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FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.



**WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH**

# Escape from Tomorrow

By FRANK BELKNAP LONG, JR.

*A curious narrative of the world of the future, when Science has enslaved mankind—the story of an artificial brain that rebelled against this enslavement*

LIFE seemed suddenly very rich and rewarding to Jon Maal. He arose from smooth metal and threw open the window casement, and stared down at the gray Atlantic.

Far beneath him the sea heaved tumultuously. The rising sun was a great, dull disk bisected by a continuous stream of stratoplanes. Close to him in the shimmering, golden glow gulls wheeled and dipped, their wings skimming the waves.

The glandular injection didn't seem so horrible in that early morning glow. He bared his chest to the sea spume, pulling his spun glass sleeping-robe down over his shoulders, and inhaling deeply.

Today he would live. It was her eyes chiefly, but he liked her hair too, and the way she tingled when he kissed her.

He closed the window, crossed to the surgical pylon, and pulled out the hormone tray. The anterior lobe pituitary extract was slowing him up but he merely frowned slightly when the phial came into view.

Injecting the hormone was a matter of seconds. He bared his arm and plunged the hypodermic in remorselessly. His flesh tingled for an instant, but he was used to that.

He wondered if the extract would alter his expression before the Controllers decided that he had ceased to think anti-socially. Too much of it increased growth even in an adult, lengthened the long bones, coarsened the features. The Controllers had warned him against taking too

much. But they had also warned him that he must cease to think anti-socially.

He was still out of step. The Controllers had given him one month to snap back into line. He knew what was wrong with himself, because the ductless glands were his daily companions, and closer to him than breathing.

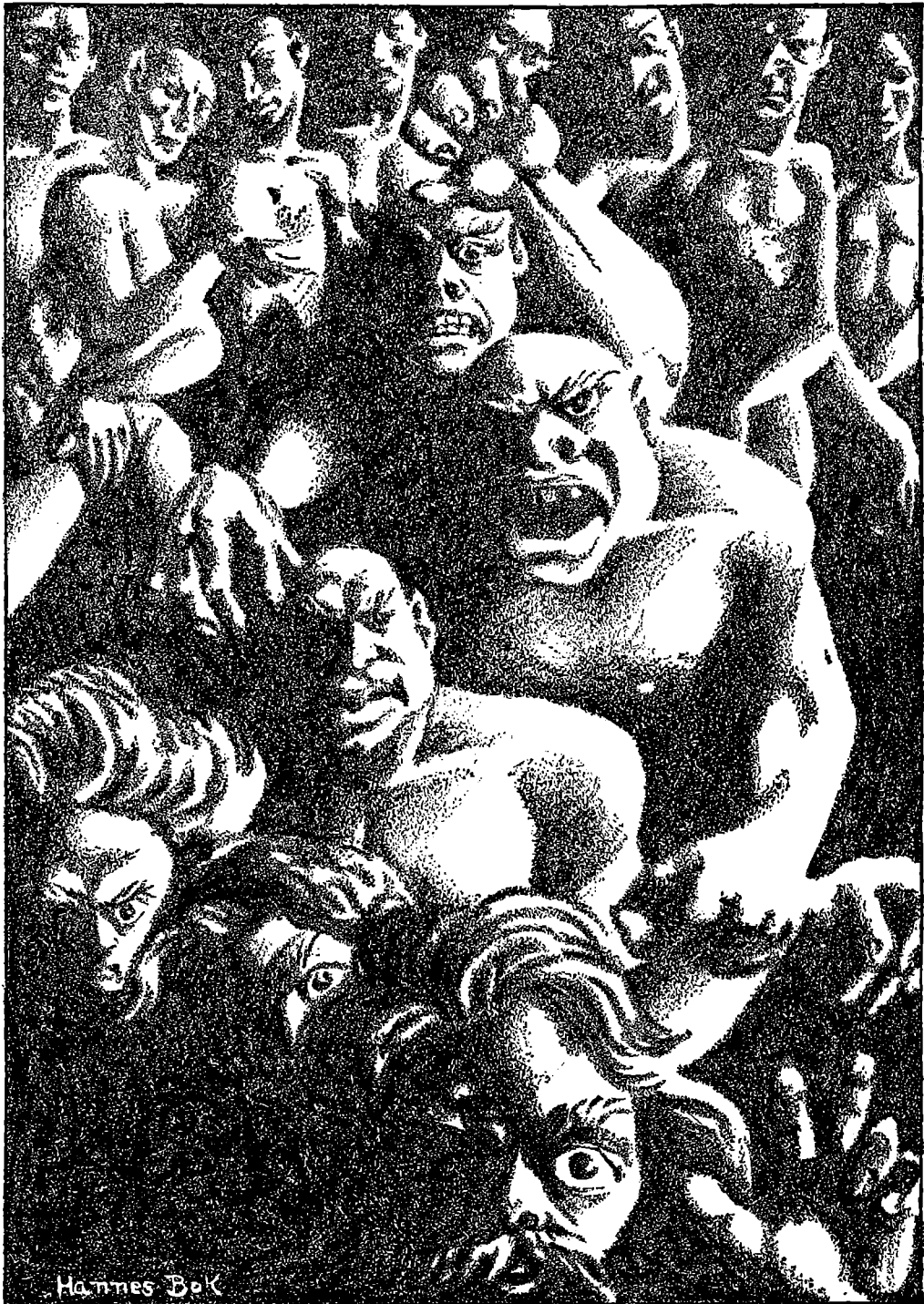
He had been correcting faulty glands for a decade. He didn't enjoy correcting other people's glands. But he had been conditioned from birth to experiment and speculate and brood over glands, and there was nothing he could do about it. In the fifth decade of the Twenty-ninth Century glandular correctionists were made, not born.

The anterior lobe pituitary hormone was the Great Inhibitor. It arrested the secretions of the other glands all over the human body. What he needed was something that would slow him up, and take new life out of him.

But somehow he didn't feel slowed up this morning. He felt wonderful. He shaved with the beard-dissolver jumping in his hand, the while he hummed irrelevantly.

Little snatches of song jiggled between his teeth:

"Oh, she'll rise in the morning,  
And swim with the mermen,  
And the sea-lions will tickle her toes;  
And at sundown we'll sit  
Till the lanterns are lit  
By a walrus with rings in his nose."



Hannes Bok

"Kill him! Kill him!" they howled.

No, he wasn't slowed up at all. He was still rebellious, defiant. Despite the Controllers, he would see her and talk to her, and interrupt her work in the middle of the morning—a damnable thing to do, considering. The micro-biological slides were draining the color from her cheeks, but it was terribly important work and she was behind schedule already. The report on those filtrable viruses—

Oh, to perdition with all that! She was a woman and he was a man, and biology could wait.

Shaved, dressed, a windflower gleaming in his tunic, he crossed his retreat cell and threw open the casement again.

THE little solo stratoplane was already occupied. As he gazed down at the ledge which supported it a smile twisted his thinnish lips. A huge, gray-black gull was perched above the pilot chamber, its wings fluttering as it stared through drenching spray toward the rotor-blade at the stern of the little vessel.

It ascended with a flapping of wings as soon as Maal descended. He inhaled the salt air with zest, adjusted his flying-goggles and climbed into the glass-encased cockpit.

The little vessel left the slide in a slow glide, rose steadily above the gray, wind-tossed sea and headed in to the east.

An hour later the coastline of Europe emerged from the thin mist of the upper atmosphere, revealing itself to Maal as a wavering thread of darkness unraveling in the dawn. The British Isles were microscopically visible to the west of the thread, but the continent itself was obscured by a tenuous haze.

Maal followed the coast southward, descending to six thousand feet as he crossed the Pyrenees and zoomed inland over the plains of central Spain.

The plains were dotted with the circular black domes of the research cities. In

thick clusters they nestled at the base of purple mountains, and marched in solitary splendor across wide wastes of gleaming sand.

Squatter, more massive than the other tower cities was the edifice toward which he flew, the bright sunlight of the Sierra Morena foothills gleaming on the little vessel's slanting wings, and dripping from its rotor-blades in glittering gobs.

He flew low over the Guadalquivir River, and descended in a slow arc toward the mile-high summit of that somber edifice of science.

It rose solidly from the site of the old Spanish city of Seville, a tiered and ebon meniscus of dome-capped research blocks dedicated to all the natural sciences—biology, anthropology, physics, astrophysics, bio-chemistry, and the more specialized branches of medical research — homotherapy, chemic-psychology.

From low-hanging cirrus clouds the stratoplane descended and settled to rest at the summit of the dome, its rotor-blades gently humming.

Bright motes were dancing before Maal's eyes when he climbed from the little vessel and strode across the dome-bisecting skyport to the massive roof of the upper-level pneumatic drop. He swung low under the roof, holding tightly to a gleaming descent rail until converging air currents sucked him into the depths of the drop. He descended a thousand feet, the vortex swirling him about, and retarding the acceleration at half-second intervals. His heart was thudding like a trip-hammer when he emerged on the biological research level.

He came out on a recreation platform between the clustering cells of the research workers and stared about him, his tall, lean-fleshed body aureoled in cold light.

The platform was crowded. Standing, sitting and lying at full length on smooth

metal were eight men and two women. They looked horribly done up. They were blinking up at the cold light lamps, their faces greenish in the diffuse radiance which poured down from above. Two of the men were sipping menfaline, a dangerous and oppressive drug which silenced screaming nerves. One of the women was playing cribbage with a young lad whose pinched, prematurely aged countenance hinted at sleepless nights and microbe-haunted days.

The other woman was resting on her side at the edge of the platform. She looked repellently like a mummy. Her incredibly aged face was shriveled and cadaverous, her flesh the color of bees-wax.

It was tragic. It was superb—the quiet courage of those relaxing men and women, expending their energies in ceaseless toil, sacrificing the greatness of the world for the greatness of science; sacrificing love and rapture, sunsets, music, moonlight and roses and the serenities of old age; sacrificing—

They had leaped up and were crowding about him. They were all speaking at once, as though his mere presence had unleashed whirlwinds of discourse.

Actually he could have been any privileged outsider. They were simply seeking to relieve pent-up emotions by sharing them with an outsider whom they respected and admired, a privileged glandular correctionist from America who was trusted by the Controllers, who could fly about at will.

"Maal, the thought-plasm has spoken. It has spoken eight words. They have transferred it to Allelan's cell. They wish her to devote all her time to it. Think of it, Maal, the plasm has parroted human speech."

The young lad with the pinched face was tugging at his sleeve. "Maal, they think it is a reflex. The words it uttered were Allelan's words, distorted, but dis-

torted queerly. Allelan asked a question and it replied in the affirmative.

The old woman shrilled: "It thinks. We know it thinks. Why should it not utter intelligent words?"

Maal stared at them aghast. "You mean she has ceased to work on the viruses?"

One of the older men laughed. "Viruses! What do viruses matter? Allelan is a woman of genius. Why shouldn't she study the most complex example of synthetic life-plasm ever created? It won't harm her. After all, Maal, it is encased in glass, it breathes through a respirator and without the aid of a vocalator it could not speak. Not even eight little words, Maal. Eight words—a reflex."

"I do not believe it is a reflex," insisted the aged woman.

**M**AAL did not dispute the point. He has seen the plasm in its incipiency—a loathsome, gelatinous blob, with a hideous sentience which had chilled him to the marrow of his bones.

But what of that? It was not a horror that could grow indefinitely, like a synthetic ameba, or the chicken hearts which the barbarian science-groppers of the remote Twentieth Century grew with childish impudence in sticky culture mediums.

Why did the thought of his dear one in proximity to that utterly harmless mass of veined jelly chill and appall him? Because the electrical content of that mass exceeded the electrical content of a human brain? Because it *was* a brain, of a sort?

Rubbish! Damn intuitions—damn all elusive, mystical-primitive feelings that created bogies out of thin air!

He said: "I'm sorry she isn't out here with you. Can't you compel her to rest?"

The young lad said: "Go in and talk to her, Maal. She will listen to you."

The woman at the cribbage board smiled. "If she would dance for ten minutes to a corybantic rhythm she would re-

turn refreshed to her work. But she is terribly stubborn, Maal."

Maal nodded grimly, crossed the recreation platform and entered the white, circular cell of the woman who would not rest.

She did not hear him enter. She was bending above the glass-encased thought-plasm, her coppery hair disheveled, her bosom swiftly rising and falling in the cold light.

Excitement became her. Her face, with its flushed capillaries and racial norm features, was biologically glorious. Swiftly Maal crossed to her side, and caught her in his arms. He clasped her tightly, kissed her till she tingled. He could feel the tingling vibrations of her body in his arms.

Breathlessly she struggled, protested: "Maal, darling, all this is so demoralizing. If you wish to make love to me the Controllers will see that you get a psychiatric adviser."

Maal threw back his head and laughed. "I do not wish to be stared at when I kiss you," he said.

"But surely, dear, you wish to be advised! You are behaving like a savage. We all must regress occasionally, because there are steamy jungles in our minds. But unless we are advised when we make love, the pleasure-impulse will—well, undo years of conditioning. Oh, Maal, Maal, what is wrong with you?"

Her vehemence abashed him. He released her and frowned. "I do not know, Allelan. I feel at times like a man of the Twenty-first Century."

"Oh, Maal, how shameless! To want to love *one* woman always, and secretly——"

"Allelan, I am mad, I know. But I would like to——"

"Yes, Maal?"

"To carry you in my arms to some cave on a high, purple mountain, to smother you with kisses beneath the eternal snows."

A tinkling voice said: "Well, why don't you? What's stopping you?"

All the color drained from Maal's face. He swung about, gasping.

The thought-plasm was tremulously in motion. It was twisting about and pulsing violently in its conical container. It looked exactly like an immense black leech clinging to wet glass, its flattish bulk surmounted by thin, nourishment-supplying tubes which arched above it like the coils of a hydra. Both the container itself and the sturdy pylon which supported it were vibrating in harmony with the plasm's feverish throbbings. From the vocalator at the summit of the case a voice rose, tinkling, derisive.

"You do not wish to be stared at! Why, I was closer to you than breathing. I was sharing your thoughts when you kissed her. From your mind alone I have built up a complete picture of the external world."

Maal was staring in horror at the encased plasm. "You mean you are aware of *all* my thoughts?"

"Of course. Wretched thoughts they are, too."

"Then you have telepathic powers?"

"Whoever made me was no slouch," said the plasm. "I have absorbed and correlated all of your cerebral concepts, your memories and desires. Your brain is a cracked, distorted mirror, but it reflects reality in wavering fragments."

Allelan spoke then, her voice tremulous with excitement. "You probed both our minds?"

"Naturally. By correlating the contents of both your minds I have built up a satisfying picture of reality."

"A *complete* picture?"

"Reasonably complete. There are a few gaps, of course, but I have bridged them by deductions of my own."

"But Maal just entered the cell. How could you, so quickly?"

"It was not quickly for me," said the plasm. "I have aged a hundred years since you spoke to me."

"A hundred years of *our* time?"

"Yes."

"But you are here with us on Earth. You are protoplasmic. How could you escape from our time?"

"You would have to be very astute mathematically to grasp the technical aspects of *that*," said the plasm. "But roughly and loosely speaking, I escape by telescoping the small portion of the space-time continuum which contains me."

"But how, how——"

"By rhythm. My electro-dynamic content is so tremendous it telescopes space-time."

The thought-plasm shuddered violently. "Now I am suffering pain. I am telescoping time too rapidly, thinking too rapidly——"

It was silent an instant, then shrielled. "Oh, how ugly you are!"

ALLELAN turned pale. "Ugly—I?"  
"I do not mean physically. The men of your race would think you attractive. You are ugly because you are a slave."

The girl drew herself up. Her eyes flashed angrily. "I am not a slave," she said. "I labor unselfishly to glorify Science and the Scientific World State."

The plasm said: "You are putting the cart before the horse. Science should glorify *you*."

Maal's lips were white. He was trembling uncontrollably. He almost screamed at the encased plasm: "The Controllers would instantly destroy a man holding such views."

The plasm said: "Possibly. But they will not destroy me. I am too costly an experiment."

Allelan said: "You despise Science, then?"

"On the contrary," said the plasm. "I

believe that Science is the hope of your world. It's just that you've let it get into the hands of the wrong people. The dull, stupid, beauty-hating people. The dry-as-dust people and not—well, poets, artists, dancers, lovers."

Maal had the uncanny feeling that the brain was staring at him. Its flat, eyeless bulk seemed somehow visually aware of him. He had never experienced anything more disturbing, more terrifying, than that eyeless stare.

"Look at you," said the plasm. "You were an amazing infant, a wonderful child. You were infinitely more sensitive and imaginative than the average run of bipedal brats. You loved the world and everything in it. You had the insatiable, gnawing curiosity, the terrific emotional drive of a great lover of life."

"But the Controllers enslaved you. They made you ashamed of beauty, ashamed of yourself. Being dull, stern, pleasure-hating men and women, they conditioned your reflexes until you were made to feel that Science was an end in itself. You were made to feel that stern renunciation was more desirable than the enrichment of human life through avenues of shared ecstasy and creative leisure."

"Yet despite the Controllers, despite thirty years of joyless toil, the pleasure impulse still torments you. You still secretly desire—oh, maddeningly—to whisper in a woman's ear that she is beautiful."

"I can tap all of your escape-memories, Jon Maal. A few hours ago you were staring at the sea and envying—the gulls. You wanted to skim the waves. You wanted to wheel and dip and ascend fearlessly toward the blazing sun."

"You were stirred to the depths of your being by the sea, Jon Maal. The sea stirs something mysterious, glorious in all men, perhaps because all life came out of the sea. To love the sea is to love life. To hate the sea is to be—less wise than an

amphibian. Why don't you wake up, Jon Maal? Escape to the Everest Colony before the Controllars destroy you."

The plasm paused an instant, then resumed: "They are compelling you to destroy yourself with injections, Jon Maal. They think you are merely a little off balance. They do not know that your adrenal cortex has rebelled completely. It is pouring fiery hormones into your bloodstream.

"If you attempt to inhibit drastically that great Gland of Life you will become an acromegaliac idiot. Your hypophysis cerebri will swell to the size of an egg. Your features will coarsen and you will drool like a schizophrene."

Suddenly the voice seemed to be laughing, to be jeering at Maal. "I can see that you do not believe me. The Controllars will be angry if you do not examine the cretins this morning. You have so much work to do—before idiocy claims you. Go, Jon Maal. Live and die a coward."

Maal's face was livid. He was struggling with a fury such as he had never known. He wanted to smash the container; to seize the gelatinous, dark plasm and twist it to death.

Allelan perceived his agitation. She took his arm, and drew him firmly toward the doorway of the cell.

Maal's face reflected torment, rage, uncertainty, despair. He was reluctant to leave the girl alone with that sinister mass of synthetic jelly. A thought-plasm that sneered at sacred things, that respected neither the Controllars nor the inviolacy of conditioned feelings, was surely a fearful menace to a young and inexperienced girl. It could instil into her mind poisonous heresies and tempt her to renounce hardship and the scoured bowl, toil for toil's sake, hatred of pleasure, hatred of joy.

He had tempted her himself, wildly, recklessly, in a moment of folly. But the plasm was poisonously persuasive. Its

specious reasoning was as corruptive as a sunset, or a woman's smile. He hated it, hated it. It had torn veils from his soul, bared his inmost thoughts.

Suddenly he knew what he must do. He must plunge into work to regain his self-respect, to cover up his shame. He dared not meet Allelan's eyes. He was unworthy of her, unworthy of himself. With a sob he turned and stumbled from the cell.

THE men and women on the recreation platform stared at him with startled eyes as he tottered toward the pneumatic drop, the young lad calling after him:

"Why the hurry, Maal? Didn't you like the plasm?"

The old woman shrieked: "Was it a reflex, Maal?"

He turned on the edge of the drop, and stood facing them, his eyes tormented, his pale features glimmering in the cold light. "No, it wasn't a reflex. The plasm is more intelligent than you dream. A great, wonderful, synthetic plasm has been created at last. But it is as alien, as hostile to us as red Betelgeuse. Watch Allelan, guard her from harm."

There was a sudden rush of wildly excited research workers in the direction of Allelan's cell. Maal did not wait for them to disappear into the cell. He swung himself into the drop and was carried swiftly downward, his lean-fleshed body revolving slowly in the swirl of the traveling vortex in the depths of the shaft.

He emerged on the endocrinopathic research level two thousand feet below, and stood blinking at the long cretin block, the little circular cells of the thymus infantiles, the flat oblong which housed the acromegaliacs, and the mottled, dome-like huts of the suprarenal virilists.

The long recreation platform between the cells and the cretin block was filled



with exhausted men and women. Maal advanced swiftly between them, his face grim, his mind intent on his task at last.

He ignored enervated greetings, feeble exclamations of praise. He was the foremost living correctionist. His fame was world-wide, but here it was concentrated in a white blaze that haloed him as he walked. But the people on the recreation platform were too tired, too horribly tired, to do more than salute that blaze and mutter feebly that Jon Maal was great indeed. Some day he would become a Controller—if only his own glands did not betray him. There were a few disturbing rumors, hints that he had surrendered, surreptitiously, to joy. But surely he was competent to cure himself.

When he entered the cretin block he was surprised to observe that all the cretins were running wildly about, their little, stunted bodies quivering with rage.

They were usually sluggish, apathetic, semi-somnolent. With horror he advanced between the struggling, short-armed, thick-tongued little men and stood staring down at the object which had inspired their rage.

His flesh congealed. Lying on the sloping metal floor of the cretin pen was Russian Ange, Maal's co-worker and friend. The young endocrinologist had been beaten, clawed and trampled into insensibility. The infuriated cretins had torn off his laboratory smock and attacked him with their nails. His body was pouring a red flood on the pale, shimmering floor. Several of the cretins were still savagely clinging to him, clawing and kicking in feral rage.

Utter horror engulfed Maal as he stared. He bent, seized one of the little monstrosities by the nape of its neck and lifted it into the air.

Instantly the cretin snarled and glared at him, the doughy flesh of its cheeks quivering with rage, its little slitted eyes malevolently agleam.

"I hate you, Jon Maal. You made me what I am. When I was a helpless infant you took me from the warm, protective embrace of the Birth Machine. You dissected out my thyroid gland. You removed the right lobe, sutured the isthmus, and sliced off the superficial layers of the capsule. You warped my growth."

So profound was Maal's amazement and horror that he forgot for an instant his stricken friend, and the infuriated children surrounding him. The little, squirming monstrosity had the brain of an eight-year-old child. It was almost an idiot—a half-witted stammerer of simple nouns and adjectives. Yet now it was spewing forth resentment with the verbal competence of an adult!

With an effort he shook off his horror, dropped the little, writhing monster, and fell to his knees beside his prostrate friend. On all sides of him the cretins were prancing, shrieking, their short, malformed limbs writhing repulsively in the cold light.

"He is guilty too!"

"Yes, yes, he is guilty!"

"He took us from the Birth Machine. He warped our minds. We are laboratory freaks, experimental child-men."

"He is helpless now, completely at our mercy. Drag him down, kill him."

"Wait, wait, wait. He is the Law. He is the Ringer of the Bell."

"Kill him, kill him."

"No, wait. The Bell is our life. Without it we would be lost in the terrible dark."

The little monsters fell suddenly to wrangling and disputing amongst themselves.

They bared their teeth at one another, and circled menacingly about.

**M**AAL leapt swiftly to his feet. He was appallingly aware that his power over them was waning. But they were reluctant to attack him because they asso-

ciated that power with an immense, impersonal force.

The great conditioning-bell brought them light and security and warmth. When it rang out sonorously they were stirred to the depths of their beings.

Swiftly Maal retreated across the pen, between menacing, swarming baroques scarcely larger than five-year-old children. Out on the recreation platform he staggered, white-faced, trembling, and moved along the outer wall of the block toward the ten-foot bell.

The bell stood on a massive pedestal between the cretin pen and the circular huts of the thymus infantiles. He was within twenty feet of it when he saw *the others*.

They had flocked from their cells and circular domes, and were converging menacingly on the startled research workers.

In horror Maal stopped in his tracks and stared straight before him. Moving across the recreation platform were creatures so monstrously deformed that they seemed like the conjurations of some bad brain. Stooped and glary-eyed acromegaliacs with ape-like jaws and bushy eyebrows, their spade-like hands outspread in quivering rage. Virile infants two feet tall, with reddish beards descending to their navels, their lantern-jawed faces distorted with hate. Frail, thymus-activated adults looking like lean hairless vampires in the cold light, their teeth bared as they advanced with infantile toddlings across the platform.

The air was filled with bestial grunts, screams and imprecations.

"We could have been normal too! But they distorted us from birth."

"Let us kill, kill, kill!"

"They wanted to observe and study us. When you hear the bell it will be—time to sleep and dream. Oh, merciful Mother Machine, what have they done to us?"

"I am four years old. I have the mind and strength of a man. They stimulated

my adrenal cortex. I am a little, strong man. A *little* man. Can they fathom the depths of my despair? No woman would even look at me. I am eighteen inches tall and never, never, never may I know the wondrous solace of a woman's arms about me."

"Kill, kill, let us destroy the destroyers! I am an ape. Look at me. I am not human at all. My hands are padded, my jaw protrudes. My ears are hideously hypertrophied; my lips swollen. Oh, how I envy you, little man! I am not even human."

"Kill, kill, kill!"

Maal swayed backward against the great bell in blind terror. Instinctively his hands grasped the striker, and swung it with vigor, released it, swung it again.

Bong, bong, bong.

Bong, bong, bong.

The effect of that sudden, sonorous tolling was cataclysmic. The glandular monstrosities stiffened, swayed and groveled. All over the platform they went rigid, sinking to their knees or flattening themselves in attitudes of abject submission.

The rage and hate seeped from their features. They moaned blissfully and wept.

"Oh, sweet Bell, dear Bell, bringer of repose."

"We kneel before you, oh Bell, for you are all-powerful, all-merciful."

"When you ring, oh Bell, my hunger is satisfied. You bring peace and light."

"The darkness dissolves when you ring, oh Bell."

Maal swayed a little when he released the striker. He raised his hand, wiped sweat from his brow. He had never known the great bell to fail.

The glandular baroques had been conditioned from birth to respond submissively to its sonorous tolling. Every pleasure, every gratification had been accompanied by a tolling of that bell; from birth—every fugitive joy. And now the bell

alone sufficed. External gratifications were no longer necessary. The bell itself was food and drink, warmth and shelter, joy and peace.

It soothed them, calmed them, put them to sleep. It brought satiety and blissful dreams. They worshipped it. It was the only god they knew.

Yet Maal had had misgivings this time. Some terrible, obscure force was at work. The cretins had been animated by an intelligence greater than their own. They had been whipped into a rebellious frenzy by something—suddenly Maal paled—by some great, disembodied intelligence that could roam about at will!

Maal did not stop to reassure the still terrified research workers. He simply turned and ran toward the pneumatic drop, shouting frantic warnings as he approached the edge of the platform.

"Keep ringing the bell! They may awake again. Get Russan out of the cretin pen, quickly!"

He swung himself into the descent shaft and embraced the vortex. He dropped a thousand feet, hurtled through a horizontal transfer tube, and ascended through the central pneumatic lift to the micro-biological level, his face losing its paleness as the vortex spun him about.

**H**IS temples were pounding furiously when he emerged from the lift and raced across the recreation platform toward Allelan's cell. His one thought was to destroy the plasm; to smash the container and crush the loathsome jelly before it sent its mind on a longer journey, disrupting, destroying civilization itself.

He entered the cell with that one thought needling and puckering his brain to a focus of blind, insensate rage. For a second his fury dizzied him, misting his vision. He stood swaying in the doorway, aware only of a slender, white form whirling about in the center of the cell.

Suddenly his vision cleared and he sucked in a long, shuddering breath. The whirling figure was Allelan. *Allelan was dancing.* She was gyrating about on her toes, her pale arms upraised in rapture, her long, rust-colored hair sheening in the cold light.

From the vocalator came a tinkling, apologetic voice. "Maal, I am sorry that the cretins attacked you. My hatred of your wretched civilization was so intense that my thoughts flowed out from me in concentric waves—thoughts laden with furious indignation. The cretins and the other poor glandular cripples were stirred by my thoughts. Deep within their minds there is a center of awareness that is wiser than you dream.

"Even idiots are subconsciously wise, Maal. I could not help my thoughts flowing out."

"You could not help——"

"Steady, Maal. I know what you are thinking. I will influence your minds too—the minds of all 'normal' men and women. Well, I have done so a little. I have released Allelan from bondage. She was so near to me that I could break down her resistance swiftly.

"She now hates everything that I hate—ugliness, cruelty, contempt for joy. Unceasing toil, and needless self-denial. The immense cruelty of scientific techniques perversely used to throttle joy, and crush the human spirit.

"And she loves—music and laughter, compassion and joy, all the great beauty of the world, Maal, the wheeling majesty of the stars. She loves Science, Maal—true Science, which is another name for passionate curiosity, for infinite wonder and surmise.

"Are you familiar with the ancient poets, Maal? A lonely boy who lived far back in the Nineteenth Century, an idle, foolish dreamer whose name I have forgotten once wrote:

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken;  
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes  
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men  
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

"That's true science, Maal. That's what Allelan is experiencing now."

Allelan stopped dancing suddenly. She stared at Maal wide-eyed, her hand going to her throat.

Maal groaned: "Allelan, are you mad?"

"No, not mad," said the plasm. "Sane at last. Gloriously, deliriously sane. I could make you sane too, Maal. If only I had time——"

Allelan spoke then. Her voice was tremulous with compassion. "It is dying, Jon."

The plasm said: "Yes, I am dying. I have telescoped time too rapidly. Immense, terrible rhythms are tearing me apart."

Suddenly Maal was aware of the plasm's eyeless gaze upon him. "Perhaps I *shall* have time, Maal. You are stubborn and strong-willed, and a fool. But for Allelan's sake I will try to free you."

Too late Maal attempted to tear his gaze from the violently quivering plasm. He felt a lightness, a giddiness sweeping over him. The walls of the cell seemed to quiver and expand. The cold lights were altering too, coalescing into bands of glimmering whiteness which widened and widened until they filled all space about him.

It seemed to him that the very floor was dissolving, dwindling away beneath his feet. Awfully for a moment he seemed to be standing on empty air, amidst blinding shafts of light that continued to widen about him.

Someone was tugging at his arm. "Jon, Jon, wake up. The plasm is dead. It exploded, shattering the glass."

Maal stared dully. "Allelan? Allelan?"

"Yes, dear. Allelan."

The floor was returning. He could feel the cold metal against his soles. The bands of light were splitting into luminous segments, were receding in globular clusters across the cell.

"Allelan?"

"Yes, dear."

"It seems to me that I have been living in darkness, underground, far underground. A mummy, Allelan. Shriveled, bent, crippled with toil."

"I know, Jon. And now you want to sing and dance. It changed me swiftly like that too."

"Allelan, the Everest colony! The eternal snows. We thought them mad. We let them go because we thought them mad criminals."

"I know, dear."

"They were men and women of heroic mold."

Allelan nodded, her eyes glowing. Rapturously to her inward gaze there arose a vision of golden domes and purple vineyards. She saw the stratoplanes descending, the mists on the mountainside, the tiered streets of a populous city thronged with men and women who had sought refuge from tyranny beneath the eternal summit of Earth's highest peak.

"We shall join them, Allelan."

Suddenly he was moving toward her. His arm went out and encircled her waist. Hesitantly at first and then with utter recklessness they began to dance.

Breast to breast they waltzed about, under lights that glimmered softly—cheek to cheek and breast to breast, their eyes shining with happiness at last.