

WONDER STORIES

"The Magazine of Prophetic Fiction"



VOL. 7 No. 4
SEPTEMBER, 1935

Published by Continental Publications, Inc. H. Gernsback, President; I. S. Manheimer, Secretary. Publication Office, Myrick Building, 29 Worthington Street, Springfield, Mass. Editorial and General Offices, 99 Hudson Street, New York, N. Y.

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● ON THE COVER

This month we find illustrated one of the conceptions of the most conceited scientist in the world—Haskel van Manderpootz, showing the mechanical equivalent of the predatory tiger—from "The Ideal" by Stanley G. Weinbaum. Cover by the famous Paul.



(Illustration by Saaty)

As they raced through the air, the wind bore to his sharp ears the sound of Di Marco's cackling laughter.

ONE HUNDRED GENERATIONS

By

PHILIP JACQUES BARTEL

● At the shrill hum of the visicast receiver, Smith-Jay nervously came out of his deep reverie and glided to the control panel.

He closed a switch and spoke into a visiphone: "Science-Research Section L-42; Smith-Jay, director, present!"

The platinoid screen clouded and cleared. At the venerable face that appeared before his startled eyes, Smith-Jay inwardly quailed.

"Burke-Sol, Discipline Bureau, City of Neonia. I am directed to order you to depart at once to the capitol at Xenonia for a conference with the Executive Section of the Supreme Council. No delay will be tolerated." Burke-Sol's cynical expression seemed more pronounced than usual as he concluded his message.

"At last it has come," murmured Jay in despair, "but so soon! Surely I understood that I was to have still another month!"

Civilization's greatest minds had unanimously agreed, at the latest session of the Supreme Council, that humanity had reached its highest point of development five hundred years before. True enough, the Science-Research Smiths, proudest of the world's family groups, were reporting new ingenious discoveries almost daily. But insofar as the main issues of the Physical Improvement and Development of Man were concerned, no progress had been made for centuries.

After thousand-year cycles of Democratic, Socialistic, and Fascistic governments, the people of the Earth broke up into groups or guilds of skilled workers, who, ignoring ancient national boundar-

● We give you here the third story by this new author that it has been our pleasure to accept. It is written in the same delightful style as his previous work, and if you have read his "Twenty-Five Centuries Late" and "The Elixir of Progress," we know that you are contemplating a rare treat and we guarantee that you will not be in the least bit disappointed.

Like in his other stories, we find here a real O. Henry ending—not just a plain surprise. It is the clever twist on the last page (and we beg you not to spoil the story by looking at it first) that makes the present yarn what our rural friends would call a "humdinger."

We find here the story of the most colossal experiment in history—one that takes "One Hundred Generations," and the findings will more than amaze you.

ies, grew to learn that all Progress depended on co-operation.

At first these guilds drew off by themselves and pursued their own art or profession, which greatly developed and improved under this system of uninterrupted study. Male and female students and workers of each group married only among themselves, thereby forming huge families who controlled separate industries and professions.

Recognizing the need for inter-family understanding, the family groups met and formed a Paternalistic System of government, consisting of the Patriarchs who were the heads of the individual families.

Further divisions were made to establish Eugenic, Nutrition, Transportation, Science-Research, Construction, and Communication Councils. As the years passed, these too, were subjected, each by a different Family-Group, until in this Fifty-Fifth Century of light, the bare mention of an individual's surname immediately told his profession.

With the disappearance of political boundaries, the moral and mental make-up of the people radically changed. Greed, envy, vice, and corruption together with selfishness rapidly waned, as concern for the benefit of the individual gave place to an interest only for the good of the community or Family-Group.

Members of each Family were directly responsible to the ruling Patriarch, who in turn answered to the Supreme Council of which he was a member, and whose decision was final.

Thus, freed from thoughts of war and material profit, civilization advanced with great strides. Invention and discoveries of vital importance to the welfare of all quickly dispensed with the need for hard labor. Intricate machines automatically supplied food, clothing, and shelter, and every want was almost anticipated.

Though the Historian-Council, through the mouth of their Patriarch, the popular Governor Green-Fred, called the opening of the year 5400 the Golden Age, his fellow-members of the Supreme Council did not agree with him.

"Man," stated the aged Smith-Ray, present Governor of the Supreme Council, "has gained mentally and morally, but not physically. We must concern ourselves with the problem of restoring his once powerful frame. What matter it if he gain marvelous mental powers, if the use of his legs, now shrivelled to uselessness by neglect, is gone forever? Suppose that by an earthquake or tidal wave our complicated system of energy-generation is destroyed? How will man move about in his attempt to restore it?"

"To this effect, I order a Special Section of the Science-Research Council to be created, bearing the number 'L-42' and appoint Smith-Jay to be its director. You will interest yourself only in the problem of restoring Man's powerful physique or discovering a suitable substitute. Exactly one's years time is given you. Waste not one moment of it!"

These words rang in Smith-Jay's ears as he donned his weather-hood and guided his carriage to the first level.

Sadly he reflected: "The venerable Smith-Ray is right. Even *I* dare not tempt the dangers of the outer air without my weather-hood for fear that pneumonia or worse might set in and death follow. Truly, Humanity is in the last stages of debility!"

One year he had received in which to arrive at a solution to this Universal Problem, but at the present time, just eleven months had passed without a single result. And now came the Supreme Council's summons!

Had they spied on his labors? Had a member of the treacherous Discipline-Council, the Burke-Family, in disguise, slipped into his Section and read the almost blank pages of the daily record-book?

He was sure that this was not the case. The Supreme Council did not stoop to spy on their trusted workers.

"Well," he sighed hopelessly, "perhaps I have been summoned to hear some suggestion. But why worry needlessly? I'll find out soon enough!"

● His rubber-tired carriage silently sped over the smooth pavement and soon he was at the base of the metal tower in which he and his young bride made their home.

He glanced at the visitor's panel and saw that it was illuminated. Evidently, Smith-Elsa was at home. A smile came over his bland face as he thought of his wife. How clever she was! In her own Council, she was slated for the next directorship.

The Eugenics-Council, in their infinite wisdom, had made a wise selection when they chose Elsa for his mate. Although perfect strangers until the day of their wedding, a strong feeling of affection had sprung up between them. The word "Love" was not in their category — and rightly so.

Each had been turned over to the Eugenics-Council, right after birth, and for twenty years had been educated in accordance with the rules of the Scientific-Smiths. During that period, neither had

ever gazed upon an unmarried member of the other's sex.

At the age of twenty they had been eugenically typed. The Local Bureau had carefully examined their physiological records before pairing them for marriage. But even then, the approval of the Smith Patriarch had been necessary. This was a prerogative the Smiths had refused to relinquish. The scientific glory of their venerated Family must not diminish!

Jay pressed the annunciator-button and presented his face to the panel. Soon a buzz was heard and Elsa's round, bald head bobbed permission to enter.

This permission to intrude upon an individual's privacy was necessary even in one's own family, as the Council feared that an abrupt intrusion some day might break up an important train of thought. Most of the Smith-Family's important discoveries had been the result of hours of quiet, peaceful meditation. These were greatly to be encouraged.

"Greetings, Jay," she murmured as he entered. "You appear worried. Has anything gone wrong with your labors?"

"Nothing, Elsa—save that I am summoned to Xenonia for a conference."

"A conference!" she exclaimed, "but surely your time is not up?"

"I have still a month," he nodded.

"Then what can they desire?"

"Perhaps some suggestion as to a new method of procedure."

Elsa composed her features. "Nothing to be concerned about, I am sure. You'd better hurry; the public conveyance for Xenonia leaves in ten minutes. Wait—I'll make certain of the time."

She slid noiselessly to the visicast receiver and adjusted a dial.

"Second Zone Time," droned the speaker, "Eleven minutes before sixteen o'clock. The fifth day of Equality, 5401."

"I'll accompany you to the landing platform," she said. "Just a moment till I put on my weather-hood."

Jay muttered an objection, but she waved him aside, and together they glided, side by side, to where the public convey-

ance, a huge polytrol, prepared for its journey to the Capital City of Xenonia.

The young scientist slid to a gate where, at an attendant's challenge, he bent his head and exhibited his tattooed identification marks. With a grunt, Jay and Elsa were permitted to pass.

She rolled up the gangplank after him and saw that his carriage was tightly fastened to its holder in the side of the craft, then looked at him anxiously.

"Jay," she inquired, "have you enough food-tablets? You may be away for days."

"Silly child," he chided, "as if the polytrol hasn't food for all!" Secretly he enjoyed her anxiety and interest.

"I'll be at my laboratory until the twenty-fourth hour tonight, if you want me. Let me hear from you," she faltered.

The Transportation-Council's attendant whistled the starting signal and slid down the aisle, closely eyeing the carriage fastenings.

Elsa turned the power-handle of her conveyance and touched Jay's hand in farewell.

"Work steadily," he mumbled after her in the parting expression of the day.

The gangplank was withdrawn and the polytrol began its flight.

Turning on his carriage, Jay followed Elsa with his eyes. A chilling premonition told him that strange events would occur before they would meet in the flesh once more. He was right.

CHAPTER II

Humanity's Need

● Smith-Jay glanced down the long aisles filled with passengers of all arts and industries. Many he knew. Right ahead of him was Reade-Mel, vice-governor of the Nutrition-Council, in whose charge was the responsibility of feeding half the world.

At his right sat Green-Jo, a director of a Historian-Council Section, famous for his satirical version of the day's news. Many times had this news-gatherer

shocked his more conservative listeners with lusty tales of past civilizations and grated their sensitive nerves with his strange bursts of uncontrolled laughter. But none dared complain, as who could tell the name of the next victim that Jo would pick for one of his mortifying comparisons?

Jones-Lem of the Transportation-Council, just across the aisle, leaned over and bobbed a greeting. Absent-mindedly, Jay grunted a reply. His thoughts were on serious things.

His breast swelled with pride as he reviewed the marvelous inventions that his great family, the Science-Smiths, had given to Humanity. Centuries back when the experts had realized that the use of atomic energy was fast using up the planet's resources, it was a Smith who had led the movement for the replacement of atomic power by the invention of still another Smith—Rojonol, the great catalyst whose presence caused the sun's rays to be converted into a fuel for the dynamos of the earth. And wasn't it a Smith who perfected the science of telekinetics that enabled men to send power through the air and even through the earth to millions of receiving mechanisms, large and small?

Even this gigantic polytrol, hurling itself through the stratosphere at a thousand miles per hour in an arc that would bring it down precisely at the Antarctic Capital City of Xenonia, was perfected by a Smith in collaboration with a Transportation-Council-Jones!

But Green-Fred was wrong. This was *not* the Golden Age of Civilization! Man *had* sold his birth-right for a Mess of Pottage!

True enough, he had uncountable scientific marvels at his command, but at what cost!

His once well-shaped head unrecognizably changed. Bulging at the top—from extreme mental concentration—round and bald, it shone like the top of ancient Mount Olympus. Then narrowing down unsymmetrically to a puny jaw, it was shriveled from lack of mastication

of teeth long lost in a glorious past of artificial substitutes!

Of course teeth would disappear if food was no longer chewed! Pills and concentrated food-tablets made this inevitable!

And their lower limbs!—once muscular and pleasing to the eye. Look at them now! Flabby, tiny flippers. Useless for support, tender and clumsy, always in the way. Why, someone had started a movement for their amputation at birth! He claimed that they were using up energy that the debilitated human body could hardly afford to lose! Who needed them, anyway? Small, speedy, and comfortable carriages were satisfactory substitutes and took the rider wherever he wanted to go, providing the road was not too bumpy.

Smith-Jay shivered when he recalled his last visit to the local Eugenics-Council Bureau. Infants were being born with shrunken, shriveled stomachs; boneless feet—

With a shudder, he drove the horrible sight from his mind! The Supreme Council was right. Something had to be done soon or early generations would be born with nothing but highly developed skulls, and no physique to speak of!

A slight vibration of the speeding ship informed him that they were nearing their destination. He glanced through the transparent walls of the polytrol and watched it land.

The sun brightly reflected from the golden towers of the Capitol, beautifully set in a field of eternal snow. The ancients had chosen the southern ice-cap of the earth for two reasons. First, its position was nearest to the planet's greatest cities on account of its central location. Secondly, the extreme cold furnished an additional handicap for a possible enemy. Of the two, the latter had been almost forgotten in the disappearance of all strife. The former had proven a real convenience.

As they approached, Jay saw an opening appear in one large tower, and with one swift, accurate movement, the polytrol entered.

In a moment it had completely stopped

and the door had closed behind it. Attendants rushed to assist the passengers to alight and Jay found himself rapidly descending in a fast elevator to the Executive Chamber.

At the entrance to the immense room, he was stopped and challenged. Again his tattooed identification passed him through.

He rolled into an anteroom and took his place in a line of arriving delegates. Some he recognized. They bobbed their heads coldly and turned away. Others just stared at him curiously.

They turned into the hall. Jay felt his heart beat faster and faster. Why had he been summoned here? Was he to be punished for negligence? Negligence was treason. Treason against Humanity was punished in one way only — *disintegration!*

CHAPTER III

Aid from the Unknown

● The opening of a session of the Supreme Council always thrilled Smith-Jay. It was not only the fact that here, under one roof, was gathered the greatest minds of the age. The ceremony and seriousness of the procedure, the respect shown to the aged Patriarchs, all excited his emotions. Not the least of his enjoyment was his pride in the fact that this reverent Supreme Council was governed by his own family Patriarch, the venerable Smith-Ray!

Like the shining white keys in a mathematical calculator, the gleaming bald heads took their positions in innumerable tiers, until the entire hall was filled.

The wrinkled Smith-Ray looked up and raised a diamond gavel. Three raps and the hum of conversation died out. In the silence, his sharp voice echoed to the farthest corner of the room.

"By the power in me vested, I, Smith-Ray, Governor of the Supreme Council, declare this meeting regularly called to order. I pray that the All-Powerful Master-Worker grant that our purposes and plans be successful. The roll of Council-Governors will now be called."

The heads of thirty-three Art and Industrial Councils were all present. Smith-Ray continued.

"Is Smith-Jay, director of Science-Research Section L-42 present?"

"I am here, Great Leader!" Jay's voice trembled. Now he was in for it!

Almost kindly, the elderly Governor answered his salutary bob. "My son, your loyalty and zeal is known unto us. Learn why you have been summoned from your labours one month before your report was due. Will Burke-Sid, Director of Discipline-Council Section B-12 make his report?"

All eyes turned to the center of the hall, where the small body of Burke-Sid glided forward on its carriage.

"Great Leader," he boomed, "I am ready."

"Then proceed!"

Burke-Sid cleared his throat and began. "As all the respected Governors and delegates undoubtedly know, I am the Discipline-Council director in immediate charge of the supervision and policing of all the territory bounded by the Equator, on the south, the fifth degree parallel of latitude on the north, and from the seventieth to the eightieth parallels of longitude, east to west.

"When I took command of Post 'R' of Section B-12, I consulted the electrical log in order that I might become more familiar with the methods of my predecessors. Imagine my astonishment on learning that for a period of two thousand years, strange occurrences had taken place exactly at the end of thirty year intervals!

"The records showed that this post, which is a lonely one situated on the top of a mountain peak, was discovered burnt to ashes exactly every thirty years. The log which is always kept in a fire-proof container was the only instrument recovered. No life was ever lost. The conflagration always took place when the director was off on a patrol.

"I determined to arrange to be present at Post 'R' on the next thirtieth anniversary and find out for myself what mys-

terious influence was the cause of destroying our station. I ordered my assistant to make my rounds for me that day and prepared for a long vigil.

"I was not disappointed. The thirteenth hour had scarcely been born when I heard a loud bump on the metal roof of the station. I dashed outside as fast as my carriage would permit, but there was nothing in sight, save a dark form that disappeared in some low-hanging clouds. I knew that it could not have been a flying-craft, as the indicator would long have informed me of an approaching ship.

"Knowing that if I was to learn what had happened I would have to look in another direction, I ascended to the roof of the station and found this sealed tube. Not daring to open it, I visicasted to my superior officer for permission. He ordered me to get a relief and report to Xenonia for further instructions. Here is the tube, Great Leader!"

Smith-Jay, his mind now freed from worry, stared intensely at the metal cylinder in Burke-Sid's hand.

The aged Governor took the tube from Burke-Sid's hand and removed one cap. He turned to Green-Fred, the Historian-Chief, and addressed him.

"Venerable Sir, will you be good enough to again translate this message so that all present will understand it?"

"Willingly, Great Leader." He turned to the assemblage.

"When first this letter was given to me, I could barely decipher it. It is written in the script of the Twenty-Fifth Century, and it was necessary for me to consult ancient records before I could read it. The following is a literal translation.

"To The Supreme Council, Family Groups of the Earth: Greeting. I have been informed that one of your representatives is determined to remain at his post until he discovers the cause of the series of fires, which I make bold to advise, were in accordance with the instructions of my respected ancestors and myself.

"I dare not wait much longer, as I am the last of my family and death approaches rapidly. Many times have I listened to

your Supreme Council Proceedings through my visicast (which was stolen from your destroyed post) and I am entirely familiar with your problem. I too, and my respected ancestors, were concerned with the important problem of the Preservation and Development of Man!

"For one hundred generations, my family has labored in the greatest cause in the history of our planet, and now I am ready to give our results to Humanity. We are not equipped for long distance telecasting, so I have taken this means of communicating with you.

"However, if you will send one of your trained scientists to our dwelling-place, which I will describe, I will be pleased to display our remarkable results. Let him leave at once, I pray, as my end draws near and there is much to do.

"If your representative will direct his vehicle to a place as close as possible to one degree North Latitude and 78 degrees West Longitude, he will be informed through his telecastor just how to reach us. Let him come alone.

"Delay not, as time is of the essence!"

Green-Fred raised his head as he finished. "It is signed: THE LAST DI MARCO!"

An excited hum of voices swept over the auditorium. Angrily Smith-Ray rapped for silence. He turned to Burke-Sid.

"Where is the place he mentions, my son?"

"Great Leader," shouted Sid, "it is the site of the extinct, ancient volcano of Cayambi, in the Andes Mountains!"

"Smith-Jay," he demanded, "can you leave at once?"

"It is an order, Great Leader," responded Jay enthusiastically.

The aged Governor smiled benevolently. "Go as our ambassador, my son, with the assurance of a proper reward for your zeal. You have full power to act for us; every assistance will be given you."

With the applause of his colleagues ringing in his ears, Smith-Jay left the Executive Chamber. Now for the perils of the unknown!

CHAPTER IV

The Voice from the Air

● At the embarkation chamber, Burke-Sid overtook him.

"Just a moment, Smith-Jay," he barked; "I have some advice for you."

Jay stopped his carriage and listened attentively. Any information of the region would be welcomed. He was in total ignorance of the area.

"The Cayambi Volcano is in my precinct," Sid began. "It is practically unknown to us on account of certain natural conditions. The entire area is mountainous and quite dangerous because of the immense clouds of vapor emitted by countless geysers, making it impossible for flyers to accurately trace a course."

Jay thrilled to the thoughts of more danger. "Have you ever tried to penetrate it?" he asked.

"Many times, but in vain. It is as thick as the heaviest fog that you've ever encountered. Once, I almost collided with a rock peak that was well-nigh invisible 'til I was on top of it. I barely avoided a crash."

"Thanks, Burke-Sid," Jay promised; "I'll use every care."

His geodetron set for 1 degree N. Lat. and 78 degrees W. Long., Jay's speedy monotrol quickly rose in the arc that would unerringly bring it to its destination.

As he flew over the gigantic edifices, which were busily engaged in lightening the burden of Man, Jay's mind was in a whirl. The clicking altitude signals warned him that soon he would be too high to observe the storehouses and manufacturing of his civilization.

He looked down. The monotrol whizzed over the Nutrition-Council's huge food-tablet plant at Neorania, the Construction-Council's developments and the Discipline-Council's headquarters at Protonia.

Soon he lost sight of the magnificent works of Man as he mounted higher into the stratosphere. The automatic heating apparatus hesitated functioning for a moment and he felt a trace of the space-cold

even through his weather-hood, then all was comfortable once more.

Again the glorious outline of the continents came into view. As he neared the coast of South America, the outposts of Man thinned to nothing. Here the jungle was supreme. Ages had had no effect on its impenetrable fastness. Deep in its swamps and valleys, the descendants of reptile, biped, and quadruped still ruled unchallenged, almost as their antediluvian ancestors had in the morning of the world.

A red light flashed on the control-board before him. He was nearing his destination! A minute later the monotrol came to a complete stop. Jay looked around. He was but a thousand feet over a huge plain of clouds. He glanced at his barometer, and was astounded.

Twenty-five thousand feet above sea level! Burke-Sid was right—this was the dense bank of cloudy vapor he had described—solid as a mass of concrete, in appearance anyway.

He connected the shortest wave of his telecastor and signalled his presence for any who should be listening.

A loud voice in his ear almost made him jump off his seat.

"You are prompt, my son. An old man thanks you. Follow my instructions carefully."

Nervously, Jay muttered his assent.

"Descend 1200 feet into the thickest section of the cloud-bank and release the levitation control of your monotrol."

Dazedly, Jay complied. He was now in almost total darkness.

Again came the pleasant voice. "You are to remain absolutely quiet, no matter what happens, until I bid you move. Fear not; you will be in friendly hands."

Had it not been for the reassuring tone of the stranger's voice, Jay might have objected and demanded reasons. After all, he was not entirely helpless. The slightest pressure of his powerful fingers would send the monotrol sky-rocketing up through the blanket of clouds to the sun-lit sky above, where he would be prepared for anything!

These thoughts were quickly driven from his mind by the rapid succession of several remarkable events.

In the dim light that barely penetrated the dark area around him, Jay saw dark, graceful shadows float to and fro about the car.

He felt light touches on the outer cover, and his heart trembled first with fear, then anger, as he saw a net thrown over the monotrol and sensed that he was being dragged along, somewhere, as if he were a large bird of prey, captured, and lowered to its death.

Any thought of escape quickly departed, as the stranger's voice addressed him. "Carefully, my friend. Remember that you are in safe hands. In several moments you will meet me face to face."

Jay strained his eyes to determine the nature of the things or thing that had him in tow, but their identity escaped him. All he could distinguish were shadows, gracefully guiding his car in the dimness.

Suddenly all went black. Evidently they had entered some kind of cave. Jay was tempted to switch on the monotrol's bright cabin lights, but remembered his orders. He took a deep breath. It was too late now. He was going to see this thing through!

CHAPTER V

Hooded Hunch-backs

● After a series of light bumps, the car came to a stop. Outside everything was still pitch darkness. Just when Jay's tense nerves could stand no more, a blinding light came on. He raised his hands to smarting eyes.

"Now you may open the door and come out," came the friendly voice.

Jay's eyes became accustomed to the brightness and he hastened to look around. He was in no hurry to leave the comparably safe shelter of the monotrol, without a good idea of his new surroundings.

He must play for a little time. "If the venerable stranger will permit," he said,

"I will remain here for a moment. My muscles are a bit stiff from my long voyage."

His voice died away as he saw the person who had been addressing him. Before him was a large, high-ceilinged room, evidently used as a study. Through the transparent walls of the monotrol, he saw a couch, quite different from his own in Neonia. It was oblong, not square. Evidently its occupant's body was longer than was customary. His eyes turned to the man who was occupying this strange bed.

A head, oddly covered with gray hairs, sat upon thin shoulders naked to the chest. The unusual sight of hair caused him to almost overlook the smile that hovered on the thin lips, that looked out from the midst of a heavy beard, white with age. Deep blue eyes looked into his own and shed friendliness and hospitality. Other than these parts of the body he could not see, as the stranger was covered with a woolen blanket from the chest down.

Shrugging aside his fears, Jay opened the door of his car and emerged. He adjusted his carriage and slid to the side of the stranger.

Still smiling, he offered his hand to Jay, who regarded him wonderingly. The old man laughed heartily, thin shoulders shaking with mirth.

"I forgot," he grinned, "men do not shake hands these days. Forgive me."

Involuntarily, Jay extended his right hand and grasped the stranger's. He was surprised at its strength.

"Your name is Smith-Jay? I heard the Supreme Council Governor call you that."

Jay nodded.

"You are welcome here. The sole surviving Master of Marconia extends his hospitality. Make yourself comfortable."

"Thanks, venerable sir—" Jay began.

"Call me Di Marco," interrupted the stranger. "My parents neglected to bestow a given name on their sole offspring."

Jay was still slightly dazed. There was so much to be explained.

"Draw nearer, if you please," commanded Di Marco. "I would examine your carriage. Many have I seen in the telecastor, but never before have I been able to handle one."

He threw off the coverlet and Jay's eyes bulged with surprise!

The man had legs!—long, muscular legs with feet and toes fully developed! Only in the visual records of the Historian-Council archives had Jay seen their like! His fears were forgotten. He rushed closer and felt them with expert, trained fingers. Once more he was the cool, curious scientist.

Jay drew back at the roar of laughter that came from Di Marco's lips. His face reddened.

"Excuse me," he apologized, "but my curiosity knew no bounds—"

Di Marco chokingly waved his forgiveness. "You should have seen the look of surprise on your face. It is I who should be forgiven for my lack of courtesy. But I haven't laughed so much in years."

He leaned over and sounded a buzzer. Instantly a door opened and two tall, hooded figures entered. They approached Di Marco, threw a curious glance at Jay, and bowed deeply.

Jay's small jaw dropped in astonishment. More surprises! Then Di Marco was not the only human with the complete use of his legs! He should have known it from the absence of the metal crutch and the hand rail that was part of the equipment of every room at home.

Di Marco's face still bore his amused smile. "Banta," he said to the taller of the men before him, "we have a distinguished visitor; you will show him every kindness and courtesy."

For a moment they turned their backs to Jay, and again his eyes lit up in his surprise. Both men had large disfiguring humps that bulged under the concealing robes they wore!

They bowed to him and the one called Banta spoke. "If the young master will be good enough to follow us, we will show him where he can rest and refresh himself."

Jay was thrilled at the softness and sweetness of Banta's voice. He turned to Di Marco questioningly. "Go with them, my son; my story can wait until you have rested," nodded the old man.

Banta opened a large folding door and motioned to Jay to follow, but as he turned, all present were electrified by a resounding wail that came from the interior of the monotrol. In a moment the room was filled with throngs of hooded, hunch-backed figures who surrounded Di Marco protectingly.

It was Jay's turn to laugh. True, his chuckles were intermingled with qualms at the intruding figures, but nevertheless his small shoulders shook with merriment.

"What was that?" exclaimed Di Marco, angrily.

"That," grinned Jay, "was our Universal Feeding Signal. I'm surprised that you have never heard it before. But perhaps your telecastor is not always connected."

"Universal Feeding Signal!" Di Marco was deeply moved. "Please explain immediately!"

"A hundred years ago," began Jay, "a member of the Smith-Family, Smith-Jan by name, discovered that if all the people of the world would eat at a given time, the practice of medical science would be greatly aided. He was right. So since then, we take our food-tablets promptly at the beginning of the thirteenth hour each day."

"Very interesting," commented Di Marco; "forgive us if we doubted your integrity. My people were afraid of violence."

Jay bobbed his assent and followed his guides. His eyes were glued on the strange, tall, hooded hunch-backs. They entered a long, well-lighted corridor. He was mentally thankful for its smooth floor, as his carriage needed even surfaces for its best results.

After a short distance had been covered, Jay was shown to a large room with no windows. "Young master," droned

Banta, "you have but to press this button and you will be attended." He bowed and withdrew.

Left alone, Jay wondered how humped backs were to improve the physique of man

CHAPTER VI

Di Marco's Story

● Sleep was out of the question. Jay's mind was whirling. A thousand questions presented themselves. He inspected his quarters and was pleased to find a tap with running water. Eagerly he drank, hoping vaguely that it had been properly treated against disease and infection.

His tired nerves refused to be relaxed, so he continued to investigate his surroundings. The tiled floor and walls were sound-proof, no doubt. Evidently these strangers also realized the value of absolute peace and quiet to their well-being.

He glided to the odd-shaped bed. How different it was from his own couch! This one was oblong and rested on four metal legs. His was square and was suspended from a coiled spring attached to the ceiling, the better to absorb all vibration. Rest was so vital to their easily tired bodies.

He nodded pensively at the straight-backed chairs. They were the first he had ever seen, save in the Historian-Council's Museum. *His* people used soft cushions. They had no long, muscular legs to worry about. He wondered what the immediate vicinity outside the building looked like. At last he could stand it no longer. His trained scientific mind must be satisfied. He had to have more information! He slid to the button that Banta had indicated to him and pressed it.

A light tap on the door and Banta entered. He seemed surprised at the short summons, but politely bowed.

"I am desirous of seeing the Master," stated Jay.

Again Banta bowed, his grotesque hump seeming to grow larger with each bobbing movement. "This way, young master," he indicated.

Once more they passed down the long corridor and halted just outside the large double door to Di Marco's chamber. Banta tapped.

"Enter," rang out Di Marco, jovially.

The scene was as Jay had left it. This time Di Marco was seated in a large arm chair before a table covered with strange dishes.

"Seat yourself next to me," invited his host. "I am about to dine."

Jay's nostrils wrinkled at the unfamiliar odors of cooked food. He slid to the table and stationed himself opposite Di Marco, curiously eyeing the dishes.

"Will you join me? I'm afraid it is simple fare." Di Marco's eyes held laughing lights. He opened his mouth wide.

Jay's interest immediately swung to the strange sight of teeth!

"You have teeth!" he exclaimed in astonishment. "Are they artificial?"

"The few I have left are my own," grinned Di Marco. "We have no false teeth here. Come, let's eat." He lifted a pronged instrument and speared a morsel on his plate.

A feeling of nausea came over Jay as he realized that the man before him was about to partake of reeking flesh! He quickly composed his features, but not before Di Marco had spied his expression of disgust.

"Why don't you take something," he chided, "or the things will cool."

Again Jay suppressed a shudder of repulsion. He reached into his jacket and produced a vial of Food-Tablets. Placing two in his small mouth, he swallowed them in a quick gulp.

"You must excuse me," he told Di Marco, "but unfortunately our people lost their teeth two thousand years ago." He couldn't tell *this* friendly man that meat was considered the food of only the lower animals!

"Why bother to deceive *me*?" laughed Di Marco; "don't forget that I have a pretty good idea of your civilization."

To cover his embarrassment, Jay changed the subject. "If you have no ob-

jections, venerable sir, I should like to discuss a few things."

Di Marco nodded good-naturedly. "Ask on, my friend."

"Where am I, and how did I get here?"

"After you descended into the cloud-bank, you were guided down into the crater of Cayambi volcano, and through a fissure into a cave. My poor house occupies this cave. It is the only entrance to our valley."

"Yes, but please tell me *how* I was conducted here. By whom, I mean!" Jay's voice was vibrant with interest.

Di Marco smiled mysteriously. "Wait until you have heard my story. Then you shall know everything. I have nothing to conceal."

Jay nodded eagerly.

The old man leaned back in his comfortable chair and crossed his thin limbs. "To begin properly, I must take you back just three thousand years." He stopped and took a long breath.

Jay crouched forward on his carriage. His curiosity was about to be satisfied!

Di Marco continued: "In the year 2401, there dwelt in the city of La Scala, in the ancient division of Peru, the six brothers Di Marco, who were known throughout the civilized world for their keen minds and skilled fingers.

"The oldest, Henri Di Marco, had achieved renown as a plastic surgeon. He had virtually performed miracles with his steady hand and sharp knife. But philosophy was his hobby; but of this, more later.

"Francisco Di Marco was the peer of the world's ornithologists. His works on bird life are still consulted, as you doubtlessly know.

"Arturo Di Marco was also a surgeon—a bone-specialist. He had spent years in the clinics of his continent, effecting cures for paralyzed limbs and replacing diseased bone with healthy tissue.

"Alvarado Di Marco's specialty was embryology and pediatrics. His interest was solely in the development of healthy children and his ability was unequalled.

"Benito and Jose Di Marco were twins. They were the youngest in the family. The former was a distinguished chemist and pathologist. The latter was an engineer of note.

"The six brothers dearly loved one another and spent all their spare time in each other's company. The Smith-Family today is known for its pride of achievement. The Di Marcos, in their time, were famous for theirs.

"In his travels, Jose Di Marco had stumbled across an unknown valley peopled by a strange race of white Indians. Entrance to this valley, which was surrounded by impassable mountains, was through the crater of the extinct volcano of Cayambi. While searching for rare metals in the volcano's crater, Jose had discovered this entrance which was unknown even to the valley's inhabitants.

"They were tall, strong, and handsome in appearance, and Jose was delighted. He determined to keep his find a secret until he had brought his brothers to the valley and exhibited his discovery.

"At first they were sceptical and demanded to know why the many aviators who constantly crossed the Andes had never found this so-called secret valley, but when Jose had explained that heavy banks of vapor-clouds from the countless geysers entirely covered it and made close investigation by flyers dangerous, they agreed to accompany him and see the wonders for themselves.

"Secretly they made their departure from the city and before long found themselves in Marconia, as Jose named it. They were entranced by the high type of intelligence and physical development of the natives and decided that they must be the lost race of whites that ancient explorers made mention of."

● The old man stopped his story and rested for a moment. He was plainly tired at his exhaustive recital. Jay nodded understandingly.

After a few minutes of rest, Di Marco resumed his tale.

"About this time, the governments of the earth were confounded by the reports of their Bureaus of Vital Statistics which unanimously agreed in warning them of the increasing epidemics of leg diseases. On account of disuse, due to the overabundance of vehicles of all descriptions, the muscles and tendons of the leg were shrinking and atrophying.

"Led by Arturo Di Marco, the scientists urged precautionary measures be taken at once, or man would lose the use of his legs before many generations have passed. They were laughed down. In satire and prose, writers sneered at the 'Footless Di Marcos' and jeered at them wherever they were seen.

"This was more than they could stand. Their pride could bear anything but disgrace. In a body they dashed to the home of Henri, the eldest's house. He greeted them warmly. Gathered in his spacious library, he informed them of a plan he had conceived. No longer would they allow themselves to be the target of the world's jokes and disbelief.

"They would retire to Marconia, secretly, with all their scientific equipment and lay the foundation for a new race—a race that would survive, by reason of their superior mental and physical development, long after the myriads of sickly fools had died and disappeared from the face of the earth!"

Once again Di Marco was obliged to stop and rest. Respectfully, Smith-Jay remained quiet. His brain was filled with images of the brave ancestors of the aged man before him. How they must have labored! How they must have struggled in their efforts to educate and train the natives of the lost valley!

But even his keen, sharp mind did not grasp the whole story!

Di Marco thanked Jay with a smile and took up his history.

"Henri, the philosopher, naturally became their leader. He was overjoyed at the opportunity to experiment with some of his daring theories, ideas that the world without would have considered mad and impossible!

"His philosophy was not narrow or selfish. He was not satisfied to remain isolated from the rest of the world, no matter how wonderful his new Utopian surroundings. He had a longing to create a race that, together with the peoples of the future, might result in a Super-Human species of men!

"Henri realized only too well that this huge enterprise would not come to pass in but one generation, so he called his brothers and their families together and confided his ambitions to them.

"'Many generations from now,' he explained, 'man will evolve into a creature, physically debilitated, and no matter how mentally improved, he will be faced with the gradual disappearance of his muscular powers.

"'My idea is to study this problem ourselves and to train our children, and they their children, so that, forever, or until the last Di Marco shall have died, work in the great cause shall continue!'

"Henri then asked for suggestions, and Francisco Di Marco, the ornithologist, astounded them all with his offering. He begged his brothers to consider the possibility of evolving a race of men that would be able to fly!"

At these astounding words, Jay almost fell off his carriage! A new train of thought entered his excited mind. Perhaps this would explain many of the things that were bothering him? But Di Marco was still speaking and he dared not miss a word!

"—The brothers knew each other too well to scoff at each other's ideas, strange though they might be. The thought electrified their imaginations—to develop wings on unborn generations! Man would forever be free from his chains that bound him to the ground! Let him lose the use of his legs; he would *still* be able to move and contrive food and shelter for his dependents!

"After a moment's reflection, Henri agreed to make the attempt. He had full confidence in his own skill and in that of his brothers. The natives trusted them

and considered them demi-gods. They could do no wrong!

"Hundreds of native children were set aside for the experiment. Francisco decided to use young condors, with which the surrounding country was infested. Later, natives were set at work breeding them for the delicate tests.

"At first Henri made unsuccessful attempts to graft the entire wing and muscle assembly on the skeleton of native infants, but all died. Then Jose suggested that if groups of babies were selected and each section endowed with separate divisions of muscles and feathers, they would stand a better chance for survival and in time, perhaps longer than anticipated, their descendants would be born with all the parts necessary for flight.

"Wearily, they spent years cutting, grafting, joining, sewing and watching. Thousands of young condors were vivisected. It was found beneficial to use two-year old birds for the work, as it was at that age that they began to fly.

"Finally three groups of infants were used. In one group, the meta-carpal or finger bones of each hand were bound, so as to leave only three fingers—the thumb, index, and ring fingers. Primary quills or remiges, as they are called, were then taken from the wings of the young birds and grafted to the skeleton of the upper or posterior surfaces of the hand and interspersed with covert, or small feathers.

"In the second section, another means was used. Secondary quills were removed from the forearm of the bird and attached by their bases to the lower portion of the forearm and wrist of the child. The spaces between were also filled in with small feathers or coverts.

"These first two sections disposed of the Principle of Flight feathers—all the quills, primary, and secondary used in actual flight.

"The third section was more complicated and resulted in the greatest number of deaths of subjects. It consisted of a series of operations in which two sets of muscles were grafted to the child's

chest. One was solely concerned with the purpose of depressing the wings, the other to be used for elevating them. Great care was needed here, for in birds, as you know, these muscles are remarkably powerful and must be fully developed to sustain long periods of flight.

"In this last group, one end of the pectoral or breast muscle was removed from the condor and grafted to severed ends of the child's large pectoral muscle. The other end was joined to the infant's humerus or arm, together with the elastic ligament of the bird, thereby connecting the arms closer to the body.

"A second and deeper muscle, called the deltoid, was then attached to that of the child together with the third or smallest muscle, which is named the pectoralis minor. These last two were essential for elevating the wings.

"Progress was slow until Benito the chemist developed a serum made from the blood of the birds. As the temperature of a bird's blood is quite higher than that of man, it blended nicely. This was just what was needed to make the experiment a success.

"Years passed. All the brothers died, but their children, sons and daughters, followed in their footsteps. However, none intermarried with the natives and were therefore born normal. Constant exercise in the forest and climbing mountains preserved for them the use of their legs and they lived to ripe old ages.

"And as for the natives, soon all died but those who were born with the various segments of feathers and the elastic muscles of the condor. Due perhaps to the large quantities of bird-serum, the subjects finally developed the powerful, immovable posterior backbone and hip girdle. Our X-rays have shown us that as in the bird, late generations developed the solid, fused vertebrae, so necessary for speedy flight."

● The old man stopped, completely exhausted. Jay had engraved every word of the long oration on his mind. He felt that it was his turn to express an opinion.

He gathered his bewildered wits and began.

"Venerable sir, I have followed your discourse carefully and can see just how such an experiment is possible. After all, what did your ancestors do? Nothing more than direct the accident of evolution!

"History teaches us that in many cases evolution has been greatly influenced by luck or accident. When the first species of living thing emerged from the ever-present slime that existed in the early years of this planet, it was probably by pure accident, such as a sudden evaporation of the water in the marshy ground, due to the excess heat of the blazing sun, that the smallest blob of living matter, the amoeba, while perfectly at home in the water, found itself drying up and dying in the unprotected heat of dry land.

"Either it had to grow protective cells to enable it to breathe and absorb moisture from the air or perish. In this way, perhaps, other simple living things, blown to and fro by hot winds across rough and uneven surfaces of rock, were forced to develop hardened, friction-resisting under-surfaces, that later evolved into tiny bumps and legs, which enabled them to travel across dry land more easily."

Jay had waxed enthusiastic over this subject that so captivated all his being. Di Marco finally had to stop him.

"Perhaps you wish to know just how far we have gotten? Well, fifty years ago, one of our youngsters first flew. Since then I've had to forbid flying higher than the cloud-blanket for fear that one of your Discipline-Council planes would see them. I'm sorry, but in order to obtain supplies and new machinery, we had to burglarize your outposts, and to avoid suspicion, burned them to the ground.

Again Jay was astounded. "Do you mean to say," he gasped, "that your people can fly? All of them?"

Di Marco nodded. "Every one, even the very old. I had hoods made to entirely cover their bodies, until I had prepared you for the sight of winged humans. Though I can see that they are

very uncomfortable, none have complained."

"So *that* is why they appear to be hunch-backs!"

The old man smiled at Jay's exclamation. "Did you think they wore 'weather-hoods' like yours, to protect them from the outer air? Not *my* people! There hasn't been a death from sickness for hundreds of years."

"If it is possible," remarked Jay, "I should like to see them in flight, or at least examine the wings myself. I am very curious as to their construction."

"Immediately!" agreed Di Marco. He reached to the wall and pressed a switch.

In a moment there was a light tap at the door.

"You may enter!" Di Marco shouted with a strange light in his expressive eyes.

The door opened slowly and in strode a figure completely enveloped in the disfiguring hood. Even the person's features were undiscernible. Gracefully, it bowed, first to Di Marco and then to Jay.

A light smile played over Di Marco's bearded lips. "Disrobe!" he ordered. The figure complied.

His small jaw drooping foolishly, Jay gave vent to a deep gasp of perplexing astonishment! His whole body trembled at the astounding sight! Never in his wildest dreams had he imagined so disturbing and bewildering a fantasy! Something entered into his very soul!

CHAPTER VII

Lyth of Marconia

● Never again would Smith-Jay forget the wonderful vision before him! For years to come, his dreams each night would be of this, his first sight of her!

About six feet in height, and perfectly proportioned, stood a young woman. Had he seen her but yesterday, he would have sworn that the girl before his eyes was a legendary goddess!

Coppery hair, cut short so as to form a close sheath for an oval face, itself a

deep brown shade. And eyes! Green as the emerald, with the depthless sparkle of the sea seen from the transparent walls of a monotron at high noon.

It was minutes before he could tear his eyes from hers. More than her high-arched nose and thin lips he could not see, as she had folded her wings until she seemed clad in a wondrous garment of feathers — feathers that, in the bright light of the room, appeared to be scintillating golden scales.

Dazzled, he dropped his eyes to her feet. They were bare, and though bewildered by her beauty, his dazed mind was just able to note that she had but four toes. He dimly recalled that birds never had more than that number.

Again he raised his glance to her face. As if drawn by an electrical magnet, he could not tear his eyes away! Her lips formed into a smile that lit up her face with an unearthly light.

Di Marco's voice broke the spell and released him.

"Smith-Jay," he drawled, "permit me to present my protégé, Lyth of Marconia. The fleetest wing, the keenest eye, and the sharpest brain are hers. I want you both to be good friends."

Lyth bowed gracefully from the hips. "It is a great honor," she murmured in a musical voice that did things to Jay's taut nerves.

He was only able to mumble some acknowledgment of her greeting.

Di Marco seemed to enjoy Jay's embarrassment and proceeded at once to aggravate it to a startling degree.

"My child," he said to Lyth, "Smith-Jay is the respected visitor we awaited. I have told him our story and he is particularly anxious to examine, himself, the phenomena of human wings. Please be good enough to extend yours so that he can see for himself every detail of their construction and growth."

The girl's smile widened. "Willingly," she answered in her enthralling tones.

If Jay was impressed by her first appearance, he was profoundly moved by the sight of her, as wings extended for flight

she posed before him, clad in nothing but a close-fitting leather harness that accentuated every curve of her unusual body.

Di Marco assumed the identity of a schoolmaster who was bringing the details of a strange animal to the attention of rapt students.

"See, Smith-Jay, the formation of the meta-carpals. Birds, you know, never have more than three fingers or four toes." He pointed to the magnificent feathers that covered hands and forearms.

"And note the even growth of the greater, lesser, and median coverts. Give me your hand, my friend."

With these words, he grasped Jay's capable hand and pulled him closer to Lyth.

"Feel for yourself," he pointed, "the place where the large number of vertebrae enter into an immovable connection with her hipbone, forming a powerful girdle which is fused to most of her anterior ribs."

He pulled Jay still closer and pressed the young man's unwilling fingers to her limbs. "Stroke these quills," he ranted, "and see how smoothly they cover the spinal, the ventral, and the femoral tracts."

Mischievously he directed Jay's hands to various parts of her body. "And you may believe me," Di Marco went on, "that nowhere in Marconia will you find more powerful flight muscles, such as these." He indicated strong, hard tissue that entirely covered the breast bone.

Still he continued. "Examine for yourself the fine texture of her feathers. Judge how firm the shaft, how delicate the blade, how closely the barbs or rami grow. And the barbs themselves, see how straight the barbules or radii branch out. Isn't the softness remarkable?"

Jay could stand no more! The close proximity of this glorious creature had set his blood boiling with sensations that he had never felt in his life. His small features were as red as fire, even up to his bulging, shiny skull.

He drew his hand from Di Marco's and moved sharply back on his carriage. At this movement, a pitying expression

came into Lyth's wonderful eyes. He sensed that she was sorry that he had not the use of his legs.

Jay stiffened with shame. He wanted no person's sympathy if first he could not obtain his respect. These conflicting thoughts were interrupted by a surprising change in Di Marco's demeanor.

"That'll be enough for today, my children. Our visitor *must* retire and rest." The old man was insistent. "We have a strenuous day ahead of us, and must consider the welfare of our distinguished guest."

His words were very welcome to Jay's ears. The young man was on the verge of collapse. He muttered an objection, but Di Marco overruled him.

"Surely, it is still early," pleaded Lyth charmingly.

But Di Marco was obstinate. "I order you to retire at once."

The graceful creature bowed to him and flashed Jay a thrilling glance as she floated from the room. A deep sigh came to his lips as she left. In a way he felt greatly relieved.

During the action of the preceding events, Jay had forgotten the presence of Banta who had been in the room all this time. At a signal from Di Marco, he stepped forward.

"Return the young master to his chamber," the old man ordered, "and attend to his every want." Turning to Jay, he smiled benevolently and placed a hand caressingly on his small shoulder.

"A pleasant rest to you, my son," he drawled. "Join us refreshed in the morning. We will have still more wonders to show you."

Again in his room, Jay sought his couch. He could not erase the entrancing vision of Lyth from his mind. Her greenish eyes seemed to be still staring into his own, expressing wondrous promises of more thrills to come.

He was exhausted and fell into a fitful, restless sleep. Gone from his mind were all thoughts of his mate in Neonia, the considerate, clever Smith-Elsa.

Perhaps if she knew of his plight, she might have been able to warn him of the dangers that overshadowed and threatened her fellow-worker, and protect him from the menacing influence of Lyth.

CHAPTER VIII

Valley of Twilight

● Next morning, Jay felt a gentle hand on his shoulder and opened his eyes to see the amiable features of Banta smiling down at him.

No longer did he wear the disfiguring hood. He too appeared to be more graceful in his dark brown sheath of feathers.

Warm brown eyes, full of consideration for his every comfort, shone as he softly whispered to Jay: "Hasten! The Master awaits. He desires your presence immediately."

They found Di Marco at breakfast; with him was Lyth, radiant as ever. Jay experienced new thrills as her eyes met his.

"Good morning, my son," greeted Di Marco. "Forgive us for not waiting, but we hungered."

Only for a moment did Jay allow his glance to rest on the platters of smoking meat. The sight of cooked flesh still was exceedingly repulsive to him. He glided to a position where the food would be out of his vision.

Lyth and the old man smiled at his delicacy.

Finally, Lyth rose from her seat, and at Di Marco's command, assisted him to rise.

"Prepare yourself for your first sight of our valley, Smith-Jay. I doubt whether you have ever seen its equal."

Banta opened a small door and they trooped out onto an open porch.

Jay was not surprised. It was exactly what he expected. The valley opened up before him and widened until it became lost in the distance. Due to the constant heavy cloud-blanket above, the sun's rays did not entirely penetrate, which resulted

in a half-light more resembling the twilight of dawn than that of dusk.

Objects were plainly discernible, but shadows were longer. It made the ordinary phenomenon of daylight seem weird and mysterious.

Di Marco was slightly disappointed at the lack of interest displayed by Jay, and he hastily turned to Lyth.

"Come, my daughter," he grimaced, "let us show our friend your ability in the air."

"Just a moment," Jay broke in. "I've forgotten my weather-hood. The air is cool and I don't care to catch cold."

"Banta!" snapped Di Marco, "The young Master's cloak. Immediately."

The winged man returned in a flash, the transparent weatherhood grotesquely draped over his left wing.

They watched him curiously as Jay put it on. In the dim light it was almost invisible to them.

"Ready, now?" Di Marco asked them. They nodded. Lyth advanced a few feet and with a quick motion of her feet, she sprang into the air rapidly flapping her beautiful wings.

Jay was entranced at the marvelous sight; his eyes followed her every movement.

"What now!" exclaimed Di Marco proudly. "I'll wager this is a sight you've never seen before!"

The young man was too interested to answer.

Di Marco again assumed the role of instructor. "Watch," he indicated, "how the bones of the elbow and wrist make a quarter of a turn during the wings' extension, and its retraction.

"In flight," he continued, "the wings twist upon themselves propeller fashion and reverse themselves so as to have no slip in the air. One of two things is necessary in flying. Either the wings must attack the air with great violence, or the air in rapid motion must attack the wings; either is sufficient.

"If one of us attempts to fly in a calm, the wings must be made to smite the air after the manner of an ancient kite, with

great vigor and at a high speed. In this case the wings fly the individual.

"If, however, the person is fairly launched in space and a stiff breeze is blowing, all that is required in many instances is to extend the wings at a slight upward angle to the horizon so that the underparts of the wings present kite-like surfaces."

Di Marco ceased his explanation and yawned, stretching his arms upward in a wide circle. For a minute, Jay took his eyes from the wheeling figure of Lyth and regarded the many low buildings that stood out in the dim light between groves of tall trees.

One minute was enough! Like a stroke of lightning from the skies, Lyth swooped down and, grasping him around the waist, whizzed upward into a breath-taking spurt for the cloud-blanket!

As they raced through the air, the wind bore to his sharp ears the sound of Di Marco's cackling laughter.

Up, up, into the damp vapor and out to where the hot sun blazed upon the rocky, grim Andean peaks they soared. Adjusting his breathing to the thinner air almost choked Jay. He was thankful for his weather-hood; without it he surely must have suffered severe cold.

At last he knew the sensations of a small animal, captured by a monstrous bird of prey, and taken to some lofty aerie for an unknown death. For the first time in his life, Jay knew the feeling of chilling, abject fear!

CHAPTER IX

The Jaws of Death!

● Hardly had Jay recovered from his surprise at being snatched from the earth, when Lyth alighted on the narrow head of a high peak.

He fell back as she released him, helpless without his carriage. Lyth politely ignored his undignified position and turned the power of her green eyes upon him.

Jay could not restrain a sigh of relief at feeling solid ground beneath him once

more. He became slightly angered and avoided the dazzling eyes of the girl as he spoke indignantly.

"Will you be good enough to explain this outrageous conduct?"

Lyth drooped her head, greatly like a mammoth canary. "I did nothing but follow the Master's orders. He desired that you witness an example of our strength and skill in the air." She seemed greatly hurt at his attitude.

"Truly a remarkable way to convince me," said Jay in a kindlier tone. "You almost frightened me to death."

"I am very sorry," she murmured.

Jay twisted around and was surprised to see two white eggs surrounded by a few sticks.

"Can this be a bird's nest?" he asked.

"Yes, Jay," she replied, sweetly, "that of a condor."

He trembled at the tremulous way she pronounced his name.

"But how simple and inadequate," he asserted gruffly to hide his emotion.

"The condor doesn't worry about a complicated nest," she explained, "as it always lays its eggs on the most inaccessible ledge it can find."

"How often?"

Lyth was delighted to find Jay interested in this subject.

"Usually in February and March the bird deposits two eggs that hatch in about seven weeks. After that they must be nursed and fed for two years before they attain their full growth of feathers and learn to fly."

Jay's interest grew. "What does the mother bird feed them during that time?"

"Small animals. Sometimes she will carry a calf to them. They have exceedingly voracious appetites. One that I've tamed ate a calf, a sheep, and a large dog in a single week!"

"You are serious?"

She nodded her shining head emphatically. "Of course, after gorging itself this way, it slept for two days and was very stupid for some time after."

Jay was astounded.

"Would you like to see a young bird?" she inquired. Before he could reply, she was gone from the narrow perch like a rocket in the blue sky. He followed her with anxious eyes until she disappeared.

Uncertainly he peered at the gorgeous scenery around him. In the distance he could see the immense cloud-bank that hid the extensive valley below. High, bleak mountains pushed their grey pinions upward wherever he looked. The glare was unbearable as the hot sun stabbed down at him, and he was forced to squint.

A flutter of wings caused him to reopen them quickly. For a moment he thought that Lyth had returned.

There, high above, wheeled a giant condor. Slowly she circled downward. In spite of the glare, Jay noted every detail of her form. From what he could judge, the bird was from four to five feet from beak to tail.

Her wings he estimated had an expanse of twelve feet. There were no feathers on head or neck, but her body coverts were mostly black intermingled with large patches of white.

He exclaimed at the size of her sharp beak as it wheeled in majestic circles, the very essence of grace. As he watched, it seemed to sail through the sky, hardly moving its wings.

The bird dropped like a plummet and landed on a mountain-top nearby, covered with snow. Jay marveled as it brushed the flakes over its head and wallowed in its cooling softness.

Suddenly the bird changed its tactics. It darted into the air and swooped in ever narrowing circles over Jay's head. Closer and closer it drew, as if to see just what the man-creature that usurped its perch would do to protect itself.

It came to Jay, in a flash, that this bird of prey, this vulture, was a real danger to him. He looked around but could see nothing to defend himself with.

At each of his frantic movements, the bird darted closer, until every time its huge shadow swept over him, Jay winced involuntarily.

There was no place for him to go, even if he had had the use of his legs—no where to crawl. As the sharp beak and ugly claws of the condor missed him time and again, he seriously considered jumping from his narrow perch to the valley below.

That way, death would come suddenly and painlessly. It was much better than being pulled to pieces by those dreadful talons!

From every direction, the condor seemed to dash at him. At once he spotted another shadow over that of the bird. He dared not look up. Was it Lyth returning too late, or was it the condor's mate?

CHAPTER X

The Death of Di Marco

● Loud squawks of fury came to Jay's ears as he blindly tried to distinguish what was approaching. Then he saw. The golden form of Lyth was too conspicuous to be mistaken for anything else.

Screaming angrily, the condor made its escape. Lyth lightly dropped to where Jay lay weak with agitation at his narrow deliverance.

Lyth could hardly console herself for her thoughtlessness.

"I never dreamed I was leaving you in danger," she gasped. "What will the Master say?"

"We need not tell him it happened," offered Jay soothingly.

"If he suspects, I'll tell him the truth. It is useless to lie to him." She pointed to a leather belt that formed part of the harness she wore. "Take hold of me here. It will be more comfortable for you."

He complied, and as they soared over the mountain tops, he grew to enjoy the sensation of flying. How different from his monotrol! It seemed more natural and fit than just operating a series of mechanisms.

Down through the cloud-blanket they dropped until the large settlement at the narrow end of the valley was in sight.

They alighted right on the lawn, a few

feet from where Di Marco sat watching them intently.

"Well, my son," he queried, "how did you like your first *real* flight? Better than your machines, I'll warrant!"

"It was wonderful, venerable sir. But tell me, how many people live in this valley who are able to fly?"

"Nearly ten thousand. I do not count the aged."

Jay nodded thoughtfully. "Plenty for our purpose. With that number as a beginning, I'm sure that ten generations hence will surely find humanity well on the road to the recovery of its ancient muscles, not to mention the marvelous ability to fly."

Di Marco's eyes were shining with pride. "If only I could live to see it. But I must be content: I am the last of the Di Marcos—the one hundredth generation, to be exact. After I die, and I feel that it must be very soon, our name must not be forgotten. Promise me, Smith-Jay, that you will do all you can to perpetuate it. It is all I ask of you."

"It will be easily done," Jay vowed. "All that is necessary for its perpetuation is for the Supreme Council to direct the group beginning the great work to be designated as the Di Marco Family."

"What immediate steps do you suggest," asked the old man.

"First, I must report to my superior, Smith-Ray, Governor of the Supreme Council. He will advise me."

"But," said Di Marco, "we have no powerful sending telecastor."

"The one in my monotrol will do the trick. With your permission, I'll retire to it immediately."

Di Marco nodded eagerly.

Once more comfortable on his familiar travelling carriage, Jay hastened to the monotrol. Seating himself at its telecastor, he selected the Supreme-Council's private wave.

The small platinoid screen clouded and cleared. A shiny, bald head appeared, its wrinkled face bearing an expression of annoyance. It was Blake-Jim, Governor of the Communications-Council.

"Who dares use the Supreme-Council's private wave?" he demanded.

"Smith-Jay, director of Science-Research Section L-42, on a special mission! I must have the ear of the venerable Smith-Ray at once."

Blake-Jim's bored expression immediately gave way to intense interest. He muttered an apology and faded from the screen.

The austere countenance of Smith-Ray radiated trust and joy.

"My son," he greeted Jay, "long have we awaited word from you. What tidings do you bring? Are you well?"

"Great Leader," rang out Jay's youthful voice, "I have marvelous tidings. Our problem is solved. My mission has been successful. Be pleased to listen—"

As quickly as possible, Jay related his experiences, emphasizing the kindly nature, the powerful frame, and the miraculous flying ability of the natives of Marconia.

The Supreme-Council Governor was intrigued. His amiable face beamed with joy and satisfaction. "I shall convene the Supreme-Council at once for an emergent communication. These are important tidings. You have done well, my son. I shall not forget your service."

"Great Leader," begged Jay, "if you will order a polytrol to be at Post 'R,' Section B-12 of the Discipline-Council, I will have several of the natives prepare to accompany me to Xenonia at dawn tomorrow."

"It is so ordered. Work steadily, my son."

The journey to Xenonia, with but one exception, was the most enjoyable experience of Smith-Jay's life. His companionship with Lyth grew to a warm mutual regard that promised still more possibilities. Her clever mind eagerly grasped his detailed explanation of the miracles of modern science that surrounded them.

Jay became very fond of Banta, who also accompanied them, and whose interest in his comfort became greater each day.

The exception to Jay's total happiness

was the illness of Di Marco. The old man had aged and weakened in the excitement of the last day.

As the polytrol left the earth's atmosphere for the few minutes before it resumed its arc of flight, Di Marco gazed at the wonderful view of his planet and expressed his pleasure.

"It is too bad that I must leave you, my children," he sighed; "I would have spent some time toying with man's mechanical marvels, before I died. Now I know how much I missed while in Marconia. Man may have lost his physique, but he certainly has developed his mind."

"Fear not, venerable sir," consoled Jay.

"You will live many years. As soon as we arrive, I'll summon our best medical experts. You've seen our mechanical progress; wait until you watch our medical healing rays do their work."

But Di Marco shook his head.

With the speeding hours, the old man grew noticeably weaker. He sent Banta, who never left his side for a moment, for Lyth and Jay.

Sorrowfully they approached his bed. He could hardly move his withered hands. He motioned for them to draw nearer.

"My children," he whispered weakly, "I am dying. I go to join my respected ancestors, the six Di Marcos who so considerately gave not only their only lives, but one hundred generations of their descendants that Humanity might live on for Eternity. Remember my orders. In—the farewell expression of today, I—I—say—work steadily!" Those were his last words.

Jay turned from Di Marco's death-bed to find that the polytrol was entering the golden towers of the capitol city of Xenonia.

CHAPTER XI

The Revelation

● Again Supreme Council was in session.

After a ceremonious opening, Smith-Ray addressed them.

"And now," he announced, "that you have spent a week's time testing the two Marconians, and have heard the Eugenic-

Council's favorable report, I am open to a motion." His wise old eyes singled out Smith-Jay from the multitude.

"Great Leader," boomed Jay, "I move that the Family-Group Governors consider intermarriage with this splendid race, so that future generations of Humanity may regain their ancient splendor together with this remarkable power of flight."

Smith-Ray looked around and White-Len, a director of the Eugenics-Council, seconded Jay's motion.

"Is there any discussion?" The venerable governor knew that there would be a great deal.

"Great Leader," spoke up White-Mark, another Eugenic Councilman. "I favor this union. It is just what humanity needs. Let us vote on the subject that no further time be wasted."

"I, Burke-Phil, director of the Discipline-Council Section A-9, object!" All eyes turned to the speaker.

"It is my opinion," he continued, "that the Marconians are nothing but a superior ornithological or bird group. I should like a greater opportunity to study them. This is an important question and should not be treated lightly. Suppose we were to make a mistake in merging them with us. Can you imagine the horrible results?"

Jay could listen to no more. He controlled his anger and slid from the council-chamber. Knowing that the discussion would go on for hours, he felt that he could stand no more stupidity.

Besides, he wanted to be with Lyth. He had been so busy of late that those precious moments with her had been few and far between.

As he glided down the spacious corridors, the thought came to him that soon they would be separated no longer.

He skilfully turned a corner that would lead him to the quarters of Lyth and Banta. The body of Di Marco was there with them. They had refused to let it out of their sight.

With a quick movement, he checked his carriage's speed, just as he lightly collided with another.

"Excuse my haste," he began, but fur-

ther speech failed him. Unless he was seeing things, here before him was his mate, Elsa!

She halted him as he was about to depart. "Jay!" Her low voice reached the depths of his soul!

"I want to congratulate you," she faltered, "on the success of your mission. It was wonderful! The whole world is moved by it!"

He couldn't raise his eyes to hers. "Why didn't you telecast me?" she murmured. "I waited night after night."

"You must excuse me, Elsa," growled Jay. "You know I am busy."

"Promise you'll come to see me later," she begged. "I have something important to tell you."

Gruffly he nodded and shook off her restraining hand. Gone was his feeling of righteousness. For the first time he felt self-conscious and uncertain. He allowed himself to think of the glorious splendor of Lyth to drive these strange thoughts of Elsa from him.

Thus, mentally occupied, he forgot to tap on Lyth's door, but impatiently threw it open and slid in. His carriage only moved one single foot!

At the horrible sight before him, his senses swam and he clenched his fists in an effort to remain conscious! Could the abominable vision he saw be anything but the accursed scenes from an unholy nightmare? He blinked his eyes to make sure, but the awful tableau persisted!

His soul writhing with the depraved sight, he was barely able to mumble: "Lyth—what is this—"

At her reply, new strength came to him. He wheeled his carriage, and at a dangerous speed, returned to the ante-room of the executive chamber.

Before the astonished guard stationed at the door could object, Jay drew a demolitron-pistol from his belt and dashed back to Lyth's room.

He entered the door and, as the occupants came to their feet, he swept them from head to foot with the demolitron's lethal rays, not heeding their awful

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ONE HUNDRED GENERATIONS

By Philip Jacques Bartel

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screams, until nothing but a mass of quivering flesh and feathers lay before him!

Dully, he closed the door behind him and faced the bewildered guard whose hand was stretched out for his weapon. He gave it to him and slowly made his way to the council-room followed by the perplexed sentry.

As he entered, some other speaker was voicing his ideas against intermingling with the Marconians. Who it was, Jay never discovered. He didn't care.

Insensible to the congregation's stares, he glided to the center of the hall, directly in front of Smith-Ray, and raised his arm in a prayer for attention.

Frowning at this uncalled-for interruption, the aged Governor nodded his permission.

Jay summoned the last of his fast waning strength. "Great Leader," he rasped, "I hope I am in time to avert a horrible mistake!"

Never before had anyone had the audacity to disrupt the strict ritual.

"What has happened, my son," he cried; "compose yourself!"

Jay gripped the handle-bars of his carriage until his knuckles turned blue. He related what he had seen on opening Lyth's door.

"—And there was the glorious Lyth and the loyal Banta, gorging themselves, in the manner of true vultures—real eaters of carrion—on the poor, dead flesh of their friend and Master, the beloved Di Marco!—like beasts, I tell you, like beasts of prey!"

His voice grew into an hysterical shriek. "—And when I begged an explanation of this vile conduct, she replied:

"*Fool, you gave us pills to eat; we need meat!*"

As his last bit of strength left him, he fell forward in a dead faint!

● It was weeks before Jay was permitted to have visitors. Deadly quiet, his eyes staring straight before him unseeingly, he lay in his square cot, suspended on its spring from the ceiling of his room.

Of all his friends and associates, he was hungry for the presence of but one person—Smith-Elsa, his wife.

Many times, while his body trembled under the soothing health-rays of the Medical-Bureau, he had sensed her presence. When the nightmares of the past had disappeared, they were finally replaced by pleasant, sweet dreams of *her*.

A foreign sound came to his ears—the soft buzz of the visitor annunciator. He raised his tired head and glanced at the screen.

The familiar, welcome shining baldness of Elsa beamed out at him. He signalled permission for her entrance and eagerly awaited her arrival.

The door slid open and, with a heavenly grace, not the diabolic rhythm of *she* who had gone—his wife glided to his side. Softly she bent over and kissed his feverish head.

"Jay," she murmured soothingly, "we will only look ahead to a glowing future."

He nodded his complete agreement.

A smile lit up her pleasant face and she lightly patted his hand.

"I told you I had something important to say," she remarked quietly.

He raised his eyes in a mute question. Speech was impossible.

"Yes," she went on lightly, "while you were away, I *did* work steadily and in an entirely different direction."

Intuitively, he knew what she was about to say.

"Jay," she smiled through her tears, "I am certain that I've discovered a true method to restore Man's vigorous form forever!

"*Together* we will labor to perfect it!"

THE END