

ELSEWHEN

Excerpt from the Evening, STANDARD:

SOUGHT SAVANT EVADES POLICE City Hall Scandal Looms

Professor Arthur Frost, wanted for questioning in connection with the mysterious disappearance from his home of five of his students, escaped today from under the noses of a squad of police sent to arrest him. Police Sergeant Iowski claimed that Frost disappeared from the interior of the Black Maria under conditions which leave the police puzzled. District Attorney Kames labeled Iowski's story as preposterous and promised the fullest possible investigation.

"But, Chief, I didn't leave him alone for a second!" "Nuts!" answered the Chief of Police. "You claim you put Frost in the Wagon, stopped with one foot on the tailboard to write in your notebook, and when you looked up he was gone. D'yuh expect the Grand Jury to believe that? D'yuh expect me to believe that?"

"Honest, Chief," persisted Iowski, "I just stopped to write down--"

"Write down what?"

"Something he said. I said to him, 'Look, Doc, why don't you tell us where you hid 'em? You know we're bound to dig 'em up in time.' And he just gives me a funny faraway look, and says, 'Time-ah, time ... yes, you could dig them up, in Time.' I thought it was an important admission and stops to write it down. But I was standing in the only door he could use to get out of the Wagon. You know, I ain't little;

I kinda fill up a door."

"That's all you do," commented the Chief bitterly. "Iowski, you were either drunk, or crazy-or somebody got to you. The way you tell it, it's impossible!"

Iowski was honest, nor was he drunk, nor crazy.

Four days earlier Doctor Frost's class in speculative metaphysics had met as usual for their Friday evening seminar at the professor's home. Frost was saying, "And why not? Why shouldn't time be a fifth as well as a fourth dimension?"

Howard Jenkins, hard-headed engineering student, answered, "No harm in speculating, I suppose, but the question is meaningless."

"Why?" Frost's tones were deceptively mild.

"No question is meaningless," interrupted Helen Fisher.

"Oh, yeah? How high is up?"

"Let him answer," meditated Frost.

"I will," agreed Jenkins. "Human beings are constituted to perceive three spatial dimensions and one time dimension. Whether there are more of either is meaningless to us for there is no possible way for us to know-ever. Such speculation is a harmless waste of time."

"So?" said Frost. "Ever run across J. W. Dunne's theory of serial universe with serial time? And he's an engineer, like yourself. And don't forget Ouspensky. He regarded time as multi-dimensional."

"Just a second, Professor," put in Robert Monroe. "I've seen their writings-but I still think Jenkins offered a legitimate objection. How can the question mean anything to us if we aren't built to perceive more dimensions? It's like in mathematics-you can invent any mathematics you like, on any set of axioms, but unless it can be used to describe some sort of phenomena, it's just so much hot air."

Fairly put," conceded Frost. "I'll give a fair answer. Scientific belief is based on observation, either one's own or that of a competent observer. I believe in a two-dimensional time because I have actually observed it."

The clock ticked on for several seconds.

Jenkins said, "But that is impossible. Professor. You aren't built to observe two time dimensions."

"Easy, there ..." answered Frost. "I am built to perceive them one at a time-and so are you. I'll tell you about it, but before I do so, I must explain the theory of time I was forced to evolve in order to account for my experience. Most people think of time as a track that they run on from birth to death as inexorably as a train follows its rails-they feel instinctively that time follows a straight line, the past lying behind, the future lying in front. Now I have reason to believe-to know-that time is analogous to a surface rather than a line, and a rolling hilly surface at that. Think of this track we follow over the surface of time as a winding road cut through hills. Every little way the road branches and the branches follow side canyons. At these branches the crucial decisions of your life take place. You can turn right or left into entirely different futures. Occasionally there is a switchback where one can scramble up or down a bank and skip over a few thousand or million years-if you don't have your eyes so fixed on the road that you miss the short cut.

"Once in a while another road crosses yours. Neither its past nor its future has any connection whatsoever with the world we know. If you happened to take that turn you might find yourself on another planet in another space-time with nothing left of you or your world but the continuity of your ego.

"Or, if you have the necessary intellectual strength and courage, you may leave the roads, or paths of high probability, and strike out over the hills of possible time, cutting through the roads as you come to them, following them for a little way, even following them backwards, with the past ahead of you, and the future behind you. Or you might roam around the hilltops doing nothing but the extremely improbable. I cannot imagine what that would be like-perhaps a bit like Alice-through-the-Looking-Glass.

"Now as to my evidence-When I was eighteen I had a decision to make. My father suffered financial reverses and I decided to quit college. Eventually I went into business for myself, and, to make a long story short, in nineteen-fifty-eight I was convicted of fraud and went to prison."

Martha Ross interrupted. "Nineteen-fifty-eight, Doctor? You mean forty-eight?"

"No, Mss Ross. I am speaking of events that did not take place on this time track."

"Oh." She looked blank, then muttered, "With the Lord all things are possible."

"While in prison I had time to regret my mistakes. I realized that I had never been cut out for a business career, and I earnestly wished that I had stayed in school many years before. Prison has a peculiar effect on a man's mind. I drifted further and further away from reality, and lived more and more in an introspective world of my own. One night, in a way not then clear to me, my ego left my cell, went back along the time track, and I awoke in my room at my college fraternity house.

"This time I was wiser-Instead of leaving school, I found part-time work, graduated, continued as a graduate fellow, and eventually arrived where you now see me." He paused and glanced around.

"Doctor," asked young Monroe, "can you give us any idea as to how the stunt was done?"

"Yes, I can," Frost assented- "I worked on that problem for many years, trying to recapture the conditions. Recently I have succeeded and have made several excursions into possibility."

Up to this time the third woman, Estelle Martin, had made no comment, although she had listened with close attention. Now she leaned forward and spoke in an intense whisper.

"Tell us how, Professor Frost!"

"The means is simple. The key lies in convincing the subconscious mind that it can be done--"

"Then the Berkeleian idealism is proved!"

"In a way. Mss Martin. To one who believes in Bishop Berkeley's philosophy the infinite possibilities of two-dimensional time offer proof that the mind creates its own world, but a Spencerian determinist, such as good friend Howard Jenkins, would never leave the road of maximum probability. To him the world would be mechanistic and real. An orthodox free-will

Christian, such as Miss Ross, would have the choice of several of the side roads, but probably remain in a physical environment similar to Howard's.

"I have perfected a technique which will enable others to travel about in the pattern of times as I have done. I have the apparatus ready and any who wish can try it. That is the real reason why these Friday evening meetings have been held in my home-so that when the time came you all might try it, if you wished." He got up and went to a cabinet at the end of the room. "You mean we could go tonight. Doctor?" "Yes, indeed. The process is one of hypnotism and suggestion. Neither is necessary, but that is the quickest way of teaching the subconscious to break out of its groove and go where it pleases. I use a revolving ball to tire the conscious mind into hypnosis. During that period the subject listens to a recording which suggests the time-road to be followed, whereupon he does. It is as simple as that. Do any of you care to try it?"

"Is it likely to be dangerous. Doctor?" He shrugged his shoulders. "The process isn't just a deep sleep and a phonograph record-But the world of the time track you visit will be as real as the world of this time track. You are all over twenty-one. I am not urging you, I am merely offering you the opportunity."

Monroe stood up. "I'm going, Doctor." "Good! Sit here and use these earphones. Anyone else?"

"Count me in." It was Helen Fisher.

Estelle Martin joined them. Howard Jenkins went hastily to her side. "Are you going to try this business?"

"Most certainly."

He turned to Frost. "I'm in. Doc."

Martha Ross finally joined the others. Frost seated them where they could wear the earphones and then asked, "You will remember the different types of things you could do; branch off into a different world, skip over into the past or the future, or cut straight through the maze of probable tracks on a path of extreme improbability. I have records for all of those."

Monroe was first again. "I'll take a right angle turn and a brand new world."

Estelle did not hesitate. "I want to-How did you put it?-climb up a bank to a higher road somewhere in the future."

"I'll try that, too." It was Jenkins.

"I'll take the remote-possibilities track," put in Helen Fisher.

"That takes care of everybody but Miss Ross," commented the professor. "I'm afraid you will have to take a branch path in probability. Does that suit you?"

She nodded. "I was going to ask for it."

"That's fine. All of these records contain the suggestion for you to return to this room two hours from now, figured along this time track. Put on your earphones. The records run thirty minutes. I'll start them and the ball together."

He swung a glittering many-faceted sphere from a hook in the ceiling, started it whirling, and turned a small spotlight on it. Then he turned off the other lights, and started all the records by throwing a master switch. The scintillating ball twirled round and round, slowed and reversed and twirled back again. Doctor Frost turned his eyes away to keep from being fascinated by it. Presently he slipped out into the hall for a smoke. Half an hour passed and there came the single note of a gong. He hurried back and switched on the light.

Four of the five had disappeared.

The remaining figure was Howard Jenkins, who opened his eyes and blinked at the light. "Well, Doctor, I guess it didn't work."

The Doctor raised his eyebrows. "No? Look around you."

The younger man glanced about him. "Where are the others?"

"Where? Anywhere," replied Frost, with a shrug, "and way when."

Jenkins jerked off his earphones and jumped to his feet. "Doctor, what have you done to Estelle?"

Frost gently disengaged a hand from his sleeve. "I haven't done anything, Howard. She's out on another time track."

"But I meant to go with her!"

"And I tried to send you with her."

"But why didn't I go?"

"I can't say-probably the suggestion wasn't strong enough to overcome your skepticism. But don't be alarmed, son-we expect her back in a couple of hours, you know."

"Don't be alarmed!-that's easy to say. I didn't want her to try this damn fool stunt in the first place, but I knew I couldn't change her mind, so I wanted to go along to look out for her-she's so impractical! But see here, Doc-where are their bodies? I thought we would just stay here in the room in a trance."

"Apparently you didn't understand me. These other time tracks are real, as real as this one we are in. Their whole beings have gone off on other tracks, as if they had turned down a side street."

"But that's impossible-it contradicts the law of the conservation of energy!"

"You must recognize a fact when you see one-they are gone. Besides, it doesn't contradict the law; it simply extends it to include the total universe."

Jenkins rubbed a hand over his face. "I suppose so. But in that case, anything can happen to her-she could even be killed out there. And I can't do a damn thing about it. Oh, I wish we had never seen this damned seminar!"

The professor placed an arm around his shoulders. "Since you can't help her, why not calm down? Besides, you have no reason to believe that she is in any danger. Why borrow trouble? Let's go out to the kitchen and open a bottle of beer while we wait for them." He gently urged him toward the door.

After a couple of beers and a few cigarettes, Jenkins was somewhat calmed down. The professor made conversation.

"How did you happen to sign up for this course, Howard?"

"It was the only course I could take with Estelle."

"I thought so. I let you take it for reasons of my own. I knew you weren't interested in speculative philosophy, but I thought that your hard-headed materialism would hold down some of the loose thinking that is likely to go on in such a class. You've been a help to me. Take Helen Fisher for example. She is prone to reason brilliantly from insufficient data. You help to keep her down to earth."

"To be frank. Doctor Frost, I could never see the need for all this high-falutin discussion. I like facts."

"But you engineers are as bad as metaphysicians-you ignore any fact that you can't weigh in scales. If you can't bite it, it's not real. You believe in a mechanistic, deterministic universe, and ignore the facts of human consciousness, human will, and human freedom of choice-facts that you have directly experienced."

"But those things can be explained in terms of reflexes."

The professor spread his hands. "You sound just like Martha Ross-she can explain anything in terms of Bible-belt fundamentalism. Why don't both of you admit that there are a few things you don't understand?" He paused and cocked his head. "Did you hear something?"

"I think I did."

"Let's check. It's early, but perhaps one of them is back."

They hurried to the study, where they were confronted by an incredible and awe-inspiring sight.

Floating in the air near the fireplace was a figure robed in white and shining with a soft mother-of-pearl radiance. While they stood hesitant at the door, the figure turned its face to them and they saw that it had the face of Martha Ross, cleansed and purified to an unhuman majesty. Then it spoke.

"Peace be unto you, my brothers." A wave of peace and lovingkindness flowed over them like a mother's blessing. The figure approached them, and they saw, curving from its shoulders, the long, white, sweeping wings of a classical angel. Frost cursed under his breath in a dispassionate monotone.

"Do not be afraid, I have come back, as you asked me to. To explain and to help you."

The Doctor found his voice. "Are you Martha Ross?"

"I answer to that name."

"What happened after you put on the earphones?"

"Nothing. I slept for a while. When I woke, I went home."

"Nothing else? How do you explain your appearance?"

"My appearance is what you earthly children expect of the Lord's Redeemed. In the course of time I served as a missionary in South America. There it was required of me that I give up my mortal me in the service of the Lord. And so I entered the Eternal City."

"You went to Heaven?"

"These many eons I have sat at the foot of the Golden Throne and sung hosannas to His name."

Jenkins interrupted them. "Tell me, Martha-or Saint Martha-Where is Estelle? Have you seen her?"

The figure turned slowly and faced him. "Fear not."

"But tell me where she is!"

"It is not needful."

"That's no help," he answered bitterly.

"I will help you. Listen to me; Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and Love thy neighbor as thyself. That is all you need to know."

Howard remained silent, at a loss for an answer, but unsatisfied. Presently the figure spoke again. "I must go. God's blessing on you." It flickered and was gone.

The professor touched the young man's arm. "Let's get some fresh air." He led Jenkins, mute and unresisting, out into the garden. They walked for some minutes in silence. Finally Howard asked a question,

"Did we see an angel in there?"

"I think so, Howard."

"But that's insane!"

"There are millions of people who wouldn't think so-unusual certainly, but not insane."

"But it's contrary to all modern beliefs-Heaven- Hell-a personal God-Resurrection. Everything I've believed in must be wrong, or I've gone screwy."

"Not necessarily-not even probably. I doubt very much if you will ever see Heaven or Hell. You'll follow a time track in accordance with your nature."

"But she seemed real."

"She was real. I suspect that the conventional hereafter is real to any one who believes in it wholeheartedly, as Martha evidently did, but I expect you to follow a pattern in accordance with the beliefs of an agnostic-except in one respect; when you die, you won't die all over, no matter how intensely you may claim to expect to. It is an emotional impossibility for any man to believe in his own death. That sort of self-annihilation can't be done. You'll have a hereafter, but it will be one appropriate to a materialist."

But Howard was not listening. He pulled at his under lip and frowned. "Say, doc, why wouldn't Martha tell me what happened to Estelle? That was a dirty trick."

"I doubt if she knew, my boy. Martha followed a time track only slightly different from that we are in;

Estelle chose to explore one far in the past or in the distant future. For all practical purposes, each is non-existent to the other."

They heard a call from the house, a clear contralto voice, "Doctor! Doctor Frost!"

Jenkins whirled around. "That's Estelle!" They ran back into the house, the Doctor endeavoring manfully to keep up.

But it was not Estelle. Standing in the hallway was Helen Fisher, her sweater torn and dirty, her stockings missing, and a barely-healed scar puckering one cheek. Frost stopped and surveyed her. "Are you all right, child?" he demanded.

She grinned boyishly. "I'm okay. You should see the other guy."

Tell us about it."

"In a minute. How about a cup of coffee for the prodigal? And I wouldn't turn up my nose at scrambled eggs and some-lots-of toast. Meals are inclined to be irregular where I've been."

"Yes, indeed. Right away," answered Frost, "but where have you been?"

"Let a gal eat, please," she begged. "I won't hold out on you. What is Howard looking so sour about?"

The professor whispered an explanation. She gave Jenkins a compassionate glance. "Oh, she hasn't? I thought I'd be the last man in; I was away so long. What day is this?"

Frost glanced at his wrist watch. "You're right on time; it's just eleven o'clock."

"The hell you say! Oh, excuse me. Doctor. 'Curiouser and curiouser,' said Alice.' All in a couple of hours. Just for the record, I was gone several weeks at least."

When her third cup of coffee had washed down the last of the toast, she began:

"When I woke up I was falling upstairs-through a nightmare, several nightmares. Don't ask me to describe that-nobody could. That went on for a week, maybe, then things started to come into focus. I don't know in just what order things happened, but when I first started to notice clearly I was standing in a little barren valley. It was cold, and the air was thin and acrid. It burned my throat. There were two suns in the sky, one big and reddish, the other smaller and too bright to look at."

"Two suns!" exclaimed Howard. "That's not possible-binary stars don't have planets."

She looked at him. "Have it your own way-I was there. Just as I was taking this all in, something whizzed overhead and I ducked. That was the last I saw of that place.

"I slowed down next back on earth-at least it looked like it-and in a city. It was a big and complicated city. I was in trafficway with a lot of fast moving traffic. I stepped out and tried to flag one of the vehicles-a long crawling caterpillar thing with about fifty wheels-when I caught sight of what was driving it and dodged back in a hurry. It wasn't a man and it wasn't an animal either-not one I've ever seen or heard of. It wasn't a bird, or a fish, nor an insect. The god that thought up the inhabitants of that city doesn't deserve worship. I don't know what they were, but they crawled and they crept and they stank. Ugh!"

slunk around holes in that place," she continued, "for a couple of weeks before I recovered the trick of jumping the time track. I was desperate, for I thought that the suggestion to return to now hadn't worked. I couldn't find much to eat and I was lightheaded part of the time. I drank out of what I suspect was their drainage system, but there was nobody to ask and I didn't want to know. I was thirsty."

"Did you see any human beings?"

"I'm not sure. I saw some shapes that might have been men squatting in a circle down in the tunnels under the city, but something frightened them, and they scurried away before I could get close enough to look."

"What else happened there?"

"Nothing. I found the trick again that same night and got away from there as fast as I could-I am afraid I lost the scientific spirit. Professor-I didn't care how the other half lived.

'This time I had better luck. I was on earth again, but in pleasant rolling hills, like the Blue Ridge Mountains. It was summer, and very lovely. I found a little stream and took off my clothes and bathed. It was wonderful. After I had found some ripe berries, I lay down in the sun and went to sleep.

"I woke wide awake with a start. Someone was bending over me. It was a man, but no beauty. He was a Neanderthal. I should have run, but I tried to grab my clothes first, so he grabbed me. I was led back into camp, a Sabine woman, with my new spring sports outfit tucked fetchingly under one arm.

"I wasn't so bad off. It was the Old Man who had found me, and he seemed to regard me as a strange pet, about on a par with the dogs that snarled around the bone heap, rather than as a member of his harem. I fed well enough, if you aren't fussy-I wasn't fussy after living in the bowels of that awful city.

"The Neanderthal isn't a bad fellow at heart, rather good-natured, although inclined to play rough. That's how I got this." She fingered the scar on her cheek, "I had about decided to stay a while and study them, when one day I made a mistake. It was a chilly morning, and I put on my clothes for the first time since I had arrived. One of the young bucks saw me, and I guess it aroused his romantic nature. The Old Man was away at the time and there was no one to stop him.

' He grabbed me before I knew what was happening and tried to show his affection. Have you ever been nuzzled by a cave man, Howard? They have halitosis, not to mention B.O. I was too startled to concentrate on the time trick, or else I would have slipped right out into space-time and left him clutching air."

Doctor Frost was aghast. "Dear God, child! What did you do?"

"I finally showed him a jiu jitsu trick I learned in Phis. Ed. II, then I ran like hell and skinned up a tree. I counted up to a hundred and tried to be calm. Pretty soon I was shooting upstairs in a nightmare again and very happy to be doing it."

"Then you came back here?"

"Not by a whole lot-worse luck! I landed in this present all right, and apparently along this time dimension, but there was plenty that was wrong about it-I was standing on the south side of Forty-second street in New York. I knew where I was for the first thing I noticed was the big lighted letters that chase around the TIMES building and spell out news flashes. It was running backwards. I was trying to figure out DETROIT BEAT TO HITS NINE GET YANKEES' when I saw two cops close to me running as hard as they could-backwards, away from me." Doctor Frost smothered an ejaculation. "What did you say?"

"Reversed entropy-you entered the track backwards-your time arrow was pointing backwards."

"I figured that out, when I had time to think about it. Just then I was too busy. I was in a clearing in the crowd, but the ring of people-was closing in on me, all running backwards. The cops disappeared in the crowd, and the crowd ran right up to me, stopped, and started to scream. Just as that happened, the traffic lights changed, cars charged out from both directions, driving backwards. It was too much for little Helen. I fainted.

"Following that I seemed to slant through a lot of places-"

"Just a second," Howard interrupted, "just what happened before that? I thought I sawied entropy, but that got me licked."

"Well," explained Frost, "the easiest way to explain it is to say that she was travelling backwards in time. Her future was their past, and vice versa. I'm glad she got out in a hurry. I'm not sure that human metabolism can be maintained in such conditions."

"Hmm-Go ahead, Helen."

"This slanting through the axes would have been startling, if I hadn't been emotionally exhausted. I sat back and watched it, like a movie. I think Salvador Dali wrote the script. I saw landscapes heave and shift like a stormy sea. People melted into plants-I think my own body changed at times, but I can't be sure. Once I found myself in a place that was all insides, instead of outsides. Some of the things we'll skip-I don't believe them myself.

"Then I slowed down in a place that must have had an extra spatial dimension. Everything looked three dimensional to me, but they changed their shapes when I thought about them. I found I could look inside solid objects simply by wanting to. When I tired of prying into the intimate secrets of rocks and plants, I took a look at myself, and it worked Just as well. I know more about anatomy and physiology now than an MD. It's fun to watch your heart beat-kind o' cute.

"But my appendix was swollen and inflamed. I found I could reach in and touch it-it was tender. I've had trouble with it so I decided to perform an emergency operation, I nipped it off with my nails. It didn't hurt at all, bled a couple of drops and closed right up."

"Good Heavens, child! You might have gotten peritonitis and died."

"I don't think so. I believe that ultra-violet was pouring all through me and killing the bugs. I had a fever for a while, but I think what caused it was a bad case of internal sunburn.

"I forgot to mention that I couldn't walk around in this place, for I couldn't seem to touch anything but myself. I sliced right through anything I tried to get a purchase on. Pretty soon I quit trying and relaxed. It was comfortable and I went into a warm happy dope, like a hibernating bear.

"After a long time-a long, long time, I went sound asleep and came to in your big easy-chair. That's all."

Helen answered Howard's anxious inquiries by telling him that she had seen nothing of Estelle. "But why don't you calm down and wait? She isn't really overdue."

They were interrupted by the opening of the door from the hallway. A short wiry figure in a hooded brown tunic and tight brown breeches strode into the room.

"Where's Doctor Frost? Oh-Doctor, I need help!"

It was Monroe, but changed almost beyond recognition. He had been short and slender before, but was now barely five feet tall, and stocky, with powerful shoulder muscles. The brown costume with its peaked hood, or helmet, gave him a strong resemblance to the popular notion of gnome.

Frost hurried to him. "What is it, Robert? How can I help?"

"This first." Monroe hunched forward for inspection of his left upper arm. The fabric was tattered and charred, exposing an ugly burn. "He just grazed me, but it had better be fixed. If I am to save the arm."

Frost examined it without touching it. "We must rush you to a hospital."

"No time. I've got to get back. They need me-and the help I can bring."

The Doctor shook his head. "You've got to have treatment. Bob. Even if there is strong need for you to go back wherever you have been, you are in a different time track now. Time lost here isn't necessarily lost there."

Monroe cut him short. "I think this world and my world have connected time rates. I must hurry."

Helen Fisher placed herself between them. "Let me see that arm. Bob. Hm-pretty nasty, but I think I can fix it. Professor, put a kettle on the fire with about a cup of water in it. As soon as it boils, chuck in a handful of tea leaves."

She rummaged through the kitchen cutlery drawer, found a pair of shears, and did a neat job of cutting away the sleeve and cleaning the burned flesh for dressing. Monroe talked as she

worked.

"Howard, I want you to do me a favor. Get a pencil and paper and take down a list. I want a flock of things to take back-all of them things that you can pick up at the fraternity house. You'll have to go for me-I'd be thrown out with my present appearance-What's the matter? Don't you want to?"

Helen hurriedly explained Howard's preoccupation. He listened sympathetically. "Oh! Say, that's tough lines, old man." His brow wrinkled- "But look-You can't do Estelle any good by waiting here, and I really do need your help for the next half hour. Will you do it?"

Jenkins reluctantly agreed. Monroe continued,

"Fine! I do appreciate it. Go to my room first and gather up my reference books on math-also my slide rule. You'll find an India-paper radio manual, too. I want that. And I want your twenty-inch log-log duplex slide rule, as well. You can have my Rabelais and the Droll Stories. I want your Marks' Mechanical Engineers Handbook, and any other technical reference books that you have and I haven't. Take anything you like in exchange.

"Then go up to Stinky Beanfield's room, and get his Military Engineers Handbook, his Chemical Warfare, and his texts on ballistics and ordnance. Yes, and Miller's Chemistry of Explosives, if he has one. If not, pick up one from some other of the R.O.T.C. boys; it's important." Helen was deftly applying a poultice to his arm. He winced as the tea leaves, still warm, touched his seared flesh, but went ahead.

"Stinky keeps his service automatic in his upper bureau drawer. Swipe it, or talk him out of it. Bring as much ammunition as you can find-I'll write out a bill of sale for my car for you to leave for him. Now get going. I'll tell Doc all about it, and he can tell you later. Here. Take my car." He fumbled at his thigh, then looked annoyed. "Cripes! I don't have my keys."

Helen came to the rescue. "Take mine-The keys are in my bag on the hall table."

Howard got up. "OK, I'll do my damndest. If I get flung in the can, bring me cigarettes." He went out.

Helen put the finishing touches on the bandages. "There! I think that will do. How does it feel?"

He flexed his arm cautiously. "Okay. It's a neat job. kid. It takes the sting out,"

"I believe it will heal if you keep tannin solution on it. Can you get tea leaves where you are going?"

"Yes, and tannic acid, too. I'll be all right. Now you deserve an explanation. Professor, do you have a cigaret on you? I could use some of that coffee, too."

"Surely, Robert." Frost hastened to serve him.

Monroe accepted a light and began,

"It's all pretty cock-eyed. When I came out of the sleep, I found myself, dressed as I am now and looking as I now look, marching down a long, deep fosse. I was one of a column of threes in a military detachment. The odd part about it is that I felt perfectly natural. I knew where I was and why I was there-and who I was. I don't mean Robert Monroe; my name over there is Igor." Monroe pronounced the guttural deep in his throat and trilled the "r." "I hadn't forgotten Monroe; it was more as if I had suddenly remembered him. I had one identity and two pasts. It was something like waking up from a clearly remembered dream, only the dream was perfectly real. I knew Monroe was real, just as I knew Igor was real.

"My world is much like earth; a bit smaller, but much the same surface gravity. Men like myself are the dominant race, and we are about as civilized as you folks, but our culture has followed a difficult course-We live underground about half the time. Our homes are there and a lot of our industry. You see it's warm underground in our world, and not entirely dark. There is a mild radioactivity; it doesn't harm us.

"Nevertheless we are a surface-evolved race, and can't be healthy nor happy if we stay underground all the time. Now there is a war on and we've been driven underground for eight or nine months. The war is going against us. As it stands now, we have lost control of the surface and my race is being reduced to the status of hunted vermin,

"You see, we aren't fighting human beings. I don't know just what it is we are fighting-maybe beings from outer space. We don't know. They attacked us several places at once from great flying rings the like of which we had never seen. They burned us down without warning. Many of us escaped underground where they haven't followed us. They don't operate at night either-seem to need sunlight to be active. So it's a stalemate-or was until they started gassing our tunnels.

"We've never captured one and consequently don't know what makes them tick. We examined a ring that crashed, but didn't learn much. There was nothing inside that even vaguely resembled animal life, nor was there anything to support animal life. I mean there were no food supplies, nor sanitary arrangements. Opinion is divided between the idea that the one we examined was remotely controlled and the idea that the enemy are some sort of non-protoplasmic intelligence, perhaps force patterns, or something equally odd.

"Our principal weapon is a beam which creates a stasis in the ether, and freezes 'em solid. Or rather it should, but it will destroy all life and prevent molar action-but the rings are simply put temporarily out of control. Unless we can keep a beam on a ring right to the moment it crashes, it recovers and gets away. Then its pals come and burn out our position.

"We've had better luck with mining their surface camps, and blowing them up at night. We're accomplished sappers, of course. But we need better weapons. That's what I sent Howard after. I've got two ideas. If the enemy are simply some sort of intelligent force patterns, or something like that, radio may be the answer. We might be able to fill up the ether with static and jam them right out of existence. If they are too tough for that, perhaps some good old-fashioned anti-aircraft fire might make them say 'Uncle.' In any case there is a lot of technology here that we don't have, and which may have the answer. I wish I had time to pass on some of our stuff in return for what I'm taking with me."

"You are determined to go back, Robert?"

"Certainly. It's where I belong. I've no family here. I don't know how to make you see it. Doc, but those are my people-that is my world. I suppose if conditions were reversed, I'd feel differently."

"I see," said Helen, "you're fighting for the wife and kids." "

He turned a weary face toward her. "Not exactly. I'm a bachelor over there, but I do have a family to think about; my sister is in command of the attack unit I'm in. Oh, yes, the women are in it-they're little and tough, like you, Helen."

She touched his arm lightly. "How did you pick up this?"

"That bum? You remember we were on the march. We were retreating down that ditch from a surface raid. I thought we had made good our escape when all of a sudden a ring swooped down on us. Most of the detachment scattered, but I'm a junior technician armed with the stasis ray. I tried to get my equipment unlimbered to fight back, but I was burned down before I could finish. Luckily it barely grazed me. Several of the others were fried. I don't know yet whether or not Sis got hers. That's one of the reasons why I'm in a hurry.

"One of the other techs who wasn't hit got his gear set up and covered our retreat. I was dragged underground and taken to a dressing station. The medicos were about to work on me when I passed out and came to in the Professor's study."

The doorbell rang and the Professor got up to answer it. Helen and Robert followed him. It was Howard, bearing spoils.

"Did you get everything?" Robert asked anxiously.

"I think so. Stinky was in, but I managed to borrow his books. The gun was harder, but I telephoned a friend of mine and had him call back and ask for Stinky. While he was out of the room, I lifted it. Now I'm a criminal-government property, too."

"You're a pal, Howard. After you hear the explanation, you'll agree that it was worth doing. Won't he, Helen?"

"Absolutely!"

"Well, I hope you're right," he answered dubiously. "I brought along something else, just in case. Here it is." He handed Robert a book.

"Aerodynamics and Principles of Aircraft Construction," Robert read aloud. "My God, yes! Thanks, Howard."

In a few minutes, Monroe had his belongings assembled and fastened to his person. He had announced that he was ready when the Professor checked him:

"One moment, Robert. How do you know that these books will go with you?"

Why not? That's why I'm fastening them to me."

"Did your earthly clothing go through the first time?"

"Noo-" His brow furrowed. "Good grief. Doc, what can I do? I couldn't possibly memorize what I need to know."

"I don't know. Son. Let's think about it a bit." He broke off and stared at the ceiling. Helen touched his hand.

"Perhaps I can help. Professor."

"In what way, Helen?"

"Apparently I don't metamorphize when I change time tracks, I had the same clothes with me everywhere I went. Why couldn't I ferry this stuff over for Bob?"

"Hm, perhaps you could."

"No, I couldn't let you do that," interposed Monroe. "You might get killed or badly hurt."

"I'll chance it."

"I've got an idea," put in Jenkins. "Couldn't Doctor Frost set his instructions so that Helen would go over and come right back? How about it. Doc?"

"Mmm, yes, perhaps." But Helen held up a hand.

"No good. The boodle might come bouncing back with me. I'll go over without any return instructions. I like the sound of this world of Bob's anyway. I may stay there. Cut out the chivalry. Bob. One of the things I liked about your world was the notion of treating men and women alike. Get unstuck from that stuff and start hanging it on me. I'm going."

She looked like a Christmas tree when the dozen-odd books had been tied to various parts of her solid little figure, the automatic pistol strapped on, and the two slide rules, one long and one short, stuck in the pistol belt.

Howard fondled the large slide rule before he fastened it on. "Take good care of this slipstick, Bob," he said, "I gave up smoking for six months to pay for it."

Frost seated the two side by side on the sofa in the study. Helen slipped a hand into Bob's. When the shining ball had been made to spin. Frost motioned for Jenkins to leave, closed the door after him and switched out the light. Then he started repeating hypnotic suggestions in a monotone.

Ten minutes later he felt a slight swish of air and ceased. He snapped the light switch. The sofa was empty, even of books.

Frost and Jenkins kept an uneasy vigil while awaiting Estelle's return. Jenkins wandered nervously around the study, examining objects that didn't interest him and smoking countless cigarettes. The Professor sat quietly in his easy chair, simulating a freedom from anxiety that he did not feel. They conversed in desultory fashion.

"One thing I don't see," observed Jenkins, "is why in the world Helen could go a dozen places and not change, and Bob goes just one place and comes back almost unrecognizable—shorter, heavier, decked out in outlandish clothes. What happened to his ordinary clothes anyhow? How do you explain those things, Professor?"

"Eh? I don't explain them—I merely observe them. I think perhaps he changed, while Helen didn't, because Helen was just a visitor to the places she went to, whereas Monroe belonged over there as witness he fitted into the pattern of that world. Perhaps the Great Architect intended for him to cross over."

"Huh? Good heavens, Doctor, surely you don't believe in divine predestination!"

"Perhaps not in those terms. But, Howard, you mechanistic skeptics make me tired. Your naive ability to believe that things 'just growed' approaches childishness. According to you a fortuitous accident of entropy produced Beethoven's Ninth Symphony."

"I think that's unfair. Doctor. You certainly don't expect a man to believe in things that run contrary to his good sense without offering him any reasonable explanation."

Frost snorted. "I certainly do—if he has observed it with his own eyes and ears, or gets it from a source known to be credible. A fact doesn't have to be understood to be true. Sure, any reasonable mind wants explanations, but it's silly to reject facts that don't fit your philosophy."

"Now these events tonight, which you are so anxious to rationalize in orthodox terms, furnish a clue to a lot of things that scientists have been rejecting because they couldn't explain them. Have you ever heard the tale of the man who walked around the horses? No? Around 1810 Benjamin Bathurst, British Ambassador to Austria, arrived in his carriage at an inn in Perleberg, Germany. He had his valet and secretary with him. They drove into the lighted courtyard of the inn. Bathurst got out, and, in the presence of bystanders and his two attaches, walked around the horses. He hasn't been seen since."

"What happened?"

"Nobody knows. I think he was preoccupied and inadvertently wandered into another time track. But there are literally hundreds of similar cases, way too many to laugh off. The two-time-dimensions theory accounts for most of them. But I suspect that there are other as-yet-undreamed-of natural principles operating in some of the rejected cases."

Howard stopped pacing and pulled at his lower lip. "Maybe so. Doctor. I'm too upset to think. Look here—it's one o'clock. Oughtn't she to be back by now?"

"I'm afraid so. Son."

"You mean she's not coming back."

"It doesn't look like it."

The younger man gave a broken cry and collapsed on the sofa. His shoulders heaved. Presently he calmed down a little. Frost saw his lips move and suspected that he was praying. Then he showed a drawn face to the Doctor.

"Isn't there anything we can do?"

"That's hard to answer, Howard. We don't know where she's gone; all we do know is that she left here under hypnotic suggestion to cross over into some other loop of the past or future."

"Can't we go after her the same way and trace her?"

"I don't know. I haven't had any experience with such a job."

"I've got to do something or I'll go nuts."

"Take it easy, son. Let me think about it." He smoked in silence while Howard controlled an impulse to scream, break furniture, anything!

Frost knocked the ash off his cigar and placed it carefully in a tray. "I can think of one chance. It's a remote one."

"Anything!"

"I'm going to listen to the record that Estelle heard, and cross over. I'll do it wide awake, while concentrating on her. Perhaps I can establish some rapport, some extra-sensory connection, that will serve to guide me to her." Frost went immediately about his preparations as he spoke. "I want you to remain in the room when I go so that you will really believe that it can be done."

In silence Howard watched him don the headphones. The Professor stood still, eyes closed. He remained so for nearly fifteen minutes, then took a short step forward. The earphones clattered to the floor. He was gone.

Frost felt himself drift off into the timeless limbo which precedes transition. He noticed again that it was exactly like the floating sensation that ushers in normal sleep, and wondered idly, for the hundredth time, whether or not the dreams of sleep were real experiences. He was inclined to think they were. Then he recalled his mission with a guilty start, and concentrated hard on Estelle.

He was walking along a road, white in the sunshine. Before him were the gates of a city. The gateman stared at his odd attire, but let him pass. He hurried down the broad tree-lined

avenue which he knew) led from the space port to Capitol Hill. He turned aside into the Way of me Gods and continued until he reached the Grove of the Priestesses. There he found the house which he sought, its marble walls pink in the sun, its fountains tinkling in the morning breeze. He turned in.

The ancient janitor, nodding in the sun, admitted him to the house. The slender maid-servant, barely nubile, ushered him into the inner chamber, where her mistress raised herself on one elbow and regarded her visitor through languid eyes. Frost addressed her,

"It is time to return, Estelle."

Her eyebrows showed her surprise. "You speak a strange and barbarous tongue, old man, and yet, here is a mystery, for I know it. What do you wish of me?"

Frost spoke impatiently. "Estelle, I say it is time to return!"

"Return? What idle talk is this? Return where? And my name is Star-Light, not Ess Tell. Who are you, and from where do you come?" She searched his face, then pointed a slender finger at him. "I know you now! You are out of my dreams. You were a Master and instructed me in the ancient wisdom."

"Estelle, do you remember a youth in those dreams?"

"That odd name again! Yes, there was a youth. He was sweet-sweet and straight and tall like pine on the mountain. I have dreamed of him often," She swung about with a flash of long white limbs. "What of this youth?"

"He waits for you. It is time to return."

"Return!-There is no return to the place of dreams!"

"I can lead you there."

"What blasphemy is this? Are you a priest, that you should practice magic? Why should a sacred courtesan go to the place of dreams?"

"There is no magic in it. He is heartsick at your loss. I will lead you back to him."

She hesitated, doubt in her eyes, then she replied, "Suppose you could; why should I leave my honorable sacred station for the cold nothingness of that dream?"

He answered her gently, "What does your heart tell you, Estelle?"

She stared at him, eyes wide, and seemed about to burst into tears. Then she flung herself across the couch, and showed him her back. A muffled voice answered him, "Be off with you! There is no youth, except in my dreams. I'll seek him there!"

She made no further reply to his importunities. Presently he ceased trying and left with a heavy heart.

Howard seized him by the arm as he returned. "Well, Professor? Well? Did you find her?"

Frost dropped wearily into his chair. "Yes, I found her."

"Was she all right? Why didn't she come back with you?"

"She was perfectly well, but I couldn't persuade her to return."

Howard looked as if he had been slapped across the mouth. "Didn't you tell her I wanted her to come back?"

"I did, but she didn't believe me."

"Not believe you?"

"You see she's forgotten most of this life, Howard. She thinks you are simply a dream."

"But that's not possible!"

Frost looked more weary than ever. "Don't you think it is about time you stopped using that term, son?"

Instead of replying he answered, "Doctor, you must take me to her!" Frost looked dubious.

"Can't you do it?"

"Perhaps I could, if you have gotten over your disbelief, but still--"

"Disbelief? I've been forced to believe. Let's get busy."

Frost did not move. "I'm not sure that I agree. Howard, conditions are quite different where Estelle has gone. It suits her, but I'm not sure that it would be a kindness to take you through to her." "Why not? Doesn't she want to see me?" "Yes-I think she does. I'm sure she would welcome you, but conditions are very different."

"I don't give a damn what the conditions are. Let's go."

Frost got up. "Very well. It shall be as you wish." He seated Jenkins in the easy chair and held the young man's eyes with his gaze. He spoke slowly in calm, unmodulated tones-Frost assisted Howard to his feet and brushed him off. Howard laughed and wiped the white dust of the road from his hands.

"Quite a tumble. Master. I feel as if some lout had pulled a stool from under me."

"I shouldn't have had you sit down." "I guess not." He pulled a large multi-flanged pistol from his belt and examined it. "Lucky the safety catch was set on my blaster or we might have been picking ourselves out of the stratosphere. Shall we be on our way?"

Frost looked his companion over; helmet, short military kilt, short sword and accoutrements slapping at his thighs. He blinked and answered, "Yes. Yes, of course."

As they swung into the city gates. Frost inquired, 'Do you know where you are headed?' "Yes, certainly. To Star-Light's villa in the Grove." "And you know what to expect there?" "Oh, you mean our discussion. I know the customs here. Master, and am quite undismayed, I assure you. Star-Light and I understand each other. She's

one of these 'Out of sight, out of mind' girls. Now that I'm back from Ultima Thule, she'll give up the priesthood and we'll settle down and raise a lot of fat babies."

"Ultima Thule? Do you remember my study?"

"Of course I do-and Robert and Helen and all the rest."

"Is that what you meant by Ultima Thule?"

"Not exactly. I can't explain it. Master. I'm a practical military man. I'll leave such things to you priests and teachers."

They paused in front of Estelle's house. "Coming in, Master?"

"No, I think not. I must be getting back."

"You know best." Howard clapped him on the shoulder. "You have been a true friend. Master. Our first brat shall be named for you."

"Thank you, Howard. Goodbye, and good luck to both of you."

"And to you." He entered the house with a confident stride.

Frost walked slowly back toward the gates, his mind preoccupied with myriad thoughts. There seemed to be no end to the permutations and combinations; either of matter, or of mind. Martha, Robert, Helen-now Howard and Estelle. It should be possible to derive a theory that would cover them all.

As he mused, his heel caught on a loose paving block and he stumbled across his easy chair.

The absence of the five students was going to be hard to explain. Frost knew-so he said nothing to anyone. The weekend passed before anyone took the absences seriously. On Monday a policeman came to his house, asking questions.

His answers were not illuminating, for he had reasonably refrained from trying to tell the true story. The District Attorney smelled a serious crime, kidnapping or perhaps a mass murder. Or maybe one of these love cults-you can never tell about these professors!

He caused a warrant to be issued Tuesday morning, Sergeant Izowski was sent to pick him up.

The professor came quietly and entered the black wagon without protest, "Look, Doc," said the sergeant, encouraged by his docile manner, "why don't you tell us where you hid 'em? You know we're bound to dig them up in time."

Frost turned, looked him in the eyes, and smiled, "Time," he said softly, "ah, time ... yes, you could dig them up, in Time." He then got into the wagon and sat down quietly, closed his eyes, and placed his mind in the necessary calm receptive condition.

The sergeant placed one foot on the tailboard, braced his bulk in the only door, and drew out his notebook. When he finished writing he looked up.

Professor Frost was gone.

Frost had intended to look up Howard and Estelle. Inadvertently he let his mind dwell on Helen and Robert at the crucial moment. When he "landed" it was not in the world of the future he had visited twice before. He did not know where he was-on earth apparently, somewhere and somewhen.

It was wooded rolling country, like the hills of southern Missouri, or New Jersey. Frost had not sufficient knowledge of botany to be able to tell whether the species of trees he saw around him were familiar or not. But he was given no time to study the matter.

He heard a shout, an answering shout. Human figures came bursting out of the trees in a ragged line. He thought that they were attacking him, looked wildly around for shelter, and found none. But they kept on past him, ignoring him, except that the one who passed closest to him glanced at him hastily, and shouted something. Then he, too, was gone.

Frost was left standing, bewildered, in the small natural clearing in which he had landed.

Before he had had time to integrate these events one of the fleeing figures reappeared and yelled to him, accompanying the words with a gesture unmistakable-he was to come along.

Frost hesitated. The figure ran toward and hit him with a clean tackle. The next few seconds were very confused, but he pulled himself together sufficiently to realize that he was seeing the world upside down;

the stranger was carrying him at a strong dogtrot, thrown over one shoulder.

Bushes whipped at his face, then the way led downward for several yards, and he was dumped casually to the ground. He sat up and rubbed himself.

He found himself in a tunnel which ran upwards to daylight and downward the Lord knew where. Figures milled around him but ignored him. Two of them were setting up some apparatus between the group and the mouth of the tunnel. They worked with extreme urgency, completing what they were doing in seconds, and stepped back. Frost heard a soft gentle hum.

The mouth of the tunnel became slightly cloudy. He soon saw why-the apparatus was spinning a web from wall to wall, blocking the exit. The web became less tenuous, translucent, opaque. The hum persisted for minutes thereafter and the strange machine continued to weave and thicken the web. One of the figures glanced at its belt, spoke one word in the tone of command, and the humming ceased.

Frost could feel relief spread over the group like a warm glow. He felt it himself and relaxed, knowing intuitively that some acute danger had been averted.

The member of the group who had given the order to shut off the machine turned around, happened to see Frost, and approached him, asking some questions in a sweet but peremptory soprano. Frost was suddenly aware of three things; the leader was a woman, it was the leader who had rescued him, and the costume and general appearance of these people matched that of the transformed Robert Monroe.

Asmile spread over his face. Everything was going to be all right!

The question was repeated with marked impatience. Frost felt that an answer was required, though he did not understand the language and was sure that she could not possibly know English. Nevertheless-

"Madame," he said in English, getting to his feet and giving her a courtly bow, "I do not know your language and do not understand your question, but I suspect that you have saved my life. I am grateful."

She seemed puzzled and somewhat annoyed, and demanded something else-at least Frost thought it was a different question; he could not be sure. This was getting nowhere. The language difficulty was almost insuperable, he realized. It might take days, weeks, months to overcome it. In the meantime these people were busy with a war, and would be in no frame of mind to bother with a useless incoherent stranger.

He did not want to be turned out on the surface.

How annoying, he thought, how stupidly annoying! Probably Monroe and Helen were somewhere around, but he could die of old age and never find them. They might be anywhere on the planet. How would an American, dumped down in Tibet, make himself understood if his only possible interpreter were in South America? Or whereabouts unknown? How would he make the Tibetans understand that there even was an interpreter? Botheration!

Still, he must make a try. What was it Monroe had said his name was here? Egan-no, Igor. That was it-Igor.

"Igor," he said.

The leader cocked her head. "Igor?" she said,

Frost nodded vigorously. "Igor."

She turned and called out, "Igor!" giving it the marked guttural, the liquid "r" that Monroe had given it. Aman came forward. The professor looked eagerly at him, but he was a stranger, like the rest. The leader pointed to the man and stated, "Igor."

This is growing complicated, thought Frost, apparently Igor is a common name here-too common. Then he had a sudden idea:

If Monroe and Helen got through, their badly-needed chattels might have made them prominent. "Igor," he said, "Helen Fisher."

The leader was attentive at once, her face alive. "Elen Feesher?" she repeated.

"Yes, yes-Helen Fisher."

She stood quiet, thinking. It was plain that the words meant something to her. She clapped her hands together and spoke, commandingly. Two men stepped forward. She addressed them rapidly for several moments.

The two men stepped up to Frost, each taking an arm-They started to lead him away. Frost held back for a moment and said over his shoulder, "Helen Fisher?"

" 'Elen Feesher!' " the leader assured him. He had to be content with that.

Two hours passed, more or less. He had not been mistreated and the room in which they had placed him was comfortable but it was a cell-at least the door was fastened. Perhaps he had said the wrong thing, perhaps those syllables meant something quite different here from a simple proper name.

The room in which he found himself was bare and lighted only by a dim glow from the walls, as had all of this underground world which he had seen so far. He was growing tired of the place and was wondering whether or not it would do any good to set up a commotion when he heard someone at the door.

The door slid back; he saw the leader, a smile on her rather grim, middle-aged features. She spoke in her own tongue, then added, "Igor... Ellenfeesher."

He followed her.

Glowing passageways, busysquares where he was subjected to curious stares, an elevator which startled him by dropping suddenlywhen he was not aware that it was an elevator, and finally a capsule-like vehicle in which they were sealed airtight and which went somewhere very fast indeed to judge by the sudden surge of weight when it started and again when it stopped-through them all he followed his guide, not understanding and lacking means of inquiring. He tried to relax and enjoy the passing moment, as his companion seemed to bear him no ill-will, though her manner was brusque-that of a person accustomed to giving orders and not in the habit of encouraging casual intimacy.

They arrived at a door which she opened and strode in. Frost followed and was almost knocked off his feet by a figure which charged into him and grasped him with both arms. "Doctor! Doctor Frost!"

It was Helen Fisher, dresser in the costume worn by both sexes here. Behind her. stood Robert-or Igor, his gnome-like face widened with a grin.

He detached Helen's arms gently. "My dear." he said inanely, "imagine finding you here."

"Imagine finding you here," she retorted. "Why, professor-you're crying!"

"Oh, no, not at all," he said hastily, and turned to Monroe. "It's good to see you, too, Robert."

"That goes double for me. Doc," Monroe agreed.

The leader said something to Monroe. He answered her rapidly in their tongue and turned to Frost. "Doctor, this is my elder sister, Margri, Actoon Margri-Major Margri, you might translate it roughly,"

"She has been very kind to me," said Frost, and bowed to her, acknowledging the introduction. Margri clapped her hands smartly together at the waist and ducked her head, features impassive.

"She gave the salute of equals," explained Robert-Igor. "I translated the title doctor as best I could which causes her to assume that your rank is the same as hers."

"What should I do?"

"Return it."

Frost did so, but awkwardly.

Doctor Frost brought his erstwhile students up to "date"-using a term which does not apply, since they were on a different time axis. His predicament with the civil authorities brought a cry of dismay from Helen. "Why, you poor thing! How awful of them!"

"Oh, I wouldn't say so," protested Frost. "It was reasonable so far as they knew. But I'm afraid I can't go back."

"You don't need to," Igor assured him. "You're more than welcome here."

"Perhaps I can help out in your war."

"Perhaps-but you've already done more than anyone here by what you've enabled me to do. We are working on it now." He swung his arm in a gesture which took in the whole room.

Igor had been detached from combat duty and assigned to staff work, in order to make available earth techniques. Helen was helping. "Nobody believes my story but my sister," he admitted, "But I've been able to show them enough for them to realize that what I've got is important, so they've given me a free hand and are practically hanging over my shoulder, waiting to see what we can produce. I've already got them started on a jet fighter and attack rockets to arm it."

Frost expressed surprise. How could so much be done so fast? Were the time rates different? Had Helen and Igor crossed over many weeks before, figured along this axis?

No, he was told, but Igor's countrymen, though lacking many earth techniques, were far ahead of earth in manufacturing skill. They used a single general type of machine to manufacture almost anything. They fed into it a plan which Igor called for want of a better term the blueprints-it was in fact, a careful scale model of the device to be manufactured; the machine retooled itself and produced the artifact. One of them was, at that moment, moulding the bodies of fighting planes out of plastic, all in one piece and in one operation.

"We are going to arm these jobs with both the stasis ray and rockets," said Igor. "Freeze 'em and then shoot the damn things down while they are out of control."

They talked a few minutes, but Frost could see that Igor was getting fidgety. He guessed the reason. and asked to be excused. Igor seized on the suggestion. "We will see you a little later," he said with relief. "I'll have some one dig up quarters for you. We are pretty rushed. War work-I know you'll understand."

Frost fell asleep that night planning how he could help his two young friends, and their friends, in their struggle.

But it did not work out that way. His education had been academic rather than practical; he discovered that the reference books which Igor and Helen had brought along were so much Greek to him-worse, for he understood Greek. He was accorded all honor and a comfortable living because of Igor's affirmation that he had been the indispensable agent whereby this planet had received the invaluable new weapons, but he soon realized that for the job at hand he was useless, not even fit to act as an interpreter.

He was a harmless nuisance, a pensioner-and he knew it.

And underground life got on his nerves. The ever present light bothered him. He had an unreasoned fear of radioactivity, born of ignorance, and Igor's reassurances did not stifle the fear. The war depressed him. He was not temperamentally cut out to stand up under the nervous tension of war. His helplessness to aid in the war effort, his lack of companionship, and his idleness all worked to increase the malaise.

He wandered into Igor and Helen's workroom one day, hoping for a moment's chat, if they were not too busy. They were not. Igor was pacing up and down, Helen followed them with worried eyes.

He cleared his throat- "Uh-I say, something the matter?"

Igor nodded, answered, "Quite a lot," and dropped back into his preoccupation.

"It's like this," said Helen. "In spite of the new weapons, things are still going against us. Igor is trying to figure out what to try next."

"Oh, I see. Sorry." He started to leave.

"Don't go. Sit down." He did so, and started mulling the matter over in his mind. It was annoying, very annoying!

"I'm afraid I'm not much use to you." he said at last to Helen. "Too bad Howard Jenkins isn't here."

"I don't suppose it matters," she answered, "We have the cream of modern earth engineering in these books."

"I don't mean that. I mean Howard himself, as he is where he's gone. They had a little gadget there in the future called a blaster. I gathered that it was a very powerful weapon indeed."

Igor caught some of this and whirled around. "What was it? How did it work?"

"Why, really," said Frost, "I can't say. I'm not up on such things, you know. I gathered that it was sort of a disintegrating ray."

"Can you sketch it? Think, man, think!"

Frost tried. Presently he stopped and said, "I'm afraid this isn't any good. I don't remember clearly and anyhow I don't know anything about the inside of it."

Igor sighed, sat down, and ran his hand through his hair.

After some minutes of gloomy silence, Helen said, "Couldn't we go get it?"

“Uh? How’s that? How would you find him?”

“Could you find him. Professor?”

Frost sat up. “I don’t know,” he said slowly, “-but I’ll try!”

There was the city. Yes, and there was the same gate he had passed through once before. He hurried on.

Star Light was glad to see him, but not particularly surprised. Frost wondered if anything could surprise this dreamy girl. But Howard more than made up for her lack of enthusiasm. He pounded Frost’s back hard enough to cause pleurisy. “Welcome home, Master! Welcome home! I didn’t know whether or not you would ever come, but we are ready for you. I had a room built for you and you alone, in case you ever showed up. What do you think of that? You are to live with us, you know. No sense in ever going back to that grubby school.”

Frost thanked him, but added, “I came on business. I need your help, urgently.”

“You do? Well, tell me, man, tell me!”

Frost explained. “So you see, I’ve got to take the secret of your blaster back to them. They need it. They must have it.”

“And they shall have it,” agreed Howard.

Some time later the problem looked more complicated. Try as he would Frost was simply not able to soak up the technical knowledge necessary to be able to take the secret back. The pedagogical problem presented was as great as if an untutored savage were to be asked to comprehend radio engineering sufficiently to explain to engineers unfamiliar with radio how to build a major station. And Frost was by no means sure that he could take a blaster with him through the country of Time.

“Well,” said Howard at last, “I shall simply have to go with you.”

Star Light, who had listened quietly, showed her first acute interest. “Darling! You must not-“

“Stop it,” said Howard, his chin set stubbornly. “This is a matter of obligation and duty. You keep out of it.”

Frost felt the acute embarrassment one always feels when forced to overhear a husband and wife having a difference of opinion.

When they were ready. Frost took Howard by the wrist. “Look me in the eyes,” he said, “You remember how we did it before?”

Howard was trembling. “I remember. Master, do you think you can do it-and not lose me?”

“I hope so,” said Frost, “now relax.”

They got back to the chamber from which Frost had started, a circumstance which Frost greeted with relief. It would have been awkward to have to cross half a planet to find his friends. He was not sure yet just how the spatial dimensions fitted into the time dimensions. Someday he would have to study the matter, work out an hypothesis and try to check it.

Igor and Howard wasted little time on social amenities. They were deep into engineering matters before Helen had finished greeting the professor.

At long last- “There,” said Howard, “I guess that covers everything. I’ll leave my blaster for a model. Any more questions?”

“No,” said Igor, “I understand it, and I’ve got every word you’ve said recorded. I wonder if you know what this means to us, old man? It unquestionably will win the war for us.”

“I can guess,” said Howard. “This little gadget is the mainstay of our systemwide pax. Ready, Doctor. I’m getting kinda anxious,”

“But you’re not going, Doctor?” cried Helen. It was both a question and a protest.

“I’ve got to guide him back,” said Frost.

“Yes,” Howard confirmed, “but he is staying to live with us. Aren’t you. Master?”

“Oh, no!” It was Helen again.

Igor put an arm around her. “Don’t coax him,” he told her. “You know he has not been happy here-I gather that Howard’s home would suit him better. If so, he’s earned it.”

Helen thought about it, then came up to Frost, placed both hands on his shoulders, and kissed him, standing on tiptoe to do so. “Goodbye, Doc,” she said in a choky voice, “or anyhow, au revoir!”

He reached up and patted one of her hands.

Frost lay in the sun, letting the rays soak into his old bones. It was certainly pleasant here. He missed Helen and Igor a little, but he suspected that they did not really miss him. And-life with Howard and Star Light was more to his liking. Officially he was tutor to their children, if and when. Actually he was just as lazy and useless as he had always wanted to be, with time on his hands. Time ... Time.

There was just one thing that he would liked to have known: What did Sergeant Izwolski say when he looked up and saw that the police wagon was empty? Probably thought it was impossible.

It did not matter. He was too lazy and sleepy to care. Time enough for a little nap before lunch. Time enough ...

Time.