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FRANK B. LONG, *Associate Editor*

KEITH AYLING, *Article Editor*

*Cover Painting by
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DEPARTMENT of LOST STORIES



Three months ago we announced that each month SATELLITE would publish in this department one or two science fiction and fantasy classics from the past—stories lost to all but a pinpoint scattering of readers with very retentive memories across the years. This month we have a quite startling surprise for you. A short while ago Fritz Leiber moved from Chicago to California, and before moving did a considerable amount of packing and cellar-to-attic exploration. Quite by accident he came upon a short-story manuscript with a familiar name in the upper right-hand corner—his own! For a moment he had no clear recollection of having written the story, but then the title and the opening paragraph jogged his memory a bit and he recalled that he had always regarded it as one of his very best stories. He re-read it with a critical eye, saw no reason to change his mind, and submitted it to SATELLITE. We in turn read it with a severely critical eye and decided—that it was a very unusual story indeed, a top-vintage Leiber! Here, then, is a truly lost science fiction story.

Psychosis From Space

by FRITZ LEIBER

YOUNG DR. WALLISER'S MIND was in a pleasant whirl, as if he'd just attended a symphony in combined sound, color, and electric vibration. What had really happened was that he'd spent a morning touring I.P.P.R.—the Institute for Psychological and Psychiatrical Research. And that meant a great deal more to Dr. Walliser than any symphony, no matter how stimulating.

For it had been his lifelong ambition to get on the I.P.P.R. staff, and now his ambition had come true. To cap everything, he was actually talking with the Director of the Institute, Dr. Stegman himself, and walking by his side toward the wards.

"Remember, Dr. Walliser," said the older man, "you are entering the first line of defense in a never-ceasing battle for the sanity of mankind. Our ancestors were confident that the future would see all mental ills catalogued and cured. Poor misguided idealists!" He ran his fingers through his iron-grey hair. His eyes looked tired.

"Oh, I won't deny we have learned a great deal about the human mind. But can we cure cosmic shock? Do we have a treatment for gravitational dementia or spaceman's psychosis? It's an inescapable fact, Walliser, that one-fifth of the popu-

lation of the world is insane or severely neurotic. And the percentage is constantly growing."

Dr. Walliser nodded gravely, but his imagination was busy with what he'd seen earlier—the brain-wave projectors, the gravitational therapy apparatus, and the superb Rand hypnotizers.

"Our task is not an easy one," Stegman said. "I.P.P.R. is constantly under attack. Misguided humanitarians want to stop our work. The Ultimo Party wants to see the Institute transformed into a gigantic laboratory for remaking the germ plasm of the human species. Their rallying cry is: 'A New Humanity to Replace the Old.' The Space-men's Co-operative brings powerful political pressure to bear on us. Since we depend on government funds, we must be very careful. Each one of us must watch his step. I know, Dr. Walliser, that you will be a loyal and—well, circumspect member of our staff."

Dr. Stegman indicated with a wave of his hand the doors they were passing. "Each one of these, Dr. Walliser, houses a unique mental problem. For example, take that room ahead—L-Fifty-seven. A most baffling case, though I've not had a chance to look in on it personally. You probably heard of

The Institute of Psychological and Psychiatrical Research waged a never-ceasing battle for the sanity of mankind. But the patients in the wards were not always as unbalanced as they seemed.



it in the tele-news six weeks back. Professor Dickenson."

"You mean the man who claimed to have invented a spaceship that would travel at a speed greater than that of light?"

"He's the fellow. A scientific crank. There was little or no publicity when he took off. But then his ship disappeared, and the news people tried to build up interest. They made a one day's sensation of it when his ship was picked up derelict off Saturn, with Dickenson half-starved and violently insane. He'd wrecked much of his special machinery, evidently because it had not fulfilled his expectations. Now he's in the hands of Doctor Trand, one of our most brilliant younger psychiatrists. But after two weeks Trand reports no progress whatever. Very possibly another failure for I.P.P.R."

A low, well-modulated voice began to issue from the Director's vest pocket. "Dr. Stegman. Dr. Stegman," it said.

The Director sighed and took out a two-way pocket television piece about as big as a watch.

"Is it the Humanitarian Protest Committee?" he asked the pretty blonde girl whose troubled face appeared on the dial.

She nodded. He put the tiny transmitting and receiving instrument back in his pocket.

"Well, Doctor Walliser, I must get along. See as much as you can of our plant before you settle down to your first assignments. Goodbye and good luck."

He hurried down a side corridor.

The door of L-57 opened. A red-haired, capable-looking young nurse stuck her head out.

"Doctor, will you give me a hand," she asked curtly. "Patient's violent and I can't locate Doctor Trand."

Walliser hesitated for a second and then followed her.

"Above all, don't try to talk to him!" she said. "That makes him worse."

A somewhat frail and scrawny looking old man had left his bed and was standing with his back to a wall. He seemed to be trying to mould himself to the smooth plastic. There was something pitiful about his gaunt face and white hair. When Walliser and the nurse approached him, he shuddered violently, and a stream of gibberish issued from his writhing lips.

"A hypodermic would be in order, I think," whispered Walliser, and then felt like biting his tongue. Of course, it was an emergency, but still he had no business making suggestions, especially to an experienced nurse.

The red-head wrinkled her forehead and nodded.

"I was about to give him one," she whispered back. "Otherwise he may injure himself before Trand can be located."

She slid open a wall cabinet and prepared an injection. Walliser helped her hold the old man while he administered it. Dickenson struggled, but only weakly and in a purposeless fashion. Finally his body went limp. As they were getting him back into bed, the door opened.

"Just what have you been doing, Nurse Minter?

And just who is this young man with you?" Dr. Trand's voice was as cold and supercilious as his face. The red-head bridled at it.

"Dickenson became violent," she said. "I was unable to reach you. A hypodermic was imperative."

"Your patient's violence was considerable," said Walliser. "As for myself, I am Doctor John Walliser. I have only recently been attached to the staff of the Institute."

Trand's lips tightened in a sardonic grimace. "Your inexperience," he said bitingly, "hardly excuses your behavior. I'm quite sure Nurse Minter misrepresented the case to you, with her cock-and-bull story about being unable to locate me. Nevertheless, your conduct is indefensible. It will be reported to Director Stegman. For the present, you will return to your quarters."

Walliser could see that the nurse was having difficulty keeping her anger in check. He felt a strong impulse to say something more in her behalf, but realized it would be a very unwise move. After all, he was a newcomer. Doubtless Trand was in the right. Walliser and the nurse left the room together, with Trand glaring after them, his lips set in tight lines.

Nurse Minter exploded the instant she reached the corridor.

"That was just an act. He's been trying to get rid of me for days, because I know that he's been tormenting that poor old man in order to get hold of his scientific secrets. Trand's one of the Ultimos. He makes no secret of it."

Walliser suddenly felt glad that he had not tried to defend Nurse Minter. Her startling accusation seemed to indicate that she was suffering from a typical nurse's delusion. Trying to steal secrets from a man who was admittedly both insane and a scientific crank made no sense at all.

"Of course," the redhead went on, "I wouldn't dare tell old Stegman or any of the others. They'd side with Trand immediately. For that matter—here her features relaxed in a smile—"I don't know why I'm telling you. Do you?"

Walliser shook his head. But in spite of himself, he liked her smile.

"I wonder," said the redhead, opening the door of a pneumo-elevator, "if you'd do something for me. Oh, nothing to get you into trouble. You see, it's probably just a matter of time now until I am fired. But I really have a good and sufficient reason for believing what I just said about Trand. Would you meet me in the social room tonight after supper? Everybody goes there. I'd like to tell you some more about Trand and Dickenson. Then, if you think I've just got a bee in my bonnet, you can tell me so quite frankly. Is it a bet?"

The redhead mistook Walliser's hesitation for agreement.

"Good!" she said. And, before he could decide to stop her, she vanished into the pneumo-elevator, which shot upward with a soft, sighing sound.

Walliser shrugged his shoulders. Then it occurred to him that he barely had time to get to the lecture on brain-wave equations.

That evening Walliser felt both excited and anxious as he entered the large, softly-illuminated

social room. He had just passed through the lobby of the Institute. A group of Ultimos were out in front, picketing. Their portable projectors flashed such statements as "Why Waste Money Curing Individuals, when the Whole Human Race Needs Treatment?" "Devote Yourselves to the Future; Progress Demands a New Species!" "Create a New Species to Fit a New World!" and "This Institution is Bar to Progress. It does Nothing but Patch Up Misfits."

There was something deadly and chilling about the quiet fanaticism of the pickets—young men and women, all of them. They knew that, as long as the powerful Spaceman's Co-operative was backing the Ultimos the Institute would have to tolerate their bold propaganda.

Walliser looked around the social room, but nowhere could he see Nurse Minter.

"Are you Doctor Walliser?" a petite brunette asked suddenly, emerging from a shadowed recess. She giggled self-consciously when he nodded, and handed him an envelope.

"Nurse Minter asked me to give you this."

Walliser thanked her and she wandered off, smiling at him knowingly. He resented the smile. Evidently Nurse Minter had neglected to tell the girl that this was not a social "date" but a professional one.

The note was brief and to the point, but not very illuminating.

"Sorry I couldn't meet you at the social room, but I'm taking advantage of an unexpected opportunity to expose Dr. Trand. Come to R-38 and I can give you direct proof of my accusations. Please. This is important."

Walliser was irritated. Just where was room R-38? In the living quarters of the staff, wasn't it? Well, he would hardly be compromising himself by going there. After all, it was up to him to see the matter through. He couldn't just forget about it.

At this time of evening R-corridor was deserted. Walliser received a considerable surprise when he noted that the name-plate on the door of 38 read DR. TRAND. But his surprise was greater when Nurse Minter opened the door.

"Come on in," she whispered. "I've just got him hypnotized. Caught him taking a nap and used the usual technique. Come on in before someone notices us."

Walliser saw his career going up in smoke. Why, this sort of business was decidedly criminal, according to the strict hypnotism codes.

"You can't do this!" he whispered angrily. But he let himself be drawn inside.

"Can't I?" grinned the redhead. "Just listen to what he has to say!"

Trand, clad in purple pyjamas and a green dressing robe, was propped up comfortably in bed. His vacant eyes were fixed on the small Rand apparatus, from which a tiny light was flickering and changing colors. From the same apparatus a phonographic voice was issuing, monotonous but subtly soothing.

Nurse Minter went over to it and began to speak in rhythm with the voice, imitating its tone. As her voice became louder, she decreased the volume of the phonographic one. Walliser understood the pro-

cedure. She was making a voice-transference. He consoled himself with the thought that it was now his plain duty to see that Trand came to no harm. He would listen for a little, and then step in and put a stop to the whole crazy business.

Nurse Minter was beginning her questions.

"Doctor Trand, can you hear me?"

The vacantly-staring figure on the bed nodded mechanically.

"Are you a member of the Ultimo Party?"

"Yes." Trand's voice was somewhat thick, as if his tongue had become swollen, filling too much of his mouth.

"Are you interested in obtaining the secret of Professor Dickenson's faster-than-light spaceship?"

An inner resistance in Trand seemed to be fighting the question. His lips opened and closed several times before they emitted a faint but distinctly audible, "Yes."

"All this proves nothing," whispered Walliser. "The Ultimo Party isn't illegal. And anyone would be interested in knowing Dickenson's secret—if he has a secret, which I doubt."

The redhead silenced him with an impatient gesture.

"Doctor Trand, would it mean a great deal to the Ultimo Party to obtain Dickenson's secret? Would it be of tremendous help to them in the revolution they are planning?"

Trand's "yes" was slow in coming, but unmistakable. Nurse Minter immediately went on to her next question.

"Do you know what's wrong with Dickenson's mind?"

Again an unwilling "yes." Walliser felt a thrill of excitement. That last "yes" meant something. Stegman had said that Trand had reported himself baffled by the case of the elderly inventor.

"Are you purposely delaying his cure in order to get his secret out of him first? Are you?"

Trand's body began to rock a little, and his hands made uneasy, fumbling movements. Obviously the last question had provoked even more inner resistance in Trand than the ones which had preceded it. The unconscious struggle seemed dangerously near to breaking his trance. Walliser waited anxiously for the reply. It came from an unexpected quarter.

"Interesting visitors Doctor Trand has, eh?"

Walliser and Nurse Minter whirled around. Standing outside the opened door were three hard-faced young men. Well-dressed, cultured-looking but coldly menacing. Walliser thought he'd seen one of them with the Ultimo pickets. They filed into the room, the last to enter shutting the door noiselessly behind him.

"Hypnotism," said the first, after a quick glance around. He drew an automatic pistol from an under-arm pocket. He turned to Nurse Minter.

"Wake him," he commanded in a toneless, cultivated voice.

"He's in deep trance," said Nurse Minter. "I refuse to wake him. If you kill me, you won't be able to either."

The young man with the weapon raised an eyebrow quizzically.

"I think you're lying," he said, "but we'll soon make sure. Meanwhile, keep quiet."

He motioned to one of his companions. "See if you can wake him," he said.

Walliser realized it was a tight situation. He knew that these young fanatics would kill without compunction, with a cold, scientific zeal. He was not ashamed of the fear he experienced.

He heard some laughing voices approaching down the hall, and straightened in sudden wariness. He saw his chance.

"Nurse Minter," he said, in a calm but fairly loud voice, "I think it's time we were going. Doctor Trand is getting rather tired."

The young man lifted his automatic. Then he scowled perplexedly. He knew the approaching staff members were near enough to hear a shriek, or even the sounds of a struggle.

"Yes, Doctor Trand," said Nurse Minter, in an equally loud voice. "I'm sure we should give you a chance to get some rest. I know you're tired."

Together they walked toward the door. The young man took a slow step toward them, then paused. He did not speak. Baffled hate gleamed from his eyes.

They opened the door. The laughing group had just passed. Nurse Minter started after them, but Walliser caught her arm.

"Come on," he said. "No use starting anything now. We've got to see Stegman first and tell him everything. I'll back you up."

They were unable to reach Stegman by radio-phone. His secretary said he was in an important conference, and refused to dial his television piece, despite their entreaties. So they hurried down to his office. Again the pretty secretary blandly refused to disturb the director. She assured them, however, that he would be free within half an hour.

They had a whispered conference as to whether it would be wiser to wait, or to get in touch with some other official. They decided on the former course. Walliser had great faith in Stegman's ability to take an intelligent and sympathetic view of the whole disturbing matter.

The half hour dragged by. Then the secretary motioned them from her booth.

"He'll see you. Go right in," she said.

Nurse Minter didn't like the calculating look in the wench's eye.

The inner office was large and blank-walled. Behind a dully gleaming metal table stood Stegman, looking tired and grave.

In a large arm chair sat Dr. Trand, fully dressed. His face was serious, but it was a seriousness that masked sardonic triumph.

"Nurse Minter," said Stegman, "I am more than displeased by what you have just done. You have gone much too far. Indeed, you have made yourself subject to prosecution for criminal behavior."

"Wait a moment, sir," interrupted Walliser aggressively. "Nurse Minter's accusations are true. I can substantiate them. I tell you I heard Trand himself admit—"

"Restrain yourself, Doctor Walliser!" Stegman's voice carried the ring of authority. "Let me tell you that I find you guilty of stupidities unworthy of a psychiatrist. Any 'admissions' you may have heard

from Dr. Trand were made while he was in hypnosis. Have you forgotten that a person in hypnosis can be cleverly and deceptively led into making such 'admissions'? You didn't see Trand until after he was in a state of trance, did you? I thought not. You surprise me. I took you for an intelligent young man."

"Dr. Stegman!" Nurse Minter's voice was sharp and angry. "Won't you at least listen to our side of the case? Trand is trying to steal Dickenson's secret, and—"

"Really, Nurse Minter, your ideas are preposterous. How can you believe that Dickenson *has* any secret? Everyone knows that it is impossible for an object to travel at a speed greater than that of light. The impossibility of traveling faster than light is the basis of all post-Einsteinian physics."

"But there's another thing," argued Walliser desperately. "While we were in Trand's room, we were accosted and threatened by three young men, obviously Ultimos and accomplices of Trand. One of them had an automatic pistol."

"That," said Stegman sternly, "is a deliberate lie. Four staff members saw you leave Trand's room peaceably. I have checked their statements. Moreover, they heard both of you make remarks utterly incompatible with your story of an attack."

"But that was a trick on our part to enable us to escape."

"Doctor Walliser! I will waste no more time listening to your clumsy prevarications. Nor to Nurse Minter's equally wild accusations. Leave this office immediately. Tomorrow you will learn what action I propose to take. Doctor Trand has generously asked me to let you off lightly, but I am afraid that is something I cannot do. And I shall listen to no more excuses! Leave at once!"

Walliser steeled himself to make a final furious protest. But as he fixed his angry eyes on Dr. Stegman, he saw for the first time just how utterly tired and worn the old man looked. That morning he had felt that Stegman was a well of understanding and patient sympathy, and that there was a deep bond between them. What a fool he'd been! The bent figure he now saw before him was obviously overtaxed with routine, his nerves worn to a frazzle by endless consultations and protests, a man who could not afford to take a minute more than seemed necessary in reaching a decision. What a fool he'd been to think such a man would back the word of a newcomer against the clever lies of Trand!

Walliser swallowed his indignation and followed Nurse Minter from the office. Dr. Trand permitted himself the ghost of a smile.

"Don't feel too badly about Stegman," said Nurse Minter, after the smugly courteous secretary had watched them leave. "He's a grand old boy, really. But unfortunately he thinks the world of Trand. You couldn't have known that."

"I'd be the last person in the universe to deny that Trand has a brilliant mind," said Walliser bitterly. "Frankly, I myself still can't believe that Dickenson has any secret. Trand must be following a will-o-the-wisp—or else he's after something entirely different. But in any case, we mustn't let him get away with it. Surely there's something we

can do! Do you think we could get hold of those three cultivated young thugs before they leave? We could prove they were carrying weapons."

Nurse Minter shook her head. "Not a chance," she said. "They're gone by now. Anyway, they probably have weapon permits. Trust the Ultimos to stick to the rules!"

Then she added, in a more serious voice, "I'm sorry to have gotten you into this mess. You've been a good sport, and I feel guilty, because I've kept you nine-tenths in the dark. Tell you what, let's go to the social room, and I'll tell you the whole story. Who knows? Maybe you'll have a new slant on it."

Walliser nodded wearily.

The crowd in the social room was thinning out, and they readily found a quiet corner. He felt that he ought to be very angry with Nurse Minter. But somehow, when he looked at her frank, capable face, with its almost irresistible charm, he didn't want to be.

Instead, he found himself managing a feeble grin and murmuring, "By the way, I don't even know your first name."

She nodded, a glint of amusement coming into her eyes.

"Helen—Helen Minter, who tomorrow will be applying for a job as a lady's maid. Able. Even-tempered (I don't think!) A practical nurse. Experienced masseuse. Recommendations—better not ask for any. Especially don't ask I.P.P.R., which just kicked me out. Well, Doctor Walliser, shall we forget about that? I've got a long story to tell you."

"Incidentally, my name's John."

"I'll remember, John. Well, the real story begins two weeks ago, when Dickenson was brought here after his ship was picked up derelict off Saturn. The first thing that impressed me about him was the fact that his case was profoundly unlike any I'd ever come into contact with before. You know how all psychoses, no matter how different the symptoms, have a sort of family resemblance? Well, Dickenson's case impressed me as being completely different. Of course, the symptoms were common enough—purposeless movements, unintelligible babblings, inability to make the simplest adjustments, even occasional attacks of violence. But somehow I felt that behind all that there was a completely sane mind, trying desperately to make itself understood—and unable to.

"Oh, Trand noticed right at the start that it was something out of the ordinary. He's quick, very quick to observe things. Stegman would have sensed it, too, only he was completely worn out the one and only time he looked in on Dickenson. Yes, I know that my feeling that Dickenson was sane inside sounds like a delusion born of sympathy. But wait a minute. You heard what Dickenson said before we gave him the hypodermic, didn't you? Well, wasn't there something that impressed you about his babbling—something out of the ordinary?"

Walliser thought for a moment. "Yes, I believe so," he agreed hesitatingly. "I couldn't make any sense out of it, and yet I got the impression that it wasn't just a lot of meaningless sound. Come to think of it, that is unusual. Could it have been a

language we just happen to be unfamiliar with?"

"I thought of that, too. But it seems very unlikely, surely someone would have recognized it. Besides, Dickenson was a bred-in-the-bone American. He's never been to Europe, Africa, or South America. Still, it's just barely possible, and it does happen to fit in with the rest of my story. You see, after Trand had been on the case for three days, he began to take phonographic recordings of Dickenson's voice. That's not very unusual, in itself but the number surprised me. He made dozens of recordings, literally dozens. And it was just after that that Dickenson began to show an abnormal fear of Trand.

"I haven't told you much about that fear, have I? It was ghastly—horrible. I've had considerable experience, and I can tell almost instantly when a patient is terrified of his nurse or physician—and I can tell when that fear is justified, too! At about the same time, Trand began to keep me out of the room as much as he could. Subtly, of course. He sent me on unnecessary errands. He said I had a disturbing effect on his patient, which interfered with the treatment.

"About three days ago I surprised them together when they weren't expecting me. I opened the door a crack and eavesdropped. Trand was playing some of those 'gibberish' recordings back at Dickenson, and Dickenson was listening intently. Believe me Doctor Walliser, the look on Dickenson's face was that of complete sanity. There was fear in his eyes, too, but it was a *sane* fear. Every once in awhile Trand would stop the recording, and Dickenson would seem to *answer* it with another outpouring of gibberish, and Trand would take a recording of his answer.

"The next day I caught them at it again. This time I listened more carefully to the recordings. Of course, I'd thought they were just the ones Trand had taken of Dickenson's voice, since the gibberish seemed similar. But they weren't at all. The voice was different. And I'm willing to stand up in court and swear that second voice was Trand's. A phonographic recording of Trand's voice. You can imagine my surprise. Trand mouthing what I'd thought was nonsense! Doctor Walliser, can you see any other explanation but that Trand had discovered how to converse with Dickenson and was trying, not to cure him, but to make him divulge some very important information?"

"Strange, very strange," murmured Walliser, frowning. "Why should Trand, if he knew Dickenson's secret language, bother to make recordings of his own voice? I suppose he wanted to preserve his questions, as well as the answers, for future reference."

"That's what I decided, too," said Nurse Minter, somewhat excitedly. "But there's more to it. The second time I eavesdropped, Dickenson gave me the impression that he was refusing to answer one of Trand's questions. At least, he wouldn't speak. Trand got up and walked over the bedside. Dickenson's fear increased. He flopped around grotesquely.

"Then Trand slowly began to feel along the man's spine with those long-fingered, strong hands of his. Oh, he might just have been making an

examination, but I couldn't stand the cold look in his eyes—that, and Dickenson's obvious terror. I barged into the room noisily. Trand straightened up immediately, and bawled me out for disturbing his patient at a crucial moment. I didn't mind.

"Afterwards, when Trand was gone, I made a careful examination of Dickenson. There were some very faint bruises in the skin over the nerve centers at the base of the skull. Another person wouldn't have given them a second thought. But they told me a lot. They told me that Trand wouldn't hesitate to resort to torture.

"Right then and there I wanted to report the whole matter, but a little thought convinced me that I wouldn't be taken seriously. It doesn't do for a nurse to make accusations, unless they're backed up with a pile of evidence. So I tried to spy on Trand even more closely. The most I could do was catch him talking with one of those three Ultimos who threatened us. That didn't mean anything. I was getting desperate. Then, right after I talked with you this morning, I got the idea about hypnotism. I knew I could catch Trand dozing. I thought that you would make a good witness—certainly better than another nurse. We'd have found out what was the matter with Dickenson. We'd have learned the secret of the phonographic recordings. But now—now it's too late for that. Trand won't let himself be caught another time. Well, what do you think of it all?"

Walliser did not reply for some time.

"About Dickenson's invention," he said. "Supposing for the moment that he wasn't a crank, and that he *had* invented a spaceship that would travel faster than light. Well, such a spaceship would give the Ultimos a decisive advantage in the revolution they would like to bring about, wouldn't it?"

He seemed to be speaking his thoughts aloud. "What's more, I have an idea that the solution of the whole problem of Dickenson's case is right within our grasp. I only wish I had a chance to listen to him again. You didn't get hold of any of those re-recordings Trand made?"

Nurse Minter shook her head. "No, I tried to several times, but he was too careful."

"That's bad. I have the feeling that, if I knew a little more, I could put my finger on the truth. I know that sounds boastful, but—Isn't there anything else about Dickenson you can tell me, Helen? Some other symptoms you may have noticed? One that may not have seemed of any importance at the time?"

Nurse Minter pondered and then shook her head again regretfully.

"Are you sure?" insisted Walliser. "It might be something very trivial. For instance, did you ever see him try to write anything? Did he ever make any other sounds besides the gibberish? I don't mean speech, but murmurings, cries, whistling . . ."

Nurse Minter sat up straight. "Why yes, he did! He used to whistle something—something that sound almost like a tune. A queer sort of tune."

"Do you remember it?" Walliser's voice was excited now.

"I do. Perfectly well. I heard it several times."

"Can you whistle it for me, or hum it?"

"I'm not sure," said Nurse Minter doubtfully.

She tried a couple of notes. "No, that's not it. Wait a minute . . . Now I've got it!"

She softly hummed several bars of odd-sounding music.

Walliser leapt to his feet.

"Come on, Helen, you've given me a brain-wave!"

He seated himself at the electric organ. The social room was almost deserted.

"Now hum that tune over again, will you?"

Nurse Minter complied, and he fingered it out on the organ, repeating it several times. Then he took out paper and stylus, drew some scale lines, and jotted down the notes. Looking intently at the paper, he played a different tune on the organ.

"Why, I recognize what you're playing!" said Nurse Minter. "It's that old popular song *I'm Headed for the Stars*. And yet somehow it vaguely reminds me of the other tune. Is there some connection between them?"

"Wait a minute. First I want to ask you a question. You must have read a detailed account of what happened when Dickenson's ship was picked up off Saturn. Tell me. He had a television receiver aboard, didn't he?"

"Why, yes, I think there was one in the control panel, right in front of the seat he occupied. I believe he had to have one for the test he was making."

"Good! That clinches it! Now another question. Is there any way we can get at Dickenson tonight? I don't care if we have to run risks. But is there a chance?"

"As it happens, there is. I know the nurse who's on duty at night. She's the one who gave you my note. I ought to be able to bluff or persuade her. But . . ."

"I don't care if we have to tie her up and gag her! Just so long as we can get at Dickenson. Tell me, can you get hold of a phonographic recording outfit right away?"

"Of course. But just what are you planning?"

Walliser was pacing back and forth excitedly. He grinned at Nurse Minter. "No time for that now he said. "Every minute may be important. Besides, you kept me in the dark all day. Now it's my turn. Come on, let's get started!"

A hard-faced young man, standing in the dark alcove where the color symphony had been performed, watched them attentively as they hurried from the social room. Then he took a television piece from his pocket, raised it to his lips, and began to whisper.

Walliser and Nurse Minter reached Dickenson's room without attracting any special attention, as far as they could tell. The petite brunette opened the door.

"Hello, Helen," she said. "I thought you were off this case." Then she noticed Walliser. "Good evening, Doctor."

"No, I'm not, Marie," said Nurse Minter, advancing quickly into the room. "I'm on it more than ever. Is the patient asleep?"

"Yes, but . . ."

"Stegman's ordered a complete change of treatment. He's taken the case out of Trand's hands completely, and given it to Doctor Walliser. I'm to assist him."

"But I should have been informed about it. There are strict rules—"

"Now, Marie, you know how sudden Stegman is when he gets a new idea. Doctor Walliser is anxious to get to work."

"Well . . . all right," said Marie, obviously afraid of doing the wrong thing. "Still, I think I should have been informed."

She left reluctantly, casting a dubious glance over her shoulder.

"Something tells me we've got to work fast," said Walliser. "You operate the machine. Put in a fresh metal tape and cut a recording of any gibberish Dickenson gives us. I'll wake him."

Asleep, the elderly inventor was peaceful and distinguished looking, but when Walliser touched him, he awoke with a start, and exhibited symptoms akin to terror. His eyes went wide. He flapped his hands about purposelessly. Then he uttered what Nurse Minter recognized as two or three short sentences of the gibberish with which she had become so familiar. She motioned to Wallister that the machine was cutting.

He nodded encouragingly at the old man, who responded with a longer jumble of strange sounds. Then he seemed to hesitate. Walliser nodded again, then said in a low voice the mysterious syllables, "No og."

Immediately Dickenson's face brightened, and he spoke with more assurance. For fully five minutes he continued to utter fragments of the outlandish gibberish, pausing doubtfully at short intervals. Then Nurse Minter indicated that the machine had come to the end of the tape.

"Good," said Walliser, giving Dickenson another smile and nod. "Now play back to me what you've just recorded. No, don't put the tape in the right way. Put it in *backwards*!"

"Backwards?"

"Yes! Don't hesitate, Helen. I'll explain later. Or, rather, things will explain themselves."

A gleam of doubtful understanding came into Nurse Minter's eyes. She complied with Walliser's instructions.

An instant later the door was thrown open, and Doctor Stegman and the other nurse came into the room. Marie looked frightened. Stegman was furious.

"This is too much!" he cried. "Are you insane? I wanted desperately to avoid scandal. Therefore I didn't have you both put in detainment earlier this evening. Now I see I've made a mistake."

"Helen," said Walliser. "Play the recording!"

Stegman paused doubtfully, his hand fumbling for the television piece in his vest pocket. Then the voice came from the machine—Dickenson's voice.

"That man. *That man Trand*. Save me from him. Can't you see? He is torturing me, trying desperately to force me to tell him what I know about my faster-than-light spaceship. I am Professor Dickenson. I am not insane. Believe me, I am speaking the truth. He will stop at nothing. Are you the new doctor? I am not insane. Only Trand knows what is wrong with me. Save me. I told him something about my invention, but nothing of great importance—nothing he can use. I am sane, but no one

but Trand understands what is wrong. I am Professor Dickenson . . ."

And so the words continued, with considerable repetition and jumbling of sentences, but always intelligible.

A look of blank amazement came into Stegman's face. He pointed at the machine. "That recording," he said. "It seems to be reproducing Dickenson's voice! But what is it? Is it . . .? Great Heavens!"

"It is Dickenson's voice," said Walliser, nodding emphatically. "It is a recording of Dickenson's characteristic gibberish, played *backwards*. What's more, it indirectly proves that Dickenson, during the first part of the solo test of his spaceship, *did* travel at a speed greater than that of light! Can't you see what happened? When he started the test, he had one eye glued to his television receiver. Also, he probably had the radio going. That was a necessary part of the test, as you'll see. Since he was moving faster than light, he easily outstripped the radio and television waves. Therefore every image and sound that came in on them, came in backwards. Moreover, all terrestrial events, as far as their relationship to him, were moving backwards as well."

"He was literally traveling back into Earth's past! Only for a very short time, mind you. But the shock had the effect of *reversing* his mind, of reversing the delicate time-directional mechanisms of his consciousness. Then, when he finished the test and reduced speed, that mental reversal *persisted*. All his motor impulses were reversed, too. He spoke backwards, tried to move backwards. The first time I saw him, he was attempting to push himself into a wall."

"Do you grasp the further implications of all this? Once Dickenson was back in normal time, all his sensations seemed wrong to him, because now—relatively to his reversed mind—*they* were coming in backwards. A terrible struggle began between his mind and his sensations. No sane adjustment was possible for him. It was almost sufficient to topple him over the edge into true insanity."

"Nurse Minter gave me the clue. She remembered a few bars of music she had heard Dickenson whistling. Now I happen to know a little about music and the theory of musical composition. Obviously, when a tune is played backwards, it doesn't sound as completely nonsensical as when words are spoken backwards. I recognized those bars of music as a popular song, *I'm Headed for the Stars*, but hummed in reverse!

"I checked on my guess and found it to be correct. Further proof was easy. I only had to get a recording of Dickenson's voice. If I'd had time, I would have done what Trand did—make a recording of pertinent questions in my own voice, and play them to Dickenson backwards. As it was, when Dickenson hesitated, I tried to say 'Go on' backwards. That was why you heard me say 'No og, Helen.'"

"My God, yes. I understand now," said Stegman slowly, running his hand through his hair, giving each word a greater emphasis. "Doctor Wallister, I have done you a great wrong. It is hard to believe, but all the facts are in agreement. Undoubtedly your solution is correct. And now it will be very easy to determine on a treatment."

His voice took on the spontaneously confident quality of a younger man. "In any event, we can now communicate with Dickenson. That should stave off any possibility of true insanity. Moreover, it seems very likely that the mind-reversal is wearing off of its own accord. You must have noticed how jumbled his sentences were in the recording. That perhaps indicates his thoughts are only moving backward intermittently—that they occasionally seek to leap forward, only to be met by a time barrier. Great Heavens, but this will be a subtle problem for the psychophysicists! The relationship of mental time and physical time . . . the warping and reversal of an individual's entire subjective space-time system."

His enthusiasm trailed off and his voice became heavy and serious again. "But those statements Dickenson made about Trand," he said, shaking his head gravely. "I can't believe them. They must be the result of a secondary delusion on Dickenson's part—a natural enough delusion, to be sure. Why, I have known Doctor Trand for years . . ."

Nurse Minter, who had moved over to the doorway, suddenly ducked inside, shutting and locking the door behind her.

"Quick, Doctor Stegman," she said, alarm in her voice. "Call for aid! Those three men, accomplices of Trand—they're coming up the corridor."

Stegman looked toward the door doubtfully.

The door leading to the adjoining room opened and Trand walked in quietly. His manner was that of a doctor who had been summoned for consultation. But there was an automatic pistol in his hand.

"Well, well," he said, "so you finally discovered the truth. I was interested in all you had to say. I wanted to know just how far you'd gone. Too far, it seems. Oh, so you've locked the door on my friends. I'm afraid that won't help at all now."

"Trand," cried Stegman hoarsely, "you—you can't be serious. If this is a joke, it is not a funny one."

"No joke," replied Trand coldly. "Well, it seems I must leave the Institute. It's fortunate that my friends have made preparations. We shall take Dickenson with us. In order to insure our escape, you four will die. Immediately."

"And I trusted you," said Stegman bitterly, his face a mask of indignation and misery.

"Sentimental, too," observed Trand, smiling. "Doctor Stegman, the world does not need sentimentality. It needs a new humanity. It shall have one. I believe I shall kill you first."

And then Walliser saw that Nurse Minter was standing very still, her lips white. Trand was calmly pointing the gun at her chest. His finger closed around the trigger. Walliser, hurling himself forward, winced in anticipation of the shot.

It never came. Instead, an astonishing thing happened. Trand did not pull the trigger. With a peculiar, seemingly involuntary gesture, he threw the pistol to the floor, and stood staring down at it in utter bewilderment.

Walliser hit him. A clean blow to the jaw that was as effective as a hypodermic would have been. It took all the fight out of him.

Nurse Minter locked the connecting door. Dr. Stegman spoke rapidly into his television piece.

Walliser snatched up the gun. The other nurse caught the back of a chair to steady herself. Her face was like chalk. With their eyes fixed on the door leading to the corridor, they waited. . . . five seconds . . . ten . . . twenty . . .

Then they heard the sound of running feet pounding up the corridor, the noise of a scuffle. They relaxed, realizing that the guards had seized the three intruders. The threat was past.

An hour later Walliser and Nurse Minter were sitting in Dr. Stegman's inner office, answering the old man's questions. Trand was in safe custody. Trand's accomplices had been overcome by the guards while attempting to reach the stairway to the roof, where a small gyroplane had been stationed. Two had been killed, one captured.

"Do you suppose the higher-ups of the Ultimo party will be involved?" asked Walliser.

Stegman frowned, and shook his head. "I doubt it. Trand and the others probably belonged to a small and 'advanced' splinter group of extreme fanatics within the party itself. In any case, the party leaders will deny all knowledge of the plot. I dislike thinking what might have happened, though, if they'd have been successful in breaking down Dickenson's resistance completely."

He frowned again. It was obvious that Trand's treachery had wounded him deeply. "Dickenson will be a celebrity by tomorrow," he said. "Whether we cure him or not—and I think we will—mankind will shortly know how to travel more swiftly than light. An awe-inspiring thought. Only first we'll have to learn how to avoid the psychological consequences of time-reversal. That will be the Institute's major task. Walliser, I think you will be able to help us a good deal in that direction."

"Thank you, Doctor Stegman. I'd like nothing better. But I hope you aren't forgetting that it wasn't my small knowledge of psychiatry that led to my success with Dickenson. It was only because my hobby happens to be music. Queer."

Doctor Stegman filled his pipe. "There's one little thing that keeps puzzling me," he said reflectively. "It's that almost miraculous fact that Trand dropped his gun just as he was about to shoot Miss Minter. If it hadn't been for that . . . And somehow, Miss Minter, I get the impression that you expected him not to shoot."

"I did!" She grinned. "You see, Doctor Stegman, one of the things you said earlier this evening, when you were so angry with me, was quite true."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you remember how you accused me of having schooled Trand to make false statements under hypnosis?"

"Yes. But of course I was wrong."

"No, you were almost exactly right, Doctor Stegman. You see, I did have Trand hypnotized for a few minutes before Doctor Walliser arrived. As it happened, I knew he was carrying a gun, and I wanted to make sure he'd be unable to use it if he had his back to the wall. No use stealing it, of course, since he could easily procure another. So I imprinted on his mind the post-hypnotic suggestion that whenever he aimed that pistol at someone with intent to kill, he'd have to throw it down. Just in case, you know."