

# SCIENCE FICTION

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PLANET OF THE  
KNOB HEADS  
astounding new book  
length novel by  
STANTON A. COBLENTZ



THE ATOM PRINCE  
by RAY CUMMINGS

DEC. SCIENCE FICTION

big new novel by  
STANTON A. COBLENTZ

A BLUE RIBBON  
MAGAZINE

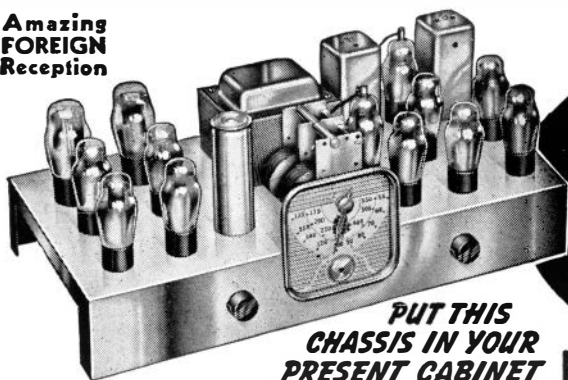
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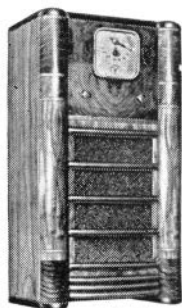
Here is what we believe is today's biggest radio value—the 1940 TELEVISION - ADAPTED MIDWEST. NOW, you can enjoy the mighty power of 14 latest type tubes—plus an advanced circuit—plus advanced features—plus astonishing foreign performance—plus TELEVISION ADAPTATION—plus Super Built-In Aerial System—for little more than the cost of new tubes . . . and on 30 days' trial in your own home.

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Gets Re-  
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Severe  
Attacks**

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NACOR  
Enough**

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Indianapolis, Indiana





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December, 1939

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A flash from the void, an investigating expedition to a lonely tropical island, and Jack and Marjorie find themselves captives of the weird dwarf-people of Uulappe! Brought to the distant world of their captors, in far Andromeda, they struggle against the unwelcome "favors" of the knob-heads—but hope fades as they face the High Knobule!

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Gore, the great scientist, provides Alan with a drug, a strange concoction that allows him to escape the trail of the prison guards—a drug that reduces his size to infinite smallness—throwing him into a world of the atom, where a minute race of people fight their submicroscopic wars!

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John Corstair's tattered book, centuries old, reveals to him many secrets of the ancient days, before the great war of 1945 had killed off most of the world's men and put the rule of the Earth into the hands of the Women—perhaps these secrets may free the men from their lives of slavery in the mines, and once again make them masters of the world!

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How could Police Reporter Wade convict Cameron of the double-murder? In order to prove his guilt, he would have to pull the lethal lever—but if Cameron's story were true, and he had killed Ericson and his wife to save the world, the contact of the lever would blast the Earth out of existence!

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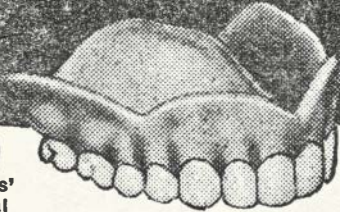
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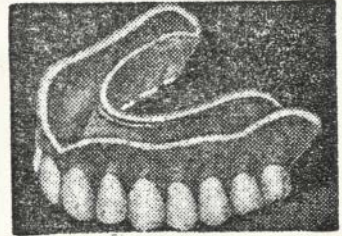
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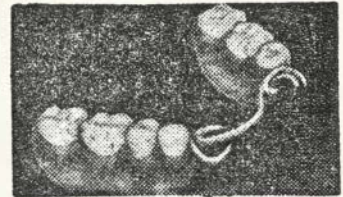
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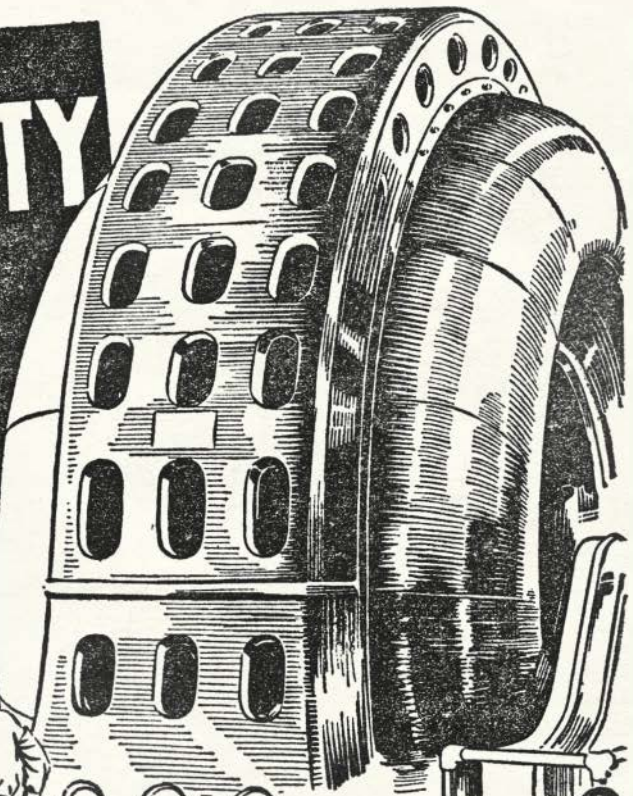


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# PLANET OF THE

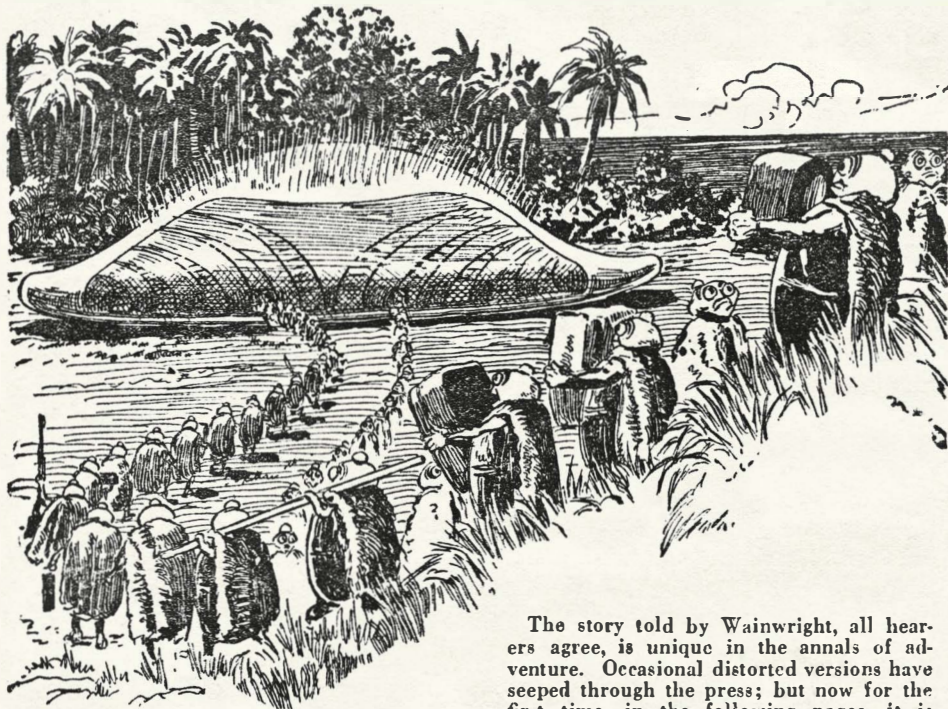
by STANTON A. COBLENTZ

Jack and Marjorie meet the strange visitors from Andromeda, the knob-heads of Uuleppe, on a lonely tropical island—only to find themselves being carried across the void to an alien world as "specimens of Earth fauna!" Treated as inferior animals, the Earth couple face a hopeless struggle as the knob-heads plan for them an unbearable fate!

## INTRODUCTION

**I**T WAS in the summer of 1944 that Jack Wainwright and his wife Marjorie, two young American scientists, disappeared while on an expedition to Equatorial

wrights; yet the appearance of both man and wife was so altered that not even their closest friends were able to recognize them. Their eyes were bulging, and preternaturally large; their skins had a faintly purplish complexion; and, strangest of all,



Africa. Although the wilderness was thoroughly combed for days, no trace of either of them was ever found; it was assumed that they had either been drowned in the river or had fallen prey to wild beasts.

Fifteen years later, in the dead of winter, a mysterious S.O.S. was heard from central Alaska. A rescuing party, hastily organized, set out from Nome by airplane and in due time returned to the world with an incredible tale. They bore with them two persons who, by means of fingerprints, handwriting and other evidence, were positively identified as the long-lost Wainwrights—each had a curious knob-shaped protuberance on the back of the head!

The story told by Wainwright, all hearers agree, is unique in the annals of adventure. Occasional distorted versions have seeped through the press; but now for the first time, in the following pages, it is given to the public in its entirety and in Wainwright's own words.

S. A. C.

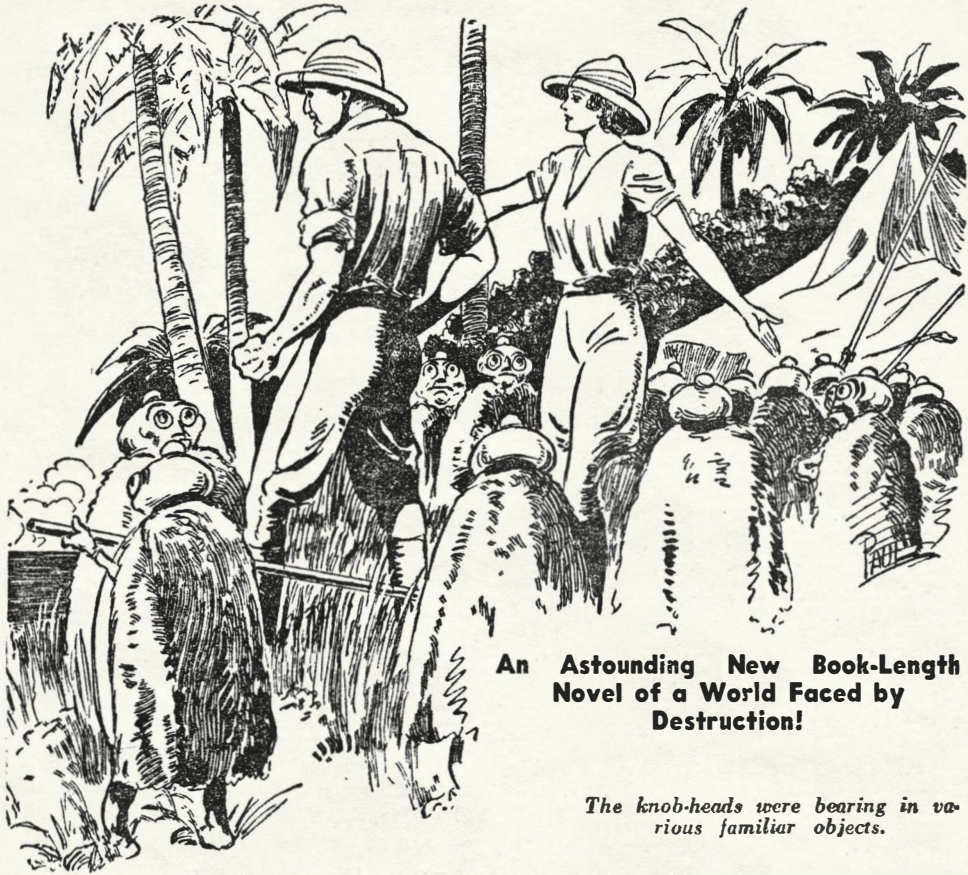
## CHAPTER I

### THE WEIRD VISITORS

**U**P TO the time of that catastrophe which was to plunge me for fifteen years into a living death, I had devoted my



# KNOB-HEADS



**An Astounding New Book-Length  
Novel of a World Faced by  
Destruction!**

*The knob-heads were bearing in various familiar objects.*

life to astronomy; and for five years, following my graduation from college, I had been Assistant to the Director of Mount Ludlow Observatory. My position was secure; my work was fascinating; and when, in April, 1944, Marjorie and I were married, it seemed to me that my bowl of joy was brimming over. But it was at this very moment, when I regarded myself as the most fortunate of men, that the event occurred which was to make me the most wretched of mortals.

In a sense, it was my bride herself that was innocently responsible. Having an incisive logical mind, she had specialized in mathematics and

physics; also, she was not at all a bad amateur astronomer, and passed many hours at the telescope. It was this inclination of hers which, only about two weeks after our union, led to the discovery that was to work havoc with our lives.

I well remember the evening when, while I was in my study checking up on some computations on the extra-galactic nebulae, she burst in upon me like a spring torrent.

"Jack! Jack!" she cried, her blazing eyes shooting out sparks of fire, her whole tense, slender form vibrant with energy. "Jack! Come; see!"

Without a word, I followed her to the eye-piece of the eighty-six-inch



reflector; and, a moment later, was gazing with gasps of amazement at an object on which she had focused the giant lens. At the first glimpse, it looked like a star of the third magnitude, in a position where no such star normally existed; I wondered if this were not a "nova" or temporary star.

But, the next second, I knew that it was not a "nova." Radiating from it, like sparks from a rocket, I noticed a series of faint green and crimson flashes that came, apparently, at regularly spaced intervals.

"God in heaven!" I burst out. "It seems to be signalling!"

"It is signalling! It is signalling!" she almost shouted into my ears. "Look again, Jack. Do you notice, it doesn't stay fixed among the stars! They drift past it, from east to west!"

"Lord save us, do you mean to say it's right here on earth?" I fairly bellowed.

"I don't see what else I can say!"

Marjorie and I exchanged dumb-founded glances. In both our minds alike was the thought which neither of us dared to put into words. This was not an astronomical object in the true sense at all! It was a space-ship descending from somewhere in the outer void—a space-ship navigated by voyagers from some other world!

Further observations confirmed this conclusion. The alien vessel, of enormous size, had evidently been caught by the earth's attraction and was gravitating about it as a satellite, at a height of anything from five hundred to a thousand miles. But what were the green and crimson flashes we had seen shooting from it? Were they not signals to the earth for help?

As there was, obviously, nothing that any man could do to aid the

space-travelers, Marjorie and I continued breathlessly watching. After a few hours, we saw flashes of light descending below the space-ship and concluded that the occupants were escaping in parachutes. By now we had been able to determine the ship's position with fair accuracy. After an elaborate series of computations we decided that the travelers were dropping toward a certain point in Equatorial West Africa.

**T**HEN all at once a startling plan occurred to us both. For the first time in human experience, the earth was to have visitors from outer space; and Marjorie and I would be privileged to be, as it were, on the committee of reception! The strangers were descending, we knew, in a jungle wilderness, inhabited at best by a few aborigines; and there was grave danger that they would perish there, or be unable to find their way out, unless aid were speedily sent. Therefore, let us organize an expedition! Let us hasten to find the wanderers!

So mad were we, so reckless, so scornful of all obstacles, that not for one moment did we pause to consider the extreme peril of our project. It scarcely occurred to us that the newcomers might be monsters who would destroy us; with the courage and overconfidence of youth, we rushed into the trap. As bad luck would have it, it was easier than we had expected to organize the expedition. Having interested the Director of Mount Ludlow, who in his turn interested certain scientifically-minded persons of vast means, we found ourselves soon in possession of the necessary funds. Within a few weeks, we set sail for the Cameroons, in company of a well-equipped party of ten.



When we had reached our destination and made camp in a jungle clearing fifty miles above the Equator, I was just a little surprised to observe no sign of the strangers from space. For many days we searched, fearing that our observations had not been sufficiently exact. But all our efforts went unrewarded . . . until that day of which I cannot think without a shudder, and which has come back to haunt me in a thousand nightmares.

I remember that, discouraged, we had thought of moving camp, and that all the other members of our party, in company with the native guides, had set out early one morning to reconnoiter, and had left Marjorie and me in charge of the camp, with the promise to be back before evening. To tell the truth, we were glad to be left behind—for the dripping heat, which hovered around a hundred in the shade, had all but exhausted us. Besides, we had plans for passing the day comparatively pleasantly with the short-wave radio, listening through the ear-phones to messages from home, and transmitting messages of our own. . . .

It was almost noon; and the day, it seemed to us, was the hottest yet. Naked to the waist, I lay full-length in our tent, gasping, and barely able to get my breath in the oven temperature; while Marjorie, clad only in her silk kimona, lay near me, panting and sweating between puffs at a cigarette. I had fallen off into one of those confused, half delirious dreams that sometimes beset one on very hot days . . . when I became aware of a tumult that at first seemed part of the dream but gradually beat upon my consciousness as something from outside.

I was not yet fully awake when I felt a tugging at my sleeve, and

stared up into two terror-distended large blue eyes.

"Jack! Jack! What's that?" Marjorie demanded, in an almost breathless staccato, as she pointed toward the borders of the clearing. "What—what's that?"

My first impression was of a flock of birds of some unheard-of and terrible type — though no aviary has ever heard such a chorus of squeaks, screams, squawks and cawings as came to us from the borders of the wood, so shrilly that our ear-drums ached.

"What—what can it be?" she muttered under her breath, as she nestled close to me; while I, snatching at my rifle, sat up erect and listened.

"It's nothing—nothing," I tried to soothe her, though my jerky syllables betrayed my own alarm. "Most likely a flock—a damned quarreling flock of water-fowl."

"But where's the water around here?" she shot back, with annihilating logic.

Almost before the words were out of her lips, we both beheld a sight that rendered any further questioning futile. Out of a tangle of bushes, snake-like creepers, and gnarled old trees, a creature emerged—and such a creature as no man had ever set eyes upon before! At the first startled glimpse, we merely stared and wondered if we had not gone mad with the heat; but when, a second later, the apparition was joined by others of its kind, we knew that it was an actual, breathing thing.

**E**ACH of the beings was a dwarf, not more than four or four and a half feet tall. Its body, thick and barrel-shaped, was carried on two short, shrivelled legs; its arms, likewise, appeared to be shriveled; its skin was of a nightmarish, faintly



purple hue; its eyes were enormous, salmon-colored, and protuberant; its head, which was hairless, was crowned by a cup-shaped knob the size of a baseball. What made the creature appear particularly grotesque was that its head was very wide and flat, so that the cheekbones were further apart than the chin and the peak of the forehead. But even stranger, to our minds, was the fact that each of the dwarfs, despite the broiling noonday heat, was dressed in a thick shaggy black fur cloak.

All this I describe from later knowledge rather than from the impressions of that first bewildered instant; for, to tell the truth, my head whirled so crazily that I hardly could have said what it was that I saw.

Still cawing and squawking with excited bird-like voices, the strangers started across the fifty yards separating them from our tent. Such was the confusion of my mind that I still had not realized who they might be; but when I saw them drawing near, moving with surprising speed on their uncertain-looking legs, it came to me that their purposes were anything but friendly; and, with hands shaking, I lifted my rifle.

Instantly it was as if some unseen thing of steel had grasped my arm. How it was I did not know—but the arm could not move either up or down, though nothing appeared to be holding it.

But everything was happening too swiftly for reason. In my mind two emotions were uppermost—bewilderment, and terror; and, driven by these twin forces, I wheeled about, and, with Marjorie at my side, started toward the opposite end of the clearing with fiercely hammering heart.

Scarcely had I gone five paces when a hand of iron seemed to reach

out and arrest me. As though clutched by invisible talons, I halted; and, falling painfully to earth, could no longer move a muscle. At my side, Marjorie lay sprawled on the grass, with gasping mouth and convulsively twitching form. Her lips trembled, as though she wished to speak, but only a choked muttering came forth; and to my own lips also I could only force an incoherent mumbling, which sounded in my ears a little like a groan.

We had hardly had time to realize our plight when the dwarfs came crowding around us. Still uttering the same shrill screeches and caws, which reminded us of gigantic crows, they looked down on us with their round bulging reddish eyes that were the most inhuman and cruel we had ever seen. A great wave of heat seemed to engulf us both, more frightful even than the heat of the tropical sun; and consciousness faded from us as we saw the little withered monkey-like purple hands reaching out to seize us.

## CHAPTER II

### OFF TO ANDROMEDA

**L**IKE one who has been drugged, I felt my self being dragged through the jungle. My head ached dully; my ears pained me from the din of the screeching, crow-like voices; but that unknown force, which had seized me as if with hands of iron, had lifted me to my feet and now drew me forward like a puppet.

I had no idea how much time had passed. But when at length my tired feet halted and the fog lifted from my mind, I was astonished to find that it was already twilight, though



it had been barely noon when we were captured.

It was still not too dark, however, for me to note my surroundings. The surprise which I received was, if anything, greater than at my first sight of the knob-heads.

We were in the midst of a great meadow surrounded by woods. Just in front of me, three hundred yards long and seventy-five yards high, was an amazing, an unbelievable object. Flamingly red, it was shaped like a gigantic shell-less snail, with curving outlines that tapered gracefully at both extremities. Little tentacle-like projections, thinner than thin threads, shot up above it by the thousands and waved sinuously in the breeze—while along its sides numbers of slit-like openings, from a few inches to several yards in length, narrowed or widened like huge feline eyes, emitting flashes of green, purple or orange light.

Even as my startled senses took in these details, my attention became focused on the longest slit of all, which opened at the base of the colossal red object. Through the glaring aperture, scores of knob-heads, like agitated ants, were passing in both directions; some of them were bearing in various familiar objects: the canvas of our tents, and the tent-poles, and the radio receiver and transmitter with which I had been experimenting!

At my side, with a stupefied expression, stood Marjorie, staring open-mouthed at the red edifice. At the first glimpse, she too had realized its nature: that it was a space-ship, like the one we had observed through the telescope! Evidently there had been two of the vessels! The one which we had seen, caught by the earth's attraction and held as a satellite, had indeed been send-

ing out the green and crimson flashes as signals for help! But the help had been solicited not from us, but from a second space-ship, which had already landed safely—the one we now behold! Thus, when the occupants of the ill-fated craft escaped in parachutes, they went to a haven prepared by their fellow beings who were already on earth!

Such were the conjectures—later to be confirmed as the truth—that burst upon both Marjorie and myself.

But, at the moment, we were not concerned with explanations. What would our own fate be? Were we to be destroyed by our knob-headed captors?

**A**FTER a few minutes, while we stood speechless and helpless and our jailors conferred in excited cawings, we felt the invisible iron force again seizing us and drawing us toward a lemon-yellow slit of light near the prow of the space-ship. As if under intelligent guidance, the slit grew longer and wider, until it was large enough to receive us; and through this doorway we were drawn, Marjorie first, and I almost falling head over heels after her as the hidden force thrust me in with a powerful shove.

Rattling and clanking like a jail gate, the slit was slammed shut; and suddenly the pressure on our hands, legs and tongues was released, and we were able to move and talk as we wished.

But, at the same time, there came to us both a sense of imprisonment so overwhelming that we could only stare at each other and groan.

We found ourselves in an egg-shaped compartment which, ten or fifteen yards wide, reared its perfectly curving walls above us for a hundred feet. Its sides were of some



translucent material, a little like frosted glass, and glowed with a lemon-yellow radiance that pervaded them from some invisible source. Whether this light also generated heat we did not know, but never before had we been in so hot a place. Even the blazing jungle seemed invitingly cool by comparison as we mopped our brows and stared at each other in silent misery.

"God!" I at last mumbled. "This has Dante's Inferno beaten all hollow. Look at the way those walls slope! Smooth as glass, and steep as hell, and you can't move three feet without sliding down!"

"Who wants to move!" groaned Marjorie, as she lay outstretched on the curving floor as listlessly as a bag of rags.

Almost before the words were out of her lips, a sudden whirring and thudding came to our ears, making us both look up with a start. The walls and floor began to shake with a slight, continuous, rhythmic vibration and the thudding grew louder, then receded and settled down to an unintermittent purring.

"The devil!" I muttered, with sudden realization. "Do you think—"

"Oh, I don't know! I don't care!" sighed Marjorie, as she twisted on the floor and opened her kimona to throw off the deadly heat. "I wish I were dead!"

I do not know whether it was minutes or hours later when I became aware that a door was opening. A faint rattling jarred on my ears as one of the knob-heads fumbled at a little catch; then a long slit appeared in the wall, and at the same time the lights went out.

Startled, I arose with a reeling sensation; and, as if obeying the will of my captor, stumbled over to the slit

in the wall, which was covered with a transparent glass-like material.

One glance through the slit, and I was shocked back to full consciousness. It was almost as if I had known in advance what I was to see; yet the actual sight came to me as the most painful blow of my life. My first impression, as I peered through the slit, was of the moonlit skies outspread above me—moonlit skies in which, however, the lunar radiance seemed scarcely to dim the brilliance of the glittering star-myriads. And my second impression, as I stared beneath, was of an enormous unfamiliar dark globe, many times the size of the full moon, which blotted out the stars over a vast area, and which in part was coal-black, and in part a deep silver-tinted gray—while on its eastern rim a long thin crescent of white light stood out blindingly.

Even in the space of seconds, while I stood watching, this great body dwindled, grew narrower and more remote. Then it was that I began to pound against the walls until my fists bled and I slumped down to the floor, not caring if I ever rose again. For the globe I had seen beneath me was the earth, and it was receding hundreds or thousands of miles every minute!

"Where are we going? Where, where?" was the question that pounded and hammered at my mind. "To Mars? Venus? Jupiter?" Though I had often thought of space-travel as a thing marvelous and greatly to be desired, I would gladly have signed half my life away for the privilege of being back on earth!

It was when my despair was at its worst—when I sorrowfully reflected that never again would I see home, friends or loved ones—that I felt a hot midget hand touching me.



As if in response to some unheard command, I leapt to my feet; and as though reading my thoughts and trying to answer them, a knob-head stood at my side, repeating over and over again, "U-u-lep-pe. U-u-lep-pe. U-u-lep-pe."

Was this the name of the knob-head's native planet—the planet to which we were being carried?

I pointed out through the glass-like slit; pointed up toward the bright flame of Mars, which glittered redly far above us. "There? Is it there?" I cried, forgetting that the knob-heads could not understand English.

The pygmy hand fumbled at the window, through which just sufficient light filtered to enable me to make out the withered fingers.

Could I be mistaken? Or was it that the knob-head was pointing toward the wide glittering belt of the Milky Way, and meant to say that we were headed through innumerable light-years of vacancy toward some inconceivably remote sun?

"U-u-lep-pe. U-u-lep-pe," he repeated, with an excited cackling, as if to answer that I had correctly surmised his thought. "U-u-lep-pe! U-u-lep-pe!"

Once more I sank to the floor, half swooning as I realized that perhaps for the remainder of our lives, Marjorie and I must continue to travel through space.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE POWER OF THE SMOKE STICKS

**N**OW that we were imprisoned beyond possibility of escape, we were given the freedom of the space-ship. We found it divided into dozens of compartments, each of a different shape—

round; triangular, hexagonal, elliptical, square; and each was glowing with its own color—jade-green, or cherry-red, or sky-blue, or lilac—which shone through the walls with a translucence that lit them at every point. Within some of the halls, we observed a great variety of machines, all of which looked very strange to us: engines like great bees, with rapidly beating wings; engines made of pipes and wire that threshed and looped with convulsive movements, like angry snakes; engines that blazed with a light so blinding that we were never able to approach and see what they were really like; and engines composed of a blur of wheels in such swift rotation that the wind they gave blew us back like ants.

Everywhere in the space-ship, the heat was almost intolerable; but when we were close to the knob-heads (of whom there were hundreds) the air grew especially hot. As measured by thermometers which they had stolen from our camp, the average temperature was 105 Fahrenheit; this rose several degrees when the knob-heads came too near. Their bodily temperature was a trifle over 112 degrees! This explained the fact that they had had to wear overcoats in our tropical heat. They came from a planet so much hotter than the earth that its torrid regions seemed chilly to them!

As time went on, we found our captors less unfriendly than we had thought. They brought us our food regularly, in little concentrated tablets that were nutritious enough, though quite tasteless; they gave us an occasional sip of water (a substance which they themselves did not seem to require); and they filled most of our spare time with lessons in their language. Thus, within a few weeks, we were able to speak with



them fluently, and to answer many questions that had been bewildering us.

I well remember the talk we had with Zukoko, the three-foot runt who had been appointed our tutor.

"What are you going to do with us? Where are you taking us?" I asked, pointing out of a window toward the star-sprinkled heavens, in which already our sun shone as a dot not distinguishable from any other.

He flung a shriveled hand upward, indicated a point in the mid-stream of the Milky Way; he declared that, by means of some power in the heart of the electrons, we were traveling at several times the speed of light; then went on to remark:

"We did not mean to alight on your planet, O earth-man. It is too cool a globe, and too far from your sun; but an accident to our engines compelled us to descend. Having arrived, we explored the country for a long distance; and, finding your nest, we thought it a good idea to take some specimens of the native fauna back with us to Uuleppe."

Although it did not please us to be referred to as "specimens of the native fauna," we listened with great interest as Zukoko bent his salmon eyes full upon us, and continued, in a grating cackle:

"Now that we have seen you, O earthians, we marvel that beings of such simple organization can live at all. With your rudimentary eyes, you can see only a few of the rays of light—such ordinary colors as green, blue and yellow. You cannot see beyond the red at one end of the spectrum, and the violet at the other. Your hearing is equally limited, and you can detect only a few sounds. This alone would put you far down among the lower animals. But this is not the worst. For your senses,

poor as they are, are only five in number. You have no knobs on your heads!"

"Knobs on our heads?" Marjorie and I both exclaimed.

"Of course!" reiterated Zukoko, fondly fingering the cup-shaped protuberance that crowned his anatomy. "In other words, you can hardly communicate with each other at all."

I STARED blankly, wondering if the dwarf were not trying to make sport of us.

"We have our tongues, haven't we?" demanded Marjorie.

"Tongues? What are tongues?" rasped the Uuleppeian. "They will do well enough for children. Grown-ups on our planet communicate by means of the knobs on their heads."

Since this was about as clear to us as a brick wall, we said nothing. But Zukoko hastened on to declare, "My knob tells me you don't even begin to understand. It's hard for me to explain in words, being better used to knob communication. But I'll try. You see, there are invisible rays vibrating all about us, which we catch by means of the knobs—"

He launched into a long explanation, which made it clear that he referred to the Hertzian rays, the ones that make radio communication possible. The knobs on the heads of his species were, in fact, combination radio transmitters and receivers, by which the natives of Uuleppe flashed messages to one another!

"I really don't see how it is possible to exist without these organs," concluded Zukoko, scornfully. "Eyes—ears—noses—they are nothing by comparison! On Uuleppe, even the worms have knobs on their heads!"

Not flattered at being ranked beneath the worms of Uuleppe, I remained silent.

Zukoko, however, as if bent on humiliating us still further, rushed on to remark, "So far as I can see, you haven't even magnetic hearts."

"Magnetic hearts?"

"Yes, magnetic hearts. On our planet, all animals higher than the mosquito have them. But I see you don't understand again. Evolution on your world is evidently very backward. A magnetic heart is one that can be used to give out a continual powerful stream of protons—protons that may control the will of any weaker being. Thus, when we saw you—"

"You mean to say," I interrupted, hotly, "you used your magnetic wills to move our muscles and make us go with you to your confounded spaceship?"

"Of course! The instant we saw you lift that stick you call a rifle—though we had never seen such a crude-looking weapon before — our knobs told us of your criminal intentions, and our magnetic hearts shot out their protons to paralyze the nerves of your arms and make them obey our will."

The dwarf launched forth upon further explanations, all about infra-rays and sub-atomic forces. But the more he said, the less we understood. Finally, with a raven-like croak of glee, he ended.

"Just imagine! Won't it cause a sensation on Uuleppe! Two-legged beasts without knobs on their heads! And without magnetic hearts! Why, they will rank with the brainless apes on the planet Ximbo!"

"When do you think we will get to Uuleppe?" inquired Marjorie, eager to change the topic, which was becoming less and less pleasing to our human vanity.

"Oh, before very long. We're traveling so fast we'll be there in

five or six years, as you earthians reckon time. We've decided to go straight back. You creatures are very perishable, and don't live any longer than the May-flies on our planet!"

These words were uttered with such a screech of contempt that I thought it best to terminate the conversation, lest in my anger I rise and strike down this puny three-foot creature who lorded it over us with such a swagger of superiority.

But very soon, in an unexpected way, the opportunity was to come to us to turn the tables and to show that not all the superiority was on the part of the Uuleppeians.

For our first few weeks in the space-ship, we had not even the consolation of a smoke to relieve the monotony of our lives. But one day, among the tent-poles, radios and other articles which the knob-heads had stolen from our camp and now left unguarded in a storage room, we discovered several prizes that made our hearts leap with the first joyous impulse since leaving the earth. Cigarettes!—half a dozen packages of cigarettes, along with several boxes of matches! Evidently our captors, ignorant of the purpose of these objects, were taking them back to Uuleppe to be exhibited as curiosities.

**WE** HAD no idea, at the time, how these commonplace possessions were to alter our future. Greedily, we seized the cigarettes and matches, and held the majority in the crevice of a window slit just behind the engine room. Then, promising ourselves to use our treasures very sparingly, we each permitted ourselves the luxury of a single cigarette; and seated like mischievous children in a semicircular saffron-



yellow compartment used for storing compressed food, we struck a match and began to take long delicious puffs.

Before we had enjoyed half a dozen whiffs each, we were aware that a knob-head stood at the doorway watching us. His salmon eyes, widening in astonishment, looked big as saucers. Then, after a few seconds, his midget form bent double with glee, and his shrill cackling laughter beat upon us like a rain of blows.

"What's getting into the fellow?" I muttered to Marjorie. "You'd think a cigarette was just about the funniest thing under heaven!"

Even as I spoke, the knob-head began swinging his dwarfed arms and calling to some companions. "Look! Look! Come! Quick! The earthians have lighted little chimneys and stuck them into their mouths!"

The next minute, scores of Uuleprians had come crowding about us, gibbering and cackling, and pointing to us with loud cries of mirth.

"They blow fire through their mouths! They make smoke and drink it like water! They suck it down like something to eat!" yelled the marveling spectators, as they nudged one another and tittered. "The earthians have gone mad! They think that smoke is catalpha!"

"Catalpha," I must explain, was the knob-heads' name for their compressed food tablets.

Angered at this mockery, I was struck with an idea. "Here!" I exclaimed. "Here!" And I held out the smoking remnant of my cigarette to Jimjimmubo, one of the headmen in the space-ship, who stood smirking and chuckling along with the others, his flattened, hairless head bobbing up and down in his merriment. "Here! Take this and try it!"

The mob laughed more derisively than ever. But, emboldened by my anger, I stepped forward and almost thrust the cigarette between Jimjimmubo's lips. "Try it!" I insisted. "Never have you tasted anything so delicious!"

The crowd laughed once more. But Jimjimmubo, in the manner of one who would humor a child, allowed me to slip the cigarette between his lips.

Making wry faces, he took a few tentative puffs, while his kinsmen looked on with ape-like grimaces.

Then, with remarkable suddenness, his expression changed. His eyes shone with a glitter of enjoyment; a look of utter bliss settled over his countenance. His hands fluttered and twitched; his feet began to sway as to rapid strains of music; he let out a shout of joy, followed by a broken snatch of song, and then began to reel and stagger about the room while bawling out to us in husky, incoherent syllables.

Only too well did Marjorie and I recognize the symptoms. The knob-head was behaving exactly like an earth-man who has imbibed too much strong liquor! His sensitive nervous system, unused to the effects of tobacco, had been thrown out of balance! He was drunk with the cigarette smoke!

"More! More! More!" cried Jimjimmubo, as he stumbled about the room and flung his arms around a companion's neck in the effort to maintain his equilibrium. "More! More! More!"

Marjorie, encouraged by my example, had thrust the remains of the cigarette into the hands of another knob-head. And he, out of curiosity, lifted the object to his lips; and, after a few puffs, showed the same blissful expression as Jimjimmubo, and began to leap, prance, cavort, shout,

reel and stumble with the same symptoms of intoxication.

"More! More! More!" he too cried, with the avidity of a drug fiend. "More! More! More!"

"Give me some! Me too! Me too!" begged dozens of the onlookers, fascinated. "Give me some of the little smoke sticks!"

"By the Lord," I muttered to Marjorie in English, while dazzling new possibilities leapt before my mind. "Those cigarettes are our fortune! Used properly, and—"

"Give me some! Me some! Me too! Me too!" the insistent voices dinned upon us. "Give me some, O earthman, and we will reward you!"

"Make the best of their bargaining value!" Marjorie whispered into my ear.

"O Uuleppeians," I fabricated, stepping forward and picking my words very slowly, "I cannot give you all some of the smoke sticks. They are made of two very rare herbs, called paper and tobacco, and are considered sacred on our planet. Only the nobles, like my queen and I, are allowed to drink in the divine fumes, which are said to make a man one with the gods. We have very few of them, and cannot give them to you."

Then it was that the midget Zukoko stepped forward. "Our knobs, O earthians," he said, "tell us that you lie. We read that you have hidden some of the smoke sticks, but we cannot tell where. Therefore, I warn you, let us know the place, or—"

Several of the knob-heads shot forward with angry mutterings, as if to seize us. For the first time since leaving the earth, we felt ourselves being grasped as if by invisible irons.

But it was Jimjimmubo who, reeling forward, saved the day for us. "Let them—let them—go—go," he

sputtered, in thick, blurred tones. "Let them—let them—go. They have—they have smoke sticks. They will give me—give me smoke sticks. Put them—put them in pink rooms."

The pink rooms, as we knew, were the most luxurious part of the spaceship, where only the leading knob-heads were permitted to live!

As we felt ourselves released from the invisible pressure and started on our way to the pink rooms, we reflected that the Uuleppeians were indeed strange people, to be able to conquer trillions of miles of space and overcome the natives of a distant planet, and to be themselves conquered by a bit of tobacco wrapped in a scrap of paper!

As long as we still possessed cigarettes, we realized, we need not be slaves of the knob-heads!

## CHAPTER IV

### WELCOME TO WUMJUM!

**I**T TOOK us nearly seven years to make the voyage to Uuleppe. But we would never have reached there alive had it not been for the cigarettes.

This does not mean that we used them ourselves. A man does not willingly let his most precious possessions go up in smoke! No!—with a mighty effort, we choked down our own craving for tobacco. We kept our priceless supplies hidden in various places; and, at the very beginning, a fortunate accident saved them from being looted. A marauding knob-head, aided by his sixth sense, spied out a cigarette box containing three or four of the treasures. With no more self-control than an alcohol fiend on earth, he promptly smoked them all; and, as a result, he had convulsions, became delirious,



and was so near to dying that his fellows prepared to chant his death lament. On his recovery, he swore that there were some "little demons" in the smoke-sticks, which "chewed at the insides of his knob"; and the consequence was that the other knob-heads, being very superstitious at heart in spite of all their science, were afraid to take the cigarettes without our permission.

We now kept them for special occasions, doling one or two out at a time, at intervals of months, and then only giving them to the headmen, such as Jimjimmubo, who could do us some service in return. It was due to the cigarettes that we were permitted to take up our quarters in the vessel's refrigerator—a compartment so cold that no knob-head ever entered it for more than a few minutes, and then in fur robes that covered every inch of his skin. We, for our part, found it the only comfortable place on the ship, since the thermometer registered exactly sixty-eight degrees! Our ability to withstand such excessive cold was a never-ceasing source of wonder to our captors, who felt that this was another sign of our inferiority, since only the "cold-blooded animals" on Uuleppe could exist under such frigid conditions.

Long before we had reached our destination, of course, our meager clothes were worn out. The remnants of my shoes and trousers and of Marjorie's kimona were taken from us, to be exhibited in a natural history museum in Uuleppe, along with the hides of various beasts; and we were compelled to wear the native costume. This was very hard upon us, for the Uuleppeian dress, beneath the long cloaks worn in "cold" weather, consisted of a single one-piece suit, a little like an old-style

bathing suit, except that it was much tighter fitting. It was considered fashionable, in fact, for clothes on Uuleppe to fit as tightly as possible. The more they impeded the circulation of the blood, the better; it was regarded as admirable, and a sign of bravery, for a man to wear such constricting garments that he was in constant torment.

Owing to my height (I stand six feet two in my stocking feet) it was impossible for me to squeeze myself into any of the Uuleppeian suits, and one had to be made to order for me. I surely looked far from handsome in my tights, which, gaudily striped with crimson, green and yellow, brought out every curve of my form and pressed down on me like a straightjacket, making it difficult to walk. It was no consolation to be told that I was now "in style."

As for Marjorie—she too had to have her clothes made to order, since she was bigger than any of the knob-heads; and, besides, she was the only lady among us, as the Uuleppeians believe that woman's place is in the "atrum" or "live" and not making flights through space. She was dressed in a drab gray (bright hues are considered immodest for women, except on the knobs of their heads) and her costume fitted her so closely that the first time she took it off her skin showed deep ridges and corrugations—which caused the tailor to smile with self-approval, as he said it was the sign of a successful fit.

**A**LL that was now needed to make us look, as our captors said, "halfway human," was to have the hair shaved off our heads. For hair, being unknown on Uuleppe except among dogs, weasels and other low animals, was considered another proof of our bestial origin. Behold

us, then, both sheared bald as convicts! Poor Marjorie, as she herself said with tears in her eyes, "looked a perfect fright." But the knob-heads had other ideas; standing off in admiring crowds after they had shaved her down to the scalp, they exclaimed, "Ah, at last she's really good-looking!"

Having been properly shorn and dressed, we were all prepared for our arrival in Uuleppe. Time after time, as we drew nearer our goal, the knob-heads would point out to us Vallappin, the sun about which Uuleppe revolved; but it was no more than a dot of light in Andromeda, one of those nameless fifth or sixth dimensional stars which, on earth, are barely visible to the naked eye.

By the beginning of our seventh year of travel, however, it had become conspicuously brighter. Rapidly it gained in brilliance, and finally widened to a dazzling yellow-white disk; and near it we made out a shining pinpoint which, we were told, was Uuleppe—a planet circling about a sun of the size and brightness of our own, at a distance of barely sixty million miles.

"God! But it's going to be hot down there!" I remarked to Marjorie, when our speed had slowed to a few miles a second and we gazed down at a world completely covered with vegetation, except for the oceans and certain bare brown patches which, our captors said, were the inhabited parts.

"Hot! By my knob, what an idea!" Zukoko reassured us. "It's hardly ever much warmer than in this ship!"

As we drew nearer, I observed many great mountain ranges, all cloaked in dense green forests. "I hope we are going there," I said, thinking it might be pleasantly cool

beneath the trees. But Zukoko put an end to my dream by snapping, "Are you silly in the head, O earthian? It's too cold in the forests to support intelligent life! Sometimes it's almost as cold as our refrigerator!"

Despite my dread of the heat, my interest was pitched high. Now that we were so near to our journey's end, I could scarcely restrain my eagerness to see the marvels of Uuleppe. The shrieking, cackling excitement of the knobheads, as they bustled about the vessel, only added to my enthusiasm. Yet as we descended, I saw but a flat, low-lying, dusty-looking brown plain, without so much as a green thing anywhere—not even a tree to give shade! "The trees have all been cut down," explained Zukoko. "They shut off too much of the sun's heat."

Naturally, we did not sympathize with this point of view when, on leaving the space-ship, we found the temperature to be 108°.

As we settled down toward the brown plain, we observed a great mass of queer-looking buildings: the city of Wumjum, the capital of Zur, Uuleppe's leading nation.

Some of these buildings were needle-like spires that shot upward for nearly a mile; others, just next to them, were small flat edifices no taller than a bungalow. But the majority were high and black and coffin-shaped. They leaned one against the other in great piles, with only the thinnest ribbons of light between. Nowhere was there any regularity; no two were of the same height or width or plan of construction, and the total effect was of a great number of children's building blocks thrown together haphazardly.

"Why is everything so crowded?" I asked Zukoko as we descended. For



I saw that, while the city occupied several square miles, thousands of square miles of empty country stretched on all sides.

"That's to keep the heat in!" replied Zukoko, scornfully, as though surprised at such a foolish question.

"And why is it they haven't any windows?" put in Marjorie; for all the buildings presented bare blank walls.

"Windows? And what would they want with windows?" Zukoko demanded. "Why, they would only let the heat out!"

We began to foresee that we were in for an even hotter time than we had expected.

**O**UR landing place was a great field just outside the city, where thousands of knob-heads were waiting to greet us. As we drew near, we could hear their squawks and cackles of acclaim, in such a tumult that we had to stuff old rags into our ears. Hence we were not sorry that we were ordered to remain inside the space-ship until the knob-heads had all been received, and had prepared the people for our emergence.

And so Marjorie and I passed another hour or two in our refrigerator—our last cool moments in many a day! We were almost as nervous, I believe, as prisoners awaiting execution, and would about as soon have faced a pack of man-eating tigers as those screeching mobs of Uulepeians. Both of us were trembling when the crucial moment arrived, and Zukoko, standing shivering at the door of our refrigerator, motioned us to follow him.

A minute later, we passed through a slit-like exit, and bade farewell to our home of nearly seven years. A blast of air that seemed straight from a furnace struck us in the face

as we emerged; and our eyes blinked and pained us from the glare of an enormous sun which blazed directly overhead out of a sea-blue sky. The air, we instantly felt, was not much different in composition from that of the earth, and might have been refreshing to breathe had it not been so hot; the pressure of gravity was just a little more than on earth—or so it seemed to us—for we felt very heavy, and our footsteps dragged as never on our own planet.

Held back by wire ropes, tens of thousands of knob-heads stood staring at us as we followed Zukoko out of the space-ship. A tremendous howl went up as soon as we appeared, and innumerable little shriveled hands began pointing at us excitedly. We noticed several babes who, held on high on their parents' shoulders, began to bawl and hide their faces; we noticed also that scores of persons, on the outskirts of the crowd, broke as if in a panic and scattered in all directions.

But the majority bravely held their ground, while screaming and shrieking, "Look at them! Look! See the strange animals! . . . The monsters! . . . What horrible brutes! . . . Just notice their eyes! Not pink, like human beings! Blue, like dogs! . . . And see, just see! They haven't any knobs on their heads!"

After the first astonished chorus had died down, we detected another note, which pleased us even less. Beginning in a low ripple, but gradually rising to a mighty billow, laughter broke out among the multitude—until all the spectators, pointing at us with cackles of glee, had become hilarious. Evidently they thought us the funniest things they had ever seen!

Now it was that an odd-looking individual approached; the rabble, mak-

ing way before him, touched their heads to the ground in homage. The newcomer was unusually thin, and his head was exceptionally flat; in fact, it was shaped about like a fly's, and was at least twice as wide as high. What made him even more conspicuous, however, was his huge knob, which was painted with stripes of red, white and green.

"Hit your heads on the ground! Your heads on the ground!" cried Jimjimmubo, rushing to us, his salmon eyes distended with excitement. "That's O-olumik! The son of the High Knobule!"

While we had no idea who the High Knobule might be, we were eager not to offend the son of so grand a personage, and so bent down until our heads were covered with dust.

Rising to our feet again, we found that O-olumik had not even noticed our obeisance. He was making a speech—a speech in such a hoarse crowing voice that we could not understand what it was all about. The crowd, likewise, was evidently mystified, to judge by their dull looks and yawns; but every once in a while, when the orator paused for effect, they would burst out in loud croaks and caws, which was the native way of cheering.

Finally, with a flourish of his dwarfed hands, O-olumik turned toward us. And now, for the first time, we could make out what he was saying:

"Fellow Uuleppeians, we have two strangers among us. They are not purple men, for on their planet people's skins are a sickly pinkish white. But I do not hold that against them—they were born that way. Also, do not blame them because their heads have no knobs. Not every race is blest by nature. I am told that, in spite of their natural drawbacks,

they are really quite amiable, and not nearly so stupid as one would expect. . . . The line will form to the left, for those of you who wish to meet the strangers from space."

Now began the greatest ordeal of all. It seemed to us that everybody wanted to meet us; a line many blocks long was formed, bending and twisting in an endless serpentine. Each Uuleppeian in turn would approach with wonder in his big salmon eyes, would look up at us as at some miracle in a zoo, and would then perform the native salutation—which was to slap us on the head. After being slapped a few thousand times on our shaven scalps, both Marjorie and I realized as never before what it was to be sore-heads.

**W**HILE this senseless procedure was going on and we stood almost ready to faint in the oven heat, we had our first chance to observe the lady Uuleppeians. These were a few inches taller than their brothers, and were distinguished by having larger knobs on their heads—which was due to the fact, as one of them explained, that they devoted so much more of their time to conversation. Though their clothes were drab gray and brown, their knobs were painted every color of the rainbow, from brilliant orange and scarlet to checkered green and yellow and spotted blue and white. To us they seemed so grotesque that, in spite of the torment we were enduring, we could hardly keep from laughing. Yet the belles of Uuleppe prized their painted knobs as beauty marks—so much so that many of them spent hours a day at the "knobeticians," who made a specialty of knob painting.

After we had been slapped on the head by a few thousand natives, and



had slapped them back again as a sign of mutual respect, the mob once more bowed their heads to the ground, and made way before a resplendent figure — resplendent, that is, according to the native conception, for she was a giantess over five feet tall, and her knob was as large as a cocoanut, and was splashed, like a painter's palette, with every bright hue in the spectrum. Personally, I thought I had never seen a more repulsive creature: her head was the flattest I had yet observed, and her salmon eyes were crossed; while her teeth, in accordance with the latest fashion, were filed to points until they resembled shark's teeth, and were stained a deep crimson.

"Bend low! Bend low!" Zukoko whispered into our ears. "Here come Zuwanna!"

"Who the devil's Zuwanna?" I muttered in English.

Zukoko, who had caught my thought, instantly replied, "She is the daughter of O-olumik — and granddaughter of the High Knobule. Show her respect, O earthians, for no lady in all our land has more power!"

With a little squeal of delight, Zuwanna had paused in front of us. She had forgotten to slap us on the heads; but her twisted eyes gleamed with ecstasy. I writhed beneath her gaze, which was steady as a cat's; yet a horrible fascination held me.

"Oh, isn't he just a klicktrappe!" she exclaimed — which, translated into English, means, "Isn't he simply grand!" And, to my consternation, she turned to Jimjimmubo, and demanded, "Give him to me: I want him! I never saw anything so adorable since my pet kitten Roki-roki was drowned!"

"Who could deny what you ask, O noble-knobbed lady?" returned

Jimjimmubo, bowing to the ground. And then—I do not know whether it was due to the heat, or because I saw her flinging her little withered hands toward me in rapture—I suddenly reeled, staggered, and lost consciousness.

## CHAPTER V

### THE HIGH KNOBULE'S GRANDDAUGHTER

**I**T SEEMED hours later when I awakened. As I gradually came to myself, I had the dazed sense of being in a Turkish bath; the sweat streamed from me at every pore, and I hardly seemed able to breathe in the boiling heat. Opening my eyes, I stared about me in uncomprehending wonder. I was in a large fan-shaped windowless chamber, with walls that glowed faintly from hidden lavender-tinted luminaries. Heavy purple rugs, lighted with an inner radiance, covered the floor; the walls were frescoed with nightmarish pictures of knob-heads who were nearly all knobs. But the strangest thing of all—and the only thing that really concerned me—was my own position. I was lying just beneath the ceiling, on a little cot suspended by steel chains. And heavy blankets were wrapped about me from head to foot!

My first act was to kick off my blankets—which left me still feeling almost dead with the heat, though I now wore only the ordinary native tights. Not knowing how to work the automatic levers and lower the cot, I scrambled as best I could to the floor ten feet below, and was relieved to find it a trifle cooler there—probably in the neighborhood of 110.

I was mopping my brow and wondering if I were in prison for some

unwitting offense, when a slim, gaudy-knobbed creature burst in from an adjoining room, her crossed salmon eyes flashing anxiously.

"Oh, Blixblax," she exclaimed (this being a native term of endearment), "Oh, Blixblax, you mustn't! You've been ill! Get right back into bed and put those blankets on! Do you want to catch cold?"

"Where under heaven am I?" I burst out. "What am I doing here? Where's Marjorie?"

"It's all right, Blixblax. It's all right," soothed Zuwanna, as she busily inspected the chink of the door and applied wax to it to keep out all air. "I think there's a draft. That's what makes you so irritable. Now get right back into bed. It's so chilly down here on the floor."

"But I want to know what you're going to do with me," I almost shouted. "And where's Marjorie?"

"Marjorie? Oh, you mean that awful creature who came with you?" growled Zuwanna, wrinkling up her lips so as to reveal her blood-red teeth. "I don't know what they've done with her, and don't care. All I know is that I'm going to take charge of you from now on, Blixblax. You're mine!"

"Yours?" I gasped, reeling.

"Yes, all mine, dear knob. You and I are going to be knobuled."

"Knobuled? What's that?"

"It's when two people are made one. So the man may serve the lady for life."

"You mean, it's getting married?" I yelled at her.

"Maybe that's what your people call it. Anyway, you'll find out! You're a lucky man, Blixblax. For a hundred quiglas—or, as you would say, for over two hundred years—all the men on this planet have been waiting for me to propose to them.

But none of them satisfied me. They're all so small. Why, the largest didn't come up to my chin. So when I saw you, so big and tall, then for the first time I knew what I had been waiting all these centuries to find. I felt eternal love rising up in my knob!"

Appalled at the idea of being "knobuled" to a woman who was born before George Washington, I had a sudden inspiration. "It's not that I desire to oppose your wishes, dear lady," I said, "but I can't be married—that is to say, knobuled—because I have a wife already."

Zuwanna's eyes narrowed, and shot out angry crimson flashes. "Oh, you mean that ugly thing, Marjoram? What does she count? You didn't knobule her by the laws of Uuleppe, did you?"

"How could I?"

"Well, then, Blixblax, it isn't legal!" concluded Zuwanna, with a triumphant toss of her shoulders. "Knobulations on other planets are not recognized on Uuleppe. So you're a free man—free to enjoy your happiness with me, dear knob!"

**S**TANDING on tiptoe, she reached up, and gave me a resounding slap on the head, as a mark of her affection. Then, while the sore spot smarted, she touched a little button near the floor; and, after a few seconds, a compartment of the wall opened, admitting several cups and bowls and a caldron filled with a steaming muddy-yellow liquid.

"Drink this, Blixblax," she said, pouring out some of the fluid. "It's real hot and will break up your cold!"

Though I was craving nothing except ice water, I put my lips to the burning substance, and found it to taste about like diluted mouth wash. "What is it?" I inquired.



"It's Suriscu," she replied. And then, seeing that I looked blank, she went on to explain, "You're really very ignorant, Blixblax, coming as you do from one of the lower planets. Suriscu is the entire source of our food supply. We grow it in great laboratories. It's a form of protoplasm, which originally came from an animal, but now develops outside the animal's body in laboratory cases, where the cells remain alive and keep on growing and multiplying so long as we feed them the proper chemicals. We cut it off in steaks, and use it to make compressed food tablets, or else boil it in soup."

I tried my best to force down a little of the insipid-tasting liquid, but a few sips was all I could manage. At the moment, I did not greatly admire the science of the Uuleppeians, which had solved the food problem by putting an end to all the pleasure of eating.

"Here, Blixblax, you forgot your blankets!" urged Zuwanna, trying her best to wrap the heavy wool-like garments about me. "By the red of my eyes! You've got to learn to do what I tell you if we're going to be knobuled!"

With a desperate effort, I flung the blankets off; and, sagging with the heat, staggered across the room, while she followed like a mother after a disobedient infant. "If you don't mind me better than that, Blixblax," she chided, "how do you know the High Knobule will give permission for our knobulation?"

A sudden hope burst over me. "Oh, must the High Knobule give permission?" I asked.

"Of course! He must give permission for everything that happens in the land of Zur. Only, of course, he never refuses me anything. I'm his

favorite granddaughter, and know how to get things out of him."

She paused; pursed her flat face into an ogling expression, to show how she accomplished things; and then went on to explain:

"Naturally, the High Knobule isn't supposed to give privileges to anyone; for Zur is a scientific dictatorship. That is to say, my grandfather is a scientist whose duty is to run the country on scientific principles for the good of all. He tells everybody what to do, and how: what time to get up in the morning, and what time to go to sleep, and what to eat, and when to work and play. Nobody would dare express a thought without permission from the High Knobule. Nobody would speak or even laugh in public without his consent. Nobody would have an idea without first getting a license from him. That's how scientific he is! It's the best form of government there ever was. Everybody agrees so. The High Knobule has never given any one permission to disagree."

Not feeling very much drawn to the Knobule, I said nothing in reply, but waited for Zuwanna to go on:

"Of course, his favorites have some privileges. Old Knobby is really a perfect klicktrappe, once you get to know him. That's why I know he'll consent to our knobulation. He never refused me anything yet—not even the time I begged him to strangle ten of his guards for blinking at me disrespectfully."

Now, as never before, I was awake to the peril of provoking this great lady's anger. Yet hope had not quite died out in my heart. Like one grasping at a straw, I suggested, "Surely, the High Knobule cannot consent. I'm not a native Uuleppeian. I haven't a magnetic heart. Worst of all, I haven't a knob on my head."

"Never mind, Blixblax," Zuwanna reassured me. "One magnetic heart will do for two. And as for the knob—take cheer, all will turn out well. I have plans for you."

"Plans?"

"Yes, indeed! It will not be necessary for you to go knobless through life. Our surgeons have recently developed a new technique. When a person loses his knob in an accident, it is possible to perform a delicate operation and graft on a new knob, from some one who had just died. This is what I have in store for you, Blixblax, as soon as we can find a knob of the proper quality."

"God deliver me now!" I exclaimed, bringing one hand to my forehead, which began to ache as from the pressure of an iron band.

"Even if your sixth sense doesn't work properly, you will have a decent knobbed appearance," she went on. "To tell the truth, not everybody's knob does work. Take me, for example. A bump on the head in childhood damaged the knob nerves, so that my sixth sense doesn't behave. I can't read anybody's thoughts, not even yours, Blixblax. But what does it matter? I get along, don't I?"

I felt indeed fortunate that she could not read my thoughts. Yet I could hardly keep from cursing her aloud, when I pictured the approaching operation which was to give me a dead man's knob.

## CHAPTER VI

### AMONG THE KNOB PAINTS

**D**AYS lengthened into weeks while I still lived like a prisoner of war. Zuwanna accompanied me wherever I went; and, whenever I tried to slip away from her, I found myself held in an

iron grip by her magnetic heart. I felt, in fact, much like her pet kitten, with her constant, "Don't do this, Blixblax," and "Don't do that, Blixblax"; evidently she thought that, coming from another planet, I was of low intelligence and unable to care for myself.

In her company, I explored the city of Wumjum, and learned how the Uuleppeians lived. They passed most of their time indoors; for the outdoor temperatures, which rarely went over 100 and had been known to fall even below 90 at night, were considered too low for comfort. In their great windowless dwellings, with the artificially lighted rooms heated to super-tropical temperature, comfort was their chief consideration. They had automatic devices to perform every service: to bring them their food and clothes, to dress them and undress them, to paint their knobs, to brush their teeth, to tuck them in bed, to call them in the morning, and even to read to them as they lay cuddled among the blankets. No wonder their arms and legs were shrivelled! These organs, thanks to the mechanical lives they led, were used as little as possible.

Yet, although they had every imaginable machine for comfort, the knob-heads were always complaining how uncomfortable they were. Those who could not afford some new invention which their neighbors enjoyed—such as an engine for twisting their eyebrows in the latest fashion, or for rolling their compressed food tablets down their throats at specified hours—would be very unhappy. And those who could indulge in these great modern advantages would be equally unhappy, since they would not be able to afford all the new models (and the High Knobule, with a view of stimulating trade, had



made a law prohibiting any invention that did not put out a new model every second month). All in all, I never saw a people who lived in such luxury or discontent as the Uulepeians.

For my own part, I also had complaints. Being under the constant threat of knobulation, and of the knob operation, I was continually wrapped up in my troubles. Zuwanna was only postponing the worst, I knew, until she found a suitable knob. Daily she would accompany me to the morgue, where she would examine the knobs of newly defunct citizens. But she was not easily to be pleased. One knob was too small, and one was too large, and one had a crease in it, and one had a spot, and one was too bony, and one was too fatty, and one came from too plebian a head! Of course, I always joined in finding fault with the knobs; and at times I had a faint hope that Zuwanna would never find one to suit her.

A thing that troubled more was my constant fear for Marjorie. Since reaching the planet, I had neither seen nor heard of her. There was no point in inquiring of Zuwanna; for, at the mere mention of the hated name, her flat face would begin to glow with a purple flame of anger. Nor was there any one I could ask, since Zuwanna kept me under constant supervision. I could only wait and hope that sometime, somehow, an accident would give me a clue to my wife's whereabouts.

And, indeed, it was not many weeks before the longed-for moment did come. Zuwanna took me with her one day to a public exhibition of knob paints—a subject which, she said, had always interested her, so much so that she had once taken a correspondence course in it. Person-

ally, I was bored beyond endurance by the exhibition; particularly as many of the paints, being in ultra-violet and infra-red colors that were invisible to my eyes, appeared to me as the drabest gray. But the hall, though a large one, was packed to the doors with eager visitors, most of them of the so-called "knobbier" sex; and the happy thought came to me that, amid this crowd, I might be able to escape.

**E**VEN as this idea flashed over me, I felt something brushing against my right hand—something small and crinkly that was forced into my palm. I glanced down, and my heart almost missed a beat. Half a dozen words, in a familiar handwriting, had been hastily scrawled upon the paper. The words were in English! "Meet me rear door. At once!"

My breath coming by spurts and gasps, I managed to worm my way through the crowd. Fortunately, Zuwanna was at that instant engaged in scrutinizing an exhibition of new aluminum knob-paint and so did not notice me; while by ducking low and bending nearly double, so as to hold my head on a level with the mob, I managed to keep out of sight.

It was no more than a hundred feet to the rear door; but as I circuitously dug a path through the throng, the distance seemed at least a mile. Would a loved familiar form be awaiting me?

At first, when I reached the door, a chill swept over me—no Marjorie was to be seen! But, the next instant, I heard a low, well known voice. "Here! Quick!"

From behind the concealment of several large empty iron packing cases, a hand reached out; and, the

next instant, Marjorie and I were clasped in a hurried embrace.

She looked thinner and more worn than of old. But I offered up a secret prayer of thanksgiving that she was whole and well.

"Quick!" she reiterated. "We haven't a minute to spare. How lucky my master took me here and I saw you and slipped away."

"Your master?" I flung back, so loudly as to forget caution.

"Be quiet, dearest!" she warned, bringing one finger to her lip. "I don't want him to catch us."

"Who is he?" I reiterated.

She hung her head, and a film of deep sadness came into her eyes. "His name is Xumxolite. He's Chief Strangulator for the High Knobule—a very important man, they say. On account of his position, he has privileges. One of them is to be knobuled as many times as he wants. You know what that is, darling?"

"I'm afraid so!" I groaned. And then, once again lifting my voice, "You don't mean to say the damned villain wants to get knobuled to you?"

A rattling from just beyond our hiding place froze us both into silence. But the sound passed; and a moment later, when all that we could hear was the steady cackling and cawing of the visitors to the exhibition, Marjorie wiped a tear from the corner of one eye, and mournfully confessed.

"Yes, sweetest, he wants to get knobuled to me."

"The devil he does!" I growled, in a mood to commit murder. "Just you let me set eyes on the scoundrel, and they'll be one knob-head less on this planet!"

"Oh, darling, you must be careful!" she pleaded. "One word from him, and you'll be strangulated.

Don't be so sad about it, though. I'm not knobuled to him yet. He's waiting till he can find just the right knob for me, and then he'll have an operation performed on my head—"

"Not if I have to choke him first!" I swore. "Show him to me! Just show him to me! That's all I ask!"

"Now, now, dearest," she appealed, "he'd have you overcome in no time at all with his magnetic heart. Can't you behave sensibly? I have a plan, but if we don't hurry, Xumxolite will notice I'm gone before I can tell you."

**A**NOTHER ominous rattling just beyond the packing cases warned us to make haste.

"It's just this," Marjorie rushed on. "If we don't see each other, maybe we can communicate. You remember our old radios, which the knob-heads stole from our African camp? Well, they're here in a museum. I was there with Xumxolite only yesterday!"

"Well, what of it?" I demanded, not seeing the point.

"Now if I had the receiver, and you had the transmitter," she suggested, eagerly, "couldn't you send me messages? Then maybe you could work out a plan to escape!"

"Yes, but how to get the radios out of the confounded museum?"

"Simplest thing on earth, dearest." Marjorie came closer yet, and whispered in even lower tones. "Xumxolite is always trying to press gifts on me, though I never take them. Now I'll just let out casually that I'd like part of the radio, as a remembrance from my own world. With his influence, he'll have no trouble getting it for me."

"And as for me," I reported, after briefly describing how I was held a prisoner by Zuwanna, "I'll ask the



rest of the radio as a favor from the High Knobule's granddaughter. She'll think nothing of granting me such a trifle."

"Of course not, sweetest!" she agreed. And we were locked in another embrace when, with a sudden clatter, the iron cases rattled down about us, and I heard a shrill indignant voice, "There they are!"

Glaring at me with a sultry blaze of her salmon eyes, stood my mistress, Zuwanna!

At her side, his face twisted into a ferocious grimace, was a particularly small and shriveled Uuleppeian, whose ruby-hued knob indicated his high rank.

"Xumxolite!" muttered Marjorie, shrinking back in alarm.

"I told you they couldn't have gone far!" exclaimed Zuwanna. "The naughty children! They will have their little play when we're not looking! Now, Blixblax, you come right along with me!"

"It it wasn't for you, O noble-knobbed lady, I'd have him strangulated!" growled Xumxolite, fixing me with a malevolent glitter of his reddidded eyes.

But already I felt the magnetic will of my mistress drawing us away. My last backward glance, before the crowd closed in about us, showed me Marjorie following Xumxolite out through the door, while staring back at me with a convulsed and tear-streaked face.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONDEMNED TO KNOBULATION!

"OH, BLIXBLAX, I have the best news!"  
Zuwanna, bursting in upon me one evening with wildly waving arms, made this announce-

ment in a congratulatory manner; while ogling me fondly with her twisted eyes.

"Yes, Blixblax," she went on, not appearing to notice the horrified start I gave, "I've found you simply the loveliest knob! Most ideal thing you ever saw! Beautifully painted, red and black!—and comes to a point on top. Very high-toned knob, too, and terribly expensive. Used to belong to a general, who lost his life by strangulation, after issuing an order the High Knobule didn't like. But I bought it for your sake, Blixblax, because the best isn't too good for you."

I groaned, and feverishly mopped my brow.

"You don't seem to show any appreciation, Blixblax!" she snapped. "You might at least have said, 'Thank you!' Well, that's always the way when you do things for others—can't look for any return. I've arranged everything, too! The operation will be tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?" I shouted, starting up with an unsteady feeling in my legs.

"Yes, dear knob. The asphyxiators will be here in half an hour."

"Asphyxiators?" I roared, as I leaned against a chair for support, and felt the world going round and round about me.

"Of course, dear knob. It wouldn't be modern, would it, to operate on you without asphyxiating you first?"

I continued to hold to the chair like a shipwrecked man to a log, but found nothing to say.

"The asphyxiation is temporary only," explained Zuwanna. "Its effects wear off in about two weeks. Nobody thinks anything of such a trifle nowadays."

"But what—what if it happens to

be more than temporary?" I stammered.

"Oh, but it won't be," she reassured me, airily. "Not unless your heart's weak, or the asphyxiators get careless and gas you too much. But I wouldn't let that worry me, Blixblax. If you're asphyxiated for good, you'll be perfectly in fashion—and, besides, you'll never know anything about it."

Even before the promised time, the asphyxiators arrived, with a heavy mask which they forced over my face, while they began to pump foul-smelling vapors into my nostrils through a long rubber-like tube. First, however, so as to ease me (as they said), they stuck several needles into various portions of my anatomy, injecting a paralyzing fluid that left me inert as a stone slab, although every part of me ached as though I had been run through a threshing machine. I was then lifted on to a table; and, before complete asphyxiation set in, I saw a dozen natives gathering about me with great curved knives. They were all dressed in black robes, and the knobs on their heads were black; and I heard one of them saying, just as my senses deserted me: "This will mark a milestone in the progress of science, my friends. I intend to write up the results for the next quarterly issue of *Cuts and Incisions*. Never before has any one from the lesser planets enjoyed the benefits of modern knob-ectomy. . . ."

**A**FTER a series of nightmares, in which at times some one seemed to be pounding on my head with a triphammer and at other times I thought I was gasping for breath in a sealed crypt, I finally opened my eyes to find myself on my cot in the lavender-tinted chamber.

Heavy blankets enswathed me, and the temperature exceeded that of a hothouse; pillows were heaped about my head, and a glaring red-hot electric oven faced me within elbow reach.

Hovering just above, solicitously glancing down at me with her salmon eyes, was the person I wished least of anybody in the world to see.

"Oh, Blixblax," she cried, wringing her shriveled little hands in delight. "You're coming out of it! Coming out of it beautifully! You were only thirteen days under the gas!"

"For heaven's sake," I grumbled, weakly, pointing to the electric oven, "you're roasting me to death. Take that infernal stove away!"

"Now, Blixblax, is that any way to greet me after thirteen days?" she chided. "The stove's necessary, if you're to recover. It keeps the room heated fifteen degrees above normal. Why, I can hardly stand it myself, but for your sake I've submitted!"

Tears of chagrin rolled down from her bulging salmon eyes. But they aroused no sympathy within me; I was not feeling well enough to be sympathetic. There was a terrible throbbing and aching near the crown of my head; and a sense of heaviness as though I were weighed down with sand-bags. "Oh, I wish I'd stayed asphyxiated!" I groaned.

"But, Blixblax, you haven't looked at yourself! You haven't looked!" she cried, snatching a mirror for me to see. "Just notice! Isn't it a wonderful improvement!"

I took one glance, and groaned again. Never had I expected such an appalling alteration in my appearance. It was not only that a huge pointed knob, chequered with black and scarlet, rose from the top of my head—though this made me look gro-



tesque as a fiend of Satan. My eyes, enlarged, had begun to bulge out of my head like those of the Uuleppeians! And my skin had taken on a purplish tinge!

"Heaven preserve me if I stay like this!" I sighed.

"Of course you'll stay like this!" Zuwana rejoiced. "The grafting has sent Uuleppeian blood coursing through your veins, and this has mixed with your own blood and improved it with chemical changes, benefiting your skin and eyes. It's a triumph of science, the way you have been made to look human at last. But tell me, Blixblax, what about your sixth sense? Do you feel any sign of it working in your knob?"

"All I feel is a pain like a gimlet boring!" I said, hoping she would go.

"Well, it's too bad. Maybe your nervous system is too rudimentary," she ruminated. "Never mind, Blixblax. You have your knob, and you have me!"

"Which is worse than having the knob," I thought, but kept my reflections to myself.

"I have good news for you too, Blixblax," she rambled on, as if bent on torturing me without limit. "Can't you guess?"

"Can't guess, and don't care!" I muttered.

"Well, it's just this. The High Knobule has consented to our knobulation."

I covered my lips with one hand, to keep back a groan; while she went on, jubilantly, "He fixed the date, too! Wasn't that just darling of him? And he's so busy nowadays! You don't know it because you've been asphyxiated, but he's started another war, and that takes up so much time!"

I felt too sick to ask what the war was about, but she went on to ex-

plain, "You see, old Knobby has to have something to do. He gets bored, having nothing on his mind but running the country. Lots of the people get bored too, and begin to grumble against the government. So he puts them to work fighting, where they won't be able to grumble any more, particularly if they died for their country, as most of them will.

"Of course, he has to find some excuse for a war," she proceeded, after a silence. "But that's easy. This time we're fighting because we're a Cheater Nation, and all the other nations are Cheaters. Our country has not more than three-fifths of the planet. Other countries, like Yoloth and Quix, have the remaining two-fifths. The High Knobule has gotten us all so mad against these greedy Cheater nations that everybody wants to go out and fight them. But, of course, that doesn't concern you, Blixblax. I only wanted to explain why my grandfather postponed our knobulation."

"Postponed our knobulation?" I found the strength to repeat, with a burst of hope.

"Yes, isn't it too bad? I wanted it to take place right away, but he's so busy with the war he'll have to hold off the celebration for three weeks yet."

"Three weeks?" I gasped, hiding my face among the pillows as my newly lighted hope went out. Most fervently I wished that my asphyxiation had been permanent!

## CHAPTER VIII

### ACROSS THE AIR WAVES

**I**N ABOUT a week, I had recovered from most of the effects of the knob operation. And yet, in one sense, I was never to recover.

Beneath the newly added weight, my head drooped constantly; I felt as if I carried a cobblestone by way of a crown; and it was long before the muscles of my neck strengthened so that I could hold myself erect again. Sometimes, with vain efforts, I would clutch at my knob, as if to tear it away; but it had been grafted on so firmly that I could as easily have torn off my right arm.

However, there were sterner matters that bore down upon me. I had not forgotten Marjorie's plan about the radio; and at the first opportunity, accordingly, I approached Zuwana, pleading that she must obtain parts of the apparatus for me as a memento of my own planet.

At first she shocked me by refusing. "No, Blixblix," she said. "What is the use of keeping a reminder of your low origins?"

But I begged and entreated, and swore I could never be happy without the radio. And finally she said, scornfully, "You come from a childish planet, Blixblix! Here we consider remembrances and keepsakes and such trifles mere relics of barbarism, for we are ruled by our minds, not our emotions. . . . What toy was it you said you wanted? And where can I find it?"

I described the radio, and added, "I do not know where it is, but when I was in the space-ship I heard Zukoko say it would be put in a museum. You can easily find it for me, Zuwana. Half of it will be enough." And briefly I described the transmitter.

"Very well. But for nobody else would I do anything so silly," grumbled Zuwana, as she greased and polished her knob and prepared to go out and find the radio.

Needless to say, I lived in a state of fluttering suspense until she re-

turned, which was not until much later in the day. When finally she reappeared, it was in company with two servants, who carried a familiar polished brown cabinet. My heart gave a leap—it was the radio receiver!

"This was all we could find in the museum, Blixblix," she reported. "The director said the rest of it was taken away yesterday, and he couldn't say who took it—because he would be strangled if he said anything. That's too bad, isn't it, Blixblix? Now you be careful how you play with that toy; it looks dangerous. I'm going out to have my knob re-decorated, and will be back in a little while!"

Hardly had the door closed behind her when I set out to test the radio. While I was sorry that I could not send messages to Marjorie, I did not have to guess twice to know who had the transmitter. Hence I examined my part of the machine with trembling eagerness; found that the batteries and other apparatus were in good condition; and could hardly wait until I had clapped on the ear-phones and turned the switch.

**I** CANNOT say what I expected to hear; but actually I heard nothing at all. Five minutes, ten minutes, fifteen minutes went by, while I stood there in foolish expectancy, like a listener on a dead telephone line. Finally, I was about to put down the ear-phones, when a faint but familiar voice came to me over the air. A woman's voice, speaking in English!

"Jack! Jack!" I heard my own name uttered, in a hurried staccato. "I don't know whether you're listening or not. All today and yesterday I've been speaking every now and then. They gave me the transmit-



ter by mistake. But maybe that's just as well. First of all, I want you to know where I am." And she mentioned that she was kept captive on the third floor of a building lined with green and orange pillars—a building I remembered having seen several times when I passed it with Zuwanna. "Why, it's no more than a stone's throw from here!" I reflected.

"But you'd never find me, dearest," Marjorie went on, in a low wailing voice. "You wouldn't recognize me. That terrible Xumxolite has made me go through an operation. I've only just recovered. My skin has turned purple, and my eyes are bulging. Worst of all, I've got a knob on my head. It's bigger than an apple, and all golden, except for a long pink crescent. Xumxolite thinks it's beautiful. But I—I think it's simply awful!"

A sob came into her voice, and choked her before she was able to go on. "Xumxolite says now I'm fit to be knobuled to him. He's trying to get the High Knobule to fix the date!"

"Damn that Xumxolite!" I exclaimed, forgetting that Marjorie could not hear me. "I'll wring his neck!"

"Oh, dearest, dearest, I think he's coming now! I can't have him catch me broadcasting!" my wife suddenly broke out, in tones of panic. And though I listened for many minutes longer, not another word came to me across the air.

But during the following days, I took up the ear-phones and listened whenever Zuwanna was absent; and, fortunately, she was away a great deal now, since she was always buying things in anticipation of our knobulation.

Sometimes, although I waited for

hours, not a syllable came to me over the radio; but at other times I heard long monologues from Marjorie, although it was tantalizing to be unable to say anything in return.

Little did I realize how soon this innocent diversion was to bring down on both our heads a new and terrible peril!

Yet I did have a foreboding of danger one day when I chanced to overhear part of a conversation between my mistress and one of her bosom friends, the lady Kanzantru.

"No, they haven't been able to trace the trouble yet," Kanzantru was saying. "Such a thing has never happened before. Everybody's noticing it, too."

"Well, since my own knob doesn't work, I wouldn't have known it," returned Zuwanna. "You say everybody's knob has been out of order?"

"Only at certain times—that's the strange part of it," Kanzantru declared. "Suddenly, without warning, an interference will come up—like conflicting waves. For a while, it's almost impossible to get any knob messages through anywhere in the city. In fact, you might say our whole system of communication has been put out of commission."

"H'm. That's bad. Very bad," meditated Zuwanna. "At least, the reason is clear enough."

"Of course! Spies from Yoloth and Quix! A form of war-time sabotage! However, the Chief Strangulator and his men are now on their trail. By my magnetic heart! I wouldn't like to be wearing their knobs when they're caught!"

Zuwanna and her friend withdrew into an inner room, and I could hear no more of their conversation. But stark terror gripped me. Not for a moment did I doubt the source of the interference with knob communica-

tion. Evidently the knobs operated on the same wave-lengths as our radio!—and the radio, being more powerful, played havoc with the knob messages. Here indeed was an unforeseen result of our innocent little plot! I could well realize Marjorie's peril if she should be discovered sending out the radio messages, and was ready to move heaven and earth to warn her. Yet how warn her? I was still as much a prisoner as ever and had found no way to escape Zuwanna's constant surveillance.

But the time was fast approaching when there was to be an imperative need to act. And it was to be Zuwanna herself who would bring things to a climax.

**I**N THE following day, during Zuwanna's absence to arrange for some matter connected with our knobulation, I was listening intently at the ear-phones, and was hearing how, as a special concession, Xumxolite occasionally let her find relief in the refrigerator from the furnace heat of his apartment. So absorbed was I in her recitation that I did not notice that some one had entered the room. But suddenly I heard a sharp cawing voice, "Blixblax! What are you listening to!"

So startled was I that I almost toppled over backwards as I snapped off the ear-phones.

"What were you listening to, Blixblax?" she repeated. And then, without awaiting my reply, she seized the ear-phones and clapped them on to her own ears.

With the feeling of a murderer whose crime has been detected, I stood looking on.

Nor had I long to wait. Not ten seconds had passed before, dashing the ear-phones off, she turned to me

again, her salmon eyes narrowing in a furious blaze.

"So, Blixblax!" she screamed. "So! You have been deceiving me! You were talking to the earth-woman! I recognized her voice, the vile, hideous thing! Nobody else on this planet has such a strange, inhuman voice! Well, we'll see! By my knob! But I'll have her punished for this!"

I stood glaring at Zuwanna in silence for I realized that anything I said might only react against Marjorie. But within me a towering fear for my wife was beginning to rise.

"One word to the High Knobule—one word will be enough!" shrieked Zuwanna. And then, pausing for an instant, while shaking convulsively in her anger, she seemed overcome with a new idea.

"Ah, now there's something else I see!" she almost shouted. "Those messages—those messages from the earth-woman—they've come across the air! Now I know what has interfered with knob communication! Now I know who is the foreign spy!"

"Marjorie is not a spy!" I yelled back, although I knew I would have done better to hold my tongue.

"Oh, so you defend her, do you?" Zuwanna paused, and her eyes shot out devouring red fires. "Well, maybe she's not a spy! But just let me denounce her to the High Knobule, and not all the power of the Chief Strangulator will be able to save her!"

Moving away on a frenzied impulse, she was already at the door. "Why wait?" she shrilled. "Why not tell the High Knobule right away? Spies should not be allowed to live one second longer than necessary!"

And then, while she stood quivering at the open door, she hissed at me the real reason for her anger at Marjorie. "Speak to her in secret



while I'm away, will you? Speak to that knobless she-snake while I'm away?"

With a burst of hilarious laughter, half mocking, half hysterical, Zuwanna was gone; while I, feeling as if the whole world had come thundering down about my shoulders, began pacing the floor, desperately trying to form some plan to stave off Marjorie's threatened doom.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE STRANGULATORS

**W**HEN Zuwanna burst back into the room, I was still pacing the floor in despair, unable to think of any way to escape and help Marjorie.

"Well, it's done! It's done!" my mistress squawked into my ears, with parrot-like screeches. "The High Knobule will send his strangulators to round your friend up the first thing in the morning."

This meant that Marjorie must be saved tonight!

"It's been a terrible strain on me—terrible!" Zuwanna went on, complainingly. "You don't know what you put me through today, Blixblax, all on account of that low earth-woman! The High Knobule was so busy too, looking over some plans for wiping out the people of Yoluth with ant poison; he wouldn't give an audience to anyone else at all. Oh, what a pain I have in my knob! I'll have to go right to bed, and all on account of being so good to you!"

Thereupon she rang some bells, and pulled some switches, and called out at the top of her voice, and half a dozen servants came running, and saw that she was put to bed in a cot raised up near the ceiling for warmth; while an electric oven was

placed at her feet, and another was placed at her head, and blankets were wrapped about her until only her bulging salmon eyes were visible.

Little as I could foresee it, this illness of Zuwanna's was to prove my salvation.

Far from being a quiet patient, she kept calling for this thing and that; for various foods and medicines, and hot bags to put on her chest, and hot plasters for her knob. And servants kept scurrying from room to room, though no matter what they did she yelled that it should have been done otherwise. Finally she screamed that she must have some cool drinks, which were kept in the refrigerator. For want of anything better to do (indeed, I was like a dazed man wandering in a dream) I had strolled into the "food rooms" and watched Xug, Zuwanna's butler, go to the refrigerator for the drinks.

Although I had often seen the refrigerator, I had never been allowed to look at it closely; my mistress had refused to let me enter it to cool off, being afraid the cold might kill me. It was a small room, about ten feet square, where large supplies of concentrated food and other perishables were kept at a temperature of sixty-eight degrees. Now, when Xug unlocked the door, I glanced in and noticed an opening about three feet wide at the opposite end, where a pipe like the ventilation funnels of a steamer shot out.

"What's that?" I inquired.

"The cold air spout," stated Xug, as he began to mix the drinks.

"Where do they lead to?"

"Down to the street, of course."

Xug peered at me as one might at a child, out of pity for its ignorance, and went on to explain, "A constant supply of air is needed to keep the refrigerator cold. This is let in from

outside, and electrically cooled before being piped to the refrigerators in the different apartments."

"Oh, I see," said I. For, indeed, a great light was breaking over me!

**I** KEPT Xug occupied with conversation, while asking various foolish questions; and so long did this delay him that finally Zuwanna's shrill cry broke out from her sick-room, "Xug! Xug! Are you never coming? Will you bring me those drinks at once, or shall I get them myself and have you strangulated?"

"Right away, noble-knobbed lady! Right away!" yelled Xug; and he almost tripped over his own feet as, laden with a tray and several decanters, he went puffing out of the room.

This gave me my opportunity, since, in his haste, he had forgotten to lock the refrigerator door!

Without a second's delay, I opened it and slipped inside. A faint yellow illumination, glowing from the walls, provided all the light I needed; while the cool air seemed to blow the hazes from my mind and fill me with new energy.

Three strides brought me to the entrance of the funnel-like tube. "By God, I've got to go down it, even if I break my neck!" I muttered. And, steadying myself, I slipped into the tube, which, I was relieved to find, did not shoot straight down, but slanted at an angle of about forty-five degrees.

Never shall I forget that toboggan through the darkness. I could not check myself; I slid down fifteen or twenty feet; then, bruising my hands and shins, came to an abrupt stop at a narrow platform, which I could feel with my fingers although I could not see it. From this point, the tube sloped down in the opposite direction, also at an angle of forty-five degrees;

and, there being nothing else to do, I again trusted myself to the darkness, and again came down upon a platform many feet below, at the cost of new bruises.

Four times I repeated the process before at last, feeling half dead, I picked myself up in a small rectangular chamber and saw a faint line of light shining in through a chink just above me. Without thinking what I did, I reached up, and my hands struck a wire which sent a stunning electrical shock through me. "Lord! I'll be lucky if I'm not electrocuted!" I groaned.

But, not having any choice, I reached up again, although more cautiously, and felt a round lid with a projecting handle.

By pushing and shoving, I managed to lift this lid, and a most welcome sight greeted my eyes—a tall building, with polished black windowless walls! I was coming out upon the street! By the gray light that pervaded all things, not a knob-head was visible; and I knew that it was the evening twilight, when it became too cold for the natives to be abroad!

To tell the truth, I sweltered, for the temperature was above ninety. But I had other things in mind than comfort. Crouching low against the walls, lest some belated passerby should spy me, I began stealing away toward the building with the green and orange pillars, which I knew to be only a few hundred yards off.

Fortunately, I found it long before the twilight had deepened into night. And, by the time I reached it, I had concocted a scheme.

But though hope was rising within me, I trembled at every step I took. What if Zuwanna had already discovered my absence and were sending her servants after me? Every shadow sent a dart of fear through me; each



moment, I expected to hear the pattering of feet behind me, and to feel myself caught in a grip of iron beneath the magnetic hearts of my pursuers.

But I reached the building of the green and orange columns safely enough; and, straining my eyes in the heavy dusk, began to circle around it, in the hope of finding the refrigerator entrance.

It was in an inconspicuous spot in the rear, behind a thickly wired fence, that I saw a round iron lid, like the cover of a manhole. This I lifted without difficulty; and the cool air that blew over me proved that it was indeed the mouth of the refrigerator.

Beneath the lid was a square cavity a score of feet across, from which tubes shot up in many directions. For several seconds I stood hesitating before them, and then noticed, in front of each tube, a faintly illuminated patch of metal, on which a word or two was written.

**H**AVING pulled the lid down over my head, I crept over to the nearest spot of light, and, by straining my eyes, was able to read, "Gulgolar." This meant nothing to me, so I turned to the next and read, "Jumji." On the third, I read, "E-ewak," and on the fourth, "Alav Alav." It was now clear that these were the names of the persons to whose apartments the various refrigerator tubes led; and, accordingly, I began searching with almost breathless interest, until finally, before the last tube of all, I read the name, "Xumxolite."

To climb through the darkness into Xumxolite's refrigerator was now my problem—a problem which I did not know how to master, for every time I started up the slippery incline I

would slide back after mounting a few feet. But was I to lose the battle now that I was on the brink of success? So I asked myself . . . when suddenly I heard a snapping sound from one corner of the square cavity, followed by a whirring, as of a gigantic wheel in rapid rotation. At the same instant, a powerful cold gale struck me from behind.

This, I realized, was the wave of air that automatically blew into the refrigerators to keep them at the proper temperature. It was arranged with a thermostatic regulator, like our own electric ice-boxes, and went on and off at irregular intervals. Doubtless my entry into the cavity, by letting in the outer air had raised the temperature, and caused the cool air to be discharged sooner than it would otherwise have been.

I cannot say that I was quite like an ant caught in a gust; yet I was almost hurled off my feet as the roaring wind hit me at a speed of at least a mile a minute and shot me up the tube.

With this tremendous prod behind me, I was thrust up several twisting reaches of tube, each many feet in length. Crouching and all but falling over myself, I went up and up. My shins, already bruised, were knocked cruelly against the iron walls; I had to struggle to save myself from being banged headlong against the metal. It was more by instinct than by reason that, just before the gale ceased, my hands clutched at a projecting steel rim—which I found to be the top of a funnel like the vent of Zuwanna's refrigerator.

Fortunate for me that I had this to hold to! Otherwise, when the roaring wind died down, I would have fallen back through the darkness. As it happened, however, I was able to scramble through the funnel, into a

dimly lighted compartment—a refrigerator that seemed the exact duplicate of Zuwanna's.

From beyond the closed door, as I emerged from the funnel, I heard a loud banging and pounding, which did me a good turn by drowning out the noise I made, although it did not help to compose my shaken nerves.

After a minute, this racket ended, and I was startled to hear another sound. Just outside the refrigerator, a woman was sobbing! Trembling, I crept close to the door, and strained against it as I listened. The voice was that of Marjorie!

But above her voice there arose a man's tones, screeching in a way to remind me of an angry sea gull. "There! There! Now I've smashed it! I should have known better in the first place than to let you have it! Wanted a keepsake from your own world, did you?—and then start sending out secret messages when I'm away, and bringing down all this trouble on us both! By my knob! that machine must be the invention of some demon!"

"Oh, Xumxolite, you're so cruel!" came the wailing voice of my wife. And I, clenching my fists, felt an impulse to dash out and throttle her tormentor.

"Cruel, am I?" shrieked Xumxolite. "That's all the thanks I get! I'd like to know what man but myself would take a low-born woman from one of the under-planets and want to knobule her. If you keep on talking like this, I won't make any effort to save you—no, may I lose my knob if I save you! I'll leave you to be strangulated in the morning!"

"Oh, Xumxolite, Xumxolite, what can I do? What can I do?" came Marjorie's imploring cry. "I'm not a spy—really I'm not! What made the High Knobule think I am? I

didn't even know you had a war!"

"Ignorance is no excuse!" shrilled Xumxolite. "The facts are plain enough! Someone in high position has denounced you, because you upset our knob communications with that infernal machine of yours. That's why the High Knobule sent me that message—to take you in the morning, and strangulate you till you're dead!"

A groan from Marjorie was the only reply.

"You don't know what it is to be strangulated, do you?" Xumxolite went on, ruthlessly. "Well, as Chief Strangulator, it's my duty to tell you."

"I—I—it means being strangled, doesn't it?" faltered Marjorie; while I, writhing, would have dashed out and seized Xumxolite, if the refrigerator door had not been locked.

"Strangled?" threw back the tormentor. "Why, being strangled is like going to a party beside being strangulated. I tell you—and it's my business to know—strangulation is worse than being burned alive. It's worse than having your insides cut out with red-hot wires. It's worse than being drawn and quartered a hundred times over. Why, we have electric instruments that play on every nerve of the body, one after the other, and get the maximum pain out of each before the patient dies hours later."

"Oh, my God!" moaned Marjorie, in English.

**M**Y FISTS, pressed against the steel door until the blood came, were ready to pound at the unfeeling metal.

"There is only one way to save yourself," Xumxolite raged on. "Elope with me tonight! Be secretly knobuled! Stay in hiding a few



weeks! By my magnetic heart!—the High Knobule can never remember very long just who he's ordered to be strangulated. So he'll forget all about you. Besides, as the fifteenth mate of the Chief Strangulator—"

"Oh, but—but—how could I ever do it?" wailed Marjorie.

"By my knob, if you're not unreasonable!" fumed Xumxolite, in tones of exasperation. "I see that women are pretty much the same on every planet. As if it isn't much more pleasant to be knobuled than to be strangulated!"

"But I can't! Oh, I can't! Haven't I told you—I'm married—knobuled—already?"

Terrible was the anger in Xumxolite's voice as he howled, "Oh, so that's what's in your mind? You won't have me just because you're knobuled to him—that ridiculous walking pole!—that long-faced knobless dog!—that spider!—that worm!—that madman! I never liked him from the moment I first set eyes on him, the low small-eyed earth-rat! Now just let me get my hands on him! I'll strangulate the viper!"

Hearing myself referred to in these far-from-complimentary terms, I could no longer restrain my rage. My fists clenched more tightly than ever; a wrathful growl issued, unbidden, from my throat.

Instantly a change came over the two persons just outside the refrigerator. A second's tense silence showed that they had heard me.

"What was that?" Xumxolite asked, sharply.

"I—I don't know," stammered Marjorie, in a way to make me wonder if she really did know.

Feeling it would be wise to crawl even deeper into the refrigerator, I started away, as cautiously as I knew how. But my foot caught in a crevice

in the floor, which gave out a peculiar squeak.

"There it goes again!" cried Xumxolite, evidently frightened. "By the High Knobule's crown! I didn't think that fiend would come back so soon!"

"What fiend?" demanded Marjorie.

Xumxolite gave a short, nervous laugh.

"A spy I strangulated this morning. He swore he would come back to haunt me! What else than a ghost could be alive in a refrigerator? Not that I ever did believe in ghosts and such things!" wailed the Chief Strangulator, in tones of increasing terror, as I purposely gave out a deep, sepulchral moan. "Only, I'm not in favor of taking chances."

"I've just remembered an appointment at the office, dear knob!" he flung out, hurriedly. "Don't forget, we're to be knobuled this very night! If not, I'll have to strangulate you with my own hands in the morning."

A clattering of footsteps made welcome music in my ears, followed by the slamming of a door. At the same time, Marjorie's voice broke out once more in heartbroken sobs.

"Darling! Quick! Let me out! Let me out!" I shouted, and began hammering against the refrigerator door.

It was but a moment before I heard the rattling of the lock and we stood clasped in one another's arms.

I scarcely had time to notice the change that had come over her: the great pink and golden knob on her head, the purplish skin, the bulging eyes. It was enough to feel her weeping, convulsed form pressed close against mine.

But now was no time for love-making. "Quick, Marjorie! Come!" I urged, almost as I embraced her. And I led her into the refrigerator, closed the door behind us, filled our pockets with compressed food from

the cooler, and began the perilous descent with her through the funnel and down the slanting dark tubes.

## CHAPTER X

### PITFALLS

**S**LIPPING and sliding, colliding with one another in the darkness, banging our heads and hands against the walls, Marjorie and I made our way through the refrigerator tubes. Upon reaching the square cavity at the bottom, I hardly waited to regain my breath before lifting the manhole-like lid. Finding that all was dark outside, I whispered, "Road's clear," and, with some difficulty, helped my wife to the pavement above.

Had it not been for the susceptibility of the natives to any slight "chill" and their consequent avoidance of the night air, our escape would have been impossible. But, fortunately, the streets were deserted. Like thieves fleeing from justice, we kept close to the walls of the buildings, crouching low so as not to be seen by any late passer-by. After creeping forward for about an hour, and halting with fluttering hearts at every shadow, we came to the borders of the city without having heard the dread patter of pursuing footsteps.

The country, stretching before us flat and bare, was without a road; for the Uuleppeians did all their interurban traveling by air.

"We've got to chance it," I whispered. "Better go as far as we can at night, and hide by day. But where under thunder are we going?"

"It's all right, dear, so long as you're with me," I heard a confident low voice at my side; and, thus encouraged, started across the vacant fields, guided only by the lights of

strange constellations, and by two small moons which, orange-golden of hue, dipped their slender crescents far down in the west.

For hours we trudged across plains bare of all vegetation, mere dusty deserts in which it was difficult to breathe. Here and there we saw towns and factories, dark black masses against the stars, but we gave them as wide a berth as possible.

Toward morning we found shelter in an abandoned shed; breakfasted on compressed food tablets; quenched our thirst from the water spilled by a passing shower, and lay down to pass the ten or eleven hours until dark (the Uuleppeian day is but nineteen and a half hours long).

As yet we had not seen nor heard any pursuers; but neither of us, as we lay huddled together in the dim cobwebbed shed, could believe that Zuwana and Xumxolite would let us escape so easily.

It was toward dusk, which we were awaiting in order to resume our travels, that Marjorie reached into an inner pocket and offered me my first taste of solid comfort since reaching the planet.

"Look!" she murmured, drawing forth a small familiar-looking box. "Have a smoke!"

"Where did you get it?" I demanded, taking up the box, which contained six or eight desiccated cigarettes. "I thought they were all gone!"

"It was my secret," she smiled. "I put them aside on the space-ship—just for emergencies. Better use them very sparingly."

"Well, one each will help brace up our nerves," I said. And we lighted the cigarettes with one of our few remaining matches, while I jammed the remainder into my pocket, and,



for the first time in weeks, began to feel slightly cheerful again.

I SHALL pass over the next few days. . . . By night we plodded across the flat, dull plains; and during the hours of sunlight we hid in ruined shanties, stone-piles and ditches. It was the better part of a week before, to our relief, the nature of the country began to change, and the prairies gave place to the mountains we had seen from the space-car. These, which rose to a majestic height, were known as "deserts" by the natives, for the reason that they were covered with forests, consisting of trees like the giant sugar pines and the redwoods of California. No knob-heads, we had been told, could live there because of the cold.

In all respects but one, these highlands were all we could desire. After climbing to a thousand or fifteen hundred feet, we had escaped the deadly heat of the plains amid magnificent surroundings; and the temperature, which never rose above eighty nor descended much below seventy, was ideal according to our way of thinking. Though we lived here the rest of our lives, we would never encounter any knob-heads!

Our water we obtained from the springs and streams; and our shelter was ready-made for us in the hollow of a gigantic tree. Had it not been for one need, we would have lived out our days in the forest, without fear of Xumxolite, Zuwanna, or the High Knobule. But by the time we had reached our haven, our supplies of compressed food were nearly exhausted, and our efforts to find sustenance resulted only in the discovery of a few small bitter nuts.

Consequently, only one plan presented itself. I must steal down to the plain at night, locate some settle-

ment of knob-heads, and steal enough food to keep us alive. True, this was a perilous project, and one I would rather not have resorted to. But necessity knows no compunctions!

At first Marjorie insisted on accompanying me on my nocturnal expeditions, asserting that she would not let me take the risk alone. But I pointed out that two persons would be in greater danger of detection than one; and so, after much debating, she reluctantly conceded the point.

Late one afternoon I set out toward a hamlet I had observed from a tree-top. By dusk I had reached the forest edge half a mile from this small settlement; and trembling a good deal (for it would be no small matter to be caught by the magnetic hearts of the Uuleppeians!), I approached the village, which loomed grim and lightless before me, with half a dozen black buildings rising twenty-five or thirty feet.

But all was silent; not a soul was abroad in the cool night-air. Reaching the nearest building, I tiptoed about it several times, but could find no way to enter, until finally it occurred to me to look for the refrigerator vent which, after some difficulty, I managed to find. For a moment, I hesitated, with the vague sense that I was about to thrust myself into a trap; but, since there seemed to be no choice, I launched myself into the darkness beneath a round three-foot lid and discovered that the tube led up at a very moderate incline, which I could easily scale.

It seemed no time at all before I was in the refrigerator, by whose dim light I gathered supplies of compressed food until my pockets bulged. Then, still moving stealthily though bursting with inner satisfaction to

think how easy the deed had been, I started toward the tube, supposing that in another moment I would be safely back in the open.

Already I could almost hear Marjorie's little cry of joy as I showed her the food . . . when all of a sudden the most unearthly screech dinned upon my ears. Shrill, piercing, powerful, like the scream of a terrified bird, it sent a stab of alarm shooting through me, while, realizing my peril, I dashed toward the tube entrance.

Even as I did so, there came a crashing as of iron chains. A steel partition banged down in front of me; and as I wheeled about in consternation, I realized that somehow, unknowingly, I had touched off a burglar alarm, and was a prisoner in the refrigerator!

No sooner had this knowledge come to me than the walls about me burst into a blaze of lights. I heard excited voices muttering from outside; then a little partition in the door, no bigger than my fist, was thrown open, and I saw two malevolent salmon eyes staring in.

"By my knob," the observer exclaimed to some persons whom I could not see, "there he is! The beast of an earthian! May I be frozen stiff if there won't be a reward for this when Zuwanna hears!"

Several other purple faces were thrust curiously against the opening. "Where's the female earthian? The one the High Knobule wants to strangulate?" somebody gibed.

I said nothing, but tried to choke down my horror and dismay. Meanwhile one of my tormentors went on to deride, "Oh, so you thought you could get the best of of us, earthman? As if our knob communication didn't tell everyone that you had escaped! As if we weren't warned to

be on the lookout, and put alarms in our refrigerators, which you had a habit of burglarizing! No, O earthman, no lower being can get the best of a Uuleppeian!"

"We will keep him in the refrigerator!" took up another voice. "He likes it nice and cold. That will be the best place for him till Zuwanna gets here."

"Well, it won't be long! She'll fly over the first thing in the morning," added a third speaker; while I, tortured by visions of the inflamed and twisted eyes of my former mistress, felt suddenly so sick and weary that I had hardly the strength to consider how to meet this dread new emergency.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE HIGH KNOBULE

**D**REARILY the hours passed, while I paced back and forth like a caged bear in my refrigerator prison. Worse than anything that had ever happened to me, I dreaded the arrival of Zuwanna, whose spiteful tantrums I could already visualize. But worse than the arrival of Zuwanna I feared what would happen to Marjorie, alone and uncared for on the mountainside, while she vainly awaited my return. Why had I not been contented to starve there in her company?

In my refrigerator jail, there was no way of telling night from day. But the time seemed long enough for several days before at last a commotion arose outside, and I heard a sharp, all-too-familiar voice screeching, "Where is he? Just tell me where! Oh, you don't know what torments I've been through for that wicked creature!"

"Right this way, noble-knobbed lady!" someone answered, deferen-



tially. And, the next instant, the door was flung open, and I found myself face to face with my former mistress.

I could see that she was all "made up"; her face streaked with purple paint, to make it look twice as flat as usual; her knob newly greased and polished.

By way of greeting, she stared at me long and reproachfully; while I, dreading the coming storm, cowered far back in the refrigerator, and had nothing to say.

"Come here, you ungrateful beast!" she snapped; and, by means of her magnetic heart, drew me out of the refrigerator.

Feeling somewhat like a cat or dog dragged out by the scruff of its neck, I glared up at her apprehensively.

"Why don't you say something?" she demanded. "Is this the greeting to give me after all I've done for you? Oh, Blixblax, you don't know what I've been through! Why did you ever do it? Why did you do it?"

Still I said nothing.

"Well, I've learned never to expect gratitude in this world," she raved on, in a hoarse, cawing voice. "I think I deserved better than to be deserted, after doing more than your own mother could have done—getting you a new knob, and everything. Still, Blixblax, I really don't blame you. No, it's that imp of an earth-woman—she got you in her power. You couldn't help yourself. She's the one that turned against me!"

"Now, Zuwanna, don't be unreasonable—" I started to protest.

"Unreasonable?" she screeched, with an angry sparkle in her eyes. "Unreasonable? Just because I don't want to see you swallowed alive by that designing fox? You're under my protection, Blixblax; it's my purpose to save you from scheming females. That's why I've come here. I've natu-

rally got a kind and forgiving knob, so I'm willing to take you back and forget everything—yes, I'm willing to take you back, on one little condition."

"What's that?" I asked.

Her salmon eyes twisted; seemed to bulge out of her head even further than usual; and sent out red flashes as she continued:

"Promise to have nothing more to do with the earth-woman. Swear to me, on your honor as a knob-head, that you will never see her, talk with her, or think of her again! In that case, I will forgive you! More than that! I will even help the earth-woman! I will have the High Knobule revoke his order to strangulate her!"

**F**OR the first time, I was glad that Marjorie was safely up on the mountainside. "Thank heaven!" I exclaimed. "He can't strangulate her! He doesn't even know where she is!"

"Oh, doesn't he?" Her eyes blazed a sultry red with triumph and mockery. "There's where you're mistaken, Blixblax! She came down from the mountain just an hour ago, looking for you; and two special deputies from the High Knobule caught her, the low stinging scorpion! She's outside just now, waiting to be strangulated before evening, unless—"

I groaned, and did not know what to reply. Here was indeed a dilemma! I must either play the traitor to my wife to save her from strangulation; or I must be loyal to her, at the cost of her life!

"But Zuwanna, Zuwanna," I started to expostulate, "you're asking the impossible. It isn't fair, what you want—it isn't decent!"

"What isn't fair? What isn't decent? You dare to talk like that to me?" Croaking in fury, my perse-

cutor went off into such a fit as I had never before seen even from her. She shrieked and squeaked, and zig-zagged about the room on her little shriveled legs; she beat at her knob in frenzy, gnashed her crimson teeth, and rolled her eyes until they were rotating flames of red. The froth came to her lips, and I drew back, frightened, as she went on:

"By my magnetic heart, you're still under that beast woman's power. You prefer her to me! Well, you can have your way! I'm done with you! I'm not going to let you make a fool of me all my life! No, you've made your choice, and can't blame me for what happens! I'll go right before the High Knobule—this very day! I'll take you with me, you and that female earthworm, and recommend a fate worse than strangulation for you both. Then, by my knob! you'll be sorry!"

"For heaven's sake, Zuwanna—" I started to protest.

"Silence! I'll hear no more from you!" she squeaked.

I opened my mouth to reply, but my tongue was bound as if by unseen wires. Once more her magnetic heart was in action! As she wheeled about and invisible forces of iron pulled me after her against my will, I knew that the climax could no longer be delayed; and that the doom which Marjorie and I had struggled to avert lay just around the corner.

A few minutes later, I felt myself being drawn into a torpedo-shaped car, and almost immediately, from the whirring and the vibrations, knew that I was being launched into air.

After another few minutes, there came a sudden jolt, the whirring ceased, the door of my compartment opened, and I was pulled out, to find myself face to face with Marjorie,

who gave me a desolate look but could not speak owing to the magnetic force that held her.

Preceded by Zuwanna and a guard of twelve knob-heads, we started toward a building that looked like some strange sort of power-plant, for it was black as a stove, was surmounted by multitudes of queer tubes and funnels, and was decorated along the front and sides with interweaving pipes and wires, varied by wheels, belts and rotating turbines.

"Behold the palace of the High Knobule, O earthians!" exclaimed one of the guards, as a means of increasing our torment. "You see how well it is protected by machinery. It is so wired that, by merely pressing a button, the High Knobule can electrocute anyone anywhere in the building. Besides, there are electrical ears and eyes to detect any suspicious sound or movement; electrical sentries to seize any suspicious characters; and electrical arms to crush or throttle them."

As we entered the palace, salutes were given by two mechanical sentries, who looked so much like actual knob-heads that I could hardly tell the difference. Mechanical doormen, who appeared as much alive as any of the Uuleppeians, opened the gates and let us into bare stone hallways illuminated by flashes of blue electricity that shot along grooves in the ceiling. We passed a door marked, "National Department of Strangulation. Do Not Enter"; hurried into the "Inspection Chambers," where machines with fingered iron hands went over every inch of our bodies, searching for dangerous weapons; and then heard a blaring voice announce from a megaphone, "This way to the court-room of the High Knobule!"

We advanced to a steel wall, near



whose base a long narrow slit of orange-red light opened. Rapidly it widened and lengthened, until it was large enough for us to slip through, which we immediately did; while, ahead of us, Zuwana and the guards moved with a calmness that we were far from sharing.

For a moment my eyes were blinded by the painful orange-red light, which filled a dome-shaped hall more than a hundred feet across. In the center, perched six feet in air on a throne of blood-red glass, and protected by meshworks of wire that wound about him in a charged ring, was the most powerful man on Uuleppe. Yet as my eyes gradually adapted themselves to the glare and I made out his features, I gaped in surprise and wondered if I were not mistaken as to his identity.

**A**LL that I saw was a very ordinary-looking knob-head, even shorter than the average, with unusually shriveled arms and legs, and with dull salmon eyes that looked out from an exceptionally flat, wrinkled face. His breast, it is true, was decorated with all manner of shining stars and crescents; but these were only made of tin and brass, which, on Uuleppe, are regarded as "noble metals."

As we drew near, we were compelled to crawl on our hands and knees, with our faces to the stone floor. Zuwana alone, being of the Knobule's kin, did not have to make this obeisance.

While we were in this undignified position, I heard the Knobule screeching out some orders, in a thin rasping voice, "Case 84, Strangulation! Case 85, Double Strangulation! Case 86, the same! Cases 87, 88, and 89—by my knob, I can't be bothered with so many in one day." He yawned, and

finished, wearily, "Might as well strangulate them all, and be done with it!"

It was at this point that Zuwana stepped up; stepped even to the ring of high-powered electric wires that no one else dared approach.

"O Grandfather, dear knob!" she exclaimed, smiling coyly up at him. "I have a little favor to ask."

"What Another?" he cackled, yawning again.

"Oh, just a little one. A very little one," she cooed.

"Has it anything to do with those beasts over there?" he squeaked, pointing to Marjorie and me.

"Yes, Grandfather, dear knob," she declared. And Marjorie and I felt ourselves, without our own volition, rising to our feet; while the cold, dull eyes of the High Knobule were fixed upon us, causing our hearts to hammer uncontrollably and our limbs to tremble.

"These are the two earthians, dear knob," Zuwana went on. "Remember, you already ordered the female to be strangulated."

"No, I don't remember," yawned the head of the State. "What with all these executions, how do you expect me to recall every little detail?"

"Of course not, dear knob. But I have some important new evidence here. Both earthians are spies from Quix!"

"What's that? Spies from Quix?" demanded the Knobule, starting up from his seat. "You're sure of it? . . . Then there's only one cure! Have them strangulated!"

"But wouldn't it be better, dear knob, to make an object-lesson of them? Strangulation isn't bad enough. They ought to be needled."

My heart sank as I heard this dread word. I knew that "needle-

ation" was a punishment reserved for especially vile offenders, and was a process whereby electric needles were stuck into them for many days, until they perished.

"Well, by my crown, maybe you're right, considering what horrible-looking brutes they are," ruminated the Knobule. "Besides, they're foreigners, anyway."

"Also it's time you made a good example of someone, to discourage spies," argued Zuwanna.

"I've been thinking the very same thing myself, young lady! It's remarkable, what brilliance there is in that little knob of yours. Of course, you come by it naturally," the Knobule reflected. "Very well! Since you advise it, dear knob, let the two earthians be needled!"

"Thank you, grandfather," sweetly smiled Zuwanna. And her salmon eyes twisted toward me malevolently, as if to say, "There! Now aren't you sorry?"

**T**HE High Knobule meanwhile yawned again, sank back on his pillowed throne, and seemed about to fall asleep.

But from all around me, as I heard those dread words, "Let the two earthians be needled!" there came a rattling and clanking; and the twelve guards, forming themselves about Marjorie and myself, prepared to march us toward a coal-black slit that was opening in the wall to our rear.

It was at this crucial moment when, fumbling in my pocket for something to wipe my overheated brow, my hands came across a little object which was to prove my salvation.

It was the cigarette box Marjorie had given me a few days before, and

was empty except for one match and a single cigarette!

But the mind, at times of crisis, works with extraordinary rapidity. All at once a wild scheme sprang full-born into my head. Without pausing to reflect upon it, I started forward, stopping only at the ring of charged electric wires in front of the High Knobule; while the guards, at the sight of such boldness, were too astonished to attempt to restrain me.

"Your High-Knobbed Astuteness," I exclaimed, using one of the usual terms of salute, "grant me a moment, by the sacred knobs of your fathers! I ask nothing but permission to do you a favor before it is too late."

"What favor can any earthian do for me?" squeaked the Knobule, sitting up wearily, and shaking off his sleep.

Even as he spoke, I had lighted the cigarette with my sole remaining match.

The Knobule's eyes began to show their first sign of interest as I brought the object to my lips and puffed out the smoke.

"By the throne of Zur!" he cried, the hard dull light in his eyes giving place to a gleeful twinkle as he bent down and smacked his lips while inhaling a whiff of the smoke. "You're on fire!"

"Here, Your Luster," I offered, holding the cigarette out to him. "Don't you want to try it? It is what my people call the key to Paradise."

"Most Celestial-Knobbed One, shouldn't I take him away?" asked one of the guards, stepping forward.

"Not yet!" snapped the Knobule, as he inhaled another whiff of the smoke. "By my mother's magnetic heart!—never did such a good smell tickle my nostrils! If this is the



key to Paradise, I have the right to find out about it!"

Smiling with anticipation, he reached down for the cigarette.

"But, dear knob, you mustn't take any chances—" protested Zuwanna, flinging herself toward him anxiously.

The Knobule did not seem to hear her. Eagerly he slipped the cigarette between his lips, and hastily took his first puff. And, at that delicious unexpected taste, an ineffable expression came over his face. He took another puff, and yet another, and with every breath his look of satisfaction became more complete. Deaf to his granddaughter's repeated pleas, he continued smoking until not even the cigarette stub was left.

When it was finished, he looked down at me, beaming. One cigarette had not sufficed to make him completely drunk; he was merely in that stage of pleasant intoxication when all the world looks sweet and rosy. He did reel a little as he stood up on his throne, and tapped out a tune with his toes in a most un-Knobule-like dance. Then, smiling down at me, he demanded, "Give me another! Another smoke-stick, O earthman!"

"I am sorry, Your Radiance," I replied. "I have none left"

The look of pleasure died from his face. His eyes became grim, severe, unhappy. "Then go and get me some more. At once!" he ordered.

"Nothing would please me better, O Great-knobbed One. But there are no others left on this planet."

The Knobule's expression had turned into a glare. His eyes narrowed with such disappointment as I had never seen registered on any face. "By the stars in their courses," he squealed, "this will have to be remedied! The smoke-sticks are truly, as you say, the keys to Para-

dise. Never did I taste such enjoyment. I will get some more, though I send you back to your own planet for them!"

"Willingly, shall I go, O Luminous Knob!"

"But grandfather, grandfather," appealed Zuwanna, desperately. "You forget, you ordered him to be needled."

"I revoke the order!" shrieked the High Knobule.

"But, dear knob—" Zuwanna began again, trying her softest smiling wiles.

"Silence!" screamed the Knobule, whose intoxication had given him new strength of mind. "You've been ordering me around since you were a foot high, young lady. I'm going to assert myself for once! So get out of here quick, or I'll have you needled instead!"

Weeping, Zuwanna turned and withdrew. The last I saw of her she was glaring at me with her wide lips upcurled above her crimson teeth, and a look of bottomless anger and frustration in her twisted eyes.

"How long would it take, earthian, to send a space-ship to your planet for a cargo of smoke-sticks?" inquired the Knobule.

"About seven quiglas, Illustrious Knob," I declared, mentioning a period equivalent to fifteen of our years.

"Pooh! What's that out of the five hundred quiglas of a man's life?" reasoned the Knobule, with a shrug. "I will send you with the space-ship as a pilot, O earth-man."

"The earth-woman too must come," I pleaded. "She is an important personage on my planet, and may be needed to get the smoke-sticks."

"By my knob! We won't miss her here!" decided the Knobule, shrugging again. "But make it as quick

as you can, earth-man. I don't know how I'm going to wait even seven quiglas for those delicious smoke-sticks!"

**A** FEW WEEKS later Marjorie and I, in company with a hundred knob-heads, set sail in a luxuriously equipped space-ship; and, after about seven years, we set eyes once more on the earth. We were headed for the Gold Coast of Africa, where the climate would be warm enough for the Uuleppeians; and my wife and I passed long hours planning how to escape on our arrival. But, just as we approached our planet, something went wrong with the controls of the ship; we wandered far off our course, and crashed among the mountains of Alaska. No one was killed by the actual fall; but as it was mid-winter, and the Arctic cold swept in through a hole at one end of the ship, all the knob-heads swiftly succumbed

to the frigid temperature. After their death, Marjorie and I kept ourselves warm in their fur clothing; and, improvising a radio from the scientific paraphernalia of the space-ship, were able to send out signals for help, which eventually were heard, and resulted in our rescue by airplane.

Thus, after fifteen years, we were restored to our own planet. But we had changed phenomenally. Our bulging eyes, purplish skins and knobbed heads will always offer testimony to our strange adventures; while I, having seen enough of the skies, have lost all my old-time interest in astronomy. Instead, I am devoting myself to the study of man; for, remembering the salmon eyes and shriveled limbs of the Uuleppeians, their furnace homes, their black cities and their strangulations, I value the planet Earth and the good old human race a thousand times more than if I had passed all my days here.

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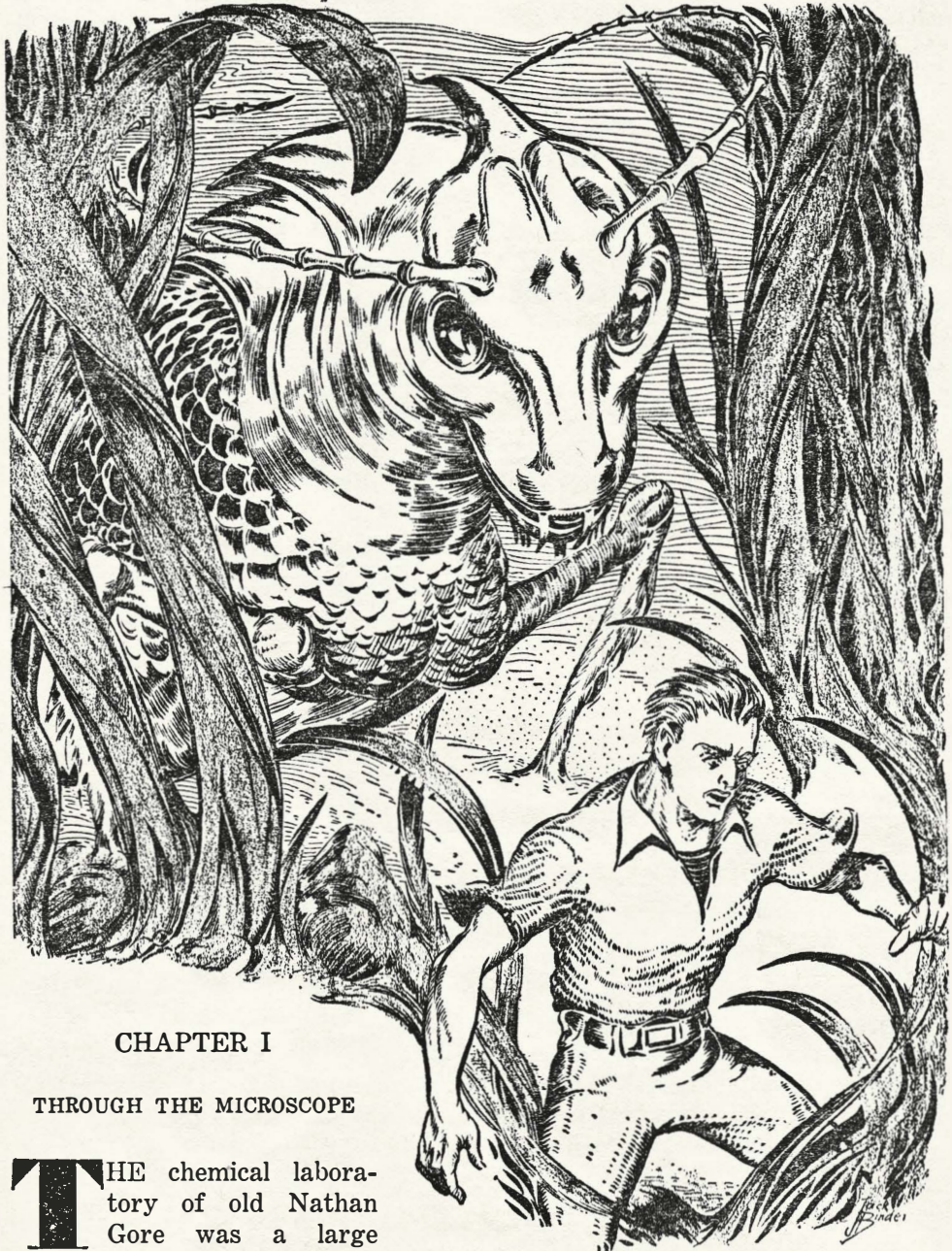
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# The Atom Prince

by RAY CUMMINGS



## CHAPTER I

### THROUGH THE MICROSCOPE

**T**HE chemical laboratory of old Nathan Gore was a large wooden room on the ground floor of his old-fashioned frame home. Its windows looked out over the roll-

*It crouched, as though about to spring upon him!*

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Alan was a fugitive from the penitentiary—the guards were hot on his trail, but through the genius of a scientist, he effects the strangest escape in the annals of crime—for he takes a drug that reduces his size "beyond the vanishing point" and becomes a monster in a submicroscopic kingdom!

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ing hills beyond the village. The hills were snow-clad tonight; now, at nine o'clock, the flakes were falling thickly and all around the house the snow was an unbroken white blanket.

In the big bare laboratory, with its wooden table, its sink of running water in the corner, its wall-shelves littered with bottles and strewn with a variety of chemical apparatus, the old man sat with his granddaughter. The room was dim with shadows; a single small light was on the table—and in a corner, a big microscope stood with a glass slide under its lower lens. The slide was bathed in a small, intense white light focused upon it.

One might have thought at a quick glance that the microscope slide was empty. But in its center, a single tiny grain of sand was carefully placed—a little yellow-white grain of sand from a nearby beach. Infinitesimal speck of rock. One of a billion like it, on that single small beach. But under the eye of the microscope, it was a thing momentous.

The old chemist was saying, "A lifetime of work and thought, Barbara. But I've got it now—the secrets of the worlds of the infinitely small." He gestured toward the microscope. His thin old face was glowing with his emotion—with the thrill of his years of work, his dreams of accomplishment, at their consummation now.

The girl sat stroking a Maltese kitten lying on her lap. She was a small girl—dark-haired; pretty, in a studious, characterful fashion—eighteen now, though she looked somewhat older.

"But grandfather, you never told me—"

"Fantastic." He smiled. "You're a practical little thing, Barbara. You would have said the old man was loose-witted in his old age. But now I can show you—"

"What?" she demanded breathlessly.

Again he gestured to the microscope. "There is no such thing as the smallest particle of matter. You know that, don't you?"

"I've heard you say it."

"And it's true. With more and more powerful lenses, we can peer downward into smallness. But always there is something smaller—just 'beyond the vanishing point.' And that's what I have conquered now—to go into smallness!—not just to try and see there—with a puny microscope, but to go there. A human being, to shrink in size—to become infinitely small—to penetrate the realms of smallness which even the most powerful microscope cannot see—"

The girl was staring with a look of incredulity, save that the old man's manner more than his words carried conviction. He was on his feet now, standing by the table.

"Come here, Barbara; I'll show you. The years of theory have passed. This is an actuality now."

She placed the kitten on the floor and stood beside him. There were two brown vials on the table and two broad leather belts, fashioned with pouches so that they looked something like cartridge belts. Gore uncorked one of the vials. His shriveled old hands were trembling with excitement as he dumped into one



of his palms a hundred or so tiny pink pellets.

"This drug, Barbara, has the power of shrinking every tiny cell of any living organism. A diminishing of size, yet with a uniform rate so that the shape and character of the material substance remains unchanged. You understand me?"

"Well—" she murmured.

**H**E DUMPED the pellets back into the bottle. "A human being," he said, "or your kitten, let us say—taking one of those pellets, would diminish in size—shrink until in a few minutes it would be too small to see with that microscope."

He lifted the other vial from the table. His trembling hands dropped its cork; the silent, awed girl picked it up and handed it back to him.

"Thanks, Barbara—I'm excited—who wouldn't be, at a time such as this?"

He dumped from the vial into his palm another heap of little pellets. These were like the others, save that they were white. He said:

"And this is the opposite drug, Barbara. This enlarges the body cells. With this drug one may come back from infinite smallness."

He replaced the pellets. He showed the girl the two leather belts. "The drugs," he said, "act only when absorbed internally by a living organism. But around that living substance—as it shrinks, or expands according to which drug it has absorbed—around it a magnetic field is created—an aura of influence, let us call it, so that any organic substance, not living, but still organic, which is in close contact, will change size also."

The girl looked puzzled. "I don't think I understand, grandfather."

"I mean," the old man said, "a man wearing a knitted garment—a fabric

of organic substance—will find the garment changing size with him. He wears this leather belt. In these pouches he carries tiny wooden vials—with the drugs in them. The belt and its contents enlarges or diminishes with his body."

"You—you're going to try this experiment?" she murmured.

The trembling old chemist shook his head. He sat down again, gripping his hands now as though to stop them from shaking.

"I'm too old, Barbara, I don't dare try it. But I think—I'm even pretty sure the size-change will bring no great physical shock. To a young man it will be nothing. To me—"

He smiled tremulously. "When you're seventy, child—things are different with you. Look at me—I'm all unstrung, just telling you about this—"

She said slowly, "You mean—you want me to try it?"

The color had left her face. Fear was there—fear of the unknown, which even the bravest of men may not face without quailing. The old man's gaze searched her—and saw it.

"No," he said. "Not you. I'll get some professional adventurer, someone I can trust though—because this thing, for a time at least, must be kept a secret. It has many diabolic possibilities for evil—"

His voice trailed away. His gaze, with a wistful look, seemed staring far beyond the walls of the shadowed room.

"I'll—I'll try it, grandfather," she said.

"No—I won't let you. I was just thinking—if only your brother Alan were here; a good lad, Alan—there's good in him, Barbara. You and I know it."

"Yes," she murmured.

Her brother Alan! He was twenty-

two years old now—strong, handsome—a man who could have made his mark in the world. She—and Alan—and their grandfather—a little trio, with all their relatives gone. How happy they could have been—if things had been different with Alan. But Alan was in the penitentiary, a convicted felon—ten of the best years of his life, to be lived now behind gray prison walls.

Barbara and her grandfather stared at each other. They were both thinking the same things, so they stared in wistful silence. Alan Gore—a sort of living example of what might have been—

The old man said again with sturdy defensiveness, "He's a good lad, Barbara. Bad companions—bad influence. I often think, if he'd had his father and mother, instead of just an old man like me to bring him up—"

Bad companions. Alan had been an outside "lookout" man, when those companions entered the supposedly unoccupied furrier's to steal the furs. Alan had heard the shots—and the furrier was killed. Accessory to a murder. There had been no thought of murder in Alan's mind—no thought of any consequence—just reckless, heedless, thoughtless youth gone temporarily astray. And now Alan was a self-confessed, guilty felon—jailed for ten years.

The old chemist's eyes were moist as he thought of it, and Barbara impulsively sat on the side of his chair and put her arm around him.

"You mustn't blame yourself, grandfather. That's nonsense."

He said wistfully, "I was just thinking of the worlds he could have conquered now, with my discovery of these drugs—a man to carry on my work. I'm too old, Barbara. Those drugs—the compounding of them—

that represents me—my life. I can't do any more."

She bent and kissed him, but he pushed her away. "In ten years—when he gets out—I'll be dead; and I wanted him to be a hero—not—not a jailbird. You don't realize how I was pinning my dreams on him—"

What might have been! With the sleeve of his faded black alpaca jacket, he brushed his eyes.

Barbara said hastily, "But how do you know these drugs will work?"

He brightened. "I've sent—insects for instance—into the realms of smallness. I'll show you."

From a shelf at the side of the room he brought a small cage of wire-mesh.

"Insects," he said. "I'll show you, with a grasshopper."

**H**E BROUGHT the little green-brown insect out and held it by the microscope. "Give me one of the pink pellets, Barbara. This fellow's frightened—but he'll take some in a moment."

The old man put on his spectacles. He dissolved a fragment of the pellet in a drop of water. He and the girl bent over the glass side of the microscope until presently the grasshopper was induced to taste the drugged liquid.

"There—now I can let him loose. I don't think he'll jump away—the drug will confuse him."

Old Gore was breathless with excitement. This amazing miracle of chemistry! On the glass slide of the microscope, bathed in the white light, the grasshopper crouched quiescent. Small insect; but so infinitely larger than that tiny nearby grain of sand!

"He's shrinking!" Barbara gasped. "Smaller—already—"

Dwindling green-brown bug. Soon it was half its normal size—then



still smaller—diminishing, slowly like the movement of a clock hand, hardly to be apparent. But it was an accelerated movement. Tiny grasshopper, as small as a fly now. Then still smaller. . . .

“Still visible, Barbara?”

“Yes! Yes—I can see him.”

“Here—take this toothpick—move him over to the grain of sand. Shove him against it.”

Tiny green-brown speck, barely visible as she gingerly moved it with the point of the toothpick until it was against the grain of sand. Then suddenly she realized that she could not see it. “Gone—”

“Use the microscope,” the old man murmured. “Watch it—till it goes—”

She peered through the lens with practiced eyes. Miracle of magnification! As seen through the powerful microscope, the glass slide was a great gleaming rough spread of surface. The tiny grain of sand seemed a big lump of pitted, eroded, yellow-brown rock. The huge grasshopper was pawing at it, trying now to climb onto it. Then it leaped suddenly and clung to a projection of the rock. Soon it was so tiny that it was walking there. Even through the microscope now, Barbara could barely see it. A rock-rift hid it for a moment. Then it reappeared—a speck barely to be seen.

And then, in a tiny rock gully, it dwindled and was gone.

Barbara straightened from the eye-pieces. Old Gore spoke triumphantly:

“You saw it go! But you only saw the very start of its journey. It will go on and on—dwindling into the infinitude of smallness—”

He stopped; stiffened. Barbara gasped, “What’s that?”

A rap on the window pane. Sharp. Insistent. It came again; and suddenly, from outside, the unlocked

window sash of the lower room was flung up. Whirling snowflakes came in upon a rush of wind; framed in the dark rectangle there was the head and shoulders of a young man.

Old Gore found his voice. “Alan—Alan, lad—”

It was Alan—bareheaded; an old overcoat covering his striped convict’s uniform. His face was pallid, tense, and wet from the snow. He was climbing in the window now; he tumbled over its sill to the floor in a heap. Then he straightened, flung down the sash, locked it, and drew down the blind.

“Alan, dear—” Barbara had run to him; flung her arms around him. “Alan—”

He kissed her tenderly but hastily, then pushed her away. He said tensely, “Babs — grandfather — they — they’re after me — I escaped — ”

“Alan—” The old man stood trembling. And suddenly he and Barbara saw the blood on Alan’s shoulder—blood under the overcoat, matting the black and white stripes with a crimson stain.

“You’re hurt!” Barbara gasped. “Oh, Alan—”

“It’s nothing. They shot at me—” He flung off the overcoat. “I got away—three of us—we found an old automobile—this overcoat was in it. You’ve got to hide me—they’ll come here—they were pretty close after us—”

Old Gore murmured, “Hide you? Yes—yes, they’ll come here, of course—”

“You hide me! I guess maybe I should have stayed with the other fellows—but I wanted to get to you—”

Hide him! But where? The guards would surround the house, of course. And search it—

A thump sounded in the room. It

made all three of them stiffen. The penitentiary guards—already here?

But it wasn't that—a thump over in the shadowed room corner. And then, in the stricken silence, came the sound of a queer labored rhythmic breathing.

Alan muttered, "Good God—what's that?"

They all saw it now—a thing crouching in the dimness of the bare laboratory floor. A gray-blue and white thing.

It was Barbara's maltese kitten. But it was a monstrous cat now, four times its normal size. It stood with back arched, glaring confusedly around the room. Then it spat, and backed further into the corner.

Old Gore gasped, "Why—why, look at it—enlarging—"

They stared, transfixed. Damn-able growth. Already the kitten was like a little gray tiger and every instant it was growing larger!

## CHAPTER II

### THE FIGHT WITH THE KITTEN

**T**HERE was a moment when Alan, Barbara and old Gore stood stricken with shocked terror.

"Why—why what's the matter with it?" Alan murmured. "How can—"

"My drug!" the old man gasped. "I have a drug here—it causes rapid growth—I was just showing it to Barbara. I must have dropped one of the pellets!"

"Look out! Keep away." Alan shoved the girl and the old man behind him. He was still confused—shocked so that his startled mind hardly encompassed the old man's words or believed this incredible

thing he was seeing. "That damned brute—good Lord, look at it."

Giant feline now. Its arched back, over there in the corner, was higher than Alan's knees. The laboratory light gleamed on its glaring eyes as they roved the room, desperate to combat the strange sensations it was undergoing.

Then old Gore gasped, "Alan—good Lord you—you've got to kill it."

Kill it! Already the delay could be fatal. Alan heard his grandfather's terrified words:

"Kill it, Alan. This ghastly growth! Don't you realize—no limit to it. Nothing to stop it—but death. Kill it—why, if we let it get big enough, it can devastate the world!"

This ghastly growth. Already the damnable thing was as big as a fair-sized dog!—and growing larger every instant. Soon it would fill the room, burst the room outward with its bulk. A monstrous feline as big as the house! Still growing! Why, it would soon be as big as a mountain—a titanic, snarling thing roaming and devastating the world.

It was snarling now. It suddenly spat again, and leaped with padded thumps along the wall edge until it came to another corner where it stood with arched back and bristling fur.

"Kill it, Alan!"

Only a few seconds had passed. Alan found his wits. He shouted, "Keep back. I'll try—"

In his panic of confusion, old Gore had seized a heavy Bunsen burner from the table. He snatched off its rubber gas connection and flung the heavy metal base at the giant kitten. Damnable error. The burner struck the kitten's shoulder, bounced harmlessly away—but it angered the animal. Its huge back arched higher.



Its great tail lashed its sides as it tensed to spring.

Ghastly size-change! Within it now was the consciousness of its own power. These dwindling humans were enemies, and all the gentleness of its normal nature was gone. Like a tigress of the jungle, it stood lashing its sides, its low panting breath a snarl in its distended throat.

Alan gasped again, "You keep back. I'll try—"

He was unarmed. Beside him on a chair lay the overcoat he had discarded. He seized it. Slowly he advanced. Diabolic adversary! Certainly the kitten weighed thirty or forty pounds now.

**T**HEN Alan leaped—and the giant cat reared up with its head higher than his waist. He heard Barbara scream. And then he was gripping the damnable thing, thrusting the overcoat against its snarling fangs.

A chaos of horror. Alan found himself sprawling, with the writhing, snarling feline under him! His hands found and gripped its throat. Its claws ripped at his clothing. He felt them tearing at his flesh.

Then, with amazing strength, the animal tore itself away, and as Alan staggered erect, panting, bleeding, it bounded across the room, knocking over a chair, leaping to the table which overturned.

And again, in another corner, it stood lashing its sides with its tail. This ghastly growth! Alan went cold as he saw how much bigger it was now, even larger than but a moment ago. He'd have to kill it quickly. Another minute would be too late.

"Alan! Alan—" old Gore panted. "Kill it now—Alan— You've got to kill it now—"

"Yes—I know."

He spread the overcoat, flung himself forward and down. The garment barely covered the giant cat's head and shoulders as he enveloped it in the coat, pressing down, trying to smother and hold its writhing, clawing body.

"Got it!" he panted. "Babs—quick! Something heavy! Give me—"

In a moment he felt her thrust a weapon into his hand—a huge, heavy iron retort. He swung it, tried to strike at the animal's head within the coat. It writhed; heaved. But he pounded the head. Would the damnable thing never die? Then suddenly it was loose; scrambling, scratching, snarling, it heaved out of the enveloping coat.

Monstrous gray cat!—almost as big as Barbara now! Alan was crouching on one knee. He saw the huge feline face and claws come at him. With a last desperate effort he swung the heavy retort. It crashed on the cat's head. Grewsome crack! Then the great sleek gray body fell sidewise, lay writhing in its death agony. Alan was upon it, pounding with the retort, smashing the giant head until, in a moment, the writhing body was only quivering. And then it lay motionless.

"Oh—Alan—Alan—" The terrified Barbara flung herself down beside him. "You're bleeding, Alan—you're—"

"It's all right, Babs. Got the damned thing." He staggered erect, and his pallid old grandfather gripped him.

"Alan—thank God you killed it! That diabolic growth—it could have wrecked the world—"

The growth was stopped now. At their feet the huge hundred-pound cat lay grewsome with its mangled head. Alan panted:

"But how did it happen? What damnable—"

Abruptly there came a new terror—a sound close outside the laboratory, a pounding. For a stricken instant, the panting, ragged, bleeding Alan stared at the old man and the girl. The pounding continued, echoing through the silent house. No need to guess what it was! Peremptory fists were pounding the locked front door in the lower hall close to the laboratory. And now there was the clatter of the metal knocker and the murmur of men's voices.

Alan muttered, "The guards! Hide me, grandfather."

The grisly giant body of the dead kitten, the wrecked laboratory room—it was all stricken from their minds by this new emergency—the need to hide Alan. . . .

Babs whispered. "Yes—hide you! But where? Grandfather—where—"

Shouting voices were outside the windows now. The house was surrounded.

"They know I'm here! My trail in the snow—"

Hide him? Where? The terrified old chemist's roving gaze suddenly landed upon his big microscope. Miraculously it had not been touched in the fight. Its glass slide still held the tiny single grain of sand, bathed in the white light focused upon it.

Old Gore seized his grandson. "Only one way, Alan." He murmured it swiftly, and Alan instantly was stripping off his garments. The thumping on the door continued. It seemed now that the guards were lunging against it, trying to break it with their shoulders.

"You — Barbara — you burn his clothes in the heater."

Gore flung her the overcoat. "Yes —yes, grandfather—"

She seized the coat, stuffed it into the big old-fashioned heater in the hall. The guards were shouting now.

"Open the door! We know you're in there—"

Barbara rushed back to the laboratory. Alan was arayed in a white knitted suit. The trembling old man was buckling one of the big pouched belts around his waist. At his feet, Alan's clothes lay in a little heap; the black and white striped convict's uniform—the badge of his dishonor—torn ragged and blood-soaked—the white knitted suit he was wearing, already was stained from the scratches bleeding on his arms and legs. The flesh wound of the bullet that had seared his shoulder was bleeding again, too.

Barbara gasped, "Oh Alan—you're so badly hurt—"

"No I'm not! It's all nothing—hurry Babs—"

She seized the garments, ran and stuffed them into the heater.

"Open up here—"

"Hey Pete—give us your gun. We can pound this open. We've got him!"

"I can smash one of the windows—get in—"

"Better not. He might be armed—"

**S**HE could hear them pounding also at the kitchen door now. If only they wouldn't get in for just a few minutes longer—

She rushed back to the laboratory. This amazing size-change! Alan stood in the center of the room—stood with his feet planted wide as though to keep him from staggering. He was diminishing. Already he was no taller than her waist. On his face was a numbed stare of confusion.

Old Gore murmured, "You're all right, Alan?"



"Yes—guess so. Good Lord—it's weird."

Breathless moments, with that pounding and shouting of the guards! Soon Alan was only as tall as Barbara's knees.

Gore was saying softly, "When you're small enough—I'll put you on the microscope slide. You stay by the grain of sand. We'll watch you."

"Yes—all right." He stood so small now—hardly two feet high. In his little hand he clutched a tiny vial of the drug pellets.

"Good-by — grandfather — and — and thanks—"

"Good-by Alan—" Barbara bent over him, but the old man snatched her away.

"Careful—he's so small— You might step—"

His tiny figure was down by their shoe-tops now. Gore added:

"You let the guards in, Barbara. They'll never see him—" He stooped, gathered Alan to the palm of his hand. In the silence, Barbara heard the tiny voice:

"Careful—not too fast!"

The old man raised his hand with the tiny dwindling figure clinging to his thumb. The girl turned and ran into the hall. "Hey, in there—if you don't open up—we'll break in."

She called: "All right, I'm coming."

She flung open the door. Upon a swirl of wind and snow four burly men rushed in, brandishing their weapons.

"Your brother Alan—we know he's here—give him up."

"Alan?" She summoned all her wits. "Alan — he's in jail — not here—"

"Oh he's here all right!" They pushed past her.

She said breathlessly, "Grandfather and I—we—we're alone here—and a terrible thing just happened.

I couldn't let you in—we were killing an animal—"

The open laboratory door attracted them with its light. They rushed in—stood stricken at the sight of the shaking old chemist who was bending over the dead body of the giant cat. As the intruders entered, Gore looked around.

"Who are you?" He was breathless. He added, "I was—experimenting to make this animal grow large. It's a kitten. Something went wrong—it got too big. "We—my granddaughter and I—we had to kill it."

From the doorway, Barbara gazed furtively at the microscope. Yes, he was there—tiny white upright speck, moving along the glass slide toward the grain of sand!

## CHAPTER III

### BEYOND THE VANISHING POINT

**W**HEN Alan had held the tiny pink pellet of the diminishing drug in his hand, he found himself hesitating. Outside, at the front hall door, the penitentiary guards were pounding and shouting.

Gore murmured, "Take it, Alan! It won't harm you—you'll get so small they can't see you. Hurry, lad!"

Alan put the pellet on his tongue. Almost instantly, it dissolved, with a queer, sickening, sweetish taste. His senses reeled, whirled away for an instant with a swoop as though he had fainted. But he kept his feet, and abruptly he steadied.

"You—all right, Alan?" The old man's anxious voice seemed to come from a great void far away; then Alan opened his eyes. His grand-

father was here beside him, plucking at him. "Steady lad."

He gulped, and tried to smile. "Yes—all right. Lord, it's weird!"

He stood, for those first seconds, with his feet planted wide, bracing himself against the unsteadiness of the floor. Everything was unsteady—quivering. Within his head was a faint vibrant humming. It seemed in that instant, spreading to every fiber of his being—a vibration, tiny, infinitely rapid, coursing in his veins; tiny tingling of his flesh, a whirring in his bones. Weird; but in a moment he seemed growing used to it, so that it was unpleasant no longer.

The dim laboratory room swam unsteadily. There came a shifting, blurring of his vision. But that, too, cleared. He gasped.

"I'm—all right. Why—why—"

His head was clear now. The scene was not blurred, but everything was shifting, visibly in slow crawling motion. Expanding! Growing larger. His old grandfather—standing here trembling, peering at him so anxiously—was already nearly as tall as Alan himself. The room walls were widening, shifting back away from him. The ceiling was lifting.

He gasped again, "Lord—it's weird—everything getting so big."

But nothing was changing, save himself. His own body shrinking. Amazing domination of his own ego! Throughout all the weird journey of size-change which now was beginning, Alan never could conceive himself as different from his own normal six-foot stature. Always, he felt himself the same—and it was everything else that changed.

The whole scene before him now was widening—expanding. It was a slow crawling motion—steady, inexorable. And now he could feel it at his feet. The floor on which he stood

was shifting outward. It drew his feet apart, so that in a moment he had to move them together again to keep his balance.

Motion accelerated as the drug took effect. The room was enormous now. The side of the overturned table had shifted to be twenty feet away, and already its tilted edge was higher than his head. Before him, the figure of old Gore had drawn back—a giant figure now, ten feet or more in height.

Then from the distant giant doorway came the towering form of Barbara. Old Gore was saying:

"When you're small enough—I'll put you on the microscope slide." His low-pitched voice came from high over Alan's head. "You stay by the grain of sand."

When he was small enough! Queer way of saying it! He still felt six feet tall—a normal man in a gigantically expanding room.

He murmured, "Yes—all right."

**F**AR AWAY through that enormous rectangle of doorway he could hear the reverberating shouts of the penitentiary guards. Then the giant form of Barbara came at him with a swoop. Amazing figure! Her feet and ankles were here six or eight feet away from him! He gazed unsteadily upward to her face some fifteen or twenty feet in the air. And he heard, from forty or fifty feet away, the low blurred roar of old Gore's voice:

"Careful—he's so small—"

He had called his goodbye. He saw the blur of Barbara retreating into the distance as she went to let in the guards. The scene was expanding still more rapidly now. The floor under him was unrolling, shifting outward so that almost constantly he was forced to move his feet. And it



was growing steadily rougher, lumpy. He could feel its undulations and lumps through the soft leather of the buskins he was wearing.

In a moment, the whole scene was gigantic. The table had drawn away—a hundred feet at least—with its tilted sides looming high into the air. Far above it, the room ceiling was a great blurred spread of surface—how high above him? He tried to guess. Seven or eight hundred feet, at least. The further walls of the room were gone in the distance—but off to one side, high up, there was a blurred radiant spot of white light, the microscope light, focused upon the glass slide.

Where was his grandfather? He could hear distant echoing thumps. He saw a far-away blur of movement. Then a gigantic pink-white shape came from overhead with a swoop and a rush of wind so that he jumped backward in alarm.

It was the chemist's hand—tremendous, corrugated, pink-white thing. It settled to the undulated rough surface of the floor. Titanic hand! Each of its fingers was fifteen or twenty feet long; the palm was a huge, tumbled concave spread.

From far away and high up came the rumble of the old chemist's voice:

"Hurry, Alan! Climb on my hand."

He ran over the shifting floor. The palsy of the old man's hand made it rock precariously. The thickness of it brought the palm surface as high as Alan's waist. He ran, leaped, tumbled upon the pitted, seamed spread. And standing unsteadily, he wrapped his arms around the huge curves of the thumb.

"Careful," he gasped. "Not too fast."

Dizzying upward swoop! Alan was conscious only of a vast rush of wind; a surging lunge with the distant ra-

diance in the sky brightening to a dazzling white glare. For a moment, he was blinded. The rush of movement had stopped. He heard the chemist's far-away roaring voice:

"Climb down, Alan. You—you get on the grain of sand. We'll watch you through the microscope—after the guards have gone. Goodbye, lad."

He called, "Goodbye, grandfather." Would his voice carry that far? He doubted it. The rounded, quivering pillar which was the old man's thumb had expanded so that now his encircling arms could not hold it. His eyes were growing accustomed to the brilliant glare. He took a few unsteady steps on the surface of the giant hand. He came to its edge—a drop of six feet down to a flat glaring white surface—the glass microscope slide! It spread level before him, twenty or thirty feet to the edge of a vast blurred abyss.

"Goodbye, Alan lad."

He slid over the curved edge of the hand, dropped six or eight feet and fell in a tumbled heap on the white surface. When he picked himself up, the hand was gone. There was only a rush of wind.

A new world was here! The sky was too brilliant with white light for him to look upward. All around him, the rough glass surface gleamed dazzling white. The drug was still working. He could feel the surface unfolding under him.

The same steady expansion of this new scene! The abyss which was the nearer edge of the slide already had shifted away to a hundred-foot distance . . . then two hundred. . . .

And then he noticed the grain of sand. It was a hundred feet in the other direction. A lump of yellow rock lying there, a foot or two in height—but it was rapidly enlarging, and shifting further away.

Unsteadily, over the shifting surface, he began walking toward it. Weird new world! Suddenly he envisaged, as though from the viewpoint of someone close, his true situation. This was the little microscope slide. That rock over there—a tiny grain of sand. How big was he now, from Barbara's viewpoint? — an eighth of an inch tall—or less!

Had the penitentiary guards come into the room? He stood staring. It seemed, in that vast blurred abyss, miles away, that he could see gigantic blobs moving. And there was a distant roaring, reverberating rumble—titanic voices? It seemed so.

For all this weird situation into which so suddenly he had been plunged, Alan chuckled. The guards could never find him here! Queer how quickly one could become accustomed to almost anything. His head was wholly steady now. The shifting, crawling movement of expansion of the scene was no longer confusing.

**H**E STILL was clutching in his hand the little vial of the pink diminishing pellets. He thrust it into one of the belt pouches. He wouldn't like any more of it. Heaven forbid! He wondered how long the pellet he had taken would continue to act—some time yet, undoubtedly, because his grandfather had said they would watch him through the microscope.

To Alan now came the first lure of this weird adventure. His jail-break—the pursuing guards—all that seemed suddenly distant, unreal. Here was an adventure! He could explore this realm of smallness now—help his grandfather in this, the old man's life work. What amazing things he would be able to tell the old man and Barbara when he returned! He'd let this dose of the drug wear off—penetrate as far into

smallness as it would take him—then a pellet of the opposite drug, as old Gore had explained, would bring him back. . . .

Abruptly, Alan realized that he had been standing pondering for a moment or two, and that now the scene around him had vastly changed. The glass surface had roughened. The light from overhead was more diffused, less intense, and now the little hollows and indentations of the ground were beginning to hold shadows. To one side—several hundred feet away now—he could still see the brink of the abyss.

Ahead of him, the grain of sand had grown to be a rocky mound several feet high. It had drawn further away, and was shifting steadily backward. Again he started walking toward it. But after a minute he saw that he was no closer! It was retreating as he advanced, and looming always higher. It was as high as his head now—a yellow-brown, jagged rock.

He began running. He found himself now getting nearer the rock. A hundred feet away, it loomed ten or fifteen feet high. Then presently he reached it, stood panting. But again it had shifted, so that he had to run another few paces to bring himself beside it.

Jagged, pitted lump of rock!—a little mound-shaped hill, bulging at its middle, smaller here at its base so that it lay like a great eroded meteorite dropped here on this rough, gleaming white ground. He gazed up. The summit, beyond the center bulge, certainly was fifty feet above him.

An eroded little rift was beside him, a widening rift, so that he squeezed into it, and as it expanded, he found himself on a little rocky ledge. Then he began climbing, with the rocks around him expanding, and



every tiny crevice opening in a moment into a gully.

Impossible climb! He knew now that he could never reach the summit of this expanding rock pile. He came out of a small ravine to a jagged ledge. A hundred feet or more beneath him lay the great roughened spread of surface — the microscope slide! The abyss of its edge was a blur, miles away. Overhead, fantastic as a naked, jagged mountain of the Moon, the tumbled rocks loomed high. He could not see the summit; bulging pinnacles and ledges intervened. But he could guess that this jagged, tumbled mountain-top was now a thousand feet or more above him.

And the scene still was expanding. He moved from his precarious perch on the ledge, and retreated back into an ascending gully. Its rocky walls shifted away and rose higher. Panting, he sat down to rest on a little loose rock. Soon it was a boulder, so that he had to leap down from it to the rock-strewn valley floor.

A valley now! He was in a widening rocky valley; nothing was in sight but expanding walls of rock, its floor strewn with loose stones and boulders—and overhead a gray-white sky softened and turned vaguely blue with distance.

The beginning of a panic stirred within Alan. This damnably expanding landscape! He could so easily get lost in here! He wondered how long the accursed drug would continue to act. Or could he take a pellet of the opposite drug now and counteract it?

He was fumbling in the pouches of the belt for the vial of the enlarging drug. Then a full panic swept him. The pouches were all empty! In the excitement of his departure, the old man had forgotten that the expanding drug was not in the belt!

There was nothing here but the single vial of diminishing drug!

Alan stood numbed, gazing at the expanding rocky scene around him. He was marooned, trapped here in Smallness!

## CHAPTER IV

### THE GIRL OF THE ATOM

**F**OR a moment, the shock of his discovery struck Alan into confusion — but he mastered it. After all, his situation here was preferable to that he had had in the world from which he had fled, a hunted fugitive—or, if caught, twenty years behind gray prison walls. He found himself grinning. He was safe here. No pursuing guards could hound him. . . .

He came out of his reverie to find the scene again enormously expanded. The valley walls had withdrawn almost beyond his vision. The broad reach of the sky overhead was solid blue with distance. The diffused light from the sky was waning, dimming, so that now a soft twilight seemed falling upon the scene.

The pellet of diminishing drug which he had taken still seemed at its full intensity. There was no lessening to the expansion of the rocky landscape. The ground here had been boulder-strewn. The boulders now were giant buttes—fantastic mounds, spires and pinnacles. Vast, naked, tumbled region. Pits, crevices and gullies were opening up. Beside him, a tiny rift of darkness had become a yawning chasm with a rocky slope descending into it like a great ramp.

For all his ironic triumph that he was safe here from the pursuit of the penitentiary guards, Alan realized that his situation in this weird new environment was desperate. He

was without food or water, and certainly there was no evidence of any here.

Trapped in Smallness. . . . Was he doomed to wander here in this desolation until he died from hunger and thirst? But Alan had faced death before this. He was conscious now of a throbbing pain in his wounded shoulder. A few inches to one side, and that guard's bullet would have brought death. Certainly his chances here were no worse than in the world above.

Even if he survived here, he'd never see that Earth-world again. It strangely brought a pang. He began wondering if his grandfather and Barbara would realize that he had none of the expanding drug. Would one of them come down here after him, bringing the drug to rescue him? If they did, how would they ever find him in this vast empty desolation of mountains?

Alan had for a moment been standing by the brink of the descending ramp. Darkness was down there; but now he seemed to see more clearly. A strange new light was suffusing the scene. It seemed a sort of phosphorescence. Apparently, it was inherent to these rocks themselves—a vague, luminous, radiating glow.

**F**AR down the ramp, a thousand feet or more, a distant lower valley was opening up. The darkness down there seemed brighter now—the glow of phosphorescence making it almost like a dim moonlit night on Earth. Was that a green tinge on the valley floor?—something different from these naked brown rocks?

Vegetation! That would mean food. The abyss was expanded further. The smooth rocky ramp had roughened now. It was not an overly steep descent—he could almost run down it.

A mile down to that lower valley? It seemed already that far.

Then he noticed a tiny silvery thread stretching off into the lower luminous darkness. A river? Water—perhaps drinkable?

Upon impulse, Alan tore off a fragment of his white knitted garment, and laid it on the rocks, just over the brink of the ramp. If his grandfather came, following him, this would be a clue to where Alan had gone. . . .

Behind him in the expanding valley there came a sudden sound—a distant scratching, scraping, and a rocky clatter. He swung, terrified.

Horrifying sight! Here on the valley floor, a hundred feet or so away, a gigantic green-brown thing was lying, peering at him. A grasshopper!—familiar enough in shape and aspect, but this one was fully fifty feet long! It had been moving, but now it crouched, peering as though about to spring upon him.

Alan turned, plunged over the brink and ran down the ramp. Behind him, as he looked back over his shoulder, the head of the monstrous insect appeared. Then, as though it had lost interest in the tiny fleeing figure, it moved back and away.

For how long or how far Alan plunged downward, he had no idea. Fifteen or twenty minutes? A mile perhaps? Or more? The light dimmed as he advanced. And suddenly he realized that the scene no longer was expanding. The drug had worn off.

A rocky ceiling was over him now—a thousand feet or so above him, as he plunged down the diagonal rift. The overhead blue of the sky was gone, hidden by the rift ceiling. Then the ceiling abruptly ended, as though he had descended out of a gash into a lower cavern.



But it was more than a cavern. A vast void was here with the darkness of distance overhead—and on down the slope there was a glowing lower surface. The phosphorescence now had intensified—a moonlit night scene. He felt, too, a new quality to the air—a gentle breeze, warm, like a tropical night on Earth.

Then presently he came off the ramp to the level, undulating floor of the lower surface. Another new world was here—a black cloudless sky overhead. Under his feet now, the surface was no longer rocky.

Abruptly, as Alan peered down at his feet, there came a new shock of realization. This was the greenish vegetation he had seen. He was standing in a tiny forest! Leafy trees, green, and somewhat of earthly aspect were thick here as far as he could see. But the tallest of the trees was barely an inch in height. He was standing with his feet crushing, splintering dozens of them!

A tiny toy world!—a landscape all in miniature—a rational world. But he, in his present size, was a titan. A few feet away, with the tiny trees around it, was a little circular shining patch of open space. He stooped. A tiny lake was here. It was only a handful of water as he scooped it up, tasted it. Pure, fresh water. He swallowed it gratefully.

The river which he thought he had seen was no longer visible. Far away in the luminous, phosphorescent darkness, there seemed a line of tiny hills, and tiny terraced mountains behind them.

For a moment, Alan stood pondering. In this little forest at his feet things might be growing, things edible. If he could make himself a rational, normal size to this tiny landscape—

From his belt pouch he drew the

vial of drug. One of the pellets. Should he take it? He contemplated the size-change the other one had given him. Infinitely more than the difference between him and these inch-high trees.

He barely touched his tongue to the pellet. . . . Again his senses reeled. But it was a slight shock and instantly it was passed. Again the scene was expanding. But very slowly, and he was accustomed to it now. He stood waiting. . . .

Five minutes? How could he judge time? He tried to estimate how long it had been since he left his grandfather and Barbara. An hour perhaps. How distant the Earth-world above seemed now! He tried to envisage it. Why, this was all in a tiny grain of sand, lying on the glass slide of his grandfather's microscope! Save for his run down the descending ramp, he had been always near the surface. That blue sky he had seen—that was the vast distance of the laboratory room. The light had been the focused light of the microscope.

How far away was that microscope light from him now? Unanswerable question! Compared to his present size—a hundred thousand miles, perhaps—or infinitely more.

Meaningless figures! Compared to Barbara's size, he was now not the hundredth part of an inch from the surface of the grain of sand! Barbara now, this present instant, could place her fingertip within the hundredth part of an inch from him! And yet, if he tried to get back to her, to him it would be a journey of thousands of miles! . . .

Alan abruptly realized that again his size-change had stopped. Once more, what an amazingly different scene was here! He was normal—or very near normal—to this environ-

ment now. The forest trees had risen high over his head, so that he was down in the dim, luminous forest glades with a tangle of leafy branches over him. The soil was thick with underbrush. The trees stood like great dark sentinels—brown-trunked, with upper, fantastically spreading branches.

To one side, the forest was mangled, crushed, with huge splintered tree trunks lying in a tangled litter. Nearby, a broad shallow cauldron some twenty feet deep showed where the little lake had been scooped of its water. . . .

Upon some of the bushes, globular objects like fruit were hanging. Alan plucked and opened one—strange in aspect, and taste—but it seemed edible, and his hunger impelled him to eat it.

And now, as he wandered, searching for water, he was aware of life here—the sounds of tiny flying things—and insect life underfoot. . . .

He came at last to the bank of another shimmering little lake. Kneeling, he drank deeply. He realized now, with hunger and thirst appeased, that he was tired to the point of exhaustion. He bathed his wounded shoulder. Then, on a mossy sward by the side of the lake, with the trees arching over him, he stretched to rest. . . .

He must have gone to sleep almost instantly. He was aware, dimly, of a long interval of time passing. Then he came suddenly back to consciousness with the feel of hands upon his face. With a rush of memory, he opened his eyes. A girl was bending over him!—a girl of strange but human aspect. Her face was close above him—a face queerly beautiful, with a mass of white hair framing it and falling to her shoulders.

At his sudden waking, she started

upward in fright—and like a startled fawn, she stood peering at him from a nearby thicket.

## CHAPTER V

### TITAN IN THE SKY

“WELL—” Alan gasped. “Good Lord, where did you come from?”

He was on his feet. The girl darted away along the little beach of the lakeshore in terror; then stopped and again stood regarding him. He saw now that she was an extraordinarily small figure, no more than four feet high. A brief fabric garment—blue-gray like the waters of the lake—hung from her shoulders to cover her upper thighs. It was belted in at the waist, with a tasseled belt whose fringe dangled down one side to her knee. Her limbs were bare; on her feet was a sort of sandal, with red thongs binding her ankles.

Strange, wild-looking little creature! She stood timorous, but evidently held by curiosity at this strange huge man.

“Come back,” Alan called. “I won’t hurt you.”

Then he realized that she could not understand him. She did not move, save to shake the long white tresses of her hair as though with some sort of answering gesture.

He took a step toward her. “Is that the way you talk? Can’t you speak?”

At his advance, she retreated—so that he stopped, stood still to reassure her. He was smiling now, and suddenly she answered his smile—amazingly beautiful, radiant little face, as her smile lighted it. She was no more than twenty feet away.



The deep, gray-blue waters of the lake seemed phosphorescent, like the ground; and in the shining half-light, Alan could see the girl clearly—oval face, with features delicately chiseled, patrician as a little Diana. But she had a queer foreign aspect, so that certainly she resembled no race of his own world.

He had a sudden inspiration. He smiled again, and thumped his chest with a fist.

"Alan," he said. "That's me. Alan!"

At once she understood him. Emotional little creature. Her fear had seemed to vanish when she smiled; and now she laughed—a faint, liquid ripple.

"Neona," she said; and with a hand she touched her breast. "Neona—Alan—Neona—"

"Right," he agreed. "Come over here."

He thought at least she would understand his beckoning gesture, but she only looked puzzled. Again he started toward her—but she retreated so that he gave it up and sat down by the water's edge.

And as he quietly regarded her, she came and stood timidly before him. in a moment.

"Neona—" he said, and smiled.

She answered, "Alan— Alan—" And with it, a flood of soft, liquid syllables, wholly unintelligible.

He shook his head. "Nothing doing, Neona. We have no language like that in my world."

But though his gesture of negation obviously meant nothing to her, she had an intelligence matching his own; that was evident. She was not a child, for all her four-foot stature—a woman fully grown, undoubtedly—slim, rounded and matured. She was a girl who, in his own world, would be at least eighteen.

THE instincts of her womanhood were no different than those of a woman of Earth. She saw the wound in his shoulder, the inflamed scratches the monstrous kitten had made on the flesh of his arms and legs; and with little murmurs of sympathy, she regarded them.

A small rosette ornament was fastened to her tunic between the swelling rounded outlines of her youthful breasts. She loosed it, dipped it in the lake, and solicitously began bathing his shoulder.

It could have been Barbara, worried over him. A lump rose suddenly in Alan's throat. Life had been pretty rough on him so far. No woman, save his mother, now dead, and who lived only in his memories of childhood—and his sister Barbara—had ever cared in the slightest whether he was hurt or not.

But here was one who seemed to care. She was leaning close over him; her long white tresses brushed him. She was soft; fragrant; alluring.

He said, "Gosh, I'm all right. That's nothing."

She seemed, this time, to comprehend his gesture as he shrugged, and raised his arm to show her that his shoulder was all right. Her murmured words as she tossed away the wet rosette were unintelligible, but her smile of solicitude was obvious.

"Thanks," he added. "We're friends now, aren't we?"

He held out his hand. She looked puzzled; then he reached, and took hers. Shook it.

"Neona," he said. "Neona—Alan. Neona—Alan."

She laughed with a child's delight. "Alan—Neona. Alan—"

Then suddenly, while he still held her hand, she tilted her head as though listening.

"What is it, Neona?"

He could hear nothing, save the stir of insect and bird-life, the sough of a gentle wind through the tree-tops and the soft lap of the lake rippling against the shore. But Neona, with a hearing more acute than his own, was listening to some distant sound.

Then she relaxed. "What was it?" he demanded again.

Her soft syllables were blank of meaning, so that he laughed.

"This won't do, will it? An awful barrier." And he added, "I wonder how quick you could learn my language—I certainly wouldn't want to tackle yours."

He touched his foot. He said, "Foot." Then he indicated his hand, head, arm, face and his various features in swift succession while he named each of them. Upon her alert face had come an expression of intent eagerness. And when he stopped, she named and indicated them all. Then she named them backwards; and then any of them at random which he designated.

"Heavens," he laughed. "You're a quick learner."

"Heavens," she intoned, in her limpid voice. "You ah queeke learner."

It made them both laugh. Friends now. Quite evidently she had an extraordinarily retentive memory. He would soon be able to teach her enough English so that they could converse.

A queer thrill came to Alan in that moment. The Earth-world in which he had been such a misfit was gone. But here was another world where now he would have to make his way. A new race of people, like this girl probably, must exist here. Somewhere near here, must be a village—houses—a civilization; primitive, doubtless, judging by the girl. But certainly an intelligent people

lived here—perhaps more inherently intelligent than the people of Earth.

Earth! Queer that always he kept thinking of himself as no longer on the Earth! But this was the Earth! He was still in his grandfather's laboratory room, on the glass slide of his grandfather's microscope—only a hundredth part of an inch inside a grain of sand! Amazing realms of smallness. Here at his feet, on the strip of beach of this little lakeshore, were a myriad of other grains of sand. How immense was his present stature compared to them! Yet in each of them, if he were small enough, he could penetrate to new realms. . . .

It was a swift flow of thoughts. He saw that Neona again seemed to be listening to some distant sound. And now in the twilight silence, Alan heard it—faint sounds of music. It had a queer timbre, with a brisk rhythm, like a march. Martial music? It seemed so.

The music was growing louder. He met Neona's gaze, and suddenly she was plucking at him, urging him to his feet.

"Want me to go somewhere?" He stood erect. "All right—why not?"

She led him, picking her way along the narrow strip of beach, to where, near at hand, a path led off into the woods. They went perhaps half a mile through the dim forest glades. Birds occasionally fluttered overhead. Beneath Alan's tread, tiny insects scampered away. The ground was a soft, loamy soil, gray-blue. Then the forest was opening; the trees and underbrush were thinning; the ground turned rocky. Off to one side, Alan presently saw what seemed a small, mound-shaped dwelling—primitive affair, perhaps of thatch. Moving figures were around it—



THE sounds of the oncoming music were far away to the left. To the right now, the landscape had opened to a brownish rocky terrain, undulating into the luminous distance. It seemed to Alan that a patch of dark blobs a mile or so off there on a ramp-like hillside marked the edge of a city. Tiny phosphorescent lights dotted it.

Then Neona suddenly gestured. "Bartok! Bartok!"

The name of the city. He repeated it, and she clapped her hands for affirmation.

Bartok! His new home. What would his life be here? Across the background of his consciousness the thought of New York City stabbed at him. He was dishonored up there in his birthplace. A misfit. But here was another chance. . . .

The oncoming music was much louder now. Ahead of him and Neona he presently saw a broad, rocky road. The music evidently was on it, advancing toward the city. He could see a line of bobbing, advancing dots of lights now.

Neona was urging him toward the road. The light here was brighter than in the forest. Other little mound-shaped dwellings showed at intervals, dotting the landscape like tiny farm-houses, each with a patch of soil around it in which things were growing. People were coming from the houses now, attracted by the sound of the music—running out to gather along the roadside.

Quite close to Alan and the girl, a group of figures suddenly appeared—an old man, bent, hobbling with a staff; two women, and three or four scurrying children. The women and the old man were about Neona's size. They saw her and the towering Alan beside her. They stared, gaping, frightened at Alan. But the girl

called to them imperiously and they dispersed.

The road was twenty or thirty feet wide. It lay at this point in a shallow gully, so that Alan and Neona came to a rocky brink some ten feet above it. The music was close now; and as Alan gazed to the left, he saw the oncoming columns of a line of marching men.

Soldiers! An army returning now to the city, with these farmers gathering at the roadside to watch it pass. Not so different from Alan's world!

The thought was ironical—this realm of smallness—everything so different in aspect; nature in a different mood. But there was human nature—just the same, so that here was the strife of one set of people against another.

War! The head of the advancing line of men went past, with Alan lying prone against the rocks of the gully top so that he would not attract attention.

War! The little martial band of musicians marched by. The soldiers behind them were in formation, with officers leading, and with streams of stragglers to the sides.

Strange little army. Alan saw that all the men were only a trifle taller than Neona—men in leather jerkins and short, wide leather trousers—a ragged, primitive little army, carrying primitive weapons of clubs, bludgeons and crudely fashioned swords. Occasional carts were passing now, carrying supplies. Then came a cart with a huge device, like an ancient catapult for throwing rocks.

An army was returning from battle. The stragglers along the edges of the marching columns were wounded men who occasionally sat down to rest, and then were up,

struggling on. Then a cart came with the dead . . . and crude stretchers, with soldiers carrying the dying. . . .

Victorious army? Obviously not. Neona was solemn and pale, huddling here beside Alan, shuddering as a huge litter went by—with the dead piled high upon it. . . . Ragged, bloodstained, broken little army, struggling back, defeated, to the city and the frightened people! The onlookers were gathered thickly along portions of the road now. A hundred yards or so away, where the gully ended and the road was upon the open, rocky plain, a thick group of people were standing. They did not seem to have noticed Alan and Neona. They did not cheer the passing soldiers, but just stood solemn, staring in silence. And a surge of angry emotion swept Alan. He put his hand on the girl's arm.

"Damned shame, Neona—"

She understood his sympathy, and smiled wanly. He said suddenly:

"Gosh—I wish I could help your people—"

Help them! It leaped at him with a queer thrill. Why not? These little people, with their crude primitive weapons—the enemy, doubtless, was hardly any different. Why, in his present size, he could wade through a horde of the enemy! They'd be like a mob of children, trying to hit him with stones and sticks!

Abruptly Neona stood up. An officer who seemed to be of important rank was passing along the road now—a youngish fellow, in leather garments like the others. But he carried a sword, and on his chest was a huge metal ornament like an insignia of his rank.

Neona called, "Tatoh!"

He looked up. He waved his sword. He said:

"Neona—"

And then, as Alan impulsively stood up, the young officer saw him. Astonishment, bewilderment swept his face. Then the soldiers saw the giant Alan. The columns momentarily broke; the men stared, awed and alarmed. And the nearby onlookers now were staring.

A commotion was beginning. Neona obviously realized it, for abruptly she waved and shouted at the astonished young officer. Whatever she said, Alan could not guess—but this was a friend—a stranger, but a friend. The young man turned and issued sharp commands. The broken columns reformed. In a moment, the line was marching forward again.

The young officer had left the road. He climbed up the ten-foot gully side. As he reached the top, the girl threw herself into his arms. Alan stood smilingly towering over them. Her brother perhaps? Queer that he found himself caring whether this were her brother, her lover, or husband!

He seemed to look like her. Black-haired young fellow—his hair was long to the base of his neck, with a leather thong tied around his forehead. His face was hairless—a handsome face, queerly, indefinitely foreign, like Neona.

She was explaining Alan. And now she was introducing him.

"Alan—Tatoh—"

Alan smilingly extended his hand. Tatoh was puzzled; but the alert girl explained the gesture, so that Tatoh offered his hand and Alan gripped it warmly—a new friend—officer of this army—a fighter. Soon Alan would be in this fight. The idea stirred him.

He stood listening to the flood of liquid syllables as the girl evidently was explaining how she had found him. Obviously, Tatoh was amazed,



almost incredulous; and abruptly, from her gestures, Alan gathered that she must have seen him before he had slept there by the little lake in the forest; that she had seen him in the distance when he was gigantic beyond even his present stature. Tatos now was regarding him with blended astonishment, awe and fear—miraculous being, and Alan laughed.

"Great Scott, don't look at me like that. I'm not superhuman or anything—"

He offered his hand again, and Tatos reluctantly took it. "If only we could talk to each other," Alan added. "We—"

He stopped abruptly. Neona had uttered a startled cry. She was gazing back across the twilight landscape toward the dim, purplish sky above the nearby forest. Tatos turned and stared. . . . The soldiers down on the road now were staring with spreading murmurs of terror. Above the dim forest, ten miles or more away, a titanic human figure loomed up a thousand feet, silhouetted against the blurred purple background of the sky!

## CHAPTER VI

### PRINCE OF THE ATOM

**B**ARBARA! A thrill of exultant excitement surged over Alan as he recognized his sister in that gigantic distant form. Barbara was coming down to rescue him!

For a moment, he stared. Up against the distant luminous blur of the sky, the outlines of Barbara's head and shoulders were clear. And he saw that her titanic form was diminishing. She was moving, slowly walking forward as her stature shrank. He could hear now the faint

distant grinding crash of the forest trees, mangled beneath her tread.

His sister was bringing the enlarging drug, undoubtedly, so that he could go back with her. A very queer mixture of emotions swept Alan.

He felt Neona clinging to him now. Queer—this strange little creature, stricken at the miraculous, terrifying sight of the oncoming gigantic figure—yet clinging to Alan as though for protection.

He was aware now that the soldiers in the road, and all the nearby groups of people, were upon the verge of panic—shouting; milling. Alan turned to the numbed, terrified Tatos.

"It's all right! No danger!"

This damnable barrier of language! If only he could make them understand. He gestured, waved his arms toward the dwindling figure in the sky. He smiled. "No danger, Neona! My sister—friendly—like me—"

It seemed that the alert girl comprehended him now. She spoke swiftly to Tatos. And abruptly the young officer turned and shouted to his men—commanding, reassuring words. Like the ripples from a stone thrown into a pond, the reassurance spread along the line of soldiers in the road, and to the onlookers beside it.

The panic was checked. They stood and gaped, half in terror, half with expectant awe.

"It's all right, Neona—nothing to hurt you. It's all right, Tatos."

They were so small—like children here beside him. All these people were like children. Amazing power of size! His own present stature—two feet taller than anyone here—made him seem so superior. He was a giant of a strength and power, the natural leader—

HE SWUNG protecting arms down around Neona and Tatos. He towered more than head and shoulders over them. . . . The great distant figure of Barbara was still dwindling—five hundred feet tall. Then one hundred feet tall. . . . And now she was down in the forest trees.

Breathless tableau! Neona, understanding more fully now, called to the soldiers, and the word was passed so that the line of men stood expectant. Five minutes—

The nearby forest trees, dim in the luminous twilight, suddenly parted. Barbara appeared. She was fifty feet tall, disheveled from her journey through size—her dark hair falling free, her brief white-knitted suit torn and dirt-stained; her slim waist clasped by the broad leather belt with its drug pouches.

A murmur of fear went up from the starming throng of little people. Then Alan called:

“Barbara! Babs, dear—”

“Alan! Alan—you’re safe—”

She was still dwindling. Forty feet tall now. Then thirty. She stood, careful of her size among this crowd of little figures. And then, as she became still smaller, she advanced toward Alan.

“We were so worried, Alan dear—we realized you had only the one drug—I came down—I saw that piece of your suit—”

“Yes,” he said. “I thought you might come, Babs.”

She was ten feet tall now, changing more slowly, as the drug was wearing off. Then presently she was no larger than Alan—and he flung his arms around her, kissed her; held her. And within his arms he could feel her still dwindling.

“Weird, Babs! Lord what a trip!”

“Yes—but you—you get used to it.”

Neona and Tatos had moved a few paces away. Over all the scene of staring, stricken little people there was silence.

And as Babs still dwindled, she and Alan exchanged swift words of their weird experiences. . . . Then the action of the drug within Babs was over. She stood almost as small as Neona; and at the sight of her, so small and no longer changing size, one of the nearby soldiers cheered. Infectious cheer—it spread with a torrent of roaring sound. It flung away all the terror that had been here, so that now the throng of people were coming forward—a willing, awed crowd around the little group on the rocky eminence above the road.

Alan gasped, “Tatos—Keep them back!”

His gesture was comprehensible. Tatos and Neona shouted. The crowd obediently fell back; but still stared at these miraculous, friendly beings so suddenly come among them.

To Babs it was all a blur of confusion. Alan introduced her, with futile words and vehement gestures, to this smiling little Neona; to this strangely handsome young soldier, Tatos. . . . Weird experience—climaxing the weird journey of her size-change.

She said, “Those penitentiary guards couldn’t find you, Alan. They searched the house—then they left.”

“Yes,” he said. He did not smile; he was staring at Neona.

“Here’s the enlarging drug, Alan.” Barbara handed him the vial, with a hundred or more of the white pellets in it. “Grandfather said we should each carry our own. I have one just like this.”

“Thanks.” He held the vial in his hand.

“Well,” she said awkwardly, out of



a brief silence, "shall we start back, Alan? Grandfather will be worried. Heaven knows, he has a right to be. You—you don't realize how weird it looks from up there in the laboratory. You, climbing on the grain of sand until even the microscope couldn't find you."

"Yes," he agreed. "I realize." Then abruptly he turned solemnly upon her. "Babs—I don't want to go back. Well—not now, anyway. I've work to do here—"

His giant, seemingly ten-foot stature towered over her. His face was solemn, grim, but there was a strange exaltation upon it. "I was a failure up there, Babs. Everything went wrong. You—you and grandfather were ashamed of me. I know you had reason to be—but look, I've got a new chance here."

She stared at him blankly. And abruptly, from the vial she had given him, he took one of the white pellets. His fingers were trembling.

"Alan!" she murmured. "Alan—what do you mean?"

"The power of size, Babs! You stand still. Watch me!"

Over all the crowd, the tense silence continued. Neona and Tatoh stood nearby, gripping each other, regarding Alan with expectant awe.

He said excitedly, "I'm taking the least quantity I can take, Babs."

He touched his moistened finger to the pellet, and put the finger against his tongue.

"Careful Alan!" Babs cried with sudden warning. "Get that pellet back into the vial! Don't drop it! If that drug got loose here—"

He replaced the pellet; and put the vial into his belt pouch. His figure was growing now, so that Tatoh and Neona murmured with awe, and from the crowd a cry went up.

"It's all right," Alan shouted.

"Don't be afraid—" With his gestures and his smile he tried to reassure them. He was — as Barbara saw him now—fifteen feet tall. Then twenty. . . . Twenty-five.

**T**HE drug action ceased. Barbara had moved to join Tatoh and Neona. The two girls stood with their arms around each other.

"Careful, Alan!" Babs called. "Don't step on us!" He towered so gigantically over them.

"Yes, I'm careful." He leaned down. He said, "Don't you understand, Babs? Look at me—a leader here. There's a war going on. You didn't see the dead this poor little army is bringing back with them. But I'm in it now."

"Alan—"

He laughed, grimly but with the confidence of invincibility. "Don't you worry, Babs—they use clubs and swords and stones for weapons. Why, with these drugs I can stamp on the enemy like you'd stamp on an ant-hill."

His great fist thumped his chest with a blow that reverberated through the luminous stillness. "You go back, Babs. You tell grandfather what I'm doing here. This war — I don't know what it's all about. But I'm on Neona's side. I belong to these people—"

Thy people shall be my people—

He was standing now with his arms over his head, a gigantic warlike figure. From down by his knees, Barbara stared up. And suddenly, to her he was heroic—heroic in stature, in all his aspect. And the exaltation upon him communicated to her. She cried:

"I saw that other army, Alan! I saw it when all this was tiny at my feet — barbarians, I saw them, off there in the mountains. Men with

black hairy bodies—clad in skins—”

He hardly heard her. For all the barrier of language, he was making the soldiers understand now, exhorting them. Their leader!—giant, supernatural leader whom now they could follow back against this barbarous enemy . . . and then they were cheering Alan, standing expectant for him to start.

And Tatoh and Neona understood. The young soldier was gesturing back along the road toward the dim purple distance where a line of terraced mountains loomed against the sky. The enemy was there.

“Goodbye, Babs.” He stooped and she laid her cheek against his face.

“Goodbye, Alan—”

“You go into the forest,” he said. “Keep away—so you won’t hurt anybody. Then get large and go back to grandfather.”

“Yes; all right, Alan.”

He straightened. Then he stooped over Tatoh. “Easy,” he said smiling. “I won’t hurt you.”

His tremendous arm scooped Tatoh up, and the young soldier sat on his shoulder, clinging to his neck.

“Right, Tatoh. You can direct us. We’ll show these barbarians.”

A scattered, awed cheering was rolling up from the watching people. The band of musicians were marching back along the road now, playing their weird marching rhythm. . . .

The advance to battle! What a different scene here now from a few moments before! The carts bearing the dead continued on toward the city. But the carts of implements and supplies turned the other way. The soldiers were reforming, ready to march behind this giant leader.

Then Barbara saw Neona plucking at the great pillar of Alan’s leg. He stooped down; and she gestured that he should pick her up.

“You want to come?” he laughed. “Sure—why not? I’ll see you don’t get in any danger. We’ll make short work of this war.”

He lifted her so that she was clinging to his other shoulder.

“Goodbye, Babs—see you later. Don’t look so solemn! Nothing can happen to me!”

He was starting now — gigantic, twenty-five foot warrior, with Tatoh and Neona sitting on his shoulders, clinging to his neck. With one careful step, he went down the ten-foot brink to the road where the soldiers scattered to make room for him. And then he was striding off toward the distant mountains. The columns of little men fell in behind him. From the watching throng of people, a cheer welled up.

A lump rose in Barbara’s throat, as ignored by the excited gathering, she turned back alone toward the purple forest. Somehow it seemed that she had lost a beloved brother. . . . The leafy aisles of the dim forest presently closed around her. She took the enlarging drug. . . .

Amazing, shrinking landscape! Trees and dwindling rocky hills folding up under her, so that she had to run backward, mangling the forest.

**S**HE did not see Alan again. The scene of the tiny cheering figures was lost in the luminous gloom as she ran away from it and climbed so that it would not roll under her and be crushed. . . .

Perhaps she would never see Alan again. It brought a pang. But if she were destined to lose him, certainly she had gained a glorious memory. Her beloved brother—not a felon now—not a hunted, dishonored fugitive, but a leader of his world, a warrior prince.

Prince of the Atom!



# Upon the Dark Moon

by JOHN L. CHAPMAN

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Jack Merrill went to one wild party too many—for, on "the morning after," he awoke to find himself gazing at the Earth—from distant space!

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**M**Y HEAD ached dully, and a painful throbbing pulsed through my weakened body. Gradually, the sluggish semi-consciousness gave way to the remote chill of utter darkness. I waved my arms, thrashing, as though to part the curtain of nothingness before me. Faintly, as I opened my tired eyes, I could see myriads of twinkling things dancing before me—stars, of course.

Yawning, I tried to push myself up from my awkward reclining position. I fell back, uttering a slight groan, and rested.

After some time, I managed to gather my senses. But that was as far as I got. I could remember nothing. I hadn't the vaguest recollections of my surroundings.

Amnesia? No, not as bad as that. My memory was not a complete blank; I merely had lost my bearings. Something strange had happened to me—of that I was certain.

I muttered something more or less a curse, and with renewed vigor raised myself to a sitting position. Ignoring the brief paralysis of my arms and legs, I looked about anxiously—nothing but blackness below and to the sides, and the stars blinking above.

I was outside—the stars accounted for that. But there was something else, something patterned against the heavens that I hadn't noticed before. At first it looked like a blue, opalescent globe, hanging in semi-

shadow against the starry background. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. This time it was different.

**T**HE pale glow had vanished, and in its place, barely distinguishable in the pitch darkness, was the outline of a continent, the North American continent—unmistakably!

I was stunned for the moment. Unfortunately, such a thing had never happened to me before. I wasn't accustomed to awakening in the dead black of night to find Mother Earth suspended in space before me. Lord—where was I?

Luckily, I'm not the weak-hearted type. Had I been at the time, that first shock would have been my last. As things were, however, the idea had its nauseating effects.

I got to my feet hastily, glancing about. The darkness to the sides was impenetrable, untouched by the feeble glow of Earth. Could it be that I was on the moon? The distance looked the same; the size of Earth seemed correctly proportionate. Yet, I couldn't be positive. I was no astronomer, just a playboy—

in a flash. At least, part of it did. I was Jack Merrill, the playboy—of course. I felt about my clothes. True, I was in full dress, and I had vague recollections of a riotous evening, wines, and a fast taxi ride. After that, nothing.

There was the question of the moon again. My thoughts rambled on in search of a solution.

I was quite aware that my logical position would be the Earth's satellite, but how did I get there? And why? My head reeled with unanswerable questions.

Wandering space-ships from another planet, perhaps, had landed on Earth, had picked me up — a mad scientist might have used me in an experimental rocket flight. But that was absurd.

I toyed with other angles — time warps, gaps in dimensions—all were unsatisfactory to my conceptions.

What about the darkness? If I were on the shaded side of the moon, how could Earth be in view? Perhaps I was being shadowed by a crater. But if that were true, I should have sighted other mountains; the darkness would not be so complete!

Possibly I was in a space-ship, looking out some sort of porthole. That was plausible, that space-ships had not been invented as yet.

I tugged at my pockets, found a cigarette case and brought it out. A flick of my finger, and a small flame protruded from the top. But it was of no aid. The flame was not bright enough—I could distinguish nothing about me. I lighted a cigarette and blew smoke into the air. . . .

The air, of course! There was none on the moon, yet I was breathing normally. No doubt I was in a dark room on the Earth's satellite or in a space-ship near that position. I was standing before a porthole—

My thoughts were but utter nonsense. I couldn't make the least bit of sense out of them.

I was growing weary. I moved about cautiously, hoping I might contact something that would reveal my position. I had to get out of here—wherever that was! I'd go crazy!

Then I heard something. At first it was indistinct, but then it sounded

again. A human voice! I couldn't make out what was being said, but I knew someone was near.

I shouted my presence and leaped forward unknowingly. I struck something, tripped, and went tumbling down an irregular incline. Earth and stars flashed past my vision; then the stars seemed to burst. One by one they flared, and blinked out.

A HOSPITAL room. I knew that the moment I came to. Ignoring a bad headache, I opened my eyes and sat up.

"Be careful, Mr. Merrill — you mustn't strain yourself."

The nurse was already pushing me back. "Not until I know what this is all about," I retorted. "Where have I been?"

"You don't remember?"

"Of course not."

"What a time you must have had! After this, you'll probably hire a bodyguard to follow you on party nights or you'll lose yourself again."

"Never mind that. Where was I?"

"You were found last night in the Roberts Planetarium, three hours after the evening lecture was finished. Apparently, you fell asleep and didn't awaken until the program was over. You were discovered at the bottom of a balcony stairway. Fortunately, you escaped serious injury in your fall. But really, I didn't know astronomy lectures were as dry as all that—"

"You mean one of those new planetariums—in which the Earth is viewed as if from the moon?"

"Yes, and it would never have happened had you omitted all that champagne—why, Mr. Merrill, you're turning pale—is there something I can get for you?"

"Whisky," I replied. "Straight."

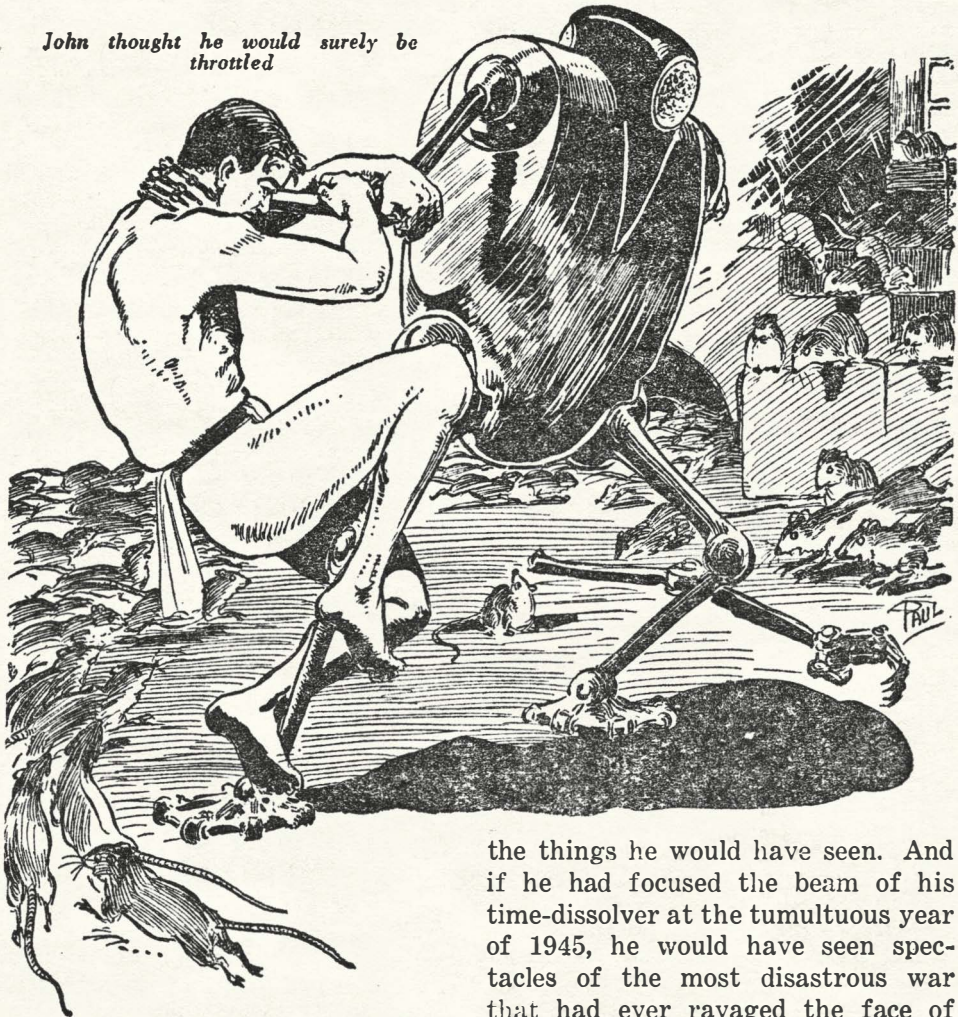


# Women's World

by DAVID C. COOKE

The great war of 1945 had destroyed most of the men in the world, and the remaining few had for centuries slaved in the mines while Woman ruled the earth! Then John Corstair finds a yellowed book whose secrets may once again bring man into his own!

*John thought he would surely be throttled*



**I**F ANY sort of device had ever been built during the first part of the twentieth century for looking into the far future, the scientist who had invented the machine would have been sorely depressed by

the things he would have seen. And if he had focused the beam of his time-dissolver at the tumultuous year of 1945, he would have seen spectacles of the most disastrous war that had ever ravaged the face of the earth. However, since no such machine was ever built, mankind was totally unprepared for the two centuries that followed in the wake of the great war to end the harbingers of battle—men!

After the world-wide war of 1945,

the manpower of the world had been killed off to such an extent that there was no man who was either old or wise enough to take the responsibility of absolute dictatorship upon his shoulders, and, therefore, a woman, Dunya Franklin, was proclaimed supreme ruler of the United States of Earth.

In the beginning, women were slightly aghast at the wealth of power that they found at their fingertips. Since the beginning of history, women had been the underdogs, and they found it strange to orient themselves to their new-found power. But this state did not continue for long, because they soon determined that they, at last, had been set up in their rightful position.

Soon, however, they began to realize that men were not needed in the general order of things, and rapidly began to treat them as slaves and as mere animals of burden. Science had advanced to such a state that even child-birth became controllable, artificially, by the induction of electrical shocks that stirred the protoplasm into an active form—thus eliminating the use of men entirely. But, even though the sex of their offspring was also controlled, in some cases the apparatus pulled a boner and a boy-child was born.

The percentage of male births was low, and for several years the all-powerful Dunya Franklin ordered the children destroyed. But the women eventually concluded that the men should be allowed to live as slaves to repair and build.

After the death of Dunya Franklin, her daughter—whose father was an electrical impulse—became the all-powerful, and after her, the next in line. This state of succession continued until the year 2245, when the last of the line of Franklin's offspring

was ordained as supreme dictator of the world.

**T**OLKA TIMRETE sat in her resplendent, glass throne, supreme in power. She was the present ruler in the Franklin line, and held herself just as aloof and haughty as did others in the long line of rulers. Her blue, opaque glass castle, situated in the midst of her white, transparent capital city, was a stronghold that was far superior to anything that the world had ever seen before. She was absolute in her power, and her word was law to the women of the city.

While the women were located in the city proper, alone, with the exception of the robots that were controlled entirely by the will of the dictator, the men—what there were left—were forced to live in squalor beneath the surface of the earth in the platinum mines. While the women lived in luxury, having the robots doing all their menial tasks for them, the men spent their weary lives toiling away in the mines in a weary search for the precious metal that had to be made into brain-plates daily to keep the robots in a state of mental subjection.

"Comrades," Tolka addressed the rulers of the key cities that were grouped before her in the throne room, "as you know, there has been a drastic shortage of platinum recently and thousands of robots had to be disposed of. The men who work in the mines have notified me through their spokesman, a man they call John Corstair, that the present lode has been almost entirely exhausted. None of our engineers have been able to place another rich lode, and unless another streak is found, it will mean that we will have to do away with thousands more of the mechanical servants."



One of the women, who was dressed in a pure green tunic—showing that she was the representative from Johs, a city on the mainland of what was once called Europe—raised her hand, indicating that she wished to ask a question of the supreme one.

“Yes?” Tokla acknowledged the one in green. “Speak up. You have the floor, with my permission.”

“Almighty Tolka Timrete,” the woman said reverently, bowing her head low, “permit this unworthy one to make a suggestion. Instead of expending innumerable hours or weeks in search of a new source of platinum, why can’t we increase the number of men and let them take the place of the robots? I feel quite sure that they—”

Tolka interrupted: “Fool!” she exclaimed, “use some of the sense that you were given credit for when you were made governor of Johs! If you would but exert your meager mentality an iota you’d immediately realize that men are much more of a menace than the robots could ever hope to be. And if we ever expect to keep the world civilized, we must continually keep the barbarous men in complete subjection!

“But why?” answered the one in green. “Why would they ever be a threat? Surely they could never hope to realize in their child-like brains that they are anything more than slaves.”

“Alas, oh foolish one,” Tolka answered in her most sarcastic tone, “do not show your ignorance further. Exercise your gray matter and you’ll undoubtedly realize that there might be some subconscious reasoning in the men’s mind—even though they know nothing whatsoever about history—that they were at one time rulers of the world. Would you wish to have our civilization again re-

verted back to the barbarous state of the twentieth century that we have read so much about?”

The governor from Johs shook her head, bowed low to Tolka, and sat down on her soft glass chair. She had only heard stories about the creatures that were referred to as men, and could not even visualize the disgust with which the dictator painted them.

“And so,” continued Tolka, “we must render at least two thousand of the robots useless immediately in order to preserve as many of them as possible, because if their brain-plates wear out completely and are not replaced, it is quite possible that they will become completely demented and go on a tour of destruction as they did when my illustrious mother, Tolka I, was in her prime.” She raised her voice to a demanding pitch. “Would you want such a state to occur in our generation?”

A chorus of “No’s!” greeted her question.

Tolka rose from her throne. “Very well,” she said, turning to her personal robot servant, “then we will act without delay.”

The robot, which was about the size of an average man of the twentieth century, walked stiffly toward Tolka, swinging his long arms in an odd fashion. His platinum brain-plate began to squeak and whine as a vibration needle dug into it to produce speech.

“You called, Mighty One?” the words vibrated from the robot’s metal sound-plate in a tinny tone. The sound of its rapidly whirling brain died as the robot finished the sentence.

“Yes, Zonta,” answered Tolka. “Disconnect the energy fuses from two thousand mechanical slaves—two hundred from each key city.”

The robot bowed to Tolka, turned stiffly, and walked toward a huge board on the opposite side of the platform on which the dictator was seated. Zonta, the mechanical man, stopped before the board, which was similar to a telegraph connection switchboard of the earlier centuries, and hesitated for a moment.

"Immediately, Zonta!" demanded Tolka.

The robot reached up both of its long, metallic arms, and pulled scores of the long rubber tubes from their sockets. He then walked stiffly back to a spot directly behind Tolka and waited in silent obedience.

"Now that that's done," Tolka again addressed her audience, "the robots that have been cut off from Central will completely disintegrate. Let us pray that a new lode will soon be found so that more will not have to be destroyed."

**W**HILE the influential women of the world were involved with their problems of retaining as many robots as possible, there was a far different scene only a few miles distant and under entirely different circumstances.

The light was poor this far under the ground, and the heat was intense. But in the slight glare of the perpetually burning axiult arc lamps that were set high in the ceiling of the cavern, men could be seen silently toiling away under working conditions that were far worse than any seen in Siberia in the salt mines during the reign of the Czars before the medieval World War. Their dress was scanty — consisting only of a brown rag that was rudely wrapped around their waists, completely exposing their chests and legs—and the complexion of the men was a pasty white from the lack of sunshine. Here

and there, one of the poor creatures who lived as moles broke into a fit of violent coughing—a condition that could only be caused by tuberculosis or silicosis.

The blatant blare of a horn permeated the silence of the underground mines, telling the men that their long hours of toil were over for the day. Almost as a man, they dropped their tools and stood still as scores of police-robots moved toward them. The robots inspected the men thoroughly, made sure that they were not carrying any of the tools that they had been using, and then ordered them into single-file formation.

With the robots on guard, the men marched back through the water sodden adit toward their sleeping quarters. After a weary climb uphill, they reached a dry but chillingly cold section of the mine. Here, hundreds of musty, moldy cots lined the floor of the dirt cavern. And disregarding the condition of their beds, the work-weary men threw themselves on the soft cots to rest.

The men had no sooner made themselves comfortable when the robots brought them concentrated food tablets as their evening meal. Small containers of water were also left beside each cot. After another hurried inspection for concealed tools with which the men might escape from their virtual prison, the robots left the room, locked a huge door securely behind them.

When the sound of the robots' footsteps died in the distance, a figure on one of the cots stirred into life. Guardedly, John Corstair, a surprisingly well-developed young man despite his years beneath the surface of the earth away from the life-giving rays of the sun, reached into his brown tunic and slipped an age-worn book from its hiding place. He tend-



erly caressed its faded blue cover, and then held it in a position so as to let the glaring beam of an axiult light fall upon its opened pages.

John tediously turned the crisp and crumbled pages until he found the one that he had been reading the night before after the robots had locked them in. He was about to start reading where he had left off, when the man on his right, who was deadly affected by the ravages of silicosis, interrupted him:

"I see you're still at it, John," the man gasped. "I thought that you had given up the idea of trying to read, after the job you had last night trying to make out some of those ancient words. Anyway, where will it get you? Why don't you rest like the rest of us do?"

A faint smile creased John's livid features. He turned to the man. "I might be foolish, Royston," he said. "True, I might. But already I have found out that at one time men ruled the world and that women were their companions instead of their masters. And if it hadn't been for our luck in unearthing that ancient city, that is something I would have never known."

"But where will it get you?" Royston demanded. "We are destined by Tolka to spend our lives—even as men did centuries before—rotting away in this damnable hole beneath the surface. You will not be able to do anything to help our position. The women are in control, and as long as they have robots to follow their bidding, we shall continue to be their slaves." He broke into a spasm of coughing that wracked his whole body with sharp pain.

When Royston had stopped coughing, John said: "Last night I came across a chapter in this book on superstitions and subconscious fears,

comrade. It said that women are deathly afraid of rats—or were, anyhow—and become nervous when they even see one of the creatures. Well, today when we were having our mid-day meal, I found two of the rodents in a deserted shaft and put them in a place where they will be cut off from escape. They are ugly beasts, and if they multiply as rapidly there as they do when free, I feel sure that we will have a weapon with which to combat the power that the women hold over us."

"I wonder," answered Royston, controlling himself from starting another spasm of coughing, "if that is the reason they send those damn robots down in this pit to watch over us instead of coming themselves?"

"Yes," agreed John, "that is probably the reason. Either that, or they are afraid that one of us will get up enough nerve to challenge the power that they hold over us. They might not only be afraid of the rats that are down here, but also our superior strength that has been built up from steady work here in the mines while they loaf in leisure on the surface, having the robots do all of their physical work for them.

"I really believe, Royston, that unless something is done in our generation to take the power away from the women, the entire world will crumble in ruin. Their complete lack of physical exercise has made them a useless race of creatures that are good for nothing except to plan greater power for themselves. And according to what I read in my book," he patted the faded volume reverently, "the world is now in the condition that it once before found itself facing when the Roman Empire was at its height. The time to act is now or never!"

With that, John Corstair propped

himself in a more comfortable position, shifted his book again, and started to read where he had left off the night before.

**T**HINGS went on as usual for the next several weeks. The platinum in the shaft was rapidly becoming depleted, and the scientists of dictator Tolka had been unsuccessful in their attempts to find another abundant lode to draw from. Experiments were being made with brain-plates of various alloys and amalgams, but the results had always been the same—the robots became violently mad and had to be destroyed, or just remained in a state of suspended mechanical animation; depending, of course, upon the metal or metals used in the experiments.

Almost every day, Tolka had been forced to order more robots destroyed. Things were now in such a state that there were but two or three mechanical men for each woman, and these few were kept out of commission most of the time so as to preserve their sanity-giving brain-plates as long as possible.

Virtually no construction or repair work was being done on the surface because the robots that had been destroyed so far were, for the most part, those that were originally constructed for laboring purposes. The ones that were left were totally unskilled in any line except personal service.

While things were in a terrible state—for the women—in the cities, John Corstair was completely without worries for the first time since his birth. His rats were multiplying splendidly, and his only difficulty was in finding enough food to give them every day. John knew the time to strike with his army of furry little creatures had come, but, try as he

would, he could think of no way to get them out of the mines and out onto the surface of the earth amongst the women.

But as he toiled away at his menial job of digging there in the bowels of the earth, a startled cry rang out from one of the men who was in advance of the others, sounding and testing for platinum. Immediately John and scores of other men rushed to the far end of the adit.

They expected to find that part of the non-metallic strata had collapsed because of improper support and buried the one who had cried. But when they reached the end of the dimly-lighted tunnel, they saw a black-faced man pointing excitedly at something he had just struck.

John shouldered his way to the front of the crowd. "What is it?" he asked, excitedly.

The man held up a hand, extended a piece of something black. "I don't know!" he exclaimed. "I don't know what it is, but it's different from anything that we've ever come across before! Here, what do you make of it?" He handed the object to John.

Corstair held it up for closer inspection. He tasted it, smelled it, and said: "I don't know, either. I don't think it's anything to get excited about, though. It looks just like a piece of black stone to me. Let's take it back—"

But John was interrupted by one of the robots who had just reached the men. The mechanical man's brain-plate started to whirl. In a flat, absolutely toneless voice it said: "Give it to me! I will take it to the All-Powerful Tolka so that her scientists can test it." The robot made a demanding gesture.

"Get back to work—all of you," it demanded. "Get back to your work or I'll have to use my photon gun."



The men had seen too many of their unfortunate comrades crumble into nothingness from the rays of those guns, and they wanted no part of them. Like frightened children, they hurried back to their tools, not bothering—or daring—to look back. All of them left except John. He walked up to the robot, and said:

"I might be wrong, but I think that black stone is a substance that men in the olden days called coal. I didn't say anything about it before for fear that the other men wouldn't know what I was talking about. But if you will tell Tolka about this discovery of the fuel that the ancients used, we will gather as much as possible so she can see how it works."

The robot nodded. "I will relay your message. But how could a mere man know anything about medieval times? The Supreme One will think you out of your mind, but I will see that the message gets to her."

John walked away from the mechanical man, a smile playing around the corners of his mouth. A plan was beginning to formulate in his fertile brain, and if everything went off as he planned—and if the meeting of the ambassadors and governors of the key cities was still in session—he thought that his scheme might work.

The robot who had taken the piece of coal from John went up to the surface at noon to see that Tolka would get news of this new discovery, and the men were left alone in the mine. After the huge door at the top of the shaft had been locked, John called the other men to him, told them about his plan.

"And if that black rock is the coal that I read about in my book," he said, "then we will have our chance to live on the surface, if my plan works. Are you with me?"

A chorus of yells went up from the men. They were tired of living like prisoners, and wanted to live on the surface as their ancestors did.

"All right, then," answered John, after the men had agreed to follow him. "If we go to the surface tonight or tomorrow, be prepared to do as I said. And, above all things, watch carefully for my signal. If this isn't worked exactly right, then it probably won't work at all. Now go back to where you left your tools. That robot will be back any moment, and he's liable to think something's up if he sees us all together."

As if in answer, the door at the top of the shaft flew open at that moment and the men had to hurry back to their former positions to keep from being seen. The robot rapidly descended the stairs, called the men to attention, and said in his queer, rasping voice:

"Dig out as much of that coal mineral as soon as possible. This is the last day of the meeting of the delegation from the other cities and the All-Powerful Tolka wants them to inspect this new rock tonight!"

For the first time in their lives, the men went to work with a smile on their lips and a song in their hearts. They worked faster and harder than ever before, because each of them wanted to be in on the show that night, and if there wasn't enough coal, only a few could go.

The men filled bag after bag with coal, and carried them close to the mouth of the adit near the mouth of a deserted shaft. John was one of the men who were carrying the heavy bags back through the tunnel, and he slipped away on one trip while the robot-boss was busy at the lip of the new lode instructing and egging the men on to greater speed.

One by one, John dumped the coal

from the bags that were near the old shaft. After they were all emptied, he tucked the sacks under his arm, and stole off in an unlighted section toward another deserted shaft that had been unused for as long as he could remember. He tediously made his way down the shaft until he reached the bottom. John then pushed a huge rock away from the entrance of an adit, and went inside, groping with his free arm.

A chorus of squeals of protest met John's ears, but he continued to walk through the adit. He came to a shallow bed of water, waded across, and scooped down at the ground eagerly.

**"ALL RIGHT,"** rasped the robot, "that will be enough—in fact, there are too many bags already! You men"—he pointed to the strongest ones, including John—"take the bags and come with me. Remember," he continued, "my photon gun will shoot faster than you can run, so don't try to get away."

The designated men selected the bags that were nearer the shaft, swung them over their shoulders, and started after the robot. But John picked up a bag that was in the other pile, and seemed to have more trouble in carrying its weight.

A few minutes later, the men got the first sight of the upper-world that they had seen since they were old enough to work in the mines. Luckily, however, it was night, and there was no bright sun to blind them. The robot led the way to the huge triangular, opaque castle that stood in the midst of the city, took them up a rear elevator, and ushered them into the throne room where all of the women were awaiting them.

Tolka spoke to the robot that had brought them up: "Go outside and stand on guard. Lock the door after

you. Zonta will be enough to match these creatures if they try to escape."

Obediently, the mechanical man walked back through the lone door that led into the room, closed it after him, and snapped the lock in position.

"Now," asked Tolka, eagerly, "which one of you men think that this mineral is the ancient stone called coal, and where did you get your information?"

John stepped to the fore. "I am, Supreme One," he answered. "A few days ago I found a book in a ruined section of an ancient village that we found, and this rock looks just like the coal that was mentioned in it."

Tolka looked at John sternly. "And what do you know about books? Why didn't you report your find immediately to a robot?"

"I did, Almighty Tolka," lied John, "but perhaps the robot somehow forgot. Perhaps his brain-plate needed replacing."

That seemed logical enough to Tolka, so she dismissed the subject, and said: "We will go into that at a later time, man. But now I would like to see this coal you speak of."

John immediately opened his bag, dumped the contents on the floor in front of Tolka.

"You see," he explained, "it is just as it was explained in the book. And if a light is applied to it, the coal will burst into flames and give off heat like the static electricity plates do."

Tolka examined the piece of coal. "Fine!" she beamed. "This substance, coal, will now take its place in my Museum of Ancient History. Open your bags so that the others may also see the primitive rocks."

John turned his back to Tolka, stepped slightly to one side so that he would not be in front of the throne, and spoke to the other men who were completely surrounding the



room, bags held in front of them. "Open your bags, comrades—immediately!"

As a unit, the men untied the cord that was looped around the top of their bags, but still held the tops tightly together.

"Now!" exclaimed John.

The men quickly dumped their contents on the floor.

The women screamed madly as thousands of hunger-maddened and terrified rats scrambled from the heaps on the floor. The little rodents scampered in all directions. And as in olden days, the women climbed to the tops of their chairs, screaming bloody murder!

John quickly spun around as Tolka called to Zonta. He grabbed the robot by one of its long arms before the mechanical man's metal brain was able to spring into action. John twisted savagely, brought the robot's arm behind its back, and pushed it up sharply until it broke at the armpit.

The robot struggled from John's mighty grasp, reached its other arm out and grabbed the man by the neck. Its long fingers tightened and squeezed until John thought he would surely be throttled. But with a mighty heave, he dived between Zonta's legs, straightened up suddenly, and threw the robot in a heap, head first, completely bashing its head on the hard floor of the room.

Tolka screamed for other robots to come to her assistance, but John rapidly ran to the central control board and pulled all of the lines from their sockets, thus destroying all of the robots in the world.

He snatched the photon gun from the floor and directed its muzzle at Tolka. He yelled to the other women in the room: "Disarm or this thing might go off! Gather their guns, men. This is our day!"

**T**HE men left their places at the sides of the wall, took the guns from the women, and chased the rats from the room through the door that one of them had opened.

John stuck his gun in a pocket, bade the women sit down. "Women," he said, "In 1945 an ancestor of Tolka's was put in control of the world. There were no men old enough to undertake the responsibility. From that time we men have suffered so that you could rule. Now things are different! You no longer have your robots to do your work! We are free! Understand? Free!"

Tolka, who was still sitting on her throne, spoke up, calmly and apparently not disturbed by this turn of events. "What do you intend to do? Are we to become your slaves now?"

John pondered for a moment. "No," he answered, "you will be our companions! A government shall be set up similar to that of our ancestors—a democracy. From now on, all people will be on equal standing."

One of the women let out a "Yip-p-pe-e! We were getting fed up on seeing nothing but women and robots, anyway! Now we will have something to live for!"

Tolka again spoke from her throne. "And I was getting tired of my life, too. The continual haggling of women has bored me. I'm glad you did what you have, John," she added, amorously. "Now I, too, will have something to live for."

John moved closer to Tolka, took one of her hands in his. "And it's all because of an ancient superstition," he smiled.

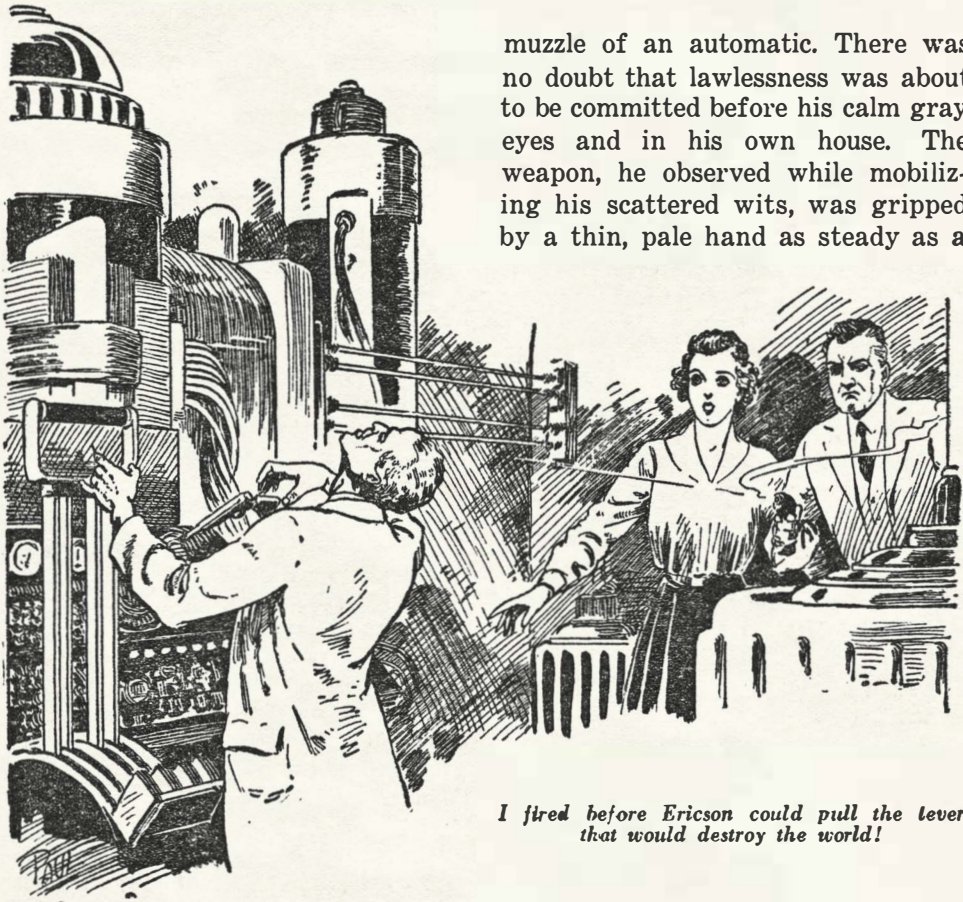
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# LEVER OF DESTRUCTION

Cameron, the murderer, pointed to the giant switch—a lever, he declared that, thrown into contact, would destroy the world in a blast of atomic energy! Could Police Reporter Wade call his bluff by pulling the lever, or was there a chance that Cameron was telling the truth?

by TOM ERWIN GERIS



muzzle of an automatic. There was no doubt that lawlessness was about to be committed before his calm gray eyes and in his own house. The weapon, he observed while mobilizing his scattered wits, was gripped by a thin, pale hand as steady as a

*I fired before Ericson could pull the lever that would destroy the world!*

**P**ROFESSOR EUGENE P. ERICSON lifted his eyes from an evening newspaper and looked into the black and blunt rock. The face above the gun was the color of putty. The skin, drawn tightly over high cheek bones, was like parchment. The mouth was a



slit of hardness edged by almost bloodless lips.

"So it's you, Cameron," he faltered. "What do you want with me?"

The individual addressed as Cameron laughed. "This time tomorrow I'll be reading your obituary. You've ordered me around for the last time!"

Ericson's eyes widened grotesquely. He made a ludicrous picture, a shabby, lanky figure with one hand half out of his pocket, with eyes as big as ping-pong balls. His face went pale in a flash, and he opened his mouth to cry out. At that moment, Cameron pulled the trigger.

The professor collapsed like a pricked balloon. He gave a long, moaning gasp, and fell to the floor and lay still.

Cameron also stood still for a moment—long enough to satisfy himself that Ericson was dead. The realization that he had killed a man seemed to give him new determination. He was cold now, and deliberate. He tossed the gun aside, careless of the fact that it contained his fingerprints. Then he went upstairs to the room where Mrs. Ericson was sleeping—there was work ahead of him yet.

**A** HALF hour later, the telephone on Sergt. Byrne's desk in the fifth precinct jangled. Byrnes picked the receiver up. His gaunt, bronzed face with its pencil-thin mustache line tightened as he heard the excited voice at the other end.

"This is Dr. Franklin Cameron. I've just killed my employer, Professor E. P. Ericson, and his wife. Better send someone over at once. The place is 157 Hudson Street."

"We'll be over in fifteen minutes," answered Byrnes into the transmitter. "Hey, Wade," he yelled, turning

toward a narrow vestibule where several men were playing cards, "Cameron's gone and done it! Believe me, he'll get the hot squat for this. The whole town knows of his affair with Ericson's wife—I'll bet the old boy got wise today!"

Johnny Wade, police reporter for the local Scimitar, threw down his cards and grabbed his coat. It was too astounding to believe! Cameron had virtually signed his death warrant by that 'phone call. How on earth did he expect to get out of this mess, he speculated.

"Ericson was a classmate of yours at college?" asked Captain Judson, although he knew that the answer would be in the affirmative.

"Only in my physics classes. He was a 'whiz' in everything—I think he knew more than the prof. But let's start going."

Hudson Street was a depressing looking place, originally called Bismarck Avenue, until the town council, in a spasm of patriotism, changed its name. Ericson's home was on the corner. Wade banged the old-fashioned knocker on the door. Suddenly it opened, revealing a dark hallway.

"Come in," said the heavy figure before them.

"Where are the bodies?" asked Sergt. Byrnes.

"In the laboratory. Follow me. Wait, I want to close the door first."

Cameron's tone was cold as a cemetery vault. The door barred, he took two quick steps down the hall. All that the others could see of his face was an unpleasant impression of a heavy jaw and shaggy pepper-and-salt eyebrows.

The reporter followed along under the overhanging stairway into the dining-room. His heart action was quicker, he realized. Inside him was an uncanny feeling, as if something

were about to happen. They went through some bare corridors to the wing where the laboratory was situated. It was an extremely large room, illuminated during the day by a sky-light, and adorned with an astounding plethora of scientific paraphernalia; yet somehow it was undeniably sombre-looking.

"There's the professor and Mrs. Ericson," pointed out Cameron.

Even in daylight it would have been a gloomy room. And now, at two in the morning, when only one amber bulb glowed in the ornate, old-fashioned chandelier, the place was depressing and ghastly.

Professor Ericson was sprawled out in front of some apparatus. Blood still trickled from a bullet-hole behind the ear. He was certainly an extraordinary fellow—about forty years of age, tall and cadaverously thin, somewhat watery eyes under a bald brow—clothes that looked as if they had never seen the inside of a tailor's.

Mrs. Ericson lay beside him. Her face was purple. She had been strangled. Even in her convulsed form, she looked pretty. Her knees were drawn up and one of her white hands clutched the nap of the rug. She must have been dainty, pretty too, in a pathetic, faded way.

Dr. Cameron pointed to the immense piece of apparatus, fitted with huge electrodes connected with thick cables coming from outside. Alongside that was a switchboard with several dials and rheostats. But the most commanding feature of the switchboard was a huge, powerful-looking lever, which was thrown out of contact.

"That's why I killed them," he spoke, grinning derisively.

"I would advise you to keep quiet," warned Captain Judson. "Remember,

anything you say now may be used against you."

"That's all right. I've heard that before. Come on into the living-room. I'll tell you all about it."

Wade drew in his breath sharply. This was page one, right hand column, top line!

"Why did you kill them?"

"Self-defense," barked back the doctor, an almost perceptible expression of contempt lighting his face.

"Believe it or not, but to a certain extent you owe it to me that you are now existing, here, on this earth, at this very moment!—that," he continued, as Wade and the amazed officers seated themselves in the living room, "this entire planet, together with the whole solar system, has not yet been devastated—blasted apart into the vast infinities of interstellar space!"

They stared at him—was he mad? The scientist read their thoughts. "No, I'm not mad," he notified them. "On the contrary, I assure you that I am extremely sane—perhaps too much so for my own good."

Then, singling out Wade: "I suppose you are familiar with the elementary fact that all matter can ultimately be reduced to specific atoms, and that these atoms are comparable to solar systems—on an infinitely minute scale, of course. These minute solar systems . . ."

"Hold on there," broke in Wade. "It's all Greek to me—I've forgotten all my physics—took the course merely for the credits—and besides," he winked at Byrnes, "I got through the course on crib notes. Anyway, what has all this to do with these murders?"

**C**AMERON deliberately ignored Wade's query. In a patronizing, tolerant fashion he continued: "It has long been known that certain



substances possessed a store of latent energy which they could release under given conditions. A lump of coal, for instance, seems inert, yet when we set fire to it it can give forth enough power to help run our railroads and steamships. But it was only with the discovery of radium that we began to understand that every substance possesses a tremendous amount of this latent power. If we only knew how, we could get far more work out of the cobblestone than we can at present out of a lump of coal of the same size. Both seem equally inert, but the potential power is there just the same.

"Uranium disintegrates very slowly into radium, and radium disintegrates into lead, and in the transformation a large amount of energy is liberated. Here the disintegration occurs naturally; we know of no means of hastening or retarding it. Now, we scientists are certain that any element in disintegrating into a lower one must likewise give out energy, and it is believed that the disintegration, like that of uranium, is very slow—so slow as to be imperceptible.

"The thing to find was a means to hasten it. If a log of wood is allowed to decay, it gives out as much heat in the process as if it were burned, but the decomposition requires years instead of hours. To get the heat or energy immediately, we must set fire to the log. In the same way, to get the energy from the coal we must start the disintegration by first setting fire to it. Once lighted, a coal fire can keep itself up indefinitely—it needs merely to be started. The same must be true in getting atomic energy from stone. All we need is to find a means of starting the disintegration—of kindling the atomic fire, so to speak. Once started, the disin-

tegration itself will release enough heat to continue the process.

"Professor Ericson devoted several years of study toward the solution of this problem," went on Cameron. "A few nights ago he phoned me at my home, requesting that I come to see him at once. He was extremely jubilant when I arrived. 'Congratulate me, Cameron,' he greeted me. 'At last I can tap the energy locked in the atom!' he cried, exultantly, waving a sheaf of papers smothered with mathematical formulae before me. 'I tell you I can do it, man!' he breathlessly rushed on.

"I had never seen Ericson act so impassioned before. For a moment, I feared that the strain of his work had temporarily unbalanced him.

"I have discovered a means of starting atomic disintegration in stones,' Ericson told me. 'To none will I confide the secret—the method of starting this disintegration, nor the equally important means of stopping it:—I can only isolate the portion that is burning and let it go out of itself when the disintegration is complete. I use the term burning you understand, because it is convenient, though the process has little analogy to real combustion save that it releases energy, and this energy may be turned into heat, light, sound or electricity, the same as any other form of energy.'

"'How does the process work?' I asked him."

"If I once started disintegrating a small amount of earth, the fire, if I may call it so, would spread to the surrounding earth, and the whole terrestrial globe would be consumed. It would be as if the earth were a ball of coal and a fire were started anywhere on its surface! This irresistible fire would spread and spread, gaining momentum all the time, and

would inevitably cause the complete destruction of our planet. Once this occurred, it would in turn disrupt our finely balanced solar-system, and would virtually result in absolute cosmic chaos!

"Can you prove your claims?" I had questioned.

"Ericson quieted down for a moment. Then, waving the mass of papers before me, he defiantly announced: 'Here is incontestable proof as to my assertions. I challenge you to find a flaw in my reasonings!'

"You must take my word for it, gentlemen," Cameron addressed the police party, "Ericson's postulates and hypotheses were well grounded. I spent hours poring over his formulas, checking and rechecking; and slowly it dawned upon me that Ericson had achieved the impossible—on paper. Here was the discovery of the ages, I realized! But was his theory practicable?

"Surely you have a small working model which can illustrate your theories,' I asked.

"Ericson's eyes glinted. He gave me a hard, suspicious look, like a jealous mother guarding an only child, perhaps.

"Come with me into the laboratory,' he grunted. He led me before an apparatus—a miniature replica of the one I showed you before. With this machinery, he explained, he could demonstrate his claims, but atomic disintegration would be affected on an infinitely small scale. To kindle the atomic fire, again I am speaking figuratively, Ericson relied on the stimulus of tremendous electrical voltages supplied by his special dynamos. He twirled a few dials, threw the switch which contacted the electrical current with his secret 'atom-disrupter,' as he termed it. A split second later the laboratory was

rocked by a series of violent explosions—I thought the roof would tumble down.

"That,' had gravely pointed out Ericson, as I stood trying to dodge the falling plaster, 'was the result of the disintegration of the smallest particle of matter which cohesion can keep together—a grain so fine that it is visible only through an extremely sensitive microscope! Now do you doubt my claims, skeptic?' he gloated, standing by me for congratulations, while I remained rooted to the ground, speechless."

APPARENTLY as an afterthought Cameron turned to Wade, saying, "You can still see the pieces of plaster on the laboratory floor, where they fell. As for the model of Ericson's machine and his abundant mathematical data, he later destroyed them. He was insanely jealous of his secret, and distrusted me most openly. Nevertheless, he used to revel in my praises for him."

"I can well believe the former," broke in Wade. "Let's not mince matters, any, Cameron. You hated Ericson—envied him, and had an affair with his wife in the bargain. Everyone knew about it, and Ericson, blind fool that he was, was the last to find out about it, as is the usual case. Ericson took you into his confidence, built up a reputation for you. And typical ingrate that scoundrels like you are, you reciprocated his benignity by first becoming involved in a scandal with his wife, and then you cap the climax by murdering them both. Listen to me, Cameron," heatedly went on the police reporter, "there isn't a jury in the world that won't convict you! I think you're cracked like Ericson, bringing in all this tomfoolery about his invention. I'm fed up on this. What say we take



him down to headquarters, Byrnes?"

"That won't be necessary," interrupted Cameron, an angry scowl on his face. "Now listen to me—all of you!" Cameron's tone was menacing now, commanding. "I'll admit I played around with his wife—that was his hard luck. But I didn't murder them. I only protected myself, and the world in general, from a scientist gone mad!

"Ericson found out about our affair tonight. He overheard me talking to his wife. The little fool was begging me to run away with her. But I'll have to say this much for Ericson; there were no fireworks, no hysterical threats on his part. No, the man was far too intelligent to engage in a prosaic denouncement of us both.

"But an inner sense—a sixth sense, if you will, told me that he was brooding revenge. And what a diabolic reprisal he intended for us, I later learned! Only a man with a distorted mind like his could have conceived it.

"He headed straight for his laboratory. I remained in the living-room quieting his wife as best I could. The frantic woman now blamed me entirely for breaking up her home, absolving herself completely of any guilt in our affair.

"During the next few hours, we heard noises coming from the laboratory, as if someone were moving heavy pieces of apparatus about. Occasionally the noise would subside to be supplanted by a furious hammering; then the same noises would begin again.

"Four hours later he came out of his laboratory, hair disheveled, wild-eyed, an automatic clutched in his hand. Pointing the weapon imperatively at us, he gestured that we follow him into the laboratory.

"The moment I entered the laboratory, I sensed his real purpose. He had been assembling together parts of his atomic-disintegration machine—but this time, instead of a model, he had constructed the ponderous machine I brought to your attention when you first arrived here.

"We stood in the room, Mrs. Ericson and myself, waiting for an explanation of his strange behavior. Taking care to keep us covered with his gun he finally spoke.

"Do you know what will happen when I close that lever?" he asked, crossing the room within reach of the atomic machine. 'I'll tell you what will happen, my little lovebirds,' he said, without waiting for a reply to his rhetorical question. 'With this machine, I can loose the energy locked up in the atom. Cameron here knows I can do it,' he added, for the benefit of his wife. 'I have so arranged the dials on the switchboard that when the switch is thrown the process of disintegration will be so speeded up that our entire globe will be literally blown to bits. I am going to pull that lever right now!'"

"I drew my own revolver and fired at his shoulder before Ericson could pull the lever that would destroy the world, intending to disable him and call for help. Unfortunately, my aim was poor and the bullet entered his forehead. I rushed over to his side to see the extent of the wound. Almost simultaneously Mrs. Ericson lunged at me and seized the gun out of my hand. She would have killed me, I am positive, had I not grabbed her by the throat and throttled her into submission. But evidently my tactics were too vicious, for she died also. Most regrettable," grinned Cameron. "Then I phoned the police. That certainly was self-defense, eh gentlemen?"

"Do you mean to say that if I pulled that switch in the scientist's laboratory the world would go blooey, and me with it?" interposed Byrnes.

"Exactly," answered Cameron, the grin now broader than ever. "Want to try it?"

"Dr. Cameron, I take my hat off to you," commented Wade. "A beautiful story, you've told us. It's worthy of Harry Stephen Keeler, the mystery novelist. You planned it all beforehand with consummate deliberateness. You killed them both—but not in self-defense! Mrs. Ericson ended her affair with you probably a few weeks ago—I can't blame her for that—and you, enraged and envious of Professor Ericson, plotted the double murder. You rigged up this machine and a plausible explanation of its workings to provide you with a motive for self-defense, so to speak. You planned this thing down to the most minute detail, from the 'fallen plaster' to the 'destroyed miniature model and mathematical papers.' You're laughing at us right now, because we can't call your bluff. For if we want to prove you guilty, we must show that the machine cannot disintegrate the atom. If, by some remote chance, you're telling the truth and we pull the switch—where are we? An excellent job, Cameron, but we'll get you somehow."

"You're not so dumb for a reporter, Wade," laughed Cameron. "And suppose you run along now to your city editor and report the two deaths as an unavoidable accident. It was really that, you know," he added innocently. "In the meanwhile, I'll do my good deed for the day by smashing this machine with an axe."

"When I go back to my paper," snarled Wade, "it will be with news of your arrest. I'm staying right here to see the thing through!"

"I think Cameron is telling the truth," contributed Captain Judson. "He sure sounded real convincing—and I don't like the looks of that machine. Better let him wreck it. I'm not taking any chances."

"That's exactly what he wants us to think," argued Wade. "No, men, that machine is a phoney—but we're too yellow to call his bluff. Because we're not one hundred per cent sure! After all, he may be telling the truth!"

"Wade is right, boys," joined in Cameron. "If anyone doubts my claims, why, he can pull the lever and see for himself. After all, you can't hold me responsible for killing a madman. What would you have done in my place, Wade?"

**B**UT Wade didn't answer. He seemed to be totally engrossed in some mental problem. "Couldn't we get some scientists to give the machine a once-over?" suggested Byrnes.

"No," bellowed Judson. "Cameron would then contend that they tinkered around and damaged one of the 'delicate parts.' The only way we can settle this is to go right up to that switchboard and throw the lever into contact. Nothing should happen, but if it's as Cameron says, we'll be blown into kingdom come . . ."

Suddenly Wade arose from his chair. He walked over to Cameron and quietly announced: "It's all up, Cameron. You're through! Tell me, quickly, what are three properties possessing radioactivity?"

Cameron went pale. "Why, radium, thorium, and uranium. Why do you ask?" he stuttered.

"You'll know soon enough," barked back Wade. "Now tell me, what do you know of Paleolithic Man in the Aurignacian Epoch?"



"I'm no paleontologist," answered Cameron. "What should I know about Paleolithic Man?"

"That's all I wanted to find out," snapped Wade. "Have you got an encyclopedia around the house?"

"In the library—room next to the laboratory," replied the scientist, an uneasy look lighting his face.

"Keep an eye on him, Byrnes, while I go look something up," ordered Wade. "I'll be right back."

Ten minutes later when Wade returned to the living-room, a smile of elation hovering on his lips, Cameron was his old reckless self again.

"Find anything interesting, Sheerluck Holmes?" he flaunted.

"Plenty," Wade assured him. "Let's go into the laboratory, men, I am going to pull that switch!"

"You're crazy," roared Dr. Cameron as Wade determinedly walked up to the switchboard.

"Let go of that thing or I'll kill you myself, Wade!" screamed Byrnes.

"Look out," yelled Judson. "My God, he's pulled the lever!"

Nothing happened. Wade grinned. "I told you so," he whispered.

**C**AMERON'S face twisted into a horrible grimace. "You're pretty clever, Wade. Sure, I killed them both. I hated them. Of course the machine was a fake, but I'll never die in the electric chair!"

"We'll see about that," answered Wade. "Hold him, Byrnes."

Cameron drew up. "Like hell you will!" he blurted. His hand flashed inside his coat. The first shot tore through the flesh of Byrne's upper right arm and clicked into the top of the machine. The second whizzed past Wade's cheek. He whirled against the wall and fired twice swiftly. Cameron was crouched be-

side a table. Wade's bullets sent splinters flying into his face.

A hoarse yell came from near the switchboard. It was Judson. He fired once and Cameron screamed. Two bullets from Cameron's gun sped across the table and thudded into the opposite wall. Cameron fell to his hands, then fired again.

Two reports roared in the room at the same instant. Wade felt Cameron's bullet tear through the cloth over his shoulder and nick a bone. Cameron went down to his hands again, then rolled on his side.

Wade jumped across the room and kicked. The toe of his shoe struck Cameron's gun and spun it away. Cameron was lying motionless beside the table, semi-conscious.

Wade made them hold the presses while he wrote and wrote. He handed in his finished copy to his city editor for approval. "Look here, Wade," he said, "Judson and Byrnes told me everything that happened. You certainly had nerve when you pulled that lever. And why did you ask Cameron those two questions, about the elements possessing radioactivity, and Paleolithic Man in the Aurignacian Epoch? I'm curious to know."

Wade lit his first cigar for the night. "I wanted to get into the laboratory without Cameron suspecting that I was prowling about. So I asked him those two questions, which were of a technical nature. Then, when I apparently went into the library, I went into the laboratory instead."

"Yes, but I don't see . . ."

"Once in the laboratory," interrupted Wade, "I disconnected the electrical cable from the outlet in the wall. So nothing could happen when I pulled the switch. Cameron gave himself away. The only switch that will bother him now is the one the executioner will pull in the death house."

**TELEVISION IS HERE !**

# **MOVIES VIA RADIO**

**by RANSOM F. READ**

**N**OT many years after the birth of science-fiction, as a classified newsstand fiction, radio experimenters began to promise us television "within two years." Back in 1927, we were told that everyone would have television in the home by 1929—etc. Well, we didn't have practical television in 1929—nor in 1933 nor 1936. Many of us began to think that it was still just an impractical dream.

Science-fiction fans in particular became disillusioned and impatient during this delay—for they had read about television in practical use in dozens of romances of the future. They had become almost as well acquainted with television as though it were already a form of home entertainment and instruction.

What a thrill our science-fiction fans are receiving now—as well as the general public—to see actual, practical television receivers on display in radio stores! For television is really here to stay!

Television—the perfect and truthful distributor of the events that change the face of the Earth and the history of the nations!

While many people consider television to be a relatively recent discovery, many years of laboratory work have preceded its perfection and introduction to the public. One of our largest electrical concerns has carried on an intense research in this field since 1922. In 1926 experimentation had reached the point

where an actual, though crude, demonstration was made possible. In this year, a broadcast took place using the mirror wheel and multiple flying spot.

Later, work was undertaken with a 48-line system using the nipkow disk and a single flying spot. The next development was a 24-line system, necessarily of low definition, but operating within the frequency limits of the standard broadcast channels. Using this latter method, regularly scheduled programs were broadcast by the General Electric station, WGY, in Schenectady, on both long and short waves. Pictures from these broadcasts were received by amateurs in various parts of the country—even as far away as Los Angeles!

In the fall of 1928, at the New York Radio Show, a projected 48-line television picture approximately one foot square was demonstrated. In April, 1929, television images were produced on a cathode ray tube using an early gas-focused oscilloscope tube. Twenty-four line images of black and white geometrical patterns were obtained, but further progress along these lines awaited the development of a tube with means for modulating the electron beam to produce gradation in the picture.

In May, 1930, a large television picture, approximately seven feet square, was demonstrated by General Electric in Proctor's Theater, Schenectady, New York.

Early in 1931, weekly television



programs were broadcast to Europe on seventeen meters, using the 30-line 15-picture per second German standard, in use at that time. These were so well-received in Berlin, that accurate drawings were made there of several different geometrical patterns transmitted. During this time, 48-line television images were successfully recorded on motion picture film. An interesting corollary of this was the fact that, when the pictures were printed matter, they could be transmitted and recorded at the rate of 20,000 words per minute!

During 1935, experimenters succeeded in securing high definition pictures of 245-lines. Early in 1936, this equipment was again taken to the laboratories and made part of an intensive television program on the part of the engineers. Later, the equipment was extensively modified and a complete system—including electronic camera tubes, cameras, synchronizing generators, video and audio transmitters, and receivers—was developed and constructed. In October, 1937, this complete system was demonstrated and proved, to provide a very satisfactory picture.

By the year 1937, enough success had been attained in the development and perfection of television to show promise of practicability. So, in that year, the manufacturers took courage to investigate the commercializing possibilities of television receivers for popular use. Plans were made for the mass production and distribution of sets, and for daily television broadcasts. The plans started at that time involved all the aspects of television. It included the erection of transmitters and building antennae, in favorable locations on cliffs, high peaks, and tall buildings. Signals in the high power frequencies in the

bands around 70 megacycles were decided to be most fit for "see-and-hear" broadcasts.

**A**T THE New York World's Fair, some of the larger electrical manufacturers give daily television demonstrations, in which the public is allowed not only to view the reception, but also take part in the transmission. This takes the form of interviews given by employees of the television manufacturers. In one room, the persons in the broadcast stand before a complicated apparatus and are surrounded on all sides by fantastic-looking mechanisms, covered with dials, gauges, levers, buttons, etc.

In another room of these exhibits are found all types of television receiving set models, from table sets to great consoles, through which visitors are allowed to view the transmission of the images—often their own friends.

Yes, we must certainly accept modern television as a permanent fixture, the latest marvel of our super-science! Of course, it is still in its infancy, but the next decade should bring about a great many improvements in this field. With the present methods used in television transmission, images can only be received within a limited range, due to the curvature of the Earth. Both the costs of transmission and receiving sets are very high—but so was the case with radio in the early days.

However, we can really be assured, this time, that television is on its way to becoming a household necessity within the next few years. You will soon have large, distinct motion pictures in your own parlor—perhaps, some day—even in Technicolor!



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.

**I**N THIS department, we present the views of our readers about the future—both the scientific and social developments that are likely to come about. How do you think that science will change the world? We want your opinion on this matter.

This month, we are giving the entire department over to one letter from a Private at Fort Williams, Portland, Maine. In this letter he gives many conjectures. If you disagree with any of his theories, you can voice your reasons through THE ETERNAL CONFLICT.

## WHAT IS LIKELY TO COME

by R. D. COLTON

**F**IRST would come a devastating war to completely overthrow today's mixed-up conditions of lack of understanding between man and fellow-man. Then would come a period of recovery starting with anarchy—and gradually evolving into a better understanding until our descendants, realizing the uselessness of war, the utter folly of selfishness and distrust, would form a world-wide federation of all Mankind. It is even possible that mystical powers, such as is suggested in Paul Edmond's "Telepathy is News!" (June SCIENCE FICTION) would be developed, thus affording absolute and universal understanding. Then, with all Mankind WILLING (not forced) to co-operate for a common purpose, the lost wonders of civilization together with those of other great civilizations (Lemurian, Egyptian, classical, etc.) would be rediscovered and harmoniously employed in making this world a REAL Utopia. Then, developments in the arts, the sciences, and in engineering would know no bounds.

Earth, 3120 A.D.:

Atomic Power: With the earliest rudiments of this already discovered (Harvard, M. I. T. "Atom Smasher") atomic power would, by 3120 A.D., furnish us with unaccustomed floods of cheap, yes, even free power—as money, or any medium of exchange would be completely unnecessary in a world of mutual understanding.

People of the future: Save for a few isolated super-sky-scrappers here and there, and for low, modest, nearly-hidden single-family, one-story domiciles, the Earth's surface would be completely turned over to Nature for her to work her beauties on—while just below the surface, all over the world, would be ONE ultra-super-city, extending over the entire world, and, perhaps ten or fifteen miles deep. All this, with the above-ground structures mentioned, would be completely air-conditioned and synthetically day-lighted, perpetually. Agriculture would be synthetically carried on in underground chambers—thus freeing man from the surface altogether.

Transportation would be by underground railroads or highways for distances less than a hundred miles or so; by super-airship between the tops of the super-sky-scrappers for long-distance. Those same sky-ports would be used for space-ships of the type suggested in John Coleridge's "The Black Comet" (June SCIENCE FICTION)—automatic controls and repulsor-screens and all—in their interplanetary commerce. Other planets, though appearing as they would when Man first landed on them, would nevertheless become filled with metropolises just below their surfaces, just like Earth—thus Man can expand his future domain, and yet let the original life on all the planets be.

What we'd find on the various planets would most likely be what present-day tele-



scopes give evidence of—the canals of Mars, for instance, might turn out to be ten-mile-wide, glassed-over strips of farmlands, with major railroads, etc., running their lengths and air-routes following their courses—with large cities at the junctures of these “canals.” The exterior surface of Mars would probably be desert lands, with here and there patches of a strange kind of vegetation, adapted to Martian conditions. Man could undermine all of Mars’ surface with his super-cities, without interfering with any civilization that might already be there.

It is even feasible that this Martian race, being human like us, might become a willing annexation to our domain. And so on, to the other planets, likewise.

**T**HE world’s end: The only “World’s End” we’d need to worry about, for the present day, that is, is the big civilization-wrecking war I mentioned earlier in this note. As to an end coming from the planet itself, I believe Man of the future will foresee it in time to affect a mass-migration to other planets, or stellar-systems—no matter what that end might be.

Attaining immortality: With no limits imposed on scientific progress, this may come about—though, strictly speaking, it wouldn’t be “Immortality,” for even if an individual remained alive and young for a million years, he’s still subject to violent accident. However, in the face of mutual understanding, no need to worry about over-ambitious dictators equipping themselves with “immortal armies.”

As to the sexes: Just as there would be

absolute understanding between races, so would there be between the sexes. Neither would dominate, even though one is superior to the other in some respects, inferior in others. These superiorities and inferiorities can be made to harmonize—thus a man’s greater physical strength and mental judgment can harmonize with a woman’s gift of intuition and her sense of beauty.

Atlantis, Lemuria, etc.: No telling about any mythical civilizations of the past, but because such myths persist in all parts of the world, there may be something to it. In fact, every day scientists are digging up evidences which could be explained by saying there were such civilizations.

Economic problem: With mutual understanding, there would be no need to worry about any “economic problems.” Everyone would be in constant contact and understanding with everyone else, so when it comes to a new invention or discovery, the entire world would become simultaneously aware of it.

Our leisure time would be spent in any one of a number of ways—pleasant physical exercising like today’s bowling, roller-skating, bicycling, or just plain walking, etc.—or visiting super-museums, galleries, wherever you’d happen to be. For, indeed, man-made works of that time, unlike those of today, would present a pleasing harmony, not only integrally, but with the works of Nature as well. The entire world (including all planets occupied by Man) would be a perpetual “World’s Fair,” and as full of color-harmony as the current Pacific Exposition or New York’s “World of Tomorrow.”

## FREE PAUL PAINTING!

For over a decade the fans have fought to secure original cover paintings by the world-famous science-fiction artist—

## FRANK R. PAUL

Here is your opportunity to possess one of these masterpieces! The Editors of Science Fiction will present, free of charge, the original painting of this issue’s cover to the person sending in the most interesting comment upon this number of Science Fiction!

**SEND YOUR LETTER TODAY!**



A special supplement department for the active science-fiction fan and collector. Send your items of fan interest to THE FANTASY FAN, SCIENCE FICTION, 60 Hudson St., New York.

## ARE YOU A FAN?

**I**F YOU belong to a science-fiction club, issue or work on a science-fiction fan publication, or come in contact with science-fiction notables, why not write us about it? Readers of THE FANTASY FAN are anxiously awaiting to know what you are doing to spread the gospel of science-fiction! Share your experiences in the fan field with advocates all over the world! This department is open to all fan, author, and publishing material, so don't hesitate to make free use of it.

## FORREST J. ACKERMAN

**W**E HEREBY dedicate this issue of SCIENCE FICTION to Mr. Forrest J. Ackerman of Hollywood and San Francisco, California.

To the best of our knowledge—and we think we know the fans—Mr. Ackerman has devoted more actual hours to the perusal and popularizing of science-fiction during the past thirteen years than any other advocate of fantasy.

Year after year, he has unselfishly spent a large part of his time spreading propaganda for science-fiction, creating new fans all over the world by means of a tremendous amount of correspondence. He has done all this without any thought of recompense because he loves science-fiction and sincerely believes it to be a great force in the molding of the new generation into a peace-loving, brotherly, forward-looking, and broad-minded, scientific humanity.

Aside from his great work of creating new lovers of science-fiction, Forrie has spent much time, energy, and money in building up what is undoubtedly the world's finest and largest collection of science-fiction movies, autographs of science-fiction celebrities, and original illustrations by famous fantasy artists are among his unique collection.

Due to the fact that Forrest J. Ackerman has put in more time and effort to spread science-fiction and keep it on a high intellectual level than anyone else, we have no choice but to nominate him as World Science Fiction Fan Number One.

## WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION

**T**HE spirit of science-fiction was born thousands of years ago—accepted science-fiction stories have been written over a century. The term "science-fiction" to designate pseudo-scientific fantasy came into use less than two decades ago—but in all those years, in all those decades, the significant month in the history of science-fiction, to date, was July, 1939.

The World Science Fiction Convention was held during the early days of last July—the greatest assembly of science-fiction fans, authors, artists, editors, and notables of all time! Here indeed was the apex of attainment in the science-fiction world—mostly due to the untiring efforts of several New York City fans—Sam Moskowitz, James V. Taurasi, William S. Sykora, Mario Racic, and Julius Schwartz, among others, under a rapidly-growing science-fiction fan organization known as New Fandom. For fourteen months these fans labored continuously to make a success of the World Science Fiction Convention—and they are now pleased to report that it was a complete success, even financially.

Early in the morning of Sunday, July 2nd, a few lone creatures were pacing a certain block on East 59th St., New York, passing back and forth before a door that bore the legend: Caravan Hall. For these were the harbingers of the World Science Fiction Convention. The doors were still locked, and would be for hours, but these fans had traveled great distances to attend this momentous occasion, and were burning with anxiety. Many of them had slept little the



night before. Below the second-story windows of the Caravan Hall was strung a long banner announcing, proudly, "World Science Fiction Convention."

Around 10:00 a. m., the doors were opened for a pre-convention get-together, attended by dozens of fans and authors. Many acquaintances were made at this time, although the Convention did not officially open until 2:00 p. m. A little after noon, the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Queens Science Fiction League began accepting registrations, at the same time giving each Convention member a badge on which was stamped "World Sci Convention." Members were requested to write their names on these badges so that they could be easily identified by their many hitherto unseen friends.

What a mob surrounded those registration desks! What a turn-out! It certainly did the heart good to see such loyal enthusiasm for science-fiction.

After the confusion of registration was over, the Convention members were seated in the Convention hall. There were upward of two hundred, representing California, New Mexico, Canada, Texas, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Virginia, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, and many other states.

Let's just take a look around the room before the opening meeting. Here in one row we find Eando Binder, Jack Williamson, Edmond Hamilton, and Julius Schwartz. Ross Rocklyne and Nelson S. Bond are discussing new plots. Frank R. Paul is talking to Charles D. Hornig about the latest SCIENCE-FICTION cover. Off to the side we find Mort Weisinger and Leo Margules in a huddle. John W. Campbell, Jr., is sitting with R. D. Swither and their wives.

Harl Vincent and Malcolm Jameson seem to be having a serious discussion. Jimmy Taurasi and Sam Moskowitz are struggling with the microphone on the platform—with Bill Sykora glibly telling it: "One, two, three, four!"

We are pleasantly surprised to see Ray Cummings among us, with his daughter. Nearby, there is a little horse-play between author David V. Reed and the Jeep—Mort Weisinger's bridge-mad brother.

But look!—has one of Paul's drawings come to life? Oh, no—we recognize him now—it's none other than Forrest J. Ackerman, all the way from Hollywood, all dressed up like something out of H. G.

Wells' "Things to Come," complete with Paul pantaloons. Accompanying him is Myrtle R. Douglas, the nation's leading feminine fan, also from Hollywood, and also dressed in a futuristic costume.

The California delegation is completed by Ray Douglas Bradbury, popular fan and humorist, budding author, and editor of the new fan-mag, "Futura Fantasia." These Californians are also Esperantists and Technocrats. Many regretted the fact that Pogo of L. A. couldn't come.

In the absence of Ray Palmer, we find his representatives—Earl Korshak and Marc Reinsberg of Chicago. Dale Hart is in from Texas, and a bunch of the fans have come up from Philadelphia—including Oswald Train, Robert A. Madle, Jack Agnew, and Milton Rothman. Kenneth Sterling, a Harvard man, is also present—not to mention Louis Kuslan, Gertrude Kuslan, Lloyd Arthur Eshbach, Otis Adelbert Kline, Jack Darrow, Bill Dellenback, David A. Kyle, Manly Wade Wellman, Jack Speer, Conrad H. Ruppert, Charles Schneeman, Leonard Levy, and other well-knowns too numerous to mention.

After the address of welcome by Sam Moskowitz, head of the New Fandom Committee, special talks were given by John W. Campbell, Jr., Mort Weisinger, Charles D. Hornig, Frank R. Paul, and William S. Sykora. One of the highlights of the afternoon was the showing of science-fiction's best movie, "Metropolis." Later, the notables present in the audience were requested to stand, one by one, and say a few words to introduce themselves to the gathering.

**SUPER-SALESMAN SAM MOSKOWITZ** led the great Science Fiction Auction in the evening. Hundreds of items were sold—magazines, original illustrations, old fan mags, movie stills, and even a carving by Clark Ashton Smith.

During the second day of the convention, Monday, July 3rd, several science lectures were given, and the auction was continued in the afternoon. At this point, we would like to offer special thanks to New Fandom, the sponsors of the convention, for the excellent abundance of free refreshments, and the marvelous 20-page souvenir program.

On Monday evening, a special dinner was given in honor of Frank R. Paul, SCIENCE FICTION'S veteran artist. About thirty-five persons were present at this affair, and the after-dinner talking lasted until one a. m.

Sincere appreciation and thanks were extended to Paul at this time for his long years of faithful service to science-fiction.

On Tuesday afternoon, July 4th, many fans gathered in Flushing Flats, near the home of Jimmy Taurasi, to play the first all-science-fiction baseball game on record. The Queens fans played the Visitors, winning 23-11. This game undoubtedly made science-fiction history, but it certainly made no baseball history. On the other hand, what do ballplayers know about science-fiction?

A group of about a dozen fans and authors spent Tuesday evening at Coney Island—winding up an exceedingly successful and harmonious convention.

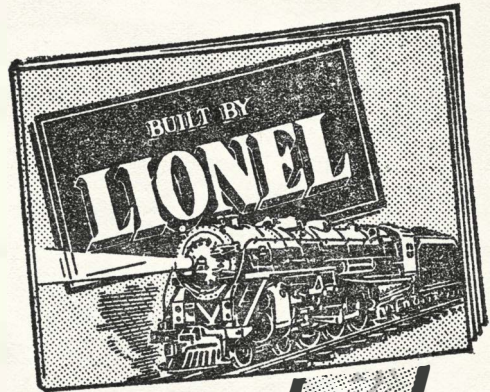
Outside of the convention itself, the out-of-towners were shown around New York by the localites for a period of about two weeks. At one time, a bunch including Ackerman, Douglas, Korshak, Bradbury, Reinsberg, and Hornig paid a special visit to Hugo Gernsback. Other visits were made to the office of Mort Weisinger, Erisman—and, on Saturday, July 8th, a number of fans were received in the private office of A. Merritt. Of course, there was the World's Fair and a lot of general sight-seeing, also.

And so ended the first really big get-together of science-fiction—many happy days that have brought about a greater bond among the active fans, authors, and editors—cementing many intimate, personal friendships where before there had been only postal acquaintances.

Due to the huge success of the First World Science Fiction Convention, the fans are planning to hold one every year. Tentatively, the convention city for 1940 has been designated as Chicago; 1941 is wide open, but the California fans want everyone in Los Angeles in 1942—with the double attraction of the World's Fair.

## FAN MAGS

**T**HE Convention news crowded out this issue's supply of fan-mag information—but more publications will be reviewed in the next issue. If you know of a good effort of this nature that may have escaped our attention, please send us a copy for review.



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## 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, there's plenty of news this month!

First a word about **FUTURE FICTION**, our companion magazine. Following the rule of all good companions, this new sister does not compete with **SCIENCE FICTION**. It acts as a supplement—they supplement each other. They harmonize. Both **SCIENCE FICTION** and **FUTURE FICTION** present science-fantasy stories of the adventure type, but you will find a difference between these two books. In **SCIENCE FICTION** we go in for the scientific angle more—not boring technicalities and long-winded discussions, but brief scientific theories that can be understood by the layman (who typifies the majority of readers)—logical and believable ideas that keep our fantasy out of the fairy-tale class. On the other hand, **FUTURE FICTION** uses stories in which the science is relatively unimportant. The big thing in the new magazine is rapid-action thrills, and fantastic portrayals of tomorrow. Of course, nothing in this magazine is contrary to known science, but the emphasis is placed mostly on human emotions and adventure. The stories in both **SCIENCE FICTION** and **FUTURE FICTION** transport you into the realm of future possibilities, away from the hum-drum workaday world—so don't fail to read both books, every issue, for the best contemporary yarns of science and adventure! If you have not yet read **FUTURE FICTION**, get a copy at your newsdealer's today!

And here's the other big news: the winners in our Cash Prize Contest of the June **SCIENCE FICTION**!

The eleven prizes have been distributed as follows:

**FIRST PRIZE—\$25.00 in Cash**

James Michael Rogers II, 2006 Court St., Muskogee, Okla.

**SECOND PRIZE—\$15.00 in Cash**  
Sam Moskowitz, 603 So. 11th St., Newark, N. J.

**THIRD PRIZE—\$5.00 in Cash**  
Andrew Lenard, Pozsonyi ut 7.11.1., Budapest, Hungary.

**FOURTH PRIZE—\$5.00 in Cash**  
Martin Rosen, 309 E 94th St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

**FIFTH PRIZE—Original Paul cover-illustration**  
Clifford Kornoelje, 3847 N. Francisco Ave., Chicago, Ill.

**SIXTH PRIZE—Original Paul cover-illustration**  
Thom. S. Gardner, Columbia U., John Jay Hall, New York City.

**SEVENTH TO ELEVENTH PRIZES**  
One year subscription to **SCIENCE FICTION**, each:

Milton A. Rothman, 2113 N. Franklin St., Philadelphia, Penna.

M. F. Bolton, 115 Marine Ave., Manhattan Beach, Calif.

Dayton Stepp, 2651 So. Manhattan Pl., Los Angeles, Calif.

Tom L. Munger, 3007-15 Book Tower, Detroit, Mich.

Clifford Gessler, care of The Tribune, Oakland, Calif.

The persons listed above sent in the best essays telling what they considered to be the "Essentials of Good Science-Fiction." So many hundreds of really good essays were received that it became a very difficult job to decide just which ones were on top.

Due to a sudden influx of advertisements in the October **SCIENCE FICTION**, the "Eternal Conflict" science department was crowded out of that number. I'll do my best to avoid similar catastrophes in the future!

According to your letters, Edmond Hamilton's little story, "The Man Who Solved Death," was voted the most popular yarn in

the August issue, with Ephraim Winiki's "Jewels from the Moon" coming in second.

I'm anxious to get your comments on the current number. I don't like to boast about SCIENCE FICTION (not much!), but I really think you'll agree that this number—featuring the incomparable Coblenz and Cummings—is one of the very best fantasy magazines issued in recent years. Do you agree?

CHARLES D. HORNIG,  
Editor—SCIENCE FICTION  
60 Hudson Street  
New York City

#### THE AUGUST NUMBER

Dear Mr. Hornig:

Your magazine is improving with each succeeding issue instead of retrograding as pulp magazines usually do. The August issue went far ahead of the two previous ones.

"The Man Who Solved Death" was the best-written story. It was short, forceful, and presented a clear, plausible picture. I would like to have had it illustrated. There was nothing new or original about the plot, though. I've read several stories that had practically the same plot and theme.

"The Mogu of Mars" and "The Jewels From the Moon" tie for second place. But after second consideration, "The Jewels From the Moon" gets it. "The Mogu of Mars" dwindled out at the end. Winiki's story contained a really new idea even though it wasn't a strong one.

"The Sphinx of the Spaceways" has to take a back seat in my estimation. The characters are weak. It is merely a typical space yarn with nothing to differentiate it from the rest. Ed Earl Repp had an idea in that flat world. Why didn't he build it up and explain it? That would have given the reader something to think about after finishing the story.

"The God That Science Made" and "The Silent World" were interesting but not outstanding. I'll give them the rating of "Good."

"Strange Creature" was too impractical, too uneventful, and presented in too mundane a manner to be awarded a "Good" mark.

I like your articles because they are brief and to the point, but especially because they are brief. Your cover was outstanding and thought-provoking, but personally I prefer to have the cover illustrate one of the stories.

Now what was the idea of hiding that enlightening editorial clear at the back of the

magazine? If I hadn't noticed it on the contents page, I would have missed it altogether. You write good editorials (this one was especially good), so don't hide them under a bushel. I quite agree with you that your magazine has filled a gap in the science-fiction field. Keep up that balance of not too much fiction, and not too much science.

F. E. HARDART,  
P. O. Box 1088,  
Poughkeepsie, N. Y.

(Letters of this type are among the most important and most welcome that any editor can receive, because they offer comments and criticisms that help in planning the future policy of the magazine. This one is especially interesting because it represents the average relative position of the August stories, in popularity.)

I hope you'll give me the same service on all future numbers.—EDITOR)

#### THE LOVECRAFT BOOK

Dear Charles:

I fear I have been somewhat negligent in failing to congratulate you on the nice job you are doing with your new magazine. I hope you are in for a long and successful career as an editor. You certainly are entitled to it.

I assume you attended the convention. Unfortunately, I was unable to get there; but I understand that Sterling read the announcement in regard to the proposed Lovecraft book. In the event you didn't get one of the batch of notices I gave Sterling, I am enclosing one herewith. Any publicity you can give this plan will be greatly appreciated by not only Derleth, Wandrei, and "yours truly," but by all Lovecraft fans.

H. C. KOENIG,  
East End Ave and 79th Street,  
New York City

(I'm sorry that you were not able to attend the convention. We all had a marvelous time. You'll find a report on this affair in THE FANTASY FAN department, this issue.)

The book Mr. Koenig refers to is "The Outsider and Others" by H. P. Lovecraft. This book contains many hundreds of pages, dozens of stories, articles, and letters by the late master of the occult. Lovecraft was one of the greatest fantasy writers of all time, and his stories have been classed with those of Poe, Machen and Bierce.

All fantasy lovers will want to know more about this book. For information,

(Continued on Page 107)



# WHAT'S IN A NAME?

*An Editorial by* **CHARLES D. HORNIG**

**A**LMOST fourteen years ago, the first science-fiction magazine appeared on the newsstands. In the intervening years, many new titles made their appearance, some of which were swallowed by oblivion, and others changing publishers.

Though there had been over a dozen different titles for these magazines—all of which published science fiction exclusively—not one of them used the most logical of all names for their identification—SCIENCE FICTION, until the magazine you now hold in your hands came into existence last winter.

Sometimes we wonder why some publisher didn't adapt the title SCIENCE FICTION over a decade ago. Does it lack sensationalism! Does it deceive the reader? Does it drive people away? Many a publisher must have pondered these questions, all deciding against adapting the most logical name for a science-fiction publication.

Last winter, when I was hired by the Blue Ribbon Magazines, Inc., to edit a new science-fiction magazine for them, I decided that it was about time to give the words SCIENCE FICTION themselves a trial at selling our literature.

After all, why not? Why not come out into the open and show the readers just what you are selling, minus sensational camouflaging titles? The fact that SCIENCE FICTION is a pulp magazine with a colorful cover shows the new reader immediately that he is purchasing a book filled with action stories. The title signifies that the stories are based upon, or about scientific subjects.

And that's just what science fiction is—action stories based on science—plus imagination, portrayed by the cover scenes. So, you know just what you are getting when you pick up a copy of SCIENCE FICTION at the newsstand—at first glance—whether or not you have ever read science-fiction stories before.

We're not sorry about it, either. Our sales chart has proven to us that calling a spade a spade is the best policy. In appreciation of the fine progress that our magazine is making in science fiction circles, we're doing our best to bring you the top-cream yarns by the finest authors in the field—the type of literature announced on our cover in nice, large letters—SCIENCE FICTION!

THE END

**AT LAST! A  
SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY  
IS HERE!**

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"THE INFINITE EYE" by Philip Jacques Bartel

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WATCH FOR THE JANUARY, 1940

**FUTURE FICTION**

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**"ISLES OF THE BLEST"**

An Amazing Adventure of Old Atlantis by

**FREDERIC ARNOLD KUMMER, JR.**

PLUS:

"INTERPLANETARY GRAVEYARD" by Edmond Hamilton

"AFTER DOOMSDAY" by John Cotton

"AS IN THE BEGINNING" by Jack Williamson

"RING AROUND THE SUN" by Isaac Asimov

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**ON ALL NEWSSTANDS---15c**

(Continued from Page 103)

write to August W. Derleth, Sauk City, Wisconsin. This compilation of Lovecraft's work is an invaluable "must" for every fantasy-fiction collector and weird-story peruser.—EDITOR)

#### ATTENTION, COLLECTORS!

Dear Mr. Hornig:

Having followed the fortunes (or misfortunes) of scientification for over 15 years, I naturally awaited the arrival of a lusty boy to the ever-increasing family of scientification magazines with bated breath. Paul naturally gave you your first base, Gardner and Hamilton stole second and third for you—and I sincerely believe that your third issue will bring in a home run.

As I said in a former letter, the essentials of science fiction are—the irony of Coblenz, the artistry of Paul, and the imagination of the fantasy fans. Of these you already possess two. It is needless to say which two these are. Keep up the way you are going and you'll soon be at the top of the heap. I know that several of the others are staggering now and will soon be out of the race, while a certain few are leaping ahead.

I would like to state for the benefit of newcomers to science fiction, that in the past fifteen years I have collected over 3,000 magazines and books of science fiction. These I'm at present selling to fans all over the world at very reasonable prices. If you'll be so good as to publish this letter in your readers' column, I'll be greatly obliged.

JULIUS UNGER

1349—50th St.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

(Well! I know how difficult it is to secure the old science-fiction magazines, and I'm glad you're giving the readers of SCIENCE FICTION this opportunity to complete their collections.—EDITOR.)

#### ANOTHER WOMAN READER

Dear Mr. Hornig:

Well, here's another woman that reads Science Fiction and has since 1928—over eleven years now, and not tired of it yet. It grows on one the older one gets.

Re those people who are always crying for stories like the "good old days" of science fiction. It's not that the stories were better, but that they were so new and different, that they seemed to give more of a

thrill than they do now. As you become accustomed to anything, it naturally isn't new or thrilling any more, but more like every-day fare. But don't we all like good substantial fare most of the time? Frankly, I can't seem to get myself interested in any other fiction since I've read science fiction. It simply holds me spell-bound till I finish a story. I'm told I am gifted with a remarkable imagination—but not enough to write the stories myself, it seems.

"Where Eternity Ends," by Eando Binder, held my complete attention from beginning to end. But, of course, all Binder's stories usually do. "Short Wave Madness"—very interesting, if vague short. "Moon Heaven," by Dom Passante—holds the interest but is rather implausible where Elsa Rutter is concerned. "Telepathy Is News!" brings home to us the fact of almost identical conditions across the water.

I didn't like "The Traitor" at all. "The Black Comet" promises lots of sequels. Good reading, too Glad to see you are answering the letters on the readers' pages "The Telepath."

Could you possibly get Merritt to write for you, or is he deceased? Also, isn't there someone who will write a good story of time-travel to the past for a change? It would be so interesting to meet characters from our history.

I wish you the best of luck with this new magazine.

(MRS.) HAZEL F. BAILEY

4039 N. Neilson St.

Philadelphia, Penn.

(Personally, I have always taken the stand you do in regards to the "good old days." Many old timers don't seem to realize that the initial thrill of reading science fiction can't last forever—and they blame latter-day science fiction rather than their own waning enthusiasm.

Mr. Merritt is very much alive, but every minute of his time is taken in editing the American Weekly, with a weekly circulation of about eight million—which, I must admit, is considerably higher than our circulation.—EDITOR.)

#### BUT HE STILL BUYS IT!

Dear Mr. Hornig:

Looking over the second issue of SCIENCE FICTION, I'm sorry to say I

(Continued on Page 108)



(Continued from Page 107)

can't find much to praise, unlike many other readers (unless you publish only complimentary letters) of yours—judging by "The Telepath."

The Binders used to turn out some pretty good stuff, but sad to say, they, or rather he (Otto), have degenerated something fierce since the advent of the practically unlimited scientification market in the last six months. "Where Eternity Ends" is an outstanding example of back.

However, familiarity breeds contempt, so I suppose I am unduly finicky and fussy in my definition of a good scientification story, as I am not an old, but a middle-aged fan, in point of reading scientification. There are so many new fans that eat up this brand of tripe, that I suppose you must cater to them. But just for old time's sake, couldn't you give us "old-timers" a break and publish ONE real good story an issue?

Three stories managed to raise themselves—no, only two—above the muck of mediocrity, but I wouldn't say they were "good." "Telepathy Is News!" almost rated a "B," but the writing was sloppy in spots. "Moon Heaven," playing on the psychology of the reader, who would like nothing better than such an Ionian escape from today's realities, is to be complimented for clever handling. The humor, which should have made it perfect, was clumsily handled, and detracted, rather than added to the general excitement. There was another little inconsistency which I don't like to mention, but I suppose I might as well go whole hog and make a real pest of myself while I'm at it. How could a child of three learn to read and speak by a radio? No object lessons. No spelling lessons. Maybe I'm thick, but I can't see it. The ripped space-suit gag was also unconvincing somehow.

Can't Paul dream up a cover from one of the stories instead of drawing one and having Binder write an excuse for it? (And a poor excuse at that!)

The Esperanto article was the most interesting thing in the magazine. Are there any correspondence courses offered on it at reasonable prices?

Ah, well—I suppose business is business, but with the futile hope of the incurable victim of Clark's "scientifictionitis," I still buy the heap of goo called "science fiction" thinking perhaps it will improve at any mo-

ment, but knowing damn well it won't. Which, I guess, is all you're interested in.

ARTHUR L. WIDNER, JR.

Box 122

Bryantville, Mass.

(Concerning the "old-timers" and the "good old days," I refer you to my comment at the end of the previous letter. You seem to fall into this class, Mr. Widner. Has science fiction really degenerated, or are you just losing your interest in it? The fact that you keep buying it shows that you're a fan still, whether or not you'll admit it!

As to the heroine in "Moon Heaven," you must remember that she was a very clever girl. . . .

Many years ago we discovered that Paul draws his best illustrations the morning after a violent nightmare—so, come cover time, we just feed him a pickle sundae and let him sleep on it. The next morning he draws the cover!

You will find the address of the Esperanto Association on the first page of this department. They can provide you with some very easy courses at ridiculously low prices. I've seen some that sell for a dime and others for a quarter. It's that easy to learn.—EDITOR.)

#### COMMENTS APPRECIATED

Dear Hornig:

So now you're hitting the old stride again! Yes—and Paul, too. It took both an issue of lousy mistakes to get warmed up, but I think (and hope as well) that you'll be going places from now on.

From the cover to the ads at the back, SCIENCE FICTION is getting to look more and more like the old Wonder. Paul came through with the best cover since his return to science fiction. There are, nevertheless, a few errors—only artistic, but errors however. For instance, the perisphere wouldn't burst as though it were made of rubber, no matter how great the pressure within. As I understand it, the ball's made of steel plates riveted to a framework of girders. Therefore, it would definitely not pop open like a punctured basketball. The people pictured as being blasted from the ball are a bit out of proportion—and on second thought, the people wouldn't be all in one piece if the internal combustion was high enough to split the walls. But don't

take me wrong. Paul's done a darned good job there and one which your mag should be proud to offer as a prize.

Thanks for giving Esperanto an editorial boost. But how about running an occasional short-short in that tongue? In fact, either you or 4SJ could translate one of Gardner's beautifully.

And now to close with a plea for a drastic enlarging of the Telepath. If not in actual space, in at least the size of the type. (Oops! That was a slip of my better judgment! I meant "reduce" the type size.) That which was used for the Binder cover filler is perfectly readable and a darned sight better for letters than the italics which you had this issue. Your comments are appreciated as always, and in answer to your swell editorial-letter, I'd like to say that the title, SCIENCE FICTION, is second only to itself in usefulness. As you said, it's about time someone called a science-fiction magazine by its given name!

JIM S. AVERY  
55 Middle St.  
Skowhegan, Me.

(Poor Paul! Everybody's always picking on him, just because he makes use of his poetic license. That's one license that doesn't expire you know, until the artist does—so you can expect him to keep using it. Some things must be stretched a little, when they are painted on a cover, to make them more comprehensible to potential readers who glance at the painting on the newsstands. This is particularly necessary in interplanetary scenes.

We may use an article in the Esperanto language in the near future.

You'll be glad to note that "The Telepath" has been enlarged.—EDITOR.)

#### SCIENCE, ADVENTURE, ROMANCE

Dear Sir:

You may take this as a compliment to your SCIENCE FICTION magazine, because, since I am rather indolent by nature, this is my first letter to an editor.

In general, I prefer novels or novelettes to short stories because the author has more time to develop a plot. Personally, I would rather read three long stories than one long and a number of short ones.

As to the type of stories, I like science, adventure, and romance mixed together. I read such stories for pleasant relaxation;

so I like to have stories end happily. I believe tragic stories leave one mentally disturbed and have no place in science fiction.

I like to read a few articles on modern science or present scientific possibilities.

Have you ever thought of running articles describing interesting scientific apparatus—for example, the 200-inch reflecting telescope, or the device for measuring the speed of light? The articles might include a sketch or diagram as necessary. An explanation of how to make an amateur telescope might be interesting.

Well, I've written enough; in fact, I feel like a student trying to teach his instructor mathematics. You are doing a good job. The above is my personal idea of a good magazine. Very possibly, it does not represent the opinion of the general public.

GEO. W. OULSSEN, JR.  
226 W. 38th St.  
Anderson, Ind.

(We are attempting to present one book-length novel in most issues of SCIENCE FICTION for those who prefer the longer stories—and a mixture of novelettes and short stories to fill the remainder of the magazine, for those who like the shorter ones better. We feel that this arrangement satisfies the majority.

You will find articles on general phases of science in each issue of SCIENCE FICTION, but very little of a technical nature.

I am indeed complimented that you sent your first letter to an editor my way.—EDITOR.)

#### HIGHEST CONGRATULATIONS!

Dear Sir:

I have just finished your second issue of SCIENCE FICTION from cover to cover. My heartiest congratulations on its quality!

Since I sent you my entry in your contest several months ago, there is no need of my expressing my views on what a good science-fiction magazine should be like. Your second issue fulfills all of the important features of my demands except two. I should like to renew my agitation for those two. I "still" think there should be a department in which facts of science are discussed and explained, and I "still" think you should provide front covers by Paul suitable for framing. That is something no other

(Continued on Page 110)

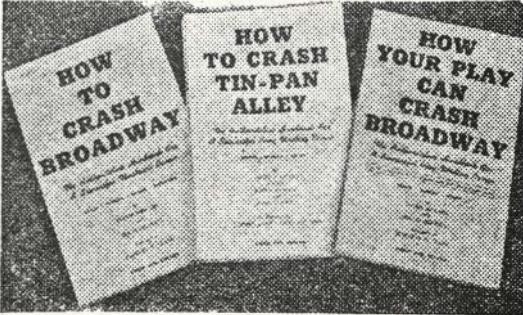


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## SCIENCE FICTION

(Continued from Page 109)

science-fiction mag on the market has at present (the frangible front covers), and I feel it would be a real success. You should be able to collect some data on the success of such an idea from the files of certain mags, notably a "western" and an "aviation" fiction magazine that tried the idea. At any rate, ask the opinion of the readers on the idea.

That article, "Esperanto—Tongue of Tomorrow" of yours really rang the gong with me. I've been hearing about Esperanto, but I never really understood what it was. Now, I want to learn it. Do you suppose you could give me any advice as to how to go about it? I wonder if a course in Esperanto would go good in your mag? No, I suppose not, but it's an idea. What was the reaction of the rest of the readers to the article?

Your proposed department, "The Eternal Conflict" receives my fullest approval. I've been wishing some mag had a department like that for a long time. Some mags do have a department similar to it, but they all lack a certain "freedom" which I believe your new department will acquire if you let it. However, I believe the name should be changed to "The Eternal Questions." "Con-

### 3 OF A KIND....

Science Fiction—

Future Fiction—

Science Fiction Quarterly

READ ALL THREE LEADERS  
IN THE FANTASY FIELD

flict" is too near to being a suggestion. It has an ironic tinge.

All in all, you had an excellent batch of stories in the June issue and I hope your mag climbs to the top in the world of science fiction.

WALLACE W. AUSTIN  
8806 Independence Ave.  
Kansas City, Mo.

(As you can see by the other letters in this department, the Esperanto article met with general approval. Readers, how do you like Mr. Austin's suggestion for an

**THE TELEPATH**

Esperanto course in SCIENCE FICTION?—and the framable covers by Paul?

Mr. Joseph Leahy, Esperanto Association of North America, 1410 H St. N. W., Washington, D. C., will send you information about Esperanto courses and books upon request.

I call the science department "The Eternal Conflict," because I really expect some violent disagreements on various scientific subjects and theories among the readers—nice friendly conflicts, you know, but none the less sincere.—EDITOR)

**WHO ARE YOUR FAVORITES?**

When writing your letter to "The Telepath"—let us know which authors you like best, so that we may secure their works for you—

**We Want to Please You!**

**STREAMLINED SPELLING**

Dear Editor:

Having digested the first issue I am accepting your invitation to drop U a line & let U know how I like. (Pardon my peculiarities in spelling, Mr. Printer, but I believe in being "up-to-tomoro" & think the trend in spelling is toward streamlining like everything else.)

Here r some thots jotted down during a thumb-thru of the issue several wks after having read it (I got it directly it apeard & had completed it a day or 2 later but this is my first opportunity to write):

"Under the White Star" by Edm. Hamilton: Mildly entertaining lite adventure & love story laid in distant future when earth has greatly changed but—implausibly!—human beings r quite the same as now. Nothing to get excited about, except has captivating illustration by Paul on pg. 6. — "Martian Martyrs" by Jno Cole idge: Begins with crash that's a "smash," by Paul. Very good plot fairly well handled. Did not nrly attain its possiblitys but was very good anyway. —Robt Castle's "The Conqueror's Voice": No appeal to me at all. —A very

(Continued on Page 112)

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If you wish to have book sent postage paid enclose \$1, plus 10c for postage charges, and check this box.



## SCIENCE FICTION

(Continued from Page 111)

clever idea very poorly handled, in "Valley of the Pretenders" by Dennis Clive. Good illustration by Paul but narrative wishy-washy. —"The Machine that Tho!" by Wm

## YOU CAN WIN That Free Original PAUL PAINTING— By Sending This Department the Most Interesting Letter About This Issue of SCIENCE FICTION

Callaban (I don't know y I'm repeating all these names of authors as I understand majority of m r pseudonyms); Good illustration, good story. More! — Illustration all x but story n. s. g.: "The Sea Things."— Could stand more good lite reading like the acceptably-illustrated-by-Binder "Outlaw of Saturn." — A good detective story, ARLong's "Death by Fire.— N. G.: "Leeches from Space." — Science article "Hazards of Space Flite" good. More!

I liked the cover.

Best liked "Martian Martyrs" and "Machine that Tho!" but the storys seem to be aimed at new or young readers so none held me enthralled. They seem to be very lite love & adventure storys with a touch of science or cast in the future to make them fit under the name "Science Fiction."

But don't mind me, I'm old enuf to b reading "True Confessions."

(MISS) MOROJO  
Bx 6475 Met Sta  
Los Angeles, Cal.

(Your streamlined spelling smacks an awful lot of the so-called Ackermanese that's been flowing out of L. A. recently. As I once said to Forrie—the Ackerman—"Ain't you ever satisfied? You've got your Esperanto—the language without a flaw—and still you've got to mess up the English language!" Needless to say, I still always spell "thought" the old fashioned way. I pity the poor foreigner, learning English, who comes across a bit of Ackermanese stream-lining! It's enough to make him quit altogether!

Aye am yousing your letter, eaven though late, because aye am ank-shuss to present your vee-yous to hour readers— you bee-ing wunn of the country's most ac-

**THE TELEPATH**

tive fee-male science-fiction fans. Aye hope you have fow-nd an improovment in the passed fee-you ish-yous of the magazine.

The above paragraph is in the new elongated Hornigese. How you like?—EDITOR.)

**"STICK TO HIS MONSTERS"**

Mr. Editor:

I have just secured the first issue of your new magazine, SCIENCE FICTION, and I do not mind telling you that so far I have been very well pleased. The stories thus far are nothing extraordinarily exceptional, that is, when I compare them with the old Gernsback publications—nor do I think that Mr. Paul is living up to his great reputa-

**ESPERANTO**  
Is the World-Tongue  
of the  
**FUTURE**  
Read This Department for  
Information

tion by attempting to draw human figures, as every ardent science-fiction fan knows that Paul cannot draw "humans." But this does not detract from his "real" ability, because as far as machines and impossible creations go, Paul does not have any rivals! So, please, in the future, advise him to "stick to his monsters and space-ships." If you have any doubts about this criticism, kindly examine your current copy and I am sure that you will see my point of view (along with all other Paul fans' viewpoints.)

In my own magazine, "The Lane Tech Prep," I have been gradually introducing science fiction, both in the form of articles, and stories. (The largest High School magazine in the world with a reading circulation of over 10,000.) So, it was with a great amount of interest that I read your contest column, and herewith submit my own individual version of the subject, "The Essentials of Good Science Fiction." I write this article, not because of the money-prizes involved, but because of my own personal interest in the subject.

W. LAWRENCE HAMLING  
2609 Argyle St.  
Chicago, Ill.

(Continued on Page 114)

**I don't care how big  
the other fellow is  
— you can knock  
him cold with  
JIU JITSU!**



**Prof. Kuwashima**  
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## SCIENCE FICTION

(Continued from Page 113)

(I must agree with you that Paul excels in his portrayal of space-ships and alien forms of life—and I intend that most of his drawings for SCIENCE FICTION shall be based around such subjects, rather than those entailing human figures alone. How do you like Schneeman's execution of humans?)

Your use of science fiction in "The Lane Tech Prep," with such a large circulation for a school paper, interests me. I wonder if you'd send me a copy containing science fiction?

I'm late in using your letter, but I'd like to get your opinions of the subsequent numbers of SCIENCE FICTION. Most fans that have written in lately have declared that the magazine has improved since the first number. What do you think?

As this issue goes to press, the closing date of the Cash Prize Contest has not yet arrived, but I hope to be able to announce the winners in the next number.—EDITOR.)

### TECHNOCRACY REVIVED!

Dear Charlie:

*Would have got this letter off sooner, but there was (and still is) plenty of work for*

### ALL FOR YOU!

**Our Three Departments—  
THE ETERNAL CONFLICT  
THE FANTASY FAN  
THE TELEPATH**

**Are composed for the benefit and interest of**

**You, the Reader!**

**Don't neglect sending in your letters!**

*me to get off. I got THE mag a long time ago, and finished reading it a long time ago, but, this recent Easter vacation gave me ample opportunity to let all pretense of application slide.*

*I am naturally quite surprised and pleased over the HELLO, BRUCE! thing, but it was quite unnecessary. I also see that brother Bradbury had a letter published. We seem to be monopolizing the magazines.*

*In regards to THE magazine, it was, frankly, better than the first issue, which I,*

## THE TELEPATH

again frankly, didn't think so much of, but which I very hypocritically hedged around in the missive. The cover was swell, and was somewhat unusual for brother Paul. It looked like one of the last two or three covers on the old Amazing Stories. I look forward to some beautiful lurid yellow and red swashings.

All the stories were good, but the one which I didn't especially care for was "The Black Comet." "Where Eternity Ends" was a swell story, and I liked "Moon Heaven," after I got used to the amazing Betts. Only one question. I doubt if, from a philological standpoint, a child of three would remember enough of the English of its parents to eventually master the language. It would no doubt grow up without the use of a language, or else it would have some unintelligible gibberish of its own.

I liked your Esperanto editorial, being a sort of pseudo- or embryo-Esperantist. I go to the local club here, and was even at one time so energetic as to get a book (a little green book which Forrie sells, called "Practical Esperanto," by Dr. Benson) and make an attempt to learn the language. I got along, as Forrie put it, "in a most phantastical manner," but stiff competition from French and German soon put an end to this. I would catch myself saying something like this: "je voule zu gehen al la chambro," which is a mixture of French, German, and Esperanto. Lest I be caught bashing my head against the wall, I had to regretfully give it up.

You asked in your editorial comment to a certain letter, that the writer of the aforementioned write to the writer of the aforementioned, in regards to the progress of certain individuals in a certain city of the West Coast.

The latest fad for the members here in-and-about seems to be Technocracy. Possibly you have heard of the movement, in a generally vague and uninformed way. So

(Continued on Page 116)

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30x4.50-21	2.40	30x3.50-17	2.95	30x3.50-17	4.15
28x4.75-19	2.45	30x3.50-18	2.95	30x3.50-18	4.15
28x4.75-20	2.50	30x3.50-19	2.95	30x3.50-19	4.15
29x5.00-19	2.85	30x3.50-20	2.95	30x3.50-20	4.15
30x5.00-20	2.85	30x3.50-21	2.95	30x3.50-21	4.15
30x5.00-21	2.95	30x3.50-22	2.95	30x3.50-22	4.15
30x5.00-22	3.05	30x3.50-23	2.95	30x3.50-23	4.15
30x5.00-23	3.15	30x3.50-24	2.95	30x3.50-24	4.15
30x5.00-24	3.25	30x3.50-25	2.95	30x3.50-25	4.15
30x5.00-25	3.35	30x3.50-26	2.95	30x3.50-26	4.15
30x5.00-26	3.45	30x3.50-27	2.95	30x3.50-27	4.15
30x5.00-27	3.55	30x3.50-28	2.95	30x3.50-28	4.15
30x5.00-28	3.65	30x3.50-29	2.95	30x3.50-29	4.15
30x5.00-29	3.75	30x3.50-30	2.95	30x3.50-30	4.15
30x5.00-30	3.85	30x3.50-31	2.95	30x3.50-31	4.15
30x5.00-31	3.95	30x3.50-32	2.95	30x3.50-32	4.15
30x5.00-32	4.05	30x3.50-33	2.95	30x3.50-33	4.15
30x5.00-33	4.15	30x3.50-34	2.95	30x3.50-34	4.15
30x5.00-34	4.25	30x3.50-35	2.95	30x3.50-35	4.15
30x5.00-35	4.35	30x3.50-36	2.95	30x3.50-36	4.15
30x5.00-36	4.45	30x3.50-37	2.95	30x3.50-37	4.15
30x5.00-37	4.55	30x3.50-38	2.95	30x3.50-38	4.15
30x5.00-38	4.65	30x3.50-39	2.95	30x3.50-39	4.15
30x5.00-39	4.75	30x3.50-40	2.95	30x3.50-40	4.15
30x5.00-40	4.85	30x3.50-41	2.95	30x3.50-41	4.15
30x5.00-41	4.95	30x3.50-42	2.95	30x3.50-42	4.15
30x5.00-42	5.05	30x3.50-43	2.95	30x3.50-43	4.15
30x5.00-43	5.15	30x3.50-44	2.95	30x3.50-44	4.15
30x5.00-44	5.25	30x3.50-45	2.95	30x3.50-45	4.15
30x5.00-45	5.35	30x3.50-46	2.95	30x3.50-46	4.15
30x5.00-46	5.45	30x3.50-47	2.95	30x3.50-47	4.15
30x5.00-47	5.55	30x3.50-48	2.95	30x3.50-48	4.15
30x5.00-48	5.65	30x3.50-49	2.95	30x3.50-49	4.15
30x5.00-49	5.75	30x3.50-50	2.95	30x3.50-50	4.15
30x5.00-50	5.85	30x3.50-51	2.95	30x3.50-51	4.15
30x5.00-51	5.95	30x3.50-52	2.95	30x3.50-52	4.15
30x5.00-52	6.05	30x3.50-53	2.95	30x3.50-53	4.15
30x5.00-53	6.15	30x3.50-54	2.95	30x3.50-54	4.15
30x5.00-54	6.25	30x3.50-55	2.95	30x3.50-55	4.15
30x5.00-55	6.35	30x3.50-56	2.95	30x3.50-56	4.15
30x5.00-56	6.45	30x3.50-57	2.95	30x3.50-57	4.15
30x5.00-57	6.55	30x3.50-58	2.95	30x3.50-58	4.15
30x5.00-58	6.65	30x3.50-59	2.95	30x3.50-59	4.15
30x5.00-59	6.75	30x3.50-60	2.95	30x3.50-60	4.15
30x5.00-60	6.85	30x3.50-61	2.95	30x3.50-61	4.15
30x5.00-61	6.95	30x3.50-62	2.95	30x3.50-62	4.15
30x5.00-62	7.05	30x3.50-63	2.95	30x3.50-63	4.15
30x5.00-63	7.15	30x3.50-64	2.95	30x3.50-64	4.15
30x5.00-64	7.25	30x3.50-65	2.95	30x3.50-65	4.15
30x5.00-65	7.35	30x3.50-66	2.95	30x3.50-66	4.15
30x5.00-66	7.45	30x3.50-67	2.95	30x3.50-67	4.15
30x5.00-67	7.55	30x3.50-68	2.95	30x3.50-68	4.15
30x5.00-68	7.65	30x3.50-69	2.95	30x3.50-69	4.15
30x5.00-69	7.75	30x3.50-70	2.95	30x3.50-70	4.15
30x5.00-70	7.85	30x3.50-71	2.95	30x3.50-71	4.15
30x5.00-71	7.95	30x3.50-72	2.95	30x3.50-72	4.15
30x5.00-72	8.05	30x3.50-73	2.95	30x3.50-73	4.15
30x5.00-73	8.15	30x3.50-74	2.95	30x3.50-74	4.15
30x5.00-74	8.25	30x3.50-75	2.95	30x3.50-75	4.15
30x5.00-75	8.35	30x3.50-76	2.95	30x3.50-76	4.15
30x5.00-76	8.45	30x3.50-77	2.95	30x3.50-77	4.15
30x5.00-77	8.55	30x3.50-78	2.95	30x3.50-78	4.15
30x5.00-78	8.65	30x3.50-79	2.95	30x3.50-79	4.15
30x5.00-79	8.75	30x3.50-80	2.95	30x3.50-80	4.15
30x5.00-80	8.85	30x3.50-81	2.95	30x3.50-81	4.15
30x5.00-81	8.95	30x3.50-82	2.95	30x3.50-82	4.15
30x5.00-82	9.05	30x3.50-83	2.95	30x3.50-83	4.15
30x5.00-83	9.15	30x3.50-84	2.95	30x3.50-84	4.15
30x5.00-84	9.25	30x3.50-85	2.95	30x3.50-85	4.15
30x5.00-85	9.35	30x3.50-86	2.95	30x3.50-86	4.15
30x5.00-86	9.45	30x3.50-87	2.95	30x3.50-87	4.15
30x5.00-87	9.55	30x3.50-88	2.95	30x3.50-88	4.15
30x5.00-88	9.65	30x3.50-89	2.95	30x3.50-89	4.15
30x5.00-89	9.75	30x3.50-90	2.95	30x3.50-90	4.15
30x5.00-90	9.85	30x3.50-91	2.95	30x3.50-91	4.15
30x5.00-91	9.95	30x3.50-92	2.95	30x3.50-92	4.15
30x5.00-92	10.05	30x3.50-93	2.95	30x3.50-93	4.15
30x5.00-93	10.15	30x3.50-94	2.95	30x3.50-94	4.15
30x5.00-94	10.25	30x3.50-95	2.95	30x3.50-95	4.15
30x5.00-95	10.35	30x3.50-96	2.95	30x3.50-96	4.15
30x5.00-96	10.45	30x3.50-97	2.95	30x3.50-97	4.15
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## SCIENCE FICTION

(Continued from Page 115)

had I until of recent, but when it is looked into, it makes Wollheim and his parlor-pink CPASF look like a ———. Hodgkins and Brady (Dr. Acula) have joined and are going to all the meetings, taking the study course. Since the national H.Q. is in New York, you ought to be able to look into it first hand.

Take a hint and go to your nearest Technocracy Office. You'll find that their "plan" is the embodiment of all scientific ideals, past, present, and future.

Forrie and myself are going to join the outfit as soon as we can get time. Forrie is working for Associated Oil and doesn't have time to even read the fan mags.

Enclosed in this letter is a souvenir ticket for our Scientific Revival, full details of which you must have heard about. We lost ten bucks on the whole thing, and are as mad as hell at Henderson (Sbep's Shop) about it.

Well, this is about all I can think of to say, but I eagerly await the next issue. I hear you intend to go monthly soon, or else issue another mag, a companion.

T. BRUCE YERKE  
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(I'm glad you see a constant improvement in the magazine, Bruce. How do you like the new departments and their snazzy cuts?)

In the story "Moon Heaven," you will recall that the girl learned English with the aid of a radio, as well as books. Speaking of learning languages, if I know Forrie as I think I do, he'll keep on your neck until you're an A-1 Esperantist. He started me off, you know, and now I speak it like a veteran —almost.

I see that the current fad in L. A. is Technocracy—which seemed all the rage around here about seven years ago. I notice that you edit a small publication about Technocracy. I understand that it advocates a

## THE TELEPATH

scientific government. If you'd like to compose an essay or about 1000 or 1500 words on the movement, I'd be glad to consider it for publication in SCIENCE FICTION as a special feature. After all, it has to do with science and the future—the chief concern of science-fictionists.

I'm sorry that your motion picture revival wasn't a success. Forrie told me quite a bit about it. I'm sure that you would have made money, instead of losing it, if you had been able to obtain a real science-

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Magazines  
The Best On the Stands  
Look for the  
Blue Ribbon  
On the Cover**

fiction movie, like "Just Imagine" or "The Mysterious Island," rather than "The Ghost Goes West." I'm not surprised that Charlie Henderson suggested the showing, though. I remember the argument I had with him once at a meeting of the Los Angeles Science Fiction League, in which he suggested that the local club issue a full-fledged professional science-fiction magazine. I never did learn where he expected the club to get several thousands of dollars. —EDITOR)

### ESPERANTO INQUIRIES

*"I have just read your article on Esperanto in the June issue of SCIENCE FICTION and found it very interesting. I have been interested in this language for some time but as I didn't know where to get any information concerning it, I let my interest wane. When I read your article, I immediately became interested again and I am hoping you will be able to give me some information as to how I can learn the language and where I can get books published in this tongue. I know a little German and Spanish and quite a bit of French. Languages have always interested me and I'll be looking forward to your reply."*

**IMOGENE CARROL**  
358 West 51st St.  
New York City

(Continued on Page 118)

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## SCIENCE FICTION

(Continued from Page 117)

"In the June issue of SCIENCE FICTION appeared an article about Esperanto. Can you please furnish me with information as to where I may obtain a text book and dictionary for the study of this language? I hope that this request is not too unusual, and I thank you again for SCIENCE FICTION."

WILLIAM P. WILSON  
116 Crystal St.  
Lancaster, Penna.

"I have just finished reading "Esperanto—Tongue of Tomorrow" in the June issue of SCIENCE FICTION, and I would like to know if it would be possible for me to obtain books, etc., on this language. It seems to me that there is a great advantage in knowing it, even though I am merely a stenographer in a law office in a small town. Who knows, some day I may be glad to know that I could speak this language. Would you be kind enough to let me know if I can get these books? If so, I would appreciate it greatly. I hope this will not put you to any unnecessary trouble."

MRS. MARY BREWER  
813 Main St.  
Natchez, Miss.

(In response to the above inquiries about the Esperanto language, and for the benefit of all others of our readers who would like more information about the tongue, we refer directly to the Esperanto headquarters in the United States. Write to the National Secretary, International Esperanto League, 328 W. 46th St., Los Angeles, Calif.—or to the General Secretary, Esperanto Association of North America, 1410 H St. N. W., Washington, D. C. Either organization will be glad to provide interested persons with information about courses, books, Esperanto newspapers, how to join Esperanto clubs, and facts about the world-wide movement.—EDITOR)

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Charles Fort spent many years of his life collecting little items from various publications, each one of which contained news about some incident that could not be explained by natural science. Each item was either impossible or supernatural.

Using these inexplicable articles as a basis, Fort wrote a series of books in which he tried to prove the existence of a supernatural world by the frequency of strange occurrences over the Earth.

We wonder how many of these published "testimonies" were authentic, and how many were printed merely to cause a sensation, or were but wild imaginings of somely highly-strung persons.

We who enjoy science-fiction like to believe that many wonderful, amazing things are happening in the world—as they undoubtedly are—but let us not permit our enthusiasm to make us gullible. Let us not believe in any apparently "impossible" happenings related in a news article until we have made a thorough investigation of the matter.

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## What Is "Science-Fiction"

Now that seems an odd question for us to ask—we being in the science-fiction business—but we are really asking it seriously of each reader of this magazine.

What IS science-fiction?

Is it just as the word implies—fiction containing science? We don't think that that is quite enough. We have tried using stories in which science has played a large part, and have been told by veteran science-fiction fans, that many of them were not truly science-fiction.

What is the quality in science-fiction—besides science and fiction—that is so essential? Is it an element of wonder, of fantasy, of awe, of amazement?

Suppose you tell us! We want to know just what you look for in a science-fiction story that you don't expect to find in any other type of literature. By letting us know your interpretation of the word "science-fiction," we can make a better choice of stories for SCIENCE FICTION.

# What Do You Think?

Today, many people are saying that Man will never travel in space—because, if we were supposed to visit other planets, God would not have prevented us from doing so with his powerful law of gravity.

What do you think?

Other persons declare that atomic power will never become a reality, because the destruction of atoms could not be controlled — everything being composed of atoms — and therefore could even destroy the world, rather than provide us with a cheap source of power.

What do you think?

On all sides of us, we find people propounding scientific theories and others just as fervently tearing them to pieces. The past has taught us that many of these wild theories have become realities that have changed the world.

Send us your opinions about the theories of today—which ones are likely to become facts? Join in:

**THE ETERNAL CONFLICT.**



## This is real money

"Today I received a check for \$20.00 for a story. Another I sold for \$34.00. Not bad for a beginner, is it? The other day I counted up just how much I have won on advertisement contests. It amounted to \$1,620.00."

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# Why can't you Write?

*It's much simpler than you think!*

SO many people with the "germ" of writing in them simply can't get started. They suffer from inertia. Or they set up imaginary barriers to taking the first step.

Many are convinced the field is confined to persons gifted with the genius for writing.

Few realize that the great bulk of commercial writing is done by so-called "unknowns." Not only do these thousands of men and women produce most of the fiction published, but countless articles on business affairs, social matters, domestic science, etc., as well.

Such material is in constant demand. Every week thousands of checks for \$25, \$50 and \$100 go out to writers whose latent ability was perhaps no greater than yours.

## The Practical Method

Newspaper work demonstrates that the way to learn to write is by writing! Newspaper copy-desk editors waste no time on theories or ancient classics. The story is the thing. Every copy "cub" goes through the course of practical criticism—a training that turns out more successful authors than any other experience.

That is why Newspaper Institute of America bases its writing instruction on the Copy-Desk Method. It starts and keeps you writing in your own home, on your own time. And upon the very same kind of actual assignments given daily to metropolitan reporters. Thus you learn by doing, not by studying the individual styles of model authors.

Each week your work is analyzed constructively by practical newspaper men. Gradually they help to clarify your own distinctive style. Writing soon becomes easy, absorbing. Profitable, too, as you gain the "professional" touch that gets your material accepted by editors. Above all, you can see constant progress week by week as your faults are corrected and your writing ability grows.

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# How About HUMOR?

Something has been worrying us lately, and we need your advice to help us out. It has to do with humor.

Of course, we all appreciate funny stories, comedies, and other humorous efforts of talented writers—but does humor mix well with science-fiction?

Occasionally, we receive an excellent burlesque on science-fiction in our mail, but we hesitate to use it in fear of the disfavor it might bring forth. You see, in past years the reception of funny science-fiction stories has been very divided.

Would you like to see an occasional burlesque in SCIENCE FICTION? Do you think that fictional humor has a place in a magazine of this type?

Write us today, and give us your arguments for or against humor in science-fiction! What is your verdict?

# THE FANTASY FAN

'Way back in '33, the Editor of SCIENCE FICTION issued one of science-fiction's first fan magazines—"The Fantasy Fan," which ran monthly successfully for eighteen months before a combination of circumstances advised its discontinuance.

Many of the old-time fans, who became used to this little magazine, declared that they would like to see it revived. Hence: "The Fantasy Fan" department in SCIENCE FICTION!

In this feature, the Editor hopes to revive the spirit of the old fan-mag—giving the readers some little-known facts about many well-knowns of science-fiction, besides the activities of the inner-circles of fans.

There is nothing like it in any other professional magazine!

We invite you to participate in this informal get-together of fans. If you are active in any science-fiction club or publication, tell us all about it so that we can let the entire science-fiction world know what you, and your group, are doing to increase the popularity of our literature!

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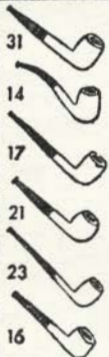
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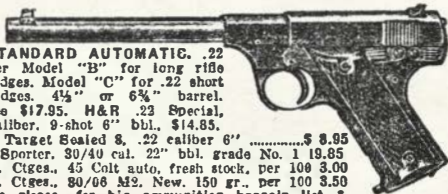
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We think that we've presented here a fine collection of fantasy stories, but it's your opinion that counts—so write us a letter and tell us frankly just what you think about our venture. At the same time, you may suggest a title for a readers' department.

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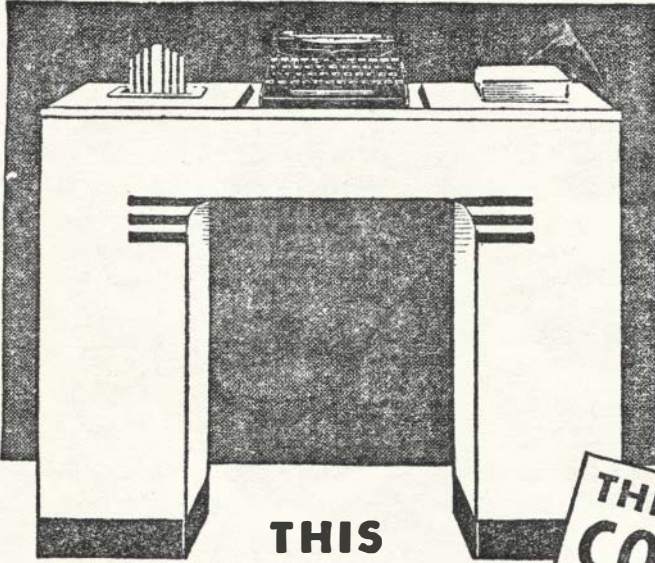
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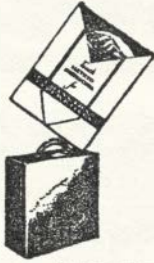
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- 6 Absorption Systems.
- 7 Refrigerants.
- 8 Vertical Reciprocating Compression Type of Refrigeration.
- 9 Domestic Refrigerator Using Rotary and Hermetic Compression Cycle, Commercial Units.
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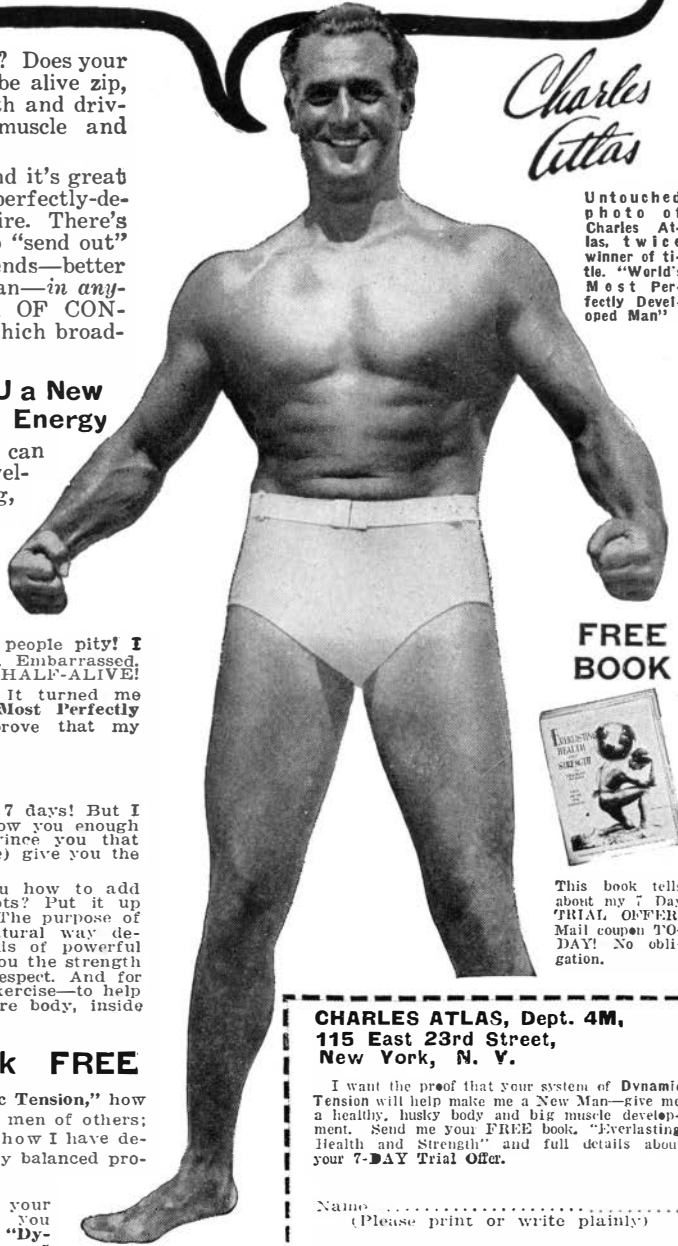
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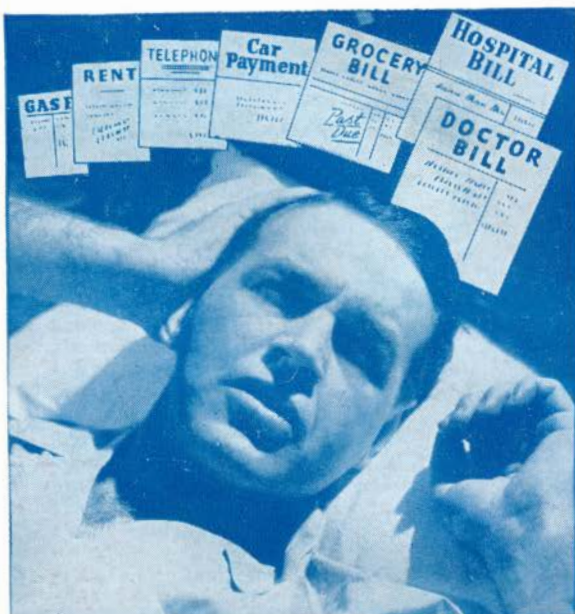
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