

SEPT.

# SCIENCE FICTION

15¢

SEPT.

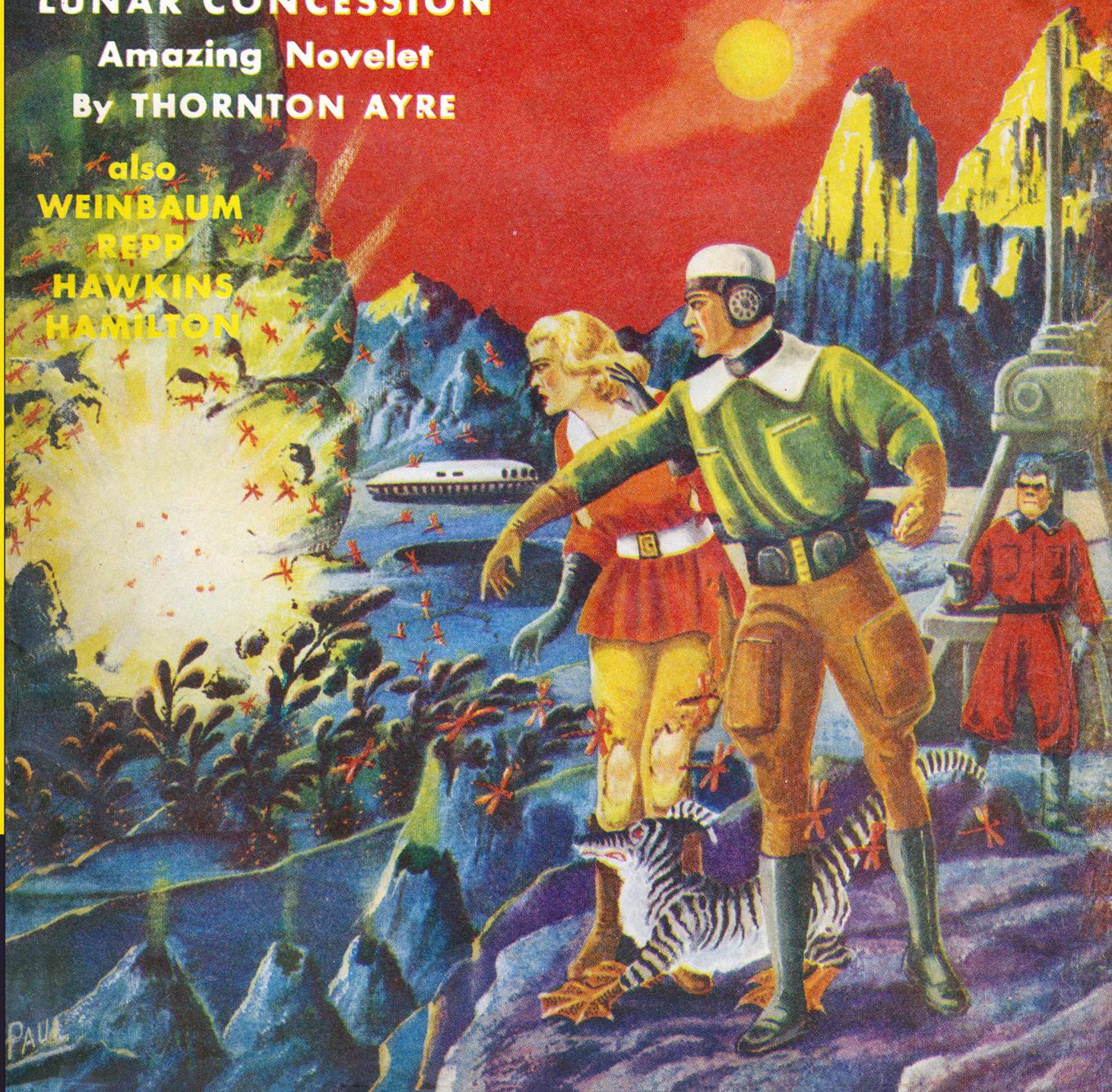
## LUNAR CONCESSION

### Amazing Novelet

### By THORNTON AYRE

also  
WEINBAUM  
REPP  
HAWKINS  
HAMILTON

SCIENCE FICTION



1941

PAUL



# CASH...

For Your Old Lapsed Weekly-Payment Life Insurance Policies

**MILLIONS of DOLLARS**  
 Have Been Recovered Through  
 Our Service On Policies Considered  
**WORTHLESS**

## Tens of Thousands of Families Have Recovered CASH Through Our HELP!

The lapsed weekly-payment policies that you consider worthless, or without cash value, may be worth considerable money **RIGHT NOW!** No matter how long since you stopped paying premiums—regardless of what the policies state or what anyone may have told you—your policies may be worth **IMMEDIATE CASH!**

Every day, with the help of the National Refund Company, large numbers of people are securing money for such policies. All of **YOUR** lapsed weekly-payment policies may have **PRESENT CASH VALUE.** If your lapsed policies are in a large insurance company, you have an excellent chance of receiving immediate cash. Simply list the policies of yourself and family on the **INFORMATION FORM** printed below; then mail it at once to the National Refund Company.



Even though your lapsed weekly-payment life insurance policies state that there is **NO CASH VALUE**—no matter how long since you stopped paying premiums and regardless of what anyone may have told you—Your policies may be worth **IMMEDIATE CASH.** It costs you **nothing** to find out.

### DO NOT SEND YOUR POLICIES

Just fill in and mail the **INFORMATION FORM** that is printed below. Be sure to answer all questions as to each policy. This information will be analyzed carefully. You will then be advised how you can secure the cash to which your policies may entitle you.



## NO COST OR OBLIGATION

Unless you receive cash for your policies, this service will cost you nothing and you will be under no obligation whatever. **You have everything to gain and nothing to lose.** Just fill in and mail the **INFORMATION FORM.** Be sure to answer all questions as to each policy. If you do not know exactly how many years premiums were paid, estimate to the best of your knowledge. The sooner you send the **INFORMATION FORM** the quicker you may secure cash. **Do it NOW!**

## MAIL THIS INFORMATION AT ONCE!

	Name of Insurance Co.	Policy Number	Present Age of Persons Insured	Number of Years Premiums Paid	CHECK KIND OF POLICY		
					Ordinary or Whole Life	20-Pay Life	Endowment
1.					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Be sure to list ALL lapsed weekly-payment policies—use separate sheet of paper if necessary.*

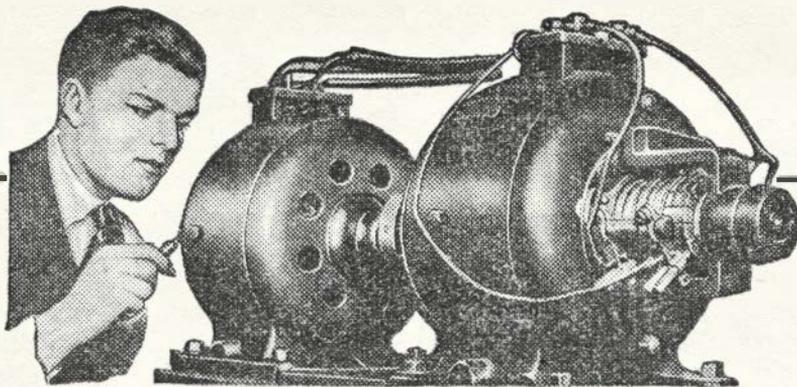
**NATIONAL REFUND COMPANY, DEPT. H6, 9 W. WASHINGTON ST., CHICAGO, ILL.**

You are to inform me as to such of the above policies that you select for your service. I am to pay you nothing and I will be under no obligation whatsoever unless money is received. Regardless of what any insurance company or its agents may write or say, I solemnly pledge my word of honor and agree that I will promptly pay you a service fee of one-fourth (1/4) of the amounts received.

Name..... Address.....

City..... State.....

**Do Not Send Your Policies—Keep Them Until You Hear From Us!**



# Amazingly Easy Way to get into **ELECTRICITY** I'LL FINANCE YOUR TRAINING

Don't spend your life hoping for a better job and a better salary. *Let me show you how to train for positions that lead to \$35.00, \$40.00 a week and up in the great field of Electricity.* NOT by correspondence but by actual shop work right on real electrical machinery. Then on my "PAY AFTER GRADUATION" PLAN YOU CAN PAY YOUR TUITION AFTER YOUR TRAINING PERIOD IS OVER IN EASY MONTHLY PAYMENTS.

## Learn Without Books in 90 DAYS

Lack of experience—age, or advanced education bars no one. I don't care if you don't know an armature from an air brake—I don't expect you to! It makes no difference! Don't let lack of money stop you. Most of the men at Coyne have no more money than you have. That's why I have worked out my astonishing offers.

### Earn While Learning

If you need part-time work to help pay your living expenses I'll help you get it. Then, in 12 brief weeks, in the great roaring shops of Coyne, I train you as you never dreamed you could be trained...on one of the greatest outlays of electrical apparatus ever assembled... real dynamos, engines, power plants, autos, switchboards, transmitting stations...everything from doorbells to farm power and lighting... full-sized... in full operation every day!

### No Books—No Classes

No dull books, no baffling charts, no classes, you get individual training... all real actual work... building real batteries... winding real armatures, operating real motors, dynamos and generators, wiring houses, etc., etc. That's a glimpse of how



we help to make you a master electrician so you can cash in on the opportunities ahead.

### Jobs, Pay, Future

To get a good job today you've got to be trained. Industry demands men who have specialized training. These men will be the ones who are the big-pay men of the future. After graduation my Employment Department gives you Lifetime Employment Service. J. O. Whitney says: "After I graduated, the School Employment Service furnished me with a list of several positions... I secured a position with an Electrical Construction Company, paying me 3 to 4 times more a week than I was getting before I entered Coyne and today I am still climbing to higher pay."



### PREPARE FOR JOBS LIKE THESE

Our Employment Bureau for graduates gives FREE lifetime employment service.

Armature Winder  
Sub-Station Operator  
Auto & Aviation Ignition  
Maintenance Electrician  
Service Station Owner  
Air Conditioning  
Electric Refrigeration  
Radio Servicing  
and many others

## RADIO

Right now I'm including an extra 4 weeks' Radio Course at no extra tuition charge.

### Get the Facts

Coyne is your one great chance to get into electricity. Every obstacle is removed. This school is 40 years old—Coyne training is tested and proven. You can get training first—then pay for it in easy monthly payments after you graduate. You can find out everything absolutely free. Simply mail the coupon and let me send you the big, free Coyne book...facts...jobs...salaries...opportunities. This does not obligate you. So act at once. Just mail coupon.

Get this  
**FREE**  
Book



### THE HOME OF COYNE

This is our fireproof, modern home wherein is installed thousands of dollars' worth of the newest and most modern Electrical equipment of all kinds. Every comfort and convenience has been arranged to make you happy and contented during your training.

**COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL**  
H. C. Lewis, Pres., Dept. B1-25  
500 S. Paulina St. Founded 1899 CHICAGO, ILL.

H. C. LEWIS, Pres.  
**COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL, DEPT. B1-25**  
500 S. Paulina Street, Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Lewis:

Without obligation send me your big free catalog and all details of Free Employment Service, the 4 weeks Radio Course and how you will finance my tuition and how I can "earn while learning." I understand I will not be bothered by any salesman.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....



Vol. II No. 6

September 1941

### 3 FEATURE NOVELETS

- LUNAR CONCESSION** ..... Thornton Ayre 10  
 There was power enough in that Lunar mining claim to blow the Earth to pieces—and Randi, the war-monger, worked his way into the confidence of Ann, owner of the concession—though he didn't for a moment fool Clem. But Randi held a secret that spelled disaster for democracy!
- THE SKY TERROR** ..... Ed Earl Repp 31  
 The most horrible war in the history of Mankind had to be laid aside for awhile so that Man could combat a greater danger . . . a world-wide plague of giant insects!
- DEVIL DOGS OF SPACE** ..... Helen Weinbaum 87  
 They could not help falling in love . . . Jeanne in the service of Jupiter, and Warren, the Devil Dog of Earth. Yet they knew that one of them must die to give the other a victory!

### OUTSTANDING SHORT STORIES

- REVOLVING WORLD** ..... Millard Verne Gordon 47  
 The asteroid dwellers were just too ingenious—they didn't fall on the easiest way of doing things at all.
- DAY OF THE MICRO-MEN** ..... Edmond Hamilton 50  
 Into the world of the microscopic—thence to the very stars; that was the fate of Gurth, who would sacrifice his all for the freedom of the Micro-Men!
- MASTER OF EMOTION** ..... Willard E. Hawkins 64  
 No man should have the power that belonged to the mad Bandizon!
- HEAVY CARGO** ..... Milton Kaletsky 82  
 Captain Kirk wouldn't trust any of the details of space-navigation to his under-officers—but perhaps if he had, he would not have lifted the greatest cargo in history!
- A MATTER OF PHILOSOPHY** ..... Wilfred Owen Morley 85  
 It was just the way that the Captain and First Mate looked at things!

### SPECIAL DEPARTMENT

- THE FANTASY FAN** ..... conducted by R. W. Lowndes 80

COVER BY PAUL

SCIENCE FICTION: published every other month by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, INC., 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke, Mass. Editorial and executive offices at 69 Hudson St., New York, N. Y. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at Holyoke, Mass. Copyright 1941 by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, INC. Single copy 15c, yearly subscription 75c. Printed in the U. S. A.



**I'M GETTING  
\$150<sup>00</sup> A MONTH**

**Amazing New Sickness  
And Accident Policy  
Costs Only 3¢  
a Day**

**BIG PROTECTION VALUE OFFERED BY ONE  
OF BEST KNOWN COMPANIES IN AMERICA**

More than a million people are killed or injured every year by automobile accidents alone. Thousands of others are forced to lose time and money through sickness and accidents, which strike you down without warning. **BE PREPARED FOR THESE EMERGENCIES!**

Don't let your loved ones suffer at such a time. Protect yourself and them from money worries and embarrassment if you are laid up. What peace of mind you will have when you know that you'll receive up to \$150.00 a month **WHEN YOU NEED IT MOST.**

**PAYS BENEFITS FROM VERY  
FIRST DAY OF DISABILITY**

This policy covers and pays graded benefits for all sicknesses common to both men and women, whether house confined or not, and all accidents, both big and small, that happen every day in every way. Benefits payable from **FIRST DAY** of disability, as provided. *It does not skip the first 7 or 14 days as many policies do.* It also pays generous benefits for loss of limbs or sight—**PROTECTION FOR YOUR LOVED ONES** in case of accidental death—and many other liberal benefits as you will see when you examine your policy.

**INSURE WITH CONFIDENCE**

The Sterling Insurance Company is a legal reserve Stock Company, and is legally authorized to do business by mail in every state of the Union. Over 100,000 men and women now enjoy Sterling protection. Over \$750,000.00 has already been promptly paid in cash benefits and more is being paid every day. When you insure with Sterling, you insure with confidence. As a policyholder of the Sterling Insurance Company you are **NOT** subject to the payment of dues or assessments. **THE SMALL PREMIUM THAT YOU PAY ALWAYS REMAINS THE SAME.**

**STERLING INSURANCE  
COMPANY**

**For Only  
3c a Day**

*This Policy Pays Us To*

**\$10000**

*Monthly for Sickness  
or Accident Disability*

**\$15000**

*Monthly if Confined  
to a Hospital*

**\$250000**

*for Loss of Limbs  
or Sight*

**\$250000**

*for Accidental Death*

**Pays Moderate  
Doctor's Fee**

*for any Non-Disabling  
Injuries*

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THIS OFFER  
IS LIMITED**

**Direct Mail Plan Saves You Money**

Because we deal direct by mail and have no collectors, or expensive branch offices to maintain, we can pass tremendous savings on to you. The Sterling Sickness and Accident Policy gives you the **MOST PROTECTION FOR LEAST MONEY.** It is one of the most outstanding Insurance Bargains in America.

**EASY TO OWN**

The cost of the Sterling Sickness and Accident Policy is so amazingly low that you will never miss the small sum. Just think of it! This liberal protection costs only 3 pennies a day and you can pay for it on easy monthly payments.

**FREE INSPECTION of Policy**

**SEND NO MONEY!** Here's our sensational offer. Fill out and mail the coupon below and we will mail you the actual policy for **FREE INSPECTION.** You may examine it yourself in the quiet of your home and see for yourself just what liberal benefits this Sterling Policy offers. No obligation whatever. Send for this policy today.

**EXAMINE THIS  
POLICY FREE**

**STERLING INSURANCE COMPANY**  
5631 Jackson-Franklin Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

Please mail me at once for **FREE INSPECTION** your New Improved 3-Penny-A-Day Sickness and Accident Policy. I am not obligated. No agent will call.

Name.....  
Street.....  
Address.....  
City.....State.....  
Name of Beneficiary.....

**OVER 100,000 SATISFIED POLICYHOLDERS NOW ENJOY STERLING PROTECTION**

# HERE THEY ARE! THE WORLD'S MOST AMAZING LEGENDARY CURIOS, TALISMANS AMULETS & CHARMS

All over the world, in many strange countries, people are alleged to have carried Mascots, Amulets, Charms, Talismans and other curios which they are said to have considered "Lucky Pieces". Many are the almost fantastic legends which have come



down to us about them. For those who collect or carry such Tokens we present, for the first time, a collection of Talismanic Curios. All statements made in describing them are those of writers of standard works and are not to be construed as our own opinions.

## GATHERED FROM THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE EARTH



**GENUINE, POWERFUL, MAGNETIC, ALIVE 'GREY GHOST' BRAND LODESTONE**

There are many legends about the Lodestone. Some regard it as a living thing thought to serve as protection to the wearer. It has been written that the Romans and Assyrians thought it attracted and kept love secure. In India many believed it preserved vigor and vitality. Numerous Mexicans carry it in their belts that it may give success in their undertakings. Ours are genuine, powerful, alive "grey ghost" brand Lodestone only—Item No. 1 **50c**

### GENUINE RABBIT'S FOOT



We don't have to tell you how many people carry a Rabbit's Foot. Many a professional and amateur Gambler, ball player, etc. carries one at all times. We make no super-natural claims but guarantee ours are genuine. Complete with gold lacquered mounting cap and chain. Item No. 2..... **25c**



### BEAUTIFUL SERPENT RING WITH 3 SIMULATED RUBY STONES

Ancient philosophers believed the power of Cleopatra and the Pharaohs came from the serpent. They also believed that the RUBY was a talisman of good Fortune, Wisdom, Power and Success. This Serpentine ring of silvery, oxidized finish has 3 entwined serpents each set with simulated Ruby. FREE Table of alleged Fortunate days with each Ring—Item No. 4..... **\$100**



### GENUINE, REAL TURQUOISE STONE

From the Fabled Indian Country of Nevada

The Arabs called the turquoise "Fayruz" which means "The Lucky Stone" and they wore it as an amulet. In Persia it was esteemed as a stone of good omen while the Indians of our Southwest prized it most highly. Ours are genuine turquoise stones from the fabled Indian country of Nevada. Item No. 5..... **25c**



### EXTRA! SPECIAL! GENUINE, REAL BRAZILIAN SCARAB

The Scarab was called "the sacred beetle". Temples were built in its honor. It was worn by many soldiers to gain Mastery and Strength and Success. Many native Brazilian Indians wear them thinking to protect themselves from evil and ward off danger. Ours are genuine, real Scarabs, imported from Brazil and preserved by Nature in a way to retain the beauty they had when alive. In rich 14-Karat gold plate ring setting. Item No. 7..... **\$100**

### Famous Legendary JOHN THE CONQUEROR ROOT & RING



This curious Root has had many legends told of it and it is said that many in the Caribbean Islands and even our own Southland carry it at all times. Because it was thought to have "reproductive properties" the custom arose of carrying it always near money. We offer to collectors not only a genuine John the Conqueror Root but also a handsome, silvery oxidized finish John the Conqueror Ring as a symbol of the Root. A real value at our price. Item No. 8..... **\$100**



### IMPORTED, HAND-CARVED COROZO NUT RING!

Down in Puerto Rico they tell many incredible legends about the Corozo Nut. It is worn as a love charm or amulet. This ring is actually hand-carved from the nut and inlaid with real mother of pearl. Item No. 3 **75c**

### THEY CALL THIS THE CHINESE LUCK RING



The symbols on this ring are supposed to denote "Good Luck, Health, Happiness" and so it is in demand by many people because of its alleged legendary background. In ladies' mens' styles. Non tarnishing chromium finish. Item No. 9 **35c**

### Handsome, Embossed EGYPTIAN SYMBOL RING



Has Egyptian symbols embossed on black enamel finish. A real talismanic ring of unusual beauty. Non tarnishing chromium. Item No. 10..... **59c**



### GORGEOUS SIMULATED MOONSTONE PENDANT

The moonstone has been referred to as "the sacred stone of India" and books on folklore state that it brings Good Fortune, protects travellers and reconciles lovers. This pendant has 14 brilliants resembling DIAMONDS around the simulated MOONSTONE. Looks very expensive. Item No. 11..... **\$100**

### Free YOUR KEY TO POWER



This amazingly interesting book which gives many legends and folklore on Talismans, Amulets and Charms through the Ages is given FREE with each CASH purchase of \$1.00 or more. Not included with C.O.D. orders. No C.O.D. orders for less than \$1.00. We pay postage on all prepaid orders.

### TALISMANSIC SEALS



From the famous 'Lost' 6th and 7th Books of Moses Seals and Psalm Cards have been carried for centuries by Phoenicians, Gnostics and Hebrews in many countries for inspiration. Many have been found in ancient manuscripts which state that they were used for many purposes including: to secure favor, love, friendship, success, protection, etc. We offer 6 different SEALS with Psalms. Item No. 6... **50c**

### --- NO C.O.D. ORDERS FOR LESS THAN \$1.00 ---

#### AMULUK PRODUCTS

890 Sixth Ave., Dept. DA-9  
New York, N. Y.

Please send me the numbered items I have circled below.

I enclose payment. Send post. paid with FREE book.

Send C.O.D. plus postage (book not included).

Make a ring around each item you may wish to order.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11  
50c 25c 75c 1.00 25c 53c 1.00 1.00 35c 59c 1.00

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

# IMAGINE THEIR JOY

## WHEN THEY FOUND THEY COULD PLAY

### This easy as A.B.C. way!



#### Learned Quickly at Home

I didn't dream I could actually learn to play without a teacher. Now, when I play for people they hardly believe that I learned to play so well in so short a time.

\* H. C. S., Calif.

Wouldn't Take \$1,000 for course

The lessons are so simple that any one can understand them. I have learned to play by note in a little more than a month. I wouldn't take a thousand dollars for my course.

\* S. E. A., Kansas City, Mo.



#### Surprised Friends

I want to say that my friends are greatly surprised at the different pieces I can already play. I am very happy to have chosen your method of learning.

\* B. F., Bronx, N. Y.

#### Plays on Radio

I am happy to tell you that for four weeks I have been on the air over our local radio station. So thanks to your institution for such a wonderful course.

\* W. H. S., Alabama.



#### Best Method by Far

Enclosed is my last examination sheet for my course in Tenor Banjo. This completes my course. I have taken lessons before under other teachers, but my instructions with you were by far the best.

\* A. O., Minn.

## What Instrument Would You Like to Play ?

JUST name your instrument and we'll show you how you can learn to play it—quickly, easily, in spare time at home. Never mind if you don't know one note of music from another—don't worry about "special talent." And forget all you've ever heard about music's being hard to learn.

The truth of the matter is that thousands now play who never thought they could! Yes, men and women everywhere have discovered this amazingly easy way to learn music at home. Now they are enjoying the thrilling satisfaction of playing the piano, violin, guitar, saxophone or other favorite instruments. Some of them are playing in orchestras and over the radio; others are teaching music, making money in

spare or full time. And thousands are having the time of their lives playing for their own enjoyment and the entertainment of their friends.

It all came about when they wrote to the U. S. School of Music for the Free Booklet and Print & Picture Sample that show you how EASY it is to learn music at home this modern way. No tedious study and practice, no tiresome exercises. You learn to play by playing—start right in almost at once with the melody of a simple tune! It takes only a few minutes a day and the cost is trifling; you save the expense of a private teacher. Does it sound too good to be true? Mail the coupon and get the FREE PROOF! (Our forty-third year—Est. 1898.) U. S. School of Music, 1238 Brunswick Bldg., N. Y. C., N. Y.

**SEND FOR FREE**   
**PRINT AND PICTURE**  
**SAMPLE**

• You'll open your eyes when you find how quickly and easily you can learn to play your favorite instrument. Don't doubt; don't hesitate. Send for the fascinating illustrated booklet that answers all your questions; let the free Print and Picture Sample show you how this method actually works. If interested, mail the coupon, NOW. (Instruments supplied when needed, cash or credit.)

\*Actual pupil's names on request. Pictures by professional models.

U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
1238 Brunswick Bldg., New York City, N. Y.

I am interested in music study, particularly in the instrument indicated below. Please send me your free booklet, "How to Learn Music at Home" and the free Print and Picture Sample.

- |                 |                 |                           |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Piano           | Cello           | Trumpet                   |
| Violin          | Hawaiian Guitar | Trombone                  |
| Guitar          | Banjo           | Flute                     |
| Piano Accordion | Mandolin        | Piccolo                   |
| Plain Accordion | Ukulele         | Organ                     |
| Saxophone       | Cornet          | Drums and Traps           |
|                 |                 | Modern Elementary Harmony |

Name ..... Have You This Instr. ?.....

Address .....

City ..... State.....

Check here if under 16 years of age.



# SICKNESS OR ACCIDENT

Every hour, day and night 4,080 people are disabled through sickness and accident. You never know when tragedy strikes. The Policy of the Century comes to your aid at the time of your most dire need—at a time when you are down, financially handicapped, unable to care for your loved ones.

## THE POLICY OF THE CENTURY WILL HELP PAY YOUR BILLS

**YOU RECEIVE**  
**\$5,000.00**  
 Accumulating to  
**\$7,500.00**  
 Benefits for stated  
**Accidental Death,  
 Loss of Hands,  
 Feet, or Eyes**

**\$25 PER WEEK FOR  
 SICKNESS**

**\$25 PER WEEK FOR  
 ACCIDENT**

**\$100 EMERGENCY  
 ALLOWANCE**

All subject to Century  
 Policy provisions.

**COST TO YOU**  
**\$1 ONLY**  
**PER MONTH**

The United Insurance Company of Chicago, a legal reserve insurance company, which has paid millions of dollars to policy-holders offers you the new "Century" Policy. This company is not an association or assessment company and is old and reliable. It is approved by state insurance departments. Rated "A" plus Excellent in Dunne's

Insurance Report. Be safe! Costs only \$1.00 per month. Pays big cash accumulated benefits for accidental death, besides financial protection during Sickness and Accidents. Act now, before it is too late. Just send coupon today for complete information. You are under no obligation and no agent will call.

### INSURES MEN AND WOMEN

The new "Century" Sickness and Accident Policy insures both men and women with the benefits shown, plus many other liberal features outlined in the policy.

### NO MEDICAL EXAMINATION

No medical examination is required. No agent will call. Remember, in addition to the liberal accident features, the "Century" Policy covers SICKNESS as well—it provides liberal benefits in times of both Sickness AND Accident. This vital protection gives "Century" policy-holders a safeguard against the misery of lost income and increased expenses during times of adversity. Don't delay—Get this safe protection at once.

**ANYONE BETWEEN THE AGES OF  
 16 AND 75 CAN APPLY**

This policy protects you against such misfortunes that often occur in the home, in the streets, on farms, in factories, etc., subject to its provisions.

## Send No Money—Just Mail Coupon

Remember, you do not send one cent—just mail coupon for complete information. The "Century" Policy covers both Sickness and Accidents. Get the facts without obligation at once. No agent will call—Rush the coupon today. Tomorrow may be too late. The time to act is NOW—before a terrible, unforeseen accident or sudden sickness tears at your heart.



## YOU Get Cash Quick!

When emergencies arise, this remarkable policy provides quick cash payment of specified benefits for family aid. Get complete details at once. Send no money—just mail the coupon. No agent will call.

### MILLIONS PAID To Policy-Holders

The United Insurance Company was founded in 1919 and has paid more than *Four Million Two Hundred Thousand* dollars in claims. An old and reliable insurance company with more than \$2.00 in assets for every \$1.00 of liability. The company rating is "A" plus Excellent in Dunne's Insurance Report. For over 18 years has unfailingly made prompt and just claim payments. Covers both Sickness and Accident. Reliable, honest, stable.

### MAIL COUPON NOW FOR COMPLETE DETAILS

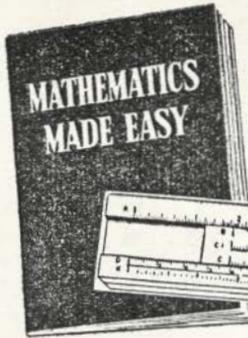
**UNITED INSURANCE COMPANY**  
**ELGIN TOWER, Suite 1-76-B**  
**ELGIN, ILLINOIS**

**NO AGENT  
 WILL CALL**

Please mail me at once complete information and how to get the "Century" Policy for Free Inspection without obligation.

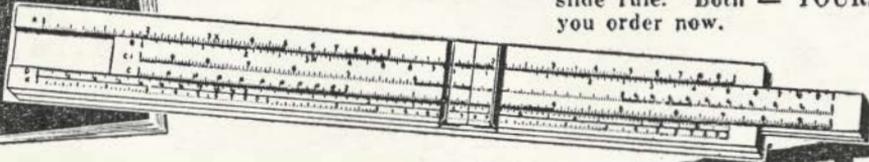
Name .....

Address .....



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WIN A BETTER JOB!**

Learn

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With This  
Amazing New Invention

**UNIQUE A, B, C METHOD — EASY AS SEEING  
A MOVIE — LEARN AT HOME IN SPARE TIME**

Here it is at last! A quick, easy shortcut way to learn to read blueprints on sight. Created by top-ranking experts. It doesn't matter whether you're a mechanic, high school boy, office worker, student, plumber, carpenter, steam fitter, truck driver or employee in any of the mechanical and DEFENSE industries — this is what you need — the surest, quickest way to win a better job and more pay for yourself. And it's yours at a cost so astonishingly low that you'll be amazed.



**Now Shadowgraph Method  
Enables You To Read Blueprints  
the First Day!**

**Meets Blueprint Requirements for  
Civil Service and National  
Defense Jobs**

This sensational SHADOWGRAPH method of Blueprint Reading was perfected by a group of college professors, architects, engineers, a shipbuilding expert, and a former army engineer. They've eliminated all the technical phraseology—all the complicated details. They've boiled the whole thing down into 24 manuals, containing everything you need to know about reading blueprints, no matter what branch of industry you're in. Simple, complete, practical! No dry textbooks—you learn by seeing and doing—and you READ BLUEPRINTS from the very first day.

**Now Anyone Who Can Read English  
Can Read Blueprints—  
Quickly—Easily!**

Here is the ESSENTIAL DATA you need to read even the most complicated mechanical drawings. Best of all you CAN ACTUALLY READ BLUEPRINTS FROM THE VERY FIRST DAY! Everything you want

to know is put right at your fingertips—in down-to-earth, plain language that anyone who can read English can understand. We planned this new FAST way to learn blueprint reading so that you can put it right to work, winning that better job and bigger pay for you. You master it—not in months, or even weeks—BUT IN A COMPARATIVELY FEW DAYS.

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Sensational  
Invention Brings  
BLUEPRINT READING  
"Down To Earth"

The specially constructed "bookcase" in which the 24 A, B, C manuals, over 600 illustrations are packed, as in itself a unique "working model" designed to enable you to read blueprints from the first day.

**IF YOU ARE A**

- STUDENT
- MECHANIC
- WELDER
- CARPENTER
- PLUMBER
- STEAMFITTER
- SHIPBUILDER
- MACHINIST
- SHEET METAL WORKER
- TOOLMAKER
- ELECTRICIAN
- STEEL WORKER
- AVIATION MECHANIC
- RADIO MECHANIC

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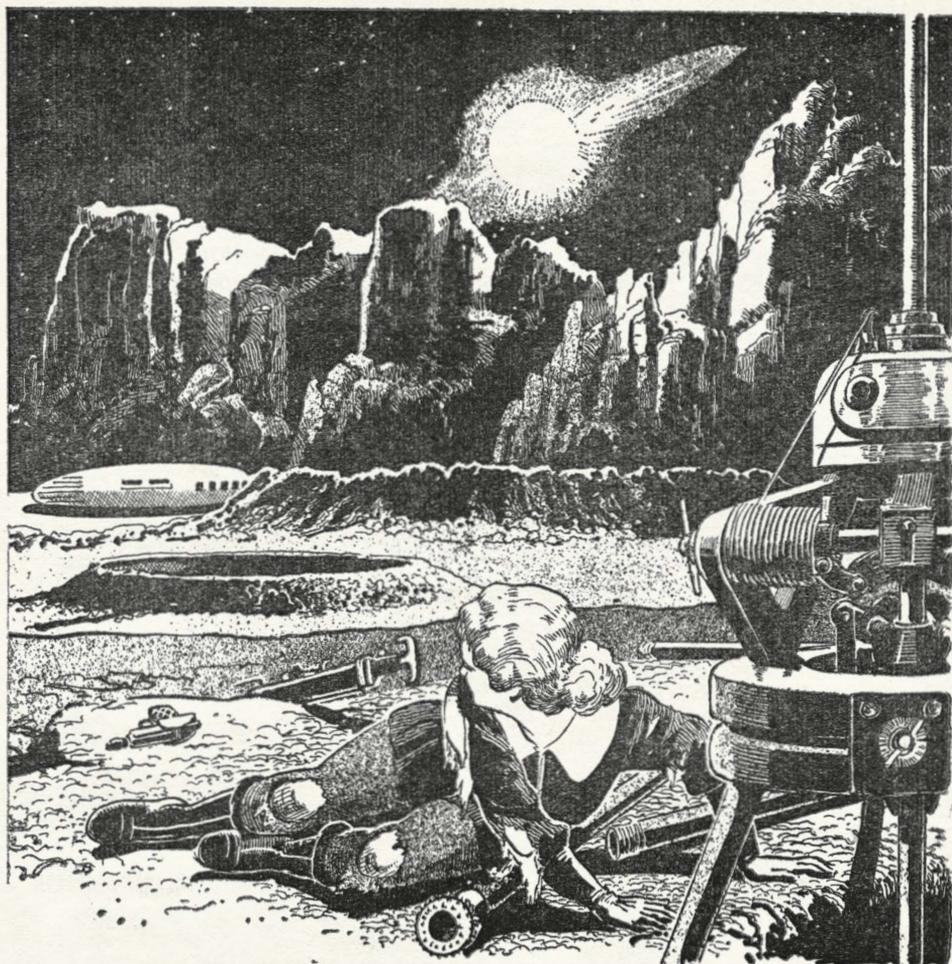


# LUNAR CONCESSION

by **THORNTON AYRE**

Ann was just a foolish little heiress, and her desire to spend four million to own a mining claim brought tragedy and disaster into the lives of herself and Clem, manager of her Lunar Concession—for Randi, the war-monger, meant business when he learned of the power hidden beneath the claim.....

**A COMPLETE NOVELET**



*Against the lesser gravity, I was on him in a second!*

## CHAPTER I

### POWER AT AUCTION

**S**OMETHING of the eternal round of international squabbling, bickering over colonial rights and economic differences, was thrown in the shade in early 1987 by Dagenham Pye's amazing record flight to and from the Moon. It was not the space trip itself that was so remarkable—space travel has been in vogue now for over ten years—but it will be recalled that his meteoric speed certainly aroused interest.

He revealed that he had a new type of fuel, a little of which went a long way; that was the sum total of his information to persistent radio, television and press representatives. The fuller details of his record were only for the privileged few—and because at that time I'd done quite a little knocking around in space myself, I was present at the banquet given in his honor in the home of Ann Drew, recently become the heiress of the Drew multimillions and owner of the powerful Drew Space Corporation by the sudden death of her father.

I hardly need to describe the lion-

izing and feting; you will remember the televised details—but I can take you behind the scenes to matters of a very different interest, as for instance when Ann, Count Vaston Randi, Pye, and myself all got into a huddle on the terrace. I remember that we were very eager—except Count Randi. I couldn't quite weigh the fellow up.

He was foreign, even though he spoke perfect English. I had been given to understand he was of Russian and French extraction—a pale, dark haired immaculacy, faultlessly mannered; the kind of dress-suit-Romeo it pleased a girl like Ann to have around. Beyond that he seemed harmless.

Then there was Dagenham Pye—dark and quick, with a hint of mystery in his manner and speech, a legacy of long service in the Interplanetary Secret Service before he had taken to space racing with his new fuel . . . Ann herself, incredibly blonde, incredibly fluffy, and sometimes incredibly senseless, listened most of the time to Pye's statements with her very kissable red lips parted in amazement . . .

And me? Well, I'm a pretty ordinary guy—not quite six feet, black-headed and blue-eyed, with a pile driver fist and feet big enough to tread any planet in God's universe. My name wouldn't make you turn handsprings, either—Clem Dixon, bestowed on me some thirty-three years ago—

Well, there we were on the terrace with Pye talking with his usual machine-gun rapidity, flicking cigarette ash all over his suit.

"The stuff's dynamite plus!" he declared, thumping his knee. "You see, I happened to be lucky. I spent a bit of money in buying a plot of territory on the Moon's other side,

but directly under that territory I found this fuel. I'm as lucky as a man with an old time oil gusher in his back garden. Five feet below the surface of the Moon are tons of fuel. In fact, most of the Moon is hollowed out, only it happens that I have an edge over the others because I have a special way in. Besides, it looks as though my particular concession is the main fuel source."

"Whereabouts is your plot, Dag?" I asked.

**H**E TUGGED out a small, perfect scale map of the Moon's other side, traced a stumpy finger along it.

"Here are the Dawn Edge Mountains, that's where Earthward view of the Moon ends. Now, down in all this space there is, of course, air—pulled into the deeply sunk valley caused by Earth's perpetual gravitational drag. Nothing active or dangerous lives in the green stuff except of course the *Diggers* and *Flame Bugs*— Here's Devil's Nose Rock. Two miles to the east of it"—more finger jabbing—"is my plot. Just here. I bought it from the Government and I figured I might make a tidy profit out of it as a trading center, until I found this stuff below at five feet depth. That altered matters. I got samples of the stuff, had it analyzed, and—Well, a record!" he wound up blandly.

"But what possessed you to look underground?" I demanded.

"Quite an ordinary thing, really. You see, the lunar night is hellishly cold, and I noticed that the *Flame Bugs* and *Diggers* all trekked to some part of my plot at sundown. I followed them in a space-suit on one occasion—I'd have been frozen to death without its protection—and

discovered a fairly wide fissure leading below. I got down and had a look around—found the *Diggers* and *Bugs* all cozy as you please . . ." He shrugged a little. "Well, I found the fuel, anyway. Being a chemist I put two and two together when I saw an eruptive crater in the underground cavern . . . But that's another story!" he finished, with a guarded smile.

"So wonderful, don't you think?" Ann asked brightly. "It must be marvelous to have such a scientific mind. . . You know, Daggy, you're much too clever to just pilot a space-machine and break records. You ought to be settling affairs of state—and all that," she wound up vaguely.

Nobody spoke for a moment. For once she'd come near truth. War was right on our horizon, blowing in from Europe in close alliance with Asia. . . Then Randi spoke in his slow, calm voice, fingertips together.

"Since this stuff is so valuable, Pye, why don't you find a company to take it up? Expand it into a business? We need fuel like that, not only for space-travel but for armaments and war materials. The possibilities are—Well, limitless!"

Pye shrugged. "I've been thinking of something like that, Count. Up to now I'm the only one who has the ownership of the lunar plot, who knows exactly what the stuff looks like. Naturally, now I've proved the stuff's worth, I intend to cash in on it. I'm going to start looking for a bidder as soon as possible, somebody who'll take over the whole concession and mine the stuff. It'll turn in a vast fortune. I call it *Potentium*, by the way. A piece the size of a garden pea will drive a space-machine to the Moon and back. I've proved it. That's all I used."

"What!" I cried incredulously.

"Why, that sounds almost like atomic force!"

He shook his head slowly. "No, Clem—*potential* force; hence the name. . ."

"One moment," Randi broke in thoughtfully. "Would you consider a private bidder for your concession? Need it of necessity be a space company?"

"Why, no. I've no objection to a private bidder. The check is my main interest, I guess. I don't want the job of mining the stuff anyway—I'm not the type. The Interplanetary Secret Service made me something of a rover, you know. . . . I only said a space company because I figured they're the only people liable to pay my price."

"And it is?" Randi murmured, surveying the ornate ceiling.

"Two million dollars. Outright sale. Profits will multiply a thousand fold in no time."

"Two million. So!" Randi looked momentarily rueful. "You are a business man, my friend. But suppose—"

"I'll give you three million!" Ann exclaimed suddenly, and giggled a little. "I've always wanted to do something big—like this. I'd love to own a—a dynamite factory! Daddy was always sure I'd make a business woman if I had the proper chance."

**R**ANDI sat up as she broke off into another snicker. I fancied that for a moment I saw a queer light come into his dark, somber eyes. He flashed a glance at Pye, then back at Ann.

"But Ann, my dear, what would you *do* with this concession?" he asked gently. "Think of the details! Expert spacemen, miners, Governmental details—thousands of dollars in labor alone—"

"I'd handle that," said I, turning to her. "If you'd let me?"

"But of course!" she cried. "Oh, Clem, that's awfully decent of you, really it is. And you'll have a nice fat salary too."

Funny thing about Ann. For all her feathery, cockeyed ways she had a ring of something regular about her. A bit of a chump, yes, but she had a quality that made a guy like her.

"You really mean this?" Pye asked at last, keenly.

"Why not?" Ann demanded. "I'm wealthy enough. . ."

"I'll give you three and half million," Randi said suddenly. "That's my limit."

Ann hesitated for a moment, then she shrugged her bare, creamy shoulders and sighed, "Oh, well, make it four million. I believe in paying for things that interest me. After all, Vassy, you don't mind so very much, do you?" she pouted. "I do so want to be a businesswoman. . ."

Randi looked back at her steadily, and I thought I never saw a man kill a girl so effectively without physical force. His eyes lost that pet dog quietness and went strangely brittle and cold—but when it made no effect on Ann, his shoulders went up resignedly and his hand gently patted her arm.

"Of course not, my dear," he smiled. "I only thought I'd like to invest. Your gain is my loss. But just the same—" He stopped and demurred, smoking absently.

"Well?" Ann asked.

"Would it interfere with your business sense if I helped you? Just as your very devoted friend?"

"Why—why, no." Ann looked at me. "Would it, Clem?"

"I suppose not," I answered briefly, but I was thinking of that look

in Randi's eyes. "Do what you like, Count, but just the same I'm still going to handle the man's end. I know all the answers in mining for explosive. I've had a year collecting *ampite* compound from Pluto. . ."

"You're quite indispensable, I'm sure," Randi conceded, airing his unblemished rows of ivory. "Ann is very fortunate."

I didn't reply because I was thinking I was pretty fortunate, too. I needed a job for one thing. A spell of space sickness had knocked me off the payroll of my old company and space jobs soon fill again. Illness in my racket means long unemployment. Though Ann was a close friend of mine, of any man's, for that matter, I couldn't ask her outright for money, though she'd probably have given it to me by the truckful if I had. It was better to earn it this way. Besides, there was that nasty look in Randi's eye, something in the acid flattery of his smile. . .

"**T**HEN it's a deal?" Pye asked suddenly.

"Of course!" Ann rose to her feet and left the terrace. She came back with her check book. She scribbled with the ease of a girl with too much cash and too little sense, handed the check over. Pye nodded slowly and pulled out his wallet, laid a recognizable Interplanetary Concession form on the wicker table, filled out the space provided for endorsement and receipt.

"And this endorses the concession over to you," he said, handing it over. "I'll come with you on the first trip, of course, to show you the exact nature of the stuff you're to mine. Now, here is the formula of quantities for safe usage, which you'd better hand over to your labor-

atory technicians. And here is the map. . ."

I looked over Ann's shoulder as she studied the various papers. Precious little went into her carefree head, I imagine, though she looked dutifully solemn. Still, the papers were O. K.; I could tell that at a glance. Then Randi came silently forward, but he wasn't soon enough. I folded the papers just as he arrived and he shrugged a little, regarded me steadily.

"Surely, if I'm helping—?" he asked.

"To help doesn't mean to know everything," I retorted. "The formula, and concession, are Ann's personal property—not even the property of the Drew Company unless she wishes it. It was private account, wasn't it, Ann?"

She nodded proudly. "All my very own!"

Randi still looked at me. "You are most cautious, Mr. Dixon," he observed.

"I guess life's made me that way. . . ." I went over and pushed the bell, told the butler to find Sykes Henson, the Drew Company's own lawyer. He came in, bald and perspiring, from the ballroom—but before he left he'd legally finished off the details, got Pye's signature to numberless ready printed forms, and fastened the formula in a heavily sealed envelope signed by Ann's own hand. Without her instructions—or mine, as her manager—nothing could be done.

And Randi was anything but pleased, even though he tried to be as courtly as ever. . . .

At last I managed to get Ann away from him, left him talking to Pye. We wandered away to the edge of the rooftop terrace and gazed over the sprawling, lighted haze of New York.

"Don't you think it's wonderful, Clem?" she said wistfully, resting her elbows on the parapet and clasping slender fingers under her chin.

"You need a keeper," I growled uncivilly.

"Keeper?" Her big blue eyes were astonished. "Oh, Clem, how could you—"

"You nearly chucked four million dollars down the sink," I said, trying to be patient. "Count Randi did his utmost to muscle in and see what was written on that formula. You ought to be more careful! And see that Randi confines his interests to Earth, too! Frankly, I don't trust him."

"Oh, you men!" she chided, and smiled in that irresistible feminine way of hers. When she smiled like that, I wanted to stop being tough and scoop her up, frills and perfume and all, into my arms. Since I couldn't stop being tough I went on talking.

"This thing's got to be properly organized, and I'm the man to do it. I'll run the expedition myself. Have I your authority to do that?"

Blonde waves nodded. "Of course. I just wouldn't know *what* to do without you. But I'm coming on the expedition too, you know."

"But Ann!" I protested. "There may be danger—"

"Daggy said there wasn't. Only fleas and things—or was it bugs?" Her nose wrinkled distastefully, then she straightened up. "Anyway, I'm coming!" she announced decisively. "I'm a businesswoman now. . . ."

I couldn't help but laugh. I couldn't picture anything further from either a businesswoman or an explorer—but she had a determined kink in her that I think was a relic of her old man.

"All right, I'll fix it," I promised.

"I'll have everything under way in a week or two. . . Now let's forget it. You owe me a dance."

Instantly she was close against me, and I felt as we floated into the ballroom, with her blonde head so close to me, that I had a sudden task in life—to protect this generous little fool against the subtle courtesies of a gentleman who had a smile about as friendly as pack ice.

## CHAPTER II

### SUICIDE?

**I**N THREE weeks I had things pretty well sorted out, had made all the necessary plans for a preliminary investigation of Pye's lunar concession. If it was all it was claimed to be, it would be a simple matter afterwards to transport the necessary mining engineers.

I fixed it so that I was to be pilot of the investigation ship. Pye was also to come along, of course, as adviser. Then there was Ann: she made it clear she wouldn't take any refusal. Last but not least there was my pet swamp hound from Venus—"Snoops."

Queer little chap, Snoops—not unlike a chow in shape, but there any similarity ended. He had webbed feet, one very serious blue eye in the middle of his forehead, a coat as soft as eiderdown, and a fanlike tail. Normally, he had a temper like a dove, but he could be unbelievably savage when roused, and never forgot a harsh word or injury.

Since he had been instrumental in saving my life on an ill-starred Venusian swamp expedition, I felt it almost a duty to look after him, and to my gratification Earth- and space-life seemed to suit him perfectly . . .

That was the sum total of our party. We fixed the date for July 7, 1987, and since I had ordered the strictest secrecy, there were only a few mechanics to watch us when we took off from the Drew space-grounds. . . Once we were free of the atmosphere, I put the automatic pilot in action and turned back into the main living room.

You can imagine my indignant surprise when I saw a long, dark haired figure murmuring flatteries to Ann. Pye was taking no part in the proceedings, was seated smoking in a corner, regarding Count Randi with a rather disgusted stare.

"How did you get aboard?" I demanded, coming forward. "Without wishing to give offense, Count, you were not invited!"

He smiled at me; an ill-disguised smile of triumph. "But I was," he corrected. "Ann herself saw to that. Didn't you, my dear?"

She flushed just a little as she turned to me. Shyly she said, "Well you see, Clem, Vassy was so persistent in his wish to help me that I just had to be a regular fellow. I—I mean—Well, I put him in the wardrobe in my room until the trip began and—Oh, why do you stare at me like that?" she broke off tearfully, as I stood grimly listening. "One might think I—I had no say in this thing at all!" Out came her square inch of silk and dabbed her watering eyes.

I looked squarely at Randi. "In other words, you just muscled in," I stated bitterly. "I might have known it! You twisted Ann around your little finger to get in on this expedition and find out all there is to know. . . Well, I'm in charge here, and if there's one hint of anything suspicious from you, I'll fix you so the authorities will take care of it when

we get back to Earth. So long as you behave yourself, you can string along. But watch yourself!"

"One would think you don't like me," he sighed, lighting a cigarette.

"I don't!" I snapped. "And neither would Ann if she'd had many men to deal with!"

**T**HAT started her off properly and the waterworks went onto overtime. Randi gave me a slimy sort of grin and started to console her. I gave it up and went back to the control room. I was beginning to feel fed up already with the whole darned business, mainly because I couldn't figure out what Randi was driving at, and because Ann had such a crazily generous streak in her.

I took a good look at our objective floating serenely in space, almost at the full—then Pye came in and regarded me dubiously.

"Look here, Clem, I hope you don't think I had anything to do with Randi coming along," he said anxiously. "I only—"

"You're all right, Dag," I interrupted him. "But it sure looks as though your concession is starting trouble already. What exactly, I don't know, but we'll soon find out. . ."

He nodded slowly, moodily switched on the radio. The same old Earth jargon came floating through on the ultra-short waves.

"War is imminent! All Europe and Asia stands ready for a supreme conquest! Every man must stand to arms—every woman must prepare for sacrifice. . . ! Today the American authorities rounded up a ring of European espionage agents. The ringleader, the notorious Valon Kintroff, is still missing and—"

Pye savagely switched off, stormed up and down the little chamber.

"War! Espionage!" he shouted bitterly. "What the hell's the use of anything any more? The whole damned world upside down. . . It makes me sick!"

He turned and went glumly out. Randi, who had heard his outburst, made an observation about killing being an art. That seemed to set Pye thinking, for the next time I saw him through the glass partition he was seated in the living room with his head buried in his hands, musing.

Ann's display of tears had stopped and she was playing a game with Randi—the current craze of "Give and Take," not unlike a great grandchild of mid-century "Monopoly." From what I heard, Randi was winning. The game finished with Ann owing him an imaginary continent, and following the rule of the game she gloomily signed the paper stating her likewise imaginary debt.

Idly I watched Randi push the paper laughingly in his pocket, then I turned back to my observation window and stared out on the velvet dark of space, the glowing silver of our goal.

A sudden antithesis swept over me. Squabbling on Earth, for *what*? And out here the sublime, indescribable glory of infinitude—that had been, that would be, long after man had become a wisp of dust in eternal time. Out in space it is impossible to believe in fawdriy humans. They just haven't any part. . .

**W**E measured our days and nights by clocks, of course, and they went quietly enough at first.

Pye, for his own amusement, typed out a daily log of events, one of which included our stoppage at the half way line by the ever active

Space Patrol. We were searched, ask to produce every legitimate reason for our moonward journey, then allowed to proceed. . .

But for the most part Pye seemed intensely preoccupied about something, and all my efforts to get at the trouble were unavailing. Then, on the fourth morning, we met up with tragedy. While the rest of us had been asleep poor Pye had committed suicide!

There seemed no doubt about it—there was a typewritten letter in his quite orderly cabin, a letter which intimated he was too afraid of world crisis and war to live any longer. He would rather be out of it all.

He must have opened the emergency airlock and jumped outside into the void. Anyway, there was a charred gray speck keeping close to the ship all the time, which could only be Pye's corpse caught by our attraction field. . .

It hit me badly; I'd liked Pye. I recalled his outburst in the control room, his recent thoughtful mood—but even then I couldn't somehow reconcile the facts with his natural space roving toughness. The business got me worried—but there it was. What could I do?"

Randi seemed sorry, but that was all. Poor Ann had a great chance to go prostrate and stay in her room with an attack of grief. I do think, though, that she really *was* deeply sorry. She loved most people with genuine, sex-free affection, and Pye's untimely end struck her deep. It put a new face on the expedition, too. We would simply have to trust to luck that we'd find the right stuff. We had all the directions, except the most vital one of all. . .

Ann and I tried our best to avoid looking at the gray corpse behind us, but I saw Randi studying it once

and blowing smoke rings at the same time. . .

**W**ITH ordinary fuel, such as we were using, it is about six and half days' journey to the Moon, and after Pye's decease things passed fairly quietly. Ann was much quieter; Randi spent a good deal of time with her. I spent mine either playing with Snoops or watching the great globe of Moon rising through space, the notched fingers of shadows cast across its waning disk. . .

And finally it came time for the landing. . .

We dropped within a mile of Devil's Nose Rock. The sun was half way to the zenith, just clear of Dawn Edge Mountains, a range entirely encircling the huge valley which forms the moon's other side.

From our position, part of the valley was spread out before us, sweeping down into a deep, verdure-filled cup. Here and there amidst the sprawling green—day vegetation only, withering in the bitter cold of the fortnight long lunar night—smoked and fumed carbon dioxide geysers, connected by natural shafts to the dying fires of the Moon's core. Carbon dioxide, broken down by the plentiful supplies of ephemeral green stuff, formed into breathable oxygen of almost earthly density. Such a thing could only exist in this gravity-drawn valley—for, as science has proved, the earthward surface of the Moon is dead—airless and finished.

Here in the valley the shadows had lost their savage black and white aspect; they were softly tempered as an earth shadow, and through the midst of them swarmed the strange lunar *Flame Bugs*—myriads of them, a little larger than dragonflies, sweeping in endless hordes in and out of the glancing, pouring sun-

shine, revelling in the protracted day. . .

And then there were the *Diggers*. We couldn't see them from the ship, but from record—and Pye's own observations—the place teemed with them—savagely active, molelike creatures, forever burrowing with a seeming blind purposelessness, but probably because being heat lovers they were always trying to get nearer to the Moon's still smoldering, internal fires.

"Interesting," observed Randi at last, his eyes fixed on the distant, unmistakable formation of Devil's Nose Rock. "Just the same, with all these thousands of clefts and ruts in the valley side, it's going to be no picnic trying to find Pye's fissure. He could have taken us straight to it. . ."

"It's wonderful!" Ann broke in excitedly, the business of our mission right over her head for the moment. "I've never seen anything away from Earth before. Just look at those darling little Flame Fleas. . . It makes me want to go out with a net and catch them. I brought one, you know, on the off chance."

"We didn't come here to hunt those things, Ann," I said, a bit tartly. "And you'd better get into suitable clothes, too. We're going outside. Don't forget a topee, too."

She nodded promptly. "I'll wear a dark blue silk blouse to match the sky," she said thoughtfully, and with that she tripped off merrily. I turned from watching her to find Randi eyeing me.

"Suppose, Dixon, we come to grips?" he suggested levelly.

"Meaning what?"

"That you drop your high-handed attitude and include me in on this investigation? Be reasonable, man, and stop trying to freeze me out.

After all, I'm not trying to do anything except help Ann."

"I don't believe you," I answered bluntly. "However, I have to admit that I can't very well stop you helping us. Just the same I'll watch that you make no use of anything you may learn."

"Always looking ahead," he said regretfully. "What a pity we haven't Pye to help us."

His gaze rose for a moment to the spired heights of Dawn Edge Mountains. I knew in that moment that he was thinking of the gray speck that had dropped there as we'd landed—Then he turned aside without a word and went off to dress.

### CHAPTER III

#### TRICKERY!

**H**ALF an hour later we were outside in the blazing sunshine. Ann fell over twice in her excitement, forgetting the lesser gravity after the ship's attractive plates—but it didn't dampen her spirits and rather pointless vaporings.

Randi and I walked silently together, and Snoops came up behind us, sniffing suspiciously. In fact, I never saw him quite so perturbed. His absurd tail was standing upright, an action I'd learned to interpret as a prelude to his rare fits of passion. Glancing around, however, I could see no reason then for his mood. Everything was quiet. The hot sun, the distant verdure, the scorching rocks. . .

I pulled out Pye's map and studied it carefully, made measurements, pointed out directions, but although we wandered for nearly two hours, we could not find that one elusive fissure that gave ingress to the un-

derworld. As Randi had remarked, the surface around Devil's Nose Rock was cracked into millions of fissures, nearly every one of them blind, and to find one in particular that went clean through to below, without a specific guide, was a next to impossible feat.

"We might never find it without assistance," Randi remarked, as we halted to review the position. "Unless we wait until night when the *Diggers* and *Bugs* head for below."

"And that means working in space-suits because of the cold," I grunted. "Wasting valuable hours of time. . ."

"There is one other way," he said thoughtfully. "Pye said the underworld begins at five feet down. If we get out the drilling apparatus there's nothing to stop us drilling a shaft of our own and be damned to the fissure."

"Now why didn't I think of that!" Ann exclaimed.

"Guess you're right, Randi," I had to admit; and we returned to the ship for equipment, set it up in the approximate center of the area Pye had owned. . .

Starting up the automatic driller, we watched it commence its steady biting into the rocks. A slow haze of dust began to rise in the quivering hot atmosphere. The three of us sat down thankfully on the rocks and relaxed.

"Just look at those flame things!" Ann exclaimed presently, shading her eyes. "Millions of them. Don't you think it would be wonderful if we collected some?"

"What the deuce for?" I asked blankly. "They're already catalogued in the Planetary Museum, anyhow."

"I know—but think how lovely a score of them would look, professionally dried and hardened, on an

evening frock. I'd be the rage of New York!"

I just couldn't answer that. Here was a girl with four million dollars banked in us finding *Potentium*, and she had to talk about evening frocks! It was clear, though, that the things fascinated her. Chasing about in the lesser gravity with a butterfly net would be just about her idea of a thrill. . . She went on vamping idly, but I didn't listen.

I WAS eagerly watching the drill's slow progress as it bit a two-foot wide circle in the rock and hardened pumice. I turned to comment on it to Randi, then paused at a sudden bass growling from Snoops. The three of us looked up sharply. Ann was the first to cry out.

"Look! Moles like lobsters!" she shouted. "Oh, Clem, aren't they cute—"

"*Diggers!*" I interrupted her, watching them. "I might have known it. They seem to scent it when anybody or anything starts to dig downwards. Take it easy. They're harmless enough."

We studied perhaps a score of the strange looking gray shapes as they came towards us on their crablike feet. Their mouths, fitted by Nature with a naturally sharp drill in swordfish fashion, were opening and shutting spasmodically, following the usual custom of biting invisible mites in the air—

Then all of a sudden there was confusion. Snoop's growling abruptly veered off into a hoot of fury. He shot outwards like a gigantic muff and charged at the advancing creatures. Immediately they scattered, then came back to the attack. Inside seconds Snoops and *Diggers* were mixed up in a snapping, snarling mass of dust and flying pebbles.

Randi grinned sardonically. "Evidently that swamp hound of yours doesn't like *Diggers*," he commented, obviously enough. "Sort of cat and dog act—"

"Snoops! Come here!" I bawled, racing down into the melee. "Come here, damn you—!"

I plowed through the midst of the drilling little devils, kicked them to one side, tore off those that had fastened their pincer claws into Snoops' fluffy body. He was bleeding a little. A drop or two fell on my trousers and the *Diggers* flew for it right away until I clubbed them off with my revolver.

Breathless, Snoops hugged tightly to me, I stumbled back to Randi and Ann. Instantly she took Snoops from me, cuddled him under her arm and softly stroked his head.

"There now, poor little Snoopsy. Did he get cross, then. . ."

"Better keep him locked up after this," Randi suggested dryly. "He may get hurt if you don't, and I'd hate to have that happen."

If Ann hadn't been present, I'd have called him something. As it was, I looked back at the slowly returning *Diggers*—then Ann went into action with a very feminine but very determined "shooing" act. Her war-like leaps and noises were enough to keep the *Diggers* away. In the intervals, she took Snoops to the ship and gradually bound him up with lint tied in chocolate box bows. . .

**I**N TWO hours our drill had gone down three feet, moving more slowly now on account of the tougher material packed below. There was little to be gained by just watching, so we returned to the ship for a rest and a meal and left the apparatus to its own devices.

With some astonishment we found we'd been at work for eight hours. Time is like that on the Moon. The protracted day—the slow movement of the sun across the heavens—the lesser gravity. They all play havoc with one's sense of timing. . . It was the meal that showed us how the burning heat had tired us.

There were no objections at my suggestion that we should get some sleep before restarting work. My last vision before I securely closed the airlock was of the *Diggers* nosing around our still operating drill, and the eternal *Flame Bugs* swirling in the sunshine. Then I went off to my room to grab some rest, leaving Snoops in the control room on guard. . .

In fact it was Snoops who awakened me—his snuffing, prodding muzzle dug insistently into my ribs until I was forced to take notice of him. I sat up yawning, saw through the window that the sun was considerably higher in the sky. According to my watch, another eight hours had passed. The drill ought to be through by this time.

I washed and tidied myself up, then I became aware that Snoops was remarkably anxious about something. He ran in and out of my room, finally clamped his teeth on my trouser-leg, and began to pull me insistently.

The moment I entered the control room I got a shock. The airlock was wide open—open to the drowsy stillness of the lunar mid-day. That started me on a wild search, and in three minutes I found that it was Ann who was missing! Randi wanted to know what was wrong, but I'd no time to waste on him. Instead I followed Snoops' anxious prowling, went with him across the burning

rocks towards our now-deserted drilling equipment.

As I'd expected, the work had finished itself and a bottomless, narrow hole lay beneath the automatically stopped drill. I stared at the shaft, then started at a sudden cry from its dark depths.

"Help! Is that somebody there? Clemmy, it's you!"

"Ann!" I yelled, both in relief and amazement, flinging myself flat on the shaft edge. "Where the devil are you?" I shaded my eyes.

"Down here, of course! I'm too short to get up and the shaft edge is too smooth. See—here's my hand!"

I watched intently and saw something vague and white twisting in the gloom. I reached to the limit and grasped it tightly.

"How the devil did you get here?" I demanded, staring at the smudge I took to be her face.

"I—I fell in, and I'm scared. Help me up!"

I reached down both hands, gripped her upflung wrists, and heaved. The weak gravity and her own natural lightness made it pretty easy. In a few moments I'd lifted her up bodily and set her down on the rocks.

She was filthy dirty, her bare arms caked in dust, her hair and face smothered. For a long time she sat with her knuckles crammed in her eyes at the blinding glare of sunshine. Then by degrees she looked at me—and I just couldn't stop myself bellowing with laughter at her comic, filthy appearance.

"It isn't funny!" she complained, shuddering as she surveyed herself. Then she said, "You see, Clem, I couldn't sleep properly. I was too hot. I could see the *Flame Bugs* through my window and I got to

thinking about that evening frock. . . Well, I got out my net and decided to hunt them. I went quietly and took Snoops with me as protection from the *Diggers*. I found when I got here that the *Diggers* had gone and that this shaft was finished. . . I leaned over to look down, but I guess Snoops thought I was playing a game. He charged playfully at me, I lost my balance, and down the shaft we both went. I wasn't hurt much because the gravity's so silly—but I couldn't get up again without help. I'm too small."

SHE stopped and stared at me ruefully, wiping her face. I tried not to grin and asked politely, "And what then?"

"Well, I wandered about a little, trying to decide what to do. There were a lot of *Flame Bugs* flying about, and since they give a phosphorescent sort of light, I could see pretty well—so I went along the narrow tunnel into which I'd dropped. This tunnel ended in a huge cave, and I think it's the one Daggy Pye was talking about."

"It was!" I cried eagerly. "Then you—"

"There were other tunnels and more caves beyond it," she went on seriously. "Sort of all the insides of the Moon. But there was something else, Clem—something that scared the wits out of me—a great rumbling and roaring noise from somewhere deep inside the Moon; and there were hot winds and things, too. I saw the reflection of white light cast on the walls, and in the shadows there were thousands of *Diggers* crouched around in a kind of luminous crater. I think our newly-made shaft provided an easier way into the ground than the fissure they usually use. . . But around the floor

there were little chunks of brittle gray stuff. Like this. . ."

She fished in her blouse pocket and tugged out a shiny piece of stuff like extremely battered aluminum.

"Then I lifted Snoops up our shaft in the hope he'd find you and bring you," she finished, handing the lump of stuff to me. "Think it might be what we're looking for?"

I studied it intently, and as I was doing so, footsteps came crunching up and Randi appeared.

"Interesting, isn't it?" he asked slowly, squatting down. He glanced at Ann. "I heard most of what you had to say as I came up," he remarked. "Sound carries very well in this still air."

"Think this might be what we're searching for?" I asked, handing the lump over.

He shrugged, studied it, then stood up. With a sudden effort, he heaved it an enormous distance. We all watched its flight—then the three of us were abruptly lifted from the ground and pressed back hard against the rocks by the force of a terrific explosion.

It looked as though the whole verdure-filled valley rocked and swam under that stunning impact. *Flame Bugs* went hurtling like driven mist; the distant trees swayed and bent. . . Then all was still once more.

Very slowly I rose from shielding Ann. She was nearly crying with alarm. I noticed in that moment that Randi was not over startled; he was looking towards the scene of the explosion with a dreamy expression in his eyes. I saw his thin hands clench momentarily.

"It is *Potentium*!" I exclaimed at last.

"Exactly," he agreed thoughtfully. "*Potentium*. Crystallized energy,

stored up through millions of years. Release of natural forces."

"What the blazes are you talking about?" I demanded, scrambling up. "Did you know it would explode like that?"

"If it *was Potentium*—yes."

"And I wandered about with that awful stuff in my pocket!" Ann cried, suddenly shaking. "If I'd trodden on the stuff, or slipped, or anything—Oh, Clem! Do you realize. . ."

She didn't finish; the thought was too awesome for her, though I decided the light pull of gravity wouldn't make her doll-like weight very heavy on a piece of *Potentium* anyway.

"You see," Randi said, looking at us both, "I'm rather more of a scientist than you two think—and I also believe in turning Nature's efforts to good use, if possible." He pointed to the ten-foot crater the stuff had blown. "Look at that—from a thing the size of a Brazil nut. Imagine, then, a shell of a ton or so in weight, made of *Potentium*, dropped in the middle of a civilized city! Nothing—absolutely nothing—could stand against it. Whoever owned such a power could dominate all nations, all Governments—perhaps all planets. . ."

**A** NN gave a little gasp of alarm. "Vassy, whatever do you mean? You talk like a warmonger—"

"I am," he said steadily, regarding her with a cold smile. Then with lightning suddenness, he whipped his revolver from its holster, covered us both steadily. Stupidly Ann and I raised our hands.

"We came for fuel," he went on calmly. "And we've found it rather more quickly than I expected—thanks to Ann's fool blunderings

with a butterfly net. As an explosive material for rockets *Potentium* has certainly no equal—but I'm not interested in rockets. I regard the stuff as a supreme war weapon."

"You mean you're working for some foreign power?" I grated out.

"Yes. You may have heard of a missing espionage agent—one Valon Kintroff. That's me. . . You see, my government has ways and means of learning things. They found out that when Pye made his space-record trip, he was using hardly any fuel at all. Before he set out from earth, paid agents—in the guise of mechanics and so on—removed a small quantity of his fuel and sent it to our laboratories for analysis. It was found to possess an enormous amount of stored energy, released by the action of friction or heavy, successive blows. A lump the size of a pea, as Pye told us, was quite sufficient to drive him the 480,000 miles to the Moon and back. . ."

"Then?" I asked bitterly.

"I was assigned to learn all about the fuel—obtain it by any possible means without exciting suspicion. As you know, the Space Patrol prevents us from doing anything but legitimate business on any planet. No amount of bribery or corruption can get a paid agent in the Space Patrol. I could not, therefore, by any stretch of ingenuity, jump a concession on Luna—nor could I import the necessary machinery. The only thing to do was to line up with somebody who *had* a legitimate purpose and then work things my own way. I went to work, found out by devious means that Pye was prepared to sell his fuel secret, that its source was on the Moon.

"I realized he'd sell to the biggest company—the Drew. So I struck

up an apparently amorous acquaintance with you, Ann. Pye did as I'd hoped, and I tried to get the concession to save further trouble. You outbid me, Ann, so I let you have it and kept by you all the same. . . All very simple, isn't it?"

I looked at him helplessly, said savagely, "Are you fool enough to think you can get away with this, Randi? You—"

"I know I can," he answered me, complacently. "Accidents on the Moon—death of famous heiress and young space-explorer. . . Very easy. Oh, yes! Pye was the fly in the ointment. He did not suspect anything until I gather he heard something over the radio about a missing espionage agent—Kintroff. As you know, Pye was once in the Secret Service. He'd unfortunately seen my record photograph and started to recognize me. . . . He came into my room to know the truth while you two were asleep. We fought it out. He ended up through the emergency lock. . . You see, of the two evils of him giving me away, or losing him and the exact location of *Potentium*, I decided the latter was the lesser. Naturally I typed his suicide note. I remembered his outburst about war and kindred things. Perfect link up for me."

"So it *was* murder!" I roared. "You damned, rotten snake! I suspected it, but I couldn't prove it. . ."

**R**ANDI grinned a little as I glared at him. Ann looked at me helplessly. Behind us Snoops snuffled impatiently.

"You know, Dixon, you're something of a fool," Randi commented. "If you were anything of a scientist—such as I think I am—you would have seen the possibilities of this fuel for yourself. Don't you see what's

happened here on the Moon? The titanic craters and mountain ranges could possibly have been caused by volcanic and internal upheaval—but not *probably*. . . Nature is ever expending her force. Some of it passes away into space; some of it changes into invisible radiation—but quite a quantity of it is stored up in materials.

“Coal, for instance, discharges long accumulated solar energy. In the ultimate state of a world like this one, vast amounts of energy are liable to be stored up in the rocks in a locked, potential form. The forces that blew these vast craters are no longer active—they’re inert, awaiting powerful impact to release them—just as coal seams will not burn until the coal is removed and placed on a fire. That is the nature of this fuel—locked energy—a planet with great areas of its underworld holding enormous supplies of leashed force—*Potentium*, as Pye so aptly called it. Control of that stuff—”

That was about the limit of what I could stand. Randi’s sneering voice, his supercilious explanation, his absolute belief in his mastery of the situation, did something to me. With an almost mechanical impulse, I suddenly dropped my hands and charged forward. Against the lesser gravity, I was on him in a second; his revolver went off violently and fell a few feet away. In the confusion I saw Ann snatch at it gingerly.

Then Snoops joined in, lip drawn back over his teeth, his single eye flaming hate. He’d never liked Randi anyhow, and my sudden attack was sufficient to release his terrific temper.

I punched and pounded Randi with all the force I could muster, and that was plenty with muscular power rating so high—but in Randi

I was dealing with a man of unsuspected strength. He was no boxer, but his wrestling holds were wicked. Before I knew what had happened, I was underneath him with his crushing fingers at my throat.

Snoops charged in with snarling muzzle, only to fly backwards as Randi lashed out with his heavy boot. The blow hit Snoops clean on the head, stunned him completely with its violence. . . That incident lent me added fury and I struggled again with the force of a maniac.

Out of the tail of my eye I saw Ann dancing around frantically with the revolver butt foremost in her hand. Down it came, aimed unerringly at Randi—but at that identical moment my strugglings succeeded and I came uppermost, got the full force of the revolver blow on my left temple.

I saw a soundless flash of fire—

## CHAPTER IV

### POWER AND PEACE

**A** DEEP, rumbling, beating roar thundered in my ears. The ground was shaking underneath me. Stiffly, I twisted around and tried to bring up my hands to my head—only I couldn’t. They were bound securely at my sides. In fact my whole body was bound so tightly I could not even bend my knees.

For a moment I lay passive on rough stone, gazing at a remote, lofty ceiling of rock, lighted by the eternal dancing of the *Flame Bugs*—and something else. A vast, distorted wavering shadow was cast on the wall in front of me, the ragged outlines of a man, his head bent as he looked downwards.

I twisted around at that, and the

first thing I saw was Ann beside me, similarly bound. She flicked her eyes towards the figure of Randi standing some little distance away. . . . The scene rather awed me for a moment—the vision of him staring down into some kind of crater, its creamy glow fanning upwards with the radiance of white hot fire. Hot winds were swirling through the cavern; the deep, remote muffled boomings gave a little insight to the titanic battle of forces still being waged deep in the moon's core, probably at the bottom of that colossal shaft.

"What happened?" I whispered, wishing my head didn't ache so abominably.

"I'm sorry I hit you," she muttered. "It was a complete accident. He overpowered me in a moment, brought me down here, and then brought you as well. He tied us up together with his belt while he went to the ship and got some rope. . . . Funny thing, he saved a length of the rope for something, and also brought a bottle of acid from our supplies."

"Acid!" I cried.

My voice carried to Randi. He turned and came slowly forward, smiling complacently.

"So you've recovered, Dixon," he murmured. "And are wondering about my acid bottle, eh? Well, you'll soon see its purpose. At least I shall be able to spare myself the thought that I ill treated either of you. It will be so swift—so sudden—there can be no question of lingering pain. . . . However, first there is work to be done."

He turned away and went swiftly out of the cavern. The moment he'd gone I set to work on my ropes. Ann and I sat back to back and worked with desperate fury, she pull-

ing at my knots and I at hers—but we might as well have tried to open a bank vault with a toothpick for all the good we accomplished. Those knots were so damned tight it would take hours to unfasten them working under such conditions.

The idea of rubbing the rope against stone was ruled out too in case we happened to choose a piece of *Potentium* and the friction would blow us to infinity. . . .

So by the time Randi came back, we were pretty exhausted. He had only that same smile on his sallow face. With him he had brought four ordinary metal chests from the ship, carefully lined with cotton wool and waste rags. Ann and I watched in silence as he moved about the cavern, picking up gray, metallic hunks of the explosive rock and laying it with gentle care in the crates, taking supreme pains to wrap each piece separately. As each crate became full he departed with it, walking on tip toe to avoid all chance of jar—and, thanks to his precautions and the lightness of the gravitation, he got all his crates full and removed them, presumably to the ship.

Then he came back with three strong poles which he proceeded to erect with significant silence in the cavern's center. By the time he'd finished, he had a stand like a camp fire tripod with a massive hunk of rock suspended from the center by the surplus length of rope. He regarded it like an artist finishing a masterpiece, just glanced at us amusedly, then searched around until he found a large, odd piece of *Potentium*. Carefully he placed it on the floor directly under the suspended rock.

"I wonder," he said, turning, "if I need to explain this?"

"You know damn well you don't!" I raged. "If this is your idea of fighting for your country, you've some plenty foul ideas! Why can't you and I fight it out? Leave Ann out of it! She—"

"Knows everything, like you," he murmured. "And that, unhappily, is a chance I cannot afford to take. You see, this piece of rock is large enough to weigh pretty heavy even in this gravity. Now, if I sprinkle nitric acid on the supporting rope, it will rapidly eat through it. Down comes rock, explodes *Potentium* underneath, and— Well, I can imagine my reporting a tragic lunar accident in which two well known people lost their lives. . . And I have three crates full of *Potentium*, enough to make bombs to blow all enemy civilizations from the face of the Earth.

"Then, in the future, I may return here with others. This cave will assuredly be blasted to dust, but not all traces of *Potentium* will vanish from the moon. I shall dig for it again, be the heir to it, because it was your dying wish, Ann, that it should be so."

"You—you can't do this, Vassy!" she screamed frantically, lashing her bound body. "You just can't—"

"Who's going to believe you, anyway?" I broke in furiously. "You'll be caught by the Drew Company and made to explain!"

"Which I shall—very satisfactorily," he smiled. "You see, Ann, you have made the entire concession over to me. It was your dying wish."

"I—I didn't! It—it isn't!" she stammered despairingly; then she took refuge in tears. I lay glaring up at Randi.

"What in hell are you talking about?" I grated. "You've got no authority, and never will have."

**F**OR answer he tugged out a sheet of paper from his pocket and held it for us to see. Both Ann and I stared in speechless amazement at a statement in Randi's handwriting that the entire concession and formula were under his control. That was plain enough, but the extraordinary part about it was Ann's unmistakable, flowing signature at the end.

"You see, it is not a forgery," Randi commented dryly.

"But—but how—?" Ann gasped, "That's my signature, yes. Even my bank manager would swear to it, but—"

"A little game of 'Give and Take,'" Randi said softly, refolding the paper. "You remember how we played it on the journey? I believe I won an entire imaginary continent from you. In accordance with the rules, you gave me your signature for it, just as on an I. O. U. I wrote the statement of the game debt at the top of the sheet, and you signed at the bottom. To you it was just a game of fun—to me a game of reality. I had merely to tear the top off the sheet and substitute these other vital words underneath. . . Need I remind you that the Expeditionary Clause in the new Space Law makes it legal—as in the constantly existent case of a soldier—for a dying person on an expedition to make a last will without the presence of witnesses, provided the signature is approved by experts. . . ?"

"Why, you infernal swine!" I yelled. "You dared to do that? Is there nothing safe from your rotten fingers? And if you wanted to kill us, why resort to this? You killed Pye without compunction; what stopped you on our account?"

"Well, I wanted to be sure that *Potentium* could be found first, other-

wise my accident story and false concession would have been useless and I'd have found myself in difficulties. But as it is—"

He shrugged and turned aside, pulled a bottle from his pocket. Ann and I could only watch helplessly as an oily, corrosive fluid poured from the bottle onto the rope suspending the improvised pile driver. At the finish of his performance, Randi threw the bottle away with a flourish, regarded the wisping smoke already rising from the rope into the disturbed air.

"I should say . . . about fifteen minutes," he commented, glancing at his watch. "That will give me ample time to get away from the Moon into space—and I have an idea that the Moon's surface will change a deal in the upheaval, enough anyhow to substantiate my story of an accident." He stopped and regarded us. "It's been nice knowing you," he chuckled, then he went softly from the cavern and vanished in the outlet tunnel beyond.

**I**T SEEMED that Ann and I lay gazing for an eternity at that gently smoking rope before the full horror of our predicament hammered in upon us—then we both started to thresh and struggle with desperate energy, straining and tugging until the skin round our wrist ropes was bleeding and broken.

Disturbed by our activities one or two *Diggers* came from out of the warm shadows. I called to them as a last desperate measure. If only I could get them to work they'd drill through the ropes in a moment—but all the little devils did was to sit like rats and watch us, basking in the warmth from the central crater shaft.

"No dice," I panted at last. "They haven't the brains to know what I mean. We'll have to try rolling towards the tripod—"

"No—no, wait!" Ann screamed. "You can't pick your way like you can when walking. There are bits of *Potentium* all over the floor. If your weight crushes one of them we'll go sky high."

"And what do you think we'll do when that blasted rock falls?" I demanded desperately. "This is the lesser of the two evils. Come on!" And I started rolling with frantic speed, digging my bound heels into the floor to help me along. I couldn't have stood upright, anyhow; I was too tightly bound.

Little by little I edged my way along, moving towards the *Potentium* under the tripod in the hope that I might be able somehow to push it away—but the distance! It seemed to me like hundreds of miles. And suddenly the rock swayed ever so slightly as one strand of the rope parted smokingly.

"Clem, it's going!" Ann screeched. "It's going!"

"Keep rolling!" I ordered, and made myself sound savage to stop her going hysterical—though I knew it didn't matter much anyhow. The rate I was going at I'd never reach the darn thing in time, anyhow. . .

Then, half way in a roll, I stopped at a sudden sound down the outlet tunnel. Not a second later Snoops came into view—limping badly, blood dripping from a battered jaw, a deep gash across his skull where the fur had been torn away. I stared at him in momentary horror. In the intensity of the moment, I had forgotten all about him.

"He's hurt!" Ann cried. "Look, he's bleeding. . . ."

"Come here, Snoops!" I ordered

wildly, making motions with my body. "Bite! In God's name, animal—bite!"

Bite! That was the last thing the affectionate old fool did. He lay down, plainly exhausted, and licked my hand languidly. I felt the warm drip of blood drops as he made the action.

"Bite!" I screamed. "Dammit, Snoops—bite!"

He licked my bound right hand again, more affectionately than ever—and also more wearily. I couldn't figure how he'd gotten into such a state, why he'd been so long coming. Unless that devil Randi—

Then my thoughts were interrupted by a violent commotion in the shadows. Like a sudden tide a mass of *Diggers* came swarming into view, eyes glinting fiendishly, their terrible drilling muzzles projected for action. Ann and I watched in blank horror as they swept towards us—but they left her alone entirely and instead plunged for me.

Exhausted though he was, Snoops was on his feet again instantly, snarling defensively, and this time there was nothing I could do to save matters. Fighting began instantly—a swearing, snapping mass swarming about the cave, piling thick and fast on poor old Snoops until he went down with a crash. . . But I noticed something else too. Savage-ly sharp drills were boring into my right hand, through the rope that pinioned it. Almost before I realized what was happening, my hand was free!

"It's the blood—Snoops' blood!" Ann shouted hysterically, staring at me. "It happened in that other fight—when it got on your clothes. . . It's on your ropes. . . The *Diggers*—attracted them—enemies. . ." She got

no further, collapsed in her bonds, utterly overcome.

I didn't wait to ask whys or wherefores. I hurled off the remaining *Diggers*, ripped my hand free, tugged out my left arm from the loosened rope, then dragged myself as fast as I could go along the cavern floor, fell flat by the tripod.

**W**ITH infinite care, I dragged out the *Potentium* from beneath. Hardly had I pushed it to a safe distance than the supported rock came down with a bang that made a dent in the soft floor and sent dust swirling wildly. . .

I was shaking with reaction, had to lie prone to still my slamming heart. Then at last I was calmer, tore the remaining rope from my body and released Ann, raised her in my arms.

I was glad she didn't see the carnage I was forced to gaze upon—the swarming masses of *Diggers* over the lacerated corpse of poor old Snoops. I knew in those moments that all aid I could give was unwanted. . . Slowly I went out of the cavern.

As I neared the surface opening, Ann recovered again, but I still carried her. Without saying anything, I lifted her up to the rim of the surface hole and she scrambled outside. With my greater height, I got up without assistance, just as Randi must have done.

"Even though we've got out of that mess, we're not much better off," Ann remarked moodily, gazing at the blue-black sky. "I don't see the ship anywhere up there, so I guess he's gone. . . Taken all the drilling apparatus, too," she went on, surveying the deserted space. Then she looked at me quickly. "Where's Snoops? We must have left him below—"

"For good," I said seriously. "Anyhow, he died being loyal."

We began to walk aimlessly; then she said, "Well, I was right about the blood on your rope attracting the *Diggers*, anyway. They and Snoops were sworn enemies—" She broke off.

"Look!" she cried in amazement, as we turned the corner of the rock that gave access to the main valley side.

I saw immediately what she meant. Our ship was where it had been all the time—but that wasn't the main point. I raced forward in long leaps to land beside the sprawling body of a man—Randi! Ann turned away with a little shudder as I turned him over. Just for a moment I felt pretty squeamish, too. His neck was lacerated mercilessly from ear to ear. Across his face were the unmistakable marks of canine teeth.

Gently I let him fall back on the crimson stained dust.

"Snoops!" I breathed, suddenly understanding. "Ann, don't you realize—? That was why Snoops took so long in joining us. He hated Randi; he hated him more after he stunned him so violently. He must have waited his chance and then sprung—probably from this very rock. And he made no mistake. Got the jugular. . ."

"But Randi made a lot of trips," Ann reminded me. "Why did Snoops choose the last one?"

I shrugged. "Probably because he was still unconscious during the interval, and only recovered as Randi made his last trip to the ship. . . That accounts for Snoops' condition.

There must have been a hell of a fight. . ."

She nodded very slowly, gripped my arm in eloquent silence as we turned towards the machine. . .

**A**T LEAST Randi had guessed right in one thing—his belief in the potency of *Potentium*. Once we got back to Earth and had the stuff analysed and formulated according to Pye's methods, we adopted Randi's own scheme and had a considerable amount of the raw stuff made into bombs.

Then, purely as a matter of defense, we demonstrated the bombs' efficiency to a world council of war. The result was immediate. Approaching hostilities were tempered; bickering slackened off. No nation could afford to tackle such a supremely destructive agent. The threat of war vanished—but in the laboratories of the Drew Space Corporation there still remains enough substance in raw state to blow to atoms any nation that dares to break the World Peace Pact of 1994.

Today, of course, the Moon is entirely under the control of the Drew Concessionaries. The stuff is mined by trusted experts and used for the peace-time measure of super-fuel. . . None without absolute authority may venture to that lunar storehouse.

Ann has gained more sense since her experiences—but there are times when we both wonder, during the all-too slack intervals of our busy married life, how much of this power and peace would have come about but for the supreme loyalty of an ugly, one-eyed mass of fur from the swamps of Vēnus, . . .



# THE SKY TERROR

By ED EARL REPP

A war-torn world turned to John Waldron, the Brain, in time of need—not in a plea to end the war, but in a desperate attempt to help them rid the world of a strange insect plague! But still more shocking to the world came the message of the Brain...



*A giant wasp loomed up five feet away from him!*

## CHAPTER I

### M-DAY

**Y**OUNG Dale Cannon was white-faced and shaken when he entered the laboratory that morning. He stopped squarely just inside the door, as if unable to proceed further. From the nerveless fingers of his right hand dangled the ominous yellow card that had brought his world crashing about him like a house of mud.

From across the room, John Waldron's metallic, rasping voice sheared the tumult of his mind: "Dale! That card! Does it mean that you—?"

The young scientist tried to square his sagging shoulders, but it was a futile effort. Warily he advanced from the door. "Yes, it means I'm called!" he said tonelessly. "It's M-day—the draft. It had to come at a time like this, bringing the end of our—your work. God, what useless waste!"

There was a heaving, clumping

sound as Waldron, universally known by the sobriquet, "The Brain," laboriously made his way to the younger man's side. His strong, metal fingers came down heavily on Dale's shoulder.

"When nations go to war," his crisp, mechanical voice said, "there is no such thing as waste. Millions of dollars are flung into the raging fire, the youngest and most valuable men are slaughtered. But it is not waste. No, it is making the world safe for democracy or some ism — whatever the warlords have declared. But for us who think, it is cruel."

The Brain looked away, gazing with bitterness at the tangle of pipes, sinks, and glass tanks that made a modern jungle of the laboratory. Dale saw the despair brimming in his enormous green eyes. Savagely he smashed his fist down on an acid-stained sink.

"When I let myself think of it!" he cried. "Here we are, in the midst of work which promises to save humanity from a dozen diseases that make life a haphazard thing. And today, because every large nation of the world is at war, I must leave you while I pick up a rifle and learn to kill! Only by a miracle will I come back to you, in this day of refined butchery. Cruel!"

This time the Brain found no answer for John Waldron knew that when Cannon left him, the experimentation he loved must end—perhaps forever, if Dale never came back. His poor, clumsy body was like a battery without a motor, like a brain without a body . . . which was exactly what Waldron was. Dale Cannon was the "body" this awkward, miraculous little creature who was half man and half robot used to do his amazing work.

Now both men were brought sharp-

ly about as the door flew open. Into the room hurried a girl, dark-haired, dark-eyed, frantic. The marks of strain and anxiety were in her delicate features.

"Dale!" The word was like a sob as she rushed up to him. Her voice became muffled, because her face was pressed against his coat lapel. "I've been looking for you all night! Yesterday I got my draft card for nurse service. When I went to tell you, I found your apartment unlocked and the government envelope on the floor. I knew what had happened, and—and I was afraid. . ."

"I started walking," Dale murmured. "Guess I walked all night. So they're drafting women now. It'll be children next."

Heavy thumping sounds, and the clanking of metal joints, told that the Brain had begun to pace the floor. "It's the same old vicious circle," came his toneless voice.

"When will it stop?" Dale groaned. "The last war threw us back twenty years. This one will retard civilization and science for a hundred. John, it will take a new order of things to end wars . . . an entirely different scheme. A man like you could devise one—!"

**T**HE Brain sighed, with a thin rasping of his metal larynx. "Greater minds than mine have failed on that problem," he shook his head.

"There's never been a greater mind than yours!" Sue Carey protested. "Medicine, astronomy, and industrial science are changed spheres since you entered them. John, you must, before it's too late! Dale and I will be in camp by tonight. Perhaps, before this awful carnage is ended, you can think of something—"

In the tense silence that came into the fantastically modern laboratory,

the thoughts of the girl and Dale were on the miracle of this unworldly little being whose mind, in their opinion, was Earth's only hope for permanent peace. Yet, except for a tragic accident long ago, John Waldron would have been little more intelligent than they.

Ten years ago, the Brain had been a handsome figure of a man, six feet tall, proportionately heavy, a skillful physicist. In one flashing second of catastrophe, when an explosive went off prematurely, his body had been shattered, the arms and legs ripped off, his skull crushed. Surgeons became tight-lipped at the hopeless remains.

"One more saint in the calendar of science," they shrugged, "gone to join the Curies, the Bacons, the shadowy host of unselfish martyrs." But suddenly, from the battered lips, came whispered words!

Step by step, that half-dead torso on the operating table told the surgeons what to do to give him life. Never a surgeon himself, that accident affected Waldron's brain, giving him knowledge beyond that of the specialists who surrounded him. He spoke of things they had never dreamed of attempting. Yet—they did it.

It was a year before Waldron walked again. He prowled through his old, dusty laboratory like a being from the void. Tottering on spindly, steel legs, he moved his top-heavy sponge-silver torso about like a robot. Within this honeycomb of metal were encased his vital organs, all that was left of his fleshy body, save his head.

His arms were systems of rods and joints, terminating in bulky, almost useless metal grippers. His voice was a mechanical one. Every "nerve center" in his body was connected with his brain. And the whole, fantastic

machine was purely a shell that permitted his brain to live. Behind bulging forehead and goggling eyes—it lived on.

His brain—that was the most wonderful part of his miraculous body. In ten years, he had perfected and given the world the first space-ship; he had stamped out cancer; he had brought to pass weather control. And yet without Dale Cannon, whose dextrous fingers and keen intelligence operated as his own, he would have been able to do nothing.

There was a strange affinity between them that enabled the Brain to control Dale's body during the course of an experiment almost as though it were his own. It was a strange situation, with Cannon's own trained intellect and hands retaining full power, yet serving as a catalyst between the Brain's thoughts and the completed act.

It was hypnotism, and yet it was not. But this much they knew: that it would be years, if ever, before John Waldron found another man who could serve him.

Softly the Brain's reedy voice spoke again: "You leave tonight?"

"At four o'clock," Cannon responded.

The Brain surprised them by smiling. His enormous green eyes looked wistful. "Then let us spend this day working for the last time. All night I have been thinking about our failure yesterday. I believe I have it, now."

With his usual alacrity, Cannon prepared the apparatus. His mind would not be routed from its gloomy subject. Somberly he set up a great brass ball, trained electro-magnets on colored bands about its curved surface. The experiment was an attempt to break the secret of gravity. If Waldron succeeded this time,

transportation would no longer be a problem on earth.

The lab filled itself with the whistling roar of the revolving ball, the crackling of power. Dale sat at a switchboard that resembled an electric organ console, calling forth discharges from the myriad of magnets and transformers.

Behind him, on a high stool, hunched the Brain. His huge head was canted forward on its metal neck of flexible tubing. His eyes glittered, and the fingers of his steel hands moved in an overpowering desire to perform the actions himself.

Suddenly Dale sprang up. "It's no use!" he blurted. "It isn't the same. My mind is so cloudy, even you can't use it."

With a gesture of finality, he extended his hand. The Brain's came up to meet it. Dale's strong fingers closed about the scientist's clumsy ones. Sue stood by, white-faced.

"Good bye," Dale muttered. "Try to find someone else. And for your sake, for the whole world's sake, don't stop until you've found a way to bring sanity to mankind!"

Abruptly they were gone, with only the echo of retreating footsteps to mark their going.

The Brain stood alone for a long time. At last he turned. Because he wanted to keep from thinking for a while, he let his metal body down on the bench before the control board. He began to play over the keys.

His jointed fingers stumbled and buckled as he manipulated the controls. The brass globe stopped, started, faltered. The magnets grew hot. Finally there was a flash that betokened the burning out of a circuit. Even at this simple operation, the artificial fingers were useless.

Waldron looked out the window, futile tears standing out in his bulg-

ing eyes. All at once he crashed his hands down on the keys.

"I'll do it!" he whispered. "Somehow . . . God only knows in what way. But—it—will—be—done!"

## CHAPTER II

### THE HORROR FROM THE SKIES

**B**Y THE middle of March, not a nation, including those that had escaped the World War, was out of this one. It was the war to end wars . . . yet every thinking being who crouched there in the trenches realized others would follow it.

That thought was in Dale Cannon's mind that late March afternoon, while he huddled in an observation pit bored into a hillside above the battlefield east of Victorville. The broken desert below him was churned by plowing shells and occasional bombs. A telephone was all that connected him with headquarters, underground beneath the rear lines.

A mouthpiece was strapped in place so that he could talk without removing his hands from the binoculars he gripped. Through the glasses he scanned the blue heights of the Sierras west of him, towering majestically over the scene of battle. He watched a puff of dust blossom from the tree-clad slants and drift away. Then he spoke, mechanically.

"Raise elevation four and one-half degrees. Shift right by six degrees. Next shot will get them."

"Them" was a nest of enemy observers near the mountain top—men who liked to live as much as he, but whom he had thus coldly condemned to death. Down below, a cannon roared, sank back behind a barricade. Up above, five men died without knowing they had been hit.

"That do it, Captain?" came the clipped voice in the phones.

"Yes. No—my God, wait!" Dale lurched half to his feet. "Lieutenant, look above the hills there! All along, for ten miles."

"What is it?" Anxiously, now.

"What is it?" Dale roared. "Planes! Hundreds, thousands of them! Coming in a black cloud as far as I can see."

The gunner was silent; then his voice croaked, "Oh, my God!"

Dale had not exaggerated. As far as his eyes could reach, even with the aid of field glasses, was a roaring horde of black shapes, swooping down upon them! As they came closer, the sun fell behind their close-packed mass, casting an eerie twilight over the setting.

Quite suddenly, all firing ceased. The Allies' guns went silent. The enemies' became mute. And in that horror-born hush, Dale realized that these were not enemy planes, for they were as startled as the Allies. His eyes ached with the strain he put them to.

Then his gaze leaped into focus on one of the ships that was farther ahead than the others. In the next moment he had lurched to his feet. His face was sucked dry of color.

"Lieutenant!" he husked. "Man your guns. Those aren't planes. They—they're alive! I can see their eyes and mouths!"

He was oblivious to the officer's pleas for more information. Presently firing broke out in both armies, all of it directed upward at the endless horde of monsters that were circling above in a great arc. In Dale's eyes was still the vision he had seen through the glasses.

A huge, black, hairy head, with telescopic antennae, topped a long,

slender body, like that of a wasp. But the creature must be at least ten feet long! The yellow, hairy mandibles swinging open and shut caused him to shudder. The huge eyes with their thousands of facets were scarcely less horrible.

Minute by minute they circled lower. Dozens of them came hurtling down as bullets took their toll. But those dozens were like so many grains of sand dipped from the beach. It was obvious that they had a definite objective: Attack!

With the cold shock of realization upon him, Dale leaped up and flung the headphones to the ground. Sue was down there in the trenches—in the path of those wasps, or whatever they were.

The trenches were a bedlam by the time he reached them. Soldiers ran about in wildest disorder, firing at the bellies of the gigantic insects only a hundred feet above the ground now. The hissing roar of a million mighty wings filled the air. The wind stirred by their beating created a fog of dust everywhere.

Somehow, Dale fought his way to the hospital dugouts. He passed officers as crazy as their rankest recruit, saw dozens of hardboiled fighting men on their knees, praying, stumbled over many who had fainted from shock. And against that madness he unconsciously set the cold-blooded order of the wasps.

Sue sprang out the door almost into his arms. "Dale!" she sobbed. "Is it a nightmare, or are we all crazy?"

"They're real, I know that," Dale jerked. "Come on. You've got to get under shelter somewhere."

Half dragging her, he found an empty officer's dugout and lifted her in. Swiftly he sprang out, a rifle in his hands. All around them, massive

insects were dropping, as concentrated fire cut through their close-packed ranks. They lit with soft thuds. Dale saw that his surmise was correct. The invaders were about ten feet long and four or five feet high.

He began firing at the grotesque faces sweeping closer to them. Shrieks and groans came from all sides. He felt a breathlessness clamp down on him as the first of the horde landed and came running on swift legs down the trenches and over the higher land.

Shot after shot he poured into the horrible bodies; yet only a square hit in the head stopped them. Abruptly, a giant wasp loomed up five feet away from him. With a cry of involuntary terror, he ducked into the dugout. The monster crowded its ugly shape into the doorway.

Sue was screaming. Dale shook as with an ague as he aimed at one of the honeycomb-like eyes and squeezed the trigger. A dull click told him the gun was empty.

Desperately, Dale sent a wild glance about the bomb-proof shelter. There was no other door, no window. Suddenly he felt calm, as he knew the end was here.

He got Sue behind him and awaited the monster's advance. It squeezed through the door, tearing away timbers and cement as it passed. Dale's fists balled. Without warning, the beast sprang.

There was a moment of suffocating under a soft, warm body. Then something jabbed his stomach, causing him to cry out. Almost instantly, a delicious lassitude sank through his body, and he lost consciousness.

**W**HEN Dale came to, he was lying on hard ground, with thousands of prostrate bodies around

him. With a start, he sat up. A choked cry escaped him as he saw Sue lying near him.

At his touch, she opened her eyes. Then terror flooded their blue depths. She came to a sitting position and stared about her at the battlefield. Dale's glance wandered from her disbelieving countenance about the incredible scene.

They lay in No Man's Land. But now it was no longer a barren expanse of death. It was a vast field covered with men and women of both armies. They lay, sat or stood everywhere. And in a giant ring about them squatted what seemed to be several hundred thousand gigantic, black-and-yellow wasps. The clicking of their mandibles was a horrible sound in their ears.

Minute by minute, more of the soldiers recovered from the paralyzing sting of the creatures who had overcome them. Near Dale and Sue lay a few soldiers—both enemies and Allies.

"Dale, what's it all mean?" Sue blurted. "Those creatures—they're built just like wasps, but their size! What in heaven's name could have caused them?"

"Just what we would all like to know," came a guttural voice.

Their gazes shifted suddenly to a soldier nearby. He was painfully sitting up. The man's rather heavy features took hold of Cannon's consciousness. With short-cropped gray hair and an intent, alert face, he looked more the part of a thinker than a fighter. And he had spoken English.

Suddenly Dale knew. "Doctor Lohr!" he breathed. "You—out here! Is Gollnow so shortsighted as to waste his greatest scientist in the trenches?"

Hans Lohr, who had been president at the last meeting of the International League of Physicists, smiled grimly. "Not only shortsighted, but short of men," he gruffed in his thick accents. "Every man from sixty years old down to sixteen is in the army. Your face is familiar, Herr?"

"Cannon," Dale said. "Assistant to—"

"Of course!" Lohr broke in. "John Waldron. Young man, I was one of the specialists who designed the clumsy, makeshift body the Brain stumbles about in!"

Now his face grew sharp with interest. "It looks as if we are to be informed."

All over the battlefield men were coming slowly to their feet. Into the mass of stunned humanity came a long, narrow wedge of wasps, forcing the soldiers aside. Down the aisle thus formed waddled a quartet of still larger insects. In the center of the concourse they stopped. Dale had the feeling that the huge, parti-celled eyes were looking into their very minds.

Abruptly, words sprang into their consciousness. And every being there in the desert knew the wasp who crouched in the center of the others had put them there. As words, they did not exist; yet crude thoughts came simultaneously to all, and their minds translated them as rudimental speech.

"So long as you are useful," was the halting announcement, "you will not be killed. We need you. Therefore, we have captured you."

Startled, the three of them shot blank looks at each other. Then the leader was going on.

"I am Ramil. I and all of my hive have grown to be giants, yet we do not know why. It is thus with all

other hives. This is unfortunate, because the flowers we take nectar from are too small to feed us. You must help us get food."

"Help them!" Dale gasped. "How on earth could we—"

Ramil answered his question as though he had anticipated it. His long antennae quivered like oscillating wires.

"You have done things more difficult than this we ask of you. If you can not do it, you yourselves must be our food! My hive and I detest meat, but rather than starve, we will eat it. And we cannot live for more than a month on such slim rations as we are living on now."

A rigid silence held them all. Suddenly Ramil sprang into the air and his wings whirred angrily. The thoughts that snapped out to the armies crackled like electric sparks. The king wasp's great mandibles clattered like triphammer drops.

"I have asked you for help! Will you answer, or die now?"

Abruptly Dale shot a look at Hans Lohr. "This is like some crazy nightmare!" he blurted. "But it sounds as if scientists are being paged. Let's answer him."

The German readily agreed. Dale raised both arms high. Instantly, the king had dipped low over their heads. The young physicist somehow felt foolish addressing remarks to a wasp—even a remarkable one. But already he felt there was solid reason for their ability to talk back and forth. Insects, it was almost certain, communicated by thought vibrations, since instinct could not answer for all their intelligent cooperation. Enlarged to the size they were, there was no reason why their antennae should not send out tremendously

more powerful vibrations—nor why their minds should not pick them up.

"We will try to help," he announced simply. "But we must go far from here to do so."

"I expected that," Ramil answered. His startling eyes, looking at close range almost like leaded panes, burned into Dale's. "You will need things to work with. Very well. We leave immediately."

Dale shook his head. "We must talk first with men far away, to learn if their cities have been spared, so that we can work in them. It will take many factories to provide the food you need."

Ramil rose higher. "Then do so. You have means of doing it?"

Dale nodded. Grimly, he led Sue and Lohr through the crowd into the radio dugout. A dozen wasps kept constant guard.

Inwardly, Dale trembled with eagerness. Hope stirred his blood hotly that their call for help would bring quick relief. Most of all, he wanted to talk to the Brain . . .

Loomis, the tight-lipped young operator, got the sets going. With a roar of power, the loud-speakers came to life. And with the first words that struck their ears, desperation had its way with them—for what they heard told them that their plight was hopeless.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE BRAIN ACTS

"**T**ALKING to you from Washington," came the announcer's tense voice. "In this city of unbelievable horror, we are living in the constant fear of what will come next. Word has reached us from every part of the

nation that the plague of giant wasps now has every city and town in the nation in captivity! The demand is the same everywhere—food!

"Transcontinental broadcasts reveal the same condition all over the world. The monsters which have attacked Europe and Asia, however, seem to be creatures corresponding to the ferocious 'praying mantis' of the insect world. Scientists are unable to account for the sudden change in size of these terrible invaders.

"War has taken a holiday. Everywhere, men, women and children live under the close scrutiny of the wasps. We appeal to all scientists, the world over—overcome your fear of the creatures and volunteer to help. Only synthetic food will furnish an adequate supply, of this there is no doubt. For the time being, we must submit to the insects' demands. After that—"

Dale clipped impatiently, "Get New York. I've got to talk to John Waldron—the Brain."

In a matter of minutes, Waldron's reedy tones were filling the dugout. Dale trembled with relief at knowing the robot-man was alive.

"Thank God you are alive!" grated Waldron's voice. "I have promised help, and they are waiting for me. Yet I am helpless without you, Dale. Return immediately. Together, we can lick this problem . . . and the larger one!"

Dale spun about, stalked to where Rimal waited. "You'll follow our plane?" he asked hurriedly.

"Later, with the armies," the monster glared. "We have no fear of your failing us. To do so would condemn your civilization!"

It was less than ten hours later that the strange reunion was held in John Waldron's laboratory. But

this time, four giant wasps kept guard over them while they prepared to work.

The Brain was tensely eager to begin his experiments. But before he did so, he said softly to the three of them, "Keep your face averted from them when you say anything you don't want them to hear. Our eyes seem to act like their antennae in transmitting messages."

Then he was rubbing his metal hands together, smiling in an attempt at cheerfulness. "A pleasure to work with you, Dr. Lohr. Do you have any ideas on the problem, before we begin?"

Hans Lohr shook his head, smiling ironically. "None that you haven't discarded long ago, Waldron. I bow before the master—but don't forget — if it weren't for me, you wouldn't be tottering about on those steel pins of yours!"

"It will never be forgotten," the Brain murmured. Then, suddenly, he was the scientist again. They could feel the force of his mentality begin to assert itself over theirs, unconsciously. He hunched upon his work stool, cupped his chin in a cold metal palm.

"In the several hundred vials you see in racks along Bench Five, I have samples of every flower nectar that grows in any quantity in North America. This will be routine work. I expect no trouble with the matter. Dr. Lohr, you may begin by analyzing these and grouping them into logical classifications. Sue, you know stenography. You will please take notes on all his findings. Dale and I will begin on another problem . . . a more important one to humanity!"

His cryptic words were still in their minds when they plunged into the work.

Dale knew a sudden gladness at

the familiarity of the setting: He, seated before a tilted work-desk; the Brain hunching over his shoulder; thoughts pouring through his mind like steam boiling along a glass pipe over a heated catalyst, to emerge a pure gas, even as Waldron's ideas were somewhat refined by his own brain.

His pencil began to write, smoothly, at top speed.

"The Problem:" he saw appear on the paper. "To develop a substance, a ray, or a power capable of seizing the electrons in the outer ring of an atom, and tearing them loose; to use this power to destroy any known material instantly . . ."

Dale's fingers froze. His eyes wandered up—to meet the stare of a watching hornet.

"Keep your eyes down!" the Brain rapped impatiently. "Once let them know the thing we are working on, and humanity can write its own obituary tomorrow."

Again the pencil was writing. "Hypothesis Number One: Would it be possible to create a sort of 'reverse cathode stream,' with the power, so to speak, to suck these atom-particles loose? To consider the facts—"

On and on the pencil flowed, until the blunt point caused it to be thrown aside and a new one taken up. There were fourteen pages of close writing when the Brain relaxed and sat wrapped in thought.

He tilted his head back and gazed at the ceiling, a small, grotesque figure with the brain of an intellectual giant. He appeared not to hear Dale when he asked tightly, "You know what you've written here—? Atomic destruction! It—it's impossible."

After a time, Waldron muttered, "I shouldn't have expected such a statement from you. You will see

things a lot more terrifying than that before we are through!"

**F**OUR days were all the Brain required to solve the matter of food for the wasps. With Lohr's efficient notebook of findings, he was able to work out a successful formula on the first attempt. The German scientist was given the problem of the most efficient method of manufacturing the stuff. Simultaneously, Europe, Asia and all other parts of the world began production, as formulae were radioed to them.

The liquor was produced in tremendous quantities. Every adaptable factory in the world was soon running night and day to produce the nectar the insects demanded. Their long near-fast was broken when barrels of the clear, sweet liquor were broken open and let run in the streets.

Overnight, the Brain had become the leader of stricken humanity. His formula had saved them, that was all paralyzed mankind cared about; hence they looked to him for eventual freedom from the increasingly vicious rule of the hornets and tarantula hawks. Every hour of the day and night, twenty operators were kept on duty in the laboratory, answering questions for the confused men who had governed the world of yesterday.

And Dale was quick to see John Waldron's pleasure with it. Here in the laboratory he was fusing the divergent strains in humanity's pattern into one solid mass. Racial troubles, boundaries, petty squabbles, were forgotten. Realizing that, and noting the Brain's quiet confidence, Cannon began to experience a slow suspicion. . . . But it soon became lost in the tumultuous events soon to follow.

The captives there in New York,

as elsewhere, grew to hate the sickly sweet stench of the nectar. Everything was sticky with it. The insects glutted themselves and began to demand more and more. Rimal, who had risen to leadership of the great colony by the expedient of killing sufficient rivals, took on the aspect of a fat, bloated overlord. He was in the laboratory nearly every day, berating Waldron for not producing more nectar, though the streets swam with it.

Yet for a long time the enslaved world did not see which way their gluttony was heading. One day the little group in the laboratory found out.

Work on the peculiar atomic experiment was going on quietly that morning. Up the stairs came the soft, heavy padding of clawed feet. Suddenly Rimal burst in on them, at the head of four fur-cloaked, vicious lieutenants.

"Waldron!" was his snarling salutation.

The Brain stood up and tottered over. "What is it?" he replied quietly.

"I asked for more food," Rimal's angry thought-impulse crackled. "You have not given it. I will allow you—"

A trace of impatience scuttled over the Brain's ugly, hairless face. "The streets are wet with nectar," he pointed out. "If we were to provide more, you could not use it."

Rimal's mandibles opened, crashed together. "Fool!" he roared. "You know nothing of our needs. Soon there will be young ones, and they must be fed."

"We have stored vats of it against that need," Waldron argued quietly.

"But we do not trust you," the king wasp cut in. "I have decided. You are to provide us with machines

which we can operate ourselves. We will make our own nectar from now on."

Dale Cannon could not repress an angry gasp. "It's a trick!" he burst out. "Once they've eliminated the need for us, they can do as they want with—"

Rimal took a menacing step towards him. His antennae trembled over Dale's head, and the great mandibles yawned. Then he turned again to John Waldron.

"It is decided," he snapped. "You have a week to do this. Do not fail, or I will find another to take your place."

In silence, they watched them leave. Hans Lohr muttered, "I've seen Gollnow act the same way. They are blind to everything but greed."

For the first time, the Brain looked actually worried. His face mirrored his desperation. Then, abruptly, he was turning to the radio room. His words floated crisply back to them.

"Arrange a world-wide hookup immediately! Get Okura, at the Imperial Institute of Science in Tokyo; Yarborough, at the Royal College of Physicists in London; Becquerel, at College des Sciences—get every leading scientist in the world and have him waiting."

The certainty grew on Dale and Sue that the Brain had something of terrible importance to divulge to the waiting world. He sat at his desk before the microphone, awaiting the red signal to speak. His long, rod-like fingers drummed nervously on the desk-top, scarring its polished surface. Fine beads of sweat glistened on his bulging forehead, and his greenish eyes looked haggard.

The light flashed. A second's pause. Then the Brain was speaking.

"Scientists of the world, I am calling on you for help in this crisis. Here in America we have been given an ultimatum that means suicide to fulfill, execution not to. Probably your captors will soon be doing the same. But before I outline my plan, I have a confession to make to you . . . one that will shock you more deeply than you can possibly imagine."

Dale started. His narrowed gaze studied Waldron's white features. The scientist took a deep breath and went on.

"When the incredible invasion of hornets swept America, on the same day that the ferocious wasp known as the tarantula hawk descended on the rest of the world, there was one man who was not surprised. That man was myself. I had been expecting the attack for a week because I engineered the whole thing, from start to finish. It was I who brought the monsters into existence, I who planned that they should enslave the world!"

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CRAWLING HORROR

**D**ALE could almost hear the gasp that went up around the world. Lohr stood stupidly, an incredulous croak on his lips. The battery of radio operators in the other room froze.

Very quietly, very deliberately, John Waldron continued.

"I have long dreamed of a permanent peace for the world, but until recently, I was not driven to try to achieve it. Two months ago I became convinced that unless peace came, humanity would destroy itself within a century. I set out to find a way to stop wars forever.

"I thought of the things that tend to draw men together—hardship, peril—those were the factors I thought of most. I dreamed of an entire world dominated by some power, a world thus unified in purpose and desire. When I became convinced that that way lay peace, I sought the dominating power my plan called for.

"Very quickly I decided insects must provide it. Their intelligence and social life made them ideal subjects. I discovered that the chromosomes of the hornet and tarantula hawk contain identical growth-genes. If those genes were stimulated, I reasoned, the insects' growth could be controlled.

"I found out that a rare solar light had the desired effect, but it must be in quantity to affect the chromosomes. I also knew that by increasing the vapor content of the atmosphere by fifteen percent, throughout the entire world, the amount of Z-ray would be increased a thousand percent! How well it would work, I could only guess. But I put it into effect.

"Because I am the inventor of the system of weather-control stations encircling the globe, I am allowed at any time to demand changes in the methods being used. Thus I was able to call for the fifteen percent humidity increase. Then I waited. And suddenly, six weeks later, I knew I had succeeded."

The Brain's jaw hardened. "My intention was that we should fight together to free ourselves of the bondage we would be put into. I had no idea of the blood-thirstiness of the creatures. I knew they would rely on us for food, because of their high degree of intelligence, but I had not the slightest suspicion they would want to do away with us! I dreamed

of a struggle—and then, permanent peace.

"Time is now growing short. With my assistants, I am working on an atomic weapon which will free us. . . if I can finish in time. I ask your help. Keep in touch with this laboratory at all times. Make no attempt to fight with guns, as they are useless against such numbers. Prepare munitions factories for instant use. Above all, trust me and trust each other, whatever your nationality!"

When he turned from the microphone, he looked weak and tired. But he was able to smile when Hans Lohr seized his hand and shook it until it rattled.

"I had no idea such courage existed in this world!" he exclaimed. "I know the reaction of my people. They will be with you till the end!"

The Brain suddenly stopped smiling. "God knows I'll need such cooperation," he wagged his head. "We can't stall Rimal longer than a couple of weeks. It will mean the hardest work any of us has ever done, and for the greatest prize!"

**F**OR the workers in the laboratory, knowing the lives of billions of persons depended on them, the days and nights that rushed by were eternities of anxiety. Twenty hours out of each twenty-four, Dale and the Brain labored to perfect the atomic rifle. They grew gaunt and tired under the strain.

From all over the world poured suggestions, as Japanese, French, British, German and all other races tried to help. Factories were ready to spring into action the moment plans came through. Two weeks after the broadcast, Waldron suddenly found the thing he wanted.

There was a feverish night of last-

minute planning. At five o'clock in the morning, without pausing to sleep, he went on the air once more.

His plans went all over the world, complete to every infinite detail. But one thing remained to be done. A powerful energy transmitter must be constructed in New York, to provide the terrifically destructive rifle with motive power.

Around the world, munitions factories began to work at high speed, cautiously, because the wasps must not guess that the work did not concern nectar-making. A week fled by. In the laboratory, they were working on a massive piece of equipment that would be capable of supplying nascent energy to atom-destroyers the world over. Only a small amount of power was required to run them, but that power must be of the right kind. It was a tribute to Waldron's mind that no working model had been constructed yet. They were relying entirely on faith that his calculations would prove flawless.

Then, three weeks after the guns were completed, with the power battery half done, the very thing that had brought the giant wasps into existence boomeranged on helpless humanity!

The first report was from London.

"All soldiers have been ordered to leave immediately for North America!" came the announcer's excited message. "In every part of Europe and Asia, a terrible storm has been raging for a week. At first we thought it was some freakish weather disturbance. Now, with intense cold settling down in July, it has become obvious that John Waldron's alteration of the humidity of the atmosphere has had a far-reaching effect! The wasps seem to sense that there is warmer weather to the west. What will happen when the two

species of insects meet is a matter of conjecture. At any rate, we shall know within three days, for the embarkation is under way!"

"What will happen!" the Brain croaked. "Good Lord, everyone should know what will happen! Why are they bringing armed forces with them? Because mankind is going to be forced to fight like slaves for their masters!"

He began to stalk about the room, and the very stiffness of his lips told what was in his mind. His attempt to prevent war was resulting in an even more horrible kind of combat. The tragedy of it was graven deep on his face. With sudden resolution, he whirled to the task of confronting them.

"Dismantle all the apparatus," he shot at Dale. "They'll have every one of us in the trenches again, when the others get here. We've got to move. Don't ask questions! Pack up everything and find some deserted building to move to!"

That was the beginning of a perilous series of trips to an old warehouse near the Battery. The Brain drove them mercilessly, seeming to realize more than anyone the imminence of danger. For in less than three days, fast liners were cutting through the water short miles off the shore!

From Canada, Mexico, the Canal Zone, word crackled through the ether that ships laden with soldiers and the ferocious tarantula hawks were landing. A few sporadic skirmishes here and there—and the war began in earnest!

Laboring feverishly there in the dark warehouse, the scientists could hear the thunder of guns in Jersey. Their ears were filled with the pleas of commanding officers all over the continent, for power to operate the

guns they were holding ready. And still the power plant would not function.

Dale knelt on the floor under the bell-shaped mass of copper and brass that rested on insulators five feet above the planks. For twelve hours, now, the Brain and he had fiddled with connections, examined parts, sent jolt after jolt of high power through the dead apparatus. Their test gun remained lifeless.

Lohr was perched on a scaffolding above the crouching bulk of the energy-dynamo. His sharp eyes peered down into the interior of the machine, as he probed with the white beam of a flashlight.

Now the loudspeakers burst into life. A young radio operator on the Pacific Coast reported the death of five thousand men in that day's warfare. In Texas, more than that number had died as they fought under the goading of their masters. And still the wasps hung behind the trenches, hoping to defeat their enemy without the risk to themselves. They had grown too large now for their frail wings to support them. All fighting was confined to the ground.

All at once Waldron emitted a hoarse croak. "Turn it off!" he groaned. "I can't work while that thing is taunting me with my failure! It's more than—"

A shout from Lohr cut him off. "Here! I've found it! One of the urano-cathode tubes, Waldron—it's cracked. Probably damaged in transportation. A spare, and we're ready!"

"A spare!" The Brain appeared stunned. "All the spares are at the other place."

"I'll get it!" It was Sue Carey who spoke. "You can send out word while I'm gone. If only that's all it needs!"

Dale's hand went out to stop her.

"They may be watching for us," he argued. "Rimal wouldn't give up as valuable an aide as the Brain without a search."

But Sue's slim form was already slipping into the darkness. "There's too much to be done here to spare any of you," she said hurriedly. "I'll have it and be back in ten minutes."

But she was not back in ten minutes, nor in twenty. Tension built higher in the power-house, while time droned on. Word had been flashed all over the continent to be ready to turn on the guns. The energy-machine waited like a caged beast needing only to be sprung.

Then, suddenly, every man in the room was stiffening, as heavy footsteps approached the door. Pistols flashed into their hands. With a crash of breaking timbers, the door was smashed from its hinges. Into the room crowded Rimal, with Sue, clutching the cathode tube, borne in his hairy forelegs!

## CHAPTER V

### WHEN PEACE BROKE OUT

**T**HE girl was screaming and struggling, striking with her free hand at the armor-plated head.

"They were waiting!" she cried. "Dale—John . . . get the tube!"

But they were not thinking of the tube now. Dale Cannon lifted his revolver and fired two shots into Rimal's head. The monster staggered and dropped the girl. Then he charged.

The Brain had the presence of mind to lunge in between them. Metal clanged and rang as he went down in a heap, but he was unharmed. His own gun blasted at the pair who had charged in the door be-

hind the king. One of them went down with a floor-shaking crash.

Again and again Dale sent lead spinning into the ugly head of the monster. Yet none of his shots struck the eyes, seemingly the wasps' only vulnerable spot. Rimal's mandibles made a noise like the clashing of cymbals as he charged for the corner where Dale crouched.

The young scientist pulled the trigger again. With a sinking of his stomach, he felt no answering recoil of the weapon. Slamming it into the monster's face, he seized a long crowbar and swung it up over his head. The metal made a dent in Rimal's huge head.

The king's thoughts, boiling through Dale's brain, were a confusion of hate-filled imprecations and threats. Frantically he swung the bar again, smashing it into the hairy lower part of the face. Still Rimal plunged on, crowding him back farther and farther.

At last Dale knew he could resist no longer. One chance remained to him—His shoulder muscles bulged as he brought the heavy bar up like a spear. A grunt of exertion escaped him. The crowbar shot from his fingers straight at Rimal's eye.

Then there was a ringing sound . . . and the bar fell to the floor! The king wasp had been unharmed. Now he was advancing with his gigantic, yellow paws open for the kill. Dale waited, his body taut as a steel wire.

Across the room sounded a low, tremulous buzzing. Rimal stopped. In amazement, Dale watched his whole body grow yellow, then red, then white. He could feel the terrible heat emanating from him. Suddenly—he was gone!

Flame writhed there before the young physicist in a whirling ball of brilliance. A crackling arose. A

nauseating stench assailed his nostrils. With a final "pop" the king wasp vanished, leaving only a little heap of white crystals where he had stood.

Dale's glance wandered to the dynamo. Hans Lohr was crouched beside it, one of the energy rifles against his shoulder. A greenish glow arose from the power machine. He had installed the tube and completed the circuit!

A glad cry rang through the room. Dale raced for the rack of weapons and seized one. The remaining wasp waited stupidly while he turned the full force of electron-hungry energy upon him. With a sharp explosion, the creature dissolved into elemental dust.

Like captives released, every man in the room lunged for the door. Even Sue followed with rifle ready for vengeance. After they had all gone, the Brain took the last rifle and tottered toward the door. He was not a fighting man, he reflected, but this once it would go hard with any hornet who showed his ugly face in his vicinity!

The rest of that night, and half the next day, were a carnival of death and—liberation. The light of dawn showed an ungainly army of slow-moving wasps struggling across field and meadow for the hills of the inlands. Shoulder to shoulder, men of every nation pursued them. Men who had been enemies a few months ago were comrades now.

It was like that the whole continent over. The outcome was inevitable. By evening, there was not a hornet or a tarantula-hawk in the world. Overnight they had come, to a world torn by war. Overnight they had vanished, leaving a world unified in purpose.

John Waldron, perhaps alone of

all the relieved mortals on the planet, felt a strange gratitude for the monsters he had created. Their reign of terror had brought Earth something it sorely needed . . . brotherhood. And the weapons he had invented, weapons that every nation possessed, and that were so powerful that conflict with them was unthinkable, would insure the lasting permanence of that long-awaited peace.

**ONE** of the first things the nations did, when the work of repair was well started, was to organize a League of Nations that had teeth and the courage to use them. The Brain, Dale Cannon and Sue heard the first meeting by radio.

After the fourth speech by a government head, in which he used the universally accepted auxiliary tongue, Esperanto, lauding the courage of the man who had made world peace possible, Waldron began tapping a steel forefinger on the table. There was a reflective look in his eyes, the mark of a man whose attention is elsewhere.

Out of a clear sky, he said suddenly, "How many volts were we using?"

Dale winked at Sue, knowing he had probably been conscious of noth-

ing that was going on since the first speech. "When?" he asked in return.

Impatience furrowed the Brain's lofty brow. "In that gravity-nullifier experiment, of course," he said.

Dale grinned. "Twenty-two thousand, I think. Mean to say you've been thinking about that while every important man in the world has been lauding you the last hour?"

The Brain shrugged. "One of the beauties of being nine-tenths brain," he countered, "is that it gives you a fine sense of the value of things. These speeches merely impress me with the fact that some people are gloating over one success with a thousand more waiting to be achieved. Now, you take this gravity business . . ."

"No, you take it," Dale interrupted. "Because one of the blessings of being an ordinary, stupid mortal like me is that you know when it's time to knock off for a while and go off on a fishing trip. You're going to pack a few cans of machine oil for your joints and fly up to the High Sierras with Sue and me. Then we'll see if your intellect is equal to the task of persuading a rainbow trout to take the fly on the end of your line!"

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**CLOSE-UP**

10c ON ALL STANDS

# REVOLVING WORLD

by MILLARD VERNE GORDON

The planetoid-dwellers didn't mind doing things the hard way!

**T**HE people of Iris were perhaps the most intelligent and therefore the most infernally curious of all the planetoid dwellers. That was why Dolu was busy fastening hoops of iron over the sloping sides of his house and fixing them firmly to stanchions driven deep into the hard packed soil. Even though Dolu was the one most involved in this business, he had attended to fastening his own home himself. "Why trust something as important as this to another?" was the way he would have phrased it.

As a matter of fact everyone on what was later to be known as "the biggest little planet in the system" was doing the same thing. It had all started when the crystal mountain near Dolu's habitation-center began to emanate odd noises.

The crystal mountain was a unique feature of the little world. Iris was fairly big as asteroids go; it was all of 87 miles in diameter which placed it seventh in rank of the thousands and the natives had been justly proud of that fact when their sky-gazers had finally announced it. The sky-gazing place had been built on top of the large mass of crystalline rock that jutted out of the otherwise sandy stony surface of the world.

Long, long ago, the prying single-footed men had found that if you broke off odd shaped chunks of the crystal you could get funny reflections through them. It wasn't long before they had built themselves re-

fracting telescopes and had gratified their insatiate curiosity about the great spheres that kept drifting across their blue-black sky.

By dint of copious argument and heavy fighting, they had arrived at the discovery that their world was but one of the many spheres; that the lot were all sister worlds of a great belt. After two or three wars over the matter, they had found that Iris was seventh in size and not first.

Then, when Dolu was examining the first world, Ceres, one night on top of the crystal mountain, he heard odd noises. By placing his hand-tympana to the floor which was the mountain-top itself, he heard them quite distinctly.

There would be staccato sounds, clicks, dots, dashes, screeches, and then once, far off, a voice.

It was the latter that threw him and the rest of his race into turmoil. At first he thought that the voice and the noises were inside the mountain but when he turned his telescope away the noises ceased. He turned it back on Ceres again and the sounds returned.

This was most curious. Several other savants came up to observe. It was quite true, the noises must have emanated from Ceres itself. The great crystalline mountain must have picked them up as the larger world passed by overhead a scant few thousand miles away.

They tried listening to other

worlds but they got no results. Only Ceres gave off the strange noises.

For a long time the whole planet engaged in controversy. What could Ceres be saying? Why was it saying it and how could it say it?

Dolu felt that it reflected on Iris that Ceres could talk and his home world couldn't. The others felt the same way and a considerable amount of anger was heard. Were they living on an inferior world, an ignorant world?

It had been bad enough to know that theirs was not the largest and best of planets. This, now, was almost intolerable. Something had to be done.

**A**T LENGTH their leaders came together and they said:

"This cannot be stood any longer. Someone must go to Ceres and find out how it talks. He must come back and we will teach Iris to talk too. If our planet does not know how, it is up to us to see that it learns. We must go to Ceres."

Everybody waved their paws in agreement but nobody knew what came next. At length Dolu, who felt that it was up to him to find a way since he had made the embarrassing discovery, remarked:

"We must examine all the methods of getting an object off the surface of a globe. When we have found that in miniature, we will know how to send a person to Ceres."

Everybody put their heads together and thought and thought. Finally someone came to a bright conclusion.

"If a thing is attached to a wheel," he said, "and a wheel being a cross-section of a globe this is a proper thing to think on, and if the wheel is made to revolve very very fast, the thing will be thrown off the wheel."

Everybody said this was so old stuff.

"Then," he said, "let us cause Iris to revolve very very fast and we can throw off a small metal house filled with air and Dolu and it will fall through space to Ceres if we aim it right."

"But," objected Dolu very rapidly, "If the small metal house flies off, so will every other house and every other person!"

"Ah," said the one who had had the bright idea, "we will attach everything else down with metal hoops and stays and so nothing will fly off except the special house."

After some exhaustive discussion, in the course of which the inventor of the idea was punched in his big round eye by Dolu, the plans were laid down for the great trip.

A small metal house built like a ball was made, quite airtight. It was put at the bottom of a long greased slide running along the equator. The slide went up in the air and ended pointing to where Ceres would be the next time Iris caught up with it around the sun-roads.

Along the equator, quite like a gigantic Catherine-wheel, were set big slanted holes filled with explosive powder. When the time came these deep sunk tubes would start their explosions, and with each explosion the planet would receive a circumferential shove and revolve a little faster on its axis. Its natural rotation was slow and indifferent but that would be altered. Faster and faster the planet would spin and then it would be so fast that anything along its equator would just slide off right into space. Gravity was never strong on this small world, though it was strong enough for the Irisians and their peculiarly composed atmos-

phere. Thus it wouldn't take too many pushes or too much explosives to shove Dolu's metal house into space.

When the ship was on its way, tubes set in the other direction would be fired off; the planet would be slowed down on its axis and come back to normal again.

That was why Dolu made sure his own home was fastened down tightly. Everybody was doing their own places down and he didn't want to take any chances of coming back (a problem that no one seemed to have solved and he didn't care to think too much about) and finding that his home had followed him into space.

Then at last came the day when Ceres hove in sight again, a great white sphere rising in the midst of innumerable moving planetoids on the horizon.

Dolu got into the metal ball, bolted the door tight. Outside everyone scurried into their tightly fastened houses, shut their doors, and waited. Presently the first of the explosive tubes went off, then another and it was bang, bang all the way around the equator.

Dolu felt his space-house quivering and rocking and he felt himself getting giddier and giddier and lighter and lighter. Presently the ball began to turn over and over and roll slowly up the greased slide. Outside pieces of rock and bits of plants and things people forgot began to rise into the air and sail along on the growing wind.

Then Dolu's ball began rolling faster and faster up the slide and then, with a sudden swoop, lifted off the

end and whistled away into the sky toward Ceres.

**D**OLU'S BALL fell into the Great West Lake of Ceres in the midst of an amazing shower of dirt, rocks, and old clothes that some forgetful Irisian had left on the line.

It bobbed up and was fished into shore by a crew from the primary Asteroid Exploration Party from the Earth whose main communication center had been set up by the Cerean lake.

When Dolu had come out, he was amazed at the gaunt angular two-legged, two-eyed creatures in metal suits who made talk at him and drew pictures of orbits at him.

Being curious as befits an inhabitant of what came to be called in Transworld Travelogues as "the biggest little planet in the system," he soon imitated and mastered these double-eyed men's tongue.

When he became sufficiently conversant, he spent a great deal of time examining the radio with which the explorers were equipped and over which they talked with Earth. They explained that certain crystals could pick up radio messages and that the crystal mountain must have had that property.

"But," they asked him, "why was it necessary to put rockets on the planet and spin the whole world when it would have been simpler to have put rockets on the space-ball only and shot that off under its own reaction?"

Dolu looked confused a minute and then replied:

"It had never occurred to us."



# DAY OF THE MICRO-MEN

by EDMOND HAMILTON

To Gurth, the freedom of his race was the aim of his life—and he faces tortures unbearable to bring the Micro-Men into their own—until he finds the very Earth shrinking beneath him!

**R**OGER GURTH stretched his broad shoulders to uncramp them, until they threatened to burst his drab brown uniform. His virile, craggy young face, covered with gray rock-dust, showed the tiredness he felt as he sat down in the bottom of the rocket-truck.

Other Plebs in brown uniform were climbing draggingly into the truck. Presently a whistle was blown. The whole caravan of trucks rattled off toward Central City, with these hundreds of Pleb workers who had finished their shift in the uranium mines.

Gurth wiped his mouth free of dust and growled to the thin, exhausted youth sitting beside him:

"You'd think they could give us a drink when we come out. I never get the taste of this dust out of my mouth."

The sun was setting. Like a red-hot ball of fire it hung far in the north, casting long crimson rays across the barren rocky plain over which the trucks rocked and rattled.

This desert of jagged peaks and rocky wastes had once been the ice-bound wilderness of Antarctica. But that had been centuries ago—

"Tired, boy?" Roger Gurth asked the thin lad who sat in dull silence beside him, as the truck rocked on.

"Yes," answered Steve Dart, without raising his dusty head.

Then he looked up. There was an aching hopelessness in his weary young eyes as he appealed to the bigger young man.

"How long is it going to go on, Gurth?" Steve Dart asked haggardly. "How long are we Plebs going to break our backs and hearts laboring for the Patricios?"

"Hush, lad," Gurth cautioned quickly. The big young Pleb looked around at the other weary men in the truck. "Don't talk like that! If a spy heard and reported you—you'd go to the Micros!"

"Besides, lad," he added encouragingly, "we're not without hope. Hasn't your father said that if his plan succeeds, we Plebs might yet be free?"

"He's said that for months," Steve answered dully. "And none of us, even I, know what his plan is. Whatever it is, how can it help us when the Patricios have all the weapons?"

"Your father has something up his sleeve," Gurth declared, his belligerent face confident. "In the old days, he'd have been a great scientist. If those days ever come back—"

"Come back?" echoed the younger man bitterly. He gestured toward the hot, barren rock wastes. "How can they ever come back, with the world like this?"

Gurth's face lengthened. He too had thought of that. It seemed impossible that earth should ever again



*"Damn you, I'll kill you!" he yelled.*

become the smiling garden planet it had been before the great catastrophe.

It had been two hundred years since the thing had happened, in the last decade of the 20th century. A small asteroid had veered from its orbit and plunged into the sun, and had so upset the delicate balance of solar stability that the great orb radiated some twenty percent more heat than before.

That increase of solar radiation had been disastrous. It had made of the tropics a burning belt in which no life could exist. It had superheated even the temperate zones so greatly

that vegetation withered and died, and human life became impossible. Only the Arctic and Antarctic regions, whose ice was completely melted by the increased warmth, remained habitable. But the low, flat Arctic lands were submerged by the swelling, ice-fed seas so that the high land of Antarctica was the only land in which men could live.

**T**O THIS last refuge had flocked the remnants of stricken humanity. A committee of scientists had taken over government of these survivors. Cities had been built and lands cultivated and mines opened.

Gradually, as generations passed, the original benevolent scientist-rulers had become transformed into an hereditary ruling class, the so-called Patricios.

The oligarchy of the Patricios was all-powerful now. The great mass of the people, the Plebs, were little more than serfs. Because the Patricios conserved for themselves all scientific knowledge and the right to education and research, they could devise weapons that easily quelled the rebellions of the serf-class.

And when the Plebs' numbers increased too greatly for the Patricios' safety, the rulers had devised their most terrible scientific device to lessen the population. They had condemned whole batches of Plebs at a time to become Micros, under plausible pretexts.

"They only send us to the Micros because they're afraid of our numbers," young Steve Dart was saying bitterly as the rocket-trucks rattled onward.

"I know, lad," growled big Roger Gurth, his gray eyes bleak with hatred. "But there'll come a day when we'll tear those sweet-scented Patricio dandies to shreds. Your father has promised."

Gurth cherished in his mind the hopeful promise made by Doremus Dart. Steve's father, a Patricio who had been declassed or made a Pleb because he had dared champion the people, had had scientific training. And Doremus Dart had long been engaged in secret, forbidden research upon a scientific weapon he claimed would enable the Plebs to rise against their oppressors.

"I'll go home with you when we reach the City, and see if your father has achieved any success yet," Gurth said to young Steve. "He told me he believed he would succeed soon."

Steve looked at him with a tired smile. "And maybe my sister Lina will be there, too."

Gurth flushed guiltily. He growled, "Your eyes are too sharp for your own good, lad."

But secretly, he admitted to himself that Lina was what had drawn him originally to become a friend of Doremus Dart.

The trucks were rattling across the great belt of cultivated gardens around the city. In the spring dusk, Plebs could be glimpsed working in the fields, moving with slow, plodding steps.

Ahead, across the fields, rose the towers of Central City. Spires and terraced pyramids of white cement caught the last high beams of the sun. With swarms of shimmering rocket-fliers darting above them, they looked like fairy structures.

But Gurth's hard craggy face frowned more deeply, with hatred. Those elfin, lovely towers held only the hated Patricios. They lived up there in the sunlight while the Plebs huddled in the sub-levels.

He muttered a curse as he glimpsed the domed, arrogant mass of Government Hall. Beneath that center of tyranny lay the chamber dreaded by every Pleb—the so-called World of the Micros.

Gurth was thinking of the thousands of Plebs who had gone into that dreaded room—and never come out. More than one good friend of his own had gone there—sentenced to the Micros.

The rocket-trucks rattled through the gate in the high city wall. Black-clad, domineering guards—men of Pleb origin who served the Patricios and were a favored class—stopped the trucks, checked the number on each Pleb's arm, then dismissed them. The Plebs streamed silently

toward the nearest escalator-entrances.

Roger Gurth, trudging with his big arm around Steve's sagging shoulder, saw a sleek rocket-flier landing in a nearby court. Silk-clothed, handsome young men and women emerged from it, and their laughter jarred his ears as they trooped gaily toward a nearby pleasure-garden.

Steve looked yearningly after them. "It must be nice to wear silk, and not have to work all the time," the boy said.

Gurth grunted. "They're soft and useless. I could smash a dozen of them with my bare hands. And by God, I will some day!"

An escalator took them down into the first sub-level. Here were the living quarters of the Plebs. The factories and other industrial plants were on levels farther beneath.

During the day, the glass pavements of the upper city admitted a diffused sunlight to the streets and apartment-barracks of the first sub-level. But now, as dusk deepened above, the electron-lamps were coming on to illuminate the geometrical streets.

Gurth and Steve tramped down the street on which the lad's family lived. Smell of cooked food, distributed from community kitchens, came from open doors. Children played under the electron-lamps. Tired men and women sat in the doorways, idly gossiping.

But Gurth noticed the queer attitude of these fellow Plebs tonight. All were strangely silent as the two young men passed.

"What's the matter with them all?" demanded Gurth. "You'd think we have the Hotlands plague, to see them!"

"I don't understand," Steve said, his dusty brow wrinkling puzzledly.

"Our neighbors here have always been friendly, even though they know that father was once a Patricio."

He and Gurth soon reached the Dart apartment. When they stepped inside, Steve uttered a cry of alarm.

The little apartment was in confusion. Furniture had been tossed about, and scientific apparatus smashed on the floor.

"Dad!" cried Steve alarmedly. He turned a white face. "Something's happened to father, Gurth!"

"The guards must have been here," Gurth gritted. "That scientific equipment—they've discovered your father's work."

Steve paled. "If they've done that—"

**T**HE YOUTH sprang toward one of the cement walls, fumbled and then opened a cunningly concealed panel. From the hidden recess behind it, Steve took out a flat little disk-shaped instrument.

"This—the secret weapon father was working on—they didn't find it," Steve cried.

Gurth took the disk-shaped metal instrument, and stared blankly at it. "What is the thing?"

"I don't know," Steve denied. "But he said it would overturn the Patricios' rule." Then the youth cried, "I'm going to ask the neighbors what happened!"

Steve rushed out. In a moment he was back, his face deathly. "It was the guards, Gurth. They arrested dad—and Lina."

Gurth felt a pang of violent emotion. He thrust into his blouse the disk-shaped instrument he had been examining.

"Lina too?" the big young Pleb cried. His face dangerous, he strode to the door. "I'm going above and

find out what they've done with your father and her!"

Steve was at his side, but Gurth stopped him. "You can't go with me, Steve! If they arrested Lina, they'll be looking for you too! Probably the alarm for you went out just too late for the guards at the city gate to catch you."

"But I can't stay here—," Steve protested wildly.

"You daren't stay here now," Gurth retorted. "Go to old Kasman—he'll hide you till I get back with news."

He overpowered Steve Dart's protests and thrust the agonized youth down the street. Then Gurth started grimly toward the nearest escalator-entrance.

His mind was seething. Not only did the arrest of Doremus Dart destroy the hopes he had put in the old man's plans to develop a weapon against the tyrants. It was Lina he was thinking of.

He had loved Lina from first sight. He had had roseate dreams of a successful revolt against the Patricios, of Lina and himself living free and happy, rearing free children. And now—

Gurth's face was thunder-black as he strode through the streets of the upper city. Here beneath the calm moon, the towers of the Patricios were bathed in brilliant light. Fliers like shining moths flitted to and from the terraced landing-stages. Laughter and music spilled down to the ears of the stalking, grim-faced young Pleb.

It was against rules for a Pleb to be above without a permit. But luck favored Gurth, for no guards stopped him until he approached the entrance of the squat, domed Government Hall. There a burly, black-clad sergeant of guards halted him.

"What are you doing here, Pleb?" the sergeant snarled. "You know Government House is out of bounds. Where's your emerging-permit, anyway?"

"I haven't any," Gurth answered calmly. "I want to see the Commander of Guards."

"What?" bellowed the sergeant, stunned by such audacity. Then he yelled for a detail. "You'll see the Commander, all right. And you'll wish you hadn't! See if he's armed, men."

With sudden dismay, Gurth remembered that in his excitement he had left Doremus Dart's secret disk-weapon in his blouse. It was still there. If the guards found it—

But they only slapped his belt and pockets, where an ato-gun would be carried. Then Gurth was hauled through broad corridors and ante-rooms, until he faced the Commander of Guards.

The Commander was a Patricio, a bored-looking young man with sleepy but very intelligent eyes.

"This Pleb came above level without a permit, sir, and demanded to see you," reported the burly sergeant.

**G**URTH spoke steadily to the Commander. "I admit having no permit. I'll take my punishment for that. But according to law, I have a right to appeal to you for information."

"Talk of your rights, will you?" bellowed the burly sergeant. He raised his hand threateningly.

But the Commander intervened. "No, no, sergeant," the Patricio drawled. "This fellow is within his rights—even the Plebs have some rights, you know. We have to maintain the law."

There was a quirk of amusement in the eyes of the Commander as he said

it. He surveyed Gurth with faint interest.

That half-bored, half-amused look stung the big young Pleb. But he kept his face bleakly steady as he spoke.

"I want to ask about two friends of mine, sir—Doremus Dart and his daughter, Lina."

The amused look faded from the Patricio's face. He eyed Gurth more sharply.

"Friends of yours, are they? I'm glad to know that. We're trying to gather in all Dart's accomplices. He has been convicted of secret scientific research—the worst crime a Pleb can commit."

"What have you done to them, though?" Gurth persisted. "You can't send that old man and girl to the uranium mines?"

"Oh, no, we're not sending them there," the Commander drawled. Gurth felt a quick relief. "Dart and the girl have already been sentenced. They've been sent into the Micros."

"Into the Micros?" Gurth repeated unbelievably. Then the sheer horror in his mind detonated into exploding rage. "You damned tyrants—"

He sprang forward. His one idea was to get this bored young Patricio's neck between his hands.

The sergeant yelled, and the guards leaped forward. Gurth's knotted fists, hardened by long toil, smashed two faces into red pulp. One of them was the sergeant's—the other the Commander's.

Then a hard weapon descended on Gurth's head from behind. He lost consciousness for a brief interval.

When awareness came dimly back to him, he vaguely realized that he was being dragged by several hands along a stone-paved passageway. A brilliant light shone in his eyes. Gurth blinked, and with head aching

violently, tried to rally his stunned wits.

He saw that he had been dragged into a big, vaulted underground stone chamber. Upon a copper platform at its center stood a curious object—a six-foot globe of solid earth that was turning slowly on its axis.

The world of the Micros! Gurth realized that that was what that earthen globe was, and despite his raging passion and defiance, his heart skipped a beat.

Near the turning earthen globe blazed a suspended ato-lamp of great brilliance, the only light in the chamber. Half the turning globe was always in its light, the other half in shadow.

Gurth tried to get up, but could only attain a sitting position. Near him were guards with ato-guns trained on him, ready to blast him. One of them was the burly sergeant, his face now a bleeding wreck. He glared balefully at the dazed young Pleb.

"Attack me, will you?" the sergeant raged to Gurth. "And a Patricio, too? You'll never have another chance—it's the Micros for you, you swine!"

Condemned to the Micros!—most terrible of fates, from which there was no escape ever! Gurth felt the impact of horror.

He tried to get up and fight. But the strength had drained out of him. He could not yet stand.

A guard was wheeling a tripod apparatus from a corner. In its side was a thick lens which was trained on Gurth.

"Go ahead, before the brute gets his strength back and makes us kill him," ordered the sergeant.

A broad blue beam shot from the lens and enveloped Gurth's sitting figure. He felt a terrific shock

through every fiber of his body. It was a terrible sensation of rending and compression that seemed to rive his cells asunder. He was violently sick.

Then he became aware that the big stone room was rapidly changing. Its walls were expanding outward with nightmare speed, its domed ceiling receding, as the room grew larger. And the guards were growing larger, too! They were increasing in stature by the second—already they towered twenty feet high.

Gurth knew that all this was self-deception. It was not the room and guards that were growing larger—it was he who was becoming smaller.

#### INTO THE MICRO-WORLD!

**S**MALLER! That blue beam that still bathed his body with sickening force was the atomic-compression force that was compressing the electronic orbits of each of his body's atoms. It had already reduced him to a pigmy a foot high.

And he was becoming still smaller—was becoming a Micro!

Gurth staggered up and shook his fist at the guards in wild passion.

"Damn you, I'll kill you!" he yelled. "All of you!"

He saw the now-colossal guards laughing, their mirth reaching him as great waves of sound. Then he heard the thunderous voice of the giant who was the sergeant.

"Put the brute on his new world, with the others," the sergeant was ordering.

A hand—huge, incredible—came down toward Gurth and seized him crushingly between thumb and finger. He was lifted in a breathless rush through the air, toward the

spinning Micro-world that now seemed to his eyes a great sphere. He was put down atop it.

The blue compression-beam again bathed him. Driving him farther down into smallness. Now Gurth could not even make out the guards—they were vast, cloudy forms towering up beyond his vision.

The terrific sensation of the compression still sickened him. He sank to his knees, crushing his face against the soft earth of the Micro-world.

Presently the sickening sensation ceased. He knew the compression had stopped. He had been made a Micro—a tiny being too small for the ordinary human eye to see!

Gurth staggered up. He looked around. He felt unable as yet to realize what had happened to him.

Around him lay a weird, unearthly landscape—vista of the Micro-world on which he must live the rest of his life!

Great green clumps of coarse moss towered about him in fantastic groups, looming against an ocher sky in which blazed a great, brilliant orb. Slimy, jelly-like things crawled in the moss—either protozoa or large bacteria, Gurth guessed.

"A Micro!" he said hoarsely to himself. "Trapped here forever—as thousands of other Plebs have been—"

Then a thought came to him that cheered him a little. "But Lina and her father must be somewhere here too!"

Gurth's spirits lifted a little at that idea. If he could find Lina on this tiny world—

*Tiny* world? He suddenly realized that this six-foot globe was now to him a huge planet, whose immensities might hide Lina from him forever.

**N**O, HE'D FIND her somehow! And though their existence as normal humans was ended forever, maybe they could attain a scant measure of happiness together here in the Micro-world.

Gurth stiffened as he saw a large mass sliding through the mosses not far away. His hair bristled on his head. The thing was an incredible arthropodal monster, a worm-like creature armored in an exoskeleton of horny chitin. Its multiple-faceted eyes gleamed coldly, its great claw-like horns projected as it crawled questingly through the mosses.

Gurth's brain told him the thing was really only a tiny worm. But to him, in his present pigmy stature, it was of appalling size. He crouched down, and breathed easier when it had passed.

There was life, danger, on this Micro-world, then? He might have known it. He'd have to have some weapon if he were to survive long here.

He thought suddenly of the disk-like instrument he still had in his blouse—Doremus Dart's mysterious weapon.

He snatched it out and examined it. It was baffling. There were switches on one side, and two small projecting metal globes.

Like all Plebs, Gurth had only vague ideas of science. He could not determine the purpose of the weapon. He stuck it back into his blouse and looked around for something more useful.

Then he went to one of the moss-clumps and began tearing at a tough gray stalk. It would make a fairly heavy club.

Gurth was tearing at the stalk when a whistling scream sounded behind him. Cold, horny feelers grabbed his legs.

The big young Pleb spun around, horrified. He gazed into cold, gleaming, saucer-like faceted eyes of a bulky brown chitinous monster that towered to his shoulder.

A tiny beetle or insect of some kind—but made enormous by his own reduced stature. The thing again uttered the whistling, wheezing scream as its feelers gathered Gurth in to it.

He yelled hoarsely and fought frantically, threshing to win free of its horny limbs. But he was dragged inexorably toward a gaping maw—

Then the feelers gripping him threshed in a wild flurry and relaxed. Gurth staggered back, and then stared wildly.

Men—two men wearing primitive tunics of woven moss—were attacking the insect with stone-tipped spears. Again and again they plunged their weapons between the joints of chitin. The insect rolled over, its multiple limbs still threshing as it died.

Roger Gurth, breathing hard, stood motionless as the two men advanced. They were young, brawny, hardy-looking.

"You're new?" one of them exclaimed eagerly. "We were hunting when we heard your yell. How long have you been here in our world?"

"Only—only a few minutes, I guess," Gurth panted. He stared at them. "How long have you been here?"

The taller man answered. "I've been here five years—I was sentenced for striking a mine-guard. My chum here was born here."

"Born here?" Gurth said incredulously. "You mean—"

"Why, of course," said the taller man. "There have been several generations of people born on this Micro-world since the first Plebs were sent here, decades ago. And thousands

more have come here through the years, sentenced by the damned Patricios."

The tall hunter added, "I'm Jan Karth and this young chap is Val Limbar."

Gurth cried eagerly, "Have you seen a man named Doremus Dart and his daughter? They were sent into this world only a few hours ago."

Jan Karth shook his head. "I've not seen them. But Val and I have been hunting all day. They might be at our village."

"Village?" Gurth repeated, and the hunter nodded.

"We've a number of them—scattered all over the Micro-world. We hunt the insect life here for food. And certain of the mosses have edible spore-pods, and furnish us with clothing, too.

"Come along," he added not unkindly to the bewildered Gurth. "We're going home to my village now. My people will be friendly—most of us know what it means to find yourself on this world!"

Gurth felt as though in a dream as he tramped with his two new friends through the glades of looming mosses, over the black earth. Could all this world really be only a six-foot globe in a subterranean chamber of Central City?

Grotesque life teemed in the moss-forest. Weird protozoan creatures and insects—some of them of tremendous comparative size. Jan Karth and Val Limbar seemed to know their way through the endless moss-glades without hesitation.

"You say villages are on the bottom side of this little world too?" Gurth asked. "Why don't they fall off it?"

Jan Karth shrugged. "I suppose the cursed Patricios imbedded some

kind of artificial gravity control inside this world. At least, I've heard older men guess that—I don't know any science myself."

"Neither do I," Gurth admitted. "But Doremus Dart does. He was once a Patricio, himself."

They came finally to an open clearing in the moss-glades. Here was an astonishing little community.

A half-hundred beehive huts of moss thatched upon frameworks of stalks were clustered together behind a stockade of tall posts. They passed through a gate into this village, and Gurth's amazed eyes beheld scores of men, women and children.

Some wore almost new Pleb uniforms, indicating that they had but recently entered the Micro-world. Others' uniforms were ragged, while many others wore the improvised tunics of woven moss.

Then Gurth's heart bounded as he saw a slim, girlish figure in white blouse and shorts, standing sadly beside a hut.

"Lina!" he yelled, and plunged joyously forward.

Lina Dart looked up startledly. Her pale, lovely face brightened with incredulous gladness, her hand at her throat.

"Gurth! Why, Gurth—"

Before she could say more, the big Pleb had his arms around her and could feel the pound of her heart against his. He crushed her dark, fragrant hair against his rough cheek.

"Gurth, how did you come here?" Lina cried as she stepped back a moment later. "Why did they sentence you here?"

He told her in quick, happy sentences, his eyes fondly searching her face. He saw dismay come into her brown eyes.

"Oh, Gurth, you shouldn't have

gone to protest to the Patricios! Then you'd never have been sent here."

"Do you think I'd have enjoyed it better as a slave in the bigger world, separated from you forever?" he cried.

Lina's soft red mouth quivered. He patted her hair awkwardly. Then he heard an amazed masculine voice.

"Roger Gurth!"

It was Lina's father. Doremus Dart had astonishment written on his fine, aging face whose handsomeness still betrayed his Patricio origin.

### THE MAN WHO GREW

**W**HEN HE had heard Gurth's story, Dart's reaction was the same as his daughter's.

"You were foolish to do that, Gurth. Now you are prisoned forever on this wild little world."

And Doremus Dart shook his head sadly. "My own hope of helping the Plebs is ended forever now. Just as I achieved success, the guards of the Patricios suddenly arrested me. Their spies had learned that I was engaged in secret research. They didn't even give Lina and me a trial."

That recalled something to Gurth's mind. He took from his blouse the disk-like instrument and handed it to Dart.

"Steve and I found this in your apartment, sir—I guess it's the weapon you were building to use against the Patricios. Too bad I forgot and brought it down here into the Micro-world with me. Steve and the other Plebs might have been able to use it up there."

Doremus Dart showed galvanic excitement at sight of the disk-like thing. He snatched it from the hand of the big Pleb.

"Gurth, I can *still* use this!" Dart babbled excitedly. "It's been reduced in size, along with your clothing and your body, but it retains its powers!"

Gurth stared. "Why, I don't understand. No matter how powerful a weapon the thing is, it's only microscopic in size now, like ourselves. We're trapped in smallness—the thing is useless."

"You don't understand!" cried the old ex-Patricio. "This instrument isn't a weapon, as you thought. It's a device to reverse the action of the atom-compression beam—it generates an atom-expansion force that makes material objects *larger* by expanding the electronic orbits.

"You see, Gurth, when I was a Patricio, I learned during my scientific studies the principle of the atom-compression beam. It makes matter smaller by contracting the orbits of the electrons around each atomic nucleus. It occurred to me that an analogous force which expanded the electronic orbits could make matter larger. The Patricios' scientists hadn't investigated that subject, because there was no pressing need for such a discovery.

"But later, when I'd been de-classed and made a Pleb, the idea recurred to me. If I could find an expansion-force, I could bring back from smallness to normal size all the thousands of Plebs imprisoned in the Micro-world. They'd be so numerous they could help the other Plebs in an attempt to break the Patricios' tyranny."

Gurth's eyes popped. "Then this thing could make one of us normal size again—could even make us larger, without limit?"

"Not without limit, Gurth," corrected Doremus Dart. "I found that I could make an object only two or

three times larger than normal, and still reduce it back to normal. If I made it larger than that, it couldn't be brought back to normal! The orbits of the electrons were so expanded after that critical point that the electrons tended to break away completely from the nucleus, dissipating the matter into free electrons. But this thing *can* make a Micro-man into a normal-sized man again."

"God, what a chance!" Gurth cried. "If it still works—"

"It will work, yes," Dart said. "But it won't help us now. This one instrument has an aura of expansion force only large enough for two or three of us, at most. What good would it do for just two or three of us to grow back to normal size again? The guards up there would seize us as soon as we appeared."

"You see," Doremus Dart explained sadly, "my plan was to make thousands of these instruments secretly and bring them down into smallness here, and use them to bring back all the Micro-men to normal size simultaneously. They could overpower the guards in surprise attack. But, before I'd made more than this first model, the arrest came."

And Dart sorrowfully shook his head. "I'm afraid this thing is of little use to us now. There are not tools or resources on this Micro-world to make the delicate instruments in numbers."

Gurth shouted. "We won't give up like that, sir! This thing could help free all the Micro-men on this world. If I could get you back up to the upper world, with it, so you could secretly make hundreds of these instruments—"

"But the guards in the chamber of the Micro-world?" Doremus Dart reminded.

Gurth's craggy face hardened. He had made his decision, and his purpose now was unshakeable as a rock.

"I believe we can take them by surprise and overpower them, sir. If we can, we can get you away and into hiding where you can start making these instruments. If we can't—well, it's worth risking, isn't it?"

**D**OREMUS DART'S eyes flashed. "It *is* worth risking, Gurth! The hope of freeing all these people prisoned in smallness—yes, I'll go back up with you!"

"And I too!" Lina cried eagerly.

But Gurth shook his shaggy head. "No, Lina—there will be fighting and danger above. You must stay here and wait."

Firmly, he disregarded the girl's protests. Dart was now tugging at his sleeve.

"Jan Karth is going with us, Gurth," the aging ex-Patricio said. "We must go some distance from this village, lest we crush it under our feet as we grow."

For a throbbing minute, Gurth held Lina in his arms.

"They'll be back down for you, Lina," he whispered. "We'll win past the guards, up there—your father will make instruments to free all the people down here from smallness."

"But even then," she said troubledly, "there'll be fighting and bloodshed when the Plebs try to overthrow the tyrants. Oh, Gurth, be careful!"

He tore away from her. Doremus Dart and Jan Karth were waiting out in the moss glades beyond the village.

"Now—gather close around me, so that the expansion force will bathe us all," directed Dart. "The mechanism, of course, is designed to be self-

affecting and will grow larger as we do."

They hunched together. Gurth's heart was thudding. This weird, fantastic plan he was going to try!

Dart touched the switches on the side of the little disk. A humming began within it.

"Compact ato-batteries inside it are the only power," muttered the ex-Patricio. "But it should be enough—"

From the twin globes on the little instrument glowed a ghostly red light. The spraying radiance bathed all three of the closely-gathered men.

Gurth felt again that rending sickness as of colossal forces riving his body's atoms. He felt Dart stagger against him, and heard an incoherent exclamation from Jan Karth.

The three were—*growing*. It was as though the moss-clumps around them were shrinking rapidly. Their stature was increasing by the minute. They could look far across the curving, moss-covered surface of the Micro-world.

And now as that world grew smaller beneath them, Gurth's eyes could make out the big stone chamber in which this diminutive world was housed. He saw the bright sun-lamp—and saw two apparently gigantic guards lounging and chatting by the door.

"We're already a foot high!" Dart was whispering. "Jump off the Micro-world, before we crush it under us!"

They leaped together and hit the stone floor of the chamber with a shock. Huddled behind the six-foot Micro-world, keeping it between them and the two guards at the door, they swayed shakenly as the red radiant force shot them into larger stature.

They were six feet high now—normal stature. Doremus Dart turned

off the disk-shaped mechanism. Gurth took the instrument from his hand and thrust it into his own blouse, supporting the older man as he swayed sickly.

"All right—now!" whispered Dart weakly as they hunched behind the Micro-world.

"You stay here," Gurth murmured. "Jan Karth, you take the guard on the left, I'll take the other. Try to make no sound."

Jan Karth raised the stone-pointed spear he had brought, his eyes gleaming. Gurth knotted his great fists.

They leaped out together. One of the black-uniformed guards saw them. His brutal face froze in incredulous amazement. Then, with a strangled cry, he grabbed for the ato-pistol in his belt.

Gurth's hands gripped his neck. The convulsive wrench had all the strength of a uranium-miner's muscles in it. The guard's neck snapped, and the man sank limply to the stone floor.

Gurth turned. The other guard was dead. Jan Karth had driven his spear through the heart.

Doremus Dart stumbled toward them. "Now what? How are we going to get out of Government Building, past all the guards?"

"You and Jan wait here," Gurth ordered. "I'll go out and see if the corridors are clear."

His heart was pounding with resolve as he left them and went out into the big corridor outside. There was no one in it. Gurth went a little way along it, and stopped.

He reached into his blouse, and took out the disk-shaped instrument. Deliberately, he touched its switches as he had seen Doremus Dart do.

**T**HE RED radiance sprayed again from the instrument, envelop-

ing him. He felt again the sick shock of atom-expanding forces. He thrust the instrument back into his blouse and stood, sickly shaken.

He was growing larger rapidly. Already he was eight feet tall—ten feet, now. His head brushed the stone roof of the corridor. He had to get out of here before he was trapped and crushed, if he was to do what he had determined to do.

Gurth stumbled down the corridor, stooping. He squeezed up a broad stair at its end, into a big lighted hall.

Guards lounging in this great room stared with petrified unbelief at the fifteen-foot Pleb giant emerging upon them.

"Kill him!" shrieked one officer.

They grabbed out their ato-pistols. Too late! Gurth was already plunging forward, his giant arms flailing.

It was like fighting children. The guards who came barely to his knees were flung in all directions by his whirling arms.

One had escaped, screaming. Alarm bells began clamoring through Government House. Gurth's head was now brushing the vaulted ceiling of this high hall.

"Got to get out of here!" he muttered thickly, stumbling toward the doors.

He had to get down on his knees to squeeze through the double doors. He scrambled down a broad entrance-hall hardly large enough to contain his giant, expanding body. He burst out of its further end, into the warm night outside Government House.

He straightened up, then—a thirty-foot giant who already towered above the first stories of the cement tower of the Patricios. Bells were ringing, men calling in tiny voices,

fliers darting wildly off landing-stages of nearby buildings.

Gurth still felt rocked by sickness. He felt a burning stinging in his ankles, and looked down to see the tiny jets of atom-guns blasting at him from pigmy guards.

"Out of the city," he told himself hoarsely. "There's room to grow, outside—"

Still bathed in the red radiance of the atom-expansion force, Gurth staggered through the streets toward the edge of the metropolis. There he towered up, his head level with the towers.

In ten more minutes, Gurth towered up two hundred feet above the surface of the city. He felt standing beside an ant-hill of blinking lights and tiny insect figures. His head seemed touching the stars. Then he heard a vicious, tiny buzzing.

Swarms of rocket-fliers were darting toward him like clouds of brilliant bees. Bees that could sting! They jetted tiny spurts of flame that pricked the face and hands of the giant. He reached a hand and smote a cloud of them from the air like midges.

Gurth laughed in Homeric mirth. "They won't attack again!"

He felt more stings in his ankles and looked down at the tiny pigmies down there who were attacking him with atom-blasts.

"Lay down your arms and retire, Patricios and guards!" Gurth thundered, raising his foot menacingly over them.

The nerves of the tiny men below could not withstand that awful hanging menace. They sucked back, dropping their weapons.

"Ho, Plebs!" Gurth bellowed thunderously. "Come forth from the sub-level, all of you!"

Out of the escalator entrances hes-

itatingly came awestruck masses of tiny, brown-clad figures, looking up with thousands of white little faces at the colossus above the city.

"Disarm all Patricios and guards!" Gurth thundered. "Kill no one, needlessly—but if there is resistance to you, I will crush those who resist!"

**H**E WATCHED as the brown-clad pigmies, with a thin, tiny cheer, began surging through the city. He saw that there was no resistance. The Patricios and guards, overawed by the menacing giant against the starlit sky, surrendered their weapons and authority.

Gurth was still growing, bigger and bigger. He had to stoop down to peer at the lighted square in front of Government Building. He could just make out two tiny men being escorted out of Government House by rejoicing Pleb hordes—two men staring up at him.

"Dart—Doremus Dart!" Gurth called down. "I tricked you—this is what I meant to do, all the time. The only way to free the Plebs—and now it's done."

He saw one of those two tiny men wringing his hands, and though he could not hear Dart's voice, he understood.

"I know," Gurth's mighty voice vibrated. "I know that I can't come back, that the expansion of electron-orbits is out of control now. But—it was the only way."

He straightened. He was beginning to feel very strange. The sickness had passed into a smooth, gathering darkness that was somehow invading his mind.

He saw the Pleb masses down there, no longer in frenzied rejoicing, but staring up at his titanic, growing form. Gurth knew the end was near. And he felt a queer, warm happiness.

"Lina—all the others on the Micro-world—Dart will make instruments and go down and bring them back," he whispered to himself. "Bring them back to a new, free life."

The darkness was gathering and gathering. He was so gigantic now that he could hardly see the little mass of lights that was the tiny city far below.

He moved away from it, walking blindly out into the desert under the starlit sky, with mighty strides.

They watched him go, the awestricken, frozen masses of Plebs in the city. They watched that incredible figure that loomed vast against the heavens recede from them, still growing.

They saw Gurth's titanic form become vague and shadowy and unreal. He seemed to waver and melt against the darkness, as he dissolved into free electrons.

The giant who had freed them, the liberator whom legend would give immortal life—he was gone now, gone forever, drifting off into eternity between the night wind and the stars.

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## CHAPTER I

### FEAR, ANGER, LAUGHTER

**T**HE building was a narrow, dilapidated structure, the neighborhood bleak and deserted. Signs conveyed the information that the area had been condemned. Already several buildings had been razed, to make way for the new park which would replace the unsightly slum district.

Doubtfully, Griff Harkness consulted the clipped advertisement. There seemed no mistake; this was certainly number 356 Linwood Avenue. Mounting the rickety steps, he read a penciled notice on the door. "Prof. Z. K. S. Bendizon, B. A., M. A., M. Sc., Ph. D., 3rd floor."

The interior echoed hollowly with his footsteps as he climbed the narrow stairs. All other tenants appeared to have fled long since before the oncoming wreckers. What need could anyone located in such surroundings have for an assistant? At least there would probably be no surfeit of applicants.

In the dingy third-floor waiting room, only one person was ahead of him—a girl. She sat huddled forlornly near the door. At Griff's entrance, she looked up with blended relief and apprehension.

He mentally appraised the glance—

and the girl. "She's glad I came, because she's half scared of being here all by herself; but she sees me also as competition. Poor kid—she must need the job pretty bad to brave this neighborhood."

Tacked to the inner door was a sign, "Busy—Knock." Griff raised his knuckles, then paused.

"I suppose you've already knocked?" he asked casually.

The girl nodded; then, swallowing, she added: "He told me to wait—I've been here almost half an hour."

"H'm-m. Time to stir him up." Griff rapped sharply.

After a short delay, the door opened. An untidy, stocky little man with a scraggly beard and peculiar-looking skull cap peered at them through steel-rimmed spectacles.

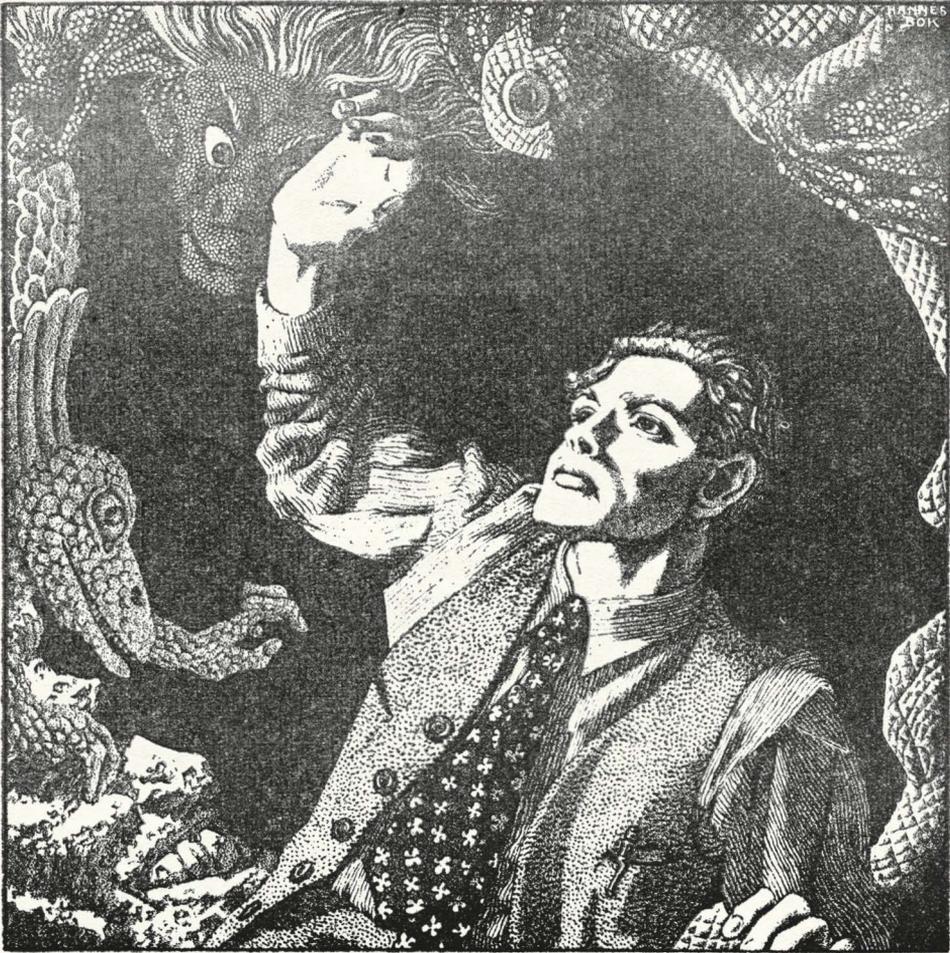
"Another?" he observed with satisfaction. "Good! I can use you both. Step in."

Both visitors looked around his workshop curiously. The room contained a number of pieces of strange apparatus, a littered desk, and a confusion of boxes and packing cases.

"My temporary laboratory," explained Bendizon. "They have permitted me to stay until the wreckers reach this building. Are you ready to begin?"

"Does that mean," demanded Griff, "that we're hired?"

"I need two people—for a special



*From every dark corner leered horrible, obscene faces—*

purpose. I shall pay you well. You are perhaps acquainted with telepathy?"

"I know what it is."

"Good. Now if the young lady will remove her hat and take this seat—"

While she complied with the request, Griff studied the curious chair to which she had been assigned. It was a substantial affair, bolted to a low platform, with various attachments. When the girl had taken her place, Professor Bendizon lowered an adjustable headpiece, not unlike the hair-dryers familiar in beauty shops, until it encased the upper portion of her head. It was connected through

wires and tubes with a near-by instrument stand. He adjusted a screw-like device in the side of the helmet until she interrupted with a gasping exclamation.

"Too tight?" he inquired. "I will loosen it. Better?"

"Yes—somewhat."

"Good. Now young man—in the chair facing the lady."

Feeling slightly uneasy, Griff took the chair indicated, and allowed the scientist to fit a corresponding helmet to his cranium. Then, over his wrists, as they rested idly on the chair arms, Bendizon deftly fastened a pair of clamps.

“What’s that for?” demanded Griff.

“To complete the circuit,” explained Bendizon, shortly. He was already engaged in adjusting similar clamps on the girl’s slender wrists. She smiled wanly, and Griff tried to grin back. The grin faded when the little scientist darted back to him and snapped another clamp around his legs. It was altogether too much like being strapped in an electric chair.

“I don’t like this!” Griff exploded, straining at his bonds. “Let me up!”

“Please!—my young friend—you might injure that fine body. It is useless to struggle. To make sure—” Bendizon passed a strap around Giff’s abdomen, and drew it tight. Unheeding the burst of expletives that followed him, he returned to the girl and similarly fastened her more securely.

“Now,” he said, triumphantly, “we are ready. No, my friends—as you have begun to suspect—we are not going to amuse ourselves with a nice little experiment in telepathy. My investigations have to do with more important matters — matters that will make the name of Bendizon world-famous.”

For a moment, he busied himself at the instruments to which the headpieces were connected through a maze of wires and tubing.

Fuming with anger, Griff could only watch and strain—his lips compressed to a thin line. Across the room, the girl was following every move of the scientist with wide-eyed apprehension.

“You think I am mad?” jeered Bendizon over his shoulder. “Who knows? Perhaps I am. You will be sure of it presently.”

He bent over a tank-like affair in the corner and suddenly turned, hold-

ing in his hand a rod some four feet long. Harkness gasped. The girl gave a stifled scream of horror. Dangling from a short line at the end of the rod was a huge, hairy spider.

“You recognize it?” taunted Bendizon. “Yes—it is a tarantula. Let us see if the little lady can make friends with it.”

Grinning fiendishly, he thrust the dangling monster toward her. With horror-filled eyes, she shrank away.

Then, slowly, with diabolical care, the mad scientist proceeded to torture her with the wriggling, hairy monster.

Harkness, straining at his bonds until his bones fairly cracked, shouted helpless imprecations. Bendizon paid not the slightest heed. His whole being seemed concentrated on savoring to the full every ounce of sadistic delight from the torture of the girl.

Maneuvering the squirming creature until it was level with her eyes, he slowly advanced it toward her face. The baleful red eyes burned into hers; the loathsome hairy legs struggled to clutch her features. As they almost succeeded, Bendizon drew it back, then repeated the performance. Tiring of this, he lowered the spider to her hands—slowly, slowly — allowing the squirming claws to scramble for a hold on the quivering flesh. This amusement palling, he dropped it in her lap and allowed it to run free on her body—up, up—over the swelling breasts beneath her jacket—until it reached her throat—when he drew it back.

Watching this nightmare helplessly, Harkness raged and swore, shouting incoherent threats, promising to rend the vile scientist limb from limb, struggling frantically against the clamps and bonds that held him.

Again the scientist was dangling the hairy body of the squirming tarantula in the girl's face. And suddenly — her control breaking — scream after scream burst from her tortured throat.

Human endurance could stand only so much of this. Her body collapsed; all the color drained from her features.

"Good God, man! Don't you see she's fainted!" bellowed Griff. "Let her go! Do what you want with me, but have mercy—"

Bendizon turned toward him, smiling satirically.

"Ah, my friend—you are angry! Very angry! That is nice. Yes," he added reassuringly, "we shall release the young lady. But first, I must put away my little pet."

He deposited the squirming creature in its tank-like cage, then made some adjustments in a piece of apparatus standing between the two contrivances with which the head-pieces were connected. This done, he set about releasing the girl.

**A**S SOON as her vise-like helmet was removed, she slumped down in the chair. Bendizon calmly unfastened the clamps and straps that held her and eased her to the floor.

"I would ask your assistance," he observed to Griff, "but I fear you are angry at your good friend, Professor Bendizon. After all, can you not enjoy a little joke?"

Perspiring and limp from his helpless fury, Griff stared in astonishment. A joke! If torturing a helpless girl was Bendizon's idea of humor—

"Very funny, was it not?" insisted the Professor.

Funny! Yes, it was funny—funny what Griff would do to the rat when

he was free of his bonds. At the thought, he found himself laughing harshly.

"You'll think it's funny—when I get my hands on you!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Bendizon.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Griff, in unison.

It was absurd that they should both be laughing at the same idea.

"Suppose I should not let you go free?" demanded Bendizon, looking very roguish at the suggestion.

"Then," roared Griff, "the joke would be on me!" and they both lapsed into gales of boisterous laughter.

The girl sat up, blinking in bewilderment.

"What are you two sillies laughing at?" she demanded. Suddenly, the comical aspect of it seemed to strike her. She rocked back and forth on the floor, convulsed with amusement.

Griff scarcely realized that the Professor had been unbuckling his straps until he found himself free. He shook with mirth at the thought that he had threatened to strangle the pleasant old rascal. A fresh burst of silvery laughter diverted his thoughts to the girl.

"You looked—so funny—sitting there, with your head in that bucket affair!" she giggled.

"Ought to have seen the way you looked, dodging away from that spider!" retorted Griff, guffawing at the memory.

"It was very comical," observed the Professor, "but after all, we must settle our business. You have been most helpful. I shall pay you each twenty dollars—is it not droll of me to pay you for doing nothing? Please sign this receipt and give me your addresses. I may send for you again. Does that amuse you?"

"Yeah—that's a good one," chuckled Griff. Signing the receipt, he glanced up. "It says: 'I hereby state that I was not injured in any way and that I performed the tasks required by Professor Bendizon of my own free will.' Prof," he observed, shaking a waggish finger, "you know that's stretching things!"

"Ha, ha! Very good!" returned Bendizon appreciatively. "You have a keen sense of humor. Of course—" he in turn became waggish—"you can return the money and refuse to sign."

This was the funniest suggestion of all. Griff and the girl found it difficult to sign, they were so convulsed by the thought.

A moment later, they were racing to see who could get down the stairs first. Amid gales of merriment, the girl won. Arm in arm, they scamp-ered hilariously down the almost deserted street.

"Aren't they funny?" demanded the girl, giggling. She pointed to some men who were indulging in a sort of riotous horseplay on the corner.

One of the group spotted the approaching couple and insisted on explaining the cause of their hilarity.

"Foreman can't make us work!" he roared, doubling up with glee. "We're wrecking the building, and we all gets the notion to quit. Foreman can't make us work 'cause he's got the silly giggles hisself—ain't that right, Bill?"

"That's right!" bellowed the man indicated. "Lazy sons-o'-guns don't wanna work. Don't wanna work myself—ho! ho! ho!"

Griff was laughing at the cockeyed absurdity of it all—and then, of a sudden, he sobered.

"What's so funny about that?" he demanded.

The foreman looked at him, startled. "That's right," he growled. "What's funny about it? Get back on the job, you scum—what do you think you are?"

Glancing sheepishly at one another, the men sidled away. Griff looked askance at the girl. She was no longer laughing; she merely looked bewildered. And he found that he no longer cared to meet her eyes, remembering the unsavory part he had played in Bendizon's office. Not only had he allowed her to be nearly frightened to death, but he had callously laughed about it afterward.

In an atmosphere of constraint, they reached the streetcar line. "There's a car coming," she said. "If you don't mind—"

"Oh, sure!" he agreed, obviously relieved. "I'm walking—er—that is, I'm not going that way."

Not until he saw her disappear inside did it occur to him that he had neglected to learn her name or her address. What was it she wrote on the receipt? Lucille something or other—he was pretty sure it was Lucille.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RETURN VISIT

**G**RIFF thought a good deal about the incident during the next week, and the more he thought, the madder he became. When his seething anger and shame had reached a fairly torrid point, he decided that something ought to be done about it. Details connected with a change in his own fortunes caused some delay, but the afternoon of the seventh day found him again approaching the dilapid-

ated structure in which the old scientist was housed.

The door was locked. After his third knock, a window was thrown open. A voice called down: "What do you want?"

The countenance peering over the window ledge was that of Professor Bendizon, his unruly hair standing out in all directions.

I want to knock your block off! was the answer Griff felt tempted to give; but since this did not seem likely to gain him admittance, he temporized. "Can't tell you from down here."

The head disappeared inside. It returned a moment later, this time—Griff noted—with the black cap on. He wondered vaguely why any one with such a heavy crop of hair should wear a skull cap.

"The door is unlocked. Come up."

The minute's interval seemed hardly long enough to have allowed the old coot time to slip downstairs and unlock the door; however, when Griff tried the latch, it opened. A glance at the lock, as he entered, cleared the mystery. The device was operated by some electrical mechanism evidently connected from above.

Why this fact should fill him with a sense of dread was inexplicable; nevertheless, he found himself strangely reluctant to proceed. At his first move toward the stairs a board creaked, sending shivers up his spine. He shrank back in terror.

From what? He could not have told. He knew only that some frightful danger portended in that empty, silent structure. An impulse surged over him to turn and run—run until he had put a world between himself and the horrors here contained.

**H**E TOOK another step forward. The effort seemed to exhaust

his reserves of will power. From every dark corner leering, horrible, obscene faces—spectral monstrosities—were peering forth. Clutching fingers on long, bony arms stretched from the murky shadows. The nightmare terror was something palpable; it swathed him like a shroud, constricting his movement, tightening his throat so that he could scarcely breathe the fetid air.

Bathed in cold sweat, he took another step—another. He forced one foot onto the bottom stair. Through all his terror, the insistent voice of his will urged: "You came here to get that fiend! You've got to go through with it!"

Go through with it he would—even though he was in a cold funk—was afraid as he had never been afraid before!

Slowly, with dragging steps, he forced himself up the first flight—and knew that he could go no further. His whole being revolted—retched with the need to turn and make a wild dash for the open.

"I've come this far—I've got to see it through!" he muttered between clenched teeth. And fearful of his own strength to endure longer, he flung himself violently up the next flight of steps—fairly into the open doorway at its head. It was like plunging deliberately into a miasma of unnameable horrors—something that revolted flesh and spirit alike.

And now he faced the final ordeal—Bendizon's laboratory. Here, he knew, lurked the central core of that fearful, unclean menace—a menace so palpable, so terrifying, so overpoweringly loathsome that its breath tainted the whole building. In some way, it seemed personified in the tarantula with which Bendizon had tortured the girl. His imagination seized on the suggestion. The place

was alive with tarantulas—huge, hairy, malevolent creatures, their slimy bodies squirming out of every crack. His flesh shrank. He feared to look down, knowing that they were creeping along the floor; he could not look up for knowing that they were pouncing on him from the ceiling and walls. He was crawling with them. Their clammy, sharp-clawed feet were on his hands, his neck, his forehead—inside his clothes! He could endure no more—

The inner door opened. Dr. Bendizon, squat, venomous-looking—a human tarantula himself—stood looking at him curiously.

“Are you not afraid?” he asked.

“I—yes, I am afraid,” admitted Griff, aware of the hysterical undercurrent in his voice. “I came to—I’m going to—”

Bendizon showed his teeth in a mocking smile.

“What are you going to do?”

And in that instant Griff knew that he was afraid to do what he had come to do—that he would never lay hands on this evil, mocking creature from hell. He was shaking violently.

“I—I came to—to ask for her address. The girl—”

Loathing himself, he heard the words issue from his mouth—words designed to placate this satanic monster. If he had fallen to his knees gibbering for mercy, it would have been a no more abject surrender.

“Is that all? You should have told me. It would have saved you much suffering. Wait.”

The scientist turned to his littered desk. Griff waited in agonized uncertainty while the scientist rummaged through his papers. When he had found the address he copied it on a discarded envelope retrieved from the waste basket.

“Here,” he said, extending the envelope. “She was a very nice young lady.” He cocked his head. “You have remarkable courage, to force yourself up here when you are so afraid. I congratulate you.”

Stumbling down the stairs, Griff exercised all his remaining reserves of self-control, determined that he would not run from this vortex of hellish mystery. Once yield to the wild terror that clutched at his nerves, and he would go raving mad.

Even in the street, the baleful influence of the poisonous old building seemed to spread abroad. The neighborhood was fearsome—a place to run from in unnameable fear.

Not far ahead of him men actually were running—yes, shouting in terror. And on a sudden, he realized why. They had been working on the very building he was passing. They were scurrying away like frightened mice because the building was starting to fall.

Frantically, he too ran. Too late! He could never make it. In a moment, he would be buried alive in the noisome ruins. Faster his feet flew—but not fast enough. Choked, gasping cries burst from his throat. Cowering from the gathering momentum of the black, falling walls, he dodged, slipped, and fell, shrieking as in a nightmare.

He glanced up presently with the realization that the sun was shining. He was not buried in ruins—he was not even in danger. The building which had been about to fall was far behind him. It was still standing and did not look at all dangerous.

Conscious only that he had escaped something—he knew not what—Griff rose to his feet. He was dusting himself off when the men slowly returned. He recognized the fore-

man he had encountered on his previous visit.

The man eyed him shamefacedly. "Seems to be all right," he said, jerking his thumb toward the building. "But I sure thought it was coming down. Funny the whole gang got the same notion to oncet," he added, perplexed. "Musta been something to it."

"You can give me my time," one of the workmen spoke up. "I'm through with this job."

"Me too," was the gruff chorus from several throats, flavored with such additions: "Too much funny stuff." "The damned place gives me the creeps."

"We'll knock off for the day," the foreman replied. "This ain't the kind of work to be doing when your nerves is shot."

On an impulse, Griff suggested a visit to the nearest beer parlor. The resulting talk was vaguely illuminating. The foreman recounted several queer incidents which had shaken the morale of the wrecking crew. There was, for example, the laughing jag they had experienced at the time of Griff's former visit. Another time, every man had been seized with an irresistible restlessness which caused them all to start walking away from the place.

"I wasn't afraid—not like it come over me today," the foreman explained. "Just seemed like I had to be on the go. Got a little ways out in the country and it left me. Another time—that was the day Sam Fiddler tried to kill hisself jumping off the scaffolding—we all got so gloomy and down on our luck we like to have died. The feeling went away about the middle of the forenoon. It's mighty danged queer."

"It is that," acknowledged Griff, absently studying the envelope the

scientist had given him. The name the Professor had written down was Lucille Driscoll; the address, 951 Henderson Place. But it was not this information which caused him to give a start, then hastily to settle the bill and take leave of his companion.

### CHAPTER III

#### SECRET ENTRY

**H**IS first objective was the telegraph office. When he had dispatched his wire, he hunted up 951 Henderson Place, only to learn that Miss Driscoll had found work in a store and would not be home until evening. He arrived in time to intercept her as she emerged from the employees' entrance.

"Remember me?" he demanded, grinning sheepishly.

"Oh! Why, yes, of course. You're the—you're Mr.—"

"The name's Griff Harkness. How about having dinner with me?"

She hesitated. "I suppose there's no reason why I shouldn't. That is, if you—"

He surmised that she was thinking a young man who had been willing to take any kind of a job a few days ago might not be very affluent.

"I've had a little stroke of luck," he explained, as they found seats in a restaurant. "I'm an indirect beneficiary of those wild ups and downs on Wall street that the papers have been full of the last few days. I've a friend in a brokerage house there—Stan Williams. He managed to clean up a bit, in a flurry, and sent me a check for a few hundred dollars he'd borrowed way back in my more prosperous days."

"How wonderful!" The girl seemed genuinely glad at his good

fortune. Griff suddenly realized that she was an unusually attractive piece of femininity. If he could only erase from his thoughts the look of utter terror that had been on her features when the Professor—damn him!—tortured her with the live tarantula.

She flushed under his gaze.

"I was thinking," he explained, "what you must think of me for letting that phoney scientist get away with his stuff."

"Why," she assured him, "you were bound—helpless. You couldn't prevent it."

"I should have whaled the stuffing out of him afterward."

A puzzled expression came into her eyes.

"It might interest you to know," he went on, refusing to spare himself, "that I went back this afternoon to do the job—and he had me buffaloed again."

She looked up at him in embarrassment. "What do you want me to say?"

"That's just it, sister—er—Miss Driscoll. There's nothing you can say. But let me spill the whole story."

He told of the visit—his talk with the foreman.

"We're both in this—in a way," he wound up. "That's why I hunted you up. I wanted to see if you could help me figure out what it adds up to. I'm convinced this screwy scientist must be somehow responsible. I don't believe it's hypnotism. He couldn't have hypnotized me before I even started up the stairs. At any rate, he couldn't have hypnotized those workmen a block away. That reminds me—" he paused abruptly—"I forgot one important thing."

**H**E produced the envelope on which Bendizon had written

the address. "See this?" He indicated with his finger.

She read the engraved corner inscription, "Girvin, Girvin & Hayes, Investment Brokers," then glanced up questioningly.

"It's the investment firm Stan Williams works for. I've wired him asking what he knows about a certain client named Z. K. S. Bendizon. Suppose, as soon as we're through, we go around to the telegraph office and see if there's an answer."

Somewhat to his surprise, there was an answer. They bent over the counter, their heads close together, and read it.

THIS FELLOW BENDIZON YOUR CITY IS NEW MYSTERY MAN OF FINANCE. SEEMS TO HAVE UNCANNY SENSE OF MARKET FLUCTUATIONS. WAS ONLY TRADER WHO GUESSED RIGHT EVERY TIME DURING PAST WEEK OF UNACCOUNTABLE BULL AND BEAR MOVEMENTS. FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE WIRE ME ALL INFORMATION YOU HAVE ON HIM.—STAN.

"That!" observed Griff, expelling his breath, "is something!"

"I'm sure of it," the girl agreed excitedly. "But what?"

"I'm afraid even to suspect. But one thing I can tell you. Beginning tomorrow, I'm going to haunt that neighborhood until I catch him away from that apparatus of his. I suppose, having a job, you wouldn't be able to get off to watch the fun—if any?"

"Well—it isn't a very good job," she responded, smiling up at him.

**I**T WAS mid-morning before they arrived at the desolate section in which the tenacious scientist still maintained his aerie. The delay resulted in part from an argument in

which Griff, who had been anxious for the girl's company the night before, presented specious reasons why she should not go with him.

Eventually, she guessed his real purpose. "You're afraid I'll be a nuisance. You intend to—punish him for what he did to us—and you don't think I could endure to witness it. Isn't that so?"

"Well, could you?" he demanded.

"Perhaps not. But Griff—" they had advanced to the point of using first names—"isn't our real purpose to find out what it's all about? When you take him away from his uncanny apparatus, he's just an egotistical, commonplace, little man. You couldn't demean yourself by using your superior strength against him. But if he actually has power over people's minds; if he can influence others to his personal advantage—then he's a public menace. That's why I want to be in on this. It's our duty to find out—and then take measures to stop him."

In the end, her view prevailed. "But if he makes it too hard to find out, I might have to get rough," hedged Griff.

They were a couple of blocks from their destination when the girl suddenly caught Griff's arm and pulled him into a shadowy building entrance. Her quick eyes had caught a glimpse of the scientist emerging from his doorway on the opposite side of the street.

"Good! We'll waylay him here—make him talk," said Griff, with satisfaction.

"Couldn't we use his absence to better advantage?"

"Might, at that," he admitted. "What's he carrying?"

As Bendizon drew closer, the answer became apparent. The two ob-

jects in his hands were empty beer bottles.

"That means he's on his way to the nearest store to turn in his empties on a couple of fresh bottles. Getting ready for lunch. We won't have much time to work."

Restraining their impatience until the scientist was well on his way, they crossed the street and hurried to the building that housed his laboratory. It was locked. A boarded-up basement window offered a more promising means of entrance. Griff quickly forced it, then, groping his way through the littered, cobweb-festooned basement, he located the stairs and hurried to the front door.

The locking device was not difficult to manipulate from inside. In a moment, he had admitted Lucille and they were scrambling up the stairs.

**T**HEIR objective was the instrument stand—or rather, the three instrument stands—for the central section seemed to have no direct connection with the flanking portions—the latter being connected with the head-pieces of the torture chairs which both of them recalled so vividly. The central apparatus was shaped somewhat like a pipe organ, with a series of tubes rising to the ceiling at the back, a sloping instrument board in front. The various dials and indicators on this panel furnished no hint of its purpose.

"This jigger seems to be a sort of a switch," Griff commented, pointing to a small lever projecting from a circular aperture. Gingerly, he moved the lever, found that it could be rotated like the gear-shift of an automobile. A slight pressure to one side forced it into some interior pocket, where it settled with a click.

From the body of the machine

came a faint whirring sound. Slowly at first, then with a sudden flood of intensity, an influence emanated from it—a sense of depression that was crushing in its finality. Over Griff's being flooded a hopeless realization of the futility of their errand—of the futility of all effort. Why had they come here? What was the use of it all?

He glanced somberly at Lucille. The girl's eyes had completely lost their luster. Her shoulders sagged, her lips trembled, she did not even respond to his glance. Despair settled over Griff like a tangible weight. All the woe of the universe seemed to be bearing him down.

Through it all, he was conscious that the emanation came from the machine. Unavailing though he knew it would be, some lingering impulse from his intent when he pushed the lever caused his fingers to fumble hopelessly for it. He pushed it from its slot, then with infinite weariness, stumbled away.

The whirring in the machine stopped, before he had taken three steps. Miraculously the sense of depression lifted.

He whirled. The two—the man and the girl whose senses had been overwhelmed by an influence more powerful than their own personalities—looked at each other for a full minute without speaking. Griff drew a deep breath as he returned to the girl's side.

"So that's how he does it."

He fingered the control lever—the urge strong within him to experiment. Hastily the girl caught his hand.

"Let's take no more chances!" she gasped. "Whatever it is, it's stronger than we are. He must have it set for various emotions—he can turn them on or off with a twist of

the lever. They blanket the region like radio waves."

"Radio!" Griff caught excitedly at the word. "That's it. Only instead of sound vibrations, it broadcasts vibrations capable of affecting human nerve centers. They overpower the ordinary emotional reactions just as a blasting radio drowns out other sounds. I wonder—"

## CHAPTER IV

### MACHINE OF MADNESS

**H**IS groping fingers discovered a catch. Releasing it, he tipped back the instrument panel, exposing the inner workings.

Manipulating the control lever cautiously, lest it release some violent emotion too great for their powers of resistance, they gained some idea of how the contrivance worked.

As the lever slipped into one of several selective notches, it engaged the cogs of one or another of several small spindles, at the same time starting a silent motor which set the spindle to whirling. At the top of each spindle was a disk which rotated in contact with a metallic-fibered brush. From this, delicate coiled wires led to what was no doubt the amplifying and sending mechanism at the back. Even though the disk was smaller than a playing record, and the needle was replaced by this brush-like affair, the similarity to the phonograph principle was inescapable.

They tested the mechanism cautiously, engaging one spindle and then another for a brief instant at a time. Doing so actually meant running the gamut of an emotional maelstrom. They had brief flashes of fear, of anger, of humor, of de-

pression, of hatred, of a dizzying erotic urge that caused Lucille to blush furiously and almost made Griff forget his intention to jerk the control lever back to neutral.

"And these other two—must be recording machines," hastily suggested the girl, turning away to cover her embarrassment. "Don't you see it now? That's why he frightened me so terribly. He wanted a record of intense fear. And very likely he obtained a beautiful anger record as you had to sit there helplessly and watch him. I wonder—"

"It is unnecessary to wonder, young lady. I will tell you all about it."

Both turned guiltily. In the doorway, his snapping black eyes darting from one to the other, stood the stocky scientist.

Griff quickly recovered his poise. "Nice little contraption," he remarked. "I had an idea something like this was the answer. Another one planted on Wall Street—that so?"

"You are clever," conceded Bendizon. He deposited the bottles and package which betokened the fulfillment of his errand on the desk, and donned his skull cap. "Shall I demonstrate how it works? You see, I am hospitable—even though you have performed a criminal act by breaking into my property."

Griff interposed himself in front of the instrument.

"No you don't!" he observed. "Not while I'm on the job."

Bendizon showed his teeth. "You have a suspicious nature! And having learned my secret, what do you intend to do?"

"That question," returned Griff, "is one that we should ask—not answer."

The scientist's shrewd eyes danced

from one to the other. He paced back and forth a couple of times, then paused.

"You are intelligent young people," he said, regarding them intently. "The time is near when this instrument will bring about changes too vast for one man to control. I shall need assistants—an army of them. I offer you the opportunity to become my lieutenants. Together we will wield this great power. Money? As you surmise, I have a hidden sending apparatus near Wall Street. At strategic points I will soon have many more. My library of emotional controls is very complete. I am adding to it constantly."

"Through the methods used on us?" demanded Griff.

"Through a variety of methods. Even a mild emotion I can build up to great intensity through amplifying devices. Unfortunately, mild emotions are mixed emotions. It is better to start with intense reactions. That is why I found it necessary to frighten the young lady so greatly that there was room for nothing else in her mind. Would it surprise you to discover that you tasted the purity of that record on your recent visit? And what can I not do with that splendid classic of anger you helped me to produce! With it I could plunge any country into war."

"It's a pleasant thought!"

"Ah! You are sarcastic. But perhaps you are beginning to realize the immense power that you, as my confidants, will share. We do not necessarily have to breed wars. We may cement our power by bringing nations *almost* to the point of war. I have other records—beautiful, tender records. I could inspire the people with religious devotion. The laughing record with which I put you in such a good humor was the

contribution of a very foolish fellow, made more foolish by champagne. I have a record taken from a man afflicted with wanderlust. Think how that would make railroad, aircraft, and transportation stocks soar."

"How did you work that Wall Street business?"

**B**ENDIZON was obviously enjoying this. Very probably it was a relief to tell some one about his marvellous secret—to strut and boast of plans which he had kept bottled up for years.

"Ah, that! Child's play. You recall the newspaper stories about Casey Hanford—the young man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo a few months ago? I contrived to meet him. The man has been fortunate at games of chance—and it has built up in him a childish belief in his luck. We threw dice together one evening. To induce him to wear a recording helmet, I explained that I was testing the brain reaction to excitement. If that had been the case, I should have had a very good result, for as the evening advanced, he became highly excited. Naturally my dice were loaded—against me. The man could not lose. I parted with a great deal of money—but it was a most excellent investment.

"When I broadcast this record, those within its sphere of influence are filled with a reckless belief in their own good luck. As may be expected—if its location is the stock exchange—stocks soar. The next day I broadcast my record of depression—the one you toyed with a few moments ago—and which incidentally brought me hurrying back to see who had invaded my property. I was fortunate in obtaining it from a victim of intense melancholia. Not long afterward he committed suicide.

As its vibrations go forth—some-what muted in intensity for this purpose—there is a wave of pessimism. Stocks are sacrificed. It is only necessary to instruct my brokers when to buy and sell in order to reap a harvest from these fluctuations."

"The thing is—stupendous!" acknowledged Griff, overawed in spite of himself by the implications of Bendizon's power.

"Ah! You are impressed! You see the vision? But wait—I have scarcely begun to reveal the steps by which I shall sway mankind to my will through its emotions."

"I don't think you're going to do it."

The fanatical light faded. Bendizon's expression became coldly practical as he narrowly regarded the young man standing ominously before him. He spoke shortly.

"You underestimate my power."

"I don't. That's why I'm going to see that you never use it. The world doesn't need you—nor a machine which would give any person a chance to do what you intend. My impulse is to choke you—as I would any menace to society. You can thank Miss Driscoll that, instead of that, I'm going to turn you over to the police—let the law take its course."

Warily, Bendizon started backing away. Before he could make a break, Griff lunged forward, seizing him by the collar.

In the scuffle that followed, the scientist's skull cap was knocked off. It fell with a resounding thump.

"Hello!" Griff exclaimed, holding his squirming victim. "Take a look at that thing, Lucille."

Bendizon's eyes darted venomously from one to the other while the girl gingerly picked up the heavy cap.

Only partly concealed by the lining was a network of coils and electrodes.

"I wondered how he could endure the vibrations!" she murmured. Quite evidently, the cap was an ingenious "scrambler," which rendered emotional vibrations harmless to the wearer.

Griff freed one hand and extended it for the cap. "Let's try it out," he suggested, pushing it down over his head. "Twist the lever into one of those slots—but be sure to snap it out the instant you feel the vibrations getting the best of you."

Timidly, she obeyed. As she moved the lever, Griff waited for the resulting reaction. Nothing happened. Nothing, that is, except that after a moment Bendizon slumped down in his grasp, a dead weight.

"Playing possum?" commented Griff disgustedly. "That's an old trick." But Bendizon had not pretended to faint. He had simply shrunk within himself, all his fury and arrogance gone. He looked now only a pathetic, beaten, spiritless husk of a man. As Griff stared at him, puzzled, his thoughts were wrenched away by the alarming behavior of Lucille.

She gave a low moan. Then, shoulders drooping, hands hanging listlessly at her side, she sank slowly to her knees, then slumped in a desolate heap on the floor.

Springing to her assistance, Cliff released the scientist, who stumbled hopelessly into a chair. She had not lost consciousness, but something was terribly wrong.

"What's the matter?" he demanded, lifting her in his arms. "What is it? For God's sake, what's the matter?"

"It's no use!" she moaned shudderingly. "I want to die!"

"Good heavens, girl! What the—"

**W**ITH a sharp imprecation at his own slowness of wit, he dived for the instrumental panel, gave the control lever a shove. Of course, the vibrations—which he could not feel on account of the cap—were affecting her—were affecting Bendizon.

The result of his act upon the distraught girl was immediate—and startling. She struggled, she screamed, she wrenched herself free and ran cowering into a corner, where she covered her eyes from some imagined terror.

Before he could quite comprehend what had happened Bendizon, too, came to life. Cringing as if he expected Griff to administer some dreadful punishment, he scrambled from the chair and sidled toward the door.

"No you don't!" muttered Griff, springing to intercept him. He moved quickly but this time, the scientist, spurred by a frenzy of fear, was quicker. He flung himself from the room and fled into the hallway, Griff close at his heels.

At the end of the hall was an open window. With a shriek of terror, Bendizon dived toward it, scrambled onto the sill. For a moment he wavered uncertainly—torn between two terrors—then, as Griff made an involuntary move toward him, with a wild cry he flung himself over the ledge. An instant later there was a sickening crash below.

"Great heavens!" muttered Griff. Sick with horror, he started toward the window, then—with sudden realization—turned and dashed toward the laboratory.

Lucille still cowered where he had

left her, moaning in uncontrollable terror. What had happened was now apparent. So vigorous had been his shove on the lever that it had passed the neutral point and engaged another spindle—the terrible fear record he knew so well.

Hastily he remedied his mistake, then cautiously lifted the cap from his head to test the emotional reaction.

There was none. Lucille was straightening up, a look in her eyes as of one waking from a nightmare.

She wavered, then took a hesitant step toward him, an expression of shame, mingled with something else, on her features.

"I know," she said tremulously, "what the Professor meant when he said that—about your courage. To think that you forced yourself to come up here—through that awful terror—" She paused, aware that

something was wrong. "But he's escaped! Where—?"

**G**RIFF looked down at her grimly. "He'll menace the world no longer. It seems he just couldn't take his own stuff."

"Oh!" and suddenly she was in his arms, as if only there could she find refuge from the strain, the horror of it all.

"The wreckers will take care of things," Griff surmised, his eyes roving in search of some object heavy enough to smash the apparatus. "But it'll do no harm to give them a start."

"What are you muttering?" demanded the girl, looking up at him through eyes filmed with disappointment.

Griff drew her close. "I said," he responded gaily: "Who the dickens would want his emotions to come out of a machine anyway—when the real thing is so much sweeter?"

**DON'T MISS**

## **"They Never Come Back"**

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in the August issue of

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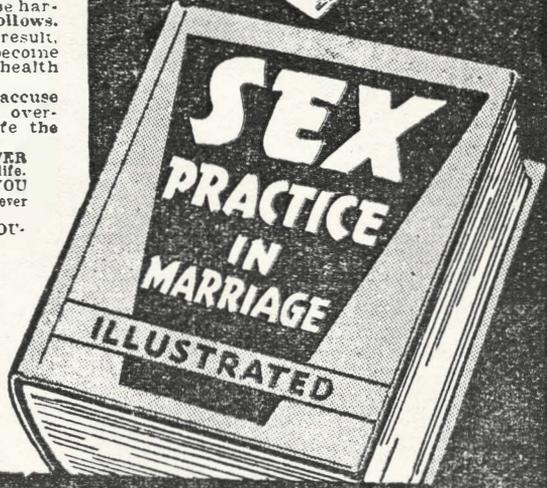
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AS with Futurian Times in our sister publication, Future Fiction, this department is one unique in science-fiction magazines. It is, in actuality, a magazine within a magazine, with the more active enthusiasts of imaginative literature for its star writers. The Fantasy Fan is by no means exclusive; if you have something you think might be of interest to the great mass of fans, send it in for this department.

JOHN B. MICHEL

THIS issue of Science Fiction is dedicated to Mr. John B. Michel of New York, one of the oldtimers who did a great deal in helping fan organization get off to a flying start. He started reading science fiction with the first issue of the first stf magazine, and became a fan almost immediately thereafter. Since that time his activities have been so many and so widespread, that it would take much more than this entire department to catalogue them adequately.

Among the notable fan organizations in which he has played a prominent part are the International Cosmos Science Fiction Club (which later became the International Scientific Association or ISA), the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, and the Futurian Society of New York, of which he is the present Director.

#### FILM REVIEWS

**MAN MADE MONSTER**, Universal. Once again the antiscience theme stalks across the screen, and spectacularly. Adapted from the "Electrical Man," bogeyman has Lon Chaney, Jr., portraying the victim of the electro-biological experiments of a "mad" doctor—mad like Galileo or Newton and the other Greats. Lionel Atwill envisions the man of the future as deriving his energy directly from electricity. But his creation causes death and destruction. You may not like the picture's moral, but the special effects and Chaney's unique appearance make a thrilling show. I stayed twice.

**THE DEVIL COMMANDS**, Columbia. Adapted from "The Edge of Running Water," picture preaches that there are walls Science should not scale, showing the disaster caused when an effort is made to penetrate the veil. Karloff, in the picture originally Head of the Science Dept. of a University, succeeds in recording human thought-waves. More, he learns that the dead can communicate—if feebly—through his invention. He finds a medium of exceptional spiritualistic powers, and she becomes his assistant—for she foresees that if he could establish communication with the dead, answer mankind's eternal questions, he would be master of the world! Fellow scientists attempt to dissuade him from his research, fear some horrible knowledge may be loosed upon the world, that he is dealing with "things

outside science." His greatest experiment gets out of control and a vortex from the astral plane destroys him and his apparatus. The apparatus sure was swellelegant-lookin', too.

**TOPPER RETURNS**, Roach. If you missed "The Invisible Woman" this one will give you a second chance. If you enjoyed the latter and would like more of the same, this will serve the purpose. But for a Thorne Smith film like "Turnabout" or either of the other "Topper" predecessors, this reviewer would say: Only fair. Plot concerns itself—in a mildly humorous manner—with the identification of a killer, fantasy angle being that it's the ghost of the corpse that's doing the detecting. Said ghost (Joan Blondell), who can materialize or dematerialize at will, presses Cosmo Topper (Roland Young) into service to help her find her murderer. Eventually they do, but your reviewer was a bit bored in spots.

—FORREST J. ACKERMAN.

#### THE INTELLECTUAL BROTHERHOOD OF PRO-SCIENTISTS

THIS organization isn't the dry, formidable thing it would seem by the title (and we might suggest that a better one be sought out by the association's heads without delay) and it isn't an exclusive society of octogenarians.

The IBP, as it is more commonly known, is an informal association of fans who believe that science is something of which we are going to see more and more as time goes on and that a lot of the more desirable futures stf has portrayed can and will come true. The IBP members point out to all and sundry that it all just isn't as simple as that, because there is a great deal of anti-scientific opinion going around these days. It finds its expression, so far as stf is concerned, in the "mad scientist" type of story, or the yarn which, in one way or another, preaches that science must not go "too far" or that mankind "isn't ready" for new discoveries.

There have been a great many stf tales, say IBP members, which have supported this anti-scientific opinion and the lads are trying earnestly to use what influence fans can exert upon editors to discourage the publication of anti-scientific stories in stf magazines. They're staunch stf fans, and they are convinced one cannot be for science fiction and against science—or neutral about it all. The person to get in touch with on this, and all relating matters, is Ray Van Houten, c/o 114 16th Avenue, Paterson, New Jersey.

#### THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN FEDERATION

EVER since the organizational period in fandom began, there have been attempts made to form some sort of "official" society

## The Fantasy Fan

for sf fandom so that a unified front could be maintained for the benefit of the outside world. Fans are always trying to interest new sf readers in their activities and organizations, are incessantly trying to convert new readers to sf. Thus, for the sake of these aims, as well as the general aim of fraternity and unity throughout the entire fan world, this problem of the national organization has constantly arisen.

But the task is not, nor has it ever been, an easy one. The avid science fiction fan is an individualist through and through. He does not want to "join" an organization where all the activities are laid out before him. He wants to do things himself, in his own way, whether that way may be better than the suggestions of more mature fans or not. He wants to write his own dissertations upon science fiction and fandom, publish his own fan magazines, wherein he can spout on whatever pet theme he owns, and criticize other fan magazines, or the pros, to his heart's content. And, if possible, he wants to start his own fan organization—his very own if he can't obtain a charter from some professionally sponsored league or club.

Thus the early attempts to form a national organization were shattered against this rock of fan individuality. For, not only the individual fans, but the individual clubs alike were opposed to it. Clubs did not want to lose their identity and become just a branch of an all-embracing single society. Thus the idea of a fan-congress, or loose federation began to shape up.

Instead of the ironclad single club, thought the more advanced fans, why not a loose federation to which every club could belong, and which would be open to the isolated fan who did not belong to any organization at all? Why not a sort of fan congress which could present a unified face to the outside world?

That, in brief, is the aim of the National Fantasy Fan Federation. Unity, fraternity, and cooperation among all fan-groups from coast to coast. Plus a place for the isolated fan as well. The work on the NFFF is going forward slowly, care being taken in each preliminary step. The present workers in the project are experienced fans who have learned the cost of trying to rush something new through; they won't try it in haste this time. And, if fandom as a whole will come through with its share of cooperation, then perhaps we shall see that united fandom so many have hoped for yet.

### THE FAN PRESS

ONE might say that fandom is like Caesar's Gaul, for it is divided into three parts: organizations, conventions (or conferences), and publications. This latter is probably the most fascinating because it is something open to the isolated fan as well as the member of a club. The amount of publications issued by sf and fantasy fans over the course of about 10 years (for that is the span of fandom in its publication-era) is staggering to consider. A checklist running to over 50 pages has been issued, wherein the various titles are listed, dates, data, etc., given and this is admittedly incomplete, becoming more incomplete as days go by and new titles roll off the mimeograph, litho, or hecto-jelly.

This department, as in previous issues, will be open to review of any and all fan publications sent to us.



### Bus Driver Sells 7 Stories

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# HEAVY CARGO

by MILTON KALETSKY

"Heavy cargo" is putting it mild—for the blustering Hammer Kirk, so exact with his details, forgot the one detail that gave him the heaviest cargo ever pulled by a space-ship!

**I**N THE BARE, airless surface of Phobos, the small inner moon of Mars, rested the vast bulk of the *Leviathan VII*. Newest and hugest of Earth's interplanetary fleet, the 6000-foot freighter lay securely in its landing cradle, while through air-tight ports in the ship's bottom, thousands of tons of vanadium ore were being loaded from the underground mines into the *Leviathan's* enormous holds.

Nearby on a jagged crag stood two space-suit clad men, examining the imposing lines and curves of this marvel of the twenty-eighth century, which had just completed its maiden voyage from Earth.

"What a ship!" exclaimed Captain "Hammer" Kirk, the freighter's commander. "Some style! Fastest thing out, too. Rocket reaction force five times any other ship's. And only a freighter!"

"Yes, sir," agreed Second Mate Henderson. Young and inexperienced, fresh out of training school on his first job, Henderson always agreed with the captain. So did everyone else, because Captain Kirk never gave anyone a chance to disagree.

"Hammer's" rugged, seamed face was lighted by intense pride and his powerful figure swelled with satisfaction as his eyes swept along the graceful outline of his ship. "When Interplanetary Lines was thinking of building this, who did they call into

consultation? Me! Did they ask any of you kids from the training college for advice? No! And who got command? One of you college whipper-snappers? No! Me!"

"Yes, sir," said Henderson. He had heard this same lecture almost every day since leaving Earth two weeks before, and he still didn't like it.

"But dammit, look at the officers they gave me," complained Captain Hammer angrily. "A bunch of kids just out of school. Bah! You think you know something because you studied space navigation four years in a college? Well, let me tell you, sonny, I never took courses, I have no fancy diploma, but I know more astronautics than you could learn in forty years in school!"

"Yes, sir," said the second mate. He swore heartily . . . in his mind. Nobody swore out-loud to Hammer Kirk—that is, nobody who wanted to enjoy good health.

Hammer continued his harangue. "It's details you must learn. Hundreds of details must always be kept in mind and never forgotten for a second. And you don't learn to do that in school."

"Yes, sir," agreed Henderson.

"Well, I guess they've finished loading. Let's get aboard."

**T**HEY climbed clumsily over the rough rocks, barely lifting their heavy magnetized boots which helped them cling to the tiny moon's metal-

lic surface. Captain Kirk swore at their slow progress. "Drat these new-fangled magnetic clamps! In the old days we never bothered with such things. Just hopped from one rock to another and never worried about drifting off into space. But nowadays everything's got to be made easy and safe for you la-de-da kids from the training schools. Details and more details! Bah! You kids'll never remember them all."

"Yes, sir," said the second mate. What he was thinking would have disintegrated Phobos if it had gotten loose.

Entering through an air-lock, they slipped out of their space-suits and jumped into a pneumatic tube which whisked them to the bridge. As Kirk arrived at his post, he at once began barking orders and calling people all over the ship on televisors.

"Everyone aboard?" he bellowed to First Mate Smith down on the loading platform.

"Yes, sir! All ports sealed, sir."

Supercargo Manlon appeared on a screen. "Cargo checked, holds filled and sealed, sir," he reported.

"O. K.," grunted Hammer. "Mike, how's fuel pressure?"

"Point under maximum, sir. All in order," replied the Chief Engineer from the rocket control room.

"Details! Details!" growled Hammer as his eyes roved over the great central control panel, checking all gauges and indicators before departing. "Can I depend on you kids to handle some for me? No, you'd forget a dozen. Suppose you tell me what to do next," he snapped suddenly to Henderson.

The unexpected question flustered the second mate. "Why, er, start the motors."

Captain Hammer showed the blunt, hard-hitting manner that had earned

him his nickname. "Oh, yeah? Go read a textbook! I knew you'd forget a few things. How about priming the motors first? And how about clearance papers? Pfah!"

Henderson flushed. The Captain sneered and signaled to the mine office deep in Phobos's interior. On the screen appeared Ir-4-Meli, the Martian mine manager, gloomy as usual with his dislike for the Earthmen who carried away so much precious vanadium ore, which Mars needed so badly. He nodded curtly at Kane and reluctantly tapped on a machine which automatically wrote out and recorded clearance papers for the *Leviathan VII*.

"Thanks," acknowledged Kirk. "Prime the motors!" In the engine room, buttons were pressed and motors hummed. Kirk checked with the duplicate controls in the bridge.

"To your stations!"

"Captain—," said Henderson hesitantly.

"Don't bother me now. Just watch how I handle every detail!"

"Yes, but—"

"Quiet! Step up one," signaled the captain. From the rocket tubes at the rear and along the ship's sides, small flames flashed and the ship vibrated gently. On the control panel, the captain's hands leaped from lever to lever busily.

"Half maximum!" The vessel trembled. "Full speed ahead!" From every tube an inferno blasted, covering the ship with flame, thrusting forward with a mighty reaction force.

Captain Kirk glanced at the acceleration dial and blinked. He turned to the duplicate dial on the other wall and then hastily called the chief engineer. "Hey, what's the acceleration?"

"One tenth gravity, sir. Can't un-

derstand why. Should be four times gravity. All tubes are functioning properly, but the ship seems very heavy, sir."

"Captain—," said Henderson again.

"Blast it, son," bawled Kirk impatiently, "don't you see something's wrong? We're burning fuel at full capacity but we're hardly moving! We'll never get to Earth at this rate." Kirk fell into frantic activity, shouting ten orders at once and swearing more than the rest of the crew together.

"Cut all tubes," he finally ordered. "We'll have to crawl into the rockets' guts to see what's wrong."

The vision screen buzzed and Ir-4-Meli appeared. Black fury distorted his unhandsome features.

"Damn you, Kirk," he squawked. "So that's why you Earthmen built such a big ship with such powerful rockets!"

"Huh?"

"You know what I mean!" howled the Martian. "You Earthmen aren't

satisfied with making us sell vanadium so cheap, so now you're trying to steal Phobos itself!"

"What are you shouting about? If you accuse me of stealing anything, I'll come down there and beat you into a vacuum!" Kirk was as furious as Ir-4-Meli.

"Look what you've done," the Martian shrieked. "You've pulled Phobos out of its orbit! Now you push it back into place at once, or you'll have to deal with the law!"

**C**APTAIN HAMMER leaped to an observation port and stared incredulously out. "Jumping rockets! We're still on Phobos!"

"That's what I was trying to say, you old buzzard," muttered Henderson softly.

Ir-4-Meli stared at them, then a smile spread over his face and he broke into uproarious laughter. "Of course! You old idiot, you forgot to disconnect the magnetic clamps that hold your ship down!"

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# A MATTER OF PHILOSOPHY

by WILFRED OWEN MORLEY

## A Science Fiction Brief

**A**S SOON as I stepped into the Captain's quarters, I guessed that he had a surprise for me; I could tell from the genial way in which he swiveled around in his chair and inhaled a deep draft from his tobacco-tube.

"Elton," he announced slowly, "I have a treat for you. The consignment we picked up at Lunar Station was the one for which I have been waiting." He reached into his desk and drew out a small disk. "Alfred Bristol's greatest work: *The Ascent of the Liberal*."

It was one of those rare moments when pure joy floods through you, drowning out all thought of anything else. There was nothing I could say. I merely sank into the chair beside him, smiling.

"Yes," he continued, "and the historians call the 20th Century the 2d Dark Age. An age that produced such titans as Bertrand Russell and Bristol, men of such profound depth. Sometimes I am saddened, Elton, at the lack of vision shown by our contemporaries."

"I know," I replied. "I, too, have felt about it just as you. These pigmies to whom the sweep of events is nothing more than a conflict of blacks and whites; these gnats who can see but one factor; these minds so warped—"

A light on the skipper's desk flared. "Excuse me, Elton," he murmured, snapping on the mike.

An instant later, Dr. Halley's face, filled the screen. A most capable man, Halley, I thought, but, like so many others of our day, one whose mind ran along a single track.

"An urgent matter, sir," he stated, his face set in grim lines. "May I see you and Mr. Elton alone?"

The captain nodded and switched off the set. "I want you to read this work right away, Elton," he confided, "so I'll put it in the mentascope and you can hop to it as soon as Halley's finished with whatever business is at hand."

The door swung open, and Halley stalked

in, bristling with purposeful determination. "I must insist, sir, that Control Assistant Lucian be confined in the hospital immediately. His mental state is becoming increasingly dangerous and his actions indicate that he may burst into open violence at any moment."

I could see that the Captain was trying to retain his patience. "Halley," he contended in a tired voice, "I thought we had threshed this matter out before. Why must you continue in this dogmatic fashion? I have seen Lucian at work; I have spoken with him and studied the official reports upon him. There are no grounds for such a drastic procedure as you urge. Lucian is, I grant, a bit different from yourself and the other men, but that is no reason for imagining that he is dangerous.

"Sometimes I am inclined to feel that you are obsessed, doctor." He turned to me. "Mr. Elton, you have been in contact with Control Assistant Lucian, have you not?"

"I have indeed, sir."

"Have you observed anything about him that would tend to substantiate Dr. Halley's contentions?"

I pondered carefully. One must not be too hasty in passing judgement. "It is true that he has been given, at times," I replied, "to—shall I say whimsical actions? And, further, he might be said to consider himself a trifle more important than his position actually warrants. But I believe, sir, in keeping an open mind."

"As do I," echoed the Captain. "No, Halley; I cannot sanction such obviously uncalled for measures. If you feel that Lucian would benefit from a little more personal attention than the other men, why that is up to your discretion. But I cannot permit more."

"And I suppose," stated Halley with what I considered a note of sarcasm, "that Lucian's act of putting the forward engines out of commission a week ago was just clean fun."

"Dr. Halley!" At this point the Captain

rose, his full kindly dignity enveloping him. "Dr. Halley, you forget that we have only your opinion as opposed to Lucian's statement. Outside of your opinion there is nothing in the way of corroboration. And it must not be forgotten that you are clearly biased in this matter.

"No, there is no evidence whatsoever that the affair was not entirely accidental, and more the fault of the Control than his Assistant. Unfortunately, Fleming has not yet regained consciousness, so we cannot question him.

"My decision is final, sir. Now, if you have nothing more important to discuss with me, I shall appreciate your returning to duty."

Halley departed without another word.

**T**HE CAPTAIN turned to the mentascope. "What a welcome relief from this concept of black and white are Bristol's philosophies. For, as he has clearly shown, black and white rarely, if ever, exist. We are all various shades of grey, replete with innumerable modifying, rich tenors. Just think of all the hasty, ill-advised action that might have been avoided had only our forbears been advised by this wise, kindly counsel. But I must not digress farther." He helped me adjust the mentascope and I sank back in utter bliss, my entire being drinking in the mellow charm of the Ascent of the Liberal.

Would that I could write with the eloquence of a Bristol, describe to you the gentle, yet firm thoughts which flow through this greatest of philosophical discourses. Under this influence, the harsh, sharply etched temper of our current life melts away, and we see the blending, smoothly-flowing thoughts whose predominance could have resulted in a world fully as progressed as ours, yet one which avoided all the harsh, violent conflicts we see as having brought ours forth.

Temperance and tranquility is the keynote of Bristol's being; an attitude which investigates fully, learning all aspects of a situation, before acting. How different from the narrow, dogmatic outlook of a Halley, or of thousands like him.

And how often this narrow, biased viewpoint has resulted in bringing forth violence and conflict, which so easily could have been avoided by an open mind, willing to compromise. Such is what occurred

on that fateful voyage which I am describing: I have given much thought to the matter, and I cannot help but feel that Halley, not Lucian, was to blame.

For I had scarcely set aside the priceless volume, and taken out my tobacco-tube, preparing to enter into another mentally-invigorating discussion with the Captain, when the door was rudely broken in. Framed in the entrance to the Captain's quarters were Lucian and Halley, struggling desperately.

Halley asserts that Lucian had taken weapons from the arsenal, but there is only his clearly biased word for it, as were there but his unsubstantiated charges against the man previously. Who knows but that the poor Assistant had been persecuted by the doctor, driven to what desperate ends. Perhaps he was seeking the Captain for refuge against his oppressor.

"Gentlemen!" I cried, "what is the meaning of this?" Even now, it might not be too late to temporize and avoid needless violence.

However, I regret to say, it was too late. For, in the tussle, the gun was discharged and our noble Captain mortally wounded. Of course Lucian was overcome, and treated shamefully; I do not think his story was listened to at all, or, if it was, with but scant attention.

I bent over our Captain as he lay on the floor, his life flowing out swiftly. "Elton," he whispered, "do not forget the words of Bristol. Do nothing rash because of me; keep your mind open and judge not hastily." So saying, the great man died.

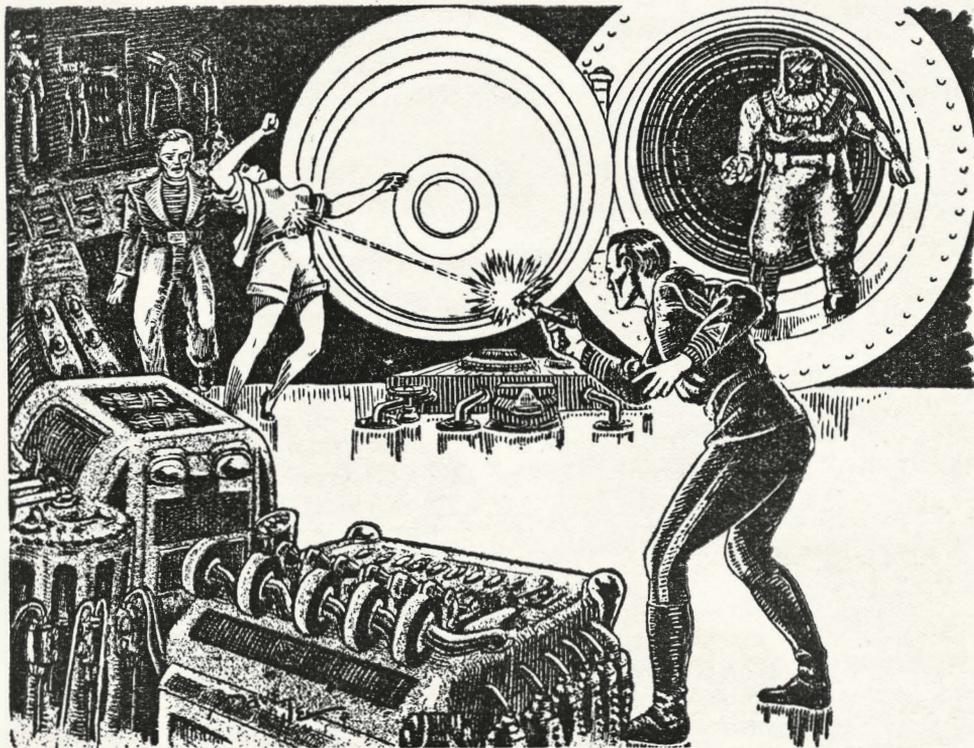
It was at this time that, due to the confusion and ensuing lack of attention to space, the ship's screens were not set in order at the proper moment, and a swarm of meteors riddled us like so much buckshot. Only Lucian, Dr. Halley, and I survived.

There was an investigation, of course, led by narrow-minded men who are incapable of perceiving the many-sidedness of human nature. They declared, in record time, that Halley had been completely in the right.

Sometimes I am inclined to feel bitter at the Terrestrial Board for revoking my Mate's license, but then, I, at least, am capable of looking at both sides of the question.

# DEVIL DOGS OF SPACE

By HELEN WEINBAUM



*Jeanne threw herself into the path of the flash!*

Jeanne of Jupiter and Warren of Earth—each fighting in the service of their respective planets—enemies in deadly opposition, yet lovers of intense devotion! But one must be the victor—and the other must die!

## CHAPTER I

### ON AN ASTEROID

**I**T was third dark on base station No. 5 on Pallas, used now as a stopping off place for ships traveling between Earth and Jupiter. Commander Steve Warren, seated before his desk at headquarters, cursed the asteroid's short days.

With six darks to a twenty-four hour Earth day, trouble seemed always to come at night. He looked up irritably as the Second Command, Simon Burr, entered.

"How do you like this?" Sliding a radiogram across the desk, he leaned back in the chair, running his hands through his rumpled hair.

"Plans for Super Detonator stolen," Burr read. "Spy in stolen ship

believed headed towards Jupiter. If it does not arrive Pallas within hour, pursue in off spaceways. Under no conditions allow to escape. Hum!" Burr sat down heavily. "Pursue in off spaceways! Just like that. If those Earth Officials had ever ridden an off spaceway, they wouldn't be so casual about—"

"This theft warrants the orders," Warren interrupted. "Jupiter is the sole source of Dinerium. And Dinerium is the secret of the Super Detonator's power. If an alien world constructs the Detonator—don't forget Earth has only a small working model now, too small to subdue a planet—Earth is finished. As Dinerium is a very unstable element, Earth must continually replenish her supply. But Jupiter, with all the Dinerium she wants right there for the taking, could have a large model in working order in no time at all. Besides, even if she doesn't construct the Detonator, even if she has no desire to conquer Earth—which I doubt, inasmuch as a weak planet like Jupiter always has ideas of universal supremacy—once she learns the use to which her Dinerium is being put, she'll not ship Earth a dram of it. Then where are we?"

"Right where we started." Burr rose. "Ready to pursue the stolen ship in the off spaceways. Devil Dogs of space, they call us, and they sure see that we live up to the name."

Even in the year 2187 space travel was dangerous, not the easy interplanetary communication past writers of science fiction had pictured. It seemed almost as if Nature were rebelling against man's efforts to populate the planets with his kind.

Only a few safe routes, free from errant asteroids and dangerous vortices in space, had been discovered between the planets. On each of these

Earth had set up asteroid base stations where space-ships might land to refuel for the balance of the trip. These base stations manned by the Nationals, a branch of the Military Service, were in great part the reason for Earth's supremacy in the Solar System.

The Nationals led a hazardous existence in the lonely outposts; life and limb could be of little import to a Devil Dog of space. Often, when a ship preferred to risk the uncharted spaceways rather than submit to inspection for contraband on an asteroid base, a Devil Dog must pursue and capture it in the cosmic waste, where a vortex or fault in space might send his own ship spinning beyond control to follow its own orbit forevermore.

To add to Earth's power, a lethal weapon had been invented which insured the complete extinction of any planet daring to advance against it. To an impartial observer, it might seem Earth was over-confident. After spreading abroad the strength of her space force, the number and invulnerability of her base stations, now news of the Super Detonator had leaked out.

Or perhaps it was that Earth was fearful. Having colonized the planets some hundred years ago, perhaps she was just becoming aware of the short memory of man—how when he leaves his mother world he is apt to forget love of the soil on which he has been nurtured. Perhaps she was just now learning of the strong underground movements, the growing national feeling, the desire to throw off the yoke of Earth and be free! Maybe she sensed rebellion in weak nations such as Jupiter, and it was to frighten such ambitious planets that she stated and restated her impregnability.

Steve Warren smiled as he unwound his long body from the chair. "Your freckled neck is safe this time, Si. Only one of us has to pursue the ship."

"Big-hearted!" Burr sputtered. "Where do I come in?"

"As Second in Command, you don't. Besides, this capture is too important to trust to an inferior."

"Nuts! You're making a play for Jeanne. A dame's got you. You want to be a big story-book hero so she'll fall into your arms. Don't think you're pulling the wool over—" He stopped abruptly at a knock on the door, continuing in a lower tone as Warren walked to open it. "And you don't know a thing about her either. What's she doing on Pallas? Waiting for her brother to pick her up and take her to Earth. Her brother! That's what she says!"

**W**ARREN threw him an angry glance as he opened the door, but at sight of the girl outside his face lightened. "Come in, Jeanne. Si was just saying how glad he was that you were here to break the monotony of Pallas." He smiled into velvety brown eyes nearly on a level with his own.

"I don't believe it." The girl spoke in a deep, throaty voice. "Si wishes I'd leave Pallas and I know it. He resents the time you spend with me."

Even in the heavily-weighted suits that humans were forced to wear on Pallas because of the light gravity, Jeanne was attractive. There was something compelling in her eyes; something magnetic in the deep quality of her voice — aside from the sheer beauty of her feature and the sheen of her closely drawn black hair. Against Burr's sandy coloring and Warren's wind-tanned features, she looked delicate and feminine—entire-

ly out of place on an asteroid with little social life and no conveniences.

She had come from Jupiter four weeks ago. Since then, much to Burr's disgust, Warren had spent most of his waking hours with her.

She sat on the chair Burr had just vacated, smiling up at him to soften the sting of her last words. He flushed and without answering turned to Warren to avoid her eyes, tacitly admitting the truth of her accusation.

"Your orders, Commander?" he asked dryly. "One of us ought to pay some attention to business."

"Isn't he quaint," Jeanne remarked. "He means me. I'm interfering with Duty."

Warren had been lost in thought during this by-play. Now he turned to Burr, picking up the conversation where it had been at Jeanne's entrance.

"Of course, it may not be necessary for either of us to go in pursuit."

"Go in pursuit of what?" Jeanne asked casually.

"We've received orders to stop a stolen ship," Burr informed her; then, to Warren: "What do you mean, it may not be necessary? He'd be a damn fool to land here, on an Earth base station, with what he's carrying."

"I don't think he'll land," Warren said slowly. "However, he may come within range of our anti-space-craft guns. Have them set up immediately, and order the men to fire at any ship passing within range which doesn't land on request. Any honest pilot will land. It would be foolhardy to risk the balance of the flight without refueling anyway. Flood the sky with neutron lights, and ready my speed cruiser for in-

stantaneous flight. I guess that covers everything."

"It's as good as done, Commander." Burr left.

After a moment of watching Warren abstractedly pace the floor, Jeanne remarked, "I thought people had given up trying to smuggle contraband past you Devil Dogs."

"What?" He brought his mind back with an effort. "Oh. This isn't contraband."

"What is it?"

"Don't trouble your pretty head with men's affairs."

"Men's affairs are the only thing I have to think of on Pallas. It least, your affairs are."

She rose, brushing carelessly against him. Turning suddenly, he took her in his arms, burying his face in her hair.

"Will you be in danger, Steve?" she asked softly.

"Perhaps. But no more than usual. I thrive on danger."

"I couldn't bear to have anything happen to you. Why must you pursue this ship?"

"A stolen blueprint is on her," he answered. "Kiss me, Jeanne," tilting her face up to his, "you know I love you."

Putting her hands behind his head, she drew it down to meet her lips. For a moment she clung to him, her lips burning his; then suddenly pushed him away.

"I must go." Her manner changed abruptly; her voice was hurried, business-like.

"Jeanne!" He grasped her arms, arresting her passage to the door. "What's the matter?"

"I have to leave," she said shortly. "Please don't interfere."

Bewildered, he watched the door shut behind her. Then, thinking to get to the bottom of her reversal of

feeling later, he put his mind again to the business at hand.

About half of the hour allotted him by Earth to await the landing of the ship remained. Still, it might have made better speed than expected. The best place for him was on the space-port, ready either to take off in pursuit, or search the spy's body if the ship were grounded by the guns. Brushing a haunting worry about Jeanne from his mind, he hurried to the field.

Under Burr's directions, the space-port was taking on the appearance of a Gargantuan movie set. Powerful neutron lights spaced at intervals along the edges of the field swept the heavens, piercing the dark fifty miles into space. Mammoth rotating anti-space-craft guns mounted on cradles so they could be focused to cover the sky with a blanket of destruction were being wheeled into position, their multiple-nosed bulk suggesting strange monsters reincarnated from the past. Beside the gigantic machines of their creation, the small human figures scurrying along the ground seemed ineffectual and impotent.

**B**URR was at the hangar, supervising the readying of a speed cruiser for instantaneous use. As Warren approached, he was watching the lean, silver cylinder emerge from the hangar with a gleam of envy in his eyes. He turned, startled, as Warren spoke from behind him.

"Don't look so disappointed." He patted Burr's back comfortingly. "The next trip is yours. I'm going this time only to keep us both off a spot. There's a good chance the ship will elude capture. If it should, and I had sent you, we'd both be up for questioning before the Court."

Burr's wide, good-natured mouth stretched in a grin. "Maybe you believe that, but my intuition still tells me there's a dame involved. Devil Dogs turn to puppies when love enters the picture."

"I'll keep my adult standing."

Preparations on the field were now completed. So accurately were the guns placed to blanket the sky that any ship coming within focal range without making a move to land, didn't stand a chance of escaping.

"Have you ordered the lookout to signal when a ship is sighted?" Warren asked.

Burr nodded. "Yes, but I hardly think it was necessary. That ship will skirt Pallas like the plague. You're due for a nice little jaunt in the off spaceways tonight."

"Maybe. However, if the ship lands of its own accord, I think we're in for some fighting. That spy is not just going to settle down to be captured. If he lands at all, it will be with the idea of forcing us to refuel the ship."

He took a P.A. set from his pocket and, holding it cupped in one hand, spoke into it.

"Attention men!"

Despite the simplicity and compactness of the instrument, Warren's voice boomed over the field as if it had been sent through high-powered amplifiers.

"At first sight of ship, signal to land, using Solar code: three short notes, repeated at intervals of two seconds. Repeat signal ten times. If ship does not approach, release fire. If ship lands after signal, be prepared to meet barrage of fire. Do not fire until first shot from ship. That's all."

Jeanne appeared as he replaced the P.A. set in his pocket. Before she could speak, a high, shrill note

circled the space-port. A ship had been sighted!

Powerful neutron lights made the sky as bright as Earth's day, far lighter than it ever was on Pallas. Away in the distance, a silver ship flashed. Over the field P. A. sounded the landing signal as it was sent to the ship: three short, peremptory notes repeated at intervals of two seconds. No pilot on a legitimate mission could afford to ignore it.

For awhile it was impossible to tell whether or not the ship came nearer. The signals were repeated . . . four times . . . five times . . . Still they did not know.

Jeanne drew a deep, slow breath, bringing Warren to awareness of her presence.

"Go inside. There may be firing."

"I'll be all right."

For the eighth time the signal flashed. A few more seconds and the guns would release.

"Go inside, Jeanne!"

The moment was too tense for him to tear his eyes from the silver ship. Jeanne stepped back out of his sight, remaining on the field.

At the ninth signal a green light flashed three times from the ship's nose: the code of submission. It had decided to land!

Nerves taut, they waited. Even the atmosphere seemed to lose motion; the tiny figures manning the guns were still; for a moment, the whole asteroid seemed to rest immobile.

The ship came closer. Now it was within the pull of gravity. For a few moments it loomed overhead like a mammoth insect while it unfurled its wings, then slowly sank to a landing.

Tensely, guns drawn, Warren and Burr waited. Every weapon on the field was now focused on the ship. One belligerent move from it and it

would be blown to bits. For a long moment it lay on the bosom of the asteroid; then the door opened. A lone man emerged, hands lifted in surrender at sight of the array of arms. Slowly he walked toward the little group of people.

"A fine reception," he said. "All I want is to refuel and pick up my—"

In a flash Jeanne was across the field, throwing herself in his arms.

Warren paled. There must be some mistake. This couldn't be Jeanne Carver's brother, this spy! He watched unbelievably as the stranger bent to kiss her forehead, heard his words to Jeanne echo hollowly over the field.

"Tell your friends I don't mean them any harm." He laughed at his own futility. "They can lower their guns."

Marshalling his senses, Warren walked toward them. "I'm Commander at Pallas. We've received word that you're riding a stolen ship."

Avoiding Jeanne's eyes, he searched the man for weapons and, finding none, signalled for the guns to be lowered. Then, more carefully, he searched again.

"Steve," Jeanne's voice was reproachful, "what in the world are you looking for? Mark is not a criminal. I told you long ago he was coming to get me."

"I'm sorry, Jeanne." Warren continued to go through the man's pockets. "I have orders to hold the man who stole this ship."

"Why should Mark steal it? He had passage money—"

"He has stolen something else too, I'm afraid." From the man's inside pocket, Warren withdrew a paper and unfolded it—the blueprint for the Super Detonator!

**F**ORCING the words from him, he straightened. "Mark Carver, in the service of Earth, I arrest you as a spy."

"Steve!" She put a hand on his arm imploringly. "You can't do it. There must be some mistake!"

Pity flooding his heart, he looked into her tortured eyes. "I must, dear. It's my duty. Your brother won't be harmed if he doesn't try to escape, and if there is a mistake, it will be rectified."

Carver stood by silently, almost sullenly, but as Jeanne took his hand to walk with him to base headquarters, he smiled gently at her. "Good kid," he said softly.

She looked at him gratefully, pityingly; then, raising her eyes in mute appeal to Warren said, "Please be kind to him."

"I'll do all I can." Warren's heart was heavy, knowing the evidence he had found on Carver was conclusive, knowing he must be held until Earth envoys arrived to take him back for trial and, worst of all, knowing what the verdict must be. "I'd like to talk to him now—alone. Wait here until I've finished."

Closing the door to the room where Jeanne waited, Warren made an exhaustive search of his captive. While the Detonator blueprint was undoubtedly too intricate to be committed to memory, he feared the man might have a duplicate copy concealed somewhere on his person. Finding none, he motioned Carver to a chair, watching the slight, defenseless figure move with a pull at his heart. Carver was dark, like Jeanne; yet aside from their coloring, there was little resemblance. She was tall for a woman; he was short for a man. Where Jeanne's eyes were soft, his were burning.

"You must have known we'd receive word from Earth to stop you after you stole the blueprint," Warren began. "Why did you risk landing on Pallas?"

Carver did not answer.

"Because of having to fly blind, space pilots often land on the wrong base," he continued, "perhaps you didn't know this was Pallas."

"Yes, I knew." Carver's voice was sullen. "I landed to refuel."

"Then the whole plan was foolhardy. You stole the blueprint knowing you'd be captured, knowing the attempt to get it to Jupiter would fail." It was an effort for Warren to keep his tone that of a Government official questioning a spy; because of Jeanne's relationship to the prisoner who had so foolishly risked his life, sympathy colored his words.

"No risk is too great for me to take for my country." Carver's eyes burned fanatically. "But something went wrong. The theft of the blueprint shouldn't have been discovered until long after I was safe on Jupiter."

"You make no attempt to deny your guilt?"

The man shrugged. "That would be childish, you have the evidence. However, I do wish to make plain that my sister knew nothing of the plot."

Warren sighed. At least Jeanne was cleared. However, there was still no alternative where Carver was concerned. He must hold the brother of the girl he loved knowing his eventual fate would be a spy's death.

Suddenly, with a movement so quick it took a second for Warren to grasp its import, Carver dashed for the door, speeding through the outer office where Jeanne waited, onto the space-field toward his ship.

"Fire!" It was the Commander

who spoke into the P.A. set in his cupped hand; the Commander who sent a word booming over the field which meant the death of his own happiness; the Commander who spoke, not the man!

Jeanne ran to the window which overlooked the field. He came slowly to a position behind her, hearing the swift, sure report of the guns, arriving just in time to see the lone, defenseless figure sink to the ground.

"Monster!" Jeanne's voice was tense with hatred. "You had the plans; why did you kill him?"

"It was my duty." Warren spoke dully. "He knew he'd be killed, why did he try to escape? It almost seems as if he wanted to die tonight . . ."

Crying softly, Jeanne left.

## CHAPTER II

### THE TRAITOR

**N**EAR DARK of the next day, Steve Warren sat alone at headquarters, his heart too heavy to allow his mind to concentrate on the duties at hand. Carver's body lay in a near barrack, awaiting orders from Earth. None had arrived. Apparently information that the blueprint had been kept from Jupiter's hands had relieved Earth officials to such an extent that they were neglecting minor details. But after all, the spy was dead. All the pomp and ceremony of a court trial could have elicited no more complete payment.

A life for a crime . . . Jeanne's brother's life. And Warren had given the command to fire! Jeanne had refused to see him when he called that morning.

The door opened softly.

"Steve." It was her throaty voice.

He rose, whirling to gather her into his arms where she lay unresisting but cold.

"Forgive me; I had to do it," he said desperately. "Can't you understand?"

She drew away and, standing apart, spoke in a low monotone. "Perhaps. However, I haven't come to argue about that." She closed her eyes despondently for a moment. "There's nothing either of us can do now. Except—" she paused, "you might do me one last favor. You have the stolen plans; Earth has had revenge in Mark's death. Give me permission to take his body back to Jupiter!"

"As soon as orders arrive—"

"Orders! Duty! Orders!" She rose angrily. "Aren't you a man with the power to think and act independently? What harm can Mark do you or your beloved Earth now? He would want to lie in the soil of Jupiter, the planet he loved. And my parents are old. They still cling to ancient superstition — religion, they call it—and it is all they have. Their son is dead—and you speak of orders! I was mistaken about you, Commander Warren." She brushed her eyes over him contemptuously. "I thought for a moment there was a gleam of human understanding in your eye."

She was magnificent in anger. He stepped close, pulling her roughly to him, pressing his lips hard against hers. "Wildcat," he murmured. "You shall have your way, wildcat. A ship will take you to Jupiter tomorrow."

He felt her lips rise in warmth to his. "But you must come back," he whispered. "You must promise to come back to me."

She tensed suddenly.

"Promise," he persisted.

"I promise," she said softly, "if

within the month you still want me." Pulling his head down eagerly, she rested her cheek against his, and for a moment held him close. Then, as before, she pushed him abruptly away and left.

Warren wrinkled his brow in perplexity. What made the girl so changeable: warm and clinging one minute and coldly resistant the next? Yet, her moody caprices intrigued him. Smiling to himself, he turned again to work.

Si Burr burst into the room.

"Where's Jeanne?"

"She left here a while ago," Warren answered. "Why?"

"The complete stock of element No. 95 is missing from the Government storehouse."

"What's Jeanne got to do with that?"

"Plenty!"

"Is that all that was taken?"

"All? Only about ten thousand dollar's worth! Yes, that's all. And I'm responsible. That had to happen to me." Burr paced up and down nervously for a moment. "I'd better find Jeanne."

"What's Jeanne got to do with it anyway?" Warren rose angrily. "Just because her brother was a thief doesn't mean she is."

"Honestly," Si Burr paused at the door, "I know what they mean now when they say love is blind. Even if I told you the facts, you wouldn't believe them."

"Suppose you let me draw my own conclusions." Warren's voice was cold. "Jeanne isn't going to disappear into thin air. There was a kilocycle lock on that storehouse. A strong man couldn't have broken in, let alone a woman."

Burr smiled. "Yeah. A multiple kilocycle lock. Only a metallurgist could have combined metals to set up

the correct vibrations to open it—and there is no metallurgist on Pallas. The lock wasn't broken. Therefore the person who robbed the storehouse must have had a key."

"You have the only key. Who do you think stole it?"

"No one stole it," Burr answered slowly. "I'm a devil popsy-wupsy just like you, where dames are concerned. I gave the key to Jeanne yesterday, during the excitement of preparing to ground the spy ship. She asked to borrow my flash; said she'd lost something. Obviously, she knew the kilocycle key was on the same belt."

"So did you," Warren said angrily. "Why didn't you remove it? At least it would have kept your ridiculous suspicion off Jeanne. What use would she have for the element? Its only known use is to cure the bends induced by cosmic pressure. If she wanted the money from its sale, it would have been easier and more profitable to rob the headquarter's safe. The key to that was on the same belt."

Burr scowled. "Don't ask me to tell you why she stole it. I only know she did. When I started to remove the flash for her she said, 'Oh, don't bother to take it off the belt. You're busy. Just give me the whole thing and I'll bring it right back.' Doesn't that sound to you as if she was after the key?"

"Not at all," Warren said coldly. "Your dislike of her prejudices you."

"Well, if you're going to be so blind—," Burr opened the door to leave. "Guarding the storehouse is my responsibility. I'm going to question her!"

Warren laughed humorlessly. "Go ahead. Much good may it do you! Anyone but a muddle-headed idiot would know Jeanne's not a thief."

**F**OR a second the two men glared at each other before Warren partly regained his good humor. "Go ahead," he repeated. "I'll come along to laugh when you discover your mistake."

Outside it was second twilight, the feeble light from the sun just receding into the West horizon. In the Northeast, Jupiter was rising. The space port was quiet. The massive anti-space craft guns had been wheeled under cover; the neutron lights were out.

The two men walked in silence: Burr worrying over the disappearance of the element; Warren angry at the suspicion cast on Jeanne. Too bad, Warren reflected, that Si had let his resentment of Jeanne come between them. Before her arrival, they had been as close as brothers; now arguments continually spoiled their comradeship. Memory of the old days dulled his anger. He put his arm through Burr's companionably as they plodded in their weighted suits toward the residential quarter where Jeanne was staying.

They were across the mile and a half stretch of field when suddenly they heard the blurred echo of a space-ship hitting the atmosphere of Pallas. They looked back.

The hazy outline of an old man-of-war broke the sky which, as they watched, unfurled its wings to land. Solar headquarters kept them informed as to ships due. Though none was scheduled for this time, it was not unusual for a ship, lost from its spaceway, to arrive unheralded. As all ships were, of necessity, driven blind, occasionally a lost pilot mistook another base for his original destination, not realizing his mistake until he had landed.

As the last war had ended some hundred years ago, unless ordered by

Earth to search a ship for contraband, the base at Pallas was not strongly guarded. They no longer feared a surprise attack from an enemy.

Warren squinted at the descending craft, his mind troubled, though he did not know why, as the outline of her clumsy air-resistant lines and old-fashioned three-fold wings became clearer. Earth had discarded such ancient space-ships long ago. Only the weaker, down-trodden planets such as Jupiter, not allowed by all-powerful Earth to exceed armament limits, still used the old, unperfected ships.

His companion's next words justified his thoughts. "...Jovian multiple tail, type four..."

"I'm going back." Warren spoke from an unreasoned intuition. While ordinarily there would have been nothing upsetting in the arrival of an unheralded ship, now in the light of the recent theft of the Detonator blueprint by a Jovian spy, the matter should be investigated.

While they were still almost a mile away, the ship landed. In the rapidly waning light they could make out two figures leaping with great strides over the ground, humans, without the weighted suits ordinarily worn on a light gravity world. A third figure leaped to meet them, a figure strangely blurred at the knees, a woman! All three leaped to a near barrack, disappearing inside.

"Now what do you say?" Burr panted. "That was Jeanne. She's probably giving her compatriots the stolen element to take to Jupiter."

Warren paused to shed his weighted suit. Time was a factor; he could make five times the speed without it.

"They wouldn't have to go into the barrack for that. But Carver's body is in there. Maybe—"

Before he could finish, the figures emerged, two of them carrying a long box between them. Quickly all three leaped to the Jovian ship and entered.

Even without their weighted suits, the two men had covered less than half a mile when the ship took off. Pallas had been robbed of the body of a spy and, perhaps, a valuable element. But why? What possible connection could exist between them? And in the whole confused mess, where did Jeanne fit?

The blueprint for the Super Detonator was still safe in Warren's inner pocket. He felt again to be sure. What then could have been the object of this surprise visit?

He tried not to think, as he hurried toward the speed-cruiser, still ready from the day before to take off. Burr prepared to follow him into the ship.

"Sorry. I'm going alone this trip." Why hadn't Jeanne waited for the ship he had promised her to take Carver's body to Jupiter? Warren's mind was in confusion.

"You can't do a thing alone!"

"Stay at the post!" He was the Commander giving orders. "There's been enough trouble lately. And—keep this!" From his inside pocket he took the blueprint, handing it to Burr. "The Earth envoy will be along to pick it up."

As he reached for the lever to start the rockets firing, the thought that Si was right occurred to him. Even if he found the Jovian ship, there wasn't much he could do outside of satisfying his curiosity as to the reason for Jeanne's sudden departure.

Leaving the cruiser, he went into the hangar and looked around. There was nothing here that would help. Yes . . . maybe, if all else failed. . .

his own life must be sacrificed along with those of the Jovians.

Taking a small, compact box from the wall of the hangar, he emptied a package of cigarettes and put it inside, sliding it under the unturned half of the package so it could not be seen, and filling the space that was left with cigarettes. Then, putting a ray gun in his pocket, he returned to the cruiser where Burr waited.

"I'll catch that old crate before she's a third of the way to Jupiter," he shouted above the roar of the rockets.

Burr grinned. "All right. But when you do, don't forget that Jeanne is a traitor—and you're in the Service for life!"

Warren smiled wryly as his ship shot into space. Burr was right again. He must not forget his duty to his planet. Even love must not make him forget that.

### CHAPTER III

#### EN ROUTE TO JUPITER

**H**E turned on the magnetic guide which would draw his cruiser in the trail of the escaping man of war. As science had not yet perfected a transparent substance which could withstand cosmic buffetings and the terrific impact a ship suffered on hitting the atmosphere around inhabited worlds, space-ships were driven blind. While instruments were pretty reliable, without sight of the world toward which a pilot was headed to guide him, mistakes sometimes happened. Besides, it was monotonous to sit in a closed ship for hours with nothing to look at but an instrument board—especially when one's thoughts were as troubled as Warren's.

Jeanne had double-crossed him.

How, he did not know, yet he feared some treachery lay behind her earlier departure. While it may have been her desire to avoid indebtedness to him by using the Jovian ship instead of the one he had promised to provide her with, he felt it was something less legitimate and less comprehensible.

His ship swayed sickeningly. Evidently he was off the beaten spaceway. Probably the Jovians knew, by the fluctuations of their instrument panel, that they were being pursued and were endeavoring to shake him off. Tensing his lips, he righted the whirling ship. If their old multiple tail model could stand the exigencies of space, his perfected cruiser certainly was in no danger.

Again the ship spun, a bad twirl this time—bad enough to throw his ship out of range where the magnetic guide could not function. For a moment, he twisted helplessly in space. Muttering, he increased the power. If the guide beam was too far lost, he might never pick it up.

Back and forth he tacked, trying desperately to catch it, straining his ears to hear above cosmic noises the low hum which would mean his ship had crossed the lines of force given off by the other.

At last he heard it. The guide caught. Relieved, he again released his steering apparatus to the magnetic force which would draw his ship in a direct line to the Jovian man of war.

Despite the danger of being caught in an unexpected vortex or of crashing an errant asteroid, he ran full speed, risking a severe bumping in the rough spaceway. He must lose no time in getting to the bottom of this strange double theft. How foolish of Jeanne, foolish of them all, to think they might get away with it!

It was fortunate for him that Earth had not allowed Jupiter to construct ships since she had reached her armament limit years ago. Had the Jovian ship been a modern, single tail type, he'd never have had a chance of overtaking it with the head-start it had had.

His skin prickled from the cosmic rays which penetrated even the heavy metal of the ship. He shifted uncomfortably, maddened by the itch, yet fearing to scratch. A break in his skin, exposed to the rays, might mean death.

He tried to think of other things—gleaning satisfaction from the certainty that despite the duplicity of Jeanne—whatever its purpose—the blueprint of the Detonator was safe on Pallas in Burr's possession.

At last, after what seemed limitless time, he felt a soft bump. He had caught up to the Jovian ship. He ran a faint current through the nose of his cruiser, creating a suction which held it to the other ship in mid-space.

Shutting off the motive power, he crawled forward, opening a door leading to the electric nose. This was the ticklish part. He must maneuver his ship around the surface of the Jovian craft until he found the safety lock. The force holding the two ships together was slight. One false move might break the connection, might send his cruiser careering helplessly into space, perhaps to pick up such whirling speed before he could reach the pilot's seat to turn on the power that he might never regain control.

**H**E TOUCHED the gently clinging nose carefully, detaching and moving only a part of the flexible material at a time. If he had misjudged direction, he might have to circle the entire ship before he came

to the lock. It was slow work, but at last he found it.

Centering the ship's nose, he knocked loudly: two slow taps, three fast ones, so those inside might not mistake his knocking for the beating of cosmic forces outside.

The safety lock opened almost immediately to reveal a dark, bearded face.

"Come in." The man smiled suavely. "We've been expecting you, Commander Warren."

Warren crawled through the narrow safety lock. Before he could draw his gun, he was seized violently from behind and his arms pinioned as he was searched for weapons.

"I'm Captain Domber," the voice continued.

"Perhaps you will tell me, Captain Domber, what your purpose was in landing unheralded on Pallas this evening and removing the body of a spy from an Earth base?"

The gun found and taken, his arms were released. He stood erect and turned.

Jeanne stood midships over the opened coffin of her brother. Only one other person was on board beside the girl, Captain Domber and Warren: a thin-boned, metallic skinned, lidless eyed native of Jupiter, serving as pilot.

He stared coldly at her, letting no sympathy for her tense body and eyes wide in mute appeal color his gaze. Captain Domber spoke.

"There is no harm in telling you our purpose now, Commander Warren. You are a captive of Jupiter. The Jovian custom is to tell captives anything they wish to know—before they die."

"Die!" Horror paled Jeanne's face. "You can't kill him! I won't allow it." Stepping to Warren's side, she put an arm through his possessively.

## Devil Dogs of Space

"So-oo?" The Captain leered at them, exposing ragged teeth. "And how will you stop me, Comrade Carver?"

"Easily." She squared her narrow shoulders defiantly. "Unless I have your promise for Commander Warren's safety, I shall refuse to reveal the secret of the hidden blueprint."

To Warren her words came like a thunderbolt. The one thing he had felt certain of was that the plan for the Super Detonator would not fall into Jupiter's hands. The spy had been thoroughly searched and he himself had given the only copy found on Carver to Si Burr before leaving Pallas.

Now, he looked thoughtfully at Jeanne, heavy-hearted in the knowledge that Burr's suspicions of her had been warranted. She was a spy in the service of Jupiter—an enemy spy!

She raised eyes full of entreaty, but he stared coldly, ignoring their plea.

"Faugh!" The word sounded inexplicably vile on the Captain's lips. "Are you woman or patriot? Woman, I'd say. Woman, ready to sell out her country for a lover's body!"

"I am both. I have sacrificed too much already," her eyes rested wistfully on Warren, "to wish the cause for which I did it to fail. I am eager to serve my country, eager to reveal the secret to you—once I get your promise that Commander Warren shall go freely back to Pallas. But," she shrugged, "the Jovian officials told us each only one step of the plan for getting possession of the blueprint. If one compatriot fails to live up to the ideal, another may withhold his information. You are powerless to proceed without me."

"Women!" Domber exclaimed. "To send women on such a mission! Frail!

(Continued On Page 100)

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## Science Fiction

(Continued From Page 99)

Untrustworthy! Weak! You ask me to let this man return to Pallas possessing full knowledge of our activities, merely," he continued disdainfully, "because you love him. No!" He paced a small circle. "Our enemies must die!"

Jeanne sighed. "Then Jupiter will suffer. Your cause is lost." Turning her back slowly, she mused, "There was need for haste, you know."

"Was need for haste?" Domber asked fearfully. "Do you mean it may be too late even now?"

SHE glanced at her watch. "Will you allow Commander Warren to leave?"

"Yes! Yes! Answer me, woman!"

He took her arm, swinging her around to face him. "Is it too late?"

Over the Captain's shoulder, her eyes met Warren's. "Go then," she said softly. "And—I'm sorry. But I had a duty too—to my country."

A faint smile lit his eyes. "I understand. We are each working sincerely, but against each other. To you, your cause is right; to me, mine is. The only difference," his voice became slightly bitter, "was that I kept my cause no secret from you."

"Forgive me, Steve. There was no other way. Go back to Pallas and forget me."

Heedless of Domber's presence, he walked over and took her in his arms. "One kiss then," he said lightly, "to help me forget."

Half in love, half in anger that she had bested him, he pressed his lips hard against hers; then, pushing her roughly from him, he said, "Forgetting isn't easy unless one knows all there is to forget. Show Domber the secret hiding place of the blueprint now—while I am still here. It may amuse you to watch my face while you reveal the way you tricked me."

## Devil Dogs of Space

"Hurry," Domber said, "show me! You have wasted too much time already. If your friend wishes to stay—"

Withdrawing her hurt eyes from Warren's, Jeanne took a vial from her bag. So Si Burr had been right about that too! Jeanne was responsible for the disappearance of the element from the Government storehouse.

She spoke in clipped, cold tones. "You have your part of the instructions, Captain Domber. Prepare to follow them."

Half angry, half horrified, Steve watched her bend over the coffin in which her brother lay and uncover his chest; he watched her uncork the vial and slowly pour its contents over the body.

From the dead flesh a mist rose, filling the ship with an acrid, horrid odor. Jeanne covered the chest completely with the element, emptying the vial. Ten thousand dollars had been dissipated into thin air!

Warren bent closer. As the mist cleared, a pattern appeared on the dead man's chest—an intricate thing of lines and coils and strange hieroglyphics. The design was familiar, but queer—troublesomely queer!

Domber wrinkled his brow in perplexity and, for a moment, all three looked into the coffin in silence.

Suddenly, a light broke over Domber's face. With a springy step, he walked forward in the ship, returning with a mirror which he held over the body.

Warren peered into it. The puzzling hieroglyphics were now merely draftsman's numbers. In the mirror, the plan for the Super Detonator showed clearly and perfectly with, below it, one line of print: Activating force, Dinerium.

That was the thing Jupiter should never have learned—the one thing,

(Continued On Page 102)

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(Continued From Page 101)

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besides the actual construction of the Detonator, which Earth feared the Jovians would discover: that their Dinerium was the motivating force of a death machine. Due to the unstable nature of Dinerium, Earth must have a continuous source, but once Jupiter discovered the use to which it was being put, her source was gone. A planet would not ship the wherewithal to destroy itself.

Jeanne turned away, avoiding Warren's eyes, and walked to the far end of the ship. "You have seen," she said dully. "Go now."

Domber still gazed eagerly at the plan. "How long will these lines show?"

"A few hours."

"Then there is time for this."

Before either Warren or Jeanne realized his intention, he walked to the safety lock and pried the lightly held nose of Warren's cruiser from the Jovian ship, allowing it to sink back into the void of space.

"I have saved you from yourself, Comrade Carver," he said calmly. "No enemy of Jupiter's must live. However," he waved the trembling girl to silence, "I won't kill him now. Our country shall decide his fate." Turning to Warren, he asked tauntingly, "What will you do now, spawn of all-powerful Earth?"

Warren did not answer.

"Beast! Liar!" Jeanne's eyes were pools of burning anger. "I was a fool to have trusted your word!" For a moment she trembled, overcome with rage; then she suddenly burst into tears. "The only thing I might have done, Steve, was to save your life—the one thing I could do to atone for the unhappiness I've already caused you. But my countryman betrayed me!" She sank weakly to a seat, burying her head in her arms.

## Devil Dogs of Space

Warren hardened his mind against her grief. "Cut the hysterics, Jeanne," he said coldly. "Your effort to save my life seems of small moment beside the many lives Jupiter will sacrifice when the Detonator is completed and she attacks Earth."

"Earth meant to do the same to us," Domber remarked, looking up from the paper on which he was copying the blueprint from its reflection in the mirror.

"Earth planned to hold the Detonator only as a threat. She might never have used it." Warren walked slowly to the corner where Jeanne sat watching him with hurt and troubled eyes.

"You hate me, don't you?" she asked softly. "Why? You said only a short while ago you understood that my cause seemed right to me."

"It isn't for that I despise you."

"Why do you despise me, Steve?" Her voice was pleading.

**H**E EYED her coldly. "For two reasons: first, because you used me as a means to gain your end. In other words, you misused love—pretended a love you didn't feel."

"I didn't," she said wearily. "Probably you'll never believe me, but I did love you—do still, for all the good it will do me. What's the other reason?"

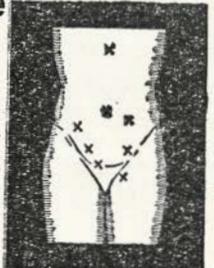
"Mark Carver knew his was a suicidal journey," Warren said inconsequentially. "On his way from Earth to Pallas, by the use of a mirror, he copied the blueprint to his chest with some rare sort of invisible ink. Whoever evolved the plot for the theft of the blueprint took no chances that the body might be examined for common invisible ink on Pallas. Due to the medicinal properties of element #95 it is probably the *only* substance which will bring

(Continued On Page 104)

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## Science Fiction

(Continued From Page 103)

out that particular ink. That's why you stole it from the Government storehouse. And the reason you left early on a Jovian ship was because you had to work *en route* to Jupiter, before the ink lost effect. However, Carver knew he'd be captured on Pallas and the original blueprint taken from him. Therefore, he *had* to be killed so that you could take his body to Jupiter. You were waiting on the asteroid especially to deliver his body *and* the secret to Captain Domber."

"That's right," Jeanne said disinterestedly. "Why do you hate me, Steve?" she persisted.

"Mark was your brother!" The words burst from him. "How could you take his sacrifice so coldly, so heartlessly? How, a few minutes ago, could you mess around on his dead chest without shedding a tear or heaving a sigh of regret for the life that was lost? *That's* what I despise about you, Jeanne Carver—your calloused heart—the unfeelingness with which you took the death of your flesh and blood—the death of someone you must have once loved. Or isn't it possible for you to feel real love?"

"It is possible." A tear coursed slowly down her cheek. "I love Mark now—love and respect him for what he has done. But you see, he *wasn't* my brother. I had never laid eyes on him before his ship landed on Pallas. When I saw the preparations you were making to stop his ship after receiving the message from Earth, I knew the time had come for me to carry out my instructions. I asked you for permission to take Mark's body to Jupiter to find out whether you would leave the body unguarded where I could get it easily when the Jovian ship arrived." She fell silent a moment; then added,

## Devil Dogs of Space

"All those things were planned long ago—before I met you . . ."

Impulsively, Warren bent to kiss the rivulet the tear left on her cheek. "Darling, forgive me. Your heart is as warm as the sun, and I was a fool to doubt it."

Pillowing her head on his shoulder, he held her close, letting his mind run in turmoil—half of it happy in her justification of his love, half acutely miserable. With Jupiter's rich Dinerium mines and the plan for the Detonator, supremacy lay in her hands. The country which he had sworn to protect would be annihilated . . . . .

Save for his helplessness to serve Earth, Warren's own plight troubled him little. Though he was trapped unarmed, hopeless of escape, with sure death awaiting him on arrival at Jupiter, to a true Devil Dog such details paled to minor importance when his country was threatened. He must find some way to save it! But what possible way was there?

### CHAPTER IV

"ONLY ONE CAN WIN . . ."

**B**EFORE Warren had solved his problem, his mind was drawn from it by the feel of Jeanne's eyes on him. If there were only one country, he and Jeanne compatriots! This way they had no chance of happiness together. They were enemies!

Domber was still occupied in copying the blueprint. Forward, the Jovian pilot sat robot-like and silent, his lidless eyes fixed motionlessly on the instrument board. Steve Warren and Jeanne were as alone as they would ever be now . . . . . alone for the last time!

Jeanne spoke slowly. "At least I

(Continued On Page 106)

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**Science Fiction**

(Continued From Page 105)

will have this to remember: that you believed I loved you."

He tightened his arm about her shoulders. "I'm not dead yet, my dear. While we're together, let's be happy."

"Happy?" Her eyes widened incredulously. "When I'm to lose you in so short a time? How can you speak of happiness?" She lowered her lids to cover the welling tears.

"There is happiness," he answered slowly, "in the knowledge that though we are enemies, we love as deeply as though we were not."

"And there is irony," she said bitterly, "that one must die so the other may be triumphant."

"Then may the best man win!" He rose, flourishing an imaginary sword and bowed low before her.

"To victory," she answered. "My victory—which I no longer want." Closing her eyes again, she tried to shut him from her thoughts.

Alone, his mind worked furiously. Even if he were to attack and subdue Domber, what of the pilot? Though the Jovian native appeared to be little more than a robot, he had undoubtedly been trained to defend his master in case of danger. Unarmed as he was, did Warren stand any chance against the two of them? And what of Jeanne? Would she help him or, despite her bitter words about victory, stand on the side for which she had already risked so much? Which stood paramount with her: patriotism or love? He did not know. Were he in her position, he did not honestly know which one he would sacrifice.

Putting his hands in his pocket, he paced a small circle. Suddenly, he paused. His fingers had encountered the package of cigarettes in which he had concealed the small plastic box he had taken from the



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## Devil Dogs of Space

hangar at Pallas—which, fortunately, Domber had overlooked in searching him for weapons.

Keeping his hand in his pocket, he removed the cigarettes one by one, tearing the package slowly until the small box was free. It was a Capacitive Attractor—a magnet equipped with coils which deflected magnetic waves coming within its radius—used by the Devil Dogs to befuddle an escaping pilot by distorting the action of his instrument board. Warren himself had used it many times to send an escaping ship off the beaten spaceways into a vortex where, out of control, it might be easily wrecked or captured.

Still . . . . . must it be suicide for them all? Sending this ship into an uncharted spaceway would not only mean his own death—but Jeanne's. Wasn't there another way? He weighed values in the balance. If worst came to worst, he must sign a death warrant for them all. Even that was better than allowing Jupiter to get the plan for the Super Detonator.

Still, he racked his brains, feeling, for no apparent reason, that in the small box lay a way out. Maybe . . . a hope sprang! It was worth trying anyway.

Keeping one hand still in his pocket, he sauntered carelessly across the ship to stand behind the pilot. The instrument board was true; each needle lay squarely beneath the line on the dial face with which it must coincide. Was the spaceway too smooth here to try? No. One of the needles wavered . . .

Domber looked up suspiciously. "Be careful what you do, my friend. Our pilot is one of the quickest draws on Jupiter, and he is armed. You'd do better to await trial, than be assassinated in mid-space."

(Continued On Page 108)



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**Science Fiction**

(Continued From Page 107)

Warren smiled. "I'm no Hercules. I have no thought of besting three of you."

Walking over to Jeanne, Domber handed her the gun he had taken from Warren. "Keep him covered. If anything goes wrong, I'll see that you are tried for treason. And you know the fate of traitors!"

**S**HE took the gun, holding it as firmly trained as a man, her eyes dark with confused emotions. Warren smiled disarmingly before he turned his eyes carelessly to the instrument board again, one hand still in his pocket.

Finding the dial of the Capacitive Attractor, he turned it a fraction of a degree. With that small current, would it affect the whole board or only the most sensitive instrument? He waited tensely, striving to keep his outward appearance casual. Had the pilot noticed?

It was going to be a long, hard pull . . . but *maybe* it would work. Warren sauntered back to sit beside Jeanne. If only they didn't hit a vortex . . . if only the off-spaceways were smooth . . . if only the ship held to control . . . He had one chance in a thousand of getting away with it.

Domber looked up from his copying. "Make the most of your time, Commander Warren. We must be almost half way to Jupiter."

"Halfway to death," he answered, smiling to Jeanne. In his pocket, he turned the dial infinitesimally again. "You've been very clever, my girl." Gone was the lover; his tone was cold. He knew only that he must keep talking to hide his actions.

She started, staring at him in disbelief, the gun wavering and dropping to her lap.

He picked it up, handing it butt

## Devil Dogs of Space

first back to her. "You don't want to lose the upper hand now. With a weapon, I might still come out victorious."

"The victory I anticipated so long," she said wistfully, "has a bitter taste, because in gaining it, I betrayed you. Don't be cold to me now, Steve, or," her voice lowered, "you will force me to betray my country too."

"Sh . . . ." He silenced her, his voice again tender. "That was farthest from my mind."

"A human being must have some loyalty, some cause," she continued softly, "must have one thing in all the Solar System to which to be true. That is the only thing which distinguishes us from the wild planet life . . . the one thing which makes us human, with the capacity for love."

"I know," he answered. "A poet said it thousands of years ago: *I could not love you, dear, so much, loved I not honor more.*"

"That's beautiful," she murmured. "I never heard it before. You know somehow, Steve, I think primitive life before the planets were colonized was better. People had more time for beauty, for living, for love. What if art and literature are meaningless? They need no excuse for being. Today our minds are taken up with conquest and material gain . . ."

"Since time began," he said softly, "that has been true." He turned the dial in his pocket another fraction. "But neither the past nor the future is our problem now. We must live, in the moments left us together, a whole lifetime . . . ."

She laid her head on his shoulder despondently. Fleeting, he had a feeling of guilt at playing on her emotions; yet everything he had said was true. He loved her better than

(Continued On Page 110)

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## Science Fiction

(Continued From Page 109)

life itself . . . but as Jeanne had said, a human being must have loyalty for something. For a long time they sat in silence.

At last Domber rose, closing the coffin, putting the paper on which he had copied the blueprint into his pocket. A moment later, there was the sound of wings unfurling. The mechanism in the wings automatically started when a ship came within the pull of gravity of a world.

Domber smiled cruelly. "Time's up, love birds. We're hitting Jupiter."

Warren felt the wetness of Jeanne's tears as she laid her cheek against his. "I'm sorry things turned out this way," she cried. "Steve, please believe, I'm sorry I won!"

Drawing away, he avoided her tear-filled eyes, saying gruffly, "Remember this, Jeanne. Remember this afterwards. *One of us had to lose!*" He kissed her tenderly, keeping his arm close about her until they felt the soft bump of landing.

At Domber's gesture, they drew apart. "Your love idyll is over, Commander Warren. You are prisoner on Jovian soil."

Motioning Warren to precede him, he pushed open the space-ship door, to see—framed in the square of its opening—a gun, and above it a freckled, grinning face. Si Burr!

"Welcome to Pallas," Burr said cheerily.

"Pallas!" Domber tensed, his eyes darting sideways in anger.

Realization flooding her mind, Jeanne said dully, "You said 'one of us had to lose.' I'm remembering it, Steve."

For a moment, he gazed into her soft eyes, letting the compassion of his own answer for him.

"Come out," Burr said, pointing

**Devil Dogs of Space**

his gun at Domber and the pilot.

"Very well," the Captain smiled suavely. Then, with a lightning movement faced about, drawing his gun. "But you won't live to enjoy victory, Warren!"

Jeanne threw herself into the path of the flash and, catching its full force, crumpled to the floor.

Si Burr reacted a moment too late. Though his quickly-fired shot pierced Domber's heart, sending the man spinning against the space-ship's side, Domber's fire meant for Warren but intercepted by Jeanne had already reaped its tragedy.

"The one thing I could do for you, Steve," Jeanne murmured, her eyes caressing him until they closed.

As Burr led the Jovian pilot from the ship, Warren dropped to his knees beside her . . .

**I**N Pallas headquarters, Warren stared hopelessly at nothing.

" . . . did a wonderful job." Uncomfortable in the heavy silence, Si Burr kept talking. " . . . probably mean a promotion. Hope you'll take me along, wherever they send you . . . ." He paused. "But you haven't told me yet *how* you did it."

"What?" Warren covered his eyes with one hand.

"How you managed to bring the ship around so it landed on Pallas instead of Jupiter? Apparently they had disarmed you. When the Jovian ship landed here, Domber had all the guns."

"Oh." Warren uncovered his eyes. "I had a Capacitive Attractor concealed which, luckily, Domber overlooked in searching me for weapons. I turned it a fraction of a degree at a time while it was in my pocket, hoping with that small a current it would affect only the most sensitive instrument — the space-compass

(Continued On Page 112)



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(Continued From Page 111)



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needle—instead of distorting the whole board. It did, and, as the needle wavered, the pilot adjusted his course to bring the dial line true. So, after awhile, without knowing it, he'd turned a half circle and was headed back toward Pallas."

"It must have been a wide half circle," Burr said, "and it must have taken the ship entirely off the beaten spaceway for a time. What if she'd hit a vortex?"

"She didn't. Just dumb luck."

"And if the Attractor was in your pocket," Burr continued, "how did you judge when the ship had completed a half circle? How is it you didn't make it a three-quarter circle by mistake, or a whole circle and head her back towards Jupiter again?"

"Oh, I don't know. I figured a lot as to how many twists of the dial made a degree, but I never got it quite clear in my mind. That was just dumb luck too."

"Not exactly," Burr objected. "It wasn't dumb luck that you thought of using the Attractor that way. I'd have scuttled the ship with it while I was still safe in the cruiser, hoping I could manage to wreck her while she was out of control in a vortex."

"I couldn't have done that," Warren said softly. "Jeanne was on her."

Burr's voice was gruff. "Oh . . . . I'm sorry about Jeanne. The way she saved your life at the cost of her own makes me feel pretty awful because of the things I said about her."

"They were true," Warren answered dully.

"But it never could have worked out," Burr continued, "a Devil Dog and a traitor . . . ."

Steve Warren raised his head. "Not a traitor, Si. Jeanne was a patriot . . . . On the other side of the fence."

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*Edited by Dr. Edward Podolsky*

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# DO THE DEAD RETURN?

A strange man in Los Angeles, known as "The Voice of Two Worlds," tells of astonishing experiences in far-off and mysterious Tibet, often called the land of miracles by the few travelers permitted to visit it. Here he lived among the lamas, mystic priests of the temple. "In your previous lifetime," a very old lama told him, "you lived here, a lama in this temple. You and I were boys together. I lived on, but you died in youth, and were reborn in England. I have been expecting your return."

The young Englishman was amazed as he looked around the temple where he was believed to have lived and died. It seemed uncannily familiar, he appeared to know every nook and corner of it, yet—at least in this lifetime—he had never been there before. And mysterious was the set of circumstances that had brought him. Could it be a case of reincarnation, that strange belief of the East that souls return to earth again and again, living many lifetimes?

Because of their belief that he had formerly been a lama in the temple, the lamas welcomed the young man with open arms and taught him rare mysteries and long-hidden practices, closely guarded for three thousand years by the sages, which have enabled many to perform amazing feats. He says that the system often leads to almost unbelievable improvement in power of mind, can be used to achieve brilliant business and professional success as well as great happiness. The



young man himself later became a noted explorer and geographer, a successful publisher of maps and atlases of the Far East, used throughout the world.

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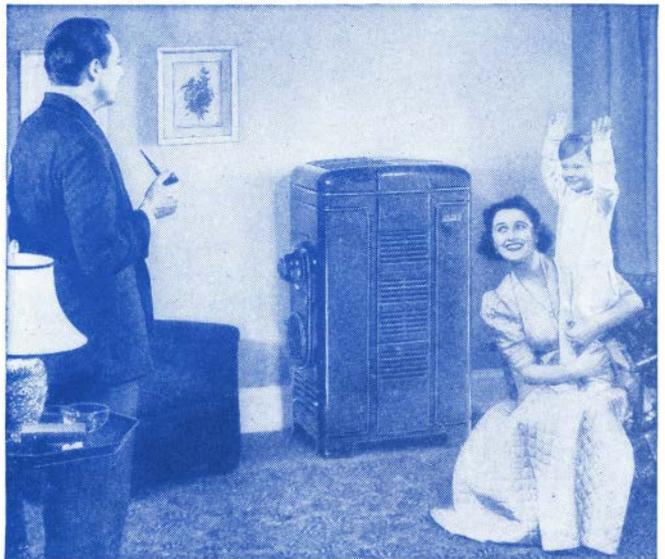
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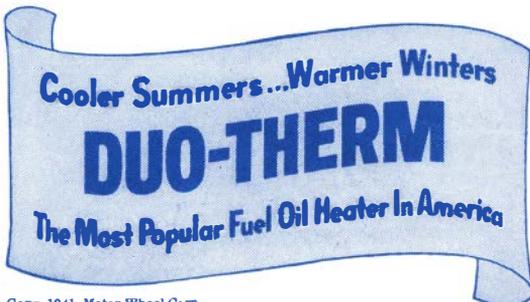


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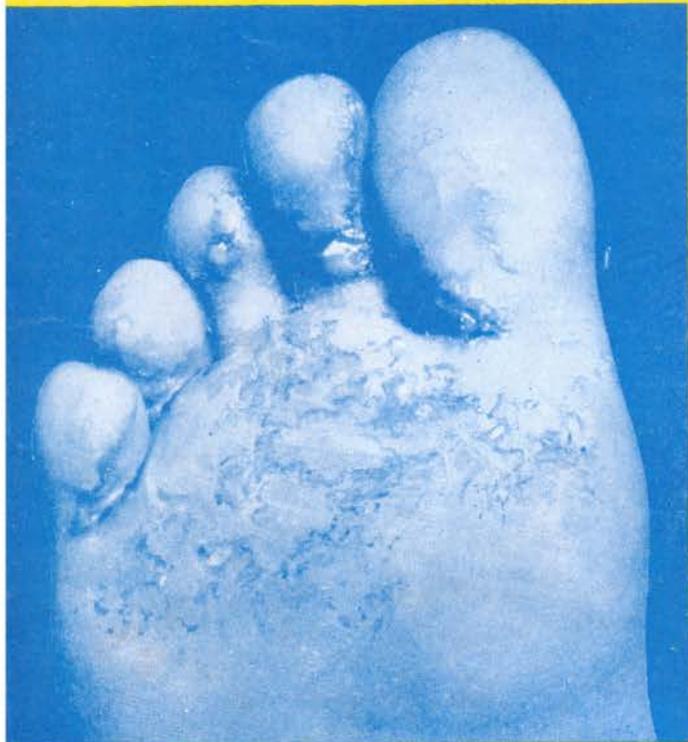
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# FOOT ITCH

## ATHLETE'S FOOT

## WHY TAKE CHANCES?



The germ that causes the disease is known as Tinea Trichophyton. It buries itself deep in the tissues of the skin and is very hard to kill. A test made shows it takes 15 minutes of boiling to destroy the germ, whereas, upon contact, laboratory tests show that H. F. will kill the germ Tinea Trichophyton within 15 seconds.

H. F. was developed solely for the purpose of relieving Athlete's foot. It is a liquid that penetrates and dries quickly. You just paint the affected parts. H. F. gently peels the skin, which enables it to get to parasites which exist under the outer cuticle.

## ITCHING OFTEN RELIEVED QUICKLY

As soon as you apply H. F. you may find that the itching is relieved. You should paint the infected part with H. F. every night until your feet are better. Usually it takes from three to ten days. You should leave the skin soft and moist. You may marvel at the quick relief it brings you relief. It costs you nothing to try, so if you are troubled with Athlete's Foot why wait a day longer?

## H. F. SENT ON FREE TRIAL

# PAY NOTHING TILL RELIEVED

## Send Coupon

According to the Government Health Bulletin No. E-28, at least 50% of the adult population of the United States are being attacked by the disease known as Athlete's Foot.

Usually the disease starts between the toes. Little watery blisters form, and the skin cracks and peels. After a while, the itching becomes intense, and you feel as though you would like to scratch off all the skin.

## BEWARE OF IT SPREADING

Often the disease travels all over the bottom of the feet. The soles of your feet become red and swollen. The skin also cracks and peels, and the itching becomes worse and worse.

Get relief from this disease as quickly as possible, because it is very contagious, and it may go to your hands or even to the under arm or crotch of the legs.

Sign and mail the coupon, and a bottle of H. F. will be mailed you immediately. Don't send any money and don't pay the postman any money; don't pay anything any time unless H. F. is helping you. If it does help you, we know you will be glad to send us \$1 for the bottle at the end of ten days. That's how much faith we have in H. F. Read, sign and mail the coupon today.



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