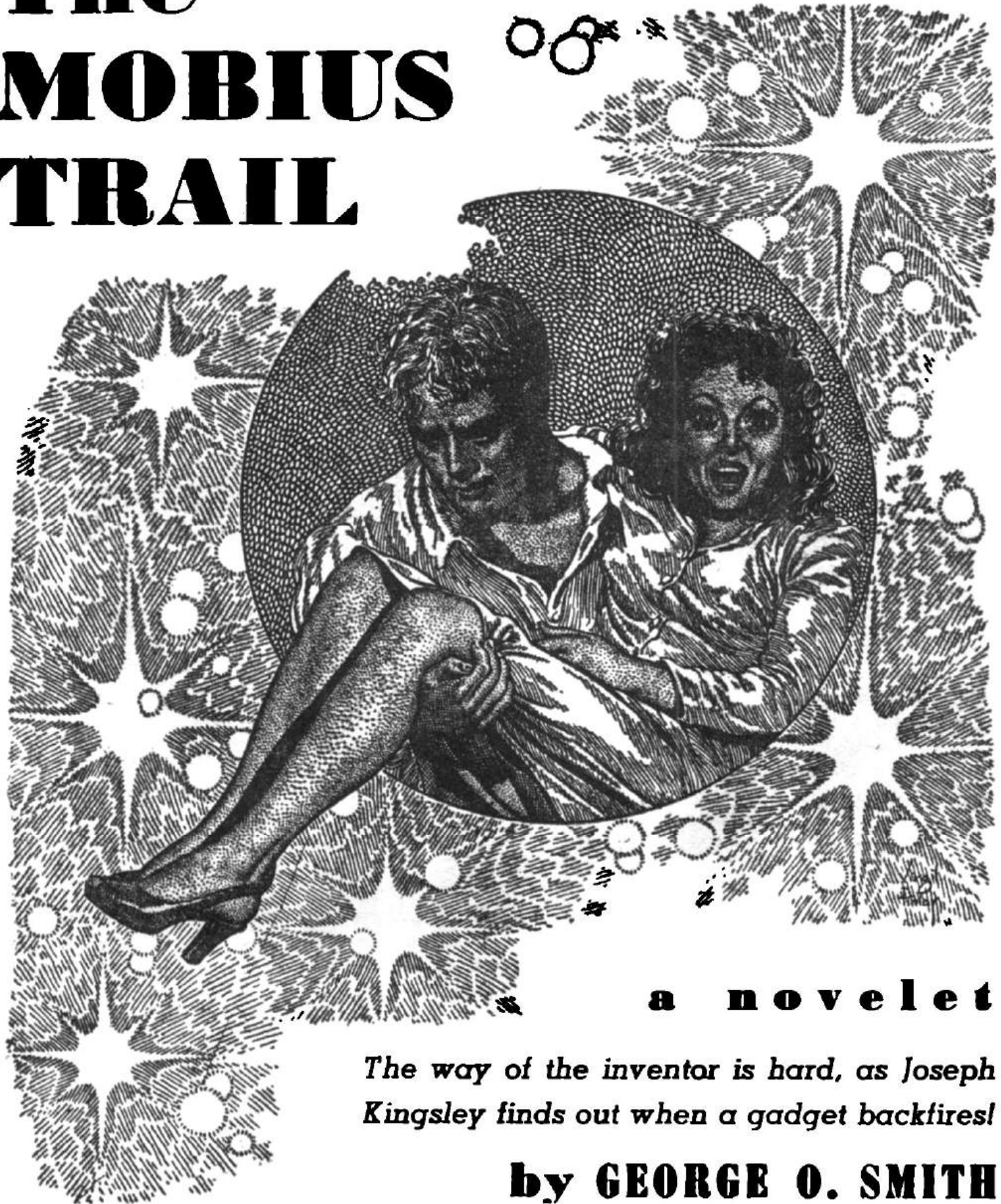


# The MOBIUS TRAIL



a novelet

*The way of the inventor is hard, as Joseph Kingsley finds out when a gadget backfires!*

by **GEORGE O. SMITH**

## CHAPTER I *Fantastic Fact*

**T**HE FIRST model of any invention is never the refined version. More than likely it is a rather sorry mess, con-

taining converted parts and hand-whittled members; strewn profusely with regard only to their function, and without a single thought for the esthetic quality of placement or shining panel and meter.

Grown from a single idea, passed through

# Boon or Blight—What Would be the Future

the adolescent growing pains of many failures and few true advances, the finished product is an inefficient, ill-appearing semi-mediocre forerunner of the final thing. The first working model may also make its first success at some odd hour in the morning after a job of work that culminates forty or fifty solid hours—after a few years of preliminary planning and building.

condition, then snapped the final switch with his left hand as he stared intently at a polished plate of mirror-perfect silver about three inches in diameter.

The plate was ringed by equipment of one sort or another, but Kingsley was interested only in the plate. Not the mirror image of his own face behind the plate, but in the surface of the plate itself.



In the dimness, Blair could see Sally

And so Joseph Kingsley yawned as he stepped back. He was waiting for the tubes to come up to working temperature. For the past twelve hours it had been just another half-hour, perhaps, and then a final bit of frustration before the trial. Kingsley refused to give up and go to bed, because success was so close.

His reward was near, now. He watched the meters indolently, smoked a cigarette until everything came to stable operating

Subtly it changed from a solid shining surface to a translucent film, and then it faded into a partially transparent darkness. Kingsley took a deep breath and realized that he had been holding his breath for a full minute. He shook his head quizzically and poked a pencil forward.

**T**HE culmination of months of work depended upon this moment. According to all of the laws of modern physics, the pencil

# of the Scientific Marvel of Teleportation?

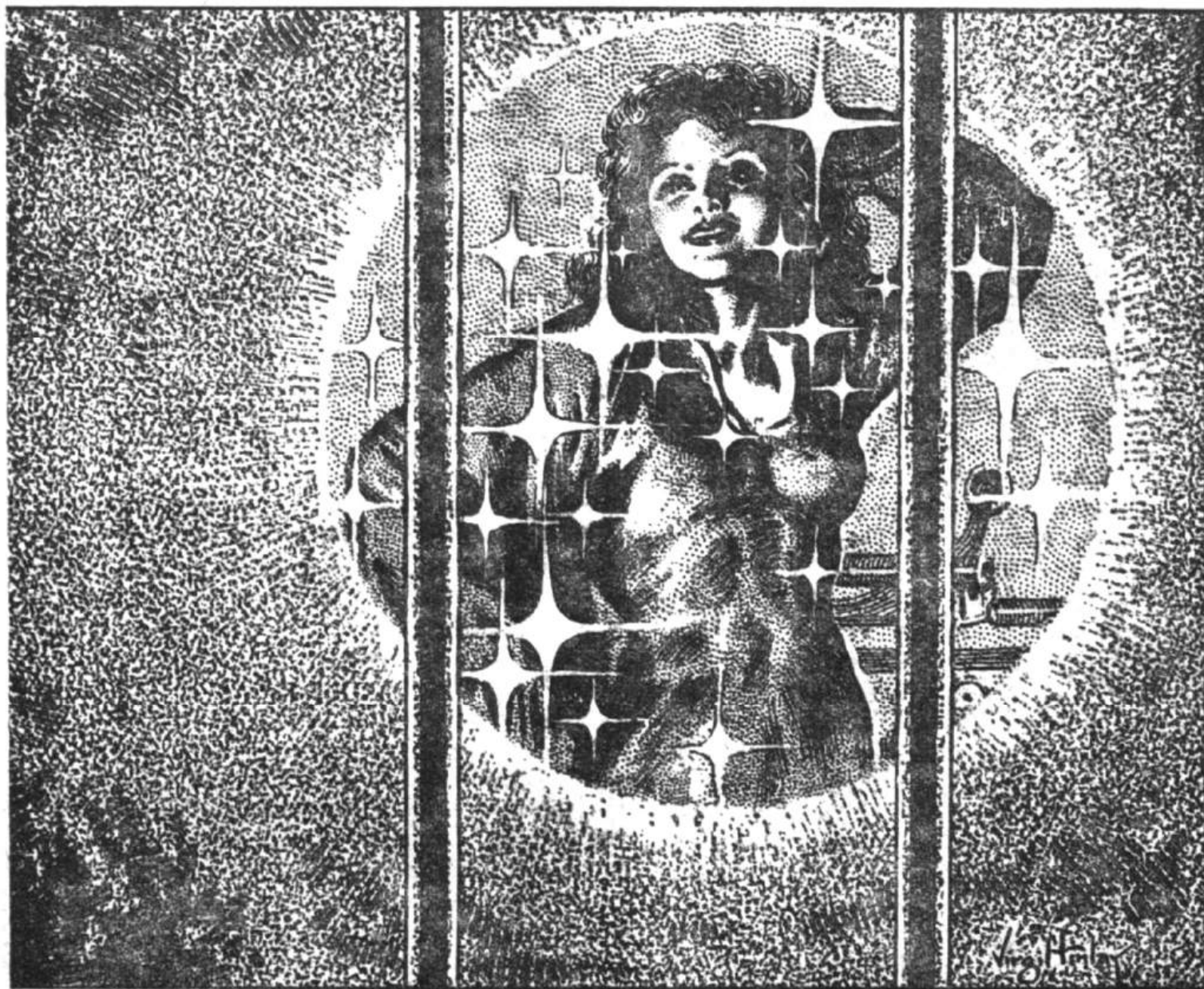
should have come against the silver plate regardless of its change in color. It was not supposed to stop, yet Kingsley really did not believe that the pencil would do anything else even though he had designed the gear after making the preliminary discoveries. It was so utterly fantastic that he himself did not really believe it.

Gingerly he pushed the pencil forward and

side—there was no light. Or not much, anyway, compared to the high level of light in his laboratory.

Joseph Kingsley withdrew the pencil and inspected it. It had not changed.

He looked through the plate. It reminded Joe of peering through a three-inch porthole from a brightly lighted room into a dimly lighted space, or perhaps looking out of his



framed by a circle of light

then he knew that the point of the pencil was beyond the surface of the silver plate. The plate was invisible, now, but in the three-inch expanse, Kingsley could estimate the virtual surface reasonably close. He shoved the pencil in deep; stopping only when his fingers were close to the invisible surface.

He looked at the pencil. It seemed normal enough. It was illuminated by the light in his room passing through the three-inch circle made by the silver plate. On the—other

room onto the street through a three-inch hole in the wall. A street darkened by night. He could see nothing because the light in the room was too bright.

He shoved a forefinger into the circle with a cautious gesture. It might hurt; it might be dangerous. Kingsley did not know. Yet he felt nothing.

So far it was a success.

So far—and yet so futile. It was, he thought, like having a brand new telephone

on a world where there were no other subscribers. He could reach out for the world but the world could not answer. Yet, if his theory were correct, both pencil and forefinger must have been reaching and pointing for—something, somewhere!

Joe Kingsley cranked three of the dials on the front of a panel near by. The hole changed color once during the spinning of the dials, but Joe was unable to relocate the setting. At a later date he would have calibrated them, but now they were standard dials that read from zero to one hundred and were meaningless in any terms but the percentage of half-rotation of the dial itself. Even an intrinsic zero for the equipment did not coincide with zero on the dials, because true zero required an electrical balance and not merely zero input.

According to theory, there must be somewhere a three-inch circle that looked out of a darkened spot into his laboratory.

Kingsley wanted that other circle to enter his own lab so that he could experiment with both ends.

It was a solid half-hour later before Kingsley saw the circle lighten once more and he fiddled with the dials carefully, balancing them as close to the theoretical zero as he could. The circle lightened in swoops and darkened suddenly as he fiddled, and he saw, in those swift changed, brief flashes of the laboratory, as if seen through the eye of a motion picture camera swinging madly on a boom and making wild random zoom shots.

He finally got the thing stable, then spent another half-hour fixing the circuit with fine-tuning verniers so that he could control the position of the circle. Before, a hair-breadth on the dial sent the far circle swooping beyond calculation.

The Kingsley looked through his circle at a bench on the far side of the room, where a screwdriver lay. Taking his tongue between his teeth, Joe reached into the three-inch circle before him, reached down on the bench he saw through the circle, and picked up the screwdriver.

Across the room, his hand appeared in space above the table and grasped the screwdriver. To a hypothetical observer from that vantage, it would seem as though a three-inch circle appeared in space, behind which stood Joe Kingsley and a pile of equipment. It was the opposite of Kingsley's view. Where Kingsley was looking through a three-inch hole in a wall at the outside or at

the bench, the bench was oppositely looking through the same hole in the same mystical wall at Kingsley and his equipment.

**K**INGSLEY drew the screwdriver back through and looked at it. It seemed quite normal.

Then the enormity of the thing struck Kingsley, and he sat down quickly. It was too much. He had just succeeded in making a teleport, surpassing the dreams of many writers of science fiction. This was not story for the imagination, this was fact, and it was so fantastic a fact that Joe Kingsley had to rest both his mind and his body before he could continue.

He reached for a cigarette, and grunted when he found his pack empty.

It was now about four o'clock in the morning and every place he knew of closed. He wanted a smoke desperately, which desire was heightened because he had none.

Kingsley looked at the gear speculatively, and from the gear to the screwdriver he held in his hand.

If Kingsley could steer this thing, he could get cigarettes.

He turned the dials carefully, but saw the circle swoop away far too rapidly. It passed bright patches and dark spots with a kaleidoscopic rapidity and poised—somewhere—while Kingsley peered through it hopefully.

Not too far away were a few lonely lights that strove in sheer futility to cast illumination on a dark and sleeping countryside. Town, without a doubt, from a distance.

Again Kingsley turned the dials carefully, and the circle approached the town at an odd angle. It poised in the middle of an intersection illuminated poorly by the single light high on a pole at one corner. But on the corners of the intersection that Kingsley could see—two were behind him through the port—were a filling station, a drug store. Both stores were unmistakably familiar and required no more identification.

Kingsley turned the dial-vernier and the circle swooped forward and entered the drug store. Near the door Kingsley located the cigar counter, and because it was dark in the store—the only illumination cast on the scene came from the light in Kingsley's laboratory—Kingsley merely reached for the first pack of cigarettes he saw.

Then because Kingsley was an honest man, he fished in his pocket and dropped a quarter in the cash drawer. The ring of the

cash register bell was loud in Kingsley's laboratory—and also in the drug store.

Kingsley retreated rapidly, turning off his gear after he drew the cigarettes back into his own bailiwick. He lit one idly, paying no attention to the pack other than to strip the paper from it with a letter opener. The paper went into the wastebasket and the cigarettes went into his cigarette case.

Then Kingsley relaxed and smoked, planning his next move.

This was not hard to do. The first thing was to make a teleport with a four-foot circle so that something larger than a hand could enter it. No, the first thing was to hit the hay and get some sleep. Then would come the time to rebuild and refine.

He sighed at the equipment. It might take another couple of weeks before he could again do this. The new equipment would require cannibalization of the present gear. The salary and the appropriation of a college professor in theoretical and practical physics does not permit grand expenditures for fancy and special equipment.

First sleep. Next rebuilding. Then announcement of his success. And then to reap the profits from a machine that would make him a fortune and bring him undying fame.

Joe Kingsley was wrong. His first move should have been to inspect the package of cigarettes, instead of letting his practised fingers open them without his eyes seeing them.

That might have saved him a lot of trouble.

---



---

## CHAPTER II

### *Wheels-Within-Wheels*

---



---

**W**ALTER MURDOCH of the Treasury Department entered his superior's office with a smile. His boss handed Walter a cigar.

"Sit down, Walt," he said. "We've a case for you."

Walt nodded affably. Tony Monroe did not call his operatives into the office for any other reason.

Monroe handed Murdoch a quarter and asked, "What do you think of that?"

Murdoch placed his cigar on the ash-try and looked at the quarter. Then he gulped,

looked at it again, and exploded into lurid profanity.

Tony Monroe nodded. "That's what we all said. What do you make of it?"

"It's a perfect mirror image!"

"Precisely. And though you've had only a chance to inspect it visually, we've made comparison photos. The thing is a perfect mirror image."

"It is?" asked Murdoch incredulously.

"Blown up a thousand times in the comparison projector, a photograph of this phony and a real quarter from the same mint register perfectly—so long as this one's lantern slide is put in the projector reversed."

Murdoch looked at the reversed quarter. "Now why in the name of sin would anybody make a reversed die of a coin?"

Tony Monroe shook his head. "I could see some amateur counterfeiter making a reverse image with a bit of his own-built gear. Some guy who hadn't thought too much about the process—a rank, ignorant amateur. But this thing is mechanically perfect. It would take a master die cutter to make a coining die of that perfection, and any master die cutter would know how to make it come out properly. Furthermore, the department metallurgists tell me that a sliver from that phony is precisely correct coin metal."

Murdoch whistled. "So we have a quarter made of perfect coin metal, from a die mechanically perfect, but mirror-reversed. What about the guy who took this?"

"A small store in Holland, Illinois. The storekeeper, a Timothy Lockland, knows nothing about it. Doesn't know where he got it."

"Believe him?"

"I do. He called the bank as soon as he found it."

"Fingerprints?"

"A smudge. The storekeeper's; two bank-teller's; and one other. We're running through the card files now. At any rate, Walter, you're it. Track this thing down and clean it up. Heaven alone knows who's tinkering with coins this way, but we'll have to find out."

Murdoch took the coin close to his eyes again. He shook his head unhappily.

"This is a first class mystery," he said. "I doubt that counterfeiting has much to do with this case."

"Nor do I. But even so, they're monkeying with U.S. coinage, and we've got to stop

them. It's a fine thing, I'd say. But—"

The buzzer on Tony Monroe's desk called his attention and he snapped the switch, to hear, "Mr. Monroe, the files are ready for you."

"Bring 'em in, Trudy," he replied.

A girl brought a sheaf of papers in to Monroe's desk. Monroe handed them to Murdoch, who riffled through them quickly. There were not many—a statement made by the storekeeper, and statements by the bank tellers. A photo of the quarter taken through the comparison projector showing the perfect registry of real and phony quarters when the latter was re-reversed. A fingerprint photograph, showing the outlined areas of several prints, each numbered and keyed to various fingerprint records of the people involved, including one with a question mark scrawled on it. The latter was in a brief folder by itself, and Murdoch opened the folder.

"This guy's in jail, Tony."

"Yeah, I know," grunted Monroe unhappily. "I've just called the warden. Number Three-forty-seven—eight-eighty-nine—forty is still in his cell and has been there all along. I told Warden Daniels not to do or say anything other than to keep a quiet watch. We'll do our own investigating of this mad thing. The papers are keeping it quiet, too."

**M**URDOCH nodded and dropped the quarter into his pocket.

"This is a start," he said, tapping the file folder. "But that print's rather small."

Monroe nodded. "A mere fragment. Not enough to get a conviction, I'll admit. Just barely enough to get the general classification. About all we can do is to see if there is a connection between the ones that fall into this classification and the real act."

"There were others?"

"About eight. Five of them fall in the general grouping, but their match is imperfect with the fragment. One was executed for murder a month ago and was taken from the files on active criminals, but the red tape hadn't caught up the general card file yet. The other came from the general identification files and was a blueprint clerk in a war factory during the late unpleasantness. A girl of twenty at the time, since married to a lieutenant in the Navy and now raising a brood of embryonic naval officers and Waves while her husband is skippering a sub chaser and stationed within a three-inch

rifle shot of their home. Somehow I can't connect her with this."

"So it boils down to Norman Blair, alias Norman Black, alias Ned Burrows. Age thirty-two. Convicted of forgery, theft, and tampering with the mail. Now serving twenty years for attempted bank robbery. A ruthless character unlikely to be or become a trusty, and more likely to be carefully watched at all times. How in the devil can a jailed crook do some of the things they get away with?"

"I'll never tell you," agreed Monroe. "But there it is, Walt. Take off and see what you can uncover. . . ."

There was little he could get from the jailbird. Norman Blair's constantly repeated answer was the same:

"I don't know nothing, copper."

"And you've never been in Holland, Illinois?"

"Never heard of it, copper."

"I'm no copper. I'm a Treasury Agent."

"A T-man, huh?" spat Norman Blair roughly.

"If you call us that."

"We calls you other things," snorted Blair.

"And you've never seen or heard of anything like this quarter?"

"No dope'd make a phony quarter."

"Why not?"

"Not profitable."

"Thanks."

"Thanks—for nothing," snarled Blair nastily. "Any fool would know that." He looked at the reversed coin again. "And any fool wouldn't make a reversed die."

"Some might."

"Nope."

"Well," snapped Murdoch angrily, "someone did!"

"Maybe someone turned a real quarter inside-out," sneered Blair.

"Maybe they did."

"A nice trick if you can do it," jeered Blair. "And what good is it?"

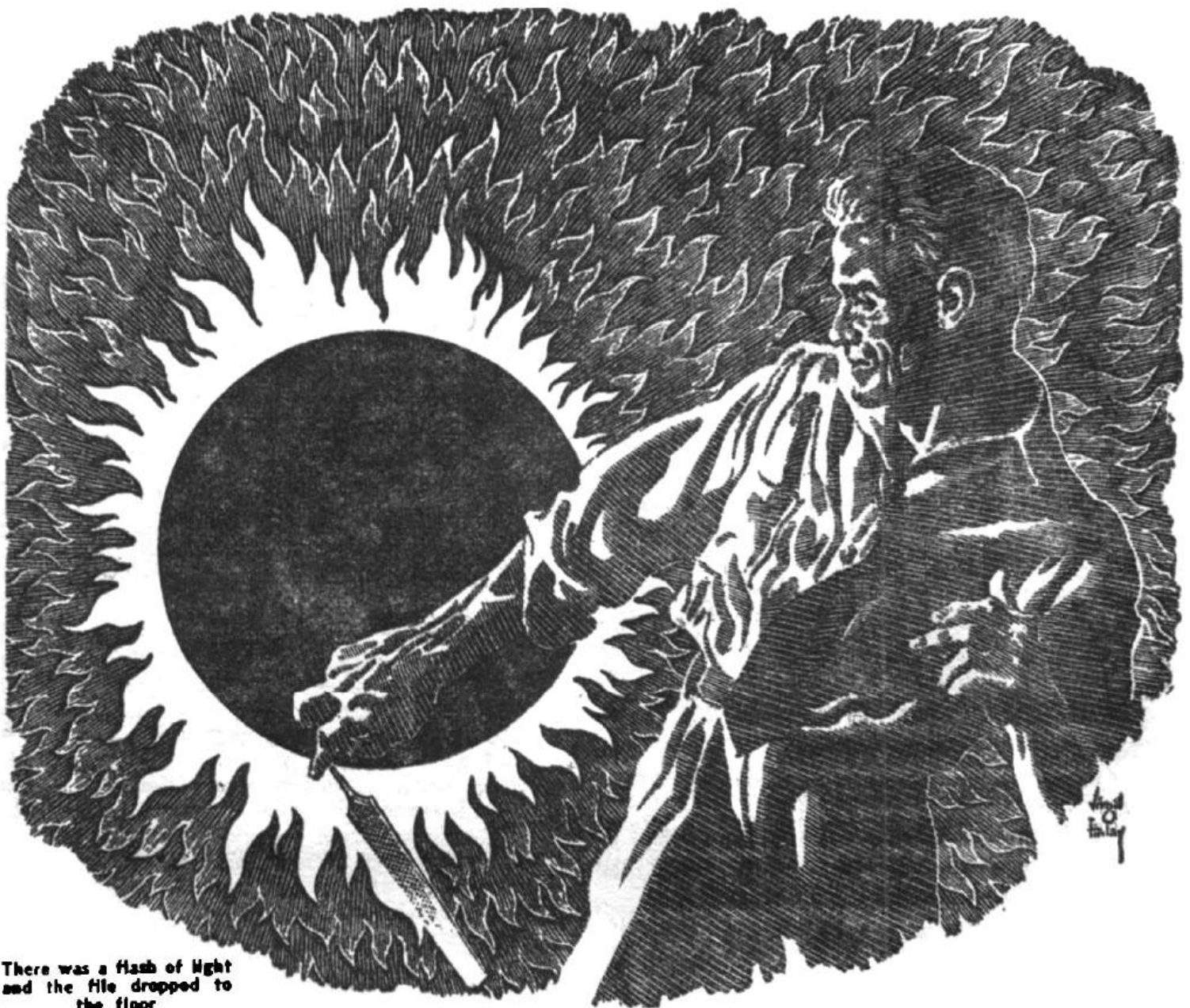
"I wouldn't know. I just want to find out who did it."

"Then find 'em, copper. Someone else, not me. I wouldn't waste my time on quarters, either."

"All right. Just forget I was ever here."

"More'n glad to, copper. You annoy me."

Blair turned and left the office with a sour expression. Murdoch shrugged as Blair left. Then after a period of thought, he turned to



There was a flash of light and the file dropped to the floor

Warden Daniels.

"Have you any ideas, Warden?"

"Nope. Only that Blair is a tough guy and we've had him under more than close observation. He broke jail in Arizona once, you know. We'd like to keep him here."

"And where does he go when he's finished here?"

"In about eighteen years he can go back to Arizona to finish out his stretch there. That'll keep him under the wraps for most of the rest of his life. He's been with us for two years now."

"Well this looks like a dead end. I might as well go to Holland and see what's giving at that end. That's where this coin was found, you know."

"I'll wish you luck, Mr. Murdoch."

**F**LIPPING the quarter, Murdoch caught it deftly. It came down heads—reversed—so that Washington looked to the right.

"I'll need it," he said unhelpfully.

Murdoch left after that, and went to his hotel to think about further plans. He was not entirely satisfied with Blair's explanations, but he knew that there was nothing he could do about it more than to ask Warden Daniels to inspect any letters carefully.

Yet as Murdoch left the jail, Norman Blair was writing a letter to a friend. This letter was written in a normal vein. It contained considerable discussion of the state of affairs in the world, his own feelings at incarceration, and what he planned to do eventually. The latter included appeals and ideas for retrials, which were so much talk, but typical of the man.

Concealed in the letter was a word-meaning code impossible to break since the seemingly uncouth usage of improper words conveyed whole phrases of meaning. It went out by mail right through the censor's desk, and was on its way before Treasury Agent Murdoch got a train reservation making con-

nection with the small town of Holland, Illinois. . . .

A week passed quietly, during which time the trail cooled considerably. Murdoch arrived in Holland and met the storekeeper and came away convinced that the man knew nothing of the mystery; nor even how it had happened. He stayed around a few days, but his stay was completely sterile because this was a completely cold trail with not the slightest inkling to lead Murdoch toward a new end.

The recipient of Blair's coded letter arrived a day or so after Murdoch came, and because only the Treasury agent had official sanction, there was even less to be learned. Unknown to one another, both sat and pondered by the hour; wondering what possible move could be made next.

In the meantime, Joe Kingsley had finished his pack of cigarettes without having noted the lettering on any one of them. This seems unlikely at first sight. Yet an inveterate smoker will admit that he is not inclined to read the label on his cigarette, especially one who is busy with his hands most of the time and who may smoke a full package of cigarettes during the working day and another at night.

In Kingsley's case, the twenty smokes were gone by midmorning, a good quantity of them having been burned during Kingsley's nighttime pondering. So the perpetrator of the outrage was himself completely unconscious of his act, and had he been confronted by the evidence itself, Kingsley would have disavowed any knowledge of it. And Kingsley's argument would have the validity of truth, for Kingsley had no idea of the wheels-within-wheels that he had started turning.

The quarter-in-reverse was not mentioned. It was kept from all public notice by the Treasury Department, and the recipient of Blair's letter did not dare broach the subject openly to the storekeeper for fear the authorities would get curious.

What Blair expected was not known. Blair himself did not know. All Blair knew was that something downright odd had taken place and Blair was smart enough to realize that something might be made of it if it could be made to work. And nothing would be lost if the strange affair led to nothing.

So with the veiling of the strange quarter by the Treasury Department, that phase of the thing died. Yet there was one other

item that was neither of interest to the Treasury nor to Kingsley, for neither of them knew about it. It was an item that could reach the newspapers in due time.

And did.

---



---

## CHAPTER III

### *Power of the Press*

---



---

**T**HE STORY broke as a squib item on Page Eight, sandwiched between a recipe for a cake by a popular home economist and the daily cross-word puzzle. Its few lines were both terse and mysterious. It went:

#### FORTEAN SOCIETY PLEASE NOTE!

Gustave Stanisky today presented this newspaper with its first package of Lemac cigarettes. Stanisky collects cigarette stamps for his son's collection, and found the empty and torn wrapper in his pile of waste paper.

Upon close inspection, the package of Lemac cigarettes turned out to be a perfect mirror image of the wrapper from a pack of Camels.

The origin of this oddity is unknown, and equally vague are the means of doing the job and the reason why it was done. It is suggested that the Fortean Society whose members collect such rare oddities may be interested. Rumor has it that a Lemac smoked backward tastes like a Camel.

This item caught the eye of Walter Murdoch during his dinner aboard the crack train heading toward Washington. He swore roundly because he had left too soon, and because the thing had hit the papers and was now public knowledge. It also heightened the mystery quite a bit, and gave it some weight. A quarter reversed might be an abortive attempt at counterfeiting, but when other things began to turn up reversed in the same inexplicable fashion, it began to look as though more than mere "happenstance" was in the making.

Murdoch called for the conductor and had the train flagged down at the next station. There he fumed and fretted because a full thirty-six hours must pass before he could get back to Holland to look into this new development.

The news item was also seen by the recipient of Blair's letter, and that started a chain of thought. A bit of research disclosed that there were three members of the Fortean Society in Holland, and further research proved that



one of them was an elderly lady who believed firmly in the occult, and was therefore of little use in any discussion of pure scientific fact.

The second was an obscure young professor at Holland University of Science, and might prove interesting. The third was an adolescent of fifteen who was an avid collector of science fiction and fantasy stories.

And so Joe Kingsley opened his door to a gentle knock and blinked as the girl smiled and asked uncertainly:

"Doctor Kingsley?"

"Yes."

"I'm Sally Ransome."

"How do you do?"

Kingsley stood there foolishly, not knowing exactly what to do. He was not used to this. The girl was about twenty-four and constructed along very desirable lines all the way from her high-arched feet to her chestnut hair. Her eyes held his naively; nice eyes, large and brown, and their hold almost prevented Kingsley from seeing her generous mouth and finely molded nose.

"I'm a roving reporter from the *National Weekly*," she said.

"I've read it occasionally. But what can I do for you? Come in, Miss Ransome."

"Thank you. I will. As to what you can do for me, have you any ideas about that reversed package of cigarettes?"

"What reversed package of cigarettes?"

Sally held forth the newspaper and showed him. He took the paper and read it through. He shook his head and shrugged.

"A prank, I fear."

"That's what most people will claim—and forget about it. But there's something to it, I think."

"I doubt it."

"But you're a member of the Forteans. You aren't supposed to doubt anything."

**H**E LAUGHED, and shrugged again. "I do belong to the Fortean Society," he admitted. "I joined several years ago because I was interested in some of the things Charles Fort claimed."

"I've read some of them. But isn't finding a reverse-image wrapper almost as intriguing as a rain of frogs, or people disappearing from sight without leaving any trace?"

"There are two reasons why people might join the Forteans," he told her. "One of them is the one I have—because I happen

to believe that everything has, somewhere, a sound basis in fact. Some scientific fact."

"How about the tales of people who have disappeared, only to turn up some other place in much less time than it is possible to travel regardless of the means?"

"That's happened," he admitted. "Furthermore, just because we do not know the scientific fact that runs an occurrence on one day or during one era is no sign that the scientific truth might not come to light at a later day. Charles Fort and others call this phenomenon 'teleportation' and it has been used by many writers. It is, of course, completely unknown as they write about it. Yet there might—"

Kingsley paused. He realized that he was treading on thin ground. He wanted no mention of his invention until much later.

"Might be what?" she prompted.

"I have no ideas about your cigarette package," he said a bit abruptly. "It must be false."

"The men who know say 'no'. They claim it is printed on good, authentic paper with the same kind of ink, and in perfect reverse-register to an original."

"I'd hate to go on record as claiming the thing might have passed through some sort of a space warp, or something like that," mused Kingsley. "The trouble with these things is that they are entirely too scattered and infrequent. I guarantee that a whole rash of such stuff will come forth now that it's begun. There were the Flying Saucers of a few years ago, you know, and the Loch Ness sea monster seems to make its yearly appearance just before vacation season."

"I'm a bit disappointed," she told him. She stretched, and the gesture showed off to perfection her lissome waist and rounded arms. "I thought that a scientist who was also a member of the Forteans might be able to shed some light on the thing."

"I'm sorry."

"Then your membership in the Forteans is not for any reason than to scoff."

"Why, no," he replied firmly. "I'm definitely interested."

She smiled at him archly. "Yet you say the same thing that Fort said. That everything has an explanation but that we can't understand it."

"That's right."

"But then you refuse to explain anything."

"I don't know everything."

"How do you explain teleportation?"

"Why harp on that subject?" asked Kingsley uncomfortably.

"Because you know something about it," she told him directly.

Kingsley colored. "Not—"

Sally's laugh was apologetic. "I'm sorry," she said seriously when she finished showing him that she knew the score. "I don't mean to pry. Perhaps it is a military secret?"

"I hadn't thought of it in that—" Kingsley shut his mouth with a slight click. He looked at her askance.

"All right," he said quietly. "I'll make a deal with you."

"I'll agree to most anything for a story," she said.

"The deal is this: You print nothing until I'm ready to announce it, and then I'll see that you get first information."

"That is a deal," she said holding out a hand. Her hand was firm, and the pressure of it against his hand tingled a bit.

"Then I'll show you my teleport."

**S**ALLY RANSOME blinked. Her mouth parted a bit, but she held her tongue. She arose and followed Kingsley to the laboratory.

"I'm just polishing off a few last-minute ends," he said. "I've been working on this for a week now."

"Looks like more time than that."

"Oh, the first model took me a long time. It was a small job. I've been making it bigger, and I've been using most of the old stuff in the larger model. That way I've saved time."

"Good idea. But it looks a mess."

"I suppose so." He laughed as he picked up his tools and went to work on the gear.

"When will this model be working?"

"Golly, Miss Ransome, I don't expect it to play until dark."

Sally Ransome seated herself in Kingsley's easy chair and lit a cigarette.

"This I will wait to see," she told him. . . .

At seven o'clock, Joe Kingsley stood up and racked the soldering iron with an expansive gesture.

"Finished?" she asked.

"Finished wiring," he said. "There's just one question. You must be ravenous."

"How do you feel?"

He shrugged. "I'm hungry, of course."

"We could go out and eat," she said. "But what would you be doing if I weren't here?"

He grinned. "Well, I've got about two hours worth of alignment and calibration work to do before it ticks. I'd be inclined to do that."

"Then you go right ahead," she told him. "I can wait, and then we can take enough time over our meal to taste it. Otherwise it's hot dogs and coffee gulped on the run so we can get back. Right?"

"Right," he said with a look of admiration.

He turned back to his equipment with a smile and began the arduous job of adjusting the gear. His two hours were a good estimate, and at nine o'clock he arose from the back of the equipment and announced that it was about to make history. He pointed to the four foot disc above the table.

"Watch!" he said.

The silvery disc grew dully translucent as Joe Kingsley advanced the power. Then it went into transparency and Sally gasped as the solid silver plate became glass-clear.

The teleport looked from the laboratory into another room in the building, and he turned a dial which caused the plane of view to retreat until it passed through the wall into their own room.

"I had a bit of trouble on my first try," he told her ruminatively. "I drilled a three-inch hole in the wall over there."

"How did you do that?" she asked, leaning forward interestedly.

"By running the thing forward for transfer while the power was full on, instead of merely watching. Now I merely use it to look through until I see where I want to go. Then I turn on the final dollop of power and the thing is not only transparent, but non-existent."

"But how does it work?" asked the incredulous girl.

"Space is curved," he said. "Curved in the fourth dimension. Inasmuch as this thing looks anywhere we want it to, it must cross space directly. Actually, it works because of a bit of rather involved field theory. In simple terms—which because they're simplified are subject to argument for absolute fact—it is a situation where time and space are factors normal to this particular universe or environment. However, neither time nor space have the same meaning when you traverse a space or a universe that has no connection to this one. So the teleport connects two locations in this space with no apparent distance between them."

"But why?"

**K**INGSLEY picked up a bit of paper, and put two dots on it about three inches apart. Then he folded the paper so that the dots touched one another.

"See? The two-dimensional paper is curved in the third dimension so that the two dots are touching through one dimension but three inches apart in the other."

"But you can't tell me that this room full of equipment is powerful enough to cause any warpage of space you feel inclined to bend?"

He shook his head. "No, even the mass of the sun warps space only a minute bit. But the case is that we cannot really get any mental picture of a curved space. It may be curved in many ways, and might even have a multiplicity of curves. Since it curves in the fourth dimension, there is always some curve that will cause any two spots to be adjacent, and these curves are constantly variable so that you move smoothly from one to the other as you change the power."

"I'm still dull," she said, and smiled.

"That's hunger," he said. "And while I'm demonstrating, I'll make another attempt."

He twiddled the dials until the scene went down into a lower floor. He approached the stove first, then switched in the extra power. Then, standing before the circle, he reached through and took the coffee pot from the stove.

He turned the scene to a cupboard where he got coffee from a flower-printed cannister. He filled the coffee pot, placed it on the stove, and lit the gas. He turned the scene to the refrigerator and took a paper-wrapped package.

"Hamburger," he said.

---

## CHAPTER IV

### *Mobius Space*

---

**J**OE KINGSLEY set the meat in the pan, then went back to the cupboard. From this he took plates, knives, forks, cups and saucers. He handed them back over his shoulder with a flourish, and Sally Ransome set a corner of the laboratory table.

Then, watching the frying hamburger, Kingsley continued to explain.

"You've seen the normal curve of a func-

tion—a curved line running across a piece of cross-ruled paper?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever seen a three-dimensional graph?"

"No."

"It's called a functional surface. It has places that show the function of two variables. You can vary either of them, and the position of the intersection shows the function. You can vary one of them in a minute increment and the function may move only slightly. It's like drawing a series of lines on a curved surface, like—like a contour map." He gave her a pleased glance. His fumbling had found the proper simile and he was happy.

"So," he continued, "the tide can come in a thousandth of an inch, and the contour will change minutely. So in a four dimensional graph, you change the function slightly and the space-curve changes slightly—not abruptly but smoothly—and you have another location. Follow?"

"I follow, but I'm a long way behind. All I know is that it seems to work. How's the hamburger?"

"Done," he said.

He handed the food over and took the coffee pot from the stove. He poured.

"Not the Biltmore," he said. "And even so, it's just the thing you didn't want a couple of hours ago."

"Here it's fine," she said. "We can still talk. I like it. Two, Joe."

Kingsley's spirits lifted again. He dropped two lumps of sugar in Sally's coffee and settled back in his chair. Sally tasted the coffee.

"I think I'll need another lump," she said apologetically.

Joe laughed and dropped another lump in her cup. "Come from a long line of chemists?"

"Why?" she asked, stirring vigorously.

"All chemists seem to take about nine spoons of sugar per cup," he told her.

"Why?"

"No one knows, not even chemists. But it's apparently a habit."

Sally tasted and then shrugged her shapeless shoulders. "Just call me chemist," she said. She held up the cup for another lump.

"This is ridiculous," she said. "I'd normally say that four lumps would make this taste like syrup."

"It should," he told her. "Mind?"

"Not at all."

He tasted gingerly. He shook his head.

"What kind of sugar is that?" she asked.

"Standard dextrose."

"I didn't ask the chemical name for it. Who made it?"

"Same people who have been making it for years. Standard brand."

"It's been cut," she said.

"Well, use more and we'll discount it."

Sally dropped in more lumps and stirred again.

"Dextrose," she said glumly. "As puny a grade as any. What we need is saccharin, I guess."

He laughed.

"Well, all I know about it is that some people use saccharin. What else is there?"

Kingsley smiled, happy to show off his knowledge. "There are about nine different kinds—perhaps more. There's dextrose, fructose, levulose . . . Levulose!"

"What is levulose? Sounds like a bad name."

"Maybe they got some levulose mixed in with the batch," he said musingly.

"What is levulose?"

"Levulose is similar to dextrose except that it is about one-tenth as sweet as sugar."

"How do you tell 'em apart? Taste?"

"That's one way. Dextrose is a flanged-up nomenclature for 'right-hand sugar' because dextrose polarizes light to the right. Levulose means 'left-hand sugar' because it polarizes light to the left. Yet their molecules are built the same except that one is a left-hand image of the other."

"Joe—get me the package!"

**H**E NODDED, went to the machine and returned with the sugar carton. He shook his head glumly. The box was lettered in reverse.

"And, Joe—did you get any cigarettes through this thing?"

He nodded, slowly. He was stupefied with the enormity of it all. He returned to the machine and cranked the distance back so that the plane of view looked in on the same room. He picked up a screw and inspected it.

"Left-hand thread," he said. He shoved his hand through, and Sally caught it between her own.

"Is that your right hand?" she asked.

"It is."

"It came out left."

Sally handed him the sugar package after taking out one cube. It came through the machine re-reversed so that it could be read normally.

He tasted the reversed cube and one that had come through the second time. The re-reversed sugar was normal, the other weak.

"Well," he said, "that's it!"

Sally left the laboratory at midnight, and by the time she left there was no doubt. Screws, shoes, printed matter; all of them went through reversed. Her parting word was humorous:

"You could sell this to a shoe factory," she told him. "Then they could make only right shoes and send half of their production through the machine. Save manufacturing costs."

He nodded glumly, and wondered where he had heard the same words before. He pondered this for some time after she had gone, and he went to bed on the couch in a spare room below. He went to sleep thinking about it, and dreamed about it after slumber claimed him. . . .

Norman Blair felt the feather-light touch on his lips and came awake quietly. This business of awakening quietly was a matter of practise in an institution where any nighttime commotion was cause for instant investigation by the guards. It was sensible to come awake quietly because friends bring news that could not be passed along with an angry guard ordering you to separate. And because it might be an enemy, Norman Blair came awake with one hand inside a slit in his mattress; his hand clenched around a sliver of steel that had been whetted to a razor edge.

"Norm!"

"Sally!"

"Shut up," came her fierce whisper.

"But how in the—"

"Shut up and ask later. Get up and come here."

In the dim light Blair could see a large circle of somewhat lighter texture. Framed in this circle was Sally. She seemed to be standing waist-high in the circle, and it put her feet a good four inches below the level of the floor. The bottom rim of the circle was a few inches above the floor. Blair shrugged.

"Is it safe?"

"Yes," she whispered. "Now come on—quick!"

Blair asked no more questions. He

climbed through the circle and fell heavily to the floor. The sound created enough disturbance for the guard to come running with a challenging command.

Sally snapped the switch and the circle disappeared before Blair's amazed eyes, and it returned to its shiny silver surface.

"Your guess was good," she told him.

Blair stood up and looked around. He reached for her with his right hand, and she laughed.

"Southpaw," she chuckled.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"You're reversed."

"I'm what?"

"Shake," she offered.

He held forth what he had known for thirty-five years to be his right hand. Approaching it was what appeared to be the girl's left. She laughed and explained, cranking the dials back as she talked.

"You'd find things hard to read," she told him, and he nodded as he picked up a book.

**S**ALLY watched the plate until the laboratory was in the field of view. Then Blair stepped through the teleport and when he came out the far side, he looked back at her—but over the wrong shoulder.

"I'm over here," she said. "You've been reversed back again."

He shook his head. "No more of that for me," he told her fervently. He looked at the gear contemplatively. "But it looks good. Just what goes on?"

Sally Ransome began to explain. . . .

It was a mad dream, as all dreams are. A vast machine that combined the more complicated features of a cross-sectioned internal combustion engine and the turned-inside-out interior of a Burroughs Calculator stamped, ground, formed, and assembled shoes that came curling forth on a swiftly moving belt of flexible metal.

The moving belt slowed farther along its curving extension and came to a gradual halt, and as the belt moved more and more slowly along its length, the shoes began to move. Slowly at first they moved, then extended into a saunter, which changed to a walk, and then to a brisk trot, and finally into a bold and open run as they reached the place where the belt ceased to move.

Though the belt slowed in its motion, the shoes increased their speed so that the shoes always moved forward at the same speed. Just beyond the place where the belt ceased

to move, the shoes passed a tall, green-painted stop-sign which flashed alternately red and green.

Here the running stream of empty shoes divided. Every second shoe arrived coincidentally with a red light and paused before it leaped from the belt into an open box. The rest continued on, up, around, and over, running madly until they went the length of the broad metal belt, which returned upon itself and joined smoothly.

The shoes leaped into the same box as their fellows had entered—but now they were all left shoes, because they had gone completely around the belt, which was twisted into a Mobius Strip.

A veritable giant of a man came and picked up the box. He saw Kingsley and with a piece of blue chalk, he wrote "One, Two, Three, Infinity" on the side of the box. As he turned away, there was a large block letter sign on his back. It said George Gamow. The giant left, and Kingsley leaped onto the belt to follow.

Kingsley paused at the stoplight because a voice said:

"But it looks good. Just what goes on?"

"It's Mobius Space!" yelled Kingsley.

He leaped from the production line Mobius belt—fell to the floor in a welter of bed-clothes!

Then he remembered.

Gamow. A gentleman with a sense of humor and a definite talent for explaining the more abstract bits of higher mathematics in terms that the man in the street could understand and enjoy reading. It had been Professor Gamow who had hinted that space might be twisted in the Mobius fashion, and that shoes sent across space might turn out to be left shoes, thus simplifying the production problems.

"That's where she heard it before!" muttered Kingsley.

## CHAPTER V

### *The Hijacker*

**B**ELOW in the laboratory, Blair looked at Sally. "What was that?" he asked in a whisper.

"Joe Kingsley."

Blair picked up a heavy file and hefted it

menacingly. Then he dropped it on the bench again with a clatter.

"He's valuable," Blair said shortly. "If this gimmick goes wrong, someone's got to repair it."

"What are you going to do?"

"Take him."

Sally smiled wisely. "He's soft on me. Make it look like you've kidnaped me, too, Norm."

"Why?"

"You're soft on me also. Would you act quick to see me saved from having my feet burned?"

He winked at her instead of answering. He reached for Sally quickly and carried her to the chair, where he dropped her roughly. He roughed up her hair and slapped her across the face several times, not sharply, but enough to bring an unmistakable flush to her cheek and a few tears to her eyes.

He tore her tress at the shoulder a bit, and then added another inch to the tear after he saw the result. More soft white shoulder gleamed, and Blair nodded calculatingly.

Above, Kingsley blinked uncertainly as the file clattered and then, wondering why burglars would enter a laboratory, he headed for the stairs.

He entered the laboratory and was met with a sharp chop against the side of his head from the edge of Blair's hand. He slumped, senseless, and when he opened his eyes, he was neatly taped with electrician's tape. He looked around and assumed that the tape on Sally's wrists was as tight as that on his own. He glared at Blair.

"What goes on?" he demanded.

"I'm taking over."

"But you—"

"Shut up, chum. I've done it."

Kingsley looked at Sally. The girl shrugged unhappily.

"He met me as I left," she said.

"Anybody who's working this late at night must be doing something good," grunted Blair. "And then there's that strange coin and the reversed cigarette package."

"What reversed coin?"

"The one you tossed into the coin box at the corner. Huh! Looks like I got here second." He glared at Sally.

"She's a magazine writer."

"That so?"

Sally nodded.

"Maybe," grunted Blair. "And maybe

you're fronting for another gang."

"She couldn't be!"

"Shut up." Blair faced the gear. "How does this run?"

"I'll never tell you."

Blair faced Kingsley coldly. "Like to watch me slice off a few toes?"

"You won't make me talk."

"Brave man," sneered Blair. "But I mean *her* toes!"

"You wouldn't."

"Watch." With a swagger, Norman Blair went to the tool table and inspected it critically. There were saws and files and drills and other items of the metal-worker's trade, but no knife. Blair grunted angrily, and turned to face the taped-up pair.

"There are other means," he said ominously, angered by his failure to find a knife.

He looked around the room and his eyes fastened on the teleport. It had been turned off by the power switch and the controls set as Sally had left them following Blair's re-reversement.

The distant plane of view was not many feet from the prime plane, and Blair knew it. He could run the gear if he had to, for he had seen Sally do it. He preferred to pretend ignorance, however, because it gave him a better chance to learn the workings of the equipment, and would also give some weight to the pretense of Sally's innocence.

**H**E FUMBLLED with the switch uncertainly. He swore at Kingsley for not labeling the controls, and called the scientist a fool. He realized in his mind that the scientist was familiar enough with the gear to know its every part, and so needed no labels, but he did not say so.

He snapped the switch, and the silver plate changed slowly from solidity to translucence to complete transparency. Then, with a sly grin, Blair went over and lifted the bound girl in his arms. He carried her forward until her feet entered the circle.

From Kingsley's position, he could see back into the circle. His field of view showed most of the girl's body and Blair's hands as he held the girl suspended. It was an eery sight, for beyond them he could see Blair facing away from him, holding the girl with her feet extended through the circle and beyond the girl's feet he could see his own—

No! It was not an *image*! It was himself!

His mind corrected itself almost automatically, though he struggled to comprehend the

completely strange condition. It was something that never before had happened.

Blair lowered the girl until the bottom of the circle supported her legs just across the back of the knees. With the hand so freed, Blair reached for the "OFF" switch, turning back to Kingsley.

"Might be interesting," he said callously. "When this goes off, will she be stretched out a few yards at the knee or will her legs just drop off?"

Kingsley did not know, and the idea made him turn a bit sick. Sally turned a true pale and screamed.

"Give you three," snapped Blair. "One, tw—"

"You win," said Kingsley in a dry voice.

Blair laughed sourly and lifted the girl back to her chair where he dumped her unceremoniously. Then he went back to the tool table and found a file which he poked through the circle. He snapped the switch.

There was a brilliant flash of white, a brief wave of heat, and a sound similar to the blowing of a fuse. The far end of the file dropped to the floor with a clatter and the cut end smoked as it hit the linoleum. The end that Blair had was held only for a moment; then it grew hot along its length as the heat at the end came along the length of the file. Blair dropped it with a howl.

"Now talk," he snapped.

Kingsley began to explain. . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

The porter came through the sleeping cars quietly and tapped at the bedroom door. Walter Murdoch came out of fitful slumber quietly and opened the door expectantly. The porter handed him a telegram, explaining that it had been picked up on the fly at the last town.

It was in code, but Murdoch went to work on it quickly, and came up with:

RE REVERSED PRINTS CLASSIFIED AND SIFTED TO PROFESSOR JOSEPH KINGSLEY OF HOLLAND COLLEGE OF SCIENCE. GOOD LUCK. MONROE

MONROE

Murdoch nodded. He knew that by "classified and sifted," Monroe meant that the cards had been run through the selector machine and had come up with several, and that these had been sorted as to possible connection and discarded until only the glaring connection between Joseph Kingsley and the town of Holland remained.

This at least was a true lead, one that he

could get his fingers into. He consulted his watch and then went back to bed. He would arrive in Holland by early morning and that was as soon as he could make it.

Tomorrow would be a busy day!

\* \* \* \* \*

"And so it's like that," said Blair with a sneer. "And the next thing to do is to get this junk to some safer place."

He scoured the laboratory and the other rooms and returned with a .32 target pistol, which he inspected cynically. A gangster of the first water, Blair preferred the heavier .45 automatic, but this was at least a weapon, and that was what he wanted.

His handling of the teleport's controls was crude but he knew that practise with the machine would increase his dexterity. His first move was to locate a garage containing a moving van. Then he marked the controls carefully.

**N**EXT, Blair returned the distant circle to the laboratory and stepped through.

Reversed, he had some trouble with the controls, but he reset them to their pencil-mark calibrations and thickened the plate until passage was possible. He picked up his pistol and stepped through. He breathed a sigh of relief when he attained the distant garage without trouble. He looked around the garage warily, and then walked boldly towards the moving van.

"Hey! What goes?" came a challenging cry.

Blair turned and coldly pulled the trigger. The watchman fell, squirmed once, and was silent.

Then Blair opened the doors of the garage and drove the van out. He paused long enough to close the doors because he did not want the watchman to be found while the teleport circle was available.

He stopped the van before the laboratory a half-hour later and raced upstairs to turn off the machine.

"Now," he said. "Before I start taking this stuff apart, I'll send you fellows to a nice safe place."

Blair turned the machine on again and sent the controls spinning. He located a neat house beside a lake and grinned happily as he inspected it through and through.

"Everything neat," he said. He picked up Kingsley and with some difficulty he carried the scientist to the circle. "You in here," he said, and he shoved Kingsley

through the circle.

Joe Kingsley landed on his side and turned over in time to see the circle vanish. He wondered in which room Sally would be put, and then started to struggle with his bonds.

Kingsley intended to break out of this place at once and give the alarm.

He was still struggling with the metal walls, the heavy shutters, and the sealed door, and cursing the complete lack of any tools when Blair and Sally Ransome left the laboratory with the machinery all neatly disconnected and stored in the van.

It was slightly past the gray of dawn.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Too Much Coincidence*

MURDOCH yawned as he stepped from the train and looked around for a taxicab. Holland, he thought, must be a really small town. There was nothing awake. Nothing awake, that is, excepting the big transcontinental truck that was waiting for the train to start so that it could cross the tracks.

He saw a sign pointing to Holland College campus and began to trudge down the road in the early morning light. He yawned again and swore that some day he would quit this nerve-wracking job and take up a nice quiet one. Something like the guy driving the moving van, who was sharp enough to have a woman going along with him.

The train moved on, and Blair crossed the tracks and left the scene as the Treasury agent headed up the road toward the laboratory.

It was before things should begin stirring, but Murdoch beat on the door of the laboratory anyway. Then he waited and waited, and the ring of cigarette butts grew about his feet as he sat there on the gray stone and fumed. It was almost eight o'clock before the first of the townspeople began to stir about.

"I'm Murdoch," he said to the first man who came to the laboratory. "I'm looking for Professor Joseph Kingsley."

"I doubt that he is here," said the man. "I'm Edward Holmes. Kingsley usually gets here about nine."

"I'll wait."

At nine-forty, Murdoch went inside and asked Holmes where Kingsley lived.

"He has a small apartment at Forty-one Normal Street. Occasionally he sleeps in the rooms we have here for men who have worked too late. I looked there, however."

"He wasn't there, I take it."

"He was not. I am a bit puzzled, though. He had been here. The bed had been used but was not made. Most of the men are neat, and Kingsley was one of the best. I'd try his home."

"Telephone?"

"Of course."

Holmes led Murdoch to one of the offices and used the telephone. There was no answer.

Murdoch then requested a taxicab, and waited with Holmes until the cab arrived. Hiring the cab for the day, Murdoch was driven to Kingsley's apartment. He burgled his way in with a set of master keys and saw at once that the apartment had not been used for days.

He went back to the laboratory and asked more questions, checking on Kingsley's habits. Then, to check upon some of Kingsley's habits in person, Murdoch took to his cab again.

The feeling of frustration welled once more in Murdoch's heart, and he felt glum about missing the scientist. He realized that he had not eaten breakfast, and asked the driver to drop him at a restaurant—and how about a cup of coffee?

"Sure."

"Know Kingsley?"

"Nope. Heard of him, though. Seemed a smart enough feller. Newspaper?"

"I suppose. Any funnies? Nothing of real interest to an out-of-towner, you know."

"We have a good one," said the driver proudly.

The newspaper was fair for a town of that size. It was filled with local items about people who were undoubtedly all well-known to the rest of the town, for the personal angle was high in every item. The comic strips were good; taken from a national syndicate and given prominence.

The radio in the restaurant stopped playing music as Murdoch finished the paper, then there started a news broadcast. Indolently, Murdoch listened to the radio while finishing his coffee, and did not realize what he had heard until the account was almost over.



Then he sat bolt upright and told the driver:

"The police station and make it quick. . . ."

I'M CAPTAIN HARRIS, Mr. Murdoch. What can I do for you?" The police captain handed Murdoch his credentials and looked expectantly at the Treasury agent.

"I just heard a news broadcast and I want to know the particulars."

"Which one?"

"Someone was found murdered in a garage."

"Oh. Tim Lake. Too bad about Tim. Tough lines for his wife and kids."

"Have any idea who did it?"

"Some foreigner, no doubt."

Murdoch smiled. "How can you tell?"

"The bullet was about the size of an American thirty-two, and the right weight. But the ballistics man tells me that it must have been one of the foreign guns, because the rifling was to the left instead of to the right. He told me that some foreign guns are rifled left-hand."

"That's what I wanted to get straight," said Murdoch. "What kind of a gun did he say it was?"

"He didn't know."

"Um. I wouldn't know either. I doubt that any English gun is rifled to the left, and most of the French and German guns are millimeter sizes, neither of which popular sizes fall too well into the thirty-two caliber class. The seven millimeter is about two-seventy-five thousandths of an inch; and the nine millimeter is about three-fifty-four thousandths. I'd have to check the gun expert at the Bureau to state with any positiveness, but I believe that left-hand rifling is comparatively rare."

"Then what in heaven's name—"

Murdoch shrugged. He contemplated the situation for a moment and decided that there was far too much highly circumstantial evidence to start a hue and cry for Joseph Kingsley. After all, Murdoch knew too little. There was a reversed quarter that came from Holland with fingerprints on it which, when reversed again photographically, became the prints of Professor Kingsley. There was a reversed folder from a pack of cigarettes, also from Holland. There was the rather strange disappearance of Kingsley, though Murdoch had not checked too thoroughly as yet. And now this bullet,

claimed to be a .32 but shot from a gun that was rifled to the left. A gun that there was little likelihood was an American weapon.

Even so, the chain of circumstance did not lead too directly to Joseph Kingsley. Not enough to start a hunt for the scientist.

The telegraph in the police station started to rattle, and the tape came spilling out at high speed.

"Pardon me," said Captain Harris.

He went to the machine and began to read the tape, leaving Murdoch to think the situation over more thoroughly. Harris came back shaking his head.

"Trouble?" asked Murdoch sympathetically.

"Yeah. Jail break."

"That's bad."

"You bet. A rather clever fellow, too."

"How did he do it?"

"No one knows. Of course, the tape was quite sketchy, but it said something about a convict named Norman Blair being found missing this morning at check-up. The means of his escape were unknown since he was locked in his cell last night. His cell-mate knows nothing about it."

"Who?" demanded Murdoch.

"Norman Blair. Know him?"

"Slightly," said Murdoch, stunned by the sheer accumulation of coincidence.

The trail here pointed more or less to Kingsley because of the fragment of fingerprint on the spurious coin. And now to have the further coincidence of the convict, Norman Blair, break jail was too much.

Blair possessed at least one minute fragment of fingerprint that was a mirror image of some finger of Professor Kingsley. At least, similar enough so that there was plausible connection between the two fragments. Of course, one cannot state identification on the basis of a mere quarter-inch square of smudged print when it was sheer guesswork as to which finger it came from.

YET the connection was solid enough. It pointed to Kingsley.

Enough, thought Murdoch, to send out at least a "wanted-for-questioning" circular for Professor Kingsley. Too bad that fired bullets seldom have fingerprints on them.

Murdoch went back to the laboratory and took Captain Harris's fingerprint man with him. Dr. Holmes let them enter Kingsley's laboratory with a master key, and stood dumbfounded when he looked at the empty

room, shaking his head.

"It begins to add up," said Murdoch.

It was an hour before the fingerprint expert was finished. It took another hour to send them to Washington by telephoto, and another hour later an answer came to Walter Murdoch:

PRINTS DEFINITELY BLAIR, KINGSLEY, AND WOMAN SALLY RANSOME. PRINTS ON DIRTY DISHES MIRROR REPRODUCTIONS OF KINGSLEY AND RANSOME, NO BLAIR. CAN YOU GET PRINTS FROM CIGARETTE FOLDER?

TONY MONROE

"No," grumbled Murdoch. "That one was handled by too many people."

But Murdoch's belief that there was some connection between Blair and Kingsley was confirmed, as strange as it was. And within the next couple of hours, a general alarm was out for Joseph Kingsley, Sally Ransome, and Norman Blair wanted for suspicion of murder.

Meanwhile, the real criminals were rolling swiftly across the countryside in a stolen moving van with their loot. Another day of luck would see them at their hideout far from any city large enough to have more than the sketchiest of police departments. . . .

An instant after Joseph Kingsley saw the circle disappear, he began to look for a means of breaking his electrician's tape manacles. His hands were taped behind him so he could not use his teeth, and they were taped too high to permit him to pass his feet between them.

He inspected the room carefully. The walls and ceiling were of a satiny metal and the furniture seemed bulky and round-cornered. Light came from tightly shuttered windows and was inadequate. Kingsley found that by wriggling like an eel, he could move about the room slowly and painfully, and after inspecting each piece of furniture and finding it useless for breaking his bonds, he located a radio receiver.

He knew it could be used and his heart leaped. The front was smooth and clear of anything likely to be of use to him, but Kingsley knew that somewhere in the back would be something that could be used. He levered the radio from the wall, hoping it was not a model with a closed-in back.

It was not.

And then Kingsley levered the radio for-

ward on its face and eeled himself to a sitting position on the edge of the cabinet-rear, dangling his bound feet inside. He kicked against the largest of the several tubes and broke it with a loud pop.

Then he sat upon the floor and dangled his hands over the back. He located the brutally splintered glass of the tube that clung to the base where it was inserted in the socket. He cut his wrist twice before he succeeded in getting the edge of the tape against the sharp glass.

A minute later he was free.

He unwrapped his ankles and stood up. He looked around the place, trying the doors and windows. They were locked with a complex lock that couldn't be forced without tools of some sort. He did not know, but the place was a veritable fortress, built by Blair as a hideout and as a place for a final standoff if it came to a last ditch battle against Law and Order. And such a place, difficult to enter, was equally difficult to get out of when the owner desired to make it so.

Kingsley hammered on the walls to let Sally know that he was free and that she must not lose hope. His one intent was to break free and to get to some place where he could let the authorities know what was going on.

**H**E TOOK time to ponder the strangeness of reversal. He knew which was his right hand, and the mirror on the wall showed him to be right. He smoked with the correct hand and his coat was buttoned correctly. In his left hand pants pocket he found his keys just as they should be.

But a book on an end table read as it might read when viewed in a mirror, and the mirror proved to him that this was so. When he approached something it came as it was expected to, and as he walked a curved course things moved as they should. He had no trouble in getting around.

But he knew that the matter of position was a matter of relativity and that regardless of how he were reversed, a strange room would not seem stranger than normal. In his own apartment things would be reversed to him.

Though it was really true that he was reversed with respect to it, it is human nature to interpret things in relation to yourself. The driver's license and the papers in his wallet read properly to him, for they

had been reversed along with him. Only those things that had not been reversed seemed backward.

He could get along all right. But have someone ask him for his signature and he would be trapped, for he could not write backward—and other people would not accept a reversed signature. Besides, Kingsley was right-handed, and despite the fact that to his reversed senses he seemed normal, other people would see him as a southpaw.

---

## CHAPTER VII

### *Hideout Fortress*

---

**F**ORGETTING the strangeness of it all, Kingsley began to think of some way to get out of this trap. The shuttered windows, he discovered, were of tool steel and near to being impregnable even with the best of equipment, let alone his bare hands. The doors were steel-faced and sturdy. Yet he reasoned that a door between rooms might be less firm than those leading outside, and he determined to try.

The cupboards that lined one end of the room were locked, and they resisted the battering of three wrecked floor lamps and one ruined chair before he gave up. The door at the end of the room seemed likely, since he could not open the cupboards to find something useful in breaking out, so he inspected the door and shrugged. He could do no more than try, and if he failed he would have tried, at least.

Kingsley tried the sofa, and found it too heavy for him to lift. The heavier chair was bulky and he staggered under its weight, but it took a staggering mass to give him hope. He started from the far end of the room and began moving forward with the chair on his shoulders. He increased his walk to an uncertain run. He stumbled at about eight feet from the door and his groaning curse rang out through the room as he pitched forward under the chair's weight.

But the stumble proved fortunate. It gave him a headlong velocity he could not have achieved had he merely rammed at the door, and the hurling chair hit the door with force enough to shatter the bolt. The door opened slightly, and Kingsley, muttering about fortune coming in strange ways to the

righteous, hurled the chair again but did not stumble this time. The weakened bolt gave way and Kingsley went into the next room on a headlong run.

This room was furnished as a combined kitchen and dining room, and Kingsley lost no time in drinking from a glass he found on the sink. Then he looked around.

There was something wrong with the setup, he knew, and he spent some time in trying to unravel the evidence presented, for there was some conflict that he could not, at first, determine. As in the case of the living room, cabinets and cupboards were locked. Dishes were neatly stowed in a glass-doored cabinet which was not locked.

There was a faint film of dust in the place.

The refrigerator motor started with a faint purr, and Kingsley opened it to see what was inside. It was stocked; not filled to the brim with neatly-stacked packages and dishes, but in the normal fashion.

Kingsley looked out of the kitchenette window upon a lake that glistened an unbroken blue through the trees. There was no sign of any other occupancy of the region from where Kingsley stood, but he knew that certain territories in the country were like that. A summer cabin could easily be located in such a manner as to be away and free of other people by mile after mile, or the next house might be only a couple of hundred feet through the woods.

The shutter on the kitchenette window gave him too limited a view. Kingsley could not tell which kind of sheer loneliness it was.

But as he tried to see more of the surface of the lake, he began to get the discrepancy. Here was a summer cabin on a lake, obviously miles from civilization. Locked and stowed as if abandoned for the season, but awaiting the arrival of its owners for the next season. But in contrast to this was the running water, the electricity, and the refrigerator stocked with food as though it had been used recently. The film of dust was that of a few days or at the most a week, but not that of month after month.

In spite of the locked and abandoned look of the place, someone had lived here recently.

The door in the kitchenette was open slightly and it showed stairs leading upwards into darkness. Kingsley opened the door the rest of the way and put his foot on the first step.

"Sally!" he called. She must be up here

somewhere, locked in some room.

There was no answer.

"Sally!"

He paused in doubt. Had that gangster hurt her?

"Sally!" he yelled.

Or had the crook kept her in Holland, and what was her fate?

**K**INGSLEY raced up the last few steps and burst into the room on the right.

It was empty but a faint perfume filled the room. It was furnished as a boudoir and it had been occupied by a very feminine woman. Here the evidences of recent occupancy were greater than downstairs. A pair of sheer nylons were folded on the dresser and a full complement of cosmetics were on the dressing table. The bed was made neatly, and a chenille robe was folded and laid across the bed.

On the lapel of the robe was an embroidered script-monogram, and Kingsley held it to the mirror to decipher it.

"S. B. R.," he said, wondering.

He found a book on the bedside table and opened it to the flyleaf. The scrawl would have been hard to read if properly presented, and Kingsley had trouble in reading it through the mirror. This was partly due to the fact that he did not want to believe his eyes. The signature was:

Sally B. Ransome

He slid open the boudoir table drawer and found a small pile of letters. The top letter was a long, lengthy letter from a man in jail which went on in a sentimental tone that sounded false, somehow. Certain words and phrases were misused, and below these was the same bad scrawl as on the flyleaf. Connected, these annotations added up to the fact that Sally should investigate some rather weird happenings in Holland, Illinois, because they might prove interesting.

"Sally," he said in a dry voice.

So that was how the girl had happened to be so conveniently interested in the Fortean Society. And Sally Ransome must have used the teleport to get her man out of jail!

He found a chain of keys in the bottom drawer. The identification tag said "Norman Blair," which meant nothing to Kingsley but made him believe that Blair must be the man in question. He pocketed the keys and looked around, thinking.

There was no question as to his next move. He must get out of here quick and report to the authorities.

The keys worked, and within a minute Kingsley was outside and walking briskly up the narrow roadway that wound in and out of the trees. It was several miles long and in poor shape, but Kingsley went along the trail until he came to the main road.

Here he paused. Then because one way was as good as the other from his own standpoint, Kingsley turned left—knowing as he did that he was really turning right—and started up the main road.

He began to whistle cheerfully. For the first time since Blair had shown up, Kingsley was confident that he could handle the situation.

Kingsley had not gone far beyond the first curve when the moving van came up the road from the other direction and turned into the trail. It made heavy going through the narrow road, and it was almost an hour before Blair and Sally Ransome came to the house by the lake. Blair stopped the truck and turned to Sally.

"You'll have to be tied again, you know."

She nodded. "How long?"

"Long enough for Kingsley to be convinced of the necessity of putting this gear together."

"Okay. Then what?"

"Then it's into the cellar with him!"

Sally held her hands forward and Blair taped them loosely. Then he threw her over his shoulder and carried her to the door. From her handbag he took her keys and opened the door. He carried her in and dropped her on an easy chair, then he looked around.

"Hey!" he exploded.

He raced through the door to the kitchenette and stumbled over the battered easy chair. He swore, but then wasted no time in inspecting the rest of the house.

"He's escaped!" snapped Blair, untaping the girl.

"Escaped?"

"Gone. Come on, Sally. We've got work to do!"

She nodded. The thing to do was to set up the teleport as quickly as possible. How they would search for Joe Kingsley neither of them knew, but it must be done. And if Kingsley had really escaped and had the authorities out in full cry for them, what better way of escape was there than to walk

through the teleport to some distant place? It meant abandoning the thing, but if Kingsley were alive he could eventually be recaptured and tortured into reproducing the machine.

**T**OGETHER they carried the instruments into the house and put them in neat array in the cellar. Luckily for them Kingsley was a methodical man, for the various bits of equipment—the generators, the supplies, the driving components—were all more or less standard, or had been standard bits of electrical gear at one time, and they were equipped with standard input and output plugs which fit standard cables.

Had the gear been built as a unit the initial move would have been impossible. But as it was, each factor in the generation of the space field was produced by some small bit of equipment or a series of small pieces all cable-connected.

As Norman Blair carried the various cabinets into the cellar, Sally found the right cables and plugged them in. In two hours, Blair smiled wryly, held his breath, and snapped the main switch.

Obediently, the silver plate glistened translucently, then became transparent to show them a view of the forest outside.

"It works!" cheered Blair.

"Now we'll find Kingsley!"

Blair shook his head.

"First we replace that radio," he said sourly. "We've got to keep one ear out for the cops, and for any news broadcasts."

He manipulated the dials and sent the plane of view scurrying across the country to a large city. He held it high in the air until he located a store carrying a complete line of radio receivers, then entered the warehouse below the store. Here Blair removed three radio sets in their complete cartons before he turned the gear off.

He opened the sets and plugged them in. They worked, which surprised Blair a bit but would not have surprised a radio engineer. Giving it no more thought, Blair turned one of them to a short wave band that carried police calls from the nearest city, set the second radio to a station in the same city which played phonograph records twenty-four hours a day, and gave the latest news every half-hour. The third radio he did not tune, but left it running as a spare, just in case.

"Now," said Blair, "We will collect Joe

Kingsley." He sounded confident.

"But where?"

Blair smiled. "Just hope we're not too late," he said.

"But where?"

"Sally, if you were a law-abiding, peace-loving citizen and you were in the same kind of mess as Kingsley, where would you go?"

"To the police."

"Naturally. And since Kingsley went afoot, he'd get to the main road and go either left or right. There's one town about twelve miles up the road to the right, and one about fifteen miles down the road to the left. We'll take the right-hand road first."

## CHAPTER VIII

### *A Scientist Disappears*

**K**INGSLEY came to the outskirts of a small town. It would not be too long, now. He quickened his pace along the main street of town. He wanted to get this settled and finished so that he could return to work.

He stopped a man and asked where the police station was, and after getting directions, went to the station and entered boldly.

The man at the desk was scanning a sheet of paper that Kingsley could not see, so he waited a moment until the desk-sergeant finished.

The officer looked up and blinked.

He looked down to the paper again and frowned.

"Sergeant, I'm Joe Kingsley and I want to report—"

"So you are?"

"Yes."

"And what is it that you want to report?" Unseen, the officer's hand was pressing a button under the desk.

"I want to report a theft, an escaped criminal, and—"

The door behind the sergeant opened and three uniformed policemen came boiling out, their guns at ready.

"There he is!" snapped the sergeant.

"But what—"

"Up!" snapped the sergeant waving his hand.

Kingsley shook his head in disbelief. "But I want—"

The three officers split as they came around the desk. Kingsley looked into the muzzle of a Police Positive while the other two came at him from either side and took him by the arms.

They carried him backward, lifting him so that his feet scarcely touched the floor. He was forcibly dropped into a hard chair, his hands looped over the open arms, passed across his lap, and handcuffs snapped. Completely trapped, Kingsley looked at the sergeant with pained wonder in his face.

"But I'm Joe Kingsley."

"So you said. Doctor Joseph Kingsley, suspected of aiding a criminal escape from jail, theft of an automobile, and murder."

"Me?"

"You! Now where is he?"

"Where is who?"

"Your accomplice."

"I don't know, but he's on his way here —" Kingsley paused. "But he's no accomplice of mine."

"No? Make something else of this, then."

The sergeant held the handbill in front of Kingsley. It was a formal notice of his identity, his photograph, and the usual details of such handbills similar to those posted in police stations and post offices. In addition, there was another section appended which explained that in the case of Kingsley, there might be a discrepancy in the fingerprints, and gave a complete set of reversed prints as an alternative.

Beside that of Kingsley was a similar description of Norman Blair, and on the other side was one of Sally Ransome. A rather large reward was offered for any information leading to capture of any or all of the three.

"But this isn't true—"

"No? We'll take your prints and see whether you have left or right-hand prints." The sergeant took Kingsley's wallet and opened it. His brow furrowed. "Anybody got a mirror?" he asked, scowling.

"Why?" asked one of the officers.

"Everything in this wallet looks as if it had been passed through a mirror, like 'Alice Through the Looking Glass,'" he said. "If nothing else, Kingsley, this would be enough. How do you do it?"

"It's the teleport."

"The what?"

"Teleport. A means of teleportation."

"Yeah. I'm sure. A bit more of that double talk and you'll learn how to talk

easy," the sergeant threatened.

"But it is."

"Bah! Go on, bright guy."

"The teleport transmits objects through space by bringing two locations side by side in superspace. The trouble is that superspace—or space itself—is twisted as a Mobius Strip is twisted so that everything that goes through it comes out reversed."

"Forget it, chum. Boys, plant this guy in Cell Four. We'll save this for the F. B. I. This guy ain't saying a thing."

"I can tell you where Norman Blair is."

"Good. Where is he?"

**N**ONE of them saw the faint shimmering circle because it came in through a window and was lost in the dust-speckled shaft of sunshine that slanted down toward the floor. It was there but a moment, then it slid downward into the floor edgewise, but tilting with its lower edge forward as if to come toward Joe Kingsley on a glide.

Below the surface of the floor it went. Its edge came up once halfway across the floor, then dipped downward again after Blair had caught his bearings.

"I'll have to show you," Kingsley said.

"Can't you tell us?"

"Yes, but remember that I'm reversed and every right-hand turn looks to me like a left-hand curve. We'd get all mixed up."

"Could you draw us a map?"

"Yes but—"

"Draw us a map and we'll look at it through a mirror."

"It'll be crude."

"Just give us an idea, that's all."

"I'll be more than glad to help—"

Kingsley's offer of help was cut off by a yelp of fear. He and his chair and a three-foot circle of the floor dropped down and out of sight into a room that stood sideward from that hole in the floor.

The desk sergeant caught one glimpse of equipment, a man, and a woman apparently standing against a wall, and he saw Kingsley fall down from the police station, then take a curve below the floor, falling sideward against that strange wall.

The scene disappeared abruptly. The policemen were looking through the three-foot hole in the floor at the basement of the police station.

"The crooks who own that could steal anything!" The desk sergeant exploded.

He headed for the telephone quickly. . . .

"Well, how do you do?" sneered Blair, planting a kick against Joe Kingsley's sprawled form.

Kingsley was helpless, and all he could do was glare. Blair shrugged and stood the chair upright roughly.

"Take it easy," he said. Then a thought came to Blair. "Look, Kingsley, can't we make a deal?"

"Deal?" asked Kingsley.

"Yeah. This thing will make us rich quick. Maybe I could do something to make up for the rough way I've handled you, and we could throw in together."

Kingsley shook his head. "It's murder," he said.

"Murder's easy," said Blair callously. "And with this thing they'll never catch us."

"No? You might think differently."

Sally shrugged. "Money makes people think differently," she said. "Why not show him?"

"Did y'ever think of that?" sneered Blair. "Just watch!"

He manipulated the controls and sent the field of view flying across the country. He located the money vault of the Chase National Bank in New York and lifted package after package of currency from the vault, handing them to Sally, who stacked the packages neatly on a table near the wall.

Then Blair headed the field of view for Chicago, and in a similar fashion rifled the First National Bank. Next was the San Francisco branch of the Manhattan Trust Company.

"Money?" he laughed happily. "Or," he added seriously, "maybe jewelry."

Tiffany's vault appeared behind the circle and Blair waved Sally forward. She selected a ring and a necklace and strutted a bit when she put them on.

"Or maybe revenge," growled Blair angrily.

He found the State Prison and thickened the circle just behind the warden's head. Quickly he reached through and slammed a fist into the back of the warden's head. The warden dropped like a limp rag and Blair gloated a bit before he turned the teleport off.

"Anything you want," he told Kingsley.

**J**OE shook his head. "Come on, fellow. We need you." Blair picked up a hand-ax and headed for

Kingsley. Joe shuddered, but Blair hit the chair arms and broke Kingsley free. "Now," he told Joe, "we both know how to get you out of those bracelets. We'll do it as soon as you decide to throw in with us. We need a technician to keep this thing in operation—or to build another one, larger and better."

"No," said Kingsley.

"Think it over, chum," said Blair. "You'll work for me willingly or not, you know."

"No."

Blair laughed ominously. He knew that Kingsley would, ultimately. . . .

Walter Murdoch was waiting for the airplane when it landed on the small field outside of Holland. He said hello to the pilot and climbed into the jet fighter and was borne into the sky with a swoosh. The plane streaked north at six hundred miles per hour while Murdoch called Monroe over the plane's radio.

"Hello, Tony. It begins to jell."

"I know, Walt. Keep it up. What's the latest?"

"About the same time you sent me the dope on the rifling of several banks and the abrupt disappearance of Kingsley from the police station, the plane arrived. I'm on my way to Little Superior, Wisconsin, right now."

"Need any help?"

"No. The local cops can handle it, I think. Besides, we have no time."

"Why?"

"Well, from the situations that we've managed to uncover, it seems as though Kingsley invented some gadget that can ship stuff from one spot to another instantly."

"Yes."

"Well, the way to catch a crook that can get around that fast isn't by frontal attack by a small army. We've got to do it by stealth."

"You're right. I just hope we can catch up with them."

"I'm trying, Tony. Better put the rest of the force on it too."

"I'll wait until you see what you can see in Little Superior. I'd rather not get the whole country excited about this thing. Remember, once this gadget gets known all over the world there'll be cause for international trouble. And we don't really know what it is, you know."

"That's right—but we'll find out," said

Walter Murdoch certainly.

He shut off the radio and the speech-scrambler, but he had an uncertain, queasy feeling that he could not be certain that Kingsley or Blair was not following his every word from some unseen place right in the jet fighter.

It was an hour and twenty minutes of jet flying from Holland, Illinois, to Little Superior, Wisconsin. And then Murdoch was in the police station talking to the sergeant who was still a bit pop-eyed over the absolutely incredible escape of the scientist.

"So he disappeared?"

"Right through that hole in the floor."

"Dropped right down?"

"Sort of down and sideward. Beneath there was a room that seemed to be standing on one end."

Murdoch thought for a moment. He nodded.

"There was a shiny circle?"

"Yes, it—well, from what little we saw, it went like this: First we knew was when Kingsley fell into a three-foot circle. Then we saw this sideward room, just like looking into the room from that circle in the floor. Next, the circle thickened, sort of, and the room faded from view abruptly. Next the circle—the hole in the floor—was silverlike. Then it disappeared and all we could see was the basement."

"That thing must have some sort of portal, a doorway-passage," said Murdoch. "Probably vertical on the machine itself. But the distant portal can be tilted or moved in any direction. Then if the distant portal were vertical, people in either of the places would view right through the circle and see the others in position relative to themselves. So Kingsley fell down, out of here, and the inertia of his fall carried him horizontal a bit into that other room, where the direction of gravity changed abruptly and he fell again downward, but which direction was at right angles to yours."

"Sounds right. But it looked almighty funny to see the man and woman standing against the wall surrounded by all sorts of gear."

"What kind of gear?"

The sergeant spread helpless hands.

"What can you tell in a split second of time, especially when you're completely boffed?"

Murdoch nodded. "Did you notice any-

thing at all about the stuff?"

"Mostly a gleam of dials and pilot lights."

"Now that's something," said Murdoch exultantly. "Pilot lights mean electricity. The thing must use electricity for power. Can we turn off all the current in the neighborhood and leave 'em stranded?"

"Might work," said the sergeant. "I can get the electric company to cooperate."

"Good. And meanwhile I'll start down the highway to see what I can see."

"Tell you what," said the desk sergeant. "We've got quite a bunch of forest rangers here. They're well-equipped with walky-talkies. I'll ask them to help, and we can near canvass the neighborhood. As soon as any of them sight something suspicious, they can call in and we'll collect the rest of them and see what we can do."

"Just find 'em," said Murdoch. "We don't want to scare 'em off. It's a ticklish proposition trying to locate and catch someone who can not only follow you unseen but can also be in Melbourne within the twinkle of an eye."

"Okay. You're running the show. And I'm glad of it."

## CHAPTER IX

### *The Man Who Could Not Go Right*

**A**FTER Blair and Sally Ransome had finished showing off what they could do with their stolen machine, Kingsley was taken upstairs. There had been a slight argument about the pile of money, Sally insisting that it be re-reversed at once, and Blair telling her that it would have to be shipped somewhere else sooner or later anyway, and that that would automatically re-reverse it and make it valid.

Meanwhile, Kingsley sat in an easy chair and looked around the room with interest. It was the same room he had been in before, but it looked so vitally different when re-reversed. He preferred it that way because he was used to it, although it was certain that he could learn to live left-handedly.

It would be quite a problem, learning to write from right to left with his left hand so that other people could read his writing, or he could write southpaw with his reversed right hand which was the more agile.



Yet he preferred not to go through years of relearning the physical habits of a lifetime, backward.

Blair continued to oversell Kingsley on the mutual benefits of joining, and Kingsley wanted no part of it.

Kingsley admitted the ease with which Blair had amassed a small fortune and at practically zero chance of being caught and with little effort. It would be so easy merely to live in some pleasant place far from authority and to bring to you all of the things that go toward making life pleasant.

It tickled his fancy. It would have tickled the fancy of any man, and it would have sent many an otherwise honest man along the trail of dishonesty because it was so simple and so safe.

Yet Kingsley knew that sooner or later the Law and Order side would catch up, or possess similar machines, and that would spell the end of the free take and have. A criminal using a teleport would soon be forced into the constant running that he was in now, for authority could follow and trail him with a similar or even improved model, once the possibility were known.

So Kingsley said "No!" and let it go at that while Blair shrugged, knowing that Kingsley would do as he was told or suffer the consequences.

Periodically during the evening, Blair fired up the equipment and watched the police stations in both small towns nearby. In each things were running as normal. The main offices of the Federal Bureau of Investigation were looked into, and found clear of any but minor details.

But while the game of business-as-normal was going on in official quarters to fool just such a spying operation, the forest rangers were combing the district carefully, and it was only ten o'clock in the evening when one of them found the stolen moving van in a small ravine not more than a mile from Blair's hideaway.

He found it because he was a forest man, and he knew that the trail of broken limbs and crushed twigs meant the passage of some large, hard body. The van was well-concealed, but not well enough concealed to hide it from the sight of a man standing before it with anger in his mind.

The forest ranger lifted his walky-talky and called to give the alarm.

A hundred men seeking the same thing heard, and they began to congregate. It

could take hours, but they moved silently through the woods and in the dark, walking boldly because they knew their forests. Along the highway came Walter Murdoch in a borrowed automobile, to pause at the local electric distribution station.

He dropped one officer and went on to within a mile of Blair's summer cottage hideout. There he met the others and explained the situation to them. Then, as everything was clear, Murdoch took charge.

He called the distributing station, and the attendant pulled the main switch.

Every light in the district went out. . . .

**B**LAIR swore. He looked a bit worried, but arose from the sofa where he had been reading idly and went to the cellar where he worked by hurricane lamp to service an auxiliary power plant. With the auxiliary plant running, the lights came on again, but Blair was still worried.

He fired up the teleport and the lights dimmed.

"What gives?" he demanded of Kingsley.

"That gear takes a lot of power. You haven't got the capacity in that auxiliary."

Blair swore again and tried the teleport, sending the plane of view down the road toward the power distribution system. It entered, and he saw the policeman and the attendant beside the open power switch.

Blair cursed. His hand hit the switch that thickened the connection so that teleportation would be possible—and the lights dimmed while the auxiliary power plant groaned with the unaccustomed load. There came the pungent odor of too-hot electrical machinery and as Blair snarled, he reached forward but hit the silver plate with his hand. "Not enough!" he gritted.

He whirled the plane of view back along the road angrily until he caught sight of the approaching body of men. They had spread out in a vast circle and were closing in on the house.

"Let's get out of here!" exclaimed Sally.

"Not on foot," grunted Blair.

A fuse blew in the auxiliary equipment.

Blair swore again, and replaced it. The men were inside of the plane of view by the time it was reestablished again. Blair forgot them for the moment and sought over the neighborhood for some means of escape. On foot he would never make it, and so long as the main source of power was off he could go no further than perhaps a mile

without blowing fuses. Even so, the auxiliary was groaning and straining and the odor of burning insulation filled the cellar.

Then from the trees that surrounded the house came a burst of flame. It led across the clearing like a sword of light and it hit the house and burned its way through the metal wall. It erupted in the living room with a shattering crash and a welter of living flame. "Bazookas!" snarled Blair.

He cranked the dial frantically to return the plane of view. From a cabinet he took a rifle and loaded it. He found a bazooka carrier and took a bead on him through the teleport. He snapped the switch, the plate opened long enough for Blair to fire.

He did not see the result because the auxiliary generator blew another fuse.

Swearing luridly, Blair went over to the machine and wired across the fuses with heavy copper strips. He returned to the machine, knowing that it was a matter of time before they blew him to bits. Another bazooka shell roared across the clearing and tore the kitchenette to shreds above their heads. Then Blair found the automobile that Walter Murdoch had used, and laughed with sardonic confidence.

Another bazooka shell hit the upper part of the house. Apparently the attackers believed them to be upstairs.

"Hurry!" breathed Sally.

Blair nodded. He turned and grabbed Kingsley by the manacled wrists and dragged him toward the teleport.

Blair materialized the teleport just outside of Murdoch's car and handed Sally through first. She held the rifle there while Kingsley was shoved through and Sally held Joe at bay until Blair came through to stand beside her. Blair leaned back into the circle.

"Hurry!" cried Sally again.

Blair nodded, ran around the car and jumped into the driver's seat. He started off down the road at a high speed just as the open face of the teleport erupted flame and a terrible roar that blew forward out of the hole in space for fifty feet, cutting down trees and scorching the very earth before it.

**T**HEN the circle was cut off abruptly, but the roaring flame of the dynamited hideaway still pillared a mile into the sky.

"That," gritted Blair coldly, "will take care of most of them! They won't find enough to do 'em any good. What's left of them, that is. But," he added with a sour

chuckle, "we've got the guy himself—and he'll build another one!"

They went down the road at a high rate of speed, away from the wreckage they left behind them. Blair grunted unhappily, and Sally, from the far side of Kingsley from Blair asked: "It is hard driving?"

"Not too bad. Something you can get used to. Just a matter of using the left foot for gas and brakes and the right foot for the clutch. And staying on the wrong side of the road."

The car was mounting a hill now, and going at a terrific pace. Far behind them, men were bandaging themselves and calling for aid to quench the forest fire that had been started by the exploding dynamite. Blair had made good his escape.

They came to the top of the hill and began to round a curve, Sally looked back at the flames mounting high in the distance.

"Nice fire," she commented.

Blair took a quick glance behind him and smiled grimly. And Joe Kingsley, with a sudden convulsive movement, shouted:

"Look out—car coming!"

With the instinct born of years of driving, Norman Blair yanked the wheel to the right.

But it was *his* right, and instead of hugging the inside of the road where there was a bit of cliff the car lurched, roared across the road, and hit the restraining fence with a splintering crash. Down the side of the hill rocketed the car. It hit a boulder and bounced. End over end it turned, then it slewed sideward and rolled to the bottom where it came to rest with all four wheels in the air.

Kingsley, cushioned between Sally and Blair, came to consciousness first.

They found him in the cold gray of dawn, sitting between a cursing woman and a groaning man, clumsily but effectively tied with strips of cloth torn from Blair's shirt.

"What happened?" asked Murdoch.

Kingsley explained, and as he finished, Murdoch got the handcuff keys from the desk sergeant and freed the scientist.

"But how did you accomplish this?" he asked, pointing at the wrecked car.

"Blair messed everything up for everybody," said Kingsley, with a bitter laugh. "We were teleported to the car, which reversed us left to right. I'll have to build another machine to get back to normal again. But Blair," he finished cheerfully, "never did anything *right* in all his life!"