

ADAM LINK IN BUSINESS by EANDO BINDER

See
BACK
COVER

AMAZING

JANUARY • 20c

STORIES

SONS OF THE DELUGE

by NELSON S. BOND



Six GREAT STORIES
Ten BIG FEATURES

*** 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: The Man Who Saw Two Worlds

Date of first publication: 1940

Author: John Russell Fearn (as Thorton Ayre) (1908-1960)

Date first posted: Aug. 30, 2022

Date last updated: Aug. 30, 2022

Faded Page eBook #20220862

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



There came a smashing concussion and a blinding light

THE MAN WHO SAW TWO WORLDS

By

John Russell Fearn

Writing under the pseudonym Thorton Ayre.

First published *Amazing Stories*, January 1940.

Blind Ralph Marshall's sight slowly returned, but it wasn't his own world he saw. It was another, where a scientist worked at an awful plot.

Ralph Marshall never knew what really happened. One minute he was carrying on his normal work as mining engineer, supervising the drilling of the giant shaft which it was hoped would one day pass under the Atlantic Ocean from the United States to Britain—and the next there was the sound of smashing concussion in his ears and blinding light before his eyes. He stumbled and fell amidst a rain of tumbling rocks, props, and underpinnings. . . .

Voices merged out of darkness. Sounds of instruments clinking and tinkling in glass vessels. Ralph Marshall felt throbbing pain throughout his body. He stirred and winced. A nurse's voice spoke to him gently.

"Just relax, Mr. Marshall. You'll be all right."

He obeyed perforce, piecing together the past events. There was a wadding of bandages across his eyes, tight binding round his arm. It felt as though his leg were in a plaster cast. But his biggest worry was the dark—total, pitchy. Had his sight gone? Had it been destroyed in the mine blow-out? That was something he did not dare to think about.

But as hours and days slid by, as days slipped into weeks, as the rest of his body healed and his eyes did not, he began to realize the truth. He realized it all the more clearly when the bandages were unwound from his face and he raised his eyelids. The darkness remained unchanged.

"Doc!" he shouted hoarsely, gripping the hand that held him. "Doc, what's wrong with me? I can't see! Everything's . . . black!"

The voice of Dr. Talford Flint, chief doctor of the hospital, sounded as impartial as ever.

"Just sit here, Mr. Marshall, while we take a look at you."

Ralph fumbled for the high backed chair and fell into it, sat motionless, breathing hard, staring into the abyss. He heard the whirr and buzz of electrical machinery, the mutter of voices in consultation.

Suddenly, sharp questions stabbed from the dark.

"Can you see this? No? Well—*this!* No reaction? Hm . . ."

More muttering. Dr. Flint's voice rose higher than the others with its sharp, acid sting.

"The eyes react normally, I tell you! Optic nerves are quite in order. Maybe a case of temporary shock. Nonsense, man!" he scoffed at somebody. "Nonsense! Cannot be the brain-centers . . ."

Ralph sprang up suddenly. "Would somebody mind telling me what the devil's going on in here?" he demanded, almost with a touch of hysteria. "Stop cackling, can't you, and let me have the truth!"

Flint's voice replied, monotonously calm. "If we could tell you what *is* wrong with your eyes, Mr. Marshall, we would do so—but we cannot! They answer to every one of our tests, and for that reason you should be able to see. That you cannot see is something we are unable to explain. It's—it's temporary blindness and will pass off eventually, just as snow-blindness does."

"And supposing it doesn't?" Ralph stood mastering himself. He went on desperately, "There must be *somebody* who can diagnose, surely?"

"In this room are the best experts in optics, Mr. Marshall," Flint retorted. "Your firm insisted on the best possible specialists to examine you. That has been done. It is simply a case of your eyes not answering to normal optical laws, that's all. We can do nothing more to help you—but keep on calling nonetheless so we can note an improvement the moment it appears. We'll keep thorough track of your case, of course."

Ralph smiled bitterly. Thorough track! That was the last thing he could imagine this cold-blooded fish, Talford Flint, ever doing. Though he had never yet seen him he had long since summed up the man's nature from his ruthless voice.

Ralph said quietly, "Well, thanks . . ." A hand caught his arm. He could tell by the cool draft when he was in the main passage. Then another hand caught him—a strong hand he immediately recognized, that of Ed Rutter, his assistant engineer on the Shaft.

"Good to see you around on your pins again, Ralph." Ed's voice was genuinely pleased. "How's tricks?"

"Not so hot, I guess." Ralph fingered his dark glasses and gave a brief account of the medico's edict as they passed down the steps together.

"They're crazy!" was Ed's summing up. "I dragged you out of that blowout myself. You got a smack on the head, a cracked leg, and a burned arm—nothing more. You'll be O.K., don't worry. In the meantime you can hitch to me. I'll keep the flies off you."

"That," Ralph said quietly, "is the part I don't like. You know I'm not built to rely on other people. I've got to do things myself, with my own two hands— Oh, hell, why did this have to happen to *me*?"

Ed said philosophically, "I suppose things can happen to the best of us. Stop worrying, man. Just keep on digging in with me at the apartment until you get right again."

Ralph gripped the strong hand gratefully. He needed no words to convince him of the tough, red-haired engineer's loyalty. Ed Rutter was the sort of man who'd give his right arm in defense of somebody he really liked.

There was a long silence between them after that. Then after a while Ralph noted from the increasing roar of traffic that they had come into the heart of New York. In his mind's eye he could see the way to their apartment, could also see the three-mile distance of criss-crossing streets which led to the vast excavations at the Shaft entrance. Three times a shaft had been attempted, and still it was incomplete.

For Ralph all that was over now, he felt. He had to pattern a new sort of life. He had money saved, plenty of it. The firm had intimated they would grant him a life pension. Did that imply that they thought he would never. . . ? He crushed the thought from his mind.

Over the meal in the apartment Ed's voice went on in forced cheeriness. Ralph did not listen to all the things he said. His thoughts were on his immediate predicament. Then he started violently as the alarm clock went off—that infernal clock, always going off at the wrong time, moving itself along the mantelshelf by the very vibration of its ringing.

Ed leapt for it, jammed on the silencer.

“Tell you what,” he said, turning again. “Why not let me go and get you one of those dogs? You know—eyes of the blind, and all that. I don’t want to rub it in, but you *could* get about.”

“Thanks—no,” Ralph answered curtly. “I haven’t given up hope yet, Ed. A dog to run around with me would sort of make me feel tied down. I’ll get better—somehow.”

“But until you do—”

“Oh, quit worrying me, can’t you?” Ralph blazed.

Ed relaxed and lighted a cigarette. Ralph crushed out his own cigarette with strong, knotty fingers. Thereafter he drummed on the table with a definite desperation of spirit.

In the ensuing days Ralph Marshall debated many courses of action. Should he just vanish from sight? Should he put an end to himself? He did not consider it would be cowardice: he was a firm believer in ridding the world of useless material, organic or inorganic. He might . . . No: there was always the thought he might recover.

A week passed. In that week his moods were those of a man driven to distraction. He had periods of smouldering calm; then he flew into berserk rages, ranted, finally apologized—and Ed Rutter came from and went to work on the Shaft with calm, cheerful understanding. He knew only too well the ordeal his dynamic, energetic friend was undergoing.

Then something happened! One of the mornings when he was left alone as usual Ralph noticed something queer. There was a puncture in the abyss of darkness—a tiny hole of light!

Ralph’s whole being suddenly exploded with hysterical delight. He sat staring at that hole, rolling his eyes to make sure, but whichever way he turned his eyes the hole remained. It was perhaps as large as a pea. Straining to the utmost, he tried to analyze what he saw. He held his hand before his face, but for some reason could not see any trace of his hand at all in the hole. Not that that discouraged him: he remained confident that he would do so before long.

He phoned the news to Ed down in the Shaft. That evening they had a celebration supper on the strength of it. From then on Ed was as keenly interested as Ralph himself in the gradual expansion of that hole day by day. Once or twice Ralph toyed with the idea of going back to the hospital for an examination, then decided against it. Better to get himself wholly well before being tested and proven all right for work again.

The hole grew. With the growth came a sense of dawning wonder to Ralph. Four days later it was large enough to encompass a quarter of his vision, but he was not looking at anything in the apartment! He walked in bewilderment from room to room, but he never saw a familiar thing, and certainly failed to observe the furniture with which he collided. And yet the scene changed as he moved about. He saw things which, in their partial state, he could not understand or reconcile. Otherwise it seemed he was as blind as ever. He still could not see his waving hands in front of his face, could not see a sign of anything immediately around him.

His first hopes began to diminish, but not entirely. There was definite interest in watching the development of returning sight—though what sort of a world he was going to look into he dared not imagine.

He purposely kept most of the truth from Ed, only told him enough to let him believe he was recovering very gradually. In another week the vision was completely clear to Ralph, and sitting on the divan in the living room one morning with his dark glasses off, he gazed—and gazed.

He was alone in the apartment; he knew that—but instead of being in the apartment he was apparently sitting on the sidewalk of a tremendously long main street. He gazed down it steadily, remarking the absolute clarity of detail. People passed him constantly but never glanced at him—busy people, men and women, just as he had always known them, except that their attire was rather different to prevailing fashion. It struck him as curious, but here and there people came straight toward him and passed on—*through* him! He was convinced of it after a while, and the sensation was startling.

He studied this particular section of city carefully. It was not familiar in the least, was apparently a mass of rearing towers. Here and there were bullet-nosed rocket airplanes, far in advance of any known to 20th Century civilization.

The buildings seemed to have millions of windows. Directional towers for aircraft were atop every edifice. There were car parks high in the air, floor upon floor, driven by endless belt systems. All ground space was devoted to traffic ways and open parks, with special sidewalks for pedestrians.

Even the traffic was peculiar. There was not a single recognizable make of automobile in sight, and what there were moved silently and swiftly. It was odd, Ralph reflected—in fact fantastic. He could see all this activity, which should have made the din of a super-modern city, yet all he could hear was the pounding tick of that old fashioned alarm clock on the mantel. He closed his eyes momentarily and the vision was shut out; but it was there again when he opened them once more.

His exact emotions were unfathomable. In one sense he was profoundly disappointed because he was obviously as blind as ever; yet in another he was aware of a feeling of triumph at being the dissociated observer of something bafflingly complex. This required study.

So to Ed Rutter he only gave brief reports and wore dark glasses whenever Ed was about. But week after week thereafter he studied the city by day and night, the periods of daylight and darkness corresponding exactly with those of the normal world.

Among other things Ralph took advantage of Ed's suggestion. He got a dog. Thereby he was enabled to extend the scope of his activity. At first he was faced with considerable confusion. Walking down the main street in the other city, for instance, demanded walking through a New York emporium and leaving by the back entrance! To gain elevation and study the city properly he had to go to the top of New York's highest buildings.

Everywhere his dog unflinchingly guided him. Everywhere the faces of the Others looked unseeingly at him. He was the invisible observer of a great, mysterious, busy world.

It was perhaps inevitable that the vision of this new world should affect Ralph with increasing force. His body was in the normal world, but sight was elsewhere! He got into the habit of calling to the people passing by him—and getting no answer of course—of repeating the various proclamations on the signs and posters he saw, all of them in an unknown language. He began to build up a small vocabulary, both from looking at newspapers over people's shoulders and watching the things they did, or the things they indicated, when they spoke. He became gradually adept in lip reading.

There was something else too. In this other plane matter was no barrier to him. He passed through walls and people as easily as people passed through him. Yet of course it was impossible for him to touch anything.

Ralph forgot his caution as time went on. His interest was utterly absorbed. On more than one occasion Ed was surprised to find him in the act of apparently talking to himself in

unknown jargon, staring straight before him while he did it. It worried Ed not a little. He thought he took the right course when he reported the matter back to the hospital.

Accordingly the hospital contacted Ralph's firm. They in turn made arrangements, and one morning Dr. Flint himself and two other experts turned up at the apartment.

Once the brief examination was over Ralph sat in his bedroom, waiting, listening to the voices floating through the fanlight over the door.

"I cannot help but think he needs attention, gentlemen," Ed was saying earnestly. "Being left alone too much maybe. Probably affecting his mind. He talks to himself, does queer things. He even thinks at times that he is in a street when standing in this room!"

Ralph did not catch the answer, but he got to his feet and entered the living room suddenly. He sensed the sudden expectancy his arrival created.

"Gentlemen," he said quietly, "I think there is something you should know. I can see." He took off his dark glasses. "I see, but I do not see you! I do not even see New York. No; I see another world, another city, another race of people. At this very moment I am looking down the main street."

Still there was silence.

"Well, have you nothing to say?" Ralph demanded. "Aren't you even going to try and find out what is wrong? I suppose I should have told you this sooner, but I was waiting for you to tell *me*. Only you didn't! If you can't find out the truth then let me get a man who will. There's Dr. Brutus Lloyd, for instance. He was with me at college once—"

"I hardly think we need to consider the so called merits of Dr. Lloyd at this moment," broke in Flint's curt voice. Then in a more conciliatory tone he went on, "We are well able to take care of you, Mr. Marshall. If you will accompany us back to the hospital where we have all the instruments we will see what we can do."

"It's obviously an optical defect," Ralph said, as he put back his glasses and was helped into his coat. "You know—embracing an angle in space which we cannot see under normal conditions. These other people *do* exist, and their city is much improved on ours."

"Of course—of course." Dr. Flint sounded as though he was humoring a lunatic.

Ralph was full of inner doubts as he was driven through the streets. Dimly through his dark glasses he could see apparent buildings whirling towards him, through which the car passed like vapor. The whole mad other-plane was careening round in dizzying circles. He felt himself sway a little when he finally alighted from the car. He was taken up in an elevator and seemed to rise up the face of a building. He became stationary half way up and fell into a chair. Once his glasses were removed he found himself gazing over a futuristic square with waving trees lining either side of it. Silent, as ever.

Then Dr. Flint said, "Now for a few tests, Mr. Marshall."

This time the tests were not entirely confined to the eyes. For an hour or more Ralph found himself taken from chair to chair, felt unseen instruments at work upon him, heard muttered consultations. Then at last Flint spoke out clearly.

"Mr. Marshall, our tests reveal no change whatever in your eyes since the previous examination. Whatever you believe you see cannot be at all connected with your eyes. It is, to be perfectly frank, the outcome of brain pressure from your accident. Delusions, if you will. Once you asked for the truth—now you shall have it. So far as we can tell there is no chance of your eyes ever recovering sight. Further, the strange visions you speak of, together with the queer behavior noted by your friend Mr. Rutter lead us to one definite conclusion . . ."

“You mean you think I’m crazy?” Ralph snapped.

“We believe,” Flint said, “that you would certainly be better under observation here until you lose your delusions. We can no doubt soon cure you. It is what your firm would wish.”

“Now listen!” Ralph exclaimed earnestly. “You think I’m going insane. I tell you I’m as sane as you are, only my vision’s gone haywire. Didn’t it ever occur to any of you that a shock might cause the optic nerves to become hypersensitive or something?”

“Are you an optician, Mr. Marshall?” Flint inquired coldly.

“You know I’m not; but I have some scientific knowledge and I know plenty of things can happen to a person after a shock. Take—take lightning, for instance. Haven’t you ever heard of people being able to see through solids after being struck by lightning? Is it not possible, then, that I—”

“We don’t think so!” Flint broke in curtly. “We are dealing with facts, not fantasies. You require treatment and close supervision, examination by other specialists, in our psychopathic department.”

“But look here—”

“You may rest assured we are acting from the best interests,” Flint concluded implacably. Then aside, “Attend to it!”

A door slammed.

Ralph swore openly, started to struggle as strong hands took hold of him, obviously those of male nurses. Finally he gave up the battle as useless. His dark glasses were replaced on his nose and he was led out into the corridor. The next thing he knew he was in a room, alone.

He knew after a while that it was well furnished, comfortable enough—but his hands found bars on the windows and the door was securely locked. From rage his emotions changed to deep wonder. Flint must surely know he was not insane. Why, then, the captivity?

CHAPTER II

Dr. Brutus Lloyd

Once he realized how ruthlessly the medicos had put Ralph Marshall into virtual imprisonment, Ed Rutter's fury knew no bounds. He bitterly regretted ever having mentioned the matter.

He ranted and raved at the callous Dr. Flint, and got nowhere. He tried to make the newspapers take it up, but editors were chary of it. As a last hope Ed recalled the name of Dr. Brutus Lloyd, looked up his address and occupation from the directory. He was listed as a research chemist, but his degrees filled two small columns and other remarks spoke of proficiency in the fields of optics, physics, medicine, and criminology.

"In plain words, a dabbler," Ed mused. "Might do worse, though."

So he tracked Dr. Lloyd down to his out-town house—a rather old fashioned place in its own grounds, well free of the city bustle yet connected with the metropolis by a wide main road.

Inside, as a manservant took his card, Ed found evidences of unexpected opulence about the residence. His feet sank into rich carpet; the walls were lined with armory, costly brasses, rare antiques. Clearly Brutus Lloyd was not short of cash by any means.

The manservant came back noiselessly. "If you will step into the laboratory, Mr. Rutter?"

Ed found himself conducted through a door at the end of the hall. He passed into one of the most completely equipped laboratories he had ever seen. The glass roof was fitted with slanted mirrors so that shadowless daylight was cast in every direction. For a while he stood looking round on beakers, retorts, electric engines, switchboards. Of Dr. Lloyd himself there seemed to be no sign—until suddenly a tiny figure came from behind a bench, wiping his hands down his smock.

For a moment Ed stared in surprise. Lloyd was no more than four feet ten inches tall, an amazingly gnomelike man. He was not a dwarf or a freak, simply vest-pocket size. The most surprising thing about him was his head. It was squarish with a brow like a baby cliff, capped on top by a tuft of jet black hair which permitted one lock to curl in a J down the immense forehead. The eyes were small and piercing gray, almost masked by black eyebrows and lashes. The face, though overbalanced by the brow, was powerful for all its smallness. Possibly Lloyd was forty; certainly no less.

"I presume you came for a reason other than to gape, Mr. Rutter?"

Brutus Lloyd's voice was the biggest shock of all. It was deep bass. "I'm—I'm sorry, doctor," Ed hastened to apologize. "I sort of expected to—"

"To find a big man with a white beard dabbling in hellish alchemy?" Lloyd asked, with a babyish smile. "Well you didn't, and I'm not. . . . What's your trouble?"

"I believe you're a criminologist and scientist? Also connected with optics, physics, and medicine?"

"*Dolus versatur in generalibus*," Lloyd rumbled. "A snare lurks in generalities. . . . Just what concern is it of yours what I do? What are you?—a reporter? If so—out!"

"No—no, wait a minute. I want your help—from the criminal and optical side."

"Really?" Lloyd stroked his forelock for a moment. Then with his sharp little eyes narrowed a little he said slowly, "It will have to be something of surpassing interest to drag me

from my research into subatomic cultures. What have you done, my friend? Robbed a bank?"

Rather uncertain how to take the man Ed said quietly. "It's not me at all. I'm worrying over one Ralph Marshall, a friend of mine. He's in a hospital for supposed lunacy. He mentioned you just before they took him away. But actually he's no more insane than you are."

"I am indebted for the compliment. Ralph Marshall, you say? Not 'Stinker' Marshall who nearly blew me up in the college lab, and who's now working on the Atlantic Shaft?"

"The same—only he isn't working any more. This is serious, Dr. Lloyd, really it is . . ." Ed went on to relate the full details. Then he finished earnestly, "You've got influence. You're an expert in optics, medicine, and all the rest. You know more than all those darned sawbones put together. And since you know a thing or two about crime too you might be able to discover if there is a special reason, other than a medical one, for detaining Ralph."

"Frankly, Mr. Rutter, I am not a police officer. My stature is against it. As to Ralph, the situation is little short of preposterous!"

"I thought a true scientist never called anything preposterous! I really believe Ralph *can* see a city or something which we can't. I thought he had a neurosis at first. Now I know differently . . ."

"Hm!" Lloyd flattened his J on his brow again. He stood thinking.

"The firm will back up whatever measures you see fit to take," Ed went on earnestly. "If you can prove to medical satisfaction that Ralph is perfectly sane you will at least get him out of imprisonment. At least you should do so. If you can't, then maybe you can find the right legal means. Ralph has *got* to be released. He's a master engineer, and valuable."

"I suppose you are aware that despite my brilliant reputation I am not at all in favor with the regular doctors, specialists, and patchers of human framework generally?" Lloyd asked calmly. "My methods are unorthodox. At times, surprisingly enough, I have been called mad. My chemical work, leading me to deal in Latin so much, has led me to call many a man worse than a fool in a language he does not understand.

"I may, for instance, know optics inside out, but I am not a registered optician. However, the law entitles you to call in a specialist if you wish—and though not registered I am certainly a specialist. For two reasons—A, my regard for old 'Stinker' Marshall, and—B, my desire to see a proper engineer finish the Atlantic Shaft, I will look into the business. *Experto crede*, my friend—trust one who has had experience."

"Quite." Ed nodded, uncertainly.

"I have another reason—C," Lloyd went on in his rumbling voice. "If Ralph *has* somehow gotten his vision bent into another line of light waves he can be of invaluable assistance to science generally through his revelations. I'll see him.

"First, however, I shall have to prepare. Instruments are needed to try a case like this, and I shall have to bring influence to bear to get permission to make the examination. I'll advise you when I'm ready."

Ed caught the small hand and shook it warmly. "I can't begin to thank you enough for—"

"Then don't waste my time and your own," the little scientist replied briefly. "Good morning!"

It took a week, overcoming professional prejudice, for Brutus Lloyd to secure permission to examine. It was Ralph Marshall's firm, urged by Ed, who finally ordered it, and against that

Flint could do nothing. Ed accompanied the diminutive, Latin-spouting scientist to the hospital in his small but powerful car and helped him to carry in a variety of instruments. There were moments when he felt inclined to smile at Lloyd's Derby hat, long overcoat, and neatly rolled umbrella. He had a remarkable gift for carrying that umbrella on his arm and thereafter apparently forgetting its presence.

Ralph Marshall was finally brought into the wide, light room singled out for the examination, and after a few words sat in the high backed chair. Dr. Flint and the summoned specialists, some of them smiling tolerantly, sat in a half circle round the instruments. Only Flint looked impatient, his fingers drumming on his bony knees.

Skipping round like a goblin in his overcoat, hat carefully laid on the surgical table, Lloyd first set up a curious object like a shimmering ball, connected to electrical devices on the tripodical stand beneath it. It started to coruscate with startling radiance when the current was turned on. At times it filled the room with bewildering incandescence, then at others faded rapidly through the spectrum colors into invisibility. The spectators blinked. Flint stared hard.

Lloyd said in his rumbling voice, "Did you see anything then, Ralph?"

"At the moment, sir, I'm looking at some—some sort of ball," Ralph answered slowly. "Solid looking piece of work. It comes and goes."

"Hah!" Lloyd pressed a button with the ferrule of his umbrella. The ball seemed to vanish entirely, but Ralph became excited.

"Now it's quite distinct! It's hovering over the city streets!"

"Such rubbish!" Flint cried, leaping up. "Dr. Lloyd, this is sheer absurdity!"

Lloyd surveyed him, eyelids drooping. "*Ex nihilo nihil fit*—from nothing nothing comes," he observed. "And I haven't finished yet, Flint. Sit down!"

Flint slowly obeyed, his lips a tight line.

"You and your tests!" the little scientist went on sourly; then he pushed his ball instrument to one side and proceeded to get to work with a needle-recording apparatus, shafts of criss-crossing light, and finally a prism device radiating all the colors of the rainbow.

"What did you see, Ralph?" he asked finally, stroking his J.

"I saw a ball, a prism, and something like a torch beam."

"That," Lloyd said, "is exactly what I thought you'd see. You can relax for a moment. Now, gentlemen!" He spun round like a top and pointed his umbrella at the group in sudden accusation. "Gentlemen," he rumbled, "I have pleasure in telling you that Ralph Marshall is *not* mad! On the contrary he is as sane as you are—saner probably. He is also one of the most useful acquisitions to science yet known."

"Proven, of course, by this—this hardware of yours?" Flint asked sarcastically.

Lloyd was unabashed. His frosty gray eyes were bright with triumph.

"We all know—at least *I* know because I am a scientist of the first order—that the human eye is only capable of seeing within the ranges encompassed between ultra violet and infra red at opposite ends of the spectrum scale. Also there are sixty octaves of light, of which we see only one! Only *one*, gentlemen!" Lloyd raised his umbrella aloft dramatically. "This ball instrument of mine is designed to cover the whole range of invisible light fields. By altering its light-reflecting capacity it gives off either the light waves *we* see, or the light waves beyond our range. In the latter instance it becomes invisible to us—but it becomes visible to Mr. Marshall! In other words, his vision has slipped into an octave higher than our own. So slender a margin, gentlemen—so unusual for it to happen. This is the first real case I have

encountered. The other three instruments verified, prismatically, that he is indeed looking into a plane an octave above normal visual range.”

“From which,” Flint asked with deadly calm, “you deduce what?”

“I deduce—A, that people move and have their being in this other plane; and that—B, an accident caused Mr. Marshall’s vision to be warped into that plane.”

Flint snapped, “Then these people are all around us? These—others?”

“Naturally!” Lloyd stood challengingly erect.

“Then in that case,” Flint said, smiling maliciously, “you infer that these people occupy the same space as we do? That their city is superimposed over New York? Even you should know that no two bodies can occupy the same space at the same time.”

Lloyd’s fingers quivered down his J of hair. Only the slightly higher pitch of his voice revealed his exasperation.

“*Nemo me impune lacessit*—no one affronts me with impunity,” he breathed. “Your ignorance surpasses my highest expectations! Any expert physicist will confirm the fact that *our* space is only one of *thousands* of spaces!”^[1]

[1] A molecule is made up of empty space in much the same fashion as the universe is mainly empty space. It is not only possible, but probable, that the apparently empty spaces are filled with other matter working at a different pitch of vibration, and therefore completely invisible to us. Matter dovetails and interlocks and each section is at a pitch of vibration which makes it invisible to its immediate neighbor.

Imagine a wire netting for a moment. You would say it is full of holes—but the holes are filled with matter at a different vibration invisible to us, and *because* of such vibration each section believes itself to be alone and isolated. Nature has so designed her so-called empty space that other molecules move about it in the apparent emptiness—hence the belief of Mr. Marshall that he walks through buildings and that people walk through him. What actually happens is that his molecules never touch the other molecules but pass by them, like—like pouring water through the nose of a watering can.—Author.

“Fictional nonsense, Dr. Lloyd.” Flint commented sourly. “We are only concerned with facts. In my opinion Mr. Marshall is still completely blind and a victim of mental perturbations. I think I speak for my colleagues, too . . . ?” He glanced round sharply and there was a solemn nodding of heads.

“In other words,” Lloyd said slowly, “you do not *want* to believe?”

“I didn’t say that—”

“But *I do!*” Lloyd bellowed, thumping his umbrella on the floor. “The whole lot of you—you in particular, Flint—are either a collection of conservative, unimaginative boneheads, or else you prefer to believe the dementia theory for your own purposes. Don’t interrupt me, Flint! You have the authority here, certainly. What you say goes in this hospital, and you might possibly scare other men into obeying you. But you don’t scare me. I am Brutus Lloyd! I cannot legally force you into releasing Marshall—but I can, and will, do other things.”

“Such as?” Flint inquired calmly.

Lloyd put his Derby back on his head. “*Cadit quaestio*—discussion is at an end. Let’s go, Mr. Rutter. . . . I’ll be seeing you again, Ralph.”

Lloyd gathered up some of his instruments and departed. Ed looked after him, then back at Flint.

“Listen, doctor, you’re not taking Ralph back into imprisonment without plenty of opposition!” he snapped. “I’m warning you—”

“Take it easy, Ed,” Ralph himself broke in quietly, rising from the chair. “Causing a scene won’t do any good.”

“Evidently the patient has more sense than anybody,” Flint observed dryly. He stood watching, lips compressed, as the male nurses came forward.

“I’ll wait and see what happens,” Ralph went on. He shook Ed’s hand firmly and Ed concealed the surprise he felt as a hard lump of paper was pressed in his palm. What could Ralph be up to?

When he left the hospital a few moments later with the rest of the instruments he found Lloyd waiting for him in the car. Slipping in beside him he unfolded the crumpled note and the pair of them read in mounting surprise. It was badly written, since Marshall had been unable to see the writing, but it was decipherable nonetheless:

“Don’t endanger anything, Eddy. I’ve been waiting for a chance to give you this note. I have discovered something almost incredible since this side-slipped vision came upon me. It is to my advantage that you let me stay in my cell for the time being. I have one or two things to look into. I think, but cannot yet be sure, that I have happened on a particularly amazing plot in this ‘other world’ which affects ours! And unless I am entirely mistaken Dr. Talford Flint is mixed up in it somewhere.

“This possibly accounts for his fanatical desire to keep me under lock and key. Once I’m sure of my ground I’ll pass on the news to you. See me visitors’ day. If you can find out anything about Flint in the meantime all the better. . . .”

Ed glanced up at Lloyd’s thoughtful face.

“Well?” Ed asked briefly.

Lloyd did not reply; he only smiled as he started up the car’s engine. But his face was preoccupied as he drove through the busy streets.

Ralph Marshall had made no idle observation in his note. His cell—for it was little better than that despite its furnishings—unknown to anybody else, was so placed that in the “other plane” it overlaid a small, compact laboratory, in which a solitary, white-garbed scientist seemed to spend nearly fifteen hours of every day.

Invariably, Marshall saw him arrive as soon as it was light; and he remained until about midnight. In the daytime he seemed to spend his time testing medical apparatus, peering into highly efficient microscopes, making notes, watching queer animalcules slithering and twisting nauseatingly in glass test-tubes.

Certainly Ralph did not like the man’s face. It was cast in a ruthless mould. The lips were thin and tight, the jaw hard and cruel. The eyes, too, had the brittle brightness of a man driven by ambition to the exclusion of all finer sentiments. There were times when he seemed pleased to watch a queer, unknown animal—probably the equivalent of our guinea pig—twisting in near-death under the influence of some mystic fluid he had injected into it. Apparently he was working in secret for nobody ever came to see him and he prepared all his own meals.

But above all things it was the notes he made so assiduously that interested Ralph. By walking the length of his cell he was able to look over the scientist's shoulder and read what was being put down. So far, his knowledge of the language was limited, but there were parts of it he understood, and in particular one name which was bound to be the same in any language—Flint.

Was it referring to the chief of this very hospital? That was what Ralph wanted to find out: it was his one reason for submitting so tamely to captivity. What connection had Flint—if it was the same man—with this trap-jawed scientist of another plane of existence, so close, and yet so infinitely far away?

Most puzzling of all to Ralph were the evenings. He would watch the Unknown sit for nearly two hours in a chair, motionless, his head tilted back on two leather pads like those adorning a dentist's chair. As he sat, his hand was at work on a neighboring scratchpad, making all manner of notes, mainly chemical symbols in which Ralph was not in the least versed.

It did not, however, take much deduction to discover that the daytime laboratory work was based on the evening time notes—but why did the Unknown have to sit like that? Ralph cudgelled his brains over it for many days but he got no solution. As a matter of fact, it was Ed Rutter who worked on that particular mystery.

Determined on his own account to more fully confirm Ralph's vague suspicions of Flint, he entered the hospital grounds by night—once Lloyd had discovered by various surreptitious methods exactly what part of the hospital the doctor occupied in his private moments—climbed the railings, and slid softly past the great isolation wards to the doctors' chambers' wing to the east of the hospital. To him it was not a difficult feat to climb to the balcony: his work in the Shaft had made him an adept climber.

He spent some little time discovering which window belonged to Dr. Flint's room, traced it finally from the rough sketch Lloyd had drawn. His hopes were verified when Flint came into the room, switched on the light, and without drawing the shades sat down at his desk to write.

Ed smiled grimly, withdrew from his pocket a tiny, flat microphone which Lloyd had given him. It went easily under the door-size window leading out onto the balcony. The rest of the instrument, perhaps as large as a portable typewriter and strapped to Ed's back, began to record whatever the microphone picked up on wax drums.

Ed switched the button and waited, listening to the small-size earphone. He heard nothing beyond the scratching of a pen so he switched off to conserve the battery power, went into action again when a man came into the room beyond.

He recognized him as one of the doctors who seemed to be Flint's right-hand man. After closing the door and locking it he came over to the desk.

"Not too late, am I?" he asked briefly. "I had that operation to finish on old Saunders."

"No, Dutton." Flint tossed aside his pen. "I haven't started yet . . ."

"How long do you think it will be before we're ready?"

"Depends. Perhaps a week. There's little time to lose now. And besides I want to get everything perfectly arranged before this guy Marshall happens to discover the truth. It's not likely that he will while locked in that cell—but if any fluke law can be brought along to release him he might discover plenty. Only by having freedom could he possibly come across Maravok's laboratory—and even at that only chance could lead him there. Just the same I've

warned Maravok that we have a fellow with us whose eyes are geared to his particular space. He told me he was working on a visionary detector by which he'll be instantly warned if alien eyes discover him. Clever man, Maravok . . ." Flint's voice was full of grudging praise.

Outside, Ed stood listening tensely, frowning in wonderment. On his back the silently turning drums were recording every word.

"About this fellow Lloyd," Dutton mused. "He's damnably quiet, isn't he? In face of all he said he'd do? Think he's up to something?"

Flint laughed harshly. "Not him! The man's a clown—the biggest clown in New York City. He thinks he's a detective, a scientist, and God knows what all rolled into one. Five feet of empty boasting, my friend, and a lot of phony instruments to back him up . . ."

"Phony enough to prove that Marshall *was* and *is* looking into the plane you contacted," Dutton pointed out uneasily.

"Well—yes," Flint admitted. "Rather a good thing he did find that out for it enabled us to know that Marshall's eyes *are* geared to the plane I've contacted. I suspected it might be so when Rutter called us to have a look at him in the first place. Most amazing case, Dutton. Yet, deeply though it stirs my professional curiosity, I cannot admit the truth of it with so much at stake. He must be kept out of the way, until we're ready anyway. Then it doesn't matter what he does!"

"Suppose Lloyd does manage to find a legal excuse for extracting Marshall. I don't think he's such a mug as he pretends to be."

"That," Flint said, "is a risk we have to take. We've got to stall for time until I have every detail. If the worst comes to the worst we can always arrange an—er—alteration of diet for Mr. Marshall which will make him too ill to be moved. We dare not kill him off: that would involve too searching an inquiry."

In the brief silence which followed Ed controlled a fierce impulse to kick the glass window through, open the door, and dash into the room. He wanted to beat the living daylights out of the callous hospital chief. Only the realization of the necessity for subtlety kept him in check.

Presently Flint spoke again. "Well, time's up!" There was the snap of a watch closing.

Ed peered cautiously through the window as silence dropped. Flint was seated in the armchair, head lying back on the cushion, hands resting lightly on the chair arms. He was gazing into space straight in front of him. Dutton was sitting opposite to him with a notebook and pencil, waiting.

"Now!" Flint exclaimed suddenly; then he started to talk in a quiet, monotonous voice. "*Having thoroughly impregnated the fluid, drop the cultures into it. There will be rapid metabolism. Then—*"

The monologue veered into profoundest technique possible and could only interest a medical expert. But the thought of cultures and fluids, that certain sinister suggestion of a deep medical experiment, remained uncomfortably in Ed's brain. He waited for an hour until Flint had obviously finished, then he withdrew the microphone gently, climbed back over the balcony, and departed. This was definitely getting into deep waters, and only one man could swim in them—Brutus Lloyd.

CHAPTER III

Bacilli—X

The morning after Ed's activities Dr. Lloyd turned up at the hospital during the usual visiting hours. A nurse creaking with starch led him down the white enameled corridor to Ralph's room and admitted him.

"Ten minutes," she proclaimed curtly, and locked the door behind her as she departed.

Ralph rose at the familiar bass voice, shook the small hand warmly.

"I've discovered something—" he started to say, but the scientist cut him short.

"*You* have discovered something! Ralph, you don't know what a discovery is. Leave that to me! I will admit—A, that your friend Ed Rutter was helpful, and—B, that I might not have thought of the idea otherwise. But my genius provided the instruments . . . Listen!"

Lloyd went into a complete recounting of Ed's adventures the previous night, slapping the table with his umbrella for emphasis.

"*Fervet opus*—the work goes on busily," he finished in triumph.

"Seems to me," Ralph said slowly, "that there's only one explanation. This guy who you say is called Maravok, does exactly the same thing as Flint. He sits back and rests his head as Flint apparently does . . . Oh, I forgot. You don't know all the details about the laboratory, I can see. It's like this . . ."

"Telepathy!" Lloyd announced, when the story was over.

"Yes; telepathy. I was going to say that. There is no barrier to thought reaching into this other plane, is there?"

"None whatever. In fact we contact these planes in the normal way. We have all had the feeling of being watched in an empty room, or that 'I have been here before' sensation. I should say a trained telepathist might get into touch with other planes around us. More of us might see these planes if our eyes were as cockeyed as yours. But what is Flint *driving* at?" The umbrella stubbed the floor impatiently. "So far as I can make out from the record Ed made Flint is constantly taking down details of a medical experiment devised by this guy Maravok."

"Just the same as Maravok is taking details from Flint," Ralph puzzled. "It's an exchange of information. See here!" Ralph pulled his scratchpad from his pocket. "You take this and see if you can understand what it's all about. Most of it is in medical terms; stuff I've taken down from looking over Maravok's shoulder. Not very well written, I know, but maybe you can figure out something. His figuring seems to be pretty similar to ours and some of the terms may make sense to you. You know most things in medicine. . . ."

"*All* things in medicine," Lloyd corrected modestly, thrusting the pad in his pocket. "More I see of this the less I like it," he went on. "This fellow Flint is the least angelic person I've ever met. Telepathy, medical experiments, cultures, and so forth, when practised by him spell something sinister. However, maybe I'll find out something from these notes. I'll be back again next visitor's day and tell you how I've got on—also to learn anything you may have found out."

Ralph nodded. The door lock clicked as the nurse returned.

"I forgot to tell you," Lloyd said, as he turned to go. "Ed sent his regards, or his love, or something. . . . He's at work and couldn't make it. Ought to be his own master, like me. Much

better! Well—*nil desperandum*. . . .”

Lloyd met no officials as he passed down the corridor, looking like an underpaid clerk. Though there was no law against his presence in the hospital he preferred if possible to avoid a direct contact with Dr. Flint. And he managed it successfully.

Half an hour later he was in his laboratory, perched like a gnome on a toadstool before his desk, poring over the scrawled notes of Ralph, then listening to the playback from the recording drums Ed had made. The more he pondered over them the grimmer his resolute little face became. Certain technical terms leapt readily to his mind, and where they were in a different language the interpretation, from the formula itself, left little doubt as to the actual meaning.

For two hours Brutus Lloyd brooded, stroking his J of hair at intervals. Thus Ed Rutter found him during the dinner hour when he slipped in to inquire as to any progress that had been made.

“Anything fresh?” he asked quickly. “You saw Ralph?”

“Sure I saw him . . .” Lloyd slid from his stool and paced the laboratory slowly, hands deep in his smock pockets. Then looking up sharply he said, “I believe we’ve happened on something unimaginably big! We—or at any rate Ralph—have unearthed a medical plot which for sheer villainy beats anything I ever heard of! So far as I can make out this person Maravok is about as ruthless in his ideas as Flint himself. Both of them are—A, exchanging medical information; B, Flint is telling Maravok how to nurture cholera germs which are apparently unknown in this other space, and against which there is no protection; and—C, in return, Flint is finding out from Maravok how to cultivate a bacilli which will cause paralysis and death when introduced into the human system! It is a bacillus entirely unknown to us, and Flint would be able to start something as virulent as the Black Death!”

Ed’s eyes opened wider. “Hell, we *have* found something!”

“I have found something,” Lloyd averred, his eyelids dropping insolently.

“Well anyway, it’s been found. But listen, why should two men telepathically exchange secrets concerning plagues in their respective lands? It isn’t even sense. . . .”

“*Corruptio optimi pessima*—the corruption of the best is worst,” Lloyd sighed. “Two clever men pawning genius for gross material gains. Look at the situation and what do we find? A—Flint is head of the hospital. B, he is in a fixed position which any qualified medico could take over. C, a Plague hits the country. An unknown, smashing Plague! What then? Suppose he—Flint—were the only man with an antidote? And he *has* an antidote; I’m convinced of that. . . . The demand for his services would be colossal. His antidote, or serum, would net him millions of dollars. He, and whoever else is in on the job—there will be others I’m sure—would reap a fortune. You see? A deadly plan with human lives as the means to an end. Since Flint can probably cure all those who are impregnated he probably considers it is quite a safe move and not a murder risk. It’s clever, though I’m loath to admit it. Damned clever!”

“Of course we tell the police?” Ed demanded.

“And tell them Ralph Marshall saw most of this in another plane of space?” Lloyd asked. “You overrate the imagination of the law, my friend. I could explain it to my friend Inspector Branson, but without solid proof even he might become a trifle annoyed. No, I intend to nurture the bacilli for myself first and find out their potentialities. If they turn out as I expect I shall hand the results to the police chemists to satisfy themselves. As for Flint, his recorded

voice is enough to convict him. But we must be *sure*! I must also know exactly what his past history has been.”

“I’d help you if I could,” Ed said, rather anxiously. “As it is I’m tied up during the day, but I could go to the hospital again by night and try to—”

“Emphatically no!” Lloyd slapped his tiny hand on the bench. “You did it once and got away with it; next time you might not be so lucky. Anyway, I have all I need for evidence. If Flint gets wind of our plans it will put Ralph in a spot. Just leave things as they are and rely on me. Now get out. I’ve work to do.”

Lloyd completed his medical experiments during the afternoon. In the evening Ed Rutter found himself gazing through the microscope upon twirling, squirming life-forms of minute size drifting through thick fluid.

Lloyd gave a rather harsh laugh. “Bacilli-X,” he commented grimly, handling the slide with care as he returned the culture to the glass phial. “There’s enough in this tube to reduce the population of New York to paralysis. The devils multiply like hell . . .”

“What’s next?” Ed asked briefly.

“Next we track down Flint’s history from the medical records. . . .” Lloyd locked the culture phial away in the safe securely, then scrambled into his vast overcoat. He nodded toward the door.

They began with the library and studied Flint’s career from *Who’s Who*. His career had been distinguished anyway. He had degrees without number, but it was the nature of his various published works that gave an insight as to the real man. In three years he had published *Crime and Medicine*, *Possibilities of Thought Transference*, *Telepathy*, *Mind and Inter-Space*, *Criminal Action and Reaction*, and *The Psychology of Crime*.

Lloyd, satisfied, headed for the nearest booksellers before they closed and managed to buy every one of the books enumerated. Then he returned home. Without a word, an overlong pipe crackling in his mouth, he settled down to read. Ed started to read too because there was nothing else he could do. But he had no idea of what the diminutive scientist was looking for.

As a matter of fact Lloyd read for three consecutive nights, probably the days too for all Ed knew to the contrary, before he seemed to arrive at a conclusion. On the third evening, shutting the last of the volumes with characteristic abruptness, he said:

“My conclusions are verified! Flint besides being a brilliant doctor is also a master-telepathist. He either has a mind ideally suited for transmission and reception of thought, or else he has learned the art better than any other man living in this world. Either way he has communicated with this other plane.

“But it is also clear that he has definite leanings towards a criminal state of mind. Like many men with too much scientific and medical knowledge he doesn’t know where to stop. Not all of them have that spark of divine genius which makes them invaluable to the world. That is left to the few.”

Lloyd licked his lips at the personal reflection and went on. “Though not actually possessing a police record, Flint certainly has been—and still is no doubt—in close contact with many underworld dives. He could not otherwise have written these remarkably clear treatises on the relationship between crime and medicine. He refers to several specialized types of criminals, whom he has obviously met. He gives fictitious names, of course. I fancy it might be possible, however, to track down the various people mentioned in these volumes by

way of police department records. Tomorrow I'll see what Inspector Branson has to say about it. I'm ready to move now."

"But what do you hope to gain by tracking down these criminals?" Ed demanded. "It's Flint we want—not the subjects of his treatises."

Lloyd smiled tolerantly. "How do you imagine a Plague would begin, my friend? Do you think Flint would walk about sticking hypos into people? He would have agents scattered everywhere. What better place is there to recruit them than from the ranks of crime with which he is already in contact?"

"Funny! I never thought of that!"

"*Quandoque bonus dormitat Rutterus!*" Lloyd murmured. "Even the worthy Rutter sleeps at times. Fortunately, I remain awake."

Inspector Branson was cordial, but doubtful, when Lloyd tackled him in his office at headquarters the following morning. Ed, on a day's vacation to see the thing through, added his own corroboration. Not that Brutus Lloyd needed corroboration: he had it in the voice record and culture phial.

"Have this tested by your chemists and they'll find something they never knew about before which can paralyze the population of New York," Lloyd announced, holding the phial up. "Then have them check the formula by the voice record Ed Rutter here took. That can't damage your infernal red tape surely?"

Branson took the phial and laid it down gingerly. He looked at the little scientist thoughtfully, then finally he nodded.

"All right, Lloyd, I'll do that much. Frankly, though, I never quite know how to take you. You get the most extraordinary scientific ideas sometimes and—"

"And they are always right," Lloyd finished calmly. "This is no exception. However, I am not a detective—in the sense of snooping after criminals, I mean. I am a scientist. That is why I have to enlist your aid in tracing the living originals of the descriptions given in these books by Flint. You'll find them blue-penciled. You can manage that?"

"Don't see why not." Branson flipped the pages. "Take about a couple of hours. Suppose we manage it? What then?"

Lloyd picked up his umbrella. "I'll tell you in a couple of hours. Meantime some lunch is indicated. Let's go, Ed."

They returned at the appointed time to find Branson ready with a pile of record cards.

"Ten of 'em we've easily identified from description and surroundings," he announced. "The rest aren't so easy. These ten are always under police observation, anyway."

"You could rope them in for questioning?" Lloyd inquired.

"Nothing easier."

"Then go to it. You'll find one of them will crack wide open and admit he's in contact with Flint. If one of them does that the rest is easy. You can round up the others in no time—if it's necessary. It's probable that Flint hasn't started circulating his bacilli, yet, and I don't suppose these crooks will know the real issue anyway."

"I hope," Branson said, pressing a button on his desk, "you're all straight about this, Lloyd. After all, basing your original theory on a man who can see into another space is a bit tall, even for you."

"*Ab uno disce omnes*, Branson," Lloyd responded, beaming. "From a single case infer the whole."

“You’d better be right,” Branson observed grimly.

Lloyd stroked his J pensively. “I’m sitting right here until those crooks are roped in, if I have to wait a week. Once you’re satisfied, Branson, a warrant for Flint’s arrest can follow pronto.”

CHAPTER IV

Scientist of Another World

Ralph Marshall wondered more than once what Ed and Lloyd were doing as the days slipped by. At least he had complete confidence in them, which was everything. For his own part he did not relax his efforts in the slightest: in fact he could not do so very well since he was obliged to look into the laboratory of Maravok every time he took his glasses off.

As on the other occasions, Maravok spent each night doing his telepathic work and making notes. During the daytime he made medical experiments and also put the finishing touches to a device like a metronome. On the fourth night he had the "metronome" finished, stood watching it pensively.

Ralph moved across his cell, the better to see what was going on. He stood gazing at the inverted pendulum as it swung rhythmically to and fro—but it struck him as curious that when he moved towards it—actually across his own cell of course—the pendulum ticked all the faster and increased its swinging to nearly double.

A sense of unexpected danger touched him. He saw Maravok's cruel face set in granite lines. He turned sharply, gazed unseeingly at Ralph and then round the laboratory. Ralph backed away instinctively and the metronome resumed its former leisurely beat. He felt—he knew—that that device was somehow geared to register alien vision in the laboratory. In truth it was the device of which Maravok had already spoken telepathically to Flint.

Ralph sat down to watch, clenching and unclenching his fists. He saw Maravok settle in his chair and lie back to concentrate. As he remained motionless various thoughts twirled through Ralph's brain. He knew quite well by this time that the scientist was planning something pretty diabolical from a medical standpoint, something that was no doubt destined to endanger his own people as much as Flint's scheme would endanger the people of the everyday world.

But how was it possible to get at the man from another space? Unless, perhaps, the metronome . . . ? That, so far, was the only thing Ralph had seen which was capable of reacting between planes. Probably it was accomplished by the vibration of bodily aura passing between molecular spaces. That was quite a logical possibility, anyway. If so . . .

Ralph looked at the instrument again. It was not fastened down in any way. The shelf on which it stood was directly over an array of bottles of fragile glass containing all manner of chemicals. Some of them were probably explosive if mixed together. Certainly there were numerous acids.

Ralph began to smile to himself grimly. Perhaps there *was* a way to destroy this other-world laboratory and Maravok with it. Back of Ralph's mind was the remembrance of the alarm clock on the mantelshelf in the living room at home—the thing that had slid itself along by its own vibration every time it had rung. Suppose that the metronome could be made to vibrate strongly enough to slide over the edge of the shelf? It *might*, if he went close enough, and Maravok was sitting with his eyes closed, concentrating.

Ralph rose up and walked across the cell slowly, watching the instrument immediately increase its rate of pendulum swing. Closer—and it still increased. He reached out both his hands and waved them in the space where he imagined the thing must be. That action, as the electricity from his body passed across the gap, made the pendulum become a mist. The

instrument, even as he had hoped, began to tremble and slide uneasily along the shelf towards the edge.

At that moment Maravok opened his eyes and looked up. He catapulted out of his chair, arm outthrust, but he was a shade too late. The metronome slipped into the midst of the glass bottles below, and in his frantic urgency Maravok missed catching it completely.

Ralph stood watching the results of his handiwork—but he did not watch for long. The acid jars spilled their fuming contents into saline looking chemicals. There was a sudden unholy spurt of flame and deep yellow smoke. Almost instantly it was followed by a blinding flash of incandescent light. No noise, not a sound, but the glare and vibration hurled Ralph back across the cell as though he had been thrown. His eyes twinged and stabbed as though rammed with white-hot needles. He could not see the laboratory any more, only a spotted curtain of chaotic dark.

Gasping with pain, clawing at his eyes, he scrambled to his feet. He had hardly done so before the doorlock clicked and somebody came in.

“Who’s there?” he demanded sharply, staring into the dark.

“Just me, Mr. Marshall.” It was the unmistakable voice of Flint. “I thought perhaps a little chat might be advantageous. You see, I only just learned this evening how completely I have played into your hands. I realize that you know of my telepathic activities with Maravok, whom you killed only a moment or two ago by some method or other . . .”

Ralph stood rigid, his pain abating. He tried to place the position of the voice. It was by the door. He clenched his fists and said nothing.

“Tonight Maravok learned for the first time that there were other eyes watching,” Flint went on. “His instrument revealed it. It could only be you. Since you must obviously know most of my plans I cannot imagine anything better than for you to be the first victim of the plague that is about to strike the continent. I have everything ready. My agents will be advised. Right here in my hand is a hypodermic, one injection from which will insure your death within fifteen minutes. Since countless others will be affected within a few hours, and since only I possess the antidote, it will obviously not be a case of murder but death from an unknown disease. Simple, isn’t it? Had I known you knew so much I might have done it sooner—”

“Damn you!” Ralph roared suddenly, and charged for where he knew the table was. He seized it, slammed it forward to the position of the doorway, blundered round it. Flint gasped with pain, then his voice came again, thick with fury.

“You can’t get out of here, Marshall! Not with those warped eyes of yours! You’re as blind as a bat, and I know it! You can’t get out, I tell you—”

Ralph clawed suddenly at the door handle, then he stopped at a grip on his arm. Instantly he whirled up his fist into the dark and felt it impact bone. Flint went staggering back across the room, tripped, and dropped his length, the syringe flying out of his hand.

Ralph’s sharp ears heard it tinkle on the woodwork round the carpet, and that was enough for him. He plunged forward until he stumbled over Flint. Seizing his neck he raised him, hammered home his right fist time and time again into the doctor’s face . . . until a sudden smashing blow in the jaw stopped him for a moment.

He lashed out again, missed, and another blow hit him in the face. It was followed by one over the head which laid him flat on the floor. He felt his senses reeling. A weird miscellany

of noises came to him. The sound of running feet, the desperate breathing of Flint and the scratching of his hands as he clawed for the syringe—

Then for Ralph the sounds faded away into silence.

Ralph returned to consciousness to the knowledge of a throbbing head and a bandage across his eyes once again. He stirred slowly and the voices of Ed Rutter and Dr. Lloyd reached him simultaneously.

“Take it easy, Ralph; you’re O.K.,” Ed said. “But we were only just in time.”

“In—in time? How? Why?”

“Thanks to me the police came to arrest Flint,” Lloyd said modestly, after briefly recounting the earlier events. “We couldn’t find him in his study, but nurses had seen him going toward your room. So we followed. We got him just before he could sink a hypo into you.”

Ralph relaxed with a sigh. “Then that’s settled! I cleaned up Maravok and you cleaned up Flint!”

“What!” Lloyd cried. “You mean you did something to cause Maravok to be destroyed?”

“Sure I did. . . .” Ralph related the full facts. At the end of it Lloyd drew a deep breath.

“This explains much!” he exclaimed. “I had a look at your eyes when you were unconscious and my tests showed they were almost normal. Something had shifted them out of that other plane to the normal one, but even my wide experience could not imagine what it could be. I thought it might have been the result of the blow Flint gave you when he hit you with a chair. Now I know the truth. The blast of flame in that other plane gave the necessary optical shock to slam your vision right back to normal after a brief spell of blindness, which you are now undergoing. In two days’ time you’ll be seeing as well as ever again.”

“You mean it?” Ralph cried eagerly, sitting up again.

Lloyd glanced at Ed and smiled. “Ralph does not know it,” he observed gravely, “but *stat magni nominis umbra* . . . He stands in the shadow of a mighty name . . . And the owner of that name never makes mistakes.”

The little scientist was right. Two weeks later Ralph was back on his Shaft.

[The end of *The Man Who Saw Two Worlds* by John Russell Fearn (as Thorton Ayre)]