

SATELLITE

science fiction

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A COMPLETE NOVEL

A GLASS OF DARKNESS

by PHILIP K. DICK

The Virginia town in which Ted Barton was born had vanished. In its place was a strange new community where golems walked and Wanderers shone by night, a strange battleground of cosmic forces that spanned time and the galaxy!

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The Man in the Iron Altogether

Are you a weakling? When you sit down at the piano, do your fingers lack muscle to depress the keys? If so, read the following pages . . .

by DAL STIVENS

EVERY TIME I carted coal from the cellar, I puffed hard enough to blow out a blast furnace. Drinking beer made me feel weak at the elbows. I was so frail that I was continually blown off my feet every time the N.B.C. broadcast Vaughan Williams's *Sinfonia Antarctica*. That wind machine . . . !

When I tried to drive the car, it was almost more than my life was worth. The big heavy trucks kept coming straight for me, and I had scarcely enough strength to pull the wheel over so I could mount the sidewalk to get out of their way. I swore that, one day, I'd get my revenge.

I had a lot of scores to pay back. I was always being pushed around. It had been the same at

school. Hemstead used to bully me unmercifully. He particularly liked kicking me on the shins. He used to roll up his trouser cuffs before he started. Not only did this give him greater freedom of movement, but he was also a careful type. Hemstead was a lawyer now, but, all the same, I gave the neighbourhood of his chambers a wide berth.

These days, my wife bullied me unceasingly. Having to stoke the furnace made her cross.

"It's shameful that I should have to do it," she complained. "You are always promising to go to a body-developing expert, but you never do. You have a wish-bone for a backbone. Just look at you . . . !"

She glared at me, pointing an

accusing finger. "Too many cigarettes!" she said.

I nodded penitently.

"Too many beers!"

I nodded again, but not so penitently. The resolution to do something about my deplorable condition was solidifying in me suddenly—don't ask me how.

"Too many—" she began.

I cut in, looking hard at *her*. "Too many women!" I said. And I added, so she could get my meaning clearly, "Women—singular."

"It's ungrammatical," she said. "It should be *woman*—singular."

"Anyway, you got my meaning," I said. "I thought it was rather bright."

"Oh, you do, do you?" said she. "Well, let me tell you . . ."

But she didn't. I had taken myself off—the wind helped, as it was blowing my way—to see a physical culture expert, Iron-heels Murphy.

"Make a man of me Iron-heels," I pleaded. I felt more frail than ever. "Give me a mighty chest, thews of corundum, tendons of steel . . ."

"Iron only," he said. "Steel is needed for moral rearmament."

Murphy looked me up and down. He had to—I was floating gently between the ceiling and the floor, thanks to an updraft. He pulled a piece of cord out of a side pocket.

"I'll tether you and get to

work," he said. "I've never seen a worse case, but I'll give you everything I've got. You represent a challenge to any builder of iron men."

Six months later Iron-heels had made good. I walked out of that gymnasium, a new man.

"I wouldn't have believed it possible, but I have excelled myself," he said, eyeing the finished product. "I've made you an iron man."

I plodded heavily across Times Square, and a bus crashed head-on into me. The driver was visibly upset.

"Why can't you look where you're going?" he said pettishly. "However *will* I get my bus back to the depot?"

"I dare say the engine's still all right," I told him. "You weren't going very fast."

A character piped up from the rear seat. "The engine's here in my lap," he said.

I plodded off. I was ready now to take my revenge on all those trucks that had run me off the road. I chose a ten-tonner—one of those big trailer jobs that don't give way, not even for grandmothers with babes in arms. In a matter of seconds, the hood had been concertinaed.

"Take *that*!" I said with arrant scorn.

The truck that I picked for my 37th victim braked to a violent stop just short of collision. The

driver leapt out, pale and shaking.

"Spare me!" he quaked. "I'm the guy who loves Baby Fiats."

I let him go.

After that I visited my dentist.

"Tough cavity," he said an hour later. The carpet was stuck like a pin-cushion with bent drills. "But I never allow anything to get the best of me. Just hold that fuse steady, will you?"

He put a match to the fuse, hurried into the next room to wait for the explosion. After it was over, he came back.

"Clean as a whistle," he said, a couple of minutes later. "Hang on for a minute, until I shift some of the ceiling off your chest."

"Don't worry about me," I said. "I'm quite comfortable."

"I'm not thinking about *you*," he said. "It's the people upstairs. That basin belongs to their wash-room, and they might need it later."

After I left the dentist, I went and waited outside Hemstead's office. I'd teach him to be the school bully.

At five o'clock, he emerged. You should have seen his face light up with pleasure when he saw me. He put his rolled umbrella and briefcase down and rolled up his pinstripe trousers.

"Ah, Weasel, you little stinker!" I cried. "I have waited these many long years for my vengeance!"

"Ah . . . !" he whispered, his little eyes aglow.

"Take *that*, and see if you can do better," I cried. I kicked him hard on the shins and waited for him to retaliate. He did.

Chivalry demanded that I see Hemstead limp over to a taxi before I moved off. It was beginning to rain heavily as I set out for home. I was soaked through by the time I reached my house.

I was going to do big things to the furnace, but my wife took one look at my face and diagnosed measles. She put me to bed.

They weren't measles—they were rust spots. In the morning, I was a shell of my new self. Just as well, too, you'll say.

A hell of a fix!

