

# THE UNBROKEN CHAIN

John Russell Fearn

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# THE UNBROKEN CHAIN

By JOHN RUSSELL FEARN

**Braving countless dangers, across hundreds of centuries  
and  
through a myriad past lives, Drath Gofal seeks knowledge!**

Ugh-Wah, of the Fourth Glacial Age, did not know that people of the future would call him a Neanderthal man. In fact he knew very little about anything except hunting, eating, sleeping, and keeping warm—until one day he suddenly began to devise more elaborate weapons for the snaring and slaying of the bigger beast which forever threatened safety. This feat gained for Ugh-Wah the reputation of being a wizard, and because of it distrust was bred among the others of his breed—a childish superstition of his powers.

Particularly when he talked in his boastful, snarling jargon of visions. He said he had seen landscapes that had upright men on them, men who went up and down in strange machines, who actually made use of the flaming ball that buried itself every night and was reborn every morning. To

Ugh-Wah, though he barely understood what he was talking about, it was all very real—until he began to realize that he had perhaps said too much.

Distrust was all about him. Even his own mate, Gu Lak, was suspicious of him, alarmed at the strange light in his fierce, almost hidden little eyes.

Then came a day when Ugh-Wah, foraging, found himself in deadly danger. During his hunt for food he turned and shambled off, to stop abruptly and wheel round at the sound of mighty feet pounding behind him. For one short second he stood in paralyzed horror before an advancing mammoth whose tiny ruby-red eyes were sparkling with fury.

Ugh-Wah wheeled and began to run across the ice-caked ground, shouting warnings at the top of his croaking voice. Behind him the mammoth screamed and trumpeted. The others of the tribe swung around at Ugh-Wah's yells and were instantly on the defensive. Then they became motionless with awe at an amazing sight.

Ugh-Wah, not ten yards in front of the mammoth, suddenly began to become transparent, even as he ran! The watchers could see the mammoth through his fading body.

In two seconds Ugh-Wah had disappeared, and at that identical moment a vast, overwhelming explosion cannonaded from the spot where he had been. The tribe fell back in screaming, disorganized terror before a blinding flash of flame and terrific concussion!

The tribe soon forgot all about Ugh-Wah, all save his mate

—and she silently remembered that he had saved the lives of all in the tribe by the explosion. But how? That was where her undeveloped brain stumbled...

Clifford Delthorpe was the toughest problem the Board of Directors of Delthorpe's Bank had to contend with. Because he had inherited virtual ownership of the Bank from his father he was in effect the President of it—but what he knew about banking could have been written on his gold cuff-links. He left it all to the Directors and spent his time in and out of New York's social spots, using up the money his tight-fisted father had withheld from him. Which was why Delthorpe's Bank preferred his room to his company.

His wife Fay was just as bad—a former actress, shallow and vain, conspicuously devoid of culture. But she had the redeeming virtue of honestly admitting that she loved Cliff only for his money, a confession which did not worry him in the least. In fact nothing ever worried him—he had too much money for that. Which was the reason Fay got the shock of her dizzy life at breakfast one morning when Cliff refused to agree to her idea of a protracted, round-the-world tour.

"But why not?" she demanded, her egg-spoon in mid-air. "I thought we fixed it all up yesterday?"

Cliff looked at her thoughtfully. There was puzzled indignation on her pretty face, the prettier indeed for its morning absence of cosmetics.

"Yesterday has gone, Fay. It's what I say this morning that counts. The cruise is off. We're going to do something useful instead—build machinery!"

"What!" the girl bleated. "But—but I've ordered my outfit for the trip. Done everything! You just can't—"

"I control the money," Cliff snapped. "What I say goes! Get it through your empty head, Fay, that I'm resolved to do something with my life even if you are not. I've got work to do in the matter of straightening out humanity's problems."

Fay could not speak so she just stared blankly.

"Machinery," Cliff whispered softly, at length. "Machinery incorporating electronic power."

It was too much for Fay. She got to her feet in sudden anger.

"Look here, Cliff, I've had enough of this clowning! If you think I'm going to have a darned good holiday canceled while you drool about electrons and—and things, you're crazy! I won't—"

She broke off, her eyes widening as Cliff looked at her steadily. It was not the Cliff Delthorpe she was accustomed to knowing. That look in his gray eyes was one of mental force, shattering and omniscient, breaking down all her individual desires.

For nearly five seconds she stood in paralyzed amazement before his gaze. Then she flung herself from the room and slammed the door. Cliff relaxed a little and rubbed his dark

hair in a worried manner. Going over to the sideboard he poured himself a stiff drink and meditated over his plan.

"Maybe lunacy," he mused, staring into the glass. "Grandfather Delthorpe went nuts—but figures did it for him. Maybe I've got the same complaint. Only figures that have interested me so far have been girls'."

He went to the mirror and studied himself, saw nothing unusual. At the back of his mind swirled odd little notions and visions—cities of supreme design reared against a dying sun—machinery of incredible efficiency.

Machinery! That did something to him. He went over to the writing desk and tugged pencil and paper towards him, began to draw....

In the ensuing days it was increasingly evident to Fay that something was radically wrong with Cliff. He became less and less like his normal self and went off into his curious, dictatorial—yet oddly brilliant—moods without warning.

He talked with an unquestionable accuracy about electrons, wave-packets, continuous union of mentality, time and space lines, and various other scientific matters which were utterly over Fay's head. He bought a plot of land out of town and had a concrete laboratory erected on it, to which machinery was delivered and gradually assembled.

Fay watched all this with a certain futility, tried once to get a brain specialist to see Cliff, until his deadly rage at the suggestion frightened the life out of her. From that point onwards she sought some relief from the nervous tension

governing her.

She revived her ideas for a world tour and spent the time with Dick Morrison, an old flame, leaving Cliff to his own devices. Her own pleasure was far more important than this strange behavior anyhow—though she did secretly wonder what he was driving at.

Within two months Cliff had become completely absorbed by his ideas and had undergone a strange metamorphosis of character. He deserted the city apartment and normal ways of living, appointed a proxy to handle his connections with the Bank. Working alone—Bronson occasionally bringing him a fresh supply of provisions and laundry—he devised machines of various shapes and sizes, machines which bristled with tubes and coils as remarkable as they were revolutionary.

Nobody was admitted to this laboratory except Bronson, and—when she ran short of money—Fay. It was her first, and she hoped her last, visit. To her inward surprise she found Cliff in a more tractable mood than usual, a curious half and half state, but more understandable, more the man she had married. And yet there was still something mystifying about him.

Fay spoke peevishly, by way of opening. "At least I ought to have an explanation!" She gazed, round on the banked machinery. "For instance, what is all this stuff for?"

"World betterment, I hope," Cliff answered. "Eventually, that is. What puzzles me is I'm not quite so sure about the

whole thing as I was when I started."

"Still the same old gag," she sighed. "Why can't you be yourself and throw this junk away?"

"That's all it means to you?" he asked seriously.

"What else do you expect? World reformers are either nuts, or else a cinch for a kick in the pants."

He considered, ignoring her bitterness.

"There's a reason for all this," he muttered. "But I don't know yet what it is. I've been forced to take stock of myself recently, and I've arrived at a pretty definite conclusion. An intellectual force, somewhere, is trying to establish a contact with my mind. It may be something in the future. I've had curious visions which might apply to a time to come. Yet I'm definitely linked up with something else, and this something—far as I can tell—believes that the mental line of each individual is continuous from beginning to end of time."

Fay gazed at him, mystified.

"Don't tell me you include reincarnation among your tricks!" she burst out scornfully.

"Call it that if you like, but yours is a primitive term," Cliff answered curtly. "It would be more correct to say that a man—or woman—never really dies— No, listen to me a moment! The mind, which had its first matter-manifestation in the amoeba, grows in knowledge during the course of its evolution, and during that evolution, it manifests myriads of

different matter states from amoeba to future man until, at the finish that mind has so perfected itself that it doesn't need matter any longer for the purposes of expression, and so becomes pure intelligence."

"And of course, when we die, we're just playing hookey?" Fay asked cynically.

"The body dies, Fay, not the mind." Cliff's voice sounded as though he were talking to a child. "The mind lives on and expresses itself again through another matter form. That's what I mean by an unbroken chain of mentality from beginning to end. After all, many of the present day scientists are pretty convinced of the fact. Eddington, for instance, in his 'Nature of the Physical World,' refers to consciousness by saying, 'consciousness is not sharply defined, but fades in subconsciousness, and beyond that must be postulated something indefinite but yet continuous with our mental nature'."

Fay's eyes had become frankly contemptuous.

"If you aren't the world's prize sap! A multimillionaire, and you go haywire over a scientific theory! Anyhow," she went on impatiently, "it doesn't mean a thing to me, Cliff. I'm more interested in practical things, like enjoyment of money and—and a trip around the world."

She stopped and screwed up her painted brows in unaccustomed thought for a moment.

"Did you say something in the future is affecting you?" she asked slowly.

"I think so, yes."

"But how on earth can it? The future isn't here yet."

Cliff smiled tolerantly. "It isn't here, but it exists. Past, present, and future always exist. We move along a definite course in Time—and that course is evolution. The unknown force which has every atom and every star in its appointed place has just as surely mapped out the road of Time. We pass along it to some ultimate stage, experiencing on the way what scientists call 'instants.' Eddington calls them 'special frames.' Just as on an ordinary train journey you'd experience different stations at different scheduled times. If you went from New York to Los Angeles, for instance, you wouldn't deny that Los Angeles would be at the end of the line, would you? That represents man's conquest over space and distance. How simple it must be to a greater power, then, to arrange the future at which we must arrive in due course."

"Heaven save us!" Fay groaned. "This gets worse! Anyway it still does not explain how the future can affect the present—can affect you."

"But it does!" Cliff insisted. "A person at the end of time has one very singular advantage—in fact two advantages. He has a profound scientific mentality for one thing, and for another he is able to recapture the vibrations of a past time. Even today we admit the possibility of being able to trap light and sound waves from a past time, but we haven't the necessary mental

development to work it out.

"Everything that is seen, heard, or experienced is caused by the activity of electrons and dissipation of energy, all of which is distributed somewhere in the Universe and can, by machinery complicated and intricate enough, be recalled and refitted into place.

"If I had that power I might be able to see my past selves stretching away right down through history. Unfortunately I have only a limited brain. But wherever this force which is guiding me may be it's taught me plenty. Especially in the knowledge of how to build machinery to improve the world. I still have a lot to do."

Fay tightened her lips. Then with a helpless glance, she went out of the laboratory and into the small living room off the laboratory. She spent half an hour trying to decide what she ought to do. But the decision was taken out of her hands.

Just as she had made up her mind to leave, that living room, the laboratory, and everything attached thereto, went up in the mightiest explosion New York had known in many years...

\* \* \*

The curiously contoured, big-pated figure moved very slightly in his chair, stretched out a lean knuckled claw of a hand and pulled a switch. A periscope screen came into life and pictured a view of the world existing outside this buried, Arctic laboratory. It was not a cheerful view, but none the less it was one to which this being, Drath Gofal, was accustomed.

Stretching away to the everlasting, brilliantly cold stars yawned ice fields, bordered to the west by a mountain range. Gofal might have imagined himself alone on the planet were it not for the fact that he knew, beyond the mountains, the last men of his race were eking out a waning existence in the slight but still noticeable warmth of a red, dying sun. Everlasting sun, even as just here there was everlasting dark.

The ceaseless struggle of tidal drag was over. Earth swung round her master with one face always towards him, wobbling only slightly on a faint libration which occasionally brought the barrier reefs of Twilight Mountains into the sunshine and melted the accumulated snow and ice to provide water for the last man.

Strange, inhospitable world! The husk of a once beautiful planet of soft winds, expansive seas, and life-giving sunshine. Only the stars seemed unchanged, and even they were misted by the presence of embryonic rings. The moon had returned to Earth, broken up.

Synthetic air, water just sufficient to maintain life by melting processes—Man might live on the sunward side for many thousands of years with such perfect science and synthetic powers at his command—save perhaps for one thing. The Ice Life.

Drath Gofal, out here in this specially constructed laboratory, erected in the first instance for quite a different purpose, was so far the only man—excepting his assistant Flan—who had seen the strange invader. Microscopic, destructive, insatiable life, spawning in the ice itself, life that in truth

belonged to other barren worlds, that had been spewed on Earth in spore form when drawn by the moon's attraction in its Earthward movement. Life which existed and thrived at 500 degrees below zero Centigrade—tiny organisms which digested the water content of the ice, life that would one day adapt itself to sunward-side conditions and devour everything before it unless something happened to bring sudden and extensive heat to this Arctic waste and destroy the queer, malignant bacteria in its early stages.

Drath Gofal sighed. "Heat or else explosive. Heat we cannot afford because we need every scrap we can manufacture both here and in the city. And explosive would certainly wreck this laboratory completely and ruin my experiments. A pity indeed that it happens to be directly overhead..."

He looked at the periscope screen again and studied the view of a starlighted, brownish area about a mile and a half in width lying immediately above this buried retreat.

"At the moment, Flan, we can do nothing," he observed. "We shall have to decide sooner or later which will have to go—this laboratory or the Ice Life." He turned and looked at Flan's face beneath its bulging head. "You followed out my orders and advised them in the city of the presence of this life?"

"Yes, Gofal—and also warned them to make no attack on it for fear of destroying us."

Like his superior, Flan was a short, big-chested, big-headed being with a muscular pipe for a neck and thin arms and legs. His slightly smaller head was the sole indication of his inferior position to Drath Gofal himself.

Drath Gofal switched the screen off at last, rose from his chair with a slight clink of metallic clothing, and walked across to the machinery jamming the main portion of the laboratory. For a time he stood musing before a sprawling mass of tubes, globes, and electrical equipment.

Presently he turned.

"I shall have to finish my work without delay," he said thoughtfully. "And you know, Flan, the more I dwell upon the ultimate possibilities of probing back along a mental lineal descent, the more I think we were wise in burying ourselves here, away from all interference, and likewise from all possible disturbances we may create in the final stages of the experiment. There may be danger." He paused gravely. "You realize that?"

"Science only gives her greatest secrets to those who are not afraid," Flan answered, unperturbed. He belonged, like Gofal, to a race schooled through ages to be absolute masters of emotion. His small but brilliant eyes surveyed the machinery.

"You have definitely proved then, Gofal, that such things as individual mental lines exist?" he asked.

"Beyond all doubt." Gofal nodded his massive bald pate. "From the dawn to the close of evolution everything is mapped out. Since it is beyond all question that simultaneity of instants

exist all down an individual line, it is possible to make contact with one's past self—or more accurately the matter manifestation existing as one's past self—at any time in the past. That was why we set out to master the forces of electron waves."

"You set out," Flan corrected. "I have barely been able to follow your postulations. I realize only that your mind—my mind—every mind, has evolved from the beginning and has possessed various matter forms, which forms are changed only at the mutation named death. I understand, too, that all Time can be mentally explored. But beyond that—"

Gofal interrupted him.

"I have no reason to know that at every state in the past a certain order of electron waves was in force. While it is almost impossible to discover the exact electron formations of inorganic, non-intelligent substances, it is possible by mathematics to determine the exact wave form packets that made up any specified individual, myself for instance.

"Bear in mind, Flan, the fundamental truth that there was more organization in the world yesterday than there is today. The old-time scientists didn't know how to calculate the exact extent or disorganization in a single living being, though they did admit that any change occurring to a body, which can be treated as a single unit, can be undone. If they had known, and had built mathematical machines such as we have here, they would have been able to find the exact matter state of any unit or living person at any time in the past.

"With these machines of mine we know the exact entropy, the exact disorganization of energy, of any living object in the past. As I have said, inorganic substances do not concern us. I chose my own lineage because it is one in which I'm most interested. As you have seen, I merely placed myself in the core of these mathematical machines and allowed them to calculate, from the electronic state I now possess, exactly what organization I possessed at an earlier instant."

Gofal permitted an expression of satisfaction to spread over his face.

"To a certain extent I was successful," he went on pensively. "It is of course impossible to move physically in Time, and therefore my body remained where it is. But my mind, not being limited by any material force, returned down the lineal line, and when a particular instant of organization arose to which my mind definitely applied, I automatically became part of it. In truth, I took on a former body, and since Time is unalterable, I did exactly what I had done before at that period.

"The only difference lay in the fact that there was a mental overlap from my present knowledge. This had the effect of making me far cleverer than was normal to that past state. But as records have shown, I was clever in that past state. Therefore Time did not err.

"In my first venture I traveled back mentally to the limit of dawning intelligence—a very early Neanderthal form. I think I

was regarded as something of a wizard. I remember that my last experience there was of building extremely cunning traps for animals, despite a growing distrust among my people. Then I came back here and fixed the organization for a much more advanced age."

Gofal paused and smiled faintly at his recollections.

"I must have been a fool in the early modern period," he murmured. "I spent my time drinking strange substances that fuddled me and exchanged curious paper sheets that gave me anything I wanted. Here, again, though, my present knowledge overlapped a little, and I unwittingly changed my nature into that of a true scientist. I built machinery with which I honestly intended to better a very unhappy world. I found, though, that I was considered a lunatic. I was despised by my very small-brained wife, in spite of my vague effort to explain things and give her an underlying glimpse of my real intentions. In the end I got weary of it and came back here."

There was a pause. Flan waited attentively. Presently Gofal uttered a deep sigh.

"And yet, Flan, some of those early modern scientists had the right idea," he resumed. "I mean ideas on which our modern science is built. Many of them disbelieved in death and pointed to child prodigies in music, science, and religion as reincarnated geniuses carrying their knowledge over a mythical gulf. They pointed to so-called seers as people who knew the future, not realizing that such folk simply had a better sense of their Time-line than others. Still other people had memories of past incidents, memories of having seen certain places before.

Dreams, amnesia, many things that explained the underlying truth that only our science has brought to fruition—the knowledge that real understanding begins where what was formerly called the subconscious region exists."

Gofal stopped talking and regarded his apparatus. Flan still maintained a respectful silence...

"The one thing that still remains to be mastered in mental science is memory!" Gofal said at last, clenching his fist. "I have proved that it is possible to retreat mentally and live in a former state, but that is not everything. Think, my friend, of the infinite wisdom that could be encompassed if one had the memory—the clear, vivid remembrance—of everything one had ever done! Think of the storehouse of knowledge, the multimillions of useful little things forgotten in the turmoil of progress. With a complete memory of everything I've ever done since mind began I could accomplish miracles, lay the foundation of a science that could mold the whole Universe to my desires!"

There was a certain fanatic urgency in his voice at the last words. He faced Flan's calm, inscrutable eyes.

"If you have accomplished so much, you can accomplish that," Flan told him. "And if you can do it for yourself, you can do it for others—give our whole race a complete memory stock of knowledge. With that we can defeat—anything," he whispered. Then he frowned slightly. "Unless bringing past memory to a future state is an impossibility?"

"Not at all," Gofal contradicted. "Mental force is outside the

realm of time, space, and matter. It is a power of its own, something which cannot be described, something that is! Even to remember what one did a few moments before is proof of that. No matter how far back one remembers it creates no disturbance in the Universe. That is a plain fact. My idea, however, is to make memory crystal clear and not vague."

"But remembrance ends where the birth of an individual begins," Flan pointed out.

This observation gratified Gofal. "Exactly so, Flan, but in each matter state we have progressed somewhat. The same mind goes on with the mutation of death alone forming a blank between this physical experience and the one preceding it. That is why, if I eliminated all my matter states preceding this one and left only the mind—which is indestructible—in a state of complete disassociation, I would have a continuous record of my past in my memory now. It is only the individual presence of matter forms, each utilizing a portion of that complete memory stream, which prevents it being continuous."

"But how would you be born?" Flan demanded. "You are at variance with the law of Time, Gofal! By defeating your own physical forms in precedence to this one, you could not exist."

Gofal sighed. "My dear friend, how wrong you are! If a man is utterly blown to pieces it does not stop him being born again, does it? His mind cannot be destroyed, and even though his new body prevents him remembering what happened to his

previous forms, his mind is that far advanced. His body is of no account. Indeed, it would not be there at all but for him holding its presence to be a fact mentally. If he could utterly disbelieve in it, it would not exist. Bodies only exist by the force of the mentality held over them. If then I separate the mind of all my previous entities from their matter bodies, they simply cease to be. I am not affected. Yet I shall be the possessor of an unbroken memory chain from the very dawn of intelligence."

"But the inconceivable number of preceding bodies you must have possessed!" Flan cried.

Gofal smiled. "Not so many as you think. With each succeeding body, life has lasted longer until, at our present stage with no untoward hostile influence, we live tens of thousands of years. According to the mathematical machines I have had seventeen thousand previous matter-existences, and no more. Each one ended in the mutation named death, and each one was packed with experiences which must contain valuable knowledge. Just to move back mentally and study each of these seventeen thousand existences would be impossible, for it would take all eternity and even then I would probably forget a good deal because of lack of union. But if I cut each physical attribute adrift and allow my mind full play, then I shall have the knowledge of all those existences!"

"And you can do this?"

Gofal looked at his machines thoughtfully.

"Yes I have reason to believe I can. I have thought so from the outset of my experiments, and the presence of this Ice Life now demands that I act quickly. I've already mentioned the mastery of mind over matter, and I have mentioned, too, the individual highly intelligent overlap I carry from this present state of evolution. Assuming then that the disorganization calculators are set at maximum—which is my present state—I allow them to work slowly backwards to the beginning through all my varied states. Also during this entire process, I shall hold in rigid concentration the fact that I am not held by material shackles. Thus all the matter states preceding this one will disappear. I shall indeed force them to do so by superior knowledge.

"By the time I've reached the lowest manifestation of matter, I'll have eliminated all the states of matter between that state and this present one. By that means, when I return here to take over my body again, I'll have the full knowledge of my entire mental past with no material interventions. It will be swift, Flan. Mind is incredibly rapid, infinitely faster than light. Mind takes no more time to remember an incident of a moment before than it does to remember a century. Indeed it is even possible that the two past selves I have already visited will hardly be aware of my present absence, so swiftly shall I resume contact."

"And then?" Flan asked slowly.

"Then I can do as I choose. With such knowledge I can even be rid of this body and become a pure intellectual. In fact I

believe I shall. I could do it now if I wished, but that would be of no advantage without past knowledge added to what I already possess. You, my friend, during this process, will see to it that I am kept fed, as on the other occasion..."

Flan said no more, but he wished he could foresee exactly what would happen. He felt that there was something which had not been taken into account. The machines, flawless though they were, were only mechanical, had not the human gift of foresight. Still, since Gofal saw nothing to impede him, it was not Flan's business to argue. He watched as Gofal seated himself in the sunken chair in the heart of the mighty, incredibly intricate machines which built up past time-matter states from the basis of organization of energy.

"Remember to nourish my body at regular intervals, Flan, no matter how long I may be," Gofal instructed him. "I shall always be linked to it until I return, though I'll not be conscious of the fact."

Flan nodded silently and his tiny eyes watched as Gofal thrust in the main power switches in front of his chair.

Immediately, the same strange happenings as on that other brief journeying through mental realms became evident. Four unwavering bars of vermilion radiance poured from the whirring hearts of the profound mechanisms and bathed the motionless savant, Gofal, in steady fire.

His body became rigid—his eyes stared into vacancy.

He was temporarily a body without an active mind, a body still only visible as a body because of the conscious knowledge of its presence which Gofal still retained deep in his mentality, just as a man is still subconsciously aware of his body though he dreams.

Flan sat down and waited, his eyes glancing ever and again to the queerly fashioned clock on the wall. He tried to picture what must be happening to his master's mind—his whirlwind manifestations as he passed with unerring accuracy over his former states of matter, fitting flawlessly into position as the right states were merged by the machines. Right down through the gulf of mental time in an audacious effort to master all Time's knowledge in one mighty sweep.

Just for an instant Flan questioned if it was not tempting science too far....

True to his orders, Flan kept a steady watch over the motionless form at the machine, fed it with injections on long mechanical arms in order that he might not graze the fringe of the penetrating, mysterious rays built up by complex forces.

In the long, wearying intervals between, he studied the ever growing Ice Life, noted with alarm its tremendous increase.

"Gofal must return soon," he muttered. "If he does not we are endangered and—"

"Gofal has returned!" a voice observed, at his elbow.

Flan swung round, found Gofal right beside him, an inscrutable smile on his wizened face. Flan shot a glance back

at the machinery. He had been so lost in thought he had hardly noticed that it had ceased its activity, was rayless and silent.

"Gofal!" he cried. "You've succeeded! You've done what you expected!"

"Everything," the scientist assented calmly. "I was preeminently successful in my efforts. Not a single matter formation of my body remains between this one and the first crudely developed body of lowly intellect which I possessed which, for that very reason I did not trouble to destroy. I have memory as far back as I need it—a colossal storehouse of knowledge. All the myriads of undeveloped ideas, lost in individual lives, are now modeled into a composite whole. So colossal is my knowledge, Flan, I feel that this world is singularly uninviting, almost beneath the scope of my mentality."

Flan's expression changed. He noticed there was a curious, burning light in his master's eyes, a light of tremendous domination and with it a certain insufferable conceit.

"So, you wonder?" Gofal asked softly, reading Flan's mind. "You need not. You see, in detaching my mind from its previous matter bodies I absorbed something of the ego of each. That was unavoidable. In their different ways and different times they were me, and the gift of supreme memory means too a fraction of individual ego from each of those bodies. I am the only absolute, complete man which ever existed—mentally and physically.

"I can wing space, pit my knowledge against the

superpowerful intelligences which dwell in the cosmos, master the deepest secrets beyond the furthest stars. In learning all that earthly existence can tell me, I have also learned that Earth is a playground for such an intelligence as I—the jumping-off place for finer glories."

For a moment Gofal paused and looked at Flan long and earnestly.

"Flan, I am leaving Earth," he stated simply. "I intend to eliminate this body of mine even as I have its predecessors—eliminate it from all concepts. It is the last body I shall have in the normal way. I want you to leave me and return to our people. If you would learn my secrets and have my knowledge, you must work for yourselves. You have seen my methods—the rest is up to you. I have fields so advanced to conquer that this is the parting of our companionship."

"But—but why must I go?" Flan asked anxiously. "If you depart, what is to stop me remaining here to study your machines? I can complete the details for my own use?"

"These machines are useless to you, Flan. They deal only in the energies relative to myself. But the records of their construction are in the city. You can learn about them from those. If you stay here you will be blown to pieces. I discovered something on this particular journey which I had not quite reckoned with before. The effect of destroying a concept of matter results in its very abrupt change into pure energy—the state from which it originally came—through the power of mentality governing it. The form of a body is definitely a mirror of the mind controlling it. A man can think

himself into any physical state if he wants to. Remember the old time hypochondriacs.

"So the effect of sudden energy in place of matter produces an explosion of terrific violence. That is what will happen when I depart, what has happened in every state in the past where I have destroyed the concept of my body. Oddly enough, I believe that on two occasions—my Neanderthal and early modern forms—my disappearance was actually of benefit to those left behind. That, however, is beside the point. Since only a body is killed and not the mind I have nothing on my conscience.

"The decision rests with you, Flan. If you are destroyed, you will live again in some other matter state. But if you live as you are, you will be able to follow out my experiments and one day, in some far realm of supreme intellect, we may meet again. Incidentally, my departure will produce sufficient destruction to smash this ice cap for a considerable distance. Energies will be released which will destroy this Ice Life menace completely. You have your choice."

Flan hesitated for a time, looked at the silent figure of the scientist who had mastered the ultimate secrets of matter and mind, had gained memory and knowledge unlimited. Quietly he turned and donned the heavy, insulated suit for wear on the surface.

"You will see me safely out of danger?" he asked.

"Of course."

They bowed to each other with the calm impartiality of their

race, looked into each other's eyes for a moment. Then Flan opened the massive airlock which gave access to the ice tunnel leading to the plain above.

He broke into a run as the tunnel's natural slope took him higher and higher, emerging at last through the great air-regulating vent system on the surface. No cold or thin air reached him through his suit. He turned his face towards Twilight Mountains. In his mind's eye he pictured Gofal at the periscope, watching his progress, impatiently noting the minutes passing by.

Finally Flan reached the vast pass through the range giving access to the distant city on the sunward side. Here he turned. He watched the sudden wild pounding and heaving of thousands of tons of ice, the spouting of vivid electric discharges. To his headphones came the rumble of vast underground thunder.

He saw a huge area of water boil in the crumbled ice where the heat had melted it. And he saw something more—the utter incineration of a carpet of malignant brown Arctic Life, forever destroyed by that discharge of electric energy.

Flan's spirits rose. He imagined that supreme mind winging its way invisibly across the infinite towards the eternal stars. With a steadfast heart, the last determination of a last man to follow the only way of science, he turned towards the red-lighted city in the distance.

[The end of *The Unbroken Chain* by John Russell Fearn]