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NOVEL

LAST STAND Algis Budrys 4

NOVELETS

LIVE IN AMITY D. A. Jourdan 36

PROTECTIVE CAMOUFLAGE Charles V. De Vet 106

SHORT STORIES

IN WORKING ORDER Ward Moore 55

DESIGN IN STATISTICS Irving Cox, Jr. 63

TELESTASSIS M. C. Pease 78

UGLY DUCKLING Barbara Constant 93

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They watched in horror, knowing what had happened...

TELESTASSIS

by M. C. Pease

illustrated by ORBAN

STAN WYCOFF sat at the foot of the long table as the President, flanked by his personal secretary, took the seat at the head. In a moment almost of panic Stan wondered why he was here. What rank did he have to sit here among these great? Kritchevsky, the famed professor of comparative sociology at the University of Moscow. Yamagata, one of the foremost philosophers of the world, here from the University of Japan. Renoit, leading anthropologist of France, if not the world. And these others, assembled from all the lands to meet this catastrophe. What right had he to be here, even if he was the resident psychiatrist on the President's staff?

From her chair at the President's

right, Selma flicked him a glance. Her face was impassive and her hands did not hesitate as they arranged her notebook and pen before her, but Stan drew comfort from this sign of her awareness of him. She had wrangled his invitation, he knew, and he was grateful and afraid. Afraid that he would not measure up to her opinion of him, but grateful for the fact of that opinion.

Cautiously he reached out his mind to her. Tentatively, with a question mark. Finding her, he gently fitted his mind to hers. He felt her realize he was there, and sensed her turning to him with a mental smile. But then she stopped. "No, not here and now," her mind said. "The others might

become aware." She closed her mind to his, but she did it gently, and he was comforted.

The President cleared his throat. "Gentlemen," he said. "I have called you here as a committee to study the present crisis, and to determine what course of action will help to solve the problem. You probably already know the magnitude of the crisis. If you don't, Mr. Ryan, my assistant here, will inform you. Its scope, its threat to civilization and to humanity itself, is such that a solution *must* be found." He looked old as he stared around the table—old and tired and desperate.

"You are each an authority in your field," he went on. "Between you, you represent all the main fields of knowledge which seem to have a bearing on the situation. If there are any we have left out, you as a committee may, in my name as President of the World, command whomever you will. But I suggest that you will not wish to call many others; even this present committee is beyond the danger point. I suggest you think well before you add to it.

"You each possess one other qualification," he continued. "Each of you talks English fluently. Obviously you will wish to conduct your meetings on the verbal level. I will go further and suggest that you all forego any telepathy until some solution has been found. As members of this committee, you

will be too valuable to take any chances." He smiled, but there was no humor in it as he looked around. Only fear. "And now, gentlemen, I will turn the meeting over to Mr. Ryan, who will act as Chairman in my place. Please do not hesitate to ask for anything you wish." They all got up as the President walked out, and there was silence until Mr. Ryan took the head chair and sat down.

A LEAN, dark man with deep set eyes, Ryan displayed a nervous intensity of focus. He was known as an excellent organizer, Stan knew, and as the President's assistant, had considerable authority. Stan knew him as Selma's father and he worried somewhat about him. He wondered how stable Ryan actually was, and feared that the man's drive might be obsessive.

Calling the meeting to order, Ryan quickly sketched in the background. The world was falling into a coma. Telepathy, first hailed as the tool to save humanity, had proved a terrible curse. Opening the way to more perfect communication, it had solved the age-old problems of humanity. Wars had become impossible with all people knowing each other; crime and evil had nearly been banished. The psychiatrists had had the perfect tool to help the sick of mind. The millennium had arrived.

But then, on the very dawn of

the millennium, had come the dark spectre. Telestassis! Somewhere, some time, some place, there had been a group of people who were alone and afraid. Men, and women, bearing such heavy scars of childhood fears that they could not find peace even in the communion of a telepathic friendship. And somehow their neuroses had meshed, reaching some crisis at the same time and with the same need. Their needs had cried out to each other, and they had locked together in a wild obsessive cycle. Submerging their separate identities in the group, they had found release and satisfaction in the final unity. A union where each thought was locked into the pattern, frozen into a timeless and impervious stassis.

Like a whirlpool, each part had existence only as part of the whole. As individuals, they were gone; freezing into the foetal position, their bodies continued, cared for by their puzzled friends and doctors. But their minds were locked together—locked into the maelstrom of a group obsession so strong that even the trained psychiatrists with all their tools of telepathic probing were powerless.

And like a whirlpool, too, the group drew others into itself, feeding itself on their own worries and fears. It grew to a strength that could attract the mildly neurotic. And finally it grew until a man's fear of the telestassis itself was enough to make it dangerous.

Even as he sat there listening to Ryan's words, Stan could feel in his mind the throb of the telestassis. He could hear its siren song and could sense the pulsing power of it. By habit, he kept his mind locked against it, the door in that direction firmly closed; but, like flooding waters, it was too strong to be completely denied. It seeped around the door, and the vibration of its voice permeated his awareness. There was a temptation to open that door—to open it and see for once and all the idiot titan that was there. There was a fascination to it that could hardly be denied.

STAN SUDDENLY heard Ryan say, "...and there, gentlemen, is the problem. Where shall we start?" What had Ryan been saying, he wondered. In its essential details, he knew, of course. As a member of the President's staff, he had heard the confidential figures. He knew that one adult out of thirty over the whole world was curled up in the foetal position, eyes blank and staring, breathing barely visibly, unreacting to any stimulus. Three percent already engulfed in the telestassis, and the number still climbing without sign of saturation. There was a problem and it was a terrible one. How long, in the face of this mounting tension could any single individual hope to hold on?

"Please." It was Yamagata, the Japanese, his round head bobbing

and his lips spread in a smile. "Forgive the question but what is the problem?" His voice was pleasant and decisive.

"The problem?" Ryan's voice cracked sharply. "I thought I made it clear. I told you how big it is. I said that this...this thing is growing fast. What more do you need—to know we've got a problem?"

"No, please, you do not understand," Yamagata said. "There are many problems here. Which should we tackle, please?"

"What do you mean?" Ryan frowned.

"I am so sorry I do not make myself clear," the Japanese said. "Should we only consider how to stop its growth? Will it be enough if we could make it happen that there will be no new victims? By a pill, perhaps, or a screen about the head? I do not know that this can be done, I am just asking for direction, please. Or should we seek to break the telestasis somehow, and return these poor people to the living world? Or, in the other way, would it be enough if we could learn to raise the new generation to be free of it? Find some way to stop the Cayley-Stimpson reaction? How should we turn, please?"

"Stop the Cayley-Stimpson reaction?" Ryan seemed shocked; this was the phenomenon that was the very basis of the telepathic world—the fact that children raised in

an environment that included telepathic adults would develop telepathic powers of their own in adolescence or in early adulthood. Telepathy had come upon the world suddenly and quite by accident. Two people had, by chance, awakened in themselves the latent power; their use of these new powers had acted on the children near them. By the Cayley-Stimpson reaction, the more sensitive of these children had in their adulthood found their latent powers. It had taken only fifty years to breed a generation that was wholly telepathic, for the Cayley-Stimpson reaction was easily established.

"Yes," Ryan went on. "I guess even that is a possibility. At least it would be better than having everybody in...in that."

KRITCHEVSHY hunched himself forward. A huge man with a bristling black beard and a perpetual scowl on his face, he took the cigar out of his mouth and cleared his throat. "The problem is simple," he said, the words coming forth in a guttural torrent. "You cannot stop the Cayley-Stimpson reaction, unless maybe you park some children on the Moon or Mars, and even that I doubt. But we have tried experiments. There is the work of Tchebyscheff and others. Children raised in caves, and in metal cages with all sorts of fields around them, are still subject to it. And

for the telepathy itself, Drusoff has tried all sorts of ways to try to screen it out.

"All have failed. We do not know what kind of transference telepathy is—radiation or whatever—and we cannot screen it. We cannot stop the Cayley-Stimpson reaction.

"And by the same thing, we cannot protect ourselves from telestassis. There is *no* screen for telepathy." His fist came down hard scattering ashes from the cigar clamped in it. "We cannot stop the cancer that is telestassis and there is only one thing we can do." He glared around the table.

"Please, what is that?" Yamagata asked.

"Telestassis is like a cancer," Kritchevsky said, staring at the Japanese. "It is an uncontrolled—and therefore malignant—growth of destructive cells in the sociologic body. We must treat it as a cancer."

"Please, you speak in riddles," Yamagata said; "there is no rhiamine for the sociologic cells."

"No, there isn't," Kritchevsky nodded vigorously. "And there did not used to be for the cells of the body. But there was still cancer and it still killed people. And rhiamine, is a recent discovery. Even sixty years ago there was still no chemical known that worked on cancer, but there was quite a respectable science of medicine. And, not knowing any drug to help, the

doctors were still not fully helpless to fight cancer."

"Please, how did they treat cancer?"

Kritchevsky glowered a moment at the table. Then he answered: "They cut it out." He glared around the table. "They removed the cancerous cells. To be a surgeon, one must be willing to sacrifice the part for the whole. One must be able to be brutal to the individual cell so that the whole body may live. We must be surgeons; for otherwise the whole body of mankind will die."

As the meaning of Kritchevsky's suggestion became clear, as Stan realized that the Russian was saying that they must kill—or at least some way remove—all the people in the telestassis, he was horrified. These were still human beings. It was true that their minds were dead for the rest of humanity, that individually they had given up their very selves. But to kill them, to say that they must be destroyed to save the rest, that was the ultimate denial of their humanity, and Stanley was appalled.

HE LOOKED around at the others, wondering what their reactions were. No one was saying anything. Some of their faces expressed shock; some were impassive and indrawn, betokening perhaps a greater shock. Others were nervous and their eyes evasive.

Cautiously, Wycoff stretched out

his mind, wanting to get a better feel of the reaction. But there was no contact; every one of them was closed up tight, sealed against the intrusion. By this fact as much as by anything else, he suddenly realized that this plan of Kritchevsky's was not entirely alien to them. If it had been, their instinct would have been to scream out against it, even as his had been. And if they had suppressed the screams as he had done, they still would be reaching out to find some other denial of this horror.

But they were not screaming. Each hid behind a poker mask that extended even down into their minds. They had already faced the shock, even before Kritchevsky had spoken. And they were waiting.

"Please," Yamagata finally broke the silence. "I have considered this possibility. It is a real one. If there is no other way, then we must use it. But first we must consider if there is another way. Is it not so? Is that not why we are here, please, Mr. Ryan?"

Stanley looked at the man at the head of the table. Ryan's face was grey and his hand trembled as he lit a cigarette. His breathing was fast and his eyes jerked as they looked up at the Japanese. "We're not murderers," he burst out. "There must be some other way; there's got to be!" And he stamped out the cigaret he had just lit.

Renoit, the French anthropolo-

gist, leaned forward. "Yes, Messieurs," he said, "we must seek some other way." His face was pinched, his mouth almost puckered, and he gestured tightly with his hands. "Perhaps drugs. Perhaps we can anesthetize them all at the same time. And when they come out of it, who knows, maybe they will be free."

"Bah," Kritchevsky grunted. "That has already been tried, at least twice that I know of—in the early days when it was small. It did no good at all. There's no purpose in trying to fool yourself."

Renoit shrugged. "I did not know." He spread his hands. "If that is known not to work, then maybe there is another way. If you will speak of the history of psychology. We know now how to treat the aberrations of the mind. With the tool of telepathy, we can... how do you say?... straighten out any individual who is twisted around. It is only the combined power of the telestassis that prevents us from curing that.

"But this did not used to be the case. And as you say, before we had this tool, there were still doctors, and they were not entirely without the power to cure. In the case of psychiatry, the ultimate was similar to surgery. It was shock—electrical, chemical, through drugs, and other kinds. And in its ultimate form, mechanical through direct surgery on the brain. Perhaps these techniques will work here."

Kritchovsky sneered. "You can try them if you like. If it makes your conscience easier to kill only the mind and not the body, go ahead. To me it all seems the same; to leave them mindless, without will or sense of ego, to remove the feeling and the pride that makes a man a human being, I do not see that this is any different from the outright killing of the man. But if you think it is, why go ahead; it might work."

"Please," Yamagata said, "I think you are right. But there are other factors that are perhaps important. We cannot do this thing ourselves. We must persuade the proper people. And maybe it will be easier to persuade them to kill the mind than to kill the body. But I agree that, from a purely ethical standpoint, there is little to choose between them. Therefore I do not think we can make this decision easily. If I may make a suggestion, Mr. Chairman, I think it would be well if we thought about this for a while. Perhaps we should adjourn and discuss this more tomorrow."

Ryan looked at him with stupid eyes. He shook himself slightly as if to wake himself from a trance and said in a weak voice: "Yes, I think we should. If this is the only answer we can find, then we must be very sure that it is right. Do we have the right to do such a thing? Can we live with ourselves if we must make this recommendation to the President? I wonder if

I can. Let us meet tomorrow at ten."

Ryan hurried out, looking almost sick. Some of the others left, too. The rest gathered into smaller groups, each group containing one or two men who argued vociferously, while the rest watched with troubled eyes.

Stanley went to where Selma was finishing up her notes. He felt shocked and sickened. To kill—either outright or in their minds—some three percent of the human race seemed a horrible thing to contemplate. And yet he had an awful feeling in the pit of his stomach that this might be the only answer, the only way to keep the whirlpool of the telestassis from swallowing up the whole human race. For the power of the telestassis was growing, and how long could any man, however sane, hold out against it? And if this was so, if the telestassis did in fact threaten the whole of humanity, did they have the right to shrink from any measure of therapy, no matter how brutal, that might afford an answer? There was the cold, bleak thought in him that they would probably reach this decision.

THAT NIGHT, Stanley took Selma into a small park on the second level. Around them, the city was quiet but busy. Along the street ways personal cars glided silently through the glowing light.

Overhead, the belts moved with swift silence broken only by the hum of conversation of the people riding them. Around them the buildings towered high, their windows having automatically adjusted to the night so that only faintly glowing squares showed the life within. There was an air of cleanliness about it all, for it was clean. And so, too, were the stars that glittered overhead, undimmed by smoke or dust or glaring light.

In the park there was silence except for the occasional sleepy cheep of a bird and the low voices of the other people there. It was dark except for the dimly glowing signs to show the paths, for there was no one here who was afraid of the dark, and there was no need for fear.

They walked through the park until they found a bench. They sat down, Stanley leaning back against the cushions, and Selma leaning on his shoulder and pulling his arms about her. They sat without talking, listening to the soft breeze in the leaves, smelling the flowers that bloomed about them, being aware of each other with a sense that was only partly telepathic and partly as old as man. It was peaceful, and for the moment at least, they were not even aware of the beating pressure of the telestassis.

AFTER AWHILE, Selma stirred and, sitting up straight, turned

toward him. "Tell me, Stan," she said, "I don't understand; why is the telestassis like it is?"

"Must we talk shop?" Stan asked, his voice slightly irritated. And then he shrugged in the darkness. "Oh, well. What do you want to know?"

"Well, why do they go into this trance?" she asked. "Why can't they think in it? I mean, I should think that people linked up that way would be able to think so much more effectively. It's as if their brains were multiplied by a millionfold; why does it so paralyze them?"

"Well, how can they think?" Stan asked.

"You make a computer better by making it larger," she answered. "Why doesn't it work with the brain?"

"Even in a computer," he said, "it depends what you mean by 'better'. Actually you can build a computer that will fit in a suitcase, and which will perform all the logical functions, and do them as fast as any other. The only difference between a computer you can carry in your hand and the one at Central Information that fills up ten million cubic feet, is in the amount of data it can handle.

"How fast can it absorb data, and at what rate can it deliver it? And how fast can a stored piece of data be made available? These are the key questions. The telestassis can absorb data fast with

all its separate eyes and ears and sense nerves—but not in useful way. It all comes pouring in in one vast jumble, the separate pieces completely indistinguishable. And, for the same reason, it cannot transmit data, for all the mouths and all the ordering nerves are linked together.

"But the third question is the even more important one, for thinking is done by the association of stored data. And consider, how can the single governing body that is the telestassis get at any single memory? In the mind, the data stored in the memory is coded for its access. We are only just beginning to understand this coding, but we do know some things about it. We know that no two individuals use quite the same method of coding. It may be—and usually is—similar, but never identical. And so, the telestassis wants to think about—let us say—ah—primary power generators. It sends out what it hopes is the proper code, and for one person, it *is* the right code, and his memory does send up the wanted data.

"But some other memory sends up the data that it has on the source of solar power. And a third one sends up what it knows about the basic metabolism of plants. And so on and on, to utter and complete confusion. How can it put together so much as one single coherent thought?"

"Hmm," Selma said. "I suppose.

But why doesn't it set up its own coding? I should think at least it could control what it itself has experienced."

"I've wondered about that," Stan admitted. "Maybe the answer is that some day it will; but right now it's growing too fast. Maybe it's like a baby before birth, growing so fast, with new connections being added to its brain in such profusion that it cannot yet learn to use that brain. The unborn baby cannot remember anything—not in a form that will be useful to the conscious mind. It's changing too fast. Maybe the telestassis is like that."

"A baby in the womb of all mankind," Selma mused.

"Perhaps," Stan said. His voice was sad. "If so, a foredoomed baby. It is going to kill its mother; and it will do this before it can take care of itself, and so it too will die."

They both dropped into silence. After a moment, without saying anything, they both got up and took the path back homeward. Their hands were linked together but there was a deep sadness on them.

WHEN THE meeting convened the next day, they were all there. Ryan, as he took the chair at the head, looked haggard, as if he had little sleep over the night. He called the meeting to order, and the discussion continued as different people talked round and round

what had been said the day before.

It was finally after lunch that Kritchevsky exploded. "I would like to know why we are sitting here, talking and talking, with nothing new to say," he suddenly roared, his eyes glittering over his bristling beard. "It has been obvious for years what has to be done. It was obvious yesterday and it is obvious today. I am a busy man; I have important things to do—things more important than to say over and over again what is obvious. Let us agree that what must be, will be; let us write our report and get home."

"Please, are you not being a little hasty?" Yamagata asked. "After all, this is not an easy matter. All of us have friends and relatives who are victims of the telestassis. It is not a little thing to condemn these people to death. And whether it is a death of the mind or of the body, it is not something to be shrugged aside."

"Bah," Kritchevsky growled. "You are a sentimentalist." His mouth worked for a moment. "My wife is in the telestassis. And I love my wife. She was the joy of my life; she was my pigeon, my little bird, and now she is gone. She is dead now."

His voice trembled. "She lies there, my little Sonya, so still and quiet—so empty. She is dead, I tell you; she is dead this moment, even though she is still called alive. And I do not mind taking that last

spark of life from her. It is nothing, for there is nothing there. I am a realist, and I do not believe in sentiment."

"Monsieur," Renoit said, "you have our sympathy, and perhaps you are right. Perhaps there is no point in discussing this thing further; perhaps we do all know what must be done, and that this is the only thing that can be done. But, bear with us. This is not, I think, a new idea to any of us. It is probably not to the President himself. I suspect he knows what we will recommend. And yet it is still not an easy thing to face; it is not an easy thing to do. Let us admit that this is what we shall do. Let us agree that the telestassis must be destroyed, excised, removed. There still remains the means, and how the thing shall be organized. Let us discuss these, so we may grow used to the idea."

"You're agreeing to this?" Ryan was on his feet, shouting, his face white, his lips drawn back. "Hasn't any one of you any idea except mass murder?" He leaned on the table, his face working. His body was rigid and trembling. And suddenly his head snapped back and his legs folded under him while his arms came up alongside his head. There was panic in the room and men leaped to their feet, jumping back in horror, for this was the telestassis.

"Father!" Selma cried, leaping to catch him as he fell. And in his

mind, Stan heard the same cry, but it was louder, more desperate, more appealing. He did not stop to think. With a shuddering sense that this was what he had to do, he dove into Ryan's mind, grasping after the last shreds of the other's dissolving personality. And as he did, he heard Selma, as if from far away, cry out: "No Stanley, no! Not you, too!" But he did not try to stop.

IT WAS A winding tunnel that he went down; it was a blackness and a death. He felt his own thoughts dissolve, his very mind tatter in the wind. There was a sucking grinding dissolution and there was a sickening thought as he knew that he was lost. And then that thought, too, was wrenched away.

Selma. The thought was clear and sharp. It was the totality of all thought, and it was alone. *How? Why?* As he asked the question he knew the answer: She was here, with him; and behind her was Kritchevsky, and Yamagata, and, dimly, Renoit also. They were a life-line strung out across the whirlpool. Ryan, Stanley, Selma, Kritchevsky, Yamagata—a line that could not stand against the power of the vortex over which they hung. A line that stretched, growing thinner and weaker, until it must break.

It broke. It broke and he was many people. He saw... There

was a vast jumbled pattern of sight that had no meaning. He heard, and it was as if each sound had a multiplicity of echoes of strangely varying intensity. There was no meaning.

But... Yes... No... There was meaning. There was a table, a queer, abstract image of a table. Cubistic, a table viewed from many angles all at once. And at one end of the table there was a man that was himself. With a driving will he threw himself into that man with a blinding effort that he should be no other one.

He felt weak as he looked around. Selma was painfully climbing back into her chair; Ryan was sitting on the floor looking dazed; Kritchevsky sat heavily in his chair with his mouth open; Yamagata was staring at his hands, his habitual smile gone from his face. And Renoit was weakly fumbling at a package of cigarettes.

"Whew, old man," somebody said—Stan felt too weak to find out who—"you had us scared there for a minute. It almost looked as if it had gotten you." There was something very funny to Stanley about that, and the laughter bubbled up in his mind. His shoulders began to heave, and suddenly he could control himself no longer and he bent over and roared. He was dimly aware that the others who had been with him were laughing, too. He could hardly

bear the same voice saying: "Well, really, I don't see what's so funny."

WHEN HE finally had control of himself, he looked around at the others. He felt their minds reach out to his with wondering, and perhaps, awe. "What happened?" Kritchevsky's mind asked. "Was it an accident, or have we made a discovery, do you think?" Renoit asked voicelessly.

"I don't know," he answered in his own mind. "We seem to have stumbled onto something. I am tempted to think we should try again to make sure of what it was."

"Please, I am an old man," Yamagata said by telepathy, "and I like to think of myself as a philosopher. I would be unhappy not to know more about this thing that we have done." The others chimed in with their assents—even Ryan, although with some apparent fear.

"Okay, let's go," he told them, and he let his mind reach out towards theirs. He felt theirs, too, reaching for his and for each other. He tried to will himself into them, and suddenly it happened. The table from many simultaneous angles. The sounds so queerly distorted. The tactile senses so... confused. He felt this common mind that now was his as he was part of it, and he was aware of many things. He knew the tensions that had been in Ryan, the fear of

failure and the sense of doom. He knew the hurt of Kritchevsky, the love that he had borne his wife, and the bitterness that her absorption in the telestassis had left. And he knew of Selma's love for him as he had never known before. He knew the nature of them all, all six of them.

There was a sense of power, a tremendous exhilaration. And yet there was no thought. Deliberately, he tried to think of something and the ideas were only blurred confusions. But still, there was a sense of well-being that transcended all else. It was with almost regret that he willed himself back into his own body alone.

"Will somebody please tell me what is happening?" a chap at the center of the table asked in a rather petulant voice.

"Please," Yamagata answered, "our young friend at the bottom of the table is the one responsible for what has happened. I think he deserves the honor of explaining it."

"Well," Stanley said as all eyes turned towards him, "in a way it's simple, although in another way it isn't. You see we—Mr. Ryan, Mr. Yamagata, Mr. Kritchevsky, Mr. Renoit, Miss Ryan, and myself—set up our own telestassis."

"Yes," Ryan cut in. "I was in the telestassis, and Stanley rescued me; all of a sudden, there was the thought of Stanley before me. I tried to hang on to it, but I was

losing it. It was blurring out, twisting, distorting into nothing. And then there was a kind of a snap, and instead of the vast torrent, I was... well... it was quite a different feeling."

"I look at it this way," Stan said, "I think of the telestassis as a vast whirlpool. The chain of us was stretched out in it. And then, suddenly, it lost its grip and we snapped back into a second small whirlpool of our own. Only this second one was small enough so we could keep control. Each of us still had some measure of his own identity in it. And when we wanted to, we could break it, and come back each to ourselves. And it is a wonderful feeling."

"It is indeed," Renoit said, his face lighting up. "Never have I felt so exhilarated. Never such a sense of power, the ability to do things."

"What things?" somebody asked. The Frenchman just shrugged.

"Nothing actually," Stan said. "The power is there, but we have to learn how to use it. Right now, this micro-telestassis, if you want to call it that, is something new, and it's going to take learning. We have to pool our memories and organize our thinking; but it can be done, and when it is, we're going to have something."

A DIGNIFIED Englishman said, "This is very interesting," his voice noncommittal. "But I believe

we were discussing what to do about the telestassis. I suggest we defer these psychological adventures until after the meeting. There remains the central problem."

"You are wrong," Kritchevsky announced. "These 'adventures' as you call them, have removed the 'central problem'. I am no longer afraid of the telestassis."

With a shock, Stanley realized that the Russian had spoken the truth. He could still, as it were, hear the torrent of the telestassis; but the door in his mind that had once held his horror, was open. There before him in his mind lay the telestassis. He could, in metaphor, stand on the very bank of the whirlpool and watch it with pity and with curiosity, but with no terror.

"Yes," he cried, "that is true, we have the answer here. It's somewhat like an inoculation, where you give a weak and controllable form of disease so the body will know how to handle the real disease. Only this isn't a disease; the telestassis is, but the micro-telestassis isn't. But it acts in the same way, and somebody who has been in a micro-telestassis need not fear the telestassis."

"Yes," Ryan said, his voice wondering. For the first time in the meeting he looked relaxed and happy. "For the first time in twenty years I feel safe." His voice became more brisk. "First, we will take each of you into a micro-telestassis,

inoculate you people, one by one—and then we'll all go out, singly or in as large a group as is needed (we'll have to find out what is needed) and treat others. And so on, until all the world is safe; this is the answer to the telestassis."

"This is the answer," Kritchevsky said. His voice was almost belligerent, but then he seemed to hesitate. "There is another thought in my mind. Do you think, maybe, that this thing we have found can be used also to rescue people who have . . . disappeared . . . into the telestassis?" His eyes were almost pleading.

Stanley looked at him; he knew what was in the Russian's mind. "I don't know," he said, his voice gentle. "But there is hope; it's worth trying. After this thing is well started—when there are many people who know what micro-telestassis is—then I, and probably some of the others, will be glad to help you try to find your wife."

The others all nodded vigorously. And Kritchevsky, looking around at them, seemed almost ready to break down.

"Please," Yamagata said. They all turned eagerly to him as a relief from their embarrassment. "I have, I think, one final thought of interest. We are met here because the telestassis created a tremendous crisis. This crisis, you will note, was basically caused by the Cayley-Stimpson reaction, which changed humanity into a telepathic

race. Now I—and I think many other people—have been wondering why this is so. How did it happen that mankind developed such a potentially lethal characteristic as the Cayley-Stimpson reaction which lead to the telestassis? It was a potentiality for race-suicide and seemed quite pointless and without benefit. This is what I have been thinking.

"Now, however, I must revise my thoughts, for the possibilities that have been opened up by this micro-telestassis are enormous. I can only dimly grasp them, but I feel that they are tremendous. There is the possibility, therefore, that the Cayley-Stimpson reaction has always been headed towards the micro-telestatic condition, and that the telestatic form has been only an aberrant form of this.

"What I am suggesting, therefore, is that, in discovering micro-telestassis, we have actually given birth out of ourselves to the coming man. It is ironical, I think, that this should be the result of that most terrible phenomenon, the telestassis."

And thinking about it a moment in silence, Stan decided he thought the Japanese was probably right—that out of disaster had, in fact, been born the salvation of mankind. It was ironical that both the disaster and the salvation should have the same basic form.

