

# FUTURE FICTION

Vol. 1, No. 3



July, 1940

## SIX ASTOUNDING NOVELETS

- LIQUID HELL**.....*Neil R. Jones* 8  
 Nez Hulan finds himself battling amidst the bloodiest mob of space-pirates in the solar system! Himself an outlaw, he struggles for supremacy on a tiny asteroid, where he is trapped to die a lingering death in a lake of acid!
- LAUGHTER OUT OF SPACE**.....*Dennis Clive* 24  
 A world of laughing death, where a plague of madness promises the destruction of all Mankind!—such is the world that Conrad Smith fights to save! But the powerful evil out of space is not to be conquered—and we promise you a powerful, realistic climax that will leave you awestruck!
- PROPHECY OF DOOM**.....*Ross Rocklyne* 43  
 Argus Nesban was the master of the Imperians—the handful of people that composed the last remnant of the human race—and he upheld the Rule that Knowledge should be shunned as an evil! The Rule demands that the Imperians ignore the prophecy of Zaga-meen—He-Who-Broke-The-Rule—a prophecy of certain Doom to Man's last stand!
- THE CITY UNDER THE SEA**.....*Duane W. Rimel* 55  
 Two undersea explorers are thrust into a weird adventure amidst a kingdom beneath the waves! Huffman finds himself battling a strange science, to save the surface world from the traitorous plans of Belton, conspirer against his own people!
- THE MAGNIFICENT POSSESSION**.....*Isaac Asimov* 71  
 After many patient years of painstaking experiment, Walter Sills makes the discovery that promises him great fame and a million dollars! But success is no bed of roses, as Sills finds out—trouble and terror threaten from every side!
- THE POISON REALM**.....*John Coleridge* 83  
 Two helpless humans in a far world of another dimension, Lona and Terrance fight a torturing doom as the poisonous gases of a strange atmosphere threaten a painful death in that weird jungle of alien monsters!

## AN AMAZING SHORT STORY

- GRAVITY OFF!**.....*Leslie F. Stone* 100  
 Jerry Moore looked like anybody else—except that his face became very red when he stood upright—for "upright" to us was "upside-down" to him! Tired of walking on ceilings as a side-show freak, he considers just letting himself fall into the sky!

## SPECIAL FEATURES

- FAN MAG DIGEST**..... 41  
**LETTERS FROM READERS**..... 66  
**FANTASY TIMES**.....*James V. Taurasi*.. 82

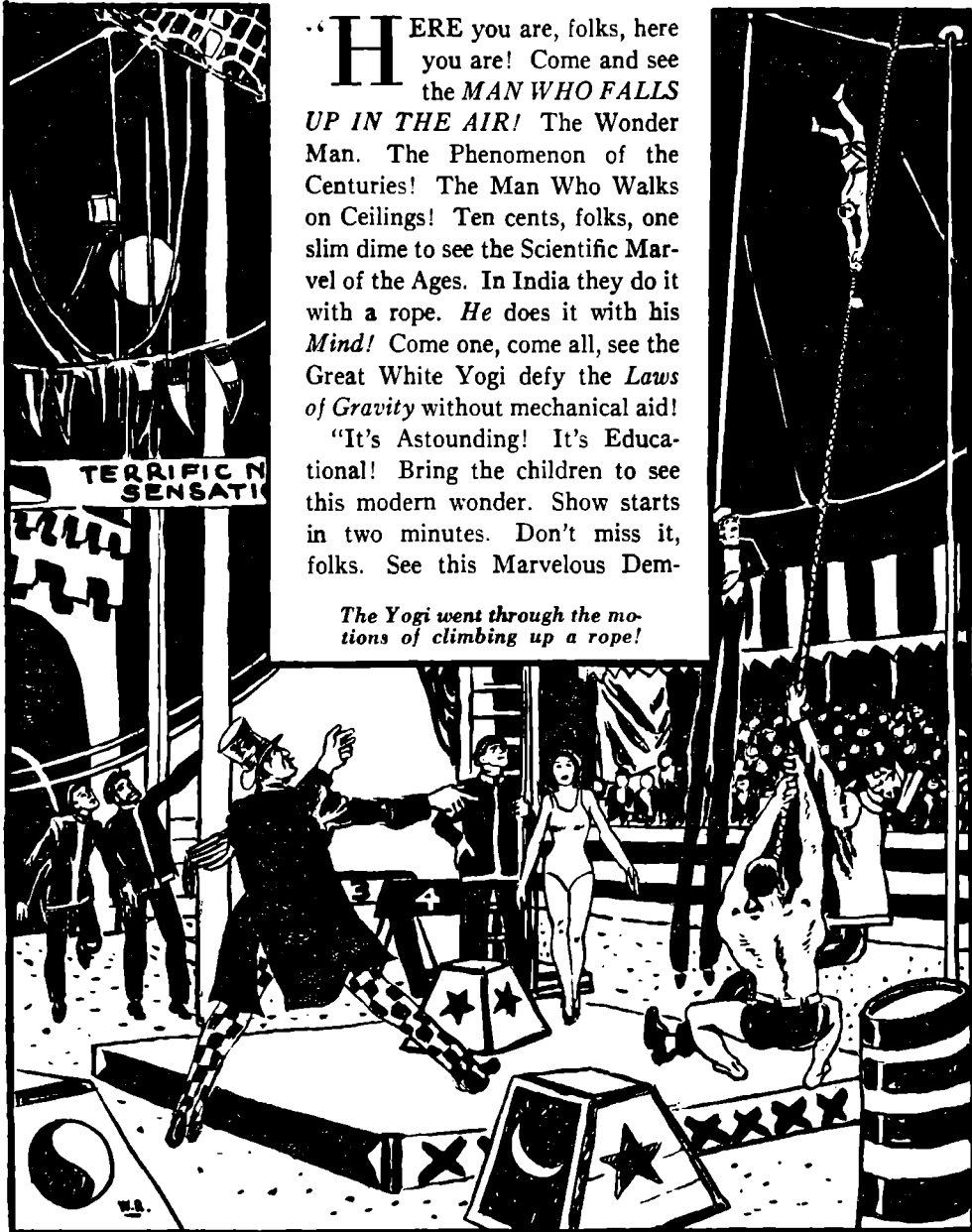
### COVER BY SCOTT

FUTURE FICTION, published every other month by Double Action Magazines, Inc., 2258 Grove St., Chicago, Ill. Editorial and executive offices, 60 Hudson St., N. Y. C. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at Chicago, Ill. Copyright 1940 by Double Action Magazines, Inc. Yearly subscription, 75c. For advertising rates write to the Double Action Group, 60 Hudson St., N. Y. C. Printed in U. S. A. The Cuneo Press, Inc.

# GRAVITY OFF!

by  
LESLIE F.  
STONE

Jerry Moore delved just a little too deeply into science—so that he found his gravity reversed—making a living in a circus side-show as the "Upside-Down Man!" But he considers ending his misery by simply walking over the ceiling to an open door—and falling into the sky!



“**H**ERE you are, folks, here you are! Come and see the *MAN WHO FALLS UP IN THE AIR!* The Wonder Man. The Phenomenon of the Centuries! The Man Who Walks on Ceilings! Ten cents, folks, one slim dime to see the Scientific Marvel of the Ages. In India they do it with a rope. *He* does it with his *Mind!* Come one, come all, see the Great White Yogi defy the *Laws of Gravity* without mechanical aid!

“It’s Astounding! It’s Educational! Bring the children to see this modern wonder. Show starts in two minutes. Don’t miss it, folks. See this Marvelous Dem-

*The Yogi went through the motions of climbing up a rope!*

onstration of Mental Powers. *He's not a freak, ladies and gentlemen, it's all done with the mind!* One dime, one slim dime. Don't miss it, don't miss it, don't miss it!"

The midway barker's mechanical drone went on and on, and men, women and children crowded around the ticket seller's booth under a crude lithograph dangling in the sunlight in front of an unusually proportioned tent. Its base was a hundred feet square, but it rose high into the air, a hundred and fifty feet above the Midway, long guy ropes holding it in place. The crowd thickened, shoving and pushing its way inside the tent.

Across the way another barker, megaphone hanging listlessly from his hand, leaned on a prop, one foot swinging free, watched the shoving crowd with jaundiced eye. Behind him stood another tent with a half-dozen or more garish drawings depicting a half dozen or more freakish-looking creatures, while on a small square platform beside him three bepainted, bedizened, scantily clad houri from the East (Side) jiggled to the tinpany tune of a phonograph, moving arms and legs in a negligible wiggle.

They, too, watched people pause and stare at the brilliant lithograph before the rival tent. It depicted a man calmly eating at a table that, apparently, along with the chair in which he sat, hung from the ceiling of the painted room. At least, that was the impression it conveyed, that the man was sitting up-side down! To make certain one understood what was intended, another man stood at the bottom of the picture, right side up.

The houri nearest the freak-tent barker spoke from the corner of her red-smearred mouth. "What a take that guy's got. It's a natural if ever I saw one. They say he's cleaning up every midway. I think I'll go see him next show . . ."

Her answer was a growl; the speiler still eyed the pushing crowd. Suddenly, he straightened. At the entrance of the rival

tent had been hung a sign. "TENT FULL. NEXT SHOW—TWENTY MINUTES!"

Disappointed persons looked at the sign and glanced at the freak-tent barker as he began. "Here you are, folks, the greatest collection of freaks ever brought together under one tent. See Jim-Jim, the eat-em-alive-man. Eats snakes in front of your eyes! It's no fake, it's the real thing! Come . . ."

Within the tent of the Upside-Down Man people elbowed for room. Before them stood a six foot high wooden platform holding a large curtained box, twenty feet high. Beside it, on a small table was a phonograph, a bottled drink, and some wrapped sandwiches. Tacked on front of the platform was a small bulletin board with several notices pinned on it. One of these was signed by the town's mayor, the other by the chief of police.

Both notices were statements to the effect that the mayor and chief of police had been present at the erection of the tent, that they had seen no buried machines, no contrivances of any kind installed, and that the platform was built of ordinary lumber with no place for concealed wires.

LOOKING above, the people found the upper part of the tent shrouded in darkness. On one canvas wall hung a rope ladder, and beside it an inch-thick rope that rose into the overhead obscurity.

The tent was full to capacity; people were packed in like sardines. Children whimpered in the close quarters when from between the curtains a brisk, close-shaven man with graying hair stepped forward. He looked the crowd over and spoke.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," he began pleasantly, "the young man with the megaphone outside explained this isn't a 'freak show.' That's correct. The White Yogi, friends, isn't a freak. He was not born this way! The feats you will see performed in a few moments are feats of scientific achievement. As you all know, in India

there are men known as Yogi, men who devote all their lives to a contemplation of the life-forces, and it was among them that the White Yogi studied and learned the secret of his accomplishment, the defiance of the Laws of Gravity!

“The Great Einstein, folks, teaches us that gravitation is the result of a warp in Space, a force responding to no other force, and is unchanging, unchangeable, and so powerful a force that it bends light! *Yet, here, Ladies and Gentlemen is a man who controls the uncontrollable force with his mind! LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I GIVE YOU THE WHITE YOGI!*”

With that, the speaker waved his hand, the curtain behind him flipped aside to reveal a queer-looking chamber. It was twenty feet high with three solid walls and was furnished exactly like a bedroom, with bed, table and chair. In the side wall was an ordinary door with an ordinary door-knob. What made the room unique, however, was the fact that it was *upside-down*; the furniture was nailed to the ceiling; the bedclothing was tied to the bed! The door, likewise, was upside-down, its sill being even with the room's ceiling—or rather the floor.

The chamber was not empty. On the floor of the stage in ordinary position stood a small nondescript looking thin man of about twenty-eight or nine. He stood in the center of the floor, feet firmly planted as he made a slight bow and scanned the audience.

Somehow, that man presented a pitiful object; he had the saddest blue eyes anyone had ever seen. Peculiarly he was blushing; his face was a warm red!

The announcer spoke from the side of the platform. “The White Yogi is ready to demonstrate his powers. Yogi, will you show these good people how you ascend to your bedchamber?”

The man smiled, stooped and untied his shoes! Then, without apparent effort, with

*(Continued on page 104)*

(Continued from page 102)

hands held above his head, *he surged upward with a rush!* There was a thud, and the whole unusual room shook to his impact—*his upraised arms bent as he caught his weight upon his hands.* So would a man's arms bend if he dropped from the same height to the ground!

The speiler went behind the room coming back with a ladder. *While the White Yogi hung from the ceiling of his room, feet dangling toward the floor,* the speiler called for volunteers to climb to the top of the chamber and examine it for a possible hidden machine responsible for the White Yogi's unique position.

Four self-conscious men came forward, stating they did not belong to the show, and climbed the ladder. A few moments later they came down to testify that there wasn't a thing on the roof at all.

As this went on, the upside-down man held his place, his face grew redder and redder and the cords of his neck strained to his effort!

The man on the platform spoke. "All right, Yogi."

With that, the Yogi raised his feet, and the next instant stood in the center of the upside-down room grinning an upside-down grin at the audience as he flexed muscles and breathed heavily from his exertions. Still panting, he walked to a chair and sat down, head pointing toward the ground while the red in his face subsided. Taking out a cigarette, he put it to his lips and lighted it.

"How about a sandwich? You hungry?"

For the first time the upside-down man spoke. "Right—and send up a bottle of pop, Mr. Bolton."

Taking a sandwich and the bottle from the nearby table, Mr. Bolton spilled some of the liquid from the bottle to show that it was full, climbed a chair and handed it to the Yogi. He quickly ate the sandwich and tipped his head backward to drink the soda from the bottle. He passed back the empty bottle.

Now he went through a prescribed routine, walking around the upside-down room, sitting at a table to take out paper and pen from a drawer and write a few lines upon it. Next, he went to the bed and laid up upon its covers.

"You'll notice, ladies and gentlemen," said Bolton, "the Yogi lies upon his bed as much at ease as you and I lie on an ordinary bed. Yogi, will you rise and let these people see the indentation your head made upon the pillow?"

The Yogi complied and the people exclaimed aloud at what they saw. Slowly, the pillow returned to its original position, hanging down in accordance with gravity.

"Yogi, will you give us a dance?" Going to the phonograph, the speiler put on a tune and the man on the ceiling went into a short dance routine that elicited some response from his audience.

The record was turned off. "And now, good people, the Yogi will give you a demonstration of a *man falling up into the air!*—together with his own interpolation of the Hindu Rope-Trick! In India, folks, the Yogi project a rope into the air without support so that a child can climb the rope. The White Yogi does something else.

"Yogi, will you kindly step out of your bedroom?"

The upside-down man crossed the "floor" of his chamber to its door. He turned the knob and let the door swing outward with himself clinging to it, *his feet dangling up into the air!*

**A** GAIN the announcer spoke at length. "As you people no doubt know, the velocity of a falling body continually increases by 32 feet per second in each second of the fall. This fall is calculated at approximately 16 feet in the first second, 48 feet in the second second, 80 feet in the third second, and so on. From the Yogi's present position he is about 125 feet from the top of this tent; therefore, he will reach

(Continued on page 106)

*(Continued from page 104)*

the top in less than four and a half seconds. For those wishing to verify this, take out your watches while the Yogi performs this unusual feat of *falling against the Force of Gravity!*

"Are you ready, Yogi?"

"Ready!"

At the last cry, lights went on in the top of the tent which looked even higher from the inside than it had outside.

"GO!"

At the signal, the White Yogi let go his hold on the doorknob, and in one upward surge, rushed toward the top of the tent!

He struck the canvas with such force that the entire structure swayed back and forth ominously. Bolton shouted for the people to remain calm, that the tent was braced for that impact, just as the tent top was provided with springs for the benefit of the *man who had fallen upon it.*

Straining their necks upward, the people saw the man who had flattened against the tent-top sit himself up—upside-down, of course, and climb to his feet.

Walking to the side wall, he took hold of the rope fastened to the side of the rope-ladder, freed it, and held the end in his hand for all to see.

Again Bolton spoke. "The White Yogi wants you to know the rope he is holding isn't fastened at either end. He will now lower his end of the rope to us to prove to you all the rope is free. When he has the other end of the rope in his hands, he will come down!"

They watched the upside-down man pay out the rope, and as one end came in reach of the platform, the announcer called for two strong volunteers to grab it and "hang on to it for dear life!"

He turned to the audience. "Remember, folks, that rope is not suspended in any way. It is the Yogi alone who holds it upright! As he comes toward us, you'll see the other end of the rope drop downward; the Yogi alone holds it up!" He called out.

"All right, Yogi, start coming!"

Obeying him, the Yogi went through the motions of a man *climbing up a rope!*—using hands and knees as the free end of the rope slowly snaked downward from between his thighs. The two men held its lower end grimly. Once or twice Bolton put a hand to it to keep them from being lifted off their feet! "Thought you were strong men!" he laughed at them.

*It was as if a tremendous weight strained on that rope to pull them upward!*

When the Yogi was half-way down, the free end of the rope reached the platform. A handler came from behind the stage to grab it and coil it on the floor as it dropped.

At last the upside-down man "climbed" to the level of the stage room. Reaching out, he took hold of the open door, dropped the rest of the rope and swung himself into the room, walking again on its upside-down room.

Breathing hard, he smiled at the audience, giving them a wide upside-down grin as he waved his hand. The curtain came together and the people were hurried outdoors to make room for those collecting outside the tent. The helper ran up the rope-ladder to refasten the long rope in place again at the top, turning off the floodlights a little later.

Slipping behind the curtains of the stage, the speller came into the upside-down room. Above him the Yogi was seated in his chair smoking.

"Say, Frank," the "Yogi" said as he appeared, "We've got to change that routine a little. Let me get 'upright' before you send the men to examine the roof. It gives me a headache standing on my head so long! I told you I didn't think that idea would work out."

Frank Bolton nodded. "All right, Jerry, but for heaven's sake, wipe that goofy expression off your face next show. It keeps getting worse. You look like a sick cat the way you stare at people!"

*(Continued on page 108)*

(Continued from page 106)

THE upside-down man grunted. "Sorry. But, you know, when I begin to think of those people walking around on the good earth as they please, it gets me! But for two years, I've watched them go away from here to comfortable, ordinary homes, sitting down at an ordinary table and eating *right-side up* while I've got to go 'home' to my upside-down trailer, sleep under blankets pinned to my bed with cold air whistling up my back where the covers drag away from me! God, what would it feel like to take a bath without almost drowning myself! I tell you—it—it's—oh, what's the use . . .?"

"Aw, forget it, kid. Look at the money we're salting away! And that isn't all! Soon, it won't be empty—ten shows from ten in the morning until midnight—but four a day! I signed that vodvil contract for you this afternoon, Jerry—52 weeks at \$3,000 a throw! Told you I'd put it over! I figure we'll use the proscenium arch of the theatre for your 'falling act,' enlarge your bedroom scene some . . ."

"Yes, and if I'm not careful, I'll go flying up among the flies and girds back-stage," said the Yogi.

"Oh, we can fix that. Use a canvas roof while you're on the stage, y'know, and back-stage, where you can't walk ceilings, we'll use hand-ropes for you. You'll live in the trailer, as usual. We'll back up to the stage-entrance and you get out right there. You'll be a sensation, boy! We'll get some bona fide scientists to study you and make statements to the papers. You know, that's why I been holding back on that stuff while we've been doing Fairs and Carnivals. It'll be great stuff, all right!"

"Sure, great stuff. Great if you can stand it. But how you can go out front and tell 'em I'm not a freak is beyond me. And I don't like you telling 'em I learned my stuff in India!"

"Now, look, Jerry, it's good advertising, that's all. Tell 'em you're a freak and you're just another one. This way it looks

like it's really scientific. Look, we'll change the spell, put in all that stuff you told me about space-time—con—continuum. . . ."

"Why don't you tell the truth? Why don't you say I'm a crack-brained experimenter who tried to nullify gravity, and I degravitated myself with the radiations of an unknown substance?"

"Oh, that's all right for these here scientists, kid," observed Bolton, "but the public's different. Believe me, I know. And your contract, if you remember, says I've got full say about these things. . . ."

"Yeah. Well, whatever you say, Frank. To tell the truth, I don't much care. God, if I could only go out and stand in the sunshine under the open sky once more! But if I did that, I'd shoot straight UP—and never come down again. . . . You know, I was trying to figure out my rate of speed by the time I got a hundred miles up! I wonder just how far I would go before I reached the negative state. I may try it—just stand outside and *let go!*" As he spoke, the White Yogi's voice sounded deep with despair.

Bolton looked startled. "Saaay, none of that! Remember our five-year contract with three years to go yet. Also, kid, I've got a big investment in you! Don't go forgetting that you was stone broke when I took you off the ceiling of Mrs. Heeney's boarding house, third-floor back! She was ready to ask you to step outdoors, you know that. You wouldn't do anything like that to me, would you?" His voice was filled with whining anxiety.

Jerry Moore sighed deeply. "Of course not, Frank. I'm not ready to commit suicide yet. I still hope to get out of this predicament. Y'know, I've a standing advertisement in my home-town weekly newspaper promising a hundred dollars to the one finding a stone like the one I used in my machine. It isn't reasonable that that was the only stone. I'm sure it came from a meteorite. One part was pitted, the other side showed where it had broken off from

(Continued on page 110)

*(Continued from page 108)*

another piece, maybe bigger. There must have been more to it, and if I could crawl around the spot, I'm sure I could find other pieces.

"You see, I've got to study that stone and find out what its properties are, to get back to normal. I don't know what possessed me to use the darn thing at all. I'd kept it as a charm since I was a kid on the farm. And one day when I wasn't getting any results from my Nullifier, the stone dropped from my pocket. I stuck it in the machine, and while I was bending over, adjusting the new tubes I had bought, the thing began to throw off a pink radiation!

"Before I could back away, though, there was a loud sizzling sound, a roar, and I was flung against the ceiling. When I came to my senses, the radiation was gone, but I couldn't get down to the floor. And the little stone had dissolved completely—well, you've heard it all; you know the rest. . . ."

"Sure, I know. My two-headed calf had died and I needed another fr—exhibition. I signed you up after I showed you you'd make plenty in five years to do all the experimenting you want to get down to earth again. I don't want you forgetting what I've done for you. You'll have plenty in the bank when this is over. Just—three more years. . . ."

"Yeah, I spoke out of turn, Frank. It's just that I'm so lonely and disgusted with this upside down living. Think of it—getting red in the face when I stand in a natural position!" he sighed deeply.

"S'tough. Shame you didn't have a girl assistant when the thing happened! You could've married her and gone house-keeping in the trailer!"

**T**HE pseudo-Yogi laughed bitterly. "And we'd raise upside down kids, I suppose!"

Bolton looked at his watch. "Well, it's time for the next show. I can hear the

crowd. Come on down. . . ."

As he spoke, the midway concessioner took out a number of curved iron hooks, a few inches long. He began fastening them, one after the other, into holes provided for them in the side wall of the room. Several he screwed into the floor. As he was doing this, the upside-down man came to the wall and by means of the hand-holds, pulled himself to floor level.

With a twist of his body, he stood in a natural position, sliding one stockinged foot under the first of the floor cleats, then the next, until he stood beside the pair of shoes nailed firmly to the floor. Using Bolton to steady himself, he slipped his feet into the shoes while the other man tied the laces for him.

"Look, Jerry," Bolton said on straightening up. "Why haven't we tried fastening weights on your clothing? Enough of them ought to hold you down to earth!"

"What good's that with the blood rushing to my head when I stand like this? No, I thought of that long ago, but it's no go!"

"I see. Well, try to keep that silly look out of your eyes this show. . . ." He yawned as he spoke, removed the hooks he had inserted, and went through the curtains.

There were three more shows and it was supper-time. People left the midway in increasing numbers and the midway performers relaxed.

Bolton fastened a long rope from the side of the upside-down stage to the tent wall where there was an opening. On the other side was a large trailer backed up to the tent. Jerry Moore left the stage dragged himself along the rope until he reached the trailer door. He walked it upon the trailer's ceiling which was furnished much like the stage room, upside down. On the floor, however, was a second set of furniture for Frank Bolton. Under his settee was the bathtub both men used

As they went into the trailer, a waiter from a nearby restaurant came with a cov-



ered tray of food. He grinned at Jerry. "Some show you put on; I took it in today," he said as he put the tray down.

WHEN he left, the man on the ceiling sat in a chair above the ordinary table at which Bolton sat, and he performed the rather difficult feat of eating upside down while the speiler ate his own food in the regular fashion.

A little later, Bolton came outside. He saw a young man coming alongside the tent to the trailer. "Here," he called to him, "you can't come back here."

The youth stopped in his tracks, waiting for the older man to reach him. "I'm looking for a Mister Jerry Moore, sir. They said this was his trailer."

"No one sees him while he's resting. Wait for the show," the speiler said brusquely.

"But I gotta see him," protested the young man, who was no more than sixteen or seventeen. "I got something for him in—in answer to an advertisement. It said . . ."

"Ad? Oh, yeah. Let me see it."

The young fellow fumbled and brought out an envelope in which was a sheet of paper. Pasted neatly on the paper was a newspaper clipping. Moving over to a light, Bolton read:

"I WILL PAY \$100.00 for a translucent green stone with red flecks showing throughout stone to match one found in the vicinity of the old Moore farm along Beaver Creek. Size does not matter. Stone may be found imbedded in another kind of stone. Address, this week, York Fair Midway, York, Pa. Jerry Moore."

"That's been running in our paper a couple years with different addresses every week. . . ."

"I know—I put it there. Did'ya bring the stone?"

"Sure. Found it in the creek above the Moore place, though some Poles got it now. It was half under a rock in the water. . . ."

"Well, let's see it," said Bolton wearily.

*(Concluded on page 113)*

*(Continued from page 111)*

"Hey, I wanna show it to Mr. Moore. My father said . . ."

Bolton glanced behind at the trailer, ran his tongue across his lips and turned back to the boy. "I'm Moore's manager, see, and I attend to all his business. Let's see the stone. If it's right, I'll give you your hundred." He reached into his pocket and brought out a thick roll of bills.

The boy's eyes bulged at the sight of the wad. Unhesitatingly, he took a fist-sized rock from his pocket. The overhead light showed its rough, deeply pitted black surface, but when he turned it over, Bolton saw a green irregularity imbedded in the roughness. It was translucent, flecked with reddish dots, the size of a small lemon.

"Paw says he bets the thing's a meteor. He says I oughta get morn'n a hundred because a museum would pay a lot of money. . . ."

"I wouldn't know about that," said Bolton, ripping five twenties from his roll. "It's worth a hundred to Kent, and museums don't go throwing money around."

"Shall I look for any more of 'em?"

"Well, I guess Mr. Moore only wants one. You may try selling the others to the museums," he laughed pleasantly.

For several moments, the man stood where he was. He glanced toward the trailer speculatively, then from a pocket brought out two more green stones that matched the one in the rock. "I'd like to stop that damned ad, but if I did, Jerry'd get hep to the fact I got these rocks. But anyway, these are my insurance that he keeps our contract! At that," he added to himself, "they may come in handy to show him if the fool wants to take a walk into the sky! I wonder how many more of the stones there are, anyway?"

He pocketed the three green stones and walked up the midway whistling contentedly, waving an arm to the barker from the freak show.

THE END