

THE PHANTAGRAPH

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Picture of a Young Man With a Vision

by Donald A. Wollhelm

The young man put down the science-fiction magazine he had been reading and locked out the window. His mind was filled with the story he had read, his heart was beating fast and his imagination, stirred to heights by the tale, was still flaming on through the sky. The sun beat in the window; outside he could see blue sky with one or two lacy white clouds idly floating; on the river front, a block over and below, a few nondescript boats steamed along; the New Jersey shore far away stood out clear and green and the little houses perched on top of the verdant cliffs all trim and peaceful.

Yet his thoughts were not of them, nor of these things. They were away, far away in time and space, hurtling like the wind. Shooting through the blackness and silences of outer space, tearing soundlessly like the flight of a solitary meteor through the void between the distant and lonely stars. He stood, in his thoughts, alone in the tiny control of a small glistening space-ship, staring out into the black black star-strewn universe. Ahead lay worlds, distant tiny worlds, worlds of great strangeness, yet spheres to which his soul felt a keen affinity. Those worlds were to be his, his for conquest, his for adventure, his for use. He was the space-

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traveller, he the fearless voyager of the stars. And he was Man.

Man. Man shorn of his bonds. Man freed of his ties to his little ball of sod. Man freed emotionally from his mental bonds of millenia past. Freed of the agonies and hatreds of histories gone past. Shattered at last the ties to aeons of misery and suffering, aeons of mad fighting and futile unceasing battles against the petty squabbles of a petty world. The wars, the sicknesses of body and spirit, the incredibly petty economies, the grinding monotony of work and sleep, of birth and death with nought between but drudgery. All gone, cut short in one fell stroke by he who was the first to tear aside the chain of gravity to hurl his little but mighty mass through the endless voids towards the prize that dangled eternally before the eyes of man.

The space-voyager smiled quietly in his little cabin. In his eyes the lights of starts and ebon lightlessness of void gave proof alike that he was free. Free to wander forever the universe that was his. For him no four corners and seven winds. For him, an infinity of corners, an infinity of worlds and homes, infinite riches and infinite resources, the universe was Man's, the universe and all that went with it. Life forever. And with life, happiness. Legions of men would live and breath in the airs of a thousand ripe rich worlds, and live to the fullness the happiness and throbbing pleasure of untrammelled life. Of lives without misery, with work yes, but work for progress, work for enjoyment, work for further power and further benefits, work in cleanliness and vitality. This is the promise of science, and this the ultimate fulfillment. The space-flier smiled, a grim smile of victory and

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strong confident strength, of power and pride unbounded, and of joy of living.

The youth strained forward. His eyes sought to tear the blue from the sky, sought to hasten the time, to shut out the beating of the clock and move forward to escape these grim weary days. He strained and suddenly in an agony of spirit brought his fist down with a thunderous crash upon the reading-table.

"What was that noise?" called a tired female voice from the kitchen.

"Oh nothing," the youth spoke resignedly and got up and left the room.

