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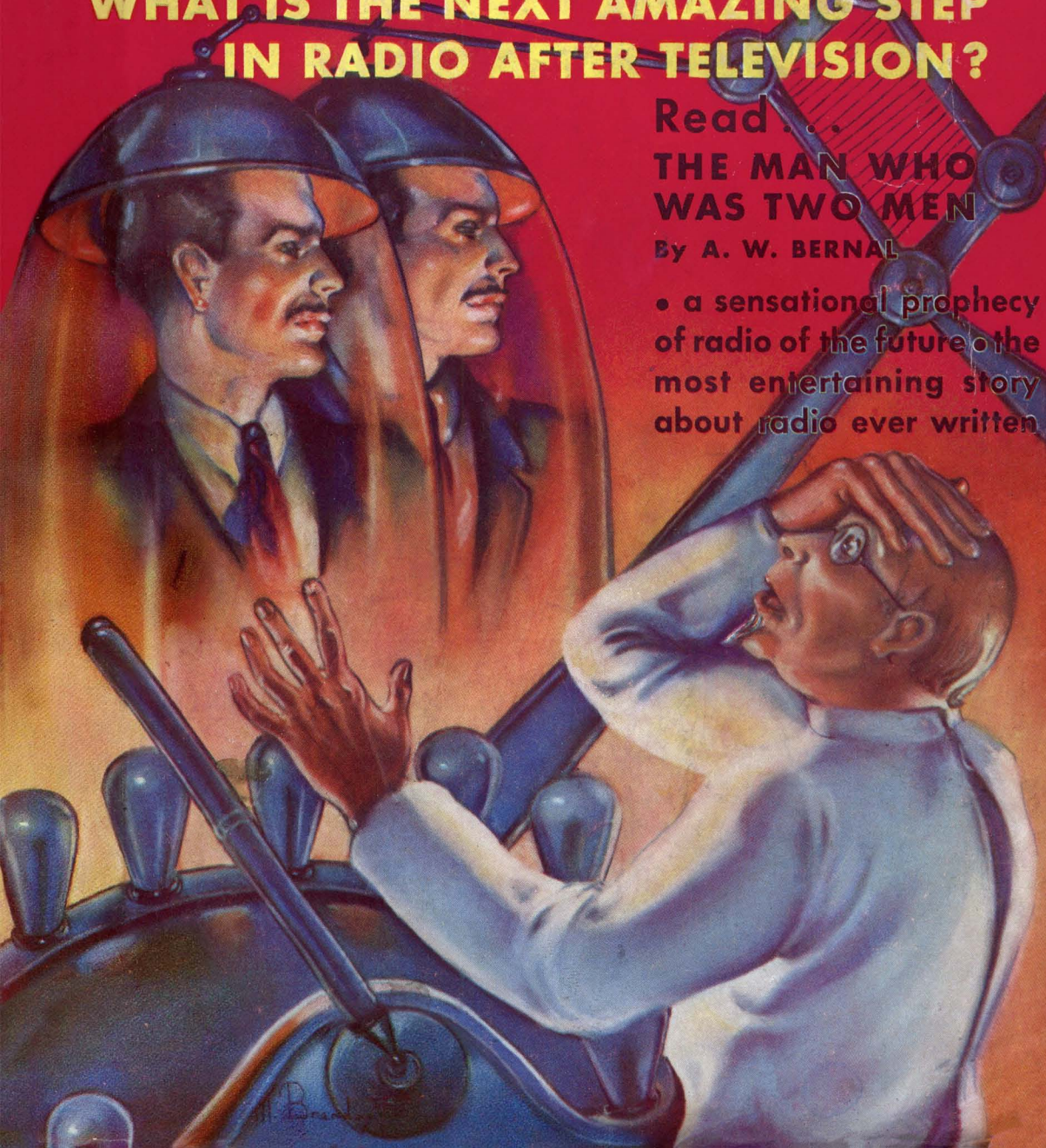


# Weird Tales

**WHAT IS THE NEXT AMAZING STEP  
IN RADIO AFTER TELEVISION?**

Read...  
**THE MAN WHO  
WAS TWO MEN**  
By A. W. BERNAL

• a sensational prophecy  
of radio of the future • the  
most entertaining story  
about radio ever written





# Weird Tales

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Volume 25

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**WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH**



"The next moment the screaming scientist was helplessly enmeshed in a net of wiring."



# The Man Who Was Two Men

By ARTHUR WILLIAM BERNAL

*An amazing weird-scientific story that will hold your intense interest  
—probably the most entertaining story about  
radio ever written*

"OH, I GUESS it does sound weird, doesn't it?" asked the man who was called Harry Preest.

I nodded acquiescence, watching his white teeth as they chewed nervously upon the ragged fringe of a black mus-

tache. It sounded unutterably strange, even to me whose business it is to hear incredible narratives—to whom fantastic stories are everyday commonplaces. Yes, inured as I was to such ravings, I had now come across something which far

overshadowed all others I had ever heard.

"It—it's quite remarkable," I said without exaggeration; then I added, "for how long a time were you two separate men—one individual, living two distinct lives?"

The man called Harry Preest looked me straight in the eye and answered in a taut half-whisper, "*I still am!*"

The air was quite warm, yet I could not repress a sudden shudder.

"I see that you'd like to hear the whole story, wouldn't you?" went on the man called Harry Preest. "Well, all right, I don't mind telling a sympathetic person like you about it. You sit down here and make yourself comfortable," he motioned to the narrow bunk on which he slept, "and I'll tell you everything. No, I'll stand up; I talk better if I stroll up and down a bit as I speak."

As he cleared his throat as though preparing to make a long speech, I eased myself onto the bed he had indicated. I glanced up expectantly into his bright, restless eyes.

"All right," the man called Harry Preest said again, "but if I'm going to tell you this story I'm going to do it in my own way, in my own words, you understand. I don't wish to be interrupted till I'm all finished. Agreed?"

"Agreed."

The other began slowly to pace to and fro within the small room, while his eyes appeared to be searching the floor for the words he needed. "All right, now," he said. "Listen carefully to what I have to say."

### *The Amazing Dilemma of Harry Preest*

**H**ARRY PREEST, unemployed, seated on a bench in the park, was staring dolefully at two sparrows quarreling over a stale crust of bread. He had lost his job, and his hopes of soon getting an-

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● Arthur William Bernal is a young author, yet he has already distinguished himself as a writer of fascinating science-fiction. His weird-scientific novel, "Vampires of the Moon," won enthusiastic acclaim when it was printed in *Weird Tales* a year ago. This young California author presents an amazing story of what might happen in the near future—a striking tale of the next forward step in radio after television. "The Man Who Was Two Men," published complete in this issue, is an intensely human story, presenting a very real dilemma. What would you do if you were suddenly changed by science into two men, each complete with the body, the brains, the emotions and the memory that you have now? This novelette tells in interest-gripping fashion how Harry Preest met that problem when a radio experiment split his personality into two identical beings. We recommend the story to you.

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other were fast paling. A discouraged sigh escaped his lips.

"I beg your pardon, my dear sir," remarked a high thin voice from beside him, unexpectedly, "but isn't your name Preest?"

Preest looked up. A slow smile of recognition chased the worried frown from his face as he beheld a plump little figure attired in a sport-back coat and rather tight-fitting, shiny, blue serge trousers.

"Doctor—Doctor Porthet!"

"Exactly," agreed the little man, jovially. "Doctor Emmett D. Porthet, at your service."

"Why, how are you, doctor? Won't you sit down?"

The paunchy little man in the tight pants carefully dusted off a portion of the bench and seated himself, his round face agleam with pleasure. "Well," he said pertly, at once, his eyes twinkling from behind octagonal lenses, "you, Harry Preest, are just the man I have been looking for. Have you any porcelain fillings in your mouth? No? Then, how would you like to earn one thousand dollars for a meager half-hour's work this evening?"

Preest's head jerked up as though he had been jabbed with a pin. "Uh? Say that again, doc!"

"I mean it," insisted Porthet seriously. He cast a bird-like glance over his shoulder to assure himself that no person was within hearing distance, then resumed in a low voice. "I have urgent need for a man's services tonight—a man who is willing to take a very little risk for a fat and satisfying sum of good round dollars. I ventured to this park especially to pick up some unemployed fellow who seemed trustworthy; but now that I have found you, my dear Mr. Preest, I feel my search is terminated."

"Risk, eh? Some experiment, doctor?"

"Exactly—an extremely significant experiment," pursued the smaller man importantly. "An experiment which will—if successful, and I give you my word that it can not fail—an experiment which will, I say, astound the universe and open up for mankind fields as yet undreamed of. Why, this discovery of mine, my dear——"

"But what about the thousand dollars?" put in Preest, his interest in the material considerably outweighing his curiosity in the scientific.

"Exactly—the thousand dollars. I was just coming to that," chirped the cherubic little man of science, wagging a fat forefinger beneath Preest's nose. "Well, Mr. Preest, as I have doubtless told you some-

time during those dialogs of our previous acquaintance, the name of Porthet—or, more strictly speaking, the name of Emmett D. Porthet, Ph. D., F. R. S.—is one which ranks among those foremost on the honor rolls of science. You yourself are well aware of my accomplishments in such widely diversified fields as organic chemistry, medicine, and television, are you not?"

"Now," this cherub of the scientific world tripped on, pausing only long enough to take breath, "in the past five years, I have run across several startling discoveries, all proceeding from my extensive work in the transmission of objects through space by means of electromagnetic impulses——"

"You mean radioing solids, don't you, doctor?" Preest interrupted.

"Exactly, my dear sir, exactly. But to the point. Never let it be said of Doctor Emmett Porthet that he dallies with excess verbiage when occasion demands expediency. Now, my dear sir, do you realize that you have the honor to be the very first to compliment me on my discovery of transmitting three-dimensional objects through empty space to resolidify them in a receiving-bowl as far away from the broadcasting unit as desirable?—that you are the first person to whom I have confided the fact that precisely one year ago this coming August, I—Emmett D. Porthet—accomplished the heretofore impossible feat of broadcasting a can of condensed vegetable soup from one part of my laboratory across some thirty feet of intervening space, to reassemble it *in toto* at the other end?"

"You are surprized, my dear sir, you are astounded, are you not? Exactly. But that is not all. No, indeed. Is it like Doctor Porthet to be content to publish the results of so trifling an achievement before he had plunged deeper into the

problem—to its very crux, if you wish? Emphatically no, my dear Mr. Preest, emphatically no! Not Doctor Emmett D. Porthet!"

"But what's this about the thousand dollars?" Preest inserted hastily while the round-faced orator paused for his second wind.

"I am coming to that directly, my dear sir. As I was saying, a year ago I succeeded in transmitting an inanimate object through space and solids, to be completely reassembled, unharmed, at the receiving end of my laboratory unit. But that was only the beginning. Day after day I slaved like the martyr to science that I am, forging ever farther toward that gleaming goal which I had set for myself. And in my heart of hearts, my dear sir, I knew that the unfolding scrolls of time must eventually bring hard-earned but appropriate rewards to my genius."

"But what happened? Did you——"

"Exactly. At eight o'clock on the evening of April first, this year, I solved the difficult problem of disintegrating a chloroformed guinea-pig into its component pulsations, broadcast them helter-skelter through the air, picked up these invisible vibrations of organic matter in my receiving-unit, condensed them — *manière de dire*—and reintegrated the unconscious little hero of the animal world within the catching-bowl!"

**A** GLIMMER of uneasy suspicion was dawning in the mind of the worthy Porthet's audience of one. "You mean, doctor, that you *broadcast* a guinea-pig through a microphone and *tuned in* on him with a receiving-set across the room, as if he was a piece of *music*?" demanded Preest breathlessly. "What did he look like?—I mean, was there any static?"

"In answer to your first query, my dear sir," nodded the scientific cherub in agree-

ment, "yes. Your somewhat inelegant terms rather inadequately describe the miracle which I on that occasion performed. The piglet was, as you suggest, broadcast a good deal after the manner of a musical note. Now, as to what he—poor little creature—looked like, that I was just coming to. In every lineament, eyes, ears, nose and whiskers—even in minuter details such as nerve-fibers and corpuscles—the brave little fellow was in flawless condition when I picked him up from the receiving-bowl at the conclusion of the experiment. That is, my dear Preest, ah, he was in absolutely flawless condition except for one thing—ah, he was, alas, deceased."

"Oh." There was a world of expression in that single syllable as uttered by Harry Preest.

"Yes, he was dead. *But*"—the chubby forefinger jumped into action once more—"I had conquered my invisible and relentless enemy, Nature, not only to the extent of reducing organic matter to mere vibration, but actually to the point of re-integrating those selfsame vibrations in exact order of their transmittance across the ether. Do you see, my dear Mr. Preest?"

"Yeah, I get it," said Mr. Preest. "He was perfectly O. K.—only he was dead!"

"But once again, sir, that was merely the beginning. Three short months later—two nights ago, to be more explicit, at precisely 11:45 p. m. Pacific Standard Time—I surmounted my final obstacle and learned how to disintegrate that unseen something, that bit of life-force, that divine spark called the soul, if you will, along with the rest of the animal and broadcast it, too, across empty space as an etheric impulse! Are you not astounded, Mr. Preest, to be talking thus informally to one so great as the brilliant Doctor Emmet Porthet—the man who broadcasts

living creatures as others transmit sounds and pictures?"

"Then two nights ago you sent and received a guinea-pig—*alive?*" asked Preest, in unbounded amazement.

"No," corrected the precise Porthet. "Alive, yes—but not a guinea-pig this time. No, my dear sir, two nights ago my faithful and courageous house-cat, Theresa, became an immortal in the corridors of scientific fame, when she leapt, in the form of darting vibration, from one end of my laboratory across more than thirty feet of thin air, safely into my receiving-bowl—alive and unharmed. Think of it! And in proof, my dear sir, just allow me to show you these," a plump pink wrist twisted itself from its sleeve to bare three fine, red scratches, where the ungrateful Theresa had plunged her feline fingernails, in astonishment, no doubt, over her abrupt ride through the ether. "And now——"

"And now, about the thousand dollars?" asked Preest hopefully, raising his eyes from the wounds of this martyr to science.

"Exactly. Just what I was coming to. It is growing dark, and I am growing cold. I will dally no longer with history—and what I have been telling you *is* history, my dear Mr. Preest—but will advance without delay to the very heart of this matter which concerns us both so vitally. Very well, the thousand dollars. Now, as you are doubtless cognizant, I have amassed, through some modest contributions of mine in the field of true-color television, a small but tidy sum of profit—worldly recognition of my scientific endeavors, if you will.

"Now," the glow of triumphant pink cheeks was matched by the answering gleam in the eyes of Harry Preest, "so anxious am I to complete my experiments—to tie up the final loose ends—as it were

—I this night seek the services of some great hero who will volunteer to let me broadcast him through but thirty short feet of empty air! In appreciation of this timely aid, I will, besides not neglecting a mention of his full name in each and every newspaper account of my work, bestow upon this fortunate individual, without obligation, the handsomely generous amount of one thousand United States silver dollars or their equivalent in paper currency! What say you, Mr. Preest?"

PREEST stared through the gathering dusk at his beaming would-be benefactor without responding. A thousand dollars—cold cash! A thousand good round cartwheels in a time of need! Ah, that *was* something. But—to be broadcast through space? Reduced to mere vibrations—*broadcast?* That also was something. Something to be wary of.

"Uh—well," began Preest. "Great Scott, doctor—I don't know about this. I—could I—uh——"

"Exactly," chirped the portly Porthet with a snap of the fingers. "Exactly. You wish a demonstration. You, who are about to brave the Great Unknown in the worthy cause of science—you, who are about to become the first human to dare complete disintegration of your earthly body—you, I say, desire a trial test, do you not? I compliment you, my dear Mr. Preest, upon your sagacity and good judgment. Your sagacity in wishing to view a trial demonstration, and your good judgment in expressing yourself so unselfishly willing to dare to do for the great god Science, my dear sir!"

"Whoa," demurred Preest as the other rose and clutched him firmly by one arm. "I didn't say——"

"Tut, tut, my dear sir," the genius in tight pants cut him off with superb nonchalance, "none of your thanks to me for

singling out a mere average man like you for so great an opportunity as this. No indeed, Emmett Porthet seeks not praise from any man for his greatest deeds. Come, my dear sir, let us visit my humble house of science."

Preest reluctantly allowed himself to be dragged from the park, while his gracious benefactor showered upon him a brilliant monolog of verbal gems.

Harry Preest gnawed the fringe of his mustache helplessly, and gazed in bewilderment at the intricate mazes of wires, tubes, and dials heaped about him in seemingly endless profusion. In all the vast space of a thirty-foot room there appeared to be no single area in which one might move about, unless he risked entanglement in some mysterious mound of scientific paraphernalia. Preest understood now for the first time how the paunchy little Porthet could keep half a dozen experiments going simultaneously. He also observed that being broadcast in the form of vibrations seemed to be about the only possible method to journey across the wire jungle on the floor, unless perhaps the worthy doctor made use of some sort of road map to make the precarious trip.

Preest, wading through a mass of apparently useless things in what might in ordinary quarters be termed a junk-heap, doubtfully eyed a massive panel studded with various-colored signal bulbs and enough nickeled levers and switches to control every railroad in the world.

"Doctor Porthet," he pleaded eventually, "please don't make any more speeches tonight—but can you tell me what all this stuff is about?"

Porthet chuckled proudly. "Brush those coils off that bench over there and be seated. But do not touch anything, I warn you, because I have several delicate connections which might easily be jerked

loose by a careless foot, spoiling a life's work. I shall explain the—the dimensional-transmission equipment in a moment, but right now I must retrieve that fearless veteran of countless experiments, Theresa. Here kitty, kitty."

Preest marveled at the dexterous manner in which the chubby Porthet crept in and out among the tentacles on the floor in pursuit of the bashful Theresa. But the dauntless little experimenter was not to be trifled with, and he finally emerged triumphantly from beneath a table with a lei of copper wire dangling from his neck and a shrilly protesting Persian cat in his arms.

"When does the charming Mrs. Preest expect you home?" inquired the scientist, thrusting the unwilling Theresa into his visitor's lap while he donned a once white laboratory apron.

"Oh, we just ate, and the wife went to the movies with her sister. Not for hours yet." Preest batted a few fluffs of cat fur away from his face as he answered.

"**T**HERE we are," remarked Porthet as he enclosed the rapidly shedding Theresa in a small wire cage and stood her in a shallow porcelain receptacle on the floor. "Now, my dear sir, how much of this material," he waved a pink hand at the wild disarray surrounding the mewling Theresa, "is familiar to you?"

"Well," somewhat falteringly, "that thing there is some sort of a tube—looks like a kind of X-ray machine. And over there is a wire leading to this bell-like thing up here, which looks as if it might be an air-purifier or something, and Theresa is sitting in a porcelain bowl, and up on top there is some kind of new-fangled aerial——"

"Alas!" bemoaned the eminent Porthet, pursing his lips in sorrow. "I see that your scientific education has been sadly



neglected. Well, my dear sir, just what is your knowledge on the subject of radio transmission?"

"Why, of course, I—I'm in favor of it; I suppose it's been very useful in——"

"No, no, my dear Mr. Preest. To put my meaning in more precise words: just how complete is your knowledge of what occurs in a radio studio when a program is broadcast?"

"Oh, you mean *that!* Well, all I know is that, say, when a man sings, the sound of his voice is changed to some kind of impulses called radio waves, and that these waves travel with the speed of light and spread in all directions at once like big bubbles issuing from the station. Then, when those waves strike an aerial, they travel down it to the receiving-set, are changed back again to sound waves by the tubes and things, and come out of the speaker just as they sounded before they were picked up by the microphone in the studio. I guess that's about all."

"I see. How very unfortunate!" mused the cherub of science regretfully. "That rather complicates matters for me in any attempted explanation of my marvelous invention here. Oh, well. Anyway, my dear sir, allow me to inform you of these few simple facts. If you had a fuller understanding of the man-made miracle of radio broadcasting, you would find it immeasurably easier to grasp the gist of what I am driving at. For this machine I have created operates on almost exactly the same fundamental principles, you see."

"But first, my friend," the semaphoric pink digit was at work again, waving itself beneath the generous nose of the attentive Harry Preest, "heed you this. All matter, I have found, is nothing more nor less than varying combinations and types of etheric vibrations—to put it crudely, so that you may understand me. Every existing thing—metal, flesh or vegetable—can

be shaken down in such a manner by certain periodic, rhythmic vibrations of tremendous velocity that it will rapidly assume its basic form—etheric impulses. You have no doubt heard that it is possible for certain sounds—vibrations, that is—emitted by the violin to completely shatter a glass vase or a window-pane in the room in which it is played. Well, that is the first step in the process which I have so rudely outlined to you.

"Now this," the dapper little gentleman pointed grandly to the apparatus which Preest had likened to an X-ray machine, "sends forth a bombardment of certain high-frequency rays which, when they impinge upon the atomic structure of a material object, set up that specific rhythm among its component electrons, which I mentioned, until that atomic structure breaks down completely under the influence of its internal disturbance, is disintegrated, if you will, till naught remains within that porcelain bowl but pulsing vibrations—the raw stuff from which matter is built. Do you follow me? Watch!"

A careful scrutiny of dials and a setting of shining levers; then the bespectacled Porthet plunged home a master switch on the broad paneling beside him. The drone and whine of tremendous dynamos sounded in Preest's ears, and as the long room began trembling gently beneath their powerful purr, he paled slightly, wondering uneasily if the entire laboratory were liable to slip into that "raw stuff from which matter is built."

But nothing unusual occurred—at least, not at that moment. Doctor Porthet pottered about the bulbous glass tube, making several adjustments in a mechanism at its base, and finally trained it on the metal cage and its terrified Persian contents.

"Piling up a good deal of voltage for

this machine, my dear sir," smiled the round-faced gentleman while he removed and meticulously polished his glasses with a silken handkerchief.

Preest stared without comment.

"All right, sir. Are we ready now?" the cherub chirped at last and stepped behind the thick protective shield in back of the monstrous tube. Preest made haste to follow. "Now, sir, if you will just keep an eye on Theresa there, you will soon witness a spectacle that will be worth writing to one's home about, as they say in the vernacular, eh, my dear Mr. Preest?"

"Go on," urged that individual, consumed by curiosity, "let's see the thing work."

"Right you are, my dear sir. There. Just look at that!" Chubby fingers worked buttons and switches.

Of a sudden a lurid, bristling purple glare was emitted by the angrily glowing tube, its eery light converging upon and completely engulfing the lunette of porcelain that held the crouching cat and her tiny prison. In breathless fascination Preest gaped, wide-eyed, while great sparks of blue-white flame writhed noisily about the lower edges of the sending-bowl.

Theresa, every hair on her body erect with rage and fright, was frantically mewing her protest against being reduced to a mere etheric disturbance.

"Hush, Theresa," cautioned her master with severity, "you are spoiling the experiment."

Theresa's lithe body began to quiver under the flood of mystic purple light. She looked suddenly very ill. Abruptly Preest sucked in his breath. Theresa, purpler than ever and caterwauling discordantly, was beginning to get a trifle blurry of outline, like a moving-picture which had accidentally slipped out of focus. In

another moment the animal began to grow semi-transparent and her crouching form trembled violently into an extremely hazy indistinctness. Then, right before Preest's startled eyes, Theresa—not without visible reluctance, it must be admitted—slowly melted out of sight!

"**T**HERE, you see?" The cherub of science was elated. "We have now completed the most difficult portion of our experiment. Naught remains of the little Theresa but a shimmer of vibration."

What he said was true. Theresa as a personality was quite gone, and in her place within the glistening porcelain shell, where the snapping purple glow bathed it with its weird sheen, was a huddle of hazy pulsations, reminding Harry Preest of those heat undulations which rise from a desert on a blistering day. Of the cat's cage, also, there was no trace.

"Wha—what happens now?" demanded Preest as soon as he had accustomed himself to the uncanny vision in the sending-bowl. He glanced inquiringly at Porthet's beaming face, which in the dazzling reflection of the purple glare, looked something like the full moon over fairyland.

"Exactly. What happens now, you ask," glibly supplied the worthy Porthet, wagging his plump finger to punctuate his remarks. "Well, my dear sir, that," the cherub indicated a queerly glowing metal grid ensconced within the bell-shaped hood above the sending-bowl, "is what corresponds to the microphone in the customary broadcasting-studio. It is what might be termed as something of a dimensional-microphone: one for the purpose of picking up the basic vibrations of a physical object, just as a regulation microphone picks up the vibrations of sound—and a very pretty bit of work I did on it too, I may remark, *en passant*."

"But to press on. Now, when musical notes are produced in a broadcasting-studio, what happens to them? I shall inform you, briefly. Those notes are a disturbance in the atmosphere—a series of pressures against the air, so to speak—which, in traveling outward from their source, encounter a properly stationed microphone and are then transposed from an air pressure to an electrical pressure. Wires now receive these electrical impulses and carry them to apparatus transforming them into electromagnetic waves, which the sending-antenna next radiates into space in all directions. With the amazing speed of light they now leap across great distances of void until they are collected by a receiving-antenna and are re-formed into electrical impulses inside a wire, once more. These wires connect with the set, and therein the loud-speaker finally reconverts the electric signals into sounds which are interpreted by the human ear as music.

"Very well. At the closing of this switch here upon which I have my hand, something very similar to what I have just related will occur to the pulsing vibrations of valiant little Theresa, there in the porcelain bowl. To be explicit, when this switch makes contact, that grid up there will create a—a vibrational suction, if you will allow the employment of such an inadequate term—a vibrational suction which will cause it to absorb within itself the component vibrations of Theresa, together with those of her imprisoning cage. So!"

The plump wizard plunged home the indicated switch, and Theresa's handful of component vibrations were swept upward, to vanish in the hooded grid like a cloud of dust drawn inside a vacuum cleaner.

"Now," continued Porthet proudly, "when the object's vibrations have been

sucked—if you'll excuse the vulgarity of the expression, my dear Mr. Preest—sucked, I say, into the grid, they are immediately translated into electrical impulses and are thus rendered ready for instant release as electromagnetic radio waves."

"Are they broadcast in all directions—like a bubble?" demanded Preest confusedly.

"Exactly, my dear Mr. Preest. Exactly the term for it—hurled outward in all directions like an expanding bubble! And now, follow me, if you please, across the laboratory to the receiving-bowl, where we shall fling Theresa to the winds, as it were; and then reintegrate the brave little creature after she has traveled in the form of etheric impulses across thirty feet of space. Come."

Preest held his breath and made himself as narrow as possible while the two threaded their precarious way through the jungle of wire, down between walls of high-piled scientific apparatus.

**T**HE receiving-bowl, as far as Preest could determine, was almost a duplicate of the sending-unit. Voicing this observation, he received an answer in the affirmative.

"Exactly. This, the reintegrator, simply acts in the same manner as the sending-bowl, only it is operated in reverse ratio. And, of course, there is no vibratory ray needed at this end of the mechanism. Further, as you can not see by casual inspection, in the grid above a translator, or condenser of component vibrations, is so situated as to focus upon the center of the porcelain shell below. This I have cleverly arranged so that it will operate concurrently with the receiving-apparatus, and so, as fast as the vibrations are received they are built up into matter in the bowl. Are there any other questions?"

"Well, this thing over here—what is it?" pondered Preest. "It looks the same as the reintegrator to me."

"And that is exactly what it is. I was just coming to that. The other is a spare receiver, as it were; but of late I have been having no trouble at all with this one and so, of course, there has been no need of it. Be careful not to touch any of its switches, although I hardly think it is being supplied with current at present, anyway. But now, watch here carefully."

Porthet pulled back the lever which sent the receiving-bowl into silent readiness. A second later, as he plunged home the sending-switch that would release Theresa's vibrations and whiz them through space, there followed an ear-splitting crackle of sound like the crash of lightning. The deafening roar subsided almost at once, and scarcely had the thunderous reverberations died away, when Theresa and her cage sprang into abrupt existence in the lunette of gleaming porcelain.

"Why, she *is* reintegrated—or whatever it is!" cried Preest excitedly.

"Of course." There was not a trace of offense in the gracious Porthet's tones at that insinuating remark from his visitor. "Reintegrated. Exactly."

Doctor Porthet wheezed painfully as he stooped to free Theresa from her distasteful bondage. "Nobly done, my brave little kitten," he complimented as he released the catch on the cage door. Theresa quickly sprang out and scurried from sight among a nest of boxes. Porthet carefully set the empty cage away on a high shelf.

"Man, that's — that's colossal!" exclaimed the admiring Preest, but the scientific cherub, glowing like a happy infant, waved a deprecatory hand.

"Tut, my dear fellow," the portly Porthet beamed with charming modesty,

"Just another tiny cog in the vast mechanism of service which I am for ever building for humanity's use. But, my dear Mr. Preest, since you have eaten already and I have not, will you allow me a brief respite to prepare a hasty snack so that I may alleviate the unwelcome pangs of hunger? Then, after I have partaken of prandial nourishment, we shall transact our little business. All I need to complete my experiment is the successful transmission and reintegration of a living human!"

"Oh, but——" protested Preest uncertainly.

"Tut, tut," the cherub in tight pants remonstrated gently. "I know how eager you must be to perform the journey through the ether, but let us wait until a poor old man has partaken of adequate refreshment. Now, not another word . . . not a word. Excuse me, please."

WHILE the rotund Porthet prepared a meal from his stock of canned goods, Preest roved thoughtfully about the crowded room investigating the "dimensional transmitter" at close range. Porthet had been careful to shut down the power so that no inadvertent twisting of dials or nudging of levers could cause any mishap. While Preest examined the various curious units of the remarkable invention, he mulled over in his mind the generous offer of the inventor-host.

It was horrible to contemplate what might happen if his vibrations got meshed in the gears or something, should he volunteer for the experiment. Yet a thousand dollars was a lot of money and such a vast sum would come in mighty handy at present. But being reduced to *vibration*—broadcast through the air like a cooking-recipe! Well, a thousand simoleons couldn't be earned without *some* effort—some risk. And after all, what was there

to be so greatly feared? The trip lasted only half a dozen seconds, and Theresa had made it twice now with apparently no ill effects. However, suppose anything did go wrong! A thousand dollars, though . . .

By the time the good doctor had completed his supper, Harry Preest had formed his decision. In response to the scientist's inquiry about his readiness to proceed at once with "their little business," he was able to make unhesitating reply.

"O. K., doc, sold! Let's get at it, before I come to and back out. Do I take off my clothes?"

"No, my dear sir," said Porthet happily. "Removal of your clothes will not be necessary. There on that table will be the thousand dollars, and here is a pen and an agreement. Just sign here on the dotted line, and our little compact is sealed."

"What's this thing I'm signing?" asked Preest, eyes glued to the enticing stack of greenbacks which the chubby genius was transferring from his safe.

"Just a mere matter of form, my dear Mr. Preest," smiled the doctor disarmingly as he pocketed the document in question. "A little agreement to the effect that if any untoward accident should befall either of us during the course of the experiment, the other shall not be held responsible for it. Mainly for your own protection, Mr. Preest, don't you see?"

"Yes, I see," said Preest, who did nothing of the sort. "Now, anything else?"

"Oh, yes! You say you have no porcelain fillings in your mouth—and how about a watch? The vibratory beam is adjusted so as not to affect porcelain or glass, you see."

"Nope, no porcelain; only silver and a speck of gold. No watch either—Uncle

Benny's got that! Let's get going, eh? I'm getting nervous."

"Nothing to get nervous about, I assure you," chided Porthet, inspecting one of the two receiving-bowls and preparing it for use. "Look at me—I've got my entire scientific goal at stake—yet I'm not the least bit nervous. Ah, now if you will be so kind as to step this way, we shall soon be at the thing."

As if to prove that the temerarious wizard was not shaky in the slightest degree, he whistled cheerfully as he primed the sending-unit for its ultimate triumph. Trembling, but buoyed up by the cheery sight of the crisp, cool heap of currency, Preest plucked impatiently at his mustache and shifted dubiously from one foot to the other while he watched.

A minute later, the chipper Doctor Porthet straightened up with a sigh. He uttered a low, middle-aged chuckle of satisfaction. The great experiment was about to begin.

Harry Preest's teeth were chattering, but he manfully stepped over the edge of the porcelain shell and stood upright in the sending-bowl. He felt very silly, and not a little panic-stricken. His head, he found, just fitted nicely beneath the grid and was shrouded completely by the protective hood suspended over it.

"All right, my dear sir," glowed the genius with the paunch. "I think we are ready to commence, are we not?"

"Oh, ah—wait a minute," Preest's stammered retort was muffled sepulchral by the great hood about his head. "Let's not—not be too hasty, Porthet. I——"

"Tut, tut. Nonsense, my dear Mr. Preest," piped Porthet, then added dramatically, "Remember, it is for science—and a thousand dollars!"

Preest gulped. "I—I guess I'm ready now," he choked hurriedly, thinking hard



of the neat stack of greenbacks on the table. "Let's go—quick!"

"Right you are, my dear sir. *Now!*"

WITH the drone of dynamos throbbing heavily in his ears, Preest did not hear the clicking of the switch which operated the giant bulb, whose vibratory impulses were to disrupt his entire atomic structure. But he winced a trifle and a tingling sensation skipped down his spine as, amid a sputter and crackle of sparks, the lurid purple glare drenched his frame with its mystic forces.

No sooner had the eery glimmer of light swirled hungrily over him than Harry Preest felt as though he were being given a swift ride on the hand-grip of a super-riveting gun. This terrible jarring sensation persisted for less than ten seconds; then the torturing twinge and jolt upscaled gradually into a high-pitched jerky buzz that paralyzed every cell in his body and set his teeth on edge like the harsh scrape of knife across frying-pan. He knew not how long he jounced and jittered under this awful strain before, with an abrupt suddenness that swept away all consciousness, a maelstrom of vibration descended upon him as though all the forces of evil had been unleashed within his boiling blood. The last thing Harry Preest remembered was the jangle of a billion billion whirling dental drills grinding away at the trembling rims of each red corpuscle in his circulatory system. Then it was over.

His clenched teeth relaxed and he sucked in a long, quivering breath. Henceforth he knew there would always be a bond of sympathy between him and Theresa, the purple kitten. For a brief second, vertigo seized him; then the nausea ebbed speedily and the man who had been reintegrated opened his eyes.

He was standing in the receiving-bowl,

stiff as a wooden Indian, with his head in the confines of the grid-hood. Cautiously, so as not to damage anything about him, he ducked slightly and peered, first, down the long length of room across which he had so mysteriously traveled, then at the round face of the portly Porthet who stood, hand on lever, staring in his direction.

But Preest's reassuring smile froze on his lips, for Porthet, his eyes like huge black buttons in a white soup plate, was not looking at him, but at something beyond. And that something beyond held more than a soup-plateful of terror for the rotund genius.

Slowly, color drained back into the full-moon face until it shone with a rich-hued purple surpassing that emitted by the wonderful glass bulb at the opposite end of the room. Preest watched in horror, tensing himself for the moment when Porthet's flushed features would vanish with the pop of a punctured balloon. Then Porthet spoke.

"Ug—wuh," he exclaimed eloquently, pointing a palsied pink forefinger at something over Preest's left shoulder. Preest faced puzzledly about, and nearly jumped backward through the laboratory wall in sheer amazement at what he saw.

*There, standing bewilderedly in the spare receiving-bowl, was Harry Preest, himself!*

FOR a sickening instant each man gaped agonizedly at the apparition that faced him; then each ducked his head to see whose body he was wearing.

"Ug—wuh," gasped the purpling Porthet once again.

Harry Preest Number One, after satisfying himself that he was seemingly in his customary body and not in the least flocculent or shedding fluffs of cat fur, groped for and found his voice.

"That—that man," he stuttered hoarsely, "that other man—who is he?"

"Ug—wuh," reiterated Porthet for the third time, and noiselessly champed his jaws as though he were making a soundless after-dinner talk.

Then Harry Preest Number Two discovered that his vocal cords had been safely tucked into their proper place by the efficient reintegrator.

"Hey, doc, who *is* this guy?" he demanded.

"Oh dear, oh dear," wailed the pink-cheeked inventor at last, but without clarifying his previous statement; "oh dear, oh dear!"

"Well, doctor, what does this mean?" insisted Preest One, upon learning that Porthet was again employing the English language.

"Yes, Porthet, what is this?" inquired Preest Two like an echo to his fellow's query.

"This is—oh, this is terrible!" elucidated the frantic scientist and collapsed weakly into a chair. There was the pop and jangle of bursting tubes as he sank down upon the pile of apparatus the chair contained, but he heeded it not. "I knew I should have installed some sort of a directional beam device," he groaned miserably.

At this juncture, Theresa the cat, previously sulking in a corner but now evidently recovered from her gross misuse, began strolling leisurely out from under a table, approaching the stage of this portentous drama. Suddenly Theresa caught sight of the pair of perplexed Preests. Instantly her aristocratic back arched in wild astonishment like a human eyebrow and her tail plumed into pugilistic thickness. "Pfffft!" she exclaimed and scampered madly through the open window to the alley below.

"Well, Doctor Porthet," chorused the

Preest couple in identical accents, "what is this all about?"

Startled at the sound of their measured voices, the duo transfixed each other with piercing glances. Preest One caught himself glaring at his own ireful phiz like a man making faces at himself in the mirror. Preest Two gnawed the fringe of his mustache in nervous resentment.

"Why, my dear sirs," cried the appalled Porthet after an ominous silence, "don't you see? One of you has been dematerialized and then reintegrated *twice!*"

"What!" The two exclamations met and blended perfectly.

"Exactly," Porthet hastened on. "Somebody tampered with the master switch of the spare receiver and turned it on. And of course, when I broadcast the component vibrations of the original Harry Preest, it naturally tuned in on them also. Now, which of you two men is responsible for this?"

"Well, I was fooling with the spare receiver——" began Preest One.

"——but you told me that it wasn't plugged into the circuit," finished Preest Two.

"Yes, yes," groaned the inventor sadly, "I suppose it is mainly my fault for not making sure that there was only one receiving-bowl functioning at the instant of broadcasting. Alas, the horror of it all!"

"You've got to get rid of him, then, somehow," ejaculated the two Preests together, each jabbing a thumb in the direction of the other.

"Wait a minute, my dear sirs," begged the chagrined cherub despairingly. "We won't get anywhere this way. Attend, please. Now, which of you is the spurious Mr. Preest?"

Silence.

"Come now, gentlemen, one of you speak up. Which of you is Mr. Preest under false pretenses?"

"He is!" agreed both in perfect synchronization.

Again silence. The two Preests eyed each other suspiciously; Porthet mopped at his pink forehead with a silk handkerchief.

"Wait a second——" commenced Preest One.

"——Let's do this thing right," ended Preest Two.

Porthet nodded feebly. "Yes, gentlemen, let us do this thing right, by all means."

"All right, now," Preest One cleared his throat in a business-like manner and turned toward his mate. "We'll start this way. Tell us just who you are."

"Well, I'm Harry Cornelius Preest," stated Preest Two simply and directly. "Who are *you*?"

"But you can't be. *I'm* Harry Preest!" protested the other strenuously.

Preest Two tossed his head in impatience.

"Now, gentlemen, gentlemen," hastily interrupted Porthet before the inevitable argument could get further under way. "Heed my explanations. This situation is graver than it seems. *Both* of you are the real Mr. Preest. . . ."

"What!" shrieked the pair of reintegrated men in unison.

"Exactly, gentlemen, exactly. Each of——"

"But how?—what?—why?——"

"I was just coming to that, my dear sirs," Porthet continued uneasily. "You see, in order to transmit your component vibrations from one point in space to another, it is necessary to alter them before hurling them forth from the sending-grid—as I explained before. So, although there was originally but one of you reduced to vibrational form, the wave that carried you across the laboratory radiated from the sending-grid in an infinite num-

ber of directions, in the same manner as a transmitted musical chime. Had there been a hundred receiving-bowls about the place, there would now be a hundred real Harry Preests. Do you comprehend?"

"That's something to be thankful for, at any rate," offered Preest One.

"Then he and I are both absolutely genuine?" queried Preest Two.

"Exactly, my dear Mr. Preest. Each and every single cell—every little gene and tiny chromosome in one of your bodies is duplicated without a single exception in the corresponding place in the body of the other. Your brain is his brain—his heart is your heart. Do you follow me?"

"But that's impossible!" put in Preest One angrily. "We can't be two people at the same time. It's not right!"

"No," agreed the other emphatically, "and two people can't be a single person at any time. That's not right, either!"

THE cherub of science thought a moment.

"Well, you are not actually one individual," he supplied uncertainly. "You are two distinct entities, but—well—his ideas are your ideas, and his memory is your memory at this moment; but from now on each of you will, of course, pile up individual experiences for yourselves. It will be rather like the same man being in two different places at once, although naturally the experiences of the one can not interfere with, or in any way affect, the experiences of the other."

"But that's impossible!" stoutly insisted Preest One.

"Oh yeah!" Preest Two inserted sarcastically. "Then how come you're standing over there, while I'm standing over here at the same time? Answer me that."

But Preest One was in no mood for riddles. "I don't care," he persisted, eyes

narrowing with determination. "I'm Harry Preest. I know I am—and I can prove I am! See here, see this scar on my wrist? That will identify me beyond the shadow of a doubt. Two years ago I and my brother-in-law were out——"

"——out hunting in the mountains," concluded Preest Two without hesitation, "and you fell down an embankment and slashed your left wrist. I know all about it. I ought to—I was there! See, there's the proof. Take a look at that scar."

"Why, you dirty impostor! You——" ground out Preest One excitedly.

"Listen to me, you big tramp!" cut in the other in equal wrath. "If anyone is an impostor, it's you—and you know it! And I'm——"

"My dear sirs," came Porthet's nervous voice above the ensuing clamor. "You shouldn't say those nasty things about each other. It merely amounts to casting ugly reflections on your own parentage, when you do."

"You're right," acquiesced Preest One shamefacedly. "I am only calling my own self names."

His *alter ego* vouchsafed no comment but subsided into a glowing silence.

Thereupon followed a short lull in hostilities while the miserable two seated themselves, at Porthet's request, to think things out in a logical manner. Both Preests inadvertently chewed musingly upon the hirsute growths adorning their upper lips, until each happened to glance guiltily at the other simultaneously. Caught in the act, the twins immediately ceased, and frowned sourly at their respective feet.

"There is only one way out of this terrible *impasse*, as far as I can see," sighed the portly Porthet eventually, "and that is to eliminate one of you."

"Eliminate him? How?" spoke the synchronized two together.

"I was just coming to that, my dear Mr. Preest," the scientist diplomatically addressed them both by their common title. "One of you must re-enter the sending-bowl to be reduced to his component vibrations and broadcast through the air—but—he will not be reintegrated again! Instead, the eliminated individual will simply speed onward for all eternity in vibrational form, painlessly and senselessly—till the suns themselves grow cold."

"Senselessly is right," growled one of the Preests. "Which is the poor dope who's going to consent to do the vanishing act for us? Him?"

"That, of course, my dear sirs, is the great stumbling-block. However, I see no other way. Is there one?"

"Listen, Harry," remarked one Preest seriously, "Porthet's right. We're both in an awful jam as long as there's two Preests running around loose. One of us has got to disappear."

"Yeah," grunted the other, a trifle embarrassed at finding himself engaged in conversation with himself, "guess you just about hit it. But which one of us has got to go? I won't—will you?"

The other Preest shook his head in silent negative.

"Well, gentlemen," said Porthet the portly, "we can—although I may say such a distasteful thing goes wholly against my grain—we can, I say, gamble on it. I will admit that this is a very serious matter to be decided by the whims of fickle Fancy, but unethical as it is, we can draw lots to see——"

"Wait!" One of the Preest's eyes gleamed triumphantly. "Listen, doctor," he said hurriedly, buttonholing that worthy, "here is the logical method of deciding which one of us is to be disintegrated again. When you began this experiment, you had in mind but one reintegration of Harry Preest, did you not?"

Exact—uh, of course you did. All right, then. The fellow who was received by the *spare* receiving-set is the *spare* man! See?"

"Exactly!" A cheery smile wreathed the rosy cheeks of the diminutive scientific giant. "Right you are, my dear sir. The Harry Preest who was materialized in the wrong reintegrator is the one who should undoubtedly be reduced back into his component vibrations! This time, my dear sirs, it will be a simple matter to locate the spurious Mr. Preest. Now, which one of you is the—ah, authentic one?"

"Ah—see there?" exulted the first Preest. "He admits it. Doctor Porthet, I implore you to do your duty!"

Porthet advanced hesitantly, waving an arm toward the sending-bowl of his apparatus. "Now, you get back in there," he warned.

THE Harry Preest thus addressed dodged behind one of the reintegrators which had so disastrously brought him into existence. He chuckled savagely. "Ha-ha! I can't get 'back' into the disintegrator because I was never in it in the first place—or was I? Anyway, Doctor

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**"Preest's smile froze on his lips, for Porthet, his eyes like huge black buttons in a white soup-plate, was not looking at him, but at something beyond. And that something beyond held terror for the rotund scientist. Preest faced puzzledly about, and nearly jumped backward through the laboratory wall in sheer amazement at what he saw."**

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"Me!" declared twin voices ungrammatically but promptly.

"You're a liar," said one shortly, and turned to the inventor. "You saw us materialize, doctor; which one is the extra Harry Preest?"

Two pairs of expectant eyes searched the scientist's face.

"My word," vociferated the plump one peevishly, "if you two men can't tell which is which, I assure you that I can not!"

"I *can* tell," grated one Preest then, pointing an accusing digit at his twin; "that man there is the extra Harry Preest—I swear it!"

"But——" spluttered Porthet uncomfortably.

"All right," snapped the second Preest, doubling his fists with great resolution, "suppose I *am* the Harry Preest who was reintegrated by mistake? You can't dematerialize me!"

W. T.—2

Porthet and *Mister* Harry Preest," he added vindictively, "I tell you that you can't get rid of me by dissolving me into a bunch of vibrations! You can't, see? You can't, because it would be—murder!"

"*Murder?*" This time it was Porthet who helped out the twin act in chorusing the word.

"Yes, murder!" repeated the defiant Preest loudly. "I am a living man with feelings just like anybody else, and you can't rub me out against my will because it's against the statutes of this state! So, what do you think of that?"

His counterpart was staggered into momentary silence, while Porthet seemed to be struggling with a violent fit of apoplexy. "He's right," the latter affirmed after a bit, "he's right—it would be murder to do away with him!"

The accused Harry Preest chortled triumphantly, in the true manner of villains since time immemorial. One of the hands



and noses of Harry Preest signaled arrogant victory to one of his two bodies.

"No, you're wrong!" blurted the baffled Preest after a few seconds of rapid thought. "It won't be murder to disintegrate this geezer, doc, because legally there can be only one Harry Preest—and that will be me!"

"Legal or not, here I am; and *my* name is Harry Preest as much as yours is, too. Even if one Harry Preest is still left alive, you can't get around the fact that one Harry Preest will be killed."

The plump little scientist fished wearily in a pocket, drew forth a tiny box, and prepared to down a couple of aspirins. "Gentlemen, gentlemen," he moaned for the tenth time, "we are not getting anywhere."

"Who wants to?" sneered the ostracized Preest sarcastically. "If you want to get anywhere, just step in your little sending-bowl and I'll ship you right off to infinity. How'd you like that?"

"Wup—my dear sir!" remonstrated Porthet hastily as he strangled over the masticated tablets. "I beg your pardon! Let us not forget for one instant just whom this paradoxical situation involves."

"I still say," spat a Preest acidly, his eyes glinting, "that it would be perfectly legal to erase that guy from this cartoon, and I——"

"No, no, my dear sirs." It was Porthet, the Great Mediator, at bat again. "Can you not see the light of truth? Suppose this other Harry Preest were to assume another name—then you must admit that it would be a grave criminal offense to destroy him, would it not? He is truly a distinct individual, you see; it is but a mere entanglement of names that is causing all this dreadful confusion. If——"

"There! That's it—I've got it!" exploded the accused Preest happily, vastly

relieved at getting back out of dangerous territory. "Listen to me, both of you. The doc, here, is correct. This whole nasty stink is all over just the mere name of Harry Preest. Now, I've never particularly gone for that name—something more like Dixwood Carter Brent would suit me better. Anyway, here's the point. So far as I can make out, I seem to be a little bit more in the wrong than this other Harry Preest, even though I had nothing to do with it. But anyhow, I'll be the hero and make the sacrifice that has to be made. For that \$1,000 over there on the table, and another stack of bills like it, I'll volunteer to change my name, buy a ticket to some other town, and never see either of you again. Is it a bargain?"

"But, my dear sir," protested the tight-trousered Porthet, at once, "it so happens that I have no extra thousand dollars to supply you with, although I would gladly do so were I able."

"Why, it's a cinch," interposed that one of the Preests whom the conversation did not immediately concern. "Look. Put the dough in the sending-bowl, pull the switch and *blood!*, you'll have *two* reintegrated piles of money—two thousand dollars!"

"Sure," supplemented the other, readily. "Why not?"

"Gentlemen!" Porthet expostulated indignantly. "My *dear* Mist'ers Preest! Now I ask you, does Emmett D. Porthet appear to you to be a low, caddish, sneaking *counterfeiter?*"

"What do you mean, counterfeiter?" asked Preest One.

"Those bills would be as real and as genuine as we are—exactly alike in all respects," confirmed Preest Two.

"Exactly." The dignified Porthet's words were clipped. "Exactly. Evidently you are not aware of the fact, my dear sirs, that the wonderfully efficient Gov-

ernment of this great nation keeps an accurate check on the serial numbers of all the bills it issues." He paused a moment before adding confidentially, "You see, gentlemen, I had thought of doing that some time ago, but realized the terrible mistake I should be making. The Government would certainly catch us at it."

"Well, it's two thousand berries, or I don't go," stated Preest One firmly. "You make the money and I'll take my chances at being caught with it."

Porthet wrinkled his brow confusedly.

"Come on, doc, it's the only way we'll get rid of this—this chiseler," urged Preest Two. "Besides, those bills will be so genuine nobody'll ever think of comparing the serial numbers."

The snugly-trousered cherub wavered, weakened and wilted. "Very well, gentlemen, very well. I am a clean-principled man, but in the face of such a dreadful state of affairs, I must unselfishly bismirch the heretofore stainless shield of the Porthet honor—not for myself, you understand, but for the sake of others." He stopped, and struck by a new thought, ventured, "But, my dear Mr. Preest, couldn't you let me keep just five hundred dollars of this extra money?"

"Two grand—or else," gritted a Preest haughtily, indicating by his supple use of the vernacular that he had witnessed more than one cinema epic of the underworld.

The fat doctor shrugged resignedly. "A princely ransom, my dear sir, but you shall have it. I must bend my will to yours. This way, please."

Porthet waddled off toward the stack of green currency, placidly braving the perils of the great wire jungle which all but engulfed him.

**T**HE mercenary Preest was starting to do as the cherubic scientist bade him, but had not progressed far between the

walls of wire before his counterpart tapped him hesitantly on the shoulder.

"Of course," said the latter, "you will adopt some sort of a disguise—shave off that mustache or let your beard grow, or something?"

"Well, as you know, we've grown our mustaches to cover a peculiar lip, but I'll consider it. I think my wife would object to a beard."

Preest One's heart did a hand-stand on his adam's apple. He stopped, paralyzed, in his tracks.

"What was that?" he asked in the ghost of a whisper, through inert lips.

"I said I'll have to shave off my mustache, because the little woman would probably object to——"

"D-di-did you mean to say that your wife——"

"Correct. I said that my wife would——"

Porthet turned on them impatiently, and motioned them forward.

Preest One waved him away. "Wait, doctor," he managed to gulp; then to his twin he choked, "Are you—*married?*"

"Sure," returned the other in surprise. "Aren't you?"

"Of course I'm married, but—is—I mean—are—who——"

A sudden gleam entered simultaneously into the slitted eyes of both Preests and the two pairs of Harry Preest's hands clenched themselves meaningly. Neither uttered a sound.

"Gentlemen!" murmured the aghast Porthet, shuddering with alarm. "My very dear sirs!"

Harry Preest ignored the gasps from the purpling cherub. Instead, he looked himself grimly in the eyes and grated, "*Whose* wife?"

"My wife!" he answered possessively to his own question.

"Listen, you," he grimaced next, ad-

vancing slowly upon himself, "there's been an extra one of us for just a little while too long, and I'm going to remedy that little difficulty right now!"

"You take one step closer," snarled Harry Preest to Harry Preest warningly, "and I'll knock you loose from a few of your front teeth. Get me?"

This was the first time in his life that Emmett D. Porthet had ever been faced with the problem of keeping a jealous man from fighting with himself over his own wife, but he rose to the occasion masterfully.

"My *dear* Misters Preest," he clamored in great fright. "Let us not lose our tempers. I can fix everything. If you will only just bring the charming Mrs. Preest here to my laboratory, I shall be only too glad to make one of her for each of you. There, won't that clear things up?"

"Nope. You don't——" started Preest One decidedly.

"——know my wife!" completed Preest Two with equal decision.

"But, my good friends—friend, I mean," implored the moon-faced scientist, "what, then, are we to do? One wife for two husbands? Tch, tch, tch, tch."

The unthinkable impasse was growing even more involved.

"Well, I know what I'm going to do," rasped Preest One; "I'm going to take my money and get my wife. Then we're both leaving this town tonight!" And he made a dive for the stack of bills.

"And I know what I'm going to do!" barked Preest Two, and made a similar dive at the fleeing figure of Preest Number One.

"Oh dear! oh dear!" howled the little man with the big stomach in a delirium of terror. "What's to become of all my beautiful apparatus?"

Preest Two showed his host what was to become of part of it, for after Preest

One had clipped him with an exquisite right to the jaw, he deposited a goodly portion of a giant retort within the scalp of his attacking double. The next moment the screaming scientist was helplessly enmeshed in a net of wiring as lashing feet ripped loose half a dozen miles of intricate hook-ups. Together the pair of Preests tumbled in a writhing, primitive heap in the midst of the scientific maze, and hammering fists and flying oaths whistled through the scorched air.

It is an egregious and horrible sensation to be fighting oneself, a fact soon realized by Harry Preest both One and Two. After the first wild flurry and tilt, during which the two trusty right fists of Harry Preest scored heavily on both his rather protuberant noses, the duplicate antagonists lessened the energy of their onslaught considerably. The dual duel, if such it may be termed, settled down to the more strategic, if less spectacular, maneuvers of a thrust and parry form of warfare.

There would have been little or no object in continuing the conflict had not the absconding Preest been favored by the services of a *deus ex machina*, in the form of a raveling coil of rubber-coated wire. As the vengeful twain laughed at and pounded each other like a man shadow-boxing with his reflection in the mirror, neither could gain any advantage over the other, for the two Preests were exactly equal in thought and action. Being literally the same man, each could foretell just what the other would attempt next and so could launch a ferocious counter-attack against all broadsides. Also their common speed, craftiness and strength were contributing factors which rendered the struggle even, to a mathematical preciseness.

But Fate, as ever was her wont, intervened, and the Preest who was not only

battling for his wife but also for a thousand good United States dollars, found himself in a ticklish predicament as, in endeavoring to haul up a terrific round-house right, he suddenly discovered that it was suspended in midair by a spiral of heavy wire which had snared him as neatly as though his adversary had deliberately set the trap.

**O**F COURSE the absconding Preest had not intentionally lassoed his opponent with the noose of wire, but he made full use of the situation. Wiping the crimson stains of siege from his battered nose with one hand, he simultaneously loosed a snarl of victory and a fistic thunderbolt, rendering his entangled twin temporarily *hors de combat*. The triumphant warrior staggered to his feet with difficulty and turned to resume his rudely terminated flight to love and riches.

Meanwhile, the plump cherub in the laboratory apron had replaced his dangling spectacles upon the bony ridge from which they had been knocked, and struggled valiantly from his own enshrouding web of wires. As the incredible duel raged to its disappointing conclusion, the portly pillar of science had warily neared the scene of carnage with a heavy lamp-stand in one upraised hand, ready to aid his fallen comrade should the wrong Mr. Preest emerge triumphant.

So it was, when an enraged and somewhat tattered Preest did arise from the shambles on the floor, the cautious inventor greeted him ominously with, "See here, my dear sir, exactly which Mr. Preest do you happen to be?"

"How should I know?" snorted the conqueror shortly, and with a superbly placed thump of his fist in the very midst of Porthet's capacious paunch, reduced that menacing gentleman to a state of complete speechlessness, breathlessness,

and helplessness. The stricken scientist doubled up like a folding jack-knife, spun sideways and crashed headlong into the delicate mechanism of his precious dematerializer.

With the jangle of splintering tubes and the crash of crumbling apparatus sounding a discordant pæan of complete victory in his ears, the sole Harry Preest who was upright in posture if not in principles, glared once about the chaos he had created, then wheeled and fled into the night. The villain—the superfluous man—was at large!

The defeated Harry Preest crawled dazedly to his feet as the front door slammed mightily behind the back of his counterpart, and began wrenching at the constricting bands of wire which held him prisoner. Out of the corner of his eye as he did so, he spied a plump but disheveled little pink-faced man seated in a ruin of shattered instruments, weeping dolorously.

"My invention," he wailed as he in turn glimpsed the other through his copious tears. "My invention—you smashed it completely. Oh, I hate you, Harry Preest, I hate you both—indiscriminately!"

"Never mind that now," ordered Preest breathlessly. "Where'd he go? That other Preest is loose. We've got to catch him! Snap out of it, doc—he's gone!"

The scientist was jerked to his feet by the scruff of his ample neck and dragged in frenzied pursuit behind the avenging Harry Preest.

"We'll tear out the back way and head him off," Preest grunted as he ran; "he'd have to go by that way to get to my house. Step on it, will you?"

Out the back way and down a dark and narrow alley the pair raced, Porthet's gasping breaths inhaled in noisy sobs.

The night was very dark; consequently the dim rectangle of the alley-mouth was difficult to observe with any degree of clarity, but just before they reached it the flying figure of a man whizzed past. The pursuers leapt out into the thoroughfare and saw the galloping form of Harry Preest just ahead of them.

"Hey, you! Stop!" bawled the other Preest at the top of his lungs.

"Try and catch me!" bellowed the first Preest, snatching a hurried glance backward as he dashed off the curb into the street. "I can run as fast as you can!"

"Look out!" shrieked Preest Two frantically to his racing twin. For the white beams of a hurtling automobile abruptly drilled the darkness as it sped recklessly across the intersection.

Preest Two's warning came too late. Preest One flung out his arms madly in a vain attempt to ward off the monster on wheels as it bore swiftly down on him, and the next second it was all over. There came a horrible screeching and skidding and the roaring automobile spun about in a complete circle, jumped the curb, missed a telephone pole by inches, then careened off down the street in the direction whence it had appeared.

"Hit and run!" the pursuing Preest flung over his shoulder at the paralyzed and quivering Porthet, then raced toward the crumpled body in the street.

"Is—is he dead?" queried the plump doctor tremulously as one Preest swung the other to his shoulders and staggered to the sidewalk.

"No. He's unconscious but breathing," said the rescuer, puffing from his exertions. "Well, we got him. But now what on earth shall we do with him? Where can we take him?"

"My place, my place," chattered Porthet, trotting off. "I'm a very excellent doctor, you know. I'll take care of him

and nobody will ever be the wiser. A hospital would mean endless complications, you see, my dear fellow. This way, this way, sir."

DOCTOR PORTHET looked up with a sigh from the man he had just examined for injuries. "The fellow has a nasty knock on the head, a broken right arm, and a few minor cuts and bruises."

"Nothing more serious?" demanded his listener. "I thought he was a goner. Machine must have just clipped him as it swung by, I guess."

"Exactly," responded the smaller man. "He'll be up and about in two or three days, I should venture. Let's get him to bed here; then perhaps you had better go home to your wife till tomorrow. I shall be able to manage him alone without difficulty."

"O. K., doc." Harry Preest, unhurt, did not know exactly whether to feel happy, sad or sorry at the way affairs had turned out. But no matter what, the whole infernal business was far from being settled—of that he was certain.

As Harry Preest, unharmed, walked slowly homeward that night, his brain feebly grappled with the amazing dilemma in which he found himself. Harry Preest—two men! A pair of Harry Preests, precisely alike in all respects and each reluctant to give place to the other. Twin Harry Preests with a common home, a common wife, a common temper. An incredible twain of individuals, one of which must vanish somehow, in some way, soon; but neither of whom would ever be willing to take the dooming step. What was the answer to this paradox of paradoxes . . . or was there any answer?

When Harry Preest stepped into the bedroom of his darkened apartment, his wife was gone and on his pillow there



was pinned a note. It read: "Gone to Aunt Christobel's—rheumatism again—will be home in the usual three days—Daphne."

The man who was two men thankfully hurried back to Porthet's laboratory to spend the night where he could keep close watch on his double.

That night, a day, and another night passed, during which the figure on the bed rolled and groaned uneasily, but did not awaken; and during which two very perplexed men discussed endlessly and unsatisfactorily the baffling problem with which they were confronted. A man who was two men—ghastly paradox!

Then, at last, on the morning of the second day, the man in bed unexpectedly groaned loudly, pulled himself to a sitting position, and demanded huskily, "What happened?"

**H**IS two nurses were at his side in an instant. The doctor felt his pulse. The other man just stood and stared in dreadful expectancy. The whole mad mess was about to resume its nightmare complications once again, he thought, and braced himself for the ordeal.

"What happened?" the sick man dully shifted his gaze from one man to another. "Where am I? Who are you two men? Who am I?"

Stunned silence.

A pinwheel of words was spinning in the brains of two of that grotesque trio. The meaning of the whispered sentences simultaneously struck home in the minds of the neatly groomed doctor and his lanky assistant with the force of a bursting bomb.

"What did you say?" gasped Porthet unbelievably.

"Who *are* you?" echoed that incredulous Preest who stood by the bed.

"Yes," husked the bandaged man softly. "My mind seems all a blank. Who am I? Don't you know?"

Again a brief interval of appalled silence; then the whirling brain of the Preest who was standing steadied itself and came to his rescue. Words rushed from his mouth in a torrent.

"Do we know who you are?" he yelped joyously to the man in bed. "I'll say we do. Listen! You're a friend of mine—named Dixwood Carter Brent. You live in—in the East—in, uh, Vermont. You, ah, came here on business—and made a thousand dollars. You got hit by a speeding auto, you've been asleep for a week, and you should have been home days ago. And you've got to leave for Vermont on the first train you can—or—or—or you'll lose your job. See?"

"Exactly, my dear sir," an amazed Porthet acquiesced rapidly; "ah, er, uh—exactly!"

The man in bed creased his brow in a frown of complete bewilderment. He blinked dubiously at each of the two excited men who hovered about him.

"Oh. Oh, yes . . . I see," he muttered slowly at last. "Thank you very much!"

\* \* \* \* \*

**I** GLANCED at the pale-faced, nervous man who had stopped his restless pacing, and now stood staring at me expectantly. He was watching me with odd earnestness, licking dry lips, pulling at a button on his coat.

"Quite a mix-up, wasn't it?" I smiled, for lack of anything else to say. He nodded a jerky affirmative. "But—uh, this other man? What about the similarity—the mustache and all? And didn't he find out you were lying to him? How about——"

"No, he never suspected a thing. His right arm was battered up; so he asked me if I would shave him—said he felt well enough to make the trip to Vermont at once. Well, when I shaved him I did a good job—took off mustache and all.

I have a peculiar upper lip, and without a mustache to hide it, it alters the whole cast of my face. He never even dreamed that we two were the same man.

"As to the story I had told him, Porthet didn't dare do anything but back me up; and after all, that thousand dollars cold cash that I sacrificed *was* strongly convincing, you must admit. He was a little reluctant to leave at first, though, since he couldn't get any details about where he was going. But Porthet fixed that by saying that if the jolting of the train didn't bring everything back to him, he should go see the authorities in the town of Vermont where we sent him. Said that they'd help him get rid of his amnesia.

"Of course, as you know, when he went to the authorities they would simply hold him for a day or so, while they tried to identify him, and after a while he would be released, since he was perfectly all right otherwise. He's safe somewhere now, and perfectly happy with that thousand, I'll bet. Anything else?"

"Never heard from him, I suppose?"

"No. I wanted to keep an eye on him, but I knew it wouldn't do to have letters coming to my house addressed to me in my own handwriting. Anyway, it was safer not to give him any clue so that he might get hold of me again—if anything should ever happen to bring back *my* memory to *him*, I mean."

"Hm-m, very interesting," I said. "And is that all?"

"No, that isn't all!" the man called Harry Preest almost shouted, stabbing me in the chest with a lanky forefinger.

"That's nothing! Listen! Day and night, night and day, awake or dreaming, I am tormented with the one thought: who am I? Am I really Harry Preest or am I really that other self, Dixwood Carter Brent? Is this *me* here talking to you, or am I away off in Vermont somewhere under an assumed name, not knowing my true identity? If I really am Harry Preest—then who is that other man? And if he's really Harry Preest—then who am I?"

Long fingers crumpled my lapels in a hard grip. Gleaming eyes stared into mine. "Answer me!" he commanded, raising his voice to a shriek. "Answer me! *Who am I? Who is he?—WHO ARE YOU?*"

Speechless, I gasped in unmitigated horror, and jerked myself free. I looked askance at the man called Harry Preest. Was the fellow a madman? The light in his eyes was that of fanaticism, all right.

I backed slowly away and clenched my fists, fully prepared to sell my life dearly. But just at that moment a familiar voice broke in on us, and we both glanced up. A man in a white uniform was opening the door behind me, jerking his head in my direction cheerily.

"O. K. there, Napoleon," he said to me quietly, in friendly fashion. "You've been playing at Waterloo long enough and Josephine is worried about you. Come on, Your Highness."

For a moment I looked at the other occupant of the cell in considerable embarrassment, then rose and left hurriedly. The Empress gets very impatient with me if I keep her waiting.

