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Two Worlds ★ ★ ★ ★ For One

by George O. Smith

(author of "Dynasty of the Lost")

Professor Milton had a famous plan for ending the strife between the Western and Eastern world — split the earth in two, literally, and let each side go its way, according to its own ideals. And the trouble was that Milton could actually do what he planned!

WITHOUT preamble, the door swung open with a rush and a man ran into the office. He was waving a paper in one hand, but this was not the only evidence of his excitement; aside from the waved paper and his obviously breathless appearance, the man spoke as soon as he was within sight of the other man behind the desk.

"Professor Milton has resigned!"

The man behind the desk smiled resignedly. "Don't be too concerned, Doctor Harris. Professor Milton has resigned before; he always comes back."

Doctor Harris shook his head. His agitation did not diminish, despite the calm composure of the man behind the desk. "Doctor Edwards," he explained, "you don't really understand. He—"

"Look, Harris," replied Doctor Edwards, dropping the formality of title, "is there anything we can do about it?"

"No," admitted Harris uncomfortably. "But you don't know what he'll be doing next." He handed the paper to the quiet man behind the desk. Doctor Edwards read:

Dear Doctor Edwards:

It has come to my attention that the world is in a high state of confusion. Under these trying circumstances, I

feel moved to do something constructive about it.

You will understand that any honest attempt to eliminate the state of strife that exists is most difficult under my present affiliations with this Institution. Ergo, I make formal resignation, knowing that a request for even a brief leave of absence would not be granted.

Have no lasting fear. I may return once I have accomplished the reinstatement of peace and quiet in this troubled world.

Sincerely yours

Paul Monroe Milton, Ph.D.

Doctor Edwards shrugged. "This time it is the state of the world," he said. His voice held a twinge of amusement.

Harris gasped. "You're not really worried!"

"Of course not. There is no single man on earth capable of untangling the mess of the century."

"I wonder," objected Harris.

"Why?"

"Professor Milton is a literal-minded genius, and a bit of a screwball. A more brilliant man has seldom existed on this earth—but he reminds me somewhat of a powerful machine running wild; neither he nor a machine has much judgment."

"But what are you worried about?"



"The shock of splitting the earth would leave no city standing; huge crevices would be formed, and no living thing would remain.

"Remember the time he said 'Nothing is impossible!' and was instantly told to try scratching a match on a bar of soap?"

Edwards laughed heartily. "You bet!" he chuckled. "Milton invented a safety match that would light only when scratched on a soft, moist bar of soap. Nowhere else."

"Uh-huh," drawled Harris. "And a bit of common sense added to that kind of genius might have brought forth a real safety match that might be worth millions to the institution. What I'm a bit worried about is just what angle his rather literal mind will follow."

"No matter. We can stop him once we know—and Professor Milton is not an unknown figure; we'll wait and watch carefully."

Doctor Harris nodded slowly. He was sensible enough to know that the Professor was missing completely and no matter how dangerous it might be, nothing could be done until Professor Milton did something to smoke himself out into the open. He left Doctor Edwards' office determined to keep a close eye on newspaper and a sharp ear on the radio commentators.

* * *

THE GENERAL Assembly of the United Nations came to order after prolonged applause. The Chairman nodded genially and spoke into the microphones on his desk; his words were translated for those who did not understand his tongue, but no man present was unaware of the importance of the figure beside him. Pictures have no tongue and Professor Milton was genius.

"Gentlemen," said the Chairman, "this may seem irregular. However, Professor Milton comes before us to explain a plan he has evolved for the continued peace and satisfaction of the world—a world made desparate by continued disagreement. We need no pre-vues of his plan because we know that he Milton seldom presents any solution that is not workable. I relinquish the rostrum to Professor Paul Monroe Milton!"

More thunderous applause.

"Gentlemen of the United Nations," said Milton into the microphones, "it is not my purpose to decide who is right in these everlasting disagreements. Without a doubt each side has its own personal reasons for believing as it does, otherwise there would be no agreement.

"However it stands that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics wants to rule a certain part of the world in their own manner—which is anathema to the United States of America. Similarly, the United States of America prefers to see the world operating under a manner favorable to its principles of Democracy.

"Because of this no agreement has been reached. An impasse has obtained for years.

"My plan is simple. Let us divide the world into two equal parts and each go our way, ruling each according to our own ideals. I offer you two worlds for one!"

Professor Milton seated himself.

The General Assembly was quiet for a moment; then all broke into a roar of scornful laughter. Minutes later the Chairman succeeded in restoring order. He said: "I fear that Professor Milton does not quite understand. My dear Professor Milton, we agree in the whole. The main argument is not that we should do this; the question at hand is how to get along after the world is divided."

"Simple," said the professor. "It is—"

He was interrupted by more roars of laughter.

"Fools! Idiots!" he stormed. The power of his voice stilled the laughter. "You think it will not work?"

More laughter, and an undercurrent of remarks like: "Choose up sides like a ball game"; "Make it cricket, old chap." "Match you for the Dardanelles, Commissar,; "Swap you Java for—"

"Imbeciles," yelled Professor Milton angrily. "Must I demonstrate?"

"Just how do you propose to effect this division?" asked the Chairman sarcastically.

"By application of gravitic field theory," snapped Professor Milton.

The Russian Delegate arose, was

recognized, and said: "Professor Milton's suggestion sounds uncomfortable. I fully believe that no one will find fault with Russia if I exercise my power of veto on this suggestion." He seated himself among wild cheers, laughter, and applause.

In the excitement, Professor Milton left.

* * *

CHARLES Ingalls of the F.B.I. smiled tolerantly. "I see no reason to be upset," he said.

Doctors Edwards and Harris shook their heads in unison. "You don't understand," explained Edwards. —Recall his words?"

"Of course."

"And you apply no importance to them?"

"His theory sounds reasonable. Let Russia run her section—"

Harris snorted excitedly; he slapped the newspaper with the back of his hand. "Divide the world," he said, his voice rising in pitch. "Have you any idea of what that would mean?"

"Why—it still sounds sensible."

"Professor Milton is literal-minded to the extreme. Professor Milton is sheer genius— That is why he is employed in our institution."

"Then," snapped Ingalls, "why don't you keep him there?"

"We'd like to. The trouble is that Milton is genius and as such quite important to certain factions. His ability to solve problems hitherto unsolvable make him valuable. One of the problems he has encountered and solved is the way to leave our institution at any time. That is why we treat him as an employee instead of an inmate."

"So about this dividing business?"

Harris shook his head. "When Milton said 'divide the world into two parts,' he meant that literally. He is quite capable of devising some means of dividing the world astronomically."

Ingalls laughed. "Impossible!" he chuckled.

"Several years ago Professor Milton was in need of some dye for some obscure purpose. One of his assistants made a wisecrack to the ef-

fect that if Professor Milton was so smart, why couldn't he filter the dye out of ink and use that. Milton devised a filter capable of separating the dye from ink, and used it. So far the filter is useless for anything else but it will certainly remove the color from a bottle of ink, leaving the stuff in two useless quantities."

"Interesting, but—"

"Astronomically, the idea of separating the world into two hemispheres is disastrous."

"WHY?" ASKED Ingalls. "I know little of astrology."

Edwards glared at him. "Not astrology; astronomy. Astrophysics or celestial mechanics. Your half-apple of a world is unstable astronomically. Gravity would set in unfavorably upon the instant of division and separation and the half-apple would collapse into two smaller spheres, gradually assuming true spherical shapes in thousands of years as the rocks cold-flowed. But for the moment, the shock and the immediate crack-up would leave no city standing; huge crevices would be formed, and no living thing to remain. Understand, I'm a doctor of medicine and not an astrophysicist. My description may err but I can guarantee that the results would be disastrous. I suggest that if you don't believe me, call one of the big brains at Mount Palomar; they'll tell you the details."

"It sounds impossible. But if the man is a maniac—"

"Not a maniac," objected Doctor Harris. "Just completely single-track, literal-minded. Genius without judgement. Cares nothing for any problem that has not caught his fancy but will pursue anything he likes to the bitter end. Trying to keep up with what he fancies is like predicting which way a bar of bath soap will squirt when you step on it inadvertently. He's—"

"Enough! Convinced or not, I'll aid you to re-collect the Professor. How shall we go about it?"

"You're the man-hunter," said Edwards with a smile. "How do you go about it?"

"Just what kind of thing will this

mad genius use to divide the earth?" asked Ingalls.

"Lord knows," grunted Harris. "Why?"

"I was suggesting that we keep watch over the sale of certain materials."

"Make it a watch over *all* materials," snorted Edwards. "Field theory is an abstract subject and he'll try to reduce it to practise, I'd guess. Mechanical division is impossible, I'd state flatly. Gravity holds the earth together; slicing it would do no good for it would cold-pressure weld together once the knife passed. But with some sort of field to divide and direct the forces of gravity— Well, your guess is as good as mine."

"Fine," said Ingalls sourly. "So we have the job of locating one man in the earth who might be capable of ruining it, but we don't know how." He snorted. "Could one man do it?"

"We're here because we think so; he's done some mighty impossible things so far. Few of them are known for security reasons. Actually, though it is not admitted, Professor Milton is the man whose calculations made the original uranium pile practical. He took theory and reduced theoretical equations to practical calculations before they tried it out at the University of Chicago. It was some of his calculations that—stolen, of course—put the rocket experts on the track of developing the V-2. So—?"

"Um. I begin to see."

* * *

PROFESSOR Moreiko of the Moscow Academy of Science shook his head heavily. "Ridiculous," he said in a good grade of English into the telephone. "Ridiculous, my comrade. No earthquake fault-lines exist there."

Ingalls, on the other end of the telephone, said: "We know that; but that is where we anticipate trouble."

"What manner of trouble. You do not expect—?"

"I have called every seismographic station on earth," explained Ingalls. "Or I should say that I am calling every station. Professor Milton—"

"Ah, the great Professor Milton! He is—?"

"Loose again," grunted Ingalls.

"With what purpose?"

"Professor Milton has decided to divide the earth so that Russia can run her half while we—"

"Divide the earth!" exploded Professor Moreiko loudly, nearly damaging the telephone earpiece and Ingalls' ear at the same time. "You Americans!... He is yours! I will help, but you must stop him!"

"Okay," replied Ingalls. "Just keep an eye on the district I mentioned. According to the big globe here, that is the best place to divide the world so that each of us can have an equitable half—"

"And a precious lot it will do us," snorted Moreiko. "What a completely outrageous idea!"

"Well, I'm told he is the guy to do it."

Moreiko spluttered for a moment. Then his voice became sober. "Had any other man on earth made that statement I would have scoffed," he said. "But Professor Milton— American, I am alarmed!"

The connection was broken as the Russian hung up in an excited mood.

* * *

DAYS PASSED. Days in which men poured over shipping statements, pondering their relative importance and seeking some clue of strange shipments to a strange location. A huge airliner was stolen; the seismographs of the world were still save for their usual reportings; for three days all radio was killed by energetic cracklings of static which appeared to be completely non-directional in source. The Department of Terrestrial Magnetism in Washington reported shiftings of the lines of equal deviation from true north and a change in the vertical component as well but their measurements were insufficiently precise to pin the source of trouble down to more than several thousand square miles.

Twenty days after the Professor had resigned from the Institution, all the world's seismographs reported a

serious temblor. Directionally, it was tracked down, and the calculations indicated a fairly straight line of fault.

The fault was a vertical Great Circle of the earth dividing the earth into two hemispheres.

Somewhere along this Great Circle must be Professor Milton, reasoned the many agencies seeking him. The beat the Circle from pole to pole and though finding one man in the wilderness of earth might be impossible, every available man was seeking him actively. Locating Milton was inevitable—providing Milton did not accomplish his division of the earth first.

Ten days later the earth shook again, and people looked at one another in fear.

"We must find him!" stormed Ingalls.

Edwards and Harris nodded unhappily. Edwards added: "He's down there, somewhere."

Ingalls looked out of the plane window at a million square miles of glaring ice. "A mote in the Grand Canyon of the Colorado," he grunted.

Professor Moreiko shook his head. "All Americans are crazy," he stated.

"No," grunted Edwards. "Only some of them." Moreiko laughed bitterly. Days upon end of flying over the ice was tiring to them all.

It was, however, only a matter of time before the elusive Professor Milton was located. And hours later, Moreiko gave a shout as he pointed towards a small building squat upon the ice with a tall steel tower beside it. They landed beside the building, and climbed out of the plane worriedly. Whether the professor was armed bothered them quite a bit.

PROFESSOR Milton was not armed, nor was he resentful at being found. "Greetings," he boomed genially. "You are the first."

"Why did you hide?" demanded Edwards.

"Hide? I was not hiding. I merely came to the proper place for the division of the earth. I'd have mentioned it, but apparently no one was

interested; I was forced to go on my own, so to speak."

"You realize the importance of this?"

"Of course," smiled Professor Milton whimsically. "Once this division takes place, there will be no cause for argument."

"Nor anybody to argue," pointed Edwards.

"Small matter. Russia wants—"

"Might I speak for Russia?" asked Professor Moreiko.

"Ah, Moreiko! So glad to see you. Of course you may speak."

"Professor Milton, I tell you that neither Russia nor the United States is pleased with this proposition of yours."

"Why not?" asked Milton childishly. "It seems equitable."

"It is equitable, but truly not practical."

"No?" boomed Milton, reaching for a large lever protruding from a panel. "I shall show you. I—"

"Please consider first," objected Moreiko.

"But why? Your ideology is at cross purposes with ours; you go your way and we'll go ours."

"Dead!" snapped Moreiko.

"Better dead," replied Milton, "than constant strife."

"You realize that you will kill every man on earth?"

"Not at all... Just a few. The others will find life difficult for a bit but most will survive."

"But—"

Milton stood to his full height which was imposing. "I care little for that," he boomed. "I am laughed at; I am made a fool of; I am ridiculed. I am told that my theories are impossible. I shall show them all, though they die in the attempt!"

"And you yourself."

"And if I do—if we do—it will prove my theories sound. Russia and the United States may each have their half, separated by millions of miles of space where neither can harm the other."

"It will not work," said Moreiko. Edwards and Harris groaned. Telling Professor Milton that something will

not work was the best way to urge him on.

Professor Milton sat down with a superiorly tolerant smile. "I shall give you five minutes," he told the Russian. "If you prove this impossible, I will desist with but a formal apology from those Doubting Thomases."

"Clip him," snapped Ingalls, pointing a revolver at the professor.

Professor Milton smiled. "Field theory," he told Ingalls. "Pull the trigger, and see what happens!"

Ingalls grunted, pointed the pistol at the wall and fired. The explosion was but a piffling one, more of a slow burn than a sharp bang. The bullet oozed from the end of the barrel and fell to the floor with a thud.

Ingalls pulled a blackjack from his pocket and started forward, lifting it. Then he stopped. Moving the sap was difficult, like trying to swing a sledge under water.

"All metals encounter resistive fields here," said Professor Milton.

"At him bare handed, then" snapped Ingalls.

"Wait," said Moreiko. "The world need not lose a brilliant brain. Once I have convinced him of the fallacy, he will forget this entirely."

"Fallacy?" snapped Milton angrily. "You think I cannot divide the world?"

MOREIKO smiled. "No, my esteemed colleague, I know you can divide the world; that all the earth grants. The earth does not want itself divided."

"Even to eliminate trouble?"

"If I prove to you that the trouble will not be eliminated, then will you forget this venture?"

"Yes, but it is the only way."

Moreiko nodded.

"I presume that you have set up a plane of cleavage through the earth. One, say, that will divide the earth and also screen the gravitic attraction of each half for the other so that centrifugal force will cause the two halves to separate?"

"Yes."

"Then, once separated by several

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millions of miles, you believe that no arguments can ensue?"

"Yes."

"Because you think that neither of us can get at the other to do harm?"

"Yes," replied Milton.

"But Professor," smiled the Russian, "may I point out that in this equipment; in this generator of some hitherto unknown field of force, you have developed the means of interplanetary travel?"

"Perhaps?"

"Now, then," said Moreiko, "if you must demonstrate your power, divide the moon. But remember that separating the earth into two parts generates *interplanetary* strife instead of mere global argument. Have I answered your problem?"

* * *

THINGS are less troublesome now. A bit of impending disaster will draw people together; it is often a sorry fact that once the disaster is averted, those people will again revert to their former animosity. But all that the people of the earth have to do to remember is to look upwards.

There are two moons in the sky, moons once hemispherical but whose edges daily crumble into crude spheres.

A nice reminder—and also another problem for Professor Milton. He has not yet returned to his Institution, for he is living in a glass dome on one of the moons, trying to work out the problem of bringing them together again.

He claims it to be but a matter of time.

THE END

