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FANTASTIC

 *Mysteries*

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No. 4

Book-Length Novel

The Secret People

John Beynon 10

Lost in a fantastic underground world . . . guarded by a race left over in strange survival from the dawn of time. . . . What would become of the hapless captives cut off from the world they knew—and what part would they be made to play in the forbidding ancient rites whose strange gods threatened their waking nightmare?

Story

Guardian Angel

Arthur C. Clarke 98

Harbingers of utter annihilation were they, the silent, grim guardians from outer space, hanging implacably over the panic-stricken cities of Earth. . . . And only one man dared to ask the question for a million souls— What new cosmic pattern of terror had the New Masters fashioned from their heartless knowledge, that they themselves dared not reveal—until the hour of Doom?

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After the Atom

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After the Atom

By Stanton A. Coblenz

DEEP among honeycombing caves, within the moon there dwelt
Creatures with faces pale as frost, and bodies weak as felt.
Like hiving bees across the gloom they wove their crowded way,
Brewing in vials their food, and light for their dim, electric day.



Yet from the sealed pit-hollows wherein they bred and died,
Walled from the worse-than-Arctic night and furnace noon outside,
Sometimes through lenses they would scan a golden globe that shone,
With shadowy markings like a face, high in the starred unknown.



And some believed, but most denied the story that was told:
"There, in a land of boundless sun, our fathers throve of old;
There, through the ages, they had raised bridges and docks and towers,
Until they fell, slain by the wealth of their own crackling powers.



"Secrets as wondrous as the sky, wisdom no thing of flesh
Has wit to fathom or to use, snared with a devil's mesh;
And the blade whereby they smote the foe smote back at them again,
Till air and earth were foul with rays deadly to beasts and men.

"And over the wide, once-blossomy spread of that whole poisoned sphere,
All creatures but the rat and fly were doomed to disappear.
Freely along the unpeopled street long-tailed usurpers ran,
And maggots gnawed where granaries knew no more the tread of man.



"Yet of our race they tell us some outlasted those horror-days.
On rocket wings they sought the moon, fleeing the demon rays;
And many died, but some began a half-life caged and thin,
In which even now we expiate our fathers' deathly sin."



Such was the tale that some believed in those honeycombing caves
Where things with faces pale as frost swarmed amid living graves,
Peering through lenses at the night, where, pale and round, would rise
A globe with shadowy lands and seas against the star-filled skies.

