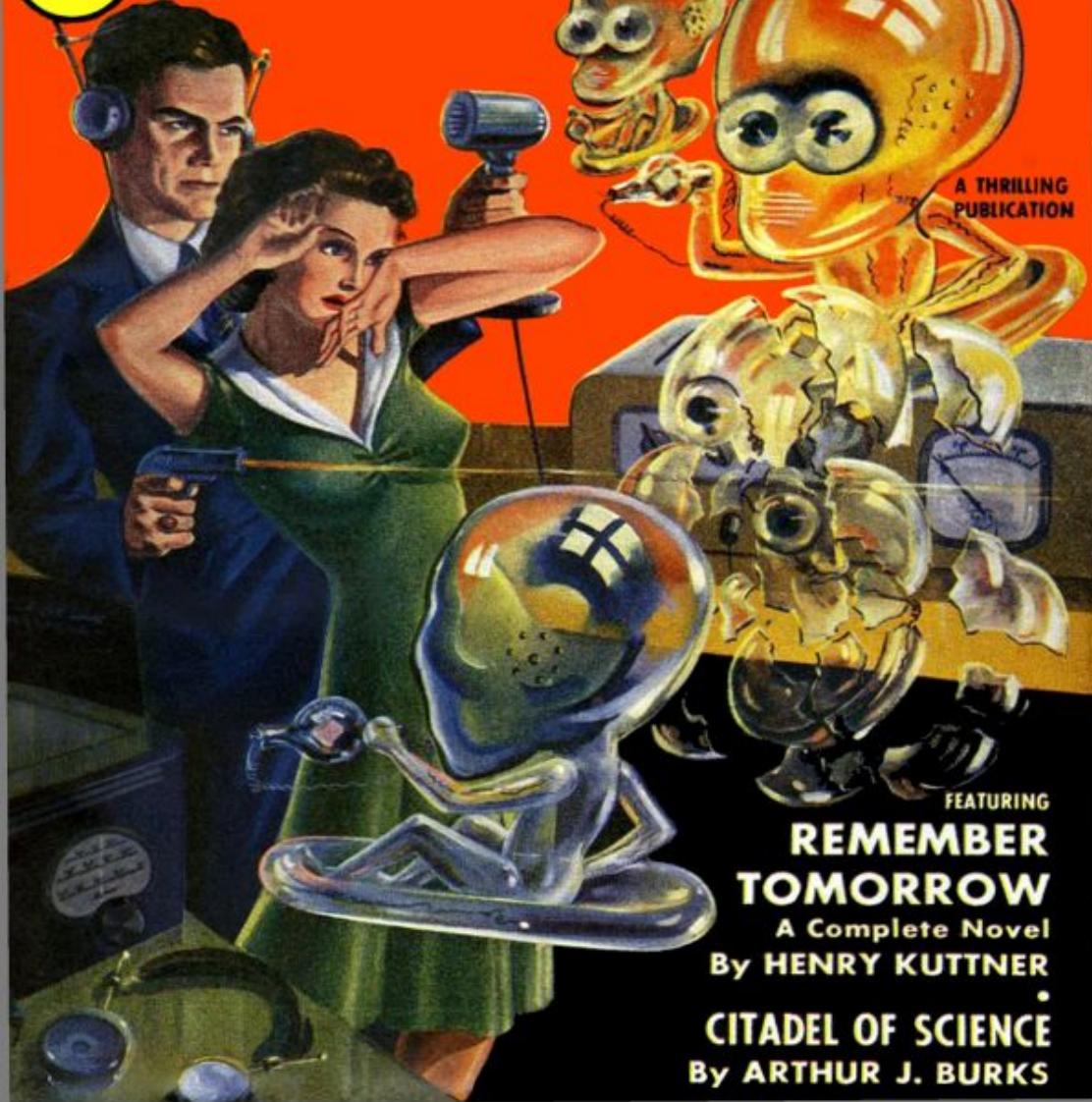


THRILLING WONDER STORIES

15¢

JAN.

A THRILLING PUBLICATION



FEATURING
**REMEMBER
TOMORROW**

A Complete Novel
By HENRY KUTTNER

•
CITADEL OF SCIENCE
By ARTHUR J. BURKS

*** A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook ***

This eBook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the eBook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the eBook. If either of these conditions applies, please contact a <https://www.fadedpage.com> administrator before proceeding. Thousands more FREE eBooks are available at <https://www.fadedpage.com>.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. IF THE BOOK IS UNDER COPYRIGHT IN YOUR COUNTRY, DO NOT DOWNLOAD OR REDISTRIBUTE THIS FILE.

Title: Remember Tomorrow

Date of first publication: 1941

Author: Henry Kuttner (1914-1958)

Illustrator: H. W. Wesso (1894-1948)

Date first posted: Aug. 7, 2022

Date last updated: Aug. 7, 2022

Faded Page eBook #20220813

This eBook was produced by: Alex White & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <https://www.pgdpcanada.net>

REMEMBER TOMORROW

*A Complete
Scientific Fiction Novel*
By HENRY KUTTNER



REMEMBER TOMORROW

By

Henry Kuttner

First published *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, January 1941.

Fate Hurled Steve Dawson Across the Channel of the Centuries Into the Perfect World of the Future—But He Found a Shadow Over This Utopia That Made Him Yearn for the Past!

CHAPTER I

Strange Awakening

Steve Dawson was sunk—in more ways than one. Only a thin shell of metal protected him from the tons of water overhead. He was alone, stranded at the bottom of the sea in a tiny bathysphere that was like a bubble in a vacuum.



Bethya Dorn

"I'm going to die," Dawson told himself hoarsely. He listened to the echoes of his words within the hollow globe, the first human sounds he had heard in thirty hours.

Now that he had given voice to the thought he had previously evaded, he felt oddly relieved. A sense of strain was, somehow, gone now. And after all it was surely best to face the darkest side of the situation, rather than cling to false hope. So many of his hopes had already been shattered—when the cable and telephone line had broken during the storm, ending all possibility of communication with the *Adventurer*, riding the gale fathoms above this Caribbean deep. Each time it had been worse.

Rescue was impossible, Dawson realized. No divers could reach this depth.

Yet it was impossible for him to resign himself to death. More than thirty hours had passed, he guessed. Purposely he had not looked at the chronometer since opening the fifth oxygen tank. It was not pleasant to watch the slow progress of the hour-hand, crawling inexorably toward doom.

The man took out a cigarette, hesitated, and finally lit it. Why not? He could afford the gesture—there were so few that he could make now. He sat on the floor, his back against the curving wall, staring at the port.

Outside, through the midnight black of the ocean floor, a spot of dim light swam into view and was gone. Some luminous-organized fish. If all had gone well, he would be cataloguing these denizens of the abyss now, capturing some through the special valves for delivery to the *Adventurer*. And then, within a few days, the ship would head back to Florida, and he would return to New York where Marian would be waiting—

Mustn't think of that. Think of something else—anything else. . . .

The museum expedition. The scientists, with their specially-built bathysphere, and their newly-discovered gas that would preserve safely the undersea life of the lower depths. Always before deep-sea fish would explode when brought to the surface and pressure removed. But this new gas, Dawson remembered, had the property of somehow preserving, of "freezing" tissue.

It was simple enough. The bait was already in the various valve-compartments. Dawson merely had to open one, let the fish swim in, and close it again, afterward releasing the preservative gas that arrested all decay. His gaze slid toward the rows of dull metal cylinders that held the strange stuff. They would not help him now. Only the tubes of oxygen would prolong his life—for a little while. And then would come death, and he would lie in this ocean tomb. Life above would go on. Marian—

Forget Marian! The marriage could never take place now. Forget Marian, with her soft, sweet lips, and her curling brown hair, and—and—

Dawson found that he was shaking. He crushed out the cigarette, trying to battle down the abysmal loneliness that rose within his mind. He went to the port and stared out through the thick, reinforced glass, a tall, lean figure with a brown, thin face that had grown very haggard in the last few hours.

It was so utterly black out there, so far removed from anything alive.

The lights flickered. The batteries were low. On an impulse Dawson turned a switch, plunging the bathysphere into darkness. His eyes strained through the sub-sea depths, searching for some hint of illumination. But there was nothing.

The oxygen was low. Dawson turned on the lights again and twisted a valve, bending to inhale the life-giving gas. He breathed too much, and felt a heady sense of exhilaration. . . .

Intoxication mounted to his brain. What was the good of dragging out the last pitiable minutes of his existence? He wasn't living down here. He was waiting . . . Dawson, staggering with the effects of oxygen-drunkenness, went to the next cylinder and turned it on. The gas hissed out. He went to the next, and the one after that. Turn them all on! One last gesture. . . .

He did not know that he had released the preservative gas as well. He turned all the release-cocks he saw, toward the end scarcely conscious of what he was doing. But now there was a strange, sweetish odor in his nostrils, and he felt weak and giddy. The lights flickered again.

Marian . . . Mustn't think of her . . . Better open a port and let the sea rush in . . . Why wait for death? Let it come swiftly. . . .

Dawson reeled across the floor of the bathysphere. His foot caught in a tangle of cordage, and he came down heavily, smashing his forehead against an oxygen tank. The metal floor rose to meet him.

He lifted a dazed hand, felt the lips of a raw wound cutting his skin to the bone, a gash that ran from brow to temple. Blood was hot on his fingers. He—he—

The walls of the bathysphere began to spin around slowly, and then increased their velocity till the ports were dark streaks. The light was flickering insanely. The hissing of escaping gas rose to a shrill scream. He was passing out—no, dying.

And now he could see nothing. The spinning walls merged into a chaos that slowly darkened. He felt that he was sinking into black velvet.

This was death. And after thirty hours of tortured imprisonment and stark loneliness, it was good to die. . . .

He was not dead. The pain in his eyes told him that. He felt a sharp sense of disorientation, as though his brain moved in his skull. It was the same feeling that had come whenever he had been knocked out. Realization and memory came back.

He tried to open his eyes, and failed. They were gummed tightly together, and Dawson attempted to lift his hand to them. But a surge of tingling pain rushed through his arm as he moved.

He relaxed. Why try to awaken? It would be merely postponing the end. Better just to lie here in darkness, until he slipped back into unconsciousness.

And yet—yet there was something wrong. The light! It filtered between his closed eyelids, and, somehow, had the quality of moonlight. Then he felt very light blows upon his face, and the wetness of spray. It reminded him of rain beating upon him. He smelled the sea, and the tangy fresh air.

It was incredible, and so, too, was the distant booming and crashing that came to his ears. It sounded like surf breaking upon a beach. But how could all this be happening in a bathysphere under the Caribbean Sea?

It couldn't. Dawson moved his arm again, and lifted it, not without pain. His fingers were stiff, but he managed to pry open his eyelids. He was instantly blinded by a glare of intense light, and the lids snapped shut in automatic reaction.

The thought came to him that he had been rescued. Perhaps he lay in a hospital bed, and a nurse would come hurriedly at his call. He tried to cry out, and a shock of pain paralyzed his dry throat.



Fered Yolath

Dawson's eyes gradually accustomed themselves to the light as he blinked them. Distorted outlines swam into visibility. The glow was coming in through the ports of the bathysphere. It was for the most part in deep shadow, yet Dawson could see that the interior was chaos, with gas-cylinders and equipment tossed about helter-skelter. He tried to rise, but his left arm gave beneath his weight with a sickening lance of pain. It was broken, he realized.

He went unsteadily to the broken port, through which fresh air was gusting, and stared out. The scene was unfamiliar, and yet comforting. It was raining lightly, and moonlight was coming through dissipating clouds. The bathysphere rested on the sands of a beach.

Still puzzled, Dawson found a wrench and finished the task of smashing the glass of the port so that he could crawl through the aperture. The substance was unexpectedly friable, for some reason, and it was not long before Dawson emerged. He

collapsed on the sand, gasping with exhaustion. He was weaker than he had realized.

What had happened? On the beach fish were flopping about, and the bulk of a dead octopus lay not far away. Staring around at the silvery-green ocean, Dawson decided that a tidal wave, providential to him, had struck the shore, bearing the bathysphere with it. He turned his head to look at the sphere. Then Dawson went cold with amazement.

The globe was the same, and yet not the same. From outside the bathysphere was now scarcely recognizable. It looked like a round boulder encrusted with sea-life. Molluscs clung to its sides, which were overgrown with weeds and polyps. And—good God!—*coral!* Dawson sprang up to examine his find. The coral had actually grown to the hull—and the sea polyp grows only over a long stretch of years, he knew. How long had the bathysphere been under water?

Dawson looked around. There was no clue. The beach seemed deserted. But to the left, southward, he saw a faint glow in the night sky. A village, perhaps, or a camp, though it did not look like firelight.

He'd investigate. There would be food, liquor. Dawson felt the need for brandy. He was very weak. He began to walk southward.

The breakers boomed monotonously. The wind was warmer now. Dawson's hopes rose as the glow in the sky grew brighter. He'd have to send telegrams the moment he could. To Marian, first of all. She'd have worried. . . .

The ground rose. Dawson topped a rise and paused, staring down at the little city that lay beneath him. He blinked.

It was like a Hollywood studio set. The fragile, delicately-tinted buildings were small and delicate, looking as though a wind might blow them over. Yet they had weathered the storm that must have just passed. An incredible toy village!

There were towers and minarets and swooping ramps and arches, all in those delicate pastel tints, with streets and parks, the whole illuminated with a soft light that seemed to come from the substance of the city itself. And, strangely, the place seemed to be—under glass! No, not glass, but a shimmering, translucent hemisphere that glittered faintly in the moon-glow. The vast dome covered the entire city.

Dawson shook off a queer sense of uneasiness. There were movie studios in Florida—and there were always experimental villages being built. A government project, perhaps, though he had not heard of it before. It had unusual lighting facilities—so what?

He went on, descending into the valley. The sea roared at his left, for the bowl was open in that direction. Hills bounded it on three sides. As he advanced he saw less and less of the city, for he lost his aerial view and saw only tall buildings towering above him. He was staggering with weakness, but kept on doggedly.

A park ringed the city. It was a blaze of colorful blossoms, though Dawson could not smell the flowers' perfume. It was curious that they should be blooming at night. . . .

The air flickered before him. Suddenly he was standing before a shimmering, translucent veil in the air. That dome he had seen from above—he was at its edge. But it was not a barrier. Just light. He could step through it easily.

He made a move forward. Simultaneously there was a shrill, urgent cry, and a form hurled itself at Dawson. Taken off guard, one foot in the air, he fell back heavily, agony lancing through his broken arm. For a second he was blind with the pain.

Then he looked into the eyes of a girl, small and slim and lovely, with crisp golden hair curling about her face in an odd coiffeur. The cornflower-blue eyes were wide with fright.

"What the devil's the idea?" Dawson snapped.

"Are you a madman?" the girl whispered. "Do you—" She cast a glance at the shimmering wall of light and looked back at Dawson with a little gasp.

Her voice held shocked disbelief.

“You were going to touch—*the Barrier!*”

CHAPTER II

Shadow Over Utopia

Utterly amazed, Dawson remained flat on his back, looking up at the girl. Now he realized that there had been something strange about her words, a slurring of consonants and a prolongation of vowels that gave them a curious accent. Gutturals were softened, breathed out instead of being formed deep in the throat. And her clothes—

She was dressed in an almost skin-tight, elastic fabric of pale-blue material, covering her to wrists and ankles. On her feet were glass slippers. Perfectly transparent, they were flexible, and bent as the girl moved and rose from the ground.

Dawson also got up.

“What’s the gag?” he asked quietly.

She frowned at him, puzzled.

“I do not understand—gag?” She made the gutturals sound like vowels. “Wait. The Barrier will pass in a sec.”

Dawson followed her gaze. A shimmer of brighter opalescence rippled across the strange veil. And suddenly, the Barrier was gone. It vanished without trace.

“What was that?” Dawson asked. “And just where am I, lady?”

The cornflower-blue eyes examined him.

“The Barrier? It—it—why, you must know that! Everyone knows about the Barriers!” The girl’s soft lips parted in surprise, showing small, perfect teeth.

“Yeah? Well, I don’t. I’m a stranger here—”

“We make the Barrier whenever storms come,” she explained. “It keeps the oorican from Dasonee—from hurting the city. And when the wind dies, we turn off the power, of course.”

“Oorican?”

She made a wide gesture seaward.

“The big winds—the rain—”

“Oh. Hurricane. And this city’s named Dasonee? I never heard of it.”

The girl smiled.

“No. It isn’t large. You must be from the great cities—or even from Europe. Those are strange clothes you wear.” She touched Dawson’s sleeve, and he flinched with pain. “Oh—your arm! It’s hurt.”

“Broken, I think. Listen, lady, is there a doctor in this burg?”

“Doctor . . . doctor? The medics will mend your arm for you. Come!” She led him forward into the park. “I am Bethya—Bethya Dorn.”

“Let’s get a taxi, Miss Dorn,” Dawson said.

She paused and turned, confronting him.

“Wait. Miss Dorn—and a while ago you called me *lady*. Why do you use those archaic terms? I don’t understand . . .” She shrugged small shoulders. “I’ll get you a car. I cannot go with you. I must tell Fered about the strange metal globe I saw on the beach.”

“That’s a bathysphere,” Dawson said. “Even if it doesn’t look like it. I just crawled out of the thing.”

Bethya Dorn's face went white. She looked at the man as though she had never seen him before.

"You—but it must be centuries old!"

"It looks like it, sure. But it was built just last year."



Steve Dawson

"When? What date?"

"April—"

"The year!"

"Nineteen-forty."

Bethya's reaction was astonishing. She glanced around hurriedly, almost furtively. No movement stirred in the glowing flower-gardens of the park.

"Who are you?" she said.

"Stephen Dawson. I—"

"S'ephen Dawson . . . Come with me. Hurry!"

She began to pull the man forward. He resisted for a moment, a queer presentiment growing in his mind. Why had the girl asked him the year?

"Come! I must take you to Fered!"

"What year is this?" Dawson ventured.

Bethya hesitated, bit her lip, and finally answered, not without reluctance.

"The twenty-sixth century. Twenty-five thirty-three."

Dawson stood motionless. It was true, then. He had not previously allowed himself even to guess at the incredible thing that

might have happened. His strange awakening—the coral growth on the bathysphere—this amazing city—

"I—I need a drink," he said hoarsely. "I won't let myself believe—"

"Come! Fered will know—he'll help you. I do not understand how—but he will know. Your arm needs attention, too."

Dazedly Dawson let Bethya pull him through the park. They came out at the edge of a deserted road, paved with a shining white substance, that wound among the underbrush. Parked before them was the twenty-sixth century substitute for an automobile—it looked like an oval cup of gleaming plastic, not more than a dozen feet long, supported by three wheels.

The cushioned seats were arranged familiarly enough, but a single handle, ending in a small ball, comprised all the instruments. The edge of the car was so low that Dawson stepped over it easily at Bethya's hurried gesture.

She slipped in beside him. "Don't try to talk. Just relax, S'ephen Dawson."

"Yeah . . . yeah." He obeyed, feeling the padded seat give beneath his weight. He leaned back, staring up. The same sky . . . Had the constellations changed in six hundred years? Not much, he thought. It was incredible. Well, he would soon know. He could see the city of Dasonee as they drove through it.

But a plastic shell slid up and formed walls and roof about them, leaving only a small horizontal slit through which the girl peered.

Dawson could see little. The vehicle turned, and there were flashing glimpses of other conveyances drifting along like clouds. He rested, closing his eyes. The sense of movement reminded him of days long past, when he and Marian had driven together through the Berkshire hills. . . .

Marian—dead six hundred years! Gone back to dust, resting in a grave he could never know now, never find. A sickening pang of loneliness shot through Dawson. The faint pastel glow that came through the window-slit, the silence of this alien city, were suddenly horrible to him. Never again to see the sun sinking behind the towers of New York, to hear the deafening roar of the subway and the rush of wind as trains passed. . . .

Marian—*dust!* All that had bound him to life, all his friends, his cities, his world, dissolved into gray dust. There was emptiness within Dawson's chest. He did not want to open his eyes.

The car stopped. Bethya hustled him out so quickly he had time for only a brief glance at a broad, winding street, lined with gardens and houses that there were symphonies in flowing curves and luminous, pastel tints. The vague light seemed to shimmer up from the paving itself. Dawson's head was throbbing. He was feverish. His arm ached.

"Come, Dawson. Fered will be back soon. He'll help you."

The door had slid up and vanished noiselessly as they reached it. Dawson had a brief impression of an oddly-furnished, large room. Bethya helped him to a seat, where he relaxed. Hurriedly she went to a table, returning with what resembled a small metal egg.

She held this under Dawson's nose and broke it. A cloying, sweet perfume rushed into his nostrils. Unconsciousness took him instantly.

He awoke, conscious instantly of a warm, pleasant lassitude. The dull, oppressive headache, and the pain, were gone. It was the relaxation that comes after a hot shower and a sound night's sleep. He lay quietly, remembering.

"Made the readings?" It was Bethya's soft voice. Dawson almost opened his eyes, but did not. On an impulse he remained unmoving. Perhaps he might learn something of interest—the girl's motive in keeping him hidden.

"It checked with mine," a man said. "In a few days I can turn in my report to the Council. The grant should be large—"

"And this man from the past—there'll be a grant for that, too. Enough, Fered."

"Yes." The man's voice was low and pleasant. "We can marry then, Bethya. But I am not quite sure yet. Will have to question him. Though the interior of the bathysphere confirmed his story."

There was silence for a long time. At last Dawson groaned, rolled over, and sat up. His arm, he saw, was neatly bandaged and strapped into a light, rigid-metal frame that held it motionless.

The room in which he found himself was lighted by filtered sunlight that came, with a warm golden radiance, through circular-paned windows. Designs of translucent glass bricks were set here and there in the plastic walls. The floor of the room was a mosaic that yielded slightly to Dawson's feet when he swung his legs down from the couch on which he sat.

The furnishings were comfortable, yet definitely unusual. They were all swooping curves and graceful whorls, looking as though moulded out of one piece, tinted delicately in harmonizing colors. Couches and chairs had been built for comfort, Dawson saw. Seated together in one were Bethya and a man.

He was a slim, dark-haired young fellow, with a youthful round face and soft brown eyes. He wore tan shorts, a light sleeveless shirt, and sandals. That was all.

He stood up and came forward, bringing Dawson a little tray on which stood a glass of yellow fluid and what looked like a celluloid capsule.

"S'ephen Dawson . . . I'm Fered Yolath."

Dawson grinned feebly and extended his right hand.

"Glad to know you."

Not fully understanding the gesture, Fered lifted his hands, palms outward, at shoulder height.

"Oh—I see. Our customary greeting—Well, before we talk, take this capsule and drink this nutros." He went on as Dawson obeyed. "You have been a long time without food. We've fed you—by injections—while you slept, nearly fourteen longseecs—"

"What?"

"I don't know how you reckoned time in your day, Dawson. It's mid-morning now." He took the empty glass and handed the tray to Bethya, who slid it into a wall compartment. "How do you feel?"

"All right," Dawson said. He still had that vague sense of disorientation, of instability, as though the Earth itself had vanished from beneath his feet. "Have I really slept for six hundred years?"

"Yes."

"That preservative gas in the bathysphere—I think I understand. It put me into a state of suspended animation, arrested all metabolism. It was supposed to 'freeze' deep-sea fish, but it worked on any sort of animal tissue, I guess. I'm living proof of that. Even my clothing's been preserved in pretty good shape."

"So are the metal parts of your garments. There was no water vapor in the bathysphere, and they didn't rust."

"It's harder for me to believe it than for you," Dawson said with a touch of wry humor. "Wait a minute," he went on as he remembered something. "Have you a mirror—a glass that reflects images?"

"We still use the word mirror." Fered smiled, showing even white teeth. "Here." He turned to Bethya, who took a small shining disk from her garments and gave it to Dawson. The object was not an inch wide, he saw, and yet curved so that the reflection was magnified greatly without distortion. Of course Bethya would carry a mirror. The eternal feminine, even after six hundred years!

"Just before I passed out," Dawson said. "I remember cutting my forehead. Cut it to the bone, too. The wound's gone. No, there's still a scar."

"Scarcely noticeable," Fered nodded. "Your metabolism was tremendously slow, but it went on nevertheless."

Somehow this latest discovery was the final touch that convinced Dawson. Simultaneously came a memory he did not want. Better to forget Marian now, if he could. At least, he should keep his thoughts away from those old days in New York. . . .

"I'm curious," he said. "This new world of yours—I want to know all about it."

"And we're curious about your world," Fered said. "We have records, naturally, but we don't know how much exaggeration has crept in. A living fossil—" He laughed. "You're not insulted?"

"I've been called worse things." Dawson was beginning to like this easy-going youngster. "What can I tell you about the world I come from?"

"Nothing, yet. It's much better for you not to overwork your brain till you've recovered completely. Besides—"

Bethya interrupted.

"The Council will question him, Fered," she said.

"Yes. Of course. Meanwhile, there's no harm in telling you how we live, Dawson."

"All right. Thanks. What is this Council?"

"The Advisory Council. A group of men and women who administer the world government. New ones are chosen from time to time as the old ones die. The greatest minds on Earth."

"It sounds a bit like Technocracy," Dawson said. "A world government? No nations or states?"

"States, of course. But the Council lives in the capitol, here in America—in Washington."

"We used to have a President. He was elected—"

Fered nodded.

"So I've read. The members of the Council are elected, too, by state electoral votes, after they've proved the merits of their claims by some achievement. Even I might become—"

"No!" There was a hint of panic in Bethya's voice. "I don't like that, Fered, even though you're joking."

The youngster flashed a smile at her. "Little chance of my being elected. My vibratory-principle isn't good enough—"

"It might be," the girl whispered, her blue eyes wide. "Sometimes I'm afraid. And yet we can't afford to marry unless you get a grant."

Dawson shrugged.

"I don't understand."

"It's not complicated," Fered told him. "I've been working on a theoretical idea I've had for some time. The Council always encourages scientific work. They give grants—work-units—in return for any worthwhile ideas worked out and given to them."

"They keep the ideas themselves?"

"Of course not! We're not under a tyranny, Dawson. Any new scientific principles are worked out by the Council and given back to the world. Naturally the Council is better equipped to develop such ideas than—well, than I am."

Bethya broke in.

"Fered hasn't told you everything. If a man or woman is elected to the Council, he must dedicate his life to it. He can never see his friends or relatives again. He lives in Washington . . . Marriages are automatically dissolved if you're elected. It's like cutting all ties."

"That's no sacrifice," Fered said, his eyes glowing. "It takes all a man's energies to serve the world—it's the greatest honor one could want. But—" He looked at Bethya. "I won't be taken, darlya." The unfamiliar word was a caress. "And I can always refuse, you know."

Dawson looked from one to the other of the pair. He was beginning to understand. The youngsters were in love, of course. For the rest—what was this Council? He didn't know, but despite Fered's reassuring words, he felt a vague sense of something wrong. He did not know just what. Perhaps Fered *trusted* the Council too much. It was like believing utterly in propaganda, never asking a question.

"Aren't there any revolutions?" Dawson asked. "No racial barriers? No social unrest?"

"Why, no. The Council rules. It's ruled for five hundred years, always beneficially. There's no reason for unrest. The system has stood the test of time, you see."

"All that power—power to rule the world—in the hands of a few men?"

"Men and women. Six of them, always. They can be recalled by popular vote, though that's never happened, as far as I know."

"What's going to happen to me?" Dawson asked abruptly.

"Perhaps the Council will see you, or a group of scientists. You needn't worry. Everything will be made easy for you."

"Made easy for you." The sentence struck a dissonant chord in Dawson's mind. This seemed like a Utopia. Everything *was* easy—even adverse weather conditions were shut out by super-scientific barriers. A bit too easy, perhaps.

Fered was still talking.

"You'll be given time to adjust yourself to these new conditions. Given work for which you're fitted and which you like. Psychographs will take care of any mental kinks. Jumping six centuries may have upset you a bit! That's putting it quietly, I'd say."

Putting it—mildly? Despite the familiarity of the language, Dawson realized that there were many new colloquialisms he would have to learn.

"I'd like to see your city."

"Dasonee? All right. I'll drive you."

"What about reporting?" Bethya said.

"To the Council? Do it for me, darlya, will you? Grasas. Just about S'ephen Dawson, though. I won't have the vibratory-principle papers finished till tomorrow."

Bethya nodded, gave that odd salute to Dawson, and went out through a door that slid up as she approached.

"This is my home," Fered said. "You'll be my guest until requests come."

"Requests?"

"From the Council—as to your disposal."

That was an odd way to put it. Why not—orders? It would be the more logical word. Again Dawson sensed something vaguely amiss in this Utopian civilization, too tenuous for him to grasp or understand. It was like a shadow that fell momentarily over the bright, sunlit room.

"Your experiment is finished?" he asked, more through politeness than anything else.

"My part's done. That's why Bethya and I were on the beach last night. We were registering lightning-current on recorders. I wanted to check a minor point. The real work will be done by the Council. I'm not fitted for it. I've supplied the basic idea, and they'll work it out."

Dawson regarded him queerly.

"You're satisfied with that?" he snapped. "To let others finish your experiment?"

Fered looked at him.

“But I am finished! I’ve provided the idea!”

“This world *is* different,” Dawson said. “You may not believe it, but in my day people got a kick—pleasure—out of finishing anything they started, even if it was just carving a toy sailboat.”

The younger man frowned, puzzled.

“But—surely—it would have been enough to visualize the sailboat, and let the Council carry out the task. The Council is far wiser than any one man. Its members know what should be best for the good of all.”

“I suppose everyone thinks as you do, Fered?”

“Naturally.”

“No experiment is ever finished?”

“Of course it’s finished! By the Council! You don’t understand—”

“I understand,” Dawson said, rather breathlessly. “Let’s not talk about it just now. You were going to take me for a drive.”

He followed Fered toward the door, a sick, cold feeling in his stomach. Both the young man and Bethya seemed completely happy, satisfied with their lot. Was it actually possible that mankind had become a race of slaves, not realizing their servitude, worshipping the tyrants who ruled them?

No—his imagination was running riot, Dawson thought. This civilization seemed far better than the one he had left. But he knew, deep down within him, that something was wrong—very wrong.

This was not Utopia, after all.

CHAPTER III

The Discord

Under other circumstances, the drive through Dasonee might have been enjoyable. But Dawson was too busy searching for the flaw in the crystal. Under the warmth of a semi-tropical sun men and women in light garments strolled about or rode in the three-wheeled cars—propelled, Fered said, by electro-magnetism.

"Doesn't anybody work?"

"Naturally they work. A few hours each day, longer if they wish. Machines toil for us, you see, Dawson. In our world the happiness of man is the most important thing."

Happiness—yes. Contentment, too. But there was none of the unrest that had existed in Dawson's time—nothing of the adventurous, daredevil spirit that sent men into the sky and beneath the sea and to the unexplored places beyond civilization.

Everything was made easy for these people. Scarcely ever did anything go wrong. Each man and woman had his appointed task, and was responsible to someone above him, and so it went up to the supreme authority of the Advisory Council. Yet there was a certain helplessness about the dwellers in Dasonee, somehow. They were—that was it—like children. Blind, unquestioning loyalty and obedience. So might a child feel toward its parents. But a child is eventually taught self-reliance, and there was none of that in Dasonee!

Dawson realized that this quality was an important one—perhaps the most important of all in the march of civilization. Fered had been willing to let the Council finish his experiment. He had lost all self-reliance. It had been weeded out of the race in six hundred years. So Dawson decided, after hours of observation and conversation with his guide.

Dasonee was a typical small city of the era. No servant problem—robot machinery was highly developed. Food? Scientific farming—cattle and sheep ranches, with ultra-modern facilities requiring only some human superintendence. Fishing? You went out in specially-built, huge boats, pushed a few buttons, and metal nets came up with the catch, dumping it in the hold to be cleaned by machinery.

Social life? There were crèches for children, but these were not compulsory. Family life wasn't extinct. Amusements were greatly developed, both in the home and out. Vast theatres were subsidized by the government. At these one saw symphonies in light and color, ballets in which the dancers, with the aid of metal suits and magnetism, seemed to float in mid-air. And all of these amusements were surprisingly cheap. It took few work-units to live in this civilization, Dawson found.

Then came the accident. It happened on one of the higher ramps, a long descending curve that dropped down steeply to street level. Fered was driving the little car. Suddenly an oncoming vehicle loomed directly in their path. Fered swerved the car sharply to avoid a crash. Simultaneously there was a sharp, brittle snap, and the car jolted slightly.

It slid directly toward the slight railing that edged the ramp.

Whether or not the guard-barrier would hold, Dawson did not know. The wheels were locked, he realized, as Fered jerked the control-lever back and forth. But the youngster did not appear frightened. He touched a concealed knob, pulled at it—and it came off in his hand.

The car slid on.

Dawson looked sharply at Fered. The young man was frozen. He reached out with a helpless, fumbling motion—at air.

“Jump!” Dawson yelped. Fered didn’t move. He had the expression of a frightened small child—uncomprehending.

There was little time to think. The car was almost at the rail, moving with a velocity that would have carried it through and into the abyss, to crash down into the street below. Dawson hurled himself against Fered, so that both their bodies smashed into the side of the car. Their combined weight lifted a wheel from the ground.

The little vehicle overbalanced, and fell over, capsizing. Fered made no effort to save himself, but Dawson managed to push him free.

They got up slowly. There was a queer expression on Fered’s face.

“That—that never happened to me before,” he said dazedly.

“Well, here comes help,” Dawson grunted. A repair car was already swooping down upon them. Within a few moments it had towed the wrecked vehicle away, and a new one had arrived for them. Fered and Dawson got in, and they headed back home.

“Why didn’t you jump, Fered?” Dawson said abruptly.

Fered shook his head.

“I don’t know. It never happened to me before . . . I had the strangest feeling, as though the Earth had dropped from under me.”

Of course. Fered had always been taught to depend upon others. Independence of thought was something that was lost to this new world. The unexpected would find these people helpless—for they had lost their self-reliance. Without leaders—the leadership to which they had been conditioned for centuries—they would be sheep!

Back at Fered’s home, they talked further. Dawson asked questions. “Have you achieved space travel yet?” he asked.

“No. Why should we? Though—wait a moment.” Fered touched a few buttons on his televisord set, and watched the screen. A page of printed matter appeared on it. Dawson could not read it. It was English, but—

“Metrn dsndgfmnspc strktr . . .”

Fered grinned.

“Simplified spelling—a form of shorthand used, particularly in libraries. You’ll learn it eventually. A meteor was seen descending from space to strike Terra—no one knows just when, but it must have been around your time, Dawson. It proved to be a space ship, but it was empty. No one ever found out much about it. It’s like that Arizona meteor crater, just a mystery.”

“Yeah.” Dawson was thinking of something else. “About your experiment, Fered. I used to be an amateur scientist, in my way. Though I suppose now—”

The young man seemed excited. “Why, you’ll want to know about the vibrationary principles. Let me tell you about my own—”

“Aren’t you afraid to tell me?”

“Afraid? Why?” Fered asked, and Dawson did not press the subject. He had an idea. He listened intently as the other brought out papers and explained his ideas, and occasionally Dawson threw in carefully-planned comments. He made suggestions here and there, and spoke of his own college experiments. Fered listened with much attention. He began to ask

questions about the laboratories of 1941, the great research bureaus, the private investigations of inventors.

"You know," he said at last, "I might have liked those days, Dawson. Something you said a while ago, that people liked finishing what they started—it must have been rather exciting."

"It was—is. Only you've never done it."

"No."

Dawson waited a minute, and then said, with carefully-assumed casualness, "I suppose the Council would give you permission to go ahead with the experiment, if you asked?"

Fered looked almost guilty.

"But, Dawson, why should I? I could do nothing that the Council could not do much better. It would be selfish of me."

"Why? The Council could still have the plans, and you might just happen to stumble over something they'd miss. Why, look here, Fered—" Dawson pointed out an angle the other had apparently overlooked in his sketchy diagrams. "How would vibration affect molecular action? And quanta? Suppose—"

"The molecules would be—" Fered stopped. "This isn't my job!"

Dawson said nothing. Fered walked to the other end of the room and back. He glanced down at the diagrams, and remained without moving for a full minute. And Dawson smiled.

Maybe it was merely throwing a monkey-wrench in the machinery. Perhaps it was that Dawson liked Fered, and felt sorry for the kid after seeing what had happened during the near-accident.

A little self-reliance wouldn't hurt Fered. If he worked on the experiment by himself, it would give him a feeling of independence, a realization that he wasn't just a cog in a machine. There was something unwholesome about the utter lack of self-reliance in Dasonee.

Dawson dined that night with Fered and Bethya. He was beginning to like them both, but seeing them together brought back painful and poignant memories. The soft lighting of the room reminded him of a restaurant in Greenwich Village, where he had often taken Marian.

Abruptly he was struck with a sense of complete unreality.

Could it be true that he was sitting here alive, eating, drinking, in the twenty-sixth century, while everything he had ever known was merely—history? And Marian? She was not even history. It was horrible to think that she had passed without leaving the slightest trace on Earth. She was dust, and the food was dust, too, in Dawson's mouth.

He fought down the unhealthy feeling. He'd have to keep his mind fully occupied . . .

"How's the experiment? Did you ask permission?"

"Yes." Fered smiled at Bethya's inquiring blond eyebrows. "I'm going to work it out myself, Darlya. Or try to."

The girl shook her head, but before she could reply a bell rang softly. A panel opened in the table, and a small metal cylinder popped out before Fered. He picked it up, glancing at the others.

"Speaking of the subject, this must be the answer."

Dawson was pondering on the evolution of the colloquialism—"talk of the devil"—when Fered looked up, his eyes agleam.

"I've got permission!"

"You have?" Somehow Dawson felt a pang of disappointment. He had expected something else, though he did not know just what.

"Yes. They want me to come to Washington. They'll put an entire laboratory at my service. Darlya—" He sprang up, circled the table, and kissed Bethya enthusiastically. "This will mean a very large grant!"

The girl's eyes glistened.

"You're going to leave me?" she said.

"It's not for long. I'm handicapped a little here. I'll have so much equipment in Washington. And whenever I'm stuck, I can get help."

"Uh-huh," Dawson said.

Fered flushed. "I don't mean—well, it won't take long, anyway. They want you to come, too, Dawson. They sent you greetings and asked me to bring you."

"Nice of them. Suppose I don't go to the Council?" Dawson resented feeling like a cog in a well-oiled machine.

"Why, I imagine they'd send someone to you."

Very nice and friendly! A bit too much so. There seemed to be a dread of causing friction on the part of this mysterious Council.

It was, perhaps, a subconscious fear of meeting the Council, more than anything else, that made Dawson refuse to accompany Fered the next morning when he took his departure.

But apparently there were no ill effects, immediately, at least. Dawson continued to live in Fered's home, and Bethya took him in charge. She was a conscientious hostess, though it was plain that she missed Fered badly.

"We've never been separated before, S'eph'en. It's like losing him."

"He'll be back."

Bethya looked away.

"You don't understand. You don't know what it means—"

She stopped abruptly.

"There's the televor. Just a minute."

They were in Fered's home. It was late evening. Dawson saw the televor screen light up, and the figure of a uniformed man appear on it.

"Bethya Dorn?"

"Yes."

"When I called your home they told me I'd find you here. I'm representing the Council. Are you in charge of the man named Stephen Dawson?"

"He's right here with me."

"He is asked again to come to Washington. The Council is anxious to learn of the past from him. Will he come?"

"Ask him about Fered," Dawson said.

The official heard. "Fered Yolath has been made a member of the Council."

Briefly Bethya stood perfectly motionless. Then her hand flew up to her throat.

"Oh—no—" she cried.

Dawson was beside her. "What's all this?"

"Johan Burk of the Council died today," the man on the screen said. "He has been ill for some time. Instead of holding an election, the Council examined Fered Yolath and recognized his potentialities and achievement in a theory he presented. He was appointed a member."

Dawson's arm was around Bethya's shoulders, keeping her from falling.

“Will you come to Washington, Stephen Dawson? The Council invites you.”

“Yes. I’ll come. I’d like to meet—the Council!”

CHAPTER IV

The Council

Bethya looked up with tearful eyes at Dawson.

"Fered would never have consented. We talked it over often. He said that if they elected him, he'd refuse. He loved me."

They were sitting in the robot-controlled Washington air-liner, a government-owned plane that was ready for them at the airport the next morning. Dawson had been amazed by the smallness of the wings and the rocketing speed it developed. It would not take long to reach Washington, at this rate.

"We'll see Fered. If they'll let us."

"They'll let us."

Dawson nodded. The Council must be pretty sure of itself. But what on Earth could have changed Fered's mind so suddenly? He didn't know.

"It was good of you to come," Bethya said.

"Forget it. I'd have had to see the Council sometime."

"I feel better with you along, though. Not so lonely."

Dawson grinned. That, of course, was the motive behind his decision. He liked both Bethya and Fered, and had realized how helpless this child of a strangely decadent culture would be under the circumstances. Besides, he was curious.

A streak flashed by outside the plane, far above. Dawson pointed.

"What's that?"

"A stratoship."

"Moving fast."

"It doesn't use propellers. It's powered by the Earth's magnetic lines of force."

This was electro-magnetism with a vengeance. Dawson whistled. Good Lord! If mankind had discovered that power, why hadn't they used it in the construction of space ships? Another mystery to ponder!

He relaxed, examining his broken arm. It was healing surprisingly fast, and there was scarcely any pain. The brace still held it motionless.

The plane sped on. The countryside below was lovely, little changed from the scene Dawson remembered. The rolling hills, forests, and plains remained the same. Rivers and mountains had not altered in six hundred years. But the occasional cities were far different, delicate structures like toy villages.

There were many broad highways, with cars on them, and a surprising number of helicopter planes in the air. People had plenty of time to play. Perhaps too much time . . .

They did not touch New York, and Dawson was vaguely relieved at that. He found himself remembering the vast metropolis of his time, with the Empire State thrusting up gigantically against the blue sky, and snow crunching underfoot in Times Square. Always, tied up inextricably with those memories, was Marian, with her curling brown hair and her soft lips . . . *Dust!*

Dawson set his jaw and stared ahead. A city was coming into view ahead.

"Washington," Bethya said.

The man looked in vain for the Capitol's dome. Instead of the great city he remembered, he saw a park, with a number of smaller buildings surrounding what looked like a stone block. The towers and minarets of other towns were not here. There was only this great cube of undecorated stone towering above what had been Washington.

Its roof was a garden, however, lush with bright flowers, and in the exact center was a great elliptical dome of silvery metal. The contrast with the elfin cities Dawson had seen was striking.

There was no need to touch the controls. Following its radio beam, handled by robot machinery, the plane slackened its flight and angled down smoothly. They were level with the roof of the great white cube. It towered above them as they sank down. They were descending into a small, cleared space of greensward.

There was not the slightest jolt as the plane landed and a door slid open. A man was standing outside, clad in a neat gray uniform of light material. His long face was pleasant enough, but in his belt Dawson saw a small, light pistol that looked like a toy.



Dawson stared at the motionless figures who ruled the Earth.

"Come in," the man smiled. "You're Stephen Dawson, of course. The Council is ready for you." He pointed back of him to where the vast cube rose. "It's not far. And you—" His eyes asked a question.

Bethya got out of the plane.

"I want to see Fered Yolath."

"The new member of the Council? You're a relative? I'll have to ask. Usually the Council is completely isolated, you know, but in cases like these an exception is sometimes made. Come along."

The guide led the way. Bethya, in an instinctive, long-forgotten gesture, slipped her hand into Dawson's, and he tightened his grasp on it with a comforting squeeze. There was no need for words.

There was a small arched door in the face of the cube that they approached. Again Dawson was struck by the vastness of the structure. It was like the ramp of a cliff, as though

he stood at the bottom of the Grand Canyon and stared up, craning his neck.

"Come along."

The door slid up. They entered a bare, stone-walled corridor. They walked forward perhaps two hundred feet, turned sharply to the left after their guide, and found themselves in a small room empty save for five chairs neatly ranged in a row.

"Sit down," the guide said genially. "I'll see if the Council will see you, girl. Your name is _____"

She told him, and the man slipped away. For a space Bethya and Dawson sat motionless, staring at the blank wall ahead of them.

Suddenly it began to move. It slid upward smoothly, utterly without sound, and vanished. They looked down a long corridor. At its end was a stone wall, featureless.

The row of chairs began to slip forward, on a moving conveyor belt, Dawson thought.

"Do not be alarmed," a quiet voice from nowhere announced. "You are entering the Council Room. The girl, Bethya Dorn, may see Fered Yolath, though we do not usually have contact with the outer world."

As they approached the end of the passage, the wall in which it ended also slid up. The row of chairs moved on, into a square, fairly large room that was empty save for a long, low bench set to face the moving chairs.

On this bench sat five men and a woman.

Dawson scarcely realized that he had stopped moving. He was staring at the five motionless figures who ruled the Earth. No—it was the woman at whom he looked. And his breath caught sharply in his throat.

He stopped breathing. He had never thought he would see that face again—brown curling ringlets, and gray eyes cool under the sweeping lashes. . . .

He swallowed convulsively. It wasn't Marian. Like her, but not the same—not quite.

Yet it had been a shock. To see again that face so very much like Marian's. He looked more closely.

She was small and soft and fragile-looking, with a slightly tilted nose. She seemed very warmly human in the sleeveless light fabric garment she wore. Her eyes met Dawson, and he felt a cold, inexplicable shock ripple down his spine. He could not have told why.

It was Bethya's voice that brought him back.

"Fered!"

Dawson looked. The other men were normal specimens, two of them gray-haired, with smooth, beardless faces, two of them approaching middle age, and there was Fered, too, seated at one end.

He wore the same sleeveless plain garment as the others.

"Yes, Bethya?" he said.

The girl glanced at the others.

"May I speak?"

"Of course," said one of the older men. "Speak as you wish. The Council is for the help and guidance of humanity."

Reassured, Bethya looked again at Fered.

"Why did you do it?" she asked, her voice quite steady. "You said that if you were elected to the Council, you'd refuse."

Dawson waited for the answer. But, when it came, he was shocked nevertheless.

"Perhaps I owe you an explanation," Fered said. "This may be difficult for you to understand, but I have learned a great deal in the last twenty-four longsecs. I told the Council of my theory, and they thought more of it, even, than I did. Johan Burk was dying, and I was offered his place."

"You said—"

"At first I refused. But many things were revealed to me. Knowledge given only to the Council, passed down from old members to new. Knowledge that showed me why I must sacrifice my life for humanity by serving in the Council. I said you might not understand this, Bethya, but you must try."

There was silence. The girl's head was bent. Dawson felt a sharp pang of pity for her. How could Fered sit there unmoving while Bethya was trying to repress her tears?

"Do not think that this was easy," the man said. "I loved you very much. I still do. Yet I have learned a greater wisdom. It is for the benefit and future of mankind that I must give up you and all the other things that were part of my life."

Bethya lifted her head and looked at Fered.

"No, you don't love me. I can tell that by your voice. What has changed you?"

The Council sat like a row of stone statues.

"Knowledge has changed me," Fered said. "I can see now that I was like a child before. I have learned so much . . . That is why no man has ever refused to serve the race by becoming a member of the Council. You must believe that I have my reasons, and that they are good ones."

"And I—"

"You must forget me. Move from Dasonee, if you wish. Work-units will be provided for your convenience. Think of me as one dead, and marry someone else, when you can do so."

A hurt, pitiful little cry came from Bethya's lips. She said nothing more.

She kept staring at Fered, all her soul in her eyes.

One of the older men tapped Dawson's arm.

"You are Stephen Dawson?"

"Yes."

"May we ask you some questions?"

"You're very polite," Dawson said, feeling a strong dislike for these six motionless figures.

They seemed utterly without emotion—and Fered had become one of them.

Irony seemed wasted on the Council.

"Yes," Dawson said, and waited.

"Not here. We have machines—psychographs and others—that will save much labor. You will not be harmed or hurt."

"All right," Dawson said.

"The guide will take you—"

"Wait."

It was the woman member of the Council who spoke. She stood up, her gray eyes fixed on Dawson's.

"Wait. I wish to superintend his examination myself."

"Very well."

The woman walked toward Dawson, who rose.

"I am Laurena San," she said impersonally. "Come."

She went toward the wall, and a concealed door within it slid up. Dawson cast a reassuring glance back at Bethya, but the girl did not look up.

He followed Laurena San.

She was completely detached, cool and aloof. Yet always, during the hours that followed, he was conscious of her resemblance to Marian. Always when her eyes met his there was that cool, dispassionate appraisal.

Yet under it, he sensed something else—a very vague and inexplicable thrill of strangeness.

They went from laboratory to laboratory, where trained experts in psychology and other scientists manipulated machines that examined Dawson. They tested him physically—his blood-pressure, his pulse, his metabolism. They probed his mind, using a curious form of word-association test. They X-rayed him and literally put him through the wringer.

They turned a ray upon his wounded arm which, they said, would speed up the healing process. And always Laurena San kept at his side.

Dawson was uneasily conscious of her presence. For he was pretending. Some impulse he could not define told him to "play possum"—to pretend a stupidity which might disarm suspicion. Why he sensed danger he could not guess, but he felt its nearness nevertheless. By playing dumb he might lead his enemies into underestimating him.

His enemies? Were the members of the Council inimical? That remained to be seen. At last the examination was finished, and he was taken back into the presence of the Council. Bethya was no longer in the room. Laurena took her place on the bench beside the others.

One of the older men took command.

"Stephen Dawson," he began, "you have been found healthy in body and mind. You are not fitted for other than work below the thirty-level—that is, nothing that requires concentration and quick thinking is open to you."

Dawson suppressed a grin. So his stratagem had worked.

"After you have acquainted yourself with this civilization, you may choose what work you wish, within certain limits. It will not be arduous. Have you anything to ask?"

"I'd like to go back to Dasonee for a while."

"Very well. The girl Bethya Dorn is in the robot plane. Join her, and you will both be returned to Dasonee. You may have the former home of Fered Yolath for your own. A guide will be appointed to aid and instruct you."

That was all. The row of chairs slid backward, out of the chamber, and the wall descended, blotting out the Council.

Again Dawson found himself in the little room of stone. Suddenly, as he started to get up, a panel moved and opened. Laurena San came in.

Dawson was on his feet, a poignant stab of pain suddenly rising deep within him. *Dust. . . .*

Laurena San paused a foot from the man.

"Do you know why I offered to superintend your tests?" she said, her voice low.

"No."

"Because—" She hesitated. "Because there was something in your eyes when you first looked at me. Something I do not know. What was it?"

Dawson froze. It was like probing in a wound.

"Surprise, I suppose," he said carelessly. "You're very lovely."

There was indecision in the woman's manner.

"No. It was something else than that. Yet—"

She turned to the door. "The plane is ready for you. Go. I do not know why I am doing this. For you are not as stupid as you pretended to be under the tests, Stephen Dawson. No! And I should tell the others of your trickery. . . ."

"I—"

"Go."

Dawson obeyed. He turned in the corridor, to catch a brief glimpse of level gray eyes in a small, heart-shaped face surrounded by curling brown ringlets. Laurena's lips were parted. She lifted one hand—

The panel closed. Dawson, breathing unevenly, walked along the passage toward the small rectangle of daylight he could see far away.

CHAPTER V

Revolt!

Time passed slowly in Dasonee. The unexpected never happened. Everything was easy for Dawson, and, to all appearances, he settled down in Fered's former home and began to adjust himself to the new life. But he was restless and uneasy. He asked innumerable questions of his tutor, taking care to keep up the pretense of stupidity that he had begun at the Capitol.

He spent much time with Bethya, almost automatically assuming an attitude of protection toward the girl, and she clung to him, perhaps sensing in him a strength that had been bred out of the race for centuries. Gradually, with a definite plan, Dawson began to acquire the reputation of a wastrel.

He spent his days and many of his nights enjoying the various amusements of Dasonee—and there were many. Horses were bred for speed and beauty, and the ancient art of hawking had come back. Dawson became expert at the art of falconry. In this Bethya could help him, for her work was the attendance of an aviary, filled with an amazing assortment of birds, some familiar to Dawson—redbreasts, herons, pigeons—and others quite new, including a sort of tiny penguin popular as a pet.

Bethya gave him a falcon of a newly developed breed, trained to long flights, with certain novel traits that Dawson found interesting. It could sing like a canary, for one thing. He told Bethya of the birds of his day, and, to her surprise, informed her that pigeons had once been used for carrying messages, that pelicans had been used to capture fish, and other stray bits of "history."

All the pleasures of Dasonee were put at his disposal, and he seemed to have an unlimited number of work-units at his command. Behind this he sensed a motive. It was like being fed an opiate, kept so contented that he would not trouble to think. But Dawson was not a product of the twenty-sixth century. He was an anachronism—and therefore dangerous.

Dining one night at a roof-garden, in a private, glass-walled room that permitted an excellent view of the floor show, a kaleidoscope of rainbow colors and shifting geometrical patterns, Dawson watched Bethya closely. He had adopted the new clothing, shorts and sleeveless shirt and flexiglass sandals, and looked healthy again, his broken arm nearly healed.

"You've been wanting to talk to me, Bethya," he said at last. "What is it?"

She looked around and then met his eyes.

"I'd be afraid to talk to anyone else, but you're—you're strong, S'ephene. Not like these others. Though I'm afraid not even you can help me."

Dawson stretched luxuriously, a lean, hard figure, tanned and dangerous-looking. Bethya watched him.

"It's about Fered, isn't it?"

"Yes," the girl said. "He doesn't belong in the Council. I—I want him back, S'ephene."

"You talked to him."

"That wasn't Fered, not the Fered I knew."

Dawson's eyes narrowed.

"Right. I don't believe his story of some secret wisdom the Council told him that changed his whole character." There was another thing, too, which Dawson did not mention. Fered

would not have been deceived by Dawson's pretense of stupidity, after the conversations the two men had had together. Had the youngster forgotten? Ridiculous, unless—

"These psychographs," he said. "Are there any machines like that that could change a man's mind?"

Bethya frowned.

"I'd thought of that. I've suspected something's been done to Fered—something to change his psyche—"

"Destroy all emotion, eh? Turn him into a coldly logical machine?"

"Can't you help me save him, S'ephēn?" the girl whispered.

"I don't know. It's a tough job—"

"You're not like other men."

Dawson knew that this was true.

"Your race has become decadent, I think," he said. "Six hundred years doesn't seem a long time in which to work such a complete change, but with guidance and careful conditioning it might be possible. The race has stagnated. And I think the Council encourages that."

He went off at an angle.

"There's something wrong about the Council. I can't put my finger on it, but somehow the whole set-up doesn't ring true to me. You can't sense it, Bethya, because you've been trained along different lines, like the rest of the world. But—"

"Go on!" The girl's blue eyes were wide.

Dawson toyed with his glass.

"I don't know, really. The Council members seem somehow without emotion. The Capitol itself—just a block of stone. That's funny, when you remember how lovely all the other cities are. Again, space-travel could be mastered, with the principles at your command. Yet that's never been tried. The Council holds all science in its grasp. It's an autocracy."

"It's benevolent."

"Superficially, yes. The people are kept drugged with pleasure so they don't realize that something's wrong. They are free to do whatever they want. But what could threaten the Council's power?"

Bethya didn't answer, and Dawson went on. "Science. New discoveries, new weapons. And people have been conditioned to turn over all new ideas to the Council, without troubling to work them out themselves. The race is in a backwash. It's stagnated, like a herd of sheep in a pasture. The sheep may be grateful to the shepherd for giving them good grass—but they'll be mutton eventually."

"Five hundred years the Council has ruled—"

"I don't understand it all. This electorate business, for example. The Council members are elected—good enough. But why are they isolated from the world afterward? The Council's clever—damnably so. Look at Fered. He stepped on their toes, but there wasn't any trouble about it. They made everything easy for him, gave him just what he wanted. Maybe that's the idea—giving people what they want, so they won't become difficult."

He gestured around at the lovely city spread beneath them.

"It's beautiful and it's stagnant. All initiative has been bred out of the race. There's no need for strength or self-reliance. If anything goes wrong, just run to Papa. Papa's the Council. And that's the nub of the mystery."

"I'd like to smash the Council," Bethya said with sudden anger, and Dawson looked at her, startled.

"You would? So . . . I guess initiative hasn't been bred out entirely. Once the basic human emotions are touched—Personally, I think it'd be the best thing to cure humanity. Jolt it out of its rut. Depose the Council. People would be helpless for a while, and then learn to think for themselves. Progress would begin again." He tugged at his ear-lobe. "I'm afraid, Bethya. There is something wrong about the Council. Remember what I said about sheep—and mutton?"

There was a little silence. At last Dawson shrugged.

"I've been playing dumb. I've done that before, once when I helped a revolution down in South America—but there's no parallel. I don't like the idea of relapsing into a stupor, like the rest of the race. Still, you can't fight a world, and the Council owns all science, all weapons."

"Not all," Bethya said. "Fered's papers—I have a copy of them. I spilled water on the originals and made a new copy for him. I still have the first ones."

Bethya's hand gripped Dawson's. "Can't you do something, S'ephen? I'll help all I can. I want Fered back, if it means wrecking the Council!"

So like a woman! Civilization, the world itself, meant nothing compared to getting the man she wanted. And yet—might this not be a good idea? There was a stir of excitement rising within Dawson.

"It's not as fantastic as I first thought," he said slowly. "The Council doesn't expect attack. A sudden *coup d'état* might succeed. Taking them by surprise, capturing them before they have a chance to use defenses—good Lord! It'd certainly jolt the race out of its stagnation." And now his eyes were ablaze.

"Fered told me something of his theory—"

"He told me something, too. The vibrationary principle. If we can secretly construct a weapon and make a few converts, it wouldn't be impossible."

Dawson grinned. "About these plans now. . . ."

And so it was begun. In the days that followed, the pair of conspirators worked fast and secretly. Dawson's pretense of being a thoughtless wastrel helped. On the surface, he continued his reckless search for pleasure, and was careful to spend some time each day with his tutor, who might, he thought, be in touch with the Council. But he and Bethya found plenty of time to work together.

It was surprisingly easy, provided one used a certain amount of care. Conspiracy was a word forgotten. There was no need to guard against it. And, inevitably, the pair made converts. Bethya chose them painstakingly, and Dawson, more by strength of will than sound argument, made them his supporters. In the very nature of this civilization, men were ready to turn to stronger men for guidance.

A few score men were all Dawson needed and wanted. More might mean betrayal. But among these adherents were several scientists, and Dawson needed them.

Though, whenever they were stumped, they always ran to Dawson for aid. Gradually he began to instil some semblance of self-reliance into them, using elementary psychology, giving them jobs to do and making sure they finished them. It was curious to see the new pride and pleasure they had after completing their tasks.

Sometimes Dawson wondered why he was doing this. He liked both Bethya and Fered, and wanted to help them. But, more than that, he sensed a deadly danger in the existence of

the Council. Try as he might, he could never solve the deep mystery that surrounded it. Yet he knew, with a definite certainty, that the human race was held in silken, perhaps unbreakable fetters, subtly led on to decadence and doom.

Why?

No one could tell him. And how could a tyranny, based on an electorate, maintain itself? It was against all principles of political logic, for the elections, as far as Dawson could discover, were perfectly fair and free from corruption. A machine-made, psychic change in character after joining the Council was the only solution. Yet it failed to explain too many things.

His arm was fully healed now, and Dawson worked with electric urgency, watching the characters of his adherents grow and develop under his tutelage. Bethya was much changed. Her chin was firmer, the blue eyes direct and level, her voice brisker. She was getting back the heritage of the race—and so were the others.

Yet it was hard at first. Fered's papers showed the way, but the instinct of research and inquiry was hard to recapture. Dawson had to show every step of the way. He guided; the others followed efficiently once he had led them on a bit.

"How will this ray affect molecular structure?" he asked one scientist.

"It might cause stasis."

"Arrested motion? You mean it could freeze people into statues?"

"I hadn't thought of that, but you're right, of course, Dawson. Yes. The molecular motion would be halted, with the same effect as that caused by absolute zero temperature, and all movement would cease. Yes, people could be paralyzed."

"Work it out. In detail!"

And the scientists could do that, once Dawson had given orders. Theory turned into practice, and practice into a concrete, three-dimensional ray-projector. Working on a carrier beam principle, it was capable of transmitting vibration for a distance of half a mile, instantly arresting anything in its path. Its focus could be made wide or narrow, and could, if necessary, embrace the whole great cube of the Capitol building in its sweep.

The conspirators met in a deserted warehouse on the outskirts of Dasonee. It didn't look like a warehouse, being a dome of plastic, tinted in blue and soft green. There was little fear of discovery, though Dawson took all possible precautions, including posting guards outside. The group met secretly, always at a different time, to disarm suspicion.

Eventually two planes were readied, one of them equipped with the ray-projector. This was to hover over the Capitol, keeping the beam in operation, while from the other, men in protective armor would land to take over.

"No need for any killing," Dawson said. "We'll take the members of the Council into protective custody. If there's something wrong with their minds, we want to cure them."

Bethya nodded, but there was a new ruthlessness in her blue eyes. It was Fered she cared about, no other.

Dawson, at the last moment, felt a twinge of compunction. After all, he was a stranger in this world. Had he the right to upset the apple-cart without knowing more about the situation? It was rather late for such thoughts, but Dawson nevertheless determined on a bold move.

"I'm going to Washington," he told the group of conspirators as they listened in the deserted warehouse one night. "I'm going to ask questions and, maybe, deliver an ultimatum."

Bethya objected, but Dawson was firm. It was a big monkey-wrench he was throwing into the machinery, and he wanted to be quite certain before he upset a world. Good Lord! He'd

never realized it would be so easy. That was the result of breeding alertness out of a race. . . .

"Everything's ready for the attack. It will take place exactly at noon tomorrow. Remember my instructions. Fly high till you reach Washington, then turn on the ray and drop. The men in protective suits will enter the Capitol and take over. Not until you're sure of safety will you turn off the ray."

"What about you?" someone asked. "You'll be in it—"

"The ray doesn't kill. It just paralyzes. I'll recover with the others. And then we can learn the truth about the Council. But keep your televisors tuned in. If I don't call you from Washington before noon, attack."

He let his gaze slide across the row of faces before him. They were changed, stronger now after weeks of tutelage. The softness was no longer so apparent. Dawson smiled grimly, lifted his hand in the Dasonee salute, and said, "Happy landings."

He went out, Bethya with him. But in the shadows he stopped her.

"I'll leave you here. You're to remain in Dasonee, remember."

"I don't want—"

Dawson's eyes bored into the girl's.

"You're staying. Hear me?"

"I—yes. You know best, of course. You'll bring back Fered, Stephen?"

Dawson nodded, squeezed Bethya's arm, and turned away, walking swiftly toward the airport. Excitement was tense within him. By noon tomorrow the mystery of the Council would be solved!

CHAPTER VI

Disaster

Dawson timed his arrival well. He did not go to Washington immediately, but, on an impulse, headed for New York. The city had changed unrecognizably. The stiff skyscrapers had given place to towering, graceful spires rising from a labyrinth of domes and curves and arches. All the structures were lit by the glow that came from the plastic structure of the city itself.

The outline of the Island had not changed. Dawson could trace the Hudson, the East River, the Harlem River, but they were fringed with parks, and were no longer the dirty, roiling streams he remembered. Bridges spanned them, slender arches that seemed too light to support their own weight. But tremendous tensile strength held them safely.

New York was a riot of color. Yet only the traditional name remained unchanged. Greenwich Village, Times Square, Central Park—they were all gone. Dawson felt a horrible loneliness as he hovered above the city, and for a second had an insane impulse to send the plane diving down to destruction.

The feeling passed, and he went on, pausing sometimes over cities, or to examine the countryside in the bright moonlight. Once more he was struck by the Utopianism of this world. But it was only superficial, he knew. Over all brooded the mysterious shadow of the Council.

The hours dragged past. He set down the plane in a valley of what had been the Alleghenies and got out, drinking from a trickling rivulet that ran near by. He walked about, feeling the dewy grass cool on his bare ankles.

He stopped and let a handful of dirt trickle through his fingers. The Earth had not changed. But the people who dwelt upon it changed, and died, and went back into the dust, and were forgotten. As Marian had been forgotten, except by him.

Strangely he could not remember the lovely, futuristic New York he had just seen. He could not picture it. Instead he recalled how the lake in Central Park had looked at twilight, with the skyscrapers clifflike to the south, and a girl's face turned up to the sky as she watched the sunset. Sick with hopeless longing, Dawson dropped upon the grass and buried his face in his hands.

The sun was high when Stephen Dawson reached Washington. He set down his plane in the stretch of greensward he remembered, and got out, looking up at the great block of stone that was the Capitol. His face was grim and harsh.

The chief problem was—what to ask the Council? Demand a solution of the mystery; that was easy to say. But, after all, just what was the mystery? A false note here, a suspicion there, all building up to a convincing whole; yet there was actually nothing definite. For all Dawson knew, the whole set-up might be on the level. And, somehow, that was the most sinister touch of all. For he sensed, quite certainly, that something was terribly wrong with this world.

The same guide he had met before came to meet him.

"You were not summoned . . . Oh, you're—let's see—Stephen Dawson."

"Tell the Council I want an audience," Dawson said.

The other shrugged.

"It's unprecedented. An exception was made when you first came, Dawson. But I'll ask. Come along."

Presently Dawson was brought before the Council. The panel closed behind him.

Nothing was altered. Five men and a woman—Laurena San—sat on the low bench, facing him. Involuntarily Dawson felt his heart contract at sight of the heart-shaped face, the cool gray eyes.

Fered was there, too, his face without expression.

"How can we help you, Stephen Dawson?" one of the older men said.

"I'd like to ask a few questions."

There was silence.

"It was at the request of Laurena San that we consented to see you," the man said, after a pause. "But we serve the world, and have little time to spare. You must be brief."

Dawson nodded, stealing a glance at his wrist-chronometer. He looked up in time to see Laurena's gaze fixed upon him intently. A wave of uneasiness touched him. There was something definitely sinister about this barren, ascetic room.

"You needn't answer," he said, "and in your place, I know I wouldn't."

"Why should we not answer your questions?"

"Why should you? What do you care about one man when you rule the world?"

"We do not rule. We administer. And every individual on Earth deserves happiness."

Dawson let his gaze move along the row of stolid, impassive faces. He stopped at Fered.

"First—have you altered Fered Yolath's mind or character?"

"You mean by mechanical means, don't you? No. He has acquired certain knowledge not given to ordinary men. His whole attitude toward life was altered by this new understanding."

"That is true," Fered said quietly, his voice calm.

Something drew Dawson's eyes to Laurena's lovely face. In it he seemed to sense puzzlement, and a very vague sort of amused mockery. Briefly it seemed to him that he confronted six blind masks, impassive and cryptic.

"Is that why members of the Council are so different from other men?"

"We cannot take part in ordinary life and administer it, too."

Dawson made a gesture.

"This room—the whole Capitol—you're ascetics. Is it because beauty no longer means anything to you? Or is it because you don't wish to arouse envy?"

Laurena San spoke.

"Perhaps it is that we now have a different concept of beauty. As for envy, why should anyone envy us? There is no man or woman on Earth who is forbidden to become a member of the Council."

And that, of course, was true. That damnable electorate! It was the weakest link in Dawson's chain of evidence. He went on grimly.

"Humanity has changed since my time. You, the Council, have lost touch entirely with it, I think. Man has become degenerate."

Laurena's expression was grave.

"No, you are wrong. Mentally and physically man is nearly perfect."

"He has lost initiative."

Suddenly Dawson was conscious of an inexplicable tension in the air. Yet the six faces before him did not change. Laurena broke the silence.

"To you, from the twentieth century, initiative must seem very important," she said coolly. "Yet it is an acquired trait. Man lost his appendix and his wisdom teeth when they were no longer needed. Since primeval times, the law has been that of the survival of the fittest. Man was essentially hedonistic. Self-preservation and preservation of the species were the great driving instincts. Unless one had initiative—which is a form of selfishness—he did not survive. Do you agree?"

Dawson was forced to nod.

"So. Now, today, we have an almost perfect administration, socially and politically. Six specialized humans sacrifice themselves, as you would say, to serve the race. In these six all the necessary traits are highly developed. Mankind does not need them any more. There is no longer a battle for survival. There is no crime, no jealousy, no greed—happiness is everyone's prerogative. Thus initiative became unnecessary, and died out of the race. In your time the appendix was a useless organ, yet many died because of its survival. If initiative existed today —"

She did not finish, there was no need. The parallel was obvious. And it was all damnably convincing.

He went off on a tangent.

"Why hasn't space-travel been developed?"

"We do not need it for our happiness."

"You don't have any explorers, either. You're stagnant. You can't realize the thrill of going somewhere no one else has ever been—into an ocean deep, up a Himalayan peak, or into space."

"That is merely compensation," Laurena argued, "the result of a psychic unbalance, an inferiority complex. Self-glorification is not needed today. The individual is healthy mentally as well as physically."

Dawson blinked, feeling like an insect under a microscope.

"Sure," he said. "You can rationalize anything. Love is just a glandular unbalance—"

The woman's lips parted.

"Love—" she murmured, frowning.

"Maybe that's one of the things you forgot when you joined the Council. But it's a primal impulse, and so is initiative. What's wrong with self-preservation?"

"It is not necessary today."

"And man has degenerated," Dawson argued. "The human race is a race of fighters, always has been. You can't breed out a heritage that goes back to beyond the Jurassic without causing weakness. Something's lacking in men today—"

"What do you wish?" Laurena said suddenly.

A wry, ironic amusement at his own audacity took hold of Dawson as he stood up, facing the Council.

"I want you to abdicate—resign, if you prefer."

There was silence. And it struck Dawson as rather shockingly strange that no one laughed.

Laurena rose, without a word, and went out through a panel that opened at her approach.

"You ask us to send man back five hundred years, into a life-pattern for which he is no longer suited?" one of the older men said.

Good Lord! Was this fantastic group seriously considering his demand? He felt a shock of amazed incredulity.

"Man can adapt himself," he pursued. "He can get back his initiative—"

"And many would die. It is not for the best that this be done. We must refuse. And, for your own safety, we must put you under observation until you have achieved happiness. We shall do all that we can to help you."

"I don't want opiates," Dawson snapped. He saw that Laurena was coming back. She took her place quietly on the bench, watching him with odd intentness.

"You must understand our situation," the Council member went on. "You are a false note in this world of ours. No trouble has arisen for years. We want you to adjust yourself."

Dawson looked at his chronometer.

"That's your last word?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that this is an ultimatum. I give you just thirty secs to change your minds."

The man started to speak, but Laurena held up her hand, halting him. She looked at Dawson, and again he sensed the subtle mockery in her gray eyes. She said nothing to him.

There was silence, filling the room like water, motionless and oppressive. Dawson could feel the secs sliding past. It would be high noon very soon now—deadline. The planes would attack.

He sat down and waited, folding his arms.

There was no sound. The eyes of the Council were impassive, inscrutable. They seemed to have taken their cue from Laurena.

Then, without warning, it happened.

A tingling shock rippled through every cell of Dawson's body. Abruptly the life seemed to be draining from him. The movement of air through his nostrils ceased. He had stopped breathing.

Nothing else was changed. The Council sat motionless. They were frozen into stasis by the ray that was flooding the Capitol building. The molecular movement of their bodies was halted.

It was like paralysis.

Dawson tried to move, and found that he could not. He tried to look away from Laurena's face, and that, too, was impossible. There was no means of judging time. He could only sit there, helpless, realizing that this identical thing must have happened to everyone within reach of the vibratory ray.

He felt triumph. *Coup d'état*—and, soon, *coup de grace*!

It seemed to him that he heard footsteps approaching. No, that was illusion. His senses were no longer working. He was numb, deaf—though not blind. Or perhaps his brain simply retained the last impression the optic nerves had sent up to it.

Mentally he pictured the scene above. One of the planes was landing on the cube's roof, disgorging men in protective armor. They would find their way down, disarm and capture the Council—though no armament was apparent on those lightly-clad bodies. Then the ray would be shut off. . . .

Abruptly the paralysis was gone. Dawson did not entirely realize it at first. When he did, he stood up, his body tingling. Yet no member of the Council had moved. He felt uneasiness, the nearness of danger.

A voice from nowhere spoke in rapid, clicking audio-shorthand. Dawson could not understand. He looked around, searching for the armored men who should be here now.

The voice stopped.

"The attacking planes have been destroyed, Stephen Dawson," Laurena said lightly.

Startled, Dawson could not realize the significance of what she had said. He stared at her, seeing no hint of emotion in the small, regular features, the level gray eyes.

"Sit down," she said. And Dawson obeyed, every sense alert, feeling trapped and helpless.

"You were wrong to underestimate the intelligence of the Council," Laurena went on quietly. "When you asked us to—abdicate—I realized that you must have some weapon, for you are not a fool, regardless of what the psychographs said. I left the room to set certain robot machinery into operation. When your ray bathed the Capitol and paralyzed it, the robot guns sent forth radio-propelled torpedoes, aerial-torps, which were attracted by the electrical and magnetic apparatus in your planes overhead. Those planes were destroyed, and the ray ceased to operate."

"My—my men—" Dawson whispered, his throat dry and tight.

"All dead. And now we have some questions to ask."

"Questions!" The man almost laughed in bitter mockery. "There must be a wall around!"

"I do not understand."

"Stand me up against it—shoot me. It's the unusual thing, isn't it?"

"Not in this day," Laurena told him. "You are a false note in our world, but a false note may be tuned aright. You will be taken to the laboratories again and re-tested. First there will be some questioning. But you will not be killed."

Was Dawson wrong in thinking that a ripple of surprise passed through the Council—even Fered? He could not be sure. However, no one spoke as Laurena went on.

"Explain your motives," she demanded.

Dawson glanced at Fered. He was remembering Bethya Dorn, back in Dasonee, waiting for the outcome of the abortive attack. At all costs, he'd have to protect her—for, somehow, he knew that not even Fered would show the girl mercy if he betrayed her part in the conspiracy. She might not be murdered, but the subtle psychology of the Council was more deadly than poisoned fangs.

He sat down, assuming a sullen air and crossing his arms.

"All right. This isn't my world. Where I come from, people fought. I've always had to fight for what I wanted."

"There was no need, here."

He grinned savagely.

"No? You don't know what it means to have power—power of life and death! Hell, of course you do!"

"We serve," Laurena said simply.

"Well, so what? I've always wanted to be top dog. Never had a chance in my own time. When I saw this race of weaklings, I figured I could make myself the big shot—the ruler." He went on, trying hard to make the Council believe him. And, very gradually, he sensed that he was succeeding.

"Call it a psychic unbalance," he said angrily. "Or an inferiority complex. I'm not one of these sheep you rule."

"Who were your assistants—your helpers?"

Dawson named them frankly, taking care to mention only those who had died in the destroyed planes.

"There were no others?"

"No. I didn't think I'd need an army."

"Not even an army could conquer the Capitol," Laurena told him. "Very well. You will go through the lab tests—"

"You'll let me live?" In spite of himself, Dawson let amazement creep into his voice.

"We must have no discords. The whole world knows about you, that you came from the past. If you died, many would ask questions, and their happiness would be menaced. As yet, you cannot be allowed to mingle with others. You will be our guest here, *incommunicado*, until such time as your mental cure is complete. Then you will be released."

Dawson shivered. There was menace in those words. *Mental cure . . .* He did not fear guns or fists or death-rays, but he did fear the unknown powers of this world. Looking at Fered's blank, expressionless face, he remembered how the youngster had changed.

A "guest" of the Council! And would he, too—*change*?

CHAPTER VII

Dangerous Captive

Then began a strange time for Dawson. He was never harmed, and everything was done for his comfort. But he was a prisoner within the vast block of the Capitol, never allowed to emerge. Not that he was barred from the fresh air, for the gardens on the roof were open to him.

Only the private quarters of the Council were barred, and it was a strictly enforced rule that no man was ever to enter these. They were kept locked by devices to which only the members possessed keys—tiny electro-oscillatory gadgets they wore at all times on their persons. More than once Dawson speculated on what lay beyond those eternally guarded doors.

He was given almost luxurious private quarters high up in the dome. Though there had seemed to be no windows, the touch of a button made part of the wall transparent as glass, so that he could see for miles over the rolling green countryside. Sometimes a plane would take off or arrive. That was his only contact with the outer world, save for a one-way televiser that would not permit him to send out calls.

There were perhaps a thousand men and women working in the Capitol, trained scientific experts who spent a few months in each year there. For the rest, they were free to go where they chose, with ample amounts of work-units at their command. Yet over all ruled the Council. There were no guards, save for nominal ones armed with paralytic needle-guns. Everything Dawson wanted, almost, was given freely to him. He wandered about the Capitol, his eyes open, trying to understand everything he saw. He was free—but a prisoner.

He saw much strange science, and saw, too, the great libraries where secrets of centuries were kept hidden away for time of need. If this knowledge could be thrown open to the world, he thought, a new era would dawn. Barriers would fall, and so many avenues of exploration would open up. Men would again search, with scientific zeal, for solutions of mysteries. They would delve deep into the Earth and the sea, and go out to the planets—perhaps even beyond them. If only he could disseminate this secret lore!

Mysteries were all around him. There was so much he did not understand. Why, for example, had the Council not yet effected the “mental cure” they had promised? They seemed to have forgotten Dawson’s existence.

No—not all of them. More and more Laurena San sought out his company. He learned much from her, though always he was conscious that she carefully guarded her tongue. Laurena spent many longsecs with Dawson. She could not understand why he loved to walk in the open-air gardens on the roof, but she went there with him often, and they talked. Nor did Dawson draw back from the contact.

Curiously enough, he realized that, as time went on, he found himself thinking less and less of Marian. The familiar features of her remembered face had changed. Whenever Dawson tried to recall them, he saw instead the face of Laurena. And, at first, this was bitter to him, though soon he realized the futility of faithfulness to dust. Besides—so he told himself, perhaps not with complete honesty—the more he encouraged Laurena’s companionship, the more he could learn from her. And that information might come in handy—some day.

Would that day ever come? Time slipped past, idly and slothfully, and Dawson found himself almost submerged in a slough of pleasant idleness.

It was so easy to do nothing, to have every wish granted, provided he forgot the existence of the outside world.

One thing kept him from forgetting entirely. That was Fered. Seeing Fered, he remembered Bethya, and much else.

So he walked with Laurena in the flaming, exotic gardens, far above ground level, with the cool winds blowing upon him, and learned from her. . . .

"How did the Council begin?"

They were sitting near the great silvery dome, three hundred feet long, that rose from the center of the roof. They sat on a sloping lawn under a magnolia tree, and blossoms were drifting down about them, while the heavy fragrance was strong in their nostrils. Dawson could almost imagine himself back six centuries in time.

"How did it begin? Why, through logical evolution. According to history, there was a world war in nineteen-ninety, which left the Earth desolated. A Technate of scientists rose and took command in various countries, eventually combining their forces. In time this gave place to the Council."

"I see. What were you before you joined the Council, Laurena?"

She looked away.

"We won't speak of that. It does not matter now. Tell me, are you happy here, Stephen Dawson?"

He looked at her averted profile, and all the nostalgia for a lost Earth rose up in him.

"Happy? I—"

His arms went around her then. It was not Laurena San he was holding. It was his own world—all that he had lost, all that had crumbled forever into dust. But when his lips found hers—

It was not dust that he kissed—no!

He drew back at last, staring at her. She put up her hand in a queer, helpless gesture.

"Stephen . . . I—I am afraid."

"Why?" he asked quietly. "Is love forbidden to the Council?"

"Love," she repeated, and at the note in her voice Dawson felt a curious, inexplicable shock. He looked at her sharply. It was almost as though she had never heard the word before, or had forgotten it.

She nodded.

"I have forgotten so much, or perhaps there was much that I never knew. When I first saw you, Stephen, I sensed something—" She hesitated. "I don't know—I don't know! Our world, our plans—"

Dawson caught the phrase.

"Your plans? What do you mean?"

She hesitated, but her glance toward the silvery, elliptical dome was betrayal. The man nodded toward it.

"Does the secret lie there?"

Laurena's gray eyes found his. She nodded slowly.

So there was a secret! Triumph leaped within Dawson. And then died as he saw the grief and pain in the girl's face. Involuntarily he reached out to touch her.

"You wish to go there?" she said. "Under the dome?"

"Yes."

And now a queer sort of excitement shook Laurena. She leaned forward.

"Now listen well. If I take you beneath the dome, it will mean that you can never leave the Capitol. There are secrets which must not be told."

"Was I ever intended to leave?" Dawson asked quietly.

"Yes, you were. But not until a psycho-machine had expunged all memory from your brain, making you harmless. Now—well, I do not think the Council will trust even the psycho-machine, after you have been under the dome. You must remain here forever."

A magnolia blossom drifted down between them. Dawson stared long at the girl.

"It's a good bargain," he said unevenly. "Very well."

She started to rise. He said, "Wait," and kissed her again. Her lips were tender as memories. There was a single scarlet blossom growing near them, and Dawson plucked this and put it in the curling brown hair.

She smiled at him, then rose, leading him toward the ramp that led down from the gardened roof.

Down they went, winding through corridors of stone till they faced a blank wall. From within her shirt Laurena drew a tiny metal box. She pressed this against the smooth surface.

The panel opened. At first Dawson could not comprehend what he saw. A long bulging curve of metal that swept out above him, like the hull of an ocean liner—

Laurena pulled him through the threshold, and the barrier closed. Dawson saw now that he looked upon a space ship.

He remembered the silver, elliptical dome in the roof. That must be the ship's upper half. The lower portion was hidden in this secret room, so that only part of the vessel was visible from above. A clever trick—the old "Purloined Letter" idea, of concealing an object in plain sight.

Laurena led him to where an open port gaped in the ship's side. He followed her in, finding himself in a little metal-lined corridor.

This ended in a room, paned with what looked like black glass. Set flush with the dark floor was an instrument panel. Otherwise the room was quite empty.

Laurena turned to face him.

"Do you remember the space ship that fell to Earth hundreds of years ago?"

Dawson nodded, blank with amazement. "This is—"

"Yes. It came from another world, Stephen. We never learned what the builders were like. It was robot-controlled. The Council took this ship and studied what they found in it. There were secrets of science such as Man had never dreamed existed. And that is why the Council is—as it is. Our knowledge is not drawn from Earth, but from an alien world as well."

"I see." Yet Dawson did not entirely understand.

"This ship lies here in a cradle. No one but the Council suspects its existence. It seems to be part of the Capitol building."

"Why is it here?"

Laurena indicated a larger white button among the others on the instrument panel. "Do you see that? If it is pressed, the ship would rise and head into space. It would leave the Earth. It is always kept stocked with concentrated provisions, enough to last for almost a century. It is our Noah's Ark."

"I don't—"

"We cannot see the future. We plan as we can. If cataclysm ever strikes our planet or the race—a comet, or a flood, or an incurable virus—we shall choose the hardiest and flee with them in this ship, to begin life again on another world. And that is all. We shall go now." Laurena turned back toward the door, and Dawson perforce followed her.

Outside the ship, he hesitated, watching the girl. She was very lovely, with the scarlet flower in her hair, her level gray eyes no longer frightened. But, deep within him, there were questions he did not ask. Laurena's story had not satisfied him.

A Noah's Ark—yet why had not the Council provided for the building of thousands of space ships, so that not a few, but many, might be saved in the event of catastrophe? And then Dawson remembered the lack of furnishings in the ship, and the instrument panel set flush with the floor. Strange! He wondered what sort of beings had originally built the vessel. They could not have been human.

That night, in his suite, Dawson spent hours pondering. Now that he had seen the ship, he could never leave the Capitol—except, perhaps, at the expense of losing all his memories and becoming like a child. No—rebellion rose in the man. He would escape somehow. Or—

He remembered his sacred promise to Bethya, to help her save Fered. Impossible now. He could not communicate with her. If he could, she still had the plans for the vibratory principle. Some new weapon might be devised from it. And this time he would strike without warning—

Dawson smiled bitterly. He was utterly powerless. Did he love Laurena? Yes, he thought—and yet, somehow, he was not quite sure. Perhaps it was because she was a member of the ruling Council, and, even if a marriage could take place, Dawson would still be in the position of a Prince Consort. That, to a man of his character, was unendurable. Yet under other circumstances, in a world where Laurena was not totally alien to him by ancient tradition, it might be different. A new weapon? The stasis ray would not work again. Yet vibration is an underlying principle of matter. Dawson remembered the days in Dasonee, when he had guided the conspiracy—

His eyes widened. There was a way! A way against which this ultra-modern civilization might not suspect, because of its very existence had long been forgotten. But he must be discreet so as not to awaken the suspicions of the Council.

"I want you to do something for me, Laurena. Back in Dasonee I had some pets. I'm rather lonely for them."

"You want them? Very well."

"The girl who runs the aviary there—Bethya Dorn—is probably keeping them for me. A tame falcon, and some pigeons. Will you have them sent on?"

"There is no harm in that, if you want them," Laurena smiled. Dawson held her arm as she turned away. "Yes?"

"I won't want them for a month. I'll be busy until then—I'm still not acquainted with the Capitol. Will you have Bethya send them here—in a month?"

It was hard to wait, after that. Dawson could not know whether Bethya would understand the significance of the enforced delay. Would she remember their conversation, long ago in Dasonee, during which Dawson had described—*carrier pigeons*?

CHAPTER VIII

Triumph of Dust

Bethya understood. She spent that month training the pigeons to return directly to the aviary from great distances, doing it secretly. There was never any suspicion, nothing to connect the girl with the original plot to overthrow the Council. Dawson guessed all this when the pigeons—and the tame falcon—arrived.

He had spent the month in working out plans, trying to devise a new weapon from the vibratory principle. He was not an accomplished scientist, but the final work could be done by the remnants of the conspirators, whom Bethya would gather together. Vibration. . . .

Light is vibration. And Dawson outlined theories, plans, suggestions, aimed at creating a ray that would destroy all light vibrations, canceling them so that total darkness would result. A complete blackout, in which the conspirators, wearing specially-made goggles, might move with unimpaired vision. To Dawson the idea seemed practical enough, in the light of this ultra-scientific civilization, but necessarily, he had to go much by guesswork.

Messages could be sent only one way. Dawson felt triumph when he released the first of the pigeons, saw it rise and circle, and then dart away southward. His heart was a lump in his throat. Would the trick be suspected?

It was not. Carrier pigeons were forgotten, not even mentioned in history. And the message went to Bethya. . . .

She could not answer. There was no way, without causing suspicion. Dawson tried to foresee every exigency, outlining in his shorthand notes just what Bethya should do, how she should gather together a group of plotters, how the scientists must work on the new ray-projector. Remembering the girl's new-found self-reliance, Dawson felt that he could depend on her.

Time passed. At last he sent the falcon back to Dasonee, giving as his reason the statement that the bird was homesick and pining. The truth was that the falcon had now become accustomed to the Capitol, and would return there promptly whenever Bethya released it in Dasonee. She would not send the bird, however, until the last moment, unless an emergency arose.

The days fled past. More and more Dawson found himself attracted by Laurena. He scarcely ever thought of Marian now. He was burning with anxiety to learn how the plot was progressing. But there was nothing he could do except wait.

The falcon came back, a message with it. Dawson read it surreptitiously. Bethya had not failed him. The machine was ready. The conspirators would wear protective goggles that would make the artificial darkness non-existent to them. They would land on the Capitol's roof whenever Dawson gave the signal.

He sent out a pigeon for the last time, setting the hour. And, after that, it was almost unendurable to wait. . . .

The day before the deadline, Dawson stole the tiny electro-oscillatory key from Laurena while she slept in the roof gardens, under the magnolia tree. He had to be sure that there would be a way of reaching the Council behind their locked doors.

That night Dawson quietly let himself out of his suite. He intended to go to the roof, meet his friends as they landed, and lead them to the sleeping-quarters of the Council. Too, he wished to be present so that he could protect Laurena. He did not entirely trust the newly-aroused spirit of his co-conspirators.

It was half an hour to deadline when Dawson slipped into a side corridor, hiding from a strolling guard. He decided to take a different way, past the rooms of the Council, usually left unguarded.

But trouble came unexpectedly. A guard caught sight of Dawson as he sped along, and lifted his needle-gun. Dawson was used to rough-and-tumble scraps, and he had faced guns before. He dived under the weapon, so that the paralytic needle hissed above him, and crashed into the guard's legs. The two men went down, Dawson's hand shutting off a cry from his opponent.

Fighting was almost a lost art. A fist cracked against a jaw, and the guard lay silent. Dawson stood up warily.

He was beside a paneled door set into the wall—the sleeping-quarters of one of the Council. No sound came from beyond the panel. Yet Dawson hesitated, fearing that the noise of the scuffle might have reached dangerous ears. It would be well to make sure—

He drew out the tiny "key" and pressed it against the door. There was a soft clicking, and a line of light widened as the panel slid up.

Dawson saw a plain, unfurnished room of stone, with an open door set in the opposite wall. He stepped cautiously across the threshold, and the panel slid shut after him.

He went into the next room and stopped in blank amazement. It, too, was undecorated, though cut in the wall was a square opening no more than a foot high. But flat on the floor, motionless, lay the body of Fered Yolath.

Something was dreadfully wrong about it. Dawson moved forward, the guard's needle-gun in his hand, looking down. Fered's head—

The entire top of the man's head was lifted up, as the lid of a box is lifted.

And within the skull cavity was dark emptiness. Good God!

Dawson fought down his repugnance, knelt, and gingerly examined the body. The skull had been cleverly hinged, he saw, so that the top of the cranium could be lifted at will. And the bone had been replaced with metal that felt cold under the crisp hair.

He looked up in time to see something stir in the darkness of the little opening in the wall. From that gap a bizarre being emerged, so swiftly that Dawson caught only a glimpse of what looked like a monstrous spider. There was a flash of swift, innumerable limbs, the gleam of light on a shining, wrinkled, grayish body from which they sprang, and the creature sped straight for Fered's body.

The spiderlike creature entered the empty skull, and the cranium-cap fell into place. Before Dawson could rouse himself from his shocked incredulity, Fered's hand moved swiftly, and a round lens glittered in it.

Dawson swung up the gun. From the lens light flashed, and the weapon fell to the floor, while Dawson felt a shock of pain in his arm.

Fered stood up, still holding his lens-weapon ready. Dawson could scarcely believe what he had just seen.

Through dry lips he whispered, "You're not—Fered—you're some devilish being—some monster insect—aren't you?"

"Ask what you wish," the low voice said. "I must kill you now, so what you know will make no difference."

But Dawson could not speak. And the spider thing that spoke through Fered's body, its garment of humanity, went on:

"You know, now, that we are not human. We came to Earth in the space ship you saw, centuries ago. We are almost immortal. But our own planet, far beyond your Galaxy, was destroyed, and we sought for a new one. We are an old race, tired of battle. You said that Mankind stagnated under us. This may be true, because we, too, are stagnant. We reached the peak of our civilization eons ago, on a different planet, and were content to rest."

Dawson swallowed.

"You're inhuman—"

"We are intelligent, far more so than humans. When we reached the Earth, we decided to remain here. We could, perhaps, have conquered by force, but it was unnecessary. Instead, we took the bodies of Earthmen, employed psychology, and created—the Council."

Dawson's fascinated gaze clung to the being's skull.

"We are almost immortal, as I have said. But we preferred to arouse no suspicion in Earthmen. They held their elections, whenever one of our bodies would wear out, and a new member would be appointed to the Council. The person's brain would be removed, and one of us would enter in its place. We are almost bodiless, Stephen Dawson. We developed into beings chiefly composed of brain-tissue, yet with the necessary mobile organs."

Now Dawson knew why he had sensed something alien about the Council from that first. They *were* alien—creatures from a different Galaxy, come to this planet centuries ago, to rule unsuspected over Mankind. So much was explained now—the stagnation of humans, the drug of contentment that had wiped out initiative. . . .

"Fered—" Dawson whispered. "What became of him?"

"We kept his brain alive. It was a most valuable one, and we wished to drain it of its knowledge later."

"You mean—it can be replaced—"

"Of course," the being said. "It can be replaced in this skull, and Fered will live again. But that will not occur. You will die, instead."

Then darkness fell.

Instantly Dawson realized what had happened. Bethya's planes had arrived, were even now hovering over the Capitol, sending down the vibratory ray that blacked out light. His reaction was instinctive. He sprang aside, feeling death touch him as the alien being used the death-lens, and grappled with the Thing.

He put all his strength into a smashing blow at where he guessed its jaw would be. Then he felt the creature go limp, and collapse.

Dawson bent blindly, his fingers searching. The knockout was complete. Under his hand he felt the chill metal of the skullcap, and shuddered. Then he groped his way to the door, using the "key" he had taken from Fered to let himself out into the corridor.

He was alone in blind darkness. Guided by touch alone, he felt his way upward. He had two "keys" now, Fered's, and the one he had stolen from Laurena. He hurried on. He was to meet Bethya on the roof.

Fresh air gusted against his face. He heard low voices, and hands seized him. He felt goggles being slipped over his head, and then, amazingly, he could see again, though there

was a queer absence of perspective.

Three planes stood near by. Goggled men, armed, were still pouring from them. A knot of figures stood near Dawson, among them Bethya, a vicious little gun in her hand.

"Is Fered safe?" she asked.

Dawson nodded. He could not bring himself to speak.

"The Council? Where—"

"Come on." He led the way back down into the Capitol, past blundering figures of guards, who were ignored. They were harmless now, and could be disarmed later. Men scattered through the building to take over.

But two score followed Dawson and Bethya. The man wondered whether the Council would be in their sleeping-chambers. They probably were. They would feel safe there, not knowing that he had two keys.

"The Council must die," Bethya said grimly. "It's the only way."

And Dawson, knowing what he did, could not reply. He paused by the first of the doors, showed Bethya how to use the key, and stood aside, letting the men pour past him. He had a glimpse of one of the older Council members coming forward in startled anger, a lens-weapon in his hand. Then he was shot down mercilessly.

Dawson went to the last of the doors, knowing that Laurena was behind it. The others had not caught up with him yet as he opened the panel and slipped in, closing it behind him.

He saw Laurena, standing in the center of the room, staring around blindly, a lens in her hand. Her face, surrounded by brown curls, was frightened.

"It's Stephen, Laurena," he said softly.

She gave a little sigh, let the lens fall and reached out into the darkness that surrounded her. The man came forward and took her in his arms. She touched his goggles.

"Stephen, what—"

Then she was silent, clinging to him, frightened at the sound of shots that came faintly to them.

Dawson felt the warm softness of her, the fragrance of her hair in his nostrils. He looked down at that curling, dark head. His hand went up—touched a brown, silken lock—

He jerked back, longing for death. He said abruptly. "No!" and Laurena looked up at him, blindness in the gray eyes that were now so dear to him.

"The Council has fallen," he said, as the door lifted, letting in the attackers. "Do just as I say. It's the only way to save your life."

There was no time for more. He saw Bethya enter.

"Stand away, Stephen!" she cried. Her gun lifted.

Dawson swung Laurena behind him.

"Wait! Listen—" His gaze probed into Bethya, making her pause.

"Well?"

"Listen to me, Bethya. Fered is safe—"

"He's unconscious. We found him."

"His brain has been removed from his body," Dawson said succinctly. "It's still alive, and can be replaced. This girl can do it. I do not know if any other person can."

"Fered—you say—"

"It's true. In exchange for her life, Laurena San will give you back Fered."

Bethya looked at Laurena. "Is it true? Can you—and will you?" She lifted the gun significantly. "If you do not—"

Laurena nodded.

"I—I'll do it. Yes."

And, somehow, Dawson found himself wishing that the girl would fail in the attempted operation, that she would not reveal the ultra-surgical skill that would prove her a member of an alien race.

He did not watch. He went on an errand, and when he returned, there was a strange, greenish blood on his hand, and he was white and trembling. Yet, somehow, he felt triumph too. The knowledge—the scientific lore—in the Capitol would be given to Mankind now, and the race would live again, strong and vital and eager as of old. Beauty would no longer mean decadence.

The darkness-ray had been shut off, and there was now no need for the goggles. Dawson entered the operating room and stood by the door, a gun dangling idly from his hand as he watched. Laurena, in sterile white garments, was motionless, looking at the still form on the table.

Bethya bent over Fered's body, her soul in her eyes. She gasped as the man stirred.

Fered's lashes trembled, lifted. He saw the girl.

"Bethya—Bethya, darlya—" he whispered.

That was enough. The gun whipped up in Dawson's hand. With the other he reached out for Laurena and dragged her close. The others whirled, startled.

"Laurena San has earned her life," Dawson explained. "I'm taking her with me. Good-by, Bethya. I kept my promise to give Fered back to you."

The girl did not answer, and before she could move Dawson was in the corridor, taking Laurena with him. Through a long corridor they went, and up, pausing at last before a wall where Dawson used his "key." The panel lifted, and then crossed the threshold to stand before the giant space ship.

Dawson carried Laurena into it, closing the port behind her. He went into the control room, where he released the girl. He touched the white button on the instrument panel.

The smooth, dark walls were suddenly darker, and flecked with stars. The moon, larger now, hung silvery and mottled like a lantern. The great cloud-hung globe of the Earth was visible on the floor vision-screen.

They were in space.

Dawson went toward Laurena. His hands gripped her arms.

"I do not know," he said, oddly. "You may not be like—like the others. But I couldn't be sure without. . . ." He stopped, his eyes searching the heart-shaped, tender face. "You wouldn't be safe on Earth now, and Earth might not be safe from you, if you're like—the others."

She did not answer. The gray eyes met Dawson's without evasion.

The girl gently captured one of Dawson's hands and lifted it to her head. He resisted at first, and then felt a sudden, impossible hope at the touch of the soft ringlets. She guided his fingers. . . .

No chill of metal made him draw back now. For Laurena San was—*human*!

"Yes," she said quietly. "I did not know you really thought—"

"Laurena!" Dawson's voice was unsteady. "But how—"

She smiled at him.

"Always, since the beginning, one member of the Council has been human. The—the *others* were afraid they would lose touch with the race. They needed a 'bridge,' someone who was *en rapport* with humanity. It counteracted their own inhumanity, to some extent. They took me when I was a child, and raised me in the Capitol, teaching me their own knowledge. In time I became a member of the Council—but Stephen, Stephen! I have always been human!"

The man shivered a little, and glanced to where the image of the Earth hung small in the visiplate.

"You cannot go back," he said slowly, with meaning.

Laurena did not answer. And Dawson went on:

"The human race would hate and fear you, because you *were* a member of the Council. It would not matter to them that you were not like the—others. You would not be safe. And you learned much from the Council. Knowledge that no human other than you possesses. Knowledge that makes the Earth unsafe, if you ever decided to use it. We must be exiles—always. We can never go back. . . ."

The girl waited, her eyes very bright. Dawson's arms went around her. He drew her close.

"But you're human, Laurena San! A girl I can love whole-heartedly, without any doubts or fears!"

"I love you, Stephen," she said. "Exile will not matter, as long as we're together. We'll find some other planet, some new world—"

Together they turned to watch the distant, receding sphere of the Earth. The star-bright darkness of space walled them, the limitless unknown. But they were no longer afraid.

They would find a new world out there among the stars.

[The end of *Remember Tomorrow* by Henry Kuttner]