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# THRILLING WONDER STORIES

The Magazine of Prophetic Fiction



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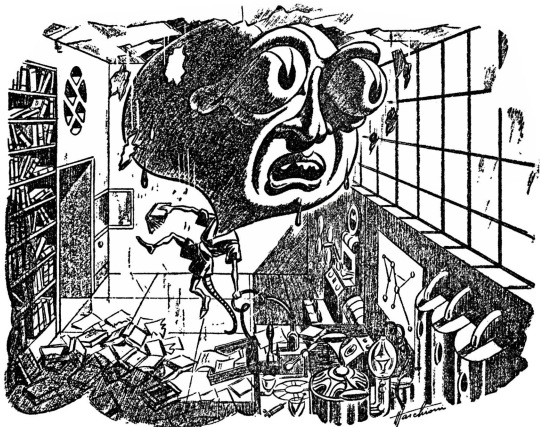
*ON THE COVER: Painting by Rudolph Belarski depicts a scene from BEYOND THE VORTEX, by Frank Belknap Long.*

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Read our Companion Science Fiction Magazine—**STARTLING STORIES**



Yooggl's body zoomed upward and his head crashed through the skylight

# BLOATED BRAIN

By ALFRED G. KUEHN

*The Secret of a Mind Stimulus Has Amazing Results!*

**Y**OOGGL nervously fingered the tubular atom-blaster beneath the heavy folds of his dark tunic. It was late and the Zurmanian damp had a clammy eeriness about it that tingled the hairless tip of his trailing appendage. Yooggl crouched motionless in the thick shadows of an arch-ope as the clacking sound of the steps grew closer. He knew he had no business being out at this time, and if he were caught—

They came finally into hazy view. A steel-shod squid man, with a pair of drunken, slithering Gurks in tow. The Gurks' jointed antennae were faintly phosphorescent with the

glow of maryeena. Yooggl shuddered as the fierce insect-men passed by. There had been rumors about them lately of a cannibalistic atavism. Yooggl waited two minutes, then fled stealthily in the opposite direction.

Planetoid Clinic was dark when Yooggl reached it, except for one beam-ray glowing dimly in the dome. Yooggl whispered a number into the oscilla-phone and the panels slid aside. He stepped quickly inside, then whispered a different combination which would keep the panels locked.

The flight tube was half-way down the darkened hall. Yooggl entered it silently, and

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A PRIZE-WINNING AMATEUR CONTEST STORY

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whispered the single word, "Observatory." Noiselessly, and with incredible speed, the tube whisked him up nine hundred levels to the Clinic's pinnacle where the skylight laboratory was located.

Yooggl stepped quietly out into the corridor. The blaster was in his hand now as he cautiously slid along the shadows to the side of the laboratory. He paused there, listening. There were sounds of activity within the laboratory. Professor Krex, no doubt, was conscientiously at work. There was a rattling of beakers, a clicking of test tubes, and another—a faint sibilance, as of an electro-torch's hissing.

Yooggl moved closer, and peered stealthily through the observation panel. Then he stiffened. His eyes narrowed, and he swore softly under his breath. The professor was working on the brain-stimulus!

Professor Krex's warped, hunchbacked form was bent awkwardly over a laboratory bench. His single, sunken, myopic eye was shining—radiant. He was watching a retort filled with a thick, syrupy substance, slowly heating over an electro-torch's flame. The mercury in the thermometer was gradually rising. Krex gave a grunt of satisfaction. He thumbed shakily through a pile of notes at his side.

**A** THIN smile teased across Yooggl's hard mouth. Perhaps the old boy wasn't so dumb after all. If he had finally hit on the right catalyst—well, it would save him a lot of work.

Professor Krex turned the flame up a trifle. A group of tiny bubbles were beginning to form on the retort's bottom. Slowly, they grew larger and oozed their way up through the gelatinous mixture.

A minute passed. The retort became a foamy, effervescent froth. Krex snatched the torch from beneath the retort. And watched.

Yooggl held his breath. Many times had he reached this point himself—and failed. Would the reaction follow this time? If it did . . . Yooggl gripped the blaster tightly.

Krex was checking the notes. He ran a bony hand uncertainly through his tousled white hair. The retort was rapidly cooling. One last bubble oozed its way to the top and burst with a little ping. Krex watched anxiously.

Then, just as the thermometer registered normal, there were signs of activity. Some latent, hidden energy was slowly being re-

leased. A new set of minute, almost microscopic, bubbles was forming. Slowly, very slowly, they became larger and rose lazily to the top, releasing a heavy, purple vapor.

Krex gurgled with delight. He was finally succeeding. With trembling hands, he quickly attached a long series of chemical filtration tubes, and a curiously constructed condensation apparatus.

At that point Yooggl lost his balance. His right knee bumped the wall harshly. He inwardly cursed his clumsiness. Would the old man hear?

Krex, squinting from the bright lights of the bench, gave the panel-way a searching glance. Apparently satisfied that nothing was wrong, he continued working. He added a little of a viscous emulsion to the contents of the retort. It began to bubble violently. The purple vapors started to curl through the winding tubes, down through the condenser.

In a few minutes a phosphorescent lavender drop formed on the outer end of the condenser, splashed into the waiting beaker. Splash, splash, splash. Drops rapidly covered the bottom. They were luminous, sparkling.

Yooggl decided it was time to act. He kicked open the door, and pointed the blaster.

Krex wheeled, his face pale.

"Yooggl! What are you doing here?"

"You know blasted well why I'm here! I wasn't kidding last night."

"It won't do you any good to kill me, Yooggl," Krex said quietly. "The fluid is worthless without the powder. And I'm the only one who knows its secret."

"Quit stalling. I saw the notes."

"They're incomplete. Fortunately, I destroyed the others after I caught you sneaking in the library last night. I should have turned you over to the patrol."

Yooggl jabbed the blaster hard into Krex's emaciated chest.

"What's to keep me from giving it to you right now, just for spite?"

"Nothing, I suppose. Except your egoistic greed for power."

Krex stared fearlessly back into Yooggl's threatening gaze. He straightened himself up as much as his crooked back would allow.

"You'd like to use my discovery for your own selfish, wicked purposes, Yooggl. My brain-stimulus would give doctors, surgeons, and scientists a wonderful new power to benefit mankind. I've spent a lifetime de-

veloping it. And now, give it to the likes of you? Never!"

Yooggl flushed angrily. He hadn't thought the old man had that much spunk in him. He picked up the notes, shuffled through them. Krex had not been lying. The powder formula was missing. Yooggl threw the papers savagely in the professor's face.

Krex's heavily-lidded eye blinked.

that wrinkled eyelid of yours?"

Krex drew back. His face paled and his bony hands trembled.

"You wouldn't!"

"Oh, wouldn't I, though!" snarled Yooggl.

The Professor covered his face with his hands. His frail body shook.

"All right," he said at last, in a tired voice. "I'll do it."

## Meet the Author of This Story



**T**WENTY-NINE years ago, in Milwaukee, I weighed exactly three and one-half pounds, and eye-dropper feedings brought complete gastronomical satisfaction. Today, I hit around the one-seventy pound mark, and nothing less than a two-inch-thick T-bone, with double portions of French fries and apple pie a la mode on the side, can produce that same inner satisfaction—if I could get the steak. Guess I was more contented in '14.

It was in high school days that an interest in the laboratory sciences was developed. Especially chemistry and electricity. The period following was filled with electrical tinkering and ultra-shortwave radio transmitting and experimentation.

College days were interrupted by a long hospital seige with an ankle thoroughly smashed at ice skating. When I was finally able to walk again, it was '33 and the depression was in full swing. I searched for work, and was, variously: clerk, salesman, bookkeeper, photographer, stenographer, radio repairman, baker, and cake decorator. The last for five years.

At present am employed as an electrical tester in a War plant manufacturing motor controls for Army and Navy invasion equipment.

The girl I married was a dramatic star in a "little theatre" guild, and her background has been most helpful, as well as maddeningly critical, in sparking up the dialogue of my literary endeavors. We have a one-year-old son, "Gibbie," whose latest tentative claim to genius is a terrific keyboard rendition of Tschaiakowsky's piano concerto, in his own inimitable style—with his toes.

At present am working on a rather long novelet. At my side is "Jaax-16," an almost human (?) robot, with a chromite skeletal, neo-plasmic flesh. My story is about Jaax-16's underwater odyssey. Jaax-16 can't swim—but no matter. Neither can he breathe. He's alive, but not quite living.

And, incidentally, the entire manuscript is being typed in a dark room. Jaax-16's clammy hands on my shoulders sends emeno-ux-waves tingling through my brain, guiding my long, trembling fingers on the keys.—*Alfred G. Kuehn.*

"It won't do you any good, Yooggl," he repeated.

Yooggl looked around the laboratory. His eyes rested on a chemical-filled shelf. A cruel look twisted his face.

"There are ways to make people talk, Professor," he purred, pausing significantly between words. "Ways that a chemist like yourself would understand."

He picked up a half-full bottle of radii-ux.

"Would this help any? Say, one drop on

**H**E LIMPED over to a rack of assorted chemicals. He studied the rows of bottles for a few seconds, then removed three. With meticulous care he weighed off small amounts of each and ground them together in a mortar. Yooggl watched him suspiciously.

"You wouldn't be trying any funny business now, would you?" he growled menacingly. "If it shouldn't work you will pay."

"It will," said Krex quietly. "But you'll

regret this, Yooggl."

He poured the powder into the beaker of purple fluid. The liquid hissed softly. Then he filled a syringe with the mixture.

"My life's work," he sobbed, handing the hypodermic to Yooggl.

Yooggl eyed the outstretched syringe with sudden distrust. The old man seemed just a little too eager. What had he done to it? Yooggl knew that Krex was a wizard at bio-chemistry. Had he craftily altered the brain-stimulus somehow? Filled the hypodermic with sudden death? Well, there was a way of finding out easily enough.

"After you," he ordered, with a cunning grin, handing the syringe back to Professor Krex.

The Professor looked startled. He hesitated, but only for an instant. Then he jabbed the hypodermic into his arm. A fierce tremor shivered through his thin body. His hands shook violently. He staggered a few steps, and sat down.

After a few minutes the trembling stopped. He straightened, and stared peculiarly at Yooggl. The pupil of his eye was weirdly dilated. It was a black pit boring into Yooggl's head. Yooggl had the curious sensation of something crawling around inside his skull.

"How—how does it feel?" he asked nervously.

Krex continued to stare at him. Then he smiled, a queerly twisted smile. "Fine, Yooggl, fine," he said. "It's working beautifully. I can catch your every thought. Their emanations are quite clear. You have an evil mind, Yooggl. It won't do you any good."

His eye blinked, grotesquely. Like a lizard's, Yooggl tried to look away, but couldn't. Tiny-fingered tentacles seemed to be clutching at his brain. Twisting it, pulling it, knotting it. It paralyzed his mind. Some strange alien force was squeezing it into a helpless pulp.

Yooggl gave a strangled yelp. What was this anyhow? The Professor's eye. An abysmal pool of black fire. Burning through his head. Agonizing. He tried to swear. Couldn't. He was choking.

Krex arose and shuffled slowly closer to Yooggl. He spoke. His voice thundered and reverberated inside Yooggl's skull. It was deafening.

"And you would have used this power for evil, Yooggl!"

Yooggl's hands suddenly twitched. His blaster sparked. The Professor faltered.

Then the tension lifted. Yooggl shot again, and again. Krex crumpled to the floor in a misshapen heap. His lips moved feebly. "It won't do you any good, Yooggl."

Then he lay still.

Yooggl took a deep breath. That was close. The brain-stimulus must be pretty powerful stuff. He grinned avidly. It was so simple. He, Yooggl, would now be the Master Mind of the Universe!

He searched for a fresh syringe, filled it quickly with the stimulus. He plunged the needle point into an artery and slowly pushed the plunger, forcing all the sparkling liquid into his blood stream. A feeling of extreme exhilaration suffused his entire being. His veins felt as though they had been filled with liquid fire.

Then, as his brain slowly cleared, he became aware of a strange, whizzing sound inside his head. A buzzing, whirring, crackling. He sat up stiffly, listening. The sound grew louder, with short, intermittent periods of popping noises, as though a string of firecrackers were exploding inside his cranium.

Yooggl became alarmed. Was something wrong? He had used the fluid out of the same beaker. But of course, the Professor must have felt the same sensations.

Slowly the sound developed into a low, euphonious hum. Yooggl smiled. He understood now. Professor Krex had succeeded in localizing the action of a culture of the pituitary gland hormone, through refinement and reaction with a secret solution of a substance which the world had never known. Already it was at work, creating a new, wonderfully infinite brain inside his head. He could hear it working, crackling.

**N**EW cells were being formed. Cells of a potent neoplasm which multiplied the brain tissues with amazing rapidity. Yet each new cell formed was of an infinitely minute, condensed form, so that the new brain created would be of enormous capacity, capable of illimitable possibilities, yet compactly enclosed within his own ordinary-sized skull.

Yooggl was exultant. His brain would be equal to the combined minds of a hundred, yes, perhaps even a thousand geniuses! It was an intellectual dynamo in the making! Already he could feel his brain take on an entirely new process of assembling, adjusting and classifying of all previously assimilated knowledge. All the defective mechanisms of memory and rationalization were

being scraped of their obnoxious fungi.

A new structure was being erected—a brain in which the mind revolved around rows and rows of cellular receptacles with such precision and clarity that the slightest impulse of the will brought about an incredibly perfect coordination of all thought. It was a mechanized thinking machine! Pure and perfect. It opened all knowledge and power to his will!

Yooggl decided to give his new brain a test. He hurried into the adjoining library, removed a heavy medical tome from one of the shelves. As he flipped the pages, he became aware of a peculiar fixity of its printing. He closed the book. He could still see and read each page! The words remained indelibly mirrored in his brain!

With quivering fingers, Yooggl leafed through the entire book. As fast as his eyes could glance at a page, its contents were conveyed to his brain, completely assimilated—and remained fixed there.

Then he heard the crackling in his head again. More brain cells were being formed, more receptacles of knowledge, and power! Yooggl was elated. Given the time, he could page through every book in the entire library, and have their contents indelibly printed upon his own brain.

He looked at the book in his hands, and laughed wildly. He had robbed it of all its value. It was now worthless to him. With an exultant shout, he flung it into the fireplace, and watched the flames dissolve it into a small heap of ashes.

Then, like an excited spider, Yooggl raced madly about the library. He pulled book after book from its shelves, paged feverishly through their contents. One after another they went into the fire. His hungry mind avidly devoured the cream of Man's collected knowledge. Science, philosophy, literature—all fell prey to his brain's greedy tentacles.

And as he read, Yooggl felt a powerful interchange of truths and etiologies. His new brain strode nimbly across the edge of the incomprehensible. Yooggl gasped in wide-eyed amazement at what lay revealed there. The mysterious secrets which the alchemists and sorcerers of old had sought—and failed to find!

Then Yooggl suddenly was aware that the crackling had grown painfully loud. It boomed with an ear-splitting roar that threatened momentarily to split his head.

He stood up with a jerk. He felt dizzy, could scarcely keep his balance. His body seemed peculiarly light. He felt an odd

inclination to float in the air. It frightened him. He put his hands to his head. Then icy terror struck him.

Yooggl staggered frantically to a mirror and stared aghast at the creature reflected in the glass. His head was a monstrously bloated, spongy growth—nearly double its normal size. His head was a quivering mass of cancerous tissue! His eyes were bulged nearly completely out of their sockets!

Huge beads of sweat sprang out on Yooggl's head. He sank limply into a chair, but was scarcely able to sit down! He was forced to pull himself down by the arms of the chair and hold himself there.

With a sickening start, Yooggl understood. His head was lighter than air. The new cells of his brain were composed of a new, unknown substance—a compound many times lighter than hydrogen!

Yooggl swore savagely. This was the Professor's work. Curse him! He had juggled the ingredients, injected this joker.

Even with the thought, the crackling in his head increased. Yooggl groaned. More cells! With every thought, a corresponding number of cells formed. With every book he had read, myriad cells had formed, until his skull could no longer hold them all. Then they had begun eating away the flesh and bone, changing them all into spongy brain tissues, piling up cell after cell, transforming his head into a malignant growth of bloated brain! Soon it would attack his eyes!

**Y**OOGGL shuddered convulsively. He clutched at a bench for support. There must be some way to stop this loathsome leech which had fastened itself upon him. He searched frantically through the piles of notes for a clue to an antidote. But with each page he turned, the crackling increased in volume.

He felt his body grow lighter and lighter. His head swayed from side to side, threatening each minute to pull him off his feet. He forced his knees beneath the bench for anchor, and paged frenziedly through the sheafs of notes. More crackling.

Yooggl laughed—wildly, hysterically. He had the touch of Midas! Everything he touched turned to brain cells! Every word and thought added fuel to the fire of that torturing thing that was relentlessly eating away his body.

Yet he continued doggedly with his search. There must be an antidote somewhere! But

with each passing minute, Yooggl felt the surging in his head increase. Louder and louder grew the insane crackling.

Then, suddenly, it stopped. All was quiet. Yooggl felt a heartening ray of hope. But the next instant he realized what the stillness meant. His ears had been eaten away by the growth. They had become part of the Brain.

Yooggl jerked the drawers out of the desks, scattered their contents chaotically about the floor. In the bottom of one was a small, leather-bound notebook. The Professor's secret formulas!

Yooggl read them feverishly. Then the printing became hazy, indistinct. The lights grew dim, darkened. Yooggl clutched at his eyes. They were huge balls of bulging sponge! The Brain had attacked the optic nerves.

He was growing blind!

Yooggl held the paper almost against his eyes in a last desperate effort to read the blurred print. But it was too late. Everything turned black. He was blind!

Then Yooggl went berserk. His body shook with a violent paroxysm of wild terror. He overturned the bench, floundered wildly around the library, stumbling crazily among the debris of scattered books and papers. He groped along the walls, half pulling and half floating his way into the laboratory. He smashed bottles and flasks in a demoniacal fury to feel his way about the room. He raged and fumed at his sightless eyes.

Still the surging growth in his head con-

tinued with undiminished fury. New thoughts constantly presented themselves to the fertile Brain. An interchange of ideas of the assimilated knowledge continued to feed the avid tissues, building more and more cells. He was no longer able to control his seething, incoherent thoughts. The demon in his skull raced furiously with an unending succession of words, words, words—spawning more cells, cells, cells!

Yooggl clung desperately to the laboratory bench to keep from zooming to the ceiling. His neck was taut with the strain. It was impossible to hold on much longer. Visions of immense preponderance seeped through the surging in the Brain. But it was too late.

With a convulsive shake, his head expanded over and beyond his shoulders. With a jerk, it tore his hands loose of the bench. His body zoomed upward. With a last spasmodic effort, Yooggl clutched at the bench. Missed. He felt himself rising upward. His head crashed through the skylight, and he floated out into the early morning mists.

A staggering drunk stopped in his tracks and stared fearfully at the ghastly apparition that rose above the house-tops. A red-faced patrolman frantically turned in an alarm to the interceptors to watch for a queer-shaped invader craft. A Zurmanian astronomer gurgled ecstatically at the flash of a strange new comet streaking across his telescope.

And with ever accelerating speed, the balloon-headed phantasmagoria soared out into the void.