

# SUPER-SCIENCE FICTION

Vol. 2 — No. 3

April, 1958

## CONTENTS

### NOVELETTES

- PLANET OF PARASITES** *by Calvin M. Knox* ..... 2  
Something serious was the matter on Gama Crucis
- THE TOOL OF CREATION** *by J. F. Bone* ..... 80  
At last they saw how new worlds begin

### SHORT STORIES

- ALL THE TROUBLES OF THE WORLD** *by Isaac Asimov* ... 34  
The huge computer could solve any problem, except—
- ALL-PURPOSE ROBOT** *by Jay Wallace* ..... 54  
The mechanical man could do everything!
- I WANT TO GO HOME** *by Robert M. Williams* ..... 68  
Are we sure we really belong on Earth?
- THE SEED OF EARTH** *by Robert Silverberg* ..... 102  
He didn't want to die on an alien world until—
- THE SITUATION ON SAPELLA SIX** *by Harlan Ellison* ..... 116  
Earthmen may not be alone in outer space
- PAIN REACTION** *by T. Cogsuwell & H. Randolph* ..... 125  
The secret chemical was much too deadly

### FEATURES

- DATED METEORS** ..... 53
- NUCLEAR NEWS** ..... 67

**COVER** *by Emsh*

**ILLUSTRATIONS** *by Emsh, Orban and Bowman*

**W. W. Scott — Editor**

SUPER-SCIENCE FICTION is published bi-monthly by Headline Publications Inc., at 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke, Mass. Editorial office at 1790 Broadway, New York 19, N. Y. Entered as second class matter at the post office at Holyoke, Mass., August 21, 1956, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Single copy 35c. Subscription rates, \$4.00 for 12 issues. Not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, and all such materials must be accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes. All stories printed in the magazine are fiction, and any similarity between the characters and actual persons is coincidental. Copyright 1958 by Headline Publications Inc. All rights, including translation, reserved under International Copyright Convention and Pan American Copyright Convention. Printed in the U.S.A.

# I WANT TO GO HOME

by ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS

*illustrated by* ORBAN

Why are we alive on this earth? Does anyone know?  
How can anyone be sure we are now where we belong  
and that no cosmic mistake has somehow been made?

**F**OR a moment, the noise in the adjoining room died down enough to allow Calvin Thurber to think clearly. He was not certain this helped. Judging by the contents of the folder in front of him, he was not sure that he wanted to think at all. In the juvenile department of even the most modern police station on earth, some things were beyond human power to change, particularly the power of the police psychologist.

"You go to hell, you dirty-nosed cop!" Thurber heard the kid yell through the thick door that led into the next room.

*Smack!*

Thurber hurriedly turned his

attention back to the papers in the folder. This file had been sent down to him as soon as the arrest had been made. Since this was a juvenile case, he had by law wide latitude in determining what disposition would be made of it.

"The child spoke at four months. His first words, according to his mother, were, '*I want to go home.*' These words formed a recurring theme through infancy and childhood and formed the basis of nightmares from which, according to his mother, he would awaken screaming in terror. Nor was she able to reassure him in these seizures, since he did not seem at these



times to recognize her as his mother and she seemed to excite as much fear in him as the hidden fantasies of the night."

Thurber gave the social worker who had compiled this report a mental pat on the back. The mother's words must have been pure garbage. The worker who had written up the interviews had managed to turn the mother's unfinished sentences into a clear, coherent narrative. This report had been made after the first arrest, of which there had been several, he noted.

Because both parents had worked, Ralph had been placed in a nursery school. He was unable to make an adequate adjustment there, nor, though placed in special classes, was he able to adjust adequately at any time until his junior year in high school, at which time his many trancies reached culmination and he stopped school and left home.

"His grades in school were not impressive, this in spite of the fact that repeated testing indicated his IQ was very high. His teachers reported that he

regarded these tests as being games and that he had no inkling of their significance. But, despite this opinion, his high IQ made it likely that he did know the importance of the tests and that his treatment of them as games was merely another way of demonstrating his rebellion against authority.

"Ralph's police record began when he was nine—petty theft. Found guilty, he was placed on probation, but efforts of probation officers to maintain control over him were not measurably successful. At the date of this summary, he has had five arrests, two on charges of theft and three on charges of burglary. Oddly, all of the stores he burglarized specialized in the sale of electronic equipment and all of his thefts were for stealing merchandise of this type."

Thurber felt a twitch of rising interest at this item—a juvenile delinquent who specialized in burglarizing stores that sold electronic equipment! "What's he trying to do—make a radio set that will contact Mars?" the psychologist wondered.

THINGS were quiet in the next room now, Thurber realized with relief. Although he was an employee of the police department, he had never accepted the brutality that old-time officers occasionally used. The .38 caliber revolver which had been issued to him, he kept carefully hidden in his desk drawer. His eyes went back to the folder.

"Ralph seems to have been a complete individualist at all times. Living in a neighborhood infested with teen-age gangs, he belonged to none."

"A lone wolf," the psychologist thought. Turned criminal, the lone wolf often gave the police enormous difficulty, simply because his habit of working alone left few clues—and no stool pigeons—behind him. On the other hand, going with the culture instead of fighting it, the lone wolf was often the brilliant engineer of the famous scientist, simply because he dared to travel where there were no trails.

A knock sounded on the door. "Just a minute," Thurber called. Hastily scanning the rest of the report, he found

little of significance in it. "All right, come in," he called.

A sergeant brought the boy in. The officer's face was red, and a button was missing from his uniform. He laid the arrest report on Thurber's desk and turned away. Pausing at the door, he said, "If you need any help, I'll be right here."

"Thank you, sergeant. However, I am sure Ralph and I will get along fine."

Glowing, the kid stood beside his desk. Tall and thin, he had a bruise on his right cheek. Thurber guessed that this was probably related to the button missing from the sergeant's uniform.

"Ralph, I'm Calvin Thurber." The psychologist rose and offered his hand. The kid stared at him as if he did not know what was expected. "Oh, come now, you know how to shake hands," Thurber said, jovially.

"Yeah, but I'm not shaking hands with no stinkin' cop!"

Thurber lost none of his geniality. "Really, Ralph, I'm not a cop. I'm a psychologist. My purpose here is to help peo-

ple who are in trouble, especially young men—"

"You lie like all the other cops," the kid answered.

Unruffled, Thurber answered, "I have no way to prove my words to you at present, but if you will give me a fair chance, I will show you that I mean what I say. What have you got to lose by playing ball with me? After all, I might mean what I am saying!" The psychologist put sincerity into his voice, and meant it. "Just sit down for a few minutes while I look over the arrest report. Ah—smoke?"

In Thurber's experience, most juvenile delinquents did smoke. Often they were marijuana addicts.

This one surprised him. "No, thanks. Never touch them." Much of the hostility had gone out of Ralph's voice. He sat down in the chair beside Thurber's desk.

The report was brief. "Apprehended filching electrical switches from a delivery truck. Resisted arrest." The signature of the arresting officer was an illegible scrawl.

More electronic equipment!

A question leaped to the tip of Thurber's tongue. It was the usual question, "Why are you so interested in electrical devices?" He would have asked any man who had been repeatedly charged with pilfering a particular article why the thief was so interested in this one thing. In this way, a compulsion could perhaps be brought to light, which when corrected, might change a thief into an honest man.

To Thurber's surprise another question actually came from his lips. To him, carefully trained in saying exactly what he wanted to say, and no more, this was astonishing. If his right hand had formed a fist and had struck him in the nose, he would not have been more surprised.

"Why do you want to go home?" was the question he actually asked.

THE kid was out of his chair in an instant. His hands were balled into fists and the dazed psychologist's first impression was that Ralph was on the verge of striking him.

"Why do you ask that?"

What do you mean by asking me that? Why—"

"Really, Ralph, I had no intention of asking that question," the startled psychologist answered.

"Then why did you ask it?"

"I don't know. I intended to ask something else." Thurber had to fight to regain his composure. "Of course, I know the source of it. It's right here in the records, the first words you ever spoke—"

Thurber showed him the case history. "Oh, that nosey social worker who kept prying around when I was a kid." Ralph seemed relieved to know the source of the question, but, as if the query had opened up hidden thoughts, he seemed more tense than before. The psychologist, still startled at the reaction, wondered what deep trauma had been brought to the surface by his question. Later, he would desperately wonder why he had ever asked this question in the first place.

"What was there about going home that upset you so much?"

"I'm not upset," Ralph denied. "To prove it, he slid back

into the chair beside Thurber's desk. A film of sweat was visible on his forehead.

"Is there a relationship between wanting to go home and pilfering electronic equipment?" the psychologist asked. He was guessing in the dark and he knew it.

"Nah," the kid said. The sweat appeared more profusely on his forehead. On the arms of the chair, his hands showed signs of tremor.

Thurber wondered how much tremor he would show if he knew that he faced a prison sentence, if found guilty on the present charge, on the grounds that he was a habitual offender? Also since his last offense, Ralph had passed his eighteenth birthday, which in this state changed the legal picture by lifting him out of the category of a juvenile offender. The front office had made a mistake on the age, but was not yet aware of it.

"Why do you want electronic equipment?"

"I like to build things."

"What kind of things?"

"Electronic stuff."

"What kind of electronic

stuff?" Thurber's knowledge in this field was limited but the kid did not know this.

"If you will get my things, I'll show you."

"What things?"

"The stuff they took away from me when they booked me."

Getting what Ralph wanted took some telephoning and some doing. Finally an officer lugged a battered army surplus bag into the psychologist's office, got a receipt from him for it, and left. Thurber lifted the bag to the top of his desk and opened it.

The contents held little interest for him, but to the kid they seemed to open the way to a new life. As the bag opened, Ralph opened up, too. Instantly he became friendly and co-operative. His voice rattled rapidly. His talk was of electrons, ions, and particles smaller than either. Thurber tried hard to look interested, but, so far as he could see, the stuff was so much junk.

"How is this going to help you get home?" he asked, searching again for the trauma that he suspected.

THIS time the question did not make Ralph angry. As if the delivery of his beloved junk had opened deep wells of companionship between them, he was willing to talk. His words were to the point, Thurber thought.

"First, we have to establish where home is," Ralph said.

"Yes," Thurber said.

"It's not here."

"Um."

"It's *there*."

"Ah!" the psychologist said.

"I don't belong here," the kid continued. "As a matter of fact, I doubt if any human belongs here."

"On Earth, you mean, or in a police station?" Thurber queried when the referents for the words were not forthcoming.

"Earth. I don't believe any of us ever belonged here. Oh, we've learned to live here, sort of, and there are a lot of us, but we only appeared here in the first place because some of us got trapped here a long time ago. We've been breeding here while we tried to find our way out. This has gone on so long that most of have even forgotten where home is."



"Oh, yes," Thurber said. "How does it happen that you do know?"

"I always remembered."

"But why do you remember when no one else does?"

"A lot of people do remember, only they're afraid to talk about it." A frown furrowed the kid's face as his fingers paused in their task of assembling pieces of electronic equipment into an organization of some kind. Watching, Thurber had the impression that his fingers had eyes of their own. Incredibly deft, the kid did not seem to have to look to know what he was doing. "I think we're here as a result of a slip-up somewhere?"

"You mean somebody goofed?"

"No, not some *body*. "There's nothing personal about this. I mean a law slipped somewhere, or a higher law that we don't know about entered the picture and upset the balance. However the explanation goes, it works out that I don't really belong here at all. Not this time anyhow."

THE psychologist kept himself from thinking that this was schizophrenia. He knew it was, of course, all his training told him this. In his mind he was busy finding words for his recommendation to the judge. "Suggest hospitalization—" He felt regret as he found the words he wanted. In spite of the record, he liked this kid, and didn't want him in an institution. He knew how grim even the best of them were. He sincerely hoped that some understanding psychiatrist would give Ralph a chance to work with electronics. Judging from what he had seen, the road of recovery lay in that direction.

And yet, somehow, this was not a sick mind. The schizophrenic didn't usually talk in terms of laws in operation, he made the laws into personalities malefically directed at him.

"I've got it!" the kid exclaimed.

"What do you mean?" Thurber asked.

"I've got it assembled the way I want it. I had it all figured out and all I needed were the time-delay switches which

I was swiping when the stupid cops grabbed me!" The kid's nostrils flared and excitement rasped his voice.

Thurber, suddenly wondering if he had some infernal device on his hands, was perturbed. He had always been more than halfway willing to believe that if you put the right combination of transistors, wires condensers, and coils together, anything might happen. He had no sound basis for this belief, which had persisted since he had been a kid himself. With visions of the building blowing up dancing in his mind, he became apprehensive.

"Hold up for a minute there, Ralph!" Thurber's voice was sharp. "What's that thing supposed to do?"

"Take me home!" the kid answered. He pushed a switch. A click sounded. Soundless light flared for a moment. Thurber felt a nameless wave-pulse pass through his body. His hair began to stand on end.

As if puzzled, the kid stared at the assembly. "It ought to work," he muttered.

"Something wrong?" Thurber said, almost maliciously.

Secretly he was vastly relieved that nothing had happened. Or had something happened? His hair was still standing on end.

"Yeah," Ralph said, out of a brown study. His fingers were exploring every instrument on the top of the desk. "I don't understand it. I was sure I had everything right this time."

"You've tried this before?"

"I've tried nothing else since I yapped at Mom the first time that I wanted to go home!" the kid snarled at him. "I was trying to work this out with my first set of building blocks, only nobody knew it."

"Then perhaps it is time you gave this up and began working on practical electronics," Thurber said, firmly. "Go to a school that specializes in this sort of thing, get an education from the ground up..."

Mentally he was puzzling over the exact wording of his recommendation to impress the judge. "Strongly recommend further clemency and parole. Ralph has great natural talent at electronics. He has agreed to enter Polytechnic at the coming term—"

So far Thurber's imagination took him. And no farther. He could imagine influencing the judge and he could fantasy the court agreeing to further parole, but he could not force his imagination to the point of foreseeing this lone wolf entering school of his own free will.

"How closer to the ground can you get than building blocks?" the kid answered, confirming the psychologist's imagination. "What I want to know they don't teach in school. Ah!" Satisfaction suddenly appeared in his voice.

"What happened?"

"It was the tuning that was wrong. The exact frequency is very important. The condensers must have gotten a little damp." The deft fingers worked rapidly. "Now watch!"

Again the switch snapped shut. Again Thurber felt the surge of the nameless electric pulsation through his body. This time it seemed to affect every molecule in his being, perhaps every atom.

"Goodbye," Ralph whispered. "I've got it right this time. *I've got it right!*"

Elation, exultation, the wild tones of joy were in his tones.

Light flared somewhere, a soundless puff of it. Face first, the kid slid down into the chair beside Thurber's desk.

Thurber needed several minutes to realize that he was dead.

**E**VEN after the body had been removed and a report from an assistant medical examiner had indicated that there was no obvious cause of death and that the determination of the actual cause would have to wait on an autopsy, the dazed psychologist could not believe that the kid was actually dead. True, he had seen the body fall, true he had summoned help, true he had assisted in carrying the body from the room, true he had the report of the assistant ME, true his eyes had seen all of this, and true his ears had heard the sounds, but he still did not believe it. A human being could not be so full of life one instant—and dead the next.

Had there ever been such a person as Ralph Kine? It would be a pleasure to believe

that the kid had never existed, that all that he had seen had been a product of his imagination. In time he might talk himself into believing this, but as for now there was the kid's equipment on his own desk in front of his own eyes.

He reached for the phone, to have the equipment and the battered bag picked up and returned to its proper place, and to retrieve his receipt. This would be needed at the inquest, he told himself.

As he started to pick up the phone, he realized he was lying to himself. What he was trying to do was to remove the evidence so he would not have to continue believing that what he had seen happen had actually taken place. He checked the movement to pick up the phone.

What about this generator that had actually caused the kid's death? Thurber began examining it. He called it a generator in the absence of a better name for it, but what had it actually generated besides a soundless puff of light and a wave form that had seemed to touch every atom in his body?

Thurber had the suspicion that he should call in electronics experts, the best in the field, to examine the device the kid had assembled, on the hypothesis that perhaps information of military importance might be gleaned from it.

"And get myself called a fool?" He decided against his action. Psychologists were not well enough regarded for him to take careless chances with his position.

A gadfly of thought was buzzing in his mind. He knew an idea was seeking expression. He had a hunch that he did not wish to look at this idea and he tried to push it out of his mind. It came again, stronger than ever, and forced its way into his consciousness.

*"I want to go home, too!"* he exclaimed.

THE idea had power in it, such longing as he had never known. Nothing in his life had been as important as this desire to go home. He had the .38 completely out of his desk drawer before he realized what he was doing.

"No!" Dropping the gun, he shoved the drawer shut. Sweat bathed his body. Tremors shook it. Although many of the people he saw professionally had tried to tell him about suicidal impulses, this was his first experience with them.

He left the room, paced to the drinking fountain, smoked a cigarette, and returned to his office much calmer, he thought. As soon as he entered the room, the desire to go home hit him again, stronger than before.

Finding the switch the kid had used, he pushed it.

Again the nameless wave cut through his body. With it came knowledge and ecstasy. The knowledge was that he too, was an alien here. The

kid had been right! All humans were aliens! They belonged somewhere else.

The ecstasy came from the knowledge that he was going *there*, he was going where he belonged, he was going—home!

He did not feel his body fall forward across the generator. Nor did he care. Dying was not important. It was only graduation to the place where he belonged.

The inquest for Thurber was held immediately following the hearing in re Ralph Tine. In both cases, the coroner's jury returned a verdict of "death from causes unknown."

Humans still called it *death*.

THE END

