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THRILLING WONDER STORIES

The Magazine of Prophetic Fiction



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Next Issue



FOG OVER VENUS

A Novel of
Pioneer
Space Adventure

By
ARTHUR K. BARNES

PI IN THE SKY

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By
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STOP, THIEF!

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Contest Story

By **FOX B. HOLDEN**
Plus Many Others

COMPLETE SCIENTIFCTION NOVEL

THE ETERNAL NOW

By **MURRAY LEINSTER**

Marooned in a Weird Universe of Frozen Time, Harry Brett and Laura Hunt Battle to Balk the Destructive Plans of Professor Aldous Cable and Seize an Invention That Holds the World Enslaved! 11

Other Complete Novels

THE LAST MAN
IN NEW YORK Paul MacNamara 32

Joe Dunn and Julie Are the Sole Survivors in a Vast City of Silence and Death!

BEYOND THE VORTEX Frank Belknap Long 55

A Traveler from a Distant Galaxy Kidnaps a Group of Callisto-Bound Earthmen!

Thrilling Short Stories

BLOATED BRAIN Alfred G. Kuehn 49

A Prize-Winning Amateur Contest Story.

MONGROVIAN CARAVAN Richard Tooker 70

Kurt Langer Strives for a Cargo of Lunite.

THE GADGET GIRL Ray Cummings 80

Tubby Rushes Through Space to Rescue a Lady.

THE ULTIMATE ANALYSIS John Russell Fearn 89

A Perfect Mathematical Equation Darts Forth.

Special Features

THE READER SPEAKS Sergeant Saturn 6

SCIENTIFACTS Oddities 29

HEADLINERS IN THE NEXT ISSUE Announcements 78

WONDERS OF WAR Fact Feature 79

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY A Department 110

ON THE COVER: *Painting by Rudolph Belarski depicts a scene from BEYOND THE VORTEX, by Frank Belknap Long.*

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Read our Companion Science Fiction Magazine—**STARTLING STORIES**



"Hello, Toots," said Tubby. "Meet the Professor and Angelina.

THE GADGET GIRL

By RAY CUMMINGS

Tubby and the Professor Rush Through Space to Rescue a Damsel in Distress and Meet a Lady with a Melting Glance!

THE lecture hall was almost full. "There's three in the first row," Tubby said. "Come on, let's grab 'em."

With Jake and Pete close after him, Tubby shoved his way down the aisle. He wedged his fat little body into one of the three chairs that fronted the small raised platform.

"Swell seats," he whispered. "Lecture on thought waves. Sure ought to give us

plenty to think about. Am I right?"

"Education is wonderful," Jake agreed.

"Sure gives you plenty to think about," Pete declared with awe.

The little platform was indeed awe inspiring. The lecturer had not yet appeared, but all his scientific gadgets were here mounted on three tables. There were mysterious looking rows of tubes, like the tubes of a radio; a big

globe of thin glass with what looked like a shiny little metal weather-vane mounted inside; a snaky tangled mass of small glass tubing, like a scrambled unlighted neon sign; a gruesome helmet with electrodes that suggested the death chair at Sing Sing.

Tubby squirmed in his seat as he gazed at the helmet. Front row seats could have disadvantages at an affair like this.

"If he wants to make a test on us," he whispered, "you try it, Jake. Your thoughts sure are—"

Tubby's suggestion was lost in a stir from the audience as a woman appeared on the platform. She was evidently the lecturer's assistant. Quietly she moved among the apparatus, inspecting it, adjusting it here and there.

"Sure knows her business," Jake murmured. "Brains and scientific knowledge—that's unusual."

SHE looked it. She was maybe fifty—tall, skinny and hatchet-faced. Tubby stared at her with repugnance while she calmly switched a current into the tangled mass of tubing so that it glowed and bubbled with purple fluorescence.

His attention wandered to a fluffy young girl sitting across the aisle. Cute little dish with dimples and curves. Tubby nudged Jake.

"Take a look," he whispered. "If I was this lecturer I sure could pick me an assistant like that."

A ripple of applause burst from the audience as the slim, slightly bald, middle-aged lecturer appeared. The hatchet-faced female stood quietly to one side, alert to do his bidding.

"Ladies and gentlemen," the lecturer began when the applause had subsided, "in presenting to you tonight this remarkable series of experiments with thought waves, I must explain to you our modern conception of what, scientifically, a thought actually is. As perhaps you know, about thirty or forty years ago Sir William Crookes, the inventor of the Crookes' fluorescent tube, forerunner of all our Neon signs—"

The lecturer made a gesture towards

his apparatus.

"Sir William Crookes," he went on, "was the first to recognize that thought actually is a vibration—a tangible thing."

This lecturer evidently believed in getting to the meat of the business at once. Tubby braced himself for a swift absorption of meaty scientific knowledge.

"And now," the lecturer said, "it is a demonstrable fact that thought is an electric impulse—a definite, tangible impulse of electric charge sent out by the brain. An impulse of infinitely tiny, infinitely rapid vibration of the ether. A little wave of immense velocity, with the brain its sending station. And thus, another brain at some distant point, if properly attuned, is capable of receiving those thought waves. We call that thought transference; telepathy."

Meaty stuff. With his feet swinging clear of the floor, Tubby sat soaking up the intricate data. Presently he was aware of a twitch at his coat sleeve. Turning, he saw there was a man beside him in the aisle.

"Lemme alone," Tubby murmured indignantly. "I'm listenin' to the lecture. It's important."

"I'm important, too," the man retorted. He was a tall, thin, stringy-looking man in baggy black clothes. His gray-white hair was spread in scraggly strands over his bald spot. His sunken cheeks were like wrinkled brown parchment. His voice was a hoarse, urgent whisper.

Tubby was startled.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"I need help. Someone to help me. Someone who understands this thought science. The minute I saw you I knew you were the man. Please, come with me, just for a few minutes. My woman, my thought-girl, needs me and I've got to get to her at once."

A girl? A girl who needed help? That certainly was important.

"Where is she?" Tubby whispered. Before he realized it, he was out of his seat and the stranger was urging him along the dim aisle toward a side exit

door. "Where is she?" Tubby demanded again. "She's a good looker? How do we get to her?"

"I knew you'd help me." Immense gratitude was in the man's hoarse voice. "I could see you would, by the kindly look on your face. And the intelligence. But we must hurry."

IT WAS obvious that they couldn't talk details when they were hurrying along this way.

Outside the lecture hall the dim street was almost deserted. The stranger's bony hand clutched Tubby's arm with a trembling grip.

"You're all excited," Tubby said. "Take it easy, don't be scared. Where we going?"

"To my laboratory. It isn't far, just around the corner. You see, I'm a thought-professor. That lecturer you were listening to tonight is just a beginner, a theatrical trickster. I'm Professor Ponder. I was the first, the very first, to discover that thought actually is a tangible, scientific thing. I've delved into the science of thought waves very deeply. And now I've got the apparatus all finished—just today."

"That's fine," Tubby said. "Pleased to meet you, Professor. I'm Tubby. You need my help. Am I right?"

"Of course you're right. I wouldn't dare make the trip alone."

"And your girl's in trouble and we gotta get to her in a hurry to help her. Right? Is she a good looker?"

The last question seemed to strike at the Professor with all the importance it had Tubby. They were just entering a dark hallway of a shabby brownstone lodging house. At a big wooden door the Professor turned and stared down at Tubby.

"She's the most beautiful of all women who live," he said hoarsely. In the dimness his sunken eyes were gleaming. "Or ever have lived, or ever will live. How could she help but be? I created her. With my thoughts I fashioned her into everything most noble of glorious womanhood. And now, she exists out there. I've seen her. I saw her this afternoon,

just for the minute I had my image-grid working. But I can't leave her forever in the oblivion of the thought-realm. Her eyes pleaded with me to come and get her. So I'm going. That's where we're going, you and I, right now."

Meaty stuff. Tubby gulped.

"Where did you say we were going, Professor?" he asked.

They had entered the Professor's laboratory room. It was a big, shabby, room, littered with weird scientific apparatus. Tubby could see at once that this was the real McCoy, not like the cheap theatrical gadgets on that lecture platform. On the floor here there was a black glass screen, with coiled wires hanging from it. The glass of the screen was broken, with the black wires of its mesh holding it partly together.

THE Professor noticed Tubby's rueful gaze.

"I broke it," he acknowledged. "When I saw her out there in the thought-realm I got excited and knocked it on the floor. And now it can never show her to me again."

"But if we're going to her, what difference?" Tubby said. "Am I right? Professor, listen, what's this thought-realm business? You gotta tell me."

"Yes. Yes, of course I have." The Professor was across the room, pulling out some apparatus with shaking hands. He was terribly excited.

"I hate to take the time now for details," he said, "but I must, of course. The thought-realm is the storehouse of all human thought. A realm of a different vibration-rate from ours here. A different state of being, but equally real. A coexisting realm—oh, dear, we're wasting so much time, and this is so elementary."

"You can talk while you work," Tubby suggested. "Get that apparatus ready, but don't get so excited. The more haste the less speed. Am I right?"

"Yes. Yes, that's right," agreed the Professor. "This is my transition mechanism. Two of them, one for you and one for me. They'll change the vibration-rate of our bodies, building an

aura around us—that's my electro-magnetite field—so that our clothes and personal belongings close to our bodies also undergo the change. It will be a progressive change of our state of being, until we ourselves exist in the other realm. It's all so elementary—in principle, I mean, because it took real genius to devise my apparatus to make the physical transition practical. I hardly need explain this, to you especially."

"Right," Tubby agreed. "I'm up on stuff like this. This thought-realm place where your girl's trapped—that's the fourth dimension."

"Or the fifth, or the sixth or seventh," the Professor said. "Those are only arbitrary terms meaning a different dimension from ours. Here, you put this head-gear on, and run these wires down to your wrists and ankles. Fasten the belt. You take this one, it's bigger."

The thing was made of some extraordinarily light metal. It was easy to adjust, and Tubby had it on in a moment. It wasn't particularly bothersome.

"Swell," he said. "We're about ready, Professor. Your girl, she knows we're coming? Why is she in such a rush? She's been out there a long time already."

"All her existence," the Professor agreed, "Out there, buried in oblivion, with only me thinking of her. Here's the battery box. Fasten it to your belt."

They had just completed their preparations when a drastic thought occurred to Tubby. A girl as beautiful as that, all dimples and curves and everything—she couldn't be out there in that other realm without the people there noticing her. When the Professor had seen her on his image-grid this afternoon her eyes had pleaded with him. A look of anguished appeal? Of course! Because she was frightened! Because some dirty villain was after her, and the Professor and Tubby would have to come in a hurry.

HE TOLD the Professor his deductions. They were so logical you couldn't help but realize they were true.

But it was an error to tell them to the Professor. It threw the poor man into a panic.

"Oh dear, you're right, of course," he moaned. "Hurry, let's get started. Just slide that little switch on your belt buckle. We must start together and always keep together."

The terrified Professor was trembling. Tubby took the situation in hand.

"Hadn't we better sit down?" he suggested. "The shock of starting might leave us dizzy."

"Oh yes—yes, of course," agreed the Professor. "I forgot that."

They sat down on the board floor, side by side.

"Now," Tubby said. "I'll count three. Here we go—one! Two! Three—"

He slid the little switch. Things happened so instantly that his voice intoning the word *three* seemed to get lost in the chaos. This thought-wave transition certainly began with speed.

Tubby had a vision of the laboratory walls dissolving into nothingness. The impression was blurred a little because his head gave a wild lurch and everything inside him seemed turning over. The shock of it knocked him on his back. For a minute he lay dazed, with the Professor clutching at him.

"Oh my goodness—I didn't realize it would be quite so swift as this." The Professor's frightened voice was a weird, moaning blur. It seemed to come from very far away. But it didn't of course, because the Professor was right here.

"Okay, take it easy, hold everything," Tubby muttered. Somebody had to be in control here, and the Professor certainly had gone to pieces. "We're okay, Professor. Don't get excited."

In a manner of speaking, they still were okay. Tubby couldn't feel any pain anywhere. In fact he couldn't feel much of anything except the Professor's shaking grip. The floor under them was gone. Everything was gone, so that they seemed like two blobs without any weight, floating in emptiness. Tubby began to kick his legs violently, and in a minute he seemed to have himself in a

position what might be called sitting up, with the Professor huddling beside him.

The transition mechanisms were humming faintly. Tubby could feel the heat of the metal bands on his wrists and ankles, and the band of the helmet around his forehead. Looking down at his legs he could see he hadn't changed any, and the Professor looked and felt normal.

But everything else was just a gray empty abyss. It was obviously horribly big. Billions and billions of miles of emptiness under them, above them and to the sides. Much bigger than being out in Interplanetary Space, where at least the stars would give you something to hold onto. Here there was just nothing.

"Lucky we don't fall," Tubby said. "Looks awful far down there, eh, Professor?"

"Don't look down," the Professor moaned. "It's awful."

"Where are we?" Tubby demanded. "Brace up, Professor. Keep your mind on this. We don't want to make any errors."

The Professor pulled himself together.

"Actually we're all right," he declared. "Our bodies are changing their dimensions—a progressive change of vibratory character. A new state of being. We're incompatible now with our earth-world, and so we can no longer perceive it."

"All according to Hoyle," Tubby agreed. "Correct. And when we get to be like the thought-realm, then we'll be there. Say, these waves sure are speedy."

THE flow of movement was obvious now. It was like being on a fast train, you couldn't exactly tell whether you were moving forward, or the scenery was coming toward you and passing at the sides. There was a sort of scenery here now, a gigantic swirling mist out in the abyss. Tubby stared at the mists. Up ahead, billions of miles away, the whirling shadows seemed to have some sort of shape.

"Look, Professor?" Tubby cried.

"Maybe that's it up there?"

The misty shadows were opening, spreading out sidewise, and closing in behind. All at once Tubby realized that he and the Professor were almost in amongst them. It was a terrible realization. If they hit anything at this speed it would be a nasty bump. A roof of gray blur was overhead now. A million miles overhead, but still it was there. To the sides the walls were like gigantic graystone caverns. A million big corridors were sweeping past. Tubby gazed into one. It went back a million miles, and seemed to branch out into a million other corridors.

This was certainly a big place. Everywhere you looked there were caves and tunnels. And there was a floor coming up underneath them now—a shadowy, undulating floor that spread out for millions of miles. It was sweeping backward so fast it was a blur.

"Hey, Professor, hadn't we better slow up?" Tubby suggested. "And how do we steer? How do we know where to look for your girl? There's quite a few places around here."

The Professor seemed to have his wits now.

"That will be a natural process and take care of itself," he said. "Our bodies will find their way into the proper vibratory channel. We will stay compatible always with our surroundings."

"Like a radio being tuned," Tubby said. "Am I right?"

"Yes, of course you are." The Professor's voice was admiring. "You always have a neat way of putting things, Tubby."

"Hitting the nail on the head," Tubby agreed. "Lookit! We seem to belong up this hill."

They went around a curve like a run-away roller coaster, and then they were speeding into a big ascending tunnel. Other tunnels criss-crossed it and branched out in every direction. It was like going through a monstrously big Mystic Maze, having no trouble at all choosing the right turning, and doing it all at headlong speed. Nature was certainly wonderful.

"Soon we shall be there," the Professor said with awe. "We're slowing now. One of these caverns must be ours."

His voice trembled with emotion. That was natural, heading toward his girl of such breath-taking beauty. She wasn't Tubby's girl, but still he could feel the emotion of it.

The gray rocky floor was sliding past fairly slowly now. Tubby shoved his legs down and realized that he and the Professor were walking. It wasn't exactly walking, though. It was more of a jolting run, like being shoved forward by a strong wind. It had Tubby out of breath in a minute. Then the wind eased and he and the Professor came abruptly to a halt.

"Well," Tubby panted. "Here we are."

He gazed around. Through the dim gray twilight he could see that they were in a huge cavern. It was just one of billions of caverns which they had passed, and it was enormous. Everywhere you looked gigantic tiers stretched like circular balconies, one on top of the other. And every balcony had million of shelves with millions of shadowy objects resting on them. Worse than that, everywhere Tubby looked he could see openings that led into other monstrous grottos, just like this one—billions of more tiers and shelves crowded with shadowy objects. Tubby had never seen anything like it.

It was certainly quite a big storehouse.

"Well, we're here," Tubby repeated. "I mean to say, where are we? Where's your girl, Professor?"

SCIENCE had quite evidently done its part, and the rest was now up to them. Tubby and the Professor stared around dubiously. There was no sign of life, and everything was silent as a tomb. Tubby was standing near a big shelf in a recess of the rocky wall. At first it seemed empty and then he could make out the ghostly outlines of things on it. Just the gossamer ghost-shape of a big machine. Under it was a neat, glowing little placard.

The Rocket
Thought of by
George Stephenson

The ghostly outlines of the quaint little locomotive with its big old-fashioned smoke-stack shimmered in the dim gray twilight.

"It was here for eons and eons," the Professor murmured with awe. "Then Stephenson thought of it and built it in the Earth-world. Now it's gone. This is just its memory."

Deep stuff, this thought-realm business. Tubby pondered it.

"Listen, Professor," he said, "that Stephenson feller got his locomotive out of here without coming up after it, didn't he? Couldn't you have gotten your girl out of here, without all this bother?"

"Ah no, that was just the trouble." The Professor warmed eagerly to the argument. "Stephenson had his basic materials in his earth-world. Everything that's ever been thought of, or ever will be thought of by humans is stored here in this realm. But with a living girl, you couldn't very well build—"

Tubby got the point at once.

"I get you, Professor. Then all the people that us humans have ever thought of, they just have to stay here—except that we've been able to come here and get your girl."

"Exactly," the Professor agreed.

Tubby stared again into the vast dead-gray silence around them.

"Funny, with so many people here, how quiet they're keeping themselves, eh Professor?"

But if the people were still not in evidence, the things which had been thought of, and were going to be thought of, were certainly here by the billions. A weird-looking little blob, with a shape that had no meaning at all, stood nearby. It was obviously solid and intact. It had a placard that read:

The Blintzer
Thought of by
William McGuire

"I guess McGuire's not been born

yet," Tubby suggested.

It was interesting stuff. One could get a lot of knowledge by poking around here. But it wasn't getting them to the Professor's girl. Tubby mentioned the fact.

"Maybe I've got to think of her harder," the Professor murmured. "You see, Tubby, my theory—"

Whatever his theory was, quite evidently it was pretty good, for suddenly from near at hand there was a sound. Tubby couldn't at first place where it was, or what it was. As the Professor stood with his face and forehead wrinkled into a knot, the sound got clearer. It was off to the left, a sort of faint gurgle. It was a girl's voice, gurgling with emotion, a gurgle of love. This girl, this most beautiful, glorious specimen of womanhood was gurgling with love because she was aware now that her lover had arrived.

It was thrilling.

"She knows you're here, Professor!" Tubby whispered. "Come on, let's go get her."

The Professor seemed instinctively to know the way. He started off at a trembling, shaky run, with Tubby after him.

"Brace up," Tubby murmured. "You gotta look romantic. First impression's important."

Tubby straightened his tie and smoothed his slick blond hair as he ran. They turned a corridor corner and burst into a dim gray cave room. A figure stood in the center of the room. The Professor's girl. She was his all right. A little placard on her bore the glowing words:

Thought of by
Professor Ponder

Tubby stopped short at the cave's entrance, as though he had bumped into a wall.

"Oh my," he murmured.

HE HAD good reason to be startled. This was a girl, doubtless. And positively she was alive. She stood jiggling as though her legs and spine were made of springs, and she was gurgling

and cooing as the Professor tremblingly approached her. The glowing twilight of the cave glinted on her weird figure. She was dressed in a square-cut jacket that looked like gray polished metal cloth and a short, gray metal skirt that stood out like a cone, her skinny waist coming out of its top. Her bony legs ended in wide, flat feet.

"Oh my darling," the Professor murmured.

He did his best to embrace her, but on her angular shoulders, at her waist and on her flat chest there were a lot of little gadgets that got in his way. Her shining square face had thick-lens spectacles on its nose. Her face was framed by dangling yellow curls, hair that looked like gleaming coiled wire. The curls jiggled and bounced and a loose end of one must have scratched his cheek as he tried to kiss her, because he let out a squeal of pain and drew away hastily.

But he was obviously thrilled. He stood trembling, gripping her hand, overcome by emotion.

"My darling," the female's voice cooed. "You came to me."

No accounting for taste, it seemed that she was as pleased with him as he was with her. For a moment they stood rapt with the sight of each other.

The Professor swung around to Tubby.

"You see?" he gasped. "Here she is. We've got her, the most noble, glorious, beautiful specimen of womanhood. You like her?"

Tubby gulped. But a gentleman is always a gentleman.

"Swell," he managed. "She's just grand, Professor. What are the wire curls for?"

"Ah," the Professor exclaimed with delight. "I knew you would appreciate her. Those are made of my springtite wire-alloy. Any coiffure can be arranged in a moment, and at no beauty-parlor expense. Show him, Angelina. The upswing hair-do—show him how easily you can fix it."

The polished, shining skin of Angelina's face crinkled into a gratified smile. At least she was like other females in being pleased, displaying her

good points. With nimble, prehensile fingers she bent and twisted the wire curls so that in a few seconds they were all standing upright like a little gleaming haystack on top of her head. It exposed her yawning, cup-shaped ears.

"Perfect," the Professor murmured. "I think I like that way best of all. Her hearing is even more acute, with the ears free of the hair. She has marvelous hearing and eyesight. See those double bifocals? And her complexion needs no cosmetics. Show him Angelina."

From one of the gadgets on her shoulders she took a bit of polishing cloth, rubbed her face and her long nose until they shone even more brightly.

"And no fragile hosiery," the Professor enthused. "I thought of all that. By virtue of my electronic color-absorption process the skin of her legs is chameleon-like. That's the nude shade she's wearing now. But if we want a deep beige, for instance for afternoon wear, to be ultra-fashionable—show him, Angelina."

Modestly, Angelina raised her flexible metal skirt a trifle. A gadget was around her skinny leg somewhat above the knee, like a garter with tiny electrodes buried in the skin. She pressed a switch-button on the garter and the skin of her legs at once turned a darker shade, mottled with a mesh-like design.

"You see?" the Professor exclaimed. "How simple and inexpensive! And how she can cook! Look at the thermite-grids there at her waist. She has a self-heating, automatic-turning grille—for a broiled steak, if we have a visitor with a big appetite, and a grille to boil my own arrowroot porridge. A most glorious woman, Tubby. Why, nobody in the world, not even you, could think of such a glorious specimen of womanhood."

A GENTLEMAN can be pushed only just so far, but what Tubby would have retorted was never revealed. From the shadows of the cave near at hand there came a sound. A warm, throbbing voice—a girl's voice calling a familiar greeting.

"Tubby, Tubby dear, how perfectly wonderful that you came to me, darling."

Luscious voice, lingering on the endearing words. Tubby's girl! With her long slinky skirt swishing about her sleek Nylon-clad ankles she came gliding from the shadows. It was a marvelous answer to the Professor's challenging question because she was certainly an eyeful—fulsome curves in all the right places. A regular super duper girl. Not built along the lines of economical utility maybe, but she was certainly decorative.

"Why, hello, Toots," Tubby greeted. "I was just thinkin' of you. Meet the professor and Angelina."

Toots quite evidently was already acquainted with Angelina. Her penciled eyebrows went up and the Cupid's bow of her rouged lips twisted into a grimace of distaste. And through the thick lenses of Angelina's spectacles the Professor's wonder girl returned the look with equal asperity. They were both very dirty looks.

It was an awkward moment, but with neat skill Tubby jumped into the breach.

"Well, here we are," he exclaimed. "You girls are gonna go back with us. Right? Come on, Professor, let's get going. You can't ever tell when somebody—"

Too late! Behind them there was a bellow. In the cave entrance a towering, swaggering figure loomed—a huge, thickest man with flaring high boots and big rolling black mustache.

"So?" he roared. "Hah! I've got you all trapped. That's just what I planned."

The bellowing voice had a sneer in it, the very essence of villainous sneer. In his hand he had a long, leather quirt. He lashed it, snapped it so that the crack was like a little pistol report to punctuate his sneering words.

Toots gave a scream and swayed into Tubby's arms.

"Oh, Tubby, dear," she cried, "save me!"

The Professor stood trembling, with a squeal of excited terror.

The exotic perfume of Toots envel-

oped Tubby, and her soft warm arms were around his neck. It was a momentary handicap in doing battle with this villain. Tubby took just a moment off to kiss her. And then, as he was trying to get loose from her convulsive clutch, he saw Angelina.

The gadget-girl might have been frightened by the villain's sudden entrance, but certainly she didn't show it. Anger seemed her chiefest emotion. All of her was abruptly alive with jiggling, throbbing current. All her little thermite grids and gadgets were glowing luminous. From her eyes, through the double-lens spectacles, little lightnings of electronic anger were darting. Her gaze at the advancing villain was like a death-ray.

It had all happened in an instant. The lashing quirt was cracking as the villain strode confidently toward what he, of course, considered his helpless quartet of victims.

Suddenly the quaking Professor squealed:

"Angelina! Angelina—your spectacle adjustments, the gravity-intensification ray!"

ANGELINA got the idea instantly. Her nimble fingers darted to the thick metal rim of the spectacles, turning a tiny switch there. In a second the lightnings of her angry gaze deepened. Twin violet rays struck the villain in full force. It brought him to an abrupt halt. Rooted to the cave floor as though his feet were glued there, he stood swaying, roaring with baffled anger. But he could still lash his quirt. It crackled in a ten-foot circle around him, but it couldn't reach anything.

"Now quick, the automatic clothesline, Angie," the Professor prompted. "We've got him!"

From somewhere about Angelina a long length of clothesline came slithering out. In addition to her domestic talents she was evidently skilled in rodeo work. In a second she had the rope into a lariat-noose and was whirling it around her head. The spinning noose darted out, settled over the head of the

snarling villain.

"Well thrown, Angie!" the Professor squealed. "Now then, rope him up."

There was no doubt but what Angelina had everything under control. It shot a pang through Tubby. He was still trying to get loose from Toots' loving, frightened grip. He sensed that if he didn't do something more heroic than just stand here hugging her, Toots herself would be the first one to remind him of it. Desperately he flung her off.

"Hold everything!" he shouted. "I'll fix him, I've got him."

Angelina paid no attention. Methodically she was pulling on the tightened lariat and the villain had now fallen to the floor. Tubby gazed around wildly for some sort of weapon with which he could finish the affair up in speedy, efficient fashion. If only he had something like—

And then he saw it! There it was, standing only a few feet away in a recess of the cave wall, a little globular object.

A glowing placard under it read:

Essence of T.N.T. Super-Triple X
Thought of by Tubby

Just the thing, and who had a better right to use it? With a bound he had rushed and seized it. Unerringly he flung it at the fallen villain's head. His aim was perfect. There was a snapping roar and a burst of light. It completely obliterated the man on the floor. It did more than that. It obliterated everything else, with such speedy efficiency that Tubby was only aware that the Professor, Angelina, Toots, himself and the cave were being splintered into fragments, very tiny fragments of nothingness. There was nothing left but a vast abyss of empty silence.

"No, not quite silence. From an immense distance out across the abyss, a blurred faint voice came floating.

"No mam, he's not been drinking, honest. Maybe he's got a fit or somethin'."

And another earnest voice:

"Seems like maybe he's got a fit or something."

(Concluded on page 112)

THE GADGET GIRL

(Concluded from page 88)

The abyss sprang suddenly into swaying light—chairs and people's legs as they crowded forward. Tubby knew that he was on the floor by his overturned chair, with the lecture platform in front of him and people of the excited audience jamming around. Jake helping him, he struggled and sat up.

"I'm all right," he gasped. "What's all the excitement?"

Close at hand a figure leaned over him—a tall, skinny, hatchet-faced female. The lecturer's efficient assistant. A first-aid kit was in her hand, and she was proffering Tubby a small vial. She reminded him of someone. Angelina! That's who she was like—the professor's gadget girl.

"Smelling salts," said the hatchet-faced female. "Aromatic spirits of ammonia. And I'd advise you to stop drinking, young man."

"Not been drinking," Tubby muttered. "Lemme out of here."

There was certainly no one in the lecture hall who was anything but glad to have Tubby and his friends go. The lecturer was resuming:

"And as I was saying before the unseemly interruption, the power of thought is—"

"That's a swell assistant he's got," Jake whispered admiringly. "Unusual woman, so quiet and efficient."

Tubby thought of that other quiet and efficient woman, Angelina, and shuddered.

"Yeah," he said, "she's okay, I guess, but not my type."

IMPORTANT NOTICE

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