

MARVEL

STORIES

15¢

APRIL

LAST SECRET WEAPON

unusual book-length science novel by **POLTON CROSS**

THE THOUGHT MACHINE
by **RAY CUMMINGS**

PLUS OTHER GREAT STORIES



THE IRON GOD smashing feature novel of the future by **JACK WILLIAMSON**

MARVEL

STORIES

ALL STORIES BRAND NEW WRITTEN ESPECIALLY FOR THIS MAGAZINE

Vol. 2, No. 3

☆☆ CONTENTS ☆☆

April, 1941

★ ★ THRILLING BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL ★ ★

THE LAST SECRET WEAPON

Page

by Polton Cross

8

The simplest and yet the most brilliant invention of all time, the secret weapon to end all secret weapons—this was the diabolic device that Val Turner knew foreign dictators would finally use to wipe out his beloved America, this was the fiendish instrument that only a new super-science could smash!

★ ★ 2 UNUSUAL NOVELETTES ★ ★

Girl from Venus.....by D. D. Sharp 53

The girl from Venus was the only girl in the world for me, and atomic disintegration and argonite would give us health, wealth and complete happiness—until that inevitable day, alas, when Leatha must no longer be distinguishable from any other girl on the planet!

The Iron God.....by Jack Williamson 70

A dive-bomber weighing sixty tons, ten of them the highest explosives known, hurtling four hundred miles an hour at the giant's head! . . . Lundoon knew that if this attack did not stop the 2,000-foot-tall mad colossus, nothing ever would!

★ ★ 2 GRIPPING SHORT STORIES ★ ★

The Thought Machine.....by Ray Cummings 46

To Dr. Jenks the Thought-Machine was the transmutation of human body atoms into matter with the same vibration-rate—to Butch and Red and Willie it was a way to make a million-bucks!

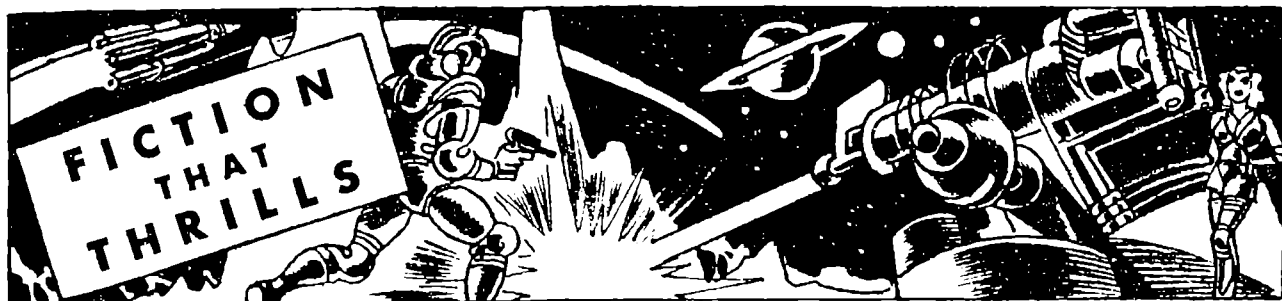
We—The Other People.....by Bruce Manchester 96

You remember how those creatures looked, and the way they acted, the crew of the first spaceship to reach the Earth, and how you called them the Other-People . . . I wonder, though, if you guessed then that they'd turn out as they have. . . .

★ ★ MARVEL'S SPECIAL FEATURE ★ ★

The World of Tomorrow.....by Ray Cummings 106

Proof that the basic ultimate substance is—**nothing!** . . . Mechanical invisibility is coming. . . . Have you tried to kill yourself recently? . . . Do you see things as they really are?



Marvel Stories published every other month by Western Fiction Publishing Co., Inc., at 4600 Diversey Ave., Chicago, Ill. Entered as second class matter May 4th, 1940, at the Post Office at Chicago, Ill., under act of March 3, 1879. Editorial and executive offices, 339 West 42nd St., N. Y. Contents copyright, 1941, by Western Fiction Publishing Co., Inc. Yearly subscription, 20 cents. Single copies, 15c. Not responsible for unsolicited scripts. Printed in U. S. A. Vol. 2. No. 3.

**SCIENCE-FICTION'S MOST SENSATIONAL AUTHOR
GIVES YOU HIS MOST STARTLING STORY!**

LUNDOON never forgot the night the Child was conceived—oddly, from a word of his own. The three men had worked all day, vainly, trying to perfect Kallent's antigen for the "war fever." It was a quiet midnight, and they sat around a simple lunch in the bare little office of

He has caught the war-plane! He crushes it in his



MIND-STAGGERING FEATURE-LENGTH FUTURE-SCIENCE NOVELETTE OF THE MAD

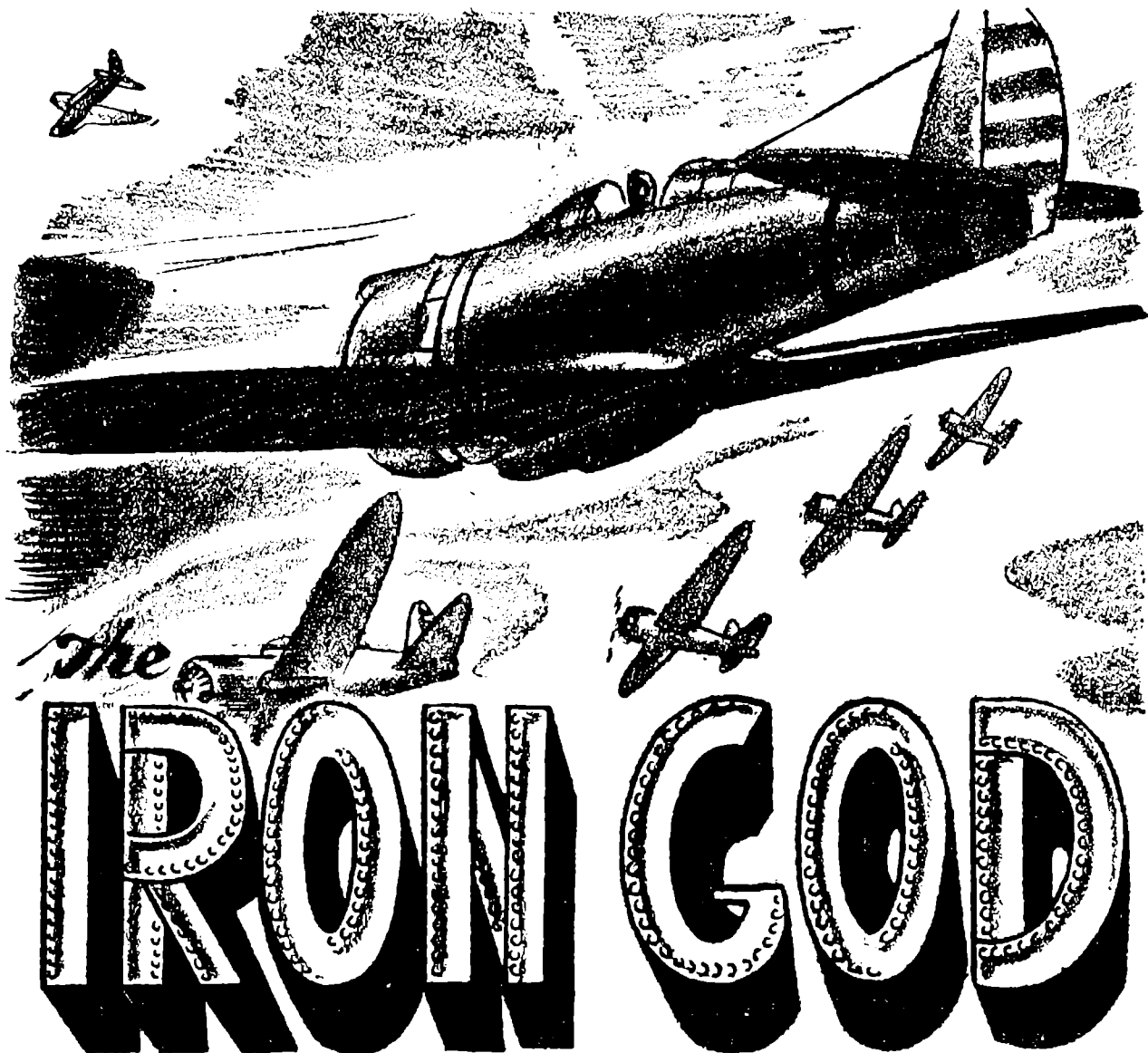
by **JACK WILLIAMSON**

Author of "After World's End," etc.

Kallent's bio-chemical laboratory on the Jersey meadows. Listening with the modesty of twenty-one, Lundoon poured coffee into tin cups from a ther-

With the dry, precise austerity of a convenanter, Andrew Douglas supported that text with quotations from the evening paper. The eurasian war

ist, ignoring the two-ton bombs exploding around his head.



Some day science will create a super-man, they told Lundoon—not just a thinking machine, or a robot, but a being wise and powerful. Lundoon wondered if the day had not come . . .

mos jug, quietly offered it to nervous little Douglas and gaunt, grave-eyed Kallent himself.

"Aye, the world's ill!"

was spreading. A million were on strike, here in America, and millions unemployed. Everywhere there was oppression, corruption, human misery. And

WARS OF TOMORROW AND THE TEST-TUBE DICTATOR MEN WILL CALL KING!

now the "war fever" was ravaging half the world.

Sometimes this new, man-made pandemic was called the "whistling death." Because the virus attacked the respiratory system, and the last hopeless battle for breath made a characteristic sound. The virus was a product of protein-synthesis in "biological warfare" laboratories, and both armies had scattered it, in simultaneous thrusts at civilian morale.

"'Tis more of Cotterstone's work," rasped the dried-up little Scot. "They've learned in Washington that agents of World Chemical and Steel sold the virus to both sides at once—warning each country that they must hasten to use it for self-defense, because the enemy was planning to. An old trick of Cotterstone's. Now, if our antigen fails, the plague may sweep all the world!"

The gaunt stooped bio-chemist shook his huge grizzled head, solemnly. Jethro Kallent looked twenty years older than his forty-four—all except his eyes. His eyes were blue and young with the undying fire of genius.

"We can't fail," Kallent said.

Wendell Lundoon—lean and earnest, for two years Kallent's eager assistant—felt his hands clench. He had caught the fire of Kallent's genius, and his smooth youthful face reflected Kallent's firm purpose.

"No," he whispered. "We won't fail."

"But the world's ill." Douglas nervously stirred his coffee, on the corner of the big acid-stained desk. "Lost. Aye, and damned! The old faith has weakened. But men need a god. A being of power, that they must look up to and obey; one to choose the way, and lead them, and punish those who straggle. That's why they must set up dictators, and worship them like demigods."

SLOWLY, Kallent set down his empty cup.

"Science is religion enough for me," he said quietly. "Science—in the service of human progress—has room for all the awe and humility and sacrifice and devotion and sheer exultation that any human being is capable of."

"For you, perhaps," admitted Douglas. "But most people can never grasp that ideal. They need to fear, and worship, and follow. They are too small to stand alone. They need to lean on something greater than themselves."

Lundoon's serious young face was illuminated with a thought. His dark head lifted, with a sudden eager motion.

"Some day," he whispered, "science will create such a god. I mean, a superman. Not just a thinking machine, or a robot. But a being wise and powerful—"

The youthful researcher checked himself. His first awe of Kallent's huge learning had increased, in their two years together. And the vastness of this idea was almost appalling. Flushed, feeling a little foolish, he looked diffidently at the tall gaunt-bio-chemist. But Kallent was nodding soberly.

"Perhaps," he said softly, "it could be done!"

Lundoon stared at him, whispering:

"Do you think—"

But Kallent said no more. His deep-sunken eyes looked past Lundoon, as if they saw something far-away and great. His furrowed face smiled faintly. Then a look of weariness and pain settled upon it. And Lundoon remembered a bitter, seldom-mentioned chapter in Kallent's life.

Kallent had worked for years, Lundoon knew, on the problem of synthetic life. Through the vague contemporary concepts of static equilibrium, dipolar moment, alpha brain-waves, electrochemical transmission, he had ad-

vanced to a more fundamental grasp of the laws of life. He actually announced the creation of living cells—and was stunned by the popular reaction to that triumph. The sensational press roused a savage resentment against him. Laws were demanded, “to keep creation for the Creator.” Then the war came. Kallent dropped his biosynthesis experiments, for his efforts to protect the world from the deadly products of the biological warfare laboratories abroad.

“Aye,” cried little Douglas, “if science could make a god!”

But Kallent said no more.

It was a month later that Kallent announced his “anti-virus”—a synthetic protein which conferred lasting immunity to the virus of the “whistling death”—in time to arrest the first cases breaking out in American ports. The great pandemic was checked, and uneasy peace came to the exhausted Eurasian nations.

In the midst of the praise and awards heaped upon him, Kallent quietly announced that he was leaving the laboratory. Even to Douglas and Lundoon, he refused to reveal fully his purpose.

“I have another piece of work to do,” he told them. “You had to point it out to me, Wendell. But I see now that all I have done is mere preparation for it. It’s a big thing. It may take the rest of my life. If it succeeds, there’ll be nothing more for me to do. If it fails, nothing else will matter.”

HIS eyes were looking far away again.

“The thing can’t be done in America. Jethro Kallent wouldn’t be allowed to attempt it, anywhere. So I am going to leave America. And Jethro Kallent is dead. Jethro Jones is going to make a new experiment in bio-chemistry—somewhere.”

Douglas whispered, “Alone?”

Kallent’s rugged, grizzled head nodded.

“I must go alone. There are essential tasks for both of you, behind. Jethro Jones is going to need money and information and equipment. Andy, a Scot can always make money.”

“Aye,” said little Douglas.

Kallent set his lean hand on Lundoon’s shoulder.

“Wendell,” he said, “Jethro Jones will probably have a few research problems for you. And you must take my place, in the laboratory here. We must be ready, when Cotterstone decides to sell mankind another war. I think you need more training, and I’ve outlined a course of study for you—you’ll work with some of the biological warfare experts, abroad.”

Kallent shook their hands, picked up a black brief-case that was already initialed “J. J.,” and walked swiftly out of the laboratory—and apparently out of the world of men.

Where had he gone? Lundoon had not dared ask—he knew that Kallent had already told them as much as he thought wise. Douglas, he knew, had instructions for forwarding letters and money and scientific equipment to Jethro Jones, but the little Scot refused to divulge the address.

“Kallent is afraid,” he told Lundoon. “Aye, afraid of Cotterstone. We didn’t tell you, but we had a wire from Cotterstone, after the anti-virus was announced. He offered Kallent a round million a year to work for World Chemical and Steel. Kallent replied with a devastating no. But Cotterstone is not a man you can say no to, safely.”

Douglas knew no more than Lundoon of the mysterious “bio-chemical” experiment that “Jethro Jones” was going to attempt.

“Andy, do you suppose—?”

Lundoon couldn’t forget that midnight conversation. The thing was in-

credible, too stupendous to be possible. Yet everything seemed to hint at it.

"Do you suppose, Andy, that he's going to try to make a superman—a god?"

With a characteristic bird-like quickness, Douglas shook his head.

"I don't know," he said. "But, if any man could do such a thing, it is Jethro."

No word came back from "Jethro Jones."

CHAPTER II

KALLEN had refused to demand any large reward for the "war fever" antigen. After he was gone, Lundoon spent seventy hours in the laboratory, and emerged with a formula for a new household antiseptic. Thereupon Andrew Douglas displayed his canny Scotch genius at finance. He organized the Jethro Kallent Electro-Biological research Foundation, with an initial endowment, from advance royalties on the antiseptic, of half a million dollars.

Lundoon prepared the first shipments of biological — and, oddly, metallurgical — equipment ordered by "Jethro Jones." Douglas forwarded the crates, together with drafts for a hundred thousand dollars.

Presently, then, Lundoon was off to begin the two years of study that Kallent had outlined. He was in Paris, at work under a distinguished French astro-physicist, when he met Gina Arneth.

Deciding that his pupil was working too hard, the Frenchman began to vary his discourse on sub-atomic chemistry with lectures on the Gallic art of living; and finally presented Gina as a competent instructress in the latter.

Lundoon was instantly captivated with the beauty of her tall, pale body,

the flame of her hair, the flashing spirit of her violet eyes. To the savant's astonishment, he persuaded her to break her contract to sing in a night club, to fly with him to the *Avalon*.

The isle-port, for two weeks, was to Lundoon a dream of happiness. A scientific vision of his boyhood, made real. A floating man-made atoll, it ringed an oval blue lagoon, bore the gardens, hotels, and casinos of a luxurious resort.

Gina seemed his dream of perfection. He found her spirited, clever, winsome, gay, utterly lovely. The holiday was expensive, but Douglas, back at the Foundation, honored his drafts without comment.

The day came, however, when the scientist woke in Lundoon. Climbing with Gina back to the swimming deck, after a plunge in the cobalt tropical lagoon, he told her abruptly:

"Let's get dressed. I want to talk."

When they were seated at a palm-shaded table on the uttermost deck, the cool sea-wind in their faces, Gina squeezed his hand and whispered:

"Happy, Wendy?"

"I've been happy," he told her soberly. "But I have work to do. Last night I had an idea. I see—I think I see—a connection between one of Dupre's astro-physical tensors, and the ultra-microscopic radiogens that now appear to be the key to life. Astronomy illuminating biology! Or maybe I'm crazy. Three months in the lab, and I'll know."

The hair of Gina Arneth, in the strong tropic light, was like spun flame. Her pointed oval face was smiling, and her violet eyes flashed with a taunting challenge.

"Wendy, what about me?"

Reaching across the little table, Lundoon took both her hands.

"Gina," he whispered, "will you marry me?"

"I love you, Wendy." Her voice

trembled — yet something reminded Lundoon that she was a trained actress. “But you know already that I am—costly. I must have money, and the splendor that money buys. Money is food to me. Without it, I would die.”

Her violet eyes were misty.

“You have ability, Wendy. You could make money.”

LUNDOON'S dark head lifted, and a slow grin smile twisted his face.

“If this idea turns out as I expect,” he said softly, “my friend Cotterstone would give several millions for just one simple application of it—to drown the world in blood again.”

Against the green translucent fronds and the sea's far glinting blue, a brightness suffused the face of Gina Arneth, until he thought that it was like a fantastic painting of some malicious elf.

“Wendy!” It was a hushed, eager plea. “Millions, Wendy—”

His face turned bitter.

“I love you, Gina.” His laugh was a short harsh sound. “Funny — because it seems you stand for everything I hate.” He stood up, and the chair fell unheeded behind him. “But—won't—” He choked, gulped. “Won't you go with me, Gina?”

“Not today!” Emotion caught her voice. “Take time to think, Wendy.” She was in his arms — he drew her against him, in spite of himself, and her hair was soft and fragrant in his face. “Money is so much—”

He pushed her roughly from him.

“See that purple flying boat down on the lagoon?” Torture drove him to cruelty. “That's Cotterstone, the munitions king. If you want blood-money, Gina, you had better go to him!”

At the savagery of that, she went pale as if he had struck her face. She pushed over the little table, so violently that its service was flung through the rail into the sea, and ran away from

him. She was sobbing.

Mechanically, Lundoon set up the table and his chair, and then went down to make his reservation on the next Clipper for New York. He went back to work, in Kallent's old laboratory. In three months he knew that the new idea—sprung from the seed the French astrophysicist had dropped into the fertile bed of Kallent's modified radio-genic theory — was something greater even than he had hoped.

He knew that Cotterstone would, indeed, give millions for the development of it that he called the azoic radiation. But every precaution had been used for secrecy. Douglas alone knew the details of his success. Lundoon was surprised beyond measure when the armament king came himself to the laboratory.

J. Hollworthy Cotterstone was a big man, single, violent-tempered, fifty-six. His masses of flesh looked puffed and unhealthy. His face was pale and splotched, and his small leaden eyes were set too close together.

Cotterstone's origin was unknown, the name but the last of a series of aliases that confused the details of his colorful early career as munitions salesman and war-promoter. A child, he had been a bootblack—and, the rumors went, purse-snatcher — in the towns along the Danube. Now only he knew the number of his millions, or the measure of his veiled power.

“I'll be frank with you, Lundoon.” It was in the office of the new administration building, that Douglas had built while Lundoon was abroad. Cotterstone strode ponderously up to the stained old desk that had been Jethro Kallent's, and his voice was loud and flat. “I understand that you've invented a death ray. I want to buy it.”

“I don't know how you understand it.” Lundoon's lips had tightened. “We made no such announcement.”

"It doesn't matter how I know." Cotterstone's pale unblinking eyes were keen and yet somehow stupid-seeming. "What's your price?"

LUNDOON'S eyes flickered shut, and he leaned across the old battered desk.

"I tried to make it clear in my wires, Cotterstone," he said. "The azoic ray is not for sale."

The splotches on Cotterstone's puffy face turned purple.

"You're a damned fool, Lundoon." He shook a soft pinkish fist. "War is a business, all right—but a dangerous business. It's easy to get your fingers burned. World Chemical and Steel will pay as much for your weapon as any other interest will. But I warn you—if you refuse to sell—"

The big man was heaving, too breathless to go on. Lundoon rose slowly behind the desk.

"Listen, Cotterstone." His voice rang cold. "If war comes again, I'll give the ray for the defense of America and democracy—without a cent of cost. But—speaking your language—I'm not interested in murder for profit—not at any price."

He drove a hard finger into Cotterstone's quivering middle.

"Now get out!"

Gasping and sputtering, dangerously mottled, Cotterstone at last got out. At the door, however, he found breath and voice enough to indicate that he was used to crushing whatever stood in his way, and that he would enjoy annihilating Lundoon.

Standing tense behind the desk, Lundoon saw more than the varnished panels of the closing door. He saw a pointed, elfin face, with lucent violet eyes shining from its pallor. Strange, after nearly two years, how hard it still was to forget.

He sent for Andrew Douglas. Some

dark shadow, of late, hid the old twinkle behind the nervous little Scot's gold-framed glasses.

"Andy," Lundoon said softly, "please collect all our records that you have dealing with the azoic ray—every scrap of paper—and bring them here to me."

The mild slight man stiffened, his shadowed eyes flashed.

"Why?" Puzzled, Lundoon merely waited, until Douglas rapped tensely, "What are you going to do with them?"

Regret turned Lundoon's eyes black as he whispered:

"I'm going to destroy them—and all my own notes."

The pale lined face of Douglas smiled and relaxed.

"I'll get them at once, Wendy. Forgive me, but I knew that you had just seen Cotterstone—and I know Cotterstone."

Lundoon smiled a hard white smile.

"Then you understand. If Uncle Sam ever needs the ray, we can set down the specifications from memory."

"Aye." The voice of Douglas shook. "Though that would be a bitter day. I hope the ray can be forgotten."

Lundoon looked at him, suddenly.

"Have they come to you, Andy?"

Douglas ran nervous fingers through his fine graying hair.

"I know almost as much about it as you do, Wendy—unfortunately." His face went sternly white. "Cotterstone's agents came to me when you refused their first offer. They have brought to bear a pressure—difficult to resist."

Lundoon stared, astonished.

"Why didn't you tell me, Andy?"

DOUGLAS hesitated, bit his quivering lip.

"I couldn't, Wendy." His gray face was pinched with pain. "Once—long ago, Wendy—I did a foolish thing. I thought I had escaped it. But Cotter-

stone's spies know everything." His voice was low and hoarse. "A hard choice they offered me—disgrace, or millions. I'm glad you made this decision."

Douglas brought a thick envelope. Lundoon took a brown folder from the safe. Douglas watched nervously as he burned the sheets one by one, holding each until the flame was close to his fingers, and carefully crushing the ash.

The violet eyes of Gina Arneth looked reproachfully from the flames.

"Now," Lundoon sighed, "the plans exist only in our brains."

Looking tense and pale, Douglas echoed faintly:

"In our brains."

But Lundoon, in his own relief, failed to grasp the significance of those words—until, the next morning, he found the body of Andrew Douglas lying on the laboratory floor. One more record of the azoic ray had been blotted out—by the azoic ray itself, for the head had been charred and hardened in a way that only Lundoon could understand.

CHAPTER III

THE telegram came two days later, when Lundoon was standing beside the new grave, on the grassy hill above the laboratory. The flat marble slab, he decided, would bear only the name of Douglas. Anything more, he felt, would be too little to say.

"Dear Wendy," the message ran. "I have not forgotten, and I know that you have not. Still, after two years, I believe that a meeting can mend our shattered happiness. Flying, I shall arrive close after this. Believe me, yours, Gina, Countess of Arneth."

The eyes of Lundoon darkened as he read it, and the lids veiled them briefly. He looked down at the raw mound of

red earth. A sudden anger made him tear the yellow sheet in two. But the woman's flame-haired beauty still smiled from the fragments. He smoothed them and put them in his pocket.

An unease settled upon Lundoon, sharper than his grief for Douglas. A fascination seized him, eager and yet apprehensive. Had two years changed her? Did the title mean she had won the wealth and position she yearned for?

Lundoon walked on aimlessly, and the steel-fenced grounds were transformed into the floating gardens of the *Avalon*. The wind was suddenly scented with the sea. He was hardly surprised when Gina Arneth came to meet him, along a gravel path.

"Wendy!" Her voice was rich with the same moving magic. "They told me you were wandering up here—somebody's dead?"

He nodded, and bitterness choked him.

"Andrew Douglas—my best friend. He died to save himself from doing what you asked me to do, on the *Avalon*." Her violent eyes were startled, curious. "Cotterstone somehow learned about the azoic radiation. And Douglas died to keep it from him."

He tried to smile, and led her to a sun-warmed stone that made a seat on the grassy slope.

"Tell me, Gina, about yourself?"

She shook her flame-colored head.

"Nothing has happened, Wendy, nothing—important." Her violet eyes searched him, and her throaty voice was eager. "I still want you, Wendy, as much as I did on the *Avalon*."

"Your other tastes?" he asked softly. "Have they changed?"

"I'm still costly—but that won't matter now." Her silken voice paused. "You see, I know how much Mr. Cotterstone is offering for your invention.

I came to beg you to accept his offer—and me.”

Lundoon rose suddenly. He seized her shoulders and dragged her upright. She winced from the abrupt blazing blackness of his eyes. His grasp tightened, until she cried out with pain. He released her, then, stepped back.

“I had wondered how Cotterstone found out.” His voice was quiet and tired, bitter. “It was you, Gina.” She cowered before the black accusation on his face. “I told you to go to Cotterstone, if you wanted blood-money. And you did.” His voice went hard, relentless. “And he made you a countess. And he sent you here!”

The flame of her head tossed defiantly.

“What if I did? Luxury is my life, and Cotterstone could give it to me.” The brittle voice snapped, and she was pleading again. “I love you, Wendy. Really—”

His black face stopped her.

“Gina, do you know what you’ve done?” His voice was hushed, stricken. “You’ve murdered my best friend!”

SUDDENLY he was fighting to stop hysterical laughter.

“I’m sorry, Wendy.” Her soft eager arms slipped around him. “The *Dawn Girl* is waiting at the airport—my new flying yacht. Let’s fly away, Wendy—to where you can forget. Back to the *Avalon*. To Celebes—anywhere. I do love you, Wendy!”

He stood stiff and silent in her arms.

“You must sell, Wendy.” Her body was slim and soft against him. “Don’t you see?” Dread edged her voice. “Cotterstone hates you. He—he’ll kill you, Wendy!”

Lundoon laughed again. His face twisted into a pale mask, without merriment. The girl turned white, shuddered.

“Stop it, Wendy! You’re dreadful.”

Her hands tried to smooth the laughing mask into a face again. “Listen, Wendy.” She spoke with a new voice, lower, steady, resolute. “Come away with me—anyhow. Cotterstone will get us in the end. But for a while we could be happy.”

He stared at her, with a slow strange smile.

“There’s Eve in you, Gina,” he whispered. “Eve and Lilith too. You could make—make a Judas of me. Someday, maybe, you will. But I’ve still got a job—now, it’s Andy’s job. Dr. Kallent will be depending on me.”

His mouth drew to a thin, grim line.

“Go back to Cotterstone, Gina. Tell him: no sale.”

Her white loveliness froze in a stare of pained amazement.

“You’re cruel—cruel!”

He saw the glitter in her violet eyes, and made a little motion toward her. But she had already turned. He held himself, as she ran away toward the gate. Then he walked slowly back toward the administration building.

He was wondering if Douglas had left any forwarding address for “Jethro Jones.”

CHAPTER IV

ANDREW DOUGLAS had left the books of the Foundation in careful good order. Large cash withdrawals, made on the day before his death, were credited to “J. J.—Field Experiments.” But a search of all his files failed to disclose how the funds had been forwarded, or how to communicate with “Jethro Jones.”

Lundoon could only wait. He occupied himself with the Foundation’s financial affairs, and with tests of an anti-virus that promised immunity to influenza and the common cold. Three

months passed without any word from Kallent. Then the radiogram arrived, sent from Panama and addressed to Douglas:

"Project has resulted in unforeseen catastrophe. Am returning by air. Follow newspaper stories of terror in Andes. Ask Lundoon to stand by for emergency. Explain on arrival. Jethro Jones."

Lundoon read the message twice, and sent for all the morning papers. He searched them for South American items. He found two, neither apparently important. Seismographs had recorded a minor earthquake, centering somewhere among the little-known summits of the Cordillera Oriental. The other item dealt with the famous statue, the "Christ of the Andes."

The Quechua natives of the high *páramos* of Ecuador and Peru, item stated, were reported to be in superstitious panic because of a rumor that the statue had left its pedestal, above the tunnel of the Trans-Andine railway, to stride northward through the Andes on a tour of mad destruction.

"Railway officials," the item concluded, "state that the statue is still in place."

That was all.

The evening papers, however, had no lack of South American news. The first extra shrieked in immense black type:

**2,000-FOOT MAN
RAVAGES ANDES**

Breathless, Lundoon devoured the bold-faced box in the middle of the page:

For twenty-four hours the most amazing news story conceivable has been coming by radio and cable from various points in South America. A 2,000-foot giant, the story goes, is striding in a frenzy of destroying madness through the bleak uplands of Ecuador and Peru, spreading terror and death

among the native Indians.

Suspecting hoax, news agencies have held up the story for verification. Conclusive evidence is so far lacking, and the editors of this paper feel that the reports are incredible. However, as the dispatches continue to arrive, from points as widely separated as Quito, Guayaquil, and Lima, laden with increasing detail, it is felt that public duty demands their publication in full.

While this paper is able naturally to assume no responsibility for the facts, frequent editions will hereafter carry the latest news of the monster of the Andes. A special AP expedition, headed by William Mack, veteran correspondent, and equipped with radiophoto apparatus, is already flying from Panama toward the disturbed area, and his eye-witness reports are shortly anticipated, via radio.

Lundoon wiped a sudden cold wetness off his forehead, and the paper rattled in his hands. Suddenly, he had remembered that midnight conversation of four years ago, when he had suggested that science might someday create a superman—a god.

HAD Kallent indeed attempted that audacious project? The shocking certainty fastened upon him. And had the child of science revolted against its creator—after all not a god, but a colossal satan?

The black print swam before Lundoon's eyes. He saw blurred jumbled phrases. Giant wrecks train. Lifts locomotive like toy. Sixteen crushed in coach. Indians flee "El Espanto." Villages tramped by "The Terror." Hundreds dead. American "flying fortresses" from Panama to join international expedition. Continent, skeptical at first, now fear-stricken. Thou-

sands believed dead. William Mack to accompany flight. Does this monster threaten civilization?

That night was endless. Lundoon had a radio installed in the office, and left an order for the delivery of every newspaper extra when it appeared. He clipped and filed every item dealing with the giant. It was day again when he read the first dispatch from William Mack:

It is now an hour since our international expeditionary fleet lifted above the jungle-laden savanna, beside the Bay of Guyaquil. Including the six "flying fortresses"—all of the latest, sixty-ton type, mounting four light cannon each and carrying twelve tons of bombs—our force totals thirty planes.

Can we find and destroy El Espanto?

An hour ago, the writer still suspected the giant to be a figment of superstitious imagination. The Andes, however, must impress one with the insignificance of man. One is prepared to face incredible realities.

Our planes are now spread out in a huge V. Our ears are deafened with the engines. I am the guest of the Peruvian commander. The swarthy men in the cabin with me are alert—half laughing, half afraid. They jest in swift, crackling Spanish—and covertly make the cross.

We have passed to south of Chimborazo, whose awful snowy cone rises a full mile above the line of forests. Now we climb to cross the bleak inner range. The engines roar louder. Our ears ache. Snow is drifted in the pass beneath. Bitter cold penetrates our bones. Heavy with death, we almost scrape the snow.

Now the pass is behind. The

glacier slopes fall away to the bleak uplands, the *páramos*. Beyond, on the far low rim of the world, we can see the dark green of the forested *montaña*, dropping away to the Amazonian rain-forests.

The fleet wheels southward, and we come over a valley. It is a colossal trench, a black-walled gorge through riven peaks. The river, so far below, is a thin band of green-edged silver.

The men are pale and silent now. Hours of cold and strain have exhausted their first bravado. In this fantastic and colossal world—these stark peaks must have looked the same a million years ago—man is nothing, and anything is possible.

Brave and ready, the men must feel, as I do, that—

But we see the giant!

The impact upon the senses—it is sharp as a blow—destroys the last doubt. Perhaps men can never believe, until they see. But now, for us, El Espanto is real. The men are quietly preparing for the attack.

The giant is northward along the canyon, toward Quito. El Espanto! His vastness turns this mighty gorge to a mere ditch. His nude body is a shining silver-gray, as if molded of living metal.

A BEAUTIFUL figure, terrible only from its size. The form of a lean youth, superbly erect. Every muscle rounded, perfect.

He walks to meet us. Without effort, he makes at least a hundred miles an hour. His bare feet raise hurricanes of dust. His long hair, silver-gray like his body, is flung back a little by the wind of his motion.

The face is the same shining gray, the level eyes have the keen

blue of steel. An awesome face—yet to the writer it does not look cruel. Perhaps it is some bewilderment or misunderstanding that has caused this being to destroy thousands of human lives. The face reflects no malice. Rather, it shows longing and pain.

But we attack!

The dark faces of the men about me reflect my own admiration, and my own fear. But our mission is inexorable. Whatever the origin or the motives of this amazing being, civilization must defend itself.

We wheel high. Dwarfed as we climb, El Espanto seems no larger than an ordinary man, standing bewildered amid toy mountains. He is aware of us. He has stopped. His blue, terrible eyes look upward.

We dive, led by the six great flying fortresses. They release their bombs—in all, sixty one-ton “eggs” of ruin. The first bombs miss. Tiny puffs of gray dust spring up about the bare feet.

A hit!

A burst of white against the gray, naked shoulder. The giant brushes it away, bends his head to examine the spot. There is no sign. No wound. No blood—if El Espanto has blood.

Another hit—yellow flame and white smoke envelop the bent head! But the giant crouches, apparently unharmed. He leaps upward, toward another diving ship—the fourth of the flying fortresses.

He has caught the war-plane!

For a little time he stands holding it like a toy. He turns it in his fingers, ignoring the rapid-fire cannon battering at his face. Then he flings it to meet the next American bomber. They collide—we

feel the shock of a tremendous explosion.

The last flying fortress, meantime, is diving in its turn. But it doesn't drop its explosive load and veer away, as the others did. It plunges at the side of the giant's head.

The Americans are going to ram El Espanto!

A weight of sixty tons, ten of them the highest explosives known, diving at nearly four hundred miles an hour! If men can harm the giant—

They have struck!

A blinding glare. A huge burst of gray smoke. Tiny-seeming fragments of wreckage rain toward the giant's feet. He shakes his head, and straightens—unharmed, invincible.

The giant makes a warning gesture—still without anger on his face, but rather regret. The remaining planes are turning back. El Espanto is invulnerable. Quito awaits him, undefended.

CHAPTER V

THE city of Quito, however, was spared. Ascending the Cordillera Oriental, the colossal gray figure appeared upon the northern slopes of Cotopaxi. Climbing a little way up the smoking cone, El Espanto looked across the mountain-cradled city.

Desperate confusion filled the ancient streets, as the people began a frantic exodus. But the giant upon the mountain smiled. His great arms made a gesture, as if commanding the fugitives to return. Then he set his face to the eastward, and went back the way he had come.

The evening papers also reported the establishments of an international commission, to lead the world in concerted

attack against El Espanto. Members included statesman, industrialists, scientists, and military authorities, from many nations. The chairman—who had placed the entire resources of World Chemical and Steel at the commission's authority—was J. Hollworthy Cotterstone.

A later edition stated that the giant had been seen again, by a Peruvian scouting plane. The aviators stated that the giant had leveled the summit of a mountain they identified as Canusayacu, and was busy there with some colossal machines. He paused in his work, the men said, and waved them away. They departed without determining the nature or even the material of the unfinished machines.

Another extra, out before midnight, contained the story of a woman who claimed to have witnessed the giant's birth. She had been discovered by Dr. Eustaquio Griego, who had led an expedition from Lima into the remote Llanganati region, to investigate the quake that preceded the first appearance of the giant.

The Peruvian geologist found evidence of a tremendous recent upheaval on the flank of the mountain. Immediately beneath were the tracks of El Espanto—deep-pressed footprints two hundred feet in length.

Griego came upon the woman in the valley below. She was ill, lying on a cot in a deserted camp. Under his care she recovered consciousness for a short time. But she died before her story could be completed.

She was white. She claimed to be an American citizen and a native of Youngstown, Ohio. She refused to give any name except Marion. Reticent about her past, she said she had come up into the Andes with an Australian named Jethro Johnson, who was searching for Incan treasure. She had lived with Johnson in the vicinity, she ad-

mitted, for several years.

For many weeks, she told Griego, the whole region had throbbed steadily, as if to the beating of a great heart. The surface of the earth grew hot. By night, she said, strange pale lights glowed and flickered above the mountain. The native Quechuas had long since fled.

Johnson, she said, had gone out for supplies two weeks before the giant's birth. She had not seen him since. (Efforts to find Jethro Johnson had failed, the dispatch added. No one of that name was known in Ecuador.)

The giant, the woman said, was born at dawn.

Wakened by the preliminary quakes, she ran out of her tent, fearful of an avalanche. She stared up at the mountain. The color of the dawn was in the sky, and Llanganati was massed against it, black and sinister.

There was indeed a landslide. Masses of stone came roaring down. The mountain split, and intense green light burst through the fissures. Then a mighty arm came forth—the arm of El Espanto.

The arm was burning with a terrible green.

THE giant's head followed the arm. His shoulders burst through. Then he rested, until the sun had risen. At last he roused again, and dug his hands into the flanks of the mountain, and wrenched his body free.

The quake that followed flung the woman from her feet. For a time she was unconscious, of combined injury and fear. When she came to, the giant was kneeling over her. The green luminescence had gone from his body. It was the bright gray of metal, and his eyes were blue.

"His eyes were kind," the woman named Marion said. "Love was shining in them. They were like the eyes

of God. I thought they could see all my mind, and all my life. Suddenly I was ashamed of the life I had lived. And I was afraid. I cried, and covered my eyes, and lay trembling on the ground.

"Then I felt a flame against me. I looked up again. The giant was still kneeling over me. But his eyes had changed. Now they were angry, terrible. A fire shone out of them, and burned—burned—"

With those words, Dr. Greigo reported, the woman called Marion had lost consciousness again. Within a few minutes she was dead. Besides symptoms of shock and bruises, he discovered inflammations and tissue-destruction such as, he thought, might have been caused by X-rays or some other penetrating radiation.

Lundoon, in his office at the Foundation, had clipped and filed that last, most amazing item—he was reflecting upon the significant similarity of Jethro Jones and Jethro Johnson—when he heard the rap upon the door. He heard his own name, strangely and hoarsely spoken:

"Wendell!"

He stood up, wearily, beside the long ancient desk that had been Dr. Kallent's. It was littered with newspaper clippings, empty coffee cups, full ash trays and burned matches. Lundoon was red-eyed and haggard, dark stubble smudged his jaws.

He sloshed coffee out of a vacuum jug into his cup, and limped sleepily to the door. He had not recognized the hoarse voice. Someone, he supposed, with another batch of papers. The door swung open before he reached it, and the cup fell out of his hand.

A tall and ghastly figure swayed into the doorway. A long black coat muffled it, the dark hat was pulled far down. The face was bandaged white. The eyes burned through narrow slits,

like live coals.

"Kallent!" gasped Lundoon. "My God, Dr. Kallent—is it you?"

The reply was a hollow croak:

"Yes, Wendell. May I have—coffee?"

Lundoon was staring, stunned with horror. The tall man shuffled wearily to the desk. His stiff, bandaged fingers opened the vacuum jug. He lifted it in both awkward hands, and drank.

"Jethro?" whispered Lundoon. "What has happened to you?"

The other man caught the chair behind the desk. Stiffly, painfully, he lowered himself into it. He raised the steaming jug, to drink again. Then his burning eyes lifted, terrible beyond the white mask of bandage.

"I asked for Douglas," that queer voice rasped. "They tell me he is dead."

LUNDOON nodded, mute with horror.

"But it is you I came to see," the rusty tone went on. "I came to place my work in your hands. You may try to salvage it, for mankind. Or destroy it, before more harm is done."

"You are Jethro Johnson," Lundoon whispered. "You created El Espanto."

"Speak louder, my boy," said that terrible voice. "My senses are failing." A stiff muffled hand indicated the piles of clippings on the desk. "You have studied them?" rasped Kallent. "Then there isn't much to tell you. For the Child of Science was born from a word of your own."

Trembling, Lundoon sat down. The thing was incredible, even if he had already guessed it. It was hard to breathe. Staring at Kallent, he felt ill with horror. But the floor ceased to rock, and he shouted the imperative question:

"How?"

The stiff, terrible figure lurched for-

ward in the chair.

"To you, Wendell," croaked Kallent, "little explanation will be necessary—Andy reported your remarkable, and very dangerous, work with the azoic ray. You know that life is a function of the electro-chemical tensions that exist as a result of the molecular arrangement of protoplasmic matter. It is possible to reduce life to a mathematical equation."

Lundoon nodded. That discovery of Kallent's had afforded him the basis of the azoic radiation. Any force which affected those sub-molecular potentials, even slightly, destroyed life at its very origin. He listened.

"Protoplasmic life," said Kallent's husky voice, "is the expression of that fundamental equation, through one series of elements—those common at the Earth's surface, where our life originated.

"The equation, however, has other possible solutions — through combinations of other elements, in various ranges of temperature and pressure. Your suggestion, that night, was a seed.

"I was fascinated by the possibility of creating a life-form more enduring than our own. A gigantic superman, who might be the guardian, mentor, and leader of humanity. A god, born of science!

"The means were already at hand. Already I had calculated—on paper—a synthetic protoplasm that would have a thousand times the strength and stability of human flesh. Iron is the base of it, instead of water. Its energy is derived not from oxidation, but from the controlled disintegration of heavy atoms.

"I had not dared attempt any actual synthesis. My first experiments roused so much criticism. I had realized that any mistake might be final—that one cell of that new life might be mankind's doom.

"And I don't know, about reform."

Jethro Kallent sighed. His gaunt thin frame slumped down in the chair. His terrible hollow eyes stared at his bandaged hands. Lundoon waited, in a stunned and breathless awe.

"Reformers," Kallent mumbled faintly. "Peculiar creatures. Psychologists tell us they attack in others what they fear in themselves. And the world doesn't want to be changed. It's easy enough to plan a Utopia, Wendell. But not to find Utopians to fit it."

Impatiently, Lundoon prompted: "El Espanto?"

THE thin man leaned wearily on the desk.

"I finally decided, Wendell, to follow your suggestion. The world, as Andy said, was desperately ill. The Child would be a remedy, equally desperate.

"Discretion was essential. I dared not trust even you and Andy, fully. I went to Guayaquil. Jethro Jones was a bearded, half-crazy Andean tramp, searching for Incan treasure about remote Mt. Llanganati. He warned off intruders. His real secret, however, was a laboratory hidden in a cave.

"The technique was difficult. Not the actual creation of life—we have not progressed with that beyond the viruses. The transfer, rather, from one chemical base to another. The method was to replace the familiar elements of a fertilized human cell, with the iron, the heavy metals, and the radioactive elements of the new synthetic protoplasm.

"In Guayaquil, Jethro Jones found the woman who was to be the mother of the Child. She had been unfortunate. But tests and investigation convinced me that, physically and mentally, her heritage had been superior.

"Her disasters had been clearly the fault of environment. I chose her, partly, because I thought her misfor-

tunes would emphasize to the Child the task for which he had been created—it now seems that I made a fatal error.

“Marion, when I found her, was full of bitterness against the injustice of the world. But kindness changed her. She was loyal to me at the end, when she gave my name as Johnson, and concealed facts that she might have told.”

The terrible white head fell again. For a while Jethro Kallent was silent. Then through the bandages came a whisper that sounded like, “Marion.”

Lundoon waited, tense with a breathless expectation.

Kallent moved stiffly at last, and resumed:

“With a small portable diamond drill—that Jethro Jones had bought to search for the lost Incan mines—I sank a boring two thousand feet into the flank of Llanganati.

“When the life-cell of the new protoplasm was safely started on its ectogenetic development, I sealed it into a gold capsule, loaded with the iron, radium, and other elements required for the first stages of growth, and lowered it into the bore.

“That was nearly three years ago. The new being began a rapid development under the mountain—I had made a dozen borings, to select a spot where the necessary elements were sufficiently abundant. The energy of accelerated radioactivity—the focal temperatures of its radiogens approach that of the Sun’s interior—enabled it to fuse the surrounding rock. From the molten stone, it absorbed metallic food.

“Only the task of education remained.”

Lundoon was leaning forward in his chair. As the gaunt man paused wearily, he licked his lips and gulped and started to speak. But his voice was only a stunned, incoherent little mumble. He waited again, for Kallent to go on.

“I had foreseen the problem,” rasped the thin bandaged man, “and its solution. For the Child’s brain is directly sensitive to certain radio wave-lengths, and radiates similar waves as it functions. With a portable transmitter, I was able to propagate signals strong enough to reach it, even through several thousand feet of stone.

“NEARLY a year had passed when I picked up the first faint disturbances, of the new brain’s growing awareness. After certain difficulties, we set up a sort of half-telepathic contact.

“The Child had a queer, intuitive apprehension. Presently he seemed able to grasp my very thoughts, before I could frame them in words. He was aflame with curiosity about himself and the universe.

“For many hours a day, during the last year, I sat at the transmitter, telling him about his creation and the reason for it. I thought, Wendell, that I had made him love mankind. I was glad when his maturity approached. Because I thought that he would soon end all war and poverty and suffering. He would be an actual, physical god, stooping to aid mankind.

“As the time for the Child’s birth approached, I was very happy, Wendell. Every day I talked to him, and we made bright plans for the millenium. He seemed eager to repay his debt to his creators.”

Kallent sighed again, dropped his bandaged head wearily against stiff, white-swathed hands. His hollow eyes burned feverishly through the slits in his strange mask.

“It’s hard to believe that, now,” rasped his rusty voice. “What a fool I was! But am I completely to blame? You, yourself, Wendell, made the first suggestion—please try to remember that.”

"I do," gasped Lundoon. "Go on."

CHAPTER VI

THE gaunt man lifted the vacuum jug in his stiff white hands. Trembling, gulping noisily, he drank through the mouth-slit in his uncanny white mask. At last, in a voice that had grown fainter and huskier since he began, Kallent went on:

"Marion, the mother of the Child, stayed in my camp. She had demanded ten thousand dollars, for her part, and she planned to come back to the States. I paid her the money, and told her she could go. But she stayed.

"She was no longer beautiful. The cruelties of life had dulled and warped her mind. Yet sometimes I saw in her a glimpse of the woman she might have been—a woman I might have loved, if science had left me time.

"I know now that it was a mistake to let her stay. But she had developed an almost pathetic devotion to me—no one else, she often told me, had ever been kind to her. And I had a feeling for her—half pity, perhaps. I could never analyze it. But I was glad to have her stay."

Kallent's stark ghastly hand pointed abruptly at the pile of clippings on the desk. Lundoon started, at the gesture, and a wondering horror choked him.

"She told Griego how the Child was born," his distorted voice went on. "A true account—except that I was there, at my little portable radio communicator, beside the camp. I was speaking with the Child, as he came forth from the mountain.

"It is hard to convey the strange splendor of that scene—the Child rising upright, a truly god-like being of living metal, above the tumbled slope of blackened, smoking stone that had

given him birth. You can't sense the elation that I felt.

"Part of it was a selfish pride, because I had made the Child. But most of it was the triumphant knowledge that now men had a real and living god, to lead them into a better world.

"The Child's first desire was to see his mother. He came down the mountain, starting new avalanches, and knelt down over our camp. He looked down at Marion. She was lying beside the tent—she had fainted, I think, from the terror of the Child's emergence.

"Through the communicator, he spoke to me:

" 'This is my mother?'

" 'Yes, my son.'

" 'Is she hurt?'

"He bent closer above her. A tender smile was on his great face, and his blue eyes were softly shining. He put down his hand—each finger so much larger than her body—and then withdrew it, as if afraid that he would injure her.

" 'She can't be hurt much,' I began. 'Just afraid—'

" 'Wait,' the Child's words came to me. 'I can see her mind—all her life.' Then a look of hurt bewilderment came over that sublime, magnetic face, and the Child asked me: 'Why was my mother treated so?'

"I saw the anger rising into his eyes.

" 'Why have men been cruel to her? Why was she punished, for deeds she could not avoid. Why was she hungry, when men had food? Why did she lie ill, when men could have healed her? Why did men drive her from her home, to a foreign land?'

"His eyes lifted to me. Their tremendous blue depths seemed to flame with his anger—and my skin was stinging already from their actual radiation. His thoughts came through the communicator, like a deep and dreadful voice:

"My father, you are a man. I thought the other men would be as you are. I thought I should be proud to serve them with the strength that you have given me. But now that I have seen them through my mother's mind—and seen their cruel injustice to one whose only crime was love—I cannot serve them."

I TRIED to defend mankind. Surely, I said, the world was not perfect. There was injustice everywhere, needless suffering, vast ignorance and folly and futility. But all this, I said, only showed our need for the strength and intelligence and leadership of the Child.

"But he stood up, making a sudden wind that flattened everything in the camp. He stood for a moment, with his angry eyes blazing down at me.

"Such vermin are not worth leading,' came his furious words. 'They ought to be destroyed.'

"And the Child went away—the very Earth trembling to the violence of his anger. Probably you know more than I of what has happened since. He has trampled a village and wrecked a train. He was stirred to fresh anger by a useless air attack."

The hoarse unnatural voice of Kallent had grown very faint. Now it paused. For a time his burning eyes looked out of their white slits, at his quivering, bandaged hands. Lundoon merely waited, speechless from wonder and pity and dread.

"When the Child was gone," the gaunt man at last resumed, his rasping voice a little stronger, "I went back to Marion. We both had been severely burned, by the radiation from the Child's eyes.

"Perhaps I should have foreseen the danger. The radioactive protoplasm of the Child emanates destructive radiations, as our bodies do heat. The

effect had been increased by the nervous excitation of his retinal rods and cones—the Child's anger, unconsciously and without intention, had destroyed us.

"Anyhow, I saw that we both were doomed. The rays had penetrated our bodies, injuring all the tissue. There was no hope—"

Lundoon made a protesting gesture.

"But, surely—"

Kallent shook his bandaged head.

"I think I qualify as an expert on the tissue-effects of radiation. I have used every treatment that my knowledge suggests—just to gain the time to reach you, Wendell. To place the Child's future in your hands."

The bandaged man dropped his head, for a little time, on his stiff arms. His breath was audible, now, slow and wheezing. Lundoon waited for him to rest. At last he looked up again, and Lundoon asked:

"What am I to do?"

"The Child is in your hands." Kallent's voice was louder again, but forced and harsh. "I have brought my notes, and the portable communicator. You can speak with my son, try to win his good will for mankind.

"Or—if you must, Wendell—you can kill him."

Lundoon stared, incredulous.

"Kill El Espanto?" he gasped. "How?"

"With your azoic ray," rasped Kallent. "Just one octave higher than for men. But promise me—" The strained voice shook. "Promise me that you will not kill him unless you must."

"I promise," said Lundoon.

"Because he is my son." The voice of Kallent was no more than a rustling, faint and far away. "And because he is a god. Take my hand, and promise."

Lundoon gripped the stiff, bandaged fingers.

"I promise," he shouted again.

He thought the burning eyes of Kallent smiled behind the mask. The bandaged fingers fumbled in Kallent's coat and found a tiny vial, poured white grains from it into the vacuum jug. Lundoon grasped the jug, protesting:

"Wait—"

The terrible eyes stopped him.

"My last task is done," the gaunt man croaked. "And I can endure no more. Let me drink—"

Lundoon released the jug. The bandaged hands lifted it, trembling so in their eagerness that the liquid death sloshed noisily within. Ill, Lundoon looked away. He heard a loud gulp, a rasping breath:

"My son—save my son!"

The vacuum flask crashed against the floor.

CHAPTER VII

TWENTY days later, Lundoon stepped down on the airfield at Guayaquil. His heavy Gladstone contained the equipment Kallent had used for communication with the Child. Clipped to the inside pocket of his brown sports jacket was an aluminum cylinder, the size of a fountain pen.

The cylinder was a radiation-bomb. When set off by the brass detonator screwed into the end of the tube, its forty-gram charge would complete an atomic reaction, emanating that octave of the azoic radiation fatal to the Child.

In the building, Lundoon made inquiries.

"*Sí, señor,*" said the vivacious Latin beauty behind the tobacco stand. "El Espanto is still upon his mountain. He is busy, the people say, building some so-large machine." She favored Lundoon with a smile. "I am glad that he doesn't go courting, like other young men. *Porqué,* unawares, he might

crush his sweetheart under his toe."

Her laugh was a tinkle of silver, but Lundoon, heard the ragged discord of unspoken fear.

Carrying the brown Gladstone, he approached a window.

"*Sí, señor,*" the agent said, "we charter planes for private flights. Where does the *señor* wish to be conveyed?"

"To the mesa called *la vicuña*, beside the mountain Canusayacu."

"Canu—" The agent's voice failed upon the second syllable. "The *señor* isn't aware—that is the fortress of El Espanto?"

"Nevertheless," Lundoon said gravely, "I have mining interests there. I must go, to protect them."

"Impossible, *señor!*" The agent flung up his arms. "El Espanto would destroy the plane!"

"I have banking references. I'll buy the plane."

"*Sí,* the plane. But the pilot! Who would risk his soul—?"

"Surely—" Lundoon said. "For American dollars—"

There was, the agent suggested, *un Americano*, who had no soul to risk. He might be found at some cantina in the city. Now, if the *señor* Burns were not too drunk to fly—

"Find him," said Lundoon.

Sammy Burns was drunk enough to take the chance, and not too drunk to fly—as he explained, "Hell, it ain't noon yet." The battered plane took off. The Andes were first a mighty, snow-crowned barrier ahead, then a white and cragged waste beneath, and then a wall behind.

"Stranger," Sammy Burns shouted at last, "I said I'd fly you to hell for a thousand bucks, and no questions asked or answered. Well, there you are. That's Canusayacu."

Still a hundred miles away, the mountain was blue with haze. But Lundoon

could see that it had been truncated. Upon the leveled summit stood colossal machines. A skeletal tower, taller than the old peak had been, was spindle-shaped in outline.

SEEMING small amid his stupendous mysterious works, and yet clearly visible at a hundred miles, Lundoon could see the nude gray magnificent form of the busy Child.

"Land me on the mesa," shouted Lundoon. "As close as you can."

Sammy Burns lit a cigarette, leaned smiling to offer one. But Lundoon could feel his tenseness, glimpse the staring terror in his eyes.

He set down the little plane at last, upon a *pajanole*: an open, treeless plateau, tufted with yellow *ichu* grass. From its edge a great chasm dropped. Below naked boulder-fields rolled the far green of forests. Beyond, twenty miles away, stood truncated Canusayacu.

"So long, *amigo*," shouted the pilot. "Don't get too rough with him."

The little plane bumped into the air, and whirled away as if on wings of fear. It was cold, at this altitude, even in the sun's white glare. Lundoon's heart thumped painfully from the small exertion of climbing a little grassy ridge, from which he could look across the valley.

For a long time he stood there, staring through binoculars at the busy Child. It seemed to Lundoon that his mighty hands molded the stone of the mountain as a man molds clay—and he knew that those lofty, enigmatic constructions were of something stronger than any common metal.

Lundoon's task was simple.

He had merely to make this gray splendid god the slave of mankind. Or, if the Child refused, if all his persuasions and his threats were to fail, if nothing else was left—then he had to

kill the Child.

A simple task—but infinitely appalling.

The long afternoon slipped away. Lundoon stopped his watching long enough to open the Gladstone and set up the radio communicator. But still he could not bring himself to speak. His mind was dulled with awe. Doubts rose against his resolution.

The Child was perfect, he thought, eternal. Truly, a god. It might be that the entire purpose of all mankind, in the cosmic telology, had been only his creation. What possible right had men to enslave or destroy him?

The sun dropped beyond the westward summits. For a brief time the Child's machines were stark enigmas against the flaming Andean dusk. Then it was dark. But a pale green, that had been invisible by day, shone from the Child's body—a secondary emanation, Lundoon supposed, from his radioactive vital processes—and he worked on without rest at his unknown enterprise.

The icy night wind of the *páramos* came down from the high glaciers. Lundoon stirred himself at last, to put on a heavy coat, eat and drink hastily from the supplies he had brought, and then to inspect again the small aluminum tube that held the Child's death.

Again Lundoon hesitated. He shuddered, from something more than cold. But at last he closed the transmitter key, and said quietly:

"Hello. A man is speaking."

THE valley was a black sea. Beyond it, the nude glowing form of the Child was motionless for an instant, amid the great machines that loomed against the tropic stars. Then blue flaming eyes discovered Lundoon.

"Man, I am glad you have come." The giant's lips did not move, but the voice in the phones was deep and clear. "I wanted to warn your race, so that

you may prepare to die.”

Lundoon drew a long uneven breath, of the icy mountain air.

“You are going to destroy mankind—your makers?”

“Not from malice,” said the phones. “My first anger at you is forgotten.” The Child’s flaming eyes lifted, toward the tropic stars. “But I see other worlds, and beings upon them that seem closer kin than men. I am building a ship, to seek them.”

The green giant touched the spindle-shaped skeleton.

“My ship can’t be launched without the liberation of vast energies. I shall curb them as much as may be. But I think the recoil, the disturbance of air and sea and the Earth’s crust beneath the blast of atomic force that drives my ship, will surely be fatal to your puny race.”

The issue appeared sharp to Lundoon as the night wind’s chill. It was the life of man or the life of the Child. But what right, he asked himself uneasily, had he to judge?

At last, trembling, he said:

“So you will destroy your makers?”

“I am sorry,” said the Child. “But it is not at my request that I exist.”

Lundoon reached under his coat. His numbed fingers found the studs on the detonator of the radiation-bomb. He could set it off, he thought, before any agency of the Child could cross the intervening miles.

Across the black chasm, that immense shining figure jerked as if with surprise. Lundoon knew that the Child had perceived his action and its meaning. But the giant made no hostile move. From the phones, the deep voice asked:

“Why do you delay my death? You know you can’t coerce me. I’ll be no slave to your miserable breed!”

“I know,” Lundoon said slowly. “But still I’m not sure that I’ll destroy

you.”

The shining face of the Child looked puzzled.

“Why should you let me destroy your race?”

“I’ve no right to kill you,” Lundoon said. “Men are chained to this planet, doomed with it. You may lead a greater life, eternal as the universe. You are a more splendid being, above the baseness, the uncertainty, the conflicts that torment mankind—”

“Wait.” Beyond the black chasm, the Child lifted a shining arm. “I’m a man. Suddenly, now, I see that. With the same weakness, the same selfishness. But you have made my plan impossible. I couldn’t accept the willing sacrifice of the race that made me.”

The Child lifted a colossal beam, that he had been about to set in place upon the space ship. For a little time he held it, as if uncertainly. Then he flung it down the mountain slope. The plateau shook to its fall.

Suddenly it occurred to Lundoon that he ought to suspect a trick. The voice in the phones said promptly:

“No, neither of us has lied.”

He knew then that the Child was above deception. A slow elation began to rise from his new sense of communion with the supernal mind beyond the chasm. Here was a god, indeed, able to satisfy all the needs of mankind.

“The man who was my father,” that great voice came again, “told me of all he planned for me to do. He wanted me to be the leader and the judge and the servant of mankind. You have made me see that I must do that.”

CHAPTER VIII

FOR a long time, that night, Lundoon talked to the Child. The shining giant upon the far-mountain ceased to be strange and terrible.

They were like two men, calmly discussing a practical matter across a table. The plan they made was simple. The Child would talk to men, and they would follow him.

All the rest would come from that. But, first, there were two preliminary steps. The Child must build a radio station, powerful enough to carry their appeal to all the world. And he must bathe his body with a solution which would absorb those deadly radiations, which had been fatal to Kallent and the woman Marion. Meantime, for his own safety, Lundoon must wait where he was.

Dawn had come when their communion ended, and the Child went back among his machines, to begin his new tasks. Lundoon found himself stiff with cold. He found dry brush to make a fire, and warmed himself, and heated food. Then, lying in the direct cold sun, he wrapped himself in his coat and went to sleep—to dream of the new era coming, of men beneath the Child.

The roar of a motor woke him, to the glare of noon. He peered across to the flat-topped mountain, looking for the Child. The giant was invisible. But, among the machines, was a new immense black cylinder. He supposed that must be the tank in which the Child was treating his body, to stop the harmful rays.

Dazzled, it was a little time before he could find the plane. But it landed, and came bumping toward him across the clumps of sere yellow grass. Out of it sprang Gina Arneith.

She wore no prosaic flying togs, but something of shimmering silk. Her hair was amber flame. In the pale, passionate oval of her face, her eyes were still pools of violet midnight. In a glad husky voice, she sobbed:

“Wendy—”

Like a wild cold wind, a great sudden fear swept Lundoon. His knees were

weak, as he stumbled to meet the girl. He knew that her coming promised disaster to the Child, and all their splendid plan.

But she was in his arms, and in his blood.

“Wendy, I’ve brought you a letter.” Her whisper was swift and uneasy. “Don’t be angry, please. This was the only way they would let me come. They learned about Kallent, you see, and traced you here.”

Lundoon ripped open the stiff yellow envelope. He saw the printed name, Cotterstone, and the sheet trembled in his fingers. He read the bold black script:

Lundoon: A thankful world will reward your destruction of the giant with a lifetime annuity of one hundred million dollars, the yearly payment of that sum being guaranteed by the great nations.

—J. Hollworthy Cotterstone.

He slowly crumpled the heavy yellow sheet, and looked up into the anxious violet eyes of Gina Arneith. He smiled a faint tired smile.

“I’m sorry you came, Gina,” he said softly. “Because I loved you—too much to expect you to stoop to this. I think I ought to kill you, Gina—there’s an automatic in my bag. But I’m going to let you go back to Cotterstone. Tell him again: no sale.”

HER violet eyes were level, unflinching.

“You don’t understand,” she told him quietly. “Cotterstone knows now that I really love you. He’s afraid that I would betray him, to you and the giant. He told me not to come back—not until the giant is dead. He’d kill me, if I did.

“Cotterstone’s an emperor, Wendy.” Her voice was low and urgent. “He knows that the giant threatens his power—he has an idea of why Kallent created the giant. And he’s fighting,

now, to save his empire from any reform the giant might lead."

Tears shone in her eyes.

"You see, Wendy, I can't go back. He's ruthless. His enemies just vanish." Her persuasive fingers caught his arm. "May I stay, Wendy? If you are going to join the giant—and make the world over, as Cotterstone fears—I want to be on your side. Because—really—I love you."

His dark head bent slowly, half reluctantly.

He whispered, "You may stay."

"Wendy—my darling!"

She flung ecstatic arms around his neck. He kissed her, thirstily. Still he felt misgivings. He could not trust her, fully—he knew how much that reward must mean to her. But he began to talk about the plan. When she understood its reach and its splendor, she couldn't fail to be loyal.

Gina Arenth was a bright and joyous companion. She listened eagerly to all he said, and her acceptance seemed complete. Her presence on that bleak mesa, Lundoon thought, made him happier than he had ever been.

"I love you, Gina," he told her again. "If you'll really come with me—and join the Child—it will be more than I ever hoped for."

"I've done that, Wendy—for I love you, too."

Her lips, and her warm, eager body, repeated her answer.

Still, when the sun set, the Child had not emerged from that huge black cylinder. Lundoon set out a simple meal. They ate, and presently—when even Lundoon had tired of his visions of the bright tomorrow dawning—they slept.

Lundoon to a sense of ineffable joy—from a dream that he was walking, hand in hand with Gina Arneth, through the halls of a splendid crystal palace. He whispered her name. Then,

numb with sudden fear, he knew that she had gone.

His first conscious move was to grope for the little aluminum tube. It was gone. He knew instantly that Gina had taken it—that its loss meant the death of the Child.

Lundoon had not spoken of the radiation-bomb. Some tiny unconscious gesture must have betrayed its position. But Gina— Incredulity stunned him. Still he could feel the laughing joy of her nearness, her love like a flame. It simply couldn't all have been a ruse, a lie.

But the bomb was gone.

Then he heard the motor again, and realized that it had waked them. In the cold night wind that came down from the glaciers, the stiff motor was reluctant to start. It coughed and died. Again he heard the starter.

DESPERATELY, Lundoon stumbled upright. He found his bag. The contents were turned out. Gina evidently had searched for the gun. But he found it safe in the little hidden pocket that had brought it through the customs.

The cold motor caught at last, roared.

Lundoon worked the slide to load the gun. He ran stiffly toward the plane. Pale in the light from the instruments, he saw Gina's face. Intent over the controls, she was unaware of him.

The flat gun came up in his hand, grew steady. Then Gina's oval face looked up, and she smiled. Her beauty meshed him, a clinging web he could not break. The plane lurched forward, rushed past him. It was a diminishing sound in the night.

The gun dropped out of Lundoon's hand.

The Child was doomed.

Regret more bitter than the night

wind pursued Lundoon across the black plateau. His shoulders sagged beneath a weight of guilt that seemed too great to bear. His tortured brain could find but one possible atonement.

Staggering against the freezing wind, he went back to the camp—now starkly desolate, since Gina was gone. He found flashlight, notebook, pen. For a time, with numb fingers and straining eyes, he was busy.

He set down the formula for generation of the azoic radiation. An untested force. And there was no time for experiment, for selection and precision. It would be merely a hasty blotting of other life from the Earth, so that the Child might survive.

Lundoon was sick, shuddering, but he spurred himself to the task. When mankind was composed of such individuals as himself and Cotterstone and Gina Arneith, when it exiled Jethro Kallent and murdered Andrew Douglas, when it fought the Child through fear not of evil but of good—then the thing he did was right.

As he calculated and set down the last equations, he felt a tremor of the earth. The Child had already left the other mountain, and was striding toward him through the dark valley. The lean majestic body still shone, but the green had changed to a pure and luminous white.

Lundoon reeled to the communicator, to blurt out his confession:

"Master, I have given your life away—"

But the Child's deep voice spoke gravely from the phones:

"I know what you have done. And I see the weapon that you have prepared to give me, to enable me to annihilate your kind tonight."

Lundoon tried to shake away his awe.

"But you must hasten!" he cried. "Before your enemies can strike. Go

back to your machines, and make the generator. I'll read you the specifications."

But the Child came on, with an unhurried stride, across the valley. The blue shining eyes were calm and not afraid. The edge of a level hand was set against the cliff. Lundoon, obeying a nod, leaped upon it, carrying the communicator. He was lifted into the night.

THE Child stood still. For a little time the blue radiant eyes rested upon Lundoon, and then they lifted toward the tropic sky.

"I have not lived," the deep voice throbbed in the phones. "For I have been alone. Splendid visions have beckoned to me, and I have not attained them. And now I must die."

"No!" A panic shook Lundoon, standing in the bitter wind upon that vast and luminous palm. "Use the ray—or, if you will not, the range of the bomb is limited. If you fled to the polar continent, perhaps, or into the sea—even yet there might be time!"

"No," that great voice said slowly. "I am a man. I am the stuff of mankind—strength and weakness mingled. Any violence would destroy the strength. The best that I can do is leave its memory to my fellow men."

And the Child added, presently:

"All our plan was wrong. It had to fail. Man cannot be uplifted by force. He can only grow from within. He must have leaders, but the very need calls them forth. I am no more than another man, and less than others that shall come. My small part, now, is to die." The shining hand moved beneath Lundoon. "I shall set you down, and wait—"

"No," Lundoon protested. "Please hold me."

He wanted to urge the Child again to save his life. But thinking of

another, two thousand years ago, whose death had been the beginning of a new faith, he couldn't speak. The Child's eyes lifted to the starry sky again, and the deep voice said:

"You know, I have perceptions more delicate than men's. Now, looking upon a vast planet that circles another sun—"

At that moment Lundoon saw a new violet star in the west. An intense flaming point, it fell in a long swift arc. Lundoon knew that it was the radiation bomb, dropped from a plane. It had the same color, he thought, as the eyes of Gina Arneth.

The Child's bright palm quivered beneath him, and was suddenly rigid as iron. The pure white glow of the great body was abruptly extinguished, as the vital radioactive processes ceased. The blue light faded from the uplifted eyes.

The Child was dead.

CHAPTER IX

SHIVERING with the night wind of the *jaramos*, Lundoon crouched down in a furrow of the flat dead hand. At last the cold dawn came, and the sun gilded the colossal statue of gray iron that stood on the edge of the bleak plateau.

Soon a small white-winged plane soared over the peaks from the direction of Quito. With a reckless daring, that ignored the perils of altitude and blustering wind, it was landed upon the too-small space of the level palm.

Gina Arneth ran eagerly to meet Lundoon.

"I was so afraid, Wendy!" She clung to him, against a rough blast of the wind. "Afraid the giant would fall on you—"

Stiffly, dully, he pushed her away from him.

"Listen, Wendy—please!" Her hurt voice was half swept away on the wind. "Everything's all right. I told Cotterstone you'd accepted, stayed behind just to keep the giant from suspecting. So the money's waiting—a hundred million a year!"

She tugged at his arm.

"Come on—before the plane blows away. They sent a special radio. All the world is waiting for you to tell how you destroyed the giant. And Mr. Cotterstone—"

"Get away," he said faintly.

She saw the bleak agony on his face.

"Wendy!" Her voice was sharp with concern. "Darling, are you ill?"

"Blood money!" He staggered before the wind, toward the iron hand's edge. The girl dragged him back, herself white with fear of the gulf below. "A better price," he muttered, "than Judas got."

"Come on," she begged him.

"I'm going to jump." His voice was dead. "After Andy and Dr. Kallent and the Child."

"No, Wendy—no!" Her tone was thin with dread. "You can't do that—not now." She pulled, against the wind.

Lundoon looked at her, bleakly.

"No, Gina, I won't. I've got to go on living. All of them left me their jobs. Now I've got the Child's. I'll have to carry on with that—as far as a human can." He nodded soberly. "To begin with, there's the cold anti-virus—"

He lifted a hand toward that gray colossal head, and his lips smiled faintly. Then he followed Gina Arneth to the tiny plane, which, even in the hollow of the palm, was shuddering before the wind. Gina Arneth gave him the microphone.

"Hello, Cotterstone—"

His voice was hoarse and choked.

"Yes, the Child of Science is dead.

A god, he died so that men might live. You killed him, Cotterstone—and that is a murder that even you can hardly forget. But I am to blame, for letting the weapon reach your hands. I'm going to spend the rest of my life trying to do the Child's work. And this will serve notice that I'm not going to touch the murder-money."

HE dropped the microphone, and looked at the breathless girl.

"Drop me, somewhere, Gina," he said faintly. "On some beach or highway. Because this has got to be the end of Lundoon. He has too much to live down—and Cotterstone would never let him rest, with the azoic ray. But somebody else can go on—somewhere."

"Drop me and leave me." His trembling hand closed desperately on the gun in his pocket. "Then you can go back—" His voice was a tired bitter rasp. "Back to Cotterstone and his bloody millions—"

She sat rigid, stricken, in the air-coupe beside him.

"Don't — Wendy!" Agony sobbed in her voice. "Please — don't rub it in." Wide and black and dry, her eyes looked into his face. "I see now that I have done a dreadful thing." Her voice was quiet and low. "I know that it can't ever be forgiven or undone. It will be a burden on me, always. But may I go with you, Wendy—and try to do the little that I can."

For a long time Lundoon sat as rigid as the gray iron form of the Child. The wind shook and lifted the plane on the great open palm. Lundoon looked up through the glass at the majestic still features of the child, and the stern bitterness melted slowly from his eyes. He put his arm around the weeping girl.

"I forgive you, Gina," he whispered. "I think the Child would want me to."

The Child's frozen body was decreed

public property by the government of Ecuador. Peru, however, made a counter-claim, since it stood upon disputed territory. Both nations armed for war.

The quarrel was finally arbitrated, however, and both parties sold their claims to meet munitions bills. The buyer turned out to be a subsidiary of World Chemical and Steel—which had sold the armament.

It proved a shrewd investment. Besides the almost worthless iron, the Child's body contained enough radium, platinum, osmium, and other valuable metals to yield a net return of eighty dollars a ton. The net profit to the Cotterstone interests was estimated at more than two billion dollars.

One fragment, however, was preserved from the furnace. Anonymously purchased from Mr. Cotterstone, the metal was cut into a massive twenty-foot pillar, and erected upon the spot where the Child had died. Into its rustless gray metal was cut:

IN MEMORY OF THE CHILD
OF SCIENCE—A MAN WHO
DIED THAT MEN MIGHT LIVE

A landing field was leveled on the bleak plateau beside the gray pillar. Among the visitors who came one day was a certain Dr. Smith—who, if he had been less self-effacing, might have been recognized as the conqueror of the common cold. He was accompanied by his lovely flame-haired wife, and their son.

Staring across at the mysterious remains of those colossal black machines, whose adamant material had defied Cotterstone's salvage crews, the blue-eyed boy listened eagerly to their stories of the Child.

"Dad!" he cried. "Mom, when I grow up, I want to be like the Child was—strong and wonderful and good." Dr. Smith and Gina smiled.