

The Gravity Experiment

J. U. Giesy

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The Gravity Experiment

By J. U. GIESY

Author of "Palos of the Dog-Star Pack," etc.

**There were no rules in Patrolman
McGuiness' manual for enforcing
the Law of Gravity**

"MEOUW!" The sound was one of feline protestation, a sort of outraged plaint, uttered in the accents of a snarling rage.

"Goodness! Was that Fluffy?" exclaimed Miss Nellie Zapt to her fiancé, Bob Sargent, with whom she was sitting in the dusk, back of the vines on the porch of her father's house.

"Sounded like her voice, at any rate," Bob agreed.

"Meouw! Psst! Zit!"

Nellie started to her feet and stood slenderly poised as a fresh outburst of something suspiciously like inarticulate

profanity drifted to her ears. And then she laid hold of her companion.

"Come along, there's something wrong." she urged, and dragged him to his feet.

She darted into the house intent on learning what had evoked the outcries so vociferously emitted by her pet, and Sargent followed very much as he had been following her for something like a year. She was a dainty, glowing creature, and Bob was all tangled up in her feminine charms. So he kept close now as with a tapping of quick little heels on polished wood she entered the living-room of the house via the entrance hall.

And then Nellie paused. She stared at the figure of a small man with spectacles on the bridge of a high, thin nose, and iron-gray whiskers. He stood with back-tilted head, beside a small tin pail deposited on the table in the center of the room.

"Father!" Miss Zapt gasped.

And Sargent also exclaimed. "Good Lord!"

"Eh?" Xenophon Xerxes Zapt, "Unknown Quantity Zapt," as his associates sometimes called him because of the double "X" in his name, the celebrated investigator of the unknown in science, lowered his head and jerked it around in the direction of his daughter's voice. There was the atmosphere about him of a small boy apprehended in some prank. He put out a hand and laid it on the little tin pail. "Did you speak, my dear?" Out of near-sighted blue eyes, he peered at his

radiant offspring who had drawn herself up in an indignant fashion.

"I did," said Miss Zapt firmly. "I suppose you're responsible for that?"

She lifted a graceful arm and pointed overhead, as indeed she very well might, considering that she pointed at the wildly gyrating form of a superb Angora cat.

One would hardly expect to find a Persian Angora flattened, with no visible means of support, against the ceiling of a room, as this one certainly was. She hung there threshing with frantic legs at the impalpable air, with a motion not unlike a rather desperate effort at swimming. Then she spun herself about in a circle, marked by a rapidly alternating head, from which gleamed yellow eyes and a twitching bushy tail. Her behavior was little short of hysteria.

"Meouw!" she voiced her troubled state once more as she heard her mistress's voice.

With poor tact Sargent chuckled. "Seems to have got the Angora's angora," he began.

Miss Zapt gave him a withering glance.

"Never mind, Fluffy pet," she called encouragement to the glaring creature that had temporarily given over its efforts and rested with back pressed against the ceiling.

And then she bore down on the little man who had once more lifted his eyes to the animal above him. "I suppose this

is another of your detestable experiments," she went on in a voice half tears and half rage. "What have you done to my cat?"

"Nothing, nothing—about the seventy-fifth of an ounce." Professor Zapt fumbled in his pocket for notebook and pencil, opened the former and touched the latter to his lips.

"Father!" Miss Zapt seized both book and pencil. She stamped her foot.

"Eh? Oh, yes, yes—exactly." Xenophon Xerxes glanced into her flushed face. "As a matter of fact I have done nothing to your pet, my child. Nothing at all worth mentioning, that is. Indeed, as you will note I have even exercised extreme caution. I have closed the windows, and the ceiling, of course, prevents her further ascension. But if you refer to her present position—"

"It is rather unusual, don't you think, professor?" said Bob. "Now if she were a flying squirrel—"

"Exactly," Xenophon Zapt cut him short. "The term flying-squirrel is a misnomer, however, Robert. The animal so-called is incapable of sustaining itself for any considerable time in the air. As to the former part of your remark, however, hers is indeed a most unusual position. It is that which proves the complete success of my experiment. You are now witnessing one of the marvels of the ages—voluntary levitation. The rediscovery of one of the lost secrets of the ancients. The means by which—"

Abruptly Nellie caught up the little pail. "I suppose your lost secret's in this?"

And swiftly Xenophon Zapt put out a hand to retrieve what she had seized. "Nellie," he commanded sternly, "replace that receptacle where you found it. As you surmise, it contains a substance of incalculable value. The first practical preparation of Zapt's Repulsive Paste."

"Wha-a-at!" Sargent crossed to gaze into the little bucket his fiancée was holding. "Does look sort of repulsive," he agreed after a glance at the mess in the bottom of the pail. "But—you mean this stuff is responsible for Fluffy's sudden elevation in life?"

"Exactly." Professor Zapt nodded. "The animal is not injured except in her feelings, I assure you. I merely rubbed a very small portion of the paste into the fur on the under side of her body, and she assumed the position you are now privileged to behold. I am sure that in later years you will be glad to recall this evening, to remember that you were the first to witness the reapplication of those principles once before known to our race. You—"

"Just at present," his daughter interrupted, "I'm far more interested in knowing whether, having sent her up there, you intend letting her remain until she starves to death."

"Eh?" Professor Zapt frowned. "Starves? Why, certainly not. Having demonstrated to our satisfaction the efficacy of the latest addition to science, we may consider the test as ended. If Robert will obtain a stepladder from the basement,

and you will procure some water in order that we may wash off the paste—"

"Sure," Bob said, and departed on his errand. Nellie went with him as far as the kitchen.

PROFESSOR ZAPT shook his head in depreciative fashion, retrieved his notebook and pencil from the table where Nellie had cast them, and began jotting down certain memoranda. His thin lips moved as his pencil traced its way across a page. "The seventy-fifth part of an ounce," he muttered.

Above his graying head glared a very much disgruntled cat. It was not the first time her mistress's father had made her the subject of some experiment.

Sargent and Nellie reappeared in due season. Bob set up his ladder and mounted to the rescue. Below, Nellie waited with a basin of warm water and a soft cloth in her hands.

"Lay her on her back," Professor Zapt advised as Sargent descended with the Angora clinging desperately to him. "That way she will not present any tendency to rise. The paste does not affect anything beneath it, but merely what is superimposed. That is the secret of its adaptability."

"Exactly," Bob said, grinning, and got down upon his knees.

Nellie knelt beside him. Together they administered to the resentful cat. While Bob held her, Nellie applied water to the body of her pet and dried her fur with the cloth. Fluffy glared, but submitted to superior force.

"Steady," said Bob at last, and turned her over. He removed his restraining hands, and in a flash she vanished through the door into the hall.

Xenophon watched the entire performance, his blue eyes glowing behind their lenses. He nodded as she disappeared. He rubbed his hands together as Bob rose and assisted Nellie to her feet. "A very satisfactory experiment," he declared; "a very satisfactory experiment indeed."

"If you don't let Fluffy alone"—Nellie turned on him—"I'll—I'll pack up and leave home." For years, since her mother's death, she had taken care of the little man's temporal wants and managed the house, but there were times when his complete attention to his scientific pursuits and his lack of attention to everything else, got badly on her nerves. And now her violet eyes were winking, and her red mouth quivered.

"Any time you feel like that, I'll see you have another to go to," Bob suggested as she paused, with a little catch in breath.

"Ahem!" Xenophon Xerxes Zapt glared. He did not approve so wholly of Bob as did his daughter. "Do not make any premature preparations, Robert," he said, after a rather tense interval in which Nellie blushed. "The animal is not

injured, as you yourself have seen, and as Nellie will realize in time. The main difficulty against which scientists have to contend in these days of self-interest is the conventional attitude of the average mind.

"Human beings are prone to allow some purely personal view-point to overshadow the major object to be attained. In the present instance it is consideration for a cat. It is permitted to obscure the fact that through her use we have demonstrated the rediscovery of the means by which the Egyptians built the Pyramids."

"What? By Jove!" Sargent opened his eyes in wonder as the point struck home. "You really mean that, professor?"

"Exactly," said Xenophon Zapt benignly, and stroked the graying whiskers on either side of his chin.

"But if that's the case," Bob began quickly, and came to a tongue-tied pause.

"It is the case, Robert."

"I know—but—" Sargent floundered. "If it is, why couldn't you have proved it just as well with a book or a rock or a box?"

For an instant the professor's blue eyes twinkled. "I suppose I could have done so, Robert," he replied, "but, as a matter of fact, I took the first object at hand when I was ready to make the test. I—er—that is, I didn't give the matter any further thought.

"My mind was focused on the larger point, the demonstration which proves beyond question that Zapt's Repulsive Paste will revolutionize the commercial world. By means of it we shall be able to accomplish marvels heretofore quite beyond any engineering scope. We shall, by inserting definite quantities of the paste between the object to be transported and the earth, be able to move enormous buildings, nullify the weight of tremendous loads, alter the entire present-day conception as appertaining to weight."

"I don't doubt it," Bob agreed in actually enthusiastic fashion. "Lord, professor, it's simply wonderful when you explain it; and it's already sent Fluffy to the ceiling, and moved Nellie to tears."

"You beast," said Miss Zapt; but she smiled.

Her father frowned. "My chief objection to you, Robert, is the somewhat bizarre sense of humor which induces you to approach matters of weight in a light mood. If you would refrain from undue levity, there are times when I would be inclined to appreciate your otherwise not unintelligent apprehension of the results of scientific investigation."

"I beg your pardon, sir," Bob apologized meekly. "What was it you were saying about the Pyramids?"

"The world has long marveled how they were built, how it was possible to transport and place in their walls monoliths of such enormous size. The answer was suggested some years ago, but never carried further, so far as I am aware. It was reserved for me to prove the truth of that suggestion and

give again to the world a substance similar in effect at least to the one they used.

"That substance you have seen in operation tonight. It is in principle a screen for gravitation. Objects above it become for the moment practically devoid of weight; mere trifles light as air."

"You mean it cuts off the operation of gravitation on anything above it?" Bob asked. "Why, that's marvelous, professor."

"Exactly," Xenophon Zapt agreed.

"Dead or alive?"

"Animate or inanimate, as you have seen." The professor rubbed his hands. He eyed the stylish shoes his daughter's fiancé was wearing. "For instance, Robert, I could rub a certain amount on the soles of your shoes, and you would walk a certain distance from the floor. Depending upon the quantity employed in proportion to your weight, you would rise slightly or higher, as the centripetal force of the earth revolutions threw you off.

"The entire action is capable of regulation by means of a calculation based upon the weight of the object to be moved. If I knew your exact weight I could cause you to lose ponderability altogether. I could even make you disappear. Still," he sighed, "I presume Nellie would object to that even more loudly than she protested my use of the cat. However,

as a matter of scientific demonstration, it would be interesting, I think."

"Oh, very." Bob drew his modish footwear well under the chair in which he was sitting, and Nellie stiffened.

Xenophon Zapt arose. "I think I shall go to my study now and write a brief account of my experiment. Tomorrow I shall begin the preparation of a large amount of the powder which, blended with water, constitutes the paste. I shall organize a company after a bit. If you wish, Robert, I shall permit you to purchase a reasonable amount of stock. Good night."

"Good night, sir. Thank you," said Bob, and watched him disappear, a quaint little figure in his loose slippers, his iron-gray whiskers and his shapeless, flapping coat.

And after the professor was quite out of sight, Bob turned to Nellie. "Lord! Do you suppose he's really got it?" he remarked. "Something surely happened to Fluffy, and after we washed off the paste she was all right, and—I guess those old wiseacres did know something in their day. It makes a fellow feel funny—Egyptians and Pyramids, and all those old things."

Five minutes later, while Professor Xenophon Xerxes Zapt drew paper before him and dipped his pen in ink, his daughter and Sargent sat very close together on the living-room couch.

TRUE to his promise, Professor Xenophon Xerxes Zapt spent the major portion of the succeeding day mixing and blending the ingredients of the powder which, when mixed with water, constituted the Repulsive Paste. He heaped it upon a tray and left it on a table in the upstairs room that he habitually used as the scene of his scientific investigations—a room overlooking, from broad windows, the tree-shaded street.

And the succeeding morning he charged downstairs about ten and informed Nellie that he had nearly overlooked the fact that he meant to attend the meeting of a scientific body to which he belonged in a neighboring town. In considerable haste he arrayed himself in clean shirt and collar, the frock-coat, to which he consistently clung, and hat, and was on the point of departure for a train, when Nellie suggested that he had better wear his shoes, rather than the slippers on his feet. The professor acceding rather impatiently to the suggestion, the change of footgear was made and he departed. After that the day dragged past until-four o'clock.

At that hour Bob Sargent, seated in the office where he dispensed legal advice to sundry clients, answered a ring on his phone.

"Oh, Bobby," came the voice of Miss Zapt; "come up to dinner. Dad's gone to one of his society meetings and he won't be home till rather late, and with all these recent burglaries and hold-ups in the city, I'm sort of nervous."

"Yes, you are," said Sargent with the chuckle, deriding the confession of Miss Zapt's timorous nerves.

"Yes, really, I am," she insisted. "You'll come, won't you, Bob?"

"I will," said Bob without hesitation. And he did.

Because he was in love, and a dinner with his sweetheart tête-à-tête is something no true lover in his senses will pass up. He arrived about six with a box of Nellie's favorite candy and anticipations of a pleasant evening, since Miss Zapt's experience as manager of her father's household had made a dinner under her supervision a thing not to be missed.

In this particular case anticipation proved no more than the precursor of realization. The dinner was a course affair of finely balanced quality, and the two young people rather dallied over it, from soup to cheese, as young people sometimes will, until a sudden deepening of the twilight sent Nellie to the window just as a peal of thunder reverberated sharply through the house.

"Goodness, it's going to rain cats and dogs, Bob!" she exclaimed. "The sky's as black as ink."

"Let 'er rain," said Sargent, content with a well-filled stomach and the society of the lady of his affections. "We've a good roof over our heads, so we should worry."

"I was thinking of father," Nellie explained and giggled as she recounted the professor's attempt to leave home without

his shoes. "He's so absent-minded about little things. Mercy!"

A small cyclone seemed sweeping through the house, sending curtains eddying in flapping streamers, and doors banging as they were caught and slammed in the draft.

There followed a few moments of rapid effort in closing windows and making all secure, and then youth and maiden stood briefly watching the first dashing flurry of the summer shower, before they pulled down the shades and withdrew to a low-toned conversation, dealing as usual under similar conditions, quite largely with themselves.

Meanwhile, some distance up the street, a large and heavy-set figure sheltered itself as best it might beneath an arching tree, while waiting for the shower to pass.

It was that of Officer Dan McGuinness, patrolman on the beat that included the Zapt house. It wasn't a very exciting beat as a rule, but recently Danny had been nursing hopes. As Miss Zapt had said to Bob that afternoon, there had been a lot of burglaries of late and Danny really couldn't see why fate should not be kind and send one of the as yet unapprehended prowlers into his quiet street. He was thinking about it now as he listened to the patter of the rain among the leaves.

"Shure it would be a grand noight for a poorch-climber to git in his fancy wuruk," he soliloquized. "Th' wind an' th' rain would cover any noises he might be makin'. 'Tis th' sort of

noight I'd consider as made to me order was I a burglar myself."

And the thought having taken hold upon him was with him still, as the shower swept on across the countryside, and the moon appearing, began to flirt with the dripping landscape from behind a veil of ragged clouds. It sent him on down the street with a wary eye for any burglarious-minded individual who might have been of the same opinion as himself.

Thus he came in time to a house, with a wide front porch, above which was an open window; and rising over the top of the porch as Danny watched, an object like a human head.

With a heart beginning to beat more quickly, McGuinness drew into the shadow of a tree, and waited. He knew this house as the home of Professor Xenophon Xerxes Zapt, inhabited by the old man and his daughter. That open window and the head rising cautiously over the edge of the porch roof fitted in with the thoughts McGuinness had been entertaining. He thrust his club into its loop and felt for his revolver. He was convinced that at last he had been given his chance to prove himself.

The head kept on rising. It was followed by a crouching body, and a pair of legs. It became the figure of a man crawling on top of the porch toward the open window with the silent caution, of stealth. Once it appeared to hesitate, to slip on the slanting surface, and then it again went on.

OFFICER McGUINNESS had seen enough. He drew his gun and started at a heavy run for the gate in the fence before the house. And having reached it, he slipped through it without sound. He did not follow the walk, but tiptoed with burly caution over the dampened lawn, made his way quite close to the porch. Then and then only did he lift his voice in a heavy, authoritative summons:

"Coom out of ut, me poorch-climbin' beauty. What are ye doin' up there?"

For a moment the figure above him went flat. The flirtatious moon peeped out long enough to reveal it sprawled on the rain-soaked shingles. And then, in most surprising fashion, it floated straight up into the air!

Danny McGuinness stared. Little by little while his breath came harshly, he tilted back his head to observe that most amazing ascent of a human body without apparent means or visible cause.

The man was swimming up as one might swim in water, to judge by the frantic thrashing of his arms and legs. But— Danny had never heard of anyone's swimming in the air.

His eyes popped and his jaw dropped as his intended prisoner mounted twenty, fifty, seventy feet and paused, seemingly unable to go any higher. The policeman removed his helmet and scratched his head. The thing was beyond all precedent of experience, a defiance of natural law. A criminal accosted might vault a fence, or climb a wall, or even scale a building in an effort at escape; but to drop on his

face and bounce into the air—and—stay there like a—like a kite! Danny put some of his bewilderment into a baffled mutter.

"He went up," he mumbled. "I ask, is ut a man, or a flea or a flyin' fish, devil take 'im. Coom down, I says, an' instead of realizin' th' disadvantages of his position, he rose straight up like a airyplane an' there he is."

And then remembering the dignity of the law and his own standing as a representative of its force, he addressed the figure above him: "Well, that's enough now. Yer quite a burd to judge by yer actions, but—come on down out of that, and light."

Above him the figure was still undergoing contortions beneath the moon and the broken clouds. As he spoke it rolled half-way over and started like a plummet for the earth. Out of it there broke a strangled exclamation of sheer instinctive terror. By a wild effort it again reversed its position and once more shot aloft.

"Up an' down," said Officer McGuinness. "Ye've foine control an' quite a lot of speed, an' that was a grand exhibition. But finish th' trip next time. I've seen enough of yer tricks."

There followed a breathless interval and then a gasping response, "I c-a-a-a-an't!"

"Huh?" Officer McGuinness began to feel the least bit annoyed. He began to entertain a suspicion that this night-

hawk was making sport of a member of the police. At the least he was denying what Danny had actually seen with his own good eyes. "Ye can't, can't ye?" he remarked at length. "Well, th' way ut looked to me, ye started out all right."

"Yes, an' if I'd a kept on, you dub, I'd a broke my neck."

"Shmall loss an' ye'd had," said Danny, his anger rising at the other man's form of address. "An' 'tis not all noight I hov to stand here watchin' ye act like a bloomin' bat."

"Who's actin'?" It was a snarl that answered. "If you think I'm doin' this for my health, you got even less sense than th' average cop. I tell you—"

"That's enough. You don't need to tell me nuthin'." Officer McGuinness's outraged dignity came to his aid. "You're under arrest."

"Oh, am I?" Apparently the man in the air was inclined to dispute the patrolman.

"Ye are." Danny stood by his statement none the less.

"Then why don't you come up and get me?"

"Because I ain't no rubber ball." It was a taunt and nothing else, and Danny knew it, but he didn't know exactly what to do about it. He shifted his position, moving in until he stood close beside the porch.

It was a most amazing situation. He might call the fire department and get the extension-tower, but that would ruin

the professor's lawn. He might shoot the defiant captive, and yet he doubted if such action on his part would be considered as justified. There might be a question as to whether or no a man's floating up in the air constituted resisting arrest.

He had been taught that an officer should always keep cool. Only it was hard to keep cool in the face of such an amazing situation. Once more he scratched his head and eyed the figure between himself and the moon. The odd thing was the fellow didn't go any higher or even try to swim off. That was another thing that Danny couldn't understand. In fact, he couldn't understand anything that had happened during the last fifteen minutes. The whole thing was a bit too much for his brain.

"How do you do ut?" he asked at length.

"I don't do it, you square-head." The flying man disclaimed all hint at a personal prowess.

"Oh, don't you?" A fine scorn crept into Danny's tones. "Then I should loike to know who does."

"I don't know, dang it," gibbered the other's voice. "You started it yourself, comin' up on me like you did. There was something on the roof, I tell you. I laid down in it when you yelled at me. I felt it, it was sticky. I got it on my clothes—"

"On th' roof?" Danny interrupted with a flash of understanding. He knew considerable about Xenophon Zapt. He had even been mixed up once or twice in his experiments, quite outside his own intent.

"Yes. It stuck to me when I laid down, an' it's keepin' me up here, I guess. If I lay on my face I'm all right, but I start fallin' as soon as I turn on my back. Here's some of the danged stuff, if you want a closer look." Something whistled through the air and hit the spot where Danny had been standing.

But Danny wasn't there. As the other man spoke he had ducked and stepped aside. And straightway he became conscious of two things at once. The man had sunk a trifle nearer the earth after throwing down whatever it was he had scraped from his clothing, and—there was something the matter with his, Officer McGuiness's foot.

It was exhibiting a most remarkable inclination to rise into the air despite Danny's efforts to keep it on the ground. It was throwing him off his balance. Instinctively he hopped sidewise to save himself from falling, landed his one sane foot in what might have been a mass of soft mud on the grass under the eaves of the porch, and became aware that it also had gone wild.

AT ONCE Officer Dan McGuiness found himself in a most bewildering case. He had large feet, powerful, tireless in the path of duty, and the soles of his shoes were of a large expanse. Yet, strangely enough now, those heavy feet seemed to have taken on a quality positively airy. Strive as he would, they refused to remain on the grass. In desperation he tried a step and found himself unable to thrust either leg or foot

downward to a contact with the earth. Still struggling against belief he repeated the endeavor with the other foot and found himself mounting to the level of the porch roof. Then and then only did realization and acceptance of the situation come upon him.

"Whu-roo!" He gave vent to a full-toned Irish shout of comprehension and continued his progress aloft.

Inside the house as that shout woke the echoes of the night, Miss Zapt pricked her pretty ears. "Bob," she said sharply, "what was that?"

"Sounded like a yell or a battle-cry or something," Sargent made answer. "I've had a notion I heard voices outside for the past few minutes. Maybe I'd better find out."

He rose, and Nellie followed him into the hall. He opened the door and they both stepped out on the porch.

At first they saw nothing, and then a gruff voice drifted to them: "Lie shtill, ye spalpeen. Ye tould me to come an' git ye an', begob, I hov. Quit yer squirmin' or I'll bust yer bean wid me club."

"Bob!" Miss Zapt seized her companion's arm. She had recognized those stentorian tones: "That's Officer McGuiness. They—they must be on the roof."

"Probably." Sargent went down the porch steps before he lifted his eyes, and then he, too, gasped at what he beheld and his voice came a bit unsteady. "Good Lord, Nellie! Look at that!"

He lifted an arm and pointed to where Danny, treading air very much as a man treads water, was endeavoring to still the struggles of a human figure sprawled out weirdly with its face to the earth.

Miss Zapt took one glance at the spectacle above her and shrieked: "Bob—they'll be killed!"

There came the click of the gate and a little man with iron-gray whiskers and a flapping frock-coat came up the walk.

"Ahem," he said rather dryly, "just what is the meaning of so excitable a statement? Who will be killed, may I ask?"

"Officer McGuinness and—somebody else," Nellie stammered.

"Eh?" Professor Zapt stared, out of his near-sighted eyes. "Indeed? I fail to perceive any indications of an impending tragedy myself. Where are they?"

"There!" Once more Sargent pointed aloft.

"Huh?" The professor tilted back his head as Bob's arm rose. "Bless my soul!" he exclaimed and stared for at least fifteen seconds before he raised his voice in a question: "Officer McGuinness, exactly how did you get up there?"

Danny may have sensed the presence of those beneath him, but if so he had thus far given no sign. Now, however, he managed to snap the handcuffs on his man, tilted his head and shot a glance at the earth.

"An' is ut you, professor?" he replied. "Shure, an' if it is how I got up here yer askin' why I walked, though barrin' th' fact how I done ut I dunno, except that this poorch-climbin' beauty floated offen yer roof when I told him to come down, I stepped into somethin' on th' grass. An' then I found meself endowed wid th' ability of follerin' after, belike because of whatever it was I had got on me fate. An' 'tis not so much how I got up is troublin' me now, as how I shall git down wid th' burd I've caught."

"Remarkable—actually remarkable!" said Professor Xenophon Xerxes Zapt. "Officer, this is most amazing. Let me think—let me think." He made his way to the porch steps and found himself a seat.

"If I moight be suggesting sor, don't be thinkin' too long at present." Danny's voice came down in the tone of a plaint. "'Tis tiresome work entirely, this walkin' on air. 'Tis not an angel I am as yet, an' there is nothin' to sit on at all, at all, an' th' steady movement is tirin' on th' legs."

"Then stop it," said the other in a manner of impatience. "Keep your feet still and float." He began pulling at his graying whiskers as though minded to tear them out by the roots. Presently he hopped up, trotted a few steps down the walk, lifted his eyes to the laboratory windows and nodded. And then he turned to Bob and Nellie. "Did it rain here tonight?"

"It did," Bob declared.

"Wind—preceding the shower?"

"Lots of it at first."

"That explains it," said Xenophon Xerxes Zapt.

"Glad of it—" Bob began.

The professor gave him a glance. "If you will kindly let me finish my remarks. As I told you I would, I prepared a quantity of the Paste Powder the other day and left it when I departed this morning to catch a train. In my haste I forgot to close the windows. The wind blew the powder upon the roof and the rain converted it into the paste and washed some of it off on the lawn—"

"If yer quite done thinkin', professor, sor," Officer McGuinness interrupted, "would you moind tellin' me how to get down?"

"Eh?" Xenophon Zapt jerked up his head to view the patrolman and his captive. "Oh, yes—yes—certainly. That's simple. You have the substance merely on your feet?"

"Yes, sor."

"Then hold them up."

"Hould thim up? Hould thim up where?" Danny's tone was growing a trifle excited. "If I try houldin' up my fate, I'll be losin' my balance and breakin' my—"

"Exactly." Professor Zapt's voice grew crisp. "Take hold of your prisoner, bend your legs at the knees, so as to elevate the soles of your shoes and let gravity do the rest. Robert, go

turn on the hose that we may wash the paste off the officer's feet when he reaches the ground. He's all mussed up."

Bob departed, running, on his errand. By the time he was back Danny had effected a landing and was kneeling on the grass with his captive stretched out on his back within reach.

WITHIN five minutes the paste was removed from McGuinness's feet and he stood erect.

"Shure, an' 'tis wonderful stuff, professor," he began after he had taken a deep breath of relief. "An' what moight you call th' same?"

"Zapt's Repulsive Paste," said the professor. "It robs anybody above it of weight."

"What do ye think of that now?" Officer Dan exclaimed. "But 'tis no more than th' truth yer spakin'. I've had an example of its effects myself. Oh, would ye!"

He broke off and sprang, snatching into the air to grip and drag back the form of his prisoner, who in the momentary distraction of conversation had managed to roll himself on his face.

Danny slammed him down none too gently, it must be confessed. "Lie there now, ye human balloon," he admonished in a growl, "or I'll make ye more repulsive than any kind of paste ye ever saw. If ye think I'm going to let

Spur Heel Eddie slip out of my fingers, once they grip him
—"

"Spur Heel Eddie?" Sargent repeated in excitement.
"McGuinness, is that right?"

"Roight ut is—dead roight, Mister Sargent," Danny chuckled. "Shure, an 'tis a foine noight's wuruk. He's the burd we've been sort of thinkin' was behindt all these here burglaries happenin' th' last two weeks."

"And you caught him trying to burglarize my house." Professor Zapt's fingers slipped inside his coat. They came out with something crisp. "Officer, let me express my appreciation of your fidelity to duty."

"Thank ye, sor." Danny deftly pocketed the "appreciation" without removing his watchful eye from Eddie, "As I was sayin', McGuinness niver shirks his duty, an' 'tis a foine noight's wuruk."

"I'll go in and telephone for the wagon," suggested Bob.

"Don't trouble, sor," said Danny. "Begorra, I'll be takin' him in myself."

Stooping, he rolled Eddie face downward, seized him securely by the slack of the trousers and started to walk with him across the grass.

"Ye'll notice that wi'd all this Repulsive Paste smeared on him, if I carry him loike this he hasn't any weight at all," he announced from the gate.

"Exactly. You're a man of intelligence, McGuinness."
Xenophon Xerxes Zapt turned to enter his house. "Good night."

"Good night, sor," Officer McGuinness made answer.

"Good night," Bob echoed with a chuckle as he watched Eddie, literally held fast by the strong arm of the law, borne off down the tree-shaded street until he disappeared.

Professor Zapt whirled upon him. "The occasion is not one of levity, Robert," he remarked in decidedly acid tones.

"No, sir. Merely of levitation," said Bob.

[The end of *The Gravity Experiment* by J. U. (John Ulrich) Giesy]