

# PLANET STORIES

20c

STRANGE ADVENTURES ON OTHER WORLDS  
— THE UNIVERSE OF FUTURE CENTURIES

## GODDESS OF THE MOON

THE CRATERS SPEW A SLIMY GREEN ARMY BENT ON SMASHING THE MOON GODDESS AND HER EARTHMAN PROTECTOR.

by JOHN MURRAY REYNOLDS

## MARTIAN TERROR

by ED EARL REEP

## THE GIRL FROM INFINITE SMALLNESS

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*Title:* The Girl from Infinite Smallness

*Author:* Cummings, Ray

*Date of first publication:* 1940

*Date first posted:* March 29, 2020

*Date last updated:* May 2, 2020

Faded Page ebook#20200590

Produced by Greg Weeks, Mary Meehan and the Online  
Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>



# **THE GIRL FROM INFINITE SMALLNESS**

**By RAY CUMMINGS**

**Into a different space-sphere bursts Lea,  
terrified Princess of the microcosmic Heanas,  
searching for an earthling champion. For the  
vicious Taroh had thieved the secret of  
transcendant growth, and he's marching to  
crush the gentle sub-world of Helos.**

**[Transcriber's Note: This etext was produced from  
Planet Stories Spring 1940.**

**Extensive research did not uncover any evidence that  
the U.S. copyright on this publication was renewed.]**

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Young George Carter had always particularly liked the little rock garden which lay on the declivity behind his home. His mother, now dead, had designed and planted it with loving care. In the spring, and particularly on hot summer evenings when the moonlight patched the garden with silver, it was his favorite spot, the place where he liked to sit alone, smoking and dreaming.

Despite his intention of following in his father's footsteps and becoming a scientist, there was incongruously much of the dreamer, the romanticist, in young George Carter. At nineteen now, six feet tall, he was lean and rangy, with a rugged, handsome face, dark eyes and unruly, longish black hair. Admiring college girls had sometimes told him that he was a combination of Abe Lincoln and Lord Byron. That pleased him, though in his heart he knew it really wasn't very important.

He was finished with his studies now, ready for the world of achievement. His father, a retired Professor of Ethnology, had arranged the financing of an exploring expedition. Alice—George's twin sister, who from birth had been blind—was going to visit distant relatives. George and his father would go to central Asia. Perhaps they would find some Neanderthal skeletons, crumbling bones that could be pieced together thrillingly to throw more light upon the nature of our savage ancestors of a few million years ago.

It was an exciting prospect to young Carter. All the spirit of adventurous youth stirred within him at the thought of it. But nevertheless, this summer more than ever, when the night breeze rustled the leaves and the moonlight patched his mother's little rock garden, he found himself liking to lie out there alone, smoking and vaguely dreaming of things less remote than Asiatic Neanderthal skeletons of a million years ago.

Undoubtedly—this particular July evening—young Carter drowsed off into complete unconsciousness, with his long lanky figure sprawled in the chair. He was awakened by a faint vague sound so abnormal to the somnolent little garden that at once it snapped him into alertness. It sounded like a faint cry—a little gasp of human fear. He sat up, startled, but the sound was gone. There seemed nothing here but the patches of moonlight and the dim outlines of the garden.... Then Carter sucked in his breath and tensed, with his hands gripping the sides of his canvas chair. There was a girl standing off

there between the sundial and the distant hedge—a girl smaller than Alice, with the moonlight shining on the pale fabric of her dress that hung from her shoulders to above her knees. A gray-blue cord crossed to divide her breasts, encircled her slim waist and hung with tassels down one side to her knees. He saw her face, with hair streaming down to frame it—a face that stared at him with terror.

"Well," he murmured. "Good Heavens, where did you come from?"

He jumped to his feet. Again she gave the little cry of fear, and like a faun darted backward until the hedge stopped her. She had come into a brighter patch of moonlight now, and the sight made him gasp. Her short tasseled robe was torn and soiled. Her bare legs were scratched and splotched with blood that had dried. On her feet, buskins tied with thongs about her ankles were ragged, dirty and bloodstained. Her whole aspect suggested an arduous, perhaps desperate journey.

Thoughts are instant things. For that moment he stared, transfixed; and like a trapped little animal she gazed back at him. He saw that she was young, fifteen or sixteen perhaps. A girl in a fancy dress costume, who had run a long way and was cowering here in terror. But then he saw her pale-gold hair, almost silvery in the moonlight; the flesh of her neck and arms and face, queerly seeming to glow, as though opalescent—saw her face of exquisite, but very strange beauty. Oriental? He knew it was not that. And all his sudden thoughts of rationality were stricken from him with the startled idea that this girl could belong to no race that had ever been known on Earth. Idiotic thought! But he could not thrust it away.

He was advancing upon her now. "Who the devil are you?" he demanded. "How did you get in here? What's happened to you?"

She was trembling as a faun might stand its ground and tremble, so that now he was beside her, with her face at his shoulder as she stared up at him. Then she was murmuring something, in a language of soft limpid syllables. A language of Earth? Certainly it didn't seem so. She was breathing hard; her whole aspect showed exhaustion.

"You're all in," he murmured. "Good Heavens, you look as though you'd walked from California and climbed half a dozen mountains."

Idiotic words, especially as obviously she couldn't understand them. His hand went to her shoulder. Perhaps she was badly hurt.... He must get her into the house....

But at his touch she twitched loose. She was staring past him now to where the moonlight glistened on the rippling little lily pool. Then she darted away; and at the pool knelt down, plunging her face, drinking deeply, greedily as one drinks who has been much too long without water....

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It was several weeks before Professor Carter, Alice and George had any clear idea of who the strange, weirdly beautiful young girl might be, or where she had come from. Her name, which almost at once she was able to indicate to them, sounded as though it might be Lea—a limpid syllable as near that as they could determine. Professor Carter had told no one in the quiet little New England village about her. For the first few days, vaguely it had seemed that from some distant place a hue and cry would be raised for her; news that such a girl had escaped from some asylum, circus or Heaven knows what.

But nothing developed. No such girl seemed missing. It confirmed George and his father's own conviction; incredibly this timid, new little inmate of the prosaic Carter household was of a race so far unknown.

"Why, look at her, George," Professor Carter had exclaimed that first evening. "That complexion, creamy, ivory-tinted—perfect for an earth-girl. But don't you see that glow of opalescence in it? God, that's weird, unnatural, unexplainable. And look at the shape of her skull—not our shape. Not Neanderthal. I'd call it perhaps more in the line of Cro-Magnon. Yet hardly that either. My guess is that the skeleton formation, particularly the skull, certainly in many ways represents a development different from ours."

Professor Carter was scientifically enthusiastic, amazed and thrilled by this mysterious specimen of living young female so miraculously here for him to study. George's father was a stocky, thick-set man of nearly sixty, square-rigged like a brig. His face was solid, heavily lined from almost a constant habit of grimness. He had a sunburned baldspot with a fringe of iron-gray hair. There was nothing of the dreamer, the romanticist in the practical scientific nature of Professor Carter—save that to him, everything scientific was the essence of romance. His deep-set gray eyes were sparkling with earnestness as he regarded the queerly beautiful little Lea.

"A primitive race, George. And yet, look at her expression. Those delicately chiseled features. She has artistic feeling—a mentality different from ours,

but perhaps in some ways even more advanced."

To young Carter, the classification was repugnant, as though this frightened, wild little creature were a bug under a microscope. And Alice evidently felt the same.

"Father, stop it!" she exclaimed. "Don't boom at her like that. She's still too frightened."

George's blind sister was slender, brown-haired. Her face had a gentle, wistful beauty, enhanced into pathos by the blankness of her pale-brown eyes. Here in her own home where she had lived all her sightless life, she could move with almost normal freedom. It was she who took care of Lea at first. But as the days passed into weeks the strange little visitor, alert of mentality, always with a whimsical smile, began taking care of the blind girl. Lea's language of soft, weird syllables defied Professor Carter's classification. He and George could do nothing with it. But from the first, with extraordinary concentration and abnormal aptitude, at once Lea began learning English. That her mentality was different, and in this respect certainly far superior to their own, immediately became apparent. With amazing rapidity she memorized and understood the words and phrases with which patiently they drilled her. With Alice as her constant companion, she made an immediate effort to fit into what was for her, the strangeness of their household. Often she would laugh with what obviously was a keen sense of whimsical humor—a little rippling rill of girlish laughter....

The knowledge of who she was and where she had come from, of necessity was imparted gradually to the still incredulous Carters. Obviously now she was struggling with their language with the desire to tell them. There was still another mystery about her which that very first evening, Alice had discovered. Beneath one of her armpits, held by a strap around her body, there was a small vial, seemingly of some tough vegetable fiber. She had wildly, vehemently resisted everyone's effort to touch it; she would never let it leave her person.

Then at last came her ability to make them really understand that she had come from a strange world of infinite smallness. A world so tiny that it was vastly beyond the reach of any microscope. A world in an atom.

"I watch—very careful as I grow large," she said. "I can show you now from where I come." Then she led them, amazed and, of course, still incredulous, out into the garden. At the broken old sundial she indicated to them its metal pointer, near the end of which there was a tiny abrasion.



"From there," she insisted. "I notice it well when I come. You wait—I tell to you soon—when the English for me get better."

To young Carter who watched her always with a mixture of struggling emotions which he could not himself understand, it seemed that a shadow crossed her expressive little face as she showed them the spot on the green-bronzed aged pointer of the old sundial. A single atom, down there in the metal, housed her world. She was worried about her people....

Amazing infinity of smallness! As a scientist, young Carter had been reared upon the contemplation of how little one can really know of the multiplicity of things which exist in the Universe. The remoteness of inter-stellar space to him had always been awesome. And here was an opposite remoteness. An infinity of smallness....

Lea's English was sometimes quaint, but adequate to her task, that evening when in detail she told them....

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My people—Lea said—live in the mountains and in the forests around the big lake. The main city, it is called Helos. We are the Heanas, most civilized people in our world....

It was a strange picture which the girl evoked of her world within an atom of the sundial pointer. From a shimmering, luminescent lake in a region of soft-glowing twilight, hills of a strange blue-gray vegetation rose in great undulating terraces toward the distant mountains. The Heanas were a peaceful people. Nature had always been kind; food was readily grown; the people's few wants always had been easily supplied. Crime among them had always been very little. But there was some, of course—crimes of fundamental motive; love, hate, jealousy, cupidity, revenge. Wherever humans exist, such crimes are inevitable.

It happened that when Lea was just emerging from childhood—perhaps a thousand times of sleep ago—there was a man in Helos named Taroh. He had been what might be called a chemist—his work created substances which kept the fields fertile so that foods might easily and swiftly be grown. Neither Lea nor her father—who was ruler of the city of Helos—liked this Taroh. And shortly after that, the fellow was caught and convicted of killing another man. For punishment he was banished from the land of the Heanas

—sent to live forever in the region of darkness beyond the mountains, in the country of the Malobs, as it was called.

For a thousand times of sleep, little was heard in Helos of this Taroh. But it was known that he had risen to be a ruler of the colony of banished criminals like himself; that he had organized them, and organized the savage tribe of Malobs—men who lived in caves or roamed the black distant forests and killed the lurking animals for food.

"Like our Neanderthals," Professor Carter interjected, when Lea had further described to them the savage, primitive Malobs.

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In Helos they were beginning to fear that Taroh might have become a menace. Occasional visitors to banished relatives in the Malob colony brought darkling hints back to Helos that Taroh was promising to have his revenge; that some day there would be a war like the ancient wars; the exiles and the Malobs would be victorious and they would rule and enjoy the better lands and better climates which the Heanas now were ruling. It had frightened Lea's father and his counselors. Secretly they had selected a young Heana named Artone, who volunteered to pretend that he was convicted of a crime and banished; and thus go and as a spy join Taroh to find out what was going on. This was known to Lea. She liked Artone—he was young, handsome and courageous. She feared for him; his mission was dangerous.

Then, during one of the times of sleep, Artone had returned to Helos, riding one of the swift iguaras. Lea had met him, before he met anyone else in Helos. And his news was terrifying. Even before Taroh had been banished—Artone had learned—he had been experimenting with a diabolical, dangerous drug. It was finished now. A drug which effected the growth of living cell-organisms. Young Artone had been clever. He had gained Taroh's confidence, so that one night the drunken Taroh and an evil woman who called herself Tara after him, gloatingly told Artone all about it.

Lea had only partially understood the depth of scientific principles involved. To enlarge the bodily size of a living human, for instance, Taroh had said, engaged no deeper problem than does a slight expansion of tissue—or the rapid growth of a single cell—except that it must be carried farther. The problem was to find a combination of chemicals, sufficiently unharmed to

life, that would so act upon the cells as to cause an increase of their bulk without changing their shape—a uniform proportionate rate of growth of each cell, so that the body shape would not be altered.

Taroh, experimenting with simple living organisms, had progressed to insects, and then to himself. He had found, too, that any object of animal or vegetable cell structure which is held in close physical contact with the enlarging body, likewise would be expanded, because they would be within the natural aura of magnetic field with which every living thing is surrounded. Thus a man's garments, his weapons closely held against him—unless they were mineral—would grow large with him.

"And Taroh planned to take this drug?" George Carter exclaimed. "And grow large? A man a hundred feet tall perhaps—so that he could come and devastate your city of Helos? Why of course he could do that!"

It had been Taroh's boasted intention. But Lea, hearing of it from the breathless Artone, had ridden back at once with Artone on the huge iguara. It had pleased and flattered the drunken Taroh that the girl, out of attraction for him, had come to join him, so that Lea had been able to learn from him where he kept the diabolic drug.

"You did that?" Professor Carter exploded. "Look here, young woman, you mean to say on a thing of importance like that you didn't tell your father and his counselors? You dared take the thing into your own hands?"

Lea's slant eyes beneath her long lashes flung him a sidewise glance; her lips twisted into a whimsical smile.

"It could be that there are some things," she said demurely, "where a woman's wit is better than the strength of a man's arms." And she added slyly, "You are much like my father, Professor Carter."

She had gotten the drug. And with it, upon the verge of being trapped, she had no recourse but to take the drug herself, and by growing gigantic, escape from Taroh. The drug at first had blurred her senses. That, and her terror, had sent her reeling out into the faintly luminous darkness of the Malob country. Quite evidently she had taken far more of the drug than she planned. Half conscious, she had been aware of the dwindling rocky landscape—gullies closing in upon her so that she had to draw her expanding body upward or its bulk in the apparently shrinking space would have crushed her.

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It had been a weird and ghastly journey to the terrified Lea. Professor Carter, George and Alice sat tense, amazed as they tried to visualize what so earnestly she was describing. Then at last the dose of the drug she had taken wore off. She had desperately climbed from a shrinking valley into a new vista of barren rocky waste. Exhausted, she had slept. Then she was cold, hungry and thirsty. For hours and for miles she had wandered over the gigantic, empty, naked terrain of metallic rocks. Without food or water, she knew she would die. There was nothing she could do save to take more of the drug, with the monstrous landscape again shrinking until at last there was different air, different light.

She emerged finally, with other, decreasing doses of the drug which now she had learned to regulate—emerged upon the pointer of the Carter sundial. And growing still larger, had been able to drop to the surface of the sundial itself, and then with more growth, to the ground. She was in the Carter garden, where presently the last tiny taste of the drug wore off. With size unchanging she stood terrified and amazed in the strange silver and black world—and then she had seen the strange-looking man who was George Carter, lying in his chair....

For a moment the Carters were silent as Lea ended her amazing narrative. It seemed incredible, but they had to believe it; the girl was so earnest; her words carried such a wealth of corroborating detail. It made them realize anew what a vast multiplicity of human life must be hidden away beyond our ken in the Universe!... Later that evening, George and his father discussed it.

"Naturally the human life within atoms of our own earth has developed in our own image," Professor Carter was saying. "The same life-source—same general lines of evolution. A different environment—that, and a different size. But still fundamentally the same. Why, I'll be able to lecture on this, George. That girl Lea—she can appear with me." He slapped George enthusiastically on the back. "This will be a big thing for us, boy. We'll be world famous, once we make it known."

"Will we?" Young Carter sat with his gaze focused far through the walls of the living room—gazing out to the conjured vision of a world of Heanas, and savage Malobs. The lamplit living room here was silent. Alice had gone to bed. Lea had retired to her room up there also.

"I was thinking," George said. "That fellow Taroh—Lea stole his drug, but he can make more. Why not? Maybe by now that's what he's done. To trample gigantic, upon Lea's people—to wreck that little city—"

It seemed that there was a faint noise at the top of the hall stairs. George and his father glanced up inquiringly, then decided that it was nothing.

"We must get the rest of that enlarging drug away from her," Professor Carter said. "I didn't want to tackle her tonight—she's been so unreasonable about that package under her arm. We'll get it, George, I'll demonstrate it to the scientific societies to prove our statements, and then, good God, it must be destroyed. Too damn dangerous. Why, if a thing like that fell into the wrong hands here, it could devastate the world!"

But George was thinking only of poor little Lea. Marooned here. She was worried about her people, of course.... After Professor Carter had gone to bed that night, for a long time George sat alone in the sitting room, pondering. To his father the fate of that tiny world was only an interesting scientific thesis. He realized that a billion billion other atomic worlds might be struggling, unseen, inaccessible to us....

Upon impulse, young Carter suddenly left the sitting room and went quietly upstairs. Very gently he knocked on Lea's door.

"Lea? You asleep?"

"Oh—that is you, George? Come in."

Clad in a pair of Alice's blue pajamas, Lea was sitting on the bed—slim little figure with the lamplight softly painting her, glinting in her pale-gold hair with tints of burnished silver. Her hair was streaming down over her shoulders; it framed her face on which now a shadow of terror had gathered.

"You heard what I mentioned to father," George said. "About Taroh maybe making more of the drug?"

"Yes. That I did. Oh, George—I thought what I did for my world was the best."

Contrition was upon her. "It was," he said hastily. He had closed the door behind him; he lowered his voice. "Lea, father wants to get that drug away from you and destroy it. But I was thinking—chemists here, analyzing it, might be able to create its reverse."

She stared. "I mean," he added earnestly, "I don't want to abandon your world, Lea. Not by a jugful I don't. If a drug can be made to increase bodily growth, why couldn't one be made to diminish it? I don't care what father says, I'm going to get the best chemists in the country to try and analyze it—try and create its opposite."

"Your father—and the big men of science—they would never allow that," she said. "I heard your father say that this enlarging drug, it could devastate your world. He is right. And so could one that made people smaller, so that they would vanish forever into smallness. Is that not so, George?"

"I don't care," he asserted. "I'll take a chance. I'll be careful what chemists I give it to. And father needn't know what I'm going to do anyway. Let's see the drug."

She opened the neck of her pajama top; and produced a flat brown box, of a strange hard fiber which undoubtedly was vegetable. Within it were two small vials of the same material.

"This one I used," she said. "There is some of the drug here left." Opening it, she showed him a number of tiny white pellets. A luminous phosphorescence seemed to stream up from them when they were held in shadow. "The dose I first took was three," she added. "But at the journey end, no more than did I touch one to the tip of my tongue."

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The other vial, identical in size, shape and color, was sealed with a wax-like gum. George opened it. They stared; Lea faintly gasped as he poured the tiny pellets out into his palm. They were not white like the others, but a deep violet, with the same luminescence seeming to stream up from them.

"Why, what is that?" Lea murmured. "I thought that all the drug was the same."

"But Taroh maybe figured he wouldn't want to stay gigantic," George exclaimed with rising excitement. "Why not? Maybe our work is all done for us, Lea."

Were these luminescent violet pellets a diminishing drug?... A fly was walking on the white counterpane of Lea's bed. Carter watched it as it flew and landed on the tabletop under the lamp.

"Don't move, Lea," he murmured. "I'll see if I can get that fly to eat some." He laid one of the violet pellets in the circle of lamplight. Breathlessly he and the girl watched. Perhaps the violet luminescence carried an alluring smell, for presently the fly crawled to the pellet.

"It did! It ate some, Lea! Watch it now!"

The fly was standing motionless. For a breathless instant fear stabbed into Carter. Suppose this were the enlarging drug, the same as the other save a different color. That fly, getting large, might dart away. In a moment it might be too large to kill. Still growing, it would burst the room, wreck the house.... With the flash of terrified thoughts, Carter raised his hand to try and kill the motionless insect. But he stopped.

"Look! It is smaller!" Lea murmured.

With wings still folded it was crawling in a wavering little circle near the pellet. And visibly it was diminishing in size. Already the tiny pellet seemed gigantic beside it. Silently Lea and Carter stared. The fly was a tiny black midge now, swiftly crawling, but moving so slowly on the polished tabletop.

"Can you still see it, Lea?" Carter blinked; bent down. It seemed that the insect already was beyond his sight.

"Yes. I see it."

And then it had vanished. Not gone. They knew it was still there; dwindling; soon it would be beyond the reach of any microscope....

For a moment, in the silent little bedroom, Carter and the girl stared at each other, overwhelmed by the momentousness of their discovery.

"You want to go back to your own world, Lea?" he murmured at last. "You can do it now—with this."

"Yes—yes! That is what I shall do." Her eyes were shining. Her whole little figure was trembling. Swiftly she gathered up the pellets, replaced them in the vial. "Your father shall have no chance to destroy them," she declared defiantly. "They are mine, not his."

"If you go, I'm going with you," Carter exclaimed suddenly. His heart was pounding; a band seemed binding his chest. There is no one who can face the Unknown without a thrill of excitement, and fear.

"And leave this your world?" she murmured. "Your father and sister—they who love you just as my people love me—"

"I can come back to them. The journey—"

"The journey, it can be very long and very dangerous—"

"Not so dangerous for me as for you, Lea." He seized her by her slender shoulders and stared earnestly down into her eyes. "Look here, do you want

me to come?" he demanded. "Not because I can help you—I don't mean only that. Do you want me to come?"

For an instant it seemed that in the limpid depths of her eyes a mist was gathering. Then her face turned whimsical; her mouth twisted into a little smile as she cocked her head and gazed at him slantwise from behind lowered lashes.

"That is for you to think for yourself," she murmured. "I could not stop you coming if I would. Is that not so?"

"It damn sure is," he agreed. Again he lowered his voice, with a swift glance at the bedroom door. "I don't think I'll say anything about this to father and Alice," he added softly. "Just leave them a message that I'll be right back. No use starting anything, you know."

"And you will come back soon to them? You will thank them for that they have both been so very kind to me here?"

"Sure I will. Why, Lea, we're not going far. Only into the garden, to the sundial's pointer. Why, if you look at it like that, we're not going maybe even an eighth of an inch beneath the surface of that metal pointer!"

He met Lea, a short time later, out in the moonlit garden. They had come furtively down through the silent house. He was wearing his bathing suit, with rubber-soled sneakers on his feet from which he had removed the metal eyelets. Lea was dressed as he had first seen her, in her short gray-blue ragged little garment. The same wild, strange little girl of another world—and now he stared with his heart racing, and he put his hands on her shoulders.

"I'm glad you're not getting away from me," he said unsteadily.

"We should stand by the sundial," she murmured. "We take the drug now?"

"All right," he agreed. They had divided the two drugs, so that each of them carried a vial of both violet and white pellets. "Now listen carefully, Lea," he directed. "Above everything we must keep together. Not only in space—keep close beside each other, I mean—but we must be sure and keep together in size also. We must always take identical amounts of the drug. And take them at identical times."

"That I understand." She had made this trip before; outwardly at least, she was far less excited than himself. "One pellet first, you think?"



"Yes. Until—until we see what happens." He took one of the luminous violet pellets in his palm. A pungent aromatic odor wafted up from it. "Ready, Lea?"

He put the pellet into his mouth and hastily swallowed it. He was conscious of a sickish sweet taste; a burning constriction of his mouth and throat. Then his senses reeled with a dizzying swoop.

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He and Lea were clinging together; he felt himself staggering a little. He opened his eyes. The patched black and silver scene of the rock garden was blurred; swaying. Then his sight clarified. The scene steadied. But then he realized that everything was moving—the dim trees, the garden hedge, the little paths and rocks, all very slowly expanding, heightening, widening. And he felt the movement under his feet. With a soft, crawling, shifting, the ground was moving outward, expanding under the soles of his shoes. It drew his feet slowly apart, so that he had to take a staggering step to readjust them.

"Heavens, Lea—it's weird."

She steadied him. "It will seem not so bad in a moment."

One may almost get used to anything. His senses presently were steady. And he knew that all the motion he was seeing was only an optical effect. Nothing was changing save himself and Lea as they dwindled. Amazing scene! The motion of the landscape had accelerated now—soundless expansion of everything within his vision. Only Lea beside him remained seemingly unchanged. To each of us, himself is the center of the Universe. Always throughout all the weird journey, Carter conceived himself his normal six foot height—and all the world around him seemed getting larger.

He had taken a step away from Lea on the unsteady ground. Awed, he stood gazing at the crawling movement of the expanding garden. The trees near at hand already had drawn back; their interlocking branches were strangely high over his head. Beyond a line of huge mossy rocks, forty feet away now when it should have been twenty, he could see the moonlit line of giant hedge. To the left, the moonlight glinted on a great pool of rippling water, with tremendous lily pads and a great line of mossy boulders along the bank—a line which was shifting backward and expanding upward, steadily, as he stared.

Gigantic garden. Why, he could hardly see across it now. A forest of giant trees towered into the sky near its distant lower end.

"George! The sundial!" He felt Lea tugging at him. "We must go—"

"Good Heavens, we've got to climb up there," he gasped. He seized her hand; ran with her. The rocky garden path was broad as a road. The flaring top of the sundial was seven or eight feet above the ground when they got there. Frantically he lifted her up and leaped after her. She pulled at him; tumbled him over the brink. Panting, they lay on the great circular spread of uneven concrete, with the brink down to the moonlit ground beyond its curving edge, close beside them. Beneath him he could feel the concrete turning rougher and shifting outward in all directions. There were sharp jagged points on it now. Then he stared down over the edge. It was an astonishing abyss, sixty feet at least, down to a spread of moonlit rippled lake, which was the lily pool!

He had helped Lea to her feet when abruptly they thought of the sundial pointer. In the center of the circular moonlit spread of concrete the metal pointer stood gleaming, fifty feet away. It was a triangle of metal standing on edge, with its top sloping steeply upward—a slope perhaps thirty feet long now, up to an apex ten feet high. Swiftly they walked toward it. Within a moment, around them was a huge porous plain of jagged rocks gleaming with moonlight. The circular lip of the abyss everywhere was receding. There was only a silvery sheen of darkness beyond it now. Overhead, far up, a single gigantic tree branch still was visible, blurred in the moonlight.

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Then they reached the sundial pointer. Its apex towered twenty feet high now; the lower end of its upper sloping edge already was a foot or two above the ragged, porous ground. Carter, standing at the end of the pointer which in another moment was waist high, gazed up a six-foot wide slope of metal which rose steeply into the moonlight. Ten feet or so up the slope there was a depression like a little gully gouged out of the metallic rock.

"That is the place," Lea said.

"All right. We'd better get up there at once."

He lifted her up to the bottom of the slope. Together, up a great jagged expanding ramp which presently was twenty feet wide, arduously they

climbed upward. Inexorable expansion! New spaces every moment were opening up beneath their feet. A tiny rift in the jagged metal ground, in a moment was a little gully. Metal stones were apparent now, and tiny pits into which one might thrust a finger. The edge of the slope chanced to be beside Carter; and he gazed down from here on the top of the pointer—down to the concrete circular top of the sundial. Hundreds of feet down there, a vast, shining moonlit surface spread out now to the blurred horizon! Huge pits, gullies, ravines were inky black. On the jagged spires and little butte-tops the moonlight was molten silver. It was a weird, naked scene of gray and yellow-white rocks, fantastic as a Lunar landscape!

Then just for a moment, with mental viewpoint changed, Carter envisaged the actuality. How big, compared to his original six-foot stature, was he now? A sixteenth of an inch perhaps? If his father were here in the garden, bending close over the sundial pointer with a light, he might still be able to see him and the girl as they struggled up the sloping narrow top edge of the sundial pointer!

Amazing how nothing is absolute, but wholly comparative to something else! He had told Lea that they were not going very far! Only from the house to the sundial in the garden. But, based on his present size, his father and Alice off there in the house now, were at least sixty or seventy miles away!

"This is the valley," Lea panted. "I can recognize now. It almost closed upon me as I grew large. I can remember climbing up to here."

The edges of the giant upward slope had drawn away, so that with tumbled boulders intervening, Carter could no longer see them. He and Lea were in a depression, like a huge cauldron with its scooped-out bottom almost level—a place a hundred feet in diameter. Steadily the crawling expansion of all the scene continued. It seemed a uniform rate of expansion now.

"That pellet lasts a long time, Lea." He tried to grin at her. "Don't you suppose its effect is about over?"

"Oh, no! There is a great distance yet."

Distance; size! Meaningless terms. He and Lea—as his father would view it—were not going very far in terms of distance! Just two tiny creatures, almost too small to be seen, struggling on the one-eighth-inch-thick top of the sundial pointer!

"You say we go into a valley?" he suddenly demanded. "I don't see any valley."

"This one," the girl said.

A few feet from them there was a rift, like a little crescent slash. A foot wide and twice as deep, it began here and curved off into the distance. But presently it was a gully—a ragged, curving little canyon fifty feet wide with broken walls that towered above them as they went into it.

"I climbed out from here," Lea said. "I am sure it was just about here where nearly I was crushed. But it looks so very different now." She was puzzled as she gazed about them—gazed at what now was a broad, curving valley with great mountainous sides towering up into the luminous darkness overhead.

"Look here," he said, "I'm getting the hang of this. The secret is not to wait until you're too small before going anywhere. Which way next?"

She was still puzzled. And then she brightened. "Why, it is right here. I see it now."

It was a steeply descending little chasm. It had been a mere crack a moment ago so that she had not recognized it. Now it was a ten-foot rift, with a bottom smooth as black marble—a slide steeply descending into darkness.

Carter peered dubiously. "How far down is it?"

"Not far. I was so big, I jumped up just as these walls almost closed upon me."

He and the girl were very much smaller than that now. They lay down, feet first, at the top of the slide. For a moment he hesitated. How far down would it be for them in this size? But every moment of hesitation was making that worse!

"All right, Lea. Here we go."

Half sliding, half climbing, they started. The smooth, marble-like slide had roughened. Little stones began sliding with them. "Easy!" he gasped. "Don't go too fast!"

He clutched her; they slid together a dozen feet; wildly scrambled to a stop. Then Lea lost her foothold. He gripped at her, and lost his own. Then they were bumping, rolling with a clatter of loosened stones coming after them. And then the terrified Carter was aware of a fall. And a rock struck his head with a bursting roar of light as his senses slid off into the soundlessness of oblivion....

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He came to himself with the knowledge that Lea was holding him, kneeling beside him in a luminous darkness. "Oh, you are all right now?" she murmured anxiously.

"Yes. I guess so." Dizzily he sat up. "What happened?"

"We fell."

"You—it didn't hurt you?"

"No. I guess not much."

The action of the drug had worn off. As his head cleared he saw that the rocks were motionless; the ground on which he sat at last was steady. Around them now was a great void of luminous darkness with an undulating landscape of naked rocks dimly visible. In a moment it seemed to Carter that his eyes were becoming accustomed to the darkness. He could see, far away in the distance where the ground rose up seemingly to meet the sky.

"Shall we take another pellet now, Lea?" he suggested at last.

"All right," she agreed.

Again they took the drug; and gazed appraisingly about them as the luminous, naked landscape crawled and shifted with its outward, upward motion. Tremendous journey downward into smallness! Carter had had no conception of the immense new distances which would open before them as they dwindled. For another hour, then two hours—three hours perhaps—they ran, and walked and climbed downward. Lea, with judgment, perception and memory far greater than any Earth-girl could have, had remarked well the main features of her upward climb, so that now she could recognize them. But more often than not, the way was obvious—by mathematical law, it was usually the first large aperture to open near them. Soon Carter was nimbly alert to get into it before it was too large, so that often a step or two downward, or a drop of six feet or so, would represent a long and dangerous descent if they had waited until they were smaller.

Again the drug wore off. "Shall we rest again?" he suggested.

She assented, and he made her lie with her head cushioned by his lap. Around them the phosphorescent darkness showed distant wilds of barren wastes. It was a ragged plateau here, with giant cliffs in the distance that rose thousands of feet against the blurred purple sky. He and Lea had jumped down from those cliffs only a little while ago—and it had been a drop of only waist high.

Poor little Lea.... No wonder she had been terrified when she made this weird journey alone! Was she asleep now? He sat gazing drowsily down at her head on his lap; her delicate little profile, with eyes closed, her pale-gold hair framing her face, never had seemed so beautiful as now with the glowing phosphorescent of the rocks upon it. The luminous light made her delicate skin take on an added opalescent look. How beautiful she was! She would be radiant down there among her own people. They would be very glad to see her. That young fellow Artone—he no doubt would be especially glad to see her. She had said that Artone was handsome and courageous. She was very fond of him, no doubt....

Perhaps Carter himself had dozed a little, here with his back against a rock. His fingers were entwined in a lock of Lea's pale-gold hair which he had been caressing. And suddenly it seemed that he heard something moving near them. It snapped him into startled alertness.

"Lea, wake up!" he whispered. He shook her a little. "Lea—"

"Oh—yes, George?"

"Quiet! Not so loud! I thought I heard something!"

He held her against him as she sat up-right. Staring over her shoulder, he could see nothing but the tumbled spread of crags around them. Then the sound came again—a scratching, scuttling tread as though something gigantic were scampering on the rocks.

"George—" Lea faintly screamed. Her hand pressed her breast in terror as she shrank back against him. From around a nearby boulder a tremendous insect had come scuttling—a monstrous, reddish oblong thing, with a pinched body twenty feet in length and crooked jointed legs. With huge waving feelers, it stood for an instant motionless. Its great compound eyes, like clusters of tiny lanterns, glared balefully.

And then without warning it came lunging at them!

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Carter and the girl scrambled to their feet. The monstrous insect came with scuttling, scratching tread. Its antennæ, waving from the top of its ugly round head, furiously lashed. The mandibles of its great jaws worked as though with anticipation of devouring these tiny victims.

"Lea—this way—jump—"

They scurried sidewise. It flashed to Carter that they must take the drug—the enlarging drug—grow large to fight this horrible adversary. But there was no time now to get out the vial. Frantically they darted behind a little group of rocks. The huge red insect, like a charging bull, went past them. Then, fifty feet away, it stopped; reared up on its two hind legs as though puzzled. The luminous radiation from the rocks showed it more plainly now—long bulging body with six crooked legs; body pinched in the middle grotesquely like a spindly waist so small that it seemed as though the twenty-foot body might break in half.

"It doesn't see us, George—"

"Quiet!"

They crouched among the rocks. There seemed no place else they could hide. Could they out-distance the horrible thing in a straightaway run? Carter did not think so; certainly he did not dare try it. He was fumbling with the drug-vial now. And then the monstrous insect saw them! It whirled; dropped to its six legs. The two great compound eyes again were glaring; and now on the top of its flattened, smooth-shelled head, near the sockets of the waving feelers, three other little eyes were visible—gleaming spots of light.

"Here, Lea—take these pellets—quickly—"

The giant insect was coming forward again, more slowly this time as though cautiously to stalk its tiny prey. Carter dropped two of the pellets into the trembling girl's extended palm; and took two himself. They were the violet ones—the diminishing drug. In the panic of the moment he could not select the others. His head reeled as he took the double dose, but he clung to Lea. In the swaying phantasmagoria of the luminous scene, he was aware that the monstrous scuttling thing again was charging head on. The rocks here were swaying, enlarging with a new acceleration, the spaces between them rapidly opening up.

In those horrible seconds, there was nothing Carter could think of to do but fling himself and the girl flat on the ground, squeezing into an opening which a moment ago would have been too small for them. Vaguely he was aware of the sound of the monster's claws as they scratched on the rocks. It came with a rush. It was a monster thirty or forty feet long in a moment. Carter had a dim vision of the broad under surface of the tremendous body as it scrambled almost directly over him—scuttling headlong over the clump of rocks among which its dwindling prey were crouching.

"Now, Lea—up! Run!"

They staggered over the swaying, outward-crawling ground. In a moment Carter turned to look back. Far behind them in the glowing darkness, the insect again had reared up, vainly searching for them—a titan thing now, its reddish body looming a hundred feet or more above the ground. For a second or two it showed etched against the blur of sky, its eyes glaring like distant lighthouse lamps. Then an expanding cluster of nearby rocks intervened and they could no longer see it.

"We've got to be careful, Lea. Do things quickly or we'll get lost in size." With the attacking monster gone, Carter's wits came back to make him aware of a new danger. They had not intended to take this double dose of the diminishing drug. Gripping the girl, Carter stood unsteadily, peering around at the swaying scene. The apparent enlarging of the landscape was greatly accelerated, so swift that it was dizzying. But he could still recognize the main familiar features. Here was the rift into which they had determined they must go....

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The doubled drug, though accelerated in action, seemed to last no longer than a smaller dose. But it was two hours or more of wild scrambling. Then at last Carter was aware by the visible slowing of the expanding scenes, that again it was wearing off.

"Well, thank God for that, Lea," he murmured. "Don't let's try anything like that again."

They were resting, preparing to take more of the drug, when on the bottom of Lea's ragged short shirt Carter saw a tiny ant crawling, evidently disturbed by the movement. He stared; then he reached, squashed it between thumb and forefinger.

"Just an ant," he said. "But those red ones can bite. You must have gotten it on you in the garden when we left." A sudden thought made his jaw drop. A red ant—an eighth of an inch long maybe—six legs—a body pinched in the middle....

"Why, good Lord, Lea," he gasped. "There could have been more red ants on us. One of them dropped off while we were getting small—then while we slept it found us and attacked us! That was the monster that nearly got us!"

Just an ant! What an amazing difference size could make!



Surely they still had much to learn about this weird traveling!

Carter could see that the cliffs here were honeycombed with tunnel-passages and cave-mouths. After resting a while they took more of the drug and went on.

They merely touched the pellet to the tongue. The dim landscape began slowly opening; and at intervals they repeated the tiny doses of the drug. They were walking forward, Lea eagerly leading now. To Carter it seemed that they had mounted a hill, topped a rise—emerged at last into the open. He stood amazed. The void of sky here suddenly showed infinite distance—a gigantic black firmament. In a great dome, myriads of stars were glittering—gems strewn upon the black velvet of the heavens, with faint effulgent patches of remote nebulae, star-dust strewn across the sky!

"There—the sky of my world," Lea murmured. "We need more of the drug now, George. Still, we are so very big—it would be dangerous to go forward in a size like this."

They tasted the drug several times. Lea would not let him move more than a few steps each time down the small declivity. Then they came to where the ground now seemed fairly level. It slowly shifted and crawled under their feet as they dwindled. And suddenly, as they walked slowly forward, Carter was aware that the ground wasn't rocky under them now. It was softer, with little scrunching ridges and lumps which he could feel through the battered soles of his shoes.

"There is the lake," Lea said presently. Her hand flung out with a gesture. He stared to one side with a new awe. Twenty or thirty feet away he had noticed a little patch of yellow sheen on the ground. But it was hundreds of feet away now—a pool of shimmering water with a path of glowing starlight upon its rippled surface. Behind it there seemed to be wooded hills ... tiny trees....

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Quite suddenly—so suddenly indeed that the thing momentarily made Carter's head reel—his viewpoint changed. As though his eyes were thousands of feet in the air, he felt himself dizzily staring down at a little town of streets and buildings that clustered along the nearer lakeshore. He saw himself as he actually was, a monstrous Titan, standing here with his

head reared thousands of feet into the sky and Lea's world shimmering peacefully in the starlight almost at his feet!

The ground under them was still expanding from the last small dose of the drug. The shining lake and the little city were growing larger, seeming to rise up; but they were also visually receding.

"We sure better start walking forward," Carter suggested. "It'll be an awfully long walk if we don't make speed before we get much smaller."

She agreed, and they hastened their pace. The ground crunched audibly now under their tread. Presently Carter could hear that it was a very queer crunch—a swishing, crackling of tiny sounds. Puzzled, he suddenly stopped and bent down. Under his feet a tiny forest was spread—strange-shaped, gray-blue trees, none of them more than an inch or two in height. Beneath his tread they were mangled—tiny furred twigs mashed and strewn, and some of them thrust by his weight into the soft ground.

Slowly the forest rose up, closed over their heads. Dark glades were here now. The soft air was perfumed by the flowers. The phosphorescence of the ground, more apparent in this arboreal dimness, streamed up to meet the effulgence of starlight which filtered down from overhead.

It was a peaceful, glowing forest of strange twilight. And suddenly Carter was aware of the stirring of bird-life in the trees; the sound of insect life under foot. New realms of infinitesimal smallness!

"Taroh evidently hasn't started anything while you were gone," he said. "Everything looks okay here. No need to worry over Taroh now, Lea. Not with us here, with the drugs. Your world is in no danger now."

No danger? Within the city gates close ahead a sudden shrill cry rose up and floated out over the glowing forest. A cry of startled wonderment; of fear. Then others took it up—a chorus of terror within the little city. Along the top of the city wall the figures of the sentries, etched against the sky, were running.

"Why, what the devil—" Carter murmured.

Lea, in a panic, was gripping him. "Oh, George, look—off there by the lake!"

Far off beyond the crescent tip of the starlit lake a giant figure loomed! The starlight painted a huge man's head and shoulders—bullet head of close-clipped hair.

"Taroh!" Lea gasped.

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Monstrous enlarging giant! He stood for a moment, head and shoulders above the forest trees, peering down at the lake and the little city. And then he came striding forward!

"Lea, dear—" Carter was clutching her by the shoulders. "Lea, you run on into the city. Find your father—you stay with him, Lea."

"Oh, George—what is it you do? The enlarging drug—"

Hastily he dumped the pellets into his palm. The white ones this time. How many should he take? He swallowed two; replaced the others.

"George—" He felt her gripping him as his senses reeled.

"George—" She gasped it in terror as she saw him towering beside her.

"It's all right—I'll take care of Taroh. Run, Lea! Run—"

Her little face was down at his waist. For a second she stared up; terrified—and wistful.

"You will—come back, George?"

"Yes. I'll come back—" He gave her a gentle shove; he stood staring as he saw her dwindling figure dart between the dwindling trees. Then he turned and ran back. Soon he was threading the narrowing spaces between the trees which were hardly as high as his head...

Where was Taroh now? In the swooping, shrinking scene, for a minute or two Carter had wildly run away from the city. He was stooping now, trying to keep below the dwindling tree-tops. Momentarily he did not see his adversary. But off in the distance there was the crackling of breaking twigs. It sounded like brush-fire. Abruptly it occurred to Carter that he did not dare delay any longer. Taroh, gigantic, in a moment might be demolishing the city. He stopped his advance; waited a moment and stood erect. The trees were well below his knees now. A hundred feet or so away was a patch of shimmering water like a great pool. He could see the spread of little city beside it, the tallest of its buildings not so high as his waist.

Off to the left was Taroh. Carter's heart leaped with triumph. Taroh seemed now not much more than a head taller than himself—massive chest and shoulders garbed in a leather garment, with knee breeches of leather beneath. A stalwart, heavy-set fellow. To Carter's viewpoint he was some seven feet tall. But he seemed shrinking a trifle. Carter was overtaking him in size!

Taroh saw him now! The starlight showed a look of amazement that for a second spread on his evil, heavy-featured face. Then he whirled from the edge of the pool; and as Carter darted backward to lure him away from the city, like a bull Taroh came charging, lunging, crashing through the tiny trees. He was far enough from the city now—Carter gauged it, and then suddenly turned, faced his adversary and then leaped for him.

The impact of their bodies knocked Carter backward. He fell, with his huge antagonist on top of him. It was the weight of a powerful, thick-set three-hundred-pound man nearly a foot taller than himself. He felt big arms around him; saw Taroh's face, contorted with rage. Locked together, they rolled, mangling the tiny forest. Then, despite Carter's agility, he felt himself pinned, with his adversary sprawled on top of him. A slowly shrinking adversary? To the panting, lunging, wildly twisting Carter it seemed so. But it was a negligible shrinkage now. He felt Taroh's powerful hands at his throat. Over him the bullet head was etched against the starlit sky. Then the evil face pressed down, leering, triumphant, with muttering floating words, and hot panting breath.

Carter's senses were whirling. The strangling fingers at his throat had shut off his breathing. His head began to roar. Wildly he fought to get loose, but could not.... The end for George Carter ... Lea—poor little Lea—this would be the end for her and her people also ... all doomed....

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In those terrifying, strangling seconds, dimly Carter was aware of the shrinking ground pulling in under his threshing body. The crushed forest was like thick mangled fern-clumps. Was this water here? One of his flailing arms went down into a little puddle beside him. His hand struck a rock in the water. Instinctively, with fading senses, he gripped it; heaved it up, dripping; tried to crash it on Taroh's head, which was close above him. He heard his adversary grunt. It was a glancing blow; but Carter was aware of the strangling fingers momentarily loosening at his throat. He gulped in the blessed air; and with clearing head, despairingly he lunged, broke loose and heaved Taroh off.

Abruptly the crouching Taroh's hand went to his mouth. He was taking more of the enlarging drug! Carter tried to do the same. But he had no time; with a roar, again his adversary sprang at him. They clinched; staggered, but both kept on their feet. And within Carter's arms now he could feel the bulk of Taroh expanding! A rapid expansion. Soon he would be ten feet tall.... You couldn't win a rough and tumble like this against a giant ten feet tall.... Was this a rocky wall here beside them?... It seemed that Carter dimly could see looming rocks. Despairingly he was trying to break loose from Taroh, get away long enough to take more of the drug. But his triumphant antagonist was holding him as they staggered on their feet. Taroh was content to clinch.

His massive body was horribly huge now—so huge that Carter's face was pressed against the chest of the leather jerkin.

It was now or never. Despairingly Carter knew it. In another minute he would be a puny child in the grip of this monstrous growing giant. He could see now that there was a towering rock wall here beside them. Carter's failing hand struck it. Would some of the rocks be loose? The dwindling wall pressed forward against him like a thing alive. His despairing fingers roved it. A loose chunk of rock—he found one. It was too large to grip. Then, in a moment, it had shrunk so that his fingers encircled one of its jagged ends. Desperately he tugged; tore it loose. It was a chunk of metallic rock as big as his head. With all the power he could muster, he crashed it sidewise against Taroh's huge temple. It was a direct blow, this time. Carter seemed to hear the gruesome cracking skull. He felt the huge arms around him loosen, drop away. For a second Taroh seemed to stand balanced, with buckling knees. A dead man on his feet. Then he fell, lay sprawled on his back with the inch-high forest trees crushed beneath him.

And one of his outstretched dead arms struck across a rill of shimmering water—a river that backed up against the Titan arm, then turned aside and went roaring off through the mangled forest!...

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At the city gates the running Lea had paused. She could hear that the city was in a wild turmoil of terror; shouting, running guards; people awakening in the middle of the time of sleep; appearing in windows or on rooftops; shouting at each other, or running out into the streets, gathering in milling, terrified groups. All staring at the monstrous fighting giants that loomed above the distant forest trees beyond the end of the lake.

And at the city gate, unnoticed by the gathering crowd, little Lea stood alone, gazing. Only she of everyone, knew the meaning of that weird combat. Which of the distant struggling giants was George? At first she could not tell. And then she saw him....

Combat of Titans. Waist high above the forest trees and steadily looming higher, they stood swaying out there by the end of the lake. Then presently they fell, with a cataclysmic distant roar as they crashed down. She saw a huge arm go down into the lake. George's arm! Her heart seemed stuck in her throat as breathlessly she stared. Was George winning? His hand, with a

dripping boulder as big as her father's castle perhaps, came heaving from the lake. The distant dripping water was a monstrous opalescent cascade in the starlight. Then a great wave from it came surging down the lake. It beat with a roar against the city embankment; some of it rolled up into the streets, so that the terrified people there rushed screamingly back.

The giant figures were on their feet again. She could not see them clearly. They were so far away now—just blurred monstrous shapes looming into the sky. Fighting men, each of them bigger than all the city of Helos. Then presently they were fading shadows, big as all the sky, blurring with it. The roaring sound of them was only a monstrous fading whisper. And then they were gone.

Was the battle over? Who had won?... To each of us, himself is the center of the Universe.... The white-faced, trembling little Lea stood at the city gate staring at the empty luminous distance. And because she was a woman, she wanted George to have won—for herself, as well as for the fate of her people....

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In the lamplit Carter living room, George sat with his father and Alice. He was in his bathing suit; ragged, dirty and blood-smeared. He had told them now of his weird experience; how he had killed Taroh; and then, still getting large, had come on and emerged again into his normal Earth-world....

"You've still got some of the drugs?" Professor Carter said finally. "Good Lord, George—a trip like that, you could have been killed a hundred times. You accomplished your purpose—I'm glad of that. Taroh is dead. No use trying to connect that world with this one any further. It's against nature. And those drugs—the most diabolic things that exist in the world today. I'll demonstrate them to our scientists—then we'll have them destroyed."

Did the blind little Alice perhaps feel differently? Her sensitive fingers caressed the stubble of beard on George's blood-smeared face. "In the morning you'll tell me all about Lea?" she murmured. "I—I really loved her, George."

"Yes—yes, of course I will," he agreed. He avoided his father's demand for the drugs. "In the morning, Dad," he said. "Don't worry—I'll be careful of them. You and Alice better get to bed now. For me, I want a bath and shave. And a lot of sleep. I'm about all in."

He kissed his father affectionately. His caress as he embraced his blind little sister lingered for just a moment.

"Good night, Alice dear."

"Good night, George."

There was no one to see young George Carter as, later that night, he furtively tiptoed downstairs. Quietly he left the house, went down to the little rock garden where the moonlight gleamed on the old sundial and its metal pointer. And he did not come back....

That was more than a year ago. They found his scrawled little note: "Don't worry over me—I'll return shortly."

But so far, he has not. The sundial is in the Carter living room now; the room is closed off and never used. If you go to the small New England village, perhaps Professor Carter would let you see the sundial. A microscope has been erected over it. A light always shines on the old metal pointer.

Professor Carter is somewhat a grouchy, dogmatic old fellow. You might not like him. But despite that, there is never a day passes that for hours he does not sit at the microscope, peering downward so futilely little of the way, straining his eyes, hoping and praying that his son will return.

And often, too, the blind little Alice sits there, listening, waiting for the tiny voice which will tell her that her brother has emerged. She is sure he will come; it would not be like him to go and never return at all. She wishes, too, that he would bring Lea back with him....

If you should go to see the Carters, go at night. Gaze up at the immensity of the distant stars, the faintest nebulae over the house. They are thousands, millions, trillions of light-years away—distances beyond conception of the human mind. Then go in and stand by the sundial in the Carters' little living room. You'll see, quite plainly, the tiny abrasion on the narrow top edge of the triangular sundial pointer. Lea's world, infinitely distant, beyond the reach of any microscope, is there—her world with its own remote heavens, and its own myriad tiny atoms—and each of them holding still other infinitudes of smallness.



[The end of The Girl from Infinite Smallness by Cummings, Ray]