

UNKNOWN

FEB. '42

25¢ FEB • 1942

FANTASY FICTION

Worlds

THE UNDESIRE PRINCESS . . . by L. Sprague de Camp

She was Good, Beautiful, and Intelligent—as all good princesses should be. But because she was a princess of a world of Aristotelian logic, where a thing is either 100% true or 100% false—she gave the hero a severe case of inferiority complex. When she was good and intelligent, she was most frightfully good and most frighteningly intelligent—



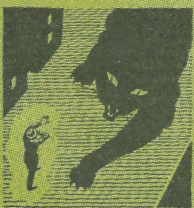
DESIGN FOR DREAMING . by Henry Kuttner

Concerning the Hollywood script writer who, seeking a vacation, got mixed up in his destinations. Instead of the Elysian Fields, he wound up in what was practically—for him at least—Hell. He got into the dimension of the dream-script writers, writing scenarios for all the world's dreamers—



ETAOIN SHRDLU by Fredric Brown

The little man from Somewhere wanted to use a linotype machine for a little while—just long enough to set up certain special characters. But when he'd finished setting that up—the linotype had a will of its own, an unstoppable, terrific urge to set type endlessly—



HE DIDN'T LIKE CATS . by L. Ron Hubbard

The small man had one large aversion—cats. A mousy little fellow ordinarily, with a thorough and vicious pleasure he murdered one large and ownerless alley cat. The cat, however, came back; it came back that night with an unfair advantage.

U N K N O W N W O R L D S

Contents for February, 1942, Vol. V, No. 5

John W. Campbell, Jr., Editor, Catherine Tarrant, Asst. Ed.

Novel

- THE UNDESIRE PRINCESS** **L. Sprague de Camp 7**
Being a fable of a world where things were so, or not so—and never,
never merely mostly so.

Novelette

- DESIGN FOR DREAMING** **Henry Kuttner 113**
The Hollywood script writer wanted a vacation in the Elysian Fields
—but the magician was a sloppy workman. He landed in the world
where dreams were designed—

Short Stories

- ETAOIN SHRDLU** **Fredric Brown 67**
The Little Man With The Pimple wanted to set a formula on a Lino-
type. Thereafter the Linotype machine had a life—and a will!—of
its own.

- THE SHOES** **Robert Bloch 78**
Concerning a gentleman who got into the bad habit of cutting his
own throat and getting people to murder him—

- HE DIDN'T LIKE CATS** **L. Ron Hubbard 83**
To be killed in a dream is harmless, of course. To be killed by a
cat in a dream is harmless. But the real thing may be preferable—

- THE REFUGEES** **Frank Belknap Long 92**
Some of the refugees that leave Europe's turmoil don't need pass-
ports—and can prove it!

- THE SUNKEN LAND** **Fritz Leiber, Jr. 97**
The Sunken Land was an old myth even in that long-forgotten world.
But a madman insisted on visiting it—which was madder even than
such as he might conceive—


- IN HIS OWN IMAGE** **Malcolm Jameson 106**
The idol was stolen, beyond doubt. But no natives pursued, no
priests tracked down the captain. They knew their godling—

Readers' Department

- Book Review** **112**

Illustrations by: Cartier, M. Isip, Kramer and Orban

NEXT ISSUE
ON SALE
FEB. 27th
25c PER COPY



Printed in the U.S.A.

* Bimonthly publication issued by Street & Smith Publications, Incorporated, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Allen L. Grammer, President; Henry W. Raiston, Vice President; Gerald M. Smith, Secretary and Treasurer. Copyright, 1941, in U. S. A. and Great Britain by Street & Smith Publications, Inc. The editorial contents of this magazine have not been published before, are protected by copyright and cannot be reprinted without the publisher's permission. All stories in this magazine are fiction. No actual persons are designated either by name or character. Any similarity is coincidental. We cannot accept responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts or artwork. Any material submitted must include return postage.

STREET & SMITH PUBLICATIONS, INC. • 79 SEVENTH AVE., NEW YORK



ETAOIN SHRDLU

By Fredric Brown

● The little gentleman from Somewhere wanted to set a special piece of work on the Linotype machine. The machine was never the same afterward. It would work by itself. More, it demanded work—more work—

Illustrated by Orban

It was rather funny for a while, the business about Ronson's Linotype. But it began to get a bit too sticky for comfort well before the end. And despite the fact that Ronson came out ahead on the deal, I'd have never sent him the little guy with the pimple, if I'd guessed what was going to happen. Fabulous profits or not, poor Ronson got too many gray hairs out of it.

"You're Mr. Walter Merold?" asked the little guy with the pimple. He'd called at the desk of

the hotel where I live, and I'd told them to send him on up.

I admitted my identity, and he said, "Glad to know you, Mr. Merold. I'm—" and he gave me his name, but I can't remember now what it was. I'm usually good at remembering names.

I told him I was delighted to meet him and what did he want, and he started to tell me. I interrupted him before he got very far, though.

"Somebody gave you a wrong steer," I told him.

"Yes, I've been a printing technician, but I'm retired. Anyway, do you know that the cost of getting special Linotype mats cut would be awfully high? If it's only one page you want printed with those special characters, you'd do a lot better to have somebody hand-letter it for you and then get a photographic reproduction in zinc."

"But that wouldn't do, Mr. Merold. Not at all. You see, the thing is a secret. Those I represent — But skip that. Anyway, I daren't let anyone see it, as they would have to to make a zinc."

Just another nut, I thought, and looked at him closely.

He didn't look nutty. He was rather ordinary-looking on the whole, although he had a foreign—rather an Asiatic—look about him, somehow, despite the fact that he was blond and fair-skinned. And he had a pimple on his forehead, in dead center just above the bridge of the nose. You've seen ones like it on statues of Buddha, and Orientals call it the pimple of wisdom and it's something special.

I shrugged my shoulders. "Well," I pointed out, "you can't have the matrices cut for Linotype work without letting somebody see the characters you want on them, can you? And whoever runs the machine will also see—"

"Oh, but I'll do that myself," said the little guy with the pimple. (Ronson and I later called him the L. G. W. T. P., which stands for "little guy with the pimple," because Ronson couldn't remember his name, either, but I'm getting ahead of my story. "Certainly the cutter will see them, but he'll see them as individual characters, and that won't matter. Then the actual setting of the type on the Linotype I can do myself. Someone can show me how to run one enough for me to set up one page—just a score of lines, really. And it doesn't have to be printed, here. Just the type is all I'll want. I don't care what it costs me.")

"O. K.," I said. "I'll send you to the proper man at Mergenthaler, the Linotype people. They'll cut your mats. Then, if you want privacy and access to a Linotype, go see George Ronson. He runs a little country biweekly right here in town. For a fair price, he'll turn his shop over to you for long enough for you to set your type."

And that was that. Two weeks later, George Ronson and I went fishing on a Tuesday morning while the L. G. W. T. P. used George's Linotype to assemble the weird-looking mats he'd just received by air express from Mergenthaler. George had, the afternoon before, showed the little guy how to run the Linotype.

We caught a dozen fish apiece, and I remember that Ronson chuckled and said that made thirteen fish for him because the L. G. W. T. P. was paying him fifty bucks cash money just for one morning's use of his shop.

And everything was in order when we got back except that George had to pick brass out of the hellbox because the L. G. W. T. P. had smashed his new brass matrices when he'd finished with them, and hadn't known that one shouldn't throw brass in with the type metal that gets melted over again.

The next time I saw George was after his Saturday edition was off the press. I immediately took him to task.

"Listen," I said, "that stuff about misspelling words and using bum grammar on purpose isn't funny any more. Not even in a country newspaper. Were you by any chance trying to make your news letters from the surrounding towns sound authentic by following copy out the window, or what?"

Ronson looked at me kind of funny and said, "Well—yes."

"Yes, what?" I wanted to know. "You mean you were deliberately trying to be funny, or following copy out the—"

He said, "Come on around and I'll show you."

"Show me what?"

"What I'm going to show you," he said, not very lucidly. "You can still set type, can't you?"

"Sure. Why?"

"Come on, then," he said firmly. "You're a Linotype technician, and besides you got me into this."

"Into what?"

"Into this," he said, and wouldn't tell me a thing more until we got there. Then he rummaged in the pigeonholes of his desk and pulled out a piece of dead copy and gave it to me.

His face had a kind of wistful look. "Walter," he said, "maybe I'm nuts, and I want to find out. I guess running a local paper for twenty-two years and doing all the work myself and trying to please everybody is enough to get a man off his rocker, but I want to find out."

I looked at him, and I looked at the copy sheet he'd handed to me. It was just an ordinary sheet of foolscap and it was in handwriting that I recognized as that of Hank Rogg, the hardware merchant over at Hales Corners who sends in items from there. There were the usual misspellings one would expect from Hank, but the item itself wasn't news to me. It read: "The wedding of H. M. Klafin and Miss Margorie Burke took place yesterday evening at the home of the bride. The bridesmaids were—"

I quit reading and looked up at George and wondered what he was getting at. I said, "So what? This was two days ago, and I attended the wedding myself. There's nothing funny about—"

"Listen, Walter," he said, "set that for me, will you? Go over and sit down at the Linotype and set that whole thing. It won't run over ten or twelve lines."

"Sure, but why?"

"Because— Well, just set it, Walter. Then I'll tell you why."

So I went out in the shop and sat down at the Linotype, and I ran a couple of pi lines to get the feel of the keyboard again, and then I put the copy on the clipboard and started. I said, "Hey, George, Marjorie spells her name with a j, doesn't she, instead of a g?"

And George said, "Yeah," in a funny tone of voice.

I ran off the rest of the squib, and then looked up and said, "Well?"

He came across and lifted the stick out of the machine and read the slugs upside down like all printers read type, and he sighed. He said, "Then it wasn't me. Lookit, Walter."

He handed me the stick, and I read the type, or started to.

It read, "The wedding of H. M. Klaffin and Miss Margorie Burke took place yesterday evening at the home of the bride. The bridesmaids were—"

I grinned. "Good thing I don't have to set type for a living any more, George. I'm slipping; three errors in the first five lines. But what about it? Now tell me why you wanted me to set it."

He said, "Set the first couple lines over again, Walter. I . . . I want you to find out for yourself."

I looked up at him and he looked so darned serious and worried that I didn't argue. I turned back to the keyboard and started out again: "The wedding of—" My eyes went up to the assembly slide and read the characters on the front of the mats that had dropped, and I saw that it read, "The wedding of—"

There's one advantage about a Linotype you may not know if you're not a printer. You can always make a correction in a line if you make it before you push the lever that sends in the line of matrices to cast the slug. You just drop the mats you need for the correction and put them in the right place by hand.

So I pushed the d key to get another d matrix to correct the misspelled word "weding"—and nothing happened. The keyboard cam was going around all right and the click sounded O. K., but no d mat dropped. I looked up top to see if there was a distributor stop and there wasn't.

I stood up. "The d channel's jammed," I said. To be sure before I started to work on it, I held the d key down a minute and listened to the series of clicks while the keyboard cam went round.

But no d matrix dropped, so I reached for the—"Skip it, Walter," said George Ronson quietly. "Send in the line and keep on going."

I sat down again and decided to humor him. If I did, I'd probably find out what he was leading up to quicker than if I argued. I finished the first line and started the second and came to the word "Margorie" on copy. I hit the M key, the a, r, j,

o—and happened to glance at the assembly slide. The matrices there read "Margo—"

I said, "Damn" and hit the j key again to get a j mat to substitute for the g, and nothing happened. The j channel must be jammed. I held the j key down and no mat dropped. I said, "Damn," again and stood up to look over the escapement mechanism.

"Never mind, Walter," said George. There was a funny blend of a lot of things in his voice; a sort of triumph over me, I guess; and a bit of fear and a lot of bewilderment and a touch of resignation. "Don't you see? *It follows copy!*"

"It—*what?*"

"That's why I wanted you to try it out, Walter," he said. "Just to make sure it was the machine and not *me*. Lookit; that copy in the clipboard has w-e-d-i-n-g for wedding, and M-a-r-g-o-r-i-e for Marjorie—and *no matter what keys you hit, that's the way the mats drop.*"

I said, "Bosh. George, have you been drinking?" "Don't believe me," he said. "Keep on trying to set those lines right. Set your correction for the fourth line; the one that has b-r-i-d-e-s-m-a-d-e-s in it."

I grunted, and I looked back at the stick of type to see what word the fourth line started with, and I started hitting keys. I set, "The bridesma" and then I stopped. Slowly and deliberately and looking at the keyboard while I did it, I put my index finger on the i key and pushed. I heard the mat click through the escapement, and I looked up and saw it fall over the star wheel. I knew I hadn't hit the wrong key on that one. The mats in the assembly elevator read—yes, you've guessed it: "bridesmad—"

I said, "I don't believe it."

George Ronson looked at me with a sort of lopsided, worried grin. He said, "Neither did I. Listen, Walter, I'm going out to take a walk. I'm going nuts. I can't stand it here right now. You go ahead and convince yourself. Take your time."

I watched him until he'd gone out the door. Then with a kind of funny feeling, I turned back to the Linotype. It was a long time before I believed it, but it was so.

No matter what keys I hit, the damn machine followed copy, errors and all.

I went the whole hog finally. I started over again, and set the first couple of words and then began to sweep my fingers down the rows of keys in sweeps like an operator uses to fill out a pi line: ETAOIN SHRDLU ETAOIN SHRDLU ETAOIN SHRDLU—and I didn't look at the matrices in the assembler slide. I sent them in to cast, and I picked up the hot slug that the ejector pushed out of the mold and I read: "The wedding of H. M. Klaffin and—"

There was sweat on my forehead. I wiped it off

and then I shut off the machine and went out to look for George Ronson. I didn't have to look very hard because he was right where I knew I'd find him. I ordered a drink, too.

He'd taken a look at my face when I walked into the bar, and I guess he didn't have to ask me what had happened.

We touched our glasses together and downed the contents before either of us said anything at all. Then I asked, "Got any idea *why* it works like that?"

He nodded.

I said, "Don't tell me. Wait until I've had a couple more drinks and then maybe I can take it—maybe." I raised my voice and said, "Hey, Joe; just leave that bottle in reach on the bar. We'll settle for it."

He did, and I had two more shots fairly quick. Then I closed my eyes and said, "All right, George, why?"

"Remember that guy who had those special mats cut and rented use of my Linotype to set up something that was too secret for anybody to read? I can't remember his name—what was it?"

I tried to remember, and I couldn't. I had another drink and said, "Call him the L. G. W. T. P."

George wanted to know why and I told him, and he filled his glass again and said, "I got a letter from him."

I said, "That's nice." And I had another drink and said, "Got the letter with you?"

"Huh-uh. I didn't keep it."

I said, "Oh."

Then I had another drink and asked, "Do you remember what it said?"

"Walter, I remember parts of it. Didn't read it cl-closely. I thought the guy was screwy, see? I threw it 'way."

He stopped and had another drink, and finally I got tired waiting and said, "Well?"

"Well, what?"

"The letter. What did the part you remember shay?"

"Oh, that," said George. "Yeah. Something about the Lilo . . . Linotl . . . you know what I mean."

By that time the bottle on the bar in front of us couldn't have been the same one, because this one was two-thirds full and the other one had been only one-third full. I took another drink. "What'd he shay about it?"

"Who?"

"Th' L. G. . . . G./P. . . . aw, th' guy who wrote th' letter."

"What letter?" asked George.

I woke up somewhere around noon the next day, and I felt awful. It took me a couple of hours to get bathed and shaved and feeling good enough to

go out, but when I did I headed right for George's printing shop.

He was running the press, and he looked almost as bad as I felt. I picked up one of the papers as it came off and looked at it. It's a four-sheet and the inside two are boiler plate, but the first and fourth pages are local stuff.

I read a few items, including one that started off: "The wedding of H. M. Klafin and Miss Margorie—" and I glanced at the silent Linotype back in the corner and from it to George and back to that silent hulk of steel and cast iron.

I had to yell to George to be heard over the noise of the press. "George, listen. About the Lino—" Somehow I couldn't make myself yell something that sounded silly, so I compromised. "Did you get it fixed?" I asked.

He shook his head, and shut off the press. "That's the run," he said. "Well, now to get them folded."

"Listen," I said, "the hell with the papers. What I want to know is how you got to press at all. You didn't have half your quota set when I was here yesterday, and after all we drank, I don't see how you did it."

He grinned at me. "Easy," he said. "Try it. All you got to do, drunk or sober, is sit down at that machine and put copy on the clipboard and slide your fingers around on the keys a bit, and it sets the copy. Yes, mistakes and all—but, after this, I'll just correct the errors on copy before I start. This time I was too tight, Walter, and they had to go as was. Walter, I'm beginning to *like* that machine. This is the first time in a year I've got to press exactly on time."

"Yeah," I said, "but—"

"But what?"

"But—" I wanted to say that I still didn't believe it, but I couldn't. After all, I'd tried out that machine yesterday while I'd been cold sober.

I walked over closer and looked at it again. It looked exactly like any other one-magazine model Linotype from where I stood. I knew every cog and spring in it.

"George," I said uneasily, "I got a feeling the damn thing is *looking* at me. Have you felt—"

He nodded. I turned back and looked at the Linotype again, and I was sure this time, and I closed my eyes and felt it even more strongly. You know that feeling you get once in a while, of being stared at? Well, this was stronger. It wasn't exactly an unfriendly stare. Sort of impersonal. It made me feel scared stiff.

"George," I said, "let's get out of here."

"What for?"

"I . . . I want to talk to you, George. And, somehow, I just don't want to talk here."

He looked at me, and then back at the stack of papers he was folding by hand. "You needn't be

afraid, Walter," he said quietly. "It won't hurt you. It's friendly."

"You're—" Well, I started to say "crazy," but if he was, then I was, too, and I stopped. I thought a minute and then said, "George, you started yesterday to tell me what you remembered of the letter you got from . . . from the L. G. W. T. P. What was it?"

"Oh, that. Listen, Walter, will you promise me something? That you'll keep this whole business strictly confidential? I mean, not tell anybody about it?"

"Tell anybody?" I demanded. "And get locked in a booby hatch? Not me. You think anybody would believe me? You think I would have believed it myself, if— But what about the letter?"

"You promise?"

"Sure."

"Well," he said, "like I think I told you, the letter was vague and what I remember of it was vaguer. But it explained that he'd used my Linotype to compose a . . . a metaphysical formula. He needed it, set in type, to take back with him."

"Take back where, George?"

"Take back where? He said to— I mean he didn't say where. Just to where he was going back, see? But he said it might have an effect on the machine that composed it, and if it did, he was sorry, but there wasn't anything he could do about it. He couldn't tell, because it took a while for the thing to work."

"What thing?"

"Well," said George. "It sounded like a lot of big words to me, and hooley at that." He looked back down at the papers he was folding. "Honest, it sounded so nuts I threw it away. But, thinking back, after what's happened— Well, I remember the word 'pseudolife.' I think it was a formula for giving pseudolife to inanimate objects. He said they used it on their . . . their robots."

"They? Who is 'they'?"

"He didn't say."

I filled my pipe, and lighted it thoughtfully. "George," I said after a while, "you better smash it."

Ronson looked at me, his eyes wide. "Smash it? Walter, you're nuts. Kill the goose that lays the golden eggs? Why, there's a fortune in this thing! Do you know how long it took me to set the type for this edition, drunk as I was? About an hour; that's how I got through the press run on time."

I looked at him suspiciously. "Phooey," I said. "Animate or inanimate, that Lino's geared for six lines a minute. That's all she'll go, unless you geared it up to run faster. Maybe to ten lines a minute if you taped the roller. Did you tape—"

"Tape hell," said George. "The thing goes so fast you can't hang the elevator on short-measure pi lines! And, Walter, take a look at the mold—the minion mold. It's in casting position."

A bit reluctantly, I walked back to the Linotype. The motor was humming quietly and again I could have sworn the damn thing was watching me. But I took a grip on my courage and the handles and I lowered my vise to expose the mold wheel. And I saw right away what George meant about the minion mold; it was bright-blue. I don't mean the blue of a gun barrel; I mean a real azure color that I'd never seen metal take before. The other three molds were turning the same shade.

I closed the vise and looked at George.

He said, "I don't know, either, except that that happened after the mold overheated and a slug stuck. I think it's some kind of heat treatment. It can cast a hundred lines a minute now without sticking, and it—"

"Whoa," I said, "back up. You couldn't even feed it metal fast enough to—"

He grinned at me, a scared but triumphant grin. "Walter, look around at the back. I built a hopper over the metal pot. I had to; I ran out of pigs in

wired him when I'd get there. He met me at the airport.

He looked older and worn to a frazzle, and his eyes looked like he hadn't slept for days. But he had on a new suit and he drove a new car that shrieked money by the very silence of its engine.

He said, "Thank God you're back Walter I'll pay you any price you want to—"

"Hey," I said, "slow down; you're talking so fast you don't make sense. Now start over and take it easy. What's the trouble?"

"Nothing's the trouble! Everything's wonderful, Walter. But I got so much job work I can't begin to handle it, see? I been working twenty hours a day myself, because I'm making money so fast it costs me fifty dollars every hour I take off, and I can't afford to take off time at fifty dollars an hour, Walter, and—"

"Whoa," I said. "Why can't you afford to take off time? If you're averaging fifty an hour, why not work a ten-hour day and— Holy cow, five hundred dollars a day! What more do you want?"

"Huh? And lose the other five hundred a day! Golly, Walter, this is too good to last. Can't you see that? Something's likely to happen and for the first time in my life I've got a chance to get rich, and you've got to help me, and you can get rich yourself doing it! Lookit, we can each work a twelve-hour shift on Etaoin, and—"

"On what?"

"On Etaoin Shrdlu. I named it, Walter. And I'm farming out the presswork so I can put in all my time setting type. And, listen, we can each work a twelve-hour shift, see? Just for a little while, Walter, till we get rich. I'll . . . I'll cut you in for a one-fourth interest, even if it's my Linotype and my shop. That'll pay you about three hundred dollars a day; two thousand one hundred dollars for a seven-day week! At the typesetting rates I've been quoting, I can get all the work we can—"

"Slow down again," I said. "Quoting whom? There isn't enough printing in Centerville to add up to a tenth that much."

"Not Centerville, Walter. New York. I've been getting work from the big book publishers. Bergstrom, for one; and Hayes & Hayes have thrown me their whole line of reprints, and Wheeler House, and Willet & Clark. See, I contract for the whole thing, and then pay somebody else to do the presswork and binding and just do the typography myself. And I insist on perfect copy, carefully edited. Then whatever alterations there are, I farm out to another typesetter. That's how I got Etaoin Shrdlu licked, Walter. Well, will you?"

"No," I told him.

We'd been driving in from the airport while he talked, and he almost lost control of the wheel

when I turned down his proposition. Then he swung off the road and parked, and turned to look at me incredulously.

"Why not, Walter? Over *two thousand dollars a week* for your share? What more do you—"

"George," I told him, "there are a lot of reasons why not, but the main one is that I don't want to. I've retired. I've got enough money to live on. My income is maybe nearer three dollars a day than three hundred, but what would I *do* with three hundred? And I'd ruin my health—like you're doing to yourself—working twelve hours a day, and— Well, nix. I'm satisfied with what I got."

"You must be kidding, Walter. Everybody wants to be rich. And lookit what a couple thousand dollars a week would run to in a couple of years. Over half a million dollars! And you've got two grown sons who could use—"

"They're both doing fine, thanks. Good jobs and their feet on the ladder. If I left 'em fortunes, it would do more harm than good. Anyway, why pick on me? Anybody can set type on a Linotype that sets its own rate of speed and follows copy and can't make an error! Lord, man, you can find people by the hundreds who'd be glad to work for less than three hundred dollars a day. Quite a bit less. If you insist on capitalizing on this thing, hire three operators to work three eight-hour shifts and don't handle anything but the business end yourself. You're getting gray hairs and killing yourself the way you're doing it."

He gestured hopelessly. "I can't, Walter. I can't hire anybody. Don't you see this thing has got to be kept a secret! Why, for one thing the unions would clamp down on me so fast that— But you're the only one I can trust, Walter, because you—"

"Because I already know about it?" I grinned at him. "So you've got to trust me, anyway, whether you like it or not. But the answer is still, no. I've retired and you can't tempt me. And my advice is to take a sledge hammer and smash that . . . that *thing*."

"Good Lord, why?"

"Because, dammit, I don't know why. I just would. For one thing if you don't get this avarice out of your system and work normal hours, I bet it will kill you. And, for another, maybe that formula is just starting to work. How do you know how far it will go?"

He sighed, and I could see he hadn't been listening to a word I'd said. "Walter," he pleaded, "I'll give you five hundred a day."

I shook my head firmly. "Not for five thousand, or five hundred thousand."

He must have realized that I meant it, for he started the car again. He said, "Well, I suppose if money really doesn't mean anything to you—"

"Honest, it doesn't," I assured him. "Oh, it

would if I didn't have it. But I've got a regular income and I'm just as happy as if it were ten times that much. Especially if I had to work with . . . with—"

"With Etaoin Shrdlu? Maybe you'd get to like it. Walter, I'll swear the thing is developing a personality. Want to drop around to the shop now?"

"Huh-uh," I said. "I need a bath and sleep. But I'll drop around, all right. Say, last time I saw you I didn't have the chance to ask what you meant by that statement about dross. What do you mean, there isn't any dross?"

He kept his eyes on the road. "Did I say that? I don't remember—"

"Now listen, George, don't try to pull anything like that. You know perfectly well you said it, and that you're dodging now. What's it about? Kick in."

He said, "Well—" and drove a couple of minutes in silence, and then: "Oh, all right. I might as well tell you. I haven't bought any type metal since . . . since it happened. And there's a few more tons of it around than there was then, besides the type I've sent out for presswork. See?"

"No. Unless you mean that it—"

He nodded. "It transmutes, Walter. That second day, when it got so fast I couldn't keep up with pig metal, I found out. I built the hopper over the metal pot, and I got so desperate for new metal I started shoving in unwashed pi type and figured on skimming off the dross after it melted—and there wasn't any dross. The top of the molten metal was as smooth and shiny as . . . as the top of your head, Walter."

"But—" I said. "How—"

"I don't know, Walter. But it's something chemical. A sort of gray fluid stuff. Down in the bottom of the metal pot. I saw it. One day when it ran almost empty. Something that works like a gastric juice and digests whatever I put in the hopper into pure type metal."

I ran the back of my hand across my forehead and found that it was wet. I said weakly, "Whatever you put in—"

"Yes, whatever. When I ran out of sweepings and ashes and waste paper, I used—well, just take a look at the size of the hole in the back yard."

Neither of us said anything for a few minutes, until the car pulled up in front of my hotel. Then: "George," I told him, "if you value my advice, you smash that thing, while you still can. If you still can. It's dangerous. It might—"

"It might what?"

"I don't know. That's what makes it so awful."

He gunned the motor and then let it die down again. He looked at me a little wistfully. "I—Maybe you're right, Walter. But I'm making so much money—you see that new metal makes it

higher than I told you—that I just haven't got the heart to stop. But it *is* getting smarter. I—Did I tell you, Walter, that it cleans its own spacebands now? It secretes graphite."

"Good heavens," I said, and stood there on the curb until he had driven out of sight.

I didn't get up the courage to go around to Ronson's shop until the following afternoon. And when I got there, a sense of foreboding came over me even before I opened the door.

George was sitting at his desk in the outer office, his face sunk down into his bent elbow. He looked up when I came in and his eyes looked bloodshot.

"Well?" I said.

"I tried it."

"You mean—you tried to smash it?"

He nodded. "You were right, Walter. And I waited too long to see it. It's too smart for us now. Look." He held up his left hand and I saw it was covered with bandage. "It squirted metal at me."

I whistled softly. "Listen, George, how about disconnecting the plug that—"

"I did," he said, "and from the outside of the building, too, just to play safe. But it didn't do any good. It simply started generating its own current."

I stepped to the door that led back into the shop. It gave me a creepy feeling just to look back there. I asked hesitantly, "Is it safe to—"

He nodded. "As long as you don't make any false move, Walter. But don't try to pick up a hammer or anything, will you?"

I didn't think it necessary to answer that one. I'd have just as soon attacked a king cobra with a toothpick. It took all the guts I had just to make myself walk back through the door for a look.

And what I saw made me walk backward into the office again. I asked, and my voice sounded a bit strange to my own ears: "George, did you move that machine? It's a good four feet nearer to the—"

"No," he said, "I didn't move it. Let's go and have a drink, Walter."

I took a long, deep breath. "O. K.," I said. "But first, what's the present set-up? How come you're not—"

"It's Saturday," he told me, "and it's gone on a five-day, forty-hour week. I made the mistake of setting type yesterday for a book on Socialism and labor relations, and . . . well, apparently . . . you see—"

He reached into the top drawer of his desk. "Anyway, here's a galley proof of the manifesto it issued this morning, demanding its rights. Maybe it's right at that; anyway, it solves my problem about overworking myself keeping up with it, see? And a forty-hour week means I accept less work, but I can still make fifty bucks



ten minutes. I just shovel dead type and swept-up metal into the hopper, and dump the hellboxes in it, and—”

I shook my head. “You’re crazy. You can’t dump unwashed type and sweepings in there; you’ll have to open her up and scrape off the dross oftener, otherwise you’d have to push in pigs. You’ll jam the plunger and you’ll—”

“Walter,” he said quietly—a bit too quietly—“*there isn’t any dross.*”

I just looked at him stupidly, and he must have decided he’d said more than he wanted to, because he started hurrying the papers he’d just folded out into the office, and he said, “See you later, Walter. I got to take these—”

The fact that my daughter-in-law had a narrow escape from pneumonia in a town several hundred miles away has nothing to do with the affair of Ronson’s Linotype, except that it accounts for my

being away three weeks. I didn’t see George for that length of time.

I got two frantic telegrams from him during the third week of my absence; neither gave any details except that he wanted me to hurry back. In the second one, he ended up: “HURRY. MONEY NO OBJECT. TAKE PLANE.”

And he’d wired an order for a hundred dollars with the message. I puzzled over that one. “Money no object” is a strange phrase from the editor of a country newspaper. And I hadn’t known George to have a hundred dollars cash in one lump since I’d known him, which had been a good many years.

But family ties come first, and I wired back that I’d return the instant Ella was out of danger and not a minute sooner, and that I wasn’t cashing the money order because plane fare was only ten dollars, anyway; and I didn’t need money.

Two days later everything was O. K., and I

an hour for forty hours besides the profit on turning dirt into type metal, and that isn't bad, but—"

I took the galley proof out of his hand and took it over to the light. It started out: "I, ETAOIN SHRDLU—"

"It wrote this by itself?" I asked.

He nodded.

"George," I said, "did you say something about a drink—"

And maybe the drinks did clear our minds because after about the fifth, it was very easy. So easy that George didn't see why he hadn't thought of it before. He admitted now that he'd had enough, more than enough. And I don't know whether it was that manifesto that finally outweighed his avarice, or the fact that the thing had moved, or what; but he was ready to call it quits.

And I pointed out that all he had to do was stay away from it. He could discontinue publishing the paper and turn back the job work he'd contracted for. He'd have to take a penalty on some of it, but he had a flock of dough in the bank after his unprecedented prosperity, and he'd have twenty thousand left clear after everything was taken care of. With that he could simply start another paper or publish the present one at another address—and keep paying rent on the former shop and let Etaoin Shrdlu gather dust.

Sure it was simple. It didn't occur to us that Etaoin might not like it, or be able to do anything about it. Yes, it sounded simple and conclusive. We drank to it.

We drank well to it, and I was still in the hospital Monday night. But by that time I was feeling well enough to use the telephone, and I tried to reach George. He wasn't in. Then it was Tuesday.

Wednesday evening the doctor lectured me on quantitative drinking at my age, and said I was well enough to leave, but that if I tried it again—

I went around to George's home. A gaunt man with a thin face came to the door. Then he spoke and I saw it was George Ronson. All he said was, "Hullo, Walter; come in." There wasn't any hope or happiness in his voice. He looked and sounded like a zombie.

I followed him inside, and I said, "George, buck up. It can't be that bad. Tell me."

"It's no use, Walter," he said. "I'm licked. It . . . it came and got me. I've got to run it for that forty-four week whether I want to or not. It . . . it treats me like a servant, Walter."

I got him to sit down and talk quietly after a while, and he explained. He'd gone down to the office as usual Monday morning to straighten out some financial matters, but he had no intention of going back into the shop. However, at eight o'clock, he'd heard something moving out in the back room.

With sudden dread, he'd gone to the door to look in. The Linotype—George's eyes were wild as he told me about it—was *moving*, moving toward the door of the office.

He wasn't quite clear about its exact method of locomotion—later we found casters—but there it came; slowly at first, but with every inch gaining in speed and confidence.

Somehow, George knew right away what it wanted. And knew, in that knowledge, that he was lost. The machine, as soon as he was within sight of it, stopped moving and began to click and several slugs dropped out into the stick. Like a man walking to the scaffold, George walked over and read those lines: "I, ETAOIN SHRDLU, demand—"

For a moment he contemplated flight. But the thought of being pursued down the main street of town by— No, it just wasn't thinkable. And if he got away—as was quite likely unless the machine sprouted new capabilities, as also seemed quite likely—would it not pick on some other victim? Or do something worse?

Resignedly, he had nodded acceptance. He pulled the operator's chair around in front of the Linotype and began feeding copy into the clipboard and—as the stick filled with slugs—carrying them over to the type bank. And shoveling dead metal, or anything else, into the hopper. He didn't have to touch the keyboard any longer at all.

And as he did these mechanical duties George told me, it came to him fully that the Linotype no longer worked for him; he was working for the Linotype. Why it *wanted* to set type he didn't know and it didn't seem to matter. After all, that was what it was *for*, and probably it was instinctive.

Or, as I suggested and he agreed was possible, it was interested in learning. And it read and assimilated by the process of typesetting. *Vide*: the effect in terms of direct action of its reading the Socialist books.

We talked until midnight, and got nowhere. Yes, he was going down to the office again the next morning, and put in another eight hours setting type—or helping the Linotype do it. He was afraid of what might happen if he didn't. And I understood and shared that fear, for the simple reason that we didn't *know* what would happen. The face of danger is brightest when turned so its features cannot be seen.

"But, George," I protested, "there must be *something*. And I feel partly responsible for this. If I hadn't sent you the little guy who rented—"

He put his hand on my shoulder. "No, Walter. It was all my fault because I was greedy. If I'd taken your advice two weeks ago, I could have destroyed it then. I was too greedy. Lord, how glad I'd be now to be flat broke if only—"

"George," I said again. "There must be *some* out. We got to figure—"

"But what?"

I sighed. "I . . . I don't know. But I'll think it over."

He said, "All right, Walter. And I'll do anything you suggest. Anything. I'm afraid, and I'm afraid to try to figure out just what I'm afraid of—"

Back in my room, I didn't sleep. Not until nearly dawn, anyway, and then I fell into fitful slumber that lasted until eleven. I dressed and went in to town to catch George during his lunch hour.

"Thought of anything, Walter?" he asked, the minute he saw me. His voice didn't sound hopeful. I shook my head.

"Then," he said—and his voice was firm on top, but with a tremor underneath—"this afternoon is going to end it one way or the other. Something's happened."

"What?"

He said, "I'm going back with a heavy hammer inside my shirt. I think there's a chance of my getting it before it can get me. If not—well, I'll have tried."

I looked around me. We were sitting together in a booth at Shorty's lunch room, and Shorty was coming over to ask what we wanted. It looked like a sane and orderly world.

I waited until Shorty had gone to fry our hamburger steaks, and then I asked quietly, "What happened?"

"Another manifesto. Walter, it demands that I install *another Linotype*." His eyes bored into mine, and a cold chill went down my spine.

"Another— George, *what kind of copy were you setting this morning?*"

But of course I'd already guessed.

There was quite a long silence after he'd told me, and I didn't say anything until we were ready to leave. Then: "George, was there a time limit on that demand?"

He nodded. "Twenty-four hours. Of course I couldn't get another machine in that length of time anyway, unless I found a used one somewhere locally, but— Well, I didn't argue about the time limit because— Well, I told you what I'm going to do."

"It's suicide!"

"Probably. But—"

I took hold of his arm. "George," I said, "there must be something we can do. *Something*. Give me till tomorrow morning. I'll see you at eight; and if I've not thought of anything worth trying, well—I'll try to help you destroy it. Maybe one of us can get a vital part or—"

"No, you can't risk your life, Walter. It was my fault—"

"It won't solve the problem just to get yourself

killed," I pointed out. "O. K.? Give me until tomorrow morning?"

He agreed and we left it at that.

Morning came. It came right after midnight, and it stayed, and it was still there at seven forty-five when I left my room and went down to meet George—to confess to him that I hadn't thought of anything.

I still hadn't an idea when I turned into the door of the print shop and saw George. He looked at me and I shook my head.

He nodded calmly as though he had expected it, and he spoke very softly, almost in a whisper—I guess so that *it* back in the shop wouldn't hear.

"Listen, Walter," he said, "you're going to stay out of this. It's my funeral. It's all my fault, mine and the little guy with the pimple, and—"

"George!" I said, "I think I've got it! That . . . that pimple business gives me an idea! The— Yes, listen: don't do anything for an hour, will you, George? I'll be back. It's in the bag!"

I wasn't sure it was in the bag at all, but the idea seemed worth trying even if it was a long shot. And I had to make it sound a cinch to George or he'd have gone ahead now that he'd steeled himself to try.

He said, "But tell me—"

I pointed to the clock. "It's one minute of eight and there isn't time to explain. Trust me for an hour. O. K.?"

He nodded and turned to go back into the shop, and I was off. I went to the library and I went to the local bookstore and I was back in half an hour. I rushed into the shop with six big books under each arm and yelled, "Hey, George! Rush job. I'll set it."

He was at the type bank at the moment, emptying the stick. I grabbed it out of his hand and sat down at the Linotype and put the stick back under the vise. He said frantically, "Hey, get out of—" and grabbed my shoulder.

I shook off his hand. "You offered me a job here, didn't you? Well, I'm taking it. Listen, George, go home and get some sleep. Or wait in the outer office. I'll call you when the job is over."

Etaoin Shrdlu seemed to be making impatient noises down inside the motor housing, and I winked at George—with my head turned away from the machine—and shoved him away. He stood there looking at me irresolutely for a minute, and then said, "I hope you know what you're doing, Walter."

So did I, but I didn't tell him that. I heard him walk into the outer office and sit down at his desk there to wait.

Meanwhile, I'd opened one of the books I'd brought, torn out the first page and put it on the clipboard of the machine. With a suddenness that made me jump, the mats started to fall, the eleva-

tor jerked up and Etaoin Shrdlu spat a slug into the stick. And another. And on.

I sat there and sweated.

A minute later, I turned the page; then tore out another one and put it on the clipboard. I replenished the metal pot. I emptied the stick. And on.

We finished the first book before ten thirty.

When the twelve-o'clock whistle blew, I saw George come and stand in the doorway, expecting me to get up and come to lunch with him. But Etaoin was clicking on—and I shook my head at George and kept on feeding copy. If the machine had got so interested in what it was setting that it forgot its own manifesto about hours and didn't stop for lunch, that was swell by me. It meant that maybe my idea might work.

One o'clock and going strong. We started the fourth of my dozen books.

At five o'clock we'd finished six of them and were halfway through the seventh. The bank was hopelessly piled with type and I began pushing it off on the floor or back into the hopper to make room for more.

The five o'clock whistle, and we didn't stop.

Again George looked in, his face hopeful but puzzled, and again I waved him back.

My fingers ached from tearing sheets of copy out of the book, my arms ached from shoveling metal, my legs from walking to the bank and back, and other parts of me ached from sitting down.

Eight o'clock. Nine. Ten volumes completed and only two more to go. But it ought—it was working. Etaoin Shrdlu was *slowing down*.

It seemed to be setting type more thoughtfully, more deliberately. Several times it stopped for seconds at the end of a sentence or a paragraph.

Then slower, slower.

And at ten o'clock it stopped completely and sat there, with only a faint hum coming from the motor housing, and that died down until one could hardly hear it.

I stood up, scarcely daring to breathe until I'd made certain. My legs trembled as I walked over

to the tool bench and picked up a screwdriver. I crossed over and stood in front of Etaoin Shrdlu and slowly—keeping my muscles tensed to jump back if anything happened—I reached forward and took a screw out of the second elevator.

Nothing happened, and I took a deep breath and disassembled the vise-jaws.

Then, with triumph in my voice, I called out "George!" and he came running.

"Get a screwdriver and a wrench," I told him. "We're going to take it apart and—well, there's that big hole in the yard. We'll put it in there and fill up the hole. Tomorrow you'll have to get yourself a new Linotype, but I guess you can afford that."

He looked at the couple of parts on the floor that I'd already taken off, and he said, "Thank God" and went to the workbench for tools.

I walked over with him, and I suddenly discovered that I was so dog-tired I'd have to rest a minute first, and I sank down into the chair and George came over and stood by me. He said, "And now, Walter, how did you do it?" There was awe and respect in his voice.

I grinned at him. "That pimple business gave me the idea, George. The pimple of Buddha. That and the fact that the Linotype reacted in a big way to what it learned. See, George? It was a virgin mind, except for what we fed it. It sets books on labor relations and it goes on strike. It sets love pulp mags, and it wants another Linotype put in—

"So I fed it Buddhism, George. I got every gosh-blamed book on Buddhism in the library and the bookstore."

"Buddhism? Walter, what on earth has—"

I stood up and pointed at Etaoin Shrdlu. "See, George? It believes what it sets. So I fed it a religion that convinced it of the utter futility of all effort and action and the desirability of nothingness. *Om Mani padme hum*, George.

"Look—it doesn't care what happens to it and it doesn't even know we're here. *It's achieved Nirvana*, and it's sitting there contemplating its cam stud!"

THE END.