

THE HIGH-TENSION MAGAZINE

INSPIRED BY THE CBS RADIO AND TELEVISION PROGRAM SERIES **SUSPENSE**

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OPERATION

JOHN WYNDHAM



Science fiction, like music, is the better when relaxed. Unlike so many writers who approach the future with stiff neck and deadly seriousness, John Wyndham allows a bit of lightness, even fun, to leaven his tales, writing in an easy, unforced fashion which not only grips but entertains. One result is that the general reader and the dyed-in-the-wool science aficionado equally enjoy him. Another is that he can plumb to the full the matchless potentialities of the medium for ironic comment on our own times without becoming didactic or irascible. A Britisher who fought with the Royal Signals from Normandy to Germany, Mr. Wyndham's first novel in this country, "The Day of the Triffids," has just been published by Doubleday.

PEEP

SCIENCE SATIRE

With parts of people poking right through walls at most embarrassing moments, life became intolerable. Only an "invention" could restore precious peace and privacy . . .



WHEN I called 'round in the evening I showed Sally the paragraph in the Center City News.

"What do you think of that?" I asked her.

She read it, standing, and with an impatient frown on her pretty face.

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

Sally's principles of belief and disbelief are things I never could get a

line on. How a girl can dismiss a pack of solid evidence like it was kettle steam. . . . Oh, well, skip it. The paragraph read:

MUSIC WITH A KICK

Patrons at Adams Hall last night got a shock when they saw a pair of legs dangling knee-deep from the roof while the concert was on. Seemingly everybody there saw them and all reports agree they were bare feminine gams. After three or four

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minutes and a couple of cute kicks they disappeared upwards. Examination of the roof showed everything normal, and the owners of the hall are at a loss to account for the phenomenon.

"It's just more of the same," I said. "So what?" said Sally. "What does it prove, anyway?" she added, apparently forgetful that she wasn't believing it.

"I don't know—yet," I admitted.

"Well, there you are then," she said.

Sometimes I get the feeling Sally doesn't rely much on logic.

To me, it looked like there were things happening that needed adding together.

You see, Sally and I knew about the first guy to bump against it. A certain Patrolman Walsh. Oh, maybe others saw things before that and just put them down as a new kind of pink elephant. But when Patrolman Walsh found a head sitting up on the sidewalk, he stopped to look at it pretty hard. The thing that upset Walsh, according to the report he turned in after running half a mile to the precinct station, was that it turned to look back at him.

If it did, he shouldn't have mentioned it; it just naturally brought the pink elephants to mind. Nobody in a respectable police station wants to hear a thing like that. However, he stuck to his story, so after they'd bawled him out a bit and taken disappointing sniffs at his breath, they sent him back with another man to show just where he'd seen the thing. Of course no head could be found—

nor signs of cleaning-up marks. And that's all there was said about the incident—save, doubtless, a few curt remarks on the conduct-sheet to dog his future career.

But two evenings later another queer story made the papers. Seems an apartment house was curdled by searing shrieks from a Mrs. Rourke in No. 35 and simultaneously from a Miss Farrell who lived above her. When the neighbors arrived, they found Mrs. Rourke hysterical about a pair of legs that had been dangling from her bedroom ceiling; and Miss Farrell the same about an arm and shoulder stretched out under her bed. But there was nothing to be seen on the ceiling, and nothing under the bed beyond a discreditable quantity of dust.

There were other little incidents, too. It was Jimmy Lindlen who drew my attention to them. He works, if that isn't too strong a word for it, in my office and his hobby is collecting queer facts. In this he is what you might call the *reductio ad absurdum* of Sally. For him everything screwy that gets printed in a newspaper is a fact—poor fellow. I guess he once heard that the truth is never simple, from which he deduced that everything not simple must be true.

I've never actually seen Jimmy at work on his hobby. But at a guess I'd say he would deal himself a hand of cuttings in which there was one strange yet constant factor, discard the awkward ones, and then settle down to astonish himself as much as possible with theories about the

rest. I got used to him coming into my room full of inspiration, and didn't take much account of it. I knew he'd shuffle and deal himself another hand that evening and stagger himself all over again. So when he brought in that first batch about Patrolman Walsh and the rest I didn't ignite much.

But some days later he was back with more. Maybe work was slack, or maybe I was surprised by his playing the same type of phenomena twice running. Anyway, I paid more attention than usual.

"You see. Arms, heads, legs, torsos all over the place. It's an epidemic," said Jimmy. "There's something behind it. *Something's happening!*" he said, as near as you can vocalize italics.

When I'd read the clippings, I had to admit that maybe he was right.

A bus driver had seen the upper half of a body upright in the road before him—but a bit late. When he did stop and climb out, sweating, to examine the mess, there was nothing there. A woman hanging out of a window watching the street saw another head below her, doing the same—but this one was projecting out of the solid brickwork. There was a pair of arms which came out of the floor in a butcher's shop, then withdrew into the solid cement. There was the man on an erection job who became aware of a strangely dressed figure standing close to him, but in the empty air—after which he had to be helped down and sent home. Another figure was noticed between the rails in the path of a

heavy freight train, but had vanished without trace when the train had passed. The dozen or so witnesses agreed that it was wearing some kind of fancy dress, but looked quite masculine. . .

While I skimmed through the clippings Jimmy stood waiting, like a bottle of seltzer.

"You see," he fizzed enthusiastically. "Something *is* happening."

"Supposing it is," I conceded. "But what?"

"The manifestation zone is limited," Jimmy said impressively. "If you look where I've circled the incidents on this city plan, you'll see they're grouped. Somewhere in that circle is the 'focus of disturbance.'" He nicely managed to vocalize the inverted commas. "I've got a pretty good idea of the cause," he added, weightily.

I rarely knew Jimmy when he hadn't, though it might be a different one an hour later.

"I'll buy it," I offered.

"Teleportation! Busting a thing up and transmitting it through space like television sends pictures. That's what it is. Bound to come sooner or later!" He leaned forward earnestly. "How else'd you account for it?"

"If there could be teleportation, or teleportage, or whatever it is, I reckon there'd have to be a transmitter and some sort of reassembly station," I told him. "You couldn't expect a person to be kind of broadcast and then come together again any old place."

"But you don't *know* that," he pointed out. "Besides, that's part of

what I was meaning by 'focus.' It may be focused on that area."

"If it is," I said, "it seems to have got its levels and positions all to hell. I wonder just what happens to a guy who gets himself reassembled half in and half out of a brick wall?"

It's details like that which get Jimmy impatient.

"Obviously," he said, "it's in the early stages. Experimental."

"Huh," I said.

THAT evening had been the first time I had mentioned the business to Sally, which on the whole was a mistake. After making it clear she didn't believe it, she went on to call it "just another invention."

"What do you mean. Why, it would be greater than the wheel!"

"Should be," she said, "but not the way we'd use it."

Sally was in one of her withering moods. She turned on that voice she reserves for the stupidities of the world.

"We've got two ways of using inventions," she said. "One is to kill more people more easily; the other is to help short-sighted goons make easy money out of suckers. Maybe there are a few exceptions, like X-rays, but look at the movies, listen to the radio, and can you or I go buy a nice cheap little helicopter to keep in the back yard?"

Sal gets like that sometimes.

"Inventions!" she said, with as near a snort as her snub nose can manage. "What we do with the product of genius is first ram it down to the lowest common denominator,

then multiply it by the vulgarest possible fractions. What a world! When I think of what other centuries are going to say of us it just makes me go hot all over."

"You're a funny girl," I told her. "Future generations, hey? I suppose they'll laugh like hell at us—but at least we won't know it. And will they be doing any different with *their* inventions?"

A couple of days later Jimmy looked into my room again.

"He's laid off," he said. "This tele-reporting guy. Not a report later than Tuesday. Maybe he knows somebody's on to him."

"Meaning you?" I asked.

He frowned. "I got it figured out. I took the bearings on the map of all the incidents, and the fix came on New Saints Church. I've searched the place, but I didn't find anything. Still, I figure I'm close—why else would he stop?"

That very evening there was a paragraph about an arm some woman had watched travel along her kitchen wall.

When I showed it to Sally, later, she started to snort again. Quickly I suggested a movie. When we got out it was raining but Sally had on her slicker and we decided to walk back to her place. I took her arm.

"Honey," I said, "I know I am regarded as an irritating cluck with a low ethical standard. But have you ever seriously thought what an opportunity there is here for reform?"

"Yes," she said, decisively, and in quite the wrong tone.

"What I mean is," I told her pa-

tiently, "if you happened to be looking for a good work to devote your life to, what could be better than reformation? The scope is tremendous and—"

"Is this a proposal of some kind?" Sally inquired.

"Some kind! I'll have you know that in spite of my dubious ethics . . . good God!" I broke off.

We were in Tyler Street, rain-swept, and empty now except for ourselves. What stopped me was the sudden appearance of a kind of vehicle farther along. I couldn't make it out clearly on account of the rain, but I got the impression of a low-built truck, with several figures in light clothes on it, crossing Tyler street quite swiftly, and vanishing. That wouldn't have been so bad if there were any street crossing Tyler, but there isn't: the truck just came out of one side, and went into the other.

"Did you see what I saw?" I said.

We rushed to the place where the thing had crossed, and looked at the brick wall on one side and the house-fronts on the other.

"You must have been mistaken," said Sally.

"Well, for . . . I must have been mistaken!"

"But it couldn't have happened, could it?"

"Now listen, honey—you saw it, didn't you?"

But at that moment someone stepped from the solid brick, about ten feet ahead of us! A girl! We gaped at her.

I don't know whether the hair was

her own, art and science can do so much together; but the way she wore it! Like a great golden chrysanthemum a foot-and-a-half across with a red rose in it a little left of center. She had on a kind of pink tunic. Maybe it was silk. It wasn't the kind of thing you expected to see in Tyler Street on a filthy wet night, but for sheer coverage it would have got by—well, maybe in a girlie show. What made it a real shocker were the things which had been achieved by embroidery. I never would have believed a girl could—oh, well, anyway, there she stood, and there we stood.

When I say "she stood," she certainly did, but somehow she did it about six inches above ground level. She looked at us both, then she stared at Sally just as hard as Sally was staring at her. It must have been some seconds before any of us moved. The girl opened her mouth as if amazed. She took out a piece of paper—looked like a picture of some kind—from somewhere. She gazed from it to Sally, seemed to laugh with delight, then excitedly turned, waving the paper, and walked back into the wall.

Sally stood quite still, the rain shining on her slicker. When she turned so that I could see her face under the hood there was an expression on it quite new to me. I put my arm around her, and found she was trembling. "I'm scared, Jerry," she said.

I was badly rattled myself, but she needed an act.

"No cause for that, honey. Bound to be a simple explanation—"

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"But it's more than that, Jerry. Didn't you see her face? She looked exactly like me!"

"Not nearly so pretty," I argued nobly.

"Jerry, she was *exactly* my twin. . . I-I'm scared."

"Must have been some trick of the light. Anyway, she's gone."

All the same, it stood my hairs on end. That girl was the image of Sally, all right.

JIMMY came into my room next morning with a copy of the News. It carried a brief, facetious story on the number of local citizens who had been seeing things lately.

"They're beginning to take notice at last," he said.

"How's your research going?"

He shrugged. "I guess it's not quite the way I thought. As I see it, it's still in the experimental stage, all right, but the transmitter may not be around here after all. This may just be the area he has it trained on for testing."

"But why here?"

"How would I know?" He paused, looking portentous. "It *could* be mighty serious. Suppose some enemy had a transmitter, and could project things or people here . . . ?

"Why here?" I said again. "I'd think Oak Ridge, or maybe Brooklyn Navy Yard. . ."

"Experimental," he said, reprovingly.

I told him what Sally and I had seen the previous night. "She sort of didn't look the way I think of enemies," I added.

Jimmy shook his head. "Might be camouflage."

Next day, after half of its readers had written in to tell about the funny things they'd been seeing, the News dropped the facetious angle. In two days more the thing had become factual, dividing sharply into what you might call Modern and Classical camps. The former argued the claims of teleportage against three-dimensional projection or some theory of spontaneous molecular assembly: in the latter, opinions could be sorted into beliefs in a ghostly invasion, a suddenly acquired visibility of habitual wandering spirits, or the imminence of Judgment Day. In the heat of debate it was becoming difficult to know who had seen how much of what, and who was enthusiastically bent on improving his case at some expense of fact.

On Saturday Sally and I met for lunch. Afterwards we took the car *en route* for a little place up in the hills which seemed to me an ideal spot for a proposal. But at the corner of Jefferson and Main the man in front of me jumped on his brakes. So did I, and the guy behind me. The one behind him didn't quite. There was an interesting crunch of metal going on on the other side of the crossing, too. I stood up to see what it was all about, and then pulled Sally up beside me.

"Here we go again," I said. "Look!"

Slap in the middle of the intersection floated a—well, you could scarcely call it a vehicle—it was more

like a flat trolley or platform, about a foot off the ground. And when I say off the ground, I mean just that. No wheels. It kind of hung there from nothing. Standing on it, dressed in colored things like long shirts or smocks, were half a dozen men looking at the scenery. Along the edge of the platform was lettered: PAWLEY'S PEEKHOLES.

One of the men was pointing out New Saints Church to another; the rest were paying more attention to the cars and the people. The cop on duty was hanging a goggling face out of his uniform. He bawled, he blew his whistle, then he bawled some more. The men on the platform took no notice. He got out of his box and came across the road like he was a volcano which had seen a nice place to erupt.

"Hey!" he bellowed.

It didn't worry them. When he got a yard or two away they noticed him, nudged one another, grinned. The cop's face went purplish; his language was a pretty demonstration of fission. But they just watched him with amused interest. He drew his stick, and went closer. He grabbed at a fellow in a yellow shirt—and his arm went right through him.

The cop stepped back. You could see his nostrils kind of spread, the way a horse's do. He got a hold on his stick and made a fine circular swipe at the lot of them. They just grinned at him as the stick went through them.

I'll hand it to that cop. He didn't run. He stared at them a moment, then he turned and walked deliber-

ately back to his position; just as deliberately he signaled the north and south traffic across. The guy ahead of me was ready for it, he drove right at, and through, the platform. It began to move, but I'd have just nicked it myself had it been nickable. Sally, looking back, said it slid away on a curve and disappeared into the First National Bank.

When we got to the spot I'd had in mind the weather had turned bad; it looked dreary and unpropitious, so we drove around and then back to a nice quiet roadside restaurant just out of town. I was getting the conversation around to the mood where I wanted it when who should come over to our table but Jimmy.

"Fancy meeting you two," he said. "Did you hear what went off at Main and Jefferson this afternoon, Jerry?"

"We were there," I told him.

"You know, Jerry, this is something bigger than we thought—a whole lot bigger. That platform thing. These people are technically way ahead of us. Do you know who I think they are?"

"Martians?" I suggested.

He stared at me. "Gee! How did you guess that?" he said, amazedly.

"I sort of saw it had to come," I admitted. "But," I added, "I kind of feel Martians wouldn't be labeling anything 'Pawley's Peekholes.'"

Jimmy went away sadly.

But he'd wrecked the mood. My proposal waited.

ON MONDAY, our stenographer, Anna, arrived more scattered than commonly.

"The most terrible thing just happened to me. Oh my, did I blush all over!"

"All over?" inquired Jimmy, with interest.

"I'm serious! I was in my shower this morning, and when I looked up there was a man in a green shirt standing watching me. Naturally, I screamed at once."

"Naturally," agreed Jimmy. "And what happened then, or shouldn't I . . .?"

"He just stood there," Anna said, firmly. "Then he sniggered at me, and walked away *through the wall*! Was I mortified!"

Jimmy said: "Very mortifying thing, a snigger—and at you, too—"

"That's not what I—what I mean is, things like that oughtn't to be allowed," Anna said. "If a man's going to be able to walk through a girl's bathroom walls, where's he going to stop?"

Which seemed a pretty fair question.

The boss arrived just then. I followed him into his room. He wasn't looking happy.

"What the hell's going on in this damned town, Jerry?" he demanded.

"I'd like to know," I told him.

"Wife comes home yesterday. Finds two incredible girls in the sitting-room. Thinks it's me. First bust-up in twenty years. Girls vanish," he said, succinctly.

That evening when I went to see Sally I found her sitting on the steps of the house in the drizzle.

She gave me a bleak look.

"Two of them came into my room.

A man and a girl. They wouldn't go. They laughed at me. Then they started—well—acting as if I weren't there. I-I couldn't stay, Jerry."

Then, not altogether accountably, she burst into tears.

FROM then on it stepped up. By the end of the next day the town was full of mothers crying shame and men looking staggered, and the mayor and the police were snowed under with protests and demands that somebody do something about it.

The trouble seemed thickest in that district which Jimmy had originally marked out. You *could* meet them elsewhere, but in this one area you were liable any and every minute to encounter a gang; the men in colored shirts, the girls with amazing hair-do's and more amazing decorations on their skirts, sauntering arm in arm out of walls, wandering indifferently through automobiles and people alike. They'd pause anywhere to point out things and people to one another and go into helpless roars of silent laughter. What tickled them most was when folks got riled with them. They'd make signs and faces at them until they got them tearing mad—and the madder the funnier.

You couldn't seem to be free of them any place in the area though they appeared to be operating on levels that weren't always the same as ours. In some places it looked as if they walked on the ground or the floor, but in others they were inches above it, and elsewhere you'd find them moving along as if they were

wading through the solid surface. It was soon very clear that they could not hear us any more than we could them, so there was no getting at them that way.

After three days more of it Center City was in chaos. There just wasn't any privacy. At the most intimate moments they were liable to wander through visibly giggling and guffawing. All very well for the police to announce that there was no danger, that the visitants couldn't *do* anything, so the best way was simply to ignore them. There are times and places when giggling bunches of youths and maidens take more ignore-power than the average guy's got. It sent even a placid fellow like me wild at times, while the women's leagues of this-and-that, the purity promoters and the like were living in a constant state of blown tops.

The news getting around hadn't helped, either. News hounds of all breeds burned the roads into town. They overflowed the place. Pretty nearly every street was snaked with cables of movie cameras, television cameras and microphones, while the press-photographers were having the snappy-shot time of their lives.

But there was more to come. Jimmy and I happened on the first demonstration of it. We were on our way to lunch, Jimmy quite subdued. He'd given up theories on account of the facts had kind of submerged him. Just short of the lunch-bar, we stopped, noticing a commotion further along Main Street. After a bit, a vehicle emerged from a tangle of cars farther down and came

towards us at some seven or eight miles an hour. Essentially it was a platform like the one Sally and I had seen at the crossing that Sunday, but this was de luxe. There were sides to it glistening with new paint, red, yellow and blue, enclosing seats set four abreast. Most of the passengers were young, though there was a sprinkling of middle-aged men and women dressed in a soberer version of the same fashions. Behind the first platform followed half a dozen others. We read the lettering on their sides and backs as they went past:

PAWLEY'S PEEKHOLES
INTO THE PAST

GREATEST INVENTION
OF THE AGE

HISTORY WITHOUT TEARS—
\$10.00 A TRIP

SEE HOW GT. GT. GRANDMA
LIVED

YE QUAINTE OLDE
20th CENTURY EXPRESSE

EDUCATIONAL!
LEARN PRIMITIVE
FOLKWAYS & LIVING
CONDITIONS

VISIT ROMANTIC
20th CENTURY—
SAFETY GUARANTEED

KNOW YOUR HISTORY—
GET CULTURE—\$10.00

BIG MONEY PRIZE—
IF YOU IDENTIFY
YOUR OWN GRANDAD/MA

That last one explained the mystery of Sally's twin of the ether.

I noticed that most of the occupants of the vehicles were turning their heads this way and that in gog-eyed wonder interspersed with spasms of giggles. Some of the young men waved their arms and addressed us with witticisms to the admiration of their companions. Others leaned back, bit into large yellow fruits, and munched. On the back of the next to last car was lettered:

HOW GOOD WAS
GT. GRANDMA?
FIND OUT FOR YOURSELF

SPOT THE FAMOUS—
SHARP EYES MAY WIN YOU
A BIG PRIZE

As the procession moved away it left the rest of us looking at one another kind of stunned. Nobody seemed to have much left to say just then.

I GUESS that show must have been something in the nature of a grand premiere. After that you were liable almost any place about town to come across a platform labeled HISTORY IS CULTURE—BROADEN YOUR MIND, or KNOW THE ANSWERS ABOUT YOUR ANCESTORS, each with full good-time loads aboard, but I never heard of a regular procession again.

Well, work has to go on. We couldn't fix to do anything about it, so we had to put up with it. Quite a pack of families moved out of town for privacy and to spare their daughters from getting the new ideas about dress, and so on; but most of us had to stay. Pretty near everyone you met those times looked dazed or scowling—except the "tourists."

I called for Sally one evening about a couple of weeks after the trolley procession. When we came out of the house there was a ding-dong going on down the road. A couple of girls with heads that looked like globes of gilded basketwork were scratching the living daylights out of one another. There was a guy standing by looking mighty like a proud rooster, the rest were whooping things on. We went the other way.

"It just isn't like our town any more," said Sally. "Our homes aren't our homes any more. Why can't they go away and leave us in peace, damn them! I hate them!"

But outside the park we saw one little chrysanthemum-head sitting on apparently nothing at all, and crying her heart out. Sally softened a little.

"Maybe they are human," she said. "But why do they have to turn our town into a darn amusement park?"

We found a bench and sat on it, looking at the sunset. I wanted to get her away out of it.

"It'd be grand to be off up in the hills now," I said.

"It'd be lovely, Jerry." She sighed.

I took her hand, and she didn't pull it away.

"Sally, darling—" I began.

But before I could get any further, two tourists, a man and a girl, came to anchor in front of us. I was angry. You might see the platforms anywhere, but walking tourists didn't find much to interest them in the park as a rule. These two did, though. They stood staring at Sally. She took her hand out of mine. They conferred. The man unfolded a piece of paper he was carrying. They looked at the paper, then at Sally, and then back. It was too much to ignore. I got up and walked through them to see what the paper was. There I had a surprise. It was the Center City News. Obviously a very ancient copy indeed. It was badly browned and tattered at the edges, and to keep it from falling to bits entirely it had been mounted inside some thin, transparent plastic. I looked where they were looking—and Sally's face stared back at me from a smiling photograph. She had her arms spread wide, and a baby in the crook of each. I'd just time to see the headline: "Twins for Inventor's Wife," when they folded up the paper and made off along the path running. I guessed they were hot on the trail to claim one of their infernal prizes—and I hoped it poisoned them.

I went back and sat down again beside Sally. That picture had kind of spoiled things. I'd never invented anything more than an excuse in my life—and I had to do that again right now to avoid telling her what I'd seen.

We sat on a while.

A platform went by labelled:

PAINLESS EDUCATION— GET CULTURE IN COMFORT

"Maybe it's time we moved," I said.

"Yes," said Sally.

I was wishing I'd seen the date on that paper.

"You don't," I asked casually as we walked, "you don't happen to know any guy that invents things?"

"No," said Sally.

That was something, anyway. . .

NEXT DAY found indignation right up the scale again, with everybody complaining to the police, the mayor, Congress, even the President. But no matter how many and how influential the tops that were blowing, nothing was getting done about it. There were schemes, of course. Jimmy had one: it had to do with either ultra-high or infra-low frequencies which were going to shake the projections of the tourists to bits. Maybe there was something in it, and something on those lines might have been worked out sometime, but right then it wasn't getting any place. It's darned difficult to know what you *can* do about something which is virtually a movie portrait in three dimensions—except find some way of cutting its transmission. All its functions are going on not where you see it, but in the place where its origin is. So how do you get at it? What you are actually seeing doesn't feel, doesn't act, doesn't breathe, doesn't sleep, doesn't—

And at that point I had my idea. It struck me all of a heap—so simple. I grabbed my hat and took myself around to the Mayor's office.

After their daily processions of threateners and screwballs they were wary at first, but then interested. We made a test, then we went to work.

All the next two days the gear came rolling into town. When we were ready we had batteries of Klieg lights, beacon lights, all kinds of lights rigged up on trucks, and we had all the searchlights that the Army, the Navy and the airport people would lend us set strategically round town. We brought in a special consignment of very dark glasses for the citizens, and served them out to all comers. Then we got busy.

Whenever a platform showed, we opened up on it with all the blaze we could bring to bear. We poured all the concentrated glare on them that we could. The people on board covered their eyes and the platform slid to cover. We couldn't reach them inside buildings, but the moment they showed outside again we were on them. After a day of it the tourists started showing up in dark glasses too, but if they were strong enough to dim off those lights they just dimmed everything else clean out.

We kept right on at it, working in shifts day and night—and in a bit we began to see results. No wonder. It couldn't have been a lot of fun having your eyeballs fried at \$10.00 a fry. After three days of it, trade fell off badly for Pawley's Peek-holes. Evidently the customers

wanted to see something more than the inside of a few buildings and an almighty searing glare everywhere outside. And at the end of five days it was pretty well over. . . . At least, we say it was over. Jimmy maintains otherwise. According to him, all they did, probably, was to modify out the visibility factor, and it's likely they're still peeking around just the same right now—in Center City and other places. Maybe he's right; maybe that guy Pawley, whoever he is or will be, has got a chain of Fun-Fairs all around the world and all through history operating right now. We wouldn't know—and, as long as he keeps 'em out of sight, we wouldn't care a lot. There's a lot in that old adage: out of sight, out of mind. . . .

When we could see we'd got it all tied up I took time to call on Sally. She was looking as lovely as ever.

"Hullo, Jerry," she said. "I've just been reading about you in the paper. I think it's wonderful."

"Nothing so wonderful. Just that I happened to get an idea," I said modestly.

"But it was. It was a wonderful invention."

"Well, it worked, but I'd hardly call it an—" I broke off. "Did you say 'invention?'" I asked.

"Why, of course!"

"Then that would make me an inventor?"

"Why, yes, Jerry. . ." She looked puzzled.

I took a deep breath.

"Sally, darling, there's something I've been trying to say to you for quite a while. . . ."