

SCIENCE FICTION Quarterly

MAY

132
PAGES

250

EXTRA-
SECRET
AGENT

by H. B. Fyfe

WHEN IN
DOUBT--
MUTATE!

by E. Hoffmann

Price

ALERT! INVA
ALL

ALL STORIES NEW
No Reprints



Volume
1
Number
5

SCIENCE FICTION *Quarterly*

May,
1952

132 PAGES OF NEW STORIES — NO REPRINTS!

★ ★ *Feature Novel* ★ ★
THE SHINING CITY Rena M. Vale 10

Thor wonders if his loyalty to the city isn't a worse betrayal than his son's treason. But must there be war of extermination between the city and others?



Two Unusual Novelets

WHEN IN DOUBT, MUTATE! E. Hoffmann Price 54
Oscar isn't born human; he's made human. And he doesn't like it!

EXTRA-SECRET AGENT H. B. Fyfe 78
Laril doesn't know his mission, but there's another agent operating with him who is even more secret!

Short Stories

THE LUCKIEST MAN ALIVE! William Morrison 96
—obviously, will be the one who's chosen "Mister Earth"!

WE, THE PEOPLE... Ward Moore 101
Any resemblances in this fable shouldn't be too surprising.

Departments And Features

IT SAYS HERE (*Editorial comment and Letters*) 6

SCIENCE IN SCIENCE FICTION No. 4 James Blish 49
Wherein we look into "The psychological story".

READIN' AND WRITHIN' (*Book Review Dept.*) Robert W. Lowndes 77

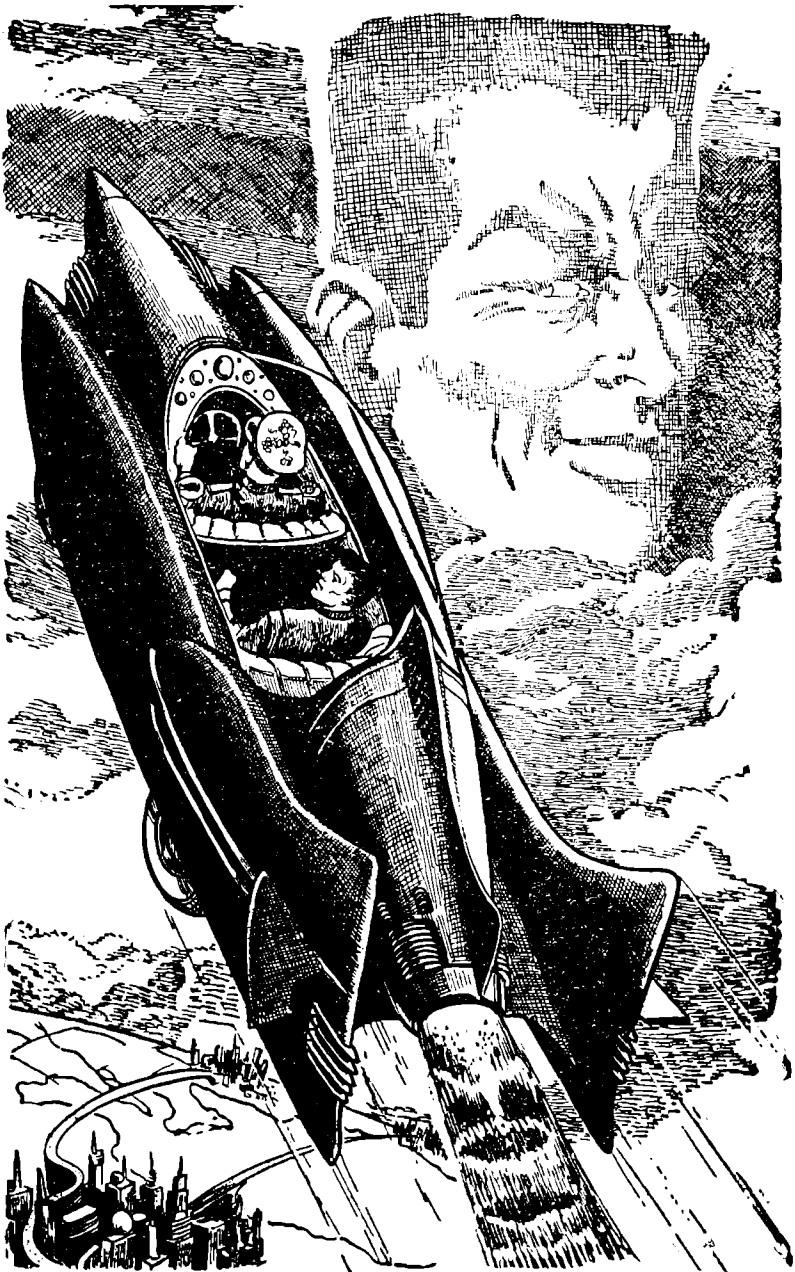
THE BLACK MAGIC OF YESTERDAY (*Article*) Eugene W. Nelson 106

THE RECKONING and READERS' PREFERENCE COUPON 130

Cover by Milton Luros, suggested by "The Shining City"
Interior illustrations by Luros and Poulton

ROBERT W. LOWNDES, Editor

SCIENCE FICTION, QUARTERLY, May, 1952, published February, May, August, and November, by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, Inc., 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke Mass. Editorial and executive offices at 161 Church Street, New York 14, New York. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at Holyoke, Mass., under the Act of March 3, 1979. Single copy 25c yearly subscription \$1.00. Entire contents copyright 1952 by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, Inc. Manuscripts must be accompanied by self-addressed envelopes to insure return if not accepted, and while reasonable care will be exercised in handling them, it is understood that they are submitted at author's risk. Printed in U. S. A.



As the car shot upward, Thor fancied he could see Marshal Zachary's smile following them...

THE

SHINING CITY

By Rena M. Vale

Heavy in Thor Larsen's heart was the suspicion that his son, Leonard was a traitor to the city — but heavier still was the feeling that Thor himself had betrayed something greater!



“LEONARD is gone.”

Thor Larsen did not turn from the telescreen, on which a depiction of a javelin-throwing contest between two teams of Northerners was in progress in a field near the Argonne Pit. The challenging team was from Superior City, and Thor strained to see if any members were familiar to him. Then he noticed the reflected image of Anisse in the corner of the screen, and the Northerners were forgotten. It was the year all women of official rank had been ordered to wear red, and her costume was the same shade as that of the flames that stained the sky above the Pit—women called it “Exciting Red.” Thor found himself reacting in the manner the Social Engineers had planned, though he hesitated a few centi-seconds before acknowledging the presence of the woman. She tossed

her head in impatience, and the artificial yellow of her hair swirled above the flame of her dress as though her image-fire had been freshly fed. It was then that Thor became aware of the fact that she had said something about his son.

“Leonard?” he asked without turning.

The yellow cascade quieted as she stepped into the room. “Leonard is not in his quarters; his belongings are gone.” She flung the words like a handful of hailstones at the hunched figure on the bench.

Thor cut the control of the screen and turned to face the woman. He was a large man of fifty or more, and he moved with sure deliberation. “Why should that alarm you, my cherished one?” He spoke with soothing tenderness. “Perhaps there is some reason why he should be in Paris ahead of us.”

Anisse strode quickly across the room and seated herself on the bench beside Thor. It was the only seat in the room; in fact, the bench was the only piece of furniture in the room, though the walls were lined with com-

Feature Novel of Tomorrow

munication cabinets, control boards, screens, charts and other apparatus necessary for the executive work of the President of the City Board. She tilted her face up to Thor's and forced a smile. "I thought it best that you hear it from me before the Eye Squad issues a call. I'm afraid—"

Thor embraced the woman clumsily. "There is nothing to fear, my little Anisse, my lovely Anisse. Leonard is capable of looking after himself."

She drew away from him, a look of mingled perplexity and cruelty written in the wrinkles around her eyes and mouth. She was a small, spare woman, about forty, with lingering traces of a beauty that had been hard and glittering. However, the adoration in Thor's face showed that he saw in her only the reflection of his desire. "They were here looking for him."

Thor waved her statement aside. "Leonard has an important part in the celebration tomorrow; he is to receive the sceptre of Honored Scientist for his accomplishments in research on ancient chemical processes. Gaurin himself recommended it to the Board."

"Leonard cared nothing about the sceptre."

"Cared nothing about the sceptre!" Thor stared at his mate in astonishment. "Why, he will be the only scientist born outside the Band ever to receive it—the only one from the Shining City to get it tomorrow! It's an honor second only to the one they will bestow on me! Whatever gave you the impression he doesn't care about it?"

"Something he said yesterday."

"Oh, Leonard is a little obscure at times—he's been so much engrossed in matters of the past. You know you've never understood the boy."

"I couldn't fail to understand him this time. I met him in the corridor when I was on my way to the reconditioning salon, and just to be pleasant I asked him if he wasn't excited

about the Paris celebration. He said, in that way he has of tipping his head and looking way off into another time, 'Celebrations and honors are falsifications for future history.'"

THOR LAUGHED, an easy, full laugh. "He was only trying to hide his eagerness; he'll be there tomorrow, and excited as any of us. There has undoubtedly been a change in his travel plans; so many are going from the Shining City, it's easy to understand how confusion can develop. It's to be expected." He rose and paced the great width of the room; as he spoke, his tone deepened and the blue of his eyes became darker with intensity. "You must realize, my dearest one, that ours is a time of flux—everything is changing with great rapidity. Why, twenty years ago—when I gave my allegiance to the world of science—Sun Conversion was not even used for travel. A heavy load of fuel was needed to propel a sky car from one city of the Band to another. Tomorrow we will go forth from the Shining City in a car that is propelled through space by an envelope of magnetic fog, and in two turns of the telechron we'll be in Paris!" He looked at the woman as though surprised to find an audience of only one. The realization brought him back to the subject they had been discussing. "Probably Leonard is already there."

"Your son is not in Paris, Thor of the genetic rating Two-Two."

The voice came from the tri-dimensional communication cabinet, and Thor whirled to face the smile of Doctor Gnurin, One-One-Seven. The head appeared to be little more than a skull.

"Gnurin!" Thor exclaimed. "I didn't hear your signal!"

"I bypassed the signal in order to have an informal chat with you. I believe you will agree with me that it is better for our conversation not to be recorded on an Eye Squad spool."

"What is this about Leonard?" The muscles of Thor's face tightened, and

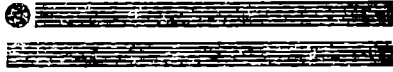
it was an expressionless mask he presented to Gnurin.

"A little irregularity."

"Perhaps Marshal Zachary changed his transportation plans. Our official skycar will be fairly well filled—all the Board members are taking their mates, you know, and there are the heads of delegations..."

Gnurin cut into Thor's speech. "Marshal Zachary is with me. He changed no plans."

"Then perhaps—" Thor groped for words. He looked helplessly at Anisse, but she supplied nothing.



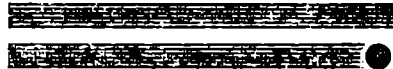
"COLLABORATOR" and "quisling" are terms which came into common usage within the last decade, but the behaviour they describe is probably as old as human history.

Usually, one thinks of the clever turncoat when these terms are applied—the man or woman ready to switch sides at moment's notice, for tangible profit.

But there are other kinds of collaborators, basically honest and well-meaning people who believe in a decision to accept what their fellows are struggling against, sometimes with reservations.

This story reached us out of the mails, from a name unknown. Frankly, I think it is one of the finest I've read in a number of years.

RWL



The skull continued speaking. "Leonard One-Two-Two was to have reported to me at the hour of thirteen today, and when he had not appeared by another turn of the telechron I called on the Eye Squad to investigate. He was not in his laboratory; he was not in his quarters. In fact, he was not in the City. The Eye Squad captain reported that he had taken all the charts on sulphuric acid as well

as many other secret documents from the laboratory files last night. This morning—and this is even more grave—he requested a hovering car from the transportation office; he has used it frequently on journeys to excavations, and in the present confusion the transportation office failed to check his authority. It appears that his plan was well thought out."

"Oh, I'm sure—" Thor fumbled, and, catching a look from Gnurin, changed his approach. "How did he set the gear lock?"

"He didn't use the gear lock, which means he didn't set out for a locked destination. All that is known is that he went in a westerly direction."

"Westerly?" Thor repeated in an effort to gather his faculties.

"The Argonne Pit!" Anisse exclaimed.

Thor shot a reproving glance at her. "I can't regard this as serious—a research problem that absorbed him, made him careless about formalities..."

"Perhaps we had better discuss this in private, Gnurin."

Anisse rose from the bench and swayed toward the entrance, her short belted garment cupping to the curves of her body. "I must prepare for my stay in Paris."

"There may be a change in plans." Thor's eyes followed her hungrily.

"If the official skycar goes to Paris, I go; it has been overlong since I visited my home, and I'm looking forward to it." The door slid shut behind her.

"But," Thor stammered, speaking to her retreating figure, "if I don't go to Paris there'll be no celebration!"

Gnurin laughed, a harsh and grating sound that was almost metallic. "The ceremonies in Paris are being held for the purpose of celebrating the success of the experimental Unvalator and Invalator. That you employed those devices in constructing the City doesn't necessarily mean the honors go to you! Great scientists of the Band

do not confuse deeds and personalities, Thor."

"I understand, Gnurin. It was just that I thought it might take a little time to change program plans. However, if they can be changed as easily as you imply, the celebration can proceed without Leonard, if need be."

"It will." A smile that was like the gash of a saber cut across the face in the cabinet. "However, there are matters for the Board to act upon."

"I will come at once to your laboratory." Thor closed the control of the cabinet and watched Doctor Gaurin's features fade.



HE PAUSED at the door to Anisse's room but did not enter. She had never liked Leonard, and Thor assumed it was because his son represented a link to the life she had not shared with him. For that reason he had not consulted her on matters pertaining to Leonard. As his mate she had counselled him on every other decision he had made for the past fifteen years; often she had prepared the speeches he had made in meetings. He was only a superintendent of construction—a mere overseer of denizen laborers—when he met her in a relaxing parlor in Paris, where he had gone to attend a conference on scientific city construction. She poured wine for him and told him he could be "ruler of the world"; he had returned to the Shining City with a new mate and a new ambition. Anisse had pushed him upward to the highest position in the Shining City, that of President of the City Board. *Without her*— He could not bring himself to finish the thought, and his hand trembled as he passed it through the beam that controlled the outer door to his apartment.

It was spring and he felt the need for outdoor air. He took a sun mask from a wall niche beside his door and swung it in his hand as he strode down the long, gleaming corridor. Glasteel. Proudly he thumped the wall. Every



building in the Shining City was constructed throughout of glasteel, a product he had helped to develop. Doctor Gnurin One-One-Seven spoke of the silicones of the ancients, of polymerization, isomerization and ion exchange; but Thor, the builder, made no effort to understand these technicalities. He asked only for a material that could be molded to shape, that had high tensile strength, resiliency, and, for the purpose of Sun Conversion, high reflective qualities. Glasteel was the answer, and Thor had driven the swarms of denizens in his building crews to construct a city of the gleaming alloy. All other cities in the scientific Band had adopted it, and two continents were now dotted with shimmering citadels. The Siberian Outpost, Moscow, Prague, Paris, London, New York, Cleveland, Chicago, Kansas City and Los Angeles—all were phoenix-cities which had risen from the ashes of a ruined world and banded together to share their scientific knowledge. Now they were all monuments to Thor Larsen, the builder, who had been born a Northerner. Tomorrow in Paris— But first he must clear up the difficulty about his son.

Thor slipped the sun mask over his face and emerged into the dazzling brilliance of the Boulevard. The rays of the sun were multiplied a thousand fold by the reflective surfaces of the hundred story buildings that lined the west side of the Boulevard; they splintered upward from the Boulevard floor into the graduated discs of the Sun Converters. Heat was intense along the buildings, but Thor didn't mind it. A refreshing wind blew off the lake, to the east, and he filled his lungs with the moisture-laden air. He gripped the rail of the walk for

guidance and glanced up at the tiers of Sun Converters. It reassured him to see those slowly-turning discs drawing the magnified sunlight into power-shafts. Power was feeding into the dynamos of the Shining City, and so long as that power continued to feed in and flow out to the apparatus of Science, the Shining City would stand.

Yet the counter-current in Thor's mind ran toward a lake of fear. Was it possible that his son—the son who had grown up under his guidance and whose thoughts he believed he had shared—had not completely accepted the authority of the Band? Did he retain a secret allegiance to the backward-looking people of the Northland? Thor knew that Leonard had never given up the hope of reuniting his parents, although he knew that his mother would never leave Superior City.

She, who had been Thor's mate, loved the customs of the Northland—the forests and the freedom of them—too much. One of Thor's clearest memories was that of Irenka standing on a mountain-top above an iron ore pit, hair flying loose in the wind and muscular arms folded across the lacing of her tight leather bodice. Her eyes, as purple as the wood violets at her feet, pulled to slits and her strong chin lifted as she looked out over the forest that stretched like green fur into the northern horizon. "My home," she said, speaking as much to the wind as to the man at her side. "It is part of me, and I am part of it; my son, who will be born in the deep of winter, will be a man of the forest."

That was the first that Thor had known of Leonard's coming. Once life had taken root inside her, Irenka had no further need for him until after the period of the infant's suckling, when the ice in her veins had again turned to steam. The oldest had been a girl, somewhat of a disappointment to Thor; the second, Irenka pronounced,

would be a boy. It was, and they named him Leonard. The birth of his son gave him new hope, and he built more sawmills and more houses from the product of the mills. There were other children, six more girls, but it was the boy in whom he centered his parental pride.

THOR HAD contributed much toward progress in Superior City. The dream of building had come to him when he was twelve. One winter day, while he fished through a hole in the ice of the lake, he looked at the helter-skelter of mud-smear'd log huts in which his people had lived ever since the destruction of the Great Civilization over two hundred years before. He thought of the tales he had heard of the great city to the south where men of science were unlocking the secrets of the past. The big city needed food for the many thousands of people who were flocking there to work. The Northerners, spread out over forest-clearings and valleys and prairies around the lakes, could produce food in abundance. They had boats that could sail the lakes. Why could not the Northerners exchange their surplus food for big saws and tools like those that were found in the mounds of ruined cities? The scientific city could produce such things with ease.

He got people to listen to him and to help him; and even though he was not grown to the size of a man he went on the first trading boat to Chicago. He talked to men in laboratories, showed them the rusted and broken things from the ruined world. At length his plan was accepted by the men in the laboratories. The home that Thor built for Irenka before they took their wedding vows was made of lumber from the first sawmill in the Northland for over two hundred years. With that thought Thor wanted to forge ahead; but Irenka clung to the old ways, the superstitions and the ceremonies that had held the Norther-

ners to primitive existence. Too many people agreed with her, and Thor found himself pulling against her influence. He began to prolong his stays in Chicago when he went there on trading trips. Frequently he took Leonard with him, and when the boy was ten Thor arranged to place him in school there.

Since all trade was carried on by barter, the transaction was involved; Thor had never thought it wise to inform Leonard of the price of the schooling. The majority of outlanders who presented themselves to the city entered a life of virtual slavery. They agreed to perform tasks assigned to them in return for food, raiment, shelter and "planned recreation." They were trained only for the menial tasks and driven till they fell from illness or fatigue. But the lot of the "denizens" was preferable to the sketchy, animal-like existence in the camps of the Wanderers, from whence most of them came. The Northerners seldom surrendered to this slavery. However, the Social Engineers of the city desired the more robust and healthy-minded Northerners to the weak-willed, unreliable and disease-ridden types that came from the Wanderers.

Thor agreed to supply Northerner labor for gigantic construction projects under way in the city in return for his son's education.

Two years later the Scientists requested him to oversee this crew, and he accepted. Irenka had refused to come with him; when he insisted on going ahead with his plan, she declared their union at an end. At that time Leonard had chosen to remain with his father—not because he was more fond of Thor than his mother, but with the apparent hope of bringing his mother to the city.

looked out over the sun-sparkled blue of Lake Michigan. Twenty years he had been away from the Northland, and each year the social gap between the city dwellers and the Northerners had become wider. His former people had remained much as they were when he was a boy—worshipping idols, tilting with javelins, even though they lived in houses of sawed lumber. And in that twenty years, Chicago had become the Shining City of sun conversion. Thor had risen to President of the City Board, and Leonard had become an Honored Scientist—that is, he would be an Honored Scientist if his difficulty could be straightened out in time for him to go to Paris to accept the sceptre. They had chosen well, Thor decided.

Or had Leonard really chosen the Shining City? At thirty-three he was still adolescent in many ways; Thor realized, now, that in spite of scientific training, his son was emotionally undeveloped. For one thing, he was a perfectionist—an idealist who was intolerant of reality.

Gray-garbed dial operators in the control room of the Citadel of Science glanced up with furtive adoration as Thor strode through on his way to the private elevator. He was the only member of the Board who had come from the world outside the Band; the denizens regarded him as their representative in the ruling body. He carried that favor, and never forgot to bestow a nod or a smile on those he recognized. Even now, with worries pressing him, he paused several times to call out the greeting, "Fair day," to the ones who looked up expectantly.



At the entrance to the building that housed the laboratory of Doctor Gnu-rin One-One-Seven Thor paused and

IN THE glittering vault that was the private laboratory of Gnu-rin One-One-Seven Thor found the diminutive scientist and Marshal Romain Zachary of the Band Police,

their heads almost touching over a black light tank.

"We have been waiting for you." Gnurin's voice reminded Thor of metal grating on metal; the little scientist stood drawn almost backward in straight erectness, and his chin was thrust upward so that his back-heavy cranium rested on the collar of his smock. "Why didn't you come on the belt?"

Quickly Thor snatched off the sun mask he had forgotten to remove when he entered the building; he twisted it nervously in his hands as he approached the two waiting men.

"The mask is not what informed us that you were walking in the sun," Marshal Zachary said with a toothy smile. He, too, was a man of small stature, though the line of his graying blue-black hair was a little higher than the top of Doctor Gnurin's sparsely-covered skull. Beside the other man's skeleton-like ugliness the marshal of the Band Police was plumply pleasing to the eye. He filled his bright blue uniform with a bulge here and there, but he moved with a fluid grace and there was warmth in his wide smile and mischief without malice in his dark, flashing eyes.

"We watched you in the tank," Gnurin put in. "It is a new police invention. Operates radionically. Can tune in and watch anyone whose vibratory pattern is known. See, here is Elmer One-Eight-One. He was in the shower stall a few centiminutes ago; now he is plucking hairs out of his nose."

Zachary's laugh rippled out and he cut the control. "It would be much more interesting to watch a charming woman in her bath. We must have some vibratory charts made of the ladies!"

"You are not serious, Marshall!" The metallic rasp of Gnurin's voice made Thor shudder.

"Never more serious." The Marshal winked at Thor.

"Now to the business at hand."

Gaurin sank nimbly to the floor and sat cross-legged. He would not permit benches to be installed in his laboratory, and commanded everyone who came into his presence to sit on the floor.

With some difficulty Thor seated himself on the floor and sat with his knees thrust outward like great knobs. Zachary remained standing.

"Now about Leonard One-Two-Two," Gnurin began.

"Nothing of intent is established yet," Zachary cut in. "We of the Eye Squad do not regard his actions as anything serious, and we feel certain, my dear Thor, that you can save the situation. It is only that—"

"He has disobeyed the rules of the Band. The City Board must denounce him as a traitor. That is the only possible interpretation."

"It is not up to you to interpret anyone's actions, my dear Doctor Gnurin," Zachary purred. "As head of the Research Coordinating Board you will concern yourself with research."

"I am responsible for the behavior of research scientists, and Leonard One-Two-Two has far exceeded mere willful disobedience."

"Very well, that is your report, and the City Board must reach its own decision. Leonard Larsen—I cannot get used to these genetic rating names—has taken leave without obtaining permission; and certain formulas, and other files, are missing. It is our assumption—based on the findings of the Eye Squad—that he has taken them to the Argonne Pit to turn over to the Northerners. According to our present intelligence, this group of Northerners may be able to use the information to some advantage."

"I do not understand why this encampment of pariahs has been allowed to remain at the Pit, or what they are doing there," Doctor Gnurin said.

"It's a kind of religious rite," Thor explained. "They think the Pit is the door to Hell, and they make pilgrimages of penance to it."

GNURIN snorted. "Humph! There might be other activity there! We must not forget that ten years ago the glasteel plant at Gary was destroyed by guided bombs of a crude design, though most of them didn't get through."

"You don't have to go back to ten year-old bombings at Gary, Doctor. We had explosions in Paris ten days ago; only last year, one-third of London was wrecked. Prague has been blown out of the Band, twice, in the past twenty-five years. So long as information on the Old World's explosives is available, people will use it. What is more, they will use it against the Band, because the Band rules all the world that is worth ruling." He smiled broadly and gestured with both hands as much as to say, *That is what makes life exciting.*

"But this is not information of a military nature that Leonard has apparently taken." Thor's mind had wrapped itself around a thought and he could not leave it.

"Any scientific knowledge is military information," Gnurin snapped.

"We are not at war with the Northerners," Thor continued. "I don't see how—"

"You are not supposed to 'see how', Thor of the genetic rating Two-Two. Even though you are President of the City Board, you are merely Coordinator of Construction; you're not called on to exercise powers of scientific, social or political deduction!" Gnurin quivered with rising anger.

Thor prepared to defend himself, but before he could speak, Marshal Zachary cut in. "Recrimination does not settle an argument, Doctor Gnurin, and argument does not solve a problem." His eyes flashed a warning, and the little man withdrew into a sulky silence. "Before we call a meeting of the City Board." he went on, speaking to Thor, "I think you should know of some of the Eye Squad findings."

A frown of apprehension formed on

Thor's face, but he erased it quickly. "If there are Eye Squad reports on my son, why hasn't Elmer informed me? He is Coordinator of Eye Squad work for the Shining City."

Zachary framed his reply carefully. "On occasions, Thor, when affairs of the Band are involved, a few formalities of procedure are dispensed with. Since I happened to be on the scene, it was only natural that the local Eye Squad officers in possession of highly confidential information should give it to a marshal of the Band Police."

"They knew that Elmer One-Eight-One is on Thor's belt," Gnurin snapped. "They knew the traitor would not be exposed if those two handled the matter in secret."

"Let us remain objective." Zachary's warning to Gnurin was more emphatic than the last. "Only a few centimnutes ago—when I was on my way to Doctor Gnurin's laboratory, to be exact—a Captain of the Eye Squad handed me a spool which was made by our counter-espionage agent in the encampment of the Northerners at the Argonne Pit." He opened a portfolio and took out the small cylinder. "I have not yet had an opportunity to play it, and therefore I do not know if it incriminates or clears Leonard."

Gnurin bounced on his haunches. "If you had informed me you had it, we could have played it while we were waiting for Thor instead of dallying with this police toy!"

Zachary grinned broadly and gestured with his outspread hands. "What do our Social Engineers say about pleasurable dalliance?" He slipped the spool on a spindle on the wall and opened the control. "Our agent was able to get only part of the speeches, but I believe the meaning is clear. That is what the Eye Squad Captain informed me."

A MAN'S VOICE, which was not Leonard's, came forth. "*What do we gain by dealing with the Shining City? We trade the summer's toil to a*

whole village for a circular saw, and many times in the bargain we give our women—our fairest women—to those sterile creatures who call themselves scientists. . . .”

“Sterile?” Zachary arched an eyebrow. “My wife is giving birth to our tenth child!”

“I say,” the recorded speech continued. “let’s do without saws and live in log houses, like our fathers did, and their fathers before them!”

And keep our women for ourselves!” another man shouted.

“Let’s have none of this science stuff. I’m not saying that Leonard Larsen don’t mean well by us; but we been tricked so many times, we ought to be leery. How do we know this isn’t just another trick aimed to do us in, or to sell us into slavery? Our spies report that Leonard is supposed to go to Paris tomorrow to get some kind of honors. . . .”



Another voice, a resonant voice with laughter in it, cut in at this point. “Honors within the Band are but the corn on which we are fattened for the moral slaughter!”

“Leonard!” Thor exclaimed, the grayness of sorrow spreading over his face.

Zachary cut the control. “I believe our case is clear.”

“Quite clear.” Thor’s eyes were curtained with sagging flesh and his mouth was a straight, hard line.

Gnurin bounded to his feet. “We can send out a hovering car carrying the Unvalator to wipe out the entire camp at the Pit.”

“And when the word of this wanton destruction reaches your denizens, who will be left to perform your menial tasks?” Zachary asked. “Experience has shown we only create difficulties

when we use the methods of the ancients; somebody always escapes, then we have vengeance to deal with. Most troublesome.”

“Who are you to moralize?” Gnurin demanded. “You, who have incinerated whole towns as a disciplinary measure! You, who had liquid fire poured on fleeing mobs. You put poison in rivers, sowed disease germs over two continents! And you tell us to spare a handful of enemies at our gate!”

“What better way to learn?” Zachary spread his hands, palms upward.

Thor shuddered. He had heard rumors of warfare, more hideous than that of the ancients, which had raged among cities of science before he came to the Shining City; but nothing concerning it had been recorded on history spoils.

“Furthermore,” Zachary picked up the thread of his argument, “the Unvalator is a device designed for construction. If we use it as a weapon of warfare, is it not possible that denizens in the construction crews might not revolt, seize it and turn it against us? Let us put not the means of our own destruction in the hands of possible enemies, or we, ourselves, may be reduced to cosmic ash.”

“The denizens have a deep sense of justice,” Thor added.

“Ah, I have it!” Gnurin rocked on the balls of his feet. “Thor will volunteer to find his son and bring him back for trial!”

“Is that not the duty of the Eye Squad?”

Zachary placed a hand on Thor’s shoulder. “I believe the doctor has a point there. We must deal with these matters legally—give Leonard an opportunity to defend his actions before the Board.”

“If such a trial should take place,” Gnurin smacked his lipless mouth, “Thor would have to yield his seat—temporarily, of course.”

“Of course.” Zachary’s sarcasm was lost on the other.

Thor strode to a cabinet and pushed three buttons simultaneously to call

other members of the Board to the meeting room.

IN ADDITION to the Bulding and Research seats on the Board, there were Security, filled by Elmer One-Eight-One; Social, by Juno Sixty-Seven, a tall, angular woman of unfeminine appearance, and Economic, by a round, bald little man who wore correction lenses over his eyeballs. For a reason no one could ascertain he had chosen the name of Doctor Vivian, and he refused to allow use of his genetic rating in connection with his name. It was his duty to supervise the production and acquisition of food-stuffs for the city; he maintained laboratories which were separate from those of Gnurin.

As they filed into the Board Room the members, other than Thor and Gnurin, were under the impression the meeting had been called for the purpose of making last-minute preparations for the journey to Paris; for a few centiminutes, while Thor prepared his announcement, Zachary answered questions about transportation arrangements.

In accordance with custom, the Board meeting was to be carried on a 'compulsion' channel; that is, it would appear on all telescreens in the City, and all denizens not engaged in the operation of vital public utility dials were compelled to watch them. It was taught in all schools—from kindergartens to Specialty Colleges—that the governments of all cities within the Band were "democratic"; since it was forbidden to argue the meaning or words everyone accepted this myth.

Thor caught sight of his reflection in the testing mirror beside the reception disc. His face was ashen, and a wisp of graying blond hair stood out like a horn over one ear. He smoothed his hair, and on the pretext of clearing his throat behind his hand, he moistened his lips and bit some color back into them. Whenever he stood

before a reception disc, he appeared to grow in stature and his voice took on a resonance that was almost musical. He spoke caressingly, even if a little condescendingly, and his enunciation was careful so that the newest denizen might understand his words.

"The meeting will come to order," he announced. It was a command to all those who gathered before the telescreens as much as to those in the Board Room. His eyes travelled from one face to another. Elmer resented Zachary's presence and he slouched in a sulky pout; Juno was preoccupied with the social theories she hoped to have an opportunity to propound in Paris the next day. As Thor's glance fell on Doctor Vivian he recalled something Leonard had said about him: "A mass of yeast; if you'd stir him, he'd bubble." Gnurin licked his lipless mouth in anticipation.

"A very serious matter has come up, and at a most inopportune time," Thor began. "I know all of you of the Board are occupied with preparations for tomorrow's celebration; but I will have to ask you to give undivided attention to the problem before us. And let us approach it with complete objectivity, as true scientists. I well remember that statement of my esteemed predecessor with which he opened all Board meetings: '*The Old World was wrecked by ten parts subjectivity and one part fissionable material.*'"

He paused dramatically, then with an apprehensive glance at Gnurin, he called on Zachary to give the security report.

The Marshal rose, bowed to Elmer and mumbled, "With your permission, sir." He then gave the facts as he had previously outlined them.

A stunned hush fell over the room, and Thor again took the disc. His voice was grave, though he showed no signs of emotion in his bearing. "Fellow Board Members, I regret to say that, because of this unfortunate occurrence, I cannot accompany you to

Paris tomorrow; but I want the celebration to proceed as though nothing had happened. The honors I was to accept are, in fact, honors for the Building Department and the Shining City as a whole; the next in rank on the Board will accept them in my stead."

Doctor Gaurin made no effort to conceal his pleasure, but Thor held up his hand for silence. "I feel I can best serve my City and the Band by bringing this errant scientist, who happens to be my son, back to face trial. If Science is to triumph over superstition, ignorance and disorder, we must allow none of our cherished secrets to fall into the hands of people who do not accept our plan of life. Our justice must prevail; if my son has committed a crime against our society, he must be punished. It is my duty as a scientist of the Band and as a parent to bring him back to the Shining City. That is my proposal, is there any discussion?"

All members of the Board were on their feet, but Elmer was the first to reach the reception disc. "This is a simple matter for the Eye Squad, Mister President. I do not feel that Leonard's defection calls for more special attention than any other case. We have able counter-espionage agents among the Northerners, and it will be a simple matter to locate and apprehend the culprit."

"I disagree!" Juno bounded to the disc as though propelled by a spring mechanism. "We have here an example of parental subjectivity against which I have long campaigned. If we are to progress as a scientific nation we must put an end to family ties! Leonard One-Two-Two would not be a fugitive and a suspected traitor today if he had been trained scientifically. Our President's nobility comes a little late; punishment should be inflicted on father and son alike, for one is as guilty as the other!"

"Are we not being over-dramatic?" Doctor Vivian pushed up beside Juno. "The difference between our scientific

civilization and others which have perished ignobly is that we can profit by our mistakes. Let us not waste time on recrimination or costly trials and executions, but let us go forward in a truly scientific manner. Our Eye Squad has certain lethal equipment with which to deal with traitors. Send a good man, or two, after this criminal, deal with him on the spot and end the matter there."

"You forget one thing!" It was Gaurin who spoke. "Research scientists and apprentices must be taught the sanctity of secrecy. If making an example of Leonard One-Two-Two seems costly from a purely economic standpoint, we must realize that the eventual social gains will more than justify the time and effort spent on a trial. I propose that Thor Two-Two's plan be accepted."

Thor's face was a mask as he called for a vote on the proposal.

"Concur!" All were in agreement.

"So ordered. Meeting adjourned." Thor closed the connection on the reception disc and walked rapidly from the room. He was not sure how much longer he could retain his composure.



MARSHAL Zachary overtook him in the corridor. "Splendid, my dear President, splendid!" he panted. "You were magnificent! Objective to the last!" Then, in answer to a sidelong glance of suspicion from Thor, he added, "I will go with you to your quarters to assist you in preparing for the expedition."

Thor wanted to be alone, but he realized that, under the circumstances, it was impossible. Not until he delivered his son for trial—or resolved the matter in some other manner—would he be free from Eye Squad surveillance.

He and Zachary rode a low level belt through a strip that was called The Park, which was bright and fragrant with blooming fruit trees. Here the artificial spring sun shone warmly, and plants sprang to life in the prepared loam. Much of the food for the City was raised in the Parks, above which towered the glasteel buildings. Doctor Vivian continually harangued the agronomists and food chemists to speed up their food-production experiments to a point where it would no longer be necessary for the Shining City to trade with outlanders for food-stuffs; so far, the goal had not been reached.

Thor was not thinking of food-production, however. A shower of peach-bloom petals from an overhanging branch fell on the belt, and the sight brought back to his mind another such ride through an indoor Park in spring—his first trip though the City with Leonard. The boy was only ten, and had just been accepted for schooling in the city that was then called Chicago. They clung together, each trying to conceal his fright, and gazed in wonder at blooming trees that were not native to the Northland. At length the boy had spoken. "Father, there are no birds."

"I guess there is no need for birds, my son," Thor remembered saying.

Whereupon the boy had added thoughtfully, "Perhaps the birds do not choose to live in this great cage."

Marshal Zachary spoke, bringing Thor back to the present. "You may rely on me to look after your charming Anisse in Paris."

"She will not go without me!" Thor blurted out.

"Oh, but she will, my dear Thor; arrangements have already been made to welcome her."

"They were also made to welcome me; the plans will have to be changed."

"It has been a long time since Anisse was in Paris. Surely you would not want to deprive her of the visit to her home city."

"It's hardly proper," Thor parried, remembering her last words to him.

"As you should well know by this time, my dear Thor, the world of Science does not adhere to the rigid standards of your Northland."

There was a secret understanding of some sort between Zachary and Anisse, Thor decided as he watched them during the Social Hour. It did not come out in anything they said, but in the glances they exchanged as they talked of the Cultural Decline in the Twentieth Century. That was the topic of the day chosen by the Social Engineer, whose discourse had already begun when Thor and Zachary reached the apartment. Thor had difficulty concentrating on "the manifestation of mechanical prisms in musical scores," and he was relieved when the ordeal came to an end.

ANISSE rose as soon as the tele-screen went blank. "I may not see you in the morning, Thor," she said, brushing her cheek against his in a perfunctory caress. Her eyes evaded his. "Good rest, my dear."

He waited hungrily for a word of encouragement or sympathy on the expedition, but she spoke none. Instead she turned to Zachary with a smile that was warm and full of meaning. "I will see you in the official car, if not at the sky station, Marshal. Good rest."

Zachary bowed from the waist. "Good rest, Madame the President,



and may health be yours on the morrow." When she had gone he turned to Thor. "I hope it won't disturb you if I remain with you tonight. Mere formality, you know."

"A pleasure, indeed," Thor responded coolly. "You may take Leonard's

room; or, if you prefer, we will bring his pallet into my study."

"I'm afraid regulations require me to share your sleeping room with you."

Thor smiled at the marshal's tact in permitting himself to be watched.

"Women!" Zachary made conversation as he dialed Eye Squad headquarters. "We are drawn to them as a sky car to a gear lock, and yet it is good to be away from them at times. As soon as the Paris celebration is over tomorrow, so is my vacation from my wife. She has given birth again, as I believe I told you, and she will make life difficult for me if I do not attend the christening ceremony. A true daughter of old Syeria, my wife—fat, shrill-voiced, a tyrant in the harem, as ugly as all the sins of the world. You would be fascinated by her ugliness, Thor—one side of her face covered by a purple birth-blotch. But feminine, ah, how beautifully feminine! Soft limbs and yielding lips—what a woman, my wife!"

He completed the sentence after the face of the Control Guard appeared on the screen. The guard tried to suppress a smile, but Zachary winked at him mischievously. "At sixty-two I should settle down—no?"

The guard's stern face crackled with lines of laughter. "You called, sir?" Any lingering loyalty to Thor that might have slowed the guard's hand at the controls was overcome by the marshal's ebullience.

"First, and most important, send my dinner to Thor's apartment. Then, get me Transportation—and don't go away, I'll be wanting a lot of things."

Several times, Thor felt that his dam of self-control would give way as he and Zachary worked out the details of his trip. He could not eat the food sticks that were delivered to his wall slot, and watched Zachary bite into them, feeling a touch of revulsion.

"What the Shining City needs is an expert on flavor," the marshal commented as he picked crumbs from a wrapper. "In Prague we have paprika;

in Paris they use too much garlic flavor; London has its leeks; but the Shining City has nothing—nothing but tasteless and slimy gook."

"I believe Doctor Vivian is experimenting with flavors," Thor responded absently.

"So long as Vivian stays on the food vats, you'll have nothing but gook. A most unimaginative creature, but that is the curse of our scientific world—too little imagination, too little laughter! Why, stars above me, I seldom have anything to laugh at but my own jokes, and that gets tiresome."

Captain Renlow Sears was assigned to go with Thor on the search for Leonard, and Sears agreed to select an assistant. Elmer said that Sears had volunteered because he knew something of Leonard's habits. "Also," Elmer added in a tone he hoped would not carry to Thor, "Sears won't stand so much in awe of the President as other officers would. He had accompanied Leonard to his apartment on occasions and has seen the President in informal attire."

"Very good," Zachary pronounced, and directed his next call to the sky station storage room.

Thor would travel in a sun-battery powered hovering car, similar to the one Leonard had taken. These cars were used for research expeditions outside the Band, since they were small, light, and could execute landings and takeoffs on any terrain—although they were incapable of rising above the atmosphere or travelling faster than two hundred kilometers in a teléchron turn. The only weapons requisitioned for the trip were small carbon ray guns with a few rounds of reload capsules.

"Squad regulations," Zachary explained as Thor protested.

"Leonard will obey my command." Thor did not expect the marshal to believe him; in fact, he did not believe it himself. But he could not let himself regard Leonard as hostile to the authority of the Band. "There must

be some explanation," he went on, hardly aware that he had spoken.

Zachary smiled at him with something akin to sympathy. "We must get some sleep," he said, cutting all controls.



THOR'S CAR was scheduled to launch ahead of the official car for Paris, but when he and Zachary reached the sky station it was ablaze with red gowned women. They all looked much alike as they fluttered around, talking in knots of three and four; their combined voices reminded Thor of the cawing of crows in a field of freshly planted corn. Eagerly he looked for Anisse—there were twenty women who were stick-slender with a billow of artificial yellow hair falling over their shoulders. A profile that was like hers turned out to belong on another face; another woman moved with her quick grace, and a third affected the same nervous toss of the head. At last he saw her on the other side of the great room, but by the time he reached the spot she was gone.

"Captain Sears and his assistant have your car loaded," Zachary announced as he caught a signal from the station guard.

Thor turned with some relief to follow the marshal. Elmer One-Eight-One stood beside the car speaking to the Eye Squad Captain.

"You will not leave the car unguarded at any time. If the Northerners attempt to seize it, destroy it and make your way back as best you can. Remember, Captain Sears, you are in charge of the expedition." The marshal's eyes avoided Thor's.

Sears touched his cap in a salute and assisted Thor into the cabin. The assistant followed and took the seat beside Thor. Thor's eyes sought Zachary's for an explanation of the Captain's unprecedented authority, but already the rotor was whirring. The

marshal's face; as the hovering car rose upward on the launching platform he fancied he saw Zachary's smile following them. It followed them into the air and stretched across the entire sky above the Shining City. It was a smile without the malice of Gnurin's fleshless grin, or the chill of Anisse's smirk; Thor had a feeling that Zachary was the only person in the Band who wished him to return. This slight reassurance kindled a warmth in him for the city that was diminishing below the car. It appeared a fragile thing, that glasteel band that clung to the curving shore of Lake Michigan, a glittering toy resting on a pad of earth brown and water blue.

Thor watched the toy city grow smaller until the car passed over the Argonne Pit, when the view was obscured by flames and curling smoke. He shuddered slightly, thinking of the scenes of horrible destruction that had taken place in the great wars which had left such scars as the volcanic crevice below them. He could evoke no feeling for the folly-ridden humans who had invited their own incineration; he cared nothing about the demolition of the ancient stone and rubbish piles that were the cities, but he resented the red-raw wounds in the earth's surface, such as the Argonne Pit and others he had seen in the European continent.

Captain Sears, who operated the car, circled the Pit several times in order to get an opportunity to search all the surrounding fields for the hovering car Leonard had taken.

"He is not there," Thor pronounced after the fourth turn.

"Evidently he has gone—but where?" The captain held the car in a hovering position awaiting Thor's suggestion as to course.

"He has done considerable work at the site of the old Colorado shale plant. Perhaps he has gone there." Thor endeavored to convince himself that Leonard's departure from the

Shining City was along the line of duty.

Captain Sears, a tight-lipped, square-jawed veteran of the Eye Squad, turned to fix Thor with a dispassionate stare. "Would it not be your suggestion, sir, that we search the site of the shale plant *after* we have exhausted other possibilities?"

"I suppose so." Thor settled back in his seat. "Your guess is as good as mine, Captain."

"Headquarters may have a suggestion." Sears cut in the outlet grille in the ceiling of the cabin and adjusted the dial to the Eye Squad wave band.

THE CABIN of the car was somewhat crowded with the three men, their food supplies, medical aid equipment, heavy coats for the Northern cold and their weapons. They carried food for ten days, since they did not know how far they would have to go in search of Leonard. Thor and the assistant, Erik Forty-Four, sat behind Captain Sears, who handled all the controls alone. Erik was a youth of not more than twenty-one or twenty-two; Thor guessed, from the reddish-blond hair that was visible below the band of his uniform cap, that he was a descendant of some branch of Northerners. He sat stiffly erect in his seat, apparently uncertain how to conduct himself in the presence of the President of the Shining City Board.

Thor, in turn, was ill at ease, knowing that he was virtually a prisoner. It was an Eye Squad axiom that until he had proven himself innocent each suspect or associate with a suspect was to be regarded as guilty. One of the refinements which Elmer One-Eight-One of the Board had added to Eye Squad investigation procedure was the plan for providing suspects with "*tasks of test.*" Now that Thor had time to reflect on the matter, he realized that he had been maneuvered into a task of test. He sought escape from the unpleasant thoughts that continued to

boil in his mind, and turned his attention to his companions.

"Headquarters reports that Leonard left the Pit yesterday afternoon; he loaded Northerners into his car and they travelled in a northeasterly direction from the Pit. They are twenty turns of the telechron ahead of us, but it is suggested we try the Ten Cities on the eastern shore of the lake."

It was no use; he could not escape. Thor remained silent. Once they were over the blue monotony of the lake the silence in the cabin became oppressive. Sears tuned in the celebration in Paris, but shut it off before long. The broadcast was the formal greetings of arrivals at the Paris sky station. Genetic rating numbers were used instead of surnames, and Thor caught himself smiling at what Leonard would probably say: "*Sounds like a kindergarten counting lesson!*"

Leonard had left the Ten Cities by the time they arrived. Reports to the Shining City Eye Squad headquarters from espionage agents in that area were to the effect that he had landed, dropped the men he carried with him and picked up three "agitators" of that region. The agents making the report from the Ten Cities were more thorough than those stationed at the Argonne Pit, and the report was detailed and exact—although it had not been possible to make a spool recording of everything that had taken place. The men Leonard left at the Ten Cities were expert javelin-throwers as well as competent organizers. Apparently, the report went on, it was his aim to coordinate forces of various settlements around the lake which were antagonistic to the Shining City. This was the only explanation the Eye Squad could offer for the exchange of leaders.

"People from a kilometer in every direction ran to the hovering car when it landed," the agent reported. "Some thought it was a kind of heavenly body come to earth; others thought it was

an invasion from the Shining City, and they were about to attack when Leonard halted them by shouting through an amplifier: *'I am Leonard Larsen, a Northerner. I have come to bring you a plan to get some of the good things from the Shining City without selling your sons and your daughters into slavery!'*"

The report ended with that quotation and Sears cut the control. "If I may comment, sir," the captain said, "that speech attributed to Leonard is not characteristic of him. I have accompanied him on many expeditions and I have never heard him say anything that was not—how shall I put it?—kind of pointed with bitter humor. He didn't make declarations straight, that way."

Thor regarded the Eye Squad captain in a new light, and he let down some of the barriers of his reserve. "No, it doesn't sound like anything Leonard would say," he agreed; "Leonard's wit was somewhat mordant; he was frequently accused of 'spouting epigrams'."

"That's it, sir!" Sears responded warmly.

"I never heard him say anything," Erik put in, speaking for the first time on the journey; "but one time I was on duty in the sky station when he came in from someplace. I seen him make a face at the outlet grille when Doctor Gnurin was speaking. It was so funny I had to laugh, but of course I hid my face and pretended I did not see him."

"He meant nothing disrespectful, I'm sure," Sears added quickly.

"Of course not," Thor agreed with a relieved sigh. "Just boyish. I guess I forced him to study too hard when he was young and his playfulness came out later."



Superior City, and without making a landing at the Ten Cities Sears set his direction to the northwest. Again they were over the monotony of water, and Thor suggested that Sears tune in the Paris celebration.

The roar of applause came through the grille before an image appeared on the screen and a voice was saying, "...calls for a report from you, Doctor One-One-Seven, on the Invalator and the Unvalator."

Erik groaned. "Gnurin again!"

"A correction, if you please!" The image of Gnurin appeared, standing stiffly erect. "The *Unvalator* should always be mentioned first, since it was the first to be invented. Also, this device must complete certain operations before the *Invalator* can function.

"I suppose by this time," his tone indicated that he had launched into his prepared speech, "that everyone within the Band knows that my Department of Research in the Shining City developed these scientific marvels. Now a word about the principles on which they operate—and who is better qualified than I, who have spent years in consultation with my inventors, poring over these charts."

He waved a sheaf of parchments. "First, the *Unvalator*. It operates like this: These multiple sonic drums—" He held a chart before the reception disc and pointed with a bony finger. "—record the vibratory pattern of any mass to which the reception slate is exposed—buildings or other installations, an earth formation—anything, and in less than one-tenth of a centisecond counter-vibrations are set up in these drums here..." He traced his finger down the chart. "These counter-vibrations will instantly disintegrate everything to which the slate has been exposed. An *Unvalator* the size of the experimental model in the Shining City could be mounted in a large hovering car and transported to a field of battle, if need be, and in the time it

EYE SQUAD headquarters decided Leonard's next destination was

would require for the car to pass over the area, everything within a radius of a kilometer square would be reduced to cosmic ash!" He lowered the chart exposing a ghoulish grin to the disc.

Applause again swelled and he acknowledged it by bowing first to the right then to the left; then he stepped to one side and bowed to someone apparently in the wings of the Coliseum stage. Thor was familiar with the building in which the ceremonies were to take place and his imagination filled in details that were not recorded in the reception disc.

The doctor's grin faded and he held up his hand for silence. "Warfare is costly," he announced in round, oratorical tones. "I repeat, warfare is costly, and we scientists of the Band hope to avoid it forevermore! And we will, so long as we keep all science within the Band. We must ruthlessly put down all attempts to pass the smallest secret of our science to the primitive hordes that swarm at our gates. Science is for the scientists and those who accept our leadership!" He barked these words defiantly, as though challenging an enemy.

"Enough!" Sears cut the control and Gnurin's livid face sputtered to grayness.

"Quite enough!" Thor was grave; "he said many things that should not have been said."

"He usually does," Erik said solemnly, apparently unaware that criticism of a Board member by one of the lower rank was forbidden.

Sears shot a warning glance over his shoulder, but Thor laughed. "You're very right, Erik!" The tension was re-

lieved, and the two Eye Squad officers laughed with Thor.

DESPITE the grimness of their errand, Thor was deriving considerable pleasure from the company of these men. While the grille was silent they talked as men who are equals, and Thor told them something of life in the Northland, of the industry and simple pleasures of people who lived without benefit of science.

Erik revealed that he had come from the region of the Ten Cities. Like Thor, he had brought a crew of denizens to the Shining City, had been rewarded with a position on the Eye Squad. He, too, had fished through a hole in the ice when he was a boy, had danced square dances and played a catgut fiddle.

At length Sears interrupted. "The public ceremony in Paris will soon come to an end," he said, consulting the telechron on his arm. "Should we tune in for the last of it?"

"By all means!" Thor straightened, suddenly remembering his position.

The figure of a Master of Ceremonies appeared on the screen. "And now, men and women of Science, we have a still greater treat in store for us. Never before in the history of the Band have so many of our great gathered together, and never before has the world of Science enjoyed such an intellectual feast. We have heard from Doctor One-One-Seven of the Shining City of our greatest scientific achievement—the invention of the all-devouring Unvalator and of the miniature Sun Converter, the Invalator. While other inventions described here today are noteworthy, these twin building apparati far overshadow everything else. Now to make the summation on these inventions, I want to present a scientist to whom the Band owes everything. Without him there would have been no Band of scientific cities, there probably would have been no Science, as we know it today. It was his great foresight, his organisational genius, his



tireless effort at a time when the cities of science were contending bitterly one against the other, that made it possible for us to meet here today in peace. But he has worked so unobtrusively that few of us have heard his name, and none but his intimates have seen his face. His modesty exceeds his genius, yet because of the great significance of this occasion, he has consented to come forth. He will speak to you now from behind a shielding screen. May I present—Doctor Eli Julian of Prague!”

The applause that followed lasted during the time the fleur-de-lis shielding screen was moved close to the reception disc. There was a moment of confusion and the telescreen was cluttered with attendants of the great man, among whom was a woman who apparently had been speaking with him. Her dress was the official red, and her hair the color of a flame-tip. Though her face was on the screen but a centi-second, it remained long enough for Thor to recognize Anisse.

At first he tried to tell himself he had been mistaken, but he knew he was not. Anisse was among the “intimates” permitted to see the face of this mysterious manipulator of Band affairs. *How intimate?* Thor asked himself. A parade of long-suppressed thoughts flashed through his mind: the way her eye slid aside when she responded to his caresses, an impatient toss of her head while he was talking, a suggestion about City policy that was given with the ring of an ultimatum. Was it possible that Anisse had been in league with Doctor Julian all the time he had shared her pallet? An observation of Leonard’s came to his mind. *“Women of the Band are motivated either by passion or politics—generally politics.”*

Doctor Julian spoke in a deep, though somewhat nasal voice. It was a well-modulated voice, trained for public speaking, and it had the resonance of great energy in it. No accent or colloquial expression gave a hint of

the man’s geographical origin; Thor wondered about his physical appearance, whether he was tall and fair, round and ruddy or squat and dark. Thor tried to picture him, but his thoughts were colored by jealousy. Whether the speech was poetic or prosaic he would never know. Julian said something about the Unvalator and the Invalator and the Shining City, and vaguely Thor realized that the great man had paid tribute to the work he had done, though he was sure the name of Thor Two-Two had not been mentioned. *Perhaps*, he thought bitterly, *Julian implies praise for Anisse’s accomplishment.*

“We are coming to Superior City, sir.” Captain Sears spoke and Thor became aware that Doctor Julian’s speech had ended; the blare of martial music came through the grille.



IT WAS growing dark, and the lights of the town twinkled like a small constellation at the edge of the steely gray of the lake below them. “I think you’ll find a suitable landing spot near the south edge of town,” Thor said.

Gone was the sense of camaraderie which had developed among the three men in the cabin, and Thor felt sure that the others had noticed his reaction to the appearance of Anisse. Had Sears recognized her? Thor fervently hoped not. Although Leonard’s behavior had grieved him deeply, he was more chagrined over his discovery of Anisse’s betrayal; at the moment he was almost glad he had a sorrow on which to concentrate.

Sears maneuvered the hovering car down in a small, freshly-plowed field; as soon as the door was opened Thor

examined the ground to see if they had broken the young sprouts of plants. Sears laughed. "Leonard used to say it was better to risk the wrath of the gods by landing on a rough spot, rather than the wrath of a farmer by landing in his field!"

"Leonard loves growing things, and people who tend them," Thor sighed. A sadness had settled over him, a sadness he could not analyze.

After they had stretched and made themselves comfortable, they opened packages of food and ate in silence. All around lay the forest, great trees that sheltered the small, cultivated plots and the scattered buildings. In the twilight, low mountains looked like the furred backs of sleeping green cats; Thor's mind went back to his boyhood fancies about those mountains and the lake that was always cold. He had imagined the mountains were enormous cat-creatures that had slept for over two hundred years, and that chill-blooded reptilian monsters slumbered in the lake. He had believed that the destruction at the end of the Twentieth Century had been the work of these terrifying creatures, that they would again rouse to spread death and horror if human beings tampered too much with Nature. Even now, though he accepted Science's interpretations of the wars that had wiped out the old world, he found himself trembling at the thought of bringing a sun-powered car into the presence of those sleeping monsters.

Erik, too, appeared to be wrapped in strange thought, and listening for something. Sears shot a questioning glance at the boy, who grinned apologetically. "Can't help it; when I get out in the country this time of year I always listen for cicadas."

"It isn't time for cicadas." Sears frowned sternly, and it occurred to Thor that it was strange an Eye Squad officer from the Shining City would know about things of the country. He concluded that Sears had

learned much from Leonard on their trips together.

Sears gave Erik instructions about guarding the car. Handing the youth a carbon ray gun, he said, "Don't shoot except to protect your life. If Northerners try to attack you, take the car off the ground and hover around the location. Flash the blue signal light so we can find you. Remember, it will be better to run some risk rather than to antagonize these people; we are far outnumbered, and there may have been some weapons in the car Leonard took."

Erik's "Yes, sir," was not very forceful, and Thor felt a sudden wave of pity for the young officer on his first important assignment. "There won't be any trouble," he assured the boy. "This is my home; these are my people. They will not harm you."

"Shall we go, sir? It's growing dark very rapidly." Sears, too, showed signs of uneasiness, though he was more adept at concealing it.

THEY STEPPED out of the car, put on their uniform great-coats and set out for the town, half a kilometer distant. Sears walked cautiously on the balls of his feet, and glanced with apprehension at the shrubbery, which was just taking leaf.

It passed through Thor's mind that their energy guns, intended for use at close range within the City, could not protect them against a shower of javelins hurled from ambush. If they were attacked they could not hope to escape; however, the excitement that pounded in his veins was not altogether that of fear.

The ozone of evergreens was in the crisp, cool air, and as they came nearer to the cluster of whitewashed houses the smell of woodsmoke and frying fish came out to greet them, and off in the distance they could hear the shouts of children at play. They were healthy, happy sounds, unlike the mechanized rumble of the Shining City.

Thor felt a swell of pride as they trod on the plank walks that led into the little city. His effort in getting saws for the Northerners had made those walks possible, as well as the trim frame buildings along the streets. Something akin to a sense of guilt crept into his thoughts as he dwelt on this past, but quickly his gyroscopic rationalization righted his ego. He had done the only thing possible by going to the Shining City and taking Leonard with him. Had not the great Doctor Julian—and here another thought rankled—recognized his work, if not him, when he praised accomplishments with the Unvalator and Invalator?

His reverie was interrupted when a door of a nearby cottage flew open and a yellow light streaked out across the walk. A woman threw out a pan of slop, and a dog ran out, barking. They were discovered.

The Eye Squad Captain stiffened and made ready his weapon.

"Let me do the talking," Thor said.

Before he could speak, however, the woman called out to the dog. "What is it, Pete? Who's there?" She was a young woman, ample of figure with strong, round arms and a determined chin that thrust out as she turned her profile to call to someone indoors. "Come here, Axel. It's strangers."

The dog continued to bark, though he made no attempt to attack. Thor pushed aside the gun which Sears levelled at the animal. "Which is the home of Irenka Larsen?" he called to the young woman.

She raised her hand to her brow and peered into the darkness. "Hush, Pete, be quiet!" The dog ceased barking. "Who wants my mother?"

A huge man towered beside her in the doorway. "Get inside, Helga." Roughly he pushed her back into the room, then he took three great strides out to where Thor and the captain stood. "I never seen you before; who are you? What do you want?"

"We're from—from—" So that was

Helga, the youngest, the little girl with hair like spun moonbeams and eyes the color of deep ice. A lump swelled in Thor's throat, choking off his voice; he forgot he was President of the Board of the Shining City. He wanted to rush past the glowering man and sweep the woman into an embrace, but a warning from the Eye Squad captain restrained him. "We've come to see Irenka Larsen on business," he added weakly.

"Two squares down, turn left one square. You can't miss it, a two story white house on the corner. With six sons-in-law to support her, the old woman gets the best!"

The dog barked again and other dogs took up the barking; then doors and window shutters along the street opened and the openings filled with the curious faces of men and women and the tousled white hair of fair children. They were not unfriendly faces, but Thor became conscious of the uniforms he and Captain Sears wore. By now, people along the street knew that two men from the Shining City were on their way to Irenka Larsen's house. Shadowy figures darted across garden plots, and Thor imagined he saw them come from the large house that stood out white against the backdrop of mountain darkness.

"We'll either be welcomed, or—" Thor did not finish the sentence because a woman running toward them blocked their way.

SHE WAS dressed in the black clothes of mourning, with a black headshawl fastened tightly at her throat so that her long and rather homely face appeared to swim bodiless in the gloom. Thor's first thought was that he was staring at his own reflection.

The woman scrutinized him closely, her eyes burning with emotion. "Father!" It was an announcement, not a cry.

Thor fumbled in his memory, trying to recall the faces of his daughters.

"It's Irenie," she went on. "A widow, thanks to the sawmills you brought to Superior City. It's no use seeing Mother; she knows nothing about Leonard—and that's who you came to see, I know. Go back to the Shining City, Father, back to that harlot in the red dress. We don't want you here!" Her voice rose to a shrill that was almost hysterical.

"Irenie!" Thor reached out to touch her but she evaded him. "I must talk to Leonard; it's the only way!"

"Talk to the wind!" she spat. "You won't find Leonard!"

"Come, Captain." Thor stepped off the walk and waded through the rutted mud of the street toward the tall house.

Light streaked through the shutters of the house that was Irenka's; as Thor approached it he remembered the cottage he had built for her on that site. Leonard and the seven girls had been born in it. He remembered the smell of the sweet peas that had been planted in neat rows beside the walk, the violets that had bloomed in the shelter of the garden wall, the first onions of spring, the water, cool and fresh from the well back of the house, and the shouts of laughter of his children at play. He stumbled on the steps and Captain Sears caught his arm.

"I'll wait for you at the car, sir." The Eye Squad Captain saluted and turned away, leaving Thor to enter the house alone.

He pushed open the door that stood ajar. It creaked on crude hinges, and he noted that the construction was not so good as in the tidy cottage he had built to Irenka. The odor of cabbage soup was strong in the cavernous hallway, and it guided him to a lighted room in the back of the house.

"Is that you, Irenie? Supper's ready." A large fair-skinned woman stood over the brick stove in the corner of the kitchen holding a wooden ladle. As she turned, Thor saw that his former wife's face and figure were

more rounded and her eyes were less blue than when he had last seen her; but there was little gray in the pale gold of her hair, and she still radiated the same vibrant strength that had first attracted him.

She stared, eyes wide, and the ladle fell from her hand.

Thor felt his knees grow weak, but he fought for self-control. He picked up the ladle, wiped it on the skirt of his coat and dipped into the steaming soup pot. "What we need in the Shining City, Irenka," he said putting the ladle to his lips, "is an expert on flavor. All we get to eat is gook, tasteless and slimy gook." He blew on the soup, then sipped it from the ladle. "This tastes like food!"

Irenka backed away from him, still staring in disbelief. "You wouldn't dare, Thor Larsen! You wouldn't dare come home after all these years, and walk right into my kitchen! Why, your sons-in-law will thrash you, take you out to the whipping post and thrash you with leather lashes, like they do the men that desert their families!"

THOUGH he was trembling with excitement, Thor cast aside his coat and lifted the lid of another pot that simmered on the stove. "Ah, burnt wheat-coffee! It's been years since I've had a cup of coffee, Irenka."

"You're the President of the Shining City, and you just walk into my kitchen and start talking to me about soup and coffee!" She lifted her apron to wipe away tears that ran down her cheeks.

"I'm hungry, Irenka; let's eat supper."

"Irenie isn't home yet. She lives with me now—since her man was killed—she and Jamie, but he's out on a fishing boat." Irenka turned to a cupboard and took down three pottery bowls and put them on the table that stood in the center of the room.

"I've got a tablecloth for company, but it's dirty."

"You've had company?" He got wooden spoons from the cupboard and laid them beside the bowls.

"There's cups in the dishpan; I'll dry them. I can't imagine what's keeping Irenie. She knew supper was ready."

"Leonard's been here, drinking coffee." He took the towel from her hand, wiped the cups and set them on the table.

Irenka's shoulders tensed and she busied herself at the stove, ladling soup into the bowls. "He was here—and gone. Just for dinner he stayed, then coffee in the afternoon. He had one of them little talking things that he wore like a belt around his waist, and kept listening to it. A little while ago he got some kind of warning on it. He kissed me and said he couldn't stay for supper. Irenie went with him, but she wouldn't go in that flying car with him. Maybe I ought not to tell you this, but it's kind of good having somebody to talk to. Leonard didn't talk much to me—only to Irenie and to some of the young men Jamie knows. They were in the sitting-room while I was out here in the back." She broke chunks from a loaf of bread and laid them on the table.

Thoughtfully, Thor crumbled bread into a bowl of soup. "Leonard is gone? Where?"

Before Irenka replied she bowed her head and mumbled a short prayer of grace. "I don't know, Thor. I was so excited, him coming home after all these years, and I was hurrying around trying to make things nice for him. I was in there changing the blankets on Jamie's bed when he said he had to go. He's not in trouble in the Shining City is he, Thor?"

"Jamie?" Thor sipped the black brew that was called coffee, and pretended not to hear Irenka's question. "Why he wasn't born yet when I—when I went to Shining City!" He wondered what Anisse would have said

had she known that he had a grown grandson.

Irenka studied his face for twenty heart-beats before she spoke. "You have ways of staying young in the Shining City?"

Thor knew that Leonard had told her of Anisse. The vision of the woman in red beside Doctor Julian's screen rose up in his mind, and his appetite left him. He laid down his spoon. "There are things, Irenka, that make one grow old very fast in the cities of the Band."

"What's the 'Band'?"

Thor did not have the opportunity to reply to her question. There was a commotion in the hallway—a barking dog, a shriek that was Irenie's, and heavy footsteps. Captain Sears, followed by Irenie burst into the kitchen. "The car, sir! It's been stolen! And Erik with it, abducted! There was a struggle... I came right back here, sir."

"He's lying!" Irenie cried. "It's a made up story to blacken Leonard!"

"The woman's insane!" Sears' eyes flashed anger. "You must come with me sir, immediately!" He took up Thor's coat and held it for him.

"They traded flying cars! I heard the whole thing; Leonard didn't do anything wrong!" Irenie went on.

"Where is Leonard now?" Thor demanded.

"He flew away."

"He's gone, sir. I got there too late to stop him!"

"You liar!"

"Come, sir. He left the other car in the field. It may be destroyed if we don't hurry!" Sears laid hold of Thor's arm and pulled him toward the doorway.

Thor glanced back at Irenka. She had detached herself from the scene and was calmly refilling the coffee pot. She did not look up as he left.

ON THE WAY back to the field Thor endeavored to find out

what had taken place, but Sears replied only, "We must hurry, sir!" and set the pace so fast that talk was impossible.

A group of twenty or more youths surrounded the hovering car that stood on the field near where the other car had been; but they fell away as Captain Sears drew his gun and waved it threateningly. Some of them called out mild insults, but compared to Irenie's vehemence the demonstration was dissipated. Recalling it later, Thor was somewhat puzzled, but decided that the group had been drawn to the scene by curiosity only. The other car had disappeared.

Sears pulled Thor into the car, slammed the door and lifted it immediately. It had been stripped of all communication devices, the extra sun-battery and all weapons. Thor made several attempts to learn exactly what had taken place on the field, but Sears was uncommunicative; he had reached the scene too late to assist Erik, he insisted. The car was already in the air, he said, and he had not used his gun on the crowd for fear the Northerners would destroy the car Leonard had left—which would leave them at the mercy of the Northerners. Instead, he ran back to get Thor, and Irenie had followed him.

He showed signs of considerable strain and Thor did not press him further. For one thing, in order to find their way back to the Shining City it was necessary to follow the shoreline of the lakes, but not to allow the car to drift over water because the battery might become exhausted at any time. When Thor came to a full realization of their predicament he relieved Sears at the controls; but due to his lack of skill, the car drifted, rocked and oscillated.

In less than a turn of the telechron, Sears rose impatiently from his improvised pallet of coats and took the controls from Thor. "We'll probably drift down into the Argonne Pit," he said sourly.

"The hot air will cause us to drift in the opposite direction," Thor pointed out.

"We'll drown in the lake, then."

"Not necessarily." Thor did not feel the cheer he tried to put into his voice. "These cars are buoyant; we'd float for days if we kept the cabin sealed."

"What would we breathe? Air-conditioning stops when the battery goes out."

"A searching party would undoubtedly find us before—anything happened."

"Without a broadcast from us how would they know where to search—even if anyone wanted to look for us?"

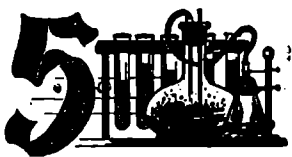
"The Eye Squad—the Board. They always send out searching cars when a scientist gets lost, and we are a little more important..."

"To whom?" Sears refused to shake his morose mood. "As Leonard used to say, *'The more important you are, the more people want your ash in an oven.'*"

"I suppose that's true," Thor sighed. The reference to Leonard plunged him into gloom deeper than that of Sears. He was now convinced that his son had deserted the Shining City; the evidence was overwhelmingly strong that Leonard had stolen valuable secrets, as well as property from the Shining City, for use by the Northerners—a capital crime. Also, abduction of an Eye Squad officer—if such it was—would call for the death penalty. By now Thor realized that he could not excuse Leonard's acts as boyish pranks or even as temporary unbalance. His son was motivated by lofty ideals—of that Thor was certain—but exactly what were these ideals that caused him to risk his reputation, his life, his father's position and the lives of his people in the Northland? Perhaps he wanted to put over some scientific point, some theory Gnurin would not accept, and had taken this means to bring the matter before the Board in a dramatic manner.

This might account for his theft of communication equipment; he had to take the other car in order to obtain the fresh batteries and additional supplies. And he had to take Erik with the car. Or, perhaps he had abducted the Eye Squad officer in order to gain a bargaining point. Thor was not satisfied with his attempts to rationalize Leonard's actions, but he could not bring himself to regard his son as a willful wrongdoer.

What could he say to the Board in his report? How could he present the facts in a light that would not be too unfavorable to Leonard? Most important, there must be no conflict between his presentation of facts and that of Sears'. Sears' testimony would clear Thor of all blame in the matter, and his, in turn would clear Sears. That is, if he did not mention Irene's hysterical outburst. He tried to find a way to bring up the subject of testimony to Sears, but the officer's clamped jaws and taciturn frown discouraged conversation. They rode in silence for almost a turn of the telechron.



WHEN THEY came in view of the sky glow over the Shining City, which rose like a huge and misty moon before them, Sears, relaxed somewhat, but not until they were on the landing platform did he unclamp his set jaws. "The worst is ahead of us." A new anxiety furrowed his brow, and there was something of a plea in his eyes as he turned to Thor. "Explanations will be—most difficult, sir, but for your protection I am going to report that we were together the entire time in Superior City."

"I believe that is right, Captain." Thor chose to manipulate his memory rather than his veracity. "We landed in a field near town, went to the home of my former wife, where Leonard was most apt to be, leaving Erik Four-Four to guard the car. Leonard was not in the house; we heard a commotion in the direction of the field and we ran back, only to see our car in the air. How many men would you say we could see in the car through the viewing windows, Captain?"

"Five or six," Sears replied in a matter-of-fact tone, "among them Leonard and Erik. This stripped car was in the field nearby; we made a run for it and got in before the Northerners attacked—didn't use our guns on them for fear they would destroy the car."

"We came direct to the Shining City by the shortest possible route because we had only the battery that powered the car and we didn't know how nearly exhausted it was."

While they rehearsed their recital the landing platform descended into the sky station. Thor had barely finished speaking when the car door was pulled open violently from the outside and the nozzle of a gun appeared in the opening.

"Unscheduled flight, unannounced landing!" a voice behind the gun barked. "Alight and give an accounting."

It was a full turn of the telechron before the Eye Squad officers at the sky station released them. It was apparent from the type of questions asked that they had been specially alerted to watch for Sears and Thor. Apparently, espionage reports on the incident at Superior City, had come in. Thor was sure the reports did not agree exactly with his and Sears' story, but it was also apparent the discrepancy was not great enough to cause particular concern at Eye Squad headquarters; the lieutenant in charge authorized the dismissal of Sears and Thor without consulting Elmer One-Eight-One.

Although Thor was numb with fatigue when he and Sears passed through the sky station, he noticed that the official car from Paris was in its stall. Had Anisse returned with the others? His heart beat with wild hope, even though he knew that she planned a stay in Paris.

At the station entrance Sears saluted wearily. "I assume my assignment to guard you is at an end, sir. Good rest."

Thor made his way through the sleeping city, the only passenger on belt cars and elevators. His footsteps echoed in the long, silent corridors; his own distorted reflection in glasteel was his only companion in the waiting room of the third level Ten North transfer station where he changed to the local stop belt car that served his apartment building. His apartment was tomb-silent. Leonard was gone; Anisse was gone. He wandered through the bare, cold rooms that he had shared with them searching for something, either of them might have left behind—a memento, a discarded garment or even a crumpled container. There was nothing; the cleaning attendant had removed everything that was reminiscent of both of them—even the fragrance of bath oil Thor had often noticed on Anisse's sleeping pallet. The pain of loneliness pressed in on him but he could find no relief. At length he bathed, put on his night robe and lay down on his pallet. The empty dark pressed in on him and a dull pain thudded in his chest. It was as though a band had been drawn tightly around it, compressing his lungs; he was not sure whether or not he slept.

"*Awaken, men of Science.*" A strange voice filled the room, a woman's voice, rather pleasant, but too calculatingly cheerful. Frightened, Thor sat up on his pallet and looked around expecting to find a new companion. The voice continued, and he ascertained that it came through the outlet grille. "*It is the hour of seven, sun time, and the day dawns, this one*

hundred thirty-sixth day of the first glorious year of Science. You of the Shining City are being awakened to your tasks by the means that is used in the mother city of Prague. . ."

Thor scrambled off his pallet and went in to the shower stall to shut out the forced cheer of the female voice.

"*. . . mother city of Prague. . .*" The phrase brought to his mind a fleur-de-lis pattern and a flash of red beside it—Doctor Julian. So, Doctor Julian's city becomes 'the mother city' of the Band! he thought bitterly. The dull pain in his chest sharpened.

WHEN HE emerged from the shower his communication cabinet was buzzing insistently. He opened the control and the frightened face of Elmer One-Eight-One sprang to life in front of him. "Something terrible has happened, Thor! The third level, ten north transfer station, blown up, shattered! Two guards on duty were killed, as well as a hundred, maybe two hundred denizens, on their way to work!"

"Why," Thor stammered, trying to collect his thoughts. "I came through there not more than two turns ago! It was deserted, not even a guard!"

Doctor Gnurin's angry face filled another segment of the screen. "Why didn't you report to One-Eight-One upon your arrival, Thor? Where is Captain Sears? Why did you dismiss him? How do you explain the fact that it was *your* transfer station that was wrecked?" He directed the next question to Elmer's image. "Why did you call Thor before you called me, the President of the Board?"

"I was so excited I guess I forgot," Elmer answered contritely.

"A few denizens more important than *procedure*? You heard what Doctor Julian said yesterday about the importance of correct procedure if we're to synchronize in the Band!"

"The Band isn't going to mop up that mess on the third level, Gnurin," Elmer retorted with sullen resentment. "The Building Coordinator's got to get

an emergency crew there with the Unvalator to clear out the wreckage, and the Invalator to rebuild it. I've got an investigation to conduct, traffic to re-route..."

"Not until we've had a meeting, One-Eight-One! The Board has to find out why Leonard One-Two-Two was not brought back to the Shining City, and why—"

"That's got nothing to do with the emergency!" Elmer's face was redder than Gnurin's now. "It's up to the Police Coordinator and the Building Coordinator—me and Thor. Hold your meeting with Juno and Vivian; we've got work to do. Meet me at the scene of the accident, Thor." With that Elmer cut out.

"Accident it is now!" Gnurin shrieked. "Don't cut me out until you've answered a few questions, Thor Two-Two."

"Ask Juno and Vivian; I've got bodies to remove." Thor closed the control and turned away.

"I can bypass your cutout! Come back here!" Gnurin shouted from the screen.

"Talk to the walls, doctor," Thor shot back as he hurried from the room.

Thor had seen the aftermath of many construction accidents—some in which entire crews of denizens had been mangled—but he had never beheld such gruesome carnage as confronted him at the wrecked belt station. Torn parts of human beings, oozing black blood, lay scattered thickly over all the floor that remained in the station, some of them straggling into the great hole in the center of the room. Groans and cries came up through the opening; here and there a living person made an animal effort to extricate himself from the mass of death. No rescue operations had been undertaken because of the unsafe condition of the structure. Supporting pillars had been broken, and the ceiling sagged threateningly, while the entire floor was mottled with cracks.

Thor gaw faint and he took hold of

Elmer's arm to steady himself, then found he had to support Elmer. The Coordinator of Security had fainted.

IN LESS than a turn of the telechron Thor had the Unvalator and the Invalator as well as an emergency construction crew on the job. He ordered everything cleared, the dying as well as the dead, because salvage of any kind was impossible. In a few centiseconds all human flesh was rendered into cosmic ash for the Invalator's digestors. Reconstruction was slower, but in ten turns it was well under way.

Elmer took charge personally of the Eye Squad Control Board. For ten turns his orders crackled steadily through the compulsion channel to all the City. First it was necessary to re-route traffic and call up emergency crews. Denizens who were to have been relieved by those who were killed in the blast remained at their posts until replacements were recruited, and some of them required resuscitation. Doctor Vivian had to be instructed to supply rations of hot food and stimulants to the emergency crews, then before long it was discovered that Social Engineers were needed to provide emotional anodynes to those incapacitated by terror, thus Juno was drawn into the disaster work.

There was nothing for Gnurin to do, however. For most of the emergency period he screamed at Elmer demanding a channel to call a Board meeting, or so Elmer reported to Thor when Thor entered Eye Squad headquarters after he had reconstruction work in progress. He was numb with fatigue, but dreaded to return to his tomb-like apartment.

Elmer turned from the Control Board. "It's terrible, Thor!" He threw up his hands in a gesture of despair. "I'd rather handle a hundred disasters than another day of Gnurin! If there was only some way— He keeps bypassing."

At that moment a skull-like head

popped out in a segment of the wall screen and Thor moved out of range. "I'll call in Band Police!" Gnurin shouted hysterically. "I've got to have discipline! Give me a channel to call a Board meeting or I'll notify Prague!"

"What's Prague got to do with us?" Elmer demanded sullenly.

"What does Prague have to do with us? It's just the mother city of Science, that's all! All cities of the Band must obey the wishes of Prague, and Prague would not tolerate laxity. What have you done to establish the blame for the explosion? What have you done to prevent recurrences of sabotage?"

"I've got my best man on the job," Elmer replied with frayed patience. "I called Captain Sears off his pallet to take charge of investigation."

"And *who* has investigated Sears? What assurance do we have that he is not in league with the saboteurs? After all, he was an associate of Leonard One-Two-Two, and he spent all day yesterday with the former President—who was, by the way, the last person known to have been in the third level transfer station before the explosion! Have you had an accounting from him? And what of the Eye Squad officer whom Leonard abducted? Have you sent out a searching party to locate him?"

"I'm doing all that is humanly possible." Elmer motioned to an Eye Squad Lieutenant in an anteroom and turned the Control Board over to him. "I'm going to get some rest—somewhere where there are no communication cabinets," he said to the Lieutenant. "Don't call me for six turns, even if the city blows up!" He motioned to Thor and led the way into an Eye Squad officers lounge.

Gnurin's scream followed them. "I'll have you brought up on charges!"

THE LOUNGE was quiet and dark, except for a night-glow light. Several Eye Squad Officers were asleep on bunk-shelves protruding from the wall. Elmer and Thor tiptoed into the room, found empty bunks and lay

down without removing their clothing. Thor slept the sound sleep of complete exhaustion; he was not sure how long he slept, but a brilliant light shining in his eyes awakened him.

The room was in confusion. Eye Squad officers who had been asleep were dressing hurriedly; others lined up before a weapon storage vault door, waiting for guns and reload capsules. Elmer, his hair uncombed and his blouse unbuttoned and his eyes puffed from sleep, stood in the vault dispensing the arms.

"What's wrong?" Thor asked as soon as he could gather his faculties.

Elmer did not hear the question. An officer in the line answered, "Emergency—the whole ground-level belt of eighteen, west."

"Explosion?" Thor guessed.

"Several explosions; denizens in a panic fleeing the city. We've got to stop them."

"Try to stop them, you mean," the man in front of him said with a cynical grimace.

"From what Sears says, they're so panicky they'll run right into our death rays."

"No telling what a denizen'll do. They're primitives—act like animals when they're scared."

Thor reeled under the impact of the news, and it was not until the fourth man had spoken that he realized the gravity of the situation. "I'll go out on the emergency belt car with the officers," he called to Elmer.

"Better not, Thor," Elmer advised him. "Gnurin's been howling all night. Zachary's on his way in a special car—may be at the sky station now. We'll have to have a Board meeting."

"But the emergency," Thor argued.

"Send an assistant. Renlow Sears is out there; he can coordinate emergency work."

The Eye Squad officers piled into a waiting belt car and it shot through the archway and quickly disappeared. Elmer closed the vault door, smoothed his hair and buttoned his blouse.

"Breakfast is on the way, but we'd better not wait for it. Gaurin and the others are in the Board Room."

They paused in the Control room to give orders to assistants, and while they were in communication cabinets an attendant brought a jug of hot stimulant and poured it into containers. Thor sipped the warming brew while he spoke to Cliff Davis, his first assistant. The stimulant revived him somewhat, though it increased his heart action which brought back the dull pain of compression in his chest. However, he had no time to dwell on his own pains.

Elmer emerged from the cabinet where he had been talking, his face ashen. "An unexploded bomb was found in the sky station some time last night. The guard took it to the laboratory for analysis. First I've heard of it; communications have been jammed."

"It appears to be organized sabotage," Thor pronounced gravely.

"Looks that way."

They stepped into the elevator for the Board Room. "I called Sears in to make a report to the Board," Elmer went on. "He's leaving Captain Seventy in charge at the disaster scene; main thing is to halt the denizens."

"Remember what Zachary told us? This sort of thing has happened frequently in other cities," Thor offered in an endeavor to rationalize the situation. "Probably timed for the Paris celebration; the plotters thought all important officials would be out of the City."

"That's not what Sears thinks."

Thor's heart skipped a beat. He didn't want to connect Leonard to the plot, but he thought he read the implication in Elmer's remark. "What does Sears think?" he asked at length.

The elevator door opened and they stepped out into the corridor that led to the Board Room. Zachary approached them.

"Later," Elmer whispered in answer to Thor's question.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" The marshal of the Band Police held out both hands in greeting. "Could you not hold up your emergency until my tenth son is christened with his genetic rating number?"

"Ten sons!" Elmer exclaimed. "You have an Eye Squad of your own!"

"The three eldest are Social Engineers!" Zachary's lips curled with scorn. He turned to Thor. "It is good to see you back safely from your expedition, my dear Thor, but I was indeed sorry to hear that it was a failure. Too bad about the Eye Squad novice. Risky business, this police work."



THEY STEPPED into the Board Room to be greeted by a blast from Gaurin. The diminutive scientist appeared more mummified than ever, and the gash of his mouth opened wider as he spoke. "You are tardy, Elmer One-Eight-One and Thor Two-Two—twenty turns tardy! The City has been blown up, the denizens are fleeing in terrified droves, but do you come to a Board meeting? No, you go chasing around doing the tasks of menials while strategy planning goes to—goes to—" He choked in anger, unable to finish the sentence.

"Goes to Hell," Zachary supplied.

"Hell!" Gaurin shrieked, "there's no such place!"

The marshal shrugged. "Opinions differ."

Gaurin fixed the marshal with an angry glare, then as if he remembered something important, he changed his expression to a grin that was almost ghoulish. "Thank you, Marshal Zachary for responding to my call; it is always a pleasure to welcome a representative of the Band." He moved to

the reception disc and opened the control. "The meeting will come to order. Thor of the genetic rating Two-Two will be allowed to sit in as Coordinator of Construction until such time as his status is definitely established. Now, if you will all be so good as to give your undivided attention I will proceed with my report. Elmer One-Eight One, the Board Room is *not* a sleeping chamber!"

Elmer sat up and blinked the sleep from his eyes. "Sorry, sir."

"My report is of an exceedingly grave nature," Gnurin went on as he drew a thick sheaf of parchment sheets from a portfolio.

Zachary rose. "Might it not be better, Mister President Pro-Tem, to hold an executive session in order to evaluate the material in the reports? I assume there are others beside yours. We must remember that many operations in the City are on an emergency basis and it might seriously disrupt vital work if we keep the compulsion channel open for long."

"His point is well taken!" Juno added quickly.

"Zachary is right," Vivian put in.

"Let's have it that way." Elmer was awake now.

Thor said nothing.

Gnurin's face grew livid. "Every word of *my* report is important to every scientist and every denizen in the Shining City!"

Zachary held the floor. "I must beg your pardon, Mister President Pro-Tem, but the Band frowns on undigested reports. I am sure you do not wish to arouse the displeasure of leaders of the Band."

Gnurin deflated. "Our procedure will be altered to suit the pleasure of the Band representative; a digested report will be given later over the compulsion channel." He cut the reception disc control and seated himself at the conference table. "Now, with your permission, Marshal Zachary, I will proceed with my detailed report."

The marshal nodded solemnly, and

Thor smiled to himself. *The cat toys with the squealing mouse, he thought.*

Gnurin's report was detailed indeed. It began with a listing of all missing scientific data which he implied had been taken by Leonard. "It might be asked at this point," he interjected, fixing Thor with an insinuating stare, "*where* the suspect stored the stolen data before he disappeared with it. About the only possible answer is that he stored it in his quarters, which he shared with his father. Since the father was a Board member, these quarters were not subject to routine inspection by the Eye Squad. And it might be asked what form of eye disorder afflicted the father to make him blind to the suspicious behavior on the part of his son!"

"I object!" Elmer bellowed.

"And well you might object to these exposures!" Gnurin snorted. "One of *your* men, your most trusted Captain of the Eye Squad, Renlow Sears, whose genetic rating has never been tabulated, was a frequent caller at the quarters of the suspect. May I ask why, in view of this fact, Captain Sears was put in charge of the expedition to apprehend Leonard One-Two-Two? Might *that* not answer the question of *why* the mission failed so miserably?"

"Is this a trial?" Elmer demanded, "And if so, *who* is on trial?"

"It is a report on the sabotage of the Shining City," Gnurin retorted blandly. "The chemical analysis of the unexploded bomb taken from the sky station was manufactured from sulphuric and nitric acids, the data files on which were taken by Leonard One-Two-Two."

"That proves nothing whatsoever!"

Thor exploded. "It has never been established that my son took those files. I never saw anything suspicious in his room; he never carried portfolios or packages of any description. It's true he stole a hovering car—two hovering cars—and certain equipment; but as to his stealing research for-

mulas, and especially formulas that have to do with the current bombings, that is pure guesswork, an accusation which is apt to be proven false! Isn't it more reasonable to assume that someone else who had access to those research files took them and is now using the information in them to manufacture the bombs right here in the City?"

"What is this?" Elmer shouted, "A guessing game? I suggest we get a few facts in front of us before we arrive at any conclusion!"

ZACHARY clapped his hands. "Bravo, Elmer! Spoken like a true police officer! Doctor Gnurin, may I suggest that you take your bombast back to the laboratory and analyze it for factual content!"

"Concur!" Elmer shouted.

Gnurin puffed up for a blast, but before he could speak Captain Sears burst into the room. "I have information of great importance," he announced. He showed considerable agitation and glanced nervously from Gnurin to Elmer.

"As Coordinator of Security I will take your report at Eye Squad headquarters, Captain Sears." Elmer rose and moved to the captain's side.

"Not so fast, Elmer One-Eight-One! I insist that the officer's report be given to the assembled Board!"

"Concur!" Vivian had vacillated toward agreement with Gnurin.

"One moment," Zachary interrupted. "A Board meeting at this time is not in order. I have come here, at great expense to the Band, to assist in solving a police problem in your City; I did not come to listen to opinions or to give lectures on procedure. I operate by Band rules. If I'm not permitted to follow them, I'll return to Prague at once."

"And your rule is—?" Juno asked the question.

"That all evidence pertaining to the security of a City of the Band be gathered and summarized by the Eye Squad. The Board may evaluate it at

such time as the Eye Squad submits a report."

"Meeting adjourned!" Gnurin tossed the parchment sheets into the air and stalked angrily from the room.

Captain Sears had remained standing beside the door. As soon as it slid shut behind Gnurin he spoke. "Use the rear elevators! A bomb has been placed in the Boulevard elevators. It may explode at any centi-second!"

"Stop Gnurin!" Juno shouted.

Sears did not move. "He will not endanger *himself*."

Stunned, everyone in the room stared at the captain, who waved his hand to open the door. Zachary, nearest the door, rushed out into the corridor, then turned back to announce, "He is taking a *rear elevator*!"

"But he always—" Doctor Vivian began.

Sears interrupted him. "Where is his laboratory?"

"No! Not Gnurin!" Vivian covered his face with his hands.

Juno shrugged. "I thought all along he acted guilty."

"Let's not jump to any false conclusions," Elmer warned. He turned to Sears and asked, "Have you apprehended any suspected saboteurs, Captain?"

"More than a hundred are in the Compound and more coming in. I've assigned five men to question them; can't spare more."

"Good work!" Elmer returned.

They were all in the corridor walking toward the rear elevator bank. Marshal Zachary, ahead of the rest, had summoned a car. Thor's mind was a-whirl but he had not found voice for any opinions, however, he noticed that the compression in his chest had eased and his step was lighter. *Gnurin, after all!*

AT THAT moment there was a dull thud somewhere below them in the direction of the Boulevard. The floor swayed, and a splintering crash

followed. Everyone staggered, and Junb screamed.

"The explosion!" Sears announced calmly. "On the ground level; those who planted the bomb couldn't reach the Sun Converters."

Cries and screams came from the corridor behind them as doors flew open and white-clad research scientists ran out. Sears turned and raised a hand authoritatively. "There is no danger!" he shouted. "Merely a drill. Go back to your work, but use the rear elevators when you leave the building. The Eye Squad has taken over the others."

Slowly, and with some grumbles of suspicion, the scientists returned to their work.

When the corridor was cleared, Zachary opened the elevator door. "Do you have the guilty ones?" he asked Sears when they were inside.

"All in the Compound; some have confessed. We will soon have the situation under control."

"Are you going to arrest Gnurin?" Doctor Velvet asked.

With a glance at Elmer, Sears shrugged.

"When guilt is established we will arrest the conspirators, no matter what their position," Elmer replied; "right now we will proceed to question the suspects."

"A suggestion," the marshal offered; "all Board members should remain in quarters and direct their activities by communication cabinet for the time being. You will be called when the Eye Squad has prepared a report."

"What about Gnurin?" Velvet asked.

"None of you should contact him." Zachary turned to Sears, "I assume that certain—necessary alterations—have been made at the controls to his communication cabinets."

Sears smiled. "We are leaving nothing to chance."

On Zachary's advice, Thor went first to Eye Squad headquarters where he dictated to a spool a full account of the expedition into the Northland in search of Leonard. He paused at several points, not sure just what he had told the Eye Squad at the sky station.

"We made our way to the home of Leonard's mother, after asking directions from some townspeople," he dictated carefully. "The front door was open and we went through the house, finding—finding—" He realized the repetition would sound suspicious, and he stammered over the next words, "—my former mate, Leonard's mother was in the kitchen. She informed us that Leonard had gone..."

Thor's heart pounded heavily; the pain in his chest was severe and perspiration dripped from his forehead. He remembered too late that, while they were being questioned at the sky station, Sears had stated they had searched Irenka's house; also he had later given the information that there were two stories to the house. Neither had mentioned seeing anyone in the house, leaving the impression that their conclusion about Leonard being gone was the result of their search. He wanted to re-dictate the spool, but he had been given only one. The discrepancy was nothing serious, he told himself; they always showed up in several truthful versions of an incident. Besides, the emphasis was not on his expedition to locate Leonard, but on finding the persons guilty of sabotaging the Shining City. In spite of his rationalization he fretted, an inner, physical fretting that affected all his organs and aged him years in a day.

Gnurin is guilty, Thor told himself over and over as he sat in his apartment waiting for a summons to the communication cabinet. Gnurin craved the adulation of underlings; he wanted power and prestige, and he had plotted a disaster in order to get them. Undoubtedly his madness had

been the cause of Leonard's behavior. Probably, Leonard would return to the City after the doctor's execution. These thoughts with which he sought to console himself did not dispel the pain in his chest.

THERE WERE twenty more explosions in the next four days, and one of them disabled a Sun Converter. The use of power and light was curtailed severely, and the dim light aided the saboteurs. By now, the denizens were in complete panic; their bodies piled high at all the City outlets where Eye Squad officers had stopped them. Yet many escaped. They dived into the lake; some drowned and some managed to swim far enough south to reach safety. They crawled through holes blasted by bombs in the City's outer wall. They stole guns and left the corpses of Eye Squad guards atop of the denizen dead.

The City was almost paralyzed. Elmer remained at the Control Board fifty turns of the telechron—two days—without relief other than for a few centiminutes at a time. He closed the research laboratories and the Specialty College and put scientists and students at the dials. He directed the Unvalator crew to clear away wreckage and carnage, but the Unvalator had to move too rapidly to permit rebuilding with the Invalator. The released cosmic ash from the Unvalator blackened the bright buildings and clogged air vents. Columns of smoke rose up and mingled with the steam from the Argonne Pit, and a cloud, like a pall of black gloom, hung over the Shining City.

Suspects arrested by the Eye Squad overflowed the Compound, and Elmer ordered the empty laboratories and schoolrooms converted into jails. Most of the suspects were research scientists, though some were denizens, and a few were Eye Squad guards. Not all the research scientists who were suspects came from the department under the supervision of

Gnurin; some were food chemists, and this gave rise to a new wave of fear. However, Doctor Vivian remained on duty to inspect each batch of food, and no casualties resulted from poisoning.

Zachary and Sears supervised the questioning of the suspects, and they obtained a mountain of confession spools, many of them conflicting. Some claimed to have made the bombs themselves, though none knew the exact formula. Most of them said they had gotten the explosives from "a stranger." None had a very well-defined reason for participation in the sabotage. A plot there was; of that the marshal was sure; but he could not pull out the threads of it.

"I'm completely baffled," he told Thor in a cabinet conversation. "We have plotters but no evidence of a plot."

"Have you a complete check on all of Gnurin's contacts?" Thor asked. "He uses the bypass more than the Control Board, you know."

"Every hole is plugged," Zachary assured. "He's hermetically sealed in his apartment—and screaming his head off. If he's the brain behind this thing, he must have had it all laid out in advance. But why? There is no why! If he were guilty he would be making demands by now."

Thor pondered a moment. "What's he screaming about?"

Zachary threw up his hands in a gesture of disgust. "Meeting, meeting, meeting! Just wants a sounding board!"

"Maybe he intends to spring his coup in a meeting."

"My dear Thor..." Zachary rolled his eyes thoughtfully and his image faded.



THOR WAS asleep when the compulsion channel signal buzzed. His first thought was that the Board had assembled for a meeting without him. He rose from his pallet and stumbled

into his study. The screen was already glowing; he scated himself on the bench and waited for the intensity to increase. He waited twenty, thirty, fifty centi-seconds, but still the screen continued to glow only faintly and no voice came through the grille. His mild alarm heightened into terror. Was the City's power supply so low that communication equipment could not operate? If so, belt cars and elevators wouldn't run, doors wouldn't open, the air circulation system would fail. He felt as though the walls were pressing on him, and an animal cry rose in his throat.

Then a voice came through the grille. It was clear, though faint. Thor had heard it before, but he was unable to recall where, or under what circumstances, and no image came on the screen to identify the speaker.

"Are you tired of bombs, Shining City?" the voice asked. *"If not, we have plenty more which can be delivered to you by means you can never detect. If so, flash the blue signal light on top of your Sun Converter—while you have Sun Converters!"*

There was no more; the glow faded from the screen, and Thor sat very still in the thick dark, not sure whether the buzzing in his ears was a signal or an echo of blood rushing to his brain.

The buzz came from the communication cabinet. Thor opened the control and looked into Elmer's blanched face. "You heard?"

"Of course."

"How did he get the compulsion channel number?"

"I've no idea, in fact, I can't quite place the voice. It's one I heard—recently, I think."

"Is that the truth, Thor?"

"Of course; why should I tell you anything else?"

"You'll have to come to Eye Squad headquarters immediately, Thor. I'm summoning Zachary."

"Very well, but I don't see why—"
Elmer had cut out.

While he dressed Thor fumbled in

his memory for the identity of the voice. *"Flash the blue signal light."* He had heard that instruction recently. It was— It was—Sears' instructions to Erik... Erik Forty-Four! The voice was that of Erik!

By the time he reached Eye Squad headquarters, he had answered one of Elmer's questions. There was but one source from which Erik could have gotten the compulsion channel number—from Leonard. His mind rebelled against further deductions, and when he presented himself before Elmer his clothes were damp with cold perspiration.

Marshal Zachary was already at headquarters and he beckoned Thor into a questioning booth. He held four spools in his hand and he did not smile as he greeted Thor. "There are a few discrepancies," he began.

"Yes, I know." Thor hastened to say. His mouth was dry and his voice sounded strange to his own ears. "I can explain."

"Please do; the future of the Shining City may depend on your explanations."

"Naturally I didn't know at the time I made the statements that the matter would be so important, but you see—" He moistened his lips. "You see, it was dark on the field. There was considerable excitement, and I was—well, I was frightened. And surprised, I think—yes, surprised. Terribly hurt, too, over what Leonard had done. Perhaps I didn't see clearly, and later when Captain Sears said—I felt his vision would be more accurate than mine. Trained man, you know."

The next question came like a blow to the face. "Did Sears coach you on what to say?"

"No... Well, not exactly. We talked it over, but my statements were based on my own observation, perhaps clarified a little, so that I understood my fleeting impressions."

"That is all for now, Thor." The marshal rose and smiled down on Thor. "This has been very difficult for all of us—you most of all. Have

pity for me, Thor; I have ten sons to worry about!"

Thor sighed with great relief. "It is good to know someone like you, Zachary."



WHEN HE reached his apartment he tumbled onto his pallet and slept more soundly than he had for several nights.

"Awaken, men of Science. It is the hour of seven..." Thor roused, angry at first at the sickish-sweet voice that poured through the grille, then relieved. It was the first time in four mornings that the record had been played, and it indicated that the City was getting back to normal. Soon, Thor thought as he stretched on his pallet, everything will be cleared up.

"Yes, awaken men of Science! It is time you awakened!" Startled, Thor sat up. Another voice cut in over that of the morning greeter. Leonard's! His words were clear, easily sorted but from those of the young woman's, and they continued sharp crackling over the background of music that completed the greeter's spool.

"The doggerel to which you have just listened will soon be stilled. Men of vigor and men of vision will not long follow the foolish patterns laid down for you by the intellectual dwarves who seek power for the sake of power alone! Arise, men of Science! Arise, men! Shake off the shackles that bind you to your narrow bands of glasteel, to your vats of tasteless yeast-food, your communication cabinets and your barren pleasure women! I speak to you from the wide prairies where freedom still exists and men stand tall with pride. This freedom is yours, if you will but take it! If you

will but rise and stretch and feel your strength, men—men, not political cuckolds betrayed by depraved weaklings who seek to enslave you!

"Arise and listen to the strong voice of free wind, the snap and roar of thunder over the plains! Lift your faces to the cooling rain and drink with the trees and grass. Throw open the doors of your prisons, men of Science, and let all the world share your secrets. Let your neighbors build houses not just of sawed lumber, but of glasteel! Let us sit down with you around your conference tables and exchange evenly—our wheat and berries and fruit, our corn and cheese and animal-meat—the products of our toil for the products of your toil!

"We have demonstrated to you that we are strong. We have demonstrated to you that our ways can win. Think well, men of Science. Will you die in the shambles of your artificial world, or will you throw open your gates and live in the freedom we offer you in exchange for some of your science?"

Thor was trembling violently when Leonard ceased speaking. Pride swelled in him, yet fear gripped him. That was the son born of Irenka, the strong—his son! And there was the plot against the Shining City. For a fleeting moment, he wished that it were he who was in league with Leonard. If he were, he would answer that call by flashing the blue light on the signal towers above the Sun Converters.

At any moment Elmer or Zachary will summon me, he thought. He waited in his night robe beside the communication cabinet. The telechroon dial turned slowly—ten centiminutes, twenty, thirty. Perhaps only underlings were on duty at the Control Board and Elmer would have to be summoned. A turn was completed, still no signal. Perhaps Elmer and Zachary were so exhausted that they had left word they must not be disturbed.

Thor dared not go into his shower

stall for fear he would not hear the signal. He shaved and dressed—he'd have to be ready when the summons came. His breakfast lay in the slot. It was cold now. The sight of the slimy yeast mass and the skum-covered greenish liquid nauseated him. Quickly he stuffed everything into the discard chute; if only he had a cup of burnt-wheat coffee!

His thoughts were only of the immediate. No reflection or contemplation was possible, and as the centimutes turned off the telechron dial his anxiety grew. When two turns were completed, he realized that the silence was something more than mere routine delay. Undoubtedly by now he was "hermetically sealed" in his apartment. In that case his innocence would be established. Here a thought sent the blood pounding to his head. Would Leonard try to contact him? He would have to face his son, guilty of treason, while the Eye Squad observed, made records and depictions for future analysis. If he revealed the slightest hint of sympathy they would—

No! Leonard was an adult. He had chosen to betray his City as well as his father; he deserved no pity. He must be destroyed like any other enemy of Science! Thor paced and prepared his speech of denunciation to Leonard, mumbling some phrases aloud. Then he stopped himself. If there were listening devices in the walls the Eye Squad would think he had some secret means of communication with Leonard! Perspiration poured off his face, soaked his clothing. He loosened his collar, removed his jacket. Had the air cooling system failed? Was he sealed in a death chamber? The walls pressed in on him, the silence rang in his ears and he gasped for breath.

Then the signal buzzed. Trembling seized him as he opened the control. Did it mean the reduction oven?

It was Gnurin, grave and calm. "Report at once to the Board Room, Thor," was all he said.

The Board Room—only the Board Room! Thor laughed hysterically. Of course they knew he was guilty of nothing! He would speak to them, tell them how much he revered the Shining City, and he would denounce the traitor who was his son. Soon everything would be cleared up.

WHEN HE entered the Board Room, Thor was in a state of elation that was almost hysteria, but his spirits were soon depressed when he saw the faces around the conference table. All were grave. Gnurin sat quietly on the President's bench, a very deflated and composed Gnurin. Vivian's face was puckered with perplexity, and Juno appeared bewildered. Sitting at the foot of the table, between Elmer and Zachary, was a stranger, a swarthy man with iron gray hair, heavy overhanging eyebrows, and a long, thin face with a straight line of a mouth. He and Zachary were studying a sheaf of parchment charts. No one spoke for several centi-seconds. Gnurin glanced questioningly at the stranger when Thor entered, and at length the stranger rose.

Thor noticed that he walked with a decided limp; his left leg was several centimeters shorter than his right, and he grimaced as though each step caused him pain. Yet there was a strange fascination about the paintwisted face. His eyes were large and expressive, brown, flecked with gold lights, almost feminine in their beauty. *Here is a man who has thought deeply, seen far*, Thor thought.

He stood beside the President's bench and placed a hand on Gnurin's shoulder as if to steady himself. "We will dispense with formalities and with preliminaries," he said, speaking with slow emphasis. His was a deep, though somewhat nasal voice, well-modulated, trained for public speaking.

Thor closed his eyes and saw in his memory a fleur-de-lis pattern.

Doctor Julian!

"The reports which Marshal Romain Zachary have given me about members of this Board are indeed alarming. We have handled together many serious situations in cities of the Band, Romain and I, faced many a crisis. But we still have a Band, and it is my hope that the Shining City will remain in it. In the first place, there must be some replacements on this Board. Romain knows better than I who is capable of filling these important positions, and I will rely on his judgment in the matter. But I sincerely trust that those of you who remain will alter your attitude toward security. Faith is a beautiful attribute of character—in literature—but it has no place in the emotional make-up of one who occupies a position of responsibility in a city of the Band. We all love a trusting child, but if that person remains trusting after he has attained the stature of man, then he remains a child.

"The Band needs adults, men and women capable of objective thinking, capable of detachment, capable of exercising judgment which is uncolored by emotion of any kind.

"In the first place, your President Pro-Tem, Doctor Gnurlin One-One-Seven, throughout this entire crisis has shown an admirable amount of healthy suspicion. But perhaps the reason he did not convince the rest of you was that he erred in presenting his suspicions in a highly emotional manner. I sincerely trust that he has learned the lesson that will henceforth make him a useful Board member.

"The report that Romain has given us on the Eye Squad of the Shining City is most shocking indeed, and the condition was brought about by the mental attitude of the Coordinator, Elmer One-Eight-One. This plot against the City, and the wave of destruction that resulted, would never have gotten beyond the initial stages if One-Eight-One had properly distrusted the men in his department. He

should have turned a critical eye on Captain Renlow Sears when he offered to assist in the capture of a man with whom he had been closely associated. *Never accept the help of volunteers*—isn't that a rule of the Band police, Romain?"

Zachary nodded affirmatively. "One moment, Julian. Thor Larsen came in late and does not know that Captain Sears has been executed as the coordinator of the sabotage plot." He turned to Thor, who was reeling under the impact. "His full confession enables us—shall I say—to close the case."

THOR FELT faint and clung to the table to hold himself erect. He was unable to speak.

"At this point," Doctor Julian continued, "I want to touch upon the case of your former President, Thor Two-Two. The relationship that was allowed to exist between Two-Two and his son invited trouble; the social scientists of the Band insist upon separation of parents from their children. The emotional fixations that are inevitable where sons or daughters remain with their parents are always detrimental to the community as a whole. The Social Coordinator, Juno Sixty-Seven is solely at fault for allowing this condition to exist. As it developed, that was the crux of the whole problem in the Shining City. I had had some reports on this matter, but I was loath to interfere in the affairs of any city of the Band. I felt sure—and I blame myself for this inexcusable faith—that things would eventually right themselves."

Anisse did report to Julian! Thor found breathing even more difficult.

"Now I come to Doctor Vivian, the Economic Coordinator. I have eaten some of the food prepared under the direction of this worthy scientist—"

Vivian puffed with pride.

"—and I find it the worst offense of all!"

Vivian slumped and dropped his head.

"We all heard the brazen plea of the traitor, Leonard Larsen. On what did he base his plea to the scientists and denizens of the Shining City? Food! *'We'll give you corn and berries and animal-meat,'* he said. What healthy individual, be he ever so loyal to Science, could fail to heed such a plea if he had been eating three meals a day from Doctor Vivian's yeast-vats? Why, if I had eaten Vivian's gook for long I, myself, would have been willing to take up a javelin with the Northerners!

"Seriously, my fellow-scientists, if we are to have loyalty to our cities, we must have proper food, not just nourishment with the correct molecular vibrations to sustain our bodies, but food with flavor—flavor that will stimulate our imaginations, give us the zest for living!

"As Romain knows—and I believe I mentioned it to Gnurin in Paris the other day—it has long been a dream of mine to seal our cities—build walls around them so high and so thick that no enemy can penetrate them, and cover them with a roof to protect our scientific world from the vagaries of climate, from the harmful airborne bacteria which now causes us needless suffering and brings untimely death to our scientists.

"The invention of the Unvalator and the Invalator brings this dream closer to realization. Within sealed cities, Science can control our entire environment; we can control population... It's still a dream, but as Romain knows, I am one to implement my dreams. Sun conversion, photosynthesis, the Unvalator and the Invalator—all these are steps on the way, and soon, within a few years, the Band will become the Sealed Civilization of Science."

All sat agape with wonder, all but Thor. He passed a hand over his brow. *No more sunlight on the water... no trees bending in the wind... no blaze of stars overhead at night,*

no summer storms with lightning darting out of the blackness... a tomb for the living—the Sealed Civilization!

JULIAN continued. "And now for more practical matters. Your first problem in the Shining City, now that the conspirators within have been dealt with properly, is to discourage this clamoring horde at your gates. Drive them away or wipe them out. You have the means; Doctor Gnurin gave us an outline of possibilities in his speech in Paris.

"I propose that Thor Two-Two, the father of the ringleader of this band, take the disc and speak on the compulsion channel so that all the City as well as the ingenious ringleader may hear, and make the proposal." He turned to Thor. "You understand, of course, what is required." Julian limped back to his seat.

Thor rose and steadied himself by placing his hands on the table, and Gnurin opened the reception disc control.

"I propose at this time..." Thor moistened his dry lips... "that the Eye Squad equip a large hovering car with the Unvalator... and proceed to wipe out the nest of conspirators... at the Argonne Pit! I believe... that is all."

He sat, heavily, and Gnurin rose. "You have heard the proposal of Thor Two-Two; what is your pleasure?"

"Concur!"

"It is so ordered. The Eye Squad Coordinator will proceed to carry out the instructions of the Board. The meeting is adjourned." Gnurin cut the control.

Thor stood. The room whirled around his head and his knees crumpled. As he sank down he caught sight of the doctor's skeletal grin. There was mockery and triumph in it, and Thor knew that he had been replaced as President of the Board of the Shining City.

"Perhaps the birds do not choose to live in this great cage..." Thor was not sure that he had spoken. He

opened his eyes and saw that he was lying on a pallet in a questioning booth at Eye Squad headquarters.

Zachary bent over him. "You were saying, Thor—?"

"I don't know what I said." He sat up and looked into the face of the only friend he felt he had left. "I did my best, Zachary; it was a matter of honor."

"An obsolete word, 'honor'; the world of Science never uses it."

"I see. It's the reduction oven now, I suppose."

"Patience, my dear Thor, patience; at the moment the ovens are terribly overcrowded."

"May I go to my apartment?" *Perhaps Anisse had come back to the City with Julian.*

"Sorry. Rules."

"Then where—"

Zachary shrugged. "We are very busy, Thor. You must find ways to amuse yourself until we are ready to go further into your case. Perhaps you would be so good as to look over the reconstruction project at the western wall? The work there is behind schedule." With that he hurried from the room.

THOR LEFT his uniform jacket on the pallet, walked out of the room, down the corridor and took an elevator to the transfer station for the westbound belt cars. An emergency construction crew was loading into one, and as he had so often done, he climbed in and sat amidst the construction tools that smelled of raw earth.

The car stopped at the project and the men took their tools and filed out. Cliff Davis, the overseer, came up to Thor. "We're almost through with this job, sir."

"Take your time, Cliff." Thor walked through the hole in the wall, past the Eye Squad guard who had seen him with the overseer, and took a path that led through the shrubbery.

The path, which apparently had been beaten by fleeing denizens—or

by the saboteurs—went straight into the bronze glow of sunset which lingered over the blood-red glare of the Argonne Pit. The pain in Thor's chest was intense, but he continued to walk westward.

Dusk had settled down when he came to a stockade around a cluster of tents. Here and there among the tents a dying campfire flared feeble competition to the glowing pit. The encampment was breaking up. Men scurried to and fro loading rolls of bedding and bundles of supplies into horse drawn wagons, some of which were already on the move.

"Leave the rest for the Unvalator!" The voice was Leonard's.

A dog barked and a sentry ran back to the open gateway of the stockade. "Who goes there?"

Thor gathered his strength and answered, "Thor Larsen!"

"Thor Larsen!" The name echoed through the camp, and several other sentries appeared.

"The President of the Shining City?"

"Ya! I have come to my son, Leonard."

"Leonard Larsen!" Again the echo.

Several dogs were barking now, and one ran out, snarling. The sentries closed ranks and Thor saw a row of javelins outlined like sharp pickets of a fence against the glare of the Pit. Then a man broke through the line, javelin poised. He hurled it, and Thor felt the point drive into his chest. The pain expanded, like a bud bursting into flower, and petals of red spread over the white front of his blouse.

A flare from the Pit threw a harsh light over the scene, and Thor saw a man taller than himself with hair like moonbeams and eyes the color of wood violets. The man smiled grimly and spoke to the sentries. "Leave that, too, for the Unvalator!"

As Thor crumpled around the flower of pain, he gasped to the retreating figure—"Leonard!"