

Fantastic

ADVENTURES

TRADE MARK REGISTERED

Contents for August, 1942

STORIES

THE DAUGHTER OF THOR (Novelet)	by Edmond Hamilton	10
Lust for conquest flushed hot in Nazi breasts—the Norse gods confused it with the glory of combat.		
TINK TAKES COMMAND (Short)	by William P. McGivern	48
Tink and Jing wanted to make these U. S. soldiers in Ireland happy—but Nastee messed their work up.		
THE MENTAL GANGSTER (Short)	by Thornton Ayre	64
A lethal blade struck silent death aboard this space ship—but the corpse refused to stay dead!		
MR. AMES' DEVIL (Short)	by August W. Derleth	80
Mr. Ames didn't want to conjure up a devil; especially one who would commit murder at his every whim!		
CREEGAR DARES TO DIE (Novel)	by David Wright O'Brien	88
Death meant nothing to Creegar now—after five years of injustice; so he dared fate in the tubeways.		
THE SON OF DEATH (Novelet)	by Robert Moore Williams	134
The strength of ten wild beasts coursed through this man's body; but his hunters were strong too . . .		
THE LUCK OF ENOCH HIGGINS (Short)	by Charles R. Tanner	176
No man could possibly be as lucky as Enoch Higgins was! Nor should he have depended so much on it!		
THE LITTLE MAN WHO WASN'T ALL THERE (Short)	by Robert Bloch	188
Lefty Feep certainly wasn't all there! He soon discovered that fact when he wore the coat in public.		
THE KID FROM KALAMAZOO (Novelet)	by Eric Frank Russell	202
There was plenty of guts in this kid's makeup to face the movie mogul in his den; but he had an invention.		

FEATURES

The Editor's Notebook	6	Death's Chilling Voice	221
Running Wild	77	Unsolved Fraction	221
Romance of the Elements	78	A Jules Verne Fantasy	222
Hot Weather Appetite	87	Murderous Hail Storms	226
The Friendly Swallow	87	Cancer, The Fantastic	227
Can They Take It!	87	Just About Eels	230
Greased Lightning	132	Reader's Page	231
Fantastic Facts	133	Forecast	233
First U. S. Patent	187	Vulcan—God of Heavy Industry	238
News Item: Fly Eats Spider!	201	Correspondence Corner	241

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The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

ERIC FRANK RUSSELL is the English counterpart of August W. Derleth. His story in this issue fascinated us for sheer polish on socko power. That yarn "satisfies", it's so smooth and complete and slick. A fine fantasy, you'll agree.

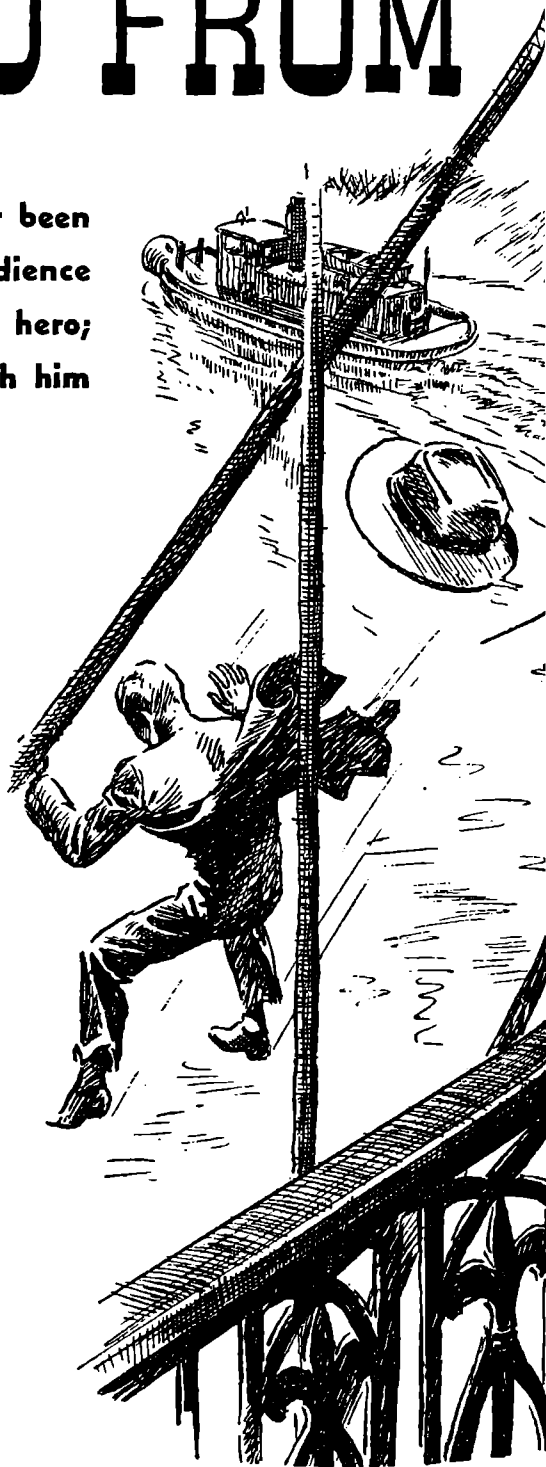
THE KID FROM

No movie like this had ever been seen before! Because the audience actually lived the role of the hero; fighting, loving, suffering with him

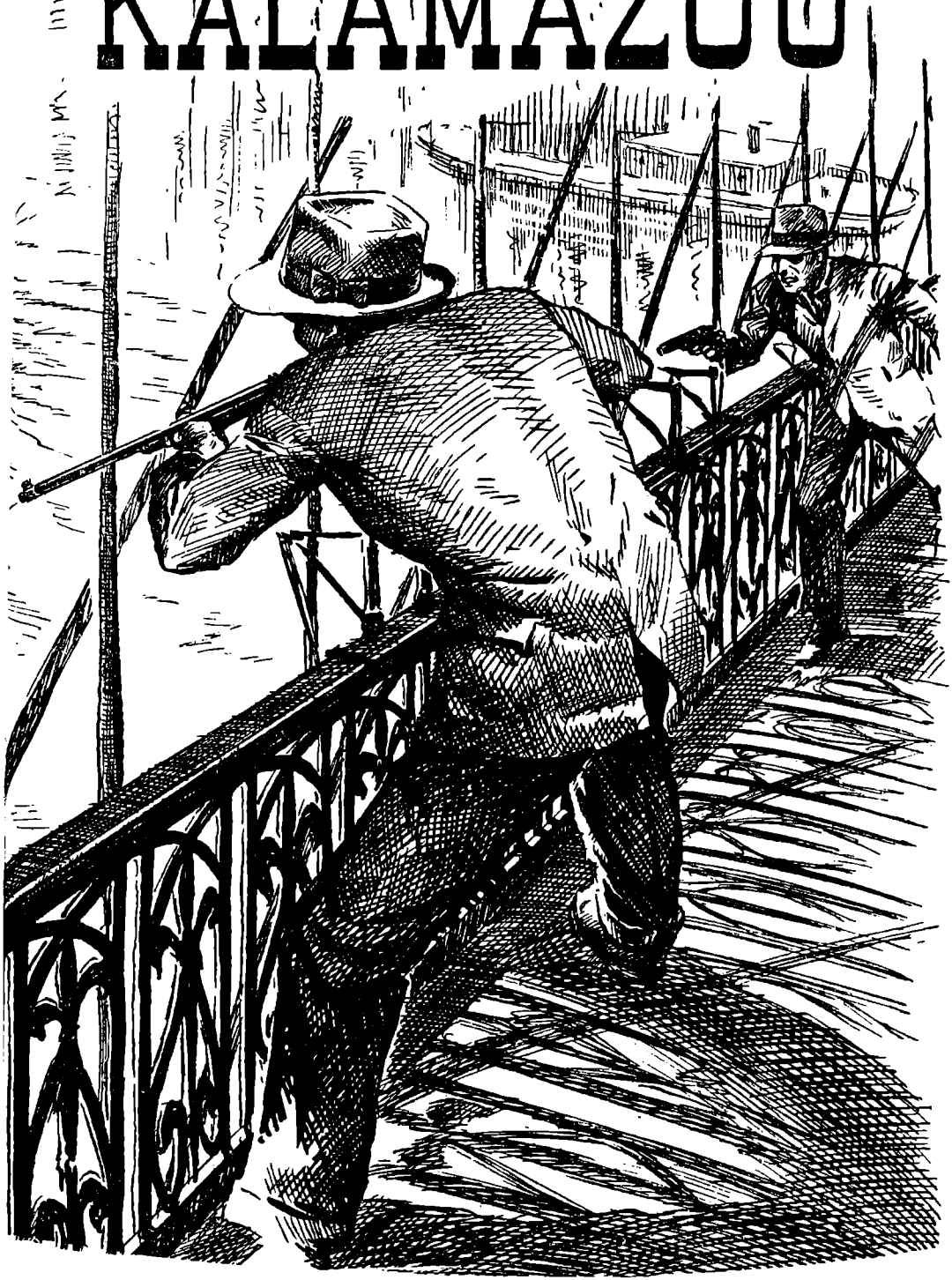
by
**ERIC
FRANK
RUSSELL**

EMORY MORGAN felt like Napoleon and suspected that he didn't look unlike him either. He sat regally in the depths of the throne-like chair behind his half-acre desk, put a very expensive cigar into his very fat face, let his supremely satisfied eyes gloat over the great length of carpet stretching from the desk to the distant door. This was the life.

It had been a tough fight to get from wholesale junk jewels to effective control of Motion Picture Superproductions, still tougher to establish the complete monopoly on which he'd set whatever he'd got for a heart. But he'd done it. Some had jumped off the bridge, some had fallen by the wayside, and a few had raked up the sense to climb aboard the bandwagon. Yesterday's final merger had put him in actual, if not nominal, control of the whole of the nation's film industry. Now he could give orders, and what he said,



KALAMAZOO



This was no movie; it was the real thing to the audience!

went. He could hire 'em and fire 'em; make 'em and break 'em. He was the master of all he surveyed.

Jabbing one of the many buttons on his desk, he puffed his cigar with an air of well-deserved opulence, watched the door. Presently, Miss Dreener gave a discreet knock, opened, came toward him with lithe hip movements. She was a cute piece of work, very trim, beautifully groomed, most efficient, her manner always pleasingly respectful. Morgan liked them slick and respectful, especially the latter. A man deserved respect when he had your bread in his right hand, your butter in his left.

Contemptuously flicking a couple of papers across the mirror sheen of his desk, he said in a loud voice, "What in hell're these?"

She picked them up in long, delicate fingers with blood-red nails. Her manner was that of a woman reporter reluctantly compelled to obtain an archbishop's views about sex.

"The midwest circuit of independent exhibitors object to the film rota system," she replied. Switching letters, she looked at the second one. "This man Dore, a Kalamazoo exhibitor, has written us repeatedly. He protests against the rota system. He says he'll organize his local circuit for militant action."

"Well," growled Morgan, "can't Crait attend to them? What am I paying him for? Ain't he here to bounce all the bellyachers, and ain't I plastering him with my money for doing it?"

"Mr. Crait has been dealing with the matter," explained Miss Dreener, evenly. "He has told them that Motion Picture Superproductions is quite unable to permit free selection from its output and that exhibitors are requested to accept the weekly series circulated in the rota."

"Requested!" pshawed Morgan. "He

requests them! The hell with that guff!" He glared at her. "What's the matter with Crait? He still spending my time mauling the office blondes? Don't he know we got the shebang in our pocket?"

"Yes, Mr. Morgan, but—"

"Why don't Crait tell 'em to go bake their brains, if they got any? Why don't he tell 'em to take what we give or do without?" His features began to heighten in color. He gnawed the cigar savagely. "Seems Mark Crait's too small to know when he's big. Send him in to me. I'll ask him if he's working for us or who."

"Mr. Crait has already informed the complainants that they are in no position to criticize," soothed Miss Dreener. "He has told them they'll have to take what they get." She looked at him carefully, added, "As a matter of fact, he told them to like it or lump it. He thought you would approve."

"I okay that." Emory Morgan leaned back, examined the ceiling with the air of Mohammed looking for Paradise. "All right. Why worry me? Ain't I got worries enough? Ain't my time worth ten berries a tick no more? Does Mark want me to put love and kisses on his letters?"

"THE matter had gone further," she said. "Mr. Crait thought it time you were informed." She flourished the second letter. "This man Dore, in Kalamazoo, is now threatening that his proposed organization will appeal to the Federal Government that action be taken under anti-trust laws and that free selection of film productions be restored in the interest of public policy."

"Hah!" Morgan enjoyed an expansive smirk. "A tough guy! Well, we ain't a trust. We're a national industry. What's more, we've got a few senatorial shareholders who ain't go-

ing to slaughter their favorite hogs to please some punk in Kalamazoo. That guy can go suck his lollipop. Tell Crait to ignore him. Let him petition, let him sue, let him go nuts if he ain't nuts already."

"Yes, Mr. Morgan."

"And tell Gloria Sweeting she's through."

"Oh, Mr. Morgan!" For once she lost her poise, went wide-eyed.

His color went up again, he roared at her, "What the devil's the matter with you? You going deaf, or something? Tell that blonde ham she's on the shelf. I'll teach her to argue with me."

"But, Mr. Morgan, her contract—"

He stood up. No he didn't. It was something grander than that, something more in keeping with his power and personal magnetism. He arose majestically.

"Is everyone crazy this morning? Ain't I got nobody who can take orders? Do I have to run Motion Picture Superproductions all my myself?" Resting his belly on the rim of the desk, he stared at her long and hard. She didn't answer, neither did she quail. "I made her contract. I can bust it. Sling her some hash and push her off the lot."

"Very well, Mr. Morgan." She went out. Very shortly, she returned, another paper in her hand. Looking at him, she said, "He's written again."

"Who has?"

"This man Dore."

"Bah!" Morgan sat down, crumpled the remains of his cigar, mashed it in the ash-tray.

"He says he intends to pay you a personal call."

"What for?" He got the rats again as she stood and hesitated. "Well, out with it! You struck dumb?"

Flushing, she said tartly, "He says he wishes to save you from the conse-

quences of your own folly."

Disregarding her presence, Emory Morgan began to swear. He was sulphurating like a volcano as she stole out.

THE kid from Kalamazoo turned up the following Thursday. He was quite a nice kid, clean-cut, burly, but somewhat indifferent about his unruly hair. His eyes were as blue as a baby's and fully as innocent, he had a very large assortment of freckles, and his pants looked as if they had been slept in a few dozens of times. In general, he seemed a healthy, clean, but very naïve specimen who hadn't yet discerned the truth concerning Santa Claus and still believed that story about the stork.

Presenting himself at the main gate, he stared like a yokel at the big neon which said in twelve-foot letters of fire: *Motion Picture Superproductions*. Fidgeting around, he failed to find the bell, so rattled the gate.

To the uniformed guard who answered, he said, "My name is Daniel P. Dore. The P stands for Praise-the-Lord, but you may call me Dan." He smiled ingratiatingly. "I wish to see Mr. Emory Morgan."

"Do you now?" said the Mick at the gate. "Guess I'd better tell him to come along pronto." Then he narrowed his eyes, pushed out his jaw, and rasped, "Skeram!"

"What," protested Mr. Dore, his blue eyes faintly shocked, "after coming all this way? Not likely! Please be good enough to inform Mr. Morgan that I wish to see him at once. Tell him that my time is valuable and I would appreciate a modicum of swiftness on his part."

"Eh?" The Mick looked a little dazed.

Mr. Dore obligingly put it in sim-

pler language. "Tell Mr. Morgan that I am a very busy man with no time to waste on frivolities, and that I'd be glad if he'd see me without delay."

The guardian of the gate put a hairy hand on a side-post. He seemed in need of temporary support. He stared unbelievably at Dan Dore who reciprocated by regarding him with blue eyes of incredible blandness. That and the freckles and the cherubic countenance made a combination that fascinated the Mick. After a while, the Mick shouted into an adjoining hut, brought out a second guard.

Pointing at Dan, he mouthed, "Just listen to this guy." Then to Dan, "Go on, tell Joe what you just told me."

"What's the matter," inquired Dan, mildly. "Are you a Bulgarian by any chance? Can't you understand plain English?"

The Mick scowled. Joe made a supporting grimace.

"I want to see Mr. Emory Morgan," repeated Dan. "What's stupefying about that?"

"You don't know Morgan," growled the Mick.

"I'll say he doesn't," agreed Joe.

"Neither does he know me," Dan pointed out. "Is he such a stickler for the niceties of etiquette that he cannot converse without the formality of an introduction?"

"Motheruvmike!" exclaimed the Mick.

"Imagine Old Jelliguts knowing anything about ettikay," said Joe.

"Old Jelliguts," echoed Dan. "Dear me! An amusing pseudonym. He is a paunchy man, I presume?"

THE first guard fervently repeated his appeal to the maternal parent of the invisible Mike. The one named Joe elbowed him aside, bent his beetle brows, bugged his eyes at Dan.

"You got a line of talk. What're you selling?"

"In a way," Dan explained, "I wish to sell Mr. Morgan an idea."

"Oh, an inventor," said Joe. He turned to the Mick. "Another nut inventor." He turned back to Dan. "Morgan ain't interested."

"Good heavens!" Downright astonishment filled the innocent eyes. "A clairvoyant!"

"Don't you start calling me names," warned Joe. He showed his teeth. "I've told you Morgan ain't interested."

"I suppose he informed you of this fact after receiving my missive. Dear me, the man is most precipitate. I would not have credited that anyone could be so indifferent about his own career."

The Mick swallowed hard, said to his partner, "Let's give this kid a break, Joe. You go phone the office before he uses up his tongue and puts the whammy on us. Gwan, give him a break—maybe somebody'll take him offen our hands."

Joe oscillated his brows, disappeared into the hut. He was a long time on the phone, came out somewhat surly.

"Percival will see you."

"Who's Percival," demanded the persistent Mr. Dore.

"He's just the sweetest thing," assured Joe. "He's the forty-fourth deputy-assistant-under-secretary or sump-in." He lugged open the gate. "Come on, get in before someone changes his mind."

"I am exceedingly obliged to you," beamed Dan. He wandered through. Joe conducted him along the broadwalk to Percival's office, dropped him thankfully.

PERCIVAL proved to be a delicious person attired in a shapely, deep-waisted jacket, perfectly pressed pants

and very glossy shoes. He also had on a mauve silk shirt. His hands were nicely manicured, his eyelashes unusually long and sweeping.

"Mr. Dore, I understand?" he chirruped. He looked Dan over, smoothed his hair, patted his undisturbed tie. "And what," he asked, roguishly, "can I do for you?"

"Good gracious!" said Dan. His blue eyes blinked. "I wish to see Mr. Morgan."

"Oh, quite, quite." A subtle perfume stole from Percival's hair. "But Mr. Morgan is a busy man, an exceedingly busy man. If disturbed unnecessarily, he tends to be harsh, somewhat unreasonable." The eyelashes operated effectively. "Surely I can serve you in some way?"

"Indeed you can." Dan sniffed loudly. His eyes held pained surprise. "You can fetch Mr. Morgan and let me save him from financial ruin."

"Yes, yes," said Percival, fluttering his eyelids, "but as I have told you, Mr. Morgan is—" His high voice tailed off, his face swapped expressions, his mouth hung open. "Eh? What was that you just said?"

"Dear me," sighed Dan. "What can be wrong with everyone's hearing?" His blue eyes looked mildly through the window, observed the near-city that was Motion Picture Superproduction's lot. "Nobody hears, nobody listens. I can't see how you manage to do business. Think, this might have been quite a big place by now had your affairs been conducted with some semblance of efficiency."

"Eh?" said Percival again.

His mouth was still out of control. He walked gracefully toward the window, gaped through it as if seeking something that wasn't there.

"Now back in Kalamazoo," declared Dan, "we make locomotives

and all sorts of really useful things. We are so far advanced that we can understand speech. We didn't have to wait for someone to invent the wheelbarrow before we learned to walk on our hind legs. We are, as you will have gathered, rather civilized." He nudged Percival. "Can you comprehend my words?"

Percival started violently. The hand he put to his hair was uncertain. "Yes, yes, to be sure."

"And," continued Dan, "we do business as man to man with none of the silly procrastination such as I have experienced here. Out in Kalamazoo, if I wanted Mr. Morgan I'd get Mr. Morgan and we'd complete our business in the minimum of time."

"Yes," said Percival, faintly.

"Trouble is you're not slick enough." The baby blue eyes looked severe. "You appear to be in a sort of industrial backwater this side of the continent."

"True," gabbled Percival. He moved away from the window. Keeping his eyes on Dan, he picked up a phone, called an extension. "Mr. Schultze? Is that Mr. Schultze? Can you see Mr. Dore?" His pleading voice became hurried. "No, no, I can't say. It would be best if you dealt with him. Yes, it may be important, it seems to be of some importance. Oh, quite, Mr. Schultze. Yes, right away." He pronged the phone. "Mr. Schultze will see you."

"Tut-tut," said Dan. "I asked for Mr. Morgan."

"I know." Percival sat down, smoothed his hair, fanned himself with a silk handkerchief. "Mr. Schultze will see to it." He was still fanning himself dazedly when Joe turned up to take Dan away.

SCHULTZE was the direct opposite of Percival, a massive man with a

bull neck and blue jowls. His closely cropped gray hair stuck up in an aggressive bristle and his nose was more for snorting than breathing.

Dan said, "Ah, Mr. Schultze! Delighted to meet you!" He didn't offer his hand.

Distorting his beefy features into what he considered irresistible joviality, Schultze rumbled, "Now, Mr. Dore, kindly state your business as speedily as possible and I'll see what can be done for you."

"Thank goodness!" exclaimed Dan, fervently. "Action at last!" A pious expression drifted across his cherubic countenance. "I wish to have a personal interview with Mr. Emory Morgan."

"Upon what subject?"

"Upon the subject of the financial future of this business and, of course, the prospects of Mr. Morgan's own career."

"What paper do you represent?"

"Paper? I have nothing to do with papers. I am an independent exhibitor—from Kalamazoo."

"Really!" The joviality fled from Schultze's face, was replaced by a strained look. "It doesn't happen by any chance that you're that crank who's been writing in promising to take this outfit for a ride?"

"Dear me." Dan scratched his head. "My missives made no such threat. They merely appealed for the reestablishment of the right of exhibitors to make free selections. I did remark that otherwise the said exhibitors would be compelled to take whatever steps they considered necessary to preserve their livelihood." The blue eyes became childishly frank. "And it is true that such steps might bring about the complete dissolution of Motion Picture Superproductions."

"Might they?" inquired Schultze,

with heavy sarcasm. He snorted like a rising hippopotamus. "We're a five hundred million dollar conglomeration of movie producers. We're in control of the whole of this country's film output. And you, a two-bit squirt from Kalamazoo, think you can buck us. Pah!" Another snort. "Old Jelliguts'd have my pelt if I let a punk like you waste his valuable time."

"Calm yourself," advised Dan. "Don't permit your somewhat precipitate emotions to mislead you." The blue eyes were now paternal. "Way out in Kalamazoo we comport ourselves with equanimity. That is why we are efficient."

"Are you insinuating that we aren't efficient?" Schultze stood up behind his desk. "You'd better go home. You're too young to roam loose around these parts. Somebody's liable to smack your bottom."

"A most improper remark," reproved Dan. "I doubt whether Mr. Morgan would sanction such a comment."

"How the hell do you know what Morgan would or would not sanction?" roared Schultze. His neck hairs quivered. "We've had more than enough of smarties like you. Now get out!"

DAN sat down, crossed his legs, looked imperturbably into the other's furious face. "Don't be so uncouth. It would pay you very well to be civil—you may be in need of a job someday."

"Me?" Schultze yelled.

"You," confirmed Dan. He waved a vague hand. "And most everyone else, for that matter—unless Morgan is willing to listen to reason." His bland eyes became faintly ruminative. "I am most loath to be drastic, but at least my conscience will be clear. I guess you'll have to be satisfied with a

hot-dog concession some place."

"A hot-dog concession," yammered Schultze, his features waxing livid.

"Don't parrot me," said Dan, evenly. "You don't appear to appreciate the fact, but you are now at the crossroads of your career. It is up to you to protect your own interests by letting me see Mr. Morgan forthwith. I am most anxious to save him from the consequences of his own stubborn attitude."

With surprising suddenness, Schultze cooled down. Regaining his seat, he gave Dan his full attention, staring at him in silence broken only by his own heavy breathing.

After a while, he said, "You ever done any acting?"

"Bless my soul, certainly not!"

"Well, maybe you will do some soon." He got up, went to the door. "Just you wait here a minute. Just you sit and wait. I'll see what Old Jelliguts has to say about you."

"No more passing me along," warned Dan. "I've neither the time nor inclination to hold ineffectual conversations with three-quarters of the staff before reaching Mr. Morgan."

"All right," agreed Schultze. "You just sit and wait like I told you." He stared hard at Dan, then went out, breathing asthmatically. Before long he returned with Joe. "Morgan'll see you." Another long stare, then, "Take my tip, mister, make it good."

"Make what good?"

"Never mind." Schultze seated himself heavily, blew his nose, frowned at the papers on his desk. "Just you talk at him. You hand him that line of yours—that's all I ask."

JOE shoved it open, gaped toward the desk in the dim distance and said in a hoarse voice, "Mr. Daniel P. Dore." Rapidly, he beat it.

A girl left the desk, came quickly

down the room, a notebook in one hand, a pencil in the other. Politely, Dan stood and held the door open for her. It took her a long time to cover that stretch, but he stood there patiently, his mild eyes covering her approach. The solitary figure at the huge desk also watched. She kept her sangfroid despite this fore-and-aft surveillance, but her poise was shaken as she exited.

Dan said, gravely, "He ought to give you a bicycle, Luscious."

Her mouth quirked as her eyes looked into his blue ones. He stood in the doorway, admiringly watched her retreat along the outer corridor. Several times the figure at the desk harumphed without avail. It was not until the girl rounded the corner that Dan turned and waded through the carpet toward the desk.

He paused halfway, sighed, said to the silent observer, "This is Dore, on safari."

Reaching the desk, he hitched one leg across its shining corner, made himself comfortable, and inquired, "If you don't mind me asking, who was the fair lady?"

"Miss Dreener, my secretary," grunted Morgan. He squatted low in his seat, his hard optics fixed unswervingly on the other. His face was totally devoid of expression.

"H'm!" mused Dan. He gestured to the space between desk and door. "That isn't bad psychology. The humble petitioner is forced to make a journey of his approach." The blue eyes turned to the impassive Morgan. "But it is only an imperfect job. It could have been bettered."

"How?"

"For example, it would have been a great improvement to have stepped this end of the room a couple of feet higher than the rest, and to have moved that hanging lamp three yards farther for-

ward." Leaning over, he propped an elbow on the desk, used the elbow to prop his head. "Then any expedition that succeeded in getting this far would find itself parading on the lower level and in the full glare of the light. You would be higher and half-concealed. You'd have the tactical advantage. The effect on respective egos would be most satisfactory from your point of view."

Morgan came a little more erect in his seat. "I reckon there's something in that."

"Of course there is! It should have been done in the first place." Dan casually studied his nails. "But I've become accustomed to inefficiency around this dump."

"Inefficiency," growled Morgan. He leaned forward, his eyes glowing. Then he changed his mind, relaxed again. "Go on," he urged, "say your piece."

"THE position is so simple that you should find little difficulty in comprehending it," explained Dan. He toyed with an inkpot, favored Morgan with a look of bland friendliness. "I am deputed by a small circuit of independent exhibitors to demand that you restore the old practice of free choice of film products. We have written to you on this subject a number of times, and we feel that we can no longer let it remain in abeyance. So we're giving you a last chance."

"You're giving me what?"

"A last chance," repeated Dan. "Good gracious, I cannot remember a day when I encountered so many people who were hard of hearing."

"That'll do me!" said Morgan. "You go along to Arty Lipoli and tell him I said you was to get a test."

"A test?" Dan looked surprised. "I have not the slightest intention of subjecting myself to any test of any description. Neither am I interested

in this Mr. Lipoli."

Leaning forward, Morgan grinned beefily. "D'you know why I consented to see you?"

"I could hazard a guess or two. Possibly your conscience has smitten you."

"Conscience be damned!" rapped Morgan, still grinning. "Schultze phoned through to say he'd got for me a good type. He said he'd picked up a talking clown. We can use you providing you'll take okay. Yeah, we ain't got one quite like you."

"You want to feature me in your productions?" inquired Dan. His eyes opened wide. "Bless my soul!"

"You're a lucky guy, mister," patronized Morgan. He let his proud, satisfied eyes take in the huge room. "You're on the rainbow trail with the biggest outfit that ever was. You've got Emory Morgan right behind you, and that means you can't go wrong."

"Bless my soul!" repeated Dan.

"You'll be in the money if you're as good as you ought to be when I've finished with you. It'll take time, of course—but I'm the man to bring out the best that's in you. Now you run along and take that test. If Lipoli says you're photogenic, you can come and see me about that contract."

"A movie actor; fancy me a movie actor!" said Dan. "How disgusting!"

"Eh?"

"Now to return to the subject of whether or not the independent exhibitors are to get a square deal," Dan went on. "Do you or do you not intend to restore the policy of free selection?"

"Independent exhibitors . . . free selection." Morgan mouthed the words as though he'd never heard them before. Abruptly, his face reddened. He roared, "To hell with them whining pikers!"

"So you defy me?"

"Huhn?" Morgan gulped, stood up, stared at the other.

Unpropping his head, Dan sat upright on the corner of the desk, favored his opponent with a look of mild reproof.

"You do not appear to realize it, but I have you across the barrel with your southern aspect prominently exposed." He watched interestedly as Morgan's mouth dropped open, then shut. He continued, "This is definitely your last chance. Do I have to paddle you or not?"

Morgan's face went from red to purple, he found his voice, bellowed, "You impudent pup!" and savagely jabbed every button on the desk. He was still both colorful and vocal when the dozen who responded solemnly paraded Dan along the room and out of his sight.

MARK CRAIT was the first to smell a rat. He barged into Morgan's room, did the length of the carpet in record time, grabbed a chair and one of Morgan's cigars. The latter act was one he'd cultivated to remind his chief that he, Crait, was a privileged person in this neck of the woods.

"Boss, there's something fishy afoot."

"So what?" growled Morgan, disinterestedly. "Ain't you paid to keep them stinks to yourself?"

"Yup, but this is outside. It ain't on the lot. It's way over there in Kalamazoo."

"It would be." Morgan scowled at Crait's face mirrored in the surface of the desk. He flicked some ash over the face. "That young squirt Dore, eh?"

"He's behind it, boss. Seems that last Thursday he held a meeting of Southern Michigan exhibitors in his cinema. The date coincided with the expiration of their current rota con-

tract." He paused there, lit the cigar with a dramatic flourish.

"Go on," urged Morgan. "You ain't projecting a cowboy serial."

"After this gabfest, they notified our local agency that the contract would not be renewed."

"Hah!" Morgan's clipped laugh was almost a bark. How many halls they got?"

"One hundred and fourteen."

"That all?" He asked the face again. "Maybe they're aiming to import foreign productions, but they can't drag in a half quota of bum stuff at double price and still compete. It ain't economical. Let 'em try it. In a few months they'll be as sorry as hell. They'll come crawling back to us."

Crait blinked. "I thought that, boss. But it ain't so. That's what's fishy—they've closed down their halls until further notice."

"You mean they ain't exhibiting at all?"

"Yup."

"Well, what the devil are they doing?"

"I don't know, boss. I sent Harkshaw out there last Saturday, to smell around. He phoned through this morning. He says that all the halls are shut and that the entertainment columns of the local sheets are carrying notices saying that the halls are temporarily closed pending completion of alterations."

"Alterations!" Morgan's natural suspicion woke up in a hurry. "Look, Mark, what does that suggest to you?"

"Something new."

"Yeah, something new. But there ain't anything new. There can't be anything new, at least, not in movies." Sliding open a drawer, he dragged out a printed sheet, held it up. "See?" he said. The words on the sheet were known all over the world:

*Every M. P. S. Epic Is
In glorious color!
Completely scented!
With full-range sound!
And three-dimensional!*

GLANCING at it, Crait said, "They can't beat that. It ain't humanly possible. There ain't any more improvements to be made. Smells and stereoscopy brought our flickies as near to reality as they'll be in another thousand years, and our hold on patent rights is good and tight. I've looked into that! I thought there might be a loophole somewhere, and that some smarties had thought up a sneaker, but we've got the master patents as sure as you've got the movie trade in your mitts."

"Don't tell me." Morgan was half surly, half gratified. "I bought 'em. I know what I bought."

"Only thing I can think of," pursued Crait, brightly, "is that they're going to clean out of the show business and into something else. Maybe they're calculating on starting another craze like miniature golf or roller skating."

"That'll suit me." Morgan's grin came back. "Them crazes bust quicker'n they inflate. Let them hicks burn their fingers—in a few months they'll be outside the gates praying for pics." The grin widened. "By which time our rates will have upped ten percent."

"Sure," said Crait. "Sure." He got up, looked doubtfully at the other, went slowly out.

IT WAS a month before Crait was back with the same bee in occupation of his bonnet. His entrance was as hasty as before, he sat himself even more hurriedly, but he forgot the cigar. He was considerably out of breath.

"Kalamazoo," he wheezed. "Dore."

"That guy again?" Morgan looked

pained.

"The close-down's spread. The only halls still open in Detroit are ours. All the independents have shut up shop. What's more, they're selling their projectors." He panted a bit, went on. "Remember them five redundant jobs on our Chicago-South Bend circuit which we threw on the market? Well, this punk Dore bidded in and got them."

"He did?"

"And that ain't all. I came across Gloria Sweeting this morning. She acted hoity-toity. You'd've thought I was dirt. She said she was leaving this putrid burg forthwith, and them was her exact words. She's leaving for Kalamazoo tonight. Dore's given her a job as a professional emotionalist."

"As a what?" Morgan had found the inevitable cigar and was just about to stick it in his mouth. He almost swallowed it.

"She didn't know any more than that, or if she did she wasn't telling. She said she was going to emote for Dore." He waited, but Morgan stared and said nothing, so he carried on. "Harkshaw brought this back." He tossed a newspaper clipping on the desk.

Morgan leaned forward, gaped at it, a small, boxed advertisement in heavy print. It said:

Wanted: Fluent, sensitive, imaginative, well-educated people for training as professional emotionalists. This is a highly remunerative opportunity for the right persons. Box W. 1887.

"The guy's nuts," opined Morgan, positively.

"That's what I think. But he's managed to convince a considerable number of fellow exhibitors that whatever

he's got on his mind makes sense, and not all them boys are dopes. I don't like it, boss, I don't like it."

"Quite right," approved Morgan. "I don't want you to like it. I ain't worrying, but I expect you to worry. You go on worrying, Mark, and you won't be chiseling me outa your pay." He pressed one of the buttons, silently watched the uneasy Crait go out, watched the self-possessed Miss Dree-ner come in.

SHE got up to his desk, seated herself, opened her book, patted her perfectly arranged hair, made her pencil ready. Then, before he had time to dictate, she spoke to him.

"By the way, Mr. Morgan, I shall be leaving your service Saturday."

"Eh?" He was startled. "You getting married?"

"Oh, no!" She smiled a little, pinked a little. "I'm moving to the mid-West. I have been offered a most attractive post in Kalamazoo."

"H'm, I see," he said, easily. He mused a moment, then his face contorted, and he yelled at her, "Where?"

She dropped her book, picked it up, repeated, "Kalamazoo." He arose from his seat, his eyes bugging at her. She stood up, too. Apologetically, she said, "I'm going to become an emotionalist."

With a mighty effort, Morgan controlled himself, asked very deliberately, "And what in the name of all that's holy is an emotionalist?"

"I don't know—yet. But it's a very interesting and remunerative post. I understand that it offers opportunities equal to anything in the movie business. Mr. Dore gave me my chance. He is a very charming man."

Morgan flopped back in his seat, waved his hands feebly. "Beat it and leave me to think. I've forgotten what I wanted you to write down, so beat it."

THE affair continued to spread.

One of Motion Picture Superproduction's statisticians made Morgan a day-by-day graph showing the rise in number of non-contracting halls. The graph went up in a steady line, but Morgan stubbornly refused to take notice until the day it reached the six hundred mark. Then he summoned Crait.

"Look, Mark, this squirt Dore ain't getting into my hair, so don't you think that he is."

"No, boss," responded Crait, dutifully. His tongue poked around in his cheek.

"But I'm curious about him. I want some dirt on who he is and what he's doing, see? And I want to know who's digging up the dough for him to play with."

"Might be Krupa or Walmsley or the Aston brothers," hazarded Crait.

"Who knows? They all stepped out with plenty when we absorbed their lots, but any of them'd be glad to take a smack at us. You go get yourself a likely shamus and tell him to find out."

Crait obeyed orders. It took him a fortnight to get hold of the required information, by which time the graph recorded seven hundred and four and Morgan's cigars were being more eaten than smoked. Crait came in with a bunch of papers.

"This guy Dore is twenty-four years old and is said to be a demon in diapers."

"Don't talk melodramatic," reproved Morgan. "I been in the business too long."

"It's the flatfoot's report," Crait explained. "Up to a year ago Dore was a research worker with the North American Electric Corporation. He was a clever guy at his job. In fact, he was a scientist of some merit, despite his age."

"Go on."

"He chucked this post and became a movie exhibitor when his old man died and left him the *Rotunda* in Kalamazoo. Nobody knows why he threw up a good post, but—" He paused tantalizingly.

"Someday, Mark, I'll break your neck," Morgan promised.

Crait finished it hurriedly. "But the North American Electric Corporation is financing him right now!"

"Hell in a bed!" Morgan scowled ferociously. "That outfit can match bucks with us and hardly call it money. They're colossal, co-lossal!"

"I know it," said Crait, full of sympathetic gloom. "I looked 'em up. All that gold down there in Kentucky is just their petty cash."

"You comfort me," Morgan told him, scowling even more. "You make me feel tranquil. That's what I like about you, Mark."

Looking self-conscious, Crait said, "Aw, boss, you wanted to be told."

"Sure I wanted to be told. But I ain't asked you to rub it in, did I? Never mind, carry on and give me the rest. I can take it. Nobody ever said Emory Morgan couldn't take it—and dish it out." He settled back, eyes gleaming.

"The exhibitors won't say what Dore put across them. They just snigger dirtily and tell us to study the papers. But Jack Embleton did remark that when they were ready they were going to knock the public's ears off with a startling version of *Manhattan Nocturne*."

"He did?" A swift change came over Morgan's face. The gleam in his eyes brightened until his optics flared with a predatory light. "*Manhattan Nocturne*, eh? The year's best seller. Well, that's fine, that's real fine!" He rubbed his hands together. "Let 'em

go right ahead, Mark. They're riding the rail, though they don't know it. I'll show them they can't cock a snoot at this outfit!"

"I don't see it, boss," Crait protested.

"Of course you don't, Mark." The magnate was positively amiable. "Now you run along and worry. Leave the next move to Emory Morgan, and you do the worrying in the meantime."

MORGAN studied the papers. It was five weeks before he found anything, and then he failed to grasp its significance until he was passing Jack Embleton's place on his way to the lot. He lounged back in his Cadillac, idly raked through the morning sheet, found right in the middle of it a simple advertisement in huge letters that occupied a full page:

WATCH FOR YOUR
LOCAL
DORMITORIUM

He scanned it without feeling as much as mildly curious, turned over the pages and examined the financial columns. M. P. S. shares were down by twelve cents for the third successive week. Just one of those vagaries. Probably some sizeable holder was unloading. If they got down to within reasonable reach of par he'd step in and buy, thus strengthening his personal holding.

Then he glanced through the side window at Embleton's *Plaza* which was one of Dore's mysterious recalcitrants. The facade was newly painted, the brickwork lined and pointed, the whole front freshly dolled up. The old gilded script *Plaza* sign was missing, and a great neon sprawled across in its place. The neon wasn't illuminated, but he caught its lettering as the Cadillac swept past: *Tenth Avenue Dormitorium*.

"Stop," he snapped at his driver. "Wait here a bit." Getting out of the Cad, he went back, had another look at Embleton's place. The collapsible gate was across the main entrance but not locked at one end. Sounds of hammering reverberated from inside. Sliding the gate, Morgan went through, found a painter busily graining a pillar in the foyer, said to him, "Embleton anywhere around?"

"As I live," remarked a bland voice right behind him, "Mr. Morgan in person! To what do we owe this pleasure?"

He whirled around, stared right into those wide blue eyes that were becoming his pet irritation. "You!" he rumbled at Dan Dore. "What in hades are you doing here?"

Mr. Dore pulled at one ear, his expression verging on the infantile. "Oh, I'm merely giving Jack a hand. I go around them all as alterations near completion and help them make final adjustments. You'll be in the gutter soon."

"I see," said Morgan, not seeing at all. "Now maybe you'll—" His voice ended as if chopped off, his features went crimson, and he bawled, "Hey, what was that you just said about me?"

"Did I say anything about you?" Dan Dore rubbed his freckles, looked faintly amazed. "Good gracious!"

"About me being in the gutter," Morgan reminded him. He took a step forward, his attitude pugnacious.

"Ah, yes," mused Dan. "The inevitable fate of any man who refuses to admit that further improvement is possible. A pity, a great pity! It touches my conscience that I should have to compel an individual otherwise so talented to hawk shoelaces in the street."

"What?" bellowed Morgan. The painter dropped his brush, the hammering inside temporarily ceased.

"However," continued Dan, imperceptibly, "the situation is not without a modicum of justice. You were most unkind to Miss Dreener although she served you faithfully and well. You were unnecessarily harsh with Miss Sweeting." The blue eyes filled themselves with pious reproach. "In fact, the opinion of many of your employees is that you are a rather cold and heartless man. As a human being, you bear a striking resemblance to a fish."

"A FISH," mouthed Morgan. He put one hand on the adjacent pillar to brace himself. The paint was wet, and the hand stuck, an incident that did nothing to help his pleasure.

"A fat fish," corrected Dan, as an afterthought. "You should diet, you know. I diagnose your case as one of inefficient digestion." He emitted a resigned sigh. "Yes, inefficiency—that's all I seem to encounter in these places far from Kalamazoo. It's a marvel to me how you've all managed to survive."

"That settles it!" Morgan recovered rapidly. His ire evaporated, he became visibly pleased about something. "It's what I've always thought. You're a nuthead. You're just plain, incurably daffy. All I've got to do is wait for the crash and watch the goon squad rope you in."

"Bless my soul!" said Dan.

"Heaven alone knows," went on Morgan, "how you've managed to dig up all the suckers you've got with you, but I'm old enough and sinful enough to know that Barnum made a grave underestimate." He cackled gratingly. "Go ahead, pal. Go right ahead and try to smash the movie trade. I'll come along and gloat when they toss your pants in the clink."

"Dear me," said Dan, "how sadistic of you."

"Dormitorium bunk!" continued

Morgan, thoroughly enjoying himself. "When you're breaking rocks I'll buy your halls for the price of the bricks."

"Well," put in Dan, charmingly, "that leaves us all happy; you in the gutter and me in the . . . er . . . clink. So pleased to have met you again, Mr. Morgan. I'm sure you'll pardon me leaving, but I'm very busy even if you aren't."

"Hey - hey!" chuckled Morgan. "Uncle Sam'll keep you a damnsight busier!" With that, he went out, got into the Cadillac, had a last look through the rear window at the *Tenth Avenue Dormitorium*. He said to his chauffeur, "Slugs, back there's a crazy guy who thinks he can add to movies something more than sounds, smells, colors and three-dim effect. Can you think of any improvement?"

"Naw, chief, they ain't nuttin'," quoth Slugs. His hairy hands clenched about the wheel, his small eyes squinted with the unusual strain of thinking. "Only t'ing I'd like'd be a movie where Gloria Sweetin' snaked right outa the screen an' sat in me lap."

"Sweeting's a ham," defined Morgan. "I could think of tastier lumps, myself."

THE storm broke Monday, September 20. All the dailies carried long articles eulogizing dormitoriums, the twentieth century climax of entertainment, the great successor to the movies. None of the articles gave any hint of the technique employed in these mysterious halls, but all were well calculated to excite the curiosity of the public in general and of critics and independent exhibitors in particular. Each paper ran a full-page advertisement:

YOUR LOCAL DORMITORIUM
OPENS TONIGHT
WITH
MANHATTAN NOCTURNE

Morgan took Crait around in the Cadillac to the *Park Dormitorium* which stood alongside the M. P. S. *Coliseum*. The latter bore its usual poster telling the world that all M. P. S. creations had color, sounds, smell and were completely stereoscopic. The new rival displayed a matching poster which read:

*Every Dore Epic Means
Self-Participation!*

"Baloney!" scoffed Morgan. He frowned at the long queue leading to the newcomer's box-office, frowned more deeply as he noted the deserted air of the *Coliseum*. "You get out, Mark, and hang around. The first mob'll be out in half an hour or so. Find out if they were actually given *Manhattan Nocturne*, and then phone through to me. One show's enough—after that I'm gonna skin 'em!"

He rolled back to the lot, waited in his huge office until a phone shrilled, picked it up and said, "That you, Mark?"

"Boss," yelled Crait, "they've come out and I talked to some guys who'd seen *Monhattan Nocturne* and they said it was a wow and it'd make you forget your wooden leg and it's—"

"That'll do," cut in Morgan. He slapped the phone down on Crait's excited voice, smiled broadly, selected a cigar and lit it with an imperial air. Then he picked up the phone again, said to his operator, "Get me our lawyers."

The call went through. He rapped authoritatively, "Mulligan, you've heard about these here dormitoriums? Well, they've been showing their version of a book called *Manhattan Nocturne*. You've read it, huh? Anyway, we bought up the movie rights six months back." He listened, said, "Yeah, you got it. You sue the pants off them. Move fast and make it hot."

He sat back, eyed the room grandly, blew cigar smoke around, felt supremely satisfied.

Crait charged in four hours later. His clothes were sloppy, his hair awry. The way he came up the carpet suggested that he was making a getaway with somebody's gold watch. He fell into a chair, mopped his forehead.

"Boss, we're sunk."

"Don't talk nutty," ordered Morgan.

"It's a fact, boss. Our shares are down so far you can't use 'em to buy hamburgers. If I gave a month's pay for our outfit I'd owe everything to my mother." He panted heavily, mopped the forehead once more. "I been in the dormitorium. I got inquisitive and went in. It's the apex, the acme, the peak, the word after the last word! You go see for yourself."

"Huh?"

"You go see," persisted Crait. "This Dore's put us back in the dark ages. We're dumped in the museum along with them hairy fellers in the coonskin belly-muffs."

"You been drinking, Mark?" asked Morgan, severely. He bent his brows at the other.

"I ain't touched a drop although I could do with plenty right now." He gave a sour laugh. "As I came in I saw Flaherty trundling the Number Two big camera toward the Swiss Village. Poor guy, he doesn't know it, but he was lugging junk around." Crait waved a devastating hand. "They're gonna bury us with all that stuff just like they did King Tut."

"Mark!" Emory Morgan arose in all his imposing magnificence. He was royally shocked.

"You go see," invited Crait, adding, with unexpected spirit, "You ain't scared, unh?"

"I'll go and see," pronounced Morgan. "I'll go see for myself." He

mashed his cigar in a tray, frowned deeply at the moody Crait, went out.

INSIDE, the dormitorium proved to be much like an ordinary cinema except that there wasn't any stereoscopic screen, and the long rows of tip-up seats had been replaced by wider rows of deep, luxurious armchairs. Morgan estimated that this latter refinement reduced the capacity of the house by at least twenty percent. An attractive usherette conducted him to one of the armchairs, he sank into its soft, embracing depths, looked around.

The place was full, with plenty more waiting outside for the next performance. For some reason he couldn't fathom, those who were running the place weren't giving a continuous show, but a series of separate and distinct houses, letting each successive audience see the programme right through then clearing the hall in readiness for the next lot. They were not admitting late comers, either. And they didn't allow any standing. You had to be in your seat at the start or else wait a couple of hours outside for the next performance. Also, they were unusually strict about smoking.

In front, where the screen should have been, hung a huge sheet of fine, closely woven wire that shone like polished copper. A similar sheet hung at the back of the dormitorium several feet behind the rearmost row of seats. Below the front sheet, softly illuminated by hidden lights, was the keyboard of a giant organ.

The doors closed, the usherettes faded into the side aisles, the lights dimmed. The giant organ stirred to life, played a soothing melody. A strange odor wafted through the hall, became stronger. It wasn't an attractive odor, yet neither was it unpleasant. The scent remained; the organ grew

slumbersome in its lulling tones. The whole atmosphere bore an overwhelming suggestion of sleep, sleep, sleep.

Then with all the startling suddenness of an unheralded miracle, Morgan found himself face to face with Carlotta Clair, the raven-haired heroine of *Manhattan Nocturne*. He wasn't amazed by the meeting, in fact it seemed to him the most natural of all events. She was vibrant, beautiful, alive—and she loved him. He, Harry Reordon—not Emory Morgan, not Emory Morgan, but Harry Reordon— young, handsome, burly and fascinating, could feel Carlotta's infatuation, see it in her glorious eyes. And he loved her, loved her like hell. She knew that, knew it because he told her so. He enjoyed the pressure and the taste of her carmine lips upon his own, the soft yielding of her slender body as he embraced her in farewell.

SHE was leaving him for ever, leaving him to marry that dirty, misbegotten skunk who had a hold upon her father. He couldn't bear the thought of it, felt the fierce resentment boiling up within his chest, felt the grim, dogged determination to smash the whole rotten set-up and regain Carlotta for his own. Her fragrance was tantalizing in his nostrils, her deep, black eyes held the tiniest hint of tears. He could not let her go like this.

Fragilely, she swayed toward him, whispered in her low, warm voice, "Harry, I'll always think of you."

He scowled upward at the mighty spires of Manhattan, immense monuments over the graves of a thousand hopes, and his jaw stuck out as he said, rather melodramatically, "Carlotta, there are still a few weeks. There still is hope." He bunched his fists until the knuckles whitened. "Don't worry, darling. Be brave! I'll beat Old Man

Time to the altar yet!"

She smiled sadly and left him. Thus it went on. He, Harry Reordon, handsome and heroic, bust Manhattan wide open in the requisite time. The sweat of anxiety poured down his spine as he made his getaway from pursuing black sedans with drawn side-curtains. His stomach shrank to a small, hard ball when he made that daredevil leap off Brooklyn Bridge. He thrilled like a kid at every surreptitious meeting with Carlotta. He suffered agonies when they framed him, became defiant and courageous all through that long court case, was immensely gratified by the plaudits of the crowd when finally he vindicated himself and drove the rats out of town.

Then the wedding with Carlotta. Her beautiful gown, her shining eyes, the admiration of the great crowd of spectators, a-a-ah! And the excitement within his breast as he knew that now the world was his oyster. He slipped the ring on her finger. She tilted her face for the nuptial kiss. Her lips were warm and soft and moist, her cheeks like velvet, her eyelashes long, graceful. She was his! She was bliss!

At that point a half-dazed and thoroughly excited Emory Morgan found himself sprawling in his seat, his eyes staring blankly before him. He didn't even see the copper cathode above the keyboard of the organ. The lights were waxing once more, the organ began to play a lively, stirring tune. People moved all around, languidly gathering gloves and handbags, moving out. He had a funny feeling deep down inside him, a feeling as of one completely satiated with emotional experience, a sense of glandular satisfaction. Lazily, he got up, went out of the dormitorium.

HE WAS introspective all the way home, still soberly thoughtful at

his office next morning. The lawyers phoned through, told him it was a waste of time to sue Mr. Dore because that gentleman had purchased for a thousand bucks the right to emotionalize *Manhattan Nocturne*, and he took it like a lamb. Crait came in at ten, his air that of a professional mourner.

"Did you see it, boss?"

"Yeah." Morgan fiddled with a silver pencil, looked around with eyes decidedly worried. Somehow, the great room was dull and empty, not half as imposing as it used to be. Even the desk had lost some of its polish. "Mark, I hate like hell to say it—but I reckon we're on the way out."

"Sure, boss, that's what I think."

"I never thought I'd live to see the day when the movie business got poured down the sink, but this is it!" He scuffed the pencil around, didn't notice his cigars. "What that mule-skinner from Kalamazoo has discovered is something mighty near to reality. Hell, I could even taste Carlotta Clair's lipstick. It was cherry."

"It was mandarine," contradicted Crait.

"It was cherry. I know, because that's my favorite."

"Mandarine's mine—that's how I know," Crait persisted.

They stared at each other, then Morgan went on. "I can't make out how in hades he's done it, but it looks to me mighty like controlled dreaming, and you can bet he's protected his methods in law—especially seeing that electrical gang of bandits've got their fingers in the pie."

"Yup," endorsed Crait, "he's got us by the short hairs. So where do we go from here?"

"God knows," said Morgan, gloomily. It was then that he surprised Crait by revealing a hidden side of his character. "I'm all right. I can always

go back to the old racket and fight my way up again. But what about the others, hundreds, thousands of 'em? What're they gonna do? What about the little guys who've staked us with hard-earned dough?"

"It'll be hell on them," said Crait, waggling his eyebrows as if he couldn't believe what he'd heard. "They're slated for a long spell on crusts and ditch water."

Still twiddling his pencil, Morgan said, "If I could carry them all, I'd do it, but there're too many of them." The phone yelled, he picked it up disinterestedly, listened. His beefy face darkened, and he shouted, "To hell with him!" He went on listening while the phone squeaked rapidly against his unwilling ear. After a while, he growled resignedly, "Oh, all right. Show him in." He forked the phone. "Dore."

"What, is that bum pestering you again?"

"Yeah. Beat it, Mark, and leave me to deal with him."

DAN DORE made his entry with the same bland assurance as before, struggled through the carpet, paused halfway and said, chidingly, "You ought to plant an oasis just here." He reached the desk, hitched himself onto a corner, bestowed an infantile grin upon the glowering Morgan.

"Well?" Morgan rapped.

"You're the unhappy victim of a sort of ultra short-wave radio," Dan informed. "Actually, it's an adjoining pair of telepathic bands. One belongs to males, the other to females. When you're experimenting with electro-magnetic impulses you don't expect sex to rear its ugly head, do you?"

"I don't," growled Morgan, with a touch of sarcasm.

"Now this dual band won't function effectively over a range greater than a

mere seven hundred feet, but within that range it is potent in all directions. So if I use it in a dormitorium in the same manner as an ordinary transmitter I'm going to have the surrounding sidewalks littered with non-paying clients. To avoid this, I have to transmit on a sort of beam system, seating the audience in the path of a telepathic stream flowing from a big cathode to an equally big anode. Are you following me?"

"Yeah," said Morgan. "But what's it to me. Why can't you go trundle your hoop?"

"Patience, my bellicose friend." The blue eyes looked guileless, disarming. His freckles seemed bigger and more numerous than ever. "The technique is simple. I have two emotionalists in each dormitorium's equivalent of a projection room. One is male, the other female. Both are of the imaginative, literary type that never reads a book but rather enters it in person. I take their telepathic output, amplify it enormously, give the powerful product to the audience. It's too strong for any of them to resist, and even the dullest of them emotes like he never did before." His chuckle was loud. "You ought to watch an audience sometime. All the men lash out in their sleep when the hero lands the villain a belt in the lugs; all the ladies pout their lips and sigh ecstatically in the terminating love scene."

"I know it," growled Morgan. "I've had some."

"I'm trading in created dreamlands," continued Dan Dore. "Anyone who's had a really vivid dream knows how vividly real a dream can be. While the novelty lasts, the effect is good enough to suit everyone. Do you comprehend me?"

"I ain't a cretin."

"Quite! You wouldn't be cretinous

enough to maintain that there's no more room for improvement in dormitorium technique?"

"Well . . . well—" Morgan hesitated, fidgeted uneasily.

"LISTEN!" ordered Dan. "What imperfection lies within our broadcast dreams is due mostly to the mental strain put upon the professional emotionalists while they visualize and animate the printed story."

"So?"

"So their task would be far easier, more polished, better co-ordinated, their responses more detailed and realistic if they watched a movie version of a book."

"Eh?" Morgan sat up. His hands weren't quite steady.

"In other words, the movie trade can give me greater clarity, I can give the movies intense realism. We can assist each other. You'd have to turn out home-size films and we'd have to install a miniature projector in every translation room of a dormitorium, but that's no bother." The childish eyes went severe. "Are you prepared to help, without any commercial wrangling, and permitting us free selection from your output?"

Morgan contorted his face, said, "I am."

"That's fine! If you're prepared to operate with some degree of efficiency, and turn out praiseworthy stuff, we won't turn any of it down."

They shook hands on it, and Dan went out. Morgan sat at his desk a long, long time. Then he dug up a cigar. The flame wavered as he lit it. The room wasn't looking so bad after all, and the desk had a beautiful polish. He wondered whether there was an improved cigar on the market.

The phone rang, he picked it up, a familiar voice said, "I forgot to men-

tion that you'll have to arrange for selection by giving all previews in Kalamazoo."

"Yeah," agreed Morgan, "sure!" He made sure the phone was properly cradled before he bawled, "I'd like to blow that goddam burg clean off the

map!"

From the distant door, Crait said, "Which place, boss?"

"Slumber Dump, Michigan," snapped Morgan, and mashed his cigar which somehow tasted as if it could be better. He selected another.