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Vol. XXIV, No. 2

The Magazine of Prophetic Fiction

June, 1943

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Published every other month by BETTER PUBLICATIONS, INC., 10 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y. N. L. Pines, President. Copyright, 1943, by Better Publications, Inc. Subscription (12 issues) \$1.80, single copies, 15c, Foreign, postage extra. Entered as second-class matter May 21, 1936, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Names of all characters used in stories and semi-fiction articles are fictitious. If a name of any living person or existing institution is used, it is a coincidence.

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Professor Gouf inserted the match in the sole of Billy Camorra's shoe

# THROUGH THE BLACKBOARD

By JOEL TOWNSLEY ROGERS

*Unexpectedly Tossed into the Fourth Dimension, Little Mathematics Professor Noel Gouf Has an Amazing Chance to Solve All of His Personal Problems While Time Stands Motionless!*

## CHAPTER I

### *The Beautiful World of Math*

**I**T WAS Professor Noel Gouf's final class in Senior Math at the Stratton, New Jersey, High School. He stood at the blackboard with a piece of chalk in his hand, a little bug-eyed man of forty-five with a big bulb of head growing out on the stem of his thin neck

like an overripe spring onion, to give his talk on the fourth dimension.

For twenty-nine years he had always concluded the course in Senior Math with the same little discourse. It had become a tradition, with generations of graduating seniors at Stratton High, like the Senior Woggle. Old Prof Gouf and his lecture on the fourth dimension.

Today, however, he was giving it for the last time, although none of them

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**A SHORT NOVEL OF STRANGE ADVENTURE**

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knew it. There would be no more classes in Senior Math for him at Stratton High, nor any place else, he was afraid. Principal MacGlurk and the Board of Education had not renewed his contract. And since middle-aged, ineffectual high school mathematics teachers are far more plentiful than jobs, little Noel Gouf knew that he was finished.

"Ladies and gentlemen—" he said apologetically, clearing his throat.

Outside the open windows the warm, bright June afternoon dozed and hummed. Inside the classroom thirty-seven seniors of assorted sizes and shapes of both sexes settled down to their individual pursuits.

Muriel Morton had already laid her lovely head against her curled fist, and was off day-dreaming. Billy Camorra, twenty years old and six-feet-three, draped a lanky leg with garterless sock over his other knee, and began to fabricate a cardboard spitball, fishing around in his pockets for a rubber band.

Blond Niles Gowambly, the football captain, with the blitz haircut, turned sideward to resume the endless game of tick-tat-toe which he had been playing all year with Gloria Glick, the president of the student council. "Leaping Leander" Leverwaite, the hurdling track star, arose and stretched himself, in preparation to crossing the class room to shake dice with "Four-Eyes" Ryan.

A buzz of conversation filled the air, like the buzz of bees, hornets, flies, gnats and Japanese beetles out the windows.

"Ladies and gentlemen—" said little Noel Gouf, beaming with his ineffectual smile.

**N**O ONE paid any attention to him. No one ever paid any attention to old Prof Gouf. No one ever understood anything about the formulas which he wrote down and the endless computations he made, and the diagrams he drew. It was the universal opinion of the student body that he didn't understand anything about them himself.

Still he was a well-meaning and harmless old screwball. Give him a black-

board and a piece of chalk, and he could amuse himself happily for hours, standing at it and muttering to himself. Like a child whose fingers have been smeared with molasses and which is given a feather to pick back and forth from one hand to the other, to its endless entertainment. It accomplishes nothing, but it does no harm.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said little Professor Gouf, "on this last day of our happy little class, which I trust has been both stimulating and instructive to all of you, I am going to dispense with the ordinary textbook problems, and instead am going to discourse briefly on a theoretical world of four dimensions, as has been my custom for many years—"

For many years, he thought. And now the end of it. Suddenly he wanted to burst into tears. To be a boy again, and lay his head on the lap of his mother, and weep his heart out. But a man can't cry.

Mathematics. Abstruse theories. The lovely perfect world of intangible and unreal speculation.

He had been a boy once, a big-domed boy. He had been an infant prodigy, the delight of his teachers, the pride and awe of his heavy-shouldered, tired, plodding, slow-speaking laborer father; the hope and glory of his shining-eyed young mother. He had graduated from this very high school at eleven. He had graduated from Harvard *summa cum laude* at fourteen.

Noel Gouf. The mathematical wizard. Written up in newspapers and magazines. Lecturing to the Graduate School faculty on "The Theory of the Fourth Dimension" at fifteen.

What a lovely world, the perfect world of mathematics. Minus quantities. Multiply  $x$  to the  $n$ th power. Carry onward to infinity. Everything working out to perfection with a pencil and a piece of paper, or a blackboard and some chalk.

All that in his big dome. But what of it? The pure and beautiful world of mathematics is not the world in which a man must live, or can. "Butch" Sundersohn had been in his high school class thirty-three years ago, and had flunked



"Butch! Listen to me. This is Brains Gouf, Butch! I'm here in the fourth dimension"

out of elementary algebra after repeating it three times. He was the multi-millionaire head of Sundersohn Industries now, with a half a billion dollars in war contracts.

"Skiddy" Merton, the class playboy at Harvard, into whose amiable bubble-blown brain little Noel Gouf had diligently tried to cram sufficient tutorial information to get him through freshman trig, was head of his own great brokerage house. He was director of thirty or more great corporations with assets of twenty billion dollars, even though he still didn't know what a cosine was.

And Noel Gouf, the infant prodigy, the Phi Beta Kappa marshal, the *summa cum*, was a professor in Stratton High at twenty-seven hundred dollars a year, giving the same discourse to a class of indifferent high school half-wits that he had given to the attentive Graduate School faculty when he had been fifteen, thirty years ago. And now he had lost even this poor job.

**I**N THAT pure world of mathematics in which he had lived and dreamed, the world had passed him by. It had never had much use for him, a theoretical and impractical dreamer, at the best. Now it had none at all. It would have been better for him if he had never been born, with his big head, into this hard and tough and all-too imperfect world of practicality.

Perhaps if he had been able to finish his graduate work and get his Ph.D., he might have obtained some berth on a university faculty where he could have continued his speculative mathematics. Old Hoogstretter, the mathematics head, had dryly suggested that sometime, in another thirty years, young Gouf might have his place. He might have become another and greater Einstein by this time.

Still, there are only a limited number of even Einsteins for whom universities can find room on their faculties. Universities are practical businesses, run by practical men, and such men have to

think of hard, realistic matters like endowments and shrinking per cents on invested capital, and the necessity of having a well-rounded faculty, and the importance of being useful and constructive in their teaching.

A man needs only one necktie and one handkerchief in his breast pocket, and is not any better dressed if he wears a dozen. So a university needs only one phenomenal abstract mathematician, only one outstanding Sanskrit scholar, one Grade A atom-smasher, one supreme authority on the life and habits of the female titmouse, and one of other kinds of decorative but not indispensable scholars, to appear sufficiently resplendent and well-dressed. Doubling the number or multiplying them by a hundred is superfluous.

Noel Gouf had not gone on to earn his Ph.D. anyway. One June day like this, when he had been sixteen years old and finishing his second year in Graduate School, his quiet, tired, plodding, slow-speaking father had collapsed at his laborer's job, digging a sewer beneath the boiling sun.

He had died in half an hour of the heart disease which he had kept silent about so long.

Noel Gouf had had his bright-eyed, worshipful little mother to take care of, with the illness which had rendered her helpless, and with the years she had to live not many. So he had left the Graduate School, and had taken the mathematics teaching job here at Stratton High temporarily.

Four years afterward there had been Jessica Corlay, his brightest and loveliest pupil, and though she had understood nothing about mathematics, she had worshiped him. So he had found himself married, in the year his mother had died. And then there had been little Tommy, and in a few years more little Caroline followed.

Algebra, plane geometry, solid geometry, and elementary trig. He had been professor of mathematics at Stratton for twenty-nine years. And now it was ended.

## CHAPTER II

*Two Speeches—Spoken and Unspoken*

**P**ROFESSOR GOUF stood there at the blackboard with the chalk dust on his old gray flannel suit, the dust of twenty years. With his big dome of head and his big scared eyes. With his wistful pathetic smile, and terrified of life.

A little man, not above five feet five, and getting older every year. He who had once been an infant prodigy, the brightest boy in all the school, the joy of his teachers, the pride of his father, the hope and glory of his mother. With all the world before him, it had seemed.

He would like to say to the giggling, slumbering, playing, inattentive class before him:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I know that I am a joke, and that my life has been a hideous failure. My boy Tom began to despise me as an impractical fool when he was no more than ten years old. When he finished high school he got himself a job working with his hands, as a mechanic. He said that his grandfather had been a laborer, and had been more useful than anything I had ever been. He is now a flying instructor in the air service, and with his flying pay earns more than I do.

"My daughter Caroline is a secretary in a judge's office, and earns almost as much. She, too, despises me. She is engaged to an illiterate but highly successful labor politician whom I think is a crook, instead of the young English professor that I wanted her to marry. She only laughs at me when I say the man's no good.

"My wife, who knows me best of the whole world, long ago came to the realization that I am a man with no more common sense than a six-year-old child, and must be scolded and petted and treated accordingly. I have no pals and buddies among men. They all know that I am a freak, and avoid me. Even you pimple-faced young rug-cutters and jive-

brained morons regard me as a complete idiot. And you are right. You are perfectly right.

"I am a failure, a dolt, a clown, and an idiot. Old 'Jawbone' MacGlurk is going to fire me because I can't keep order among you. When I lose this job I'll never be able to find another. I can't even get a defense job. The Army would laugh at me if I tried to volunteer.

"Last week, in a mood of desperation, I mortgaged my house for everything it would carry, and borrowed to the hilt on my furniture and my old car and the three-thousand-dollar life insurance policy I carry, and put the money into Wall Street, to see if I could make five thousand into fifty, with all the mathematics that I know. I put it in the brokerage house of a college classmate of mine who couldn't pass elementary trig, and flunked out of about everything else, and who is now worth fifty million dollars.

"Already, in five days, I have lost a thousand dollars of the little stake I had put in. Just this morning I ordered my brokers to buy two hundred shares of Sundersohn Industries cumulative preferred at seventy-eight dollars on margin, in a desperate effort to recoup. That was more than I had margin for, and I had to send them a check by special delivery for twenty-five hundred dollars which I do not have in the bank.

"The stock has been rising steadily for the past three weeks. It is a sure thing that within the next few days the company will declare at least a thirty-dollar dividend on account of deferred payments, and the stock will rise at least ten points more. In which case, if I can only hold on, I will make two thousand dollars. And sell and take my profits and get the money in the bank before that check I sent them has gone through.

"But if the declaration of the dividend is delayed a few days, the stock may hesitate, and I may have to sell at a loss. And if by any chance it should drop too much, before I can sell out, my four thousand dollars will be wiped out, and I will have nothing to cover the check I have sent them, and I will go to jail.

"I am Noel Gouf, and I was an infant prodigy once, and I have a big bulging brain. And I am of no more use than if I were an idiot drooling in a darkroom. I can't even feed myself. I don't know enough to come in out of the rain.

"Thirty years ago, when I was younger than the youngest of you, I was lecturing to the Graduate School faculty on the fourth dimension, and old Hoogstretter told me that I would make discoveries which would shake the mathematical world before I was done. And here I am. You are quite right, young ladies and gentlemen. I am just a perfectly futile fool, and a joke and a clown."

**B**UT they were not paying any attention to him, and they wouldn't even if he talked like that. Nothing he could do or say would surprise them or even interest them. He was just an idiot, old Prof. Gouf.

"Ladies and gentlemen," was what he did say, "let us consider briefly the possibility of the existence of another, or fourth dimension. In other words, the possibility that instead of this being a world in which everything is measurable only in three dimensions, namely, width, length, and height, there may be actually one or more additional dimensions to reality which we fail to perceive because of some human intellectual limitation. And let us try to picture by diagram, if possible, what such a world would be like.

"The simplest approach is to imagine a two-dimensional world, and what it would look like to our three-dimensional eyes. To two-dimensional people, in such a two-dimensional world, a line, such as this line AB—" he drew a line upon the blackboard, labeling the ends of it A and B—"would be the equivalent of a blind and impassable wall. Something over which no one could climb, and through which no one could look. As solid and impenetrable as the brick wall behind this blackboard in front of me. Yet with our three-dimensional perception we can see on both sides of this line AB at once, of course, and we

would find no difficulty at all in traversing it.

"Here is a two-dimensional room, ABCD—" he drew three more lines on the blackboard, making a square on the line which he had previously drawn, and labeling its additional corners C and D—"in which the two-dimensional inhabitants would feel themselves as shut off as we feel ourselves in any three-dimensional room. Pulling down the shades, they might undress and go happily to bed, quite unaware that three-dimensional people could see into their shut-in room as easily as if the walls did not exist.

"So in all the acts of their lives, because they could perceive only two dimensions, they would have a feeling of impenetrability which would be ludicrous to us with our three-dimensional perception.

"Let us try to picture a four-dimensional world, and what this three-dimensional world, as we see it, would look like to people who have the perception of such a fourth dimension. To anyone with such a perception we would be as exposed inside a closed three-dimensional room, like this classroom, as our two-dimensional people would be to us inside this square.

"A person with the fourth-dimensional perception could see and reach through what seems solid and impenetrable to us. Could step over or through or between these walls in the same way that we can step over the lines of a two-dimensional square.

"Is there such an additional dimension to reality, and do some men have perception of it? There have been magicians such as the famous Houdini, who performed feats explicable by no known laws of the three-dimensional world. Such as getting out of locked steel boxes, with his limbs shackled, beneath the sea.

"Houdini always claimed that there was nothing supernatural in his exploits—but he never explained how he did them. A fourth dimension would not be supernatural, of course, if it exists.

He and other famous magicians may quite possibly have happened to discover it, but decided to use it for their own professional purposes and profit rather than making it known to science.

"Let us try to diagram such a four-dimensional world. Let us take this square ABCD, and extend it into this solid ABCDEFGH"—he drew legs from the four corners of the square, joining them at the top by another series of lines, like a glass box seen in perspective—and see if we can picture—"

**H**E HAD done the same thing for thirty years. The same words, the same diagrams, the same little formulae. But he felt a fever mounting in him this afternoon, an eerie feeling. Outside the windows the murmuring of the fat June-laden insects was a soporific song. He felt the bones inside him rush and melt. An intangible trembling had taken hold of him.

At their desks the thirty-seven pupils went about their business. Billy Camorra, tossing back his raven hair that had fallen over his forehead had made his cardboard missile, hard and stinging, shaped like a boomerang. He had found a rubber band in his pocket. Muriel Morton, with her head cradled against her hand felt an intrusive midge which had come in the open window chew her leg above the knee, and put down a curved finger to lift her skirt and scratch it briefly.

Niles Gowamley's blond blitz head, bent over the tick-tat-toe paper with Gloria Glick's auburn tresses, brushed foreheads with her briefly, with one of those brief ardent looks of young love which fortunately are so fleeting that their bug-eyed and drooling appearance seldom registers on the consciousness.

Leaping Leander Leverwaite, the hurdling star, was vaulting over a chair on his way across the room. The electric clock upon the wall stood at just half past two.

There was that strange tingling in little Noel Gouf's nerves, and in his

bones. The bones, the solid flesh of him, seemed to melt and rush together.

"Let us draw this line, continuing it—"

He drew a swift corkscrewing parabola. His hand went in through the blackboard, following the swift line he had been drawing, and which had receded in.

"Well, I'll be jigged!" he gasped, dropping his chalk.

The blackboard was like rubber or jelly. More like a translucent plasm, it might be called. The chalk line he had drawn had gone in like a corkscrew, unwinding like a spool of thread, to arm's length in front of him. He reached in and caught hold of the spiraling end of it, and tied it in a knot!

"Q. E. D.!" he said breathlessly. "*Quod erat demonstrandum!* What was to be demonstrated! Ladies and gentlemen, the fourth dimension!"

He turned around, beaming, dizzy, to face the classroom. A boomerang-shaped cardboard stinger from Billy Camorra's rubber band was coming at his face from just three feet away. The rubber was still stretched forward in its snap from the fork of Billy's fingers.

Muriel Morton's bright red index fingernail rested on her white knee, hooked in a delicate scratching gesture, an inch from a nimble and wary midge which hung motionless above her knuckle. Niles Gowamley and Gloria Glick had their noses pressed together, their eyes swimming into each other's, grinning idiotically.

Leander Leverwaite was just jumping over a desk on his way from one aisle to another. Six inches above the desk, with legs neatly folded, he remained motionless, as if kneeling on an invisible pillow. The humming of insects outside had ceased. The clock stood at just half past two.

"Well, I'll be rum-jiggered!" said little Noel Gouf.

He had penetrated Time. Time was the fourth dimension, of course, as Einstein had always said. Somehow he had solved the enigma of it. At least, had



penetrated it. He walked forward, a little dazedly, on rubber feet that seemed to have no foundation beneath him.

"Watch the old goof," he heard a voice in the motionless, silent classroom air as he moved forward.

He paused, and bent his head back.

"Watch," was in his ear. He moved his head an inch forward.

"The old goof," was in his ear. He moved his head a little more forward, scooping with his ear.

"Jump when this hits him," the lazy sentence was finished.

### CHAPTER III

#### *Quod Erat Demonstrandum*

**N**O ONE was speaking. No lips moved. Leaping Leander remained in motionless flight six inches above the desk he had been clearing. The midge which had itched Muriel Morton remained poised an inch above her curved finger. The rubber band, snapping forward in its propulsive bound, remained motionless in Billy Camorra's forked fingers. The missile which Billy had shot remained motionless in the air.

The voice, of course, was the sound waves of Billy's voice, frozen motionless in the air. The first word he had uttered farthest from him. The rest of them going right down to his slack grinning mouth.

The air was crisscross with other sound waves, some of them tangled together like invisible coils of tape. By pushing his ear forward, this way and that, tiptoeing around the room, Noel Gouf could pick them up. Moving toward the windows, he could even pick up the hum of bees again, poised motionless on motionless wings above the delphinium spikes outside.

The clock stood still. The sun stood still. Time stood still. It was the fourth dimension, and he had penetrated

it!

He flipped his thumbnail on Billy Camorra's nose with stinging force.

"You garterless overgrown grinning half-wit," he said. "I'd like to kick you in the seat of the pants, for all the trouble you've given me."

Six-foot Billy, sitting slumped with one leg over the other, continued his unchanging grin.

Noel Gouf went out the class room door, taking a deep breath and squaring his shoulders. He passed by Principal MacGlurk's office on his way to the school front door. Inside he saw Miss Peavy, MacGlurk's secretary, sitting with her sharp-pointed pencil poised above her notebook.

"Jawbone" MacGlurk was dictating to her. He had been pacing up and down, as was his custom, jingling coins in his hand, with his long jaw extended while he orated. He had paused in the instant to stoop and pick up from the floor a nickel he had dropped.

Noel Gouf caught a word coming out, as he tiptoed by.

"Professor Gouf—"

He started, in mortal terror. Jawbone MacGlurk had terrorized him for ten years. The man's mean, malicious mind had squeezed his brain. MacGlurk's sadistic pleasure in exercising authority and inflicting hurt had petrified his spirit. The sight of, and even the name of MacGlurk was enough to make him cringe.

But MacGlurk was not speaking to him, of course. He was not aware of him, through the fourth dimension. They were just words that the bony jawboned principal of Stratton High had been dictating, the sound waves of them in the air.

With a bent ear, Noel Gouf went quietly into the sacrosanct precincts, scooping up the motionless waves of sound and toward MacGlurk's stooped form and downward bent countenance.

"Professor Gouf is a man totally unable to maintain discipline, and for that reason, if none other, I would find it impossible to recommend him for the posi-

tion. Period. New paragraph. In the larger view, he is a man of a highly impractical—”

Little Noel Gouf had followed the sound waves right down Principal MacGlurk's bent bald head and the tight, twisted mouth in MacGlurk's long bony jaw. He had to kneel beside MacGlurk's motionless figure to scoop in the last word which had been uttered. The rest of them were still in MacGlurk's larynx and in his brain.

**H**E arose with a trembling mouth, and tears in his eyes. He had given MacGlurk's name as a recommendation when he had applied for the teaching position at the state Defective Institution. Only fifteen hundred a year, and the life would be rather awful.

But with the children now grown up and self-supporting, somehow he and Jessie might have got along on it. Now MacGlurk wouldn't even recommend him for that miserable starvation job, after twenty-nine years.

“You—you jaw-boned old toad,” he whispered, almost crying. “I feel like —”

Well, he could actually do it. MacGlurk remained there stooped, with his rear end lifted in the air, and the seat of his pants stretched tight, as he reached for his nickel.

Professor Noel Gouf lifted back his right foot, and swung it with all the solidiy of his short, stubby frame against the spot indicated. Principal MacGlurk did not move, did not change

expression, still reaching for the nickel he had dropped.

Noel Gouf went out the ornate Gothic entrance of the Stratton High School into the bright warm day. Motionless insects on motionless wings hung in the air. Motionless motor cars stood on the streets, with motionless blue exhaust coming from their pipes, with motionless wheels spurning the pavements.

Motionless pedestrians were frozen on the sidewalks. Motionless waves glinted with motionless sunlight on the blue little river. Motionless wind blew motionless factory smokes.

He went down the street. He went skimming. His bones were melted. His feet were bottomless and rubber. He moved at first at his brisk little pace of thirty inches to the step, but soon found that he could take thirty feet as easily, or three hundred, or any amount that he desired to. That fourth dimension, which he had penetrated, made all other dimensions valueless, like the chalk line which would have been a wall to two-dimensional people.

It was two-thirty. It was two-thirty of the afternoon. The stock market in New York across the river wouldn't close for half an hour. The first and most important thing in his life was to find out whether SI preferred, Sundersohn Industries preferred, on which he had staked so much, every dollar that he had and more, had gone up since he had bought his two hundred shares at seventy this morning, or whether it had gone down, and he was due for jail. He went

[Turn page]



skimming to the Stratton commuting station, trying to remember what was the next train out.

No trains were running, of course. But he didn't need a train. It was hard to adjust himself to that. To realize it at once, completely. He went skimming to the Hudson's shore fifteen miles away, and across the river, skating above motionless waves past motionless ferries, dodging motionless gulls poised over the water.

The clock overlooking the Battery and the tall towers of financial Manhattan said half past two. The sun stood still.

"It's amazing," he whispered to himself. "It's perfectly amazing. It's—well, it's wonderful."

He didn't need to hurry so. He had all the time in the world. Before going to his brokers, Skiddy Merton & Co., whose offices were up town, he might as well drop in and see the offices of the Sandersohn Industries themselves, in the great Sandersohn building down overlooking the harbor.

**T**HE revolving doors were motionless, filled with motionless people going in and coming out. He went through the glass panel of the locked side door. The elevators were motionless, but he went up the stairs, three, and seventeen, and fifty at a time, and seven whole flights within a step.

He went through glass-paneled doors past motionless secretaries, into the private office of B. B. Sandersohn, who had been Butch Sandersohn in his class at Stratton High thirty-three years ago, and hadn't even been able to add A plus B together, but had added together five million dollars.

In the directors' room off Butch's private office a dozen men sat around the big board table at lunch. They spooned ice cream to their mouths motionlessly. They drank from tilted highball glasses out of which no liquid poured.

Butch Sandersohn, big, bald, powerful, with shrewd pale eyes, stood at the head of the table, with the knuckles of his left hand resting on a sheaf of papers.

The red point of the cigar in his right hand, which he held out before him in a declamatory gesture, did not burn in this timeless space, and yet it did not die.

"We are agreed, gentlemen, on the necessity," Noel Gouf scooped in Butch Sandersohn's booming voice as he came through the door.

"Pardon me," he murmured.

He had come through in such haste and curiosity that he had failed to notice that one of the directors was standing on the inside of the door, with his hand on the bolt, locking it. He had come right through the man.

He was Skiddy Merton, old Skiddy with his amiable bubble brain, who didn't know what a cosine was yet, but had made a pile of money on the market, more even than Butch Sandersohn. Gouf hadn't hurt Skiddy, going through him that way. Skiddy hadn't even noticed. Still it was the polite thing to beg pardon.

He went toward Butch Sandersohn at the far end of the table, scooping up Butch's booming sound waves with his ear, stepping through the table and the men seated around it with little murmurs of apology.

"The necessity of declaring no dividend at all on the preferred," he scooped up Butch's sound waves hanging motionless in the air, "in consideration of the serious tax outlook and the fact that profits have been much below preliminary estimates. To insure no unfair advantage among ourselves, we will wait to make our announcement till after the market's close, I think we are agreed. However, I rather imagine that most of us have had some forewarning, and have already succeeded in disposing, at the recent not unfavorable market—"

They were not going to declare the huge thirty-dollar dividend on the preferred, or any dividend at all. They were going to pass it again. They had known all along that they were going to pass it. They had just spread the rumor of the big dividend, so that they would have a market among the little

speculators to unload their stock.

Noel Gouf pushed his face right up through the ring of cigar smoke which stood motionless in front of Butch Sundersohn's mouth, but that was the last word out. Butch had paused to blow his cigar ring before resuming.

"Butch!" Noel Gouf said. "For Pete's sake, Butch, aren't you really going to declare it?"

**H**E WAS panic-stricken. The stock would drop thirty points. He would lose six thousand dollars, two thousand more than he had. He would go to jail for life, and Jessie would starve. He clutched Butch Sundersohn's lapel, trying to shake Butch's large impassive frame.

"Butch!" he cried. "This is Brains Gouf, Butch. You remember me. The little guy who was in your high school class at Stratton thirty-three years ago. The one who always got the As. I'm here in the fourth dimension, Butch. Listen to me! I've sunk everything. I've gone overboard. I got the tip straight from Skiddy Merton's own head office that the dividend would surely be declared, and I might make two thousand dollars! Please do something about it, Butch!"

He was almost crying. Butch Sundersohn remained stolid and impassive, with shrewd, cold-wrinkled eyes looking beyond him, with the cigar ring unbroken in front of his round mouth. He did not move to Noel Gouf's frantic shaking. His face was unchanged.

"For gosh sake," thought the little man, releasing him. "This isn't any time to him at all, of course. I'm not even here. Any more than a man peering over the walls of a two-dimension house would be there to a two-dimension person. It's hard to keep it straight."

He got out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead. He poured himself a glass of water from a carafe on the table, and drank it.

"Well, so long," he said.

He straightened his shoulders and

went out through the wall, stepping from the parapet of the Sundersohn building to the top of the Woolworth tower, and skating from here to the Empire State thirty blocks up town, and rolling over on his back and floating from there to the tall-clustered spires of Rockefeller Center, a mile farther on.

He got out there on the eighty-seventh floor and walked sedately down the stairs, eighty-three flights of them, one step at a time. There was such a thing as carrying anything to excess in the way of speed. He needed time to think.

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## CHAPTER IV

### *While Time Stood Still*

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**L**ITTLE Professor Gouf was tired and breathless and his calf muscles were wobbling when he entered the offices of Skiddy Merton & Co. down on the fourth floor. The clock in the board room said half past two. The huge green board with threefold wings had eight hundred big board stocks listed on it, with a few selected curbs, and wheat, oats, cotton, and lard. Opening price, low price, high price, and latest price for each stock.

In big leather lounge chairs facing the board the traders sat, watching the motionless translux tape. At the trading counter the customers' men stood, at telephones, with pencils poised, with changeless smiles upon their faces, in that changeless instant.

Noel Gouf's eyes went roving to Industrials. SI pfd. had opened at 77 $\frac{3}{8}$ , which was also its low for the day. Its last and high were the same, 79 $\frac{1}{2}$ . Tomorrow morning it would open at about 50. Or maybe 40 or below. It was going to be a cold, freezing day in SI pfd. when the word got out that that hoped-for dividend had been passed.

He went to the counter, where his customer's man, old Grilby, looking like a decayed nineteen-hundred-style con-

fidence man in bright striped shirt, bright checked suit, and diamond horse-shoe stickpin stood. Grilby was smiling, with pencil poised over a black-printed order blank on the counter before him, and a telephone at his ear.

"How is SI preferred acting, Mr. Grilby?" said the sound waves, clustered around the telephone.

"Up. Up. All the boys seem to be crazy about it." The sound waves of Grilby's voice, rising up and down in the air like a roller-coaster, came joyously.

He was an optimist, Mr. Grilby, as a customer's man should be, and it was all a roller-coaster to him.

The black pads were the buy orders. In shaking anxiety Noel Gouf reached for a red-printed pad on the counter, and wrote on it:

Sell to account of Noel Gouf 200  
SI pfd. at market.

He pushed it beneath old Grilby's pencil, and wiped his forehead. Selling at the market meant selling at whatever price happened to be bid. If the last price was  $79\frac{1}{2}$ , though, he ought to get  $78\frac{1}{2}$ , anyway.

Allowing half a point for taxes and commissions in buying and selling, that would just about clear him, after having bought this morning at 78. If the market price was half a point more, he might even make a hundred dollars. He had escaped losing thousands, anyway, and more than he had, and going to jail.

He wiped his forehead again, and pulled back the red pad. Beneath the order he had written he wrote further:

Sell 200 SI pfd. short at market.

He pushed it under old Grilby's pencil again. Wiping his sweating hands, he went tiptoeing out, afraid that some police officers' hand would reach out and pinch him before he had gained the door.

He walked down the stairs, and went out upon the street, still a little dazed. A cop's whistle made him jump. But it was only a track of sound waves which

he had run into from the traffic policeman at the corner, directing the motionless traffic with motionless hand up-raised. He looked absently at his watch. It was still half past two.

His daughter Caroline had had a luncheon engagement at the Pigeon Club today, he remembered, with Allison Clouber, the powerful young labor politician to whom she was engaged. She and Clouber might still be lingering at lunch.

**H**E TURNED down the side street on which the Pigeon Club was located, passing through the door and through the admiral-uniformed doorman, who was just starting hurriedly out, with hand uplifted and a whistle to his lips, to signal a passing cab.

Caroline and Clouber were sitting at a table in an alcove. An empty bottle that had held champagne showed that they had been celebrating. Caroline had her glass half lifted to her lips. Her eyes were bright. Her face was smiling. She was so much like what her mother had been at nineteen that the sight of her always tore old Noel Gouf's heart. He had been only a failure to Caroline, a despised cipher in her existence. It was no wonder she had chosen a man so different.

The luncheon bill was in front of Clouber on its silver platter. With one hand on his coat lapel he had pulled out his pocketbook. Inadvertently, he had pulled out a letter from his inside breast pocket with it, too. His broad, pale face, powerful and big-jawed, was smiling a little quizzically as he glanced down at the letter behind his pulled-out lapel.

"We'll take the plane for St. Louis this afternoon, Caroline." The sound waves of his voice hung motionless in the air. "You'd like to meet my sister."

The letter which he had pulled out and was glancing down at was on pink paper with a blue deckle edge. The writing on it was in violet ink.

Noel Gouf had always had a strong prejudice against reading other persons' letters. But anything written on deckle-

edged pink paper with violet ink had nothing sacrosanct about it. He removed it gently but firmly from Clouber's big, square, well-manicured hand, without even a murmur of apology. He read:

Dear Al,

How much longer you going play that judge's secaterly, that Goof girl? Your wasting time. A Dame like that ante going to give you no inside Info about the case their building up against you for Rakateering without you get her in a box & under your Thumb.

wrinkled beast of a young man.

Perhaps if she read it herself, she would understand something in it. She was young, but she was wiser in so many ways than her father. Gently plump little Professor Noel Gouf removed the half-lifted champagne glass from her hand, and set it down on the tablecloth. He inserted the pink sheet opened in her hand, before her smiling face.

He started out the door of the Pi-

## Barney Barringer Was Fading—

MILLIONS OF tiny electric needles pricked at every cell of his body as he tumbled backward—

BACKWARD into the effectual zone of the telematerio's radiations. He tried to scream. Everything grew hazy. But beneath his fear his mind was telling him the truth. He was being broadcast—where?

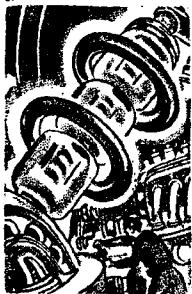
FREEZING cold . . . indescribably swift motion . . . and his brain, its molecules torn asunder, blacked out. Barney Barringer was an

## EXILE TO CENTAURI

*in the amazing complete novel of that name*

By ROSS ROCKLYNNE

Coming Next Issue



You bring her out to St. Loo where I break her for you like I broke others.

Your loveing wife,

Madame Sally Lou.

Little Noel Gouf read the violet ink on the pink paper over with a feeling creeping horror. What it meant or what it suggested was something quite outside the range of his mathematics, and not less out of his own simple personal experiences in life. Still it gave him a feeling of some dark and brutalizing horror which threatened his lovely young Caroline, from this great pale,

geon Club, and bumped into the doorman still rushing out in motionless silence, with his hand lifted and his silent whistle in his lips. With a thought he removed the whistle from the doorman's lips.

He went back to the table where Caroline and Clouber sat. Picking up a napkin, he wiped the whistle diligently. He dunked it in a water glass, rinsing it, and wiped it off again. As a last measure, he immersed it in Caroline's champagne. Champagne had alcohol in it, he was sure, and alcohol is sterilizing.

**O**NCE having taken these precautions, he placed it between Caroline's smiling and half-parted lips. He spat into his palm, and doubled up his right fist. He swung it straight at young Clouber's broad white nose, and wrung his knuckles when the blow had landed. Young Clouber remained smiling ironically, still looking down at his half-extracted purse and the pink letter which was no longer in his hand.

Rubbing his bruised knuckles, little Professor Noel Gouf went marching out of the Pigeon Club again, going through the wall this time so as not to go through the doorman.

The motionless sun was bright above. The day was at perfection. In this timeless space the weather could not change. No cloud could come. No drop of rain could fall. Little Professor Noel Gouf walked up Broadway, through a city of seven million people where no one walked or moved but him, enjoying the fine balmy afternoon June weather.

The sound waves of a loudspeaker horn above a radio shop, playing "Deep in the Heart of Texas," were seined up by his ear. He looked at his watch, and it was just half past two.

"I could make it out there and back in no time," he muttered to himself, in he way that he had had, for thirty years, of muttering at his blackboard while he worked out his problems. "Texas is only two thousand miles away, after all. Yes, out there and back in no time. I've always wanted to see it."

He started out, sauntering up Broadway to the George Washington bridge six miles to the north, and sauntering across the bridge, enjoying the motionless sparkle of the motionless sunlight on the motionless river deep below. He paused to cut himself a walking stick when he had reached the Jersey side, and then started out for Texas.

It was difficult to explain. He himself found it somewhat difficult to explain, with all his mathematical knowledge. But by penetrating time, and thereby reducing all the other dimen-

sions of reality to chalk marks, it didn't really make any difference how far he went, or at what speed he went.

It didn't make any difference whether he sauntered slowly along country roads, enjoying wild flowers and scooping his ear to catch the sound waves of singing birds, or whether he paused and meditated; or whether he skated gracefully above the treetops in mile-long skimming strokes, or whether he tried a trudgeon crawl and went plowing through the air with a scissors kick, overtaking motionless hawks and stationary formations of combat planes and frozen lightning bolts in his swift progress.

It didn't make any difference whether it was two hundred feet or two thousand miles he went, either. For the time that it took him to go anywhere, at whatever speed, was just exactly nothing.

So he started out for Texas, not going like a wild hawk, nor like a plane, nor like a bullet nor a lightning bolt, for even the last takes a measurable eleven thousands of a second to go two thousand miles. And it was taking him just exactly no time at all.

He started out walking, swinging the walking stick that he had cut, leisurely enjoying the scenery on the ground or floating through the air when his legs got a little tired. At the end of precisely no time, at two-thirty Eastern War Time, one-thirty Central War Time, he was at Collins Field in Texas, where his son Tom was stationed as a flying instructor.

**I**N JUST precisely no time he was there from the Pigeon Club. In precisely no time from the board room of Skiddy Merton & Co., and in no time from the directors' room of Sundersohn Industries. And in no time from old Jawbone MacGlurk's office and his own class room in the Stratton High School in the pleasant little town of Stratton, on the sparkling river two thousand miles away.

He was out there in Texas in no time, a hundred feet above the ground, which

was a bad patch of rocky ground. His hand was on the cockpit edge of a training plane which was poised motionless in the air with its nose down and its wings sideways, and its ailerons and flippers and rudder all twisted in what seemed to him, with his mathematical mind, somewhat peculiar and irrational positions.

He was holding on to the cockpit edge, and looking at the wrenched terrified face of a student pilot in the rear seat of the trainer. The student was clinging with both hands to the control stick hard against his belt in a stone grip like death, with motionless drops of saliva spouting from the edges of his wide-open mouth, and sound waves frozen in the motionless air about his mouth. They were discernible even in the great rocky corrugated sound waves of the plane's motor.

"I want to go home!" his sound waves screamed.

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## CHAPTER V

### *Back to Work*

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**F**IRST Lieutenant Tom Gouf, in the front seat, was looking around, his hand gripping the dual stick in his cockpit, and trying to force it forward from him. A twisted and considerably alarmed look was frozen on his lean, hard, brown face.

"Hello, Tom," said little Noel Gouf, apologetically. "I'm here in the fourth dimension. It was such a pleasant day that I thought I'd pop out and see you."

Tom made no reply to him, sat there with that motionless glare.

"I don't mean to butt in with my theories," said little Noel Gouf, still apologetically. "But it seems to me that, speaking in terms of pure abstract mathematics, the position of line of flight of your plane in relation to the direct line of gravity forms an extremely acute angle—which, if continued, would cause

your line AB to meet the ground line CD almost perpendicularly, and with considerable force.

"I know nothing about flying, of course. Still the proper maintenance of the Kv curve is a mathematical formula. I thought that perhaps you wouldn't mind if I pointed out to you the mathematics of the situation."

Tom's frozen face glared back. The professor edged up along the fuselage toward Tom's cockpit timidly. Tom had always hated for him to give any advice.

"Let go," Tom's sound waves came into his ear as he moved up toward him. "That stick! You crazy fool!"

"Goodness gracious," said little Professor Noel Gouf, rubbing his chin. "The young fellow is really quite crazy with fright, isn't he? And he has seized the controls and has swerved your plane into this most singular and mathematically absurd position. And the ground is extremely close. At a speed of approximately two hundred miles per hour, you will hit in approximately three hundred and seventeen thousandths of a second. With disastrous consequences, I presume, since the force of impact is in proportion to the square of the speed. Let me think a moment."

But there were no moments at all, of course, to think. He stood with his foot on the cockpit stirrup, rubbing his chin and analyzing all the mathematics of it, muttering to himself, while no moment passed, and then another.

"I have it," he said. "Just wait a moment. No moment, I mean."

He dropped down to the stony ground, and looked around. He selected a smooth oblong-shaped flint rock, after due reflection, of about two pounds in weight, which fitted nicely into his palm. He was back beside Tom's plane again in no time.

"Pardon me," he said.

He put one hand upon the side of the head of the bug-eyed, screaming student. He struck a little tap with the stone just back of that petrified young man's ear.



"Dear me," he said. "I hope that's firm enough. Perhaps I had better repeat it, though, for good measure and a little more emphatically."

He gave a somewhat more vigorous and impressive tap, with nicely calculated force. The motionless student with mouth open continued his soundless screaming, still clutching the stick in that timeless instant. However, when time began again he would be, Professor Noel Gouf felt, sufficiently well taken care of. He tossed away the rock, which remained motionless in the air a few feet away.

"I really believe that should do it, Tom," he said. "Hope I haven't bothered you."

**H**E LOOKED at the watch on Tom's wrist, and it said half past one. He looked at his own watch, and it said half past two. He was walking down the shady side of Maple Street in Stratton toward the high school a block away, still looking at his watch. His legs felt quite tired. As near as he could remember, he had walked the whole way from Texas.

Along the shady sidewalk, he saw a tall brisk white-bearded figure striding toward him. A white beard parted in the middle, and combed out in big puffs upon each side. A pair of steel-rimmed dark blue glasses, the color of eye-cup glass, over a pair of glittering eagle eyes. An old and bony figure, walking with a little hop.

Little Professor Noel Gouf had not seen him for almost thirty years. But it could be none other than Dr. Alcibiades Hoogstetter, the head of the Mathematics Department of the Graduate School; the great savant.

"Bless my soul, if it isn't young Gouf," said old Hoogstetter, stopping and shaking hands with him heartily. "I was just thinking of you, Gouf. I am retiring, and none of the other young fellows seem to fit into my shoes. I have always expected you to take over after me. I inquired about you, but they told me you had left the Graduate

School, and were now in Stratton. It took me a little by surprise."

"I left Graduate School twenty-nine years ago, Doctor," said little Noel Gouf with a trembling mouth.

"Indeed?" the old man said. "Time flies. It's quite difficult to keep track of it. I had a birthday only the other day, or maybe it was a few years back. I thought that I was forty-two, but they told me I was eighty-one. Felt like a perfect fool. I thought that I had seen you around the Yard only yesterday, Gouf, or the day before, but you tell me it's been months. What have you been doing in mathematics in recent weeks?"

Little Noel Gouf drew himself up to his full height. He took a deep breath.

"I have discovered the fourth dimension, doctor," he said quietly.

Old Hoogstetter nodded absently. "Good—good!" he said. "I was sure you would. You were right on the tail of it. Write me your mathematical computations, and I will check them over. A fascinating discovery. It's good, of course, for a doctorate. But that would hardly be required of you, Gouf. I have the full authority to name my successor, and I have always had you in mind for it, as I told you only yesterday."

"Twenty-nine years ago, doctor," said little Noel Gouf.

"Well, well, time flies. I had a birthday the other day, and they told me I was ninety-seven. I thought I was still thirteen. But think the matter over, Gouf. I'll write you a confirming letter offering you the post. In fact, I'll have my secretary take a letter right now. What is your address, you say? Stratton, New Jersey? Where is that?"

"You're right there now, Doctor."

"Yes, I'll have her write to you at once. Well, good day to you, Gouf."

"Wait a minute!" said little Noel Gouf, as old Dr. Alcibiades Hoogstetter lifted his hat courteously and turned away, going absently around a corner three steps distant. "Wait a minute Doctor! How the dickens are you walking and talking—"

He ran around the corner after the

brisk old man.

"Hey, wait a minute!"

But there were no minutes to wait. In no time the brisk old figure of Dr. Hoogstetter had vanished.

**L**ITTLE Noel Gouf turned back, considerably bewildered, and resumed his course down Maple Street. Really, any way he looked at it, it was most inexplicable. It was almost supernatural, that Dr. Hoogstetter should talk to him that way, and then abruptly vanish. He had never heard of such an extraordinary happening in his life.

He was almost at the high school steps when he saw the slight little figure of the Reverend Holmes, the new youthful pastor of the church which Jessie attended, walking toward him along the timeless and motionless street, with hands clasped behind him, head bowed in meditation. Would wonders never cease?

"Good afternoon, Parson," said little Noel Gouf.

"Oh, good afternoon, Professor. I was just thinking over my sermon."

"I have solved the riddle of the fourth dimension," said little Noel Gouf, with shy pride. "But of course you have, too, haven't you, or you wouldn't be here?"

The young clergyman nodded absently. "Yes, yes," he said. "There's really nothing to it. Amusing little experiment at times, though, to get us out of ourselves."

"I just came from Texas," said Noel Gouf.

"I just came from China," said the young clergyman. "Norway. Abyssinia. I am on my way down to East Peoria, where my dear old aunt lives. Glad to have seen you, Professor."

He walked on down shady Maple Street, with his hands clasped behind him, still pacing and meditating. Slowly pacing, he walked up into the air, and went whisking away over the roofs of Stratton like a bullet.

Little Professor Noel Gouf wiped his forehead, and turned into the high school's Gothic doors. He passed by

Principal Jawbone MacGlurk's office door, and MacGlurk was still stooped over inside, still reaching for his nickel. Little Professor Noel Gouf stopped in again, and delivered another mighty kick to the surface so prominently displayed, before proceeding on.

He went into his classroom in Senior Math. Nothing there had changed. The clock on the wall still stood at half past two. The spitball from Billy Camorra's rubber band still hung in the air three feet from where he had been standing at the blackboard. Muriel Morton still scratched her milk-white thigh. Niles Gowamley and Gloria Glick still had their noses and foreheads pressed together. Leaping Leander still sailed in motionless grace six inches above the chair.

Professor Noel Gouf paused. He got out a box of matches from his pocket. He struck one. It lit instantly, with a motionless flame, though it did not burn. He stooped, and inserted it in Niles Gowamley's hip pocket. He struck another, and inserted it in Leaping Leander's shoe, curled gracefully beneath him.

He struck a third, and after reflection tucked it gently into the sole of Billy Camorra's shoe, with just the flame extruding. He flipped his thumbnail on Billy's nose again.

He went back up to his blackboard a little hurriedly. He would have to complete the diagram and set down the mathematical formula while it was still clear in his mind—the diagram and the mathematical formula of the fourth dimension. He bent down to pick up the piece of chalk that he had dropped. . . .

**I**N THE directors' room of Sundersohn Industries, Inc., big Butch Sundersohn laid down his burning cigar, and blew away the smoke ring which drifted slowly six inches in front of his big face.

"Two-thirty now, even," he said. "We'll play fair with the public by holding the news till after the market closes. That's just a half hour more."

At the door Skiddy Merton, turning the bolt, said: "Curse it, something went right through me. I don't know what."

He clicked the bolt and turned around from the door, resuming his seat at the table again.

"A lot of little margin speculators are going to be hit," he said. "They've been hopping on SI preferred for a free ride. There's a little bug-eyed guy I used to know in college. Named something Gouf. Valedictorian of the class, first marshal of Phi Beta, one of these infant prodigies.

"He came to me last week, a seedy little fellow, a high school teacher, with a few thousand bucks that he wanted to put into a margin account and make fifty thousand out of. Somebody had given him a tip on Sundersohn preferred, and he asked me about it. I couldn't tell him anything, naturally. I just told him to watch it. I almost wish now I had told him to lay off."

"Why?" said Butch Sundersohn. "Sooner or later a guy like that is bound to lose it. He doesn't know the inside."

He picked up his cigar again, sitting down in his seat at the head of the table.

"I went to high school with him, myself," he said. "They used to call him Brains. Funny, I was thinking of him just this minute. Hadn't thought of him in thirty years, I guess. Teaching high school, is he? That's where they all end up. A theoretical guy like that, they never amount to much."

"The thought of him went right through me," said Skiddy Merton.

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## CHAPTER VI

### *Guardian Angel*

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**I**N Skiddy Merton & Co.'s board room the half-past two bell bonged. Old Grilby, the customers' man, put down his phone. With his flashy horseshoe tie pin, his flashy striped shirt and gambler's checked suit, he couldn't possibly be dishonest. Customers' men who wear

blue serge suits and black ties and who look like undertakers are the ones to watch.

Old Grilby had just given a quote on SI preferred to a rich widow, one of his most successful traders, and she had given him an order to buy five hundred shares. He reached for the black pad to put the order down, and saw the red "sell" pad on the counter right beneath his pencil.

"I must be getting old," he said to a confrere beside him at the counter. "Here's one I overlooked."

An order to sell two hundred SI pfd. at the market, and to sell two thousand additional short, for that seedy little new customer, Noel Gouf of Stratton. He initialed it, and rushed out to the phone desk to have it transmitted down to the exchange floor for execution.

He glanced across at the moving translux and the big quote board with its snapping prices, when he had returned to his station. He read the morning translux figures:

SI preferred 79% . . . Two hundred 6 . . .  
One hundred 7 . . . Five hundred 80 . . . Five  
hundred at  $\frac{1}{8}$ .

"Are they grabbing it!" he enthused. "They're going wild. It will never stop. I'm going to buy five shares of it myself. It'll hit ninety tomorrow morning, when the big dividend is declared. Hey, that fool is going to lose twenty thousand dollars!"

"What fool?" said the adjacent customers' man.

"Fellow just started an account this week," said old Grilby. "Made a few trades, lost a thousand. He bought a couple of lots of SI preferred this morning on my recommendation, and when he has made a point or two he loses his nerve. Sells out. Goes overboard on the other side, and sells two thousand short. He's going to lose twenty thousand dollars."

"Is he good for it?"

"He who sells what isn't his'n, must pay for it or go to pris'n," Grilby hummed the old song softly. "Well, he

must be good for it. Seedy little fellows like that generally have plenty tucked away in the sock. They save on clothes, that's how they have money."

"Sold two thousand short," said the other customers' man, in some alarm, thinking it over. "I've got ten shares of SI puffed myself. Wonder if he had any inside information?"

"How could he have? He doesn't have any Street connections. He's just a mathematical shark at some little jerk-water high school out in Jersey."

"A mathematical shark. Two thousand is a big lump. If they don't declare a dividend, he's going to make about sixty thousand dollars by tomorrow morning."

"Listen," said old Grilby uncertainly, "Sundersohn is going to pay that dividend. It's going up and up. And up. Nothing can stop it. Look at me. I know. Who made two million dollars in Twenty-nine by riding them up and up?"

"Show me two dollars now that you own," said the other customers' man unsympathetically. "I think I'll cash in on my little ten shares myself. Just for luck."

**OLD GRILBY** went out to the order desk, to confirm the execution of Gouf's order. It had gone through, two hundred shares at a little less than eighty, two thousand shares short at a little more.

"He must have known something," he whispered to himself.

He watched the translux out in the board room. SI pfd. was hovering around '0 and a quarter. There were a lot of buyers, but there was also a lot of stock. Old Grilby picked up his phone, and began calling his customers.

"SI preferred doesn't look so good," he said cautiously. "There's a rumor going around. A big short sale. It might be just as well to take your profits—"

The hunch had come to him from where all hunches and Wall Street tips come from. From the fourth dimension. . . .

In the Pigeon Club, Caroline Gouf smiled at Allison Clouber across the table from her. He was so big and crude and strong. His very ugliness had a charm for her. He was some kind of an outlaw, quite likely, but there was a boldness and daring about him which fascinated her. All the girls she knew were crazy about him.

She lifted up her wine glass and smiled, as the clock pointed to half past two. The waiter had set down the luncheon reckoning on the table before Al. He reached into his pocket for his bill-fold, with his quizzical smile.

Suddenly blood spurted from his nose, and his head jerked back. He glared at her.

"What did you do that for?" he snarled. "What are you doing with that blasted whistle in your mush? Where did you get that letter? Curse you, don't you try to tie me up with Sally Lou!"

He was on his feet, with his blood-dripping nose, glaring at her with terrible eyes. She thought she had a wine glass in her hand, but it was a pink letter with violet ink.

"Oh!"

She started to exhale her breath. A police blast came from her startled lips. Al struck at her with a swinging fist. He was leaping, a pistol coming from his pocket. Men were running at him. She arose with a frightened gasp, pulling the whistle from her lips, as Al went down beneath a flying horde.

A man kneeling on the floor looked up at her.

"You're from Judge Barnaby's office, aren't you?" he said. "We've been tailing him. We've been trying to tie him up with a traffic out in St. Louis, in which too many girls have disappeared, but he's always been too smart for us. Have you got hold of some letter of his, some written document? That was quick work, Miss, blowing that police whistle. And you are a brave girl to have gone out with him alone."

"I guess I have a guardian angel," she gasped. "I g-guess I have—"

She burst into tears. She went out

crying, with some young man supporting her.

"I want to go home," she said. "I want to go home. . . ."

The rushing ground was whirling up a hundred feet below the whipping plane, down there in Texas. Pushing the frozen stick and the jammed rudder bar with all his strength, Tom Gouf yelled at the paralyzed screaming fool behind him, for his life.

"Let go that stick!"

**T**HE loco student's head dropped sideward. He had fainted. The stick was loose in Tom's grasp within the instant, and he pushed it down. Nose rushing at the ground, the ship straightened from its spin. He brought its nose back as its belly scraped along the rushing rocky ground, and lifted it in a zoom.

"That was about the longest moment of my life!" he muttered, sweating. "I must have a guardian angel somewhere."

He still had a curious feeling, a curious eerie feeling which would be with him all his life, that he had seen a rock, a smooth two-pound flint rock, dropping aimlessly in empty space two feet away from his tail surfaces in that instant as the loco student fainted and he had got the controls again.

Maybe it was a meteorite that had dropped down, for there was a contusion on the white-faced, retching student's head, just back of his right ear, when they had returned to the field and landed. But it would seem that a meteorite, falling from outer space, would have hit harder than just to tap him. . . .

In his study at Cambridge, Massachusetts, old Dr. Alcibiades Hoogstetter swung around in his big leather swivel chair.

"I was meditating a moment," he said to his secretary, combing his white beard. "Will you take a letter to Professor Noel Gouf, Stratton High School, Stratton, New Jersey. "Dear Gouf—I am ready to retire, and it has occurred to me that you might be interested. As I once mentioned to you, I have always had you in mind as my successor. How are you

progressing in your theory of the fourth dimension? I always felt that you had something there. Sincerely yours.' . . ."

In his office in the Stratton High School, Principal Jawbone MacGlurk, pacing up and down and jingling coins as he dictated, stooped to pick up a nickel he had dropped. He fell flat upon his face, and plowed forward across the floor on his chin.

He arose, rather lamely, bending over and feeling the seat of his pants, while Miss Peavy, his secretary, burst into screams of laughter, and threw her notebook over her shoulder, and threw her pencil at the ceiling.

"I've lived for this day," she said.

"You're fired," said MacGlurk.

She screamed with laughter. "You've got splinters in your chin. . . ."

Little Professor Noel Gouf stooped and picked up the chalk which he had dropped. He had drawn a three dimensional cube on the blackboard, ABCD-EFGH, like the outline of a glass box seen in perspective. Then his chalk had slipped, and had described a meaningless corkscrewing parabola, trailing off to nowhere, as it fell from his grasp.

"Let us imagine," he said straightening up, with the retrieved chalk in his grasp, "that this is a three-dimensional solid—"

Something thudded against the back of his head with a hurtling sting which brought the tears into his eyes. He turned around meekly to the class room.

The clock ticked. Outside the open windows bees and other insects hummed. Leaping Leander was just descending into the aisle from vaulting over a chair. Muriel Morton was pulling down the hem of her skirt briefly and discreetly. Niles Gowamley, the big blond blitz football captain, and Gloria Glick separated their heads, bent together over their tick-tat-toe game. Just for an instant their foreheads had brushed.

**B**ILLY CAMORRA, slumped grinning in his seat with a long lanky garterless leg draped over the other knee and a quivering rubber band fas-

tened to his forked fingers, put his hand to his nose.

"Ouch!" he yelled.

Niles Gowamley reached to his hip pocket with a yelp. Leaping Leander Leverwaite, just landing on the floor, reached down to his shoe, yelped. Billy Camorra arose with a spring, straight upward from his seat, gripping his nose with one hand, then bending down and slapping at his shoe with the other.

"Who did that?" he yelled.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" said little Professor Noel Gouf, helplessly. "Ladies and gentlemen! Gentlemen! Please pay attention! Gentlemen!"

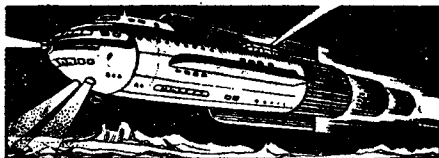
whether he was there or not. Dodging and ducking between them, he made his way to the class room door, and out.

He passed by Principal MacGlurk's office. MacGlurk was bent over inside, feeling the seat of his pants.

"You've got splinters in your chin!" the happy voice of Miss Peavy rang out.

"You're fired!" said MacGlurk. "You're fired!"

Little Professor Noel Gouf stopped in on his way out. He swung back his foot and landed it solidly and with all the emphasis of his stocky little frame upon MacGlurk's bent hind end. He had always wanted to do it, he realized. He



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Niles Gowamley was on his feet, with his fists swinging. Lanky Billy Camorra swung his arm at Leaping Leander's jaw. Leaping Leander, diving under, butted his head into Billy's stomach. The girls were standing on their seats, laughing and screaming.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" said little Professor Gouf, more helpless and almost crying. "Please pay attention! I was just on the verge of a most important thought. I almost had something. Let us for the moment imagine—"

But he had lost the thread of his thought. For an instant, only for a tiny split infinitesimal fraction of a second, he had thought that he had the answer to the fourth dimension.

They were all in an uproar, and screaming. It made no difference

wondered why he had never done it before. It almost seemed to him he had.

"You're fired!" yelled MacGlurk, as he went forward with great speed, and hit the floor again.

But somehow little Noel Gouf didn't care any more. He didn't care or worry about anything. There was a great peace in him.

He went out upon the streets, at his little pace of thirty inches to the step. He bumped into young Reverend Holmes, the new clergyman of the church which Jessie attended, on the sidewalk.

"I was just on my way to see you, Professor," said the young clergyman, falling into step with him. "I was writing my sermon, and all at once I thought of you. I thought we had a fascinating

conversation, but I couldn't think about what."

"About the fourth dimension," said Noel Gouf. "I almost thought that I had solved it, for an infinitesimal split fraction of a second."

"Perhaps we all solve it, more than once in our lives," said the young parson gravely. "In times of stress or need, when we get out of ourselves. Hunches. Intuitions. Visions. Artists' creative inspirations. Things which come to us while we may be wandering in some

fourth dimension. Only we never remember about it afterward. I might put that in my sermon. I thought—I don't know why—but I thought there might be something you would be able to tell me, something of that world. You have forgotten?"

"If I sold SI short today, and it goes down tomorrow, the fourth dimension is real," said Noel Gouf. "That is all that I can tell you."

And he went home to call up his brokers, and make sure he had.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

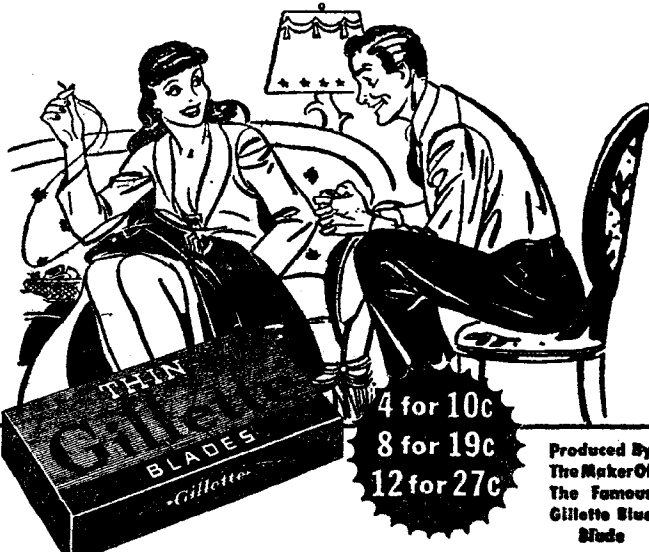
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