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# HE WASN'T THERE!

The little man offered ten years of time-travel for ten cents, but Winant only took two. Two, he found, were plenty!

**K**ELLY wasn't often in New York. When he did get to the city, it was usually on business, and he seldom had more than a few hours a day, for a week at the most, which were unconditionally his own. Those hours he usually spent in the company of an old pal, Winant. The manner of spending was varied, yet bounded by one definite specification: it must offer opportunity for full use of the candid camera.

"The only way to see New York," Winant had advised him as soon as he had picked him up at the station, "is through a thin film of alcohol. It's the greatest city in the world, but out-of-towners generally just can't take it undiluted." Thereupon, though it was only noon when they met, they proceeded to absorb liquor. Like sponges.

The two of them hoofed it up from Penn Station to Times Square, Kelly ticketing his baggage to be sent to his hotel. The Square was almost empty at this hour of a Summer Sunday, but there are almost always some things open and of interest for the out-of-towner, providing, of course, there is someone to point them out, and that the host fits the entertainment to the type of person he entertains.

Kelly and Winant had gone to school together ten years before. Their joint attendance at a farm-college had lasted only one year, Winant quitting at that time through lack of interest. He went on to New York to take the post of minor executive with a publishing company while Kelly finished out the course, then took an offered job as an asphalt salesman whose route covered the small towns of six states in the middle West. Winant envied Kelly his job, though his own paid

more in salary. But Winant wanted, more than anything else, the atmosphere of freedom in which his candid-camera mad friend lived.

Kelly was sleepy. "Let's take in a movie," he suggested. "Maybe I can snap some stills."

Winant stared at the surrounding marquees. "What do you want—first run picture or revival?"

Kelly snorted loudly. "First run! Every show on this street is a revival to me. I've seen all the ones I can stomach." It was quite true, as Winant was aware. Broadway got its "premiere" showings from a week to six months after they had been played in most of the small towns of the country. There didn't seem to be any sane reason for it, thought Winant, and it was a sore spot to his New Yorker ego.

"All right then. Let's forget about the movies," he said. "Tell you what—let's take a squint at the Futurama. It's just around the corner here. You haven't seen *that* in a road company out yonder!"

Kelly shook his head. "Fair enough. Lead on. I'm just in the mood for passive entertainment."

The Futurama, hit of the New York World's Fair of the year before, had been moved to Times Square when the Fair closed its doors for good. The piece was an excellent advertising for the firm sponsoring it, an automobile company. Simple in concept, it had meant a great deal of planning and ingenuity, the outlay of large sums of money, and the labor of many men. You paid your quarter and you walked in. Inside the entrance, an attendant placed you in an armchair, part of a long string of chairs which moved along in an endless chain. You sat down



## By **Hugh Raymond**

and moved a short distance, then there was a faint click and a voice beside your ears began a commentary on the tiny model houses and villages and roadways that were spread out before you. First, you saw a scale model of the countryside of today, with its autos, horses, barns, farmhouses, and death-dealing highways, full of intersections, blind curves, and the like. Suddenly the string of chairs rounded a curve, and you saw, in beautiful exactitude, tomorrow's world.

"It's all about highways, isn't it?" commented Kelly suddenly as they were

sitting down. "Seems like a sort of busman's holiday to me, but I guess it's too late to turn back."

They saw it; they enjoyed it, and they came out proudly wearing white enamel buttons bearing the legend: "I Have Seen the Future!" in their lapels.

Kelly jerked against Winant in astonishment as they left, grabbing his right arm in a death-grip.

"For Heaven's sake! What's that?" he ejaculated.

Winant stared, too, and whipped out his camera.

THE object of their attention paused and smiled. It was a fat little man, occupying loosely the confines of a black Prince Albert coat, with a derby hat on his head. From between the slit in the tails, the end of a loud red handkerchief protruded. The man smiled again, nodding to his photographer, and began to walk up and down before the Futurama, waving a big sign tacked on a broomstick before the eyes of bystanders. In huge, perfectly printed black letters, the sign read:

DON'T BE FOOLED

*The Futurama is a Phoney!*

Patronize the real Stuff!

Time Travel, Inc.

TEN YEARS FOR TEN CENTS!

Satisfaction or your money back.

The bystanders looked and walked on. Some looked back, occasionally, laughing or commenting to their companions, but none paid attention of a serious nature to the little man. Presently the street was almost empty.

"For Heaven's sake!" gasped Kelly again, trying to shake off the mental fog that was swirling about him. "Look at that guy!"

"Interesting," agreed Winant. "Do you suppose that Incorporated part of the sign is on the level?"

"It better be. The Futurama people probably won't care for this guy's picketing them, and they can have him jailed in a second if it isn't actually incorporated."

"I wouldn't want to see him go to jail," said Winant reflectively. "Maybe we can do something about getting him away from here."

Grasping Kelly's arm, he hustled over to the little man, casting about in his mind for a suitable way of opening a conversation. "Uh—er—" he began, "we—my friend and I here—just saw the Futurama. We thought it was pretty good. What's

your service got that it doesn't have?"

"Mine is the real thing," was the fat little man's answer. "It's just what the sign says. I know how to travel in time."

"Ah!" exclaimed Winant, who liked his chance acquaintances to be odd and interesting. Kelly, though amused for a moment by this New York City type-character, decided that the little man must be mad, wondered how he could get Winant away.

"I'm glad that someone at least shows the courtesy of asking about my service," the fat little man went on. "I don't think any of the others believed me—perhaps you do not, either. And I tried so hard to fit my sign to their psychology. Sales pressure, you know; the proper approach and all that soft of thing. All gone to waste. I don't suppose that a single one of the six or seven hundred people that saw me in the time I've been here would be willing to put their stupid prejudices against whatever they haven't been told a thousand times is true to the test. And—that reminds me," he added eagerly. "Will you put me to the test—will you try me out? Remember: 'satisfaction or your money back', just like it says on the sign."

Winant wasn't sleepy any more, not even a little bit. "What do you say?" he asked Kelly. "Shall we see what's ahead for us?"

The fat little man tugged at Winant's sleeve. "You've got entirely the wrong slant!" he exclaimed indignantly. "I am not a fortune teller. I will show you the future—the whole future. The future of the city and country, as a whole. Not your own, particular, individual future."

"Fine," replied Winant heartily. "Well, shall we?"

"I can't," said Kelly. "I just can't. I've got to have lunch with the Sales Manager today. I told you about it, but I guess you forgot it, too, just as I did. Why don't you go ahead and see what it's all about; I'll meet you—tomorrow,



at around noon, in your office. We can have lunch together before I catch my train."

THE fat little man resumed his walking up and down for awhile as the two made their arrangements. Kelly left, and Winant stood undecided for a moment. Then he walked up to the odd man, a bit put out at having been left alone. "Well—when do we start?" he asked.

The fat man looked at him blankly, as though he had forgotten he'd had a prospective customer. "Oh—you," he said finally. "Well, could you wait a few minutes? It would hardly pay me to operate the equipment for just one person, you know. Just ten minutes, if you can wait that long. I'll leave now if you like, but, really, my machine uses up a lot of power, and it would hardly pay me to operate the equipment for . . ."

"Okay, okay," replied Winant. "Where shall I wait?"

"Yes, of course," mused the little man. "You have to wait somewhere, don't you? Well . . . Oh, I know what. Wait in my car. Here," and he fumbled through his pockets, "I'll give you the keys. You won't run off with it, will you? Of course not. It's parked right around the corner. You'll know it—it's a new Pontiac, red car. I like red, myself." He handed Winant the keys, then turned away and resumed his picketing.

Winant stared after him, shrugged, and sought out the car. It *was* a new car, and a very nice one. Also expensive—apparently the little man was not dependent on his "Time-Travel, Inc." for a living. Perhaps, after all, he was really just a practical joker. Winant shrugged again, unlocked the car door and got in. If the fellow was a joker he was going to a lot of trouble, and the denouement was bound to be pretty funny. Possibly even funny enough for the victim to appreciate.

Sinking back into the soft upholstery,

Winant looked about him. Being single and of solitary frame of mind, he was strictly a coupé man himself, and the feeling of so much vacant space in the rear seat behind him gave him a sense of uneasiness. He twisted in his seat and peered at the back. On the floor, he discovered, was a canvas sack. He stretched and prodded it: it was almost empty, but contained some small metal objects that clinked against each other. Coins, possibly, or more probably metal parts for some gadget or other. It suddenly occurred to him that the little man might come along and find him acting inquisitively; hastily he straightened and turned to the front.

There was a radio in the car, he discovered, so, for lack of something better to do, he snapped it on. It warmed up very rapidly, he found, but he encountered difficulties when he tried to dial a station. His fingers slipped as though the plastic knobs were heavily larded with some sort of grease. But it wasn't the knob, after all. He held his hand up before him and saw that there was unpleasant-looking grey slime, with threads of red and yellow floating in it, on his fingers.

Where had he got that? He cast about in his mind, enumerating the things he had touched since he shook hands with Kelly when Kelly left him. Nothing but the keys, the door-handle, and the radio. And—oh yes, that sack in the rear. He twisted around again and examined it more closely.

It was the source of the slimy stuff, all right. It was saturated with it, like a thoroughly rotten apple seems to be saturated with decaying pulp, exuding it if you so much as brush it with a finger. Just what the stuff was, Winant could not guess. Some highly efficient lubricant, possibly, though it seemed to be of animal origin.

Fastidiously he took out a clean hand-

kerchief, scrubbed his hands thoroughly, then rolled down the car window and tossed the handkerchief out into the street.

Just then the little man came up to him, without any further customers. "They chased me," he declared aggrievedly. "The police said I was obstructing the sidewalk."

"That's too bad," said Winant.

"Well, I certainly won't get any more customers here," the little man observed. "We might as well get started."

**A**LTHOUGH so tiny that Winant thought his legs couldn't reach the starter, the little man drove the car very well indeed. As they sped out of the Times Square area into the Central Park residential zone, Winant relaxed.

"What's the principle of this machine of yours?"

The other replied without looking aside. "Power. Lots of it! Time is a medium like the air, or water, or the ground. Ships and airplanes need lots of power to plow their way through their mediums. Earth borers need the same. I can push people through time with an accumulation of simply inconceivable power. All this energy is under perfect control, of course. You needn't worry."

Winant knew a stall when one was thrust on him, and this was one very definitely. For that matter, power was the motivating principle of the automobile, the steam engine, or the electric light bulb. He didn't press the subject, though: the man had a right to his secret. Like all really great inventions it might be so elementary that the slightest hint would give away the whole thing.

The little man was frowning as he drove the big car. Occasionally he would sneak a look at the dashboard or at Winant, or would bend forward and listen to the motors. Something was annoying him; simultaneously, he and Winant realized what it was.

The radio, forgotten since Winant had turned it on, was blaring away tinily. Winant reached to switch it off, or to tune it in more clearly, but the little man was before him. Swiftly, with surprising strength, the heel of his hand descended on the knob and sheared it off. He hammered twice, *hard*, on the front panel of the radio and the blare stopped. A tube broken, Winant thought.

"Damn nuisance," the little man explained. "Radios distract the driver."

"Why did you buy it?"

The little one shrugged. "I didn't know I was buying a radio. They asked me what accessories I wanted, and I didn't know—how should I know? So I told them to put in whatever was usual."

That explained the superfluous fog-lights, spot-lights, chimed horns, and other gadgets he had noted subconsciously when he got in, Winant thought. The salesman, given a free hand, had netted himself some extra commissions. And it proved his guess: the man did have money.

Then the car slowed down before a large house, a private house on a block of large apartment dwellings. Steering the vehicle into the driveway, the little man parked it expertly, shut off the ignition, and threw open the door. They entered the house through the back way.

Inside Winant could find nothing to excite his interest. The furnishings were boringly commonplace. Meanwhile the other had removed his prince albert and, clad now in a shirt and trousers with bright blue suspenders, beckoned Winant toward a door.

"The machinery is in the cellar. I found it easier to set up there, and of course I didn't want the neighbors snooping. Come along."

He led the way down a flight of wooden steps.

Winant, somehow, remembers very little of the appearance of the cellar now. When

he walked through the door, something clicked in his brain, though he didn't hear it click. From then on, everything he saw came to him as if he were looking *through* his eyes rather than *with* them.

There was a confused jumble of brilliant steel and glass all distorted and flowing. And it is easy for him to remember cracklings and the smell of ozone and a surge of tremendous power as the little man threw a giant master switch; and a bit of homely musing that he uttered when he suddenly felt sick at his stomach due to the strangeness of it all: "The current to run this junk must cost a fortune."

He stood in front of a big, crackling vortex of whirling energy. It looked something like an ice cream cone wilting furiously under the attacks of a blow torch, he thought, only the ice cream was flame, and the "torch" was a weaving, singing pivoted bar of metal. Suddenly he felt a touch on his arm.

"Go on, step into it. It won't hurt you. How far into the future do you want to go?"

Winant was far from being an imaginative man.

"Two years," he croaked.

The little man did something to the machine that looked sometimes like a machine and sometimes like a distorting mirror.

"All right, mister, you can step in now."

Winant walked into the blinding glare.

**T**HERE was nothing very alarming about what happened to him then. He felt an instant acceleration, powerful, but not unusual. He had suffered under a stronger pull in many an express elevator. The direction was not unusual, either; it was definitely up—or forward—or possibly a combination of the two.

The Fourth Dimension—he was not

flustered, mentally, at all, and was aware that he must be in the Fourth Dimension, or something of the sort—seemed much more like the express tunnel of a subway train than anything else. Things were flickering around him, the outlines of metal beams and lights moving in various directions. Except for the lights, it was very dark, nor did the lights seem to help him to see anything except their own shining selves. They resembled the odd lights seen over a swamp, or the light of a radium-faced clock: giving no real light but seemingly phosphorescent.

Very suddenly there was a swift braking, and Winant came to a halt. There was nothing to be seen that he hadn't seen before, but he was halted, stopped dead in the middle of black nothingness. Queerly the pillars, or beams, or whatever they were, kept flashing, and so did the lights. But Winant was perfectly motionless in every dimension: of that he was sure.

Then there was a gathering of forces that Winant could perceive but not identify, and, after that, a sensation of resistance, as though he were trying to break through a soft infinitesimally thin sheet of rubber.

Suddenly his whole universe reverberated with the sound of splintering eggshells, and he was through.

He was in the future.

**T**HE first thing he noticed was stillness. At first, he could not make out what was wrong, but merely stood, stock still, waiting and listening for something. A sort of unease quivered in his stomach and he strained his ears trying to pick up the odd sound, until he realized there were no sounds. Only his heart banging away and the noise of his rapid breathing.

Nothing else. No automobiles, trolleys, doorways, planes, or people.

He looked up and realized that no long-

er were there four walls around him. He was standing in a little depression which slanted away, running deeper until, he saw, it gave into a huge, great pit some hundred feet away. Of the large house there was no sign. There must have been an explosion, he thought.

There were buildings, or what was left of buildings, he saw. But they were some distance away. Where he stood was the large cleared space, the slight depression, and the enormous cavity. Rank grass and weeds had sprung up and, perhaps the distance of a half-block in another direction, was a pile of masonry and general wreckage. Weeds half concealed this, as well.

Even from where he stood, he could see that the nearest houses were empty. He turned slowly, looking carefully. In another direction he could see what had been a side street; this too was now twisted and broken by plant-growth and littered with bits of masonry and metal.

Above him, the sky was a dry blue, flecked with the tiniest wisp of cloud. There were no birds. And the silence was maddening.

He strode over toward the buildings he had noted, observing the shattered windows, dust and grime adhering to the remaining splinters of glass in them, the many breaks in the brickwork, and the gutted woodwork.

As he reached the nearest ruin, there was a sudden scurrying, and an enormous rat, almost the size of a cat, bounded out of one gaping hole in the ground at the base of the deserted apartment making a dash across the street. He started half uncomprehending then burst into semi-hysterical laughter as he recalled oratorical predictions that grass would grow in the city streets if certain persons were elected to public office.

He felt tired and old as he entered the doorway of the apartment house.

Strangely enough, there was not the

filth inside that he had expected to find. Dust there was in plenty; there were a few spider webs, further there were evidences that rats, termites, and cockroaches had taken full advantage of the situation. Yet, he mused, the disaster could not have happened more than a year ago. His logical, observant mind told him that it could not have been long. There would be more traces of dissolution; pavements would be lost from sight; so would asphalt roads.

And the rats. The rats would be bolder—they would attack on sight. A clue lay in that last thought. Why hadn't the giant rodent attacked him? It couldn't be fear of man; rats were notoriously unafraid of men, even in the old days—old days—two years back—his shoulders sagged; what could it be except—

Except that provender was so plentiful that they did not need to attack living humans?

The thought was nauseating. He tried, quickly, to pass it from his mind, but could not. He turned to go out, wanting to get into the clean air again; just then, his eyes caught something in a corner, a sight that made him gag and rush for the doorway.

A pile of gnawed bones—*little* bones.

Something was flickering in the air as he emerged from the building. He stared, fascinated, wondering if this could be some form of alien menace. After what he had just seen about him, meeting up with a crew of Martians would have been no surprise. He wondered if there *had* been an invasion from outer space.

The stairs beneath him gave way suddenly and he was precipitated into darkness.

**H**E WAS surprised, not hurt, he soon found. No bones broken; nothing wrenched, no bad bruises or cuts that he could notice. A little light streamed in from above; matches gave him the once-over as to his condition.

He rose, slowly, brushing the dust from his clothes, noting that his trouser leg was slit badly and that there was a tear in his coat. He'd have to change before going into the office—he'd intended to stay up all night, dash into the office at 8, finish that copy and be through by 12. Then he'd take a couple days off because there'd be a big lull after the copy went out—but God help him if it wasn't out on time!

He struck more matches, looking around him. A dampish cellar. Rats no doubt would be plentiful here. Then he saw something in the corner something that moved and crawled restlessly.

It was—or had been—a man. It crawled on its belly, inching along, dragging useless legs behind it. The hair was filthy and matted. The eyes had a gleam in the semi-darkness. The arms, he thought, must be strong and well-developed.

It crawled over to him and stopped. Winant wanted to leave in nothing flat but there was a fascination about the horror that kept him rigid. "Hello!" he said.

The thing looked up at him, speculatively, he thought. "Hello! Hello!" he said. "I'm a friend. Can you talk?"

"Talk," croaked the crawling man.

"Are you alone here?" Winant knew he would have to try to start a conversation or start something. He preferred to try and make conversation.

The voice was a little more nearly human, now. "Alone. Alone here." The crawling man rested now, craning his neck up at Winant. Winant sat down. "Who are you?"

The man stared reflectively. "Have you always lived here? Like this?" Winant bent closer. "I'm a friend; you can tell me."

"Live here like this alone. Always."

It was no use, he thought. The thing was apparently able to understand, but whatever had happened to it had also

robbed it of memory. Which perhaps was something of kindness.

"Alone always," said the crawling man. His voice was a little clearer now. "You friend? You stay?"

"No," replied Winant. "I must go now."

He got up and strode away, looking for a means of egress. It occurred to him that he had better get back to the spot where he'd landed; otherwise the time machine might not be able to pick him up he'd be stranded in this year. He struck matches and found, at length, a door. It did not open.

Striking more matches he examined the hinges carefully and decided that it swung outward. He pushed against it. There was something on the other side. He put more weight now, banging his body upon it. It gave a little.

He decided that it would be better to shove than batter himself by trying to ram it. Consequently he strained at it, feeling it give a little at a time. Then he felt something at his ankle, a tugging.

It was the crawling man.

"You friend," came the voice. "You stay here always."

"No!" he said. "I must go."

"You stay!"

He tried to shove the horror away, but it wrapped its arms around his legs, dragged him down. He fought with it, broke free, but again it clasped his legs. He had to get away; he kicked out, striking the thing's forehead.

Winant reached in his pocket, drew out the matches and struck one, dropping the lighted match on the thing's hand. The hand jerked back and a howl of pain came from its lips. He struck more matches, shoved them in its face. It screamed and threw itself backward, then inched away with amazing rapidity.

The door gave to his pushing and he slipped through, ran up stone steps to the street. For a moment he glanced about

him wildly, shrinking from the glare of the sun, then noted a familiar glow in the air. As he ran toward it, it took on the familiar vortex-shape.

**K**ELLY'S luncheon with the Sales Manager had been a thing of gloom. Kelly knew he was under his quota—no one had to tell him that—so was every other salesman on the force—but it required the stinging honey of the manager's comments to rub it in his face. A hell of a trick, he thought, feeding a man just so you can insult him. He walked back. Kelly was a mild man and he did not want to vent upon a taxi-driver the wrath he felt for his Sales Manager.

It was still daylight, the sun at least an hour from the horizon; Kelly took up his camera, meaning to use the last roll of film in it. He made a couple shots of children in the street, and then, snapping a yellow filter over the lens to blank out some of the light from the blue sky, he took two shots of a particularly lovely cloud formation. That finished the roll. By now every drop of his anger had evaporated. He overflowed with sheer delight and hailed a passing cab.

At the hotel, he handed in the roll of film at the cigar counter, left a call for eight in the morning, and went up to his room to read the day's papers. Then he finished making out his reports and went to bed.

**W**INANT walked out of the vortex of flame much in the same manner as he had gone in. When he looked back, holding one hand to his hat-band, the vortex had vanished and there was a smell of burning flesh in the air.

In the corner, a bubbling heap of burning matter that looked vaguely like a crisp fried egg burdened the air with its smell. Winant clutched at his throat in nausea as the mass flopped and heaved, bulging two or three great eyes toward the ceiling

plaster. Coming down again and again on two red-hot terminals the eyes slowly tore to pieces. Floods of green mucus hissed into steam. Chunks of flabby bone and whole organs flowed away. The scene resembled an insurrection at a pie factory.

Nobody was around. The cellar was empty of life.

Winant clumped around the stinking mass and put his foot down on one end of a tough copper cable extending over the concrete floor. The cable was stretched and bent with the V pointing directly at the now smouldering wreck of a carcass. Recovering from a totally unexpected hot-foot, Winant suddenly understood. The quivering thing, whatever it was (and he was beginning to get an inkling), had tripped over the cable, torn it with tremendous force, and collapsed on top of two high-voltage terminals.

Winant ran from room to room of the house for about ten minutes until he realized that the little man wasn't there.

And, being the kind of man he was, he went down through the cellar and turned off the house current. The terminals cooled down. The machinery looked shiny and pretty for a little while and then melted together like a lump of babbitt in boiling water.

When it was convenient to do so, he went home. No one had seen him arrive; at least no one had recognized him. No one saw him leave.

NEXT morning, Kelly rose on schedule and left the hotel. His films weren't developed yet, he found with some irritation; he'd have to wait until around noon, at the earliest, to get them. He went to his firm's New York office and reported for a final pep-talk from the Sales Manager.

By half past eleven he was free again, and he went over to Winant's office to keep their lunch engagement. But the girl at the switchboard, in response to his request to see Mr. Winant, said that Winant hadn't been in all day, hadn't phoned, and that no one knew where he was. Kelly cooled his heels in the anteroom for an hour, hoping Winant would eventually show up, then went back to his hotel to pack.

On the way to his room he stopped again at the cigar counter to inquire about his pictures. This time they were ready; he paid for them and stuck them in his pocket.

Just to make sure of things, he tried to get Winant on the phone as soon as he was in his room. The same response, though. He'd not been in; no, they hadn't heard from him; yes, she'd personally make sure that he'd phone Kelly the moment he came in. And, seeing that Kelly was an old friend of the missing man's, the operator added the purely gratuitous information that if Winant didn't come in soon, or didn't have a good explanation

for his absence, it might be just as well for him never to come in. Copy for the publisher's fall catalogue had to go out that day, and Winant was the man who had to send it.

Kelly's packing was simple enough. He traveled light by long habit, and it doesn't take much time to fill one suitcase and an overnight bag. When he completed it, he phoned the railroad terminal to check his compartment reservations, then sat down on the bed, eyeing the telephone.

Then he remembered his photographs.

He pulled the envelope of prints out of his pocket and ruffled through the bunch of cardboards, looking for his pet cloud shots. They were disappointing. He hadn't stopped down the aperture far enough, it seemed; the pictures were full of harsh blacks and whites, with no fine gradations of shade. Well, even after ten years as a minicam bug, he still had things to learn. Next time, he would do better.

The others came out okay. He held one picture, a telegraph messenger on a bicycle, the background a row of weather-beaten tenements, up at arm's length, admiring it. That one wasn't bad at all. He'd have to mount it, have a couple of extra prints made, and enter them into various contests.

He glanced hurriedly at the rest. One he looked at and did not comprehend. Then the shapes and planes coagulated in his brain, and he saw it clearly.

*Where in God's name had he made THAT shot?*

He slumped back against the head of the bed, staring at it. He began to breathe again, exhaling in a loud, rasping sigh that was partly a grunt. The muscles of his back and shoulders violently and involuntarily had contracted when he saw the picture. Now they relaxed slowly, and he trembled with great, jolting shudders.

The locale was easily recognizable. It was Times Square, in front of the Futu-

rama. And he remembered what he had photographed: the little fat man in the prince albert.

But the little man wasn't there.

Or rather, something of him was there—a sort of misty outline that looked like a papier-mache make-ready frame. Draped over that frame was a ghastly, flowing, whitish thing with tentacles and staring eyes. A huge bulge of the creature at the edge where it began to blur a little hid a section of the sign, cutting out the words: "or your money back."

Stupid! A trick of the developer!

Or bad photography.

He looked at the tiny print again. It wasn't bad photography. He had rarely seen a clearer print.

Kelly got up and took out a cigarette. He took out a match, cupped it in his hand, struck it, and lit the cigarette.

He stood there in the middle of the floor, staring toward the innocuous-looking rectangle of coated paper that he had thrown on the bed. In a moment or so he became conscious of a pain in his right hand. He looked down; the match had burned itself out between his fingers. A huge white blister had already formed on each of the three. He threw the dead match to the floor, jammed his hurt hand into a trousers pocket and sucked on his cigarette. No smoke came into his lungs. He looked at the cigarette; it was broken almost in two by his shaking hand.

To hell with his train reservations! With great precision he extracted and lit another cigarette and went out.

"I'll find Winant and straighten this thing out," he mumbled to himself as he waited for the elevator.

But he didn't find Winant. Not even though he scouted in every conceivable place that Winant might be, even, eventually, put the police on Winant's trail.

Nobody ever really found Winant again.

THE END