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THE REVISITOR

BY THEODORE L. THOMAS

The Genter Test proved that Marl could do anything—and it was never wrong. But there are some things no machine can discover!

Illustrated by GARI

THE last agent was receiving his assignment; the others had already left. Some had walked out on varying numbers of lega, some had slithered out, and still others had had to be carried. Life took strange forms on the several planets throughout the galaxy and the agents had to conform.

The last agent was preparing to leave. The Mesos was giving his final instructions.

"It might be that this race merits extinction, particularly if your last visit is any criterion; we almost didn't get you out. However, externally at least, conditions seem to have changed, so maybe we won't have to wipe them

out. It shouldn't take long to tell. Don't spend a lot of time there, there's a lot of other work to do."

The agent nodded and said, "I'll arrive differently. I'll mingle with the people so that they don't know who I am."

"Good," said the Mesos.

"Anything else?" asked the agent.

The Mesos shook his head.

The agent turned and headed for the opening that led out of the great domed chamber. He almost reached it when the Mesos called after him.

"Oh, Té."

The agent stopped and listened.

"Don't make such a big thing out of it this time."

The agent smiled and disappeared through the opening.

BUSINESS had been slow for Romero all morning, but he liked it that way. It was much nicer to tip back in his chair in the pleasant Texas sun than it was to haul passengers around the country side in his ancient taxicab.

The first time he knew anyone was near him was when he heard a voice ask, "Can you take me to the Rugmon Laboratories?"

Romero pulled out of his doze and looked up at the speaker. He saw a tall well-built man with sparse brown hair. Romero hesitated before answering. He didn't like to undertake the twenty-mile round trip when lunch was only an hour away. He might not get back in time. His old '94 Ford wasn't as peppy as she used to be. But then he thought of his wife and the row that would start if he turned down even such a short jaunt as this. He sighed and heaved himself out of the chair. He faced the stranger full and started to quote him his number one sucker price. But he cut himself short.

The stranger had the build and face of a very young man, 20 to 25 or so. But his build and face lied; his eyes told the true story, but Romero couldn't believe it. His eyes were blacker than Romero's own. Not just a surface blackness but a blackness that seemed never to end, deep, deeper than the man himself. There were no noticeable pupils, but half-inch black openings that pointed at Romero from all eternity. So Romero quickly changed his price to the regular fare and the stranger agreed.

A half-hour later as the cab entered the main grounds of

the vast Rugmon Laboratories Romero asked his passenger where he wanted to go.

"The Genter Test building, please."

"Oho," thought Romero. "Another candidate." He spoke aloud. "Do you want me to wait for you, sir?"

"No. That won't be necessary."

Romero felt annoyed. This guy was too sure of himself. Only one out of every half a million passed the Test yet this man wasn't even considering the possibility of his failing it. But then Romero remembered those eyes and his annoyance disappeared. Well, maybe so.

He pulled up in front of a large plain building with an inscription over the door that read—GENTER TEST.

"Here you are, sir," he said.

The stranger got out and paid him. Romero wished him good luck and drove off feeling somehow a little relieved.

INSIDE the building the tall stranger stopped in front of the main desk and spoke to the clerk.

"I'd like to take the Test."

"Certainly, sir," was the reply. "May I have your name and address?"

A moment's hesitation,

then—"Dron Marl, Beirut."

The clerk wrote it down and asked, "This isn't a Political Test, is it?"

Marl shook his head.

"No," went on the clerk. "It'll be another month before the politicians begin coming in. We can take you right now." He pushed a button.

A guide came through a sliding door. The clerk gave him Marl's name, told him he was here for the Lab Test, and waved them on.

The Test Room wasn't far off. The guide turned Marl over to the attendants and disappeared. Marl looked around.

It was an impressive sight. The room measured about 50 by 50 feet. All four walls were banked with recording instruments—little circles of paper on which the now-dormant needles traveled. The recorders were grouped into sets and each set had a master recorder. The pattern repeated itself around the entire room except for a part of one wall. That part contained the instruments that summarized the entire Test.

But the most striking feature was the Test Chair itself. It sat in the center of the room facing the summarizing instruments. It looked like a

seat carved out of a solid block of aluminum. The helmet hung suspended from large cables; the jacket lay over one massive arm. It looked like the sort of thing that would be hard to get out of once you got in.

One of the attendants broke up Marl's survey.

"Please remove your coat, sir."

Marl did so and the attendant hung it up on the back of the entering door.

The attendant spoke again. "There will be no sensation beyond a slight itching at the surface of the skin. The Test takes about one second, so we will know the result even before we get the equipment off you. All set?"

Marl nodded.

Four assistants led him to the Test Chair and helped him into the sleeveless metal jacket. A band passed between his legs and fastened in front. When the jacket was in place he sat down. The helmet was lowered and strapped around his head leaving only his nose and mouth exposed. Every organ in his body was encased in the metal mesh.

The four assistants stepped back. The attendant pressed a button. Every needle in the room came alive. The four assistants moved forward to

release Marl. The attendant glanced at the summarizing instruments, glanced and then took a long look. His eyes widened. He reached down and picked up a small phone.

"The Director, please. Priority."

As he waited he watched Marl's head emerge from the helmet. He was about to speak to Marl when the Director came on.

"This is the Test Room," the attendant said. "Can you come right over? We've just tested a Number One."

THE Genter Test had been in use for some eighteen years. It had all started in the fertile brain of William Genter. Genter had been a bright young physicist more interested in doodling with magnetic fields than in earning a living. In 1971 he stumbled on the basic concept that a magnetic field was perceptibly changed by the minute electrical disturbances that took place during a chemical reaction. Just that, and nothing more.

Three years later Genter and a few eminent physicists talked to the Secretary of Science about all the ramifications of the discovery. They pointed out that it might be possible to explore every

single chemical reaction that went on in the human body—that knowing how a man's cells were functioning might in turn give a perfect picture of a man's capabilities. In short, here was a possible means of assessing a man's worth to an extent never before dreamed of. But it would take money, a huge amount of money.

The Secretary was interested enough to call in the heads of several committees. And the whole project died right there. The committees just couldn't see the expenditure of several billions of dollars for a gadget that could tell a man he shouldn't have been born. No, sir. It wasn't worth it.

That's where Hank Rugmon stepped in. Rugmon had started out as a driller's assistant in the oil fields. By the time he was fifty-eight he had built up such a fortune that nobody was sure how much he had. Conservative estimators put his weekly take at about a million and a half dollars; the liberal estimates were ridiculous.

Anyhow Rugmon agreed to back Genter and his associates to the hilt. It was never clear whether Rugmon did it because he had the best interest of science at heart or be-

cause he wanted financially to thumb his nose at the United States Government. Rugmon was shrewd. He was probably the best financier the country had ever seen. It took a whole staff of accountants to keep up with the intricate maneuvers he was forever engaged in. He had turned down every top-flight job the government had to offer. He seemed to be forever seeking new fields to conquer. Yet he wasn't a selfish man, nor was he power-happy. He merely liked to square off against any and all difficulties.

So the Rugmon Corporation bought a few hundred square miles of land just north of Brownfield, Texas, and the project got under way.

Research fellowships were farmed out all over the world. Genter set up a huge laboratory to iron out some of the remaining design problems. More and more experts flocked to his staff. The scientific cream of the country became intrigued with the idea. Most of them realized that if Genter's discovery could be put to practical use it would be the greatest discovery since the invention of movable type. The staff of scientists grew larger as the research needs increased. It finally got

to the point where industry began to complain. Many of the good men were leaving to join Genter.

But by now the eyes of the whole world were focused on the project. A steady outpouring of valuable information in all branches of science had impressed even the scoffers. And in 1981 when Rugmon's vast still ran dry the government took over.

Everybody was behind it now. Genter's hazy idea had developed into a roomful of practical blueprints. Small calculators had been built to test out certain phases of human behavior. One of them up in Boston was now giving accurate measurements of Pride. In Washington, D. C., it was Music. And Nevada took care of Mathematics. These and many other test units sufficed to show that it could be done.

MUCH of the work was empirical. But much of it was the result of scientific analysis. It turned out that the supposedly fictitious lines of magnetic flux in a magnetic field were not fictitious after all; the hypothetical tiny tubes were really there. When a magnetic field was passed through a man's body each line of flux would pass

through only a single molecule—if it passed through any at all. It depended on the probability laws. The measurement of changes in the flux line gave the measurement of the chemical reactions in a man's body. And since a man is no more than his hormonal and enzymatic reactions allow him to be, the remainder of the problem was a question of interpretation.

But what interpretation. It took twenty-eight electronic calculators to do the job and each calculator was larger than any that had ever been built. Some of the time the scientists weren't certain of what they were doing; they were often in over their heads. But each completed calculator made the next one easier. Each calculator helped solve the problems still ahead. Things sort of snowballed. Some of the workers were acutely uncomfortable at blindly following what the machines dictated. But they went on.

Rugmon was left in charge as administrator since he was the only man who could handle it. He had a marvelous facility for ironing out the myriad of obstacles that blocked their way. Sometimes he greased the path. Other times he blasted. He

always seemed to know the best technique to use. And he was happier as a thirty-thousand-a-year administrator than he had ever been as a wealthy industrialist.

In fact, the project affected all the workers that way. From the lab assistants on up to Genter there was a kind of feeling about the work that had never existed before. There was a deep satisfaction, an intense contentment, a foreboding of good.

Toward the end the scale of effort had become immense. It went way beyond the level that the United States had attained when it developed the atom bomb in one of the wars in the old days. Practically every scientist in the country was working on it in one way or another. The knowledge gained from it was so great that even the depleted industrial laboratories came out ahead. Nothing was kept secret. All information was passed out to whoever wanted it.

And finally in 1990 came the great day when the Test was ready for use. There was no need for preliminary testing; that had been done during construction. Once the last connections were made the entire Test was in complete and perfect working or-

der. There was nothing to do but wait for the stampede of people to take advantage of it. But a startling situation appeared.

It turned out that everybody was perfectly delighted to have everybody else take the Test. But when it came to having his own character spread out on paper each man wanted no part of it. All of Genter's co-workers took it. So did a few cranks and a few sincere people from various parts of the world. But nothing significant, nothing to make the vast outlay worth while.

Genter broke the embarrassed silence with a brilliant suggestion: Why not use the Test to select a staff of the finest scientists to work in a government-owned laboratory? Have the best men in every field brought together under one roof. Let them work there, solving if they could any problems that were tossed to them. Let them do original work too. In short, use them as a fountain of knowledge for the good of the whole nation.

THE idea had so much merit that it was put into operation after the usual haggling. There was opposition but nothing that couldn't be over-

come. Standards were set up and in 1991 the Rugmon Laboratories became a national institution.

That same year brought the second great suggestion. It all started when Congressman Hansey was discovered siphoning public funds into enterprises that did no one any good except Congressman Hansey. Right after the trial a stouthearted Senator moved to pass a law requiring all holders of public office to take the Test. That started it. The country split into factions. Many people were still suspicious of the Test. Others couldn't make up their minds. Most of the office holders wanted no part of it.

Genter and Rugmon pointed out that the standards of the Test could be set wherever desired. They recommended that the Test be used merely to eliminate the incapable, the truly selfish, and the potentially criminal. The people softened. Then Rugmon, shrewd old Rugmon, added his clincher. Let the present incumbents go untested but make it mandatory for all new office seekers to take the Test. And so it was enacted.

The very next election showed the results. Several of the hopefuls sneaked off and took the Test. When they saw

they had passed it they based their whole campaign on it. It worked. Untested politicians were promptly defeated. The Congress took on a new air.

Six years later there wasn't an untested man left. The entire legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the government were made up of well-balanced men eager to do the best job they could.

Inevitably the standards of the Political Test were set higher and higher. Many politicians dropped out and went back to selling shirts. A reign of prosperity set in. A twenty-five-hour week was instituted. Wise planning evened out many inequities without curbing the freedom and initiative of the individual.

The time came when the people recognized the danger of setting the political standards too high. A committee made a careful study of the situation. They recommended standards high enough to insure excellent government yet low enough so as not to exclude more than three-quarters of the people. The proposal was submitted in the form of an Amendment to the Constitution. The Congress adopted it, all fifty states ratified it, and it became part of

the supreme law of the land.

And the United States wasn't alone. Public opinion forced foreign officials to take the Test too. The United Nations representatives were among the first and did surprisingly well. More and more candidates for office in other countries showed up with a successful Test behind them. Many of the results were unexpected. The head of one royal family turned out to be reasonably competent after all. Another small country wasn't able to produce a single man with integrity enough to govern it. It reluctantly accepted a governor appointed by the United Nations.

And all the time the Rugmon Laboratories increased in importance. By 2008 the laboratory proper consisted of some 2,100 men and women, each of them a brilliant specialist in one or more fields. In addition, there were many thousands of assistants in every conceivable occupation and trade. Welders, machinists, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, every trade was represented by the finest in the business. An entire city grew up on the site, a city geared to the needs and demands of the Laboratories. And it was unquestionably the happiest city on earth.

The people in it all loved their work; they wouldn't have been happy doing anything else.

BUT great changes took place throughout the land. The great industrial laboratories throughout the country began to dry up. So did the patent system, except for the host of tricky and useful gadgets that help make life easier. These were still patented. The Rugmon Laboratories was so efficient that it was no longer worth while for any company to undertake a research program. It was easier just to ask the Rugmon workers for a solution to all problems. And when the answer came out it became public property; it belonged to all the world. Original research would have stagnated had it not been for the initiative of the Rugmon personnel themselves. In addition to answering industrial problems and loaning out their engineers when needed, they kept up a ceaseless flow of brand-new unheard-of discoveries. Polio, tuberculosis, and other diseases vanished from the earth. Cancer was brought under control although it could never be prevented. A satellite was started on an endless orbit around the

earth. A rocket was successfully crashed on the moon.

New fertilizers and farming methods brought food production way up. The acceptance of birth control measures was sufficiently widespread to seem to make a liar out of Malthus; but it was too soon really to tell.

Despite all this the people hadn't changed basically. There was still crime. There was still too many accidents. A Hollywood starlet made the headlines because she had been married twenty-eight months now and hadn't had a divorce yet. Children still conversed in their customary screams. People griped about the way things were going.

But behind it all was a hardly-felt feeling of satisfaction. Things were good. The government could be trusted, and so could science. Given that, the people could take care of the rest; they needed nothing more. And nowadays when you walked into a bar for a glass of beer you found pretzels and bagels in the same bowl.

Experience had shown that the Laboratories could best be staffed by dividing all personnel into sixteen groups. The Number Ones were the original thinkers, men like Newton and Einstein or as

close as could be found. The Number Sixteens were the engineers, the practitioners. In between were all grades and distinctions. But they all had one thing in common. They had few blind spots. The Test saw to that. Many a brilliant man failed because of anchoritic tendencies. Some few got through even though the Test showed that they preferred to work alone, that they didn't much care about other people. But in those cases the Test also showed that the men knew it, and that they had a saving sense of humor. In fact, humor ranked high among the qualifications necessary to pass either the Political Test or the Lab Test. Humor and imagination go hand in hand, and a man without imagination is somewhat less than a man should be.

The Test measured a candidate's learning and education as well as his native ability. Occasionally a man who flunked the Test would come back years later and pass it. In fact, most people who took it the second time passed it; that was because the first Test showed that experience was all that they needed; potentialities could be charted as easily as realities. It was thought better that these

people gain their experience outside of the Laboratories.

The Test would have been criticized into oblivion had it not been for the far-seeing wisdom of Rugmon and Genter. From the very beginning those two had insisted that the Test never be forced on anyone. And more than that they insisted that all results be kept secret. Each candidate gave his name, address, and thumb print. He was told the results and the card was filed away where no one could get it. If the candidate wanted to tell people the results, that was his business. At the same time there was no possibility of lying about passing the Test. Anybody could phone the Laboratories free of charge and check up on someone else. The automatic operator responded with one of two answers: "Passed," or "Not listed." Most of the time though the check-up was done through the mail with a thumb print enclosed. For people with no thumbs other identifying means were used. The attendants that conducted the Test were all men who had themselves been Tested. Their integrity was of the highest. There was no possibility for fraud or deception anywhere.

By 2008 the Test was al-

most universally accepted as part of civilized life. There was no shame in failing it; too many good men couldn't come close to passing the Lab Test and couldn't quite make the Political Test. It worked out statistically that a Number One came along only once every eighteen years. Whenever one did, the whole world celebrated. That's why the attendant's mouth fell open when he read the master instruments giving the results of Marl's Test. That's why he fell over himself in eagerness to call the Director. That's why he said, "This is the Test Room. Can you come right over? We've just tested a Number One."

THE Director was there in six minutes flat. He swept into the room and right over to Marl to shake his hand.

"Welcome," he said. "This is wonderful. What is your name? Marl? Well, Doctor Marl, your arrival is the best thing we've had in a long time. Where have you been hiding?"

Marl smiled. "Not hiding, just studying. I had a lot to work out in my own mind before I came."

"I understand," said the Director. Then: "Would you

like to look over the results of your Test?"

"Very much," replied Marl.

Side by side the two of them began to work their way around the panelboards that lined the room. The Director explained things as they went. But before they'd covered half of one wall the Director was all but speechless. This was unbelievable. Every minute breakdown of knowledge, learning, and character stood higher than the Director had ever seen. Not perfect—there could be no such thing. Just awfully high.

The Director translated Marl's capabilities into direct comparisons.

"A better mathematician than Sternwood. Better chemist than Cohen. Better physicist than Stuml. Better . . ."

On and on it went. Marl was even a better administrator than Director Lancing himself. In fact, Marl was far better at everything than any man had ever been.

Lancing was puzzled. He looked at Marl strangely.

"You will have to choose the work you want to do," he said. "There's no way for me to know what's best." He was silent a moment. Then he went on: "Do you know what you want to do?"

"Yes," said Marl. "I have something I'd like to try. I have a theory that can be tested within a short time, a few weeks, I think. If you can give me—oh—two assistants, biochemists, I should soon be able to test it. After that we can talk about what to do next."

"Good," said Lancing. "And now come. I'll introduce you to some of the others."

MARL'S two assistants were Tom and Ginny Martin, the only married couple in the Laboratories. Both of them were skilled biochemists famed for their work in nucleoproteins. In the old days it would have been considered suicidal to put man and wife together on the same job. But the Martins complemented each other. They worked better together than either could have worked with anyone else. They were very young to be Rugmon workers. Tom was thirty-three; Ginny a year younger. Both were Number Twelves.

They greeted Marl cordially and showed him around the laboratory where they were to work. When Marl felt he knew his way around they all sat down at a desk and Marl began to outline his program.

"We are going to syntho-

size a set of genes from which we will build chromosomes. With the chromosomes and proteinacious matter I think we can concoct a fertilized egg. The egg can be grown in . . . What's the matter?"

The silence was thick and heavy. The Martins stared at him, bewildered. Mari spoke first.

"I guess I went too fast. I'm sorry. You see I have already worked out all the details for the production of this fertilized egg. I know exactly how I think it should go. It's now merely a question of putting it into practice."

Tom explained their bewilderment.

"You caught us flatfooted. As far as we know only two genes have ever been identified. And synthesis of any of them is fifty years away. Yet here you talk about synthesizing an entire cell—a fertilized cell at that."

Ginny took it up.

"We've known that eventually life could probably be started in a test tube. But we always thought it was centuries away. Now we find it's going to happen in our own lifetime."

Mari smiled and said, "You're putting a lot of confidence in my theory. It might not work."

Ginny didn't smile back. "I know it will," she said.

Mari produced a loose-leaf notebook crammed with equations and notations. He roughed out a good many of the procedures to be followed explaining enough so that the two scientists could grasp what was called for. Many pages in the notebook were covered with beautiful sketches of the necessary equipment. As soon as Tom clearly understood the apparatus he took charge of getting it made. He sent for the Chief Glassblower to explain what was needed in glass. Electricians and mechanics were briefed on the auxiliary equipment. Tiny pumps and motors had to be designed. Metallurgists were brought in to decide what alloys could be used where. Countless copies of Mari's sketches were distributed so that all the teams could work closely together.

Ginny took care of the chemical end. Chemists were assigned to prepare the numerous compounds and solutions. Other chemists carried out test reactions to establish optimum conditions. Physical chemists worked out specifications to control some of the lesser-known reactions. Specialists in carbohydrates and

fats joined with the others in rounding out the picture. And every word that was said was recorded by the Autorecs and classified in the Central Library where each technician and scientist could get at it. The Labs worked overtime.

Right about this time Ginny turned up pregnant. There were many congratulations and much back slapping; everybody knew that they'd been trying for some time, even though the best medical opinions had said it was hopeless. The doctors now examined her, pronounced her perfect, put her on a diet, and sent her back to work. It did not slow her down much. She just made sure she never got overly tired.

THE next two weeks were hectic. Marl and the Martins hardly ever left the Labs. They ordered their food sent in. They slept in the nearby Sleep Rooms. They took lots of hot showers, drank lots of hot coffee.

Ginny always made the coffee despite the fact that there was plenty to be had from the Food Rooms. Tom explained that Ginny's coffee had a bite to it, a bitterness, a sort of partly-burned flavor that couldn't be duplicated. "I've drunk it so long now,"

he said, "that I can't stand decent stuff."

Ginny glowered at him, and was about to speak when a familiar hissing noise came from the next room where the percolator was. Ginny leaped up and flew in.

"She's got a nice system there," said Tom. "She always knows when it starts to percolate—she waits 'til she hears it boil over . . . Let's see, where were we?"

And the work went on.

The Martins found that they could master the complex equations without undue difficulty. The equations themselves weren't so bad; it was the assumptions on which they were based that were hard to swallow. Marl seemed to know the exact formula for many thousands of genes. He also had processes for synthesizing six different kinds of proteinacious jelly. With these tools alone he was proposing to synthesize life.

As he explained it though it seemed to make sense. "It's mostly a matter of setting up the right conditions. We will select the genes that will give us the animal we want. By bringing these genes together in the proper order we will get our chromosomes. The chromosomes can be implanted in a variable protein to

form the nucleolus and nucleus. The reticulum is next. Then the whole nucleus will be placed inside the cytoplasmic matter and we are all done. From there on it's just a matter of nurturing it properly. See?"

"No," said Tom. "But as long as YOU do it's all right, I guess." He thought for a moment, then asked, "What about differentiation?"

"That takes care of itself," said Marl. "Everything is controlled by the proper selection of genes at the start. As cell division proceeds the genes, as you know, act as templates for the synthesis of duplicate genes. At certain points some genes become more active than others, due to their physical shape. It's a process that's similar to steric hindrance. Differentiation is nothing more than a change in the relative activity of the genes."

"Oh," said Tom. He sat there thinking about the years of unsuccessful research aimed at the explanation of differentiation. So did everyone else in the Lab.

The apparatus began coming in. As fast as it arrived it was set up in its proper place. Portions of it were tested, pronounced perfect, and connected up to the rest.

Panel boards sprung into being. Constant-temperature ovens appeared here and there. Special conveyance facilities connecting with nearby laboratories were built.

IT WAS at a late supper one evening that Marl asked the question the Martins had been waiting for: "What kind of animal shall we make?"

There was no answer. Then Marl spoke. "Suppose we make a dog."

"Good," they said together.

Marl smiled and turned to Ginny.

"What kind of dog would you like?" he asked.

She thought a minute and said, "A collie. I've always wanted a collie but never had time for one."

"All right. What kind of coloring shall we have?"

Ginny looked at Tom. "Tom?"

"White," said Tom. "White, with a smooth coat."

"So be it," said Marl, pushing back his chair. "Let's go and select the genes."

It took him five days to pick out the 14,829 genes that made up the 22 chromosomes. Then the real work began.

Everybody connected with the project lost weight even though the dieticians saw to

it that their nourishment was more than adequate. Massive vitamin dosages helped keep up the health of the workers despite the gruelling pace. Sleep and exercise schedules were rigidly enforced. The work never stopped now. Day and night it went on.

Timing was all-important. Each reaction could take place only in a certain sequence. A break anywhere would have spoiled the entire chain. But it was bound to be successful from the very beginning. Nothing could go wrong. Not with Marl there.

The man was like one possessed. He seemed to carry every detail of the process in his mind. He overlooked nothing; he forgot nothing. Time after time when the possibilities of a snarl materialized he stepped in and smoothed it out as easily as if he were blowing his nose.

The cell swiftly took shape under his skillful manipulation backed by the combined efforts of 452 specialists.

The delicate chromosomes were finished in a week; the entire nucleus in another two weeks. And at the end of the month the finished cell was gently deposited in the growth jar. Nothing remained but to feed it, and that was comparatively easy. The entire

Laboratory kind of settled back on its haunches and took a deep breath. It had been rough going even for the Rugmon workers.

The cell's progress was carefully watched by means of cold light and Telecast. Normal light was kept away; the cell's energy balance was too delicate.

A WEEK went by and the cell grew beautifully into a recognizable foetus. The composition of the nurturing solution was slowly modified to meet its changing demands. The pumps kept the rich solutions ever flowing; thermocouples held the temperature within the narrow range. Conditions were such that the normal gestation period was shortened by almost half. And exactly five weeks after he was put into the growth jar little Adam was lifted out.

He was a fine-looking pup, normal in every respect. Tom broke the umbilical cord and gently sponged him down. A snug incubator stood nearby to serve as Adam's first home. A whimsical painter had apparently put the finishing touches on it; just above the central knobs there was lettered in block letters of gold—EDEN.

"Lucky fellow," said Tom as he gave Adam his first feeding of synthesized dog milk. "He has no Eve to cope with."

"I know," said Ginny, "but maybe he'll turn out all right anyway."

Just then a messenger came in. There was to be a meeting of the Number Ones tomorrow. Marl was asked to be there.

Such a meeting was rare. Informal meetings where specialists sought each others' knowledge were commonplace. But a formal meeting of Number Ones was different. Only a discussion of major policy could warrant such a thing.

When Marl walked into the conference room the next morning the others were already there. Cohen was telling them about an incident the night before between his little grand-daughter and her prize doll; everybody was chuckling.

They greeted Marl and as soon as he was seated Lancing began talking to him on behalf of the group:

"Doctor Marl, your researches have been stupendous. All of us are overwhelmed."

"Unbelievable," said Cohen. "You have advanced science

by at least a hundred and fifty years."

Marl nodded.

Sternwood spoke: "There's no limitation, is there? You could synthesize any animal you wanted?"

Marl nodded.

"Even man?"

Marl nodded.

SILENCE fell, each man deep in his own thoughts. Stuml began musing, half-aloud, mostly to himself.

"It's too soon. It'll be too upsetting. We shouldn't have to face it yet. I'm afraid of its effects."

He subsided.

Silence.

Marl leaned forward. "Hasn't it always been man's goal to create life? Hasn't he always strived to explain himself? Hasn't he always wanted to be the all in all on earth? Well, here it is. We have reduced him and everything else that lives to chemical equations. Man can now create himself, and his food, and everything he needs. Isn't that what you want?"

The others looked at him, then:

"I don't think so," said Lancing. "You see, hunger has practically disappeared from the earth. For the first time people are beginning to trust

each other. Faith has come back. We're happy, and we work hard for our happiness. We do things. We solve our problems as they come up; we make up new problems and solve those. But this creation—this miracle—it would destroy the people's confidence in themselves. At least now. In time to come when we are ready, then, then this creation will have its place. But not now, not yet. We don't need such tremendous power."

He stopped, and took a deep breath, and went on.

"So gentlemen, I recommend that for the first time we withhold scientific information from the world. I recommend that we bury this knowledge, bury it deep, until the time comes to release it."

Lancing looked at Cohen.

"I agree."

He looked at Stuml.

"I agree."

At Sternwood.

"I agree."

Then all four swung around and looked at Marl.

He met each pair of eyes

in turn, looking deep, searching. He pushed his chair back and stood up and faced them. A slow smile spread over his face, and he said.

"I agree."

He turned around and went out the door.

They never saw him again.

THE agent strode into the great domed chamber.

"Good," said the Mesos. "That was a quick check-up. How is everything?"

The agent didn't answer. He seemed lost in his own thoughts. It was one of the rare times in his existence when his thoughts were somewhere else. He was seeing a puppy, a white collie puppy frisking around in front of a tubby baby that gurgled and drooled all over himself. He chuckled.

"Snap out of it, Té," said the Mesos. "How is everything? Do we drown them out?"

The agent shook himself.

"They've come a long way in 2,000 years," he said. "They'll make it."