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An Amazing Complete Novel

DONOVAN HAD A DREAM

By JAMES MacCREIGH

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Read Our Companion Science Fiction Magazine—STARTLING STORIES



W. W. Moore

In a spasm of anger, Donaldson reached out and twisted a dial, sending a wave of agonizing current through Aucassar

PROBATE

By MARGARET ST. CLAIR

Scientist Jim Donaldson stages a last-ditch revolt against the emergence of the superior New Man as Earth's inheritor!

PROBATE—*n. Law.* Official proof, esp. of an instrument offered as the last will and testament of a person deceased.—*Webster's Collegiate Dictionary.*

THEY were very beautiful, Jim Donaldson thought, pressing his hands over his eyes. (He had worked for twenty hours without sleep.) Aesthetically, *Homo intelligens* was a delight. The tall, strong, shapely body, the noble symmetry of

the head, the amazingly vivid coloration.

New Man, according to Old Man's standards, was the most beautiful thing that had ever walked the earth.

It didn't make any difference. He hated them. Sometimes he thought he had more in common with a lizard or a snake than with these incomprehensible strangers who had come as mutants from the loins of his kind.

Their alienness almost made his flesh creep.

Old Man in general had felt it so.

How many Old Men were there left now? He and Bax had been the only ones in all the New York area, and Bax was three months dead. He must remember to ask Aucassir, his adviser.

When Old Man had realized that his successor was on the scene, that his winter was upon him, he had begun a bloody, savage, pitiless struggle against the newcomer.

Old Man had warred against his heir with the black, unsleeping treachery of a Dobu islander, cruelty the weapon whose feel he relished most. There had been truce after truce, but Homo sapiens had broken them all.

At one time, so Aucassir said, there had been less than five hundred New Men left. Then they had rallied, realizing—for they were incorrigibly unwilling to inflict pain—that no partial solution was possible, and turned all their enormous intelligence to the devising of weapons. Within two months, Old Man had been hopelessly routed.

Today Donaldson's mind went back to a conversation he had had with Bax not long before the psychiatrist's death.

"You say there's basically no insurmountable reason why we couldn't learn to tolerate Homo intelligens," Donaldson had argued. "You say they have good motives and they can put them into effect. That's nonsense. We've been top species for so long that, if we once accepted their hegemony, we'd die of an inferiority complex."

DONALDSON'S argument drew a snort of contempt from Bax.

"You're the one that's talking nonsense," Bax had replied. "As so many people did, you think that feelings of inferiority, what you call an inferiority complex, have something to do with inferiority in fact. They haven't. In the days when I still had patients, I saw over and over again that the people who suffered most from a conviction of inferiority were those who were superior both in native endowment and in achievement. But their success was powerless to alleviate a purely subjective thing.

"Adults don't feel inferior because they can't live up to what their culture expects of them; they feel inferior because as children they couldn't measure up to their parents' expectations. It's a sign of mental health to be satisfied with what one is."

"But we can't accept such things!" Don-

aldson had protested.

"Oh, it might take a generation or two of conditioning. Not more, I think. Dogs live with men and don't feel inferior. Though we have some mental abilities they haven't, Homo intelligens is as far above us in intelligence as we are above dogs."

As far above us as we are above dogs, Donaldson thought. But they had their blind spots. He smiled faintly. They'd let him keep on with his work, had encouraged him, given him everything he asked for. Now what would happen?

There was a rap at the door. After a moment, Aucassir, his adviser, entered. She was a tall, lovely girl with the intense turquoise eyes and gleaming copper skin of her race. Homo intelligens was far more homogeneous than Donaldson's people had been.

"I thought I'd drop in and see how you were doing," she said smilingly. "I left Gervis outside on the terrace—you know how he wants to handle everything." Gervis was her son, showing, in this slow-developing species, at the age of four the lack of complete muscular control Donaldson would have expected in a much younger child. "I see you're still using lots of power. How's your work coming?"

Donaldson felt a stab of fear. Aucassir's people were highly telepathic. But he was safe enough; because she was far too polite to tune in on his thoughts unless he invited her.

"I hope to have something to show you one of these days," he said.

"Splendid! We were talking about you in my group last night. I expect great things of you." Aucassir had a lovely voice.

He walked over to the windows and looked out over the window ledge to the city below.

"You haven't been around much lately, have you?" he said without turning.

Aucassir, as he had expected she would, looked vaguely puzzled.

"No. I—well—"

She had, he perceived with smug pleasure, no idea why she had called on him less frequently of late. The apparatus he had been working on broadcast vibrations, wave-particles (he could work on the nomenclature later), call them what you will, which rode pick-a-back on ordinary radio waves. Their effect on the sensitive neural organization of Aucassir's people was somewhat analogous to that of supersonics on Old Man. Aucassir avoided his laboratory without realizing why.

"Oh, that's all right," he said. "What's that you're reading?"

"One of your old poets. You're much better at word-verse than we are."

He held out his hand for the book, and then realized, with a slow flush, that he couldn't read it. It was in a language he didn't know.

"It's Greek," Aucassir said helpfully. "I learned it last week. Some of it is very fine. Listen."

She found a place and began to read, long, rolling lines.

"What does it mean?" Donaldson asked, raging inwardly. It was intolerable to have his own culture ladled out to him by Aucassir, intolerable that New Man, who wasn't human, should be quicker at human things than Old Man had been.

AUCASSIR became contrite. "Oh, you don't understand!" she cried. "I'm sorry. Your languages are hard to translate. Something like this: 'There are many strange things, but than Man, none stranger. He it is who goes across the gray sea with the wind of winter, and pierces through the swollen waves that follow one on another; and Earth, the eldest of the Gods, the unworn, the unwearied, he harasses with the turning plow, year after year, tilling the soil with the horse.' And this part is nice: 'And speech, and wind-swift thought, and the temper that shapes the state Man has found out for himself and—'"

"You say it's Greek?" Donaldson interrupted. He felt he couldn't bear to listen to her any longer. He had backed around so his hand was against the intensity-dial. It might, he thought unexpectedly, be a good idea to have a full-dress rehearsal of what his apparatus would do.

"Yes." Aucassir closed the book and looked at him. "Those are the things your people did," she said slowly. "You tilled the soil, you crossed the sea, you invented speech and founded states. Your people never realized how grateful we were to you. We felt you were a race with great achievements and we were your heirs. We build on what your people built."

She was perfectly sincere, Donaldson saw. Gratitude! She was as much above him as a man is above a dog. In a spasm of anger, he twisted the dial.

"What is it!" said Aucassir. Her mouth wrenched away from her teeth. For a moment she looked frantic. Donaldson had the

impression that she was trying to move and could not. Then her body stiffened and her face grew blank.

Donaldson turned the power down low and regarded her sourly. Paralysis first, he supposed, and, at greater intensities, death. His heart was pounding wildly, but on the whole he was surprised and pleased to find he was so calm. What he had just done was the first hostile act of man toward New Man in more than forty years.

How many of them would he be able to kill? He had enormous power at his disposal and, in theory, he ought to be able to blanket the earth. Even if theory were at fault, he'd be able to wipe out most of the New Men. It was too bad he hadn't remembered to ask Aucassir how many Old Men there were now. They were still born occasionally, he knew. Once they got rid of their overlords, Homo sapiens would be able to take over again. New Man would be disorganized and dazed. Homo intelligens had never been able to believe that anyone meant him harm.

Even if Donaldson were wrong about that, and man—his kind of man—didn't make a come-back, what difference did it make? Homo intelligens had everything, and Homo sapiens had nothing by comparison. But he was still dangerous. He could still kill.

There was a noise at the window. Donaldson looked up quickly, his pulses beginning to pound.

Gervis, left on the terrace, had grown bored with solitude. A four-year-old adventurer, he had climbed up on the parapet and onto the window ledge outside the laboratory; now, balanced insecurely, he was leaning out, smiling and clapping his hands, toward the city below.

For a moment Donaldson's heart stood still. If the child were startled in any way, he would plunge over and out of sight, down, down—down—

Then Donaldson opened the window, clasped his hands about the boy's body, and drew him gently into the room just as the child's feet slipped over the edge. Donaldson put him down softly on the laboratory floor. Twisting the dial on his apparatus back to zero, Donaldson began to laugh.

Aucassir had not realized how narrow had been her escape.

"What happened to me?" she had asked, stretching, breaking into uncontrollable yawns. "I feel like I'd been asleep. I don't

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PROBATE

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even remember your letting Gervis in." After she and her son had gone, Donaldson felt an enormous bitterness. He hadn't, in the last analysis, been able to do it. The years of easy living, the kindnesses, the solicitude, had undone him. Something—the fighting heart, the ruthlessness—had gone out of him.

He sat for a long time looking blankly at the blotting paper on his desk. Today had been the last time *Homo sapiens* had dreamed of regaining his leadership. Today had seen the last flicker of revolt. No man would revolt again.

Equanimity began to invade him at last. What had that poem said? That there was nothing stranger than man. And Aucassir had spoken of gratitude, had said they built on what Old Man had builded first.

Donaldson drew a deep sigh. It was all right. Man had lived that New Man, his inheritor, his successor, might be born. *Homo sapiens* had, however unwillingly, handed on the torch. It was all right.

After a while Jim Donaldson picked out an assortment of screwdrivers and wrenches from the tools on his work bench and began dismantling his machine.