

SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

CONTENTS • SEPTEMBER 1953 • VOL. 1, NO. 6

FEATURE NOVEL

THE FINAL ANSWER, by M. C. Pease 6

NOVELETTE

THE VENUSIAN, by Irving E. Cox, Jr. 58

SHORT STORIES

WHAT IS DOUBT?, by Richard Snodgrass 48

THE MEDDLERS, by C. M. Kornbluth 55

CLOSED CIRCUIT, by Robert Sheckley 82

AMONG THE FEN

THIS IS THE ESFA, by Sam Moskowitz 74

SERIAL

POLICE YOUR PLANET, by Erik van Lhin (Conclusion) 96

DEPARTMENTS

EDITORIAL 4

THE DISSECTING TABLE 92

COVER BY VAN DONGEN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BERWIN • DREANY • EBEL • ORBAN • SMITH

SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES is published bi-monthly by Future Publications, Inc., 80 Fifth Avenue, New York 11, N. Y. Copyright 1953 by Future Publications, Inc. All rights, including translation in foreign countries reserved. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office at New York, N. Y. Subscription \$3.50 for 12 issues in the United States and Possessions; \$4.50 in Canada; \$5.00 elsewhere. All stories in this issue are new and have not previously been published. No actual persons are designated in works of fiction, either by name or character; any similarity is coincidental. Not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts or art work. All submissions must include return postage to expedite the return of manuscripts not acceptable.

PHILIP ST. JOHN • Editor
BILL BRADLEY • Circulation Mgr.
DAVID GELLER • Advertising Mgr.
H. L. MITCHELL • West Coast Office

E. K. HARRISON • Associate Editor
DAMON KNIGHT • Book Editor
JOHN VINCENT • Associate Editor
M. BERWIN • Art Director

THE MEDDLERS

BY C. M. KORNBLUTH

We love Cyril Kornbluth. We love his agent, too. But in the final analysis, we print this only because we love our fellow editors too much to subject them to receiving stories like this without proper warning!

Reev Markon, Continental Weather Chief, swore one of his affected archaic oaths as his pocket transceiver beeped. "By my lousy halidom!" he muttered, turning the signal off and putting the pint-sized set to his face.

"How's that again, chief?" asked the puzzled voice of his assistant Moron Slobb.

"I didn't mean you, Slobb," Markon snapped. "Go ahead. What is so by-our-lady important that I must be dragged from the few pitiful hours of leisure I'm allowed?"

"Meddling," Moron Slobb said in a voice of deepest gloom.

"Ding-bust the consarned villains!" Markon shrieked. "I'll be right down."

He cast a bilious eye over the workshop where he had hoped to relax over the monthend using

his hands, forgetting the wild complexities of modern life while he pattered with his betatron planer, his compact little thermonuclear forming reactor and transmutron. "I'll meddle them," he growled, and stepped through his Transmitter.

There were wild screeches around him.

"I'm sorry, ladies!" he yelled. "It was completely—completely—" One of the ladies hit him with a chair. He abandoned explanations and ducked back through the Transmitter with a rapidly swelling eye. Through the other he read the setting on the transmitter frame. His wives' athletic club, as he had suspected. Nor had they bothered to clear the setting after using the Transmitter.

"Lollygagging trumpets," he muttered, setting his office com-

bination on the frame and stepping through.

Moron Slobb tactfully avoided staring at the discolored eye. "Glad you're here, chief," he burred. "Somebody seems to have gimmicked up a private tractor beam in the Mojave area and they're pulling in rainclouds assigned to the Rio Grande eye—I mean Rio Grande Valley."

Reev Markon glared at him and decided to let it pass. "Triangulate for it," he said. "Set up the 'unilateral Transmitter. We'll burst in and catch them wet-handed."

He went to his private office and computed while the mechanical work was being done outside. A moderately efficient tractor beam, however haywire, could pull down five acre-feet of water a day. Rio Grande was a top-priority area drawing an allotment of eighty acre-feet for the growing season, plus sunships as needed. Plancom had decided that what the Continent needed was natural citrus and that Rio Grande was the area to supply it. Lowest priority for the current season had been assigned to the Idaho turnip acreage. He could divert rainfall from Idaho to Rio Grande. If that wasn't enough, he could seize the precipitation quota of Aspen Recreational with no difficulty since three Plancomem-

bers had broken respectively a leg, a pelvis and seven ribs on Aspen's beginner's ski trail. . . .

Slobb told him: "Chief, we're on it and the Transmitter's set up."

Reev Markon said: "Take a visual first. Those wittold jerks aren't going to booby-trap me."

He watched as a camera was thrust through the Transmitter, exposed and snatched back in a thousandth of a second.

The plate showed an improvised-looking tractor-beam generator surrounded by three rustic types in bowler hats and kilts. They obviously hadn't noticed the split-second appearance of the camera and they obviously were unarmed.

"I'm going in," Reev Markon said, cold and courageous. "Slobb, arm yourself and bring me a dazzle gun."

In two minutes the weapons had been signed out of the arsenal. Reev Markon and Moron Slobb walked steadily through the Transmitter, guns at the ready. To the astounded, gaping farmers Reev Markon said: "You're under arrest for meddling. Step through this—"

The rustics stopped gaping and went into action. One of them began ripping at the generator, trying to destroy evidence. The other uncorked an uppercut at Slobb, who inter-

cepted it neatly with his chin. Reev Markon shut his eyes and pulled the trigger of the dazzle gun. When he opened his eyes both farmers and his assistant were lying limply on the floor. Puffing a good deal, he pitched them one by one through the invisible portal of the unilateral Transmitter. He surveyed the generator, decided it would do as evidence and pitched it through also before he stepped back into the Continental Weather office himself.

When the farmers had recovered, a matter of twenty minutes or so, he tried to interrogate them but got nowhere. "Don't you realize," he asked silkily, "that there are regular channels through which you can petition for heavier rainfall or a changed barometric pressure or more sunlight hours? Don't you realize that you're disrupting continental economy when you try to free-lance?"

They were sullen and silent,

only muttering something about their spinach crop needing more water than the damn bureaucrats realized.

"Take them away," Reev Markon sighed to his assistant, and Slobb did. But Slobb rushed back with a new and alarming advisory.

"Chief," he said, "Somebody on Long Island's seeding clouds without a license—"

"The cutpurse crumb!" Reev Markon snarled. Two in a row! He leaned back wearily for a moment. "By cracky, Slobb," he said, "you'd think people would speak up and let us know if they think they've been unjustly treated by Plancom. You'd think they'd tell us instead of hay-wiring their rise in private and screwing the works."

Slobb mumbled sympathetically, and Reev Markon voiced the ancient complaint of his department: "The trouble with this job is, everybody does things about the weather, but nobody talks about it!"
