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Title: The Shadow Girl

Date of first publication: 1957

Author: Ray Cummings (1887-1957)

Date first posted: October 4 2012

Date last updated: October 4 2012

Faded Page eBook #20121007

This eBook was produced by: David T. Jones, Greg Weeks & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <http://www.pgdpCanada.net>

THE SHADOW GIRL

by

RAY CUMMINGS

ACE BOOKS, INC.

23 West 47th Street, New York 36, N.Y.

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THE MAN WHO MASTERED TIME (D-173)
BRIGANDS OF THE MOON (D-324)
BEYOND THE VANISHING POINT (D-331)
WANDL THE INVADER (D-497)

Printed in U.S.A.

TRIPLE TROUBLE FROM THE TOWER OF TIME

That brand-new experimental television set could not bring in any of the normal channels. What its screen showed was a strange tower, moving through changing time, piloted by a girl of exquisite beauty. Suddenly the time tower came to a halt in Central Park—right in 1962.

Ed Williams and Alan Tremont, who had built the set, knew then that they must meet that girl, rescue her from the evil genius who pursued her, and join their destinies with that of the time-traveling building.

Flashing through uncharted ages, witnessing the panorama of the world's rise and fall, Tremont and Williams found that only they, the tower, and the girl stood between a tyrant's evil ambitions and the destruction of the greatest city the world had ever known.

When **RAY CUMMINGS** took leave of this planet early in 1957, the world of modern science-fiction lost one of its genuine founding fathers. For the imagination of this talented writer supplied a great many of the most basic themes upon which the present superstructure of science-fiction is based. Following the lead of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells, Cummings successfully bridged the gap between the early dawning of science-fiction in the last decades of the Nineteenth Century and the full flowering of the field in these middle decades of the Twentieth.

Born in 1887, Cummings acquired insight into the vast possibilities of future science by a personal association with Thomas Alva Edison. During the 1920's and 1930's, he thrilled millions of readers with his vivid tales of space and time. The infinite and the infinitesimal were all parts of his canvas, and past, present, and future, the interplanetary and the extra-dimensional, all made their initial impact on the reading public through his many stories and novels.

CHAPTER I

The extraordinary and mysterious visions of the shadow girl appeared on the television set which Alan and I had just erected in his workshop. It was nearly midnight—a hot sultry evening of late June. We had worked all evening installing it. Alan's sister, Nanette, sat quietly in a corner, modeling a little statue in green clay. Occasionally she would ask us how we were getting along.

We were planning to receive the broadcasting from one of the New York stations—a program which had been advertised for 11:30 P.M.

The room was dark as we sat at the small instrument table with the nineteen-inch screen erect against the wall. The set hummed as the current went into it. But at once we saw that something was wrong. The screen lighted unevenly; we could not locate with any precision the necessary channels; not one of the broadcasting studios which we knew were at that moment on the air, would come in.

Nanette was disappointed and impatient as I manipulated the dials at random, and Alan verified the connections. "Is there nothing on it?"

"Presently, Nan. Alan must have grounded it badly—I'm sure we have everything else—"

I stopped abruptly. My grip tightened on her arm. We all sat tense. An image was forming on the screen.

Alan said sharply: "Don't touch it, Ed!" I relinquished the dials.

We sat watching, tense, and interested. Then mystified, awed. And presently upon us all there settled a vague, uneasy sense of fear.

For this, confronting us, was the Unknown.

The screen glowed, not with the normal gray-silver, but with what seemed a pale, wan starlight. A blurred image; but it was slowly clarifying. A dim purple sky, with misty stars.

We sat staring into the depths of the television scenes. Depths unmeasurable; illimitable distance. I recall my first impression when in the foreground faint gray-blue shadows began forming: was this an earthly scene? It seemed not. Blurred shadows in the starlight, crawling mist of shadows, congealing into dim outlines.

We saw presently the wide area of a starlit night. A level landscape of vegetation. Grassy lawns, trees, a purpling brook, shimmering like a thread of pale silver in the starlight. The image was sharp now, distinct, and without suggestion of flicker. Every color rounded and full. Deep-toned nature, pale and serene in the starlight.

A minute passed. In the center foreground of the vista a white wraith was taking form. And suddenly—as though I had blinked—there was a shape which an instant before had not been there. Solid reality. Of everything in the scene, it was most solid, most real.

A huge, gray-white skeleton tower, its base was set on a lawn where now I could see great beds of flowers, vivid with colored blossoms. The brook wound beside it. It was a pentagon tower. Its height might have been two hundred feet or more, narrowing at the top almost to a point. Skeleton girders with all the substantiality of steel, yet with a color more like aluminum.

We were, visually, fairly close to this tower. The image of it stood the full height of our screen. A balcony girded it near the top. A room, like an observatory, was up there, with tiny ovals of windows. Another larger room was midway down. I could see the interior—ladder steps, and what might have been a shaft with a lifting elevator.

The tower's base was walled solid. It seemed, as we stared, that like a camera moving forward, the scene was enlarging

We found ourselves presently gazing, from a close viewpoint, at the base of the tower. It was walled, seemingly by masonry, into a room. There were windows, small and high above the ground. Climbing vines and trellised flowers hung upon the walls. There was a broad, front doorway up a stone flight of steps.

And I became aware now of what I had not noticed before: the gardens surrounding the tower were enclosed with a high wall of masonry. A segment of it was visible now as a background to the scene. A wall, looped and turreted at intervals as though this were some fortress.

The whole lay quiet and calm in the starlight. No sign of human movement. Nanette said:

"But, Edward, isn't any one in sight? No people—"

And Alan: "Ed, look! There—back there on the wall—"

It seemed on the distant wall that a dark figure was moving. A guard? A pacing sentry?

And now, other movement. A figure appeared of a girl. She came slowly from within and stood at the head of the entrance steps. The glow of an interior light outlined her clearly: a slim, small girl, in a robe faintly sky-blue. Flowing hair, pale as spun gold with the light shining on it like a halo.

She stood a moment, quietly staring out into the night. We could not see her face clearly. She stood like a statue gazing. And then, quietly, she turned and I caught a glimpse of her face—saw it clearly for an instant, its features imprinted clearly on my mind. A young girl, nearly matured; a face, it seemed, very queerly, singularly beautiful—

She moved back into the tower room. There was a sudden blur over the scene. Like a puff of dissipating vapor, it was gone.

The television screen before us glowed with its uneven illumination. Everything was as it had been a few moments before. The broadcasting studios would not come in. Our apparatus was not working properly. The tuner was misaligned. It was grounded badly. Or our fundamental calibration was in error. Something wrong. What, we never knew.

But we had seen this vision—flung at us, from somewhere. A vision, shining clear in every detail of form and color and movement. The image of things solid and real. Things existing—somewhere.

That was the first of the visions. The second came that same night, near dawn. We did not dare to touch our instrument. The dials, we found, had been set by me at random with a resulting wave-length which could not bring in any of the known broadcasting studios. We left them so, and did not try to find what might be wrong with the hookup. The image had come, it might come again if we left things as they were.

We sat, for hours that night, watching the screen. It glowed uneven; many of its cells were dark, others flickered red and green.

Nanette at last fell asleep beside us. Alan and I talked together softly so as not to disturb her. We had promised that if anything showed, we would awaken her. We discussed the possibility. But often we were silent. The thing already had laid its spell upon us. This vision, this little glimpse of somewhere. It had come, perhaps, from some far-distant world? Incredible! But I recall that instinctively I thought so.

Yet why should I? A tower, and a dim expanse of starlit landscape. And a girl, humanly beautiful. Surely these were things that could exist now on our earth. The atmosphere, we knew as a matter of common everyday science, teems with potential visions and sound.

Alan strove to be more rational. "But, Ed, look here—we've caught some distant unknown broadcaster."

"But who broadcasts a scene like that at night? This is 1962, Alan, not the year 2000."

He shrugged his wide, thin shoulders. His face was very solemn. He sat with his long, lean length hunched in his chair, chin cupped in his palm, the attitude of a youthful, pagan thinker, confronted with a disturbing problem. But there was a very boyish modernity mingled with it; a lock of his straight black hair fell on his forehead. He seized it, twisted it, puzzled, and looked up at me and smiled.

Then Alan said a thing very strange; he said it slowly, musingly, as though the voicing of it awed him.

"I think it was on Earth. I wonder if it was something that has been, or that will be—"

It came again, near dawn. The same tower, the same serene, starlit spread of landscape. The same grim encircling wall, with stalking dark figures upon it. We did not at first see the girl. The tower doorway stood open; the room inside glowed with its dim light. A moment of inactivity; and then it seemed that at this inexplicable place at which we were gazing—this unnameable time which seemed the present on our screen—a moment of action had come. A dark figure on the wall rose up—a small black blob against the background of stars. The figure of a man. His arm went up in a gesture.

Another figure had come to the tower doorway, a youth, strangely garbed. We could see him clearly: white-skinned, a young man. He stood gazing; and he saw the signal from the wall, and answered it. Behind him, the girl appeared. We could see them speak. An aspect of haste enveloped all their movements—a surreptitious haste, furtive, as though this that they were doing was forbidden.

The signal was repeated from the wall. They answered. They turned. The youth pushed the girl aside. He was stooping at the doorway, and her eager movements to help seemed to annoy him. He straightened. He had unfastened the tower door. He and the girl slid it slowly closed. It seemed very heavy. They pushed at it. The doorway closed with them inside.

We had awakened Nanette. She sat tense between us, with her long braids of thick, chestnut hair falling unheeded over her shoulders, her hands gripping each of us.

"Tell me!"

Alan said: "That door's heavy. They can't close it—yes! They've got it closed. I fancy they're barring it inside. The thing is all so silent—but you could imagine the clang of bars. I don't see the guard on the wall. It's dark over there. There's no one in sight. But, Nan, you can see that something's going to happen. See it—or feel it. Ed, look! Why—"

He broke off. Nanette's grip tightened on us.

A change had fallen upon all the scene. It seemed at first that our instrument was failing. Or that a "hole" had come, and everything momentarily was fading. But it was not that. The change was inherent to the scene itself. The tower outlines blurred, dimmed. This image of its solidarity was dissolving. Real, solid, tangible no longer. But it did not move; it did not entirely fade. It stood there, a glowing shimmering wraith of a tower, gray-white, ghostlike. A thing now of impalpable aspect, incredibly unsubstantial, imponderable, yet visible in the starlight.

The wall was gone! I realized it suddenly. The wall, and the garden and the flowers and the stream. All the background, all the surrounding details gone! The tower, like a ghost, stood ghostly and alone in a void of shapeless gray mist.

But the stars remained. The purple night, with silver stars. But even they were of an aspect somehow different. Moving visibly! For an instant I thought so.

Time passed as we sat there gazing—time marked only by my dim knowledge that Alan was talking with Nanette. Changes were sweeping the scene. The gray mist of background under the stars held a distance unfathomable. A space, inconceivable, empty to my straining vision.

And then, presently, there were things to see. It seemed that the infinite had suddenly contracted. The wraith of the tower stood unchanged. But abruptly I saw that it stood in a deep wooded area, rearing itself above a tangled forest. A river showed, a mile or so away, crossing the background in a white line. The stars were gone, it was night no longer. A day of blue sky, with white-massed clouds. The sun shone on the distant river.

The tower stood, faded even more in the daylight. I searched the forest glade around its base. Figures were there! Familiar of aspect; a group of savages—of this earth? Yes, I could not mistake them: Indians. Red-skinned, feathered figures, in vivid ceremonial headdress as though this day they had been dancing in the forest glade. And saw the strange apparition of this tower. Saw it? Why, they were seeing it now! Prostrated in a group on the mossy ground, awed, fear-struck, gazing fearfully upon this thing unknown; prostrate because this thing unknown must therefore be a god, and being a god, must be angry and threatening and to be placated.

An instant and I knew that this which Alan Tremont, and Edward Williams were permitted was a mere pause. A tableau. A snatched vision from somewhere—sometime; presented all in an instant and whirled away.

But the phantom of the tower stood motionless, unchanged. The gray background whirled, pregnant with things unseeable. No! It was night. There were the familiar, unchanging stars. I became aware that the wraith of the tower was

solidifying. The gray shadows under it were turning dark. Gray—then black—then deep green. Trees and grass. A small white spread of water near at hand.

The tower now was solid, tangible and real of aspect as we had first seen it. The doorway was still closed. Around it now was the dark stretch of a cultivated park-like space. All clear and distinct. A reality here, beyond anything we had seen before.

I gasped. Alan's swift words to Nanette echoed as though from my own thoughts. This was wholly familiar! This familiar space, pictured in quiet detail upon the screen. Familiar trees, little paths with benches along them, grassy lawns, a small, starlit lake. A winding roadway, with lights at intervals. In the distance, behind the tower, I could plainly see a large, low building of stone. A city street behind it, beyond the park. All familiar.

Alan gasped: "Why, it's here! This is barely a mile from us! That's Central Park! That's the Metropolitan Museum!"

Central Park, New York City. But when? We knew there was no tower like that in Central Park. Was this the future of Central Park at which we were staring?

The vision was more than a glimpse now. It held, vividly persisting in every reality of its smallest detail. The same space of that forest glade. But now man called it "Central Park." No ignorant savages were prostrated here now, before this phantom of the tower. No one here—

And then I saw, in the foreground, a man in a blue uniform standing on one of the paths of the park. A light shone on him. He stood, pressed backward against the light-pole; staring at the tower with a hand upflung against his mouth. Instinctive fear. But not prostrate upon the ground. He stood tense. And dropped his hand and stood peering. Incredulous.

"Ed—see that police officer there! He sees the tower!"

The tower door opened. I fancied I saw the figure of the girl step furtively out and disappear into the shadows of the starlit park. I could not be sure. It was dark. But in the background, above the Metropolitan Museum, above the city buildings lining Fifth Avenue, I could see that the east was glowing with the coming dawn. A mass of billowing clouds flushed pink.

The tower doorway was closed again. The tower melted into a spectre, illusive, tenuous, but still there. A gossamer tower. And then it was gone. Everything was gone. But as though, in my fancy, or perhaps merely the persistence of vision, for one brief instant I seemed to see the park empty of the intruding tower; and the policeman, standing there incredulous at this that he had seen which was now vanished.

The television screen was empty of image. Alan was on his feet. "Ed! Look at the sky out there! That's the same sky!"

The workshop faced to the east. The same star-strewn sky of the vision was outside our window—the same sky, with the same modelling of clouds, flushed with the coming day.

Alan voiced my realizations. "Why, that's this dawn we've been seeing! The tower—in the park behind us—that policeman is out there now—he saw it! That's today! That just happened—now!"



CHAPTER II

It was clear to us, or at least in part, what had occurred. The little fragment of Space occupied by Central Park, was throughout both the visions, what we had been seeing. The tower was there; the tower had not moved—in Space. We had first seen it in some far distant realm—of Time. And it had moved, not in Space, but in Time. We had glimpsed the tower almost stopping, frightening those savages who, in what we call the Past, were roaming this little island of Manhattan. The same Space. The same enclosing rivers. But no city then. Or perhaps, near the southern end, where the converging rivers merged in broader water, there might just have been a group of struggling settlers. Cabins of hewn, notched logs, stockaded against the marauding redskins of the adjacent forest. A dense forest then, was north of the trail called "Maiden Lane." Far up there was this Space which now we call Central Park, with the great New York now around it, grown in three short centuries from the infant New Amsterdam.

And the tower, immovable in Space, had come in Time to 1962. Had paused. Now. This very morning. Had stopped and frightened a policeman of 1962, in Central Park. And then had become again a phantom, and in another instant, wholly invisible.

I recall my surprise at Alan's apparent understanding of this incredible thing which had come, all unheralded, upon us.

I found suddenly that there were things in the life of Alan which I did not know. Things he shared with Nanette; but not with me. An eagerness was in his manner as we discussed this thing. His dark cheeks were flushed with emotion; his dark eyes had a queer glow of excitement.

"I think, Ed, that I can understand a good many things of this. Things father knew, in theory—things he told me—" He checked himself. And when I questioned, he stopped me.

"Wait, Ed. It's confusing. It seems—tremendous." And then he added: "And perhaps—dastardly."

What could he mean by that? Nanette said: "But, Alan—that girl—there was a girl, came here to New York this morning —"

The girl! The shadow girl, from out of the shadows! She, at least, was something tangible now. We had seen her in Central Park this morning. The television screen now was vacant. It was destined never again to show us anything, but that we did not know. We had seen a girl arriving? Then, if so, she must be here—in Central Park, now.

Alan said: "I wonder if we should report it. That girl probably will be found." He had been into one of the other rooms of the small apartment a few moments before. He drew me there now, "Ed, I want to show you something significant. Perhaps significant—I don't know, yet."

Nanette followed after us. The bedroom faced south. We were high in a towering apartment building, just east of Fifth Avenue.

Over the lower roofs of the city I could see far to the south. In the waning starlight down there a single searchlight beam was standing up into the sky.

"Where is it?" I demanded. "The Battery? A ship in the harbor? Or Staten Island?"

Somewhere down there, a white shaft of light standing motionless. It was fading in the growing daylight.

"On Staten Island," said Alan. "It's a small searchlight on the roof of the Turber Hospital. It often stands like that. Haven't you ever noticed it?"

I supposed I had. But never thought of it. Why should I?

Alan added musingly: "It's queer—because I was wondering if it would chance to be there now, and there it is."

"But, Alan, see here—you're making a mystery of this. Heaven knows it's mysterious enough of itself, without your adding more."

He smiled. I saw suddenly a grimness as the smile faded and he set his wide, thin lips. There were things which he was beginning to piece together. Things, involving us so soon into such a maelstrom of events! But now, Alan only said:

"This Dr. Turber—Wolf Turber—have you ever heard of him?"

"No," I said. "What has he to do with this? Whatever it is, you've guarded it very carefully from me, Alan."

There must have been a touch of bitterness in my tone. He laughed. "Nonsense! I haven't known anything worth discussing."

Nanette touched me: "It was something father told us just before he died. Just a theory of his—a suspicion."

"So inexplicable," said Alan. "But he was so earnest, that morning he died. Telling us what might be things of scientific fact, but probably would never be disclosed—to us or any one. Yet now it may be—these things this morning seem to fit in. Ed, it's no secret—not from you."

"Then," I said, "who is Dr. Turber? What is he to you?"

"Nothing. He was, in 1940, a young medical student. Then, for a short while, he worked for father. He now owns the Turber Hospital—a private institution, a sort of sanatorium. He is, in his way, a genius. A specialist in nervous disorders. And father said he was—or would have been, had he stuck at it—an eminent physicist. But he did not. He left father—he stole, father thought, a large sum of father's money. I don't know the details. They're not important. Nothing was proved. He became—well, you might call him father's enemy. Certainly they disliked each other. I've met him casually several times. A scoundrelly sort of fellow, by his look. And that—of what I actually know—is all."

We were back in the workshop. The television screen still glowed, but it was empty of image. Nanette said gently: "Tell him, Alan, about Dr. Turber, and me."

It gave me a start. Alan said: "He seems to have fallen head over heels in love with Nanette. He had always liked her—"

"I was always afraid of him," she put in.

"And when Nanette grew up, even though then he was father's enemy, Turber came to him—wanted to marry Nanette—"

I could well imagine it. Nanette was tall, slim, with long chestnut hair incongruous in this day of short-haired girls. To me she was very beautiful indeed.

Alan went on: "I won't go into details. His persistent attentions were unwelcome. Father told him so, and Nanette told him."

"I was always afraid of him," she repeated.

Alan smiled wryly. "I threw him out once—a snaky sort of fellow. We want none of him—do we, sister?"

"No," she said. "Tell Edward about Dr. Turber's life—father's theory."

"It wouldn't mean much to you, Ed. There were things—so father thought—of mystery about this Turber. Things inexplicable. His curious, unexplained absences from the hospital. Things about him which father sensed. And the searchlight, that for no apparent reason for years now had been occasionally flashing from the hospital roof. It marked Turber's absence, I know that much."

"And Turber's assistant," said Nanette. "That Indian—whatever he is—at the hospital."

"Yes. He, too. Father pieced it together into a very strange, half-formed theory. I have always thought it must have been born of father's dislike for the fellow. And father told it to me the morning of his death. That, too, I felt, must have colored it. Father's mind, there at the last, roaming a little—not quite clear. But this, Ed—this morning, these visions of ours—we saw them, you know, we can't deny that. They seem vaguely, to fit. Oh, there's no use theorizing—not yet. That girl we saw—"

Upon the girl it hinged, of course. The vision was gone. And at best it was only a vision. But the girl might be real here in 1962.

We did not report what we had seen to the police. Perhaps we had fancied that a girl came out of a phantom tower in Central Park this morning. And, if we had seen it on the television, even so, it might not actually have happened.

Had there actually been a policeman, there in the park, who had seen it? And was there existing, here in New York today, this girl of the shadows?

We waited, and the thing turned tangible indeed! Became a reality, for presently we learned that it had touched others than ourselves.

The early afternoon papers carried a small item. Some of them put it on the front page. But it was only a joke—a little thing to read, to laugh at, and forget. There had been, in actuality, a policeman at dawn in Central Park; and he had been less reticent, more incautious than ourselves. He had told what he saw. And the newspapers wrote it:

GHOST OF EIFFEL TOWER INVADES CENTRAL PARK POLICEMAN FIGHTS PHANTOM

Something to laugh at and forget. A chuckle, donated to a cosy city by earnest Officer Macfarland who undoubtedly was already sorry that he had not kept his mouth shut.

And the girl?

The later afternoon papers carried another item. Who could connect the two? Who, indeed! For this other item was still smaller, unobtrusive, not even amusing. Nor novel—and therefore, worthy of nothing but a passing glance:

Unknown girl found at gate of Central Park. Unable to speak intelligibly. Victim of amnesia. Taken to Bellevue. Later transferred to Turber Hospital, Staten Island.

Who would think anything of that? But we three knew that we stood upon the threshold of a mystery, with its shadowy portals swinging wide to lure us in.

CHAPTER III

We left Nanette at home and Alan and I started for the Turber Hospital about three o'clock that same afternoon.

Was this the girl of our visions, now the "victim of amnesia" at Dr. Turber's Sanatorium? Or was it merely some other girl whose memory had gone, and whose prosaic parents soon would come to claim her? Things like that frequently happened. We determined to find out. Both of us were sure we would recognize her.

From the ferryhouse on Staten Island we took a taxi, a few miles into the interior. It was an intensely hot, oppressive afternoon—the sun was slanting in the west when we reached our destination.

I found the Turber Hospital occupying a fairly open stretch of country, about a mile from the nearest town. It stood on a rise of ground—a huge quadrangle of buildings completely enclosing an inner yard. It was four stories high, of brick and ornamental stone; balconies were outside its upper windows, with occasional patients sitting in deck chairs with lattice shades barring the glare of sunlight.

There were broad shaded grounds about the buildings, the whole encompassing, I imagined, some twenty or thirty acres. Trees and paths and beds of flowers. A heavy, ten-foot ornamental iron fence with a barbed wire top enclosed it all. A fence which might have been to keep out the public but which gave also the impression of keeping in the inmates. The place looked, indeed very much like the average asylum. There was an aura of wealth about it; but, unlike most such places, also a look of newness.

"Turber built it in the last eight years," said Alan. "He's doing very well—rich patients of the neurotic, almost insane but not quite, variety."

There were some of them about the grounds now. Off at one end I could see tennis courts with games in progress.

"Spent a lot of money," I commented.

"Yes—they say he's very rich."

Bordering the grounds was a scattered, somewhat squalid neighborhood of immigrants. We had crossed a trolley line and ascended a hill arriving at the main gateway of the institution. I glanced back through the rear window of our taxi. We were on a commanding eminence; I could see across the rolling country, over several smoky towns to New York Harbor; the great pile of buildings on lower Manhattan was just visible in the distant haze.

The gatekeeper passed us at Alan's request to see Dr. Turber. Our taxi swung up a winding roadway to the porte-cochere at the side of the building.

"Will he see us," I demanded.

"If he's here, I imagine he will."

"But you're not, even outwardly, friends?"

He shrugged. "We speak pleasantly enough when we have occasion to meet. So long as he lets Nanette alone."

We were ushered into the cool quiet of a reception room. The white-clad nurse said that doubtless Dr. Turber would see us presently—he was busy at the moment. She left us.

It was a fairly large room of comfortable wicker chairs; oriental rugs on a hardwood, polished floor; a large wicker center table strewn with the latest magazines. A cool, dim room; there were broad French windows, with shades partly drawn and additionally shrouded with heavy velvet portieres across the window alcove.

We had seated ourselves. Alan drew his chair nearer to mine. He spoke softly, swiftly, with an eye upon the archway that gave onto the main lower corridor down which the nurse had gone.

"I was thinking, Ed—when Turber comes—we've got to have some excuse for seeing the girl."

"Yes, but what?"

"Tell him—I'll tell him you're a newspaper man. Some of them have been here already, no doubt. We won't go into it—you won't have to say much."

I was, in actuality, a pilot. I was off now, these three summer months. But posing as a newspaper man was out of my line.

"I don't know," I said dubiously. "I have no credentials. If he asks me—"

"I'll do most of the talking, Ed." He jumped up suddenly, went to glance into the corridor, and came back. "Come here, want to show you something."

He drew me to the windows. We pushed the portieres aside, and raised one of the shades. We were some ten feet above the level of the paved inner courtyard. Alan murmured: "Just look, Ed—queer construction of this place! I've often wondered, and so did father."

Queer construction indeed! The quadrangular building completely enclosed this inner yard. At the basement level it was all normal enough. Windows and doors opening from what seemed engine rooms; the kitchen; the laundry. And at this first story it was normal also. These windows through which we were looking; and other windows and occasional balconies in each of the wings. But above this first story there were three others and then the flat roof above them. And in these three upper floors so far as I could see there was not a window! Nothing but the sheer, blank stone walls!

"What would you make of that, Ed? Crazy architecture—they said that when the place was built. There are no courtyard rooms at all in the upstairs floors—nearly half the building goes to waste. Turber designed it—"

"But what did he say?"

"Nothing much, I fancy. It was his own business. Perhaps merely that he could afford the luxury of all outside rooms for his patients. And look at that inner building—"

The courtyard was perhaps two hundred feet long, by half as wide. In its center was an oblong brick building, a hundred feet by sixty possibly—and not quite as high as the roof of the main structure. From the angle at which we were gazing, I could see the full front face of this smaller building and part of one of its ends. It had not a window! Nor a door, except one, very small, at the ground in the center of the front!

"Turber's laboratory," said Alan. "At least, that's what it's supposed to be. That one door—nothing else. It's always locked. Nobody has ever been in there but Turber, and his Indian assistant. Father once talked with the builders of this place, Ed. That laboratory is nothing but two small rooms at the ground level here in front. All the rest is just four solid brick walls enclosing an inner empty space! What's it for? Nobody knows. But people talk. You can't stop them. Turber's employees here. And most of all, his patients—not quite sane. They talk—of ghosts—things mysteriously going on inside those walls—"

People not quite sane—talking of things unknowable. But I was wholly sane; and as I stood there, gazing at the shadows of twilight gathering in this inner courtyard; the blank upper walls of the large building turning dark with night; the smaller one, standing blank and silent in the courtyard—the whole place seemed suddenly ominous, sinister!

A step sounded in the room behind us. I started violently; I had not realized how taut were my nerves. We dropped the portieres hastily, and left the window. Turber?

But it was not he. A young man stood before us. He was dressed in flannels and a shirt open at the throat. He carried a tennis racket.

"Well," said Alan. "How are you, Charlie? Been playing tennis? You remember me, don't you?"

A good-looking young fellow. He said: "Do I? You were here once before, weren't you? I saw you in here with Dr. Turber."

"Yes," said Alan. "Let's sit down, Ed. How are you, Charlie?"

We sat down. Charlie stood before us. "I've been playing tennis. Is the doc coming here to see you?" His face clouded. "You're all right, aren't you? My mother said—" He was addressing me. "My mother said—but look here, don't pay any attention to your mother if she says you're sick. Don't you do it! I did it, and my mother said I'll put you in here and make

you well. So look what happened to me—I'm in here."

I met Alan's glance. Alan said: "Well, that's fine, Charlie. And you're better, aren't you?"

"Yes." He hesitated; then he added: "I'm better, and I'd like to help you get better. I was thinking that, last time I saw you. I like you—very much."

"Do you, Charlie? That's nice of you."

"Yes. You're a friend of mine—'Friends sturdy and true' I was thinking—that's us."

He turned suddenly away. He took a step toward the window, and came back. His face had wholly changed; a look of cunning was on it; his voice low, quivering, dramatic.

"You were looking out there when I came in. Strange things go on out there—but you can't see them in the daytime!"

"Can't you?" said Alan. "I was looking—"

"I've seen them—at night. I've got a way to see them any time I want to. From the roof. If you get put in here—I'll show you—maybe. Because we're friends."

It galvanized Alan into action. He jumped to his feet and gripped Charlie.

"I'd like you to show me."

"Yes, I can do it. There's a girl came this morning. I saw her—"

"A girl?"

"Beautiful girl. She was beautiful—I saw her. They took her upstairs. I know where."

Alan gestured to me. "Watch out if anybody comes, Charlie, tell me!"

I moved nearer the corridor entrance. Alan and Charlie stood by the window. I could hear them.

"She's sick, but her mother didn't bring her. Men brought her—in a taxi like I saw you come in."

"Charlie, if I should come here—"

"I've got a key to the roof. You're not allowed up there. Nobody's ever been up there but me. I'm too smart for them—'Keys to open Bluebeard's room'—you can't open anything without a key. Keys to open Bluebeard's—"

"Charlie, stop that!"

"Well, I have. It's dark. Nothing ever happens in the light. You can see it from the roof, because you're higher up and you can look down inside."

"Inside what?"

"His laboratory. That's what they call it. 'Four walls to hide what devils do'—that's Shakespeare. I studied it, when I was in school. But mother said I was sick—"

"Wait, Charlie. That girl—"

"She's sick, I guess. We're all sick. But she was frightened, too. I'm not frightened. I passed them in the hall. She looked at me—I saw she was frightened. I said then to myself I guess I can help that girl. I'm smart—I've got keys."

If Turber should come! But the corridor was empty.

"You know which room is the girl's, Charlie?"

"Yes."

"You've got a key to it?"

"Key? I've got a key to Bluebeard's closet—"

Alan shook him. "The girl's room—where they've got her now."

"Key to Bluebeard's room—don't get excited—I'm not excited." He was trembling. "When you come to live here—"

"Charlie, listen! I want to help that girl—get her out of here. She isn't sick."

"I can get out of here—but my mother told me not to. I've got a key to the little gate in the fence behind the tennis court. I've had it a long time. You know how to make a key? You take wax and get an impression—I had a locksmith make the key when I was home at Christmas. Mother thought it was my trunk key—but it wasn't. I thought I might use it to slip out and go home some night. Only mother would be angry. And I had Bluebeard's key made at the same time—that's the key to the roof, where you can see things—"

From the door I caught a glimpse of a man approaching along the corridor.

"Alan! Here he comes!"

Alan said vehemently: "Charlie, listen! Get this right! Tonight, about ten o'clock! Can you have your keys and come to the tennis court gate?"

"Yes! Tonight—"

"Can you get there, alone? Tell nobody? Let nobody see you!"

"Yes. At night—dark deeds, alone." He heard Dr. Turber's step. He added swiftly: "I'll be there—ten o'clock tonight! I can hide you in my room. At eleven, they're all asleep—we'll go to the roof—I call it Bluebeard's—"

"Not a word to anybody, Charlie! For the girl's sake!"

"Yes! And because we're friends—"

Alan pushed him away; and said, conversationally: "So you had a good game, Charlie? That's fine—but you'd better go wash up for supper."

"All right, I will. Mother said never be late for supper."

We all turned as Dr. Turber entered the room.

I saw Dr. Wolf Turber as a man of about forty, obviously of extraordinary personality. There are many men in this world who have a power, for good or evil, which marks them apart from their fellows. A radiation—an aura—a something in their unconscious bearing; a confidence, a flash of the eye, all unmistakable. Dr. Turber was such a one. Marked for big things—good or evil.

He was, to me at least, at once physically repellent of aspect. A very heavy, powerful frame, with wide shoulders, thick and solid; a deep chest; long powerful arms. Had he stood erect, he might have been fully six feet tall. But he was hunched. Not exactly a hunch-back; rather, a permanent stoop which had rounded his shoulders almost to a deformity.

His head was massive, set low on a wide, short neck. Close-cropped black hair, turning gray at the temples. A solid, wide-jawed face, smooth-shaved, with dark eyes gazing through a pair of incongruously dapper rimless glasses, from which a wide black ribbon descended.

He stood before us; stooped, but with the strength of a gorilla seeming to lie hidden in his squat frame, masked by the dapperness of his clothes. Pointed patent leather shoes; gray trousers; a dark gray jacket with a white waistcoat, to which the black eyeglass ribbon was fastened. He stood with a hand toying with the ribbon.

"He annoyed you, Tremont? Charlie's a good boy. A little off mentally—like most of them here."

Charlie had been summarily dismissed. Turber added: "You do not bring the charming little Nanette. Where is she? I would far rather see her than you, Tremont."

Alan, from his six-foot height gazed down at Turber. He ignored the reference to Nanette, and said:

"There was a girl found in Central Park this morning. Amnesia case, the papers say. Transferred here from Bellevue. My friend Williams here does some newspaper writing—he'd like to see her."

Turber's face remained calmly polite. His gaze went to me. It made my heart leap—his quiet, keen scrutiny, as though without effort he might read my thoughts.

"A girl? Amnesia case? No girl came here." His glance swung between us; but his wide, thin-lipped mouth was smiling, ironically. He added: "You believe what you read, evidently. You are trustful."

Alan's shortness of temper surprised me. "Then you won't let us see her."

"No, why should I?"

"But you admit she's here?"

There was no love lost between these two! Turber rasped:

"Why should I bother to let you cross-examine me?"

It quieted Alan. "I know she's here. What you mean is, I have no right to demand seeing her."

Turber bowed ironically.

"I can get that fixed up," said Alan.

"Perhaps."

"Oh, I think I can." Alan was smiling now, with recovered poise. "In the first place, she is undoubtedly a public charge until her identity is established. Why Bellevue sent her to you, I can't imagine—"

"That, like everything else you are saying, is none of your business."

"But I intend to make it my business. They'll give Williams and me an order to see her." Quite evidently Alan knew his ground. "Come on, Ed—we're wasting time. Let's go see what they say at Bellevue. There are a lot of things about this I don't understand."

Turber said abruptly: "If you come as a friend, Tremont." His imperturbable smile remained, but it was evident that Alan's persistence was disturbing. I could even fancy, alarming. "But you come, gruffly demanding—and you bring the power of the Press." The faint inclination of his head toward me was a bow of mockery. "You frighten me—"

"Why? Is it something mysterious?"

"It seems to be. Your sudden insistence—I have not seen you in a year. I have had several amnesia patients here, all ignored by you."

Beneath his bantering manner he was trying no doubt, to fathom what Alan knew.

Alan was silent. I said: "Well, I'd be mighty interested to write up the case. But if we have to get an order from the Health Department—"

"We'll get it," said Alan.

Turber made an abrupt decision. "You may see her. You're an annoying young cub, Tremont. I know you well enough to realize that."

"Can we see her now?" Alan demanded.

"Yes. But only for a moment. Her memory is gone. I was hoping, with my routine treatment, we could get it back."

He led us into the corridor, stalking ahead of us with his heavy tread. "This way—she is upstairs."

He turned a corner. Alan whispered: "Watch where we're going! Try to remember the location of the room! How old is she, Dr. Turber?"

"About twenty, apparently. A strange-looking little creature. I would say, of a cultured family."

We mounted a staircase. Passed down another corridor. I tried to keep my sense of location. I said: "Is she an American?"

"Probably not." He shrugged. "She is dressed very strangely. She resisted the matrons at Bellevue who would have changed her robe. She looks as though she might have wandered from some fancy dress affair last night. But by now something would be known of it, I suppose. The police have full details. I shall send her back to Bellevue—I'm not looking for any bizarre publicity."

We passed occasional inmates in the halls; they stared at us curiously, scattering and vanishing at Turber's glance. One was the young fellow, Charlie. He appeared magically at my elbow, flashed me a swift, knowing glance, and disappeared.

Abnormality was in the air, everywhere about this place. Heavy carpeted hallways; dim, with lights not yet lighted, in the afternoon twilight. These patients—most of them seemed to be young men—free to move about, in apparent health; indefinably, but unmistakably abnormal. The whole place struck me as almost gruesome.

"This way, Tremont."

We were in the upper story, close under the roof. There was an elevator in the front of the building; we had not used it, but had mounted three separate flights of stairs, each remote from the other. I fancied we were at the top of the wing across from the reception room.

Turber paused and took a key from his pocket. I had noticed as we came along the halls that all the rooms opened outward; the inner side facing the courtyard was always a blank corridor wall, with no suggestion of rooms. But Turber now paused at a small, heavy mahogany door—on the courtyard side.

"She is here, Tremont. I have her locked in. She escaped from somewhere. It is often a trait of these cases—the desire to escape. If she eluded me here, the authorities would have plenty to say."

He stood a moment, cautioning us in low tones. The girl would be startled—she was startled at seeing any one. But to be mildly startled might be good for her. He smiled. "Amnesia has been cured by a blow upon the head. But I don't recommend it."

"May I talk to her?" I suggested.

"That," he said, "would be useless. She could not understand; and her own words are wholly unrecognizable."

There was another door directly across the hall. It stood open, disclosing a bedroom, into the windows of which the setting sun was streaming. A man came to its doorway. Turber's Indian assistant, Alan afterwards told me; evidently he was here on guard. He did not speak; he saw Dr. Turber, and moved back into the room.

But for that instant he was visible I think I have never had a more startling impression. A man, clad in trousers and white shirt; of huge stature, well over six feet. Straight black hair, parted in the middle; a red-brown face, flat-nosed. But more than that. I saw something about him which was uncanny. An indescribable impression of something incredibly sinister. Something weird.

He had a magazine in his hand. If it had been a tomahawk dripping blood, if his face with its broken nose had been streaked with ochre, if his body had been bare of those civilized garments—it would have seemed far more normal. He grunted as he met Dr. Turber's glance and turned away.

Turber repeated: "I think I would not speak to her—but you may if you like."

He knocked on the girl's door. He then turned the lock and pushed the door inward.

We crowded at the threshold. It was a small, comfortably furnished bedroom. Windowless. A wicker table, with a lamp giving a soft glow of yellow light. The girl stood like a startled fawn in the center of the room. It was the girl we had seen on the television!

A creature, here in life, of fairylike delicacy. Almost unreal. She was not over five feet tall; slight and delicate of mold; a girlhood upon the brink of maturity. A fairy creature, like a vision of girlhood in a child's fairy dream. White-limbed; wearing a pale, sky-blue robe—a drapery rather than a dress. Flowing hair, pale as spun gold. A face, oval and small, exquisite, delicate as a cameo. Eyes, sky-blue—

They stared at us, those sky-blue eyes. Startled. But they were not vacant eyes, nor confused; not the eyes of a person mentally deranged. They swung toward Dr. Turber; and as momentarily he turned away they came back to Alan. And in them I read—and Alan read—a mute, furtive look of appeal!

CHAPTER IV

The gray walls of the Turber Sanatorium were painted red by the falling sun when we departed in our waiting taxi. The episode with the girl had taken only a moment. I had spoken to her; I said fatuously:

"Don't you know us?"

She did not seem to try to answer. Her gaze swung from Alan to me. She took a step backward; as though the sound of my voice were frightening; but I could have sworn she was watching Turber; it was Turber of whom she was afraid, not us.

"Come," he said. "That's enough." We had not crossed the threshold. He closed the door upon the girl; her gaze seemed still searching Alan's face as it closed.

Turber led us back downstairs. He chatted pleasantly about the girl's case; he accompanied us to the door and smilingly bowed us out.

"I shall hope to see you again, Tremont. Bring Nanette when you come next time, will you?" He said it sardonically. But more than that, for beneath his banter there was an intensity that made me shudder. And a pang of fear for Nanette swept me. We had left her home alone.

Turber stood gazing after us as we drove away. I recall him, standing there on the steps of the porte-cochere; hunched forward; his gorilla figure so immaculately garbed, fingers toying with his black eyeglass ribbon, his mouth twisted with a faint sardonic smile. Sinister figure! Satanic! A very modern Mephistopheles, this fellow Turber. A genius—for evil; of that, at least, I was now convinced.

We were silent on the way back in the taxi. My mind was on Nanette. It seemed suddenly that she must be in danger; my greatest desire was to get back as quickly as we could.

We dismissed the taxi. At the ferryhouse I said abruptly: "Alan, let's telephone Nanette."

"Why?"

"I'm worried about her," I stammered. "Alan, that fellow, Turber—"

We called the apartment. She answered promptly.

"You all right, Nanette?" I demanded.

"Why, yes, of course, Edward. When will you be back? I've been worried about you."

"We'll be there in an hour."

I hung up. I felt unutterably relieved. We boarded the ferry.

"What do you propose to do next?" I asked Alan.

"Get our car—come back tonight."

"With Nanette?"

"Yes. I know how you feel. That fellow Turber—this weird thing—"

"No time to leave Nanette alone. I wish she weren't there now."

"We'll be there shortly. When we come back, you'll stay in the car with her," Alan directed.

While he was meeting Charlie at the tennis court gate? I did not fancy so inactive a role.

"It's best, Ed. Only one of us should go in. With both of us, the chance of being discovered would be greater. Besides, we daren't leave Nanette."

"You think he'll let you in?"

"Charlie? I think so. They're very cunning, fellows like that. He said he would hide me in his room."

We discussed it. There was so much—and yet so little that was tangible—to discuss! But I realize now that Alan, with his greater knowledge of what all this might mean, had formed fairly definite plans. To discuss them with me then, was futile. He did not do it.

We got home to Nanette, and had supper. My own reticence matched Alan's when it came to going into details with Nanette. It would have led us far afield in fantastic, meaningless theory. But the girl was there, held virtually a prisoner; we wanted to release her. That we told Nanette, but nothing more. It was, indeed, as definite a plan as I could form myself.

It was a hurried supper. Nanette had it ready for us when we came in.

It was eight o'clock when, after hurried preparations, we started. Alan brought his car from the nearby garage. Nanette, with her hair braided and piled upon her head, was ready. We all wore outer coats. The evening was cooling; the sky was overcast.

Alan went into his workshop; came out with a small cloth bag. "Nanette, get your black cloak—I couldn't find it."

"I thought I'd wear this coat and hat, Alan. Don't I look all right?"

Eternal feminine! The subconscious strain under which we were laboring made us laugh.

"Of course you do! We're not going to the opera! I want your cloak—for something else."

She went and got it. The car was a big sedan. Alan put on the back seat the cloak and his cloth bag—they were tools from the workshop, he had told me briefly when I questioned. We all three sat in front, as was our custom. Alan drove.

I recall as we left the apartment that I vaguely gazed ahead those few hours to when we would return. The futility of gazing ahead!

"We've got to hurry," said Alan. "Hope we can catch a ferry, without too long a wait."

He threaded us skillfully south; through the crowded city streets. I gazed around. This was New York of 1962. I suddenly felt wholly apart from it.

We just made the ferry. The sky continued overcast. It rained a little, and then stopped. We left the ferry, drove into Staten Island toward Turber's.

"I think I know a secluded place," Alan had told us.

He found it, an unlighted country road. He stopped and switched off the headlights. The darkness leaped at us.

"Where are we?" I demanded.

"A mile from Turber's—not much more. You can see it off there." j

We climbed to the road. The sky was solid gray. We were in a lonely neighborhood; a fence was here, bordering a field; but no house was in sight. The road went up a rise here through a cut. Alan had drawn the car to one side; a spreading tree hung over it. Beyond the trees, I could see the lights of a nearby settlement; a trolley car—a lighted roadway winding off there, and the hill with the lights of Turber's. The searchlight was not lighted.

"Hadn't we better get closer, Alan?"

"No, this is all right. It's barely a mile."

"You know where we are? You'll be able to find us, coming back?"

"Yes. Just keep your lights out and wait."

"How long, Alan?" Anxiety flooded me. "If you don't come back—say by midnight—what shall I do?"

"I will come back. You just wait, Ed."

He kissed Nanette. I sat at the wheel with her beside me. Alan's figure, carrying his small bag and the black cloak, showed dimly down the road for a moment, then was gone.

It was nine forty. With all the lights of the car extinguished, we sat in the darkness, waiting. Alan had taken a small revolver, and I had one also.

Ten o'clock. A distant bell marked it; I snapped on the dash light to verify it. Nanette felt me move.

"What is it, Ed?"

"Nothing. I was looking at the time.

"Ten o'clock?"

"Yes."

We fell silent. Alan would be at the gate of Turber's by now. But what reliance could we place upon that boy Charlie's word for what he would do? Perhaps he had no key to the tennis court gate at all. Or even if he had, he would forget to come. Or Turber would see him and stop him. Or worse, follow him and trap Alan. A thousand doubts and fears for Alan's safety rose to beset me.

Ten thirty. Eleven o'clock. What was Alan doing now? But I told myself: "This is 1962—not the dark ages of the past. This is civilized New York." If Turber caught Alan prowling on the premises, what of it? He wouldn't dare murder Alan. Or would he?

Waiting is a difficult thing to do. The mind grows too active. I began to think that Alan wasn't coming back. Nanette crept against me in the darkness.

"Ed, what time is it?"

"Nearly midnight."

"Ed, I'm so frightened—"

I began to plan what I would do. Wait here until midnight, or one o'clock perhaps. Then drive up to Turber's and boldly ask for Alan. At worst, they would have caught him—arrested him as a marauder. I set my teeth. Why, before morning, if I couldn't locate Alan I'd have all the police of Staten Island up at Turber's looking for him!

"Don't be frightened, Nanette—he'll be back presently."

No one had passed along this road; we seemed wholly secluded. The sky remained overcast; there was not a star showing; off in the distance lightning had flared for a time and we heard the distant thunder, but the storm had now receded. There had been a cool wind, but it died. The night was black and dark. Breathless. And I think it was my apprehension, too, that made me breathless. I sat, with Nanette huddled against me, and stared, straining my eyes in the darkness for Alan's coming.

Midnight passed.

From the roof of the Turber Hospital the searchlight beam abruptly flashed into the sky! It hung motionless.

I told Nanette.

"What does it mean? What could—"

"I don't know."

We sat tense, every faculty alert. Nanette, with sharpened fancy and a hearing always keener than normal, cried out suddenly:

"That was a shot! Listen! There's another!"

I seemed, myself, to hear the sound of distant shots. At Turber's?

"An automobile tire blowing out," I said. "Or a car back-firing."

But she insisted: "I thought I heard screams—some one screaming—"

"Nonsense!"

Another interval. The searchlight off there hung steady.

"Ed, what is that? Don't you hear?"

I heard nothing; but Nanette did, quite evidently.

"Someone coming! Can't you hear?"

Then I heard it. Running, approaching footsteps, clattering faintly in the darkness on the stony road!

Alan crept up to the Turber place. He heard the clock chime ten. An Italian settlement lay in a fringe along the east side of the hospital grounds. The main gateway was there. Alan skirted to the west. A cemetery lay on the west slope of the hill, with a narrow road like a trail bordering the high iron fence. It was all dark along here, but Alan remembered that the tennis courts were in this far corner. According to Charlie there should be a small gate somewhere here in the fence.

Would Charlie keep his word? Everything that Charlie had said might be the wandering of an unhinged mind; the boy might have forgotten it all by now.

Abruptly Alan came to a small iron door in the fence. A dark figure stood behind it.

"Charlie?"

"Yes."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"Let me in."

The door swung inward. Alan slipped through; closed it carefully.

"Where's the key, Charlie?"

"Here."

"You keep it. Well leave this unlocked—when I'm gone you can lock it after me."

"Yes."

Alan could just make out Charlie's figure at the edge of the tennis court.

"No trouble getting out here, Charlie?"

"No."

"Nobody saw you? Sure?"

"Nobody. I'm supposed to be in bed. I was, but I got up—look how I'm dressed."

He moved to where a yellow glint from a lighted window of the nearby building fell upon him. He wore a long dark dressing gown.

"And my brown tennis shoes, see? Dark clothes for dark deeds at night!"

Alan seized him. "Come out of that light! Shall we go to your room first? Wait for the place to get to sleep?"

"Yes. I can get you there. A side door—I know where it is."

They started, along the edge of the court, then under the shadowy trees of the lawn.

"Won't they lock the side door at night, Charlie?"

"They did, already. It's a spring lock—I opened it from the inside and left it unlatched."

There seemed, even at this early hour, few lights about the building.

"Almost all in bed," Charlie whispered. "All but the doc. He never goes to bed."

Charlie knew where the girl's room was. The Indian was on guard there across the hall. But Alan felt that there was no reason why the girl's door should be watched too closely. They could not anticipate anyone trying to get her out. That Indian would relax by midnight; probably would go to sleep in his own room, with his hall door open so that he could hear if the girl made any disturbance.

Charlie and Alan came to a small entryway at the ground level.

"Are the halls empty?"

"Yes. Nobody will see us. They're dark, too, at night. If you want to go to my room first—"

"I do."

There was a dim night light in this small inside hallway. It showed Charlie with rumpled hair, white face and gleaming eyes. He was shaking with excitement.

"Come on. What's that you're carrying?" the boy asked.

Alan wore black rubber-soled shoes; his long, light weight dark overcoat and a dark cap. The bag was under his arm. In his overcoat pocket he had the small revolver.

"Tools, Charlie. To open the door of the girl's room—later, when that Indian gets to sleep—"

The bag contained a chisel, a screw-driver and other implements with which he might force a lock. And a vial of chloroform and a sponge.

They crept along the hallway, into the main lower corridor. Alan feared that at any moment they would be discovered. He would make a dash to get out the way they had come in—

"Here! Come in here." Charlie twitched him suddenly by the arm. Through an archway, and Alan found himself in a familiar room—the reception room. It was unlighted. Its furniture showed dimly in the light from the corridor. Like shadows they slid into the recess behind the portieres of the windows.

"What is it, Charlie? Some one coming?"

"No. I want to show you—outside here. Big things afoot here tonight—dark deeds of mystery. I know—I've seen them!"

They cautiously raised one of the shades a trifle. Alan saw that the main courtyard was dark and silent. The single door of the laboratory building was closed.

"What, Charlie? Shall we stay here awhile?"

"Yes. Big things going on. You'll see."

"But what? What have you seen?"

"Things you can't see from here. From the roof you can see them because you're higher than those other walls. Shall we go to the roof? I've got the key—that's Bluebeard's key—"

"No. Stay here awhile."

They were comparatively safe, here behind the portieres. Alan was waiting until later, when he could go up to the girl's room.

They crouched at the window. Half an hour passed. An hour. It was getting toward half past eleven. No lights showed now in any of the courtyard windows; it was all dark out there.

Once or twice Alan had heard footsteps in the main corridor outside the reception room. But no one had entered, and for half an hour now there had been no sound of anyone.

Another interval.

"We've been here long enough," Alan decided.

"All right." The boy was shaking again. "It's midnight, isn't it? 'The very witching time of night when churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out contagion to this world. Now could I drink hot blood and do such bitter business as the day would quake to look on—'"

"Charlie, stop that!"

"It's Hamlet. I'm like Hamlet—a little mad, but though they fool me to the top of my bent they cannot play upon me!"

"Stop it! Let's go upstairs now."

"Shall we? All right. Go where?"

"To the girl's room. Can you lead me there?"

"Yes. But she isn't there!"

"What?" It electrified Alan. "Not there!" He gripped Charlie. "What do you mean?"

"Don't! You hurt!" The lad jerked away.

"Sorry, Charlie! But hush, you make too much noise!"

"All right. But you hurt me. The girl isn't up there."

"Why in Heaven's name didn't you say so long ago? Where is she?"

Charlie gestured to the window. "Over there—in the laboratory. They took her over there—just before I went to let you in."

"They? Who?"

"The doc. And the Indian. That's Uncas, as we call him. Uncas was a Mohican—you know that."

"Where are they now?" Alan's heart sank. This changed his plans wholly. Was it true?

"They? Who? The girl? She's over there now. They locked her in over there—then they came back."

"Where? When was this?"

"About ten o'clock. I saw them start over here from the laboratory, but then it was time for me to go and let you in."

"They came over here—to the main building?"

"Yes. They're in the doc's rooms, I guess. They're getting ready for something. You'll see. That's what I've been waiting for—they'll be going back over to the laboratory soon."

Alan felt that it was true. There were many things which Charlie had said that fitted into Alan's own beliefs.

"Charlie, can you get us down there?"

"In the courtyard? Yes! Sure I can. Two or three ways. This isn't a jail—you can go where you like if you know the way."

I've been almost everywhere, and nobody ever caught me."

They slipped into the dim corridor. A flight of stairs was near at hand. The lower story was wholly dark. Charlie found a cross hall and opened a door.

They were on the courtyard pavement. Near by an end of the inner building was visible as a dark outline; they moved noiselessly across the open space and crouched against the brick wall of the laboratory.

"How far are we from the door, Charlie?"

"Not far. There's a wheelbarrow there somebody left this afternoon. Let's hide by it."

They came upon the wheelbarrow. It was standing up against the laboratory wall. Its shelter was hardly necessary; the yard here was solid black.

"Where's the door?" Alan whispered.

"Right here. What you going to do?"

Alan stood at the door. His fumbling hands felt for it. There was no knob; an iron door, set in a brick and iron casement. His fingers felt a lock, sunk in the metal of the door.

Alan laid his bag at his feet. No chance of forcing this lock. Turber and the Indian would doubtless be coming presently. Whatever Alan could do must be done now.

In the solid darkness at his elbow, Charlie's voice whispered again: "What you going to do?"

Alan acted wholly upon impulse. He thought that the girl was inside, alone. She might be able to help—

He knocked, very softly on the door.

"What you—" Charlie began.

"Sh!"

He knocked again.

It happened unexpectedly; yet Alan by instinct was ready for it.

The door abruptly opened!

It swung, just a few inches; a guttural voice sounded, speaking unintelligible words!

Whatever surprise it was to Alan, the Indian within was undoubtedly far more surprised. Alan stuck his foot into the door opening; he shoved violently with his powerful body, his shoulder against the door. It yielded; opened wide with a rush, knocking the Indian backward.

Alan burst into the room. The Indian, unarmed, recovered his balance to find himself staring at Alan's levelled revolver.

"Don't you move! Put your hands up!"

Behind him, Charlie yelped shrilly: "He can't understand English! He's a Mohican!"

But Alan's menace was enough; the fellow backed against the wall. His hands went up.

"You've got him! You've got him!"

"Charlie, shut up!"

A confusion of swift impressions surged upon Alan. A small, bare room with a vague glow of light. The girl was here! She stood near the Indian. Frightened, shrinking against the wall; but she saw Alan, recognized him. She took a step forward.

Charlie was making too much noise. The door through which Alan had burst was open. If Turber saw the glow of light—or heard Charlie's voice—or if any one else heard this uproar—

A confusion of instantaneous impressions.

"Charlie, shut up! You'll have the whole place aroused! Take the girl out—she'll go with you! Grab her arm—we'll make a run for it."

The girl understood. If not Alan's words, at least his swift gestures. She moved toward Charlie. Alan backed, his weapon levelled upon the Indian. "Go on! Run, Charlie! Get her out at once! I'll follow. Get us to the tennis court."

Alan backed, with the two of them behind him. He had been in that room certainly not over thirty seconds. He left it with Turber's secret laid bare to him! The room had an archway, opening inward. Alan had stood facing it. Charlie had seen it and yelped with excitement.

In the inner court stood a large gray-white vehicle—a cabin airplane. A spread of canvas for a concealing roof was over it. A vehicle for travelling through Time—like the Time-travelling tower we had seen in Central Park!



CHAPTER V

Alan found himself outside the laboratory. Its door was open, with a yellow glow streaming out. Charlie, clinging to the girl, was with him. The glow fell on them; Alan shoved them aside.

"Which way, Charlie? We've got to get out of here!"

They stood in the darkness a moment against the laboratory wall. The hospital was aroused. A voice had shouted. Others were taking it up. Lights were showing in several of the windows. An uproar—growing now of its own momentum. Some one lighted a light in the reception room. A shade snapped up.

The courtyard was brightening with yellow glints of light. No one as yet seemed to notice the three figures standing by the wall.

"Which way, Charlie?" Alan was momentarily confused. They would have to pass through the lower part of the building, get into the garden, fight their way through if necessary.

The girl stood docile: Charlie was chattering with fright. A desperation was on Alan; he shoved at Charlie. "Come on!"

But he stopped abruptly. The Indian had come to the laboratory door. He shouted—vehement, guttural words. An answer came. Dr. Turber! The man appeared in the light of a lower doorway in the main building.

All thought of flight was momentarily stricken from Alan's mind. "Charlie, wait!" They were standing by the upright wheelbarrow. "Look!"

Turber came running. The shaft of light from the doorway picked out his running figure. He was heading for the laboratory door. Not to menace these intruders; knowing only that his secret was discovered. With his hospital in uproar around him, Turber was in flight.

The Indian disappeared back into the room; Turber went at a full run through its doorway. Alan had not thought to try and stop him. Instead, he moved to the door, fascinated.

The room already was empty; Turber had gone through it; was leaping into the vehicle of the inner courtyard. An instant. Then the huge ship—it was nearly a hundred feet long—with all its gray solidity, began melting. Dissolving. A wraith of a cabin with wings—a dissipating phantom—

The inner courtyard was empty!

Charlie's voice: "Look! There it is! There it is!"

From the top of the laboratory building—perhaps automatically operated by the going of the ship—the searchlight beam was standing up into the air!

Alan found his wits. "Charlie, for God's sake lead us out of here! You don't want to get caught in this affair."

Figures were now in the courtyard; voices, questioning; at a window of the first story a boy in white nightclothes stood gazing down. The excitement set him screaming—shrill, piercing, unearthly screams! Voices began shouting at him.

It was a welcome diversion. Alan gripped the girl by the arm. She seemed to understand what was going on. She ran with Alan as they followed Charlie across the courtyard, into a lower doorway. In a corridor a man opposed them. He ducked away from Alan's waving weapon.

Through a dim room, crowded with the silent machinery of a laundry. Through another door. A hall. At the foot of a staircase two nurses in dressing gowns saw the running figures and screamed.

Charlie fumbled at a door; opened it. They were in the side garden.

"Which way?" Alan demanded. "You go back! Nobody recognized you. Pretend you had nothing to do with it."

"This way! There's the tennis court—to fight and run away—live again to fight—"

There were people in the outer grounds now. The presence of intruders was recognized. A voice called, "Which way did they go?" One of the inmates began screaming again. Some one fired a revolver—several shots into the air to arouse the neighborhood.

At the little gate Alan paused. "Lock it after us! Throw the key away! Don't let them find it on you! Thanks, Charlie—you're a brick. Say nothing—know nothing."

"All right, I won't." He touched the girl. "Goodbye—the maiden fair is gone!"

"Yes, Charlie. Thanks for what you did—we won't forget you—"

The gate thumped closed. Its lock turned. Charlie whirled and vanished in the shadows of the trees.

The girl clung to Alan's hand and ran swiftly, lightly as a fawn, beside him. The uproar at the hospital faded into the distance.

Within ten minutes, running through the darkness over the stony road, Alan and the girl were at our car.

We bundled the girl into the back seat. Nanette sat with her. "Wrap her in the cloak, Nanette! Is it there?"

"Yes."

"Move over, Ed," Alan said. "I'll drive."

In the silence other shots sounded off at Turber's. Alan hastily backed the car and turned it.

"Raising hell up there! But I got her!"

We sped away into the night.

The thing was clear to us now. This girl had come in a Time-travelling tower from the Past—or the Future. Turber also possessed a Time-vehicle; one more effective than the tower, since it seemed a vehicle also capable of travelling through Space. This girl undoubtedly knew Turber in some other Time-world. And feared him—just as Nanette feared him.

With purring motor we were speeding along one of the island's highways, almost deserted at this hour of the night.

"Which way you going, Alan? Not to the ferry?"

"No. West, over the bridge into Jersey. Get back to New York that way. We're safe enough."

"What are you going to do with the girl?" I asked.

He hardly knew. "Take her home, I guess. See if we can't learn to understand her. She's intelligent—she speaks some kind of language."

We sped through a quiet, sleeping village. It was a long drive, around this way through Jersey. The night was well advanced toward the new dawn when we were again in Manhattan.

We had stopped once on a lonely Jersey road. Stopped by Nanette's voice.

"Alan! She's trying to talk to me!"

We drew down the car curtains; lighted the tiny dome light. The girl was much smaller than Nanette; she sat, with her blue robe crushed about her, enveloped in Nanette's long cloak. She was smiling, gesturing.

"She's beautiful, Alan. She's been talking—I can't understand."

Her voice was soft; queer liquid syllables, queerly intoned. A voice like music; the wind in harp strings, stirring them to murmur—but it meant nothing intelligible to us.

But there were gestures.

I said: "She understands! She's trying to show us she understands—"

Nanette demanded: "Is she looking at me? Look, dear—I'm Nanette—understand? Oh, you can see—and if you can see, you must understand! I'm Nanette." She laid her hand on her own breast. "Can you say it? Nanette—"

The girl said, quite clearly, "Nanette!" And laughed with a low ripple of pleasure. "Nanette! Lea! Nanette! Lea!" She was indicating herself. "Lea!"

"Her name is Lea! Yes, dear, we understand you."

I murmured: "And at Bellevue—"

With quick hearing she caught the word. "Bellevue," she said. She had evidently learned it while there. "Bellevue." She repeated it, frowning. She made a gesture, meaningless, and sank back, huddled against Nanette.

Alan switched off the dome light. "We'd better get started—some one might see us." He drove on. "Keep on trying, Nanette."

We decided to take her to Alan and Nanette's apartment. The Turber staff at the hospital would report that Turber and his assistant and the girl suffering from amnesia had vanished. What else could they say? Charlie probably would not talk; and Alan doubted if himself or Charlie had been recognized. Our connection with the mysterious midnight disturbances at Turber's might never be established.

We were in the quiet, mid-town streets of New York when Nanette called us again.

"She understands the word 'tower'! She just said it. Lea, what do you mean? Try! Say something else to Nanette!"

Lea was murmuring: "Tower! Tower!" She seemed trying to look out of the side window. I leaned back and drew up the shade.

"That all right, Alan?"

"Yes. What does she want to do?"

She was peering through the window. We went on a few blocks in silence. Alan said nothing. But he had told me he intended crossing Forty-second Street to the East Side. He did not. He went north to Fifty-ninth. Then turned east. Soon we were passing along the southern edge of Central Park.

Lea had been peering intently. She recognized the park. She murmured. "Tower! Tower!" Insistently. She even turned and plucked at Alan's shoulder. "Tower! Tower!"

Understanding swept me. "Alan, she—"

"Yes. Wait, Ed! Don't say anything—just watch her."

He silenced Nanette's questions. We turned up Fifth Avenue. The dark, tree-dotted park was on our left. Nanette sat quiet, trying to fathom the sudden tenseness which had come to us. Lea stared through her window at the park. Intent. Motionless.

We came into sight of the Metropolitan Museum a few blocks ahead. Alan slowed the car.

"Lea—"

She turned at the sound of her name. She smiled; gestured at the park; reached toward the door of the car.

I exclaimed: "She recognizes it, Alan! She wants to get out. What are you doing?"

He had turned into the cross-street. "Stop here. See what she wants to do."

We opened the car door. I stood at the curb. This cross-street was dim and deserted.

"Lea." She turned again as Alan spoke. She smiled and gestured again toward the park. And pulled at Nanette.

"What is it, Lea, dear?"

"She wants you to get out, Nanette."

"Shall I, Alan?"

"Yes. Help her, Ed."

I guided Nanette. Lea plucked at Alan. He put the lights of the car out and locked it. His fingers were trembling.

"You walk with Lea, Nanette. Let her guide you. We'll follow. See what she wants to do."

Four of us, unnoticed by the great, sleeping city, all unaware of us. And what would it have cared?

We crossed the avenue, plunged into the shadows of the park. To the east the leaden sky over the housetops was brightening with the coming dawn.

We crouched in the shrubbery by the edge of a path. Trees were over us, a lake near by, a winding park roadway off there with lights along it. The shadowy building of the Museum at the edge of the park was in the distance.

Lea had marked well this landscape! It was familiar to her, as it was to Alan and me, who had been here so often, and had seen the vision of it on the screen last night. This open spread of lawn here, with the lake near it, this path bordering it.

My mind swung back. A forest glade was here, three hundred years ago. Three thousand years ago, what? A virgin forest? And three hundred thousand years ago? Primitive man, hiding here—as we of 1962 now were crouching?

This same Space, the spread of this lawn in Central Park—what would it be in another hundred years? Or a thousand? This little Space, from the Beginning to the End so crowded with events and only Time to hold them separate!

Lea was in advance of us. I whispered to Alan. "That tower we saw here—coming again?"

"Of course! Don't you think so? She's waiting for it—expects it."

This empty lawn—no! Not empty!

The tower materialized all in an instant. It stood gray and silent. We were on our feet—Alan and Nanette off to one side.

The tower doorway opened. A young man stood there with the light behind him. Stood gazing—

No vision this! Reality! Empty space, two moments ago. Then a phantom, a moment ago. But a real tower, now! Solid. As real, as existent—now—as these rocks, these trees!

Suddenly, even nearer at hand, another shape materialized. The Turber vehicle! It came from nothing into visibility. It settled like a giant airship upon the lawn. Its door opened. Figures sprang out.

There was a moment when we were all too surprised to move. Lea gave a cry. The young man from the tower rushed toward us. From the Turber ship three men came running. They were no more than twenty feet away.

"Ed! Run!" I became aware that Alan had turned to run with Nanette. She stumbled, fell, and before he could pick her up they were caught.

I leaped for them. It was Turber and his Indian, and a huge, half-naked man in an animal skin. He swung a stone axe. Alan was fighting, he fired his revolver, but missed. The axe struck him; he went down, but he was not badly hurt, for from one knee he fired again. The giant with the axe swayed and dropped to the grass.

I leaped for Turber. Another man came running from the ship. Turber was holding Nanette; he flung his coat over her to stifle her screams. I did not dare fire. I launched into them. From behind something struck me. I dropped, but I recall that I was still struggling—gripping Turber's legs, but he kicked me off. Then some one leaped on me; struck again. I fell insensible.

Alan was again on his feet. Turber was carrying Nanette away. Alan dared not fire at them, he swayed on his feet, trying

to run after them. He saw the Indian strike me. And then the Indian whirled. Incredibly swift. Alan was hurt. The dim park swayed before him. He saw Lea and the young man from the tower standing together. Both seemed unharmed. They stood horrified, undecided what to do.

Alan, reeling dizzily, was no match for the Mohican. He blindly fired his revolver, but he missed. The Indian's tomahawk caught him a glancing blow on the head.

He must have recovered consciousness in a moment. Lea and the young man were bending over him. Turber's ship was gone, taking Nanette and me with it.

Alan was not badly hurt. He sat up, then he stood. Lea urged him toward the tower. But he resisted her. And then she used force. The youth with her seized Alan. He was too weak and shaken to withstand them. They hurried him to the tower. He saw upon the grass the motionless body of the giant, with a primitive stone axe lying beside it.

The tower door closed after him. Lea sat him in a chair, the young man went to a table of instruments.

Alan felt a flash, a reeling of all his senses and of all the world.

CHAPTER VI

Alan did not lose consciousness. But it was a terrible sensation of falling; a soundless, clattering chaos. The room seemed going dim, glowing silver-bright, with every smallest detail sharp and clear—and then fading. There was the sense that his body was suddenly spectral, with a lightness of thistledown, whirling away in all this soundless confusion.

The sensations were momentary, the room presently was almost normal again. Alan sat still and gazed around him. A solid, white metal floor; gray-white metal walls; a metal ceiling, windows and doors, all closed. A solid room, unmoving—standing in the bottom of a tower planted solidly upon the ground. It felt like that. Almost normal. But not quite. For under his feet Alan could feel the floor vibrating. A whirring, infinitely tiny, infinitely rapid vibration. It thrilled up into his body like a gentle current, it gave him a sense of lightness, buoyancy.

Alan knew that the tower was travelling in Time. Into our Past or our Future he could not tell which. Across the room at a table of instruments Lea and the young man sat gazing at a bank of whirring dials. They talked together in low tones, words unintelligible to Alan. Lea, glancing over, caught his gaze and smiled. He stood up, stood trembling and dizzy. At once she came and took his arm.

"Let me see the dials," he said. He knew she could not understand the words, but he gestured, and she understood and steadied him to a seat by the table.

"San," she said, and pointed to her companion.

The young man smiled, and offered his hand in the fashion of Alan's time. He was a trifle taller than Lea, similar of aspect—a gentle-looking youth, but with strongly masculine features. Blue eyes, like Lea's, brown hair, long to his neck; a robe of fabric, dark-blue, in form not unlike hers. It revealed his delicately molded limbs. A very gentle, handsome young fellow, but there was nothing girlish, nothing effeminate about him. He stood up with a quiet dignity—almost an unconscious aspect of superiority, as though he were a gracious little prince, shook hands with Alan, and sat again at his dials.

Alan surmised he was Lea's brother. Certainly they looked alike. Alan made them understand that he wanted to read the dials. Most of the dials were unintelligible, but there was one, with a slowly moving pointer, which Alan could read. It marked 1980 A.D. Into the future! Alan cursed the fact that he could not talk to his two companions. His mind leaped back to Nanette and to me. Captured by Turber. Taken—where? He did not know. But one thing was clear, Lea and this San were friendly to him. They had forced him into the tower because they knew it was the best thing for him. They were taking him now—ahead, into what we call the Future. Doubtless to their own Time-world.

Alan believed it must be far into the future—a time when English was lost and forgotten, a dead language of history. But once there, Alan thought that they would have a way of communicating with him. Their smiles were reassuring. Lea examined his head and shoulder wounds. They were no more than severe bruises.

"Nothing," said Alan. "I'm all right. But Nanette?" He tried to gesture to make it mean something.

"Nanette," said Lea. She smiled again, but then her face went solemn.

San said abruptly: "Lea—San—Alan." His gesture included the three of them. And then he pointed to the dial. Alan understood. He was indicating the year to which they were going.

It was the year 7012 A.D.

"But Nanette," Alan insisted. "Nanette? Turber?" He swung his finger over the dial. But they both shook their heads. They were solemn, perturbed. They did not know Turber's destination. Alan's heart sank, yet there was nothing he could do but wait.

Presently Lea was showing him about the tower room. It was some thirty feet square, occupying the entire base of the tower. There was furniture which seemed to be of metal. A gray-white room, windows closed now and covered by opaque metal plates, a dim glow of light, the sources of which he could not determine, lighted all this gray interior.

Two small sections of the room were divided off by hangings of what might have been a gray metallic fabric—one enclosure where it seemed food was stored; the other, an instrument room. A low hum came from there. Alan saw lines

of tiny wires of cobweb fineness, which began there and spread like a tiny white network woven into the walls and ceiling and floor of the room. And, in one corner, there was a small metal staircase—an incline spiralling upward through a trap door of the ceiling. Lea gestured.

"Want us to go up?" said Alan.

She evidently did. She showed him the dials again. They were passing the year 1995. She spoke to San. He remained at the instruments; Alan and Lea went up into the tower.

Amazing sight! They stood on the narrow balcony which girdled the small tower room near its top. Alan had not dared to look down as they climbed the ladder. It seemed that around him was a gray, luminous fog. On the balcony he clung to the breast-high railing and stared.

A gray monochrome of city—blended colors of whirling days and nights, seasons, years—all blended into this flat, shadowless gray. A blurred scene, crawling with movement. Melting outlines, changing with the progressive altered aspect of the passing years.

1995! 2000! Our great city of 1962, here just a few moments ago, now seemed so small and antiquated! What a tremendous giant, rearing itself here now around him! And it was still growing. Its great buildings had come up and were encroaching upon the park. They loomed far higher than the tower.

He saw, off where Broadway traversed its diagonal path, a roof appear over the street. A great shadowy spread of roof—over Broadway—then over other streets. Growing giant of a city. The outlines of the huge buildings came nearer. The park was dwindling as the city flowed over it. Structures which Alan fancied might be great airplane stages rose high on silted tower legs. One was quite near. It came up all in an instant—twice the tower's height, with an enormous platform upon its top. Once, for just an instant, Alan fancied he saw the shape of an airliner resting there. A thing which, because it persisted long enough for him to see it, must have been lying there for many months.

The city seemed a single solid structure now—a vast building of tumbled, storied wings, and walls, towers and spires. A city, roofed over. The roof was over the tower now. The buildings had long since flowed over the park. No trees here now. No sky; no light from nature. The persisting man-made lights now were visible, blurred spots of dull yellow-red glow. It seemed suddenly a city infernal. Teeming multitudes here under one vast roof. Spider-like aerial bridges and viaducts were everywhere.

The tower presently was set in the space of a street. Alan could see very little of the city's extent—a street of many pedestrian levels one above the other, flanked with great lights.

The street had come into being, risen around the tower—endured for a moment. And then, as though leprous, it began dismembering. A portion of it melting away; then another. But other buildings—other viaducts—other towers rose to fill up the gaps. And always larger structures.

The tower now seemed travelling faster. Alan could imagine the city—this one vast roof with the rivers flowing beneath it. Staten Island with the space of Turber's hospital, was doubtless under this same roof. And all the upper bay; and the New Jersey shore of the Hudson; and Brooklyn and all this end of Long Island.

Incredible millions of people, living here in this enormous, monstrous beehive—living pallid, some of them perhaps, in the poverty-stricken sections, never having seen the moon save as its light might struggle through their translucent roof, not knowing the sunlight rays, never having seen the sea, with only gloomy rivers flowing through tunnels to represent it, wondering, perchance, what grass might be, and things that people richer and more travelled spoke of as trees. Pallid people of the monstrous city, slaves to their own machinery!

Alan clung to the balcony rail, with Lea beside him. Her hand was on his arm as though to steady him. Occasionally she met his glance and smiled, or gestured to indicate the gray shifting wonders of the scene around them.

Alan noticed now that in this constricted area where the tower was set, there seemed few changes. These vast structures, of a material the engineers of this age may fatuously have termed indestructible, were enduring over longer periods. They melted away occasionally and others took their places. But the form was about the same.

As though now mankind here were resting. The peak of civilization here, and perhaps upon all the earth, was reached.

Man resting upon the summit of his achievements. But in nature there is no rest! A thousand years, here upon civilization's summit. And then—a little step backward! Mankind, softened by ceasing to advance, turning decadent. A little backward step.

As though this city here were a symbol of it, Alan could see the decline. A rift in the street—and it was not rebuilt. Another rift. A leprous slash—a hole that gave Alan a wide extent of vista to the east.

Doubtless, upon an earth so unified by transportation as this age must have been, it was not only New York decaying—but also a decadence of all mankind over all the world. Alan saw it here. By what might have been the year 5000 A.D., the shadows of the vast city lay in ruins around the tower. Broken buildings, crumbling visibly as Alan stared at them. Fallen roof—the whole ramified and multiform structure everywhere lowering as nature pulled it down. It lay piled in shadowy mangled fragments.

There were trees now! Vegetation springing up. A wild, neglected growth. A forest growing in the ruins of the city, where the occasional broken spires still stood like headstones; and then melted down.

The forest grew around the tower, the city was almost buried. Lea plucked at Alan. She murmured something.

"Shall we go down?" he said.

She smiled. She said, quite distinctly, "Yes."

She led him down the ladder. He felt more secure now. There was no sense of movement of the tower; the ladder steps were firm and solid. Alan saw the forest melting. A sylvan landscape seemed coming.

In the lower room they found San still intent upon his dials. He drew Alan over and indicated that single dial which to Alan was legible. It marked 6650 A.D. The pointer was traveling much faster than when Alan had seen it before; but as he watched it now he could see that it was slackening. He sat regarding it, listening to the musical, unintelligible words of his two companions.

Then they gave him food and drink. And Lea again examined his bruised shoulder and the gash on his head. But they were not serious, he had forgotten them.

6700 A.D., 6800 A.D. The tower's flight was slowing, the hum of the room seemed progressively at a lower pitch. They were nearing their destination; preparing to stop in 7012.

Alan's mind again went to Nanette and me. Where were we in all these whirling years? A sense of loneliness, depression swept him. He felt utterly baffled, helpless. But he tried to shake it off. He said aloud, as though to cheer himself:

"Lea—see here—I've got to talk to you. Understand?" It seemed almost that she did. "My sister, Nanette—that villain Turber has her—he's always wanted her, understand? I've got to get her back, Lea. Damn it, I've got to find him—get her away from him!"

But all Lea could do was touch him sympathetically.

Baffled. This cursed barrier of language! "Lea, what is Turber to you?"

San, with readier wit, pointed again to the dial. Indicated 7012, and then gestured to his lips.

Alan nodded. "Yes, I understand—when we get there we can talk."

They came to the year 7000. Travelling slowly now.

Then Lea had an idea. In the automobile, coming from Staten Island, she had been wrapped in Nanette's cloak. It was discarded now, but it lay here in the tower room. She picked it up and stood before Alan. Fragile, beautiful little creature! The soft folds of the sky-blue drapery fell about her figure, the golden tresses lay in a mass over her shoulders. Her eyes, clear pale blue as a morning sky, were fixed on Alan. A wave of emotion swept him; it seemed that he had never seen a girl so beautiful.

"Nanette," she said, lifting the cloak.

"Yes," he responded. "Nanette's cloak. I understand. But what—"

She took Alan's finger and moved it over the dial. Aimlessly. She said: "Nanette—Turber—Edward—"

And shook her head. She did not know where we were. But then she indicated the cloak again, and smiled, and said, "Yes—yes."

What could she mean by that? Was she trying to convey that with Nanette's cloak they would be able to learn where Nanette was? It seemed so.

A tenseness had come to San. He was alert at his mechanisms. He spoke sharply to Lea. Her hand went to Alan, steadying him. Alan braced himself. San flung a switch-lever. The tower seemed almost to lurch physically.

They had reached their destination. Alan's senses had suddenly reeled, but they cleared at once. The tower room was vibrationless, the hum was stilled. San opened the door. A warm sunlight streamed in.

The Space of Central Park, five thousand years in our future!

Lea and San led Alan from the tower.

CHAPTER VII

They went down a flight of stone steps to the ground. Alan found that the tower now was set in the midst of a garden of gloriously vivid blossoms. The air was redolent with their perfume. A brook of sunlit water flowed nearby. There were cool bushes and shade trees, green and brown; cool green lawns of sward; little winding paths.

A garden of a few acres. It was all enclosed by a wall of masonry—a wall some twenty or thirty feet high, looped and turreted. The figure of a man was on the top of the wall, over a gateway fairly near at hand. As they stepped from the tower his arm went up with a gesture of recognition.

Realization swept Alan. This garden, this wall, this pacing sentry—all this we had seen on the television. We had witnessed then the tower's departure; by some vagary of Nature's laws the etheric waves carrying this image had come to us of 1962.

They passed through the gateway of the wall. The guard on its top called down something and stared at Alan curiously as they passed through.

Beyond the wall a sylvan landscape was spread to Alan's gaze. The Space of Manhattan Island. He could still recognize it. A river behind him. Another river ahead a mile or so. The Hudson shimmering in its valley. He could see the cliffs of its further bank.

Near at hand the open country was dotted with trees, checkered with round patches of cultivated fields. There were figures working in the fields. And occasional habitations—low, oval houses of green thatch.

A road of dull smooth white wound from this gateway over the countryside toward the river. Animals, strange of aspect, were slowly dragging carts.

A city was off there, along this nearer bank of the river—a stretch of houses more closely set. City! It seemed some primitive village. All this—primitive, as though here might be some lost Indian tribe of our early ages. The field workers, garbed in vivid colors. Their squat little carts, slow-moving with broad-horned oxen. The quiet village strung along the calm flowing river. All picturesque and primitive.

But Alan knew it was not barbarism, but decadence. Civilization had reached its summit, and declined. Fallen back, to this.

Lea was in advance of Alan and San. She turned into a small gateway. They passed through a garden profuse with flowers. A low house stood here, half hidden by the verdure. An old man was at the doorway—a stalwart old fellow with a furious white beard, a shaggy white mane of hair, a robe of sober gray, monklike with its rope about his bulging middle.

He greeted Lea and San with a gesture of affection. He stared open-mouthed at Alan. Lea explained to him swiftly. And then came relief to Alan. This old patriarch spoke what he doubtless called the ancient English. He said slowly, with a meticulous, careful intonation:

"I thank you for saving Lea from Wolf Turber."

"But we've got to locate them," Alan insisted. "How can we? With this cloak? Yes, it belongs to my sister."

"I will take you shortly to my instrument room," said the old man. "I have had Lentz, my assistant, preparing the Time-vision—we cannot do it more quickly."

They had talked now for perhaps half an hour—old Powl, as he was called, interpreting for Lea and San. He was their grandfather. It was he who had discovered the secret of this Time-travelling tower. He had built it, and had constructed also a series of instruments which he called Time-vision. He was, in this age of decadence, one of the few living scientists. And he was a language student as well—he had trained himself in many of the dead languages of the past.

"My son," Powl said, "the father of Lea and San took my tower and once stopped in the year you call about 1925. He paused for just a moment, but when he returned here there was found a young man with him. A stowaway, as you would call it. That man was Wolf Turber."

It was all presently clear to Alan. Turber had come here, had stolen the secret of the tower and the Time-vision, and getting followers had built himself his Time-vehicle—and departed.

"He said he was in love with Lea. But she was afraid of him—his attentions were unwelcome. We told him so."

Like Nanette! "I understand," said Alan bitterly. "My sister—"

"He has her now, you tell me. That is bad. You must get her back. And kill him."

The old man's mild blue eyes suddenly flashed. Lea spoke. He interpreted.

"She says, I must tell you—we have sworn to kill Turber. He murdered my son—father of Lea and San. Stole our platinum treasure—and murdered my son, who was defending it."

Alan thought he had never heard such intensity as came into the old man's voice. "We are careful with our tower—we do nothing evil with it. Turber's vehicle is all for evil. My son died—and there as he died we swore—myself and Lea and San—that some time we would kill Turber and destroy his vehicle."

Lea and San understood what he was saying. They stood beside him, with faces white and solemn. He added: "But there seems little that we can do. There are no weapons here. We have no need in this age for any scientific weapons. I cannot travel in the tower—I am too old to stand the shock. San must always stay with it—to guard it. And so it all falls to Lea. She has passed through the different ages in the tower. There are weapons in the Past, of course. But I have not wanted Lea to stop. And Turber is very powerful, very elusive."

Lea interrupted again. Powl said: "We know that Turber has a stronghold in the year 2445 A.D."

"Five hundred years in the future of my Time-world," said Alan.

"Yes. Your city of New York is then about at its height. Turber is powerful there—impregnable. There is only one other Time in which Turber habitually stops. The year 1962. Lea went there. But it was foolish, we all realize now. As you know—she could accomplish nothing. And but for you, Turber would have had her!"

Again Lea interrupted. Powl translated: "She wants me to say that now she will learn your Ancient English. There are so many dead languages—but she is very quick to learn—when interested."

"Interested?" said Alan. His gaze went to Lea's eager face. A wave of color swept her, but her eyes remained level and she held out her hand. Its touch thrilled Alan. As though the clasp were sealing a compact, unspoken, but he could read her eyes and feel, surprisingly, the sudden anger in his own heart.

San, too, held out his hand. Powl said: "My children find in you a friend—sorely needed." Again the old man's eyes flashed. "We have sworn that Turber will die. He has your sister, and your friend. Your own purpose—"

"To get them back," said Alan. "But where is he? I don't think he will return to 1962. You say he is impregnable in 2445 —"

"Yes. But he is not there now. If he stops—in some earlier age, as we hope—then will be your opportunity."

A man came to the doorway of the room, spoke to Powl, and disappeared. Powl stood up. He said, with brisk energy:

"The instruments are ready. Turber, we think, is still travelling in time. We will try, with your sister's cloak, to locate him as soon as he stops anywhere."

They left the house, crossing the gardens toward an out-building in which was the instrument room. Alan's mind was tumultuous with his thoughts. This incredible catastrophe into which so unexpectedly he and those he loved had fallen! Alan had always been one to walk alone in life. He made few friends, his friendship for me, his love for Nanette—to these he could now add an emotion, as yet barely understood, his feeling for Lea.

Into this, his world, Turber had suddenly thrust himself, abducting Nanette, capturing, perhaps killing me. What could Alan do about it? Suppose they located the Time-world to which Turber had gone? Alan could go there—with this girl Lea to help him and San to guard the tower. Hopeless adventure! He had one small weapon, his revolver. And a frail girl for companion. There seemed no one else from whom he could get help. No one in this Time-world of Lea's.

His mind roved the possibility of getting help elsewhere. His own world of 1962. Who could he get there to do more than smile incredulously at his fantastic tale? He envisaged all the other centuries. But to go to any one of them for help—for weapons and men—was hardly practical. He would be a stranger, he would fall into a strange civilization with only this same incredible story to aid him. He would be imprisoned perhaps—or, at best, be disregarded as a lunatic.

Lea had faced all this. She had tried in 1962. It was not feasible. Alan saw now that he would have to depend upon himself. The tower would transport him. The rest lay with himself, his own wits. He felt that very probably I was dead. He would rescue Nanette from Turber's clutches if he could. For the rest—this oath of vengeance sworn by Lea and her brother against Turber—Alan gritted his teeth, and as he thought of Nanette's gentle beauty and Turber's grinning, satanic visage, he swore to himself a similar oath. He would kill Turber if he could!

"This way," said Powl. "Stoop down—you are so tall for our door openings."

It was a low-vaulted room, dimly illuminated.

"My assistant," said Powl. "He is called Lentz—he speaks a little of your ancient language."

A man of about thirty rose from a seat before one of the instruments. He offered his hand. Powl added to Alan:

"You may speak openly before Lentz. He is my trusted helper—the only person beside ourselves who knows the secrets of my Time-vision and of the tower."

He was an undersized, heavy-set fellow, garbed in a short robe like San's. His black hair was clipped close on a bullet head. He wore goggles which now were pushed up on his forehead.

"I speak very little," he said as he shook hands. "I am ready if it is you have the cloak."

The tubes of this instrument might have been Neon lamps by their aspect. There were coils, a multiplicity of wires, a tiny series of amplifiers, a system of prisms and mirrors, beams of light, whirling from tiny mirrors swiftly rotating. There was a metal tube like a small microscope, a rack beneath it, upon which a dull red light was focused. There were rows of dials—tuning dials, and indicators; and a large fluorescent screen which seemed under electronic bombardment from the rear. The whole apparatus occupied a table some six feet long, with the dials to one side and the screen upright at its end.

Lentz placed Nanette's cloak upon the rack, he focused the red light upon it, then stood gazing into the eyepiece of the tube as one might gaze into a microscope.

Lea and San stood by Alan. Lea gestured toward the screen; it was empty of image. Then she pointed to one of the dials. Alan saw it bore figures he could understand—figures ranging over thousands of centuries. Some of it B.C.; the rest A.D. There was a point on it marked zero. The indicator stood there at rest.

"Your ancient calendar," said Powl. "With this garment belonging to your sister we may be able to time our receivers and make connection. The image of her is here in the ether—if we can adjust it."

Lentz was twirling the tuning knobs. The pointers on all the dials stirred a little; images seemed trying to form on the fluorescent screen.

A minute. Ten minutes. Then Lentz relaxed.

"Not now," he said. "It will not come. Presently we try again."

"They may still be travelling," said Powl. "It would be difficult to get the image—"

They waited, then tried again but failed. Where was Nanette? Despair flooded Alan. Over all these diversified centuries, how could they ever find her? She seemed so hopelessly faraway. And yet he realized not far in Space. A few miles from here probably, no more.

"We will never find her," said Lentz.

Alan gazed at him sharply. "You think not?"

"No." The fellow seemed confused under Alan's eyes. "That I mean—I hope so, but it seems not."

"We must keep trying," said Powl. "The other instrument is more sensitive. Have you the tubes for it connected?"

"No," said Lentz.

The tubes were in an adjoining room. Lentz went in to prepare them. The connecting door was open; Alan heard Lentz moving about, and heard presently the hiss and snap of a current as he charged the tubes.

San and Lea sat murmuring together in low tones. They addressed Powl. He listened. He said to Alan:

"Lea wants me to explain—if Turber takes your sister directly to the great city of 2445, still it is not quite hopeless. We think we have located a weapon—a single very powerful weapon—"

The old man's voice lowered. Lea and San bent forward intently. There was a weapon—a projector, Powl called it—which was mentioned in history. It had been built as an historical curiosity. It stood in a museum of Greater New York. The contemporary history of that Time—when weapons of such a kind were long since abandoned—said that this specimen in the museum was in perfect working order. Its operation was described. It was scientifically preserved in the museum against the ravages of time.

Lea and San—travelling in their tower—had seen the Time-world when the city was crumbled into ruins. The museum was abandoned; there would be no one there to stop Lea if she went and searched in the ruins of the museum for the projector.

Powl was talking very softly. A tenseness was on him.

"This we have told no one."

"What Time-world?" Alan asked.

"We think the best year to try for it would be about 5000 A.D."

It chanced that of the four of them, only Alan was facing the doorway of the connecting room. The sound of Lentz moving about was suddenly stilled. The realization of that struck Alan.

A segment of the other room was visible through the open door; Lentz was not in sight, but it seemed as though a shadow of him lay on the floor near the doorway.

Alan whispered sharply, "Quiet." He leaped to his feet, he darted noiselessly across the room with the startled glances of his companions upon him. Beyond the doorway he came upon Lentz standing close against the wall. A tube was in his hand; he was polishing it with a piece of cloth.

"Oh," said Alan. "I didn't know you were here."

"The instrument will be ready quite shortly." Lentz moved back to his work.

Alan returned to his seat. He murmured to Powl: "Let's talk about that later—not now."

Lea touched his arm. She whispered: "Yes—yes, understand—not now."

The thing startled them all. There was a brief silence; they could hear Lentz moving normally about the other room.

Alan asked Powl at last: "Can you operate your instrument here? Without Lentz doing it?"

"Lea and San can," said Powl. "Though not so well as Lentz."

"Let's try it again, but wait a minute."

Alan went to the door. "Lentz, how soon will you be ready?"

Lentz looked up from his work. "Quite shortly."

"Good. I'll close this door. Knock when you're ready." He ignored the fellow's surprise, and dropped the door closed

with a bang.

"Now," said Alan. "Try it."

With Nanette's cloak again, Lea and San tried the instrument. Almost at once results came. The screen showed an image. A starlit night. Figures were moving about the glade. Strangely garbed, burly figures of men; and a group of half-naked feathered savages stood near by, upon the shore of a river. A canoe lay there. To one side, a camp fire showed its dull yellow light through the forest underbrush.

There was an air of inactivity about the scene. Turber came presently and stood in the cabin doorway of the ship. His familiar hunched figure, with the starlight on him and a yellow-red glow from the camp fire. Turber, waiting here for something!

The dial marked 1664 A.D. Powl was trembling with eagerness. Lea and San snapped off the instrument. San had recognized the location of the scene. It was the Hudson River shore of Manhattan Island, no more than a mile from the tower-space. Powl said hurriedly: "San has the exact reading—the year, month and day. Turber will not expect you, that night there in the forest. If you can creep up on him with your revolver—"

It might be possible, in the gloom of the forest, to get up to the ship unobserved.

They made a few hurried preparations. San and Lea would not be able to talk with Alan; they made their plans now, with Powl for interpreter. Back at the tower, Powl stood by its steps.

"Goodbye. Do your best." He gripped Alan's hand.

The tower door closed upon Alan, Lea and San. A moment, and they had started. The room reeled, but this time Alan was prepared for it. He recovered in a moment. He stood by Lea and smiled. He said: "Not so bad this time."

"No," said Lea. "All right."

There was a sound in the humming, vibrating room. A rustling behind them. From a shadowed corner a figure rose up.

Lentz! His swart face was smiling. He was by the door. He had followed them in. He said to Alan: "I thought better I come, so I can talk for you and them. We must plan carefully what we do. I want to help you."



CHAPTER VIII

I must go back now to that time at dawn in Central Park, when we were set upon by Turber and his men. I recall that something struck me and I fell. Turber was holding Nanette. I caught him by the legs as I went down, but he kicked me off. Then I was struck again and everything went black.

When I recovered consciousness I was lying on a bunk in a small cabin of Turber's ship. I seemed not greatly hurt. I sat up, wholly confused at first; then lay down again, listening to the hum of the room, feeling the metal bunk vibrating beneath me.

My head was roaring, my hair was matted with blood from a ragged scalp wound, and I was sore and bruised all over. But I lay and felt my strength coming back.

I was alone in the tiny cabin. It was not much more than twice the size of the bed. There was a vague silver glow in it; I could see a small window with a transparent pane. And a door. The door stood ajar.

I got to the floor on my feet and stood swaying dizzily. I felt queerly light-headed—as though I were about to float away. My revolver was gone, so were my overcoat and hat and outer jacket.

I lurched to the window. The ship seemed poised a hundred feet or so above the ground. I gazed, incredulous, at a blurred, shifting, melting landscape.

The ship was travelling in Time. But I recall that in my confusion, only half conscious, I could not realize what this might mean. And suddenly I was faint. I tumbled back onto the cot. I fainted—or drifted away into sleep.

I was awakened by a sound near me. I sat up abruptly, this time fully conscious and clear-headed. Turber stood in the cabin regarding me.

"Well, you've come to yourself at last?"

I sank back on one elbow. "Yes. What are you doing to me?" I gulped with a sudden thought. "Where is—where's Nanette?"

"So you're worried about her? Be consoled—she's worried about you. And she has cause."

He stood toying with his ribbon, dangling his glasses. He was dressed as I had seen him at the hospital. He regarded me sardonically.

"You're alive—let that suffice."

I moved to get up, but he waved me back. "Don't bother. You will annoy us if you come out. Are you hungry?"

"No," I said.

"Nanette and I will be breakfasting presently."

I added, "I am hungry."

That amused him. My mind was active now—fully alert. I asked: "We're travelling in Time, aren't we? Where are we going? What do you want with Nanette and me? This is all very strange."

I was trying to gauge him. I managed a smile, as though my situation were annoying, but nothing more. "Shall I come out and have something to eat with you?"

His smile broadened. Satanic scoundrel. Inscrutable. He said:

"Yes. I'll call you." And then his whole face changed as though a mask had dropped upon it. He rasped: "You, Edward Williams—what are you to Nanette?"

It took me wholly by surprise. I stammered: "Why, an old friend."

"Yes?" He changed again. He purred it. His hunched shoulders were exaggerated as he leaned forward, and his fingers were unconsciously stroking his waistcoat. "Yes? Nothing more than that?"

More than that! It flooded me now; I knew in that instant what all my life I had not known before—how dear Nanette had grown to me—of all the world, most dear.

I must have been stammering. He cut me short. "Strange that Fate should have delivered you into my hands." Purring again; he seemed like a cat, licking his lips. His eyes roved me. "She loves you."

I gathered my wits. "What are you talking about? Nanette love me? What nonsense!" My tone sounded hollow; his black gaze was boring into me. I said boldly: "Why should it bother you?"

I wondered why he had not already killed me. He answered, not only my question, but almost my thought.

"A girl who amounts to nothing, but it happens that I love her. Wolf Turber—the great World Turber—you would not think it of me, would you?"

Unfathomable fellow! There was almost sincerity mixed with the irony of his tone. "And because I want her love—she has just a little hold over me." He added wryly: "I've just now promised her I would not kill you. She thinks of nothing else, so I promised her—to get it off her mind."

I managed, "Well, I thank you both."

"You need not. Her brother Alan—there is no complication with him since we left him dead back there in the park."

It sent a shudder over me but somehow I did not believe it.

A man stood at the door. "Wolf Turber, will you come?"

"Coming, Jonas."

Turber leaned smilingly over me. Against all my will, I shrank back from his grinning, massive face.

"I will not kill you. But this you need not mention to Nanette—there are things not so pleasant as being swiftly killed. We will take you with us. She and I—we'll take you to my great city. And when we get there she will see you as a hideous object, Williams." His chuckle was gruesome. "If she has love in her heart for you, it will vanish when she beholds you as you will be then."

He straightened. "Lie where you are. When I call you can come out—if you promise not to be troublesome."

He closed the door upon me.

CHAPTER IX

This Time-voyage in the Turber time-craft seemed in duration four or five hours. Crowded hours! A cosmorama of whirling eons. Turber flung us far backward in Time. I did not see any of this part of the trip. I lay in the cabin, pondering what Turber had said—wondering what I could do to escape with Nanette. And wondering if Alan really were dead.

Then Turber called me for the meal. I found Nanette white and solemn and very silent. She spoke to me, casually, it seemed cautiously. I had always known Nanette to have a will of her own; she was nimble-witted. I saw now that she was wholly on her guard. She was silent, apparently docile with Turber. Watchful. She found opportunity once to press my hand. And to murmur. "Careful, Edward—do not anger him."

A new mood was upon Turber. He seemed in a high good humor. He was courtly with Nanette. Pleasant enough with me, but there was an edge of irony to his pleasantness.

"A long trip, Williams, but we are comfortable enough. If you cause no trouble you may sit in the control room later. A wonderful view from there."

I asked, "Where are we going?"

"Nowhere," he said. "In Space we are not moving. I have us poised over what you and I used to call the shore of the Hudson River. You remember it? About the foot of Eightieth Street."

He seemed pleased to talk—probably for Nanette's benefit, to please his vanity by exalting himself. "I'm taking us back in Time—back near the beginning of life on this earth. Then coming forward. I have several stops to make. Mere pauses—though in the year 1664 we shall have to make a longer stop. Stay there perhaps for the passing of a night. It's a quaint world here, in 1664." He chuckled. "It is to yield me, I hope, quite a little treasure. Gold and jewels. Money, as you know, is an all-powerful thing."

There were just the three of us at the meal. The interior of this hundred-foot ship was capacious, but there seemed only a few people on board. Turber once made reference to the fact that upon this, his last passing, we had many people to gather. But what few I now saw made a motley crew indeed! There were several men, brown, white, hairy of body, clothed in crude animal skins; heads which showed receding foreheads, upon which the tangled, matted hair grew low; dangling, gorilla-like arms. Men from some primitive age snatched up by Turber. They seemed stupidly docile, animal-like.

There was a fellow who seemed the opposite extreme. Turber called him Jonas. A man of about thirty, small and slender, with a long white robe, a golden-tasseled sash, and a gold band about his forehead. His wavy brown hair was long to the base of his neck. His skin was pale white. His features delicately molded; his nose thin, high-bridged; his mouth loose-lipped. He was obsequious with Turber. He suggested Lea and San a trifle. I surmised that he might belong to their Time-world.

The giant Indian, he of the flat, broken nose, was operating the controls of the ship. Turber called him Bluntnose. He was, I learned later, a Mohican Indian of New York State.

Motley crew! And there was one woman. Turber addressed her as Josefa. She served us the meal. She wore a blouse and a gaudy skirt with a vivid sash. Her thick black hair fell on her shoulders. Her face had a barbaric beauty with a mixture of races stamped upon it. She spoke English, with occasional Spanish words intermingled.

She served us with what seemed a defiant sullenness. It contrasted with Turber's good humor. He reached for the woman once as she passed him—reached for her with a coarse caress. But she drew away; and his grin at me was a leer of amusement.

This pantomime—which Nanette did not see—was to be plain enough. And a moment later, as I chanced to look around, I saw the woman standing watching us; staring at Nanette and Turber. And there was upon her face a blazing intensity of hate. She stood tense, hands upon her hips. Her fingers were writhing; and in the folds of her sash I saw protruding the handle of a dagger.

CHAPTER X

We finished the meal. Turber rose. "Come into the control room. We can see better from there."

There was only Bluntnose in the control room. He sat at his instruments and dials. His face was inscrutable as he looked up and saw Nanette and me.

"We will sit here," said Turber. "Here, Nanette—by me."

He pushed me away with silent vehemence. I sat down by a window. The door to the corridor which ran the length of the ship was behind me. I saw the woman Josefa out there; she was staring after us, but in a moment she moved away.

Turber spoke to his Indian. "You have been pausing, Bluntnose?"

"Yes." The Indian spoke with a low guttural intonation. "Yes. Saw nothing where could stop."

"No," said Turber. "Well, well go forward now." He turned to me. "We had hoped, along here in these primitive ages there might be some great reptile lying dead. One with tusks." He grinned. "In civilized times, ivory is very valuable."

He sat beside Nanette. "I'm not sure that we shall stop, child. Except in 1664. I am impatient to get back home with you. We will have a wonderful life, Nanette—riches and power. Master and mistress of all the world. Wolf Turber—master of the world. You'll be proud of me."

I could not catch her answer. I could see her involuntarily shrinking away from his caress.

I sat alert with roving thoughts. Nanette and I would have to escape; but how? If the ship paused in one of these primitive ages, could I snatch Nanette and leap out? Unthinkable! But in 1664? If we paused there for a night, I would make my play then. Nanette and I, to live out our lives together in little Dutch-English New York.

There was nothing I could do now, and presently I was engrossed, listening to Turber's voice, and regarding the vast scene spread before us through these windows. The control room was in the bow-peak of the ship. Banks of windows on both sides gave nearly an unobstructed view.

Tremendous cosmorama! We were still poised motionless about two hundred feet in the air. My mind went to my own Time-world. New York City in 1962. Beneath me here would be the New York Central Railroad tracks; Riverside Drive; the Hudson. Grant's Tomb, George Washington Bridge just a short distance to the north. And behind me, the spread of New York's streets and solid buildings.

This same Space, how different now! Turber was saying to Nanette: "We are about one billion years, B.C. That's a long time in the past, isn't it? But we are travelling forward very fast."

I gazed out upon a landscape gray and misty; blurred, unreal as a shimmering ghost. The colors of nature were blended into gray; melting phantoms—the changes of a century encompassed within an instant of my consciousness. It created a pseudo-movement; a blurred, changing outline.

An unreality, a ghostly aspect upon all the scene. Yet I was the speeding phantom; and these things at which I stared were the realities.

A vast area of gray land and water lay spread around us. The water lashed and tumbled; swirls of mist and steam rose from it. The land lay with a gray look of movement. A naked land. No vegetation here yet. No soil. A land perhaps almost viscous, congealed from the lashing ocean. It spread like a great gray plain; the mists and vapors rose from the land-crust as from the sea. Mists and swirling masses of steam, surging up into the orange-gray of the sky. Condensing, dissipating, forming the atmosphere.

I fancied, as we plunged through these early centuries, that vast storms were here. Vast cataclysms of Nature. Torrential deluges of hot rain pouring down from the clouds that these mists were forming. Dire winds that plucked and tore at the sea; earthquakes that rocked and tumbled this land and swept this sea with tidal waves gigantic.

Life here? This was the Beginning. There was a shore line quite near us. It wavered and blurred as the centuries altered it. A reach of shallow water where the waves rolled up against the bleak landrocks. Life was beginning there. In the

shallows of the sea I could envisage the microscopic protoplasm, like algae that form the green scum on a pond, lying here in the shallows. Restless, irritable organisms! Desiring food to eat. Urged by the primitive spark of life to eat and grow and multiply.

I could fancy that on the lower steppes of this more solid crust vegetation was now taking hold. We were passing too fast for any details. There were fleeting glimpses of what might have been vegetation. A forest—springing from nothing, existing and vanishing while I blinked. But I could seem to see a forest, springing into lush life from the heated soil; growing to a jungle; whirled away in a cataclysm that tore and ripped all this land and water. Or a forest that grew, lived and decayed; enriched the soil, with other different giants of trees to live after it.

We were going forward too fast for such tiny details. But the great changes were obvious.

Again, beyond what I actually saw, my fancy roamed. From the shore-water protoplasm, the restless living things had ventured now. The ocean was peopled. Great swimming reptiles had been here and were here now. Nature's first efforts—from the microscopic protoplasm to these great monsters of the sea! Millions of years developing toward size only. The ages of life gigantic! We were sweeping through them now.

Amphibians were living now. I can conceive the first such sea creature with its restless urge for experimentation—the urge with it, forcing it to try for something better—I can imagine it coming from the deeps into the shallow water of the shore. Venturing further; rearing its great head up from the water into the air. Trying again; lunging—dragging its great length up to the land. Feeling the sunlight.

As restless as the changing life, was the changing environment. I saw the mountains rise and drop; and the sea surge in and back again; an instant when for ten thousand creatures there must have been great heat here—and then a sweep of ice.

Throughout it all, life struggled, adapting itself, patiently trying new forms; driven away from here by hostile nature—but coming back again. Struggling.

An hour or two must have passed as I sat there engrossed. Turber had been talking steadily to Nanette.

I heard him say:

"We are entering now the last million years before the Time of Christ."

1,000,000 B.C.! Out of the thousand such intervals, only one was left!

There had been no attempt by Turber to stop our flight in any of these centuries. I wondered why he had made this trip.

He had said to Nanette: "I have really done this to show it to you." But I doubted that. He had told me, with a grin, that he might stop for an ivory tusk of some prehistoric monster. But I did not believe it; especially since he had made no effort to stop.

I got the answer now; his real reason. The fellow Jonas came into the control room. He stood by Turber. They talked for a moment, softly, but I could hear them.

"You think, Jonas, that we have shaken off that cursed Time-vision?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Lentz would do his best to fool them."

This meant nothing to me. Had Alan been there, how well he would have understood it!

"Yes. But Lea and San are persistent. You should have laid plans, master, to capture that tower."

Turber smiled wryly. "I suppose so. But I've been busy, Jonas. If Lentz had any sense he would have wrecked the tower for me."

"And left himself stranded? You expect too much, Master. Lentz wants to join us."

I could only partially understand. But it was clear that Turber wanted to shake off pursuit. He was planning to stop in 1664. He wanted no interference there.

If I had known that presently Alan would be speeding there in the tower to help me!

There was just a moment when Nanette and I were left alone. Turber went out of the room with Jonas. Bluntnose, the Indian, sat at his dials. But he was some distance away and his back was toward us.

I moved to Nanette. I touched her. I whispered:

"Nanette."

"Edward?"

"We're alone. Only the Indian—his back is turned."

"Edward, be careful of yourself." Her dear hand clung to me. "Careful!"

"Nanette, listen—we're going to stop in the year 1664. It will be night, Turber said. We'll be there all night."

"Yes. I heard him. But, Edward—"

"I'm going to try to get us out of here then. I can't tell you how—I don't know. But I'll watch a chance for us."

A step sounded behind us. My heart leaped. I half rose from my seat. The woman Josefa was bending over us. At my movement she hissed:

"Hush, you fool! Stop that!" Her glance went to the Indian in the distant forward part of the cabin. "He'll hear you. Dios! Sit quiet."

"What do you want?"

"I tell you. Only a moment I have—Turber will be back."

"What? What do you want to tell me?"

"This. When we stop—night in the forest, you understand? I will watch for a way to help you. It will be dark—I can get you out, you and this girl." She paused breathlessly, then blazed. "Take her! Never let Turber see her again!"

I could gladly agree to that. I whispered vehemently: "Yes, of course. That's what I want. How will—"

"Later I find a way. Madre di Dios, he—"

She saw Turber down the corridor. She murmured swiftly: "You be ready."

She turned and was gone. In the corridor, I saw her pass Turber. He seized her and kissed her, and this time she submitted.

Turber joined us. "Ah, so you are entertaining my little Nanette?" I moved away at his command. He sat down. "We are only half a million years before the Time of Christ now."

And the mammals were here now as well. The end of the great reptiles was at hand. Nature had made an error, and was busy now in rectifying it. The giants, handicapped by their huge size, unwieldy bulk and dull-witted brains, were sorely pressed in the great struggle for existence. Creatures smaller were evolving; creatures more agile of body, more quick-witted of brain. They fought their environment better. They lived, they thrived.

Another few minutes while we sat at the cabin windows. The giant reptiles went down into defeat. The archaic mammals flourished and rose into the higher mammals. The lemurs were here. And then the anthropoids. Apes of pseudo-human form skulking in these lush jungles.

The stage was set for man.

I saw all life here driven away into defeat with a glacial sweep of ice coming down. It enveloped the ship for an instant.

We must have been within it—glaciers over us with our phantom vehicle speeding through them.

The ice age passed. The land and the sea sprang once more into shadowy form. The gray phantom jungles were here again. The living things, driven elsewhere, came back. The giant mammals like all the giants were losing the battle. The smaller creatures were surviving. The ice came again, and passed. And again. Vast climate changes. Was the axis of the earth altering in its inclination? I think so.

The ice ages passed. The apelike man had been roaming Java for nearly half a million years now. Roaming, and spreading.

Two hundred thousand years and, a little less apelike, the Heidelberg man was wandering throughout Europe—and Asia perhaps. I wondered if here in this Space of New York City there could have been men like apes in those ages. We did not stop; there is no one to say.

The glaciers withdrew. The Neanderthal race gave way to higher forms. The Cro-Magnons struggled with their primitive thinking.

Reason had come. Man—true mankind—was upon the earth at last. His earth!

He held it now, rising against environment and against all the efforts of the beast to hold him down!

The Indian at the dials said abruptly: "25,000 B.C."

"Ah," said Turber, "the age of civilization, little Nanette. We are entering it now. It starts here—and when it reaches its peak, I will be master of it. Ruling the world—with you."

His fingers touched her hair. Enigmatic, unfathomable scoundrel! I sat ignored by him, tensely regarding him. And I could have sworn that he was wholly sincere. His fingers gently stroked her hair.

"Ruling the world, Nanette, I have selected its greatest Time—the peak of civilization. I will be Master of it, and you its Mistress. A wonderful destiny for you, child."

He waited, and she murmured awkwardly: "Why—yes—"

He frowned a little. "You do not love me yet. Oh, Nanette, don't you understand? It is your love I want. Not you without your love."

"Yes," she said. "I understand."

A pang went through me. An impressive scoundrel this! He went on earnestly:

"I think there will be a great battle, Nanette. But we will win. We will conquer Great New York of 2445. And you'll live out your life five hundred years in the future of that world in which you and I were born."

He turned to the window. "This is a backward Space, Nanette. Elsewhere on the earth man, now in these eras before Christ, is leaving the impress of his struggle. But not here. It's all still empty—no evidence of civilized man. But its outlines are familiar. Why, if you could see it, Nanette, you'd recognize it now. The ocean is to the east of us. The shores; the islands. This is Manhattan Island beneath us. Slower, Bluntnose! Remember, we stop at that appointed night of 1664. Go slower! We want no shock to harm my little Nanette."

His voice went on.

We passed through the centuries with constantly decreasing speed, and entered the Christian era. Then to 1000 A.D. The Mongols had come from the Eastern world, come here and lived, cut off upon this backward continent. Without contact, they remained backward. Primitive savages. They were here now—the American Indian with his wigwams set in the forests of these slopes; his signal fires rising above the trees; his bark canoes floating on these sheltered waters. But his impress upon Nature was too slight for us to see.

Men, risen higher in civilization's scale, were in Europe now. Thinking. Wondering. Soon they would be here, adventuring.

1500 A.D. Columbus had come into the west now. Seeking his passage to China he had come, and returned disappointed in his quest. We passed 1550. And 1600. 1609 A.D. was gone by in a moment. Henry Hudson had been here now! The Half Moon had come sailing up this placid river. A flash, those days, so brief to us that we saw nothing. But with my mind's eye, I saw it. Quaint little ship, adventuring here. Passing our island, navigating the river up beyond where Albany was to be, seeking the passage to China, running aground up there in the narrowing river and deciding with complete correctness that here was no easy way to China, and turning back and departing, disappointed.

Turber was saying: "Ah, here is man—at last—"

The standard of civilized man! Something enduring of man's handiwork was visible off there through one of the windows. Shadows—tiny blurs—of what might have been houses were materializing on the marshes of the Jersey lowlands; a settlement. It persisted, and grew. And now, another—here on our island near at hand.

To the south—the lower tip of Manhattan Island—the outlines of a fort had appeared; it endured; a fort with a stockade. In a breath, like tiny chickens clustering about the mother hen, little buildings were appearing. All within the stockade at first.

The Dutch were here! New Amsterdam existed here, now! The humble, struggling beginning of the great city. But it persisted. It grew. Tiny shadows of houses flowed into shadowy being as we stared. All were down at the lower end of the island—and the savages roamed up here.

The years went by. The hardy Dutchmen were thriving. On all the distant shores we could see the small settlements appearing. All over the busy scene the Dutch were imprinting evidence of their hardihood. The peppery Peter Stuyvesant was stamping his wooden leg about here now. I could imagine him upon his brash forays into enemy country. Warring upon the savages; and upon greater game. Voyaging with trenchant belligerence to attack the Swedes of the Delaware.

We were nearly at our destination. The ship was going very slowly. Soon there was almost color in the scene. Soundless flashes of what seemed alternate light and darkness.

Turber stood up. "Just sit quiet, Nanette! Hold the arms of your chair; don't be frightened."

He went over and stood by Bluntnose. "The exact night—don't mistake it."

"No."

There was a long period of daylight. Long? It may have been a second or two.

Then darkness. Then light again. My heart was pounding. Outside in the corridor I saw the woman Josefa standing against the wall.

Darkness outside again. The cabin reeled. It lurched. The humming vibration was gone. I heard Turber's voice: "Good enough! Not much after sunset."

We hung in the air; poised over the river.

A quiet starlight night. Early evening. The ship's horizontal propellers were whirling; I could hear their throb. We sank gently to the ground, with the depths of the forest about us and the starlit river nearby.

CHAPTER XI

Nanette and I sat quiet. The figure of Josefa had disappeared from the corridor. Turber had gone out hastily with a command to Nanette and me.

"Don't move. Stay in your chairs."

We were alone in the control room, except for the Indian, Bluntnose. He had ignored us throughout the trip, but he was not ignoring us now. He stood a few feet away, like a statue in the gloom, watching us closely. A tomahawk was hung at his belt; a modern automatic revolver was in his hand.

The ship inside and out, was in confusion. The tramp of feet, a babble of voices. Through the windows I could see a dark forest glade with the yellow light of a campfire near by. And the glint of a starlit river, with a shadowy cove quite near us.

I whispered: "The Indian is watching us, Nanette—we mustn't move."

Turber presently came in. A short sword was strapped to his belt; and a revolver in a holster.

"Good news," he said. "It's coming! They're bringing it by water from up the river."

The Indian grunted.

"It will take several hours, Bluntnose. But the first of it is almost here—a canoe is in sight."

He was jubilant. He dashed away, but I called to him.

"Dr. Turber."

He came back.

"Let us go out and see it," I said. "What is it? Your treasure?"

"I'd like to go out," Nanette said. I could feel her fingers tighten on my arm.

"Yes." He hesitated. "Nanette—if only you could see this added wealth coming to us now!"

Turber spoke to Bluntnose. The fellow Jonas appeared in the corridor. He called excitedly: "The first canoe is very nearly landing, Wolf Turber. There's another in sight. Are you coming?"

Turber hastened away. I urged the Indian: "Let us go out and see it."

"Come, then." He shoved us before him, down the corridor to the main side doorway. I did not see Josefa.

"Careful, Nanette." I helped her down the small ladder. Bluntnose was very watchful. He said:

"Sit over there. Don't move."

He sat us by the bole of a great tree some twenty feet from the vehicle. In the glow of the firelight I saw the dark shadowy forms of Indians moving about. A group of them were waiting down by the shore. A fat Dutchman was with them, round as a barrel in his leather jerkin and pantaloons. He jabbered excitedly in English.

"Did I not tell you, Wolf Turber? I've done it—such a treasure! Come here, vrouw!" His wife stood beside a tree. "This is the great Turber, woman. Do we go with you now, Wolf Turber?"

"Yes."

"Glad I am to get out of here. The blow-hard Stuyvesant meets his match tomorrow. Did you know that? The English are coming."

"Yes," said Turber. He turned toward the shore. The Dutchman followed him. "Our boat is here. Unload your things, woman. Carry them up—get them in this airship. We're going to a better world, good wife."

His voice was lost as they moved away.

Nanette sat beside me, silent, motionless. But I knew that she was alert—waiting for what I might command her to do.

I whispered: "Not yet. The Indian is here, close. I don't see Josefa. But I'm watching for a chance to get away."

The pressure of her hand answered me. Brave little Nanette!

The Indian seemed never to take his eyes from us. The automatic was ready in his hand; I could not have made a move.

Where was Josefa? If she could distract this Indian even for a moment—

Five minutes passed. Ten minutes. My mind strayed to Alan. Was he dead? In reality, Alan and the tower were at this instant materializing in the forest no more than a mile away.

Out in the river a long Indian war canoe appeared. It was heading for the cove. Its paddles gleamed rhythmically in the starlight. It landed. I saw that it was piled with moldy chests. The Indians began carrying them to the ship. The Dutchman and his wife struggled back and forth with their household effects.

Turber and Jonas were giving commands. Then I saw Josefa! She was down by the shore. She spoke to Turber. I saw him reach into a broken chest and haul forth a huge jewelled bangle. He tossed it to her and moved away.

She came towards us. I did not move. She stood by Bluntnose.

"Look what the Wolf gave me. What jewels we have now. This pleases me more than all Turber's platinum and golden wealth."

She was standing in front of Bluntnose, blocking his sight of us. He pushed her away.

I cursed myself. Had my chance come and gone? But it had only been an instant. He would have shot at Nanette and me before we had gone ten feet.

I caught the woman's significant glance. She was trying to make my opportunity. Nanette felt me stir. Nanette knew that the moment had almost come.

Josefa said: "Turber wants you, Bluntnose—there is a chest that fell in the water. These fool Indians—not Mohican like you, are they, Bluntnose? Not one of them will dive, even for jewels."

The Indian hesitated. Turber fortunately was not within sight. There was an Indian wading in the shallows of the shore.

"These captives—"

"He told me to watch them. Dios! If I could not shoot better than you! Give me that ugly thing."

She took the automatic; took it gently from him. Her face was upraised; her smiling lips were mockingly alluring.

He yielded the weapon; and suddenly leaned down and kissed her with a rough caress.

"You bad Indian! Never let Wolf Turber see you do that! Go now—show him you fear no river when it has jewels in it. I'll keep the prisoners safe."

She covered us with the automatic; she stood ten feet away. "Hurry back, Bluntnose."

He went. She stood tense. She met my glance, but did not answer it. Her gaze roved the nearby glade. There was a moment when no one nearby was observing us. She gestured with the automatic.

"Go! Run south toward the village. I'll fire presently—and I'll tell them you went north. Run fast!"

"Nanette—run!" I lifted her up; held her hand; we slid into the underbrush and ran.

CHAPTER XII

In the tower, Alan, with Lea, San, and Lentz, came speeding back to this night in 1664. San plunged the tower to its swiftest pace—the trip seemed less than an hour.

At first they sat in the lower room. Alan could not make up his mind about Lentz. The fellow appeared loyal enough. Anxious to help, and certainly his presence was an advantage. But Alan determined to watch him closely, always.

Both Lea and San were startled at Lentz's appearance in the tower. That was obvious; and several times Alan seemed to read in their expressions that they, too, were suspicious of the man.

Lentz interpreted:

"San must stay always with the tower. He wants me to be sure you understand that."

"Yes, I do."

"And Lea says she will go with you—"

The Turber ship was on the river bank not much more than a mile from where the tower would land. It was Alan's plan to try and creep up on it.

"What weapons have you?" Lentz asked.

Alan showed him the revolver. Lentz reached to take it.

"No," said Alan. "I'll keep it. What have you?"

Lentz had a knife—a long, thin blade in a sheath. Alan wondered what else. For an instant he had an impulse to search the fellow. But he decided it would be a wrong move. He smiled.

"That might be handier than mine. Mine makes a noise. You'll go with me, Lentz?"

"Yes. That is what I think best. I have so often seen this forest with the instruments—I can guide you."

"And—me?" said Lea.

"You stay here," said Alan decisively.

She burst into a flood of words to Lentz.

"She says she speaks the dialect of these Indians of 1664. She has studied it in the dead-language books—She can talk to the Indians. She stopped there once—they thought she was a goddess."

Lea said: "Yes. Yes—magic—this tower."

"She means," said Lentz, "they saw the tower. It was magic to them—she says, if we meet any band of savages she can get them to help us."

Alan decided against it. Haste was necessary; they could not be sure how long Turber's ship would remain.

"No," he said. "Tell Lea, I think not. You and I will go, Lentz. She and San had better remain with the tower."

Lea was disappointed, but she yielded.

Near the end of the trip San remained at the controls; the others went to the top of the tower. It presently lurched and stopped.

Alan saw that they were in the forest. A quiet, starlit evening. From this height at the tower's top, the distant Hudson showed plainly. To the south a few lights in the little city of New Amsterdam were visible.

"That's where Turber is," said Lentz.

"Yes," agreed Lea. And she pointed southeast. Another campfire was off there—a mile or so away, perhaps. A band of Indians encamped.

As well as he could, Alan tried to keep in mind the lay of this strange land. Strangely dark and sinister forest. Yet Alan was born right here in this same Space! He had lived here all his life. This, in 1962, was Central Park. The Turber ship lay over by Riverside Drive. But how different now!

Out in the Hudson River a large canoe was coming south. It seemed heading in the direction of the Turber ship.

They went back to the lower tower room. Through the windows here the black woods crowded like a wall.

"Tell them, Lentz, to watch closely. At any sign of trouble, tell them to take the tower and escape."

Lentz told them. They nodded solemnly. Lea gave Alan her hand. Again, as always, its touch thrilled him. She said:

"Goodbye, Alan. Good—luck."

"Goodbye, Lea."

In the woods, Lentz and Alan crept through the underbrush.

"You lead," Alan whispered. He felt safer with Lentz in front of him. But he told himself that was foolish; Lentz seemed perfectly friendly.

"Quiet, we make no noise. In these woods, it seems, savages are everywhere."

It was rough, heavy travelling. The underbrush was thick; there were fallen trees, tiny streams occasionally; deep, solemn glens, thick with leafy mold and huge ferns. And the solid wall of trees. Wild brier, dogwood, sumac, and white birch occasionally, gleaming, ghostlike, in the gloom.

Silent, sinister recesses. At every crackling twig beneath their tread, Alan's heart leaped. The Indians of this forest could glide through it soundlessly. Alan felt a dozen times that he and Lentz were being stalked.

"Where are we, Lentz? Wait a minute."

They crossed perilously on the top of a fallen tree, which spanned a deep ravine. Lentz waited at its end for Alan to come. Lentz whispered: "Let me help you."

There was an instant when it flashed to Alan that Lentz might push him off. Alan drew back.

"Move on—I'll get down."

They crouched at the end of the tree. It occurred to Alan that he had been foolish to bring Lentz. His mistrust of the fellow was growing. But it seemed an unreasonable mistrust.

"Where are we, Lentz?"

"Halfway there, I think. Or more. We should see the light of the camp fire soon."

They started again. Presently Lentz stopped. Alan could see him, ten feet ahead, standing against a tree-trunk.

"What is it?" Alan advanced until they stood together. Lentz pointed. Two eyes gleamed in the brush ahead. Alan impulsively raised his weapon, but Lentz checked him.

"Quiet! Some animal."

Not an Indian. Alan relaxed. Of course not—human eyes do not glisten like that in the darkness.

It may have been a wildcat. The eyes moved; there was a rustling; the thing was gone.

"Shot would spoil everything," Lentz whispered. "Come on."

Once more they started. The stars were almost hidden by the thick interlacing of the forest trees. Alan had long since lost

his sense of direction. This space—Eighty-sixth Street, from the park to Riverside Drive. How different now!

Alan was lost. He followed Lentz. But it seemed that Lentz was bending always too much to the left. Once Alan said:

"That way, isn't it?"

"No. I think not. That is north. This is west."

But to Alan the feeling persisted. They plunged down into a dell, at the bottom of which ran a tiny, purling brook. They waded it.

"Lentz!" he whispered.

They crouched together. There was something close ahead of them in the woods. Figures—unmistakable human figures—stood lurking against a tree off there!

In the silence Alan could almost hear his pounding heart. He was afraid to move; a crackling twig would have sounded like a shot.

A moment. Then there was a rustling ahead. The figures moved. They ran.

The underbrush cracked under them. They had seen Alan and Lentz and were running. They reached, in a few feet, an open space of starlight. Alan saw them clearly.

He gasped, and then he called softly, cautiously:

"Nanette! Ed—stop! It's Alan—"

It was Nanette and I, wandering lost.

CHAPTER XIII

We stood together, there in the forest glen, for a minute or two exchanging swift whispers. The fellow Lentz—I did not know who he was then, unfortunately—stood a few feet from us. He was listening to the woods. Then he came to us.

"I thought we might have been heard. Was any one following you?" He addressed it to me.

Nanette and I had feared pursuit, but there had seemed none. We had tried to head south—Josefa had said she would direct our pursuers the other way. She was to have fired a shot—to make plausible her story that we had escaped her. We had heard no shot. Nor had Alan and Lentz. And in these silent woods the shot would have been heard plainly.

Nanette and I were wholly lost. I realized it when I tried to tell Alan which way we should go to reach the tower.

"We must get there at once," said Alan. He gestured toward Lentz. He whispered: "That fellow—I may be wrong, but I don't trust him."

We could not agree on where we were, or which way might be the tower.

"Oh, Lentz!" He came closer to us. Alan whispered: "Which way would you say?"

The patch of starlight overhead was too small to help us. I suggested: "I'll climb one of these trees. If I can see the camp fire at Turber's—"

But it would take too long. By now there was undoubtedly a Turber party of Indians in these woods searching for us. They might cut us off from the tower, or locate the tower itself.

"I think," said Lentz, "this way."

To me it seemed that he was right.

"But that's south," said Alan.

I did not think so. Lentz said: "I led you wrong before—it was my mistake. But I am sure now."

His frankness convinced us. We started. Lentz was leading; Alan and I guided Nanette. Slow, careful going. We made as little noise as we could. We came to a slight rise of ground. A distant gleam of water showed ahead of us.

"Alan, look!"

"That's the East River."

"Yes, I think so."

It seemed so; it was very faint through the trees. Lentz had not seen it—or he ignored it. But he heard that we had stopped; he turned and came back.

"What is it?"

"That water—the river off there! We're going wrong."

I became aware that we were standing in a patch of starlight. "Not here, Alan! Don't stand here!"

Almost in a panic we left the hillock and crouched in a thicket at its foot.

Lentz whispered: "That river—that's to the east. Then Turber's ship is off there—the western river." He pointed behind us. "And then the tower would be this way."

It seemed so. We started again at almost right angles to our former course. For what might have been half an hour we crept along. It was eerie.

We heard, in the distance, the mournful hooting of an owl. Or was it an owl? Was it, perhaps, some Indian signaling?

My nerves were tense; I was trembling, straining my eyes to see, and my ears to hear. It was difficult, keeping Nanette from falling. It seemed as though the noise we made must reverberate through all these woods. How far we went I do not know. It seemed miles.

A glow of light showed ahead of us! The tower? We stopped. Not the tower. Why—a stockade! A high picket fence. A building. A northern outpost of New Amsterdam!

Realization swept us. That river we had glimpsed was not the East River, but the Hudson. We had turned exactly the wrong way; had wandered far to the south. Or had been misled by Lentz. At one time, until we checked him, we were headed for the Turber camp. The fellow realized we understood. He was beside Alan, and as Alan turned on him Lentz leaped and struck with his knife. Alan fired. The shot roared like a cannon in the woods. It caught Lentz in the hand; the knife dropped.

So quick, all this, that I had not moved from Nanette. Like a cat, Lentz eluded Alan. Leaped behind a tree. And then ran, with Alan after him.

I called, frantically: "Alan, come back! We'll lose each other!"

Alan's revolver spat again. Then he came back; we could hear Lentz plunging off through the underbrush.

"What rotten shooting!" Alan groaned.

We seized Nanette and ran north; heedless of noise. Voices were behind us. Torches showed back there.

"Not so fast, Alan. We're making too much rumpus!"

We slowed. Then we stopped to listen. The woods seemed full of voices. Heavy tread of feet, pounding in the brush. Behind us. Then ahead of us! We crouched; no use running now. We were surrounded. Torches flared. A dog was howling. I saw, off in the trees, the heavy figure of a man holding a blazing torch aloft. He held an ancient fowling piece half raised; the dog was on a leash leading him.

Figures closed in on us. They saw us in the light of their torches.

"No use, Alan."

Alan stuck his revolver in his pocket. We stood up, holding Nanette.

The Dutchmen seized us, and stood jabbering. Sturdy fellows, in shirts and broad jackets, flowing pantaloons and hobnailed shoes. They were almost all bareheaded; hastily dressed. They stood amazed at us. They pulled at Nanette.

"Let her alone," said Alan.

It was a mistake. English! One of them spoke English. He said:

"You English?"

They tore us apart from each other. They hurried us off. I heard one say: "English! The damned English here already! Well can I speak it! Oh, but our good Peter will be pleased at this midnight foray."

They dragged us south, into New Amsterdam.

CHAPTER XIV

It seemed a long march. We had aroused a single fort—a northern outpost of the city. They took us past that, following a crude corduroy road. A noisy, blustering cortege we made in the woods. Some fifty Dutchmen, armed with fowling pieces and swords, carrying torches.

We came to other outposts. Our party augmented. We passed through a long, armed stockade, and were in the little city.

It was well toward midnight now. But the city needed no arousing. The houses were all lighted. The winding streets, bounded by picket fences and the houses with little gardens and vegetable patches, were thronged with excited Dutchmen. For this was a momentous night. The English were coming. Nichols, emissary of the Duke of York, already had sent his demand that Peter Stuyvesant surrender this little Dutch Empire to English rule. His fleet now had been sighted; it would anchor in the bay tomorrow.

All day, and now far into the night, the little city had been in a turmoil. The streets were littered with groups of jabbering patrols firing up their great pipes and vowing that the thing was dastardly. How dare the English duke demand their surrender! They rushed at us, stared open-mouthed; but our captors fended them off, and vouchsafed nothing.

I seized upon this fellow who spoke English.

"Where are you taking us?"

"To the Governor. He is in Council now."

Down by the Bowling Green, near where the main fort displayed its flag and menaced the bay with its cannon, Peter Stuyvesant sat in the upper story of his home deliberating with his Council upon this crisis. But we never reached there. We went only a block or two from the northern edge of the city. The Dutchmen on the street corners gazed up at their tin weathercocks and prayed for a storm that would blow Nichols's fleet to perdition. They came running out from their gardens to regard us, and jabbered some more. The city was flooded with words this night.

An argument broke out among our captors. We were faced about, taken north again.

"What is it?" I demanded.

"Keep you here," said our interpreter. "The good Peter will come up to see you."

We were taken back. Out beyond the stockade, a little blockhouse stood on a rise of ground. The woods were thick around it.

"Leave you here," the fellow told us. "There is enough trouble in the city tonight. Peter will come up to see you." He chuckled. "Tomorrow they will bargain with Nichols's emissary at the Bowling Green—unless, as I hope, the Council decides to have our fort blow up these cursed English ships as soon as they appear. But if there is a bargain, by the gods it is nice to have you English out here secluded in the woods as hostages."

He evidently thought we were strangely dressed, important personages connected with the English invasion. Sent ahead, perhaps, to stir up the Indians in the northern woods. He said something like that; and how could we contradict it?

The log fort was a heavy-set structure. Two rooms in the lower story with an open space like an attic under the peaked roof. We were flung into one of the rooms. Its windows were barred with solid planks. The Dutchmen bound us with lengths of rope and laid us like bundles on the floor.

"Lie there—keep quiet."

They slammed the oak door upon us. We lay in the darkness. In the next room when most of them departed, we fancied some half a dozen had been left to guard us. We heard their voices; the light from their candles showed through the chinks of the interior log wall.

We whispered to each other. We were worried about Nanette but she was unhurt.

"Yes, I'm all right, Alan. But I'm so frightened."

"At least it's better than being in Turber's hands, Nanette." If we could escape now, there might still be time to get back to the tower. If not—well, we might be stranded here to live out our lives in New Amsterdam. But at least these Dutchmen probably would not murder us.

But could we escape? It seemed impossible. We lay in the darkness on the log floor, bound securely.

An interval went by. There was a stir outside. Thumping. More voices. The door opened. Peter Stuyvesant came in. He stood, balanced upon his wooden leg and regarded us by the light of a candle held aloft. Eyed us as though we were some monstrosities, poked at us with the peg of his leg and turned and stumped back to the doorway.

And then, in the doorway, I saw Wolf Turber standing! Turber, in his black cloak, his white shirt gleaming beneath it. His sardonic gaze upon us.

The thing struck us with such surprise and horror that neither Alan nor I moved, or spoke. The door was left open. Turber and Stuyvesant sat at a table. The candlelight showed them plainly. There seemed now only one other man in the room—some trusted patrol, no doubt.

Turber spoke in contemporary Dutch. They conversed. We could hear them but could not understand a word.

What they said will never be disclosed. Unrecorded history, this! A furtive, hidden incident—who was there ever to record it? Did Stuyvesant think Turber some magician? Or just a rich adventurer?

A bargain was struck. From a bag Turber produced jewels. And coins and chunks of gold. He piled them on the table in the candlelight. He and Stuyvesant drank from their goblets to seal the bargain. Stuyvesant gathered up the treasure and stuffed it in the pockets of his greatcoat.

Turber came in to us. He bent down. "If you speak or move, I'll have them kill you now." He chuckled. "Say goodbye to Nanette—quite a little fortune I paid for her but she's worth it."

He lifted up Nanette. He untied her thongs. She cried out—just once.

"Don't be frightened, child. I won't hurt you."

Alan and I were straining at our bonds.

"Quiet, you fools!" We had helplessly tried to menace him with words.

He led Nanette from the room. The door closed upon us. We could hear Stuyvesant leaving. And then Turber taking Nanette away. His voice reached us:

"Don't be frightened, child."

There was silence.

Another interval passed. There were again guards in the room outside. I whispered: "Alan, it must be nearly dawn."

We had no idea. There were spaces in the outer log walls where the morticed filling had fallen away. But only blackness showed.

In the adjoining room there was candlelight, and the drowsy voices of the Dutchmen.

"Alan, what's that?"

A thud had sounded; something striking the roof over our heads. Then another. Off in the woods there was a shout. A war-hoop! And other thuds. A rain of arrows falling upon the roof and the side of the little fort.

An Indian attack! The Dutchmen in the adjoining room made short work of getting out of this isolated building. They did not come in even to look at us. They decamped into the woods, running for the village stockade.

We were left alone. Helpless!

The rain of arrows kept on. We could hear the Indians shouting, but they did not advance.

The dawn was coming. Or was it the dawn? A red glow showing through the log walls. Red and yellow. I smelled smoke! Alan coughed with a sudden choking.

The little log blockhouse was being bombarded with flaming arrows. It was on fire, filling up with smoke which already was choking us!

CHAPTER XV

Lea and San—after Alan and Lentz left them—kept watch in the tower. They talked together in their own language.

"How long do you think, brother, that they will be gone?"

"Until dawn perhaps. We can only hope for the best. Alan is resourceful—he got you away from Turber, Lea."

They could not guess what Alan and Lentz would do to rescue Nanette and me. They discussed Lentz. A fellow of their own Time-world. Their father had always put great trust in him. But Lentz had known Turber there. Was he a traitor now? A fellow in the pay of Turber? There had been several little things which Alan had brought to light—things to make them suspicious of Lentz. And they knew Alan did not trust him.

The hours passed. The forest was a black wall of silence about the tower. Lea often stood in the doorway, staring out. Small, graceful figure in flowing blue robe and golden hair. We had seen her on the television like that—our first sight of her.

San would not be still. As always when the tower was at rest in a strange Time-world, he constantly paced the room; peering alternately from each of its windows; always within a few feet of the tower controls so that at any hostile sign outside, in a second or two the tower would speed away.

Time dragged by. Lea grew increasingly worried. Alan should be back by now.

"If he would have taken me," she said. "You remember, San, when we were here once before? There was an old chief—Silver Water, you remember? I could have got him then to help me try for Turber in one of Turber's passings. But you would not let me."

"You are over-bold, Lea." San shrugged. "I am helpless—always here with the tower."

"I could, tonight, have enlisted a band of these Indians," she said. "They worshipped me for a goddess—the 'God of Magic,' old Silver Water called the tower."

The Indians had been prostrate before the tower, that other night, and from its steps Lea had talked to them, while San watched at the controls.

"That was one thing," he said. "Safe enough. But to have you leave—tonight—off in these woods to try and find your friendly, gullible Indians—too dangerous, Lea. Alan knew it. He was right."

She presently mounted the tower, while San remained alert below. From the top she could see the Turber camp fire. And the Indian fire to the southeast.

Silence. And then, far away to the south where the paleface city held the southern tip of the island, Lea thought she heard a shot. Then another. But they were very faint.

Dark spread of silent woods! What was going on out there? The shots were Alan firing at Lentz when we discovered his treachery. But Lea could not know that.

The Hudson River shone in the starlight. Lea saw a huge Indian canoe moving south toward the glow of light which marked the location of the Turber shape. It was one of the canoes bringing in the Turber treasure. But that, too, she did not know.

She went down again and joined San. They waited through what seemed another interminable period.

"We must leave at dawn," said San.

But Lea shook her head. "We will not leave until we know Turber has left—and Alan has failed."

And there was the chance that Alan and Lentz would be in the woods, and return at last, unsuccessful.

"We cannot abandon them, San."

They both suddenly felt that the venture was doomed to failure.

"San! Did you hear that?"

They were at one of the windows. A cautious call had come from the woods. A low hail.

"Lea!" It came again. "Lea! Don't start the tower! I'm coming."

Lentz's voice! They both recognized it. Lea went to the doorway. San was alert at the controls with his gaze on her.

"Wait, San." She gestured. "Wait! I see him."

Lentz appeared from a thicket near by.

"Lea?"

"Yes, Lentz. Where is Alan?"

"I'm coming in. Don't start the tower." He approached. "Disaster, Lea. We could do nothing. Alan was killed by Turber."

Her heart went cold. She stood on the steps. Lentz was alone. He came up the steps, into the tower room. There was blood on his right hand; one of its fingers was mangled. He held out the wounded hand.

He said: "Don't start us yet, San. I want to talk to you. I've been hurt—Turber shot me."

They stood with him in the middle of the room. For that instant the tower controls were neglected. Lentz held out his wounded hand for inspection. His other hand was behind him. It came up over his head. He struck with a dagger at San.

A swift blow, but Lea was quicker. She shoved at him. The blow missed, and San was upon him. And Lea leaped at him also, fighting desperately. They bore him down. His wounded hand was a handicap. The dagger was in his awkward left hand. San fought for it as they rolled on the floor with Lea bending over them.

A brief struggle. San twisted and got the dagger, stabbed with it. Lentz gave a shuddering cry and relaxed.

San climbed to his feet, white and shaken. Lea was trembling.

"Got him. Lea. Accursed traitor."

San's first thought was the controls. Lea stopped him.

"Wait! How do we know Alan is dead? A lie, perhaps, that Lentz told us."

They went to the windows. There was no one in sight. A groan from Lentz brought them back. He lay, gruesome on the floor, with the knife in him and a red stain widening. But he was not dead. Lea bent over him.

"Lea—I want to—tell you the truth."

He died in a moment, but before he died he gasped out the truth of what had happened. He had lurked in the woods and seen us captured by the Dutchmen. He followed us—himself like an Indian, for he was skilled in woodcraft. He had been here before with Turber, laying plans to get the treasure. He knew these woods well.

He had seen us finally thrown into the fort with half a dozen Dutchmen left to guard us. Then he had gone to Turber. Had told what happened. Turber had set off to see Stuyvesant. Lentz had come back to the tower. If he had killed San, he would perhaps have killed Lea also, and escaped with the tower.

But now he lay dead. He gasped his last words of the confession. Blood gushed from his lungs.

Lea turned away. There was barely time for her to tell San what Lentz had said—they were standing at the doorway—when they became aware of dark figures in the shadowed glade near at hand! Again San would have flung the tower into Time. But again Lea stopped him.

Figures of savages were out there—not menacing, but prostrate upon the ground at the edge of the nearby thickets. It was so dark by the forest edge—the figures were dark and motionless—that Lea and San might not have seen them had not

there come a low wail. Mournful cry! A prostrate savage placating this magic god of the forest. This strange tower, with a god and goddess in its doorway standing in this glade which the redskins well knew to be usually empty of such a vision.

Lea's thoughts were swift. Alan and I and Nanette were held by the Dutch in an isolated fort some two or three miles to the south. Lea could control these Indians. She had already proved her power upon one of their chieftains.

She murmured her plans to San. It was hardly a minute from the time they had first seen the prostrate figures.

San stood alert, watching. Lea advanced to the top of the tower steps. She called in the Indian dialect: "Rise up, children of the forest. I would not hurt you. I bring you only good."

She descended the steps slowly. San called anxiously: "Careful, Lea!"

"Yes, San. Stand on your feet, men of the forest."

Slowly she advanced upon them. Watchful.

They rose at the gesture of her upraised arms. Some ten of them—young braves prowling here in the forest, attracted by the tower's dim light.

They trembled before Lea. Savages of the year 1664! Well might they have thought her a goddess; white, fairylike creature with flowing blue robe and dangling golden tresses—and the Time-travelling tower behind her.

"I bring you commands," she said, "from the Spirit Land where your fathers hunt now in peace and happiness. You have a chieftain—a man of much power here in these woods. He is called Silver Water—name like a woman, but he is a man very old, and wise, and very good."

One of the Indians stepped forward. "I know him. His lodge—off there by the water of the dawn—not far."

He pointed to the southeast.

"I will go with you," she said. "Lead me. Be not afraid, young braves."

"Lea, come back!" San called.

She turned. "I'll be careful. No danger, San. Watch out for Turber."

She followed the Indians into the dark shadows of the forest.

"But, Goddess of the Sun, I have buried the hatchet with the paleface intruders here." The old Sachem was troubled. He sat by his camp fire with his braves about him. The East River flowed near by. The wigwams of his village stood along it—dark-coned shapes in the gloom. The curious women and children hovered in the background.

Lea stood straight and commanding with her back against a tree. The firelight painted her. She held her arms upraised.

"I am at peace here," the old Indian repeated. "The pale-faced chief with the one live leg sat here at my fire and smoked the pipe of peace with me. And you would command me to break my oath—"

"No," she said. "There is one little fort, this side of the city. You know it."

"I know it," he said.

"And it is in your woods."

He nodded gravely. "Yes. They press always further, these paleface intruders. But I want no fighting. The white men are very good at killing—and I have heard this day that more of the paleface ships are coming. One of my braves was in the city today. He came back drunk with firewater, but he had the tale."

"Have they ever broken their word with you?" she demanded.

"Yes—many times."

"Well, it is not my wish you should start any fighting. Merely frighten away the guards of the little fort."

"My braves," he said, "run wild when deeds of violence start. We want no killing."

"No," she agreed. "I will be careful of that."

Lea at last convinced him. There were two gods, and another goddess like herself, held in that little fort by the Dutch. A score of braves and herself could go and frighten away the Dutchmen and rescue them. If they were left there—if evil came to them—then evil would fall upon all this forest.

He listened. Abruptly he stood up and flung his gray braids with a toss of his head, and wound his vivid blanket around him. Dignified, venerable figure. But he was afraid of Lea. Her curse upon these, his forests—his people—

"It shall be as you command. You shall have thirty of my braves. In a moment they will be ready."

The little blockhouse stood in the trees on a rise of ground. Lea, with her Indians about her, moved silently through the underbrush. It was her intention to creep up and surprise the Dutch guards, and to overcome them without arousing the nearby village. The door of the blockhouse faced the other way. The building stood black and silent. Were we in there? Was any one in there? She did not know.

Without warning, taking Lea wholly by surprise, at the edge of the thickets the savages knelt abruptly and shot their arrows.

"Why—" Momentarily she lost her poise.

The young brave beside her drew her back behind a tree-trunk. It startled her. But she saw that he was reverential.

"We will go no further," he said. "Drive them away."

The lust of battle abruptly swept over the young Indians. With the launching of the first arrow they seemed to forget Lea. The forest rang with their shouts. They spread out; creeping forward. And then with flint and steel bartered from the paleface, they set their arrows into flame. And launched them.

The young leader standing by Lea murmured: "They are running! See them go—off there—running for their village. The fort will burn."

It was already burning. Dry walls and roof; the flaming arrows struck and caught the bark. Spots of spreading flame.

"Wait!" commanded Lea. "Enough!" She stopped them at last. The fort was blazing. The Dutchmen had decamped.

She added: "Come!" But the young Indians feared to advance; suddenly fearful of what they had done, the great paleface village could pour out many wrathful men upon occasion.

"Then stay here," said Lea hurriedly.

She left them. She dashed across the short intervening space. She ran around the corner of the burning building. A prayer was in her heart that Alan and Nanette and I were inside and still safe.

She came to the door. It stood open. The room was full of smoke. Its candles gleamed dully, but she saw that the room was empty. And saw a door across it.

She rushed in. The smoke choked her. She held her breath.

The door between the rooms was not fastened. She flung it open. Saw, in the yellow glare of the burning roof—saw Alan and me lying bound and helpless.

We called: "Lea!"

She came—saw the ropes binding us. She dashed back to get a knife lying on the table by the candles. We rolled so that she might cut our ropes. We were all gasping in the smoke. She helped us up, we could barely stand at first, but with her help we staggered out into the blessed cool air of the night.

The building was blazing all over its side and roof. To the south, by the city stockade, the Dutchmen were shouting, but none of them advanced. We ran back to Lea's waiting Indians. There seemed still a chance that Turber's ship might still be there. The Indians led up to the spot. But it was gone and the camp was deserted.

Then we crossed swiftly east to the tower. It was daylight when we left the braves, prostrate before the tower as it melted into a phantom and vanished.

We were safe—all but Nanette. Of what use to me, this safety? Nanette, to me of all the world most dear, was gone. And this time I had a premonition that she was lost to me forever.

CHAPTER XVI

Turber took Nanette back to his time ship. A dozen canoes had arrived now, the treasure was nearly all loaded aboard. The Indian legends here had told of it—these chests buried on the shore of the water, up the river a day's journey. How it got there no one can say. Left by some Mongol outlaw, perhaps—of that Eastern civilization which was here centuries before and which merged gradually into these savages the white man called Indians.

Turber had laid his plans. The renegade Dutchman—one Melyn from the Staten Island region—had been supplied with money by Turber. He had purchased trinkets—had bribed the Indians—organized and fitted out an expedition.

"And now we have it, little Nanette," said Turber. "You will love me for all this wealth and luxury and power that I will lavish upon you."

The ship was everywhere littered with the treasure. Piles of broken, moldy chests; scattered with jewels strewn in heaps in the various cabins. Jewels fashioned in strange devices of beaten gold and silver, anklets of gold, garlanded with insets of rubies and emeralds, a head of sapphires glowing like the tropic sea at night, gemmed bangles of a myriad designs, great metal vases, ornate with hydra-headed images—religious trappings of a heathen age, and fabulous Eastern riches.

The ship started almost as soon as Turber and Nanette came aboard. It flashed forward in Time, and flew slowly in Space. Not far in Space—south down the Hudson River, across the harbor until it poised over Staten Island.

Turber sat with Nanette in the control room. She heard Josefa's voice, but Turber ordered the woman away. Bluntnose was at the controls. How Josefa explained our escape Nanette never knew. Perhaps by blaming it upon the Indian—her word was as good as his. Turber with his treasure, and having recovered Nanette, was in too good a humor to bother with probing it.

Nanette knew that they were upon the last of the voyage now. Headed for the Great City of New York in the Time-world of 2445. Their permanent home.

"No more travelling, Nanette. We will conquer the world, you and I, and rule it together."

Nanette was frightened, but she would not let him see it. Alone now. Alan and I, she thought, were gone from her forever.

It was a brief trip. They stopped, just for a moment, in the year 1779. It was a fairly large settlement here now on Staten Island, and the ship selected a safe landing place, came down in a field near it.

A Colonial settlement, they called it, but it was in the hands of the enemy. Sir William Howe had landed in the Narrows two years before and now held all the island.

It was night again when the ship stopped.

Nanette sat in the control room and attentively listened to the new voices. All English now.

"Wolf Turber, we failed—"

"Yes?" His quiet voice was unruffled. "Did the sloop get in?"

"Last week. I have been here every night since—you come late, tonight of all nights! They're fighting over in the marshes—this traitorous Mercer and his men."

Turber interrupted: "About the sloop, Atwood! Who cares about Mercer?"

"Gad! You can brush me aside, but I've had a hellish time."

"All right, Tony, I believe you."

"It's well you should. I had thought if you did not come tonight, by tomorrow Mercer's troops might be here. And where would I be? Not here—that I promise you. As it is, Sir William does not think any too much of me. He called me

somewhat of an ugly name last week. I think I am insulted."

"Well, you didn't get the gold?"

"No. The sloop got in—ninety days from the Bermudas in weather of the vilest sort. And then the blockade—but it got through. I have Somerset's letter. Your money was spent—"

Turber laughed. "I fancy it was!"

"—spent in what I warrant must have been no less than a digging up of all the beach on Cooper's Island. Treasure there was none." He added: "I did what I could. I hope this is your last passing, egad, it had better be, and take me with you. They'll be sending me on a still longer journey if I stay around here."

They took him aboard. The ship hung over Staten Island and sped forward again in Time. Through the 1800's. The 1900's. And then, while the huge city grew under it, sped on five hundred years farther. It took only half an hour.

Turber said: "We are here." The ship had settled—a phantom settling down in a shadowy city. It rested on that same rise of ground on Staten Island which in 1962 held the Turber Hospital.

It flashed to a halt in 2445. Through the windows Nanette heard the tumultuous roar of the monstrous city. Turber led her from the ship.



CHAPTER XVII

Alan and I, in the tower with Lea and San, were simultaneously heading for the same Time-space to which Turber now took Nanette. We did not know that Turber stopped in 1779. It would have availed us nothing. But we did know his final destination. The knowledge was poor consolation. Turber was practically impregnable in that giant city. Old Powl had said it; we knew that Lea and San thought so. All our efforts had been to keep Turber from taking Nanette there. It was his final stronghold.

We made them understand that we would stop in the giant city. San would land us there at a time similar to Turber's arrival.

Alan said: "We'll go to the authorities, Ed. They will be intelligent, scientific people. They'll understand this tower—it won't be magic to them. We'll make them organize an expedition against Turber. Rescue Nanette—get her back safely."

My heart was heavy. It was the only rational plan we could make. But that giant city! What new conditions, with which we would have to cope! A new civilization, all strange to us.

Lea said: "Yes. That best." She indicated 2445 A.D. on the dial. "You and Alan there. San and I got to—"

She indicated the year 5000 A.D. Alan knew what she meant. She and San would make a hurried trip on to that Time when the city was in ruins, and would search in the ruins for that super-powerful weapon. They would get it and bring it back to us.

Lea added: "Tell them—not yield to Turber. Weapon coming—Lea and San bring it in tower."

We sped forward—a trip of much less than an hour. The Indian forests melted away. The City flowed up around the tower. Central Park was here. We saw the city flow over it. We saw huge streets about us. Then a roof over us, with our tower set in a monstrous metal street.

Lea shook our hands. "Goodbye, Alan—until we come with weapon."

The tower lurched to a halt. A surge of noises flooded in through the windows. The noise of the huge city. And there were shouts of human voices. And dazzling lights everywhere. Turber was here in this same city, now, with Nanette. We were to make our last desperate play against Turber here.

San flung the door open. Alan and I leaped from the tower steps. Behind us, the tower flashed into a phantom and was gone.

The city street was a roaring torrent of voices, human and electrical; a confusion of strange sounds and stranger sights. The street was solid metal. Traffic levels rose in tiers one above the other. Vehicles were passing, scurrying cars on wheels, a monorail hanging from a trellis, with dangling cars showing as a string of lights high overhead. And a great translucent spread of roof like glass above it all.

The empty street space showed a mangled vehicle which had evidently been too close when the tower materialized. Twisted, blackened metal, and there were three human bodies lying dead in the street.

"Stand still, Ed! Let them take us!"

I clung to Alan. A crowd of strangely garbed figures rushed at us. But they did not approach too close, a ring of them, milling about, shouting—but too fearful to seize us.

We stood confused. Out of a million new impressions, my mind grasped so few! Mechanisms everywhere, gleaming mirrors with moving images, traffic lights and signals; clanking, clattering mechanisms; movement everywhere.

I saw fifty feet up the tiers of sidewalks, a street of open-faced shops with merchandise on display. The narrow viaducts were a lacework of metal overhead. The city roof above them glowed with light—I think it was daytime.

Alan said: "There ought to be an official."

The milling crowd was mostly men. All garbed in sober colors—black and grays. Hatless, with close-clipped bullet

heads. Close-fitting trousers with legs like jointed stovepipes; short black jackets. Women with dark skirts like inverted funnels, hair close-clipped.

An official in white appeared. A roaring electrical megaphone on his chest magnified his voice. The crowd scattered obediently. He waded through it. He stood near us and roared at the congesting traffic. A halted swinging train above us, moved along. Signal lights flashed. The tangle of vehicles began struggling to sort itself out. Other officials—all in white uniforms—showed on the bridges, and in small rostrums on the different levels. A magnetic crane swung out into the air. It seized an offending vehicle—lifted it clear of the jam.

The officer gripped us. "Come with me."

English, readily understandable, yet wholly strange. I cannot set it down here. I cannot approximate its swift brevity—its suggestion of eliminated syllables; its close-clipped intonations. Compared with it, our own speech was ancient, flowing and flowery.

"Come—"

"We're friends," said Alan hastily. "Don't hurt us—take us to your government headquarters. You can do that, can't you?"

The fellow stared. Astonished, I think, at Alan's strangely antiquated English.

"They have already sent for you," he said. "Come."

He led us swiftly away. The crowd stared after us.

Into a small tunnel. A lifted car whirled us aloft. It passed endless floors—or streets, or tiers. People everywhere. The car stopped its vertical movement, it rolled sidewise upon a track. Our captor spoke into a mouth-piece on his chest. I heard the answering voice.

"Room 400—tier 8 Tappan Government House, Westchester, Section 6 N.W."

"Yes," he said. He repeated it to the operator of our car who sat at a switch.

The voice added: "Bring them."

"Coming now."

Our car whirled off, along a track; went over bridges of glaring, tumultuous streets; through vaulted passages of buildings where behind transparent panes I could see what seemed busy commercial offices; up a long incline until I fancied we were almost under the roof—

I heard once above the mingled commotion of sounds: "Turberites expect to buy city—" A broadcasting voice; and as we sped over a bridge, dangling now from a single overhead track, I saw in the blur of light far beneath us a giant oblong area of light, with moving letters. A news-bulletin. I read:

Four Hundred and Fifty Thousand Billions—Wolf Turber's price—payable in minted gold, silver, platinum and ancient jewels.

And then:

Council of Ten in Session. Turberites' Ultimatum expected soon.

We flashed into a black vacuum tube. It was a trip of perhaps ten minutes. We emerged into an area where the city was less congested, descended to a trestle near the ground. The roof was lower. In places it was gone. I saw the daylight—a gray overcast summer day. This was the morning of June 12, 2445 A.D.

Alan whispered: "This must be about Tarrytown. There's the river."

To the left we saw the Hudson. A solid ground level of metal buildings spread beneath us. Only the streets were roofed over here. Streets were laid out in orderly parallels. Our single car sped above them, flashing over switches.

I saw that there were no docks along the river. No sign of boats; occasional low covered bridges crossed over to the other shore which was solid with houses.

"Say, look behind us," Alan murmured.

A glare of light was back there. The roof seemed nearly a thousand feet up; tracks and viaducts and traffic levels came from it like a tangle of exposed veins and arteries spreading out over this wider northern area.

Our guard said: "Here."

The car stopped within a towering building near the river. We emerged into a lighted metal corridor. Guards passed us along it; we went through great swinging baize doors.

We stood in the presence of the government council.

I think most strange of all this age, was its rapidity. Its machine-made precision permeating every detail. Within half an hour, at this council of the Anglo-Saxon Republic, of which Great New York and Great London were twin capitals, we were understood and accepted; the part we might play in this crisis Turber was precipitating, was grasped by these leaders.

I recall now our amazement at the dispatch with which fundamentals were reached. The arrival of our tower had already been investigated; witnesses in some local court near the scene had been interrogated; the reports transmitted to scientific authorities—and the whole lay now before this council.

Turber had carefully guarded his ship in that portion of the city which he owned. It had never been seen by the governmental authorities. But its existence was suspected and understood as an explanation of the presence of Turber's rabble.

Within half an hour the main details of what we had to tell were drawn from us by swift questions. There were no bypaths. No astonishment; no theories. Half a dozen men of science arrived shortly after we were brought in. They listened; they stated the scientific laws—well known in this age—which made credible what we had to say.

It was a narrow room of metallic, vault-like aspect. Ten men sat around a table littered with documents, reports and summaries of the Turber affair, and the more recently compiled data on us. Mirrors and grids with moving images of distant scenes were on the walls; ovals of windows and a swinging door disclosed an adjacent room humming with the sounds of instruments; messengers passed in and out. There was a table in a corner with instruments and two intent operators.

The business concerning us was dispatched with a celerity that left us both confused. The interrogation of us was suddenly nearly over. The president of the Great New York Branch of Anglo-Saxonia demanded of Alan:

"You say your tower will return with a weapon for us to use against Turber?"

"Yes. That is, we hope so."

"What sort of a weapon?"

"We don't know. A projector—"

"Electronic, probably." He was obviously greatly interested.

I said: "But you must have such weapons here."

"No. Our world aerial power makes them inoperative. There was a class of weapons up to the years around 2000, called explosives. And then came the electronic weapons. We have none of them. They would not operate—and war itself is obsolete—"

Was it? I doubted that, with the menace of Turber here. The president seemed to read my thoughts. He said:

"We are business men. We know nothing of war." His grave face clouded with anxiety. He repeated as though to himself: "We know nothing of war."

I regarded Alan. Then I said: "We have come here to have you help us. And to help you. My friend's sister is held by Turber—"

An expedition against Turber to release Nanette. We urged it.

The president, said impatiently: "You know nothing of what you talk. That is utterly impossible of success."

Alan said: "We know nothing of your conditions—that's true. But we must release my sister. Our purpose is the same as yours—if we can kill Turber—his Empire, as you call it, would go to pieces with his death. That's obvious from what you say."

We listened while the council went on with its business. Gradually it was growing upon us how impregnable was Turber in this Time-world. This was only five hundred years in the future of our own world of 1962. And less than eight hundred years in the future of that little New Amsterdam! My mind went back to those forests with their roving Indians. This same Space which now was this giant city! Eight hundred years is not a long time in history.

What a stupendous change!

The Council was discussing the aerial power-vibrations broadcast over the world from the main power plant in Scotland. The city comptroller said: "The Turberites refused today to pay the rental fees." He gestured to the table before him. "Here is the report—a protest from the Great London office. The Turberites are pirating the power now. Stealing it—the Wolves!

"How can we stop them? We cannot, without war."

My mind clung to Nanette. Cut off from us. No chance to get to her—it would start the warfare, which of everything else I understood at once was what this Council feared. There were mirrors here—and hundreds more in the adjoining room—picturing present scenes all over the city, and over the world. But none from the Turber area—that was insulated against them.

How changed was this world from ours of 1962. Changed in every smallest detail. Our familiar nations were gone. White, Yellow and Black nations now, in a trinity of alliance. The White Nation was headed by Anglo-Saxonia.

It was a vast world of business unified by transportation. There were no ships, it seemed, on the seas, save perhaps locally in very small areas. No great railroads. The age of the air.

Power was universally distributed by aerial vibrations. It was broadcast by a central plant in Scotland. Transformers were at Niagara, the Iguazu in South America, and Victoria Falls in Africa. The power was tapped by airliners, by the city trains, by the factories which now were spread over every rural district; it operated all lights—all motors down to the smallest.

There was now spread before us, in terms of this super-modern world, the culmination of Turber's plans. There was a Turber Empire here now.

He had brought, with many trips of his ship, a constant stream of villains gathered from the Past. How many thousands of them, we never knew. And brought his treasure.

The city here knew him first as a wealthy man with a business organization, buying up small sections of the city. His wealth and his power grew, until now, ten years after his appearance in this Time-world, he was a figure gigantic. He and his followers—his organization—owned now all the southern area of the city. In ancient terms; Staten Island—New York Harbor—a portion of Brooklyn—and adjacent New Jersey.

Outside the city the Turberites owned and had colonized a strip of land some twenty miles wide by six hundred miles long. Bought with gold—like a gigantic railroad right-of-way. The strip ran from the New Jersey edge of the city southward through New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and into the Carolina Mountains. All ancient terms, these, of course.

An agricultural section, and factories, and mines. A wall of metal and masonry, huge as the old Great Wall of China, hemmed in this Turber Colony. Food and all the supplies necessary to life were produced by Turberites for their section of Great New York. They had organized their own air transportation.

And now, the Turberites were ready to show their true colors! They stopped paying for the use of the aerial power. That was just today—June 12, 2445. They had flung up insulation a week ago—against the government news mirrors. They demanded—the demand had come today—that the city sell itself for the sum of four hundred and fifty thousand billions of dollars. The government was to sell for this sum, incredibly too small; to pay the citizens, each for his proportionate property ownership, what would be a mere pittance, and order every one to leave the city. In one transaction, they were to abandon this world capital; disorganize its business: fling thirty million people into unemployment!

It was unthinkable. And it had given to the world a hint of the real menace of Turber. This was the beginning of his intended ruling of the world. By money power, and by force of arms, he meant to extend his despotism over all humanity.

We heard it all discussed, now at this Council meeting. And I saw these men, gigantic governmental Captains of Industry. Men of business, nothing more. Business men, trying to meet a crisis of war and handling it by business principles. An impossibility!

The president's thin face was haggard and harassed. His stiff circular coat was rumped; he passed a hand over his face and dropped his close-clipped gray head. An old man, utterly tired. But in a moment he looked up again. He spoke, more vehemently than I had heard any of these men speak before.

"We must learn what weapons the Turberites have. If he is to attack us—when? We have plenty of men—the city police army—"

"Armed how?" asked Alan.

"With the needle swords. And the steel slingshots—our men are very expert—and they have projectors of compressed air, and sleeping gas."

Primitive weapons, modernized! My heart sank.

"How many of the police are available?" I asked.

"We have some two hundred thousand here. And Great London will send us by liner all the police we need."

"Are your airliners armed?" Alan asked.

"No. How could they be? Except with short-range slings."

Another man said: "If Turber cuts off the incoming supply ships—if his ships are armed—our city here will starve in a day."

A commotion in the adjoining room interrupted us. A messenger came out.

"A communication from Turber!"

The president read the document.

"It has come!" He spoke with a strained hush to his voice. "He gives us but half an hour. An ultimatum! He says we vacillate like children all this morning, and give him no answer to his business proposal. Either we accept his purchase price—and our citizens must start leaving the city within thirty minutes—or he will begin war! We must tell him now. He gives us just sixty seconds to answer!"

Someone said huskily: "We shall have to yield."

The president looked at Alan. "That projector which your tower went to get—if we had it we could ask that the world-power be shut off. Then we could use it, against Turber."

No one answered him. He added:

"Do you think your tower will bring it?"

"Yes," said Alan.

Messages were flooding in from the other world governments. Demands for details. They passed ignored.

The president stood up, his slim figure wavered. "I think—I think gentlemen, we should not yield. If you are against defending ourselves—defending the world from these wolves stand up now and say so."

No one moved. He turned suddenly; his voice rang out:

"Tell the Wolves we are not afraid."

He stood listening for the answer. It came within a few seconds. Clattering messages from the southern—the Manhattan section of the city.

Turber's attack had started!

CHAPTER XVIII

History will record that the battle of Great New York began on the morning of June 12, 2445 A.D. For three days it raged. I can give but fragmentary pictures. It whirled Alan and me into a maelstrom. I recall the morning of June 13. A day of the battle was passed. Inconceivable events of horror! Inconceivable ramifications of gruesome tragedy!

I recall that that morning Alan and I sat before a mirror-grid in the Westchester section of this monstrous beehive city. The fighting was further south. We could see its ghastly details mirrored on a score of grids around us. We had been in it at times. And snatched food and sleep. But we were worn now to the verge of exhaustion. And worn with fear. The Turberites could not be stopped.

And Nanette? How could we dare hope that we would ever see Nanette again amid this torrent of killing?

The Hoboken area across the lower river had been the scene of bloody fighting all the afternoon of June 12, the evening, and through the night. The Manhattan-Hudson terraces and most of the network of Hudson bridges down near the lower end were held now by the Turberites. They had penetrated through all the corridors of the Hoboken area south of the power rooms. Factory rooms and offices were here, shops and storage warehouses of local food supplies. The Turberites now swarmed them. The terminus of the north-south traffic artery on the Manhattan side of the river tunnel was taken from us.

The city traffic system of internal railways was long since paralyzed. It added to the panic of the people who were caught in the city the morning before, when the fighting so abruptly started, and who had not yet been able to get away. A resident population of thirty millions now in this monstrous city! Ten million more as a daily average of visitors. They, too, were caught in the maelstrom of the panic. And another thirty million who commuted in to work.

Millions had escaped now. Every moment black streams of them came pouring out. But transportation was hourly becoming more difficult.

Inconceivable ramifications of tragedy! The mirrors before us pictured it in a myriad horrible details. My gaze caught one of them and clung, fascinated.

It was a vaulted corridor, with tiers of levels from the ground up to the thousand-foot roof. The loading platforms of the shuttles which normally whirled local travellers away, to the main departing stages of the Northbound Local Coast Flyers were on these levels; forty of them, one above the other, on each side of the corridor. The shuttle cars stood ready on their tracks; the escalators still were in movement.

A tremendous throng of people was struggling here, trying to get onto the shuttles which occasionally were departing. The Hudson River—nearly closed over here by the ground tracks, surface viaducts and the network of bridges to the Hoboken terraces—showed occasionally in patches of sullen, yellow-stained water.

The crowd milled and fought for place in the inadequate cars. Every level, every smallest bridge, was thronged. From a line of doorways and trans-corridors up near the roof a horde of advancing Turberites appeared—a mob of blood-stained villains with the bloodlust upon them. They came clambering and leaping through a hundred doors and widows; they spread down the inclines, the stairways, running over the spiderbridges. Within a moment they seemed everywhere.

I saw a low, unroofed kiosk upon the edge of a sidewalk level. Tables and chairs were there, as though this were a street cafe. It was black with men and women, thrust in there by the press of others outside. The furniture was overturned.

From twenty feet overhead a dozen figures of Turberites leaped a rail and plunged down. Men in torn and blood-soaked uniforms of red cloth, grotesque with epaulets and golden braid. Their swords flashed. The little cafe was in a moment strewn with the mutilated dead and dying. Some of the bodies went like plummets over the low rails. I could see the white flashes as they struck the sullen river.

There was a mirror giving a close detail in another section—a room in the honeycomb of cells that occupied an area of southeast Manhattan. The Turberites had reached there now in a drive for the great air-stage where the transcontinental liners were departing.

Our police forces still held the roof-tracks and all the arteries of official travel up there, and the subterranean arteries

were still ours all over Manhattan. But in the metal honeycomb of squalid living quarters which in my day was called the lower East Side the Turberites had forced us back.

There was, on my mirror, this chance close detail of a single room. A woman in it, thin and pallid and frail; wasted frame—a woman old and haggard at thirty, with wisps of yellow hair turning white. In metal bunks her brood of children were huddled. Cut off here in their home, lost and forgotten in the turmoil. The woman had barred her door—there were no windows; it seemed that perhaps her ventilator had ceased to operate; she huddled, gasping, with a baby against her breast.

The door burst inward. A savage who in a different age had stalked the forests of this same space stood expectantly upon the threshold. His painted face was grinning. Other faces behind him peered to watch. He bounded in; his tomahawk whirled. The woman mercifully went down at once; the children lay where he had thrown them in a gruesome little heap. He seized the baby, which still seemed alive. He held it aloft and gestured to his grinning, feathered companions. He tossed its white body toward the ceiling and flung the dripping tomahawk at the falling mark. The weapon cleaved the baby's head as it fell to the floor.

And there were other scenes, indescribable. Rooms of small factories. I saw one of them, where for this whole day a group of young girls had been trapped. The swinging viaduct leading from their doorway had fallen with the press of a fleeing mob; a girder had fallen, pinning their door so that they could not open it. They were trapped; and though the official safety emergency station in that area was still in our hands, it was too flooded with similar calls, and too disorganized to heed this one.

A room of young girls. And by some chance, when the Turberites advanced, a leering giant had peered through a narrow ventilator orifice and seen them. With his huge stone axe he hacked away at the ventilator. Others took his place when he was winded. They came through at last into the room—

A news-mirror beside us—one of the few circuits still in operation—flashed a message:

"Turber attacking the local ventilating power-house. To shut off our power—paralyze our ventilating system."

So, with that done, he could use his gas fumes! I had not heard of an attack at the ventilating power-house. The one mentioned was in Lower Manhattan—local to that area. It was far underground.

The subterranean city was a vast catacomb with a depth everywhere of several hundred feet. We still held our sections of it.

"Alan! What will Central Headquarters do about that? Has it been moved yet? Central Headquarters moved?"

No one near us seemed to know. Every city function was disorganized. The government archives were at this moment being transported with difficulty from the financial area into new quarters beyond the Spuyten Duyvil flood gates. From the subterranean treasury vaults the tremendous gold reserve was being moved northward. All our instrument-room headquarters were being shifted to the northern outskirts. It was almost a flight—a rout. But our massed fighters in all the important corridors were still holding firm.

The day wore on. We slept for a few hours, and awoke to find the situation immeasurably worse. San and Lea had not come. And now our tower Space was menaced! A mob of Turberites—there must have been ten thousand of them—had broken through our men in the tiers of Lower Manhattan. They swarmed there in all the vacant rooms and corridors and pedestrian viaducts. The lifting shafts were out of operation now; the moving sidewalks were stilled. They swarmed up the inclines, the emergency stairs and ladders.

The city forces were driven back, and the local machinery rooms, where the ventilating system of this area was controlled, fell to the Turberites. They had been after it all day. They smashed it. The air currents were stilled.

It was as though all this vital section of the city structure had ceased to breathe. The foul air pouring into the chemical vats was not renewed; it surged in for a time and burst the coils. The pumps used up their reserve pressure and stopped. The emergency systems operated for another hour, then they too went dead.

The first Turberites attacking here were armed with pikes and swords—side-arms of ancient fashion. Sabres, the cutlass, broad-swords, muskets, useless to fire, but used as bludgeons, or fitted with a bayonet, spears and lances of every type.

Lurid cutthroats they were, slashing their way in a bloody torrent of hand-to-hand fighting.

Our police held them at occasional points of vantage. There were rooms in which the police entrenched themselves; there were cannons set up from which great balls of steel were hurled by compressed air and huge coiled springs.

But these Turberites fought with a recklessness that the police of this modern business era could not equal. They slashed and plunged and flung themselves to wage always a combat at close quarters.

A myriad hand-to-hand encounters. Needle blades and polished clubs of the city police. Lengths of steel wire with small metal balls at the ends; the police were expert at throwing them to lasso the legs of a running criminal. Small knives, tipped with harmless anesthetic, to be thrown like a dart. Or bombs of sleeping gas which in days of peace could be flung in a well ventilated street at an escaping criminal—but could not be used here.

Almost everywhere the city forces were worsted. But it took time. It was not an utter rout. A hundred thousand personal combats. Inconceivable sanguinary warfare this! All indoors!

When the local ventilating system was broken, Turber must have known it at once. Within an hour the type of fighting in this section was wholly changed. The Turberites had fought their way northward up Broadway with the city forces scattering east and west as they advanced. The attackers permeated every passage and tunnel and room. Thousands of them must have wandered aimlessly, lost. Wandering—killing and plundering as they went. The civilians were nearly all out of this area now.

A wedge of the Turberites reached what in my day was Columbus Circle. There seemed leaders among them to direct what they were after. They worked their way northward, and then shifted to the east—toward the corridor-street where our tower space was located.

The danger was recognized by the high command. Police troops were withdrawn from the Hoboken section, where similar scenes were transpiring south of the main city power station, and troops were brought from other sections. Our lines on the roof over the harbor were weakened—but there seemed little activity up there.

The strengthened police squads fought their way into mid-Broadway. The upflung wedge of Turberites was cut off. Inhuman with their heedlessness, their reckless thirst for blood; but here for the first time we saw them falter. Cut off from possible retreat, a panic swept them. A thousand or more of them tried to get back. The city troops drove them out of the Broadway corridor and hunted them down as they tried to escape into the honeycomb of the city. We gained ground here for a time. But new mobs of the enemy came pouring northward.

All this within an hour or two. The ventilating system of Mid-Manhattan was failing. Turber knew it—and presently the whole character of the fighting there changed. The Turber mobs began withdrawing from this newly captured area. The air was turning fetid, but the police pursued the retreating Turberites as best they could.

The Manhattan exits of the vehicular tunnels under the harbor network of islands were all held by Turber now. From them a new horde of his fighters began pouring. Strange figures in black hoods with goggling mouth tubes. They came prowling in the north-south corridors. They worked their way north. The fetid air did not seem to impede them. They held strange round objects in their hands. They threw the objects, which shattered and spread heavy chlorine gas. And mustard gas.

The corridors and rooms choked up—with fumes and the fallen bodies of our police. The strange Turberite figures prowled like ghouls among them.

Strange familiar warfare! Alan and I recognized it. These grenade-like missiles—these gas bombs—these figures with gas masks—

The First World War flashed to our memory.

The air throughout the levels of Park-Circle 90 was maintained fairly clear. The city troops made a stand there, in a great amphitheatre of local tracks where many corridors converged. In my day it was called the Grand Central region.

The Turberites had stormed the eastern warehouse depots of what was once Long Island City. Hordes of them began spreading west. It was part of this drive towards our tower space.

A message now came:

"Turberites making drive in Van Cortlandt tubes toward our main dynamos."

Had they got up that far? It seemed incredible. An attack in the subterranean northern city towards the main lighting plant! If successful it would plunge us into darkness. And these Turberites had obsolete flash lights from my own age, no doubt, with which our forces were not equipped.

I saw upon the mirrors later a few scenes of this attack. The vast buried bowels of the city. The upright girders drilled and set deep into the rocks, the deep-set foundations of the pneumatic lifts, the gigantic sewerage system, the underground traffic tubes, the storage vats of chemicals. Narrow, gloomy tunnels of streets, vertical ladders, pneumatic tubes for freight transfer strung everywhere like capillaries in a section of flesh laid bare.

The Turberites came prowling, and, finding the ventilation still working, brought hordes of their fellows.

I saw in the subterranean city, in a dark open area of tracks on a viaduct beneath the Hudson River, where a hundred or two of the city troops were making a stand. In my day, this was about Dyckman Street.

The city forces had set up a battery of air-cannons on a metal terrace; the missiles rained down, but as though the terrace were some ancient rampart, the Turberites stormed it. Gas bombs were thrown by both sides, but the ventilation cleared the fumes away quickly. The terrace, with its northward underground corridor towards the light plant, was stormed and taken, after a siege of half an hour. A rain of missiles—nondescript chunks of metal thrown by hand, spears and javelins and darts—a cloud of poisoned arrows from a band of Indians posted at a distance, and arrows flaming with fire. Scaling ladders, such as firemen of my day might have used, came up from below and swarmed with men carrying dirks in their teeth as they climbed.

The terrace was finally carried. The Turberites ran northward to where at some other point the police were making a stand. Or climbed up the spirals into the city overhead. It was difficult to keep track of them. Groups appeared suddenly in many sections well within our safely held areas. They had to be hunted down and killed.

Of what use to mention my own and Alan's futile parts? There was a time, near the evening of this second day, when for hours I stood only a few hundred feet south of our tower space—stood at one of the top levels, where I had been told to guard an isolated transverse corridor. Occasional Turberites, lost from their fellows, wandered through. My part to stand in ambush and dispatch them with a rapier, as they appeared. Gruesome business! Like a sharp-shooter of our Civil War posted in the bushes.

Or again, for a time I fed round steel bullets to an air-cannon where a battery of ours was entrenched on a bridge. A horde of savages with flying arrows and tomahawks assaulted us there, from the network of overhead tracks along which they had climbed.

There were times when Alan was sent off on other duties, and I watched at our tower space and prayed for the tower to come. Once Alan was so long gone that I feared he might not return; and then he joined me, bleeding, torn from combat.

I have hardly mentioned the panics that swept the civilian population which was caught in the city. The panics were worst the first day. Millions everywhere trying to get away into the north rural sections. The panics killed far more, that day, than did the fighting. For a time the authorities tried to cope with them. The traffic squads were on duty. The moving sidewalks, elevators—escalators—the trams and monorails—were moving. But it was soon all paralyzed. Most of the main vehicular arteries were soon in a tangle. Abandoned cars. Accidents everywhere.

A wandering, milling jam of people, mad with panic, their screams rang throughout all the rooms and every smallest corridor of the monstrous beehive—a pandemonium of horror. Soon there were dead everywhere. Millions died—but millions got away. Millions wandering on in a frenzy until they got northward to the open air.

A million must have walked through the tubes. They were always flooded with people, the East and West Side bridges were black with fighting mobs. A million climbed on foot up the Hoboken terrace area and wandered in the city sections there. And other millions fought their way to the north roof and embarked on the departing air liners.

The business of the city had ceased within an hour that first morning when the battle began. Inconceivable industrial details all were abruptly at a standstill. Food gave out. The Turberites captured many of the city's food depots. The

incoming freight liners found no one to receive them. No further orders were issued. They soon stopped coming.

Gigantic business ramifications of Great New York. When they ceased, within a day disorganization spread over the world like waves in a pond. Confusion of industry everywhere. Everything to its smallest detail was interwoven with Great New York. The world was in confusion. The gigantic world-business machine of perfection was well oiled in its every smooth-running part, but the paralyzation of Great New York threw it all into disorder.

The world governments watched with amazement this sudden tragedy. Food was brought by liners from Great London. There was one arriving at the Tappan Terminal nearly every hour. Food, and fighting men, and such weapons as this era provided.

I saw the mirrored scene as the sleek silver body of one of these liners came in sight over the Long Island coast. The air over the city roof had been occasionally invaded by marauding Turber ships. They had dropped missiles, but with little damage. But they had frightened off the food freighters and greatly impeded the local passenger ships which—the first and second days of the battle—stood bravely trying to transport the fleeing millions.

The transatlantic liner came like a giant silver flying-fish with glistening outspread wings. Alan and I watched it on the mirror as its image grew. This was at sunset of the battle's second day. The sky in the mirrored scene was red and gold. Great fleecy clouds lined with the vivid colors, with a background of deepening purple. I had almost forgotten that there was a sky! The liner came speeding. But from the south a Turber ship loomed up—a narrow thing of black, a ship, fleet and darkly piratical of aspect. Like a wasp it came. Catapulted missiles preceded it, but they fell upon the transport liner comparatively harmlessly.

The Turber ship circled, but the transport came steadily on. We could see its decks thronged with troops. It had been hastily armed in Great London. Its cannon answered the Turber fire. But presently it came over the city roof, and ceased its fire that the balls might not fall and do damage. It slowed into a great lazy circle, preparing to land on the Tappan stage.

The Turber pirate ship followed it. We gasped. The Turber ship plunged for the liner; it kept on coming. They collided! Alan exclaimed: "Look at this other mirror."

A telescopic image of the scene, greatly magnified, showed on another mirror. We saw the decks of the Turber ship. No one was there! Its control room held mechanisms only! There was no living soul on this Turber ship!

A vessel, like the crude steering devices of our own time, automatically controlled! Within some instrument room in the Turber section of the city the helmsman sat. We had no such ships. There was no need for such mechanism in this age. It had been lost and forgotten now with the passing centuries. But Turber had located it and brought it here—adapted it to this world-power with which the ether was flooded and which all ships used.

We saw the collision. The great white liner turned over. The two ships, locked together with broken girders, wavered and fell. We turned away as the mirrors showed us close views of the strewn human forms on the roof-top.

That was the first of the Turber suicide ships. He had others. One more was used when the next liner appeared. After that Great London ordered the others back. We were cut off from the world.

That night of June 13, when the battle had been raging some thirty-eight hours, found Alan and I quartered for needed sleep in a building of northern Westchester. Exhausted beyond all ability to talk or even to think, we slept.

Late in the evening we awoke. The tower still had not come. The battle raged everywhere with undiminished fury. The Turberites now had more than doubled their original area. The Hoboken power-house still held out; but in all the rest of the Jersey section the enemy was in full possession. Our forces at the power-house were surrounded, they could not hold it much longer.

The harbor islands were all Turber's now. And the Brooklyn and Queens sections. Lower Manhattan, without local lights, with its ventilation gone, was a tomb of black corridors and rooms strewn with the dead, while Turberites with gas masks and flash lights prowled among them.

Broadway, and all to its west toward the Hudson River, was taken, nearly up to the Van Cortlandt region. But we still held the mid-section, which once had been Central Park; and Harlem, with widening lines into the Bronx. Still held the

vital space of the tower.

But it could not be held much longer!



CHAPTER XIX

Alan and I sat, that late evening of the battle's second day, upon our bed where we had just been sleeping. The news tapes and mirrors gave us the details of what had happened while we slept. Turber was winning. There could be no doubt of that.

The sleep had refreshed us; and suddenly, as I met Alan's eyes, I realized that his thoughts were the same as mine. There must be something we could do to try and rescue Nanette. We were no longer total strangers here.

We knew the city now; and by personal contact, or by reputation, we were known to most of the commanders of the city forces.

"That fellow Van Dyne," said Alan, "the Marshal of the West Manhattan area, likes us. I was thinking—"

I interrupted: "Get him to organize a small squad. It could be done without general orders. Make a secret raid into the Turber section—try to get to the ship—"

Make a desperate play—no matter how desperate! We were all desperate. The situation was almost as bad as it could be.

Alan shook his head. "I think the more men we took, the less chance of success. There's no chance, Ed, to fight our way into the Turber city. We'll have to try to get there by our wits—just you and I. I was thinking—"

He had a plan. We discussed it; elaborated it. We called on the audiphone here by our bed for Van Dyne. He was available. Luck was with us. He was where we wanted him to be, on the roof, on patrol duty.

The least of the fighting so far had been on the city roof. The Turberites had made sorties, but often had abandoned the region they took. Van Dyne told us now:

The Hoboken roof section was mainly in Turber hands. And Brooklyn. But this central Manhattan section and all north of it we held.

Van Dyne was on the roof, over mid-lower Manhattan.

"We want to come up and see you," said Alan.

"Where are you?"

Alan told him our location in northern Westchester. "Can you order us transportation?"

"Yes," he said. "But it's roundabout. Only a few official lines running."

"I know," said Alan. "Order us a guide to get us up to you. Hurry it, please."

A guide appeared in our room in a moment. He led us out to a small rail-car. It whirled us south. Then by lift to the roof. An official transport car on a narrow-gauge rooftrack was operating with emergency battery. It took us south, over the roof-top.

The roof spread like a great rolling expanse of rumpled canvas. Dark everywhere, with a few dotted lights. It never was level for very far. It rose in terraces, up and down, heaped up in peaks to cover huge, looming structures beneath. A roof, built haphazard, piecemeal, through many centuries. It rose to the right, over Hoboken, and ahead of us, over mid-Manhattan, it loomed in great terraced steps.

The open sky was over us. It seemed so strange to be out in the open air! A black night, with heavy, sullen clouds.

The roof surface was a dark metal labyrinth. Narrow metal roadways crossing it; viaducts, sometimes on stilts to strike a more level path; inclines up the terraces; footpaths and ladders. The air landing stages—all now abandoned—were up here.

There were low metal towers at intervals, observation and instrument towers, occasional low metal buildings—the meteorological station, observatories, metal posts were set at points of vantage holding the image finders for the city

mirrors; and there were occasional official kiosks covering the entrances downward to the city. And an intricate system of drainage sluiceways, with heat projectors to melt the winter snows.

A maze of metal structure, this roof-top. It was all official—the public always was barred up here. Its activity was paralyzed now. The buildings were abandoned. The lights were nearly all out. It lay dark and mysterious, with only the glow of the city showing in occasional irregular patches where the roof structure was translucent.

Our car was frequently challenged as we passed prowling patrols of the city police. Then we came to Van Dyne.

A friendly fellow. Alan, in confidence, told him our plan, and he passed us. His post here was the end of our territory. Beyond it the roof was abandoned—a sort of No Man's Land, where figures prowled; but for hours now there had been no fighting.

"Good luck," Van Dyne said.

We slipped past and ran south. We followed a narrow viaduct which bent to the right to avoid the higher terraces. The roof surface was some six feet beneath it, with occasional steps leading down. It was all solid black.

We were armed with the needlelike swords; and each of us carried a small dagger. It had been our original plan to have Van Dyne secure for us two uniforms of the Turberites. There were many bodies in the city in our territory.

But it was not necessary. Van Dyne told us promptly. The roof up here had been the scene of many bloody skirmishes. We could pick for ourselves.

We went south perhaps a mile. Alert, but we encountered nothing alive. Occasionally upon the roof we saw a heap of dead. Our little viaduct in one place was blocked with bodies. Turber's rabble was always garbed in the costumes of its native Time-worlds. It seemed a conceit of his. We lifted the dead bodies here. Grisly business! We selected two of about our size. They wore the red-coated uniforms of the British army of the Revolutionary War. In the darkness on the trestle-like viaduct we changed clothes. And then we found two dark cloaks. Threw them over our heads. In the darkness we might thus pass unnoticed. But if challenged we hoped we might be thought Turberites. Our native language—with uniforms like this—would be English, which is why we selected them. We discarded our police needle-swords and carried only the daggers.

Again we started south. The roof was at a low altitude here over the Hudson River section. We passed down to where the fence of the original Turberite area ranged in an irregular line east and west across the roof.

"Think we can get through it, Ed?"

"Van Dyne said the gates were more or less abandoned—some were smashed by the fighting up here."

"Yes. But we'll be challenged."

We had expected constantly to be challenged. The metal fence loomed close before us. It seemed thirty or forty feet high. There was a gateway near by.

"Over there," whispered Alan.

We were down on the roof-structure itself now, clambering forward over its sluiceways.

"Ed!" He gripped me. In the air over us the Turber Time-ship came sailing! It was solid—not travelling in Time—merely sailing here in Space. Two or three hundred feet above us, moving slowly north!

We stared with sinking hearts. This was so wholly unexpected. The ship seemed descending, as though it might land on the roof. A moment; and then it flashed, faded into phantom. There was an instant when I thought it had gone through the roof. The wraith of it vanished.

We stood stricken. Was Turber taking Nanette into some other Time-world? Abandoning his enterprise here? It did not seem likely when he was winning.

Or was the ship going into Time to try to find our tower? Had Turber some inkling that Lea was bringing us a super-weapon? Was he sending his ship to try and prevent that? If so, were he and Nanette in the ship? We had no way of

knowing.

"I think we should go on," Alan whispered at last. "Nanette may be in the city. If they'll accept us as Turberites—if we can only get to her—"

We got through the gateway. A guard was there. He chanced to speak English. We flung back our cloaks.

"Special business for Dr. Turber. Good news!"

There seemed only one fellow here. Then off to one side we saw a dozen or more, seated on the roof in a glow of light, lolling about, smoking.

The Turber roof was dim with dotted lights. But it was all in operation. Groups of soldiers at intervals; occasionally a transport car passing along on its narrow rails.

The fellow at the gate had waved vaguely toward this viaduct we now were traversing. We had followed his gesture. Our idea was to locate some Turber official whom we might fool—or force—into giving us information about Nanette.

A low metal building showed ahead of us. It was small; it seemed perhaps of only one room. An isolated dark spread of roof was around it. This viaduct we were on led to it. The little house had open windows, low to the floor, and there was a glow of light within.

I whispered: "Some official may be on duty there. If we can rush him—make him tell us—"

A kiosk leading down into the city showed a hundred feet or so beyond the little building.

We left the viaduct. We crept forward over the dark open roof. We came to one of the open windows of the building. There must have been at that instant a dark figure lurking near us on the roof. Watching us. But we did not see it.

The window stood with its sill at our knees. We dropped low, peered in.

A single metal room with a glow of light. A metal table-block held a strange instrument of tubes and coils. Strange to me but not to Alan. It was a Time-vision instrument! Its screen stood facing us; upon it was an image of our tower, a phantom speeding tower!

A man sat with his back to us, hunched over the instrument. It was Turber! He was alone in the room. Alan's lips went to my ear:

"I'll go first"

The Time-vision was humming. It covered the slight noise we made. We got through the window, stalked noiselessly.

With a leap we seized Turber. He seemed unarmed, he did not struggle or cry out. He was startled, but he sat back with almost instantly recovered poise.

"Well! You here?"

We stood over him. Alan gripped him. There was a moment when I thought that Alan might plunge the dagger into him and have it over.

"Alan—easy!"

Alan shook him. He did not resist. Alan gritted: "God, I ought to kill you! Where is Nanette?"

"Nanette? Nanette?"

He began to stall. It was too much for me.

I cuffed him in the face with the flat of my hand. He winced and went livid white; his eyes bored into me. But he held firm.

He said: "Why—Nanette? Take your hands off me, young fellow!"

Alan eased up. He motioned me off. "We want Nanette, understand? We're desperate, Turber. If you balk I'll stab you now and have done. Understand?"

He said: "Yes." He managed a wry smile. "If I raise my voice I can bring a dozen of my men here in a minute."

"But we'll kill you first," said Alan.

He could not doubt it. He said: "All right—then let's be quiet. I'm no more anxious to die than you are." His poise was coming back. "What do you want?"

"Nanette," I said. "Where is she? The truth, damn you!"

I felt he was going to say in the ship.

Instead he said: "Down in the city, not far from here."

There was a local audiphone hanging on a hook near him. Alan said: "Order her up. Be quick! Give the order and have one man only bring her up."

He moved his hand to take down the receiver. He stopped. He said: "You see, I've told you the truth. I could just as easily have said she was in my ship. Did you see my ship passing?"

"Yes," said Alan.

"I've sent it after your tower. With Bluntnose and Jonas." The Time-vision instrument was still operating; he gestured to the screen, which still showed our speeding phantom tower. The dials here were illegible to us. Turber added:

"Where has your tower been? I just picked up this image. Is your tower coming here?"

I realized he was again stalling. I said: "You take down that receiver—"

He took it down. He said: "Shall I open the circuit?"

"Yes," commanded Alan. "And speak quietly—if you say a wrong word I'll run this dagger in your throat."

This clever scoundrel! We realized afterwards that he had drawn our attention to the screen and thus had turned our backs to the door of the room which he could see out of the tail of his eyes. As we bent alert while he reached for the audiphone a figure crept up behind us; launched full upon us.

We were taken wholly by surprise—knocked against the table. The woman, Josefa! She had doubtless followed Turber to the roof, jealous of his every movement. He had seen her behind us in the doorway. She leaped upon us. Turber heaved upward. Alan's dagger grazed his arm.

Turber shouted. He struck with his fist at me and flung himself backward. The woman managed to cling to us both, heedless of our knives. She clung; kicked, bit and tore at us. It took a moment for us to shake her off. But in that moment Turber was near a window. He flung a heavy metal chair at us, and turned and leaped like a misshapen cat through the window. His shouts sounded outside, as he ran, giving the alarm.

We would be trapped here in another moment.

"Alan, come on! Get out of here!"

I was free of the woman. I tore her from Alan. She panted: "You let him alone! You let him alone!"

We turned and ran. Leaped into the darkness of the roof, where a turmoil of the alarm was beginning.

How we ever got back I do not know. Hunted, as two rats would have been hunted in that metal labyrinth by a pack of wolves. But we got through safely; found a broken section of the division fence. Ran northward.

The pursuit behind us presently died away. Then we came upon a city police patrol. They saw our red uniforms and very nearly killed us before we could speak. But we convinced them of our identity.

One said: "The tower came!"

It galvanized us. "The tower?"

"Came, but did not stop. Just a phantom."

What could that mean? Lea and San, passing, but not stopping!

We got transportation down into the city, avoiding the areas where the fighting was raging. An official car took us by a devious route to the tower space. The street here was heavily guarded by the city forces, but the Turberites were fighting close to the south. Only a few blocks away we could hear the sounds of the battle.

The tower had come and passed. Its marked space in the street was empty. Our guards surrounded it. We stood among them.

A phantom showed over our heads! A moving phantom of the Turber ship! It darted across the tower space and vanished.

Now we understood! San and Lea were trying to land. Bluntnose, with the ship, was endeavoring to prevent them. He had followed the tower, through Time. Two speeding phantoms! The ship could wing its way directly through the tower without contact—when they were speeding phantoms! But not if they stopped.

The tower showed again. A brief wraith of it. Just an instant; but in that instant the ship also materialized, circling, darting. Then they both were gone.

Would San dare stop? Would he risk that Bluntnose might wreck the ship and kill himself, just to wreck the tower?

Another moment. Again the phantoms showed. The ship was slightly above the tower, and to one side.

The tower did not pass. In a breath it materialized into solidity before us. My heart seemed to stop. San had dared!

The ship seemed half to turn. And then the wraith of it vanished!

Bluntnose had not dared risk it.

From the tower came Lea and San, dragging apparatus. The projector! They had been successful.

The guards in the street were shouting triumphantly. A turmoil was around us. I stood at the foot of the tower steps; I saw Lea fling herself impulsively into Alan's waiting arms.

The tower, with San, sped safely away.

But my heart was cold. Whatever the outcome here a fairyland of happiness for me was gone—the lost what-might-have-been for Nanette, and me.

CHAPTER XX

"Why, Ed! With this thing we can rock the city—bring death—"

"Death! Yes. But Alan—"

"Death to them all! To Turber! If we can catch his ship before he can get to it we can kill them all!"

"But, Alan!" I was trying to say. "What about Nanette?"

He echoed: "Nanette?" Here was a tangible death for her in this weapon Lea had brought. Death for Nanette as well as destruction of the Turberites which was being planned here now. We would see it; we, indeed, might very well be chosen to accomplish it. And we stared wordlessly at each other and knew that it was inevitable.

It was about 1 A.M. of the night of June 13-14, 2445 A.D. Momentous night of history! Culmination of the Battle of Great New York! We sat, Alan and I, in a corner of one of the rooms of the Hudson Machine Shops, watching Lea with the corps of engineers who had been summoned to assemble her weapon.

These electronic experts recognized it; not in its working form, but in its principle. An electronic beam, with the harmless aspect of a spreading searchlight ray. Like most scientific devices of importance, its practical working mechanism was complicated, with a basic scientific principle of the utmost simplicity. It carried—this harmless-looking beam of light—vibrations both etheric and atmospheric. They were communicable—as are all vibrations.

Harmless of aspect, this bronzed projector! I would have said, with a casual glance, that it was a searchlight of my own time. I have seen many like it. But it had a focusing grid of wires across its face instead of a lens. Wires of metal no one could name. A focusing and firing mechanism; and insulated wires leading to a cylindrical tank, long as a man—the battery, in which was stored some unnameable electronic force.

Alan and I examined the apparatus as Lea showed how it should be assembled. Within the projector was an elaborate mechanism of tiny discs and thin metallic tongues, which in operation would whirl and vibrate. There were condensing coils and bulbs of vacuum with laceworks of filament—lights to cast the beam. I saw that the light would pass through an intricate magnifying system of prisms—condensed finally to a focal point where a whirling mirror-disc cast it loose through the projecting grid of wires.

"If that touches a building," Alan exclaimed, "this building, for instance—why, these walls in a moment would be trembling—quivering, shaking until presently they would fall—"

The principle was known even in my own age. This cold, white light, with its inconceivably rapid vibrations; would in a moment set up similar vibrations in anything it rested upon! Nothing of material substance could for more than a moment hold its form under the lash of such inconceivable trembling! With this beam we could rock the city—smash through its roof—bring death to every living thing upon which we could get the light!

The whole apparatus was carefully insulated. It would not operate here because of the world aerial power. The insulation was to protect it now.

It could not be operated with this insulation if we removed it, our power would instantly destroy the filaments and coils, and in a moment or two detonate the battery. The world power would have to be shut off during its operation.

There had been a consultation of the world governments fifteen minutes ago when in code our city government had asked that the world power be discontinued. We now had the decision. At the Trinitight Hour—three hours after Midnight this night—the huge Scotland plant would go dead for sixty minutes. No more time than that could be given us. Most of the air liners—and all the civic lighting and ventilating and traffic systems—had emergency batteries for sixty minutes. Beyond that limit the whole world would go into disaster.

Sixty minutes, beginning two hours from now! It gave plenty of time to assemble the apparatus and mount it in a swift ship. Lea was to be beside the man who would be chosen to control the projector.

Now Alan and I sat whispering, for upon us had come the realization that this would mean Nanette's death.

I said: "But Nanette—this is death for Nanette!"

"Edward!"

An audible answer! A microscopic aerial voice here in the workshop room-corner! Alan heard it also. And it came again:

"Edward!"

Hushed accents! Imperative! Vehement! Nanette's voice!

"Edward, don't move! Don't look surprised! I know you're there—you and Alan—I've heard you talking."

Tiny voice, materializing from the air! Alan murmured something, but I gripped him. We sat tense.

It came again.

"Don't show surprise! It may be that they have an image of you at some other receiver! I'm alone here now—just for this moment."

I said softly: "Shall I speak? This is Ed—can you hear me?"

"Yes, Edward. They've been listening—Jonas was in here, at an aerial, eavesdropping on you. They've lifted their barrage for this one finder. Located you—they've been listening to the men there with you—Lea's weapon."

Aerial eavesdropping! Turber was aware of our plans!

Nanette's voice added:

"Turber is off somewhere, but Jonas thinks he can locate him. I wanted you to know it. I think Turber may take us in the ship and go."

I exclaimed: "Yes, Nanette! Go!"

Alan tried to speak, but I silenced him. This at least was mine! These few last minutes—Nanette's and mine!

"Go, Nanette!"

"Jonas wants us to go now, to escape without Turber! But he does not know how to operate the ship. The Indian does—Bluntnose the Indian—but he won't go now—he wants to wait for Turber. Edward, I must talk quickly—I heard what you and Alan were saying. About me—death—but I know that, of course.

"Tell Lea I said goodbye. I can hear Jonas coming back now! You must have your men stop talking there—or whisper very carefully! And—can Alan hear me? Goodbye, Alan, dear."

He gulped: "Oh, Nanette, little sister—"

"And—goodbye, Edward—"

I stammered: "Goodbye." I choked over it.

"Goodbye—Edward, I—always loved you—very much—ah, so much! And I want you to know it."

I thought: "Dear God!" I stammered: "Nanette, darling—I've always loved you—"

"He's here! Don't speak!"

I gasped hurriedly: "Get away in the ship, Nanette!"

"Edward! No more! Goodbye, dear."

We waited, but there was only silence.

CHAPTER XXI

"Alan, will you be all right? Can you do it?"

"Yes, I must." He set his jaw grimly. "I must."

I touched his hand, where it rested on the projector; his fingers were cold, but steady.

This forward gondola-cabin, hanging almost under the nose of the swift, small ship, was silent, with only a low thrum audible from the rear motors.

From where we sat, with Lea beside us at the projector, the wide transparent windows gave us an unobstructed view forward and down. We were rising now from the Hudson air-stage—a brief flight, and we would be over the city roof. Sixty minutes! The world-power was off now; in sixty minutes it would flash on again and our weapon would be useless. Sixty minutes! A very little time! Yet, it can be an eternity.

The officials at the Hudson shops had said to Alan and me: "You know this girl—and she knows the weapon—its operation. The Council ordered that one of you operate it, with the girl beside you."

I looked at Alan. My heart was pounding. I wanted Alan to speak, and he did not. It seemed that he never would. Then he said: "I'm older—I'll do it, if—if they think I should."

No executioner at his switch in the little room behind an electric chair of our day could ever have shuddered as Alan now must be shuddering. But he held himself firm when once we were in the ship's cabin. The controls, with a white-faced young pilot seated at them, were near us. There were several other men in the cabin, with observation instruments; and at a bank of mirrors, receivers and audiphones three operators held us in close communication with the city authorities. Our commander moved quietly about; seldom speaking; but intent upon every detail.

Sixty minutes! Five of them were already gone when—with the world-power dead at the Trinight Hour—we hastily stripped our mechanism of its insulation and rose from the landing-stage. The gigantic city loomed into the sky before us. The night was still overcast.

We climbed steeply, then levelled, and presently we were over the city roof, a thousand feet over it perhaps; and beneath us it spread in the darkness like a great rolling expanse of soiled canvas.

We had not heard Nanette's voice again. Precautions were taken against the eavesdropping. What Turber personally may have learned of our plans we never knew. Nothing probably, until near the end. He had no warning that the world-power was to be shut off. The battle everywhere in the city was undiminished in its fury. It was raging down there now. Our mirrors, here in the cabin, occasionally shadowed it, but there was no other sign.

Turber had carried our tower Space. San was gone with the tower—with orders from Lea to swing slowly past at intervals. The Turberites, finding the tower was gone, left a guard there and swept on—fighting our troops northward. The Hoboken power-house still was surrounded, but holding out. The attack there seemed momentarily to have slackened as Turber concentrated on his northern drive.

There was still no fighting on the roof. Our lines had withdrawn northward as the Turber mobs swept north through the city. Most of this roof area seemed deserted. We could make out occasionally the dark forms of the Turberites patrolling this captured area. We crossed over the Turber wall. The roof from this height was very little different of aspect.

Our projector had not yet flashed. All our lights were carefully hooded. But we thought that by now some Turber ship would have come up to assail us. There had been occasional Turber patrol ships here all day, but none were here now.

I thought that the harbor with its lacework of causeways and islands must be beneath this area of the roof. It was difficult for me to estimate. Far off, ahead to the right where the roof ended beyond Staten Island, I could see the banks of lights that marked the great Turber wall enclosing this end of his rural territory. There was no ship in sight.

I murmured: "When do we turn it on, Alan?"

"Soon. When we get near where Turber houses the ship."

"Yes, but where is that? I don't know where we are."

We had no idea where the ship was either; but our orders were to attack its usual housing place.

The pilot heard me. He said: "Approximately approaching Staten. We have little information of the Turber city. But his ship is kept some two or three miles farther ahead."

Our beam had an effective range of about fifteen hundred feet. From this present altitude we would have to direct it almost vertically downward.

Lea murmured something. We followed her gesture through the observation pane into the darkness of the sky. Our pilot saw it at the same instant—a black shape looming—a Turber patrol ship rushing at us! With all my air experience, my senses reeled as we dropped. I gripped my bench. We made a forward loop—nose down.

I heard the rush of air as the Turber ship almost brushed us. We righted. The pilot muttered an oath. Somebody said: "Where did it go?" There was a flurry in the cabin.

We could see nothing in the darkness. We flew onward. Then we made out the Turber ship, not following us, but flying north. As I turned to gaze behind us to the north on the roof top fighting was beginning. Torchlight gleamed—waving, moving lights there.

We caught some close details on our mirrors. Our troops had come up and were assailing the Turber patrol lines. The Turberites were falling back; but beneath us, in a moment, lines of re-enforcements appeared. There were tracks here on the Turber-owned roof. We saw spots of illumination where cars were loading with fighters to be rushed north. Our image-finders showed the Turber ship. It had been rushing north—like ourselves, without lights—to meet this roof attack. A rain of missiles dropped from it.

Our commander said suddenly:

"Now, Tremont! Start here—ten degrees off the vertical, to the left about another ten. Hold the course as you have it, Pierson."

Our orders to flash the beam! Alan and I set the range-dials. Lea with nimble fingers made the last adjustments, wound the firing tensions, and then crouched on the floor by the battery to handle the gauges of its current-flow.

The projector-face swung downward through an open aperture in the window-shield. I focused it at the agreed-upon spreading of the beam. From our instrument table someone sang out: "Eleven hundred feet altitude here, Williams. Roof ahead averages nine to eleven hundred under us—"

I made the adjustments; the beam would strike with a circle of light about a hundred feet in diameter.

Alan's voice: "All ready, Ed?"

"Yes!"

He added: "Lea?"

In the dimness of our cabin interior I saw her white arm go up in answer from where she crouched. She said: "Yes—ready."

Alan snapped on the current.

I sat back; I was limp and cold all over. There was nothing for me to do. Nothing but watch—and listen.

The light-beam grew very slowly into being. A low whirring—a trembling; it purred, this diabolic thing, like a smug cat licking its lips. Purred, and then seemed to hiss as its anger grew. Whirring, tiny vibrations of sound; they went up the scale in pitch; always soft—higher until the thing was screaming with its microscopic voice. Higher, faster until it faded away, too rapid for audibility.

But the low hiss and sputter of the current remained. And the light-beam grew. Darkness at first; then a radiance of faint dull red, streaming down from our projector; red and then up through the spectrum to violet; then white. Cold white—

nothing but the mingling of all colors made too rapid for separate visibility.

A minute of this process. Our ship was hovering—horizontal propellers holding us poised. Some one said:

"His vehicle ought to be about here."

Beneath us now was the same Space which in my Time held the Turber Sanatorium! I gazed down our white, slightly spreading beam. It fell on the roof here with a hundred foot circle of white illumination. It showed a small metal house on the roof-structure, with a group of Turberites on guard along a railed trestleway near it. They had evidently been lounging about; they were on their feet now surprised by the light.

I stared, cold with fascination. I heard Alan murmur "God!"

The men stood with upflung hands against the dazzling light. Stood transfixed—and then tried to run. I saw one fail; another turn, waver and crumple. Others, stronger, tried to stagger—weirdly swaying with arms flinging wildly and legs bending, crumpling—they did not lie mercifully still at once, but writhed gruesomely.

The figures were strewn in a moment. Some, near the edge of the circle, got out of it and away. Confusion—horror down there. Others figures came like frightened animals running into the light; stood stricken and fell—or managed to get back.

Lea appeared beside me. She bent over Alan—showed him other adjustments. The circle of light narrowed upon the small house.

I had been aware of a sound from below.

A throbbing—a rhythmic throb. The house and all this immediate section of the roof was vibrating—trembling—shaking—

It grew louder. Like a pendulum, where at the end of each swing your finger gives it an added push, the impulse of our beam was shaking this little building—rocking this roof-segment.

A corner of the building split off and fell; a crack seemed to open in the roof; the little house broke apart and slithered through the crack. The human figures spilled down.

A jagged hole was here. The light bored down into it. A ragged broken cross-section of the great city-structure. Our glimpse went down through rending, clattering walls, falling ceilings, collapsing floors and tiers. Human figures engulfed. A turmoil of sound and movement.

The destruction seemed to spread inward. One tier brought down another. A widening jagged wound was here in the metallic city. It extended a hundred or two hundred feet down from the roof level. But our range from this altitude could go no deeper. Was the ship down there in some fortified room underneath this tangled wreckage? Nanette, down there perhaps, still alive—

"Move us along, Pierson. Tremont, spread the beam! We'll go down to five hundred feet."

The roof broke in larger fragments as the light widened and intensified with our descent. This whole section of the city must have been quivering now; we could hear its ragged pulse, mingled with the rending of metal, the crash and crack of trembling, collapsing interior walls.

With the first breaking of the roof insulation-barrage, our mirrors began picking up interior images. I did not see them—I sat at the projector with Alan, watching the widening break in the roof as our beam bore down from this lower altitude. But I heard the comments of the men behind me in the cabin. The panic of defeat was spreading throughout the Turber-owned city. Mobs of Turberites, soon in a wild rush to come this way; against all reason, rushing in a panic of terror toward this quaking, falling area! Because the Time-ship was near here!

We realized it. But no Turber mob ever reached the vehicle. We found later that it was fortified with metallic barriers. They shut off the mob which tried for safety—barred those few who got past or around the falling area.

The panic spread up north to the battle lines. The tide of the fighting abruptly turned. The Turberite wolves, suddenly stricken with rumors of defeat, began trying to withdraw. Our troops pursued them. Soon it was a rout. I heard no orders

—no talk of the taking of prisoners. Like wolves, trying to run, the Turberites were hunted down.

Lea plucked at me. I turned again to look back toward Manhattan. There were torches everywhere on the roof to the north—our police troops, suddenly heartened, were surging up triumphant and sweeping the enemy back. In the glare of the lights the black Turber ship up there showed as it winged away. Escaping—and in a moment one of our ships rose up and took after it.

Some one said: "Look! The Turber Jersey landing stage!"

Far ahead, where the city ended beyond the Staten Island section, a group of Turber ships came up. Coming to attack us! The thought flashed to me. But it was not so. Turber ships—escaping. They sped off to the south, over the Turberite rural district.

I prayed that one of them might be carrying Nanette.

Someone said: "Forty minutes; twenty left!"

Had this all been only forty minutes?

"Pierson! Lower! There it is!"

We dropped nearly down to the roof level. The roof structure was gone now over a segment of fully a mile. The beam, with Alan oscillating it, bathed the whole shattered area in white light. Indescribable scene of ruin! A vast honeycomb of metal city; shaken into ruins as though by some persistent earthquake; girders of metal piled in a tangled mass like jackstraws. Stone and mortar; plaster; wood—all the innumerable shattered substances strewn in a wreck inconceivable. Fires were starting in a dozen places; lurid glare of red-yellow flames; black smoke rolling up.

And sounds inconceivable—a torrent of crashes—explosions—and, I think, an undertone built with the myriad screams of the dead and dying.

As we descended almost to the level of the hole where a huge slice of the roof was dangling, our light struck into an open area of the city. There was less wreckage here; we could see down to the ground level. It was not very far down—a rise of ground was here; a hill—and it seemed an open park-like space of metal pavement surrounded by high metallic barriers.

They crumbled, these barriers, within a moment as the white beam caught them. There had been a low roof over the park, but it was fallen.

The ship stood exposed, but still unharmed. It rested motionless on the pavement. Our beam touched it. Horror surged at me. I gasped: "Alan—" He swung the beam away. What he said I do not know. But he had seen it—as I saw it; the white light always showed everything with intense clear detail; the figure of Nanette standing in the ship doorway! We could even see her now, dim but distinguishable—standing there—wavering from the shock of the light as it had so briefly struck her.

"Alan—don't!" An anguished cry that sounded like my voice, and our commander's voice: "On the vehicle, Tremont! God, don't let it get away!" The walls around the park were falling. There was a mingled glare of our beam and the yellow light of the burning ruins near by. It showed a man's figure appearing in the ship doorway; he jerked Nanette backward into the interior. He stood for a moment in the doorway; Bluntnose, the Indian! He flung up his arm like a signal. And other figures showed, running forward. Turber, and Josefa. Trapped somewhere in the city and just now arriving at the waiting Time-vehicle. Turber, with his knowledge of the city labyrinth just now able to get here. His figure, and the woman who clung to him, avoided our circle of light; Alan in his confused horror had swung it farther away.

Instant impressions. A second or two while we sat cold and stricken. Our commander's voice: "Tremont! Good God, man! Is that Turber?"

The commander bent over Alan and seized the projector. The light swung to Turber and the woman. They staggered, but kept on. Then the woman fell. She lay twitching. Turber left her. He stumbled, fell; but got up. Gruesomely contorted—staggering with twitching steps. Almost at the ship's entrance he fell again. Relief surged over me. The ship, bathed in the

white and yellow glare, went thin as a ghost. An apparition—with the solid broken figure of Turber lying huddled. A wraith of the vehicle. It was gone!

But only for a moment! Why, what was this? The horror surged back to me. Unimaginable horror! The ship had gone. But had gone only a moment into our future, and then had stopped. And in that moment we had caught up with it.

As we stared at the empty space, with that passing moment the Time-ship materialized again. It lay in a tangled, disintegrating heap of metal with lurid green tongues of gas-flame licking at it!



CHAPTER XXII

To me, the rest of those sixty minutes were a vague, drab dream of things horrible to see. Awesome—but though the rocking, shattering Turber city went down while I watched it, it all seemed dreamlike. My mind was on that torn heap of wreckage which had been Turber's Time-vehicle. Nanette's body lying somewhere there.

Alan seemed dazed. A man shoved him away and took his place. He sat huddled by Lea. I sat, numbly staring. Then someone said: "Two minutes! That's enough, Grantson! Get the girl and those ancients to insulate the projector. Hurry! We won't need it any more, but no use ruining it."

The world-power was about to come on again. We hastened to insulate our projecting mechanism. The light-beam died. But its work was through. All this end of the Turber-owned city was in ruins. The black waters of what had once been New York Bay were exposed. The islands and the causeways and all the structure there were strewn and tumbled and broken. All of what had been Staten Island was wrecked. Fires and explosions everywhere, and masses of lurid smoke mounting; and all the upper air pungent with the smell of chemicals.

The gas clouds hid the Staten Island hill, with its wrecked ship.

We swung back toward Manhattan as the world-power flashed on. Our sixty minutes were over.

Aftermath of the battle; I need not detail it. To Alan and me it was all unimportant. We kept Lea close with us. Gentle little creature! Why, I suppose her ethereal beauty could not be matched in all the world. But my mind went always to Nanette.

I recall how vaguely I gazed at the mirrors as they pictured the rout and final destruction of the Turberites. The hunt for the panic-stricken mobs ceased in a few hours; those still alive were allowed to escape. I recall sitting with triumphant city officials and hearing it all discussed. The Turberites would be banished to various other localities—scattered. I heard the triumph when searching parties in the ruins found the Turber-Treasure Vaults. His tremendous wealth would go to enrich the city government; to rebuild the destroyed area.

Turber and all his leaders were dead. His Empire was broken; its menace met and conquered. There was official government praise and thanks for Lea, Alan and myself. Our interest in it all was apathetic. We had lost Nanette—we found that our greatest desire was to get away from this world which had taken her from us.

Alan and I did not go with the party of searchers who brought back the bodies from the wreckage around Turber's vehicle. Nanette was not found—but they told us there were many bodies not recognizable. We did not go to see them.

A day passed—then another—and on the third a message came which took Lea and Alan and me in shuddering, trembling haste to where now workmen were cleaning away the wreckage of the shattered area.

Nanette!

Three workmen had seen it happen. They were working just now, close beside the mangled pile of metal which was Turber's vehicle. From the air a few feet above their heads—the empty air—a human form came hurtling. They saw it all in an instant materialize. A shadow—a ghost—but in a second, when it struck the ground almost at their feet, it was solid. A human form. A girl—lying broken and unconscious. But still alive!

We were taken to see her in the improvised morgue and hospital near the ruins. It was Nanette. We could see that And we looked just once, and then they led us away.

She was still alive. Oh, I thanked God for this era of progress of 2445! Five hundred years ahead of my own lifetime these surgeons and physicians who for days were working over Nanette! They said she might live. Her broken body might be restored to a semblance of itself.

Our tower with San arrived. It waited, this time.

Then, at last, they said that Nanette would surely live. They took us one day to see her. She lay so swathed in bandages that not much more than her eyes were visible. We spoke to her, just for a moment; bending low, we could hear her murmuring answers. Then Lea held her close and crooned to her, and she went back to sleep.

Another week. We saw her again; propped up for a moment in bed to receive us. The bandages were gone now from her face and head and shoulders. She sat, staring into the direction of our voices.

My poor Nanette! Her face, shrivelled and scarred. She raised what seemed a twisted arm to welcome us. She tried to smile. A travesty—a mockery. I recalled her gentle beauty, her sweet womanly dignity—that little smile, so sweet, that she used to have.

I leaned over her. "Nanette, darling!"

"Edward, you came—I didn't want them to let you come—"

I said: "Lea is here. Do you recognize her voice?" I bent over her as though with a great secret. "Nanette, she and Alan love each other. We're just waiting for you to get well—it won't be long now. Then we're going home."

"No," she murmured. "They say it won't be long now. And they say—"

"San is here with the tower. But he stays always in it. That's why he hasn't been to see you."

Oh, I had phrased it wrongly! She shuddered.

"Edward—that time, you remember—when I said goodbye over the aerial? I—I thought that it was—really goodbye. You understand?" She was stammering.

"I don't understand, Nanette."

"I mean—I—I told you that I loved you. That was very wrong of me. I do not—I do not love you. I n-never did."

She could not see the rush of moisture that clouded my eyes. I gulped, but I managed a laugh.

"You can't get out of it that way. Of course you love me! I'll make you!"

But she held me off. "No."

From across the room the watching nurse said: "She should be kept quiet, Mr. Williams."

I relaxed and sat back. "We'll forget it, Nanette—not talk about it now, because—"

"Yes, forget it. They say, these surgeons—"

"Nanette, listen—we're rich! You didn't know that. The city government here has awarded us—the four of us—and some for San—some of the Turber gold. In 1962, Nanette, what we four have will be accounted at nearly two million dollars."

She was trying to speak, but I talked fast against it. "You've always wanted to live in the country, haven't you? So does Lea. We're going to buy—Alan and I are—two little homes—near each other, understand—out in the country somewhere in our world of 1962. Where there will be trees and flowers—and the beautiful sky over us."

"Edward, I'd rather you went away. You understand? It's wonderful of you—your plans and all that."

"Nanette, you're talking nonsense!"

"All right. Perhaps I am. They say my hair can be made to grow long again very quickly, Edward." Her voice was trying to be jocular. "That will help, won't it? And yesterday a surgeon was here from Great London. A specialist in plastic surgery—"

The nurse called: "Better go now, Mr. Williams. Not tire her."

There were more days of waiting.

We had long since heard, through Nanette's nurse, her brief account of those last moments in Turber's ship. She had been for a time alone in the control room with Bluntnose and Jonas. They were waiting for Turber. Jonas had fallen into a panic of fear; he sat huddled and chattering, dominated by the Indian who, with stolid indifference to the city tumbling around them, was waiting for the master.

Nanette had stood in the ship doorway. Her mind was groping with a plan. Bluntnose came and pulled her back. He stood in the doorway and shouted welcome to the arriving Turber and the woman Josefa.

Nanette knew that the control room was filled with a blinding glare of light reflected from our white beam so near at hand, outside. She heard Jonas, scream something about the glare; she could feel it—almost see it. And she could hear, outside the ship, a pandemonium of sound.

She knew every detail of the corridor and the control room. She ran past the huddled Jonas. In a moment Turber would enter, and the ship would flash away and escape. Nanette ran for the instrument table which held the controls. She knew it was close by a window; she knew that the window was open and that it was some six or eight feet above the ground.

Desperate plan! Just a chance to wreck the ship and still to save her own life. She had no knowledge of the controls operation. She leaped for the table. Her fingers tore at the delicate wires—her clenched little fists smashed the fragile vacuum globes.

She felt the ship sway crazily; she felt it flash as she flung her body through the window. She fell into the black emptiness of insensibility—

The ship had lurched a few seconds into the future, and with every law of Nature transgressed by its derelict flight it had stopped and crashed into the ruins.

Nanette's body, hurtling through the air, must have been just within the ship's influence. Inconceivable shock to her! A fall through Space of a few feet. But the impulse from the lurching Time-vehicle had thrown her—as she fell those few feet—into the third day forward.

But it was over now. She lived; these surgeons with their science were giving her back to me.

We waited through those hours; the operation was successful. Her face was—restored.

And so I find myself now with little more to record. We are back now in the world of 1962. We went with Lea while she took leave of her grandfather; and she left him to follow her destiny with Alan. But San would not come. He took us to our own Time-world and left us. He said, forever.

No one saw us as we slipped from the tower into Central Park that last time. A few days only since we had left. It was in the night; and no one was there to see the phantom tower as it came, paused solid for a moment, and then vanished.

Or if we were seen, what of it? No one would believe it; the newspapers would not bother to print it again.

The world here moves quietly along.

Not far from New York City—now in 1962, as I write—there are two little houses, twins upon a small farm. Alan Tremont and his wife live in one of them; and the other is Nanette's home and mine. No one around here is very interested in us. Nanette says that the neighbors sometimes speculate upon Mrs. Tremont's nationality. Some of the women have called her a Scandinavian; they say she looks like one—or talks like one, I forget which. But there is a Swedish woman in the village who is convinced that Lea Tremont is a fair-haired, blue-eyed native girl of the South Sea Islands. The Swedish woman has never been to the South Sea Islands, but she is convinced of it nevertheless.

Once—only last week—Nanette found Lea dancing in the shadowed moonlight of our apple orchard. Dancing for Alan. Her robe of blue fabric—her golden hair flying. Shadow girl! Her fairy figure weaving in and out of the shadows.

But you can't explain to the farmer's wife down the road that Mrs. Tremont is a shadow girl!

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[The end of *The Shadow Girl* by Ray Cummings]