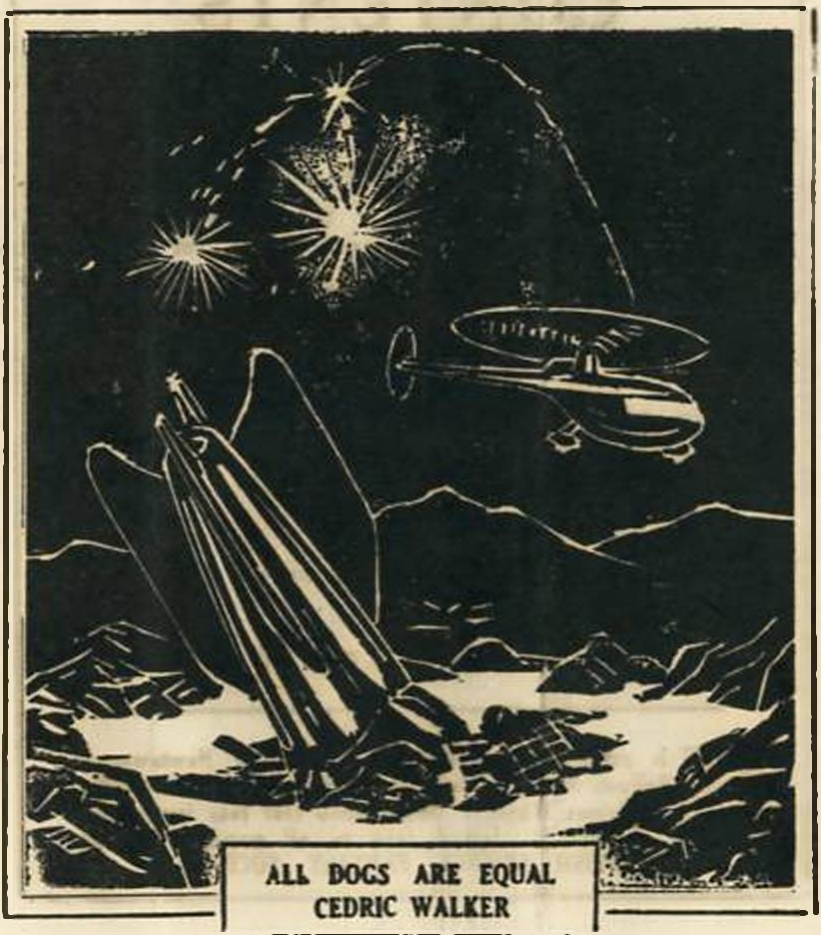
SUMMER, 1949

SLANT

NO. 2



ALL DOGS ARE EQUAL
CEDRIC WALKER

NO. 2

SUMMER 1949

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WOODCUTS BY JAMES WHITE

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THE STILL SMALL VOICE

BY BRAD RAYBURY
(Clive Jackson)

'Well, it looks like we made it, Young Jim.'

'Yes, Dad, it looks like we did it.'

'My, will you look at that! All that water, and why d'you suppose it's so green?'

'Yes, I wonder why? So they were canals, after all. Straight as a die as far as you can see. My!'

'Well, Young Jim, get busy on that air analysis, and then we can stretch our legs awhile.'

Father and son stood in the airlock side by side, on the threshold of a strange new world, and it was such an awesome feeling that neither of them said anything at all, and then together they stepped forward out of the ship onto the strange new soil.

When they were outside the tension broke and they both laughed a little without knowing why, and the boy knelt suddenly and said, 'Look, Dad, see what makes everything so red? Such a tiny, beautiful little plant, and hardly any roots at all.' And the father said 'Say, just look at these leaves; they must have a million points, and each one perfect as a snowflake.'

Then they remembered that they had a ceremony to perform, so they got out the big green UNO flag on its aluminium pole, and the small shiny camera on its tripod, and the boy took a picture of his father, and the father took one of his son, and then they both stood by the flag while the automatic shutter whirred and clicked. They both looked sheepish, and the father said, 'By gosh, I never felt so many kinds of a darn' fool in all my life!'

After that, they went for a little walk, but not far because the sun was already almost on the horizon, and while it was setting they came back and had their first meal on the new world. They opened some cans of beer they had brought especially for the occasion, and the father made a little speech to their imaginary hosts, and they laughed a great deal. They even sang a little, and the boy played on an old out-of-tune harmonica, but the more noise they made the quieter it seemed to be. The sound rolled away and was lost at once in the solemn silence of the ageless plains, and soon they fell quiet and sat still smoking their pipes while the warm night fell around them and the stars came out one by one like fireflies settling on a velvet cloak.

The days that followed were long and very full. They took samples

of the soil and rocks, and preserved some of the tiny red flowers and transplanted some into boxes, and analysed the canal water, and made slides of the strange algae that made it so green, and took a great many photographs. They made weather observations, but their barometers never altered by a millibar, and their rain gauge was always empty, and they tramped many miles with pack and compass, but they never found anything at all except the little red plants and the green algae.

One evening, when they were sitting smoking their pipes and looking at the familiar stars, the son said, suddenly, 'We will leave tomorrow morning', in such a matter-of-fact tone that he might have said, 'We will have beans for breakfast tomorrow morning.'

His father looked at him, with his pipe half way up to his mouth, and said, 'Oh, I know it's been a mite disappointing so far, Young Jim, but there's lots of directions we haven't tried yet, and maybe this is just a calm season, and anyway if we go back so soon the Assembly will say we haven't done our job properly.' And the son knocked out his pipe and stood up and said, 'We will leave in the morning.' Then he went to bed.

The father was so hurt that he could hardly believe his ears, because his son had never even spoken to him that way before, and he sat very still for a long time until his pipe grew cold in his hand, and then he went slowly inside the ship to his son because he could hear him weeping.

He came to the boy's bunk without switching on any lights, and he laid his hand on the trembling shoulder and said, very gently, 'Forget it, Young Jim. This goddam' red world is enough to make anyone edgy, and sure we'll leave in the morning if you want.'

'Oh, Dad, it . . . wasn't me!'

'Huh? How's that again, son?'

'It wasn't me that said that about leaving, it was . . . . someone else, and he's got inside somehow, inside my head, and I'm scared.' The boy snapped on the lights, and then the father saw the naked terror that stared from his son's young eyes, and the force of it hit him like a jet of ice-cold water, and he knew there was nothing he could say because they were not alone any more.

In the morning after they had begun to pack their gear, the boy suddenly said, 'We can't go, Dad, not back there. Sometimes he asks me questions, about what it's like there, and how do the people behave, and what is love, and what is death, and I just know something terrible will come if we go back . . . . if we take him back.'

The father stood up and squared his shoulders and said, 'Yes, Young Jim, we must stay and fight it here, and maybe if . . . . when he comes back again . . . . you tell me, then maybe I can put my mind alongside of yours and help you to resist him.' He gripped his son's shoulders tightly. 'We've GOT to fight him, son, we've just GOT to.'

So they started to unpack the equipment again, until suddenly the boy

[continued on page 16]

THE SOLUTION

Ill luck seems to dog the London Underground. Every extension of the Tube has brought trouble in its train, from the disastrous first junction with the French Metro (then called the 'Mrquis' I believe) back in 1960, to their ill-fated experimental connection with New York, the terrible Test Tube explosion. Their last project was no exception.

The Australians had started their end of the tunnel with great energy (no wonder they are called 'diggers') and already they were 200 miles nearer to us than we were to them. The situation was impossible. National pride was at stake, and the Government appointed me to take over the project. Unfortunately the Underground people went up in the air about this, and I got the impression that their engineering expert, old Professor MacHinery, particularly resented my intrusion.

However they were able to take the knife away from him, and I put these worries aside. My job was simply to dig a hole, and I threw myself into it with enthusiasm. By sheer organising ability, and payment of double wages to the men who did the actual drilling, I soon had the work progressing at almost twice the speed. Round and round went the enormous great wheel, and the tunnel grew steadily in depth. I was so buried in my work that I had lost all count of time, but one day I consulted the Professor, who had finally been prevailed on not to sever his connection with us.

'According to my calculations,' he said insolently, 'we passed the Australians five days ago.'

'Why did you not tell me this before?' I exclaimed.

He sneered audibly.

Fired with indignation, I went off at once and made a sharp report to the Government. They were seriously perturbed. The engineers had hoped that most of the journey in either direction might be made without fuel, and the frictional losses involved in negotiating a curve would be disastrous. Finally it was decided to abandon the Sydney end of the tunnel and proceed with ours alone, in the confident expectation that it would emerge somewhere in New South Wales.

Curiously enough, we had little difficulty in further increasing the speed of drilling, and hordes of men were continuously employed in adding new sections to the great shaft. All the Government shadow factories were switched over to the production of new sections. The public were greatly interested in the project, and bore the shortage of shadows with equanimity. But weeks went by without any word from the Australian Government of the appearance of the drill in their territory.

One morning the Professor came unexpectedly to my office. He had an evil gleam in his eye (the left one, I think) and I could tell by the way he spat in my face that he still harboured some resentment against me.

'I thought you might like to know,' he leered, 'that we have just penetrated the Heaviside layer.'

When I had ascertained where this was I was horrorstruck. I at once wired the Australian Government and Prime Minister Molesworth ordered out the entire Australian Air Force on reconnaissance, but without success.

There was only one thing to do. The drill must be taken up. The great machine was put into reverse, and accountants checked the number of sections as they were unscrewed. A terrible shock awaited us. The shaft was only 4,000 miles long, and the drill head, with the other 4,000 miles of shaft, had completely disappeared. Yet there was no sign of a break; the end was quite smooth. As clean as a whistle is the popular phrase, though I have heard some very unclean whistles from time to time.

The Professor and I went immediately to 10 Downing St. with our grievous news. On the way the Professor seemed abstracted, and something in his demeanour gave me the impression that he was perplexed. It may have been the way he kept muttering to himself and tearing out handfuls of his hair. On arriving at our destination we found the Prime Minister sitting with his Cabinet. He put down the lid at once, and came forward enquiringly. The Professor gave a bald summary of the facts, a feat for which he was now peculiarly fitted.

The Prime Minister was flabbergasted, but I had hardly started to give him my observations on the problem when he abruptly exclaimed 'Sir! You are an egregious moron!' I bowed modestly; I am immune to flattery. He turned to the Professor. 'Professor!' he hissed, 'Perhaps you can present some rational explanation for this seemingly inexplicable phenomenon?'

The Professor mopped his face with his handkerchief. 'Only,' he said, moving out of range, 'a theory so bold, so bizarre, as to defy disbelief.' He passed his hand wearily over his brow. 'It grew on me slowly. It had been on my mind for some time, but only this afternoon I grasped the roots of the matter firmly at last....'

'Yes, yes,' cried the Prime Minister impatiently, 'but the theory?'

'I asked myself,' continued the Professor, 'what mystery lies at the centre of the Earth? The answer came to me in a flash. What could be there but something that could exist nowhere else? The flask contained samples of the metal at the end of the drill shaft...'

'You mean the solution was in the drill?'

'No,' the Professor exclaimed, 'the drill is in the solution! For centuries alchemists have been searching in the face of ridicule for this elusive substance, only to have it speed from their triumphant retort straight to the centre of the Earth. In the course of ages there has thus accumulated inside our planet an enormous globule of that legendary fluid, the Universal Solvent!'

[to be continued... perhaps]

COLLECTORS' PIECE[1] . . . . Unknown (Worlds), U.S.A. 39 issues. March '39 to Oct. '43. Bi-monthly '41 onwards. Large size Oct. '41 to June '43.

THE OTHERS

The fire had been dying for some time, but no one had cared to collect more brushwood. It had been a long day's walk, and the night was warm, even close. How dark and quiet it was beneath the great trees, he thought: not a breath of wind stirred in the whole forest. One would think the branches would move even a little. The silence was unusual, surely, and suddenly oppressive. It was as if the whole world were dead. What an unpleasant idea, he thought, startled. For a moment his clothes were cold and damp. He felt the need for some sort of action to break the pattern into which his thoughts had strayed, but the silence had lasted so long it seemed somehow wrong to disturb it. Finally he spoke nervously,

'Quiet, isn't it?' He cleared his throat.

No answer. Were the others asleep, he wondered.

No, he could dimly discern their eyes in the infinitely faint glow from the embers. Perhaps they thought his remark not worth answering. It wasn't, of course. He tried again.

'If you people weren't with me I'm sure I'd feel rather nervous here. Don't you think it's quite eerie?'

He could foretell exactly the tenting replies his friends would make.

But there was still no answer. Perhaps they were asleep after all? No, he could still see their eyes. But it wasn't like them to keep so quiet.

The silence dragged on and on, reverberating in his eardrums. Had he been asleep, was he still dreaming? Did he only imagine he was in this terrible place? Absurd. But why did they not answer him?

They?

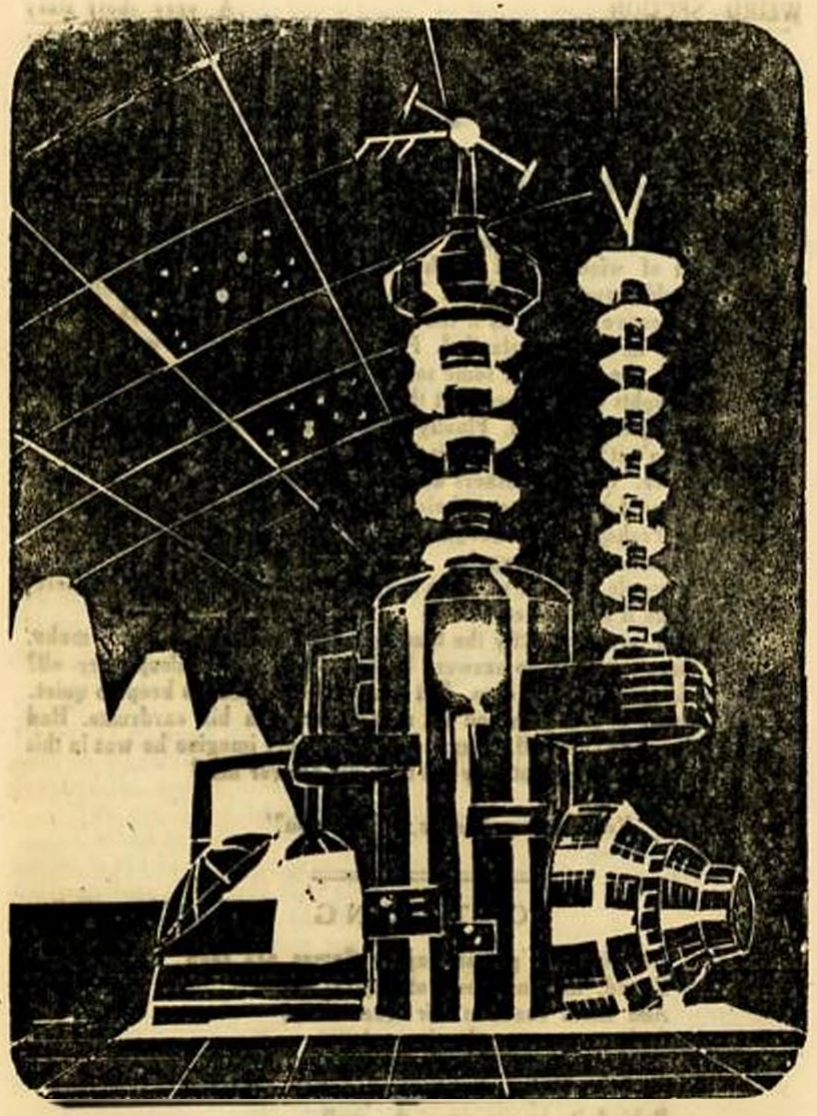
'You.... You are my friends, aren't you?'

'No.'

CAT SONG

by Cedric Walker

Red limned 'gainst leaping flames are seen
Round, flashing pools of crystal green,
And silent shadows stir from sleep,
And creep upon the furry heap,
To see each flicker ere it dies
Dance fitfully in lambent eyes.
Behind it, vague upon the wall,
A monstrous crouch-ed thing
Each action mocks, each movement blocks
Of the creature 'neath its wing.



"our civilisation is founded on these machines..."

OUTCAST

by

WALTER A. WILLIS

The city sunned itself on a green hillside. It was no upstart growth of steel and concrete, but a thing of grace and beauty, of perfection attained in centuries of tranquillity, representing a way of living worth almost any price. On this peaceful summer afternoon an instalment was being paid.

The students shuffled another few yards. Reluctantly they restored their flagging attention to the lecturer. The nature of medical students does not change perceptibly in five thousand years.

"This patient," said the Professor, "is about to be awakened from supra-hypnosis. I want you all to concentrate at the moment of awakening. The time between the release from hypnosis and the resumption of control by the cortical censor is very short, and you will have to use all your attention to make a full examination of the patient's thoughts. There is no need to be afraid. You will experience only of course the sense of unaccustomed well-being and release from inner conflict which are the natural consequences of the Treatment. Also, probably, some evanescent sensations of loss and forgetfulness."

He threw a switch, and the mesmeriser began its exercise in applied semantics. The figure on the bed stirred, and the students opened their minds in anticipation of his awakening. The rays of the setting sun threw long shadows down the ward.

The patient sat up and screamed.

Even the most efficient of organisations cannot cope with the impossible. Other doctors were, of course, available, but they were foolish enough to attempt re-hypnosis. After some time the necessity for injections forced itself upon them, and peace was restored. Or at least silence. In a few hours some of the students were able to speak coherently, and the Professor to put through an emergency call to the Director.

"I don't want to be discourteous, Citizen Erene," said the Director insincerely, "but you must realise that your husband's case is not unique. Every day thousands of people receive the treatment, and the greater their need the less they realise it. But afterwards they are invariably grateful."

"And their relatives?"

The Director was incensed. "I am sorry to see that you share that vulgar superstition. The Treatment does not change the patient's character; any slight adjustment that is made is for the better."

"You say that so glibly," said Erene, "but can't you realise that any change in my husband, however desirable from your point of view, would make him cease to be the person I love? One doesn't love a person for his virtue, but for his failings, the little short-comings and eccentricities that make one person different from another. One only admires virtue and sanity."

"I wonder if you would have thought so lightly of those qualities if you had seen this hillside five thousand years ago?" He beckoned her to the window, and they looked down on the sun-steeped city. "After the second atomic war this was a heap of stinking rubble, the product of that deadly streak of madness in us which comes to the surface when it can be most dangerous. The truth is, we were not fitted by nature for civilisation. The more complicated our social structure the greater the likelihood of mental breakdown, and the more dangerous its consequences. Confusion, fear, and cruelty make up our history since we began to build cities, and every step we make towards civilisation is at the cost of our peace of mind. When atomic war came civilisation could no longer guarantee even security, its main inducement, and neurosis was pandemic. It is not hard to see why this was so."

He began the familiar explanation with patience.

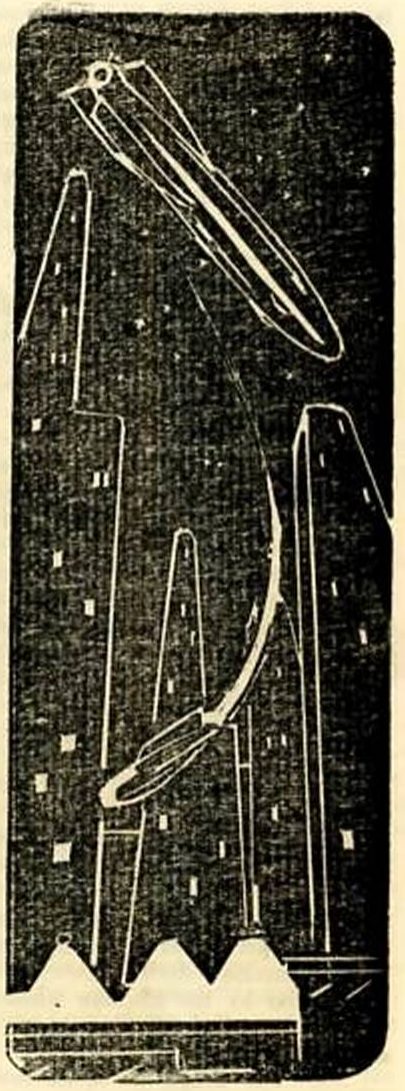
"The cerebral cortex is the seat of all the higher activities of the mind, and as animals evolve the cortex takes over to an increasing extent the functions of older control centres like the thalamus. With us, in turn, the cortex is superseded by the supercortex. But the primitive control centres still exist, and in moments of stress they can take over,

the thalamus from the cortex, or the cortex from the supercortex. When this condition is chronic, when the rebel control centre struggles continuously for power, we have schizophrenia. All that the Treatment machines do is to drive out the rebellious secondary personality, but it is not too much to say that without that invention, and the Diagnostat, the entire world would have sunk into barbarism; our civilisation is founded on these machines."

"I am not questioning the worth of the Treatment," said Erene doggedly, "all I say is that my husband doesn't need it."

"You think so because you love him, and that is a form of insanity," replied the Director, "and he thinks so because it is part of his disease that he should. I see no point in continuing this discussion."

In the few hours since the Co-ordinator's ship had flashed out of the darkening sky all memory of the unpleasant interview had faded from the Director's consciousness. The System Co-ordinator is an important personage. But not because he is particularly learned or intelligent; as civilisation progresses other less obvious properties of the mind gain in significance. Progress is impossible without specialisation, and efficient specialisation requires specialists in co-ordination. The System Co-ordinator owed his position to the power of his association centres. His work was to journey ceaselessly from one scientific station



...out of the darkening sky

to another, and to listen..... and occasionally to be reminded of something he had heard ten million miles away. An imagination untroubled by probability was essential; no connection too absurd to be suggested, even one as fantastic as that between, say, frogs' legs and lightning.....

The Director conjured up another set of statistics on the screen. "These are the most recent figures in the Library," he apologised, "I haven't been able to get through to the Hospital."

"They'll do....The number of Treatments per year seems very high?"

"We have to treat every case detected in the examinations," said the Director defensively.

"Of course, but the incidence of insanity should have fallen instead of remaining more or less constant as it has done. After all, social tension was supposed to be it's main cause, and in a comparatively stable society like ours..... It's very disturbing. From what I hear of the breakdown at Power Centre yesterday we cannot even rely on people certified sane by the...."

The door began to open and the Director swore softly. The staff should have gone home by now, and surely no one else...

Amid all the advances of technology the primitive firearm has retained its popularity. It is simple, cheap, and as deadly as a weapon needs to be; and it is said that the subconscious fear of its noise is almost as effective as the conscious fear of its bullet. However that may be, it was quite enough to freeze the Director and the Co-ordinator in their places. Erene's voice was as steady as her gun.

"I am sorry to have to take this way of convincing you that my husband is not insane..."

"It will only convince us that you are," the Director retorted with asperity.

"We shall see," said Erene. "You will come with me to the Diagnostat room."

Astonishment struggled with fear and gained a momentary victory. Erene answered his unspoken question.

"It's quite simple really. You won't believe in my husband's sanity because you don't know him. In the whole universe there is only one person whose sanity you would believe in even if that damned machine denied it. Yourself. You will submit yourself to examination by the machine which incorrectly diagnosed my husband, you will be adjudged schizophrenic, and be forced to admit that the machine can make a mistake."

The Diagnostat is an essentially simple machine, consisting mainly of an electro-encephalograph. It applies all the stimuli required for psycho-pathological examination, correlates the results, and shows any departure from the norm in the simple and convenient form of a filing card.

As the last readings were being taken the Director's principal worry was the reaction of this unbalanced female to her inevitable disappointment. On consideration he decided against taking the risk of telling her that the Treatment had already been administered. The Co-ordinator's attitude remained one of detached interest. Erene preserved her air of confidence, but as the machine approached the last of its tests she edged closer. The machine clicked once with an air of finality, and Erene pulled the release lever. A card clattered into the tray. Erene snatched it up, and for the first time the gun pointed at the floor.

The gun went off...

Her expression touched the Co-ordinator's heart. "Poor thing," he thought, "she's taking it badly." The Director wasted no time on commiseration. He pounced on the gun. Instinctively Erene clung to it and there was a brief struggle. The gun went off, and a jagged hole appeared in the immaculate panel of the Diagnostat. The noise was deafening in the confined space. It brought Erene to her senses, and she meekly surrendered the gun. With the situation now well in hand, and his attitude apparently vindicated, the Director was disposed to be lenient, though such unbalanced behaviour seemed to indicate that Erene's own examination was long overdue. He was about to make this suggestion when his attention was attracted by the peculiar behaviour of the Co-ordinator. That distinguished personage had crossed the room at a most uncharacteristic speed, and was now picking another card out of the tray. Erene awakened momentarily from her stupor and snatched at it. She returned it with apathy. "Just the same," she muttered. She had not really hoped that the machine would change its mind.

"But it isn't," said the Co-ordinator. He was examining the translucent cards. "These are diagnoses of two different patients. The serial numbers...." He shot a stern look at the Director. "It looks to me as if at some time a card has jammed in this infernal slot machine of yours, and the operator has been foolish enough to press the release lever

again. The second card expelled the first and so on. Since then, your machine has been one diagnosis behind. A genuine schizoid has gone undetected and..... You had better call the Hospital at once."

The Director was already making for the screen. As he threw the switch the emergency tone filled the room, and the agitated face of the Professor appeared. The Director turned pale.

"It seems we are too late," said the Co-ordinator.

"That's the last of your students fit to be interviewed,' said the Co-ordinator. He stared speculatively at the Professor. 'Are you at all a religious person?'

'I wasn't.,' said the Professor.

The Director was contemptuous. 'Simply a powerful hallucination. You Hypno-semantic people are far too impressionable.'

'Every one of his students seems to have been converted to a fervent belief in Hell. They don't seem very impressionable youths?'

'They aren't,' said the Professor, 'as he would know if he had to teach them. And neither am I.' He glared at the Director. 'No one but a fool would dismiss that experience as a figment of the imagination. Besides, I think I know enough of my patients' subconscious to be quite sure they are not capable of dreaming up anything like THAT. No, we must face the fact that Hell does exist; not as conventionally depicted, of course, but a place of torment where our souls, or part of them, go when the body dies. Perhaps there is also a more pleasant place for the 'good' part of our personality, and death is merely the final stage in schizophrenia.'

'Rubbish,' exclaimed the Director, 'That chimera again! Why, the whole concept of personal immortality is obviously too fantastic to be believed...'

'Do caterpillars believe in butterflies?' snapped the Professor. 'The complicated arrangement of atoms that we call life has properties which far transcend those of the inanimate matter from which it springs. And consciousness is to life as life is to matter. Each step, from dead matter to animacy, from reflex movement to free-will, is one towards independence from material limitations. What can be the step beyond consciousness but complete independence from matter?'

'That doesn't mean...'

'I think', said the Co-ordinator hastily, 'we should start with the facts. And so far we just haven't got enough of them. I suggest we take another look at the patient. There is

no sense in trying to make up our minds on second-hand reports."

He led the way to the door.

The patient stirred almost imperceptibly. Somewhere in the chaos that had been his mind a remnant of consciousness continued to function, like a watch in an earthquake. There were even lingering memories, of another world, of the unaccountable interruption of a peaceful existence. There had been a struggle, he vaguely recalled, though the reason for it had long since slipped his enfeebled grasp. But he remembered a terrible misunderstanding and an overwhelming injustice, and the 'Treatment.' It was the machine that had brought him to this. Its violation of the mind's integrity, the rending of his very soul, the banishment to the outer darkness, the wild terror of the unknown, and now this.

Suddenly he had found himself no longer alone. His individuality drowned in the sea of alien thoughts. Waves of savage emotion broke over him, and the agony of countless souls became his own. He shared their suffering, and the exaltation of their hate. The realisation forced itself upon him that in this world insanity was the norm. He wondered vaguely, what lies beyond insanity? Insanity is reason's refuge from intolerable strain: is there no escape for madness?

In time he began to think coherently once more, and slowly he became aware that a change was taking place. On the fringe of his consciousness hovered the realisation that this nightmare in a nightmare had an appearance of actuality beyond the normal horrors of a diseased mind. The fact that the notion of reality or unreality could present itself to him at all meant, he realised, that there was indeed a change. The familiar frames of reference, time and space, cause and effect, were being restored to him. Or he to them. He grasped the thought like a drowning man, and the mad world began to fade. The storm of emotion subsided. An interval of infinite darkness, and he became aware of the reassuring background of bodily sensations. As the process of integration accelerated, confidence returned in his ability to control his body. He experimented with his eyelids.

'I think,' said the Co-ordinator, 'we can assume that the patient's experience was of a real world, and that we have encountered a unique telepathic phenomenon. Telepathy. Perhaps the Director can tell us the current theories?'

The Director looked somewhat uncomfortable. 'I'm afraid,' he said, 'we haven't yet been able to arrive at any really satisfactory explanation. All our attempts to link up the phenomena with known radiation effects have failed because of two well-established facts. First, that there is no attenuation with distance, and secondly, that pre-cognition, though usually only by a few seconds, does undoubtedly occur. Indeed, the subject often seems unable to distinguish between the present and the near future. Of course, the whole field is hard to explore because of subconscious resistance by the subjects. Obviously it is necessary for survival that an animal should be able to conceal its thoughts, and in the higher animals an efficient censor has accordingly been evolved. Its operation is almost completely automatic, so that telepathic phenomena are erratic and unreliable. Our theories are thus mainly speculation so far, but the most attractive is suggested by the fact that the perception of duration is increasingly developed in the higher animals; it is well known, for instance, that primitive peoples have only the concepts of 'before' and 'after'. It is postulated that higher forms of intelligence develop extension in time, i.e. their 'now' has duration. Their 'present' is not a mere point moving along the time line, but actually occupies length on that line. They are like an educated person who can read a sentence of a book at a glance where a child reads letter by letter. It is argued that two such minds can contact one another independently to some extent of time and space, in much the same way that two tall men converse across the heads of a crowd.'

'Plausible enough,' said the Co-ordinator, 'But... Let's shift the problem down one dimension and consider those two-dimensional creatures of our text-books, who live on the surface of a hollow sphere. To them, as to us, the universe is finite but unbounded: if they travel far enough in a straight line they return to where they start, as we would. Your theory, I take it, is that if two of these creatures were able, as it were, to put their heads through the skin of their sphere, i.e. acquire extension in the third dimension, they could contact one another outside their continuum?'

'In a way, yes.'

'H'm,' said the Co-ordinator. He turned to the Professor. 'What is the actual physical action of the Treatment?'

'It sets up a field of stress which has the effect of contracting the unwanted cells, severing their links with the mainbrain.'

'Contracting them in all three dimensions?'

'Yes'.

'But surely there must be a corresponding expansion in another dimension? May not the effect of the Treatment on the unwanted cells be to increase their extension in the fourth dimension?'

He continued slowly. 'To get back to our two-dimensional creature. If he were able to acquire enough extension in the third dimension could he not leave the surface of his sphere altogether?'

'You don't mean,' said the Professor finally, 'that the world we

saw was a four-dimensional one?'

'Not necessarily. Suppose that inside the sphere inhabited by our two-dimensional creatures there were another sphere, similarly inhabited.'

There was a long silence. 'Well,' said the Director, 'it is certainly pleasant to think that those monsters do not exist in our continuum.'

'I'm afraid you cannot dismiss that world so easily. What made it like that? Remember we knew of its existence only because that particular patient was not genuinely schizophrenic, and the untreated part of his mind retained telepathic contact with the outcast. What has been happening to all the genuine schizoids that have undergone the Treatment?'

'You mean,' exclaimed the Professor, 'that we have just been exporting our insanity? That we are responsible for all that cruelty and suffering? We must stop the Treatment at once!'

'I'm afraid you haven't seen all the implications yet. Atomic war and famine, fear and ignorance....Didn't you notice a certain resemblance between that world and ours of the Age of Unrest? Why is the incidence of insanity still so great among us? Why should there be only two spheres?'

The sun was rising above the city.

'It is curious all the same,' said the Professor, 'how like the conventional religious set-up it all is. I mean, the unfit for Heaven are cast down to us, and our sinners are thrown into Hell.'

'With this difference,' said the Co-ordinator tiredly, 'that now we know of their existence we shall do anything in our power to help these unhappy creatures.... What did they call themselves...'humans'?

THE STILL SMALL VOICE [continued from page 2]

said, without emotion, 'You will prepare the slip for flight,' and the gun in his hand was trained steady as a rock upon his father's heart, and there could be no doubt at all that he would use it.

The father looked at his son and said, 'Yes', almost in a whisper, and he could not say anything else because of the gun and because of the grief that tore at his heart as he realised that he had lost his son.

He moved heavily towards the air lock, and then he leaped like an uncoiled spring and bore the boy to the ground, and the flat report of the gun echoed away over the endless red plains.

After a moment he climbed shakily to his feet and stood looking down at his son with the tears rolling down his cheeks, and then he stooped and gently withdrew a harmonica from the vest pocket. It was dented with the force of the explosion, and riven by the bullet, and it was the one he had given Young Jim five . . . no, six . . . years ago when he was at Cal. Tech., and the one on which his son had played 'Sweet Adeline' the first evening after they had landed.

And then he forgot about the harmonica, because, although no sound broke the terrible silence, somebody said, quite distinctly, 'Now prepare your machine for departure.'

EDITORIAL

In our last issue, which was our first, (a lot of people thought the first issue would be our last) we promised that No.2 would'n't be any bigger though we hoped it would be better. Well, here it is, twice the size and containing about thrice as many words. Whether it's any better we leave you to judge.

This time we are not going to make any prophecies about the next issue, except that there will be one. Incidentally, our thanks to all the other famine editors who have been so sympathetic about the arduous toil involved in producing a printed mag., but it's really not as bad as all that. Personally, I find it quite a congenial hobby; of course, printing runs in our family, and I have merely reverted to type. But taking our time and with the assistance of our cat Bem, the nearest thing we have to a copy-boy, the three of us (our co-founder Dick Merritt has gone to England and can give only mail assistance, but my wife is a fan too) don't find it too much trouble.

One good reason we don't say what will be in the next issue is that we don't know yet. That largely depends on you, the readers. Please write and tell us what you liked in this issue, if anything; and send a contribution if you can. We are looking for good material of any kind, but there are fanzines purveying news and articles much better than we could, and we have neither the ability nor the desire to compete with them. So, and here is SLANT's slant, we intend this to be mainly a fiction magazine. But we do want originality. We want to be neither a half-baked imitation of a second-rate prozine, nor a mere expression of editorial egoboo. like (continued at foot of cover IV)

ALL DOGS ARE EQUAL

by

CEDRIC WALKER

What the devil could they be wanting him for, Geller wondered. A summons to the Institute usually meant something unpleasant. It was the sort of thing that caused your friends to shake their heads and look at you pityingly. Damn them! They were only a pack of scientists after all. Surprising how their power had grown through the years, though. And disturbing.

It was a depressing building, cold and bare in outline, outstandingly so, even amongst the sprawl of utilitarian architecture around it. It floated up to receive and envelop them. Geller paid the pilot, who promptly returned his taxi to the multitude which darted and streamed above the metropolis.

When he presented his card to the girl at the reception desk she looked at him fleetingly and then directed him down the vast hallway. A lift swished him up to a breathtaking height above the airlanes. At length he found himself before a plain unguarded door bearing in small simple lettering the name 'A. Carse', and, beneath, even smaller,'Chief Educator.'

Remarkable lack of precaution, considering that the Institute was scarcely universally popular. Geller smiled at his little joke.

What should be his attitude? Co-operative? A citizen standing on his rights? Friendly but detached? He decided not to decide. The Chief Educator would undoubtedly call the tune, anyway.

Almost before he knocked a voice bade him enter.

There was only one man present. He sat at a desk facing the door, his back to the window, which overlooked a drop of more hundreds of feet than Geller cared to think about. He was small, fat, and middle-aged, with heavy jowls. He smiled benignantly at Geller.

'Please sit down.'

Despite himself, Geller could not help reacting normally to the other's friendliness. Just for a moment. Then his mood regained control and he hardened his face and gazed coldly at the Chief Educator.

The next words came like a blow to Geller.

'Your wife has just given birth to a boy.'

It was a statement, not a question.

Geller recovered himself, but said nothing.

'Why do you keep silent?'

'Why speak? You know perfectly well that my wife has just had

a baby. You probably knew before I did.'

Carse chuckled. 'Come, we aren't exactly omnipotent, you know.'

Damn the pompous blighter! 'I'd be obliged if you'd come to the point,' Geller snapped.

The jowls settled back into quiescence. The Chief Educator leaned forward. 'Very well. I asked you here to get your consent.'

'Consent to what?'

'Please do not interrupt. Briefly, we propose to take your child into our care, and we require your permission.'

Geller leapt to his feet, his face gone suddenly white. Breathing heavily, he placed both hands carefully palm downwards on the Educator's desk and stared into the other's face.

'I'll be damned if you will!'

The Chief Educator was unmoved. 'Emotional outbursts are unnecessary and will not be tolerated. You will regain your seat at once, please.'

The words were quiet, as before, but there was menace behind them.

Geller sat down. The mask of benevolence returned to Carse's face.

'I'm well aware that you're not one of our most ardent disciples. However, you will realise that my motive in bringing you here is purely one of courtesy. We shall proceed with our plan with or without your consent.'

He paused. Geller sat silently. No point in protesting. Might as well hear him out. Indeed, he had no choice.

The Chief Educator settled himself comfortably in his chair.

'To begin with, I must go back quite a number of years; twenty-five, to be exact. It was on the occasion of the 951'st Conclave of Educators, when, as you know, one of the chief items on the agenda is the consultation with the Forecaster. I don't think I need describe that remarkable, almost living, machine even to you. Out of the 422 questions put to it all were answered satisfactorily (further proof of the excellence of our administration) save one. And that one was indeed no reflection upon us. Frankly, it puzzled us for a time. It was in fact,' he spoke the words distastefully, 'the human factor. The Forecaster told us that at a certain date in the future, the exact date need not concern you, if matters were allowed to go ahead unchecked, we should reach a stage when there would not be sufficient space pilots to permit our civilisation to continue. For certain reasons fewer and fewer boys would desire to take up the vocation of pilot. This prophecy is already making itself apparent. You realise, I trust, the urgency of the situation?'

'Of course. But what...?'

Carse raised his hand. His face was grim. He pulled at the lobe of his left ear with thumb and forefinger. It was a characteristic gesture.

'We realised how useless it would be to compel boys to become pilots against their will. They had to want to become pilots. They had to take up the vocation naturally, because it was not in them not to do so. Our plan was to create such an environment from the birth of the pilot-to-be that it would be inevitable that he become a pilot: indeed he would want to be one.

'We went first to the famous Whitlow family, about which I need not tell you. Whitlow, the first man to encircle the moon and return safely. Their deeds are legion. Through the ages it has been a matter of family pride that the sons should follow the tradition.

'Right, then. We went to the then Whitlow and put the situation to him.'

'I don't see what possible connection this can have with my son.'

Carse smiled. 'I will try to simplify things so that you may understand. One of the mainstays of the Institute is that anything can be accomplished by education. We could by education turn a child into an Einstein or a Beethoven, if this were desirable. The essential differences between individuals originate in the opinions they form, and these in turn are controlled by their environment. For environment substitute education, and that is where we come in. Apart from physical differences identical environments produce identical beings.' Carse spread his hands and sighed.

'This is what we of the Institute learn in our first year. However...

'Imagine a person subjected from birth to all the arguments and all the excitements that were ever directed upon, say, a famous space pilot. I cannot do better than quote from the works of our famous founder: 'It is impossible to believe that the same moral training would not make nearly the same man. The same stimuli, with all their strength and all their weakness, unaccompanied by the smallest addition or variation, and retailed in exactly the same proportions from month to month and year to year, must surely produce the same conditioned reflexes. The same excitements, without reservation, whether direct or accidental, must fix the same propensities.''

Carse paused reverently. 'So you see, Geller, the child to whom we give this identity of impressions must of necessity follow the same pursuits as the man after whose life his own is patterned. Do I make myself clear?'

'Quite clear.' Geller said coldly. 'You have studied the life of Whitlow..'

'Of his child, the pilot-to-be. Now, by the way, as famous as his father. Complete observation and recordings from birth. We can reproduce his entire life up to the age of 25.'

'I see. And you intend to subject my child to this... this pseudo-life and make him into another Whitlow so you can turn him out into the black horror of space! Well, you won't do it! I refuse absolutely!'

Carse pulled at his ear. 'Listen, Geller, 'he said gently,'I understand how you feel: naturally you wish your son's life to be patterned after your own...'

'It isn't only that.'

'...but you must understand, the Institute...'

'Damn the Institute! All this bosh about environment! Don't you think a father gives anything to his son? Doesn't heredity mean anything to you?'

The Chief Educator scrabbled his chair back. There was a look almost of horror on his face. The jowls quivered. He stared at his visitor as if the latter had uttered a blasphemy.

'That word means nothing to us,' he said coldly. 'I advise you to take care.'

Recent research shows the planets to be remnants of a supernova, former double-star with Sol. In our galaxy should be about one million planetary systems which can and probably do support life like ours - Dr. Hoyle, 3rd Prg

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