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DOCTOR PICHEGRU'S DISCOVERY

By Carl F. Keppler



AS I TOOK one of the cigars from the box that Pichegru offered me, my hand quivered a bit with the excitement that I could not wholly suppress. He noticed it, and his little pale eyes twinkled under their faded brows.

"Nervous?"

I laughed shortly. "Natural, isn't it? After getting a message like yours."

He smiled a bit grimly and sank into the chair opposite me. "I hope I haven't excited you unduly, Mr. Cavanaugh," he murmured, "but—in my mind at least—the discovery of which I spoke is quite well worth getting excited over." He leaned suddenly toward me, his eyes glowing with the light of a fanatic, his voice tense and vibrant. "One of the most important, I believe, if not *the* most important, in the history of scientific experimentation!"

I looked at him in astonishment. Odd old codger that he was, there was one thing of which Pichegru could never be accused, and that was overstatement.

"But I did not call you here tonight," he went on, his voice dropping back into its old dry rattle, "simply for the purpose of telling you about the discovery, but for a far more practical reason. The truth of the matter is, Mr. Cavanaugh, that the discovery is still in the experimental stage, and I intend to perform the final experiment, an extremely complex and delicate piece of work, tonight. For it I need an adept assistant."

I started to speak, but he interrupted me by raising his hand.

"Before you accept," he said, his voice growing very hard and cold. "it is only fair for me to warn you that such assistance will involve a consid-

erable amount of inconvenience, as well as—not a little danger.”

Danger! A delicious little thrill ran down my spine. You can not imagine how welcome a thrill can be to the dry and tedious humdrum of scientific life.

“I’m ready to start any time you are, Doctor,” I told him steadily.

He smiled delightedly. “Wonderful! You’ll never regret it, Cavanaugh. Tonight’s work, if all goes well, should not only bring us both to the peak of fame, but should also be the means of securing for us—I speak with assurance—untold amounts of wealth.” He paused, studying the effects of his words with his little glassy fish-eyes. “And now”—he drew his chair closer—“now for the discovery. I’ll boil it down as much as I can, so listen closely.

“It deals primarily with the formation of the brain.” Pichegru essayed a little amateurish puff at his cigar, blowing the smoke away quickly, as though it had burned him. “You remember, Cavanaugh, when you first took up the study of psychology in college, the brief dissertation we made upon the formation of the brain itself?”

I remembered, vaguely.

“It is composed, if you will recall, of various centers; for example, the two cerebral hemispheres at the top, the optic thalami, medulla oblongata, and so forth. Without going into details, the surface of the brain is filled with innumerable cells, called neurones, from which project threads of fibers known as axones. These axones project out for a distance of several feet through the body, and connect themselves with threads projecting from nerve cells in the different muscles, and so forth.

“The whole importance of my discovery lies in the fact that it refutes the belief held at present by scientists: namely, that the body can not live without the brain, nor the brain without the body. They can not do

so long, I admit; but for a short time, and under the right conditions, they are able to subsist separately.

“But I fear that you do not understand me,” he went on with a frown. “The whole gist of the matter is this: these axones, these threads that connect the brain with the body, can be severed, and the brain removed from the skull, and brain and body will go on living as before—provided, of course,” he added, “that both are under the influence of an anesthetic at the time, and that the severed ends of the axones are carefully covered.”

I saw, now, but it was with a keen sense of disappointment that I finally became aware of what he was saying. So this was his discovery! I had been expecting—I don’t know what, but certainly something more thrilling than this. This! What did it mean in my life, or in his, or in anyone else’s?

He must have divined my thoughts, or perhaps my face did not remain as impassive as I thought. At any rate, he arose, and, throwing aside his cigar butt, said brusksly: “Perhaps an example or two will serve to clarify my assertion, or at least heighten your interest in the matter. Come!”

HE LED the way to a door at the rear end of the hallway, down a long dark flight of stairs, and, unlocking a heavy door, passed into a huge, brightly lighted chamber, windowless, with cement floor, walls, and ceiling, and with a row of closely barred cages along the wall.

“I have here a number of rare and interesting specimens,” said he, nonchalantly. “For example, in this cage, to the left—no, this one, with the wire on top—see, a full-blooded Argive hen, which has held the world’s laying record for the last ten years.”

I looked through the wire netting, as he directed, and saw, crouched on a pile of straw in the corner of the cage, a great, beautiful, snow-white hen. She glared at us unblinkingly with her beady black eyes, her head sway-

ing to and fro with the monotonous regularity of a clock pendulum.

"Superb!" I ejaculated involuntarily.

"Aye, superb, without a doubt," agreed the psychologist somewhat dryly, "but do you notice anything strange about her?"

"Strange! N-no," I rejoined dubiously, "unless it is that singular swinging of her head, or the limp way she lies on the ground there, as though her legs were broken."

"Reach in and smooth her feathers," he suggested, unlocking the cage. "She likes that."

I did as he directed, but no sooner had my hand come within a foot or so of her than the swaying stopped, the eyes seemed to glow like twin points of fire, and a hiss, thin and faint, but unmistakable, issued from her throat. Then with the speed of lightning, the head darted up; the bill buried itself in my finger-tip. With a cry of pain and anger, and sundry remarks concerning the fowl's parents, lineage, past history, and general character, I withdrew my hand.

Pichegru had been chuckling to himself all the while, and now he burst into a hoarse cackle of mirth, which ceased, however, when he noted the furious expression on my face.

"There, there, Mr. Cavanaugh," he placated me. "At least you will admit that affairs are taking a more interesting turn. Turn your attention now to the adjacent cage, here: another very rare specimen, the bola-boi of the Malay peninsula, one of the most dangerous snakes in existence. Would you care to fondle it, my friend?"

I shuddered slightly at the sight of the occupant—a huge reptile with a thick, gaudily colored body and a wicked-looking, triangular-shaped head.

Smiling strangely, the doctor opened the cage door, and, reaching in, softly stroked the fearful head, rubbed his

fingers over the scaly, loathsome skin. And the snake lay perfectly quiet, emitting a strange clucking sound of content.

Utterly confounded, I stood between the two cages, looking dazedly from one to the other; now at the chicken that acted like a snake; now at the snake that acted like a chicken. What did it all mean? What—

"You understand, of course, how all this is achieved?" asked Pichegru, as he shut the door of the cage.

Dully I shook my head.

"Why, it's all very simple; just use your wits. I said before that the brain can exist without the body, and the body without the brain. At present the brain of the snake is existing in the body of the chicken, and vice versa."

"But how—"

"Very easily. See—first I split open the head of the chicken—after subjecting the bird to an anesthetic—and remove the brain. Delicate work, of course, but none the less possible. Then I do the same with the snake. Then, hurrying lest either body or either brain perish during the process, I insert the snake's brain into the chicken's skull, fastening the brain fibers of the snake to the muscle fibers of the chicken. I repeat the process with the snake's body and the chicken's brain, and the experiment is complete. On the one hand we have a snake, or rather a chicken, externally, but with the brain—and incidentally all the brain capabilities—habits, memory, instincts, emotions, and so forth—of a snake. And on the other hand, we have the exact opposite: a snake's body with a chicken's brain. Intricate, isn't it?"

I nodded uncomprehendingly. Here was a snake that was a chicken; here was a chicken that was a snake. But how could a snake be a snake and still be a chicken? . . .

Again Pichegru chimed in with my thoughts.

"I sometimes wonder," he mused softly, "just which is the chicken and which is the snake. Or whether either is each or each is either."

I swept my gaze over the remainder of the cages. There was a great eagle, barking and whining and trying to wag his feathered appendage. And there was the dog, squatted on his haunches, striving piteously to swing his forelegs out to his sides, and uttering long, shrill cries. There was—oh, why go on? It was all so grotesque, so fantastic, so *cruel*.

"Well!" snapped the doctor suddenly. "Enough of these trifles."

"Trifles?"

"Just that. Pawns in the game of life. They have served, I hope, to illustrate to you the background of my discovery. If so, they have served the purpose. And now let us turn our attention to a matter of vastly greater importance. Come!"

At the far end of the room was a heavy door, barred from the inside, and which, I thought at first, opened into an adjacent chamber. Dropping back the bolt, the doctor threw open the door, and stepped aside. Thinking that he wanted me to precede him, I went to step through the doorway, but found my progress arrested by a row of stout iron bars, about an inch in thickness. Beyond, all was darkness, and at first silence, though soon an audible rustling, and then a series of sharp, shrill, barking noises sent me shrinking back from the bars.

With a short laugh, Pichgru snapped a button near the door, flooding the place with light.

"Look closely, Mr. Cavanaugh!" he cried.

THE chamber was a small one, of sheer cement, with straw scattered about the floor. And in the center, deep eyes glowing from beneath heavy ridges, thin lips drawn back from great curved teeth in a ferocious snarl, stood the most awe-inspiring monster it had ever been my

lot to witness. I say "monster," for this is the first word that flashed into my mind as I saw it; but as the first shock passed away, I gradually became aware that it was a gorilla, a huge beast easily six feet in height, and with proportions so tremendous as to verge on the grotesque.

The light seemed to anger the beast. Throwing his head back, and clapping his heavy fist against his bare chest, he gave vent to a most terrific and ear-splitting roar, which fairly shook the solid floor beneath our feet.

"Quiet!" snapped the doctor, but his voice was drowned in the torrent of noise.

"Quiet!" he warned, seizing a long whip from the wall, and uncoiling it with a great snap. "Quiet, Gormaz!"

At the sight of the lash the beast cowered abruptly, and in an apparent agony of terror scampered over to the corner of his cell, where he made a vain effort to conceal himself under the straw, chittering all the while in a shrill, almost humanlike voice.

"What do you think of this little pet, Cavanaugh?" was the doctor's query as he fondled the tip of the lash.

"An awe-inspiring figure indeed, but he seems natural enough," I replied. "What's wrong with him?"

The doctor grinned.

"Nothing. He is a full-fledged gorilla from the jungle of central Africa; probably the largest in captivity."

"Intact in brain as well as body?"

"Quite intact."

I was puzzled. "Then what do you intend to do with him, if anything?"

He drew forth his watch. "I shall answer that question in precisely two minutes," he said deliberately.

His remark astonished me more than anything else; yet such was the effect of his stipulation that I had to pull out my own watch, and anxiously follow the passing seconds. At the end of two minutes he turned toward me again, and I noticed an odd smile on his lips.

"You are feeling quite all right,

Cavanaugh?" he inquired solicitously.

"Fit as a fiddle. Save for a little dizziness, perhaps," I added as an afterthought. For I was beginning to feel dizzy, though I considered it more due to the shocks of the last few minutes than anything else.

"Ah!" The doctor seemed pleased. "I thought it was about time."

"Time?"

"You are—ah!—I noticed with satisfaction the deep inhales which you took on the cigar I offered you earlier this evening. Yes, the cigar was doped, you know, with a narcotic which requires about fifteen minutes to take effect, but which is none the less extremely powerful. What, a yawn? Cavanaugh, your attitude is positively insulting. And another? Well, well, if you *must* sleep, I'll excuse you. But about that gorilla: I *do* intend to operate on him, by the way; yes, I propose to replace his brain by that of a human being, you know."

I could no longer see him, for his face, and the room, and the cages, and all, were whirling about at the most horrible and incredible speed; but I lunged at that hateful voice, that droned on and on. I seemed to miss, however, and to slip, and fall, down, down, down, into a void of utter blackness.

FOR interminable ages I was tossed about on the limitless bosom of a raging sea, where the waves were points of fire, spurting up fumes of choking smoke. Flames, which stood out blacker than the blackness itself, licked over my tortured body, tore at my throat, shot up my nostrils. Then suddenly I shot upward, whirling about, whirling, whirling, with a speed which dizzied me, sickened me, yet filled me with a strange sort of satisfaction. And gray demons rushed up out of the shadows, and seized me, and bore me on and on . . .

"Feeling better?" came a voice from the far heavens. And then I

heard a groan—a pitiful, heart-rending groan—another, and another. What poor being, I thought dreamily, was venting forth his heart and soul in such awful groans? And then I heard another, and felt an odd tingling in my throat and lips. Could the sounds be my own? I was filled with amazement by the thought.

"Feeling better?" repeated the voice, this time so close that I opened my eyes. For several moments I could see nothing; then gradually objects began to assume shapes and significance.

I was lying on some sort of a cot, or a table, rather, covered with soft white padding. Above me was a level expanse of frescoed ceiling. Slowly and painfully I slid my legs over the side of the table and pushed myself to a sitting position. For a time my head swam, and a sickening feeling prevailed around the pit of my stomach.

"Don't exert yourself, Cavanaugh," he admonished me casually; "you shouldn't try to smoke such strong cigars."

"Well, that was a pretty trick of yours, Pichegru!" I snapped angrily, forgetting the deferential "Doctor" as recollection of his artifice returned. "I thought that practical jokes were out of your line."

"Calm yourself, calm yourself, Cavanaugh," he soothed me. "I made it perfectly clear, earlier in the evening, that the task of assisting me in this great scientific enterprise would involve no small degree of danger and inconvenience."

I cleared my throat irritably. My voice was husky, and it was with the greatest difficulty that I could enunciate clearly.

"You didn't make it clear that I was to serve as a source of amusement to you by smoking a doped cigar! And what the devil good did that little stunt do your scientific enterprise, anyway?"

"An enormous amount of good.

Your assistance has been of the most indispensable nature, Mr. Cavanaugh, though rendered without your knowledge or consent. And as for the cigar; well, I regret the incident, but it really didn't do you any harm, did it?"

"Not much!" I replied with a groan. "Oh, my head!"

Gingerly I fingered my aching skull. And now a chill of horror shot down my spine like an electric shock. Running along the middle of my head, from the top of my forehead to the base of my skull, was a thin strip of adhesive tape. But it was not this as it encountered my finger-tips that so startled me, but the *hair* on each side of the bandage. My own had been long and black and wavy; this was a short, stubby growth like the bristling pelt of a prize-fighter.

With a puzzled frown, I dropped my hand, and as it passed before my eyes I received another shock, a far more poignant one this time. For my hand was a hand no longer, but a veritable paw, huge and hairy, with great, thick talons. My horror-stricken gaze wandered up my arm; it was long and thick, like a great log, and covered with heavy, dark-gray hair. In almost a frenzy of terror I glanced over the rest of my body, noted the great black chest, the swelling, hairy paunch beneath it; the bowed stubby legs; the hairy, handlike feet.

Small, icy hands were clutching at my throat as I raised my eyes to Pichegru. I could not speak a word.

The sardonic smile on his faunlike face deepened. "What is wrong, my dear Mr. Cavanaugh? Surely the brain is not displeased with its new habitation?"

My lips trembled to say the words which my heart dreaded to utter. Still smiling, he took me by the arm—the strange hairy arm—and led me, unresisting, to the far corner of the room, where stood a shining full-length mirror. "Calm, now!" said he, as he shoved me before it.

I looked in—oh, God! how can I express the horror of it all? There before me, my own reflection, mirrored in the shining glass, stood the great, hulking figure of a gorilla, scowling savagely at me with eyes deep-sunk beneath heavy ridges! I started back with a cry of terror.

"Easy, easy, Cavanaugh," he admonished in his dry, rasping voice at my side. "It is yourself, you know, no one but yourself."

With a snarl I turned on the author of my plight, my hands reaching instinctively for his throat. "You, you—dastardly——"

The smile vanished, his face turned a sickly green with fear, and he jerked an ugly automatic from his pocket. "Back! Back, I tell you!" he warned me.

Reluctantly I dropped my hands, but I felt satisfied, somewhat, in having frightened him. Gradually fear left his face, and he put up the automatic.

"Use a little reason, for the love of heaven, Cavanaugh," he cautioned me in a hollow voice. "Remember that the secret of your transformation is known to me alone; with my death passes your last chance of ever regaining your former shape."

I scarcely heard him, I was so sick at heart with the horror of it all. Oh, God! could it be—it *must* be a joke—that was it, just a joke, a hideous, monstrous joke my diseased frenzy was playing on my mind! For an instant I struggled to step before the mirror; but at length I turned away with a shudder; I could not view that hairy, inhuman face again, with its great tusks curving out under thin lips, and its scowling, bloodshot eyes.

I slumped down on the table, and with odd thrills of horror rubbed my great hairy hands over my great hairy body. Pichegru, smiling still the smile that was a sneer, sat down beside me.

"Don't take it so hard, Cavanaugh," he consoled. "Nothing really very

horrible has happened. You have simply been changed, for a short period, from a man into a gorilla. You should be grateful for the enormous strength and vitality which you possess in your present form. And it will not be difficult, when I have rested for a time, to restore your mind to its former beloved habitation."

I glanced up with a ray of hope.

"My—body——?"

"Is in perfect condition, and not at all displeased with its new master. Wait! I shall reassure you."

He arose and left the room.

IN A moment I heard the sound of shoes scraping down the passageway, and then, in through the door shuffled—myself! Shoulders hunched forward, arms swinging limply, legs bent awkwardly at the knees, eyes blinking dully in the bright light of the chamber, yet in all particulars the figure before me was my own! So here was I and there was I, and in the name of heaven which was I?

Now Pichegru pushed in behind. I noticed that he carried a whip in his hand.

"Into the corner, Gormaz!" he snapped, pointing with the whip, and my body scampered over submissively and lay down.

"You see," explained the psychologist, as he joined me, "as I had no desire to lose so useful a subject as Gormaz, and as I rather expected you would care to employ your body again at some future time, I united the two that they might keep each other alive."

"Pichegru!" I cried. "This joke has gone far enough! If it has served as a source of enjoyment to you, or of progress in your confounded scientific enterprise, well and good, but enough is enough. Restore me to my former condition!"

"Wait. There is plenty of time. First I have a proposition to make to you. I am the only person on earth,

you know, who can effect the retransformation which you desire."

"Do you suppose I am ignorant of that? And——"

"Wait. I am the only person who can perform the difficult task, and I shall do it, as you wish, but—*first*, you must do a little deed for my benefit."

"Name it, man!" I broke out in relief. "Name it, and it is done!"

He turned toward me, and never was there such a change in the face of a man. Gone were the dry, prim, ultra-prudish lines to which I had been accustomed; gone was the dull, thoughtful film which had covered his eyes. It was a very evil face which looked at me now.

"To put the matter briefly, then: You are possessed at present, by virtue of the operation which I have performed, of miraculous, of superhuman, strength and agility. These powers, which I have so magnanimously afforded you, I wish you to put into play for a short time in my interests, though the matter, I promise, will not prove entirely unremunerative."

He was silent a moment, drumming his fingers on the edge of the table. I said nothing. Soon he continued.

"You have seen the Godding mansion, at the other end of the town? Then you are, of course, familiar with its setting. It occupies an entire block, you know, and is built on the order of a mediæval castle, surrounded by a high piked wall. Watchmen patrol the place incessantly. Dogs are let loose within the grounds every night."

"Well?"

"At the southeastern corner of the mansion, high up on the top story, is a little stone chamber, with a little barred window and a heavy steel door. Within the room is a great steel safe. Within that safe is—one million dollars' worth of jewels!"

I sat in mute astonishment.

"The wall outside the window," he went on, "is sheer glazed stone; not

a foothold, not a handhold on it. But—and here is where you come in—about twenty feet from the wall grows a large tree, reaching up toward the window. You understand, now?”

Dumbly I shook my head. He frowned as if irritated.

“Well, then; listen. You are to climb that tree early in the evening, before the dogs are released. I shall divert the attention of the watchmen. Later, when all is dark, you will swing from the branches over to the barred window. It should be but the work of a moment for you to tear away the network of bars. Once inside, and with the combination of the safe, which I possess——”

I cried out in horror: “Pichegru—you—you damned fiend!”

His face turned livid with rage and disappointment.

“You refuse? You refuse, do you? Too damn moral and uppity to touch somebody else’s jack, are you? Why, you maudlin, little——”

He broke off, choking with anger.

“Then to hell with you!” he screamed with the voice of a madman. “Live on the way you are, then—be a gorilla the rest of your life! And as for this jabbering piece of dirt here——”

Blinded by fury, he struck out with his whip in the direction of my body. A red welt appeared across my forehead, blood trickled down my white cheeks; and I heard Gormaz shriek in pain. Again he swung the whip, and again the corded lash cut through my tender skin.

Now Gormaz could stand it no longer. Cowed as he was by years of submission to that cruel, powerful, snake-like thing, the excruciating agony of the welts on his strange sensitive hide screamed for revenge, threw him into sudden action. With a great roar he leaped at the throat of his tormentor. Coolly Pichegru reversed the lash and with a sickening thud the heavy butt crushed against Gormaz’s forehead.

The poor beast-man slumped down on the floor without a groan.

A snarl, curiously savage and animal-like, rumbling in my throat. You’ve seen a she-bear when she sees her cubs maltreated? Well, my own body was a great deal dearer to me than ever was a cub, animal or human, to its mother.

Pichegru turned around just in time to jerk his neck away from the great hairy fingers which wrenched at it. With a sudden scream of terror he sprang back until his shoulders touched the wall, at the same time jerking the automatic from his pocket.

“Back—back, you fool!” he squeaked like a cornered rat. “Back—Cavanaugh, be reasonable, you can’t—I’ll fill you full of lead, I tell you——”

What an awful laugh it was that welled from my lips! The doctor’s face turned sick with horror as he heard it. Slowly I advanced.

There was a report, like the pop of an uncorked bottle, and I felt hot liquid trickle down my side, and something tore a furrow along my sloping forehead. And still another and another and another. All bullets landed, yet I scarcely felt them.

Pichegru gave a gasping scream, and flung the empty gun at my face. But I caught it in the air and crushed it into a shapeless mass with my fingers.

“Cavanaugh!”

I shook the blood out of his eyes, and leered down at him.

“For the love of God, Cavanaugh!”

For an instant my hands paused before his throat. His eyes rolled, and he half slumped to his knees. “Remember——” was his last word, choked out by my ape hands as they closed about his throat.

SLOWLY and dazedly I sank into a chair; I felt strangely weak and listless. Before me, at my very feet, lay my body, its chalky white face spattered with blood. Gently I gath-

ered it into my great arms, stroked its blood-stiffened hair with my clawlike fingers, crooned to it tenderly, lovingly.

Suddenly a horrible thought cut at my heart. Trembling, I felt the slender wrist. Ah! the pulse was still beating, though feebly. There was still time—still time—if Pichegru would only—but where was Pichegru? Oh, yes, I had killed him; in my rage I had throttled him to death. He had gone to the land where they never see the sun.

“Remember,” had been his last word. “Remember;” yes, that was it. Remember—remember—*what?* Slowly the words trickled through the labyrinth of my memory:

“The secret of your transformation is known to me alone. With my death passes your last chance of ever regaining your former shape.”

Steadily the pulse-beat ebbed away beneath my finger-tips. At last it ceased altogether. Gormaz was dead, and with him had died my body—my beloved body. My last chance was gone. My part in the drama of life—as a human being, at least—was ended. The play was played out.

I shook my head dazedly, and suddenly my heart leaped with the thought that there was still a chance! My own body was dead—lost forever—but there were others. There were other surgeons than Pichegru, quite as brilliant as he; they could rediscover his secret; they could retrieve my brain from the hideous form in which it was encased and restore it again to a human shape. Any half-wit or madman or condemned criminal would do. The world would not miss *him*, and in me it would regain one in the prime of a busy, serving life. Could there be any hesitation?

I leaped to my feet. There was no time to be lost. I would call Von Sternen, the “wizard of European surgery.” He would understand; he would study the matter; he if anyone could save me. Of course it would

sound strange to him at first, and weird and impossible. But—who could doubt a gorilla that talked?

At the thought I burst out into a roar of laughter, then tore open the door and dashed up the stairway, my clawlike toes clicking against the polished wood. Up the hallway I ran, and through the brightly lighted sitting-room, and jerked the telephone receiver up to my ear.

“Number, please?” chimed the operator.

I started to speak, but suddenly my whole great form froze into the immobility of horror. From my throat came a series of sharp, shrill, barking sounds, like those of the brain-dead Gormaz. *I had lost the power of human speech!*

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THE gorilla surged against the bars of his cage, and roared out his great thunder-roar. The visitor, a pudgy little man with a pink little face, shrank back against the wall.

“Quiet!” shouted the guard, uncoiling his whip with a loud crack. “Quiet! Back there, Gormaz!”

Slowly the gorilla sank down on the straw, utter despair and hopelessness pictured on his hairy face, in his eyes the awful terror of a soul that has lost its way. The guard turned back to the little man.

“Vicious beggar, that,” he grunted, with a jerk of his head toward the cage. “Killed two men not mor’n a week ago. They’re going to shoot him, I hear.”

The pink-faced man gasped. “Killed—two men?”

“Uh-huh. A doctor and another man in town. They had him out in a private house—jolly fool thing to do anyhow—performing some sort of experiment on him. They must have gotten him mad in some way, because he slaughtered them both—throttled one and bashed the other’s skull in, I think. Then”—the guard laughed

harshly—"blimey if he didn't go to the telephone and try to call the police!"

The pink-faced man shook his head. "So they're going to shoot him?" he murmured, pressing a coin into the

guard's hand. "Almost human, isn't he?"

The guard stole a glance at the coin. "Yep," he agreed cheerfully, dropping it into his pocket, "almost human."