

# Weird Tales

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## Contents for June, 1927

- Cover Design** ----- **C. C. Senf**  
*Illustrating a scene in "A Suitor From the Shades"*
- A Suitor From the Shades**----- **Grege La Spina 726**  
*A human, touching ghost-story about a lover who returned from the grave to blight his sweetheart's happiness*
- The Dark Chrysalis (Part 1)**----- **Eli Colter 747**  
*Here we have, at last, the epic of the microbe-hunters—a three-part scientific thrill-tale about cancer*
- The Fourth Dimension**----- **Charles Ford 767**  
*Strange was Ripley's experience when his racing canoe turned over—a five-minute ghost-story*
- The Arctic Death** ----- **Wilford Allen 769**  
*Out of the North it came, that dread death that touched every living thing with a killing cold*

(Continued on Next Page)

# THE ARCTIC DEATH

BY WILFORD ALLEN



"They had arranged themselves in concentric circles, rank on rank, centered about that spark of ultimate glory."

**I**T WAS seldom that Charles Breinbar was excited. That he was excited then meant two things: first, that the matter was vastly important; second, that no crisis was immediately imminent, for in a crisis no man was ever more collected than he.

"Yes!" He was speaking in the explosive style which characterized him when excited. "If we fail—the whole world dies. And for me it is—vengeance as well. Come! Look and listen!" And he dragged me to some of his apparatus. Whirling the control dials, he motioned for me to watch a screen. There was a rapid play of lights and shadows, much as though I was looking at the reflection on a ceiling of a water surface disturbed by ripples. Suddenly he reached the right combination. The movement ceased and there was shown, plainly, a snow-covered sur-

W. T.—2

face, and on it was sprawled the body of a man, seemingly dead. I looked at Breinbar questioningly.

"Yes, dead!" he answered my unvoiced question. "That is an old friend, Amos Toble. Yesterday I got a letter from him. Said he was on a trip—up on the Dubaut. Thought it would amuse me to see him. And so I turned the dials for him. Saw him tramping along. He came on a small animal, dead. Picked it up, seemed puzzled. Picked up another, also dead. It puzzled him. He walked on. Suddenly he stumbled. Seemed to regain his balance. Then collapsed. Quite dead!"

"I quickly turned the dials to the 'Q' vibrations. They show up what we can't see by ordinary light, you know. I knew I would see his spirit, but I did not expect to see it struggling with Something! Trying to get back into his prone body, while the

769

Thing tried to hold him off! He was forced farther away, farther, and—my God! I suppose there is no reason why a spirit should not suffer, but I never expected to see one suffer as he did. But he lost. It was the Thing which slipped into the body, but seemed to find it in some way unfitted, for it left, and swept away the spirit of poor Toble, battling—battling! So for me it now means vengeance!”

Perhaps you recall the sensational tales in the papers some years back, of the “Arctic Death”, as they called it. They gained no credence, fortunately. Luckily for the world it never knew just what the real truth was. All winter an expanding wave of death had spread fanlike out of the Arctic into the northern interior of Canada, an epidemic in which the lethal agent was unknown. The bodies bore no indication other than the fact of death, and, when found soon enough, the fact that they were frozen like ice. Yet it was certain that freezing was not the cause of death. It was an epidemic of unparalleled deadliness; when a community was stricken every vestige of life was destroyed. So the tales went.

Breinbar was continuing: “Necley of Edmonton was down here last week. Told me the papers tell the truth. So I have been watching it on the screen here. I thought at first it was a medical problem. Then I saw it kill Toble. It must have been an inspiration, turning on the ‘Q’ rays, and catching the Things in the act. So I spent last night studying it. I think I know what is happening. But I need help. You are game to go with me? Good! It will be dangerous. But you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are taking a fighting chance. If we don’t take it, we shall all be killed anyway. If we take it, maybe——” He did not finish, but I could supply the end.

The net result of it all was that a

few days later, rigged out in warm clothing and wearing a peculiar suit of insulating material with a network of wires and a battery-like contrivance within it, Breinbar and I set out in his airplane one morning. The machine was also equipped in a peculiar fashion, and we took along several strange implements, the use of which I knew nothing of at the time. To complete the weird outfit, each of us wore a mask which completely covered our heads, with eyepieces which appeared opaque to ordinary light, but were transparent to vibrations of a wave-length entirely outside of the visible range of the spectrum, and which moreover so transformed these vibrations that they became visible to us, and the world appeared to us as it must to any organism which can utilize such vibrations naturally. The most peculiar effect of this mask was that, the vibration which it admitted being present at night as during daytime, we could see equally well in darkness and daylight, becoming in effect as owl-eyed as we looked.

**WE** TRAVELED northward for two hours before Breinbar brought the plane down on the edge of a treeless expanse, and near a little settlement which we found to be a trading post. As we had sped northward in the eery lighting afforded by our masks, a sense of unreality had grown upon me, which increased rather than diminished when we came to earth and walked the few hundred yards to the little trading station.

There we had our first real news of the “Death.” It had not yet reached that point, but that very morning a little Indian village some twenty miles to the northwest had been found with its few inhabitants lifeless, their bodies frozen stiff. What had been told in the papers was seemingly true; at least the story which we heard there was just as it

had been told in the press dispatches.

All morning Breinbar sat in the shelter of a little tent which we pitched, with a map spread out before him. About us were grouped the curious Indians and the few white people, not more than twenty in all. For some curious reason the Indians did not seem to be especially fearful. Perhaps the facts had been kept from them. Or perhaps some streak in their makeup caused them to regard fatalistically any threatening danger which they could not see before their eyes. With the whites it was different. They were frankly fearful, and kept plying us with questions, the while Breinbar was plying them, obtaining information which he carefully plotted on his map.

When he had finished with his map he called the head man, a tall Scotchman named McIntosh, and motioned for the others to move away.

"McIntosh," he began, "I guess you have it figured out that we have been sent up here by the government to study this plague. We are going right on, and I believe we shall be able to check it before long. But it will take some time, perhaps weeks.

"In the meantime we can give you no protection. And I am going to warn you, now—if you value your lives, don't sleep here tonight!" He finished in a tone which carried conviction to me, at least.

"Gad, Mister—what is your name? Mister Breinbar! You don't think It will be here tonight!" The tall Scotchman who spoke like an Englishman was palpably terrorized, although I took it that it would ordinarily take quite a bit to frighten him.

"I'm sure of it," Breinbar asserted.

"But what is the Thing? And how can It kill us tonight when we are perfectly well now?" The Scotchman's questions were evidently

framed more to bolster up his courage than to obtain information.

"Don't be a fool, man! Get ready to leave at once. You may be too late now!" Breinbar was looking into the north as he spoke. "See!" he gesticulated, and we looked up along the trail to where a solitary figure had been approaching. It had begun to move erratically, then suddenly we saw it stagger and fall.

"For God's sake, man, get your people and *run!* Don't wait for anything. *Run!*" Breinbar fairly pushed the Scotchman from him, and he did not have to repeat the command, for before he had finished, the latter was already on his way toward the buildings, calling loudly to his people. Frightened the man may have been, but he was no coward, and was turning away from the opportunity of getting an immediate start to see that the others were warned.

Breinbar turned quickly to meantime reaching inside of his clothes to press the catch on his protector. "Quick!" he said imperatively. "Reach in——" He did not wait to finish, but himself reached, and quickly locating the button on my suit, pressed it with a sigh of relief.

"Now we're safe. For God's sake never let anything touch that battery now!" He turned and looked toward the people who were streaming from the post in terror-stricken flight toward the south. "Poor devils! I'm afraid it's too late for them—nothing we can do for them now but hope! So it wasn't true, what the reports said, that the Death came only at night. I wondered; it didn't seem——"

Before he could finish, the rearmost straggler, an Indian woman with a baby, staggered a few paces and fell motionless. At her cry the others turned, then, shrieking, broke into wilder flight, but in vain.

One after another fell as though a machine-gun burst were sweeping them. The last to go was the Scotchman, gigantic among the shorter Indians. He displayed the most tremendous vitality, fighting as though in the grip of invisible assailants. Finally he, too, pitched forward, dead.

During it all we had been powerless to aid. Although I had no idea nor plan, I had started forward, but Breinbar restrained me.

"Stay here! They have to die!" He was speaking in the jerky fashion peculiar to him when he was stirred. "Hundreds more—we only make right moves—stop it—before it kills thousands—but not now!" I felt his muscles quivering as he gripped my arm, and knew that only his judgment was holding him back from following the same impulse to help the doomed fugitives.

"But," I objected, "if we can protect ourselves, can't we do anything to help them?"

"God! Not a thing! No more than Canute could hold back the sea. Beyond hope—unless we reach their center—paralyze that—there is no hope for the world. The center—we must! If not—," and he stopped as though afraid to think farther.

Then, suddenly, I seemed to see in the weird light of the mask an advancing wave of transparent formlessness, moving along in the manner of a cloud of gas on a battlefield, but not with the wind, against it! And it did not seem to have the consistency of a vapor, but of something more solid, like a gelatinous mass which rolled along and engulfed the fleeing figures. It was impalpable, for it had passed over us without my having detected its presence in any way. Yet, as it reached and touched each doomed fugitive, it struck him instantaneously with the finger of death, all but the Scotchman, who had seemed to sense its existence as

an entity and tore desperately at it for a moment before he, too, pitched forward. And through it all I felt absolutely nothing except the sensation of awful chill which was at first pressed back into the submerged part of my consciousness by the awfulness of the happenings. But after the last victim had fallen stark it returned to dominate completely my impressions.

I asked Breinbar if he too felt the chill, but his only reply was a harsh "Naturally!" a sardonic gleam in his eyes as he said it.

And then I noticed that our plane was covered with glistening ice crystals, as though it had been chilled below the dew-point of the air so that frost was forming upon it. Hurrying over to the post buildings I found that there, too, the frost was forming over everything, and even water in containers, which had been liquid in the warmer air of the interior of the houses, was solidifying as I watched it.

A horrid thought came to my mind, and I rushed to the bodies, hoping that I was mistaken. My horrified fear was justified. Every body, although but a few short minutes before it had been warm with life, was frozen stiff, so cold that the fingers on touching it were burned as by the touch of liquid air, and the flesh had taken on a horrible yellowish, half-transparent appearance.

Breinbar had followed me around, observing my actions with that terrible, half-amused gleam in his eyes, as though he already knew what I would find, but he ventured no statement beyond a short answer when I asked him, in horror, "For God's sake, what is it?"

"You might call it what the papers do, the 'Arctic Death'," was all he said.

He suddenly became all impatience again and hurried me on. I wanted to stay long enough at least to get the bodies under a covering of earth.

There is something in human nature which rebels against leaving the dead of one's kind for the beasts to mow. But Breinbar would not hear of it.

WE CLIMBED again into the plane and advanced into the treeless plain by short stages, with frequent side flights. At the halts between the short flights Breinbar would take readings with a metallic thermometer which was a part of his equipment, entering the results on his map. I noticed the figures which he put down, and in spite of the feeling of intense cold, I was surprized at the degree of cold which they indicated. In a region where forty degrees below zero is a mark reached only once or twice a winter if that often, the temperatures which he was recording fell within the first few hours lower than two hundred Fahrenheit degrees below zero. It seemed incredible that we could live in such a temperature, and I realized that it was only due to the protection of the insulating suit which I wore that the cold did not freeze me in an instant. Out of curiosity I took the thermometer and placed it within a few inches of my body, as I had noticed that Breinbar laid it down, then walked away several feet to remove the influence of his body, to remain away two or three minutes before he returned quickly and read it as though afraid he could not reach it quickly enough to get the correct reading. I was not altogether surprized to find that the temperature which surrounded my body, at least within a few inches distance, was much warmer, although quite cold enough, being thirty-five below at a time when the temperature at a distance of several feet was two hundred and five—a hundred and eighty degrees lower.

Finally it seemed that he had accumulated all the information which he needed, for he drew the isotherms connecting the points of equal tem-

perature on his map, obtaining curves which were distinctly circular in form, with the center definitely located.

Pointing to that center on the map he turned to me. "That's where we've got to go to find it, George. If I'd only——"

His words were suddenly cut short as a dark form sprang from behind us and felled him with the single impact.

I turned to face the thing, and the horror which swept over me on seeing that form robbed me of what power I might have had to resist the sinisterly powerful bulk of the Scotchman whom we had left stiff in death only a few hours before! As it touched me I was galvanized into activity by the burning cold of the frozen hands, but I was powerless in the resistless grasp. My only satisfaction was in noting that the warmth of my body seemed to cause as intense an agony to him as the searing cold of his touch did to me. He handled me as one does a hot potato, as he trussed me up securely; then turned, and as gingerly bound up Breinbar.

All this time he had uttered no sound, nor did he do so even when, about to leave, he turned and leered into my face with a hellish chuckle. But the acme of it all came when, as he took his departure toward the south again, I saw that he was accompanied as by a bodyguard, by ranks of round balls of that gelatinous substance, each about three and a half feet in diameter, perfectly round and featureless, yet moving, rolling along in perfect order; animate things, possessed of an intelligence! As the import of what my eyes saw began to seep into my brain, the world began to swim around, and I felt myself sinking forward into an ocean of swirling darkness and nothingness.

It was hours later when I returned to consciousness, for while it had been in the early afternoon when I had last noted the time, it was considerably after sunset, although still light to me through my mask. Breinbar was kneeling beside me, chafing my wrists.

Before we went on from that place I learned more, for after the narrow escape we had just had I wanted to know something more definite of what we might expect, and I am afraid I said so with more feeling than I usually put into my voice when talking to Breinbar. "Now look here," I complained, "it seems to me if we are going to be jumped by dead men and such things I ought to know more about it than I do."

"You're right, George," my friend answered. "I was just thinking that myself. We had a narrow squeak that time. If It had only had the intelligence to destroy our insulation—well, It didn't. It could not have touched us in Its natural form, but in the body of the tall Scotchman It had an instrument with which It could easily have eliminated us from the affair." He fell silent, and I was afraid he was going to retreat into his own thoughts again. Just as I was on the point of speaking he began again, "Well, it shows They are not infallible. They slipped that time, and, now that we are on our guard, I think we have a chance, a fighting chance."

This time the pause was so long that I did break into it. "But what is this Thing, this Intelligence you are talking about?" I insisted.

"I won't say what It is, only what It might be, although it is all we have to go on, and I am working on the assumption that the hypothesis is correct," he resumed. "Just suppose there is another form of matter, one we can not know through any sense, nor measure; but one which occupies the same space we

do. Suppose that beings exist, composed of such matter. Suppose that they are able to dissociate their intelligences from their individual selves, and that those then disembodied intelligences assemble and combine into one great central intelligence, which functions for the entire race of beings, directing them. If you suppose that, you can suppose that if such beings, directed in that manner, are responsible for this eruption of death, the only hope we have is in reaching that central intelligence and somehow influencing it."

"But," I interrupted again, "you don't mean to say those were the balls we saw? It can't be!"

"Why not? You saw them, and you saw people killed by them. You saw that they and everything they did was inexplicable by the laws of nature as we know them. How else would you explain them?"

"Yes, but the intelligence you speak of—how do you know It exists, and in that form? And what can we hope to do to It?" I was sinking into the slough of despondency as the logic of Breinbar's statements was shown to me as I reasoned back. It was inescapably true, it seemed, and as inescapably hopeless. How could we cope with such Things, especially if, as he was calmly telling me, they operated under the direction of a pooled intelligence? I could not even hope to hope.

Breinbar did not seem so hopeless, for he said, although with considerable gravity, "Some day I can tell you how I know it, sometime when we have more time. Right now, I am afraid you will see it all yourself before long. I know we have only one hope, one chance. Not much, but we can take it fighting."

But my morale was gone, and if I followed and did Breinbar's bidding during the time which followed, it was not because I still harbored the slightest spark of hope, but rather

that, believing that we and all other living things were doomed, I was filled with a sullen rage against the Things and a smoldering desire to close with them and die fighting, hurting them as I knew I could hurt, after seeing the Thing which had been the Scotchman cringe at the touch of my body.

MEMORY holds only for the high spots of the ensuing time. I moved with Breinbar as in a stupor, toward the center of the eery plain where we began to see, looming up, a single peak of barren rock. More and more of those hellish balls of pestilence passed us, rolling over the snow-covered plain, and I saw that I had been mistaken in thinking they were simple balls without appendages. It was true that there were none except when one was needed for some purpose, then they were able to throw out from any part of themselves grotesquely shaped limbs, to any required length; or so it seemed to us, to whom all portions of the Things appeared alike. I might have derived some comfort from the way in which they rebounded in evident distress when they inadvertently approached us too closely; I did get a savage satisfaction from their pain, but I was too deeply steeped in the apathy of despair for any heartening emotion.

And the cold grew always more intense. There came a time when Breinbar let the thermometer fall from his numbed fingers after picking it up, and when it struck the ground, metal though it was, it shattered into as many pieces as though it had been brittle glass, so intense was the cold.

Did I say we had long since lost the use of our plane? That is easily understandable, with such unearthly temperatures. The only wonder, which is still inexplicable to me, although doubtless due to Breinbar's

planning, is that we had its use so long. When it failed, even Breinbar appeared to lose hope for an instant, or at least to consider our prospects more desperate. We must win before our strength failed, for of course we were virtually without supplies, except the few rations of concentrated food we carried on us. The one desperate hope to which we clung was to reach the Intelligence which was directing the Things before our strength gave out.

As I look back now, it seems presumptuous, two men matching strength against the concentrated power of the intelligence of a world. But it was not. It was desperation.

The forward struggle became endlessly long and hopeless without end. The death and the cold of the plain and its dreariness entered into the very soul until there was nothing but the consciousness of the endless plain with its wheeling balls from the outer spaces of hell itself, and back in the darkness of our minds the dull compulsion, vague and intangible, but potent, that we must plod on forever if need be, and reach that bleak monadnock ahead. And under the unreasoning compulsion of that impulse we plunged dumbly on, ever drawing nearer to the goal, yet our progress was so terribly slow.

And the balls came thicker. We were constantly jostled by them, and, while they recoiled as though injured by the touch, we also suffered a sharp sting of cold at each impact. So there was room for gratitude even in our numbing minds when the news of our coming and of the desirability of keeping out of our way seemed to spread ahead of us, and we were given a clear passageway.

At last we neared the black-gray rock, and a final crushing despair overwhelmed me as I saw that the balls were issuing from the rock itself, not from any opening into which we could penetrate. If what we



sought was inside that huge pile of unbroken rock, how could we ever reach it? I gave up the last shred of hope, a shred which unknown I must have been clinging to, for I found that I did have it to lose, although an hour before I would have said I had none left. So it was nothing but the automatic functioning of my mind which made my lips form the words, "We're gone now! Do you see those Things pass through the solid rock? How can we cope with that?"

But while for the last hour or so Breinbar had seemed almost as dispirited as I, his action under what to me was the most disheartening sight of all was surprizing, even to me who was almost beyond the reach of surprize or any emotion save despair. He took from his back the nozzle of something that looked like the flame-throwers used by the Teutons in the World War. With a vindictiveness which was unusual in him, although I could easily understand how it had developed, he turned it against the rock, and to my astonishment the solid mass seemed to fade away.

The consternation which his action caused among the animate balls was easily perceptible. They dashed madly around, losing all semblance to spheres as their appendages appeared and thrashed about in all directions. Finally order seemed to be restored by the appearance of authority, although I could make out none who appeared to take the lead. But the effects of authority were manifest. The balls formed as though to protect a certain part of the mountain, and with a grunt of satisfaction Breinbar turned in that direction. I followed him, for the stimulus of action had restored me somewhat.

Relentlessly we plowed through their ranks, and strangely, the ray which issued from Breinbar's projector with power to annihilate the

solid rock itself had no effect on those hellish balls. But if it did not, we ourselves did. While we suffered from the searing touch as they came into contact with us, our touch seemed a thousand times as terrible to them, for although their spirits seemed willing enough to die in opposing us, the agony of our touch was so exerutiating that it was unendurable, and as fast as they came into contact with us they would bound away, twisted into all the contortions of extreme agony. So in effect our progress was unopposed as we first forced our way through their ranks, then bit into the solid rock behind them with the ray.

**A**FTER what seemed an infinity of slow progress into the depths of the old mountain, advancing into the tunnel which we were cutting into the living rock, we suddenly broke through into a blinding radiance. A blinding light, in which we blinked, unable to perceive the source of the radiance. Finally, adjusting our eyes to the unaccustomed glare, we advanced, and came upon It suddenly.

It was not what I had been prepared for. In fact I was unprepared for anything, certainly unprepared for a Thing which had no form. For It had no dimensions of any kind, at least none measurable by our standards. It was a blinding point of light, suspended in a great chamber, or at least, situated in the air in its center, with no visible means of support. One minute point of light; light which, while having no single color one could name, yet seemed to give the impression of all vivid colors. One tiny point of energy so great that it flooded a vast chamber of many million cubic feet with a radiance positively blinding, even at its confines exceeding the radiance of the noonday sun. After the first glance, which again blinded me for

the moment, I did not care to look at It directly again.

For it was quickly evident that the point of light was the Thing we sought. It spoke no language. How could a point of light without body or vocal organs speak? Yet we easily received the message It sent. And, conversely, Its answers, registered in our minds, showed that It understood our thoughts, though It had no ears to hear with. And as the realization of the fact came to me, I again thought to myself, "How can we contend with an Intelligence which reads our very thoughts?"

For It said, or at least the thought was communicated to us, "What do you expect to be able to do here?" And the thought echoed in my brain. "Nothing!"

The voiceless message went on: "Now that you have seen me, how do you expect to destroy me, whom you can not touch, nor injure with your machine, which is only contrived to annihilate matter such as you know it. It can not touch us."

"No." The voice of Breinbar startled me, as he spoke aloud, though the Thing had no ears. "But I have another weapon which can harm you."

"You mean could harm me if you could come close enough," the Intelligence seemed to reprove him. "You can not get close enough to get in range."

I saw by the sudden dejection which had come over my friend that what It said was so. The weapon, whatever it was, had a range far too limited to reach to the height of that dazzling point of light. We were limited by the necessity for something material to stand upon, while It was not.

The next words from the Thing, if I can call such thoughts words, were sickening with their revelation, even though what I had already seen must have prepared me for them. The

thought came, "You want to know what we mean to do. We here in our situation in the universe find our state unsatisfactory. We see you and your world, so wonderful, and you living in it like brainless brutes. So we are trying, by the only means we have, to leave our world and enter yours. You must not think we are murderers. We are simply a higher form of life supplying our needs. You do not call it murder when you kill a steer for food, for clothing."

"Yes, I know what you are doing," Breinbar interrupted harshly. "But I will not grant the cases are parallel. We hold that you are not justified, either by your law or ours; that you are committing murder without the justification even of necessity, just to gratify a foolish wish which if allowed to become a fact will bring the destruction not only of us but of your race as well."

Again the answering thought came, irritably this time: "You forget that it is the law of the Maker himself, He whom you call God, Who directs all things, that there shall either be progress or death. This is progress."

And back came the answer from the man, with no slightest hesitation, "While you are talking of the Maker's law, why do you not remember that He created our worlds separate, closed all the normal means of communication from one to the other? Do you not think it was with a purpose? You think you can break those laws and not suffer? What about the one of your race who entered the body of the Scotchman, McIntosh? You know how he was changed to a devil incarnate. You can not break the law separating our worlds and escape. If you persist you can only bring destruction to all."

"Enough of this!" the answering thought was sharp with anger. "We will not argue. We are acting, and you can not prevent it. But in a

short time you, too, will be dead. We can not harm you now, but we can wait, while you can not. And I can wait very easily when the prize is your body, Breinbar." The meaning of that last sentence nauseated me, but it must have brought a different thought to Breinbar, for the Thing, reading his mind, warned sharply, "Don't think you can influence me in that manner."

And then began a debate even stranger than what had gone before. For I heard only one side of it, but there was no difficulty in supplying the missing side. Breinbar no longer spoke aloud, contenting himself with thinking.

"I warn you, you can not succeed," the thought came into my mind, from the Thing. A short pause, with Breinbar's rejoinder only having an existence in his mind and the Thing's. Then again the thought: "Oh yes, Breinbar. I should have thought of that. Your mind, joined with mine; it would be the richest acquisition I have known. But you are deceiving yourself if you think you will have power to sway my decisions. It is you who will be overwhelmed."

The meaning of it began to seep into my brain, and I turned to Breinbar with a start. "For God's sake, what are you going to do?" I asked, knowing in advance what the answer would be. And although I did know his answer, yet I could not repress the shudders of horror as he answered sharply.

"It is our only chance. I believe I can dissociate my own intelligence and join it with that Thing of intelligence. Then—well, we can see. We are lost if we don't; maybe lost if we do."

"But," I objected, "how are you going to do that?"

"I think I can. It will help me all it can, for it will always welcome such acquisitions. It said so plain-

ly." He was silent a moment, then broke out suddenly, "Now you, you just concentrate on one thought. Whatever happens, keep willing that It have no control over you. Will as though your life depended on it, which it will, that your intelligence remain in your own body. Never drop the thought for a moment until it is over. Remember!"

"Yes, but you——" I was beginning again, but he interrupted me fiercely.

"Keep still! And hold that thought!"

The forcefulness of his utterance seemed to paralyze my faculties for the time. I was shaking as though with a violent attack of buck-ague, as I tried involuntarily to follow his instructions. But I could not, for suddenly I felt him go limp beside me and slump to the floor. Dropping to my knees I was horrified to find that there was no pulse to his body: he was as dead!

Then began a time which was the most terrible I ever experienced. The horror of the attack by the frozen body of the old Scotchman was nothing in comparison. I was not old at the time, only thirty-six, but when I returned finally from that experience under the bleak monadnock my hair was white and my hand shaking as with palsy.

AT FIRST I was unable even to imagine what was happening. The Light began to behave erratically, although I received no brain impulses from It such as It had sent before. It seemed to expand until it filled the entire room, then contract to the size of a pinpoint. Rhythmically it swelled and shrank, pulsating, and while I could not see clearly in the radiance, I did obtain the impression that the balls themselves recognized the strangeness of what was taking place. For they had arranged themselves in concentric circles, rank on

rank, centered about that spark of ultimate glory, and if they had possessed limbs which could have been designated "arms" I would have thought their attitude was that of prayer.

How long the horrible glory of that happening lasted I do not know. I was completely lost in it, forgetful of the admonition which Breinbar had given me. But the recall came with a shock. For suddenly it seemed there was something pulling at my senses, as though something were being drawn from my brain. With a burst of horror I remembered Breinbar's last words, and began to oppose my will to that which seemed to be bent on drawing the very life from my body.

And then It spoke again, while great drops of perspiration ran from my forehead into my eyes, cold though the chamber was with a cold like that of space. "You have lost!" the thought came clearly. "I have Breinbar here and he has been submerged. It would be better for you to come, for it would be for you eternal life as an intelligence. You must come!"

And still I fought against the idea, the Thing itself; my being revolting against the coming desecration of life. And—a sudden gleam of hope came as I seemed to hear dimly in my consciousness a smaller thought, encouraging. "Hold out! Hold out for a time!" And somehow I did hold out awhile. But there is a limit to the strain that human nerves can bear, and imperceptibly I slipped over the margin.

The remainder of the awful experience does not lie within the memory of observed fact. It has the seeming of a dream, a dream, however, of such convincing reality that I am firmly convinced that it happened in all of its impossible details. For I seemed to be looking down upon our bodies, mine and Breinbar's, which lay huddled

dled in a heap against the wall, while in my consciousness was a veritable riot of conflicting thoughts.

The sickening realization seemed to come to me that I had failed and that my intelligence had been sucked out of my body into the being of that parasitic Thing of souls. As the nausea of that knowledge began to wear off I became conscious of some of the thoughts which were surging through the ether. And I was surprised to find that all was not harmony within that pool of intellect. For there were two factions, and as I began to get my bearings I recognized that the outstanding intellects among the pool still retained some of their individuality, and that, instead of all being drawn from that strange plane of life and matter, there were many that represented intelligences which had once had human form.

Then it became evident that the dominant faction which had argued so cavalierly with Breinbar had made another slip when It thought It could absorb and submerge his mind within Itself. For it soon developed that the other faction needed only the leadership which Breinbar now supplied to spur it into triumphant action.

The following time, hours maybe, or minutes, is indescribable. I can only chronicle its results. At last, after a space of time the length of which I have not the slightest idea of, harmony was again restored, and sanity with it. Realization had been forced even on the most radical element of the reservoir of intelligence that to pursue the mad course It had embraced would so disrupt the working of both worlds that all beings in both would inevitably be extinguished. But in the struggle I must confess I played the part of an onlooker.

And then quiet was restored, and Breinbar was again speaking to me in that mysterious wordless way. Only

one of us could return to life as we had known it, and he wanted me to be the one. Frank terror in my awful surroundings combined with his arguments about my family, and I yielded.

So Charles Breinbar, greatest scientist of all, greater than any will ever know, passed on. And, lest you regard him as a pathetic figure, a martyr, let me insist that such is emphatically not the case.

For it is given to me, who knew him and his zest for adventure which drove him to penetrate the mysteries of nature farther than any man has ever done, to know that he did not die; that his intellect, he himself, now

enjoys advantages which I should envy were I half so curious as he. And in the long evenings as I sit before the fire and talk with my Maida who was his daughter, I see him plainly, endowed now with powers which were denied even to him while prisoned in such a body as mine. And I am quite sure that when I am at work in my laboratory on the experiments which have made me world-famous, it is Breinbar who stands beside me, directing. For no brain but his could so directly and surely solve the problems which I have solved since that time when the Arctic Death threatened our existence as a race.