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**NOVELETTES**

- THE PROFESSOR SPLITS** by J. Harvey Haggard..... 6  
Just a school-boy's unfinished experiment—until the Professor completed it!
- COSMIC DERELICT** by Neil R. Jones..... 82  
The death of the patient isn't the only danger involved in brain-transposition!

**SERIAL**

- QUICKSANDS OF YOUTHWARDNESS** by Malcolm Jameson..... 42  
Conclusion  
Athanata—planet where age is immortal, and youth cannot live!

**SHORT STORIES**

- HE WASN'T THERE!** by Hugh Raymond..... 22  
If a man offers you 10 years of time-travel for 10 cents—turn him down!
- THE PET NEBULA** by Alfred Bester..... 33  
A playful nebula is nice around the house—if your life and property are insured!
- THE KING'S EYE** by James MacCreigh..... 63  
Life is violent on Venus—and a death must be paid for by a death.
- MAGNUS' DISINTEGRATOR** by Ray Cummings..... 73  
John Magnus' life was worth little—but his death would be of great value!

**SPECIAL FEATURES**

- FANTASY REVIEWS**..... 4
- VIEWPOINTS** ..... 40
- EDITORAMBLINGS** ..... 81

# COSMIC DERELICT

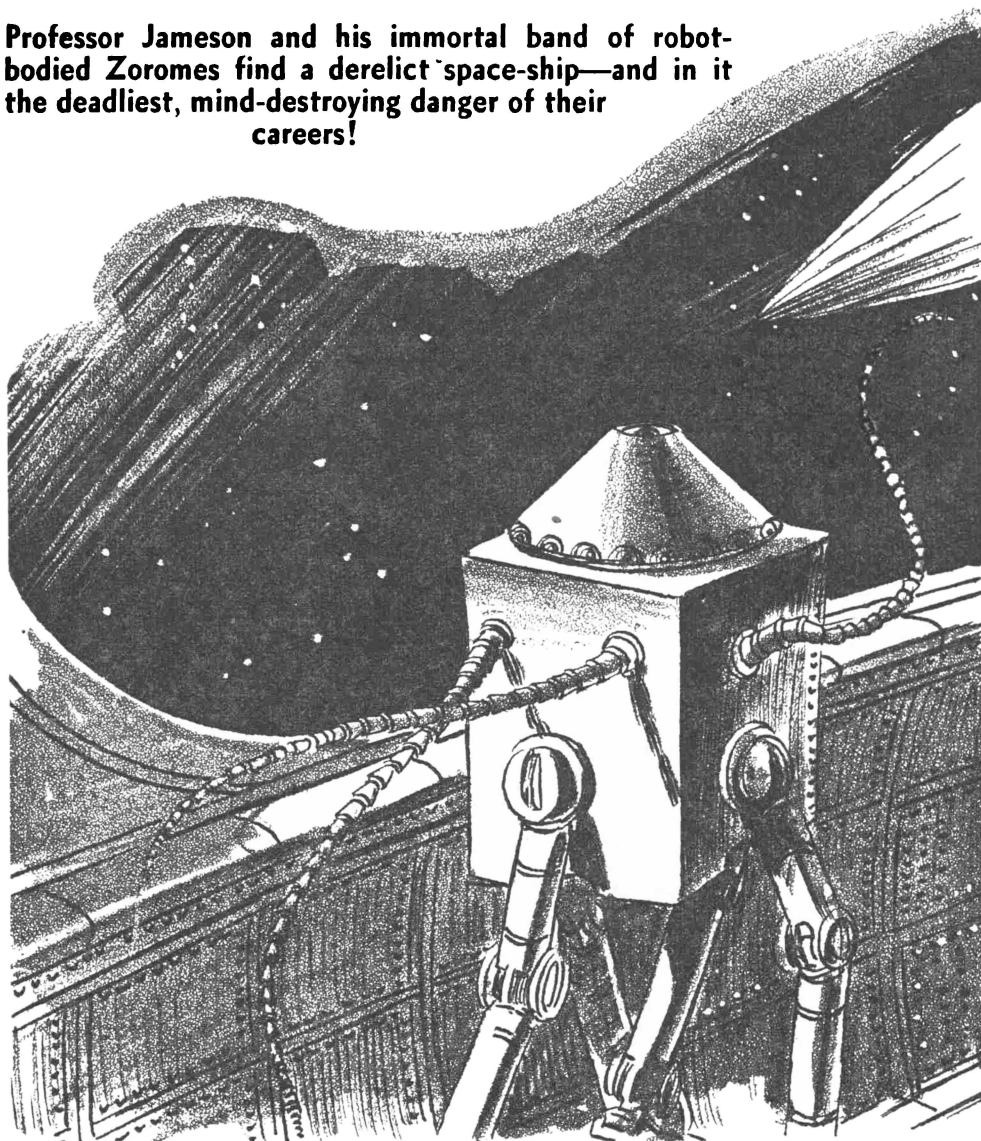
By Neil R. Jones

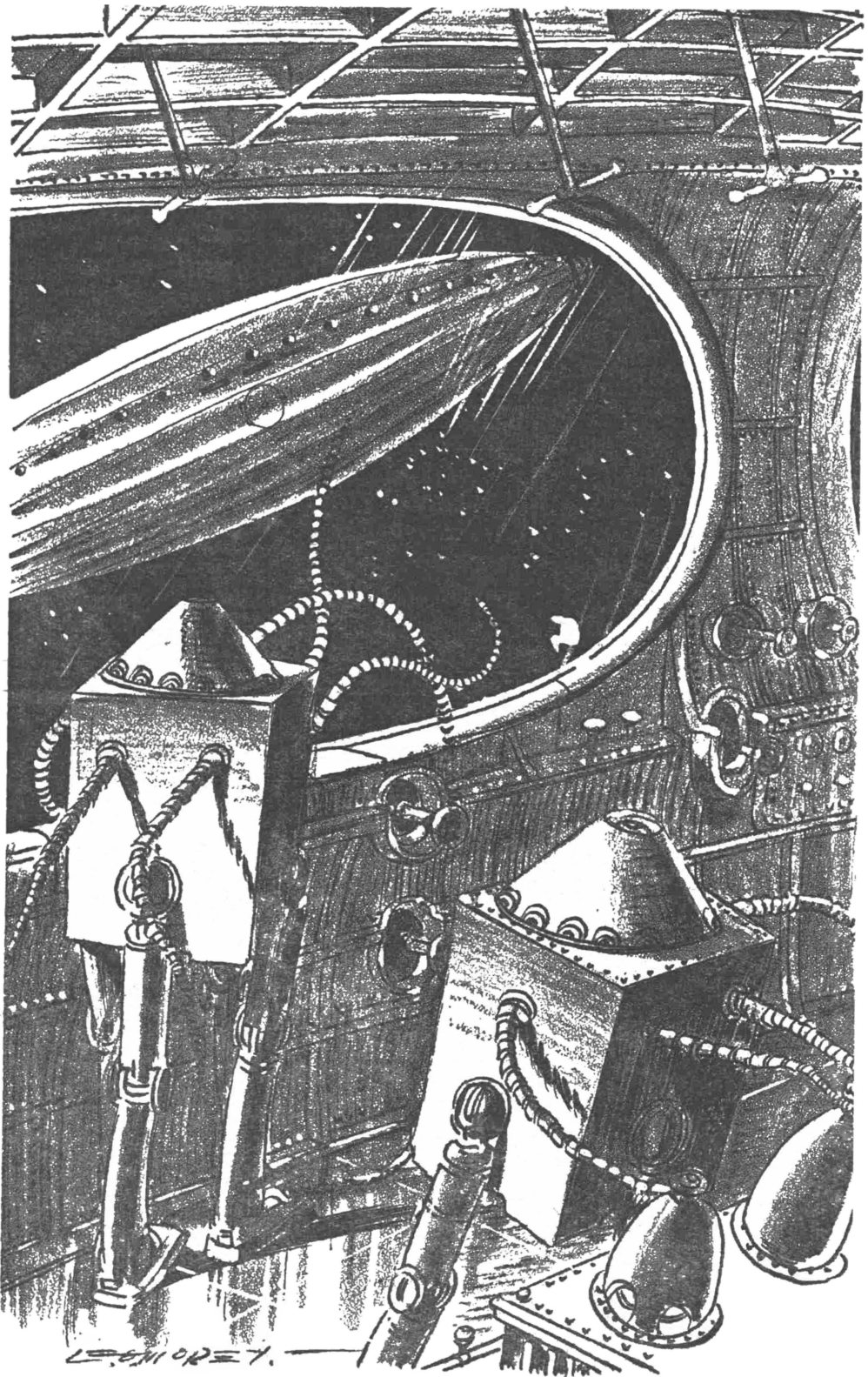
## INTRODUCTION

**T**HE last chapter of Professor Jameson's life came to a close in 1950. His was a strange, secret will left in the hands of a nephew. Douglas Jameson found that his uncle had built a space rocket to carry his earthly remains into the graveyard of space where it was the pro-

fessor's contention that organic matter suffered no deterioration. The funeral rocket was to become a satellite of the earth in the lonely wastes between worlds. The Egyptian embalmers, in the professor's opinion, had merely scratched the surface of an interesting experiment. He expected to remain perfectly preserved until that far-flung age in the future

**Professor Jameson and his immortal band of robot-bodied Zoromes find a derelict space-ship—and in it the deadliest, mind-destroying danger of their careers!**





when the earth, its rotation slowed to a standstill, one side forever facing the sun, eventually fell back into the dulled brilliance of the flaming body from which it had been hurled on its career at worldbirth.

The wandering meteors provided the professor with his greatest problem. Automatic, radium repulsion rays were finally built into the rocket and equipped with sensitive detectors and a system for transformation of sunlight into energy.

Millions of years passed since the night the professor's nephew sent the cosmic coffin speeding upon its endless journey. The professor's theories were vindicated, but his eventual anticipations were interrupted. Fate stepped in forty million years after. Space wanderers from a distant world of another system, ever on the move to explore new planetary systems in a search for the unusual, found the professor's funeral rocket in the shadow of the dying world, a lifeless, untenanted world which memories had even deserted long ago.

These space wanderers were mechanical, their bodies made of metal. Only their brains were organic, once situated in the skulls of an intelligent race of flesh and blood creatures but now transposed to coned heads of metal, governing a cubed body, four metal legs and six metal tentacles. Shuttered, television eyes surrounded the base of the coned head; while from the apex, a single eye looked straight upward.

The Zoromes recalled to life Professor Jameson's brain and transposed it to one of their mechanical bodies. He was offered the opportunity of travelling with the machine men on their exploration of eternal adventure. For a time, a melancholia arising from the effects of the desolate earth and its long gone civilization depressed the freshly revived brain of the professor, and he unwisely contemplated an end to his weird situation. But between eternity and death, he chose the former and embarked on an amazing series of adventures.

Eternity, however, was not the definite heritage of the Zoromes. In fact, it might well be discarded as a literal term and be applied only relatively. Immortality was theirs as long as no damage was suffered by their metal heads. Parts of their bodies when worn out were replaced. Professor Jameson, known among his metal comrades as 21MM392, had seen many of his mechanical brethren die. He had verged on that perilous eventuality himself a good many times in his travels with the Zoromes. He

had also seen machine men created from living subjects. There were 5ZQ35, 454ZQ2 and 92ZQ153 who had originally been Tripeds on the planet of the double sun, and on a return to the home world he had seen a female Zorome, Princess Zora, become 119M-5, and her dead lover 12W-62. It was with a new expedition that the professor and 744U-21 had set forth into a new territory of cosmic exploration not yet related upon the record books of the home world.

## CHAPTER ONE

### The Derelict's Passengers

WITH a metal tentacle, Professor Jameson pointed to the world in the rear of their passage. At a distance astern of less than twenty thousand miles, the planet still loomed large and commanding, occupying a large section of the star-sprinkled sky within its halo of atmosphere.

"It seems strange, 6W-438, that we found no intelligent life on that world."

"There are still three inner planets to explore. We may yet find an intelligent species in this system."

"Life, even of low intelligence, is the exception rather than the rule," 744U-21 reminded them. "We have found life on but seven worlds in the last twenty-eight planetary systems we have visited, and all but one of these worlds were divided up among two systems. We did gather interesting scientific data, however, in a good many cases."

"This system shows signs of being peculiarly well adapted for life forms," the professor pointed out. "We may strike something of interest among the inner worlds."

"First, we must explore this lone satellite of the fourth world. It is strange that there is but one moon among all five worlds. Possibly, on closer approach to the inner world, we shall see smaller ones we missed through distant observation."

The satellite in question grew on their

vision as the mother world behind gradually dwindled. 20R-654 piloted the space ship in a broad, sweeping curve around the little moon. As detectors and diviners of all kinds were trained upon the little moon, Professor Jameson, by the side of 744U-21, who was estimating the satellite's diameter and density, saw that their earlier approximation of seventeen hundred miles diameter was only slightly in excess of the exact.

"There is a strong concentration of metal at one spot we passed," 65G-849 announced.

"Return that way and we shall seek it out," 744U-21 relayed to 20R-654 at the controls. "Cruise closer to the surface."

Close to the surface, in their parlance, meant at an initial safe distance of several miles above any possible spires of rock or mountainous terrain rising up suddenly from beyond the moon's close horizon. They dropped gradually nearer the rough, airless expanse of desolate surface and slowed their speed as 65G-849 reported stronger emanations. At one point, he reported the metallic concentration to be highly localized. Then the ship passed beyond it, for the emanations diminished in strength quite rapidly. 65G-849 made a confusing report, however, as they returned to the point of highest recording. The radiations were weaker.

"We have strayed off the line to one side or the other."

"No, we were above the same topographical features both times."

"Check your instruments again and give specific directions to 20R-654."

This was done, and a startling discovery was made.

"We are not over this metal concentration! We are under it!"

Surprise and interest was immediately manifested by all thirty-eight machine men.

"A sub-satellite!"

The mysterious object was quickly

found. It was small, they noticed, as the ship maneuvered to sunward.

"Another space ship—smaller than ours!"

"Signal it!"

"They do not receive anything, at least, there is no response."

"It is not under its own power. It is drifting."

"Abandoned, possibly."

"Or its crew dead."

"A derelict."

"We shall soon learn," said the professor. "5ZQ35, 19K-59 and I shall board it, if we can effect an entrance without help."

THE three machine men put temperature equalizers over their metal heads to protect their all-important brains from the low temperature of space. They were let out of an airlock from which they drifted across to the derelict. On closer examination, the professor saw that it was a space ship, one of a crude fashioning, as if its creators were still in the pioneering field of space flying. From experience, he guessed that it was a degravitator type, one of the slower methods of space travel. For one thing, he could discover no rocket exhausts.

It was 5ZQ35 who found the means by which entrance was effected. A round port projected from one side of the faceted ship. With the built-in heat ray in one of his tentacles, a peculiar equipment carried exclusively by the professor, the machine man patiently cut away the hinged apparatus for opening the door. 19K-59 and 5ZQ-35 waited; then assisted in lifting and twisting out the tight-fitting cover which was secured inside at one edge. Again, Professor Jameson found it necessary to use his heat ray, creeping part way through the opening, his cubed body jammed tightly between metal jaws before his heat ray released the entrance hatch entirely. As numerous mechanical eyes

watched from the space ship of the Zoromes, Professor Jameson disappeared inside the derelict, closely followed by his two metal companions. Through telepathic observation, they followed the discoveries of the three.

Once inside, the rapid flow of mental information centered about the mechanical details of the space ship—until 19K-59 came across the first corpse. It lay slumped before an instrument board. Their initial impression was a four-legged creature with a short body extending horizontal rather than vertical, and an echo of the machine men's construction was found in the four tentacles which now drooped disconsolately in death. A long neck grew from the center of the body, supporting a head which the expert eyes of the machine men readily recognized as capable of generating an intelligence sufficient to solve the mechanical details of space flying. Two knoblike eyes were filmed with thin lids. The creature's accoutrements, as was generally found universal, were designed more for practical detail rather than adornment. Seven of the creatures were found. How long they had been dead, it was difficult to determine.

"Probably from one of the inner worlds," 6W-438 deduced. "They appear to have known that death was coming. They just sat there and waited for it."

"The moon is inhospitable. They could have found no help there if supplies or fuel were needed, or if faulty mechanical details were responsible for their drifting like this."

"Their faculty for making sounds is subordinate to their faculty for understanding each other mentally, like we do," said the professor, examining one of them closely. "As in most stages of civilized advancement, their hearing is not very strongly developed."

"Let us see what 744U-21 says to resurrecting their brains to life in the coned

heads," 5ZQ-35 suggested. "Then we can learn their story."

"It has been a long time since we discovered a species to be advanced as far as this," Professor Jameson reminded them. "If 744U-21 is agreeable, it might prove well."

More of the machine men transferred from their own ship to the derelict. The matter of attempting to bring the strange creatures back to life was discussed, and it was decided that if the first trial showed good effects, the other six would be recalled.

The selected corpse was taken aboard the ship of the Zoromes and preparations rapidly consummated for brain transposition and the resurgence of life forces, whereafter the brain in its metal case would call out various chemical necessities stored in the apex of the coned head for its continuation, purification and rejuvenation.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Resurrection

**B**OTH 744U-21 and 6W-438 were masters in the art of resurrection and brain transposition, and they immediately took over. The fact that the subject's brain appeared to be excellently adapted to transposition precluded a great deal of preliminary preparation and special treatment. Where the brain structure of the subject was found at wide variance with the brain structure of the Zoromes, the metal heads, which had been constructed for their own individual use, were given detailed rearrangement of neuron-impulse transformers, distributing centers of cerebral nutrition and eliminator conductors, to mention a few of the more common and pressing necessities.

This done, and the brain properly ensconced in its new setting, the release of a synthetic life force was consummated

from attached apparatus, causing the needed stimulation for the revived and continued functioning of a dormant brain. It was a delicate and exacting business which 744U-21 and 6W-438 undertook. The machine men mentally probed the brain for signs of returning consciousness, watching for subconscious impulse deep in the inner mind as a prelude to complete recovery.

The appearance of the unmistakable signs heartened them. Then followed a chaotic preambulation of disconnected thoughts. The machine men found that it called for a distinct mental effort on their parts to detect the thoughts of the creature's brain, and Professor Jameson made the observation that given complete command of their faculties, this species might easily hide their thoughts from the mental perceptions of the Zoromes if they chose to do so.

As consciousness reasserted itself more strongly, the mechanical eyes of the head became focussed on the nearby machine men and other objects. Disbelief and bewilderment were both reflected from the brain. The Zoromes caught mental gaspings at sanity, as if it were an elusive quantity, and wonderment if this were a post prelude to death, or an afterlife. 744U-21 impressed upon the creature's mind the facts concerning what must have been his fate and how they had transposed his brain and recalled it to life. Reiteration of the facts was necessary, yet the initial idea of death was soon realized, for memory served in this capacity. The machine men discovered, through associate thought, that something had gone wrong with the space ship between planet and moon, and that the moon had been the destination to be reached.

**W**HEN the ideas of what had happened were clearly understood, the machine men told the creature about themselves, and they told him that he was like them.

From him, they learned that he was one of an intelligent race of creatures who lived on the third world. He and his six companions had been upon a space expedition to the fourth world which they occasionally visited.

"What were you going to do on the moon?" 6W-438 asked.

Their informant seemed taken off balance momentarily, wondering how they knew. He was told of the associate thoughts of his which had been read.

"There is a terminal on the moon," he replied. "Others who waited for us must also have died there."

"Is the terminal airless? They, too, may still be preserved if they are intact."

"The moon is airless, and the atmosphere in the terminal must have soon passed off after they died, for there must be someone always to keep the machines working."

The creature expressed keen satisfaction that his six companions were to be resurrected and made into machine men. He conjectured on what time had passed since death had overtaken them. He was stunned by the professor's observation that he had lain dead in space forty million of his planet's years before the machine men found him.

Movement of the new machine man's mechanical appendages was awkward at first, but he soon mastered a smoother control. His first act was to try and determine the length of time he and his companions had been dead. He went about this by means of astronomical observations with the help of the Zoromes. Careful measurements of star constellations assured him that no such abyss of time such as Professor Jameson had mentioned had elapsed since his death. Solar observation also checked this fact. He next figured the positions of the five planets and the single moon which he assured the machine men was the only satellite in the entire system. His figures

eventually yielded the fact that he and his companions had been dead either seven of his planet's revolutions around the sun, eight hundred and ninety-one or else two thousand fifty-three. Observations of comparatively close stars precluded the possibility of longer periods of time, and it was considered almost beyond doubt that the last mentioned period was also doubtful.

"You will find your world almost the same as when you left it," Professor Jameson told him.

"The world—but not its civilization," the creature observed. "Much can happen in eight hundred years."

"That would be about eleven hundred of my earthly years, figuring your time to mine."

"There's another way to figure this problem if we can find two comets."

This was found to be more difficult, due to the obscure positions of the comets, but they were figured in all three time positions and sought after by the powerful glasses of the Zoromes. One comet could be found in none of three spots, yet this was blamed possibly upon a bright cluster of stars which would have formed a background in case the comet lay in the seven year spot.

"It has either been but seven years or else the two thousand year juncture is too far out in space to be seen."

They looked for and finally discovered the second comet—in its most difficult position for observation, yet spectroscopic analysis by the special telescopic eye of 4F-686 eventually proved it conclusively for what it was.

"Seven years!" Professor Jameson exclaimed. "It is even possible, perhaps, that those in the moon's terminal still live on if they had sufficient supplies."

He from the third world expressed sad negation. "It was because of a shortage of supplies that we went to the fourth world."

## CHAPTER THREE

### Ytremv's Gratitude

THE machine men recalled to life the remaining six brains and gave them mechanical bodies. They were entirely successful in all but one instance. One of the brains suffered mental lapses and occasional stoppage of impulse like that of a cataleptic trance. Much was learned about the civilization of the third world, yet Professor Jameson became obsessed with the idea that much information was being withheld. These creatures were secretive and were capable of holding a secret from the probings of the machine men even as the latter were capable of shutting off their thoughts from others.

Through a mental association with certain sounds, the machine men learned that he whom they had first brought back to consciousness was articulately known as Pfrengt.

The third world was Dmypr, and the moon of the fourth world, Vroblz, was known as Zrm.

"We, too, have attained a proficiency in bringing the dead back to life," said Ytremv, "in the cases where irreparable injury to a part of the body has not been suffered, but brain transposition is entirely out of our realm of possibility."

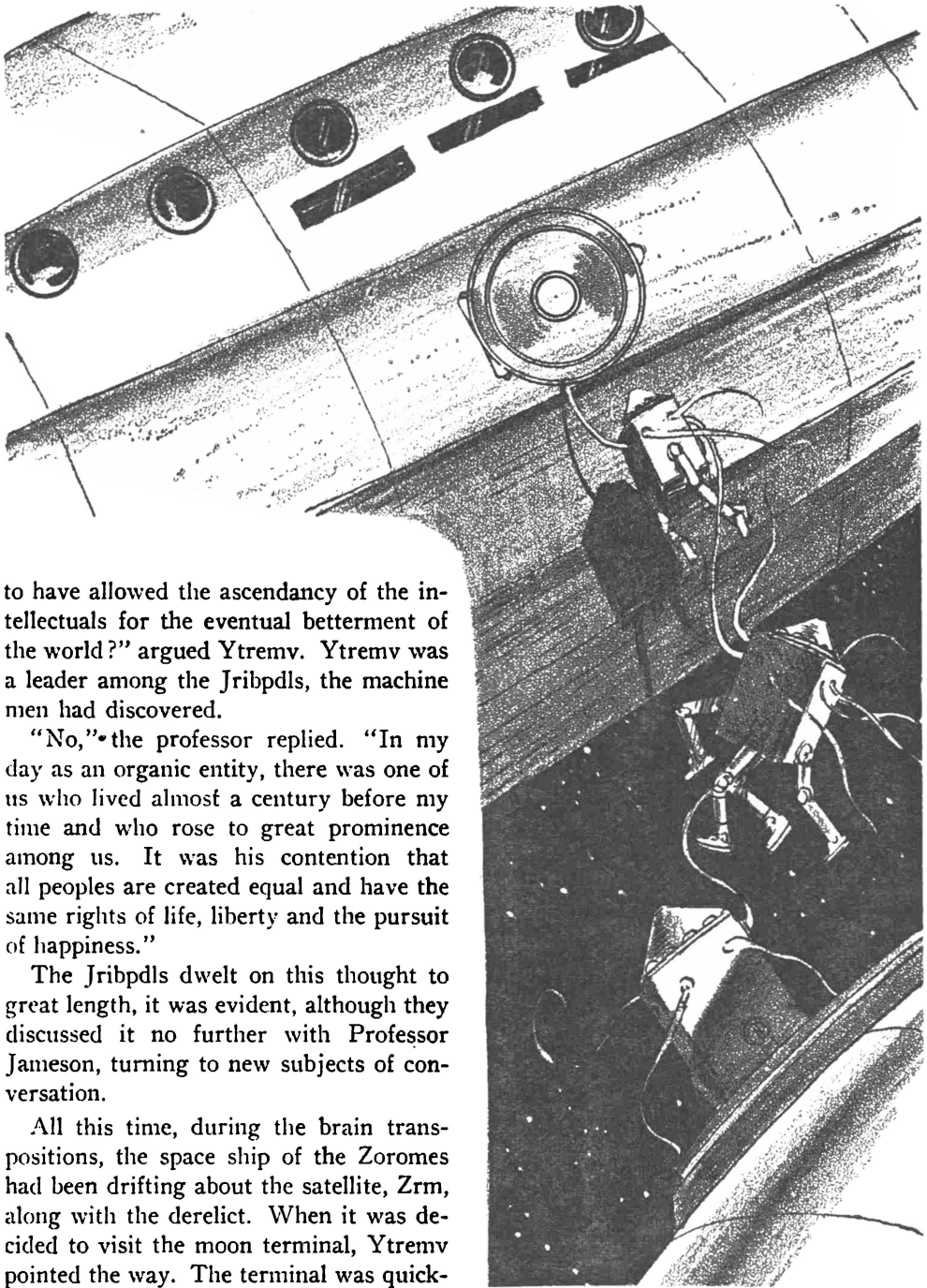
"If those at the terminal are found as perfectly preserved as we were, we can bring them back to life again if we can get them to Dmypr safely."

"We can help you in that," 744U-21 assured them.

The Jribpdl, as they called themselves, were keenly interested in the space ship and its operation, and they learned rapidly. They were also interested in the travels of the machine men, and they learned how the Zoromes had lately freed a race of feline men from oppressive, scientific masters.

"But would it not have been better





to have allowed the ascendancy of the intellectuals for the eventual betterment of the world?" argued Ytremv. Ytremv was a leader among the Jribpdl, the machine men had discovered.

"No," the professor replied. "In my day as an organic entity, there was one of us who lived almost a century before my time and who rose to great prominence among us. It was his contention that all peoples are created equal and have the same rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

The Jribpdl dwelt on this thought to great length, it was evident, although they discussed it no further with Professor Jameson, turning to new subjects of conversation.

All this time, during the brain transpositions, the space ship of the Zoromes had been drifting about the satellite, Zrm, along with the derelict. When it was decided to visit the moon terminal, Ytremv pointed the way. The terminal was quickly reached, and the ship settled down beside a curved knoll which was all of the terminal which projected above the surface of Zrm. Eleven Jribpdl had been left below, the machine men were told.

"It will be necessary to take them to Dmypr in an airless chamber of the ship," said the professor, "if you have hopes of recalling them to life."

**F**IVE of the machine men accompanied the metal Jribpdl into the subterranean terminals. It was not necessary for the machine men to don their temperature equalizers for stepping upon the surface of the airless satellite, for the satellite held a certain amount of solar heat which it slowly radiated.

Here again, as in the derelict, Professor Jameson looked upon the final gestures and attitudes of life frozen in death. All eleven Jribpdl were accounted for. Several had died the easy way—in sleep. Others, seeing ahead of them the drawn out horrors of the inevitable, had gone forth from their heated and air-filled sanctum to meet death. These were found in an antechamber, or airlock, slumped over each other in a tangled heap. Still others had followed routine up until the end. They were found sitting at instrument boards, ready to contact the space ship which never came, which had drifted helplessly into the attraction of Zrm.

What interested the Zoromes primarily, however, were fixtures and scientific apparatus in the terminal which they were eager to have the Jribpdl explain to them. Ytremv stepped over to one of the machines and gave it a quick examination and adjustment. A sudden paralyzing dizziness struck at the professor's brain but quickly passed.

"Did you feel that?" he asked the others.

"I felt nothing," 12W-62 replied. "What do you mean?"

The remaining Zoromes regarded him wonderingly. The thoughts of the Jribpdl, however, were concentrated among themselves, and their mental radiations flew thick and fast.

"Something stabbed at my brain," Professor Jameson explained. "It was somewhat of a coincidence. I thought it had something to do with that machine near Ytremv."

But there was no further comment from

the machine men of Zor on the unexplained phenomenon. The professor found their brains strangely dulled and their thoughts indistinctly blurred. Their metal bodies had become strangely quiet, too. He realized instinctively that they were experiencing the same cerebral sensation that he had just felt. And he knew, too, that Ytremv at the controls of the machine was responsible for these mental spasms.

"Ytremv!" Professor Jameson called in alarm. "Stop what you are doing! What is that machine?"

**T**HE professor started for the machine, but again the unnerving power throbbled through his brain, rendering him helpless, arresting his neuronics impulses in static waves. His mental inclinations became passive, yet he realized a malevolent satisfaction among the seven Jribpdl who in no way appeared to be bothered by the emanations Ytremv had unloosed. Their thoughts remained clear and their faculty of motion unhindered. Summoning his impaired concentrations as best he could, the professor sent a call of alarm and warning to those above in the space ship.

"Beware the Jribpdl! They would trap and render us helpless!"

"Useless!" Pfrengt mocked the professor. "Your thought concentrations are of no avail!"

It suddenly occurred to Professor Jameson that the subterranean quarters were thought proof and that those above did not know the treachery which was going on below. But Ytremv's information dispelled this idea and gave rise to a more alarming situation.

"The radiations reach a long way, fully one of your miles. Those in the ship are as useless and helpless as you, only they have no idea what has happened to them. Our own brains are different than yours and require a different frequency wave to affect us."

The seven Frankenstein creations the Zoromes had made went about examining their dead organic brethren and seemed satisfied with their condition. Professor Jameson was aware that his companions were more deeply afflicted by the disrupting power than he was, for he seemed unable to communicate with their dazed minds.

"Why are you doing this?" he demanded of the Jribpdl. "What madness has overcome you?"

"No madness," Ytremv replied. "We want your ship so that we can return to Dmypr, and we want no meddling outsiders putting the affairs of our world in what they think is proper order. About you, here in this terminal, are the proper rulers of Dmypr, including myself, who were driven out of their world. We have the means of conquering and ruling again. Millions will effectively support us when we return.

"We shall leave you here on Zrm. The temperature of the moon is high enough to keep your brains unaffected. Perhaps some day when our work of conquest is finished you shall be allowed to make yourselves useful in our employ."

The dazed professor did not catch the exchange of thoughts between the metal Jribpdl, but it was evident that they had decided it best to take the machine men of Zor out of the terminal. The Zoromes were picked up and carried out upon the moon's surface where they were dumped upon one side of their cubed bodies. The professor found the eye in the apex of his coned head pointing directly at the knoll of the terminal. To one side lay the space ship.

**H**E watched the seven Jribpdl enter the ship and return, each carrying a machine man who was dropped unceremoniously upon the ground. Five such trips were made until all the machine men of Zor lay in scattered profusion and

helplessness on the surface of the moon, bodies piled together with legs projecting at grotesque angles. The professor caught the idea from the Jribpdl that the mind disrupter affecting their brains was to be left running on their return to Dmypr. No chances were being taken with the resourcefulness of the machine men despite the fact that they were marooned on Zrm. The Jribpdl wanted to find them easily overcome when they returned, and not organized for resistance or trickery. The Jribpdl were too proficient in these phases themselves to overlook the possibility in others.

The professor saw 454ZQ2 lying a short distance from him, while 22K-501 and 377X-80 were half supported in semi-upright positions by the cubed body of 8L-404. The professor gradually felt his mind growing more alert as he searched the brains of his nearer companions and found only weak, dazed queries. As his own brain became clearer, those of his companions became more blank.

The Jribpdl had done something to the machine's adjustment. The minds of his fellow machine men had become more deeply afflicted, while his own coma had lifted somewhat. He found that he was able to move, but he wisely remained quiet. What had happened? It did not take the professor long to decide. Like the Jribpdl, his earthly brain was on a varying frequency from that of the Zoromes, although it was more closely allied to them than the Jribpdl mentality. What had happened, he reasoned, was the fact that preparing to leave Zrm for Dmypr, the Jribpdl had set the frequency disturbance to a finer and more complete control over the collective mentalities of the Zoromes. From a partial effect over the professor's brain and a near total clouding of the Zoromes, the new setting had practically removed the professor's mental impotence.

He saw the Jribpdl hurrying back and

forth between the terminal and the space ship. They were moving much of the paraphernalia and apparatus of the terminal into the space ship. Professor Jameson was suddenly seized with the inspiration to stow away on the ship and wait for a chance. He tested movement of his metal legs while the Jribpdl's were out of sight. Then he froze to inaction as one of the new machine men 6W-438 and 744U-21 had created to their own disaster appeared out of the terminal carrying a piece of mechanism in tentacles he had not yet become accustomed to using efficiently. It was Cnibml, the defective brain transposition. Halfway to the space ship, as the professor watched, Cnibml stopped suddenly, while the machine he was carrying slid to the ground from undirected tentacles. Cnibml had become afflicted with another of his temporary mental lapses.

With the speed of thought, an alternative, a desperate one, to the idea of stowing away, flashed before the professor, and he acted upon it. He rose to his feet and rushed upon Cnibml, seizing the new machine man much in the same manner as he and the other Jribpdl's had seized upon the Zoromes and cast them out of their own space ship. Fearful that another of the Jribpdl's might issue from the ship or terminal before his work was accomplished, Professor Jameson carried the machine man back to the position where the Jribpdl's had deposited him. He assumed the old position with Cnibml beside him. He was none too soon. Pfrengt and Mnarspl, each carrying one of the organic Jribpdl's, issued from the terminal and walked towards the ship. They looked in surprise at the piece of mechanism Cnibml had dropped and continued on into the ship.

The professor lost no further time. Quickly, he pushed himself to a convenient position beside Cnibml's head. Cnibml, coming slowly to his mental

faculties, became aware of a sensation of heat against his metal coned head. Pain and bewilderment caused him to express alarm which the professor quickly squelched with further rapid application of his heat ray. Cnibml was no more. Seeing no one in sight, the professor placed the body with the damaged head among the more conglomerate heaps of machine men, rolling the metal cube of 168P-75 over the head to conceal it. Then he went and leaned against the side of the space ship where he remained motionless and waited. Outwardly, his mind carried but one impression. He was Cnibml, and his brain was too confused to realize what had happened. It was in this position that Ytremv and Pfrengt found him.

"There he is!"

"He's coming out of it. Do you suppose he will always be like this?"

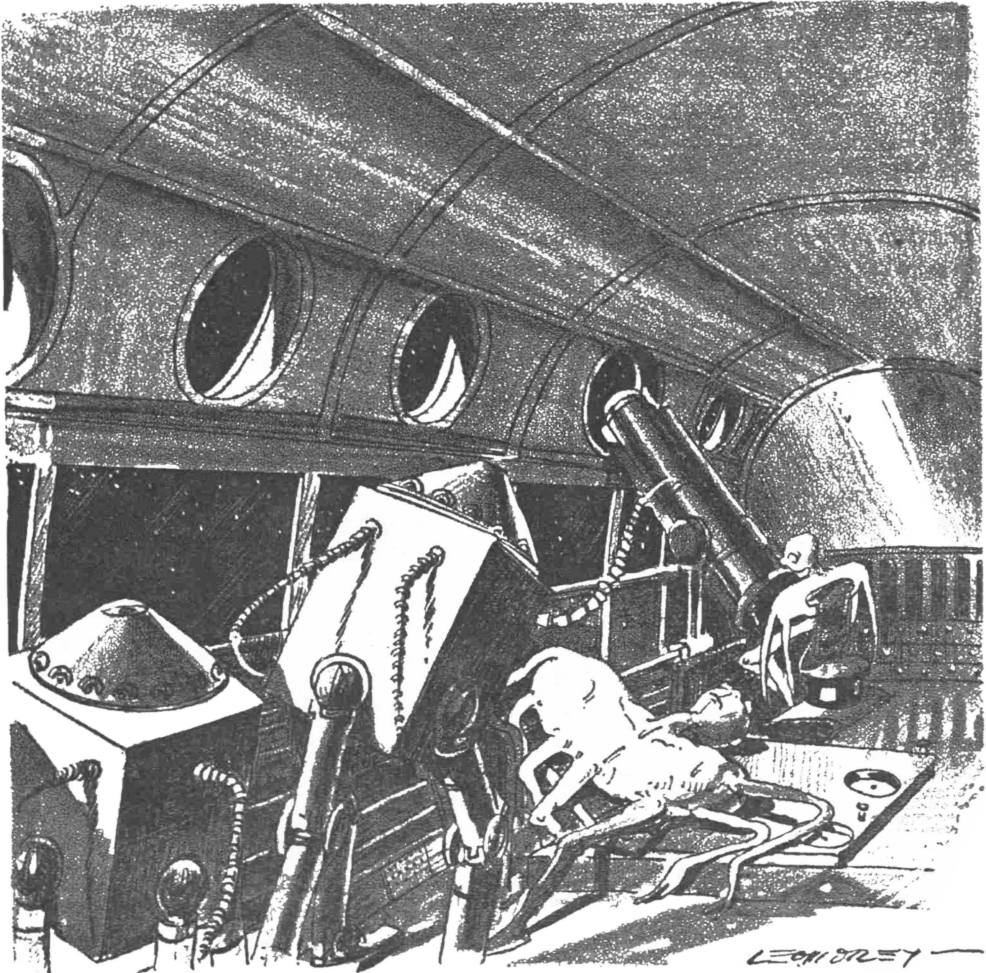
"He may die some time in one of these comas, or some time he may recover from them entirely," said Ytremv. "We cannot put too much dependence in his consistency when we get back to Dmypr. We must bear with these lapses."

And so Professor Jameson was accepted by the Jribpdl's as one of them. They found his memory also affected. He did not recall a great deal of what he should have remembered. At first, the professor's mental lapses were frequent, but as he learned more about the Jribpdl's and the world from which they came they found cause to consider a marked improvement in his condition.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Mysterious Broadcaster

THE machine men of Zor were left stranded on the moon, helpless under the radiating spell of the machine which darkened their brains and dissembled their impulses. The Jribpdl's, although unable to handle the space ship skillfully, never-



theless made good speed, and were more than pleased with the quick transit they could never have made with their de-gravitator ship. Dmypr continued to grow larger.

By the time the third world filled a large part of the sky before them, Professor Jameson had learned that he had fallen in with political criminals who had been exiled from Dmypr for planning to overthrow the world government of their species and rule as absolute tyrants. He learned that their plot had failed and they had barely escaped with their lives in the fastest space ship at their command. Paradoxically, they had among

them many of the best scientific minds of the planet, and this fact had figured largely in their near success. A losing pursuit of them had nevertheless crippled their ship, and they had barely reached the terminal on Zrm. Here, they had made repairs and had stayed. But once their food supplies threatened to run short, it was necessary to make a trip to the nearby world of Vroblz. They reached Vroblz safely and were nearly back to the moon when the ship gave out.

The professor learned that much of their following on Dmypr was synthetic. Besides the mental disrupters, the Jribpdl possessed propaganda coordinators which

worked on a principle along the same lines as the other machines except that they did not render the victims helpless. There were only certain mental types of Jribpdls, however, over which the propaganda coordinators exercised control.

It was the plan of Ytremv and his metal companions to visit an isolated outpost where they would find friends and the means of bringing back their dead comrades of the moon's terminal to sentient consciousness and activity.

Professor Jameson found their destination to be a village on an island. They landed at night so as to conceal the space ship. Ytremv did not want publicity; neither did he wish to scare his old friends by appearing suddenly among them in the weird entity of a machine man. All seven machine men could not leave the ship, so only four went, the professor among them. They crept through the darkness, sending thought waves ahead and preparing their organic allies for what had happened since they had fled from Dmypr seven years ago. They also outlined glowing prospects of eventual conquest. Even so, the flesh and blood Jribpdls were somewhat unnerved at first sight of the machine men.

**T**HEY were taken to laboratories where Ytremv wished to get his plans under way at once. One of the first steps was to remove the dead Jribpdls from the space ship and apply methods of resuscitation. It was in the laboratories that one of Pfrengt's metal feet crumbled to pieces in the joint.

"That is strange," said Ytremv. "One of mine is about worn out and ready to be replaced. We must be reshod. Go to the supply room of the ship, Kfzazc, and bring new ones."

"But I have tried," said Kfzazc, holding up a worn foot. "I need two—or shall, soon. These metal feet of ours seem a defective lot."

"Something to do with our walking about Zrm, possibly," offered Gmejd.

"I thought we had plenty of everything in the way of new parts aboard the ship," said Pfrengt. "I investigated before we started. There is no shortage of anything else?"

"None," Kfzazc replied. "Only feet."

"We must stay in good mechanical condition in order to do all that we have laid out ahead of us," said Ytremv determinedly.

"Let us make a fast trip back to Zrm and take feet from the bodies of the Zoromes?" the professor suggested to Ytremv.

"That is a good idea," Ytremv approved.

"Then let us start," urged the professor. "No time is to be lost."

"Not you, Cnibml," Ytremv checked him. "Kfzazc and Mnarspl will pick a crew. I dare not trust so responsible a task to you. Your brain transposition is still defective, and you might suffer a lapse at a crucial moment. Never fear, there will be much for you to do here on Dmypr."

Ytremv was aware of the professor's ill-concealed disappointment, which he misinterpreted, however, as the professor knew he must.

The ship started back to Zrm in charge of Kfzazc and Mnarspl. Ytremv's veto of Cnibml's going appeared vindicated when the latter went into a coma shortly after the space ship rose into the starlit night.

**T**HE conspirators suddenly learned one day that their secret was out—that their presence and their intentions were being broadcast to an entire world over the mental broadcasting units. A mysterious, dark-cloaked figure was the disseminator of the unbelievable information. The conspirators tuned in on one of his revelations.

*(Continued on page 96)*

## COSMIC DERELICT

*(Continued from page 94)*

“—and I solemnly tell you peoples of the world that once again you are being faced with a crisis such as you went through more than seven years ago. These self-centered, scientific fiends you considered dead are back again, ready to play their same heartless game—to turn your government to their own ends, to establish a tyrannous rule and bring supreme power into the hands of a chosen few. They possess clever machines which affect the brains of those who listened to their propaganda years ago, and many of such become their unwilling minions the moment the revolt flares and these machines are set to working. More than this, these enemies of society now have seven formidable robots to do their bidding. Beware of them.

“Listen to me. When the revolt comes, everyone who is now giving me attention rush to the aid of your government and overwhelm those who blindly follow the dictates of the machines trained upon their brains. Beware also of forces—”

“A traitor!” exclaimed Ytremv frenziedly. “One who knows all our plans!”

“What can we do?”

“We must start the revolt before Kfaze and the others return. We must get it under way before we are further blocked. Have all five of our machine men here at once. Have you seen Cnibml lately?”

“Yes,” replied Gmejd. “He was in one of his comas, however.”

“Go and bring him, if he is able to come. When I last saw him, he was not right, either.”

The machine man left to perform his errand. A hurried mental call brought Ytremv and the others to Gmejd.

“Cnibml is dead!” Gmejd exclaimed, pointing to the motionless machine man. “We others have checked, and he has been like this since the ship left for Zrm!”

THEY made a hasty examination. It was Ytremv who first caught at the truth and figured much more from it.

"He is not dead, for there is nothing in the head to die! This is a dummy, an empty-headed machine. What's more, Cnibml was never among us since we left Zrm. It was a Zorome posing as Cnibml! I am certain of it, now that I look back. He must have rigged up this dummy aboard ship and brought it off in the darkness when we landed ready to use it in an emergency."

"How did he escape the mental disrupter?"

Ytremv had no reply for this and stated as much. "He must have caused our feet to corrode and wear—and destroyed the stock of metal replacements!"

"But where is he now?"

"Aboard that ship stowed away to try and rescue his friends back on Zrm."

"Or else he is the mysterious broadcaster!" said Pfrengt.

"Either, but if he is doing the broadcasting, we can set a trap and stop that soon enough."

The broadcasts, however, terminated suddenly. Government officials broke in upon one of them as the mysterious broadcaster was carefully reiterating the text of his usual theme with emphasis upon what each individual should do when the revolt came.

"You are reported to be an enemy posing as our friend and advisor," challenged one of the officials. "Information has reached us that you are one of the robots you yourself have described. You are reported to be spreading further propaganda in a subtle manner so that these machines will control even more victims than before. Come, unveil and prove yourself."

"It is not true," the cloaked figure countered. "I am glad that you have learned some of the truth of my assertions.



Whoever you may find me to be, I am your friend."

An official stepped forward and snapped away the cloak with a quick motion. . . .

### CHAPTER FOUR

#### The Siege of the Citadel

CLOSE upon the heels of the murderous killing by a machine man, the revolt which the mysterious broadcaster had warned about broke out in scattered sections of the world. Government buildings were seized, and law enforcement groups demoralized. The small standing armies were torn by internal dissension, and the officers fought among themselves.

Meanwhile, the mysterious broadcaster had been unveiled. Before the officials of Dmypr stood a metal cubed body upheld by four metal legs and carrying six tentacles. A circle of television eyes regarded the officials from a coned, metal head.

"You are one of the robots!"

"I am no robot."

"Where is your control point?"

"In my head. I have a brain the same as you, and it is not made of wheels and bits of metal any more than yours."

"You are one of the murderers!"

"I am not one of them, though it is true that the murderers you mention are made like I am. I am trying to save your world from their domination. That is why I have been giving out this information."

"More of their cleverness!" cried one of the officials. "We must find all of these machines and destroy them!"

"You must give up," said the chief spokesman. "Destructive forces are levelled at you from all directions. Offer no resistance. Do not try to kill. You are in a trap which has been prepared for you."

The officials stood aside and motioned

for the machine man to step through the doorway by which they had entered. Outside the broadcast chamber, he found himself the center of a group of purposeful Jribpdls who held pointed rods directed at him menacingly. He was told to proceed under pain of destruction to be unloosed upon him if he balked or showed signs of resistance.

**H**E WAS taken across the city in an airship and jailed. Besides being confined in a strong cell, the machine man was heavily chained, and a guard stood outside a grilled opening and watched him. It was not until the dawn of the following day that the machine man was brought forth for examination. He found himself in a great audience hall, looked upon curiously and in awe by government officials and scientists of Dmypr.

"Who and what do you claim to be, if not a robot of our enemies" he was first asked.

"I am a machine man with an organic brain which once belonged to an intelligent flesh and blood creature of another world. In a broad point of view, I was somewhat like yourselves."

"How did you come to know Ytremv, Xsmylx, Pfrengt and their associates? We thought them dead several years ago. Their space ship was reported destroyed and lost."

"They were dead. We brought their brains back to life after transposing them from their dead bodies to our machines. We found seven of them in a derelict floating about Zrm."

"You resuscitated them so that they might again harrass and threaten this world with their evil, perverted genius?" the interrogator hurled wrathfully.

"We, as well as you, have come to realize our mistake—but too late. The conspirators overcame our brains with a strange mechanism and we were left on

Zrm while they stole our ship and came here. Our space ship is a great many times swifter than your degravitator ships."

"We know the mechanism of our enemies well. It paralyzes mental consciousness. But if you were left on Zrm, how did you manage to get here?"

"I am 21MM392," the machine man replied, "and I am originally from a race of creatures unlike the Zoromes both in physical aspect and brain structure. Aside from a preliminary affliction, I escaped the static waves which overcame the mentalities of the other machine men. Their complete helplessness called for a frequency wave which left me unharmed. I killed one of their number and posed in his place. When we reached Dmypr, I escaped and have been trying to head off the revolt, or at least to insure its lack of success."

At this point, the speaker called for an analytical study of the machine man by scientific colleagues. They pronounced the facts admitted by the machine man in relation to his physical structure to be true.

"We would know more about you and your intentions," the chief spokesman summed up the general opinion. "You will be held but not destroyed, while we wait for further developments before taking any action either with you or against you."

**P**ROFESSOR Jameson was led back to the locked cell where he had languished since the broadcasts had been terminated. Again he was carefully chained, and the guard was posted. No chances were being taken with him. Certain members of the assembly had been careful on that stipulation.

Yet that which was guarded against happened. The guard was found with several chains encumbering him. These

had been burnt through from an application of intense heat. The locks on the various gates and grills were found to be in a like condition. The machine man had escaped. The sensational news was greeted with mixed feelings. Many were glad. Others were fearful, waiting for him to strike.

Professor Jameson, escaping from the bastille at night, skulked among the shadows and carefully searched for an airship or other means of getting out of the dangerous neighborhood of his incarceration where a coming search would certainly be made when the alarm was raised that he had escaped. In the graying dawn, he found a hangar and broke inside. He was glad to find a small craft of a type with which he had familiarized himself during his broadcasting tour of the various large cities on Dmypr.

He rose into the sky and headed for Tstzlrq, the great capital city where the machine men of Dmypr held the citadel and where the fighting was most intense. The city of his captivity lay still in sight behind when he became aware of pursuit in the form of several large, growing dots against the sky. He pushed his speed to the limit and turned on the mental reception. He found that his escape had been discovered and that he was being pursued with the object of preventing him from joining his metal companions in Tstzlrq where he was reported to be heading.

With the speedy little airship, the professor knew it would be but a short time before he reached the capital city. Meanwhile, the pursuit gained steadily. They were in firing distance by the time Tstzlrq loomed on the horizon, and whistling sounds sobbed through the atmosphere close to the little airship, while yellow puffs ahead and to each side marked explosions. Professor Jameson adopted a swerving course.

AS HE neared the citadel, he noted an absence of aircraft which became explicable when a barrage of projectiles exploded all around him and sent the ship into a dizzy spin. Those pursuing him, though puzzled at this unfriendly act on the part of the machine man's allies, retired and were followed by the anti-aircraft fire which crippled one ship and forced it to an emergency landing. The professor caught glimpses of large forces of Jribpdl's, and combats raging in the streets surrounded the citadel.

He flew above the citadel in the face of intense fire, looking for a landing. Several projectiles struck the ship, and it started falling. Another hit it. More whistled past. Desperately, the professor tried bringing it out of its spinning drop as he had done before, but this time there was no possibility. It was incapable of further flight. The citadel expanded rapidly in his mechanical vision, and then came the crash on a low roof of the huge structure. Professor Jameson suffered a bent leg and was terrifically shaken up, but he never lost consciousness for even a split second. He was out of the wreckage as quickly as he could manage and hurrying across the roof to a hatch.

Professor Jameson seized a bewildered Jribpdl he came across and held the luckless creature in a painful grip as he extorted what he wanted to know in regards to the citadel and its arrangement. Momentarily, the Jribpdl was stunned by the uncommon behavior of what he believed to be one of his own leaders.

Learning what he wished to know, Professor Jameson dropped the terrified Jribpdl and followed a mentally sketched route to the upper levels of the citadel.

The professor found the chamber he was looking for, where the propaganda coordinators and mind disrupters were located. He found several organic Jribpdl's overlooking a battery of the propaganda

coordinators. Word had now flashed through the citadel of his presence, and he was no longer mistaken for one of the mechanical Jribpdl. Opposition was given him, but he dispatched it ruthlessly, and those who did not succumb to the heat ray were glad to escape. One of them, struck on the head by a metal tentacle, fell stunned.

Professor Jameson was glad to find several mind disrupters. The Jribpdl were unable to use these in the conquest of Dmypr at this stage of the fighting due to the fact that they had no personal protection against the common frequency necessary. It was not like turning their power on the machine men of Zor.

### CHAPTER FIVE

#### Castaways on the Moon

THE professor rapidly set to work manipulating the various controls of a mind disrupter in an effort to find the mental frequency of the Jribpdl and paralyze their mental faculties. He knew that it would work upon both factions if he could only discover the right combinations. All fighting within a mile of the citadel, as well as in the citadel itself, would freeze into immobility.

The Jribpdl who had been stunned was recovering from his unconscious state, and the professor watched him, examining his mental processes for a hint of success. Then suddenly he received the mental shock he had first felt in the terminal on Zrm, and he almost lost the faculty of motion. It was a dangerous business. He managed to twist a dial, and the feeling of helplessness passed off. He was on the right track. The professor continued to slowly exercise the controls. Once more, he passed his own wave frequency. He heard running feet.

An explosion against the wall beyond

the professor warned him of his peril. He saw one of the long rods poking its dangerous length through a doorway. Organic Jribpdls were massing outside. The one Professor Jameson had stunned with a blow from his tentacle suddenly acquired motion and resolve. He staggered to his feet and ran for the doorway. But he never reached it. He stopped suddenly, swaying a moment before he fell, as if struck by an explosive missile from an excited and irresponsible compatriot in the doorway. But there had been no mistake. Professor Jameson realized this as he watched the mind of the Jribpdl cloud and knew that at last he had hit upon the right mental frequency. Another explosion roared about his head and something took him by the shoulder and hurled him violently to the floor. He recovered his feet rapidly to be prepared for any emergency. The Jribpdls in the doorway were succumbing, however, to the waves of mental static, and they fell helplessly among the weapons they had brought to blast the machine men into submission.

**P**ROFESSOR JAMESON lost no time. He raced through the galleries and chambers of the citadel. Jribpdls lay motionless on all sides. He knew that in the nearby vicinity of the citadel both friends and foes were likewise stricken. The problem of consolidating the advantages must fall to him alone. He knew that he must remove the heads of the mechanical Jribpdls or otherwise incapacitate them. The rest of the conspirators must be locked up. He finally discovered a broad storeroom capable of being shut off from the rest of the citadel. Rapidly and tirelessly, he commenced carrying inert Jribpdls into the great storeroom, all the while seeking Ytremv and his three metal companions. But they were evidently on the upper levels, held by the grip of the mind disrupter.

The professor decided to search for them. For one thing, the storeroom was becoming filled, and additional space was necessary to confine the rest of the Jribpdl. Then too, the professor was commencing to wonder how many of these Jribpdl he was carrying into the storeroom were unwilling victims of the propaganda coordinators. These machines were located in the same room as the mind disrupters, and Professor Jameson had a mind to destroy these without further delay. It would be well to check on the mind disrupter, too.

In reaching the chamber of the machines, the professor searched the various levels on the way up. He found more of the organic Jribpdl but none of the machine men. He wondered if they had fled the citadel, but the idea did not seem to fit the circumstances. They must be on the higher levels, above that of the machines. He found the mind disrupter working smoothly. He had also discovered more jail space for the remaining Jribpdl in the citadel. But first he meant to destroy the propaganda coordinators, for their effect was far reaching. Then, he meant to hunt down the mechanical Jribpdl.

With heat ray and kicking mental feet, Professor Jameson quickly reduced the machines to fused and broken parts. His attention was absorbed in this work when he heard a clicking noise foreign to the sounds made by himself. He turned rapidly as the eyes on one side of his head caught a movement in the doorway where organic enemies had lately sought to destroy him. The machine men rushed down upon him, and he was overpowered before he had a chance to use his heat ray. Another came through the doorway upon the heels of the first three, leaving the professor subdued and wondering what means of nullification and self protection Ytremv and his machine men had found against the mind disrupters.



THE Zorome 454ZQ2, aboard the space ship on Zrm, became stricken with a sudden throbbing of his brain which passed off into a dulling influence rendering him helpless. He called out mentally in alarm; then became aware, as his senses reeled, that others in the ship about him were similarly affected. He lost all consciousness. When he came to his senses again, he was laying on the surface of the moon. He saw the mechanical Jribpdl's carrying his companions out of the ship as he had probably been carried. His confused brain debated on the treachery which must have occurred. He did not know how it had been done, but he gathered the malevolent intention of the Jribpdl's. To one side of him lay a tangle of machine men partly piled on each other. On the other side of him, he recognized 21MM392. Helplessly, he watched the last machine man brought out of the ship, and then came an endless procession carrying apparatus and dead Jridpdl's out of the terminal and into the space ship.

He saw one of the new machine men pause and become immobile. He recognized the Jribpdl who had been unfortunate to have constituted a poor subject for brain transposition. 454ZQ2's hazy mind became mildly bewildered as he saw 21MM392 suddenly rise and attack the quiescent machine man. No, he was carrying him back where the rest of the machine men lay. Then 454ZQ2 witnessed the quick end to Cnibml from the professor's heat ray—and 21MM392's subsequent masquerade as the defective machine man. While his affected mind pondered these matters in his helpless condition, the space ship left, disappearing among the stars and bound for the third world of the system.

454ZQ2's dulled brain eventually caught the significance of the professor's act. He knew that whatever force held him and the others had escaped the earthly

brain of the professor and that the machine man was taking all the advantage offered from the fortunate circumstances. Then it suddenly occurred to him that he was different, too, from the other Zoromes. So were 5ZQ35 and 92ZQ153. They had originally been Tripeds on the planet of the double sun. He noted, too, that none of the other machine men around him were capable of thought. With a gradual growing mental power, he concentrated his faculties upon them. Their minds were blanks. He sent out a weak call to 5ZQ35 and 92ZQ153 but received no reply. Either they were unconscious, like the others, or else their perceptive faculties were too dulled to hear him. He finally relaxed into a coma.

The great world of Vroblz went through half its phase like a diminishing lamp in the starlit sky before 454ZZQ2 caught a faint message from 5ZQ35. They talked over the situation, and 454ZQ2 told him about 21MM392's escapade. As 5ZQ35's mental radiations grew plainer, 92ZQ153 entered the conversation. The latter was wedged beneath several Zoromes piled in haphazard positions atop him.

"Whatever holds us this way is in that terminal," said 5ZQ35. "Did they leave someone here?"

"We are alone. They all left—all except the one 21MM392 killed."

"If we could only reach that terminal."

454ZQ2 made a great effort to move, but found he had not even neuronc impulse to wiggle a tentacle tip, but he remained hopeful. All three machine men who had once been Tripedes were gaining in mental clarity.

**W**HEN Gmejd and Mnarspl heard the frantic alarms from their organic brethren in the ship and on the moon's surface, they rushed out to find a bewildering and desperate situation. The ma-

chine men of Zor who had lain so helplessly on the ground were swarming into the ship. The Jribpdl outside the ship were dying as their ripped space suits let out their air and heat upon the cosmic wastes of Zrm. As the two machine men stood dumbfounded, they were rushed to the ground by fully a dozen Zoromes who quickly took them to pieces, tossing their heads unceremoniously into the ship and losing little time in getting under way to Dmypr.

“We can thank you, 454ZQ2, for crawling so slowly but surely to the terminal and stopping that devilish machine,” 744U-21 praised the one time Triped.

“The strategy of pretending we were still helpless when the ship came back was somebody else’s idea,” 454ZQ2 returned.

“Let us hope that nothing has happened

to 21MM392 on Dmypr," said 6W-438. "If I know him, he will do all he can to defeat Ytremv and the revolt."

"We can only wait and see."

"If anything has happened, we may not be too late to help him."

"Or avenge him."

Under control of 20R-654, the spaceship of the Zoromes sped to Dmypr at a rate far transcending the satisfied efforts of its recent operators. On reaching the third world the machine men did not even land but captured an airship out of the sky. From its occupants, whom they took aboard and who proved to be loyal defenders of the government, they learned of the fight going on at the world's capital.

When they reached Tstzlrq. they found a strange phenomenon in the vicinity of the great citadel. For a mile around in every direction, it was a city of death. Beyond that circle, fighting raged back and forth, but no living creature in that

area moved. Cautiously, 744U-21 placed a landing force of ten Zoromes on the roof of the citadel headed by 6W-438. Rising once more into the sky, ready to protect the landing party from above, the machine men made a strange discovery. The three Jribpdls they had taken aboard from the airship were dead. It had happened since they had entered the strangely quiet zone of the citadel. An examination by 27E-24 contradicted the accepted condition of death.

"They are under the same power of mental paralysis that we were on Zrm!"

"The mind disruptive force again! In the citadel, probably! That is why everything is so quiet about its vicinity!"

"It is attuned to the frequency of the Jribpdls."

"But it may easily be turned on us by changing the frequency! Cruise higher, 20R-654, so that we shall be sure to be above its zone of operation!"

**D**ESCENDING from the highest point of the citadel, the ten Zoromes hunted carefully through the different levels, placing a guard upon their thoughts and staying on the alert for signs of the mechanical Jribpdl. It was the fortune of 29G-75, 377X-80, 160P-75 and 57L-426 to discover the first machine man. He was bending over amid a litter of mechanism when they silently rushed him. It was in the struggle to separate the machine man's mechanical parts from each other that 29G-75 made a startling discovery.

"21MM392!"

"29G-75! I thought you were Ytremv and his machine men! You were so secretive—and so sudden!"

"We thought you were one of them!"

29G-75 radiated his discovery to the rest of the machine men in the citadel and urged them to look carefully on the higher levels for the mechanical conspirators. Spreading out in a careful, detailed search, the Zoromes soon found them. 12W-62 and 41C-98 discovered a small chamber where the four machine men had hidden themselves when they felt the first warnings from Professor Jameson's search for the right mental frequency. They had no mind to be found helpless, and there had been little time for them in which to act.

"There is much for us to do," said the professor. "The revolt is doomed, now. We must reach a broadcaster, a powerful one. Then we must strike with the space ship at points necessary. All propaganda coordinators must be detected and put out of operation."

The work of the machine men was rapid and efficient. The threat of the conspirators was removed, and the machine men made amends for their unfortunate mistake in creating machine men from enemies, to the welfare of Dmypr. They helped the peaceful and intelligent Jribpdl a long way upon the path of scientific progress.

When they left the system of five

## COSMIC DERELICT

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worlds, six coned, metal heads were left behind in the citadel at Tstzlrq. Six immortal brains lived on in the metal heads, but all connections of the heads necessary to direct metal bodies and limbs had been carefully removed. The six living brains were undying prisoners, and from their mechanical eyes they looked upon generation after generation of organic Jribpdl who had heard of their strange, legendary adventure and had come to look upon them in awe.

THE END

