

OCTOBER

SCIENCE FICTION

THORNTON AYRE  
RAYMOND Z. GALLUN  
BOB OLSEN

DOUBLE-ACTION  
MAGAZINE

# SCIENCE FICTION

OCTOBER

15¢

## THE MAN WHO SOLD THE EARTH

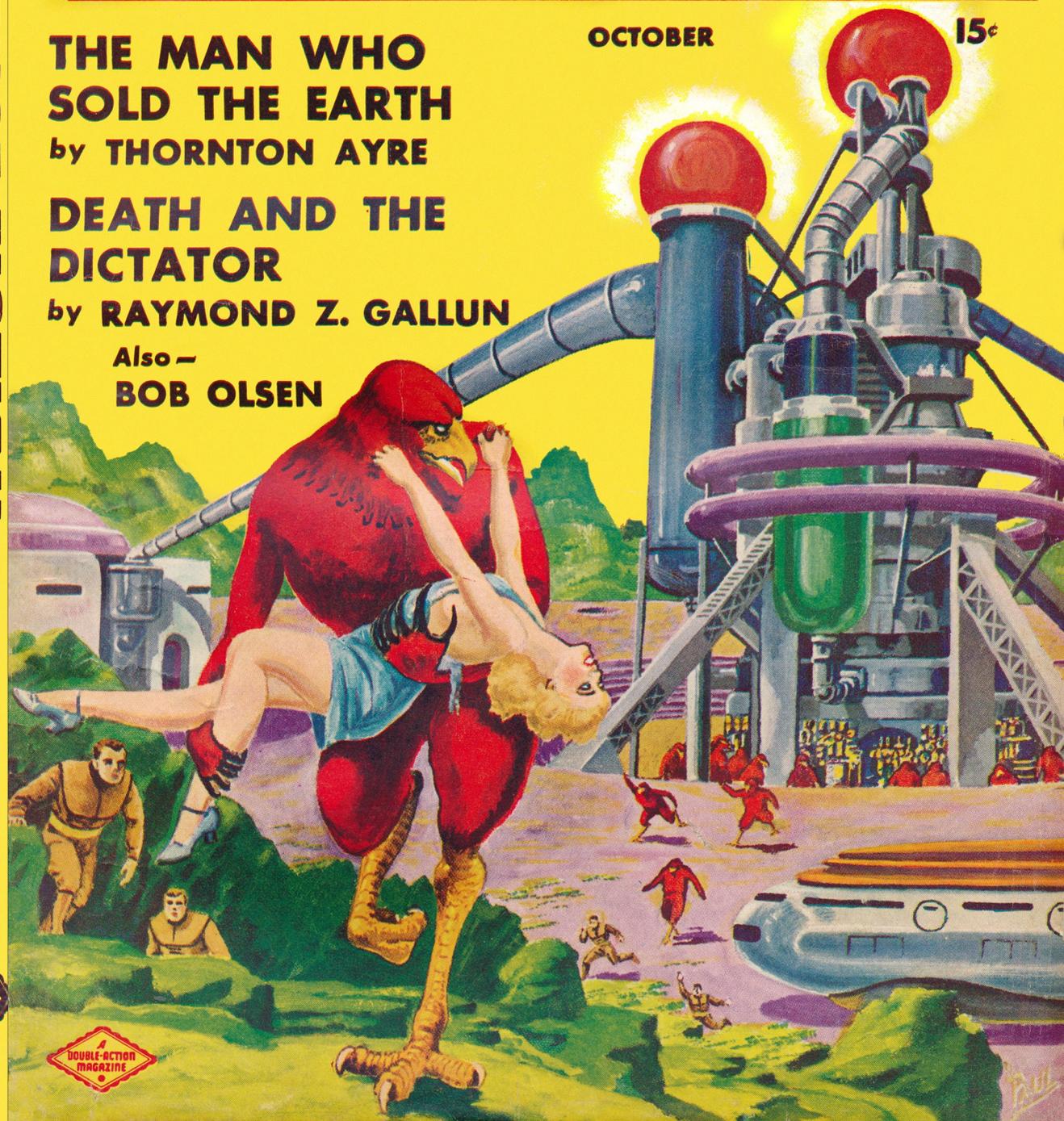
by THORNTON AYRE

## DEATH AND THE DICTATOR

by RAYMOND Z. GALLUN

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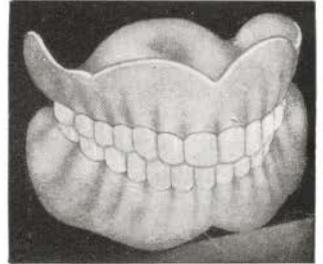
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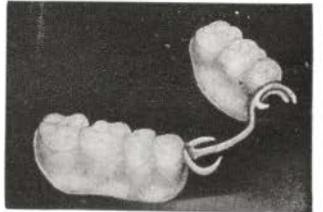
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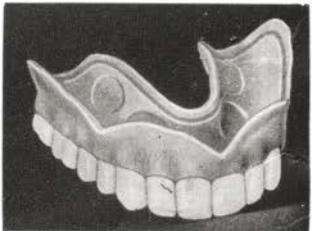
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Vol. II, No. 2



October, 1940

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**Cover by FRANK R. PAUL**

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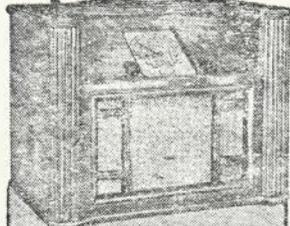
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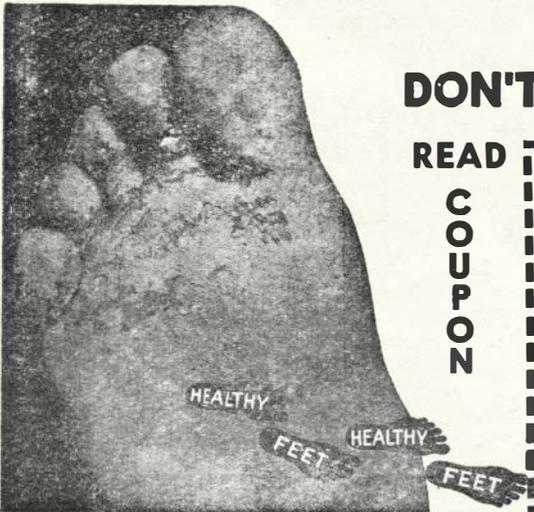
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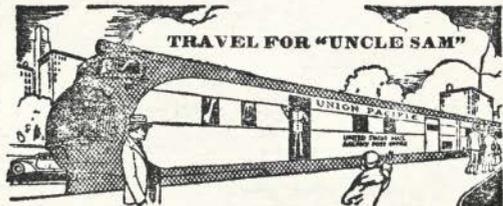
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# "THE SHADOWS"

by LLOYD ARTHUR ESHBACH

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Out of the weird realm of another dimension come the looming Shadows that spell a terrible fate for the people of Earth! Hal Kinkaid finds himself battling the forces of an alien life-form—Shadows that suddenly materialize into nightmare beings!

---

## CHAPTER I

### DREAMS OF THE SHADOWS

He glanced across the spacious living room at dark-haired Rita Rand, his lips

**H**AL KINKAID frowned. Before him hovered something dark and tenuous, like a shadow—a shadow suspended in midair! Yet there was nothing within ten feet of the formless haze that could cast a shadow.



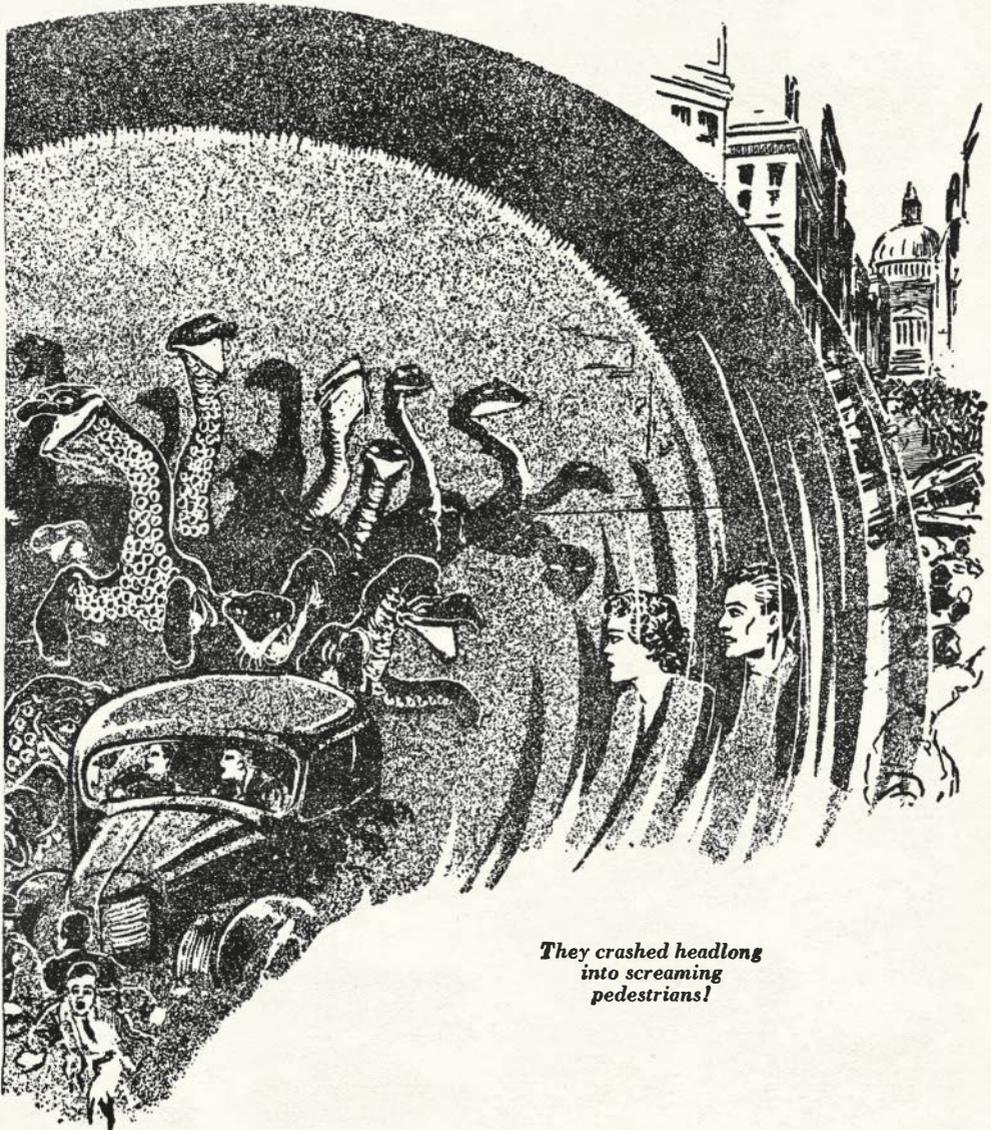
# FROM HESPLON"

puckered in a soundless whistle. He must look idiotic, staring into the almost-empty air—but she was reading a newspaper, hadn't noticed.

He looked back at the shadow. It still hovered there, but now it seemed to have thickened! He watched fixedly, whistling a faint, tuneless monotone. Within that haze, life seemed to pulse, an energy striv-

ing for something just beyond its reach—striving mightily, then waning abruptly to vaporous shadow. A growing tension tautened the heavy silence—a vast blind struggle which, though unheard and unseen, was terribly real.

The whistle checked. Hal held his breath. There was movement there! Movement—conscious, purposeful—as though a wisp of



*They crashed headlong  
into screaming  
pedestrians!*

smoke had suddenly come to life! And within the shadow something grew—a monstrous distortion . . .

“Hal.” Rita’s clear voice spun him around. “The queerest thing happened last night.”

“What—sleep-walking again?” He tried to sound casual, though he could feel his ears flaming. He’d better snap out of it—imagining shadows hanging in the air.

“No wise cracks, please.” Rita hesitated, her blue eyes troubled. “You see—well—I was just reading an article here about something which some reporter calls ‘group hallucination’. The family of Dr. Kerigan, the math instructor at the University, has been seeing things—shadows—shadows everywhere, where there was no earthly reason for shadows to be!” She hurried on half-defiantly. “Don’t laugh, Hal—but last night I saw a shadow, too, hanging right above my bed! It didn’t move—just hung there. And when I got up to call father, it disappeared. I know it sounds silly—that’s why I didn’t mention it before, but—” Rita caught her breath, and her eyes widened.

“Hal—there’s one now!”

Hal Kinkaid nodded, smiling with one side of his mouth. His words came jerkily.

“Yeah. I’ve been watching it for the last five minutes. Figured I was seeing things—but it’s there.”

He arose, squinting at the nebulous intruder, that tuneless whistle on his lips again. He moved toward it slowly, broad shoulders hunched slightly forward—and it vanished.

With a faint shrug, Hal turned to the girl. “Hmmm! Now you see it—now you don’t. I’d give a lot to know the answer.”

“So would I,” Rita said.

For moments neither spoke. Hal was aware of a sense of relief completely out of proportion with the danger—if there was any danger. After all, what harm could a shadow do?

At length Rita said, “Hal, let’s tell dad

about this. If anyone can explain it, he can. His dreams—” She hesitated.

Hal looked at her queerly. “Dreams?”

“Never mind. It’s probably a coincidence. Let’s go—he’s up in his lab.”

“Okay. It’s a good idea.”

Dr. Lucius Rand, his future father-in-law, knew plenty—and no one had more respect for his knowledge and intellect than Hal.

AS THEY hurried through the long, thickly carpeted hallway and up the rear stairs toward the scientist’s laboratory, Hal tried to shake off a feeling of uneasiness. He felt about the same as he had felt that time in Brazil, just before the native porters had tried to mop up the entire party—only now there didn’t seem to be any reason for feeling that way.

They reached the lab and Rita rapped lightly on the door. They waited a moment, then pushed it open and stepped into the room.

At the other end of the big chamber the short, rotund mathematician toiled with what appeared to be a huge electric motor. Above him loomed an immense mass of glass, as tall as two men—a queer composite of cubes, prisms and queerly indescribable angles. Dr. Rand’s fat, usually genial face was rigid with complete concentration, and as he worked, he chewed his upper lip, a sign of suppressed impatience. He hadn’t heard them enter.

“Maybe we’d better wait,” Hal suggested softly. “He’s so completely lost in the thing. . . .”

Rita shook her head decisively. “He’s been in here long enough today, anyway. He’s been working on that awful thing for a full month now, day and night. He’d starve if I didn’t interrupt him.”

At that instant, Dr. Rand straightened, and triumph shone in his bloodshot eyes. Hal and Rita waited. With one pudgy hand the scientist slowly stroked the bald spot on the back of his head.

"By—calculus!" he exclaimed jubilantly. "That does it!"

He stopped and closed a knife-switch, then stepped back. A low whine crept through the room—mounted steadily to a shrill shriek—higher and higher till it was thin as a thread—and then it could not be heard. Now something happened in the great pile of glass. Silvery radiance awakened in its metal base, creeping slowly upward, and seeping through cubes and prisms and cones till the mass glittered and flashed like an enormous, unearthly jewel.

Lucius Rand's stroking fingers covered his bald spot with criss-cross trails of grime. After moments of silent contemplation, he stepped toward his creation and thrust his hand into the pulsing radiance. Held it there—and withdrew it, unharmed! He grinned gleefully.

"Knew it! The first tesseract! Now for a real test."

Grasping a wrench, he tossed it into a triangular opening like a doorway in one side of the pile. Hal waited for the crash, but he heard only the chuckling of the scientist.

"It's gone! Will this make Horton and Welker and Dracha open their eyes!" His brow lowered reflectively, then he mumbled: "Guess I'll have to try it myself now."

"Dad—don't you dare go into that—thing!" Sharply Rita's voice cut through the laboratory.

Rand whirled, his expression confused. "Why, Rita—when did you come in? And Hal! Ah—how are you young folks?"

Rita shook her slender finger. "You know we're all right—but I won't be, and neither will you unless you promise to stay out of that crazy affair!" She saw a stubborn look forming in her father's eyes, and her attitude changed instantly. "Please, dad—at least until you're certain it's harmless—and that you can—come back."

A slow, affectionate smile crossed Rand's

features. Rita meant everything to him since her mother's death.

"Of course I'll wait, Rita. It'll be safe when I try it myself." He glanced at the thing he had made, then looked at the two with poorly concealed impatience. "Did you have any special reason for—ah—interrupting me?"

Rita nodded, and with Hal prompting, told what she knew about the strange shadows. When she finished, Dr. Rand smiled indulgently—though Hal thought he saw doubt lurking in his eyes.

"It's barely possible that you saw something, my dear—but really, what you describe is an apparent impossibility. Hallucination—as the newspaper said. However, to satisfy you, I'll investigate these—shadows—as soon as I find time. But now—" He half turned toward his apparatus.

"But now," Rita finished, "you want us to go."

At the top of the stairs, Rita gripped Hal Kinkaid's arm. He stopped short and looked down into a face grave with doubt.

"What's wrong, Rita?"

"I—I wish I knew! I'm afraid it's something dreadful. Hal, though daddy scoffed at what we saw—he believed us. I *know* he did. He knows more about it than either of us, because—well—the idea of his tesseract—that glass thing—came to him in a series of dreams—told to him by shadows! Hal—I'm afraid!"

His arm went around her shoulder and he looked steadily into her blue eyes. A shadow, a formless thing, in a dream—and now shadows were appearing out of nothing in broad daylight.

"Exactly what did your father dream?" he asked gently. "And what's the purpose of that pile of glass?"

QUICKLY she told him. The first dream had come to the scientist months ago—a vague vision of an endless void, silent, lightless. No stars—nothing. Then dimly,

a hazy gray mass moved in the blackness, formless, yet somehow alive. Only that.

He had awakened with the strange thought that he had seen a vision—not a dream.

Night after night other dreams had followed, visions of the same lightless void with its cloud of alien life—a cloud that gradually became a throng of grotesque creatures whose form his mind refused to grasp. And from that horde had come strange voiceless whispers revealing the secret of a thing of electricity and glass: mathematical formulae; plans for the motor; details of the wiring—everything. And afterward came a ceaseless urge to build it.

“And the result, Rita concluded, “is a tesseract, a hyper-solid, a four-dimensional cube—or so father says. He says it’s a door between our three-dimensional world and some world in the higher fourth dimension, though how it works, he doesn’t really know himself.” She hesitated. “He plans to use it to go into this other world, but—”

“But,” Hal finished, “maybe the things that planned this figured on coming into our world—out of the void. Maybe they—those shadows—are trying even now.”

He remembered something he’d read during his studies under Dr. Rand—the work of a Professor Oumoff\*. The professor had estimated that in the known universe, the volume occupied by matter compared with the void surrounding it, was comparable to a second in a million years. Or, if all the matter contained in all the stars that were visible through the world’s most powerful telescopes were rolled into a single sphere, this single sphere would float amidst as many milliards of other spheres, which would contain only the vacuum of interstellar gulfs, as there were seconds in ten

\*N. A. Oumoff: “The Characteristic Traits and Problems of Contemporary Natural Scientific Thought.” (Address before the second Mendeleeff convention in 1911.)

thousands centuries, very little matter in a lot of emptiness.

If this were so, why couldn’t there be a fourth-dimensional realm co-existing with the three-dimensional universe, helping to fill that waste space? In fact, why not a fifth or sixth dimension—or why not an almost limitless number of spheres of existence?

His thoughts reverted to the tesseract. It might lead into the fourth dimension—but it seemed more logical to think it opened a way into the void Dr. Rand had seen in his dreams—the space between the dimensions.

The sudden shrill *whirrr* of the motor back in the laboratory cut short Hal’s thoughts, a strangely different sound that jangled on his nerves. He felt Rita stiffen in his arms.

There came a scream—the voice of Dr. Rand!

With a bound, Hal reached the door, flung it open. Rita darted past him, into the laboratory. And both stood stunned, staring into a hell of light.

Like a white-hot sun, the tesseract flared, flooding everything with intolerable radiance. Beside it crouched the scientist, pudgy hands pressed over his eyes. Spirals and tendrils of bursting light leaped from the glass—cascaded over the floor—lashed out and drew back like coiling springs. Again Rand screamed—and a swirling light-tendrill whipped around him!

“Dad!” Wildly Rita sprang into the blinding chaos, Hal beside her. A yard from the scientist—and the tentacle coiled—lashed back—bearing him into the tesseract! And Rita, lunging forward, was caught in a backwash of energy—vanished with him into the crystal pile!

Hal hurled himself headlong toward the opening. He must—stop them! Dimly he felt his foot brush something solid, twisting him aside. He heard a click—and his head crashed against a smooth, hard sur-

face. Even as blackness blotted out the light, he heard the whine of the motor check—fade . . . die . . . and he knew he had kicked open the switch that charged the tesseract.

CHAPTER II

OUT OF THE ALIEN REALM

HAL KINKAID opened his eyes and shook himself. What a dream! He'd been in a stifling black fog infested with formless things that swarmed over him, fastening invisible lips to his skin. . . He looked upward weakly, pain thudding against his skull. Some hangover!

Then he saw the shadow!

An inch from his face—so close that he had been staring through it—the thing hovered, wrapped around his head like a veil! It was choking him—draining the life from his mind and body—like the thing in the dream.

Clumsily he rolled aside and struggled to his feet, his arms flailing at the clinging mists. For a second he felt a stab of fear. How could he fight a shadow? How—hell! He dropped his arms, clamped his jaws together, and stood perfectly still. Nothing—vaporous or solid, three, four or ten dimensional—could take his mind from him!

His lips puckered in that habitual silent whistle—and he saw something misty float away from him toward a dark corner to lose itself among other, normal shadows

Shaking his head to clear it, Hal faced the tesseract, an innocent-looking mass of angular cubes and poly-sided blocks of glass on a black base, with an opening in one side. It seemed transparent—but he couldn't see the wall beyond it. . . And that was queer! He looked into the opening—only an empty shell.

Hal drew his hand across his furrowed forehead, reliving the moments before his lapse into unconsciousness. There was only one thing for him to do. He'd start the

dynamo and follow Rita and her father through that opening, wherever it led. He *had* to do it! He'd find her somehow—and try to bring her back.

Turning to the switch, he made contact, and again faced the tesseract. The *whirrr* of the motor cut the silence, and a faint glow grew out of the black metal base. Whistling faintly, he watched with narrowed eyes for the whirlwind play of energy and light which had torn Rita from him. but it did not come. Slowly the radiance crept through the block till it glittered as it had when he first saw it.

Abruptly his muscles tensed. Something was materializing in the tesseract—a dark form, crouching. Hal watched, his hand on the switch. Then, even as he cut off power, he stepped back, horror on his face.

Out of the opening stumbled a cringing, broken creature—Dr. Lucius Rand, transformed into something unnatural by a damnable, hellish power. His face twitched with a changing play of warped emotions, and his head was cocked curiously sideways, in a strained attitude of attention, as though listening . . . listening. . .

"What's that? What's that I hear? Oh—the shadows! The shadows!" His voice fell to a whisper. "The shadows." Then suddenly he burst into empty laughter that crashed and jangled through the laboratory.

A shudder ran through Hal's big frame. Crazy as a bat! A damned shame. He gripped the scientist's shoulders and shook him.

"Snap out of it, Doc! Tell me—where's Rita?"

The man seemed not to hear. His eyes darted everywhere. Suddenly he thrust out a stiffened finger.

"There's one now—a shadow!"

Hal spun around. The thing with which he had struggled—it had left the corner to dart toward Dr. Rand a ghost of sound drifting with it. Scowling, Hal stepped into its path.

ALTHOUGH he had not been there, the tenuous cloud swept past him and enveloped the scientist. Hal hesitated. What could he do? Then abruptly there was nothing to be done. . . . A faint cry escaped Rand—he pressed crooked fingers against his eyes—and collapsed. Hal caught him, his eyes mechanically following a deeper, *thicker* shadow that darted away to vanish in some gray-black corner.

Angrily Hal shook his head. Damn it—he was still foggy! Seemed he couldn't think. . . . A doctor—that would be first. But Rita was out there somewhere in that place which had driven her father mad. Alone! Hal's face tightened. With one last glance at the tesseract, he raised the limp figure of the scientist and sprang toward the door. The old servant could call a doctor.

Down the stairs, two steps at a time, he dashed, shouting:

"Phillips! Oh, Phillips!"

No answer. Again he called, and an old white-haired man, half deaf, shuffled from the rear of the house. Placing Rand on a davenport, Hal spun to the wide-eyed servant.

"He's had a terrible shock," he said hastily. "It's serious. Get a doctor—quick! I've got to go back to the lab—Rita's in danger. Stay with Dr. Rand—don't come near the laboratory. Something terrible there! But don't worry—everything will turn out all right."

With that, Hal turned and dashed up the steps, leaving the old man staring after him in consternation. As he ran, Hal's thoughts raced. The shadow was still up there. And somehow it had seemed changed after its attack on Dr. Rand—more tangible. What had it done to the scientist? And what—what had happened to Rita?

He reached the laboratory and rushed to the tesseract. He paused beside the motor. He didn't want to leave this doorway into—somewhere—open after he went

through. Something might enter from the other side. Maybe he could get the motor going full blast—throw the switch—leap into the block, and get through before its action ceased. But how could he get back? Maybe he couldn't. Maybe Rand would recover in time to bring them back—but even if he didn't, he'd have to get out there to Rita!

He closed the switch. The shrilling of the motor knifed the stillness, mounting steadily. The tesseract came alive, white radiance flooding its walls. Up—up the sound mounted—till Hal, with a quick stroke against the switch, leaped into the triangular opening!

Chaos crashed about him! He was in the center of a vortex of tempestuous forces, a mighty roaring blasting his ears. Creation whirled, swayed, collapsed around him. Suddenly he was swept to the brink of a black, yawning gulf—and was through, whirling into infinity.

Then—nothing.

### CHAPTER III INTO THE VOID!

HAL KINKAID stirred. He opened his eyes to stare into blackness. It must be night, he thought vaguely then consciousness of a terrible burning pain which seared every inch of him, drove all thought from his mind. He felt as though he'd had a tussle with the inside of a concrete mixer! Then he remembered the tesseract. He forced himself to look around.

He couldn't see a thing. He listened. There wasn't a sound.

He tried to think calmly, tried to check a mounting sense of fear. This was empty space, according to what Dr. Rand had said. But then how could he breathe? And why didn't he burst with atmospheric pressure removed? Hell—he wasn't breathing—had no body with which to breathe! He was like a ghost—with a body whose mole-

cules were transformed, expanded till he had become vaporous.

Interesting—but where was Rita? That was all that counted. And where were the shadows the scientist had mentioned?

With the thought, they were all about him—faintly luminous, like faded will-o'-the-wisps. Around him they circled and eddied and swirled, a procession of vague cobwebby things without form or substance.

Will to move surged through him—and he knew he was in motion, propelled by the power of thought. As he sped through the blackness, realization of his position came to him, understanding of the futility of his quest. Lost in utter darkness! Lost in a realm where there was nothing—nothing, that is, with physical substance. Yet he must find Rita.

With ethereal senses he knew that the shadows still encircled him—were speeding with him through the emptiness. Now sounds of faint stirrings came to him from every side. Imagination! It was the silence beginning to *thud, thud, thud* against his consciousness.

Anger flared through Hal. Damn the things! Did they think he was running away from them? Furiously he tore into them, tenuous fists flailing—cutting through even less tangible forms. Soundless mirth came back to him out of the darkness, silent laughter that hammered loudly against his senses.

In futile rage Hal turned and sped away in headlong flight. But always the shadows and the shadowy half-light were with him.

After a time he halted, lying motionless in the emptiness. Narrow-eyed, he peered around. Those ghostly devils were reeling around him in a crazy, jerky, unbalanced dance. His mind seemed to reel in unison with them. They were shrieking steadily, mocking him, deriding him for the fool that he was.

And he *was* a fool! Sharply the thought stabbed Hal's reason. This was what the things wanted—this, what they had done to

Dr. Rand! And he'd almost followed the Doctor. He'd ignore them, as he had the shadow in the laboratory, and they couldn't harm him!

His mind grew calm. He saw the shadows draw away—and he was alone. He thought of Rita—Rita with her dark hair, her warm red cheeks, her large, deep-blue eyes—and a voice seemed to leap into being in his own mind!

"Hal! Hal Kincaid! Hal—it's Rita!"

Joyously his answer sped from his mind. "Coming—Rita!"

He willed himself through the void—felt that he was flashing somewhere with the speed of thought. Then he saw her—faintly luminous as the shadow horde had been—an ethereal form rushing toward him with arms outspread. Shadow woman and shadow man met and clung, emotion playing in them like a flame.

"I was afraid, Rita." Hal said at length in the language of thought, the only means of communication in this strange realm. "Afraid for you. I tried to follow when you went through the tesseract, but I missed the opening—knocked myself out. Somehow I had kicked open the switch; when I came to, I started the motor again, just—just in time to let your dad come through; then I came out here to find you."

"Then dad's safe?" Hal could sense the relief and anxiety mingled in her thought. "The—things separated us before I found out that they couldn't harm me if I ignored them. I tried to find dad, but he was gone. Then I caught your thought of me—and here we are."

"I left your father with Phillips," Hal answered. "And now we've got to get back ourselves."

Together they scanned the void. They saw or sensed that utter blackness was closing in on them—that the shadows were flowing away from them like an ebbing tide speeding through the endless dark, all in one direction, with one apparent goal.

Uncomprehending, they watched. Then suddenly Rita questioned:

"What's that—that light?"

Hal stared intently. That spot—it was distant, almost beyond sight. He could barely see it as an angular point of brilliance, sharp against the blackness.

"Hal—it's—it's the—"

"The tesseract!" Hal's thought was electric. "And those things are going through to Earth! We've got to stop them! Quick. Rita, it's a chance for us to get back!" Instantly he willed himself into the opening, felt his ethereal body flashing toward it, through the ranks of the shadows. Almost as fast as thought—the will to move—the dash through emptiness—and he was in the tesseract.

**M**AD vertigo of whirling radiance! Agony of rending flesh—and Hal Kin-kaid stumbled groggily into the laboratory of Dr. Lucius Rand.

A motor spun with silent speed. Hal's outflung hand whipped back the switch, checking it. No shadowy thing could come through now. He'd stopped them.

"Rita, I wonder who started it. Maybe your father—" He turned; and the words choked him.

Rita had not come through with him! He had shut her out there in the void!

Bitterly cursing himself he stared about. But he knew beforehand that he would not see her. He'd have to go back!

As he reached for the switch, he heard a sound behind him. Wheeling, he saw crouched a yard away a creature as grotesque and repulsive as some malformation of birth. Manlike, it squatted erect on two crooked limbs like the legs of a satyr. Its long, hairless body, thin as a snake, was lined on its inner side with hungry sucker discs that opened and closed incessantly. Its trunk terminated in a flat, wide-jawed head, its mouth rimmed by slender, foot-long tentacles. It had no arms. From head to foot the monster was completely hairless,

its skin the deep flesh-pink of a measuring worm. There was about it a vague suggestion of transparency, like a figure before an X-ray projector. And somehow, it seemed familiar.

The thing spoke in a low, hoarse whisper—and Hal gasped. This was the shadow—the thing that had attacked him and Dr. Rand—grown solid!

Hal whistled softly, his muscles knotting—and the creature sprang. Hal's fist lashed against something soft and yielding; then the supple body wrapped itself about him, sucker discs gripping his skin, his clothes. As he tore at the thing, cranial tentacles coiled about his neck, choking him.

With a violent wrench he ripped the monster from him and hurled it across the room. Landing catlike on widespread feet, it charged again, its ceaseless whisper a demoniacal thing. Hal swung again—missed—and a second time those tentacles encircled his throat, and the suckers clung. The wide mouth was fearfully close to his face, flat, rheumy eyes burning into narrowed gray orbs. For moments they lurched around and around, twisting, reeling in a furious struggle.

Again Hal's superior strength asserted itself as he tore the thing loose and flung it spinning. For an instant it crouched, tentacles writhing, body weaving back and forth, madness gurgling from its gaping mouth—then it leaped toward the tesseract!

A tentacle closed the switch and the monster was in the glass pile. A second behind, Hal checked the motor, but the creature was gone—into the void—out into the emptiness where Rita was! With a curse Hal reached for the switch.

## CHAPTER IV

### PURSUIT!

**A** SCREAM—a woman's scream—slashed the silence. Sweating in mental turmoil, Hal hesitated. Again the cry, then a spasm of hysterical

sobbing. The veins bulged on Hal's forehead, and his fingers tightened on the switch. Let her scream—Rita needed him! Still he hesitated, and up to him came a wierd cackling—the voice of old Mrs. Derch, the housekeeper!

Hal's mind became suddenly icy, and he dashed toward the stairway. He ought to consign to hell the old woman and her screaming—but he couldn't.

With startling clarity, extraneous things registered on his mind. Newsboys were yelling in the street. A radio somewhere blared.

"—seems to be worldwide. From everywhere comes news of people collapsing. Doctors are helpless. The strange shadows are being seen more often. And now monsters are appearing—naked pink things without arms. Panics are sweeping some cities. Martial law is being declared.

"One strange fact has been observed. A careful check has shown that the shadows have first been seen in the homes of scientists—mathematicians. And most of the collapses have been found among the same men. Some significance—"

Hal heard no more. He had reached the room in which he had left Dr. Rand. Faint laughter came through the door, unhinged laughter. He pushed the door open—and stopped short, staring unbelievably.

Dr. Rand still lay motionless on the davenport. On the floor close by sprawled two awkward figures—old Phillips, the servant, and a tall man Hal recognized as Dr. Carew, the family physician. On their faces was stamped a dreadful emptiness and an unearthly fear. Across the room a gray-haired woman slouched loosely in a deep chair, madness looking out of her thin face. She laughed—and Hal shuddered.

"Sara—what's wrong? Look here—it's Hal. Sara!"

She glanced up owlishly. "Hee—hee—I fooled it—fooled it! I fainted an' it didn't get me! Got them—" A crooked finger pointed toward the man-servant and the

physician. "—but didn't get me!" Then suddenly she began to weep hysterically. "Got them, but didn't get me."

Hal shook his head pityingly. That damned shadow had done this, had drained the life from the two men, and had destroyed her sanity. Abruptly he started. That strange solidity of the creature—had it come with the life taken from Dr. Rand, Phillips, the physician? Fantastic thought—but how else explain his transformation? He glanced at the prostrate figures, then shrugged. There was nothing he could do—and he had delayed too long already. He darted into the hall, sprang up the steps. A faint, demented sobbing drifted after him.

As he ran, fear grew in Hal Kinkaid. He could not rid his mind of an image of a pink-skinned monster with a snakelike body and a tentacle-rimmed mouth. A monster out there with Rita . . .

He reached the laboratory, was beside the tesseract. He jammed down the switch, his body tensed for speed. Impatiently he waited while the hum of the motor mounted—then with a single smooth motion, he cut the switch and sprang into the glass block.

Turbulent energies flayed him, lashing, tearing—cosmic forces seized him—and he was through, in interdimensional space.

When his senses cleared, Hal Kinkaid circled the enshrouding blackness with sharpened senses. Nervous tension gripped him. Long he gazed—but he saw nothing. He listened—heard nothing. There were no shadowy forms near to molest him—nor was Rita near—and thought of her had become a deadening weight.

"Rita!" Out through the void he sent the mental call. "Rita! It's Hal!" There was no answer. Again he called—and waited—and silence came back to him, only dead silence that throbbed and hammered *loudly* out of the blackness.

Gray despair dropped upon Hal Kinkaid, numbing him. He was too late! Rita—gone . . . dead!

Interminably, he floated in vacancy, his

thoughts dulled, hopeless. Then after a time his grief crystallized into a bursting fury. Ungovernable rage and hatred swayed him. The pink thing—it must have destroyed her! He could visualize its attack with its choking tentacles and fleshy sucker discs—and his rage became madness. He willed himself to the horde of shadows.

They leaped toward him, a tenuous wall of drab gray mist. Spread out over a vast area, they seemed to have assumed military order, as though they were engaged in a concerted attack on some invisible foe like a gigantic wheel with spokes radiating from a common center—but spokes that extended in every direction—they were flowing steadily toward their hub, a brilliant square of light, flowing through a tesseract, to Earth—not Rand's tesseract, for his doorway was triangular! Then there must be still others!

The thought vanished as Hal saw beside that spot of radiance, directing activities, a figure less tenuous than the rest. His fists tightened, and down he flashed into the hazy mass, down, toward a flesh-pink creature with satyr limbs.

The creature saw him, and darted aside, whispering frantically. Within the throaty mouthings Hal sensed something of command to the surrounding shadows, and something of fear. Then he reached the monster, and his fist plowed viciously through its aeriated form. He, too, was tenuous—but he was less tenuous than the thing he fought. Hal struck again, savage satisfaction surging through him. This thing could feel! It was less wraithlike than its fellows—yet was too devoid of substance to offer resistance to Hal's more solid body.

Again his fists lashed out, and the other fell back, devils of fearful hatred glaring out of hazy eye sockets. Its whispered commands were wild pleas for aid. In answer the shadows swarmed over Hal, enveloping him in a cloud of misty gray. He ignored them. Only the thing he fought existed.

He swung another blow, his fist tearing

deep—and he followed it with clawlike hands reaching for the slender body. His fingers gripped it, ground into it—and the brute tore away, fled through the emptiness, anguished whispers coming back to Hal. And Hal followed.

On—with the speed of thought in a race through utter darkness, the dull ache of grief in Hal, and a consuming anger; the monster spurred by a goad of fear. On—until abruptly out of nothingness leaped something so tremendous that it vanished above and below, to right and to left, in a dim haze—as though a universe had come into sudden being before them!

The monster, far ahead, slowed, as though striving furiously to stop—then flashed on, through a great circular portal of light that opened before him—vanished within it.

Futilely Hal tried to check his headlong flight. Something irresistible held him—drew him on. The portal loomed ahead, a thing of pale silvery radiance, beyond it an elusive suggestion of inconceivable shapes: crazy, multi-angular solids, mazes of distorted arcs—a nightmare world of mind-staggering shapes—the world of four dimensions!

It was fearfully close; he was within it; and an inferno of pain seized him. Something rasped and tore his nerve-ends like fingers of white-hot steel. He was swelling, bursting—then a mighty force caught him and whirled him away. Blackness fell like a crashing blow.

## CHAPTER V

### THE WORLD OF FOUR DIMENSIONS

WHEN consciousness returned, Hal Kinkaid's first sensation was one of some vast and unfamiliar power. The fires of a new life flared within him. It seemed as though he had been freed from age-old fetters that had been an unrecognized burden. So vastly increased and rarefied was his intelligence that he could not

fully comprehend the extent of the transformation he had undergone.

Dimly he realized that the black emptiness no longer surrounded him; but the thought vanished in the wonder of his own strange metamorphosis. What had happened to him?

Then he knew, as though the will to know brought knowledge. He had entered the realm of four dimensions—and in that entry had been transformed into a four-dimensional being! Logical enough. A one-dimensional being in a two-dimensional world; a two-dimensional being in a three-dimensional world—each would have to be transformed to comprehend the higher realm. Why not a similar transformation for a three-dimensional being in a four-dimensional world?

He directed the power of his senses on his surroundings—gazed about with eyes that saw on every side simultaneously. Wonder filled him, and a confused sense of unreality; but as his four-dimensional nature asserted itself, he realized the significance of what he saw. He was looking through what seemed to be gigantic, transparent bubbles, bubbles that interlocked, moving about him in an unbroken dome, passing through each other as though they possessed no material substance. Beyond them was something vague that seemed too close to be seen, something that ended in the walls of a gigantic hall, stretching far back into some strangely understandable infinity. Those walls seemed singularly lacking in solidity; Hal could see past them into a world of geometrical confusion—yet a realm that was the embodiment of orderliness and rationality—an unimaginable city, multiangular, polycubical—yet a city that was systematic, methodical, reasonable! Streets and buildings, earth and sky—he could see them all—yet none bore even remote resemblance to those with which he was familiar. The sky seemed unthinkable distant, yet near enough to touch. The rest of the city—masses of volumes, cubes,

spheres, pyramids . . . tesseractes projecting in a fourth direction . . . were far away; yet something told him that though he was here in the hall, he was in them, too—an infinite figure like they were!

And, strangest of all, it seemed as normal as could be—save for that lurking three-dimensional sense which told him how bizarre everything really was.

Suddenly Hal stiffened, every fibre of his new self vibrant with tremendous vitality. He remembered the monster—and Rita! Perhaps she, too, had entered this world! If so, she must be beyond this imprisoning net of interlocking spheres—and he'd find her. He moved toward the transparent wall, leaning forward grimly. His hand touched the moving bubbles, sank into them—and he followed. A struggle, the sense of stifling, compressing energies, and he was outside the dome, crouching with widespread legs on a firm, hard surface.

The walls of the great hall were still about him, but they were solid now, like the walls of the tesseract in Rand's laboratory. And that strange impression of unreality was gone; he saw with normal eyes only that which he should normally see. The net of spheres must have acted as an all-powerful telescope through which he had peered into infinity.

Hal gazed upward. He was in the center of a great amphitheatre. All around him rose tier upon tier of squat backless seats, the lowest circle holding about twenty beings—geometrical spectres formed of spheres and many-sided solids, within them a suggestion of bodies like the armless, pink-skinned creature of the void.

As he stared at them, Hal heard a sound behind him. He whirled.

"Hal!"

"Rita!"

THE words came as one; then man and girl were caught in a fierce embrace. Unbounded joy and relief swept over Hal. He had thought her dead, slain by the

monster, had followed the thing for revenge, and now—

He held her away from him and gazed at her—and his eyes slowly widened. Was this the woman he loved?—this strange, geometrical figure? He could see the actual Rita distorted and obscured by hazy, cubical outlines not unlike the shapes that hid the armless things.

“Do—do I look like that?” The words were incredulous. “So—much of me?”

Rita laughed. “Of course. Why not?”

Hal nodded slowly. Why not? He was four-dimensional now, since he was in a world of four dimensions. But who cared? There were things more important than that. Here was Rita; and all around were alien creatures, among them, perhaps, the monster he had followed.

“What about them, Rita?” He gestured toward the tiers of seats, his voice low. “Are they—?”

“They’re friendly,” she answered, “and they want to help.”

She took his arm and led him around the high-piled mass of moving spheres—spheres that were as solid and opaque as the walls appeared to be. They reached the base of a wide dais and paused, staring at the monster!

A hyper-being now, hidden in spectral solids, he was manacled to the platform. Standing on squat legs, his pink body almost colorless, the tentacles that ringed his wide mouth drooping abjectly, he glared at Hal in sullen rage. Hal stared back coldly, and shrugged. It looked like the end of the trail for the creature.

Beside him, seated on an elevated disc, an impressive figure of vast power looked down at the man and woman. From him came a faint whisper, reminiscent of the voice of the shadows. And strangely, he spoke in a tongue that conveyed meaning to Hal’s mind—almost telepathic. The words were formal and somewhat stilted, yet there was something kindly and sympathetic about them.

“Welcome to Hesplon, Hal-Kinkaid. Greetings from the Ninety-fourth Aalik of the Hall of Knowledge, and from all the Intellectuals.”

Hal nodded rather stiffly and waited. Things looked peaceful, but he couldn’t be sure. After all, these beings had torn Rita and him from the void against their will. One good sign—they hadn’t been manacled like the monster.

The Ninety-fourth Aalik answered his unspoken thought. “It is true that we drew you from the Void against your will, but it was an accident. You merely came too close to the Door; its action was automatic.”

An image of the net of interlocking spheres came to Hal’s mind. The Door—between the third and fourth dimensions? Too close? But what had drawn him?

“You were drawn—” The Aalik paused. “Better, I believe, that I explain everything to you as I did to Rita-Rand, to free your mind of bewilderment, and so that you may know that we are not responsible for the entrance into your dimension by the—Condemned.”

The whispered words ceased. But the message continued, a series of moving pictures that seemed to materialize within his mind—a drama in the fourth dimension.

First was a scene in the great hall. A group of nine hyperbeings were gathered around a device of bewildering intricacy, erected above the dome of revolving spheres. Deft tentacles were completing delicate adjustments. There was something furtive in their actions. Numerous hyperbeings, as tense as the central figures, watched from the surrounding seats. There was no sound; it was as though he were viewing a colored, stereoscopic motion picture with the sound-track disconnected.

Now one of the nine looked up and Hal recognized the being he called the monster. There was triumph in the twist of his wide mouth, triumph in the rheumy eyes. For moments he seemed to be addressing his audience; then while the other eight Hes-

plonians drew back, his tentacles coiled around a long rod projecting from the apparatus like a switch.

A brief pause—and into the hall from somewhere above poured a seemingly endless horde of Hespionians—a horde that swept over the assembly in an instant, checking them in the act of rising—that overwhelmed them so rapidly and completely that they surrendered without a struggle—all save the nine in the center. They fought with insensate fury; but they were subdued finally. . . . And the scene faded.

The Aalik explained in his penetrating whisper.

"Under the leadership of Ersa," he indicated the manacled figure, "a faction of radical Hespionians had planned to open the gateway into a realm above ours—the fifth dimension. They contended that we would benefit by the knowledge the higher beings could give us; that the Intellectuals in their blindness were ignoring an opportunity to better the conditions of Hespion incalculably. Actually, they thought nothing of improving Hespion. They wanted either to control the world or destroy it. And they planned to employ this means of accomplishing one or the other end. In secret, they built the necessary mechanism and installed it while Hespion slept.

"But they had been watched—and when there was no possible question about their intentions, we checked them. They were given fair trial, and were condemned to disembodied isolation in the emptiness between the dimensions."

**HIS WORDS** ceased and Hal was suddenly looking at another scene in the Hall of Knowledge. The seats of the amphitheatre were empty. A solemn group of Intellectuals stood in a wide circle about the dome of spheres—a dome that had changed! Transparent as it had been when Hal had looked through it into the hyper-

world, it now opened into a vast panorama of black space, space that held other things, half-revealed worlds alive with motion.

A slow procession of Hespionians entered the hall from some hidden doorway, and passed within the circle of waiting Intellectuals. In single file they moved around the huge hemisphere, their tread stiff and mechanical, as though—the thought came to Hal—as though they were hypnotized. When they formed an unbroken circle, the procession halted. The heads of the Intellectuals bowed in concentration—a wave of almost tangible force seemed to come from them—and the Condemned sagged slowly to the floor, limp, unmoving.

And into the transparent dome drifted writhing cloudy things, things without definite form, things that vanished through that dome in a weaving, twisting haze of somehow luminous shadow!

Hespionians entered and removed the bodies, while the Intellectuals waited in motionless silence. Then another group of Condemned entered—to sag, to die, their life drifting into the black void—another—and another—and yet another interminably. . . . And the vision faded.

"Afterward," the Aalik commented, "we gave to the Door the power to seize and hold any of the Condemned that came within the field of its strength. In their incorporeal form they would be kept captive until we released them to undergo more—thorough—punishment. You, being more material, could force your way through the spheres." As an afterthought, he added, "as you may have understood, the Condemned were cast out by the combined metal strength of the Intellectuals—and stayed, for until Ersa crashed through, none came back from the Void."

Hal nodded, whistling his faint monotone. He understood what he had seen, but some things were still foggy. "What has all this to do with us? Why did these—shadows—suggest plans for tesseract to the minds of our scientists? Why did they choose

Earth, of all three-dimensional realms? And why did they want to enter a lower dimension? Was it to escape the Void, or—”

The Aalik interrupted. “To escape the Void, yes—but more than that. They planned to enter the world of three dimensions, draw life from the bodies of three-dimensional beings, and with that life gain sufficient solidity to come back and overthrow Hesplon. Or, more likely, to go on into the fifth dimension, and enlist their aid in bringing about our downfall. They chose Earth because of all the spheres in the third which we have investigated, it alone has physical conditions approaching ours.”

Again Hal nodded, grimly now. He remembered Dr. Lucius Rand, and Phillips, the old servant, and the physician lying unconscious while Ersa had become strangely solid.

“But that dome—” Hal questioned. “When I came through, it was transparent. Now it’s opaque. And in that vision it was transparent again, giving me a view of space and—other things.”

“When you entered,” the Aalik replied, “the dome was set to draw from space any of the Condemned who came too close. Its action was directed *into* Hesplon. For those looking out, it was opaque. In the scene I showed you, we were casting the Radicals out into the Void, and the action of the Door was reversed. From our point of view, it was transparent; and had anyone been looking in, it would have been opaque. I’ll show you.”

He crossed to the huge hemisphere, stooped, and darting tentacles played over a concealed keyboard. The spheres halted momentarily, blurring hazily—then they were revolving in the opposite direction; and they formed an inverted bowl of crystalline bubbles.

Hal stared through the ghostly spheres into utter darkness. Rita was beside him,

her arm hooked in his—peering together into nothingness.

Again the tentacles of the Aalik darted over the keyboard, and lights came alive in the gloom—squares and triangles of radiance marking tesseractes in Terrestrial laboratories; dim vistas of half-light where living mist floated. . . . Those tesseractes—the Condemned, who like Ersa had gotten through to Earth, must have set them glowing, the doorways open. Most of them must be out of the Void now, free to do what they would on a defenseless world.

Rita’s low voice broke the silence. “I wonder what’s happening out there. Those things—how could people defend themselves? Appearing like ghosts out of thin air, they’d demoralize almost everyone. The human race will be helpless. We—we should *do* something!”

Hal shrugged helplessly. “But what? We’re in another world. And even if we were there—”

“Something *will* be done!” The Aalik interrupted, his whisper bearing unusual intensity of feeling. “Even now the Draks of Hesplon are gathering. Indirectly, we are responsible for the danger in which your world finds itself, since we sent the Condemned into the Void; and they are a menace to our own life—so they will be removed! It will not be long—”

Frantic whispers from hoarse Hesplonian throats cut short the Aalik. And a shape hurtled past Rita and Hal, flinging itself headlong into the dome of crystalline bubbles. Hal had a blurred glimpse of Ersa bursting through—then he vanished in the blackness.

Ersa—free!

THE feelers of the Aalik writhed in important rage as he stared into the endless dark. He turned and glared at the empty manacles.

“I should have known,” he whispered, a mere thread of sound. “He was only

partly material—he was tenuous enough to free himself." He paused and contempt replaced his wrath. "Ersa is a fool. He has gone to warn his fellow Radicals, I suppose. But it will not help them. The Draks will destroy him with the rest."

At that instant, a hyperbeing appeared at the top of a ramp running like an aisle between the seats, and descended to the Aalik's side. Silent communication passed between them; then the messenger turned and sped back the way he had come.

"The Draks will be here almost immediately," the Aalik said. "Until they come, you may see what is happening on your world." His tentacles flicked the keyboard.

Staring intently through the crystal spheres, Hal and Rita saw something that had been a mere blur of ghostly light, leap up toward them. It was a colossal view of all Earth, a gigantic panoramic revelation of the entire globe spread out before them in a veritable living Mercator's projection. Earth laid bare to the all-seeing eyes of a four-dimensional world. Daylight, dusk, dark and dawn merged over the flattened face of the world. Land and sea, cloud and sky—all appeared in an incredible bird's-eye-view.

Again the Aalik touched the keyboard and the distant world flashed up to their eyes, so close now that they seemed to become part of the scene. Rita gasped in horror, and Hal ground his teeth as he felt the blood drain from his face.

A strange little village squatted between two peaks. Quaint cottages staggered on either side of a winding, dusty road, a road now darkened with queerly dressed folk—a people caught in the clutch of terror. There were shadowy shapes drifting above the throng, shapes that drove them on like cattle to slaughter. Frightened faces peered over cringing shoulders. Hands flailed wildly about the heads upon which shadows had settled—flailed with ever weakening force—till bodies sagged—and

lay still—to be trampled beneath the feet of those who fled. And rapidly the shadowy forms were growing more solid, pink-skinned monstrosities like Ersa creeping into view.

Under the Aalik's manipulation, the scene changed. "London!" Hal breathed as he recognized the British metropolis through the veil of overhanging fog. The spectacle of the mountain village was repeated on a vastly magnified scale. Hysteria, blind fear rode the backs of fleeing mobs. Black masses of panic-maddened humanity glutted narrow thoroughfares. Motionless forms dotted every street. Motor cars sped wildly away from the approaching cloud of shadows, vague forms materializing out of thick mist. Here and there one twisted suddenly, swerved, and crashed headlong into a crowd of screaming pedestrians. Screaming—though the watchers could hear no sound. Countless tragedies. Collisions of trains, of automobiles; airplanes staggering, crashing; a chaos of a disrupted civilization.

Flight, the universal impulse! Nowhere was their sign of resistance—for how could one resist a foe little more tangible than air?

Hal turned a pallid face to the Aalik. "Can you stop them? They'll wreck everything. And those people—no doctor of Earth had succeeded in reviving any of them before I—left. Ersa's victims—"

"They will be stopped! And soon. The Draks have come!" As he spoke, the Aalik's tentacles darted across the board; and the blackness of interdimensional space replaced the view of Earth.

Into the great hall poured a stream of hyperbeings, flowing down a long, wide ramp, an angle where, curiously, no angle should have been. Beneath their distorting spheres and cubes, Hal could detect legs short and squat, pink like all Hesplonians, but with massive bodies, with wide heads, great gaping mouths, and heavy, powerful tentacles—creatures created for combat. Down the ramp they came in single file—to the hemisphere—and into it! One after

another, an unbroken chain, flowing into the Void.

Hal peered intently through the spheres; and he saw wraithlike Draks flash into the blackness, speeding toward the distant, glowing tesseract, spreading out to all the spots of light. Interminably they poured into the dome, a horde that far outnumbered that of the Condemned.

When all had gone, the Aalik turned to Hal and Rita. "Now we Intellectuals will follow to direct the Draks. Only Vinst will remain to adjust the Door for our return. He will set the controls so that you may view Earth and see the destruction of the Radicals."

A Hesplonian stepped from the group of scientists and came to Hal's side. At a whispered word from the Aalik, Hal and Rita drew away from the dome; and in orderly manner the Intellectuals swept down into the crystalline pile—into it—and out through the blackness after the Draks.

## CHAPTER VII FINAL STRUGGLE!

MAN and girl were alone with the Hesplonian, Vinst. The latter turned to the keyboard, depressed several buttons; and again a view of Earth leaped up before them. Hal glanced at it, then spoke to the hyperbeing.

"If it's all the same to you, how about shifting around till I tell you to stop?"

The Hesplonian ignored him. Hal looked at Rita questioningly. She smiled, then explained:

"The Aalik told me before you arrived that he was the only one of his race who could talk with us. He has studied conditions in the third dimension, and has mastered communication between the two types of beings—sort of a cross between speech and telepathy."

Hal forced a short laugh. "If that's the case, I suppose we'll have to look at

whatever he wants us to see. If the show's no good, I'll get my money back." He was suddenly serious. Rita—I wonder where it will end."

"So do I, Hal." Her face tightened. "Tell me, Hal—what about father? The truth now."

"Now don't start worrying," Hal chided gently. "He was somewhat groggy from his return trip, but I'm certain he's okay now."

The girl slowly shook her head. "I don't believe you, Hal." She looked pleadingly into his eyes. "Is—is he like those people we saw in that village and London?"

Hal nodded mutely. His arm went around her. "I'm sure he'll be all right, Rita dear. Phillips had called a doctor; and by this time he probably has him as well as ever."

"We'll hope so, anyway." Rita smiled bravely. "Even though you told the Aalik that no doctor had succeeded in reviving any of them."

They looked into the dome of bubbles. Some great metropolis of Earth lay before them. And with the deceptive perspective of this strange realm, they seemed to be within the city. On every side, panic-stricken mobs fled before driving masses of semi-solid pink monstrosities. No longer did the majority of attackers drift through the air; attaining solidity, most of them travelled in long, flying leaps.

But this scene differed from the others they had viewed. There was panic in the ranks of the drivers now, as well as among those driven. The Draks had come!

The watchers saw their powerful forms, far more solid than the Condemned, suddenly appearing among them, with demoralizing effect. Each Drak seized a Radical and clung with heavy legs, their thick tentacles wrapping about the slender bodies with crushing force. Struggles took place on the ground, in midair—everywhere, the Draks fighting their weaker opponents with the stolid confidence of as-

sured victory. Above each group of battling Hesplonians hovered an Intellectual, supervising the execution.

Suddenly Rita gasped: "Hal—they're disappearing!" Hal stared. It was so. Invaders struggled in the clutch of Draks, resistance steadily weakening—until abruptly all motion ceased—they were shadows—and they vanished! A moment Hal puzzled; then he exclaimed:

"Why, of course! When they die they go back to their original shadowy form. They lose the semi-solidity, which isn't theirs anyway, and disappear." Hal whistled silently for an instant. "I wonder . . . Hmmm. I wish I could make this bird understand me. I'd like to look in on your home."

"Why, Hal—what do you—" Rita paused. Hal had caught the attention of the Hesplonian. He gestured toward the keyboard, pressing imaginary keys.

"If he moves it often enough," he remarked, "we may hit the right combination."

**I**N RESPONSE, Vinst sent his tentacles over the keys. Eagerly Hal and Rita watched the shifting scene; then Hal snorted impatiently.

"Now he's cut off the view entirely. Space again!"

They were looking into the Void with its points of light. Hal turned to Vinst, shaking his head vehemently. Then Rita's hand closed on his arm with sudden pressure.

"One of those tesseract—went out!"

Hal spun around. His eyes fixed themselves rigidly on a section of space. Moments—and a light blinked out! What could it mean?

Minutes passed—and another tesseract disappeared. Something was closing the doorways into space! There was a sound behind them, an excited, unintelligible whisper. Hal looked at Vinst. The strange face of the Hesplonian was a study in mingled emotions—fear, wrath, indecision and

excitement. Whispers came steadily from his great mouth, and he hopped about in obvious impatience.

More minutes—and another tesseract was gone.

"Rita—I'll bet it's Ersa, wrecking the tesseracts to keep the Draks and Intellectuals on Earth! Who else could be doing it? The scientists who built them, maybe—but I'll bet all of them are unconscious. It must be Ersa, and he'll have to be stopped!"

Rita nodded anxiously. "If he closes them all, how will we get back? We'd be stranded here! Can't we do something?"

"Yes—and we're getting out of here right now!" He faced Vinst, and with rapid pantomime indicated what he wanted to do. In answer came a gesture of eager affirmation. The Hesplonian dared not leave his post; and he too knew that Ersa had to be stopped.

Hal's arm gripped Rita in a strong embrace; their lips met; then arm in arm they flung themselves into the clutch of the revolving spheres. Torture of tremendous pressure—and they were flashing across space.

Only eleven tesseracts remained, distant now that they were no longer gazing through the telescopic dome, almost invisible points of light, like stars. One of these, Hal thought, was the great pile in Rand's laboratory; and his strange fourth dimensional sense told him which it was. As they sped toward it through the vast gulf, they became aware of the awful quiet of the place. There was nothing, only a great, ugly quiet, as though the life of this realm had ebbed out—as it had. It was a vast tomb from which seemed to emanate a terrible, impersonal sense of isolation.

Almost upon the white triangle, Hal saw something moving.

"There he is!"

A lighter figure in the gloom, Ersa's shadowy form was suddenly silhouetted

against the brightness of the tesseract—and he vanished into it!

“Rita—he’ll smash things to stop it forever—unless he knows some other way. Anyway, he must stop the motor and get back here before its action ceases—as I did—only we won’t let him!”

Down they flashed together, into the tesseract. Flaming torture licked at them; whips of madness scourged their minds; swirling chaos flung them about—and they were stumbling out of the opening into the laboratory of Dr. Lucius Rand.

With a mighty effort of will, Hal checked his reeling senses. Instinctively he crouched, glaring at a figure leaning over the huge motor, a squat figure with a slender pink body. Ersa! The grotesque face of the monster looked at Hal, and he cringed. There was no mistaking the look of revulsion and implacable determination on the man’s face. And twice before the Hesperonian had felt Hal’s strength. He shrank back. Hal followed.

**S**UDDENLY the creature darted past, narrowly avoiding a swinging arm, and sprang toward the tesseract. Rita blocked him; with a sucking gasp of hate he swept her aside; leaped wildly. Too slow—with a swift movement Hal reached him and flung him furiously across the room. The creature recoiled with a sharp, whistling sob. Hal followed, clenching his teeth with rage. The thing had dared to touch Rita! Out of the corner of his eye he saw her stagger erect; then he was on Ersa like an avalanche.

The fingers of one crooked hand tore into the thin body just below the gaping mouth. The other, tightly knotted, smashed fiercely into a mass of writhing tentacles. Again he struck, a third time—then with both hands he seized the quivering body and squeezed.

Whipping tentacles lashed him, coiled about his throat, his face, his arms. But

he ignored them. And his finger tips ground steadily deeper.

The face so close to Hal’s grew purple, and the queer eyes of the creature seemed about to burst from their sockets. The sound of his broken breathing was a horrible thing, a series of dry, whistling whispers. They weakened steadily—then ceased. And Hal fell back with a faint cry.

His hands were empty!

Hal thought he saw a faint shadow drifting into the tesseract, like a wisp of fog in a breeze, but he couldn’t be sure. He turned to Rita, grinning wryly.

“That was a queer sensation—though I should have expected it. By now he’s a ghost—a shadow of a shadow. Anyway, he’s done for.”

Rita swayed toward him, a figure of pathetic weariness. “We’re back, Hal—and I’m *so* tired.” Hal caught her and held her close. She looked up at him, suddenly apprehensive. “Do you think father—”

She got no further. A voice came from the floor below. “Rita! Rita! Where are you? By calculus—if anything has happened to her, there’ll be the devil to pay! Hmmm—she should be in the laboratory. Rita—d’you hear me?” The voice was somewhat uncertain, and very weary, but it was the voice of a man completely sane.

“Daddy!” Joyously she flung herself from Hal’s grasp and raced toward the doorway. “Daddy—here I am!”

Hal followed more slowly, a warm smile on his lips. He was relieved, and glad—*glad* that Rand had recovered, though the reason for that recovery might seem incredible. He couldn’t prove it, but he was certain that, with the death of Ersa, the life he had stolen from others had returned to its original dwelling place. Else how account for the monster’s disappearance?

At the foot of the stairs stood father and daughter, the girl’s head resting on the man’s rotund chest. The scientist’s pudgy hand stroked her dark curls. When he saw

Hal, the Professor waved; and Rita drew away.

"Well, Hal—seems as though plenty has happened around here!" The scientist tried to make his voice sound light and cheerful, but Hal detected the undertone of nervous strain.

"Yes, there was quite a little excitement for a while, but things have settled themselves, I believe. Sometime I'll tell you what actually took place."

"You won't have to," Rand said soberly. "I saw it all—through Ersa's eyes. I'm beginning to remember things."

Startled, Hal's lips parted—but he closed them without speaking. Through an opened window in a nearby room drifted a silent procession of ethereal figures—an Intellectual and a company of Draks. They floated into the hallway and approached the three. A few feet away they paused, and Hal recognized the Aalik. A faint whisper came from the Intellectual.

"The Condemned are no more. The Draks everywhere are returning to their

own world. And the Door between the dimensions will be closed—forever."

They were in motion again, drifting along the hallway, up the stairs, and disappearing into the laboratory. Another voice came to the ears of the motionless three—the voice of Dr. Carew.

"It's only a temporary derangement. Phillips. I've given her a sedative, and by the time she awakens she should be back to normalcy. Give her one of these every two hours—" The voice trailed off into silence.

Hal looked down at Rita. She smiled to him through a blurred mist.

He said: "The rainbow after the storm."

She nodded. Their arms went around each other. Dr. Lucius Rand coughed, and moved toward his laboratory. "By calculus," he murmured, "I think I'll have to get in touch with Dracha and Welker and Horton. I'll have plenty to open their eyes." Pudgy fingers stroked a bald spot on the back of his head as he climbed the stairs. "Plenty—by calculus!"

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*Their hearts thumping with excitement, they played and strutted!*



- NOVICK -

# RHYTHM RIDES THE ROCKET

by BOB OLSEN

**H**AVING piloted the Spaceship Godard through that perilous zone of pelting planetoids and ghostly derelicts which make the region between Mars and Jupiter a nerve-wracking nightmare for space-pilots, Captain Timothy Verger felt an urgent need for rest and relaxation. Turning the controls over to Alphonse LeDoux, the regular Interplanetary Company's pilot, he opened the door which led to the main cabin.

On the threshold he paused and gingerly inhaled a disgusted sniff. The place reeked—not that Captain Verger was particularly squeamish about odors. A veteran space-flyer does not expect the interior of a rocket-ship to smell like a spruce forest. The sensations which offended Verger's nostrils were not exactly unpleasant—but they certainly did not belong in an interplanetary freighter. They were feminine smells—the mingled fragrance of talcum powder, cold cream and perfume. And if the odors were incongruous, the sights and the sounds which accompanied them were even more so.

The cabin was crowded with women. There must have been at least twenty of them, ranging in ages from eighteen to twenty-five. All of them were playing lustily on horns, clarionettes and other musical instruments.

"Of all the unheard-of things!" Verger thought as he ducked beneath the flare of an enormous tuba and sidestepped to avoid

the sudden thrust of a trombone slide. "A band rehearsal in the space-lanes, a million miles from nowhere—and a female band at that!"

Squeezing between the compactly grouped musicians, Verger could not help brushing against the elbow of the bass drummer. She was somewhat older than the

others—perhaps thirty, he guessed. Although she was not exactly what a television scout would call glamorous, she was the kind of girl who would interest almost any man except a middle-aged, chronic woman-hater like Verger. Framed in a cloud of wavy red hair, her full red lips, pert nose and humorous eyes told an eloquent story of wholesome

**What an unearthly sight that was—a fully uniformed all-girl brass band blaring away for the benefit of the malformed natives of the moon Gany-mede! How long would those stirring marches hold the spell, the end of which could signify only horrors unspeakable?**

good nature.

As Verger slid past her, mumbling an inaudible apology, she flashed a white-toothed smile at him, shocking him with a deliberate, brazen wink. Though he tried to look stern and indifferent, he had to smile back at her in spite of himself.

Opening the door of the men's stateroom, Verger gave a cursory greeting to Professor Anderson, who was seated before a small bench which he had rigged up in one corner of the cramped quarters. He was working on a peculiar contraption which looked like a small horn attached to a strange jumble of coils and tubes. Knowing that Anderson was an inventor as well as a composer and music-teacher, Verger assumed that the

device was some new kind of band instrument.

Weary and nervous, the pilot crawled into his hammock and attempted to relax. It was a difficult task. Hard as he tried, he could not shake off the feeling of tense anxiety which disturbed and tormented him.

"There's nothing to worry about," he tried to assure himself. "LeDoux is an experienced pilot with almost as many space hours to his credit as I have."

Nevertheless Captain Verger couldn't squeeze from his mind the thought that the safety of this ship with its three men and its twenty women depended on him and on him alone.

In the hope of clearing up certain matters which puzzled him, Verger began talking to Anderson.

"Would you mind giving me the low-down on this crazy voyage?" he asked.

Anderson countered with, "Do you mean to say you don't know why you are here?"

"Frankly, I don't," the Captain admitted. "My orders simply directed me to report to the Earth Republic spaceport on Mars and to pilot the space-freighter Goddard with a cargo of supplies for the thermolium mines on Ganymede. It was somewhat surprising for me to find out most of the so-called "supplies" were female bipeds and peck-horns stained with lipstick."

ANDERSON laughed. "It does seem rather incongruous, doesn't it?"

"Yeah," Verger agreed. "Whatever that word means, it's all right. What I want to know is—why?"

"Being an inveterate bachelor, I suppose you wouldn't understand," Anderson smiled. "However, since you have spent many years on far-flung planets and satellites, perhaps you can realize that the lives of the eighty or ninety men who were exiled to the thermolium mines on Ganymede are not very pleasant."

Verger sniffed. "They must be cream-puffs if they kick about Ganymede. It has the nicest climate in the solar system—when you get used to it."

"It isn't the climate the men object to," Anderson amplified. "Their discontentment is due to being deprived of things they formerly enjoyed. Most of them were married just before they embarked for Ganymede, you know."

"First I heard of that," was Verger's abbreviated comment.

Anderson continued: "The government promised to transport the exiles' wives to Ganymede as soon as it could feasibly be accomplished. This is the first ship-load."

"Do you mean to tell me that all those female horn-tooters are married to Ganymedian exiles?" Verger exclaimed.

Anderson nodded.

"But why the trombones and saxophones?"

"That also is part of the campaign for more contented miners," the inventor explained. "A ballot discloses that, next their wives, the thing most needed by the exiles is music."

"I see," Verger grinned. "A variation of the old wheeze about wine, women and song."

"Something like that. And, since liquor is taboo, only the women and the music remained. On this first trip there was room enough for only one-fourth of the wives who wanted to join their husbands. They were about to draw lots when some one thought of the bright idea of selecting first the women who could play band instruments, thereby providing musical consolation for the benefit of the less fortunate men whose wives were delayed in transit."

"I suppose you were the one who picked the horn-blowers," Verger assumed.

"Yes, and since an immediate departure was imperative, I was ordered to accompany them and to train them during the

long, tedious voyage. I feel quite proud of their progress. By the way, what do you think of our band of exiles' wives?"

Verger parried the question with another one: "Did you say all those girls are married—even that red-headed base-drummer?"

"Oh, you mean Helen Green?" Anderson smiled. "Yes, she's married—like all the rest of the girls."

"The tramp—the chiseling tramp," Verger murmured to himself as he turned his face to the wall and fell asleep.

## CHAPTER II FORCED LANDING!

**F**OLLOWING hours of fitful slumber during which he dreamed of all the perils and catastrophes that could possibly bedevil a space-ship, Verger awoke with a start which would have bounced him out of his hammock had he not taken the precaution of zipping himself in. More than ever before, a premonition of impending disaster crowded into his worried mind.

Squeezing a handful of water from a drinking tube, he quickly washed his hands and face, hurried to the control room and strapped himself into the starboard control seat.

"Shall I relieve you, Al?" he panted.

LeDoux glanced at the chronometer and said, "No, thanks, Tim. I still have forty-seven minutes left of my shift." Then, seeming to sense a note of tension in his friend's voice, he exclaimed, "What's the matter, old man?"

"Oh, nothing," Verger assured him. "You know, of course, that I never interfere with the work of another flyer. No dual-seat piloting for me."

"For Pete's sake, spill it!" Alphonse cried. "What's wrong with the way I'm running this ash-can?"

"If you don't mind my saying so, I think you're shooting too darn close to Callisto."

"Maybe so," LeDoux conceded. "We're

several hours behind our schedule. I figured I might make it up by using the full force of Jupiter's gravitational pull. That meant shaving a slice out of Callisto's stratosphere, but we have plenty of momentum to carry us past the satellite without any risk."

"Let's hope so," was Verger's pessimistic response. "I'd hate to make a forced landing on Callisto."

"Why?" LeDoux wanted to know. "Isn't Callisto inhabited?"

"Sure, it's inhabited. That's the trouble. The natives of Callisto are unquestionably the most fearful and the most ruthless fiends in the known universe."

"What's so fearful about them?" his companion asked.

"Well, for one thing, they're too blamed curious."

"Curious?" LeDoux questioned. "Is that such a terrible crime?"

"It is when it is carried to extremes, like they do. Maybe you haven't heard, but the Callisto boys have an unpleasant habit of grabbing every human being they can get hold of, merely for the playful purpose of cutting them open to find out what makes them tick. Vivisection, I guess you'd call it."

"Nice people!" was LeDoux's comment.

"Yeah, and the worst of it is that there's nothing we humans can do about it. No weapon known to man can harm them. They shed lethal rays like a duck sheds water. Bullets from old-fashioned machine guns go right through them without apparent damage. I ought to know because—" Leaving his sentence suspended in space, Verger exclaimed, "Leaping Luna! What's that?"

Staring through the thick, super-transparent window in the direction which the captain indicated, LeDoux saw a weird, lavender-hued beam shoot out from the surface of Callisto. For two or three tense seconds it whipped around in a spiral path which centered the beam right on the nose

of the Goddard, bathing the craft with its throbbing, blinding glare.

There was a jolt which nearly snapped the strong bands of webbing which strapped the two men into their control seats. Followed then that horrible, oppressive feeling of excessive weight, which told the experienced space-pilots that their velocity was being decelerated rapidly—far more rapidly than any sensible pilot would dare to retard his flight by means of braking rockets.

Like a swimmer trying to fight his way out of the clutches of a dangerous rip-tide, LeDoux strove to steer the Goddard diagonally across the powerful current of quivering, menacing energy, but his attempts to maneuver the rocket-ship out of the beam's perilous influence were fruitless.

With inexorable power, the beam seemed to be sucking the spaceship toward the surface of the satellite, while at the same time it was retarding the Goddard's terrific speed.

CLOSER and closer loomed the enormous globe of Callisto, until it blotted out everything else. Finally, with an almost imperceptible jar, the rocket-ship pancaked into a nest of grotesque vegetation which clothed the perilous satellite.

Verger, who had closed his eyes to guard himself against blindness, opened them just in time to see a preposterous object thrust itself out of an enormous hole only a few feet away, and wrap itself about the spaceship. It was not a snake, nor was it exactly similar to the tentacle of a large cephalopodous animal. There was something about its creepy, slithering movements which suggested the pseudopodia of an amoeban organism, if one could stretch one's imagination sufficiently to conceive of an amoeba of such cosmic size.

Tearing his fascinated gaze away from this horrible object, which seemed to be holding the spaceship imprisoned in its

ominous embrace, Verger unbuckled the straps of his control seat and hurried back to the women's quarters. Fortunately, all the girls had been zipped snugly in their spring-braced hammocks at the moment when the beam had struck the spaceship. Although they were all somewhat shaken and badly frightened, none of them was seriously injured.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### MUSIC ON GANYMEDE

THE spot where the space-ship made its compulsory landing was like a small park. It was divided into geometrically fashioned beds of fantastic, crawling vines, vivid with huge, gaudy flowers and purple-hued, spongy foliage. Surrounding the open space were a number of flat, cylindrical objects which resembled the pieces on an enormous checker-board. Swinging open, like the lids of gigantic waffle-irons, these cylinders belched forth a host of preposterous creatures.

Comparable in size to walruses, their orange-hued bodies were shaped like gigantic slugs or shell-less snails. Their movements, however, were anything but snail-like. With incredible swiftness they flowed toward the space-ship from all directions. As if arrested by a sharp command, they all stopped before they reached the Goddard, ringing it at a respectable distance with an oval wall of pulsating bodies.

After a tense period of seeming indecision, one of their number separated from the others and oozed boldly across the intervening space.

Through the crystal-clear window, Captain Verger could plainly distinguish the creature's face, which, fantastic as it was, weirdly suggested a superior degree of intelligence, such as only human beings can claim. Ears and nostrils it undoubtedly possessed, the former being spirally coiled, like cinnamon rolls, and the latter resem-

bling the muzzle of a double-barreled shotgun. Unusually large was the mouth, which was armed with three rows of greenish teeth. Of all the grotesque features, the most peculiar were its organs of vision. Telescopic, like those of a lobster, its glaring, lidless eyes were mounted on long stalks so that they could be turned in all directions and focussed by drawing them in and out.

For a breathless minute, those weird eyes explored the interior of the space-ship. Then something resembling a three-fingered hand protruded from the creature's shoulder, stretched out until it became a long arm and made an unmistakable beckoning gesture. "Come out," it said as clearly as if it had uttered those very words. Verger answered with a shake of his head, which, though silent, was emphatically eloquent.

Within the crowded cabin of the space-ship, not a sound was heard. The girls had tumbled out of their hammocks and were huddled together, too frightened to speak or even to scream. Like birds fascinated by a serpent, they gazed fearfully at that fiendish face; and when it disappeared from the window, they simultaneously turned their hypnotized eyes on Captain Verger.

It was Helen Green, the red-headed drummer-girl who, assuming the post of spokeswoman, broke the silence. "Well, Captain," she said in a voice which she tried hard to keep from trembling, "What do we do now?"

Verger startled them all by shouting, "I'll tell you what to do! Get into your uniforms! Unpack your horns! Let's have a good, rousing tune right now!"

For a while they stared at him as if they feared he had lost his mind. Professor Anderson, who was standing close to Verger whispered, "Do you really mean that, Captain?"

"Certainly I mean it!" The pilot yelled. "Since you are in charge of the band, will you please see to it that my orders are carried out?"

"But why the uniforms? I don't—"

"There's no time for argument," Verger interrupted him. "It's extremely important that the girls dress in their uniforms. Please request them to do so at once!"

A MOMENT later, when the three men were shut in the control compartment in order that the girls could use the main cabin as a dressing room, Verger apologized to Anderson, "Sorry I had to be so blunt, Professor! You see, it was apparent that all the ladies were in a blue funk. Things are going to be tough enough for us without a bunch of hysterical women on our hands. I figured that something had to be done to distract their minds and there's nothing that absorbs the interest of a female like dolling up in fancy duds."

"I see," Anderson exclaimed. "So that was the reason why you insisted on the uniforms."

"Not entirely. I had other reasons. These Callisto babies are smart people—a lot smarter than we are in most things. But there's one subject they don't know anything at all about, and that's music!"

"And your idea is to stage a band concert for their benefit?" asked Anderson.

"Exactly."

"And what do you think will happen then?"

"I don't know. Anything can happen. But, no matter what they do about it, we can't be any worse off than we are right now. Tell your girls to toot like they've never tooted before. Let's hope that the Callisto boys like it. If they do, it may save us."

"What makes you think so?" Anderson asked.

"Because these babies are known to be the most inquisitive beings in the universe. If I am right about their not knowing anything about music, your band is sure to arouse their curiosity. They'll want to

find out all about it, and they can't very well do that if they cut the gizzards out of the musicians. Do you get the idea?"

While Verger and Anderson were talking, LeDoux had kept close watch through the windows of the control room. Suddenly he exclaimed, "Look what's coming now!"

A queer-looking machine was slowly approaching the space-ship. It was like a combination of a steam-shovel and a pile driver. Suspended by means of a cable from a long boom, a metal ball, which must have weighed several tons, was swinging back and forth like a colossal pendulum.

"What do you suppose it is?" Anderson whispered tensely.

"Whatever it is, it looks like bad news!" exclaimed Verger. "My guess is that they intend to use it to batter a hole in our shell. We've got to stop them from doing that. If they wrecked the ship we'd never be able to get away from here."

"What can we do about it?" LeDoux demanded. "You said yourself that no human weapons have any effect on them."

"There's only one thing to do," Verger replied. "And that is to open the hatch before that thing-a-ma-gig starts massaging our hull."

Without giving any warning, he flung open the door of the main cabin. Most of the girls were already dressed in their vivid, purple and green uniforms. Two of them, who were still partially undressed, uttered little screams, but Captain Verger paid no attention to them. Striding to the circular hatch, he quickly unscrewed the ponderous clamps and slid the door open.

Then he turned and shouted, "Hurry, girls! There isn't a moment to lose. All of you get your instruments to working and follow me."

"What are we going to play?" someone squealed.

"Play anything—any snappy march will do!"

Anderson came to the rescue with the command, "Play 'The March of the Rocketeers'."

THE girls raised their instruments and were just about to start playing when Verger shouted, "One moment, please. We've all got to be in this—the men as well as the women. Otherwise they may get the idea that the men aren't needed in the band and will start to carve us up. How about it, Professor? Have you any extra instruments?"

Anderson shook his head.

"Any objects that resemble musical instruments will do. Where's that gimmick you were working on?"

"You mean my high-frequency sound projector? I'll get it right away." Anderson dashed into the stateroom, returning immediately with his invention.

"O. K. You march along with the girls. Make believe you're playing on your dohicky. I'll pretend to play on this monkey wrench. LeDoux, you blow on your ray gun—but be careful you don't get absent minded and pull the trigger."

Stepping to the open hatch, Captain Verger yelled, "O. K., girls! Now play like you've never played before! One! Two! Three! Four! Let's go!" With the blaring band streaming after him, and with his ridiculous monkey wrench pressed against his lips he strode forth to the soil of the hostile satellite.

It was indeed an astounding spectacle. Arrayed in their vividly colored uniforms, their hearts thumping with excitement, the musical wives of the exiled miners played and strutted as if they knew their lives depended on their skill.

Pretending to pay no attention to the beasts who still formed an ominous ring around the space-ship, Verger waded through a tangle of vegetation to what looked like a walk or beaten path. Along

this he marched and the ring of slug-men opened to let the band pass through.

Out of the corner of his eyes, Captain Verger watched the natives, for he realized that the fate of his band hung on one thing and one thing only, and that was the reaction of its audience.

At first, the only effect he discerned was one of astonishment. Obviously the Callistonians were taken completely by surprise. They didn't know what to do, and so they did nothing except follow this amazing procession.

Doubling around in a wide circle, Verger led the band back toward the space ship. Like children watching a circus parade, the natives formed a lane, along which the musicians had to pass. It was then that Captain Verger noticed something that gave him relieved encouragement. Practically all of the listeners were swaying back and forth, keeping exact time with the catchy strains of the stirring march. It was apparent that, even though they were ignorant of music, they certainly had a sense of rhythm. None of them made any attempts to molest the human beings as they marched back and reentered the space ship.

#### CHAPTER IV THE UNDERSTUDIES

**K**NOWING the Callistonian's reputation for inquisitiveness, Verger fully expected that some of them would follow the band into the space ship. They surprised him, however, by moving away from the Goddard instead of toward it.

In a cleared space which was some distance away but close enough so that the occupants of the ship could see them clearly, the natives of the satellite gathered together, forming a huge circle with their heads all pointed toward the center. Apparently they were holding a conference or town meeting to decide what to do about these unprecedented eventualities.

Verger took advantage of this interlude

to make a thorough examination of the weird tentacle which was still coiled about the Goddard, shackling it firmly to the unfriendly satellite.

Calling to Anderson he said, "You're a scientist, Professor. Suppose you give this thing the once over and see if you can make anything out of it."

The inventor inspected the snake-like object minutely, using the magnifying glass to supplement his naturally keen vision. Finally he remarked: "It looks like proto-plasm."

"You mean you think it's something living?"

Anderson nodded.

"But how could anything living be so enormous?" Verger doubted. "Surely you don't believe that an underground monster could have a tentacle as big as that?"

"Perhaps the satellite itself is a living organism," Anderson suggested.

LeDoux, who had overheard the conversation, remarked, "How utterly ridiculous!"

"I wouldn't say that," Verger disagreed. "I've seen too many strange things in my time to call anything ridiculous."

"But if this satellite was really alive, we'd certainly know about it," LeDoux protested.

"Not necessarily," said Anderson. "Do you think the fleas and microbes that crawl the hairy forests on the surface of a Saint Bernard dog have any conception of the living thing which they inhabit?"

While LeDoux and Anderson were talking, Verger had disappeared into the spacecraft, from which he presently emerged, brandishing a large, razor-edged axe.

"We'll soon find out whether it's alive or not," he cried, as he swung the powerful weapon over his head and slashed it with a mighty effort into the thing.

The axe penetrated the substance as easily as if it had been made of jelly, in fact the blade sank completely out of sight. Almost instantly the wound closed, leaving the outer surface intact. When Verger

tried to withdraw the axe, he found that he did not have strength enough to do so.

"Here, fellows, give me a hand!" he yelled.

All three of them tugged at the axe-handle without being able to dislodge the blade. Finally they strained so hard that the hickory shaft cracked and the portion which was attached to the blade was sucked out of sight.

For an instant Verger stood with his mouth open, gazing foolishly at the broken rod in his hand. Then he swore and exclaimed, "Now, just what does that prove?"

Anderson shrugged his shoulders and said nothing.

"If you ask me," said LeDoux, "it proves that we're stuck here for the rest of our lives—which probably won't be long enough to become tedious."

**M**EANWHILE, the natives of Callisto had apparently completed their conference, for they started back toward the space-ship. When he saw them approaching, Verger rushed inside and shouted, "Play, girls. Your customers must have liked your routine, because they're coming back for more."

Taking the lead, one of the saxophone players blew an introductory measure of an old, familiar dance tune, and the rest of the band lustily joined in.

If it had not been for the seriousness of their predicament, the three men would have derived a great deal of amusement from the subsequent behaviour of the Callisto natives.

First they marched, or rather crawled, around the space-ship in single file, keeping time to the music with graceful movements of their sinuous bodies. Then they separated into groups, performing some remarkable, rhythmic maneuvers, which seemed to be both spontaneous and original.

"They're dancing!" LeDoux exclaimed. "It's a sort of ancient square dance—I believe it was called the quadrille."

"Looks more like the Big Apple to me," Anderson remarked.

"Big Apple?" Verger questioned. "What in the Solar System is that?"

"It's the name of a dance which was popular back in the Twentieth Century. I remember seeing the dance depicted by some motion pictures which were kept in a museum to show the customs of human insects called 'jitter bugs' who lived in what they called the 'terrible thirties.'"

"Very interesting," was Captain Verger's comment. "All I can say is, 'On with the dance! Let joy be unrefined!' If it will keep the minds of those slug-men out of mischief—more power to rhythm!"

"Looks as if they won't bother us for a while at least," Anderson remarked. "I believe I shall take advantage of this interlude to make the final adjustments on my invention. It is practically completed, you know."

"Go to it, by all means," Verger urged him. "And, by the way, Professor, just what is the nature of that contraption of yours?"

"I call it a High Frequency Sound Projector. If you're interested, just step into my laboratory and I'll explain it to you while I am working on it."

A moment later, when they were in the tiny stateroom which Anderson facetiously called his laboratory, the scientist began: "My High Frequency Sound Projector is merely a device for producing, focussing and projecting super-sonic vibrations, or waves which are similar to sound, but have enormously greater frequencies. No doubt you know that vibrations which are audible to the human ear range from 24 per second to about 40,000 per second. My device develops frequencies as high as a million vibrations per second."

"Did you originate the idea?" Verger asked.

"Indeed not," Anderson hastened to state. "All I did was to carry on the work of other scientists. Early in the Twentieth Century, during the so-called 'World War,' super-

sonics were used to detect the presence of hostile submarines. While these high frequency sound-waves were being employed for this purpose, thousands of dead fishes were found floating on the surface of the ocean. It was suggested that these fishes might have been killed by the super-sonic vibrations, and this assumption was subsequently verified by laboratory experiments."

"And is that what your dohickey is for—just to kill fishes?" Verger asked.

"It ought to do a great deal more than that," Anderson smiled. "The super-sonics which killed small fishes had relatively low frequencies—only about 50,000 vibrations per second. My device develops frequencies of over a million vibrations per second."

"Does that mean that your gimmick will kill larger animals?"

The scientist answered, "I haven't tested it yet. But, reasoning by analogy, I believe it would be absolutely fatal to any large animal, such as a human being, an elephant, or—"

"Or one of those Callisto devils!" the captain exclaimed. "Jumping Jupiter! Maybe you've got something there, Professor! No weapon that has been tried so far has been able to stop one of those babies; but perhaps your super-sonic thing-a-ma-gig will do the trick!"

"That is a possibility," Anderson agreed. "However, since we have only one Super-Sonic Projector, I'm afraid we cannot wage a successful war against the entire population of Callisto."

"Not very well," Verger had to admit. "Nevertheless, I still have a hunch that your little dohickey is going to enable us to make our getaway."

**P**ROFESSOR ANDERSON was about to ask Verger what he had in mind, when he heard a knock on the door of the state-room. In response to his invitation to enter, one of the women came in. It was Helen Green, the bass drummer.

Startled by the expression on her face, the scientist said, "What's wrong, Miss Green? Why aren't you playing with the rest of the band?"

"I got fired!" Was her astonishing statement.

"You got fired?" Anderson exclaimed. "What in the Universe are you raving about?"

"You know how it is," she grinned. "Unskilled labor is always the first to feel the pinch of unemployment. Anyone can play the bass drum. That's why I lost my job."

In a tone of exasperation which he tried hard to disguise, the professor said, "Please be more explicit, Mrs. Green. This is no time for facetiousness."

"I'm not trying to be funny," she assured him. "If you don't think I meant it when I said I got fired, take a look at the individual that copped my job!"

Following her suggestion, Anderson and Verger stepped to the door and looked into the main cabin. Just beyond the entrance they were astonished to see one of the slug-men. Armed with the padded drum-stick, it was pounding lustily on the bass drum.

Nine or ten more of the Callisto natives were crowding the musicians. With their weird, telescopic eyes, the slug-men were intently watching all the movements which the girls were making.

"I believe I get the idea," Verger remarked. "Apparently they think that if they watch the musicians closely enough, they will learn how to play all the instruments themselves. Then they will organize a band of their own. As soon as they are able to get along without the human musicians, they will—"

Anderson kicked him in the shin just in time to stop him from finishing the sentence. If Helen noticed this by-play, she did not mention it. Instead she said, "why don't you toss those kibitzers out, Captain?"

Despite the seriousness of the situation,

Verger couldn't help smiling. "We can't very well toss them out, Mrs. Green, any more than a hired orchestra could evict the sponsor of a television program who took a notion to play with the instruments during a broadcast for which he was footing the bill."

By that time the enormous, fantastically glowing globe of Jupiter, upon which the daughter-moon of Callisto depended for light and warmth, had rolled down the sky until only a small portion of it was visible above the horizon. Evidently the slug-men abhorred being away from home after night-fall. At any rate, they departed as soon as the light began to wane, leaving behind them twenty tired, frightened girls and three worried men.

## CHAPTER V

### THE DYING TENTACLE

**H**ALF an hour later, Verger, Anderson, and LeDoux stole forth from the rocket-ship. Each of the men had a box-shaped object strapped on his back. All three of them carried coils of insulated wire, which they unwound as they advanced.

When they were about a mile from the Goddard, Anderson removed the burden from his back and opened the package. It was a small but remarkably efficient phonograph, which was equipped with a powerful loud speaker and a device for automatically changing records.

After Professor Anderson had attached one of the wires to the phonograph and had adjusted the mechanism, he covered it with vines. Then they walked for approximately another mile in a direction which took them away from the space-ship at a slightly different angle. At this point, which happened to be in the midst of a thicket, they unpacked the second phonograph and connected it up to one of the

insulated wires. The third phonograph was similarly installed and camouflaged at a point about three miles distant from the Goddard.

Guided by the wires, the three Earthmen tramped back to the space-ship. They had scarcely reached their destination when ghostly tongues of magenta, orange and lavender began to flame above the distant horizon, giving warning of the impending dawn of Jupiter.

"Hurry, fellows," Captain Verger cried. "Al, will you please wake up the ladies? Tell them we're going for a little hike and that each one of them must bring her own instrument. Professor, will you please get your ultra-sound device. I'll carry the storage batteries."

"What's the idea?" LeDoux demanded.

"I'll tell you later. Time's a wasting, so let's get going!"

A few moments later he was leading the entire party toward a thickly wooded forest which was about two hundred meters distant, on the opposite side of the space-ship from the places where the phonographs had been concealed.

In accordance with Verger's instructions, LeDoux carried the three coils of wire, unwinding them as he advanced.

When they had penetrated the woods far enough to be completely concealed, the captain called a halt and proceeded to elucidate his peculiar orders.

"This is just a little game of hide and seek," he explained. "All you have to do is keep out of sight and notice what happens."

Peeping through the spongy foliage at the edge of the forest, he watched the slug-men as they emerged from their homes and flocked toward the space-ship. He waited until twenty or thirty of them had entered the Goddard and had subsequently poured out again, rushing about in apparent excitement. Then he connected one of the wires to the storage battery.

From the distant loud-speaker came the faint but unmistakable sounds of a brass band playing a stirring march in six-eight time. The slug-men must have heard it, for they all stopped and turned their heads in the direction of the concealed phonograph.

For an instant they hesitated; then, like rats following the Pied Piper, they all trooped after the mysterious music, which they obviously assumed was being produced by the band of Earth-Folk.

Verger glanced at his wrist-watch, estimating the amount of time which the Callisto natives would require to reach the first phonograph. Then he disconnected the wires, waited a while, and switched the current to the second phonograph. In a similar manner he timed the intervening interval before connecting the third phonograph to the battery.

Having thus tricked the enemy into a wild goose chase, Captain Verger herded his party back toward the space-ship.

"Don't go in yet, ladies," he ordered. Then to Anderson he said, "Let's see what your super-sonic dohickey will do to that tentacle thing that's holding our ship down."

**A**CTING on this suggestion, Anderson aimed his invention at the thick coil of sinew which held the Goddard captive, adjusted the mechanism carefully, and turned on the power.

The thing began to writhe like a python in its death throes. Captain Verger fancied he could almost hear his beloved rocket-ship groan as the massive coils tightened convulsively around it. But the staunch plates of super-alloy, built to withstand the terrific pressures incident to interplanetary travel, held firm.

Bracing himself to keep from falling to the ground, which was trembling like a miniature earth-quake, Anderson continued to shoot the powerful waves at the strug-

gling tentacle. Finally, as the vibrations cut through the massive tissues, the folds which encircled the ship uncoiled and slithered inertly to the ground.

As he jumped backward to escape being hit by the dying thing, Anderson collided with Helen Green who had been standing right behind him.

He helped her to her feet and then said angrily, "What are you doing here? Why didn't you stand back where you belong, with the other girls?"

"I'm sorry," she apologized. "I wanted to find out how that new gun of yours works, so I stood right behind you and watched you operate it."

A second later, when Captain Verger rushed into the Goddard's control compartment, he was nearly startled out of his wits. Barring his way was an enormous slug-man, who had obviously been left behind to guard the space-ship.

With a beastly snarl which sent cold shivers racing along the Earth-man's spine, the creature seized him in its slimy arms and lifted his two hundred pound body as easily as if he had been a baby. Verger had barely time enough to shout a warning, "Look out, Al!" to LeDoux, when the monster whirled him about and crashed his head against the metal floor of the space-ship.

Drawing his ray-gun, LeDoux fired point-blank at the slugman. The powerful blast, which would have instantly disintegrated the body of a human being or other mammal, seemed to have absolutely no effect on the boneless body of the Callistonian. One of its weird, three-fingered hands shot out, grabbed the weapon and wrenched it out of LeDoux's grasp. Then it turned the ray-gun on the Earth-man.

The mechanism of course was unfamiliar to the monstrosity, and this undoubtedly saved the space-pilot's life. After fumbling for a second or two in an unsuccessful attempt to operate the weapon, the creature

dropped it with a grunt of disgust and tackled LeDoux with its powerful, sinuous arms.

Attracted by the noise, Helen Green and two of the other girls rushed to the door of the control-room. One of them uttered a low moan and fainted dead away. The second girl ran screaming out of the space-ship. Helen was the only one who kept her head. Turning to Professor Anderson, who was right behind her, she snatched the Super-sonic Projector out of his hand, thrust its muzzle into the slug-man's side and squeezed the trigger.

Like a deflated balloon, the huge body collapsed, flopping to the floor in a shapeless mass. Into it plumped LeDoux, his fall cushioned as if he had dropped into a quivering heap of jelly.

Although he was trembling like an ash-tree in an earthquake, LeDoux, thanks to his long experience in facing emergencies, instantly took command of the situation.

"Quick, Anderson!" he shouted. "Make sure all the women are inside! Then close the hatch and clamp it tight! Girls! Climb into your hammocks instantly!"

As he was strapping himself into the control seat, he glanced through the observation ports. What he saw put extra speed into his fumbling fingers.

Already the natives of Callisto were rushing back to the Goddard. Apparently the tremors of the dying tentacle had told them that they had been outwitted. Although they were still nearly a mile away, they were racing along at such a rapid speed that their arrival was only a matter of minutes. On they came—thousands of them. Even at a distance, LeDoux could sense the menace of their furious features and their threatening movements.

Nevertheless, LeDoux made sure that all the women were safe in their hammocks before he snapped on the gravity-nullifier and sent the Goddard rocketing through Callisto's stratosphere.

## CHAPTER VI

## AN AMAZING REVELATION

THREE days later, Captain Verger recovered consciousness. His head heavily bandaged, he was lying on a cot in a small, white-walled room. The sickening odor of ether was in the air. Bending over him, he was surprised to see the kindly features of Professor Anderson.

"Where am I? What happened?" he asked tritely.

"You're in the Interplanetary Mining Company's hospital on Ganymede," Anderson told him. "I suppose you recall what happened to you in Callisto."

"The last thing I remember is when that blasted devil of a slug-man bashed my head against the floor of the Goddard."

Anderson nodded and said, "Luckily for you, your skull turned out to be a thick one. Instead of being cracked wide open as any ordinary head would have been under the circumstances, your cranium was only dented. The doctor says you'll recover from the concussion, but it will be at least a month before you will be able to pilot a space-ship."

"And what about the others—LeDoux, Helen Green and the girls of the band?"

"All of them are safe and sound." Then Anderson told him about the courage and resourcefulness which Helen had displayed when she saved the Earth-People from the Callistonian guard.

"Mrs. Green sure is a swell girl," Verger murmured.

"You don't know the half of it," the Professor declared. "It was Helen who risked her life to give you first aid while we were taking off from Callisto. All the rest of us were strapped into our hammocks and seats to protect ourselves against the rapid acceleration. Doctor Williams told me that you owe your life to the way she took care of you both on the Goddard and here."

"Do you mean to say that Helen has been my nurse at this hospital?"

"That's right," Anderson smiled, "And I wouldn't be surprised if that was Helen coming down the corridor right now!"

As Helen Green entered the dimly lighted room, her beaming, radiant face and her lustrous, red hair reminded Verger of noon-day sunshine on dear old Earth.

Without making a sound, Anderson tiptoed out of the room, leaving Verger alone with his beautiful nurse.

Her first actions and words astonished the hardened bachelor. Kneeling at his bedside with bowed head, she whispered, "Thank heaven you are all right!"

For a moment or two, neither of them spoke. Then Verger reached out and reverently stroked the lustrous, red curls which were pressed against the counterpane just above his bosom.

"You're a wonderful woman, Mrs. Green," he murmured. "The lucky chap who married you sure drew a prize."

She surprised him by saying, "My name is not Mrs. Green—and I am not married."

"Then how did you get into the band, which was supposed to be composed exclusively of exiles' wives?" he demanded.

"Oh, that was easy. You see, the real Mrs. Green is a friend of mine. She was selected to join the band and fly to her husband, who is one of the miners here. At

the showdown, she lost her nerve. Apparently, she lacked the—the intestinal fortitude that it takes to embark on a space voyage. When I heard she was going to quit, I got her to let me take her place. So here I am."

"But I still don't understand," Verger said. "If you haven't a husband here, why did you go on a journey which you must have known would be full of discomfort and danger?"

She grinned and replied, "Oh, I don't know. I guess it must have been the gypsy in my soul."

"Haven't you ever been married?" he asked.

"Never," she smiled. "I'm one of those things that's commonly called a spinster."

"That reminds me of a gag I heard a long time ago," Verger rejoined. "It seems that a high school girl, when asked to define that word, said, 'A spinster is the wife of a bachelor.'" Then he added, "I guess you know that I am a bachelor, don't you?"

Helen laughed and replied, "How could I help knowing that? Everyone tells me that you are an incurable woman-hater. And that's the truth, isn't it, Captain Verger?"

"All except the tense of the verb," he corrected her. "They should have told you that I *was* a woman-hater until I met you—you plucky, red-headed angel you!"

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# DEATH AND THE DICTATOR

by RAYMOND Z. GALLUN

Why not destroy London and Paris immediately, in one fell swoop?—thought the Great Dictator—then his people, thrown into war, would have to remain loyal. But the fear of treason kept him buried under the Earth in a steel-protected room, until the hatred of two decades closes in upon him!



*Accuracy meant little when you really bombed a metropolis. . . .*

ONCE again, after twenty-five years, the world stood still—breathless. Once again, in great cities, men climbed ladders and put little metal shields around the lights along the streets and boulevards. Paint was daubed on electric bulbs, one by one, swiftly, unobtrusively,

until, at night, the motif was blue—a faint, soft, low-penetrant glow, that a few hundred feet of hazy air could mask completely. Not quite blackout yet. . . .

And at the entrances to deep cellars, small red signs with white bombs painted on them, were posted. Each sign men-

tioned the number of people the cellar could accommodate, when the sirens howled. . . .

The diplomats had ceased to wrangle. Frontiers were sealed, and in buried forts along the line, men watched from behind guns that yet were silent . . . Filed hordes of snub-nosed things, with bulging rocket-tubes streamlined into their flanks, crouched before their camouflaged hangars, grimly ready, but silent and moveless, still. . . .

Poppies bloomed and Europe dreamed. But over all her mood of old, old towers and antique mellowness, Death smiled, leaning on his scythe. No one shouted and no one sang. Yet in the sand and earth of sunny parks, there were the prints of hob-nail boots. . . .

**E**RICH KETTERER knew that they would try to murder him tonight, because he was—war. And few indeed wanted war. So Erich Ketterer was careful. He had spoken. And the world had gone hushed. Now he said nothing. The general mobilization order was out. Tomorrow. . . . Erich Ketterer smiled. And it was like the slow cracking of a block of pale granite. . . .

For Erich Ketterer's face was like that—all angles and lines and faintly cadaverous hollows, with the coldness of granite and steel. Maybe Wodin, the war god, had looked a little like that too. . . .

Once again it had happened. Beyond the Rhine, and out of the ashes of another defeat, a people had rebuilt its way once more, for the world to marvel. Industry, patience, pride, genius, kindness—all these virtues were theirs, and more. A strange people, they were, a docile people, full of idealism that sometimes could change to childish cruelty. They were dangerous because they were easy to control. And, like children, you could tell them anything—sometimes.

That was how Erich Ketterer had risen to power—from nothing. Promising relief

from the terrible economic miseries of defeat—promising the rebirth of world prestige—he had gained absolute control. Perhaps he had led in the right direction for a while; but now the coffers were empty, militarism was a terrific load, and there was only one way for him to save his face, as his boundless egotism demanded: Turn to war, in the hope of gaining foreign plunder.

Blood purge and punishment had been the whip which he had applied ruthlessly to hold the reins of state. He'd been without conscience, and without mercy—more cruel than Genghis Khan. Still, the majority of the great nation he ruled, had continued to love him, or at least to tolerate him. But now, even through the net of censorship, the certainty of war had reached them. . . .

They knew what war meant. They'd had too many hard lessons not to know. Millions of them still living had felt starvation in the last great conflict. And if war came now, it would be the old story all over again, almost certainly—a magnificent, blazing, horrible start, then the slow, grinding defeat of the siege. . . . Then capitulation, followed by misery, desperate poverty, and—guilt. Again . . .

So, in many hearts, love flickered and died.

Erich Ketterer had prepared for the resulting danger to himself, months in advance. The room in which he now stood, with his small, loyal aide, Ludwig Lietz, should have been the safest place in the world.

It was buried a hundred meters below ground, and was shielded on all sides by layer on layer of reinforced concrete, and repeated thicknesses of the best armor plate. Every cubic centimeter of air within the room was filtered.

The place looked homey, like an old Bavarian rathskeller—stone floor, rough-hewn furniture—jolly gnomes, and sayings

and song verses in quaint Gothic print, painted on the walls. The electric lights were held in odd sconces of medieval iron work. There was even a great fireplace with an electric log.

But yet, somehow, there seemed to lurk in the room, intangibly and unseen, a concentrated aura of hate, like a thousand hidden swords of Damocles, pendant and threatening in the stillness. The mood of destruction clung somehow, even about the gleaming, hermetic bolts of the gigantic steel door that sealed the room, and was meant to protect the man who had made himself a god. That same mood lingered, too, in the glitter of the instruments on the table in the corner—instruments that were meant to reveal danger which human senses alone could neither see nor feel nor hear.

Hate. The hate of the world, beyond the frontiers, and of millions within. Erich Ketterer was the one serious obstacle to peace. And so, out of hate, cleverness must sprout in hundreds of brilliant, thorough minds that thought only of freedom—patient minds, scientific minds, great as those of Rontgen and Hertz and Koch of another day.

Erich Ketterer knew all this and was ready. Science was advanced now, and it was well to be cautious. He could not help but realize that many men whom he did not know well had helped to build this refuge and the parts that composed it. And those men, doubtless, had secret thoughts of their own, just as they had technical skill at their command. Skill, they had, to hide their cleverness from discovery, even under the closest inspection.

And so Ketterer waited with Ludwig Lietz, the little scientist who had been his devoted companion for twenty years. . . .

Presently Ketterer heard a faint hum, shrill and high . . . near his head . . . receding away—coming closer again, as if to touch him. . . . His hard, defiant smile dis-

solved into a leer of grimness and tension. His great, stubby palms grew faintly moist with the eeriness of it all. He stepped back cautiously, and his military boots clicked on the stone floor. . . .

And then he identified that hum. His mind had been too far from common things at first for him to do so.

"*Nur ein kleines Moskitol!*" he burst out raggedly. —Only a little mosquito! . . .

At first he wanted to laugh and to curse himself. This was an anticlimax—a joke!

But swiftly he realized—remembered—that this could be no joke at all—unless it was a joke of death! How could this mosquito be here—when all the air that entered this room was filtered even of dust particles and microbes—unless it had been brought for a grim purpose?

Ludwig Lietz was instantly in action to protect his master. His big, rabbit-like eyes were wide with concern and his withered face was drawn as he leaped to a safety-supply locker and jerked out two leaded, rubberized garments, equipped with hoods and goggles. There was no need for him to say anything, as he helped Ketterer draw one of the protective garments over his massive legs and body. Not until he had donned the other garment himself, did Ludwig speak, from within his hood. . . .

"*Es sind die kleinen Dinge die verraten,*" he said quietly. —"It is the small things that betray. . . . The odor of a rose, *Excellenz*, could be lethal gas. . . . The color of a soft cushion could be poison—acting through the skin. Smoke, incautiously inhaled from a cigarette, could bring eternal sleep. . . . Malaria mosquitoes can carry malaria germs in their stomachs. But if there was an ingenious man who could persuade some of these insects to sip at a special culture, they could carry other germs in their stomachs—bacteria like those developed in the new *Biologisches Versuchslaboratorium* in Munich. Sure mortality in six hours—one's blood rotting. I know.

I am a scientist. . . . That that insect is here is enough to reveal its purpose, since the air filters are active. It is not necessary to make tests. Had the mosquito bitten you, asleep or awake, you would be doomed. . . ."

"DESTROY! DESTROY!"

IT WAS like a grey, chill night falling in Erich Ketterer's heart. He had known before what sort of thing to expect, but now he realized. They'd found at least one way to reach him—his enemies, even in his steel and concrete vault. They might have been successful, too. . . .

Erich Ketterer's crooked lips fell apart momentarily, in awe and dread. The silence seemed to mock him. Those gnomes, painted over the fireplace, seemed to mock him with their sly, cherubic smiles, that somehow promised more hidden, unknown danger. Modern science applied to the fine art of murder. . . . An undetectable flaw in metal, or a bubble in hardened masonry might hold the seeds of death, for all he could say. . . . Every breath he drew might be dangerous. Every slight move he made might be his last—the releasing agent of some inscrutably concealed hair-trigger. . . . Even here, in this safest place in all the world!

And then, to Erich Ketterer, out of all these sinister ruminations, came fury. His stiff, short hair seemed to bristle beneath his protecting hood. Who had done this thing? Who had released that tiny mosquito here?—some workman, doubtless; but there was surely another, of which he was only the tool!—some crazy devotee of democracy and freedom, but cold and gifted. . . .

Someone who knew biology in its most recent developments. Someone who knew the human system. A physician, perhaps? The leathery crow's feet at the corners of Erich Ketterer's eyes crinkled as he concentrated. Some foreign doctor? Some hated

enemy democrat? No, it was unlikely that any foreigners would be active here, approaching so close to the inner circle. . . .

Someone else. Someone native, and from the skill of it all—noted. Ketterer's massive jaw was hard as he considered names and personalities. He knew them all—a little. One by one he weighed them, with the shrewdness of an inexorable avenger. And it was almost easy to judge. . . . One who liked those fine methods—one who toyed lovingly with the intricate subtleties of things that seemed insignificant. . . . Shrewdly Ketterer built a picture of his would-be killer. . . . Oh, he was clever himself in his sharp deductions! Let no one doubt that!

Steinbart . . . Herr Doktor Johann Steinbart . . . a little man who talked very slowly, and whose eyes glowed, always, with hidden thoughts. . . . Famous both in the fields of surgery and bacteriology. . . . He had hands that were almost miniature. . . . And a genius for the minute, the exact. . . . It would be easy for him to be a traitor. Yet few besides himself would know, before he acted. A necessary workman helper, perhaps, but no one else. . . .

"Steinbart!" Ketterer uttered the name aloud, now, with clipped conviction.

His grey eyes, behind the goggles of his hood, were narrowed. Quickly, and by habit, his gaze groped for the visiphone, on the instrument-covered table in the corner. He would only have to make a short call, mention a name, and the *Geheimpolizei*—the Secret Police—would do the rest. In Karlsruhe there would be a quiet funeral in the morning. . . .

Ketterer remembered that it was best to move slowly. So Ludwig Lietz reached the phone before him. . . .

"Wait, *Excellenz*," he said with a faint tremor in his voice. "Let me—first. . . ."

Lietz took the receiver off the hook, gingerly, his fingers covered by the heavy, leaded gantlets of his protective garment.

He did not touch the buttons that controlled the television screen. He only snapped the verbal-communicator switch. But he did not place the receiver to the screened ear-vent of his hood. Instead he held it away from his body, and toward the wall. . . .

Ketterer watched with dawning suspicion, in which imps of terror lurked. Yet he saw nothing, at first. He heard nothing within the range of his ears. . . .

**T**HEN Lietz edged a lead-and-rubber clad forefinger toward the center of the receiver's complex diaphragm—with infinite caution. Just for a second the very tip of that gloved digit hovered there, above that small, black, laminated cone. . . . Lietz looked startled—jerked his hand away. . . . Nervously he unfastened the zippers that attached the gantlet to the sleeve of his protective suit, and ripped the covering from his fingers. . . .

"I did not feel anything," he said with an odd, blurred mildness. "Only a little numb sensation. But look . . ."

The rounded part of his forefinger, beyond the end of the nail, bore a tiny white mark.

"Cooked," Lietz went on, in the same confused tone which he had used before. "Cooked, not with heat, but with super-sound vibrations, too fine and swift for us to hear. Science did the same thing, thirty years ago—cooking eggs with sound. . . . And if you had put that receiver to your head, it would have been—your brain. . . ."

Erich Ketterer paled with the startlement of one who has found that the Scythe has passed him by, within a hair's-breadth distance. For the moment he even forgot anger. Only awe remained.

"They erred. They were careless," he muttered thickly. "The inspectors here. . . . Or else they were disloyal too. The visiphone. Someone tampered with it—put something into the receiver—something—

else. . . . Other traps might have been missed, but not this—not in the general equipment checkover. . . . But the inspectors did not find anything wrong with the visiphone. . . ."

"It was not their fault, I am sure," Ludwig Lietz returned. "There is nothing wrong—with the instrument here. Everything is perfect—perhaps too perfect. The receiver, the reproducer. . . . Such things are made very wonderfully now. They can reproduce all sounds—even those beyond our ears. . . . And someone, perhaps far away, tapped the line, attached a microphone—sent waves of super-sound. . . ."

Ludwig's voice was a dry, hoarse rustle. . . .

But Erich Ketterer's anger flared again, even in the face of the heavy stillness around him, and the shadows that clung and haunted, reminding him that even steel and concrete might sometimes be futile. He was still master, wasn't he? Twice they'd tried to kill him. Twice they'd failed. . . . Those traitors who were too cowardly for war. . . .

"Send in code, Ludwig!" Ketterer ordered. "The Secret Police. Steinbart and Marsch. . . . For this is Gerhardt Marsch's work this time. He is the great sonic expert. And twice he has been suspected of democratic agitation!"

Ketterer felt a flash of his old-time confidence, as he gave this order to his aide. A thrill of fierce pride went through him, as he thought of his armies at the frontiers. His hordes of huge tanks. His carefully organized system of supply. . . . Above ground, over his buried refuge, was his personal guard, entrenched to protect him. And in scattered, sheltered places near the frontier, and near his great cities, were the rocket planes, thousands of them—the hugest armada in the world—within fifteen minutes' striking distance of London and Paris! . . .

Why not? The thought suddenly hit him. *Why not now?* Give the order at this very moment for those planes to strike! The new bombs could be dropped from a great height, beyond the range of anti-aircraft barrages. Accuracy meant little when you really bombed a metropolis—just an avalanche of projectiles. . . .

By early morning, two cities would be in smoking, shattered ruins. There would be only a few hoarse cries of agony by then. Fog. . . Wisps of smoke and lethal vapors. Fire crackling. . . . The enemy would be horrified. Dumb. . . . But full of the cold, implacable lust for vengeance. . . . Then his—Erich Ketterer's people—would have to fight. They would have to be loyal to him, then. They wouldn't dare revolt—the stupid, stolid, industrious fools—because they would be pledged to either victory or destruction. . . .

Why had he waited at all? Why hadn't he given the order immediately—even yesterday? It was silly to wait. It looked—weak. Well, it didn't matter now—one moment more. . . . Erich Ketterer stood almost casually now, his slow, terrible smile hidden by his goggled hood.

Ludwig was tapping out a message on the telegraph key—gingerly, as though he thought the little instrument might explode at any moment. Let Ludwig finish the message. Let the Secret Police know, so that, in the background of holocaust, they could crush—the fleas. . . .

Now Ludwig was finished with his unimportant tapping. And Erich Ketterer gave his order with the same clipped casualness that he might have used at a bridge game:

"I have decided, Ludwig. The general aerial attack is to take place at once. Tonight. Wire to Dusseldorf. . . . They will spread the word. . . ."

Lietz's great eyes flickered a little in startlement; but he obeyed the command of his master at once. . . .

## HATE FINDS A WAY

HIS finger jerked up and down rhythmically. The clicking of the key was almost pretty, with its broken intermittence, Ketterer thought. Like the tinkling of a little music box. . . . Trivial. . . . Deadly. . . . In a quarter-hour. . . . Paris and London. . . . And a good answer—in its own way—to those who mixed triviality with sudden death—mosquitoes and plague germs and dark poisons—sounds that came unheard out of a visiphone receiver, to destroy brain tissue; dark, diabolic treachery. Concealed destruction. . . . Once the war was under way, much of this danger of assassination would end. Pledged with blood spilled, loyalty and unity would be the one hope—as even the would-be tyrant slayers would realize. Ketterer knew he would be freer then—he would not have to stay cooped up always in an underground cell.

Ludwig finished with his telegraphy. They would be getting ready now, out there. Ketterer pictured it all in his mind—young men in flying clothes, climbing into cockpits, waving to each other on the dim-lit runways. . . . There would be no need to load bombracks, for they were ready. Everything was ready. It was only necessary to press the proper controls. Rockets would flame, and the swift raid would be on.

But now Erich Ketterer's attention was drawn away a little. Ludwig Lietz was staring anxiously at the instruments on the table—instruments meant to detect danger, meter needles that had been at rest before had begun to move and sway—mysteriously.

"What has happened?" Ketterer questioned sharply.

"I don't know," said Lietz. "Wait quietly. Be ready. . . ."

Be ready. . . . Ready for anything! Ketterer knew! But his confidence was

high, as memories and dreams rushed through his brain. . . . Wodin. . . . Crowds and cheers. . . . Banners. . . . Glory. . . .

And then he began to hear a noise . . . scarcely audible at first, but growing gradually. A steady grinding, deep in the earth, something that seemed to rotate, with a regular, repeated, ominous rhythm. Nearer . . . Nearer . . . everything seemed to wait, with hushed uncertainty, even the inscrutably glowing lights, and the grinning gnomes over the fireplace. The good-humored faces of the gnomes seemed somehow a trifle sardonic now, and sad, as though, after a dragging, tortured minute, they wouldn't be there any more—as though they would be blasted, torn, fused out of existence. Which?

"A mole torpedo—one that drills its way under ground," Lietz whispered. "It must be that. Inventors in several countries have been working to produce them. But what this torpedo's means of attack is, I cannot guess. We must wait and see. The barriers of concrete and steel are strong . . ."

Explosives? Was that what the thing carried? Or thermite—white-hot metal produced out of the chemical action between iron rust and powdered aluminum? Or poison gas? Any one of these things could easily be packed into a torpedo. Yet all of them seemed crude now—not the kind of agents that would be used by those who sought to end Erich Ketterer's bloody career.

Nearer and nearer the torpedo came—drilling, drilling. . . . Now the sound it made was a harsh snarl, as its super-hardened, rotating blades gnawed savagely at steel. Now its grinding was smoother as it tore into softer concrete. Strained to the limit, it yet seemed to be getting slowly through the barriers. Something new . . . something created by the inventive skill of Kurt Rohrer, it must be. Kurt Rohrer, the mining wizard. . . .

Erich Ketterer felt a wild impulse to flee—to open that great bank-vault door of his refuge, and rush up the long spiral stair to the surface. There were soldiers there to protect him. But he knew too that among those soldiers there were certain ones—unknown—who would kill now—kill and die—to save the world and the Fatherland from war.

NEVERTHELESS, Ketterer almost yielded to that insistent urge for flight. It was hard to tell which danger was the worse. . . . Ludwig Lietz stood at a half-crouch beside his master, facing the wall from which that grinding noise of unseen progress issued.

But then the sound stopped with a short, grating thump. And Erich Ketterer felt a little uncertain wave of relief. Had the torpedo been stopped by armor-plate at last? Had it broken down? Or—

Nemesis struck then, before Ketterer could complete the thought. Nemesis—or whatever it was. A sharp, convulsing spasm, as of electric shock. The odor of scorched rubber. Heat. . . . Nothing around him had changed very much—yet. There was no sound—no flash of flame. . . . As in a stunned vision, he saw Ludwig Lietz leap away, as if out of danger. . . . Lietz was shouting a warning of some kind. . . .

Erich Ketterer tried to leap, too; but he could not. His body was paralyzed in a rigid muscle rigor. He tried to think what had happened—what this thing was that had gripped him—the manifestation of some apparatus that the mole torpedo had brought close, evidently. Heat. Electricity. Magnetism, it must be. An oscillating magnetic field of some kind. It would induce electricity in metal, such as the lead of his suit. It would create heat. And unlike electricity itself, it could penetrate rubber effortlessly. The steel armor-plate through which it was evidently operating, might distort it, but would not stop it. The steel armor-plate

beyond the wall might even help direct its lines of force. Yes, this must be true. . . .

Sheer agony had come to Erich Ketterer now. He could not move; he could not speak. It was like clutching a charged wire, and being unable to let go. Heat increased. Little jolts of electricity seemed to tear at his brain and nerves, bringing an ache that all but ripped the will to live from him by its excruciating torture. And his time-sense was curiously slowed. . . .

Memories came back to him in scattering, vivid pictures. The other war, years ago. . . . He'd been in Paris at its outbreak—a spy, an agent. . . . And he remembered how they'd come over—that first time—his people. Just two swift scout planes. . . . They'd dropped flares in the night, to take pictures. Pretty flares—just like fireworks. . . . And in the intense darkness above those parachuting bits of blazing magnesium, the planes had been lost to view. . . . Only their roar had lived vividly, and the dazing thud and flash of anti-aircraft guns. . . . Quai St. Michel, Notre Dame, and the Seine, had looked pretty in that white, smoky glare. . . . Only when you saw the protective scaffolding, silhouetted black around the ancient towers of the Cathedral, you realized that this was real—not part of a show, and that the people who crouched in deep *abris*—bomb shelters—weren't such fools, for this was war and death. . . .

Death! Erich Ketterer knew that it was groping savagely for him now. This was real, too—this suffocating heat, these electrical shocks that dazed the brain and paralyzed the muscles—all this odd, fearsome miracle of projected magnetic lines of force, oscillating—inducing electric currents in the metal of his suit, just as in the secondary coil of a transformer. . . . But it was dream-like. Maybe that was why his thoughts were softer—momentarily. . . . Now fierce anger blazed within him again. His rocket planes, his armada, was tearing on to London and Paris now! . . .

Kurt Rohrer. A mole torpedo. And the magnetic wave apparatus. That seemed like the work of Willi Trachner, in Spandau. But it could be others. . . .

Ketterer tried with all his might to move, but he could not. He stood there as stiff as wood, his muscles tautened in a tetanus-like spasm. Heat and shock and suffocation. . . . Dizzying fires wheeled in his skull. His consciousness was going—fast. This was death. There was metal in his protective suit—metal in which an alternating magnetic field could induce electricity. Rohrer must have hoped that he would be wearing such a suit. . . . This was the end. . . .

Or was it—quite? Ludwig Lietz—was he a traitor too?

NO, THE little man seemed to float through the air now—in a kind of flying football tackle. Ketterer sprawled like a mannikin with *rigor mortis*. Momentum made him and his rescuer slide almost to the farther wall, beyond the magnetic waves. Ludwig had been clever, guessing the width of the beam well. . . .

Ketterer came to presently—limp, aching, and scorched, and furious to the point of mania. Lietz had dragged him to a safe corner, and had removed both of their now dangerous protective suits. But sparks that played about metal objects in the center of the room, told that the magnetic beam was still active there. . . .

Erich Ketterer's sweating, blistered lips twisted themselves into a snarl. "You did well, Ludwig," he rasped. "Again they tried. But I still live—for vengeance! Has there been time for the aerial attack to take place yet?"

Ludwig Lietz's eyes were strange. His face glistened in the glow of lights. "No, *Excellenz*," he said. "It has been scarcely more than a minute. But there are things to be done. There is little time to explain. . . . I will say this first: Steinbart, Marsch, and the others—they have genius—the

clever, thorough genius of our people. *Ich habe nur Geduld*—I have only patience. . . . *Die Geduld von zwanzig Jahren*—the patience of twenty years. . . .”

“What do you mean? What are you talking about, Ludwig?” Ketterer demanded puzzledly.

He tried weakly to rise, but Ludwig pushed him back with a bowed elbow, behind which there was somehow amazing power, for so small and withered a man.

“Twenty years,” Ludwig said. “While you led us away from defeat, I was your friend. But even then I watched carefully. I thought maybe you were big—in the heart and mind. I hoped, but when I saw that you were leading us to destruction, I changed. But I was careful to hide that change as well as I could—as a safeguard to our people. I even hoped, to the last, that you would alter your attitude. But you did not. . . . So—it is more just that I do this. . . . Instead of our men of genius. . . . Twenty years I have been watching, you understand. . . . To them, an incident. To me, the purpose of a life. So I rescued you, just now, from them. . . .

“I was through the last war, *Excellenz*. The starvation. The defeat and misery. . . . So we will make no pledge of blood now. I

have already telegraphed the order for the return of the rocket planes to their bases—contriving to draw the key here to this corner, where there are not enough magnetic waves to interfere with communication. Steinbart and Marsch will not be killed, for I have sent another order. As before, they will think it comes from you. . . . And I believe that in the end I will be able to keep up the bluff long enough to save myself from your loyal ones. Though it does not matter. That is all, except for this. . . .”

A knife flashed in Ludwig Lietz’s free hand—just a simple knife—ironic contrast to the subtle death-methods of science. Ludwig did not use his pistol. Fuddled, Ketterer hardly saw the blade, as it descended toward his chest. He only saw, with a strange startlement, the hate in Ludwig Lietz’s mild eyes. . . .

**D**AWN. . . . Old Europe dreamed. . . . In the grey haze, an explosion puffed up redly, over a gun-factory in smoke-grimed Essen. . . . Revolution, grief and hot. . . . But there would be no real war this time. . . . On rocket fields, in buried forts, and in camouflaged gun turrets, men were singing. . . . History would not repeat its hard lesson. . . . Freedom lived. . . .



## "I Talked with God"

(Yes I did—Actually and literally)

and, as a result of that little talk with God some ten years ago, a strange new Power came into my life. After 43 years of horrible, sickening, dismal failure, this strange power brought to me a sense of overwhelming victory, and I have been overcoming every undesirable condition of my life ever since. What a change it was. Now—I have credit at more than one bank, I own a beautiful home, own a newspaper and a large office building, and my wife and family are amply provided for after I leave for shores unknown. In addition to these material benefits, I have a sweet peace in my life. I am happy as happy can be. No circumstance ever upsets me, for I have learned how to draw upon the invisible God-Law, under any and all circumstances.

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**N**OTICE has just come to us that the Bizarre Series has just issued their second publication—a reprint of the favorite fantasy of a favorite author—"The Thing in the Cellar" by David H. Keller. We have seen this handsome booklet, and must say that it is an excellent item for all collectors of fantasies, for the thousands of Keller admirers, and for fans in general. Besides the story, the publication also includes an interesting interview with Dr. Keller by Julius Schwartz and Mortimer Weisinger, a special article by the author—and to top it off, each copy is personally autographed by Dr. Keller. All these features are printed on antique book paper and present a real thrill to all fans. A quarter sent to Richard Frank, Editor Bizarre Series, 333 S. Burrowes St., State College, Penna., will bring you a copy of the booklet, "The Thing in the Cellar."

## "THE TITAN"

**T**HE Visionary Publishing Company, which for many years has been famous as the publishers of various unusual items for science-fiction fans, announces that they have just prepared a new book—"The Titan," by P. Schuyler Miller. Fans will recognize Miller as an old stand-by who has faithfully produced many excellent yarns during the past decade. Visionary has secured the rights of this brand-new novel

by Miller. This book should prove a valuable item, and can be secured for one dollar from The Visionary Publishing Co., 5000 Train Ave., Cleveland, O.

## COSTUMES AT THE CONVENTION

by MARK REINSBERG

**A** LETTER received from Jack Speer outlined a proposed idea for the Chicago 1940 Science Fiction Convention, which we thought so appropriate and unique that, in all probability, it will be the "theme center" of the "Chicon."

The plan calls for fans using their ingenuity and imagination in creating "science-fiction costumes" to masquerade in at the Convention. The possibilities are almost unlimited; in fact, the same thing has been tried out before on a small scale by the fans Forrest J. Ackerman and Morojo, who arrived at the 1939 New York Convention dressed as "Things to Come" future-people. Needless to say, it was a great success, and no little amount of fun for the wearers.

Enthusiasts will come dressed as some famous character in science-fiction. Humorous costumes and satirical impersonations offer other fields of possibilities. Prizes could be awarded for the most original ideas, the best-suited character to its wearer, the funniest, and the most puzzling. Picture a "futuristic fashion show" and the publicity it would mean for science-fiction when newsreel cameramen and reporters from national magazines swarm down on the uniqueness of it all! And perhaps, even a parade down the city streets!

If you can come to the Convention, start on *your* costume now (Convention over the Labor Day week-end). To avoid confusion in having others using your same costume, send a post-card naming your character to: Chairman of the Convention Committee, 3156 Cambridge Ave., Chicago, Ill.

## THE FAN MAGS

**I**N KEEPING with our custom of presenting a review of the science-fiction fan mags in every other issue of SCIENCE FICTION, we present below the latest batch to reach our offices. These are published by various young science-fiction enthusiasts for the purpose of familiarizing the fans with the people behind the scenes—authors, editors, club members. Informal, breezy, newsy, these sheets are worth the perusal of everyone interested in this branch of literature. These publications are mimeographed, except when otherwise stated.

**THE ALCHEMIST**, 1258 Race St., Denver, Colo. Monthly, 10c. Editors, Charles F. Hansen, Lewis B. Martin, Roy V. Hunt. February, 1940: A legibly hektographed booklet—26 small pages of interesting discourses on various phases of science-fiction—some fiction and verse.

**THE COMET**, R. F. D. No. 1, Martinez, Calif. Bi-monthly, 10c. Editor, Tom Wright. March-April, 1940: Also neatly hektoed, many illustrations. Good general fan material—excellent humor article, amateur fiction. Many novel features, articles.

**FANTASY DIGEST**, 3136 Smith St., Fort Wayne, Ind. Bi-monthly, 10c. Editor, Ted Dikty. First Anniversary Issue, March-April, 1940: 24 extra large sheets, exceptionally fine, thought-provoking items for fans. Something special!

**FANTASY NEWS**, 31-51 41st St., Long Island City, N. Y. Weekly, 3 for 10c. Editor, William S. Sykora. Science-fiction's leading news-sheet is now printed! A really handsome affair, double page in four columns of small type—filled with up-to-the-minute news right from the center of the publishing area. All fans who want to know what's going on behind the scenes should have this paper.

**FUTURIAN OBSERVER**, 10a Sully St., Randwick, New South Wales, Australia. Fortnightly, 5c. Editors, Bert F. Castellari

and William D. Veney. Sydney's large, double-page sheet keeps the world informed of Australian fan activities.

GOLDEN ATOM, 48 Lewis St., Rochester, N. Y. Monthly, 15c. Editor, Larry B. Farsaci. April, 1940: Miscellaneous matter of interest to fans, neat preparation.

MSA BULLETIN, 49 Washington St., Rumford, Maine. Monthly, 5c. Editor, Jerry Meader. April, 1940: Ten pages of latest activities of the Maine Scientific Association, and items of general science-fiction interest.

MERCURY, "The Hell to Breakfast Fan Sheet," 1836 39th Ave., Oakland, Calif. Monthly, 5c. Editor, J. J. Fortier. March, 1940: Six pages, some hektographing, of fan news—mostly about activities in Northern California.

MIDWEST NEWS AND VIEWS, 3156 Cambridge Ave., Chicago, Ill. Bi-weekly, 3 for 10c. Editor, Mark Reinsberg. April 14, 1940: Chicago's news-sheet, four pages of up-to-date midwest activities. Breezy, informative. Chicago 1940 Convention plans.

PSFS NEWS, 2308 E. Belgrade St., Philadelphia, Penna. Bi-weekly, 5c. Editors, Jack Agnew and Robert A. Madle. Voice of the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society—Pennsylvania's leading news-organ—much material of general interest. Four pages.

PLUTO, Literature, Science and Hobbies Club, Decker, Ind. Bi-monthly, 10c. Editors, Marvis and Vincent Manning. May, 1940: Light and humorous articles, good amateur illustrating. Eighteen pages.

THE SCIENTIAL, 3671 Broadway, New York City. Bi-monthly, 10c. Editor, Thomas Hoguet. Feb.-March, 1940: Fiction and articles of general interest, 22 pages.

SHANGRI-LA, published by Walter Daugherty, 1039 W. 39th St., Los Angeles, Calif. Bi-monthly, 10c. Editor, Russ Hodgkins. The first issue, March-April, 1940, presents 22 pages, with cover, of exceptionally literary material—real California fan-mag quality, and the best mimeo

job in fandom. Caricatures of famous fans, many novel features and departments.

SPACEWAYS, 303 Bryan Pl., Hagerstown, Md. Every six weeks, 10c. Editor, Harry Warner, Jr. March, 1940: An old faithful stand-by in the fan field—consistently good, edited by a fan who knows his science-fiction. Contains 26 pages of choice articles, poetry, departments, and fiction. Presents the top names of fandom, and is the favorite fan mag of many an active science-fiction reader.

STARDUST, 2609 Argyle St., Chicago, Ill. Bi-monthly, 20c. Editor, W. Lawrence Hamling. May, 1940: This is the nearest thing to a professional magazine in the entire fan field—a large, neatly PRINTED publication of some 22 pages with heavy paper cover—featuring illustrations. Fiction, articles, and departments by the biggest names in the science-fiction field. The most ambitious effort in amateur publications, and it deserves great success!

ULTRA, 274 Edgecliff Rd., Woollahra, Sydney, N. S. W., Australia. Bi-monthly, 10c. Editor, Eric F. Russell. February, 1940: Australia's competitor in the fan mag field—13 pages of intelligent articles and amateur fiction by Australian and American fans.

VOICE OF THE IMAGINATION, Box 6475 Metropolitan Station, Los Angeles, Calif. Bi-monthly, 10c. Editors, Forrest J. Ackerman, Morojo. April, 1940: The only mag of its kind in fandom—fourteen pages of fan letters of exceptional interest. A reader's department gone independent. Here the leading fans converse in an open forum.

## READ THE FAN MAGS!

THE fan mags listed above prove that fan activity in science-fiction is greater than that in all other types of literature put together. Read the fan mags! And if you are connected with a fan mag that is not listed here, send a copy of it to our offices so that it can be reviewed the next time!



*"Your brain shall be replaced by a much better one!"*

# THE BRAIN OF MANY BODIES

by E. A. GROSSER

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The world marveled at the perpetual youth of the mighty Air Chief—and Wrane Randall got the inside story. But little value did he find this information, strapped to the Table of Death, a victim of the most heinous plan of body stealing in history—for his body was to continue life, ruled by an alien brain!

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## CHAPTER I

## THE BODY STEALERS

WRANE RANDALL slouched in one of Limpy's chairs completely engrossed with thought. He didn't see the Air Cop eyeing him from the doorway; nor did he see Limpy nudge the barman and say:

"They're after him again. Take him a highball and ask if he knows Moses."

The barman looked at Randall, then at the Air Cop. "I'll bet that's why they call him Rainy," he said mournfully; "there's always a storm when he's around."

"Sure," agreed Limpy with a grin, "but he's a good customer and always pays later for the damage when he tries to take the place apart, so get ready for a blackout."

The barman took the drink to Randall's table, set it down and mopped the varnished wood with his towel. "Limpy wants to know if you're acquainted with Moses," he muttered indetectably.

"Huh?" asked Randall, looking up quickly.

"Don't look now," warned the barman, "but they're after you again." He nodded toward the door.

The barman left and several seconds later Randall turned lazily to look at the doorway. He eyed the Air Cop, mildly surprised. So far as he knew, they couldn't pin anything on him except incipient vagrancy, and while the situation demanded attention—immediate attention—it wasn't a penitentiary offense. He turned back to his table, looked sternly at his glass and attempted to lose himself in a maze of low finance.

"Wrane Randall, rocketman?" asked a voice at his side a few moments later.

Randall looked up at the Air Cop, then got slowly to his feet. It appeared that he was being polite, but he had discovered long ago that there was nothing like being prepared.

"Yeah, that's me," he admitted. "What do you want?"

"Come along."

The Air Cop grasped Randall's wrist and tried to flip his arm up behind his back. But Randall couldn't see things that way and presented the Air Cop with a fistful of fingers.

The Air Cop did a quick-step adagio backward on rubbery legs, tripped over a chair and went down. And the lights went out! Randall leaped for the nearest exit, went through to the alley and found himself in the grip of two husky patrolmen.

This time each had an arm and he wasn't in any position to engage in sanguinary retaliations. Especially so, a moment later when one of the patrolmen jabbed a sapper into his side and turned on the juice. All the "jump" went out of Randall's body immediately.

They carried him back to the entrance of Limpy's where they found the Air Cop waiting.

"Ah, got him, I see," he approved, wiping the blood from his mouth with an expensive handkerchief. Nothing, in an Air Cop's opinion, was too good for an Air Cop, and as they were the private army of the Air Chief, outranking all local, state and national officers, they were in a position to indulge their opinions.

THE paralysis of the sapper was wearing off. Randall gave a premonitory heave. One of the patrolmen brought out the sapper again to quiet him, but the Air Cop took the weapon and motioned the patrolman away.

"Go to headquarters and get a couple of squads of men, then come back here and rip all the wiring out of this dive. You needn't be gentle, and you needn't put it back," he said with a grin. "Teach them a lesson."

Then he turned to Randall. "I have orders to bring you in, in good condition—no bruises. So move along quietly and

don't count on any chances for escape. At the first sign of your getting mean, I'll give you enough of the sapper to make you be a good boy for several hours. My ship is on the Administration Building roof. Now, march ahead!"

Randall staggered along, wishing his legs would behave, but somewhat relieved that he wasn't to be accorded the usual treatment. When the Air Cops went after someone, it was usually merely an informal sentence of death. For instance, when they had an Irredentist, the common procedure was to allow an attempt to escape, then take in a dead man.

He was shoved into the tiny, steel cell at the rear of the one-man prison rocket, and the Air Cop went forward to the controls. A moment later Randall heard the thrumming roar of the rockets and felt their thrust. The air whined and screamed around the tiny ship, then subsided to a shrill whispering. And Randall knew they had reached the stratosphere.

He was filled with sudden envy. There was power! And speed! But it was power and speed reserved for the exclusive use of the Air Chief and his men. Those rockets must be atomic, as it was rumored they were. Anyway, they were infinitely better than the crude, tricky hydrogen-oxygen rockets that the rest of the world used. And even those had been given to the world by the first predecessor of the present half-legendary, but very real ruling force that was called the Air Chief.

Randall wondered at the genius of that man of a hundred years ago who had in one short year created these powerful atomic rockets, subdued all the nations of the world with his strange, invincible weapons, then started the construction of his vast city of Yss in central Asia. Only when the city was completed and his overlordship of the earth secure, had the Air Chief given the world the inferior rocketships and a thousand other equally harm-

less advantages to knit the world into one gigantic whole.

Randall differed radically with those who fought the Air Chief, as did the Irredentists. He realized fully the international anarchy that had preceded the Air Chief's coming. Even a despotic international rule was better than none at all, he maintained. But riding rockets like these and realizing that he could never be at the controls of such a ship, was almost enough to make a flag-waving, speech-making nationalist out of the most peaceful rocketman in the world. With these rockets nothing would be impossible. The moon would be easy! Then Mars and Venus! Then Mercury, the Asteroids, and the Moons of Jupiter! And after those . . .

FOR an hour he listened to the half-heard, half-felt roaring song of the rockets, and longing and envy filled his being. He even forgot the dangers of his own position. Then the rockets stuttered, the song shifted to the forepart of the ship, and jolted the ship strongly. The shrill whispering of the thin air rose to a scream and Randall knew they were descending.

The plane shuddered again to the fore-rocket, then the keel jets wracked the ship, then abruptly the ship was still and silent. Randall wished that there was a window to his cell so he could see where they had landed.

A moment later the wish proved unnecessary. The door of the cell opened and his captor motioned for him to come out. Randall stepped out into the bright sunlight, and was numbly aware that it had been night in New York when he had been taken.

He stared around as two guards stepped forward to take positions at his sides. He marveled at the slender spires of the buildings, the thronged streets, flashing aircraft. And he knew he was in the forbidden city, Yss.

They hurried him across the roof to the

elevators, and started down at such a speed that Randall's stomach hadn't more than time enough for one good flip-flop, then his knees were buckling with the deceleration. They led him to a somberly quiet part of the building that Randall took for a hospital, and they halted at a desk. One of the guards spoke briefly with the girl. She looked curiously at Randall.

"I'll tell Dr. Brophy immediately," she said, rising and going into an inner office.

When she returned, she stood to one side and motioned for them to enter. Randall and his guards went into the inner office and found themselves confronted by four men—two of them were hospital orderlies who moved forward to take charge of Randall. One of the two older men dismissed the guards, then turned to his companion with a smile.

"Well? . . . What do you think of him, Torvald?"

Torvald was eyeing Randall with critical eyes. "We could have done better," he said unenthusiastically.

"You're wrong," argued the one Randall thought to be Brophy. "We can tattoo this fellow's brown eyes blue, raise the hairline, re-mold the face a bit—all superficial work. The important thing is that, according to his registration, this man's skeletal structure, and especially the skull, is the counterpart of the—the other's. Of course, Randall's nose seems to have taken a turn for the worse, but we can fix that easily enough."

Torvald shrugged. "I think we could have done better," he maintained.

Randall tried to ease himself out of the orderlies' grips, but they weren't to be taken by surprise. And they being big and husky, Randall was sure that a struggle would be useless. He faced the two older men.

"What's this all about?" he demanded.

Neither of them deigned to answer, but Dr. Brophy gestured to the orderlies to take him away. As though by prearrange-

ment, they hustled him out of the room and to a gleaming operating theater. They lifted him helplessly into the air, then strapped him to the operating table. After checking carefully, they left without a word.

RANDALL lay motionless on the table, unable to move even his head. A padded metal clamp clutched the sides of his cranium securely. He could only stare up at the bunched lights above him and wonder what would come next. Though it was probably only minutes, it seemed hours before Brophy and Torvald came. Brophy was still arguing with his companion.

"It *will* work, I tell you," Brophy insisted. "I have done it before, and this time by using my Gen-Rays to facilitate healing, it will be simple. You are new here. That is your trouble. You can't realize that we mean it when we say we are centuries ahead of the outside world. Have you got that negative?"

Torvald gave him a flat folder. Stein took out a negative and fastened it in a bracket so that it covered completely the mouth of a radiation machine. Satisfied, he turned to Torvald.

"You seem to think that the transference, itself, is the most wonderful and unbelievable part. That is merely a very refined technique. We have been doing that for a century. The Air Chief himself first taught us that. But my Gen-Ray! That is *mine!* It takes surgery away from the sciences and makes it an art. The negative allows the rays to strike the living flesh in varying strengths, and under the rays *the flesh molds itself.*"

Torvald looked doubtful. "Possibly," he said.

Brophy snorted. "Small minds from the outer world," he commented. "Only we here in Yss have the bravery and science to really delve into the unknown. Well, first we'll have to break this fellow's nose

and set it right. You administer the anaesthetic."

"Say, for God's sake! Tell me what you're going to do!" Randall pleaded, rolling his eyes to look at them in turn.

Brophy smiled shrewdly. "You are a fretful person," he commented dryly. "Millions of people would like to be in your position and know that their body was destined to rule the world."

"My body? What about my brain?" Something in the doctor's words sent a chill through Randall.

Dr. Brophy shrugged slightly. "It shall be replaced with a much better one," he comforted.

"But what about *me*?"

Brophy shrugged again. "Your brain will have to be destroyed. The Air Chief can not have a former tenant of the body he is using, walking around alive. It wouldn't be proper, and besides, there won't be any body for you if it were. The one the Air Chief has at present is just about worn out. He wears them ragged in ten years. Then we have to find another for him and attend to the brain transference. The anaesthetic, Torvald."

"Do you mean," asked Randall quickly, "that it has been done before?"

"Certainly. The Air Chief himself is the one who taught us."

"Then the man who conquered the earth is the one who rules it now?"

"Yes," Brophy agreed, fussing with the radiation machine. "Torvald!" he snapped annoyedly, "The anaesthetic! I can't work while he is chattering."

Randall struggled to loose his head from the clamp, to keep his face out of the mask. He felt as though he had been caught in the cogs of a great machine and that it was dragging him irresistibly to destruction. It was nightmarish! He was powerless to escape.—The mask descended over his mouth and nose and the anaesthetic blanked out his consciousness like a candle flame in the wind.

## CHAPTER II

### CONSPIRACY!

RANDALL awoke in bed, wondering how he had overcome Limpy's shrewdness and knowledge of his customer's finances. He had all the inward agonies of a hangover. Then he remembered the Air Cop and the two doctors. He sat up quickly, then held his head in his hands and regretted his hasty movement.

He stared down at the cover of the bed. It was heavily brocaded. He felt of it. It was yellow, and had a metallic feel. And though he had seen little of the metal of late and was consequently a poor judge, he bet himself that it was gold.

"Are you feeling better?" asked a soft, feminine voice.

Randall looked to the source of the words and for a moment the world seemed to consist of clear gray eyes . . . Then he saw the rest—an evenly featured young face with a few freckles on the nose, dark hair, and all set off to the very best advantage by a nurse's uniform. She was approaching, coming across the huge room to his side.

"Much better," he agreed, staring.

She flushed, then said coldly, "Don't let it get you down. As a rule, patients fall for their nurses, and usually regret it afterward. It is propinquity."

"I don't think so. . . . It's you."

She turned away, muttering something about "—fresh."

"Unspoiled, you mean," he corrected. "Well, how about getting me some clothes so I won't feel so d—darned helpless." Then he remembered Dr. Brophy's operation and added, "And I'd like to have a mirror."

She brought him a hand mirror. He took it and waited for her to speak.

"Sorry, no clothes," she said. "Patients stay in bed better when they know they will be nearly nude if they get up. It makes it much easier to handle them."

Randall grunted and deferred the argu-

ment to look at himself. The face he saw wasn't his own! For the first time since that fight in Sydney his nose was straight. His reflection had blue eyes instead of brown, the forehead was higher, and the eyes set deeper.

"A big improvement, don't you think?" asked a third person.

Randall looked up to meet Brophy's eyes. He waited without answering.

Brophy motioned the girl to leave, and when she had, he faced Randall. His eyes were hard and unemotional, as was his voice.

"You know what you face," he stated calmly. "The Air Chief will take your body, and your brain will be destroyed. And don't think that it *can't* happen. I have done it twice for the Air Chief, myself." He halted and seemed to be waiting for some comment from Randall.

"Well, admitting that," Randall prompted.

"You might escape that by co-operating with us. You might not only escape that, but be the richest and most powerful man in the world, subject only to a three man board."

"Who are 'us' and this three man board?"

"We are the scientific men of Yss. In this one giant city we have over a fifth of the scientists and research workers of the world. As soon as an outsider reaches prominence, he is brought here to work. We have made great advances, far beyond what the world at large suspects, but we work under rigid supervision. We are forbidden to investigate certain things, told to do others; we are only the laboratory assistants of the Air Chief. He controls everything. A hundred times we have been ordered to cease experimenting along a certain line, and for no visible reason."

"I can't see what all this has to do with me," said Randall.

"Just this!—you, instead, will become the ruler, under our control. There will be a brain destroyed, but a brain is not a very

personalized bit of matter as far as appearance goes—not as far as ordinary acquaintance goes, anyway. *His* brain and not yours will die."

Randall locked his fingers in back of his head and settled himself comfortably. "This sounds a lot more interesting," he judged. "Go on."

Dr. Brophy smiled. "That's all," he said.

"Is that why you changed my eyes and face?"

"No," Dr. Brophy said. "We did that at the Air Chief's orders. The transplantation is always a great shock and he thought to lighten it as much as possible. Also, there are many memory-blanks after the operation, and his retinue's knowledge of that and our help, will make the switch possible. Are you going to help?"

"First, how did you change me this way? It's far better than plastic surgery."

"But most of the change was plastic surgery, then we healed the wounds and added flesh to your face by using a variant of mitogenetic rays that can be screened by silver salts. We photographed the Air Chief many times, made a composite negative that was lightest where your face was leaner than his, then screened the rays with that negative. The Gen-Rays, acting on the cells of your body, stimulated growth. You were chosen because your skeletal structure corresponded. Coloring your eyes was simple by the old tattooing method. Is that all?"

"Yes," said Randall sharply. "Why don't you simply transfer your own brain or the one of someone you trust, to my body. And don't tell me you trust me!"

"We don't, but we are forced to seek your aid," said Dr. Brophy coldly. "Skeletal structures differ, and your cranium will hold your brain, or the Air Chief's—not ours. You were selected after we had searched thousands of records. The Air Chief supervised that work personally."

"He seems to have his fingers in every-

thing," Randall commented dryly. He thought quickly. When he looked up, his eyes and mouth were hard. "I'm with you," he said.

"Good," the doctor returned. "I have scheduled the operation for ten o'clock—that is two hours from now. Rest quietly until then. I'll have to put you under, and create the appearances of the operation having been completed, so you will need your strength." He turned and left.

**T**HE girl came back almost immediately. But she seemed to have changed greatly. Her face was set firmly with determination as she approached Randall. Then he saw that she had a tiny pistol in her hand, and that it pointed directly at him. His hair moved as though a chill wind had blown suddenly on the back of his neck.

He looked at her face, saw that she was steeling herself to do something that was unpleasant to her—and, he suspected, even more unpleasant to him. If he could make her smile. . . .

"Gosh! Trouble sure loves me!" he mourned, searching her face anxiously for some response. There was none. "I always thought I'd be safe if I stayed in bed," he continued.

She was only a few feet away. The bore of the tiny pistol looked like a rocket jet to Randall. He felt a chilly perspiration beading his forehead. Something like this would happen when he had just found out that the world was his oyster!

Her lips trembled, and his spirits soared with sudden hope, only to be dashed abruptly as her finger tightened on the trigger. She was close enough so that he could have reached the gun, but he knew that he couldn't wrench it away from her before she pulled the trigger. And though the pistol was small, he was well aware of the destructive explosiveness of the tiny bullets. Sponges would be in order for him afterward. God! If only he could make her smile! . . . Or even talk!

"Why are you going to shoot me?"

"I *can't* let you live!" she said huskily, revealing the strain she felt. "I can't! A Science Board would be worse than the Air Chief. And if you die, maybe the Air Chief will die before they can find another body for him."

"You talk like an Irredentist," he accused quickly.

"I *am* an Irredentist," she said proudly. "And this is a chance to free the world—a chance that may never come again. You *must* die!" Her finger tightened on the trigger again.

"Wait a minute!" he almost shouted. "Wait a minute! Don't be unreasonable—I'm not."

"You mean—"

"I mean I don't give a damn for politics—of any kind. It seems to be a pretty rough business the way you folks play it. All I care for is a good rocketship, and pay-days. Now, you tell me what's on your mind and I'll see if we can't two-time those guys."

She hesitated, then shook her head. "No. We couldn't trust you."

**H**E WAS tensing his arm for the hopeless snatching at the weapon, when there was a sound at the door. The girl half-turned. Randall reached out quickly and twisted the pistol out of her hand, then turned to the door.

Dr. Torvald was standing in the doorway, staring at them.

"You *must* come in," said Randall with mocking politeness, and reinforced the invitation by leveling the pistol at the doctor.

Dr. Torvald saw the point and came in meekly. Randall sized him up carefully, then turned to the girl.

"You go to the window and watch the street," he ordered. "And you," he continued, turning to Dr. Torvald, "get out of those clothes and I'll lend you a sheet."

The girl faced the doctor. She was close

to crying. "I'm sorry, doctor. It's my fault. I couldn't kill him!"

"That's a surprise to me," Randall snorted. "I'd have sworn your intentions were the worst." Then he frowned and looked from one to the other. "Say, are you an Irredentist, too?" he asked the doctor.

Neither of them said anything.

"I see you are," Randall growled. "Well, get over to that window, anyway! And you take those clothes off, and take them off fast!"

A few moments later he faced the pair, fully dressed. He smiled. Dr. Torvald was much less impressive with a sheet for a toga.

Dr. Torvald became even more dignified. "What do you plan to do?" he asked.

"Well, I think I'll look up Brophy first. He was going to do the right thing by me."

"Any guard will take you to him," sneered Torvald. "He was arrested only a few minutes ago."

Randall's eyes widened with surprise, then narrowed. "Well, maybe I'll stumble over a rocketship, then," he said, knowing he could hardly just run into one. The building was filthy with the Air Chief's personal guards.

He looked at the girl. She had been silent since returning from the window. She avoided his eyes.

"What's your name?" he demanded.

"Patricia Holden," she replied in a muffled voice.

He leveled the pistol at Dr. Torvald, then swept her to him with his left arm, kissed her. He released her as the doctor started forward. The doctor halted quickly.

"Not very satisfactory," Randall said to the girl. "But it'll have to do. I may not be seeing you again."

He started toward the door, but she halted him.

"Do you love me?" she asked.

He looked at her in amused surprise, and smiled. "I could learn," he admitted.

"Then help us! Please! I'll do anything you ask. I'll marry you, if you want."

He stared down at her, found her eyes unwavering. He tried to read her purpose, but couldn't.

"You've forgotten that Brophy has been arrested. The only way I could help you is to die—messily. And I'm not in the mood. And another thing—I like to do my own chasing. It's kind of disconcerting to have a woman snap back at me."

She flushed, and he went on to the door. He halted, listened, then turned to ask:

"Any guards out here?"

Torvald said, "Yes," and the girl shook her head "no."

"You ought to get together," Randall criticized.

He opened the door, holding the gun ready in his pocket where it would be unnoticeable—unless he had to use it. But the girl had told the truth.

"Thanks, Pat," he called back. And, so long! I'll be seeing you later—maybe."

### CHAPTER III

#### THE AIR CHIEF

HE CLOSED the door after him, feeling fairly confident that they wouldn't dare raise any alarm.

There was the awkward problem of explaining how a patient had been able to secure a pistol, and the patient could talk.

He looked around the room, saw that it was larger than the other and equally well furnished. It was obvious that they formed an apartment. There were two other doors.

He went to the nearer one and listened. He heard the slight scuffing of a movement, and went to the other door. He waited for several minutes, heard nothing, then opened the door and started out.

He halted abruptly, hand tightening on the gun in his pocket, and faced a trimly uniformed guard.

"Excellency!" said the guard, presenting arms.

Randall stared for a moment, then his fingers relaxed from his pistol. The guard thought he was the Air Chief! And why not? Hadn't he been chosen because he could be made to resemble the Chief? And Brophy and Torvald had done good work.

"Allow no one to go through this doorway, Guard," he ordered. "Neither in, nor out."

"Yes, Excellency," said the guard, remaining stiffly at attention.

Randall strode away, concealing his elation. The corridor joined a larger corridor and a few feet away he saw another guard stationed at a door. Randall strode up to him. The guard came to attention and waited.

Randall repeated his orders to the first guard, then started down the corridor, grinning as he thought of the time Pat and Torvald were going to have when they tried to get out of that room. Then his thoughts turned exultantly to escape. The masquerade had worked twice, so there was no reason why it shouldn't work all the way to the roof and get him a rocketship—if he didn't meet the real Air Chief.

He stepped into an elevator. "All the way up," he ordered.

The operator closed the door, started up and stopped almost immediately.

"This is the fiftieth floor, Excellency," the operator said, trying to keep his eyes off Randall. "Your private elevator is at the other end of the corridor." He hesitated, then added, "I will show you the way, Excellency, if you wish."

Randall faced the man quickly. "Why?" he demanded, afraid that the fellow suspected.

The fellow paled, was frightened. "A-As one of the Household Corps I was ordered to hold myself ready to assist Your Excellency in any way when it seemed that you—you might act as though you had forgotten."

Randall remembered Dr. Brophy's words—that the brain transplantation caused memory lapses. Evidently orders had been issued to take care of that matter. "Show me the way," he said with relief.

The elevator man led him down the corridor to another shaft, summoned the elevator.

"His Excellency wishes to go to the roof," he instructed the new man.

Randall was assisted into the elevator as though he were an invalid, and the ride upward was much slower than he knew to be possible.

"Shall I assist you, Your Excellency?" the man asked when they came to a stop.

"No," said Randall. "I think I can make it."

Feigning weakness, he left the elevator, then halted abruptly. Facing him was his mirror-image, the face he remembered seeing in the mirror that Pat had given him before he had escaped. Only this time he wasn't looking into a mirror.

The image purpled with anger, opened his mouth.

"Guards!" he bawled.

Randall ducked back into the elevator and slammed the door before the operator could see. The man looked at Randall uncomprehendingly.

"What—?" he started.

"Down!" snapped Randall. "It's a revolt!"

That was a word the man understood. The elevator descended swiftly. Randall's mind raced. He hadn't seen any stairways—probably there were none; only elevators.

"Your apartments, Excellency," said the operator as he brought the elevator to a stop and opened the door.

"Stop all elevators!" Randall ordered, getting out.

"The master switches are in your apartments, Excellency."

"Then warn all the operators you can reach, not to answer calls to the roof. We must isolate them."

He turned, not knowing which way to go, but a uniformed servant came and bowed submissively.

"My apartments," said Randall. "Lead!" Then to impress the urgency for speed, added, "And hurry!"

RANDALL felt like a modern Paul Revere. But events were moving smoothly, so smoothly that he felt a bit suspicious. He followed the servant into a large room. Two men sat at complex control panels and a third, seemingly in command of the trio, sat a little distance from them. They leaped to their feet, saluting.

"Cut out the elevators!" snapped Randall with a silent prayer.

The two men leaped back to their control boards to obey, but the third came toward Randall. Then he came to attention.

"Revolt," Randall explained tersely, and kept his features rigid to conceal his doubt.

"Dr. Brophy, Excellency?" asked the officer.

Randall nodded. "I think they are still on the roof," he added. "They performed the operation, but didn't destroy the other brain. Instead, they transferred it to my old body and revived it first, intending to seize control before I recovered. Have you any suggestions? I am at a disadvantage."

The officer interpreted the last as Randall hoped he would, and suggested quickly, "We should order the Air Guards to prevent anyone taking off from this building, Excellency."

"Do that."

The officer turned and gave the order to the men. Then he faced Randall again. "Excellency, I also suggest that we communicate with the Household Guards, have them gather in force at every elevator. Then we could switch them in and they could attack."

"Do that, also," agreed Randall.

While the officer gave the necessary orders, Randall looked around. Now that he

had placed the Air Chief's defenses at his own defense, there was nothing more that he could do except chance revealing his true identity. Even though it seemed not, there must be limits to the credibility of the too thoroughly disciplined guards. He had to keep out of the way until the Air Chief was disposed of.

The officer halted in the middle of his instructions and looked questioningly at Randall.

"Shoot to kill," said Randall, and the words must have been quite in character with the personality he had blindly assumed. The officer transmitted the order.

"Now, I must rest," said Randall, waiting for the officer to help him. There were a number of doors leading from the room and it might be just too bad if he took the wrong one. A hint of suspicion would bring the whole edifice of cards down around his ears. The officer hesitated, then as Randall leaned heavily on his shoulder, started toward one of the doors.

Randall found himself in a luxuriously furnished but oddly decorated room. The most general color was a deep ruby shade. The whole effect was decidedly unrestful and reminded Randall forcefully of the effect of colors on emotions. He no longer wondered at the strange brilliance of the Air Chief; a brilliance that had made it possible for him to subdue the world and keep it enslaved. Any person who could find such a room restful must either be mad, or possess a mental balance entirely beyond the understanding of the normal man. Randall felt himself longing for just one touch of green, or blue.

He sat down on the deeply cushioned couch and motioned the officer to go back to his duties, watched the man leave, then gave free rein to his curiosity.

He saw a massive, ornately carved switch on the wall. He got up, went closer. He heard a sound behind him and turned quickly, but he was alone in the room.

A door in the wall attracted his atten-

tion. The bottom of the door was three feet from the floor, and it was four feet high by two feet wide. He went to it, grasped the knob, pulled. It opened easily.

**H**E STARED. Slowly his hand slipped from the knob and fell to his side. Before his eyes was a huge transparent flask containing some transparent liquid. And in the liquid floated a small body, about three feet in height. It was thin, with the huge joints of a rachitic child. The skin was a reddish bronze and hideously wrinkled. But the head was fully the size of a mature man's.

Randall stepped back, disgust filling his soul. Was the Air Chief pitting his incomparable genius against the problem of creating life? Or, what was much more probable, was he trying to create a superbody for his own use? Randall smiled sickly. If that was the case, then he certainly hadn't succeeded—providing this was the best he had been able to do. Nature was still a better craftsman. Despite his situation, he chuckled.

And his chuckle was answered by another directly behind him. He wheeled, found himself facing the Air Chief. The Air Chief held a gun in a hand that didn't tremble.

Hard blue eyes drilled into Randall's, which were of a similar blue. There was the same high forehead, the same strong-willed mouth, the same well-fleshed face. The only difference was that the Air Chief was ten years older in body and looked thirty more, and was decades older mentally.

"My body amuses you?" the Air Chief asked gently, but the hardness of his face defied the gentleness.

Randall moved his hand closer to his pocket, and the pistol. The Air Chief's hand tightened suddenly, the weapon hummed and all the strength left Randall's body. He fell loosely to the floor.

He lay motionless, but though he could-

n't move his body, his mind was clear. He could see and hear. The Air Chief came to his side, stooped carefully and took the pistol from Randall's pocket, then stepped back and sat down.

"Like all your kind, you are a fool," he said wearily. "Did you suppose I might never want to get secretly to the hangars? There are many things that only I know. This weapon is the refinement of the 'sapper.' My shrivelled, preserved body that you laughed at—" Suddenly he halted, pressed one hand to his heart. His face grayed with pain; his lips became discolored.

Randall recognized the pain for what it was—a heart attack. He hoped that it might be fatal. He cursed his own helplessness and fought to get up. His heart leaped when he felt his strength returning.

But when he tried to get to his feet, the Air Chief leveled the strange weapon with a trembling hand. The weapon hummed and Randall collapsed. Finally the Air Chief got slowly to his feet. He crossed the room to the open locker containing the tiny body, and closed the door. Then he returned and pulled a cord.

A moment later the door opened and the officer came into the room. The Air Chief covered him with the pistol as the officer's bewildered gaze went from one to the other.

"You have been a fool, Commander," the Air Chief husked. "You obeyed this new body too soon. The operation has not yet been performed, and I doubt if even Dr. Brophy's Gen-Ray will enable a patient to walk away from the table.

"Communicate with Dr. Torvald . . . Have Dr. Brophy brought from his cell. The change must be made immediately."

Randall listened to his own death sentence, but it was heard through a hazy horror which made everything seem unreal. The Air Chief had claimed that hideous body as his own. It had been preserved for years—those chemicals and pumps kept it alive. He treasured it!

And Randall knew instinctively that nothing on earth had ever produced a body such as that one.

## CHAPTER IV

## UTOPIA!

THE officer left to obey. The Air Chief lay back weakly on the couch and rested quietly. He seemed to be summoning his last reserves of strength. And Wrane Randall could only wait helplessly for death to come.

Guards came, took him back to the small hospital where his features had been changed. Orderlies took charge of him. In a moment, he was fastened securely to an operating table, and even though he felt his strength returning, he was helpless.

He tried to move. His muscles responded, but he was clamped tight. He lay still, haunted by the thought that though he was to die, his body would live on.

After what seemed hours, the Air Chief was brought in on a stretcher and gently placed on another table. Randall watched from the corners of his eyes, and saw the Air Chief turn to face him. An evil smile gleamed on the discolored face. Randall heard a husking whisper.

"You only succeeded in hastening your end," the Air Chief mocked. "It is now fifteen minutes to ten, as you Earthlings calculate time. The operation will proceed as soon as Dr. Brophy and Dr. Torvald arrive. I shall have to use him, but three of my guards will remain; and if I do not live—in your body—no one shall leave this room. And the rest of my guards shall wait outside to see that there is no interference. So you needn't try to comfort yourself that we might both die."

"That wouldn't be any comfort," Randall replied. He was thinking rapidly. Judging from the manner in which the Air Chief spoke of Dr. Torvald, he didn't know

that both doctors were traitors. And he spoke of men as 'Earthlings!'

"What are you?" Randall asked. "You—your brain . . . that body you said was yours. . . . That wasn't human!"

"You are mistaken," the Air Chief chuckled. "I am human—more human than you are. I am from Mars, as were your ancestors. Gradual adaptation over hundreds of thousands of years changed your bodies. I came to Earth a century ago when my last companion died. Mars is a dead world now. But I . . . I have *outlived my world!* I am greater than time! I am greater than all your world! I am greater than the gods! I am the last Martian!"

RANDALL heard him choke. And from the corners of his eyes he saw the Air Chief's face twist into an unholy mask of agony. Randall grinned. Now was the time!—if he could kill this monster, even though he himself died only a short time later.

"You've lived a long time," he taunted, "but only to die now. Dr. Brophy is a traitor to you, a scientist who cares for nothing but the privilege of unhampered research. So you made an enemy of him. But Dr. Torvald is the man you should fear!" Randall saw the Air Chief stiffen. The gray face turned to face him, eyes horribly alive with an alien intelligence.

They heard the door open, but the Air Chief's eyes remained fastened on Randall. Suddenly Randall feared that he had delayed too long. A number of people were entering. He heard the door close again.

"Dr. Torvald is the man you should fear!" he shouted at the Air Chief. "He is an Irredentist! All he desires is your death, and it won't matter to him if he has to die!"

Randall heard a curse from the group near the door. It sounded like Torvald. But he was watching the Air Chief. As he had hoped, the information was too much

for the Air Chief's weak heart. The man stiffened spasmodically, quivered.

One of the guards ran to the Air Chief's side with a curse, then turned back to the two doctors.

"Hurry! Damn you! Hurry! Maybe you can change his brain to this other body yet!"

Randall saw the two doctors go to the Air Chief. Brophy lifted the lifeless hand. And as he waited, Randall wondered if the other guards had remained at the door. Then he felt a touch and rolled his eyes to see.

Patricia Holden was standing beside him. She slipped something into his hand. It was a gun! He heard a muffled click and the clamps were loose.

"Do whatever you think best," Pat said softly. "I couldn't see them go on."

The pistol lay comfortably in his hand. Its heaviness balanced a lot of trouble from his mind. Once more he felt himself a firm believer in the adage, "If you want a thing done right, do it yourself."

"You're a regular arsenal, baby," he whispered.

"It's the Air Chief's own pistol," she replied hastily. "I stole it from his clothes."

He motioned her to step away from him, to get out of danger, but she lingered at his side. Randall looked at the others by turning his head slowly. There were two guards at the doorway and one with the doctors. It would take two shots.

Dr. Brophy dropped the Air Chief's hand. It struck the table at the side of the lifeless body with a soft thump.

"It is too late," he said. "Circulation has stopped. Before we could be half through, most of the delicate brain cells would be dead."

Torvald smiled happily and glanced at Pat Holden. Then he frowned that she didn't seem happy. The guard at the doctors' side glanced at his fellows near the door. He nodded.

Their hands went to their pistols. Ran-

dall decided to take them first, even though the third guard would probably get him. He reached up, sent Pat reeling across the room and out of danger, then he rolled off the table to his feet as he shot at the men near the door.

The weapon in his hand merely hummed, but the men went down like rag dolls. And as their pistols clattered on the floor, he swept his own weapon toward the remaining guard and the two doctors.

The guard was struggling to draw his gun, but Dr. Brophy fought silently and efficiently. Randall's pistol swept over him and Brophy slumped. The guard brought his pistol out of the holster, lifted it, then he too went down. A moment later Torvald fell like a northern pine. His shoulder struck the operating table on which the dead Air Chief lay, and they crashed to the floor.

Randall covered the door and waited. If the crash had been heard, the guards would be streaming in.

Evidently the sound hadn't reached them. The door remained closed. Pat was climbing to her feet, frightened and resentful of his harsh treatment.

"Get their arms," Randall said, then was suddenly acutely conscious of his unclothed state. He snatched up the sheet from the floor where it had fallen, and draped it over his shoulders.

Pat Holden glanced at him. "You look like Dr. Torvald," she jibed.

Randall looked quickly at the unconscious doctor, half-expecting to see the man chuckle.

ONE of the guards was struggling to sit up before Pat could collect all the guns. Randall calmly shot the man again, and smiled to see him lay back tiredly and relax.

Pat brought the guns to the table and stood at his side while they awaited the recovery of the men. He looked down at her.

"I thought you were an Irredentist?"

"I was; but I got to thinking of all the horrible things we do for political reasons and—and I got to wondering if it was worthwhile. I decided it wasn't."

"When did you start wondering?" he asked.

"Just after—" She halted, flushing crimson.

Randall grinned. "So marrying me would be a horrible thing?" he said. "I feel sorry for you."

She kept her head averted as he moved toward her. Then she pointed to the door. "Look! He's coming out of it."

Randall covered the guard with the pistol.

"Get up!" he ordered.

The guard looked around for his gun, then got slowly to his feet. Randall motioned to the table. "You won't need it," he assured.

The two doctors and the guard in the second group shot down, were reviving and Randall forced them into a line. There was a short wait for the third man to revive, then Randall cleared his throat.

"I'm only a rocketman," he said, "but after seeing a few of you fellows who are supposed to have brains, I think I'm pretty good in that line too. I'm top dog now, and I intend to stay on top. You poor morons who are all brains haven't got sense enough to run things, so I'm taking over.

"You, Dr. Brophy, would have a Science Board of Three to rule the world. I'm not denying that they couldn't. But it wouldn't be much of a world when they got started. Haven't you any respect for a thing called liberty, or pursuit of happiness, to say nothing of life? Shut up! Of course you deny you'd have a machine world. But you would!

"And you, Dr. Torvald . . . You are an Irredentist. You want the good old days. You think today with today's science, but you're living in the past. Have you ever stopped to think what those good old days

were? Sure, some men had more liberty. But all civilization is, is giving up some of the smaller liberties so that you can guarantee everyone the greater ones. Your kind of liberty would be a jungle. The world has gone beyond that. Take your choice! It doesn't matter which you choose; the fact remains. Remember all the little wars that nations used to have, and the big ones? God! Even the Air Chief was a blessing when you consider them. He wasn't so bad in some ways. This central authority of Yss has possibilities of lifting the whole world to a new high. He wouldn't; I will!"

He stopped to look at them. Then he continued: "Remember, Brophy—there would be no organized science without a central authority. And you, Torvald, remember that there can be no liberty or happiness without some guarantee that the strong guys won't step all over the weak ones.

"You both better quit living in your little ivory towers. You're a couple of hundred years behind the times. There's only one way to prevent hell from breaking loose, and that is for all of you to play my game. I will take the place of the Air Chief and be the central authority—call it the executive branch. Maybe we can make it elective afterwards!

"But, Brophy—there will be science, organized science. And we will give most of the results to the world, not hide them. We will only keep that knowledge we need to keep Yss in control—by force, if necessary.

"And you, Torvald—you and others like you will be sent out into the world to organize elections. For a certain number of people—say, ten million—there will be one representative in the world-law-making body. And a judicial will be elected. Well? . . . What is your answer?"

"How are you going to do all this?" growled Brophy.

"Hell, man! I am the Air Chief—as long

as I choose to be, and as long as you support me."

Still they hesitated. Torvald glanced at the guards. "I think we could trust you. If not, we can pull you down. Your intelligence isn't as great as the Air Chief's. You're vulnerable. It is agreeable to me."

"And me," echoed Brophy.

They looked to the guards. The guards hesitated. No one seemed willing to speak.

"We could kill them," said Randall and smiled when Pat's hand gripped his arm, "but those outside would do the same to us, if we come out without them. Right?" he asked, turning to them.

"Right," agreed one of them. "Orders were that we come out of here with the Air Chief in his new body, or that they shoot us down."

**T**ORVALD started to speak, but Randall waved him to silence. Then he faced the guard who had spoken.

"We can't give you anything you haven't always had," he admitted. "You've always had your jobs and your paydays. You've always been able to go out and blow in your pay on a hell of a time, or have a family and raise that family as you wanted to. Sure, I know that. That's called liberty. You have it now, but there are millions like you that haven't. We all have a chance at liberty and a new world, and you will not lose what you already have. You will be giving others liberty like that. Are you going to pass up that chance?"

"Or are we all going to leave this room together and consider, and make others

consider, the operation was a complete success—only one of the patients died? It is up to you . . . Take your choice. But do it quickly."

The guards looked at one another.

"It's better than dying."

"Let's give it a whirl."

"Okay with me. I got a kid brother who couldn't make the guards."

Randall straightened. He felt taller without the strain of doubt. "Then it's settled," he said, starting toward the door. "Let's go!"

"Wait a minute!" said Dr. Brophy. "We're good surgeons here, but our patients don't get up and walk away from us after a brain transplantation. You have to be sick for awhile, and there will have to be a scar."

"That is easily fixed," said Torvald tersely and the guards grinned.

Wrane Randall stepped back, unwilling, but he was greatly overruled. In a moment he found himself lying on the table again. Patricia Holden was standing near his head, ready for business and smiling with enjoyment. He looked up at her.

"It's a bad habit you're forming," she advised unsympathetically.

Randall glared at her as Torvald approached with the anaesthetic.

"Do you remember what I said about doing my own chasing?" Randall asked her, and she nodded, flushing. "Well," he advised, "you better start running now, because while my intentions are strictly honorable, I think I'll start off with a good spanking."

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## ON TELEVISION AND MOVIES

by BOB TUCKER

**I** HAVE followed this television versus movies business in the last two issues of SCIENCE FICTION, and felt like putting a few kopecs worth, since another projectionist and I have given the situation very much thought.

We, like Mr. Risher, regarded television as just another operator's bugaboo, quite some time off yet—until one day we chanced across a few photographs and a very interesting article in a trade magazine. The article described (and the photograph showed) a television theater in London, and if I recall clearly, pictured the opening night crowd.

It was an ordinary motion picture theater converted for the purpose. The screen was much smaller than usual, but still large enough to be seen from every part of the house. I do not recall its exact dimensions, but was something like seven

feet wide and ten feet high. The Londoners claimed to have a television image to fill that!

The television projectors were mounted on the main floor, in the center of the house, throwing the image up at the screen. About two dozen seats were removed to make room for the apparatus. Oddly enough, I do not know how the showing turned out. If the magazine went into that, I do not recall the details.

This other operator (Sully Roberds, another fan, by the way) and I worked the problem over in our minds and on paper, however, and we have something of a plan whereby movies can be sent via television and received in theaters.

The popular conception: that of anking into a theater, seeing the remainder of the picture, and staying half-way through it next time to see what you missed, is out . . . television movies simply will not be repeated continuously from noon to midnight in that fashion. We have worked out this method:

A given "chain" of theaters, say fifty in one territory, will schedule one showing of a television performance on their screens at 2:30 Monday afternoon. There will be no other performance of any kind in the theaters that afternoon; it will be like attending a reserved-seat special premier. You had better be there at 2:30, or you'll just miss part of it.

From a central studio—let us say Chicago, a television performance will be given at the proper time. This performance will

*not* be broadcast; static and other electric interferences would play havoc with such long distance broadcasting. No, the performance will be "piped"—wired in a large circle. Each of the fifty theaters will be hooked into that circle of wire and pick up the performance, transform it from electrical impulses into images, and the proper machines will cast that image on the screen. There is our version of "television" in the theater.

## PROPAGANDA VIA MUSIC

by RAY DOUGLAS BRADBURY

**M**USIC, so far as I know, has been seemingly neglected by most science-fiction authors in their wild imaginings of the future. I personally believe that music will be one of the most potent forms of propaganda to be used in the world of tomorrow. With competent composers and neotric methods of presentation, a symphony of one hundred years from now can be expected to educate, enthrall, hypnotize and propagandize a whole humanity in a single hour. The world of tomorrow will take its cue from music. Musical tones will murmur and humanity will rise at dawn. Music will follow the Man of Tomorrow through the day. And when he gets tired at work music will salve his exhausted mind, refresh him, at work, at play, at school, during vacation, music will be with him. When he is sad, the magical compositings of a futuristic Beethoven will soar with him to the heights.

Today we see the influence, subtle, of course, of music on our different continents. The Martial music sends us off to war and makes us patriotic. It is hypnotic. It is propaganda in its cleverest phase. Music is our interpreter of life and with the comings of proficient scientists who can analyze mankind and his entertainments, we can expect great strides in education with music. And we may expect peace, for music is an

international language and it soothes the savage breast.

## INTELLIGENCE BEYOND EARTH

by G. STARR

**I** FIND your "Eternal Conflict" one of the most interesting spots in your magazine. Up to now I have been but a passive reader, but the item by Allan Somers about "Visitations from Space" has prompted me to contribute these opinions.

While reading Mr. Somers' article, I first thought he was quite egotistic in presuming that the most intelligent creature in all existence was man—but I revised my judgment of this worthy gentleman when, reading further, I note that he also pre-supposes the possibilities of creatures so far ahead of us that we aren't worthy to know them.

It may be true that, to date, there have been no historical records of aliens from other worlds visiting the Earth, but that does not necessarily mean that intelligent beings from space have *not* visited us, even during so-called civilized times. It is very possible that men of Earth, even a century ago, or less, could not imagine the possibility of extra-terrestrial callers, and if any of them introduced themselves to our ancestors, perhaps those worthy forerunners of ours just made up their own story as to the origin of the "freaks." I'm no authority on the subject, but I dare say there have been any number of mysterious beings in the world, even mentioned in history, whose origin and mission have been misinterpreted. How, for instance, could primitive Earthmen understand aliens who apparently had no means of communicating, not knowing the Earth tongues?

Perhaps, at times in the past, super-civilized visitors have come from other worlds and performed so-called "miracles" with their sciences, far advanced over Earth

science, and been misinterpreted—either as devils or gods. We know that in the middle ages, almost every new and revolutionary thought was taken to be Black Magic. Perhaps these other-world visitors could not make men believe that they came from another world, and were worshipped. For all we know, these very visitations may be the basis of many an Earth-religion!

I admire the broad view of Mr. Somers when he says that the other worlds of the galaxy "were not placed there by the Creator to shed their light on our infinitesimal abode." No broad-minded person believes any longer that the Earth is the center of the Universe and that Man is the supreme being of eternity! But life in the Universe may be a rare event, and, with the uncountable billions of miles between stars and galaxies, intelligent races might be so far separated that the possibility of one race chancing upon another is the greatest of rarities—even though they have their own means of propulsion across the void.

I guess every science-fiction fan lives for the day when some creature from another civilized planet will land upon the Earth. After all, it's more than a possibility—and it might as well occur within our lifetimes as ever!

## MORE ABOUT ATOMS

by FRANK KATHER

**I**N YOUR March number, Mr. Oscar writes quite dogmatically about atoms

and stuff. He says that Mr. Deakyne was all wrong about atomic power—that the releasing of the power in an atom could not cause terrible destruction, perhaps the end of the world. Well, who are we to say? As far as we know, no one has ever really destroyed an atom. I may be a little backward in my reading of the papers, but to my knowledge, no one has ever proved that there even *is* such a thing as an atom. That is, no *one* has ever *seen* an atom—and how can you be sure of a thing's existence, if you can't see it?

I may appear to be a doubting Thomas, but I still say that the very existence of the atom is still a theory—perhaps a very logical theory, but still not a proven fact. Scientists have witnessed phenomena that cause them to draw certain conclusions.

I guess you can see that I'm an agnostic. If I went into this discussion much deeper, I'd be giving a philosophical thesis and might wind up doubting the existence of anything—because if atoms are only electrical charges, as many scientists believe, then they're not even solid, and that makes you and me just balls of negative and positive electricity!

But supposing that atoms are neatly ordered groups of protons and electrons, how can we tell what would happen if the balance were upset? All I can say is, let a scientist split an atom—then, if the world still exists, Mr. Deakyne was wrong and Mr. Oscar correct! But if things happen the other way about, small victory for Mr. Deakyne who won't have the opportunity to gloat!

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# LIFE CYCLE

by WILBUR S. PEACOCK

FRED BLAKE answered the telephone automatically, his gaze centered on the machine that squatted like some sentient being in the corner.

"Fred?" Dorothy's voice was tight with feeling. "I talked with Father, and he said you could have complete charge of the Paris branch. Please don't fail me, darling."

"I'll call you back in a little while," Fred said tonelessly. "Goodbye, dear." He pronged the receiver, turned back to the machine.

He did not fully understand the machine, although he had conceived and built it himself. All he knew was that some form of a mitogenetic ray was released by the banks of glittering tubes and coiled wires. He hoped that it would push life ahead on the evolutionary scale; why, or how the effect was obtained was of secondary consideration.

If it failed to work, he thought, ruefully, he was destined to become but another laboratory technician for the rest of his life!

He connected the clockwork mechanism, then, after completely disrobing, emptied a hypodermic into a vein. He entered the cubical machine, stretched out upon the steel floor. He regretted that an unconscious state of body was necessary, but reasoned, should the machine really work, the shock of physical change might drive him insane. And the subject had to be he, for he had no stock with which to experiment.

Drowsiness crept over him, lulling his senses, relaxing his muscles. He heard the gentle click of the clockwork, then felt, rather than saw, the preliminary glowing

of the glittering banks of tubes. He realized then, for the first time, the risk he was taking, and made one final effort to escape. He heaved himself to one elbow, then sank back in a flood of darkness that swallowed all consciousness.

SLOWLY, a nimbus of light grew like some monstrous, multi-colored opal over the tubes, coalescing into an inverted cone from the curved mirror at the machine's ceiling. Gradually the light thickened into an opalescent swirl of shifting colors, its broad writhing base completely covering the unconscious man.

And slowly a change took place in Fred Blake's body.

The shoulders broadened, the body lengthened, and the head grew to half again its size. Within seconds, he had changed into a God-like giant seven feet tall and three feet through the shoulders, wisdom and superb strength in every line of his body.

For interminable seconds he was like that, changing only slightly in muscular structure. Then another mutation took place. Quickly now, the splendid body dwindled in upon itself, losing its massiveness in a way that was uncanny. The body became attenuated with little flesh, the little toes and little fingers disappearing entirely. The body shrunk until it was little more than a skeletal framework supporting a head that was more massive than ever.

But there was an alteration in the skull, too. The hair was gone, leaving a veined and pale-white dome. The teeth had disappeared, and the chin was almost non-

The strange glow of the evolution ray bathed Fred Blake in a light that played a prank on Nature herself—but Nature strikes back with a phenomenon unmatched in all the history of the universe!

existent, leaving the mouth but a tiny orifice in the face. The eyes bulged, and the nose grew more ridged and Roman.

Then the body dwindled still more, shrinking to that of a small child's. The head grew larger, the mouth disappearing entirely, the nose receding into the face, leaving but a single hole for breathing. The ears disappeared entirely, indicating that vibrational hearing had been replaced by telepathic communication.

Within a minute, there was no body, only vestigial arms and legs remaining beneath the giant head. Then they, too, vanished beneath the blinding forces of the machine, leaving but a gigantic head quiescent on the floor.

And then the skull was gone, and a greyish, convoluted brain pulsated slowly where but two minutes before Fred Blake had lain in a drugged sleep. Eyes on stalks, like those of a crab, the irises faceted like planes of a polished diamond, nodded gently from the frontal lobes.

Then the brain collapsed in upon itself.

Protoplasm quivered in a gelatinous mass on the steel floor, pseudopods questing aimlessly in a futile search for sustenance. And slowly, life emerged from that cohesive slime.

One-celled life it was, the first gigantic step above protoplasm, the very first in a series of life forms that moved in a great cycle.

And then the life structures changed so rapidly that the effect was that of a motion picture run at tremendous speed. From one cell, the life-forms flowed and merged into two, three and many. From without a skeleton of any kind, there came life with an exoskeleton and weird means of locomotion.

New organs of sight, hearing, and feeling grew and disappeared in many forms, each gradually growing closer to the bodies. The exoskeleton vanished, was replaced with a rudimentary endoskeleton, and slowly

the flesh took on the ruddy appearance of veined tissue.

Gills appeared, then faded, as the body began to have a definite shape. A rudimentary face appeared on the oddly shaped head. The body was fish-like at first, although weirdly shaped, then gruesomely reptilian, then it molded into forms that defied classification.

Slowly, a new form took place in the cycle of life, strangely simian-like, yet it too defied classification. Slowly, very slowly, this body lengthened and grew until it was a full two feet in length. The extremities changed with abrupt speed, forming hands and feet strangely alike, toes and fingers shortening as palms broadened.

The features became flatter; the nose bulged a trifle; the eyes rounding a bit in the hairy face. The fangs receded, became less prominent, as the mouth shrank back toward the face.

The body was now five feet long, utterly ape-like in build, the rosy muscles incredibly developed. The forehead shelved back from the face, and dullness of the features indicated the lack of use of the brain.

Then the hair faded into nothing, and the body became more man-like. Potentiality was in its face, its hands were well-developed and its body superbly muscled. Its feet were less ape-like, its forehead more bulging, and the mouth less like that of a vicious animal.

**E**VEN more quickly, as the minutes passed, the body changed, the muscles and skeleton flowing weirdly into one form after another, each forging another link in the vast life cycle.

The lips shrank, became more thin, the brow grew back a trifle, and the body straightened until there was no stoop. The ears flattened closer to the skull, and the coarse hair became more fine. The skin became less like a thick hide, and grew thinner and whiter.

Then, even as the clockwork timer on the machine clicked open the electric switch, a final change came to the slack body.

The face was entirely hairless, except for a fine stubble on the cheeks and chin. Even teeth glistened from between parted lips, and the nose jutted out firmly. The body lengthened until it was six feet in length and well proportioned in build. Lungs moved steadily, drawing in the ozone-filled air with an audible sound. Muscles twitched feebly in legs and arms.

And then the cone of colored light was gone, the tubes fading to clearness as the current was switched off. The heat of the machine dissipated as the moments passed.

**A**ND the sleeper on the steel floor raised himself unsteadily from a prone to a sitting position. He peered blankly around for seconds, then laboriously clambered to his feet, ducked out of the machine.

He stood for a moment outside the ma-

chine, weaving on his feet, almost unbearable pain threatening to split his skull. Then he slowly dressed in the clothes heaped on the chair. He lit a cigarette, examined the dials on the face of the machine. It was only too evident that the mitogenetic power had been in force for the past ten minutes.

"It's a failure," Fred Blake told himself, felt utter futility clutching at his heart. "Ten minutes I spent beneath the rays, and there's not the slightest change in my body."

He caught up a heavy maul, methodically smashed the machine into ruins, destroying the results of five years of trying labor. Then, his lean face determined, he strode to the desk, picked up the telephone.

"Dorothy," he said, when his connection was made, "this is Fred. Tell your father I'll go to work for him whenever he says."

Tiredly, he replaced the black receiver, left the room without another glance at the machine that had failed him.

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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 St. New York City. Write us today!

Dear Reader:

The other day, while having dinner with a popular author, we were discussing the blessings and curses of editing science-fiction publications. He asked me a question that might sound sarcastic to some people, but I found it thought-provoking. "Would you rather edit magazines, or work for a living?"

According to the dictionary, anything that we expend labor on is work—yet one can "work" a lot harder and toil more playing a lively game of tennis, let's say, than sitting around an office all day. But we never say that we're going to work when we grab up our racket for a match or two—because we get pleasure out of that kind of "toil"!

So my answer to the author was, "I'd rather edit magazines." I think I get more pleasure out of this "work" than I would out of any game, so it has all the earmarks of play! This is a good thing, too—because it is known that people who enjoy their daily labors make a better job of it, which leads me to believe that SCIENCE FICTION might be a pretty good magazine—as your letters and the circulation chart indicate!

Anyhow, I do get a big kick out of preparing this book for you, and particularly do I enjoy compiling the various departments in the magazine. If you like them, I wish you'd write in some letters—and if you don't like them, you can tell me what

you'd like to see changed, and I'll do what I can to satisfy you!

The same goes for FUTURE FICTION—the magazine you are familiar with as the companion to SCIENCE FICTION. Or aren't you? Well, if you haven't treated yourself to FUTURE FICTION yet, you'd better get one from the corner newsstand before they're all sold out! This popular sister mag presents the same high-quality material you find in SCIENCE FICTION—and satisfies all those fans who have clamored for more frequent publication of SCIENCE FICTION. The price is the same, and there are many new and different features and departments. The best science-fiction writers are found in *both* magazines!

Oh, yes!—before I close this editorial chatter, I want to bring two excellent fan magazines to your attention. They arrived too late to make "The Fantasy Fan" department, which is in the printer's hands at this writing. Both are from the same west coast metropolis—"Sweetness and Light," 1903 West 84th Place, Los Angeles, Calif., a quarterly mimeographed magazine of unusual merit, edited by Russ Hodgkins. This is fantasy's sophisticated magazine and presents items of real wit—it's the favorite of any number of fans. "The Rocket" is the effort of Editor Walter Daugherty, 1039 West 39th Street, Los Angeles, Calif.—also a neatly mimeographed job of 30 pages of choice articles in the March,

1940, issue, known as the "Egyptian Number." You can't find more interesting or better prepared fan mags anywhere! Sample copies can be secured from the editors, a dime for "Sweetness and Light"—a dime and a half for "The Rocket."

And with that, I turn the department over to you—

CHARLES D. HORNIG,  
Editor, SCIENCE FICTION,  
60 Hudson Street,  
New York City.

### SIGN THE NAME, PLEASE!

*Dear Editor:*

*I see that you did not print my last letter and I did not expect you to do so. I have noticed that you print only the letters that praise the mag and none that have any kicks in them. Although my last letter did have many kicks, you must admit that "The Sphinx of the Spaceways" was full of obvious astronomical errors.*

A. N. ONYMOUS.  
(No Address)

(The above is just the first paragraph from a long, critical letter. You are right, Mr. Onymous—we are not printing your letter in full. But you are wrong when you say that we do not use critical letters. There is hardly a letter used that does not contain some complaint or kick, and several are down-right panning. Evidently you made that statement without very much observation.)

And we'll print your letters too, no matter how condemning, if they are interesting—but are we asking you too much to sign your name? It is a poor practice to write criticizing letters unsigned—and far, far more unethical than any action on the part of an editor to avoid printing brick-bats.

Come out into the open and we'll have a heart-to-heart talk!—EDITOR.)

### LIKES FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE

*Dear Hornig:*

*Congratulations on securing a novel from the master of satire, Stanton A. Coblenz. Although "The Planet of the Knob-Heads" is very similar to his previous stories (especially "Into Plutonian Depths") it was remarkably interesting. I had to laugh when Jack and Marjorie were being greeted by the thousands of Uuleppians by being soundly whacked on the head! Some fun! "The Atom Prince" was fairly interesting, especially since it reminds one of Cummings' earlier stories, such as "The Girl in the Golden Atom." The remaining stories were fairly good, even though two of them were hoaxes. And you rejected one of my stories because it was a hoax! Tch, tch. I'm surprised, Charlie!*

*What I like most about your magazine is the friendly atmosphere about it. Unlike the other editors, you act as if you were one of us—and, in reality, you are. "The Fantasy Fan" and "The Telepath" are two of the most interesting departments in any magazine. Your writeup of the Convention was quite interesting, and the article concerning Forrest J. Ackerman also appealed to me. Like yourself, I consider Forrie the top-notch fan of all time, despite the ridicule certain New Yorkers used to heap on him. I'd rather discuss science-fiction with Forrie than anyone else I've ever met, for I realize that here is a fellow who is interested in everything you say concerning science-fiction—a fellow whose knowledge of science-fiction is unequalled. More power to Forrie Ackerman, the greatest fan of all time. Is your face red, Forrie?*

*And please, Hornig, don't be afraid to accept stories by new authors. Remember, you discovered Stanley G. Weinbaum, A. Connell, and many other authors. Reason? Because you weren't afraid to print authors' first stories when you were editor of Wonder. Don't turn down a story by a new author that you would accept if it were*

written by a "big name." It isn't fair. I'm positive that you'll be instrumental in discovering more new authors, and I wish you luck.

ROBERT A. MADLE,  
Editor, Fantascience Digest,  
333 E. Belgrade St.,  
Philadelphia, Penna.

(You betcha I'm one of the fans, Bob. I'll always be a science-fiction fan, though I may not always be an editor. So you see, the fan comes first!

When I accept stories for publication, I just look for extra-good stories. Many times I read a complete yarn, and if you were to stop me in the middle of it, I couldn't tell you the author's name without looking on the first sheet again. I do not look for big names in preference to good stories. I have turned down some pretty lousy stuff by the biggest names, and accepted fine yarns from brand-newcomers. I intend to continue this way—and I hope the "discoveries" come thick and fast!—EDITOR.)

#### FROM A TEN-YEAR VETERAN

Dear Mr. Hornig:

I write this, my first fan letter to any magazine, because of the interest with which I read your "Special Features" section in the December issue. I have read *scientifiction* magazines for ten years.

You ask "What is science-fiction?"—I answer, it is fiction stories of science probabilities (not possibilities)—stories which elaborate upon present, undeveloped scientific facts or hopes of present-day scientists, not on the nightmares of overly-imaginative authors.

I am inclined to believe that Coblentz wrote "Planet of the Knob-Heads" as the result of a nightmare. I have always liked his stories, but this one doesn't fit. It is as scientific as a first reader. It belongs in a

magazine like "Weird Stories" or "Eery Tales."

The best of the bunch was "Women's World." Second in place is "The Atom Prince," although another page or two could have won the war and brought the hero back to grandpa, espoused to Neona. The author seemingly intends to write a sequel, but I don't think it deserves one. Humor went to town in third place, "Upon the Dark Moon." I would have rated it higher but for the brevity. I'll concede fourth place to "Planet of the Knob-Heads," because there's no place else to put it. You can take "Lever of Destruction" and about nine more like it and issue a new detective magazine.

I liked the article "Movies Via Radio" very much. It would be interesting to read an article of this type on rocket experimentation. I have read a few articles on it but none that have told me its history or the progress it is making.

All in all, I don't feel that I was cheated in this issue, but I would like to see no more of the Knob-Head type of stories.

Can you tell me if there is a science-fiction fan club in Kansas City and who I can contact in regards to it?

JEROME S. KALIS,  
300 West Armour,  
Kansas City, Mo.

(The type of science-fiction satire written by Stanton A. Coblentz has long been a favorite with science-fiction fans, and most of the comments received on the story were decidedly favorable. Could you tolerate an occasional satire, for the sake of the other readers?

I know of no science-fiction club in Kansas City, but there certainly must be plenty of fans in your neighborhood. Perhaps if they all write to you, you might get together and form a club. How about it, Kansas City fans?—EDITOR.)

## SUCH SIMILARITY!

Dear Mr. Hornig:

A science-fiction reader for over ten years, I naturally welcomed an old-timer at the helm of a new magazine in the field. The old thrills could be expected. But little did I anticipate that the old formula would be literally applied.

"The Atom Prince" in the December issue of SCIENCE FICTION was an engrossing example of grass roots of science-fiction, but it was also strangely familiar. This I attributed simply to nostalgia and the not uncommon delusion often experienced by all of us at one time or another. It was therefore a shock and a disappointment to read the same story in the first issue of a reprint magazine now on the market. I refer to "The Girl in the Golden Atom." Curiosity induced me to get out your December issue again and compare. I was amazed to find that Ray Cummings was the author of both stories. The copyright date on the earlier story, a classic I read as a reprint once before some years ago, was twenty years ago!

Has Cummings but one plot? The superficial changes in title, names of characters, and motive for the experiment in size reduction, were so transparent as to amount to almost a contemptuous disregard of the readers' rights.

I think an explanation is due us.

PAUL R. SHAW,  
36 West 44th St.,  
New York City.

(Ray Cummings has long been famous for his atomic-reduction stories. There have been several in the series. "The Girl in the Golden Atom," famous for two decades, was one of them. "The Atom Prince," used by us last year, was another.

I must admit that the plots are very similar, but the fans have always clamored for more of this type from the pen of Ray Cummings. However, several complaints were

received by this office—not because the story was not good, but because it was not new in idea, or was unscientific.

So, you win a point! Henceforth, we shall not use stories that are based on earlier series, unless there develops a great demand for them.—EDITOR.)

## "THE GOOD OLD DAYS"

Dear Mr. Hornig:

Regarding the December issue of SCIENCE FICTION, I wish to say the following.

"Planet of the Knob-Heads" by Coblentz was the type of story that holds your interest all through, produces a few laughs, and leaves you with a feeling of contentment.

"The Atom Prince" reminded me of the good old days when science-fiction was young. In this story the imagination of the reader is allowed to roam, and if anything will make a hit with a science-fiction fan, it is to give him a story which will permit his imagination to wander from the infinitesimal to the infinite unhampered by conventional thoughts, although paying attention to known scientific facts.

"Women's World" was too artificial. It had a make-believe atmosphere. Matriarchy is just as stupid as is the idea that women were made solely to stay at home 24 hours a day, bending over a smelly stove, and being of value to the community only because of her breeding qualities.

"Lever of Destruction" was an ordinary detective story with a hackneyed plot.

Mr. Austin's suggestion for an Esperanto course in SCIENCE FICTION would meet with the approval of at least 95% of the fans.

SOL KNEGOV,  
1171 Nelson Ave.,  
Bronx, New York.

("The Atom Prince" met with very divided comments. Some fans appreciated its

magnitude of theme, while others resented its similarity to the old-type Cummings yarn.

"Women's World" was an intentional burlesque, and was not written to be taken seriously. I think our feminine fans will agree with you about the 24 hours a day over a smelly stove.

For the present, there will not be an Esperanto course published in this magazine. Perhaps later on.—EDITOR.)

#### A VOICE FROM ALASKA

*Howdy, Hornig!*

*I saw that in the "Telepath," a guy by the name of Art Senhert thinks all the science-fiction fans live in New York and California. Well, he's wrong. I am a science-fiction fan and I live in Alaska—yes, sir! Here I sit in my igloo—writing out this letter. Only one thing wrong, I'm just a kid—fifteen years, and I don't happen to know any other fellows who read science-fiction. Most of them wonder how I read these pulp magazines. They don't realize, of course, that science-fiction mags are a class above the really pulpy pulps—sort of in between—because some of them have smooth paper and some don't.*

*Getting down to business—*

*Cover: smells like rotten herring—no need for always "girl in distress" picture—also, why doesn't cover illustrations illustrate a story?*

*Stories: "Men Without a World"—4 fish. "Eclipse Bears Witness"—2 fish. "The Scourge of a Single Cell"—gets one-half a rotten herring—it was bad!*

*Features: All good—hope it stays that way.*

*When SCIENCE FICTION came out I wondered what I was getting. Just before, some other science-fiction mags were put out—not good—and I hoped I would not be disappointed. So far I haven't—not too bad, anyway.*

*How about a book-length novel—some*

*reprints of old science-fiction stories? Put them in separate booklets if you have to—some good cover pictures, some stories by Thornton Ayre and Nelson S. Bond—a course in Esperanto. BETTER covers on your sister mag, FUTURE FICTION—not the "lady in distress" cover (by the way, I noticed that both the covers of SCIENCE FICTION and FUTURE FICTION had a lady-in-distress with some big long serpentine arms about them; that is bad—like rotten herring).*

CHARLES L. CLOUDY, JR.,  
P. O. Box 569,  
Ketchikan, Alaska.

(I couldn't resist putting your letter first this month—it's so blasted hot in the office right now that a note from Alaska is indeed refreshing. Aside from that, your letter is exceptionally interesting, coming from one so young. Just goes to show that science-fiction fans have above-the-average intelligence—your note would do credit to fellows who have already voted a few times.

Thanks for all those fine fish—we'll try to get rid of the "rotten herring." The authors you mention already write for SCIENCE FICTION and FUTURE FICTION.

Remember that there are a great mass of readers to be pleased, and if some of your suggestions are not acted upon, it's because we think the majority want something else.

It's hard for me to believe that you wrote your letter from an igloo—I understand that Ketchikan, Alaska's southernmost city, is quite a modern town, with three movie theaters and everything. Don't wait too long before writing again!—EDITOR.)

#### TECHNOCRACY

*Dear Mr. Hornig:*

*Having just finished the June issue of SCIENCE FICTION, I'm disappointed—because there wasn't more of it! The stories I rate in this order of preference: "The*

*Mad Virus," "Doom from the Void," "The Price of Escape," "Proxies on Venus," "The Voice Commands," "Castaways in Space."*

The article, "Continental Engineers," was excellent, but one thing was omitted. Mr. Hodgkins said, quote, "Anyone who is interested can find out all about it," meaning Technocracy. But he failed to tell how. How about giving us the address of Technocracy, Inc.? I'm interested, would like to join, if I can, and I am sure many others of your readers would.

Your editorial on "Science Fiction and Friendship" lit the spot! I hope G. B. Woolley, the Englishman who wrote that raving "missile," reads that editorial and takes it to heart.

Let me add my voice to the clamor for humorous stories. Get stories from L. Sprague de Camp or Nelson S. Bond.

Yours for a bigger, better, and oftener  
SCIENCE FICTION!

JOHN PATCH,  
New Concord, Ohio.

(For further information about Technocracy, I suggest that you write to the author of the article you refer to—Russell J. Hodgkins, 1903 West 84th Place, Los Angeles, Calif. Many fans have written in asking about Technocracy—and I guess it's only natural for science-fiction enthusiasts to want to learn about ideas for a scientific future, as planned by the Technocrats. Mr. Hodgkins will see that each inquirer is supplied with information about the movement.—EDITOR.)

#### OPINIONS VERSUS FACTS

Dear Mr. Hornig:

*Up until now I sat quietly by on the sidelines and read most of the letters in the "Telepath"; some with interest, others with a mild form of disgust. Those poor excuses for science-fiction fans who write in plaintive letters stating that such-and-such a story IS (notice I say IS, not I THINK) "lousy" or some other such term equally*

*amateurish in criticizing any literary attempt. I believe your main idea in giving the fans "The Telepath" was to have them express THEIR OPINIONS as to the merits of your magazine, not make statements of fact "pro" or "con."*

*Now to get down to my opinions of present science-fiction. I think that altogether too many writers take the interesting subject of life on the other planets of our solar system in the wrong light. Why must almost all "inhabitants" of the other planets be repulsive in appearance, or have ideas of destruction and universal dominance?*

*Kindly inform me as to whether I'm behind times or not in saying that all science-fiction stories which don't pertain to astronomical happenings (these stories are altogether too few to suit me) must be, or seem to be, rather silly and childish.*

*Putting an end to my destructive criticism of your magazine, I'd like to say a few words of congratulations to you and your staff of writers as a whole, for the fine work they have done. And an extra special bouquet to you, for what I hope is going to be a permanent policy; that of eliminating that scourge of all magazine readers, the serial.*

*I'm afraid you'll have to get used to my banterings, because from now on they'll be coming regularly. I'm tired of having no part, however minute, in forming the policy of "our" magazine.*

*Thanks very much for "The Telepath."*

AL BLAKE,  
300 S. Hamlin Ave.,  
Chicago, Ill.

(You certainly take a more tolerant attitude than many readers, in your criticisms—a great many fans would not compromise by saying they "think" a story is lousy, if they don't happen to like it—and it's our duty to print their letters as is. Even in science-fiction we find persons to whom practically everything is "lousy" if

it doesn't happen to just suit their taste. We need more fans like you!

I guess it seems most logical to science-fiction writers that the dwellers on other worlds would have no reason to evolve into our idea of "men," under such different environments, and may very likely be exceedingly repulsive, according to earthly standards. But perhaps they are assuming too much, at times, in giving these aliens the bloody desire of conquest, which would not necessarily exist in superior races, at least.

I'm at a loss to explain why all stories that are not interplanetary "seem childish." I think this is because you are partial to space yarns. Think that might be the solution?

Thanks for that bouquet—it blends nicely with the criticisms! I'm glad that you're going to become a regular writer-inner.—EDITOR.)

#### LETTER BAIT? YOU BETCHA!

*Dear Mr. Hornig:*

*Month after month, year after year, we the "regulars" welcome each edition that comes on the "street." We scarcely ever write, either to praise or find fault.*

*True, our encouragement in the form of letters is lacking. We feel that our consistent purchasing is dominant and essential and is a compliment to your competent editing, and we have found that as the years go by, the pendulum of your copy always finds its balance for good and minus, and like water, will eventually find its level, and we are content.*

*Your staff and yourself are to be congratulated on your second birthday (?). I knew you way back when—oh, well!*

*Now as to your offering an original painting by Paul, that's o.k., fine, but as much as I'd like one, I know that its background is essentially bait to bring in the letters and create a larger circulation. I'll be content to have as a bonus, more good stories, different, interesting, etc.*

*So please accept this letter, written on the spur of the moment, as a sincere wish for your well-deserved success, and realize that a lot of us, although we never write, are right behind you appreciating the fine job you are doing.*

*May your copy be always easy to handle.*

ALBERT J. BAKKENIST,  
645 E. 224th St.,  
Bronx, New York.

(I don't think our offering the original Paul paintings for fan letters will do much to raise the circulation, but we have been getting more letters. Sure those prizes were bait!—we realize that only a small proportion of the readers ever bother to write in. and the more letters we receive, the better we can tell what the majority want! Of course, the prime essential, as you say, is that plenty of copies are sold—but an editor's life is indeed dreary without fan letters! I hope that you, who have come out of the mass of silent readers, will become a regular contributor to "The Telepath"!—EDITOR.)

#### MEMPHIS FANS WANTED!

*Dear Sir:*

*I am happy to report that my letter that you printed has brought results. There are now two science-fictionists in Memphis—one Bill Pollard and I.*

*Mr. Pollard and myself intend to organize a science-fiction association here, so be prepared to hear from us concerning our progress.*

*The stories were much better this issue. Keep up the good work.*

*I picked up a 1935 issue of "Marvel Tales" the other day that contained a very interesting autobiography of a friend of yours: Forrest J. Ackerman. Just thought you might like to know that there are a few of those old mags still in circulation.*

*I see you keep telling people to write such-and-such a party concerning Esperanto. I did about a month and a half ago*

and received no answer. Maybe Esperanto can only be learned by New Yorkers, Californians, and Pennsylvanians—eh?

The article, "Strange Mental Phenomena," was really interesting. Give us more about telepathy.

ART R. SEHVERT,  
791 Maury, Apt. 1,  
Memphis, Tenn.

(Say, there must be plenty of good science-fiction fans in Memphis—lots of copies of SCIENCE FICTION are sold in that city. Memphis fans are invited to write to Mr. Sehvert and help him organize his Science Fiction Association.

Many of our readers have already written for Esperanto information, and some have learned the language during the past few months. All persons who want to know more about the international auxiliary language, the peace instrument that urges friendship through mutual comprehension, should write to Joseph H. Leahy, General Secretary, Esperanto Association of North America, 1410 H St., N. W., Washington, D. C. Science-fiction fans seem to go for Esperanto in a big way—because it is a scientific language without the difficult irregularities that occur in all other tongues.—EDITOR.)

#### ON THE MAT!

Dear Mr. Hornig:

March, 1940: "Men Without a World," "Sky Trap," "Eclipse Bears Witness," "The New Life," and "The Scourge of a Single Cell," in that order of preference. Best illustration was Schneeman's and Paul a close second with his two, only because they were not neatly framed like the former. Cover: not so good, too hazy and too printy—a fault that should be corrected. Departments: good, but no more, please.

This last issue is quite a different proposition, entirely. The Paul cover is the best you have had so far, not because of the bare,

bulging bosom, but because of the clarity, good coloring, interesting detail and action. But the cover should absolutely illustrate a story in the book and have less print to mar the artistic merit of Paul! Clive's "The Voice Commands" is the best this issue, and I believe its art work something awful. Edmond's "Virus" yarn had a good plot, but the action was superfluous. Illustration—worse than the first. "Proxies of Venus" was a welcomed sequel to that Bond story in another mag, and much better than it was. Number two story on my list and having the most atrocious pic of the six. This condemnation of art may seem childish to you, but when an issue is dedicated to such a great artist as Paul, I think it rather insulting and ironic to fill the mag with such detective-airplane-western pics (as only the artists of this issue can draw, and don't even sign their work at that) and leave Paul out in the cold except for the cover. These other men do not know how to draw for a science-fiction magazine and thus the general make-up of that mag is the same as countless other publications and not distinctive as a science-fiction one should be. Miss Long's short was rather good, but the heroics were too pronounced. This pic by Lin (?) was the best in the issue.

You say that the "Telepath" is longer this month, but the way I count, it comes out that there were twelve pages of this department last month, and only seven this.

"Doom from the Void" is my number three story and had second best pic. But like a few of the other tales in this issue, it did not seem to get anyplace. Problem, worry, obstacles and finally the solution. This is merely a narrative, not a story. The same can be said about the next and last yarn, "Price of Escape" and the pic for this was terrible, too. Now I have three good stories out of six, one good pic out of six, and a good cover, a radically interesting article. Not very good, Paul!!!

CHARLES HIDLEY,  
New York City.

# SCIENCE FICTION AND WAR

**Editorial by CHARLES D. HORNIG**

**T**HIS editorial is being written two months before the magazine containing it will be on sale—we have to figure that far in advance, in pulp publishing—so, at the time of the writing neither I nor anyone else can predict very accurately just what developments will come about in the present European War.

This morning the news came over the air that Chamberlain had resigned in favor of Winston Churchill, and the neutral countries of Holland and Belgium have been invaded. Of course, this will all be old stuff by the time you read it here. At this moment, no one can tell what new horrors tomorrow will bring.

All we can hope is that sanity will come back into the world and that the war will end in a very short time. We would like the peoples and governments of the world to realize that no shifting of land-boundaries, no change of political management can be worth even a small fraction of the human lives lost in the process of war!

We, as science-fictionists, believe that the marvels of science should be used to improve civilization, instead of destroying it, and bringing Man back to the level of the beast. We can find no possible excuse for destroying human life, for taking men who have never had a criminal tendency, and forcing them to butcher each other, because the rulers of their nations are greedy and proud! Isn't it odd that everybody is so dead against war, and yet there are so many wars?

It came to our notice recently that some scientists have claimed to have discovered some sort of atomic power—at least some-

thing that would explode a million times more violently than gasoline. Can you imagine what holocaust could be caused by such a power being used as a weapon? There have been many science-fiction stories predicting terrible wars that will bring the world back to complete barbarism—"Things to Come" by H. G. Wells, for instance.

On one hand, science has provided us with means of lengthening the human life tremendously—eliminating diseases that formerly wiped out entire populations—and on the other hand, science has also given us terrific weapons for annihilating communities en toto.

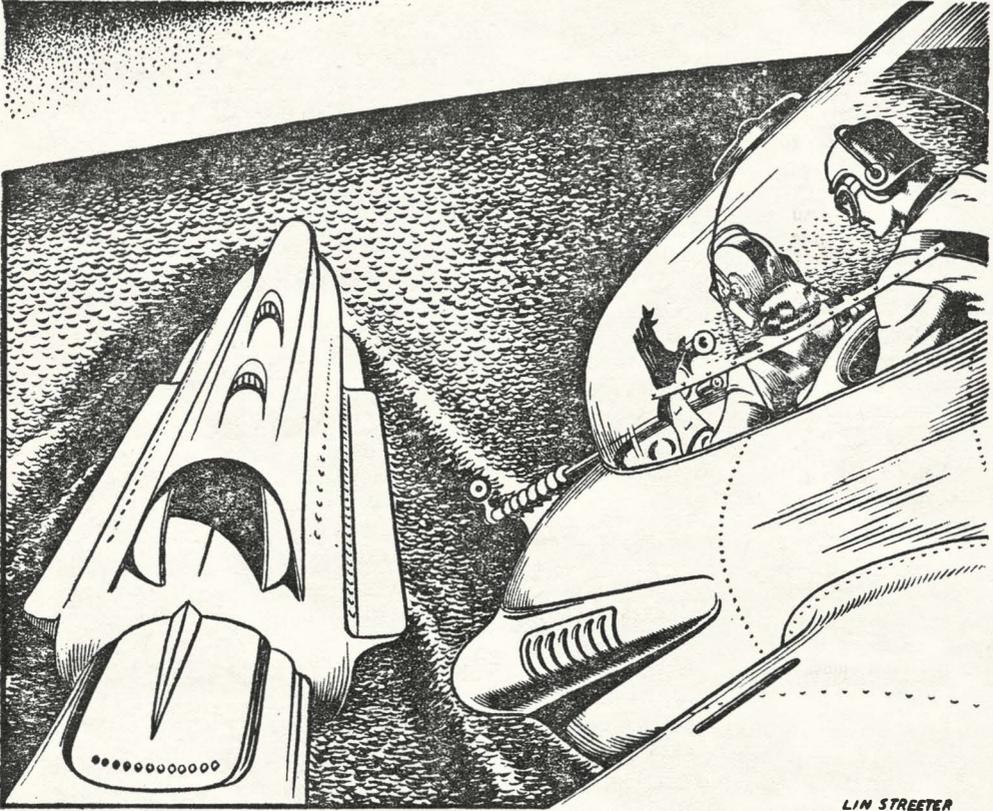
Perhaps the homo sapien has not evolved enough to make proper use of the forces placed in his command. Perhaps he is still too much of an animal to control his own discoveries. Perhaps science is more of a curse than a blessing!

They say that human nature never changes. The trouble may lie in the fact that we haven't enough *human* nature, and too much *animal* nature. When the predictions of the science-fiction world come to pass, when Sanity and Science reign together, then the Earth will truly be able to boast a Utopia—a civilization worthy of creatures who claim to be so far above the beast.

Science is merely a tool. It will follow the dictates of Madness to destroy the world, and it can be wielded just as easily by Sanity to create an ever greater future for Mankind.

We hope for the latter.

*After one frightful moment, a portion swung aside!*



# THE MAN WHO SOLD THE EARTH

by THORNTON AYRE

---

Jacob Mastervil, money-master of the world, carefully planned his master-deal—the sale of an entire world! But a primeval race of super-scientists, long thought to be vanished from the surface of the Earth, aids Bruce Calthrop in revealing the true identity of the world-seller — leading to a shocking climax of a battle between the science of an ancient Earth and that of another planet!

---

## CHAPTER 1 THE POWER OF MONEY

**J**ACOB MASTERVIL had the world in his grip. Ten short years had seen incredible changes in the rugged, ox-like financier who in 1970 had apparently

been quite content with feats of monetary wizardry. Suddenly he had altered his methods. A brief vacation alone at his holiday shack in the Alleghenies, then he had returned full of ruthless notions for world power.

He had no schemes for war or conflict,

no ideas of bloodshed. He proposed to use a far mightier weapon—money! And he had succeeded. From 1970 to 1980 he had waged bloodless war, had cornered markets, juggled stocks and shares and international securities, altered and deflated values with bewildering skill—until at last, in mid 1980, it dawned on the world that he was the master of the planet by virtue of financial eminence. Destroy him, and one would destroy the basic rock of civilization! He had reared himself up as the greatest financial wizard of the age, dictator of the earth.

The majority of nations were content to accept his ruling. He had brought prosperity, advanced science considerably, improving conditions of living in many directions. Some said that the improvement was merely natural progress and had nothing to do with Mastervil. Plenty averred that he was in truth a black-hearted scoundrel. Those closest to him said that he was midway between cruelty and generosity—a man coldly disdainful of humanity itself, yet interested in its progress. Certainly he had only one god—power!

There was only one man who ever dared to question his methods—his private secretary, Bruce Calthorp. Thirty-five years old, keen in manner, red-haired and blue-eyed, he had been a member of the Mastervil organization ever since the big fellow had been content to play around with normal finance.

Calthorp did not like Mastervil. Ten years ago he had done so, but since his relentless climb to power, he had grown to hate him. There was a supercilious arrogance about the financier that got on Bruce's nerves. There was black inhumanity in the stare of Mastervil's cold gray eyes; there was invincibility in the broad, powerful back he so often showed as he stood at the window staring out over

New York, usually dictating a letter at machine-gun speed.

He was dictating in this fashion one morning, staring down over the metropolis, when he suddenly swung around and regarded Calthorp with a baleful stare.

"Calthorp, you don't like me, do you?" he asked, and his voice was very soft, with the vaguest hint of a sneer.

Bruce slowly looked up from his notebook. His lean face never had been easy of expression. It was invariably taut and inflexible.

"Aren't you descending to personalities, sir?" he asked briefly. "If you had asked me that question outside business hours, I'd have answered it truthfully. As it is, I've no answer to give."

Mastervil sat down slowly, clenched his powerful hands on the desk.

"So you've nothing to say? I wonder if you'll stay dumb when you hear that Miss Dodd has consented to marry me?"

"I don't believe it," Bruce said flatly. "She was almost engaged to me, and now—" He stopped, his jaw squaring. "You're saying this, Mastervil, to try and get me annoyed."

Mastervil grinned, a huge unpleasant grin that bared his rows of powerful teeth.

"I've asked Miss Dodd to come over and verify it," he remarked, then snapped on the deskphone and barked, "Send in Miss Dodd."

"Right away, Mr. Mastervil."

**B**RUCE turned slightly to face the mahogany and chromium door as Muriel Dodd quietly entered. She was tall and dignified, blonde in coloring, with a pair of very large and serious hazel eyes. Slowly she walked across the office, a statuesque figure in her trim costume of black and white.

"So here you are, my dear!" Mastervil got to his feet and cupped her shoulders

in his great hands. "Tell Calthorp here that we're going to be married—soon. He doesn't want to believe it. . ."

The girl looked away for a moment, then slowly nodded.

"Yes, Bruce, it's true. . . ." She turned to him, trying to smile; but it was only with her lips. Her big eyes were filled with a haunted light, a silent plea which Bruce could not fail to notice.

For several seconds he sat in perfect silence, then glanced up as Mastervil started to laugh. It was a thick, chesty laugh, full of lusty complacency for the thing he had done. He slapped his hand on the desk.

"Damn me if I ever saw a man so surprised!" he exploded at last. "Dammit, Calthorp, you look as though I'd handed you an atomic bomb, or something."

"What a pity you didn't; I might have found a use for it. . . ." Bruce's face was as hard as granite as he rose to his feet; he carefully folded his notebook and dropped it on the desk. "From now on, Mastervil," he said, "I'm no longer in your employ. That gives me certain rights so say exactly what I want. In the first place, Miss Dodd did not consent to marry you of her own free will. You forced her into it, mainly as a lever to make things between us impossible. You want to be rid of me—and you picked the right way to do it!"

The financier chuckled mirthlessly. "Go on!" he invited.

"You did it to spite me because ever since you came into power you've hated me like poison. You know I know every one of your moves; if I were so minded I could lead a campaign against you and bring you to the ground. From now on I shall *be* so minded!"

"Very interesting!" Mastervil dusted his coat lapels idly.

"Not a soul in the world realizes you

are planning greater conquests," Bruce went on deliberately. "For instance, the recent successful space-voyages to Venus. Space-travel was born ten years ago—today it is an institution. Matters between Earth and Venus are at the best peculiar. You imagine you know all the answers—but you don't. You spread propaganda recently that Venus and Earth are the closest of friends. What you didn't say was that you were planning with a certain ring of Venusian experts to sell the Earth!—yes, sell the Earth, with humanity as the stock in trade. Without a qualm, you plan to sell your fellow men and women into something approaching slavery and make yourself the master of both Earth and Venus. . . . Then what? More conquests, I suppose? Onwards—always onwards."

"I mastered this world, and I can master another," said the financier coldly. "You know too much, Calthorp—"

"But, you don't really mean you intend to sell humanity into slavery, do you?" broke in Muriel, seizing Mastervil's arm. "You can't mean to do that! Surely Bruce has got the facts wrong?"

"No; he happens to be right—but the matter was confidential." Mastervil looked at the anxious girl quickly. "And why should you worry, anyway?" he demanded. "What does it matter what happens to the fools that make up a world? If they haven't intelligence enough to defeat me, they deserve to suffer."

He swung around to Bruce.

"As for you," he breathed, "you know exactly what will happen to you if you breathe one word of confidential matters outside this office. Now collect your due from the cashier and get out."

Bruce gave the girl one glance, then turned to the door. He closed it quietly, stalked through the busy outer offices and stopped for a moment with the cashier.

Then he was on his way again, walking steadily down the granite main corridor.

Half way down the stairs to street level, Muriel suddenly caught up with him, breathless from running.

"Bruce, please! Just a minute! I made an excuse to Mastervil."

He turned and took her arm gently as they went down together.

"Of course he forced you into that marriage idea?" he asked slowly.

She nodded bitterly. "Not because he wants me, but to spite you. . . . In a way, though, I think he *does* want me. Not for love or anything, but the sheer joy of possessing a woman that belongs to another man. . . . Oh, Bruce, you were a fool to let him know how much you really know."

"Mebbe." Bruce's lips were tight.

"You can't do anything against him. He's too powerful. . . ."

Bruce stopped. They had come to the busy street level.

"Bruce, dear . . ." Muriel gripped his arm, gazed at him earnestly. "Bruce, we love each other—but surely our lives are more valuable to us? If we cross Mastervil in any way, he'll finish the pair of us. You know that."

"Yeah . . ." Bruce meditated for a moment, then he smiled.

"You go right ahead, honey, and do nothing," he said gently. "Do everything he tells you; don't put yourself in a position to be shot at. As for me— Well, I'm going to fight him!"

"But you can't! You haven't the power or the money!"

"I'll find some way," he said doggedly. "If somebody doesn't start to oppose him mighty quickly, he'll go through with his Venusian deal and put an end to the liberty of humanity. He has neither soul nor conscience. Ten years ago he was human and decent, but today—"

"But, Bruce—"

"Muriel, I've *got* to fight him!" he insisted. "I know so many things; I've got to act upon them. Don't worry, I can look after myself; and I'll find some way to free you, too. . . ."

He paused and kissed her gently, regardless of the people passing up and down.

"Be brave," he murmured. "Trust in me."

She stared at him dumbly, then he turned suddenly and headed off into the crowd, was rapidly lost to sight.

## CHAPTER II

### A ONE-WAY TRIP

**B**RUCE gained his apartment fifteen minutes later, settled himself down to think.

"Easy to talk big," he muttered. "Easy to promise all those things to Muriel—but by no means so easy to put them into practice. How is it possible to get at Mastervil? Where is his weak spot? He just hasn't one. Steal a space-ship and try to smash the Venusian merger from the other end? It might be done; but it wouldn't be so easy. It would still leave Mastervil, and he'd probably get me before I got him . . ."

He got to his feet and paced worriedly up and down.

"If only I had some scientific apparatus! If only I had the machinery, the time, and the necessary secrecy—"

He looked up sharply at a knock on the door, demanded to know who was there.

"Message for you, Mr. Calthorp."

He flung the door wide, realized in an instant that the voice of a telegraph boy had been mimicked. Slowly he stepped back into the room, raising his hands before a steadily leveled revolver. He recognized the two men who moved towards him as Briggs and Mason, Mastervil's strong-arm experts.

"Well?" Bruce demanded. "What the devil do you want?"

"You!" Briggs answered shortly. "The boss told us to pick you up. You're going to hop an Atlantic plane, Calthorp—and what's more, you're not coming back. You know the boss; he hates people who know too much."

Bruce looked desperately about him. He had expected something of the kind, but hardly so swiftly. Inwardly he cursed himself for having said so much in Mastervil's office.

"Get your hat," Briggs ordered laconically. . . . "Now—move! And don't try anything, else you'll go west before your time."

"That might be preferable!" Bruce snapped, but he obeyed orders just the same. As long as he had life, he still had opportunity.

In ten minutes the three of them had reached the enormous transatlantic air-drome. Bruce found himself pushed into a single-seater express machine, struggled fiercely as he was bound to the seat with tough, thin cords.

"You don't have to worry about driving; this one's on us," Briggs commented genially, snapping on the robot control. "We'll be right behind you in that other big plane, doing everything for you. . . ."

He started up the engine, then slammed the door and clambered into the plane immediately to the rear. Mason sank down beside him at the controls. . . . In a few minutes both machines were in the air, heading eastward at gathering speed.

**B**RUCE struggled desperately with his cords as his plane flew onwards. Below him were the rolling gray waters of the Atlantic; far ahead, as time passed, he could distinguish the first signs of the islands of the Azores. He seemed to have been flying with whirlwind speed, the controls moving of their own accord under the radio wave influence of the machine a mile to the rear.

. . .

Then suddenly he realized that his plane was dipping. The engine had gone dead. The Atlantic was hurtling up to meet him—

He tried to scream, but the terrific downward rush choked the utterance in his throat. His plane struck the water with shattering force. The window of the cabin splintered; water came roaring in on top of him, deluging him, smothering him. . . . The plane slowly settled, weighted by its all metal body. . . .

For nearly an hour Briggs and Mason circled low over the spot where the plane had finally sunk. Beyond that last vortex of bubbles, nothing disturbed the waste of water. At last Briggs gave a sigh, lifted his small radio telephone and switched on the private contact.

Jacob Mastervil raised the receiver of his office radiophone.

"Hello? Yes, Mastervil speaking. . . . What? Well, poor Calthorp! So he committed suicide? You chased him as far as the Azores and tried to stop him? Dear, dear! It's quite a shock. . . . Thanks, Briggs. You know, I rather thought he seemed depressed when he left me this morning. . . . Too bad. Good-bye."

He put the receiver back on its hook, smiled into space.

"Private radiophones have spies," he murmured. "One can never be too sure. . . . So Calthorp was going to start a campaign against me, was he? At least, he had ambition. . . ."

He shrugged, went on calmly with his work.

Skillful tapping of the private radiophone by newshounds forever on Mastervil's track soon brought the news of Calthorp's "suicide" into the bulletins and evening papers. Muriel Dodd was the first caller in Mastervil's office.

She raged at him with all the fury of a woman whose dearest possession has been

taken from her, all of which he took with a sardonic smile.

"If it's the last thing I ever do, Jacob Mastervil, I'll expose you!" she finished desperately. "I'll do what Bruce intended to do. I'll open the eyes of the world to the fact that you're a monster—"

"And go the same way as Bruce?" Mastervil asked softly, smiling up from his desk. "My dear Muriel!"

"Then you admit he was murdered!" she cried triumphantly.

"I didn't say that. He committed suicide. You might do the same if you start saying too much. If you're the sensible woman I think you are, you'll hold your tongue and make preparations to become Mrs. Mastervil in a few weeks. . . . And now, my dear, please leave me. I have a lot to finish tonight."

The girl slowly nodded. "All right . . . I'll go." Her voice was much quieter now. "I'll see you again when you're not so busy."

She went out thoughtfully, paused in the corridor and meditated.

"So he did have Bruce killed," she muttered. "And he thinks he is invulnerable and can get away with it. . . . But maybe if I give way to him at every turn, if I learn his innermost secrets by pretending to agree with him, I can lull him into false security and one day trap him. Maybe I can do what Bruce could not do!"

She turned suddenly, her mind made up.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE WEAKNESS OF THE MASTER

**T**HE prompt despatch of Bruce Calthorp brought Jacob Mastervil a problem in its train. He was without a private secretary, nor could he find anybody who came up to his requirements. A man like Bruce Calthorp, absolutely efficient, was difficult to find. One by one, through several weeks, Mastervil tested one after the other of his immediate staff, found



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each applicant deficient in some respect or other.

Then one morning, practically a month after the murder of Calthorp, there was shown into the office a quiet, dark-eyed man with coal black hair and a very pallid face. His attire was neat, his manners faultless. Quietly he sat down before Mastervil's great desk.

"Rankin Dyall, I believe?" Mastervil said, glancing at the card before him. "Something I can do for you?"

"On the contrary, there is something I can do for you . . ." Dyall's voice was as smooth as his manner. "You are looking for a private secretary, I understand? You need look no further. Until now I have been with Rayburn and Clay, the Chicago bankers. You know them?"

"I own them!" Mastervil snorted. "What were you? President?"

"Chief confidential secretary. Telephone the president and you can verify it. I left voluntarily to take a vacation and study the angles of science and finance I knew you would need. When I felt proficient, I came on here."

"Hmmm . . . What are the present market figures on Interplanetary?"

"Forty-six seven-eighths."

"And Wallerby's Rocket Fuel Shares?"

"Twenty and three-quarters."

Mastervil nodded approvingly. "At least you know more about those two markets than any applicant yet. Now for a few other details—" and he reeled off a string of highly complicated tests which ranged from high finance to complex science. Without the least hesitation Dyall gave every answer correctly.

The financier took up the phone at last, contacted long distance and spoke briefly to Rayburn and Clay. Finally he looked across at Dyall and nodded slowly.

"O.K., Dyall, I'll take you on. If you come up to expectations, I'll gradually work

you into my private routine. Bank 47B will attend to your salary. Report tomorrow morning.”

Dyall nodded composedly and got to his feet.

“Thank you, sir; you’ll find me quite efficient.”

He moved to the door, stood aside as it opened at the identical moment to admit Muriel. She glanced at him curiously as he bowed slightly and went on his way.

“Who’s that, Jacob?” she asked, moving to the desk.

“New secretary—smartest man I’ve ever seen. Dyall’s his name.”

“Dyall . . . Oh!” The girl relapsed into thought, then started as Mastervil’s voice boomed on her again.

“Anything the matter?”

“Eh? Oh—no! Sorry, Jacob, I was just thinking he’ll have to be smart to keep up with you. . . . You know, sometimes I wonder why on earth I was content with a mere secretary when I can have you. . . .”

“Now you’re talking!” Mastervil leapt up and seized her hand, failed to notice the faint trace of contempt in her smile. “Keep by me, Muriel, and I’ll put you on top of the world! Incidentally, how are those dolts carrying out my orders for the wedding arrangements?”

“Quite well,” she murmured. “Four more weeks and we’ll be married.”

“And then,” Mastervil breathed, “we’ll show these fools how far we can go. My Venusian deal comes off just after our marriage. We’ll be king and queen of two worlds, and then—”

“I came,” Muriel said slowly, “to ask for money. I’ve run out.”

“Money!” Mastervil laughed heavily, tugged out one of his cards and scribbled on the back of it. “Here—take this. Order what you want, where you want. My name is enough. . . .”

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He drew himself up and stared out over the wilderness of the city.

**R**ANKIN DYALL fitted into his position of confidential secretary with an ease and assurance that delighted Mastervil. By the time the financier had married Muriel Dodd at an enormous function, Dyall was definitely a far better and more secretive secretary than Calthorp had ever been—nor did he seem to have any of Calthorp's scruples. He carried out orders with a certain soulless efficiency that was equal only to Mastervil himself. As time passed, he even arrived at the place where he could make suggestions and receive consideration.

"I believe, sir," he remarked one morning, "that your deal with the Venusians takes effect from September 9 onwards? That is, in two more weeks? I believe also that you have signed the merger with your Venusian colleagues?"

"Correct," Mastervil nodded. "Anything wrong?"

"No, but . . ." Dyall paused, eyed the financier steadily with his coal black eyes. "Just how much have you told your wife?"

"Only as much as it is good for her to know. Why?"

"Did it not ever strike you as strange that she should be so suddenly willing to marry you after the way you disposed of my predecessor?"

"What the hell do you know about it?" Mastervil demanded.

"As your private secretary I have access to all your files; the death of Bruce Calthorp is fully recorded. I've placed my own construction on his suicide." Dyall smiled frozenly. "I don't blame you, sir; he asked for it. What I'm getting at is that I cannot believe Muriel Dodd—or I should say Muriel Mastervil—could so easily forget the incident. I believe she only married you so willingly because she thought she

saw a way to learn some of your secrets. She might even have hopes of undermining your entire organization. . . .”

Mastervil clenched his fists. By God, if I thought for one moment that—”

“I’ve taken the liberty of having her watched,” Dyall went on smoothly. “I have seen several suspicious things. I have seen her lingering at nights around the office. She is trying, I feel convinced, to find a way to stop this Venusian deal of yours. Perhaps, like Calthorp, she has queer ideas about saving the human race.”

“I’ll crush the truth out of her,” Mastervil breathed, his face venomous. I’ll—”

“I rather think there is a better way.” Dyall moved forward and spoke softly. “Suppose, until the Venusian deal is over, you send your wife away from here altogether? To Paris, say? Let me go with her. You can be sure I’ll keep her out of harm’s way. I’d be happy to make the arrangements. . . .”

Mastervil slowly nodded. “You’re the kind of man I’ve always dreamed about, Dyall—clever, and observant. You’re granted an indefinite vacation in Europe, during which time you will watch my wife ceaselessly, see that she knows nothing of my plans. When the Venusian deal is finished and I have the control of both worlds, you can return. . . . There’ll be a big position for you,” he finished, smiling grimly.

Dyall did not seem to hear the promise. He said thoughtfully, “It would help a great deal if you remained an absentee from Paris.”

“You may be sure I will. I won’t give Muriel the chance to get near me. I trust you implicitly, Dyall, to keep guard over her. . . .” Mastervil debated a moment, then nodded. “O.K. My wife will meet you at the transatlantic airport in three hours. Bank 47B will fix your expenses. I’ll leave it to you to arrange for a plane. . . . Stay

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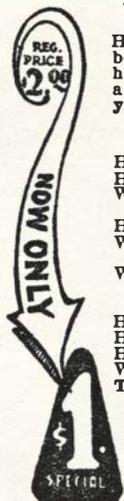
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at the Lafayette Hotel in Paris in case I want you suddenly."

"Very good. . . ."

Dyall bowed himself out, walked slowly to his own office and, once within it, stood smiling bitterly, staring pensively in front of him. . . .

**M**URIEL'S eyes were anxious as she met Dyall at the airport three hours later. He bowed gravely to her, made the necessary arrangements for her baggage, then took her arm and led the way to a two seater plane already waiting with the engine ticking over.

"I—I thought we'd be taking an ordinary liner," she exclaimed, halting. "Really, Mr. Dyall, I don't understand all this! Why have I got to go to Paris? What's behind it all?"

"I have been entrusted with the task of keeping you out of possible danger," Dyall replied gently. "Please get into the plane."

She hesitated a moment, then shrugged. He helped her to her seat, then nodded to the mechanics and settled down beside her at the controls. She gazed at him in amazement.

"So you're a pilot as well as a secretary!"

"Obviously," he answered briefly—and within a few minutes had the machine in the air. He climbed rapidly over the low ceiling of clouds—then instead of heading eastwards across the Atlantic, he turned directly west.

"But this isn't the way to Europe!" Muriel cried staring through the window.

"It's the way to Pennsylvania and the Allegheny Mountains," Dyall said briefly. "We may never get to Europe, Mrs. Mastervil—but that won't matter. I've made all the necessary arrangements for an alibi at the Lafayette Hotel. . . ."

"You—you mean you're kidnaping me?" she gasped in horror.

He shook his black head. "No. We're

going to the Alleghenies because Master-  
vil's holiday shack is still there. And it's  
not the only thing that's there! I want  
you to see something very interesting. . . ."

Muriel started to say something, then  
fell silent. She did not know which way to  
take Dyall, could not fathom whether he  
was working for or against Mastervil. On  
the chance that he might be trying to trick  
her into explaining her own motives, she  
kept silent, said no word until Dyall at last  
brought the airplane sweeping down through  
the clouds.

Ultimately he landed in a deserted table-  
land portion of the Allegheny Range. For  
a moment, they both sat staring out on  
frowning, rugged rock, the mountainsides  
sweeping upwards to the clouds. In the  
near foreground was Mastervil's rest shack;  
but when Dyall clambered out of the plane,  
he did not move in that direction. Instead  
he helped the girl to alight and motioned  
her to follow him towards a sunken cleft  
half a mile to their rear.

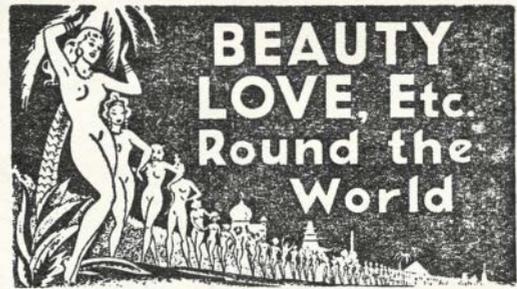
"There," Dyall said at length. "Look for  
yourself."

The girl held onto her hat as the wind  
blew up the gulf. Perhaps a hundred feet  
below was an egg-shaped mass of crushed  
metal, its sides battered and broken, its  
glass portholes long since shattered.

"Why, it's one of our own very early  
type space-ships!" she exclaimed, turning  
to look at Dyall. "What's it doing here?"

"Originally," he said, "it was covered  
with earth and rock. I found it with the  
help of some scientific friends of mine,  
whom I'm hoping you'll meet later on.  
Notice the nearness of this ship to Master-  
vil's cabin. . . . Now come down and see  
one or two other things."

He helped her down the slope, and at  
length they reached the twisted airlock of  
the thing. Dyall led the way into the  
gloomy interior, switching on a pocket-  
torch.



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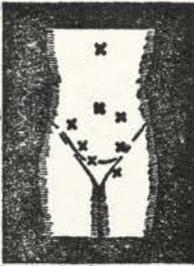
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Muriel balanced herself on the slanting floor and gazed around in bewilderment. She knew exactly how an old-type space-ship ought to look—but this one was fitted with extra details she had never encountered before. There were the usual driving engines, rusty and old now, but there were also other machines that were beyond her, apparently electrical in nature. . . . Then she gave a little start at the sight of a powdery mass on a long table by the further wall. Not all of it was yet decomposed out of all shape. The thing was the corroded remains of a skeleton, and no ordinary skeleton, either.

Dyall smiled twistedly from the shadows. "That," he said slowly, "is the almost vanished skeleton of a Venusian. Around you, you behold very advanced but long disused automatic surgical devices. . . . I've had time to piece together this business while I've been in Mastervil's employ—and the truth is rather surprising. . . ."

MURIEL said nothing, waited for him to continue.

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chance had given him the body of a famous financier. He developed that one line to an incredible degree and became dictator of the world. . . .”

Dyall stopped and shrugged. “So, Mrs. Mastervil, your husband is a Venusian in brain and an Earthman in body.”

“Somehow, I’m not surprised,” Muriel muttered, gazing around. “I suppose I ought to be, but somehow—well, it sort of explains his cold lack of all human emotion and his utter disregard for humanity, his extraordinary wish to make a deal with Venus—”

“For a very good reason,” Dyall broke in. “Believe me, Mrs. Mastervil, he has his plan worked out to the last detail. On Venus, judging from what I’ve unearthed from the Venusian ambassador, the man who poses as Mastervil was a rebel. He tried to force his own ideas on his people and got life imprisonment for his pains. He escaped. When space-travel came in, he evidently saw his chance. By gaining a hold over Earth, where the majority of beings are less intelligent than Venusians, he could also gain control over his own planet, with the help of a ring of Venusian scoundrels like himself—master two planets and dictate to both. That is his scheme.”

“And of course you agree with it?” Muriel asked coldly.

“No.” Dyall eyed her steadily. “I have only led Mastervil to believe that I do. . . . Tell me, have you ever found Mastervil give anything away? Is there anything he is afraid of?”

“Not that I know of.” Muriel sighed. “I hoped I might find something that would trip him up. Apparently he has no fears of any kind—save one. And that isn’t worth mentioning.”

“What is it?”

“He’s afraid of ghosts.”

“Ghosts!” Dyall started to laugh. “Well, of all the— But wait a minute,” he broke

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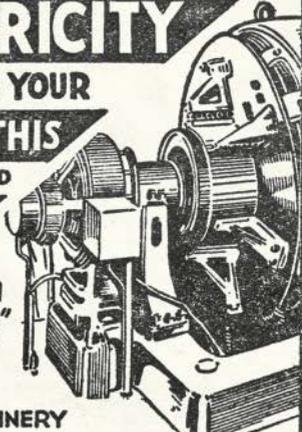
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off pensively. "Maybe there's a reason for that, too. Taking into account that he is actually a Venusian, he must be mighty puzzled by the interest of some earthly beings in things supernatural. Such things don't obtain on Venus; superstition is stone dead. But not here. . . . So a science of legend and occult alarms him, does it? That's his weak spot. . . . The last thing I'd have thought of."

"But it's so childish!" Muriel protested. "He's ordered all ghost books in New York to be burned; he's banned all plays that deal with the supernatural. He even flies at me if I happen to say such and such a thing hasn't the 'ghost of a chance. . . .' As for being afraid of broken mirrors and number thirteens—! I never knew a man like him."

"No—because he's met up with one science dating from the past that isn't in his scope," Dyall breathed. "Good Lord, only you could have found that out!"

"Suppose," the girl said slowly, "you tell me how you know so much about Mastervil's past? How can you be sure?"

Dyall started out of preoccupation. "I'm sure because all the events check up. I've seen them happen."

"But—but how? You're a secretary, not a thought-reader. I'm sure you didn't get much time to run about these mountains while you were with Rayburn and Clay—especially ten years ago."

"I used science to make my discoveries. . ." Dyall smiled faintly. "I have friends who are masters of science, who are working with me against Mastervil. I've always had a great contempt for him; if I go right ahead I may be able to defeat him."

Muriel looked her bewilderment. "But Mr. Dyall, all the science that there is in the world belongs to Mastervil! He's taken control of it."

"His science is of the present; mine is of the past," Dyall answered simply. "May-

be I can make it clearer in a while. Come along back to the plane."

CHAPTER IV  
SCIENCE FROM THE PAST!

ONCE they were back in the driving cabin, Dyall forced the machine to the higher altitudes at terrific speed, flew back over New York at sufficient height to be unobserved, kept steadily onwards out over the Atlantic.

Muriel, slumped in her seat and trying to figure things out, finally glanced at him. She felt at last that she could trust him.

"Where are you going?" she asked. "Paris?"

"No—not Paris. You'll see."

He kept his eyes on the controls, drove steadily on and on, until at length the islands of the Azores loomed up on the far horizon. Dyall shifted his cuff slightly, adjusted something like a wrist watch and spoke into it.

"Calling Zan Alfo. Rankin Dyall calling. . ."

He switched the thing off, added casually, "Private microphone to my friends. . ." Then he suddenly sent the airplane into a dive, brought the girl's heart bounding into her mouth as the pall of clouds below swept up like a blanket. They vanished and were above as the flyer plunged through them.

"Who—or what—is Zan Alfo?" she panted, staring down.

Instead of answering he said keenly, "There, down there! See it? That's where we land."

The girl stared through the port and caught her breath in surprise at the vision of a thousand foot length of gray metal floating just clear of the ocean surface.

"A submarine!" she cried, as Dyall swept towards it. Then she added in puzzlement, "But it can't be! Submarines became extinct years ago—"

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"It's a space-ship," Dyall broke in curtly. "And a monster one, too. Hang on. . ."

For one frightful moment, Muriel thought the plane was going to crash into the midst of that mass of gray, then at the last second a portion of it swung aside and the flyer dropped into a long, floodlit tunnel, came to a gentle halt. Overhead, the section swung back into place and automatically sealed itself.

Muriel stared incredulously down the softly lit metal vista; then as Dyall nodded to her, she opened the door and slowly climbed out, awe-struck with the internal immensity of the place. Under her feet she could feel the metal plates throbbing to the beat of distant mighty engines.

"Big enough ship?" Dyall asked dryly.

"Big enough!" she echoed. "Why, it makes our space-liners look like toys by comparison. Who owns it? What's it doing on the surface of the Atlantic?"

"At the moment it is well below surface and descending rapidly into the depths. It only came up long enough to admit me. . . ." Dyall turned aside and pressed a sunken switch in the wall. The girl steadied herself as a square of the floor started to sink gently downwards like an elevator. It dropped perhaps forty feet, then stopped. A portion of the wall slid away. . . Muriel found herself gazing into another bewildering, floodlit vista of metal, this time housing a variety of vast and glittering machinery.

She glimpsed men in curious garb moving to and fro about the machines, tending them with extreme care. Here and there were also women, some blonde and others brunette, lithe and graceful— Then Dyall nudged her arm at the appearance of a grave-faced individual of uncertain age, attired in clothes that seemed to be made of red velvet. His hair was gray, bushing over the top of a remarkable forehead.

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Keen, unwavering gray eyes peered from under shaggy brows.

"Welcome back," he said quietly, extending his hand to Dyall; then he glanced at Muriel. "This, I suppose, is Mrs. Mastervil?" He smiled at her, and it was surprising how his strong face lit up.

"Yes—yes, I'm Mrs. Mastervil," Muriel acknowledged, but—er— Who are you?"

"Zan Alfo," said Dyall quietly. "A direct descendant of the fugitives of Mu. If Mu doesn't convey anything, try Atlantis."

"Atlantis!" the girl cried in wonderment. "You don't mean—"

Alfo laughed a little, took her arm gently.

"My dear lady, it isn't so queer as it sounds," he murmured. "And forgive me if my English is not too good, won't you? We have not had much time in which to learn it. You see, we are the direct descendants of the people of Mu. When Mu was destroyed in a cataclysm and hurled into the depths of what is now the Atlantic Ocean, our ancestors escaped into the void in a space-ship. . . . Oh, yes, space-travel was one of many accomplishments. They traveled far—out beyond the solar system into the vast Galaxy, eventually found a planet which suited them. We are the descendants of the original Murians. Back on our planet are the others of our race—a very happy and contented people seeking nothing but scientific accomplishment. . . ."

ALFO paused, said quietly, "You understand, my dear?"

"I understand so far—but not how you come to be here. What are you doing? Planning a conquest of earth?"

"We have made our conquests," Alfo replied gravely. "Nor have we any wish to return to Earth. Our only reason for being here is because certain records came to light recently at home which revealed that our ancestors, in their hurried departure

from Mu, had left behind several valuable scientific secrets, sealed at the last moment in indestructible globes, and which now lie at the bottom of the Atlantic amidst the ruins of buried Mu. We are busy on salvage work, have already recovered three of the five globes. We came without fuss, and at the depth we maintain we know no earthly craft can detect us. . . ."

"And—and Dyall is really an Atlantean?" Muriel hazarded. "Trying to defeat Mastervil?"

The scientist hesitated and glanced at Dyall quickly. Then he turned back to Muriel.

"That will be easier to explain later on," he said, clearly on the defensive. "For the moment, I think we had better have a meal. Both of you must be tired. . . . Come this way. . . ."

He turned, led the way between the machines to an adjoining apartment of delicate light. A long table, amply filled, graced the center of the room. Smiling women took the girl's heavy traveling coat and hat. She sat down slowly, in dubious wonderment, trying to accustom herself to the perfect, ordered routine aboard this monster of the void. Dyall sat opposite her, smiling enigmatically, and Zan Alfo took up his position at the head of the table.

Soundproof doors closed, and the meal began.

"In this ship," Alfo said slowly, eating idly as he talked, "is the man who originally belonged to the Rayburn and Clay Bank. He is being treated with every courtesy. He did leave Rayburn and Clay of his own accord, and he did take a vacation—but he did not go to Mastervil. We—that is, several of our numbers—became ordinary citizens of Chicago for the purpose of a kidnaping, which was smoothly and efficiently done. . . ."

"You made that move of your own accord?" Muriel asked in amazement.

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The clang of the girl's fork to her plate echoed in the sudden silence. Alfo's piercing eyes were nearly hidden under his brows. He watched her trying to mouth words; finally they came in a rush.

"But—but Bruce died! They drowned him deliberately, wrecked his plane and pretended it was suicide. They even circled around for an hour to be sure he didn't appear again. . . ."

"I know," Alfo said gravely. "But Bruce Calthorp lives today. He is seated right opposite to you now. . . ." He said the words very slowly, avoiding all possible chance of shock. But even so, Muriel passed a hand over her forehead for a moment, sank back weakly in her chair. For a moment the room was swaying before her, then both Dyall and Alfo were before her, gripping her hands.

"*You—Bruce!*" she whispered, staring into Dyall's face.

He nodded very slowly. "I was a fool, Muriel. I should have told you sooner, only I wanted Alfo to do it. I knew you'd believe him. It all seems so incredible—"

"At the time Bruce's plane crashed into the sea, we were near the surface taking in a fresh air supply," Alfo broke in quickly. "We got him out of the plane, but he was dead. We restored him to life. Such a feat was not difficult to our science. It was merely a matter of ejecting all the water from him, then starting the heart and circulation going again. Since he had received no organic injury, this was quite possible. . . ."

"But—his appearance!" Muriel cried, sitting up and taking a hold on herself.

"That was done at his own request. He suggested we aid him in defeating Master-vil, and we agreed. He asked for a prominent man to be detected and detained here. That was done, and it seemed that Dyall's

circumstances exactly suited the occasion. We remodeled Bruce to resemble Dyall, changed the pigment in his eyes and hair, altered the blood circulation of the face to present a white pallor. . . . All of it was painless and simple."

"Then," Bruce went on, "we went to work to find out all we could about Mastervil. These Atlanteans have devices which can trap light waves from space after they have been traveling ten years; after that they are hard to reassemble. Anyway, I went with Alfo himself to the Mastervil shack—both of us looking like ordinary Americans on tour. We took portable apparatus with us and reconstructed the incidents that had happened around the shack ten years before. We saw exactly what happened—the trapping of Mastervil, everything. It was easy to find the spaceship, carefully covered with rock and earth. Then I went on to New York to apply for the job of secretary, having been well versed in science and finance by the Atlanteans beforehand. . . ."

"My reason for doing it was both to try and trip up Mastervil and get you out of his clutches, Muriel. I managed it at length by suggesting to him you were a spy. He fell for the idea of my taking you away. . . ."

"And suppose he goes to the Hotel Lafayette in Paris?" she broke in quickly. "What then?"

"We have him constantly under observation by long-distance television," Alfo remarked quietly. "He is not aware of it, of course. If he sets out for Paris, you and Bruce will leave immediately and beat him to it by several hours."

"And suppose he telephones?"

Bruce chuckled. "He can only use the submarine cable and Alfo has it tapped already. If, on the other hand, he radiophones, the apparatus here will instantly know of it. . . . In either event, the call

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will be intercepted and the answer made from here. Simple, isn't it?"

"It's marvelous!" Muriel sat in complete silence for a moment, then she said slowly, "But what is the purpose behind it all? You can't destroy Mastervil without upsetting the finance of the whole world. He doesn't just control money; he *is* money!"

"That has been our main problem up to now," Bruce said slowly, "but you, Muriel, happened to find the one thing he is afraid of. Ghosts!"

"Ghosts!" exclaimed Alfo in astonishment.

"Apparitions — phantoms — the occult . . ." Bruce gave a slow smile. "Alfo, doesn't that suggest something to you?"

The scientist pondered for a few moments, then his rugged old face broke into a grin. He turned suddenly to the girl.

"So you found the one vulnerable spot," he breathed. "And you'll certainly see something for your trouble. . . . If we can only plan it right . . . Bruce, I believe we've got him!" he finished, his eyes gleaming. "The science of Atlantis can defeat the modern schemes of Mastervil! The past *can* defeat the present. . . . We have radio television; we can hear him and see him without him knowing it. We can—"

Alfo stopped suddenly. "We must start immediately," he said curtly. "Come with me . . . It's late evening already."

## CHAPTER V

### TWO WORLDS IN THE BALANCE!

**J**ACOB MASTERVIL pushed aside the last of the world reports and lay back contentedly in his heavy chair. The day's work was finished, the great executive building was silent. Everything was running perfectly. He gazed pensively into the shadows and smiled to himself.

"Ten years ago I was an outcast on my

own world," he muttered. "Today I am on the verge of the greatest conquest of my career—the merging of two worlds, the control of both. . . ."

He closed his eyes for a moment, then opened them again as a curious wave of tension passed over him; it felt for all the world like low-voltage electricity. He frowned a little, blinked, then stared across his desk. There was hardly any light there; all of it was concentrated into the circle on the blotting pad. . . .

Something was in those shadows—a form that stood motionless.

"Who's—who's there?" he snapped suddenly, half rising.

"Jacob Mastervil . . ."

Mastervil could not determine whether the deep voice made a statement or asked a question. Brusquely, he answered.

"I'm Jacob Mastervil, yes. What do you want? How'd you get in here? Come to the desk, can't you?"

The figure remained veiled in shadow, did not move. The calm bass voice spoke again.

"You are not Jacob Mastervil; you only own his body. *I* am Jacob Mastervil, the man you slew ten years ago! Slew, I say—that you might gain control over two worlds when you are worthy of neither. . . ."

Mastervil felt something prickling his scalp. Then suddenly he shot to his feet and depressed the light-switch. He took a startled step back as he stared at the transparent figure regarding him. The shadowy lips seemed to move slightly. . . . It was Jacob Mastervil—an image of himself, clothed as he had been ten years before.

"A—a ghost," Mastervil whispered, his forehead wet.

"You believed my death meant my complete destruction," the image said slowly. "You thought the removal of my brain finished me for all time. Such a thing might apply to your world, but it does not

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apply to Earth! There are certain things about this planet you can never know. Death on earth is not actual. You cannot destroy the mind even though you destroy the brain, and in time that mind re-forms another body, such as you see that I have now. . . .”

**M**ASTERVIL stood quite motionless as he listened. He licked his dry lips slowly.

“Have you never noticed the intense interest of Earthlings in the afterlife?” the image asked. “Have you not seen their spiritualistic efforts, their struggles to prove they are reincarnated? Have you never heard of men being haunted, or of buildings housing spirits? That is a science peculiar to this one planet. Even as an Earthling knows nothing of the fundamental mysteries governing Venusian life, so you know nothing of earthly life. . . . I have come back to make certain demands. . . .”

Mastervil still stood staring. He did *not* know the basic laws of earthly life, hence his perpetual fear of the mystic science of occultism. . . . Even so, he had assumed that death meant death on any planet.

“So far,” the image went on, “you have gained your ends by mainly bloodless means. That is to your credit—except for the isolated cases of men like Bruce Calthorp. . . . Yes, I know all about him. He too did not really die! By the law of earthly reincarnation, he will return in time to confront you. Maybe sooner than you expect—”

“This is ridiculous!” Mastervil broke in suddenly, anger mastering his fear. “This is a trick—a damned silly trick to try and scare me—”

“It’s no trick. Search your entire scientific resources if you wish; you’ll find no trace of tampering. The cold fact remains that you are confronted with a mystery of

earthly life which you never expected. . . . And another thing!—If your fellows from Venus come to Earth, they will find that all those whom they destroy—and they certainly will destroy because there will be war to the death—will begin to return as the years pass. Yes, return! One by one! Imagine it; a world of ghosts!—a world of the living-dead seeking their slayers as I have sought you. . . . That will be the outcome of the Venusian invasion. . . . Already you must have had proof of what I am saying. Have you not felt at times that you are not alone in a room? That somebody is right behind you? That is because Otherworlders are present. A normal Earthling can see those people and talk with them.”

“I—I don’t believe it!” Mastervil whispered.

“Bring your fellows here and you condemn them to a lifetime of uncertainty and terror. They will suffer as you are going to suffer, always haunted by the return of the dead. Return to the world you understand. Think it over. . . .”

Mastervil stared with dazed eyes as the image slowly faded. The room was empty. He was far more shaken than he cared to admit. Suddenly he grasped the telephone, contacted long distance and gave the number of the Lafayette Hotel.

“This you, Dyall?” he asked at last, and gave a sigh of relief at the voice’s calm assent at the other end of the wire.

“Say—listen!” Mastervil took a hold on himself. He dare not give away too much. “Have—have you ever felt that you’re being haunted? Oh, I know it sounds idiotic, but I have the oddest feeling that somebody’s trying to get at me from some other world. It’s worrying me, and you’re about the only person I can trust to answer truthfully. . . . Ever felt the same way?”

Dyall laughed softly. “Sure I have! I’ve talked with many of my dead friends in

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the evening. I'm surprised that this is your first experience in that direction. Maybe you're not sensitive enough to feel those presences. Don't you remember that one of the reasons why war stopped was because the dead started to come back?"

"Eh?" Mastervil blinked; then he said quickly. "Oh, yes—yes, of course . . ."

"Who's worrying you?" Dyall asked gently. "Bruce Calthorp?"

"No—no; just somebody. Guess I'll have to take myself in hand."

"Else get used to it. Now you've started off, it will most likely happen all through your life. . . ."

Mastervil slammed the receiver back on its hook, looked anxiously around him. Then it was true!—the dead on Earth *did* come back! So utterly unlike Venus. . . . He got to his feet hurriedly and scrambled into his hat and coat. . . .

But he got no rest that night. Time and again the image of Jacob Mastervil appeared in his great bedroom, stood guard at the end of the bed and spoke in that deep bass voice.

"You'll gain nothing by this, Venusian! Return to your own world, otherwise you and your fellows are bound to perish by the utterly different laws governing the two planets. . . ."

**E**VERYBODY in the executive building noticed the difference in Jacob Mastervil as the days slipped by. His former cold arrogance had given place to a hunted look. He had few words for anybody and kept to his office most of the time. He dare not ask anybody for any facts about earthly life, because in so doing he would arouse suspicion concerning his own identity. He wondered if, deep down, Rankin Dyall knew the truth. . . .

Time and again the image appeared, always in the evening when the staff had departed—and each time Mastervil real-

ized he was fighting a losing battle to fear. Besides, if he did run his planet's inhabitants into a trap on the Earth, his own life would be forfeit. . . .

By degrees, so harrassed did he become in his various fears, he let vital matters of finance slip, was warned just in time by his expert advisers.

"I'm—I'm ill," was his worried excuse. "Can't concentrate. Take care of it for me. . . ."

The experts agreed, wondering vaguely what had come over the master-mind. . . . And he was suddenly brought face to face with the realization that his iron control over all matters financial had disappeared! Money had taken different courses; with his own hands he had turned it over to lesser experts. He was only the figurehead now, no longer the controller.

He was debating this startling fact one of the evenings when the image reappeared before his desk.

"Venusian, you have turned over finance to capable hands," it said steadily; "leave it that way. You don't want to destroy your own fellows when they come here—so return to your planet and cancel that merger between worlds. Radiophone to your world and put the deal off."

Mastervil gave a bitter smile. "Why should I? I'm gradually becoming convinced that all this is a clever trick to defeat me. The dead return!" he exclaimed sourly. "You expect me to believe that?"

"Why not?"

It was another voice that asked that question. Mastervil looked in sudden alarm to the opposite corner of the room. Another shadowy figure came slowly into view.

"Calthorp!" he cried in horror. "Bruce Calthorp! No—no, you can't be! You were drowned. . . . I know you were!"

The apparition smiled wintarily. "Mastervil has returned; why shouldn't I? I

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have as much reason to return as he has. Vengeance! That's what I seek—vengeance, for my death!”

Mastervil rubbed his eyes desperately. “Then—then it's true,” he groaned, half to himself. “Earthly life can recreate itself. . . . What a planet! What a hideous form of life . . .!”

“And this is only the beginning,” said Bruce malevolently. “When your fellows come—”

“They won't come! They'll never come here!” Mastervil shouted hoarsely. “They'd kill me for daring to do it. A world of ghosts—a world of ghosts. . . .”

Visibly shaking, he clutched hold of the apparatus for spacial radio communication, swung the dials around desperately. Then as the tiny tubes flared into life, he panted words into the transmitter.

“Abandon Earth project! Keep clear of Earth. It's a hell planet. Can only mean your destruction. . . . Merger is—is cancelled. . . .”

Mastervil's voice stopped suddenly. The microphone fell out of his nerveless hands. Abruptly his heavy shoulders seemed to crumple up and his head drooped towards the desk. . . .

**Z**AN ALFO removed a series of blades from their switch clamps and listened to the diminishing whine of electrical engines. The huge screen before him, Bruce and Muriel, dimmed and became blank. Slowly he turned.

“Heart failure,” he said shortly. “Death from extreme shock. Our idea was right, Bruce. . . . His intense fear of an unknown science finally killed him—”

“And it mightn't have done it but for that final effort,” Bruce muttered. “First we projected an enlarged photographic image of Mastervil, taken from light-wave impressions of him ten years ago, and projected it on a carrier wave to New York,

sending a voice on a second carrier wave. The molecules of the air itself were sufficient to form a receiver of light and sound. . . . That alone nearly did the trick, but I think he suspected something. My appearance clinched it. He got the shock of his life when I appeared over that second carrier wave.”

“Especially as an hour in the surgery brought you back to your former appearance.” Alfo chuckled. “Fortunately he canceled that merger at the last moment, and since finance has passed over to normal experts, I rather fancy Mastervil won't be missed.”

“No—but there'll be repercussions on Venus,” Bruce murmured. “He was in such a hurry, he didn't use any private spacial wave; that message of his would be heard all over Venus. Those that were in league with him will be unearthed by the Venusian authorities and brought to justice. That's a certainty. . . .”

He was right.

By the time Alfo and his colleagues had recovered all their globes from the Atlantic and were out in space on their homeward run, by the time the real Dyall had returned to Chicago under a willing oath of secrecy, and Bruce and Muriel had got back to New York, the news started to filter through.

The civilizations of both worlds were astounded, could hardly understand how they had escaped the ruthless plot to ensnare them both. There were talks of secret agents, all manner of amazing solutions—but the fact remained that Mastervil was dead and his colleagues were working out their sentences in the Venusian swamp-lands.

“Funny to think it was a game of bluff,” Bruce remarked to Muriel, a few days after their wedding. “Boiled down, it was precious little else—but it worked!”

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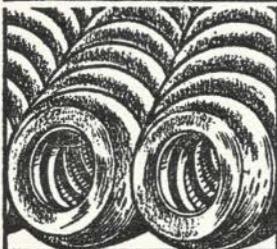
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28x5.50-18	3.35	1.40
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Audels New Automobile Guide is New from Cover to Cover. Contains all you need to know about the 1. Construction, 2. Operation, 3. Service, 4. Repair of Modern Motor Cars, Trucks, Buses and Diesel Engines. It contains Practical Information in a Handy Form—1340 Pages—1540 Illustrations. Written by an engineering authority and presented with forceful directness in PLAIN LANGUAGE and SIMPLE TERMS, generously illustrated. It is an up-to-date authoritative Book of Complete Instructions for all service jobs giving a New Vision of the automotive field. Covers the Entire Subject in Every Detail. Does Not Deal in Idle Theories, but gives Definite Directions—telling Exactly What To Do and How To Do It. It is Packed Full with Important Information, Indispensable to Auto Mechanics, Service Men and Owners.

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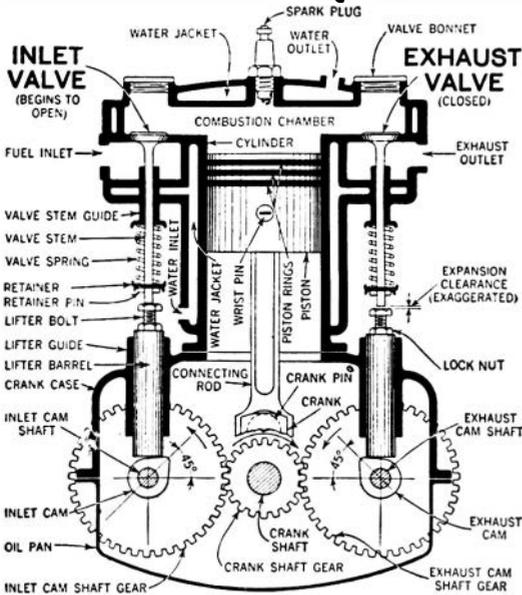
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SPECIMEN ILLUSTRATION—INSIDE VIEW OF MOTOR

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