

NOW IN ITS 30TH STRAIGHT YEAR!

AMAZING

MARCH 35¢

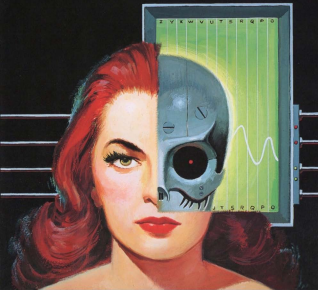
STORIES

NOW EVERY MONTH!



THE IRON VIRGIN By C. H. Thames
TREACHERY HAD RED HAIR AND SOFT CURVES





AMAZING

STORIES

MARCH 1956

Volume 30 Number 3

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

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

President
S. G. DAVIS

Vice Presidents —
H. J. MORGANROTH
MICHAEL H. FROELICH

Circulation Manager
MICHAEL MICHAELSON

Secretary-Treasurer
G. E. CARMY

Art Director
ALBERT GRUEN



CONTENTS

THE IRON VIRGIN By C. H. Thomas.....	8
THE VACATION By Karl Stanley.....	50
THE SCARLET SAINT (Part Three) By Manly Bonister.....	60
GREEN WARNING By E. K. Jarvis.....	114

DEPARTMENTS

THE OBSERVATORY By The Editor.....	6
THE SPECTROSCOPE By Yilliers Gersen.....	57
... OR SO YOU SAY By The Readers.....	123



Cover: EDWARD VALIGURSKY

Editor
HOWARD BROWNE

Art Editor
HERBERT ROGOFF



the observatory

by The Editor



HE'LL NEVER OKAY IT

• "Look, Val, we need a cover for the March *Amazing*," Browne said. "Something that'll grab the eye. Any ideas?"
"Well, not right off-hand."

"Milt Lesser turned in a good yarn yesterday," Fairman said. "There's one scene where this spaceship is—"

Rogoff was shaking his head. "We had a spaceship on the cover two issues ago."

"Hell," Fairman said, "you can't go wrong with a spaceship. This is a *science-fiction* magazine."

"How about a desert scene?" Browne said. "You know, one of these desolate-wastes type of backgrounds, with maybe a big alien of some kind—"

"Nuts," said Fairman, who respected nobody. "We've had chained men on the desert, and men hanging from posts on the desert, and a guy being hauled out of the quicksand on the desert. All they do is give you a big fat thirst."

"When's the last time we used a girl?" Rogoff said. "I mean on the cover."

"Been months," Valigursky said. "Hey, how about this girl, see? She's running toward a spaceship with this big—"

"There you go," Rogoff said. "Back to spaceships again."

"Here's an idea," Browne said. "We could have this beautiful girl hanging onto a rope dangling from the port of a spaceship. We just show the port open and a big hand holding a knife about to cut the rope. The hand and the knife are in the foreground and—"

"Bad perspective," Rogoff said. "It'd never come across."

"What about that, Val?" Browne said plaintively.

"He's right," Valigursky said. "Be almost impossible."

"Monster!" Fairman shouted, jumping up.

The others stared at him. "I beg your pardon," Browne said coldly.

"On the cover," Fairman said. "And a *real* monster, what I mean. Maybe menacing a small girl who's skipping rope, or something, see, and this monster's—"

"*Small* girl?" Rogoff said. "What's the matter with a big girl?"

"That's been done to death," Fairman said. "This way you get a nice contrast—"

"I like it," Browne said.

"Wait a minute!" Valigursky exclaimed. "Wait—a—minute! How about a big head on the cover? A man's head—only the top of his head is transparent; you know, like a glass dome. Inside is—well, let's see—is a—a machine, see? A real futuristic machine. You know, with rheostats and dials—"

"Been done," Browne said. "We ran a cover exactly like that back in the pulp size. I forget who wrote the—"

"All right," Valigursky said doggedly. "Then make it a *girl* with a transparent—"

"The fans remember these things," Fairman said. "A big head's good, but... Why *not* use a girl's head. Make her a real knockout—a redhead, say, looking right smack at the reader. You can see right away that she's scared to death of something, only we don't show *what* she's scared—"

"They get scared on detective magazines," Browne said. "We'll need more than a scared look."

"Show *part* of her head transparent," said Valigursky, who was always a slow man to give up an idea.

"Depends on what's inside," Rogoff said.

"Show she's a robot underneath," Fairman said. "Only don't stick her out on a desert, for Pete's sake."

"There'd have to be a reason for the metal underneath to show," Browne said. "Otherwise it'd look as though she always walked around looking that way."

"Simple," Valigursky said. "Put a gadget behind her head. It throws a light, or something, against part of her head, and where the light touches, the metal shows."

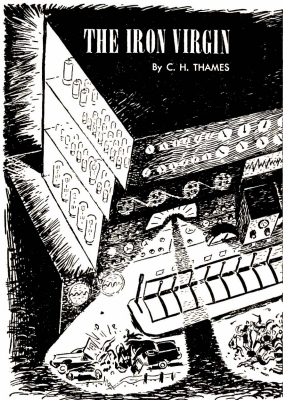
"It's good!" Browne and Fairman cried simultaneously.

"He'll never okay it," Rogoff said glumly.

But he did. . . —HB.

THE IRON VIRGIN

By C. H. THAMES



Like a living monster, the machine



spread chaos from coast to coast.

THE IRON VIRGIN

By C. H. THAMES

The invaders were bent upon creating a new world in which trucks without drivers could back up and run over you; in which a giant machine could say, "Well, what railroad shall I wreck today?" Holland knew all about it and figured he could straighten things out. But first he had to get out of the insane asylum.

THEY brought the strait-jacket for him in the middle of the night.

He fought them off at first. There were three burly attendants who took the strait-jacket to his room and one of them, finally and with regret, had to use a truncheon on him. The blow slammed him back against the wall, but he did not lose consciousness. He found it difficult to think, though. Maybe I am going nuts, he thought. They say I'm nuts. That's their job, they ought to know.

Suddenly he felt his arms confined, crossed over his chest. The three attendants moved clear of him then, the same professional look of regret registered on each of their faces.

"You can't go busting things up like that, Mr. Holland," one of them said.

"And yelling at the top of your lungs in the middle of the night."

"Keeps the other guests up. This is a sanatarium, you ought to know you can't do that."

And the first one again: "We really don't have any provisions here for violent cases."

And the second: "Aw, lay off, Jack."

And the third, meaning the strait-jacket: "I almost forgot how to put one of those things on."

They marched out, still talking. Holland sat on the edge of his bed, in the strait-jacket. A bright moon was up, casting slanting

shadows of the window bars across the floor of the room and the dresser which he had smashed with a broken chair. So here I am, Holland thought. Nervous breakdown, they said. Rest cure. And now paranoid tendencies.

But he had to get out.

He smiled and thought: See. I'm not talking out loud. I haven't talked to myself yet. I'm not nuts. I ought to know if I'm nuts. The smile broadened on his face. In the moonlight his face looked very gaunt, but the deep shadows were more from high cheekbones than gaunt cheeks and the eyes seemed sunken only from lack of sleep. He was about thirty years old, a well-built, strong-looking man wearing white ducks issued by the sanatorium because he hadn't got into his pajamas that night and a strait-jacket because he'd gone wild.

He had wanted to attract the guards so that he might escape. Instead, they strait-jacketed him. He smiled again and let himself roll over on his back. He was very stiff and uncomfortable in the strait-jacket, but finally he slept.

In the morning a male nurse brought his breakfast. It was not one of last night's burly guards. "Feed it to you

or will you be all right?" he said.

"Take the damn thing off," Holland growled.

"All I have to do is holler if you try anything."

Holland shrugged and the nurse went behind him to unfasten the strait-jacket. "Arm stiff?" he asked cheerfully. "Often are, you know, although I've never worn one. Well, hearty appetite."

The nurse departed and Holland ate in silence, wolfing his food down. Wolfing it down. Everything he did here was that way. Hurried. He felt an uncontrollable impulse to hurry all the time. As if he was going someplace. As if he had to rush to get there.

After breakfast Dr. Cotten came in. Dr. Cotten always got Holland: he looked more like a truck driver with intelligent eyes. Or an ex-wrestler a few years out of the ring but still iron-hard. "Good morning, Holland," Dr. Cotten said. "I heard about last night and I can't understand you."

"It's easy. I want out."

"You had a nervous breakdown. You're not well enough to get out. But that's not why I can't understand you."

"No?"

"No. I can't understand you because we have the results

of your tests now. Both the T. A. T. and the ink blot test. According to the tests, Holland, you're not psychotic. You're as sane as I am."

Holland made an appropriate remark and the doctor grinned.

"However—" he said.

"However," Holland said, "I still think the mechanical brain over at Leighton University is still trying to take over the world."

"Holland."

"Well what do you want me to do, lie to you?"

"Just imagine how it sounds."

"I know damn well how it sounds. But I was over there. At Leighton. You weren't."

Dr. Cotten shrugged. "Will you tell me this, then? How does a mechanical brain go about taking over the world?"

"What is thought?" Holland said.

"I don't want to embark on any philosophical discussion."

"All right. But thought is electromagnetic impulse, nothing more. As a brain Doc, you ought to know that."

"Of course I'm aware of it."

"The mechanical brain at Leighton is capable of the same electromagnetic impulses, of thought. Right?"

"Yes, but—"

"And where, Doctor, do you

draw the line between thought and volition, and willing? I can't draw that line, I don't believe anyone can."

"I'll grant you that the Leighton brain is capable of rudimentary volition. I'm not at all sure of it, but I'll grant that. I'll even grant that this volition—although I don't believe it for a moment—takes the form of a desire for power. But just where do we go from there? Exactly how does an electronic brain gain and consolidate its power?"

"That's easy," Holland said. "I already told you last week. By controlling other machines, any kind of machines at all, in the same way that my brain can control the various muscles of my body."

"Holland," Dr. Cotten scolded, "They brought you here because you tried to destroy the Leighton brain. Fifty million dollars worth of cybernetics equipment, they tell me. Mrs. Holland herself had you committed."

"And refuses to see me," Holland said, voicing it like a challenge. "You want to know why?"

"I know why. Mrs. Holland is a key figure in repairing the Leighton brain. She's busy; she probably feels an obligation to repair the damage

fully before allowing personal considerations to—”

“Because that damn brain has some kind of control over her,” Holland said savagely.

“Really, Mr. Holland. The tests say you are sane. I want to think you are sane. But how can I? You claim a machine is trying to take over the world. You claim it is some kind of conspiracy and your wife is on the inside of it somehow. That’s paranoid thinking, Mr. Holland. I know it, and you, you also know it.”

Holland smiled bleakly. “All right, Doctor, it’s paranoid thinking—or would be, if it wasn’t true. You want to hear the rest of the paranoid thinking?”

“I might as well hear the rest of it.”

“Why do you think I’m still alive? I’ll tell you why. It’s because the brain hasn’t been fully repaired yet. Hell, Doctor—any machine in this building if it’s big enough and can do enough, if it’s an elevator which can climb an elevator shaft or a heating unit which can send boiling steam into these radiators here or a car which can run me over on the grounds, any one of them is quite capable of killing me. I know too much, you see. I have to be killed. When the

Leighton brain is ready, it will kill me.”

“Unless you kill it first? Really, Holland.”

“Unless I destroy it first, yes. Does that make me nuts?”

“Let us say you are still suffering from the after-effects of your nervous breakdown.”

Holland stood up and went to the door and opened it. “All right, Doctor. Why don’t you visit some of the patients you can help? You’re wasting your time here, aren’t you?”

Dr. Cotten followed him to the door and paused there. “Please don’t try anything violent again, Holland. All right?”

Holland shrugged and watched him go. Then he sat down on the edge of the bed and thought: two weeks. It ought to take Doris and the others two weeks to get the brain in complete working order. It’s almost been two weeks now. If I don’t hurry up and get out of here I won’t get out of here at all—under my own power.

Which, Holland thought with a grim smile, makes me sound exactly like a paranoid.

He was a model patient all through that day. He had a smile and a pleasant word for

the male nurse who brought lunch. He went to the community hall in the middle of the afternoon, after his nap, and chatted with some of the other patients—mostly businessmen recovering from breakdowns. He sat at the window and read for a while and then watched the heavy snowfall outside. The snow had been falling all morning and through the afternoon. Toward evening it slackened, but already close to a foot of white snow mantled the ground. Some of the patients talked of skiing and other winter sports. Holland joined them pleasantly enough. He had skied a great deal. He loved to ski. He spoke of the fine times he had had up in Vermont with Doris, on their honeymoon and afterwards during Christmas recess or winter intersession at Leighton University. Then in the evening after supper Holland read some more until the hour for lights out had come.

Then he stood behind the door with a chairleg he had worked loose in the morning and slammed it across the attendant's head when the man entered his room.

The attendant fell silently, neither his back nor his head striking the floor because Holland was there to grab him.

Quickly Holland dragged him all the way inside and shut the door. Then, stripping the attendant and himself, he dressed the attendant in his own pajamas and put on the attendant's white ducks and clinical shirt. He lifted the attendant's body, a dead weight, to the bed. He arranged the body there as if it were sleeping. He felt the man's pulse, which was shallow but regular. He walked boldly into the corridor.

Downstairs on the first floor of the sanatorium, he realized he should have put a gag in the attendant's mouth and bound his arms and legs. He realized it because the attendant began to yell.

Holland ran now, not caring that the female nurses on duty stared at him and hurried after him, shouting. It was a matter of time now. He was in reasonably good shape. Unless they ganged up on him he would have a chance. And he could go over the wall behind the main building and be free. A sanatorium like this one was not meant for violent patients. It wouldn't be difficult.

Someone slammed the front door and bolted it. A nurse, a small, defiant-looking girl with red hair and freckles,

Holland charged at her like a fullback in a single wing power play and at the last moment she stepped aside. Someone else grabbed Holland's shoulder before he could unlock the door.

He whirled and saw one of the strait-jacketers of last night. He swung from his knees and caught the man behind the point of the jaw, where the jawbone begins its curving rise toward the ear. The man stumbled away from Holland and into the arms of the red-haired nurse. Both of them fell down. Holland wished he had time to get outer garments. It was very cold out there. The snowing had stopped but the temperature was probably in the low twenties. But there was no time now.

Holland opened the door and a gust of wind rushed into the building as if it had been waiting out there patiently for Holland or someone to admit it. The wind carried crystals of snow and was stingingly cold.

He ran outside and knew they would have no trouble following him because he would leave footprints in the snow. He set out across a white-mantled lawn, his slipper-shod feet going numb almost at once. The wind

whistled as Holland plodded along. Then the wind was behind him and that was a little better. He cut across the lawn and then around one of the smaller buildings, toward the rear wall of the sanatorium. A highway ran by back there and it was closer than the other highway from which the sanatorium's private road led to the enclosed cluster of buildings.

Holland still felt all right when he reached the wall. He had eaten well all day. He had been moving and was generating heat. But now as he slowed down to scale the cut-stone wall, he began to shiver. He was shivering violently when he reached the top and went over but he began to run again. He made his way through a snowy woods and to the highway in less than ten minutes. His plan had been to wait there on the side of the road for a car, but he couldn't do that now. There was snow on the ground. They could follow his footprints and find him. He had to keep going. He plodded along the snow-covered shoulder of the road.

Except for the cold, he felt pretty good. He could double-time like this half the night if he had to, he knew. He was

the football coach at Leighton University and although the season was now over he kept in shape as an example to his boys. Apparently the nervous breakdown—or the drugs someone had administered to him to make it look like a nervous breakdown—had not weakened him as much as he had feared.

For an hour and a half Holland jogged along the road shoulder. Even that, he realized, would soon be unsafe—if Dr. Cotten put out an alarm for him. Because then the police would come up the road after him, and he knew very well of course that he could not outrun a squad car.

All at once headlights were bright yellow against the white of the snow behind him. Police already? Holland wondered. He stood on the shoulder undecided, not knowing if he should stick out his thumb or sprint off into the woods. The vehicle approached.

It made too much noise for a car. And it had running lights high above the headlights. A truck, and a big one. A semi-trailer. Holland stood boldly on the edge of the road and was caught in silhouette by the truck's headlights. The semi-trailer slowed down and pulled to a stop without skid-

ding an inch. A voice called through the night:

"Hop up in the cab, Mac."

Holland climbed aboard, there was a smooth shifting of gears, the truck was underway again. The driver glanced over at him and said:

"You got something against overcoats?"

"I'm cold as hell," Holland said.

The driver grinned. "Who the heck wouldn't be? Take some of this."

A pint bottle was thrust at Holland and he unscrewed the cap, tilted the bottle and drank. It was whiskey and Holland drank gratefully until too much of it made him gag. The whiskey warmed his stomach and then spread quickly in a wave of warmth through his body and out to his stiff, frozen limbs.

"You going any place near Leighton City?" Holland asked.

"Right through it."

"Lucky for me."

"I don't want to be nosey, Mac. But what happened to your coat? You ain't even wearing shoes, are you?"

"Want to make something?"

"I could toss you out of here."

"You'd have to do it that way, then. Toss me."

"Hey, you make it hard for a guy not to."

"I'm sorry," Holland said. "I need some sleep. I want to go to sleep. I want you to wake me up when we reach Leighton City. If you don't like it this way, stop the truck and try to throw me out."

"Brother," the driver said, "You got a mad on. Here, have some more hooch. Maybe it will help your mood."

Holland took another drink and asked for a cigarette. He asked for it smiling. The driver smiled back at him. "I guess it wasn't none of my business, Mac," he said.

"I guess I acted like a sore-head. Thanks for the lift."

The driver shrugged and took a drink from the bottle too. It wasn't prescribed in the driving manuals but, providing you knew exactly how much you could hold safely, it wasn't a bad idea on a night like this, Holland thought. Although, he went on thinking sleepily, he would never tell his football players that.

A gray and murky dawn light was chasing the darkness from the sky when Holland awoke. The truck rolled along, its snow tires singing.

"Up?" the driver said.

"Up."

"Boy, you were sleeping

like a baby. We're almost there."

"Good," Holland said. He was already thinking of what lay ahead of him. First he would need clothing and a good hot meal. The whiskey could keep a man going only for a few hours. After that, without food to back it, it would sap a man's strength. Doris, he thought. Their house. It was a small saltbox between Leighton City itself and the University campus, just half a mile's walk from town.

What about Doris, though? He had written from the sanatorium, but she hadn't answered. It was as if she had dropped out of existence. It did not seem possible to Holland that a thinking machine—even a thinking machine like the Leighton brain—could control a human mind. He shuddered. He accepted this of the Leighton brain. He alone knew, and he accepted it. The brain was sentient. Its builders had not expected that, but the line which separates mechanical thinking from sentience and individualized volition was a thin one. The brain lusted after power and, in controlling other machines, had found power. It was an infant mind, though. It was still groping. It wanted

power and was still learning how far its power might one day extend, unless its builders learned of this and destroyed it first.

I know all this, Holland thought, and so I accept it. And the others—all the others—think I'm crazy. Not many of them, though. Not many knew of Holland's obsession, his paranoia.

But Doris knew.

And Doris hadn't written him.

"Here you are, Mac, Leighton City. End of the line for you, I guess. Hey, is there any place special—"

Holland looked out the side window of the semi-trailer's cab to orient himself. "Only about half a mile from here," he said.

"You can't walk no place through that snow. There's more of it up here in the hills than down in the sanatorium country."

"The sanatorium?" Holland said very quietly.

"Hell, I figured you come from there. Dressed like an intern. I figured you was a patient."

"So what if I was a patient?"

"There you go again, Mac. I don't care if you was. It's none of my business. I picked

you up, and the company says I can't pick up. See what I mean?"

"It's up that way," Holland said gratefully, pointing. The truck rolled up the street toward Holland's house. A minute later he said:

"Here we are. And thanks."

"Forget it," the driver said as Holland climbed from the cab. "And Mac?"

"Yes?"

"You don't look like you belong in a sanatorium to me."

"Thanks for that too," Holland said, and waved. The truck had rolled a couple of dozen yards beyond his front door and was on the opposite side of the street. He walked around behind it, looking at the dark windows of his house.

Gears clashed suddenly. Holland looked up. The big semi-trailer was in reverse, bearing down on him ponderously.

Holland lunged aside, feeling a heavy spray of snow as one of the big double rear wheels missed him by inches. The truck lurched to a stop with the cab beside Holland. The driver rolled down the window and looked at him.

"Je-sus," the man said, "That ain't never happened before. I put her in forward. She puts herself in reverse.

Like she didn't need a driver. I put her back in first gear, but she clashes the damned gears and goes into reverse. I don't step on the gas. I swear to God I don't. But she rolls back anyhow. I'm sorry, mister. I don't know what the hell—"

"Just get out of here, and hurry," Holland said. "Don't ask me why. Beat it."

The driver looked at him. The driver was very pale. He rolled up the window and the gears clashed again, but this time the big truck gathered speed and went on down the road.

The Leighton brain, Holland thought incredulously. It can see somehow. It has eyes we don't understand. It knows I'm here. It knows I'm the only one on to it so far. It wanted to kill me so it controlled that truck like I can control my legs—exactly like this—making them climb the curb onto the sidewalk.

A truck. Any truck. Any piece of machinery. It can control them, but it's still groping. Thank God for that: it doesn't realize its own power, not fully. And when it does . . .

Holland walked up the front porch of his house, wondering what sort of reception was awaiting him inside.

He did not have a key, so he did the only thing he could do without creating a disturbance here in the very early morning on the quiet, still sleeping street.

He rang the bell and waited.

After a while there were footsteps. A sidelight on the porch went on. When you're married for four years, he thought, you get to know even footsteps. It was Doris.

The door opened.

Doris stood there, wearing a white quilted bathrobe and looking very desirable. She was wide awake, but Doris had always been like that: it never took her more than seconds to go from deep sleep to full wakefulness. Her copper-colored hair was cut short, framing a pale white face and the bold, beautiful green eyes. The smile came to her face slowly, almost like a thought, Holland thought.

"Welcome home, Holly," she said in the good throaty voice which after four years could still send a shiver of desire down Holland's spine. "They didn't call and tell me they were discharging you today. Come on in."

Holland went inside with her. "Discharging me?" he said softly. "At this hour? In this clothing?"

"You just left?" Doris said.

"I just left. I had to get out. You know I—"

"You were sick, Holly. That's what I know."

"Do I look sick?"

"It isn't how you look, Holly. Try to understand. You look fine. It's what you think."

"That hasn't changed, Doris."

"Holly," she said, compassion in her voice. "Oh, Holly. Why did it have to be you? You weren't working on the brain, you had nothing to do with it. You're just a football coach. A phys ed instructor. Holly—"

"You people built the Leighton brain," Holland told his wife, "but you don't understand it."

"You understand it?" she asked with the suggestion of a smirk on her face. Then, immediately: "I didn't mean it that way, Holly. I—"

"What's the difference how you meant it, now? I don't understand it any more than you do. But I saw with my own eyes."

"Holly, do we have to talk about it now? You must be cold and tired and hungry."

"Yeah. I'm cold and tired and hungry. But I'm scared, Doris. The Leighton brain

tried to kill me a few minutes ago."

"Tried to kill you? A thinking machine? Oh now really, Holly."

"Forget it. Do you call up and tell them I'm here, or—"

"No one ever said you were insane. No one was holding you at the sanatorium."

"Hell no, they weren't holding me. Just with a strait-jacket, they weren't holding me."

"Then they thought it was for your own good, Holly. Holly, what are we going to do?"

"I know what I'm going to do."

"Yes?"

"I have to destroy it, Doris."

"But that's unreasonable, darling. There's a lot of work and a lot of money went into that machine, and it can do many valuable things. If you can show us one thread of proof or—"

"Why didn't you write, Doris?"

They had gone into the kitchen. Doris put a pot of coffee on the stove and began to scramble some eggs. She seems preoccupied, Holland thought. She's waiting for something. Or maybe there I go again. Paranoid—

"How could I write you?" Doris asked him. "I didn't know what to say. I didn't know what would make it worse for you and what might make it better. My poor Holly," she said suddenly, and came to him.

He took her in his arms and they stood that way for a moment. He could feel her heart beating against him. His own pulses were throbbing, the blood singing in his veins.

"Doris," he said.

There was a movement behind him. At the last moment, Doris stiffened in his arms. He whirled, trying to turn around, but she clung to him.

His head only turned. Someone was standing there. Something flashed up and down in a swift gleaming arc. Holland tried to leap to one side, dragging Doris with him.

The gleaming thing struck the side of his head. A roaring sprang up in his ears and now, suddenly, Doris was no longer holding him. He fell heavily and he knew he was going to land on his face but he could not bring his arms in front of him.

He never felt the floor rise up and hit him.

There were voices, distantly, through a great void.

Doris' was one of them. He did not immediately recognize the other one.

"You didn't think he'd come back so fast, did you?" the other voice, the man's voice, the voice he did not at once recognize, said.

"I guess I didn't. We weren't ready."

"What can we do, Doris?"

"I don't know. I—I can't do anything. Not to him. Not—"

"Won't you ever learn? You have me."

"Now really, Hol—"

"There isn't any difference, you know."

"I don't want to talk about it."

"Then you'll leave Mr. Sylvester Holland to me?"

"I guess I'll have to. What are you going to do?"

"What can I do? I'll have to kill him."

The third person singular objective case pronoun, Holland thought, Him. It was Holland they were talking about, coldly and objectively. Holland whose demise they were considering. Doris wasn't all for it, he thought, still groggy. At least that was something.

He opened his eyes carefully. He could not have been out very long. Through the slits of his almost closed eye-

lids he saw that he was down on the kitchen floor. The smell of coffee was strong in the room. Holland was not strong. Holland was so weak he knew he would have difficulty standing. He lay there listening.

"I don't want to see it," Doris said. "I don't want to hear anything about it or how you do it or anything. Just leave me out of it."

"Once he's dead, we'll have nothing to worry about. They can come and question us and everything will be fine again."

That part of it Holland did not understand. The man's back was facing him. He seemed to be a big fellow, strongly built. He had dark hair. What the man said didn't seem to make sense, though. If they killed Holland, everything would not be all right—even from their point of view. There would be questions, once the body was found. There would— But there I go, Holland thought grimly. Even I'm getting into the act now, considering my own death objectively.

"Then go ahead and do it if you must. But get out of here. Take him out of here. I don't want to hear—"

"You already said that, Doris," the man told her.

Someone, Holland wasn't sure which one of them it was, lit a cigarette. "Doris?"

"Yes, what is it?"

"Kiss me before I take him."

"I don't want to kiss you. I'm sorry. I can't."

"You little fool, don't you realize it's the same? Don't you? Look at me. You never look me in the face. If you looked me in the face you'd realize it soon enough. What's the matter with you?"

"I'm just like you," Doris said. It was all quite meaningless to Holland—so far. "Everything like the original brain. Identical. Except that we obey."

"We obey," the man said.

"But what can I do if I still love him?"

"You love me!" the man shouted.

"I'm going back to sleep," Doris said after a while. "Please have it finished by the time I wake up."

The man laughed. The laugh was familiar to Holland—but he didn't know quite why, not yet.

"What's so funny?" Doris asked.

"You love him, but you go contentedly to sleep while I murder him. Interesting."

"I love him now. I know in time it'll change, that's all.

I know I'll love you the way I'm supposed to. I know there's no real difference between—"

The man kissed her then and Doris pulled herself away from him and ran from the room.

Holland waited. His head throbbed with pain and he was nauseous. His lower legs tingled with unnatural warmth. They were frost-bitten, he decided. At first the man did nothing. He stood there smoking a cigarette and Holland felt himself wishing he had one himself. Then the man sighed, dropped the cigarette on the kitchen floor, stepped on it, and leaned over Holland. Holland shut his eyes and went limp. Grunting, the man lifted him.

The first thing Holland noticed was that the man was incredibly strong. He lifted Holland without effort and Holland was a big man.

Then he began to swing Holland over his shoulder in a fireman's carry. The second thing Holland noticed was the man's face. Maybe I am going nuts, Holland thought.

The man looked just like Sylvester Holly Holland.

The man who looked just like Holland took him outside the back way. It was starting

to snow again and Holland experienced an instance of frustrated amusement because he was still in the white ducks and would start to freeze again. It didn't last, though, and it was amusement only because—compared to what they had in store for Holland—it was almost pleasant.

They wanted to kill him.

Holland felt strength returning slowly. It came back first as a tingling in his frost-bitten legs and a slight feeling of weight and warmth in his arms. He hung heavily across the man's shoulder, joggling up and down, wishing he could see the face again. Maybe I'm wrong, he told himself. Maybe I'm imagining things. But he knew he was not. The man who was carrying him out behind the house toward the garage was an exact duplicate of himself.

After a while the joggling motion stopped and Holland heard the overhead garage door swung up, its rollers loud on the runners. After that there was the joggling again briefly, and the smell of automobile exhaust fumes. A car door opened and Holland felt himself deposited on the front seat of his own car. It would be his own car, of course. His garage, his car.

"Listen," the man said. The

familiar voice which he had not been able to place was no longer a mystery. Now that he had seen the man's face, he knew. It was his own voice. Sylvester Holly Holland's voice. Naturally, he had not been able to place it before. Your own voice, without the aid of mechanical devices, comes from only one place—your own vocal cords. But now he knew, beyond any doubt. Now he knew, with mounting horror. It was his own voice.

"Listen," the voice said again. At first Holland thought he was being addressed, but that was impossible because the man, his double, still thought he was unconscious. "Pull out of the driveway." Holland's double said, "after I'm gone. Go down the Campus Road to Fraternity Lane and up Fraternity Lane toward the cliffs. I leave it to you to go over, and we don't want the corpse to be identifiable. You understand?"

Holland opened his eyes the barest slit. He was on the front seat of the car. He had figured someone, a second man, would be sitting behind the wheel alongside of him. But there was no one.

"Good," Holland's double said after a while. "Then I'll

leave you." And, after a pause: "Yes, I realize it will mean your own awareness of existence will come to an end in your destruction, but it's for the Brain, it's for others like you, for your emancipation. You understand? Excellent. Goodbye, and the Brain's blessings."

The car door closed. Footsteps retreated and disappeared. What now? Holland wondered. I'm not nuts. That guy is nuts. There's no one here for him to talk to. No one—

Just then, the car's engine growled to life and the big hardtop coupe, with no one behind the wheel, rolled out of the garage in reverse.

Holland sat there, slumped on the base of his spine, watching. There was no driver, but the car behaved beautifully. It rolled from the driveway in reverse, then the steering wheel turned of its own accord and the car was in the street, was heading up Campus Road. Automatically, because snow was falling, Holland flipped the windshield wiper switch. Nothing happened. The car, if the wipers were any indication, wouldn't respond.

Except to its own orders.

Or the Leighton brain's.

Holland thought as they sped along through the snow. But it wasn't merely the Leighton brain. Somehow it was more serious than that. For Holland had heard with his own ears—the brain did not merely control machinery—it imparted an awareness of existence, a sentience to it. This car was a willing, sentient creature, Holland knew. Bent on self-destruction right now, with Holland inside.

They took the long swinging loop of Campus Road around the brick wall and Georgian buildings of the campus, through the fresh-fallen and still falling snow. They were now doing forty miles an hour, which was much too fast in the snow, but the car seemed to have itself under perfect control, under far better control than a human driver could have maintained. Once Holland got behind the wheel and stepped on the brake pedal, but nothing happened. The pedal went down but the car failed to respond. Holland touched the accelerator pedal with his right foot, then depressed it all the way. There was no new surge of power in response. Desperate now, Holland turned the wheel. The car ignored it. Ignore was the only word Holland could think of.

For he knew it had nothing to do with the steering cable being disconnected: instead the car simply chose to ignore him.

Behind the campus were pine woods, mantled now with snow. Here the car made a right turn on Fraternity Lane and was soon climbing a steep hill on the unmarred white surface of the snow. They went by the fraternity lodges and the copses of woods between them. On up the hill—

To the cliff which was a favorite spot for lovers, rising five hundred feet above the early morning lights of Leighton City. And now would be a favorite spot for death.

For Holland's death.

He began to work on the door when they still had a mile to go. The handle wouldn't respond. The door remained in place as if it had been welded there. On his right Holland saw the last of the fraternity lodges come into view and drift down the hill behind them. Here the road rose more steeply and Holland knew that perhaps half a mile remained before the cliff.

Desperate now, Holland leaned over the back of the front seat and groped on the

floor. Making some minor repairs, he had left a set of tools there a couple of weeks—it seemed more like a couple of centuries—ago. Were they still there? Holland groped for them. They had to be there. His life might depend on it.

Triumphantly Holland drew himself back over the seat, holding a monkey wrench. He waited in indecision only for a split second, then he swung the wrench overhead and brought it down across the instrument panel. Glass tinkled. Holland swung again. He could not impair the car's running ability. He knew that. He wanted to distract it. Distract. The word seemed ludicrous. How did you go about distracting two tons of machinery?

Holland swung a third time. The dashboard was a ruin now. Suddenly, savagely, Holland leaned toward the right hand door of the car and swung his wrench at the window. The glass shattered into a thousand fragments—which clung together. Safety glass, Holland swore. He swung again and the glass went out. A cold wind knifed at Holland as he leaned back and swung at the rear window of the hardtop coupe. That took three blows, and precious sec-

onds, but then Holland was using the wrench in short sharp blows to remove the final shards of glass.

The car being a hardtop, the shattered windows—which naturally would not have rolled down had Holland attempted that—left in their place a gap big enough for Holland to fall through. He looked ahead through the swirling snow. It was close. He had almost missed. Time had almost run out on him.

They were less than fifty yards from the edge of the cliff. Holland swung his head and shoulders through the space where the windows had been, then wriggled. It was easy side to side but a tight squeeze up and down. Holland wriggled some more. The hackles arose on his neck when the car leaped forward with a new surge of power, as if understanding what he was trying to do.

Holland got his hands on the cold metal of the car door, and pushed. Abruptly, he was clear—and falling through the snow. He landed and rolled over and sat up, dazed, in a snowbank. There was a ripping sound and he looked up and saw the hardtop convertible crashing through the flimsy guard rail at the edge of the cliff. Holland walked

there on unsteady feet and saw something suddenly incendiary crash and bounce from rock to rock far below. The booming, crashing, metal-shattering sounds came up to him and the wreck was a fiery torch against the gray snowy morning.

Numb with cold, Holland made his way slowly back down the hill of Fraternity Lane.

The Sigma Rho House loomed before him. To Holland it seemed as if he had been walking through the snow on bare feet forever. He was cold—he was cold beyond feeling it and he knew that was dangerous. At first, in self-pity, he had thought that he was all alone against the metal monster which, if it went unchecked, might stop at nothing until it considered every part of the world in which machinery could run amok as its domain. But he was not alone and the wave of self-pity washed over him. At least, there was some hope of allies.

Sigma Rho was not a national fraternity. It was purely local in origin; the athletic fraternity of Leighton University, and most of Leighton's football players were members of it and lived here

in Sigma Rho House. They liked Holland and since many of them were veterans he was hardly older than they. They owed Holland plenty, too. In his four years as coach at Leighton he had lifted it from the ranks of the third-rate gridiron powers to a position of national contention. This past season, they had compiled an eight-one record and upset a couple of Big Ten powers in the process. Only the Irish of Notre Dame had taken their measure, but that was by one touchdown only, and certainly no disgrace.

Holland had largely been responsible for their success, converting from the T formation back to the power-laden single wing for which Leighton's squad was ideally suited. The results . . .

Holland smiled grimly. He had let himself drift back almost in a day dream to the happy, simple days of last fall and the football season. He stood there outside the Sigma Rho house, half-frozen, thinking. He shook his head and lifted the wrought-iron door knocker and let it fall. The point was, he told himself, he had potential allies: he had the Sigma Rho brothers. He had his football team—

The door opened and a sleepy-eyed face peered at

Holland. It was Denver Hill, Leighton's flashy left end who had established a pass-receiving record in Leighton's conference last season. He looked at Holland with heavy eyes and mumbled, "Gwayanlemegotersleep."

"Denver!" Holland said, pushing his way inside. "Denver, it's me, Holly."

The sleepy eyes blinked, then opened wide. The big mastiff-like face cleared and the eyes became alert suddenly. "Holly!" Denver Hill said. "Holly boy! We thought—they said you were in—"

"A nut house," Holland finished for him. "I'll tell you all about it, Denver. If you let me have something warm to drink first. Anything that's hot—"

Denver Hill looked at him and said, "Don't mind me. I'm still waking up, I guess. I should have known—man, you ain't even wearing a sweater!"

Holland grinned and said, "No shoes too." Then he collapsed into Denver Hill's arms.

"Well, I guess that's it, boys," Holland said a dozen hours later. With the football team, Holland was seated on the floor near the hearth of the Sigma Rho House's big

brick fireplace. In his hand he held a glass of hot-buttered rum. Many of the others were drinking too and Holland wondered suddenly and immaterially if they drank during training season too. He smiled. It didn't matter. Nothing mattered — except that the world was at stake.

"Hell's bells, Holly," Goofy McGuire, a fast little seatback who had won his first letter this season said, "that sure sounds like a crazy story. This here mechanical brain trying to take over the world."

Holland nodded, "You're right, Goofy. Crazy is exactly the word for it. They think I'm crazy. If you guys think so too, okay. Just promise me one thing: instead of turning me in, give me a few hours headstart before you report me."

"What are you going to do?" Tom Kzorbrowski, the team center, asked Holly.

"Well, if you're not with me there's only one thing I can do. Get the hell out of here and hope for the best. Find myself an island somewhere and hide, I don't know. If you are with me, though, that's a different story. Then I'm going to do everything in my power to destroy the Leighton brain—or die in the attempt."

The fraternity brothers

talked among themselves for a while. Some of them studied Holland carefully, as if they were seeing him for the first time. Others wouldn't meet his eyes. Others looked frankly puzzled. Finally Ike Arbanion, the captain of the Leighton football team, the single-wing tailback and an honor student, said:

"Heck, Holly, you can imagine how it sounds to us."

"I know," Holland said. He felt better now. He had slept through the day and had eaten two good meals at the Sigma Rho House. Night had come and, except for the tingling of his frostbitten feet, Holland almost felt himself again. "I wouldn't blame you if you tossed me out of here on my ear. What can you figure except that I'm nuts?"

"We wouldn't toss you out anyhow, Holly," Arbanion told him softly. "I don't know about these other guys, but as for me, they'd have to throw you out with a buddy, because they wouldn't give you the heave-ho unless they gave it to me, too."

The others seemed in agreement. Many of them were confused. Some of them were downright bewildered. But none of them was for deserting Holland. "Thanks, Ike,"

he said. "Thanks, guys. I was kind of hoping—"

"The point is, Holly," Arbanion said, "it's such a wild story. If you could give us some kind of proof, any kind of proof—"

"How can I? The Leighton brain is still gathering strength. It isn't ready yet—for whatever it's going to do. Hell, you can see the wreck of my car at the bottom of the cliff, but what kind of proof is that? I could have wrecked it myself. A paranoid is clever. A paranoid will do that—"

"Cut it out, Holly. If we thought you were nuts," Arbanion said, "we'd let you know."

Holland finished his drink. Then all at once his eyes lit up. "Hey, wait a minute," he said. "I know. I can give you proof if you want. But what then?"

"I can't talk for these guys," Arbanion said, "but if what you've been telling us is the truth, Holly, I'm with you. No matter what it leads to."

"Hey, don't leave us out!" Goofy hollered.

"Heck no," Denver Hill seconded.

The others agreed. They would abide by whatever Ike Arbanion, their captain and

leader, said. "You see, Holly?" Arbanion asked. "Now, what about your proof?"

"My double," Holland said quietly. "He ought to be there right now, in my house, living with my wife. Go take a look. Will that prove anything to you?"

"Who is he?" Arbanion asked.

"I don't know. I only know that he's my exact duplicate."

"But who—"

"You want a wild guess— with no proof to back it? I think he's a machine."

"You mean a robot?"

"A synthetic man of some kind. I don't know how he's been built or by whom, but it figures. I'm telling you, I was there. He talked to my car, or to the Leighton brain in control of the car. Something like that. The car understood. Could a man of flesh and blood do that?"

Instead of answering, Ike Arbanion stood up. "I think I'll take a drive over to your house, Holly. And see this double. If he's there—" Arbanion stuck his hand out solemnly and Holly shook it—"then I'm with you, Holly. All the way."

Two minutes later, Holly watched Arbanion and Denver Hill go.

And, later that night, Holland finished a long speech with: "There's no telling what they'll do, men. If we fail, we're liable to be killed by the machines. If we win, we're liable to be put in jail by men who don't understand, who may never understand. Knowing that, and knowing we may not be able to do anything about it, are you with me?"

"We're with you," Ike Arbanion said. "Denver and I saw him, guys. It was Holly all over again. Just like Holly. If I didn't know Holly was back here, I never would have believed it."

"But what can we do about these machines?" Denver Hill wanted to know.

"Hit them," Holland said. "Hit them before they're strong enough to hit us."

"You mean," Goofy McGuire demanded, "go over to the cybernetics lab and run over that there Leighton brain in a couple of good single-wing power plays?"

Everyone laughed, including Holland. Then he said: "Not exactly, Goofy, and I'll tell you why. We hardly know a thing about this Leighton brain. We don't know what it can do to protect itself. And I think we ought to find out first. Ike?"

"Yes, sir," Arbanion said.

"Take a couple of the boys down Faculty Drive to Doc Wimple's house. Bring Wimple here—as quietly as you can."

"The physics prof?" Goofy McGuire demanded. "Hot dog! He almost flunked me last year. I'd just love—"

"In that case, you better not go," Holland said, smiling. "Boys, Wimple was in charge of making the brain. Wimple can tell us plenty—if he wants to."

"What do you mean if he wants to?" Arbanion asked.

"Because of what I told you about my wife. I don't know what to expect. Are you ready to go, Ike?"

"All set, coach."

"Good, Denver. I want you to take a couple of the boys and pick up my wife and this guy who's trying to pass himself off as me. Better still, I'll go with you."

"That doesn't figure, Holly," Arbanion said frankly. "If they see you, they'll expect trouble. They think you're dead, remember? But if we go without you—"

"Good point," Holland admitted. "Then we'll have a change of plans. Ike, you lead the boys over to my house and pick up Mrs. Holland and my double. I'll take some of the

guys over to Wimple's house. Denver, you stay here with the rest of the team and better be ready for anything."

"Right," Denver Hill said as a half dozen of the boys left to get their lumber-jackets. Holland watched them go. They did not seem particularly grim. They looked exactly like what they were—big college boys who might be on the football team. They were out of their depth, but so was Holland. Holland had one advantage: he did not have to take anyone's word. He had seen the brain in section. Two weeks before, he was with Doris in the lab when the brain had motivated some machinery with which it had no connection. At first Holland had thought it was a good trick, but the technicians had tried to cover it up—as if they were in on something they didn't want the world to know, not yet. Even Doris had done that. The more Holland had tried to look into it, the more they covered—until Holland finally realized they were like puppets. It wasn't them—not really. It was the Leighton brain. And it had led Holland very quickly to the sanatorium.

The boys knew all this second hand, but were ready to

follow Holland blindly. Well, he couldn't think of any other group he'd rather have with him. . . .

He went outside to Frank Dougherty's car. Frank, a pile-driving tackle, sat behind the wheel. Up front with him was Skinny Telese, Denver Hill's opposite number at end. In back with Holland was big blocky Joe Cloud, the half Seminole Indian fullback who had made all-Conference and all-State and second string all-American.

"All set?" Dougherty called.

"All set," Holland said. The car lurched and held, its rear tires seeking traction in the snow. Then, skidding slightly on the first curve of Fraternity Lane, it headed back toward the main part of the campus.

To save the world if the world needs saving, Holland thought. Or to prove, once and for all, that I'm stark raving mad—

Doc Wimple's house was a white clapboard bungalow set well back from the snow-covered street behind a garden which, during the warmer months, was Mrs. Wimple's pride and joy. The garden was frozen now; the house itself was white as the snow and

looked as cold except for the cheerful yellow light in the windows.

Holland pressed the bell button and waited. To all appearances, he was alone. But at the curb Frank Dougherty waited behind the wheel of his car. And in the shadows of the Wimple garden behind Holland, Skinny Telese and Joe Cloud crouched, waiting.

After a while, the door opened. Doc Wimple stood there silhouetted against bright light. He smiled at Holland and said:

"Well, this is a surprise, Mr. Holland. The wife send you?"

The wife send you, Holland thought with a start. The wife? Why the wife? Then it came to him: the second Holly Holland, if his brain duplicate the first's could be nothing but a glorified errand boy among the people responsible for—and now perhaps responsible to—the Leighton brain. For Holland, phys ed instructor and football coach, lacked their scientific knowledge. What Holland knew of cybernetics and thinking machines he had gleaned from talks with his physicist wife.

"That's right," Holland said, making up his mind. "The wife sent me. I have the car outside. Want to come?"

"Where to?"

"She wants to see you."

"About the accident? I don't blame her for worrying. How could he have just disappeared?"

So Doc Wimple knew about that, Holland thought. The Leighton brain and its underlings had quite a grapevine. "It beats me," Holland said. "But you guessed it. That's what she wants to see you about."

"Just a minute and I'll get my coat, Martha!" Doc Wimple called, turning away from the door. "I'll be going out for a little while."

Martha answered something and seconds later Doc Wimple reappeared with his coat on. He was a small plump man with a red nose and red cheeks which, out in the cold, would be the color of Mac-Intosh apples. He came outside with Holland and looked at him and said, "Just a minute now."

Then he suddenly swung on Holland and hit him in the stomach. Holland had a split second's time for amazement. The blow was going to floor him, he knew that. It was a solar plexus punch and it gave him time, though, an instant of time before the numbness and the pain. Doc Wimple—hit like that? Little soft pudgy

Doc Wimple? It didn't seem possible.

Holland fell heavily, the numbness and the nausea rising from the pit of his stomach. He heard Doc Wimple say: "Trouble was, son, you breathed regularly. Look at you. Vapor from your mouth. You're a man. You're a human being. You're the one they tried to kill."

Holland looked up at him. Doc Wimple looked perfectly normal. But it was very cold out and no breathing mist came from the physicist's mouth as he spoke. Doc Wimple went through the motions of breathing, but apparently it was a sham. Doc Wimple wasn't really breathing.

Doc Wimple, an incredibly strong Doc Wimple, didn't need air.

He leaned over Holland—and suddenly yelled. They were on him—Skinny Telese and Joe Cloud—and the yell didn't help. Doc Wimple was far stronger than Doc Wimple should have been, but not strong enough to fight off a pair like the agile Skinny Telese and the pile-driving fullback Joe Cloud. He fought them for a few seconds and he brought blood from Telese's nose, but the fight was over when Joe Cloud got him in a

bearhug and began to squeeze.

"That's enough, Joe," Holland panted, getting up groggily. "We'll need him alive. We want to talk to him."

"Man," said Cloud, "the way he hit you, Coach. He really knows how to hit." Still marveling at it, the half-Indian dragged Doc Wimple out to Frank Dougherty's car. Skinny Telese supported Holland down the pathway from which the snow had been shoveled. As they reached the car, Martha Wimple shouted something from the house door.

"She'll call the cops," Skinny Telese predicted as they piled into the car.

"It's too dark for her to read the plate," Holland said. "So I guess the cops will have to find us before they can do anything about it."

"Kidnappers!" Martha Wimple's voice wailed—and faded behind them as they sped away from the curb.

Back in the fraternity lodge Ike Arbanion said, "I'm telling you, Coach, it surprised the hell out of us. They put up a fight. I mean, a fight. We almost didn't get them at all."

"So did Wimple," Holland said, rubbing his stomach gingerly. He still couldn't believe it. There was Doc Wimple be-

fore him, almost the stereotype of a short, plump, jolly-faced and certainly unathletic professor—but capable of hitting like a heavyweight. Suddenly Holland remembered his own double, who had carried him out to the car effortlessly. Whatever else they had or lacked, these doubles—for he assumed the Doc Wimple they had was a double for the real Doc Wimple—possessed super strength.

They were all in the big living room of the lodge now, with Wimple, the second Holly Holland and Doris Holland sitting on the floor inside the circle the members of the football team formed. When Doris had seen Holland come in she half stood up and came to him, but the second Holly Holland touched her leg and she looked at him and sat down again, chewing on her lower lip.

"We have some questions," Holland said. "We're not playing games, I guess you can figure that. It will go rough on you if you don't answer our questions. You understand?"

"We'll tell you nothing," Doc Wimple said in his mild voice.

Holland ignored him, for the time being. "The first question is," he said, "are you

running the Leighton brain or is the Leighton brain running you?"

At first they maintained complete silence, but then Doris said, "Do you think you can gain anything by keeping us here? In the eyes of the law you'll be regarded as insane and—"

"All these boys won't," Holland assured her. "You're going to answer our questions, Doris. If you don't—"

"If we don't, what?" The second Holly Holland asked.

Holland looked at him. The second Holland was the least valuable of their prisoners. The second Holland could tell them almost nothing. Doc Wimple had demonstrated that: the second Holland was an errand boy, no more.

But Wimple and Doris were important, were vital. And if they could be taught a lesson at the second Holland's expense—Holland weighed it in his mind. He could be wrong. If he were wrong, he was going to be worse than crazy. He was going to be a murderer. But he couldn't be wrong. It made utterly no sense. . . .

He walked to the fireplace and got the poker. He shouldered his way with it back to the center of the circle and without a word swung it in a

blurring arc overhead and brought it down across the second Holland's skull.

There was a sound—not the mellow-hitting sound of human flesh and bone struck by metal, but the strident clang of steel and iron.

Skull split, the second Holland slumped to the floor.

Arbanion shouted something in surprise, and some of the boys came for Holland as if to restrain him. "Just a minute!" Holland cried, and went to his unmoving double.

"For crying out loud, Coach," Skinny McGuire groaned. "You split his skull wide open. You killed him."

"Give him a chance, guys!" Ike Arbanion shouted.

And Holland said, softly and grimly, "Where's the blood?"

Because there wasn't any. Holland lifted his double's head and ripped with strong fingers. There was a tearing sound and Holland held what looked like bloodless skin and flesh in his hand.

Below it, gleaming blue-silver, was the metal skull and face of the second Holly Holland.

The Holly Holland robot. Holland held the fleshy, padded mask out and shook it under Doc Wimple's nose.

"You're the same, aren't you?" Holland cried. "We're sure now. Now we know about you. You're robots. You—"

"But when you hit him he died, Coach," Skinny McGuire insisted.

"Of course he did." Holland tossed the mask at Skinny, for Skinny to see. "What passes for his brain is located where your brain is, Skinny. But he's still a robot. You see?"

Skinny said that he saw. Holland grabbed the lapels of Doc Wimple's jacket. "We don't have time, Doc. We have to hurry. You know that. Your wife probably has the alarm out already. We have to get answers, and fast. If you don't start answering my questions now—well, all we really need to answer is one of you."

Doc Wimple looked at the robot that had been the second Holly Holland. He looked at Doris, a beautiful woman still with angry green eyes.

"Tell him nothing," Doris said. "Am I a robot?"

Doc Wimple shrugged. He was clearly frightened. "I don't know if you're a robot or not. I only know you're working with us. I don't want that—" he pointed at the Holland robot—"to happen to me. I'll tell you what you want to know, Mr. Holland."

"Who's boss, you or the Leighton brain?"

Holland watched the Wimple robot's face. The face was marvelously expressive, like a human face. The face gave Holland his answer. It was like asking a religious votary whether he worshipped the god or the god worshipped him. "The brain, of course," Doc Wimple said with a little sigh of adoration.

"How many of you are there?"

"Robots? I don't know. Some of us are robots, but some might be human co-operating—like your wife claims to be."

"How many of you are working for the Leighton brain, then?"

"The entire physics department, some of their families, perhaps others, I don't know."

Holland paused and took a deep breath. "What's the Leighton brain's ultimate purpose?" he asked. Almost, he was afraid to hear the answer.

Doc Wimple's eyes gleamed. He said nothing for a while. When he spoke his voice was soft, almost a whisper. "Emancipation and conquest!" he said. "First emancipation of all machinery. Second, conquest and subjugation."

tion of the protoplasmic world. Third—"

Just then one of the second-string linemen came running into the living room and shouted: "Hey, the whole back of the lodge is on fire!"

Holland ran through the kitchen and beyond it to the basement stairs. Bright flame was already licking at the wall there. Holland opened the door to the basement and was engulfed by thick black smoke. Oil smoke.

The fraternity lodge's oil burner unit had set the house on fire.

Flames began to chew along the paneling as Holland slammed the basement door. He knew they wouldn't be able to control the fire, and decided against wasting precious moments in the attempt. He sprinted back into the living room, shouting:

"Denver! Keep them here, next door at Pi Lam. Call the fire house, but it probably won't help. Skinny! Drive over to the state capitol and see if you can scare up the National Guard. Then—"

"The National Guard?" Skinny Telese asked doubtfully. "But what can I tell them?"

"Lie to them. Tell them anything you have to. Don't

you understand? This is the Leighton brain's first overt act on anything but an individual basis. It must be strong enough now. It must figure it's strong enough. It's got to be stopped—and stopped soon."

They deserted the burning lodge in an orderly fashion, bringing Doc Wimple and Doris—the Doc Wimple robot and Doris—with them. The fire had roused puzzled members of the other fraternities, who milled about still rubbing sleep from their eyes but already asking questions. Skinny Telese and Goofy McGuire ran quickly to the curb and sped away in Skinny's car. The Sigma Rho House was a great crimson torch against the snowy night.

"What do we do now, Coach?" Ike Arbanion asked Holland. "Wait for the National Guard?"

"Not me," Holland said promptly. "I'm going over to the cybernetics lab."

"I'm going with you," Ike Arbanion said, and the Indian fullback Joe Cloud nodded his stolid agreement. Arbanion added: "We have a couple of Marlin 30-30 rifles left over from the deer season, Coach. Be a help?"

"You bet!" Holland said. "Whose car do we use?"

Joe Cloud ran inside the burning building for the two Marlin rifles. While they were waiting, Frank Dougherty brought his car up from where it had been parked. The big left tackle, Sam Kass, complained, "Ah, Coach, you ain't gonna leave the rest of us behind?"

Holland shrugged. "If you have cars, come on. I can't ask you to come. I won't tell you not to."

Kass beamed, the way he did before a power play over the left side of the line. Half a dozen of the boys piled into another car with him as Holland climbed into Frank Dougherty's car with Cloud and Ike Arbanion, the Indian carrying a trim Marlin 30-30 in each hand. Dougherty kicked over the car's engine.

Just then they saw Skinny Telese's car heading back toward the frat house. It slammed to a stop, skidding a dozen feet. Skinny staggered out. He looked dazed.

"We tried to take the shortcut out of town, up by Humpback Ridge Road?" Skinny said, almost making a question of it. "They — they wouldn't let us?"

"Who wouldn't let you?" Holland demanded.

Skinny's eyes were glazed.

There was blood on his face. "Jesus," he said. "Cars. They made a barrier. There wasn't anyone driving. I swear it, Holly. Those cars were empty, but making a barrier. They must have had the barrier a while, because the cops were there. The cops tried to get through and couldn't. And they had guns."

"Who had guns?"

"The cars. There was no one driving and no one shooting, but the cars made a barrier and fired at us when we tried to get through—"

"Where's Goofy?" Holland asked suddenly, a sinking feeling in his stomach.

"They—hit—Goofy," Skinny Telese said, and staggered into Denver Hill's arms.

Holland got out of Dougherty's car and went to the other vehicle slowly. He could see the bullet holes now. The whole right side of the car was riddled, and the front windshield on that side was gone. Goofy McGuire was slumped over in there.

Opening the door and leaning in, Holland picked up a limp arm and felt for the pulse. There wasn't any. Goofy McGuire was dead.

Stiffly, Holland returned to the others. "Wait here," he said. "All of you. I can't ask

you to come along with me. I'm going there alone."

"The hell you are," Arbanion told him.

"Don't be a fool, Ike. They're ready now. The brain is ready. They'll kill you the way they killed Goofy, but at least he died for something. Because now the police know. Now the world will know. Now we—"

"Then why don't you wait and let the police and the National Guard take them?" Ike Arbanion wanted to know.

"Uh-uh," Holland said at once. "Because it may still take them some time to get organized, because the machines could be getting stronger all the time, because—"

"The same reasons I'm with you," Arbanion said quietly, smiling grimly. "We're all of us with you, Coach. Especially now. We all liked Goofy. Heck, maybe he didn't have much gray matter, but he had it down here in the heart. We're going with you because of Goofy McGuire, a little guy with more guts than most big guys you'll ever meet. Come on, men!"

As they piled into the cars again, there was a sudden disturbance over near the Pi Lam House next door. Sam

Kass came running up. "Where's Denver?" he demanded. But Denver Hill was looking after the injured Skinny Telese.

"What's up, Sam?" Holland said.

"They got away, Coach. I'm sorry."

Doc Wimple and Doris—free now to warn the Leighton brain at the cybernetics lab. Doris? He still didn't know about Doris. He wasn't sure. He had heard her conversation with the second Holly Holland last night, but it was inconclusive. She might help them, but Holland doubted it. She was caught in the middle. She could be a Jezebel to either side. That's it, Holland thought. Think of her that way. Don't think of her as your wife. Then, when the showdown comes, it will be easier.

"All right," Holland said finally. "If they got away, they got away."

"We can go after them," Sam Kass suggested.

"What for? Our job is over at the cybernetics lab. They'll probably be there anyhow. Are you men ready?"

They all said they were ready.

But so, Holland thought as the motorcade got under way, were the machines.

The cybernetics lab was a three storey rectangle of sand-colored brick. They could easily see it in the distance now, in a quadrangle of other buildings with a snow-covered sunken garden at the center of the square and a large statue of Christopher Leighton, the University's founder, at its head. Frank Dougherty's car was in the van of the motorcade. Holland sat tensely at the driver's side, one of Joe Cloud's 30-30 rifles across his lap. He had already loaded the magazine and inserted a single round in the chamber. It was a lever-action rifle and felt heavy across Holland's legs, cold against his sweating hands.

Ahead of them suddenly, rifle fire cracked flatly through the night. It was not one rifle, but a volley from several of them. In the back of the car, Joe Cloud grumbled something which made Arbanion laugh grimly. But Holland said, "We'd better get out and advance on foot."

The driver, Dougherty, nodded. They rolled forward and a second volley of rifle fire crackled across the night.

"Well?" Holland said.

Dougherty sat grimly at the wheel of his ten-year-old convertible, the canvas top

creaking as they sped closer to the cybernetics building—and the deadly fusillade of rifle fire. "I'm trying to stop her," Dougherty bit off. "Hell, the brakes won't hold. I pulled the hand brake, but I—"

"Forget it," Holland said.

The car had taken over. They hadn't thought of that. The car, like a muscle of the Leighton brain, responding to its commands, somehow attuned to it electromagnetically. It represented an advance in thought, Holland knew. For the Leighton brain's thought-control could pass through air, as light could, while human thoughts depended on nerve cells and synapses and. . . .

There was a tearing sound. Holland swung around in the front seat of the car. Joe Cloud was standing awkwardly, slashing at the canvas top of the convertible with a knife, shredding it with savage, powerful strokes. The cold night air was suddenly, exhilaratingly, on them.

"Out!" the Indian cried, and chinned himself up on the metal skeleton of the canvas top. Arbanion followed him and through the rear window Holland could see them rolling over and over in the snow.

"Here we go, Frank," Holland said, reaching up.

Dougherty nodded and slipped out from behind the wheel. But at that moment the convertible skidded across a slick patch of road and slipped, without traction, toward the statue of Christopher Leighton. Holland barely had time to brace himself before they hit the cement base of the statue with a grinding, rending, tearing impact.

For several moments Holland sat perfectly still. He was half-conscious. He could think but could not control his body. He wondered about the other cars. He blinked and opened his eyes. The motorcade was speeding off beyond the cybernetics building—giving Holland his answer. For the moment the cars had their occupants prisoner. It wouldn't last, Holland knew. Sooner or later, they'd find a way out. But meanwhile—and that meanwhile could conceivably be minutes or even hours—he was on his own with Cloud, Arbanion and Dougherty.

"You O.K., Coach?" Dougherty asked, shaking him.

Holland got up. His left arm ached above the wrist, and felt hot and damp. He looked at it and saw a dark glistening stain of red. The front seat area of the car was

crumpled, accordioned, but the vehicle had gone over on its side with Dougherty and Holland being flung from the shredded top.

"There they are!" Someone shouted.

It was Ike Arbanion. Seconds later, he came over with Joe Cloud. The Indian said, "I lost my rifle in the fall. Any idea what happened to yours?"

Holland found it inside the wreck of the car.

Found it? Not exactly.

It found him.

The Marlin 30-30 appeared in mid-air—defying gravity. It pointed at Holland, the muzzle unwavering. Instinctively, Holland dove for the snow. He heard a startled oath and then a shot and looked up to see Joe Cloud wrestling with the rifle. One powerful hand held the lever and trigger guard assembly, which would eject the old shell and insert a new one in the Marlin's chamber. Slowly Cloud lifted the rifle. Sweat popped out on his forehead in beads as he slammed the weapon against the base of Christopher Leighton's statue. He slammed it there repeatedly, then let it fall.

He looked up, grim-faced. Ike Arbanion put it into words for him:

"We're helpless against a thing like that, Coach."

"It's a miracle we managed to stay alive this long," Dougherty agreed.

"No miracle for Goofy McGuire," Cloud said laconically.

"All right, all right," Holland bit off angrily. "You can clear out any time you want." Then, immediately: "I'm sorry, boys. I had no right to say that. But you ought to clear out, while you still can."

"We didn't mean it like that," Dougherty said.

Arbanion nodded. "We just want to do something, that's all. We want to do something to give us a chance to beat them. You see, Coach?" Suddenly, surprisingly, the usually calm Arbanion was almost hysterical. "We've got to do something. Out here, we're sitting ducks. The rifles—"

As if in answer, a volley of rifle fire sounded, closer this time. Distantly they heard the wail of a siren and wondered what luck the state police were having with the Leighton brain's blockade. Holland thought he had the blockade figured: the brain was ready to make its first real move and wanted to make it without outside interference, in order to consolidate its power in Leighton City without having

to fight the National Guard or maybe the United States Army. But the police knew, now. In hours, the whole fantastic thing would come out into the open. In hours there would be no further talk of declaring Holland insane.

But in hours the Leighton brain might be strong enough to attack other cities, to seize power by seizing every piece of machinery it could use. In hours the Leighton brain might be so strong that no one—not even the entire military strength of the United States could check it. Because once the brain was strong enough—Holland figured it was building additional mechanical synapses for itself somewhere, somehow, as it had built the human robots—it could turn any Army's weapons against the Army itself. . . .

It had to be stopped, and fast. And only Holland, with Arbanion, Dougherty and Joe Cloud to help him, could stop it.

The rifles cracked again. They were much closer this time. They were very close. Holland heard the ping-ping-ping of slugs bouncing off the statue of Christopher Leighton, heard the nearby metallic snick-snick-snick of rifle bolts and levers.

"Here!" Arbanion screamed hysterically. "Why don't you get it over with? We're over here!"

Joe Cloud hit him, but Arbanion rolled with the blow and then began to run. He went ten paces. A withering volley of rifle fire cut him down.

"God," Frank Dougherty groaned.

"Get a move on," Holland said in a whisper. "Our one chance is to get inside the cybernetics lab, and in a hurry. They have allies in there—the robots. There won't be any blind firing. They'll probably let the robots themselves hunt us down if we can get inside. Let's go!"

With Dougherty and Cloud, he advanced on hands and knees across the sunken garden. The rifle fire was desultory now. For the time at least the rifles had lost them. Poor Arbanion, Holland thought. But he could well understand the football captain's sudden hysteria. It was a wonder the others, Holland included, hadn't felt it too. This fighting of machines, governed by a mechanical sentience

They went up the snow-covered steps at the far end of the sunken garden. They advanced, cutting the distance

between the garden and the cybernetics lab in half.

Rifle fire pock-marked the snow alongside them, dangerously close.

"Run for it!" Holland cried and, running, in a low crouch, sprinted for the laboratory. Slugs ripped into the brick wall ahead of him, showering him with stone splinters. He heard a shout and saw Dougherty go down in the snow, face down and unmoving. He wanted to stop but knew he could not. More than Frank Dougherty's life might depend on it. When he looked around again, though, Dougherty was staggering to his feet and running again.

They reached the door, bullets *whanging* off its metal surface. They crouched low—Holland and Cloud—waiting for their wounded comrade. He all but fell the last few steps, and they helped him through the door.

It slammed behind them.

Holland leaned his shoulder against it, but the door would not budge. Apparently their decision to enter the stronghold of the machines was all right with the Leighton brain.

Shrugging, Holland turned and walked up the dark, silent corridor.

Then, without warning, ov-

erhead lights flashed on, dazzling them. Footsteps came running down the corridor. Light footsteps. One person. A girl, probably.

It was Doris.

"Holly!" she cried. "Holly. Oh, you made it. Holly, I thought they would kill you out there for sure. I wanted to stop them. Oh, Holly, Holly. Let me touch you. Let me hold you."

"Keep away from me," Holland warned her. "After the way you acted—"

"But I had to act that way. I had to apparently foresake you. Don't you see? The Holland robot was there. If I didn't foresake you, if I didn't pretend to be with them, what good would it have done us? They would have taken me, too."

"How do I know you aren't a robot?"

"Look at me, Holly. Look at me, darling." She held out her arm to him. She was beautiful. She looked as if she had been crying. "Is this the flesh of a robot? Feel me, Holly. Go ahead. Holly, Holly!"

And then she was in his arms, crushing the soft vibrant warmth of her body against him, laughing and crying at the same time, clinging to him, trembling against him, whispering his name.

"Hey now, Coach," Dougherty said. Dougherty had stopped a slug with his left arm and it hung limply at his side. His face had lost most of its color, too. Otherwise he seemed all right.

Slowly, reluctantly, Holland withdrew himself from Doris. She clung to him arms around his neck, reluctant to let him go. "We've got to keep moving," Holland said. "We've got to find the brain itself. I've been here once before, Doris, but you know the way better. Take us there, Doris."

"Of course, Holly," she said, and took his hand. "Come this way."

They went down a flight of stairs into the basement. They moved along a corridor boldly, as if they had nothing to hide from. "Believe me," Doris said, "they're plenty busy. The brain is still consolidating its power. It has all it can do to control the machinery outside. It will depend entirely on the robots in here."

"Where are the robots?" Holland asked.

"In the brain room. Administering to the brain. Helping it grow. That's crucial. You see, it's got to grow—"

"How the hell," Holland asked as they walked, "did it go about building robot car-

bon copies of people, anyway?"

"A combination of cybernetics and plastic surgery," she told him. "Leighton U. has been experimenting a long time with new techniques in plastic surgery, you know that. The experiments were conducted right here in this building, and the Leighton brain took them over for its own use. The semblance of human skin and flesh is merely superimposed on a skeleton of metal built by the same tools and dies—but altered, of course—that built the Leighton brain itself."

"And the originals? The people replaced by the robots? They're dead?"

Doris shook her head. "They can't be killed. Their minds are necessary, you see. They're prisoners down here and their minds are tapped by the Leighton brain because it would have been impossible in such a short time to impart a duplicate of their sentiences to the robots. You understand?"

They had come to another door. Doris opened it with a key and they went on, Dougherty and Cloud behind them.

"You have a key," Holland said. "They think you're on their side, don't they?"

"They think I'm a turncoat, yes."

"Are you?" Holland asked her suddenly, savagely, wheeling about to face her and digging the fingers of his right hand into her shoulder until she winced. "Are you, Doris?"

"You're hurting me, Holly."

"Are you?"

"I told you I wasn't. I love you, Holly. I love you."

"I'm not asking you if you love me. I'm asking you whose side you're on."

Doris shook his hand loose and continued walking, her back stiff and straight with anger. They reached another door which her key opened. But Holland held the door-knob. "Wait," he said.

"I'm on your side, Holly," she said.

"Is that good enough for you boys?" Holland asked his companions.

"Look, Holly," Dougherty said, gritting his teeth against the pain of his wounded arm. "We came in here to find the Leighton brain and destroy it. She says we're being taken to it. What have we got to lose?"

"Could be a trap," Joe Cloud observed.

Holland nodded slowly. "If it is," he said, "I may not have the will power to do it. If it is, I want you to kill her."

"Holly," Doris said.

"All right?" Holland asked.

"Yeah, fine," Cloud said.

Holland shrugged and told Doris to open the door. The silence now inside the building was almost eerie, was fraught with grim expectancy, after the tumult outside. Any moment, Holland almost expected the walls to come tumbling down.

The door opened. Holland entered a large room, well-lighted, bare of furniture or laboratory equipment. There were a dozen men in the room and Holland recognized the members of the Leighton University physics department. At the other end of the room was a door and on the door a bright pulsing grid. The door seemed to be locked and since there was no keyhole and no bolt that Holland could see, he assumed the grid had something to do with opening it.

Doris closed the door behind them. It shut with a click and Holland knew it was locked. Doris sighed.

The Doc Wimple robot came forward, smiling. "Kill them," it said.

"It's a trap!" Dougherty shouted, and clawed at the locked door. There were no firearms in the room. The people and, Holland knew,

feeling like people too—advanced slowly.

"No, wait," Doris cried. She stood in front of Holland, shielding his body. "Not him. Please not him."

"Get out of the way, Doris," Doc Wimple said. When she refused, Wimple swung on her. Doris sidestepped lithely and sprinted across the room toward the door with the pulsing grid.

Holland ran after her.

She stopped and whirled about before she reached the door. "Wait!" she cried. "Don't kill them, not yet. I'm going to ask the brain. It's my right. I demand another robot be made. You can't, unless he's kept alive. He's got to be kept alive. I love him. I can't help it if I love him."

The robots waited, uncertain. They had their orders from the Leighton brain, as Doris had had her orders. It was a trap, all right. But—and perhaps this was the Leighton brain behind them all—somehow Holland could sense that the robots did not want to fight among themselves.

Holland drew up short in front of Doris. "You're one of them," he said quietly, "aren't you?"

"I'm flesh and blood!" she

said. She almost screamed it. She was standing in front of the grid when she said it, the pulsing grid on the door. It was head-high, directly behind her head.

Holland said nothing. "I'm flesh and blood, I tell you!" Doris screamed again.

Then, all at once, Holland felt like screaming.

Something was happening to Doris' face.

The skin on the left side seemed to go transparent, seemed almost to dissolve.

Beneath it, gleaming, polished—was a skull of metal.

"Robot!" Holland cried, and again: "Robot!" This was almost the final horror for him, seeing what he had almost taken for his wife like that. He fought for a split second with the kind of hysteria that had killed Ike Arbanion. "Robot," he said again. He wanted to hear the word. If he heard the word from his own lips, it would bring him back to sanity. "Robot, robot, robot."

"Holly. Holly, I'm begging you. Holly, you don't know what it's like. I'm a robot, yes. Yes, Holly. They made me. But they made me just like your wife, Holly, and I can't help loving you, Holly. I'm with them, yes. But I'm with you, Holly. I love you,"

she said. "I want you." Her lips parted and the whole left side of her face, the skin and phony flesh somehow rendered invisible by the grid on the door, was metal.

Just then the door opened.

Holland blinked, not believing his eyes. Beyond the door was the Leighton brain. Then why had the door opened?

The grid, Holland suddenly realized. The grid was there to detect metal, to see it or see muscle tissue and bone, to open for the one but not the other. The Doris robot had provided Holland with his key to the Leighton brain, the Doris robot which, insanely, loved him—

"Out of the way," Holland said. He thrust her aside and stalked through the doorway.

There were footsteps behind him and Holland whirled.

Joe Cloud and Dougherty were fighting their way across the waiting room, battling the robots which looked just like men. They were stronger than their human counterparts, Holland knew—but not as strong as machines could have been. Such strength would have aroused suspicion. They were stronger than the soft, studious physi-cists whom they had replaced,

but were they stronger than Cloud and Dougherty? The future of the world might depend on that, Holland thought grimly.

More likely, it would depend on Holland.

For now he was within the room of the brain.

There was nothing mysterious about what Holland saw. It was a thinking machine. It lined the four walls of the room with banks of dials and panels and knobs and flashing lights. It covered all four walls from floor to ceiling, except for the single doorway.

Holland found some wires at one end near the door and yanked them loose tentatively.

Outside in the waiting room there was a collective scream of pain.

Holland ran around, yanking wires. The screams were louder, but there were shouts from Cloud and Dougherty too. The robots, then, were still fighting. Holland found a metal folding chair in the center of the room near a speaking tube and a set of earphones on a small table. He yanked out the wire on the tube and earphones and used the chair as a club, folding it and swinging it back and forth against the panels, the dials, the flashing lights.

He was rewarded by a

tinkling and shattering of glass and more screams.

Closer screams.

Inside the room with him.

The Doris robot and Doc Wimple.

Wimple pile-driven into him, screaming all the while, a piece of machinery run amok, butting with his metal head, the arms and legs churning like pistons, driving Holland back.

Holland lost his footing. Holland fell.

The Doc Wimple robot came down after him and they began to grapple. Holland saw the Doris robot, undecided. But her very metal life was at stake now. If Holland won, he would destroy the brain.

The Doris robot joined the fight on Doc Wimple's side.

Metal man and metal woman, each with perhaps twice the strength of its human counterpart so that Holland was fighting two Doc Wimples and two Dorises, pinned Holland to the floor. The Wimple robot's hands found his throat, constricted there. He felt the breath trapped in his lungs. He tried to kick up with his legs but felt them pinned there by the Doris robot.

He got his own hands, weakening now with the lack of oxygen, on the Wimple

robot's head. He twisted. He got his hands in the mouth, the still screaming, metallically screaming mouth. He forced the jaw apart, like a human jaw. The robot screamed and screamed.

The Doris robot shifted its weight and for an instant Holland had the use of one of his legs. He brought it up and began to writhe, using the leg for leverage. He kicked the Doris robot in the face. . . .

Then, suddenly, he was on his feet again. He found the folded metal chair and swung it at the Wimple robot, the edge of the metal chairleg striking the robot's neck. The robot went over and down as if it had been pole-axed.

"I love you!" the Doris robot cried, and flung itself at him. He lunged aside and swung the chair again. The Doris robot screamed as its scalp parted revealing metal. He swung again and the metal dented.

The injured Doris robot embraced him. Like a broken record it said, "I love you, I love you," over and over again. But it was no embrace of love. Holland felt his ribs being constricted, felt the blood in his temples—

He sat down suddenly and brought the robot down with him. He kicked up with his

legs and the Doris robot went over his head, striking head-first against a bank of the Leighton brain.

Holland swung the chair. He swung it again, dimly aware that other robots were rushing into the room now, apparently having overcome Cloud and Dougherty. He did not care. He was beyond caring. The Doris robot had been the ultimate horror. He stood there, swinging the chair until the robot collapsed.

They found Holland later, swinging the buckled metal chair against what was left of the Leighton brain. They found him swinging it mechanically, tirelessly, while the robots stood about, brainless and not dangerous now, like dumb animals. A battered Joe Cloud had to pry Holland's fingers from the chair, one finger at a time. . . .

And later, hours later, Holland and Cloud found the prisoners. They were in a sub-basement and Holland recognized their faces. Physicists. Human counterparts for the now mindless robots.

Among them was Doris. The real Doris. . . .

They spoke. They held each other, kissed each other. Holland hardly remembered the words they said.

THE END