

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECEMBER
1950

VOLUME 1
NUMBER 2



FEBRUARY ISSUE ON SALE
DECEMBER 1



MEET ME IN TOMORROW

(Short—7,000 words) by Guy Archette 6
Their love was hopeless—for can two people find happiness in separate worlds?

TECHNICAL SLIP

(Short—5,000 words) by John Beynon 24
If you could live your life over again you'd make certain changes in it—maybe . . .

TOURISTS TO TERRA

(Short—2,700 words) by Mack Reynolds 36
They were interstellar pleasure hunters—and the Earth was their newest toy . . .

"WHAT SO PROUDLY WE HAIL . . ."

(Short—6,500 words) by Day Keene 44
1789 was a great year for Ephraim Hale and his countrymen—or was it 1950? . . .

THE ULTIMATE QUEST

(Short—5,000 words) by Hal Annas 60
The world had forgotten the dark age of the 20th Century—and its barbarians!

IT'S RAINING FROGS!

(Novelette—10,000 words) by Milton Lesser 74
Having a frog fall from the sky is one thing—but a pretty girl quite another!

THE OLD ONES

(Novelette—18,600 words) by Betsy Curtis 98
They had outlived their usefulness on Earth—but there were other worlds . . .

THE BRAVE WALK ALONE

(Short—6,000 words) by John McGreevey 142
Men shunned him for a coward—but his greatest strength was a lack of fear!



THE EDITORIAL	4	THE SHOOTING LITTLE ROBOT	73
PERSONALS	23	THE VIOLENT ELEMENT	97
ELECTRONIC EYEBALL	35	THE HYDRAULIC ACCUMULATOR	140
FORECASTS	43 & 96	BOTTLE PILOTS	141
MIDGET MARVELS	59	LETTERS FROM THE READERS	158

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It was as if a hole had opened in space, pouring forth the stream of red frogs . . .

IT'S RAINING FROGS!

By **MILTON LESSER**

George didn't like the idea of little red frogs raining down on him from a clear sky. But a pretty girl falling into his arms was quite another matter!

"We shall pick up an existence by its frogs . . . Wise men have tried other ways. They have tried to understand our state of being, by grasping at its stars, or its arts, or its economics. But, if there is an underlying oneness of all things, it does not matter where we begin, whether with stars, or laws of supply and demand, or frogs, or Napoleon Bonaparte. One measures a circle, beginning anywhere."

—Charles Fort, *LO!*



Illustrated by *Ramon Raymond*

IT was raining. There wasn't a cloud in the sky, but it was raining. George wished it were raining cats and dogs, but it wasn't. Anything would be better than this. It was raining frogs. Little red frogs.

It was strictly a local rain. The frogs seemed to germinate from a spot somewhere above George's head, and then they spread out and came tumbling down in a cone-shaped area some fifteen feet across. The worst part of it was that George was in the center of the cone.

The frogs fell on him. They seemed to be concentrated most heavily in the center of the cone, and a good percentage of them landed on him—mostly on his head—and then bounced off to fall on the sand. George didn't like it.

He moved. He got up off the sand and ran half a dozen paces closer to the surf, but he still felt the little red frogs striking him. The spot was still directly over his head; George was not sure how high up. He was still the center of the cone.

"Myra! Hey, Myra," George

called his wife. He could see her head bobbing up and down in the waves and the powerful strokes of her arms through the water showed George that she had heard him call. But she would be angry. As soon as he shouted, the frogs stopped falling. First the downpour became a drizzle, and then there were no frogs at all. Myra would be very angry. She was all wrapped up in this new idea of hers, and she would be angry. If he hadn't yelled, more frogs would have fallen—and there's no telling what else, George thought.

The Bikini suit was not in style this year, but Myra wore it because she knew she looked good in it. George watched her run toward him and watched her shake her dark hair loose after she removed the bathing cap. Then he looked at her figure and he knew it was good, so good that he unconsciously felt the spare tire beginning to blossom out around his waist, and he blushed. That was another trouble, he always blushed. Not only that, but he was very fair-skinned. They could spend the entire summer at their seaside bungalow in this secluded area, and Myra would be bronzed like an Indian maiden. But George would turn red and then he would peel. Then he would turn red all over again and then he would peel again. And he had freckles all over.

But he stopped thinking of that now. It was a general consideration. The specific consideration bothered

him more: there was one circular area of little red frogs, fifteen feet across. Then there was a trail of little red frogs on the sand, five running steps long. And then there was another fifteen foot circle of them. Most of the frogs were still, but some of them hopped about, and soon the circles had become irregular areas.

Myra came up to him breathlessly. "Oh, George!" she cooed. "You're magnificent, really magnificent. Frogs this time. Little red frogs. You're so—so *Fortean*."

George sighed. He had a lot of friends, and many of them complained because their wives would call this or that thing Freudian. But they had sympathy: a lot of men had wives riding the Freudian merry-go-round. This was worse. To Myra things were *Fortean*. George had seen pictures of this man Fort—a nice enough looking guy with a cherubic face and a ruddy complexion, a turned up nose and big bushy eyebrows. A mild, harmless man. He had passed away; for some twenty years now he had been dead. But he could impress people. His work had impressed Myra.

He thought we're *property*, or things are teleported from one place to another, or we're being fished for, or you can tell a world by its frogs, or science is whacky and word-nutty and sophistic hooey . . . George had heard it all dozens of times. Myra had told him. Myra had told him so much that he

thought he knew Fort's philosophy by heart. A lot of ridiculous hog-wash—until the rain. How could he call it ridiculous now?

“SEE?” Myra said triumphantly. “See, George? This time it's frogs. Yesterday it was beetles, and the day before, those little birds—and everything was red.”

“Maybe they're communists,” George suggested feebly.

“Oh——”

“Well, that's as good an explanation as any.”

“No, it's not. Red is the predominant color of whatever world they come from, so they're red. Or else it could just be coincidence, but I doubt that. And I told you you were a good catalyst.”

“So I'm a good catalyst. So I can make rain. They could have used me back East a few months ago—if they wanted a rain of frogs.”

“Or beetles or birds,” Myra reminded him.

“Yeah. Beetles and birds, too.” George said this matter-of-factly, but then he felt his knees start to tremble. It was the inevitable after-effect. This was *strange*. It couldn't be happening to him. It never rained that kind of rain, even if Fort had said that it did, and even if Myra believed that Fort was right. How could it rain like that? George knew what caused rain, and by no stretch of his imagination could organic matter be the result. Any

sort of organic matter. And least of all little red frogs. He always associated frogs with mud—and the idea of little red frogs coming from the sky was too incredible to consider.

But there were the frogs on the beach.

George stroked the sand gingerly with the toes of one foot, clearing frogs away until he had room to sit down. He sat.

One of the little red frogs jumped into his lap, and he stood up again—so fast that he almost upended Myra.

“My gosh, George. You may be a good catalyst, but after that you're hopeless. That's where I come in.”

George was sorry he had decided to play along with his wife. She had given him a test, and that part he enjoyed, for all he did was shoot dice for several hours. Something about psychokinesis, Myra said. And George scored high. So high that Myra had cried: “You're positively Fortean!”

And then had come the birds, the beetles, and the frogs. All red.

“Listen,” George said. “This is the last time. This is positively the last time.”

“The last time? Last time for what?”

“The last time that I let you use me as a—a catalyst. I can't go around making it rain like that. We're in a deserted spot out here, so it isn't too bad. But what if this happened when people were

around? What then?"

"Silly, why do you think we came to this bungalow for the summer? And besides, even if people were around, why would they think *you* caused the rain? If you insist on calling it rain."

George did not like the way she said *you*. It was as if he didn't amount to much—but she always spoke to him like that. He knew he was no world-beater. He had an adequate job and he made an adequate salary, but he just didn't stack up like some of the men he knew. Or some of the men Myra knew. It always got him angry when she said *you* that way.

"What do you mean, why should they think I caused the rain? Who else can cause it, that's what I want to know? Who else can cause it?"

She smiled, and if it was a smile of triumph, George pretended not to notice it. "That's what I mean," she said, putting her arms around his neck. "You're so wonderful. Only you can cause it. Let's go into the house, George."

He grunted and he disentangled her arms. Then he took her hand and walked back across the sand to the house. And he held his head very high so he wouldn't have to look at all the little frogs on the beach.

THEY sat in the living room and the sun was setting, throwing long shadows across the room

through the big picture window. George sipped his bourbon and then he put his glass down. Two drinks on an empty stomach always put that dreamy feeling in his head. He wanted to get up and pour himself another, but it was so pleasant just sitting here and thinking of nothing that he decided against it.

"You're ready now," Myra told him. "Oh, you're really perfect now. Remember, George, just think of nothing. Don't think of a thing. Lean back, relax, and keep your mind a blank. It shouldn't be too hard."

There was that undertone of scorn again, but now George didn't feel like doing a thing about it. She was right: it wouldn't be too hard. He had had his two drinks of bourbon, and now he would just sit back and relax, like Myra told him. Besides, he had nothing to worry about. It couldn't very well rain anything inside the house.

"It's just like the poltergeists," Myra was saying, but George hardly heard her. "There are so many cases of poltergeist phenomena on record, of the little mischievous ghosts who throw dishes or stones or who cause pointless little accidents. And in each case, there's a catalyst. Usually it's a little child, and more often than not, a girl, but that isn't always the case. The important thing is, there has to be a catalyst."

"That's me," George said proudly.

"Yes, that's you. My George, the

best damn catalyst that ever lived." Myra had had her bourbon, too. "You know, science always explains away the poltergeists, but they do a pretty awful job of it. A lot of people aren't satisfied. Like Fort. Like me."

Was that a compliment? Was any of it a compliment? George thought so, but he couldn't be sure. His mind was fading into a pleasant haze of deep red, like the sunset. His eyes were opened and he was looking into the sunset, and that's why he saw the deep red. But then he noted a fact which would have startled him, only it didn't now. He was tired and he closed his eyes and still the deep red persisted, stronger than ever. It didn't startle him because he was too perfectly relaxed, and because the deep red was so soothing . . .

"Were you calling me?" the voice said.

GEORGE jumped up. He thought he had heard the voice, but he couldn't be sure. Now the sun had set completely and a heavy dusk settled over the room.

"What did you say, George? George, did you ask me anything?"

George said no, he didn't, and he got some slight satisfaction from the fact that Myra's voice sounded frightened. But then a slow chill crept up his spine and spread all over his body. Myra had heard the voice too.

"Well, were you calling me?"

Come, come, I haven't got all day, and if you weren't calling me, then I'll go home."

George gulped, and he heard Myra choke off a little whimper in her throat. Then George smiled. Hell, one of their friends from down the beach had come, and he decided to act mysterious here in the darkness. It was Andy. Andy would play practical jokes like that. Andy, the life of the party.

George strode jauntily to the light switch. "Hah, hah, had us fooled for a minute, Andy old boy. And nope, the answer is that we didn't call you. But you're always welcome here, you know that. Come on and join us in some bourbon."

His hand was on the light switch now, and he flicked it up. The room was bathed in the pale white of the fluorescent lamps, and George turned around to say hello to Andy.

He stood in the center of the room. He stood there regarding George with a half smile on his lips, a playful smile. You couldn't tell his age and there was nothing special about his features. But the half smile remained on his lips like something permanent. He was definitely not Andy.

"As you can see, I'm not this Andy person."

"No. You're not," said George.

"Now, then. Who called me? Which one of you called me?"

Myra's voice was husky. The way it sometimes was at night, after a few drinks. The way George liked

it. Only now she was scared. "I guess we both—called you."

"I wouldn't have come myself, of course, except that the message was so urgent. The call has never come out that strong before. I'm not just speaking about that from memory, of course. I'm king now but I haven't been around that long. There are records—and your call is twice as strong as any of the others. I could have sent an assistant, naturally, but I figured if the call was this strong I'd come myself."

HUMOR him, George thought. He's just a nut who came in off the beach. Only the reasoning was lousy. It stank. The door was locked and the big picture window was locked from the inside, so he could not have come in off the beach. George sighed.

"This is silly," the man was saying. "You put through such an urgent call that I come here myself. Then, when I arrive, no one will tell me what for."

"I know!" Myra cried. "You're from the world of the red frogs."

"What say?"

"I said you're from the world of the red frogs. You rained."

"Yes, I reign. I've been reigning for eleven years now, ever since my father died. Actually, though, it's open to question. While I'm the titular head, there's my wife to consider. She does a lot of reigning herself. In fact, she'll be pretty

angry when she learns I answered the call myself. Below my dignity or some such thing. She always wants me to be dignified, but that's stupid, because she's anything but dignified herself. You know, I often think it isn't any fun to be king."

"That's nice," George said.

"I mean," Myra said, "you *rained*. Rained—r-a-i-n-e-d, like the frogs."

"Oh, the frogs. Yes, they would come through first, of course. Something about making sure the co-ordination is right. A messenger could go straight through at once, but that would be dangerous, and if the co-ordination were off, he'd be a sorry mess. Frogs or bugs or sometimes birds, we send anything through to make sure. Anyway, what do you want?"

"Now that you mention it, I don't know. I guess we don't want anything. We were just experimenting," Myra explained.

"Experimenting? Will you stop kidding? With a call as strong as that, experimenting? I wasn't born yesterday, sister. Look, don't be afraid of my wife. She doesn't know where I've gone and it will be some time before she can find me, so tell me the truth."

"That's the truth. I knew we'd get something, but I didn't know what. We got you. My husband is very psychokinetic."

The man shrugged. "He hardly looks it."

"Oh, don't let George fool you.

He's potent that way."

"That's me," George said. "I'm a terrific catalyst. Ask Myra."

"He is," Myra said.

"Well, then I see it was all a mistake. Do you think he could get me back?"

"Of course he could get you back. You said yourself this was the strongest call on record. Get him back, George."

George smiled. He was beginning to like this. It all depended on him. The man with the enigmatic smile knew exactly what was going on, Myra knew to some extent what was going on, George knew almost nothing of it, but everything depended on him. "Why should I?" he demanded. "He only just came, and I'm not in any hurry to send him back."

"Please," the man said, and for the first time the smile began to fade from the corners of his mouth. "It was all a mistake, and now I'd better get back home before my wife finds out."

George felt cocky. "Well, it was your mistake, not mine, and I don't feel like sending you back yet. So I guess you'll stay right here."

"You're not serious?"

"Serious? You bet I'm serious. I don't even know where I'm supposed to send you, but I'm not going to. At least not for a while yet."

"Now, look. You've got to send me back. I'm the king."

"Send him back, George. You

don't know what you're playing around with. Send him back."

"No."

"I'm the king."

"Send him back, George."

George got up and took a long drink of the bourbon. His stomach was still empty, except for the previous bourbon, and the drink sent a warm glow through him. "No," he said.

THEY sat there in the living room, the three of them. George on the sofa, Myra on a straight-backed chair, and Arl cross-legged in the middle of the floor. The king's name was Arl, he had told them that. And then afterwards, he was silent. He was sullen, and George smiled. He was in trouble and he did not know what to do and it all depended on George.

"Listen, George," Arl was trying another angle. "Maybe if I tell you what this is all about, then will you send me back?"

"I doubt it, but maybe I will. Just a slight, improbable maybe. But I guess you're grasping at straws now. Say on."

"Better send him back, George," Myra said. "I got you into this and you don't know what it's all about, but you better do what he says."

"Do you know what it's all about?"

"No, I don't. But I know more than you, and I know that you better not horse around."

"Well, I'll listen to what he has

to say. But I better tell you now that I doubt if I'll send him back. I didn't really call him, you did. Now *you* send him back."

"If I could I would. I don't want to play around like this. It can cause trouble. If he loses his temper, George—well, just don't say I didn't warn you."

"Unfortunately," Arl admitted, "it takes me a long time to lose my temper. It never used to be that way. But Narka—that's the queen—has tamed me. A king should not be so impetuous, she told me, only she's as impetuous as hell. That's the trouble. She's all the time telling me to do things which will make me more polite, more refined, more cultured—none of which she does herself. The result is that I've become more of a figurehead, and she's the real power. It's regrettable."

"That's not an uncommon situation," George assured him. "But just what are you titular king of?"

"Then you do want to hear my story!"

"Yeah, yeah. I said I wanted to hear it. I didn't say I'd do something about sending you back, but go ahead and tell me if it will make you happy."

"Okay. I'll begin with a question. Do you know anything about the fourth dimension?"

GEORGE was silent, but Myra said: "I know all about the fourth dimension."

"You just think you do. Actually, you don't know a thing about it. A lot of fuzzy thinking here in the world of three dimensions, but you really don't know a thing about it."

"Oh," said Myra.

"You tell her, Arl, old boy," George said. "You tell her. That guy Fort didn't know what he was talking about."

"Fort? Fort? Oh—yes he did. He knew *what* he was talking about. But he didn't know how or why. This is a world of three dimensions, right?"

"Uh-huh."

"Well, let's assume you had a world of two dimensions. Of length and breadth, but no thickness. How would you get a world of three dimensions?"

George said, "Search me," but Myra went into a long explanation which George didn't understand at all.

When she finished, Arl shook his head. "Just what I thought. A lot of fuzzy thinking. Unfortunately, you're way off the beam. It's really simple. You have a world of two dimensions — length and breadth, and all you have to do to get a world of three dimensions is extend that world in a new direction—perpendicular to the first two. That direction is up or down, as the case may be. Either way, it's a direction at right angles to the first two, and the result is a world of three dimensions, this world."

George said he understood. "But

that doesn't mean I'm going to send you back," he added.

Arl was all wrapped up in his explanation, and he ignored the remark. "Now, then. The same situation applies. The same relation exists between a world of three dimensions and one of four. You merely extend the three dimensions out in a direction at right angles to them—a direction which is perpendicular to length, breadth and thickness, and the result is a world of four dimensions. That's my world."

George was feeling chipper. "Well, a pat on the backside for you," he said. "Now I suppose you want me to send you back?"

ARL waved his hand. "No. I'm not finished. Let's go a step further. If a world of two dimensions existed—a whole world spread out perfectly flat on this table, with no dimension other than length or breadth, a flat world—if that world existed, do you realize all the power you, as a three dimensional being, would have over it?"

George said that he didn't.

"Well, suppose something was enclosed in a square on that table. Just four lines, a square. That would be the equivalent of a cube in this world—say, of a safe. Say there was something in that square that the people of the flat world wanted to get out. But the square was locked. It was just four lines, forming an enclosed space, but because there was no such thing as up or

down in that world, they couldn't get over those lines and get out what they were looking for. It was utterly inaccessible.

"Now, then. You're a three dimensional creature. All you'd have to do is reach down, pick the item up, transport it through the third dimension, and put it down again outside the square. You would have done the impossible. You would have taken something out of an utterly inaccessible place and put it elsewhere. Mysteriously.

"So, just change the situation a bit. A four dimensional being would have the same power over this three dimensional world. He could make things appear and disappear easily, simply by transporting them through the fourth dimension. And that, my friend, explains everything strange and unreal and impossible which this man Fort reported. It was simply the intervention of a four dimensional being. One of my subjects. When the call comes through, your people are not even aware that they give it. But when it does come through, we answer. And here the call was the strongest on record. I'm the king and I came through myself. But we can't come through and we can't go back without the call. That's you, George, and it was all a mistake. Now will you send me back?"

George smiled. He enjoyed this situation. He thoroughly enjoyed it, and he watched Myra's face turn

white as he said one word:

"No."

"BE reasonable, George. If you don't send me back, there'll be trouble. I won't tell you what kind of trouble, but don't say you were not warned in advance."

"Well, maybe you ought to tell me. What kind of trouble?"

"Narka trouble," Arl said, and George could see that the man's hands were trembling. "When my wife finds out, she'll be mad. When Narka's mad, she's very mad. And not just at me—she'll be on the warpath with you, too. She'll come here and——"

"How can she come here, without your call?"

"Oh, she'll find a way. Getting back is the difficult part. Please, George."

"No. No, I don't think so. Myra started all this, not me. I told her to stop but she didn't want to. Now I think I'll let the two of you stew in your own juice for a while. You can't blame me. In a sense, I'm just an innocent bystander who happens to be a top-flight catalyst. But this could be amusing. I'll just let things stand."

Arl turned to Myra. "Myra, do you want me to go back?"

"Yes. Yes, I suppose so. You know more about this than we do, but my husband can be so obstinate——"

"I'm not being obstinate. This was all your idea, and now I want

to see what happens."

Arl said, "There'll be quite a mess. Not only will Narka be angry with us, but the call will be coming through from all over, and none of our subjects can go over without my permission. You know what that means?"

George asked him what.

"That means that there'll be a lot of situations where poltergeists should have appeared, sort of like the old *deus ex machina* of your early literature, only they won't. That, my friend, will cause a mess."

George laughed. "I don't know. I've known a lot of people to get along well enough without your poltergeists. Everyone I've ever known, in fact. All my life."

Myra shrugged helplessly. "Honest, Arl, I'm sorry. It's just that George is so ordinary."

George scowled. He had been on the verge of relenting. He definitely had been on the verge of relenting. But that did it. He wouldn't relent now.

"Can't you make him?" Myra demanded.

"No. That's the difficulty. I can't. The caller must either be unaware or willing, and your husband is neither. There isn't a thing I can do about it until he changes. Ordinarily, I could do many things so that he'd see it our way—but that would necessitate popping in and out of the fourth dimension, and without George's help, I can't do that. It all rests with George."

"Well, maybe we can *make* him cooperate."

"How do you mean, make him?"

"I mean physically. There are two of us and one of him and maybe we can make him."

MYRA advanced, and Arl was a little slower, but presently he got the idea, and he too came toward George. "Stay back," George warned. "Keep away from me or I'll never change my mind, and then you'll be stuck here forever."

"He's right," Arl said.

"No, he's not. We can make him. We can force him to change his mind."

Myra was so close now that George could reach out and touch her. He backed up a step. Myra was young and strong and she was athletic. Every curve of her lithe body was deceptively strong and beautiful at the same time, and George was developing that spare tire around his middle. It was small but it was there and George knew he was anything but athletic. He did not want to fight with Myra, especially when Arl, who was a head taller than George, would be helping her. It definitely was unwise.

Myra's first attack was merely speculative. She pushed George to see if he would fight back. He backed up two or three steps, and then he was sitting on the sofa.

Arl was much less speculative. He reached down and yanked George

to his feet. Then he began to shake George.

"Hey, stop it!" George's voice sounded like a rattle.

"We won't stop until you change your mind," Myra told him, and to show that she was serious, she poked her fist in George's stomach, hard. He felt the air *woosh* out of his lungs, and then he was sitting on the sofa again. At another time he might have thought this was getting monotonous, but he didn't think so now. When Arl picked him up again, he tried to cringe away, but Arl held him tight.

He butted his head at Arl, and the king stumbled back and away from him, losing his grip on George's shoulders. George didn't back up; he stalked after the king, and when he reached him he balled his right fist and struck out with it.

THE contact was a bit painful, but George was happy with the result. Arl stumbled and fell. He was all stretched out on the floor, and he didn't try to get up.

"I did that," George said.

"You stinker. My own husband, and what a stinker you turned out to be."

"Now, my dear——" George began, sure of himself. But the words caught in his throat. Myra threw herself at him, bodily, and George sat down. He was sitting on the floor and then he was down flat and Myra was sitting on his chest, and those two hammers hitting his

face were her fists. They hurt.

Myra and George had had fights before. George was not a violent man, he knew that. He always wanted to settle things with words, and whenever Myra lost her temper he would make it a point not to be around because he thought she could beat him, and if she did that once, there'd be no living with her. But now he couldn't make it a point not to be around because Myra was sitting on his chest and he couldn't get up.

George heaved up and over, and he felt Myra roll off him. Then he sat up and he pulled Myra across his knees. She struggled, but he held her down with one hand and with the other he did the only thing that a husband should do in a case like this. He spanked her. At first she was volubly indignant, but then she began to whimper, and George didn't stop until she was howling. He pushed her away and stood up, smoothing the crease in his trousers. Arl's head was propped up on one elbow now, and Arl had a dark discoloration around one of his eyes, but the look he gave George was one of pure admiration.

"I wish I had the nerve to do that to Narka," he sighed. "That's what she needs. I can see it now. That's what she needs."

George strode around the room jauntily. "You can if you want to, Arl. Just because you're a king doesn't mean that you can't." Then

he turned to Myra. She was just getting up, blowing her nose in a dainty little handkerchief.

At first George couldn't quite fathom the look she gave him. She was angry, of course. But she was something more than angry. "George," she said, and his name came out in a long sigh, and he knew that for the first time he had made a conquest of his wife.

"I'll be in our city apartment," he told her. "If you want me, that's where I'll be. And I guess you both realize my mind is made up. Arl will remain here until I'm good and ready to send him back. Good night."

George went outside, got into the car, drove it down the dirt road to the highway, and headed for the city.

He was whistling.

GEORGE sat on his stool at the bar and ordered a straight bourbon. He had changed his mind about going to his apartment immediately. Instead, he had gone to this bar. He had something to celebrate. Something told him that this business was far from finished yet, but he didn't care. It was incredibly fantastic, but he relished the prospect of more dealings with King Arl, and with Myra, too.

He lifted the tumbler of bourbon to his lips and sipped it. But then he set the glass down on the bar, hard, and it toppled over. Something had plunked on his head.

"Hey," the bartender roared. "That's good bourbon. You just spilled it all over. Now you'll say it's my fault and you'll want another."

"No," George said absently. "Forget it."

Something plunked on his head again. He put his hand up and plucked at his hair. The thing was wet and slimy. It was a little red frog. George held it out in front of him and then he placed it down on the bar.

"Now, look," the bartender was getting angry. "You think you're a wise guy or something? Who ast you to bring them little animals in here? This is a respectable joint, and I got my customers to think of."

George said he was sorry. Plunk! Another frog came down on his head. He felt it hop off, and then he saw it alight on the bartender's shoulder.

"Yoiks! Cut it out, bud! I'm warning you, cut it out." He was a little fat man with a bald head and his face was all red, almost like the frogs. "You stop that, bud. I don't wanna play games with you."

George said he was sorry again and he watched the bartender brush at the frog with one hand. It landed on the bar then it jumped twice and landed on the hand of a customer two stools down from George.

It was a lady but she let out a very unladylike howl and stalked

out of the bar.

"She went out without paying her bill!" the bartender told George. "So you owe me for it. Three-fifty."

George wondered about this. Arl said he was helpless without George's call, so this couldn't be Arl's work. Someone wanted to come through from the four dimensional world, and that someone had been receiving the call from George. He had been sipping his bourbon, minding his own business, yet he had given the call. He had been unaware of it but he had been giving it, and that could be embarrassing. As it was now.

"Three-fifty," the bartender said. "Three-fifty or I'm gonna force myself to call a cop."

George handed over the money and left hurriedly.

HE sat near the front of the trolley car, hoping that no more frogs would fall. He could have walked home, but that would have taken much longer, and there might be more frogs. This way, he was taking a chance that they wouldn't fall in the trolley car, and, if they did, he'd ignore them.

Three more stops and George would be home. He closed his eyes and sighed contentedly. He would be safe then. He didn't want any more frogs falling in public. Not while he was around.

Something soft but firm pressed his lap, and George opened his eyes. He yowled. He couldn't help it. It

was only a little yowl, but several people looked at him. And then they began to yowl, especially one buxom middle-aged lady. "It's indecent," she cried. "Utterly, thoroughly and obnoxiously indecent. Somebody call a policeman at the next corner."

The driver looked in the mirror, astonished, and nodded. George blinked his eyes, but when he opened them she was still there. She sat in his lap and she was very beautiful. She didn't have a stitch of clothing on.

"Please," George pleaded. "Go away! Please go away. Go away and put some clothing on and then come back if you want, but not like this!"

"You sent for me. You were in such a hurry you didn't even give me a chance to dress. Now you want to send me back. What's the matter, don't you like me?"

George felt the flush spread over his face. "Please," he said again. "Go away. Everyone's staring at us."

"Okay," she pouted. "Okay. I'll go away. Just put that call out again and I'll be able to do it." Her hair was long and billowing, the color of copper, and it tickled George's face. "But I'll be back. Don't you worry. I'll be back. And—if you see Arl—tell him I'm looking for him. Just wait till I get my hands on him, you just wait—"

George blinked. The lovely creature was gone.

He had not been aware of the fact that the trolley had stopped. Now a policeman stood in the aisle next to him.

"How'd you do it, pal? Come on, how'd you do it? I saw the girl and she was naked as Lady Godiva. Just try to explain your way out of this one . . ."

"It was utterly indecent," the buxom woman said. "I was going to visit my little grandchildren, but how can I after that? How can I?"

"That," George told her acidly, "is your problem."

"A wise guy, too, eh?" The officer was belligerent.

"It's not too difficult to explain, officer. Something like hypnotism. Something very much like it. It's called psychokinesis, I think."

"Psychokinesis, psychoshminesis. You just come on down with me and explain it to the sergeant."

George went with him and he explained it to the sergeant, but it did no good. The sergeant listened and then his face got very red. He had a thick neck and his uniform collar was too tight for it, and his neck got all red, too. He told George he could cool off his mental powers in jail overnight and pay a twenty-five dollar fine.

. . . They gave George breakfast early in the morning. It wasn't very good, but he was hungry and he ate all of it. Then he hurried out of his cell and left the stationhouse. The whole cell was filled with little red frogs, and he could hear the

patrolmen bellowing as he left, but he hurried down the stairs and flagged a taxi.

HE tried to relax in the apartment, but it was no good. He thought of the girl who had materialized in his lap, and he knew she was Narka. He wished she would come back because he wanted to see what would happen when she met Arl. And there were other reasons, too. He wondered if she would be wearing clothing. And the next thought, of course, was a logical one: what kind of clothing would a fourth dimensional queen wear?

At ten the doorbell rang.

He opened the door, and Myra came in. Behind her was Arl, and George had never seen anyone so frightened as Arl looked.

"What the hell is wrong with you?" George demanded.

"Nothing — yet. I just read in the newspaper about you and the naked girl in your lap — mass hypnotism, the report said. But we both know it wasn't. It was Narka. Where is she?"

George said not to worry because she had gone back to the world of the red frogs, and then Myra grabbed his shoulder and spun him around sharply. She often did that when she was angry and wanted his attention, and George had never done anything about it. He didn't do anything this time, either. He just looked at her, and she removed

her hand from his shoulder. Her face was very white when she spoke.

"What was she doing in your lap, George?"

"What do you think she was doing?"

"That's what I'm asking you. Please, George. I'm sorry about yesterday. I don't know what got into me. I never should have tried to hit you. A wife has no business trying to hit her husband."

"Nuts," George said. "You just thought you could get away with it, that's all. Now that you know you can't, you're trying to say you're sorry. Nuts."

Then he looked at Arl fondly. Arl was to thank for all this. If it hadn't been for Arl, he would still be henpecked. Myra didn't look like the type that would henpeck her husband, but George smiled ruefully at this thought. She was the type, and she did it every chance she got. Only she wouldn't do it anymore. Arl had been *that* catalyst. "Arl," George said, "I could love you like a brother."

"What about my wife?" Arl still wanted to know. "Where's my wife?"

"I told you, she went back. For some clothing, I think."

"Then she was sitting in your lap with no clothing on!" Myra said indignantly.

"Yes, she was."

"What was she doing in your lap with no clothing on?"

"You asked me that once."

"Please, George. What!"

"She was sitting," George said. He winked at Arl, but Arl only shuddered. Now *there* is one hen-pecked king, George thought.

Then he stood up expectantly. A frog had plunked down on his head.

THE look of expectancy on George's face faded. He waited, but there was nothing of Narka. No more frogs fell.

"That was tentative," Arl said.

"What do you mean, tentative?"

"I mean a tentative breakthrough into this dimension. Someone changed his mind. But I shouldn't say someone and I shouldn't say his. It was Narka." He was trembling.

"Get a hold on yourself, Arl. This is not the end of the world."

"You don't know Narka."

"You've just got to know how to handle women, that's all. Let them think they have the upper hand, and you're through. Just show them who's boss, that's all."

Myra seemed on the verge of snorting. But instead she smiled brightly at Arl. George is certainly right."

"Of course I'm right. Buck up, Arl."

"Well, it's easy to say. But I can't."

George snorted himself and went for the bourbon bottle. He had never taken a drink before mid-afternoon in his life, but now he figured a lot of changes had to be

made. Necessary changes.

"I have a terrific idea," Arl said.

George didn't think it would be terrific, but he said: "What's that?"

"Well, you have to put the call through, you know. So, why don't you just — don't?"

"Eh? Say that again."

"Don't put the call through. Don't put it through and Narka won't be able to come."

Myra nodded her head vigorously. "That sounds like a fine idea," she said.

George said, "It stinks. It so happens I want to see Narka again."

"After you see her, you'll be sorry. I'm not saying you can't handle women, George. Don't misunderstand me. Myra is a spitfire a lot like the Queen, but you certainly can handle Myra. I don't mean that."

George was pleased. "Of course. What do you mean?"

"Well, Narka is — "

HE stopped talking. Something fell to the floor at George's feet, and he stopped to pick it up. He held it in his palm — a necklace of flawless pearls, worth a small fortune. He held it in his hand, not knowing what to do with it.

"That's what I mean," Arl said.

"Oh, it's beautiful," Myra cooed. "Is it for me, George? Where did you get it?" Then she pouted. "It's not for — that Narka, is it? It's for me, isn't it, George?"

"That's what I mean," Arl said

again. "Narka cannot resist the impulse to steal everything she likes in this dimension. She simply takes what she likes, and I know several cases in which one of your three dimensional men went to jail for a series of robberies committed by the Queen."

"That's ridiculous," George said. "How can she steal so many things?"

Arl shook his head. "You're forgetting the relationship between the three and four dimensional worlds again. Remember, it's like you and that square on the table. How would you get a necklace out of that square without crossing any of its lines?"

"Why — why, I'd simply lift the necklace up and then put it down on the other side of one of the lines."

"Exactly. That's what Narka's doing. She sees what she likes, lifts it up out of your three dimensional existence, momentarily carries it through the fourth dimension, and puts it down here. When she has all she wants, she'll come for her booty, then I'm afraid she'll take me home with her. Only she'll be very mad. She won't speak to me for a week — she'll do other things, bad things. I wish you had never called me, George."

Something went *plop*, and George saw a small velvet cushion on the floor. Like a pin cushion. And pinned to it were a number of jeweled brooches. George did not

know too much about jewelry, but he didn't have to be an expert to know that these were valuable pieces. Even if he didn't know it himself, he could tell by the way Myra sighed. Myra would not sigh at imitations.

GEORGE laughed. "Now I know how Ali Baba must have felt after he said 'Open, Sesame.'"

Myra nodded, but she hardly heard him. She walked from one treasure to the next, as each new one plunked down on the floor or the chairs or the tables. She was running, soon, with excited little gasps, feeling the jewels with her hands, caressing them, holding them to her throat and letting them caress her, raising them to the window so she could see the sun shine on them.

Arl said wearily, "I have seen this many times before. It's always the same the first time. Narka collects the treasure and someone here in this three dimensional world sees the treasure come in. The result is always the same. It's quite a sight the first time. Narka has sufficient jewelry here to buy this city."

"Well, it doesn't affect me that way," said George. But he only said it — he didn't feel it at all. This interdimensional travel was the answer to all his dreams. You saw something you wanted, you lifted it out into the fourth dimension, you came back with it to the world

of three dimensions — and that's all there was to it.

"Don't tell me you're not thinking the same thing they all have thought in the past," Arl said. "I know you are. Everyone does. But I warn you, George: that way lies madness."

He could be a king, George thought. Not a titular king like Arl, but the real thing — a king in the true sense of the word, the old sense of the word. He'd want something — anything — and it would be his. Just like that.

"No more treasure," Myra said. "It isn't raining anymore."

George looked. The room was abrim with precious stones, and apparently Narka had enough for this trip. She had stolen a king's ransom — more than that. And there was that word again: with this power, George could be a king.

"No," he said.

"What's that?"

"Um, nothing, Arl. Nothing. Just thinking out loud." He did not want to be a king, not that way. Human values were too high, and he had moved on the straight and narrow path too long. Not that there was anything wrong with the straight and narrow path. Suddenly he liked it — it was very important to him, and although he remembered Narka as he had seen her, naked and beautiful, he thought of her now only as a cheap thief. The wild urge had gone—this was not the way to kingdom.

ABRUPTLY, Narka was there. One moment there were only the three of them and the treasure. The next, she stood next to George, and when she materialized, she was leaning on George's arm.

"I'm back," she said.

She wore a tunic, only it was more translucent than a tunic had a right to be. But George didn't mind. He didn't mind in the least. It was unfortunate, though, that he was so interested in the effects Narka's arrival would have on Arl. He looked at the woman only for a moment, and then he turned his eyes to her husband.

Arl was trembling. He looked ordinary compared with Narka. He wore what could have passed for a white linen suit, and it fit well. With that enigmatic smile, he could have been a good looking man, but right now he was trembling, and his mouth hung open.

"Narka — " he said.

"Don't you 'Narka' me. You know I didn't want you to come, but you came anyway. Just wait till I can get you home alone. Wait till I get you — "

"Wait is right," said George. He gestured to the jewelry about the room. "Right now there's another matter, a more important matter. What about your, ah, trophies?"

"What about them?" She gave George's arm a little squeeze, and George liked the feeling. But he saw Myra wince. "What about them? Why, nothing. I'll just

take them home with me, that's all. I have a whole section of the palace filled with them."

"No you won't," George said.

"Don't be silly. Who's going to stop me?"

"I am."

She leaned more heavily on George's arm, and she looked up at him with her big round eyes. "No you're not."

"No? How are you going to get back unless I help you?"

"You'll help me. I'll leave some of these jewels here with you. Name any three items and they're yours."

Myra suggested, "That brooch, and that —"

"Shut up," said George.

Narka frowned. "Are you going to let him talk to you like that?"

Myra looked at George. "Y-yes," she said. "But please stop holding on to his arm like that. If George says you take all those things back where they belong, then you'd better do it. I — I think George knows best."

"He does," Arl assured his wife.

"You shut up, Arl. I'll attend to you later." Narka made no move to release George's arm. She leaned closer to him and stood on her tip-toes. Then she kissed him. George liked it — he liked it a lot. This Narka was quite a girl, even if she was a crook.

"Now, George," she said, "send us back."

"No." George pulled his arm away, and Narka was leaning over

so far that she almost fell.

"Hah," Myra said.

Narka smiled. "Arl," she said, "pick up the jewelry, and we'll get started."

"How can we get started if George won't send us back?"

"Just be quiet and pick up the jewelry."

OBEDIENTLY, Arl went about the room, gathering the treasures in his arms. It took a few minutes, and George stood by patiently, smiling. Finally, arms full, Arl nodded to his wife. "That's all, dear."

Narka looked at George. "Now, send us back."

George shrugged. "I said no, and I wasn't kidding. You take all that jewelry back where it belongs, and I'll send you back. Not before."

For a long moment, Narka looked at him. "You know," she said, "I think I will get you in trouble. Yes, I think I will. You definitely deserve it."

The apartment was on the fourth floor, near the corner. Narka strode to the window and opened it. Behind her, George looked out. Down on the corner directing traffic was a cop.

"He's a law officer, isn't he?" Narka demanded.

George nodded, and before he could stop her, Narka took two brooches and a necklace from the pile in Arl's arms, called to the

policeman, and, when she had caught his attention, threw the jewelry down to him.

"Oh, no . . ." Myra moaned.

George shut the window. In a few minutes the policeman would be in the room. He'd see a room full of jewelry, and he'd receive reports of all the thefts in the past few minutes, the incredible number of thefts in so short a space of time, and though he would not know how it was done, he would blame George. He would definitely blame George.

A few minutes . . .

"You shouldn't have done that," George said.

Narka stuck her tongue out at him. It was very unladylike, even less queen-like. "No?"

"No." George reached out and pulled Narka to him. He saw the look of triumph on her face.

"George," she said coyly.

Holding her arm and retreating to a big chair, George sat down. Because he was still holding her, Narka sat on his lap, and from there it wasn't hard for him to turn her over. He did and then she got the idea, but it was too late. She struggled and she writhed but she couldn't do a thing about it.

"What you need," George told her, "is a good three-dimensional man to take care of you."

"Let me up or I'll — I'll beat you."

"You'll *what*?"

"I'll beat you. Ask Arl, he's a

man, but I beat him. When I get him home, I will beat him."

GEORGE lifted his hand, but Arl caught it in mid-air. "Wait, George. I think I am learning." Arl was still trembling, but he attempted a smile. "I think I am learning."

George smiled and got up. Arl sat on the chair next to his wife. Men could be henpecked just so long, George thought — even in the fourth dimension, it couldn't go on forever.

But Arl's smile was uncertain, he was trying to bolster his courage with it, and Narka stared grimly, certainly. Suddenly, she and Arl were locked together, struggling. George breathed hard. The cop would be here in another minute or two, but he had to let Arl fight his own battle. A king could not be a king in name only, and he had tried to show Arl the way.

Narka wrestled Arl to the floor and held him there, next to the remainder of the jewelry. Arl began to moan, and then Narka laughed triumphantly up at George. "There's one thing you didn't know, third dimensional man. One thing you couldn't know. In the fourth dimension, the female is superior physically."

Arl moaned.

George didn't know a thing about fourth dimensional culture. He had never thought of this possibility, but now Narka held her husband firm-

ly, and she began to do something to his arm.

"Give up?" she said.

Arl looked up at George. "I tried."

"Nuts," said George. "You may think the female is stronger in the fourth dimension, but you're in the third dimension now. If Arl —"

Arl needed that encouragement. He smiled now, and this time his smile was the grim certain one. "Why not?" he said. "Something there — different dimension, different laws apply, and if I can do it once, do it now —"

He writhed fiercely in Narka's grip, and George watched. Someone was knocking at the door. "Open up. Hey, open up in there! I saw you at the window, so I know you're there. What the hell did you throw them pins out for? Open up!"

The knocking became more urgent.

It was important, it was vital. But George hardly heard it. Here at his feet he saw a culture changing. Arl forced his wife slowly up and back, and then Arl was in control. He sat on the floor and Narka was draped across his lap and he was spanking her.

"Remarkable," Myra said.

Narka began to cry. With each downward stroke of Arl's hand, she cried. And by the look on the king's face, George could tell that Arl was having the time of his life.

He didn't want to stop. He was

enjoying himself too much, after all these years, and he was in no mood to stop. But George pulled him away. "She's had enough."

Arl was cocky. "Will you be a good girl now, Narka?"

The queen sighed and nodded. She had a look of disbelief on her face, but she walked off into the corner of the room. She looked as if she wanted to sit down, but then she thought better of it, and she stood there, sulking.

"Quick," George said. He helped Arl gather up the jewels, and even Myra helped, and then Narka was telling Arl, listlessly, where she had gotten them. Arl winked at George, his arms loaded with the treasures, and then he disappeared.

GEORGE opened the door. The cop stalked in, belligerently. "Now, what's going on? What's going on in here, that's what I wanna know!"

George frowned. "What do you mean, officer?"

"I mean, these jewels." He held out his hand, showing the three expensive items he had caught. "Better explain this good, bud."

There was only one thing to do, George thought. "Explain it? Explain what? What jewels are you talking about, officer?"

"These damn jewels in my hand, that's what!" The cop held his hand out, showing the two brooches and the necklace.

"I don't see any jewels," said

George. "Myra, do you see any jewels?"

"Huh? Why, of course — not. I don't see anything."

"Narka?"

The queen looked sullen, but she shook her head. "No."

George looked at the policeman. "Tch, tch," he said, shaking his head.

"What do you mean, no jewels? You hinting I'm nuts?"

"Maybe just a few drinks too many," George suggested, looking at the jewelry.

"Why, listen — " But the policeman scratched his head.

He didn't see Arl come up behind him. Arl reached out and grabbed the two brooches, the necklace — and then disappeared.

The policeman looked at his hand. For a long time he stared at it. His jaw went slack.

"Jeez — " he said.

"We'll forget it," George told him. "We'll forget all about it. Now just go home and behave your-

self — and no drinking on duty, eh officer?"

"Yeah. Yeah, sure." The cop went out the door, still staring at his hand.

In a moment, Arl was back. Narka looked at him, and George had seen that look in Myra's eyes yesterday at their bungalow. Arl took his wife's arm in a firm grip. "We're going home," he said.

She looked dubious, but then she rubbed her posterior, and she smiled ruefully. "Yes, m'lord." Arl shook hands with George, waved to Myra — and then they disappeared.

George smiled. "Let that be a lesson to you, dear."

Myra kissed him, shyly. They had been married for six years, but it was a shy kiss.

"I don't need any lesson, George."

"No more Fort? No more psychokinesis?"

"No more, if you say so, George."

"I say so."

"Yes, sir," said Myra. "Yes, sir."

THE END

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