The trouble with the logical-statistical systems is that they can make meaningful predictions only on a group basis. And Society is based upon the needs of the majority, to which the Individual must bow. But what happens when the Individual can make accurate predictions?

THE NON-STATISTICAL MAN

NOVEL

by RAYMOND F. JONES

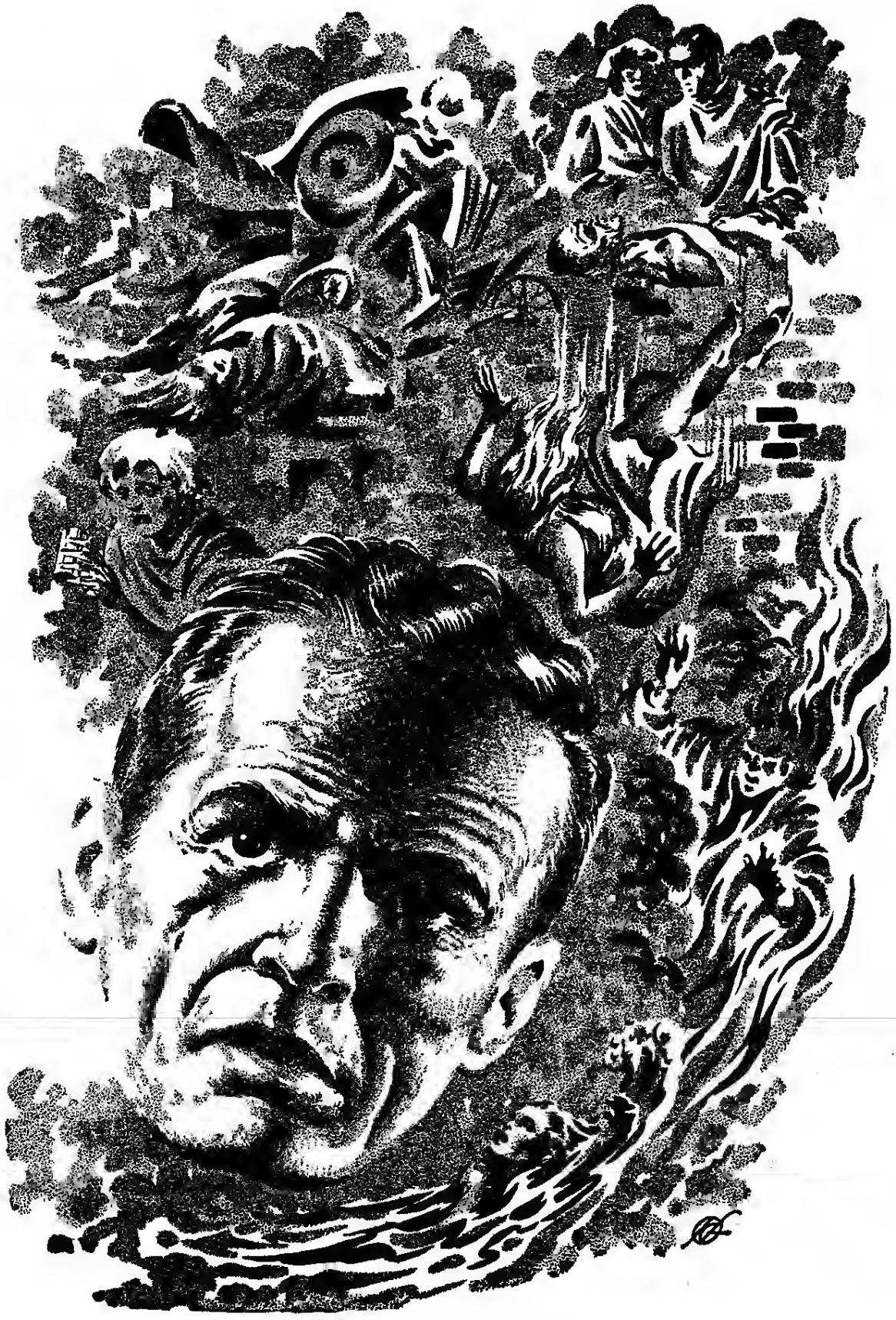
illustrated by KELLY FREAS

CHARLES BASCOMB was a man who loved figures—the genuine, Arabic kind, that is. Not that he didn't adequately appreciate the other kind, too. Mrs. Bascomb was quite good in that department, but Charles had come to take her somewhat for granted after fourteen years of married life—plus three young Bascombs who had taught him what a great obligation can be implied by so small a number.

Bascomb considered himself a realist, and pointed to his passion for figures to prove it. If an opinion were given—whether on the price of hamburger in Denver, or the difference between the climate of his home town of Landbridge, and that of Los Angeles, California—he demanded figures and odds.

Yet, in his world of endlessly marching columns of black numerals, there was escape, too. It was clean and cold and precise here. The scatterbrained effusions and emotionalism of Sarah Bascomb were lacking. Charles Bascomb loved his wife, but she *was* scatterbrained. And the utterly irrational demands of the small Bascombs could not penetrate.

All irrationality was swept aside, and here, and here alone, could be had a clear



view of the real world. It would have been difficult for Bascomb to say, if the question had been put to him, which was the real world and which was fairyland. Mrs. Bascomb and the kids were real enough—in their place—but they couldn't possibly fit in the realm of precise figures, which was the *real* world.

Fortunately, no one ever asked Mr. Bascomb about this, and it was never pushed into his awareness beyond an occasional f u z z y, gnawing feeling that there should be more congruity between these two areas than there was.

IT WAS generally quite deliciously satisfying to him to know that he could tell, for example—w i t h almost perfect accuracy—how many of the citizens he passed on the street on the way to the station each night, and how many of these would not be alive by the end of the year. He could tell almost precisely how many would be alive in another five years, provided he had their present ages, of course. He could tell how many would die of diabetes, and heart trouble, and cancer.

There was a satisfaction in knowing these things. There was a satisfaction in his work of assembling such information and producing the proper deductions. (He was Chief Statistical Analyst of the New England Mutual Cooperative Insurance Company.) There was a sense of power in it.

But Bascomb believed he was a humble man. The power was in the figures, in the statistical methods which constituted the temple wherein he but served as priest.

At the age of thirty-seven he believed he would serve his god of figures for the remainder of his life. And, certainly, on that morning of April tenth, when one of the Junior Statisticians came to his office, he considered himself safe and secure in the groove he would run in until he himself became a statistic in the Company's books.

BASCOMB looked up and smiled pleasantly as Hadley approached his desk—there was no reason for being otherwise.

"Good morning, Hadley," he said. "You look as if the week-end treated you well. Mrs. Hadley get over her cold all right?"

"She's fine, Mr. Bascomb." Hadley was a youngster, still in his first year of marriage. He shared Bascomb's passion for f i g u r e s—Arabic—and

hoped to rise high in the firm.

Hadley spread out some long sheets of paper and bent over the desk. "We ran across something interesting last week that I thought I'd like to show you. I've never seen anything like this before."

"What is it?" said Bascomb.

"District reports of claims in Division 3 show some curious anomalies. In the town of Topworth, we had eighteen claims registered on all types of policies and—"

"That is not an unusual number for a town of that size."

"No—but here's the catch. Those policies had been taken out less than six weeks ago, with only two exceptions. Now, here in Burraston we have nine claims—all on policies less than six weeks old, with no exceptions. And in Victorburg—"

"Let me see that!"

Bascomb drew the sheets toward him and adjusted the heavy, shellframed glasses that seemed to grip the sides of his head rather than rest on his ears.

"In Victorburg—twenty seven claims on policies only four weeks old." He ripped the glasses away from his face and looked up. "How large is Victorburg, Hadley?"

"Only thirty-two thousand, Mr. Bascomb." He waited, knowing he'd said enough for the moment.

BASCOMB bit the tip of the earpiece on his glasses and looked down again. He rustled the wide sheets of paper. "This is one of the strangest things I have seen since I've been in the insurance business," he said. "We know that in statistics we sometimes encounter long runs of an anomolous nature, but three cities like this—"

"There are seven, altogether," said Hadley. "I went back and checked over some of our more recent records in the same district. The other four are less pronounced—six to eight each—but they are there."

"Very strange, to say the least," said Mr. Bascomb mildly now. "I think I'd like very much to follow up the details and see if any explanation can be found—beyond merely assigning it as an unusual run."

"I have all the claim papers on my desk."

"Get me the initial applications also. Was there any consistency shown in the salesmen who wrote the policies?"

"No. About a dozen different salesmen are involved. The only pertinent factor I've found is that in these last

three towns we have new agencies, which have put on a big campaign backed by our national advertising. But that doesn't explain, of course, why they should have written policies on which claims were to be made so quickly."

"No, of course not; get me all the papers available."

BASCOMB spent the rest of the morning computing the normal claims expectancy for each of the towns involved. He figured the probabilities of encountering such runs as had come up; he examined in detail the applications of all the policyholders.

On the death claims there was the usual medical certification showing the applicants to be in acceptable health at time of policy writing. Two had died of polio; one in a car accident; four of coronary trouble—that should have been caught! There were two cancer cases—they should have been found, too. Some of the trouble was evidently in the medical department; he'd see that some overhauling was done there.

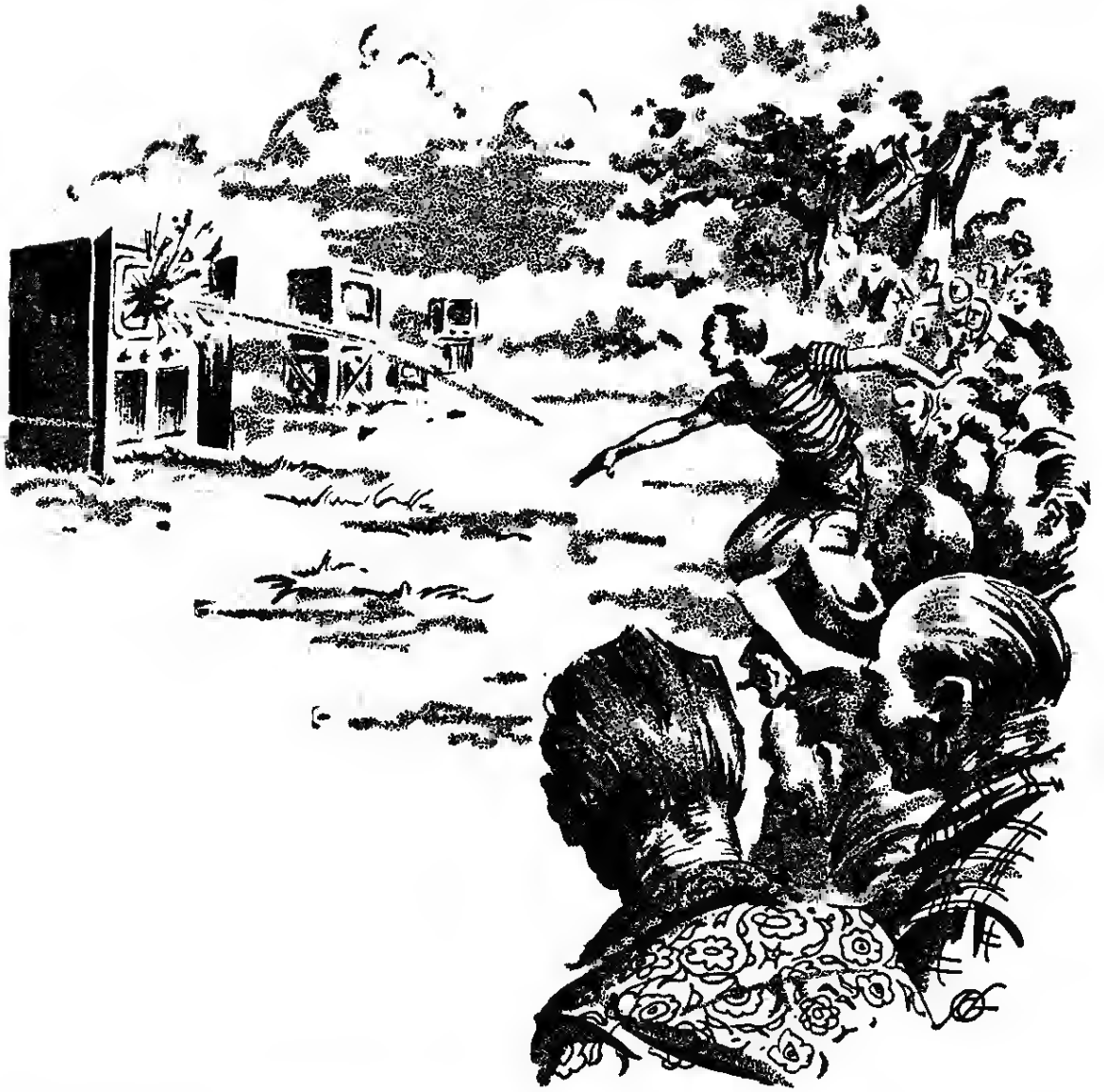
But blaming the examiners would not dispose of the whole problem, by any means; the accident and liability claims could not be dismissed so easily. There was only one factor of any significance which he was able to discover. Better than ninety percent of the applications had come in through voluntary response to the company's advertising. They hadn't been sold by the usual foot-in-the-door salesman Bascomb so thoroughly disapproved of.

That would be worth noting to the sales department!

But, on the other hand, had their advertising suddenly become so much better? He called the advertising manager and asked for copies of whatever displays had been available in the seven towns during the period the policies were sold.

He was interrupted then by some current items that killed the better part of the afternoon. When he finally got around to the advertisements, it was almost time to quit. It would be too rough if he missed the five-seventeen—there would be time enough to get back to this problem tomorrow.

Yet, that would not do, either; there was something too persistently nagging about this, too many "queer" aspects to let the matter alone even overnight. He broke a long standing rule between him and Sarah Bascomb, and stuffed the entire mass of pa-



pers into his briefcase to take home.

SARAH BASCOMB was well aware that she didn't live in the same world with her husband, and that made it rather nice, she thought. It would have been exceedingly boring if they *both* talked of nothing but expectancy tables and statistical probabilities, or the PTA and young Chuck's music lessons.

As it was, she thought they got along fine. She listened with honest attentiveness to Charles' discussions of the ratio of cancer to coronary deaths, and the increase of both over pneumonia and other infectious diseases during the past thirty years. It was so boring as to be absolutely

incredible; but she was thankful that there were men like Charles in the world to take care of these particular things —which had to be taken care of, but which no ordinary person would think of concerning himself with.

She was proud of Charles' ability to deal with such obscure and unpleasant material, and she listened to it because she was in love with him. It didn't occur to her that it was in any way disloyal to feel it was all very stuffy.

In turn, Charles took an active interest in household affairs—and left all the answers up to her, which was the way she liked it. It would have been intolerable if he'd been one of those men who insist on planning the dinner menu, or picking the kids' dentist, or seeing Mr. Salers down the street when Chuck and the Salers kid had an after-school knock-down, drag-out argument.

Sarah was quite willing and able to take care of these items alone. At thirty-five she was a competent, contented, still good-looking suburban housewife without a cloud on the domestic horizon.

But on this particular April tenth she had been a trifle uneasy all day. There was the feeling that momentous things were about to happen to disturb the complacency of Charles' life and hers. She often had such feelings and Charles told her they were ridiculous; but over the years, Sarah had sort of kept track of them. She'd discovered that these feelings always meant something, one way or another—especially when they were this strong.

So she was not surprised to see the brief case in Charles' hand as she watched him from the kitchen window, coming through the breezeway to the house.

SHE TURNED, as if she hadn't seen him, and attended to the noisy sputtering frying of his favorite—liver with onions. She squealed with simulated surprise and pleasure as his arms came about her waist, and he kissed her on the back of the neck.

Then she pretended to notice the bulging briefcase for the first time. "Big business tonight? I thought maybe we could go out to a show at the Centre—?"

Bascomb smiled, shrugged a little, and tossed the briefcase carelessly to a chair across the room. "Nothing very important; just a little problem that came up today—but it can wait. We'll see the show

if you want to. What's on?"

Sarah shook her head. "Nothing in particular; it's not that important. I want you to spend the evening on your problem. That *is* important. And I want you to tell me all about it."

They settled the problem, as Sarah knew they would, by staying home. And after dinner, she sat very quietly and attentively while Charles tried to explain why it was upsetting to come across such a run of events as had turned up. Try as she would, however, Sarah could not quite grasp the significance of it, or the reason for astonishment.

"You say it might be expected to happen once in a few hundred centuries," she insisted, "so I should think you'd be glad the time is *now*, when you are able to witness it."

BASCOMB smiled with tolerance; there was no use trying to make her understand. "It's just that a fellow doesn't expect to be around for the event," he said. "We talk about it, and use it in our figuring; but we just don't expect to see it."

"That's what makes it all the more exciting!" Sarah's eyes were alight in a way she hoped would make Charles think she understood what he was talking about.

Then her expression grew more somber. "And I think it's something terribly important, too," she said. "I feel that it's something which could mean a great deal to our future, Charles. I *know* it. Tell me as soon as you find out what it really means."

Bascomb muttered a growl of exasperation in the bottom of his throat. This was the kind of thing that came close to driving him to distraction —Sarah's "feelings" that something-or-other was going to happen, or was especially meaningful.

It gave him the shudders when she started talking that way—because the most damnable part was that she was often right. He had started keeping check on it, out of pure self-defense, a long time ago. Her batting average gave him a queasy feeling in the pit of his stomach.

"There's nothing significant for us in this crazy thing," he said irritably. "It's just a bunch of policies that came up for claim all at once —when our statistical methods gave us no reason to expect it. That's absolutely all; it's ridiculous, darling, to try to read anything more in it."

"You'll tell me, won't you?" Sarah Bascomb said.

CHARLES accomplished nothing toward a solution of the problem that night. At the end of four hours' work, it seemed just as inexplicable as it had when Brooks first mentioned it.

He slept badly, his line of disturbed thought alternating between the problem itself and Sarah's irrational interpretation of its significance. In the morning he arose and told himself that it was idiotic to allow a small, routine problem of this kind to get so out of hand.

Only it wasn't small, and it wasn't routine by any means.

As he sipped his coffee across the breakfast table from Sarah, and with the three youngsters beginning to stir noisily overhead, he said cautiously, "I've been thinking that it might almost be worthwhile to have a personal interview with these policyholders, and see if anything can be deduced from firsthand contact with them. Of course, it's silly to hope for anything definite, but I think maybe I'll do it."

He held his coffee cup poised while he waited for her answer. And now *he* was the idiot, he thought—as if her opinion could be of any possible significance!

Nevertheless, Bascomb waited, head cocked to catch the slightest inflection of her voice.

"I think that's the most sensible thing you've done about the whole problem," she said. "After all, who could tell you more about why they bought the policies when they did—and how they came to make claims—than the people themselves?"

That cinched it, and Charles Bascomb fumed at himself for asking the question of Sarah. After all, he'd intended doing just this, anyway, hadn't he? What difference did her uninformed opinion make to him? But then, her comment *was* a good one; who, indeed, could tell more about the purchase of these policies than the people who'd done the buying?

He called the office and told his assistant, Jarvis, what he was doing and gave him instructions for carrying on.

II

OF THE SEVEN towns, Victorburg was closest to Landbridge, so Charles Bascomb started for there, feeling unfamiliar in heading the car onto the open highway instead of driving to the station. He congratulated himself that these cases had turned up close to the Home

Office, instead of halfway across the United States; at the same time, Bascomb told himself once more he was a complete idiot for giving the whole thing this much attention.

He reached Victorburg by ten o'clock, and drove at once to the first address on his list. It was a quiet, tree-shaded street that added to the peacefulness of the April morning. He pulled up in front of a neat, white frame house.

Mrs. Davidson; she was the claimant on one of the death cases—Mr. Davidson had died of coronary trouble just three weeks ago. Bascomb wondered if he shouldn't have gone first to one of the lesser claimants. But it was too late, now. A woman working in the garden at the side of the house had seen him; she was looking up. He got out of the car with his briefcase in his hand.

He tipped his hat as he came up. "Mrs. Davidson? I'm a representative of the New England Mutual Cooperative."

The woman's face showed instant dismay. "Oh, dear—I hope there's nothing wrong now. Your payment came through so quickly, and I was able to pay—"

"No, no—there's nothing wrong," Mr. Bascomb said hastily. "Just a routine check we always make to determine if the policyholder has been entirely satisfied with our service."

"Oh, yes! It's been more than satisfactory," exclaimed Mrs. Davidson. "Your payment came through so promptly, and I don't know what we would have done without it. John went so suddenly, you know. It seems like a miracle that we thought of taking out insurance on him just before it happened. He'd always been so violently opposed to insurance all his life, you know—never would consider it until just now, when it was so badly needed. We didn't know it was going to be needed, of course."

"OF COURSE," said Bascomb. "Our medical examiner passed Mr. Davidson as being in good health at the time of application; otherwise, the policy could not have been issued.

"We share your feelings of gratitude that you were fortunate enough to have the policy in force at the time of Mr. Davidson's illness. And so you feel you are satisfied with the service our company has given you?"

"Indeed I do!"

"It seems strange there was no earlier indication of your husband's condition. Hadn't he ever noticed it before?"

"Never. He was always so strong and healthy; that's why he despised insurance salesmen so—said they always made him feel as if he were going to die next week."

"But he *did* finally change his mind. That is the thing I am most interested in, Mrs. Davidson. You see, we realize we have a service of positive value to offer people; but sometimes, as in the case of your husband, we simply have no means of making them understand it. So naturally, we are most interested to know what finally breaks down a great prejudice against us. You would be doing us a great favor if you could help us in presenting better appeals to other people."

"I see what you mean, but I don't know how I could help you. It just seemed like the thing to do; both John and I felt that way about the same time. It just seemed to be the thing to do."

Mr. Bascomb felt a trifle numb for a moment. There seemed to be a coldness in the air he hadn't noticed before. It was as if Sarah were there, standing in front of him.

"You just *felt* like taking out some insurance?" he said faintly.

Mrs. Davidson nodded. "I don't suppose that's much help, is it? But it's the best I can do, I'm afraid. Surely you know how those things are, though? You get a hunch something ought to be done, without knowing why. That's the way it was with us. I know it seems silly to most people, but I believe in hunches—don't you, Mr. Bascomb?"

Bascomb felt that he had to get away quickly. He nodded and picked up the briefcase from the grass where he'd dropped it. "Yes, I do," he said, backing toward the street. "Hunches are invaluable—especially in matters of this kind!"

HE DROVE partway around the block, and stopped to consider. He was irritated with himself for his reaction to Mrs. Davidson's talk. What had he expected? A profound self-analysis as to just why she, as a customer of New England, had chosen that particular policy? Or, rather, why her husband had?

He'd probably get even more of the same kind; it's what you had to take when dealing with individuals. That was why statistics had to be invented—b e c a u s e people

were so unstable and irrational, taken one at a time.

Bascomb wished that he could forget the whole thing right now. But he couldn't; his encounter with Mrs. Davidson had only convinced him that there must be an absolutely sound statistical explanation for the run of short policy claims. He started the car and drove to the next address on his list, three blocks away.

THINGS were better here; the customer was a young physician who had just opened up a small, neighborhood clinic. He had made a liability claim when a patient stumbled on a hose lying across the walk.

"I always feel it necessary to be protected this way," he said amiably to Bascomb's question. His name was Dr. Rufus Sherridan. "It's the only sensible way to look at it."

"Absolutely," agreed Bascomb; "it's the thing we've been trying for years to drum into the heads of the public. Be protected. Juries act as if they're crazy nowadays when they hand out somebody else's money in a damage suit."

"As to my making a substantial claim within three weeks of paying my first premium—well, that's why we

have insurance companies, isn't it?" said Dr. Sherridan, smiling. "I was never able to understand the figures and statistics of how you work these things out, but the idea is to spread the risk of such unfortunate coincidences, is it not?"

"That's it exactly," said Mr. Bascomb. "Well, it's been a pleasure to meet you, Doctor." He extended a hand. "I hope you will always find our service as satisfactory as it was this time."

"I'm sure I shall; thank you for calling," said Dr. Sherridan.

Bascomb had hoped to contact all twenty seven cases in Victorburg in one day; by five o'clock, however, he had reached only number eighteen. Most of them had been somewhere between Mrs. Davidson and Dr. Sherridan, and Bascomb was exhausted. He longed for his desk and his figures, the world where he knew what was going on.

NUMBER eighteen turned out to be the worst of all, a considerable number of notches below Mrs. Davidson. She was willing to *talk* for one thing; it took Bascomb almost twenty minutes to get to his critical question.

"Why did we decide at this particular time to buy a policy with your company?" Her name was Mrs. Harpersvirg, and she had a habit of putting her arms akimbo and fixing him with narrowed eyes, head cocked sharply to one side.

"We knew we were going to need it, Mr. Bascomb. That's why we bought a policy. Oh, I know you'll say a person can't know those things, and it's true for most people. But once you learn how to realize what's the right and proper action to take under any circumstance, it's just like getting a breath of really fresh air for the first time in your life."

Bascomb leaned back on his heels as she edged toward him. "You have come to such an understanding, Mrs. Harpersvirg?" he asked tentatively.

"You bet! And all I can say is, it's wonderful! You don't have to grovel around with your nose in the mud, wondering where you're going and what's going to happen next and what you ought to do about it. You can *do* something about it. Of course, I didn't believe it when Dr. Magruder said it would be that way; but the way this insurance policy paid off convinced me once and for all. I'm glad you called, Mr. Bascomb. I've got to rush now. You can tell your company

we're very happy with their service!"

She banged away and left Mr. Bascomb standing there struggling with his final question: who was Dr. Magruder?

But it was obviously of no importance—probably he was some semi-quack family practitioner in the neighborhood. Bascomb turned and almost fled toward the sanctuary of his car; Mrs. Harpersvirg was the final straw in a day that would exhaust the best of men.

And then, somewhere along the seventy-five mile drive back home, it hit Bascomb like a rabbit punch in a dark alley. The common factor.

IN STATISTICS you look for the common factor in order to lump otherwise dissimilar items in a single category. And the common factor here was that each of the policyholders he'd interviewed claimed to have bought in with New England on the basis of a hunch—intuition. From Mrs. Harpersvirg on up to Dr. Sherridan—well, maybe the Doctor could be excepted, but certainly none of the others could.

No high pressure sales talk had sold them; they weren't attracted by more than cursory interest in the company's fancy literature and advertising. They had bought simply because they'd felt it the thing to do; almost every one of them had used nearly those exact words.

Intuition—a random factor that ordinarily made no impression on statistical analysis.

These people were making it work!

Bascomb slowed the car at the impact of the thought. He finally pulled off to the side of the road to check his interview notes. The damning words were repeated in every possible variation, but they were there:

"We just figured it was time we ought to have some insurance."

"It's hard to say—I guess we were just impressed to buy when we did."

"I don't know. I felt it was the thing we needed as soon as I heard your company was opening an office here."

Bascomb closed the book shakily, and resumed driving—slowly. It was tempting to jump to conclusions in a thing like this, but that was absolutely the thing you couldn't do. There was really no basis for assigning a positive correlation between the short policy claims and the intuitive purchasing by the holders. That was the kind of thing on which a man could trip himself up badly; and *he* certainly wasn't going to fall into the trap on this thing,

Bascomb told himself. It was an interesting coincidence, but pure coincidence nonetheless—a sound, statistically understandable causation would be forthcoming in due time.

With that comforting thought, Bascomb completed the remainder of the trip and reached home.

SARAH WAS waiting anxiously, her supper schedule upset by the uncertainty of his time of arrival. She demanded at once: "Tell me all about it, Charles."

He'd thought he'd brush over it lightly in the telling. Somehow he didn't feel like describing the exhausting details of the interviews with his wife. But within a couple of hours after supper she had it all—through proper questioning, which was one of the skills in which she excelled.

Even down to Dr. Magruder.

"You mean you went away without even asking who he was?" Sarah demanded.

"It wasn't important," said Bascomb, irritated now by the cross-examination. "Besides, she'd already slammed the door in my face."

"You should have found out about him," said Sarah thoughtfully looking across his left shoulder. "I *feel* there's something important about him. Magruder— I've heard that name somewhere. Dr. Magruder—"

She went for the paper on the other side of the living room and came back, opening it in front of them. "There!" she said. "I thought I remembered."

Bascomb stared at the four inch, two column advertisement indicated by his wife's Firehouse Red fingernail.

"Are you a living vegetable —or are you living?" it asked. *"If you are dissatisfied with life, let Dr. J. Coleman Magruder show you the way to better health, vitality, and happiness. Half-alive is no better than dead. Hear Dr. Magruder Wednesday night at 8 p.m.—"*

"I guess *that* takes care of the importance of Dr. Magruder," said Mr. Bascomb with a slight feeling of triumph.

Sarah Bascomb looked thoughtfully at the advertisement for a long time, then slowly closed the paper. "I don't think so," she said finally. "I'll bet that if you go back to every one of those people you talked to today, you'll find they have taken Dr. Magruder's course."

"Nonsense!" Bascomb cried, more sharply than he intended. "That's ridiculous! What grounds have you got for suggesting such a coincidence?"

"It's no coincidence, darling; I'm just sure that's the way it is. What Mrs. Harpersvirg said proves it—"

"It proves no such thing! Just because one flippety female said Magruder—what the devil *did* she say? I've forgotten now, but it doesn't prove all these people fell for this quack's line!"

"Ask them," said Sarah.

HE LEFT Dr. Sherridan until last. After all the rest had confirmed Sarah's hypothesis, Bascomb fought against the final prospect. It was absurd in the extreme even to suppose that Dr. Sherridan had attended quack Magruder's lectures.

But he had to know.

Dr. Sherridan smiled amiably and waved his hand in disparagement of any significance attaching to his enrollment with Dr. Magruder. "It was mostly for laughs," he said; "you know how those things go. You work hard all day without much relief from the constant pressure, and something comes up that tickles your funnybone. You go through with it just for kicks, and find you get a whale of a lift out of it; that's the way it was with this Magruder thing."

"He's a complete phoney, of course, a quack?"

"Oh, naturally, but I went along with it all. I even took his pills after I had them analyzed and found out they were genuine vitamins with a harmless filler. Pretty low on vitamins, of course."

"He *has* pills?"

"Yes. Several colors for different days of the week."

"How did you come to—ah, enroll with Magruder in the first place?"

"I FOUND my patients talking about him all the time. He came through here giving his lectures and enrolled most of the females over twenty-five—he's got a good line, and a nice bedside manner—and one half the neurotic males. Big crowd. So I went down to the first one of his second series to see what went on. That's how I got in; it was rather amusing, all told."

"I see. Well, I was just curious. Wife's become interested, and I wondered if it might be something the police ought to know about. Thanks for your time."

"Not at all. You might try signing up yourself, if you feel in need of a laugh."

Before he went back to Landbridge, Bascomb made a check. He didn't want to have Sarah suggesting it first. And he was right: Dr. Magruder had also been to Topworth and Burraston, and all of the four other cities showing insurance claims anomolies.

HE CONFESSED this additional information as soon as he got in the house that evening, in order to forestall Sarah. He should have known better than to try.

"Oh, I could have told you last night that I felt Magruder had been to all those towns; but I knew you'd say it was silly. Anyway, I'm glad you found out. I made reservations for both of us for his full course, starting tonight. We'll have to hurry, if we're to get through dinner and everything before we leave."

He tried to assess his feelings as he stood before the mirror later in their bedroom, trying to adjust his tie. Only two days ago, Hadley had shown him an innocent problem concerning claims anomolies. Tonight, as a direct result, he was signed up for a quack health and development course. A kind of fogginess seemed to develop in his mind when Bascomb tried to trace the intervening steps of this cause and effect relationship. It made no sense whatever.

He wasn't quite sure why he didn't put his foot down—even now—and declare the whole thing ridiculous, as it actually was, and refuse to go. It felt almost as if he'd been drawn into a swiftly-moving current from which he didn't have the stamina to withdraw. But that was ridiculous, too; there was nothing about the whole affair that wasn't.

Except the cold, unavoidable fact that people by the dozen had bought New England policies and made claims a month or two later.

Charles Bascomb had a sense of cold foreboding as he looked at himself in the mirror now.

III

THE DOCTOR had rented the most plush assembly room in the town's best hotel, and it was filled to the limits of the gray velvet drapes upon its walls. They wouldn't have had a seat at all if Sarah hadn't insisted they hurry.

Charles Bascomb glanced about as he sat down, assessing the crowd who had turned out to hear Magruder. They were easily typed: Ninety percent of them were heavily loaded with psychosomatic ills that had already blossomed into heart trouble, cancer, arthritis, and diabetes in two thirds of them. This year they were here to listen to Magruder. Last year it had been Hongi, or something like that, from India; the year before, the sour cream and road tar molasses man; next year somebody else. Always the same crowd, minus the ones who died in between, augmented by the gullible newcomers—

Bascomb felt sorry for them; he wished he could have taken them to his office and shown them his statistics. There was the record of what would happen to this group—and all the Magruders, Hongis, and sour cream men in creation couldn't change it.

Why was *he* here—when he had claims anomolies to analyze!

A solid round of applause indicated that the performance was about to begin. Somebody had stepped to the platform and was holding a hand up for attention. Bascomb thought this was Magruder, at first—but it turned out to be only the proprietor of the local health food store, who was sponsoring the course and was about to introduce his star.

He took quite a while, but Magruder finally came onstage. This was a shock. Bascomb had been expecting a barrel-chested, big-biceped character of the kind usually photographed in high society surroundings, with his arms carelessly about the waists of a couple of movie star devotees.

Instead, Dr. Magruder was a rather wizened, pinched-up little man of better than fifty. He peered myopically at his audience through broad lenses and began speaking in scratchy tones that grated on the ears.

Bascomb sat up at attention. This was decidedly different from the show he'd expected. Something was definitely not right about Magruder; he just wasn't the type of character to be putting on a show of this kind. Bascomb decided to listen.

HE WOULD have been better off if he hadn't, he decided at the end of an hour. With the aid of an incredible pseudo-biochemistry, and large charts that bore no resemblance to any structure in the human body, Dr. Magruder gave out the usual line. He spoke of "corporeal vibrations", the "ethereal stream", the "prescience aura", and a dozen other coined phrases of nonsense. He spoke of the "correlating affinities" which his little colored pills were guaranteed to organize within the body, and of the "cosmic mono-regression" which his set of seventy-five special mental and physical exercises was sure to nullify.

It was sheer gibberish, and the audience ate it up.

Including Sarah.

She beamed happily as she received their copies of the first six of the fabulous exercises and a week's rainbow assortment of pills.

"You aren't going to *take*

those things, I hope!" Bascomb whispered.

"Of course I am; and so are you. Don't you think it's wonderful that the Doctor has discovered all these things about human beings, that people have been trying to find out for so long?"

"Look, darling—"

"Don't you just *feel* the power in what Dr. Magruder says? Don't you just *know* he's right?"

Bascomb gave up and carried the exercise books and boxes of colored pills to the car, as they broke away from the crowd leaving the assembly room.

Following Sarah's admonition, he took a red and a green pill before going to bed.

THESE claims anomolies did not constitute the first items of interest which young Hadley had brought to Bascomb's attention. Because he hoped to rise high and fast in the firm, Hadley had made an exhaustive study of his associates and superiors. It would have surprised Bascomb to know how full the file was which Hadley kept securely hidden at home, and which described the Bascomb eccentricities and foibles as Hadley saw them.

So in accord with the policy he'd adopted toward Bascomb, Hadley approached the following morning about ten o'clock—when the morning rush of mail was out of the way—with a news clipping in his hand. "Something curious here," he said. "I wondered if you might have seen it in the paper this morning."

He laid it on the desk and Bascomb frowned at it wordlessly. His cold reception of it gave Hadley a start of fear that he might have misjudged Bascomb's interest in the anomolous, after all.

"At least we can't blame Magruder for that, anyway," Bascomb growled unpleasantly.

"Who, sir?" said Brooks politely.

"Magruder. Oh, hell—I'd forgotten you didn't know anything about *him*. Forget it. Thanks for the clipping."

He turned away to his work, but Hadley stood hesitantly by the desk still. "Did you—were you able to make anything out of the claims anomolies I mentioned the other day?"

"No, nothing!" Bascomb snapped irritably. Hadley fled.

BASCOMB forgot the clipping until he turned back to that side of the desk again fifteen minutes later; his eyes caught it and he read it through once more.

There was a four inch item about a small town in Minnesota that had finally deter-

mined what to do about the TV menace to its children and its culture. On a bright spring Saturday afternoon the citizens had carried their sets down to the town square. There, amid picnic surroundings of fried chicken and peach cobbler, they'd had contests of sorts for various ages —the contests consisting of hurling rocks through twenty-one inch picture tubes from various distances.

Then they'd piled all the sets together and set fire to them. It was reported that there had subsequently been a run on the local library, and that discussion forums and chamber music groups had sprung up all over town.

Bascomb grinned wryly to himself. That was taking the bull—literally!—by the horns and tossing it. He hoped it indicated a trend.

But his statistician's mind veered back to the essential element in the story, the one which had prompted Hadley to cut it out: the anomoly. When umpteen hundreds of thousands of other communities throughout the land darkened their living rooms at sunset to bask in the hypnotic glow of buncombe until bedtime, why had the single town of Myersville reared up on its hind legs and demonstrated independence of national mores?

Bascomb didn't know, and he was quite sure he would never find out. His hands too full of Dr. Magruder even to think of tracking down such a remote incident as that in Myersville. But, he repeated fervently to himself, he hoped it was indicative of a trend.

He had reached a standstill in his attempts to analyze the insurance claim anomolies scientificaly, according to the principles of statistics; he had to have more data. And while it seemed ridiculous to wait upon Dr. Magruder for that, yet Bascomb had just about decided there was nothing else to do. He knew there could be no connection, but there seemed nowhere else to look for data.

HE KNOCKED off a little early for lunch. He had an appointment with an old college friend, Mark Sloane, who had suggested for weeks that they get together when he was in town. He phoned during the morning to announce this was the day.

Bascomb had been close friends with Sloane at one time, and it was nice to see him again—although Sloane had gone into advertising and was now president of his own up and coming firm. That meant they talked of advertising when they got together for lunch.

Sloane greeted Bascomb affably, but there was something lacking, which Bascomb detected at once. They selected a table and Bascomb eyed his friend critically while the menu was being brought.

"You look as if you had a rough trip this time," he said.

"If you only knew!" Sloane fanned the air in mock desperation. "I'm going to tell you about it—maybe you can help me, too. Seems like a statistician could diagnose the corpse better than anyone else, at that."

He launched into his troubles after their orders were brought. "We spent two solid months building up this campaign," he said; "we'd planned to try it in a half dozen Pacific Coast towns and then spread it nationally. We put everything we had into it—all we'd learned in fifteen years of pushing breakfast cereals and cement blocks. And it busted, went completely flat. People walked past the stacks of Singing Suds in the supermarkets as if they'd never heard the name.

"It's all over the trade. In America, *anybody* can sell soap, but Sloane and Franklin couldn't push Singing Suds. Unless we do something quick to show it isn't a habit, the soap company isn't the only one who'll go on the rocks.

"It's got us scared, Charles; I don't mind admitting it. We did everything just right, and it was a bust. Do you think you could do anything to help us find out why?"

BASCOMB leaned back thoughtfully. He had never sypathized particularly with Sloane's endeavors, but he understood what it meant to a man to take a heavy business setback like this.

"I can't do it personally, Mark, but I think somebody in my field could probably do you some good. There are several good men on the West Coast; I'll give you the names of two or three if you like."

"I wish you would," said Sloane morosely. "The worst part of it is not merely people's ignoring our campaign completely, but the fact that they bought wholesale lots of a completely unknown product called Dud's Suds. We tried to figure if the name had anything to do with it, but we couldn't pin it down.

"Dud's Suds, we found out, is put up locally and hasn't spent a nickel for advertising in years. It used to be in the little corner groceries; within the past few weeks, has pushed into the supermarkets —past nice packages like Singing Suds—. "It's put up in a repulsive blue, cubical box that any package man

would tell you wouldn't sell in a million years. That's what has us more scared than anything else—the fact that we couldn't buck poor competition like that. We must have done something terribly wrong!"

"Call these men," Bascomb suggested, passing over a slip of paper with a couple of names and addresses on it. "They both have small polling organizations, as well as statistical services. Let them give it a try.

"There's one thing I've been wondering about since you first mentioned this: which is the better of the two soaps—Singing Suds or Dud's Suds?"

Sloane moved his hands disparagingly. "The other people's soap is b e t t e r—but what's that got to do with it?"

THERE HAD been other times in his life when Charles Bascomb felt this way, and he didn't like it at all. It was a vague, undefinable feeling that things were snowballing on him and he was powerless to do anything about it.

The worst part was in not knowing just *what* was snowballing. He had freely in mind the irritations of the past few days: the short policy claims; the gnawing little news-clipping Hadley showed him, the story of Sloane's ad campaign that had bungled. But there was something *beyond* these things—yet somehow connected with each one of them—and he didn't know what it was. From a national standpoint, there was no possible connection b e t w e e n these events; yet something nagging faintly in his mind suggested there was.

He grew snappier around the office, and Sarah read the signs and kept quiet around the house. She knew something was bothering Charles, and it was something *big*.

In this mood he went with Sarah to the second of Dr. Magruder's lectures on Saturday night. More intently than before, he listened to the quack doctor. And more than ever, he was convinced that there was something basically wrong in the show Magruder was putting on. The nub of it was that Magruder just didn't have what it took to be this kind of spieler. At his age, if he'd been in the racket a long time, he'd have had a smooth, flowing delivery and a patter that would sell corn plasters to a fish.

Instead, Magruder clomped along—a l m o s t painfully at times—in his rasping voice. He paused frequently, as if uncertain just how to proceed with the group before him. He was not at all at home in what he was doing. He acted

more like a ready-to-be-retired college professor.

College professor.

A small trickle of cold started on the back of Bascomb's neck and moved slowly up to the base of his skull. There was no doubt about it. There was only one place Magruder could have learned a delivery like that: on a college lecture platform.

He sat back during the rest of the discourse, alternately congratulating himself on his astuteness in seeing through Magruder's deception and berating himself for being so impulsive. No self-respecting professor would ever stoop to such jargon.

AT THE END of the period, there was a question and answer session. Well-dressed matrons held up their hands without a qualm and asked items like: "If one's corporeal vibrations are out of phase with the ethereal stream, can they be brought back merely through use of exercise Four—or must the medication be relied on also to accomplish this effect?"

Magruder seemed pleased, as if the ladies were really getting his message.

Then, after a dozen of these, Bascomb stood up. "I'd like to ask," he said slowly, "how the reorganization of one's corporeal vibrations affects his need of life insurance—or of any other kind, for that matter."

There was a small titter from somewhere behind him, as if such prosaic matters were beneath consideration in the same breath with corporeal vibrations. But from Magruder there was a sudden, dead stillness. Then he removed his spectacles, wiped them carefully, and peered down at Bascomb as if wanting to fix him indelibly in mind.

"Your question is a little advanced for our present discussion," Magruder finally answered in precise tones; "but for your information I may say that insurance is an excellent form of purchase when one has need of it. Otherwise, it is a waste of funds."

Bascomb nodded profoundly in agreement. "Yes, I would say that it is," he said. "I have another question: would you say that one with properly-phased corporeal vibrations would be likely to spend much time watching television?"

Again Magruder did a faint double-take and peered at Bascomb. "Your question is almost irrelevant," he said, "but not entirely. As with most instruments of mass communication, television finds man in the astonishing position of having vast resources for exchange of in-

telligence—but no intelligence to exchange. Until this situation is corrected I would say the answer to your inquiry is no."

"One more," said Bascomb. "Would you say that such a person would be unyielding to the ordinary advertising appeal?"

"The same answer as to your previous question," said Magruder, "and for essentially the same reason. Now, if we may continue—"

ON MONDAY, without telling anyone—including Sarah—of his intentions, Bascomb hired a firm of private investigators. Within twenty-four hours he had the information he sought. Magruder was indeed a fake; he was actually Emeritus Professor Magruder of Bay City College, a small institution in southern California. He had been head of the psychology department there and had retired two years ago at the age of sixty-five.

Bascomb took the information over the phone and promised to send a check to the investigating firm for their services. He hung up, without being aware of having done so, and continued to stare at the facts he had written down. A nightmare parade seemed to be assembling in the far depths of his mind and was already beginning its march along the channels of his cortex.

"Both John and I felt this was the time to take out a policy—you never know when you might need it."

But *they* knew!

"There's something in this that could mean a great deal to our future, Charles." That was Sarah. Did she have any inkling of *how* much it could mean?

"It was reported that Donny Tompkins won the twelve year olds' slingshot event by putting a rock through a twenty-one inch screen from a distance of one hundred and ten yards."

"It has us scared, Charles. The other people's soap is better, but what has that got to do with it?"

How many more? How many more—in a country as big as the United States? He'd only come across a whisper of the anomoly. What would he find if he really looked—

He put on his hat and went out to get a taxi for Magruder's hotel.

IV

THE PROFESSOR greeted Charles Bascomb at the door with an extended hand. With the other he dropped a cigaret into an overflowing ash tray. "I'm glad you finally came," Magruder said. "I waited all

day yesterday for you; I had begun to fear I was anticipating too much."

"It took me that long to run down the dope on you," said Bascomb. He passed into the moderately untidy room with its thick cloud of stale smoke. He opened a window and looked out.

Finally, he turned. "I know who you are, but that's about all. I know you are doing something to the business of my insurance company, but I don't know how. You weren't surprised by my questions about television and advertising, so I must assume you know what I was referring to. I get cold along the back of my neck and down my spine when I think of what I don't know about you.

"I don't believe any of it, of course; it's too fantastic to believe. But here I am. And you were waiting for me. Now it's your turn to talk, Professor."

Magruder smiled and settled back in a chair opposite Bascomb. "You are a blunt man, for a statistician," he said. "I find the uncertainties of their profession ordinarily extends to their common speech."

Bascomb eyed him without answering. Magruder seemed to be musing now on something seen through the windows—but this was the tenth floor, and there was only sky beyond.

He didn't change the focus of his eyes as he said, "Insurance is actually a most reprehensible business, isn't it, Mr. Bascomb?"

Bascomb decided against rising to the bait.

"Making money from people's certainty of death or misfortune—a ghoulish business. But then, since your own profession assists this traffic in misery, I suppose it is difficult for you to see it. May I ask, Mr. Bascomb, how many of the capsules you have taken and how many hours of the exercises you have performed?"

BASCOMB stirred with vigor for the first time. "That nonsense! Come on, Professor, let's have the genuine story of what you are trying to do. I'm not one of those fat old matrons in your audiences, remember."

"But that *is* the genuine story," said Magruder. "Because I have somewhat disguised it with a bit of mummery, do you suppose the whole thing is trickery?"

"That's what I'm trying to find out. Everything I've heard so far in your lectures is nonsense—and of course the feeble vitamin pills you dish out are of no importance."

"And that is where you are

wrong," said Magruder. "I must ask you to answer my question if you will, please."

"Oh, I've been taking your damned pills!" Bascomb answered irritably. "I have to, to keep peace in the house; you've got my wife thoroughly buffaloed with your double talk. I've been doing the exercises, too. She insists on it every evening."

"Good. Then perhaps you can understand something of what I have to say—although it may be a trifle early for full comprehension.

"Can you imagine what it would be like to live in a world, Mr. Bascomb, where insurance companies were not needed?"

"Certainly not; it's ridiculous to even contemplate. Insurance business provides a sound, social need in spreading the risks of modern living. To destroy the insurance business would once again make the individual the prey of all the unforeseen and uncontrollable forces of nature and our complex civilization, from which he is now protected."

Magruder looked out the window again, as if he had almost forgotten his visitor. Then he said at last, "Doesn't it seem curious to you that modern man, with all his tremendous technological accomplishments, should still be in such great need of protection from these forces?"

"No," said Bascomb; "biology teaches us that man was forced to develop auxiliary protections because of his inherent physical weakness. That's what's made him great; out of weakness has come his strength."

"AND WHAT basis is there for such a preposterous assumption?" Magruder showed angry excitement for the first time. "How could Man have reached the top of the evolutionary ladder if he dropped his natural, physical protective devices, one by one, as he developed? Can you think of a hypothesis more absurd than this one? Wouldn't he, rather, have accumulated survival instruments instead of dropping them?"

"He did," said Bascomb, "his brain—which enables him to devise any means of protection and development that he needs."

"And that's an improvement, I suppose! A device to manufacture out of crude metal and glass the instruments possessed for fifty to a hundred million years by other species. The swift knows with unerring accuracy the way to go to avoid an oncoming storm, and its temporarily-abandoned young go into hibernation when it

comes. But human beings still don't know which way to duck a hurricane; and the ones caught in it die.

"For fifty million years bats have navigated by sonar. An eel-like fish of the Nile uses true electromagnetic radar. But Man is just now getting around to clumsy mechanical duplicates of these devices. Birds and animals use the polarization of daylight to determine direction and time. Man still hasn't got a really practical device for duplicating this feat.

"The homing ability of the 'lower species' is traditional. We use 'bird-brain' as a term of insult—but it takes quite a few tons of iron and glass even to approach a duplication of the functions of a two or three ounce bird brain."

"Are you suggesting, then," said Bascomb with a superior smile, "that Man should take a backward step and pick up some of the abilities of his distant forebears?"

"Is it anything to boast of that Man lacks the abilities of the lower species?" Magruder snapped. "Actually, they're not lost; Man doesn't have to go back. What I'm suggesting is that he merely bring into full play those abilities he has—for he does indeed stand at the top of the evolutionary ladder!

"Man's homing ability is superior to that of the pigeon, or of the elephant, fish, or bat—which have it in abundance. His natural radar sense excels that of the Nile fish; his sonar is better than that found in bats and rats. And his prescience of disaster far outdistances that of the swift."

"You mean we have all t h e s e mechanisms, unused, within the structure of our bodies?"

Magruder shook his head. "No. The mechanisms we see in the lower species are clumsy experimental models. In Man, Nature has installed the final production model which incorporates all the prior successes without their bugs, as I believe an engineer would say it.

"This final production model we call 'intuition'."

BASCOMB choked; for a moment he felt like laughing out loud. He had a flashing vision of Sarah before him—a r m s akimbo and lips pressed tightly while she exclaimed, "I don't care what you say, Charles Bascomb, I *know* what's right, and that's the way it's going to be done!"

It made no difference what *'it'* was. Sarah's feeling of just knowing could be applied to anything.

And then Bascomb had a mental picture, too, of Mrs. Davidson and Mrs. Harpers-

virg, and Dr. Sherridan.

He permitted only a faint smile as he finally answered, "You believe you have tamed man's ability to do things by hunch and guesswork?"

"Unreasonable, isn't it?" said Magruder. "It helps just a little if you use the proper terminology, however. Intuition is a definite, precise faculty of the human organism; evolutionwise, it stands at the peak of all those faculties we have been talking about in the lower species. It supplants them all, and goes beyond anything they can accomplish. And human beings have it. All of them."

"That's a large order of unsubstantiated statements."

Magruder's eyebrows lifted. "I thought I'd given you some rather remarkable evidence in your own field. You want more? Very well, I'll give you the names of an even dozen people in Wallsenburg where I finished a series of lectures last month. They will buy policies—not necessarily with your company—and will make claims within a month. You'll find them, if you check; can I give you any more evidence?"

BASCOMB shifted uncomfortably. "Let's say for the moment that I accept your thesis. Why, then, has intuition—particularly among the female of the species—become a stock joke? Why have men, generally, never been able to rely on the intuition they're supposed to have? How are you able to do anything about making it usable? Surely, these colored pills, and the nonsense you lecture about—"

"Did you ever watch a person read with his lips moving, forming every word?" said Magruder. "Irritating as the devil, isn't it? You want to tell him to quit flapping his chops—that he can read ten times as fast if he'll go about it right.

"Men don't always choose to use the maximum ability that is in them; the answer to your question is as simple as that. Men decided a long time ago not to use intuitive powers, and employ something else."

"What else?" asked Bascomb.

"Statistics," said Magruder.

Bascomb felt a warm anger rising within him. That was the kind of thing you could expect, he supposed, from a broken down professor turned quack. He forgot his recent interviews for a moment.

"I fail to see any need for an attack on the principles of statistics," he said. "Statistics enable predictions to be made, which would be impossible otherwise."

"P r e d i c t i o n s about a

group," said Magruder; "not individuals. Consider your own business. Statistical laws enable the insurance company to function, and make a profit for its shareholders. But what does statistics do for the policyholder? *Not one damn' thing!*

"Think it over; you're not working for the policyholder. He's absolutely defenseless against whatever assessment your statistics tell you is legitimate to levy against him. The individual gets absolutely nothing from your work. The group—the shareholders of the company—are the only ones who benefit."

"I'VE NEVER heard anything quite so ridiculous in my whole life!" said Bascomb heatedly.

"No?" Magruder smiled softly. "Let's consider the alternative situation then—one in which the policyholder is on an even-Stephen basis, so to speak, with the company.

"Suppose he is able to discern—as a number of people you've met recently can do—the precise need for insurance which may come his way. He doesn't need to pay premiums uselessly for twenty or thirty years, and get nothing for them; but when he sees an unavoidable emergency approaching a month or so away, he can take out a policy to cover it. There's something he can really benefit from!"

"Quite obviously, you don't understand the principles of the insurance business at all," said Bascomb. "It would simply cease to exist if what you described were a widespread possibility."

"Ah, yes," sighed Magruder, "that is quite true. Insurance would become obsolete as an institution, and would be replaced by common sense planning on the part of the individual. Any remnant of the insurance concept would have to be strictly on a loan basis.

"The same fate will be true for numerous other institutions that operate for the group at the expense of the individual—our concept of education, the jury system and criminal punishment. The advertising business as we know it will disappear; mass media of communication will operate only during the infrequent intervals, when there's something to communicate—"

"You speak as if you considered the Group as some all-powerful enemy the individual must combat for his own survival!"

"To a large extent that is true."

"To a greater extent it's absolute nonsense, and the psychiatrists have a word for it."

"Yes," Magruder agreed. "They have a word for nearly everything—I wonder what they will call your bankrupt insurance company."

"I don't consider that my company is in any danger whatever. I am quite certain that, while your hypotheses are very entertaining, I can eventually find a sound statistical explanation for this sudden run of claims on short time policies."

"And for my prediction of an additional dozen?" Magruder spread his hands inquiringly.

BASCOMB didn't answer. Instead he asked, "Why were you expecting me to come to see you? Why did you *want* me to come?"

"Because I need the understanding of men like you. I need men who know what it's like to be on both sides of the statistical fence, so to speak. I thought you were capable of becoming one."

"I'm sorry you were wrong, and have had to waste much valuable time," said Bascomb. "I must admit that I have a great curiosity about your insistent attack on statistics. You've made no case against it; and certainly it operates well enough—in a society of us non-intuitionists, at least."

"Which is the only place it will work," said Magruder. "Admittedly, this concept of intuition is so foreign to our present thinking that it appears to be an approach to insanity. We are so accustomed in our culture to the dominance of Society over Individual that we are unable to realize it as unnecessary.

"No historical era can match today's demand by the Individual for security and assurance from sources outside himself; no era can match this one for such complete overshadowing of the Individual by Society, the Nation, the Empire—not even ancient times when slavery was an acceptable culture. The slaves would revolt on occasion; the Individual does not revolt today!"

"And so you envision the ultimate anarchy!" Bascomb exclaimed in astonishment. "The wild lawlessness of the individual supreme, unimpeded by the restrictions of government?"

"I HAVE said no such thing," Magruder said angrily. "Man's optimum functioning demands his membership in a group. It's impossible for him to go it alone—on a cultural level, at least. But neither can he function optimally until he invents a society that does not oppress him to its own supposed advantage—until one man's

worth is adequately balanced against that of the entire Society."

"So our Society is the enemy to be fought then?" Bascomb thought he had Magruder's number now, and he was ready to laugh. Being taken in by a mere subversive!

"No." Magruder smiled now as if reading Bascomb's thoughts. "No—Man is his own enemy—by misarrangement. He invented Society, and didn't know he could do so much better; it is up to him to correct his own error."

Bascomb felt a little wave of cold. He spoke with increased care. "So your objective is to destroy Society? That's a trifle ambitious, to say the least. There've been a good many attempts to do that same thing in the past, but it manages to struggle along."

"Shocking thought, is it not?" said Magruder. "Well, fortunately, it's a misconception. My objective is not, of course, to destroy Society, as such, but rather to permit the emergence of a kind of man who will no longer have use for what we call Society.

"PLEASE understand, there's nothing sacred whatever in the word or the thing we call Society. It's an invention of mankind—who has as much right to change, repair, or substitute for it as he has with any of his other inventions. First, there was Man; Society came later. Let's go back and consider the time when there was only Man.

"He was an infant, just learning to read, if you will. And the job was tough, because it required that he be self-taught. He didn't learn the best way; he learned to read by moving his lips, and he never tried seriously to improve upon this.

"To drop the analogy now for the real circumstances: Man found there were numerous ways of solving problems and reaching generalizations about the world around him. He could get his own answer on an individual basis and go ahead and apply it, for one way. But he'd already learned that, on a strictly physical level, there was strength in numbers; so he was suspicious of the solitary approach to anything. He developed the method of comparing proposed solutions to problems with his fellows. Sometimes there was a radical difference—the same problem affected different Individuals in widely varying ways. But it seemed like a good idea to stick together instead of going it alone. Compromises were made; the consensus of opinion was taken, and the

majority decision accepted by all.

"Thus was born Society—and with it the art of statistics, the submergence of the Individual in the Group."

"I don't know where you learned your sociology, Professor—but if anything like the scene you describe actually occurred, that was the birth of Man's triumph over a nature he could not combat singlehanded. It was the birth of his realization that the combined effort of many Individuals can accomplish what none of them can do alone."

"No," said Magruder. "This is not what was born at that time. A concerted attack on Man's problems does not depend on his present Society. Cooperation is more easily obtained through much different instruments.

"WITHOUT exerting himself to work out such different instruments, however, Man was forced to cling desperately to the tool of his invention, Society. Inherent within it was the concept that the Individual was a servant of the group. In any question of conflicting welfare the Individual expected automatic defeat; sometimes he has fought against it, but never with any heart or expectancy of winning.

"Statistical methods were the obvious intellectual tools with which to manipulate and describe Man as he functioned in Society. The Individual was of no import, so why bother devising a means of accommodating him? In writing insurance policies, it is important to you to know only that one out of a certain dozen men will die of cancer. *Which* one is of no concern to you—unless it is yourself or someone for whom you have an affection. In this case, however, you have lost your usefulness to Society as an impartial statistician, and Society will replace you.

"As a method of reasoning, which would fit his Society, Man developed logic—statistical induction of generalizations from many individual instances. It works fine in predicting the characteristics of the group, but no individual instance can be deduced from it.

"But from time to time there have appeared short bursts of a stronger, more subtle, and completely incomprehensible means of reaching a generalization—the one Man by-passed when he invented Society; the non-logical process called intuition.

"Within the framework of our culture it has been impossible to describe, and the conclusions reached could not be

defended in any logical manner acceptable to Society."

BASCOMB shifted uneasily. "And now you have corrected these defects?" he said.

"Yes," said Magruder. "Men can now be taught how to reach generalizations through the method of intuition. And please note that the inductive operation by the intuitive method yields a different type of generalization. The intuitive generalization is of the type of the Natural Law, which, unlike the Statistical Generalization, *does* permit deduction of individual instances.

"The intuitive method, therefore, is the only one that does an individual any good!"

"And you can no doubt *prove* as well as teach what you say," said Bascomb.

Magruder smiled. "The proof, as well as the method, is one which Society is loathe to accept. The pragmatic test—in itself a non-logical method—is the only one applicable. I think, however, it has been applied sufficiently to allow you to reach a conclusion!"

"A man would have to possess a very large dose of sheer faith in order to live by intuition if he could never prove a hypothesis until it had been tried in actual experience."

"Yes," Magruder nodded soberly. "I would say that faith is a large component of intuition."

"There is only one thing you have left out: the mechanism by which these weird excercises of body and mind, and the little colored pills are supposed to restore one's intuition."

"That, too," said Magruder, "is something which can only be tested pragmatically. You understand, of course, that these methods do not restore anything. *You* have never learned to use intuition in any degree; your wife is considerably more proficient. Yet, comparatively speaking, you are both readers who move your lips. You have to learn to do it by scanning—and the only proof that this is better is in learning it.

"SO, IF YOU continue, you will learn how to use your intuitive powers. The little pills contain a shading of vitamins to satisfy those curious enough to analyze them. The active ingrediant is the other material which is necessary to subdue the automatic reaction of fear in dropping statistical thinking. This fear is very real and dominating; it says that use of intuition is a defiance of

the billions of a man's fellows who have lived since the beginning of the race. It says they will crush him for daring to step out on his own and be an Individual who does not consult and bow to their wishes.

"Without a proper biochemical compensation of this fear, it would be all but impossible for a man to ever command his intuitive powers. So do not attempt it without use of the pills; it would tear you to pieces."

"And one final question," said Bascomb. "If I were to believe all this, and become one of your men who 'know what it's like to be on both sides of the statistical fence,' what use would you make of me?"

"I would ask you to assist in the spread of these methods, particularly among your own professional group, which is among the strongest fortresses that intuition has to attack. Such attack can best be done by someone from the inside."

"I see." Bascomb rose suddenly and took up his hat. "It has been most entertaining, Professor; many thanks for your time."

"Not at all." Magruder smiled and accompanied him to the door. "I will expect you at the next lecture."

"It is doubtful I will be there," said Bascomb. "Quite doubtful."

V

BASCOMB had it in mind to return to the office as he left Magruder's hotel room, but once out on the street he knew this was impossible. His brain churned with the impossible mixture of fantasy and faintly-credible truth which Magruder had dispensed.

He turned down the street in the direction away from his up-town office and moved slowly, dimly aware of his surroundings, murmuring apologies to his fellow pedestrians with whom he collided at intervals. Finally, he stopped and found an empty bench in Moller's Park; he sat down, the pigeons clustering expectantly about his feet.

He had nothing to feed them, but their random motion and the sharp whine of their wings served to bring him in closer touch with the present moment.

A decision had to be made and made quickly. There was no use quibbling mentally over what Magruder could or could not do. The critical fact was that he could do *something*. Charles Bascomb had no doubt of this; he simply

could not deny the run of policy claims. How much of all that nonsense about intuition was true Bascomb didn't know; for the moment he didn't care. Magruder was far more than a harmless quack; he was a crank—and a dangerous one at that. If his mysterious doings were extended any further, he could actually undermine the foundations of the nation's insurance business.

He *could.*

And how much more beyond that, Bascomb didn't know; there would be time enough to find out when Magruder was safely stopped.

He considered going to the police with his story, but almost at once the futility of this was obvious. What desk sergeant, detective, or even police chief would listen to such a tale without being tempted to throw *him* behind bars for drunkenness?

Magruder had rightly said the only test of his theories and work was the pragmatic one. And until a person had seen actual results, he would be convinced the whole thing was the product of an active insanity.

There had to be a more indirect method.

AT ONCE, Bascomb thought of his friend, Hap Johnson, feature writer of the *Courier*; Hap would understand a thing like this. He would take the obvious view, at first, that Bascomb was drunk; but his innate curiosity wouldn't let him stop there. Hap was a solid citizen and a respected newspaperman; but he had just enough yen to be the kind of news hero pictured in the movies to be hooked by something like this. Yes, Hap was the man to see, Bascomb decided as he got up from the park bench.

He found his man slapping a typewriter in a small cubicle located just off the *Courier* city room. The room was full of smoke, the typewriter was very old, and Hap's hat clung to the back of his head at a sharp angle. These were the affectations he allowed himself in deference to the movie idols he realized that no workaday reporter could ever hope to emulate. Otherwise, he was an excellent newsman.

He looked up as Bascomb walked in. "Charley! Don't do a thing like that! The roof braces of this firetrap can't take such a shock. Don't tell me now—you've lost your job; your wife has left you; you owe the company ten thousand dollars you've embezzled—"

Bascomb sat down, pushing Hap back into the chair from which he'd risen. "It's worse," he said. "I want you to do me a favor—and give me some advice."

"The advice is easy," said Hap; "I don't know about the other part."

SKETCHILY, then—without going into Magruder's complex social theories—Bascomb described the professor as a half-baked quack who could really do some of the things he claimed.

"Call it hypnosis, suggestion, or whatever you want to." he said, "Magruder exerts some kind of controlling influence over the people who take his courses. Personally, I think it works through the pills he gives out. Whatever it is, the man is dangerous; he's radical, subversive, and he is somehow able to lead his followers to accomplish what he wants them to do.

"Right now, he seems to be attacking the insurance companies with an eye to bankrupting them. You'll say I'm crazy, but I'm genuinely afraid of what he might be able to do if he was able to expand and make a concentrated attack. You can imagine what the results would be if he actually succeeded—financial chaos. He seems to think he can do the same kind of trick with the advertising business and other institutions. He's got to be stopped."

Hap Johnson pushed his hat a notch further back on his head and regarded Bascomb thoughtfully. "You're not a drinking man," he said, "and I've never detected signs on insanity before. So it's possible there's something in what you say. But—" he leaned closer in a gesture of secret confidence—"isn't it reasonable to suppose you might have been mistaken about the people you interviewed? Overwork, worry about the guy who's gigging for your job—"

"I'm *sure*, Hap," said Bascomb. "I've gone over it a hundred times; I've plugged every hole."

Hap drew back. "It's not the kind of thing you could go to the police with—yet they ought to know about it. Here's what we can do: you say Magruder is no M. D., so we ought to be able to get him investigated for prescribing those pills of his—practising medicine without a license."

"I don't know whether that would stop him or not—"

"It might not *stop* him, but it would get him some darned unfavorable publicity, if it's handled right. We could play

it from there. I'll get a ticket to his lecture; you can introduce me, and we'll see what kind of story he gives me."

BASCOMB neglected to tell Sarah anything about his visits with Dr. Magruder and Hap Johnson; but he caught her eyeing him as if she knew all about it, anyway. It gave him the old, familiar, uneasy sensation. He knew she couldn't possibly have learned what he'd done, but she had feelings about things; he wished he dared ask precisely what those feelings were.

On the evening of the next lecture she volunteered the information. Bascomb had just told her about arranging for Hap to go with them.

"*That's* what I've been feeling!" Sarah exclaimed. "It's been as if tonight were a turning point of some kind. I can't tell whether it's going to be good or bad for us—but it depends on something that's going to happen to Dr. Magruder. And Hap Johnson is responsible! He doesn't want to come to find out what Dr. Magruder teaches; he just wants gossip for that cheap tabloid he works for, and he doesn't care who he hurts in getting it."

"I thought you liked Hap."

"I used to—until he did this to Magruder!"

"He hasn't done *anything* yet," Bascomb reminded her; "so far there's nothing but your own slightly overworking imagination."

Sarah ignored his remark. "Let's not go tonight, Charles. Don't take Hap down there; he'll kill Magruder with what he'll print."

Bascomb felt the perspiration starting under his collar. "Don't be ridiculous, darling; you're imagining things. I've asked Hap along, and he'd think I was crazy if I tried to back out now. Nothing's going to happen; you'll see."

THE EVENING seemed to go smoothly enough in spite of Bascomb's mixed anxieties. He let his attention be held only mildly by Magruder's double-talk, and afterwards, when he went up to introduce Hap Johnson the Professor smiled knowingly. Magruder's face clouded a trifle, however, as he took the reporter's hand, and Bascomb saw a new tension come at the same moment into his wife's expression.

Then it was past and Magruder was shaking Hap Johnson's hand cordially, inviting him back, making an offering of a generous sample of his pills and the circulars describing his exercises.

"This will make me a super-

man, huh?" Hap asked dubiously as he accepted the articles and examined them.

"Guaranteed!" Dr. Magruder slapped him on the shoulder and laughed jovially. "It never fails when instructions are followed faithfully. Of course," he added soberly, "I realize you are not sufficiently interested to go along with me to that extent; but I trust that if you write up our little course of lectures here, you will keep in mind that we actually offer nothing at all. Anything that occurs as a result of coming here is due strictly to the student's own efforts."

"If that were true," said the reporter with sudden iciness in his eyes, "it would not be necessary for you to hold lectures at all, would it? The buck isn't passed as easily as all that!"

ON THE way home, Bascomb tried to console his wife; he reminded her repeatedly that nothing had happened to verify her fears. Sarah remained unresponsive, apparently accepting as fact that Magruder's doom was sealed. She felt it, she said.

Bascomb drove carefully, acutely aware of the sense of exhaustion that filled him. It was futile to close his eyes any longer to the fact that Sarah's feelings' corresponded exactly with Magruder's description of a moderately well-working intuition.

In the early years of their marriage, he'd laughed at her and shrugged off her hunches and lucky guesses; then he'd begun to keep tab—

There was no question about her knowing Hap's purpose in coming to the meeting. Bascomb wondered how much she was aware of his own position. She had nothing, but her intuitive knowledge shown bleakly in her eyes, he thought miserably.

He hadn't quite known, at first, just why he felt it necessary to keep from telling her about his visit with Magruder and Hap. Now he saw the full impossibility of it. Suppose Magruder were right —well, partly right, anyway? Suppose intuition did turn out to be a natural, useful human function that was active in some people and could be developed in others? How could he tell Sarah that Magruder was an evil man—that the faculty she cherished so greatly had to be suppressed with all possible force?

She wouldn't understand that a sizeable number of intuitive people could literally destroy the civilization and institutions that modern man was dependent upon.

Her intuition was too precious a possession for Sarah to ever believe anything evil could be in it, Bascomb thought; she'd turn against him before believing that. This thing had a potential that could destroy his very home if he failed to handle it right!

In his attempts to appease her he was more than usually cooperative that night in doing the routine Magruder prescribed, and in taking the pills. They were brown and orange now.

Sarah's face did not relax its expression of foreboding.

IT OCCURRED to Bascomb, as soon as he reached the office the next morning, that applications might now be coming in from the people named by Magruder in their interview. He was right; six of them were in the morning mail.

He had no actual right to enter the applications department and take a look at the papers before they had even begun to be processed. It was no great offense, of course—it wouldn't have been to a man other than the kind Dave Tremayne happened to be. Tremayne was head of the processing department. Another man's casual courtesy was his grudging favor.

Bascomb was well aware of this as he stood with the papers in his hand, scanning them while Tremayne looked on belligerently.

"These will have to be rejected," Bascomb said as mildly as possible. And for a long time afterward he wondered why he actually said it; there would be no great harm to the company in paying off claims of an additional half dozen short-term policy holders. But that thought was utterly foreign to his mind now. He could see no course but the one he was following.

"I thought that was for us to decide," Dave Tremayne snapped; "since when did the Statistical Department take over those duties?"

"I—I happen to know a little about these cases." Bascomb said hesitantly. "Friend of mine is acquainted with the town pretty well. He knows these people and is certain there is something that isn't on the level. This big fire policy for example. Bhuener's Hardware. It's a firetrap; I wouldn't be surprised if you got a claim on it before the month is out—"

Tremayne advanced and took the papers from Bascomb's hand. "You can let us worry about that," he said unpleasantly; "any time I need

help from the figures department I'll let you know."

HE SHOULD have known it was worse than useless, Bascomb told himself. He looked at Tremayne and turned away; then he stopped and faced the department head again. "It wouldn't look at all good," he said, "if you got another half dozen claims within a month of granting the policies. Your short-termers are beginning to stick out on the charts."

"What do you mean by that?" Tremayne demanded. But his belligerence had subsided now.

"I'm advising you to turn down those applications," Bascomb said. He walked away to his own department.

It wasn't a logical thing to do, he thought, as he reached his own desk once again. It could cause a lot of trouble either way it fell—whether the prediction turned out right or wrong. And Dave Tremayne was just the kind to milk it for all the trouble it was worth.

He was rather hopeful of hearing something from Johnson regarding the reporter's impressions and plans concerning the campaign against Magruder. But he heard nothing at all that day, nor the next. A sense of loneliness assailed him. He wanted somebody to talk to about this thing, but there was nobody at all to give him companionship under this burden. Sarah continued moody and cool and convinced of the approach of disaster.

VI

HAP JOHNSON called on the succeeding day, and he had news. "This bird is more clever than you've given him credit for!" he said. "It's no wonder the previous chemical analyses showed a harmless filler supporting a few vitamins in his pills."

"What do you mean?" said Bascomb.

"I had five different outfits run tests on these pills before I found the answer. They all gave the same story you already had. Then I asked Joe Archer, who runs toxic checks for the police department, to look at them. He got it in a minute, just by looking at the other guys' results.

"They were right. The pills are about as potent as dried carrots—individually; but put them together in the combinations and succession Magruder prescribes and you've got something!"

"What?" asked Bascomb.

"Joe couldn't give me the

answer to that, but he said it was obvious these chemicals would combine in the body, and with the body chemicals, to form some items only slightly less potent than dynamite."

"We really ought to have a case against Magruder then," said Bascomb. Peculiarly, he thought, there was no sense of elation or triumph at all, now that defeat of his enemy was in sight.

"That's the devil of it," said Hap; "I'm not so sure we have. That's where Magruder has been so clever. The things he has actually been prescribing are inconsequential. I'm not so sure we could pin him down on the basis of the fact that his pills recombine inside the human system to form new and more potent drugs. He could argue he'd never prescribed or administered *those*; and, technically, he'd be right."

"But it would ruin him, even if the courts had to agree with that argument; and that's all I'm interested in," Bascomb replied. "Can't your friend, Archer, give us enough basis for a complaint to the District Attorney."

"He said it ought to be made known, at any rate. It would help if we could get some witnesses who could swear they'd been injured by the pills. Why don't you talk to Joe yourself, and see if you can round up any such witnesses? You know who's been taking in these lectures; in the meantime I'll put a gentle word in the paper to start the ball rolling."

CHARLES BASCOMB agreed and hung up. From what he'd seen, however, he doubted that it would be possible to get any of Magruder's followers to complain against him. They were a devout bunch—all those he'd seen, anyway.

A doubting weariness came over him again as he sat there staring at the black shape of the telephone. How in Heaven's name had this all begun? How had he become so involved in a senseless, unbelievable tangle like this?

Why was he the only one, out of the hundreds who'd contacted Magruder, who understood the threat of Magruder's work? It was as if the Professor had singled him out, as his greatest potential enemy, to show him exactly what he could do. And Bascomb remembered that Magruder had said this was just what he had done—in order to recruit Bascomb's aid. But surely Magruder hadn't actually believed he'd accept the

validity and desirability of the Professor's work!

That was the dilemma presented by the whole thing. To recognize it as a threat, Magruder's claim had to be accepted as valid. A hundred times a day, Bascomb had to ask himself again if he accepted this. And because of what he had seen, his answer was still a forced, unwilling yes.

And if so incredible a work was valid, could it not function for good instead of harm? This also gnawed unceasingly in Bascomb's mind. But Magruder's own words had answered this. He was out to change the face of society in a destructive manner.

IT WASN'T just that he was selfishly thinking of the insurance business, Bascomb reminded himself; Magruder seemed bent on attacking the whole bright world of statistical science, and all the institutions founded upon it.

And this Bascomb could not countenance; his own private world had no other foundation. In statistics a man could know what to expect of the world. Destroy this, put existence on an individual incident basis, and what was left? A nebulous faith in unconfirmed beliefs about how things *ought* to turn out—

Then he thought again of Sarah and felt lost.

His world had already been shaken too vigorously.

He didn't go to Joe Archer; there seemed to be no point in it yet. He continued with the pills and the exercises, and went to another lecture. There, he looked for possible witnesses against Magruder, and knew that the quest was futile, even before it started. These people *never* turned on their messiahs; even if one failed them, there was always the next season, and the next—

THAT WAS the day the first of Hap's articles appeared in the paper. He indicated he was going to do a series analyzing the weird cults and health panaceas and mental improvement fads that proved sucker traps for the sick, neurotic part of the populace which was in need of genuine help.

It began mildly enough, as Johnson had promised; but Bascomb was more than ordinarily amazed at the man's genius, because he could see where Hap was going. He began, not by antagonizing those who were following such phoney panaceas, but by sympathizing thoroughly with

their search for assistance—which was so difficult to find in a brutal civilization that cared only in token measures for the sick or improvident individual.

He promised to follow up with stories of the frauds who preyed upon such people. It was a terrific build-up for the time when he was ready to let go at Magruder. Reading it, Bascomb felt the matter had already passed from his hands. Magruder was at the mercy of Hap Johnson—and the newspaper-reading public.

Bascomb felt later that he should have been prepared for the event that occurred the following day. (He was eventually to do a great deal of Monday morning quarterbacking over this period of his life.) But when he went to the office, he was still prepossessed of the thought that power to act in the Magruder matter had passed from him.

He was called almost as soon as he arrived to the office of Farnham Sprock, Second Vice-president of New England. Sprock was a small, mealy old man who had been by-passed sometime ago for the top post in the Company. He had been relegated to office administration, even though it was known that all who felt his judgement would suffer for his failure.

SPROCK looked at Bascomb through seemingly-dull eyes as the statistician entered the room.

"You sent for me?" Bascomb said, trying to make it as little like a question as possible.

"I've had a most unbelievable complaint about you," said Sprock. "It seems too incredible to even act upon it, to believe that one of our Family would act in such a manner. Yet I am forced to believe that the accusation is well founded.

"I am told that you have assumed to step over the line of your authority in this office, and presume to dictate to your fellow officers in the conduct of their affairs. You have demanded that Mr. Tremayne refuse to act favorably on certain applications, so it is said. Is this true, Mr. Bascomb?"

"Yes." Bascomb nodded his head. And suddenly he felt himself shaking all over; this weazened old fool could actually destroy him if Sprock took it into his silly head. He could deny Charles Bascomb the world of facts and figures and clean, cold statistical reality. Why hadn't he minded his own business?

"Why, Mr. Bascomb?" said Sprock.

Bascomb took a deep breath

and wearily recited the occurrance of the anomolies from beginning to end, leaving out all reference to Magruder, of course.

"All you have said is a matter of serious concern, and one we should well pay attention to," said Sprock. "But it has nothing to do with your presumption in the matter of advising Mr. Tremayne."

"I have said that the policy applications I referred to are of the same class as those previously mentioned; they will also be followed by quick claims."

Sprock rose and came around the side of his desk. "Mr. Bascomb, that is a thing you could not possibly know!"

SUDDENLY an old, latent fury seemed to spring alive inside Bascomb's mind. What was this shriveled idiot trying to tell *him?* He knew —he *knew* beyond all question of doubt that what he said was true. It didn't matter that Magruder had predicted it. Magruder had nothing to do with this positive, insistent knowledge that burned in his mind.

He knew, in and of himself, that those policies would turn out as he said. And Sprock telling him he couldn't possibly know—

As suddenly as it had arisen, the rage died, and Bascomb found himself smiling at the little man and sensing a strange pity for him.

"I have discovered something new," said Bascomb quietly. "It—it is a recent statistical development on which I have been working for some time. It is a formula that enables me to predict when we are due for a run of policies such as this. They occur every once in a while, you know; my formula tells me that this is ready to occur again."

"I don't believe it!" snapped Sprock; "such a thing is impossible. Why if it were true, it would—it would change the entire aspect of our business. I warn you, Bascomb—and this is the last and only time I will do so—I want no repetition of this kind of occurrence. I will not tolerate it in my organization. A repetition means a complete and permanent severance of your relations with this Company. Do I make myself clear, Bascomb?"

"Yes," said Bascomb. He turned to the door as Sprock dismissed him. But he turned, with his hand on the knob. "I would suggest, however," he said, "that you get a list of those applications from Mr. Tremayne. Within thirty days there will be claims on every one of them!"

BACK AT his desk, Charles Bascomb felt a tremendous sense of release, quite unlike anything he had ever experienced before—an elation at having stood up to Sprock. He had a momentary feeling of not being afraid of Sprock any more—or of New England—or of any other force that might be able to shake him from his niche.

It died in a renewed consternation over what he'd said. Why on Earth had he invented the lie he told Sprock, the lie about a mathematical invention that would predict unfavorable runs? Well, there had to be something to cover his previous statement about knowing positively there would be claims on these particular policies.

And then the full force of what he'd said hit him. He'd said he *knew*. And it was true. He wasn't just taking Magruder's word for it, he *knew*. As if trapped in a corner by a persistent enemy, he tried to evade this sudden fact, to turn his back upon it and refuse to admit all its appalling implications.

But escape was impossible. He sat there, feeling stunned, then slowly embraced the unwanted knowledge.

This was it.

This was intuition.

It was the way Sarah felt, he supposed—only she felt it on almost any connection. No wonder she thought him a blockhead when he couldn't understand how she could be so sure of a wholly illogical assumption!

It was the way the policyholders felt, too, the ones he'd interviewed. And they had been right.

IT WAS impossible to take up the thread of his work as he had planned it before receiving Sprock's call. He got up and went over to the unabridged dictionary open on its stand in the corner by the window. He turned the pages to *intuition*.

"Perceived by the mind immediately, or without the intervention of any process of thought," he read. In very recent times he would have made an extremely bad pun on that definition.

"Quick perception of truth, without conscious attention or reasoning—truth obtained by internal apprehension, without the aid of perception or the reasoning powers."

That last one was closest to it, he thought, but even so, it was extremely deceptive—written by a man who hadn't the faintest concept of intuition. For there could be no obtaining of truth without perception; of that, Bascomb

was quite sure. There had to be contact. He didn't know how he could explain his contact with the matter of the six policies which he knew would shortly have claims on them, but somehow there *was* contact.

He closed the book. The definitions had been written by a statistician, not an intuitionist, he thought wryly; and that was no help at all.

He took his hat and walked out of the office, leaving word with Miss Pilgrim, his secretary, that he'd be back after lunch.

He had no definite goal in mind. He wanted merely to get away, to try to get some self-evaluation of the thing that had happened. He half expected the experience to dim as he got out into the clear spring air and faced the reality of the city with all its movement and noise and color. But there was no change at all.

HE STOPPED at a street corner, waiting for the green light. He drew himself up to full height and sniffed deeply of the air, which was only moderately loaded with carbon monoxide at this time of morning. Why had he let a thing like this shake him so? People had hunches all the time; it was quite an ordinary thing, after all, when you stopped to think about it. He had no reason to feel apologetic, because he'd finally had one for the first time in his life.

But it wasn't any good. He knew he'd have lived out his full fourscore and ten without ever experiencing a genuine hunch, if it hadn't been for Magruder. All his life he'd laughed at hunches, and at the people who depended upon them for important decisions in their lives. Now, with one of his own, he felt like an unlucky prospector who'd sour-graped himself into believing there was no ore—only to come upon the biggest strike of all.

He stopped again in the middle of the block, and stepped back against the store fronts, a sudden new burden upon him. His face paled.

It was his habit to watch the crowds on the streets. Sometimes he counted a hundred of those going past in the opposite direction and estimated with a shallow regret that twenty five of them would feel the death-grip of cancer. As many more would give way to failing hearts. There would be diabetes, infections, and accidents in decreasing proportions.

This always made him a little sad. Now, for the first

time, he recognized how much he'd exulted in this private knowledge, and how superior he'd regarded himself because of it. It had been a power over his fellows—as if he, personally, were responsible for their fate.

With horror, he recognized something new. The passers-by were no longer an amorphous, faceless stream; they had become a procession of *individuals.*

THAT WOMAN in the red coat standing by the baby carriage—

As if in a nightmare, he found himself moving across the sidewalk toward her. "That tumor—" he said in a mild, hesitant voice; "it's so small now, it could probably be removed before metastasis—"

She stared at him in a moment of fright, then reassured herself by a glance at the passers-by. "I don't know you," she said with cold contempt, not at all alarmed.

Bascomb realized in dim horror what he had done. He touched his hatbrim and glanced nervously about. "I beg your pardon," he said, backing away. "You *will* see your doctor, though, won't you—?"

His withdrawal gave her added courage. "I oughta call a cop! In broad daylight, too. And a woman with a six months old baby—can ya beat that?"

His heart was pounding heavily as Bascomb turned in full retreat. He rounded the corner and stopped in front of a cigar store window, watching the reflections in the glass to make sure he wasn't followed by an angry, insulting policeman.

WHEN HE was able to breathe easier, he faced the pedestrians again with the new awareness he possessed of his fellow men. Intuitively, he could correct the crude, statistical knowledge he'd been content with up to now. How ridiculous it was to be content merely with *how many* when it was possible to know *which ones.*

He glanced up sharply to the man standing next to him. The stranger was looking absently at a box of high-priced cigars, but his face was drawn into a warp of indecision.

"It won't work," Bascomb said quietly. It was almost impossible for him to keep from speaking. "The deal is rigged," he said, "and they're waiting for you to walk into the trap."

The man's face paled and then grew scarlet with rage. "What do you know about

it?" he demanded. "Who are you?" He advanced threateningly and Bascomb was sure he'd have laid hands on him if the sidewalk hadn't been crowded.

"I'm a friend," said Bascomb in haste, backing again from this new encounter. "Take my word for it and don't sign the contract."

Then he darted away with a speed that shocked his system. The stranger attempted a short pursuit, but gave it up as ridiculous in the heavy pedestrian traffic. His mind was made up, however; though he would not have admitted it. the fantastic warning had tipped the decision for him.

Bascomb slowed as he found the steps of the Public Library, but he went up, two steps at a time. In the reading room, he settled by the window, keeping an eye open for signs of pursuit.

He had done a foolish thing. He would not pull that kind of stunt again. At least he'd try not to—the sudden impact of this sure, certain *knowing* was difficult to resist.

VII

FOR ALMOST two hours Charles Bascomb sat there, apparently just staring through the window. But his mind was burning with the fury of the effort to evaluate the change within himself. He saw all his past life as a dark, empty grayness—a feeble reliance on somebody else, who relied on somebody else— If a man was wrong in statistical Society he could always fall back on his group, his school, "that's what they taught me", his insurance company, "everybody knows that", his firm—the bigger the cushion, the better.

It seemed impossible that that life was only as far away as this very morning, when he'd left the house, and that vision had come within these few hours.

It wasn't that sudden, of course. Magruder's pills and exercises had been working on him for days, now. Perhaps it took something like the encounter with Sprock to jar his intuitive faculty into action. At any rate, he would never be the same again. His life could never be the same.

The most immediate thing he had to take care of was calling off Hap Johnson's newspaper campaign against the Professor. After that, there would be time enough to determine what his relationship with Magruder would be.

But he already had an ink-

ling of what would be necessary.

HE FOUND Hap in the *Courier* office looking unchanged from the time of his last visit. The reporter looked up, pleased as he saw Bascomb's face. "Pretty good story to start off with, don't you think?" he said. "The switchboard has taken seventy or eighty calls on it already. Most of them giving us kudos.

"It was a good story," Bascomb said, taking a seat by the worn desk. "It will have to stop, however."

"What—?"

Bascomb nodded. "I have found out something I didn't know before. Magruder is no fake; his stuff works."

"You said that before. The idea was to keep it from working."

"On me, I mean. I've found out how to use it in a different way than Magruder intended; it can be used constructively, not the way Magruder is doing."

Hap frowned in suspicion and puzzlement. "I don't get this," he said. "You mean you want to have things all love and kisses between you and Magruder now, and promote his phoney self-development course instead of fight it?"

Bascomb shook his head. "I haven't quite figured out what ought to be done about Magruder. He's a crackpot—there seems no getting around that fact. Probably a senile condition; he's retired from the university you know. I suspect the full story is something like this: He stumbled on some bio-chemical concoction that would enormously improve a man's mental abilities—actually induce a genuine intuitive ability. He probably tried to sell his associates and superiors on it and was laughed at for his trouble. That would naturally sour him on all efforts to promote it honestly and professionally, so he became embittered and turned to this self-development business to promote it under cover.

"But with a difference. Where his initial impulse was no doubt to use his discovery for the benefit of mankind, he's now determined to destroy everything he can as a revenge for the rebuff by his colleagues."

"Which is a good enough reason why we should continue to blast him," said Hap.

BASCOMB shook his head. "No; in doing that, we would be running the risk of destroying the discovery itself. We can't take the chance; it's too valuable. The

first thing necessary is to preserve Magruder himself until we can obtain control of his discovery and make sure it will be used properly. Then we can take steps to see that Magruder is prevented from taking out his bitterness against society; it's absolutely necessary to withdraw our attack on Magruder now."

Hap's look of suspicion deepened. "I don't see it. You are only theorizing about Magruder's background; and all I can see is that his system has been pretty effective—in taking you over onto his side! What makes you think that this intuitive thing is all to the good if it's used right—and that you can handle it better than Magruder?"

Bascomb told him about the morning's incidents with Sprock and the strangers on the street. He tried to describe his new outlook on the world.

"O.K. Tell me something about me," said Hap in quick challenge.

"Why, yes—" Bascomb said hesitantly. "You—"

He stopped.

"Go on," said Hap. "Should I take a bus or a taxi home tonight? Will it be safe enough to come to work tomorrow?"

Bascomb tried to speak. Nothing came "There's nothing I can tell you," he said at last. "I haven't got it fully, and in a way I can control all the time. It's just at certain times, and certain circumstances; you've got to understand that, Hap."

"All I can see is that Magruder's got you over on his side. For my book, he's a dangerous charlatan who needs to be stamped out; and that goes double in view of what he's done to you. I don't know how he engineered such a switch, but you aren't the same man I knew a few days ago."

Bascomb tried again, from the beginning. But there was nothing he could say to convince Hap Johnson of his changed point of view—or rather, of the harmlessness of it.

The reporter stood up as Bascomb approached the door to leave. "I'm going to fight Magruder, because I think he's a menace to decent, ordinary-thinking people," he said. "And if you go over to his side, Charley, I'm going to fight you. too."

There was no hint of friendship in his eyes.

"I see," said Bascomb slowly. "Well, thanks, anyway, Hap; maybe we'll get together on this thing before it's over."

HE TRIED to assess Hap Johnson's intense hostil-

ity as he went out to the street again. The more he thought about it, the more incredible it seemed. Hap hadn't even been *that* hostile toward Magruder originally; he'd more or less gone along routinely, seeing Magruder as a crank to be suppressed. Now Bascomb felt that the reporter had become his own personal enemy because of the attempt to call off the campaign. He shook his head and gave up the problem for the present.

His inability to put on a demonstration for Hap troubled him, but he felt his explanation had been right. He had something that was growing within him; it couldn't be forced or pushed. It had to come at its own rate, and he was willing to give it time. But he couldn't afford to be backed into a corner like that again until it was fully matured.

Finally, he wanted desperately to talk to somebody who could understand him. He thought momentarily of Magruder himself, but that was out. He felt that he and the Professor were going to be very bitter enemies over exploitation of intuitive processes, and only one of them could survive that struggle.

There was no one—except Sarah.

HE GLANCED at the clock on the corner. She'd be startled to see him coming home in the middle of the day; and old Sprock would run a fever if he ever found out—perhaps even fire him. Somehow, that was becoming less and less important as the day went on.

Sarah greeted him with a smile, opening the door before he was halfway up the walk. "I thought you'd be on the earlier train," she said.

Bascomb stopped, then smiled back at her; he should have known.

They sat in the living room, and he told her about the events of the morning. He told of the interview with Sprock, and the sudden burst of intuitive knowledge that overwhelmed him. He told of the encounters with the strangers on the street, just as he'd told it to Hap Johnson. And he described the reaction of the reporter.

Sarah listened responsively, as if it were all something she'd heard before and had expected to hear again; but when he was through Bascomb realized that he hadn't come home merely for the purpose of telling her these things. He arose and stood by their modern picture window overlooking the landscaped back yard. There was still a

great deal to say and he wasn't quite sure how to go about it.

"It must be that a statistician is essentially a coward," he said finally. "I've spent my life running—fleeing as hard as I could from contact with individual factors. I don't know why; maybe it was because I felt helpless in the presence of an individual—whether it was a figure or a human being.

"But in dealing with groups, and predicting their behavior—there was power in that!" He turned to Sarah, facing her motionless figure across the room. "Can you understand that, darling? Can you understand what it meant to be able to comprehend a mass of individuals when I was completely frightened by the randomness of a single one?"

"Yes—I can understand it," Sarah said softly.

"NOW, IT'S gone," Bascomb went on in a low voice. "The terror of an individual is gone—and so is the sense of power over any group whose action I can predict. It's more than my professional career that's involved; it's the basic postulates of my whole life. I can quit hiding behind my ridiculous little rows of black figures, my summations, my media, my extremes. I can quit being the absurd fool I have been all my life!"

Sarah shook her head. "If you had been a fool, you would never have been able to see what you have been doing. You have merely gained sight which you never had before—and you mustn't forget that you still live in a world of the blind."

"How close am I?" Bascomb said. "You're so far ahead of me—can you tell me how close I am to getting full use of my intuitive capacity so that I can depend on it?"

Sarah shook her head. "I can't even see the end of the road for myself; sometimes I think there may not be any. It may be like a skill that can grow and increase as long as you live. And I'm not so far ahead of you, either; not really. I never had very much; I was just willing to trust and use what I had. It works that way. The more you use it, the more reliable it becomes."

HE CROSSED the room and sat down beside her again. He told her his feeling about Magruder and his theoretical explanation for the Professor's behavior. "Magruder's found something with the potency of atomic energy—and he's using it to

light a bonfire. It has to be taken out of his hands and put to proper use. That's my concern now—but I feel the need of more development for myself before trying to take it away from him."

"I think you're right in wanting to exploit his discovery, but I'm not sure Magruder's activities are entirely in error. After all, he brought it to your attention through these methods."

"Yes, but a direct approach would have been a whole lot more effective; and any good results are only incidental. His basic purpose is destructive. He told me so, himself."

"What are you going to do?"

Bacomb shook his head. "I don't know. I thought maybe you could help me there. I try to think ahead on it, but I get nothing but fog and fuzz. I can't seem to grasp any plan of action for myself. I don't get that intuitive feel about anything except that I must protect Magruder from Hap Johnson right now, in order to save his discovery.

"Later, there can be lectures, courses, a school maybe —not the kind of thing Magruder has been doing, but a straightforward presentation showing what his actual discovery is and what it can do. That's the approach we'll make, I think."

"But there'll be effects that will s t a r t l e and shock people—"

"We'll prepare them; we'll lay it on the line and let them know exactly what to expect —not sneak up on them without any warning the way Magruder is doing."

"What about such things as your insurance business? It will be bankrupt in time."

"That's the obvious conclusion, but I don't think it's necessarily the right one—for the simple reason that insurance company people can also have the same advantage."

"IT WOULD be a stalemate then," said Sarah. "People would apply for policies only when they needed them, and the i n s u r a n c e companies would turn them down on the basis of k n o w i n g claims would soon be made."

"It would turn into a kind of savings and loan institution," Bascomb a n s w e r e d. "P e o p l e c o u l d plan far enough ahead for coming emergencies. Insurance companies could cover them by accepting savings, and making loans for amounts beyond them—such loans being repayable in some manner. It's the only way it would ever work."

"But so many other things,

too. There'll be the public schools, the courts and juries." She gave a small gasp. "There's Zad Clementi Charles—"

Bascomb's mind shifted to thoughts of the alleged kidnap-murderer, whose trial had been headline news in their town for weeks. "Clementi—?" he said. Then the sad, sure intuitive awareness made itself felt in his mind. "Yeah," he said. "There's Clementi; he didn't do it, but they'll take a vote on it and decide to hang him for it. Twelve good men and true—in the statistical world you can multiply ignorance by a constant and get truth."

Sarah had straightened, her eyes staring through the window to the garden beyond. "We could help," she said in a whisper, "if we knew the right answer—"

Bascomb shook his head. "I can't get it; there's only the fog and fuzz. Have you got it?"

Sarah shook her head bitterly. "No—I don't know how to reach it yet. I wonder if it will be like this always—so many things you know exist, just beyond your fingertips?"

VIII

IN A KIND of fierce desperation, they returned to Magruder's manuals during the following evenings. They swallowed the green and orange and yellow and brown pills with conscious intensity, as if this would increase the potency of the chemicals.

They attended Magruder's lectures and drank up every precious word he spoke. Bascomb tried to shear through the overburden of wordage and digest the meat; Sarah refused to worry about this, taking it all at face value.

The children had been aware of some kind of strange, extracurricular activity on the part of their parents for some time. Now the sense of intensity grew somewhat frightening to them; but Charles Bascomb was not ready to admit them to an understanding of what was being attempted. He didn't know how he could make them understand fully enough to keep from resenting it. And then at other times, he wondered if they might already understand too well.

His own development progressed at a rate that was pleasing to Bascomb in spite of his impatience. After the first violent shock of becoming aware of intuitive powers, he restrained himself on the streets and on the train and wherever he had casual meeting with hordes of his fellow men. He steeled himself to

walk by men who were dying and to sit near those who were headed for inevitable disaster —disaster and death that might be turned aside by even a small degree of insight.

The revolution in his own life he began to see in appalling proportions. He'd known that changes would be necessary; but the early estimates were revised upward in a continually widening spiral. He began to know periods of genuine fear as he saw the gap widening between the future and the past—but he would not have turned back, even if it were possible.

He had not changed his initial estimate of Magruder's person and methods, or the necessity of restricting his activities, but preservation of the discovery was the all important concern right now; and anything that would lead to this end was fair enough.

HE CALLED at Magruder's hotel two weeks after the discovery of his own rising intuitive powers.

Magruder, by that time, had been brought under indictment for practising medicine without license—as a result of Hap Johnson's articles and a complaint based on Joe Archer's analysis of the colored pills. Skillfully, Hap had built up a powerful attack against all quacks and charlatans in the health and mental development field; and without leaving his paper open in any way for libel, he had directed public attention and sentiment towards Magruder and his course of lectures.

The Professor opened the door after Bascomb's first knock. "I was waiting for you."

And suddenly the enormity of his incredible oversight hit Bascomb between the eyes. How could he combat or deceive in any way a man who had the intuitive ability that Magruder must have? It was an impossibility!

How could he have overlooked this simple fact? And yet he had overlooked it completely.

"Are you feeling ill?" Magruder asked solicitously. "Can I get you anything?"

Bascomb shook his head. "I'm all right; just need to sit down. Over here by the window will be all right."

Magruder nodded and escorted him to the chair, then took one for himself. "It's good to see you again. I've been aware of you at the lectures, but you always get away so quickly I don't have a chance to even say hello."

"I've been reading about

your trouble," said Bascomb a little thickly.

"That! It's nothing; it occurs all the time. All I have to do is make a delaying action until I finish the lectures. Then I'll pay my fine and be on my way."

"Do you think you'll get by with a fine?"

MAGRUDER frowned, his wrinkled face contorting like an old apple. "These newspaper articles have a rather unusual skill, coupled with an extraordinary amount of venom. I confess they do worry me, somewhat; you didn't know what you were starting."

Bascomb remained quite still. *Was there anything Magruder didn't know?*

He had admitted worry over the outcome of the indictment, however—as if that were still hidden from him. Bascomb wondered how it could be, what limits there were to intuition, anyway.

Bascomb said carefully, "I've changed my mind since our last meeting."

"I know," Magruder answered almost impatiently.

Bascomb swallowed hard. The only possible direction was straight ahead, regardless of what Magruder "knew".

"Then you must also know that my own intuition has begun to function," he said. "I didn't understand what you were talking about before; now I do. I want to go along with you."

"I know that, too," Magruder repeated, nodding. "I'll be delighted to have you, of course. There is only one additional item we need mention: the price."

"You said nothing about price."

"When we talked before, you weren't interested enough to warrant my quoting it. But now you need to know that it's going to cost you everything that has value to you as a member of a statistical society. Your present job; your career as a statistician—"

"I expected that."

"Your name; your position in the community; your home—everything, in fact, except your family. You have good fortune, indeed, in your wife."

Bascomb paled. "I don't understand," he murmured.

"You can't; not now. Understanding will come later. The important thing is that you are ready to begin. You value sufficiently the power of intuition to be willing to pay the price of everything Statistical Society offers. There is no doubt about that, is there?"

Bascomb looked across at the enigmatic Professor in staring silence. Nothing in his whole life had prepared him for so fantastic a conversation as this one. What did Magruder mean? How much did he actually know? If he could be so positive about some things, and yet have doubt about others, it was obvious he did not have hundred percent intuition. And one of the things he seemed not to know was Bascomb's own private intentions in this matter. If that were true—and Bascomb felt almost certain of it— then this talk of a fantastic "price" was just that—fantastic.

He had to gamble on it. He nodded his head slowly and said, "There is no doubt about it. I am ready to begin."

"Excellent!" exclaimed Magruder. He got to his feet energetically. "There are a good many things I have to show you. This indictment business is going to interfere considerably, and you can be a great help to me within a short time—"

HOURS LATER, Bascomb had a substantial lead in the direction he wanted to go. Magruder gave no sign of doubting Bascomb's good faith, or sensing his real purpose.

He explained the source of his medication—a small private capsule company—and gave Bascomb authority to place orders with a letter of introduction that would validate those orders. He admitted the false front of gobbledygook pseudo-scientific terms in his lectures.

"That's the way it has to be done," he said confidentially. "The public would never swallow the actual facts. They'd rather have corporeal vibrations and ethereal streams, than try to understand that men made a mistake in the dawn of history which we now have to correct."

"But what kind of teaching is that?" Bascomb demanded in spite of himself. "How can they ever learn what intuition really is by such methods?"

Magruder glanced sidewise at him. "How does a baby learn to see, or to smell, or to feel? Intuition's like that. First order functions can't be *taught*. They are blueprinted in the germ plasm from ages past, and the psyche reads the plans in the dark schoolroom of the womb. There, it learns how to make its own heart beat, and when it comes into the world, how its eyes are to function—and its lungs, stomach, and intuition. No—you don't teach those things."

"But what do you do, then? Something happens—something happened to teach me how to use intuition."

"DID IT? I think not. You learned how yourself—after I assisted in removing some of the obstacles imposed by a Statistical Society. The exercises free the imagery mechanisms of your mind, teach your body that it need not abhor certain inherent functions. The pills react biochemically to inhibit the fear component attached to these functions. A wholly artificial fear, you understand, which has been laboriously attached by Society.

"That is all that is possible to do. Teaching is a greatly over-rated activity. It is obviously nothing more than extracting an agreement—sometimes to good ends, sometimes to bad. But it's always applied to second order effects, the *use* of a function—not the function itself.

"Self-learned items such as breathing, heart circulation, intuition, artistic creation, and ten thousand others can be suppressed by forces which may be stronger than the urge to live and grow. If the suppression has not already caused the death of the body—or the soul—it may be possible to remove the suppression, but still the organism must do its own learning in the first order field of living, growing, creating.

"In our activity we do nothing but remove the suppressors."

Bascomb made no comment. He cringed slightly before the Professor's reflection on the many years spent in achieving his place as a scholarly statistician; but it was heavy going following the physiological and psychological theories into which Magruder now plunged. Bascomb tried to stay with it, taking copious notes to refresh his memory and to check against standard texts later.

WHEN THE interview was finally over, Bascomb felt he was well on his way. Reaching the street after leaving Magruder's suite, only one puzzle remained to plague his mind insistently.

The price.

Magruder saw disaster ahead for him; but nothing could be clearer than Bascomb's own intuitive knowledge that he was on the right track—and Sarah verified it wholeheartedly.

Could two people, with functioning intuitive powers, get opposing answers to the same problem?

The answer was obviously no—provided there was any validity to intuitive knowledge at all. That left two possibilities: Magruder's intuitive power was less than Bascomb's own; or Magruder had no knowledge whatever of Bascomb's real intentions—and this made the difference in their view of the future.

Bascomb contented himself with this latter answer; he wasn't entirely satisfied with it, but there was no other in sight. And he knew he was right in what he was doing. There was no question of it, no sliver of doubt.

HE HAD decided that Hap Johnson's articles could be useful, after all, in keeping Magruder too occupied to pay too close attention to Bascomb's failure to follow instructions—if only it didn't turn heavily against the discovery itself.

Bascomb was thinking this the next morning when he opened the paper and Magruder's picture slapped him in the eye. The Professor had been arrested during the previous afternoon. He had not put up bail—which was set at an unreasonably high fifteen thousand dollars. He was securely in jail.

The news was disconcerting. Bascomb hadn't wanted anything like this to befall the Professor; yet it put him safely out of the way, and left a free hand to inaugurate a sane program. It would be all to the good as long as it restrained the professor's destructive activities—without destroying his discovery. It seemed to Bascomb a good indicator that he, not the Professor, was right. He had an intuitive feeling that this was so; it meant he had to get started—and quickly.

There was the question of Bascomb's job with New England. At first, he had considered leaving it forthwith—but that was mere crude logic that led to such a conclusion. Intuitively, now, he recognized the necessity of remaining.

First of all, he needed the money it provided. But in addition, the company represented an institution he had come to love; he didn't intend to see it scuttled. The obvious course was to take a hand in the inevitable transition. Men like Sprock would need a great deal of help during that difficult time.

AS SOON as he reached the office that morning, Bascomb requested Hadley to make a check on the batch of policies he'd warned Tremayne and Sprock about.

There was no waiting; Hadley had the information already at hand, having started a one man project to discover anomolies.

"Five of those you mentioned have made claims," he said, and was pleased at Bascomb's resulting smile. But on second thought his pleasure turned to wonder. How could Bascomb have known what ones to ask for?

"Get me the papers," said Bascomb; "I want to add them to my study."

He checked them over. It would have been nice if the remaining one had come in, but this was good enough. One death claim; two accidents, and two liabilities. He took the sheaf of papers and walked down the hall to Sprock's office.

The vice-president glanced up belligerently as the secretary ushered Bascomb in. "I was about to call you," he said. He ruffled a handful of papers in front of him and lowered bushy eyevrows. "It's time we did some more talking."

Bascomb's heartbeat quickened a trifle, and then he knew that Sprock already had a report on the claims. He hadn't ignored the prediction, after all!

Smiling, Bascomb took the offered chair. "I think we both have the same thing in mind," he said.

"All right, talk!" The vice-president commanded.

"I wasn't honest with you when I was here the other day," said Bascomb with deliberation. "I told you I had predicted these claims on the basis of a new mathematical formula I had developed. That wasn't true."

"Then why did you tell me such a cock and bull story!" Sprock roared.

"Because I felt you wouldn't be likely to believe the genuine truth. Now that I have the proof I can tell you. I predicted those claims simply because of the ability—in and of myself, without the help of any formula of any kind—to do so. Such an ability is sometimes called intuition."

"Bascomb, I warned you the last time you were in here—"

"These policy holders have the same kind of ability: that's why they were able to predict their own immediate need of insurance."

SPROCK'S face clouded even further; his fist clenched the papers to a wad. "You can't possibly believe I'm going to accept a fool story like that!"

Bascomb waited. He held out the claim papers. "These

must be explained," he said.

Sprock's silence seemed interminable; he was so immobile he seemed scarcely alive. Only the faint movement of his thin chest and the rapid shifting of his cold blue eyes to Bascomb's face and back to the papers betrayed animation.

Finally, he spoke again. "Go on," he said. "I believe you; I have to believe you."

"There'll be thousands of these," said Bascomb. "You are thinking it means the end, if enough people find themselves able to do what these few have done. That's not necessarily true. I—and others like me—can work from this end, detecting such applications.

"But it means that we must have a new policy; this is what I came to see you about. We'll have to issue a policy whose benefits are based on the term which it has run. We'll issue them only to people like these." He patted the pile of claims. "That will show them the system works both ways and will discourage their attempts to bring a run on us; after that, we'll need a new kind of program." In detail, he explained his proposal for a savings and loan system, which would serve the needs of intuitionists and keep the company solvent.

When he was through, Sprock's expression remained unchanged. "I will take your recommendations under advisement," he said. "I'll have to discuss these short claims with our Board. But later, you and I will have much moré talking to do about this new-found ability. I think there needs to be considerable explanation about its sudden appearance in epidemic form!"

"Any time that is convenient, sir," said Bascomb, rising. "I can tell you whatever you wish to know about it."

HE WAS a trifle disappointed that Sprock did not demand further explanation at the moment but this was overshadowed by his elation at Sprock's unwilling, yet definite acceptance of the reality of intuition. The first great step had been taken.

Later in the day he took a second, smaller step. He called Hadley in and with a confidential air that thrilled the junior statistician he explained about intuition. Hadley took it with difficulty; he was well on the way to solidification in his statistical mold. But when Bascomb offered personally to teach him the methods of intuition, he expressed effusive thanks.

These were beginnings; but

a bold program of expansion was necessary now to take advantage of Magruder's difficulty, and his own possession of the basic data on intuition.

From Magruder's secretary —who was now out of a job and didn't care much about the Professor's affairs in the first place—he obtained a list of those registered for the course of lectures. He prepared a letter explaining that he was in a position to explain Magruder's difficulty with the law and replace the hocus-pocus of his lectures with an honest exposition of the principles of man's intuitional powers and how to attain them.

He prepared a second letter which went to a large, select group of personal friends, business associates, and clients of New England. In this he outlined the occurrence of anomolies in human human wisdom and insight and explained briefly the role of intuition in men's affairs. He invited them to attend a series of discourses and instruction on how to improve their personal intuitive abilities.

HE CHANGED the location from Magruder's meeting place in order to eliminate as much as possible all association with the Professor's quackery and nonsense. He was going to give out the data in a strictly scientific, straight-from-the-shoulder manner that would be bound to appeal to people of intellect and logical thinking. People who could understand the tremendous responsibility toward society, which was involved in obtaining use of the intuitive faculties of the mind. With such a class of people initially in possession of full intuition there would be no risk of the panic and ruin that Magruder's program was deliberately designed to induce.

He felt good about the whole thing; it was intuitively correct. Sarah agreed that it was. Her only worry was in regard to Magruder. "We ought to do something to help," she said. "After all, he's the one responsible for bringing these principles to light. We owe him for that. And those newspaper articles are getting people so inflamed against him that he's liable to get a sentence of twenty years in jail, for things he didn't have the remotest chance of doing."

Bascomb himself was still uncertain about the position of Magruder. It worried him, too; particularly since there was no intuitive insight either

of them could get regarding him.

"After this thing gets rolling," he promised. "I'll have a talk with him and see if something can't be done. I'll see Cummings. the D.A., too. I used to sit next to him at Club."

Bascomb was quite aware that he was going to distribute pills just as Magruder had done. which was the immediate cause of Magruder's arrest. But he knew there was no risk to himself in this. In the Professor's case it had been just an excuse to lay hands on him ; with a straightforward approach there would be no such complication.

IX

CHARLES and Sarah Bascomb were elated by the sight of the first night crowd filling up the hall. Logic had told them they were getting a place much too big. But it was just right.

The crowd was divided about equally between Bascomb's friends and business people, and the group from Magruder's course. Bascomb was continually surprised by his own lack of apprehension concerning the reactions of both groups. It would be difficult to wean Magruder's people away from corporeal vibrations; and he knew the business people would not take kindly to the idea that statistics was a feeble tool to be used only in the absence of a more profound and positive intuition. Yet he felt completely secure in what he was about to do.

The feeling persisted, even when Hap Johnson walked in and took a seat at the rear of the hall. Bascomb admitted to himself he was shaken when he looked out and saw the reporter's entrance. He hadn't invited Hap, and had no idea how he had got wind of the meeting. But it didn't matter, he thought; nothing that the *Courier* might print could possibly alter the intuitive assurance he felt.

He stepped out between the curtains on the platform. He was aware of the stares of surprise, curiosity, challenge, and occasional contempt. He smiled confidently and held up a hand to quiet the perfunctory applause.

"It was probably no small surprise to those of you who know me," he said, "to read my invitation to this gathering. I am gratified that so many of you took the trouble to accept and be here tonight.

"What I have to say will sound strange to all of you.

Some of you will be thoroughly outraged—even as I was when I first encountered this information. I hope no one will be so outraged or disbelieving that he will consider it beneath his dignity to test the validity of these facts for himself—also as I have done."

GINGERLY, then, as if edging carefully into cold, deep water, Bascomb spoke of the historical evidence for the existence of intuition as it might be familiar to his audience. He modified Magruder's exposition considerably, omitting the Professor's far-fetched theories that went back to the dawn of civilization. He reminded his listeners of instances which they could believe, in which intuition had proven superior to all other forms of knowledge as a basis for action.

They listened, but he could see they weren't liking it. Magruder's group was obviously contemptuous of so prosaic a term as intuition; they wanted strong meat—corporeal vibrations. The business people were disgusted; Bascomb could read in their faces the thoughts he himself had had, not so long ago.

Somehow he wasn't getting it over; he was trying to be reasonable and scientific, but his listeners were cold to his exposition.

"How much would it be worth to know," he said, "which one out of many possible lines of action was most likely to succeed? How much would it be worth to know which man out of a group could best do a job—or which product out of many thousands was not up to specified quality? You who are executives, personnel managers, quality control experts—what would it be worth to you to have infallible insight in your profession instead of mere assurance that your error will not be greater than a stated amount?

"Statistics can never give you anything more than this assurance. Intuition, properly applied, can give you positive knowledge."

IN HIS backward-looking moments he never quite understood why he dared the argument he brought up next. Certainly, his planned discourse didn't call for it; but the apathy of the group made him a little desperate, he thought afterward.

"Think of the significanc in our judicial processes," h said. "We never *know* i many instances whether a man is actually guilty of a crime or not. We take a ballot

and *vote* him guilty or innocent, and our concept of justice and our lust for vengeance are satisfied.

"We have seen in recent days how this functions in our own city. We have voted a man guilty of the worst possible crime. There were good, sound, logical reasons for such a vote. He was a poor, unlettered devil who aroused no one's sympathy, so who could regret if an error were made? Besides, he was the janitor in the apartment house where the victim lived, and she was found stuffed in the furnace to which only he was supposed to have access.

"But I know that Zad Clementi is innocent of this crime!"

FOR SHEER emotional reaction, he might as well have set off a charge of dynamite in their midst. There was no physical response, but he felt the hostile flare in their minds like a bright, silent flame.

There was not a man or woman in the audience who didn't believe Zad Clementi was a justly condemned murderer.

Bascomb recognized his error the moment he closed his mouth, and he was appalled. Whatever had caused him to bring up such an argument? He was acting like a fool, letting their apathy rattle him; where was his intuitive assurance regarding his course of action?

It was there, silent, reassuring, commending him for having done well.

And for the first time since it came, he began to doubt.

He was *not* doing well; he had made a blunder that had alienated his listeners beyond all repair.

But he tried to make repairs. For another full hour he tried valiently to convey something of his own sense of faith in the intuitive powers of Man. With that faith so severely shaken, however, he had no ability to persuade others.

When some of those in the back rows began getting up to leave, he knew his chance was gone.

Not all of them were ready to walk out on him, however. Some wanted to talk it over, and insisted on the scheduled question and answer period. They didn't want to know about the methods of gaining intuitive understanding; they wanted to tell him what they thought about the things he'd already said.

It grew boisterous and vicious; he left the platform in defeat.

AS IF HE had forgotten where he lived, or didn't want to go there, he drove through town and along its outskirts and suburbs in a mazelike pattern. Beside him Sarah remained silent, waiting for him to be the first to speak.

He did, finally. He said bitterly, "How do you suppose I ever got suckered into a thing like that? I must have been crazy the past few weeks—completely off my nut! Intuition—!"

"You don't believe it's real any more?" asked Sarah quietly.

"As real as it's always been—a chance hunch now and then. With just as much chance of being wrong as right!"

"What about the policies?"

"What about them? I'll find that statistical formula I bragged about to Sprock and explain them! The ones that won't fit—well, the old idea of a hunch is as good as any explanation. I'll buy it. But what a fool Magruder made out of me, with his Yogi tricks and slick performance! I'll bet he isn't even Magruder—"

"What about Myersville?"

"Who knows—it has nothing to do with this."

"And Sloan and his soap failure?"

"He's probably got his trouble ironed out by now."

"And you felt it so strongly yourself—that is was real and this was the way to go."

Bascomb's lips compressed tightly before he answered. "I've seen the same thing in backwoods religious meetings, too."

"I still feel somehow that tonight was not a loss," said Sarah.

"It wasn't," Bascomb answered grimly. "It put me back on the track. What if I'd quit New England first? But there's still Sprock." He grimaced painfully. "Tomorrow I have to see Sprock and do the Most Humble Grand Salaam."

HE NEVER got the chance; he suspected he wouldn't when he saw the paper before breakfast the following morning. The international news was light, and his own picture was on the front page, neatly framed by Magruder's on one side and Zad Clementi's on the other.

The caption declared: *"Mathematician Computes Clementi Innocence."*

The story described him as a disciple of Magruder, taking over the Professor's work while the latter languished in jail, unable to provide bail on charges of medical practise

without license. It told in great detail and with considerable accuracy the things Bascomb had said about intuition and the possibility of gaining skill in its use.

The story was written by Hap Johnson.

Near the end, Hap said *"All this reminds your reporter about the old story of the tired balliff who was asked to go out for about the nine hundredth time to get the belaboring jurors something to eat. He's the one, you remember, who came back with eleven meals and a bale of hay.*

"Well, we can all be thankful that a certain insurance statistician wasn't on the Clementi jury. We've had clean-cut justice done on this case. a thing our courts and the citizens of Landbridge can be proud of. But we'll tell you: if anyone still cares to make a gift of a bale of hay at this particular date, your reporter will see that it's properly delivered."

It sent a stunning wave of hurt through Bascomb as he read it. Hap Johnson had been his friend. This bitterness was something he did not understand; he gave up trying.

On his desk, when he reached the office, there was a note for him to appear in the office of vice-president Sprock. Bascomb caught furtive glances of those beyond the glass walls of his office as he read it. Obviously they'd seen the morning papers.

Hadley hadn't, apparently, for he came in brightly, almost on Bascomb's heels. "Here's the last of the policies you asked about, Mr. Bascomb," he said. "Bheuner's Hardware Store. It burned to the ground last night."

That must have been in the second section, which Bascomb hadn't read. He stood staring, long after Hadley had left, at the two papers on his desk: the order from Sprock, and the claim from Bheuner. The hardware man hadn't lost any time, he thought.

But it would do no good to call it to Sprock's attention now; his case was lost, as far as New England was concerned. He left the claim paper on his desk and walked slowly down the hall.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT was surprisingly direct and to the point. He outlined briefly the history of the insurance business, particularly that of New England. He dwelt at moderate length on the sacredness of the obligations incurred by the Company in behalf of the Policy-

holders. He went most heavily into the personal qualifications required of the ones chosen to stand vigil over that enduring trust.

But the thing of greatest significance was his parting shot:-"I shall see to it personally, Bascomb, that no firm in this field ever considers your name on its roster without knowing the true facts of your fantastic attempt to besmirch the entire insurance institution in America! Intuition! Goodday, Mr. Bascomb."

He returned along the hall to his own office. Blackballed; he had no doubts that Sprock would and could do it.

He had thirty days coming if he wanted it, but he declined. He told Sprock he'd finish up at once, if that was all right; it was. He turned over his current studies to Wardlaw, Assistant Statistician. He cleaned out his desk and said a stiff goodbye to the office associates who didn't suddenly have to go down the hall for a break as they saw he was about ready.

That was it. He and New England were through. As he turned his back on the building he was aware that this fact had not sunk thoroughly into all his cells. A certain part of him had no doubt that he would be coming this way again in the morning. It would be a bitter struggle when that certain part attained full awareness.

SARAH WAS not surprised. They had discussed it at breakfast, and she had told him it was going to happen. He had believed her, but hoped for some miracle to prove her wrong—to prove all her intuitive hunches wrong for the rest of their lives.

It wouldn't be bad, however, he told her; he'd start looking in the morning. He might have to go farther away, but there wouldn't be much trouble for a man of his experience. He didn't tell her of Sprock's threat.

He did little the next day except write some letters asking for interviews. He went to a public stenographer in town to do this, and came home early—and the height of thirteen-year-old Mark's wails of rage and discomfort.

These were coming from the direction of the bathroom, where Bascomb found Sarah busy with soap and water and bandages. His oldest boy's eye was tightly closed. Cuts and bruises decorated the rest of his face and his upper torso.

Bascomb wanted to make it light, but he saw Sarah's face

and changed his intended tone. "What was it all about?" he asked evenly.

MARK GLANCED up, hesitant; he turned to his mother. "It's all right," she said grimly.

"Down at school—," said Mark. "All the kids—I told them they couldn't say things like that and tried to make 'em shut up. But I couldn't lick the whole school."

"What were they saying?" Bascomb asked.

"That you are a Communist. They went around singing it kind of: Bascomb's dad's a Red man; that sort of thing. Then Art Slescher wrote on the boards in all the classes before I got there: *Name a dirty Commie.* I got him after school."

Bascomb looked at Sarah. his face blanched. They didn't speak.

Later, when the children were in bed, they tried to talk about it. "We can't go on bucking something like that forever," Sarah said.

"It won't be forever," Bascomb snapped, more irritably than he intended; "I mean, it will die down after while. You know how these newspaper stories go. They pin a guy to the cross with scandal, and in a week even his next door neighbors have forgotten about it."

"Not this." Sarah shook her head. "It hasn't even got a good start it's going to build bigger and bigger. Mark's experience isn't the only one."

"What else?"

"I overheard talk at the store while I was shopping today. Two women on the other side of grocery island. They thought I'd gone away. One mentioned your name. Said her daughter had a friend who'd heard you were caught molesting some high school girls one night—that it was no wonder you were defending a man like Clementi."

BASCOMB buried his face in his hands and groaned with helpless despair and rage "Such a little thing to begin with—! How in Heaven's name did it lead up to this? I hope they hang Magruder!" He looked up. "It's going to be hell to live with while it lasts, but time will make a difference."

"Not in this." Sarah shook her head again; "it will only grow worse."

"Then what are we to do! We've got our home here. It's our community as much as those gossiping old biddies'—those mentally twisted kids—"

"It's going to force us out, Charles; we can't live here

any longer. The sooner we prepare to leave, the better we'll be. Put the house up for sale tomorrow!"

Only then, for the first time in many days, did Bascomb remember Magruder's strange words, and it hit him like a blow in the stomach. *"It's going to cost you everything—your present job, your whole career—your good name—your position in the community; your home—"*

Magruder had said that; and every word of it was coming true.

But there was time and a way to save things yet. "We're not moving out before a thing of that kind," he said; "there're ways of licking it."

"At the price of our own destruction!"

"It's always been expensive to fight against insane prejudice, but the world would be a hell of a place to live in if a few of us didn't try.

"Tell Mark to not get involved in any more fistfights; tell him that when the others accuse me of being a Communist, he's to agree. He's to tell them I've got a pipeline straight to Moscow. Kruschev himself appointed me, and I'm planning to wipe out the President and his Cabinet next month.

"Tell the neighborhood biddies the same thing. Walk up and ask their advice on what to do with a husband you catch every week or two with sixteen-year old girls right in your own house. That'll shut them up after a while.

"And then—we're staying; we're staying right here and we'll find out who did the murder Clementi is accused of. We'll ram it down their throats until it chokes every one of the lying, sadistic gossipers!"

"We have nothing but an intuitive sense about Clementi—and you've rejected that. So possibly the jury was right, after all."

BASCOMB remained staring straight ahead of him to the figured pattern on the opposite wall; it seemed as if he hadn't heard her. Then slowly his lips parted. "No," he said. "I've rejected everything Magruder induced me to believe about intuition, but Clementi's innocence doesn't depend on that. Our feelings about him were merely random chance, let us say, but logic convinces me we were right in that one thing. I've gone back and read the accounts of the trial. The evidence is ridiculous; they haven't given him a chance. And I think it's because there's someone who's being protected."

X

IT WAS A noble and virtuous gesture. Bascomb felt Sarah would commend him and agree to stick valiantly by him. Instead, she got up and paused in the center of the room. She gave him a single backward, almost-contemptuous look. "You are being an idiotic fool!" she said. "A pebble can't stop a fifty ton boulder rolling down a hill." She strode off in the direction of the bedroom.

A week later, Charles Bascomb was convinced she was right. Mark was in the hospital to get an arm set after it had been broken when the mob piled on him at school. Sarah had been read out of the two ladies clubs she belonged to; and the minister of their Church had informed her he had made different arrangements in the baby-sitting round robin which had been worked out during services. Sarah wouldn't need to bother with it any more.

Bascomb had found his car painted a screaming red—including all the glass—when he got off the train at the end of the week to drive home. The same night their front windows were broken with slingshots; and when they got up, they found a crude hammer and sickle painted on the front door.

In the city he'd not been able to get a single job interview during the entire time.

Bascomb visited the local subarban real estate office in the early morning. By afternoon he had a sale—at a four thousand dollar loss, which the agent assured him was the best he could do in the light of the jinxed condition of the property.

Once agreeing to defeat, it was impossible for Bascomb to get out too soon. He didn't know where they were going, but as soon as all arrangements for storage and forwarding of their personal goods had been made he turned the car west. Slivers of red paint still showed next to the rubber gasket of the windshield; but the new paint job on the car symbolized the only thing he was taking with them, hope.

He didn't know where they were going. He was still stunned by the events of past days. The uncontrolled viciousness and brutality of the attacks against his family were unexplainable. Even the police had expressed apathy toward his complaints. A city had turned against him.

And for what? he asked himself continually, over and over again. There was no ra-

tional explanation. His single statement of defense for Clementi had set if off. But that must be only the trigger. Where was the main explosive force of the catastrophe! He didn't know. All he was sure of was that his townsmen seemed to have suddenly gone insane.

THEY CROSSED New York in easy stages, and stopped late that night at a Pennsylvania tourist lodge. Mark's arm was giving him pain. Neither Chuck, nor Darcie, the youngest, lying across his lap asleep, was enjoying the ride. They were running from a terror that wouldn't show its proper face.

It was there that they heard the newscast as they turned on the small radio in the lodge.

"Police are looking for a once-respected insurance executive now fleeing with his family from the consequences of an incredible wave of criminal attacks. Charles Bascomb—dark green Buick—six girls all under age—license number—"

"Come on!" said Bascomb. "It must have been on earlier; I noticed the clerk watching closely while I wrote down our license number—"

They turned out of the drive, even as the clerk came out of the office to witness their unexplained departure. Sarah saw him turn and run inside. "He's phoning the police," she said.

There was no hysteria, or even despair, Bascomb, recalled later as he turned the car onto the highway and kept it moving. A kind of calm seemed to have settled over them all. The children were quiet, and Sarah sat as if she had confidence that Bascomb knew exactly what he was doing.

As if he actually did, he slowed at a dark intersection and turned off on a secondary highway. "We'll have to keep off the main roads," he said. "This one ought to take us where we're going."

No one asked where that was; at the moment Bascomb didn't think to inquire in his own mind just what he meant by his words. He just kept driving. About midnight he pulled up at a small country crossroads community. A single lighted sign: *Hotel* shown in the whole village.

"We'll be all right here," Bascomb said with assurance; "we'll try to get some rest and get out early in the morning."

THEY WENT south and west, avoiding the main highways rounding the Michigan shore line. No one viewed

them with any more suspicion than any ordinary family of tourists; no siren-screaming cars rocketed along side them. Just once did they catch a repeat of the news broadcast mentioning the police pursuit.

When Bascomb abruptly turned the car to a northerly course, he had a momentary impulse to stop and check the road map and ask himself why the devil he was heading this way. But he didn't stop; he merely slowed for an instant—then stepped on the gas and settled a little more comfortably behind the wheel. He'd known it all along, of course.

Where else would they be going to Myersville—the town that burned television sets in the square?

THEY ARRIVED very late. The headlights of the car showed a neat village of white, green-trimmed houses. There appeared to be only a single hotel, and they drew up before it, after driving the length of the town and returning. As they walked into the small lobby a man got to his feet from a nearby leather chair and advanced with outstretched hand. He was smiling broadly.

"I've been waiting all evening for you," Professor Magruder said.

Sarah Bascomb walked toward him with an answering smile and accepted his hand. But Charles stopped short and stared at the little wizened man who was at the root of all his troubles.

He'd felt there was safety in their flight west. When Bascomb turned north, he knew he'd been subconsciously aware from the beginning that they'd end up in Myersville.

But by no twist of backward calculation could he admit that seeing Magruder was anything but an unexpected shock. Magruder was the last person in the world he wanted to meet.

"How did you get here?" he demanded.

"Flew," said Magruder easily. "The judge threw out the charges in the preliminary hearing, and let me go the day you left. I tried to get in touch with you, but you were a little too early for me. I knew I'd find you here."

"And just how did you know that?" Bascomb said belligerently.

Magruder smiled again. "How did you know Myersville was the place to come to?"

He refused to say another word about the subject of their past relationship. While he accompanied them to the dining room, and to a meal

that seemed to have been waiting for them, he told about the town, its peacefullness and opportunity for full living, which he was sure they would enjoy. He spoke of other, incidental, things, but the word intuition was not mentioned that night.

He led them directly to their rooms afterward.

"We have to register," Bascomb explained.

"That has been taken care of," said Magruder. "After all, we run the place."

Bascomb knew by then it would be useless to ask the identity of "we".

THE CHILDREN had never seen the Professor, of course, and had heard his name only when it slipped in their presence. But they struck up an immediate friendship. At the breakfast table the following morning the Professor proved an unexpected adeptness with sleight-of-hand tricks, riddles, and stories that kept the children enthralled.

Bascomb, however, was more absorbed in an inspection of his fellow diners; he was used to seeing occasionally an individual he mentally classified as a "character"—but never in such numbers as this. The hotel seemed to be full of them.

Magruder was watching him, he discovered after a time. The children and Sarah had turned to their meal, and the Professor said, "That's Shifty you're watching across the room. He's a great man in a pool room. While pool isn't as popular as it once was, he handles dirty pictures, too. That gives him a good following in the highschool crowd, where he specializes in pushing our stuff. The kids think they've been on a genuine reefer jag when they get through."

"I'd like to know what the devil you're talking about," said Bascomb testily.

"Marty, over there, works the racing crowd. He gives them a system that really sends them flipping—but they pick the ponies right too. They wouldn't let go of Marty for all the uranium in Utah.

"Then the fellow next to him is Doc Simmons; he's a chiropracter. Has a nice little practice among neurotic females of the upper bracket in Chicago. Across the table is Doc Bywater—we have a lot of Docs here—who is behind the ads you see in the little magazine sometimes. You know: *cure piles in ten days or your money back.* Or: *prostrate sufferers, get relief overnight.* That sort of thing. He gives them a dilly of a

routine, and, of course, it works one hundred per cent of the time. He's got a warehouse full of testimonials."

"It makes absolutely no sense at all!" Bascomb exclaimed.

ALL RIGHT, then, I'll tell you." Magruder had been eating as he talked; now he arose, finished with breakfast while Bascomb hadn't touched a thing. Bascomb got up with him, however, and went out to the broad porch of the hotel and sat down facing the small unbusy main street of the town.

"Peaceful place, isn't it?" said Magruder. He pointed to a dark spot on the gravel of the town square a block away "That's where they burned the television sets; it must have been quite a show.

"But you wanted to know what this was all about, didn't you? That shouldn't be very hard, actually, because you already know—"

"I don't know a thing!" Bascomb cried. "Who are the 'we' you referred to last night? Who are the people you pointed out in the dining room—what's the meaning of their nonsensical activities?"

"The first thing you need to comprehend," said Magruder slowly and carefully now, "is that intuition does *not* provide you with a superman intellect in the logical, statistical world you have lived in all your life.

"Intuition is an entirely different breed of cat, a *non*-logical means of arriving at conclusions about the world. Remember that the world and its problems remain the same. Sometimes the answers are the same, too; most of them are considerably better. But the change of method sometimes tends to make the whole picture—the world of your reality, its problems, your personal inter-relations—all of these often look so different that you think you've suddenly dropped down on another world.

"Non-logical has come to be synonymous with irrational or crazy;—a piece of sheer propaganda put out by a system struggling tooth and nail, so to speak, to prevent recognition of another and better system. When shifting from one to the other you may be inclined to discount some of the features of the new."

BASCOMB SNORTED in disgust. "If you're trying to tell me I had any sense of intuition at work you can save your breath. The one time I depended on it in full confidence, it nearly de-

stroyed me. It wiped out everything I've built up so far—home, job, community relationship. I'm even wanted by the police, I hear. Heaven only knows how that will turn out!"

"No—I think Charles Bascomb knows that it will turn out all right. The hysteria will pass; the charges will be dropped and forgotten. There will be no continued pursuit and harrassment from that quarter.

"I'm quite sure you know also that your intuition did not fail you. It was working accurately to bring you with optimum speed to the new circumstances which will give you maximum satisfaction in life."

"You're crazy! I took your pseudo-scientific nonsense, hook line and sinker, and determined I *would* base a new life on it. My wife agreed with me. Everything went wrong; you evidently know what happened."

"And you recall, also, that I predicted this woud be the course of events? It had to be. You were following a strongly-working intuitive faculty, and it was leading you along an optimum path.

"There's one trait of intuition that makes it a little hard for a statistically bred and educated man to stomach. Intuition is completely ruthless. If reaching a certain goal involves a pathway through beartraps and hellfire, intuition makes no allowances for logical objections to these obstacles. It takes you through; that's what happened in your case."

"I hope you're not trying to tell me it was intuitionally desirable that I be run out of town with my reputation destroyed!"

MAGRUDER NODDED. "That's exactly the case," he said. "You had accepted your intuitive faculty as a prime motivator at the moment you recognized it actually existed. Not everyone does that, you understand, but you did—hook, line, and sinker, as you say.

"It was therefore very easy for it to assume a very high functioning level, and replace a considerable mass of logical reasoning. But even so, it was still comparatively embryonic in development—with the result that you were somewhat in the position of a man trying to ride two horses wanting to go in opposite directions.

"You permitted intuition to operate, but you tried to evaluate its results logically.

"An intuitionist has no desire for status in the commu-

nity, I suppose! No need for a sound, stable reputation and solid family life!"

Magruder grimaced impatiently. "I suppose it's difficult to shuck off the lifelong habit of trying to generalize from a single specific incident. You'll learn, however—

"Your case has nothing to do with what intuitionists in general desire or do not desire. For you, your intuition determined an optimum course of action with the precision of Natural Law. For *you*, not for anybody else. For you."

"Is there any purpose in it that can be understood by my simple logical mind, then?" Bascomb asked bitterly.

"OF COURSE. It is simply that you had to be *driven* out of your niche in a statistical society, or you would not have gone. That represents an almost unbelievable reflex activity of the intuition which *cannot* be understood in logical terms. It saw, so to speak, that you were desirous of utilizing intuition; but it also saw that you would never renounce sufficiently the statistical way of life you had built up so solidly. It saw, therefore the necessity of destroying the impediment in order to permit you to realize your basic intuitive choice of an intuitive life. So it set up the chain of circumstances—it led *you* to set them up—to destroy your position in statistical society, and thereby free you for the fuller life you had already chosen but could not otherwise obtain.

"You'll get used to that kind of operation after while; I'll admit it shakes you pretty hard the first few times it goes into operation!"

"It's absolutely—"

Bascomb didn't finish with the word "insane", which was on the tip of his tongue. He suddenly sat very still, staring across the quiet Main Street of Myersville. In the vault of his mind, a page seemed to have turned, and a previous opacity was flooded with a brilliance of light. He felt a trembling within the fibers of his being, that was at once both a joy and an apprehension.

Every word of Magruder's last statements was true!

HE SAW it now—and understood how he could not possibly have seen it before. But something within him was aware—the mysterious, fearful thing men called intuition—

He would *not* have left his niche. He would have done such nonsensical things as

promoting the course he attempted; he would have spoken of his find to his friends and associates.

And he would have backed down whenever their ridicule endangered his association with them. He would have valued his place in the community his security or reputation—everything—above a full exploitation of intuition. He would have remained with New England; he would have remained a Statistical Man.

Something in him saw how it would be. And now he witnessed clearly on the lighted page of his mind the process of that seeing, the intricate course of its illogical flow.

The process that had made him once and for all a Non-Statistical Man.

It would be there again, he knew, doing its work out of sight of his living, reasoning awareness. He'd never doubt or mistrust it again. This was the very quality of faith he'd once suggested to Magruder!

"I wouldn't have left without being driven," he said slowly, his eyes still staring at the buildings on the other side of the street. "I'll never lose faith in my intuition again."

Magruder smiled a bit wistfully. "You'll need it; but you'll doubt the truth of your statement when intuition leads you through far hotter hells than anything you've seen up to now. And it will. Never doubt *that!*

"But, eventually, you will have a solid faith that can't be shaken by anything you encounter. You'll know by then that intuitive awareness excells crude logic in any basic crisis."

"I seems wrong," said Bascomb dubiously, "the way we've been talking and thinking about it. Like something outside myself, driving, directing and telling me what to do without any volition of my own. It gives me an uncomfortable feeling to think of it that way."

"IT SHOULD, because that's not the way to think of it. Intuition is not some mysterious little green man in your skull, giving instructions and keeping back data from you.

"Intuition is *you*—a function of you, just as imagination, logic, or any other functions are. Like the subconscious, it does withhold data from the logic department at times; but that doesn't signify a separate entity by any means.

"The exact nature of intuition is, of course, still a mystery to us. We've only discovered how to restore it

and use it to a degree. And like any other faculty, its operation can be improved and developed. What the top levels may be, we don't know; none of us has reached there, yet.

"You'll find there are some things intuition is not. Basically, it is a means of knowing things as they *do* exist, without particular recourse to the other senses, and relationships as they are and can be, without recourse to involved logic. Apart from this, it isn't a means of time travel to know everything that's going to occur in the future down to the end of your life. It *does* involve a considerable amount of prescience of the immediate future; but this fades exponentially as time increases the quantity of interlocking variables. It's one of our most valuable properties, however, and one which we're expanding rapidly.

"Basically, intuition seems to function on the premise of direct contact with the universe. We have to postulate a condition of no distance, and simultaneous contact with all portions of the universe at once, or at least at will. It's very complex, but we think we're on the right track."

"I'll take your word for it," said Bascomb. "One thing I'd like to be able to understand, however, is the viciousness of the attacks on me back home. There was nothing normal about that; nothing I did could possibly explain it. The police ignored my requests for help, and vandals attacked my family at will. All because I defended an innocent man they wanted to kill!"

"No." Magruder shook his head. "Surely you don't believe the attack was result of your defense of Clementi?"

"What else?"

"That's one thing you *must* know, or one of the basic purposes of your coming has been lost. Look in your own mind and see if another reason is not apparent now."

BASCOMB considered, and the illumination he'd experienced before seemed to burn slowly into brilliance again like a ripening sunburst. "Yes," he said, "I understand. Clementi had nothing to do with it. *They* thought Clementi was the reason; but actually they fought me because of what I'd tried to teach about intuition."

"That was it," said Magruder. "The fury of a statistical society breaking out at the appearance of its more desireable rival. You can't forget, surely, that men have always burned witches, and the few who found wisdom in their words. Prophets have al-

ways paid for their gift with their lives, in one way or another. Logic almost won; witches and prophets are few these days.

"You'll learn even more fully how dependence on Society inhibits a man's intuitive ability. You *have* learned that Society will fight Intuition, tooth and nail; it was absolutely necessary that you learn that lesson well."

"Why?" exclaimed Bascomb. "Wasn't the knowledge available intuitively, without going through this unpleasant experience?"

"DON'T MAKE the mistake of assuming intuitive replaces experience," Magruder said. "If that were true, we could become ascetics and spend our lives atop a high pole contemplating our belly buttons. Intuition serves to guide experience, not replace it. Intuitive knowledge that your neighbors would react as they did would not, of itself, have served to tear you from your statistical environment—without the actual experience of being subject to their reaction. It would have remained an academic matter, a further deterrent to your breaking away.

"Similarly, you might ask, if people can detect their own need of insurance in advance, can they not change that need entirely? Can't they avoid accidents headed their way? Sometimes they can—if it is appropriate to their total optimum world-experience for them to do so. Other times they can only prepare to meet the experience in an optimum manner."

"But all your lecture students aren't going through what I did!"

"No—you're different because of what you are to become in this field. The others learn how to use it in their private lives, but they don't talk about it; their intuition teaches them how to keep out of such jams. Yours led you to it, because of the lesson you had to learn—because you had to know, first-hand, how your neighbors and friends could turn on you with cold, vicious savagery because of this thing.

"YOU HAD to see Society mobilizing all the witch burning techniques accumulated over the ages, and realize these still exist; that science has not made them unnecessary, but is sometimes only a milder form of the same thing. You had to know that Society recognizes your possession as a death warrant for itself, that it will fight to

the death for its own survival.

"You had to know how truly Man has become poor, little rich boy, sitting in the midst of his wealth of Christmas gadgetry which has become abundant beyond his capacity to use it; and that inside, a slowly crumbling psyche is leaving him a hollow, eyeless shell which will collapse upon the heap of shining gadgetry when his last internal fires are dead.

"But I say logic *almost* won; the battle isn't quite over. Logic hasn't wholly dispelled the society of witches and prophets and sorcerers and soothsayers. Their company has been considerably augmented since our discovery of processes to restore intuitive faculties in spite of the social pressures against them.

"I started five years ago while still at the University. I recruited slowly and carefully, and all of my original people are still with me. We moved about the country later, working at random, developing our methods, improving our means of contact and sheer existence in a statistical society. You have encountered reports on some of our work, we are only beginning.

"SIX MONTHS ago, we decided on the experiment of taking over a whole community. We chose Myersville because it already had a good stable foundation; you know our results. It's to be our headquarters for some time to come.

"The general public here is not in on the secret of what, precisely, has happened to them, you understand. They are simply aware that they have decided to change their way of life; that they became fed up with the old one and voluntarily decided to improve. It shocks them now when they go away for a visit. But *we* didn't do this. They did—after having experienced release of some of their intuitive faculties, which led them to cease their slavish dependence on Society.

"That's about the whole story to date. We're trying to recruit stronger men as time goes on. Our survey of your abilities showed you to be one of the strongest."

"How could you know that?" Bascomb demanded abruptly. "I was buried, literally buried—in the statistical mass I called living. Why, Sarah's intuitive bullseyes scared the daylights out of me!"

"We knew that—and we knew why. Your inherent endowment of intuitive faculties is so high that you had to

make a choice very early in life: bury them completely, or risk the terror of complete ostracism by the Society which would regard you as an enemy to its own existence.

"There's nothing shameful about that decision; it's the one the whole race made in the dawn of its life. It was particularly fortunate that you married a woman like Sarah, who already had some understanding and belief in her own intuitive powers. She will be a great help to us, also."

"You seem very sure we will go along with you!"

"Do you suppose we would have gone to the trouble we did, if we lacked positive, intuitive knowledge of that fact!" Magruder asked in astonishment.

Bascomb smiled in understanding. There was no argument to offer; he knew the Professor was quite correct. He knew it in the most positive way a man can ever gain any knowledge.

He *felt* it was the way things ought to be.

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