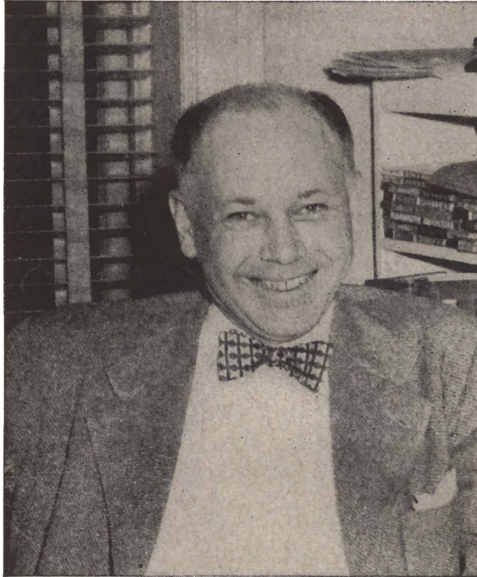


# MEN BEHIND AMAZING STORIES



**Robert Moore Williams**

**H**IGH UP on my list of "Things I Do Not Want to Do" is that of writing one of these autobiographical sketches. Editors are always so cheerful about them. They give the impression that composing such a sketch is a pleasant little task that a writer can accomplish before breakfast any morning, still making his daily quota of words before noon. That's not true. Try writing your life-story and your ideas of writing in 300 words, and see how you do.

I have seen too many bad stories (including some of my own) make

anthologies, to have any confidence in the opinion of any one man. Long, long ago I tried to explain to some irate fan that I do something called "slanting". That means, in essence, that each story is tailored to meet the editorial requirements of a particular magazine.

Once in a while I do a story "my" way. In which case it is about a fifty-fifty bet as to whether the story is going to wind up in the waste basket, or make an anthology.

As to the number of stories I have  
*(continued on page 162)*

# AMAZING STORIES

AUGUST, 1952

Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

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. . . . .

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Panic reigned as the invader moved in

# THE WINGED PERIL

By Robert Moore Williams



**They came in flying saucers, and Mankind seemed powerless against them until one man decided that merciless invaders are always equipped with an Achilles' heel**

“**B**UT WHAT the hell is it?” Quarter said irritably. Wading boots and all, old Simon Pile pulled him out of Silver Creek before he hardly had time to wet a line, insisting that the newspaper man come up to his log house to look at—something. Even after he saw it, Quarter wasn't quite certain what it was.

“It's a bee!” Simon Pile breathed pure rapture, his lined old face softened and grew warm from the inner ecstasy flowing through him as he spoke. “It's a new species never known before. I shall name it *apis pilensis*, in honor of myself, since I discovered it. Look at its size, see how alert it is. Although it is larger than the biggest queen I have ever

seen, it is obviously not a queen, it is a worker. And look at the colors! Have you ever seen anything like it?”

On Pile's face, the ecstasy deepened until he was practically beside himself with excitement. He was a bee-keeper, a bee-fancier, a bee-raiser. He went to bed at night thinking about bees, he got up in the morning thinking about them. Quarter, who felt he was secretly honored by being one of the very few men Pile liked and trusted, had always had the private opinion that the old bee keeper probably dreamed about bees during his sleep. Quarter, even if he was annoyed at the interrupted fishing, regarded the old man with fond tenderness.

Sitting on the box in the living

room was a box made of clear plastic. The newspaper man bent down to examine its contents.

At the sight of the bee in the box, some of his irritation went away. The insect was—*out of this world*, the words came into his mind. He was a little annoyed at the triteness of the expression, but the words did provide some kind of, a description, if not of the bee, at least of the feeling in him. The insect was two inches long. It glowed with gradations of gold interspersed with rings of black. The colors seemed to be vibrating with life itself, the kind of life that some men sometimes sense, but no man really understands.

Quarter had the impression that the bee was exceedingly angry—at Pile and at him, possibly also at itself, for allowing itself to be caught in a plastic box.

The anger of the insect, helpless as it was, brought up a little touch of fear in the newspaperman. With the fear came the nebulous ghost of an idea: something he had read or heard somewhere, something about bees. He tried to recall what it was. It eluded him. But there was a threat connected with it, a danger of some kind.

"Where did you get it?"

"That's my bee trap," Pile answered. "I use it to trap wild bees. I bait it with honey. When the bee lights on the honey his weight is enough to trip a trigger, and the spring lid flies shut."

"You set it to catch a honey bee, but you caught an eagle bee instead," Quarter said. He thrust his finger toward the box to see what the bee would do. The insect roused up instantly, glared at the approaching finger. Quarter grinned. "He looks as if he'd like to bite my finger off. I—" He moved the finger closer. "*Yeccccooooowwwww!*" The sound that broke

from his lips was a full-bodied scream of mortal anguish. If he had touched a hot stove, he could not have jerked his hand back faster.

**HIS** FIRST dazed thought was that lightning had struck his arm. He glanced hastily at it, to reassure himself that he still had an arm. Pain like a red-hot needle was gouging a groove along his nerves.

"What is it, Bill? What—what—" Pile had apparently been startled to within an inch of his wits by the sudden scream. "What happened? Are—are you hurt?"

"Your damned bee stung me!" Quarter said, massaging his arm. The pain was already diminishing markedly. It seemed more like a sudden electric shock than a sting, a jolt that comes like lightning and goes as quickly as it comes.

"But he couldn't have stung you, Bill. He's in the box."

"I don't give a damn where he is, he stung me. Do you think I scream just to exercise my vocal chords?" Quarter stared at his finger. The skin was unbroken: there was no mark, and no swelling.

"Let me see it, Bill." Pile peered at the finger through thick-lensed glasses. "But there isn't anything." He blinked fearfully up at Quarter. "Are you feeling all right, Bill? I mean—" He caught himself as if to keep from saying what he had on his mind.

The look in his eyes said the words for him. "I'm not out of my head," Quarter said vigorously. "I don't care whether you can see anything or not, that damned bee stung me."

"But Bill, it couldn't have stung you. It's inside the box. See."

Looking down, Quarter had the impression that the bee was still glaring at them. But mixed with the glare

was an expression of gloating. "I'm projecting my own thoughts on to the bee," Quarter told himself firmly. The pain in his arm was dying down to manageable proportions. "Hey, what are you doing?" Pile had thrust his finger toward the box. The bee instantly faced the approaching finger.

Pile's sudden scream was one of the most satisfying sounds that Bill Quarter had ever heard. The agitated dance the old bee-keeper did around the room also pleased the newspaper man, not because he enjoyed seeing Pile suffer, but because Pile's scream and dance were proof that the bee had stung through the plastic box. The sight relieved Quarter's fears that he had suddenly taken leave of his mind.

The old bee-keeper stared at the box as if a favored and trusted pet had suddenly bitten him. In a sense, this had happened. Pile was one of those rare people who are *simpatico* with bees, whom bees never sting. But this one had stung him. The expression on his face was one of acute bewilderment.

"It couldn't have stung you, Simon," Quarter said maliciously. "It's in the box." The look on the old man's face made him instantly sorry he had spoken. "Are you hurt?"

"NO, NO, it's all right." Pile rubbed his arm. Quarter had the impression that if the arm had been torn from his shoulder, Pile would have cheerfully insisted that everything was all right in preference to admitting that a bee had harmed him.

"I don't like your bee," Quarter said. "How'd you get him in here?"

"I just carried the trap in my hands."

"And he didn't sting you?"

"No."

"Then it must have taken me to

rouse him up to fighting pitch." Quarter was cheerful. If it was a forced cheerfulness, he would have been one of the last to admit it. He didn't like the idea of bees with electric stingers. There was something abhorrent about it, something foreign, alien, unearthly.

But at that moment the real nature of the problem had not been brought home to him. He had seen something very interesting, a bee with an electric sting possibly somewhat similar to the shocking ability of the electric eel, but he had not seen anything really astonishing or disconcerting. And there was the matter of the interrupted fishing. He turned to the door.

"Simon, it was nice of you to call me up here to look at this—" He opened the door.

BzzzzZZZZttt!

As he opened the door, something that buzzed like an angry hornet went past Quarter's head, moving into the room. He ducked.

BzzzzZZZZttt!

The second buzz went past his head.

"Bees!" Quarter yelled. As he spoke, the third bee went past his head with a sound similar to a jet supercharger warming up.

Quarter's first wild inclination was to cut and run. Shame kept him from it. Pile wasn't running. The bee-keeper was standing in the middle of the room turning his head in all direction as he tried to locate the bees he could hear but could not see.

Since Pile wasn't running, Quarter couldn't. Standing in the doorway, he stared goggle-eyed at what happened next. There were at least four bees in the room, maybe more. One circled the box on the table as if it were taking up a sentry position there. The other three bees lit on the table.

The three of them pointed their heads toward the plastic box. Their bodies formed a triangle, their heads pointing inward. Their actions indicated concerted, directed, conscious effort. Their wings buzzed.

**A** TINY filament of smoke—or was it steam?—puffed out from the side of the box. The smoke seemed to flow in a circle. Inside the box, the trapped bee got hastily out of the way.

The three bees outside the box needed only seconds to complete their task. Quarter, staring paralyzed and entranced, could not see an electric discharge flowing from them to the side of the box, but when they had finished, they had cut a circular hole in the plastic. The segment they had cut out fell away.

The bee trapped inside the box scrambled through the hole and launched itself into the air. The three bees outside the box spun upward in movement almost too fast for the eye to follow.

All of this happened in seconds. Quarter stood in the open door, too stunned to close it. Later, he wondered what might have happened to him if he had shut it.

*Bzzzzzt! Bzzzzzt! Bzzzzzt!*  
*Bzzzzzt!* Four bees went past his head. Then the fifth one came. *BzzzzZZZZtttt!* The last one circled Quarter's head like a miniature jet plane. In that angry buzz he seemed to sense the warning, "Watch out for yourself, Bud. I've got my eye on you."

That fifth and final bee, Quarter was willing to bet, was the one from the box, the one that had been trapped.

"B—B—Bill!" The old man looked panic-stricken. The delighted happy look was gone from his face. His ex-

pression indicated he had taken a mortal blow. "Bill, it left me, it went away from me."

The bee he had captured and loved, as he loved all bees, had fled from him. That was what was hurting him.

Something else was hurting Quarter, something vastly different. Fear. Plain, simple, panic-inducing, soul-destroying fear.

Quarter was as broad-minded as the owner of a weekly country newspaper ever gets to be. He tried to keep his mind open to any new fact that came along, to any theory that any man cared to express. He had absorbed the atom bomb and the flying saucers in his stride. Prior to the events of this morning, he had thought he was able to meet the devil himself, complete with horns, hoofs, and a pointed tail, and take him in his stride.

**H**E DISCOVERED he was mistaken. There were some things he could not take. Standing in the doorway of that neat little log house, with the bright sunshine of the early morning pouring through the door, Silver Creek rippling in the sun at the bottom of the slope, the peaks of the mountains clear in the distance, Quarter found himself covered with sweat and trembling violently as his nervous system tried to soak up the shock it had taken.

He had seen, or heard, four bees come through the door. While one took up the circling position of a sentinel, three had burned a hole in the side of a plastic trap, releasing another bee held prisoner there. How had they communicated? Some form of radio, Quarter supposed. *What am I thinking?* he furiously asked himself. They didn't communicate. They didn't burn a hole in that box. It



wasn't possible. They couldn't. . . .

His eyes came to focus on the box itself. The hole was clearly visible, the circular piece of plastic that had been cut from the box was lying on the table top.

In the few seconds it had taken for the bees to burn a hole in the box and release the prisoner, Quarter's world had turned upside down. Order had left, his established ways of thinking had been upset, the habits of a life-time had been badly disarranged.

In the back of his mind a thought was trying to come to consciousness. It was the nebulous ghost of an idea which had something to do with bees. He tried to place it, but it faded out before he could contact it.

"We'll have to find them," Pile was saying. His eyes were on the empty box. "They're hived up somewhere near here."

"No!" Quarter said violently.

They had an argument. Quarter lost it. Deep in his heart Quarter knew that he would help Pile hunt for those bees, if the old man insisted on it. He also knew that the bee-keeper would insist. Pile would climb Pike's Peak on his hands and knees if he thought there was a new and different kind of bee to be found on top of it.

During the next two weeks, Quarter left his newspaper to run itself while he and Pile searched what seemed to the newspaperman to be a hundred thousand square miles of villainous mountain country. Pile thought the bees might be found in a hollow tree. They looked for hollow trees. The bee-keeper thought they might be found in a cave. They looked for caves. They found a skunk's den and an irritated black bear and several rattlesnakes, but they didn't find any bees. Pile set bee traps by the dozens.

He caught plenty of ordinary honey bees, but he didn't catch any specimens of *apis pilensis*.

All the time they were searching, Quarter prayed they would not find the bees. He kept remembering the jolt he had gotten in his arm, and he began to wonder what would happen if that blast of fire had hit his eye. Would he have gone blind?

**A**FTER TWO weeks, they quit looking. Quarter was very happy to forget about *apis pilensis* and to get back to his fishing. He had never seen a trout burn a hole in the side of his creel or send a jolt of electric current up his arm.

Quarter was alone when he discovered the hide-out of the bees.

He was fishing Silver Creek about a mile above Pile's place, and was moving along under an overhanging bluff when he saw a bee pass through the air above him. Automatically he followed the line of flight. The bee disappeared into a small cave barely visible under the lip of the overhanging cliff. He knew from the size that it was *apis pilensis*, Pile's bee. A smart scramble upward would be needed to reach the cave, but a moderately agile climber could make it.

Quarter made a mental resolution that he wasn't going to be the agile climber who scrambled up and stuck his head in that cave. Nor was he going to tell Pile where the cave was located. The bee-keeper would insist on going into the cave himself, if he knew where it was.

*Bzzzzzztt!* Like a miniature jet plane, a big bee went past his head, startling Quarter so badly he almost dropped his fly rod.

*Zzzzzzzzppp̂tttt!* It went past his head again.

The swarms had sentinels out on guard.

With three bees zipping around him, Quarter beat a hasty retreat from Silver Creek. Again he had the feeling that he was about to remember something. He got into his car and drove back to town, fast. Lurking just under the surface of his mind was—fear. He didn't know whether he was afraid of the bee—or of something else. He parked his car in front of the garage beside his home and got out.

Something moved in the air above him. He caught a glimpse of it out of the corner of his eye. A bee!

It had followed him to town!

**I**N THE days that followed the panicky feeling grew in fever intensity. No matter where he went or what he did, he had a bee for company. Except possibly at night, and then he wasn't sure.

They were watching him as no hawk ever watched a rabbit.

One of the worst features of the whole situation was the fact that he couldn't talk to anyone about it. This was one of the things you don't tell your best friend, not unless you want him to look pityingly at you and hastily change the subject, and when you are gone quietly call a doctor. Quarter couldn't even confirm the fact that he was being shadowed by a bee, by asking someone else if he saw the insect. Half the time he wasn't sure the bee was there himself. It was so easy for a bee to hide. A big leaf was all he needed. He could light on the trunk of a tree and keep watch without being visible.

Along about this point Quarter began to wonder if a bee was actually shadowing him, or was he hallucinating?

The thought scared him out of a week's growth.

He was sitting at his desk trying

to decide whether or not he was crazy when the door opened. A park ranger entered. "Got a little story for you, Mr. Quarter, if you want to print it. We're having some trouble up in the park."

"Trouble?" Quarter got himself under control and became the owner and editor of a weekly country newspaper on the alert for a news item. "What kind of trouble?"

"Something is killing game," the ranger explained. "I've found four elk, a couple of bears, and I don't know how many deer."

At the words a slight chill passed through Quarter. "Wolves?" he ventured.

"Wolves wouldn't tackle a bear or a bull elk at this time of the year," the ranger answered. "Anyhow, if wolves had killed the game, the carcasses would show teeth marks. These carcasses don't show anything." The ranger was a big man, jovial and friendly, but he was worried now.

"Hm," Quarter said. "Not illegal gunners then?"

"Not a chance. The game is just dying, so far as I can tell. There are no marks of any kind. It looks like poison, but there isn't any bloating, which rules out several common poisons."

"Where's all this happening?"

"Mostly in the Silver Creek neighborhood." The ranger laughed. "I talked to old Simon Pile about it and he said the bees are doing it. What's the matter, Mr. Quarter? You sick or something?"

"Just a sudden chill," the newspaperman answered hastily. "No, no, I'm all right. Thanks a lot for the item. Maybe I'll make a story out of it."

**A**FTER THE ranger had left, Quarter continued sitting at his

desk. The chill passed, leaving sweat behind it. Bees killing animals. Quarter knew from experience how hard it is to kill a bull elk. Unless a bullet hits a vital spot, a bull elk will carry away half his weight in lead.

Bees killing animals. What if they were just practicing on animals before they got ready to start on human beings?

Again the chill came up in Quarter, rising from the deep marrow of his bones.

Then the thought that had been trying to reach his consciousness for days popped full-blown into his mind.

In the deep depths of his soul he wished he had never remembered it.

By itself, it was a simple thing, an article he had read about the so-called flying saucers. The writer had speculated that the saucers had originated on Mars and that they were manned by intelligent creatures engaged in inspecting Earth for purposes of their own. From the speed with which the disks traveled, and the sharpness of their turns, the writer had guessed that they must be manned by insects. Certainly no creature at all like a human being could stand the acceleration, the g's, created by the turns at terrific speeds. The writer had further speculated that the insects might be super bees.

The chill that came surging up from the depths of Quarter's soul as he remembered this article he had read was like nothing he had ever experienced before.

Suppose this fantastic speculation turned out to be true! Suppose super bees had actually landed on Earth and had begun to create their own civilization here!

Suppose Simon Pile had trapped one of them.

Back into Quarter's mind came the mental picture of the plastic bee trap,

with the round hole neatly burned in one side of it.

Thoughts poured through his mind. *The human animal does not have too strong a foothold on this planet. We regard ourselves as lords of creation, masters of the universe, the end product for which all creation has aimed, the intended children of destiny. We think that Earth and heaven came into existence to provide a proper stage for our entry on the scene. No doubt the dinosaur, if it thought at all, thought the same thing. It is not necessarily true that we are the end-product of creation!*

*The truth may be that even as a race we have only a thin and precarious foothold on existence, that all we have made for ourselves is a beachhead in the cosmos, that the forces arrayed against us may sweep us from this beachhead at any moment. The whole human race may be an accidental intruder into the scheme of creation, a by-product instead of an end-product, an accidental configuration resulting from the loose-jointedness in nature that goes under the name of Planck's constant h. It may be that we have slipped through this loose-jointedness in nature and have spread ourselves upon a stage that was never intended for us, that when our presence on this stage is detected by the rightful actor who properly is to perform here, we may be swept back into the oblivion from which we have daringly crept, while the real heir of creation, the creature for whom all the vast process of nature has moved, goes on to his destiny.*

**T**HE THOUGHTS boiling through William Quarter were not pleasant. They were fearful things, products of chaos and old night. They boiled through him at fever speed,

tearing and twisting and gnawing at his vitals.

*Maybe the real heir is here now, Quarter thought, waiting in the wings to put in his appearance on the stage. During the time of the dinosaurs a small furry creature squeaked in the rushes at the edges of the swamps where the dinosaurs ruled as lords of creation—a small shrew. The dinosaurs were swept from the stage and that small shrew, geological ages later, became man.*

*Where is the shrew squeaking, at the edges of the marshes ruled by the human race?*

*Is he, perhaps, an insect?*

*Is he, perhaps, a multicolored bee who has solved the secret of space flight and is now building up his resources, establishing his strange cities here on earth, staying out of sight among the forests and the mountains until he has become strong enough to emerge from hiding and sweep out of existence these distorted human creatures who have been masquerading as lords of creation in the absence of the rightful heir?*

The super bees, which had been a personal matter concerning only Quarter and Pile, suddenly, in the feverish mind of William Quarter, became a matter which might concern the entire race.

Rising from his desk, Quarter headed for the nearest saloon, where he had three fast drinks. They helped a little, but not enough. His thoughts were still running at fever pace when he went home. His wife, sniffing his breath, gave him the silent treatment. He went into the bedroom and lay down. There was one crumb of effort in being in the bedroom: the super bee that was watching him couldn't get in here.

There was another crumb of comfort in the fact that although animals

had died, no human death had been reported.

Maybe the bees couldn't kill humans!

Quarter felt a lot better when that idea came to him. When he got up from the bed, he was almost happy.

Something about a pane of glass in the window caught his eye. Examining it, he saw what it was.

He had to sit back down on the bed, so great was the shock.

There was a hole in the glass exactly the same as the hole he had seen burned in the side of the bee trap.

They not only had him spotted, they had burned a hole in the window so they could get at him when they wanted to.

**B**EFORE HE had finished dinner that evening, he had decided what he was going to try to do, what had to be done. Until night fell, he pattered around in the garage, loading the garden hose into the trunk of the car and making other preparations. Even if a bee was watching him from the peaked roof of the garage, he made no effort to conceal what he was doing. They couldn't understand everything.

He didn't drive the car out of the garage until well after dark. When he returned again, it was after midnight.

Arising very early the next morning, Quarter announced that he was going fishing. When he went outside, he searched the air above him carefully. So far as he could tell, he was not being watched. Inside the garage, he picked up a piece of lath, which he put into the seat beside him.

Old Simon was already up when Quarter stopped his car in front of the bee-keeper's place. Pile came trotting down to the car, pathetically

glad to see him.

"Bill, have you seen anything?" were his words of greeting.

"I caught just a glimpse of something up on Silver Creek the other day," Quarter answered with elaborate unconcern. "If you want to ride with me, I'm going to fish up there this morning—"

Pile was in the car before he could finish speaking.

In the morning-mist, Silver Creek was cool, but Quarter was wet with sweat before they reached the overhanging bluff. Old Simon, in spite of everything Quarter could do to stop it, bounded along like a mountain goat. Quarter, his piece of lath ready in his hand, went more slowly.

They reached the spot from which the entrance to the cave could be seen.

The air was quiet. No bees were visible. Or none that Quarter could see.

Pile was a little disappointed at that.

Quarter went forward with new eagerness. Deep down inside of him he felt like a man who has been lost in a horrible nightmare and now is beginning to reawaken. Had he dreamed all this, he wondered. Or had it actually happened?

**P**ILE, THE big flashlight in his hand, scrambled up to the cave entrance. It was large enough to enter by stooping. As Quarter went through the opening, he heard Pile's exclamation of surprise ahead of him.

He took a look at what the rays of the flashlight revealed, and almost stopped breathing. This was the city of the super bees all right. But it was not like any hive ever seen on Earth. The whole structure had not been stuck to the ceiling with wax, the way ordinary bees attach a comb

to the top of the cave; a space had been cleared out of solid rock for it, an opening at least two square yards in size. In this opening the city had been in the process of construction.

A city was all it could be called. There were no buildings as humans use the term, there were no streets—bees use air lanes instead of streets—but there was a complex structure the like of which neither of the two men had ever seen. It looked like a huge doll house, only it didn't have little chairs and tables and pianos, cook stoves, radios and TV sets, with a doll family engaged in using this structure.

It had structures, spheres, cones, pyramidal-shaped objects, all fitted together into a complex unit designed to serve some function. What was it supposed to do? Quarter did not know, but he had the impression that it was a system designed to generate some kind of energy—what kind was the secret of the super bees. It was constructed of plastic, not wax, synthetics of a hundred different kinds. The builders of this city had been masters of chemical synthesis.

Pile was moaning and pointing at the floor.

Covering almost every bare spot, piled in heaps in places, their bodies dull now, their wings stiff and still, were hundreds of super bees, all dead.

At the sight, William Quarter finally succeeded in waking from the horrible nightmare that he had been living. Life suddenly surged up in him again, whole, complete and wonderful.

"They're dead, Bill, they're all dead," Simon Pile moaned.

"Maybe they got distemper," Quarter said gently. "You know how distemper will destroy a hive almost overnight."

Quarter had to coax Pile away.

Old Simon came reluctantly, moaning softly to himself. "They're all dead, Bill. Why did they have to die?"

He didn't seem to notice the strangeness of the city they had been building, and the thought never seemed to enter his mind that they might have been anything other than an unusually large and new type of bee.

They reached the outside air.

*BzzzzZZZZttt!*

All the super bees weren't dead. At least one of them was very much alive.

He came out of nowhere, like a streak of lightning. He struck like the lightning strikes—at Simon Pile.

Pile screamed, grabbed at his eyes, threw up his hands, and collapsed at Quarter's feet.

*BzzzzZZZZrrrrrt!*

**Q**UARTER KNEW the bee was after him. He had thought that these bees, like the normal bees of Earth, could sting only once, but as he heard the angry sound charge toward him, he knew he had been mistaken. These bees didn't sting, they discharged some totally different kind of energy. And they could discharge it more than once.

Quarter struck with the lath he carried, directly in front of his eyes.

He heard the splat of an insect body meeting wood.

Crushed, the bee fell.

Quarter stood there crouched, ready, waiting, wondering if another bee would follow the first. He was the picture of an embattled cave man, face to face with the unknown, frightened—but standing his ground and ready to fight.

It seemed to him that an eternity passed while he waited. No sound of an angry bee came. Either there had been only one left, or if there were others, they were not attacking.

At his feet, Simon Pile moaned.

Clawing at his eyes, Simon Pile moaned as he died. He was the one man who had loved bees, and they had killed him.

Eventually Quarter picked up Pile, carried him to his car.

"Heart failure," was the doctor's diagnosis of the cause of death. When Quarter called the doctor's attention to the slightly bloodshot right eye, the symptom was passed off as a minor hemorrhage going along with the coronary failure.

Quarter knew better, but he kept his knowledge to himself. He knew definitely and surely what had killed Simon Pile. But it was not knowledge that he could hope to communicate to any man without definite proof.

**D**URING THE months that followed, William Quarter slowly recovered his lost poise, his badly shaken emotional balance. It isn't good to think you may be the man who has discovered the next actor in the cosmic drama that is being played here on Earth, the solar system, even the universe—discovered the creature that perhaps destiny intended to succeed after your race has gone. This kind of knowledge is not healthy for any man to carry with him. But Quarter carries it. And carries it well.

So far as he has been able to discover, no super bee has ever kept watch over him since the day he and Simon Pile discovered the dead swarm. Nor have there been any reports of dead animals in the Park.

Quarter sometimes wonders if all the bees are dead. Of course, the western country is tremendously huge, and it is possible that at many places in it such swarms are coming into existence. Maybe the human race—except for a few individuals—will never know they exist until they come down from the mountains like a plague of locusts, destroying everything before them.

But, Quarter reasons, maybe these bees from Mars—or wherever they came from—maybe they're not the creatures that destiny intended to supplant the human species. If they didn't succeed in establishing their foothold here on this planet, maybe they're not as clever as they seemed to be.

This much is certain: they were not too clever.

They didn't know the effects of cyanide gas, when pumped through a long garden hose, the nozzle of which had been silently thrust through the entrance of the cave where they had been building their city. Any gopher could have told them how that gas works. But they didn't seem to

know anything about it.

Quarter sweated blood getting the nozzle of the garden hose into the cave that night, but he got the job done.

William Quarter is a little man, unprepossessing in appearance, rather modest, quiet, intelligent. He never thinks of himself as a hero, an actor in a cosmic drama. But he's the man who killed the bees.

Maybe that means we humans are tough enough, strong enough, intelligent enough, to stick around this globe we think is ours a while longer. Maybe we're not. But one thing is certain—and William Quarter is living witness to it—we are not going to leave this globe without a fight.

THE END

**MEN BEHIND AMAZING STORIES****Robert McCree Williams***(continued from second cover)*

sold, frankly, I don't know. I have been keeping my own and a couple of pen names busy for several years.

Why do I write science-fiction? Of course, I don't write science-fiction exclusively. I have turned out many a western and detective story, also articles. But I always come back to science fiction. Not only were my first sales made in this field, but long, long before I started writing it, I had read science-fiction and fantasy pieces with awe and delight. When I started writing, what was more natural than to attempt to produce material along similar lines?

If I have succeeded in giving to half a million or so readers, many of them youngsters, the basic belief that tomorrow will be a pretty decent day, I will feel that I have kept faith not only with the generations behind me but also with the ones to follow. I will also feel that I have done a very small part toward making real that world of the future which is at present only a fiction, a dream, in the minds of some of us.