

AMAZING

STORIES

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ZIFF DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY
William B. Ziff (1898-1953) Founder
Editorial and Executive Offices
366 Madison Avenue
New York 17, New York

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NOVEMBER 1956

Volume 30 Number 11

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SERVICE ELEVATOR

By SAM MERWIN, JR.

Elevators are supposed to do two things: they go up, and then they go down—or maybe in reverse order. But this one wasn't called a service elevator for nothing. It took its responsibilities seriously and almost any service you wanted performed was strictly its dish. But even servants become temperamental.

THERE were times when Jerry Hale wondered how he had ever managed to work himself into such a job—and this was one of those times. Essentially, Jerry was a contact man, a salesman, a promoter, a man who used an office only as a mail-drop and a place to take an occasional telephone call. So here he was, as he had been for the past two years, chained to a desk in an office of *Research Development, Inc.* The fact that it was a magnificent

blond-mahogany desk in a magnificent blond-mahogany office fitted with every conceivable gadget for modern material comfort, from sound-proofed ceiling to built-in bar, didn't alter the basic harsh truth of incarceration.

"I'm only a prisoner in a blond-mahogany cage, an un-beautiful thing to see . . ."

He hadn't meant to say it aloud, but he must have. Rhoda Carlin's sleek strawberry-blonde head came up from contemplation of the



The elevator rocketed through time and space.

stenographer's pad on her knee, and her lush, vermilion lips said with only the faintest trace of mockery, "You want me to put that in the letter to Mr. Finkelberg, Jerry?"

"If I told you where I'd like you to put it, the crash of your illusions would shatter the silence of this mausoleum," he told her.

"You worry about Mr. Finkelberg, and I'll worry about my illusions—what's left of them," was the devastating retort.

As he resumed dictation, Jerry realized with a slight taste of ashes that Rhoda was one reason for his self-incarceration. Rhoda was a looker, all the way down. She was prompt, reliable, level headed and efficient. She was also insolent, overbearing and possessed of a remarkably even disposition—as far as Jerry had been able to discern in the course of their two-year association, it was always bad.

The only times he had seen her smile were when something went wrong—preferably painfully for him, like the occasion when he had been bushwhacked by the wastebasket and removed a strip of veneer from his desk with the bridge on his nose.

That time, he had actually heard through dazed ears, the peal of her silvery laughter.

It had become a game with him to make her laugh again—preferably without agony for himself. But he had thus far failed. His most carefully thought-out efforts to win her approval were received with sublime indifference. He had wanted to date her from the first moment she walked into R-D, Inc.—but how did you go about dating a girl who obviously zoned you somewhere between a square and a moldy fig? There were moments when he almost wished he weren't in love with Rhoda.

The letter to Mr. Finkelberg finished, he said, "What else is on the docket, Rhoda?"

She had already risen, revealing in the process the utterly luscious figure that had put the frustrating word *drool* into his dreams. Glancing at him over her shoulder, she replied, "Mr. Doheny wants to see you for a moment—and that Willy character is waiting outside."

There was a flash of something—was it gloat or mere incipient triumph?—in the slightly tilted violet eyes that warned him nothing pleasant lay in store for him.

He said, "Okay, Rhoda, tell Park I'm free if he wants to see me. I'll buzz you to send Mr. Willy in the moment I'm through."

She shrugged as she reached for the doorknob. Jerry could have sworn she muttered something suspiciously like, "Means nothing to me." Rhoda's attitude was as expressive as any words, so he couldn't be sure. He thought, *Some day, you fresh witch—some day*, but he wasn't really very confident. Two years could constitute quite a wilting process.

Parker Doheny popped in. He was round, rosy and, as usual, a-burble with enthusiasm. He was also Jerry's partner and the real reason for his having to stay chained to a desk. Parker was an awesomely brilliant idea man and all-around scientist—with about as much practical money or business sense as a child of two. The very thought of taking a trip and leaving Park in charge gave Jerry gooseflesh—it gave him visions of hard-won capital flowing into bottomless funnels labeled *Perpetual Motion* or *Portable Hole* or *Vegetable Metals*. So it was Park Doheny who took the trips while Jerry sweated things out,

chained to his desk and Rhoda's sneers.

The *Research Development, Inc.*, was exactly what it sounded like. The purpose of the firm was to put inventors—or scientific idea men as Jerry preferred to call them—in touch with laboratories or commercial firms where their ideas could be developed and put to use and profit. It was a small but successful and rapidly growing outfit. It filled a basic need, not only for scientists, but for firms whose budgets did not run to vast outlays for free research.

Park Doheny was glowing. With totally false modesty, he laid upon Jerry's desk what looked like a certified check on lingerie-pink paper. It was a certified check from the *Magnum Corporation*, made out to *Research Development, Inc.*, in the amount of \$50,000.02.

Jerry was impressed, although he had no desire to show it. "What are the two cents for?" he asked mildly.

"I've been wondering, myself," said Doheny blandly. "Well, this time old woolly-head, as I understand from Miss Carlin you have been heard to call me, came through. This is for that little unrefillable bottle top you

told me would never sell. It will cover our outlay to Garretson, pay him a fat fee and leave us five grand commission."

"Nice going, Park," said Jerry sincerely. He added solemnly, "Not even I can be right all the time." No wonder, he thought, Rhoda had been more superior than usual—she knew he had screamed his head off when Park took on Garretson and his unrefillable bottle top.

The buzzer sounded. He flipped the switch and Rhoda's dulcet vitriol sounded in his ears. "Mr. Willy is getting impatient," she said. "Shall I send him in?"

It was a tactless blunder—if it was a blunder. Right at the moment when his impractical partner was indulging in a bit of deserved self-inflation, she had to remind them both of Jerry's worst error in judgment—and most expensive—since the foundation of R-D, Inc.

Doheny moved toward the door, carrying his check. On the threshold, he paused and said, "I'll have Rhoda bank this if you don't need her for a moment." Then he added, "It may cover some of the expenses you've incurred with your friend Amos Willy."

For once, Jerry could think of nothing to say.

Amos Willy entered and sat down quietly in the blond-leather armchair facing Jerry at one side of his desk. Looking at him, Jerry knew, as always, that here was the utterly dedicated man. Dedication shone from his slightly myopic eyes, from the wild, unshorn disorder of his hair, from his frayed shirt-collar and well-worn tweeds, from the scuffed, unshined toes of his loafers. It was this dedication, this integrity, that had sold Jerry on Amos Willy from the first time that virtually unknown scientist had worked his way shyly through the office door. As he had told Park Doheny, "I may not know a damned thing about rhodomagnetics, but I pride myself on knowing a little about men. I'm backing Amos Willy all the way."

The word "*rhodomagnetics!*" had emerged as a snort from Roheny's scientifically solid nostrils. "They're still a hundred years away."

"Maybe," Jerry had replied. "But I'd like to be able to hang a picture to my wall without having to screw a hole in the plaster—and so would a few hundred million other people."

His partner had rolled his eyes toward heaven, thrown up his hands and walked out, muttering something about, "And *he* thinks *I'm* screwy!"

Amos Willy rested a suede-patched elbow on Jerry's desk and said. "This is just a progress report, Mr. Hale. I think you ought to know I've achieved a three milligram attraction between a gram of silicon and ten grams of fuller's earth."

"This is important?" Jerry asked, not unkindly.

"It's the first concrete success I've attained," said Amos Willy, his dedicated eyes ablaze. "It's proof I haven't been barking down the wrong well."

Jerry restrained an almost irresistible impulse to unscramble the metaphor and said, "That's wonderful, Amos. Any chance of giving me a demonstration? My partner seems to feel that you've essayed the impossible."

The scientist hesitated, looked his confusion, blushed, stammered, finally said, "You've trusted me, Mr. Hale, so it's only fair that I should trust you. I've been doing my best to keep my personal expenses low, since my experimental and research work have been so expensive. I . . ."

He hesitated, then said, "When can you come?"

"Right now, if it's okay with you," said Jerry, delighted at the chance of escaping, however briefly, the gloats of his partner and Rhoda Carlin.

Amos Willy hesitated again. "You may find it—well, not quite what you expect," he said.

Jerry came around the desk and laid a friendly hand on the scientist's back. "I may be a heel," he said. "At any rate, I've been called one by experts. But nobody ever called me a snob."

"And you won't tell a soul?" Amos Willy asked anxiously.

"Secrecy is part of the stock in trade of R-D, Inc.," Jerry assured him. "Without it, we'd be nowhere."

The scientist looked at Jerry doubtfully, then sighed and said, "Very well, come along then. But please don't go outdoors when we get there—you might be—er—noticed."

Jerry was still trying to figure that one out when they hit the street and flagged a taxi. To get to Willy's laboratory, wherever it was, meant he would be outside—as he was bound to be when he left it. So how could he not go

outside? He gave it up after a while and decided to let nature take its course.

While Amos Willy's laboratory was scarcely in a part of the city favored with frequent mention in the society gossip columns, it scarcely seemed a district where being noticed might cause difficulty. The cab pulled to a halt in front of what appeared to be an abandoned warehouse or loft building, one of many that lined the almost deserted street. Amos paid off the driver, who looked at the money suspiciously and said, "What kind of queer is this?"

Jerry stepped in and paid the fare himself—but not before noticing that the bill the driver had returned to the scientist was one of the large, old-fashioned currency notes that had been superseded by the more handy size in 1928. As Amos Willy unlocked a door at one end of the warehouse, he said, "Where did you get that bill, Amos? It looked almost new."

"It is new," said the scientist bafflingly. He led the way to what appeared to be a service elevator of ancient vintage, one that was operated by pulling on a cable of twisted wires. Before putting it in motion, he uncovered

what looked like a ship's capstan, off in a corner of the lift. "This is something I thought up to help save expenses," he said. "The economics are quite extraordinary."

Puzzled, Jerry peered over his shoulder, saw him check a knob that appeared to register a set of numbers that reminded him of the numbers on a dashboard speedometer. It was turned to 1-8-9-1. The scientist ignored the cable, but said, "And now—we press this." He pushed a button on the left of the capstan, there was a brief sense of movement. "We're in the basement," he added, as he opened the lift door.

It was a large, old-fashioned basement, with a smell of damp ashes familiar since Jerry's childhood. He wondered a little that such a basement should lie under a warehouse—it looked more appropriate to a plain house, with its radiating furnace pipes just under the ceiling.

He forgot about this as Amos Willy led him to a wooden door, which he opened. This, it appeared, was his laboratory, and he ran through a demonstration of his silicon-fuller's earth rhodomagnetic attraction that left Jerry unimpressed, since

he didn't really know much about the theory or practice of non-ferrous magnetism.

Then the inventor said, "Of course, my notes are all filed in my rooms upstairs. Would you mind coming up there? I'll scout around and make sure Mrs. Talbot and Dora are out of the way."

Puzzled, Jerry obeyed. He followed his client upstairs to the main floor, a hideous golden-oak, flowered-carpet and stained-glass monstrosity, then up two more flights. It was, he thought, certainly an old-fashioned house. Then, with the force of a lightning bolt, he recalled that they were in the warehouse.

It didn't make sense—nor did Amos Willy's two rooms on the third floor front. Jerry turned shuddering eyes away from a birchbark chromo inscribed, *God love our happy home*, then from a picture of some large antlered animal standing defiantly over the dying body of its mate. Ignoring his host, he went to the window and looked out.

They weren't even in the same part of the city—they weren't in the same era unless Jerry had gone mad. He saw a stout gentleman pass slowly along the sidewalk on the other side of the street, wearing a high-crowned

derby with an absurdly rolled brim and a watch chain thick as a hawser across his brocaded waistcoat. He noted a pair of ladies in long skirts and—he gulped—bustles. He saw a boy in a Buster Brown suit roll a hoop slowly down the street in the opposite direction from an open victoria driven by a top-hatted coachman and inhabited by an elegant lady who lolled beneath a fringed parasol.

Only faintly did he hear Amos Willy repeat his name to get his attention. Turning on the inventor, he blazed, "Damn rhodomagnetics now, Amos! Is this a joke, or have you invented some sort of time-travel machine?"

The scientist looked mildly distressed. "It's not exactly a matter of time travel," he said. "The theory is simple enough once you understand it. I put the thing together to save money."

"You did *what*?" Jerry discovered he was shouting.

"Well . . ." His vehemence had flustered the inventor. "You see, I knew I was costing you a lot of money, and what with the cost of living up so, it seemed economical to work this out. It cost very little, and the savings are enormous. My rooms only cost three dollars a week, and

that includes breakfast. I can live like a king on less than fifty dollars a month. Look"—he turned toward the files that filled one wall of his parlor-study—"I have them all itemized."

Jerry said, "Oh, my God!" and collapsed upon an elaborate chair of black walnut that looked as if it had been upholstered with horsehair—and that felt like horsehair when he sat on it. He said, to a distressed and bewildered Amos Willy, "What time—I mean, what date is it here?"

"Let me think," said the scientist. "Why, it's June, 1891. I'm not sure of the exact date. And I'm not sure it's really a time-travel machine. You see—"

"Skip it," said Jerry rudely. "I wouldn't understand it anyway. But, man, don't you realize what you've done? Don't answer that—you evidently don't. Can you get us back where we belong?"

"Of course," said Amos, moving toward the door. "I hope you won't spread our little secret."

"Don't worry," said Jerry. "Who'd believe me if I tried?" It was incredible, he thought as he followed Amos down the carpeted stairs. The man who had discovered time

travel had used it to save money, not to make it. On the return trip, which was accomplished without incident, he paid close attention to the capstan. "And that's all there is to it?" he asked when they were back.

"That's all there is to it," the scientist repeated. "It's really a very simple process, once the quantum mathematical theory behind it is understood. I got the idea one morning in the bathtub."

"You've shown me a miracle," said Jerry solemnly. "And you can vary the date of arrival by turning that doodad?"

"I suppose so," said Amos. "I've never tried any other date. Why should I when I'm so well off where I am?"

"No reason at all," said Jerry. They left the warehouse and walked toward the nearest avenue to pick up a cab. "I'm not sure this life you're leading is healthy," he told the scientist. "After all, *this* is the time you were born into. Surely, you have some interests here beyond your science—friends, a girl." He saw by Amos' blush that he had scored and put on the pitch. Amos had earned relaxation, a refresher, a vacation, a party. Jerry would take care of the precious in-

ventions and experiments and see no harm came to them. By the time they parted, Amos had his check for five hundred dollars and Jerry had the keys to the warehouse service elevator and the lodging house back in time. "I'll take good care of them. Don't worry about a thing. Go out and have yourself a ball," he said as they parted.

"A ball?" said Amos. "What sort of a ball?"

Hurrying away, Jerry told himself, "You'll never know, sport."

It was not that Jerry had anything really nefarious in mind—at any rate, where the dedicated Amos Willy was concerned. He merely wanted to get back there, to 1891, and look around. After all, it was opportunity—fantastic opportunity—and Jerry was hardly the man to let its knock go unanswered. That night he lay awake in his Sutton Place bedroom, thinking, figuring, computing. For once, R-D, Inc., and its myriad problems were pushed into the hind-quarters of his mind.

The next morning, he called the office and told Rhoda to cancel his appointments until further notice. He was going to have to move—and

move fast. There was no telling when the dedicated Amos might come wandering back from his hastily induced holiday.

Jerry spent the entire morning at the Public Library, delving into old almanacs and sports record books. Then he went downtown to the second-hand bookstore district and purchased a half-dozen books, dealing with horse-racing history, with baseball, with the operations of the stock-market, with general life in the early 1890's. By the time he was finished, it was past three o'clock and the banks were closed, so he returned to the office.

"Where have you been?" Rhoda asked him as he entered. "You must have gotten a million calls."

"How about Mr. Willy—did he call?" he asked, trying to hide from her the wholly masculine urge that all but overwhelmed him at sight of her shoulders, throat and upper bosom, revealed by a backless summer dress.

"No—that screwball's the only one who didn't," she told him. Then, after eyeing him curiously, "You sure you're all right, Jerry?"

"Huh? Who me? I'm fine,"

he told her. He went in to his desk and tended to office affairs, though his heart was not in it. Twice, he almost told Park Doheny about Amos Willy's amazing discovery, but each time he managed to hold his tongue. Park would not believe him, and he had promised Amos to keep his secret secret. Every time he thought of it, Jerry could only wonder at a man so dedicated that he had invented a time machine simply to cut down living expenses while working out his theories on rhodomagnetics.

He was going to have to make his move the next day, so he was in and out of the office, completing his preparations. A theatrical costumer supplied him with a Gay Nineties outfit—complete from straw boater with elastic to suede-topped high-button shoes. He found it impossible to get paper money, so he invested in a hundred silver dollars, dated before 1890, and, for fabulous prices, managed to pick up another five hundred in properly dated twenty-dollar gold pieces. By the time he had all this assembled at the office, it was after five. Gathering his impedimenta, he bade Rhoda Carlin a polite farewell, rode down in the elevator and

hired a cab to take him to the warehouse.

When he got out, another cab pulled up behind his and Rhoda emerged, revealing a breath-taking expanse of nylon leg. Wishing the silver dollars weren't quite so heavy, and that the box containing his costume weren't quite so awkward and bulky, Jerry waited until she came up to him. "What's the idea?" he asked her.

"You left these at the office—I thought you might need them," said the girl. She handed him, without expression, the precious box that contained his gold pieces. Feeling slightly sick to his stomach over danger averted, Jerry thanked her. Regarding him curiously, she said, "Have you gone stark, staring nuts—or what?"

"What difference does it make to you?" he asked her.

She regarded him gravely, then told him, "No girl likes to lose half a meal-ticket—even the treacherous, unreliable half."

"Treacherous—unreliable?" He was wounded to the quick.

"You're just like my old man," she said. "Mother never trusted him out of her sight." Then, looking curiously at their surroundings, "What

are you doing in this crummy neighborhood?"

"Your friend, Amos Willy, has his laboratory inside," said Jerry. An impulse, fortified by two years of longing frustration, was taking shape in his mind.

"What are you taking him beside gold?" Rhoda asked. "Birdseed?"

"Come along and find out," he told her, unlocking the door. He stood aside, holding his breath, while she hesitated.

Finally, with slightly wrinkled nose, she said, "I don't know which of us is crazier," and walked briskly inside. She looked around the service elevator with contempt while Jerry busied himself with the capstan, checking the numbers on the dial and praying that he was not doing anything wrong. Unquestionably, he decided, he must be out of his mind to take the girl with him. "But if this be insanity, then I be a happy lunatic," he told himself.

He looked up and around, just to make certain Rhoda was still with him, then gave a shout of alarm. She had her hands on the cable, seemed just about to give it a pull. "No! Don't!" he shouted, leaping for her. As he did so, the knob from the side of the

capstan came away in his hand.

There was a lurch, a sickening, sideways movement, then an ominous, grinding crunch of metal. Jerry said, "Oh, my God!" and looked down to discover Rhoda's well-advertised charms pressed close against him, her large violet eyes looking up, frightened, into his.

"What happened?" she asked. "What did I do?" Realizing where she was, she disengaged herself from him as if he had been a piece of chewing gum stuck to her shoe.

"I don't know—yet," he told her. Taking a deep breath, he opened the lift door—and felt a flood of relief at sight of the now-familiar old-fashioned cellar. "It's okay," he said. "Let's go quickly, don't linger."

They managed to sneak upstairs unobserved, although wheezy music from an old-fashioned upright foot-powered organ sounded from the parlor on the main floor, playing *Bringing in the Sheaves*. Not until they were safely in Amos Willy's rooms, did Jerry allow Rhoda to speak. Then she said, "It must be me that's crazy." She looked out the window, gave a little scream of alarm and

said, "What is this—a movie set?"

Apparently, her scream was heard, for rapid footsteps were followed by a rapping on the door. "Mr. Willy! I'm surprised at you," said a sharp, feminine voice. "You know my rules about young ladies in the upstairs rooms."

"Mrs. Talbot?" Jerry turned on all the ingratiations he could muster. "This is Mr. Hale, Amos Willy's employer. He's going to be away a few days, and he offered his rooms to my bride and myself for a—" he looked at Rhoda helplessly—"for a honeymoon."

"Oh!" There was a blend of disapproval and romantic curiosity in the single syllable. Then, "Very well, I suppose it's all right, but I'll have to double the rates."

"I shall be down directly to settle the matter, I hope to your satisfaction," said Jerry, feeling as if he were Alice, falling slowly down the White Rabbit's hole. He waited until Mrs. Talbot's footsteps on the stairs could no longer be heard, then said, "This isn't a movie set, Rhoda. This is the real thing."

She was regarding him speculatively. "Mrs. Jerry Hale," she said dreamily.

He grabbed her by the shoulders. "Rhoda! Snap out of it! We busted Amos Willy's time machine getting here. I don't know how to get us back. We're trapped."

Her face was close to his. She said, "Shut up and kiss me."

He did so—and again time performed a dizzy parabola. However, he pulled himself out of it in time to go into the bedroom and don the clothes he had purchased from the costumer, remembering to part his hair in the middle. Rhoda looked at him disbelievingly. "Jerry, dear," she said, "hasn't this silly joke gone on far enough?"

"It's no joke," he told her. He had been wondering if he hadn't made a ghastly mistake in telling Mrs. Talbot Rhoda was his wife. After all . . . However, looking at that lush, lovely face and figure, he felt his heart indulge in some odd but not unpleasant thumps. He had wanted this girl for two years. Now, she couldn't leave the rooms if she wanted to—not without causing a riot in her 1956 clothes. An old phrase floated through his mind . . . "Once aboard the lugger, and the girl is mine." He was humming a little tune as he went downstairs to see Mrs. Tal-

bot, carefully wiping off the stains of Rhoda's lipstick around his mouth.

Mrs. Talbot proved charming, once she saw a ten-dollar gold piece, and even agreed to bring them a little supper. Jerry continued to hum as he ran up the stairs. "Once aboard the lugger . . ."

The supper proved to be incredibly ample and extremely good—but Jerry spent the night on the horse-hair sofa, while Rhoda slept peacefully on the bed in the next room. She had killed his ideas in exactly two syllables—"No soap!"

The following afternoon, with Rhoda wearing an ill-fitting ready-made dress that Jerry had managed to purchase for her at a large department store, they were married at the city registry—an absurdly quaint, gaslit structure of red-brick that, in their own time, had long since been replaced by a towering municipal skyscraper.

Rhoda went through the ceremony gravely. Not until they were ensconced in a handsome cab, with the horse trotting noisily over a cobbled pavement, did she say, "I'd almost given up here." Snuggling close to him, she murmured, "Jerry, I'm so happy."

"I'm a little stunned," said

Jerry, slipping an arm about familiar shoulders covered with unfamiliar ruffles. "Why did you give me the brush for so long, honey?"

"Because," she told him, "you didn't have marriage in mind."

The following day, they moved from Mrs. Talbot's house to a large hotel. For fifteen dollars a week, Jerry rented the bridal suite, complete with its gray marble private bathroom. Rhoda spent the next few days shopping, while Jerry moved about the city, making the connections he wanted. It was not as simple as he had expected, but he was not a man to be denied. On the fourth day, they took a chugging steam train that conveyed them, along with a mixed crowd in holiday mood, to an ornate racetrack on the outskirts of town.

"Who's that man—the one who nodded to you?" Rhoda asked curiously as they took their places in a grandstand box close to the finish line. "The one with the handlebar mustache."

"Oh—" said Jerry. "That's Mr. Watson, Mr. Phil Watson from Philadelphia. We have a little wager on the fifth race—the Vanderlip Silver

Cup. He believes a horse called Shoo-in is going to win." Jerry found he was beginning to like Rhoda, even without lipstick. But then, he told himself, he would have liked her tattooed blue.

"And Shoo-in isn't going to win?" she asked him quaintly.

He patted the little book in his pocket. "Not unless history is wrong," he replied confidently.

He bet mildly, disinterestedly, on the first four races, since he had no record of them, managed to do a little better than break even. He placed another bet, with a bookmaker, on Breakaway, the long-odds filly scheduled to take the big race. He and Rhoda were on their feet, yelling their heads off, when Breakaway caught Shoo-in in the home stretch and won, going away, by half a length.

"We won! You did it!" Rhoda shouted in his ear, her arms around his neck. Then, restraining herself. "How much?"

"About eleven thousand," he told her proudly.

"Wonderful!" she replied. "Then I can buy that Worth copy at Mr. Wanamaker's tomorrow."

"You can buy the original," he told her grandly, biting off the end of a Corona Corona.

Women! he thought. *Bless 'em!*

A few minutes later, Mr. Philip Watson from Philadelphia entered the box, shook hands with Rhoda and pulled a number of orange-backed gold certificates from an exceedingly plump wallet. "I don't know how you called that one, Hale," he told Jerry. "But you earned this." He put the money into Jerry's waiting hands, then added with a speculative gleam in his little eyes. "The Diamond Tray comes up next week—how about giving me a chance to win some of it back?"

"Who do you like?" Jerry asked him.

Mr. Watson hesitated, then shrugged and said, "I've got a gelding going for me that should be about ready, a colt I picked up at the Louisville auction last year. Of course, she's a slow starter, and mighty green, but I feel I ought to back her—purely out of sentiment, of course."

Jerry laughed and said, "Sentiment, my eye! What's his name?"

"Carryall," said Mr. Phil Watson.

"Just a moment," said Jerry. Turning away, he got out the record book in his pocket, shielding it carefully from prying eyes. He found

the Diamond Tray Stakes, checked 1891. The winner, unless history lied again, was a nag called *Footless*. He put away the little book and turned to close the deal. Mr. Watson sighed and turned away.

"Such a sad little man," said Rhoda with sympathy—to Jerry's amazement, she actually had sympathy now that he had finally come to know her in a biblical, as well as in a professional, sense.

"He's only worth about five million bucks," Jerry told her, unfeelingly. "Made it in cod liver oil."

"Such a sad little millionaire then," said his wife. Then, wriggling uncomfortably, "Take me home, honey. These damned stays are cutting me in two."

He didn't see much of Rhoda while the sun was up the next week. His affairs kept him busy during the day—there were so many people to meet, so many things to do, so many places to go—but she didn't seem discontented. They dined in state, visited the theaters, had happy nights of love. To his surprise, when Diamond Tray Stakes day came around, Rhoda pleaded a headache and refused to go with him.

That was the day the blow

fell. Footless was running well in front of the field as they rounded the home turn, but then the horse skidded and actually fell down, throwing its jockey almost to the outer rail. While Jerry looked on in disbelief and mounting horror, the rest of the field swept past his choice and came home, with Carry-all nicely in front.

"I'll have to get the balance from the bank tomorrow," said Jerry, handing over the contents of his wallet—a little matter of ten thousand dollars, which was only half the amount of the bet.

Philip Watson's little eyes were like twin diamond bits boring into him. Jerry didn't think he had ever seen anything quite so hard. The sportsman said in tones made all the more menacing because they were gentler by far than his normal speech, "Have the money at my office before noon, or you may find matters a trifle unpleasant." Before turning away, he added, "Please convey my regards to your beautiful lady."

"By all means," said Jerry, in a fog of bewilderment laced with fear. This was disaster in more ways than one—for very evidently either history did lie or he and Rhoda were not in the past of

the same world into which they had been born. Riding back to the city, Jerry tried desperately to figure it out. He wished he had listened more attentively to what Amos Willy had tried to tell him about the machine. Something about its not being exactly a time-travel instrument . . .

Jerry knew the theory of parallel time-tracks, although, until this moment, he had never before given it much attention. It involved—but to hell with theory. Fantastic or not, he was stuck with hard fact, caught in a past whose future he could not predict. Worse, there was no way out. He still had about twelve hundred in the bank—hardly enough to satisfy Phil Watson, but enough to take Rhoda and himself out of the city and give them a stake in this world where a dollar went such a long way.

Somehow, memory of Watson's diamond-drill eyes told him that wouldn't work. And, if the dollar in this world went a long way, it was also correspondingly difficult to make. Five thousand dollars a year meant prosperity—but, to earn it, a man had to put in six long days of labor. If he could find a job that paid that much . . .

He wondered what Phil Watson had meant by the ominous words, "a trifle unpleasant"—and decided he didn't want to stick around and find out. The hotel would cash a check for him, and he and Rhoda could be off that night. He thought longingly of the security of his blond-mahogany desk back at R-D, Inc., somewhere in time, on some other world, and cursed Amos Willy and all his works. Then he began to wonder how Rhoda was going to take the bad news.

She was waiting for him in the lobby of the hotel when he got there, and she already knew some of it. She said, "I know you lost your shirt, Jerry." She sounded a little like the Rhoda of old—the fearsome Rhoda of the outer office.

"Not so loud!" he muttered furtively. "I don't want it to get around here."

"It's already around," she told him. "When Philadelphia Phil—yes, that's what they call your 'nice' Mr. Watson—When Philadelphia Phil makes a killing, everybody knows about it."

"Philadelphia Phil?" Somewhere, in Jerry's memory, a gong reverberated. Philadelphia Phil—why, that would be this world's version of

Pittsburgh Phil, the most famous and ruthless big-time race-track winner of his own and Rhoda's world. He sank onto a settee and mopped his brow with a handkerchief.

Rhoda stood over him. "Well, Jerry, what are you going to do?" she asked quietly. "You know you haven't the money to pay him."

He took her hands in his, like a drowning man clutching twin life-preservers, said in a low voice, "We're going to cash a check and get out of here—tonight."

"Are we?" she asked. "I don't think so," She nodded toward a couple of extremely sporty looking, and extremely tough looking, characters, who were lounging close to the entrance to the men's bar, their gimlet eyes fixed on him. "These gentlemen have been waiting for your arrival. I overheard them talking to the clerk."

"Oh, my God!" gasped Jerry. "What *am* I going to do? I'm sorry I got you into this, honey—only I'm not sorry about us."

"You mean that, Jerry?" Her voice, briefly, was tender.

"I mean it," he told her.

"Then this is what we're going to do," she told him firmly. "We're going to pay

Mr. Watson tonight in full."

"With what?" he asked her, astonished.

"With this." She plunged a hand into her reticule and pulled from it a thick roll of bills. "Then you're going to work—for me."

"I don't understand," he told her. "How . . . ?"

She said, "While you've been wasting your time and money trying to make a dishonest killing, I've been busy trying to do the women of this world a little good—and make an honest profit."

"But with what?" he asked her, still unable to credit his senses. "How can you do women some good?"

She wriggled uncomfortably and said, "I'm getting them out of these horrible stays. I've been going out of my mind in them. So I took my panty girdle to a manufacturer and made a deal. The patent is already applied for, and I'm going into business—only you, are going into it with me and see that our interest is protected."

He looked at her with awe. "You mean . . .," he began.

"I mean," she said firmly, "that from now on there will be no more betting—except maybe a little, for fun. It's going to take all I got today—ten thousand—to pull you

out of this hole. That will leave us a little to keep going on. The rest is up to you."

"You doll!" he said fervently. "You violet-eyed wonder!" He moved to embrace her, right there in the lobby.

"No more bets?" she managed before his lips sealed hers.

"No more bets," he whispered.

The sound of a throat-clearing behind him, brought him out of his rapture. He turned, to see a bedraggled-looking Amos Willy standing there, Amos said, "Mr. Hale—Miss Carlin—thank God, I've found you. Mr. Doheny is going out of his mind."

"It will never miss him," said Rhoda. "And the name is not Miss Carlin—it's Mrs. Hale." Then, "Mr. Willy! How did you ever . . . ?"

"It wasn't easy," was the reply. "I had to take the whole machine to pieces and put it together again. What did you do to it, Mr. Hale? It was all warped."

"Never mind," said Jerry. "You did it."

"We should be getting back," said Amos. "It's taken me several days to find you here, and Mr. Doheny is really worried."

The nightmare was over.

Jerry felt as if the weight of the ages had been lifted from his shoulders. He said, "I'm sorry about the machine, Amos, but, since you've fixed it." He turned toward Rhoda, added, "Come on, honey. Let's go."

"We're not going back." The words were low-pitched but unmistakably firm. "We have our roots down here."

"Not going back?" Jerry was incredulous. "But, honey, we don't belong here—not really. In our own time, in our own world—"

"In our own time, in our own world, I'm Miss Carlin, not Mrs. Hale. I'm a stenographer, not a capitalist, a—a babe, not a lady. Besides, you promised . . ."

"That's right," said Jerry. "I did." He looked at his wife for a long moment, then turned to Amos Willy and said, "Sorry, chum, you heard what the lady said."

"But what will I tell Mr. Doheny?" the inventor asked helplessly, his myopic, dedicated eyes ablank.

"Tell Mr. Doheny," said Rhoda, "to find himself a new partner—and a new secretary." She smiled at Jerry and said, "Shall we have dinner now, darling?"