

THE HIGH-TENSION MAGAZINE

INSPIRED BY THE CBS RADIO AND TELEVISION PROGRAM SERIES **SUSPENSE**

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Publisher: TOM FARRELL
Managing Editor: R. B. WILLIAMS
General Manager: ARNOLD E. ABRAMSON
Circulation Director: HERBERT C. HAUPTMANN

Editor: THEODORE IRWIN
Associate Editor: N. R. De MEXICO
Art Director: FRANC L. ROGGERI
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SUSPENSE Magazine is published quarterly by the Farrell Publishing Corporation at 350 East 22nd St. Chicago, Ill. Editorial and general offices at 490 Lexington Ave., New York 17, N. Y. Tom Farrell, president, A. E. Abramson, vice-president, Paul Thurlow, treasurer, Edwin J. Harragan, secretary. Entry as second class matter applied for at the post office at Chicago, Ill., under the act of March 3, 1879. Title registered in U. S. Patent Office and in Canadian Trade Marks office, Spring 1951, edition. This issue is published simultaneously in the Dominion of Canada. Copyright under International Copyright Convention and Pan American Copyright Conventions. All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction, in whole or in part, in any form. Subscriptions \$1.00 a year, in the United States and its possessions and Canada. Not responsible for unsolicited material. Copyright 1951 by Farrell Publishing Corporation. Printed in U. S. A. Vol. 1, No. 2, Summer, 1951.



WORLD WITHIN

Dr. Ramsgate

got in all right, but

the desperate question

was—how could he get out?

THOMAS A. COFFEE

This unusual journey through protoplasm differs from earlier trips of the sort reported by science-fictioners. Instead of a fleck within a fleck within a fleck, we have one fleck conquering others—by virtue of ingenuity, courage and sheer human spirit. Written by a young electronics engineer from Texas now working on (sh! . . . top secret), this story is superb of its kind.

I KNOCKED only once, and Loedstein opened the door himself. Funny thing, I hadn't seen him in months, yet he showed no surprise.

"Good morning. I'm Dr. Ramsgate of the Board of Health. I suppose you remember me?"

"Yes. I've never forgotten your accusations."

"I'm here on rather a nasty mission, Dr. Loedstein. The Board has sent me to expose you, if I can, for what I believe you are—an outright fake! Your sign in front states that you guarantee to reduce any person

by as many pounds as he or she wishes, within three days and with no exceptions. That's a broad statement, Loedstein. But I'm a fair man. Admit to me now that you are nothing but a common swindler, in which case I'll quietly hush the whole matter up, and you'll lose nothing but your patients. Or else try to prove to me that your claims are justified. Should you fail, I'll have you jailed under the statutes."

"Dr. Ramsgate, I suppose I should be angry. But I've been through this before, several times. I've sent

smarter investigators than you crawling home with their tails between their legs. How much do you weigh?"

"Two hundred and twenty-eight pounds. With dieting, thyroid treatment and constant worry, I'm unable to bring it down. Do you realize I'm more than fifty pounds overweight despite anything medical science can do for me?"

"In that case, you poor man, when I reduce your weight to about 170 pounds, will you be satisfied that I know my business?"

With a shrug I said: "Yes, naturally." And I followed him into his clinic.

The next thing I knew he had me sitting in a peculiar metal chair. Machinery and electronic equipment quite surrounded me. I was all set to start asking questions when he clamped my arms, chest and head to the chair and said:

"The clamps are merely to make sure that patients do not move. There is, however, no pain or physical harm in this treatment. You see, Doctor, you are about to be exposed to thyroid rays. Many men of the medical world have wondered at the possibilities, but haven't the courage to try it. Luckily I am a brave man, Dr. Ramsgate."

I'd heard of the experiments—growth factors subject to electronic inhibition—but the process was supposed to be deadly.

"Why, this is nothing but murder, Loedstein! I walked in here underestimating you. You're completely mad! You know as well as I that you

can't get away with this. Not only my office but everyone in the city knows I came here to expose you today. If you murder me simply in order to continue your idiotic swindle, don't you realize the police will come straight to you?"

"Why, of course, dear Ramsgate. They'll be here in a matter of hours, but they won't accuse me of murder. Because I'm not going to murder you, Ramsgate; just get you out of my hair."

I looked him right in the eyes. Yes, he was serious. Panic seized me as he moved about examining various pieces of equipment. Then his hand found a switch on a panel just over my head.

I heard a generator groan, whine, then settle down to a steady singing note. I could see Loedstein turning rheostats and watching various indicators. I felt a scream building up. The scream was just emerging when his hand flashed across my eyes to a push button on the control panel. I heard something. I can't say what. Maybe it was only the click of a relay, or possibly a bomb went off. I can't say. The next thing I knew Loedstein was flicking water in my face.

"You are a nervous man for a doctor, Ramsgate. Nothing hurt but your feelings. You merely passed out from shock. Now please calm yourself while I try to explain what I'm doing.

"You see, I'm giving you the same treatment I give to all my patients, but fifteen times as much of it. Usually one minute of this ray will

reduce a person by 20 or 30 pounds. After that one minute I reverse the ray's polarity just long enough to stop the action on the thyroid, and the treatment is finished. In your case, Ramsgate, 15 minutes should bring your weight down, I would guess roughly, to zero pounds. But don't worry, Doctor, you'll be very much alive. You see, this treatment reduces weight by actually reducing size. I'm sorry to inform you, but every part of you will reduce to nothingness. At first you will shrink quickly—until you are about six inches tall. From there on the action gets slower and slower until finally it finishes. It might take years to complete—though in less than an hour you'll be too small to see. Just to make sure you disappear I'm going to swallow you when you are no bigger than a pill. It shouldn't take my stomach acid long to digest so dainty a morsel.

"Let's see, the ray's been on 14 minutes. I'd better get back to the instrument panel. Oh, you can relax for a while. The treatment won't take effect for another full 15 minutes after I cut the switch and—Now! Your treatment is over. I could let you go home but, ah, I'm afraid your wife wouldn't recognize you."

"Let me out of this chair," I screamed. "You're stark mad."

"You'll be able to get out yourself in just a few minutes, Ramsgate."

I couldn't tell if Dr. Loedstein was pretending or not—until the clamps over my arms started getting loose. At first I thought it was pure imagination, then realized with a sinking

heart that I was actually shrinking. This maniac had somehow discovered a startling scientific phenomenon and if I didn't do something now, I'd never get another chance. I must somehow escape, and quickly, for according to Loedstein I would soon be too small to do anything at all.

As the clamps continued to loosen, a plan formed. It was possible that the madman didn't realize that I would be free long before I would be small enough to be helpless. I felt well, physically. No ill effects so far. But looking at my hands and legs, I saw that I was already down to the size of a 14-year-old. The clamps felt quite loose. It was now or never.

I watched Loedstein closely. He was rather a small man, perhaps no more than five feet six. Suddenly I slipped loose and lunged at the same time. I landed squarely in the middle of his chest and though I couldn't have weighed over 130 pounds, they were enough to carry him to the floor on his back.

My two small sinewy hands clutched his neck. It took every ounce of my steadily diminishing strength to cling to my hold.

Soon the throbbing at my fingertips died to a soft jerking pulse, then to a slight fluttering, and stillness.

I didn't consider the question of his being dead or alive. I didn't even know if I had intended to kill him or not and lay like one dead myself. Several minutes must have passed before I finally came out of the stupor. My first sane thought told me too much time had been wasted.

I was sitting in the middle of his chest and had been wondering, subconsciously, why his head looked so large, until realization dawned on me.

I was now one foot tall, at most. My wife, Francie: suddenly I thought of her. She would be worried because I hadn't come home yet. I looked at the telephone on a nearby desk. I climbed the rungs of the desk chair and swung over to the phone. Standing on the desk I exerted a tremendous effort and pried the phone off its cradle. I used my whole hand and arm to dial my number. The "zero" almost threw me off the desk when I released the dial spring.

"Hello!" the voice thundered like a loudspeaker.

"Hello, Francie, this is John. Listen, honey—"

"John, what's wrong? Your voice—you sound ghastly."

"Listen, I haven't much time! I'm all right—almost, that is. I'm going to be away for a while. I don't know how long, so don't ask. I've got to figure something out, that's all. I . . ."

"I can't hear you, John. Can't you speak louder?"

"But I'm yelling now, Fran . . ."

"John, what's wrong! Say something, say something . . ."

No use, I realized then. Though I yelled until my throat hurt, I was too small to be more than a bit of line noise over that telephone.

I rested a few minutes, then climbed back down the phone cable using the silken hairs very much like Tarzan used the limbs of trees. I

walked aimlessly over the floor, wondering how people ever could think linoleum was smooth. The mountain in the distance must be Loedstein's body. Just to settle my curiosity and with no plan in mind, I headed for Loedstein at a good brisk pace. The floor was really treacherous, with its pits and crevices.

I wasn't afraid, for some reason. The wonder of the situation, perhaps. My objective for the present was to find out if I had killed Dr. Loedstein. The journey upward through the rough cotton weave of his shirt was a trip I'll never forget. Only determination kept me going, while tiny sharp daggers gouged flesh at every step. Anything can be accomplished however, with enough urge.

Finally I dropped from a low hanging thread, a distance that seemed equivalent to 30 feet, onto the soft spongy neck and climbed up over the chin. Well, at least his whiskers were growing. I stood at the base of a huge one and watched it stretch slowly, but surely; always pulsating at the base where it disappeared into fatty tissue that oozed with oil. It was a nightmare.

Yes, he was definitely alive. The cilia-like fuzz that towered so giganticly overhead was swaying rhythmically, first in one direction, then the other. It was a good sign of breathing. The thought passed through my mind of the great danger I was in. Instinct warned me to seek refuge before this now mammoth thing came to life. But this fear couldn't compare with the one that followed, when in trying to

move I found I no longer had legs to move on. During those few minutes of thought a radical physical change had taken place. My whole body, if I still cared to call it that, had softened and combined until I was nothing more than a globule of living protoplasm with slight protuberances where arms and legs used to be. Also I was so small that the fuzz I had been surrounded by was now stupendous vegetation.

Seeing what had happened to my arms and legs, I wondered what my upper extremities now resembled. My head was merely not there. I was looking at my entire body, yet—could it be? I had no eyes, no head, but I saw everything! Well, I considered, the Creator certainly missed no possibility. When I lost the sense normally a property of the eyes, I regained it by a kind of mental projection which is much more versatile, believe me.

I was no longer afraid of the returning consciousness of the body. I was too small and light to be injured by a sudden deep breath or a fast movement on Loedstein's part. But another fear suddenly presented itself. At the moment of physical body change when I had lost limbs, head and eyes, I had also quit breathing air; and the oxygen supply in my new plasmic body seemed to be dwindling fast. This required action! I had slight control of the body by the expansion and contraction method. I wormed myself into a more sheltered area, while thinking about the oxygen problem. After this slight motion I realized how critical

the situation was. I was mentally and physically exhausted, and only by perfect relaxation would I live long enough to think out a solution—if there was one.

The only way to obtain oxygen is to absorb it, either directly from the air or indirectly from other sources. I tried by mental control of the new body to absorb oxygen from the surrounding air and I did seem to revive a little: but the poison gases given off by the body I inhabited sickened me to such an extent that I had to discontinue. If only I could separate good air from bad, I would absorb—but wait! In the bloodstream of this body was dissolved pure oxygen, no doubt. The shrinking had slowed greatly now. I managed to wriggle over the edge of one of the numerous bottomless crevices in the skin. I heaved over without a backward glance. The rolling, tumbling fall downward was peculiar. Instead of falling fast and free, I more nearly floated down, gently bouncing from various surfaces on the way. At last I found myself wedged between two jutting, leathery objects that pulsed in and out, and seemed to force me outward instead of in where I wanted to go.

I worked desperately trying to move inward against the outward pressure of gases and molecules of sweat. Each time the structure opened I edged forward and mentally gasped in exhaustion. This could not go on much longer. I was so very weak. But I had hope. I thought I could feel a slight pressure crossing the outgoing one with a force

toward the inside, only at a slightly different angle. I changed to follow that pressure. Although weak, it was definitely moving inward.

The farther along I went the easier travel became. I felt dull and vague. I could still feel the never-ending pulsation of the skin structure opening and closing. Long minutes had passed since leaving the outside world. I wondered if Loedstein was moving about now, feeling his throat where my fingers had been, wondering where I was, and if his treatment had served his purpose. I could only hope that, somehow, the intake system of the skin would lead me to oxygen; for I couldn't flex or move a single molecule, only lie pressed between slabs of pulsing structure.

Darkness closed in. I remember wondering about this. A moment before I had been able to see without light. The energy remaining in me must have dropped to such a low point that sight, like thought, was no longer possible. How near dead I was, or how long a time this condition lasted, I shall never know.

As the first inkling of thought returned I knew that all danger had passed. I was comfortable, contented and surrounded by all the elements necessary to life. I was just beginning to see a little and examine my surroundings when I realized the presence of something other than myself. I was still wondering about many things when I heard it, or felt it, whatever it was. In any case a voice within me spoke, not any language, yet in perfectly clear thought. I sensed many individual thoughts.

They seemed to come from all directions and penetrate my mind where they all registered at the same time, yet I understood each one separately.

"Found in the externess."

"Heard calls of help. Weak, but still alive. Needed oxygen."

"A very strange one, very complex. Can only understand a few of his thought patterns; must be a top thinker."

"They're coming for him any time now."

The wonder and awe I felt at "hearing" these words was so tremendous, it was almost impossible to accept the truth. Here inside a human body existed an entire organization evidently similar to civilization in the outside world.

I had been picked up, I learned later, by a group of builders who, while working on an outermost cell wall, had heard my mental calls for help. Yes, I could see them now, fast-moving blobs of plasm, darting back and forth to a section of cell wall; tearing out an old part, and inserting a new one, and then repeating the process until a whole section of wall was replaced while I watched. They worked in perfect coordination. Whenever a certain piece of material was needed, out of nowhere a plasmic body appeared carrying just that piece and passing it with no wasted time to the one working at the wall itself.

If I had possessed a mouth it would have been gaping wide open. As I watched them darting through the heavy liquid in which we were all suspended, they seemed like little blobs

of oil propelled by some unseen force. I tried the thought of moving. I willed myself to move to the center of the room and I felt the slight friction of the liquid substance against my plasmic body as I moved to the center position. It had been slow motion, but I realized I had willed it slow. I tried again and found I could move at any speed desired. But the faster I moved, the greater the friction, consequently the more heat I felt. This could explain the changes in temperature of the human body. When the body temperature goes above normal, it might simply indicate that the body workers are moving above normal speed, trying to overcome some hazard or destruction.

Having completed the entire cell reconstruction, the workers were filing out through an excretion duct of some kind. I remembered their thoughts referring to something coming after me, and since I preferred to explore on my own time, I decided not to wait to be taken into custody. I fell into place at the end of the line and followed the procession. Their thoughts reflected that they were taking some kind of transportation system to another section of cells needing repair.

I followed along full of expectancy. I seemed to have a greater density than the others. I was almost opaque whereas I could see through some of the workers. We filed through a kind of fibrous substance which seemed to fill the space between cell walls. In most of the cells we passed there were a few plasmic bodies slowly

working at some simple task. I could catch a few very simple thought patterns, so simple they were hardly recognizable as thoughts at all. From ahead I received thoughts concerning the next project. From the description it seemed they were to begin repair on a whole section of cells destroyed in a straight even line covering a considerable distance. This I translated as a body cut or scratch.

After traveling through the meshing fibers for a considerable distance, the workers in front of me one by one forced themselves through what appeared to be a solid wall and disappeared. Watching the worker in front bear against the wall and break through left no doubt in mind that I could do the same. So after he was gone I willed a little pressure against the wall. Considerably less force would have sufficed. I went squelching through a heavy mass, through another wall, and into a soft cell on the opposite side.

I felt the puzzling thought wave of a body present, and then an influence of force very uncomfortable to be under. The last thought received from this plasmic body was one of utter surprise that I could move away while he willed to overcome me. I went gently back through the wall and found the transportation system the construction workers had talked about. This I knew must be an artery of the circulatory system. The smaller structures moving, suspended yet controlled, would be red corpuscles.

I was aimlessly carried along, bumping into different things, tak-

ing in all the close-up views of medical interest, not considering possible danger. So I was not prepared for defense when out of nowhere a dark object suddenly surrounded me, and closed like a vise, with me inside. I had thought myself pretty indestructible, yet already I felt uncomfortable, sickening as though dissolving into this thing. I analyzed the feeling hurriedly. It was another force, trying to dissolve my structure into his. The only way to fight force is with force. I considered that fact and began a thought to block the force acting on me. It worked. So far, so good. The uncomfortable feeling was gone. The creature acted strangely now. I could feel mental protest at the shield I had erected. Time and time again, the force attacked, until I finally exerted the amount of mental energy I felt was necessary, and the dark curtain fell apart.

Yes, there was danger here; but not for me. For how could one possessing the entire potential of a human body be endangered by the power of a particle.

Under a microscope I might have recognized what tribe of bacteria that fellow belonged to. But seeing him at that size I could only wonder. I passed swiftly onward. The pace was so fast that individual cell walls were almost indiscernible.

Every so often a white corpuscle came close by and I could feel thoughts of considerable power probing into mine, but I gave none in return and they evidently thought me harmless as I was not molested. I soon felt another malicious force. It

seemed to come from a quite short distance ahead. I went toward it, and there was a stringy looking specimen, possibly resembling a streptococcus, adhered to the artery wall on one side, facing a mass of whites on the other. I could feel the mingling force of the germ and the white corpuscles. About an even battle, it appeared. I felt like the hero in a story book as I ordered—"Stand back." I addressed the whites with what I considered the small force necessary and they fell back amazed, almost paralyzed. I faced the germ and probed for thought. Yes, here was thought, clear and simple, yet with surprising power. The germ thought, and had a strong will for survival. I knew it was preparing to divide into two parts, and wanted to disappear into secluded tissue somewhere. Well, too bad, it must be done. I decided to try a fair shot of power, just to see the result. I let loose with a tiny bombshell of mental destruction directed to land within the germ.

The germ disintegrated, and also an entire section of artery wall. We were all swept into the surrounding cell walls, which broke down one at a time under the pressure of the blood stream. But this lasted only a few moments. Then as in answer to an alarm, workers from everywhere appeared and closed the break with fibrous material. Within seconds the wall was rebuilt. I decided to be more careful in future.

Soon after this I heard a command that seemed to occupy all space. It was peculiar to understand, yet I had no doubt that it was given especially

for my benefit. Translated into spoken words it would have sounded like—"Bring the strange one to me immediately."

The whites gathered around me. They were the same ones who fought the germ plus others who came flocking from all directions.

They surrounded me on all sides, forming a thick wall which nothing could normally break through. Yet they faltered a short distance away, emitting thought of fear and anxiety, reflecting their feeling regarding the task ahead. I mused over the fact that even the innermost flesh and blood felt the same fear that the spirit and body in entirety feel.

These tiny molecules of individual will sent me a thought simultaneously. Though presented as a command, the impulse reaching me bore greater resemblance to pleading.

"You must come with us," they ordered, at the same time almost imperceptibly withdrawing.

"Do not fear so," I answered them. "I will go with you, not because you command me to, but because I am curious about the voice in my mind that came from nowhere."

Traveling in suspension within the blood stream of an artery is a fast process. It was only seconds before we reached a portion of cell wall which, though identical to the rest, must have been the designated place. Here we passed through layer after layer of wall, finally coming to a halt within a cell much larger than the rest I had seen. In the center was a shining body who gave off a greenish-yellow light. He was situated in

the heart of a mass of web-like structures that surrounded him on all sides, each thread of web ending in a pool of black oily substance that formed a circle around him.

"I am a controller," he said, motioning me to come to him. "I am sorry the rebuilders did not leave you outside. It would have been better for you to die there and then, for I know ONE will never let so dangerous a thing as you live within this world of ours." The thought received here was of the supreme ruler of the organization. It seemed to be a thought I would describe as one or number one.

"Now you must go to ONE." The whites came forth and we passed through row after row of huge cells packed full of tiny living orbs that seldom moved at all. "What is their duty?" I asked a white.

"You are passing through the edge of a memory section," he replied, and then continued, "here each one of these bodies retain one instant of memory. Their only duty is to keep the pattern of memory sharp and clear, so that their impression may be forwarded to the conscious spirit whenever called for. This is one of the only links with the conscious mind that we have. We run into a lot of trouble here. The memory cells are practically perfect, but often they are unable to get their message through. The reason for this is simple, yet impossible to correct. It so happens there is only one group of nerves in communication with the conscious mind. This is often so filled with the message demanding the

memory be brought forward, that there is no channel by which the message can actually be sent. And sometimes the consciousness does not allow enough time for the locator to find the memory cells in demand. You see, memory cells that are not often used become crowded into isolation and are very difficult to locate. Given time to function, this organization would work perfectly.

"We are now at the dwelling place of ONE. We cannot enter, but if *you* go through the wall you will find him inside."

I got the thought and pressed through the wall. It took quite a serious amount of energy to penetrate the massive layer.

At first I thought the cell was empty, and then came a terrific crushing force of power so tremendous that thought ceased, and life itself seemed to ebb away.

Then the force relaxed slightly and I could think again and project my vision to all parts of the place. This, presumably the central room of the entire body, was empty. Except for the peculiar construction of the walls and the thickness of the suspension, it was similar to any of the other cells of the control department. Then a thought exploded within my mind.

"You probably wonder why I did not destroy you when you first entered here instead of letting you regain your senses. Well, you are a stranger to our world. You must possess much knowledge I should like to have. Only once before did an outside power enter this world. He also caused a great deal of trouble, until I

crushed him, as I will you very shortly. You agree that I can put an end to you, don't you, stranger? You have felt my power."

"I'm afraid, my overconfident ONE, you missed your only chance. When you caught me off guard and held me under your power, it was possible only because I was not expecting such treatment. Next time you try that, it will be the end of your existence here. You see, when you relaxed your force, I erected a shield against which no power available here can stand a chance. I warn you, the next time will be the last for you."

The answer was exactly as expected. I felt force building against the shield, more and more power behind it. I felt the shield start to collapse in on me. I added power and more power. For a long time the two forces remained quivering between us. I felt the force slowly closing in. This time every particle of power I knew how to use was thrown in, trying to hold that shield in place. Still, the shield backed towards me. This subconscious being, actually only part of a human spirit, was overcoming the whole unit packed into my small plasmic body.

Subconscious—yes, the subconscious, the more powerful agency! I'd have to work fast. I had to draw just a little power from the shield to do what had to be done. When that power was taken away, the shield started accelerating towards me. Quickly I used that tiny bit of power and sent an urgent message to the subconscious part of myself. Power!

Three times I repeated the message, then quickly replaced all remaining force behind the shield. It slowed just slightly, yet still moved in on me. I could feel it closing in, pressing, choking the life from me.

My senses were going. It was hard to think. The dark curtain shrouded me. I felt the spirit shudder, trying to hold on to life. I gave up. Thought ceased altogether . . .

A surge of new strength flowed in. Cessation of thought had released an added force that made the curtain lift a little, and I knew I was not only still alive but stronger than ever. With no further waste of time I sent the entire reserve of fresh energy against the shield. It retreated and closed in on ONE. I didn't stop for a second, but bore down on the shield. It gave slightly, re-composed and then gave again. The second time it kept giving. I heard pitiful pleadings: such thoughts as—"Without me everything will die. You're killing yourself and everyone, not just me . . ."

But I didn't care. All I could see was that I was killing somebody who would gladly have done the same for me.

A few seconds later the controller entered through the wall and I received the thought—"I've lost contact with ONE. What has happened to ONE?"

"ONE is dead," I replied in the same manner. "He tried to kill me, but it is I who still exist." The controller looked distraught, and his thoughts came to me fearfully.

"ONE was the central unit of the

whole body! Without him we cannot co-ordinate; therefore in practically no time at all the body will become sick and die and all of us with it."

"Can you think for yourself?" I asked the controller.

"Why, of course, everyone can think for himself, but all thoughts to other points have gone through ONE."

"I see! Well, temporarily at least, this is the way I want things done. Issue an order from—better still I'll issue it myself from this control room. If I think a penetrating thought from this room, isn't it true that the nerve cells here will pick up the thought and carry it to all parts of the body?"

"That's right."

I meditated a moment, then sent the following message to all workers of the body.

"Every portion of this body, take heed. Beginning immediately everyone is to perform his regular duties without contact from me. Send messages directly to each other, or through the controller. Learn to think for yourself. You know the right thing to do, so do it—"

I knew it didn't make much sense to them. Chaos was in order, so I had to work fast.

"Controller," I called, "how do I get to the conscious mind?"

"That you could never do," he replied. "There is a wall of outside etheric power that separates us from the conscious force and matter."

"In that case where could I go to see the outside world and operate the body by command?"

"This I know," he replied, and added—"I have seen it done a few times. From this cell you break through to the transportation directly on the other side. Follow that until you come to a solid mass of message cells. These are much finer than you have seen so far. They are closely woven and carry messages of lights and shadows and color."

He had hardly finished before I was half way there. What a maze of nerves! I passed from cell to cell through the neurons of the optic nerve. Finally they narrowed down into a vortex, and I pushed on harder until at last I looked out upon the world. I could see reflections of the outside world; they thrilled me. Loedstein's spirit of consciousness, I realized, occupied the surrounding cells. This was the center of operations for the conscious world. The I, the *Ego*—the home of the conscious spirit. My would-be executioner. I tried to force through the wall between us. I heaved on the wall with every ounce of force I possessed, yet it held as though by mortal power. I started reason to work and reached the only conclusion possible. Some outside force propped this separating wall. I could only wait. Yes, of course, when the conscious sleeps, the subconscious may take control. So, now being the subconscious I watched and waited.

I watched Loedstein treat his patients—watched the weight rapidly disappear from their bodies. He had actually found a method of dissolving it.

Hours must have passed and final-

ly Loedstein stretched out on a sofa and closed his eyes. I watched closely now. I could feel his memory patterns flowing by, first one and then another—fading and disappearing, each replaced by another, less clear than the last. Finally the spherical mass of Loedstein's conscious spirit drifted slowly to the far wall, merged with it and slowly passed into the cell beyond. Loedstein was asleep.

In the excitement of these happenings I failed to notice that the etheric curtain had disappeared, so I didn't realize until I absently went through the wall that I was in the conscious control room. As soon as I was inside I had the feeling of living again. I felt the physical body in its entirety. It wasn't too bad for an old body. Fairly tired, yes, but not too weak. Yes, I was alive again. I opened the eyes and looked around.

This was the same place, yet it looked different. Colors were different, perspective altered. A strange feeling came to me as I sat up and tried to walk. I could walk, but not smoothly. Each stride was like that of an infant trying to take his first few steps. I remembered there was not much time. With the subconscious organization steadily being destroyed, this body had only hours to live.

I stumbled over to the telephone and dialed my home, got a busy signal and slammed the instrument on the cradle. A fine time to be busy! I sat down on the chair, thinking hard. What could be done now? Was there any conceivable way to bring my

own minuscule body back to normal size? A plan suddenly came to me as I dialed again. This time there was a click and a familiar voice said, "Hello?"

"Francie, don't mind the voice. I know it has changed, honey. But I'm John."

"John! Oh, John darling . . ." Then abruptly, "If this is someone playing a joke, it's not funny."

"No joke, Francie. Now, listen. There isn't much time. Rush over to Dr. Loedstein's place, go into the clinic. Break in if you have to, but get in. And remember—when you talk to Loedstein, *you'll be talking to me!* Don't ask questions. Hurry!"

I replaced the phone and ambled around the room. Hurry, Francie. Already this old body was beginning to weaken. Fifteen minutes passed. Then ten more. It would take her forty minutes even if traffic was light. Another five minutes passed. I had to fight to keep in control now. The body was very weak. The conscious spirit of Loedstein realized something was wrong, and I could feel it struggle. His spirit fighting to regain consciousness, regain control.

My own control of his body was almost gone when Francie burst into the room.

"Francie, thank God—now, listen closely. There are only minutes left. Go to the cabinet over there and get a small syringe. That's right. Now look at the clock. Exactly three minutes after I give you the word, insert the syringe into my right arm at the usual place and fill it with blood. Then immediately inject that blood

into your own body. I'll be with you then, Francie. Inside you. We won't be able to see each other for some time, but at least I'll be alive and with you. Eventually I'll think of something. Now, wait three minutes, then take the blood—"

"John," I heard her call, but too late. Loedstein had taken control.

The time I allowed was almost too short. The whole body had started disintegrating. Transportation normally used was clogged with waste matter. Many times I had to leave one system for another. Travel was slow, very slow. I saw positively it would be only a few minutes before the entire organization broke down.

I must not be trapped now with liberty and Francie so close.

I reached the spot as near as could be judged and waited, wondering if Loedstein would have come to sufficiently to stop Francie from making the transfusion. More than three minutes had passed. I really began to worry now. Only by chance I happened to notice that just a short distance ahead cellular motion was rapidly increasing. With snap judgement I went full speed for the spot. The only way I could tell I had made it was by the rapid change in temperature. Warmth to coolness and then again to the healthy body warmth of Francie's bloodstream. Safe! Once inside I spent a few seconds killing out the masses of bacteria transferred from Loedstein into Francie. I noticed also the blood type didn't match, but because of the small quantity transferred, no apparent harm was done.

I wasted no time getting to the control room of Francie. Though constructed somewhat differently, a barrier was here too. All I could do was watch, as you might say, over her shoulder.

I looked out at a crucial moment. Loedstein had regained consciousness and apparently his wits also. He had moved about six feet, unnoticed by Francie, and had taken a gun from a small desk.

"You and your husband are very clever, Mrs. Ramsgate, but you won't be around to gloat over it. I know now that I didn't kill him. He has ended my life instead. I can feel my whole insides disorganized!"

I was powerless to help as I watched Loedstein back Francie into the same chair I had once sat in. He was weak; but the gun was strong. As her head came to rest in the specially built chair, I felt her sharp tension under the clamps.

"Goodbye, Mrs. Ramsgate." A relay clicked, the generator groaned, purred—then Loedstein gasped, fell against the instrument panel and slumped to the floor.

His cells could no longer carry on unguided. Chaos had conquered.

"Francie, I guess this is the end. I only wish I could let you know how close to you I am," I thought.

The machine kept running. Soon, very soon, the change should begin. Then what? Would I shrink again?

This waiting, wondering, would it never end? Francie—she was afraid. I could feel it. Every cell of her vibrated. Then I felt it. My cell was

getting smaller! I had to get out. I had to save Francie. But how? Already I was too large for the shrinking cell, too large to be carried by the bloodstream. There was only one chance. I took it. The opening from the ear was only a few cells away. Would I make it? I pressed fiercely, smashing walls. Here's the ear. I pushed hard . . . hard . . .

"John, are you all right?—John!"

"Yes, Francie. I seem to be. So it wasn't you shrinking! It was me getting larger. I would have killed you, if I hadn't broken out through your ear. Does it hurt?"

"A little. I don't understand!"

"The last laugh is on Loedstein," I said. "After turning on his ray, he must have reached his final breath and collapsed. And when he fell he must have hit the switch that reverses the polarity of the ray. So, instead of making me smaller still, it reversed the process and I'm full size again. . . . But Francie, why is it if I increased in size back to normal that you didn't start growing also?"

"John, get me out of these clamps. I think I know the answer, don't you? You were so small you drew all the ray's energy. It had to get finished with you before it could register on me . . . something like that."

"Good, Francie! I'm glad you have your wits about you. We'll have plenty of explaining to do to the police, I suppose. But there's nothing to show I killed Loedstein." I kissed her. "You know, darling—if anybody should ask you, you're my number ONE!"