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## OUR COVER ILLUSTRATION

Depicts the marvelous satellite of the earth, Astropod, which circles the earth just as the moon does. This tremendous structure, the work of the feverish brain of August Korf, inventor of the space ship in "The Shot Into Infinity," is based on the most excellent science and in fact there is no reason why, with the funds available, it could not be built within the next decade.

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# The Thought Materializer

By F.B. Long Jr.



(Illustration by Fox)

He watched, with agonizing intensity, the stricken man on the floor drag himself forward. Randall hastily turned off the control of the infernal device.

"I T'S utterly incredible," said Stephen Perkins: "Do you mean to say that if I simply put on this absurd contrivance all of my thoughts, everything that I casually imagine, will become sufficiently real to affect my body?"

Randall smiled, "You will need a convincing demonstration."

"But do you mean that?" Perkins persisted.

"Precisely. With the assistance of this remarkable device your body will actually suffer or enjoy all of the experiences that you merely imagine. For instance, if you will mentally convey yourself to the seashore and imagine with the requisite *flên* that the sun is beating furiously down on your exposed back, you will become really sunburned." Horace Randall spoke with conviction. He held in his left hand the disputed contrivance—a curious, metallic belt-like affair equipped with electrodes and dangling wires and designed to encircle the body immediately above the heart. He had been struggling valiantly to remove his friend's coat. "Please let me try it on you," he pleaded. "I've toiled unremitting-

ly over it for weeks and it's positively unique. You should be literally glowing with scientific fervor. There isn't the slightest danger, I assure you. I'll tell you what to imagine. I won't let you visualize anything really lethal.

"You see, I must find out how well the thing works; and I can't try it on myself and take abundant notes at the same time."

Stephen Perkins sighed tragically and permitted Randall to fasten the contrivance about his lean body. He waited with considerable trepidation for his friend to adjust the wires and other accessories—for a steel ribbon one-half inch in width to crawl upwards, like a knife from its sheath, until it rested at the base of his brain, and two thin wires to encircle his forehead. Then he asked a significant question:

"How does it work?"

"I presume," said Randall solemnly, "you mean, what power do I utilize? Electricity, for one thing. Stephen, and cosmic rays, and the elusive ether. This machine absorbs—I can't think of a more appropriate word—actually absorbs the vibrations which your brain emits when you think. You must pardon me for expressing it so laconically, but you wouldn't comprehend the abstruse technicalities. It absorbs the vibrations, and transmits them to your body intensified. It intensifies the vibrations of thought to such an extent that thoughts become living realities, capable of working an actual physical transmigration in the tissues of the body."

Stephen Perkins looked genuinely frightened: "But—suppose the changes are permanent?"

"They are not, I assure you," said Randall: "All of the effects wear off in a few hours. And I promise you that I won't permit you to think of anything that would produce any really dangerous changes in the more vital organs of your body. We will experiment with mere skin-deep sensations at first. You will imagine, for instance, that a cold wind is blowing upon you, and we will observe the inevitable goose-pimples, etc. Shall I turn it on?"

Stephen Perkins hesitated. "Are you sure?"

"Oh, absolutely. There isn't the slightest danger. But you must exclude from your mind all dangerous images. Do not visualize anything really malicious or sinister."

"Precisely what images shall I avoid?"

"Anything capable of causing acute bodily pain. Do not visualize things that stab and tear and rend, and—and kill. But if merely momentary dangerous images appear to you the risk involved will be infinitesimal. It is only when you dwell on dangerous images intently, over intervals of several minutes, that the machine can transform them, or rather the vibrations produced by them, into a dangerous bodily influence."

"I see. I must avoid thinking of—sharks, let us say."

"Precisely. Or tigers. Or anything with teeth. And you mustn't imagine yourself in an automobile accident, or in an airplane."

"Very well. I think you may turn it on."

#### Experiences By Proxy

RANDALL nodded gravely and unscrewed a tiny metal disk near the base of the belt. There ensued a low and eerie whistling sound. This continued for several minutes, and eventually subsided into a steady, monotonous drone. The electric lights in the room grew perceptibly dimmer, and a curious misty film formed upon the mirror above the mantel.

"Any ill effects?" inquired Randall anxiously.

"Haven't noticed any yet," said Perkins: "I'm trying not to think of anything that might—"

"Good. I approve of that. Just relax and maintain a receptive mind. I will suggest images to you."

Randall paused and ruminated for a moment. "I have it," he exclaimed: "We'll burn your thumb—only slightly, however. Imagine, please, that you light a cigarette and become so heartily immersed in conversation that you unfortunately forget to blow out the match. You hold it in your fingers until it burns you slightly, blackens the skin on the tip of your finger."

Perkins closed his eyes, and for a moment sat very still. Then he jumped, and gave a little, choking cough. "Damn near burnt my finger off!" he muttered: "Proves potency of imagination."

Randall was exultant. "It wasn't all imagination!" he exclaimed: "If you'll look at your finger—"

Slowly Perkins raised his finger and surveyed it in amazement. "Great Scott, you're right!" he conceded: "It's burnt rather severely. I—I'm not sure we ought to continue."

"Of course we'll continue," affirmed Randall, cheerfully. "We've just begun to experiment. I want to prove beyond a doubt that the machine caused your burnt finger. Flattitudinously speaking,

the mind is even more potent than the Freudians picturesquely imagine; and I desire to prove that it wasn't mere suggestion that caused that burning. Listen intently now! You are sitting in a cold bath—an ice cold bath, understand!"

Reluctantly Perkins shut his eyes and visualized himself in a frigid bath. In a moment he was perceptibly shivering. "It's dreadful," he remonstrated: "I want to get out!"

"Very well. You



F. B. LONG, JR.

*In presenting this story, it is well that the reader should know the full powers of mind.*

*Mental delusions can become so powerful that the subject not only feels them but lives them as well. Perhaps the most powerful example that could be cited is that of the well-known "stigmata." These phenomena occur frequently in some human beings and are well attested today and recognized by science. A recent case in Germany occurred where a young girl of hyper-religious convictions believed herself to be a reincarnation of Christ, and at stated intervals the inside of her palms and her feet would start bleeding profusely at the exact marks of the crucifixion. These marks were brought upon the subject by that excess of religious fervor. It is a case not at all unusual in medical records. The present story is, therefore perhaps not more wonderful than the phenomena of the "stigmata."*

may step out now."

Imaginatively Perkins stepped from the bath. "Fire is preferable," he murmured. "I can't stand ice-water baths."

Randall laughed: "Very well! I won't send you to join Commander Byrd. I had thought momentarily of doing so, but we'll pack you off to Bengal, instead." He was running his hand over Perkins' exposed arm. "Cold, and moist," he affirmed: "You unquestionably entered a cold bath."

The telephone at his elbow was ringing insistently. Taking down the receiver he pressed it impatiently to his ear and spoke tersely: "Hello! Hello! What's that? Someone for me on the other phone downstairs? Oh, all right. I'll be down in a moment."

"I'm expecting an important call," he explained to his friend. "I'll leave the machine turned on; because I won't be away but a moment and, if I turn it off now, a great deal of expensively-generated energy will go to waste. Sit in that chair by the window, and don't think of anything dangerous. I'll be back in three minutes."

Perkins nodded gloomily and crossed to the window. It was a humid afternoon in August and he felt dreadfully tired. Even the cold bath had not sufficed to dispel his gloomy lassitude. Sinking wearily down in Randall's Morris chair he shut his eyes. The monotonous drone of traffic from the street beyond drifted in to him, merging with the lulling drone of the machine encircling his body. It was a foolish, ridiculous experiment, any way one looked at it, and it was inevitable that he should experience an overwhelming sense of weariness and disgust.

"He said he'd send me to the tropics," he murmured. "I don't know—that I should care—to go—on a day like this." Thinking had become an actual exertion, a process almost involving pain. He would simply relax, as his friend had suggested, and—and dose. Why not? It was very comfortable in the chair by the window. The sun streamed through the glass, penetrating his closed eyelids, and bathed his world in a rosy glow. Bengal—his friend had mentioned Bengal—India . . .

India did, in a sense, suit his mood. He saw himself walking languidly through a steamy jungle with a gun under his arm and the sun in his eyes. A sense of mystery and adventure deepened about him.

He walked on and on. Behind every shrub and bush and tree lurked mystery. Little monkeys chattered in the high branches and hurled berries at his head. Parrots screamed and mocked him. It was absurd, of course, that he should go adventuring in such a childlike manner. He was not a schoolboy.

And yet, somehow, his surroundings intoxicated him. He had always dreamed of Bengal and, now, here he was actually walking through it. Was he dreaming now? It occurred to him suddenly that he might be dreaming. He experienced that sense of unreality that is so frequently present in dreams—the knowledge that one is dreaming and will presently awake.

The landscape through which he walked was distorted and unreal. The trees were twisted and cancerous and immoderately tall; there were ominous cup-like depressions in the moist soil beneath his feet, vaguely suggestive and familiar impressions. The *spoor* of some enormous and hellish beast?

Was it conceivable that some unnameable thing had stalked on before him? He found himself almost rejoicing in the thought. His fingers glided excitedly over the barrel of his rifle.

#### A Terrible Meeting

PERHAPS he could overtake it and bring it down. He would search for it boldly and send bullets crashing into its great, lumbering body. He visualized the crack of his rifle, the clearing smoke and the great beast lying stark and lifeless at his feet. Joyfully he squared his shoulders. This was hazard, this was existence as he had always visioned it.

And yet, when it actually appeared to him, when it emerged from a clump of sinister vegetation not five yards from him, he experienced a sudden sense of overwhelming revulsion, of deadly paralyzing fear.

It was a tiger—and yet it was not a tiger. It was larger than any tiger that he had ever seen, and it was night-black and its eyes glowed with an unspeakable malignancy.

Slowly it advanced toward him, its shoulders humped, its bared yellow teeth drooling saliva.

Perkins experienced that terrible sensation, so familiar to all who dream, of not being able to move. His feet seemed cemented to the ground. Try as he might, he could not raise his right leg. Then in desperation his thoughts returned to the gun in his hand.

But somehow he couldn't raise the gun. Valliantly he strove to move his arms, but they persistently refused to respond to his exertions. He was as securely bound as though tangible cords encircled his wrists and ankles. And the beast was now very close to him. . . .

Horace Randall was discussing his invention over the telephone when he heard the first shriek. It did not immediately occur to him that the distressing sound proceeded from his own apartment upstairs and, although it vaguely alarmed him, he was so intent upon explaining the character of his invention to the fabulously wealthy gentleman at the other end of the wire that he did not give the matter his prompt attention. —

"Yes, yes," he affirmed. "I assure you that the machine does really absorb and intensify the thought-vibrations of the subconscious mind. It works most effectively when the patient is asleep. No dream, no Lethian fantasy is too appalling or monstrous for it to—translate into an objective reality. Indeed, the most ghastly of the shadowy terrors evoked during sleep by the introverted type of mentality may become, with its aid, virtually embodied, capable of working infinite physical havoc. Of course it cannot leave the body in which it originates. It can work havoc only upon the man or

woman who is wearing the belt. Dangerous? Of course my invention is dangerous—sinister, if you wish. But it is not designed for popular distribution. It is for the impartial investigator—the purely disinterested psychologist. Think of the infinite uses it could be put to by a Jung, or a—

He left the sentence unfinished and the receiver dangling on its wire. He had heard—he had heard—Good God, what had he not heard! Pandemonium had broken loose upstairs; shriek followed shriek in terrifying, mind-stunning succession! Randall started forward with fear on his face, and in a moment was ascending the stairs three steps at a time.

The shrieks had prepared him for something disconcerting; but when he entered his room, and saw what had actually occurred, his brain reeled, and for a moment panic seemed about to claim him. He staggered and nearly fell, and was obliged to cling to a chair for support. He watched with agonizing intensity the stricken man on the floor drag himself forward; then, with a heroic effort, Randall recovered his wits, and hastily turned off the control of the infernal device.

Perkins' clothes had been stripped from his body, and his legs were bruised and lacerated. But his face had not been—clawed—and he was able to utter a few words before he collapsed: "Please take the belt off!" he pleaded: "I don't want to die with that thing on. Something—worse—might come—at the last moment. Although I can't imagine anything worse. It clawed and clawed and clawed. I couldn't escape from it. It sat on me and breathed in my face and clawed at me with its—it breathed on me—do you hear?" To Perkins apparently the clawing had been almost an incidental torture, of less consequence than the fact that the thing had come so hideously close. "It wasn't a tiger," he moaned: "It was something—unspeakable. Something obscene that I imagined. It was black and—it breathed on me!"

Randall assisted his stricken friend into a chair

and hastily unstrapped the devilish machine that he had devised. "I didn't know—that you would think of anything like that," he groaned coitively: "How could I have anticipated such a thing?"

Perkins smiled wistfully. "It's all right, Horace. I don't blame you—only—please send for a doctor."

"I will! I will!" exclaimed Randall: "And I'm sure you're not injured as badly as you imagine. Terribly scratched up, I concede, but we'll get you on your feet. We will indeed!"

It is to Randall's credit that he fulfilled his promise. He summoned his physician immediately; and it was due to the prompt aid administered by that gentleman, and his own assiduity as a nurse and psychic counsellor—he kept assuring his friend that his injuries were singularly trivial—that Perkins was up and about in less than a fortnight.

But the belt was never placed on the market. It was not even offered to a small group of purely disinterested psychologists; not even to Freud and Jung. It was simply reduced, by Randall himself, to a small pile of very inconsequential ashes.

But for months thereafter he was haunted by what he knew to be the potentialities of the thing he had destroyed. "Suppose," he confided to Perkins, when the latter had sufficiently recovered to listen calmly to him, "I had tried it on some animal? There is no reason in the world why it wouldn't work just as well on an animal, and—my friend, did it ever occur to you that animals must occasionally have unusual dreams? We know, for instance, that dogs dream very vividly. But even the lower forms of life may have certain visual powers. It is impossible to dogmatize about such things. Now just suppose, for the sake of argument, I had strapped that machine on a—snake?"

"I refuse to suppose anything of the kind!" retorted Perkins. "It is a hideous, ghastly contrivance, and I'm glad you destroyed it."

Randall sighed. "Yes, yes, I dare say I acted wisely. And yet—and yet—I wish I did know more about the dreams of snakes!"

THE END