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EDITORIAL

THE GROUP AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Basically, sociology is the study of how groups of human beings behave, and psychology the study of how individual human beings behave—but it's evident that there can't be a group without individuals to compose it. To that extent, at least, psychology is the basis of sociology, and the statistics on individual behavior that psychologists collect are valid as a social function. But . . . I think I can show that they have no useful meaning *for psychology itself*—for the understanding of individual human beings.

First, it needs to be recognized that human thinking, human science and theories of method of understanding, can not, in any field of effort, relate the individual and the group. There is a wide-open, and very fundamental hole in our methods of thought; we are simply, completely, and fundamentally unable to express the relationship of individual-identity to group-nature, in *any* field of study. We have a science of electronics—the study of individual electron behavior—and a science of electrical engineering, which is a different thing. In that particular field, we have made some engineering-level, rule-of-thumb correlations between electron-behavior and electric-current behavior.

But we have, in fundamental physics, the problem of "quantum statistics," which allows prediction and calculation of relatively gross matters concerning quanta in groups —but doesn't tell us much that's useful about individual quanta. And the behavior of individuals is fundamentally different from the behavior

of groups-of-those-same-individuals. Laws which *do* apply to individuals *do not* apply to those individuals-in-groups. Example: an individual nuclear particle can short-circuit, by-pass, duck-under, or somehow play ducks and drakes with the normal laws of energy relationships; a nuclear particle two million volts deep inside the nuclear potential wall somehow gives a twist, a hop-skip-and-jump, and . . . presto! It's outside the wall, *without* having acquired the necessary energy to climb over the wall. It's as though an automobile that wanted to go from a point in Colorado on one side of the Rockies to a point in California at the same elevation above sea level, but on the other side of the mountains, gave a quiver, a shake, and . . . whoops! There it is in California!

It takes energy equivalent to seven miles a second to get a mass out of the Earth's gravitational well—and that's what keeps us Earth-bound. But note this: there is a point in space between the Earth and the Sun, where a mass would have the same net total gravitational energy potential as it does on the surface of the Earth. It would have fallen millions of miles toward the Sun, and the energy so released would be equal to the energy necessary to lift that mass out of the Earth's much feebler gravitational well.

Then if we could make a spaceship act like a nuclear particle, we could escape Earth by the simple process of ducking through, or under, or around, or something, that gravitational barrier. No violation of the law of conservation of energy is involved, either.

Now individual particles can and do do precisely that sort of thing. But while that is a Law of Nature relevant to particles, it *does not* apply to groups-of-particles.

But that is equivalent to saying that the Law of Nature that makes it impossible for a spaceship to duck out into space is not applicable to individual particles. What a spaceship cannot do, a particle can do—and, in Nature, if a particle can do a thing, it must. Make it possible for water to run down hill, and that water must.

We do not have any way of relating the fundamental nature of a particle-individual to a wave-group—nor can we, because we don't know how, relate the individual human being to the laws of sociology. We lack a method of stating that type of relationship, or considering the laws of individual-group dynamic relational forces *at a fundamental level*. If we did have, we could use those laws to explain quantum mechanics, and social dynamics alike. Arithmetic applies to both fields; the sort of relational understanding I'm talking about would apply to both.

Until we do have such an understanding, however, statistical studies of human beings belong in the field of sociology, and are not, properly, to be considered studies of human individuals-as-such at all. The laws

(*Continued on page* 160)

THE DEAD PAST

There's the old saying, "Let the dead past bury its dead." But... how long does a past have to be passed before it's dead?

BY ISAAC ASIMOV

Illustrated by van Dangen

Arnold Potterley, Ph.D. was a Professor of Ancient History. That, in itself, was not dangerous. What changed the world beyond all dreams was the fact that he *looked* like a Professor of Ancient History.

Thaddeus Araman, Department Head of the Division of Chronos-

copy, might have taken proper action if Dr. Potterley had been owner of a large, square chin, flashing eyes, aquiline nose and broad shoulders.

As it was, Thaddeus Araman found himself staring over his desk at a mild-mannered individual, whose faded blue eyes looked at him wistfully from either side of a low-bridged button nose; whose small, neatly-dressed figure seemed stamped "Milk-and-water" from thinning brown hair to the neatly-brushed shoes that completed a conservative middle-class costume.

Araman said pleasantly, "And now what can I do for you, Dr. Potterley?"

Dr. Potterley said in a soft voice that went well with the rest of him, "Mr. Araman, I came to you because you're top man in chronoscopy."

Araman smiled. "Not exactly. Above me is the World Commissioner of Research and above him is the secretary general of the United Nations. And above both of them, of course, are the sovereign peoples of Earth."

Dr. Potterley shook his head. "They're not interested in chronoscopy. I've come to you, sir, because for two years I have been trying to obtain permission to do some time-viewing—chronoscopy, that is—in connection with my researches on ancient Carthage. I can't obtain such permission. My research grants are all proper. There is no irregularity in any of my intellectual endeavors and yet—"

"I'm sure there is no question of irregularity," said Araman, soothingly. He flipped the thin reproduction-sheets in the folder to which Potterley's name had been attached. They had been produced by Multivac, whose vast analogical mind kept all the department records. When this was over, the sheets could be destroyed, then reproduced on demand in a matter of minutes.

And while Araman turned the pages, Dr. Potterley's voice continued in a soft monotone.

The historian was saying, "I must explain that my problem is quite an important one. Carthage was ancient commercialism brought to its zenith. Pre-Roman Carthage was the nearest ancient analogue to pre-atomic America, at least insofar as its attachment to trade, commerce and business in general was concerned. They were the most daring seamen and explorers before the Vikings; much better at it than the over-rated Greeks.

"To know Carthage would be very rewarding, yet the only knowledge we have of it is derived from the writings of its bitter enemies, the Greeks and Romans. Carthage itself never wrote in its own defense or, if it did, the books did not survive. As a result, the Carthaginians have been one of the favorite sets of villains of history and perhaps unjustly so. Time-viewing may set the record straight."

He said much more.

Araman said, still turning the reproduction-sheets before him, "You must realize, Dr. Potterley, that

chronoscopy, or time-viewing, if you prefer, is a difficult process."

Dr. Potterley, who had been interrupted, frowned and said, "I am asking for only certain selected views at times and places I would indicate."

Araman sighed. "Even a few views, even one— It is an unbelievably delicate art. There is the question of focus, getting the proper scene in view and holding it. There is the synchronization of sound, which calls for completely independent circuits."

"Surely my problem is important enough to justify considerable effort."

"Yes, sir. Undoubtedly," said Araman at once. To deny the importance of someone's research problem would be unforgivably bad manners. "But you must understand how long-drawn-out even the simplest view is. And there is a long waiting line for the chronoscope and an even longer waiting line for the use of Multivac which guides us in our use of the controls."

Potterley stirred unhappily. "But can nothing be done? For two years—"

"A matter of priority, sir. I'm sorry. Cigarette?"

The historian started back at the suggestion, eyes suddenly widening as he stared at the pack thrust out toward him. Araman looked surprised, withdrew the pack, made a motion as though to take a cigarette for himself and thought better of it.

Potterley drew a sigh of unfeigned relief as the pack was put out of sight. He said, "Is there any way of reviewing matters, putting me as far forward as possible? I don't know how to explain—"

Araman smiled. Some had offered money under similar circumstances which, of course, had gotten them nowhere, either. He said, "The decisions on priority are computer-processed. I could in no way alter those decisions arbitrarily."

Potterley rose stiffly to his feet. He stood five and a half feet tall. "Then good day, sir."

"Good day, Dr. Potterley. And my sincerest regrets."

He offered his hand and Potterley touched it briefly.

The historian left and a touch of the buzzer brought Araman's secretary into the room. He handed her the folder.

"These," he said, "may be disposed of."

Alone again, he smiled bitterly. Another item in his quarter-century's service to the human race. Service through negation.

At least, this fellow had been easy to dispose of. Sometimes, academic pressure had to be applied and even withdrawal of grants.

Five minutes later, he had forgotten Dr. Potterley. Nor, thinking back on it later, could he remember feeling any premonition of danger.

During the first year of his frustration, Arnold Potterley had experienced only that—frustration. During the second year, though, his frustration gave birth to an idea that first

frightened and then fascinated him. Two things stopped him from trying to translate the idea into action, and neither barrier was the undoubted fact that his notion was a grossly unethical one.

The first was merely the continuing hope that the government would finally give its permission and make it unnecessary for him to do anything more. That hope had perished finally in the interview with Araman just completed.

The second barrier had been not a hope at all but a dreary realization of his own incapacity. He was not a physicist and he knew no physicists from whom he might obtain help. The Department of Physics at the University consisted of men well-stocked with grants and well-immersed in specialty. At best, they would not listen to him. At worst, they would report him for intellectual anarchy and even his basic Carthaginian grant might easily be withdrawn.

That he could not risk. And yet chronoscopy was the only way to carry on his work. Without it, he would be no worse off if his grant were lost.

The first hint that the second barrier might be overcome had come a week earlier than his interview with Araman, and it had gone unrecognized at the time. It had been at one of the faculty teas. Potterley attended these sessions unfailingly because he conceived attendance to be a duty, and he took his duties seriously. Once there, however, he conceived it to be no responsibility of his to make light conversation or new friends. He sipped abstemiously at a drink or two, exchanged a polite word with the dean or such department heads as happened to be present, bestowed a narrow smile at others, and finally left early.

Ordinarily, he would have paid no attention, at that most recent tea, to a young man standing quietly, even diffidently, in one corner. He would never have dreamed of speaking to him. Yet a tangle of circumstance persuaded him this once to behave in a way contrary to his nature.

That morning at breakfast, Mrs. Potterley had announced somberly that once again she had dreamed of Laurel; but this time a Laurel grown up, yet retaining the three-year-old face that stamped her as their child. Potterley had let her talk. There had been a time when he fought her too-frequent preoccupation with the past and death. Laurel would not come back to them, either through dreams or through talk. Yet if it appeased Caroline Potterley—let her dream and talk.

But when Potterley went to school that morning, he found himself for once affected by Caroline's inanities. Laurel grown up! She had died nearly twenty years ago; their only child, then and ever. In all that time, when he thought of her, it was as a three-year-old.

Now he thought: But if she were alive now, she wouldn't be three, she'd be nearly twenty-three.

Helplessly, he found himself try-

ing to think of Laurel as growing progressively older; as finally becoming twenty-three. He did not quite succeed.

Yet he tried. Laurel using make-up. Laurel going out with boys. Laurel—getting married!

So it was that when he saw the young man hovering at the outskirts of the coldly circulating group of faculty men, it occurred to him quixotically, that, for all he knew, a youngster just such as this might have married Laurel. That youngster himself, perhaps—

Laurel might have met him, here at the university, or some evening when he might be invited to dinner at the Potterleys. They might grow interested in one another. Laurel would surely have been pretty and this youngster looked well. He was dark in coloring, with a lean intent face and an easy carriage.

The tenuous daydream snapped, yet Potterley found himself staring foolishly at the young man, not as a strange face but as a possible son-in-law in the might-have-been. He found himself threading his way toward the man. It was almost a form of autohypnotism.

He put out his hand. "I am Arnold Potterley of the History Department. You're new here, I think?"

The youngster looked faintly astonished and fumbled with his drink, shifting it to his left hand in order to shake with his right. "Jonas Foster is my name, sir. I'm a new instructor in Physics. I'm just starting this semester."

Potterley nodded, "I wish you a happy stay here and great success."

That was the end of it, then. Potterley had come uneasily to his senses, found himself embarrassed and moved off. He stared back over his shoulder once, but the illusion of relationship had gone. Reality was quite real once more and he was angry with himself for having fallen prey to his wife's foolish talk about Laurel.

But a week later, even while Araman was talking, the thought of that young man had come back to him. An instructor in Physics. A new instructor. Had he been deaf at the time? Was there a short circuit between ear and brain. Or was it an automatic self-censorship because of the impending interview with the Head of Chronoscopy.

But the interview failed and it was the thought of the young man with whom he had exchanged two sentences that prevented Potterley from elaborating his pleas for consideration. He was almost anxious to get away.

And in the autogiro express back to the University, he could almost wish he were superstitious. He could then console himself with the thought that the casual meaningless meeting had really been directed by a knowing and purposeful Fate.

Jonas Foster was not new to academic life. The long and rickety struggle for the doctorate would make anyone a veteran. Additional

work as a post-doctorate teaching fellow acted as a booster shot.

But now he was Instructor Jonas Foster. Professorial dignity lay ahead. And he now found himself in a new sort of relationship toward other professors.

For one thing, they would be voting on future promotions. For another, he was in no position to tell so early in the game which particular member of the faculty might or might not have the ear of the Dean or even of the University President. He did not fancy himself as a campus politician and was sure he would make a poor one, yet there was no point in kicking his own rear into blisters just to prove that to himself.

So Foster listened to this mild-mannered historian who, in some vague way, seemed nevertheless to radiate tension. Nor did Foster shut him up abruptly and toss him out. Certainly that was his first impulse.

He remembered Potterley well enough. Potterley had approached him at that tea (which had been a grizzly affair). The fellow had spoken two sentences to him, stiffly, somehow glassy-eyed, had then come to himself with a visible start and hurried off.

It had amused Foster at the time, but now—

Potterley might have been deliberately trying to make his acquaintance, or rather, to impress his own personality on Foster as that of a queer sort of duck, eccentric but harmless. He might now be probing Foster's views, searching for unsettling opinions. Surely, they ought to have done so before granting him his appointment. Still—

Potterley might be serious, might honestly not realize what he was doing. Or he might realize quite well what he was doing; he might be nothing more or less than a dangerous rascal.

Foster mumbled, "Well, now—" to gain time, and fished out a package of cigarettes, intending to offer one to Potterley and to light it and one for himself very slowly.

But Potterley said at once, "Please, Dr. Foster. No cigarettes."

Foster looked startled. "I'm sorry, sir."

"No. The regrets are mine. I cannot stand the odor. An idiosyncrasy. I'm sorry."

He was positively pale. Foster put away the cigarettes.

Foster, feeling the absence of the cigarette, took the easy way out. "I'm flattered that you ask my advice and all that, Dr. Potterley, but I'm not a neutrinics man. I can't very well do anything professional in that direction. Even stating an opinion would be out of line, and, frankly, I'd prefer that you didn't go into any particulars."

The historian's prim face set hard. "What do you mean, you're not a neutrinics man? You're not anything yet. You haven't received any grant, have you?"

"This is only my first semester."

"I know that. I imagine you haven't even applied for any grant yet."

Foster half-smiled. In three months

at the University, he had not succeeded in putting his initial requests for research grants into good enough shape to pass on to a professional science writer, let alone to the Research Commission.

(His Department Head, fortunately, took it quite well. "Take your time now, Foster," he said, "and get your thoughts well-organized. Make sure you know your path and where it will lead, for once you receive a grant, your specialization will be formally recognized and, for better or for worse, it will be yours for the rest of your career." The advice was trite enough, but triteness has often the merit of truth, and Foster recognized that.)

Foster said, "By education and inclination, Dr. Potterley, I'm a hyperoptics man with a gravitics minor. It's how I described myself in applying for this position. It may not be my official specialization yet, but it's going to be. It can't be anything else. As for neutrinics, I never even studied the subject."

"Why not?" demanded Potterley at once.

Foster stared. It was the kind of rude curiosity about another man's professional status that was always irritating. He said, with the edge of his own politeness just a trifle blunted, "A course in neutrinics wasn't given at my university."

"Where did you go?"

"M.I.T." said Foster, quietly.

"And they don't teach neutrinics?"

"No, they don't." Foster felt himself flush and was moved to a defense. "It's a highly specialized subject with no great value. Chronoscopy, perhaps, has some value, but it is the only practical application and that's a dead end."

The historian stared at him earnestly. "Tell me this: Do you know where I can find a neutrinics man?"

"No, I don't," said Foster, bluntly.

"Well, then, do you know a school which teaches neutrinics?"

"No, I don't."

Potterley smiled tightly and without humor.

Foster resented that smile, found he detected insult in it, and grew sufficiently annoyed to say, "I would like to point out, sir, that you're stepping out of line."

"What?"

"I'm saying that as an historian, your interest in any sort of physics, your *professional* interest, is—" He paused, unable to bring himself quite to say the word.

"Unethical?"

"That's the word, Dr. Potterley."

"My researches have driven me to it," said Potterley in an intense whisper.

"The Research Commission is the place to go. If they permit—"

"I have gone to them and have received no satisfaction."

"Then obviously you must abandon this." Foster knew he was sounding stuffily virtuous, but he wasn't going to let this man lure him into an expression of intellectual

anarchy. It was too early in his career to take stupid risks.

Apparently, though, the remark had its effect on Potterley. Without any warning, the man exploded into a rapid-fire verbal storm of irresponsibility.

Scholars, he said, could be free only if they could freely follow their own free-swinging curiosity. Research, he said, forced into a predesigned pattern by the powers that held the purse-strings became slavish and had to stagnate. No man, he said, had the right to dictate the intellectual interests of another.

Foster listened to all of it with disbelief. None of it was strange to him. He had heard college boys talk so in order to shock their professors and he had once or twice amused himself in that fashion, too. Anyone who studied the history of science knew that many men had once thought so.

Yet it seemed strange to Foster, almost against nature, that a modern man of science could advance such nonsense. No one would advocate running a factory by allowing each individual worker to do whatever pleased him at the moment, or of running a ship according to the casual and conflicting notions of each individual crewman. It would be taken for granted that some sort of centralized supervisory agency must exist in each case. Why should direction and order benefit a factory and a ship but not scientific research?

People might say that the human mind was somehow qualitatively different from a ship or factory but the history of intellectual endeavor proved the opposite.

When science was young and the intricacies of all or most of the known was within the grasp of an individual mind, there was no need for direction, perhaps. Blind wandering over the uncharted tracts of ignorance could lead to wonderful finds by accident.

But as knowledge grew, more and more data had to be absorbed before worthwhile journeys into ignorance could be organized. Men had to specialize. The researcher needed the resources of a library he himself could not gather, then of instruments he himself could not afford. More and more, the individual researcher gave way to the research-team and the research-institution.

The funds necessary for research grew greater as tools grew more numerous. What college was so small today as not to require at least one nuclear micro-reactor and at least one three-stage computer?

Centuries before, private individuals could no longer subsidize research. By 1940, only the government, large industries, and large universities or research institutions could properly subsidize basic research.

By 1960, even the largest universities depended entirely upon government grants, while research institutions could not exist without tax concessions and public subscriptions. By 2000, the industrial combines had become a branch of the world

government and thereafter, the financing of research and, therefore, its direction, naturally became centralized under a department of the government.

It all worked itself out naturally and well. Every branch of science was fitted neatly to the needs of the public, and the various branches of science were co-ordinated decently. The material advance of the last half-century was argument enough for the fact that science was not falling into stagnation.

Foster tried to say a very little of this and was waved aside impatiently by Potterley who said, "You are parroting official propaganda. You're sitting in the middle of an example that's squarely against the official view. Can you believe that?"

"Frankly, no."

"Well, why do you say time-viewing is a dead end? Why is neutrinics unimportant? You say it is. You say it categorically. Yet you've never studied it. You claim complete ignorance of the subject. It's not even given in your school—"

"Isn't the mere fact that it isn't given proof enough?"

"Oh, I see. It's not given because it's unimportant. And it's unimportant because it's not given. Are you satisfied with that reasoning?"

Foster felt a growing confusion. "It's in the books."

"That's all. The books say neutrinics is unimportant. Your professors tell you so because they read it in the books. The books say so because professors write them. Who says it from personal experience and knowledge? Who does research in it? Do you know of anyone?"

Foster said, "I don't see that we're getting anywhere, Dr. Potterley. I have work to do—"

"One minute. I just want you to try this on. See how it sounds to you. I say the government is actively suppressing basic research in neutrinics and chronoscopy. They're even suppressing application of chronoscopy."

"Oh, no."

"Why not? They could do it. There's your centrally directed research. If they refuse grants for research in any portion of science, that portion dies. They've killed neutrinics. They can do it and have done it."

"But why?"

"I don't know why. I want you to find out. I'd do it myself if I knew enough. I came to you because you're a young fellow with a brand-new education. Have your intellectual arteries hardened already? Is there no curiosity in you? Don't you want to *know*? Don't you want *answers*?"

The historian was peering intently into Foster's face. Their noses were only inches apart and Foster was so lost that he did not think to draw back.

He should, by rights, have ordered Potterley out. If necessary, he should have thrown Potterley out.

It was not respect for age and position that stopped him. It was certainly not that Potterley's argu-

ments had convinced him. Rather, it was a small point of college pride.

Why didn't M.I.T. give a course in neutrinics? For that matter, now that he came to think of it, he doubted that there was a single book on neutrinics in the library. He could never recall having seen one.

He stopped to think about that.

And that was ruin.

Caroline Potterley had once been an attractive woman. There were occasions, such as dinners or University functions, when by considerable effort, remnants of the attraction could be salvaged.

On ordinary occasions, she sagged. It was the word she applied to herself in moments of self-abhorrence. She had grown plumper with the years, but the flaccidity about her was not a matter of fat, entirely. It was as though her muscles had given up and grown limp so that she shuffled when she walked while her eyes grew baggy and her cheeks jowly. Even her graying hair seemed tired rather than merely stringy. Its straightness seemed to be the result of a supine surrender to gravity, nothing else.

Caroline Potterley looked at herself in the mirror and admitted this was one of her bad days. She knew the reason, too.

It had been the dream of Laurel. The strange one, with Laurel grown up. She had been wretched ever since.

Still, she was sorry she had mentioned it to Arnold. He didn't say

anything; he never did, any more; but it was bad for him. He was particularly withdrawn for days afterward. It might have been that he was getting ready for that important conference with the big government official—he kept saying he expected no success—but it might also have been her dream.

It was better in the old days when he would cry sharply at her, "Let the dead past *go*, Caroline! Talk won't bring her back, and dreams won't either."

It had been bad for both of them. Horribly bad. She had been away from home that night and had lived in guilt ever since. If she had stayed at home, if she had not gone on an unnecessary shopping expedition, there would have been two of them available. One would have succeeded in saving Laurel.

Poor Arnold had not managed. Heaven knew he tried. He had nearly died himself. He had come out of the burning house, staggering in agony, blistered, choking, half-blinded, with the dead Laurel in his arms.

The nightmare of that lived on, never lifting entirely.

Arnold slowly grew a shell about himself afterward. He cultivated a low-voiced mildness through which nothing broke, no lightning struck. He grew puritanical and even abandoned his minor vices, his cigarettes, his penchant for an occasional profane exclamation. He obtained his grant for the preparation of a new history of Carthage and subordinated everything to that.

She tried to help him. She hunted up his references, typed his notes and microfilmed them. Then that ended suddenly.

She ran from the desk suddenly one evening, reaching the bathroom in bare time and retching abominably. Her husband followed her in confusion and concern.

"Caroline, what's wrong?"

It took a drop of brandy to bring her around. She said, "Is it true? What they did?"

"Who did?"

"The Carthaginians."

He stared at her and she got it out by indirection. She couldn't say it right out.

The Carthaginians, it seemed, worshiped Moloch, in the form of a hollow, brazen idol with a furnace in its belly. At times of national crisis, the priests and the people gathered and infants, after the proper ceremonies and invocations, were dextrously hurled, alive, into the flames.

They were given sweetmeats just before the crucial moment, in order that the efficacy of the sacrifice not be ruined by displeasing cries of panic. The drums rolled just after the moment, to drown out the few seconds of infant shrieking. The parents were present, presumably gratified, for the sacrifice was pleasing to the gods—

Arnold Potterley frowned darkly. Vicious lies, he told her, on the part of Carthage's enemies. He should have warned her. After all, such propagandistic lies were not uncom-

mon. According to the Greeks, the ancient Hebrews worshiped an ass' head in their Holy of Holies. According to the Romans, the primitive Christians were haters of all men who sacrificed pagan children in the catacombs.

"Then they didn't do it?" asked Caroline.

"I'm sure they didn't. The primitive Phoenicians may have. Human sacrifice is commonplace in primitive cultures. But Carthage in her great days was not a primitive culture. Human sacrifice often gives way to symbolic actions such as circumcision. The Greeks and Romans might have mistaken some Carthaginian symbolism for the original full rite, either out of ignorance or out of malice."

"Are you sure?"

"I can't be sure yet, Caroline, but when I've got enough evidence, I'll apply for permission to use chronoscopy, which will settle the matter once and for all."

"Chronoscopy?"

"Time-viewing. We can focus on ancient Carthage at some time of crisis, the landing of Scipio Africanus in 202 B.C., for instance, and see with our own eyes exactly what happens. And you'll see, I'll be right."

He patted her and smiled encouragingly, but she dreamed of Laurel every night for two weeks thereafter and she never helped him with his Carthage project again. Nor did he ever ask her to.

But now she was bracing herself for his coming. He had called her after arriving back in town, told her he had seen the government man and that it had gone as expected. That meant failure and yet the little telltale signs of depression had been absent from his voice and his features had appeared quite composed in the teleview. He had another errand to take care of, he said, before coming home.

It meant he would be late, but that didn't matter. Neither one of them was particular about eating hours or cared when packages were taken out of the freezer or even which packages or when the self-warming mechanism was activated.

When he did arrive, he surprised her. There was nothing untoward about him in any obvious way. He kissed her dutifully and smiled, took off his hat and asked if all had been well while he was gone. It was all almost perfectly normal. Almost.

She had learned to detect small things, though, and his pace in all this was a trifle hurried. Enough to show her accustomed eye that he was under tension.

She said, "Has something happened?"

He said, "We're going to have a dinner guest night after next, Caroline. You don't mind?"

"Well, no. Is it anyone I know?"

"No. A young instructor. A newcomer. I've spoken to him." He suddenly whirled toward her and seized her arms at the elbow, held them a moment, then dropped them

in confusion as though disconcerted at having shown emotion.

He said, "I almost didn't get through to him. Imagine that. Terrible, *terrible,* the way we have all bent to the yoke; the affection we have for the harness about us."

Mrs. Potterley wasn't sure she understood, but for a year she had been watching him grow quietly more rebellious; little by little more daring in his criticism of the government. She said, "You haven't spoken foolishly to him, have you?"

"What do you mean, foolishly? He'll be doing some neutrinics for me."

"Neutrinics" was trisyllabic nonsense to Mrs. Potterley, but she knew it had nothing to do with history. She said, faintly, "Arnold, I don't like you to do that. You'll lose your position. It's—"

"It's intellectual anarchy, my dear," he said. "That's the phrase you want. Very well. I am an anarchist. If the government will not allow me to push my researches, I will push them on my own. And when I show the way, others will follow. And if they don't, it makes no difference. It's Carthage that counts and human knowledge, not you and I."

"But you don't know this young man. What if he is an agent for the Commissioner of Research?"

"Not likely and I'll take that chance." He made a fist of his right hand and rubbed it gently against the palm of his left. "He's on my side now. I'm sure of it. He can't help but be. I can recognize intellectual curiosity when I see it in a man's eyes and face and attitude and it's a fatal disease for a tame scientist. Even today it takes time to beat it out of a man and the young ones are vulnerable. Oh, why stop at anything? Why not build our own chronoscope and tell the government to go to—"

He stopped abruptly, shook his head and turned away.

"I hope everything will be all right," said Mrs. Potterley, feeling helplessly certain that everything would not be, and frightened, in advance, for her husband's professorial status and the security of their old age.

It was she alone, of them all, who had a violent presentiment of trouble. Quite the wrong trouble, of course.

Jonas Foster was nearly half an hour late in arriving at the Potterley's off-campus house. Up to that very evening, he had not quite decided he would go. Then, at the last moment, he found he could not bring himself to commit the social enormity of breaking a dinner appointment an hour before the appointed time. That, and the nagging of curiosity.

The dinner itself passed interminably. Foster ate without appetite. Mrs. Potterley sat in distant absentmindedness, emerging out of it only once to ask if he were married and to make a depreciating sound at the news that he was not. Dr. Potterley, himself, asked neutrally after his

professional history and nodded his head primly.

It was as staid, stodgy—boring, actually—as anything could be.

Foster thought: He seems so harmless.

Foster had spent the last two days reading up on Dr. Potterley. Very casually, of course, almost sneakily. He wasn't particularly anxious to be seen in the Social Science Library. To be sure, history was one of those borderline affairs and historical works were frequently read for amusement or edification by the general public.

Still, a physicist wasn't quite the "general public." Let Foster take to reading histories and he would be considered queer, sure as relativity, and after a while the head of the department would wonder if his new instructor were really "the man for the job."

So he had been cautious. He sat in the more secluded alcoves and kept his head bent when he slipped in and out at odd hours.

Dr. Potterley, it turned out, had written three books and some dozen articles on the ancient Mediterranean worlds, and the later articles—all in *'Historical Reviews'*—had all dealt with pre-Roman Carthage from a sympathetic viewpoint.

That, at least, checked with Potterley's story and had soothed Foster's suspicions somewhat. And yet Foster felt that it would have been much wiser, much safer, to have scotched the matter at the beginning.

A scientist shouldn't be too curious, he thought in bitter dissatisfaction with himself. It's a dangerous trait.

After dinner, he was ushered into Potterley's study and he was brought up sharply at the threshold. The walls were simply lined with books.

Not merely films. There were films, of course, but these were far outnumbered by the books—print on paper. He wouldn't have thought so many books would exist in usable condition.

That bothered Foster. Why should anyone want to keep so many books at home? Surely all were available in the university library, or, at the very worst, at the Library of Congress, if one wished to take the minor trouble of checking out a microfilm.

There was an element of secrecy involved in a home library. It breathed of intellectual anarchy. That last thought, oddly, calmed Foster. He would rather Potterley be an authentic anarchist than a play-acting *agent provocateur*.

And now the hours began to pass quickly and astonishingly.

"You see," Potterley said, in a clear, unflurried voice, "it was a matter of finding, if possible, anyone who had ever used chronoscopy in his work. Naturally, I couldn't ask baldly, since that would be unauthorized research."

"Yes," said Foster, dryly. He was a little surprised such a small consideration would stop the man.

"I used indirect methods—"

He had. Foster was amazed at the

volume of correspondence dealing with small disputed points of ancient Mediterranean culture which somehow managed to elicit the casual remark over and over again: "Of course, having never made use of chronoscopy—" or "Pending approval of my request for chronoscopic data, which appears unlikely at the moment—"

"Now these aren't blind questionings," said Potterley. "There's a monthly booklet put out by the Institute for Chronoscopy in which items concerning the past as determined by time-viewing are printed. Just one or two items.

"What impressed me first was the triviality of most of the items, their insipidity. Why should such researches get priority over my work? So I wrote to people who would be most likely to do research in the directions described in the booklet. Uniformly, as I have shown you, they did *not* make use of the chronoscope. Now let's go over it point by point."

At last Foster, his head swimming with Potterley's meticulously gathered details, asked, "But why?"

"I don't know why," said Potterley, "but I have a theory. The original invention of the chronoscope was by Sterbinski—you see, I know that much—and it was well-publicized. But then the government took over the instrument and decided to suppress further research in the matter or any use of the machine. But then, people might be curious as to why it wasn't being used. Curiosity is such a vice, Dr. Foster."

Yes, agreed the physicist to himself.

"Imagine the effectiveness, then," Potterley went on, "of pretending that the chronoscope *was* being used. It would then be not a mystery, but a commonplace. It would no longer be a fitting object for legitimate curiosity nor an attractive one for illicit curiosity."

"*You* were curious," pointed out Foster.

Potterley looked a trifle restless. "It was different in my case," he said angrily. "I have something that *must* be done, and I wouldn't submit to the ridiculous way in which they kept putting me off."

A bit paranoid, too, thought Foster, gloomily.

Yet he had ended up with something, paranoid or not. Foster could no longer deny that something peculiar was going on in the matter of neutrinics.

But what was Potterley after? That still bothered Foster. If Potterley didn't intend this as a test of Foster's ethics, what *did* he want?

Foster put it to himself logically. If an intellectual anarchist with a touch of paranoia wanted to use a chronoscope and was convinced that the powers-that-be were deliberately standing in his way, what would he do?

Supposing it were I, he thought. What would I do?

He said slowly, "Maybe the chronoscope doesn't exist at all?"

Potterley started. There was almost a crack in his general calmness. For an instant, Foster found himself catching a glimpse of something not at all calm.

But the historian kept his balance and said, "Oh, no, there *must* be a chronoscope."

"Why? Have you seen it? Have I? Maybe that's the explanation of everything. Maybe they're not deliberately holding out on a chronoscope they've got. Maybe they haven't got it in the first place."

"But Sterbinski lived. He built a chronoscope. That much is a fact."

"The books say so," said Foster, coldly.

"Now listen," Potterley actually reached over and snatched at Foster's jacket sleeve. "I need the chronoscope. I must have it. Don't tell me it doesn't exist. What we're going to do is find out enough about neutrinics to be able to—"

Potterley drew himself up short.

Foster drew his sleeve away. He needed no ending to that sentence. He supplied it himself. He said, "Build one of our own?"

Potterley looked sour as though he would rather not have said it point-blank. Nevertheless, he said, "Why not?"

"Because that's out of the question," said Foster. "If what I've read is correct, then it took Sterbinski twenty years to build his machine and several millions in composite grants. Do you think you and I can duplicate that illegally. Suppose we had the time, which we haven't, and suppose I could learn enough out of books, which I doubt, where would we get the money and equipment? The chronoscope is supposed to fill a five-story building, for Heaven's sake."

"Then you won't help me?"

"Well, I'll tell you what. I have one way in which I may be able to find out something—"

"What is that?" asked Potterley at once.

"Never mind. That's not important. But I may be able to find out enough to tell you whether the government is deliberately suppressing research by chronoscope. I may confirm the evidence you already have or I may be able to prove that your evidence is misleading. I don't know what good it will do you in either case, but it's as far as I can go. It's my limit."

Potterley watched the young man go finally. He was angry with himself. Why had he allowed himself to grow so careless as to permit the fellow to guess that he was thinking in terms of a chronoscope of his own? That was premature.

But then why did the young fool have to suppose that a chronoscope might not exist at all?

It *had* to exist. It *had* to. What was the use of saying it didn't?

And why couldn't a second one be built? Science had advanced in the fifty years since Sterbinski. All that was needed was knowledge.

Let the youngster gather knowledge. Let him think a small gather-

ing would be his limit. Having taken the path to anarchy, there would be no limit. If the boy were not driven onward by something in himself, the first steps would be error enough to force the rest. Potterley was quite certain he would not hesitate to use blackmail.

Potterley waved a last good-by and looked up. It was beginning to rain.

Certainly! Blackmail if necessary, but he would not be stopped.

Foster steered his car across the bleak outskirts of town and scarcely noticed the rain.

He *was* a fool, he told himself, but he couldn't leave things as they were. He had to know. He damned his streak of undisciplined curiosity, but he had to know.

But he would go no further than Uncle Ralph. He swore mightily to himself that it would stop there. In that way, there would be no evidence against him, no real evidence. Uncle Ralph would be discreet.

In a way, he was secretly ashamed of Uncle Ralph. He hadn't mentioned him to Potterley partly out of caution and partly because he did not wish to witness the lifted eyebrow, the inevitable half-smile. Professional science-writers, however useful, were a little outside the pale, fit only for patronizing contempt. The fact that, as a class, they made more money than did research scientists, only made matters worse, of course.

Still, there were times when a science-writer in the family could be a convenience. Not being really educated, they did not have to specialize. Consequently, a good science-writer knew practically everything. And Uncle Ralph was one of the best.

Ralph Nimmo had no college degree and was rather proud of it. "A degree," he once said to Jonas Foster, when both were considerably younger, "is a first step down a ruinous highway. You don't want to waste one degree so you go on to graduate work and doctoral research. You end up a thoroughgoing ignoramus on everything in the world except for one subdivisional sliver of nothing.

"On the other hand, if you guard your mind carefully and keep it blank of any clutter of information till maturity is reached, filling it only with intelligence and training it only in clear thinking, you then have a powerful instrument at your disposal and you can become a science-writer."

Nimmo received his first assignment at the age of twenty-five, after he had completed his apprenticeship and been out in the field for less than three months. It came in the shape of a clotted manuscript whose language would impart no glimmering of understanding to any reader, however qualified, without careful study and some inspired guesswork. Nimmo took it apart and put it together again—after five long and exasperating interviews with the authors, who were biophysicists—making the language taut and mean-

ingful and smoothing the style to a pleasant gloss.

"Why not?" he would say tolerantly to his nephew, who countered his strictures on degrees by berating him with his readiness to hang on the fringes of science. "The fringe is important. Your scientists can't write. Why should they be expected to. They aren't expected to be grandmasters at chess or virtuosos at the violin, so why expect them to know how to put words together? Why not leave that for specialists, too?

"Good Lord, Jonas, read your literature of a hundred years ago. Discount the fact that the science is out of date and that some of the expressions are old-fashioned. Just try to read it and make sense out of it. It's just jaw-cracking, amateurish. Papers are published uselessly; whole articles which are either non-significant, non-comprehensible or both."

"But science-writers don't get recognition, Uncle Ralph," protested the young Foster, who was getting ready to start his college career and was rather starry-eyed about it. "You could be a terrific researcher."

"I get recognition," said Nimmo. "Don't think for a minute I don't.

Sure, a biochemist or a strato-meteorologist won't give me the time of day, but they pay me well enough. Just find out what happens when some first-class chemist finds the Commission has cut his year's allowance for science-writing. He'll fight harder for enough funds to afford me, or someone like me, than to get a recording ionograph."

He grinned broadly and Foster grinned back. Actually, he was proud as well as ashamed of his paunchy, round-faced, stub-fingered uncle, whose vanity made him brush his fringe of hair futilely over the desert on his pate and made him dress like an unmade haystack because such negligence was his trademark.

And now Foster entered his uncle's cluttered apartment in no mood at all for grinning. He was nine years older now and so was Uncle Ralph. For nine more years, papers in every branch of science had come to Ralph Nimmo for polishing and a little of each had crept into his capacious mind.

Nimmo was eating seedless grapes, popping them into his mouth one at a time. He tossed a bunch to Foster who caught them by a hair, then bent to retrieve individual grapes that had torn loose and fallen to the floor.

"Let them be. Don't bother," said Nimmo, carelessly. "Someone comes in here to clean once a week. What's up? Having trouble with your grant application write-up?"

"I haven't really got into that yet?"

"You haven't? Get a move on, boy. Are you waiting for me to offer to do the final arrangement?"

"I couldn't afford you, uncle."

"Aw, come on. It's all in the family. Grant me all popular publication rights and no cash need change hands."

Foster nodded. "If you're serious, it's a deal."

"It's a deal."

It was a gamble, of course, but Foster knew enough of Nimmo's science-writing to realize it could pay off. Some dramatic discovery of public interest on primitive man or on a new surgical technique, or on any branch of spationautics could mean a very cash-attracting article in any of the mass media of communication.

It was Nimmo, for instance, who had written up, for scientific consumption, the series of papers by Bryce and co-workers that elucidated the fine structure of two cancer viruses, for which job he asked for the picayune payment of fifteen hundred dollars, provided popular publication rights were included. He then wrote up, exclusively, the same work in semidramatic form for use in trimensional video for a twenty-thousand-dollar advance plus rental royalties that were still coming in after five years.

Foster said bluntly, "What do you know about neutrinics, uncle?"

"Neutrinics?" Nimmo's small eyes looked surprised. "Are you

working in that? I thought it was pseudo-gravitic optics."

"It is p.g.o. I just happen to be asking about neutrinics?"

"That's a devil of a thing to be doing. You're stepping out of line. You know that, don't you?"

"I don't expect you to call the Commission because I'm a little curious about things."

"Maybe I should before you get into trouble. Curiosity is an occupational danger with scientists. I've watched it work. One of them will be moving quietly along on a problem, then curiosity leads him up a strange creek. Next thing you know they've done so little on their proper problem, they can't justify for a project renewal. I've seen more—"

"All I want to know," said Foster, patiently, "is what's been passing through your hands lately on neutrinics."

Nimmo leaned back, chewing at a grape thoughtfully, "Nothing. Nothing ever. I don't recall ever getting a paper on neutrinics."

"What!" Foster was openly astonished. "Then who does get the work?"

"Now that you ask," said Nimmo. "I don't know. Don't recall anyone talking about it at the annual conventions. I don't think much work is being done there."

"Why not?"

"Hey, there, don't bark. I'm not doing anything. My guess would be—"

Foster was exasperated. "Don't you know?"

"I'll tell you what I know about neutrinics. It concerns the applications of neutrino movements and the forces involved—"

"Sure. Sure. Just as electronics deals with the applications of electron movements and the forces involved and pseudo-gravitics deals with the applications of artificial gravitational fields. I didn't come to you for that. Is that all you know?"

"And," said Nimmo with equanimity, "neutrinics is the basis of time-viewing and that *is* all I know."

Foster slouched back in his chair and massaged one lean check with great intensity. He felt angrily dissatisfied. Without formulating it explicitly in his own mind, he had felt sure, somehow, that Nimmo would come up with some late reports, bring up interesting facets of modern neutrinics, send him back to Potterley able to say that the elderly historian was mistaken, that his data was misleading, his deduction mistaken.

Then he could have returned to his proper work.

But now—

He told himself angrily: So they are not doing much work in the field. Does that make it deliberate suppression? What if neutrinics is a sterile discipline? Maybe it is. I don't know. Potterley doesn't. Why waste the intellectual resources of humanity on nothing? Or the work might be secret for some legitimate reason. It might be—

The trouble was, he had to know.

He couldn't leave things as they were now. He *couldn't!*

He said, "Is there a text on neutrinics, Uncle Ralph? I mean a clear and simple one? An elementary one?"

Nimmo thought, his plump cheeks puffing out with a series of sighs. "You ask the damnedest questions. The only one I ever heard of was Sterbinski and somebody. I've never seen it, but I viewed something about it once. Sterbinski and LaMarr, that's it."

"Is that the Sterbinski who invented the chronoscope?"

"I think so. Proves the book ought to be good."

"Is there a recent edition? Sterbinski died thirty years ago."

Nimmo shrugged and said nothing.

"Can you find out?"

They sat in silence for a moment. while Nimmo shifted his bulk to the creaking tune of the chair he sat on. Then the science-writer said, "Are you going to tell me what this is all about?"

"I can't. Will you help me anyway, Uncle Ralph? Will you get me a copy of the text?"

"Well, you've taught me all I know on pseudo-gravitics. I should be grateful. Tell you what— I'll help you on one condition."

"Which is?"

The older man was suddenly very grave. "That you be careful, Jonas. You're obviously way out of line whatever you're doing. Don't blow up your career just because you're curious about something you haven't been assigned to and which is none of your business. Understand?"

Foster nodded, but he hardly heard. He was thinking furiously.

A full week later, Ralph Nimmo eased his rotund figure into Jonas Foster's on-campus two-room combination and said, in a hoarse whisper, "I've got something."

"What?" Foster was immediately eager.

"A copy of Sterbinski and LaMarr." He produced it, or rather a corner of it, from his ample topcoat.

Foster almost automatically eyed door and windows to make sure they were closed and shaded respectively, then held out his hand.

The film-case was flaking with age and when he cracked it, the film was faded and growing brittle. He said, sharply, "Is this all?"

"Gratitude, my boy, gratitude!" Nimmo sat down with a grunt, and reached into a pocket for an apple.

"Oh, I'm grateful, but it's so old."

"And lucky to get it at that. I tried to get a film-run from the Congressional Library. No go. The book was restricted."

"Then how did you get this?"

"Stole it." He was biting crunchingly around the core. "New York Public."

"What?"

"Simple enough. I had access to the stacks, naturally. So I stepped over a chained railing when no one was around, dug this up, and walked

out with it. They're very trusting out there. Meanwhile, they won't miss it in years. Only you'd better not let anyone see it on you, nephew."

Foster stared at the film as though it were literally hot.

Nimmo discarded the core and reached for a second apple. "Funny thing, now. There's nothing more recent in the whole field of neutrinics. Not a monograph, not a paper, not a progress note. Nothing since the chronoscope."

"Uh huh," said Foster absently.

Foster worked evenings in the Potterley home. He could not trust his own on-campus rooms for the purpose. The evening work grew more real to him than his own grant applications. Sometimes he worried about it but then that stopped, too.

His work consisted, at first, simply in viewing and re-viewing the text-film. Later it consisted in thinking (sometimes while a section of the book ran itself off through the pocket-projector, disregarded).

Sometimes Potterley would come down to watch, to sit with prim, eager eyes, as though he expected thought-processes to solidify and become visible in all their convolutions. He interfered in only two ways. He did not allow Foster to smoke and sometimes he talked.

It wasn't conversation talk, never that. Rather it was a low-voiced monologue with which, it seemed, he scarcely expected to command attention. It was much more as though he were relieving a pressure within himself.

Carthage! Always Carthage!

Carthage, the New York of the ancient Mediterranean. Carthage, commercial empire and queen of the seas. Carthage, all that Syracuse and Alexandria pretended to be. Carthage, maligned by her enemies and inarticulate in her own defense.

She had been defeated once by Rome and then driven out of Sicily and Sardinia but came back to more than recoup her losses by new dominions in Spain, and raised up Hannibal to give the Romans sixteen years of terror.

In the end, she lost again a second time, reconciled herself to fate and built again with broken tools a limping life in shrunken territory, succeeding so well that jealous Rome deliberately forced a third war. And then Carthage, with nothing but bare hands and tenacity, built weapons and forced Rome into a two-year-war that ended only with complete destruction of the city, the inhabitants throwing themselves into their flaming houses rather than surrender.

"Could people fight so for a city and a way of life as bad as the ancient writers painted it? Hannibal was a better general than any Roman and his soldiers were absolutely faithful to him. Even his bitterest enemies praised him. There was a Carthaginian. It is fashionable to say that he was an atypical Carthaginian, better than the others, a diamond placed in garbage. But then why was he so faithful to Carthage,

even to his death after years of exile? They talk of Moloch—"

Foster didn't always listen but sometimes he couldn't help himself and he shuddered and turned sick at the bloody tale of child sacrifice.

But Potterley went on earnestly, "Just the same, it isn't true. It's a twenty-five hundred year canard started by the Greeks and Romans. They had their own slaves, their crucifixions and torture, their gladiatorial contests. They weren't holy. The Moloch story is what later ages would have called war propaganda, the big lie. I can prove it was a lie. I can prove it and, by heaven, I will! . . . I will—"

He would mumble that promise over and over again in his earnestness.

Mrs. Potterley visited him also, but less frequently, usually on Tuesdays and Thursdays when Dr. Potterley himself had an evening course to take care of and was not present.

She would sit quietly, scarcely talking, face slack and doughy, eyes blank, her whole attitude distant and withdrawn.

The first time, Foster tried, uneasily, to suggest that she leave.

She said, tonelessly, "Do I disturb you?"

"No, of course not," lied Foster, restlessly. "It's just that . . . that—" He couldn't complete the sentence.

She nodded, as though accepting an invitation to stay. Then she opened a cloth bag she had brought with her and took out a quire of vitron sheets which she proceeded to weave together by rapid, delicate movements of a pair of slender, tetra-faceted depolarizers, whose battery-fed wires made her look as though she were holding a large spider.

One evening, she said softly, "My daughter, Laurel, is your age."

Foster started, as much at the sudden unexpected sound of speech as at the words. He said, "I didn't know you had a daughter, Mrs. Potterley."

"She died. Years ago."

The vitron grew under the deft manipulations into the uneven shape of some garment Foster could not yet identify. There was nothing left for him to do but mutter inanely, "I'm sorry."

Mrs. Potterley sighed. "I dream about her often." She raised her blue, distant eyes to his.

Foster winced and looked away.

Another evening she asked, pulling at one of the vitron sheets to loosen its gentle clinging to her dress, "What is time-viewing anyway?"

That remark broke into a particularly involved chain of thought and Foster said, snappishly, "Dr. Potterley can explain."

"He's tried to. Oh, my, yes. But I think he's a little impatient with me. He calls it chronoscopy most of the time. Do you actually see things in the past, like the trimensionals? Or does it just make little dot patterns like the computer you use?"

Foster stared at his hand computer with distaste. It worked well enough but every operation had to be manually controlled and the answers were obtained in code. Now if he could use the school computer —Well, why dream, he felt conspicuous enough, as it was, carrying a hand computer under his arm every evening as he left his office.

He said, "I've never seen the chronoscope myself, but I'm under the impression that you actually see pictures and hear sound."

"You can hear people talk, too?"

"I think so." Then, half in desperation, "Look here, Mrs. Potterley, this must be awfully dull for you. I realize you don't like to leave a guest all to himself, but really, Mrs. Potterley, you mustn't feel compelled—"

"I don't feel compelled," she said. "I'm sitting here, waiting."

"Waiting? For what?"

She said, composedly, "I listened to you that first evening. The time you first spoke to Arnold. I listened at the door."

He said, "You did?"

"I know I shouldn't have, but I was awfully worried about Arnold. I had a notion he was going to do something he oughtn't and I wanted to hear what. And then when I heard—" She paused, bending close over the vitron and peering at it.

"Heard what, Mrs. Potterley."

"That you wouldn't build a chronoscope."

"Well, of course not."

"I thought maybe you might change your mind."

Foster glared at her. "Do you mean you're coming down here hoping I'll build a chronoscope, waiting for me to build one."

"I hope you do, Dr. Foster. Oh, I hope you do."

It was as though, all at once, a fuzzy veil had fallen off her face, leaving all her features clear and sharp, putting color into her cheeks, life into her eyes, the vibrations of something approaching excitement into her voice.

"Wouldn't it be wonderful," she whispered, "to have one. People of the past could live again. Pharaohs and kings and—just people. I hope you build one, Dr. Foster. I really . . . hope—"

She choked, it seemed, on the intensity of her own words and let the vitron sheets slip off her lap. She rose and ran up the basement stairs, while Foster's eyes followed her awkwardly fleeing body with astonishment and distress.

It cut deeper into Foster's nights and left him sleepless and painfully stiff with thought. It was almost a mental indigestion.

His grant requests went limping in, finally, to Ralph Nimmo. He scarcely had any hope for them. He thought numbly: They won't be approved.

If they weren't, of course, it would create a scandal in the department and probably mean his appointment at the university would

not be renewed, come the end of the academic year.

He scarcely worried. It was the neutrino, the neutrino, only the neutrino. Its trail curved and veered sharply and led him breathlessly along uncharted pathways that even Sterbinski and LaMarr did not follow.

He called Nimmo. "Uncle Ralph, I need a few things. I'm calling from off the campus."

Nimmo's face in the video-plate was jovial, but his voice was sharp. He said, "What you need is a course in communication. I'm having a hell of a time pulling your application into one intelligible piece. If that's what you're calling about—"

Foster shook his head impatiently. "That's *not* what I'm calling about. I need these." He scribbled quickly on a piece of paper and held it up before the receiver.

Nimmo yiped. "Hey, how many tricks do you think I can wangle?"

"You can get them, uncle. You know you can."

Nimmo reread the list of items with silent motions of his plump lips and looked grave.

"What happens when you put those things together?" he asked.

Foster shook his head. "You'll have exclusive popular publication rights to whatever turns up, the way it's always been. But please don't ask any questions now."

"I can't do miracles, you know."

"Do this one. You've got to. You are a science-writer, not a research man. You don't have to account for anything. You've got friends and connections. They can look the other way, can't they, to get a break from you next publication time?"

"Your faith, nephew, is touching. I'll try."

Nimmo succeeded. The material and equipment were brought over late one evening in a private touring car. Nimmo and Foster lugged it in with the grunting of men unused to manual labor.

Potterley stood at the entrance of the basement after Nimmo had left. He asked, softly, "What's this for?"

Foster brushed the hair off his forehead and gently massaged a sprained wrist. He said, "I want to conduct a few simple experiments."

"Really?" The historian's eyes glittered with excitement.

Foster felt exploited. He felt as though he were being led along a dangerous highway by the pull of pinching fingers on his nose; as though he could see the ruin clearly that lay in wait at the end of the path, yet walked eagerly and determinedly. Worst of all, he felt the compelling grip on his nose to be his own.

It was Potterley who began it, Potterley who stood there now, gloating; but the compulsion was Foster's own.

Foster said sourly, "I'll be wanting privacy now, Potterley. I can't have you and your wife running down here and annoying me."

He thought: If that offends him,

let him kick me out. Let him put an end to this.

In his heart, though, he did not think being evicted would stop anything.

But it did not come to that. Potterley was showing no signs of offense. His mild gaze was unchanged. He said, "Of course, Dr. Foster, of course. All the privacy you wish."

Foster watched him go. He was left still marching along the highway, perversely glad of it and hating himself for being glad.

He took to sleeping over on a cot in Potterley's basement and spending his weekends there entirely.

During that period, preliminary word came through that his grants —as doctored by Nimmo—had been approved. The Department Head brought the word and congratulated him.

Foster stared back distantly and mumbled, "Good. I'm glad" with so little conviction that the other frowned and turned away without another word.

Foster gave the matter no further thought. It was a minor point, worth no notice. He was planning something that really counted, a climactic test for that evening.

One evening, a second and third and then, haggard and half beside himself for excitement, he called in Potterley.

Potterley came down the stairs and looked about at the homemade gadgetry. He said, in his soft voice, "The electric bills are quite high. I don't mind the expense, but the City may ask questions. Can anything be done?"

It was a warm evening, but Potterley wore a tight collar and a semi-jacket. Foster, who was in his undershirt, lifted bleary eyes and said, shakily, "It won't be for much longer, Dr. Potterley. I've called you down to tell you something. A chronoscope can be built. A small one, of course, but it can be built."

Potterley seized the railing. His body sagged.

He managed a whisper. "Can it be built here?"

"Here in the basement," said Foster, wearily.

"You said—"

"I know what I said," cried Foster, impatiently. "I said it couldn't be done. I didn't know anything then. Even Sterbinski didn't know anything."

Potterley shook his head. "Are you sure? You're not mistaken, Dr. Foster? I couldn't endure it if—"

Foster said, "I'm not mistaken. Damn it, sir, if just theory had been enough, we could have had a time-viewer over a hundred years ago, when the neutrino was first postulated. The trouble was, the original investigators considered it only a mysterious particle without mass or charge that could not be detected. It was just something to even up the bookkeeping and save the law of conservation of mass-energy."

He wasn't sure Potterley knew what he was talking about. He didn't

care. He needed a breather. He had to get some of this out of his clotting thoughts. And he needed background for what he would have to tell Potterley next.

He went on. "It was Sterbinski who first discovered that the neutrino broke through the space-time cross-sectional barrier, that it traveled through time and that was why it had remained undetected. It was Sterbinski who first devised a method for stopping neutrinos. He invented a neutrino-recorder and learned how to interpret the pattern of the neutrino-stream. Naturally, the stream had been affected and deflected by all the matter it had passed through in its passage through time, and the deflections could be analyzed and converted into the images of the matter that had done the deflecting. Time-viewing was possible. Even air vibrations could be detected in this way and converted into sound."

Potterley was definitely not listening. He said, "Yes. Yes. But when can you build a chronoscope?"

Foster said, urgently, "Let me finish. Everything depends on the method used to detect and analyze the neutrino stream. Sterbinski's method was difficult and roundabout. It required mountains of energy. But I've studied pseudo-gravitics, Dr. Potterley, the science of artificial gravitational fields. I've specialized in the behavior of light in such fields. It's a new science. Sterbinski knew nothing of it. If he had, he would have seen—anyone would have—a much

better and more efficient method of detecting neutrinos using a pseudo-gravitic field. If I had known more neutrinics to begin with, I would have seen it at once."

Potterley brightened a bit. "I knew it," he said. "Even if they stop research in neutrinics there is no way the government can be sure that discoveries in other segments of science won't reflect knowledge on neutrinics. So much for the value of centralized direction of science. I thought this long ago, Dr. Foster, before you ever came to work here."

"I congratulate you on that," said Foster, "but there's one thing—"

"Oh, never mind all this. Answer me. Please. When can you build a chronoscope?"

"I'm trying to tell you something, Dr. Potterley. A chronoscope won't do you any good." (This is it, Foster thought.)

Slowly, Potterley descended the stairs. He stood, facing Foster, "What do you mean? Why won't it help me?"

"You won't see Carthage. It's what I've got to tell you. It's what I've been leading up to. You can never see Carthage."

Potterley shook his head slightly. "Oh, no, you're wrong. If you have the chronoscope, just focus it properly—"

"No, Dr. Potterley. It's not a question of focus. There are random factors affecting the neutrino stream, as they affect all sub-atomic particles. What we call the uncertainty principle. When the stream is recorded and interpreted, the random factor comes out as fuzziness, or "noise" as the communications boys speak of it. The further back in time you penetrate, the more pronounced the fuzziness, the greater the noise. After a while, the noise drowns out the picture. Do you understand?"

"More power," said Potterley in a dead kind of voice.

"That won't help. When the noise blurs out detail, magnifying detail magnifies the noise, too. You can't see anything in a sun-burned film by enlarging it, can you? Get this through your head, now. The physical nature of the universe sets limits. The random thermal motions of air molecules sets limits to how weak a sound can be detected by any instrument. The length of a light-wave or of an electron-wave sets limits to the size of objects that can be seen by any instrument. It works that way in chronoscopy, too. You can only time-view so far."

"How far? How far?"

Foster took a deep breath.. "A century and a quarter. That's the most."

"But the monthly bulletin the Commission puts out deals with ancient history almost entirely." The historian laughed shakily. "You must be wrong. The government has data as far back as 3,000 B.C."

"When did you switch to believing them?" demanded Foster, scornfully. "You began this business by proving they were lying; that no historian had made use of the

chronoscope. Don't you see why now? No historian, except one interested in contemporary history, could. No chronoscope can possibly see back in time further than 1920 under any conditions."

"You're wrong. You don't know everything," said Potterley.

"The truth won't bend itself to your convenience either. Face it. The government's part in this is to perpetuate a hoax."

"Why?"

"I don't know why."

Potterley's snubby nose was twitching. His eyes were bulging. He pleaded, "It's only theory, Dr. Foster. Build a chronoscope. Build one and try."

Foster caught Potterley's shoulders in a sudden, fierce grip. "Do you think I haven't? Do you think I would tell you this before I had checked it every way I knew. I *have* built one. It's all around you. Look!"

He ran to the switches at the power-leads. He flicked them on, one by one. He turned a resistor, adjusted other knobs, put out the cellar lights. "Wait. Let it warm up."

There was a small glow near the center of one wall. Potterley was gibbering incoherently, but Foster only cried again, "Look!"

The light sharpened and brightened, broke up into a light-and-dark pattern. Men and women! Fuzzy. Features blurred. Arms and legs mere streaks. An old-fashioned ground-car, unclear but recognizable as one of the kind that had once used gasoline-powered internal-combustion engines, sped by.

Foster said, "Mid-twentieth century, somewhere. I can't hook up an audio yet so this is soundless. Eventually, we can add sound. Anyway, mid-twentieth is almost as far back as you can go. Believe me, that's the best focusing that can be done."

Potterley said, "Build a larger machine, a stronger one. Improve your circuits."

"You can't lick the uncertainty principle, man, any more than you can live on the sun. There are physical limits to what can be done."

"You're lying. I won't believe you. I—"

A new voice sounded, raised shrilly to make itself heard.

"Arnold! Dr. Foster!"

The young physicist turned at once. Dr. Potterley froze for a long moment, then said, without turning, "What is it, Caroline? Leave us."

"No!" Mrs. Potterley descended the stairs. "I heard. I couldn't help hearing. Do you have a time-viewer here, Dr. Foster? Here in the basement?"

"Yes, I do, Mrs. Potterley. A kind of time-viewer. Not a good one. I can't get sound yet and the picture is darned blurry, but it works."

Mrs. Potterley clasped her hands and held them tightly against her breast. "How wonderful. How wonderful."

"It's not at all wonderful," snapped Potterley. "The young fool can't reach further back than—"

"Now, look," began Foster in exasperation—

"Please!" cried Mrs. Potterley. "Listen to me. Arnold, don't you see that as long as we can use it for twenty years back, we can see Laurel once again? What do we care about Carthage and ancient times. It's Laurel we can see. She'll be alive for us again. Leave the machine here, Dr. Foster. Show us how to work it."

Foster stared at her then at her husband. Dr. Potterley's face had gone white. Though his voice stayed low and even, its calmness was somehow gone. He said, "You're a fool!"

Caroline said, weakly, "Arnold!"

"You're a fool, I say. What will you see? The past. The dead past. Will Laurel do one thing she did not do? Will you see one thing you haven't seen? Will you live three years over and over again, watching a baby who'll never grow up no matter how you watch?"

His voice came near to cracking, but held. He stepped closer to her, seized her shoulder and shook her roughly. "Do you know what will happen to you if you do that? They will come to take you away because you'll go mad. Yes, mad. Do you want mental treatment? Do you want to be shut up, to undergo the psychic probe?"

Mrs. Potterley tore away. There was no trace of softness or vagueness about her. She had twisted into a virago. "I want to see my child, Arnold. She's in that machine and I want her."

"She's *not* in the machine. An image is. Can't you understand? An image! Something that's not real!"

"I want my child. Do you hear me?" She flew at him, screaming, fists beating. *"I want my child."*

The historian retreated at the fury of the assault, crying out. Foster moved to step between when Mrs. Potterley dropped, sobbing wildly, to the floor.

Potterley turned, eyes desperately seeking. With a sudden heave, he snatched at a Lando-rod, tearing it from its support, and whirling away before Foster, numbed by all that was taking place, could move to stop him.

"Stand back!" gasped Potterley, "or I'll kill you. I swear it."

He swung with force, and Foster jumped back.

Potterley turned with fury on every part of the structure in the cellar, and Foster, after the first crash of glass, watched dazedly.

Potterley spent his rage and then he was standing quietly amid shards and splinters, with a broken Lando-rod in his hand. He said to Foster in a whisper, "Now get out of here! Never come back! If any of this cost you anything, send me a bill and I'll pay for it. I'll pay double."

Foster shrugged, picked up his shirt and moved up the basement stairs. He could hear Mrs. Potterley sobbing loudly, and, as he turned at the head of the stairs for a last look, he saw Dr. Potterley bending over her, face convulsed with sorrow.

Two days later, with the school day drawing to a close, and Foster looking wearily about to see if there were any data on his newly-approved projects that he wished to take home, Dr. Potterley appeared once more. He was standing at the open door of Foster's office.

The historian was neatly dressed as ever. He lifted his hand in a gesture that was too vague to be a greating, too abortive to be a plea. Foster stared stonily.

Potterley said, "I waited till five, till you were —May I come in?"

Foster nodded.

Potterley said, "I suppose I ought to apologize for my behavior. I was dreadfully disappointed; not quite master of myself. Still, it was inexcusable."

"I accept your apology," said Foster. "Is that all?"

"My wife called you, I think."

"Yes, she has."

"She has been quite hysterical. She told me she had but I couldn't be quite sure—"

"She has called me."

"Could you tell me . . . would you be so kind as to tell me what she wanted?"

"She wanted a chronoscope. She said she had some money of her own. She was willing to pay."

"Did you . . . make any commitments?"

"I said I wasn't in the manufacturing business."

"Good," breathed Potterley, his chest expanding with a sigh of relief. "Please don't take any calls from her. She's not . . . quite—"

"Look, Dr. Potterley," said Foster, "I'm not getting into any domestic quarrels, but you'd better be prepared for something. Chronoscopes can be built by anybody. Given a few simple parts that can be bought through some etherics sales-center, it can be built in the home workshop. The video part, anyway."

"But no one else will think of it beside you, will they? No one has."

"I don't intend to keep it secret."

"But you can't publish. It's illegal research."

"That doesn't matter any more, Dr. Potterley. If I lose my grants, I lose them. If the university is displeased, I'll resign. It just doesn't matter."

"But you can't do that!"

"Till now," said Foster, "you didn't mind my risking loss of grants and position. Why do you turn so tender about it now? Now let me explain something to you. When you first came to me, I believed in organized and directed research; the situation as it existed, in other words. I considered you an intellectual anarchist, Dr. Potterley, and dangerous. But, for one reason or another, I've been an anarchist myself for months now and I have achieved great things.

"Those things have been achieved not because I am a brilliant scientist. Not at all. It was just that scientific research had been directed from above and holes were left that could be filled in by anyone who looked in the right direction. And

anyone might have if the government hadn't actively tried to prevent it.

"Now understand me. I still believe directed research can be useful. I'm not in favor of a retreat to total anarchy. But there must be a middle ground. Directed research can retain flexibility. A scientist must be allowed to follow his curiosity, at least in his spare time."

Potterley sat down. He said, ingratiatingly, "Let's discuss this, Foster. I appreciate your idealism. You're young. You want the moon. But you can't destroy yourself through fancy notions of what research must consist of. I got you into this. I am responsible and I blame myself bitterly. I was acting emotionally. My interest in Carthage blinded me and I was a fool."

Foster broke in. "You mean you've changed completely in two days? Carthage is nothing? Government suppression of research is nothing?"

"Even a fool like myself can learn, Foster. My wife taught me something. I understand the reason for government suppression of neutrinics now. I didn't two days ago. And understanding, I approve. You saw the way my wife reacted to the news of a chronoscope in the basement. I had envisioned a chronoscope used for research purposes. All *she* could see was the personal pleasure of returning neurotically to a personal past, a dead past. The pure researcher, Foster, is in the minority. People like my wife would outweigh us.

"For the government to encourage chronoscopy would have meant that everyone's past would be visible. The government officers would be subjected to blackmail and improper pressure, since who on earth has a past that is absolutely clean. Organized government might become impossible."

Foster licked his lips. "Maybe. Maybe the government has some justification in its own eyes. Still, there's an important principle involved here. Who knows what other scientific advances are being stymied because scientists are being stifled into walking a narrow path? If the chronoscope becomes the terror of a few politicians, it's a price that must be paid. The public must realize that science must be free and there is no more dramatic way of doing it than to publish my discovery, one way or another, legally or illegally."

Potterley's brow was in a perspiration, but his voice remained even. "Oh, not just a few politicians, Dr. Foster. Don't think that. It would be my terror, too. My wife would spend her time living with our dead daughter. She would retreat further from reality. She would go mad living the same scenes over and over. And not just my terror. There would be others like her. Children searching for their dead parents or their own youth. We'll have a whole world living in the past. Midsummer madness."

Foster said, "Moral judgments can't stand in the way. There isn't one advance at any time in history

that mankind hasn't had the ingenuity to pervert. Mankind must also have the ingenuity to prevent. As for the chronoscope, your delvers into the dead past will get tired soon enough. They'll catch their loved parents in some of the things their loved parents did and they'll lose their enthusiasm for it all. But all this is trivial. With me, it's a matter of an important principle."

Potterley said, "Hang your principle. Can't you understand men and women as well as principle? Don't you understand that my wife will live through the fire that killed our baby? She won't be able to help herself. I know her. She'll follow through each step, trying to prevent it. She'll live it over and over again, hoping each time that it won't happen. How many times do you want to kill Laurel?" A huskiness had crept into his voice.

A thought crossed Foster's mind. "What are you really afraid she'll find out, Dr. Potterley? What happened the night of the fire?"

The historian's hands went up quickly to cover his face and they shook with his dry sobs. Foster turned away and stared uncomfortably out the window.

Potterley said after a while, "It's a long time since I've had to think of it. Caroline was away. I was baby-sitting. I went in to the baby's bedroom mid-evening to see if she had kicked off the bedclothes. I had my cigarette with me. I smoked in those days. I must have stubbed it out before putting it in the ashtray on the chest of drawers. I was always careful. The baby was all right. I returned to the living room and fell asleep before the video. I awoke, choking, surrounded by fire. I don't know how it started."

"But you think it may have been the cigarette, is that it?" said Foster. "A cigarette which, for once, you forgot to stub out?"

"I don't know. I tried to save her, but she was dead in my arms when I got out."

"You never told your wife about the cigarette, I suppose."

Potterley shook his head. "But I've lived with it."

"Only now, with a chronoscope, she'll find out. Maybe it wasn't the cigarette. Maybe you did stub it out. Isn't that possible?"

The scant tears had dried on Potterley's face. The redness had subsided. He said, "I can't take the chance. But it's not just myself, Foster. The past has its terrors for most people. Don't loose those terrors on the human race."

Foster paced the floor. Somehow, this explained the reason for Potterley's rabid, irrational desire to boost the Carthaginians, deify them, most of all disprove the story of their fiery sacrifices to Moloch. By freeing them of the guilt of infanticide by fire, he symbolically freed himself of the same guilt.

So the same fire that had driven Potterley on to causing the construction of a chronoscope was now driving him on to its destruction.

Foster looked sadly at the older man. "I see your position, Dr. Potterley, but this goes above personal feelings. I've got to smash this throttling hold on the throat of science."

Potterley said, savagely, "You mean you want the fame and wealth that goes with such a discovery."

"I don't know about the wealth, but that, too, I suppose. I'm no more than human."

"You won't suppress your knowledge?"

"Not under any circumstances."

"Well, then—" and the historian got to his feet and stood for a moment, glaring.

Foster had an odd moment of terror. The man was older than he, smaller, feebler, and he didn't look armed. Still—

Foster said, "If you're thinking of killing me or anything insane like that, I've got the information in a safety-deposit vault where the proper people will find it in case of my disappearance or death."

Potterley said, "Don't be a fool," and stalked out.

Foster closed the door, locked it, and sat down to think. He felt silly. He had no information in any safety-deposit vault, of course. Such a melodramatic action would not have occurred to him ordinarily. But now it had.

Feeling even sillier, he spent an hour writing out the equations of the application of pseudo-gravitic optics to neutrinic recording, and some diagrams for the engineering details of construction. He sealed it in an envelope and scrawled Ralph Nimmo's name over the outside.

He spent a rather restless night and the next morning, on the way to school, dropped the envelope off at the bank, with appropriate instructions to an official, who made him sign a paper permitting the box to be opened after his death.

He called Nimmo to tell him of the existence of the envelope, refusing querulously to say anything about its contents.

He had never felt so ridiculously self-conscious as at that moment.

That night and the next, Foster spent in only fitful sleep, finding himself face to face with the highly practical problem of the publication of data unethically obtained.

The *Proceedings of the Society for Pseudo-Gravitics,* which was the journal with which he was best acquainted, would certainly not touch any paper that did not include the magic footnote: "The work described in this paper was made possible by Grant No. so-and-so from the Commission of Research of the United Nations."

Nor, doubly so, would the *Journal of Physics.*

There were always the minor journals who might overlook the nature of the article for the sake of the sensation, but that would require a little financial negotiation on which he hesitated to embark. It might, on the whole, be better to pay the cost of publishing a small pamphlet for general distribution

among scholars. In that case, he would even be able to dispense with the services of a science-writer, sacrificing polish for speed. He would have to find a reliable printer. Uncle Ralph might know one.

He walked down the corridor to his office and wondered anxiously if perhaps he ought to waste no further time, give himself no further chance to lapse into indecision and take the risk of calling Ralph from his office phone. He was so absorbed in his own heavy thoughts that he did not notice that his room was occupied until he turned from the clothes-closet and approached his desk.

Dr. Potterley was there and a man whom Foster did not recognize.

Foster stared at them. "What's this?"

Potterley said, "I'm sorry, but I had to stop you."

Foster continued staring. "What are you talking about?"

The stranger said, "Let me introduce myself." He had large teeth, a little uneven, and they showed prominently when he smiled. "I am Thaddeus Araman, Department Head of the Division of Chronoscopy. I am here to see you concerning information brought to me by Professor Arnold Potterley and confirmed by our own sources—"

Potterley said, breathlessly, "I took all the blame, Dr. Foster. I explained that it was I who persuaded you against your will into unethical practices. I have offered to accept full responsibility and punishment. I don't wish you harmed in any way. It's just that chronoscopy must be put an end to."

Araman nodded. "He has taken the blame as he says, Dr. Foster, but this thing is out of his hands now."

Foster said, "So? What are you going to do? Blackball me from all consideration for research grants?"

"That is in my power," said Araman.

"Order the university to discharge me?"

"That, too, is in my power."

"All right, go ahead. Consider it done. I'll leave my office now, with you. I can send for my books later. If you insist, I'll leave my books. Is that all?"

"Not quite,' said Araman. "You must engage to do no further research in chronoscopy, to publish none of your findings in chronoscopy, and, of course, to build no chronoscope. You will remain under surveillance indefinitely to make sure you keep that promise."

"Supposing I refuse to promise? What can you do? Doing research out of my field may be unethical, but it isn't a criminal offense."

"In the case of chronoscopy, my young friend," said Araman, patiently, "it is a criminal offense. If necessary, you will be put in jail and kept there."

"Why?" shouted Foster. "What's magic about chronoscopy?"

Araman said, "That's the way it is. We cannot allow further developments in the field. My own job is,

primarily, to make sure of that, and I intend to do my job. Unfortunately, I had no knowledge, nor did anyone in the department, that the optics of pseudo-gravity fields had such immediate application to chronoscopy. Score one for general ignorance, but henceforward, research will be steered properly in that respect, too."

Foster said, "That won't help. Something else may apply that neither you nor I dream of. All science hangs together. It's one piece. If you want to stop one part, you've got to stop it all."

"No doubt that is true," said Araman, "in theory. On the practical side, however, we have managed quite well to hold chronoscopy down to the original Sterbinski level for fifty years. Having caught you in time, Dr. Foster, we hope to continue doing so indefinitely. And we wouldn't have come this close to disaster, either, if I had accepted Dr. Potterley at something more than face value."

He turned toward the historian and lifted his eyebrows in a kind of humorous self-deprecation. "I'm afraid, sir, that I dismissed you as a history professor and no more on the occasion of our first interview. Had I done my job properly and checked on you, this would not have happened."

Foster said, abruptly, "Is anyone allowed to use the government chronoscope?"

"No one outside our division under any pretext. I say that since it is obvious to me that you have already guessed as much. I warn you, though, that any repetition of that fact will be a criminal, not an ethical, offense."

"And your chronoscope doesn't go back more than a hundred twenty-five years or so, does it?"

"It doesn't."

"Then your bulletin with its stories of time-viewing ancient times is a hoax?"

Araman said, coolly, "With the knowledge you now have, it is obvious you know that for a certainty. However, I confirm your remark. The monthly bulletin is a hoax."

"In that case," said Foster, "I will not promise to suppress my knowledge of chronoscopy. If you wish to arrest me, go ahead. My defense at the trial will be enough to destroy the vicious card-house of directed research and bring it tumbling down. Directing research is one thing; suppressing it and depriving mankind of its benefits is quite another."

Araman said, "Oh, let's get something straight, Dr. Foster. If you do not co-operate, you will go to jail directly. You will *not* see a lawyer, you will *not* be charged, you will *not* have a trial. You will simply stay in jail."

"Oh, no," said Foster, "you're bluffing. This is not the Twentieth Century, you know."

There was a stir outside the office, the clatter of feet, a high-pitched shout that Foster was sure he recognized. The door crashed open, the lock splintering, and three intertwined figures stumbled in.

As they did so, one of the men raised a blaster and brought its butt down hard on the skull of another.

There was a *whoosh* of expiring air, and the one whose head was struck went limp.

"Uncle Ralph!" cried Foster.

Araman frowned. "Put him down in that chair," he ordered, "and get some water."

Ralph Nimmo, rubbing his head with a gingerly sort of disgust, said, "There was no need to get rough, Araman."

Araman said, "The guard should have been rough sooner and kept you out of here, Nimmo. You'd have been better off."

"You know each other?" asked Foster.

"I've had dealings with the man," said Nimmo, still rubbing. "If he's

here in your office, nephew, you're in trouble."

"And you, too," said Araman, angrily. "I know Dr. Foster consulted you on neutrinics literature."

Nimmo corrugated his forehead, then straightened it with a wince as though the action had brought pain. "So?" he said. "What else do you know about me?"

"We will know everything about you soon enough. Meanwhile that one item is enough to implicate you. What are you doing here?"

"My dear Mr. Araman," said Nimmo, some of his jauntiness restored, "day before yesterday, my jackass of a nephew called me. He had placed some mysterious information—"

"Don't tell him! Don't say anything!" cried Foster.

Araman glanced at him coldly. "We know all about it, Dr. Foster. The safety deposit box has been opened and its contents removed."

"But how can you know—" Foster's voice died away in a kind of furious frustration.

"Anyway," said Nimmo, "I decided the net must be closing around him and after I took care of a few items, I came down to tell him to get off this thing he's doing. It's not worth his career."

"Does that mean you know what he's doing?" asked Araman.

"He never told me," said Nimmo, "but I'm a science-writer with a hell of a lot of experience. I know which side of an atom is electronified. The boy, Foster, specializes in pseudo-gravitic optics and coached me on the stuff himself. He got me to get him a textbook on neutrinics and I kind of skip-viewed it myself before handing it over. I can put the two together. He asked me to get him certain pieces of physical equipment, and that was evidence, too. Stop me if I'm wrong, but my nephew has built a semiportable, low-power chronoscope. Yes, or . . . yes?"

"Yes." Araman reached thoughtfully for a cigarette and paid no attention to Dr. Potterley—watching silently, as though all were a dream—who shied away, gasping, from the white cylinder. "Another mistake for me. I ought to resign. I should have put tabs on you, too, Nimmo, instead of concentrating too hard on Potterley and Foster. I didn't have much time of course and you've ended up safely here, but that doesn't excuse me. You're under arrest, Nimmo."

"What for?" demanded the science-writer.

"Unauthorized research."

"I wasn't doing any. I can't, not being a registered scientist. And even if I did, it's not a criminal offense."

Foster said, savagely, "No use, Uncle Ralph. This bureaucrat is making his own laws."

"Like what?" demanded Nimmo.

"Like life imprisonment without trial."

"Nuts," said Nimmo. "This isn't the Twentieth Cen—"

"I tried that," said Foster. "It doesn't bother him."

Nimmo shouted, "Look here, Araman. My nephew and I have relatives who haven't lost touch with us, you know. The professor has some also, I imagine. You can't just make us disappear. There'll be questions and a scandal. This *isn't* the Twentieth Century. So if you're trying to scare us, it isn't working."

The cigarette snapped between Araman's figures and he tossed it away violently. He said, "Damn it, I don't know *what* to do. It's never been like this before. Look! You three fools know nothing of what you're trying to do. You understand nothing. Will you listen to me?"

"Oh, we'll listen," said Nimmo, grimly.

(Foster sat silently, eyes angry, lips compressed. Potterley's hands writhed like intertwined snakes.)

Araman said, "The past to you is the dead past. If any of you have discussed the matter, it's dollars to nickels you've used that phrase. The dead past. If you knew how many times I've heard those three words, you'd choke on them, too.

"When people think of the past, they think of it as dead, far away and gone, long ago. We encourage them to think so. When we report time-viewing, we always talk of views centuries in the past even though you gentlemen knew seeing more than a century or so is impossible. People accept it. The past means Greece, Rome, Carthage, Egypt, the Stone Age. The deader the better.

"Now you three know a century or a little more is the limit, so what does the past mean to you? Your youth. Your first girl. Your dead mother. Twenty years ago. Thirty years ago. Fifty years ago. The deader the better. But when does the past really begin?"

He paused in anger. The others stared at him and Nimmo stirred uneasily.

"Well," said Araman, "when did it begin? A year ago? Five minutes ago? One second ago? Isn't it obvious that the past begins an instant ago. The dead past is just another name for the living present. What if you focus the chronoscope in the past of one-hundredth of a second ago? Aren't you watching the present? Does it begin to sink in?"

Nimmo said, "Damnation."

"Damnation," mimicked Araman. "After Potterley came to me with his story night before last, how do you suppose I checked up on both of you? I did it with the chronoscope, spotting key moments to the very instant of the present."

"And that's how you knew about the safety deposit box?" said Foster.

"And every other important fact. Now what do you suppose would happen if we let news of a home chronoscope get out. People might start out by watching their youth, their parents and so on, but it wouldn't be long before they'd catch on to the possibilities. The housewife will forget her poor, dead

mother and take to watching her neighbor at home and her husband at the office. The businessman will watch his competitor; the employer his employee.

"There will be no such thing as privacy. The party-line, the prying eye behind the curtain will be nothing compared to it. The video stars will be closely watched at all times by everyone. Every man his own peeping-Tom and there'll be no getting away from the watcher. Even darkness will be no escape because chronoscopy can be adjusted to the infrared and human figures can be seen by their own body heat. The figures will be fuzzy, of course, and the surroundings will be dark, but that will make the titillation of it all the greater, perhaps. Even the men in charge of the machine now experiment sometimes in spite of all the regulations against it."

Nimmo seemed sick. "You can always forbid private manufacture—"

Araman turned on him fiercely. "You can, but do you expect it to do good? Can you legislate successfully against drinking, smoking, adultery, or gossiping over the back fence? And this mixture of nosiness and prurience will have a worse grip on humanity than any of those. In a thousand years of trying we haven't even been able to wipe out the heroin traffic and you talk about legislating against a device for watching anyone you please at any time you please that can be built in a home workshop."

Foster said, suddenly, "I won't publish."

Potterley burst out, half in sobs. "None of us will talk. I regret—"

Nimmo broke in. "You said you didn't tab me on the chronoscope, Araman."

"No time," said Araman, wearily. "Things don't move any faster on the chronoscope than in real life. You can't speed it up like the film in a book-viewer. We spent a full twenty-four hours trying to catch the important moments during the last six months of Potterley and Foster. There was no time for anything else and it was enough."

"It wasn't," said Nimmo.

"What are you talking about?" There was a sudden, infinite alarm on Araman's face.

"I told you my nephew, Jonas, had called me to say he had put important information in a safety-deposit box. He acted as though he were in trouble. He's my nephew. I had to try to get him off the spot. It took a while and then I came here to tell him what I had done. I told you when I got here, just after your man conked me, that I had taken care of a few items."

"What for instance?"

"Just this: I sent the details of the portable chronoscope off to half a dozen of my regular publicity outlets."

Not a word. Not a sound. Not a breath. They were all past any demonstration.

"Don't stare like that," cried

Nimmo. "Don't you see my point? I had popular publication rights. Jonas will admit that. I knew he couldn't publish scientifically in any legal way. I was sure he was planning to publish illegally and was preparing the safety-deposit box for that reason. I thought if I put through the details prematurely, all the responsibility would be mine. His career would be saved. And if I were deprived of my science-writing license as a result, my exclusive possession of the chronometric data would set me up for life. Jonas would be angry, I expected that, but I could explain the motive and we would split the take fifty-fifty. Don't stare at me like that. How did I know—"

"Nobody knew anything," said Araman bitterly, "but you all just took it for granted that the government was stupidly bureaucratic, vicious, tyrannical, given to suppressing research for the hell of it. It never occurred to any of you that we were trying to protect mankind as best we could."

"Don't sit there talking," wailed Potterley. "Get the names of the people who were told—"

"Too late," said Nimmo, shrugging. "They've had better than a day. There's been time for the word to spread. My outfits will have called any number of physicists to check my data before going on with it and physicists will call one another to pass on the news. Once scientists put neutrinics and pseudo-gravitics together, home chronoscopy becomes obvious. Before the week is out, five hundred people will know how to build a small chronoscope and how will you catch them all?" His plump cheeks sagged. "I suppose there's no way of putting the mushroom cloud back into that nice, shiny uranium sphere."

Araman stood up. "We'll try, Potterley, but I agree with Nimmo. It's too late. What kind of a world we'll have from now on, I don't know, I can't tell, but the world we know has been destroyed completely. Until now, every custom, every habit, every tiniest way of life has always taken a certain amount of privacy for granted, but that's all gone now."

He saluted each of the three with elaborate formality. "You have created a new world among the three of you. I congratulate you. Happy goldfish bowl to you, to me, to everyone, and may each of you fry in hell forever."

THE END

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THE MAN WHO ALWAYS KNEW

BY ALGIS BUDRYS

Illustrated by van Dangen

You don't have to be a great genius in a hundred fields—if you can just be a genius in the right field!

The small, thin, stoop-shouldered man sat down on the stool nearest the wall, took a dollar bill out of his wallet, and laid it on the bar. Behind their rimless glasses, his watery blue eyes fastened vacantly on a space somewhere between the end of his nose and the bottles

standing on the backbar tiers. An old porkpie hat was squashed down over the few sandy hairs that covered his bony skull. His head was buried deep in the collar of his old, baggy tweed overcoat, and a yellow muffler trailed down from around his neck. His knobby-knuckled hands played with the dollar bill.

Harry, the barkeep, was busy mixing three martinis for a table in the dining room, but as soon as the small man came in he looked up and smiled. And as soon as he had the three filled glasses lined up on a tray for the waiter to pick up, he hurried up to the end of the bar.

"Afternoon, Mr. McMahon! And what'll it be for you today?"

The small man looked up with a wan sigh. "Nothing, yet, Harry. Mind if I just sit and wait a minute?"

"Not at all, Mr. McMahon, not at all." He looked around at the empty stools. "Quiet as the grave in here this afternoon. Same thing over at the lab?"

The small man nodded slowly, looking down at his fingers creasing the dollar bill. "Just a quiet afternoon, I guess," he said in a tired voice. "Nothing's due to come to a head over there until some time next week."

Harry nodded to show he understood. It was that kind of a day. "Haven't seen you for a while, Mr. McMahon—been away again?"

The small man pleated the dollar bill, held one end between thumb and forefinger, and spread the bill like a fan. "That's right. I went down to Baltimore for a few days." He smoothed out the bill and touched the top of the bar. "You know, Harry, it wouldn't surprise me if next year we could give you a bar varnish you could let absolute alcohol stand on overnight."

Harry shook his head slowly. "Beats me, Mr. McMahon. I never know what's coming out of your lab next. One week it's steam engines, the next it's bar varnish. What gets me is where you find the time. Doing all that traveling and still being the biggest inventor in the world—bigger than Edison, even. Why, just the other day the wife and I went out and bought two of those pocket transceiver sets of yours, and Emma said she didn't see how I could know you. 'A man as busy as Mr. McMahon must be,' she said, 'wouldn't be coming into the bar all the time like you say he does.' Well, that's a wife for you. But she's right. Beats me, too, like I said."

The small man shrugged uncomfortably, and didn't say anything. Then he got a suddenly determined look on his face and started to say something, but just then the waiter stepped up to the bar.

"Two Gibson, one whiskey sour, Harry."

"Coming up. Excuse me, Mr. McMahon. Mix you something while I'm down there?"

The small man shook his head. "Not just yet, Harry."

"Right, Mr. McMahon."

Harry shook up the cocktails briskly. From the sound of it, Mr. McMahon had been about to say something important, and anything Mr. McMahon thought was important would be something you shouldn't miss.

He bumped the shaker, dropped the strainer in, and poured the Gibsons. He just hoped Mr. McMahon hadn't decided it wasn't worth talking about. Let's see what Emma would have to say if he came home and told her what Mr. McMahon had told him, and a year or two later something new—maybe a new kind of home permanent or something—came out. She'd use it. She'd have to use it, because it would just naturally be the best thing on the market. And every time she did, she'd have to remember that Harry had told her first. Let's see her say Mr. McMahon wasn't a steady customer of his then! Bar varnish wasn't in the same league.

The small man was looking into space again, with a sad little smile, when Harry got back to him. He was pushing the dollar bill back and forth with his index fingers. A bunch of people came in the door and Harry muttered under his breath, but they didn't stop at the bar. They went straight from the coat rack to the dining room, and Harry breathed easier. Maybe he'd have time to hear what Mr. McMahon had to say.

"Well, here I am again, Mr. McMahon."

The small man looked up with a sharp gleam in his eyes. "Think I'm pretty hot stuff, eh, Harry?"

"Yes, sir," Harry said, not knowing what to make of it.

"Think I'm the Edison of the age, huh?"

"Well—gosh, Mr. McMahon, you are *better* than Edison!"

The small man's fingers crumpled up the dollar bill and rolled it into a tight ball.

"The Perfect Cumbustion Engine, the Condensing Steam Jet, the Voice-Operated Typewriter, the Discontinuous Airfoil—things like that, eh?" the small man asked sharply.

"Yes, sir. And the Arc House, and the Minute Meal, and the Lintless Dustcloth—well, gosh, Mr. McMahon, I could go on all day, I guess."

"Didn't invent a one of them," the small man snapped. His shoulders seemed to straighten out from under a heavy load. He looked Harry in the eye. "I never invented anything in my life."

"Two Gibson and another whiskey sour, Harry," the waiter interrupted.

"Yeah—sure." Harry moved uneasily down the bar. He tilted the gin bottle slowly, busy turning things over in his mind. He sneaked a look at Mr. McMahon. The small man was looking down at his hands, curling them up into fists and smiling. He looked happy. That wasn't like him at all.

Harry set the drinks up on the waiter's tray and got back up to the end of the bar.

"Mr. McMahon?"

The small man looked up again. "Yes, Harry?" He *did* look happy—happy all the way through, like a man with insomnia who suddenly feels himself drifting off to sleep.

"You were just saying about that varnish—"

"Fellow in Baltimore. Paints signs for a living. Not very good ones; they weather too fast. I noticed him working, the last time I was down that way."

"I don't follow you, Mr. McMahon."

The small man bounced the balled-up dollar bill on the bar and watched it roll around. "Well, I knew he was a conscientious young fellow, even if he didn't know much about paint. So, yesterday I went back down there, and, sure enough, he'd been fooling around—just taking a little of this and a little of that, stirring it up by guess and by gosh—and he had something he could paint over a sign that would stand up to a blowtorch."

"Golly, Mr. McMahon. I thought you said he didn't know much about paint."

The small man scooped up the bill and smoothed it out. "He didn't. He was just fooling around. Anybody else would have just come up with a gallon of useless goo. But he *looked* like the kind of man who'd happen to hit it right. And he looked like the kind of man who'd hit it sometime about yesterday. So I went down there, made him an offer, and came back with a gallon of what's going to be the best varnish anybody ever put on the market."

Harry twisted his hands uncomfortably in his pockets. "Gee, Mr. McMahon—you mean you do the same thing with everything else?"

"That's right, Harry." The small man pinched the two ends of the dollar bill, brought them together, and then snapped the bill flat with a satisfied *pop!* "Exactly the same thing. I was on a train passing an open field once, and saw a boy flying model airplanes. Two years later, I went back and sure enough, he'd just finished his first drawings on the discontinuous airfoil. I offered him a licensing fee and a good cash advance, and came home with the airfoil." The small man looked down sadly and reminiscently. "He used the money to finance himself through aeronautical engineering school. Never turned out anything new again."

"Gosh, Mr. McMahon. I don't know what to say. You mean you travel around the country just looking for people that are working on something new?"

The small man shook his head. "No. I travel around the country, and I stumble across people who're going to accidentally stumble across something good. I've got secondhand luck." The small man rolled the bill up between his fingers, and smiled with a hurt twist in his sensitive mouth. "It's even better than that. I know more or less *what* they're going to stumble across, and *when*

they're going to." He bent the tube he'd made out of the bill. "But I can't develop it myself. I just have to wait. I've only got one talent."

"Well, gee, Mr. McMahon, that's a fine thing to have."

The small man crushed the dollar bill. "Is it, Harry? How do you use it directly? How do you define it? Do you set up shop as McMahon and Company—Secondhand Luck Bought and Sold? Do you get a Nobel Prize for Outstanding Achievement in Luck?"

"You've got a Nobel Prize, Mr. McMahon."

"For a cold cure discovered by a pharmacist who mis-labeled a couple of prescriptions."

"Well, look, Mr. McMahon—that's better than no Nobel Prize at all."

The small man's sensitive mouth twisted again. "Yes, it is, Harry. A little bit." He almost tore the dollar bill. "Just a little bit." He stared into space.

"Mr. McMahon, I wouldn't feel so bad about it if I was you. There's no sense to taking it out on yourself," Harry said worriedly.

The small man shrugged.

Harry shuffled his feet. "I wish there was something I could do for you." It felt funny, being sorry for the luckiest man in the world.

The small man smoothed the dollar out again.

"Two whiskey sour, and another Gibson," the waiter said. Harry moved unhappily down the bar and began to mix, thinking about Mr. McMahon. Then he heard Mr. McMahon get off his stool and come down the bar.

He looked up. The small man was standing opposite him, and looking down at the bar. Harry looked down too, and realized he'd been trying to make a whiskey sour with Gibson liquor. It looked like nothing he'd ever seen before.

Mr. McMahon pushed the dollar bill across the bar. He reached out and took the funny-looking drink. There was a sad-happy smile on his face.

"That's the one I wanted, Harry," he said.

THE END

DEFINITION

DEMOCRACY: A governmental system involving a high percentage of negative feedback around all stages of the system from input to output.

LEGWORK

BY

ERIC FRANK RUSSELL

There's a bit of tendency in science fiction to view the marvelous Gimmick or Power as unstoppable. Russell has here, a small question . . .

Illustrated by Freas

As nearly as an Andromedan thought form can be expressed in print, his name was Harasha Vanash. The formidable thing about him was his conceit. It was redoubtable because justified. His natural power had been tested on fifty hostile worlds and found invincible.

The greatest asset any living creature can possess is a brain capable of imagination. That is its strong point, its power center. But to Vanash an opponent's mind was a weak spot, a chink in the armor, a thing to be exploited.

Even he had his limitations. He could not influence a mind of his own species armed with his own power. He could not do much with a brainless life form except kick it in the rumps. But if an alien could

think and imagine, that alien was his meat.

Vanash was a twenty-four carat hypno, jeweled in every hole. Given a thinking mind to work upon at any range up to most of a mile, he could convince it in a split second that black was white, right was wrong, the sun had turned bright green, and the corner cop was King Farouk. Anything he imposed stayed stuck unless he saw fit to unstick it. Even if it outraged common sense, the victim would sign affidavits, swear to it upon the Bible, the Koran or whatever, and then be led away to have his head examined.

There was one terminal restriction that seemed to have the nature of a cosmos-wide law; he could not compel any life form to destroy itself by its own hand. At that point the universal instinct of self-survival became downright mulish and refused to budge.

However, he was well able to do the next best thing. He could do what a snake does to a rabbit, namely, obsess the victim with the idea that it was paralyzed and completely unable to flee from certain death. He could not persuade a Bootean *appolan* to cut its own throat, but he could make it stand still while he performed that service.

Yes, Harasha Vanash had excellent basis for self-esteem. When one has walked into and out of fifty worlds one can afford to be confident about the fifty-first. Experience is a faithful and loving servant, always ready with a long, stimulating draught of ego when required.

So it was with nonchalance that he landed on Earth. The previous day he'd given the planet a look-over and his snooping had set off the usual rumors about flying saucers despite that his ship resembled no such object.

He arrived unseen in the hills, got out, sent the ship up to where its automechanisms would swing it into a distant orbit and make it a pinhead-sized moon. Among the rocks he hid the small, compact apparatus that could call it back when wanted.

The vessel was safe from interference up there, high in the sky. The chance of it being observed telescopically was very remote. If the creatures of Earth did succeed in detecting its presence, they could do nothing about it. They hadn't any rocketships. They could do no more than look and wonder and worry.

Yesterday's preliminary investigation had told him practically nothing about the shape and form of the dominant life. He hadn't got near enough for that. All he'd wanted to know was whether this planet was worthy of closer study and whether its highest life form had exploitable minds. It had not taken long to see that he'd discovered an especially juicy plum, a world deserving of eventual confiscation by the Andromedan horde.

The physical attributes of these future slaves did not matter much right now. Though not at all bizarre,

he was sufficiently like them to walk around, sufficiently unlike to raise a yelp of alarm on sight. There would be no alarm. In spite of a dozen physical differences they'd be soothed, positively soothed. Because they'd never get a true view of him. Only an imaginary one. He could be a mental mock-up of anything, anybody.

Therefore, the first thing to do was to find a mediocrity who would pass unnoticed in a crowd, get his mental image firmly fixed and impress that on all other minds subsequently encountered until such time as it might be convenient to switch pictures.

Communication was no problem, either. He could read the questions, project the answers, and the other party's own mind could be compelled to supply accompanying camouflage. If they communicated by making noises with their mouths or by dexterous jiggling of their tails, it would work out the same. The other's mastered imagination would get his message while providing the noises and mouth movements or the appropriate tail-jigglings.

Leaving the landing place, he set forth through the hills, heading for a well-used road observed during his descent. A flight of primitive jet-planes arced across the eastward horizon. He paused long enough to watch them with approval. The trouble with prospective servants already discovered elsewhere was that they were a bit too stupid to be efficient. Not here, though.

He continued on his way, bearing no instrument other than a tiny compass needed for eventual return and take-off. No weapon. Not a knife, not a gun. There was no need to burden himself with lethal hardware. By self-evident logic, local weapons were the equals of themselves. Any time he wanted one he could make the nearest sucker hand over his own and feel happy to do it. It was that easy. He'd done it a dozen times before and could do it a dozen times again.

By the roadside stood a small filling station with four pumps. Vanash kept watch upon it from the shelter of thick bushes fifty yards away. Hm-m-m! bipeds, vaguely like himself but with semi-rigid limbs and a lot more hair. There was one operating a pump, another sitting in a car. He could not get a complete image of the latter because only the face and shoulders were visible. As for the former, the fellow wore a glossy-peaked cap bearing a metal badge, and uniformlike overalls with a crimson cipher on the pocket.

Neither example was suitable for mental duplication, he decided. One lacked sufficient detail, the other had far too much. Characters, who wore uniforms, usually took orders, had fixed duties, were liable to be noted and questioned if seen some place where they shouldn't be. It would be better to pick a subject able to move around at random.

The car pulled away. Peaked Cap wiped his hands on a piece of cotton

waste and gazed along the road. Vanash maintained his watch. After a few minutes another car halted. This one had an aerial sticking from its roof and bore two individuals dressed alike; peaked caps, metal buttons and badges. They were heavy-featured, hard-eyed, had an official air about them. They wouldn't do either, thought Vanash. Too conspicuous.

Unconscious of this scrutiny, one of the cops said to the attendant, "Seen anything worth telling, Joe?"

"Not a thing. All quiet."

The police cruiser jerked forward and continued its patrol. Joe went into the station. Taking a flavor-seed from its small pack, Vanash chewed it and meditated while he bided his time. So they were mouth-talkers, nontelepathic, routine-minded and natural puppets for any hypno who cared to dangle them around.

Still, their cars, jetplanes and other gadgets proved that they enjoyed occasional flashes of inspiration. In Andromedan theory the rare touch of genius was all that menaced any hypno, since nothing else could sense his existence, follow his operations and pin him down.

It was a logical supposition—in terms of other-world logic. Everything the Andromedan culture possessed had been born one by one of numberless revealing shafts of revelation that through the centuries had sparked out of nothingness in the inexplicable way that such things do. But flashes of inspiration come spontaneously, of their own accord. They cannot be created to order no matter how great the need. Any species could go nuts for lack of one essential spark and, like everyone else, be compelled to wait its turn.

The trap in any foreign culture lies in the fact that no newcomer can know everything about it, imagine everything, guess everything. For instance, who could guess that the local life form were a bunch of chronic fidgets? Or that, because of it, they'd never had time to wait for genius? Vanash did not know, and could not suspect, that Earth had a tedious, conventional and most times unappreciated substitute for touches of genius. It was slow, grim, determined and unspectacular, but it was usable as and when required and it got results.

Variously it was called making the grade, slogging along, doing it the hard way, or just plain lousy legwork. Whoever heard of such a thing?

Not Vanash, nor any of his kind. So he waited behind the bushes until eventually a nondescript, mousy individual got out of a car, obligingly mooched around offering every detail of his features, mannerisms and attire. This specimen looked the unattached type that are a dime a dozen on any crowded city street. Vanash mentally photographed him from every angle, registered him to perfection and felt satisfied.

Five miles to the north along this road lay a small town, and forty

miles beyond it a big city. He'd seen and noted them on the way down, deciding that the town would serve as training-ground before going to the city. Right now he could step boldly from cover and compel his model to drive him where he wanted to go.

The idea was tempting but unwise. Before he was through with this world its life form would become aware of inexplicable happenings in their midst and it would be safer not to locate the first of such events so near to the rendezvous with the ship. Peaked Cap might talk too loudly and too long about the amazing coincidence of a customer giving a lift to an exact twin. The victim himself might babble bemusedly about picking up somebody who made him feel as though looking into a mirror. Enough items like that, and a flash of revelation could assemble them into a picture of the horrid truth.

He let the customer go and waited for Joe to enter the building. Then he emerged from the bushes, walked half a mile northward, stopped and looked to the south.

The first car that came along was driven by a salesman who never, never, never picked up a hitcher. He'd heard of cases where free riders had bopped the driver and robbed him, and he wasn't going to be rolled if he could help it. So far as he was concerned, thumbers by the wayside could go on thumbing until next Thursday week.

He stopped and gave Vanash a lift and lacked the vaguest notion of why he'd done it. All he knew was that in a moment of mental aberration he'd broken the habit of a lifetime and picked up a thin-faced, sad and silent customer who resembled a middle-aged mortician.

"Going far?" asked the salesman, inwardly bothered by the weakness of his own resolution.

"Next town," said Vanash. Or the other one thought he said it, distinctly heard him saying it and would take a dying oath that it really had been said. Sneaking the town's name from the driver's mind and thrusting it back again, Vanash persuaded him to hear the addition of, "Northwood."

"Any particular part?"

"Doesn't matter. It's a small place. Drop me wherever you find convenient."

The driver grunted assent, offered no more conversation. His thoughts milled around, baffled by his own Samaritanism. Arriving in Northwood, he stopped the car.

"This do?"

"Thanks." Vanash got out. "I appreciate it."

"Think nothing of it," said the salesman, driving away bopless and unrolled.

Vanash watched him depart, then had a look around Northwood.

The place was nothing much. It had shops on one long main street and on two short side streets. A railroad depot with a marshaling yard. Four medium-sized industrial plants.

Three banks, a post office, a fire station, a couple of municipal buildings. He estimated that Northwood held between four and five thousand Earthlings and that at least a third of them worked on outlying farms.

He ambled along the main street and was ignored by unsuspecting natives while practically rubbing shoulders with them. The experience gave him no great kick; he'd done it so often elsewhere that he now took it for granted and was almost bored by it. At one point a dog saw him, let go a howl of dismay and bolted with its tail between its legs. Nobody took any notice. Neither did he.

First lesson in pre-city education was gained inside a shop. Curious to see how the customers got what they wanted, he entered with a bunch of them. They used a medium of exchange in the form of printed paper and metal disks. That meant he'd save himself considerable trouble and inconvenience if he got hold of a supply of the stuff.

Moving to a crowded supermarket, he soon learned the relative values of money and a fair idea of its purchasing power. Then he helped himself to a small supply and was smart enough to do it by proxy. The technique was several times easier than falling off a log.

Standing unnoticed at one side, he concentrated attention on a plump, motherly shopper of obvious respectability. She responded by picking the purse of a preoccupied woman next to her. Sneaking the loot out of the market, she dropped it unopened on a vacant lot, went home, thought things over and held her head.

The take was forty-two dollars. Vanash counted it carefully, went to a cafeteria, splurged some of it on a square meal. By other methods he could have got the feed for free, but such tactics are self-advertising and can be linked up by a spark of inspiration. To his taste, some of the food was revolting, some passable, but it would do until he'd learned how to pick and choose.

One problem not yet satisfactorily resolved was that of what to do with the night. He needed sleep as much as any inferior life form and had to find some place for it. A snooze in the fields or a barn would be inappropriate; the master does not accept the hay while the servants snore on silk.

It took a little while to find out from observation, mind-pickings and a few questions to passers-by that he could bed down at an hotel or rooming house. The former did not appeal to him. Too public and, therefore, too demanding upon his resources for concealment. In an hotel he'd have less opportunity to let up for a while and be himself, which was a welcome form of relaxation.

But with a room of his own free from constantly intruding servants armed with master-keys, he could revert to a normal, effortless state of mind, get his sleep, work out his plans in peace and privacy.

He found a suitable rooming house without much trouble. A blowzy female with four warts on her florid face showed him his hideout, demanded twelve dollars in advance because he had no luggage. Paying her, he informed her that he was William Jones, here for a week on business, and that he liked to be left alone.

In return, she intimated that her joint was a palace of peace for gentlemen, and that any bum who imported a hussy would be out on his neck. He assured her that he would not dream of such a thing, which was true enough because to him such a dream would have all the makings of a nightmare. Satisfied, she withdrew.

He sat on the edge of the bed and thought things over. It would have been an absurdly simple trick to have paid her in full without handing her a cent. He could have sent her away convinced that she had been paid. But she'd still be short twelve dollars and get riled about the mysterious loss. If he stayed on, he'd have to fool her again and again until at last the very fact that his payments coincided exactly with her losses would be too much even for an idiot.

A way out would be to nick someone for a week's rent, then move and take another boob. That tactic had its drawbacks. If the news got around and a hunt started after the bilker, he would have to change identities.

He wasn't averse to soaking a muttonhead or switching personalities, providing it was necessary. It irked him to have to do it frequently, for petty reasons hardly worth the effort. To let himself be the constant victim of trifling circumstances was to accept that these aliens were imposing conditions upon him. His ego resented such an idea.

All the same, he had to face a self-evident premise and its unavoidable conclusion. On this world one must have money to get around smoothly, without irritating complications. Therefore, he must acquire an adequate supply of the real thing or be continually called upon to create the delusion that he possessed it. No extraordinary intelligence was needed to divine which alternative gave the least trouble.

On other worlds the life forms had proved so sluggish and dull-witted, their civilizations so rudimentary, that it had not taken long to make a shrewd estimate of their worth as future foes and subsequent slaves. Here, the situation was a lot more complicated and required lengthier, more detailed survey. By the looks of it he'd be stalled quite a time. So he must get hold of money in quantities larger than that carried by the average individual. And when it ran out, he must get more.

Next day he devoted some time to tracing the flow of money back to a satisfactory source. Having found the source, he spent more time making careful study of it. In underworld jargon, he cased a bank.

The man lumbering along the corridor weighed two-fifty, had a couple of chins and a prominent paunch. At first sight, just a fat slob. First impressions can be very deceptive. At least half a dozen similarly built characters had been world heavyweight wrestling champs. Edward G. Rider was not quite in that category, but on rare occasion he could strew bodies around in a way that would make an onlooking chiseler offer his services as manager.

He stopped at a frosted glass door bearing the legend: UNITED STATES TREASURY—INVESTIGATION. Rattling the glass with a hammerlike knuckle, he entered without waiting for response, took a seat without being invited.

The sharp-faced individual behind the desk registered faint disapproval, said, "Eddie, I've got a smelly one for you."

"Have you ever given me one that wasn't?" Rider rested big hands on big kneecaps. "What's it this time? Another unregistered engraver on the rampage?"

"No. It's a bank robbery."

Rider frowned, twitched heavy eyebrows. "I thought we were interested only in counterfeit currency and illegal transfers of capital. What has a heist to do with us? That's for the police, isn't it?"

"The police are stuck with it."

"Well, if the place was government insured they can call in the Feds."

"It's not insured. We offered to lend a hand. You are the boy who will lend it."

"Why?"

The other drew a deep breath, explained rapidly, "Some smartie took the First Bank of Northwood for approximately twelve thousand—and nobody knows how. Captain Harrison, of the Northwood police, says the puzzle is a stinker. According to him, it looks very much as though at long last somebody has found a technique for committing the perfect crime."

"He would say that if he feels thwarted. How come we're dragged into it?"

"On checking up with the bank Harrison found that the loot included forty one-hundred dollar bills consecutively numbered. Those numbers are known. The others are not. He phoned us to give the data, hoping the bills might turn up and we could back-track on them. Embleton handled the call, chatted a while, got interested in this perfect crime thesis."

"So?"

"He consulted with me. We both agreed that if somebody has learned how to truck lettuce the way he likes, he's as much a menace to the economy as any large-scale counterfeiter."

"I see," said Rider, doubtfully.

"Then I took the matter up at high level. Ballantyne himself decided that we're entitled to chip in, just in case something's started that can go too far. I chose you. The whole office block will sit steadier

without your size fourteen boots banging around." He moved some papers to his front, picked up a pen. "Get out to Northwood and give Chief Harrison a boost."

"Now?"

"Any reason why it should be tomorrow or next week?"

"I'm baby-sitting tonight."

"Don't be silly."

"It's not silly," said Rider. "Not with this baby."

"You ought to be ashamed. You're not long married. You've got a sweet and trusting wife."

"She's the baby," Rider informed. "I promised her faithfully and fervently that I'd—"

"And I promised Harrison and Ballantyne that you'd handle this with your usual elephantine efficiency," the other interrupted, scowling. "Do you want to hold down your job or do you want out? Phone your wife and tell her duty comes first."

"Oh, all right." He went out, slammed the door, tramped surlily along the corridor, entered a booth and took twenty-two minutes to do the telling.

Chief Harrison was tall, lean and fed up. He said, "Why should I bother to tell you what happened? Direct evidence is better than secondhand information. We've got the actual witness here. I sent for him when I learned you were coming." He flipped a switch on the desk-box. "Send Ashcroft in."

"Who's he?" Rider asked.

"Head teller of the First Bank, and a worried man." He waited for the witness to enter, made an introduction. "This is Mr. Rider, a special investigator. He wants to hear your story."

Ashcroft sat down, wearily rubbed his forehead. He was a white-haired, dapper man in the early sixties. Rider weighed him up as the precise, somewhat finicky but solid type often described as a pillar of the community.

"So far I've told it about twenty times," Ashcroft complained, "and each time it sounds a little madder. My mind is spinning with the thoughts of it. I just can't find any plausible—"

"Don't worry yourself," advised Rider in soothing tones. "Just give me the facts as far as they go."

"Each week we make up the payroll for the Dakin Glass Company. It varies between ten and fifteen thousand dollars. The day before the company sends around a messenger with a debit-note calling for the required sum and stating how they want it. We then get it ready in good time for the following morning."

"And then?"

"The company collects. They send around a cashier accompanied by a couple of guards. He always arrives at about eleven o'clock. Never earlier than ten to eleven or later than ten past."

"You know the cashier by sight?"

"There are two of them, Mr. Swain and Mr. Letheren. Either of them might come for the money. One relieves the other from time to time. Or one comes when the other is too busy, or ill, or on vacation. Both have been well-known to me for several years."

"All right, carry on."

"When the cashier arrives he brings a locked leather bag and has the key in a pocket. He unlocks the bag, hands it to me. I fill it in such manner that he can check the quantities, pass it back together with a receipt slip. He locks the bag, puts the key in his pocket, signs the slip and walks out. I file the receipt and that's all there is to it."

"Seems a bit careless to let the same fellow carry both the bag and the key," Rider commented.

Chief Harrison chipped in with, "We've checked on that. A guard carries the key. He gives it to the cashier when they arrive at the bank, takes it back when they leave."

Nervously licking his lips, Ashcroft went on, "Last Friday morning we had twelve thousand one hundred eighty-two dollars ready for the Dakin plant. Mr. Letheren came in with the bag. It was exactly ten-thirty."

"How do you know that?" inquired Rider, sharply. "Did you look at the clock? What impelled you to look at it?"

"I consulted the clock because I was a little surprised. He was ahead of his usual time. I had not expected him for another twenty minutes or so."

"And it was ten-thirty? You're positive of that?"

"I am absolutely certain," said Ashcroft, as though it was the only certainty in the whole affair. "Mr. Letheren came up to the counter and gave me the bag. I greeted him, made a casual remark about him being early."

"What was his reply?"

"I don't recall the precise wording. I'd no reason to take especial note of what he said and I was busy tending the bag." He frowned with effort of thought. "He made some commonplace remark about it being better to be too early than too late."

"What occurred next?"

"I gave him the bag and the slip. He locked the bag, signed the slip and departed."

"Is that all?" Rider asked.

"Not by a long chalk," put in Chief Harrison. He nodded encouragingly at Ashcroft. "Go on, give him the rest of it."

"At five to eleven," continued the witness, his expression slightly befuddled, "Mr. Letheren came back, placed the bag on the counter and looked at me sort of expectantly. So I said, 'Anything wrong, Mr. Letheren?' He answered, 'Nothing so far as I know. Ought there to be?' "

He paused, rubbed his forehead again. Rider advised, "Take your time with it. I want it as accurately as you can give it."

Ashcroft pulled himself together. "I told him there was no reason for anything to be wrong because the money had been checked and rechecked three times. He then displayed some impatience and said he didn't care if it had been checked fifty times so long as I got busy handing it over and let him get back to the plant."

"That knocked you onto your heels, eh?" Rider suggested, with a grim smile.

"I was flabbergasted. At first I thought it was some kind of joke, though he isn't the type to play such tricks. I told him I'd already given him the money, about half an hour before. He asked me if I was cracked. So I called Jackson, a junior teller, and he confirmed my statement. He had seen me loading the bag."

"Did he also see Letheren taking it away?"

"Yes, sir. And he said as much."

"What was Letheren's answer to that?"

"He demanded to see the manager. I showed him into Mr. Olsen's office. A minute later Mr. Olsen called for the receipt slip. I took it out of the file and discovered there was no signature upon it."

"It was blank?"

"Yes. I can't understand it. I watched him sign that receipt myself. Nevertheless there was nothing on it, not a mark of any sort." He sat silent and shaken, then finished, "Mr. Letheren insisted that Mr. Olsen cease questioning me and call the police. I was detained in the manager's office until Mr. Harrison arrived."

Rider stewed it over, then asked, "Did the same pair of guards accompany Letheren both times?"

"I don't know. I did not see his escort on either occasion."

"You mean he came unguarded?"

"They are not always visible to the bank's staff," Harrison put in. "I've chased that lead to a dead end."

"How much did you learn on the way?"

"The guards deliberately vary their routine so as to make their behavior unpredictable to anyone planning a grab. Sometimes both accompany the cashier to the counter and back. Sometimes they wait outside the main door, watching the street. Other times one remains in the car while the other mooches up and down near the bank."

"They are armed, I take it?"

"Of course." He eyed Rider quizzically. "Both guards swear that last Friday morning they escorted Letheren to the bank once and only once. That was at five to eleven."

"But he was there at ten-thirty," Ashcroft protested.

"He denies it," said Harrison. "So do the guards."

"Did the guards say they'd actually entered the bank?" inquired Rider, sniffing around for more contradictory evidence.

"They did not enter on arrival. They hung around outside the front door until Letheren's delay made them take alarm. At that point they went inside with guns half-drawn. Ashcroft couldn't see them because by then he was on the carpet in Olsen's office."

"Well, you can see how it is," commented Rider, staring hard at the unhappy Ashcroft. "You say Letheren got the money at ten-thirty. He says he did not. The statements are mutually opposed. Got any ideas on that?"

"You don't believe me, do you?" said Ashcroft, miserably.

"I don't disbelieve you, either. I'm keeping judgment suspended. We're faced with a flat contradiction of evidence. It doesn't follow that one of the witnesses is a liar and thus a major suspect. Somebody may be talking in good faith but genuinely mistaken."

"Meaning me?"

"Could be. You're not infallible. Nobody is." Rider leaned forward, gave emphasis to his tones. "Let's accept the main points at face value. If you've told the truth, the cash was collected at ten-thirty. If Letheren has told the truth, he was not the collector. Add those up and what do you get? Answer: the money was toted away by somebody who was not Letheren. And if that answer happens to be correct, it means that you're badly mistaken."

"I've made no mistake," Ashcroft denied. "I know what I saw. I saw Letheren and nobody else. To say otherwise is to concede that I can't trust the evidence of my own eyes."

"You've conceded it already," Rider pointed out.

"Oh, no I haven't."

"You told us that you watched him sign the receipt slip. With your own two eyes you saw him append his signature." He waited for com-

ment that did not come, ended, "There was nothing on the slip."

Ashcroft brooded in glum silence.

"If you were deluded about the writing, you could be equally deluded about the writer."

"I don't suffer from delusions."

"So it seems," said Rider, dry-voiced. "How do you explain that receipt?"

"I don't have to," declared Ashcroft with sudden spirit. "I've given the facts. It's for you fellows to find the explanation."

"That's right enough," Rider agreed. "We don't resent being reminded. I hope you don't resent being questioned again and again. Thanks for coming along."

"Glad to be of help." He went out, obviously relieved by the end of the inquisition.

Harrison found a toothpick, chewed it, said, "It's a heller. Another day or two of this and you'll be sorry they sent you to show me how."

Meditatively studying the police chief, Rider informed, "I didn't come to show you how. I came to help because you said you needed help. Two minds are better than one. A hundred minds are better than ten. But if you'd rather I beat it back home—"

"Nuts," said Harrison. "At times like this I sour up on everyone. My position is different from yours. When someone takes a bank, right under my nose, he's made a chump of me. How'd you like to be both a police chief and a chump?"

"I think I'd accept the latter definition when and only when I'd been compelled to admit defeat. Are you admitting it?"

"Not on your life."

"Quit griping then. Let's concentrate on the job in hand. There's something mighty fishy about this business of the receipt. It looks cockeyed."

"It's plain as pie to me," said Harrison. "Ashcroft was deluded or tricked."

"That isn't the point," Rider told him. "The real puzzle is that of *why* he was outsmarted. Assuming that he and Letheren are both innocent, the loot was grabbed by someone else, by somebody unknown. I don't see any valid reason why the culprit should risk bollixing the entire set-up by handing in a blank receipt that might be challenged on the spot. All he had to do to avoid it was to scrawl Letheren's name. Why didn't he?"

Harrison thought it over. "Maybe he feared Ashcroft would recognize the signature as a forgery, take a closer look at him and yell bloody murder."

"If he could masquerade as Letheren well enough to get by, he should have been able to imitate a signature well enough to pass scrutiny."

"Well, maybe he didn't sign because he couldn't," Harrison ventured, "not being able to write. I know of several hoodlums who can write only because they got taught in the jug."

"You may have something there,"

Rider conceded. "Anyway, for the moment Ashcroft and Letheren appear to be the chief suspects. They'll have to be eliminated before we start looking elsewhere. I presume you've already checked on both of them?"

"And how!" Harrison used the desk-box. "Send in the First Bank file." When it came, he thumbed through its pages. "Take Ashcroft first. Financially well-fixed, no criminal record, excellent character, no motive for turning bank robber. Jackson, the junior teller, confirms his evidence to a limited extent. Ashcroft could not have hidden the Dakin consignment any place. We searched the bank from top to bottom, during which time Ashcroft did not leave the place for one minute. We found nothing. Subsequent investigation brought out other items in his favor . . . I'll give you the details later on."

"You're satisfied that he is innocent?"

"Almost, but not quite," said Harrison. "He could have handed the money to an accomplice who bears superficial resemblance to Letheren. That tactic would have finagled the stuff clean out of the bank. I wish I could shake down his home in search of his split. One bill with a known number would tie him down but good." His features became disgruntled. "Judge Maxon refused to sign a search warrant on grounds of insufficient justification. Said he's got to be shown better cause for reasonable suspicion. I'm compelled to admit that he's right."

"How about the company's cashier, Letheren?"

"He's a confirmed bachelor in the late fifties. I won't weary you with his full background. There's nothing we can pin on him."

"You're sure of that?"

"Judge for yourself. The company's car remained parked outside the office all morning until ten thirty-five. It was then used to take Letheren and his guards to the bank. It couldn't reach the bank in less than twenty minutes. There just wasn't enough time for Letheren to make the first call in some other car, return to the plant, pick up the guards and make the second call."

"Not to mention hiding the loot in the interim," Rider suggested.

"No, he could not have done it. Furthermore, there are forty people in the Dakin office and between them they were able to account for every minute of Letheren's time from when he started work at nine o'clock up to when he left for the bank at ten thirty-five. No prosecutor could bust an alibi like that!"

"That seems to put him right out of the running."

Harrison scowled and said, "It certainly does—but we've since found five witnesses who place him near the bank at ten-thirty."

"Meaning they support the statements of Ashcroft and Jackson?"

"Yes, they do. Immediately after the case broke I put every available

man onto the job of asking questions the whole length of the street and down the nearest side-streets. The usual lousy legwork. They found three people prepared to swear they'd seen Letheren entering the bank at ten-thirty. They didn't know him by sight, but they were shown Letheren's photograph and identified him."

"Did they notice his car and give its description?"

"They didn't see him using a car. He was on foot at the time and carrying the bag. They noticed and remembered him only because a mutt yelped and went hell-for-leather down the street. They wondered whether he'd kicked it and why."

"Do they say he *did* kick it?"

"No."

Rider thoughtfully rubbed two chins. "Then I wonder why it behaved like that. Dogs don't yelp and bolt for nothing. Something must have hurt or scared it."

"Who cares?" said Harrison, having worries enough. "The boys also found a fellow who says he saw Letheren a few minutes later, coming out of the bank and still with the bag. He didn't notice any guards hanging around. He says Letheren started walking along the street as though he hadn't a care in the world, but after fifty yards he picked up a prowling taxi and rolled away."

"You traced the driver?"

"We did. He also recognized the photo we showed him. Said he'd taken Letheren to the Cameo Theater on Fourth Street, but did not see him actually enter the place. Just dropped him, got paid and drove off. We questioned the Cameo's staff, searched the house. It got us nowhere. There's a bus terminal nearby. We gave everyone there a rough time and learned nothing."

"And that's as far as you've been able to take it?"

"Not entirely. I've phoned the Treasury, given them the numbers of forty bills. I've put out an eight-state alarm for a suspect answering to Letheren's description. Right now the boys are armed with copies of his pic and are going the rounds of hotels and rooming houses. He must have holed up somewhere and it could have been right in this town. Now I'm stuck. I don't know where to look next."

Rider lay back in his chair which creaked in protest. He mused quite a time while Harrison slowly masticated the toothpick.

Then he said, "Excellent character, financial security and no apparent motive are things less convincing than the support of other witnesses. A man can have a secret motive strong enough to send him right off the rails. He could be in desperate need of ten or twelve thousand in ready cash merely because he's got to produce it a darned sight quicker than he can raise it by legitimate realization of insurance, stocks and bonds. For example, what if he's got twenty-four hours in which to find ransom money?"

Harrison popped his eyes. "You

think we should check on Ashcroft's and Letheren's kin and see if any one of them is missing or has been missing of late?"

"Please yourself. Personally, I doubt that it's worth the bother. A kidnaper risks the death penalty. Why should he take a chance like that for a measly twelve thousand when he endangers himself no more by sticking a fatter victim for a far bigger sum? Besides, even if a check did produce a motive it wouldn't tell us how the robbery was pulled or enable us to prove it to the satisfaction of a judge and jury."

"That's right enough," Harrison agreed. "All the same, the check is worth making. It'll cost me nothing. Except for Ashcroft's wife, the relatives of both men live elsewhere. It's just a matter of getting the co-operation of police chiefs."

"Do it if you wish. And while we're making blind passes in the dark, get someone to find out whether Letheren happens to be afflicted with a no-good brother who could exploit a close family likeness. Maybe Letheren is the suffering half of a pair of identical twins."

"If he is," growled Harrison, "he's also an accessory after the fact because he can guess how the job was done and who did it, but he's kept his lips buttoned."

"That's the legal viewpoint. There's a human one as well. If one feels disgrace, one doesn't invite it. If you had a brother with a record as long as your arm, would you advertise it all over town?"

"For the fun of it, no. In the interests of justice, yes."

"All men aren't alike and thank God they're not." Rider made an impatient gesture. "We've gone as far as we can with the two obvious suspects. Let's work out what we can do with a third and unknown one."

Harrison said, "I told you I've sent out an alarm for a fellow answering to Letheren's description."

"Yes, I know. Think it will do any good?"

"It's hard to say. The guy may be a master of make-up. If so, he'll now look a lot different from the way he did when he pulled the job. If the resemblance happens to be real, close and unalterable, the alarm may help nail him."

"That's true. However, unless there's an actual blood relationship—which possibility you're following up anyway—the likeness can hardly be genuine. It would be too much of a coincidence. Let's say it's artificial. What does that tell us?"

"It was good," Harrison responded. "Good enough to fool several witnesses. Far too good for comfort."

"You said it," indorsed Rider. "What's more, an artist so exceptionally accomplished could do it again and again and again, working his way through a series of personalities more or less of his physical build. Therefore he may really look as much like Letheren as I look like a performing seal. We haven't his true description and the lack is a

severe handicap. Offhand, I can think of no way of discovering what he looks like right now."

"Me neither," said Harrison, becoming morbid.

"There's one chance we've got, though. Ten to one his present appearance is the same as it was before he worked his trick. He'd no reason to disguise himself while casing the job and making his plans. The robbery was so smooth and well-timed that it must have been schemed to perfection. That kind of planning requires plenty of preliminary observation. He could not cotton onto Dakin's collecting habits and Letheren's appearance at one solitary go. Not unless he was a mind reader."

"I don't believe in mind readers," Harrison declared. "Nor astrologers, swamis or any of their ilk."

Ignoring it, Rider ploughed stubbornly on, "So for some time prior to the robbery he had a hideout in this town or fairly close to it. Fifty or more people may have seen him repeatedly and be able to describe him. Your boys won't find him by circling the dives and dumps and showing a photo, because he didn't look like the photo. The problem now is to discover the hideout, learn what he looked like."

"Easier said than done."

"It's hard sledding, chief, but let's keep at it. Eventually we'll get ourselves somewhere even if only into a padded cell."

He lapsed into silence, thinking deeply. Harrison concentrated attention on the ceiling. They did not know it, but they were employing Earth's on-the-spot substitute for a rare flash of genius. A couple of times Rider opened his mouth as if about to say something, changed his mind, resumed his meditating.

In the end, Rider said, "To put over so convincingly the gag that he was Letheren he must not only have looked like him but also dressed like him, walked like him, behaved like him, smelled like him."

"He was Letheren to the spit," answered Harrison. "I've questioned Ashcroft until we're both sick of it. Every single detail was Letheren right down to his shoes."

Rider asked, "How about the bag?"

"The bag?" Harrison's lean face assumed startlement followed by self-reproach. "You've got me there. I didn't ask about it. I slipped up."

"Not necessarily. There may be nothing worth learning. We'd better be sure on that point."

"I can find out right now." He picked up the phone, called a number, said, "Mr. Ashcroft, I've another question for you. About that bag you put the money into—was it the actual one always used by the Dakin people?"

The voice came back distinctly, "No, Mr. Harrison, it was a new one."

"*What?*" Harrison's face purpled as he bellowed, "Why didn't you say so at the start?"

"You didn't ask me and, therefore, I didn't think of it. Even if I

had thought of it of my own accord I wouldn't have considered it of any importance."

"Listen, it's for me and not for you to decide what evidence is, or is not, important." He fumed a bit, threw the listening Rider a look of martyrdom, went on in tones edged with irritation. "Now let's get this straight, once and for all. Apart from being new, was the bag identically the same as the one Dakin uses?"

"No, sir. But it was very similar. Same type, same brass lock, same general appearance. It was slightly longer and about an inch deeper. I remember that when I was putting the money into it I wondered why they'd bought another bag and concluded that the purpose was to let Mr. Letheren and Mr. Swain have one each."

"Did you notice any distinguishing mark upon it, a price tag, a maker's sticker, initials, code letters, serial number, or anything like that?"

"Nothing at all. It didn't occur to me to look. Not knowing what was to come, I—"

The voice cut off in mid-sentence as Harrison irefully slammed down

the phone. He stared hard at Rider who said nothing.

"For your information," Harrison told him, "I can say that there are distinct advantages in taking up the profession of latrine attendant. Sometimes I am sorely tempted." He breathed heavily, switched the desk-box. "Who's loafing around out there?"

Somebody replied, "It's Kastner, chief."

"Send him in."

Detective Kastner entered. He was a neatly attired individual who had the air of knowing how to get around in a sink of iniquity.

"Jim," ordered Harrison, "beat it out to the Dakin plant and borrow their cash-bag. Make certain it's the one they use for weekly collections. Take it to every store selling leather goods and follow up every sale of a similar bag within the last month. If you trace a purchaser, make him prove that he still possesses his bag, get him to say where he was and what he was doing at ten-thirty last Friday morning."

"Right, chief."

"Phone me the details if you latch onto anything significant."

After Kastner had gone, Harrison said, "That bag was bought specifically for the job. Therefore, the purchase is likely to be a recent one and probably made in this town. If we can't trace a sale through local stores, we'll inquire farther afield."

"You do that," Rider agreed. "Meanwhile, I'll take a couple of steps that may help."

"Such as what?"

"We're a scientific species, living in a technological age. We've got extensive, well-integrated communications networks and huge, informative filing systems. Let's use what we've got, eh?"

"What's on your mind?" Harrison asked.

Rider said, "A robbery so smooth, neat and easy is something that begs to be repeated *ad lib.* Maybe he's done it before. There's every likelihood that he'll do it again."

"So—?"

"We have his description, but it isn't worth much." He leaned forward. "We also have full details of his method and those *are* reliable.

"Yes, that's true."

"So let's boil down his description to the unalterable basics of height, weight, build, color of eyes. The rest can be ignored. Let's also condense his technique, reduce it to the bare facts. We can summarize the lot in five hundred words."

"And then?"

"There are six thousand two hundred eighty banks in this country, of which slightly more than six thousand belong to the Bank Association. I'll get Washington to run off enough handbills for the Association to send its entire membership. They'll be put on guard against a similar snatch, asked to rush us full details if any get taken despite the warning or already had been taken before they got it."

"That's a good idea," Harrison

approved. "Some other police chief may nurse a couple of items that we lack, while we're holding a couple that he wants. A get-together may find us holding enough to solve both cases."

"There's a slight chance that we can take it farther still," said Rider. "The culprit may have a record. If he has not, we're out of luck. But if he's done it before, and been pinched, we can find his card in no time at all." He pondered reminiscently, added, "That filing system in Washington is really something."

"I know of it, of course, but haven't seen it," Harrison commented.

"Friend of mine down there, a postal inspector, found it handy not long ago. He was hunting a fellow selling fake oil stock through the mails. This character had taken at least fifty suckers by means of some classy print-work including official looking reserve reports, certificates and other worthless documents. There was no description of him. Not a victim had seen him in the flesh."

"That's not much to go on."

"No, but it was enough. Attempts by postal authorities to trap him had failed. He was a wily bird and that in itself was a clue. Obviously he was a swindler sufficiently experienced to have a record. So this friend took what little he'd got to the F.B.I."

"What happened?"

"A *modus operandi* expert coded the data and fed it into the high-speed extractor, like giving the scent to a hound. Electronic fingers raced over slots and punch-holes in a million cards a darned sight faster than you could blow your nose. Rejecting muggers, heistmen and various toughies, the fingers dug out maybe four thousand confidence tricksters. From those they then extracted perhaps six hundred bond-pushers. And from those they picked a hundred who specialized in phony oil stocks. And from those they took twelve who kept out of sight by operating through the mails."

"That narrowed it down," Harrison conceded.

"The machine ejected twelve cards," Rider continued. "An extra datum might have enabled it to throw out one and only one. But that was as far as it could go; it couldn't use what it hadn't been given. Not that it mattered. A quick check of other records showed that four of the twelve were dead and six more were languishing in the clink. Of the remaining two, one was picked up, proved himself in the clear. That left the last fellow. The postal authorities now had his name, mug-shot, prints, habits, associates and everything but his mother's wedding certificate. They grabbed him within three weeks."

"Nice work. Only thing I don't understand is why they keep dead men's cards on file."

"That's because evidence comes up —sometimes years later—proving them responsible for old, unsolved crimes. The evil that men do lives after them; the good, if any, is in-

terred with their bones." He eyed the other, ended, "The slaves of the filing system don't like cases left open and unfinished. They like to mark them closed even if it takes half a lifetime. They're tidy-minded, see?"

"Yes, I see." Harrison thought a while, remarked, "You'd think a criminal would go honest once on the files, or at least have the sense not to repeat."

"They always repeat. They get in a rut and can't jack themselves out of it. I never heard of a counterfeiter who turned gunman or bicycle thief. This fellow we're after will pull the same stunt again by substantially the same method. You wait and see." He signed to the phone. "Mind if I make a couple of long-distance calls?"

"Help yourself. I don't pay for them."

"In that case I'll have three. The little woman is entitled to some vocal fondling."

"Go right ahead." Registering disgust, Harrison heaved himself erect, went to the door. "I'll get busy some place else. If one thing turns my stomach, it's the spectacle of a big man cooing a lot of slop."

Grinning to himself, Rider picked up the phone. "Get me the United States Treasury, Washington, Extension 417, Mr. O'Keefe."

Over the next twenty-four hours the steady, tiresome but determined pressure of Earth technique was maintained. Patrolmen asked questions of store owners, local gossips, tavern keepers, parolees, stool pigeons, any and every character who by remote chance might give with a crumb of worthwhile information. Plainclothes detectives knocked on doors, cross-examined all who responded, checked back later on any who'd failed to answer. State troopers shook down outlying motels and trailer parks, quizzed owners, managers, assistants. Sheriffs and deputies visited farms known to take occasional roomers.

In Washington, six thousand leaflets poured from a press while not far away another machine addressed six thousand envelopes. Also nearby, electronic fingers sought a specific array of holes and slots among a million variously punched cards. Police of half a dozen towns and cities loped around, checked on certain people, phoned their findings to Northwood, then carried on with their own work.

As usual, first results were represented by a stack of negative information. None of Ashcroft's relatives were missing or had been of late. There was no black sheep in Letheren's family, he had no twin, his only brother was ten years younger, was highly respected, bore no striking likeness and, in any case, had an unbreakable alibi.

No other bank had yet reported being soaked by an expert masquerader. Rooming houses, hotels and other possible hideouts failed to produce a clue to anyone resembling Letheren's photograph.

The silent searcher through the filing system found forty-one bank swindlers, living and dead. But not one with the same *modus operandi* or anything closely similar. Regretfully it flashed a light meaning, "No record."

However, from the deductive viewpoint enough negatives can make a few positives. Harrison and Rider stewed the latest news, came to the same conclusions. Ashcroft and Letheren were well-nigh in the clear. The unknown culprit was a newcomer to crime and his first success would induce him to do it again. Such a master of make-up had previously concealed himself under some identity other than that now being sought.

First break came in the late afternoon. Kastner walked in, tipped his hat onto the back of his head and said, "I may have something."

"Such as what?" asked Harrison, his features alert.

"There's no great demand for that particular kind of bag and only one store sells them in this town. Within the last month they've got rid of three."

"Paid for by check?"

"Cash on the nail." Kastner responded with a grim smile to the other's look of disappointment, went on, "But two of the buyers were local folk, recognized and known. Both made their purchases about three weeks ago. I chased them up. They've still got their bags and can account for their time last Friday morning. I've checked their stories and they hold good and tight."

"How about the third buyer?"

"That's what I'm coming to, chief. He looks good to me. He bought his bag the afternoon before the robbery. Nobody knows him."

"A stranger?"

"Not quite. I got a detailed description of him from Hilda Cassidy, the dame who waited on him. She says he was a middle-aged, thin-faced, meek sort of character with a miserable expression. Looked like an unhappy embalmer."

"Then what makes you say he's not quite a stranger?"

"Because, chief, there are eleven stores selling leather goods of one kind or another. I've lived here quite a piece, but I had to hunt around to find the one handling this kind of bag. So I figured that this miserable guy would have had to do some going the rounds, too. I tried all the stores a second time, giving them this new description."

"And—?"

"Three of them remembered this fellow looking for what they don't stock. All confirmed the description." He paused, added, "Sol Bergman, of the Travel Mart, says the guy's face was slightly familiar. Doesn't know who he is and can't make a useful guess. But he's sure he's seen him two or three times before."

"Maybe an occasional visitor from somewhere a good way out."

"That's how it looks to me, chief."

"A good way out means anywhere within a hundred-mile radius," growled Harrison. "Perhaps even farther." He eyed Kastner sourly.

"Who got the longest and closest look at him?"

"The Cassidy girl."

"You'd better bring her in, and fast."

"I did bring her. She's waiting outside."

"Good work, Jim," approved Harrison, brightening. "Let's see her."

Kastner went out and brought her in. She was a tall, slender, intelligent person in the early twenties. Cool and composed, she sat with hands folded in her lap, answered Harrison's questions while he got the suspect's description in as complete detail as she was able to supply.

"More darned legwork," Harrison complained as she finished. "Now the boys will have to make all the rounds again looking for a lead on *this* guy."

Rider chipped in, "If he's an out-of-towner, you'll need the co-operation of all surrounding authorities."

"Yes, of course."

"Maybe we can make it lots easier for them." He glanced inquiringly across the desk toward the girl. "That is, if Miss Cassidy will help."

"I'll do anything I can," she assured.

"What's on your mind?" Harrison asked.

"We'll get Roger King to lend a hand."

"Who's he?"

"A staff artist. Does cartoon work on the side. He's good, very good." He switched attention to the girl. "Can you come round early and spend the morning here?"

"If the boss will let me."

"He will," put in Harrison. "I'll see to that."

"All right," said Rider to the girl. "You come round. Mr. King will show you a number of photographs. Look through them carefully and pick out distinguishing features that correspond with those of the man who bought that bag. A chin here, a mouth there, a nose somewhere else. Mr. King will make a composite drawing from them and will keep altering it in accordance with your instructions until he's got it right. Think you can do that?"

"Oh, sure," she said.

"We can do better," Kastner announced. "Sol Bergman is the eager-beaver type. He'll be tickled to death to assist."

"Then get him to come along, too."

Kastner and the girl departed as Rider said to Harrison, "Know a local printer who can run off a batch of copies within a few hours?"

"You bet I do."

"Good!" He gestured to the phone. "Can I hoist the bill another notch?"

"For all I care you can make the mayor faint at the sight of it," said Harrison. "But if you intend to pour primitive passion through the line, say so and let me get out."

"Not this time. She may be pining somewhat, but duty comes first." He took up the instrument. "Treasury Headquarters, Washington, Extension 338. I want Roger King."

Copies of the King sketch were mailed out along with a description and pick-up request. They had not been delivered more than a few minutes when the phone whirred and Harrison grabbed it: "Northwood police."

"This is the State Police Barracks, Sergeant Wilkins speaking. We just got that 'Wanted' notice of yours. I know that fellow. He lives right on my beat."

"Who is he?"

"Name of William Jones. Runs a twenty-acre nursery on Route Four, a couple of hours' away from your town. He's a slightly surly type, but there's nothing known against him. My impression is that he's pessimistic but dead straight. You want us to pick him up?"

"Look, are you sure he's the fellow?"

"It's his face on that drawing of yours and that's as far as I go. I've been in the business as long as you, and I don't make mistakes about faces."

"Of course not, sergeant. We'd appreciate it if you'd bring him in for questioning."

"I'll do that."

He cut off. Harrison lay back, absently studied his desk while his mind juggled around with this latest news.

After a while, he said, "I could understand it better if this Jones was described as a one-time vaudeville actor such as a quick-change impressionist. A fellow operating a nursery out in the wilds sounds a bit of a hick to me. Somehow I can't imagine him doing a bank job as slick as this one."

"He might be just an accomplice. He got the bag beforehand, hid the cash afterward, perhaps acted as lookout man while the robbery was taking place."

Harrison nodded. "We'll find out once he's here. He'll be in trouble if he can't prove he made an innocent purchase."

"What if he does prove it?"

"Then we'll be right back where we started." Harrison gloomed at the thought of it. The phone called for attention and he snatched it up. "Northwood police."

"Patrolman Clinton here, chief. I just showed that drawing to Mrs. Bastico. She has a rooming house at 157 Stevens. She swears that guy is William Jones who roomed with her ten days. He came without luggage but later got a new bag like the Dakin one. Saturday morning he cleared out, taking the bag. He'd overpaid by four days' rent, but he beat it without a word and hasn't come back."

"You stay there, Clinton. We'll be right out." He licked anticipatory lips, said to Rider, "Come on, let's get going."

Piling into a cruiser, they raced to 157 Stevens. It was a dilapidated brownstone with well-worn steps.

Mrs. Bastico, a heavy featured female with several warts, declaimed in self-righteous tones, "I've never had the cops in this house. Not once in twenty years."

"You've got 'em now," informed Harrison. "And it gives the place a touch of respectability. Now, what d'you know about this Jones fellow?"

"Nothing much," she answered, still miffed. "He kept to himself. I don't bother roomers who behave."

"Did he say anything about where he'd come from, or where he was going to, or anything like that?"

"No. He paid in advance, told me his name, said he was on local business, and that was that. He went out each morning, came back at a decent hour each night, kept sober and interfered with nobody."

"Did he have any visitors?" He extracted Letheren's photograph. "Someone like this, for example?"

"Officer Clinton showed me that picture yesterday. I don't know him. I never saw Mr. Jones talking to another person."

"Hm-m-m!" Harrison registered disappointment. "We'd like a look at his room. Mind if we see it?"

Begrudgingly she led them upstairs, unlocked the door, departed and left them to rake through it at will. Her air was that of one allergic to police.

They searched the room thoroughly, stripping bedclothes, shifting furniture, lifting carpets, even unbolting and emptying the washbasin waste-trap. It was Patrolman Clinton who dug out of a narrow gap between floorboards a small, pink transparent wrapper, also two peculiar seeds resembling elongated almonds and exuding a strong, aromatic scent.

Satisfied that there was nothing else to be found, they carted these petty clues back to the station, mailed them to the State Criminological Laboratory for analysis and report.

Three hours afterward William Jones walked in. He ignored Rider, glowered at the uniformed Harrison, demanded, "What's the idea of having me dragged here? I've done nothing."

"Then what have you got to worry about?" Harrison assumed his best tough expression. "Where were you last Friday morning?"

"That's an easy one," said Jones, with a touch of spite. "I was in Smoky Falls getting spares for a cultivator."

"That's eighty miles from here."

"So what? It's a lot less from where I live. And I can't get those spares any place nearer. If there's an agent in Northwood, you find him for me."

"Never mind about that. How long were you there?"

"I arrived about ten in the morning, left in the mid-afternoon."

"So it took you about five hours to buy a few spares?"

"I ambled around a piece. Bought groceries as well. Had a meal there, and a few drinks."

"Then there ought to be plenty of folk willing to vouch for your presence there?"

"Sure are," agreed Jones with disconcerting positiveness.

Harrison switched his desk-box,

said to someone, "Bring in Mrs. Bastico, the Cassidy girl and Sol Bergman." He returned attention to Jones. "Tell me exactly where you went from time of arrival to departure, and who saw you in each place." He scribbled rapidly as the other recited the tale of his Friday morning shopping trip. When the story ended, he called the Smoky Falls police, briefed them swiftly, gave them the data, asked for a complete check-up.

Listening to this last, Jones showed no visible alarm or apprehension. "Can I go now? I got work to do."

"So have I," Harrison retorted. "Where have you stashed that leather cash-bag?"

"What bag?"

"The new one you bought Thursday afternoon."

Eying him incredulously, Jones said, "Hey, what are you trying to pin on me? I bought no bag. Why should I? I don't need a new bag."

"You'll be telling me next that you didn't hole-up in a rooming house on Stevens."

"I didn't. I don't know of any place on Stevens. And if I did, I wouldn't be seen dead there."

They argued about it for twenty minutes. Jones maintained with mulish stubbornness that he'd been working on his nursery the whole of Thursday and had been there most of the time he was alleged to be at the rooming house. He'd never heard of Mrs. Bastico and didn't want to. He'd never bought a Dakin-type bag. They could search his place and welcome—if they found such a bag it'd be because they'd planted it on him.

A patrolman stuck his head through the doorway and announced, "They're here, chief."

"All right. Get a line-up ready."

After another ten minutes Harrison led William Jones into a back room, stood him in a row consisting of four detectives and half a dozen nondescripts enlisted from the street. Sol Bergman, Hilda Cassidy and Mrs. Bastico appeared, looked at the parade, pointed simultaneously and in the same direction.

"That's him," said Mrs. Bastico.

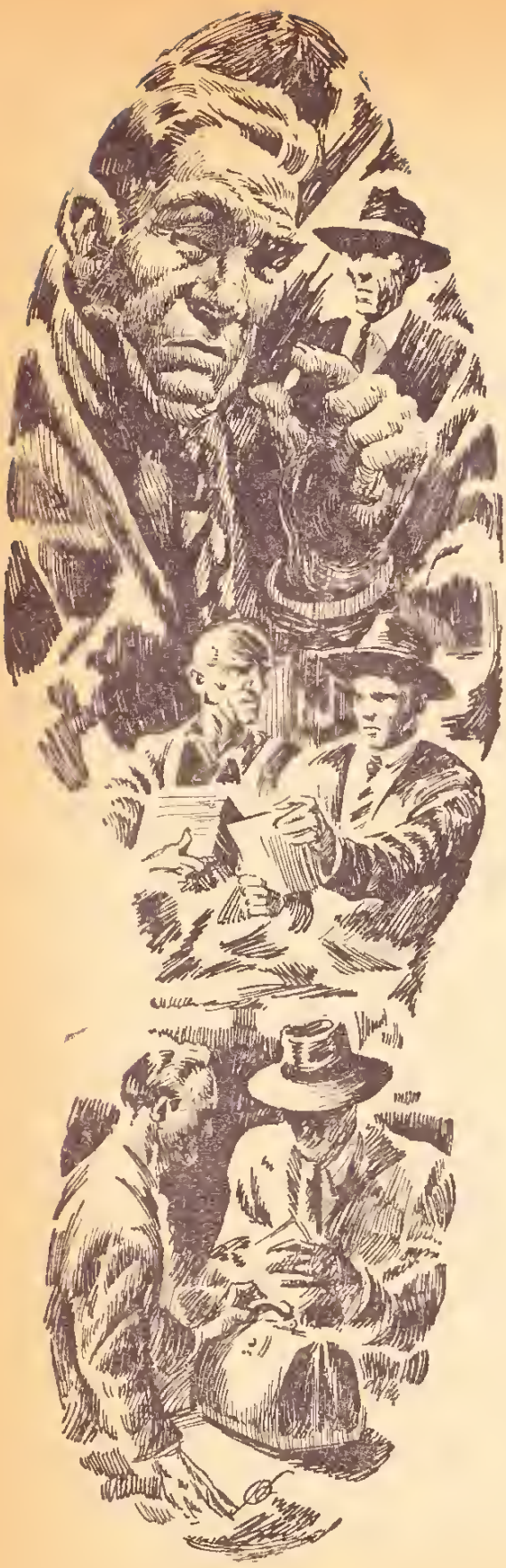
"He's the man," indorsed the Cassidy girl.

"Nobody else but," Sol Bergman confirmed.

"They're nuts," declared Jones, showing no idea of what it was all about.

Taking the three witnesses back to his office, Harrison queried them for a possible mistake in identity. They insisted they were not mistaken, that they could not be more positive. William Jones was the man, definitely and absolutely.

He let them go, held Jones on suspicion pending a report from Smoky Falls. Near the end of the twenty-four hours legal holding limit the result of the check came through. No less than thirty-two people accounted fully for the suspect's time all the way from ten to three-thirty. Road-checks had also traced him all the way to that town and all the way back. Other witnesses had placed him



at the nursery at several times when he was, said to have been at Mrs. Bastico's. State troopers had searched the Jones property. No bag. No money identifiable as loot.

"That's torn it," growled Harrison. "I've no choice but to release him with abject apologies. What sort of a lousy, stinking case is this, when everybody mistakes everybody for everybody else?"

Rider massaged two chins, suggested, "maybe we ought to try checking on that as well. Let's have another word with Jones before you let him loose."

Slouching in, Jones looked considerably subdued and only too willing to help with anything likely to get him home.

"Sorry to inconvenience you so much, Mr. Jones," Rider soothed. "It couldn't be avoided in the circumstances. We're up against a mighty tough problem." Bending forward, he fixed the other with an imperative gaze. "It might do us a lot of good if you'd think back carefully and tell us if there's any time you've been mistaken for somebody else."

Jones opened his mouth, shut it, opened it again. "Jeepers, that very thing happened about a fortnight ago."

"Give us the story," invited Rider, a glint in his eyes.

"I drove through here nonstop and went straight on to the city. Been there about an hour when a fellow yelled at me from across the street.

I didn't know him, thought at first he was calling someone else. He meant me all right."

"Go on," urged Harrison, impatient as the other paused.

"He asked me in a sort of dumfounded way how I'd got there. I said I'd come in my car. He didn't want to believe it."

"Why not?"

"He said I'd been on foot and thumbing a hitch. He knew it because he'd picked me up and run me to Northwood. What's more, he said, after dropping me in Northwood he'd driven straight to the city, going so fast that nothing had overtaken him on the way. Then he'd parked his car, started down the street, and the first thing he'd seen was me strolling on the other side."

"What did you tell him?"

"I said it couldn't possibly have been me and that his own story proved it."

"That fazed him somewhat, eh?"

"He got sort of completely baffled. He led me right up to his parked car, said, 'Mean to say you didn't take a ride in that?' and, of course, I denied it. I walked away. First I thought it might be some kind of gag. Next, I wondered if he was touched in the head."

"Now," put in Rider carefully, "we must trace this fellow. Give us all you've got on him."

Thinking deeply, Jones said, "He was in his late thirties, well-dressed, smooth talker, the salesman type. Had a lot of pamphlets, color charts and paint cans in the back of his car."

"You mean in the trunk compartment? You got a look inside there?"

"No. They were lying on the rear seat, as though he was in the habit of grabbing them out in a hurry and slinging them in again."

"How about the car itself?"

"It was the latest model *Flash,* duotone green, white sidewalls, a radio. Didn't notice the tag number."

They spent another ten minutes digging more details regarding appearance, mannerisms and attire. Then Harrison called the city police, asked for a trace.

"The paint stores are your best bet. He's got all the looks of a drummer making his rounds. They should be able to tell you who called on them that day."

City police promised immediate action. Jones went home, disgruntled, but also vastly relieved. Within two hours this latest lead had been extended. A call came from the city.

"Took only four visits to learn what you want. That character is well known to the paint trade. He's Burge Kimmelman, area representative of Acme Paint & Varnish Company of Marion, Illinois. Present whereabouts unknown. His employers should be able to find him for you."

"Thanks a million!" Harrison disconnected, put through a call to Acme Paint. He yapped a while, dumped the phone, said to Rider, "He's somewhere along a route a couple of hundred miles south. They'll reach him at his hotel this evening. He'll get here tomorrow."

"Good."

"Or is it?" asked Harrison, showing a trace of bitterness. "We're sweating ourselves to death tracing people and being led from one personality to another. That sort of thing can continue to the crack of doom."

"And it can continue until something else cracks," Rider riposted. "The mills of *man* grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small."

Elsewhere, seven hundred miles westward, was another legworker. Organized effort can be very formidable but becomes doubly so when it takes to itself the results of individual effort.

This character was thin-faced, sharp-nosed, lived in an attic, ate in an automat, had fingers dyed with nicotine and for twenty years had nursed the notion of writing the Great American Novel but somehow had never gotten around to it.

Name of Arthur Pilchard and, therefore, referred to as Fish—a press reporter. What is worse, a reporter on a harumscarum tabloid. He was wandering past a desk when somebody with ulcers and a sour face shoved a slip of paper at him.

"Here, Fish. Another saucer nut. Get moving!"

Hustling out with poor grace, he reached the address given on the slip, knocked on the door. It was answered by an intelligent young fellow in his late teens or early twenties.

"You George Lamothe?"

"That's me," agreed the other.

"I'm from the *Call*. You told them you'd got some dope on a saucer. That right?"

Lamothe looked pained. "It's not a saucer and I didn't describe it as such. It's a spherical object and it's not a natural phenomenon."

"I'll take your word for it. When and where did you see it?"

"Last night and the night before. Up in the sky."

"Right over this town?"

"No, but it is visible from here."

"I've not seen it. So far as I know, you're the only one who has. How d'you explain that?"

"It's extremely difficult to see with the naked eye. I own an eight-inch telescope."

"Built it yourself?"

"Yes."

"That takes some doing," commented Art Pilchard admiringly. "How about showing it to me?"

Lamothe hesitated, said, "All right," led him upstairs. Sure enough a real, genuine telescope was there, its inquisitive snout tilted toward a movable roof-trap.

"You've actually seen the object through that?"

"Two successive nights," Lamothe confirmed. "I hope to observe it tonight as well."

"Any idea what it is?"

"That's a matter of guesswork," evaded the other, becoming wary. "All I'm willing to say is that it's located in a satellite orbit, it's perfectly spherical and appears to be an artificial construction of metal."

"Got a picture of it?"

"Sorry, I lack the equipment."

"Maybe one of our cameramen could help you there."

"If he has suitable apparatus," Lamothe agreed.

Pilchard asked twenty more questions, finished doubtfully, "What you can see anyone else with a telescope could see. The world's full of telescopes, some of them big enough to drive a locomotive through. How come nobody yet has shouted the news? Got any ideas on that?"

With a faint smile, Lamothe said, "Everyone with a telescope isn't staring through it twenty-four hours per day. And even when he is using it he's likely to be studying a specific area within the starfield. Moreover, if news gets out it's got to start somewhere. That's why I phoned the *Call*."

"Dead right!" agreed Pilchard, enjoying the savory odor of a minor scoop.

"Besides," Lamothe went on, "others *have* seen it. I phoned three astronomical friends last night. They looked and saw it. A couple of them said they were going to ring up nearby observatories and draw attention to it. I mailed a full report to an observatory today, and another to a scientific magazine."

"Hells bells!" said Pilchard, getting itchy feet. "I'd better rush this before it breaks in some other rag." A fragment of suspicion came into his face. "Not having seen this spherical contraption myself, I'll have to check on it with another source. By that, I don't mean I think you're a liar. I have to check stories or find another job. Can you give me the name and address of one of these astronomical friends of yours?"

Lamothe obliged, showed him to the door. As Pilchard hastened down the street toward a telephone booth, a police cruiser raced up on the other side. It braked outside Lamothe's house. Pilchard recognized the uniformed cop who was driving but not the pair of burly men in plainclothes riding with him. That was strange because as a reporter of long standing he knew all the local detectives and called them by their first names. While he watched from a distance, the two unknowns got out of the cruiser, went to Lamothe's door, rang the bell.

Bolting round the corner, Pilchard entered the booth, called long distance, rammed coins into the box.

"Alan Reed? My name's Pilchard. I write up astronomical stuff. I believe you've seen a strange metal object in the sky. Hey?" He frowned. "Don't give me that! Your friend George Lamothe has seen it, too. He told me himself that he phoned you about it last night." He paused, glowered at the earpiece. "Where's the sense of repeating, 'No comment,' like a parrot? Look, either you've seen it or you haven't—and so far you've not denied seeing it." Another pause, then in leery tones, "Mr. Reed, has someone ordered you to keep shut?"

He racked the phone, shot a wary glance toward the corner, inserted

more coins, said to somebody, "Art here. If you want to feature this, you'll have to move damn fast. You'll run it only if you're too quick to be stopped." He listened for the click of the tape being linked in, recited rapidly for five minutes. Finishing, he returned to the corner, looked along the street. The cruiser was still there.

In a short time a flood of *Calls* hit the streets. Simultaneously a long chain of small-town papers took the same news off their wire-service, broke into a rash of two-inch headlines.

SPACE PLATFORM IN SKY.
OURS OR THEIRS?

Late in the following morning Harrison ploughed doggedly through routine work. At one side of his office Rider sat with columnar legs stretched straight out and read slowly and carefully through a wad of typed sheets.

The wad was the fruit of legwork done by many men. It traced, with a few gaps, the hour by hour movements of one William Jones known to be not the real William Jones. He'd been seen wandering around Northwood like a rubbernecking tourist. He'd been seen repeatedly on the main street and examining its shops. He'd been seen in a supermarket around the time a customer's purse had been stolen. He'd eaten meals in cafes and restaurants, drunk beer in bars and taverns.

Ashcroft, Jackson and another teller remembered a Joneslike stranger making idle inquiries in the bank during the week preceding the robbery. Letheren and his guards recalled the mirror-image of William Jones hanging around when they made the previous collection. Altogether, the tediously gathered report covered most of the suspect's time in Northwood, a period amounting to ten days.

Finishing his perusal, Rider closed his eyes, mulled the details over and over while his mind sought a new lead. While he was doing this, a muted radio sat on a ledge and yammered steadily, squirting across the office the reduced voice of an indignant commentator.

"The whole world now knows that someone has succeeded in establishing an artificial satellite up there in the sky. Anyone with a telescope or good binoculars can see it for himself at night. Why, then, does authority insist on pretending that the thing doesn't exist? If potential enemies are responsible, let us be told as much—the enemies already know it, anyway. If we are responsible, if this is our doing, let us be told as much—the enemies already are grimly aware of it. Why must we be denied information possessed by possible foes? Does somebody think we're a bunch of irresponsible children? Who are these brasshats who assign to themselves the right to decide what we may be told or not told? Away with them! Let the government speak!"

"Yeah," commented Harrison, glancing up from his work, "I'm

with him there. Why don't they say outright whether it's ours or theirs? Some of those guys down your way have a grossly exaggerated idea of their own importance. A hearty kick in the pants would do them a lot—" He shut up, grabbed the phone. "Northwood police." A weird series of expressions crossed his lean features as he listened. Then he racked the phone, said, "It gets nuttier every minute."

"What's it this time?"

"Those seeds. The laboratory can't identify them."

"Doesn't surprise me. They can't be expected to know absolutely everything."

"They know enough to know when they're stuck," Harrison gave back. "So they sent them to some firm in New York where they know everything knowable about seeds. They've just got a reply."

"Saying what?"

"Same thing—not identifiable. New York went so far as to squeeze out the essential oils and subject remaining solids to destructive distillation. Result: the seeds just aren't known." He emitted a loud sniff, added, "They want us to send them another dozen so they can make them germinate. They want to see what comes up."

"Forget it," advised Rider. "We don't have any more seeds and we don't know where to find 'em."

"But we do have something darned peculiar," Harrison persisted. "With those seeds we sent a pink, transparent wrapper, remember? At the time I thought it was just a piece of colored cellophane. The lab says it isn't. They say it's organic, cellular and veined, and appears a subsection of the skin of an unknown fruit."

". . . A tactic long theorized and believed to be in secret development," droned the radio. "Whoever achieves it first thereby gains a strategic advantage from the military viewpoint."

"Sometimes," said Harrison, "I wonder what's the use of getting born."

His desk-box squawked and announced, "Fellow named Burge Kimmelman waiting for you, chief."

"Send him in."

Kimmelman entered. He was dapper, self-assured, seemed to regard his rush to the aid of the law as a welcome change from the daily round. He sat, crossed his legs, made himself at home and told his story.

"It was the craziest thing, captain. For a start, I never give rides to strangers. But I stopped and picked up this fellow and still can't make out why I did it."

"*Where* did you pick him up?" asked Rider.

"About half a mile this side of Seeger's filling station. He was waiting by the roadside and first thing I knew I'd stopped and let him get in. I took him into Northwood, dropped him, pushed straight on to the city. I was in a hurry and moved good and fast. When I got there I walked out the car park and darned

if he wasn't right there on the other side of the street." He eyed them, seeking comment.

"Go on," Rider urged.

"I picked on him then and there, wanting to know how he'd beaten me to it. He acted like he didn't know what I was talking about." He made a gesture of bafflement. "I've thought it over a dozen times since and can take it no further. I *know* I gave a lift to that guy or his twin brother. And it wasn't his twin brother because if he'd had one he'd have guessed my mistake and said so. But he said nothing. Just behaved offishly polite like you do when faced with a lunatic."

"When you were giving him this ride," asked Harrison, "did he make any informative remarks? Did he mention his family, his occupation, destination, or anything like that? Did he tell you where he'd come from?"

"Not a word worth a cent. So far as I know he dropped straight out of the sky."

"So did everything else concerned with this case," remarked Harrison, feeling sour again. "Unidentifiable seeds and unknown fruit-skins and—" He stopped, let his mouth hang open, popped his eyes.

". . . A vantage-point from which every quarter of the world would be within effective range," gabbled the radio. "With such a base for guided missiles it would be possible for one nation to implement its policies in a manner that—"

Getting to his feet, Rider crossed the room, switched off the radio, said, "Mind waiting outside, Mr. Kimmelman?" When the other had gone, he continued with Harrison, "Well, make up your mind whether or not you're going to have a stroke."

Harrison shut his mouth, opened it again, but no sound came out. His eyes appeared to have protruded too far to retract. His right hand made a couple of meaningless gestures and temporarily that was the most he could manage.

Resorting to the phone, Rider got his call through, said, "O'Keefe, how's the artificial satellite business down there?"

"You called just to ask that? I was about to phone you myself."

"What about?"

"Eleven of those bills have come in. The first nine came from two cities. The last pair were passed in New York. Your man is moving around. Bet you ten to one in coconuts that if he takes another bank it'll be in the New York area."

"That's likely enough. Forget him for a moment. I asked you about this satellite rumpus. What's the reaction from where you're sitting?"

"The place is buzzing like a disturbed beehive. Rumor is rife that professional astronomers saw and reported the thing nearly a week before the news broke. If that's true, somebody in authority must have tried to suppress the information."

"Why?"

"Don't ask me," shouted O'Keefe. "How do I know why others do

things that make neither rhyme nor reason?"

"You think they should say whether it's ours or theirs seeing that the truth is bound to emerge sooner or later?"

"Of course. Why are you harping on this subject, Eddie? What's it got to do with you, anyway?"

"I've been made vocal by an idea that has had the reverse effect on Harrison. He's struck dumb."

"What idea?"

"That this artificial satellite may not be an artificial satellite. Also that authority has said nothing because experts are unwilling to commit themselves one way or the other. They can't say something unless they've something to say, can they?"

"I've got something to say," O'Keefe declared. "And that's to advise you to tend your own business. If you've finished helping Harrison, quit lazing around and come back."

"Listen, I don't call long-distance for the fun of it. There's a thing up in the sky and nobody knows what it is. *At the same time* another thing is down here loping around and imitating people, robbing banks, dropping debris of alien origin, and nobody knows what that is, either. Two plus two makes four. Add it up for yourself."

"Eddie, are you cracked?"

"I'll give you the full details and leave you to judge." He recited them swiftly, ended, "Use all your Treasury pull to get the right people interested. This case is far too big to be handled by us alone. You've got to find the ones with enough power and influence to cope. You've got to kick 'em awake."

He cut off, glanced at Harrison who promptly got his voice back and said, "I can't believe it. It's too far-fetched for words. The day I tell the mayor a Martian did it will be the day Northwood gets a new chief. He'll take me away to have my head examined."

"Got a better theory?"

"No. That's the hell of it."

Shrugging expressively, Rider took the phone again, made a call to Acme Paint Company. That done, he summoned Kimmelman.

"There's a good chance that you'll be wanted here tomorrow and perhaps for two or three days. I've just consulted your employers and they say you're to stay with us."

"Suits me," agreed Kimmelman, not averse to taking time off with official approval. "I'd better go book in at an hotel."

"Just one question first. This character you picked up—was he carrying any luggage?"

"No."

"Not even a small bag or a parcel?"

"He'd nothing except what was in his pockets," said Kimmelman, positively.

A gleam showed in Rider's eyes. "Well, that may help."

The mob that invaded Northwood at noon next day came in a dozen cars by devious routes and success-

fully avoided the attention of the press. They crammed Harrison's office to capacity.

Among them was a Treasury top-ranker, a general, an admiral, a Secret Service chief, a Military Intelligence brasshat, three area directors of the F.B.I., a boss of the Counter Espionage Service, all their aides, secretaries and technical advisers, plus a bunch of assorted scientists including two astronomers, one radar expert, one guided missiles expert and a slightly bewildered gentleman who was an authority on ants.

They listened in silence, some interested, some skeptical, while Harrison read them a complete report of the case. He finished, sat down, waited for comment.

A gray-haired, distinguished individual took the lead, said, "Personally, I'm in favor of your theory that you're chasing somebody not of this world. I don't presume to speak for others who may think differently. However, it seems to me futile to waste any time debating the matter. It can be settled one way or the other by catching the culprit. That, therefore, is our only problem. How are we going to lay hands on him?"

"That won't be done by the usual methods," said an F.B.I. director. "A guy who can double as anyone, and do it well enough to convince even at close range, isn't going to be caught easily. We can hunt down a particular identity if given enough time. I don't see how we can go after somebody who might have *any* identity."

"Even an alien from another world wouldn't bother to steal money unless he had a real need for it," put in a sharp-eyed individual. "The stuff's no use elsewhere in the cosmos. So it's safe to accept that he did have

need of it. But money doesn't last forever no matter who is spending it. When he has splurged it all, he'll need some more. He'll try robbing another bank. If every bank in this country were turned into a trap, surely one of them would snap down on him."

"How're you going to trap somebody who so far as you know is your best and biggest customer?" asked the F.B.I. director. He put on a sly grin, added, "Come to that, how do you know that the fellow in question isn't *me?*"

Nobody liked this last suggestion. They fidgeted uneasily, went quiet as their minds desperately sought a solution some place.

Rider spoke up. "Frankly, I think it a waste of time to search the world for somebody who has proved his ability to adopt two successive personalities and by the same token can adopt two dozen or two hundred. I've thought about this until I've gone dizzy and I can't devise any method of pursuing and grabbing him. He's far too elusive."

"It might help if we could learn precisely how he does it," interjected a scientist. "Have you any evidence indicative of his technique?"

"No, sir."

"It looks like hypnosis to me," said the scientist.

"You may be right," Rider admitted. "But so far we've no proof of it." He hesitated, went on, "As I see it, there's only one way to catch him."

"How?"

"It's extremely unlikely that he's come here for keeps. Besides, there's that thing in the sky. What's it waiting for? My guess is that it's waiting to take him back whenever he's ready to go."

"So—?" someone prompted.

"To take him back that sphere has got to swing in from several thousands of miles out. That means it has to be summoned when wanted. He's got to talk to its crew, if it has a crew. Or, if crewless, he's got to pull it in by remote control. Either way, he must have some kind of transmitter."

"If transmission-time is too brief to enable us to tune in, take cross-bearings and get there—" began an objector.

Rider waved him down. "I'm not thinking of that. We know he came to Northwood without luggage. Kimmelman says so. Mrs. Bastico says so. Numerous witnesses saw him at various times but he was never seen to carry anything other than the cash-bag. Even if an alien civilization can produce electronic equipment one-tenth the size and weight of anything we can turn out, a long-range transmitter would still be far too bulky to be hidden in a pocket."

"You think he's concealed it somewhere?" asked the sharp-eyed man.

"I think it highly probable. If he has hidden it, well, he has thereby limited his freedom of action. He can't take off from anywhere in this world. He's got to return to wherever he has stashed the transmitter."

"But that could be any place. It leaves us no better off than before."

"On the contrary!" He picked up Harrison's report, read selected passages with added emphasis. "I may be wrong. I hope I'm right. There's one thing he could not conceal no matter what personality he assumed. He could not conceal his behavior. If he'd chosen to masquerade as an elephant and then become curious, he'd have been a very plausible elephant—but still obviously curious."

"What are you getting at?" demanded a four-star general.

"He was too green to have been around long. If he'd had only a couple of days in some other town or village, he'd have been a lot more sophisticated when in Northwood. Consider the reports on the way he nosed around. He was raw. He behaved liked somebody to whom everything is new. If I'm right about this, Northwood was his first port of call. And that in turn means his landing place—*which is also his intended take-off point*—must be fairly near, and probably nearer still to where Kimmelman picked him up."

They debated it for half an hour, reached a decision. The result was legwork on a scale that only high authority can command. Kimmelman drove nearly five miles out, showed the exact spot and that became the center of operations.

Attendants at Seeger's filling station were queried extensively and without result. Motorists known to be regular users of the road, bus drivers, truckers and many others to whom it was a well-used route, were traced and questioned. Dirt-farmers, drifters, recluses, hoboes and everyone else who lurked in the thinly populated hills were found and quizzed at length.

Four days hard work and numberless questionings over a circle ten miles in diameter produced three people who nursed the vague idea that they'd seen something fall from or rise into the sky about three weeks ago. A farmer thought he'd seen a distant saucer but had kept quiet for fear of ridicule. Another believed he had glimpsed a strange gleam of light which soared from the hills and vanished. A trucker had spotted an indefinable object out the corner of an eye but when he looked direct it had gone.

These three were made to take up their respective points of observation, sight through theodolites and line the cross-hairs as nearly as they could on the portions of skyline cogent to their visions. All pleaded inability to be accurate but were willing to do their best.

The bearings produced an elongated triangle that stretched across most of a square mile. This at once became the second focus of attention. A new area two miles in radius was drawn from the triangle's center. Forthwith police, deputies, troopers, agents and others commenced to search the target foot by foot. They numbered a small army and some of them bore mine-detectors and other metal-finding instruments.

One hour before dusk a shout drew Rider, Harrison and several bigwigs to a place where searchers were clustering excitedly. Somebody had followed the faint *tick-tick* of his detector, lugged a boulder aside, found a gadget hidden in the hollow behind it.

The thing was a brown metal box twelve inches by ten by eight. It had a dozen silver rings set concentrically in its top, these presumably being the sky-beam antenna. Also four dials ready set in various positions. Also a small press-stud.

Experts knew exactly what to do, having come prepared for it. They color-photographed the box from every angle, measured it, weighed it, placed it back in its original position and restored the boulder to its former place.

Sharpshooters with night-glasses and high-velocity rifles were posted in concealed positions at extreme range. While data on the superficial appearance of the transmitter was being rushed to the city, ground-microphones were placed between the hiding place and the road, their hidden wires led back to where ambushers awaited stealthy footsteps in the dark.

Before dawn, four searchlight teams and half a dozen antiaircraft batteries had taken up positions in the hills and camouflaged themselves. A command post had been established in a lonely farmhouse and a ground-to-air radio unit had been shoved out of sight in its barn.

For anyone else a road-block set up by tough cops would have served. Not for this character who could be anyone at all. He might, for all they knew, appear in the dignified guise of the Bishop of Miff. But if he made for that transmitter and laid hands on it—

A couple of days later a truck came from the city, picked up the transmitter, replaced it with a perfect mock-up incapable of calling anything out of the sky. This game of imitation was one at which two could play.

Nobody got itchy fingers and pressed the stud on the real instrument. The time wasn't yet. So long as the ship remained in the sky, so long would its baffling passenger enjoy a sense of false security and, sooner or later, enter the trap.

Earth was willing to wait. It was just as well. The biding-time lasted four months.

A bank on Long Island got taken for eighteen thousand dollars. The same technique; walk in, collect, walk out, vanish. A high-ranking officer made a tour of the Brooklyn Navy Yard at a time when he was also attending a conference at Newport News. An official inspected television studios on the twentieth to twenty-fifth floors of a skyscraper while simultaneously tending to office work on the tenth floor. The invader had now learned enough to become impudent.

Blueprints were pored over, vaults were entered, laboratories were examined. Steelworks and armaments

plants got a careful, unhurried look-over. A big machine-tool factory actually had its works manager conduct a phony visitor around the plant and provide technical explanations as required.

It wasn't all plain sailing even for someone well-nigh invincible. The cleverest can make mistakes. Harasha Vanash blundered when he flashed a fat roll in a tavern, got followed to his hide-out. Next day he went out without being tailed and while he was busily sneaking some more of Earth's knowledge, somebody was briskly plundering his room. He returned to find the proceeds of his last robbery had vanished. That meant he had to take time off from espionage to soak a third bank.

By August 21st he had finished. He had concentrated his attention on the most highly developed area in the world and it was doubtful whether anything to be learned elsewhere was sufficiently weighty to be worth the seeking. Anyway, what he'd got was enough for the purposes of the Andromedans. Armed with all this information, the hypnos of a two-hundred-planet empire could step in and take over another with no trouble at all.

Near Seeger's station he stepped out of a car, politely thanked the driver who was wondering why he'd gone so far out of his way to oblige a character who meant nothing to him. He stood by the roadside, watched the car vanish into the distance. It rocked along at top pace, as though its driver was mad at himself.

Holding a small case stuffed with notes and sketches, he studied the landscape, saw everything as it had been originally. To anyone within the sphere of his mental influence he was no more than a portly and somewhat pompous business man idly surveying the hills. To anyone beyond that range he was made vague by distance and sufficiently humanlike to the naked eye to pass muster.

But to anyone watching through telescopes and binoculars from most of a mile away he could be seen for what he really was—just a thing. A thing not of this world. They could have made a snatch at him then and there. However, in view of the preparations they'd made for him there was, they thought, no need to bother. Softly, softly, catchee monkey.

Tightly gripping the case, he hurried away from the road, made straight for the transmitter's hiding place. All he had to do was press the stud, beat it back to Northwood, enjoy a few quiet drinks in a tavern, have a night's sleep and come back tomorrow. The ship would come in along the transmitter's beam, landing here and nowhere else, but it would take exactly eighteen hours and twenty minutes to arrive.

Reaching the boulder, he had a final wary glance around. Nobody in sight, not a soul. He moved the rock, felt mild relief when he saw the instrument lying undisturbed. Bending over it, he pressed the stud.

The result was a violent *pouf!* and a cloud of noxious gas. That was

their mistake; they'd felt sure it would lay him out for twenty-four hours. It did not. His metabolism was thoroughly alien and had its own peculiar reaction. All he did was retch and run like blazes.

Four men appeared from behind a rock six hundred yards away. They pointed guns, yelled to him to halt. Ten more sprang out of the ground on his left, bawled similar commands. He grinned at them, showing them the teeth he did not possess.

He couldn't make them blow off their own heads. But he could make them do it for each other. Still going fast, he changed direction to escape the line of fire. The four obligingly waited for him to run clear, then opened up on the ten. At the same time the ten started slinging lead at the four.

At top speed he kept going. He could have lounged on a rock, in complete command of the situation, and remained until everyone had bumped everyone else—given that there was no effective force located outside his hypnotic range. He could not be sure of just how far the trap extended.

The obviously sensible thing to do was to get right out of reach as swiftly as possible, curve back to the road, confiscate a passing car and disappear once more among Earth's teeming millions. How to contact the ship was a problem that must be shelved until he could ponder it in a safe place. It wasn't unsolvable; not to one who could be the President himself.

His immediate fear was well-founded. At twelve-hundred yards there happened to be a beefy gentleman named Hank who found that a brazen escape during an outbreak of civil war was too much to be endured. Hank had a quick temper, also a heavy machine-gun. Seeing differently from those nearer the prey, and being given no orders to the contrary, Hank uttered an unseemly word, swung the gun, scowled through its sights, rammed his thumbs on its button. The gun went *br-r-r-r* while its ammo-belt jumped and rattled.

Despite the range his aim was perfect. Harasha Vanash was flung sidewise in full flight, went down and didn't get up. His supine body jerked around under the impact of more bullets. He was very decidedly dead.

Harrison got on the phone to pass the news, and O'Keefe said, "He's not here. It's his day off."

"Where'll I find him then?"

"At home and no place else. I'll give you his number. He might answer if he's not busy baby-sitting."

Trying again, Harrison got through. "They killed him . . . or it . . . just under an hour ago."

"Hm-m-m! Pity they didn't take him alive."

"Easier said than done. Anyway, how can you retain a firm hold on someone who can make you remove his manacles and get into them yourself?"

"That," said Rider, "is the problem of our Security boys in general

and our police in particular. I work for the Treasury."

Replacing the phone, Harrison frowned at the wall. Beyond the wall, several hundreds of miles to the south, a group of men walked onto the dispersal-point of an airport, placed a strange box on the ground, pressed its stud. Then they watched the sky and waited.

The hordes of Andromeda were very, very old. That was why they'd progressed as far as they had done. Flashes of inspiration had piled up through the numberless centuries until sheer weight of accumulated genius had given them the key to the cosmos.

Like many very old people, they had contempt for the young and eager. But their contempt would have switched to horror if they could have seen the methodical way in which a bunch of specialist legworkers started pulling their metal sphere apart.

Or the way in which Earth commenced planning a vast armada of similar ships.

A good deal bigger.

With several improvements.

THE END

IN TIMES TO COME

The next issue features a yarn by Everett B. Cole—"The Missionaries." Now it is a fact that barbaric cultures, without true science, have succeeded in rule-of-thumb engineering of remarkably solid order. It's also true that barbarian cultures seem to have done more on the use of psionic powers than any scientific culture has so far.

What happens if a barbarian culture thumb-rule their way to a spaceship —and start expanding their empire? A workable, technical device does not require an understanding science behind it; a dog has a finer computer machine than any Man has built yet. And a barbarian with a spaceship would still, for all his rule-of-thumb technique, be a barbarian.

But—a dangerous one indeed!

THE EDITOR.

THE CURIOUS PROFESSION

BY LEONARD LOCKHARD

This, sadly is not really fiction, it's an hypothetical case. This, friends, is the way the Law of Patents works:

Illustrated by Freas

The Lorelei must have sounded like that. Enticing, inviting, yet somehow ominous. I sat puzzled until I heard it again, booming through the offices of Helix Spardleton, Patent attorney.

"Oh, Mr. Saddle. Will you come in here a moment, please?"

I was right the first time. Never before had I heard quite that tone. I was used to snarls, rasps, and bellows. I was familiar with the silky purr, the honey-coated murmur. I was even used to the breath-snatching change of pace from a gentle smile to a wall-shattering roar. For all these things were merely the stock-in-trade of any good patent attorney—merely part of the armament to be used in the eternal battle against the Examiners in the United States Patent Office.

But this was different. I got up and slowly walked out of my office. As I passed through the front office Susan looked from her typewriter and then looked quickly down. She sensed it, too. I took a deep breath and went into Mr. Spardleton's office.

He was reading an Office Action when I entered. His cigar was tilted at the thirty-degree-above-horizontal angle that meant trouble. His black eyes lifted from the Action and bored through the cloud of cigar smoke.

"Mr. Saddle, how long have you been working for me now?"

My knees got shaky. What had I done? My cases were all in good shape. I'd been working hard sixteen hours a day, Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays included. I had even been reprimanded by a Primary Examiner for being too noisy at an interview. As far as I could tell I was doing fine.

"Well, Mr. Saddle, how long's it been?"

I collected myself and said, "Ten months, fourteen days, two hours, and fif—"

"Good. And how are you feeling? Developed your ulcer yet?"

"Oh no. Nothing like that. A few gas pains lately but noth—"

"Well keep with it. You'll get there."

He looked down at the Office Action again and said, "I think you're ready for the next step in your education. I have here an action from Herbert Krome, the Examiner in one of your cases. He gives us a claim and suggests we copy it. You know what that means?"

I thought for a moment and then remembered, "Yes. We're in an Interference."

"Right. Interference. I called you in here so we could go over the case and see where we stand."

A great weight lifted from my shoulders. He just wanted to talk about Interference practice.

"Oh," I said half to myself, "is that all?" I turned to pull up a chair.

A strange gurgling sound filled the room. I looked around quickly, thinking the plumbing had let go. But the next instant I saw that it was Mr. Spardleton. He seemed to be swallowing his cigar. I jumped over to him and pounded him on the back. He gagged and coughed and choked and sputtered. It was several minutes before he got himself under control and his cigar back in battery.

"Mr. Saddle." His voice was

strained. "Mr. Saddle, don't ever refer to an Interference in that slighting tone. Do you know what an Interference is?"

I was surprised. "Well certainly, sir. An Interference is a Proceeding instituted in the Patent Office to determine which one of two or more parties claiming the invention is the first and original inventor. Rule 201 covers it. That's all there is to it."

He started to cough. "There Mr. Saddle. You said it again." He shook his head and sat back. His cigar was burning so vigorously I could hear it.

"Mr. Saddle, you know how vast the body of patent law is. You also know that very little of it makes sense. It is the most irrational, inconsistent, unreasoning conglomeration of doctrines ever gathered under one heading. And sitting right in the middle of this vertiginous maze are the doctrines that govern Interference practice, the most curious of all in an exceedingly curious profession."

He sat back and looked at the ceiling.

I spoke up. "But it's only to find out who is the first inventor. That's the sole purpose of the whole thing —who's first? Why should that be so hard?"

Mr. Spardleton heaved a deep sigh. "If an Interference proceeding really did determine who was the first inventor of a given invention, there would be nothing to it. But it doesn't. All it does is decide which claimant should get it. Priority doesn't necessarily come into it."

"Well, how do they decide?"

"I don't know. No one does. Mr. Revise and Mr. Caesar have written a four-volume work entitled 'Interference Law and Practice.' It contains much of the law of Interference. But it doesn't tell you how the Board of Interference Examiners or the courts are going to decide."

"Just a question of luck, is that it?"

"No. It's not even that. I wish it were, then you'd know where you stand. If all parties to an Interference were forced to go into a room and either throw dice or draw cards to see who's the first, the winner would really be the first inventor a certain per cent of the time. But as it stands now even the laws of probability have nothing to do with it. The Board and the courts see to that."

I digested that and asked, "How do they go about messing things up so much?"

Mr. Spardleton snorted. "Oh, they have lots of ways. One of the best ways is to allow the parties to decide among themselves. One party can concede priority to another no matter who is really first. The Board and the courts accept it."

"Well, then, they can throw dice or draw cards just the way you said they should."

Spardleton sighed and shook his head. "But the parties never do it that way. They decide who's going to be the first inventor in view of

their business relationship. Maybe one party threatens the other with a lawsuit on some other patent. Maybe one threatens to stop buying raw materials from the other. They find some reason why one should be the first inventor. And it often has nothing to do with who's actually first. But the law adopts their decision and treats it as conclusive between those parties."

I started to make a shrewd observation but Spardleton waved me quiet.

He said, "Mr. Saddle, I'm going to turn you loose on this Interference. Experience will teach you better than anything I could say. I'll supervise you only enough so that you don't walk into an estoppel situation. Now suppose you tell me how you're going to start out. Here's the letter from the Patent Office."

I took it and read:

> The following claim, found allowable in another application, is suggested for the purpose of declaring an interference:
>
> A method of preventing pigeons from contaminating buildings which comprises applying supersonic sound to the skeletal structure of a building.
>
> Applicants are advised that failure to make the above claim within thirty days will be taken as a disclaimer of the invention covered by that claim.
>
> Examiner

I read it again. The claim was familiar. Then I remembered.

"Wait a minute," I said to Spardleton. "I remember this case clearly now. I originally filed it with this exact claim in it. Krome rejected it as being non-inventive over an issued patent on a supersonic dog whistle. So I added new claims drawn to a process of removing dust from buildings by applying supersonic sound to the frame. He rejected those because they failed to patentably distinguish over my original claim. Now he comes along and says my original claim is patentable in somebody else's application. What's the matter with him? The claim's been patentable all along. Why didn't he—"

"Easy, son. Easy." Spardleton broke in. "You'll get used to it. It's just another example of the reverse logic in the Patent Office. When two applications both claim the same invention the Office decides it must be patentable."

"But that's not the test of patentability," I said. "That's not the way they're supposed to approach it."

Spardleton sighed. "I thought I'd convinced you that there is no such thing as a definite test for patentability. But you'll learn. Let's get back to this case. Tell me what you are going to do."

"Well," I said, "first, I'm going to put in an amendment and make this claim. Then I'll check with the inventors and see what kind of conception date I can prove. As I remember, Marchare and his co-inventor may have actually reduced this invention to practice. Anyhow, I wrote the application and filed it. Marchare doesn't consider the invention very important."

Spardleton tipped his head back and looked at me down the length of his nose. "Tell me," he said. "What is an actual reduction to practice?"

"Well," I said, "it's the application of the inventive idea to the production of a practical result. At least that's what the Supreme Court said."

"Ah, yes. The Supreme Court. I believe I have mentioned my opinion of the Supreme Court in regard to patent cases."

"Yes, you have. You said that the Justices never understand the technology in a patent case so they take refuge in the law, and that's fatal."

"Yes. Well, you have cleaned it up a little. Anyhow, the Supreme Court rewrites the law with just about each patent case, ignoring statutes and prior decisions. So let me ask you: You've got an invention involving the bars in a typewriter. The inventor builds the typewriter and manipulates the bars, but he doesn't put a piece of paper in it. Is that an actual reduction to practice?"

I thought a minute and said, "Yes. He actually built the invention and tried it to make sure it worked. The lack of paper doesn't matter."

Spardleton knocked an ash off the end of his cigar. "Nope. In the case of Paul vs. Hess the court said that a typewriter is a complicated machine, so its successful operation must be completely demonstrated. No reduction to practice there. Now let's look at the patent Bell took out on his telephone. Bell's telephone model never actually transmitted spoken words so that they could be distinctly heard and understood at the receiving end of his line; the model never transmitted intelligible spoken words. Did that model constitute an actual reduction to practice?"

I didn't hesitate. "No!"

He looked sorrowful. "Mr. Saddle. You are still trying to apply logic to patent cases. By the time the Telephone Cases got to the Supreme Court Bell and his telephone were national institutions. The court didn't dare say that Bell didn't have an invention or that his model was no good. To do so would have shown the world the extent of the court's technical knowledge. So the court said that the written description in Bell's patent was so good that his model did constitute an actual reduction to practice even though it did not work. Now. Suppose your inventor had discovered a new way to keep an automobile tire on its rim. He makes it, installs it on the wheel, and bounces it around on the floor to make certain it will hold. Reduction to practice?"

I looked at him silently for a long moment trying to find the catch. Before I could say anything he said, "Good. When you don't know, don't say anything—most of the time. Well, in the case of Jobski vs. Johnson the court said that such a device

must be used on an actual automobile before there could be a reduction to practice; after all, consider the strains such a device would be subjected to when the car travels at a high rate of speed. So there was no actual reduction to practice. Anything wrong with that?"

"Oh no," I said. "It's just that a lawyer doesn't know—"

"Tell me this," he interrupted, "suppose you were the lawyer in the case of American Chain vs. Weaver Company and you were wondering whether the court would hold that you had had an actual reduction to practice. You hear them label your model as crude, unsightly, unfinished, unsatisfactory, and somewhat uncompleted; those are the court's exact words. What would you think?"

I said, "I'd think I had lost my case."

Spardleton nodded. "But as I've told you many times, you must have faith. In that case the court went on to say that in spite of everything, the object contained all the effective and substantial elements of the invention, and therefore there had been an actual reduction to practice. The point I am making, Mr. Saddle, is that it is sometimes difficult to decide whether there has been an actual reduction to practice. In fact you won't know until a court has ruled on it and even then you won't be sure. So be careful in this pigeon-scarer case. It'll be a good one for you to break in on. Go to it; file an amendment and make this claim Krome wants you to make."

"Right," I said, and staggered out of the room.

I prepared the amendment and filed it and then went over to the Marchare Laboratories in Alexandria.

"Hello, Saddle," Marchare greeted me. "What's new in the patent business?"

I said, "Well, for one thing we're in Interference with one of your applications."

"Oh? Which one?"

"The one about the supersonic bird-scarer."

"Oh, yes. I remember it. I suppose you want to establish some dates. Well, I can only give you a conception date. We never reduced to practice. We thought of it and then you wrote the case and filed it two months later. Let's go look at the transcript of the meeting."

I followed him to the Records Room, thinking that at least I wouldn't be pestered with questions about actual reduction to practice. I never failed but to be amazed at Marchare's astounding memory. He never forgot anything, which probably helped account for his being a Nobel Prize winner three times over.

"Let's see," he said, pulling open a drawer. "The transcript of the meeting where we thought of the bird-scarer should be here somewhere."

The morning meetings in the Marchare Laboratories were always

transcribed word for word. Hosts of patentable inventions had cropped up that way.

"Yes," said Marchare. "Callahan and I were discussing the effect of supersonic sound on chemical reactions. Then I said—but here. Read it yourself."

He handed me the transcript and pointed to the top line. I read:

Marchare: Supersonic sound will at least prevent build-up on the interior of the reactor. Say. Won't supersonic sound prevent deposition of dust or anything on a reactor? That's your field, Callahan. What do you think of it?

Callahan: To be perfectly frank, doctor, I think that's for the birds.

Sixteen seconds of silence

Callahan: Wait a minute. Now there's something. Supersonic sound will keep birds off a building. That'll work.

Marchare: Yes, I guess it will. But I still think it'll keep dust off, too.

Anyway, we'll turn the idea over to the Spardleton firm and if they think it's patentable we'll have them file. Now back to chemistry. Why can't supersonic sound supply the energy necessary to dehydrate—

That was all of the transcript that interested me and I could see it was incomplete; it did not describe the invention in detail. I knew what had happened after that. Marchare called Spardleton. Spardleton turned it over to me. I wrote the case with Marchare and Callahan as co-inventors filling in the details and leaving the way open to claim either a bird-scarer or a dust-preventor. My original claims were drawn to a bird-scarer. Krome rejected them so I changed them to a dust-preventor. Then along came Krome finding the original bird-scarer claim allowable and setting up an Interference.

I made notes of where I could locate the transcript again if I needed it, and noted down the date of the meeting. The meeting undoubtedly established the conception date, even though the transcript might not show it clearly enough. I thanked Marchare and went back to the office.

In due time I got the Declaration of Interference setting the dates for the Preliminary Statement, the Motion Period, and the Taking of Testimony.

I made out the Preliminary Statement that stated what dates I could prove. Spardleton approved the Statement so I filed it in the sealed envelope.

The period for filing the Preliminary Statement passed and the Motion Period started. For the first time I was allowed to see the patent application of the opposing party in the Interference.

The first thing I looked for was the date on which the application had been filed in the Patent Office. Huh. Two weeks after mine. Well, that's good news. Since I filed first I was Senior Party in the Interference.

The opposing inventor was Harry Herd, 354 Hunter Street, Ossining, New York. His attorney was J. Harlington Burlington, Munsey Building, Washington, D. C.

The specification was very short, only two typewritten pages. It described how to apply supersonic sound to the framework of a building, and how pigeons would then never go near it. There was only one claim, the same claim Krome had required me to make. All in all it was a simple forthright patent application—a very unusual case.

I ordered a copy of it and took it back to my office to study. After two days I came to the conclusion that there were no problems whatsoever in this Interference. No motions need be made, a very unusual situation. I had heard of cases that required years merely to resolve the issues raised in the Motion Period. But the only issue in my case was: Who is the first inventor of the pigeon-scarer? The only thing to do was to take testimony and go to the Final Hearing.

I walked into Spardleton's office to get his approval. The first thing he asked was, "Who filed his application first?"

"We did. The other party filed two weeks later."

Spardleton sat back, nodding his head. "Excellent. That does it."

"Why?" I said. "Maybe they can prove conception much earlier."

Spardleton said, "Mr. Saddle, you are the Senior Party in this Interference. The other party has the burden to try and establish a date earlier than your filing date. And that is very, very hard to do. Any Junior Party carries a heavy burden when he tries to prove earlier dates. The burden is so heavy that few Junior Parties can carry it. That's why a Junior Party loses eighty per cent of the time; only about twenty per cent of Junior Parties win. Not because they weren't the first inventor, mind you. But because the wise and wondrous patent law makes it almost impossible for them to win."

"Well," I said, "I'll win this one no matter what they do. Without help from screwy law, too."

"I like your optimism," said Spardleton. "Now let's see. Since you are Senior Party you will take testimony last. How are you going to prove your conception date if you have to?"

I told Spardleton of the transcript of the meeting between Marchare and Callahan. I would introduce the transcript for what it was worth and back it with the testimony of the two inventors.

Spardleton looked at me strangely. "Mr. Saddle, I said I am going to let you do this on your own. Experience is the best teacher and all that. But I would like to recommend that you also introduce the testimony of the secretary who took that transcript."

"O.K.," I said, just as though I knew what he was driving at. "Anything else?"

"Yes. Can you prove diligence between the date of conception and the date of filing?"

I said, "Yes. I can show that I prepared that specification in the same order as I received it. And I can show that Marchare told me about the invention the very day he and Callahan conceived it."

"All right," said Spardleton. "You've got it. I'll be present at the Final Hearing. Good luck."

About a week later I received a notice for the taking of testimony for the Junior Party in the case of Marchare et al vs. Herd. The place where testimony was to be taken was 354 Hunter Street, Ossining, New York. I remembered that that was Herd's home address. Susan got reservations for me at a hotel. I cleared with Spardleton and drew two hundred dollars for expenses.

The night before the hearing I checked into the hotel in Ossining early to get myself squared away. I asked the desk clerk how long it took to get to 354 Hunter Street by taxi. He told me ten minutes, so I forced myself to stay in bed until

eight o'clock the following morning.

At a quarter of ten I caught a cab. About eight minutes later we pulled up in front of a high somber wall with a nasty little gate in it.

"Where are we?" I asked.

"Sing Sing Prison," said the driver.

"Oh," I said settling back. "Thanks for showing it to me, but I have an appointment. Will you please take me to 354 Hunter Street?"

The driver turned to look at me. "What's the matter with you, Bud? Sing Sing IS 354 Hunter Street."

I straightened. "What? Why that's impossible. It can't be. I have an inventor to talk to. You must—"

"You waiting for somebody?" A voice cut in through the taxi window. I saw a big man in a uinform.

I said, "No, Officer. I'm supposed to see a man named Harry Herd at 354 Hunter Street, and this taxi driver tells—"

"Your name Saddle?" the uniform interrupted.

"Why, why, why . . . yes."

"O.K. Come on. They're all waiting for you."

"In here?" I asked feebly, waving at the looming wall.

"Yup."

I paid off the grinning driver and followed the guard, walking in as straight a line as my whirling head would allow. I expected to have to strip while guards looked for hidden hand grenades but nobody put a finger on me. In a moment I was in the Warden's Office.

A short, very heavy man came over to me. His face was one of those that always seems about to break into a yawn. "I'm Burlington," he said as we shook hands. "The others are all set."

The others consisted of the Warden, a pretty girl, and a little wizened runt of a man who looked as though he had gone through the same processing as do prunes.

Burlington said, "The Warden is a notary public so he can give the oaths. Miss Dren here is a public stenographer; she will keep the record. Mr. Harry Herd," he pointed at the prune, "is the inventor and is all set to testify. Are you ready?"

I could do nothing but nod. How I wished for Spardleton. But I was on my own.

Herd took the oath and sat down. The stenographer took the following:

Burlington: State your name, age and address.

Herd: Harry Herd, forty-two, 354 Hunter Street, Ossining, New York. And I—

Burlington: Thank you. Are you the inventor in United States patent application Serial Number 166,211 entitled Method for Chasing Pigeons?

Herd: Yesiam. And I—

Burlington: Thank you. Will you tell us the circumstances under which you first got the idea for this invention?

Herd: Cer'ny. I am sitting in the prison library one day and there is a pigeon, a bird pigeon, perched on

the bars outside and I am reading a very interesting magazine what tells how you take supersonic sound and use it on a liquid what's got little particles in it so that—

I listened to Herd drone on and on. I did not object when Burlington introduced the piece of paper that Herd had scribbled his idea on. My mind was clear now. Gradually I saw my course of action. All I had to do was make sure that the record showed that Herd was a convicted criminal now serving time. His testimony would be worthless. Who'd believe a convict?

Under Burlington's prodding, Herd established a conception date. And it was a later conception date than Marchare's; Marchare had conceived the invention first. Things began looking up.

Finally direct examination was over. Burlington turned to me and said, "Any cross-examination?"

"Yes, SIR," I answered.

I turned to Herd and said, "What is your occupation, Mr. Herd?"

Herd: Machinist.

Saddle: Are you working at it now?

Herd: Yes.

Saddle: Under what circumstances?

By Mr. Burlington: I object. The question is immaterial and irrelevant.

By Mr. Saddle: I am about to attack the witness' credibility. The question is perfectly proper. Mr. Herd, please answer. Under what circumstances do you work as a machinist?

Herd! Whadoyumean?

Saddle: What institution do you work in?

Herd: Whatdoyamean institution?

Saddle: Mr. Herd. Are you, or are you not now serving a jail sentence in Sing Sing Prison?

Herd: Oh, that. Well, yes.

Saddle: What for?

Herd: I was framed. They had nothing on me. I was railroaded. They put the—

Saddle: Please, Mr. Herd. What were you convicted of?

Herd: Armed robbery. I never had a chance. I'm a three time loser. They threw the book at me. I—

Saddle: You mean you are in for life as a habitual criminal?

Herd: Yeah. But they—

Saddle: Thank you, Mr. Herd. No further questions.

By Mr. Burlington: Let the record show the following: Mr. Saddle has not impeached this witness. A conviction for robbery does not affect a witness' reputation for truth-and-veracity. It only affects his reputation for honesty-and-integrity, and that has nothing to do with this testimony under oath. Thus Mr. Herd's testimony stands unchallenged, unimpeached, and capable of being believed. Just because a man has committed a robbery or two does not mean he won't tell the truth.

I had a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach. The rules of evi-

dence were coming back to me. Burlington was right. The law stated that a robber's testimony was as good as anyone else's as long as his general character wasn't at stake. Things didn't look so good.

There was one thing in my favor. In taking testimony in an Interference, everything, but everything, went down in the record. There was no judge around to exclude improper testimony. So if you wanted to throw in the kitchen sink, in it went. At the Final Hearing, though, the Board of Interference Examiners excluded inadmissible testimony. The Board read everything over, including the objections, and threw out everything that was improper. But they had to read it first. And that's where I hoped to get the advantage. The Board would learn that Herd was a convict. It couldn't help but influence them.

We were through with Herd so a guard came and got him. Burlington then called on the supporting witnesses.

There were three of them. They had all been sitting at the library table when Herd conceived the pigeon-scarer. They all supported Herd's testimony, backed it up very nicely. They all had seen the piece of paper on which Herd had scribbled his idea. They all made it clear that Herd had conceived the invention on a date prior to the date I had filed Marchare's case. And they were all serving heavy sentences.

The first was a dapper fellow with a little black mustache. He was in for working the confidence game —specialized in mulcting widows out of their savings.

The second was relatively pure. He'd embezzled money from a bank, but only once.

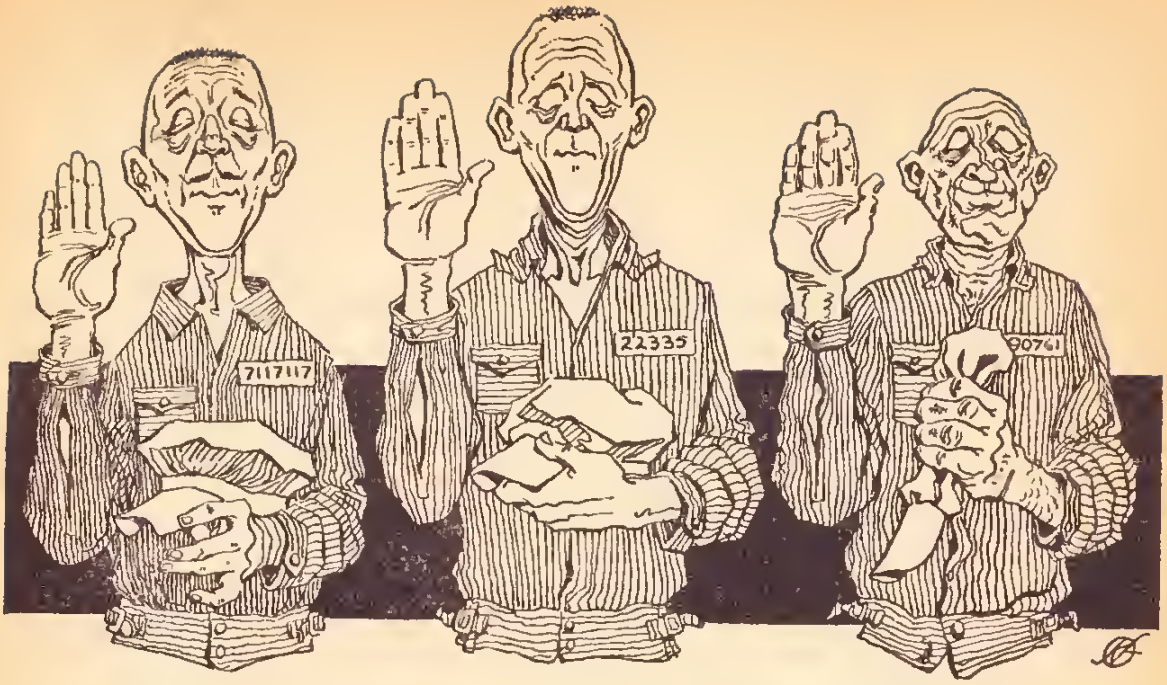
The third and last was a knife expert. He liked to whittle, but the law frowned on his choice of objects to whittle on. He'd been framed on a second-degree murder rap.

In each case I made sure that the record showed what the boys were in for. Burlington didn't even bother to object to my questions to the con man; the confidence game definitely mitigates against a man's truth-and-veracity. But Burlington objected to the questions to the embezzler. Just as with robbery, embezzling affects a man's honesty-and-integrity, not his truth-and-veracity. And when we got to the murderer Burlington almost lost his sleepiness. Murder has nothing to do with truth-and-veracity either. Murder only involves peace-and-good-order. Anyhow, it got into the record.

That ended the taking of the Junior Party's testimony. I shook hands with Burlington and the Warden and caught a 2:00 o'clock train back to Washington. Things looked pretty good.

The next morning I went into Spardleton's office to tell him about it, but he would have none of it.

"No, sir," he said. "This is your baby. You handle it. I'll go with you to the Final Hearing, but otherwise I'll stay out of it. You seem



to be doing well. This Interference will consume less time than any I've ever heard of; usually they take years. Besides, you're the Senior Party in this Interference so it's almost impossible for you to lose. The Junior Party carries too heavy a burden; I've told you that many times. Now shoo out of here. I've got my own troubles."

I shooed. Spardleton was in for a surprise when he learned who the opposing party was. That was going to be rich.

The next few days were busy ones. I decided on a hearing date and served notice on Burlington to be there. I talked the case over with Marchare and Callahan and got their testimony straightened out. I made sure that the secretary that had taken the notes at the research meeting would be available as a witness. I arranged for a stenographer to take down everything that was said. I contacted a notary public so he could be present.

The day of the hearing dawned hot and stifling. Although I had set the hearing for ten o'clock in the morning, I arrived at the Marchare Laboratories at eight. Marchare had agreed to the use of one of his air-conditioned meeting rooms as a hearing room; the cool room felt good.

At nine-thirty, Burlington walked in. He began unloading papers from the steamer trunk that served him for a brief case.

The notary showed up, then the stenographer. And at five minutes to ten my three witnesses walked in.

The hearing went swimmingly. Marchare was sworn in and testified as to what had happened at the meeting between him and Callahan. I offered a certified copy of the

notes of the meeting into evidence.

No objection from Mr. Burlington.

I finished the direct examination with Dr. Marchare.

No cross-examination from Mr. Burlington.

Callahan took the chair and gave the same testimony as Dr. Marchare.

"No cross-examination," said Mr. Burlington, looking too sleepy even to get up on his feet.

This was a picnic. I was complete master of the situation. Things were going beautifully.

The secretary, my last witness, took the chair and stated the same facts as had Marchare and Callahan. She'd heard everything. She'd taken the shorthand. She'd transcribed it. As simple as that. I turned and looked down my nose at Mr. Burlington. "Any cross?"

Mr. Burlington said, "No cross-exam— Oh. Just one thing." He painfully twisted his head around to look at the secretary. "Tell me, Miss. What is supersonic sound?"

She looked at him pertly and said, "Why, it's . . . it's a very loud noise."

"You mean," said Mr. Burlington, "that it's a noise that's a lot louder than most noises?"

"Yes."

"How do you think it would affect your ears?"

"Well, I'm sure I don't know. It would probably deafen me."

"Thank you, Miss. No further cross-examination." And he painfully untwisted his head.

I stood there with my mouth open. I'd never thought to ask the secretary if she knew what supersonic sound was. Anybody working for Marchare should know. But I guess secretaries were harder to get in Washington than I thought. She didn't understand the invention. And unless a witness understands the invention the testimony wasn't worth a hoot. For a moment I was jolted. But then I remembered that the testimony of my two inventors stood intact. And two experts like that ought to be more than enough.

The taking of testimony was over. We had started at ten and were through by noon. Good management.

"A nicely organized hearing, Mr. Saddle," said Mr. Burlington as he reloaded his trunk.

"Thank you, Mr. Burlington."

"See you at the Final Hearing," he said. And he went out the door, obviously going home to bed.

A few weeks later I received my copy of the brief Burlington had written for the Final Hearing. There wasn't much to it. All he said was that the unsupported testimony of Marchare and Callahan was not sufficient to establish a date of any kind, so that Marchare and Callahan had to rely on the filing date of their patent application. On the other hand, the supported testimony of the party Herd clearly established diligence and a conception date prior to the filing date of the party Marchare *et al.* Therefore, Herd should

be awarded priority and Herd should get the patent.

I laughed. How silly can you get? I didn't even have to look in the books to write my own brief. I pointed out that the name Marchare was known to households throughout the world as a sterling representation of a great and good man. And his co-inventor Callahan was renowned in his own right. The testimony of these two men, these paragons of virtue, must be balanced against the testimony of the somewhat tarnished witnesses on the other side. It was clear the testimony of Marchare and Callahan established a conception date prior to the date established by Herd and his crew. I closed my brief by saying that I knew the Board would see that justice was done and award priority to the party Marchare *et al.*

Susan typed up the necessary copies of the brief. I admired it for a day and then served a copy on Burlington and filed three copies in the Patent Office. I sighed with relief. My first Interference was looking pretty good.

Came the day of the Final Hearing. I got dressed in my best clothes. I had a little trouble with my shoelaces and I couldn't get my tie right. A good breakfast straightened me out; fortunately the cup of coffee I spilled didn't get on me at all.

Spardleton wouldn't let me talk about the case as we sat waiting for the time to go over to the Patent Office. He puttered around his desk while I took a few turns around the office. I drank a lot of water and rearranged a lot of papers and knocked a few books off a desk. When the time came to leave, Susan came up to me and gave me a big kiss. Our first kiss. And it wasn't until the hearing was over that I realized what she had done.

Spardleton and I were the first to arrive. Shortly after, Krome, the Examiner in the case, came in. I gulped at him and he grunted at me. He went over behind the bench and began flipping through the records of the case. A Primary Examiner came in and did the same thing. Burlington arrived puffing and droopy looking. He seemed surprised to see Spardleton there. Then the Interference Examiner came in and we were ready to start.

Burlington represented the Junior Party so he argued first. His argument was just like his brief: You can't believe Marchare *et al* for a conception date; you must believe Herd.

Spardleton gave me a funny look as I got up to argue. Krome continued to flip papers.

I cleared my throat seven or eight times before I located my voice.

"Your Honors," I began. Then confidence surged through me. I began speaking fluently and well. I told of what a fine man Marchare was. I described Callahan's virtues. I coughed delicately when I pointed out the type of people my learned opponent represented. My voice rose sonorously, and it dropped to

a whisper. I'd been a good speaker back in law school and I could tell I was even better now. I played on words the way a harpist does on strings, extracting full benefit from each measured tone, each inflection. Even Krome stopped flipping papers for a moment to look at me. And when I finished I closed my notes and turned to Spardleton with a pleased smile on my face.

He was looking at me wide-eyed, shock and displeasure written in every line of his face. My smile fell off. I started to go over to him, but the voice of the Interference Examiner stopped me.

"Uh, Mr. Saddle."

I turned to him. "Yes, sir?"

"Is this your whole case? Have you nothing else to offer?"

"Nothing else!" I said. "That's all I need. Surely you can't believe what the opposing party's testimony says and not believe mine?"

"But, Mr. Saddle, you have cast a cloud on only one of the opposing party's witnesses. The opposing inventor put his invention on paper and three witnesses back him up. On the other hand you have no witnesses at all."

"Witnesses!" I said. "Aren't Marchare and Callahan and the transcript enough?"

The Interference Examiner shook his head. "I'm afraid not, Mr. Saddle. By a long unbroken chain of decisions from the Patent Office tribunals and from the courts the testimony of an inventor is never enough to establish a date, any date."

"But I have two inventors. Plus the transcript."

"It wouldn't matter if you had fifteen inventors and fifteen incomplete transcripts. The courts do not consider that one co-inventor is competent to support another co-inventor. You had better read the leading cases of Mergenthaler vs. Scudder and Winslow vs. Austin. You need outside evidence. Even a shred of outside evidence. For instance here," he looked at me hopefully, "the secretary that took the incomplete transcript. Are you *sure* she can't help?"

I shook my head helplessly. "She didn't understand what she was taking down."

"I'm sorry then. I admit that nowhere else in all of the law of this country does any court or tribunal refuse to credit the testimony of an interested party. Interference law stands alone in this respect. But as it is we can reach only one decision."

I made a last desperate try. "But how can you believe a gang of thugs and not believe two such fine men?"

"I'm sorry, Mr. Saddle. That's the law in Interference practice."

I turned helplessly to Spardleton. He raised his eyebrows and shrugged his shoulder. The gesture of defeat made me feel a little better. If Spardleton was beaten, there was nothing left to do. Again I started to walk over to him.

"Ah, Gentlemen."

It was Krome. He had stopped flipping papers. He was looking at one fixedly.

He said, "This transcript of the meeting between Marchare and Callahan. Although it does not specifically describe the invention I note that it is part of the record and that there is no objection to it. I must point out that the claim of the Interference is directed solely at a process for repelling pigeons. Now this transcript indicates that Callahan invented the process, not Marchare. It was Callahan who stated that supersonic sound was for the birds. Now if—"

Sleepiness dropped from Burlington like a cloak. He leaped to his feet shouting, "You can't do that. It's too late. You can't—"

"The hell he can't," Spardleton's voice boomed in from my right. "Your Honors. I make a motion that the party Marchare *et al* be granted ten days to convert their joint application to a sole, in the name of Callahan alone. We wil—"

"It's Final Hearing," shouted Burlington. "Too late. You're taking unconscionable advantage. You had your chance."

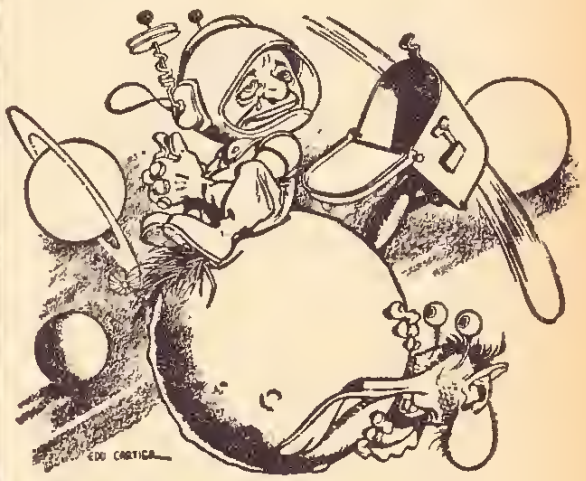
Spardleton's voice rose higher, drowning out Burlington. "It's never too late till the patent issues. You knew it all along. Why—"

Burlington went up an octave. Spardleton kept talking. My head swiveled from one to the other. Spardleton began beating the tabletop with his fist. His voice went up a notch. Burlington took up the table-pounding. The din became terrific. I couldn't understand what either man was saying. A few flecks of plaster drifted down from the ceiling.

Dimly I heard the Interference Examiner shouting, "Gentlemen. Please. Gentlemen."

"Joint to sole." "Fraud." "Rule 243." "Joint to sole." "You can't." "We can."

The Interference Examiner began pounding on the bench. The place sounded like an African village just before the sacrifice. For the first time I understood why Spardleton had always insisted that voice training was an integral part of a patent attorney's education.



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I saw Krome sit back in his chair, take a deep breath, close his eyes, and point his nose at the ceiling. Then there issued from his throat the most resounding roar ever to spring from the throat of a mortal man.

"GENTLEMEN."

The silence was deafening. The room fell silent; the outside corridor fell silent; the adjoining rooms fell silent. Typewriters and voices stilled throughout a goodly portion of the building.

The Interference Examiner turned to Krome and said, "Thank you, Mr. Krome." Then he turned to me and said, "This Board will grant the party Marchare *et al* ten days to submit a motion in writing to convert the joint application to a sole. The hearing is ended."

I stood rooted to the spot while the three Examiners filed out of the room. I stood rooted while Burlington and Spardleton shook hands and chuckled and said nice going. I was still rooted when Burlington wrung my hand and walked out. I finally gathered my wits enough to ask Spardleton. "What . . . what happened?"

"Old Burlington tried to pull a fast one. Almost got away with it."

"But we lost. Didn't we?"

"No, sir." Spardleton was packing away my papers for me. "We've got it in the bag now."

"But how? I can't understand."

"It's perfectly straightforward. Callahan is the sole inventor; not Marchare and Callahan jointly. Rule 45 states that you can always convert a joint application to a sole whenever you have mistakenly filed a joint application. That's all there is to it."

"But even if we convert to a sole, how does that help us?"

"Well, it's that beautiful record you've built up. Now that Marchare is no longer a co-inventor the law says that his testimony becomes admissible as a supporting witness. You don't think the Board would believe that bunch of crooks and not believe Marchare, do you?"

"Oh, no. Oh, no. Heavens, no."

"Of course not. As a co-inventor Marchare is considered the equivalent of a liar; tribunals won't even listen to him. But as a plain witness he's better than having a Supreme Court justice. We're all set now. Burlington knows he's beaten. Let's go."

I found I could still move my feet. As I stumbled out the door after him he took my arm in a friendly way. "It's just like I've always told you," he said, "you must have faith. The Senior Party almost always wins an Interference."

THE END

DOUBLE STAR

Conclusion. ***"—and one day, he woke up, and behold! he wasn't there any more!" Lorenzo the Magnificent quite truly lost himself in his work!***

BY ROBERT A. HEINLEIN

Illustrated by Freas

SYNOPSIS

I am the Great Lorenzo, the finest character actor in the Solar System Empire. My interest in Imperial politics is less than nothing. Had I known that this impersonation job that space pilot Captain Dak Broadbent offered me would get me mixed up in politics I would have run, not walked, to the nearest exit. Unfortunately I was between engagements at the time and short of funds—broke, to be blunt. I let him swindle me into it, then I was swept along by events—unwilling witness to the murder of another Earthman and of the death of the Martian who killed him, then accomplice after the fact through being coerced by Broadbent into helping to dispose of the bodies. A fugitive now, I let myself be shanghaied aboard the spaceship Tom Paine *and we were torching for Mars, and I still did not know what the job was for which I had been hired.*

But when they at last showed me whom I was to impersonate I was ready to scream. It was Bonforte—the Right Honorable John Joseph

Bonforte, former Supreme Minister of the Empire and now leader of the loyal opposition, head of the Expansionist coalition and the most loved —and most hated!—man in the Solar System.

Shanghaied, vulnerable to half a dozen criminal charges, I had no choice; I buckled down to work, studying stereo movies, studying recordings of his voice. I was coached in it by his private secretary, Penelope Russell. Penny was most attractive but I was in no mood to appreciate her—and besides she had only contempt for me, an actor who was to substitute for her beloved boss, while my mind was preoccupied by the strong conviction that I was being set up as a clay pigeon, to be assassinated in Bonforte's place.

Dak Broadbent tried to quiet my fears: Bonforte had been kidnaped by political enemies from the Humanity Party just before Bonforte was to be adopted into the Nest (or Martian tribal family) of Kkkahgral the Younger. This would be a political coup of the greatest importance, both for the Expansionist Party and for the human race, as it would probably lead eventually to bringing Mars and the Martians wholly into the Empire—whereas if Bonforte failed to show up, the Martians would be mortally offended, so much so that it might result in a progrom of all humans on Mars . . . which could set off an interplanetary war which would exterminate every Martian.

I did not mind that too much; I despised Martians, especially the way they smelled. What troubled me was the thought that the same tough hombres who kidnaped Bonforte to keep him from showing up for the adoption ceremony would not blink at killing me to keep me from showing up in his place. I told Dak Broadbent so.

He assured me that the peculiarities of Martian psychology were such that while the Martians would be unforgivingly offended if Bonforte simply failed to keep the date while alive, nevertheless if he were killed to prevent his keeping the date they would be just as offended—but at the persons who had killed him. Consequently Bonforte's political enemies did not dare to resort to simple assassination.

It struck me as a shaky theory on which to stake my own skin but again I had no choice.

Hypnosis was used on me by Dr. Capek, Bonforte's physician, to remove my extreme dislike for Martians. He borrowed some of Penny's perfume and implanted a suggestion in me that Martians smelled like "Jungle Lust." The silly trick worked.

I studied Bonforte all the way to Mars. We made rendezvous with the torchship Go For Broke *in a parking orbit around Mars and two others joined us there: Roger Clifton, Bonforte's deputy and political factotum, and Bill Corpsman, his public relations man. I liked Clifton but Bill Corpsman and I rubbed each other the wrong way at once—he insisted on treating me as a hired hand, while, confound it, a professional*

man has his pride, his dignity, his proper status.

But there was not time for personalities; the adoption ceremony was almost on top of us. We took a shuttle rocket down and landed at the skyport between Goddard City, the human colony where we believed Bonforte was being held, and the Nest of Kkkahgral. We cut it fine for my own safety, so that I would not have to risk going into the human colony. It seemed strange to be safer among Martians than among my own kind, but it seemed even stranger to be on Mars.

Since I was—or was impersonating—a V.I.P., my party was met at the skyport by the resident commissioner, Mr. Boothroyd, who had a car waiting to take us to the Martian city. An impersonation is as fragile as a woman's reputation; this one almost failed at once—for Boothroyd's teen-age daughter wanted my autograph—and I had not had time to learn to forge Bonforte's signature. I put her off by promising to mail an autographed picture instead, and we piled into the car. Once clear of the port the driver tried to wreck us. We captured him, Dak took over the wheel and delivered me—on time—to the Martian Nest. The others left to take the driver out into the sand dunes to strongarm some information out of him while I climbed the ramp and entered the Martian City.

The details of my adoption into a Martian family are as secret as the ritual of a lodge initiation. Let it stand that I had been carefully coached in my responses and that somehow I got through without stumbling. The Martian language is terribly difficult for the human throat at best and it was made no easier by the presence at my elbow throughout the ceremonies of a dozen adult Martians, each clutching a life-wand in his psuedolimbs . . . and I knew only too well that it took only a tiny pressure on a life-wand to give me eternal quietus.

Apparently I made no important mistakes; I lived through it. At last I was allowed to leave—a Martian citizen now myself, with thousands of Martian brothers and cousins, a Martian name of my own, and a Martian life-wand in my hand, badge of my adult Martian status. Penny was waiting for me outside the gates of the nest.

I was so happy and so relieved that I did not notice at first how terribly upset she was. Then I pressed her to explain:

Dak and the others had forced the driver to talk, they had located the place where Bonforte was being held and had rescued him . . . but almost too late; the scoundrels had brain-washed him—given him an injection of a cocaine derivative into his forebrain and had turned him temporarily into a mindless hulk of living flesh. I wanted to throw up; brain-washing is worse than murder, it strikes at the soul.

But there was no time for weakness; I returned to the Tom Paine *still as Bonforte while Dak smug-*

gled the real Bonforte aboard as cargo. For the time being I had to remain in the role; Bonforte was too ill even to make a television appearance—so I delivered a Grand Network speech for him, speaking from the Tom Paine. *But not without having more friction with Bill Corpsman, who had ghosted a draft of the speech in a style which I found to be utterly incompatible with Bonforte's personality and manner.*

My speech may have been too effective; within hours after it the government of Supreme Minister Quiroga, leader of the Humanity Party, had resigned—and the Emperor had called on Bonforte as leader of the opposition to form a caretaker government until general elections could be held. This was exactly what Bonforte, Clifton, Broadbent, and all their colleagues had been working to achieve. But there was one small hitch—poor brain-washed Bonforte was in no shape to appear before the Emperor.

It was possible that Dr. Capek could get him in shape during the voyage to New Batavia on Luna, but torchships go so fast that it was by no means certain. Yet if he failed to appear, all our efforts would fail, too, and it was even possible that the perilous impersonation inside the Martian Nest would be revealed. Broadbent and Clifton pressed me to continue the role and, if necessary, appear before the Emperor in Bonforte's place.

This time I turned mulish. To impersonate Bonforte in front of Martians—who probably don't see details in humans any better than we see details in them—was one thing; to impersonate him at the Imperial capital before the Emperor, all the court, and hundreds of people who knew him well . . . it was simply impossible, and I told them so.

Then Penny talked to me. I am a fool; I agreed.

The trip from Mars to Luna was a sleepless period of intensive coaching for me. I not only studied Bonforte's written works and every speech he had ever recorded, I studied also his mammoth Farleyfile of all his political associations. With hypnosis and stimulant pills I tried to cover a busy lifetime in days.

The formal audience at the imperial court was easy, just like a stage play with all lines set. I appeared before my sovereign lord, Willem of Orange, King of the Lowlands and Empire of the Planets, and was called back into his service. I presented my proposed cabinet.

But then came the real audience in the Emperor's private office, a relaxed and casual, man-to-man meeting. Willem seemed unsuspicious; we had a drink together, discussed Empire politics, my proposed cabinet, and we made one minor change in the line-up. I was beginning to relax and actually enjoyed myself when he took me into his workshop and showed me his model trains. Then we went back to his office. Just as I thought he was about

to let me leave he looked at me and said quietly, "By the way, who are *you?"*

I aged inside to match my appearance.

PART 3

"Come, now," he said impatiently, "surely my job carries with it some privileges. Just tell me the truth. I've known for the past hour that you were not Joseph Bonforte —though you could fool his own mother; you even have his mannerisms. But who are you?"

"My name is Lawrence Smith, Your Majesty," I said faintly.

"Brace up, man! I could have called the guards long since, if I had been intending to. Were you sent here to assassinate me?"

"No, Sire. I am . . . loyal to Your Majesty."

"You have an odd way of showing it. Well, pour yourself another drink, sit down, and tell me about it."

I told him about it, every bit. It took more than one drink and presently I felt better. He looked angry when I told him of the kidnaping, but when I told him what they had done to Bonforte's mind his face turned dark with a Jovian rage.

At last he said quietly, "It's just a matter of days until he is back in shape, then?"

"So Dr. Capek says."

"Don't let him go to work until he is fully recovered. He's a valuable man. You know that, don't you? Worth six of you and me. So you carry on with the doubling job and let him get well. The Empire needs him."

"Yes, Sire."

"Knock off that 'Sire.' Since you are standing in for him, call me 'Willem,' as he does. Did you know that was how I spotted you?"

"No, Si . . . no, Willem."

"He's called me Willem for twenty years. I thought it decidedly odd that he would quit it in private simply because he was seeing me on state business. But I did not suspect, not really. But, remarkable as your performance was, it set me thinking. Then, when we went in to see the trains, I knew."

"Excuse me? How?"

"You were *polite,* man! I've made him look at my trains in the past . . . and he always got even by being as rude as possible about what a way for a grown man to waste time. It was a little act we always went through. We both enjoyed it."

"Oh. I didn't know."

"How could you have known?" I was thinking that I should have known, that damned Farleyfile should have told me . . . it was not unitl later that I realized that the file had not been defective, in view of the theory on which it was based, i.e., it was intended to let a famous man remember details about the *less* famous. But that was precisely what the Emperor was *not* . . . less famous, I mean. Of *course* Bonforte needed no notes to recall personal details about Willem! Nor would

he consider it proper to set down personal matters about the sovereign in a file handled by his clerks.

I had muffed the obvious—not that I see how I could have avoided it, even if I had realized that the file would be incomplete.

But the Emperor was still talking. "You did a magnificent job—and after risking your life in a Martian nest I am not surprised that you were willing to tackle me. Tell me, have I ever seen you in stereo, or anywhere?"

I had given my legal name, of course, when the Emperor demanded it; I now rather timidly gave my professional name. He looked at me, threw up his hands and guffawed. I was somewhat hurt. "Er, have you heard of me?"

"Heard of you? I'm one of your staunchest fans." He looked at me very closely. "But you still look like Joe Bonforte. I can't believe that you are Lorenzo."

"But I am."

"Oh, I believe it, I believe it. You know that skit where you are a tramp? First you try to milk a cow . . . no luck. Finally you end up eating out of the cat's dish—but even the cat pushes you away?"

I admitted it.

"I've almost worn out my spool of that. I laugh and cry at the same time."

"That is the idea." I hesitated, then admitted that the barnyard "Weary Willie" routine had been copied from a very great artist of another century. "But I prefer dramatic roles."

"Like this one?"

"Well . . . not exactly. For this role, once is quite enough. I wouldn't care for a long run."

"I suppose so. Well, tell Roger Clifton— No, don't tell Clifton anything. Lorenzo, I see nothing to be gained by ever telling anyone about our conversation this past hour. If you tell Clifton, even though you tell him that I said not to worry, it would just give him nerves. And he has work to do. So we keep it tight, eh?"

"As my Emperor wishes."

"None of that, please. We'll keep it quiet because it's best so. Sorry I can't make a sickbed visit on Uncle Joe. Not that I could help him—although they used to think the King's Touch did marvels. So we'll say nothing and pretend that I never twigged."

"Yes . . . Willem."

"I suppose you had better go now. I've kept you a very long time."

"Whatever you wish."

"I'll have Pateel go back with you—or do you know your way around? But just a moment—" He dug around in his desk, muttering to himself. "That girl must have been straightening things again. No . . . here it is." He hauled out a little book. "I probably won't get to see you again . . . so would you mind giving me your autograph before you go?"

IX

Rog and Bill I found chewing their nails in Bonforte's upper living room. The second I showed up Corpsman started toward me. "Where have you been?"

"With the Emperor," I answered coldly.

"You've been gone five or six times as long as you should have been."

I did not bother to answer. Since the argument over the speech Corpsman and I had gotten along together and worked together, but it was strictly a marriage of convenience, with no love. We co-operated, but we did not really bury the hatchet—unless it was between my shoulder blades. I had made no special effort to conciliate him and saw no reason why I should—in my opinion his parents had met briefly at a masquerade ball.

I don't believe in rowing with other members of the company, but the only behavior Corpsman would willingly accept from me was that of a servant, hat in hand and very 'umble, sir. I would not give him that, even to keep peace. I was a professional, retained to do a very difficult professional job, and professional men do not use the back stairs; they are treated with respect.

So I ignored him and asked Rog, "Where's Penny?"

"With *him*. So are Dak and Doc, at the moment."

"He's here?"

"Yes." Clifton hesitated. "We put him in what is supposed to be the wife's room of your bedroom suite. It was the only place where we could maintain utter privacy and still give him the care he needs. I hope you don't mind."

"Not at all."

"It won't inconvenience you. The two bedrooms are joined, you may have noticed, only through the dressing rooms, and we've shut off that door. It's soundproof."

"Sounds like a good arrangement. How is he?"

Clifton frowned. "Better, much better . . . on the whole. He is lucid much of the time." He hesitated. "You can go in and see him, if you like."

I hesitated still longer. "How soon does Dr. Capek think he will be ready to make public appearances?"

"It's hard to say. Before long."

"How long? Three or four days? A short enough time that we could cancel all appointments and just put me out of sight? Rog, I don't know just how to make this clear but, much as I would like to call on him and pay my respects, I don't think it is smart for me to see him at all until after I have made my last appearance. It might well ruin my characterization." I had made the terrible mistake of going to my father's funeral; for years thereafter when I thought of him I saw him dead in his coffin. Only very slowly did I regain the true image of him—the virile, dominant man who had reared me with a firm hand and

taught me my trade. I was afraid of something like that with Bonforte; I was now impersonating a well man at the height of his powers, the way I had seen him and heard him in the many stereo records of him. I was very much afraid that, if I saw him ill, the recollection of it would blur and distort my performance.

"I was not insisting," Clifton answered. "You know best. It's possible that we can keep from having you appear in public again, but I want to keep you standing by and ready until he is fully recovered."

I almost said the Emperor wanted it done that way. But I caught myself—the shock of having the Emperor find me out had shaken me a little out of character. But the thought reminded me of unfinished business. I took out the revised cabinet list and handed it to Corpsman. "Here's the approved roster for the news services, Bill. You'll see that there is one change on it—'de la Torre' for 'Braun.' "

"What?"

"Jesus de la Torre for Lothar Braun. That's the way the Emperor wanted it."

Clifton looked astonished; Corpsman looked both atsonished and angry. "What difference does that make? He's got no right to have opinions!"

Clifton said slowly, "Bill is right, Chief. As a lawyer who has specialized in constitutional law I assure you that the sovereign's confirmation is purely nominal. You should not have let him make any changes."

I felt like shouting at them, and only the imposed calm personality

of Bonforte kept me from it. I had had a hard day and, despite a brilliant performance, the inevitable disaster had overtaken me. I wanted to tell Rog that if Willem had not been a really big man, kingly in the fine sense of the word, we would all be in the soup—simply because I had not been adequately coached for the role. Instead I answered sourly, "It's done and that's that."

Corpsman said, "That's what *you* think! I gave out the correct list to the reporters two hours ago. Now you've got to go back and straighten it out. Rog, you had better call the Palace right away and—"

I said, "Quiet!"

Corpsman shut up. I went on in a lower key. "Rog, from a legal point of view, you may be right. I wouldn't know. I do know that the Emperor felt free to question the appointment of Braun. Now if either one of you want to go to the Emperor and argue with him, that's up to you. But I'm not going anywhere. I'm going to get out of this anachronistic strait jacket, take my shoes off, and have a long tall drink. Then I'm going to bed."

"Now wait, Chief." Clifton objected. "You've got a five-minute spot on grand network to announce the new cabinet."

"*You* take it. You're first deputy in this cabinet."

He blinked. "All right."

Corpsman said insistently, "How about Braun? He was promised the job."

Clifton looked at him thoughtfully. "Not in any dispatch that I saw, Bill. He was simply asked if he were willing to serve, like all the others. Is that what you meant?"

Corpsman hesitated like an actor not quite sure of his lines. "Of course. But it amounts to a promise."

"Not until the public announcement is made, it doesn't."

"But the announcement *was* made, I tell you. Two hours ago."

"Mm-m-m . . . Bill, I'm afraid that you will have to call the boys in again and tell them that you made a mistake. Or I'll call them in and tell them that through an error a preliminary list was handed out before Mr. Bonforte had O.K.'d it. But we've got to correct it before the grand network announcement."

"Do you mean to tell me you are going to let *him* get away with it?"

By "him" I think Bill meant me, rather than Willem; but Rog's answer assumed the contrary. "Yes. Bill, this is no time to force a constitutional crisis. The issue isn't worth it. So will you phrase the retraction? Or shall I?"

Corpsman's expression reminded me of the way a cat submits to the inevitable . . . "just barely." He looked grim, shrugged, and said, "I'll do it. I want to be sure it is phrased properly, so we can salvage as much as possible out of the shambles."

"Thanks, Bill," Rog answered mildly.

Corpsman turned to leave. I called out, "Bill! As long as you are

going to be talking to the news services I have another announcement for them."

"Huh? What are you after now?"

"Nothing much." The fact was I was suddenly overcome with weariness at the role and the tensions it created. "Just tell them that Mr. Bonforte has a cold and his physician has ordered him to bed for a rest. I've had a bellyful."

Corpsman snorted. "I think I'll make it 'pneumonia.' "

"Suit yourself."

When he had gone Rog turned to me and said, "Don't let it get you, Chief. In this business, some days are better than others."

"Rog, I really am going on the sick list. You can mention it on stereo tonight."

"So?"

"I'm going to take to my bed and stay there. There is no reason at all why Bonforte can't 'have a cold' until he is ready to get back into harness himself. Every time I make an appearance it just increases the probability that somebody will spot something wrong . . . and every time I do make an appearance that sorehead Corpsman finds something to yap about. An artist can't do his best work with somebody continually snarling at him. So let's let it go at this and ring down the curtain."

"Take it easy, Chief. I'll keep Corpsman out of your hair from now on. Here we won't be in each other's laps the way we were in the ship."

"No, Rog, my mind is made up. Oh, I won't run out on you. I'll stay here until Mr. B. is able to see people, in case some utter emergency turns up"—I was recalling uneasily that the Emperor had told me to hang on and had assumed that I would—"but it is actually better to keep me out of sight. At the moment we have gotten away with it completely, haven't we? Oh, *they* know—somebody knows—that Bonforte was not the man who went through the adoption ceremony . . . but they don't dare raise that issue, nor could they prove it if they did. The same people may suspect that a double was used today, but they don't *know,* they can't be sure – because it is always possible that Bonforte recovered quickly enough to carry it off today. Right?"

Clifton got an odd, half sheepish look on his face. "I'm afraid they are fairly sure you were a double, Chief."

"Eh?"

"We shaded the truth a little to keep you from being nervous. Doc Capek was certain from the time he first examined him that only a miracle could get him in shape to make the audience today. The people who dosed him would know that, too."

I frowned. "Then you were kidding me earlier when you told me how well he was doing? How is he, Rog? Tell me the truth."

"I was telling you the truth that time, Chief. That's why I suggested that you see him . . . whereas before I was only too glad to string along

with your reluctance to see him." He added, "Perhaps you had better see him, talk with him."

"Mm-m-m . . . no." The reasons for not seeing him still applied; if I did have to make another appearance I did not want my subconscious playing me tricks. The role called for a well man. "But, Rog, everything I said applies still more emphatically on the basis of what you have just told me. If they are even reasonably sure that a double was used today, then we don't dare risk another appearance. They were caught by surprise today . . . or perhaps it was impossible to unmask me, under the circumstances. But it will not be, later. They can rig some deadfall, some test that I can't pass . . . then *blooie!* there goes the old ball game." I thought about it. "I had better be 'sick' as long as necessary. Bill was right; it had better be 'pneumonia.'"

Such is the power of suggestion that I woke up the next morning with a stopped-up nose and a sore throat. Dr. Capek took time to dose me and I felt almost human by supper time; nevertheless he issued bulletins about "Mr. Bonforte's virus infection." The sealed and air-conditioned cities of the Moon being what they are, nobody was anxious to be exposed to an air-vectored ailment; no determined effort was made to get past my chaperones. For four days I loafed and read from Bonforte's library, both his own collected papers and his many books . . . I discovered that both politics and economics could make engrossing reading; those subjects had never been real to me before. The Emperor sent me flowers from the Royal greenhouse—or were they for *me?*

Never mind. I loafed and soaked in the luxury of being Lorenzo, or even plain Lawrence Smith. I found that I dropped back into character automatically if someone came in, but I can't help that. It was not necessary; I saw no one but Penny and Capek, except for one visit from Dak.

But even lotus-eating can pall. By the fourth day I was as tired of that room as I had ever been of a producer's waiting room and I was lonely. No one bothered with me; Capek's visits had been brisk and professional, and Penny's visits had been short and few. She had stopped calling me "Mr. Bonforte."

When Dak showed up I was delighted to see him. "Dak! What's new?"

"Not much. I've been trying to get the *Tommie* overhauled with one hand while helping Rog with political chores with the other. Getting this campaign lined up is going to give him ulcers, three gets you eight." He sat down. "Politics!"

"Hm-m-m—Dak, how did you ever get into it? Offhand, I would figure *voyageurs* to be as unpolitical as actors. And you in particular."

"They are and they aren't. Most ways they don't give a damn whether school keeps or not, as long as they

can keep on herding junk through the sky. But to do that you've got to have cargo, and cargo means wide-open trade, with any ship free to go anywhere, no customs nonsense and no restricted areas. Freedom! And there you are; you're in politics. As for myself, I came here first for a spot of lobbying for the 'continuous voyage' rule, so that goods on the triangular trade would not pay two duties. It was Mr. B.'s bill, of course. One thing led to another and here I am, skipper of his yacht the past six years and representing my guild brothers since the last general election." He sighed. "I hardly know how it happened myself."

"I suppose you are anxious to get out of it. Are you going to stand for re-election?"

He stared at me. "Huh? Brother, until you've been in politics you haven't been *alive.*"

"But you said—"

"I know what I said. It's rough and sometimes it's dirty and it's always hard work and tedious details. But it's the only sport for grown-ups. All other games are for kids. All of 'em." He stood up. "Gotta run."

"Oh, stick around."

"Can't. With the Grand Assembly convening tomorrow I've got to give Rog a hand. I shouldn't have stopped in at all."

"It is? I didn't know." I was aware that the G.A., the outgoing G.A., that is, had to meet one more time, to accept the caretaker cabinet. But I had not thought about it. It was a routine matter, as perfunctory as presenting the list to the Emperor. "Is *he* going to be able to make it?"

"No. But don't you worry about it. Rog will apologize to the house for your . . . I mean *his* absence . . . and will ask for a proxy rule under no-objection procedure. Then he will read the speech of the Supreme Minister Designate—Bill is working on it right now. Then in his own person he will move that the government be confirmed. Second. No debate. Pass. Adjourn *sine die* . . . and everybody rushes for home and starts promising the voters a hundred Imperials every Monday morning. Routine." He added, "Oh, yes! Some member of the Humanity Party will move a resolution of sympathy and a basket of flowers, which will pass in a fine hypocritical glow. They'd rather send flowers to Bonforte's funeral." He scowled.

"It is actually as simple as that? What would happen if the proxy rule were refused? I thought the Grand Assembly didn't recognize proxies."

"They don't, for all ordinary procedure. You either pair, or you show up and vote. But this is just the idler wheels going around in parliamentary machinery. If they don't let him appear by proxy tomorrow, then they've got to wait around until he is well before they can adjourn *sine die* and get on with the serious business of hypnotizing the voters. As it is, a mock quorum

has been meeting daily and adjourning ever since Quiroga resigned. This Assembly is as dead as Caesar's ghost, but it has to be buried constitutionally."

"Yes . . . but suppose some idiot *did* object?"

"No one will. Oh, it could force a constitutional crisis. But it won't happen."

Neither one of us said anything for a while. Dak made no move to leave. "Dak, would it make things easier if I showed up and gave that speech?"

"Huh? Shucks, I thought that was settled. You decided that it wasn't safe to risk another appearance short of an utter save-the-baby emergency. On the whole, I agree with you. There's the old saw about the pitcher and the well."

"Yes. But this is just a walk-through, isn't it? Lines as fixed as a play? Would there be any chance of anyone pulling any surprises on me that I couldn't handle?"

"Well, no. Ordinarily you would be expected to talk to the press afterwards, but your recent illness is an excuse. We could slide you through the security tunnel and avoid them entirely." He smiled grimly. "Of course, there is always the chance that some crackpot in the visitors' gallery has managed to sneak in a gun . . . Mr. B. always referred to it as the 'shooting gallery' after they winged him from it."

My leg gave a sudden twinge. "Are you trying to scare me off?"

"No."

"You pick a funny way to encourage me. Dak, be level with me. Do you *want* me to do this job tomorrow? Or don't you?"

"Of course I do! Why the devil do you think I stopped in on a busy day? Just to chat?"

The Speaker *pro tempore* banged his gavel, the chaplain gave an invocation that carefully avoided any differences between one religion and another . . . and everyone kept silent. The seats themselves were only half filled but the gallery was packed with tourists.

We heard the ceremonial knocking amplified over the speaker system; the Sergeant-at-Arms rushed the mace to the door. Three times the Emperor demanded to be admitted, three times he was refused. Then he prayed the privilege; it was granted by acclamation. We stood while Willem entered and took his seat back of the Speaker's desk. He was in uniform as Admiral General and was unattended, as was required, save by escort of the Speaker and the Sergeant-at-Arms.

Then I tucked my wand under my arm and stood up at my place at the front bench and, addressing the Speaker as if the Sovereign were not present, I delivered my speech. It was not the one Corpsman had written; that one went down the oubliette as soon as I had read it. Bill had made it a straight campaign speech, and it was the wrong time and place.

Mine was short, non-partisan, and

cribbed right straight out of Bonforte's collected writings, a paraphrase of the one the time before when he formed a caretaker government. I stood foursquare for good roads and good weather and wished that everybody would love everybody else, just the way all us good democrats loved our Sovereign and he loved us. It was a blank-verse lyric poem of about five hundred words and if I varied from Bonforte's earlier speech then I simply went up on my lines.

They had to quiet the gallery.

Rog got up and moved that the names I had mentioned in passing be confirmed—second and no objection and the clerk cast a white ballot. As I marched forward attended by one member of my own party and one member of the opposition I could see members glancing at their watches and wondering if they could still catch the noon shuttle.

Then I was swearing allegiance to my Sovereign, under and subject to the constitutional limitations, swearing to defend and continue the rights and privileges of the Grand Assembly, and to protect the freedoms of the citizens of the Empire wherever they might be—and incidentally to carry out the duties of His Majesty's Supreme Minister. The chaplain mixed up the words once, but I straightened him out.

I thought I was breezing through it as easy as a curtain speech—when I found that I was crying so hard that I could hardly see. When I was done, Willem said quietly to me, "A good performance, Joseph." I don't know whether he thought he was talking to me, or to his old friend—and I did not care. I did not wipe away the tears; I just let them drip as I turned back to the Assembly. I waited for Willem to leave. then adjourned them.

Diana, Ltd., ran four extra shuttles that afternoon. New Batavia was deserted . . . that is to say there were only the Court and a million or so butchers, bakers, candlestick makers and civil servants left in town—and a skeleton cabinet.

Having gotten over my "cold" and appeared publicly in the Grand Assembly Hall it no longer made sense to hide out. As the supposed Supreme Minister I could not, without causing comment, never be seen; as the nominal head of a political party entering a campaign for a general election I had to see people . . . some people, at least. So I did what I had to do and got a daily report on Bonforte's progress toward complete recovery. His progress was good, if slow; Capek reported that it was possible, if absolutely necessary, to let him appear any time now—but he advised against it; he had lost almost twenty pounds and his co-ordination was poor.

Rog did everything possible to protect both of us. Mr. Bonforte knew now that they were using a double for him and, after a first fit of indignation, had relaxed to necessity and approved it. Rog ran the campaign, consulting him only on

matters of high policy, and then passing on his answers to me to hand out publicly when necessary.

But the protection given me was almost as great; I was as hard to see as a top-flight agent. My offices ran on into the mountain beyond the opposition leader's apartments (we did not move over into the Supreme Minister's more palatial quarters; while it would have been legal, it just "was not done" during a caretaker regime)—my offices could be reached from the rear directly from the lower living room but to get at me from the public entrance a man had to pass about five check points—except for the favored few who were conducted directly by Rog through a by-pass tunnel to Penny's office and from there into mine.

The set-up meant that I could study the Farleyfile on anyone before he got to see me. I could even keep it in front of me while he was with me, for the desk had a recessed viewer the visitor could not see, yet I could wipe it out instantly if he turned out to be a floor pacer. The viewer had other uses; Rog could give a visitor the special treatment, rushing him right in to see me, leave him alone with me—and stop in Penny's office and write me a note, which would then be projected on the viewer . . . such quick tips as: "Kiss him to death and promise nothing" or "All he really wants is for his wife to be presented at Court. Promise him that and get rid of him"—or even: "Easy on this one. It's a 'swing' district and he is

smarter than he looks. Turn him over to me and I'll dicker."

I don't know who ran the government. The senior career men, probably. There would be a stack of papers on my desk each morning, I would sign Bonforte's sloppy signature to them, and Penny would take them away. I never had time to read them. The very size of the Imperial machinery dismayed me. Once, when we had to attend a meeting outside the offices, Penny had led me on what she called a short cut through the Archives . . . miles on miles of endless files, each one chock-a-block with microfilm and all of them with moving belts scooting past them so that a clerk would not take all day to fetch one file.

But Penny told me that she had taken me through only one wing of it. The file of the files, she said, occupied a cavern the size of the Grand Assembly Hall. It made me glad that government was not a career with me, but merely a passing hobby, so to speak.

Seeing people was an unavoidable chore, largely useless since Rog, or Bonforte through Rog, made the decisions. My real job was to make campaign speeches. A discreet rumor had been spread that my doctor had been afraid that my heart had been strained by the "virus infection" and had advised me to stay in the low gravity of the Moon throughout the campaign. I did not dare risk taking the impersonation on a tour of Earth, much less make a trip to Venus; the Farleyfile system would break down if I attempted to mix with crowds, not to mention the unknown hazards of the Actionist goon squads—what I would babble with a minim dose of neodexocaine in the forebrain none of us liked to think about, me least of all.

Quiroga was hitting all six continents on Earth, making his stereo appearances as personal appearances on platforms in front of crowds. But it did not worry Rog Clifton. He shrugged and said, "Let him. There are no new votes to be picked up by personal appearances at political rallies. All it does is wear out the speaker. Those rallies are attended only by the faithful."

I hoped that he knew what he was talking about. The campaign was short, only six weeks from Quiroga's resignation to the day he had set for the election before resigning, and I was speaking almost every day, either on a grand network with time shared precisely with the Humanity Party, or speeches canned and sent by shuttle for later release to particular audiences. We had a set routine; a draft would come to me, perhaps from Bill although I never saw him, and then I would rework it. Rog would take the revised draft away; usually it would come back approved . . . and once in a while there would be corrections made in Bonforte's handwriting, now so sloppy as to be almost illegible.

I never ad-libbed at all on those

parts he corrected, though I often did on the rest—when you get rolling there is often a better, more alive, way to say a thing. I began to notice the nature of his corrections; they were almost always eliminations of qualifiers . . . make it blunter, let 'em like it or lump it!

After a while there were fewer corrections. I was getting with it.

I still never saw him. I felt that I could not "wear his head" if I looked at him on his sickbed. But I was not the only one who was not seeing him of his intimate family; Capek had chucked Penny out—for her own good. I did not know it at the time. I did know that Penny had become irritable, absent-minded, and moody after we reached New Batavia. She got circles under her eyes like a raccoon . . . all of which I could not miss, but I attributed it to the pressure of the campaign combined with worry about Bonforte's health. I was only partly right. Capek spotted it and took action, put her under light hypnosis and asked her questions—then he flatly forbade her to see Bonforte again until I was done and finished and shipped away.

The poor girl was going almost out of her mind from visiting the sick room of the man she hopelessly loved—then going straight in to work closely with a man who looked and talked and sounded just like him, but in good health. She was probably beginning to hate me.

Good old Doc Capek got at the root of her trouble, gave her helpful and soothing post-hypnotic suggestions and kept her out of the sick room after that. Naturally I was not told about it at the time; it wasn't any of my business. But Penny perked up and again was her lovable, incredibly efficient self.

It made a lot of difference to me. Let's admit it; at least twice I would have walked out on the whole incredible rat race if it had not been for Penny.

There was one sort of meeting I had to attend, those of the campaign executive committee. Since the Expansionist Party was a minority party, being merely the largest fraction of a coalition of several parties held together by the leadership and personality of John Joseph Bonforte, I had to stand in for him and peddle soothing syrup to those prima donnas. I was briefed for it with painstaking care, and Rog sat beside me and could hint the proper direction if I faltered. But it could not be delegated.

Less than two weeks before election day we were due for a meeting at which the safe districts would be parceled out. The organization always had thirty to forty districts which could be used to make someone eligible for cabinet office, or to provide for a political secretary—a person like Penny was much more valuable if he or she was fully qualified, able to move and speak on the floor of the Assembly, had the right to be present at closed caucuses and so forth—or for other party reasons.

Bonforte himself represented a "safe" district; it relieved him from the necessity of precinct campaigning. Clifton had another. Dak would have had one if he had needed it, but he actually commanded the support of his guild brethren. Rog even hinted to me once that if I wanted to come back in my proper person, say the word and my name would go on the next list.

Some of the spots were always saved for party wheelhorses willing to resign at a moment's notice and thereby provide the Party with a place through a by-election if it proved necessary to qualify a man for cabinet office, or something.

But the whole thing had somewhat the flavor of patronage and, the Coalition being what it was, it was necessary for Bonforte to straighten out conflicting claims and submit a list to the campaign executive committee. It was a last-minute job, to be done just before the ballots were prepared, to allow for late changes.

When Rog and Dak came in I was working on a speech and had told Penny to hold off anything but five-alarm fires. Quiroga had made a wild statement in Sydney, Australia, the night before, of such a nature that we could expose the lie and make him squirm. I was trying my hand at a speech in answer, without waiting for a draft to be handed me; I had high hopes of getting my own version approved.

When they came in I said, "Listen to this," and read them the key paragraph. "How do you like it?"

"That ought to nail his hide to the door," agreed Rog. "Here's the 'safe' list, Chief. Want to look it over? We're due there in twenty minutes."

"Oh, that damned meeting. I don't see why I should look at the list. Anything you want to tell me about it?" Nevertheless I took the list and glanced down it. I knew them all from their Farleyfiles and a few of them from contact; I knew already why each one had to be taken care of.

Then I struck the name: *Corpsman, William J.*

I fought down what I felt was justifiable annoyance and said quietly, "I see Bill is on the list, Rog."

"Oh, yes. I wanted to tell you about that. You see, Chief, as we all know, there has been a certain amount of bad blood between you and Bill. Now I'm not blaming you; it's been Bill's fault. But there are always two sides. What you may not have realized is that Bill has been carrying around a tremendous inferiority feeling; it gives him a chip on the shoulder. This will fix it up."

"So?"

"Yes. It is what he has always wanted. You see, the rest of us all have official status, we're members of the G.A., I mean. I'm talking about those who work closely around, uh, *you*. Bill feels it. I've heard him say, after the third drink, that he was just a hired man. He's bitter about it. You don't mind, do you? The Party can afford it and it's

an easy price to pay for elimination of friction at headquarters."

I had myself under full control by now. "It's none of my business. Why should I mind, if that is what Mr. Bonforte wants?"

I caught just a flicker of a glance from Dak to Clifton. I added, "That *is* what Mr. B. wants? Isn't it, Rog?"

Dak said harshly, "Tell him, Rog."

Rog said slowly, "Dak and I whipped this up ourselves. We think it is for the best."

"Then Mr. Bonforte did not approve it? You asked him, surely?"

"No, we didn't."

"Why not?"

"Chief, this is not the sort of thing to bother him with. He's a tired, old, sick man. I have not been worrying him with anything less than major policy decisions—which this isn't. It is a district we command no matter who stands for it."

"Then why ask my opinion about it at all?"

"Well, we felt you should know . . . and know why. We think you ought to approve it."

"Me? You're asking me for a decision as if I were Mr. Bonforte. I'm not." I tapped the desk in his nervous gesture. "Either this decision is at his level, and you should ask *him*—or it's not, and you should never have asked *me*."

Rog chewed his cigar, then said, "All right, I'm not asking you."

"No!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean 'No!' You did ask me; therefore there is doubt in your mind. So, if you expect me to present that name to the committee—*as if* I were Bonforte—then go in and ask him."

They both sat and said nothing. Finally Dak sighed and said, "Tell the rest, Rog. Or I will."

I waited. Clifton took his cigar out of his mouth and said, "Chief, Mr. Bonforte had a stroke four days ago. He's in no shape to be disturbed."

I held still, and recited to myself all of "the cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces," and so forth. When I was back in shape I said, "How is his mind?"

"His mind seems clear enough, but he is terribly tired. That week as a prisoner was more of an ordeal than we realized. The stroke left him in a coma for twenty-four hours. He's out of it now, but the left side of his face is paralyzed and his entire left side is partly out of service."

"Uh, what does Dr. Capek say?"

"He thinks that, as the clot clears up, you'll never be able to tell the difference. But he'll have to take it easier than he used to. But, Chief, right now he is *ill*. We'll just have to carry on through the balance of the campaign without him."

I felt a ghost of the lost feeling I had had when my father died. I had never seen Bonforte, I had had nothing from him but a few scrawled corrections on typescript. But I leaned on him all the way.

The fact that he was in that room next door had made the whole thing possible.

I took a long breath, let it out, and said, "O.K., Rog. We'll have to."

"Yes, Chief." He stood up. "We've got to get over to that meeting. How about *that?*" He nodded toward the safe-districts list.

"Oh." I tried to think. Maybe it was possible that Bonforte would reward Bill with the privilege of calling himself "The Honorable," just to keep him happy. He wasn't small about such things; he did not bind the mouths of the kine who tread the grain. In one of his essays on politics he had said, "I am not an intellectual man. If I have any special talent, it lies in picking men of ability and letting them work."

"How long has Bill been with him?" I asked suddenly.

"Eh? About four years. A little over."

Bonforte evidently had liked his work. "That's past one general election, isn't it? Why didn't he make him an assemblyman then?"

"Why, I don't know. The matter never came up."

"When was Penny put in?"

"About three years ago. A by-election."

"There's your answer, Rog."

"I don't follow you."

"Bonforte could have made Bill a Grand Assemblyman at any time. He didn't choose to. Change that nomination to a 'resigner.' Then if Mr. Bonforte wants Bill to have it, he can arrange a by-election for him later . . . when he's feeling himself."

Clifton showed no expression. He simply picked up the list and said, "Very well, Chief."

Later that same day Bill quit. I suppose Rog had to tell him that his arm-twisting had not worked. But when Rog told me about it I felt sick, realizing that my stiff-necked attitude had us all in acute danger. I told him so. He shook his head.

"But he knows it *all*! It was his scheme from the start. Look at the load of dirt he can haul over to the Humanity camp."

"Forget it, Chief. Bill may be a louse—I've no use for a man who will quit in the middle of a campaign; you just don't do that, ever. But he is not a rat. In his profession you don't spill a client's secrets, even if you fall out with him."

"I hope you are right."

"You'll see. Don't worry about it. Just get on with the job."

As the next few days passed I came to the conclusion that Rog knew Bill better than I did. We heard nothing from him nor about him and the campaign went ahead as usual, getting rougher all the time, but with not a peep to show that our giant hoax was compromised. I began to feel better and buckled down to making the best Bonforte speeches I could manage . . . sometimes with Rog's help; sometimes just with his O.K. Mr.

Bonforte was steadily improving again, but Capek had him on absolute quiet.

Rog had to go to Earth during the last week; there are types of fence-mending that simply can't be done by remote control. After all, votes come from the precincts and the field managers count for more than the speech makers. But speeches still had to be made and press conferences given; I carried on, with Dak and Penny at my elbow—of course I was much more closely with it now; most questions I could answer without stopping to think.

There was the usual twice-weekly press conference in the offices the day Rog was due back. I had been hoping that he would be back in time for it, but there was no reason I could not take it alone. Penny walked in ahead of me, carrying her gear; I heard her gasp.

I saw then that Bill was at the far end of the table.

But I looked around the room as usual and said, "Good morning, gentlemen."

"Good morning, Mr. Minister!" most of them answered.

I added, "Good morning, Bill. Didn't know you were here. Whom are you representing?"

They gave him dead silence to reply. Every one of them knew that Bill had quit us . . . or had been fired. He grinned at me, and answered, "Good morning, *Mr. Bonforte.* I'm with the Krein Syndicate."

I knew it was coming then; I tried not to give him the satisfaction of letting it show. "A fine outfit. I hope they are paying you what you are worth. Now to business— The written questions first. You have them, Penny?"

I went rapidly through the written questions, giving out answers I had already had time to think over, then sat back as usual and said, "We have time to bat it around a bit, gentlemen. Any other questions?"

There were several. I was forced to answer "No comment" only once —an answer Bonforte preferred to an ambiguous one. Finally I glanced at my watch and said, "That will be all this morning, gentlemen," and started to stand up.

"Smythe!" Bill shouted.

I kept right on getting to my feet, did not look toward him.

"I mean you, Mr. Phony Bonforte-Smythe!" he went on angrily, raising his voice still more.

This time I did look at him, with astonishment . . . just the amount appropriate, I think, to an important official subjected to rudeness under unlikely conditions. Bill was pointing at me and his face was red. "You impostor! You small-time actor! You *fraud*!"

The London *Times* man on my right said quietly, "Do you want me to call the guard, sir?"

I said, "No. He's harmless."

Bill laughed. "So I'm harmless, huh? You'll find out."

"I really think I should, sir," the *Times* man insisted.

"No." I then said sharply, "That's

enough, Bill. You had better leave quietly."

"Don't you wish I would?" He started spewing forth the basic story, talking rapidly. He made no mention of the kidnaping and did not mention his own part in the hoax, but implied that he had left us rather than be mixed up in any such swindle. The impersonation was attributed, correctly as far as it went, to illness on the part of Bonforte—with a strong hint that we might have doped him.

I listened patiently. Most of the reporters simply listened at first, with that stunned expression of outsiders exposed unwillingly to a vicious family argument. Then some of them started scribbling or dictating into minicorders.

When he stopped I said, "Are you through, Bill?"

"That's enough, isn't it?"

"More than enough. I'm sorry, Bill. That's all, gentlemen. I must get back to work."

"Just a moment, Mr. Minister!" Someone called out. "Do you want to issue a denial?" Someone else added, "Are you going to sue?"

I answered the latter question first. "No, I shan't sue. One doesn't sue a sick man."

"Sick, am I?" shouted Bill.

"Quiet down, Bill. As for issuing a denial, I hardly think it is called for. However, I see that some of you have been taking notes. While I doubt if any of your publishers would run this story, if they do, this anecdote may add something to it. Did you ever hear of the professor who spent forty years of his life proving that the Odyssey was not written by Homer . . . but by another Greek of the *same name?*"

It got a polite laugh. I smiled and started to turn away again. Bill came rushing around the table and grabbed at my arm. "You can't laugh it off!" The *Times* man — Mr. Ackroyd, it was—pulled him away from me.

I said, "Thank you, sir." Then to Corpsman I added, "What do you want me to do, Bill? I've tried to avoid having you arrested."

"Call the guards if you like, you phony! We'll see who stays in jail longest! *Wait until they take your fingerprints!*"

I sighed and made the understatement of my life. "This is ceasing to be a joke. Gentlemen, I think I had better put an end to this. Penny my dear, will you please have someone send in fingerprinting equipment?" I knew I was sunk—but, damn it, if you are caught by the Birkenhead Drill, the least you owe yourself is to stand at attention while the ship goes down. Even a villain should make a good exit.

Bill did not wait. He grabbed the water glass that had been sitting in front of me; I had handled it several times. "The hell with that! This will do."

"I've told you before, Bill, to mind your language in the presence of ladies. But you may keep the glass."

"You're bloody well right I'll keep it."

"Very well. Please leave. If not, I'll be forced to summon the guard."

He walked out. Nobody said anything. I said, "May I provide fingerprints for any of the rest of you?"

Ackroyd said hastily, "Oh, I'm sure we don't want them, Mr. Minister."

"Oh, by all means! If there is a story in this, you'll want to be covered." I insisted because it was in character—and in the second and third place, you can't be a little bit pregnant, nor slightly unmasked . . . and I did not want my friends present to be scooped by Bill; it was the last thing I could do for them.

We did not have to send for formal equipment. Penny had carbon sheets and someone had one of those lifetime memopads with plastic sheets; they took prints nicely. Then I said good morning and left.

We got as far as Penny's private office; once inside she fainted dead. I carried her into my office, laid her on the couch, then sat down at my desk and simply shook for several minutes.

Neither one of us was worth much the rest of the day. We carried on as usual except that Penny brushed off all callers, claiming excuses of some sort. I was due to make a speech that night and thought seriously of canceling it. But I left the news turned on all day and there was not a word about the incident of that morning. I realized that they were checking the prints before risking it—after all, I *was* supposed to be His Imperial Majesty's first minister; they would want confirmation. So I decided to make the speech, since I had already written it and the time was scheduled. I couldn't even consult Dak; he was away in Tycho City.

It was the best one I made. I put into it the same stuff a comic uses to quiet a panic in a burning theater. After the pickup was dead I just sunk my face in my hands and wept, while Penny patted my shoulder. We had not discussed the horrible mess at all.

Rog grounded at twenty hundred Greenwich, about as I finished, and checked in with me as soon as he was back. In a dull monotone I told him the whole dirty story; he listened, chewing on a dead cigar, his face expressionless.

At the end I said almost pleadingly, "I *had* to give the fingerprints, Rog. You see that, don't you? To refuse would not have been in character."

Rog said, "Don't worry."

"Huh?"

"I said, 'Don't worry.' When the reports on those prints come back from the Identification Bureau at the Hague, you are in for a small but pleasant surprise . . . and our ex-friend Bill is in for a much bigger one, but not pleasant. If he has collected any of his blood money in advance, they will probably take it out of his hide. I hope they do."

I could not mistake what he

meant. "Oh! But Rog . . . they won't stop there. There are a dozen other places. Social Security . . . uh, lots of places."

"You think perhaps we were not thorough? Chief, I knew this could happen, one way or another. From the moment Dak sent word to complete Plan Mardi Gras, the necessary cover-up started. Everywhere. But I didn't think it necessary to tell Bill." He sucked on his dead cigar, took it out of his mouth and looked at it. "Poor Bill."

Penny sighed softly and fainted again.

X

Somehow we got to the final day. We did not hear from Bill again; the passenger lists showed that he went Earthside two days after his fiasco. If any news service ran anything I did not hear of it, nor did Quiroga's speeches hint at it.

Mr. Bonforte steadily improved until it was a safe bet that he could take up his duties after the election. His paralysis continued in part but we even had that covered: he would go on vacation right after election, a routine practice that almost every politician indulges in. The vacation would be in the *Tommie,* safe from everything. Sometime in the course of the trip I would be transferred and smuggled back—and the Chief would have a mild stroke, brought on by the strain of the campaign.

Rog would have to unsort some fingerprints, but he could safely wait a year or more for that.

Election day I was happy as a puppy in a shoe closet. The impersonation was over, although I was going to do one more short turn. I had already canned two five-minute speeches for grand network, one magnanimously accepting victory, the other gallantly conceding defeat; my job was finished. When the last one was in the can, I grabbed Penny and kissed her. She didn't even seem to mind.

The remaining short turn was a command performance; Mr. Bonforte wanted to see me—as *him*—before he let me drop it. I did not mind. Now that the strain was over, it did not worry me to see him; playing him for his entertainment would be like a comedy skit, except that I would do it straight. What am I saying?—playing straight is the essence of comedy.

The whole family would gather in the upper living room—there, because Mr. Bonforte had not seen the sky in some weeks and wanted to—and there we would listen to the returns, and either drink to victory, or drown our sorrows and swear to do better next time. Strike me out of the last part; I had had my first and last political campaign and I wanted no more politics. I was not even sure I wanted to act again. Acting every minute for over six weeks adds up to about five hundred ordinary performances. That's a long run.

They brought him up the lift in a wheel chair. I stayed out of sight and let them arrange him on a couch before I came in; a man is entitled not to have his weakness displayed before strangers. Besides I wanted to make an entrance.

I was almost startled out of character. He looked like my father! Oh, it was just a "family" resemblance; he and I looked much more alike than either one of us looked like my father, but the likeness was there—and the age was right, for he looked *old*. I had not guessed how much he had aged. He was thin and his hair was white.

I made an immediate mental note that, during the coming vacation in space, I must help them prepare for the transition, the re-substitution. No doubt Capek could put weight back on him; if not, there were ways to make a man appear fleshier without obvious padding. I would dye his hair myself. The delayed announcement of the stroke he had suffered would cover the inevitable discrepancies. After all, he *had* changed this much in only a few weeks; the need was to keep the fact from calling attention to the impersonation.

But these practical details were going on by themselves in a corner of my mind; my own being was welling with emotion. Ill though he was, the man gave off a force both spiritual and virile. I felt that warm, almost holy, shock one feels when first coming into sight of that great statue of Abraham Lincoln. I was reminded of another statue, too, seeing him lying there with his legs and his helpless left side covered with a shawl: the wounded Lion of Lucerne. He had that massive strength and dignity, even when helpless: "The Old Guard dies, but it never surrenders."

He looked up as I came in and smiled the warm, tolerant and friendly smile I had learned to portray, and motioned with his good hand for me to come to him. I smiled the same smile back and went to him. He shook hands with a grip surprisingly strong and said warmly, "I am happy to meet you at last." His speech was slightly

blurred and I could now see the slackness on the side of his face away from me.

"I am honored and happy to meet you, sir." I had to think about it to keep from matching the blurring of paralysis.

He looked me up and down, and grinned. "It looks to me as if you had already met me."

I glanced down at myself. "I have tried, sir."

"'Tried!' You succeeded. It is an odd thing to see one's own self."

I realized with sudden painful empathy that he was not emotionally aware of his own appearance; my present appearance was "his"—and any change in himself was merely incidental to illness, temporary, not to be noticed. But he went on speaking. "Would you mind moving around a bit for me, sir? I want to see me . . . you . . . us. I want the audience's viewpoint for once."

So I straightened up, moved around the room, spoke to Penny—the poor child was looking from one to the other of us with a dazed expression — picked up a paper, scratched my collarbone and rubbed my chin, moved his wand from under my arm to my hand and fiddled with it.

He was watching with delight. So I added an encore. Taking the middle of the rug I gave the peroration of one of his finest speeches, not trying to do it word for word, but interpreting it, letting it roll and thunder, as he would have done—and ending with his own exact ending: "A slave cannot be freed, save he do it himself. Nor can you enslave a free man; the very most you can do is kill him!"

There was that wonderful hushed silence, then a ripple of clapping—and Bonforte himself was pounding the couch with his good hand and calling, "Bravo!"

It was the only applause I ever got in the role. It was enough.

He had me pull up a chair then, and sit with him. I saw him glance at the wand, so I handed it to him. "The safety is on, sir."

"I know how to use it." He looked at it closely, then handed it back. I had thought perhaps he would keep it. Since he did not, I decided to turn it over to Dak to deliver to him. He asked me about myself and told me that he did not recall ever seeing me play, but that he had seen my father's "Cyrano." He was making a great effort to control the errant muscles of his mouth and his speech was clear but labored.

Then he asked me what I intended to do now? I told him that I had no plans as yet. He nodded and said, "We'll see. There is a place for you. There is work to be done." He made no mention of pay, which made me proud.

The returns were beginning to come in and he turned his attention to the stereo tank. Returns had been coming in, of course, for forty-eight hours, since the outer worlds and the districtless constituencies vote before Earth does, and even on

Earth an election "day" is more than thirty hours long, as the globe turns. But now we began to get the important districts of the great land masses of Earth. We had forged far ahead the day before in the outer returns and Rog had had to tell me that it meant nothing; the Expansionists always carried the Out Worlds. What the billions of people still on Earth who had never been out, and never would, thought about it was what mattered.

But we needed every outer vote we could get. The Agrarian Party on Ganymede had swept five out of six districts; they were part of our Coalition, and the Expansionist Party as such did not put up even token candidates. The situation on Venus was more ticklish, with the Venusians split into dozens of splinter parties divided on fine points of theology impossible for a human being to understand. Nevertheless we expected most of the native vote, either directly or through caucused coalition later, and we should get practically all of the human vote there. The Imperial restriction that the natives must select human beings to represent them at New Batavia was a thing Bonforte was pledged to remove; it gained us votes on Venus; we did not know yet how many votes it would lose us on Earth.

Since the Nests sent only observers to the Assembly the only vote we worried about on Mars was the human vote. We had the popular sentiment; they had the patronage. But with an honest count we expected a shoo-in there.

Dak was bending over a slide rule at Rog's side; Rog had a big sheet of paper laid out in some complicated weighting formula of his own. A dozen or more of the giant metal brains through the Solar System were doing the same thing that night, but Rog preferred his own guesses. He told me once that he could walk through a district, "sniffing" it, and come within two per cent of its results. I think he could.

Doc Capek was sitting back with his hands over his paunch, as relaxed as an angleworm. Penny was moving around, pushing straight things crooked and vice versa and fetching us drinks. She never seemed to look directly at either me or Mr. Bonforte.

I had never before experienced an election-night party; they are not like any other. There is a cozy, warm rapport of all passion spent. It really does not matter too much how the people decide; you have done your best, you are with your friends and comrades and for a while there is no worry and no pressure despite the over-all excitement, like frosting on a cake, of the incoming returns.

I don't know when I've had so good a time.

Rog looked up, looked at me, then spoke to Mr. Bonforte. "The Continent is seesaw. The Americas are testing the water with a toe before coming in on our side; the only question is, how deep?"

"Can you make a projection, Rog?"

"Not yet. Oh, we have the popular vote but in the G.A. it could swing either way, by half a dozen seats." He stood up. "I think I had better mosey out into town."

Properly speaking, I should have gone, as "Mr. Bonforte." The Party Leader should certainly appear at the main headquarters of the party sometime during election night. But I had never been in headquarters, it being the sort of a button-holing place where my impersonation might be easily breached. My "illness" had excused me from it during the campaign; tonight it was not worth the risk, so Rog would go instead, and shake hands and grin and let the keyed-up girls who had done the hard and endless paperwork throw their arms around him and weep. "Back in an hour."

Even our little party should have been down on the lower level, to include all the office staff, especially Jimmie Washington. But it would not work, not without shutting Mr. Bonforte himself out of it. They were having their own party of course. I stood up. "Rog, I'll go down with you and say hello to Jimmie's harem."

"Eh? You don't have to, you know."

"It's the proper thing to do, isn't it? And it really isn't any trouble or risk." I turned to Mr. Bonforte. "How about it, sir?"

"I would appreciate it very much."

We went down the lift and through the silent, empty private quarters and on through my office and Penny's. Beyond her door was bedlam. A stereo receiver, moved in for the purpose, was blasting at full gain, the floor was littered, and everybody was drinking, or smoking, or both. Even Jimmie Washington was holding a drink while he listened to the returns. He was not drinking it; he neither drank nor smoked. No doubt someone had handed it to him and he had kept it. Jimmie had a fine sense of fitness.

I made the rounds, with Rog at my side, thanked Jimmie warmly and very sincerely, and apologized that I was feeling tired. "I'm going up and spread the bones, Jimmie. Make my excuses to people, will you?"

"Yes, sir. You've got to take care of yourself, Mr. Minister."

I went back up while Rog went on out into the public tunnels.

Penny shushed me with a finger to her lips when I came into the upper living room. Bonforte seemed to have dropped off to sleep and the receiver was muted down. Dak still sat in front of it, filling in figures on the big sheet against Rog's return. Capek had not moved. He nodded and raised his glass to me.

I let Penny fix me a Scotch and water, then stepped out into the bubble balcony. It was night both by clock and by fact and Earth was almost full, dazzling in a Tiffany spread of stars. I searched North America and tried to pick out the little dot I had left only weeks

earlier, and tried to get my emotions straight.

After a while I came back in; night on Luna is rather overpowering. Rog returned a little later and sat back down at his work sheets without speaking. I noticed that Bonforte was awake again.

The critical returns were coming in now and everybody kept quiet, letting Rog with his pencil and Dak with his slide rule have peace to work. At long, long last, Rog shoved his chair back. "That's it, Chief," he said without looking up. "We're in. Majority not less than seven seats, probably nineteen, possible over thirty."

After a pause Bonforte said quietly, "You're sure?"

"Positive. Penny, try another channel and see what we get."

I went over and sat by Bonforte; I could not talk. He reached out and patted my hand in a fatherly way and we both watched the receiver. The first station Penny got said: ". . . Doubt about it, folks; eight of the robot brains say yes, *Curiac* says maybe. The Expansionist Party has won a decisive—" She switched to another.

". . . Confirms his temporary post for another five years. Mr. Quiroga cannot be reached for a statement but his general manager in New Chicago admits that the present trend cannot be over—"

Rog got up and went to the phone; Penny muted the news down until nothing could be heard. The announcer continued mouthing; he was simply saying in different words what we already knew.

Rog came back; Penny turned up the gain. The announcer went on for a moment, then stopped, read something that was handed to him, and turned back with a broad grin. "Friends and fellow citizens, I now bring you a statement from the *Supreme Minister!*"

The picture changed to my victory speech.

I sat there, luxuriating in it, with my feelings as mixed up as possible but all good, painfully good. I had done a job on the speech and I knew it; I looked tired, sweaty, and calmly triumphant. It sounded ad-lib.

I had just reached: "Let us go forward together, with freedom for all—" when I heard a noise behind me.

"Mr. Bonforte!" I said. "Doc! *Doc!* Come quickly!"

Mr. Bonforte was pawing at me with his right hand and trying very urgently to tell me something. But it was no use; his poor mouth failed him and his mighty indomitable will could not make the weak flesh obey.

I took him in my arms—then he went into Cheyne-Stokes breathing and quickly into termination. .

They took his body back down in the lift, Dak and Capek together; I was no use to them. Rog came up and patted me on the shoulder, then he went away. Penny had followed the others down. Presently I went again out onto the balcony. I needed "fresh air" even though it was the

same machine-pumped air as the living room. But it felt fresher.

They had killed him. His enemies had killed him as certainly as if they had put a knife in his ribs. Despite all that we had done, the risks we had taken, in the end they had murdered him. "Murder most foul!"

I felt dead inside me, numb with the shock. I had seen "myself" die, I had again seen my father die. I knew then why they so rarely manage to save one of a pair of Siamese twins. I was empty.

I don't know how long I stayed out there. Eventually I heard Rog's voice behind me. "Chief?"

I turned. "Rog," I said urgently, "don't call me that. Please!"

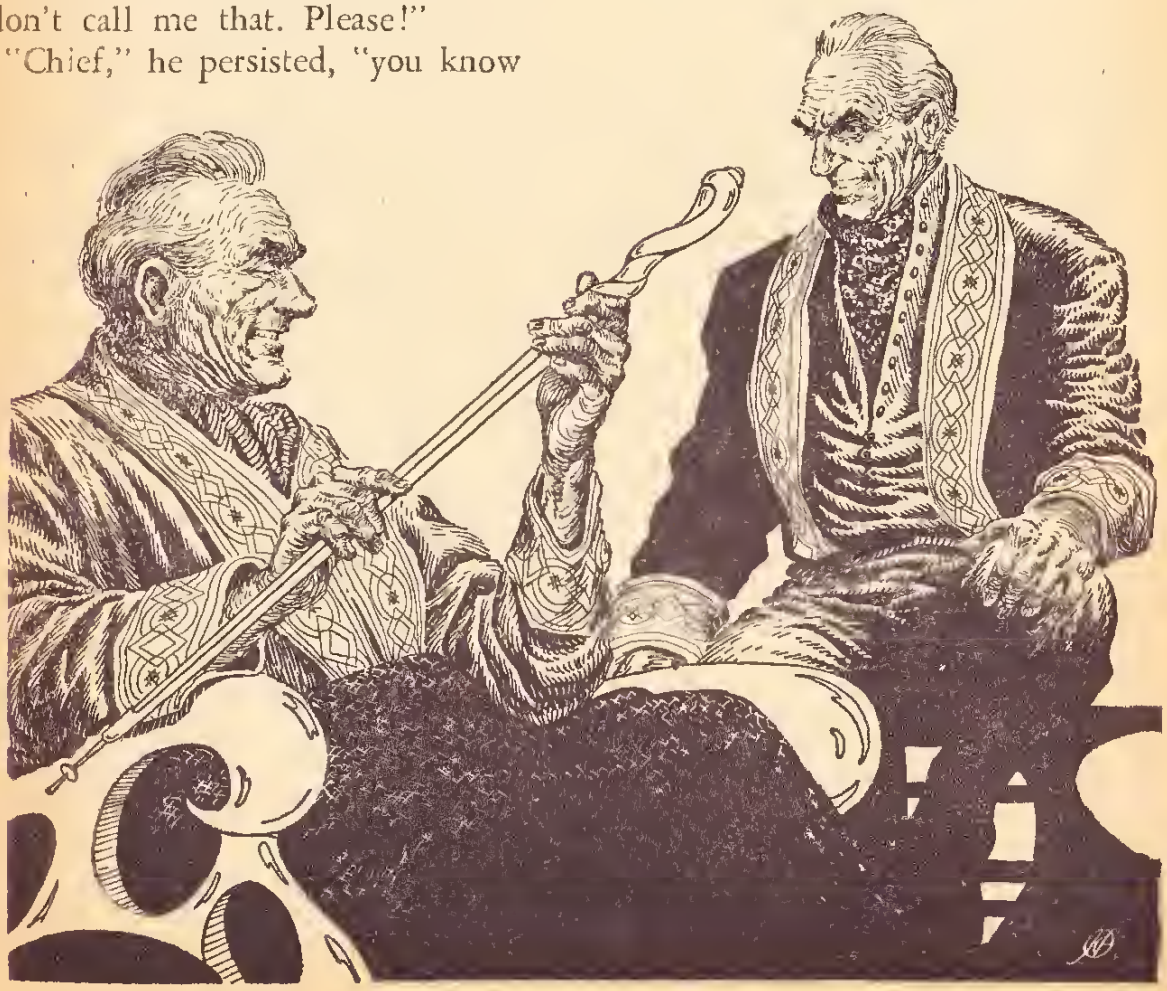
"Chief," he persisted, "you know what you have to do now? Don't you?"

I felt dizzy and his face blurred. I did not know what he was talking about—I did not *want* to know what he was talking about.

"What do you mean?"

"Chief . . . one man dies—but the show goes on. You can't quit now."

My head ached and my eyes would not focus. He seemed to pull toward me and away while his voice drove on. ". . . Robbed him of his chance to finish his work. So you've got to do it for him. You've got to make him live again!"



I shook my head and made a great effort to pull myself together and reply. "Rog, you don't know what you are saying. It's preposterous . . . ridiculous! I'm no statesman. I'm just a bloody actor! I make faces and make people laugh. That's all I'm good for."

To my own horror I heard myself say it in Bonforte's voice.

Rog looked at me. "Seems to me you've done all right so far."

I tried to change my voice, tried to gain control of the situation. "Rog, you're upset. When you've calmed down you will see how ridiculous this is. You're right; the show goes on. But not that way. The proper thing to do—the *only* thing to do—is for you yourself to move on up. The election is won; you've got your majority . . . now you take office and carry out the program."

He looked at me and shook his head sadly. "I would if I could. I admit it. But I can't. Chief, you remember those confounded executive committee meetings? You kept them in line. The whole Coalition has been kept glued together by the personal force and leadership of one man. If you don't follow through now, all that he lived for—and died for—will fall apart."

I had no answering argument; he might be right—I had seen the wheels within wheels of politics in the past month and a half. "Rog, even if what you say is true, the solution you offer is impossible. We've barely managed to keep up this pretense by letting me be seen only under carefully stage-managed conditions . . . and we've just missed being caught out as it is. But to make it work week after week, month after month, even year after year if I understand you—no, it couldn't be done. It is impossible. I *can't* do it!"

"You *can*!" He leaned toward me and said forcefully, "We've all talked it over and we know the hazards as well as you do. But you'll have a chance to grow into it. Two weeks in space to start with—hell, a month if you want it! You'll study all the time—his journals, his boyhood diaries, his scrapbooks, you'll soak yourself in them. And we'll all help you."

I did not answer. He went on, "Look, Chief, you've learned that a political personality is not one man; it's a team . . . it's a team bound together by common purposes and common beliefs. We've lost our team captain and we've got to have another one. But the team is still there."

Capek was out on the balcony; I had not seen him come out. I turned to him. "Are you for this, too?"

"Yes."

"Its' your duty," Rog added.

Capek said slowly, "I won't go that far. I hope you will do it. But, damn it, I won't be your conscience. I believe in free will, frivolous as that may sound from a medical man." He turned to Clifton. "We

had better leave him alone, Rog. He knows. Now it's up to him."

But, although they left, I was not to be alone just yet. Dak came out. To my relief and gratitude he did not call me "Chief."

"Hello, Dak."

"Howdy." He was silent for a moment, smoking and looking out at the stars. Then he turned to me. "Old son, we've been through some things together. I know you now, and I'll back you with a gun, or money, or fists anytime, and never ask why. If you choose to drop out now, I won't have a word of blame and I won't think any the less of you. You've done a noble best."

"Uh, thanks, Dak."

"One more word and I'll smoke out. Just remember this: if you decide you can't do it, the foul scum who brain-washed him will win. In spite of everything, they win." He went inside.

I felt torn apart in my mind . . . then I gave way to sheer self-pity. It wasn't fair! I had my *own* life to live. I was at the top of my powers, with my greatest professional triumphs still ahead of me. It wasn't right to expect me to bury myself, perhaps for years, in the anonymity of another man's role . . . while the public forgot me, producers and agents forgot me . . . would probably believe I was dead.

It wasn't fair. It was too much to ask.

Presently I pulled out of it and for a time did not think. Mother Earth was still serene and beautiful and changeless in the sky; I wondered what the election night celebrations there sounded like. Mars and Jupiter and Venus were all in sight, strung like prizes along the zodiac. Ganymede I could not see, of course, nor the lonely colony out on far Pluto.

"Worlds of Hope," Bonforte had called them.

But he was dead. He was gone. They had taken away from him his birthright, at its ripe fullness. He was dead.

And they had put it up to me to recreate him, make him live again.

Was I up to it? Could I possibly measure up to his noble standards? What would he want me to do? If he were in my place . . . what would Bonforte do? Again and again in the campaign I had asked myself: "What would Bonforte do?"

Someone moved behind me, I turned and saw Penny. I looked at her and said, "Did they send you out? Did you come to plead with me?"

"No."

She added nothing and did not seem to expect me to answer. The silence went on, nor did we look at each other. At last I said, "Penny? If I try to do it . . . will you help?"

She turned suddenly toward me. "Yes. Oh, yes, Chief! I'll help!"

"Then I'll try," I said humbly.

* * * *

I wrote all of the above twenty-five years ago to try to straighten

out my own confusion. I tried to tell the truth and not spare myself because it was not meant to be read by anyone but myself and my therapist, Dr. Capek. It is strange, after a quarter of a century, to reread the foolish and emotional words of that young man. I remember him, yet I have trouble realizing that I was ever he. My wife Penelope claims that she remembers him better than I do—and that she never loved anyone else. So time changes us.

I find I can "remember" Bonforte's early life better than I remember my actual life as that rather pathetic person, Lawrence Smith, or —as he liked to style himself—"The Great Lorenzo." Does that make me insane? Schizophrenic, perhaps? If so, it is a necessary insanity for the role I have had to play, for in order to let Bonforte live again, that seedy actor had to be suppressed . . . completely.

Insane or not, I am aware that he once existed and that I was he. He was never a success as an actor, not really—though I think he was sometimes touched with the true madness. He made his final exit still perfectly in character; I have a yellowed newspaper clipping somewhere which states that he was "found dead" in a Jersey City hotel room, from an overdose of sleeping pills—apparently taken in a fit of despondency, for his agent issued a statement that he had not had a part in several months. Personally, I feel that they need not have mentioned that about his being out of work; if not libelous, it was at least unkind. The date of the clipping proves, incidentally, that he could not have been in New Batavia, nor anywhere else, during the campaign of '15.

I suppose I should burn it.

But there is no one left alive today who knows the truth other than Dak and Penelope—except the men who murdered Bonforte's body.

I have been in and out of office three times now and perhaps this term will be my last. I was knocked out the first time when we finally put the eetees—Venusians and Martians and Outer Jovians—into the Grand Assembly. But the non-human peoples are still there and I came back. The people will take a certain amount of reform, then they want a rest. But the reforms stay. People don't really want change, any change at all—and xenophobia is very deep-rooted. But we progress, as we must . . . if we are to go out to the stars.

Again and again I have asked myself: "What would Bonforte do?" I am not sure that my answers have always been right (although I am sure that I am the best-read student in his works in the System). But I have tried to stay in character in his role. A long time ago someone—Voltaire?—someone said, "If Satan should ever replace God, he would find it necessary to assume the attributes of Divinity."

I have never regretted my lost profession. In a way, I have not lost it; Willem was right. There is other applause besides handclapping and there is always the warm glow of a

good performance. I have tried, I suppose, to create the perfect work of art. Perhaps I have not fully succeeded—but I think my father would rate it as a "good performance."

No, I do not regret it, even though I was happier then—at least I slept better. But there is solemn satisfaction in doing the best you can for eight billion people.

Perhaps their lives have no cosmic significance, but they have feelings. They can hurt.

THE END

THE ANALYTICAL LABORATORY

We haven't published an An Lab report for some while. So I hasten to make up for lost time.

Your comments are not unheeded; I can't answer all those letters individually, but the letters in total help determine the magazine—and specifically determine which authors get the bonus checks.

OCTOBER 1955

PLACE	STORY	AUTHOR	POINTS
1.	Call Him Dead (Con.)	Eric Frank Russell	1.2
2.	The Short Life	Francis Donovan	2.2
3.	New Blood	James Gunn	2.7
4.	Security	Ernest M. Kenyon	3.9

NOVEMBER 1955

1.	Under Pressure (Pt. 1)	Frank Herbert	1.33
2.	Cubs of the Wolf	Raymond F. Jones	2.5
3.	The Outvaders	Joe L. Hensley	3.58
4.	Slingshot	Irving W. Lande	3.75
5.	Nobody Bothers Gus	Paul Janvier	3.83

DECEMBER 1955

1.	Under Pressure (Pt. 2)	Frank Herbert	2.31
2.	Sand Doom	Murray Leinster	2.91
3.	The Golden Judge	Nathaniel Gordon	3.25
4.	Faithfully Yours	Lou Tabakow	3.75
5.	Far From Home	J. A. Taylor	4.00

JANUARY 1956

1.	Under Pressure (Con.)	Frank Herbert	1.28
2.	The Executioner	Algis Budrys	1.85
3.	Indirection	Everett B. Cole	3.28
4.	Won't You Walk—	Theodore Sturgeon	3.85

THE EDITOR.

THE REFERENCE LIBRARY

BY P. SCHUYLER MILLER

READERS' SECOND CHOICE

Not quite four years ago, in the "Reference Library" for June, 1952, I asked our readers for their nominations for two 25-book libraries. One was to be a "basic" library: their choice of the best twenty-five books of all time. The other was to be a sort of historical collection, illustrating the development of science fiction. The response was gratifying (and international); the statistical work was more than I had bargained for, and took some time that I might better have spent at the Chicago convention; and the results were published in the January, 1953 issue.

I'd like to try it again: give our readers a second choice. And by starting earlier, I'll be able to announce the results at the New York convention, Labor Day week end (and scoop myself).

I have a feeling that the results this time may be quite different. In 1952 the great boom in science-fiction publishing was just getting under way; now it's hit a peak and subsided. Pocket-book s-f amounted to next to nothing: Avon, now seemingly inactive, was doing most of the publishing of originals.

By and large, we were still look-

ing and thinking backward then. Out of the twenty-eight books I finally listed in the "Basic" library, two were by H. G. Wells, one was Wright's "The World Below," and one was Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World." Six were anthologies —good ones—and seven were single-author short-story collections. In other words, as of 1952 *modern* science fiction was at its best in the short stories of Heinlein, Bradbury, Asimov ("I Robot"), del Rey and John Campbell, plus Groff Conklin's and the Healy-McComas and Bleiler-Dikty anthologies.

Wells probably got into the list primarily because there are one-volume collections of his novels and short stories which enabled you to get in just about everything he ever wrote in the field, without having to agree on one novel. The modern science-fiction novels which made the grade were van Vogt's "Slan," "World of A" and "The Weapon Makers"; de Camp's "Lest Darkness Fall"; Doc Smith's "Gray Lensman"; Asimov's "Foundation"; Orwell's "1984"; Russell's "Sinister Barrier"; Campbell's "The Moon Is Hell"; Heinlein's "Beyond This Horizon" (his two "future history" books were both near the top of the list); and Williamson's "Humanoids," in addition to those I mentioned earlier. No Verne, no Doyle, no Merritt, no Stapledon, no Burroughs—though all of them but Burroughs were in the "classics" list.

Let's forget the classics this time. What I want you to do, again, is to send me your list of the twenty-five science-fiction books which you consider the best ever published. They don't have to be in print. They very definitely *can* and should include paperbacks, because we found out last time that the p-b's are the only form in which many of our younger fans read science-fiction novels.

These are the books you would want to keep if your science-fiction library were limited to twenty-five books (not an impossibility with present trends in apartment living: most of my own collection is in dead storage because I've no place to put it). These are books you would recommend as the greatest, in both ancient and modern senses.

I think it's going to be a very different list from the one you gave me four years ago.

Now, as to a deadline. Unless I am miscalculating, you will get this issue around the middle of March. Last time you had three months to make up your minds, and although ballots kept coming along throughout that time, I don't think there were any serious changes in the list after the first couple of months. So this time I'll give you until the week end of June 2-3 to get in your list. This means that I have a month to complete the tally—and you sent me two hundred seventy-five different titles last time—and get it into the October "Reference Library," on the stands in mid-September, just after you've heard the results at the NYCON. Perhaps the Committee

will go for an exhibit of the winners: there's unfortunately no s-f foundation to set up an award per se.

One other thing: please send your nominations to me here in Pittsburgh, rather than in care of the magazine. They'll be forwarded from New York, of course, but if you're just under the deadline you may not make it. Even with three months, there were some late ballots last time. I rent a postoffice box purely and simply as a permanent address for this department, so why not use it? The address:

P. Schuyler Miller
The Reference Library
P.O. Box 1573
Pittsburgh 30, Pa.

There is one way in which you can legitimately load the ballot box in this poll. No one tried it last time, though I heard that it was considered. If any fan club wants to poll its members, add up the results in a Club list of twenty-five "best" books, and send me the list as a weighted vote of fifteen or twenty-five or one hundred twenty-five fans, go ahead and do it. I'll take the ballot as the considered opinion of you all, unless there's something obviously phony about it. The larger the number of votes cast, the more meaning such a list as this will have, statistically, as the joint choice of ASF readers . . . and that's what we're looking for. You can even, if you want, send me the one hundred twenty-five individual ballots of your members (though I shudder at what that's going to do to my fine June evenings!).

Side bets on the results are entirely your own affair. I wouldn't make or take any, personally.

* * * *

There may be an ethic in our society which is intended to keep one book reviewer from snarling and snapping at another. Professional solidarity, and all that. If so, I contend that the solidarity within the science fiction-fantasy field—writers, editors, fans—carries more weight.

Ray Bradbury's new book, "The October Country," isn't science fiction; it's pure fantasy, with a leavening of the "straight" psychological horror tale. In fact, this is a new edition of his classic "Dark Carnival" with four new stories added and twelve of the old stories dropped out of the Arkham House edition. The four new stories are all tales of abnormal obsession without any supernatural element: "The Dwarf" (who sees himself big as his dreams in a side-show's distorting mirror, until a little man cuts him down); "The Watchful Poker Chip of H. Matisse" (a classic bore learns to shock the unshockable); "Touched With Fire" (a woman destined to be murdered); and "The Wonderful Death of Dudley Stone" (in which a novelist is reborn by "dying" at the hands of a rival). It's a Ballantine hard-cover book, by the way: no paperback edition—308 pages, $3.50.

The original book contained the stories which made Ray Bradbury famous, and which included some of his most original ideas, *story-wise,* before pure style began to take over in "The Martian Chronicles." Here you'll find that all-time classic, "Homecoming," with such other macabre fancies as "The Small Assassin," "The Crowd," "The Man Upstairs," and "There Was an Old Woman."

In the New York *Times* Book Review for December 11th, "The October Country" somehow got into the hands of a main-line reviewer who seems to have heard somewhere that this Bradbury was an overnight sensation, a real find. And his reaction is disgusted bewilderment:

". . . A gifted writer making a play for the designation of the poor man's Poe," says he. ". . . There has been a feeling among critics that this author was really on the verge of something significant. The verge he skirts in these stories . . . is the crumbling cliff-edge of the banal . . . the only direction this kind of writing can follow is down."

I am not trying to argue that Ray Bradbury's highly emotional style is unique or great literature; I don't consider it "cheaply derivative," and I can see absolutely no resemblance between "The Small Assassin" and "The Bad Seed," the William March-Maxwell Anderson play—which was written long *after* Bradbury's tale—except in the child killer.

The point, of course, is that the *Times* reviewer, dealing with a strange field, hasn't bothered to find out anything about the book except what is on the jacket, and even that points out that "Dark Carnival" was Bradbury's *first* collection, published in 1947. To throw his own words back at him, the direction Ray Bradbury's writing of main-line fiction has followed has *already* been "up." Up, in fact, to the stories felt significant by "critics."

In effect, what this critic is doing is attacking a fantasy writer for writing fantasy. He can't understand the rules of the game, so he refuses to play and stalks off in a huff, claiming a foul. If he ever gets his hands on real science fiction, I'm sure we'll be hearing those grand, smug, old word, "far-fetched," "implausible," "fantastic," and the rest, which most of us thought were dead.

ANOTHER KIND, by Chad Oliver. Ballantine Books, New York. 1955. 170 pp. $2.00; paper 35¢

The first and last of the seven stories in this collection are published for the first time; the other five come from here ("Rite of Passage," 1954), *If,* the late *Science Fiction Plus,* and *Fantasy & Science Fiction.* The author, as I'm sure you know, has been doing graduate work in anthropology and these stories are mainly based on themes and ideas he has turned up in his studies.

"The Mother of Necessity," first

of the two new stories, is a short reminiscence of what happened in a future time when Americans changed their societies overnight, voting wealth on a succession of social inventors, and what resulted when one such inventor outsmarted himself.

"Rite of Passage," you'll recall, is the story about the survivors of the starship *Juarez,* wrecked on a planet whose people, the Nern, have a deceptively primitive culture. The unraveling of that deception is the story. Next comes "Scientific Method," in which a man and an alien, representing their peoples in the first galactic contact, use an identical kind of insurance. "Night" has a bite to it: observers on another planet find that one of them is meddling with the other culture—then learn why.

There's one fantasy in the collection, "Transformer," about the people who live in a model railroad village and are turned off when the current is cut off. It's about the least of the lot. In "Artifact" we have another first-contact story, in which an archeologist is sent to learn why a flint scraper has been found in the midst of the Martian desert. Finally, in the second new story—and longest in the book—"A Star Above It" we have a theme much like that which is the backbone of Isaac Asimov's "End of Eternity" and Sam Merwin's "Time Watcher" yarns: with time travel has come the responsibility for keeping meddlers from changing the past and eradicating the present present. But where "Eternity" was strong on the mechanism of the watchers, and Sam Merwin has played up plot twists for all they're worth, Chad Oliver's concern is with the motives which would make a man meddle with Time. He also uses the opportunity to show us bits of Aztec Mexico, just before the Spanish conquest.

You may not find these stories especially exciting, but most of them show that Mr. Oliver's anthropology is "taking" and taking well. I hope he takes a typewriter with him in whatever far corner of the world he chooses to explore. Or will he be the anthropologist who first studies the science-fiction world: writers and editors, fen and fenne?

CAVIAR, by Theodore Sturgeon. Ballantine Books, New York. 1955. 168 pp. $2.00; paper 35¢

This—as some other cornball in SFdom is bound to point out if I don't—is the only caviar ever produced by a male sturgeon . . . and needless to say, it's top quality stuff, though not all science fiction.

Three of the eight stories in the collection were first published here, and one is from *Unknown.* "Microcosmic God" (April 1941) is about as close as Sturgeon has come to a routine sf gimmick: this time, a biologist who bred himself a race of short-lived creatures who evolved their culture through many generations in a relatively short (human)

time. "Prodigy" (April 1949) tugs at your heartstrings with the necessity of "eliminating" a non-normal imp of a child for the good of the society, and "Medusa" is a space story (February 1942) in which one sane man in a crew of madmen is sent to destroy the resistance of a mentally hostile planet. *Unknown's* contribution was "The Green-Eyed Monster" in June '43 but is now "Ghost of a Chance": it's the one about a girl whose men are nastily haunted, until . . .

Not all the stories are fantasy or sf. The first in the book, "Bright Segment," is apparently new and is a study in abnormal personality and obsession. The closing piece is "Twink" from a recent *Galaxy,* and one of Sturgeon's finest tales of the mental relationships between children and adults, via ESP. There remain another story of a possessed woman, "Blabbermouth" from *Amazing* (February, 1947), which balances on that shaky fence between the explicable and the supernatural, and "Shadow, Shadow on the Wall," a very simple little tale of a practical child and a mean stepmother, courtesy of *Imagination* (1950).

It's not the best of Sturgeon, but maybe it will hold the line while he is working on something to top "More Than Human."

VALLEY BEYOND TIME, by Vaughan Wilkins. St. Martin's Press, New York. 1955. 304 pp. $3.00

Vaughan Wilkins is one of the handful of writers who can reasonably consider themselves the heirs of the Merritt tradition, and this is at the same time a good and a poor example of what he can do.

The imagination and color are there: a parallel world, inhabited by timeless semi-mortals, and in contact with our own Earth only at occasional moments and in far places. To this world go a handful of people from our own time, by chance or planning, to find a new place for themselves amid the strangeness. We have a completely unbelievable Senator from Texas, a white-maned Conan type who talks something which is by no means Texan and not even American. We have a mysteriously soured English noblewoman playing chauffeur. We have a small boy . . . assorted tribes of pagan Irishmen . . . and plotting aplenty on the outside.

The imagination and acceptance of the marvelous which characterized the best of Merritt's books are echoed here, but the plausibility is lacking. Wilkins has done better, and perhaps he will again.

REPORT ON THE STATUS QUO, by Terence Roberts. Merlin Press, New York. 1955. 63 pp. Ill. $2.50

This is a little sleeper whose price and size will probably make it a best-seller on the remainder tables and a rarity of increasing value and

following in the future. I liked it.

The report is supposedly filed April 16, 1961 by one Oswald F. Bristowe. It explains, simply and a little dryly, the truth behind the hell which burst on the world in 1958-59 when a season of unprecedented rains flooded the central plateau of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, just as World War III was getting under way. Today, as we all know, the Mesozoic has re-established itself on Earth and the plague of dinosaurs, furiously dominant vegetation, and lesser-known but no less dangerous bacterial, fungal and other pests is on the verge of shoving Man into space for want of another refuge.

It should have made a popular novelette in a magazine, and I think the author might have earned more that way.

INSIDE THE SPACESHIPS, by George Adamski. Abelard-Schuman, New York. 1955. 256 pp. $3.50

By now the Adamski Saucer—or rather the Saucer-Mother Ship combination—has pretty well established itself as *the* official model in circles who believe that unidentified flying objects (UFO's) are the spaceships of interplanetary observers. In this book, the author describes a series of visits to the Masters who ride in these ships, the first apparently made before his "Flying Saucers Have Landed" was off the press. Some of the contradictions among the various witnesses of Adamski-type Saucer visits are cleared up—Saucer men come from *all* the planets as well as the Moon—details of design are elaborated, and the bulk of the book is given up to gentle demonstrance for our shortcomings as civilized beings.

Certain other things seem clearer now, too. It now appears that George Adamski is not the experienced amateur astronomer who builds his own advanced telescopes—he was given one, bought another. He has, in fact, been for some time a lecturing philosopher with a small following of disciples, whose message is coincidentally the same that the Spacemen are trying to get across.

These two books are offered as fact. You may consider them outright hoaxes. You may consider them parables of a kind, written to lend authority to Adamski's philosophy and teachings. I don't think they can possibly be considered illusion. But if you are one of the many who accept what is written here as the truth, you are going to have to accept certain statements by the Saucer people which are distinctly at odds with orthodox science. For example:

That space is a place full of moving, colored lights, apparently close at hand, which are somehow invisible to the naked eye from Earth and to telescopes and cameras. (*Pages 77-78*)

That there are twelve planets in

the Sun's family, and twelve around every other star . . . but only twelve solar systems in the Galaxy! (*86*)

That all planets, including the Moon, Mars, Saturn and Venus, have comparable, breathable atmospheres to which anyone will acclimate quickly. (*87*)

That the Moon has not only an atmosphere but a fairly sizable and thriving population of plants, animals, insects and people, mostly concentrated on the side away from the Earth. Lunar clouds are invisible to us, but telescopes show their shadows. And there is a belt of trees, lakes, cities, et al—apparently extending from pole to pole, rather than around any parallel—just out of sight on the back of the Moon. (*157-161*)

That the radiations of fission and fusion bombs are "lighter than the atmosphere, but heavier than space" (*92*), so that they become concentrated in a kind of shell around the outside of the planet, attract and worry the Space folk, and threaten to upset the mechanics of the universe.

But why go on?

GOLDEN ATOM, 187 N. Union St., Rochester, N. Y. 1955. 100 pp. $1.00

Larry Farsace, the Rochester fan, is pretty well known in the science-fiction world for his thorough knowledge of science fiction and fantasy of the earliest, pre-*Amazing* days. His present collection represents the pooling of several others, so that he is in a position to back up his bibliographical statements, and has read the fabulous early tales he talks about.

Before the war Larry had his own excellent fan magazine, "Golden Atom" (Lylda for short, for reasons Cummings fans will understand). Now he has revived the "Atom" as an annual, in printed form, with a Rochester model on the cover holding *the* real first sf-fantasy magazine, Street & Smith's short lived *Thrill Book* of 1919. *Pièce de résistance* of the issue, which is filled out with an amazing mixture of family snapshots, bibliographical notes, editorial ramblings, verse, pin-ups, and what have you, is the first part of a reminiscent article by Harold Hersey entitled "Looking Backward into the Future." (Later Hersey helped launch this magazine, and had his own second attempt in *Miracle, Science and Fantasy Stories* in 1931.)

Here was a magazine solidly dedicated to science fiction and fantasy, four years before *Weird Tales,* seven years before *Amazing,* eleven years before *Astounding.* A file is *the* collectors' dream.

It's an odd mixture, but collectors and sf-historians should go for it. For good measure, W. Paul Cook's "The Recluse" (1927) is advanced as the first sf-fan magazine. Any rivals?

P-B REPRINTS

THE LAST SPACESHIP, by Murray Leinster. Galaxy Novels, No. 25. 1955. 126 pp. 35¢

As far as I know, this is an unabridged reprint of the Frederick Fell edition (de Camp's "Lest Darkness Fall," by the way, was abridged by the author). Kim Rendall, rebelling against the Disciplinary Circuit which rules his mechanized culture, steals a spaceship from a museum and adventures among the stars.

WORLD OUT OF MIND, by J. T. M'Intosh. Permabooks, New York. 1955. 166 pp. 25¢

The story of Eldin Raigmore, planted on Earth by a race of galactic conquerors to prepare the way for invasion.

TIME-X, by Wilson Tucker. Bantam Books, New York. 1955. 140 pp. 25¢

Short stories originally published as "The Science Fiction Sub-Treasury."

MISSION TO THE STARS, by A. E. van Vogt. Berkley Books, New York. 1955. 126 pp. 25¢

The original title was "The Mixed Men." It's a typical van Vogtian epic of plot and counterplot in the far future, when the Lady Gloria Laurr attempts to subdue the mysterious civilization of the Fifty Suns.

* * *

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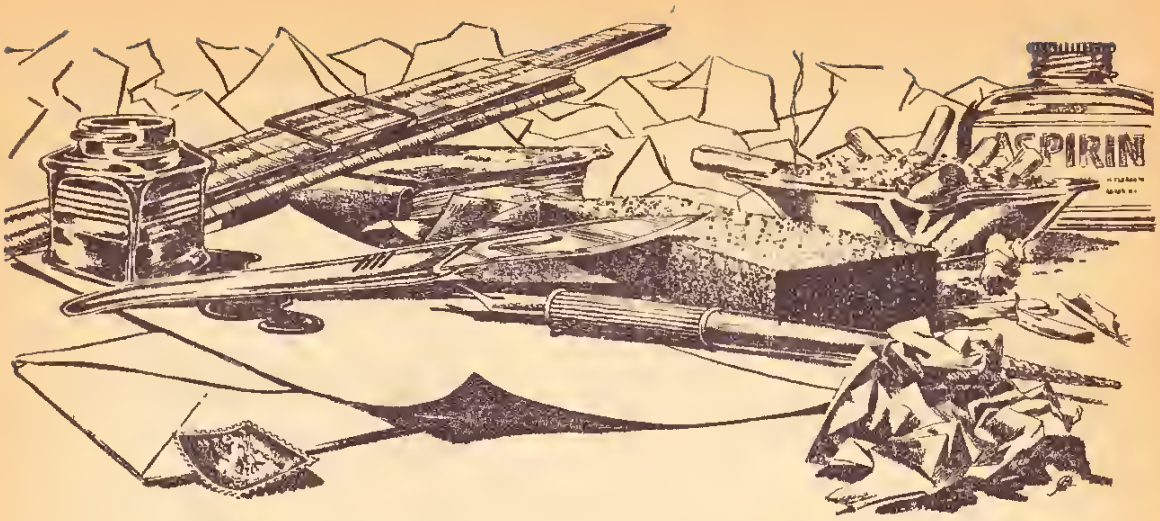

BRASS TACKS

Dear Mr. Campbell:

In Francis Donovan's absorbing tale, "The Short Life," the alien Challon crashes on the earth and discovers himself surrounded by the impossible: a race of nontelepaths so intelligent that they could think vicious circles around anyone else in the universe, and so perverse as to constitute a menace to themselves and everyone else. Overcoming his natural horror and disgust, the Challon stays on to study the ways of men and see if means can be found to save mankind from futility as well as to save the universe from the possibility that men might break loose and scatter their pestilence abroad. He hesitates to assist in developing the full powers latent in a race which appears to his telepathic mind to be unsane. His conclusion after eight years is that these people are so isolated from each other, so riddled with fears, and so completely animated by self-interest, that no one of them could be trusted not to exalt himself above all the world if he had the power to do so. The alien fears that men would misuse their potentialities as "homo superior," just as they have misused their great intelligence, by making their enhanced powers the means of forcibly dominating everything in the path of their will-to-power. He indicates by his proposed course of action that in his opinion telepathy alone couldn't work a quick miracle-cure on their egocentricity; any increased capabilities would allow fuller scope to their dangerous tendencies. If mankind's real genius is to be saved for good purposes, the Challon appears to think that man's basic nature must be changed and his whole attitude reoriented.

This is the grim conclusion he has reached after his study of the nature of man. Yet the Challon hopefully

presents his diagnosis of human ills to his friend Phil, and doesn't appear surprised at Phil's concurring in the unflattering analysis. The thought of both seems to be that the best achievements of the finest men have never been wholly untainted by motives of self-interest. Phil admits that he wouldn't even trust himself not to abuse plenary powers.

There is something odd about Phil's ready admission.

How does his attitude fit in with the Challon's general theory of psychology, according to which men of our race have "never truly known either their fellows or themselves"? Phil asks: "Are we that bad?" He would like to think we aren't, but it is apparent that at least one human being is not unduly surprised to hear that from an outsider's point of view we *are* that bad. So there must be some small capacity of self-transcendence in men that enables us to see ourselves as we really are, if only in brief flashes, and see more clearly than the Challon thinks possible. After all, if the Challon's pessimistic picture had been entirely correct there would have been no point of contact whatever between him and mankind. If men were exclusively islands of manic self-centerness, Phil wouldn't have listened to the Challon at all, wouldn't have comprehended his alien values, and, therefore, couldn't have agreed with surprising humility to the Challon's conclusions.

Doesn't it seem as if both the Challon and the human being are guided by respect for the same ulti-

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mate standard, whose existence is taken so much for granted that it is never even mentioned? Apparently, the Challon's curiosity was never roused by the phenomenon that these men who can't even penetrate each other's mind, nonetheless know and honor in the breach the same norm known and honored by races which have evolved light-years away. Without hesitating, Phil accepts the alien's implied definitions of what constitutes good and evil, sane and unsane conduct on this and on any planet. But Phil is compelled, when confronted with the Challon's conclusion, to realize that he and his fellow men have consistently departed this norm all the while they seem to have understood it remarkably well.

The fact that men generally have felt the pressure of "categorical imperatives" such as the Challon follows, is suggested by the existence of a troublesome conscience in all who are reckoned sane by their compatriots. The effect of this pressure is also demonstrated by the omnipresence of hypocrisy. Few men have seriously disputed Saint-Simon's dictum that hypocrisy is the tribute vice pays to virtue. In order to present the paired opposites "vice and virtue," a commonly recognized and fairly widely accepted norm of goodness must be assumed, from which vice departs. The Challon says he has seen nothing but "false fronts or motives or impulses among men. Thus our hypocrisy may be considered a manifestation of deep-seated respect for the laws we accept but flout.

Phil sees that men must be separated from the rest of the universe and denied access to a fuller life for as long as our self-will dominates our outlook so completely as to put us in a state of revolt against universal good. But Phil also shows that men are capable of occasional moments of objectivity, when he concurs in the judgment made against humanity, and proves his agreement by putting himself into the alien's "hands," hoping thus to carry forward the Challon's plans for mankind's eventual regeneration.

In the main, the Challon's findings are profoundly reasoned and tragically confirmed by human history. Apparently, he had studied deeply in the humanities after his pseudo-parents remarked that this was a field in which he was weak. But perhaps his "short life" on this planet had not given him time to digest fully all the material available, for some of his peripheral observations seem to be inconsistent with his basic philosophy of man.

At one point he deplores the complexities of taboos, laws, and moral codes by which men bind themselves. Could he have considered that law is the necessary prerequisite of any kind of community living among nontelepaths? He says that "the eternal wonder is that mankind has made any progress at all." The easy, natural state of constant communion enjoyed by telepathic races is not open to human beings, so in this

world the only alternative to the total dissolution of community is law. The feeble and groping beginnings of law are taboos. The Challon is jumping to conclusions as well as showing himself unexpectedly patronizing when he calls all taboos and moral codes, without discrimination, "harmful and illogical." As he says, a great many of them have outlived their usefulness as cultural situations changed, but each taboo probably had a logical function in the culture when and where it was first accepted as binding. Also, he has not borne in mind the fact that rules and codes which become irrelevant tend to be replaced gradually by others considered better, and in this way some progress has been made in the field of law and ethics. Among the Challon's people, laws and codes would happily not be necessary, but if men are anywhere near as egocentric as the telepathic alien believes, would we not be compelled to develop systems of moral and forceful restraint in order to survive as a race? And would these codes not have to be made as precise and detailed as possible, to circumvent human ingenuity in defying them or twisting their meaning to suit selfish aims? It is unfortunate that we must go to such lengths to keep ourselves within decent bounds, of course. But it would be even more unfortunate if we had never found means of forcibly restraining our impulses, when they prove injurious to individual and racial welfare. The Challon might have tactfully forborne to

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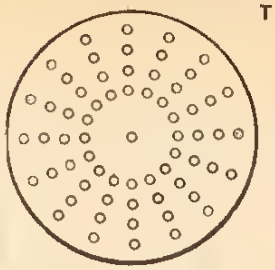

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chide mankind, in the person of his friend Phil, for the multitude of our attempts at self-control and self-protection. It is at least pointless to remind a man with a wooden leg that his movements are clumsy and sadly hampered by the presence of a misshapen log in place of a real leg.

At another point, the alien presents the thought that feelings of guilt and shame are "deranged emotions," unknown in his home world. On the contrary, the Challon might well have felt that the presence of a sense of guilt is the only evidence of any degree of sanity among us. If a seriously deranged man goes berserk and kills pointlessly, he is often judged not guilty by reason of insanity. Someone else who deliberately kills to suit his personal convenience is quite generally considered guilty of homicide. If he knew that what he did was wrong according to the standards acknowledged by his culture, he is called guilty. If a murderer later develops guilty feelings about what he did, would the Challon think these emotions of guilt and shame deranged? Of course, the murderer also might be afflicted with truly deranged guilt-sensations about other matters, but that is beside the point here. There remains plenty of cause for justifiable and rational guilt-feelings among men. Would it not be an indication of some small flickering of health, rather than derangement, if men feel shame when faced with the fact of their own betrayal of their own norms of goodness? Here again, the Challon is not discriminating.

Apparently, the alien does not see that the sense of guilt performs a function similar to the feeling of pain: it is unpleasant, and seems designed to urge us to moral action, as pain urges us to take action to cure our bodily ills. Certainly, the healthy purposes of both sensations can be and are frequently neglected or perverted, but they both seem necessary to the individual and social life of men. Would they not be useful to telepathic races as well?

Actually, the Challon himself mentions an instance of bad conscience among his people. He discusses the Challonari, (a "part-organic, artificial brain," "devised as a tool" by the Challon's race) and he tells Phil that "the damnable thing," (i.e., the thing about the Challonari which caused his race feelings of guilt and self-condemnation) was that this device which had been made as a tool, turned out to have a rudimentary personality and a childlike trust in its embarrassed creators. "To the Challon, the control or coercion of an independent intelligence was a cardinal outrage." Here is an example of a very strongly-held opinion on the part of the Challon, yet elsewhere the alien seems to condemn men for holding strong opinions on any subject. In this instance, it is almost as if the unexpected awareness appearing in their Challonari "tools" reminded the Challon of an old racial taboo.

In the end, the Challon suggests

no easy solution to the human problem, nor does he answer specifically the question of whether his environment has made man as he is, or the nontelepathic man forms his environment. In practice, the Challon tacitly dismisses optimistic theories of the self-perfectability of man, as if he were convinced that even if we were born into paradise itself we would soon turn it into something more like home. The alien believes that if "homo superior" is to appear among men, he must make his appearance under the tutelage and auspices of powers beyond men. Therefore, the Challon has directed all his efforts to the task of sending back to the earth one uncorrupted human being, Timmy, who shall be endowed with superhuman faculties.

The reader is left to wonder what effect Timmy's reappearance among men might produce, if the Challon's plans succeeded. Would they accept Timmy gladly, or instead vent resentful envy on him for bringing their own shortcomings into glaring focus? How long could most men bear the final threat to their self-esteem, which Timmy would embody, before taking advantage of his probable renunciation of coercion in order to do away with him? And if Timmy did not make use of the forces at his command to annihilate those who might oppose him, could men be sure someone like Timmy would stay dead?—Mrs. William Krieg, Bethesda, Md.

You mean, "It's been tried, and that method didn't work?"

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(*Continued from page 5*)
of the group *do not* apply to any individual of the group. Life insurance companies know that their statistical studies are accurate, valid laws of human-group behavior; they have a high order of scientific accuracy of prediction.

And they are absolutely meaningless to any individual-as-such.

But they are important and useful to any individual-as-such, because, by making himself a member of that group, he can accurately predict his financial status, on a "not-less-than" basis, which he could not do for himself-as-an-individual-alone.

The group has an effective immortality characteristic that the individual does not have; in many ways, the group is greater than, and different from, its individual members.

But in many other ways, the individual is greater than and different from the group. The group is not creative; it cannot even generate itself, because a *group* is not capable of reproduction. Only the individual human beings are. It is not creative with respect to ideas; it's conservative, and no *group* ever invented anything—individuals do.

But no individual can build an airplane capable of transcontinental high-speed flight—only a group can. But the group, of course, didn't invent it, or invent the knowledge necessary to build it—individuals did.

The individual and the group have a complementary relationship of some kind—but we can't name it, or describe it, because we have no understanding of group-individual relationships. The energy of a light quantum is a function of its wave length . . . but "wave length" is a characteristic inherently nonsense with respect to an individual "quantum"! And without individual quanta, there could be no group showing wave behavior.

The sine wave, so familiar to sound engineering, radio engineering, and optical theory has a peculiar characteristic worth consideration; the statistician's favorite curve of random distribution is the famous "bell-shaped curve." Any electronic engineer recognizes that bell-shaped curve as being remarkably similar in shape to the output curve of a single Class B amplifier tube—and two Class B amplifier tubes, in push-pull, yield a perfect sine-wave output. A sine wave is simply an endless series of summed random distribution functions of alternatively positive and negative characteristic—the statistics of a group of somethings.

The psychotherapist, unlike the research psychologist, is directly concerned with the relationships between the individual and his social group—and he's having a hellish job getting anywhere with the problem, because nobody has the foggiest beginning of an understanding—fundamental understanding, not rule-of-thumb magical ritual formulas!—of that problem. The psychotherapist doesn't understand; the patient doesn't understand, and knows he doesn't, and the society doesn't

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understand. Trouble is, the society is remarkably, immovably convinced that it *does* know the answers, and violently insists that the individual accept those answers. Too and including the violence of destruction of the individual as an individual by either carving out pieces of his brain, or executing him.

The essence of the trouble, I believe, lies in the fact that the social group *knows,* by actual, real and unarguably valid experience, that certain laws of cultural behavior are valid. It *knows,* because they have been tried and tested, and proved out—as solidly as the actuarial tables of the insurance companies. That knowledge is real; it is valid; it does work beyond peradventure of doubt. And the cultural group insists that, for their own good, individuals *must* learn the reality and soundness of that knowledge, and accept it. That if only those stubborn, wrong-headed individuals would have the sense to recognize the wisdom the cultural group has learned through long experience . . .

But the trouble is, of course, that *no individual can possibly apply that knowledge and wisdom!* It *does not* apply to individuals at all! It's like demanding that, since nuclear particles can do that energy-barrier penetration hop, a spaceship, if it just weren't so bull-headed and stubborn, would do the same thing.

Naturally, there are innumerable areas wherein the same laws apply to individual and to group—those don't cause trouble, naturally, because individual and group readily agree. It's in the areas of inherent difference that the individual learns that the culture is cruel, vicious, even sadistic in using its crushing force to cripple and injure him—and the cultural group learns that individuals are stubborn, wrong-headed, and irrational.

The rights of those matters, quite obviously, aren't going to be settled by mutual hate campaigns, nor by resigned apathy and misery. And since, by the nature of the thing, a culture-group can't create a new idea to save itself, it's going to be up to the individuals to solve the problem. And not just *any* individual; obviously, it'll take a major genius to crack the problem.

He'll probably be a physical scientist, too—not a social scientist. Cultural groups and human individuals don't mind people making new, basic discoveries of relationships that don't force any change in *their* ways of living. If some physicist-mathematician wants to work out the detailed structure of relationships between photons and light-waves, why—go ahead! Glad to have you do it, if that sort of esoteric and unimportant fiddle-de-dee interests you.

But anyone trying to lay down laws that force me to acknowledge relationships to the group that I don't think I want—"I'll murder the man!" "Nobody's going to dictate how I'm gonna live! Kill him!"

If the discoveries are first expressed in *purely physical* terms—the relationship laws can be accepted and recognized by everyone quite peaceably. It's true for *things,* of course—but *I'm* not a thing, so I don't have to accept it in my own living.

But certain individuals who, starting as young children still willing to learn relationships, begin to learn the socio-psychological application of the basic principles, will "unfairly" start gaining advantages—and, nastily, make it necessary for anyone wanting to stay in the race to learn the validity of those relationships too, willy-nilly, like-it-or-not. You just *can't* get people buying Model A Fords to support your buggy-whip industry.

Gadgets are the really potent social reformers—not orators. Henry Ford was the greatest social innovator of the last half century—he and his cheap Tin Lizzie changed the mores, the economics, and the political framework of the culture. And without half trying! The movie helped a lot, of course; think what it did to the mores concerning the relationship of the sexes! You can't keep up the always-watched-by-chaperones mores for young men and women when the cheap car and the movie give them an easy, secure and socially accepted place to meet in the relative privacy of a statistical group!

Of course, television is bringing them back into the home for courtship again—but in the meantime, the human right to courtship in private has been established too firmly to be dislodged.

All done by gadgets, you see; the orators fulminated against the shift, ministers thundered from pulpits—but people wanted the gadgets, and the consequences of the gadgets came along.

Of course, everybody is aware that what is really important to human beings are the human things, not mere mechanical gadgets. That's why science fiction, dealing as it does so largely with mere technical gadgetry, isn't really important on the human scene.

Let's let 'em go on dreaming for a while, shall we?

THE EDITOR.

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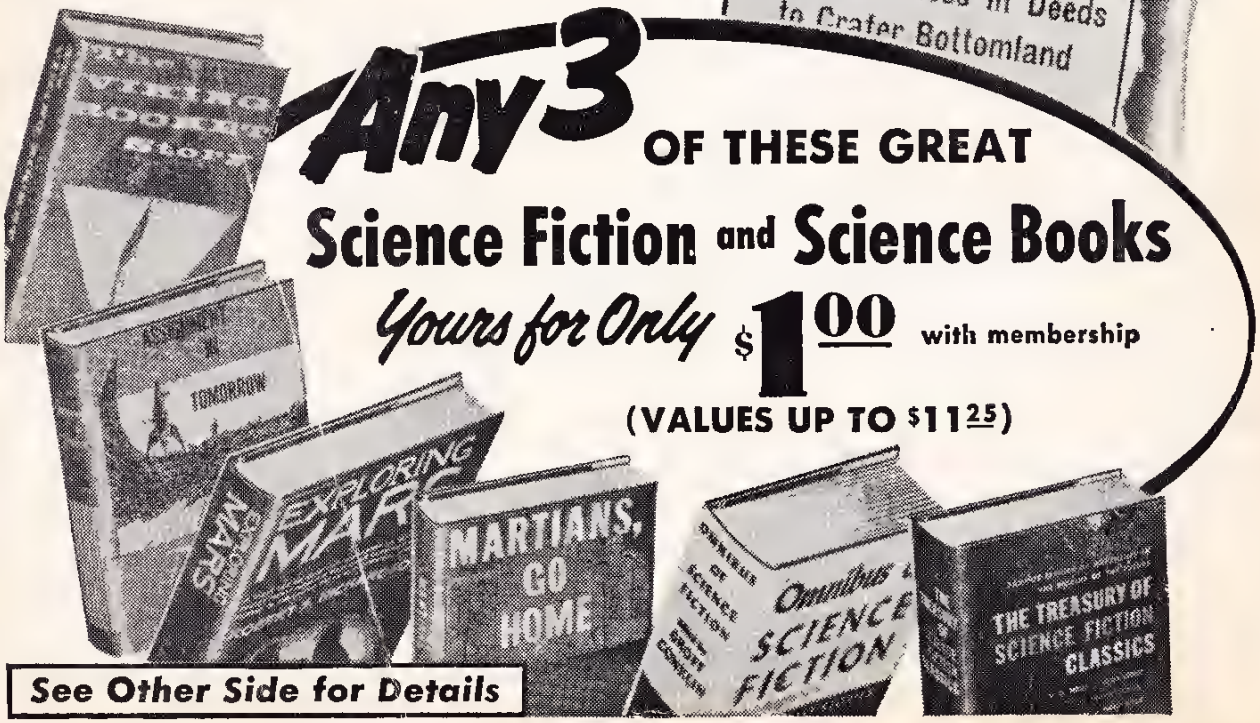

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