

fantastic

ADVENTURES

TRADE MARK REGISTERED

VOL. 3
NO. 5

Contents for July, 1941

STORIES

GODDESS OF FIRE	by Edgar Rice Burroughs	8
What was the mystery behind the Fire Goddess? How did she know of Earth, or Brooklyn?		
MURDERED—YET ALIVE	by Jep Powell	44
If you were broadcast by radio and became two men, would it be a crime to kill your other self?		
ABNER SCHLAP'S STRANGE INSIGHT	by Arthur T. Harris	56
Abner bought a pair of glasses, and found they enabled him to read minds—and life became hell!		
CITY OF LOST SOULS	by Ralph Milne Farley & Al P. Nelson	66
Daloss, the holy city, was one place the Foreign Legion of Mars had never licked—but this time . . .		
THREE TERRIBLE PEOPLE	by John York Cabot	90
This author's characters got tired of his plots, so they came to life and cooked up their own!		
ROBOTS CAN'T LIE	by Robert Leslie Bellem	116
The robot couldn't lie, because what it saw was recorded. This one saw the murderer . . .		
DOORWAY OF VANISHING MEN	by William P. McGivern	126
People walked into the revolving door of the big store, but didn't come out the other side!		

FEATURES

The Editor's Notebook	6	Introducing the Authors	136
Romance of the Elements	125	Quiz Page	137
Fantastic Forecast?	133	Reader's Page	138
Fantastic Oddities	134	Correspondence Corner	145

Front cover painting by J. Allen St. John & H. W. McCauley featuring "Goddess of Fire" and the Mac Girl

Illustrations by J. Allen St. John; Robert Fuqua; Margaritan; Julian S. Krupa; Jay Jackson; Rod Ruth. Cartoons by Wofford; R. Newman

William B. Ziff, Publisher;
B. G. Davis, Editor

Copyright, 1941
ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY
608 South Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.
Raymond A. Palmer, Managing Editor;

J. Fred Henry, Business Manager
Herman R. Bollin, Art Director.

We do not accept responsibility for the return of unsolicited manuscripts or artwork. To facilitate handling, the author should inclose a self-addressed envelope with the requisite postage attached, and artists should inclose or forward return postage. Accepted material is subject to whatever revision is necessary to meet requirements. Payment for manuscripts and illustrations will be made at our current rates.

The names of all characters that are used in short stories, serials, and semi-fiction articles that deal with types are fictitious. Use of a name that is the same as that of any living person is coincidental.

FANTASTIC
ADVENTURES
July, 1941

FANTASTIC ADVENTURES is published monthly by ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY at 608 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill., New York office 270 Madison Avenue. Entered as second class matter April 16, 1940, at the Post Office, Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3rd, 1879. Subscription \$2.40 a year (12 issues); Canada, \$2.90; Foreign, \$3.40. Subscribers should allow at least two weeks for change of address. All communications about subscriptions should be addressed to the Director of Circulation, 608 South Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.

VOLUME 3,
Number 5

ROBOTS

by **ROBERT
LESLIE BELLEM**

GOOD God—!" the words burst bomblike from Tim Kermit's taut throat. "Sylvia!"

Sylvia Gaynor didn't answer. She would never answer again. She lay on the cloth-of-gold couch, her eyes closed, her hair a stilled storm of ebony, an enigmatic smile on her lips. To Tim Kermit that smile was vaguely mocking, almost like a taunt; for Sylvia had been murdered—

And the police were accusing him of the crime!

The injustice of it filled him with savage anger. An hour ago they had arrested him at the televideo studio without even granting him time to leave a note for Dutton, his boss. That was bad enough, since it might adversely affect the promotion he'd been

There was one thing about robot slaves; they couldn't tell a lie—yet this one did, and put Tim Kermit in a murder cell

Can't Lie



A ray gun flared from the open door, directly at the robot.

promised; but this present ordeal was worse.

Hotly he turned on the homicide sergeant to whose wrist he was manacled. "You've no right to bring me here to her home and make me look at her . . . like this!" And he tried to keep his gaze off the ugly Q-ray wound that marred the white perfection of Sylvia's breast.

But the detective stolidly jockeyed him around so that he was again forced to stare at the corpse.

"Why shouldn't you look at her, pal? You were in love with her, weren't you?"

"Once, maybe," Kermit admitted. "Not any more."

"How do you mean that?"

Kermit said: "I was like a lot of others at National Telecasting when she was a star there. Her beauty had most of us in a dream."

"Well?"

"Later we woke up," Kermit made a grim mouth around this.

"What caused the so-called awakening, pal?"

Kermit said: "She married a man with money," and flashed a glance of contempt across the room at Geoffrey Gaynor.

Gaynor, beef-jowled and swollen with the arrogance of the wealthy, gave Kermit a frosty smile.

"You think it was my money that won Sylvia?"

"I'm sure of it."

The fat man's smile winked off.

"Maybe you're right. She *was* a gold digger; I found that out. All the same, she jilted you and married me. That's why you murdered her."

Rage festered up into Kermit's gullet. He shouted: "I tell you I didn't—"

"Keep your voice down, pal," the homicide sergeant let the advice drip out of a corner of his mouth. "Yells

won't buy you anything. Why don't you come clean?"

"I haven't got anything to come clean about! Why should I kill Sylvia? What would be my motive?"

"Jealousy," Geoffrey Gaynor again thrust in his verbal oar. "Because she tossed you over."

Kermit pivoted and felt suddenly as an abattoir animal must feel while awaiting the slaughterer's Q-bolt.*

"Damn you, are you deliberately trying to put me in the lethal ray chamber?"

"Precisely," the older man's answer cut like a winter wind. And his malevolent expression started a shudder inching down Tim Kermit's spine.

THAT shudder was spawned of fear,

Kermit secretly admitted. He was no coward, but he was scared. You couldn't combat a thing like this with ordinary courage; couldn't fight the charges with your bare fists. Not when they'd been made by a man of Geoffrey Gaynor's importance. Gaynor was president of General Robots, Inc. What chance had a minor telecast executive against that kind of enemy?

He must keep calm, the accused man told himself. As soon as possible he must contact Dutton, his boss at the televideo station, and arrange for a lawyer. He looked around the room, first at Sylvia's corpse and then at the fragments of a smashed Gaynor household robot in a far corner, its mechanism wrecked by a tubular steel chair

* Q-bolt—the emanation of a radium gun. An isotope of radium, radium-Q, discovered by Le-Temps in 1987, disintegrates, under propitious circumstances, nearly 10,000 times faster than ordinary radium. Thus, it is possible to use it in the form of a ray which causes radium burns at such an enormous rate that the result is an explosion of the flesh cells. A person hit with a Q-bolt is not very nice to look at since the flesh struck by the bolt is severely disrupted and burned.—Ed.

that somebody had used as a sledgehammer. Then he spoke quietly to the homicide sergeant.

"Even a millionaire's unsupported word isn't enough to convict a man of murder. You'll need more than that."

"We've got more than that, pal."

"Meaning what?"

"It's a surprise. Even the newscasters don't know about it yet. A servant robot."

"That thing?" Kermit indicated the ruined electro-automaton in the corner.

"Nah, pal. That's just the one you busted when you realized it had seen you killing Mrs. Gaynor. You knew its testimony would convict you, so you wrecked it to keep it from talking."

Kermit forgot to stay calm.

"For God's sake quit calling me a murderer! If you think you've got proof of my guilt, drag it out and let's have it!"

"Sure, pal. Keep your tunic on. First let me ask you something. Do you agree it's mechanically impossible for a robot to tell a lie?"

The question puzzled Kermit. That was almost kindergarten stuff. Everybody knew that an electro-automaton was incapable of anything but the truth, undeviating and inflexible.* It

* Camera-like, the Gaynor robot viso lenses record all events and actions which might transpire within their focus; but instead of registering the scenes upon impermanent cellulplastic cinema film, all impressions are electrically conducted through a series of selenium converter-cells to the central magnetic braincoils.

There the impulses are sorted and chronologically filed on the robot's memory discs, from which at any future time a playback can be obtained. By virtue of a complicated process called magneto-synthesis, this playback is audible rather than visual; that is, the automaton's electrovox describes the selected scene verbally down to its minutest detail.

Obviously, because of the tamper-proof nature of the mechanism, it is impossible for the slightest inaccuracy to slip into a playback. In brief, a robot simply can not lie. It records whatever it "sees" and repeats whatever it records.—Ed.

was the way they were constructed.

Kermit warily met the homicide detective's gaze.

"Of course a robot tells the truth. So what?"

"You'll see, pal," the headquarters man growled. He tugged Kermit to a closet; opened it. "Take a look at what's going to put you in the ray chamber." And he gestured to an ordinary Gaynor robot servant, a current model.

A whirring hum emanated from the automaton's motivity center, indicating that it was in functional condition. Its polished viso lenses surveyed Kermit for a dispassionate instant; then, ominously, it leveled an accusing metal finger at him and said: "*You are the man.*"

KERMIT felt his scalp tightening and sweat forming in his palms.

"What in hell's name—?" he gasped.

Again the automaton's electrovox dinned at him like some fantastic nightmare.

"*You smashed the other robot, then blasted my lady's body with a Q-gun. You are the man.*" And as this doom-droning mechanical monologue continued, a picture leaped into Kermit's imagination; a picture as fully staged as any production he had ever helped Dutton, his boss, to direct at the tele-video theater . . .

. . . He saw himself on trial for his life, saw this metallic monster in the witness box, its perjured testimony accepted as truth because it was axiomatic that an automaton could not tell a lie . . .

"But this one's lying!" Kermit belated as he brushed away the ugly vision and whirled on Geoffrey Gaynor. "And somehow I think you're responsible, damn you! You manufacture these robots and you probably know

some secret way to alter their brain-coils. It's a scheme to frame me for a murder I didn't commit!"

The millionaire's mouth thinned.

"You'll never evade punishment with that ridiculous theory, my friend. Nobody on earth can alter a robot's memory discs."

Frustrated, rage-lashed, Tim Kermit turned back to the homicide sergeant.

"Take me out of here before I go off my chump! And for God's sake do me a favor!"

"Name it, pal. I'll let you know."

"Get in touch with my boss at the studio," Kermit pleaded. "His name is Dutton. Tell him to hire a lawyer—"

"By this time they were outside the mansion of murder. And the sergeant's favors proved unrequired, after all. Someone came sprinting across the street from a parked electroglider; a tall well-dressed man whose mobile features revealed deep concern.

"Tim! Tim Kermit!" He called.

"Mr. Dutton!" Kermit answered as he felt a surge of relief and gratitude leaping through him like a warm tidal wave. Here at last was someone he could depend on, this man who was his superior at the telecasting station. Now he need no longer feel so friendless in the face of Geoffrey Gaynor's enmity.

He was aware of Dutton studying him.

"They told me you had been arrested, Tim. I came right away. Is it true that—"

"No!" the younger man answered through clenched teeth. "I didn't kill Sylvia Gaynor, if that's what you're asking me."

"But what about the robot's testimony?" Dutton said. "You had better shoot straight, Tim. For Loreen's sake."

That was Loreen Lane he was talking about; his private secretary—and Tim Kermit's fiance, if Tim ever summoned up enough nerve to pop the question. Just thinking about her made Kermit almost forget the depth of his present jeopardy.

He said: "Loreen doesn't think I'm guilty, does she?"

"She's waiting to find out. So am I, Tim."

"I've already told you," Kermit said. "In spite of that robot's story, I didn't murder Sylvia Gaynor. But I think I know who did."

"Who?"

Kermit started to answer, but the homicide detective tugged at his handcuff; interrupted him.

"No use accusing Geoffrey Gaynor again, pal. You can't make it stick. Come along, we got to be goin'." And he bundled his prisoner into a squadglider; opened the propulsion tubes.

IT was evening when Loreen Lane came to see Kermit down at headquarters. A turnkey escorted her to the cell, grumbling.

"Visitor for you, buddy." And then Loreen herself was wailing.

"Tim! Oh-h-h, Tim, darling!"

Kermit seized her hands through the vanadasteel bars. Her nearness, her fresh young blondeness, filled his veins with the wine of elation.

"Then you got my message, sweet?"

"Y-yes, Tim. I hurried here as soon as I heard from you."

He smiled wryly.

"Thank you, beloved. It shows you believe in me."

"I do believe in you, Tim! But—but I don't understand why you had that note smuggled to me asking me to bring a powercar outside the jail—"

Sharp anxiety knifed into his lowered voice.

"Wait a minute, Loreen. You did bring one, didn't you?"

"Y-yes."

"Good!" he breathed more easily.

"And now, with a spot of luck, we'll be on our way." Whereupon he leaned on the barred door of the cell—and his weight swung it open!

Loreen drew back in amazement.

"Tim—"

"Sh-h-h! They left it unlocked when they put me in here. So I got that message out to you and bided my time." He slid an arm about her slender waist, guided her along the deserted corridor. "The exit is this way. If nobody sees us we'll be in the clear around that next bend."

"But—but you can't do this, Tim! If you escape it'll seem like a confession of guilt!"

Subconsciously he clenched his capable fists.

"On the contrary, it'll prove my innocence . . . I hope!" Then there was a rear door directly ahead of them, unlocked, unguarded. Kermit and the girl scurried toward it, fled noiselessly into the outer night. Darkness spread a cloak of shadows around them.

At the next intersection rested Loreen's powercar, cumbersome and earthbound by comparison with more modern modes of transportation such as the swift antigrav rocket craft and the moulded plastic electrogliders. But the powercar was part of Tim Kermit's plan—because it contained luggage room abundant enough for his special purpose.

He slid into the operator's compartment with the golden-haired Loreen beside him; touched the controls that sent this outmoded but speedy vehicle scooting for the suburbs. Loreen nestled close to him, shivering.

"Tim, I'm frightened! First jail-breaking, and now excessive speed—"

"You can add burglary to the list before I'm finished," he chuckled without mirth.

"*Burglary?*"

He nodded while gluing his gaze to the roadway ahead. Presently he swung about, aiming for a palatial estate on his left. It loomed dark and sinister against the night's brooding background, a silent house whose recent guest had been death.

"Geoffrey Gaynor's mansion!" Loreen whispered.

Kermit braked his powercar to a halt.

"Stay here, my sweet," he said crisply. Then he strode off through the blackness.

HE was gone a long time. Ages, it seemed to the waiting girl. Even when he returned, it was only for an instant.

"Couple more trips should do it," he reassured her. Then he deposited an armload of metallic fragments in the rear luggage space and vanished again.

At long last he finished his burglarious mission; settled himself once more at the powercar's steering knob. Heading back toward town, he gave no thought to the possibility that Geoffrey Gaynor might be following. It never entered his mind.

"Are you game to see me through the rest of my experiment, hon?" he asked the girl at his side.

Her chin came up; she straightened her dainty shoulders. "I shan't leave you, Tim. Ever."

"Thanks, beloved." He was silent a grateful moment. Then: "What we need now is a place to work; a place where I can try to fit the pieces together."

"You m-mean you don't dare go home? The police might have look-outs there, hunting for you?"

Kermit's fingers drummed a thoughtful tattoo on the steering knob. "I have it!" he suddenly exploded. "We'll call Dutton. Dial him now on the autorad, sweetling. Hurry!"

Swiftly the girl reached for a miniature wheel on the instrument panel, a wheel perforated and marked with countless numbers and letters. This was the powercar's autorad dial with which communication could be established with any citizen from one border to the other.*

Presently, from a concealed electrovox, there came a mellowly modulated response.

"Dutton speaking."

"Th-this is Loreen Lane, Mr. Dutton. I—"

"Hello, Loreen. You sound worried. Anything wrong?"

"Y-yes . . . and no. It's about Tim. He . . . he wants . . ."

Tim Kermit reached over, took the tiny microphone from her grasp.

"Sorry to disturb you, sir. I'm out of jail and I need a place where I can conduct a certain experiment."

"They released you, Tim?"

"No, sir. I escaped."

"Good Lord!"

Kermit said rapidly: "Don't misunderstand, sir. It was my only chance to prove my innocence. To pin the killing of Sylvia Gaynor where it belongs. And I think I can do it—if I can have an hour or two of absolute seclusion."

* Each adult possesses his own individual wavelength assigned to him for life, thanks to the scientific way in which radio channels have long ago been split up into vernier segments—thousands of them being crowded into each frequency formerly allotted to a single broadcasting unit.

Whether at home or in your private conveyance, you always have some form of autorad receiver-transmitter near you. And to contact anyone else you merely look him up in the teledirectory, turn your autorad dial to the proper combination. At once your contact is established.—Ed.

"You want a place to work? Certainly, Tim. How about my garage? You're welcome to it. And if I can help—"

Tim Kermit smiled happily.

"Thanks a million, Mr. Dutton. I'll be right over there." And he snapped off the autorad connection; poured more speed into the whirring powercar.

DUTTON was waiting; had the garage doors open when Kermit nosed his cumbersome vehicle over the threshold. At the front of the small outbuilding a workbench had been cleared and tools laid out in readiness.

"I didn't know what you might want, so I dug up everything I had," the older man grinned.

Kermit's gaze swept the assortment.

"Just the electrical stuff will be all I'll need, sir. You see, I'm going to try to patch up a smashed robot."

"You *what*?"

The younger man nodded grimly.

"I have a theory that whoever killed Sylvia Gaynor was caught in the act by a household automaton. To keep from having his identity disclosed by this robot, the murderer smashed it."

"Sure, Tim. But that second robot claims it was you—"

Kermit balled his fists.

"I know. The second robot accused me. But that accusation was false."

"Robots can't lie, Tim!"

"They can be fooled," Kermit answered tersely.

"Fooled—?"

"Yes. It's my guess that the killer did his stuff and could have got away without leaving a trace; but he wanted to frame *me* for the crime."

Loreen Lane came forward.

"How could anyone frame you with the second robot's testimony, Tim darling? It sounds so utterly, hopelessly impossible!"

"It could have been done very easily, my sweet," Kermit said. "After murdering Sylvia, *the killer could have disguised himself to resemble me.* Then he summoned the second robot and allowed it to watch the first one being destroyed."

"You mean—"

"I mean the murderer maliciously gave that second robot a phony visio-impresion. Permitted its selenium 'eyes' to record a counterfeit scene so that later the playback would mistakenly recognize and accuse me. Something like the old motion picture technic of a century ago when one actor would 'double' for another."

Loreen's hand flew to her mouth.

"But who'd do a thing like that? And how are you going to nail him?"

"Through the wrecked robot," Kermit said grimly. "I have an idea it was smashed because it witnessed the actual killing. And if I can restore its brain-coil and memory discs to working order, it may name the murderer!" He turned to the workbench. "Excuse me now. I haven't much time."

Loreen and Dutton fell back as Tim Kermit commenced his task. They watched him bringing shattered bits of robot mechanism from the luggage compartment of the spacious powercar; saw him fitting the pieces together as if they were parts of a terrifically complicated jigsaw puzzle. Slowly and laboriously the electrobrain took patchwork shape under his deft fingers; time after time he applied weak current, got no results, shook his head and started all over again. . . .

And then it happened.

AS if from nowhere a scratchy whir sounded. The whir grew shriller and became mushy syllables, metallic, misshapen.

"—my lady is being shot—Q-gun—

she falls on the couch—dead—the man is coming at me—"

Loreen Lane's whisper was almost a quavering moan.

"Tim! It's going to name the murderer! Listen! It's going to name Geoffrey Gaynor!"

Kermit warned her to silence with his outflung hand. The patched electrovox was still blating out its hideous message.

"—is coming at me—with a chair—to strike me—I see his face—he is—"

"No you don't, by God!" a voice roared. Something arced across the garage, smashed into the robot mechanism and again reduced it to shattered wreckage. "I destroyed that damned thing once and I won't let it send me to the lethal chamber now!"

Tim Kermit spun on his heel. His palm clipped Loreen Lane on the shoulder, sent her staggering to the floor in a flurry of pert whipcord skirt and tapered, kicking legs.

"Duck!" he yelled at her. Then: "*Drop that Q-gun, Mr. Dutton! This is one trap you won't get out of!*"

His studio boss was crouched low, a deadly ray-weapon in his fist, its muzzle trained on Kermit's belly.

"Trap, eh?" he panted in a madman's keening, narrow-chilling whine. "Maybe so. But you'll be the meat for bait. Dead meat!"

"Oh, no!" Kermit said quietly. "You'll do no more killing. You see, I've got a headquarters homicide sergeant hidden in the luggage space of that powercar and he's got you covered. His was the voice you thought you heard from the patched robot; the voice that trickled you into making a move that was a full confession of guilt!"

Dutton stared stupidly toward the powercar and saw the homicide detective emerging, guns drawn.

"My God . . . !"

"Yeah, pal," the headquarters man nodded. "You'd better start praying because you're aimed for the cemetery. We've got you dead to rights."

"Y—you can't prove—"

"We've got our proof, Dutton," Tim Kermit said. "You gave yourself away today, in front of the Gaynor residence. You quizzed me about the second robot's accusing testimony; yet at that early hour *no word about that second robot had been released to the newscasters*. So how could you know any of the inside details *unless you had planted the counterfeit scene on the automaton's memory discs yourself?*"

Dutton seemed to shrink within his clothes.

"I—I didn't—I didn't intend—"

"Of course you didn't intend to give yourself away. It was a slip. A bad one. The sergeant and I could figure out the rest of the story between us. Like a lot of other fellows at National Telecasting, you'd been infatuated with Sylvia; you'd been furiously jealous when she married Geoffrey Gaynor. That was your primary motive for murdering her.

"But you thought you could kill two

birds with the same stone. Lately your studio work has slipped—and *I was slated for promotion to your job*. You knew this, so you planned to get revenge on Sylvia by killing her, then put me out of the road by framing me for the murder. You knew Geoffrey Gaynor would prosecute me to the limit if he thought me guilty.

"It was clever, Dutton. Nobody but an old-time televideo theater actor like yourself could have used a disguise make-up so perfect that it would fool a robot into thinking you were myself. But tonight, when you thought a broken electrovox was about to mention your name, fear made you tip your hand—and now you're washed up."

The detective sergeant snicked handcuffs on Dutton's limp wrists. Then he turned to Tim Kermit.

"Thanks for your help, pal. From jailbreak to capture, everything went like clockwork, eh? And now I suppose there'll be a wedding pretty soon." He cast a sly glance at Loreen Lane.

Kermit lifted Loreen to her feet; slipped a protecting arm around her.

"We'll send you an invitation, sergeant," he promised.

»»» Introducing ««« THE AUTHOR



ROBERT LESLIE BELLEM

SOME guys are born to be hanged; others are predestined to a writing career. I'm one of the latter. Ever since I can remember, I've been putting words on paper because I can't help it. But the *kind* of words—action, gunplay, thrills—well, I guess that phase of it was shaped by environment and circumstances.

I recall vividly one occasion when I was a grammar school kid in Philadelphia, my home town, where my dad was a railroad dick. I took him his sandwiches that evening and finally located him out in the freight yards. He spotted me coming; yelled for me to duck the hell out of the way. I wondered why.

I soon found out. From around the end of a freight car a gun blammed: "*Pow!*" and my dad staggered; grabbed at his side. Then he regained his balance! sprinted forward. He vanished on the other side of that freight car. Presently he reappeared with a freight-thief in tow. Dad had a bullet-crease across his ribs. Likewise he had the gun that had done the damage. He also had the trigger artist—and the trigger artist had a busted jaw. Dad always was handy with his fists.

To me from then on, cops were heroes; guys who fought through to victory with their brains backed up by knuckles were supermen; they still are. Sometimes I wish I'd followed in the old man's footsteps instead of becoming a newspaper-

man; but the closest I ever came to wearing a badge was down in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

That was in '20 or '21 when Tulsa had its famous race-riot. I was a special deputy for the first twenty-four hours of that nasty affair—until the National Guard took charge. I heard my share of gunfire then; saw my share of sudden death. As a member of the Tulsa *Tribune* staff, some of the pix I snapped of that trouble were used by dailies all over the country.

Fifteen years of newspapering took me to almost as many places as those pictures had gone. Philadelphia, Atlantic City, Miami during the boom, New York, Memphis at flood-time, Albuquerque before it lost its glamour—I hopped from sheet to sheet like a bedbug with the hotfoot. Always gathering and storing experiences; constantly seeking the side of life that wasn't prosaic.

I helped cover Woodrow Wilson's death for Universal Service during one of my tricks in Washington; I can still feel the bitter cold of that last night, with Cary Grayson, the ex-President's personal physician, coming out of the somber Wilson residence on S street every hour to issue his grim reports.

A few doors away there was an excavation for the cellar of what was to be Herbert Hoover's home. All the national wire services had led their lines into that shack; it was headquarters for the correspondents and telegraphers of the death-watch. Somebody hammered a couple of gallon oil-cans flat and made a fire on the resulting crude hearth. That was where we warmed ourselves—and almost burned the shack to a cinder.

The Long Beach, California, earthquake was another of my high spots. Until the day I traded it, my car bore the dents of falling bricks from a collapsing building; if I hadn't juiced the tripe out of all six cylinders I'd have been a gone goose. Br-r-rr-r!

But it wasn't all as exciting as that. There were years of drama-criticing, literary reviewing and the conducting of a daily column. And other years of selling advertising; of being classified advertising manager for papers large and small. There was a blissful period on the Fresno *Bee* in the hot somnolence of California's San Joaquin Valley; an interval of radio announcing for KPSN; a fling at Hollywood as a movie extra for Universal; and finally the quiet passivity of my last newspaper job on the Pasadena *Star-News*.

(Continued on page 145)

INTRODUCING THE AUTHOR

(Concluded from page 136)

Then, at long last, the thing I'd wanted always: a career as a free lance fiction writer.

Seven years I've been at it, now. I've written and sold more than a thousand magazine stories and one novel. I have an office on the eighth floor of a downtown Pasadena office building where I put in eight hours every day. When I'm tired of city life I move down to my desert home in Twenty-nine Palms; spend my spare time exploring the back country and killing rattlesnakes. Once in awhile I go back east—by train, auto or plane. Flying's best—maybe because I once took a short course and learned to handle an OX-5 Travelaire after a fashion. I never quite mastered the art of the three-point landing, though.

About my sole claim to fiction fame is my Hollywood detective character, Dan Turner, who has appeared in every issue of one certain magazine for nearly seven years without a single break. This, and the fact that I seem able to write practically all types of stories with equal facility: adventure, detective, sport, horror, love, confession and even an occasional western. I think I like the adventure stuff best—which is why I'm so thoroughly delighted to appear in the pages of *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES*. This is my first yarn in the magazine, but I hope it won't be my last. The lovely blonde wife of my bosom insists that I try again; who am I to argue?—*Robert Leslie Bellem*.

(Editor's Note: Mr. Bellem appeared in a great many pulp magazines along with your editor when he was pounding out free-lance fiction, and though we never knew him, we know of him as one boy we used to eye jealously—but not any more! Now we are tickled to see his name in *our* pages!)