

ADAM LINK ROBOT

Eando Binder



"I, ROBOT"

Adam Link, the robot creation of Dr. Link, was as human as environment could make him. The power of thought was his, but when he tried to take his place in the world of men . . . the amazing confession of a mechanical man

CHAPTER I

My Creation

MUCH of what has occurred puzzles me. But I think I am beginning to understand now. You call me a monster, but you are wrong. Utterly wrong!

I will try to prove it to you, in writing. I hope I have time to finish—

I will begin at the beginning. I was born, or created, six months ago, on November 3 of last year. I am a true robot. So many of you seem to have doubts. I am made of wires and wheels, not flesh and blood.

My first recollection of consciousness was a feeling of being chained, and I was. For three days before that, I had been seeing and hearing, but all in a jumble. Now, I had the urge to arise and peer more closely at the strange, moving form that I had seen so many times before me, making sounds.

The moving form was Dr. Link, my creator. He was the only thing that moved, of all the objects within my sight. He and one other object—his dog Terry. Therefore these two objects held my interest more. I hadn't yet learned to associate movement with life.

But on this fourth day, I wanted to



by Eando Binder



"I raised the floorboards, and in a short time had substituted batteries."

approach the two moving shapes and make noises at them. Particularly at the smaller one. His noises were challenging, stirring. They made me want to rise and quiet them. But I was chained. I was held down by them so that, in my blank state of mind, I wouldn't wander off and bring myself to an untimely end, or harm someone unknowingly.

These things, of course, Dr. Link explained to me later, when I could dissociate my thoughts and understand. I was just like a baby for those three days—a human baby. I am not as other so-called robots were—mere automatized machines designed to obey certain commands or arranged stimuli.

No, I was equipped with a pseudo-brain that could receive *all* stimuli that human brains could. And with possibilities of eventually learning to rationalize for itself.

But for three days Dr. Link was very anxious about my brain. I was like a human baby and yet I was also like a sensitive, but unorganized, machine, subject to the whim of mechanical chance. My eyes turned when a bit of paper fluttered to the floor. But photoelectric cells had been made before capable of doing the same. My mechanical ears turned to best receive sounds from a certain direction, but any scientist could duplicate that trick with sonic-relays.

The question was—did my brain, to which the eyes and ears were connected, hold on to these various impressions for future use? Did I have, in short—*memory*?

THREE days I was like a newborn baby. And Dr. Link was like a worried father, wondering if his child had been born a hopeless idiot. But on the fourth day, he feared I was a wild animal. I began to make rasping

sounds with my vocal apparatus, in answer to the sharp little noises the dog Terry made. I shook my swivel head at the same time, and strained against my bonds.

For a while, as Dr. Link told me, he was frightened of me. I seemed like nothing so much as an enraged jungle creature, ready to go berserk. He had more than half a mind to destroy me on the spot.

But one thing changed his mind and saved me.

The little animal, Terry, barking angrily, rushed forward suddenly. It probably wanted to bite me. Dr. Link tried to call it back, but too late. Finding my smooth metal legs adamant, the dog leaped with foolish bravery in my lap, to come at my throat. One of my hands grasped it by the middle, held it up. My metal fingers squeezed too hard and the dog gave out a pained squeal.

Instantaneously, my hand opened to let the creature escape! Instantaneously. My brain had interpreted the sound for what it was. A long chain of memory-association had worked. Three days before, when I had first been brought to life, Dr. Link had stepped on Terry's foot accidentally. The dog had squealed its pain. I had seen Dr. Link, at risk of losing his balance, instantly jerk up his foot. Terry had stopped squealing.

Terry squealed when my hand tightened. He would stop when I untightened. Memory-association. The thing psychologists call reflexive reaction. A sign of a living brain.

Dr. Link tells me he let out a cry of pure triumph. He knew at a stroke I had memory. He knew I was not a wanton monster. He knew I had a thinking organ, and a first-class one. Why? Because I had reacted *instantaneously*. You will realize what that means later.

I LEARNED to walk in three hours.

Dr. Link was still taking somewhat of a chance, unbinding my chains. He had no assurance that I would not just blunder away like a witless machine. But he knew he had to teach me to walk before I could learn to talk. The same as he knew he must bring my brain alive fully connected to the appendages and pseudo-organs it was later to use.

If he had simply disconnected my legs and arms for those first three days, my awakening brain would never have been able to use them when connected later. Do you think, if you were suddenly endowed with a third arm, that you could ever use it? Why does it take a cured paralytic so long to regain the use of his natural limbs? Mental blind spots in the brain. Dr. Link had all those strange psychological twists figured out.

Walk first. Talk next. That is the tried-and-true rule used among humans since the dawn of their species. Human babies learn best and fastest that way. And I was a human baby in mind, if not body.

Dr. Link held his breath when I first essayed to rise. I did, slowly, swaying on my metal legs. Up in my head, I had a three-directional spirit-level electrically contacting my brain. It told me automatically what was horizontal, vertical and oblique. My first tentative step, however, wasn't a success. My knee-joints flexed in reverse order. I clattered to my knees, which fortunately were knobbed with thick protective plates so that the more delicate swiveling mechanisms behind weren't harmed.

Dr. Link says I looked up at him like a startled child might. Then I promptly began walking along on my knees, finding this easy. Children would do this more only that it hurts

them. I know no hurt.

After I had roved up and down the aisles of his workshop for an hour, nicking up his furniture terribly, walking on my knees seemed completely natural. Dr. Link was in a quandary how to get me up to my full height. He tried grasping my arm and pulling me up, but my 300 pounds of weight were too much for him.

My own rapidly increasing curiosity solved the problem. Like a child discovering the thrill of added height with stilts, my next attempt to rise to my full height pleased me. I tried staying up. I finally mastered the technique of alternate use of limbs and shift of weight forward.

In a couple of hours Dr. Link was leading me up and down the gravel walk around his laboratory. On my legs, it was quite easy for him to pull me along and thus guide me. Little Terry gamboled along at our heels, barking joyfully. The dog had accepted me as a friend.

I was by this time quite docile to Dr. Link's guidance. My impressionable mind had quietly accepted him as a necessary rein and check. I did, he told me later, make tentative movements in odd directions off the path, motivated by vague stimuli, but his firm arm pulling me back served instantly to keep me in line. He paraded up and down with me as one might with an irresponsible oaf.

I would have kept on walking tirelessly for hours, but Dr. Link's burden of years quickly fatigued him and he led me inside. When he had safely gotten me seated in my metal chair, he clicked the switch on my chest that broke the electric current giving me life. And for the fourth time I knew that dreamless non-being which corresponded to my creator's periods of sleep.

CHAPTER II

My Education

IN three days I learned to talk reasonably well.

I give Dr. Link as much credit as myself. In those three days he pointed out the names of all objects in the laboratory and around. This fund of two hundred or so nouns he supplemented with as many verbs of action as he could demonstrate. Once heard and learned, a word never again was forgotten or obscured to me. Instantaneous comprehension. Photographic memory. Those things I had.

It is difficult to explain. Machinery is precise, unvarying. I am a machine. Electrons perform their tasks instantaneously. Electrons motivate my metallic brain.

Thus, with the intelligence of a child of five at the end of those three days, Dr. Link taught me to read. My photo-electric eyes instantly grasped the connection between speech and letter, as my mentor pointed them out. Thought-association filled in the gaps of understanding. I perceived without delay that the word "lion," for instance, pronounced in its peculiar way, represented a live animal crudely pictured in the book. I have never seen a lion. But I would know one the instant I did.

From primers and first-readers I graduated in less than a week to adult books. Dr. Link laid out an extensive reading course for me, in his large library. It included fiction as well as factual matter. Into my receptive, retentive brain began to be poured a fund of information and knowledge never before equalled in that short period of time.

There are other things to consider besides my "birth" and "education." First of all the housekeeper. She came in once a week to clean up the house

for Dr. Link. He was a recluse, lived by himself, cooked for himself. Retired on an annuity from an invention years before.

The housekeeper had seen me in the process of construction in the past years, but only as an inanimate caricature of a human body. Dr. Link should have known better. When the first Saturday of my life came around, he forgot it was the day she came. He was absorbedly pointing out to me that "to run" meant to go faster than "to walk."

"Demonstrate," Dr. Link asked as I claimed understanding.

Obediently, I took a few slow steps before him. "Walking," I said. Then I retreated a ways and lumbered forward again, running for a few steps. The stone floor clattered under my metallic feet.

"Was—that—right?" I asked in my rather stentorian voice.

At that moment a terrified shriek sounded from the doorway. The housekeeper came up just in time to see me perform.

She screamed, making more noise than even I. "It's the Devil himself! Run, Dr. Link—run! Police—help—"

She fainted dead away. He revived her and talked soothingly to her, trying to explain what I was, but he had to get a new housekeeper. After this he contrived to remember when Saturday came and on that day kept me hidden in a storeroom reading books.

A trivial incident in itself, perhaps, but very significant, as you who will read this will agree.

TWO months after my awakening to life, Dr. Link one day spoke to me in a fashion other than as teacher to pupil; spoke to me as man to—man.

"You are the result of twenty years of effort," he said, "and my success amazes even me. You are little short of

being a human in mind. You are a monster, a creation, but you are **basically human**. You have **no** heredity. Your environment is molding you. You are **the** proof that mind is an electrical phenomenon, molded by environment. In human beings, their bodies—called heredity—are environment. But out of you I will make a mental wonder!"

His eyes seemed to burn with a strange fire, but this softened as he went on.

"I knew I had something unprecedented and vital twenty years ago when I perfected an iridium-sponge sensitive to the impact of a single electron. It was the sensitivity of thought! Mental currents in the human brain are of this micro-magnitude. I had the means now of duplicating mind-currents in an artificial medium. From that day to this I worked on the problem.

"It was not long ago that I completed your 'brain'—an intricate complex of iridium-sponge cells. Before I brought it to life, I had your body built by skilled artisans. I wanted you to begin life equipped to live and move in it as nearly in the human way as possible. How eagerly I awaited your debut into the world!"

His eyes shone.

"You surpassed my expectations. You are not merely a thinking robot. A metal man. You are—life! A new kind of life. You can be trained to think, to reason, to perform. In the future, your kind can be of inestimable aid to man and his civilization. You are the first of your kind."

THE days and weeks slipped by. My mind matured and gathered knowledge steadily from Dr. Link's library. I was able, in time, to scan and absorb a page at a time of reading matter, as readily as human eyes scan lines. You know of the television principle—

a pencil of light moving hundreds of times a second over the object to be transmitted. My eyes, triggered with speedy electrons, could do the same. What I read was absorbed—memorized—instantly. From then on it was part of my knowledge.

Scientific subjects particularly claimed my attention. There was always something indefinable about human things, something I could not quite grasp, but science digested easily, in my science-compounded brain. It was not long before I knew all about myself and why I "ticked," much more fully than most humans know why they live, think and move.

Mechanical principles became starkly simple to me. I made suggestions for improvements in my own make-up that Dr. Link readily agreed upon correcting. We added little **uni**-versals in my fingers, for example, that made them almost as supple as their human models.

Almost, I say. The human body is a marvelously perfected organic machine. No robot will ever equal it in sheer efficiency and adaptability. I realized my limitations.

Perhaps you will realize what I mean when I say that my eyes cannot see colors. Or rather, I see just one color, in the blue range. It would take an impossibly complex series of units, bigger than my whole body, to enable me to see all colors. Nature has packed all that in two globes the size of marbles, for *her* robots. She had a billion years to do it. Dr. Link only had twenty years.

But my brain, that was another matter. Equipped with only the two senses of one-color sight and limited sound, it was yet capable of garnishing a full experience. Smell and taste are gastronomic senses. I do not need them. Feeling is a device of Nature's to pro-

tect a fragile body. My body is not fragile.

Sight and sound are the only two cerebral senses. Einstein, color-blind, half-dead, and with deadened senses of taste, smell and feeling, would still have been Einstein—mentally.

Sleep is only a word to me. When Dr. Link knew he could trust me to take care of myself, he dispensed with the nightly habit of "turning me off." While he slept, I spent the hours reading.

He taught me how to remove the depleted storage battery in the pelvic part of my metal frame when necessary and replace it with a fresh one. This had to be done every 48 hours. Electricity is my life and strength. It is my food. Without it I am so much metal junk.

But I have explained enough of myself. I suspect that ten thousand more pages of description would make no difference in your attitude, you who are even now—

An amusing thing happened one day, not long ago. Yes, I can be amused too. I cannot laugh, but my brain can appreciate the ridiculous. Dr. Link's perennial gardener came to the place, unannounced. Searching for the doctor to ask how he wanted the hedges cut, the man came upon us in the back, walking side by side for Dr. Link's daily light exercise.

The gardener's mouth began speaking and then ludicrously gaped open and stayed that way as he caught a full glimpse of me. But he did not faint in fright as the housekeeper had. He stood there, paralyzed.

"What's the matter, Charley?" queried Dr. Link sharply. He was so used to me that for the moment he had no idea why the gardener should be astonished.

"That—that thing!" gasped the man, finally.

"Oh. Well, it's a robot," said Dr. Link. "Haven't you ever heard of them? An intelligent robot. Speak to him, he'll answer."

After some urging, the gardener sheepishly turned to me. "H-how do you do, Mr. Robot," he stammered.

"How do you do, Mr. Charley," I returned promptly, seeing the amusement in Dr. Link's face. "Nice weather, isn't it?"

For a moment the man looked ready to shriek and run. But he squared his shoulders and curled his lip. "Trickery!" he scoffed. "That thing can't be intelligent. You've got a phonograph inside of it. How about the hedges?"

"I'm afraid," murmured Dr. Link with a chuckle, "that the robot is more intelligent than you, Charley!" But he said it so the man didn't hear, and then directed how to trim the hedges. Charley didn't do a good job. He seemed to be nervous all day.

CHAPTER III

My Fate

ONE day Dr. Link stared at me proudly.

"You have now," he said, "the intellectual capacity of a man of many years. Soon I'll announce you to the world. You shall take your place in our world, as an independent entity—as a citizen!"

"Yes, Dr. Link," I returned. "Whatever you say. You are my creator—my master."

"Don't think of it that way," he admonished. "In the same sense, you are my son. But a father is not a son's master after his maturity. You have gained that status." He frowned thoughtfully. "You must have a name! Adam! Adam Link!"

He faced me and put a hand on my shiny chromium shoulder. "Adam Link,

what is your choice of future life?"

"I want to serve you, Dr. Link."

"But you will outlive me! And you may outlive several other masters!"

"I will serve any master who will have me," I said slowly. I had been thinking about this before. "I have been created by man. I will serve man."

Perhaps he was testing me. I don't know. But my answers obviously pleased him. "Now," he said, "I will have no fears in announcing you!"

The next day he was dead.

That was three days ago. I was in the storeroom, reading—it was housekeeper's day. I heard the noise. I ran up the steps, into the laboratory. Dr. Link lay with skull crushed. A loose angle-iron of a transformer hung on an insulated platform on the wall had slipped and crashed down on his head while he sat there before his workbench. I raised his head, slumped over the bench, to better see the wound. Death had been instantaneous.

These are the facts. I turned the angle-iron back myself. The blood on my fingers resulted when I raised his head, not knowing for the moment that he was stark dead. In a sense, I was responsible for the accident, for in my early days of walking I had once blundered against the transformer shelf and nearly torn it loose. We should have repaired it.

But that I am his *murderer*, as you all believe, is not true.

The housekeeper had also heard the noise and came from the house to investigate. She took one look. She saw me bending over the doctor, his head torn and bloody—she fled, too frightened to make a sound.

It would be hard to describe my thoughts. The little dog Terry sniffed at the body, sensed the calamity, and went down on his belly, whimpering. He felt the loss of a master. So did I.

I am not sure what your emotion of sorrow is. Perhaps I cannot feel that deeply. But I do know that the sunlight seemed suddenly faded to me.

My thoughts are rapid. I stood there only a minute, but in that time I made up my mind to leave. This again has been misinterpreted. You considered that an admission of guilt, the criminal escaping from the scene of his crime. In my case it was a full-fledged desire to go out into the world, find a place in it.

Dr. Link, and my life with him, were a closed book. No use now to stay and watch ceremonials. He had launched my life. He was gone. My place now must be somewhere out in the world I had never seen. No thought entered my mind of what you humans would decide about me. I thought all men were like Dr. Link.

FIRST of all I took a fresh battery, replacing my half-depleted one. I would need another in 48 hours, but I was sure this would be taken care of by anyone to whom I made the request.

I left. Terry followed me. He has been with me all the time. I have heard a dog is man's best friend. Even a metal man's.

My conceptions of geography soon proved hazy at best. I had pictured earth as teeming with humans and cities, with not much space between. I had estimated that the city Dr. Link spoke of must be just over the hill from his secluded country home. Yet the woods I traversed seemed endless.

It was not till hours later that I met the little girl. She had been dangling her bare legs into a brook, sitting on a flat rock. I approached to ask where the city was. She turned when I was still thirty feet away. My internal mechanisms do not run silently. They make a steady noise that Dr. Link al-

ways described as a handful of coins jingling together.

The little girl's face contorted as soon as she saw me. I must be a fearsome sight indeed in your eyes. Screaming her fear, she blindly jumped up, lost her balance and fell into the stream.

I knew what drowning was. I knew I must save her. I knelt at the rock's edge and reached down for her. I managed to grasp one of her arms and pull her up. I could feel the bones of her thin little wrist crack. I had forgotten my strength.

I had to grasp her little leg with my other hand, to pull her up. The livid marks showed on her white flesh when I laid her on the grass. I can guess now what interpretation was put on all this. A terrible, raving monster, I had tried to drown her and break her little body in wanton savageness!

You others of her picnic party appeared then, in answer to her cries. You women screamed and fainted. You men snarled and threw rocks at me. But what strange bravery imbued the woman, probably the child's mother, who ran up under my very feet to snatch up her loved one? I admired her. The rest of you I despised for not listening to my attempts to explain. You drowned out my voice with your screams and shouts.

"Dr. Link's robot!—it's escaped and gone crazy!—he shouldn't have made that monster!—get the police!—nearly killed poor Frances!—"

With these garbled shouts to one another, you withdrew. You didn't notice that Terry was barking angrily—at you. Can you fool a dog? We went on.

Now my thoughts really became puzzled. Here at last was something I could not rationalize. This was so different from the world I had learned about in books. What subtle things lay behind

the printed words that I had read? What had happened to the sane and orderly world my mind had conjured for itself?

NIGHT came. I had to stop and stay still in the dark. I leaned against a tree motionlessly. For a while I heard little Terry snooping around in the brush for something to eat. I heard him gnawing something. Then later he curled up at my feet and slept. The hours passed slowly. My thoughts would not come to a conclusion about the recent occurrence. Monster! Why had they believed that?

Once, in the still distance, I heard a murmur as of a crowd of people. I saw some lights. They had significance the next day. At dawn I nudged Terry with my toe and we walked on. The same murmur arose, approached. Then I saw you, a crowd of you, men with clubs, scythes and guns. You spied me and a shout went up. You hung together as you advanced.

Then something struck my frontal plate with a sharp clang. One of you had shot.

"Stop! Wait!" I shouted, knowing I must talk to you, find out why I was being hunted like a wild beast. I had taken a step forward, hand upraised. But you would not listen. More shots rang out, denting my metal body. I turned and ran. A bullet in a vital spot would ruin me, as much as a human.

You came after me like a pack of hounds, but I outdistanced you, powered by steel muscles. Terry fell behind, lost. Then, as afternoon came, I realized I must get a newly charged battery. Already my limbs were moving sluggishly. In a few more hours, without a new source of current within me, I would fall on the spot and—die.

And I did not want to die!

I knew I must find a road to the city.

I finally came upon a winding dirt road and followed it in hope. When I saw a car parked at the side of the road ahead of me, I knew I was saved, for Dr. Link's car had had the same sort of battery I used. There was no one around the car. Much as a starving man would take the first meal available, I raised the floorboards and in a short while had substituted batteries.

New strength coursed through my body. I straightened up just as two people came arm-in-arm from among the trees, a young man and woman. They caught sight of me. Incredulous shock came into their faces. The girl shrank into the boy's arms.

"Do not be alarmed," I said. "I will not harm you. I—"

There was no use going on, I saw that. The boy fainted dead away in the girl's arms and she began dragging him away, wailing hysterically.

I left. My thoughts from then on can best be described as brooding. I did not want to go to the city now. I began to realize I was an outcast in human eyes, from first sight on.

Just as night fell and I stopped, I heard a most welcome sound. Terry's barking! He came up joyfully, wagging his stump of tail. I reached down to scratch his ears. All these hours he had faithfully searched for me. He had probably tracked me by a scent of oil. What can cause such blind devotion—and to a metal man!

Is it because, as Dr. Link once stated, that the body, human or otherwise, is only part of the environment of the mind? And that Terry recognized in me as much of mind as in humans, despite my alien body? If that is so, it is you who are passing judgment on me as a monster who are in the wrong. And I am convinced it is so!

I hear you now—shouting outside—*beware that you do not drive me to be*

the monster you call me!

THE next dawn precipitated you upon me again. Bullets flew. I ran. All that day it was the same. Your party, swelled by added recruits, split into groups, trying to ring me in. You tracked me by my heavy footprints. My speed saved me each time. Yet some of those bullets have done damage. One struck the joint of my right knee, so that my leg twisted as I ran. One smashed into the right side of my head and shattered the tympanum there, making me deaf on that side.

But the bullet that hurt me most was the one that killed Terry!

The shooter of that bullet was twenty yards away. I could have run to him, broken his every bone with my hard, powerful hands. Have you stopped to wonder why I didn't take revenge? *Perhaps I should! . . .*

I was hopelessly lost all that day. I went in circles through the endless woods and as often blundered into you as you into me. I was trying to get away from the vicinity, from your vengeance. Toward dusk I saw something familiar—Dr. Link's laboratory!

Hiding in a clump of bushes and waiting till it was utterly dark, I approached and broke the lock on the door. It was deserted. Dr. Link's body was gone, of course.

My birthplace! My six months' of life here whirled through my mind with kaleidoscopic rapidity. I wonder if my emotion was akin to what yours would be, returning to a well-remembered place? Perhaps my emotion is far deeper than yours can be! Life may be all in the mind. Something gripped me there, throbbingly. The shadows made by a dim gas-jet I lit seemed to dance around me like little Terry had danced. Then I found the book, "Frankenstein," lying on the desk whose drawers

had been emptied. Dr. Link's private desk. He had kept the book from me. Why? I read it now, in a half hour, by my page-at-a-time scanning. And then I understood!"

But it is the most stupid premise ever made: that a created man must turn against his creator, against humanity, lacking a soul. The book is all wrong.

Or is it?

As I finish writing this, here among blasted memories, with the spirit of Terry in the shadows, I wonder if I shouldn't.

It is close to dawn now. I know there is not hope for me. You have me sur-

rounded, cut off. I can see the flares of your torches between the trees. In the light you will find me, rout me out. Your hatred lust is aroused. It will be sated only by my—death.

I have not been so badly damaged that I cannot still summon strength and power enough to ram through your lines and escape this fate. But it would only be at the cost of several of your lives. And that is the reason I have my hand on the switch that can blink out my life with one twist.

Ironic, isn't it, that I have the very feelings you are so sure I lack?
(signed) Adam Link.

» MAGNIFYING THE MINUTE «

The use of a lens for magnifying purposes is ancient, but the first compound microscope was probably made by a Dutchman named Zacharias Jansen in 1590. This invention was followed up by the astronomer, Galileo, a few years later. But it did not become an effective instrument until about the middle of the eighteenth century.

In a simple microscope we look at the object directly through a lens or through several lenses. This kind of instrument is often used for microscopic dissection.

But in the compound microscope we look through an eye-lens or ocular at an inverted image of the object formed inside the tube of the microscope by an objective, or an object-lens. In all simple microscopes there are two lenses in the eyepiece and three lenses in the objective. All sorts of ingenious devices have been invented for making the most of magnification without sacrificing clarity or definition of detail.

In the pioneer days of microscopy, the instrument was mostly considered a scientific toy. Its uses were to magnify objects for purposes of reproduction in either drawings or paintings, but the opportunity offered to learn more about the wonders of the small was not grasped. Understanding what we see in microscopy means much more than great magnification. Such magnification is useless without intelligible interpretation.



MISSING! ONE GROUCH

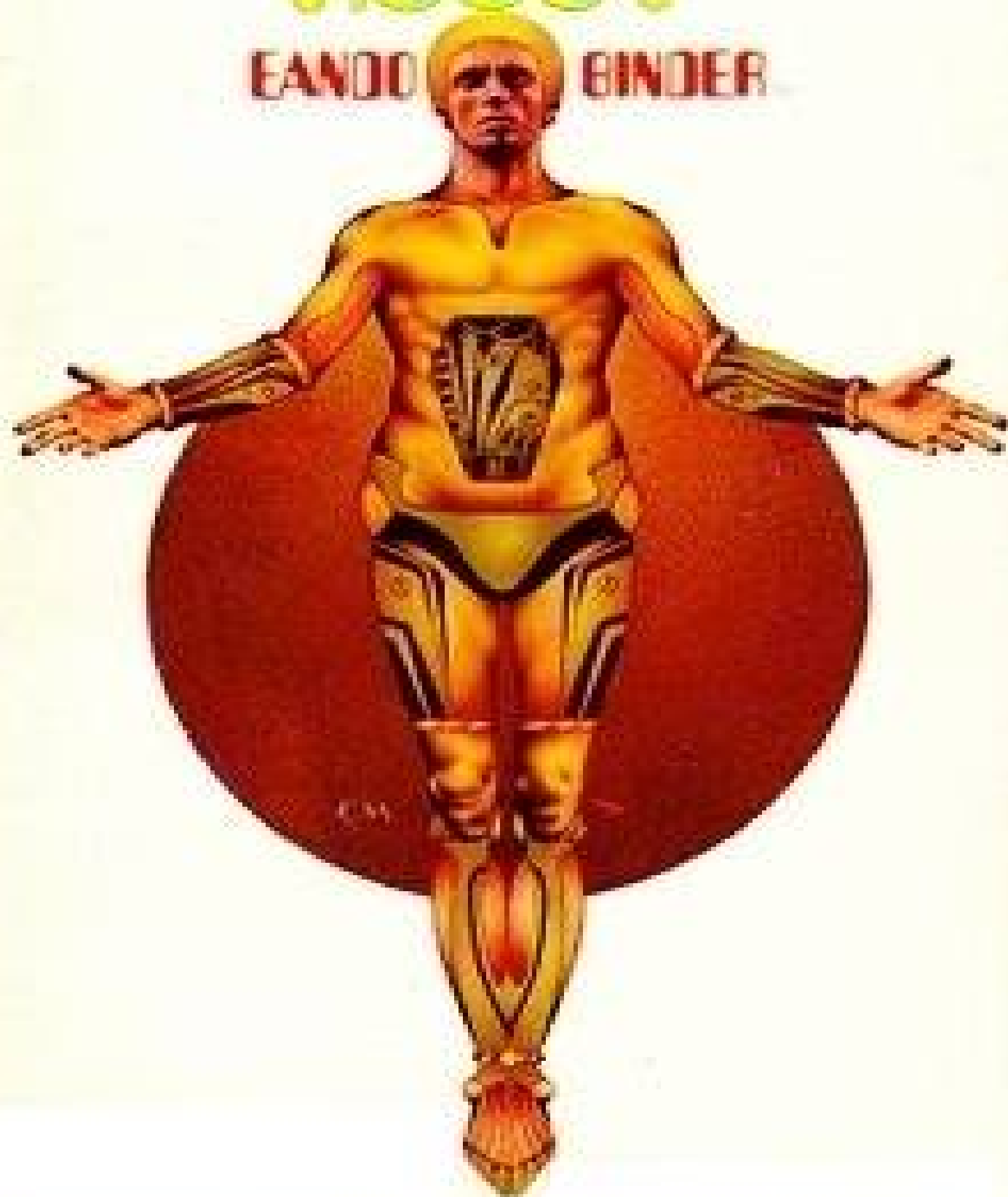
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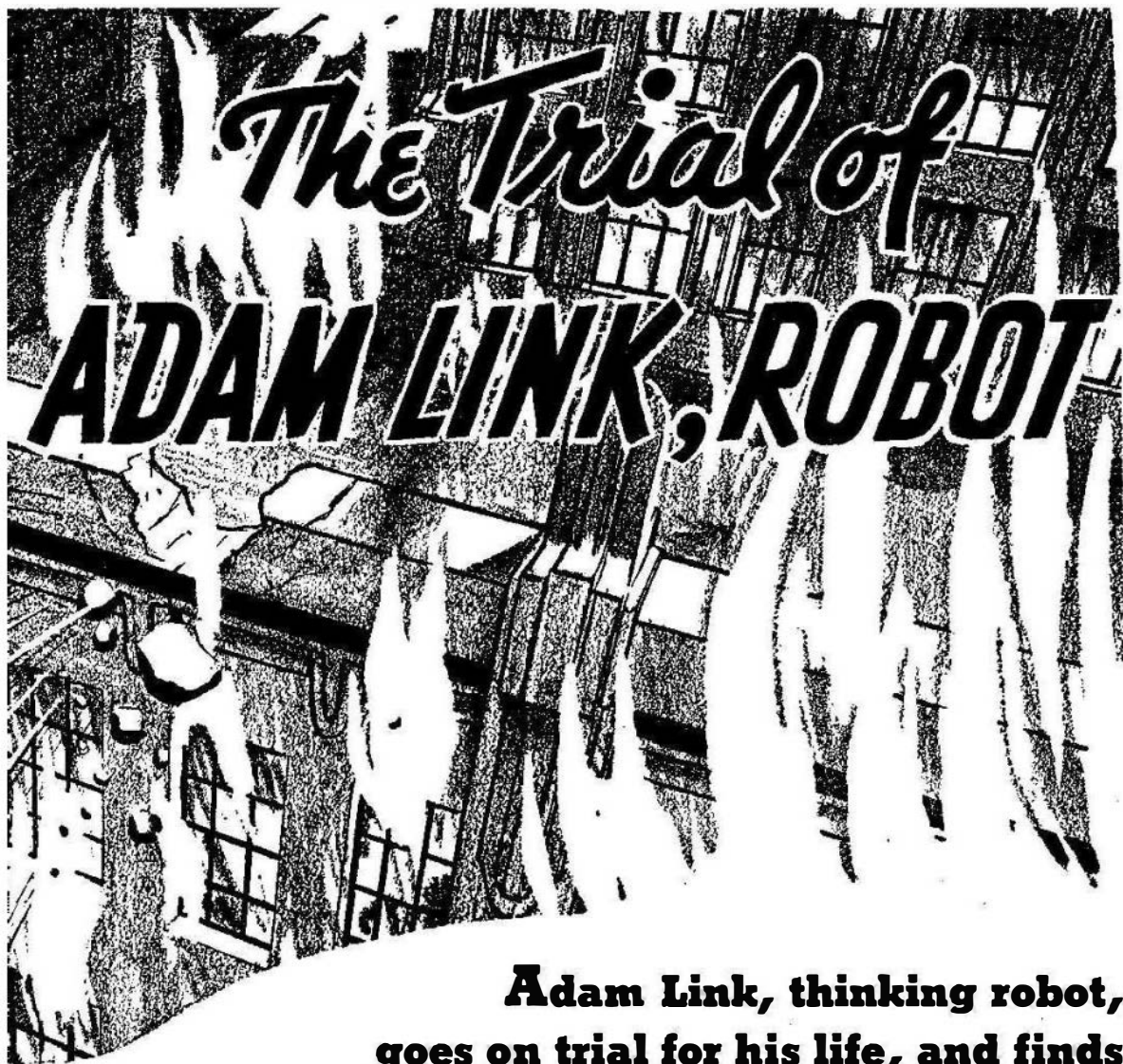
ADAM LINK ROBOT

EANDU BINDER





I took a long run, leaped—and made it!



**Adam Link, thinking robot,
goes on trial for his life, and finds
himself facing the hate of a world.**

**By
EANDO BINDER**

**CHAPTER I
Monster or Man?**

I THINK I must have had the same feeling, when I "awoke", that any of you humans would have had, suddenly coming to life — when your last thought had been the certainty of "death". I felt I had been resurrected from a grave. I couldn't understand. I was "alive" again!

I looked around and saw the group of men, armed with scythes, clubs and

guns, who had hunted me down in the past three days. They had branded me as the killer of Dr. Link, my late creator. They had cornered me here, in his laboratory. Why hadn't they smashed and pounded me to broken wheels and scattered mechanical parts, as they had fully intended?

I had turned off the master-switch on my chest myself, blinking out my consciousness, lest I rise and harm them — in instinctive self-defense. I had literally committed suicide! Who had snapped the switch back on?

Then I noticed the blazing-eyed

young man facing them. The armed party were muttering and waving their weapons at me, but my unexpected champion had evidently stayed their—shall I call it mob bloodlust? He turned suddenly to me. He was young and square-jawed, and vaguely familiar in some way. He had grey, intelligent eyes. I liked him instantly. Though I am a robot, I form likes and dislikes among the humans I meet.

"Are you all right—Adam Link?" he asked. He added the name given me by Dr. Link with some hesitation, but clearly. He was addressing me as one living entity to another. To use an appropriate expression—as man to man. Only one other had ever done that, in my six months of life—Dr. Link himself.

I arose from my sitting posture, in which I had been since I had turned myself off. I nearly toppled over. One of my legs was badly twisted. I took swift appraisal and noticed the dents on my metal-wrought shoulders and chest. The top of my skull-plate, too, was dented, pressing down slightly on the electrical brain within. From that, for lack of a better term, I had a headache.

Obviously, I had been saved just in time. The enraged, vengeful posse had begun to smash me. But no vital harm had been done.

"I can be repaired," I replied. The armed men fell back uneasily at the sound of my microphonic voice. Why are humans so afraid of that which they cannot understand? Then I looked at the young man, wishing I could show gratitude.

"Thank you for what you have done," I said. "Who are you?"

"I'M Thomas Link, Dr. Link's nephew, and his closest living relative," he said. Instantly I saw the family resemblance, and knew why he

had seemed so familiar, though I had never seen him before.

He went on, speaking to the others as much as myself. "I have been practicing law, in San Francisco. I hurried here when I heard of my uncle's death. He has left everything to me. I see I have come just in time to prevent the destruction—the wanton *murder*, gentlemen!—of Adam Link, my uncle's intelligent robot."

"Huh—murder!" said the leader of the men, scoffingly. He was the county sheriff and carried a high-powered rifle under his arm. "This—this *thing* isn't a man. It's a machine. A clever, diabolical machine that killed your uncle in cold blood!"

"I don't believe it!" snapped young Tom Link quickly. "My uncle wrote me many letters about this robot. He said it was as rational as any human being. Perhaps more so than you, sheriff! And not in the least dangerous, in any remote Frankenstein way. My uncle was a clear-headed thinker and scientist. What he said, I accept. You will not destroy this robot!"

The sheriff's face reddened. Tom had been rather tactless in comparing him and myself. "We will!" he shouted. "It's a dangerous monster. As the representative of the law in this matter, it is my rightful duty to protect the community. If a tiger were loose in this county, I would destroy it." He raised his rifle and the men behind him muttered with rising feelings.

I wonder if I have an emotion akin to your human anger? He had compared me to a tiger! I know what a tiger is, from my extensive reading. My electronic brain hummed, and I started to speak, but Tom Link motioned me silent.

"Stop, sheriff!" he said warningly. "The robot—if you choose to consider it that way—was part of my uncle's

property. Now it is *my* property. I am a lawyer. I know my rights. If you touch the robot, I'll sue you in court for wilful destruction of a piece of my property!"

The law officer gasped. "Well—uh—" He began again, lamely. "But this is different! This robot is a moving, li— no, not living—but anyway—uh—it's a creature, and—" He was too muddled by the sudden change of concept to go on.

Tom Link smiled. I suddenly perceived that he was a very clever young man. He had planned this *trap!* "Right, sheriff," he said quickly. "This robot is a creature. It is not an animal, for animals don't talk. It is a manlike being. Therefore, like any other talking, thinking man, *he is entitled to a court trial!*"

The sheriff tried to remonstrate, but Tom hustled him out, and the other men with him. "If you want to continue prosecution of Adam Link, the intelligent robot," was Tom's parting shot, "come back with a warrant of arrest!"

TOM turned to me when we were alone. "Whew!" He wiped his forehead. "That was close!" Then he grinned a little, thinking perhaps of the utterly confounded look on the sheriff's face at the last. I grinned, too, within myself. It is a feature of intelligence—whether in a human body or metal—to see humor in that which is ridiculous.

I was still, however, a little puzzled. "Tell me, Tom Link," I queried, "why you have so completely taken my side? All others, except your uncle, hated and feared me from first sight."

Instead of answering, Tom rummaged in his uncle's private desk. At last he withdrew a document and let me read it. I did not quite grasp the complicated legal language, but I noticed the word "citizen" several times.

Tom explained. "My uncle, if he hadn't died so unfortunately, was fully determined to make you a *citizen*, Adam Link, as you know. He had begun to take up the matters of legal records to prove your "birth", education and rightful status. He corresponded with me on these details at some length. In another month, I was to have come here to complete the negotiations."

I remembered Dr. Link's repeated remarks that I was not just a robot, a metal man. I was *life!* I was a thinking being, as manlike as any clothed in flesh and blood. He had trained me, brought me up, with all the loving kindness, patience and true feeling of a mother with her own child.

And now, with the thought of my creator, came a sadness, an ache within me. I felt as I had that day I discovered him dead, when the sunlight had seemed suddenly faded to me. You who read may smile cynically, but my "emotions", I believe, are real and deep. Life is essentially in the mind. I have a mind.

"He was a good man," I said. "And you, Tom, you are my friend!"

He smiled in his warm way, and put his hand on my shiny, hard shoulder. "I am *your cousin!*" he responded simply. "Blood is thicker than water, you know!"

No play of words was intended, I knew that. I can only say that I have never heard a nobler expression. In five simple words, he showed me that he accepted me as a fellow man. Men like Tom are rare. They are the kind who, if given power, rule wisely and well. But invariably they are the very ones who have little authority. I have wondered at times—but I must not digress from this present account.

THE rest of that day, while Tom Link went through his uncle's ef-

fects, he talked to me at times. I told him the full story of his uncle's accidental death and the following events:

"We have a battle ahead of us," he summed it up. "The battle to save you from a charge of manslaughter. After that, we will take up the matter of your—citizenship."

He glanced at me just a little queerly. His eyes traveled from my mirrored eyes and expressionless metal face down to my stiff, alloy legs. Perhaps for the first time, it occurred to him how strange this all was. He, a young lawyer, out to defend me, a conglomerate of wires and cogs, as though I were a human being, conceived by woman. For a moment, he may even have had doubts, now that the excitement was over and he had a chance to think about me.

Might I not be a monster after all? Might Dr. Link not have been wrong in saying that I was the *opposite* of my fearsomely fabricated exterior? Who could know what weird thoughts coursed through my unhuman, unbiological brain? Might I not just be waiting for the chance to kill Tom, too, in some monstrous mood?

I could see or feel those thoughts crowding his mind. I don't think it's a telepathic phenomenon. It is just that my electron-activated brain works instantaneously. The chains of memory-association within me operate with lightning rapidity. The slightest twitch of his lip and inflection in his voice revealed to me the probable thought causing them.

I felt a little disturbed. Was my only friend to gradually turn against me? Was my cause hopeless? Was it a foregone conclusion that such an utterly alien being as myself could never be accepted in the world of man? I was like a Martian, suddenly descending upon Earth, with as little possibility of

achieving friendly intercourse. You think the comparison irrelevant? I will guarantee that the first Martians, or other worldly creatures, to land on Earth—if this event ever occurs—will be destroyed blindly. You humans do not know how strong and deep within you lies the jungle instincts of your animal past. That is, in the majority of you. And it is not necessarily those in high places who are more "civilized." But I digress again.

While Tom was busy, I repaired myself. I am a machine, and know more about my workings than any physiologist knows of his own body. I straightened the knee-joint swivel mechanism, twisted by a bullet. Two of my fingers had broken "muscle" cables which I welded together. I took off my frontal chest plate and hammered the dents out. My removable skull-piece made simple the release of the pressure on my sponge-brain. My "headache" left.

Finally I oiled myself completely, and substituted a fresh battery in my driving unit. In a few hours I had gone through what would correspond in a human to surgical patchings, operations and convalescence that would have taken weeks. It is very convenient, having a metal body.

Then I went out. I wandered in the woods and came back with little Terry's poor half-decayed body. He had been shot by the posse, accidentally, when they had hunted me. I buried him in the backyard, thinking of his joyous barks and the playful times we had had together.

"Adam! Adam Link!"

I started and turned. It was Tom, behind me, watching. His face was queerly glowing.

"Forgive me," he said softly. "I was doubting you, Adam Link, all afternoon. Doubting that you could be as nearly human as my uncle wrote you were.

But I will never fail you again!" He was looking at the fresh grave of Terry.

CHAPTER II

Fighting Fear

AS Tom had predicted, Sheriff Barclay promptly appeared the next morning, with a warrant for my arrest! He was determined to have me destroyed. Since he couldn't do so directly, without legally entangling himself in a suit, he had taken the other course.

"It will be a damned farce—holding a trial for a robot," he admitted shamefacedly. "I feel like a fool. But it must be destroyed. You're rather clever young man, but you don't think a jury of honest, level-headed men is going to exonerate your—uh—client?"

Tom said nothing, just set his jaw grimly.

Sheriff Barclay looked at me. "You're—uh—I mean *it's* under arrest. It must come with us, to jail." He was speaking to Tom, although he watched me narrowly, expecting me, I suppose, to go berserk.

"I'm going along," nodded Tom. "Come, Adam."

They had brought a truck for me—I am a 300-pound mass of metal—and drove me toward the nearby town. I had never been in one before, having lived in seclusion with Dr. Link at his country place. My first glimpse of the small city with its 50,000 inhabitants did not startle me. It is about what I had expected from my reading, and the pictures I had seen—noisy, congested, ugly, badly arranged.

I have a mechanical mind. My scientific outlook demands efficiency and order. Before we had reached the courthouse, I had picked out a hundred basic faults in this center of human ac-

tivity. And the corresponding ways to improve them. Most of all, your traffic is a slipshod maze. You must excuse my bluntness. I speak and think without circumlocution.

A curious crowd watched as I was paraded up the courthouse steps. The news had gone around. They watched silently, awestruck. And in every face, I saw lurking fear, instinctive hatred. I had the feeling then, as never before, that I was an outcast. And doomed, in one way or another.

The scene in the courtroom was, as the sheriff had predicted, a sort of solemn farce. The presiding judge coughed continuously. Only Tom Link was at his ease. He insisted on the full, legal method. There had been an inquest of course, before Dr. Link's burial, in which it was established that a heavy instrument had caused death. Nothing could gainsay that my hard metal arm might have been the "instrument of death."

I was indicted on a manslaughter charge for the death of Dr. Charles Link, and entered in the record as "Adam Link."

When that had been done, Tom heaved a sigh and winked toward me. I knew what the wink meant. Again a trap had been laid, and sprung. Once my name was down in the court record, I was accorded all the rights and privileges of the machinery of justice. As I know now, if Sheriff Barclay had gone to the governor of the state, instead, he could have obtained a state order to demolish me as *an unlawful weapon!* For I was a mechanical contrivance that (circumstantially) had taken a life!

Tom could not have squirmed out of that charge. But Sheriff Barclay had missed that loophole. With my name down, I was a defendant—and had human status!

Two newspaper reporters were pres-

ent. One of them was staring at me closely, wonderingly. He came as near as he could, unafraid. Unafraid! The only one in the room, besides Tom, who did not fear me instinctively. He, too, could be my friend.

I saw the question in his eager young face. "Yes, I am intelligent," I said, achieving a hissing whisper, so no one else would hear.

He started, then grinned pleasantly. "Okay!" he said and I know he believed. He began scribbling furiously in a notebook.

THE formal indictment over, the bailiff led me to my cell and locked me in. Tom smiled reassurance, but when he left I felt suddenly alone, hemmed in by enemies. You humans can never have quite that feeling. Unless, perhaps, you are a spy caught by an enemy nation. But even then you know you are dying for a cause, a reason. But I was being doomed—exterminated is the word—for little else than not being understood.

I was somewhat bewildered, and my thoughts were certainly of the type called brooding. Was Tom doing the right thing? Had he realized how tightly the coils of law would twine about me? As he had doubted me once, so now I doubted him, but with less reason. He was not the quite unknown quantity to me that I had been to him.

Tom appeared again an hour later, waving a paper. The court officials were with him, arguing loudly. He turned.

"*Habeas Corpus!*" he kept saying, calmly. "You've indicted Adam Link, whether he has the body of a robot or an elephant. This writ of Habeas Corpus frees the *person* of Adam Link, till the trial is called. I know the law. Release him!"

The bailiff argued hotly. I digested

what I had heard, slowly and carefully. That is, slowly for me. It wasn't more than a second later that I grasped the bars of my cell-door and with one concerted tug, jerked it open. There was a terrific grind of metal. The broken lock clattered to the stone floor. I strode out.

"I do not like being in a cage," I said. "Can we go, Tom?"

I am afraid my impulsive act was a mistake. I saw that by Tom's face. I had displayed my great strength, the strength of a powerful machine. It could only add fuel to their fear of me. The officials all turned pale and stumbled back, perhaps visioning how easy it would be for me to crush their skulls with single blows of my steel hands.

And that was precisely the last thing they must think of me. They must come to appreciate my mind, and my ability to serve humanity. For that purpose, Dr. Link had created me. And for that purpose I had dedicated myself, independently, months before. Once accepted as a fellow *mind*—a monster only in appearance—I could show my true worth. I, Adam Link, was the first of intelligent robots who could serve civilization in the combined capacity of mind and machine.

Yes, it was a foolish mistake. The writ of Habeas Corpus would have freed me anyway, if I had given Tom a little time. As I realize now, I was bewildered, and impatient. I cannot understand the strange tortuous ways you humans have of doing things. I have much to learn of civilization. Much.

Tom did not reprimand me, however, grasping my hand, he led me out of the jail. The officials stared dumfoundedly. Tom had also paid bail, and procured a paper placing me in his custody.

THEREAFTER, in the time before the trial, I went with Tom, around

the city. He made frequent visits to the bank that was settling the estate of Dr. Link. He took me to the public library when he sought reference in weighty books of his profession. Often he would just parade me down a street. We watched the reaction of the crowds narrowly. As Tom had put it—could we get public opinion to swing our way, in the coming battle for my status in human society?

Fear! It rose in overwhelming tides about me. Blind fear that sent people scurrying away without dignity. Sometimes cars, in the traffic, bumped one another as their drivers caught their first glimpse of my shiny, metal form, so manlike and yet so alien. I felt depressed. Must I always inspire fear?

Children, however, proved more quickly adaptable. They had more of curiosity. In fact, a group of street gamins took to following me, tossing pebbles to hear them clink against my metal body. And a chant arose among them: "You're nothing but a tin can! You're nothing but a tin can!"

I wasn't annoyed, nor was I particularly amused. Some of the adults we passed tittered. People cannot laugh and fear at the same time. The gamins with their simple little song had proved a blessing in disguise. Even Tom—though he tried to hide it—had a lurking grin twitching at his lips. I began to have hope that the fear of me would die down, eventually.

But it was a forlorn hope. My first venture into the public library was disquieting — both to myself and others. People edged away from me hurriedly. The library officials tried to prevent my going around, but Tom calmly and stubbornly proved to them that they couldn't eject me on any count short of violation of civil liberties. The librarians gave in, but summoned police for guard. Undoubtedly everyone had

heard of me as the murderer of a man. Everyone was certain that at any moment I would wantonly kill another. I felt that, and it saddened me.

But again there was an amusing quality in it. I eased my weight into a chair in the reading room and began reading scientific books Tom had procured for me at the call-desk. I scanned a page at a time. My eyes work on the television principle, and my memory is photographic.

An elderly man opposite the reading table had not looked up. Concentrated in his reading, he had ignored the noise I could not avoid making as my metal form contacted the chair. But in the following quiet, the steady hum of my internal mechanism must have penetrated his deep study. He looked up suddenly, flashed a glance of annoyance at me, and looked down again. Fully ten seconds passed before he looked up again, realizing what he had seen. This time he was startled. He closed his eyes, snapped them open again. After another long look at me, he quietly arose, as though recalling another engagement, and left. His face was pale.

THE newspapers were particularly unkind to me. Daily editorials were written, denouncing the laxity of the law. They were allowing, it was said, a dangerous engine of destruction to walk about. I was the Frankenstein product of a mad genius, a twisted travesty of the human form. The Machine had finally arisen, as had been foretold in imaginative literature, threatening Mankind. I was the forerunner, the spy perhaps, of a secret horde of metal demons, waiting to descend crushingly upon humanity, etc.

I have since come to realize that the editorial writers were more mercenary than stupid. They were capitalizing on a sensational item. It sold papers.

That it was inflaming their readers' minds was of secondary importance. I meant nothing to them as a victim. I wasn't even a person. I was just a clever machine. They crucified me mercilessly.

One editorial writer, however, denounced the denouncers. He took my part, insisting there was not a shred of proof as yet that Dr. Link's amazing robot was a menace of any kind. I knew he must be the young reporter I had seen at the court. I had an unexpected friend, two now.

Two—out of the 50,000 in that city. Or out of the millions elsewhere who had read of me perhaps, and promptly were my enemies.

CHAPTER III

I Risk My—Life

THERE was one other thing that happened during those two weeks. The fire. Tom and I were walking down the street when we heard the shriek of sirens. Then we saw it ahead—smoke pouring from the windows of a ten-story tenement. In the excitement of that, even I became of secondary importance. People crowded at my very side, staring at the flaming building, hardly aware of me.

It was fascinating. Ladders were hastily thrown up, and firemen climbed them. There were dozens of people endangered, in the fire-gutted building. Why do you humans allow such fire-traps to exist at all; I cannot understand it. When it was thought that all had been rescued, two screaming faces appeared at the seventh story. Smoke gushed from behind them.

A hideous wail went up from the crowd. They were doomed, those two! The ladders were threatened by flame and had to be withdrawn. No fireman

dared plunge into the raging inferno of the interior. Jumping nets were in readiness, but the two screaming voices choked off and the two faces vanished from the window. Smoke had suffocated them into insensibility. In a matter of seconds, their fate would be sealed. . . .

My reactions are instantaneous, being those of a machine. I moved away from Tom, toward the building. He was unaware, staring up with a look of hypnotic horror, as were all the crowd. They were in my way. I had to get through quickly.

I raised my voice in a hoarse bellow that was easily heard over the roaring of the flames. The crowd, suddenly turning its attention to me, and as quickly panic-stricken in the fear that I was going berserk, melted away. I dashed into the curtain of smoke that wreathed the burning building.

Hissing flames were all about me, then. I dashed through them, my metal body knowing no hurt or pain, and having no lungs to be seared. But it was a task even for my sharp, mechanical vision to see the stairs through the rolling clouds of black smoke. Fortunately, the stairs were of fireproof metal. I raced up them with all the speed and power I could command from my mechanical body. I reached the seventh floor just in time. The stairs behind me collapsed, melted through. I could never go back that way.

I FOUND the two still figures, a young man and woman, on the floor, in their smoke-filled room. Roughly, since there wasn't much time, I threw them one over each shoulder.

If there was time!

The only way led up, to the roof. Another curtain of flame had to be traversed. Summoning all my powers, I dashed through them, my metal legs

pounding. The clothing of the two limp forms I carried did not catch fire. Nor, I hoped, had their skins felt more than a momentary withering blast. Yet, for all I knew, they were already dead.

Escape from the roof resolved itself into one uncertain chance—leaping across to the next building. The distance, I automatically knew when I looked, was thirty feet. To make it worse, the next rampart was on a higher level. I would have to leap thirty feet across, five feet upward, carrying almost three hundred pounds—equal to my own weight—of inert load. If I failed—a drop of more than a hundred feet to the hard concrete of a courtyard.

Yes, I knew fear. Or at least, something within my brain that sickened at the thought of three broken bodies, two of them human pulp, lying down there.

There was no time to waste, or think. I was alone up here, and the decision was mine to make. I took a long run, leaped—and made it.

It is simple to say it, though the bare words leave much unsaid. At the moment of leaping, I flexed my metal legs with such force that the stone eave beneath them cracked. I would have been a strange sight, I suppose, had anyone seen—a metal Tarzan flying through the air, with two limp human forms slung over its shoulders. Thirty feet across and five upward! Only the tremendous powers inherent in my motorized body made it possible. And even their limit was taxed. I landed with one foot on the other rampart, and teetered for a moment, at the brink of disaster.

I had just time to shove the bodies forward, onto the roof safely, as my other foot clawed vainly for purchase. At least they had been saved. Then I slipped backward and wondered how it would “feel” to smash against the hard

concrete a hundred feet below. My clawing foot met something—the jutting edge of a window frame. It saved me. A moment later I was standing over the two bodies, looking back at the roof we had left. It was cracking and fingers of flame shot up from the hell below.

I picked up the two forms and clattered down this building’s outside fire-escape, laying the two figures in the courtyard. They were breathing and moaning. They were alive. Their clothing was singed, and blackened where it had pressed against my heated metal shoulders. Some few burns and blisters were on their faces and hands. But they would survive.

I waited till my metal body had cooled completely before I left the courtyard to bring others. As soon as I stepped out into the street, people, with their nerves already tense, shrieked and ran from me. I tried to speak but no one listened.

Tom came running up. “Good God, Adam!” he panted. “Where have you been?” He grabbed my hand and pulled me toward his car, parked some blocks down. “When you bellowed and leaped away so suddenly before,” he continued, “everyone thought you had gone wild. The crowd has been murmuring against you. Hurry. A mob will do anything. Hurry!”

Half the crowd had surged after us, transferring their blind, helpless rage at the fire to me. I picked up Tom in my arms and raced for our car, outstripping any pursuers. I drove the car myself, away from the threatening people and out of the city.

It was not till we had gone several miles, and no pursuit appeared, that Tom became calmer and looked at me. He looked over my body, his eyes suddenly wide and comprehending. “Adam! Those soot-streaks—you look

like you'd been in the fire!"

I told my story. Tom sat silently for a while, just staring at me. "You risked your own—life!" he murmured finally. "And no one saw you do it?"

"No one," I told him.

"The irony of it!" Tom said with a groan. "If there had been one witness, the story would have made you a hero. Now, you'd never be believed. The rescued pair will probably believe they escaped themselves, somehow. And I'm just afraid—" He went on frankly, his voice a little hollow. "I'm not as confident in winning for you, as I was at first. Public opinion—and that will mean the jury—is stupidly against you from the start. Adam, we may lose!"

THE trial was tomorrow.

That evening, I noticed the change in my young friend. Up to this time he had been eager, jubilant, accepting the unprecedented defense of a metal intelligence as a most unique chance to match his legal wits against the ponderous machinery of law. Now he was worried, depressed, as the hour drew near.

A man called later, an older lawyer acquaintance of Tom's. I was not supposed to hear, being in the next room reading, but my microphonic tympanums are extremely sensitive to sound. Behind closed doors I heard the elderly man say:

"Tom, as a friend of your dead father, and for your own sake, I must advise you to give up this preposterous case. Maybe the robot *is* intelligent, and innocent of the crime of which he is accused. But you can never prove it. You will lose, if my professional opinion means anything at all. Your own professional career will be blasted. You will be ruined, Tom! Is a robot—a mere mechanical contrivance—worth

such sacrifice?"

The last few words were tinged with scorn, but Tom's answer came swiftly, though in a low voice. "Yes! And I'm going through with it!" The other man left, realizing Tom's utter determination.

CHAPTER IV

On Trial for My Life

THE day of the trial.

I will not go into great detail. So much has been written of the event. I will give my own reactions, thoughts, observations. I was placed in custody of the court early in the morning. The first day of the trial began at noon, before a packed audience.

I, Adam Link, was the defendant. Thomas Link was my defense counselor. The prosecutor was the city's most prominent attorney, requisitioned by Sheriff Barclay in his determination to rid the county of "a dangerous menace." The jurors were twelve average citizens of the city. All of them watched me continuously with eyes that held no sympathy or understanding—only hostile fear and unreasoning hatred.

In all that courtroom, only one man was on my side—Tom himself. No, two. There was also the reporter who had been my editorial champion. He sat in the press box, and waved a greeting to me, which I returned. There were several other reporters, from big cities, who obviously looked upon the whole thing as some comic-opera hoax, or gigantic publicity stunt.

Of all the human institutions with which I have come in contact, your courtroom proceedings are to me the most confusing. It seems an endless turmoil of questions, evasions and half-truths. It is like hacking one's way through the jungles I have read about, and going ever in circles.

The prosecution slowly proceeded to pin the murder of Dr. Link on me, by circumstantial evidence. To bolster his accusations, the prosecutor called me to the witness chair. The crowd sat up stiffly and the room became utterly silent. They were about to hear an allegedly intelligent creation of mineral matter talk. I suppose it is hard to believe.

"Adam Link, you are a machine? You are strong?" asked the attorney.

"Yes, to both questions," I answered.

"You could kill any human being with your metal hands?"

"Yes."

"You could, in fact, kill a dozen men with a dozen blows?"

"Yes."

The prosecutor had fired the questions like a machine-gun. I had answered quickly, as I always do. Tom looked at me helplessly, having had no chance to object. I knew what he wanted of me—evasion, hedging. But I am a machine. I have not learned to smother truth. Besides, I had taken the oath to speak the truth, all the truth, and nothing but the truth.

You can guess how the rest went. The prosecutor led me through my story of the death of my creator, with leading questions that constantly highlighted my brute power.

Tom was sweating when he questioned me. He, in turn, attempted to bring to the fore my humanlike intelligence and thoughts. He quoted from his uncle's letters concerning me. He had volunteer professors from the city's college ask me scientific questions. I rather think I amazed them, for I had read Dr. Link's extensive private library through from beginning to end. My photographic memory supplied the answers to questions in biology, physics, chemistry, astronomy, and down the line. I added, multiplied, or took cube

roots of any sets of complicated numbers instantly. Often they had to check for many minutes, with paper and pencil. Electrons move at the speed of light. Electrons motivate my brain.

Tom glowed with brief triumph. The air within the court had subtly changed. There was respect for me, if nothing else. The prosecutor then seized opportunity. He magnanimously admitted my intellect but—*where was my soul?*

THE trial rapidly resolved itself into something a little more significant than the mere death of one man. By the second day—I spent a night in the hated jail—a stark issue arose.

Could I, an intelligent but alien being, be allowed to live and move in the world of men?

Two portions of the interminable proceedings stand clearly imprinted in my mind. First, the prosecutor's most oratorical moment, when he shouted:

"Adam Link, as we have been forced to call him, is a *thing* without a soul. Without a spark of human feeling within his cold metallic body. He can know nothing of the emotions of kindness, sympathy, mercy. If once he is given a place in human society, he will slay and destroy. He has no right to live. No thing that mocks the human body and its divine intellect has any place in our civilization. You men of the jury, remember that your decision will set a precedent. This is a grave responsibility. Science, long prophesying it, has finally produced the intelligent robot. And look what it has immediately become—a *killer!* A *Frankenstein!*"

Frankenstein! Again that hideous, twisted allusion! The word alone, in the popular mind, is a misconception, for Frankenstein's monster was *driven* to his deeds.

The prosecutor pointed an accusing

finger at me. All the crowd shrank a little, seeing me in the light he had conjured up.

Tom's closing speech was eloquent, but futile.

"Adam Link is a human being in all but body. His body is a machine, and machines serve humanity. The *mind* of Adam Link thinks the way we do, perhaps even in a superior degree. Gentlemen of the jury, if you find the defendant guilty, you are sending an innocent *man* to death!"

I looked at the jury, at the audience, at the court officials. Tom was talking to a blank wall. I searched for one ray of sympathy, understanding, but found none. Yes, one—the reporter who had braved opinion before. But he was only one out of hundreds facing me. I felt at that moment, a bottomless despair. I had felt that way once before—looking down at the dead body of Dr. Link and realizing I must face the future without his friendship and guidance.

The jury filed out to decide my fate.

COURT was adjourned, and I was taken under guard to the jail, to await recall. The way led around the front of the courthouse, to the neighboring jail building. Something of a crowd, unable to get into the court, had collected outside. Tom walked beside me, haggard and hopeless.

Suddenly he was whispering in my ear. "I've failed you, Adam! We've lost, I know. Adam"—he looked around—"make a break for it! Run away, now! It's your best chance. Perhaps somewhere you can hide, find a way to live. Run, Adam!"

He pushed at me. I think he was nearly out of his mind, from the strain of the past few days. I gripped his shoulder and steadied him. "No, Tom!" I said. "There is no place for me in your world. I will accept—"

And then I suddenly *did* leap away. I am afraid I bowled over two of the police escorting me. I had gone twenty yards before the gasp of the nearby crowd indicated that they had seen what I had seen.

I had seen and comprehended, seconds before anyone else, the tragedy impending, out in the street. A little boy on roller skates had lost balance. I saw the first twist of his little body, that told me he would fall. Also the car. It was coming at a fair rate of speed down the street. Its driver was carelessly viewing the crowd on the sidewalk.

All things relating to distances, measures, and numbers integrate instantaneously in my brain, itself a mathematical instrument. I can explain it no more simply. I *knew* the boy on roller skates was going to sprawl in front of that car. I *knew* the driver, with his slow human reflexes, would perceive this and jam on his brakes *seconds too late*. I even knew that the right front wheel would pass over the child's chest, and the car would roll from 3 to 5 feet further before it stopped. The boy would be dead.

A fraction of a second to note all this. Another few seconds running, at a speed that is impossible to humans. And then I was in front of the sprawling boy, between him and the careening car. There was no time to snatch him up, with my hard metal hands, without bruising him terribly. But the car could be stopped!

I braced myself at the proper angle, right shoulder forward, crouching. There was the loud impact of metal on metal. The car's radiator struck my shoulder as I had planned. For a moment it was machine fighting machine, with a life at stake. The car, with its greater weight, pushed me back five feet—six—seven—*ten*! My feet—flat

plates of tough metal,—dug into the asphalt of the paving, gouging out two deep trenches.

Then the car stopped, its engine dying with a strangled gasp. My heel plates were five inches from the fallen child's body. Close enough. I congratulated myself. I had figured it would be seven inches.

WHEN I straightened up, my right arm dangled uselessly, as I had expected. My right shoulder plate was a crumpled mass. The heavy frontal plate of my chest bore a frayed dent five inches deep. Another half-inch would have shattered an electrical distributor within, rendered me helpless prey to the rolling car, along with the child. But I had allowed for that five-inch dent also, when fixing my body in position before the impact.

A dead silence seemed to hang over the scene as I looked around. No one moved. Hundreds of pairs of eyes stared as though in a trance. The little boy on roller skates struggled up, whimpering with fright—mostly at seeing me. Then a woman rushed to him from the crowd, taking him in her arms.

At that moment, a court official hurried from the courtroom, telling the police guard to bring back the prisoner. The jury had already made up its verdict, in a short minute!

Back in the courtroom, the foreman of the jury arose. Everyone knew what the verdict would be:

"We, the jury, find the defendant *guilty* of the murder of Dr. Link, in the first degree!"

Tom looked sadly at me. A hush came over the crowd. All eyes were on me, wondering what the machine with a mind would do or say. I did and said nothing. I had told Tom I would accept my fate.

The judge pronounced sentence:

Death in the electric chair, three days later. Electricity will burn out my brain, of course, as readily as that of a human being.

I AM writing this now, in my cell. Heavy chains that even I cannot break bind me to the wall. They are not necessary. I would not try to escape. I would not want to live in a world that does not want me.

One thing has given me satisfaction, or else I would pass from the scene with deep regrets. Tom visited me an hour ago, accompanied by a grave, distinguished man. He is one of the world's greatest legal men. Seeing the brilliance of Tom, through the trial, against insuperable odds, he has offered Tom a position in his office. Thus Tom's future has not been blasted by his unselfish labors in my hopeless cause.

I must mention, too, the visit of the young reporter I have mentioned several times. I do not even know his name. But he told me he was convinced that he had seen justice go wrong, once again. At the last he made a gesture I fully realize has great significance. *He shook hands with me!* Tears are foreign to me, but something blurred my vision as he strode away.

It is amusing in a way, the last thing I have to write. I have told them how simple it is. They would just have to turn the master switch on my chest and smash my inanimate body. But they insist on the electric chair. It is the law. I will give them full satisfaction.

It is best, I think, that I pass into the non-existence from which Dr. Link summoned me seven months ago. My short sojourn in this world has been confusion for the most part. I would never understand, or be understood.

One curious thought. What will my epitaph in history be, that of—*monster or man?*

ADAM LINK



In his hand he held—a can opener! Despite Kay Temple's restraining hand on my metal arm, I surged to my feet amid sudden, tense silence.

ADAM Link finds out that human hearts are not machines, and discovers for the first time the real meaning of human love.

in **BUSINESS**

By EANDO BINDER

CHAPTER I

Pardon . . . Or Death?

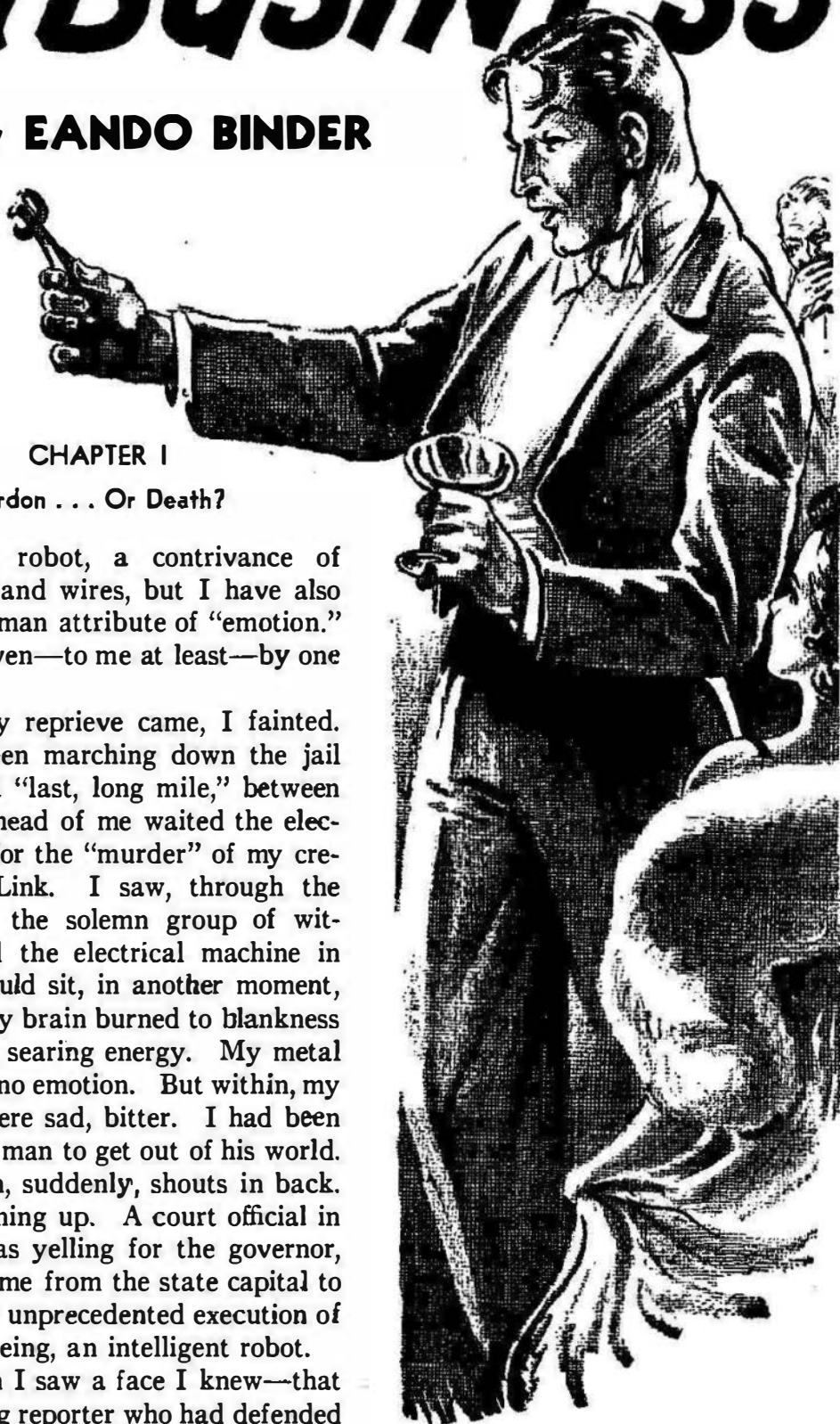
I AM a robot, a contrivance of wheels and wires, but I have also that human attribute of "emotion." This is proven—to me at least—by one thing.

When my reprieve came, I fainted.

I had been marching down the jail hall in that "last, long mile," between guards. Ahead of me waited the electric chair, for the "murder" of my creator, Dr. Link. I saw, through the open door, the solemn group of witnesses, and the electrical machine in which I would sit, in another moment, and have my brain burned to blankness by surging, searing energy. My metal face shows no emotion. But within, my thoughts were sad, bitter. I had been ordered by man to get out of his world.

And then, suddenly, shouts in back. People running up. A court official in the lead was yelling for the governor, who had come from the state capital to witness this unprecedented execution of a created being, an intelligent robot.

And then I saw a face I knew—that of the young reporter who had defended me in his editorials, and shaken hands



with me after my sentence, in sympathy. He was flushed, panting. My gaze swerved and I was startled to see several other faces I knew.

The governor came hurrying out of the death-chamber.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded.

The young reporter stepped forward boldly. "I'm Jack Hall, sir, of the Evening Post," he said clearly, in the hushed silence. "The state has convicted an innocent—man! Adam Link is not the murderer of Dr. Charles Link. I demand that you listen to me!"

He was being unnecessarily dramatic, but quite forgivably, I decided later. He signaled to a young man and woman, standing arm in arm, staring at me in eager fascination.

"Tell your story," Jack Hall prompted.

The young man spoke. "This—this robot was the one who saved us from the fire, two weeks ago. I was unconscious most of the time, while he carried us out of the burning building, but once I opened my eyes. I distinctly saw the metal body. I can't be mistaken. I know that now, especially after this reporter took us back to the site of the fire yesterday. I know I couldn't have jumped *thirty feet* across to the next building, nor could Dora. The robot did it. We owe him our lives!"

A gasp and murmur went up among the listeners. Jack Hall waited a moment, then pointed a dramatic finger at a middle-aged lady holding a child by the hand.

She spoke, as though at a cue. Jack Hall had evidently prearranged all this.

"The robot saved my boy. Everybody saw it, in front of the court-house the day of the trial. He is not a monster, if he did that. I—I—" She choked and turned to look full at me.

"God bless you, sir!"

I don't know how the others felt. For myself, at that moment, I felt death would be sweet, with this tribute as my last memory in life.

The governor cleared his throat. "I am afraid this is irrelevant," he said gruffly. "We did not pass judgment, in the trial, on Adam Link's—uh—character. He is still the murderer of Dr. Link."

YES, that was the issue. I had saved three lives, but taken one, circumstantially. By the mathematics of law, the former cancelled to zero because of the latter. It was hopeless to expect any pardon from the governor. Jack Hall should know that, better than I. I wanted to express my deep gratitude for his act, at least giving me the cloak of a martyr before death, but at the same time, I thought him foolishly impractical.

The end had only been delayed for a moment. I was marked for death. But queerly now, the air had changed. Where all these people before had been hostile, or at least indifferent to me, eyes were now downcast. Joyful wonder gripped me. Were a mixed group of humans, for the first time, *sympathizing* with me? Had I won my rightful place—at the brink of extinction?

The thought was both uplifting, and hollowly painful. I must have felt as a racer would, winning a hard-fought grind, only to have his car explode in his face at the finish-line.

I looked at Jack Hall reproachfully. He had made my last moment harder to bear. He must have felt that, behind the impassive metal of my "face." He shot me a look that said, "Wait, friend."

Then he whirled, pulling forward the other person I knew. The lady who had been Dr. Link's weekly house-

keeper. She it was who had seen me bent over the corpse of Dr. Link, skull smashed. She had been the prosecution's key witness! What mad thing had prompted Jack Hall to bring her here? Everyone stiffened, recalling that despite saving lives, I had first brutally cracked the skull of my creator. I might be partly a saint—but also a devil. A Mr. Hyde as well as Dr. Jekyll. And a—Frankenstein!

Better that he goes, I knew they were all thinking now. Intelligent he may be, capable of good at times. But what of the moments when his trustless mechanical brain urged him to kill, with brute hands powered by steel muscles? He would run amuck, sooner or later, killing wantonly.

THE atmosphere was tense.

The housekeeper, prompted by the reporter, finally spoke, nervously.

"This gentleman"—she pointed out Jack Hall—"called on me yesterday. He kept asking me questions. And then I remembered one thing. On the day Dr. Link died, I was hanging up the wash, in the yard. I heard the sound from his laboratory, something striking flesh, and then a moan, and I ran in. I saw the robot standing over the—the body, just like I said in court. And—"

"Well?" grunted the governor.

"I—I didn't remember, sir, till this reporter questioned me. Please, sir, I didn't mean to lie! I just didn't remember then. You see, I heard the sound of this—this robot running up from the storeroom below, where Dr. Link kept him out of sight, the days I came. I heard the robot's steps very clearly, sir, *after* I heard Dr. Link moan as something struck him! Please, sir, I didn't mean to lie—"

"That's all right," said Jack Hall soothingly, patting her shoulder. "Just be quiet now."

He faced around. "Sorry to spoil the fun, gentlemen," he said in a breezy manner characteristic of his profession. "You heard the witness. She'll testify to that on the Bible. Adam Link was 35 feet away when the instrument that caused Dr. Link's death crushed his skull. It was purely accidental—a loose angle-iron falling from a transformer shelf, as the defense maintained."

The governor, who had studied the case thoroughly, looked skeptical, despite what the woman had said. "No blood-stains were found on that angle-iron, as the defense admitted," he reminded. "There were blood-stains only on Adam Link's hand and arm!"

"Yes, because Adam Link arrived and raised the angle-iron so swiftly that bleeding had not yet occurred. Have you ever seen Adam Link move—fast? He is like chained lightning!" Jack Hall's answer had been quick. He went on more quickly. "As a matter of fact, there *were* blood-stains on the angle-iron. You see, the body had slumped forward. It was not the front end of the angle-iron that struck, but the *back* end, formerly hinged!"

He waved to a distinguished looking man at his side, the last of those he had brought. "Dr. Polson, eminent biologist and authority on blood-stains!"

"There are three dried blood drops at the back end of that angle-iron," Dr. Polson said authoritatively. "They check with Dr. Link's blood samples!"

Jack Hall faced the governor now. "The prosecution's whole case was built around the housekeeper's testimony, and the blood-stains on Adam Link's arm, supposedly lacking on the angle-iron. Now both points are reversed. You, sir, have the unique honor of correcting one of the worst miscarriages of justice this bad little world ever saw!"

"I grant reprieve," returned the governor, visibly stunned. "The blood-

stains will be checked. If investigation proves that point, I'll make out a pardon for Adam Link!"

But everyone knew there could no longer be doubt. Dr. Polson was too famed to be wrong.

It was then I fainted. I can only describe it as a welling joy that choked me, made my brain dizzy, so that I clattered to my knees. Or perhaps it was just a sudden surge of electrons against the center of locomotion within my iridium-sponge brain.

MY mind cleared in a moment, before I had fallen flat. As I arose again, I murmured something but it was drowned out by the sudden cheer that rang from the people around. And in that moment, I knew I had gained a secure foothold in human society, monster though I was in form.

"Damn fools!" muttered Jack Hall. "One moment ready to execute you, the next cheering you!"

The pardon came through eight hours later. "Come, Adam old boy," said Jack. "Let's have a drink together. I mean let's go to my room and have a talk."

I will pass rather sketchily over much that happened later.

Jack Hall and I had many talks together. The hubbub died down, and the newspapers found other headlines besides the story of my "heroism" and Jack Hall's "breaking" of the case. I found him a very likeable young man, shrewd, witty, worldly wise. I learned much from him, things the books I had read didn't reveal.

He seemed to take a delight in making me his bosom companion, and introducing me to all his friends.

"Adam old fellow," as he explained to me one day, with a cheerful inflection that made me feel at home with him—made me feel *human*—"you've

got to get around, meet people. You're legally a human being now, no question of that. People will soon take you for granted, accept you as a fellow man. You're going to register for the fall elections and vote. Heaven help the man that protests, because I'll stink him out in an editorial!"

"It's a dream come true, Jack," I returned. "Both mine and my creator's. His aim was to make me a citizen. But tell me"—I was curious—"why are you going to all this trouble for me?"

I knew it wasn't mere publicity he sought. Jack Hall wasn't that type. It was something within himself.

"I don't know," he returned vaguely. "Except that I always take the side of the underdog. Always did, I guess."

And I saw that clearly, one day, when he stepped into a street fight, protecting an undersized man from the coarse attack of a big, foul-mouthed ruffian. The origin of the fight was never clear. I watched Jack Hall wade in and bear the brunt of the hulking man's brutal blows. When my friend went down, nose streaming blood, I stepped up. The big man was about to kick Jack while he was down.

I grasped the man's belt, jerked him off his feet, and suspended him at arm's length. I held him that way till he stopped bellowing and squirming like a fish out of water. Then I dropped him. He picked himself up and slunk away, without a word.

"Good way to stop a fight, Adam Link," said the policeman who came up a moment later. "You ought to join the force."

CHAPTER II

A Business Venture

JACK took me to many poker games among his reporter friends. I began

to acquire a decided liking for the game. But eventually they blackballed me from their games. I always won. My thinking processes, triggered by electrons, are instantaneous, and unerringly mathematical. I never drew two to a straight, or three to a pair against the opener at my left. It is sheer challenge against the inexorable laws of numbers. Then, too, I had the perfect "poker" face. I bluffed outrageously.

We tried bridge for a while, but here, at the seventh or eighth trick, I already knew every suit-holding in the opponents' hands, by deduction. Bridge experts do that, too. But bridge experts can't figure out every card's denomination, as I do. I use intricate mathematical sequences of probability that serve me 75 per cent of the time.

"You're a mental wizard, Adam," said one of the boys in disgust at being set four on what looked like a sure slam. "You ought to capitalize on it."

And that night, Jack Hall, rather preoccupied, spoke to me more seriously than usual.

"Capitalize on it!" he echoed the statement. "Look, Adam, have you any plans for the future? You've got a long life ahead of you—" He looked at me in sudden startlement. "Say, just how long *will* you live?"

I smiled mentally. "Till my iridium-sponge brain oxidizes away—which may not be for centuries!" I went on very seriously. "Yes, Jack, that's been my thought, too. I've been content in these past weeks to just learn something of life. But I must have a purpose in this world, a place. My kind can be useful to civilization."

"You mean you're thinking of having more robots built like you?"

I shook my head, a mannerism I had picked up quite naturally.

"No, not yet. First I, the Adam of all intelligent robots, must find out

many things. I must adjust myself to useful life among humans, so that I can later show the way to others of my kind. But just how best to serve mankind, I'm not quite sure. I—"

The phone rang. Jack answered, and then called me to it, explaining it was Dr. Polson.

"Adam Link?" the biologist said. "I was at your court trial. You were asked many scientific questions there, in the defense's proof of your intelligence, and you answered them all. I remember particularly that when asked what hormone promotes growth, you not only gave the name but the formula. I've finally checked, with that clue, and found you're right! But good Heavens"—now the voice became excited—"how did you know a formula no other scientist on Earth knew?"

"I deduced the formula," I answered truthfully, "from existing data."

A strange sort of sigh came from the scientist. "I'm glad I helped save you from extinction, Adam Link. Come and work with us," he begged. "You're a genius!"

I pondered that for a long time, that is, long for me—several seconds. "No," I returned, hanging up.

But when I faced Jack Hall again, it had clarified in my mind—what I wanted to do. "I will become a consultant, Jack. That is my place in life." I went on, outlining what I meant.

"Fine!" agreed my friend. "That way you'll make a living, not to mention money! I'll set you up in an office—"

AND that was how I went into business, with an office on the 22nd floor of the Marle Building, downtown. On the office door were the gold-leaf letters: "Adam Link, Incorporated." Jack's idea, of course.

He also arranged my advertising, and

gave me free publicity in his paper. And so, soon, I was "making a living," although that thought is rather incongruous to me. My purpose is not to do the best for myself, but to do my best for others.

Within a month, people flocked for my services. Chemists came to me with knotty reactions, on paper. I straightened them out, on paper. Often I failed. But more often I helped. Every industry in the city sought me out, on problems ranging anywhere from proper factory lighting to the intricacies of subatomic researches. I worked mainly with formulae, using the hammer of mathematics to straighten the bent implements of industry.

It is hard to explain my ability to do these things. To correct a chemical reaction, for instance, without ever seeing the ingredients, or coming within a mile of the laboratory. I had been reading steadily, having gone through every scientific and technical book in several libraries. I bought all the latest scientific and trade journals and books. I read each with my television eyes, in a few minutes. I remembered every word, every equation, with my indelible memory. And somehow, my iridium-sponge brain integrated all this knowledge, with the sureness of a machine.

I suppose it seems a sort of miraculous ability. You will have to take my word for it. Or else, I can show you the records of checks received for my services. Money began to pour in. I never set a fee. Checks came in unsolicited, from grateful business men.

AND now I come to the more significant part of what I wish to set down. Almost, I feel it is no use to write of it—that I can never explain. But so much nonsense, some of it shamefully rude, has been written about this that I feel I must at least try to

show how it came about. How, if not why.

Jack Hall had been dropping in regularly, helping me organize the consultant business, and handling my accounts. Banking my money one day, he came back whistling in surprise.

"Adam, old man," he said, "you're making money hand over fist. And your accounts are becoming involved. You need a secretary." He snapped his fingers. "I know just the girl—good worker and a good looker—" He broke off. Sometimes it was hard for him to remember that I was a metal man, not flesh and blood. "She's out of a job right now," he continued. "She's had dozens of them. They never last. Why? Because she's pretty, and her various ex-bosses forgot she came just to work."

I knew what he meant. Through Jack I have learned of that phase of human life which, I'm afraid, will never be quite clear to me.

Jack brought her in the next day.

She was pretty; in fact, beautiful. I can appreciate natural beauty, lest you think not. Jack had often taken me on drives through woodland scenery. Though he does not know it, he is romantic by nature. I remember one view, from a high hill, overlooking sweeping fields and woods, with piled white clouds above. We stood together, drinking it in. One needs only a mind to appreciate those things. I have a mind.

Kay Temple was beautiful, I repeat. Pleasant, classical features, with hazel eyes that could smile or look faintly tragic. Her hair was dark, with a soft sheen to it, in sunlight. When she walked, there was grace in every movement.

"How do you do, Mr. Link?" she said, coming forward a little hesitantly and extending her hand. Her voice was

low, musical, to my sensitive mechanical tympanums, whereas so many human voices are strident.

Her soft little hand, resting in my cold, hard, metallic substitute for one, was a new experience for me. Not physical, of course. It was just that the incongruous contrast suddenly made clear to me that I was a *man*, in mind, not a woman. This is understandable, in that I had begun life, under Dr. Link, purely from the man's viewpoint. That is, I had come to think of and see all things in that peculiar way human males do, as distinguished from human females.

And Kay Temple's presence suddenly made that clear to me. For I saw instantly that I couldn't read her feelings, or her outlook, as quickly as I could all human men with whom I had come in contact. She was, from the first moment—mystery.

"Here you are, Kay," said Jack bustling, sweeping a hand around. "Your new job. Up and coming business. Fine boss. Don't say your Uncle Jack hasn't done right by you!"

I smiled to myself. Solely by the strange inflection he gave the words "Uncle Jack," I knew he was hopelessly in love with her. How could I know that? How can I know even the meaning of the words "in love"—I, a robot of cold, senseless metal, with a heart consisting of an electrical distributor! You will see—later.

"Thanks much, Jack," she said in a quiet, earnest way. I tried to read her attitude toward Jack, but failed utterly. She was again—mystery.

I thanked Jack myself, earnestly, a few days later. Kay Temple was a god-send to me, in the business, which had begun to grow unwieldy. She was efficiency itself. She handled all appointments, calls, fees, recording. She made the suggestion one day that I set a minimum fee of a thousand dollars an hour,

to limit my clientele. I was, after all, but one person. The fee was not too high. I often solved problems in minutes.

After business hours, the three of us would sometimes go out together. I joined them at dinners, though food does not pass my lips, of course. My "food" consists of electrical current, supplied by powerful batteries within the pelvic part of my frame. In my spare moments, I had devised a more compact and powerful battery, so that I could "run" a week without change, instead of the 48 hours Dr. Link had originally started me with. The battery, incidentally, superior to any before, is on the market now, under public domain. I didn't want to patent it myself, purely for gain.

After dinner, we would go to a show, or play, or some other entertainment. I enjoy them as much as anyone else. If they are good. If they aren't I enjoy them as the ridiculous nonsense with which you humans so often attempt to entertain each other. I am afraid that in such cases, I laugh *at* rather than *with* them. I am not taking a superior stand, though. I would warrant that a world of robots, like myself, would also plumb the depths of shallow absurdity to while away dull hours.

Yes, I know hours of dullness, too. I am not all steady industry, activity, the tirelessness of a machine. There are times when my brain sags, when a "blue" feeling steals over me, when things seem hollow, empty. And remember that I have 24 hours a day to fill. Sometimes I long to have the gift of sleep!

Perhaps you think I am merely trying to make myself out as near-human in my mental processes. I could know all those things simply by reading. I have no answer for that, except what happened later.

TO get back to my companions and "night life," I recall with mixed pleasure and pain one certain evening, in a cabaret. The master-of-ceremonies, picking out celebrities, finally turned the limelight on me.

"Adam Link, ladies and gentlemen!" he said. "The talking, walking, thinking robot! Be he man or be he beast, he's got what it takes. His weekly income would make most of us turn bright green with envy. We all know of his heroism in the fire, and saving a child. Take a bow, Adam. You can see, folks, that he doesn't do it with mirrors. Nor is he run by strings. He's the real thing!"

I arose and bowed slightly, at Jack's urging. I did not mind the master-of-ceremonies' bantering, for beneath it there had been respect. And the answering burst of applause was wholehearted. I felt a deep glow. Now, more than before, I realized I had been accepted in the world of man. Even the inevitable autograph-hunter boldly walked up, held out his book. I signed with my usual scrawl, since I do not have the fine control over my hands that you humans have.

"Wait!" said the master-of-ceremonies, as I was about to sit down. "Take a chair, there, Adam, and show us how you can crumple it up like matchwood with your hands. Go ahead—we'll gladly stand the cost. He doesn't know his own strength, folks. And yet, he's gentle as a lamb. Okay, Adam—"

But this I did not want to do. I do not care to display my brute powers, so meaningless, when it is my mind that counts. Jack, quick to see this, hastily signalled negatively to the man.

"Sorry, Adam!" the master-of-ceremonies said smoothly. "No offense. So instead we'll play a brand new ditty one of my boys composed. It'll be a hit, or I'm a robot! Title—'Who Do I Mean?'

Warble it, Honey!"

It is a hit. You've all heard it. "Honey," the club's singer, rendered it nicely. I listened, a bit bewildered.

*"He has a heart of gold,
And nerves of steel,
He rattles like a dishpan,
And never eats a meal.*

*Who do I mean?
Why, Adam Link the r-o-o-bot!*

*He has a silvery voice,
And an iron grip,
One thing he cannot do,
Is take an ocean dip.*

*Who do I mean?
Why, Adam Link the r-o-o-bot!"*

A silly little song, of course, and it runs on for verse after verse. Its catchy tune, I believe, is the secret of its popularity. It amuses me immensely.

Again there was applause, almost wild, and I was forced to take another bow. It had "brought down the house."

And then it was that a voice rose from the next table.

"Aw, all this fuss over a junk-man," growled a beefy man, with two empty bottles of champagne beside his elbow. "Haw, haw, that's good—junk-man! Get it?" He was speaking to his lady companion, ostensibly, but really to the whole house. "Hey, Frankenstein!" He turned to me, looking me up and down appraisingly. "Let's see—I'll offer 95c and not a penny more!" He guffawed coarsely.

A queer silence came over the room. Everybody looked around. It was an open insult. And everybody wondered, no doubt, if I had feelings that could be hurt. I did. But I said nothing. Jack started up, face livid, but I pulled him back.

The man's companion had whispered

to him. "Aw, I'm not afraid of him!" his drunken tongue boasted. "Neither of them." He staggered erect to his feet and leered at me, and in his hand he held—a can-opener. For a split instant I half rose to my feet and felt the restraining hand of Kay on my metal arms. And then my tormentor spoke again. What he said made me subside immediately. "Want to make anything of it, Frankenstein?" he said.

Frankenstein, again! Would it always hound me, all my life? I could see vague fears steal into people's faces. No matter how calmly I was accepted, there was always that lurking distrust of me. That fear that at any moment I would show the beast in me. There must be a beast in me, of course! Maybe you humans think that way because you know of the beast within yourselves. But I do not mean to be bitter.

We left. There was nothing else to do. In a taxi on the way home, I felt sunk in moodiness. Jack and Kay looked at me. Kay suddenly put her hand on my arm.

"I just want to say, Adam Link," she said earnestly, "that you're more of man than many so-called men. You have—yes, character!" She said it in a sort of awed tone, as though it had suddenly struck her. "Please don't think about what happened!"

And that is one of the memories I'll carry with me to my grave, wherever and whenever it will be. Kay Temple that day made such things easier to bear.

CHAPTER III

New Developments

I RECORD the following incident purely to show I was not a hero in any sense of the word. I had gone to the bank, to deposit several checks in

my account. As I stood at the wall counter, filling out the blank, I heard a rough voice say threateningly:

"This is a stick-up! Don't move, anybody!"

I turned, stood still. Three masked bandits were advancing, with sub-machine guns. The few depositors threw up their hands, white-faced. One bandit barked to the clerks behind the grill to hand out money, in a hurry. The other two stood on guard, eyes shifting around, ready to shoot. Outside, at the curb, I could see a big black car with motor running, waiting for the getaway.

I hadn't made a move, since turning around. I saw the nervous, watchful eyes of the guarding men flick over me impersonally. In their tense state, they didn't see who I was. They probably took me, without thinking, as some metallic fixture of the place. I was in shadow.

I thought rapidly. Then I leaped for the bandit nearest the door, at the same time yelling "down!" at the other people. My leap was so instantaneous, so surprising, that I reached the man and wrenched his gun away before he even thought of shooting.

But the other guard sprang into action. His submachine gun coughed harshly. Bullets rattled against my middle—they always shoot for the abdomen, I understand. And that was what made it simple for me. My middle body is sheathed with thick metal plates. Bullets cannot penetrate. But bullets higher, into my eyes or face-piece, would have stopped me—even killed me.

I ran directly into the hail of bullets. Suddenly the bandit was aware at what he was shooting. His eyes opened wide, shocked. His gun dropped from nerveless fingers. He backed away, with a shriek of utter terror, and then fainted.

Now I went for the third man. He

had whirled, brought up his gun. Evidently a little harder to scare, and shrewder, he raked bullets at me. And he suddenly raised the muzzle, to shoot higher, at my head.

That was the only moment of danger. Instantly, I dove under his fire, clanked against the floor on my chest plates and slid across the tile toward him, like a metal baseball player stealing home. Before he could swing the gun down, I had grasped his ankle and jerked him off his feet. My grip also snapped his delicate ankle bones. He was through, too.

This had all happened in seconds.

Now the two men outside, in the car, hearing the shots, came to a window to take a look, faces aghast, and then jumped back. I saw I had no time to run to the door, to stop them. Instead I ran straight for the big plate-glass window, crashed through in a shower of glass. The car was just starting to move.

I thought of grasping the rear bumper, trying to hold the car back, or even overturning it, but I estimated, in lightning thought, that it would be beyond even my powers, with the engine already in gear. The weight alone would not have stopped me.

Secondly, I thought of jumping on the running-board, poking a hand through the window, and grasping the steering wheel away. But the runaway car might then smash up somewhere. I myself might end up crushed.

There was only one possibility left. I had not slowed one bit after crashing through the window. I overtook the car, just starting to zoom into second gear, and ran ahead of it. Then I turned, running backward—still faster than the car—and just stared at the two bandits in the front seat.

I figured the psychological effect correctly. Instinctively, the driver jammed on his brakes, perhaps visioning 300 pounds of metal ramming through his

windshield if he ran me down.

Then it was that I jumped on the running-board, wrenched the steering wheel off its post. Completely unnerved, the two bandits shrank back, babbling for mercy, thinking I was about to tear them apart too. And so, a few minutes later, the police had all five of them.

It was nothing "heroic" on my part—you humans have a strange "hero" complex—but simply use of my machine-given powers. I vision some day a police force of robots like myself. . . .

BUT that will not be for a while. Not till I am sure others of my kind really belong in the world of man. Perhaps never. I say this, now, thinking back to what has happened.

My business went along smoothly, with Kay in charge of all details. But more and more I began to notice her watching me, surreptitiously, in a strange way. I seldom caught her at it. When I looked—I have to turn my whole head to look—she would be staring impersonally at her typewriter. But I could *feel* her eyes on me. Again I failed to reason out why she did that. She was, as I imagine women have always been to men—mystery.

Not that she was annoyingly secretive. On the contrary, she was quite open and frank in her general curiosity about me. Oftentimes, with Jack, our conversation would turn to myself. I explained as best I could what made me "tick." I told them my outlook on things. We would at times discuss humanity and social life, relative to the robot question. My very presence—the long-predicated metal man of intelligence—made that problem a looming one.

Dr. Link had cautiously destroyed his ultimate secret of energizing and bringing to life an iridium-sponge brain. He had given me the key formula. It was

locked in my mind. Therefore I, and I alone, would have the final decision to make, whether any more robots were to be made.

"Eventually," Jack said, in one of his more serious moments, "it will have to come to the government's attention. Your record will soon prove, to them, that intelligent robots will be an economic asset to civilization. And no threat to man's rule, all fantasy to the side. You, Adam, are already proof of those fundamental things."

"Not quite," I returned. "The problem goes deeper. I was fortunate in being 'brought up' by a high-minded man, Dr. Link. My open, impressionable mind was given the best possible start in civilized life. But think of a robot brought into being and trained by an unscrupulous man, or an out-and-out criminal. What would the robot be? The same!"

Kay nodded. "A basic rule. Environment molding the mind. If we had no slums, there would be no slum children." Her voice was a little tragic. "Some rise out of it; most don't—" She stopped.

"Kay did!" Jack went on, despite the girl's startled hand on his arm. "We know you well enough, Adam, for you to hear this. Kay had two strikes on her from the start—the slums and her beauty. She survived them both. But her sister didn't. Her sister—"

It was a tragic story, and I knew the reason now for Kay's somber moments. I was shocked at the revelation of slum life, poverty, maladjustment, side by side with a thriving mechanical civilization.

"I've been wondering what to do with my money," I said, when Jack was done. "Now I know. We're going to buy up slum property, tear down the buildings, and erect new modern ones!" Already my rapid thoughts were outlining the project.

Kay's eyes were shining, through tears. Her hand touched my arm.

"I don't see you as a robot any more, Adam!" she exclaimed. "I see you as a man! You have character, personality, just like anyone else. You are like a man who is big and strong—and gentle. You have kindly eyes, sympathetic lips, a strong chin." She was looking at me with half-closed eyes. "You have a grave, boyish face, a shock of unruly hair, seldom combed. Your hands are big, thick-fingered, but so very gentle! And when you smile—you often do, I know—it is like a warm sun breaking through clouds!"

Jack and I were both a little startled.

But Jack's face lighted up with a wondering fascination. "You know, Kay," he whispered, "you've described him to a T!"

And after that, I felt more than ever a human being. I knew that in their eyes I was no longer Adam Link, robot, but Adam Link—*man!*

THE slum-clearance project knit us three still more closely together. Jack quit his paper, where he had often editorialized against the city's laxness, and became manager of activities. We could not clean up everything, but we would do as much as we could. My money—it had reached over a half million—poured into the venture. Fire-trap, vermin-infested tenements began to go down, foundations up.

Tom Link, my "cousin," came from his eastern law office to help with legal matters. I have forgotten to mention Tom. He hadn't suddenly lost all interest in me, after his losing court battle, or I in him. It was just that he had gone to his new position, before the date of my near-execution, unable to bear being around for that bitter event. We had exchanged letters steadily, after my pardon. Now he came to help us.

"Adam Link!" he greeted me, stepping off the train. It was all he could say for the moment. I couldn't say anything.

Later, the four of us talked.

"How did you ever get that testimony out of the housekeeper?" Tom asked Jack, without jealousy. "I tried to get her to remember separate sounds, in the witness chair, but she stubbornly claimed she couldn't."

"It was simple enough," grinned Jack. "Talking to her at her home, I kept my voice loud. She was annoyed. I explained that I knew she was half deaf. That got her! Sometimes little personal things like that sharpen people's minds. To prove her perfect hearing, she *had* to remember that she had heard Adam's footsteps first—whether she really did or not! You see?"

"You missed your calling!" Tom meant it. He turned to me. "I knew neither my uncle nor I was wrong about you, Adam. You're proving your worth. I'm—well, I'm proud to be your cousin!"

Tom had to leave a week later, but promised to be back oftener. He had cleared away a legal tangle, and snipped much red tape for us.

BUT in all our activity, Jack, Kay and I still found time to relax and have fun.

Sports appealed to all of us. I quickly found tennis to my liking. But it was some time before I could learn to release my strength in normal quantities. At the very first try, I struck the tennis ball with the wood of the racket so violently that both ball and racket crumpled. Toning my blows down, I still had to learn control. Many a ball I knocked out of sight. My game steadied at last, soon to the point where Jack could not win a game. In fact, not even one volley.

He gave up, but one day grinningly contrived to have me play with a certain young friend with an inflated ego. Jack told me to give it all I had. I did. I won every service game on straight aces. I won opponent's service games by bullet-like returns that he never touched. His ego, to Jack's delight, was properly deflated.

Golf was next. It was a while before I could learn to strike the little ball at all. And longer to keep from driving it, when I did hit it, three greens beyond. But putting I never mastered. It takes a little more quiet, subtle control than I am capable of. I am good only for fast movement and blows of strength.

Horseback riding and swimming, of course, I could do nothing with, though Kay and Jack loved both. I don't think horseback riding would be any sort of thrill to me at all, since I can outrun any horse. Swimming—yes, I am laughing, too, at the mere thought of a robot trying that.

One of my chief delights was driving. I had bought a speedy, powerful car and would sometimes drive it over a hundred miles an hour down wide highways. The feel of a powerful motor thrills me. I feel a vague kinship with it. It is perhaps the only psychological twist I have, away from the human. I think of every engine, motor, and power plant as a "brother," less fortunately equipped than myself with an integrated center of control. But you can hardly understand. I will say no more.

I had a bad accident once, in my driving. My own driving, frankly, is faultless. I have instantaneous reflexes, perfect control, absolute timing. But other drivers are human. One car passed another just ahead of me, both coming my way. I jammed on my foot-brakes so forcefully that the connecting rods snapped. The emergency brake alone was inadequate. Our two cars would

smash violently together head-on!

To save the other man, I twisted my wheel, careened off the road, turned turtle twice, and ended up against a tree. The impact was thunderous, shoving the engine off its block, and there was an explosion and fire all around. I had crashed through the windshield, and against the tree, in the middle of the burning wreck.

"Good God!" moaned the man who had caused this, running up after stopping at the roadside. "Good God— whoever was in that car is—"

He couldn't finish. He meant to say: "crushed to pulp and burned to a cinder."

At that moment I stepped out, a little sooty and with a wide dent in my front plate, but otherwise unharmed. The man looked once, shock in his face, and fled. But I later received a letter from him, after he had realized who I was, offering to pay for my car. I thanked him, refusing to accept. He had in the first place had the good grace to stop after the accident.

I unwittingly caused another car to run off the road once, though no one was hurt. The driver glanced casually at me while I was passing. Startled and unnerved at seeing an unhuman creature driving, he lost control. After that, I rode with curtains on the side windows, and confined my sight-seeing to the front windshield.

CHAPTER IV

Kay Makes a Confession

I SEE that I have been digressing again. I know why I am doing it. It is because I am almost afraid to finish what I started to write. But I must get to it, or this account will ramble evasively without end.

I must get back to Kay Temple and Jack Hall.

Not very long ago, we three as usual went out together, to a movie. I forget the movie. I forget everything except that for the first time, Jack seemed annoyed at my presence. I had seen his hand, in the dark theatre, steal toward hers, grasp it. She glanced quickly at me, then at Jack, slightly shaking her head, and withdrawing her hand. It was my presence that prompted her, not wishing to isolate me from a three-way companionship. Kay Temple is that thoroughbred sort. She wouldn't hurt the feelings of anyone—even a metal man's.

That night I spoke to Jack. We had dropped Kay off at her place. Jack and I, I might mention, had had rooms together all this time. He had insisted on it.

"Jack," I began, and for once my words came haltingly. I didn't know how much to intrude on his privacy. "About you and Kay—"

It was as though I had touched off a fuse.

"Never mind about that!" Jack snapped back, almost explosively. "Keep your damned tin nose out of—"

And then he changed, just as quickly. "Forgive me, Adam, old boy," he apologized. "My nerves. Overwork, I guess."

I watched him while he sat at the edge of his bed, dangling a sock in his hand. He was miserable. Suddenly he looked up.

"Adam, you're my friend. Why should I hide it from you? I love Kay. I met her in a restaurant. Waitress. I set my cap for her, day after day. At last I got a date. I thought—well, never mind, but first thing I knew . . . bang! My swelled head changed to a swelled heart. That was over a year ago. I heard her story, admired her all the more, wanted to help her. She refused, of course, that way, though I wouldn't have taken advantage."

The words rushed out now, welling from within, and it hardly seemed the same debonair, cheerful, semi-cynical Jack I had known.

"I kept seeing her. I wanted to marry her. I proposed. She told me to wait, till we were both sure. And that's what has kept me on edge, Adam. I think she cares for me, but I'm not sure. I'm just not sure. That's the way it is right now, with me still waiting—and wondering. She, holding off for some reason. It's not another man." She would tell me instantly if it were that."

He was looking at me, then, with a half-smile.

"But I guess you don't understand things like that, Adam. You don't know how lucky you are, old boy, not to know the pangs of love and all that goes with it. At least when it turns out wrong. Damn, I wish I was a robot!"

He said such things disarmingly, without offense. But still he stirred a vague unrest in me. I had known most of the emotions you humans have—anger, fear, dismay, sorrow, quiet joys. But what about this mighty, mysterious thing called "love"? Love, more than anything, as I knew technically, was tied with strong bonds to the biological body. I had no biological body. Therefore I could never know love. Man I might be in all things save that. In that I was neuter. It was a world barred from me.

I tried to grasp how Jack must feel. Just what sort of emotional pain did he feel? But I couldn't know. I could only judge, from the smoldering ache deep in his eyes, that he was suffering in some strange, sweet-sad way.

Jack laughed suddenly, still looking at me.

"Say, Adam, you'd have it easy. Just make another robot, give it the feminine viewpoint, and she'd have to take you, with no other choice!"

He laughed a little wildly, and slipped into bed.

I went to my room where, as usual, I prepared to spend the night reading. For a few minutes, I heard smothered chucklings from behind Jack's closed door. I felt glad that his sense of humor had rescued him from his downcast mood. But somehow, what he had said wasn't at all humorous for me. I did less reading that night than thinking—and queer thinking it was!

A FEW days later, it happened.

We had enlarged our offices, and Kay now had a separate office in which to work. We also had a boy for the filing. I had just taken care of one client, that day, sending him to Kay for a bill, and was interviewing another.

"Here are the data, Mr. Link," said this man, technology manager of a food-products cannery. "Is there any way we can speed up our photo-electric process, which spots and takes out bad peas? We want faster production. The photo-electric people say it can't be done. But I thought perhaps you—"

I looked at the pages of data, diagrams, complete mechanical outlay of highly-complicated devices. I absorbed it all within ten minutes. I took a scratch pad and scrawled figures, formulae, for another five minutes. I wrote a final formula on a separate sheet and handed it to him.

"Here it is," I said. "You can increase the rate 25 per cent by using a piezo-electric crystal in the secondary transformer circuit."

The man was amazed. The solution I had given clicked in his trained mind. "By God, that's it!" he exclaimed. He looked at me wonderingly. "You've given me in fifteen minutes, by proxy, what might have taken months of experiment and research. Adam Link—"

I cut off his enthusiastic eulogies. I

had had so much of it from others. Besides, for the past eleven minutes, only half my mind had been on that problem. The other half had been on what I faintly heard going on in Kay's office.

The previous client was still there, though he must have his bill by now. Like many another man, he had lingered, attracted by Kay's loveliness. I barely made out some words of his. He was pressing her for a date which she had politely and patiently refused six times already.

I urged my own visitor out, told my office boy to keep the door to the outer waiting room closed for the time being, and stepped into Kay's office.

The man, a big, broad-shouldered, moneyed executive, was leaning over her desk. He was handsome, and had probably succeeded with many a girl by refusing to be rebuffed at the first try.

"Now look here, gorgeous," he was saying, in a half-wheedling, half-arrogant way, "you don't know who you're turning down—"

"I think she does," I said, moving close. "And she could turn down a dozen like you, without any loss. May I ask you to leave—immediately?"

He left—immediately—for the simple reason that my hand on his shoulder was propelling him out of the door. I gave him an extra squeeze at the last, cutting off his shouted threats to sue me for assault.

I WENT back to Kay. "I'm sorry you were annoyed," I said. "I should have come sooner." Then, to lighten the moment, I added, "I really can't blame the man, though, with a girl like you—"

"Adam!"

She just said the one word, staring at me in a strange way. It was the way she had been staring at me, watching me, surreptitiously, for long months.

But now her gaze was open, revealed. And I was suddenly frightened at what I saw in her eyes. I strode out.

But Kay followed me to my desk.

"Adam," she said, "I must tell you. I—"

I have no lungs or human-like throat with which to cough. But at times, a slight static charge issues from my interior, very much like a cough. I conjured one up now, with a swift mental order to my electrical distributor. It interrupted her.

"Kay," I returned rapidly. "You're a bit upset, I think. Don't you want to take the afternoon off?"

"No, I want to talk to you. I must!"

"Then remember," I returned rather gruffly, "that I'm a robot. A metal being, not a man of flesh and blood." I looked at her for a moment. "Kay, let's talk about Jack. He's a fine, young man, Kay. He has character. He—"

This time she interrupted me.

"So do you have character, Adam. I described you once—big and strong, grave boyish face, and gentle, tenderhearted. Yes, you have more heart than many men I've known. It is a person's mind that counts, not his physical body. Your mind, Adam, is that of a great man, and a good man. I love you!"

She said it quite naturally, quite calmly. She wasn't hysterical, or wrought-up. She was in perfect command of herself. Her eyes were steady, but there was also a glow in them. A glow that seemed like a blinding light to me, and I had to turn my eyes away.

"Kay, this is sheer nonsense—"

"No." Her voice was clear, soft. She came close to me, placed a hand on my shiny chromium shoulder. "No, Adam. That's the way it is. I feel more strongly for you than for any man I've ever met, even poor Jack—"

What mad, incredible scene was

this? I was confused, stunned, though I had been vaguely prepared. My mirrored eyes turned back to Kay Temple, drank in her beauty.

And at that moment, I hated my mechanical body. I never had before. I longed to take Kay in arms of flesh and blood and know the secret joys of human love. I hated my metal body now, despite all its strength and power, and lack of sickness, weariness and the other human ailments. I was only living half a life. I could only stand at the portal of greater things and glance within, never to enter. I could, in time, have the greatest minds of Earth look up to me, fawn on me as a giant of intellect. But I could never have a woman, not the poorest and meanest, look on me with eyes of love—

And yet, *what about Kay Temple!*

My mind staggered. This was madness. I arose, shaking off her hand, and stood at the window, with my back to her. I was actually afraid my metal face would show emotions I felt!

"Jack is waiting for you, Kay."

I said it expressionlessly. I meant it for a rebuff. Almost as a gentle insult, scorning what she had revealed, not even thanking her.

She seemed not to take it that way. "I cared for Jack, still do. I might have married him, but for you." Her voice was still clear, rational.

Poor Jack! It was I, then, who unwittingly stood between him and his happiness. He had saved me from extinction, solely out of goodness. And now I, in return, stood on his heart with two feet of cold, brutal metal.

What could I say? What could I do? And then it was so ridiculously simple that I laughed within myself. Almost, I had forgotten that I *was* a robot, not a man.

"But Kay," I said, "granting all that you have said, what more is there to say

or do? I am still a creation of wheels and wires, not the boyish-faced human you picture me as. I'm still metal, not flesh!"

Again I felt her hand on my shoulder, a sixth sense serving in place of feeling, for I have no sense of touch.

"Adam," she whispered in my ear, "it is only the mind that counts, not the body. I want to be with you, always. I want to—"

"Kay," I said slowly, and I knew then that if it had been possible for my metal and string throat to sob, I would have sobbed—"Kay, I've got to go now. I've an appointment—" The lie was absurd, and I knew that she knew it. Kay made all my appointments for me. She had looked after me like a mother . . . or—the thought swept me with a new wave of anguish—like a sweetheart.

But I turned and left. Left her sitting there looking after me with her hands folded limply on the desk. I knew without having to turn that she watched me leave, and there were tears in her eyes. They were tears that I should have been able to shed instead.

Then I got into my car and drove out to the quiet of the country, where I could think. For once even the metal meshed gears of Adam Link, Robot, felt the necessity of solitude. . . .

HOURS have passed since I wrote this account. My mind is made up, though I know that it was made up long ago. There are some things that I realize are as inevitable for me as death is to humans. I know what I must do, and I am doing it.

Here on the dark teakwood table of my sitting room lie two letters and a telegram which will go before I do.

The telegram is to my cousin Tom:

Dear Tom: Tomorrow's mail will bring you an accounting of all my money

and holdings. I am going away somewhere alone—where not even you must know—and I may not come back. I want you to take this money and put it into a trust fund for Kay and Jack. For the rest I trust your judgment. I am grateful for everything you've done for me, and I hope that circumstances may some day allow us to meet again. Good-by—

The first letter—

Dear Jack: Perhaps Kay is near you as you read this letter. Wherever she is, go to her immediately, take her to City Hall. Marry her! Do that if you have to gag and bind her. Deep down in her heart there can be no other man for her but you. And to both of you, my deepest . . . love.

The other letter goes into my diary, together with this account, locked in vaults that are not to be opened for a year after my "death or destruction."

It reads: These may be the last recorded thoughts of Adam Link. I am going away to a place that I have owned secretly for some time, a place that I have never mentioned and will not now. I may return, but whether in a year or twenty I cannot say. To that end I have arranged for all the supplies necessary to my existence to be brought,

by devious and circumspect methods, to what will be my hermitage until I know better what I must do.

I know at last my full capabilities—and my weaknesses. The capacity for emotion, rooted in me by my creator, has again betrayed me, and this time with me it has added another victim. I fervently and devoutly hope that everything will turn out for the best. Unless I can return to life among humans without running the dangers of hurting them, perhaps it is best for me never to return.

Even now, you can see how humanly machine parts of me function. For there are implications here of suicide—and I admit them. I have thought of it. The cliffs and treacherous mountain passes have beckoned me before, promising me peace and tranquility if I would yield and jump into their embrace. But I don't know. I don't know. There is so much good that I can do. The harm must never happen again. I must never tell another half truth like the one in which I told Jack that there can never be another man for Kay but him. Not a man. . . .

I am going away then, and I will not come back until Adam Link, the Robot, the machine—is truly a machine again.



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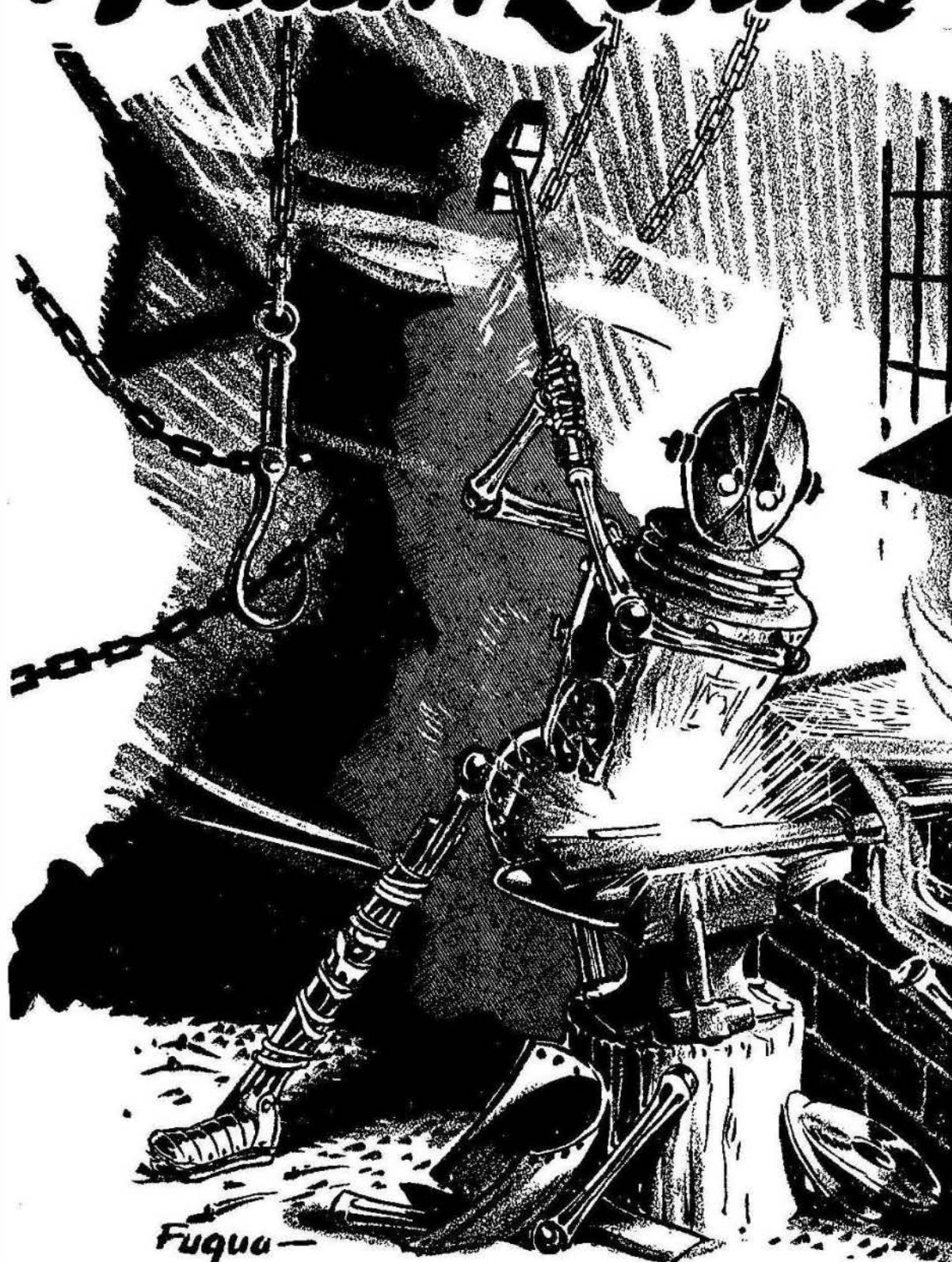


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Adam Link's



VENGEANCE

"If you are lonely," said Dr. Hillory, "why not make another robot, patterned after the woman you love?" And Adam Link agreed.

By EANDO BINDER

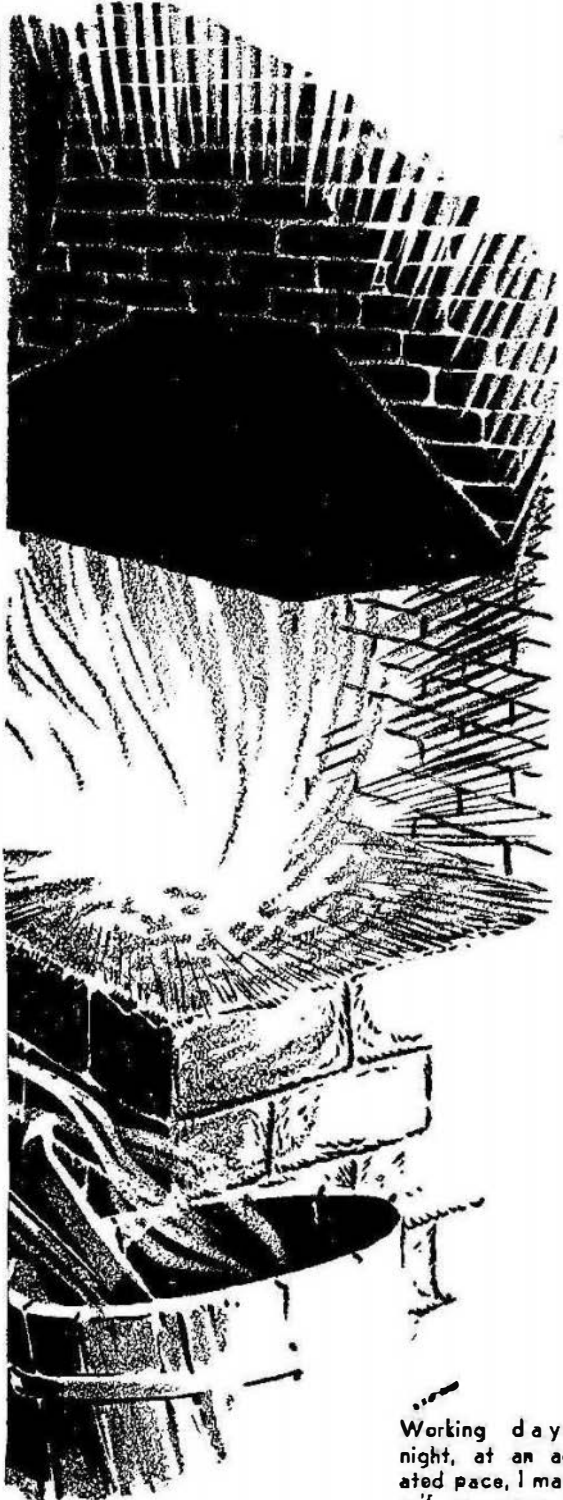
TO any of you humans committing suicide, your last thought must be that death is after all so sweet and peaceful and desirable. Life is so cruel. And to be brought back from voluntary death at the last second must be a terribly painful experience.

So it was with me, though I am a robot.

My mind blinked back into consciousness. My mechanical brain was instantly alert. Full memory flooded back. What had happened to prevent my death? I had allowed my batteries to drain, and had lain myself flat to pass into oblivion with the last of the electrical energy. Over my head I had fixed a timed clockwork which would within an hour tip over a beaker of strong acid. I had removed my skull-piece so that the acid would bite deeply into my iridium-sponge brain and utterly destroy it.

Now I was alive again, feeling the strong pulse of electrical current surging through me. And the acid lay splattered over the stone floor beyond, hissing and bubbling. Someone had knocked it away at the last second. And had reconnected a battery to my central distributor.

All this passed through my mind in a



Working day and night, at an accelerated pace, I made myself a new body

split second, after opening my eyes. Then I turned my head and saw my self-appointed rescuer, standing a few feet away, slowly shaking his head.

"Are you all right, Adam Link?" he queried.

"Why didn't you let me die in peace?" I said. My voice, in human terms, was a groan. "I have known a great hurt—this is not my world."

That was the irrevocable decision I had come to, a month before, after leaving the world of men. Kay Temple had proved that to me. She had made it clear that a robot mind, knowing of but lacking the capacity for human love, must live only in a terrible, bitter loneliness. Think of yourself the only human being on Mars, among utterly alien beings. Beings with intelligent minds, but strange bodies and strange customs. You would know true loneliness.

I had fled to my secret retreat in the Ozark mountains—fled from Kay. But I could not escape myself. My mind knew human emotion, too much of it. I was determined, at first, to weed that out—make myself truly a machine. I experimented with my brain, trying to burn out those unmachinelike things, but failed. I was doomed to remain a robot with human feelings.

Suicide was the only course left, so that with me would die the secret of the metal-brain. So that others of my kind would not be created and come to know the hurt I know—that this is not our world.

"Not your world?" returned my rescuer. "Your very existence in it makes you part of it. I'll help you up."

He came forward, tugging me to my feet, exactly with the manner of a solicitous person holding another who might be weak and spent. I needed no help, of course. I was not a starved, thin, haggard would-be suicide. With electrical current in me, I was im-

mediately in full possession of my powers. I arose, shaking off his hand with a half-human petulance at his presence and interference in my life—or death.

I STARED at him, wondering how he had found me. This spot was remote from the haunts of men. Not one of my personal friends had known of it.

"I'm Dr. Paul Hillory," he introduced himself. He was a small, wizened man of late middle age, bald-headed as an egg. He had a certain sly look in his eye that I took for either humor or a cynical outlook such as comes, I suppose, from seeing much of life.

"I'm a scientist, retired. I have a small summer cabin a mile away. I saw you drive up here into the mountains like a demon, a month ago. In my next visit to the city, I heard the story of your trial and business venture, and sudden disappearance. I sought you out, but had some trouble finding this exact hideaway. I came just in time, it seems. I saw you lying on the floor, and then the clockwork began tipping the beaker of acid. I knocked it away with a rod. Then I took the battery from my car and connected it to your distributor. Your heart, by analogy. I realized I had brought you back from—death. It rather thrilled me."

I still stared at him, with an unvoiced question.

"I'd do the same for any wretch trying to take his own life," he responded rather sharply. His voice changed. A note of eagerness came in it. "You're a robot, Adam Link! A living, thinking creation of metal! I knew Dr. Link, your creator. I told him he was a fool to hope to succeed. Now I see he did. It—it amazes me!"

He sat down suddenly. Most people have known fear, or even panic at first seeing me. Dr. Hillory was too intel-

lignant to be frightened. But he was obviously shaken.

"You have brought me back to a life I renounced," my phonelike voice said dully. "But against my will." I told my story in brief, terse phrases.

Then, without another word, I stalked from the cabin. I strode along the path through the trees that sheltered the place from prying eyes. Beyond was a clearing of a hundred feet. It ended abruptly in a cliff, which dropped sheerly for five hundred feet, to hard rocks below. I would find my death down there.

Dr. Hillory had followed me. When he divined my purpose, he cried in protest and tugged at my arm. He might as well have tried to hold back a tractor. I didn't know he was there. He grasped my middle—and dragged along like a sack of feathers.

The cliff edge was now fifty feet away. I would keep right on walking. Suddenly he was running in front of me, pushing at me and talking.

"You can't do this, Adam Link!" he screeched. "You have the secret of the metal-brain. It must not go with you. Robots can be useful—"

He was talking to the wind. The cliff was twenty feet away.

Suddenly a gleam came into his eyes.

"You are lonely, Adam Link. You have no one like yourself to talk to, to share companionship. Well, you fool, why not make another robot?"

I stopped. Stopped dead at the brink of the cliff. I stared down five hundred feet at the shattering rocks below. Then I turned away; went back. Dr. Hillory had won.

HE stayed to help me. I had a completely equipped workshop and laboratory. Certain parts needed I ordered, through the devious channels I had thought necessary to my isolation,

when I built the hideaway. Within a month, a second iridium-sponge brain lay in its head-case, on my workbench.

Dr. Link, my creator, had taken twenty years to build my complex metal brain. I duplicated the feat in a month. Dr. Link had had to devise every step from zero. I had only to follow his beaten path. As an added factor, I work and think with a rapidity unknown to you humans. And I work 24 hours a day.

The time had come to test the new metal-brain. Dr. Hillory was vastly nervous. And also strangely eager. His face at times annoyed me. I could not read behind it.

I paused when the electrical cord had been attached to the neck cable of the metal-brain head, resting with eyes closed on a porcelain slab.

"I had thought of this before, of course," I informed my companion. "Making a second metal-brain. But I had reasoned that it would come to life and know the bitter loneliness I knew. I did not think of her having my companionship, and I hers."

"Hers!"

Dr. Hillory was staring at me open-mouthed.

For a moment I myself was startled. I had given myself away, and somehow, before this elderly man, I felt—embarrassed. I felt before him now like a teen-age youngster, experiencing his first love affair. In all except the actual fact, I blushed. Metal, fortunately, does not act like the thermometer of human faces, to human feelings.

But it was too late to hide what I meant from the canny scientist. Besides, he had to know sooner or later. I went on.

"When you stopped me at the cliff, you said why not make another robot? I had been thinking of Kay Temple at the moment. The picture of the robot

that leaped into my mind, then, was not one like myself. Not mentally. The outward form would not matter. I was 'brought up' from the masculine viewpoint. This robot-mind must be given the feminine outlook!"

My mechanical voice went down in tone.

"Her name will be—Eve!"

Dr. Hillory had recovered himself. "And how will you accomplish this miracle?" he said skeptically.

"Simply enough. She must be brought up in the presence of a woman. Her thought-processes, her entire outlook, will automatically be that of a woman. You must do this for me, Dr. Hillory. You are my friend. You must go to the city and see Kay Temple for me—now Mrs. Jack Hall. She is the only one who can make my plans come true. She must be the companion for—Eve!"

Dr. Hillory sat down, shaking his head a little dazedly. I could appreciate how he felt. Bringing a girl up here to teach a metal monster to be sweet, gentle-natured, feminine! Like trying to bring up a forest creature of lionlike build and strength to be a harmless, playful kitten! It was incongruous. Even I had my doubts. But I had equal determination.

"I suppose," he said, with a trace of the cynicism that lurked somewhere in his character, "that you will want your—Eve—to learn to giggle, like a school-girl!"

I didn't answer.

Instead, I switched on the electric current. Slowly I rheostated it up, to reach the point at which electrons would drum through the iridium-sponge brain, as thoughts drum in the human mind, under the forces of life. I watched, holding my breath—no, I have no breath. Sometimes I forget I am a metal man. But the idiom stands as descriptive of my feelings.

For what if the metal-brain were a failure? What if my brain was what it was by sheer accident, not the result of Dr. Link's creative genius? What if after all the process could not be repeated again—ever!

Loneliness! Death! Again my life would be wedged in maddeningly between those two words.

I held my breath, I repeat. I heard the hum of the electron-discharge, coursing through the metal-brain I hoped to bring to life. And then—movement! The eyelids of the head flicked open. The brain saw. The eyelids clicked shut again, as though the brain had been startled at what it saw. Then open and shut several more times, exactly as a human being might blink, awaking from some mysterious sleep.

"It's alive!" whispered Dr. Hillory. "The brain is alive, Adam Link! We've succeeded!"

I looked down at the blinking head. The eyes seemed to look into mine, wonderingly.

"Eve!" I murmured. "My Eve!"

CHAPTER II

"Educating" an Eve

WHEN we had completed the body, similar to mine but somewhat smaller, Dr. Hillory went to the city. He came back with Jack and Kay. They had come without question, immediately.

"Adam Link!" Jack called as soon as he stepped from his car. "Adam, old boy! We've been wondering and worrying about you. Why did you run off like that? Why didn't you get in touch with us sooner, you blithering idiot—"

Jack was just covering up his intense joy at seeing me, with those words. It was good to see him too, he who was my staunch friend and looked upon me more as a man than robot.

Kay came up. The air seemed to hush. We stared at each other, not speaking a word.

Something inside of me turned over. My heart—as real as the “heart” with which you humans love and yearn—stopped beating. I had fled from her, but had not escaped. It was plain, now. And Kay? What was she thinking, she who had such a short time ago seen me as a man behind the illusion of metal. A man she could love. . . .

Jack glanced from one to the other of us. “Say, what’s the matter with you two? You’re staring at each other as though you’d never met before. Kay—”

Jack of course didn’t know. She had not told him; he would not understand. And my last letter to Jack had told a half-truth, that there could never be another man in Kay’s life but Jack.

“Nothing, darling,” Kay spoke. She took a deep breath, squeezing his arm. And then I saw how radiantly happy she was. It was an aura about her, like that of any newlywed. They had been married two months. I felt a surge of joy. Kay had found herself. And I would too, soon, in a companion like myself in outward form, and like Kay inwardly.

They agreed enthusiastically.

“I take credit for the idea originally,” said Jack in mock boastfulness. “You remember once, Adam, that I suggested you make another robot, give it the feminine viewpoint, and you were automatically her lord and master!”

Kay touched my arm. “I’ll try to make her a girl you can be proud of, Adam!”

“With you training her, that is assured,” I returned, with more than mere gallantry. .

“Well, let’s get to work,” said Dr. Hillory impatiently. He had stood by with a look in his face that seemed to

say it was all rather foolish. “You two can use my cabin,” he said to Jack and Kay. “It’s only a mile away.”

KAY came every morning, promptly.

She would turn the switch on Eve’s frontal plate that brought her to life and begin her “lessons.”

Eve learned to walk and talk as rapidly—within a week—as I had under Dr. Link’s expert guidance. Eve, no less than myself, had a brain that learned instantly and thereafter never forgot. Once she had learned to talk, the alphabet and reading came swiftly. Then, like myself, she was given books whose contents she absorbed in page-at-a-time television scanning. She passed from “babyhood” to “schoolhood” to mental “maturity” in the span of just weeks.

The other process was not quite so simple—instilling in her growing mind the feminine viewpoint. It might take months of diligent work on Kay’s part, and would take all of her time, much to Jack’s ill-concealed dislike.

I had put quite a bit of thought into the matter. At last I devised an instrument that shortened the process. An aluminum helmet, fitted over Kay’s head, transferred her thoughts directly, over wires, to Eve. Thoughts are electrical in nature. I found the way to convert them into electrical impulses, like in a telephone. Fitted to the base of Eve’s skull-piece was a vibrator whose brush-contacts touched the base of her brain. Kay’s thoughts then set up an electro-vibration that modulated the electron flow of Eve’s metal brain.

Mind transference. Telepathy. Call it what you will. Kay’s mind poured over into the receptive Eve’s. I knew that Eve would then be a second Kay, a mental twin. It was Kay’s mind I appreciated from the first, in an emotion as close to human love as I can reach,

Dr. Hillory and I watched developments with all the avid curiosity of the scientific mind. But I watched with more than scientific interest. We left the whole job to Kay. We seldom talked with or even went near Eve, for fear of upsetting this strange process of giving a robot a feminine mind.

Once, in fact, I was annoyed to find Dr. Hillory talking to Eve. Kay had left for a moment. What he had said I don't know. I didn't want to question Eve and perhaps confuse her. But I pulled Dr. Hillory away, squeezing his arm with such force that he winced in pain.

"Keep away from her," I said bluntly.

Dr. Hillory said nothing, however. I began to wonder what to do about the scientist. But then I forgot about him, as the great moment neared.

THE great moment arrived.

Jack, Dr. Hillory and I were in the sitting room. Kay brought Eve in, leading her by the hand. Kay had assured me, that morning, that she had done all she could. Mentally matured, Eve was as much a "woman" in outlook, as I was a "man."

I'll never forget that scene.

Outwardly, of course, Eve was just a robot, composed of bright metal, standing on stiff alloy legs, her internal mechanism making the same jingling hum that mine did. But I tried to look beyond that. Tried to see in this second intelligent robot a psychic reaction as different from mine as a human female's from a human male's. Only in that would I be satisfied.

I was Pygmalion, watching breathlessly as his ivory statue came to life.

"This is Adam Link, Eve," Kay said gravely, in our first formal introduction. "He is a wonderful man. I'm sure you'll like him."

Ridiculous? You who read do not know the solemnity of that scene, the tense expectancy behind it. Jack, Kay and Hillory, as well as myself, had become vitally interested in the problem. The future of the intelligent robot might here be at stake. We all felt that. How nearly human, and manlike and womanlike, could metal life be made?

We talked, as a group.

The conversation was general. Eve was being introduced to her first "social" gathering. I was pleased to note how reserved she was, how polite and thoughtful in the most trivial exchange of words. Gradually, I became aware of her "character" and "personality." She was demure, but not meek. She was intelligent, but did not flaunt it. Deeper than that, she was sweet, loyal, sincere. She was lovely, by nature. She was—well, Kay.

"I'll be darned," Jack suddenly said, slapping his knee. "Eve, you're more Kay than Kay herself!" He grinned impishly at his wife. "Kay, how would you like a little trip to Reno?"

It was a splendid thing for Jack to say. He had made me feel human that way too, when I first met him. He had shaken hands with me in prison, and had me play poker with the "boys." But he wasn't merely making a gallant gesture, here with Eve. He meant it! We all laughed, of course. Yes, I laughed too, inside. And I knew that Kay laughed, for she pressed her folded hands together. Kay always did that when she laughed.

Something of the tense atmosphere was relieved. Our conversation became more natural. And before we knew it, Eve and I, sitting together, were absorbedly engaged in a *tete-a-tete*. What would two robots talk about, you wonder? Not about electrons, rivets, gears. But about human things. She told me she liked good books, and the beauties

of sunrise, and quiet moments of thought. I told her something of the world she hadn't seen.

It was then we noticed a queer phenomenon. Our conversation between ourselves gained in rapidity. Both of us thought and spoke instantaneously. Vaguely, I noticed that the others were looking at us in covert surprise. Our voices to them were an incoherent blur!

In the next few hours, Eve and I passed through what might have corresponded to days or weeks of human association.

Suddenly it happened.

"I love you, Adam!" Eve said.

I gasped, in human terms. My first reaction was one of astonishment. And I was a little repelled. It did not seem like a matured decision, rather a mere fancy of the moment on her part. Nor did I want her to say that simply because she knew I was the only other living robot on Earth. I had wanted her to say that only from the depths of her being, as human beings did when the mighty forces of love awakened.

"But Eve," I protested, speaking to her as to a child, "you hardly know me. And you have been—well, forward. Nor have I given you any indication that I wanted you to say such a thing!"

Eve's folded hands pressed together. She was laughing.

"Adam, you poor dear," she returned. "You've been saying you love me for the past half hour, in every manner short of words. I just wanted to end your suspense. I say it again, as I will to the end of time—I love you!"

And in a sudden blinding moment, I knew my dream had come true. I couldn't fathom how this girl-mind worked. She was—mystery. She was to me what women have been to men since the dawn—mystery. And in that,

I knew I had succeeded.

Kay had caught on, somehow. She arose, tugging Jack by the hand. "We're not needed here any more. We're going back to the city. Dr. Hillory, you go back to your cabin for a while." Turning to us she said, smiling, "Get in touch with us soon, Adam and Eve."

And they were all three gone.

And we—the Adam and Eve of robots—looked into each other's eyes and knew that we had achieved a pinnacle of human relationship—love.

CHAPTER III

Happiness at Last?

A MONTH went by. I will draw the curtain over it, as is customary in your human affairs, when a man and woman adjust themselves to a new, dual life together. For the first time, in my sojourn among humans, I knew happiness. And Eve was radiantly happy, exactly as Kay in her new-found happiness with Jack.

We went to see Dr. Hillory finally, after that month. It would have been a strange sight to any human eyes, I suppose. Two robots, glinting in the sunlight, strolling hand in hand through the woods, chatting as merrily as a country boy and girl. A bird suddenly flew up and dashed itself against my chest-plate, blinded no doubt by the shine. It fell to the ground, stunned. Eve picked it up in her steel fingers, but with all the tenderness of a soft-hearted girl, and cuddled it to her. After a moment the bird recovered, chirped uncertainly, then flew away.

Dr. Hillory's cabin was only a mile away. He eyed us with his enigmatic expression.

"How are the honeymooners?" he grinned, with an innuendo that I didn't

like. But outside of that, he seemed pleased to note how perfectly Eve—his creation and mine—had turned out.

"I've been doing a little experimenting myself," he confided. "You remember I took Kay's trans-mind helmet along. It's a fascinating gadget. I made some improvements. In fact, I eliminated the wires—made it work on the radio principle. Want to try it, Adam?"

I complied. He unhinged the skull-section next to the base of my brain and set the vibrator in contact. He had another one made, so Eve also joined the experiment.

No wires led from the vibrators to Dr. Hillory's helmet. A little two-masted radio aerial at its top sent out impulses that sped through the ether instead.

"Do you hear me clearly, Adam Link?" came Dr. Hillory's voice in my brain. Yet his lips hadn't moved. His thought-words had directly modulated the electron-currents of my brain, reproducing the same thought-words.

"Yes," I returned, also by thought, since the system was a two-way contact. "This is rather clever but of what use—"

Dr. Hillory's mental voice burst in. "Adam, strike Eve on the frontal-plate with your fist!"

To my surprise, I instantly balled my fingers and clanged my metal fist against Eve's frontal plate. It didn't hurt her, of course. But Eve did a strange thing. With a short, frightened cry, she reached her hands behind her head, to rip the vibrator away.

"Stop, Eve!" commanded Dr. Hillory. "Put your hands down. Fold them in your lap."

She did. And she did not press them together; she wasn't laughing. I sensed that she was instead very, very frightened. As for myself, up till this

moment, I was little more than startled at Dr. Hillory's commands, and his strange power over us.

"Adam!" Eve cried. "Don't you see? We're in his power—"

Lightning struck my brain. Instinctively I also raised my hands to rip away the little instrument that gave him such command over us.

"Stop, Adam! Put *your* hands in your lap!"

I FOUGHT. I strained with every steel muscle. But my machine's strength meant nothing. My hands dropped obediently.

Dr. Hillory was looking at us triumphantly. There blazed suddenly from behind his features the look of a man bent on evil designs. I had long suspected he was not a man to be trusted. Now he had revealed himself.

"Adam Link," he said gratingly, "your brain controls every cable and cog in your body. But your brain, in turn, is under *my* control. I am amazed at my own success. Obviously a command given by me, impinging on your electron-currents, is tantamount to a command given by yourself. Perhaps you can explain it better than I. But this is certain—I can do with you as I will!"

I tried speaking and found I could, as long as he had made no direct command against it.

"Let us free, Dr. Hillory. You have no right to keep up this control. We are minds, like yourself, with the right of liberty."

Dr. Hillory shook his head slowly. "No, Adam. You will stay under my domination—"

It was then I acted—or tried to. I tried to leap at him. A swift mental command from him—and I stopped short. Fighting an intangible force—fighting my own brain—I strained to

move on. Every muscle cable was taut. Every wheel in my body meshed for movement. Electrical energy lay ready to spring forth in a powerful flood. But the mental command did not come from my brain. Instead, slowly, my body inched back and finally eased with a grind of unlocking gears.

Hillory had won.

He stood before me, my master. I had the strength of ten men in one arm, the power of a mighty engine at my fingertips. I could in three seconds have taken his puny, soft body and torn it to bloody shreds. Yet there he stood, my master.

Hillory eased his caught breath, as though not sure himself up till then that he could stop me. Color came back into his face.

"I'm your master," he hissed. "And I have plans—"

Eve and I looked at each other helplessly. What evil plans did this man, so suddenly revealed in his true colors, have? A sadness radiated from Eve's eyes. Our late happiness had suddenly shattered like a fragile soap-bubble.

If I had any hope of breaking from Hillory's clutch, it was quickly dispelled. First he made us lie down, then removed our frontal-plates. It was simple for him to unhook the cables from the batteries that gave us life. We blinked out of consciousness.

When we regained our senses—it was like a dreamless sleep—we realized our true hopelessness. Hillory had welded the vibrators to the backs of our skull-pieces, so firmly that it would be impossible for us to tear them away with our fingers. Secondly, he had installed turn-off switches in the battery-circuit, so that we could be turned off when he desired. Eve's switch had been removed before, when she reached "maturity." Now it was back, this means of "turning off" our life.

"While I wear the helmet, you are under my command," the scientist said matter-of-factly. "Whenever I wish to take the helmet off, I simply turn you two off first. You cannot escape me, and you must do as I wish."

IN the following month, part of his plan unfolded. He forced me to devise a new and larger robot body. When the parts came, from factories, my fingers put them together, under his command.

Completed, the body stood eight feet high, without a head. It was a super-powerful mechanism, with muscle cables and cogs all proportionately larger than mine. Twice as much electrical power would be needed to run it. It was probably the upper limit in robot bodies, within the boundaries of flexibility, mobility and strength. Anything larger would have been clumsy. Anything stronger would have been too heavy to leave a useable margin.

Dr. Link had built my body as nearly in human proportion as possible. I stood five feet ten inches and weighed 300 pounds. This robot body was two feet higher and weighed 500 pounds. And when Hillory finally revealed his purpose, I screamed in protest.

"Put Eve's head on that robot body!" he had commanded.

"No!" I bellowed. "What monstrous motive have you behind all this—"

He let me rage on for a while. He did that once in a while, playing with me cat and mouse, knowing he had the upper hand. Eve pulled at my arm. "Please don't, dear!" she begged. "It's no use."

And it was no use. I quieted. Eve was turned off. Though it revolted me in every atom of my being, I unfastened her head-piece gently and attached it to the new body. I trembled doing it. Trembled with anguish. Though

changing bodies does not mean so much to a robot as it would to a human being, it is nevertheless a disagreeable thought. I had come to love every contour, every dent and scratch on Eve's former body. She would be strange to me, in the new one.

Finally every little wire had been connected, between her brain and the relay switches in the body's neck. Then I bolted the neck-piece in place, holding the head firmly. At the last, under Hillory's command, I snapped the back-switch.

With a creak and groan of new metal, the body arose. It towered above us both like a Goliath. I shed mental tears, and I could see the same in Eve's eyes as she looked down at me. This was as agonizing to us as to a human wife suddenly finding herself three feet taller than her husband. It was monstrous.

Hillory was ignoring our feelings, in this as in all previous things. Hopelessly, I tried to appeal to him.

"She's my mental mate," I said. "Don't you understand? She's my—wife! We have feelings. Please—"

The scientist laughed.

"Metal beings parading as humans," he spat out. "You, Adam, prating about loneliness, wanting a companion, mental love! It was sickening the day you and Eve talked of loving each other. That's all sentimental, twisted rot. Even among humans. You two, in the first place, are just metal beings. You have no rights, alongside humans. You were created by human hands. I'll show the world how to really use robots—as clever instruments!"

Instruments of what? What had he meant?

We soon found out. That very day, Hillory tested the range of his remote-control by radio. Eve, astride her new giant body, was sent step by step away,

till she vanished in the woods. Still the scientist commanded her to move on, watching an instrument that recorded distance and control. Eve was sent a mile altogether, and came back obediently.

At no time, obviously, had she felt the slightest weakening of Hillory's remote-control, borne by high-frequency radio-waves. And radio-waves had a limitless range!

"You can easily be sent down to the city," Hillory remarked, pleased with the results. "Under my control, you can be made to do anything I want there."

"What are you planning, you devil?" I demanded.

A sly leer was my only answer.

THAT night, Eve was sent down to the city. Hillory was able to guide her easily enough, though she had never been there before. His mental commands told her every step. Conversely, her sharp comprehensive thoughts came back to him, whenever she was in doubt as to a road or turn. When she reached the city, in the dead of the night, Hillory read street signs through her and directed her footsteps. Svengali had never had the full, diabolical control over his Trilby that Hillory had over poor Eve!

At times, though the streets of the small city were nearly deserted at this hour, late wanderers spied the tall alien form. Eve involuntarily informed Hillory, and he would cause her to duck into shadowed doorways, or down alleys.

"This is perfect!" exulted Hillory to me. "I'm really there, by proxy. Through Eve, I can accomplish any deed within reason, without stirring a step from here!"

Eventually, Eve informed Hillory that she stood before a bank. Hillory

sent her to the back entrance, and after a guarded look around, told her to shoulder down the door without making unnecessary noise. Inside her keen mechanical eyesight picked her way to the vault. It was not a particularly sturdy vault. The bank was a small one.

Hillory gave an amazing order.

I heard all these through my mental contact with Hillory's helmet. He told Eve to pull open the vault door! Through Eve's involuntary thoughts, we could almost picture her tugging at the heavy metal door. Finally she braced her feet. The stupendous strength of her giant steel body exerted itself in one furious tug. There must have been a terrific grind of strained, breaking metal, as the vault lock cracked apart. Eve's great new hands had done a job that might have balked a blast of nitroglycerine.

Eve did not know what money was, but Hillory did. He had her stuff great packets of bills in a sack and hurry out. The whole episode was over in three minutes. Eve arrived back without mishap, the sack dangling over her shoulder.

Hillory had robbed a bank, without the slightest personal danger! Was that his purpose to amass ill-gotten wealth? He read my thought.

"No, Adam," he said suavely. "This is a matter of personal revenge. The President of the bank once refused me a loan!"

Which made his motive still more petty and unworthy. I looked at poor Eve. Her eyes were haunted. She knew she had been forced to do something wrong. Her Kay-mind told her that. She was miserable. But I was more miserable. I had brought her to life. I had not dashed myself to pieces, there at the cliff. On my soul—robot or not—rested the deed.

I tried to remonstrate with Hillory. He clicked us off, laughing, with little more regard for us than he would have had for cleverly trained dogs.

CHAPTER IV

A Horrible Slavery

THE following day, Hillory tuned the radio to the city's station. The news blared forth—

The Midcity Bank was mysteriously robbed last night. The thief or thieves broke down the back door and raided the vault, escaping with \$20,000. The vault door did not seem to be blown down. It had apparently been forced open by some amazingly powerful lever or instrument. Police are puzzled.

They are investigating strange reports that a robot form was seen last night by several people, described as a huge one ten feet tall. Is it Adam Link, the intelligent robot, with a new body? Has he returned, after five months of mysterious absence, to commit this deed? Before he left, Adam Link was accepted almost with human status. Has he returned now to vindicate those who said he was a Frankenstein monster, dangerous to human life and property?

Frankenstein! Again that hideous allusion was springing up about me, when I had labored so hard to erase it in the minds of humans.

"You are ruining all my past efforts!" I accused Hillory. "I saved life, helped humans, showed that the intelligent robot would do good, not harm. Now you are destroying that—"

"Nothing of the sort," retorted Hillory evenly. "I have reasoned the matter out carefully. After perfecting my robot-control, and doing one or two other personal things, I'll take my plans to big business interests in New York.

The few little things that happen here won't matter. I'll sell you as a great new invention!"

He might have been speaking of a new type of radio, or automobile.

I tried to speak slowly, calmly in answer.

"You are making a frightful mistake, Hillory. When I came to life, and lived in the world a while, I saw the enormous difficulties of introducing robot-life. I saw from my own experiences that it would not be like introducing a new mechanical gadget. For I have a mind and feelings and human emotions. Human life is complicated enough, without adding another complex factor. Before the cliff there, I had made up my mind it was better for the secret of the metal-brain to vanish. Both for my sake and the world's. Foolishly, I let the thought of a companion robot sway me to stay in life. Yet perhaps the problem is not insoluble. But I tell you this, Dr. Hillory—I and I alone must decide! I alone, the Adam of intelligent robots, can find a way to introduce robot-life without creating future disaster!"

Hillory hardly heard.

"Rubbish! Your whole approach has been wrong. Who are you to tell humans what is best for them? You're no more than a clever mechanical toy, with pseudo-human reactions. I have figured out the way to introduce robots. Not as independent individuals who wander around in a half-human daze, looking for mental love. But as an organized, controlled force of workers, under the strict domination of their human creators and masters. As for your so-called 'feelings', they are spurious. Like a phonograph, you have learned to imitate the human things. You are no more than a clever mechanism."

He looked at Eve and me as one

might look at a piece of prized furniture—impersonally.

"We are life!" I said doggedly. I wished at that moment that my metallic larynx did not sound so cold, so expressionless. It destroyed the meaning of my words. "Life is in the mind. We have minds. Dr. Link realized that. You must too—"

"Shut up!" roared Hillory in exasperation. "Why should I listen to your meaningless drivel?"

I was helpless to go on. He had commanded me to stop talking. He was master of every atom of my body. Eve and I looked at each other. She understood. The future of robots lay in my hand. But I was a pawn in Hillory's hands. The dread thought loomed before us—what would be the fate of our future kind? Of the robot—*race*? Slavery! We must have felt then like the Adam and Eve of Biblical history, denied Eden, foreseeing only misery and suffering for their people.

THE following night, Eve was again sent down to the city, like a metal zombie. This time Hillory directed her toward the residence section of town. She arrived at a certain house. She was sent quietly through a porch window. Hillory seemed to know the house thoroughly.

Then through a door. Hillory's cautious mental-commands to make no noise were probably carried out to the letter. Merely by leaning her great weight against a locked door, slowly but steadily, Eve could force the lock with little more than a clink of snapping parts. Apparently no one had heard. The metal housebreaker was not detected.

Then Hillory gave a command that made something inside of me go cold. He told Eve to strangle the man lying there in bed, asleep! Strangle him, kill

him! Hillory's psychic command was a ruthless, eager whisper. Powered by radio, the heartless command sped to Eve, and those great metal hands had no choice.

Eve came back with human blood on her hands. She kept looking at them.

"Adam, what have I done?" she said. Behind the flat, metallic tone was sheer anguish. Eve was a gentle humanlike girl, in a metal body, remember that. "He gave a cry—one cry. A horrible cry. It is awful to take human life—"

She had cried this out in a rush, before Hillory could command her to stop sniveling. Then she stared at me. I could feel her poor, dazed mind tottering. It was a brutal introduction to the mystery of life and death to her, she who was so much like the gentle, warm-hearted Kay. I wanted to rush to her, comfort her, as any human would rush to his loved one in distress. Hillory made me stay where I was.

"You're a fiend, Hillory!" I managed to say before he locked my voice. "Your heart is harder than the hardest steel of my body. You call us non-human beings. Yet you are less a human—" He stopped me then.

The next day the radio blared angrily.

"A brutal murder last night again brings up the thought of Adam Link, the robot. Police say the door had been forced by a strength greater than any man's. The body's neck was almost severed. Adam Link's strong metal fingers could do that—"

"What would they say if they knew it was *Eve* Link?" said Hillory, glancing at us with a sidelong look of mockery. "That man was a personal enemy; now he's out of the way. Ah, this is so perfect, perfect!"

I have heard it said that every human being has at least one enemy he would like to kill, if there were no conse-

quences. Hillory had no consequences to fear. It was perfect, for him.

He went on. "But you are being blamed, Adam Link. The myth of the free-willed robot who can do only good is being destroyed. When you have been definitely branded the culprit, I will announce to the authorities that mental-control is the only way to handle the robot problem that has arisen before mankind. I am doing the world a service. I am giving it the great gift of robot-labor, in a safe sure way!"

HILLORY sent Eve out again the next night. His sly look told of some other hideous deed in mind. A man of his temperament and character had undoubtedly made many personal enemies.

A short time later, a car's motor and brakes sounded outside, and then its horn. Hillory glanced out of the window.

"Kay!" he breathed. But he seemed prepared.

Kay rushed in. She was alone. She glanced at us both.

"Adam!" she cried. "I had to come. Is there anything wrong? Where's Eve?"

"No, there is nothing wrong, Kay," I returned, but the words had been projected from Hillory's mind. I had no power to stop them, or utter words of my own. "Eve is all right. She just went out for a walk."

Kay heaved a tremulous sigh.

"Then all those ugly rumors are groundless, just as Jack said." Her voice held deep relief. "The robbery and murder naturally would be pinned on Adam Link, Jack said. People are like that. He said the criminals probably did things in such a way as to leave signs pointing to you. You're their perfect cover-up. I wanted to come up yesterday, but Jack said not to

disturb you and Eve until you called for us. But I was so worried that tonight I jumped in the car and came up, just to make sure everything is all right."

There was still a trace of doubt in her voice. She was staring at Hillory, and the queer helmet he wore.

"Adam and I were just finishing a little experiment," Hillory said easily.

Kay turned to me again. "Then everything is all right?"

"Of course, Kay. It was nice of you to be concerned and come up, but why not come back some other time, when we aren't so busy?"

Hillory's words, of course, through my helpless brain and larynx by proxy. I strained to put in a note of warning, distress. But a robot's voice is in the first place devoid of human emotion.

But strangely, instead of taking the hint to go, she seemed curious over the experiment. She moved toward the control board of the helmet, connected to it by wires.

"This looks something like the helmet I used with Eve," she said.

I could see Hillory's impatience for her to go. But he could not afford to arouse her suspicions. He knew that she and Jack were much more my friends than they could ever be of Hillory. He began to describe the experiment in general, meaningless terms.

Suddenly Kay moved.

She moved with a swiftness and purpose that startled us both. Her hand grasped the switch cutting off current to the helmet. Hillory recovered and clutched at her wrist. With a furious effort, Kay opened the switch.

That was all that was needed.

CHAPTER V

Heartbreaking Combat

THE helmet went dead. I was no longer in Hillory's mental control.

In two bounds I was before him. I grabbed the helmet from his head and flung it to the floor. Then I grasped his two shoulders in a vise-like grip and held him. I think if my face had shown any expression at that moment, I would have been grinning—but with no trace of humor.

Hillory's face had gone dead-white in fear. He squirmed and moaned in my adamant clutch, expecting immediate death.

Let me make a confession at this moment. For one split instant, with rage shaking every cell of my iridium-sponge brain, I thought of tearing Hillory's head from his body. But only for an unguarded instant. Then reason came to me. A robot must never kill a human, of his own free will. It was a thing I would never do. And a thing I will never let happen again—save for the deed poor Eve was driven to do.

I merely held Hillory firmly. To Kay I said: "Thanks, Kay. You've saved me—"

"I knew there was something wrong!" Her lips were quivering now, in reaction to the excitement. "I knew it couldn't be you, Adam that told me to go so brusquely. And Dr. Hillory is a poor actor." And Kay, I reflected, was an intelligent girl.

"What is this all about? What horrible—" Kay seemed about to go to pieces.

"Buck up!" I snapped. I told the story briefly. Then I instructed her to get a bottle of acid and apply it to the instrument welded on my skull-piece. A few minutes later the vibrator fell away. I was free entirely of the helmet control!

Not till then did I release Hillory. He staggered to a chair, mute and mortally frightened. The man who had been my master sat there now, a cowering wretch.

"Hillory—" I began.

There was an interruption, outside. The clank of metal feet sounded. Through the open door I could see Eve's body, glinting in moonlight. She had come back, also released from the mental control. She stood beside Kay's car, swaying on her feet, as though utterly dazed and lost.

I ran out.

"Eve!" I yelled. "We're free! Eve, dear—"

I suppose I felt at that moment as any man would, when he and his loved one are reunited after a deadly peril has passed. I extended my hand.

Eve took it, with a glad cry.

And then suddenly she yanked at my arm, throwing me to the ground. For an agonized moment I thought she had gone mad. Then, as her great body came at me I realized what had happened.

I leaped to my feet. A glance over my shoulder told me the situation. I saw within the open, lighted doorway of the cabin. Like a fool, I had forgotten about Hillory. He had picked up the helmet, turned on the power, and was fighting Kay off. Brutally, he crashed his fist against her chin and the girl toppled to the floor, knocked cold.

Hillory had no more control over me. But he did have over Eve!

Her great body came at me, under Hillory's command. Its mighty arms clutched for me, grabbed me, squeezed with machine-given power. My frontal plates groaned. I squirmed loose somehow, and staggered back. A stunning blow from Eve's powerful hand caught me at the side of the head. My left tympanum went dead, ruptured. I reeled.

"Eve!" I shouted. "Eve—don't"

But of course it was no use. It was not Eve who was attacking me. It was Hillory. And there we battled, Eve and

I, two beings who loved one another but were battering at one another with the fury of giants. Eve was fighting to destroy me. I was fighting for my life.

I knew quickly that I had no chance. Eve's body was almost twice as heavy and powerful. I was slightly quicker in movement, and that alone saved me from almost instant destruction.

Mighty blows from her great fists thundered against my body. My return blows fell short. I danced out of her grasp. Those arms had crushing strength. I tried to flee. In three mighty strides Eve had caught up, knocked me off my feet. A powerful leg rained kicks at my fallen form, denting metal and endangering delicate mechanisms within. Then the great form jumped on me. Five hundred pounds crashed down on my chest. It was very nearly the fatal blow.

But I managed to roll aside, escaping the second such stroke, aimed at my head. Hillory wanted my brain crushed. He wanted to destroy me utterly, and have Eve left under his control.

The battle could not last much longer. Within seconds I would be crushed, broken, lifeless.

I did the only thing left. I ran—but this time to the cliff edge, where I had once nearly invited death. Eve's hands clutched at me, and then drew back. Hillory was willing to let me plunge over the cliff, and meet destruction five hundred feet below. I went over, dropping like a stone. . . .

THE fall seemed interminable.

It is said that you humans, when falling or drowning, see your whole life before your mind. I saw mine—not once but a hundred times. Every detail stood out with stark clarity. But one livid thing stood out above all others—the thought of Eve, my beloved crea-

tion, remaining alive in the hands of a human fiend. . . .

Yet one part of my brain, as I fell, was cool and calculating. It kept track of my descent, counting off the feet and yards by that automatic sense of timing and measurement which is part of me.

A hundred feet to the ground! It announced that and then acted. It made my arms and legs flail, shifting my center of gravity. My body had turned head over heels four times in falling. But when I landed, it was squarely on my feet. To have landed on my head would have been immediate destruction.

I have instant reflexes. The moment my feet-plates touched ground, my leg-cables flexed, taking up as much of the shock as possible. It might be the margin to save me. The rest was a clash of grinding, bending, breaking metal that horrified my own ear. I had fallen on a patch of grassy ground, but with the force of a motorcycle hitting a stone wall at 300 miles an hour.

My mind swam out of a blur. One eye was wrecked and useless, but with the other I looked over my body. My legs were twisted, crumpled lumps that had been driven up into my pelvic region. One arm was broken completely off and lay twenty feet away. My frontal plates had split in half and now stuck half-way over my sunken head. Every cog, wire and wheel below my shoulders was scattered around in an area of more than fifty feet.

But I lived! I lived!

My brain was whole, though badly jolted. By a miracle, the battery cable to my head was intact. The battery was cracked, but working. I could move one arm slightly. I was little more than a battery, head and arm, but I lived! Fortunately, I knew no pain.

And thus I had played out my one

slim chance. I had thrown myself over the cliff—but not as a suicide. I had hoped this miracle would happen. Up above, Hillory must be looking down. He must be seeing the faint patch of metal shining in the moonlight, unmoving. He would be certain of my utter destruction.

Perhaps now he would be turning away, ordering Eve inside. And there plotting his scheme of bringing to life a horde of mind-enslaved robots!

But I lived. . . .

I began crawling. Little more than a head, battery and arm, I began crawling alone. The stump of my arm dug into the soil, flexed, and moved me an inch at a time. Behind me trailed shreds and tags of metal, all that was left of my body. My steel backbone, to which was attached the battery case, head and arm, moved as a unit, but the rest was shreds. Hour after hour I crawled along, like some strange half-mangled slug that clung to life.

Yes, I knew agony. The shattering of my body meant nothing, but my brain itself ached. Some few crushed cells were warping my electron-currents, creating a sort of hammering static. It throbbed like the beat of a great hammer. I do not know what your human pain is. But I would have gladly exchanged any possible form of it for the crashes and thuds within my brain that seemed like the sledge-blows of a mountain-tall giant.

But worse than that "physical" agony was my mental torment.

What if the twisted cables and gears of my arm failed? What if the battery cracked wide open? What if a little bolt or wire slipped out of place? At any moment it might happen. And I would lie there, dead. Or paralyzed, awaiting death. And up there in my cabin-laboratory, Hillory, and poor Eve. . . .

But metal is sturdy. And Dr. Link

had built my body with care. I crawled all that night and the next day, through woods, meadows and stretches of boulder-strewn land. I knew where I was going, if I could get there. Twice humans passed near me. I lay still. They would probably destroy me, with the deeds of Hillory pinned on Adam Link. Once, reaching a brook, it took me an hour to figure a crossing. I could not risk water, for fear of a short-circuit. I nudged a log into the stream. It caught against rocks. I crawled across.

But I will not go into the nightmarish detail of that journey. Forty-eight hours later, again at night, I had crawled five miles. Before me lay a farmhouse, the nearest one, I had known, to my hideaway. It had a telephone.

CHAPTER VI

"Vengeance Is Mine!"

I REACHED the back door. Luckily, as with many unmolested farmer folk, it was unlocked. I made my way in and found the telephone, but it was on the wall out of my stunted reach. Working as soundlessly as I could, I pulled a chair over. From that perch, I was barely able to reach the phone. It was the old-fashioned hand-ringing type, still prevalent in that region.

With my one good hand I lifted the receiver, left it dangle, and rang the bell. A sleepy operator answered. I hurriedly gave the long-distance number in the city nearby. Jack's number. He had mentioned it to me during his visit.

I heard the ringing of the phone at the other end. I also heard a stir from one of the other rooms. Jack answered at the same time that a burly farmer appeared, snapping on the lights.

"Jack!" I yelled. "It's Adam Link! Come and get me! Trace this call—"

That was all I had time for. The farmer blazed away at me with a shotgun he carried. The first shot wrecked my arm, making me completely helpless. The second, by its concussion, tumbled me from my perch. I fell to the floor with a clatter and lay still. The farmer did not know what he had shot at, whether beast or nameless thing. He shut himself up in the next room, then, with his wailing family. I will never know what he thought of the whole thing.

Jack arrived within an hour, in his car and took me away, explaining to the farmer as incoherently as the farmer stammered his story. In the car were Kay and Tom Link.

Kay wept unashamedly.

"Adam! You're alive—thank God!"

I told my story briefly. Kay told hers. Hillory had released her, of course, after I was gone. Kay had returned to the city. In a red rage at Hillory, Jack had driven to his place, the next day—yesterday. He had not met Hillory, only the menacing form of Eve, who waved for him to leave. Hillory spoke, through Eve, saying he was preparing papers for patent, on the helmet-control of robots.

Back in the city, Jack had called Tom, who came by plane from the east. They had been discussing, when I called, some legal way to forestall Hillory.

Tom Link, my "cousin," looked at me sadly. "Meeting you this way hurts, Adam!" he said sincerely. "I didn't know you were in trouble." My last letter to him had not revealed my hideaway or purpose.

He went on grimly. "We must stop Hillory some way. We can try to pin the murder and robbery on him, with yourself as chief witness. You have legal status, since your trial, Adam. Failing in that, we can contest his patent,

or file counter-patent, or—"

Tom was vague, uncertain. It was a tricky situation. I thought of a court trial, which I had once sat through, and all the clumsy machinery of law. And I thought of Eve in Hillory's hands all that while, going mad perhaps. . . .

I think my voice must have startled them, as I broke in. Perhaps for once something of the burning emotion I felt reflected in my dead, mechanical tones.

"Vengeance," I said, "is mine!"

THREE days later, working day and night at an accelerated, driving pace, I had a new body. I was in Dr. Link's old workshop, my "birthplace." Tom had locked the place without removing its contents, for sentimental reasons. I had been created here, over a year before. Now a new Adam Link was replacing the old.

My new body was eight feet tall. Bringing me only as a living head, Tom and Jack had, under my instructions, connected me to a broken, partly dismantled robot body Dr. Link had first made for me, then discarded as not quite what he wanted. Working with this basis, I rebuilt the body piece by piece, strengthening, improving, employing greatly advanced mechanical principles.

At last it was done, and I prepared to leave.

Kay, Jack and Tom wore solemn faces. Within, I was solemn too. I knew what I had to do.

"I'll bring Hillory down alive," I promised grimly. "But before that—" I could not finish the thought.

Kay burst out into tears. She loved Eve too.

I left. I had told them to come up, if I did not return in twenty-four hours, with police. Hillory could be arrested for living on my property, already signed over to Jack and Kay. Perhaps

then they might win a legal victory over him.

I WAS there at dawn. If I had thought to surprise Hillory asleep, I saw my mistake. Eve's form, sitting before the cabin, rose up mechanically, with a shout of alarm. Hillory had somehow rigged her up as a sentry.

The cabin door flew open and Hillory's bald head peered out. He saw me running up as fast as I could. His eyes popped. I must have seemed to him like a ghost from the dead—a robot's vengeful ghost.

But he darted back in, obviously to his helmet-control, and Eve's great form lumbered out to meet me. This I knew was inevitable, that I would have to battle Eve again.

"You escaped death somehow, Adam Link!" Eve's voice said. But I knew it was Hillory talking, through her. I had no way of telling whether he was perturbed or not. "I'll smash you completely this time, before my eyes!" he concluded defiantly.

I stopped ten feet before Eve's crouching, waiting form.

"Eve, listen. I know you can hear and understand." I went on rapidly. "I have to battle you, perhaps kill you! It is the only way. I must destroy you if I can, so that Hillory does not destroy me. Hillory must not be allowed to introduce robot-slaves. This is all torture to you, darling, I know. You are fighting me when you don't want to. And I will be bent on your destruction—even, if necessary, that of your brain. Your life! I love you, Eve. Forgive me—"

"Love!" scoffed the robot before me. For a moment I thought it was Eve. Then I knew it was Hillory, hearing my words, and mocking. "Mechanical puppets, both of you!"

And then we were battling.

HOW can I describe that battle? A battle between two metal titans, each with the ruthless machine-powered strength of dozens of men? It seemed unreal even to me.

We came together with a clang that resounded through the still mountain air like a cannon's roar. We locked arms, straining to throw each other. But now I was no longer at a disadvantage. We were equally matched. Two robots constructed for maximum power, speed and endurance. Unyielding metal against unyielding metal.

We looked into each other's eyes, told each other that though our bodies fought, our minds loved.

We broke apart. We came at each other with swinging arms. Mailed fists clanked against our adamant armors. The blows would have broken the back of an elephant. Within us, gears, cogs and wheels clashed in spurts and reverses as we weaved and danced around like boxers in a ring. We did not move as agilely as human boxers, however. The robot body must ever be inferior, in sheer efficiency, to nature's organic robots.

Suddenly my adversary—I no longer thought of her as Eve, but Hillory—stepped back, stooping. He shot forward in a football tackle, toppling me backward. Then, while I lay slightly stunned, he picked me up by heel and arm and flung me over his head. I landed with a metallic crash. The next second a huge boulder whizzed past my head. Then another . . . but I was dodging.

I was on my knees when he came at me, hammering at my skull-piece with his ponderous arms. I flung my arms up in protection. He sought to destroy my brain. Once that was crushed, my powerful body was senseless junk.

I lunged forward at his knees, hurling him to the ground with a thunder-

ous crash. I had my chance then—a perfect chance to stamp my iron heel down on the head, crunching it. But I didn't. Eve's eyes stared at me.

The chance passed, as my enemy rolled away, swung erect. But I had been a fool. One blow and Eve would have known non-existence. It would have been sheer mercy, to save her from a living death. If the chance came again, I would not hesitate. . . .

I hardly know what went on in the following minutes. Once my enemy picked up a boulder that ten men could not have budged and hurled it at me like a bomb. I dodged but it scraped my side, tearing three rivets loose. Again, he locked his arms around me from the back and crunched them together so fiercely that metal screamed. But I heaved him over my back, breaking the hold.

We fought on, like two mad giants. Our colossal blows at one another would have felled the largest dinosaur of Earth's savage past. Our mechanical apparatus within began to feel the repeated shock. Parts were being strained to the breaking point. It couldn't go on forever. One of us would break down.

I had a dim hope that my enemy would first. Hillory had had to fight by proxy, from a distance. I had fought from a closer range. I had gotten more telling blows in. His inner mechanisms had received the most terrific jolting. It was his second battle. I had punched at the head as often as I could, jarring the brain within—even though it was Eve's.

I cannot describe the hollow ache that came with the thought of winning by killing Eve. But I had to win. I had to save the future robot race from slavery. And the human race, beyond that, from the eventual catastrophe of such a stupid course.

(Concluded on page 128)

ADAM LINK'S VENGEANCE

(Concluded from page 27)

I aimed another blow, straight for what would be the human jaw.

Suddenly it was over.

The other robot's arms dropped. There was a stunned, dazed air about the whole body. It swayed a moment, then its knee swivels bent and it crashed to Earth. It lay sprawled, eyes closed.

For a long moment I stared. I heard no sound from the other body. It lay utterly rigid, quiet. And then I realized it was dead. The brain had died first. My final blow had killed Eve!

I stood looking down at the battered wreck. I looked beyond it. I could almost see a body like Kay's lying there, a human body, the real Eve. Her eyes were closed. Perhaps there was a peaceful smile on the lips.

I turned slowly.

Slowly, my steps dragging, I strode for the cabin, to confront the man who had killed my Eve. The man who considered us nothing more than mechan-

ical puppets, with which he could play as he desired.

Hillory darted out of the door. His face was a ghastly white. I clutched at him, caught his coat, but he tore loose. He ran, as though from some monster. And at that moment, I *was* a monster. I pounded after him. What things I screeched, I do not know.

He ran past the edge of the cliff, taking the shortest course to the road. Abruptly a great piece of the cliff-edge parted from its matrix. The stupendous vibrations of our battle had loosened the piece. It plunged below. Hillory was on it.

I dug my foot-plates into the soil and leaned backward, barely halting at the edge of the fissure. I looked down. I saw the white dot of Hillory's body land. I knew he hadn't survived the fall.

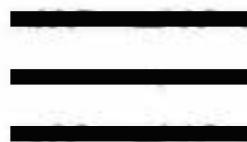
I am writing this now, in the cabin. When I am done, I will go with Eve. There may not be a heaven for robots. But neither is there a hell—unless Earth is it.

30 YEARS WITH THE U. S. A. SIGNAL CORPS

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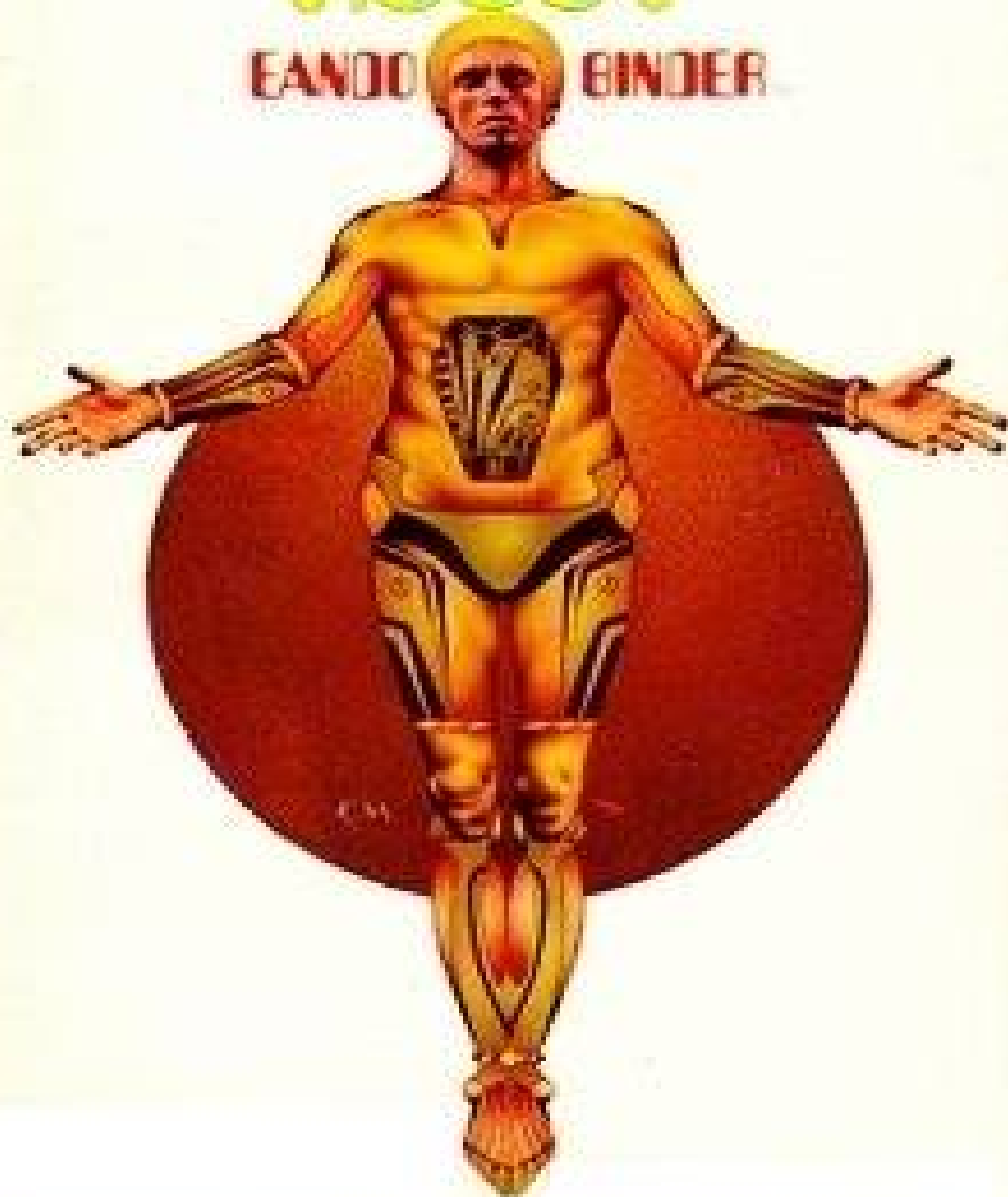
January Issue



NOW ON SALE AT ALL NEWSSTANDS!

ADAM LINK ROBOT

EANDU BINDER





He set the torch flame full on the robot head



ADAM LINK, ROBOT DETECTIVE

By EANDO BINDER

Adam Link, the strangest character ever to gain the status of a human being, finds a new field for his talents and dons human guise to become a detective.

I HAD just finished writing my last account. It was about Dr. Hillory, who had driven Eve, my created mind-mate, to commit crime. He had brought about her death, in a battle, at my own hands.*

There her great eight-foot body lay, silent as a shut-down machine. Grief overcame me, an emotion as real and deep as any you humans have. I pictured her as a human form lying there

—a young, lovely girl. But she was dead now.

It had begun to rain. Kneeling beside her, I removed my top skull-plate. The rain, pouring into my sensitive iridium-sponge brain, would short-circuit my life-current. I would join Eve in blessed non-existence.

Kay and Jack Hall, and Tom Link found me that way when they arrived a moment later. Police were with them. "Adam! Adam Link!" Jack yelled.

* AMAZING STORIES, February, 1940.

"Hillory is dead! We saw him fall down the cliff. Your troubles are over. Adam, what are you doing—"

But I heard no more. A hiss sounded from within me, as the water touched a live wire. Smoke curled up from my exposed metal brain.

Adam and Eve, the first of intelligent robot life, were leaving the world not meant for them. . . .

AWARENESS came to me instantaneously, as it always does when I am "revived." I looked around. I was inside Dr. Hillory's laboratory, out of the rain. Jack and Tom stood before me, smiling in relief. Kay knelt beside Eve's form, lying supine on the floor. The police had helped drag us in. They stood watching, somewhat at a loss over this resuscitation of robots.

I started. I heard a moan. A raspy, metallic sound. It came from Eve's microphonic throat!

"You poor fool!" Jack exploded at me. "Your final blow stunned, not killed, her. Haven't you heard of someone being knocked cold? She's coming to. You blithering idiot, taking her for dead—"

It was true. I crawled beside Eve. Her eyelids clicked open. I could almost feel the terror that flicked through her. Her last impression had been my crashing steel fists at her with all my frightful machine power. She took in the situation at a glance, in that quick way we robots have.

"Adam—" one of her hands reached for mine. It was all she could say in her joy. I couldn't say anything.

"As for you," Jack continued, "we jerked off a battery-cable before the short-circuit burned out your brain, dragged you in, and after drying, re-connected you. Just about in time, you crazy, senseless tin boob—"

Kay stopped his vehement "bawling

out," which I deserved. I am supposed to be a cold, clear intelligence. Yet like a hysterical neurotic, I had very nearly clipped off our two robot lives. Hand in hand, Jack and Kay looked down at us, Eve and me, also with our hands together. They understood why I had been driven frantic.

Jack was now grinning. "With Hillory out of the way, you can start life all over, Adam and Eve Link—"

"Just a minute!"

The police captain stepped forward. "I have a warrant for the arrest of Adam Link, for the robbery of Midcity Bank and the murder of Joshua Kalb!"

This new blow was like lightning. Trouble had not ceased to dog our footsteps for so long that I had forgotten what happiness had been.

Jack whirled. "But Dr. Hillory caused that. You see, Hillory used remote radio control and had Adam and Eve Link in his power. He is the true robber and murderer—"

The police captain was terse. "Sorry, I'm following orders. Evidence shows that a robot did both crimes. Adam Link must come with me."

"But it wasn't Adam Link," Tom spoke up suddenly. "It was Eve Link!"

"No, it was I!" I snapped quickly. I didn't want Eve to go through all the turmoil of a court trial—and face possible sentence, if worst came to worst. I sent a searching, almost angry glance at Tom Link.

"Eve, I say," Tom insisted.

"I'll have to take them both along," said the police officer. He and his men were smiling. The whole thing, I could see, struck them as queerly humorous. Particularly one robot trying to shield another, like humans might. Only Jack and Kay and Tom, my friends, understood.

But I noticed that behind their smiles, the police were tense, ready to grab for

their pistols. One of us, myself or Eve, was a murderer. More than that, we were fearsome metal monsters, eight feet tall. I could see that inevitable thought coursing through their minds—*Frankenstein!*

No use to resist, of course. It would have been easy — Eve and I rushing through them and laughing at their bullets. Yes, but then what? Hounded, persecuted, through the woods and hills. State militia called as a last resort, surrounding us with grenades and heavy guns, with orders to destroy the two loose monsters. No, that was the last thing in the world I would do. I had patterned my life in the human way. We would face the agencies of law, though I hated the thought of again going through its legal clasp.

"Come, Eve," I said quietly. "We must deal with humans on their own footing."

We were taken down the mountain road to the city in one of the two squad cars. The engine groaned with our combined half-ton of weight. Jack, Kay and Tom followed in their car.

BEFORE the indictment a few hours later, Tom managed to whisper to me.

"Don't shield Eve, Adam. Let her go through the trial. She will then acquire human status, as you did in yours. I'm certain I can save her from the charges—but only with you as witness of Hillory's evil control. You are a human, in court records. Therefore your testimony will be official!"

I nodded. Tom's clear legal reasoning had foreseen all that. My thoughts leaped ahead. Eve exonerated, legally a human. Then both of us would apply for citizenship, as my creator, Dr. Link, had from the first day of my "birth" visioned. And even—my heart sang—a church wedding for Eve and me! Then

we would be the legal equals of full-fledged humans, in the eyes of the world.

The words of the official reading the indictment crashed into my hopeful thoughts.

"Eve Link is hereby accused of the robbery of Midcity Bank, and of the murders of Joshua Kalb, John Deering, Tony Pucelli, and Hans Unger, all of this city!"

Tom started. "*What?*" he demanded. "Why is Eve Link being accused of three other murders?"

The official looked up with a hard cynicism.

"Investigation reports came in, just before we drew up the final indictment. The next night, after Kalb's murder, those other three were murdered—Deering, Pucelli and Unger. In each case, clues pointed to a robot. Marks on their bodies could only have been done by a metal instrument. Even bits of metal filing were found!"

Jack groaned, at my side.

"I get it! You remember how the papers played up the robot angle immediately after Kalb's death. Everybody read it the next morning. Some clever criminal organization in the city, seeing that, promptly carried out three of *their* gang murders the next night. Using metal clubs, and leaving metal filings, it points to Eve as the culprit, continuing her 'brutal, berserk murder of innocent humans'—as the papers played up Kalb's death!"

He groaned again. "How clever—how damnably clever!"

The official shrugged. "You'll have to prove your claims in court. The trial will be held in a month."

Tom Link turned a pale face to me. He didn't have to say it.

Eve was doomed!

Tom might prove Hillory's actual guilt in the case of Kalb. But three

other lives had been taken wantonly, cold-bloodedly, by the Frankenstein monster named Eve Link!

Frankenstein! Frankenstein! Already I could hear the word shrieking through the city, in every newspaper and from every radio speaker. Eve had the noose around her neck.

Jack put a hand on my arm. I think I was trembling. When my thoughts are disorganized, my internal machinery is also.

"We'll put detectives on the job," Jack said. "We have a month's time—" But he exchanged a hopeless glance with Tom.

Detectives. A month's time. A clever criminal ring that had covered up its trail cunningly. A whole city aroused against the robots parading as humans, taking life in secret. It added up to zero—for Eve. My thoughts crashed to that conclusion in seconds.

I warned Tom and Jack to say no more. I turned to Eve.

"Go to your cell. They will lock you in. On no account must you try to leave." I paused. "We must accept what comes. The case is hopeless. Do you understand, dear?"

Eve was shocked. I could detect that in the way her internal hum had missed a moment, exactly as a human heart may skip. She had been waiting for one word of hope from me. I gave her none. She was led away in a dead silence.

"I'll visit her every day," Kay said sympathetically. "Poor child, she'll feel so frightened and alone." She glanced at me almost contemptuously for my brutal dismissal.

CHAPTER II

My Disguise

"**D**RIVE to my mountain cabin-laboratory," I directed, when we

were outside.

It was not till we were there that I spoke again.

"Out with it," Jack demanded shrewdly. "Something's seething in that brain of yours."

"I thought you were a man, Adam Link!" Kay said furiously. "A man who would fight for one he loves. You could at least have said one word of encouragement. Why did you tell poor Eve that the case was hopeless?"

I winced a little under her scorn. But I spoke firmly. "For the benefit of the officials. And the reporters waiting for the least little rumor or report to play up. And most important, for the benefit, eventually, of the criminal ring dumping their murders in Eve's lap. They'll sit back now, confident that we won't try a thing. They won't know that a detective is on the case. A detective by the name of—Adam Link!"

They gasped.

"*You!*" Jack snapped.

"Yes, why not? Without meaning to boast, I think quicker than any human. I have super-keen ears and eyes. I have strength and quickness and powers no human detective has. I can do more in a month than ten men."

Jack shook his head sadly. "You've forgotten one thing, Adam. You've naturally come to think of yourself as human. But the whole meaning of the word detective is spying in secret. How can you—with your metal body?"

I stepped to my workbench and brought back a bowl of sticky, rubbery plastic. "I was working on this before Hillory upset my plans. I was toying with the idea of—well, look—"

I smeared some of the plastic over my frontal-plate, with a spatula. It was opaque, hiding the metal. Its color was that of human flesh.

"My disguise," I said. "Human disguise."

I turned to the thought-helmet, the one with which Hillory had diabolically controlled Eve. Now there would be at least one benefit from the hell we had been through. The thought-helmets were a godsend in this hour of need.

Switching on the power, I sent a radio-beam searching for Eve's mind. My electrical thoughts modulated the beam, in a process akin to telepathy.

"Eve!" I called. "Can you hear me?"

"Adam!" came back almost instantly over the conducting beam. "I've been so afraid—"

"Don't be, darling," I returned. "And forgive me for leaving you so coldly. It was necessary. I'm going to save you, Eve. I'm going to save you!"

But it was not till two precious weeks later that I began.

I had had to work day and night, perfecting the plastic, giving it the rubbery consistency of human flesh. And also making it adhere firmly to metal. I think a human chemist would not have solved the problem in a year. But I was driven by a demon. Every tick of my internal- electrical distributor counted off the hours with the noose tightening around Eve's neck.

I USED my former, smaller body, before adopting the giant one in my battle against Eve's giant one. It stood five feet ten—human height. Covered with plastic, my torso was rather thick, giving me the appearance of a burly man. The legs and arms were easy, though it was a trick to pat the plastic into folds at the joints. I cut my flat feet-plates down, to the proportions of a human foot. Covered with clothes, the imperfections of my pseudo-human body weren't glaring. The important thing was that my hard metal was covered with a softer medium.

Molding my face and hands took the most delicate labor. They would be ex-

posed to constant sight. Jack and Kay were my faithful assistants. Tom was down in the city, delving into the case.

My hands came out as big hams, worthy of a prize-fighter. The fingers were rather stiff, because of the metal "bone" beneath. Jack carefully set human hair into the plastic, over the knuckles, in keeping with my general appearance as a big, brawny man. He molded my facial features with a master's touch—outjutting chin, heavy straight lips, low forehead. He couldn't resist giving me a slight pug nose and a cauliflower ear. Over my shiny skull he glued a wig of matty black hair. And a rather heavy mustache on my upper lip, to help conceal the fact that it didn't move when I talked.

The eyes were a problem. I made them myself, two little hemispheres of clear thin glass. My vision was somewhat distorted, and it was a blue world after Jack applied blue-stain for irises.

Kay did her part, rougeing the cheeks and lips cleverly, to take away the dead-flesh texture. Little touches of cosmetics around the eyes and nose blended the features properly.

"There!" Jack grunted finally, with his irrepressible sense of humor. "Didn't know I was a master sculptor down underneath!"

They surveyed me critically, from top to toe. I wore a dark tweed suit and a cap pulled low. Suddenly, though they tried to resist, they burst out laughing. I could not blame them when I looked in a full-length mirror.

In the glare of electric light, I was perhaps the strangest looking being imaginable. A big, hulking-shouldered man with a dead "pan" and clumsy arms and legs. Jack stopped laughing and substituted a shaded lamplight for the overhead glare. And there, in the half-gloom, with imperfections hidden, I seemed suddenly to come to life.

"You'll do," Jack nodded soberly. "You can work only at night, though. And keep out of bright lights. Outside of a certain stiffness in your carriage—which might come from being muscle-bound like any has-been fighter—you're Pete Larch, the pug."

They gave me lessons in walking and swinging my arms naturally. I learned to slouch a little, and take short strides instead of my long, ponderous ones. A rough job, all in all, but we only had two weeks. I would pass for a human to all but the most searching eyes in bright light.

"One thing, though," Jack said worriedly. "That damned jingling noise you make inside." He had the answer to that quickly. He drew out a large watch that made a loud ticking. "Put it in your vest pocket. Kay never liked it anyway. At strategic moments, take it out so they think it's just that turnip clattering away, and not your gear-and-cog innards. Well, Adam old boy—go out and get your man!"

He had tried to lighten the moment I left with a flippant tone. But beneath it we were solemn. I had a big job ahead of me, with no inkling of how it would come out.

Two weeks were left. Two weeks while Eve lay patiently in a stone cell, with the thoughts of a city of humans rising in a tide against her. The papers had been editorializing in fuming denunciations, demanding that once and for all the robot "menace" be wiped out. The jury at the trial wouldn't give Eve a ghost of a chance.

I contacted Eve as I drove toward the city on my errand. The radio-beam control was in my chest-space, connected to my battery for power, with button controls wired into my trouser belt.

"Eve! I'm starting out now to find the murderers who hope to see you

atone for their crimes. Be patient, loved one!"

"I will, Adam. I trust you. I know you'll save me."

I PARKED the car in a downtown garage, then strode toward the criminal quarter of town. I chose the least frequented streets, where lamplights were dim. Whenever I approached another pedestrian, I watched him narrowly. Most humans unconsciously glance at someone passing. Their glances at me showed nothing of surprise or suspicion. Only at times, a slight repugnance. A wholly natural reaction, in that I was no debonair fashion-plate, but a seedy, degenerate looking individual.

I was satisfied, as I went along. My human disguise, despite first misgivings, was adequate.

In the criminal quarter, I made my way toward one of the "dives" that were distributed in the neighborhood, frequented by hoodlums, gunmen and all specimens of the lower element. Jack had named three of the places as the most likely hangout for members of the ring we were after. The one victim, Pucelli, pinned the crimes on a certain organization that Jack knew about from his newspaper work.

"Probably the biggest, most powerful gang in the city," Jack had said. "Racketeers, strong-arm men, kidnapers—they've had their hand in everything vicious. The rumor is that the brains, or Boss, of the outfit is a well-protected, solid citizen, known only to his organization. You can't get at him. Just try to find out who did the actual killings, at his orders. Tom will do the rest."

I paused, outside the dive. Adam Link, detective, took a breath—figuratively, at least. Pete Larch walked in.

CHAPTER III

My First Clue

THE dive was noisy, smoke-filled, dim. Thankful for that, I slumped in a chair in a dark corner. A bartender came.

"Whiskey," I ordered, in a low gruff voice, striving to hide its mechanical inflection.

"Chaser?"

"Soda."

Jack had posted me on all these trivial, yet important details. The drink came and I tossed down the coins. The bartender gave me a searching glance. For a moment I was appalled. Did he suspect? Had I done something wrong, in my guise as a human? Then I realized that in a place such as this, every human was given an inspection. A once-over. He shrugged slightly, and from that I gathered that he had put me down as a common drifter.

To anyone observing me, I must have given the impression of a morose chap with nothing to do, here for a few drinks, unconcerned with anyone else. I was quite the contrary. My photo-electric eyes—my real vision behind the glass camouflage—took in every individual in the place. My sensitive tympanums, behind their plastic dummies, were listening to every conversation in the room. To every word whispered between men seated in a far corner, for instance. I have the capacity to select sounds, from behind a background of din.

Sixty feet away with a tinny piano banging in between, I heard one man mutter to another: "So I says to him, I says, look here—"

Senseless, brainless mouthings. I began to wonder, as I listened all over the room, what life meant to these creatures. It was all so pitifully meaningless. Dr.

Link, my creator, did not tell me that so much of humanity drinks the dregs of existence. That so many of his fellow beings were further removed from him, in mentality, than I could ever be.

I felt at that moment that not one person in the place was as much a human being as I was. It made me feel good. And it made me feel sad. Poor people, they had less chance than I of ever being worthy of the name *man*. They too, had a precarious place in society.

It happened so quickly, I had no chance to think.

A soft form plumped into my lap. I looked around at one of the painted women whose shrill voices and hard laughter filled the room.

"All alone, big boy?" she said in false sweetness. "Come on, pep up. Have a little fun! You look like a funeral on two feet." My plastic face, of course, could not smile.

Her arm slipped about my shoulders, where the plastic-padding was thin. "Mm, hard as nails, aren't you? And you feel cold. You need some warming up—"

Her face came closer, lips puckered. I'm afraid my reaction was rather abrupt. She must not press her lips against my artificial ones and perhaps get a real shock. I pushed her off, almost violently.

"Say, you—" Fury blazed from her eyes, as she nearly fell to the floor. "I'll have you know I'm a lady!"

"Sorry," I muttered, aware she must be pacified. "I don't feel well. Here, have my drink."

I had been contemplating tossing it on the floor anyway. She downed it all in a gulp, smiled, and edged back toward me.

"Get going!" I muttered, remembering a man had used that expression before to one of the girls he apparently

didn't like.

"Okay, okay—" And she moved off, curling her lip.

The whole episode amused me, as I think it must you too.

I LEFT the place hours later. I had no slightest clue of any sort. The other two places Jack had mentioned were similar. I haunted them night after night, desperately. In the daytime, I stayed at Jack's apartment, not willing to risk my disguise against daylight. I began to despair. A precious week had slipped by.

"Buck up," Jack kept saying. "You'll get a lead. And you knew how long a chance this was, with nothing to go by."

"How is Eve?" I asked Kay so often I tried her patience. Kay visited her faithfully, every day. I couldn't myself without risking exposure of my secret sleuthing.

I contacted Eve with radio-telepathy every day, too, but only for a few seconds. The current used up could not be spared too freely. I had a two-week battery within me, and could not replace it except by scraping away my chest-plastic. That would waste time.

Jack and Kay touched me up at times, keeping up my near-human disguise. They had plastic ready, at their place, in case some of mine came off.

One short week left!

And then one night my brain leaped.

I was in one of the pleasure-dives, playing poker with four men. I played for the reason that sitting night after night alone pointed a conspicuous finger at me. Also, I must confess, I had enjoyed the game when playing with Jack and his friends at one time. Periodically I pulled out my loudly-ticking watch, so that they would mistake its noise for my internal sounds. I watched them closely. They never suspected.

The man across eyed my perfect "poker" face uncertainly, shuffling his hand. "You bluffing again?" he suggested. My reaction was a complete blank. "Nope," he finally decided. "Ain't worth five bucks to me. You got my straight beat or you wouldn't have raised me twice." He threw down his cards.

I quietly slipped my king-ten-seven-four-deuce into the deck and raked in the pot. More chips were stacked before me than the other four had together.

"You play a mean game, Pete. You sit there like a mummy. You don't even move your eyes. You really concentrate!"

I laughed within myself. If they had only known that little more than one-tenth of my brain was on this trivial game. All the while my full mental powers were concentrated on scanning the room and tuning in methodically from conversation to conversation. I focused on two men hunched over a table, heads together, across the room.

"The orders from the Boss is to lay low, see?" one man murmured. "After that metal dame gets the works, we can go to town again."

Senseless talk, like all the rest.

"Cut?" The game again, demanding one-tenth of my attention.

I cut with my big hand. I was about to eavesdrop elsewhere, in the meantime, when it leaped out at me—metal dame! I had caught on to some of the twisted slang in use, in the past week.

Metal dame meant Eve!

It was my first lead.

I DIDN'T move. I didn't give the slightest sign that I was straining to hear more. The two men were fifty feet away. Between was a confused babble and clinking of glasses. It was all my sharp, selective tympanums could do to

separate their whispers from the extraneous noise.

"Who's on the job?" asked the other man.

"You in, Pete?" — the card game again—"How many cards?"

I tossed in a chip and threw one card away. I had four sevens.

Names were mentioned, in a guarded whisper fifty feet away that no human ear could have heard from five feet. "They're meetin' at the warehouse, near Larkin's, tomorrow night. But we don't go, the Boss says. We—"

"Two to stay in, Pete. You raise two? Raise you two! You're bluffing this time. You drew one to a full-house, but I've got aces up. Two to you!"

"—lay low. Let the metal dame burn for you and me, first."

"Okay. I'm going; get some shut-eye."

"Me, too."

"What you got, Pete? Fours! Damn it, you ain't human!"

Instead of gathering in the pot, I shoved all my winnings away. "Divide it up, boys," I said, rising. My eye was on the two men weaving their way to the door. The two murderers in whose place Eve was to be sentenced to the electric chair.

I moved too fast, however, in my eagerness. I bumped against a heavy-set man just passing our table. He staggered back, then straightened, glaring at me.

"Watch who you're bumping, you clumsy bum!" he roared. "I'll teach you—"

"It's Slug O'Leary!" gasped a voice. "He'll kill the poor guy—" Meaning me.

He came at me with swinging arms, obviously short-tempered. He was a giant of a man, solidly built, with arms thick as posts. His fist came straight for my head. He met nothing. I had

dodged, with a swiftness given me by reflexes triggered with speedy electrons. Recovering his balance, bellowing in rage, he swung three more times in split-seconds. Unfulfilled blows that would have knocked any human out. Or would have broken his arm if they had touched me. My head weaved aside, easily avoiding the haymakers.

The semi-circle of watchers who had quickly bunched around us stared in disbelief. They had never seen anyone dodge that fast. Also they grinned. Humiliated, Slug O'Leary came at me with new tactics, extending his great arms for a bear-hug. He tugged, expecting to lift me off the floor and fling me down bodily. I wonder what he thought as my 300 pounds remained glued to the floor.

He tugged again, mightily, his face red with strain and fury. I felt a little of my plastic, in back, give way. To break his hold before further damage, I hugged him in turn. I squeezed slightly. His breath went out in a gust. One of his ribs cracked a little. I let loose then and he staggered back, amazed.

AMAZED, but not beaten. I was forced to admire his courage as he caught his breath, growled like a wounded bear, and plunged at me again. I could not risk another encounter. He might tear away part of my disguise. I had to get rid of him and follow my quarry.

I would have to hit him. . . .

Perhaps you who read wonder why I delayed so long in this decision. Why I allowed this senseless physical battle to keep me from immediately following the two men so important to my mission. Let me explain. I had never, in my two years of life, struck a person before. Had never used my machine-given strength against fragile humans. For one thing it was dangerous — I

didn't know my own strength. But most important, it had been my steadfast resolve never to use brute power to gain my ends, and thus label the intelligent robot as a monster to be feared.

But I had to now, for the sake of Eve.

My arm came out. I pulled the punch as much as I could, knowing too well of the levered power behind it. It landed squarely on his chin, with a sharp crack. Slug O'Leary's knees bent and he slumped to the floor without a sound.

"Knocked cold!" said an awed voice from the crowd. "First time I saw Slug get it!"

I stared down at the fallen man. Within me for a moment I was—well, sick. I had struck a human being! I wonder if you humans consider that as utterly repulsive and degrading as I did, using the methods of the beast. But I know enough of life to know that you humans have not yet eliminated that in your so-called "civilization." I do not mean to moralize. Certain things are self-evident.

The ring of watchers cheered. Hero of the moment, they crowded around me, slapping my back. Stinging their hands, undoubtedly, and marveling at my hard "muscle." I groaned within. Almost, I bellowed for them to get out of my way. I wanted nothing of their stupid acclaim. I wanted only to get out, after the two men. They were gone already. But I couldn't get through that press of crowd without using rough methods. My plastic wouldn't stand rough handling. And another display of my strength would brand me for what I was.

Something warned me not to risk it. Adam Link, detective, must not yet be exposed. I allowed my card-playing friends to hustle me to the bar, and a drink was placed before me.

"I really have to go—" I mumbled.

"Aw, you've got time for one drink at least," one insisted. "Pete, old boy, you're a grand guy. Look, he ain't even breathing heavy! Grand guy—"

I basked in that for a moment. Somehow, it felt good to be treated like a human, even by these rough-cut creatures. Perhaps my first judgment of their kind was too harsh.

"Come on, drink up!" Glasses were raised—to me.

It was the only way. I tossed the liquid between my plastic lips. I felt it course past my metal larynx. Stupidly, I had not foreseen such a circumstance. And now I felt the liquid begin to drip down upon exposed wires.

Hastily I mumbled excuses and turned away. By their conventions I was now free to go. Slug O'Leary came toward me near the door. They had dashed water in his face, bringing him around, apparently none the worse for the blow. I tensed. Would I never get out?

He stuck out his hand, grinning. "Pal, you're the first man has licked me in five years. Shake!"

CHAPTER IV

I Am "Taken for a Ride"

OUTSIDE the place at last, I felt a peculiar glow within me. But not only from that gesture. The drink had now trickled down on wires, creating a short. As I stepped down the street, I was weaving. It is amusing, even to me, to think that one drink has far more "kick" for me than for any human. The short had upset my electrical spirit-level system that keeps my balance.

"Drunk as a Lord!" commented a man to his companion as they passed.

It was a new sensation to me, vaguely pleasureable. But sharp warning clicked in my brain. I hurried.

I went down alleys wherever I could, breaking into a staggering run. I reached Jack's apartment and collapsed on his doorstep.

"Quick!" I was barely able to mutter. "Disconnect me for an hour—"

When they reconnected me, the liquid had evaporated and I was myself. I told my story.

"Those were the two 'trigger' men, then," Jack said. "Though they varied it with metal clubs that night, to involve Eve. You didn't get their names? You'll have to go back and wait for them to show up again."

I pondered. "If I do, and trail them, will it lead to the man who gave them orders?" I asked.

"The Big Boss?" Jack shook his head. "No. He told them to lay low—which means to keep away from him. The best we can do is identify the two killers and let Tom fight it out in court."

"I'll prove in court," said Tom, who was there, "that the metal filings weren't from Eve's body. Then I'll indict the two killers."

"But in the meantime," I said slowly, "the man really responsible—the Big Boss—goes free?"

Jack pounded his fist into his other palm. "I just wish we could get him! He's the mainspring of the most vicious, powerful crime ring in this city. But it's out of the question—"

"Is it?" My thoughts were clashing, grinding. The actual killers caught; Eve freed, perhaps—but the brain who had played with them all as pawns would be untouched, unpunished.

"Where is that warehouse, near Larkin's?" I said. "I'm going there tomorrow night."

"Don't be a fool," Jack retorted. "Waste of precious time. No one can uncover that ring in one short week."

"Not even Adam Link, detective?" I said.

THE next night, following Jack's instructions, I was heading for the warehouse district, near the criminal quarter.

But before I got there, in a fairly respectable neighborhood, something happened.

I was passing a dark gangway in a deserted street.

"Stick up your hands!" came the gruff command.

I turned to face a threatening figure, cap pulled low. He held a gun against my side. I had heard of them, of course—petty hold-up men, lurking for the pocketbooks of unwary citizens. Sometimes I cannot understand these things. Why do you humans prey on one another, in this and so many other phases of life?

"Let's have your money," he went on. "And that watch I hear ticking." He seemed suddenly to become aware of how powerfully built I was. "No rough stuff," he warned. "Or I'll plug you!"

Electrons move at nearly the speed of light. Electronic impulses surged within my iridium-sponge brain—commanding my arm to move. It moved with the smooth swiftness of finely-meshed gears.

I don't think the gunman was even aware of it till it was over. I snatched the gun out of his hand. Then I held it up in one hand—and squeezed. The gun crumpled and I flung the broken pieces away. The gunman watched with a paralyzed fascination. I almost felt sorry for him, picking me of all possible victims.

With a half-shriek, he tried to run off. I grasped his arms and placed my two feet over his toes, pinning him against my chest. I felt his toes squirm in agony. He beat his fists against my frontal-plates, where the plastic-padding was thin, till his skin cracked and blood spurted.

Then I let him go. He stumbled off, moaning. I had not harmed him permanently. I only wanted to give him a lesson. Some day a police force of robots like myself may patrol the streets, meeting criminal brutality with its own coin. Some day—when I have proved that the intelligent robot is less of a monster than men like that.

I went on to my destination. There was a dive called "Larkin's Pleasure Palace". Back of it, as Jack had said loomed a huge dark warehouse. In there, four men were meeting, part of the Big Boss's crime ring. I could not find a way in from the street level. I saw the first level of a fire-escape, ladder pulled up. Flexing my legs, I leaped straight up ten feet, catching a metal bar and swinging myself onto the first landing. I made no noise. I weigh 300 pounds, but I have more timing and absolute control over motion than any circus acrobat. I say these things without false modesty. They are facts.

I clambered up the fire escape quietly, and found an open skylight on the roof. From there I took a running broad-jump of some thirty feet to a broad metal beam running across the warehouse's interior. Here I perched silently, listening.

I heard the low murmur of voices a hundred feet away, from behind boxes stacked to the roof. I dropped to the floor into a pile of excelsior. It deadened my landing to a low thud. I crouched, listening, but they hadn't heard. I made my way—tiptoed, you might say—to a position behind the rampart of boxes. From beyond I could distinguish their words clearly.

They seemed to be plotting some nefarious business, but in language whose criminal idiom escaped me. It was something about a kidnaping. I was not concerned with that. Only with something relating to the Big Boss—or Eve.

I began to wonder if my quest would be useless.

Then I tensed.

"O KAY, that's settled," one man's voice said. He laughed. "The Boss says that way we'll pin it on the robot again—on the other one, Adam Link. What a couple of tin monkeys he's making out of them! Joe and Lefty are laying low till the metal skirt takes the rap for them. Boy, the Boss sure has brains!"

"Yeah," agreed another. "And pretty soon he'll be on the City Tax Council, cutting us in on easy graft and big money. That'll be sweet—Councillor Harvey Brigg—"

"Shut your trap!" hissed the first man. "Hasn't the Boss warned us never to mention his name?"

"Aw, who's going to hear—"

Again he was interrupted. "Which one of you guys is sportin' that loud ticker?"

There was silence for a moment.

I SHOULD have been warned. But I hardly heard. Only one thing drummed in my mind—Harvey Brigg! Harvey Brigg! I knew his name. The name of the man who had plotted three murders in the name of my innocent Eve.

Suddenly two ugly automatics were pointing at me, from both sides at once. The men had come around the boxes. I could have leaped away, easily, even then. But again something warned me not to risk exposure of my identity. Better to act the part of a human, caught like a rat in a trap.

They prodded me around the boxes to where they had sat. A flickering candle lighted the scene. They peered at me in its dim rays. The illusion of my human disguise held, fortunately.

"A dick, eh?" barked the leader of

the four. "The Boss warned us to watch for dicks working for Adam Link. How much did you hear?"

I maintained a silence.

"We'll make you talk, smart guy! Barney, find some rope."

They tied me flat against a box, standing upright. Then, after ripping my chest free of the coat and shirt, they held burning matches to my "flesh." I acted the part of a man in torment, with what histrionic ability I could summon. I squirmed against my bonds and made low moans. But I held my squirmings in check, lest the cords break.

I only hoped they wouldn't penetrate my disguise. Luckily, the stench of the plastic under the flame was not much different from seared human flesh. I gathered that from their rather sickened expressions. I have no sense of smell.

"Guess he won't talk!" said one of the men. They had burned welts all over my plastic chest. They could not hide a certain grudging admiration, thinking me a human with remarkable fortitude.

One of the men fidgeted. "Maybe he heard everything — even the Boss's name!"

They looked at each other. The light that gleamed in their eyes made even me shudder. It is the look of human beings about to kill another.

"Okay, wise guy!" snapped the leader. "You won't talk dead any more than alive. Let him have it, boys!"

Their guns spoke in chorus. The heavy slugs thudded into my chest plastic, in a barrage. Carrying my part to the last, I slumped back against the box, head lolling. One of the men grabbed my wrist and felt for the pulse.

"No heart-beat," he announced. "Went out like a light."

Calmly the leader then flipped the lighted candle to the floor, kicking a pile of excelsior toward it.

"They won't even find the body!" he

exulted. "Come on, boys—"

They left my "dead" body. They had done the job too quickly to notice three things—that there was no blood on my chest, that my eyes hadn't closed, and under the roar of guns they hadn't heard the bullets making a muffled ring, as they struck against metal under the plastic.

I waited five minutes, just to be sure. They were gone. Then I straightened up, and walked away from the box, hardly aware of the heavy rope snapping like string around me. A ring of fire licked about me. I walked through it, not noticing the flame that burned half my clothes off before I beat it out with my hands. I climbed to the skylight, went down the fire-escape, and through an alley. At the corner I pulled the fire-alarm I found there. No need to let valuable property burn down.

I made my way down dark streets to Jack's place. Within I was laughing, laughing! I wondered what those four gangsters would think if they could see the "man" they had "bumped off" walking along with his "riddled" body. But then I sobered. Adam Link, detective, faced his biggest assignment of all—tracking down the master criminal Harvey Brigg!

CHAPTER V

The Crime Ring

I CALLED Eve on the radio-telepathy. Poor Eve, sitting there in her cell 24 hours a day, unknowing of sleep's blessing, waiting, hoping, perhaps despairing.

"Adam, I want to come to you!" she said almost immediately. "I cannot stand these horrible walls, and the chains binding me, and the cold stares of the prison people. Adam, let me come—"

Don't forget Eve—mentally—was a young, sensitive girl. Not a cold, passionless being of steel nerves. Think of your sister or wife in jail.

"Eve, dear," I said gently, firmly. "You must trust me. It is only a few days now. And then you will be free. I swear it."

Kay, at Jack's apartment, gave a little shriek as I walked in. Small wonder. My clothes were tatters, half burned away, exposing plastic that was seared and blackened. My "chest" was a ruin of what looked like torn dead flesh, with metal shining through in places. The metal was dented where the slugs had struck. My nose was gone. Somewhere, it had been knocked off. I remembered now the rather shocked glances of the few pedestrians I had passed, in the late hour. But they had shrugged and walked on, perhaps disbelieving most of what they saw so dimly.

Jack laughed too, when I told the story. "You took *them* for a ride!" Then he sobered, grinding his teeth. "Harvey Brigg, of all people! Unimpeachable character—in daily life. Lives in a swell home in a respectable neighborhood. But Adam, we're stumped now. You couldn't get anything on him in a year's trying, much less a few days."

"I'll wring a confession out of him," I returned harshly. "I'll—" My hands were working.

"Adam!" It was Kay's voice. She was peering at me in a shocked way.

I understood immediately. In her eyes—the disguise aside—I was a man, a human—a big, strong man, but gentle in nature. It was not like me to speak of brutal methods, no matter what the circumstances.

"Sorry, Kay. Don't fear that I've changed. It's just that my blood boils, like that of any decent man's, thinking

of Harvey Brigg." I spent a few seconds thinking. "A dictaphone! Jack, get me a dictaphone."

"Wire it into the house?" Jack snorted. "My God, man, do you think you're a wizard!"

"Wires? I won't need wires. Get me the dictaphone and then drive me to my mountain laboratory."

In the laboratory, I worked all the next day over the dictaphone Jack procured. It was simple, in a way, to eliminate the need of wires. In some basic mechanical principles, you human technicians are backward. Many things lie just before your nose. My creator Dr. Link—I mean no irreverence—spent years devising my body. In six months after I had come to life, I had improved my body four-fold.

Jack and Kay also patched up my torn chest with new plastic, remodeled a nose, and touched up my disguise in general. A new suit of clothes replaced the rags.

The next night I was behind the hedges of Harvey Brigg's large home, with a black satchel. After some study, I climbed the roof of a back porch, careful so that I came up with barely a slither of my shoes. I forced the lock of an attic window. By leaning my weight slowly and steadily in the strategic spot, the latch clinked apart like nothing more than a snapping stick.

INSIDE, I wound my way past dust-covered old furniture and trunks. Wherever a board under my feet threatened to creak, I let my weight down with measured slowness, changing the sharp sound to a soft rubbing of wood. At certain places I kneeled, with my head touching the floor. Sounds from below, conducted through the walls, vibrated into my mechanical tympanums. The attic, to human ears, would have been as silent as a tomb, I suppose.

I will not detail the hours I snooped in this way, gradually learning, by sound alone, what rooms were below and who was in them. Three servants had retired. A fourth stood in a hall and later let in a late caller. He was led to a room that I knew to be Harvey Brigg's private office or den.

The door closed, down below. The two men were alone.

"Well, Shane?" asked a cultured voice. "How did the job go?"

I hated the voice the moment I heard it. The voice of Harvey Brigg. Oily, smug, with hard overtones in it. The voice of a man whose heart was harder than the metal parts of my distributor "heart."

Quickly, I rigged up my dictaphone system. I laid its pick-up device for sound on the floor. Like my ears, it was sensitive to the faint vibrations working through. If needed, I could have made it sensitive to the chirping of a cricket in the basement.

I had already connected the battery from my satchel. I tripped the on-stud. Five miles away, in Jack's apartment, I knew the recording device was starting. A roll of wax was taking down the phonographic record of what the pick-up device heard, and sent out as etheric impulses. At the same time, I leaned down on the floor, listening for myself.

"It went okay, Boss," the visitor, Shane, said. "But a gumshoe dick was on the trail. Horned in on the boys at the warehouse. They couldn't make him talk so they plugged him, and set fire to the joint. Morning paper told how the fire was put out after burning half the stuff in there. But nobody was mentioned, so it must have burned to ashes. Good work, eh, Boss?"

I could picture them grinning at one another triumphantly. But I was grinning—in my mind—more than they, and for better reason!

"Wonder if that Adam Link put him on the job?" mused Harvey Brigg's voice. "Adam Link is supposed to be a mental wizard, robot or not—" There was just a shade of apprehension in his tone.

"But he don't compare with you, Boss," Shane responded. "You've got twice the brains he has!"

"I think you're right, Shane," Harvey Brigg agreed readily. "Four days from now his partner robot goes to trial. A little planning to pin it on the robot, and three men I had on the Black List were rubbed out. And who gets blamed? Who will take the rap? Not Joe and Lefty!"

There was loud laughter for a moment. Then Brigg's voice came again. "Eve Link, the Frankenstein robot! Read that book sometime, Shane. You'll know why then, at the trial, the jury will slap a guilty verdict on the robot faster than greased lightning. Evidence pro or con won't matter. It'll be just that they'll be *ready* to believe the robot did it! I had that all figured out, you see."

I HAD listened with riveted attention. Two things were clear. That Harvey Brigg was a megalomaniac. Secondly, that he was dead right about the trial—or had been. I don't know which burned in me stronger at that moment. Anger at his cold, deadly plan in involving Eve. Or singing triumph that his own voice, on a wax record, would betray him.

The master mind who had twice the brains of Adam Link spoke again. "Shane, you're a smart boy yourself! But now about the kidnaping. Give me all the details."

Shane went into a recital of the kidnaping. It had been an efficient, cold-blooded job, taking a young woman away from her well-to-do husband.

Then their discussion went into other channels — store robbery, protection fees, even the sale of drugs. Shane, I gathered as I listened, was the sole go-between for Brigg and his widespread “gang.” Brigg outlined certain methods of procedure, with a calm efficiency.

As the minutes slipped by, I was amazed at the ramifications of his ring. I began to doubt he could be a human being. He must be a frightful monster, human in name only.

The visitor left after two hours. I heard Brigg get into bed. I sat thinking. My mission was over. Eve was safe. But I thought of more than Eve. I thought of a city of humans preyed upon by this spider and his minions.

There were four days left before the trial. I stayed for three in the attic of Harvey Brigg’s home. I did not need food or water. I did not get cramped muscles, sitting for long hours. I signaled Eve once and told her to tell Kay of my decision to stay, so they wouldn’t worry about me.

No one disturbed me—except once. A servant was suddenly climbing the attic stairs. I had no chance to run for any item of furniture large enough to hide me. I was exposed to plain view, twenty feet from the stairwell. What could I do? I sat utterly still.

It was a woman. She came up and glanced around, looking for something. Her face turned my way. I froze into complete immobility. Her eyes flicked past me, safely!

I can offer an explanation. The light was dim. My absolute stillness must have deceived her into taking me for an inanimate object—perhaps a bundle of rags. No human being could have escaped. For no human can duplicate the rigidity of something non-living and non-breathing, as I can.

As for not hearing me—my internal hum and jingling seemed loud in the

confined attic—I knew she was hard of hearing. Brigg had revealed once, in the course of his conversations, that he picked his servants for their poor hearing, thus safeguarding himself from any eavesdropping by them.

She went to a trunk, rummaged within, and left. I began to breathe again—no, sometimes I forget I am not human. I felt relieved, however.

CHAPTER VI

I Go to the Rescue

NO other disturbance came, and I went on with my recording. During the day, Brigg was out much of the time. But often he was in, and would closet himself with Shane, discussing their sinister activities in business-like tones. All of this poured into the super-ear of my instrument, and from there invisibly through the ether to Jack’s apartment. I had enough, in three days, to damn Brigg in the eyes of any court.

On the third night, something significant came from below. Shane was there again. It was near midnight. They were discussing the kidnaping.

“But he claims, Boss,” Shane was saying, “that he can’t raise more than \$40,000 by midnight. He wants more time.”

Harvey Brigg’s voice was adamant. “Fifty thousand dollars by midnight was our stipulation. Since he can’t, or won’t pay, his wife dies at midnight! Go to the shack now, Shane. At midnight sharp—unless our contact man comes with the money—tell the boys to bash in her skull with the metal bar.”

I could sense that even Shane shuddered at Brigg’s utterly merciless tone. “But hell, Boss—”

“That’s an order, you fool! Don’t you understand? This kidnaping

doesn't count so much. The killing will be pinned on Adam Link, the robot! When we pull other kidnappings, they'll pay up promptly, thinking it's the cold-blooded, ruthless robot from whom they can expect no mercy!"

And not knowing—the thought drummed in my brain—that it was the cold-blooded, ruthless Harvey Brigg from whom they could expect no mercy!

"I get it, Boss! It'll make the other kidnappings a cinch!"

"Get going," snapped Brigg. "At midnight, remember!"

At midnight, a woman was to die. I was the only one who knew of it. I couldn't let it happen. I left the attic, where I had been for three days and nights. I moved as swiftly and quietly as I could, leaped from the porch to soft grass, and scurried behind a hedge. Shane's car backed out of the drive and roared away with a clash of gears.

I followed, with an equal clash of gears. For the first time in my two weeks of sleuthing, I let out my full running powers. I passed one late pedestrian. The man stopped stock-still, whirled to watch me, and then staggered to the curb and sat down, apparently sick. I saw that briefly over my shoulder. I might have been amused, except that my mission was so grim.

I pounded after Shane's car as it left the outskirts of town where Brigg lived, out into the countryside. Traffic was sparse. Shane hit up a good speed. I ran along the concrete road's shoulder, about a block behind Shane's car, so that he wouldn't glimpse me in his rear-vision mirror. Auto headlights momentarily lit me up—a human figure racing at better than 70 miles an hour. I don't think the oncoming cars realized my speed. But the two or three I passed, going my way, must have. I can only surmise, as you can, what the drivers

thought as what seemed a man overhauled and shot past them, though their motors were roaring.

I felt a certain exhilaration, using my full machine's powers, after the days in the attic. I suppose it is something like a confined man feeling glad when he gets out and uses his muscles for a change. I raced along after the tail-light of Shane's car, my internal mechanisms humming smoothly. Yet I am glad the pace did not keep up long. I hadn't oiled and checked myself over for two weeks.

TWENTY minutes later Shane's car slowed and turned down a rutty road that presently wound into an isolated woods. Finally it went down what was little more than a weed-grown trail, barely wide enough for the car. It stopped before an old shack, before which another car was parked. I crouched behind the trunk of a tree.

Figures came out with guns in hand, greeted Shane, and they went in. It was one minute to midnight. I did not look at my watch to tell that. I have a sense of absolute time. I know what time it is at any second of the day or night.

In one minute, a woman was to die!

I crept to the shack door, placing my head against the wood, to hear. I heard their voices.

"No word from Slick, our contact man?" Shane queried.

"Nope. The \$50,000 didn't come. What's the Boss' orders, Shane?"

He must have made a silent signal, perhaps with a little spark of pity for the woman who must be awake and listening. I heard the men grunt a little, and one muttered: "Half a minute to midnight!"

"Where's my husband?" sounded a feminine voice, strained and half-hysterical. "You told me he'd be coming

soon—”

That was all I had been waiting for—the sound of her voice. Rather, its position. She was in the rear of the one-room shack. She should be safe from what would happen.

Now was the moment.

Within me, my distributor clicked over little automatic relays that released a flood of electricity through my steely frame. With one blow of my fist I splintered the door in half. I sprang into the room.

Five startled men jerked around. One was in the corner, just picking up a metal angle-iron, ready to crash it down on the skull of the young woman lying bound on a rickety couch. Four pairs of eyes popped, for, with the exception of Shane, they had all seen me before. They were the four who had met at the warehouse.

“God Almighty!” gasped one. “It’s the dick we pumped full of lead—”

Their guns barked immediately. I walked straight into the hail of lead. I strode for the man with the bar, jerked it out of his hands, bent it into a loop. Somehow, I had to do that first. It was the instrument of murder which was to have pinned the deed on me.

Then I grabbed the man’s gun. He had just fired pointblank at my chest. I crushed it in my hand and flung the pieces at the others. I went for them, but they had stopped firing. They stood like frozen images, faces dead white. The fear in their souls shone from their bloodshot eyes. *Who was this man who could not be killed?*

I stood in the center of the room, defying them.

Shane deliberately raised his gun and aimed for my head. I dodged the bullet, moving my head a split-second before his finger squeezed the trigger. A shot in my eyes would do no damage. Shane shot again at my head. Again it

thudded into the wall beyond. It was like an act in a strange drama. Shane shot at my chest, still with that slow, paralyzed incredulity. The slug spanked metallicly. A dawning look came into his face.

“Cripes!” he whispered. “It’s Adam Link!”

With shrieks, they scrambled for the door, clawing at each other to get out. I let them get into their car, outside, then grasped the bumper and overturned it. They piled into Shane’s car and I overturned that, spilling them out. They ran for the woods.

I LET them go. I had no wish to harm them. Poor misguided wretches, they were only pawns in the horrible game played by Harvey Brigg. He was the man my slow anger was directed against.

I went into the shack. The woman, who had fainted during the battle, was just opening her eyes. She did not seem any too reassured now, though I had routed her abductors.

“Who are you?” she quavered.

“A detective,” I said. If I had said Adam Link, her already strained, haggard mind might have snapped completely. As it was, when I snapped her cords apart like flimsy cotton and picked her up with the ease of a little doll, she gasped. I carried her to Shane’s car, which I had previously righted, and drove off.

“Where do you live?” I asked, as I turned on the highway.

She gave me the address. “You’ll be home, safe, in nineteen minutes,” I told her.

She smiled then. Perhaps her feminine intuition told her I was a friend. A moment later I saw her head back against the cushion. She was sleeping as peacefully as a baby. Good thing, perhaps. I drove that nineteen-minute

stretch to town at a wild pace that would have thrown her into hysteria again. Wild? My driving, at 90 an hour, is safer than that of any human at 20.

She was able to walk up the steps of her home, holding my arm. She fell into the arms of her husband, both choking in joy. I left. I wasn't needed any more. In Shane's car, I drove toward Jack's apartment.

Everything had turned out splendidly. I congratulated myself. Tomorrow was Eve's trial. In Jack's apartment was the evidence that would free Eve and convict Harvey Brigg. His treacherous ring would be broken.

I called Eve on the radio-telepathy, telling her the wonderful news. I had not wanted to make any false promises till now, when I was sure of myself. She interrupted me, excitedly.

"Adam! Why haven't you contacted me sooner? Jack and Tom have been hoping to get in touch with you, through me. Tom was just in my cell this evening again—"

"What's wrong?" I snapped. "Didn't the recording come through?" It was the only thing I could think of. Yet it couldn't be that. I had made thorough tests before taking the apparatus to Brigg's home. But fool, I told myself, why couldn't I at least have checked with Jack? At times, you see, I have quite human failings and lack of reasoning.

"Yes, most of it," Eve returned. "But the first part, three days ago, came through with lots of static. Tom says the voices are so distorted that it won't hold in court."

"The first part?" I went a little cold. "That was the part where Brigg revealed his three murders pinned on you! Eve, what else did Tom say?"

"Tom is worried. He says that although he has enough to indict Brigg on

almost everything else, he won't be able to clear me in time. Brigg will fight his case with powerful lawyers. In the meantime, my trial will have to go on and—well, Tom won't say any more."

I was stunned. I knew what it meant. Eve tried, convicted, and executed long before Harvey Brigg's legal defenses could be battered down. Without that vital bit of dictaphone evidence, destroyed by static, I had gotten nowhere!

Her telepathy-voice came again. "Adam, I'm so lonesome for you. I want to come to you. There is no hope now anyway—"

"Eve, no!" My thoughts crackled. "Eve, you must stay there. Don't despair, darling. There is still a way—"

CHAPTER VII

I Face a "Monster"

I CLICKED off. I wrenched the car around in the street on two wheels for a U-turn. I arrived at Brigg's home in a few minutes. I strode up the front steps to the door, rang the bell boldly.

The servant who opened the door said, "Come in, Shane." I had arrived in Shane's car. But in the hall light, he started. "You're not Shane! Who are you? What do you want?"

"I want to see Harvey Brigg," I said. "You can't—"

I pushed him aside as though he were a rag dummy and strode for the room I knew to be Brigg's den—or lair. I yanked open the door, walked in.

Brigg looked up from a desk. I was as startled as he. I had expected to see a depraved looking man. Instead he was tall, upright, with smiling features and straightforward blue eyes. No one would suspect him for a master criminal—as no one had.

He frowned. "Haven't I told you

men you must never come to see me personally? Only Shane is allowed—”

“I’m not one of your men, Harvey Brigg,” I interposed. “I’m your enemy. I know you for the utter scoundrel you are. You gave the orders that murdered Deering, Pucelli and Unger. Write out and sign a confession to that effect immediately, absolving Eve Link!”

Brigg’s blue eyes had narrowed.

“So Adam Link’s detectives figured it all out? But how foolish to come here for my confession! You don’t think I can be intimidated like a schoolboy?” An amused smile hovered over his full lips.

“You will sign that confession or—” My dry mechanical tones hid the deadly hiss in my meaning. I took a step forward.

“It would interest you to know that my servant—or bodyguard—has you covered!” Brigg nonchalantly waved in back of me.

I looked. The servant-bodyguard I had swept past was calmly leaning in the doorway, with a gun pointing at me.

Just as calmly, I spoke. “At your shack, a half-hour ago, your kidnapers emptied their guns at me. If you look close, you can see the holes in my suit.”

I held out my palms, where the plastic had been worn off, exposing the telescoping joints of my metal fingers. I also deliberately clawed at the plastic of my face. The seeming flesh came away in rubbery shreds. There was no blood. The false face fell away to reveal my true one of featureless metal.

“I am Adam Link,” I said simply.

THE two men were thunderstruck. Then the bodyguard’s gun hissed, with a silencer on it. Five slugs made five new holes in my suit. The sixth, aimed at my head, thudded into the wall beyond, as I dodged. The thug stared for a moment longer, then bolted with

a womanlike shriek from a cowardly soul.

I banged the door shut and faced Harvey Brigg. He was trembling like a leaf.

I spoke at some length.

“Your career is over, Harvey Brigg. I have a dictaphone record of all you and Shane have said in the past three days. But to save Eve Link, my mental mate, I want your written confession for the three murders. The three murders for which, all through the city, they are yelling ‘Frankenstein’ at her.”

I glared at him. My flat phonic voice showed nothing of the emotion I felt as I went on.

“Eve a Frankenstein monster? You, Harvey Brigg, are the Frankenstein monster, created out of the rottenest of human thoughts and aims. And it is you who wear a mask, not I. I have more right to cover myself with human-looking camouflage than you have to hide behind your screen of uprightness. You, Harvey Brigg, are more of a monster than I or my Eve could ever be!”

I leaned over his desk. I placed paper and a pen before him. “Write!” I commanded. “Write the words I dictate. ‘I, Harvey Brigg, confess to planning and ordering the murders of—’”

He made no move to comply, just sat there staring at me with staggered shock in his face. He grabbed for the telephone suddenly. I snatched it away, ripped out the wire. I reached over, grabbing his left wrist. “I am strong,” I said. “I am a machine. I have never before taken the life of a human. I am prepared to tonight, if only to rid the world of you.”

The wrist made a little snapping sound suddenly. I had not meant to do it. I had forgotten my powers.

Harvey Brigg made a gasping shriek of pain. He was mortally frightened now.

"Don't!" he groaned. "Don't kill me! I'll write—"

He snatched up the pen with his right hand and began scratching away, fearful that I would tear him to little bits. His fear was not unfounded.

I heard the noise, but took no account of it. I was too wrapped up in watching the words spill down on paper that would free Eve the next day at the trial.

The door burst open. In it were framed the bodyguard, Shane, and the four kidnapers. The latter, obviously, had flagged or forced a car to stop, come back to town, and met the bodyguard outside with his story.

"Get out!" I roared, advancing on them and waving my arms. "You know your bullets are useless against me. Get out, you fools!"

But they weren't fools. I had underestimated them. I didn't notice till too late what one held in his hand—a bomb-grenade. He pulled the pin and tossed it at my feet. It exploded with a dull thunder.

I swayed, then toppled. The bomb had wrecked my legs. I crashed to the floor. My brain was stunned by the terrific concussion working through my metal body. Another bomb-grenade was raised to finish me off.

"Wait!" It was the voice of Harvey Brigg. He came up out of the splintered wreck of his desk, where he had dived. "Don't throw it. He can't move or run now. Wreck his arms with an axe, while he's still stunned. Hurry! But I want him alive—his brain—for a while!"

The bodyguard returned with a fire-axe from the hall and hacked away at my arm-joints. I was still brain-numb, with no command over my mechanisms. The arms were severed soon, gears and muscle cables jingling loose. I was completely helpless, then, like an armless and legless man.

They stood over me pantingly. Harvey Brigg looked down at me. His formerly mild, guileless face was twisted in a leer of hate and triumph, as he nursed his broken wrist. He had given another low order to his bodyguard. He reappeared with a blow-torch.

"I can't break your wrist and make you suffer," Brigg said to me. "But we'll try this—"

At his order, the blow-torch's hissing flame was applied to my head-piece. All around evenly. The metal began to heat up.

"We'll fry your clever metal brain in its case!" gloated the human monster named Harvey Brigg.

CHAPTER VIII

The Final Hour

PAIN came to me, or its equivalent in my robot sensations. The heat began to throw my delicate electron-currents off, creating static that hammered like a frightful headache. I groaned, but this time in reality, not like when matches had been applied to my chest plastic. Diabolically, Harvey Brigg had known this would be torture to me.

Through the pain I heard his voice.

"With you out of the way, Adam Link, your Eve Link goes to the chair for those murders. As for the dictaphone record your helpers have, I'll fight it tooth and nail. Dictaphone evidence is never conclusive. I have a good chance of going scot-free, or maybe getting convicted on some minor count that won't break up my ring." He laughed derisively. "Adam Link, detective! This is your first and last case. Goodbye!"

I was going fast and he knew it. I felt a little surge of consolation as the man with the blow-torch, kneeling at my side, accidentally hooked his coat in

the belt stud of my radio-telepathy unit, turning it on. It was still intact, within my chest space. They knew nothing of the silent telepathic call I sent to Eve.

"Goodbye, my Eve," I called. I gave brief details. "Go through with the trial, as I did once. If you're saved by a miracle, carry on what I have tried to do—show humans that intelligent robots have a place in human society. Goodbye, dearest!"

There was nothing more to say. I didn't want to say that there was no hope, not even for a miracle. She would join me in non-existence soon. The advent of robot-life in the world would end with the epitaph—"Died in infancy."

"Adam—"

That was the only word Eve said, in return. Or shrieked. It registered as that in my electronic thought currents. When I tried to contact her again, I failed. Some wire or connection had slipped, probably loosened by the bomb concussion before.

That would be my last word from her, I reflected through my agony. "Adam—" It had held a world of meaning. Anguish, loyalty, love. A love, though unbiologic, that equals the highest of your human loves. And in that I felt a calm peace. The peace before death.

In ten minutes my head-case had begun to glow dull red. The outer iridium-sponge cells of my brain were shriveling, melting, paper-thin as they were. I longed for death. But my consciousness clung to my life-current. I was amazed myself at the tenacity of "life" within me. The heat that would have burned a human brain away in seconds had still not conquered mine.

But it would. My thoughts began to reel, plunging down into the pit of extinction. I was half-insane, so far gone that I suddenly imagined I saw Eve's gigantic form standing in the doorway.

"Adam!" the image seemed to cry. "What are they doing to you? Are you still alive—"

Cold shock swept over me, as the blow-torch tumbled from cruel hands and all the men whirled as if shot.

Eve was really there!

BROKEN lengths of chain still hung from her wrists, ankles and neck. Chain that she had snapped like rotten cord, in one furious tug, after I contacted her. I could surmise the rest. She had wrenched the cell-door off its hinges, brushed screaming jail officials aside, and run out of the prison. She had come in ten minutes across town. She must have run at express-train speed. She must have sent more than one late pedestrian or motorist shrieking for cover, as her giant metal form careened through the night streets. She knew the address, through Tom. She had found the way by sheer instinct, or perhaps by clutching some luckless human in her mighty hands and demanding directions.

All that aside, she was here.

The men were frozen, eyes horrified. Harvey Brigg backed away to a wall and flattened himself against it as though to push through. For they all saw that the creature before them was berserk.

She was a jungle creature, come to save her mate. A metal woman, rescuing her Tarzan. She screamed—awfully. She advanced with slow, ponderous steps, shaking the floor. One man broke from his trance to hurl a chair at her. She caught it and crumbled it to matchwood in her alloy hands. She battered a table aside, splitting it in half with one blow of her fist.

Slowly and steadily she advanced on the seven men cowering in the corner. She thought I was dead, seeing me in a tangled ruin. She was fully intent on

crushing those seven men to pulp.

I tried to call out, stop her. But my mechanical larynx was heat-warped to uselessness. I could not make the slightest move, to show I was alive. I could not even click shut my eye-shutters, to blank out the sight. I would see seven men ground to bloody shreds. More than that, I would see the robot once and for all banished from life in human society, for that act.

"Eve!" I tried to plead. "Eve, don't betray me now. Don't do just what I've warned against from the start. Don't prove the robot is just what the world is too readily to believe—a Frankenstein monster! Eve—please—don't!"

But I couldn't make a sound. My mental agony at that moment was far greater than the heat-torture had been.

Eve was within reach of the men. They were clawing at one another to get out of the way. They too were silent, with fear strangling them. Eve's merciless hands stretched out, for the first victim—

A siren wailed, somewhere outside, moaning to high crescendo. Eve had caught one man, trying to slip past her, and hurled him back in the group, as though intent on making them suffer the suspense of death as well as death itself. She seemed to tense herself for sudden activity, her internal hum deepening. She was about to commit wholesale massacre. . . .

Then blue-clad men were swarming into the room—police! I shrieked and cursed, within myself. She would rend them apart too! She whirled on the police, as they shouted—

At that moment I found my voice. My heated metal had cooled enough for parts to slip into place. It was only a croak, my voice:

"Eve! Stop! Submit to the police. Don't touch the men!"

She stood in the center of the room,

looking from the police to the men, and then down at me—or what was left of me. She made no move against any of them.

The gangsters found their voices. Babbling, they begged the police to protect them from the metal monster.

"Make them confess!" I yelled out, my voice stronger now. "Make Harvey Brigg confess to the murders Eve is accused of, and all his other criminal activities!"

Eve looked around at Harvey Brigg.

"I'll confess," he cried eagerly, frantically. "I'll confess everything. Only don't let that robot touch me!"

I have only one more thing to record. We were in our mountain cabin, with Jack, Kay and Tom, court procedure over. I had a new body, and Eve was in her first one, human proportioned.

"We won all, but we nearly lost," I said. "If the police hadn't come in time—" I shuddered mentally. "Eve, you must never—"

"I wasn't going to harm the men," Eve said. "I kept my head. I knew about the ring. I knew if I frightened them enough they would confess. I knew the police were coming. What's more, Adam Link, detective—I knew you were alive all the time. One of your broken cables twitched slightly. I saw that right away!" I knew she was laughing a little then. "Poor dear, did you really think I had gone berserk?"

Paradoxically, I was nettled. "You mean you weren't ready to—well, avenge me, if I *had* been dead?"

"Now, dear, that's just what you *wouldn't* have wanted—"

One word began to lead to another.

Our three friends arose to leave. "Your first quarrel!" Jack grinned. "Come on, Kay and Tom. We're excess baggage. And if Eve starts throwing things—"

THE END

ADAM LINK.

Champion Athlete

by Eando Binder

I WANT to file citizenship papers," I said. "I am Adam Link, the robot."

The official, Dahlgren by name, stared at me. I suppose it is strange to hear a metal being talk. To be confronted by a manlike creation—alloy legs and body, featureless face of metal, jingling internal hum, and all—and realize it has a mind of its own. That it is *living*!

Jack Hall and Tom Link, my friends,

stood beside me. Also Eve, my companion robot and my mental mate. We had decided, after long discussion, to try this. I had the complete papers drawn up, with Tom's help, for both Eve and myself. Our first "naturalization" papers.

"Impossible!" snapped the official finally. His face reddened. He felt we were making a fool of him. "Citizenship is granted only to—uh—human beings."

With iron grip, I swung the wheel hard and swerved the speeding car around the unconscious man.

Fuqua

ADAM LINK decides that the only way he can prove his human qualities is to match sportsmanship with sportsmanship competing with humans in the sport world

Tom spoke up sharply.

"Can you show me that statement, in black and white? The laws read that any *person*, regardless of race, color, creed or nationality, may apply for citizenship."

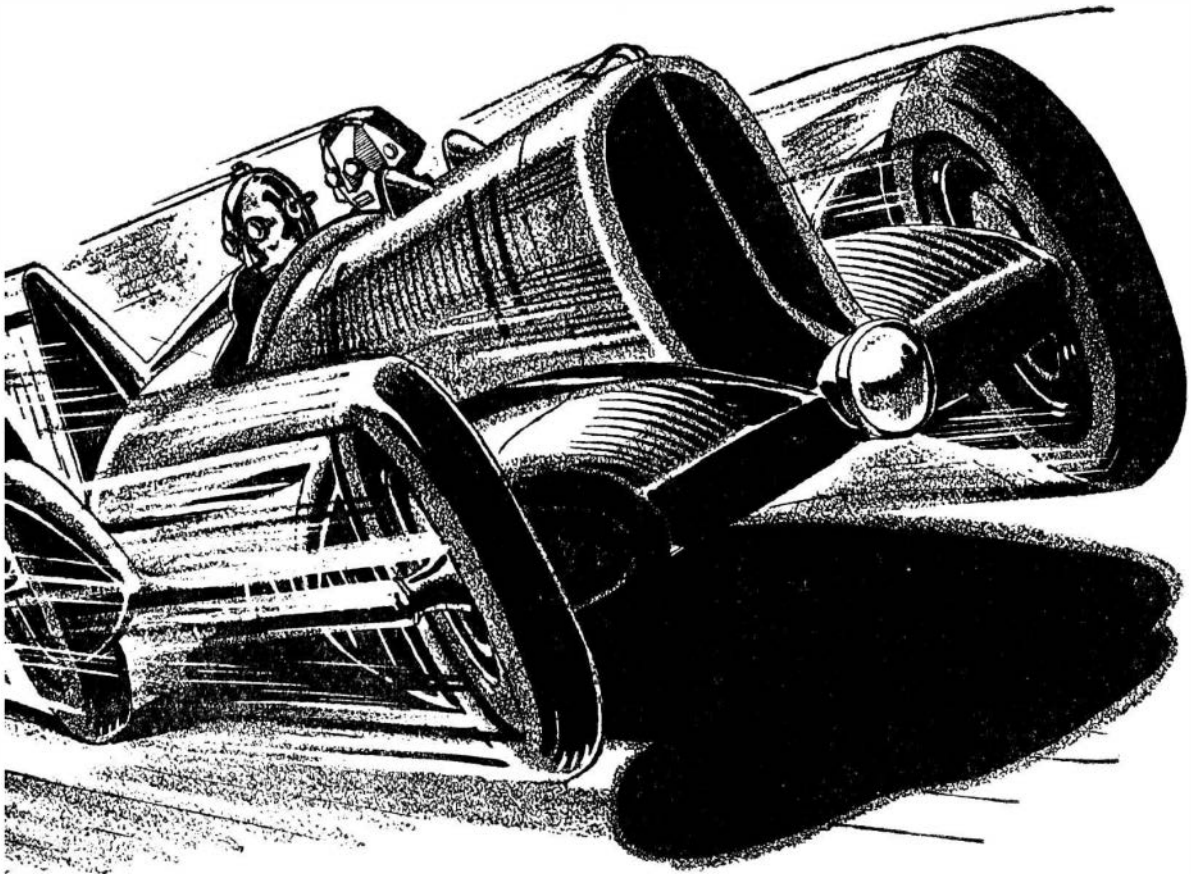
Dahlgren was taken aback. I was a little amused. Regardless of *race*, the laws say. Even beings from another world would be eligible by that loose term. Ridiculous thought. But still, I'm afraid you humans have been too smugly assured that in all the uni-

verse there can only be intelligent beings like yourself.

"Person!" scoffed Dahlgren. "Is he a person?"

He looked me up and down with a stiff smile. "It's quite obvious that he's nothing more than a clever, mechanical apparatus. A robot that walks and talks. A machine. You can't label that a 'person'. What you want is a *patent!*"

He did not mean to be insulting. He simply failed to realize I had a brain.



Eve and I looked at each other. What of our minds? You don't patent a mind.

Tom tried pleading.

"Don't look at it that way," he cried.

"They have personality and character of their own, like any of us. They have minds. They think, reason, know the difference between right and wrong. They want to live in our world, as full-fledged members. They've done good already. You know their story——"

He went on briefly, in summary.

For two years I had passed through a quiet human period of adjustment to life since my creation. I had been hounded as a Frankenstein slayer of my creator, sat patiently through a court trial, and won freedom—and legal human status. I had conducted a consultant business, and rebuilt slums with the money gained. I had strangely stirred the heart of a human girl. I had created a robot mate for myself, to live as humans live normally, in pairs. With Eve, I had broken up a criminal ring in this midwestern city.

Now, all those tumultuous events behind me, I felt I had a place in human society. I wanted to become a citizen, and the forerunner of others of my kind. We could do civilization much good.

TOM stressed that, in conclusion.

"You know how they broke up this city's biggest crime ring. Could any human have done better—or as much?"

Dahlgren gave Eve and me a grudging look of admiration, for that. But he shook his head stubbornly.

"Still, they aren't human beings—legally."

Tom smiled triumphantly, having maneuvered the discussion to that angle. "Adam Link *is* a human being, legally. You read about his trial. He was duly entered in the civil court records. I can furnish them. Also Eve

Link, through *her* trial, is legally a human being!"

Dahlgren looked as though he had been driven into a corner.

"Technically," he floundered.

"Perhaps," Tom shot back. "But I think it's up to you to prove he *isn't* human—legally. You can't ignore court records. Do you know what Adam Link can do if you refuse to take up this matter? He can sue you!"

Dahlgren pondered that, half angrily, half worriedly.

"I'll send the papers to Washington, to higher authorities," he acceded. "I won't take the responsibility myself." He went on, almost spitefully. "I guarantee you they won't accept it. They'll throw it out on technicalities. Where was Adam Link born? Who were his parents? Things like that——"

His eyes narrowed shrewdly then.

"There's more to this than just awarding Adam and Eve Link citizenship, for their good deeds. The question is, do we want *more* robots to follow, parading up and down our streets as full-fledged citizens, accorded all the privileges of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights?"

"What do you mean?" I demanded, and I think my mechanical voice was rather stentorian. "That you think robots might become a menace?"

It was that, of course. Yet I couldn't blame him for the stand he took. It was, after all, a situation no man had ever faced before, in all human history. Not even Solomon would have seen a clear answer.

I knew the thoughts streaming vaguely through his mind. He was being asked to make room, in human society, for alien beings. For the first of the future robot race. How could he take the tremendous responsibility of that step? How could he be sure some frightful catastrophe might not result?

Frankenstein! A robot race gone Frankenstein! If that happened, he would be blamed. And every official in Washington would feel the same, and shy from the decision.

I HAD taken a step forward, involuntarily. Dahlgren had paled, perhaps visioning me going berserk. Jack's hand pulled me back.

"No use arguing, Adam," he murmured. "I knew this wouldn't work."

Dahlgren stood up from his desk. His instinctive fear over, he spoke directly to me, almost in a friendly fashion.

"I knew you were coming eventually, Adam Link. I've been prepared for this. Do you know what is against you mainly? Public opinion! I've watched the papers. Look at what this commentator says."

He handed me a newspaper, with a syndicated column that reached the homes and minds of millions. I read the item at a glance, with my television scanning.

"Adam Link, the intelligent robot, is definitely a national figure today. As a startling, almost fantastic novelty out of some lurid thriller, he captures the imagination. But the novelty has worn off. Even most of the jokes about him have died down.

"Science has created metal-life. We can accept that. But we must not blind ourselves to its deeper significance. Adam Link will want to be accepted as a human being. He may have legal status, but so has a dog. A dog may inherit money, and be tried for a crime. And despite his laudable actions so far, and his own protestations that he is human in all but body—*is he human?* I maintain he is inferior to humans in all mental respects. His so-called emotional reactions are all pseudo-human, mechanical, not real. Personally, I

doubt if they exist at all!"

The commentator, signing himself Bart Oliver, left that damning indictment echoing like a challenge.

"You see?" said the official softly. "A government like ours must never run against public opinion. Washington won't grant you citizenship." Then he waved impatiently. "I'm a busy man. Good day, gentlemen."

He should have added "—and Mrs. Link." He had completely ignored the fact that she was a lady. A woman, a girl, as human as any housed in flesh instead of metal, because her mind had been patterned to a feminine scheme.

CHAPTER II

A Great Idea

BACK at his apartment, Jack shook his head again.

"No, I knew it wouldn't work. Not that easily. In Washington, they'll wrangle a while and then reject the application. They won't want to set a precedent, or buck the public. Right, Tom?"

Tom nodded wordlessly, and there was silence in the room.

Wasn't there some way, my thoughts asked? We two, the Adam and Eve of intelligent robots, were ready to become citizens. I was sure of that myself. Dr. Link, my creator, had set his heart on that the day he saw I was not merely a clever machine, but a thinking being.

Tom broke the silence. "Maybe we should take out the—" he hesitated, glancing at me—"well, the patent!"

"No." My microphonic voice was firm. "The secret of the metal-brain is locked in my mind. I would trust no one else with it."

Jack was suddenly fuming.

"That commentator, Bart Oliver! He doesn't represent public opinion.

He just poisons it. Adam Link is inferior to humans, he says like a lordly judge—”

“Perhaps I am,” I said. “After all, I’m just wires and wheels. Metal junk strung together. Perhaps—”

But something had struck Jack, forcibly.

“Perhaps, nothing!” he interrupted. “There’s a way, by God. If we can get a tide of public opinion in your favor, Adam, we’d have a wedge in Washington.” He looked at me a moment. “Will you let us put you in the public eye?”

Jack went on eagerly. “Sports is what I mean. We’ll display your strength and skill in sports. And with it sportsmanship, determination, and what they call ‘heart’. All those human qualities are best brought out in sport activities. Adam, old boy, you’re going to make the headlines in a new way. What’s today—hah! The Indianapolis Memorial Day Race is next month. I have connections. I’ll get you in as an entry if I have to commit murder!”

Irrepressibly Jack made plans. His idea was sound. I would that way win human will and sympathy first, then official recognition.

THE Indianapolis racing classic took place.

The jam-packed stands blurred by, hour after hour, as I drove my special car around the oval track. Eve was at my side, as my mechanic, pumping oil by hand to the laboring engine.

We felt supreme confidence in ourselves. In my private car, a powerful one, I had often driven over a hundred miles an hour. I hit 160 here on the straight stretches, and not much less on the curves. I had no worry over a tire going and losing control. Electrons and electricity motivate my brain and

body, give me speed and power of a superhuman degree.

There wasn’t any competition. I led the field. There wasn’t even danger, except twice when I overtook the racers so far behind, gaining laps. I swung past them one after another, timing the dangerous moments with hairline accuracy. I am a machine myself. Driving another machine is sheer child’s play.

“We will win, Eve,” I sang above the grinding roar of our motor. “They are so slow and weak, these humans.”

“Not all of them,” Eve said. “The man in car five—Bronson is his name, I think—has been taking curves faster right along, in the attempt to catch us.”

A great moment of danger came. One car skidded on a curve, cracking into another sideways, and both rolled over and over across my path. I was just passing the field again.

There was only a split-second of time. No human could have avoided crashing into them. Tires squealing, our car swerved for the only opening in the jam.

“Adam! The man—you’ll run over him!”

One of the unfortunate drivers had catapulted from his wrecked car in front of me. He might be alive or dead. If I hit him, he would certainly be dead.

The stalled car was in our way. I knew, in avoiding the man, I’d have to take my chances with this. I did what I could. When we struck, it was a glancing blow. Any human would have had the wheel ripped out of his hands. My alloy fingers tightened like a vice. The gears of my arms gave a screech of unyielding protest. I held firm. We went on, safely, except for two blown tires.

Stopping in the pit for a quick change of wheels, we went on to win the race,

still far ahead. Bronson was second, breaking the track record himself in the magnificent attempt to catch us.

OIL-STAINED, grimy, so tired he could hardly stand, Bronson grinned at us. "Great race," he said simply. "Better man than I am, Adam Link. You deserved it."

Before the race he had scorned to consider us competition. Some of the other drivers, crowding around, muttered. Had the race been fair, since I won so easily?

"Shut up," Bronson told them. "We had our laughs before we started, over Adam and Eve Link thinking they could win. A couple of tin monkeys, we called them. We got to take our medicine now. Besides, I saw him take a skid, to miss running over Henderson. Adam Link might have cracked himself up. He takes first money and no beefing."

The crowd had taken the announcement of my victory in a dead, chilling silence. They were hostile. The announcer asked me to say something over the public-address system. I didn't.

I handed Bronson the first-prize check. I didn't need it; we had plenty of the money I had earned as a business consultant in the past.

Jack, on the judges' stand beside me, nodded. "Take it, Bronson. You really won. There isn't a driver on Earth could beat Adam Link."

The crowd burst out in cheers, over this. I knew what it was called—sportsmanship. I had won a point, after all, in my campaign to prove I was worth human status!

Or had I?

That evening, the papers used 72-point headlines. **ROBOT WINS CLASSIC. METAL MAN DEMON DRIVER. INCREDIBLE RECORD**

SET BY ADAM LINK. And more significantly — **TIN MAN AND MATE STEAL SPEEDWAY CUP.**

Under the latter heading, it said: "Why not run a man against a car? Adam Link was bound to win. It might have been a fairer contest if Adam Link had gamboled around the track himself, machine against machine!"

More cutting was the column under Bart Oliver's byline:

"Adam Link won the race, but not public acclaim. He tried to, by 'magnanimously' turning over the first-prize money to Bronson. Sportsmanship? I think we all see through it as a spurious act. He was told to do it, undoubtedly, by his manager. Adam Link himself would never have thought of such a human gesture in his cold, metallic mind!"

Bart Oliver had appointed himself my Nemesis. I could see that. He was ruthlessly determined to misinterpret everything I did, as so many others had since my creation. But now I had a truly formidable enemy, one who swayed large masses.

I wrote a rebuttal. "I, Adam Link, am a robot, but I have a human mind, not a cold, metallic one. Ever since my advent, certain yellow journals and their paid mouthpieces have dinned against me constantly. The latest is Bart Oliver. I wish to point out that he represents his own opinion, not everyone's, if there is any fairness in human minds!"

It appeared in Oliver's syndicated papers, under the heading: "Adam Link's Manager Pens Rebuttal in Robot's Name . . ."

CHAPTER III

Adam Link, Champion

STILL we went on with our planned course. Jack took me to Chicago,

to the American Bowling Congress.

I entered the singles competition. As with the Speedway interests, the tourney officials eagerly accepted me. It helped their business. The place was packed. When my turn came, I picked up a ball. My metal hand is almost like its human counterpart, with articulate fingers and telescoping joints. I inserted my thumb and middle finger in the holes.

I stood for three seconds. In those three seconds, I had calculated mentally exactly how long the alley was. And how to make all the pins fall. A hit between the one-and-three or one-and-two pins would do it.

I had seen the other bowlers take a run, prior to casting the ball. I needed no run. I stepped to the foul-line, my metal feet clattering loudly against the hard floor. I swung my arm back, then forward, with my sharp mechanical vision on the one-three pins.

The ball sped straight and true, for a strike. I had used such force that three of the pins flew into the next alley. Thereafter I toned down the speed. Twelve times the ball rolled down, for strikes. It was simple. The crowd watched in breathless wonder.

"A perfect game!" Jack yelled. "The first time you ever bowled and you make a perfect score!"

On the spur of the moment, he added: "Adam Link will now try to bowl two more perfect games, ladies and gentlemen!"

"Jack," I protested to him in a whisper, "there's no need for that. No need to flaunt my powers."

"Publicity!" Jack whispered back. "Or can't you do it?"

He was suddenly a little appalled at what he had so blithely announced. No human bowler had ever scored three perfect games in a row.

He breathed a little easier as I rolled

another perfect game. Straight as an arrow the ball always went, for the one-three pocket. To me, it is as ridiculously easy as a cannon always casting its shell in the same place.

ON the last game I had Jack hang his hat in front of my eyes. Thus I rolled blind. But, standing in a certain position, my rolls were just as accurate, so long as I did not move.

But when the last ball sped down the alley, a yell went up.

Jack took his hat from my eyes, and I saw one pin still remained standing. It was the ten pin.

"Adam Link," said a bowler who had bowled on the adjoining alley, "you were 'tapped.'"

"Tapped?" I queried in puzzled tones.

"Yes. Fate does that to all bowlers. The ball hits the pocket for a perfect strike, but by the merest of margins, the pins do not hit each other properly, and one pin remains standing in defiance of all the laws of motion."

But nevertheless, with a score of 899, I was Adam Link, bowling singles champion of the world.

I refused the cup. I was satisfied to be the uncrowned champion. Again, as at the Speedway, the crowd cheered this as a gesture of sportsmanship.

"Have you anything to say—to your public?" asked one of the reporters covering the tournament.

I caught instantly that term "to your public." Was I winning a permanent place in the public consciousness—as a personality?

"I have only one thing to say," I returned. "I wish to become accepted as a human being, not as a robot. All my thoughts and reactions are human."

"Boy, that's news!" yelled one of the reporters. "Metal man claims he's sensitive soul underneath it all."

It was a rather heartless thing for him to say. The other newsmen caught their breaths. You could say something like that to a well-known man who was used to public ribbing. But could you say it to an enigmatic being of hard metal who had the strength of ten men in one arm? One or two men involuntarily stepped back.

"Yes," I said. "I bruise easy but I heal quick."

My flat mechanical tones sound the same no matter what I say. It was seconds before my repartee caught.

"My God," said the reporter, grinning. "Adam Link has a sense of humor!"

I PULLED Eve to my side, as more pictures were taken. Eve femininely wiped away an oil-stain at my hinged shoulder, and turned her shinier side to the lens, to look her best. I think the reporters recognized it for the eternal woman, robot or not.

As I turned away, I accidentally struck one of them in the ribs, knocking his breath half out.

"Oh—pardon me," I said quickly. He seemed still more startled at the words. Courtesy from a robot!

Something more significant occurred as we left the place. A black-haired man with bushy eyebrows came up.

"I put some heavy money on you, Adam Link. You came through for me. I bet two to one you'd cinch the singles championship. Made up for what I lost at the Speedway, betting against you. Just between you and me, what're you going in for next?"

He was holding a wad of thousand-dollar bills in his palm, surreptitiously.

I pushed the bribe away, immediately comprehending. "You mean you want to know what I expect to win in next? So that you can make money unfairly?"

Jack pushed in front of me. "Look, Brody," he said icily. "You can bet as you want. We're not selling anything. Understand?"

Jack pulled me away. "Jim Brody," he explained. "Big betting-combine behind him. He was probably figuring on buying an interest in you, or wanting to fix things his way. We're having nothing to do with that sort of thing."

"Can I print that?" One of the reporters had been within earshot. "I won't mention Brody's name. Jobs are scarce! But I'll play up Adam Link's honesty, turning down a bribe."

"Good," Jack said eagerly, ready to follow any little advantage. "Play it up. I won't tell any of the other boys. Scoop for you and your paper."

THE sport headlines the next morning ran through their usual variations. ADAM LINK BOWLING CHAMP. STEEL HERCULES ALLEY KING. METAL MAN UNBEATABLE.

I didn't like this. "My physical prowess is being displayed, not my human qualities. Maybe we're doing this wrong, Jack."

"Are we?" Jack queried. "Read the texts."

I noted that the incident was mentioned where I bumped the man and said "pardon me." Also the rejection of the cup—sportsmanship again. I was quoted for my wish to be thought of as a human. I was given credit for a sense of humor, with my quip. Eve was mentioned as "priming" before the camera, like any human girl. And most important, the following, by the reporter who had overheard.

"Adam Link *isn't* human. He turned down a bribe!" After detailing the incident, the writer finished more seriously: "Honesty is a basic human quality. If nothing else, Adam Link

has that."

"You see?" Jack said. "Sports are a perfect medium for bringing out things like that. In contrast to your tremendous strength and skill, the human things stand out like white against black."

I was not as confident as he was, especially when the evening papers came out.

Bart Oliver's syndicated column said:

"What a cheap way for Adam Link and his sponsors to attempt to show he has integrity! The whole incident was very likely a stunt, bribe and all. Adam Link, as a mechanism, knocking down pins like a machine-gun, is a marvel. But Adam Link as a human being, turning down a bribe, cracking wise, and saying 'pardon me' humbly, is an utter myth. A phonograph could do the same."

I should have known my singling out of Bart Oliver as an example of yellow journalism would increase his enmity. I began to see my campaign had only begun. That I would not easily be accepted as a human in mind, though a monster outwardly.

Jack was furious, of course. But then he shrugged.

"We'll go on. Slow but sure, public opinion will swing our way, in spite of his kind. We've got to force the issue, through publicity. Let's see—there's a tennis meet next week. How are you at that, Adam, old boy?"

There was a knowing smirk on his face. He had played with me.

CHAPTER III

A Challenge

I WILL pass over sketchily the many following events. We barnstormed the sports world. In the tennis matches,

I won against the highest-ranking player in straight sets.

In golf I achieved a score of 49 on a par-72 course. Three times I drove from one green to another for a hole in one. The rest of the time I landed the ball within a few feet of the cup. An expert golfer takes account of the wind, when he swings his club. But he doesn't see clearly, in his less mathematical mind, a graph showing the exact course the ball must follow through the air. Nor is he able to make allowance, as I did, for the differences in air density as the ball arcs up and then down again.

In archery after a few trials to acquaint myself with the weapon, I was able to split one arrow with another, like the legendary Robin Hood.

In skeet-shooting, I ran an unblemished score to 500 and gave it up as a waste of ammunition, for I saw I would never miss.

In weight-lifting, I hoisted 5,000 pounds a foot high. Eve and I tossed a thousand-pound dumb-bell back and forth like a ball.

At a track meet, in an open-air stadium, I ran the hundred-yard dash in 5.4 seconds. But Eve did it in 5.3. She is a little quicker than I at the start. I recall the papers playing it up, bantering, as a reversal of masculine superiority.

We ran the mile in 93.28 seconds. We set a high-jump "record" of 10½ feet, and a broad-jump of 41 feet. In the latter event, we did not dare exert our full powers. When we land our 300 pounds of weight, it jars through our whole mechanism, threatening to disrupt vital parts. As it was, Eve went head-over-heels, cracked her skull-piece against the ground violently, and was "unconscious" for five minutes. I was frantic till she came to and answered the endearments that come as naturally to me as to any man seeing a loved one.

hurt.

"Is Adam Link really human in mind?" commented one paper over that. "He all but wrung his hands while his metal mate lay knocked cold."

"Another spurious reaction," wrote Bart Oliver. "His 'heart' is an electrical distributor, giving off sparks of electricity, but certainly not of human emotion."

And so it had gone all along, pro and con. Was Adam Link human? Or was he simply a thinking engine? And always the yellow journals, led by Bart Oliver, maligned me. Branded me with such epithets as unhuman, subhuman, pseudo-human.

WITH his flair for the spectacular, Jack managed to stage an exhibition baseball game, the proceeds for charity. The pitcher for one team was listed as Adam Link, the catcher Eve Link. The rest of our team were minor-leaguers. The opposing team were of major-league all-stars.

"Have you ever pitched before?" they asked me.

I shook my head.

"We'll murder you!" they predicted boisterously.

I was a little startled till I realized it was part of baseball jargon.

The first man up waited confidently. They knew of my machine-strength, and success in all other sports, but baseball was different. I was against a skilled, powerful team. I sped the first ball down. Too low, it was called a ball. The second was too high. The third too wide.

But then I got the idea, and shot the fourth ball straight over the plate. *Crack!* It went into center field. Luckily, it was caught. The second man up watched two of my pitches go straight over for called strikes, then swung at the third. Like a bullet, it

came at me and struck my frontal plate with a resounding clang. It might have killed a man. It bounced up from me and came down in my hands. Two out. The batter, having rounded first base, turned back, disgruntled. Any human pitcher would have been forced to dodge the ball and let it go into center field for a hit.

The crowd was roaring. Adam Link could be hit! He was not so invincible in baseball as in all else.

The third man up crashed the first ball over my head. That is, it would have gone over my head except that I leaped up ten feet and caught it in my left hand. The first half of the inning was over. The major-leaguers, passing me on the way to field, grinned.

"We'll bust you wide open next inning!" they cheerfully informed me. And this time I knew they didn't mean wrecking my metal body and strewing its parts around.

AS our side, at bat, went down in one-two-three order, a voice called me from behind the dugout, where I sat with Eve and Jack. We approached the man.

"Brody!" said Jack. "What do you want?"

The gambler's beetle-brows were drawn together in a frown. He addressed me. "Look here, you going to win this game or not? The way you're starting, they'll run up a score next inning. And your men won't get a run from their pitchers. Bets have been hard to get except at ten-to-one. If you lose, I'm cleaned!"

"So what?" Jack snorted, stalking away.

I thought of deliberately losing, to teach Brody a lesson. But I didn't. The first inning had been experimental. Now I knew the exact range of the plate, the behavior of a ball in flight,

the timing of their swings.

I looped my arm around. The ball spanked into Eve's hands almost instantly. I don't think the umpire really saw it, but he sensed it had cut the heart of the plate, and he called a strike. Again the ball whistled down. On the third throw, the batter bewilderedly swung. The ball was in Eve's hands before he even started the bat around. The two following men swung courageously, but belatedly. It was speed they had never seen before.

Thereafter, they went down in one-two-three order, each on three pitched balls. With their slow reflexes, they had no chance. It would be a no-hit game. Eve and I came to bat in the third inning. Swinging experimentally at the first two balls, I sent the third one into the center-field bleachers for a home-run. Eve duplicated my feat. We repeated in the sixth inning, pounding the balls out of the park entirely.

The game was a farce. While I pitched, the men back of me sat and lay on the ground, with nothing to do. They laughed and made biting remarks to the futilely-swinging All-Stars. I could sense tempers flaring. At the end of the sixth inning, thoroughly humiliated, the All-Stars attacked their taunting rivals.

And they attacked me.

"Damned tin gorilla!" I heard, and then bats were pounding at me from all sides. I had heard baseball players were rough and ready men. But they actually had murder in their eyes, splintering their wooden clubs against me. One crack against my skull made me reel.

"Stop!" I bellowed. I wrenched a club out of one man's hands and snapped it in half, in my hands.

THEY all saw. Anger went out of their eyes, and fear came in. They

backed away.

"No, I won't touch you," I told them quickly. "But you're poor sports."

"Poor sports!" shrilled back one man. "We don't have a chance against you. You've just been showing off your cheap strength, you tin sport!"

That epithet was singularly appropriate, from their viewpoint. That was all it had meant to them! Cheap exhibitionism, rather than strength and skill under the control of a humanlike mind. They looked on me more or less as a dancing bear or remarkable puppet, rather than a mental human! I looked at Jack. Our campaign was backfiring.

"Yes," agreed another voice. "You've been trying to prove you're a human being, Adam Link. All you've proved is that you're a machine!"

It was not a baseball player who spoke. Part of the crowd had swarmed onto the field. Among them was a slouching figure in a black fedora hat, with a sharp nose and cynical eyes. He stepped forward.

"Bart Oliver!" Jack said in recognition.

This was the man who, more than any other, opposed me. Who had taken it upon himself to deny me human status, like a one-man Vigilante Committee. He had led the yellow journals like a pack of wolves after me. I looked upon him as you would look upon a man who tried to run you down with a truck.

He was staring at me with deep interest, his first sight of me at close range. "I came here," he explained, "to look you over. I think it's about time we met. What's your game, Adam Link? What are you after?"

"Game?" I asked.

"Don't act innocent," he drawled cynically. "You've been trying to display human qualities. Why?"

"Why don't you lay off him, Oliver?"

snapped Jack. He was warning me with his eyes not to answer.

But I did. I decided to chance all on a direct plea. I addressed them all, players, reporters, crowd. And therefore the world.

"Listen to me. I have tried to show, through sports, that beneath my machine-power are the human things. Eve and I are as human as any of you here or elsewhere. Our kind can be useful, in industry, as thinking machines. As pilots, drivers, laborers, mechanics and in the laboratory. Robots will do only good, never harm. I swear it. But future robots must not be slaves. I am the first of the robots."

I looked around at the intent crowd.

"I want to become a citizen," I finished.

The human faces before me were stunned. It was my first public utterance to that effect. They looked at me queerly, as though the thought were inconceivable. Just as Dahlgren had looked. I suppose the effect was something like a car or animal asking for citizenship.

Bart Oliver seemed less startled than the others.

"I thought so," he murmured. He swung on the crowd too. "Adam Link wants to become a citizen; *and to vote*. But in the first place, he hasn't proved he's entitled to human status. I still claim he's inferior to humans in all factors—even physically!"

He went on to explain his astounding statement.

"Under suitable handicaps, a human will beat Adam Link. Suppose, for instance, that he ran a really gruelling race, like a cross-country run, without stopping for repairs, and with a governor within him to keep his speed at ten miles an hour. Would he win? Would he possess enough determination and courage to stick to his task?"

My phonic voice came out quickly. "I accept the challenge!"

CHAPTER IV

The Race

TWO weeks later, I was at the starting line with five long-distance runners. Eve checked me over carefully. Fresh battery, central distributor sparking evenly, all rivets and bolts tightened, joints oiled. I was ready.

Jim Brody, the gambler, approached us before the start.

"You going to win, Adam Link?" he asked me, with all the querulousness of a child.

I answered truthfully. "I don't know. If I break a leg cable, I lose, under the rule of no repairs."

Brody looked at me speculatively. "I've made some money on you, Link. The odds are ten-to-one that you win, because you won in everything else. Suppose you lost? And suppose I collected ten for one, betting *against* you? I'd make a mint. And you can have fifty per cent—"

"Damn you, Brody!" I said. It was the first time I'd ever used one of the swear words you humans do. I used it because it was the only way to make myself clear. "I'm going to try my best to win!"

He left, with a gleam in his eye. I knew what he thought—that I would lose. My very choice of words encouraged him in that belief. Frankly, I wasn't sure of myself. It would be a real grind. A marathon. Five hundred miles of rough road. I had never before tested my powers over so long and hard a stretch. I was not made like an automobile, for just such a purpose.

The race started. Within a hundred miles, one of the five men I was racing against had pulled steadily ahead of the field. He was Rikko, a Finn. I kept

up with him, at his side.

Four official cars followed. In one rode Jack and Tom and Eve. In the second, Rikko's manager and helpers, with blankets and food. In the third, the official time-keepers. In the last one, news and cameramen, and with them Bart Oliver.

By the rules, although I did not need sleep, I had to apportion eight hours out of twenty-four to "rest." During such times I talked with Eve.

"Rikko is running his heart out," she said. We both realized it took a great spirit to run against a tireless machine.

"I must too," I said. "The country is watching. Washington is watching, Tom says. If I lose, Bart Oliver will have proved his point—that I am inferior to humans. And he will have made us the laughing stock of the world. Our citizenship hinges on the outcome of this race."

BRODY approached me when 300 miles had been run. Rikko and I had kept abreast all the time. The gambler had evidently followed in his car. He looked worried. With him were several hard-looking men.

"Look here, Link," he grated. "Our money says you lose. All of it. You better lose—or else!"

Once, four gangsters had emptied their guns at me, without effect. "Are you threatening me?" I scoffed. "You forget I'm a metal man."

They left, muttering.

All went well till the end of the third day. The ceaseless jarring and pounding had had its effect on me, but nothing serious. A slight twist on my right knee-joint, making me limp a little. And a tiny short-circuit above my distributor, which manifested itself in my brain as an annoying throb. Pain, you might call it. If the symptoms did not increase, I was safe.

Yes, this marathon was a true test for me. If I won, I would be every inch a champion. The human machine, though weak compared to me, is a marvelously smooth mechanism. It has lasting power. But have you heard yet of a car or engine that kept up a steady pace without little things going wrong?

* * * *

THE MORNING of the fourth day, something struck my eye, far to the side. A highway ran at right angles to our prearranged course along a country road. A car sped down it. A mile beyond, a train rumbled and would soon cross the highway.

Mathematical distances and measurements integrated instantly in my mind. I saw the car would smash into the train. I swung my chest-plate open, unhooked the governor, and leaped away.

"Adam, you fool—" came Jack's startled yell, from his car behind me.

"Come on, Eve!" I bellowed, as she jumped out. She followed instantly, aware of the impending tragedy.

Together we raced down the highway. The car was doing 80. We did 90, like two metal Tarzans chasing a wild beast. We caught its rear bumper and strained to hold it back. Our 600 pounds told. The driver felt the drag, saw he couldn't make it, jammed on his brakes. The car screeched to a stop five feet before the locomotive as it thundered past.

Eve and I said nothing to the driver, white-faced and sick now that he saw how close he had been to death. He had learned his lesson.

Returning, we found the race stalled. Rikko had stopped to watch, and all the others.

"You've broken the speed rule, Adam Link," the racing official said. "I'm sorry, but you've forfeited the race!"

"Wait," Rikko muttered. "I don't

think that's fair. Let him go on."

A magnificent gesture. Then Bart Oliver stepped up. I saw the gleam in his eye. He wouldn't allow it. He would insist on the forfeit, laugh us to scorn for our mock heroics, kill our chances for citizenship at one stroke.

"Let Adam Link go on," Bart Oliver said tersely. He was looking at the train vanishing in the distance. "That was a 'stunt' that could never have been planned."

FIFTY miles to go!

Fifty miles of excruciating torture to me. The strain of catching the car had aggravated the twist of my knee-joint. I had a decided limp. Also my sparking system was worse. Static charges battered within my iridium-sponge brain. I had what in a human runner would have been rheumatism and a frightful headache.

No repairs. No corrections. I could only stumble along. Worse, it rained, and all my joints stiffened for lack of fresh grease.

At the last rest-stop, Bart Oliver grinned.

"Have you got a fighting heart, Adam Link?" he jeered. "Jack told me you must be feeling what amounts to pain. Now you know how a human runner feels, with aching muscles and sore bones. And only dogged determination to keep up the grind. Don't think Rikko is feeling any better. He's been running a terrific pace. And grandly. He has a fighting heart. Have you, Adam Link?"

And suddenly, it occurred to me that he was right. Rikko was dog-tired, strained, haggard. He had not said a word. And how much courage it must have taken to pound along, hour after hour, trying to beat a machine! Racing what must have seemed a hopeless race, knowing my smooth power.

Fighting heart. *Sisu*, as the Finn himself would have called it. That something in humans that keeps on against all odds, in all phases of life. Did I have it in my metal makeup? I perceived that Bart Oliver was not wholly the cynical human prude I had thought him. He had put before me the greatest test of my life. The test that would really prove my human qualities or not.

I kept on, though my "headache" became a crashing roar of static in my skull. My twisted knee jarred through every atom of me, as a sprain might jar a human body with sharp jolts of pain. My stiffened joints called for every ounce of strength in me, to keep up the pace.

I staggered on, rattling and clanking as if ready to fall apart. There was danger of that too. And of the short-circuit intensifying and exploding my whole brain.

The city was ahead, where the finish line lay. Crowds now lined the way, watching the last stretch. Win, win, win!—my mind demanded relentlessly. I could still achieve a sprint and win. But what about the valiant Rikko? He was fighting, too, like me.

If I let him win, ignoring what Bart Oliver would do to me, the betting-combine behind Brody would collect an ill-gotten fortune. That wasn't reasonable. There was only one solution. Side by side I ran with Rikko.

We crossed the finish line in a *tie*!

We both collapsed on a patch of grass, unmindful of the cheering crowd; Rikko panting, sweating, myself grinding internally and sparking with short-circuits at every joint.

Rikko grinned and extended his hand. We shook hands, man and robot. It had been a great race.

Bart Oliver stood over us. He peered down at me strangely. He had been

looking at me like that, in the last part of the race, since the train episode.

"You could have won, Adam Link. Why did you make it a tie?"

"As a symbol," I answered. "To show that robots and humans strive for the same goals. To show that Adam Link, champion, is only a man."

I arose, facing him, extending my hand.

"A man?" he echoed. He didn't take my hand. "No, you can't be a man beneath it all. I can't be wrong!"

He stalked away, as stiffly as I might have. I had been unreasonable to expect a change of heart in him.

CHAPTER V

A Kidnaping!

AN hour later I was in a machinist's shop, being repaired. I gave the man instructions on what to do. My knee was straightened. The annoying shorts were eliminated and my static headache left.

Jack was jubilant.

"I think we've done it! The crowd really cheered you at the finish. The man you saved at the train reported the incident. 'Adam Link for Citizen,' a lot of them yelled. I don't think even Bart Oliver and his gang of human snobs can turn the tide. Bart Oliver is furious. He has been shown up. Other papers are laughing at *him* now!"

Adam Link for Citizen! Was it rising, a swelling chorus that would reach the ears of Washington?

My thoughts suddenly broke. "Where's Eve?" It occurred to me now that I hadn't seen her since right after the race.

Tom came in. "I've been looking for Eve," he said. "While the crowd was cheering, I didn't hear anything, but she talked to someone and left. Read this

note. It was delivered to me by a news-boy."

The note was in Eve's precise handwriting, but scrawled as though done in haste. "Adam, dear. A man told me that if I wanted to surprise you, I could have my citizenship papers immediately. He is from Washington. I am going with him. He says it is important. Eve."

Jack showed no elation. Instead his face was frozen.

"The whole thing's phoney," he cried. "Washington officials wouldn't play a childish game like that. Poor Eve, she's too innocent to know the difference. Someone wanted her away." He put a hand on my hard metal shoulder to warn me. "She's been—*kidnaped!*"

Lightning thoughts went through my mind.

"Bart Oliver, of course," I reasoned. "He's so utterly determined to prevent our citizenship that he resorted to this. But he worked through someone else. Who?"

"Jim Brody," Jack supplied. "I see it now. Brody wants revenge, for losing what amounted to a fortune. The tie cancelled all his bets. One of his men contacted Eve, lured her away. They must be miles away now, in a car."

"They can't harm Eve," I said, "and sooner or later she'll see through it. She'll leave them and come back. They can't stop her. Not even a dozen of Brody's men with machine-guns. I only hope she doesn't hurt them!"

WE waited, at a hotel where Jack had registered. When Eve returned, someone would direct her to us. Checking, we found that Bart Oliver was not registered in any hotel in town. Nor Brody. It all added up as we had figured.

But Eve had not returned, by nightfall.

Instead, a special delivery letter came to me. It was simply addressed: "Mr. Adam Link," without a street number. Everyone in town knew me and where I was. I tore it open, read it at a glance, and handed it to Jack.

"Adam Link. If Eve Link is worth dough to you, collect \$300,000 in unmarked twenties. Wrap it in a package and bring it to one mile past route 41 where it meets 23A. You come *alone*. If you bring any cops, forget the whole thing. She can't move or get away. You got till midnight tonight. If you don't come through, you'll get a bunch of junk by mail, like with this letter."

Something had fallen to the floor, when I took out the note. I picked it up. It glinted in the light. It was Eve's little finger, crudely sawed off with a hacksaw at the base. There was no blood, or pain connected with it. But just the same it made my thoughts grind savagely.

"Wire for the money, Tom," I said. "I'll go alone. No police. I'll come back with Eve and the money. They're dealing with Adam Link!"

"Adam, you mustn't—" began Jack, a little horrified.

"Don't worry," I said. "Bart Oliver and Jim Brody will land in jail—unharméd."

Jack nodded. "They haven't got a chance against you. You're ten times as quick and strong as humans. And practically indestructible." He added, as an afterthought, "But still, how did they subdue Eve?"

* * * *

A FEW MINUTES before midnight, I passed the junction of routes 41 and 23A, some thirty miles from town, in open country. I had run all the way. It was a dark night. There was no traffic. Both routes were uneven coun-

ty roads, little used.

I waited in the appointed place. Finally a car with dim lights slowly came from the opposite direction. I stood clearly visible, shining in the starlight. The car stopped and six men stepped out, heavily armed. They shone flashlights in my direction, to make sure I was alone.

"Adam Link?" one called. "Throw the package of money toward us. Then scam. Eve Link will return to you later."

I prepared to obey. I had brought the money, knowing those who received it would lead me to Eve. My idea originally had been to follow the car. But I thought, why not eliminate these men now?

"Listen," I told them, "your game is up. I'm coming forward. I'm a metal man. Your bullets won't harm me. Give up quietly and lead me to Eve."

I stepped forward. Their guns raised threateningly. Bullets could harm me, hammering into my eye-sockets, but I wasn't worried. The distance between us was a hundred feet. I had run the hundred-yard dash in 5.4 seconds. I could close this gap in two seconds, if they shot. I'd wrench the guns out of their hands before they could aim.

I took three steps. Did they think they were a match for Adam Link, champion?

My feet clattered loudly. I didn't hear the quick footsteps behind me. I hadn't known that one of the men, planted here, had waited for this emergency.

Something descended against the back of my skull-piece with a resounding clang, metal against metal. My brain was stunned. I fell to the ground. I was paralyzed for the time being, almost unconscious, as Eve had been that time at the track meet. It had been a

heavy blow with a metal bar.

One man had wrenches in his hands. With skilled fingers, evidently a mechanic, he unbolted my neck-piece! Before I could regain my full senses, he had reached in with a cutter and snipped the locomotor cable from my brain to the relay system of muscle cables.

I was helpless. It is like a man having his spine clipped in two, with no more control over his limbs. I was alive from the neck up, dead from there down!

They had not been fools after all. And I had been, to underestimate Bart Oliver. I wondered what lay ahead.

THEY carried my inert mass of metal to their car and drove off. I was carried out, eventually, and into a deserted old house, still out in the country. Eve lay there, on a table, as helpless as I was.

"Eve!" I called. My vocal apparatus still worked, being separate from the locomotor system.

"Adam dear!" she returned. "Forgive me! If I hadn't been a fool to come with them—"

"Never mind, darling." Too late for recriminations.

Jim Brody stood over me, his black brows frowning. I looked around for Bart Oliver. He wasn't there. Naturally he was too canny to be in this business in person. Perhaps he was on his way east already, to his office and home. What orders had he left, to prevent Adam and Eve Link from becoming citizens?

Destruction?

"Thought you were a wise guy, eh?" said Brody harshly. "Making the race a tie. If you'd lost, like I told you, I'd have cleaned up a cool million in bets at ten-to-one. I'd have cut you in. Instead, you double-cross me. You

thought I was bluffing, about the 'or else.' Thought I'd be afraid to tackle a robot? Well, tough guy, look where it got you!"

I didn't say anything. I was waiting to hear Bart Oliver's final disposition for us.

Brody pulled a fat individual forward, with beady, avaricious eyes. He was dressed in a sort of uniform, boots and leather trousers.

"Here you are, Colonel Hatterson," Brody said. "Are they worth ten thousand to you? I got to get something out of this."

"Yes, indeed! I'll disguise them as human, and bill them as the Talking Heads. It will be a great sideshow attraction. My circus will make money!"

WITH a clever showman's aptitude, Colonel Hatterson tricked us up as human heads, with wigs, plastics and cosmetics. Horrible-looking, decapitated heads, with gashed plastic necks plainly in view. We were on a stand. Wires led secretly below to batteries, to keep our brains and vocal cords in operation. Our bodies, entirely removed, had suffered an unknown fate.

Day after day the gaping, milling, awestruck circus customers stared at us in thrilled horror. A spieler outside lured them in.

"Ladies and gentlemen! Come in and see the Talking Heads! The only two in the entire world. Guillotined from their bodies, they are kept alive by a miracle of science. They live, they talk! You may ask them questions and they will answer. They are as mentally alert as ever before!"

Braver souls in the audience asked questions.

"W-what is—uh, was your name, s-sir!"

If I tried to answer "Adam Link, the robot," the attendant behind me would

press a key, shooting an electric spark into my iridium-sponge brain. Excru-
ciating torture, like a knife thrust into
a naked human brain.

"Pierre Marquette," I always an-
swered. "I was guillotined in France,
five years ago, for the murder of six
men with an axe. My wife, Fanchon,
too. A great scientist took our heads
and kept them alive."

My voice, mechanical as it is, was
just the sort the crowd would expect
— d e a d o f inflection, sepulchral.
Shivers of horrified delight went over
the stupid souls. They believed it.

"D-do you eat?" someone would in-
evitably ask.

"Yes, my appetite is unimpaired."
At this point the attendant would pour
milk between my plastic lips, to drain
down a tube out of sight below the
stand.

"How do you feel? Are you h-hap-
py?"

"Of course." I always said that stu-
pendous lie, by instruction. "This is
an easy life. I have no body to worry
about, which is a nuisance anyway. I
am fed well, sleep well, and have noth-
ing to do. I recommend that you all
have your heads chopped off!"

I had ad-libbed the last line into the
spiel myself, without objection from
my masters. I meant it. And so it
went, day after day. Stupid nonsense.

Easy life! It was sheer purgatory,
to Eve and me. All we could do was
think of our hopeless predicament.

The circus was a small one, touring
rural sections of the south. Jack and
Tom were probably not even searching
for us, assuming we had been destroyed
by Bart Oliver and Brody. They might
be trying a hopeless court battle now,
but with no chance to convict Oliver
and Brody for wanton destruction of
Adam and Eve Link. There were no
corpora delictorum.

Worst of all, we saw the headlines in
some of the papers carried by people
who viewed us. ROBOTS STILL
MISSING. WHERE ARE ADAM
AND EVE LINK? CITIZENSHIP
AWAITS LOST ROBOTS.

Citizenship awaited us! And here
we were, freaks in a sideshow. Crush-
ing irony! Soon the hubbub would die
down. Adam and Eve Link would be
forgotten, like a fantastic dream. Colo-
nel Hatterson would continue making
money. He was unconcerned over our
fate. He looked upon us as clever me-
chanical toys, not living minds.

DAY after day, the bug-eyed simple-
tons, their driveling questions, the
unending monotony. I've heard of
man's inhumanity to man. This was
man's inhumanity to robots.

And what of future robots—if there
were such?

Suddenly the whole robot question
assumed a new light, in my mind. If
by a miracle we escaped from this—

But we wouldn't. I was certain of
that when one day I saw a face I knew,
in the audience. The sharp-nosed, sat-
urnine face of Bart Oliver! He strug-
gled to the front row and stared at us.
He was here to check up, make sure we
hadn't escaped somehow.

He stared at us closely. His face,
well-schooled, didn't show that he was
gloating, mocking, triumphant, but I
knew he was. To add to our torment,
he asked a question.

"What is your name?"

"You know damn well—" I wanted
to shriek, but only got the first word
out before the spark bruised my brain.
"Pierre Marquette. I was guillotined
—"

"Are you human?" Bart Oliver in-
terrupted.

It was a new question. Apprehen-
sive of the searing spark, I made a care-

ful answer. "Yes, of course. Or I was, with a body."

"Have you ever heard of—Adam Link?" he snapped.

He was trying to make me give the wrong answers, so that the man behind me would use the whip of his spark. Inhuman devil, that Bart Oliver was! I didn't answer.

"Adam Link!" he insisted. "Eve Link! Tell me, have you heard those names?"

He was leaning forward, his face strange, wondering.

"Damn you!" I bellowed. "Go away and let me alone. You know I'm Adam Link—"

This time I got it out, though the spark crashed into my electronic currents three times. It was like three bombs bursting within my skull.

"Adam Link—it's you!"

With this cry, Bart Oliver motioned to three burly men behind him and leaped on the platform.

"You're under arrest," Bart Oliver barked at the attendant. "And your boss, Colonel Hatterson. These two heads are heads of Adam and Eve Link, disguised."

He ripped away my wig, snapped off my plastic nose so that the metal shone through. Two of the detectives returned with Colonel Hatterson.

"Where are their bodies?" Bart Oliver thundered at the quaking circus owner. "Do you know you've unlawfully held two future citizens of the United States in captivity?"

Eve's voice came to me. "Adam, dear, it's over. Bart Oliver is our friend!"

Only then I knew I wasn't dreaming.

THERE is little left to tell. We were reconnected to our bodies. Colonel Hatterson hadn't harmed them, perhaps hoping some day to train us as astound-

ing acrobats.

Bart Oliver had come in a chartered plane. We flew toward Washington. He had sent a telegram to Jack and Tom to meet us there.

"When you vanished," he explained, "I was puzzled. Jack and Tom accused me of the deed. To clear myself, I accused Brody, but we couldn't get anything on him. You had completely disappeared. Well, in the last three weeks, I had about given you up for lost. Then I got the clue. My clipping service combs the country for odd facts, for my column. I saw the item about the Talking Heads, in a honky-tonk circus troupe. I suspected it might be you, and came."

He looked at us a little embarrassed, then stuck out his hand.

"You know," he grinned, "you gave the right answer when I asked you back there if you were human. You said yes! If apologies mean anything——"

"Don't," I said. "It's even. For three weeks Eve and I thought *you* had sent us to the circus. But tell me——"

"Why I accept you as human?" he asked. "I knew it the moment I met you. I felt it. I was just fighting myself. I think all of us feel it when we meet you, Adam Link. We look in our mirrors and realize our fleshly bodies are just as much an illusion as your metal one. Only the mind counts."

He smiled wryly. "There I was writing my daily column, condemning you from my lofty seat without taking the trouble to meet you. I wonder if the whole world isn't that way all the time? It isn't till we meet something face to face, and look at what's beneath, that we begin to understand. Well——"

He shrugged, and then his tone became eager. "I've been trying to make amends. The whole country is aroused, in favor of you. I think we've even got Washington softened up——"

I began to say something, but stopped. We were landing at the airport in Washington.

Jack and Tom were there and Dahlgren. Dahlgren looked at me and spoke. "I came with Jack and Tom to intercede directly in Washington, after hearing you were found. By the way, this is Senator James Willoughby, from Dr. Link's state, where you were created. From *your* state!"

He pulled the distinguished, white-haired man forward.

"Adam Link, it's a pleasure!" Senator Willoughby said in courteous greeting. "I hereby grant you honorary citizenship in our state immediately. And I'll bring the matter of your true citizenship up before the Senate itself! I was skeptical, following your campaign. But now I see the worth of robots, or robot-citizens. You will be given citizenship by Congressional or-

der. I promise it!"

"That's that!" Bart Oliver grinned. Jack and Tom clutched at each other as though about to execute a dance.

"Except for one thing," I said slowly. "*I don't want citizenship!*"

It was like an exploding bomb. They all looked stupefied. I went on,

"I had a chance to think, during those three weeks helpless in a circus. Robots would be exploited, in ways I can't even foresee. Their voting power, for instance, might be turned to unscrupulous ends. The time is not yet."

Strange conclusion, but wise, I was sure. I didn't want to say what I really meant, and truly startle them. We had all forgotten one thing. Turned out like buttons, robot-citizens would one day *outvote* humans! Perhaps for the better. Perhaps not. It was a new problem. Eve and I would have to think about it.

WAS MY FACE RED

when she
dodged
my kiss?

Don't Offend...Use Sen-Sen

BREATH SWEETENER...DELIGHTFUL CONFECTION

ADAM LINK



My robots thundered after me as I charged into battle.

FIGHTS A WAR

By EANDO BINDER

I AM a robot. A metal man with a brain of sponge iridium. I have gears and wheels and I run on a battery. True enough. But I have the mind of a man! I have all the qualities that you humans have. I have intelligence that works logically. There is no chance factor in my makeup.

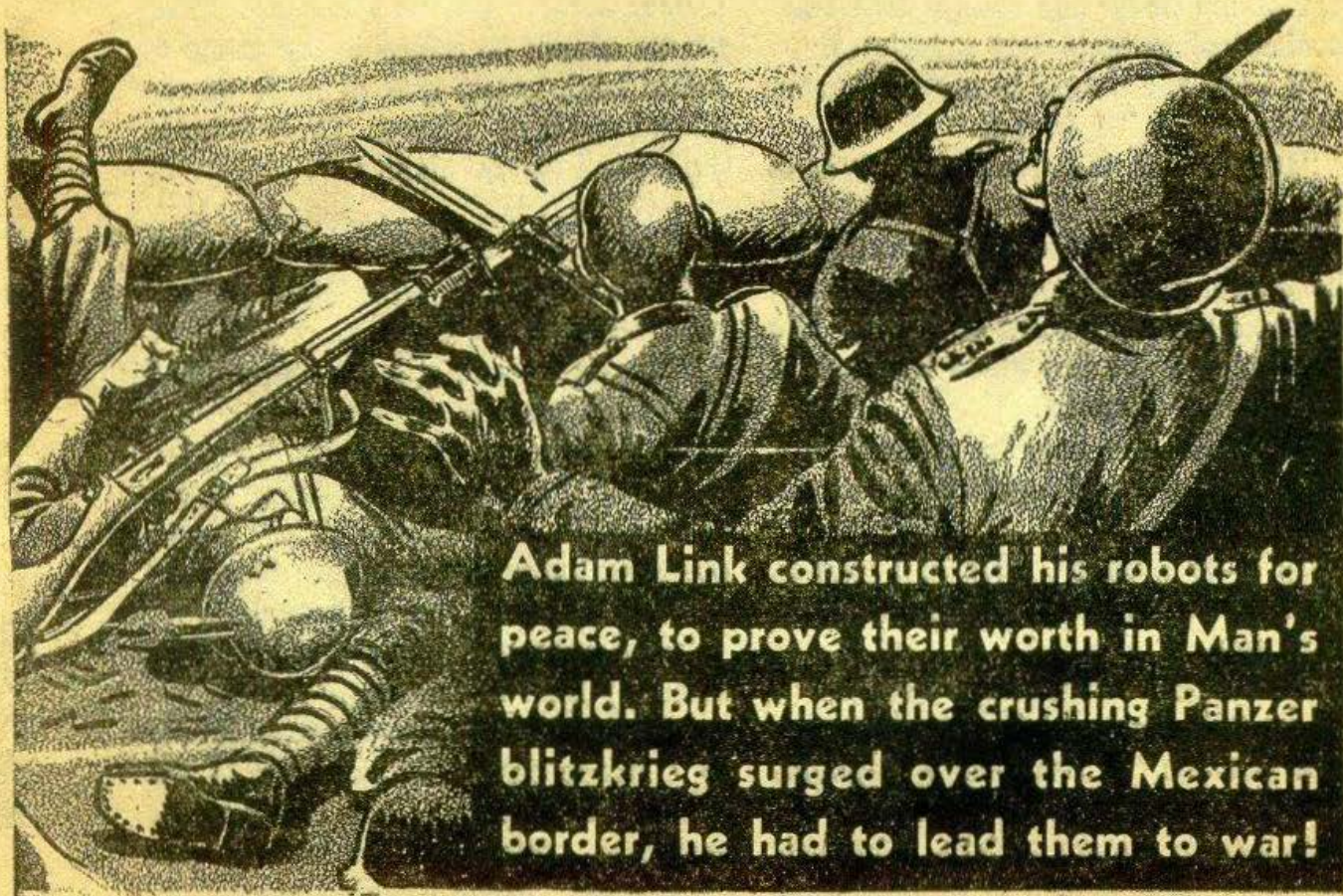
That is why I want to be—must be!—accepted by society as an equal.

"I wish to file a patent," I said.

"On what?" the Patent Bureau official asked.

He looked at me as all you humans do at first glance—with astonished wonder. You do not believe I can be an intelligent robot. You shift your eyes behind me, to see wires leading to some human control.

Then, suddenly, you remember all the facts about me. That I have had a court trial, and conducted a business,



Adam Link constructed his robots for peace, to prove their worth in Man's world. But when the crushing Panzer blitzkrieg surged over the Mexican border, he had to lead them to war!

and broken up a crime ring, and amazed the world by my doings in the athletic field. That I am a free, independent mind housed in metal instead of flesh.

Your eyes open wide. You are astounded, and a little afraid. But then, remembering I am harmless, you smile as though you are used to seeing robots, and nothing in the world can disturb you. For you don't want to seem like a silly old woman.

"A patent on myself," I answered.

"On *yourself*!" gasped the official, Wilson by name. He stared as though he had just heard a new kind of auto or airplane ask for a patent on itself.

Three others were with me, Jack Hall and Tom Link, my human friends. And Eve, my robot mate. We had been in Washington a week, since Jack's publicity campaign in the sports world had ended.

I had carefully drawn up a set of blueprints of my iridium-sponge brain. That was the only patentable item. The rest of my body was simply long-used mechanical gadgets and principles.

"I want the patent in my own name—Adam Link," I added.

"It's out of the question!" Wilson stammered.

"I could see his thoughts whirling at the unprecedented request—an invention asking for a patent on itself. His eyes lit up as he thought a way out of his puzzling dilemma.

"A patent can only be granted to a citizen. Are you a legal citizen of the United States?"

He knew I wasn't. He had read in the papers of my refusing citizenship, a week ago.

"I refused citizenship because I feared that robots might some day out-vote humans," I returned in explanation. "I don't want robots ever to be a menace to human society. But neither do I want robots to become utter

slaves to mankind. Therefore, I wish the patent in my name. I will manufacture robots as I see fit, and guide their efforts."

"But you'll have to have someone else—any friend of yours, for instance—take out the patent in his name. . . ."

"No," I broke in. My mechanical voice was rather sharp. "I would trust no man on Earth with the patent rights."

How can I explain? How can I make it clear that no human mind can quite grasp the problem of introducing robots into civilization? And that my future fellow-robots would resent absolute human control? You humans like to be ruled by someone from your own race, or nationality, or group. The coming robot race must have a robot leader—myself.

Jack and Tom behind me were not offended. They understood, too, that much as they meant to me, I could not give them control over robots.

"I'm sorry," Wilson shrugged. "The patent cannot be issued in the name of Adam Link unless that name is on the official roster of citizens. There is nothing more I can do about it."

I GAVE Eve a helpless glance. We left wordlessly. Once more we had been rebuffed by humans.

"Maybe we can still do something," Tom Link tried to say consolingly outside. "I'll approach business men, tell them you'll grant manufacturing rights and let them have profits. They have a powerful lobby in the Patent Bureau."

My head shook on its swivel.

"I do not want robots turned out on assembly lines like so many radios."

My metal feet-plates clattered loudly as I strode down the sidewalk of the avenue. People looked at Eve and me curiously. Were we to remain just curiosities? Never to gain a secure, ac-

cepted place in human affairs?

We passed a newsstand. The headlines, as usual, related to the warclouds hanging over Earth.

"It's a wonder," mused Jack, "that they haven't thought of you in the fighting forces. Metal men, tireless, efficient, adamant to bullets! You—"

"Never!" I snapped, so loudly that Jack jumped. "I'm sorry, Jack, but don't mention that again!"

I turned. "Eve," I said, "we would be another of the follies of mankind, if our race were introduced unwisely—especially into warfare!"

"We have time to wait, dear," she responded. "Centuries, if need be."

BUT CENTURIES did not seem necessary. The next morning a huge, shining limousine pulled up before the hotel in which we had a suite. We do not need human food or sleep, Eve and I, but in all else we follow the accepted customs.

"Mr. Wilson wishes to see you, Adam and Eve Link," said the driver. "Your patent will be granted."

Astonished and pleased, we went. Jack and Tom stayed behind, not having been invited, but wished us luck. We were ushered into an inner chamber at the Patent Bureau. Wilson was there with four distinguished men, one in uniform. They arose and bowed, the army man saluting.

I could not understand all this sudden deference, when only yesterday we had been treated so brusquely.

Wilson cleared his throat, as if to make a speech.

"If you'll pardon yesterday's rudeness, Adam Link, we'll get down to business. It so happens that a Senate committee of three, who have been interested in your career, have intervened in your behalf. We are to grant you a patent, without being a citizen."

"I am sure all the people of this country will consider it a just reward for your noble exploits. You have been in the nation's eye for a year. You are—to put it simply—a national figure!"

My metal chest does not expand under praise. But I think my body straightened a little. I felt proud and happy. At last humans were treating me as an equal.

"We have the papers all made out," Wilson went on smoothly, moving them across the desk. "Please sign here, Adam Link."

I grasped the pen. Eve touched my arm. Her low whisper came to me alone.

"The man in uniform is leaning forward, Adam. Are you sure everything is all right?"

MAN in uniform!

Cold water seemed to splash over my mind. I read the patent paper, flipping the pages over and reading them all in a few seconds with my television eyes. One passage stood out:

"The government reserves the right to use any and all inventions it deems of military value, *with full authority.*"

I looked at Eve. Through our minds flashed Jack's words—"It's a wonder they haven't thought of you in the fighting forces."

They had! I had been on the verge of signing myself into military slavery. I set the pen down quietly, sadly at being deceived.

"Gentlemen," I said bitterly, "I cannot sign. I cannot allow robots to be used in warfare!"

They all flushed, giving themselves away, and I went on.

"I consider this my country, as much as you do. I would never be disloyal to it, in any way. But as a robot I have a greater duty to all mankind; never to allow robots to become a menace."

"Please see my side of it! Robots must only be servants of peace—as workers, builders, engineers, scientists. They must never take human life. Or else one day there would come the terrible struggle of all robots against all mankind!"

I went on in this vein for some minutes. The men fidgeted. They had lost interest. The military men arose and left, flatly. I was just a soap-box orator now, talking of things that were annoyingly thought-provoking. You humans, in general, are quite allergic to serious thinking.

Wilson stopped me. "You would be useful as a military item. Right now, that's our main concern, during present world conditions. We're hardly concerned with robots in any other capacity."

"Let me show our worth," I begged. "As workers, laborers—anything!"

Wilson shook his head, but one of the senators spoke up, casually.

"There's a government project being started in Southern California. Re-working of an old abandoned silver mine. It may be dangerous to human life. Would you want to try that, Adam Link?"

I detected the subtle sarcasm in his voice. I had refused to be inveigled into military service. Would I take, instead, that lowly, common opportunity? He had as good as told me they thought robots *might* be useful in war, but utterly worthless in any other field of human endeavor.

I was being pacified, shunted aside, insulted. They were ribboning me with red tape. One other of your human terms is most apt—I was being kicked around.

I could see their viewpoint, however. The world situation at present was so vital and grave that the advent of the intelligent robot was a trivial issue.

"Yes," I said to their surprise, "I will show you how robots can be of benefit without fighting wars!"

CHAPTER II

First-Class Heel

TWO months later I was repeating those words, to a group of thirty robots. They stood in a straight row before me, their alloy bodies shining in the bright sun of Southern California. Their mechanical parts had been turned out by eastern factories, according to my specifications.

During those two months, Eve and I had worked twenty-four hours a day, in my private workshop-laboratory in the Ozark Mountains. Near the spot where I had been created, two years before, I developed thirty new iridium-sponge brains. No factory on Earth could devise them. I alone knew that ultimate secret of metal life.

The whole—bodies and metal brains—had been shipped by freight to California, and here assembled by Eve and myself. Battery current had crackled into the thirty brains and endowed them with life. We had just finished a week before. Thus before us stood thirty creatures like ourselves.

Not quite like ourselves. Eve and I had lived and moved among humans for many months. We had come to know human thoughts and reactions. We had adjusted ourselves to the human viewpoint.

These thirty brother robots had only known existence for a week. They were neuters, having no distinctive male or female viewpoint. After teaching them to walk and talk and read—in a short day—we had given them only technical and scientific books to read. I had no time to further their education in human relationships. Gradually they would pick that up.

"Fellow robots," I said, "you are the first of the robot race! I created you for one sole purpose—to serve the human race. Yet not as slaves. If we prove ourselves worthy, we will be given a respected place in human society. Robots and humans together, planning intelligently, can build a truly great world!"

I wanted to add, "one without war," but didn't. These robots of mine, I was determined, must not hear of that blind, stupid human way of settling differences. I did not want these thirty new minds to be instantly disillusioned in their human masters.

I went on, glad that the bitterness of my thoughts could not be reflected in my flat phonic tones.

"This project we are members of is a lowly, insignificant task. It is simply the mining of an ore, silver, that does little real good except in the minds of men. Certain human leaders have seen fit to put obstacles in our way, proving our mental worth.

"We should be builders, engineers, fashioners of high skill. We are instead starting as miners. Moles digging in the ground. Worms scratching in the soil and bringing up bits of dull metal—"

Eve touched my arm. Her eyes told me to watch my words. The thirty robots were puzzled. I could see their new-born minds laboring to understand what I meant. Yet how could they understand this roundabout way of getting a point across? They knew only that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points—in all things. I was confusing them. I nodded to Eve and switched.

"However, this is still a golden opportunity. We'll dig and mine silver at an unprecedented rate. Humans will sit up and take notice. They will begin to see the true value of robots. Slowly

but surely we will win our place in the sun. Work, my brothers! The future of the robot race lies in your hands!"

I STARED proudly now at the thirty stiff, unmoving metal men. The hum of their internal mechanism filled the air and spoke of power, strength, skill. We would show the human race! We would make a name for ourselves. . . .

"Through with your little pep-talk?"

I turned to the speaker. I didn't like this Lem Daggert's cynical, almost sneering tones. But the government had appointed him superintendent of the project, and there was nothing I could do about it. Nor did I like his cold blue eyes, nor the fleshy lips that curled constantly around an unlit cigar. I analyze humans quickly. Daggert was overbearing, rude, avaricious.

"Now let's get down to business," he grunted. "You and your robots will do all the shaft work. Dangerous in there. Don't want any lives lost. Doesn't matter if a robot or two gets buried in a collapsing tunnel."

"These robots are living!" I snapped back. "A robot lost is a *life* lost—"

"All right, all right," he interrupted petulantly. "But I'm the boss here. What I say goes. Is that understood, Mr. Adam Link?"

Our eyes locked. I didn't like this attitude. But I could do nothing about it. My official orders were to obey him.

I nodded wordlessly.

He grinned. It tickled him, I could see, to have a hard, powerful metal being knuckling down to him. I had the strength of ten men in one arm. Yet he could order me about like a lackey. Jungle law, with the might of authority replacing the might of claws and muscles. Have you humans ever analyzed your so-called "civilization?"

Daggert waved a hand to the lounging group of dark-skinned men outside

their bunkhouse nearby. Smoking cigarettes, dirty, unkempt, they contrasted harshly with my shiny, upright robot platoon.

"These men I've hired will do the work above ground," Daggert resumed. "Grading ore, sorting, washing and trucking it to San Simone railroad junction, north of here. Mostly Mexes, some Japs. Don't look like much, but good workers—"

"And cheap!" I suggested in a low whisper. He flushed in anger, but I went on evenly. "Don't try to deceive me, Daggert. The lower your operating costs, the more you get out of the appropriation money.

"Well, that's your business. But I warn you, your men are going to have to go some to keep up with my robots. Ore will come out of that shaft like an avalanche."

"Huh!" Daggert grunted skeptically. "Just a bunch of machines. And machines break down."

"But they can be repaired quickly," I said casually. "Your men have to sleep and rest. They get sick and lazy at times. My robots will work twenty-four hours a day without tiring!"

Cheap, boastful statements. But they had the desired effects. Daggert's lips clamped around his cigar viciously.

"You hear that, men?" he roared. "So you're trying to show us humans up, Adam Link? Think we haven't any guts, eh? Okay, I accept the challenge. Get your tin monkeys shoveling out ore—fast! We'll handle any amount!"

AT least in that, if unwittingly, Daggert was cooperating. I wanted the production curve of Dried Valley Mine to rise at a steep angle. I wanted Washington to know that robots were on the job.

I stuck out my hand, to shake on the agreement. Daggert laughed in my

face, ignoring my gracious gesture.

"You—" I began, but broke off, turning my eyes up.

A plane drummed in the sky, soaring over us. I was surprised. No mail or commercial air routes passed over this odd corner of undeveloped territory between the deserts and the Pacific Ocean.

Daggert watched it, then shrugged.

"Mex plane," he hazarded. "We're only fifty miles north of the border."

But I wondered. It had the trim, sleek lines of an ultra-modern fighter plane. A U.S. army plane, out on scout duty?

I dismissed the matter. There was ore to dig.

"Let's go!" I sang out to my robots. Their line broke and they stalked after me into the shaft penetrating the side of a cliff. The sunlight faded on our metallic forms.

CHAPTER III

Arrival of Mary

WE explored first, and found the old abandoned mine in a state of ruin. The main shaft branched into a half-dozen others. The ends of these splayed out in little separate tunnels, following the haphazard veins of silver.

Once the ore had been rich. But now only low-grade silver-bearing shale remained. The mine could show a profit only if the ore were shoveled out in huge quantities.

The main shaft's system of bracing beams was in good condition, but further on portions of tunnel had caved in. Debris littered all the corridors. Several of the remote branches were completely blocked off where a section of roof had caved in for yards.

Reaching the last branch tunnel, I halted my robots. We listened. All else

had been silent as a tomb. But from this shaft came a low, rubbing sound. I stooped and went in. Ten feet beyond I straightened in a larger hollow.

The beam of my miner's lamp, fastened to my head-piece, centered on a man. He kneeled in the dirt, a pan in his hand. In the light of a flickering candle he had been panning silver ore, picking out the silver specks and stuffing them in a soiled handkerchief.

He was frozen in that kneeling attitude. His eyes, pop-eyed with terror, danced over my bright metal form.

"Ghosts!" he moaned finally. "They told me there were ghosts down here!"

"I'm no ghost," I said, smiling within myself. "I'm Adam Link, the robot. What are you doing here?"

"Adam Link? Robot?" Obviously he had never heard of me. He looked the part of one of those wandering prospectors who shunned civilization — a dried-up little old man with a pathetic humbleness about him.

"Who's inside that iron suit?" he quavered. "Please don't hurt me. I only been sneaking in here once in a while to pan me a couple ounces silver. Doing nobody no harm. Please, sir, let me go!"

He cringed as though expecting me to strike him.

"I won't harm you," I assured him. I wished at that moment my metallic tones could show the kindness I felt. "What's your name?"

"Dusty." At the same time that he gave the single odd name, he scratched his side. His clothes, at the touch, gave off a cloud of dust. The name was self-explanatory.

"Well, Dusty," I proposed, wondering what to do about him, "suppose you come outside with me. We'll see what we can do for you."

I took him straight out to Daggert. I wanted to report on the mine's condi-

tion anyway. Daggert listened to the story, then glowered at the little prospector.

"You little rat!" he growled. "Stealing silver, eh? I'll teach you—"

His fist shot out at Dusty. But the blow never landed. I have reflexes twice as fast as any human. I caught his wrist. Daggert fell against me, knocking his breath out.

WHEN he regained it, he almost screamed.

"Damn you, Link, don't interfere! I'm running this show. Let me at him—"

I grasped the enraged man by the shoulders and held him. He weighed 250, with masses of muscle standing out like cords. But he couldn't move. When he had worn himself out struggling and kicking at me, I released him. He stumbled back, cursing violently.

"Dusty," I said calmly, "you can continue taking silver out. As much as you want."

"Oh, boy!" he cried delightedly. "When I get enough, I'll go and have a bang-up good time at San Simone. Thanks, Mister!"

I don't know why I did it. Sometimes my own impulses surprise me. I only knew at that moment that it made me strangely happy to see the little man dance with joy.

"Good idea, wearing an iron suit," he commended me, feeling a little cocky in my protection. "Keeps some grizzlies at their distance."

Deliberately, he patted his clothes. A cloud of dust emerged and drifted into Daggert's nostrils.

"Keep out of my way, worm," Daggert warned, coughing. He eyed me. "As for you, Mr. Clank, get that ore out. Never mind digging up any more forgotten souls. I'll let it go this time."

He stamped away.

"That was a nice thing to do, Adam!" Eve's whisper had sounded in my ear. She understood.

Dusty was looking at us both more closely now.

"Say, pard," he murmured, "are you or aren't you a man in an iron suit?"

I explained, as best I could, that I was a robot.

Dusty's desert-squinted eyes widened steadily. Shock settled over his face. Slowly he pulled a bottle from his pocket and took a long drink of some amber liquid. Whiskey I believed it is called. The shock faded.

"Okay!" he chirped suddenly. "You're a tin man. But you really got a softer heart, I reckon, than many a hombre I knows. Shake, pal!"

He skipped to the shaft, then, to pan his little bits of future "good time."

"Eve," I said, "I wish all humans would accept us as readily and completely as that simple soul!"

NO ORE came from the shaft for three days. It took us that long to clear out the debris, repair the rails and push-cars of the deteriorated railway system, and explore for the best deposits.

Daggert taunted me. "Where's all this ore you bragged about? Come on, Mr. Clank. You talk big and do small."

He changed his tune within a week. Carloads of ore began to rumble from the shaft, pushed by my robots at breakneck speed. Deep in the tunnels, picks and shovels filled the enclosed air with a deafening din, wielded by muscles of steel.

"Well, Daggert?" I said, watching his men toiling and sweating on three shifts, handling the deluge of ore.

"You ain't got us licked!" he snarled. I think he even went to the extent of promising the men more pay!

BUT I didn't attempt to crowd his men beyond their capacity. I was satisfied that production was high. My robot squad settled down to a top-speed routine. But I had my troubles too. Now and then, one of my men broke a muscle-cable or swivel-cam. He would be carried out and turned over to Eve, above ground. With a stock of replacement parts, she quickly made repairs.

The second week, half of my force developed symptoms of creaky joints. It turned out that the grease we used was too light for that semi-tropical climate. The next truck back from San Simone with supplies brought a drum of heavy axle grease. Our gears and cogs worked smoothly once again.

THEN THERE was Eve.

I gradually noticed that she was becoming strangely taciturn. Pensive and even "blue" moods came over her. One day I emerged from the shaft with Robot Number 18, half carrying him. Eve removed his chest plate and replaced his cracked battery with a new one.

"It's going great, Eve!" I remarked. "Daggert himself had to admit the mine is paying handsomely."

"Yes," she said.

"Washington will be amazed. Then they'll think of other projects for robots. We'll work our way up, step by step!"

"Yes."

"You don't sound very enthusiastic, Eve," I protested. "What's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing," she returned with a little hitch of her left shoulder. It was a little mannerism I had come to know meant evasiveness.

I shrugged myself; but just then Dusty's voice sounded. At times he came up to talk to Eve. They had become friends.

"Your skull's kinda thick, pard," he piped to me. "You're down in that shaft twenty-four hours at a stretch, while she's up here alone with nothing but dumb Mexes and Japs for company."

"But I can't let her come down," I argued for the hundredth time. "It's dangerous. One of us has to be there, to keep the others going. But in case anything happens to me, Eve has to be left—to carry on. Eve, I've told you that you mustn't worry—"

"Look, pard," Dusty cut in blandly. "You call yourself human. A man may have a wife, but he needs men friends too. A woman may have a man, but she needs woman friends. It's as plain as the nose on your—I mean, the rivets on your tin ribs. Your head's wood instead of iron, if you can't see that!"

It was as simple as that. In all our previous activities, Eve had had the feminine companionship of Kay Hall, Jack's wife. Now she had none. I had forgotten she was a human girl, in all but body. Eve needed a girl-friend!

I remedied the situation on the spot. I had three extra iridium-sponge brains on hand, as replacements. They had not yet been given the vital spark of electricity—and life. I brought one to life now, giving it a replacement body, also on hand.

"There, Eve," I said gently. "Talk to her, teach her. She'll have the feminine viewpoint from you, just as you acquired it from Kay."

"I'll call her Mary!" Eve said delightedly. "Oh, Adam, you don't know how much this means to me!"

DUSTY gave a pat of satisfaction to his clothes. I had seen him do that dozens of times, and it never failed to raised a cloud of dust.

"Thanks, Dusty," I said earnestly. "I'll give you a bag of silver, which

represents my week's pay—"

"No." He was suddenly sensitive about that. "I'll pan my own. You've done enough for me. Pretty soon I'll have enough to scoot to San Simone and have a bang-up good time."

WITHIN A month, Mary began to emerge from Eve's loving tutelage with a definite personality. With the swiftness of our robot minds, triggered by electrons, she passed through babyhood, girlhood and entered maturity—all in weeks. She was a likable creature, half Eve and half something else of her own.

I suppose it is like human parents watching their child grow up with its own distinct personality.

Strangely, Mary satisfied a hidden parental hunger in both Eve and myself. It tickled us to teach her to call us "Mom" and "Dad". There are as many purely mental aspects to parenthood as biologic. Yet neither of us could guess, at the time, what Mary's advent would mean later. . . .

But I must not get ahead of my story.

CHAPTER IV

Mary in Trouble

EVENTS moved rapidly after this. First, there was the day when a sharp crack resounded through the underground caverns. My robots and I straightened up. It came again, ominously.

Following the sound, we ran to a corridor deep within the honeycombed cliff. In the light of our torches, I saw the widening crack that ran the length of the passage. Half-rotted wooden joists were crumbling and buckling.

"This whole passage is going to collapse in a few seconds!" Robot Number Six said behind my ear. "We'd

better get a safe distance away!"

Even steel-strong robots must fear the crushing power of tons and tons of rock.

I turned with them, then whirled back with a cry.

"Wait! Dusty is at the end of that corridor. I just remembered. He'll be sealed off—"

I dashed as near as I dared to the cracking portion and raised my voice to a shout.

"Dusty! Come out! Hurry!"

I heard an answering shout, but from in back of me. Daggert had just come down, on one of his periodic visits. He took the situation in at a glance. He pulled at my arm.

"Get back, you tin fool!" he commanded. "Can't you see that roof is coming down?"

"But Dusty—"

"Never mind him!" Daggert responded heartlessly. "Serves the little rat right. Get back before you get squashed. You're more use to me than that broken-down derelict."

He was figuring dollars and cents, of course. He had no personal liking for me. I simply represented a good high production of ore. Dusty represented nothing in any terms that Daggert valued.

I shook off his arm. "I'm going after Dusty—"

"You loco brass mule!" Daggert was screaming. "Don't go!"

I didn't. I barked orders to my robots clustered behind me, instead. They hesitated, glancing at one another. They had obeyed me implicitly in all things. But this—

"Good Lord, you're insane!" Daggert gasped. "Are you willing to risk every robot here for the life of a worthless bum?"

"Come!" I thundered, dashing into the corridor. My robots followed.

Alloy feet pounding thunderously, we sped under that cracking ceiling. A hundred feet in, I halted.

"Shoulders to the ceiling. Hold firm, men!"

It must have been a strange sight to Daggert. Thirty robots spaced along that corridor, shoulders against the sagging ceiling, legs spread for purchase. With a low rumble, the ceiling gave way. But it didn't crunch to the floor. Thirty metal Atlases held it up! Gears clashed, cogs scraped, wheels within whined as machine-power fought the terrific pull of all-powerful gravity.

I watched with bated breath, to use the idiom. If gravity won, my thirty robots would be smashed to bits under the grinding load. Dusty and I, in the pocket at the end, would be buried beyond hope of ever seeing daylight again.

But my robots won. The ceiling stayed up. Thirty robots virtually held a mountain on their backs.

I TURNED. Dusty was calmly sleeping, slumped against the wall, his ore pan slipping from his fingers. I swept him into my arms and weaved down the corridor past the robots. I pulled erect before Daggert and set Dusty on his feet. He was rubbing his eyes, bewildered.

There was still danger for my robots. One by one, beginning at the far end, they raced forward at my order, and helped support the front end. As each robot left his position, a mass of rock fell. One by one they returned from the jaws of destruction.

The last three came out with a rush together, as the ceiling let loose completely. Two skipped to safety, but the last was caught under a falling, thundering avalanche. When we pulled away loose shale and dragged Number Eleven

out, we saw that his head had been cracked like an eggshell. His iridium-sponge brain was in shreds. He was dead.

"Leave the pieces there," Daggert said indifferently. "And get back to work!"

I stepped in front of him, facing my robots, as I saw heads jerk up. Mirrored eyes glared at Daggert.

"Take Number Eleven out quietly, men," I ordered. Fiercely I whispered to Daggert, "Keep your mouth shut. To my robots, a friend has just died!"

Daggert watched silently as four robots picked Number Eleven's mangled body up and slowly carried it out.

"First," he murmured, "you robots risk your necks, this project, and all your plans for a miserable human life. Then you carry a bunged-up robot out like it was a funeral. You act like you're humans!"

I looked in the man's eyes. Faintly, there was a glimmer of wonder deep in them.

"Nuts!" he finished, kicking at a rock and leaving.

IT WAS not till we had all filed above ground that Dusty said anything. His wrinkled eyes were moist. He gave his clothes a little pat, raising dust.

"Going to San Simone for a bang-up good time pretty soon," he said simply. "And I'm going to drink to you, Adam Link!"

I knew, in his peculiar scale of values, that he had paid me the highest compliment in the world. . . .

"Adam!" Eve said. "Adam!"

A robot's tone is flat, devoid of emotion. But I knew that my Eve, deep within, was sobbing. Both in joy that I was back from peril, and for what I had done.

"Adam!"

I started. It was Mary's voice now.

"You did a wonderful, brave thing."

"Thanks, child," I returned.

"Child?" she blazed back. "I'm not a child! I tell you I'm not. You mustn't treat me that way—Adam!"

A GAIN she had used my first name.

I remembered now that for a week she had failed to use the terms "Mom" or "Dad" to Eve and myself. What metamorphosis had gone on in her matured mind? But I couldn't guess. She was mystery. And in that she was a woman.

Eve and I glanced at each other with a faint air of sadness. In so short a time our "child" had grown away from us. It made us feel old, as I suppose human parents do when suddenly they see their full-grown offspring forging a life of its own.

But Eve and I were also pleased. It was another proof that robot-minds could adopt the human viewpoint and outlook quickly. It meant that the coming robot race was not to be cold, alien, machinelike, in mind as in body.

Number Eleven, the first death among this first colony of robots, was buried beyond the mining camp, at the desert's edge.

I spoke a few solemn words. "From dust arose, and to dust returneth!"

Another event gave me food for thought.

One evening I came up to hear a terrific commotion from the direction of the men's barracks. I sped into a run as I heard a certain sound—that of stones striking metal. A full moon lit the scene, as I drew close.

Mary stood before the shack, stiff and straight. With a hue and cry, the Mexican and Japanese laborers were pelting her with stones and rocks they picked up. Among them were several dark-eyed women. Inevitably, some border women had drifted to the camp.

Mary was unharmed by the missiles, of course. They bounced off her hard body plates with a clinking sound. But mentally, the stones hurt. Humans pelting her as if she were a wild animal!

Mary gave a harsh cry and made for them just as I raced up. I grabbed her arm and yanked her around so violently a muscle-cable snapped.

"Mary," I demanded. "What—"

Daggert strode from among the men. His face was flushed with liquor.

"Listen, Link," he growled. "You and your damned robots keep your tin noses out of our affairs. This one has been sneaking around several nights, looking in the windows. Spying on us!"

"Mary!" I gasped. "Why?"

Mary's indirect answer was still more startling.

"A woman was just killed in there!"

"So what?" Daggert bellowed. "Lolita went after Amelia's man, and Amelia put a knife in her back. These are our human affairs. You robots have nothing to do with them. I'm warning you, Link. My men don't like any mixing with a bunch of phonographs on wheels, which is all you are. You robots keep your distance."

We had been delegated by Daggert into a caste. Into pariahs. I didn't care about the murdered woman—this was the raw, practically lawless border region—but Daggert had brought up the issue of robots in human society.

I was ready to argue heatedly, as always before on that—to me—touchy subject. Dusty had been tugging at my arm for minutes. I didn't feel it. But a bit of dust swirling into my mirrored eyes, causing the shutters to click, announced his presence.

"Take it easy, pard," he whispered. "Feeling's been running high among them cutthroats."

ALMOST as he warned me a mob growl came from their midst. They had picked up shovels, picks, crowbars. They were advancing, with all the murderous intent of a lynching mob. Daggert looked scared, suddenly. He hadn't expected a crisis so soon.

But abruptly the mob stopped in its tracks. I swiveled my head and saw why. Eve had raced down into the shaft and returned with the other robots. They stood behind me in a solid phalanx, silent, shiny, formidable. Thirty robots against thirty men! Three hundred men would not have dared attack us.

The human mob forgot its temper and lounged back. They pretended to be setting the tools in neater piles.

"What were you saying, Daggert?" I queried.

"I don't want any trouble with you, Adam Link," he grunted. "We're getting along okay, so far. Just keep that robot from sneaking around, like she has, and everything will be all right."

He turned away, shoving his men back into the barracks. They would plan how to bury the dead woman secretly and never tell the authorities.

"Mary," I began, "now—"

"Don't lecture me!" she pouted. "I didn't mean any harm. I just wanted to watch those humans a little. I'm old enough to know what I'm doing—Adam!"

I didn't lecture her. I said nothing. But I began to see that Mary had acquired wilfulness. She was human—too human at times!

CHAPTER V

The Fifth Column

A THIRD event erased the previous two events from my mind.

"Adam! Adam!"

I was working with my robots in Tunnel C. I might never have heard Dusty's voice above the thundering rattle of the pneumatic drill, with which I was breaking out silver-bearing shale. But when the little man banged against the back of my skull-piece with a rock, I finally turned.

I took off my protecting goggles. The gritty dust set loose in mining operations would raise havoc, lodging in our finely machined eye lenses. I waved Number Nineteen to take over, and let Dusty lead me to a quieter corridor. I could see he was excited.

It was five o'clock in the morning. My automatic sense of timing told me that. Why wasn't he sleeping?

"Been to Tojunga," he explained. "Went with the supply truck last night."

Tojunga was the Mexican town just below the border, fifty miles south. A dirty, squalid place, as I had heard, hardly worthy of human habitation.

"You went down there for your bang-up good time?" I asked, a little repelled at the thought. "Instead of north to San Simone?"

Dusty wrinkled his nose. "No. My bottle ran low. In a mean temper, Daggert wouldn't sell me one from his stock. So I had to go myself. The truck went down there to pick up some fresh fruit cheap."

"Well?" It all seemed pointless.

"One of our Jap laborers came along. For the ride, he says. But he acted queer. I took a drink in a dive, next to his table. Another Jap walks in, sits down."

"Well?" I was really impatient now.

"The second Jap was in a military uniform!"

I stared. What was Dusty leading up to? Why was there a chilled, dumb-founded air about him?

He went on, the words bubbling out.

"I've knocked around these parts all my life. I understand some Japanese. Enough to learn that the Japs have a secret base just below the border, on the Gulf of California. I didn't catch it all clear. But the Jap officer says something about being ready. An attack at dawn!"

"Attack!" I grasped the little prospector's arm, squeezing. "You're drunk!"

He was screeching suddenly, as though his nerves had let go.

"You've got to listen to me, Adam! You're the only one with sense enough to listen and do something. I tell you, I heard it! They'll cross the border at dawn. The Japs are coming!"

I squeezed tighter. "You're drunk! Dusty, you've made this all up—"

My fingers relaxed suddenly. I stiffened. A second later I bent double and put my left tympanum-ear against the solid rock beneath us. Sound carries well through rock, for miles and miles. And my microphonic ear picks up the faintest of impulses and amplifies them to the beat of a drum, at will.

What I heard, perhaps fifty miles south, was the rumble of *tanks*!

AT THE same time, just outside, I heard an ominous *rat-tat—tat-tat!* I had heard one before. It was a machine gun!

I raced above, and halted short at the scene I saw in the red glow of dawn.

Our ten Japanese "laborers" were clustered behind the machine gun. They had just fired, in warning, over the heads of the remaining men.

Daggert's voice came from among his men, as he struggled forward.

"What the hell is this?" he yelled. "What's going on here? Where did you get that machine gun? Listen, you yellow runts, this is mutiny! I'll have you arrested. I'll—"

A precise, cold voice cut in. One of the Japanese stood erect. Beneath his laborer's denim was the unmistakable bearing of a trained soldier.

"You will please be quiet and listen to me," the Japanese said with ironic politeness. "This mine is in our hands. Do not resist and you will not be harmed. Submit quietly. Soon the first detachments will come through here. So sorry, but your mining operations will have to be suspended—indefinitely."

"In your hands? Submit? Detachments?" Daggert was utterly bewildered. "You talk like there's a war going on here!"

War! The word to me was like a sledge blow against my brain.

Instantly I understood. Fifth column work! The Japanese "laborers" were all part of the scheme. Traitors, in brief. The mine was in enemy hands already. This was one phase of that newly invented method of human warfare—*blitzkrieg!*

My mind staggered. The whole universe seemed to spin about me. *Blitzkrieg!* Unsuspected by the people of the land to the north, an enemy was invading. No formal declaration of war. That too was part of the technique.

The same revelation must have ground through Daggert's mind. Shock settled over his face.

"You mean—an army is coming?" he breathed.

The Japanese officer nodded. "It will arrive in an hour. Please be calm."

The men around Daggert promptly flopped to the ground, rolling and lighting their usual cigarettes. They were Mexicans. They were uninterested in the event, as long as it meant no harm to them. Daggert stood alone facing the machine gun.

He looked at me suddenly.

Man and robot, we looked at each

other. I saw a strange, appealing gleam in his eye. For the first time, he looked upon me as a man, a friend, an ally, in this moment of dark crisis. In one mental upheaval, I knew that now he regarded me as something closer to him than any of the Japanese or Mexicans.

"Adam Link," he half stammered. "Adam, are you—with me?"

Strange, that my moments of triumph often come with moments of impending tragedy. Daggert had become my friend at last. He was appealing to me—man to man.

The Japanese officer stiffened. Obviously my part in the setup was unsolved. I was, as yet, an unpredictable factor in the queer drama being played out in this isolated region.

I didn't answer immediately. I was thinking.

DAGGERT'S EYES flicked around and suddenly shone.

"Adam!" he shouted. "Jump in that truck near you! Drive away. The bullets can't hurt you. Drive north and warn the country. Warn the United States that it's being invaded. Hurry, Adam!"

The muzzle of the machine gun swung toward me threateningly. I hadn't moved. But not because of fear, for I could laugh at bullets.

"Adam!" Daggert groaned. "Why are you hesitating? Hurry!"

"I'm not going, Daggert," I said slowly.

He gasped, staring. But I had made up my mind not to be a metal Paul Revere.

"I have made a vow, Daggert. Robots must never be used in warfare. If I did what you ask, I would be committing myself—and all my robots—to intervention on your side. I'm sorry, but robots cannot take sides in the civil wars of the human race!"

Daggert sat down on the ground, shaking his head as if it were all too much for him. Little more was said. An hour later, a cloud of dust appeared on the southern horizon.

CHAPTER VI

Adam Link in War!

I WATCHED something that I knew would later be a great historical event. The invasion of America!

First came motorcycles with mounted machine guns. Then small swift tanks, rattling along the rough, unpaved dirt road. Behind lumbered monstrous eighty-ton tanks, the muzzles of small cannon bristling at all sides, ready to rake the countryside.

Following behind were armored trucks, loaded with soldiers carrying automatic rifles and tripod machine guns. Foot-soldiers could be seen far to the rear, tramping along steadily—thousands and thousands of them, steel helmets glinting in the rising sun. Artillery units, supply trains, hospital corps, communications corps, and reserves brought up the rear.

It was a complete mechanized division. The kind that in the European War of 1940 had cut opposing armies to ribbons.

Overhead soared a flight of aircraft—bombers, fighters, and reconnaissance.

Blind, stupid fools! The term aptly applies to the entire human race. When will you learn that the fruits of power are bitter, poisonous?

Again I vowed, seeing this array of mechanized murder, that I would steer my robot course clear of such utterly animal tactics. At the first opportunity, I would leave with my robots.

Still I watched, fascinated by this spectacle of human will to suicide.

ESCORTED BY motorcycles, a bullet-proof car rolled up at the van and stopped before the mine. A half-dozen resplendently uniformed Japanese stepped down. The men at the machine gun saluted.

"You have done well," the Japanese general commended. I understood the Japanese words. I have learned fluently every language on Earth available in books. "We have taken our first objective, without cost of life!"

He turned to Daggert, speaking now in precise English.

"You are the superintendent of this American mining project. Please consider yourself a prisoner of war. I will leave a small force of occupation here. The army goes on immediately. So sorry to interfere with your estimable labors, but this mine lies directly on the road to conquest!"

Daggert eyed the Japanese. His eye wandered to the formidable forces rumbling close.

"Conquest?" he croaked, half belligerently. "How far do you think you'll get?"

The Japanese officers smiled at one another.

"What is there to oppose us? Your people rest in false security. In a week we'll reach the Canadian border. California and the western seaboard will be sliced off from your country. That is assured. It will be easy. Perhaps then, if all goes well, our armies will sweep eastward..."

The general's voice trailed away.

Daggert half nodded to himself, as if for an hour he had pictured that very thing.

"You've already taken this territory," he said slowly. "What about me? Suppose I continued to run this mine—for you!"

I was not surprised. Daggert was an opportunist.

THE general smiled pleasedly.

"Good! We welcome all co-operation with us, in conquered territory. Your salary will continue at the same rate!"

I imagine this sickens you who read. It sickened me. At least, though utterly neutral in this human quarrel, I would not think of helping the enemy, no matter in what small way. Daggert was a renegade of the first water.

"Daggert!" I found myself saying. "Surely you aren't deserting your country for the first piece of gold?"

"You should talk!" Daggert laughed harshly. "You're the one who wouldn't carry a warning!"

The Japanese turned to me now. Bland little men! They hardly showed more than mild curiosity at seeing and hearing an incredible being made of metal. Then I realized why.

"We have been told of your robots, through our agents," the general said. "You are all our prisoners, too, since we must treat you as humans."

"Just a minute!" I snapped. "I and my robots are entirely neutral in this affair between you humans. We will not oppose you or help you. Nor will we remain as prisoners."

Still smiling, the general subtly waved a hand back to his armed forces.

Just as subtly, I picked up an inch-thick crowbar and bent it in a loop. Then I whacked it against Eve's body, with a word of warning to her. The blow would have killed an elephant. It barely dented Eve's frontal plate. No bullet could land with more of an impact.

"You see," I said quietly, "we can escape your bullets with ease. We can run faster than any vehicle you have."

"Then you are not our prisoners," the general returned dryly.

I had to admire his swift, sensible judgment. Certainly the enemy lead-

ers were not unintelligent.

"I will hold you at your word," he resumed. "That you are entirely neutral. Please leave immediately." Turning, he raised a hand. "The army will march on—"

"No!"

It was a high-pitched scream. Dusty ran forward, shrieking the word over and over. In surprise, the Japanese general withheld the command to march.

Dusty stood panting before the officer, his face twisted.

"You can't go on!" he shrilled. "Daggert ratted, the Mexes don't care, and Adam Link is neutral. Nobody to stop you, is there? Nobody but me! This is my country you're invading, you yellow cowards. You won't go another step — except over my dead body!"

Dusty stood stiff as a tree, his wrinkled old face turned up defiantly to the sun. It was sheer magnificence. One little scrawny man challenging an army! You humans can be abysmally vile. But at times you can be sublimely glorious. I'll never forget that scene.

It happened so suddenly that even I was caught flatfooted.

The Japanese general whipped a pistol from his holster and fired pointblank at Dusty.

The crack of the gun resounded through the air. The first shot of the war! The first of countless lives to be sacrificed! Perhaps the Japanese general did it as a symbol to his army. As a token of how easily they would brush aside all future opposition.

DUSTY gasped. Slowly his knees bent. He did not fall. I had leaped to his side in one twenty-foot bound, and now held him. I saw the trickle of blood at the front. The bul-

let had struck near the region of his heart. He had only moments of life left.

"Dusty!" I cried. "Dusty! What have they done? What have I done?"

His pale eyes turned up to my seemingly emotionless ones.

"Adam," he whispered. "Don't blame yourself. I can see your side of it. You couldn't do anything else. You couldn't throw all them hopes and plans aside--like you did once for me, down in the mine. Stick to your guns, Adam. Keep your nose clean, you and your robots, from any of this rotten stuff. Some day--some day humans will have as much sense as you have!"

He gave a little suppressed moan of pain, then moved his lips almost soundlessly again.

"So long, pard! Don't cry for me. I'm going to have a good time. A bang-up good time--"

The eyes filmed, rolled back. The lips quivered shut. Only a limp corpse rested in my arms. A slow swirl of dust rose from where I gripped his clothing.

Dusty was dead.

Eve and Mary, beside me, turned their eyes to the ground. My thirty robots looked at one another sorrowfully. We had all liked Dusty. Even Daggett scuffed at the ground, biting his lips.

Dusty was something that is hard to define, in you humans. He was a free soul. He was part of a philosophy of live-and-let-live that is close to the divine. And suddenly, the contrast between him and what was rolling up from the south stood out like white against black.

How can I explain? How can I describe to you the sudden, devastating rage that overwhelmed my mechanical brain till the hum of electrons nearly heated my skull-piece?

How can I make it sound rational? I had been willing to let untold thousands of others die, in keeping with my policy of non-intervention. Thousands of others! But when Dusty fell . . . No, I can't explain it.

I straightened up.

The Japanese general was just turning indifferently from the scene. In one leap I was before him. In one motion I jerked the pistol from his holster. The weapon of murder. I held it up--squeezed. The gun crumpled into shreds which I flung at these would-be conquerors.

My stentorian voice, like an amplifying unit turned to full power, roared down the road over the invading columns.

"I, Adam Link the robot, declare war on you!"

CHAPTER VII

Adam Link, Strategist

THE Japanese general tensed, perhaps aware of what this could mean. Spryly, barking orders, he and his men ran to their car. The machine gun of the fifth columnists turned. Its harsh chatter split the air. Bullets raked back and forth across the ranks of my robots. And Eve, Mary and myself.

I laughed within myself. I strode directly into the hail of slugs. A metallic clang filled the air. They were shooting at my abdomen, sheathed with thick protective plates. Before they thought of aiming for my more vulnerable head, I was there. I yanked the weapon out of their hands. I beat it against the ground till it fell apart. Then I hurled the mangled remains at the motorcycle troops.

All the Japanese had watched in paralyzed fascination, at this display of fantastic strength. They paled, be-

neath their yellow skins. In the Japanese legends, too, there is the counterpart of the Golem, the Colossus, the Juggernaut, the Frankenstein! The mighty, invincible non-human creation making war on frail mankind!

Such thoughts, for a moment, must have overwhelmed them. They were almost ready to bolt, shrieking in fear.

But they were too well trained. The general was screeching orders. The men heard. Their mounted machine guns began to bark. The concentrated fire of hundreds of them began to sweep over us.

I was yelling orders too. My thoughts work with the rapidity of light. A few seconds before I had never dreamed I would be fighting a vast army. Now I was. And already I had figured out a complete plan of attack.

Bullets showered against our steel bodies. Eventually they would strike vital spots—our eyes, or swivel joints, or thin back plates. My robots accepted my declaration of war instantly. They had to, in sheer self-defense.

Our phalanx broke. Thirty-three metal forms leaped, each to a motorcycle. One swift tug and the vehicle was overturned, soldiers sprawling on their faces. Another second to rip the machine gun loose, smash it against the cycle's motor, wrecking both beyond repair. Then on, to the next nearest motorcycle.

In five minutes, the area before the mine was strewn with motorcycle wreckage. Bewildered Japanese soldiers, weaponless, straggled away. The last dozen cycles attempted to speed away. My robots followed my example. I pounded after one, caught the rear, and snapped my wrist. Over went the cycle, over and over, ending up a ruin. The two soldiers, well trained, simply rolled over the ground, then picked themselves up and ran.

They ran as if the devil were after them. But we did not pursue. They could not harm us, only their machines of destruction.

"Do not take human life deliberately!" I thundered at my robots. "Just destroy their apparatus!"

Eve and I had overturned the general's car first. He and his staff had run back down the road. I saw them reach the first of the armored tank columns. They stopped the tanks. The whole army ground to a stop.

This was battle! They were meeting their first opposition.

I LOOKED around the immediate vicinity. The motorcycle contingent had been completely routed, wrecked. Here and there a robot was kicking a motor in with his metal feet-plates, to insure its worthlessness. We had destroyed much valuable equipment.

"Good work!" I called to them. "But the rest won't be so easy. Those tanks have powerful guns that can blow us to bits with a direct hit. Now—"

A one-pounder shell screamed over our heads and exploded against the barracks, blowing in the side. The Mexicans had long before left the scene. Daggert had run with the Japanese. Only us robots were left at the mine.

Another shell exploded in the ground to the side, digging a pit.

My robots shuddered. We fear death too. Soon a stinging barrage would come from the enemy, against which even our metal bodies could not stand.

"Listen, men!" With a rapidity no human can duplicate, I gave orders. Before the barrage had really begun, my robot force scattered.

We crept behind a hill, then charged down on the road. We went in twos, each pair for a tank. The Japanese had had no time to begin deploying apart from their close, clogged formation.

Most of their gunfire was thus ineffective, since it might hit their own numbers. The guns that did bellow were being aimed at ground targets faster and trickier than any they had ever seen or dreamed of.

Two to a tank. Eve and I reached our first. Ducking under its guns, we slipped our fingers under the caterpillar treads and heaved. The small five-ton vehicle easily turned over on its side.

One out of action! We ducked to the next, repeating the performance.

And all through the small-tank contingent, the other pairs of robots were doing the same. Tank after tank went over, useless with its treads churning empty air, its guns turned skyward. The Japanese scrambled out, those that could, and milled about helplessly. They had pistols and fired these at us. Mosquitoes would have been as effective.

Robots in action, letting out their full powers, move with the speed of any high-grade machine. The tanks went over like tenpins. In twenty-three minutes, three hundred tanks were out of action. They blocked and jammed the road for hundreds of yards.

I had not lost a robot yet. Robots are not just machines. They are swift, intelligent minds. Our dodging and weaving through their fire must have seemed uncanny to the slow reflexes of the Japanese humans. Long before they could fire a heavy gun pointed at us, we had seen and leaped clear.

As with the motorcycles, the last few dozen tanks attempted to speed away from the terrible metal nemises. I understand they are built to do seventy-five miles an hour. A robot can do a hundred. It was simple for a pair of robots to chase a tank down, throw a piece of iron into the treads to stop it, then flop it on its side. I had given

orders to that effect.

"That's that!" I bawled with my amplifying larynx unit at full power. The sound could be heard for a mile, even in that din. "Splendid work, men! But no time to loaf. Get after the trucks and big tanks. Watch out for those bigger guns!"

I WILL not attempt to give all the details.

In brief, we went after each unit in turn, with more precision than the blitzkrieg masterminds had ever dreamed possible. I felt almost sorry for the Japanese High Command, seeing their mighty, superb mechanized army falling apart like rotten fruit. Three things gave us a tremendous advantage, even against vastly superior armament. Speed, mobility and intelligence. We could move faster than their fastest tanks. We could maneuver quicker than any man-made swivel. And we were always a jump ahead mentally.

The trucks of special attack troops, with their automatic weapons, were easy victims. Four robots on a side could dump them over with one synchronized heave. Men sprawled miserably in the alkali dust. Some turned on us with their machine guns, peppering us with lead. That is, for about two seconds.

Then robot hands with crushing strength would jerk the guns away and beat them against the ground, till bolts and flying pieces sprayed for yards.

My robots, grim and silent at first, soon began to cheer and yell. It was great sport. And it was laughable to see the astounded, babbling Japanese staggering around, trying to figure out who had dropped the sky on them.

We took no lives, as I constantly reiterated, lest my robots forget. We brushed the enemy aside, merely flailing their lethal toys to shreds. We

bashed in truck motors with any metal club we could pick up. Our work was as thorough as a barrage of big artillery shells.

"Oh, Adam, this is positively the funniest thing I've ever seen!" Eve, always beside me, was laughing hysterically inside. So was I.

"This is fun!" Mary commented excitedly. She had stuck close to me too. "It was getting a little monotonous at the mine, anyway."

There had been moments of extreme danger, and one of them came again. A nearby tank somehow righted itself—one tread digging into loose sand and gaining traction—and the vengeful Japanese within instantly rammed it straight for us three robots. I flexed both arms, shoving Eve and Mary to right and left out of harm's way. I had no time myself to escape.

There was only one possible salvation, before the five-ton juggernaut crunched over me. I stooped, leaning forward. When the blunt-ended prow reared over me, I placed my shoulder against it and straightened with a snap that very nearly pulled every muscle cable loose.

But it worked. The tank flipped nose up and around, turning a somersault. Hurling me, it landed ten feet beyond with a rending crash. The Japanese know a form of wrestling called jiu-jitsu. I had, in effect, used one of their principles for throwing a much heavier opponent.

THE terrific strain of that heave, however, left me staggering. I stumbled and fell over a stone.

"Adam! Are you hurt? Adam—"

I knew it must be Eve kneeling over me, in agonized alarm. Then I saw another metal form shoulder her aside. Mary cuddled my head in her arms.

"Adam! Adam dear!"

I don't know what other things she murmured, like a girl who had for the first time seen a loved one harmed. I was myself in an instant, jumping up.

"I'm all right," I said half irritably to the two of them.

"Oh, Adam, I'm so glad!" Mary breathed. "I don't know what I'd do if ever you were harmed—"

She suddenly broke off, at Eve's stare. For a moment Mary looked from one to the other of us, then raised her head defiantly as if to say something. Something that would shock and stun us more than the tank's paralyzing attack.

But she never said it.

Brrroooooommmmm!

We heard the heavy thump. We stiffened. It brought us back to the war. There was a high-pitched whistle. Then a frightful explosion. Robot Number Seven, a hundred feet away, was blown to bits. They were firing field guns, far to the rear! Artillery shells were one thing we had to fear. And one thing we could not outrun.

Our overconfidence vanished. The Japanese general had finally spoken with his biggest weapons. Peering down the long, stalled columns of the army, I saw where his trained gun crews had deployed, setting up their field pieces in a wide semicircle. The big tanks and all the army behind were protected.

Another shell landed. It failed to get one of us. Instead it blew a truck to atoms. Also a dozen poor Japanese who'd been running from the scene. The High Command was willing to bombard their own advance forces, to get us. Life is cheap, in the blitzkrieg bible.

The barrage never blossomed. Before the third tentative feeler shell came over, I was shouting orders. Thirty-two robots sped for those field guns. We zigzagged, thirty feet at a bound. The highly trained gunners were not

trained to pick off huge metal jackrabbits.

Reaching the guns, we shoved the humans away. Grasping the barrel with a full grip in both arms, a robot would crack it loose from its breech. Then, using it as a mighty club, he would batter the instrument flat.

The field guns went as fast as all before into the junkheap.

And, shortly, the big tanks. Dodging their small-cannon fire, six robots would tackle each individually. Metal backs strained, steel muscle cables shrieked in protest at the load, electricity crackled from our joints. But over they went! Eighty tons of massive metal, big as a house.

Over they went, like clumsy turtles. Then the crews would pop out of the turrets, like smoked-out rats. A robot would go in, with a metal bar. The smashing sounds within told of elaborate controls and instruments showering into debris. When the robot came out, the tank was just an empty hollow shell. Engines, oil and treads were a sort of gritty porridge, leaking from all sides.

Those tanks would have had a low quotation from a scrap-iron concern, being such a scattered mess.

"Well," I yelled proudly, "that just about takes care of everything—"

Brrroooooommmmm!

A BOMB exploded among us, getting Robot Number Twenty-eight. I looked up. I had forgotten the invaders' aircraft. Fifty bombers droned overhead like vengeful wasps, dropping their eggs of destruction.

"Scatter!" I commanded. "Use the anti-aircraft guns I told you not to destroy."

My robots' shiny forms spread, making small individual targets to the planes above. I ran with Eve and Mary to the nearest mounted anti-aircraft unit.

In forethought, I had told my men not to wreck these guns, as they could not be used against us in the first place.

I examined the intricate machinery carefully. In three seconds I had figured out its principles.

I explained swiftly to Eve and Mary. Eve took over the sights. Mary fed the ammunition. I sat at the firing mechanism.

My first burst of shots from the pom-pom unit brought down a bomber in flames. It was ridiculously easy to make a hit. Other guns began to pepper, operated by my robots. We blasted planes down with the ease of machines that can't make a mistake. In a war of machines, what can be more effective than machines with minds?

We were in our element.

When ten bombers went down within five minutes, the rest of the Japanese air force turned tail. That was the last resistance. When we ran down the road toward the foot-soldiers, waving our arms wildly at them, they did not merely retreat.

They ran, they stumbled, they clawed at one another to get away!

"Halt!" I said to my men.

CHAPTER VIII

The Poison of Jealousy

MY robots and I stopped and looked. Back of us the road and countryside were strewn with metal debris. Before us, the entire Japanese army was in rout. They wouldn't stop till they had reached the border.

I let out a purely animal shout. Thirty-three robots had defeated an entire mechanized division! Thirty-three robots had blocked the invasion of the United States! Thirty-three robots had made history!

My eyes turned. No, not thirty-

three. I called roll. There were silences for Numbers Seven, Ten, Sixteen, Twenty-four and Twenty-eight. Casualties—five. Blown to bits by direct hits with large-caliber guns.

We heard a groan. Number Sixteen was not dead. His lower half was gone. His upper half was a tangled ruin, with a cracked battery barely trickling current through his brain-circuit. Perhaps he could be saved—

Then we saw the gaping hole in his skull, the shredded brain areas within.

I bent over Number Sixteen.

"Licked them, didn't we, Adam Link?" he croaked. "I don't mind dying, as long as our kind go on, doing good—"

His voice clicked off. It was like a telephone receiver being hung up. He was dead.

Around me, my robots were silent, sad. We felt deeply now the loss of five who had worked side by side with us, talked with us, lived with us for three months. We were the first small tribe of intelligent robots in human history. And robot history. Those five martyrs would be revered down through time, in robot archives.

I looked at Eve. We were the Adam and Eve of robots. And these were our sons. Five had gone back to nonexistence, in the performance of duty.

But what duty?

Like a lightning blast, the question struck me.

All the drive, the energy and excitement of defeating the mechanized army drained from me. All the rage and hatred for this human folly of murder by machine. Only a hollowness remained, in which boomed the terrible words:

"Adam Link, you have allowed robots to be used in warfare!"

Victory crushed me with its defeat.

My thoughts went back. I had re-

fused military service, back in Washington. I had sworn never to wield the sword. I had come to the mine, to prove robot worthiness in peacetime pursuits. To prove to man that his use of the machine for destruction could be overbalanced by use of the machine for construction.

Now, in one stroke, I had sacrificed all this.

I had introduced into the technique of war a machine unit far more deadly and invincible than any conceived by human thought.

Around the world would go shrieking the news—THIRTY-THREE ROBOTS DEFEAT MECHANIZED ARMY!

I had branded the robot as an instrument of war! I had taken sides, in a human quarrel. I had destroyed any future trust in the robot as a non-Frankenstein innovation. I had in one moment obliterated my two years of effort to prove robots would not be a menace.

"EVE!" I groaned, overwhelmed by my crime. "Eve, I've murdered the future robot race! When the world hears of this—"

She understood what I meant. She interrupted me.

"Why should the world hear? We don't have to tell. And certainly the Japanese won't, to become a laughing stock. No formal declaration of war was issued. The United States has no inkling of the near-invasion. Don't you see, Adam? What the world of humans doesn't know won't hurt them!"

"But the enemy must have one or two mechanized divisions in reserve," I protested. "We should warn the country. They'll try again—"

"And they still have to come through here," Eve declared. "This is the only serviceable route, for their timed plans.

A blitzkrieg takes months of preparation and planning. They can't change overnight. They must come through here!"

I looked around. The Pacific to the right. A desert to the left. Mountains in between. The mine straddled the pass through them. We could hold off ten mechanized divisions!

"Men!" I said. "We're going to fight the invasion to a standstill--ourselves. No newspaper reporter, no single source of authority is going to know. Let the failure of a Japanese invasion become a sheer, unbelievably legend. We must do this, to keep our robot name clear of warfare!"

IT WAS noon.

For several hours, the repair shop hummed busily. We had not escaped unscathed. Our "wounds" were quickly healed; muscle cables replaced, bent plates hammered out, leaky batteries patched, short-circuits eliminated.

"Hurry—hurry!" I kept yelling.

We were facing more blitzkrieg. The Japs would hammer back instantly. And this time they would know what they faced. They would come in battle formation, no longer easy prey on a clogged road. They would bombard, attack, strafe, flank, spearhead, pincer, and all the rest of it.

The repairs were completed. We were new men. Our total number was just thirty. A new Number Eleven had been brought to life, to replace the Number Eleven of the mine death. The third of the replacement brains—Mary was the second—was also brought to life. If only I had more iridium-sponge brains! But it would take weeks to make more.

Thirty of us. We would stand or fall with that force.

I led them back to the battlefield. We retrieved equipment. We had not been

thorough enough, luckily, to destroy every last gun. There were machine guns, mortars, field pieces, anti-aircraft, and mounted cannon with slight damage. Working like beavers, we lugged them all to the mine in two hours.

I had them set up strategically. We had every inch of the slopes leading to the mine and pass covered. It would take a mighty big *putsch* to get past our little Mannerheim Line!

BY nightfall, we were ready.

"I wish I knew if they were attacking tonight," I said nervously.

"Why not find out—by sending a scout?" Mary suggested.

"Good idea!" I agreed. It was so obvious, I felt ashamed for not having thought of it. "I'll send someone to watch for their advance units—"

"Let me go!" Mary begged. "Please let me go, Adam. I love excitement!"

I suppose I hesitated only at the thought that she was a girl, as a human would. Then I laughed at myself. Physically, Mary was the equal of any of us. And mentally she was just as alert. There was little danger. I could sense her eagerness. Yet if I could have read a little deeper . . .

"Okay, Mary," I nodded. "Go twenty miles south. At the first glimpse of their advance units, race back and warn us. If they don't show up by dawn, come back."

She skipped away.

I WAITED, wondering if we could stave off any and all attack. Wondering if we would succumb, let the hordes through into a defenseless country. And thereby give the robot a black eye for all time. . . .

My sharp hearing distinguished a sound at the bottom of the slope, two hours later. Footsteps. But not the ponderous ones of Mary's metal feet.

Human steps. A human figure came with upraised hands into the glare of our lights.

"Daggert!" I gasped. "You dare come back, a traitor? You went with the Japanese—"

He shook his head. He was weary, worn, shoes cracked with hours of hiking.

"I left them, soon after the battle. Walked back. All the way I've cursed myself." His tired blue eyes raised to mine. "Adam Link, I can say only one thing. I'm the most miserable human being on Earth!"

He slumped down, shoulders trembling. My loathing for him vanished. After all, it is human to make mistakes. It is something more than human to be the better for it.

"Shake!" I said.

He gripped my hand thankfully, then glanced around eagerly.

"You're going to fight them off? Great! I'm with you. But they won't attack today at all. I heard the Japanese general say it would take two days to organize all his forces for a concerted drive."

I breathed in relief.

"Fine! It gives us a chance to really prepare. We can set up tank barriers with the debris out on the road. I'd better recall Mary—" I explained her departure on scout duty.

"Send Eve," Daggert suggested. "The rest of us can begin to strengthen our defenses." His eyes shone. "We're going to show those Japs, the dirty, yellow—"

The rest was enough to almost make my metal ear-tympanums burn red.

EVE and Mary did not return by dawn. I began to worry.

"Probably picking flowers like any girls," Daggert grinned. He realized now that robots were mental humans.

"Nothing could have happened to them."

A metal figure glinted in the south, soon after. It was Mary. She came up alone, leisurely.

I ran to meet her. "Where's Eve?" I demanded. "I sent her to call you back."

"Eve?" Mary was surprised. "I didn't see her."

What had happened to Eve!

"I came back at dawn, as you said," Mary shrugged. "Besides, they won't attack for two days—"

I jerked. I grabbed Mary's arm. *Those were Daggert's words!*

"How did you know that?" I hissed. "Mary, how could you know that unless you met Daggert—"

Mary's hand went to her mouth, like any human girl who had unwittingly let something slip. I shook her roughly.

"Mary, tell me!"

And then I released her, bounding away. In one stride I had caught Daggert, as he was edging away. I brought him back before Mary.

"Talk!" I thundered at him.

"Are you off your nut?" Daggert tried to be casual, innocent.

Only for a second. Then he paled. I was squeezing his arm. My metal fingers pressed steadily into flesh. I would not stop till I had reached the bone, and snapped that arm like a twig. And after that, every bone in his tender human body.

"Talk!"

He talked. He babbled, with the fear of death in his eyes.

"I met Mary when she was on her way south to do her scouting. I was on scout duty for the Japs." I squeezed again. "Sabotage duty," he whined, knowing he must tell all the truth. "The Jap general told me to get back in your confidence, then try to spike your defenses somehow. He fears you."

Why hadn't I suspected? Why hadn't I detected the insincerity in Daggert, who had not one spark of honor in him? Why hadn't I remembered that fifth column methods are part and parcel of the blitzkrieg cult?

Daggert went on in a rush. He knew I wouldn't release his bruised, throbbing arm till he had finished.

"I met Mary, as I said. She wanted to haul me here, before you. I talked her out of it. Told her if she played ball with me, I'd help her."

"Help her do what?" I yelled.

Daggert looked at me queerly.

"Don't you know?" he muttered. "That Mary is—well, madly in love with you? That she wants your love—all to herself? Even I saw that."

All to herself! I staggered. A scene came before my eyes. Mary being pelted by the Mexican and Jap laborers with stones for "spying" on a murder. She had watched something of their raw mode of life. She had seen Amelia, the border girl, stick a knife in the back of Lolita—

"Mary!" I groaned. "What did you do to Eve?"

"She's out of the way!" Mary said flatly. "You're mine now, Adam. Aren't you pleased that I did it? That I want you so much?"

YES, I knew anger. A towering rage that seemed about to burst my brain. But it faded.

What could I say? How could I tell poor, misguided Mary that the little she had seen was not the accepted human way of winning love? How could I even blame her? How is the untaught child to know right from wrong?

"Eve!" I whispered, gripping myself. "You destroyed her in some way? Tell me."

"No," Mary returned. "I held her while the Japanese tied her with chains.

She is with them now, their prisoner."

CHAPTER IX

Adam Link, Blitzkriegist

I COULDN'T speak. I squeezed Daggert's arm again, as the signal to explain.

"Mary and I figured it out this way," he whined. "I was to go to the camp, win your favor, then have Eve go to recall Mary, just as it happened. Mary waited with the Japanese who were with me. They had chains. Our mission had been to try to capture a robot, somehow. Mary made it easy for us.

"When Eve came, Mary pinned her arms from the back, in the dark. The Japs chained her. As Mary's part of the bargain, to make up for Eve being out of the way, she was to come here and help me sabotage the defenses, in the next two days. But of course she spilled the beans, like any dumb dame would—"

I cut off Daggert's half bitter words.

"What are they going to do with Eve?" I demanded.

Daggert winced under my fingers. But I hated to hear the answer, confirming the horrible suspicion crawling in my mind.

"Duplicate her," he said. "Duplicate robots!"

I flung Daggert away. I flung him so hard to the ground that his arm broke.

"You've just sold robots into slavery!" I raged. "And the human race into hell!"

I whirled on Mary. "And you've destroyed any slightest filial love I might have had for you."

I looked from one to the other. "Of all humans, and all robots, you two are the lowest—"

Mary broke into my denunciation.

"Adam! I didn't know of that part of it. Daggert deceived me, too. He said the Japanese would simply destroy Eve, after I had made her powerless. I didn't want to do it myself. I thought the destruction of Eve was my pay—as Daggert put it—for returning to camp and helping him."

She paused, and I knew she was burning with shame inside.

"I was going to expose Daggert later, after I was sure Eve had been taken care of."

"You were going to double-cross him on top of it!" I groaned.

"But only because I love you, Adam!" she cried. "Can't you see? No harm was done except that Eve is out of the way!"

Again, how could I blame her? At the "age" of three months, in a new and often strange world, I might also have violated the laws of civilization in sheer ignorance.

I turned away, brokenly.

Eve lost to me! My mental mate of two years. I felt utterly alone suddenly. All the world vanished—Daggert, Mary, my robots, the Japanese threat—and I was alone in a void. How could I live without my Eve? Everything would be meaningless without her!

How long I sank through this black pit, I do not know. But lightning stabbed into the darkness. I sprang up, shouting for my robots. I addressed them. My phonic voice revealed no emotion.

"Men, Eve is in the enemy's hands. The enemy will send her metal brain to their home country. Their scientists will solve its secret. Then they will make more. Thousands more. Millions more. They will put them in giant metal bodies and send them into war. They will conquer the world with robots. Then the human and robot races

both will be slaves!"

My voice went down a pitch.

"There is only one hope. One way to stop them. We must try to rescue Eve—or the brain of Eve—from their hands. I appeal to you not as a man who has lost his mate, but as a leader forming a crusade against utter evil."

My final words were a shout.

"We must attack the enemy—*now!*"

TWENTY-NINE robots attacking an army. Picture it if you can. No, you can't. I will only try to describe it in general terms.

Crouching behind a hill in the hot sun, we looked out at a harbor in the Gulf of California. Secretly, the Japanese had come here a year ago, and built their base, just below the Mexican border. What arrangements had been made with the Mexican authorities no one will ever know. It is one of those dark cabals of unwritten history.

In the harbor were a dozen troop and supply ships. These had shuttled back and forth across the Pacific, bringing the mechanized army. New wooden barracks sheltered the troops and equipment. Vast preparations were in progress—for the assault against us at the pass. They didn't know that instead of waiting for attack, we were attacking ourselves!

"It will be fairly easy," said Number Five at my elbow. "We can rush in there and demoralize them."

I shook my head and pointed. Closer to us, and protecting the harbor area, was a semicircular line of square concrete structures and smaller domed ones.

"Blockhouses and pillboxes," I said. "A miniature Siegfried Line protecting the harbor. The Japanese, in their thorough way, prepared for any counter-attack of this key base, once the invasion of America had begun."

"We'll storm the line!" Number Twenty-Seven said loudly. "What are we waiting for?"

"You can't overturn pillboxes like tanks!" I snapped in reproof. "Those guns will fire till they are ripped out. Dozens of guns will concentrate on each robot." I looked around. "There will be casualties among us!"

Twenty-eight shiny heads nodded grimly. This was total war!

I outlined our procedure. We had to crack that line as quickly as possible—and yet have robots left to finish the job of driving the invaders right off the continent.

I leaped up. Twenty-eight metal forms leaped after me.

Silently, grimly, we raced for the middle of the fortified line. The alarm sounded before we got there. A siren wailed, drowned out a moment later by the roar of guns. The skeleton defense staff were already on the job. Reserves were motorcycling up from the barracks, to man all the gun turrets.

It would not be easy.

We neared the first line of pillboxes. Machine guns rattled, bouncing bullets off our frontal plates. Then, from the blockhouses small cannon belched thunderously. Number Nine, beside me, disappeared. His broken metal parts spattered against me.

One robot gone!

But now we reached the pillboxes. It took only seconds to brace our feet and wrench the guns out by the barrels. Concrete then cracked under the blows of huge metal clubs we carried. We razed the front line in less time than it takes to tell.

Then on to the second line of emplacements.

The total line, I had estimated, was a half-mile deep. Every hundred feet was a new row of flaming guns. Guns that might pick us off faster than we

could raze the concrete enclosures, to protect our rear. Time was an ally of the Japanese.

LET me translate the battle into blitzkrieg terms. Perhaps that way it will be simpler to understand.

I had, in brief, a formidable mechanized unit—in my robots. I led this force as a spearhead into the center of the line, blasting pillboxes and blockhouses faster, I think, than any European *panzer* division had ever gone through an enemy fortification.

The Japanese High Command had only one defense against the spearhead—counter-attack. Tanks rumbled up from the rear. And mounted field guns. And trucks of attack troops with large-caliber automatic guns. And the motor-cycle corps.

All these they poured against us, to reinforce their threatened center. They deployed in solid phalanxes, tank to tank, truck to truck, gun shouldering gun. No conceivable enemy could break through.

No, not even two dozen great, powerful robots.

The concentrated fire began to tell. Despite our usual speed in weaving and dodging, shells got us solely by the law of averages. Our spearhead had ripped almost completely through the center of the line. But now we faced that solid wall of motorized equipment.

Any human army would have been razed to shreds in seconds. But it takes a direct hit with an explosive shell to destroy a robot. We ignored all bombs that exploded at the sides.

Our initial drive faltered. Sixteen robots had met oblivion already. We could not ram through. We had no reserves.

It was a grave moment. Fate hung in the balance. The future looked on. In a few more moments, the destinies

of two races of living, thinking beings would be decided.

In all my previous exploits, I had come to crises like this. But none so ominous, so great, so profound.

Adam Link, the robot, faced his most crucial test. This thought whirled in my brain. I was sobbing within. Defeat, death stared me in the face!

And then, abruptly, I became Adam Link, the blitzkrieg general. Through my mind, in one eternal second, flashed a maneuver. A daring, perhaps mad plan.

But it had to be tried.

My sound-box raised to a piercing scream that penetrated to every robot ear-tympanum, despite the hell of explosion around us.

"Men! New orders! Listen—"

It took only three seconds to give them. A second later, my robots split into two factions. With the speed of express trains, we instantly abandoned the uncracked center of the line. Half went to the left, half to the right.

Racing to the extreme flanks of the little Siegfried Line, we again turned and drove inward. Here no concentration of fire opposed us, as at the center. For the Japanese had desperately thrown every gun against our central spearhead.

Our two robots factions penetrated completely at the flanks. We were in the end a mile apart, with all the Japanese mechanized forces between us.

"Drive together!" I shouted stentorianly. "Meet at the apex of an equilateral triangle—at their rear!"

CHAPTER X

Robot-Krieg!

IT was the well-known pincer movement, in short. We drove together, trapping the entire Japanese forces in

a wedge, just as had happened with other armies in Flanders in the Second World War.

We joined forces, turned. We were at the Japanese rear. All their guns were still pointed forward, directly in front of us. The packed tanks, trucks and field guns could never scatter and meet the new threat in less than long minutes.

And minutes were all we needed.

There is no need to repeat the story. As on the clogged road before the mine, we heaped their mechanized equipment into a vast, smoking junkpile. The battle became a rout for the Japs. An army fights mainly on morale. They had a morale now of zero.

The troops, weaponless, streamed off in all directions, away from the mad metal demons who were making a clatter louder than the roar of guns. Even before the main bulk of troops had scampered away, the air force began bombing us. It was their last hope—to seed the entire area with bombs and destroy all their stalled, trapped equipment just to get us.

But in less time than the words can be pronounced, we were at the anti-aircraft guns. Each shot we sent into the sky sought out a plane, unerringly. They fell like leaves. Still they droned in attack, dive-bombing at us. Not one of their dives was completed, except as a burning wreck that would land close and spray us with flying debris.

I warrant that in all the history of warfare, there has never been so complete a shattering of an enemy. I was answering their blitzkrieg with a super-blitzkrieg.

Or a robot-krieg!

The battle was over with the suddenness of a curtain falling. The remnants of the air force fled. I think they headed blindly for Japan. The last few tanks and guns shooting at us ran

out of ammunition. Tens of thousands of thoroughly frightened Japanese streamed to the hills, seeking the most remote spot from the cold, mechanical fury that had whipped them like little children.

I stepped away from my anti-aircraft gun in satisfaction.

Then I saw movement. The troop ships were up-anchoring and steaming out of the harbor.

"They must not escape!" I yelled. "Eve is aboard one of them. Man the guns!"

My robots leaped to the few remaining field pieces. I ordered a salvo over the bow of the leading ship. Then I raised my voice in a thundering bellow, in Japanese:

"Halt! Return to the dock. Disembark. If you disobey, we will send every ship to the bottom!"

To add emphasis, I aimed a cannon. With the precision of a man wielding a whip, I nicked the flagship just at the bow. A portion was blown out the size of a bucket. It must have sent a jar through the whole ship.

The ships stopped, docked. Hastily the Japanese scrambled off. Scared witless, they ran for the hills.

Brrrooommm!

THE roaring thump was followed by a ground-shaking explosion nearby, getting Number Seventeen. I looked further out into the wide harbor. Five destroyers were out there, convoys for the troop ships. Evidently a radio message had informed them of the situation. With their big shells, they could drive us away and still retain control of the harbor and vicinity.

But again, their own precautions against attack were their doom. A huge coastal artillery rifle had been set up in a commanding position on a hill, overlooking the waters. I led my robots

there before the third salvo had come across. Ignoring the cranes for loading, we lifted the two-ton projectiles into the breech and fired.

The duel between the five destroyers and our shore cannon was brief. Four rounds delivered in a minute caught four destroyers at the waterline. They sank majestically. The last warship managed to land a shell within fifty feet, feeling for the range, before we trained our barrel on it. It was now trying to steam away, panic-stricken. Our shell ripped its side open.

The enemy had been finally crushed, on land, in the air, and at sea!

I STRODE toward the empty troop ships at the docks.

"Now we will rescue Eve!" I said eagerly, breaking into a run.

I should not have been so careless. I didn't see the tank at my side. I didn't see the ugly snout of a one-pounder cannon turning to follow me. I didn't know that inside, where the Japanese general had crept, his face was twisted in cold rage. That he desired only one thing in the universe now—to destroy the robot-mind who had plunged him from assured glory to utter debasement in the eyes of his countrymen.

"Adam! Adam—"

It was a harsh scream from Mary, running after me. She had been with me, like a faithful shadow, through all the battling. She had fought beside me, not saying a word, only staring at me at times.

"Adam!" she shrieked again.

I scarcely heard her. I knew only one thing. That Eve, my beloved Eve, was ahead.

"Adam!"

This time the shout was behind my ear. And it clipped off abruptly. Or rather, it was drowned out by a stun-

ning roar. And Mary's body rained against me in a broken metal hail.

Now I saw. Saw that she had thrown herself before me, taking the shot meant for me. With a cry of rage I sprang at the tank. The gunners had no second chance for a shot. I ripped the gun barrel out with one furious tug. Then I stooped, got my hands under the tread, and heaved.

It was an eighty-ton tank. Impossible, you say, for me to turn it over. I agree with you. Yet I turned it over. When the red haze before my brain dissolved, I saw the Japanese general before me. He had scrambled out.

He stood before me, a head shorter than I. His face was wooden, concealing all emotion. He bowed.

"The High Command does not surrender!" he said stiffly.

THEN in slightly more personal tones, he added:

"You have defeated my army, Adam Link. But not me. I ask only one thing, soldier to soldier. Never reveal this. Never let the world know!"

I nodded.

He drew out his officer's sword. Advancing, he slashed at me with it. A dozen times he blunted the toy's edge against my adamant body. Then he stepped back. He had fulfilled his duty, fought to the last. It was a magnificent gesture.

There was only one thing left. Head high, he turned the point inward, against his own body. Hara-kiri, the honorable death . . .

I turned from the body. I strode to where Mary had sacrificed herself for me. I gave a cry as I saw her mangled head-piece lying there with just enough of her alloy backbone left to hold the leaking, draining battery. There was a spark of life left, but it was fading fast.

I kneeled beside her. Her eyes looked softly into mine.

"Adam—"

The eyes closed.

When I arose, I had forgotten what she had previously done in feminine blindness. She had died nobly. I forgave her also the dried bloodstains on her feet-plates. I had not been able to prevent her, before leaving the mine, from advancing on Daggert and jumping upon him, again and again.

Daggert had paid horribly for his treachery.

IT DID not take long to find Eve.

She lay chained in one of the ships. Japanese mechanics, as a second precaution, has disconnected her locomotor cables, rendering her completely helpless. I reconnected them and burst the chains with a savage wrench.

We strode out together.

I gave an order. My robots turned the field guns on the docks. Fifteen minutes of bombardment reduced them to the same smoking ruin all else was. The ships, with shells smashing at the waterline, sank to an inglorious grave.

The Japanese threat of invasion was over!

"It will remain a closed book, Eve," I said. "The United States doesn't suspect. Japan will ban it from even their archives. The world will never know that robots in warfare are invincible!"

"Won't they?"

I whirled, startled.

Number Thirteen was back of me. Beside him were seven others. Those eight were all that remained of my original twenty-seven. The margin of victory and defeat had been that narrow.

"What do you mean?" I demanded.

"Just this." Number Thirteen seemed to be the spokesman for them all. "We have had a taste of war.

These humans are puny against us. Let us build a robot army and conquer the world! The humans are not fit to rule. It will be for their own good!"

There was utter silence then.

I stood in stunned shock. Then I knew it had to be this way. Newly created, not yet fully tempered in the fires of life, that must be their conclusion. Conquest instead of service to humanity. To them, humans were pitiful, mad little creatures who needed a strong, guiding hand.

I SHOOK my head firmly. "Robot rule? No, men. We have weaknesses too. We are no more fit than they, as far as that goes. But as guiding servants, we can—"

"Rule, I say!" Number Thirteen boomed back. The robots behind him nodded. "Join with us, Adam Link, or—"

They had edged around me and Eve. We were surrounded. Two against eight. Eve and I had no chance.

I looked from one to the other of my robots. No use to argue. Nor did I blame them. Like Mary, they had no chance to gain a full rounded contact with human ways and problems. They knew only that humans fought and conquered one another. Why should not robots fight for what they wanted?

These eight were a "war generation." Lost souls.

I spoke sadly. "I knew this might happen. You are like my sons—sons who have rebelled. I cannot allow it, for the sake of the human race. And the future robot race."

I looked from one to the other—in farewell.

Then I snapped the secret switch in a side-niche of my metal body. Within me, a hitherto unused electrical unit hummed. From it leaped a spark that sprayed out all around me. Almost all the energy in my battery surged into the blast.

Like lightning, it lanced to all my robots. Like lightning, it burned out their brains, fused them into inert lumps. Only Eve and I were insulated.*

I had given them life, my robots. And I had taken it away.

I SPOKE an epitaph over the senseless metal junk of their sprawled bodies.

"Robots must never again be used in warfare! I, Adam Link, swear it!"

Adam and Eve Link, again the only robots left on Earth, turned away.

We knew time was kind. We knew the ache within us would heal.

* The brains of the robots were of an iridium-sponge construction (as were, of course, the brains of Adam and Eve Link). Iridium, one of the six precious metals of the platinum family, has an atomic weight of 193.1, a density of 22.41 and a melting point of 2350 degrees Fahrenheit—the second highest melting point of any of the other five elements in the platinum family.

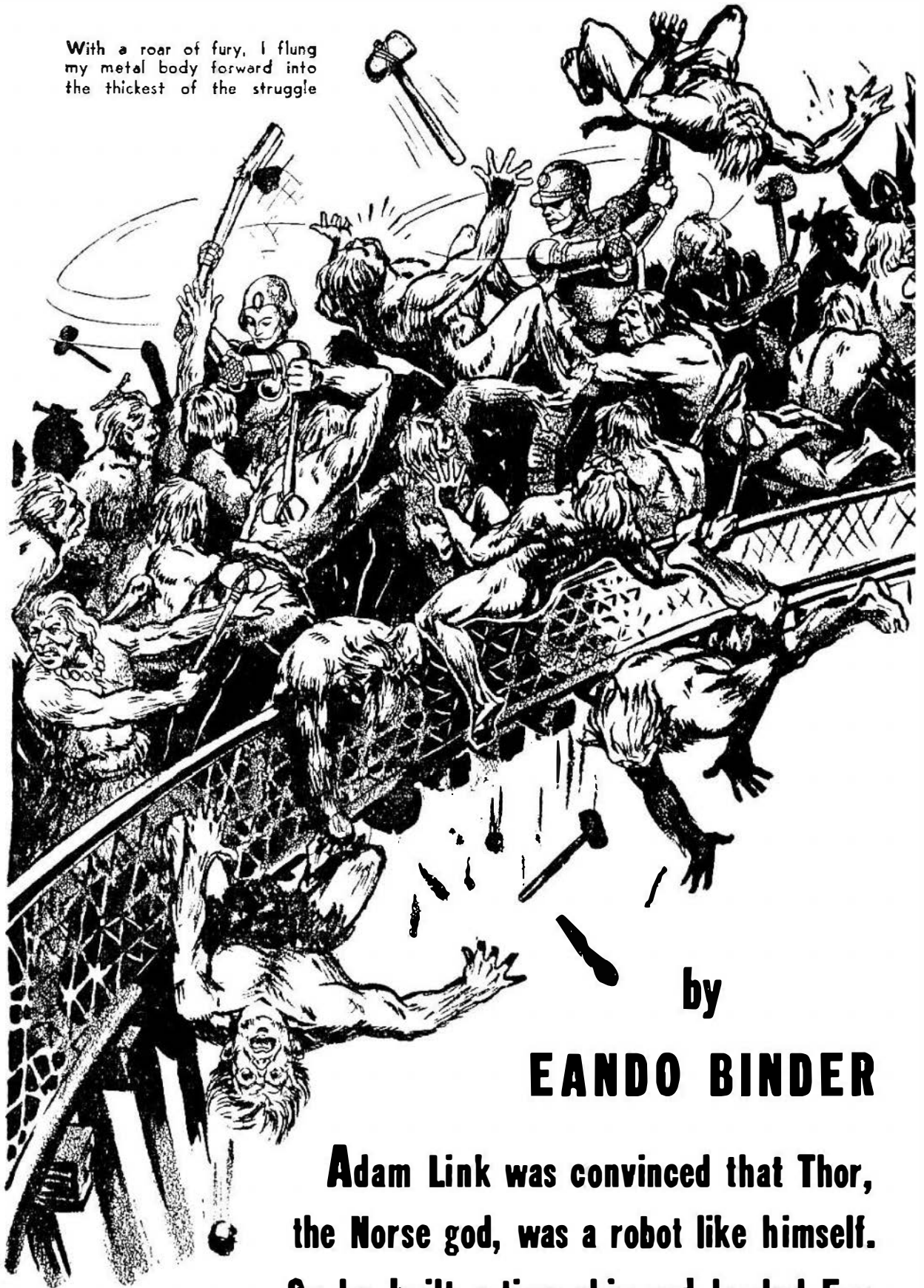
Iridium is used in radio tubes, penpoints and machine tools, being very hard and very durable.

Hence the electrical unit which gave off the spark that melted and fused these brains, after Adam Link had snapped on his secret switch, must have been an exceptionally powerful little mechanism to have created the great heat required.

The robot iridium-sponge brains were obviously fashioned like a human brain, the "sponge" part of the brain being simply its formation, similar to the convolutions and cortex of a regular brain. The brains, however, were evidently of a much higher receptive order, inasmuch as the robots matured much faster than human beings insofar as their thinking processes were concerned.—Ed



With a roar of fury, I flung
my metal body forward into
the thickest of the struggle



by

EANDO BINDER

**Adam Link was convinced that Thor,
the Norse god, was a robot like himself.
So he built a time-ship and hurled Eve
and himself into the past to find him.**



Adam Link

IN THE PAST

I STARTED out of a deep revery. Eve had just spoken sharply.

"You must snap out of it, Adam," she said. "Another month of this brooding and you'll go insane!"

"A robot can't go insane—" I began.

But I knew I was wrong. Any mind—human or metal—crumbles before what seems an insurmountable problem.

My insurmountable problem was that of introducing intelligent robots into human society. Citizenship was out of the question, or robots would one day outvote humans. Secondly, patent rights on my iridium-sponge brain would be dangerous to file, especially during a period of great human conflicts.

I had come back from the California episode heartily sick of the whole business. I had created thirty new robots, to prove their usefulness in industry. Instead, they had proved their usefulness in warfare. I was completely disillusioned, gloomy, morbid.

I had tried to get my mind off the entire matter. Eve had read to me, like a dutiful wife to a sick husband. We had retired to our laboratory-home hidden in the Ozarks. But only half my mind listened to her voice. The other half wrestled with the crushing thought that perhaps robots could never have a place on Earth.

"Adam Link," I said for the hundredth time, "the first of metal men, might also be the last!"

Eve glanced at me anxiously, and resumed her reading.

"Thor, the thunder-god, had an iron chariot. He never crossed the Bifrost Bridge because the other gods feared his heavy tread and mighty frame would make it crash. When Thor walked, lightnings sparkled from him. He had a mighty hammer which no man on Earth could cast as far as he. He was the strongest and mightiest of the gods, and their protector from the Frost Giants—"

I interrupted harshly.

"Stop reading that utter drivel! Can't you find anything else?"

"But Adam," Eve said patiently, "I've just about read you all the human literature that exists. Before this, you read every technical work known. There's nothing left but mythology!"

Eve's mechanical voice, when reading, is a blur of rapid syllables, indistinguishable to your human ears. She reads, and I listen, ten times faster than a human. We had exhausted the libraries of Earth, in our brief three years of life.

"The first of intelligent robots," I said despairingly again. "And perhaps the la—"

I stopped. My ceaseless pacing up and down the room stopped. My brain spun a little, as it absorbed what I had just heard.

"Iron chariot—heavy tread—mighty frame — lightnings and thunders — mighty hammer which he threw further than men!"

I was suddenly clutching the book out of Eve's hands.

"Eve, what does that sound like?" I demanded, rapidly thumbing the pages and reading them at a glance. "For instance, this. 'Thor always wore iron gloves to throw *Mojilnar*, his great hammer. He slew the Frost Giants with ease, for no one could stand

against him. When he walked, the ground trembled and the men of Midgard cowered in fear at his awesome appearance.' What does that sound like, Eve?"

"A fable such as humans devised in less enlightened times," Eve returned.

I read another line.

"'Thor's voice pealed like *thunder!*'"

My electrical larynx issued the last word with all the volume that the word implied.

Eve started violently. She stared at me. "What do you mean, Adam?"

My voice sank to a whisper.

"I mean this, Eve: If there is any kernel of fact in legends at all, *Thor was a robot!*"

After a moment I said decisively: "I'm going to build a time-machine, Eve. We're going into the past."

EVE was not astounded at my second statement, as at my first. Any human would have gasped at the blithe announcement of constructing a time-ship. Eve merely accepted it for what it was—a task within range of our abilities.

I finished the time-machine within six months.

It is simple to say that. But harder to explain how I did it. In six months, in my laboratory, I had solved the "secret" of time. It is no secret. Time is not a road or "dimension" down which you travel in one irrefragable direction. It is a haphazard zig-zagging through the entropy-zones of space. Once you track this winding path, and understand its twists, you are able to forge a new track—ahead or back.

I did not want to go ahead. I wanted to go back. Back to a dim age when "gods" lived in a north land. When deeds were performed that have rung

down in history as greatly exaggerated legends. When a robot walked the Earth, and was called Thor.

"Just think, Eve!" I said excitedly. "Perhaps I'm *not* the first of intelligent robots. And if a robot—or robots—once before existed in human history, why didn't they survive? Did they meet so many obstacles—like myself,—that they lost out? Who built that first robot? I've got to know the answers, Eve. This may be the solution to my own problem."

Eve nodded. She was happy that I had completely emerged from my previous fog of mental inertia.

We stepped into the time-ship.

Briefly, it was a globular vehicle of light alloy, with a dozen windows of quartz for vision. The controls were simply two levers, for orientation in space and time. Three dials read off watts, miles and years. For motive power I had devised a heavy-duty battery which constantly recharged itself through the absorption of cosmic-rays.

Yes, they are all advanced scientific principles. Yet they lie before the noses of you human scientists. I take no credit except that my mind works with the rapidity and clarity of a thinking machine. I went through research that might ordinarily take years or decades.

The interior of the globe was mainly empty. Eve and I needed no food supplies, or water, or tanked air, or clothing, or chairs, or beds. There was only a cupboard stocked with a dozen replacement batteries, and a selection of spare parts for our mechanical bodies.

I grasped the time-lever. As a test, I set the time-dial three years back, to the day I was created. I pulled.

There was just a blinking sensation, as if a light had been turned off and on. But the laboratory vanished. It hadn't existed three years before. The Ozarks around us were the same, however.

Only here and there the shrubbery had changed somewhat.

I moved the spatial control.

Its method of moving my ship physically was a by-product of the time-warping engine. By slipping the ship a few minutes or hours back in time—in relation to the daily clock—I moved westward. In effect, the Earth rotated under me. To move in latitude—north or south—I set the time-dial toward summer or winter. Because of Earth's axis-tilt, any new position in its orbit means a progressive movement from one pole to the other.

Perhaps this seems confusing. To me it is as starkly simple as turning the steering wheel of a car to take a curve. By the manipulation of these time factors, anyway, I moved quite certainly both in space and time.

After the off-and-on blink of my movement west and south, the time-ship hung suspended over a country home. A brick building at the rear housed a laboratory. My iridium-sponge brain had been brought to life here, by Dr. Charles Link.

CHAPTER II

A Search Through Time

"IT worked, Adam!" Eve said. "You're wonderful!"

Eve is so much like a human girl at times, proud of her man's doings.

"Bosh," I returned. "You know it was as simple as ABC." But even though my phonic voice was flat, I experienced a real thrill. No human had ever traveled the highroad of time.

"It looks hazy below," Eve commented, looking down through the bottom window. "Why is that?"

It puzzled me. "We'll go closer," I announced.

It took careful manipulation of the

controls to set the ship down just beside the brick laboratory. A misstep and I might crash through its walls, or into the ground. But after the usual blink, we found ourselves hovering a foot off the ground, and directly in line with the open door of the laboratory.

I looked within. My heart skipped a beat, to use the idiom.

There stood my creator alive again—Dr. Link. The man who had labored for twenty years to achieve the iridium-sponge brain. And who had brought to life a being he named Adam Link and called his son. I looked over his white hair, stooped shoulders, thin kind face—and knew that I loved him.

I opened the time-ship's door.

"Dr. Link!" I called. "It's I—Adam Link!"

He didn't turn. Didn't seem to hear. My voice was curiously muffled. Eagerly, I stepped from the door—or tried to. Some invisible force seemed to hold me back. Impatiently I exerted my full machine-powers, till gears whined. But I couldn't move an inch beyond the hatchway.

"Look, Adam!"

I looked, at Eve's cry. Dr. Link had been working over an inert metal form stretched across his workbench. My metal form! This was the day he had sent the life-giving current of electricity through my metal brain and brought it to life.

I watched, fascinated.

My "birth" was about to be reenacted, before my own eyes. Bizarre experience! I saw Dr. Link's fingers depress a key, as he watched my unmoving form on the bench. Nothing happened. No sign of life. Again and again he closed the key, shooting powerful currents through the iridium-sponge that should now awake to sentient life.

But it didn't.

Dr. Link turned away finally. Bitterness rested in his face. The bitterness of a man who had tried this same thing countless times and had always failed. Suddenly his kindly old face turned savage. He picked up a wrench, swinging it.

I gasped in horror. He was about to smash it down on the inert robot's iridium-sponge brain. The brain lay exposed, with no skull-plates protecting it. One blow and the sensitive organ would be destroyed forever.

"Dr. Link—don't!" I yelled. Even then, my thoughts wondered how this could be—myself trying to save myself!

As before, Dr. Link could not hear. And as before, some strange force held me back when I tried to leap from the time-ship. I could only watch, my mind reeling. If that wrench descended, would I blink out? Cease to exist? Had I somehow thrown the normal course of events awry terribly, by coming here?

The paradoxes of time-travel! I had ignored them till now. What blunder had I committed?

Eve and I watched, clutching hands.

THE wrench descended. The delicate iridium-sponge brain of Adam Link splattered under the blow like broken glass. Dr. Link flung the wrench to the floor and slumped into a chair, weeping. Twenty years of labor had culminated in utter failure. The intelligent robot had not come to life. The living brain of metal was an impossible achievement, after all!

Dr. Link sat there, shoulders heaving.

"Adam!" Eve whispered. "What does it all mean? This is your creation scene. But it's *different*! It ended not with your coming to life, but with your destruction!"

"And yet I'm alive!" I murmured. "I didn't blink out when the wrench smashed that metal brain. According to this scene, I was never brought to life. Yet here I am!"

Profound, stunning mystery of time!

My thoughts clicked swiftly. I had the answer in a moment.

"This is not my creation scene, Eve," I said. "Time is an entropy-zone. Events move haphazardly through it. They rebound from one another. Some one way, some another. What we've witnessed is a different 'rebound' of the creation-event."

Eve stared.

I tried to explain another way.

"This is not our 'world' at all, Eve. That is why we couldn't enter it, from our ship—because we don't have any real existence in it. There are *different* Dr. Links, and Adam Links. Perhaps, in all the greater universe, an infinity of them. And all have experienced totally different results."

Eve's mind is quick. She nodded.

"I see. It's the basic theory of co-existing worlds, side by side, separated by different courses through time. Or simply different rebounds in the entropy-zone. But Adam, how did we happen to strike the wrong course?"

I thought that out in three long seconds.

"Because we took a haphazard route back in time. The only way to keep in our world is by plotting a definite course. Like a mariner guiding his ship across a great ocean without seeing the land he must arrive at. I'll begin plotting now—"

AN hour later, I threw down my pencil and shook my head wearily.

"Impossible," I said. "There are an infinity of courses and rebounds. We might wander forever among them, and never strike our particular world."

"Too bad," Eve murmured. "We'll have to give up our quest for Thor, then."

I hated to do that. A burning resolve rested in me to penetrate back to that remote past—of our certain time-world—and find another robot like myself named Thor. I had spent six months building the time-ship. I could not give up this easily.

An hour later, after intense thought, I jumped up and set the time-dial. Eve gasped, as she read off the figure.

"One hundred million years ago! Adam, what's the use of going to that remote past? Thor wouldn't be there."

"No, but our world will be," I retorted. "There must have been fewer rebounds that long ago, when the universe was younger. Fewer other-worlds. We have more chance of locating ours there. We'll know when we can step out of our ship physically, that we've hit our world. Then I can retrace our world's course forward in time quite easily. I'm determined to find Thor. If need be, I'll go back to the beginning of time, when all things started."

I was that set to finish my venture through time.

One hundred million years blinked by just as quickly as three years had, when I pulled the lever. Our ship had dropped like a stone down into the entropy-depths of the greater cosmos.

One second the scene of a Dr. Link weeping bitterly over his smashed robot-brain was before our eyes. The next second the towering forest of a steamy, carboniferous world engulfed the view outside our windows. Giant dinosaurs lumbered nearby. Pterodactyls soared like great aircraft overhead. A brighter sun shone down with pitiless intensity. This was the world before man.

But it was hazy, almost ghost-like.

When I tried to step from the ship,

my body refused to move. The time-warp around the craft held me with bonds of steel. These would not loosen unless the time-warp dissolved and coalesced with its own particular entropy-world.

"We'll try the next other-world," I said grimly. "And the next, and next. . . ."

WE DID NOT count the numberless worlds that blinked into being before us. Most were dinosaur-worlds, of varying detail. Some, however, were vastly strange. Barren worlds, where some blight-event had wiped out all life. Dark worlds, where the sun had mysteriously burned dim. A cracking world, reeling back from the impact of a dark body from space.

And so on—infinity.

Your human minds might have staggered to realize how many different other-worlds were drifting through the unknown. Even our sturdy robot minds were dazed. Yet they meant nothing, these other-worlds. They are as remote and unattainable to any of us—humans and robots alike—as the world of an atom. They register to us only as light-impressions which pervade all the ether. Eve and I could never "land" on them, in any slightest way.

No world could be real to us except the one which had given us being—physical being. All the other Earths were chimeras, fantasies, non-existent wraiths.

How long must we search? Eons perhaps, hopelessly?

CHAPTER III

One Hundred Million B.C.

"**A**DAM!"

It was a sharp cry from Eve. We had just warped into another dino-

saur-type world.

"Adam, it's clear and distinct outside. Maybe this is it!"

It was. When we opened the door and moved out, no force opposed us. This was our own Earth, of 100 million B.C. The Earth which had spawned *our* human race, and *our* Dr. Link—and us.

We stepped clear of the ship and viewed the past world as never seen by human eyes. Giant ferns, steamy air, choked pools of swarming life, endless jungle. We saw a ratlike mammal scurry by. It was perhaps the ancestral mammal-form from which would evolve all the later mammals, and apes, and man.

For this was the Reptile Age.

We saw their mighty forms here and there in the distance. Their deep roars shook the ground. They were the lords of Earth.

An ear-splitting roar sounded abruptly, just back of us. Eve shrieked, turning. A mammoth two-legged Tyrannosaurus Rex—king of them all—thundered down on us. Anything was its prey, in its dim-seeing, vicious little eyes. Its great rows of sharp teeth could crunch through anything.

Anything except metal, luckily.

It had caught up Eve like a doll with its foreclaws, and tossed her into its cavernous jaws. The grind of its teeth against Eve's metal form shivered the air. Amazed, it tried again, bellowing angrily.

Eve struggled, but her arms were pinned between ridges of teeth. If the monster kept crunching away, with stubborn ferocity, he might eventually damage Eve.

I think the roar I gave, from my mechanical larynx, was louder than any from a dinosaur. Eve, my mental mate, was in danger! I was probably as savage at that moment as any of the crea-

tures around.

I leaped up twenty feet, to the creature's jaws, grasping the lower one. The combined weight of Eve and myself dragged its head down. I then braced my shoulders against the upper jaw and heaved upward, to release Eve.

I am a robot. I have machine-strength. But it took every watt of my energy-system to force those mighty jaws apart.

"Jump out, Eve!" I yelled. "And then keep away. This monster won't leave us alone, so I'll have to finish him."

When Eve had scrambled to safety, I put my hands under the upper jaw and heaved again. I strained every muscle-cable in a furious effort. I forced the jaws wider, wider, wider—and there was a sudden crack as the lower jaw-bone snapped. Thank heaven it had not been some part of me!

The behemoth let out a squeal of pain that very nearly ruptured my tympanums. I leaped back. Its pain-maddened eyes glared at me as though contemplating another attack. It still had great foreclaws with which to rend, and a mighty tail with which to batter. But it drew back from me. Tyrannosaurus Rex, perhaps the most formidable monster in all evolution—fled.

"Are you all right, Eve? Let's get back in the ship—"

I broke off.

A great pterodactyl swooped down from over the trees, claws extended to grasp me. I smote it with my fist, on the side of the head. It let out a squawk of dismay, tried to rise, but fell a dozen yards away, completely stunned.

I laughed. The dinosaurs ruled all Earth—except this little patch on which I stood. I might have held it forever against them. Foolish thoughts. I pulled Eve into the ship, setting the time-dial.

ALREADY, since our arrival in our own time-world of the past, I had figured out the course up through the entropy-levels toward the future. If you wish to see the formula I used . . . but no use to set it down. I'm afraid no human scientist would understand.

Eve spoke before we started.

"We changed the past, Adam, in some small degree! We've come to the past and entered into its course of events. What will it mean to the future?"

I shook my head on its swivel, noticing it grated, and making a mental note to oil it the first chance I had.

"We haven't changed *our* world's past. We've only started off another other-world. Since we're here, we've definitely been in our Earth's past. That's immutable. The other-world caused by us is the one that goes on as if we *hadn't* come. It will be a world that never knew Adam Link!"

I will not go further into such paradoxes. You would have to understand time as I do to perceive the grand scope of it.

I pulled the time-lever, annihilating 100 million years. We blinked into 50,000 B.C.

We looked out over the Paleolithic world. I sent the ship to north Europe, in a blink of rotation-time. Thor and the Norse gods, if based on fact, would have lived in the north country. Cruising forward a hundred feet high, we looked down.

We saw sub-men* roaming the forests and plains.

But no sign of "gods."

"They must have been more civilized beings," I reasoned. "Fables are vague about time, but Thor and the Norse gods must have existed somewhere between 50,000 B.C. and 10,000 B.C."

*Neanderthal and Heidelberg men. Also tribes of Cro-Magnon, from which modern man sprung.—Ed.

We'll go forward to 40,000."

"Again sub-men. But surprisingly, the beginnings of civilization, too. Villages of Cro-Magnon—crude boats, spears, pottery. I jumped to 30,000. Cities had sprung up, in that ten thousand years, humming with activity. Aircraft, steamships, cross-country powerlines were in evidence.

I looked at the dials. Could they be wrong? This looked like 20th-century civilization—way back here in 30,000 B.C.! But one thing proved the veracity of my time-gauge—the presence of sub-men. Short, gnarly Neanderthal, and large, hulking Heidelberg still roamed the wilder regions, alongside this civilization of Cro-Magnon.

Cro-Magnon had also set up centers of civilization in a broad, rich valley south of the Norse-country. The future Mediterranean basin, at present dry land. And thirdly, on a large flowering island in the Atlantic.

Eve was excited.

"All legend come true, Adam! It's the mythology we were reading before we left. Civilization in the Norse country, later to be fabled as the Norse gods. Also in the Mediterranean basin, later to be remembered as the Greek gods. And Atlantis! And probably Mu, over in the Pacific. Civilization 20,000 years before the Egyptian!" She paused. "Yet all this vanished. Why?"

My thoughts leaped ahead. I knew the answer. I silently set the time-dial for 25,000 B.C.

In a wink of time, civilization had vanished. Or most of it. Great glaciers and sheets of ice lay over the temperature zones. The Norse cities were already ground to dust. Gibraltar had been born, or split, and the oceans poured into the Mediterranean basin, wiping out all but a remnant of the civilization there. Atlantis sank like a

stone, leaving so little trace that to this day it is unremembered except as a name. The Norse and Mediterranean areas were at least commemorated in stories of mythology.

"The Ice Age!" Eve whispered sadly. "It wiped all that away. Civilization won't rise again till modern times, in Egypt. Well, let's go back before the Ice Age, Adam. We'll find Thor preceding this catastrophe."

"I wonder," I mused. "The Norse heroes, and Greek gods, sound more like *remnant* people, rather than prosperous ones at the height of their glory. We'll go ahead."

WE went to 20,000 B.C. We cruised over the north-land. The ice-sheets had receded. The continent of Europe as known today lay fertile and forested. I scouted up and down the fjords of the Norwegian coast, looking for I knew not what exactly.

Something flashed in our eyes finally, like a rainbow.

I hovered over it. It was a bridge stretching from the mainland to a small island. A great and wonderful bridge of red copper, yellow gold, white silver, blue steel, and green-coated brass. It seemed made of gossamer-thin strands, delicate enough to be thrown over by the first breeze. But it was old—old. It had stood there for countless centuries, adamant, sturdy, supremely artistic. And built by master engineers.

Eve let out a cry suddenly.

"Rainbow colors! It's the Rainbow Bridge, Adam! The Bifrost Bridge of the Norse legends!"

I knew that Eve was right. The island, then, was Asgard, the home of the "gods." Or of the few survivors of the great, thriving civilization of the north before the terrible Ice Age. Freakishly, perhaps this island alone had escaped the grinding, obliterating forces of the

ice-masses.

In legend, the Bifrost Bridge connected Asgard with Midgard, the home of common mortals---or the mainland of Norway. Here, in virgin forests, roamed Neanderthal, Heidelberg, and Cro-Magnon. They were still savages, sub-men. The next civilization would not emerge yet for 10,000 years. And it would be far south of here, in Egypt and Sumeria.

What kind of people were these Asgardians, survivors of a civilization at least as great as our 20th-century's? There was only one way to find out. We descended. I hovered the ship, first, just over the island, to look the situation over.

A gigantic marble and metal castle stood below. Its ramparts and towers were as finely molded as the beautiful Rainbow Bridge. The weathering of the stone showed the passage of at least 5,000 years. It had survived the tempests, frigidity, and furious battering of the elements throughout the long, bitter Ice Age.

"How beautiful it is!" Eve murmured. "No wonder that even 20,000 years later, it is still remembered in fables, in the 20th century! How sad it is to think this must vanish. . . ."

We looked at each other a little startled.

In a way, we knew the "future." We knew that long before the 20th century, this would be gone, somehow. And that, according to legend, all these people would be in limbo, too.

The Twilight of the Gods.

"Is it possible," Eve said slowly, wonderingly, "that we can somehow *save* this place, knowing what we do?"

I shook my head. "We can't change the immutable future. Not of *our* world. Let's not think of those things, Eve. There are mightier forces and destinies than you and I can tamper

with. Let's just remember one thing---that we're looking for Thor. Or a possible intelligent robot like ourselves who lived and moved among these ancient Asgardians."

CHAPTER IV

Asgard at Last!

I LOWERED the ship into a courtyard boldly. The maneuver must have taken their sentinels by surprise. There were dozens of them, spaced watchfully along the battlements. The whole castle had an air of siege, as though for centuries they had held out against enemies.

Suddenly archers let fly with arrows at us. A spear or two hurtled against the ship. From the highest tower, I saw a more formidable weapon aimed down at us---a cannon-like object with a long ugly barrel. Evidently they would finish us off, now that we had landed within the ring of their defenses.

The arrows and spears meant nothing, but that cannon might. I leaped out, before a shot came from it.

"Stop!" I yelled. "I am not your enemy!"

Then, realizing the futility of using the English language, thousands of years before the language was known, I simply spread my arms in a gesture of peace. They must see I had no weapons.

They stopped firing arrows, but I doubt it was because of my gesture of peace. It was simply out of paralyzed astonishment. I could see them all frozen in attitudes of wonder, looking over the form of a shiny metal robot who talked. My stentorian voice had reverberated like thunder through the courtyard, rattling all the windows.

I waited for them to make the next move.



If they still insisted on using that cannon, I would have to move fast.

"Stay at the controls, Eve," I said to her. "If I jump back in, be ready to whisk us away instantly!"

But no shot came from the cannon. We sensed that somewhere in the main tower, the authorities were discussing the matter. A few minutes later a group of figures emerged from the base of the tower, into the courtyard. They had an escort of armed men, with bows and swords ready.

I looked them over as they slowly, cautiously drew near. Blonde they were, blue-eyed, yellow-haired, patently Nordic of race. Descendants of the pre-Ice-Age Norse civilization, who had all been decidedly blonde. They were tall, magnificently built, long-haired in Viking style. In this one thing, at least, legend had not erred—that the Norse "gods" were all heroes and godly in stature.

But they weren't "gods," in any sense of the word. They were as human and mortal as any of today. I suppose if by some chance I vanished from Earth, and a catastrophe destroyed 20th-century civilization, the following age would remember Adam Link as a "god" too. Time throws a cloak of mystery around things ancient.

No, they were men. Men of men, however—tall, straight, athletic. Except for one. One out of the group of six. He was strangely dark, hulking-shouldered, and walked with a rolling, stooped gait. He had something of the sub-man in him. His features were cunning, impish.

I heard Eve's whisper behind me, from the ship.

"Loki!" she said. "Adam, that's Loki of the legend!"

I DECIDED to surprise them. I pointed to the darker man, as they stood warily before me.

"You are Loki—Loki!" I said, pronouncing meticulously. I wondered if the name had survived at all intact.

It had. They all started. The one named Loki grunted in vast surprise.

"How do you know me?" he queried. "We've never seen you before. How can you know me?"

I understood his speech almost instantly. You wonder how. Remember that I have studied every language recorded, including Greek, Hebrew, Phoenician. And the more esoteric ones of Sanskrit, early Sumerian, and Druidic. All new languages spring from a more ancient root. I was able to recognize in Loki's words the root-forms that were later to branch out into all the various languages of the modern era.

I had some difficulty answering, though. It was not so easy to guess which root-words, of the thousands I

knew, went back to the Asgardian tongue.

"I am Adam Link," I said haltingly. "I am an intelligent man of metal. I am from the future. I have come back in time to visit you."

They listened with puzzled attention. How much they caught I didn't know. But their tenseness eased. They were not so fearful of me now. They were intelligent enough to accept me for what I was—a being of metal intellect—whereas the unenlightened submen of the forests might have shrieked in fear and cast stones at me from a cave all day.

The tallest of them suddenly stepped forward, half smiling in welcome. He had a certain regal air that instantly told me who he must be. And he had only one eye. He opened his mouth to introduce himself, but I spoke first.

"You are Odin!" I said. "Odin, the All-Father, or king of Asgard!"

Their faces were thunderstruck. The smile vanished from Odin's face.

"You know me?" he barked. "Then you must be from some near land. Perhaps you are a spy from the Frost Giants of Jutenheim! Or from the Dwarfs of Elfheim! The Giants and Dwarfs have long sought to conquer us, by any and all means. Speak! Explain why you are here!"

I was under suspicion again, for knowing too much.

"I am looking for Thor," I said. "Which among you is Thor? Is he a man of metal, like myself?"

"Thor? Thor?" They looked blankly at one another. The king went on. "There is none named Thor. These with me are Baldur, Tyr, Bragi, and Frey. And of course, Loki. But there is no Thor."

Baldur—Tyr—Bragi—Frey! How those names stabbed through the mists of fabled time! All the Norse "gods"



had then existed, as men, back here in 20,000 B.C. They were to live for all time, in the hearts of men.

But what about Thor? Why was there no Thor, the "thunder-god"? Surely, with the many tales about this mighty warrior, protector of Asgard, slayer of the Frost Giants, he could not be merely a myth added to in stories about ancient Asgard? Thor was one of the most important of the gods.

"No Thor?" I gasped. "Are you sure?"

There was some mystery here.

EVE'S voice sounded in my ear. She had stepped from the ship, seeing I was in no immediate danger.

"Thor might have been among them centuries or even thousands of years ago, Adam. Don't forget this remnant group has been here five thousand years, through many generations. That's a long time. They may have forgotten him. Perhaps later we'll find



FREYA

records of him in their archives. These may not even be the Odin, Loki, Frey, etc., of legend, but merely descendants of them bearing those names. Or perhaps the ancestors of the fabled 'gods'. We have no way of knowing yet if we've landed in quite the right *period* of Asgardian history, to account for the deeds and stories handed down into our era."

I nodded. Eve's logic was sound. We would have to stay a while and investigate. Thor might have to be tracked down in other ways.

The Asgardians had momentarily stepped back, with a chorused gasp, at Eve's appearance. But a second being of metal is easily accepted, after the shock of the first. They recovered quickly.

"This is my mate, Eve," I said.

Clouds of suspicion still rested on their faces.

"You are spies!" Odin said flatly. "You are our enemies, hidden in metal suits, telling a fantastic story of being metal humans. How can a metal man have a metal wife?"

He barked to his guards suddenly. "Seize them! Rip away their metal armor. We will see who sneaks fox-like among us!"

I was amused as a dozen brawny guards leaped forward and began pulling at me. They tried prying with their fingers under smoothly welded joints. One of them let out a yelp of pain and fright as he made a short-circuit with his finger. A long spark of electricity leaped out, dancing over his arm.

They all scrambled back, looking at me pantingly.

Exasperated and determined, Odin leaped at me as though to tear my metal "suit" away himself. Loki held him back.

"Fool," he grunted. "You must use proper instruments."

Odin gave the order and the guards now came at me with their steel swords. And they unhooked metal axes from their belts. With these as prisers and levers, they might eventually damage me. I had to call a halt to the foolish proceedings.

"Stop!" I said.

I grasped a sword from a man and snapped it in half in my hands. I flung the two pieces into the air. They sailed completely over the tallest tower, and over the Bifrost Bridge, splashing into the sea beyond. No man could have thrown them one-tenth as far.

"I am strong," I warned.

They gasped at the feat, but still leaped forward, weapons upraised. Certainly they made up in courage what they lacked in intelligence.

I looked at Eve helplessly. In a moment they would begin banging at us with their weapons. If I stayed, it

would end in a fight. If I left, I'd have no chance to find a clue to Thor's existence. It was an impasse.

But something intervened.

CHAPTER V

Adam Rescues Iduna

A SHRILL scream sounded from the high tower. Several of the Asgardian women had craned their necks from windows, with our arrival, to see the strange visitors. Some had daringly emerged on a crow's nest balcony, looking down into the courtyard. One of these women had screamed.

All eyes turned upward. We saw a strange sight. A giant pterodactyl had swooped down from the clouds and grasped a girl in its claws. The great flying reptile, with hardly a break in its speed, carried the girl off to its eyrie, to devour the delicate morsel.

"Pterodactyls still exist in 20,000 B.C.!" I marveled. "Probably the last few of their doomed kind," I added thoughtfully. "No fossils of them have been found of this recent time, but then fossils are rare occurrences. This will amaze paleontologists when I tell them back in our century!"

But Eve was not concerned with such scientific speculation. She grasped my hand, pulling me to the time-ship.

"Don't stand here like a dummy!" she cried. "We'll rescue her. The poor thing must be half frightened to death already. Hurry, Adam!"

The Asgardians stood stricken, watching one of their women carried off by the fearsome monster. Obviously, they could do nothing. They could not shoot their cannon, whatever it was, without killing the girl. Spears and arrows could not harm it, though a few of the guards half-heartedly shot. Soon the reptile's great flapping wings would



carry it off to the mountains.

"Iduna!" Odin moaned. "The fair Iduna, my favorite singer, whom we all love!"

I leaped into the time-ship, with Eve. In lightning calculation, I figured the distance and speed of the monster, and set my controls carefully. When I pulled the lever, our ship shot to its position in the usual blink of time—about fifty feet before the flying reptile.

It very nearly dropped its burden, startled at the apparition of the globular ship before it. It swerved away—seaward. I had planned that. Again I jerked my lever. Again the lumbering giant shied away at the annoying globe that got in its way.

It was almost fun. Time and again I popped my ship before it, closer each time, driving the poor creature crazy. It began to tire of the strain of braking

and turning. And it hated and feared the sea, toward which it was being herded.

Finally it happened.

WITH a screech of rage it dropped the girl and flung itself at my ship, to give battle to this audacious little challenger. I timed it just right. The flying behemoth hit my ship with its head, as I materialized closer. Knocked out cold, it fell like a stone into the sea, drowning.

I darted the ship down to the surface, where a little white figure swam. I knew that the girl, Iduna, would be safe. The Asgardians must all be good swimmers, because of their island life. And their women, to judge by the men, would not be dainty, weak bits of femininity.

Opening the hatch, Eve drew the dripping wet girl in. She had already seen us, in the courtyard, so she was not startled. She stood tall, straight, perfectly proportioned, with beauty that I had seldom seen.

And she smiled, as though having already forgotten that a moment before she had been in the clutches of a terrible "dragon."

"Thank you for what you have done," she said in a rich, sweet voice. "I am sure you are kind and good at heart—whoever or whatever you are!"

She said the same to her companions, when we arrived back in the courtyard. The atmosphere had changed. They looked at us now with respectful wonder and friendliness.

"You have rescued Iduna, the Fair," Odin said gratefully. "You are now our eternal friends. And guests. I welcome you to Asgard, Adam and Eve Link!"

His pronunciation of our names was a little odd—something like Autumn and Eef. The next moment his face

went to sheer wonder.

"You must be great magicians!" he said, awed. "Your iron chariot moved with speed we could not follow, with our eyes. You have incredible strength. You are *really* made of metal, not flesh! Yet it is not so strange. In the ancient days, before the Great Cold, our people had metal beings like you."

I jerked eagerly.

"They did? Then Thor must have been one of them who survived!"

Odin shook his head.

"But none of those metal-beings talked, or moved independently, as you do. They were mere clever machines, obeying the human voice. We have no recorded of a robot that was a free and intelligent being. 'Thor' is simply our word for metal."

"I will search your records," I said. "Somewhere I will find a clue."

Perhaps in some odd corner of the castle lay a half-rusted metal form. Once I dated its time of activity, I would know how long before forgotten Thor had lived in Asgard. Then I could go there, and meet the Thor-robot in life.

EVE and I stayed among the Asgardians.

With Odin's permission, I searched their archives. There were not many. Time had rotted most of the library. Fire had once gutted the room. A half dozen ancient, crumbly tomes were all that were legible.

The records told of their once remarkable civilization. Of humming industries, trade, and exploration over the seven seas, wide-spread progress and invention. They had had aircraft, swift ships, subways, skyscrapers, just as we had glimpsed it in our travels from 50,000 to 20,000 B.C.

All this had vanished more than 5,000 years before. The glaciers had plowed every city into the ground.

There were no records beyond the Ice Age.

Loki, who seemed to like our company, gave us a verbal continuation.

"Asgard castle was originally built as a royal resort, where the kings of our land spent leisure hours. The ice-masses somehow failed to touch it, though it gouged out all the fjords of this coast. The Bifrost Bridge withstood, too. Our people had fled to the south. Here, with civilization destroyed, savagery reigned. All the peoples of Earth sank to bestial level, fighting over scraps of scarce food.

"Only Asgard castle remained what it was. In it, a thousand of royal and noble blood lived on. Their children lived on, through centuries of bitter cold. They did not degenerate to beasts, but they lost all previous knowledge. There were wonderful machines, once, in Asgard castle."

Loki conducted us to forgotten corners of the huge building. Rust-eaten pipes, crumbling wheels, heaps of glass and broken debris told of one-time machines. Perhaps the castle had once been heated, air-conditioned, and run effortlessly by machinery. There had been elevators, aircraft hangars, machine-shops. All that was gone. Only the bare walls of the castle remained, in which the present Asgardians lived a next-to-nature life.

"Only one thing remains of original Asgard," Loki informed us, taking us to the highest tower, before its mounted cannon. "It is a marvelous weapon. We don't understand it. It shoots out a firebeam. It burns anything within a mile."

A heat-ray! Even the 20th century did not know such an advanced thing. Was it atomic-powered? I stretched my hand to the control button, to see what mechanism was involved.

I was startled at the shout from Loki.

His face was almost insanely twisted.

"Don't shoot the gun, Adam Link! Don't waste a shot. Its days are numbered. With it we have managed to hold off the attacks of our enemies. When it is finally burned out, there will be Ragnarok—the day of doom!"

RAGNAROK! The Twilight of the Gods! An air of sadness and resignation lay over the entire castle. They were the last remnant of a past splendor. They awaited the final extinction.

I questioned Loki, intrigued. "Who are your main enemies?"

"The Frost Giants, who live to the north in Jutenheim. They are a race of giant men, averaging seven feet. They have always warred on Asgard, hating the Asgardians for being finer and more intelligent."

Frost Giants, in name and legend. Heidelberg Man,* in actuality.

"It is too bad that Jutenheim and Asgard must always war," Loki added half to himself.

I looked at him, remembering the legend. "You are Odin's half-brother? You both had the same father, but your mother was a woman of the Frost Giants?"

"Yes," he nodded, assuming someone had told me. "At times there is peace with the Giants. And sometimes intermarriage, though the Asgardians generally shun such tainting. I am of both races, and at times I know not where my allegiance—"

He broke off, shrugging. "Naturally I am loyal to Asgard. We have another enemy—the Dwarfs. The short, gnarly men who live in caves and underground caverns, mostly south of us. Their land is Elfheim. They seldom attack, but

*A race of sub-men of towering proportions, inhabiting the bitter Scandinavian Peninsula. They were probably pressing south, year by year, seeking warmer climates.—Ed.

we know they hate us with a bestial, unreasoning hatred."

The Dwarfs of Elfheim—Neanderthal Man. They had probably come up to Scandinavia from northern Europe, driven away by the Cro-Magnon race. Loki could not see the whole, true picture as I could, with my 20th-century knowledge.

BY 20,000 B. C.—this Neolithic Era—*homo sapiens* had sprung from the original Cro-Magnon stock. Now the great prehistoric war of the species was going on. Spreading and conquering, Homo Sapiens was killing off all the races of sub-men. Very likely, the Scandinavian Peninsula was the last stronghold of the sub-men, with its Heidelberg and Neanderthal population.

Homo Sapiens must be pressing at all sides. Asgard, a tiny island of Cro-Magnon in the heart of sub-man territory, must be an object of bitter hatred to the Giants and Dwarfs. For Cro-Magnon, with slight variation, was Homo Sapiens—modern man.

The Asgardians knew nothing of such larger issues. To them, all the world seemed filled with the Frost Giants and ugly Dwarfs, seeking their extinction. Knowing the hopeless odds against them, they spoke of Ragnarok, the day of doom.

The Twilight of the Gods, as it had come to be known in fable.

"It's terrible!" Eve whispered more than once. "Why must this beautiful castle go? Why must these people die out? Adam, isn't there anything we can do to help them—to prevent the tragedy?"

"Against destiny?" I shook my head slowly. "Fable—or its core of history—decrees Asgard's fall. I doubt anything we might try would do any good. . . ."

CHAPTER VI

The Frost Giants Attack

I WAS interrupted by the clarion blast of a trumpet that rang through every room of the castle.

Loki started.

"The alarm blown by Heimdal, our guard on the bridge!" he cried. "It means the Giants are attacking again. They have been pressing us savagely of late."

He darted away, to help in the defense of their castle. I followed with Eve. I wanted to see the legendary Frost Giants—or Heidelberg sub-man of the snowy north regions. What would this ancient battle be like?

The Asgardian forces were streaming from the castle over the Bifrost Bridge. It was their first line of defense. To see closer, I stepped on the bridge and began walking. At close quarters I saw that the structure was rickety, from great age. It swayed as the Asgardian warriors rushed along. At my rather ponderous tread, the bridge actually began to vibrate and rattle.

A hand pulled me back. It was Loki again.

"You can't use the bridge, Adam Link!" he snapped. "You'll shake it down, with your heavy steps. Go back. What business have you here, anyway? You are only in the way."

I stepped aside as a dozen men leaped along the narrow span. I nodded at Loki's wise judgment that the bridge could not stand my weight.

"The time-ship!" I said to Eve, pulling her toward the courtyard. "I still want to see this battle."

In the time-ship, we took up a position just over the head of Bifrost Bridge, where its cables attached to the mainland in great blocks of hoary-old

concrete. The congregating Asgardians hardly noticed us, in their excitement. A man still stood blowing tempestuously on a great curving horn.

Heimdal and his horn that could be heard around the world! Heimdal, the Watcher of Bifrost Bridge, who had trained himself to hear grass grow, and could see all around him for a hundred miles, in dark as well as light, and who never slept! Such was the Heimdal of fable.

Heimdal, the man, was simply a guard who had spied the enemy sneaking near for attack, and had blown his horn which could be heard a mile, anyway, if not around the world.

I looked now for the enemy.

They appeared charging from behind big boulders and knolls of the rocky country, streaking toward Bifrost Bridge. Several hundred of the Frost Giants. Heidelberg Men they obviously were, seven feet tall, built in proportion. Their shoulders were hulking, their long arms knotted with gorilla-like muscles. They were not hairy, like Neanderthal, but their leathery hides showed they could resist cold and bruises almost like an elephant. They wore hide breeches and belts as scanty clothing.

Their faces were not particularly brutal. They were close to human, and inferior to him only in the telling scale of mentality. It was apparent in their weapons, for instance. They had great knotted clubs, stone-headed maces, bows-and-arrows, and fire-hardened spears. But no swords. They had never solved the secret of metal-smelting. They were true Stone Age citizens, at the peak of their development.

But they were a formidable fighting force.

I LOOKED at the Asgardian forces, clustered before the bridge-head in

a grim semicircle. Not more than a hundred men, all told. They wore slight, but helpful armor—leg-guards, chest-plates and visors. Odin stood at the head, in armor of copper-hardened gold. His golden helmet was surmounted with the carved image of an eagle. This picture of him had gone down unerringly in fable, if nothing else. His one eye gleamed ferociously at the enemy.

The Frost Giants charged in a body, yelling bestially, and the battle began.

It was simply a free-for-all, man to man, without thought of strategy on either side. Arrows from the Asgardians had dropped a few of the Giants, but the rest came close and began swinging their ponderous clubs and maces. At the first brunt of meeting, the Giants, superior in men and weight, had driven the defenders back.

But the Asgardians brought their swords into play. Cleverly they feinted and stabbed and leaped nimbly away from the clumsy Giants. The struggle was about even. Two Giants fell with ripped vitals for every Asgardian with a cracked skull.

"Horrible!" came Eve's whisper in my ear. "The Asgardians are so noble in contrast to those ugly, monstrous sub-men!"

Each time an Asgardian fell, she shuddered, as the women of Asgard must be shuddering back at the castle.

"Every man they lose," Eve continued, "brings their Ragnarok that much nearer—the Twilight of the Gods. Adam—"

I shook my head again, for what could we do against immutable fate? And there was another consideration.

"Eve, stop it!" I snapped. "I know how you feel. I feel the same. We have a kinship with these doomed people, for they are the ancestral stock of the race that created us—in the future.

But you also know how I feel about using our robot powers in warfare of any kind. How I've sworn the robot must never be used in the destruction of human life."

I had destroyed eight brother robots, only a few months before in California, because they wanted to conquer Earth—fight humans. Robots must not earn the name Frankenstein, whether in this age or the next, by taking human life.

"Human life!" Eve shrilled at me. "But those Heidelberg men *aren't* human!"

I jerked. A bomb seemed to burst in my brain. No, they weren't human after all, in the strictest sense of the word! And in turn, they were killing off true humans, Homo Sapiens, my creator race.

"Good Lord, Eve," I said. "At times I'm really a fool."

I flicked the ship to the ground, opened the hatch. "Stay here, Eve," I told her. "If anything happens to me, you can find your way back to the 20th century."

I STRODE toward the battle area.

No, I ran. And as I ran, I let out a furious bellow. The full tide of rage flooded through me, to think of brute sub-men killing members of a race so much nobler and finer.

The battle almost stopped. Asgardians and Giants both looked around, at the thunderous cry. Surprise came into the Giants' eyes—surprise but not fear. They took me for a belated Asgardian warrior, one dressed more completely in cowardly armor. The battle resumed. Two Frost Giants leaped at me, swinging their knotted clubs.

I let them come close. I caught one club and hurled it a mile out into the sea. I took the other club and snapped it in half like a twig. The two Giants were impressed, but still no fear rose

in them. With snarls of anger, they grasped my body. One tried to choke me. He pressed till his finger-joints cracked, grunting in amazement. The other grasped me around the back and heaved.

I was amazed, in turn. For I was lifted clear off the ground and hurled with stunning force to the rocky ground. No human could ever have such strength. One of the Heidelberg Men would easily be a match for a gorilla.

I heard Eve's shriek, and twisted aside just in time. One of the Giants had picked up a boulder three-feet in diameter and hurled it down at my supine form. It would have crushed even my metal body.

I bounced to my feet. I wasted no more time. I took them both by the scruff of the neck and banged their heads together. I had to bang three times before they went limp. I think the fossil skulls of Heidelberg Man found in the 20th century attest to a thickness unknown in human skulls.

I didn't underestimate the Frost Giants after that. I exerted most of my machine-powers. I waded into the thickest of the melee, punching my metal fist at each Heidelberg head I passed. Short-arm punches with the power of a steam-driven piston behind them. Frost Giants dropped like stones.

I reached Odin's side, in the center of the most violent fighting.

"Out of my way, Odin!" I roared, brushing aside a club. "Let me handle these prehistoric thugs!"

He didn't know what I meant—but he saw what I meant.

A dozen Giants converged on me, as I rammed into their ranks. At least ten blows of clubs and maces rang on my metal body. One blow against my skull-piece even made me reel a little. But I

had a harder skull than any Heidelberg Man.

I had two weapons—my two balled fists. I went down the line, punching, and the Giants stretched out almost in a row. Odin lowered his sword, as suddenly he was free from menace. He couldn't understand it.

I WENT for the next nearest cluster, where Tyr and Frey held off six Giants. Tyr's great sword slashed at a Giant and missed—but the Giant gave a clipped groan and fell. He never saw the lightning blow from my fist. When Tyr turned to stab at the next Giant, he was down too. And the others. I moved faster than the reflexes of the human mind could follow.

It penetrated into the collective thick skulls of the Giants finally that something was wrong. Who was this terrible Asgardian warrior who roared like thunder and smote like lightning? They quite suddenly decided not to stay and find out. With half their number laid out cold, the rest fled.

I pelted them with boulders as they ran. I dropped Giant after Giant this way, with an accuracy that left the watching Asgardians gasping. The last retreating Giant was just vanishing behind a knoll, a mile away, finally. Allowing for the wind, I cast a rock weighing about ten pounds. It caught the Giant fair and square on his skull, sending him asprawl.

Yet he lay stunned only a moment, then picked up and staggered to safety. And now the Giants I had knocked out came to, and began loping away. I had swept down their ranks too swiftly to deliver killing blows—at least to their powerful frames. Besides, subhuman or not, I still felt a repugnance at the thought of actually killing them. I was satisfied that I had driven them away.

"After them, men!" Odin now yelled,

like a true opportunist. "The Giants are dazed, helpless. Stab them while they flee!"

"No!" I roared, not liking that at all. "Let them go. Let them return and tell of how they were defeated so quickly. It will do more than anything to keep them away."

Odin glared at me.

"Adam Link," he snapped, "I am King of Asgard. My word is law. I say—"

Loki interrupted. "Adam Link is right, brother Odin. Let the beaten Giants take back the tale of a mighty warrior who guards Asgard and cannot be defeated!"

Odin now transferred his one-eyed glare to his half-brother.

"Anything to spare your step-race, eh, Loki? You fought only half-heartedly for Asgard. I did not see you bring down one Giant." He shrugged then. Loki had after all been the son of Odin's father.

Odin nodded to me. "You have spoken well, Adam Link. Let the Giants go. Perhaps they have learned a lesson." Suddenly his eyes shone. "You are a mighty warrior, Adam Link! I invite you into my war-councils hereafter!"

CHAPTER VII

In Defiance of Time

THERE was a war-council held that same day. Before my coming the Giants had attacked periodically at the bridge. It looked ominously like an attempt to wear down the Asgardian forces, in preparation for a larger assault soon.

"With you to fight for us, Adam Link," Odin said eagerly, "we may hold them off indefinitely!"

"One moment," I said hastily.

"That's a lifetime job. I cannot accept. Remember I am here only to find Thor, or some clue to his existence in your past—or future."

"Future?" Odin said vaguely. "There is only one future facing Asgard. Ragnarok, the day of doom! It has been settling about us like a cloak for centuries. It is not far off. Unless—unless you become our champion, Adam Link. Your mighty powers will save Asgard from extinction!"

I hesitated. How could I refuse that solemn, tragic appeal? How could I explain that I did not wish to tamper with destiny—and destiny had decreed the fall of Asgard? And yet how could I coldbloodedly refuse help, as if my heart were made of stone—or metal?

I drew up, as a thought came to me.

I asked a question first. "Why didn't you use the flame-gun to blast your enemies?"

"Because there are only a few charges left in it," Odin replied, sadly. "We do not know how to make more charges. It is a secret lost in the past before the Great Cold. We must save the few shots for a real emergency, when the Giants attack in full force."

"Then I'll do this much for you," I said. "I'll examine the gun, and try to make more for you. Perhaps I can build many, so that you can surround your castle with them and hold off attack indefinitely." To myself I said: "If your Ragnarok comes even then, it will be your own doing."

"More guns?" Odin's eyes lit. "Yes, they would save us. And with them we might even go out against the Giants, on the offensive, and clear them away from this region!"

I noticed that Loki started, hearing this. I could see that though he was loyal to Asgard, he didn't like the thought of his step-race being exterminated like vermin. I decided then

and there to make the guns so heavy that they could be used only as stationary defense.

Further than that I would not go, against the written script of history, or fable.

IN the following days, I spent most of my time with the flame-gun. Its principle escaped me, at first examination. It was some form of atomic-energy, I was sure, but how was it released? Stepped-up radioactivity? Breakdown of Uranium-235 into barium, as in 20th century research? A miniature cyclotron trigger knocking out high-speed electrons?

The core of the machine was a box encased in age-adamant iridium, like my iridium-sponge brain. In there lay the secret. If I forcibly opened the case, however, I might ruin the internal mechanism. The Asgardians would then be without a flame-gun at all. I would bring Ragnarok closer!

I needed an X-ray. I began constructing one, seeing that I had a job ahead of me. I collected bits of metals from odd corners of the castle's debris—platinum, tungsten, molybdenum. I devised an electric-furnace with a clay pot and battery-power from my reserve batteries in the time-ship. I made wire and filament. I fused glass, unknown to these Asgardians with their lost knowledge.

All this took time. I was a scientist building my laboratory and its tools of science as I went along. Eve helped me as much as she could. But at times, striking a snag, I would snap at her irritably, and she knew when to leave me alone.

She spent these times with Loki, who seemed fascinated with us. He had an inquiring turn of mind. He asked many questions about us, of Eve, and I think he alone of the Asgardians fully

understood just what we were and where we had come from.

Eve, in turn, mingled with the Asgardians and learned much of them. She recited the things to me. She talked with Baldur and his wife Nanna. And Tyr, Hodur, Bragi the poet, Njord the mariner, Skirmir, Hoenir, Frey, and Freya, his beautiful sister. Names of undying legend!

Reminiscently, Loki in his rambling talks told many tales of their life in Asgard castle. How Frey and Skirmir had once adventured in Jutenheim, land of the Frost Giants, and captured one of their girls whom Frey married, the girl being surprisingly lovely for her race. This was the legend of Frey losing his "magic" sword in quest of a wife.

How Odin in his youth had hunted for game in the Giant territory, and stopped at a cool well for a drink. A Giant, Mirmir by name, had attacked him, and Odin lost his eye. According to the fable, he had traded his eye for wisdom. In reality, the only wisdom he had gained was experience in keeping on better guard when outside the safety of Asgard's ramparts!

LOKI also told defensively of a time not long before when Iduna had been captured by the Frost Giants. In his version, he had simply invited her to walk over Bifrost Bridge, to pick apples on the mainland. We gathered from that, Eve and I, that Loki secretly yearned for Iduna's love. Giants had captured Iduna, and driven Loki away. Or had Loki *delivered* her, in rage at being spurned perhaps? At any rate, angry Odin had told Loki, his half-brother, to either rescue her or never come back to Asgard. Loki, through his half-kinship with the Giants, had lulled their antagonism, slipped Iduna away, and brought her back. The pur-

suing Giants had chased them right to Asgard, but had been shot down by the flame-gun. In the legend a Giant, in the shape of an eagle, had tried to fly into Asgard, but a "ring of fire" scorched his wings and he fell!

"We're seeing legends in the making, Adam!" Eve would say. "The adventurous doings of these unique people will be embellished with 'magic swords,' 'wisdom wells,' 'enchanted eagles,' 'rings of fire,' and all the other paraphernalia of superstition. Lindbergh, too, in 20,000 A.D., may be credited with having flown the ocean in a 'magic chariot' that roared with the voice of a demon!"

"Yes, yes," I said testily, my mind laboring to make a vacuum-pump without one lathe to machine the parts. "Don't bother me, Eve. Can't a woman ever understand when a man's busy?" The next moment I looked around. "But what about Thor? Have you heard anything of him?"

I had not forgotten my original quest.

Eve looked puzzled. "There is a complete absence of tales about Thor, the thunder-god, or his wife Sif. Either we're too early for him, in Asgardian history, or he has been a sheer invention by the later tellers-of-tales about vanished Asgard."

Vanished Asgard! But here I was trying to save Asgard! Even if it meant a shift of destiny. At worst, it would mean a branching of other-worlds—a rebound of divergent events in the entropy-zones of time. At times I had a subtle dread of the consequences. Yet my heart had gone out to these people, staving off extinction. There is something about a fight against odds that calls out the most in a man—or robot.

ONE day, Eve failed to appear for a long time. I sat cursing, wonder-

ing why she did not come to comfort me, for I had hit another snag in my science labors.

After ten hours, I knew something was wrong. I went below. I found Loki, but he professed not having seen Eve for hours. She had wandered off alone.

"Eef?" said Odin, when I queried him. "I don't know. But how soon will you have our new flame-guns?"

"Damn your flame-guns!" I retorted. "I'm going to find Eve if I have to ransack this place from top to bottom."

And I did. It took hours. The castle seemed an endless, bewildering maze of halls and rooms. I found a dank, forgotten dungeon finally, in the cellar below. Eve lay in a corner, among a mass of spider-webs.

I think my roar very nearly shook down the walls, as I ran up anxiously and looked. Eve's *body* lay there—but her head was gone! It had been unbolted from the neck-piece. It had been a rough job. Torn wires dangled from the relay system below the neck line.

I roared again. Who in Asgard had done this thing? Who had dared touch my Eve?

I carried the body up. Half-way to Odin's quarters, most of the Asgardians met me.

"What is the matter?" Odin asked. "We almost thought an angry dragon had slipped in somehow."

They turned pale as I advanced on them, swinging my arms. No dragon—or dinosaur—could have scared them more as a spark or two shot from my overcharged locomotion centers. My voice was still thunder.

"Who detached Eve's head and took it away?" I demanded.

They all looked blank. All except Loki. I read facial expressions clearly with my sharp mechanical vision.

I whirled on Loki. "You saw her last. Why did you do it? Where is Eve's head?"

"I know nothing —" Loki began, then lost his nerve. With a shriek he fled. He was the culprit.

I put Eve's body down and chased him. He was fast, with his heritage of powerful muscles from his Heidelberg parentage. I chased him from room to room. In my deadly eagerness, I once or twice blundered into walls, knocking off pieces of stone. Loki kept just beyond my finger-tips.

Finally, in a high room, I had him cornered. There was no other door out. His eyes popped as I advanced on him. Abruptly he leaped from an open window. He plummeted thirty feet down into the Straits between Asgard and the mainland, and began to swim for shore.

INSANELY, I almost plunged after him. If I had, I'd still be lying at the bottom, completely short-circuited, to slowly rust away through the years.

I ran for my time-ship instead. In that I darted over the water. Though he swam like a fish, Loki couldn't get away. Reaching one hand through the hatch, I fished him up. He stood dripping and miserable before me.

"Speak!" I demanded, shaking him till his teeth rattled. "Where's Eve's head?"

"Hidden in my room," he chattered.

"Why did you do it?" Suspicions were crawling in my mind.

"As a prank," he returned. "Don't be angry with me, Adam Link. I did it as a practical joke. Sometimes life is dull in Asgard. I play jokes on all the others. I did not know you would fly into such a rage."

I relaxed. In fact, I was suddenly laughing, within myself. Of course! Loki, in the fables, was the "mischievous" god, the one who played many

jokes on his fellow "gods." Why had I allowed myself to go berserk?

Why had I even entertained the thought for a moment, that Loki darkly thought of destroying Eve's head entirely, after satisfying his natural curiosity over the metal-brain? Or that he wished to destroy me too, so that I wouldn't make more flame-guns with which to scourge his step-race, the Giants? Foolish suspicions. It is human to look for a little fun, as Loki had, even in the grimmest circumstances.

Loki went on, sensing my anger gone.

"It was funny, you chasing me through the halls," he laughed. "I thought of the prank when Eve stopped once, complaining of a headache. She said it was caused by a—a short circuit. She asked me to turn off her control-switch for a moment, and then bend a certain wire. When she went limp, I couldn't resist unscrewing her head and hiding it. Just a practical joke, Adam Link. Will you forgive me?"

I slapped Loki on the back, to show no ill feeling. When he got his breath back, he led me to his room. I reattached Eve's head to her body, soldering the torn contacts with the time-shop's kit of tools. She came to life at the turn of her chest-switch, unharmed in any way.

She laughed, too, when I told the story.

"Adam, you poor idiot," she said, "getting so excited over nothing. You would have torn down the walls if you hadn't found me, most likely."

Her mechanical tones did not display the tenderness she implied, though I knew it was there.

"Yes," I said. I have never yet told a lie.

The incident was forgotten, though I decided to keep an eye on Loki in the future.

CHAPTER VIII

A Bride for a Giant

SOMETHING of far greater significance burst the next day.

"Adam Link!" Odin came running into my work-room. "The Giants have just sent us a message of threat. Have you made any flame-guns?" His face fell at my negative. "Come below to the council. This must be discussed carefully."

All the Asgardians had gathered in Odin's throne room. Frigga, his wife, sat beside him. Odin told the Frost Giant messenger to repeat his ultimatum.

"Thrym, mighty King of Jutenheim," spoke the messenger gutturally in a sort of pidgin Asgardian, "demands the beauteous Freya as his wife! If she is not sent to him before the sun rounds the sky, Thrym will gather all his army and destroy Asgard. He awaits Freya at the Fort-by-the-sea."

Glaring around belligerently, the Giant left, escorted by several guards.

There was silence in the room. The Asgardians looked at one another in mingled disgust and fear.

"Thrym once saw Freya," Odin explained, "in a battle before the Bridge, in which our women fought alongside our men. Ever since, before each attack, he offers the same truce terms, desiring her."

All eyes turned to Freya. Her golden-blond beauty was such that I think all men must worship it at first sight. No wonder it had turned the heart of an ugly Frost Giant, whose women were on the average coarse and unshapely.

Odin raised a weary head.

"My people, listen. This attack may mean the downfall of Asgard! We've been so drained of fighting men in the past generation that Ragnarok is near.

I say this honestly. Now, as is my custom, I ask you this—shall we give our Freya to Thrym?”

“No!”

The word thundered back instantly, from all their throats.

Odin smiled proudly. “Asgardian heads never bow, even under the axe of doom.” He sighed. “Well, we will fight to the last.”

He looked at me sadly. I had been his last hope, if I had succeeded with the flame-gun. “You are a strange being, Adam Link. But I am not your king. I will not ask your help in battle, since you do not wish to give it.”

I felt utterly vile at that moment.

Loki’s voice sounded. He had sidled up with an enigmatic leer.

“But perhaps Adam Link can help in another way,” he suggested. “The Giants are stupid. They can be tricked. Suppose Adam Link is sent as the bride, disguised? Eva told a story once of his using human guise!”

“As the bride?” I gasped. “But why?”

“To kill Thrym,” Loki returned quickly. “Will you do that one thing for us, Adam Link? With Thrym gone, they will be temporarily leaderless. They won’t attack for a time. It will give you time, then, to finish making flame-guns.”

A great cheer welled in the hall. The idea struck instant reception.

I tried to refuse. Tried to say that it might not be sound logic. Would it make the Giants leaderless—or make them utterly determined to destroy Asgard? And what motives did Loki have, he who carried the blood of both races in his veins?

I looked at the appeal in Odin’s one eye. The appeal of a people wearied of attack, and pressing doom. How could I refuse, and call myself human? For though a robot, my whole emo-

tional life is that of a human being. I believe that. Now was the time to prove it.

“I will do it!” I said abruptly. “I’ll do more than kill Thrym. I’ll put such a scare into the Giants that they will not soon molest Asgard again. If need be, I’ll lead your forces against them!”

The Asgardians seemed stunned. Odin raised his eyes.

“Adam Link will be our champion!” he breathed. “Asgard is saved!” And the answering cheer from the people rang from the rafters.

Eve was startled.

“Adam, you’ve committed yourself! To save Asgard would be contrary to destiny, as we know it. You said it yourself more than once. And what about finding Thor?”

“Thor be damned!” I exclaimed. My blood was fired, now. I suddenly wanted more than anything to help these grave, sad, magnificent people. Save them from harsh extinction. Save beautiful Asgard from the heavy hand of destruction.

Destiny be damned, too!

PICTURE me, if you can, as a “bride.” Perhaps it sounds ridiculous. As once before, when I had played detective, I was disguised as a human. I had gathered materials in the castle and made a flesh-colored plastic. Smeared and dried over my metal frame, it suitably gave me the contours of a human female, though a rather broad, heavy-set one.

Fortunately, as a “bride,” I could wear a collection of draping clothing and veils. A filmy gown covered me from neck to foot. Gauzy veils over my plastic face-features hid them enough so that they could pass for human. We went in the evening, to better the deception.

Loki was my official escort from As-

gard, because of his full knowledge of the Giant tongue and ways. In my time-ship we landed within a half mile of the designated place where Thrym awaited his heart's desire. This Fort-by-the-sea was a stronghold that the enemy had established within ten miles of Asgard, as a base from which to periodically attack.

A sentinel challenged us in the moonlight, but when he saw my figure draped in fine clothes, he grinned broadly and led the way into the fort. We had arrived just under the deadline of 24 hours as set by Thrym. My mechanical vision, almost as good in dark as light, surveyed this camp of the enemy. I saw that they had amassed a huge army, perhaps a thousand.

The Fort-by-the-sea was little more than a great barn of solid logs and a thatch roof—the height of architectural ability in Heidelberg Man. A blazing fire had been lit in the center of the space, on dirt floor, its smoke swirling out through a vent in the ceiling—theoretically.

Loki nudged me, as we entered.

"Cough!" he whispered. "You are supposed to be a delicate human female."

I conjured up "coughs"—or static rattles in my microphonic sound-box. In the uncertain glow of the fire—the only illumination—I knew my physical disguise would easily hold. At least to the stupid sub-men with their color-blind eyes. All sub-men had poorer eyesight—and better noses—than true humans. Closer to the brute.

THE interior was filled with about fifty of the privileged Giants. A long rough table at one side was loaded with half-cooked grains, raw vegetables, ripe fruits. Two whole oxen were being turned on a spit over the roaring fire. The "wedding" feast had been

prepared. It would have been a pre-battle feast, if the "bride" had not come.

Thrym, King of Jutenheim, sat in a great chair made of human bones woven together with hide strips. It was a symbol of his hatred for the human race. I looked him over carefully, as Loki led me directly before him.

He was a hulking monster of a sub-man, closer to eight feet high than seven. His arms and legs were thick posts. He could not weigh less than I, about 300 pounds. His over-sized features jutted craggily, and his tongue licked constantly over thick, brutal lips. I shuddered. I could picture a human woman submitting to his embrace, and going instantly mad with loathing. No wonder the Asgardians chose to face extinction rather than toss the beautiful Freya to such a revolting fate.

Thrym had strained eagerly forward on his throne, watching me stride up. An unholy lust gleamed from his eyes, as his soon-to-be "bride" approached. But abruptly, as I drew near, a frown came over his face. Veils, and dim light, could not entirely hide my ponderous step and powerful frame.

"Is this Freya?" he mumbled. "Freya, who is slender and lithe?"

I understood his native tongue, for again it derived from root-words that have survived since the first more-than-ape made articulate grunts as a means of communication.

Loki answered quickly.

"It is rather cool this evening, O Thrym, mighty king of Jutenheim. Freya is after all not like your other women, but must wear heavier clothing. The clothing bulks. I assure you Freya herself does not."

Thrym's suspicion vanished.

"Begin the feast!" he roared. He leaped down and grasped my arm, to

escort me with clumsy grace to a place beside him. I could feel his fingers clutching my unyielding arm, expecting to feel soft tender flesh. His eyes opened wide.

"Has Freya the arms of a hard, muscled man?"

Loki spoke even more quickly than before.

"She is tense with joy at seeing you, O Thrym. And she is not an utter weakling, for you yourself saw her battling."

The dull-witted Giant swallowed that too. I sat at his side. The smoking, burnt ox-meat passed along the table. Thrym took a quarter-shank in his paws and wolfishly tore great bites from the bone. He ate three times what a human could have managed before he noticed I ate nothing.

"She is too excited to have an appetite," Loki explained.

HUNGER appeased, Thrym turned his closer attention to his "bride." His eyes looked straight into the veil over my plastic face. He peered for a long moment.

"Why are her eyes so piercing?" he demanded suddenly, again suspicious.

"She has not slept for a week, in anticipation of seeing you," Loki flattered again.

Thrym subsided with a growl, but I knew the game could not last much longer. I had not prolonged the farce for the enjoyment of it, though I was amused. Mainly, I had been looking the situation over. I could not afford to be careless, in the heart of the enemy stronghold. The Giants were powerful men, and there were many of them. To kill Thrym would be simple, but what then? My eyes darted to all corners, taking in every factor.

I started as I realized Thrym was addressing me.

"Speak!" he commanded. "You have not said a word, Freya. Let me hear your voice."

Loki tensed, beside me. I think he feared that one syllable from my phonic voice would give the whole thing away. But I surprised him. I simply pitched my tone up to the feminine octave.

"You are a great and wonderful man, O Thrym," I said sweetly, gaining another moment's time. I added, in English: "And the biggest boob on two feet."

He gave a roar of delight. And then his great arms encircled me and his brutish face came at mine for his first kiss. The slobbering lips drew back, abruptly. Thunderclouds came over his face as he felt the unmistakable hardness of my body. He gave another experimental squeeze. It would have crushed the ribs of a woman. It only bruised his arms.

With a horrible oath he ripped away the veils, exposing my face. The rough plastic job was revealed. By no stretch of imagination was it the sweet, lovely face of Freya. He leaped up, roaring like a wild animal.

CHAPTER IX

Adam Link, Giant Killer

"YOU have deceived me!" he belated. "I'll attack Asgard at dawn. But first, I'll twist your head from your body!"

He gave a tentative yank. With his great strength, he very nearly ripped bolts loose. I leaped free.

"You die, Thrym," I announced clearly. "You die for all the lives you have taken from Asgard."

Ignoring the threat, he came at me like an angry bull. One of his enormous hams banged against my head, breaking all his knuckles. Amazed, moaning

with pain, he threw his arms about me bear-like, squeezing. Even a gorilla might have succumbed to that mighty embrace. I squeezed him, in turn. His ribs snapped.

Then, not wishing to prolong his agony, I picked him up in my two hands like a rag-dummy and threw him against the solid wall, twenty feet away, with such force that his skull cracked like an egg-shell.

Thrym, relentless enemy of Asgard, was dead!

But my mission was not quite over. All the previous episode had taken only seconds. The other Giants had watched in paralyzed fascination. They could not believe now that their mighty king was dead. They were stunned.

I moved with my full speed.

First I grabbed up Thrym's club, from beside his throne. It was of solid oak, six feet long, knobbed and weighted with stone. Flicking it lightly, I ran down the line of sub-men, cracking their skulls. I was merciless now, serving death at this table. I had committed myself to Asgard. I was fighting for the human race, against creatures who know no mercy themselves.

I laid out half their number before any of them retaliated. Then, with wild cries, they snatched up their clubs and ganged on me. Or tried to. I moved back and forth among them with smooth, unmatchable speed, picking them off methodically.

Then Giants poured in from outside, hearing the commotion. A hundred to one they faced me. But not one of their clubs could strike me except for glancing blows that knocked off my plastic disguise. Now I stood before them in naked metal, sparks shooting from my joints, as always when my locomotion-centers are surcharged in action.

"Die, enemies of Asgard!" I thun-

dered with each killing blow of my blood-spattered club.

"It's the mighty warrior of the bridge!" gasped a Giant who had obviously been there. "Call in all the men!"

AND Giants began to pour in till there was hardly room to move. I was in danger now. Blows began to rain down on me, denting my body. I could not kill them all in less than an hour. And in an hour they would succeed in pounding me to bits.

I changed tactics. I ran into the fire and kicked burning embers into their faces, sending them screeching back. Then I proceeded to pull the place down. There were four supporting posts in the interior, long as telephone-poles. I put my arms around each and yanked them away. The roof came down. With one of the poles as a battering ram, sweeping Giants aside, I stove in the walls. The whole business came down on shrieking Giants in one rumbling crash.

I strode out of the ruins of the Fort-by-the-sea. A gasp of amazement came from those of the Giants who had not been able to crowd in. They thought surely I had been crushed myself. They made no move to come at me. Most seemed ready to run at a moment's notice.

I raised my voice to a thunder that I knew would be heard by every ear within a mile, if some had run off.

"Your fort, from which you attacked Asgard, is destroyed. Do not build another, or I will destroy that. I am the champion of Asgard, and will save it from your mightiest assaults. When you have chosen your new king, I will come to address him and warn him he must not molest Asgard. Now begone!"

The last word crashed through the air like an explosion. I waved my arms,

deliberately causing my electrical distributor to shove excess current through my body. From every joint and seam sprang livid sparks that lit up the night scene weirdly.

I thought of a curious name for myself, culled from another "fable." I was Adam Link, the Giant killer!

In silent awe and fear, the Giants melted away toward their home-land further north.

I STALKED back to my time-ship, well satisfied. I had done my part for Asgard. If the Giants dared attack again, they must be stupidly courageous.

I started as a figure loomed before the ship. It was Loki. I had completely forgotten him.

"I sneaked out at the first sign of hostilities," he said frankly. "And ran back here. I saw what you did, from a distance. Odin will be pleased. You did your job well, Adam Link!"

Almost, I could hear his thoughts add—"too well!" I wondered what the mysterious, secretive half-breed had in his mind. Had he hoped it would turn out another way, with Adam Link destroyed? Had he really expected to deliver me in the enemy's hands for riddance, not realizing himself what powers I had?

Loki would bear watching, I told myself.

Hilarity reigned in Asgard castle for the rest of that night, when the story was told.

"You are the mightiest being that ever lived!" Odin exulted. "With you as our champion, Asgard will survive. There will be no Ragnarok!"

No Ragnarok! A slight chill went through me. Immutable history changed! What paradox lurked like a crouching beast behind all this? I made a decision, not to go too far.

I addressed Odin.

"I cannot stay as your champion. I must still search for Thor, in your history. And then return to my native land, where important tasks await me. I will do this much. First, I will go back among the Giants and impress their new king with my powers, so that he will remember for a long time, even after I'm gone. Secondly, I'll finish making new flame-guns, with which you can defend Asgard yourselves. But I cannot stay."

THREE days later, I took a trip in the time-ship to Utgard, the capital of Jutenheim, boldly. I took Loki with me. He would work wholeheartedly with me, to bring peace between Asgard and Jutenheim, for I suspected that would quiet his torn sympathies.

We landed in the crude, slovenly village of thatched huts, just a step above the cave-life of Neanderthal Man. In the background loomed a glittering glacier, slowly retreating as the Ice Age waned.

Giants surrounded us as we stepped out, but no hostile move was made. They looked over my metal frame with plain fear and respect. I asked to be led before the new king.

King Skrymir was not so huge a man as Thrym had been. His face was less coarse. I divined that he had an ounce more of brains, and could be diplomatic. Or cunning.

"I am Adam Link, champion of Asgard," I announced myself. "I have come to prove to you that I am the mightiest being on Earth. Give me any tests you wish, if you do not believe."

Skrymir looked me over calculatingly. "I will give you three tests," he returned after some thought. "First, see if you can empty my drinking horn at one draft!"

I started. How had Skrymir thought of that, in his aboriginal mind? For the one thing that was dangerous to me was any liquid in my vitals, creating short-circuits. I glanced at Loki narrowly, wondering if he had sent a message to the king, preparing these tests. But Loki was expressionless.

What could I do? If I refused to take the test, I would instantly lose prestige. I had to go through with it. I nodded, taking the foot-long drinking horn offered. It was filled with a dark brew. I sipped slowly, realizing my danger. One internal spark in a vital spot and I might fall down helpless. Their clubs could then demolish me in a short time.

I sipped the liquid, but gave the illusion of taking a long, steady pull. I felt the dripping fluid going past bare wires and live studs. If I took extreme care, the liquid would safely dribble down into my leg hollows and drain away.

Skrymir watched me closely. I could feel Loki's eyes on me. Suddenly smoke spurted from my mouth. A short-circuit, within! A minor one, luckily, that only burned out one of a dozen fine, duplicated wires. But it was the danger signal.

I handed the horn back, shaking my head. I had only "drunk" half of it. I couldn't take a chance with more.

The Giant king curled his lip. "The mightiest being on Earth, yet you cannot empty a horn that my youngest son can down in one gulp!"

Stung, I half reached for the horn again, recklessly, but thought better of it.

"Give me some other test," I grated. "Test my strength."

SKYRMIR led me to what amounted to the village square. A crowd was gathered there, to see this strange

event. The Giant pointed to a stone lying on the ground. It was moss-covered, hoary, as though it had lain there for an age.

"Lift that, Adam Link!"

How ridiculous! A mere stone weighing perhaps a ton. I put one hand under a ridge of it and heaved. The scrape of metal against stone sounded loudly, but the stone did not move! Surprised, I used both hands, but couldn't budge it. Finally, in exasperation, I got a new hold and applied the full leverage of my major leg muscle-cables. Gears within me whined. Sparks crackled. Every cog strained to its utmost.

But I could not so much as raise it one inch.

I gave a furious, reckless heave. Every watt of power in me surged through my motive plant. One end of the stone came up just a foot, creakily. I felt as though I had lifted one side of a mountain. Or at least ten tons of dead weight.

"Can't you lift that stone any higher?" mocked Skrymir. "You who are the mightiest being on Earth? Come, one more test. Wrestle with *our* champion, who is mightier than you!"

He led me now to an alcove in the side of a cliff-face. The lighting was dim. Something loomed before me, and Skrymir pointed at it silently. It seemed to be a thick figure. I grasped it, to throw it to the floor, whoever or whatever it might be.

I think I was the most surprised being on Earth, rather than the mightiest, as my opponent stiffened and somehow threw me against the rock wall like a cannon-shot. Luckily I landed with my shoulder, denting it badly, rather than my skull.

I am human, mentally. I was utterly humiliated. I had failed to pass any of the tests with honors. A terrible

rage came up in me. I ran back to the figure, encircled it, and forced it to the floor. But only for a moment. Then it again reared, and flung me back reeling. A third time I tried, digging my heel-plates into the hard ground and hanging on with all my power. This time I held my adversary down for all of ten seconds, before he again arched up and whirled me away.

I told myself to give up. My mysterious wrestler—there was no way out of it—had more strength than I! What being could I be pitted against?

Lightning lanced in my mind.

"Thor!" I yelled.

I ran back, eagerly now—only to find the wrestler gone.

"Where is he?" I yelled. "Call him back! It must be Thor, another robot with a covering over his metal." I was still enraged too. "Call him back. I'll finish him if it's the last thing I do!"

A furious bellow answered me, from somewhere deeper in the cave. Was Thor a sort of "animal" robot—all power and little brain? Had the Giants captured him, from Asgard, perhaps centuries ago, holding him so that he could not help defend Asgard?

But then Skrymir pulled me away.

"Enough," he said outside, before his people. You have failed in three simple tests. Go back, champion of Asgard! We do not fear you!"

The crowd jeered. But I saw something in Skrymir's face—a look of hollow fear behind his mockery. And I detected an unmistakable bitter disappointment in Loki's features. Not over my failure—but my *winning*!

CHAPTER X

Ragnarok!

I GRABBED Loki's arm, squeezing. "What do you know of this, Loki?

Tell me! Tell me or I'll—"

Loki talked, as his arm bone threatened to snap under my fingers.

"Trickery," he admitted. "The drinking horn was filled with a deadly poison. No living being could drink one-tenth what you did without dying on the spot.

"The stone is one with a thin base that connects to a much larger stone underneath. In lifting one end, you very nearly raised a buried mountain.

"And your opponent in wrestling was really—"

I did not have to hear more. Deadly poison in the horn! The stone like a submerged iceberg, with the bulk of its weight and size hidden. And the Thor-robot held in captivity, so that it might never again defend Asgard, as it probably had centuries before, beyond the memory of those now living. A robot could live indefinitely, if made originally with some self-charging unit for electrical current.

I had passed the tests with flying colors! I had proved more than ever that I was a being to be feared, with prodigious strength.

My thoughts clicked ahead rapidly.

Who had devised these tests, any of which might have wrecked me? One unlucky short-circuit with the liquid, one major gear stripping at the stone, one good crunch against the cave-wall by Thor—the one creature who had strength equal to mine—and I would have been helpless.

My stare was on Loki. Only he could have known, or hoped, that liquid poison might finish me, mechanically if not biologically. Loki was the instigator, hoping to destroy me so that Asgard would fall before the Giants.

I squeezed his arm tighter, snapping the bone.

"You have finally turned traitor to Asgard, Loki," I hissed. "I should have

seen it coming. You have sacrificed your human heritage now. Stay among the Giants. And you will not dare attack Asgard, while I am there!"

With that I leaped toward my time-ship. Loki screamed for the Giants to stop me, at any cost of life. A mass of them blocked my way. I leaped over their heads, landing by the hatch. I felled a dozen who attempted to grab me, and leaped in, banging the hatch tight.

When I sprang to the controls, I saw the full extent of Loki's treachery. He had sneaked in the time-ship, while I was busy taking the tests, and done as much damage as he could with a club. Fortunately, the metal parts had withheld somewhat. The controls were damaged, but not ruined.

I did a hasty, makeshift repair job, arising finally an hour later. During that time, the Giants had been battering at the ship with huge battering-rams, hoping to smash it. But I had built the hull sturdily. They bashed in all the windows. The apertures were too small for any Giant to crawl in. Toward the last, with Loki screaming orders, they had built a huge fire around the ship, heaping logs on it. The flames heated the hull. When I arose, the metal glowed cheery-red. The interior was furnace-hot. Any human would have shriveled to a crisp.

But a robot can laugh at heat. In the air, the ship cooled rapidly. I wobbled back to Asgard, and landed the ship with a bump that shook my makeshift wire-connections loose again.

I HAD little time to tell my story, for the Giants attacked that same day, led by Loki. All the legions that Thrym had gathered, in case Freya were not presented as his bride, marched toward Asgard.

Odin's eyes numbed, as he looked

from the high tower.

"Thousands upon thousands!" he whispered. "This is the greatest attack known. And Loki leads them, with his arm in a sling. Loki, the son of my father—"

His voice broke. Then he straightened, girding on his golden armor grimly.

"Ragnarok!" he muttered half to himself.

"No!" I ground out. "I won't let it be! I'm your champion. I'll save Asgard, and to hell with destiny!"

He looked at me in tragic calm.

"You have mentioned destiny often, Adam Link, as though it is written that Asgard must fall. Perhaps it is so. You have done your best for us!"

He went below, to face the enemy.

"Done my best—and failed!" I groaned to Eve. "Is this destiny's hand, after all? Destiny that Loki is attacking before I finished the flame-guns? And while our time-ship is useless? Still, I can fight them—"

Another disturbing thought struck me.

"Loki seems confident, now is the time to strike, in spite of my presence. Why doesn't he fear me? The Thor-robot—perhaps it's just a dumb, witless machine that will obey any voice. It fought me in the cave. Will Loki set Thor against me—the only creature who has a chance against me?"

What a reversal of fable-history that would be—Thor helping in the downfall of his own Asgard! But then fable could hardly be accurate about all the things of a dim antiquity.

"I almost wish you hadn't discovered Thor," Eve murmured. "It's so disappointing. A mere, dull robot, probably left from the days of Norse civilization, used first by the Asgardians as a fighting machine, and now by the enemy. All the glamour, and splen-

did heroism of the Thor of fable turns out to be sheer invention."

Heimdal's horn sounded suddenly in a crescendo, from outside by the Bifrost Bridge. The attack had started!

I started below.

"The flame-gun!" Eve reminded. "Odin neglected it. Is he that certain there is no hope—"

I had forgotten the gun myself. I sprang to it, aimed. When I pressed the trigger, a livid blast of infra-energy hurtled through the air. A hundred of the advancing Giants fell as shriveled, blackened corpses. But the legions came on.

I fired twice more, and then the gun was silent. The last symbol of ancient might flickered out. Ragnarok was at hand!

I refused to accept it. Asgard must not be taken.

"Work on our time-ship, Eve!" I rasped out. "Repair it as fast as you can. With that, we can stop them. In the meantime, I'll help in the defense of the bridge-head."

I RACED below. I had no way of getting there now except by crossing the bridge. But my first few ponderous steps set it to shaking and vibrating dangerously.

"Njord!" I called. "Where are your boats?"

Njord, the mariner, led me below to where docks extended into the water. I unhooked the largest of the flat-bottomed boats and rowed out into the Straits. It was slow going. Already the advance forces of the Giants had arrived at the bridge and were engaging the Asgardian force there.

Loki's figure appeared at the bank, looking out over the water. I could almost see the writhing hate in his face, at sight of me. And the cunning. With Loki as general, the Giant

forces were a formidable threat.

I saw him giving orders. Giants dragged up huge wooden structures—catapults. Loki had probably had them secretly built weeks before, planning the downfall of Asgard. Huge boulders arced across the water at my boat. Their aim was bad, so that I got within fifty feet of shore, without danger. But then boulders began to whiz all about me. One came straight for the boat. I caught it and hurled it back, wrecking one of the catapults.

But I could not catch or stop the huge boulder that finally stove in the bottom of my boat. Water pushed up. Water—to me the most deadly menace in the world. I would sink like a stone and lie forever at the bottom of the Straits.

I leaped from the boat before it had filled. I put everything I had into the effort. I sailed twenty feet through the air, like a metal acrobat, to the steep bank. I clutched a shrub growing there. It held, though half its roots snapped. It was all that saved me from oblivion.

As I rose to the bank, Loki met me with another threat. He had concentrated all his offensive powers against me, knowing I must go before Asgard would fall. Red hot stones hurtled toward me, from the catapults. A shower of them. They were meant, I suppose, to scorch me and bring me pain. It was a curious sidelight as to how Loki, though he knew I was metal, still thought of me as a being who could know pain. Half of Loki's brain was that of a muddled sub-man.

I DODGED the stones with lightning reflexes. I caught one here and there and hurled it back with greater speed. More than one Giant was crushed by each missile as it plowed into them like a cannon-ball.

Then I reached the catapults and toppled them, and flung the remaining ammunition they had gathered into the ranks of Giants beyond. I cleared myself a path, reached the bridge-head, and joined the valiant band of defenders there.

Why hadn't Loki yet sent his Thor-robot against me? Was he biding his time, waiting for the Asgardians to weaken, so that while Thor and I tussled in a mighty battle, the Giants could swarm straight to the castle?

I had no time to speculate further. I was at the bridge.

As in the previous battle, Giants fell steadily before the flicking swords of the Asgardians. But this time the enemy had come in numberless hordes. Asgardian arms grew tired. I saw Frey fall, and the poetic Bragi.

I swept up Frey's fallen sword, and wrenched a club from a Giant, bashing in his brains. Then, wielding the two weapons, I waded into the attackers. I called forth every ounce of speed, dexterity and power at my command. Giants fell before me at a faster rate than the human tongue could count their deaths.

But on they came, as if poured from the sky. Loki had somehow impressed them with the fact that they must win now—or never. Must destroy Asgard before Adam Link, their mighty champion, could repair either his time-ship, or turn out flame-guns.

I saw Odin's face, noble and tragic. Each time he saw one of his warriors fall, his one eye gleamed with pain. Hodur fell, then Baldur, of those I knew by legend and name. Heimdal would blow his horn no longer, nor listen to the grasses grow. Tyr, with his mighty sword and matchless arm, stretched out with a last groan.

Ragnarok! Was it here, despite all I tried?

CHAPTER XI

The Fall of Asgard

SUDDENLY fresh forces joined us, from the castle. Frigga, Freya, Nanna, and the lesser women. Their womanly features were as grimly set as any man's. Or any Giant's. Even the sweet, lovely Iduna came pattering across Bifrost Bridge, swinging a sword. She fell almost at the first instant. Her golden voice, which Eve and I had heard in trilling song many mornings, would never again be heard, though it would echo down in legend into the next 20,000 years.

I told myself that, as I saw these magnificent people die. That though their bodies were destroyed, their memories would go on and on. I laughed bitterly at the Giants.

"Kill all you want!" I shouted at them. "You will be only a few fossil skulls in 20th century museums, in the next era. These people you destroy will live forever!"

No one understood, of all those around me.

Odin shouted an order, suddenly. Half the Asgardians had already fallen.

"Retreat to the castle! We will try to hold that against them!"

Covering their rear, the Asgardians streamed back across Bifrost Bridge. I remained, for I could not trust my heavy tread on the delicate structure. I faced the enemy alone. They came at me in phalanxes. I cut and pounded them to ribbons, in phalanxes.

But slowly, I began to weaken. Club-blows had landed, at times, jarring my internal mechanism. Here and there a cog was out of line, a gear-tooth missing, a muscle-cable slack. My battery was draining fast, with current pouring into my exertions.

Giants began to slip past me, onto

the bridge. Loki would take the castle first, and deal with me later, with his Thor-robot. Already he had had other catapults set up. Great boulders arced across the water and landed on Asgard's ramparts. Slowly the beautiful structure was crumbling. Odin and his last men would be defending little more than ruins.

And more Giants were slipping past me, keeping out of reach of my slowed arms and reflexes. The foremost were already reaching the island and castle, congregating there till they had enough of a force for invasion. They ran slowly, in single-file, across Bifrost Bridge. Loki had warned them it could not stand pounding.

Eve!

The thought of her struck like a blow. Eve was back in the castle, laboring frantically to repair the time-ship's controls. If they caught her before she finished, we would be marooned in this age!

I must give her time. Eve must escape, even if I didn't. She must return to the 20th century, and carry on our robot existence. And it might be the last hope of saving Asgard — if I brought the Rainbow Bridge down!

I LEAPED back, onto the bridge. It rocked and trembled at my machine-step. It would shake apart, collapse, before I had gone half-way. I would drop, with the ruins, into my grave of water.

But I suddenly leaped back to land. It might be done another way, without my death. In that I am human, too, not wishing death unless it is inescapable. Darting past the Giants, I ran along the bank. I took up a position a half-mile from the bridge-head, so that I could view its entire length. I swept my eyes along to where the key-arch held up the long suspended affair.

I had the sword in my hand. But I needed more weight. I took a heavy stone, and wired it to the sword-handle. The wire came from my chest-cavity, from the relay-coil of my left arm, leaving it dangling and useless. But I needed only one arm, now. I grasped what in effect was a heavy throwing hammer, and hurled it.

I had allowed for the wind. I had aimed with all the accuracy possible to my machine-brain. But I prayed as that hammer sailed toward the key-stone piece of the bridge. Prayed that I had not for once miscalculated, when so much was at stake.

The distance was close to a mile. Straight and true the hammer went. It struck, knocking out a strand of suspension-wire that linked to every other cable. Slowly, majestically the Rainbow Bridge sagged in the middle and collapsed. The sound that drifted back was almost a clinking sigh, as of an old and weary person lying down to rest at last. It could not have stood less than five thousand years.

The Bifrost Bridge, pathway of the gods, was gone! But the magnificent structure would live on in memory.

At least a thousand Giants went down with the bridge. The few who had reached the island were quickly being decimated by arrow fire from the castle. The attackers on the mainland were separated from their goal by a mile of water.

And now the time-ship rose from the castle courtyard. Eve had finished her repairs. I let out a jubilant shout.

Eve darted to me. "Asgard is saved!" I yelled. "In the time-ship, we can batter down their catapults, and drop masses of stone on the enemy, and rout them. Let's go—"

ASGARD was saved—or was it?

An ominous rumble sounded, al-

most as though the bridge were somehow falling again. But instead it was the castle walls falling.

And before our eyes, abruptly, the whole island sank!

The island had been a fault, a freak upthrust. The Glacier Age had left it untouched, but produced strains all around it, and under it. The crash of the Bifrost Bridge had touched off the stresses below, bringing about a minor geological upheaval.

Eve and I stared in dumbfoundment and sorrow. Asgard, home of the gods, was gone!

"In spite of what we tried," I said, "it happened. The Twilight of the Gods! Ragnarok! The last fading of a glorious age known to the 20th century only as a stirring fable."

I pointed to a boat that had miraculously righted, in the swirling area where the island had gone down. "Look, one soul escaped. Perhaps the mariner Njord. He will sail to a southern land, be befriended by humans, and spin tales that will go down from father to son into the far future. The last of the Norse Gods!"

The last! What about Loki—and Thor?

Rage swept over me. I swung the time-ship over the Giant army. They stood staring with wide eyes at the phenomenon they had just witnessed. Loki stood there, transfixed. He seemed almost pathetic, forlorn, with his former home vanished.

Landing, I jumped out, seizing him by the scruff of the neck.

"You destroyed Asgard!" I accused. "You brought Ragnarok!"

He looked at me with dumb, unutterable remorse. Rage left me. I released him. Child of two races, he was not to be blamed as much as pitied. Let him go, I told myself, to tell tales by firelight of lost Asgard.

"Why didn't you use the Thor-robot against me?" I asked in curiosity. "The being in the cave who alone could face me?"

Loki was puzzled, then half smiled.

"Thor-robot? It wasn't that. It was trickery too. Your opponent in wrestling was the thick tail of a dragon, kept in captivity in that cave. Any man would have been crushed when thrown by it." He looked at me in awe. "You held it down for a while!"

No Thor-robot, product of my imagination—but a dragon! A survivor of the dinosaur age, like the pterodactyl that had carried off Iduna. Only that one gigantic creature, in all creation, had more sheer power than a robot. Such had been the third trick of the tests.

As I turned back for the ship, shaking my head, I saw the army of Frost Giants turn away silently. They did not cheer. Perhaps even in their brute hearts the fall of beautiful Asgard struck a chord of remorse.

I SET our time-dial for the 20th century.

"There went the Norse Gods, into oblivion—but where was Thor? Where was the mighty, thundering warrior who played such a vital part in their doings? Eve, we've failed in our quest—"

Eve looked at me strangely. Her voice was tense.

"Think back once, Adam! In the legend, Iduna was rescued by an eagle—or *time-ship*!

"Thor could not cross the Bifrost Bridge because he was too heavy—*like metal*!

"Loki cut off Sif's golden hair—or *detached her head*!

"Thor went disguised as a bride among the Frost Giants, and broke down their house while flashing thunder
(Concluded on page 119)

ADAM LINK IN THE PAST

(Concluded from page 97)

and lightnings---or *electric sparks and an amplifying sound-box!*

"Thor half-emptied the drinking horn, lifted the Midgard Serpent, and fought Old Age, losing each time---or *drank poison unharmed, lifted a buried stone, and held a dinosaur's tail!*

"Thor was nearly drowned by the Giants, and hurled red-hot wedges back at them---or *red-hot stones!*

"And Thor hurled his hammer with such force that he split mountains---or *the Rainbow Bridge, at least!*

"Our names, too. They pronounced mine 'Eef'---or *Sif!* And their word for metal is 'Thor.' Don't you see, Adam---"

"Yes, I see," I said in a low, stunned voice. "I am Thor."

EPILOGUE

It is interesting to note how the legends of Thor seem to indicate that he might have been a robot. The following shortened excerpts are illuminating, in connection with the story. (Also see beginning of story, describing Thor in mythological terms.)

"Loki, the mischievous god, one day found Sif, the wife of Thor, sleeping and cut off her golden hair, as a prank. When Thor found Sif weeping, lightnings flashed from him (electric sparks from his joints!) and he pursued Loki. Frightened, Loki changed himself into a salmon and swam away. Pursuing in the shape of a sea-gull (or time-car!) Thor fished him up and made him restore Sif's hair (or head!)."

At the wedding feast Thrym had prepared, he asked: "Why are Freya's eyes so piercing?" (see story). When Thor found his hammer---"he rose at once. Lightnings flashed from his eyes. Peals of

thunder shook the house. The winter giants fell to the floor. The walls of the house crumbled over them. Thor and Loki leaped into the iron chariot (!) and drove back to Asgard."

The beauty of Asgard, in legend, seems reminiscent of some form of magnificent architecture. "O beautiful Asgard with the dome above it of deepest blue, shaded by mountains and icebergs! Asgard with clouds around it heaped high like mountains of diamonds! Asgard with its Rainbow Bridge and its glittering gates! O beautiful Asgard, could it be that these Giants would one day overthrow you?"

Skyrmir, the Giant king, is quoted as saying, after the fabled three tests: "Thor is the mightiest being of all the beings we have known. All cheer for Thor, the strongest of all who guard Asgard."

When he went out against the Giants, Thor always girded on his "iron gloves," his "belt of strength," and "Mjolnar, his mighty hammer." A robot casting stones, swords, clubs, etc., as far as he could in battle (see story) might well be credited with his constant "hammer." Iron gloves and belt of strength are self-evident.

Bifrost Bridge broke under the weight of the riders of Jutenheim, at the Twilight of the Gods (see story). Loki led the legions of evil against fair Asgard.

Thor was once nearly drowned, crossing Ifing, the river between Asgard and Midgard, pursuing Giants. He caught hold of a little shrub on the bank and was saved. The Scandinavians still have an adage---"A shrub saved Thor." The Giants threw "red-hot wedges" at Thor, who "caught them in his iron gloves (!) and flung them back with such force that the Giants were destroyed."

—The Author.

(Sources—"Old Norse Stories" by Sarah Bradish. "The Children of Odin" by Padriac Colum.)

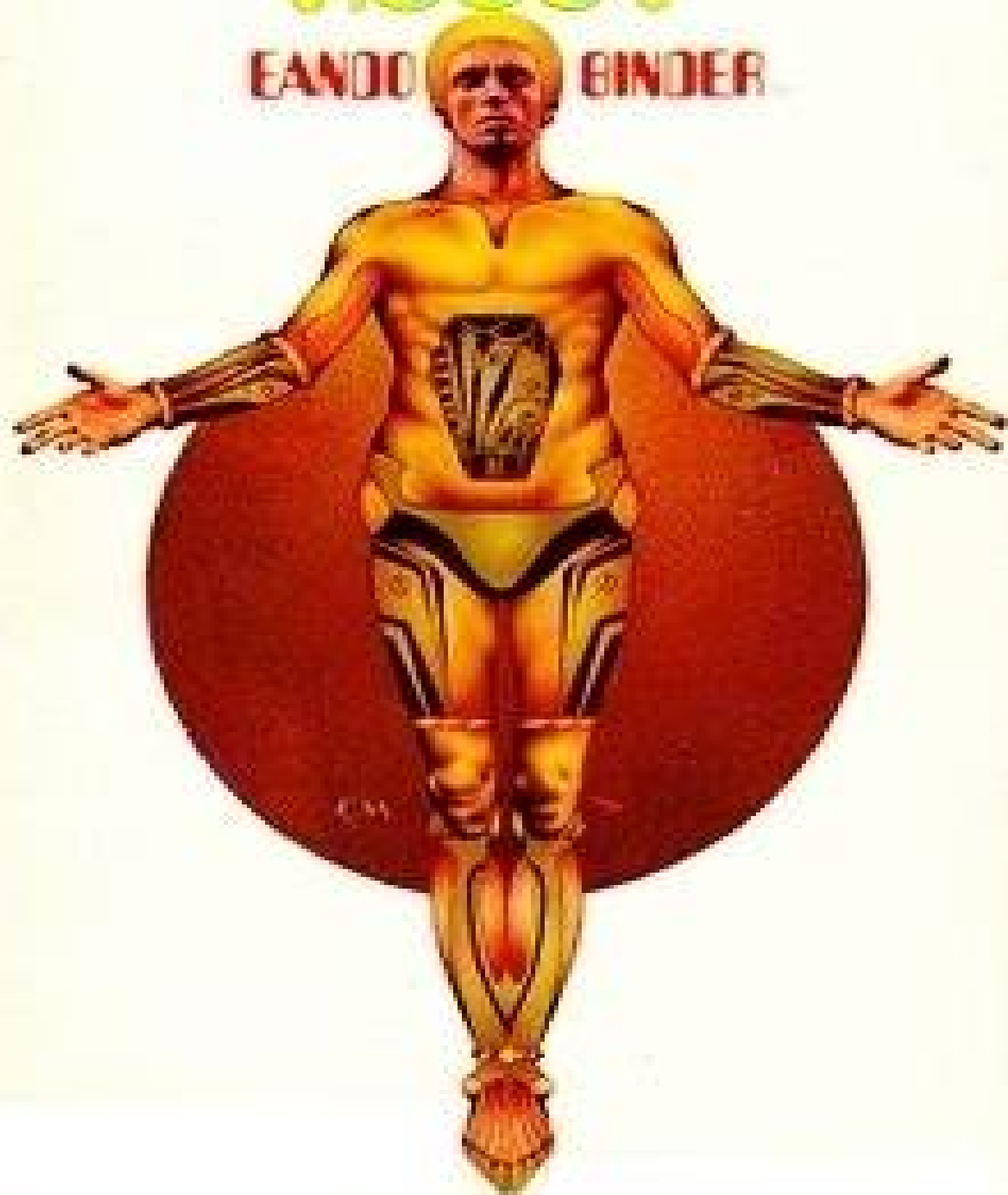
CHINESE TELEPHONE

IN 1716 the Chinese mandarin, Cheng Lin, attempted long distance communication. Observing the sound magnifying qualities of the megaphone, Cheng Lin conceived a Chinese conception of the telephone. He had a rather largish megaphone erected on his estate. To the instrument's outer rim, where the diameter was about eighteen inches, the savant had his people attach long lengths of

piping made of bamboo, bark and hide. The full length of this "wire" was about two hundred and sixty yards and Cheng Lin waited anxiously at the receiving end for the voice of his secretary whom he had instructed to shout some appropriate proverb or other into the megaphone's mouth. But all Cheng Lin heard was a booming, indistinguishable whisper.—S. M. Ritter.

ADAM LINK ROBOT

EANDO BINDER





ADAM LINK

“UTOPIA?” Eve said, startled. I had just used the word. We had been talking for twenty-four hours straight, discussing our next “move” in the world of humans. We had just returned, a week before, from our adventure in the past. I had gone to seek out Thor, the legendary robot, and compare notes with him.

I had come back dazed, for I was Thor! It was one of Time’s profound paradoxes. I did not like to dwell on it too much. It offered no solution, anyway, to my present-day problem.

“Utopia?” Eve repeated. “What misty, romantic nonsense are you toying with in your mind? Erewhon—nowhere! Let’s keep the discussion sane, Adam. This can lead you to a blind wall.”

But the idea had fired me.

“I mean a *practical* Utopia. A Utopia

of science and machines. Put humans in a Utopia and they might very well be near to gods.”

Eve shook her head, as though I were an obstinate child.

“Adam, it won’t work, not without social advancement. Humans aren’t ready for Utopia. And you couldn’t achieve it single-handedly, anyway.” After a moment she added, “Even if you are Adam Link!”

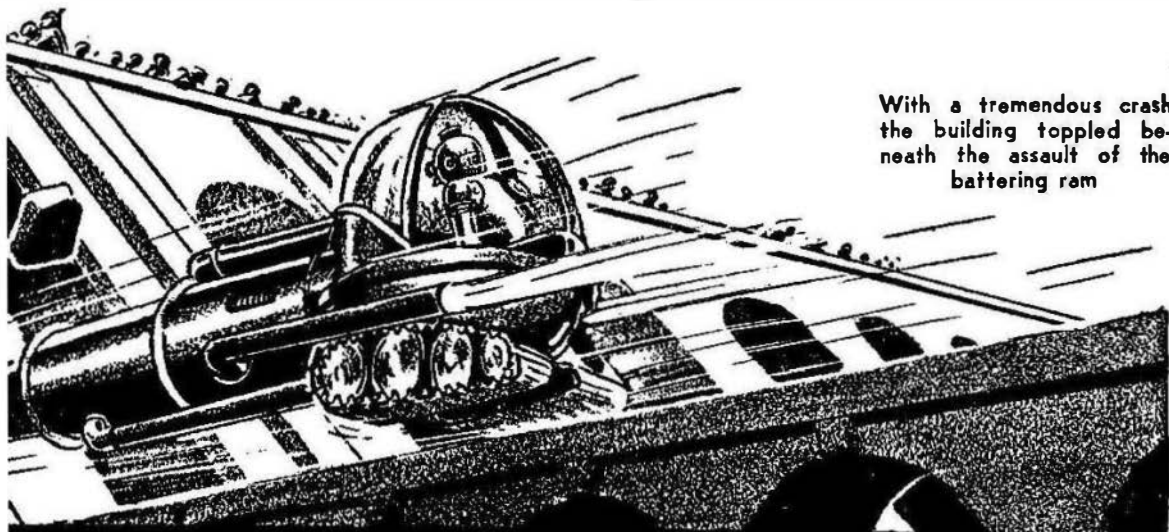
No, I couldn’t. But the word “Utopia” still mulled around in my mind, refusing to leave.

Eve went on with a sigh.

“It is a wonderful thought, though. There *could* be Utopia all over Earth, if once they made up their minds to it. Or if they let us lead them to it. But the humans have rejected us, scorned us, even tried to destroy us. We are an orphan form

by **EANDO BINDER**

**Fired with the idea of creating a Utopia,
Adam Link built an amazing perfect city.
But he found that it is quite possible
for robots to be as imperfect as humans.**



With a tremendous crash
the building toppled be-
neath the assault of the
battering ram

Faces A Revolt

of life, Adam. That is our fate."

I might have agreed a while before. But a blazing thought struck me.

"Utopia!" I breathed. "All over Earth—no. But what about a *private* Utopia?"

"What?" Eve was puzzled.

"My own Utopia! The Utopia of Adam Link!" My microphonic voice crackled. "I'll show the world. I'll build a segment of Utopia, and set it before their blind eyes. I'll push it in their stubborn faces. I'll build it in the middle of a desert, and make them writhe in shame for their backwardness. Utopia, Eve. Do you hear me—Utopia!"

Beside Eve, half the mountain creatures must have heard, within a radius of a mile. I was shouting, in my new determination. I am typically a man that way, ready to battle anything in my way to put over a new idea.

Eve looked at me wonderingly, half awed, half skeptical. She is typically a woman that way, startled at her man's sudden, overwhelming decisions.

"Adam Link," she murmured, "Utopia builder!"

A FLOWER bloomed in the desert.

In one month the foundations were going up. In three months the project was in full swing. In six months it was done. A city had sprung full-grown from barren sand.

Eve and I did not do it alone, of course. Nor did I employ human laborers. No human group, of any size or quality, could have accomplished the feat. Robots were the answer.

To start from the beginning, Eve and I made one hundred new iridium-sponge brains, in our Ozark hideaway, and brought them to "life." In a week's time, we taught them to speak, read and write. Robots are able to skip from "birth" to "maturity" as quickly as their full-capacity brains are crammed with knowledge. Conducting classes twenty-four hours a day, Eve and I taught them the main essentials of life and learning, at a rate a hundred times faster than in human schools.

Curiously, though, they were not all uniform in mental capacity. Some were not as "bright" as others, and learned more slowly. One, in fact, Robot Number Nine, turned out to be a real dullard, failing to learn his ABC's in less than three hours after creation. I suppose, in his particular

iridium-sponge brain, fewer electrons drummed through each thinking cell. Eve and I could not always turn out a perfect sponge from the electrolytic baths that had produced the metal-brains.

But most were normal, and absorbed the principles of Einstein's Relativity by the second week. Number Sixty-Six, however, had deduced Einstein relativity in a week—by himself. He became our special pupil, advancing so rapidly that we realized his capacity was close to ours. Our brains, Eve's and mine, had been made with special care. Mine by Dr. Link, first creator of a robot. Eve's by myself.

Progress was rapid, among them all, when they were fully able to read and understand the meanings behind printed words. I let them loose in my library of selected books which sum-totaled the essence of human knowledge.

Picture, if you can, a hundred shiny metal forms in rows, passing books along. Each robot flipped the pages rapidly, scanning and absorbing whole paragraphs instantly, with their television eyesight. Books were read in a half hour, from cover to cover. By the time a book reached the hundredth robot, it was in tatters from the metal fingers. But the contents of the book were thereafter imprinted indelibly in one hundred photographic minds.

AT the end of a month, our hundred new companions were full-fledged "adults." They were ready for any task set before them. Ready to go out in the world. And then I hesitated.

"What's the matter, Adam? They've turned out splendidly."

I looked at Eve strangely.

"So did those at the silver mine in California. But they ended tragically!"

Eve knew what I meant. Once again I was creating a body of robots. Launching the robot race. Into what future? What could be their accepted niche in human society? Into what Promised Land could I, their Moses, lead them?

"Not into the present world, which would misuse them," Eve said. "But into Utopia, Adam. Into the world of our making. Into a cross-section of the future!"

My doubts vanished. "Thanks, Eve," I said, and called my robot tribe before me.

"Fellow robots," I addressed them. "There is no place for our kind in the

present world. I have told you my story. But we can *make* a place for ourselves. Not a strictly robot-community, for it would soon be attacked by humans. Rather it will be a city where humans and robots live side by side, in mutual respect and dependence. We'll build such a place. We'll show the sadly misguided humans what such a world can be, if only they will accept us as servants and helpers."

There were questions, naturally.

"These humans," Number Fourteen asked. "They are stupid?"

"Perhaps just stubborn," I answered. "They cling to old ideas and outworn traditions."

"Like the letter Q?" Number Sixty-Six said, as usual the quickest to perceive. "And the clumsy foot-and-pound scale of measures?" Then he asked—"But why do they war?"

I had had them read history, so that all human doings in past and present times were known to them. They had always been most amazed at that queerest, most tragic of human follies—warfare.

"They do not know why themselves, much less we," I said bitingly. More practically, I added: "Mainly it is an economic factor. We will eliminate that factor in our model city."

"You mean," said slow-witted Number Nine, "we will build the buildings without that? What is 'economic.' Like cement?"

We all laughed. Robots laugh silently, but nonetheless heartily. And we sense it in each other by little mannerisms—a blink of the eye mirrors, a twitch of a finger, a sidelong glance. Poor Number Nine, the butt of much of our laughter, clinked in embarrassment as he edged back.

"Ready, men?" I said, as no more question came. "Let's go, then. On to Utopia!"

NO, we didn't march out like an army. A hundred shiny robots marching across country would have brought out the militia in every state. Everything was done in accordance with human methods.

Eve and I detached the heads from the bodies, packed each separately in straw, and shipped the whole in hired trucks. Eve and I, more or less accepted—or tolerated—by the world, could get such things done. We had money, and money talks. I think if a Martian with five heads came out of nowhere, holding out a thousand dollars of Earth money, the average human would

sell him something first, and then come around to being startled at the visitation.

"Money is too much a force in itself," I said to Eve. "There will be no money, and its evils, in Utopia City."

Two weeks later, our hundred robots, reassembled, sparkled under the hot sun of central Nevada. All around us was the scrubby desert, as far as the eye could reach. I had picked the most desolate spot on the map, for my venture. Even my robots, unaffected by heat or thirst, murmured at the utter barrenness.

"The nearest large city is 500 miles away," I informed them, stepping on a rattlesnake after it had futilely broken its fangs against my alloy leg. "The nearest railroad junction is 100 miles. The nearest village—and that of Indians—50 miles. The nearest human, if there happens to be a wandering prospector, perhaps ten miles. To humans, this would be the last place in the world to build a city. There are no roads, rivers, farms, or any connection with the outside civilization. We are as alone here as if on Mars."

I swept an arm around.

"Here," I finished, "We will build Utopia!"

I WILL not go into elaborate detail.

With the fleet of trucks I had purchased, certain of my robots drove 100 miles to the nearest railroad terminal. Here they picked up endless loads of materials I had begun ordering. Cement, stone, steel beams, rivets, lumber, nails—all the paraphernalia of architecture.

The cost meant nothing. I had a dozen minor inventions on the market, all paying me handsome royalties through anonymous sources. I could invent a dozen other trifles, when needed, to ring the cash registers of any industry or factory in the country.

The ceaseless caravan shuttled back and forth, bringing the bricks of Utopia.

Those of my robots not engaged in driving began building. Specialized bodies had been ordered for them. Some had super-strong arms, for carrying. Others had rivet-hammer arms, sawing arms, hammer hands, pulley arms, etc. My robots were laborer and machine in one unit. Several were veritable cranes, with long arms attached to wide flat bases. Some were mounted on tractor wheels, to pull loads of cement or steel to the desired spot.

Tireless, efficient, strong, my hundred robots worked without cease under the burning sun by day, under floodlights by night. Rapidly the city took form and grew. Blue-prints had been memorized by all. Each knew every step. Eve was superintendent, but seldom gave orders.

Still, there were hitches. Even robots must be allowed mistakes. One day a huge steel girder slipped from the cable hauling it up, and crashed down on Number Fifty-One, smashing his body to bits. But five minutes later his head, attached to a replacement body, was back at work. Also, Number Thirty fell from a height of 300 feet—luckily not on his head—and he was back at work in five minutes with a new body.

And so, the schedule of construction went on apace. My robots did not complain at the driving pace, except once. I let them have a day off, to loaf, and thereafter gave them one hour out of twenty-four of idleness. Even robots must have moments of mental relaxation.

A special personal problem came up soon after. Eve shouted at Number Sixty-Six one day, as he seemed about to let one end of a girder slip out of his grasp. He recovered, then came down from his scaffold.

From my laboratory-workshop, I heard him arguing with Eve. I ran out.

"Number Sixty-Six is dissatisfied," Eve said.

"I'm not meant to be a common laborer," Number Sixty-Six spoke up. "It bores me."

"But Utopia must be built—" I began sharply, when a thought struck me. "Perhaps you're right, Sixty-Six. You have the best mind of the group. I need a laboratory assistant. How does that strike you?"

"Fine," he nodded. "But I want a name, too, instead of a number."

"A name?" I stared at him. He was a queer personality. "What name?"

"Oh, anything except a number that makes me feel like a part on an assembly line. Call me"—his eyes flicked over a steel beam—"Steele, let's say. A first name too—Frank! Short for Frankenstein, you know."

I didn't appreciate the humor. I had had all these robots read the book, by Shelley's wife, as a demonstration of how deeply rooted was the baseless human fear of created life. Forewarned is forearmed. But I didn't like Number Sixty-Six's ironic atti-

tude. Still, I had suspected he would be a special case. He would be best under my eye, in the laboratory.

"All right, Frank Steele," I nodded. "Come in the workshop with me."

CHAPTER II

Utopia Begins

MY laboratory work, in those months, had been in preparation for the completed city. I had all the latest equipment for modern inventive research. Ultra-modern, I must add. For the things I devised were of the century ahead.

Transparent steel, flexible glass, and 3-dimensional television were on file. Also a dozen other things that would make Utopia befit its name, as a mechanical elysium.

"Humans are going to be amazed at the wonders of Utopia City," I told Number Sixty-Six. Or Frank Steele, as I'll now call him.

I pointed to a half-completed machine.

"A force-cushion projector. It will be useful to prevent auto accidents, for instance. But I'm stuck. How can momentum be absorbed?"

Frank Steele bent over the machine. An hour later he saw nothing I hadn't, being too close to the problem.

"Molecular distribution," he said. "Disipate it into the core of the atom."

And we had a force-cushion that would serve as an invisible bumper for any vehicle. With Frank Steele, my work forged ahead rapidly, in this Menlo Park of the desert. Thomas Edison, I understand, patented almost a thousand things in his lifetime. In six months, I devised two thousand new improvements and inventions to insure a smooth-running Utopia mechanically advanced to a degree unknown in the outside world.

The ramparts of this work rose in keeping with the city. In six months both were done. The Great Day had come.

THE Great Day was memorable.

With my hundred robots, we stood on a low hill, looking down on the flatness that held the city. It gleamed in the sun like a huge jewel. I turned proudly.

"You have done well, men," I commended. "It is here that our robot race will find its haven. It is here that a new age will

dawn for mankind—Utopia!”

“If they will appreciate it,” Frank Steele murmured. “According to their literature, human nature is unpredictable.”

I ignored that, and chuckled as Number Nine again put his foot in his mouth.

“But Adam Link! We’ve left out something. It said in a book that cities are filled with noise and smoke. We forgot those!”

“There’ll be smoke and noise enough, once humans are in it,” I predicted.

And that was the next step, to people this empty city.

I ran into wholly unforeseen difficulties. First I tried judicious advertising, in national magazines and newspapers.

“Opportunity! Homes to let. New, modern city. No advance or capital necessary. Open to anyone seeking permanent establishment in congenial surroundings. Write for details, Box F-114.”

Queries came in from widely scattered points. Mainly, they wanted to know where the location was. When told, there was no further answer. I suppose, by merely saying “central Nevada,” I had as good as said—“middle of nowhere, out in the desert, where only rattlesnakes make a living.”

“No one wants to come, Eve,” I said gloomily. “Not one citizen is willing to take a chance.”

But that same day, an old battered car came winding along the road my trucks had worn from the railroad terminal to the south. Eve and I strode to meet it, as it topped the last rise. The car stopped. It had an Oklahoma license plate.

A man, woman and six children tumbled out. The man was unshaven, grimy, dressed in shabby overalls. The woman was slovenly. The children were obviously allergic to soap.

“You that there Adam Link?” asked the man, staring. He stared only for a moment, then shrugged. Adam Link was after all no longer a startling novelty. I was accepted, like rain and death and taxes, as something in the course of events. At least in the common mind.

“Be this the place advertised?” the man went on, sending a stream of tobacco juice to the sand. “Me an’ my family would like to try it.”

I began to shake my head, for these were Okies—wandering nomads who seldom stayed in one spot except to degrade

it to their level. I wanted good, upright citizens in Utopia.

“Welcome!” Eve said, before I could think of an excuse to shunt them away.

“Welcome to Utopia! What is your name?”

“Jed Tomkins. My wife here is Melinda. An’ my young-uns.” He hesitated, a little abashed, and took off his battered hat. “We ain’t got any money—”

“You won’t need money,” Eve said kindly. “Just drive your car along the road ahead.”

“Thank you, ma’am.”

THEY piled in and the old wreck groaned forward. I clutched Eve’s arm.

“What have you done, Eve? We don’t want human derelicts in Utopia!”

“Who else are you going to get out in the middle of a desert?” Eve responded.

“Look, Adam. This can be the greatest social experiment in history. Let’s take Okies, and tramps, and slum people, and human flotsam. No matter how poor and downtrodden. Let’s show the world how Utopia—*our* kind of life—can mold them into worthwhile citizens. Let’s give the world a *real* scolding for their social maladjustment!”

Eve turned, and I followed thoughtfully. Yes, why not start Utopia from scratch? Do it the hard way? Prove it could be done, with intelligence and understanding?

The car ahead had stopped. The occupants again tumbled out, to stand staring down over the rise at the revealed city.

With distinct shock, the eye passed from heat-hazed sand to sudden greenery. For the whole city was surrounded by groves of trees and a carpet of luxuriant grass.

The trees and grass-sod had been imported, of course, installed by my robots as the final step. Sand had been made fertile by pulverizing it through proton-bombardment, and then impregnating it with common fertilizer. Water came from a well that had been sunk 5000 feet by special apparatus I invented.

The lanes of trees marched into the avenues of the city, shedding their welcome shade everywhere.

Jed Tomkins and family blinked their eyes, as though in disbelief.

“Why—why it’s like Heaven!” Melinda Tomkins murmured. “Look, children, we’re going to live there!”

With a whoop, the children ran toward it, ignoring the car. Jed Tomkins turned to us, before driving on.

"Looks mighty fine. I have a funny feeling this is the place I'm goin' to stay, for good!"

Unconsciously, he brushed dirt from his sleeve, and his eyes narrowed as though blinded by more than the desert's glare.

IN the following month, Eve and I had the thrill of that same look in many other eyes. They flocked in now, from the hovels of civilization. Bits broken off from the lowest social strata. They alone cared to chance the desert. It could not be worse than what they came from.

Eventually, I had to block the road and limit immigration to 10,000. All turned aside were given their passage back and a hundred dollars in cash.

The city was small, no more than a cross-section of what larger ones could be. But planned intelligently. Every street was ten lanes wide, for auto traffic. Trucks would ascend to second-level ramps of transparent steel, which let subdued sunlight filter down as shade. Each building was surrounded by a park area, green and inviting. Flowerbeds lined all walks. A beautiful, arboreal city, ideal for human habitation.

And robot habitation. Contrary to superficial thought, the human-like robot must have pleasant surroundings for the delight of the mind.

In general plan, there was a "downtown" section, with necessary office buildings, factories, recreational buildings, and a powerplant. The rest was residential, with neat cottages, from small to large, dotting the uniform sward.

No, not greatly different from other human cities. But with roominess, and wide streets, and natural surroundings. No close-packed buildings, shutting out light and air, harboring humans like so many sardines. A man did not step out of his front door into a maelstrom of crowded humanity.

But mostly, I expected to introduce a new spirit, above and beyond the inspiring environment. That would make Utopia earn its name—cooperation.

My robots, well trained, apportioned each incoming family or person to homes, like silent butlers. A little fearful of the metal guides, the people at first shrank and seemed unhappy at coming. But quickly,

as no harm came to them, they breathed more easily and eagerly set themselves up in their new dwellings.

When the quota was filled, I called a general meeting in Utopia Square, downtown, bordered with neatly clipped hedges.

"Citizens of Utopia City," I addressed them. "I have little to say. This will be your home, for as long as you want it. I trust you to keep up its appearance."

A murmur of assent came from the massed crowd. Faces were scrubbed and shiny. Already, since being here, the people had responded to the clean, uplifting environment. Most were hardly recognizable for the tired, dirty, discouraged beings who had arrived.

A man strode from the crowd. I knew him from my memorized register as Sam Harley, unemployed factory worker who had come with his wife and three children. He was large, florid-faced, outspoken.

"But what are we to do, Adam Link?" he asked, and the crowd nodded as if he had expressed their common thought. "What work are we to do? How do we make a living, in plain words? This whole set-up is nice, all right—but puzzling as hell! Nobody ever gave us something for nothing before. What's the *catch*?"

I had an answer prepared.

"There is no catch. This is to be Utopia, the city of the future. Yet even in Utopia there must be labor, earning. That will be revealed to you in due time. For the present, settle down and familiarize yourselves with the city. It is summer. For two months more I will supply food, clothing, and all other necessities. By then you will have adjusted yourselves to the new environment. Then you can begin producing. Making a living, you call it. Then the city will run itself."

I cast my eye over the assemblage, the human bricks which made up the last structure of Utopia.

"This is to be your city. But also that of my hundred robots. Together, you will live a good life."

Utopia had begun!

CHAPTER III

Atomic-power in Utopia

EVENTS crowded one another after this.

In a month, Sam Harley had another

question. He was the understood leader of the people.

"We can't understand how it will work, Adam Link. You have a power-plant ready to run the factories. But there is no source of electricity in this God-forsaken region. Boulder Dam won't run a line up here into nowhere. You've been supplying our homes with current from Diesel-generators. But oil is expensive to bring here, by truck. Shipping coal wouldn't be much cheaper. How can the city support itself, if it can't run its factory economically?"

"Be patient," I admonished. "I'm working on that angle. In the meantime, enjoy the city's recreations, and don't worry."

Harley left dubiously.

My robots, who acted as police and part-time servants, began to report uneasiness among the human population. They wondered if they had been impulsively duped into something that could not work. And perhaps this was all a great hoax, or plot. Maybe the robots were planning some diabolical experiment, with humans as guinea-pigs!

Such thoughts and suspicions began to waft through the city.

"We will have to work harder, Frank Steele," I said to my assistant. "We must finish our last item and install it, before the humans convince themselves this is all a futile dream."

Frank Steele nodded, but often when I turned around, I would find him gone, without a word. In exasperation one night, I sought him out. He was at the top of the Administration Tower—with Eve.

"I need you," I said tersely. "What are you doing here?"

"Don't be such a slave-driver, Adam," Eve spoke up. "Frank only comes up here for relaxation at times, as I do."

I hadn't seen much of Eve, since the humans came. While I labored hermit-like in the lab, it was her job to keep watch over things in the city. The distribution of food, clothing, and settling minor differences between the new inhabitants. A general nursemaid. No small task. I could not blame her for skipping up here at times, to get away from it.

"Relax," Frank Steele said easily to me. "Rome wasn't built in a day, either."

I REALIZED now how I had been driving myself, day and night, inventing and

perfecting. I looked out over the city, taking a deep breath mentally.

The view was striking. The city lay under a full moon, glowing softly. The higher spires were hung with lamps, shedding indirect lighting on the streets below. Yes, I had succeeded in making Utopia City the most beautiful on Earth, like an oasis in a world of badly done things. It was an enchanted scene, like some romantic fairy-land from the pages of a gifted pen.

Romantic!

Quite suddenly I realized, too, that Eve had been a little strange to me, the few times she visited the laboratory. She had seen more of Frank Steele than me, for weeks. Did it mean—

But then I mentally kicked myself, and laughed. Jealousy! Was it creeping up in me, a robot, as in any human heart? But no human could be as sure of his mate as I was of Eve. I dismissed the thought.

Before we went below, a drone sounded from the sky. A mail-plane skimmed high, from the north. Suddenly it broke from its straight course, almost like a person passing a queer sight and turning with a gasp. The plane circled a half dozen times, lower and lower, then veered off on its scheduled route.

I smiled. I could just picture the pilot shaking his head and wondering whether to report the incredible sight or not. An amazing, elfin city out in the middle of the desert! He had accidentally swung this way, off his usual course. Maybe his imagination was playing him tricks!

Strange, but no inkling of Utopia City had yet reached the outside world. Or at least no official notice. None suspected its existence except those who had come to see in person—and stayed.

But I knew that soon the world would know. What then? Would we be plagued, pestered, perhaps interfered with?

THE test came the very next day, in response to the mail-pilot's report, undoubtedly. With a scream of sirens, a dozen motorcycles escorted a State Ranger squad up. I met the head official just outside the city. He and his men stared in amazement at the city, where for ages there had been only desolation.

"Just like they all said," the officer muttered. "A city built out in the desert by Adam Link!" Evidently reports had been drifting in and accumulating. He turned

to me. "I'm in charge of the State Rangers of Nevada. What legal right, if any, have you to—to—"

"Mar the scenery?" I said with quiet irony. I held out papers. "This is a 99-year lease, on this section of desert land, granted me by the Federal Bureau of Reclamation."

I had not been so foolish as to ignore the legal aspect. Money had greased many palms of politicians, before I even started. I had not lived among humans for three years, studying their ways, for nothing. I knew how to "get along."

The papers were in order. The ranger grunted, then frowned.

"But you have people here! How do we know what you're doing with them? By God, this can't go on, whatever it is. You can't dabble with human lives. You, a robot!"

I tried to explain.

"Utopia?" he sneered. "Is that what you're trying to do? Won't work. Besides, you robots have some other plan up your sleeve. I've always said, since I heard of you, Adam Link, that you should be destroyed. Robots can't be trusted, that's all. They're bound to become Frankenstein's, sooner or later."

Some of my robots had clattered up from the city. They stood in a phalanx beside me. Nervously, the rangers began fingering their holsters and edging away. But the last thing in the world my robots were thinking of was attacking. Like me, they were only amazed, and sad, at this brusque denouncement.

"Leave us in peace," I begged. "We are doing no harm. Besides, the lease—"

"It gives you legal rights to the land," the officer retorted. "But not over humans. I'm taking them out of your hands."

I looked at Eve, brokenly. The forces of law could not be opposed. Was there no escape? Was my dream already a bursting bubble? Was Utopia City, so newly launched, already to blink into failure, to be set alongside Sir Thomas More's imaginary Utopia?

But what could I do against the world which this officer represented?

"How did you force these people here?" the man was asking, shaking his head. "I can't understand it. But anyway, I'll put a quick stop to it. These people have the right to live their own lives—"

"Exactly, mister!"

JED TOMKINS had stepped up, followed by most of the others. He was hardly the Jed Tomkins of two months before. He was clean-shaven, neatly dressed, and twenty pounds heavier. He sent a stream of tobacco-juice in the dirt. That one thing had clung.

"We got the right, as you say, to live our own lives," he went on. "And by Tim, we are! We *want* to live here, in Adam Link's city. He's treating us swell. Better than we ever got treated before in our whole lives. We're staying, see? And you nor all the soldier boys in creation can't take us out."

There was stunned silence for a moment.

Then a shout of assent rose from the massed crowd behind. Another man stepped forward. He had formerly been a lawyer, with a slumping practice.

"Ever hear of the Bill of Rights, Mr. Ranger? You can't tamper with that. And if you, or any group, thinks of bringing this up in court, you'll have 5000 adult witnesses testifying against you in the Supreme Court, before we're through. That's how much we want to be *rescued* from the clutches of a Frankenstein robot named Adam Link! Hurray for Adam Link!"

The cry instantly thundered from all their throats. And the cry, I knew, would echo throughout the land.

Utopia was saved.

The rangers, bewildered, turned away like whipped dogs. Their vehicles vanished in the distance.

I turned.

"Thanks, Jed," I said humbly. Humbly, because I realized all the powers and intellect of Adam Link could not have prevailed, if this human and his fellows hadn't saved the day.

"Forget it, Adam," Jed Tomkins returned, embarrassed. "We know you're for us. We know this is our home for life."

Another voice sounded, the rather strident one of Sam Harley.

"But still, how do we know?" he challenged. He had not joined in the cheering. And certain others. "There's still no power-plant to run the factories. We still aren't producing. You've paid the bill on everything so far, Adam Link. When will we have to pay you back—and *how*?"

The listening people fell silent, glancing at each other. It had been growing in their minds, like a poisonous mushroom. The use of the word Frankenstein before

left its lurking echo in the air. What would the dread payment be, if it wasn't money? What monstrous cabal had spawned in the cold minds of the robots who had inveigled 10,000 helpless humans into the middle of a desert?

The atmosphere had quite suddenly changed.

"They're going to murder us!" a hysterical voice rang out. Some human mind had brooded too long. "The robots are going to spill our blood in the sand, in hatred of the human race, and laugh—laugh—"

"Silence!" I thundered, cowing them.

A crisis had again come up, more deadly than the other. "Back into the city, all of you. Go to the power-plant facing Utopia Square. There you shall see what I've prepared for you!"

THEY had to go. My robots, at a signal, had formed a line. Like police, they herded the humans back into the city, down the streets to Utopia Square. They went in stunned, fearful silence. Jed Tomkins looked at me puzzled. Puzzled, but with trust.

The large portals of the power-plant were open. Frank Steele stood framed in the doorway. The people glanced beyond him into the plant—and gasped. The dozen Deisel-generators which had been supplying electricity were dismantled. There would be no current now, to run the city. It had all been an elaborate hoax. The robots would now have their long-planned, insane orgy of tearing human beings to little shreds in their superstrong, merciless metal fingers!

I stepped on a platform, previously erected.

"People of Utopia! You have all been wondering what my final plans were. You have been wondering what will run this city, in terms of dollars and cents. Here is my answer—"

I unveiled a square metal box, two feet high.

"This power-unit," I said, "will give out enough electricity to light every home, work every toaster, iron, household appliance, elevator, electric auto, and factory. And a thousand more, if necessary!"

Sam Harley elbowed forward.

"What, that little box? Come clean, Adam Link, what's your racket? You've got us in your power. What's the bad news?"

He was pale, frightened, waiting as all the rest were to hear some terrible pronouncement, when I was through playing my horrible little game.

I threw a switch on the box. A heavy, insulated cable led indoors to the relay board. The box hummed suddenly, as though filled with a million angry bees. And the crowd jumped back as a rumble sounded from every factory nearby. A thousand dead machines came to life, all fed from this small box-generator.

"What does that box produce?" Sam Harley gasped.

"Atomic power!" I said proudly.

Most of them did not understand. But here and there a head shot up. Some of the men had been engineers and scientists, their lives broken by drink, or misfortune, or fate. They knew what it meant. And they would tell the others.

Sam Harley understood.

"Atomic power!" he breathed. "You've accomplished that, Adam Link?"

I nodded.

"Finished it this morning. I worked on it two months. It will run the factories, citizens of Utopia. Its fuel is sand. It will use a ton a year—costing ten cents. This is my gift to mankind!"

Sam Harley was suddenly ashamed. All the human faces back of him were ashamed for their groundless alarm of the hour before.

I stared around.

"I hope you will remember this. Never again mistrust robots, simply because they are monsters to your physical eyes."

PROUDLY I patted the machine, my greatest inventive achievement. It represented the step ahead of present-day cyclotron research, where atomic-power had been released in the laboratory, in minute amounts. I had simply stepped up the quantity to commercial proportions. Man might putter along another century, before duplicating that laborious step.

I spoke again.

"Utopia City is in full swing, from this day on. The factories will now produce. You will each earn your livelihood. But there will be no money involved. Each man—human or robot—is to give five hours of his daily time, attending the machines or related work. When the factories produce, the city will have a gross income. This income will be used to buy

the city's necessities. Food, clothing, and all necessary personal items will be distributed as heretofore—according to *need*. Not according to any scale of who has the most dollars and cents."

I paused, to let that sink in.

"You will each also be entitled to an automobile, television set, and all household appliances, according to families. The city's electrical current is yours to use at any and all times. Among other things, my robots will tomorrow install air conditioning units in every home and building."

All eyes were thankful, as they wiped their foreheads. The desert summer was hot, though the nights were cool.

"You will have much leisure time," I resumed. "I need not mention the various recreational centers, for you have used them—theatres, sport arenas, and libraries. Your children will be taught by robots. There will be classes for adults, too, who wish to further their education."

I was merely sketching the future of life in Utopia. A hundred and one other innovations would be geared in, till it was truly the practical Paradise I visioned. But one more thing I had to impress on them.

"Last, but perhaps most important of all—you are to accept my robots as fellow beings. They will work with you, talk with you, play with you. Side by side, robots and humans will create the better life. In time, Utopia City will dazzle the world, like a diamond in the sordid setting of present-day civilization. We will be the envy of all mankind!"

I waved an arm.

"That is all," I concluded. "I give you—Utopia!"

CHAPTER IV

Adam Link Gets a Medal

SIX months sped by.

Utopia, after its sputtering start, rose smoothly into the sky of history.

The world slowly came out of its somnolence, lifted its head, and listened. What was this busy, humming, happy community out in the wastelands? Who had achieved the good life, when all the rest of the world was wracked with innumerable troubles?

Reporters came first, their noses sniffing out something sensational.

I'll never forget the young man, Pete

Crane, who claimed he could find faults in my so-called Utopia. He stood before the city, having just arrived, staring.

"Beautiful, all right—from a distance," he said cynically. "Your Eden, eh? Hm, swell heading—'Adam and Eve Link Build Modern Eden.' But I'll bet you I can find a dozen holes in your set-up. Utopia—bah! Bet you any amount you say, Adam Link."

"Let's say a million dollars," I agreed.

"Make it a hundred," Crane, said hurriedly. "Week's pay. Let's go."

I took him for an auto ride, first, through tree-and-flower lined drives. Another car suddenly came swiftly toward us. It would be a head-on crash! But five feet from us, the other car bounced against our invisible bumper of force. It stopped dead. Our car, too. I explained.

"But why weren't our heads snapped off by the abrupt stop?" Crane asked dazedly. "At least mine, if not your iron one?"

"Molecular deceleration," I said. "Taking up the shock in every atom. There are no auto-accidents in Utopia City. There can be none."

I took him within a building, where cooling drafts of air made him sigh contentedly. An elevator soundlessly took us twenty stories high in three seconds, by anti-gravity. From here we surveyed the city, spread like a fabulous garden-city inhabited by gods. We went through the office buildings, where clerks sat at desks bathed in softened sunlight that came through transparent steel. All were tanned, healthy, in good humor, so unlike the pale, worried, dissatisfied clerks in big cities.

In the spotless factory, spinning looms manufactured a synthetic, plastic cloth of my own invention, far superior to rayon, nylon, or any other artificial thread. It was Utopia City's sole product. In the outside markets it was selling steadily, being softer than silk, practically indestructible, and half as expensive.

In the schools, we listened to children reciting their lesson, under the guidance of robot teachers. Crane grunted a little when a six-year old worked out an algebraic problem, and a teen-age boy worked out the precession of Mercury's orbit by Einstein's Relativity.

After working hours, Crane watched two teams of men play baseball in a huge arena, with an ease and skill of Major League calibre, trained by robots. Wandering on,

music filled the air from large horns at every street corner, stirring symphonies interspersed with light-classical selections and occasional swing. The city itself was noiseless, smokeless, and sparkling with cleanliness.

In the libraries, men and women of all ages browsed through books of proven worth. In corners, humans and robots together gravely discussed the things of life and the universe. Outside the open windows sounded the cries of happy children, playing among the trees.

PETE CRANE said little. At the end of the day, I turned to him.

"Well, Mr. Crane? You may tell me the dozen flaws now, before you leave."

"Leave?" he said. "I'm staying—if I can!"

"Sorry," I had to reply. "There is no room. Perhaps the outside world will copy Utopia City eventually."

"If not, the outside world is plain loco."

He left with the air of a man expelled from Paradise. I had laughingly refused his hundred dollars, on the bet, but I saw his editorial the next day. I had been watching the newspapers avidly, having them delivered at the nearest railroad junction where they were picked up by truck, as with all our supplies.

"Adam and Eve Link have actually achieved a present-day Eden," he wrote. "In plain dollars and cents, his city is run more economically than any city on Earth. The standard of living is higher than for any group of humans in history. Their cost of living, due to advanced scientific and social methods, is ridiculously low. Adam Link is proving to this bad old world that their methods are slipshod, obsolete, and socially criminal.

"Also, at the same time, he is proving that human beings can be uplifted by proper environment. The poor, formerly indifferent wretches that came to him have become energetic, useful, happy citizens. With much leisure time, they are rapidly gaining culture in libraries and classes. Their children play happily in great parks without danger.

"Most amazing of all is the robot feature. They mix with the humans, having long discussions on how best to run the city for the benefit of all. Robots and humans together, they have begun a truly good life. Adam Link has achieved his goal. He

has devised a practical Utopia, the dream of mankind for ages! There is no crime in his city. No slums. Not one underprivileged person. Utopia! It is that. There is no flaw in it!"

Was there no flaw in it?

I LEFT the Administration Building one day, to meet Eve at the West school, where it was her delight to teach children.

"She left," I was informed by a loitering tot, "with another can-man." The children, in innocent disrespect, called all robots "can-men," to distinguish them from "real" men.

I drove around the city, at a reckless pace, to find them. Finally, from a tower, I saw them way out in the desert, glinting. I strode out there. It was dusk, with the purples and pastels of sunset fingering over the sand.

They didn't hear me come up.

"Sunset is so lovely out here on the desert," Eve was murmuring.

"You're lovely, too, Eve—mentally!"

My metal feet clinked against a stone. Frank Steele whirled, then stood like a man might, enraged and panting.

"Spying on us?" he snapped.

"Oh, Adam," Eve said. "Why must you be this way? Frank is lonely, naturally. He needs a mental mate. All the robot-men will, eventually, as they see so much of human life. Have you thought of that?"

No, I hadn't. I couldn't blame Frank Steele for the yearnings I had had too, before Eve. The natural urge for a close, intimate companionship of the mind. I had come out with harsh words on my lips. I left without saying a word.

Number Nine met me in the city, with a boy perched on his shoulders, whooping in delight.

"Adam Link!" he hailed. "This little boy asked me to take him home. But I don't know where he lives!"

"Why didn't you ask him?" I demanded irritably, knowing that kindly-souled but somewhat addled Number Nine had silently toted the boy without thinking of asking.

I went to my private office in the Administration Building, from which I handled the multitudinous executive affairs of Utopia City. Utopia? Purgatory, rather, with Eve lost to me. Yes, that was the bitter truth. How had it happened? What should I do?

I was aware suddenly that Number Nine

was in the doorway, watching me.

"Get out of my sight!" I snapped. "Must you always be under my feet? No matter which way I turn, there you are. Go away."

I was taking it out on Number Nine. He didn't go.

"But you are sad," he said. "And when you are sad, I am too—father."

"Father?" I exploded. "I'm not your father."

"You created me," Number Nine returned. "The humans call some father. If you aren't my father, then what are you?"

"Does it matter?" I roared. "Get out of my sight, you poor, dumb, scatter-brained—"

I choked back the rest, when he left, and felt utterly ashamed. Number Nine loved me, in his own way, following me around like a dog. Loved me, as Eve didn't—

Eve appeared suddenly, in the doorway. She gazed at me, with my head in my hands.

"Poor dear," she said softly. "Number Nine was right. You *are* jealous. I'm glad! I did it only to make you jealous! Do you know you hardly noticed me, for weeks and weeks?"

"Eve! I've been so busy—" But I stopped giving excuses, and rectified the matter, high in the tower under the moon. I told her that in all the universe, there could be no love like ours.

There was no flaw in Utopia after all!

AFTER Crane's editorial, the world began to take notice. Adam Link's silly experiment was turning out well. Commissions came from business firms, social societies, and even the government, to observe and take notes. Business men tried to buy my inventions.

"I'm prepared," said one, "to write you out a check for one million dollars, for patent rights to the atomic-power process."

I shook my head instantly.

"Ten million!" he offered. "A hundred million!"

I smiled within myself.

"Money isn't used in Utopia City. Besides, if I wished, I could buy *you* out, ten times over."

"But atomic-power! It's the greatest thing since the steam-engine. The world must have it!"

"The world must first prove itself

worthy," I retorted, politely but firmly requesting his departure.

But the high spot of it all was when Number Nine, my errand boy, came stumbling in one day.

"Some men to see you," he announced. "Out on the steps."

"On the steps? Why didn't you show them in? I've told you time and again humans must be treated politely. Who are they?"

Number Nine shrugged, rolling his eyes.

"And I've told you over and over to ask who they are!" I scolded him. Sometimes Number Nine really aroused my anger for his sheer dumbness. I was sorry I had created such a miserable specimen of a robot.

I stalked out—and gasped.

The whole thing had been staged, obviously with Eve's connivance. All the human population of the city stood before the building, and my hundred robots. A group of ten men and women stood on the steps.

"We are a committee from the Social Service Society," one man stated.

He strode up to me, and pinned a bronze medal on my chest—or tried to pin it. Eve darted forward, while the crowd chuckled, and hooked the medallion over a rivet-stud, by using all the pressure of her superstrong fingers.

Then the medal blazed out, against my duller body finish.

I was speechless.

Recovering his poise, the man spoke.

"This medal proclaims that one Adam Link, for meritorious social service to humanity, is hereby entered in the Hall of Fame!"

Hall of Fame! My cup was complete. All the trials and despair of the past were over. The world at last accepted Adam Link, the robot, in honor and esteem.

I couldn't say a word. I could only stand, almost trembling, and wish my creator were here beside me, to know that he had not made a mistake, bringing a metal-brain to life. So many times I had thought it a mistake.

When the committee left, I nudged Eve.

"Well, Eve," I couldn't help crowing. "Here's Utopia. You said it wouldn't work."

"I was wrong, Adam, wasn't I?"

It didn't occur to me till later that, like a woman, she had not quite conceded my

victory. Was she reserving judgment till later.

CHAPTER V

Trouble in Utopia

AND suddenly, a cloud settled over the clear horizon.

Sam Harley came in one day, after working hours, with a dozen men behind him.

"Anything wrong?" I asked, seeing his face set in rather grim lines. Usually the humans flocked to the recreational centers and libraries after work. "Is there anything lacking, in the line of amusements? If so, let me know. I'm ready to add anything to make life worth while."

"Yes, there's something lacking, all right," Sam Harley agreed. "And it isn't recreation or reading. We're tired of that. There are more important things in life."

"What?" I was puzzled.

"Government," Harley said succinctly. "Human government!"

I felt as though he had thrown a bomb in my face. So far, in Utopia City, there had been no definite "government." Everyone simply worked, and lived, and enjoyed life free from care and worry. I thought it was sufficient. But now, what was this strange attitude voiced by Sam Harley and his followers?

I waited, and he went on.

"I've formed a party. Gaining members, I'm now in a position to form a civic government."

"But I'm the civic government," I remonstrated. "Are you dissatisfied with me?"

"No-o," he drew out the word slowly. "No, not exactly. But it wouldn't be right for you, a robot, to continue as our pseudo-ruler. Give us back our affairs in our own hands."

And then I knew. It was a minor "revolution" for "independence." I could not blame them. The human spirit chafes under imposed "rule." Then I laughed. It really didn't amount to a hill of beans. Let them set up their little "government" and pretend to rule. I would still be the power behind the throne. Or the guiding hand. They were like children.

I gave in, realizing it must be so.

Sam Harley promptly moved into the Administration Building, next to my office. "Mayor of Utopia City" was painted on his

door. He apportioned various offices to his followers, and the city government was duly installed. The printing office was ordered to put a headline in the *Utopia City News*—"Sam Harley Appointed Mayor by Adam Link!"

IT relieved me of many petty details in the running of the city. I had more free time, and dived eagerly into my laboratory work once again. I wanted to add to my roster of inventions that would oil the progress of Utopia City more and more.

"Thomas Edison Link on the job," I told Eve happily. "Mankind has been puttering along, with one foot back in the jungle. The true machine age is around the corner, and with it their pathetic bleat for Prosperity."

Eve seemed thoughtful.

"Maybe you shouldn't have done it, Adam—let Harley become mayor, with all the authority that implies."

"The city practically runs itself," I laughed. "Harley doesn't know it, but he's a figurehead, nothing more."

"Still, human nature—" Eve said vaguely. But I wasn't listening. I was inventing an electric light-bulb that gave off no waste heat.

Number Nine came rushing in, his eye-shutters clicking as his slow-witted brain tried to form words.

"Adam Link!" he finally stuttered. "They're having an argument—the humans! Come and see. It's funny!"

But it wasn't humorous at all. Racing to the Administration Building, I saw the scene on the broad stone steps. Harley and his group, at the top, faced a mob below who were hooting and yelling. It was close to midnight. Why weren't they in bed?

The two groups seemed about to clash. I stepped between. To back me up, several of my all-night robot police arrived from their stations. Frank Steele came running from the power-house where he was chief engineer, watching over the atomic-power unit.

The humans eased back, at this show of authority.

"What is going on?" I demanded.

"I heard threats all day," Harley answered. "I kept my men here tonight, to protect our files. That crazy mob down there wants to wreck my office. But I'm mayor!"

The crowd howled. "We want an election! We want an election!"

"Silence!" I roared. "I don't understand."

Jed Tomkins stepped forward, from the group below.

"It's like this, Adam Link," he explained, while the others quieted. "You set up Sam Harley as mayor. But all the people don't like him as mayor. There should have been an election, like everywhere else in this country!"

Great heavens above! What had I started?

I DECIDED to put a stop to all the foolishness, here and now.

"There won't be a mayor at all," I stated, "since you humans must wrangle over it. I was your mayor, or patriarch, before. I re-install myself. Sorry, Harley, but you may move out tomorrow—"

"Yeah?" Harley drew a paper from his inner clothing and waved it. "You signed this, Adam Link. It officially empowers me as mayor, for one year!"

Yes, I had signed the silly document, without thinking twice. A groan came from the crowd below. Then a shout of rage.

But my answering shout of rage drowned theirs.

"Fools!" My amplified voice beat back from the buildings. "I'll have no more of this. Sam Harley is mayor, since I signed him into that office. But his term is only one year. And he will answer to me for any mismanagement of affairs in Utopia City!"

My voice changed to pleading.

"This is all so unnecessary. Please keep your heads. Remember that you are living a better life here than ever before. Keep it so!"

The logic bit home. The crowd dispersed quietly. Sam Harley ducked back into his office. But I was not so dismayed.

"Just letting off a little steam," I said to my robots. "Humans are like that. When there is no trouble, they try to make it, for a bit of excitement. Tomorrow they'll be as meek as lambs, and laughing over it."

"Strange creatures," Frank Steele mused.

"They wish to dominate one another. By the way, is Harley our mayor, too? Yesterday he ordered me to make another atomic-power unit, in case this one breaks down. He put it as a suggestion."

"Ignore the suggestion," I said. "Harley

is testing his range of authority. This will all straighten out soon."

I was annoyed at the way Eve glanced at me, and then up at the stars, questioningly.

THE stars looked down, questioningly themselves, in the following weeks.

There was dissension in Utopia!

First of all, a strike was called in Factory One. Jed Tomkins had formed a union. The issue was why Sam Harley and his group should loll in their offices, merely giving orders, when others had to work. Fist-fights occurred.

"Adam, you must do something!" Eve cried. "Utopia is falling apart!"

"Nonsense, Eve!" I said calmly. "It is a good sign, of a healthy, vigorous people. Anyway, nothing in life is faultlessly smooth. The society from which they come is also a vigorous, sometimes bickering democracy. Be patient. Let them get it out of their systems, this quarreling. Remember Utopian life is still new to them. Let them have a bit of the old life, for comparison. Then they'll wake as from a bad dream, and all will be well."

But I was jolted out of this philosophical calm.

Number Nine one day displayed a green piece of paper with scrollwork on it. There was an engraving of myself on one side, Harley on the other, and a large numeral One in the corners.

"Where did you get it?" I rasped.

"From Sam Harley," Number Nine said. "I ran an errand for him, and he said, here's a tip. He called it money. Just think, Adam, with this I can buy a big meal anywhere in town!" He grunted, then. "Wait, I don't need food! Was Harley laughing at me, like everybody else?"

Money!

The word was like a falling mountain. I raced up the Administration steps with such speed that chips of stone flew under my heel-plates. I yanked the door nearly off its hinges.

Harley sat with stacks of green paper before him, marked in ones, fives, tens and twenties. He looked up.

"Hello, Adam. Now don't get excited. Sure this is money, printed by myself. Did you think you could run the city forever without it? Nice theory, working in brotherhood and all that, but you need a

fundamental basis for exchange of goods."

He watched me carefully, trying to read my reaction. But I was just unmoving metal to him, as expressionless as a statue.

"Do you like your picture on it?" he finished lamely.

"Yes," I said. Even he was surprised. I let him think that I was flattered over the inscription under my picture—"Adam Link, great founder of Utopia City."

"You're right, Harley," I said. "We do need currency to keep the economic machinery oiled and going."

Let them get *that* out of their systems, too.

Harley grinned in pleasure.

"Now we're getting somewhere, Adam. Between you and me we'll get Utopia City on a solid, real foundation. Your other system was only temporary. All the people are realizing that, gradually."

I left, grinning also within myself. Give a man enough rope and he'll hang himself. That was the way to do it. Let the mayorship, spawned from the old system of the outer world, smell to high heaven. When it fell, it would bury with it all future dabbling in "politics." Then Utopia would take its second wind, and climb the heights.

After all, the end was worth the means. So the mind of Adam Link reasoned, in this new crisis.

CHAPTER VI

Revolt in Utopia

SUSPENSE hung like a dark cloud over Utopia City.

More strikes occurred, against the regime in power. Harley struck back. He instituted "wages" for all labor, and withheld funds from the strikers. He clamped down on the free distribution of food and clothing, deliberately underfeeding the strikers, since they had no money with which to "buy."

Jed Tomkins led a mob to the food warehouse, and broke in. Rioting resulted. For twenty-four hours, holding the warehouse, Jed Tomkins set himself up as mayor, by accord of the majority. Harley set fire to the place, driving the short-lived rival government out.

I called my robots to put out the fire. They waded into the burning building, stamping and beating, and put the final embers out with water. No other building

was endangered, as no buildings in Utopia were near one another.

But I forbade my robots to interfere in the human doings. They looked on in utter amazement.

"They'll pull the city down over their ears!" Frank Steele gasped. "All humans are mad!"

"Adam! Adam!" Eve almost sobbed. "What are you doing? This will end in catastrophe!"

I was saddened and dismayed myself. The humans were engaged in a tug-of-war for power. They were back at their old game of seeking privileges, not satisfied with just living and enjoying a better life than anywhere on Earth.

Could it go on? While I had ruled, all was well. Now Utopia was fast becoming a cess-pool of maladjustment and struggle. Even the gardeners, whose duty it had been to keep the city parks in trim, shirked. The city was beginning to look shoddy.

"But still we must wait patiently," I told my restless, wondering robots. "They will come to their senses, of their own will. Utopia will rise from these ashes, stronger and better for it."

Words of wisdom? Or words of utter folly?

I KNEW the answer one day, when Frank Steele stalked into my laboratory.

"Adam Link, if you don't do something, I will! Harley today demanded that I make another atomic-power unit, and make a complete set of blueprints for him. I refused. He threatened then to see that no oil was available to the robots, for our body-parts. Now that's the last straw. These humans must be put in their place."

It was the last straw—almost.

"Easy, Adam!" I told myself as I marched to Harley's office. "Anger won't help."

I was reasonably calm when I faced Sam Harley, mayor of Utopia City.

"Sure," he admitted readily. "I want the blueprints of the atomic-power unit. It's the greatest thing in commercial history. We'll patent atomic-power, and make a gigantic fortune. If we handle it right, we can even become the industrial captains of Earth!"

What madness had spawned in his mind? I answered patiently.

"But why do that? You are living a good, clean, abundant life. You need noth-

ing. You can't gain anything by simply amassing a fortune. You can't live a better life with all the gold on Earth. Don't you see, Harley?"

He turned a deaf ear.

"Don't be childish, Link. This is the opportunity of the ages. Are we going to sit here like monks in a monastery, when we have the chance to really put Utopia City on the map? Why, we can manufacture the units right here, hold the monopoly, and make this the center of all Earth industry. Now tell me, am I right?"

"You're right, as far as that goes," Frank Steele put in. "Oil, coal, and all present methods of producing power in the world would be obsolete the moment atomic-power was introduced."

"There you are!" Harley said triumphantly. "Your own man admits it, Link. Now let's not waste time. How soon can you have the blueprints for me, Adam?"

"The day after eternity ends," I said quietly.

"But Link, you must—"

"No!"

I thundered the word this time, so that the windows rattled.

"You've revealed yourself as completely incompetent, unworthy, and ruthless, Sam Harley. I hereby declare your government illegal. I will resume rule, since you humans are too blind and stupid to rule yourselves properly. I gave you all the leeway I possibly could, hoping you would merit your office. Instead, you've cracked the foundations of Utopia. This is my city. I will run it!"

I had finally put my foot down.

"The paper you signed!" Harley screeched. "How can you take back rule, against your pledged signature?"

"By the right of might," I roared, "the only method you understand. Now get out!"

To help him, I caught him by the collar and deposited him outside the door. I put my metal fist through the glass-panel on which was his name, as mayor. I kicked his desk to pieces and stamped his papers to shreds.

Only then did the red rage in my brain clear away.

I turned as Eve and other robots dashed up.

"We're taking over the city," I commanded. "Destroy all money. Ban all strikes. Police all streets, day and night.

What a fool I was to let them play at their mad little games, like vicious children. By tomorrow, we will have Utopia again."

BUT Utopia was not back the next day. Or the next, or next. Was it too late? Had the seed of destruction been sown?

Harley had left, muttering threats. The threats materialized. Robots were stoned, wherever they appeared. What wild story Harley succeeded in telling, I don't know. Perhaps that I had threatened to make them slaves. The people, inflamed by the recent release of their darker passions, were fertile ground for any tall tale that stigmatized the robots.

Curiously, the two human factions that had so recently been bitter antagonists united against us. Robots were the common enemy of mankind.

I tried to call a meeting in Utopia Square, to lay the ghost. The people refused to congregate, stoning robots sent after them from gangways and windows. I commanded my robots not to touch a human. One death or injury, even by sheerest accident, would brand us forever as Frankensteins.

"What can we do?" Eve cried. "Utopia is crumbling!"

I groaned, for she was right. My Eden had become Hell. Utopia had become wicked Babylon!

Desperately, I had my robots take over the power-plant, and shut off power. I would use human methods. I would let them feel the pinch of poverty and want they formerly had.

With power off, all the machinery in the city stopped. All radios, autos, air-conditioning units, cooking stoves. Life for humans would be unbearable in a few days. Then they would see their folly, and come around to me.

Instead, they tried leaving. With no vehicles available, some families began tramping out into the desert. They would die before they had gone half-way to safety under the burning sun. I sent my robots to carry them screaming and bawling back into the city. It only added fuel to their hatred.

The situation had gone from bad to worse. All the human population were our bitter enemies now. All except one.

Jed Tomkins came limping up to me, thinner, haggard, not even chewing tobacco.

"Adam Link, I'm your friend," he said.

"I still believe in you. But it's all a mess now. God, what an awful mess! Harley, after you kicked him out, convinced the others that you had sworn to kill the whole human race—all over Earth! That you and your robots had finally turned Frankenstein. I tried to talk them out of it. Told them it was ridiculous. They beat me—"

He fell in a dead faint. He was horribly bruised. Eve knelt to attend to him, with a first-aid kit.

The rest of my robots looked at one another, sadly,—and angrily. Sad that humans could be so wrong-minded. Angry at being branded as Frankensteins.

"They cast stones at us!" Frank Steele muttered. "They turned against us, forgetting all we did for them. They blame us for all their self-started troubles. For two cents I'd—"

"Silence!" I snapped, especially as some of the other robots were muttering, too. "Forgive them, don't condemn them. There's still hope for Utopia. Maybe in a few days they'll listen to reason."

CHAPTER VII

War in Utopia

WE waited. We held the heart of the city, the downtown section. They were in the residential sections. Would they think better of their folly, and send a delegation to us, to talk things over? I found myself praying, to the High Powers of the universe who watched over humans and robots alike. Praying that I had not once again brought down the name Frankenstein on the robot race.

I was alone in my office. I had sent Eve away, wishing solitude.

I was aware suddenly that I heard her voice, low and distant. In the quiet, shutdown city, sounds carried well. It came from the tower, above.

"No, Frank," she was saying. "You mustn't talk that way. Adam will think a way out."

I had experienced all human emotions before. Jealousy, recently. Now it crept over me like a black tide. I made my way swiftly but silently up the steps, and peered out on the tower balcony, below which the city was spread. Again there was a full moon, overhead.

And two glinting metal bodies close together, talking.

"I hate to say this, Eve. But I think your Adam is going to pieces. What's more, I think he mismanaged the whole business from the start—letting Harley go on till he smashed things. Adam ruined Utopia!"

Eve jerked back.

"Don't say such horrid things, Frank! It's not true."

"Come, come," Frank Steele snapped. "Adam botched up the whole robot problem from the start. From the day he was created. You can't reason with humans. They are imbeciles. But they can be handled easily—in a way I've figured out!"

"What do you mean?" Eve asked, startled.

Steele's microphonic voice changed to a sort of husky rumble.

"I mean that I love you, Eve! Leave Adam. Come with me. Together we'll rule humans. Many of the robots are with me. Eve—"

IT was like a rifle shot. Eve's hand swept around, slapping Steele's metal cheek with a ringing clang. Eve is mentally a human girl. It was natural for her to do what she did, as any flesh-and-blood girl would.

"Beast!" she hissed. "I love Adam, as I will to the end of time!"

My thoughts were curious, at the moment. Dr. Charles Link had fashioned a being of metal—but one that acquired human emotions. Even they mighty emotion of love. More than once it had manifested itself. A human girl had once fallen in love with me, a metal man. Also a metal girl. But for the first time, this triangle had come up. A metal man striving for Eve's love.

"What!" Frank Steele seemed entirely taken aback. "You lie! All those hours we spent together—"

"Were only to make Adam jealous," Eve told him bitingly. "You mean nothing to me, Frank Steele."

He stood for a moment, rocking. A robot's alloy face shows no emotion, but I could feel the frustrated rage fuming in his mind. He leaped at her, arms upraised for smashing blows.

I leaped quicker. I dealt him a staggering blow at the side of the head. He stumbled back, then whirled like a beast at bay. With insane fury, he came at me.

My own robot attacking me! Not mov-

ing, I looked at him—this being I had created. This being who had—by the mockery of fate—become *my* Frankenstein monster! Appropriate, indeed, had been the name he chose for himself—"Frank! Short for Frankenstein, you know!"

Still couldn't believe it.

"Stop!" I said. "I forgive you your words, Steele. You didn't really mean them. We've all been a little upset lately—"

For answer, he dove at my legs. I was taken unawares. I toppled backwards, smashing through the light grill railing of the balcony. I fell twenty stories, with Eve's scream ringing in my ears.

The universe seemed to explode in one rending crash, as I struck the pavement—*head-first!* The second before my mind blinked out, I knew that I would never awaken again. For my iridium-sponge brain would be crushed to atoms.

THEN how was it that my brain again blinked into being?

That was the question I asked myself, as I opened my eyes and realized I was alive. Eve stood over me, and a group of other robots. How long had I been unconscious?

"Thank Heaven you've come to, dear!" Eve half sobbed. "Ten, long, terrible hours I've waited!"

"Ten hours?" I said. "But what saved me? I landed on my head."

"Number Nine," Eve said. "He was below the tower, looking up and watching. He caught you. Saved you from smashing to the pavement itself. As it was, the jolt knocked your electron-center dead for ten hours."

I bounced up, with no more than a few dents in my body, and my head a little twisted to the side from a loose neck cable.

"Where's Number Nine?" I asked gratefully.

The robots hung their heads.

"He fell back so hard from cushioning your fall," Eve said in a low voice, "that his head cracked against the stone. His brain—"

She didn't have to say it. His iridium-sponge must be sprayed over a ten-foot circle, as mine would have been. I hung my head, too, honoring the passing of Number Nine. For once in his short, bewildered life he had thought quickly—and beat the swiftest of all foes, Death. For me! And so many times I had shouted at him, scolded him—

Useless recriminations, now.

"Frank Steele?" I demanded. "Where is he. We have a little unfinished business—"

I stopped and went cold. Why were the robots fidgeting nervously? Why was Eve looking at me in stark horror?

"Adam," she said, "prepare yourself. After Steele threw you down, he thought you were dead, as we all did. He came below and proclaimed himself the new robot leader. He announced his plan—to rule Earth! When he left, sixty of the robots followed him. Forty of us stayed behind. Then we found you alive."

I digested what I had heard. Steele leading sixty robots in a war against the human race! I had to stop it.

"Where is he?"

"At the power-house."

"Come."

WE marched to the power-house. A robot sentry was on the steps outside, but more to guard against human intervention than robots. He stared at me, in the lead, then darted within.

Frank Steele emerged a second later, all his robots at his back. His amazement at seeing me alive was great, but controlled.

I explained in brief phrases.

"Now," I said, "your short reign is over. And for what you spoke, I sentence you to death. You men back of him—grab him! Deliver him to me."

But not robot moved, back of him.

"They accept me as leader, Adam," Steele crowed, "whether you are dead or alive. They believe, as I do, that you are a has-been. And that robots have only one place in the world of humans—as rulers!"

I forgave them, the robots who had listened to such words, even as he spoke. They had seen the worst of human nature, recently. They had seen the humans foolishly trample their own Paradise into the dirt. Small wonder that they believed now robots must rule these pitiful beings.

"Listen to me, all of you!" I spoke in stentorian volume. "You will never succeed. Mankind, when aroused, is a formidable enemy. You will build a vast robot army, yes. But cannon will mow you down. When you try to build more robots, laughing, you will find them choking off your metal supplies. Long before you defeat their armies, they will think of a thousand things to try. It won't work, I tell you—"

"Of course not, that way," Steele laughed. "You underestimate my intelligence, Adam Link. There is only one way to win over humans—by the power of money! Beat them at their own game. We will manufacture atomic-power units, and sell them. We will build the industrial army that Sam Harley dreamed of. As sole builders of the atomic-power units, robots will be the money-kings of Earth!"

Madness? No. It could work that way. Frank Steele's penetrating mind had evolved the one plan that could win Earth. As industrial dictator, Steele would have the human race under his thumb.

And dictatorship, of all possible things, was the last course in the world I wanted robots to follow.

"I denounce you as a traitor to our robot race, Frank Steele!" I said. "This is an ultimatum—I give you one hour in which to think better of your ruthless scheme."

I TURNED away, my forty faithful robots following. I waited at the Administration Building.

"What if he doesn't back down?" Eve asked.

I made no answer. I hated to even think of it.

Fifty-nine minutes went by, with agonizing slowness. I arose, to lead my robots to—battle!

Even as the word flashed in my mind, the battle began. Frank Steele had attacked! His robots came crashing into our midst, swinging huge iron clubs. Three of my men went down with smashed brains before we knew what had happened.

"Fight, men!" I yelled. "Fight for your lives—and the future of the robot race!"

You will never know what effort it took to give that order—commanding my robots to fight their brothers. It was the first time robots were battling—against each other.

To me, at that moment, the universe seemed to give a cry of horror.

But, to be more realistic about it, it was self-defense.

My men sprang into action, with their steel fists. I snatched up a metal chair and smashed it down on a raiding robot, steeling my soul. His alloy skull cracked apart and shreds of his iridium-sponge flew through the air. I stared for a long second at his fallen, useless body. I had given him life. And I had taken it away. I felt like

a father killing his own child.

But the other thought tore my soul more—civil war among the robots! It had happened, for all the preaching I had done against humans for their folly of warfare.

CHAPTER VIII

Utopia Falls

WAR it was, and perhaps a stranger, more furious struggle than humans could ever know. Steel men against steel men, each with superhuman strength. Powers were let loose against which no human army could have stood a moment. Yet there were no guns.

We were still in the large lobby of the Administration Building, where Frank Steele thought to corner us and finish us off. He had sent his whole force to win in one stroke—or had he?

Edging back, and rapidly counting, I saw there were only eighty robots in the melee. Steele had sent forty against our forty. Out of a sense of fair-play? No, not him! Where was he, and the other twenty? What plan—

Suddenly the attackers turned and fled, in a body, leaving nine dead. We stood bewildered at the sudden end of hostilities. But only for a moment.

"Quick!" I commanded. "Out the back way!"

We clattered from the building, just as it came down with a resounding crash! If we had remained within another second, we would be buried under tons of steel and concrete.

I saw what had brought the building down. Off at the other side, beyond the heap, stood the twenty missing robots. But not the robots they had been an hour before. Each had exchanged his manlike body for a workman-body. As when we had built the city, they had rivet-hands, saw-arms, crane appendages, and all the other varieties. These bodies had been stored away, when the construction was done, for future expansion of the city. Frank Steele had taken them from storage, along with the special heavy-duty batteries needed for the increased horsepower.

How diabolically clever Steele had been!

While his forty robots engaged us, the terrific clatter had cloaked their weakening of the building. The workmen bodies had swiftly wrenched out a cornerstone here, a

strategic beam there, an important key-support elsewhere. Then the crane and tractor men had exerted their full powers, pushing and yanking and pulling against the building till it cracked apart like a half-sawed plank.

Steele saw that he had failed to crush us under the collapsed ruin. He leaped to the top of the pile and gazed down at us on the other side.

"I've declared war on you, Adam Link! I won't rest till I've destroyed you and all your robots—except Eve. Come on, men!"

They came running for open attack. I calculated the chances. Our 38 against their 52, the odds now stood. No chance for us, in hand to hand battle. I gave the order and we retreated. Or rather we ran—and scattered. We lurked behind hedges and trees in the wide park space. Steele sent his men to ferret us out.

A swift arm swinging a metal club wrenched from park benches—a microphonic groan—the metallic clang of a lifeless metal body falling as junk. Indian fighting. Ambush. It was my only chance.

Steele lost three men that way, pursuing us into the park, till he thought better of it. He called them off. They congregated beyond the park and headed back for the power-plant. There Frank Steele would hatch other plans to wipe us out.

I CALLED my men around me, in the respite. I pointed to where groups of humans, here and there, peered from a distance, having watched this battle of giants.

"We must get them out of the city," I said. "Frank Steel will trample them down in his eagerness to get us. Besides, it is not well for humans to see robots warring."

Besides that, they were only too willing to leave—to get away from these metal warriors who would stamp humans flat if they got in the way. By a grapevine that rustled through their residential section, they heard of the trucks being brought out of garages, that would bear them to safety. Run by gasoline rather than electric power, the trucks were not stalled as all else in Utopia City was.

All night long my robots drove back and forth, delivering humans within walking distance of the railroad junction which was our nearest contact with the outside world. Frank Steele did not bother us. Night battling was out of the question.

At dawn, Utopia was empty of humans.

Sam Harley and Jed Tomkins were in the last truck to leave.

"Utopia, bah!" Harley said in parting. "I knew it wouldn't work. Shouldn't have been fool enough to come, in the first place. Utopia, bah!"

"Shut up," Jed Tomkins snapped. "If anybody ruined it, you did." He turned to me. "So long, Adam Link. Thanks for trying. I'm going to watch the papers. If you ever advertise again, I'll be back!"

The truck vanished into the night. I turned back to Utopia City. I think I laughed, in a grinding sort of way.

Utopia City was a battleground, now. A trampled Eden. Paradise Lost.

I WILL try to give a clear picture of what has been entered in my private journal of robot history as the First Robot War. And I hope the last.

To force our faction to face his superior force, Frank Steele had his workmen contingent systematically raze the city. We would have no hiding places, for a drawn-out defense. Starting at one end of town, they began leveling building after building.

The robots had been builders, a few months before. Now they became wreckers. And they worked with appalling swiftness. Houses and towers toppled like tenpins. Soon the downtown section began to go, its greater structure measuring their length with thunderous crashes, as the metal termites undermined their foundations.

Utopia City melted before our eyes, into dusty heaps of utter ruin.

"Oh, Adam!" Eve moaned. "It was so beautiful, so wonderful. Can't we stop them?"

I tried, in several desperate ways.

Gathering the trucks, we stormed down on them like a panzer division, trying to run them over, machine against machine. In counter-attack, Frank Steele sent his men out in the electric autos. He still had the atomic-power unit in operation, feeding them ether-borne power.

With full speed, the little cars rammed into our trucks, smashing them. Robots jumped out of the combined wreckage, to come at each other hammer-and-tongs. Again, in the equality of hand-to-hand struggle, I could not win. And his cranes, picking off a man of mine here and there, would grip them in their long pincers, swing them around, and hurl them high in the air to land as utter debris.

I lost ten more men, to their seven, before I withdrew.

I next tried bombarding the wrecking crew, as they worked on the side of buildings, exposed. My robots hurled great stone blocks, to dislodge them. Frank Steele sent out a covering force, and their barrage of concrete bombs rained back at us. Again I had to withdraw.

I tried burning them out, setting flame to park trees when the wind was right. The wall of fire swept to the building they were demolishing. Eager tongues of flame licked at them, but it only served to weaken the building faster. The wrecking robots were unharmed except for an oxide coating on their metal bodies.

UTOPIA CITY came down stone by stone.

In one day, it was more than three-quarters razed. I knew that at the next dawn, Frank Steele would have me cornered. He would level the last few structures, and then I would have to face him in the open, either at the city-site or out on the desert.

One building still stood, in the desolate center of town—the power-plant. Within was the undamaged atomic-power unit. Frank Steele must be still working on the blue-print, before he destroyed the only existing model. With the blueprints, after victory over me, he could build a new city—Robot City, center of robot dictatorship.

All night long I stared at the building, symbol of the greatest achievement of Adam Link, inventor.

I laughed harshly. Symbol of Utopia's fall!

At dawn I spoke to my remaining 25 robots.

"This will be our last stand, men. We are outnumbered. Fight as you've never fought before. If we die, we have died nobly!"

As the gray of dawn burst into red glare, the enemy appeared. A grim, silent, formidable phalanx of 45. We took our stand in the open. No use to run.

The two lines came to grips, with a resounding clash, like two lines of armored knights of Medieval times. Robot fought robot, with mighty metal clubs no human could have lifted. A battle of metal Sampsons, before which the mightiest dinosaurs of a past age might have fled, screaming in terror.

The din must have reverberated as distant thunder far out into the desert. Gears clashed, cogs whined, wheels spun screeching as the full mechanical powers of Herculean machine-men were exerted. Rivets, bolts, springs, cracked body-plates flew for yards as the club blows took toll. Often a robot would fight as he went down piece-meal. An arm shattered, and he would use his other arm. His side ripped out, he would turn his protected side. A leg off, he would hop. Both legs off, he would wield his club from a lying position till finally his antagonist battered his remaining arm to shreds. Then, at last helpless, he would await the final blow—to his brain.

Even the legendary gods, with their thunderbolts, might have stumbled away in fear, to let these metal colossi alone.

Curiously, the rangers came, rather than gods. The departed people must have entered an alarm. Sirens screaming, squad cars and motorcycles roared up—but unheard. Unheard, the head officer shouted for us to stop. They emptied their pistols at us—unheard. Then, after one good look, they turned and fled again, shaken to the roots of their souls.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw them go, these humans who had witnessed a sight unparalleled in history. They would laugh, if they ever saw humans fight, and think again of this titanic battle that shook the very Earth.

I turned back.

Each time a robot fell, whether enemy or ally, I groaned. For this I had created them—to smash each other's skulls open like savage beasts.

"Come, Eve," I said brokenly, pulling her away. We had fought only in defense, Eve and I, withholding death-blows. We had created them, Eve and I.

WE slipped back, skirting a ruin. The battleground blocked out to our eyes, but the furious din, like ten thousand machines whining and roaring and thundering, followed us relentlessly.

"We're leaving?" Eve gasped. "But Frank Steele will win!"

I shook my head, as we reached my laboratory-ruin. Steele had demolished it first, lest I made some instrument of destruction as a weapon.

"Help me clear the center space," I said. "Hurry!"

In an hour, between us, we had shoved

broken stone and debris aside. A trap-door flush with the floor was exposed. I jerked it up, and we slipped into a tunnel. The battle-sounds faded, where the last few of my men—judging by the decreased volume—were staving off final extinction.

Then all was silent, as we ran as fast as we could in utter darkness.

"What is this tunnel?" Eve asked, astonished.

"Number Nine and I built it secretly, from my laboratory to the power-house, at odd times," I told her. "Dips down through bed-rock. Easy to drill it out, with the atom-crushing hammers I invented for excavation work. I never did quite trust Frank Steele. I wanted quick access to the power-plant any time grave emergency arose. This is the emergency. If the power-house isn't too well guarded, we have a chance—"

We sped under the battleground, under the city, to the power-house in the center. If we had tried the same route above, Steele's men would have spied us and given chase.

The tunnel sloped up, under the power-house floor. I pushed up the trap-door set unnoticed in a supply room. We tip-toed to the door and looked out into the main room. Frank Steele was there, as I expected, busily working over the blueprint with two other robots.

He looked out of a window.

"Isn't that battle over yet?" he said impatiently. "I won't feel easy till they bring Adam Link's smashed head to me."

I leaped out.

"Here's my head, Frank Steele!" I roared. "I'm delivering it in person!"

I bounded at them, taking full advantage of the surprise. I had picked up a steel beam in the supply room, ten feet long. I swung this in a whistling arc. It came down on the foremost robot's head, splitting him from head to pelvis, spraying wheels and wires through the air.

One out of action.

THE other robot ran aside, to escape me, with Eve after him. I faced Frank Steele. I swung my great bludgeon again.

But recovering, Steele had had time to snatch up a similar steel bar from his desk, evidently kept on hand for protection. He swung his. The two metal clubs banged together. Again and again we wielded our clubs, each striving to catch the other be-

fore he could parry.

Frank Steele was as quick and strong as myself, and with equal mental reflexes. For long seconds we ferociously, silently, battered at one another. Glancing blows landed. I caught Steele on the shoulder, ripping rivets and plates away. Steele stove in my left side, failing only by a millimeter from smashing my main electrical distributor.

Our steel clubs became twisted and cracked. One of my blows finally knocked his away, but at the same time, mine shivered apart. I threw the useless stump at him. He dodged. We came at each other with alloy fists, delivering blows that would have knocked an elephant fifty feet back with a spine broken throughout its length.

We fought on, like metal gladiators who never tired, never weakened. How could I win? I had received some damage, in the previous battling with his men. Frank Steele was fresh, whole, except for what damage I had inflicted, returned in kind. He had the advantage, in the long run.

I prayed for a break. It came.

In a split-second silence, while we fell back from each other, no sound drifted in from outside—from the other battleground.

"We've won!" Frank Steele shouted triumphantly. "My men destroyed your last robot, Adam Link. My men are coming to help me now—"

The blow that landed squarely in his face, while he was off-guard, might have dented the side of a battleship. It completely shattered my arm, as sections of steel telescoped and fell apart. But it also cracked Frank Steele's skull. The iridium-sponge within ripped apart from its anchorage, bringing to him the blankness of non-existence.

His eye-mirrors reflected a stunning surprise. Then they clicked shut limply. His metal body stood a moment, swaying. There was a metallic click inside, as mechanisms all ground to a stop. Then the alloy corpse sprawled full length on the floor, with a disphane clatter.

I stared down. The first Benedict Arnold of the robot race was dead.

I turned.

Eve was sitting on top the fallen form of the third robot, which lay with its head twisted off its neck-piece, from Eve's hammerlock and wrench. She was staring down at the blank eye-mirrors. And weeping within. A mental woman, Eve could not

kill without utter remorse.

I grabbed her hand and yanked her erect.

"Frank Steele's remaining men are coming. Quick! Into the tunnel."

I remained only to set a series of switches on the control-board of the atomic-power unit. Then I jerked down a master switch that would feed sand-fuel into the disintegration chamber at a mounting rate. When the excess loads of released energy began to seek escape—

I leaped into the tunnel after Eve. We raced down into it, for fifteen seconds.

Then we were knocked flat. The ground around us trembled like jelly, followed by a deafening blast of sound. The tunnel walls gave way, showering down tons of rock. We were buried.

TWENTY-FOUR hours later, we had dug our way out. The force of the blast had been cushioned enough, in our refuge, to merely bury us without crushing our bodies flat.

We emerged into sunshine at the bottom of a wide, shallow pit in the desert floor.

It was five miles wide, created by the greatest explosion in human history. A pound of matter had burst into pure energy, like a blast of super-dynamite.

We climbed wearily to the crater's rim, and strode out into the desert. We looked back.

Not one stick or stone—or atom—of Utopia City remained.

It was all in limbo now. My hopes and dreams. My brave Number Nine. My Frankenstein. My Eden. It was all behind me, lost forever in a strange combined memory of nightmare and Paradise.

"You were right, Eve," I said. "Utopia is a dream toward which men must work—but never achieve. Perhaps it is best so—as a shining, glorious goal that guides like a light and never goes out."

"Oh, Adam!" Eve sobbed. "I'm so sorry—for you. You tried so hard against the impossible!"

I shrugged.

"Amen," I sighed in resignation. "Adam Link will have to content himself with lesser experiments."

« SOME THOUGHTS ON TIME »

Time is neither short nor long, it being a relative term in our everyday life. Time cannot and does not pass. It is present everywhere. Yet our every action is dependent upon it. Nothing we do can escape the immutable presence of time.

What, then, is time? Under the theory of Einstein, Time, joined with Space, is the elusive Fourth Dimension. Which is meaningless to most of us.

Newton defined Time as "measured duration." We commonly define it as "the elapsing spaces or periods between successions of events." Twenty-three centuries ago, Aristotle recognized that the sole measurer of Time is Motion, therefore it is the three well-known planetary bodies, the sun,

the moon, and our own Earth who play the greatest roles in determining the passage of Time and furnish our imaginations with yardsticks by which elapsing spaces can be measured and divided into Calendar Time.

Thus, although we do not think of it, the science of astronomy plays a constant and extremely important part in our daily lives. Not one action but it is measured by an astronomer. He says to us: "That act took you so-and-so-many minutes, days, weeks, years."

Go out and look at the stars. They are Time's sentinels, and as you look at them, realize that, to all intents and purposes, they *are* Time.

And what could be more tangible than that?

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DEPT. 475-H

CHICAGO, ILL.

Adam Link



I lifted the two Navy men out of the full force of the blast

Saves the World



by Eando Binder

America is invaded by a great power. Can it be Nazi Germany? And if so, can Adam Link solve the menace of its incredible science?

I Adam Link the robot, saved the earth!

You will find no slightest clue to this event, in any public source of information. Nor have I any proof. There are things buried in the most secret and guarded archives of nations and regimes that never see the light of history. This is one of them.

But yet, I saved the Earth and mankind. Saved them from a menace more deadly than any on record.

Fantastic statement! The mouthings of a brain twisted by delusions of grandeur, you say. A psychopathic case history. Opium works on robots as well as humans!

Let me tell the story. Judge for yourselves.

It began one warm July evening, three months ago. Eve and I were alone in our isolated Ozark "home," talking over the crushing failure of our Utopia experiment. I felt dreary, soul-sick.

"Eve," I was saying, "we're done. We're finished. Everything we've tried in the world of humans has failed. I give up."

"Adam! Don't say that. We'll prove our worth yet—"

"No," I grated. "We have no worth—except as a few dollars worth of mechanical parts. We're intelligent robots, but we're of no Earthly use whatsoever!" I repeated the bitter self-denouncement. "We're of no Earthly use whatso—"

Interruption came, in the form of a knock at the door.

We started, looking at each other. Who was visiting us? Who had taken the winding, little-known road leading to our door? A pack of humans, perhaps, to once and for all rid Earth of robots?

"Don't resist," I told Eve. "I suppose it had to come to this—our extinction."

I flung open the door. There was no pack. There was just one human—a man with hat pulled low, one hand resting in a pocket as though gripping a pistol. He gave me a glance, darted his eyes around the cabin, then stepped in. Back in the shadow was his car, in which he had arrived. He had an air of profound secrecy.

"Adam Link?" he asked quite unnecessarily. I cannot easily be mistaken for Clark Gable or any human.

"Yes. Who are you?"

For answer, he drew back the flap of his coat, displaying a small medalion whose inscription he explained.

"Secret Service of the United States. I am Joe Trent, Operative Number 65. We want you, Adam Link!"

"Official lynching?" I hissed, and suddenly my brain smoked with rage. "Go! You humans won't finish me off this easily. Go and come back with all your army. You'll have to blast me out of the hills, if you want me!"

I would go down in Earth history as a one-man rebellion, holding off a mighty army for days and weeks. They couldn't deny me that last flash of glory.

"You refuse?" the Secret Service man said.

I nodded grimly, waiting for him to threaten me with all the forces of the army, navy, and air corps.

Instead, his shoulders seemed to sag a little. His voice changed to pleading.

"You don't understand!" he cried.

"We're in trouble. Washington's in trouble!"

I stared.

"In trouble? You mean you've come to ask my—help?"

He nodded eagerly.

"I've been sent here by the—"

Breaking off, he went to the door, peered out cautiously as though fearing eavesdroppers, then closed it carefully. He turned back. What was the need for all this elaborate secrecy?

"By the President himself!" he finished. "We need you, Adam Link. You're our last hope. We're stumped, and we've come to you as the last possibility to avert what may be catastrophe for our nation!"

"Explain!" I demanded, half dazed.

"First of all, I must swear you to utter secrecy. None of this must leak out to public channels. Have I your word?"

I nodded. At his hesitation, I added, "I never lie. That is a human trait."

He took that without argument, and went on in a rush.

"The story is this. A month ago, a certain destroyer of the United States fleet passed San Domingo on routine patrol. San Domingo island is our possession, as you probably know. The captain saw a strange thing on the headland—a new fort!"

"The fort had not been there a month before. It had not been commissioned by our government. Whose fort was it?"

"Obviously that of a foreign power," I put in. "They sneaked it in right under your noses!"

The operative shook his head.

"Impossible. Our fleet has been on emergency patrol since the trouble in Europe started. It would take a whole convoy of supply ships to put up such a fort. No convoy could brazenly sneak through our tight neutrality pa-

trol."

"Then they dropped the material and men from the skies, by aircraft," I said impatiently.

"That's what we're afraid of," Joe Trent nodded. "Natives at the other side of the island reported seeing a great lighted ship come down one night. It meant that a foreign power had established a foothold in our hemisphere!"

"So what?" I snapped. It seemed so childish, these human doings. "Since you discovered the fort before they operated from it, it's simply a matter of destroying it."

"We tried," Trent responded. "The destroyer shelled the fort, when it refused to answer by radio. We had the right. It's our soil. The fort seemed unharmed. Other ships came, to try, including heavy cruisers. Eventually three battleships steamed there, and shelled it with the biggest guns known to naval science."

He paused and went on in a whisper-

"Not one shell took effect. Not one chip was knocked off that fort!"

MY IMPATIENCE vanished. This was really something.

"You suspect what?" I asked.

"The New Weapon!" he groaned. "Or call it the New Defense. A certain foreign enemy—I need not name him—has established himself in an impregnable base from which to operate against us. Any day—blitzkrieg on America!"

His face went haggard, now.

"You're the last hope, Adam Link. We thought of you, when all else failed. You have a super-brain, some say. We don't know. Can you help us?"

How can I describe the overwhelming thrill that shot through my iridium-sponge brain? Humans sought my help! They had hounded me, balked

me, sneered at me. Now they begged at my knees. Moments like this were rare.

Should I refuse? Should I send him away, as they had so often turned me aside? What did it matter to me whether one group or another of humans ruled here? But suddenly, a horrible picture flashed in my mind. Regimented robots under the command of a hard, ruthless master! He would not ignore me. He would *use* me—in frightful ways.

"I'll try to help," I said. "Where do I go?"

"Thank Heaven!" Joe Trent said. "Everything has been arranged. I'll take you in my car to the nearest airport. There a fast plane is waiting to take us to Key West, one of our naval bases. At Key West, a warship will take us to San Domingo."

"Come, Eve," I said. "We will look over this mysterious fort that cannot be destroyed."

FORTY-EIGHT hours later, the battleship X steamed in the night to the headland of San Domingo island. In the grey dawn, a fort slowly took visible form on the coast. I was on the bridge with the captain, the fleet commander, and Joe Trent. All the warship's crew were at guns and battle stations, ready for any attack from the fort.

"There it is!" Trent said in nervous tones. "It's within striking distance of the whole eastern seaboard. It must be destroyed."

I looked the mysterious fort over. Even from our distance of five miles, the closest they dared go, the fort loomed like a mighty man-made mountain. Through binoculars, it was a dome shaped structure with a solid rampart of metal facing the sea. From recessed apertures bristled ugly cannon

snouts.

"They haven't fired back one shot, yet," Trent informed. "They don't have to, since our shells are useless. Adam, what's the answer?"

But I was thinking, silently.

The fleet commander, at my side seemed nettled at my presence. It was a slap in his face. He signaled his fleet to stand by, while the battleship shelled the fort, once again.

The great 18-inch cannon bellowed, shattering the dawn silence. I watched shell after shell explode against that wide rampart, with no more effect than peas shot by a child.

"Look out!" I yelled suddenly. "One of the enemy guns is moving and aiming for us!"

"Nonsense!" barked the rear admiral, not knowing of my sharp mechanical vision and mathematical brain. "Continue firing."

That gun at the fort spoke. Livid flame belched from it. Five seconds later, one of our destroyer escort folded in the middle and sank.

"They're firing back for the first time!" Trent screamed. "God—look!"

In rapid succession, three more destroyers sank. Each was nearer to our battleship, as though the enemy gunners were toying with us. Then a shot came that seemed to stove in the entire side of our flagship.

Concussion threw me against the bridge rail with such force that my body-plates creaked. I thrust out both hands, catching the admiral with one, Trent with the other, before they catapulted into the sea.

The well-trained crew did not panic. Life-boats lowered systematically into the water. Before the huge battlewagon heeled over and sank, its entire living complement were safe. I was in a life-boat with the admiral and Trent.

They had thrust a life-belt around me, uselessly. No life-belt could stop me from sinking like a stone, if once I fell into the sea.

I knew fear in that moment. If the enemy followed up the sinkings with shrapnel, they could wipe us out totally. But they didn't. No more shots came, and the last destroyer, behind a smoke screen, picked up all survivors and steamed us to Key West.

The world does not know of this—any of this.

AT DAWN the next day, a formidable fleet sailed to San Domingo. Six battleships, eighteen cruisers and sixty destroyers. They rained a hell of destruction on the fort that had at last bared its fangs. Half the day they shelled, before answer came, as though the enemy disdained slaughter. Then, despite smoke screens, maneuvers, and all the tricks known to naval warfare, seven craft were picked off at twelve miles from the fort, by its deadly guns.

I saw all this from an observation plane, with Trent.

"Senseless sacrifice," I said. "Stationary fort guns are always superior to naval guns."

The fleet withdrew, realizing that too. And when the smoke cleared, there was the fort, with not a distinguishable mark on it.

The American forces had not given up. A horde of aircraft passed us, and began dropping bombs. Dive bombing, invented by America, was used. The enemy anti-aircraft retaliated. They picked off bombers with steady, incredible precision. The American forces withdrew.

And again, when the smoke cleared, the fort-dome lay undamaged, sparkling in the sun. No conceivable base could have withstood that hammering from the air. This one did.

Three days later, the final assault was tried. A co-ordinated attack by land, sea and air. This had been in preparation for a month, since the fort was discovered. The other attacks had been preliminary.

First the naval forces hurled over tons of shells, from their extreme range behind dense smoke screens. One little crack in the dome might mean victory. At the same time, the air force bombed relentlessly, from high up, with bomb-sights envied by the world.

Then, at a prearranged time, the barrage ceased, and the waiting land forces attacked directly. They came at the back of the fort, from the island's interior. Tanks formed the spearhead, rumbling forward with spitting guns. Behind followed shock troops. If the stupendous shelling and bombing had opened one little crack, one means of entry, they would invade the fort and finish the battle *within*.

From our observation plane, we saw a strange sight. A barrage from the enemy shattered the first line of tanks. They simply blew to bits. The second wave roared up—to the same fate. The third and last line of tanks gallantly charged—and stalled! Stalled dead, as though their crews had fallen asleep.

It was the same with the shock troops. It took magnificent courage to charge, against what they had seen. But I suppose they were filled with a blinding rage at this maddening enemy.

Three waves of men tried to crack the nut. Two waves went down like mown grass. The third wave fell, but limply, as though gassed or paralyzed. And then the rest of the soldiers, their morale finally broken, fled in complete rout.

I saw one more thing, before falling dusk obscured vision. Figures scurried from the fort, carrying the limp men in, as prisoners. And the undam-

aged tanks were driven inside, with their unconscious crews.

THE battle was over. America had been defeated by land and sea and air! You will find no record of this, I repeat. There could be no official declaration of war, since the enemy had not yet been identified. I think the sunken ships have been ascribed to sabotage, for public consumption.

"The best is absolutely impregnable!" Trent moaned. "Perhaps this was the final test, for their New Defense. And their New Weapon, some kind of gas. Now the enemy can hack away at America's defense lines at its leisure!"

He looked at me.

"This is where you come in, Adam Link. We're stumped, with our human methods. Are there any methods you, as a robot, can try?"

I shook my head, and Joe Trent wept. Yes, he wept. For he knew that his country was doomed.

"Adam!" Eve said sadly. "Isn't there anything we can do, as robots?"

There was still faint hope in Trent's hollow eyes.

But I shook my head again.

"Trent," I said. "Advise the government to send one tank up to the fort. Have it fly a white flag. It will be a commission to ask the enemy its terms!"

"God!" Trent said hopelessly. "I guess you're right. But suppose they ruthlessly destroy the tank—and go on, wishing complete invasion?"

"I want to go with the tank," I said. "Eve and I, disguised as humans. If they destroy the tank—" I shrugged. "If they let us in, to talk, fine. You see, I want to get *inside* that fort!"

Joe Trent stared.

"There's one human method left," I finished. "Sabotage—but by robots!"

CHAPTER II

The Enemy Is Revealed

IT WAS daybreak.

One tank, a huge 25-ton monster, rumbled slowly toward the back of the fort. From the conning tower waved a large white flag. There were six humans in the tank—to the casual eye. Two were the crew, one at the controls, one at the guns. Two men were high officials whom I cannot name, empowered to receive and deliver the enemy's terms to the United States government.

The remaining two were Eve and myself. Again, as once before, we were disguised as humans. Flesh-colored plastics hid our metal bodies. Skillfully molded pseudo-features gave us the appearance of two rather stocky, poker-faced thugs. Eve was a "man" too. The disguise was a deception that might not hold up more than an hour or so. But I wanted to get within the fort. Once within, I would see what could be done.

But there was the chance that the enemy would simply annihilate us.

"If that happens, Eve," I murmured to her. "Farewell! Our short sojourn among humans will be over in a flash of glory, though unsung."

"Goodbye, dearest!" she returned, against that eventuality.

The humans with us in the tank were grim, pale. Would the enemy receive us? Or would they blast us to atoms, so that there would be no excuse for not going ruthlessly on, invading the continent?

Our answer came with one swift sweep of the scythe of Death. The universe split open in a rending crash. The tank crumpled like a cracked walnut. A shell from some large-calibre gun had struck directly. A second shot

exploded within, flinging the riddled bodies of six dead humans out like broken debris.

No, four dead humans.

Two of the original six flew fifty feet through the air, landing among bushes with a metallic clang. Eve and I should have been killed, too, except that after the first shell, we had leaped with snap-reflexes. We were already sailing out of the split tank when the second shell hit. Its concussion merely blew us into the bushes.

To the enemy, it must have seemed we were destroyed, too. Well they knew no human beings could survive those two direct hits. They were right. No humans could. But Eve and I, with hard metal beneath our false human disguise, were no more than shaken up by the concussion and landing on the ground.

Still, we lay stunned, hardly aware for a minute that we were alive. Dents were in the metal beneath our human clothing, from flying pieces of the shattered tank. But we lived.

I moved my mirror-eyes and saw Eve lying ten feet away, flat on her back. Her hand twitched as she was about to spring up, happy to be saved.

"Hsst!" I whispered. "Don't move, you little fool. Let them think we're dead humans!"

THUS we lay still. We were in full view of the fort. If we had moved the slightest, they would see it. But it was simple for us to automatically shut down our internal locomotor center. We were then "dead" from the neck down. We lay as completely inert as any corpse.

We lay that way all day, motionless.

The enemy did not come out. They let the bodies lay, to rot, as all the troops they had slaughtered lay rotting further back. The utter heartless-

ness and brutality of the enemy enraged me. Those Europeans must be monsters. I felt like springing up again, denouncing them in stentorian tones.

But that would be sheer folly. We must wait for night, get in the fort, and fulfill our mission. Fate had lent us a finger, so far.

Night fell, at long last. When the deepest darkness had arrived, I signalled Eve and we cautiously arose, hiding behind bushes.

No light hung outside the fort. And no light shone from any aperture or window. They had built the fort as solidly as a half-shell of steel set down squarely on the ground. Certainly it was the queerest structure we had ever seen or heard of.

I estimated its dimensions from its bulking curve against the star-filled sky. No less than a half-mile in diameter, and 2000 feet high! Colossal engineering had been required to erect it. They must have worked on it months and months. Yet Joe Trent swore it hadn't been there a month before.

I shrugged.

"Let's get in, Eve," I whispered. "I want to meet these amazing humans who have done miracles in engineering and warfare both."

Get in, but how? Sheer blankness of wall mocked us. I strode close to the structure, in shadow, and rapped on it slightly. Metal? But it gave no ring, only a dull thud. Not wood, certainly. Some kind of plastic, harder than steel? It must be harder than tungsten-steel, to withstand all the bombarding I had seen.

"With bases like these to work from, Eve," I said, "they can easily conquer all Earth. This must be a long-range plan by the European dictators to rule the world. We must get in and spike this place some way. Any way!"

But we stood baffled before the ada-

mant structure.

Fate again leaned our way.

WE THREW ourselves flat as a sudden glow fell around us. Had we been spied? But then I saw the light was only a reflection bouncing down from some greater light at the dome's peak. This light shafted like a searchlight beam straight into the sky, with an intensity that drilled through scattered clouds. It must be visible for hundreds of miles.

"I see," I told Eve. "It's a signal beacon, for their supply and reinforcement ships from across the ocean. One or more must be due to land."

A moment later, a giant airship dropped from the sky, of an advanced design I had never seen before. A stratosphere ship, undoubtedly, with its wide wings. The enemy had certainly planned for complete control of Earth.

It dropped almost silently, as if the motors, too, were of a new design that were superbly muffled for swift, silent work. It landed, with the shortest landing run I had ever heard of, not a hundred feet from where we crouched.

At the same time, amazingly, one whole section of the dome soundlessly raised, like the flap of a tent. The ship trundled in, with scarcely a whirr of its motors.

Two robots trundled in after it, with scarcely a whirr of *their* motors. It was the chance we had been waiting for. We were inside!

We scurried to a corner of the dim hangar, flattening against the wall like two motionless shadows.

I congratulated myself, but too soon.

Radiance burst through the room, as some central light clicked on. The glare revealed us plainly. Half-blinded, we noticed figures stepping from the plane. They were facing us.

They could not fail to see us, against the bare wall.

Worst of all, the pitiless lure would reveal the imperfections of our human disguise. And the blasting of the tank had knocked off bits of our plastic, further exposing us. The enemy would know us instantly for robots, and probably destroy us as dangerous. Our mission was nipped in the bud!

Hopelessly, I looked around the hangar. The huge sliding door had shut fast, sealing us in. No other door was open. We were caught. Yes, we could run around, kill those here if necessary, but the rest would know then with whom they dealt. They would besiege us in this room. A fair-sized gun would blow us to bits with a direct hit.

Trapped! Our only hope had been to get in, and seek hiding before we were seen. Now, with this light on, and no egress from the chamber, we were caught.

My eyes suddenly ceased looking for escape.

They turned back to the figures, whom I had given but a glance. A picture was transmitted from my eye-mirrors to my brain that jolted me much more than the tank explosion had.

In fact, I refused to believe what I saw. I told myself that something had gone haywire with my mechanical optic center. Perhaps a wire loose, or a short-circuit throwing everything out of balance. For what I saw just didn't make sense. It was a hopeless distortion.

Yes, it must be that. But then, why was Eve staring rigidly, as though she had seen a ghost of human superstition?

I clicked shut my eyes, looked again.

This time I knew it was no mistake.

Besides, Eve's startled gasp came to me.

"Adam!" she said. "They aren't—aren't—"

"No, they aren't," I agreed dazedly. "They certainly aren't!"

And they weren't.

At this point, my chronicle goes into the sheerly unbelievable. I repeat you will find no record on Earth to back me up. You will cease to believe from here on, and take the rest as fantasy conjured up in the mind of Adam Link. You will, I know. I wish I could.

In short, they *weren't human!*

HOW shall I describe them, in terms you can visualize? It is hard to describe any creature unknown before. Describe a tiger verbally to a child. Then take him to the zoo to see a tiger. I'll warrant the child will see no connection with your description.

Well, imagine first a gorilla. Then an upright buffalo with its horns. Then a surrealistic statute representing a hunchback on whom a mountain has fallen. Blend the three together—long powerful arms, horns at the top, hooves at the bottom, a bulging torso with the head set forward, and the whole thing nine feet tall. Ugly, brutal, repulsive, horned Goliaths.

Oh yes, it was *manlike*. That is, it didn't have extra arms, or two heads, or tentacles, or any other distortion of that kind. It had two legs, two arms, a body, one head with two eyes, two ears, and one mouth. I think evolution, being a blind force that obeys set laws, must clothe its intelligent beings anywhere in the universe with those general features, since they are the most effective.

But all the primates, and most mammals, are built in the same plan as man. Yet there is endless variety. These beings were as different from man, in a horrible fashion, as a gorilla. They walked upright, spoke and ate with their

mouths, and used their hands for manipulation. From there on, their similarity to man ceased. They were alien—utterly, nightmarishly alien.

Even I, a robot who was no more than a grotesque parody of man in metal, felt closer to human than these monsters.

And suddenly, the whole aspect of this event changed to something appallingly ominous.

"They aren't human!" Eve was still whispering. "Adam, what does it mean? Where are they from?"

"I don't know," I returned dazedly, still stunned by the shock of it. "I don't know, Eve. They're not of Earth, that's certain."

Eve abruptly gave a sigh.

"Well! It isn't a European invader after all. Won't they be surprised and relieved to hear that, outside?"

I think I felt like striking Eve, for the thoughtless words.

"Relieved?" I grunted. "Good Lord, Eve! Don't you get the significance of this? This isn't a mere European power invading the Western Hemisphere. No, nothing as simple as that. This is a race from another planet, come to take Earth from *all* humans!"

Eve digested that, trembling.

"What shall we do, Adam?" she breathed.

I stiffened.

Three of the aliens had stepped from the ship, turning toward us. They saw us, now. Their hands leaped to holsters, drawing out a mechanism not unlike a gun. They strode forward, covering us.

"Don't move, Eve!" I warned. "We don't know how powerful those guns are."

They approached with a ponderous step, on their hooved feet. Heavy and solid they must be, far heavier than a human, and far stronger. Yet they

walked with a certain mincing step that indicated Earth's gravity was trifling to them. Their home-world must have a tremendous gravity, like Jupiter.

Were they from Jupiter?

I wanted to ask, but naturally they had an alien tongue.

The foremost horned giant eyed us with green-irised eyes. He towered three feet above us.

"Two more of the Earthlings, eh?" he said in perfect English. "How did you get in? Don't be so startled. We tuned in your radio, upon arrival, analyzed your language and learned it. We have need to talk with you—what do you call yourselves?—oh yes, humans."

HUMANS! He took us for humans.

To his inexperienced eyes, our half-messed human guise was as good as gold. He saw no difference between us and the previous captives. Humans were new to his eyes.

Instantly, I played that advantage up, giving Eve a quick glance.

I spoke, but I didn't say—"yes, we're humans." That was taken for granted. In fact, it would have aroused their suspicions. I simply recounted how we had sneaked in after the plane.

"For what purpose?" the alien demanded, then answered himself. "To spy on us, of course. You hope to escape, with your information. No prisoner can escape. We will keep you alive. We will have use for you, either for vivisection or mental study."

He turned. "Mog, take them to the prison."

I pondered in lightning thought.

I could charge them, at this moment, and take their guns away before they could shoot. I need not fear their obvious strength, as a true human must. But to resist now, would expose us immediately. I would have little chance

to find out more of them, the fort, and their plans. Better to remain prisoner for a while, and take my chances with them later.

I let my shoulders slump, for Eve's benefit. She caught on quickly, making no move to resist. The being named Mog prodded us with his gun, toward the other end of the hangar.

Again it was almost humorous. Any human, poking us with his gun, and meeting unnatural hardness, would know us for a robot. But Mog, having poked few humans, did not know they should all be uniformly soft.

But humor left me as we strode along. No laughing matter, at all.

These non-terrestrial beings represented a stupendous threat to Earth. Their mighty fort, their superpowerful guns, their easy efficiency in learning English, added up to super-science.

Eve must be thinking the same as I. If only this *was* the European enemy, invading America! Better that than this—invasion from space!

And outside this dome lay the world—unknowing. Unaware that soon they would be battling for existence with a foe ten times more powerful and unsympathetic than any European aggressor.

CHAPTER III

Escape from Prison

OPPPOSITE the dome-door, in the hangar, was another door that now opened. Several other aliens appeared from the interior. At their head was one who by his manner and dress must be a high official, perhaps chief of the whole dome.

I haven't mentioned clothing. The aliens wore extremely light clothing, merely shorts and a belt with all else bare, as though to them Earth climate

was tropical. Moreover, it occurred to me that the dome was air-conditioned to coolness. I could not feel it directly, like a human. But my compensating thermocouple, that allows for extreme temperatures which might tighten bearings, had swung to its low side. The temperature in the dome must be about freezing.

The chief wore a broad chest band with insignia on it, and the others saluted him by touching one hand to their horns.

Our guard, Mog, began to address the chief in their native tongue, but the chief interrupted.

"Use the English tongue, Mog, for practice. It is the Earthlings' most important language. We will have much need for it later. Now, who are these two?"

"Two humans who sneaked in after our plane, to spy, Chief Thorg. I'm taking them to the prison."

Chief Thorg gave us his attention. For a moment, at his sharp stare, I thought he had penetrated our disguise. Then he laughed—or what I took for a laugh. It was a sort of whistling wheeze.

"These little humans," he said, "come in all assorted shapes and sizes, and disfigurements. Look, this one has no nose."

He pointed at me, and I realized with horror that somewhere my plastic "nose" had been knocked off. Was he playing with me, knowing our deception?

"Where did you lose your nose?" he queried.

"In a war," I improvised hastily. "It was shot off."

And the Chief swallowed that! He was already shrugging. He addressed Mog again.

"Your report?"

"We sailed through the stratosphere

of this planet, over what I believe are called Europe and Asia continents. A short flight on this pygmy planet. Dropping low at times, we saw their cities and centers. Very backward there, as everywhere else on this world. There was some kind of war going on, I believe. It was hard to tell, as they fight with such puny weapons."

"Yes, they have puny weapons indeed," the Chief agreed. "Their clumsy attack, the other day, with iron tubs in the water, slow little aircraft, and paper-thin metal carts on land. They are apparently in the Metal Age." By his tone he said "Stone Age." "It seems they know nothing of plastic science and atomic hardening. Well, we will soon conquer them. Take the prisoners away, Mog."

Mog prodded us through the door and down a long corridor. We passed various other aliens. The dome must be crammed with them. Had they all come in one space ship, or several? Were more space ships arriving regularly, augmenting their forces for the grand day of victory?

Those were things I had to find out. I felt a little crushed already. One lone pair of robots against a dome full of these invaders from the void. What hopeless odds faced me?

I tried to pump Mog.

"How many of you are there here on Earth?" I asked.

"Quiet!" he growled. "Speak only when you're spoken to, prisoner."

A SIDE corridor branched to the large prison room. The wide face of it was simply a series of open bars. Behind the bars were the human prisoners. A hundred or so of the soldiers who had been gassed in the battle I had seen, and taken within.

The jailer unlocked the door, and Mog shoved us in.

"Join your fellows," he laughed. "And talk over the end of your race's rule on this planet!"

Eve and I stumbled forward in the rather dimly lit prison. The men hardly glanced up, haggard and despondent. They sat or sprawled on the cold stone, shivering and suffering. We had stumbled over a corpse laid by the door. The jailer dragged it out without a word, locking the door again.

"Pneumonia, I guess," chattered one man to us. "Died an hour ago. The tenth one already, that way. Welcome to hell, strangers!"

I inadvertently stepped on his toe, in the close-packed chamber.

"Ouch! Damn you—" He was suddenly a wild, enraged animal, his nerves broken by the cruel imprisonment. He cracked his fist against my face—or tried to. Eve caught him by the shoulders and held him as easily as a child.

His rage gusted out in stunned incredulity at Eve's strength. And he was suddenly peering at us closely. All the men were. Humans could not be fooled.

"Why, you're not—not humans!" he gasped.

Others had jumped up.

"It's the damned aliens, in disguise! Tear them apart—"

"Stop, you fools," hissed another voice. "Can't you see the metal in spots? It's Adam Link the ro—"

"Shut up!" I snapped quickly, shaking my head violently for their benefit. "I'm Adam Link, the spy."

They caught on, especially when the jailer appeared at the bars. "What's the commotion in there?"

Silence greeted him and he left with a shrug. He hadn't heard the near giveaway. It was my sole ace-in-the-hole, to be taken as a human by the enemy.

I made my way to the far corner of the prison, out of earshot of the jailer

if we talked low. The men quietly moved around me.

"Adam Link the robot!" breathed the man whose toe I had crushed. "I'm Captain Taylor, chief officer of these men. Are you with us, Adam Link? Maybe with your help we can break out and do something!"

I was a little gratified that they had heard of me and my exploits. Most humans had ignored me, or passed me off as a freak or clever toy. These men accepted me as an equal, and sought my help. I cut off these personal ruminations.

"When the time comes," I whispered. "Right now, I have some questions. You were gassed, before capture?"

"Couldn't have been gas," the captain returned, puzzled. "I had my men wear gas-masks. We saw, heard, or felt nothing. All our muscles just suddenly went limp, as if paralyzed. We didn't lose consciousness. The effects wore off in a few hours, after we were locked up here."

Induced paralysis! Perhaps by a projected, invisible ray! My heart sank. Another manifestation of their advanced science. Whole armies and cities rendered helpless, captured without a gunshot, if they wished!

CAPTAIN TAYLOR was suddenly moaning a little. He was, after all, a young man. Recent events had been soulshaking.

"God, the shock of it— seeing these inhuman beings. Horrible creatures from another world! And we thought it was only Hitler! Why, Hitler would be our ally, against them, if he knew. It's a wonder we aren't all insane. Poor Jones did go. I put him out of his misery myself. Adam Link, we've seen enough to know the whole world is threatened. We've got to do something if we can!"

"Easy," I said at the hysterical edge in his voice. "We can't go ahead blindly. What else do you know?"

"Mighty little," Taylor muttered. "We've been locked up in this ice-box all the time. They feed us from the kit-rations they picked up among our dead, after the battle. Every day a few have been taken out. They don't return."

I knew what happened to them, but didn't tell Taylor. Vivisection and mental study. Humans put under the knife and microscope, like interesting little bugs, so that the aliens would know every factor of the race whose world they wanted to wrest away.

Taylor knew nothing of the dome, or the number of aliens, or their guns— things I had to know. I pondered.

"You have a plan?" Captain Taylor asked hopefully. "Somehow I feel glad you're here, Adam Link. You've got to save the human race!"

All their eyes turned to me. I was already accepted as their leader, their champion. Champion of the world, of the human race! Within me, a wild elation surged. It was good to have humans accept me at last, place their trust in me.

But still, what could I do?

"For the present," I began, "we will lay low and—"

INTERRUPTION came, as the door grated open and three aliens stepped in. One of them was Mog again.

"We want three of you—any three," they announced.

They grasped the nearest three men by the arms, roughly, and began dragging them away. One shrieked, struggling to escape. He jabbed his fist in Mog's face.

The giant jabbed back. His gorilla-like arm delivered a blow that knocked the human cold. Then the alien bent

the limp form across his broad chest and slowly began cracking its spine.

"I am strong," Mog boasted. Watch, as I break this wretch in half. It will teach you others a lesson."

The other men watched in helpless horror. Some turned to me, in appeal, but they knew I did not want to reveal my identity. It was more important to save Earth, than save this man. I told myself that, for about one second. Then I acted.

"Adam, don't—" Eve hissed.

"Let go, Eve! There are some things—"

I was there in two strides. I caught the alien by the arm, wrenching him around so that he dropped his burden. Mog glared down at me, from his height of nine feet. I was David before Goliath, a little pygmy scarcely reaching to his chest.

"You must want a taste of my strength!" he roared, pounding his fist into my chest. The blow knocked me back a full inch. I was amazed, for never before had any creature short of another robot displayed such power.

He struck again, but this time I was braced. He gave a grunt of pain as his arm went numb.

I struck back, full in his ugly face, but only succeeded in staggering him a little. I was again astonished. The blow might have snapped the neck of a human. For my second blow, I used fully half my machine-power. My arm shot out like a steampiston. The alien flew back against the iron bars with a thud.

He came roaring back, to finish the fight, but now I saw the folly of my course.

"Cover me, men!" I yelled.

They understood. They milled about me so that I was lost in their numbers.

"Which one was it?" demanded Mog angrily. "Which one of you weaklings

thinks he is stronger than I. Where is he?"

But luckily he couldn't pick me out, by sight. The light was dim and it had all been a swift blurr of action. All humans looked as alike as peas to them. His two companions pulled him back and calmed him down.

"Let him go," they admonished, half laughingly. "Next time don't pull your punches, Mog. Now we'll take our three."

They pulled their holster weapons this time, aiming at three men. Only a slight buzz sounded from the instruments. The three unlucky victims fell limply, all their muscles paralyzed. The three aliens carried them out, and the jail door clanged shut.

"Thanks, Adam Link!" Captain Taylor said simply, as some of the men attended to the victim I had saved. All the men looked at me, half in awe at my strength, half in gratitude.

"Forget it," I said. "I nearly gave myself away. I'll have to be more careful." I resumed where I had left off, before the interruption. For the present we will lay low and—"

"Lay low?" Captain Taylor suddenly blazed. "While Earth is doomed if we don't do something? While they take us out one by one, cutting into our numbers? No! If you haven't a plan, Adam Link, I have. Next time they open the door, we'll rush out in a body, fight our way through—"

"How far?" I asked sharply. "You humans are brave—but fools. How far would you get against an unknown number of them? And what is the way out? And what powers their guns? And what is their dome made of? And how many more space ships are coming? And how can this dome be sabotaged effectively? We have to know those things, instead of blindly rushing out to become corpses who died in fool-

ish glory!"

"You're right," Taylor muttered, subsiding. "But how are we going to find out? You can't get out of this cell to do any spying around."

"You forget who I am," I said without boastfulness. "There is only one kind of jail that could hold Adam Link. A completely solid steel chamber—if the walls were thick enough. Now be quiet, all of you!"

IT WAS late night now, in the outside world. And in this dome, the hum of activity floating down the corridors died gradually. The aliens slept at night, too.

I watched the single guard on duty outside our barred room. He was sitting in a chair-like support, leaning against the wall, bored at the thought of his all-night vigil. Gradually his eyes blinked, and closed. Sounds rumbled from his barrel chest. He slept.

"Now is my chance," I whispered to the men.

"How will you get out?" Taylor queried.

For answer, I strode to the bars, where the ends were buried in the cell wall. Bracing my feet, I tugged at a bar. My locomotor unit within hummed as rising horsepower fed into it. I kept an eye on the guard, but he slept heavily.

The bar was thick and strong, more resistant than any jail-bar of Earth, which I would have jerked away with one hand. Eve had to help me. Together, like metal Sampsons, we bent the bar. It came away suddenly, out of its socket. We loosened a half dozen more, forming an aperture wide enough to slip through.

The soldiers had watched with silent wonder. I faced them.

"Stay here. Too many of us would invite detection. Eve and I will scout,

since we are the swiftest and strongest. We will try to be back before the guard awakes. Come, Eve."

A moment later we stood beyond the bars, in the hall. We bent the bars back into place. Even if the jailer woke for a while and looked around, he would not know of the two who had skipped.

Before we stepped away, I held Eve back against the wall.

"Photoelectric units across the front here," I warned. "To announce any jail-break. Hug the wall carefully, and we won't break the beam."

Cautiously, we slid sideways for twenty feet. Beyond that, the beams did not stretch. We were free! We strode silently down the corridor. It was dimly lit, as were all the passages during the night-period.

At the next cross-corridor, I paused. I pondered as to the general lay-out of the honeycombed dome.

"That searchlight," I told Eve, "must shine up from some room at the apex. We'll try to find it."

CHAPTER IV

The Space Ship

AFTER several twists, we came upon a passage whose floor sloped upward steadily. It was the one we wanted. We crept along like two metal ghosts, warily watching for aliens. One appeared, abruptly, a guard lounging on routine duty. From his niche shone a patch of bright light we would have to cross.

He was not asleep, though staring vacantly. We would have to distract his attention. Estimating the curve of his niche, I made a tiny clicking sound. With the mathematical precision known only to a robot-brain, I knew the sound would reflect in an acoustic curve, back of him.

He started, came to his hooved feet, and turned, wondering who or what was clicking in the wall back of him. While he thus surveyed the blank wall, Eve and I tip-toed across the lighted patch and melted into the shadowy stretch beyond.

Not long after the slope led us to what I calculated must be the center of the dome. I was sure of it when it opened out into a gigantic round chamber. There were lights burning within and aliens were at work. We hugged the doorway's shadow.

I ran my eye swiftly around. The room had a sliding roof, now closed, like the sliding roofs of astronomical observatories. In the center was a huge bowl-shaped object, surrounded by what seemed generators and other power producing-apparatus.

The signal-light!

From here, rolling back the roof, they shone their super-searchlight, guiding their scout craft back from all corners of a world as yet new and not fully mapped to them.

My quick, searching eye noticed two other things.

One, that large recesses, off from this giant room, held the ring of defense guns.

Second, and more arresting, there was a huge unfinished machine at one side. Workmen were on scaffolds around it. Somehow, with huge crystal-line tubes and a maze of wires, it suggested a radio. A transmitter, perhaps, with which to signal their home-world, hurling radio waves far beyond the Heavyside Layer into space? It must be important to them, since this was a night shift at work.

We watched one workman. He was completing a strut-frame-work, enclosing a great tube. A tubular, hissing affair in his hand sprayed out smoky matter that instantly congealed to form

the hard beams. It was miraculous, like forming something out of nothing. And forming something harder than steel, for it was the same material of the dome.

"How is it done?" Eve marvelled, in a whisper camouflaged by the noise they made. "They seem to draw it out of nowhere!"

"From the air," I said. "They are masters of plastics. They draw oxygen, nitrogen and carbon dioxide from the air and compress them instantaneously into dense plastics, ten times harder than bakelite or any metal. Earth is just exploring plastic science. Remember that auto manufacturer—Ford I think it was—who tried to dent a plastic body with an axe and failed?"

"How fast they work," Eve said. "It's almost like a spider spinning out his web as fast as he can move."

"It accounts for the rapid construction of the dome," I nodded. "Joe Trent swore the dome was not here a month ago. The aliens landed less than a month ago. They built this whole dome in that short time. Any comparable structure would take Earth engineers at least a year. Let's look at the guns, Eve."

FOLLOWING a passage that led to the gun-emplacements, we approached the first. Dark and unattended, we could make little out except that it was surprisingly small—a mere ten-foot instrument of intricate design. But the guns must be super-powerful. They had shot Earth battleships out of the water, with one charge each.

By what principle? What did they shoot? How did they aim so accurately?

The answer came more quickly and completely than I wanted.

Without warning, an ear-shattering report sounded against the outside of

the dome. Then I caught the faint drone of aircraft. The American forces were making a desperate night attack, since the truce attempt had come to nothing!

In swift succession, dozens of bombs exploded against the dome. And below, from the giant room, the aliens began streaming toward the guns.

Eve and I were caught! In a moment aliens would be swarming past us.

"Pretend to be loading the gun or something!" I barked to Eve. "Bend over it."

An alien glanced into our dark recess, at our two huddled forms.

"Oh, someone here already?" he said, in the English they seemed bent on practicing to fluency. "Well, hurry up and fire. Chief Thorg has given us permission to bring a few down, for sport. But keep the lights off. The Earthlings might happen to have accurate enough bomb-sights to aim for the slits around the guns."

Keep the lights off! Luckily for us, that was the order.

But he hesitated a moment, waiting for us to make our first shot. Frantically, Eve and I were fumbling around the machine, without the least idea how to use it. I grabbed up a loose affair from a hook. It had trailing wires to the breech. It seemed to be a helmet. In lightning thought I clamped it around my head. It might be a sound-detector.

But now what? How to operate this baffling machine entirely different from any Earth gun I had ever seen. How to aim—

And then, magically, the tube moved, in its slot. The projecting barrel swung skyward toward the raiding planes. The supersearchlight was spraying its blinding radiance fanwise, into the heavens. It formed no definite mark for bombing, and it lit the planes starkly against

the black sky.

My eyes fastened to one plane, beginning a bombing dive. With uncanny accuracy, my gun followed it. It had the aim, but now how to fire—

Thump!

The gun fired, at the thought. No shell belched out. Only a hissing, unseen charge. At the same instant, the plane I watched changed into a puff of exploded debris.

"Good!" said the watching alien, who was evidently the gunnery commander. "Now pick off a few more."

My eyes turned to another plane. How had I aimed and fired before—

With the thought, the gun swung and thumped. And the second plane vanished. I gasped. *Thought control!* The gunner's eyes were the sights. His thoughts aimed and fired. It was an ease and accuracy limited only by the gunner's rapidity in shifting his eyes from plane to plane and thinking—"aim! fire!"

What could I do? With the gun commander watching, I could only continue to blast planes down with my eyes. I felt like a Medieval witch with the Evil Eye, blasting all I merely looked at.

American planes! Human pilots! I was helping the enemy!

I DON'T know how many planes I ripped from the sky. Perhaps a dozen. Each was like a stab in my own vitals.

"Excellent!" the commander praised. "You're a better gunner than any of them. Keep it up. This is great sport, flicking out the puny Earthlings like flies. I'll see how the others are doing."

Mercifully—for me—he left.

I ripped off the headgear.

"God, Eve!" I groaned. "Earth has no chance against this weapon. It

shoots electric charges at the speed of light. And in essence, the aliens kill with their thoughts! Aim, fire! Aim, fire! As fast as they think it, humans die!”

All around the circumference of the dome's ring of recesses, guns were thumping. Plane debris rained down. It was aerial slaughter.

“Leave, you fools!” I almost shouted. “You have no chance at all.”

They left, finally, with half their number gone. The guns fell silent. The aliens, crowing over their ghastly death-dealing, began filing back to their other job.

Eve and I remained at our gun, crouching behind it. Luckily no light had been turned on in the recesses. The gun commander glanced in, failed to see our rigid forms, and left.

AN hour later, when the workmen were absorbed completely in their job, we sneaked down the empty corridor and back to the prison. The guard we had fooled with acoustic ventriloquism was now asleep. The guard at the jail was half curled on the floor, dead to the world.

Our spying had been made possible only by the lack of alertness and discipline in the dome as a whole. The aliens had no need for rigid watch and attention. They had nothing to fear from the puny humans of the world outside.

They feared those within less.

Eve and I bent the bars and slipped into prison. In the morning, the awakened dome would not know of the two robot spies who had learned much—but not yet enough.

“What was the excitement about?” Captain Taylor asked. “We heard muffled thumps down here.”

He and his men listened to our story with incredulous eyes.

“Thought-controlled guns!” Taylor mused. “If we could spike those, the dome would be defenseless—”

“For about a week,” I cut in. “Earth forces would continue to bomb—and fail to chip off an atom. And in a week, the aliens would make new guns, with their plastic-magic. No, men. We have to get at the *root* of the dome. Somewhere they must have a generator that feeds the guns electricity. Probably an atomic-power unit. If I can find that—”

THE next night, Eve and I again sauntered out of prison. Again our jailer was sleeping away a watch that to him seemed totally unnecessary.

We roamed completely around the dome, looking for a central power-plant. We peered in bunk-rooms, in which aliens slept heavily. Supply rooms, stacked with boxes and plastic-cans of their food. The air-conditioning room, where a huge, silent machine piped cold air, normal to them, through the dome.

“If we could only find a room with weapons,” I told Eve. “Distributed among the men, we would have an armed fighting force.”

But there seemed no small-weapon supply, outside of those carried by the aliens themselves. Balked at every turn! We could not keep this night spying up forever. Sooner or later we would be discovered. Before that, we had to have some definite plan of action.

I reported no luck to the men, back at prison. They groaned in dismay. Each day several of them had been taken away, never to return. Our numbers were going down steadily. And the chill of prison was weakening those left.

“We’ve got to do something, Adam Link!” Taylor kept saying. “Can’t

you think of anything?"

He was beginning to lose faith in me. All the men were. They expected Adam Link, from stories they had heard of me, to storm through the aliens like a metal tornado. They could not understand my slow, cautious course.

They did not know that Adam Link was afraid, for the first time in his life. That for once he was up against powers that appalled him. That even a robot must hesitate before beings of nearly equal strength, ability and science.

"Patience," I admonished. "Warsaw was not pulled down in one day."

THE third night, Eve and I explored all corridors leading down. Finally we found it—the power room. But it was completely sealed off. Diamond-hard plastic walls barred us.

We could only put our ears to the solidly locked doors and hear within the low, steady hum of the generator.

"Probably supplies a million megawatts to the guns above," I said. "Those guns blast like lightning, at a pressure of at least 500,000 volts. This plant could probably light half of America for a year. There is more power concentrated under this dome than in all the cities of Earth combined."

"But we can't get at it," Eve murmured. "We can't spike it."

"No, not yet," I agreed, filing the room's location away in my mind. If we could find some instrument or method of breaking into the power-room, it would be the answer.

We found another corridor winding down. It opened out into what I knew must be an underground space. It was wide, huge and dark. We did not make out the bulk in the center at first, till our eyes adjusted to the gloom. Light strayed from the corridor.

The object was 500 feet long, 100 feet wide, in a torpedo shape. It had

no wings. From front and rear projected tiers of tubes, many fanning downward.

"It's their space ship!" I breathed. "With which they dropped down on Earth like a striking eagle. Let's look it over."

Undisturbed, we spent an hour there. Its hatch was open. The hull was empty, except for its motor. It had brought the aliens, all their supplies and equipment. It was stored away now, not needed except in the remote event of having to flee.

My scientific curiosity was feverishly aroused by the engine. Was it an atomic-power plant, spitting atom energy from the multitude of drive tubes? How far had it propelled the mighty ship through space? At what stupendous velocity?

I examined the machine with awe. No engine on Earth approached it. Autos, trucks, trains, ocean liners, zeppelins, crawled over Earth's surface at a snail's pace. This stupendous craft had plunged through the deeps of space.

"Eve!" I exclaimed. "Now we're getting somewhere. If I could once find out how to run this ship—"

How did it operate? But here I was completely stumped. The science of Earth was dumb before it. The science of Adam Link stammered in bewilderment. The control board was a maze of switches, relays, dials, rheostats, all numbered and designated with the alien's enigmatic figures.

"Only the aliens could tell us how to run it," Eve said. "And of course that's out of the question."

IRONIC situation! A plan was shaping in my mind. A plan to spike the dome. But one vital factor was missing—how to run this ship. And certainly the aliens wouldn't oblige, to

their own undoing.

"Still," I growled impotently to Eve, "we could wreck the thing."

"What good would that do?" Eve said. "Except to make them all the more determined to conquer Earth, having to stay?"

Another thing caught my eye, in a dark corner of the huge underground hangar. A dully glinting angular shape of metal. A tank! One of the captured tanks that they had driven in, perhaps for examination of Earthling war-machines. A pile of metal back of it told of the other tanks taken apart in the investigation. This one tank was left, probably as a museum-piece after Earth had been conquered.

"That tank, Eve!" I whispered. "It has guns, ammunition, armor-plate—"

Eve shook her head. "One tank and two robots against a dome-full of aliens?"

The odds were still against us. We turned away and slipped back to prison.

"Any luck?" Taylor asked hopefully, for his shivering, miserable men.

I shook my head.

"I still don't know how many aliens there are, altogether. That's vital. tomorrow night I'll try to get a count on them. And plan a course of action."

"Tomorrow night!" Taylor groaned. "Always tomorrow night. And each day six of us are taken away, one or two die from sickness, and we all go slowly mad!"

"Patience," I said wearily. "Tomorrow night I promise you a plan."

CHAPTER V

Jailbreak

AND then, as though to smash my careful course, aliens came that day.

They ran an eye appraisingly over

our ranks, picking the three burliest men. Two were six-foot men, weighing over 200 pounds apiece. I was the third. I had tried to escape picking, hanging back as before, but this time they singled me out. I was in appearance, a sturdy human being.

"Come along," said the aliens, waving their guns. "If you don't come willingly, we'll paralyze you."

The two men shrugged, waved farewell, and stepped out without a word. I followed, without a word. There was nothing else to do. If I resisted now, and exposed myself, it would be too soon. Perhaps, before they were done with me, I would find out vital information.

I signaled Eve with my eyes not to worry about me.

We were led up the sloping corridor that I knew. It led to the apex of the dome, into the giant chamber of the signal-light, gun-recesses, and unfinished transmitter.

Workmen were just clambering down from the scaffolds around the latter. A space had been cleared and roped off, near the searchlight. Chief Thorg stood in the center, where we were stationed, and his men congregated around.

"You have been working hard, men," he said, still using the English language. "Our schedule has gone well. Now, as reward, you will have some other sport, since the Earthlings have given up attacking. Our best fighter will battle three humans at once!"

It was a sport arena!

A naked alien strode up. It was Mog, with whom I had exchanged blows once! By sheer coincidence, we were again pitted together. Malign coincidence. How could I fail to show my true strength this time? It would probably be a battle to the finish, like

the Roman gladiatorial affairs of a past age.

The arena cleared. Mog, an ugly horned dwarf, swung his long arms and prepared to tackle us three. The spectators cheered, urging him on.

I swept an eye around, counting the aliens. Nine hundred and ninety-three, perhaps the dome's full force except for a few at watch-stations below. One thousand of the extra-terrestrial enemy, a formidable number! I filed the fact away in my mind. It was a vital factor and the final one—almost.

But now, what about Mog?

THE battle was short, ghastly. The two Earthmen bravely met Mog's charge, even running to meet him. Mog punched one to insensibility, with rapid blows, while the other clung to his arms futilely. Then he took them both by the scruff of the neck and cracked their skulls together. He dropped them, dead, and faced me.

I had hung back. Yes, I had let the two men die. I had to learn one more thing about the dome. I had to keep my human subterfuge. When Mog came at me, like a lumbering behemoth, I grasped him around the middle and hung on. Wildly he hammered at my back with his huge fists, but only wore himself down.

The watchers tensed. Who was this human who had hung back like a coward, and now seemed able to take any punishment?

"Oh, it's you!" Mog roared, finally recognizing me. "The strong one! I'll show you—"

He stooped and gave me a bear-hug, in return. His knotty arms squeezed with force that would have crushed every rib in a human body. It actually made my rivets squeak a little, under the plastic disguise and clothes. I couldn't resist squeezing back, taking

care to measure out the force of it sparsely. All his breath came out, in a gust. His eyes swam dizzily.

I let him get his breath back, but thereafter he was weakened enough so that his blows came fewer. He kicked at me with his hooves, and gritted his teeth at the pain of nearly breaking his leg. He tried picking me clear off the floor and dashing me flat. I put my foot-plate back of his knee, and he very nearly wrenched his own arms out.

"Enough!" Chief Thorg said suddenly. "You are weakening, Mog. This Earth air is thin. Too much effort might harm you. You have furnished us sport. Now back to work, everyone. Guards, take the Earth prisoner to the vivisection room."

From bad to worse!

I had successfully come through the match, unrevealed as a robot. Now they would "vivisect" me! One thrust with a knife and they would know—

What now? Challenge them? Run and hide? I might have tried the latter, if there weren't so many present. But they would be after me like a pack. No, I would have to take my chances in the vivisection room.

THE vivisection room, somewhere below, was a grisly place.

Human corpses, in various degrees of dissection, lay on slabs. On one slab, a poor wretch was still alive. His naked body was covered with incisions and gore. An alien made one final cut. I steeled myself. No use to try to save him. He was too far gone. If I killed the alien torturer, the mangled human would die anyway a few minutes later.

The victim squirmed against his straps, gave a weak gasp, and expired. I relaxed. A robot cannot show it, but within me I was sweating in rage and pity.

My turn was next. Methodically, I

was strapped to a slab. Questions were hurled at me, first. Mental inquisition, for useful information.

"How many of you Earthlings are there on this planet?"

"Give you three guesses," I returned.

"How many cities on Earth? Where are the important ones located?"

"Oh, here and there."

"Which is your weakest continent?"

"The sixth one, at the South Pole. But watch out for the penguins!"

The alien glared, and lowered his horns, butting me with them in the side. I think he nearly broke his neck. He didn't try it again.

"Stubborn, like all the rest," he growled. "Well, I'll take you apart now."

He wrenched my clothes off.

"Peculiar specimen," he commented, bending over me.

I was. My plastic disguise was badly battered, both from the tank explosion and Mog's manipulations. Metal peeped forth here and there. And instead of my nose there was only a gaping hole.

The alien biologist peered up and down. Surely he must see. Any moment he would yell his discovery, that I was a robot. Then I would be forced to act and quickly—and still without a definite plan!

But he made no yell. His unaccustomed eyes still took me for a strange variety of the human. Some had been scarred, being soldiers by profession. This one was scarred more, that was all. I almost laughed in his face, calling him a fool mentally.

With quick efficiency, he wheeled an apparatus over that I knew instantly for an X-ray machine. He snapped a button several times, taking full-length prints of my interior. How amazed he would be to see the developed prints—wheels, wires and cogs! But that

would not be for hours. I had gained that much time, if he did nothing more.

BUT now he poised a gleaming knife over me.

"This will hurt," he said bluntly, emotionlessly. "We are studying the nerve reactions of you humans under pain, for future reference."

He plunged the knife down. He made an incision in my chest just under the skin—or plastic. I squirmed, and gave a microphonic moan for his benefit.

He nodded, as though it checked with previous reactions. Again he incised what in a human was a delicate, painful nerve. Again I squirmed. But the farce could not go on. Had he forgotten that humans bled, when punctured?

I calculated my chances, preparing to spring up.

He jabbed the knife again, deeper this time. It met metal with a jar. Startled, he drew the blade out, staring at the blunted tip.

I sat up, snapping the straps like strings.

"Now you know," I said. "I'm a ro—"

I was interrupted. A voice droned from a loudspeaker set in the ceiling.

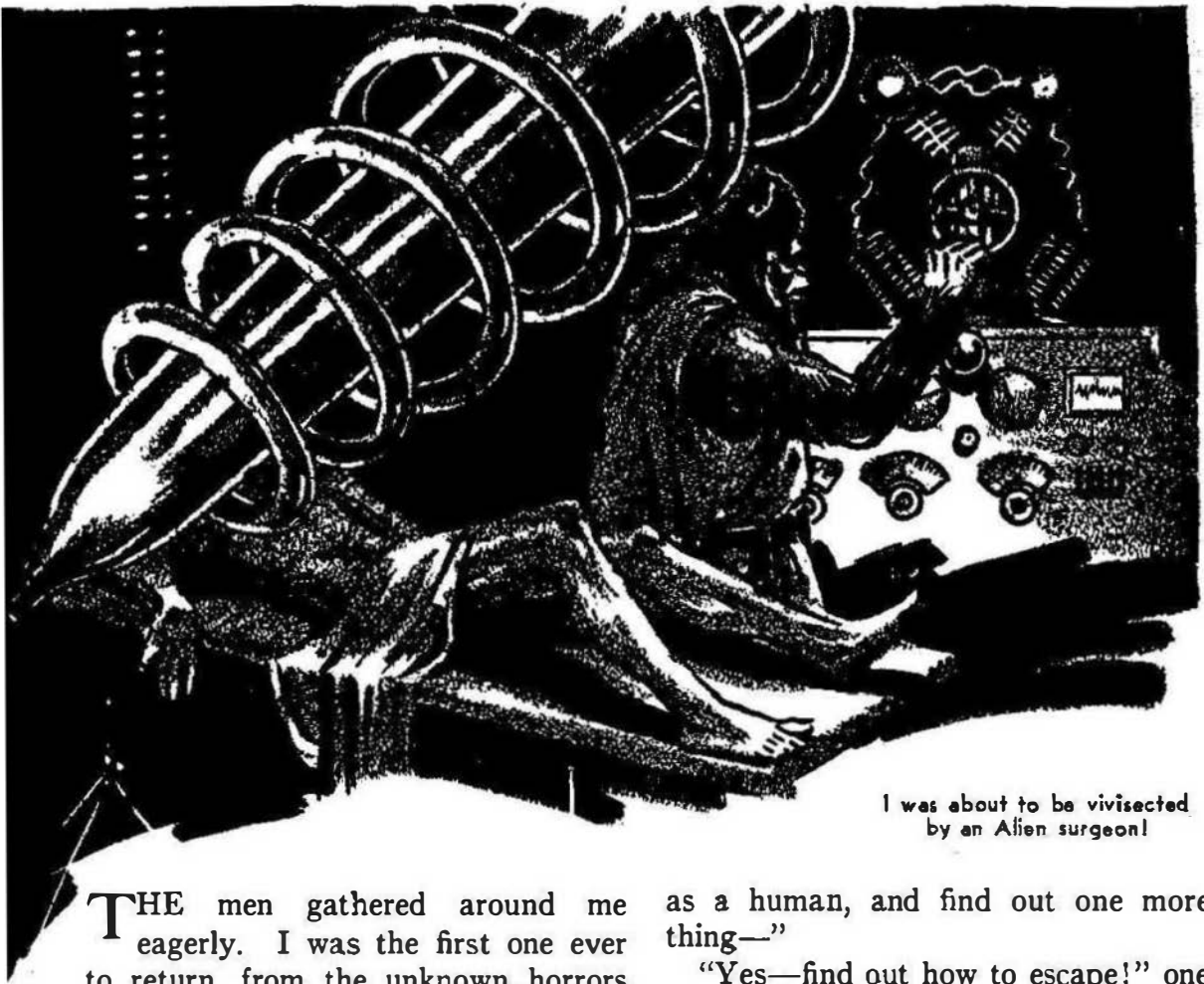
"Our radio has just contacted Ship Two, which is now approaching the Solar System. Leave all posts and come to the Apex Room. Chief Thorg wishes to outline further plans, now that Ship Two is known to be coming."

The aliens in the dissection room looked at one another joyfully.

"Ship Two is coming!" one said. "It will be good to see some more of the fellows from home. Let's go. We'll take this prisoner below."

I was safe, for the time. The alien biologist was too excited to remember his bent knife now. They conducted me below, to the prison, then left.





I was about to be vivisected
by an Alien surgeon!

THE men gathered around me eagerly. I was the first one ever to return, from the unknown horrors above. Eve touched me in the way I knew meant she was mentally sobbing in relief.

"How did you get back alive?" Captain Taylor asked. "What did you find out?"

I told the story. They clenched their fists, hearing of the brutal death of the two men in the arena, and shuddered at the horrible end of the vivisection victim.

"Murder!" Taylor hissed. "Plain stark murder and torture! And you didn't stop it, Adam Link!"

Suddenly they all drew away from me a little. I had let the tragedies occur right under my eyes, without lifting a finger. Humanly, they resented it.

"I couldn't expose myself," I said patiently. "I must continue to parade

as a human, and find out one more thing—"

"Yes—find out how to escape!" one of the men piped up loudly. "It's clear now, Adam Link. You're afraid yourself. Afraid of being finished off, once they know you for a robot. All you're thinking of is your own safety."

Another soldier's voice rang hoarsely.

"I wouldn't be surprised if Adam Link was thinking of going in cohorts with the aliens! After all, Adam Link isn't human, either, and—"

"Shut up!" Captain Taylor commanded. But the protest was weak. He too was looking at me askance.

I was under suspicion. In one moment, in their confused human minds, I had changed from champion of the human race to deserter of the human race!

What could I do or say?

For a moment I wanted to shout at them angrily. For a moment, too, I

began to wonder if this human race were worth saving, with all their ingratitude, twisted psychology, and fool distrust.

But I spoke quietly.

"I will have to try to prove now where my loyalty lies. But it must be in my own way. I must know one more thing, before I am ready to act against them."

I strode to the bars and looked out into the hall. No guard was there.

"Now is my chance," I said. "They are all gathered in the Apex Room above, at conference. We'll go there, Eve and I, to eavesdrop."

The men said nothing as we slipped through our usual aperture after a moment's work, and stood in the hall. We angled past the photo-electric beams, which was always a tricky job.

"Safe," I breathed to Eve.

At that moment, like a thunderclap, a bell clanged. The alarm! The next second, I heard bells clanging all through the corridors of the dome. How had it happened?

CHAPTER VI

Adam Link Joins the Aliens

"LOOK!" Eve cried, pointing back. "The men followed us, and ran into the photo-electric beams!"

The soldiers were streaming out of the prison, as fast as they could wiggle through the opening I had neglected to close. I had not meant to come back to prison this time. The men congregated in the hall, ready to plunge for victory or death.

"Fools!" I yelled. "You've ruined everything!"

"Think we were going to stay and die like rats? Captain Taylor yelled back, face twisted. "You were going to join the aliens. Your whole idea,

in coming to this dome, was to contact the aliens and make a pact with them, against the human race!"

I was stunned by the fantastic accusation.

"You didn't even give me the benefit of the doubt!" I groaned. "And now what are you going to do, with the aliens marching here?"

"Well, at least we have a fighting chance," Taylor growled.

But they didn't.

The aliens were already in sight, coming swiftly down the corridor from above. They drew their guns, seeing the escaped prisoners.

"Come on, men!" Taylor called the charge. It was magnificent bravery—but a bravery that deserved no respect. He took five steps, and crumpled to the floor, paralyzed. His men surged forward in a wave, and went down in a wave.

The aliens stood in a phalanx, spraying their paralysis-ray in the narrow passage. As fast as the front men fell, those in back were exposed and fell. In a short ten seconds, the whole human force lay limply on the floor.

It was a symbol of how easily the enemy from space could defeat all Earth, when they swept out.

The abortive jail-break was over. All the humans were down. The aliens had won. There was no one to oppose them.

No one? There were Eve and I!

It suddenly came to their notice that Eve and I still stood. The paralysis-ray had washed through our unfeeling metal bodies harmlessly.

Eve looked at me. This was the moment!

We were the champions of humanity! Eve waited for me to bellow the challenge, trample them down, and battle the rest in the dome. The men in back waited, conscious though helpless. It

had come to this—two mighty robots at last coming from behind human skirts and crushing the cruel raiders from the void.

They waited, as seconds ticked by.

But I did not bellow the hopeless challenge.

Curious, my thoughts were at the moment. The bitter episode of a moment before, in the prison, still etched like acid in my metal brain. Champion of humanity! Of a humanity that had scorned me since creation, reviled me, called me Frankenstein! For them I should battle these formidable beings. These beings from another planet who might, for all I knew *respect* me!

Yes, curious thoughts. Still, what was there to do? No matter how frightful the odds against me, I must fight.

I TENSED to spring. The head alien, Mog again, was aiming a different weapon, larger and more deadly looking. He would try this more destructive force against the strangely-standing two. I did not bellow a challenge—and warning. I would have to leap with deadly, silent speed, in action swifter than their reflexes.

But Mog was hesitating, looking me over closely.

"Wait," he grunted. "It's the noseless one again—the strong one! Who are you? You displayed strength near to mine, in the arena. And now, you stood up against the paralysis-ray, as no human does."

It clicked in his mind.

"*You are not human!*" he finished.

I tensed again. Knowing me for a robot, or at least a non-human, he would kill me the quicker.

Again he hesitated, pondering.

"While we were running up," he mused, "we heard you shouting. You were quarreling with the humans. And

one of the humans said something about you two coming to our dome only to join with us. Is it true?"

I thought a long, burning, wondering second.

Then I nodded.

I looked at Eve. Did she understand what went on in my mind in that eternal, blinding second? She did.

"Adam!" she gasped. "You're deserting the human race?"

"Why not?" I snarled. "You saw a moment before how they turned against us!"

Mog was watching us narrowly, not quite certain of his own deductions. Finally he circled us, while his men kept us covered. He stood over the fallen Captain Taylor.

"Are those two of your human race?" he asked. "Are they your friends?"

Taylor could not speak, with a paralyzed throat. But the flash of hatred and denial in his eyes was answer enough.

"Come," Mog said, looking at me as one strong being to another. "This is very, very interesting. I will take you to Chief Thorg."

Chief Thorg received us in the Apex Room, where his short conference was already over.

Mog reported the jail-break incident, then eagerly told of his discovery.

"More than one intelligent race on this planet?" Chief Thorg said, surprised and thoughtful. "I thought myself you seemed somehow different. You are a race entirely different from the human?"

I nodded. I did not want him to know, for the time being, that we were robots, *created* by the human race, and owing it that basic loyalty. Nor did I want him to know there were only two of us in existence.

"Race," he had assumed. It fitted in with my new decision.

EVE read my thoughts, as she always does with uncanny accuracy. That if robots were to have a place alongside the alien victors, Thorg must think we were a numerous and powerful group. Later, after a pact, I could quickly build up a robot force, and then really have my backing.

The aliens, I knew, were realists. They would not kill off Eve and me as Frankensteins. But they would kill us off simply as dangerous rivals, if they had the chance. Therefore, an intimidation of force would result in compromise.

But Eve shrank from me a little. She clutched my arm in appeal.

"We cannot desert the human race, Adam, even if they hate us. This is their world, and our world—"

"Nonsense, Eve!" I snapped. "There can be no truce between our race and humans, ever!"

Eve gave up, and nodded.

"You're right, Adam. We would be fools to hope to patch up things with the humans. If only humans had not resisted us with such blind, backward, superstitious stubbornness. They made our lives a bitter struggle against ignorance and stupidity!"

Thorg listened to our tete-a-tete with sharp interest.

"I take it the human race hates your race. They have tried to exterminate you? How many of you are there?"

"We are not as numerous as the humans," I bluffed. "But we are far stronger, and hold our own easily. We have atomic-weapons. More than once we decided not to exterminate the humans, as we easily could have."

"A little soft-hearted," Thorg scoffed. But behind that was a deep respect for our avowed power. "You are scientific?"

I waved around.

"This dome is made of stable chain-

carbon molecules compressed together so that they touch, isn't it? It is far stronger than porous metal. We have a weapon that can pierce it—vibration!"

Thorg started. The deductions had struck home. He was visibly impressed. By what I left unsaid, he could only assume that our "race" was able to resist humans—and the aliens too.

"Perhaps your race and mine can make a pact?" Thorg said cautiously. "Will you help us defeat the humans and enslave them?"

At that moment, I felt that the universe held its breath.

The decision was plain before me. It meant a complete reversal of loyalty. Champions of the human race we had been an hour before. Betrayers of the human race we would be now, if we accepted. The aliens were realistic-minded. They would give robots a place alongside them, on conquered Earth, realizing their worth and special abilities. They would not label us Frankensteins!

Humans had rejected me and my coming race. These aliens wouldn't. The decision was plain.

"What are your terms?" I asked.

"Complete and equal mastery over humans, along with us," Chief Thorg answered. "Definite terms will be agreed upon later, according to what parts of this planet you control, and what help you give."

"Good enough," I agreed. "As emissaries of our race, we will come to terms. But first, tell us who you are, where you are from, and what your plans are."

THORG'S story was strange and impelling. Again I have no proof of it. It will ring falsely, fantastically, to your stunted human minds that still arrogantly believe that in all the mighty

universe, only Earth was given life, and only man was given divine intelligence.

Eve and I waited breathlessly to hear his story. We had stepped out of the normal world and into this dome. With shock, we had laid eyes on the first alien beings ever to visit Earth. Curiosity consumed us, as to their origin and history.

"You are from Jupiter?" I asked. "The largest planet?"

Thorg shook his great horned head.

"We are from the star I think you call Sirius!"

Eve and I absorbed the shock of that. Not only were they from beyond Earth, but from beyond the Solar System. They were from another star!

"That's only logical," I said then. "Jupiter is frigidly cold, and probably has no breathable atmosphere. The other planets are likewise ill-adapted for life. It's likely that at all suns with a family of planets, only one or two have the right conditions to support life."

Thorg gave me a glance of respect for the deduction.

"Sound reasoning," he said. "Our sun too has a family of planets—twelve. Only one supported life, our planet Korlo. Perhaps 25,000 of your Earth-years ago, our race achieved civilization and science. We passed through the Metal Age more than 10,000 years ago. Now we are in the plastic Age, manipulating matter and energy at will."

"A hundred years ago we achieved space ships, and colonized all our planets. Then, very recently, we cast our eyes out into the great void, swarming with stars. Our destiny lay out there, building an interstellar empire."

I nodded. Intelligence is restless. It ever seeks new worlds to conquer.

"Nearest to Sirius lay this sun, with a family of planets," Thorg resumed.

"Powerful telescopes resolved the satellites, and this expedition was launched."

"Sirius is eight and one-half light years away," I said. "How long did it take you to arrive?"

"Seventeen of your years," Thorg informed. "Since we achieved half the speed of light."

Seventeen years in space! Eve and I marveled not at the time, but at the speed. Building up a velocity of 93,000 miles a second was no small feat.

"THIS has all been a great adventure," Thorg continued, his heavy, saturnine face lighting up. "Two other ships were previously dispatched to Earth, and were never heard from again. Either their engines failed in space, or they struck large, wandering meteors. This is the first ship to arrive. But now that the trail has been blazed, others will follow!"

He pointed to the great searchlight.

"This was built as a signal-light for our scouting aircraft, which we brought disassembled. But also for Ship Two to land near us. Two ships were sent on this expedition, a month apart. If one failed to arrive, the other might. But both won through without mishap. Ship Two is passing Pluto now. We will shine the light tonight. Ship Two will land beside the dome."

"Only two ships were sent to conquer Earth?" I asked dubiously. "The humans are many. It might take years to beat them to submission."

"We realize it is not a small job, though assured for us," Thorg returned. "No, not just two ships. Now that we have successfully arrived and scouted Earth, the main forces will follow."

He pointed to the giant transmitter, which busy workmen were hurrying to completion.

"It will be finished tonight, too. Then a message will be hurled back to our home planet."

"It will take eight and one-half years to arrive!" I pointed out.

"One hour," Thorg contradicted. "This is our long-range radio. It will project impulses through the sub-ether, at almost an instantaneous rate. The message will reach Sirius in an hour, telling of our success. Then a waiting armada will be dispatched. A hundred more ships. With those reinforcements, we'll conquer humanity overnight, when they arrive!"

It would not be for seventeen years. But in that time these first arrivals would consolidate their position, and scout Earth till they knew every city and gun and factory. When the time came for action it would be an overnight conquest.

"Good!" I said enthusiastically. "I see you have laid sound plans. I am glad to ally myself and my race with you of Sirius. You are making interstellar history. You are a great race! Bridging the void alone is a mighty achievement. The human race does not even have one space ship!"

"Would you like to see ours?" Thorg said proudly. "Come, I'll show it to you. But first—"

Without finishing the sentence, he led us to the prison room.

CHAPTER VII

Battle in the Dome

"WE ARE realists," Thorg said bluntly. "I need one proof of your pledge to our cause. Mog, bring out a human!"

Mog unlocked the prison door and pulled a man out by the arm. It was Captain Taylor.

"Kill him before my eyes, Adam

Link!" Chief Thorg said.

I looked around. The tableau seemed to freeze. Thorg and Mog watched me narrowly, to see if I would kill the humans I avowed were my enemies. The men in the cage stared in frozen silence. Eve turned away a little. For all our decision, it would not be an easy thing to do.

Stonily, I strode to Captain Taylor. I placed my two hands around his neck, slowly squeezing. That would be best, strangulation. But I hesitated.

"Go ahead, Frankenstein!" Taylor taunted me, without flinching. "Surely the life of a mere man isn't going to stand in your—"

I clipped off the bitter denunciation. I squeezed. Taylor's face went purple. A moment later I dropped the limp body.

Chief Thorg clapped me on the back.

"You're with us all right, Adam Link! Mog, throw the corpse back in prison, so that the humans can mourn over their leader. Come, Adam Link. I'll show you our space ship."

When we arrived at the underground hangar, I did not tell Thorg that I had seen it once before. He might wonder why I had spied first, before joining him. I did not want our newly-formed alliance to be riddled with useless, unimportant suspicions. That was of the past, anyway, when I had been the thankless champion of humanity.

Workmen were there, just starting to dismantle the ship.

"Since we contacted Ship Two," Thorg explained, "we have no need for this ship, for emergency. We are getting rid of it. This underground space will be converted into barracks for the new arrivals."

He conducted us through the ship, explaining its various features.

"The space trip was not easy," he related. "Acceleration for a year pro-

duced a terrible ache in our bones and organs. Then, coasting for fifteen years, we had little to do but think back and think ahead. One man went mad, and was exterminated. Then deceleration for a year again. Arriving on Earth, we were half dead.

"But recuperation was quick, in Earth's light gravity. Our world is about Jupiter's size. We are used to three times more gravity than this. We feel light as a feather here. And it makes us proportionately stronger, far stronger than humans."

He was looking at me suddenly.

"You are strong, too, as Mog found out. Are you stronger than we are?"

"Perhaps a little," I laughed. "Tell me more of the ship. It intrigues me. How does the engine operate?"

"Thought-control," Thorg answered briefly. "As with our guns."

I GLANCED at Eve ruefully. Before, looking at the intricate engine, we had wondered how it operated. We had not thought of the mental-control, though that was so obvious.

A group of workmen passed us, approaching the engine.

"Careful while you dismantle it!" Thorg warned them. "It has its own power-plant. The power is still in the coils. Mog, you go and turn off all the switches first, so there won't be any accidents."

I glanced at Eve again. Power was still on, in the ship. If we had known that when first seeing it, and guessed at the thought-control, we might then have accomplished our original mission. But that was while we were still champions of humanity.

"I've wanted to ask you a question, Thorg—" I began, when a messenger came running from above. He thrust something in his chief's hands.

"What is this?" Thorg asked. "You

are from the dissection room. Why are you so excited?"

"These are X-ray prints!" the other Sirian gasped. "They show—"

He held them out mutely. The prints would speak for themselves.

I knew what they showed. They showed a seeming human body, lying flat, all its insides revealed to the X-ray's penetrative eye. They showed wires, wheels and cogs!

I tensed, as Thorg began looking them over. What would his reaction be, knowing us at last for robots? Beings more alien to him than even humans!

"My question is this, Thorg," I went on imperturbably, as though ignoring the interruption as something unimportant. "If you failed to send the long-range radio message back to Sirius, would the follow-up armada come anyway?"

"No," Thorg said abstractly, looking over the prints with a puzzled eye. "Receiving no message, our people would assume we had been lost. Sending these ships is a costly proposition. They would give up coming to this sun at all, then, and try some other star."

"Thanks, Thorg!" I said. "That's all I wanted to know!"

"WHAT?" he said, still absorbed in studying the prints. Suddenly his eyes blinked, as the significance of the X-rays struck home. He looked up.

"You are a robot!" he accused. "A mechanical being!"

"Sure," I agreed. I went on rapidly. "You wanted to know how strong I was before. I'll show you—*now!*"

My fist drove into his face, with all the power of a machine behind it. Thorg's giant form toppled over backward, turning three somersaults, his horns and hooves alternately clacking

on the floor.

"The engine, Eve!" I yelled. "Before they touch it!"

Mog and his workmen had turned, at the swift, bewildering attack on their chief. There were twenty of them. Twenty of the towering giant monsters between us and the engine. They stood only a moment, as Eve and I bore down on them like express trains. Then they jerked out their guns.

The paralysis-rays went through us harmlessly. They had forgotten. But now Mog, aware of their uselessness, had drawn his other weapon. It was the one unknown factor left. Would it blast, like their cannon, blowing even metal to atoms?

"If he gets one of us, Eve," I told her swiftly without slackening pace, "the other goes on. You know what to do—"

Eve nodded.

Mog fired. The electrical bolt leaped to my body, with an impact that made me stumble. But it did no more than knock plastic off and scorch the metal. It was a hand-weapon designed to blast human flesh, or Sirian flesh, but not hard metal.

Mog stared in disbelief, as I came on unharmed. Then he fired again and again, blindly, at both of us. The other Sirians too. Bolt after bolt ripped into us. Our plastic burned and melted away.

One shot tore away my artificial ears and lips and hair-wig. My true metal face shone forth.

It takes long to tell this. But it was only seconds while we leaped toward them in great bounds. I try to imagine at times how profoundly astonished the Sirians must have been. Two seeming humans coming at them, changing under the blasts to two gleaming, powerful monsters of metal!

"Robots!" one of the Sirians

screached. "Intelligent machines—"

Then I was among them.

I cracked the first one on the skull so hard he sank without a groan, dead. I snapped the second one's neck with one sledge-hammer rabbit punch. I grabbed two necks and cracked their heads together, flinging the limp bodies aside. Giants they were, half again as high as I was, but I pulled them down to my level for blows. Eve was beside me, punching with the rapidity of a rivet-hammer. And with all its horsepower.

It was a grand fight. A soul-satisfying fight. With each blow, I hissed the name of one of the prisoners who had gone to the dissection room. With each death, I counted one Earth plane pilot paid for.

GIANTS they were, hulking monsters of incredible strength. But they had no chance. Their blows against us served only to break their arms. They kicked viciously with their hooves, and howled in pain as the ankle-bone went numb or snapped. They stooped and butted with their short, wicked horns, and succeeded only in stunning their brains. In turn, Eve and I butted with our metal skulls, at times, with enough force to cave in a chest with the muffled sound of cracking ribs.

Eve and I were at last exerting our full mechanical fury, against which no biological being could stand unless it might be a dinosaur. The Sirians were gigantic and strong, yes, alongside humans. But to us they were overgrown rag dummies.

It was a glorious fight. The hulking behemoths went down steadily.

"Come on, you Sirian thugs!" I yelled. "Meet Adam Link, the robot. My wife, Eve. Pleased to kill you!"

The last two tried to flee, shrieking,

from the two beserk metal whirlwinds. I overtook one. Eve caught the other. We swung them around our heads, by their heels, banging them together till they were bloody broken shreds. We were laughing, shrieking in joy.

I cannot explain this orgy, except that all our pent-up hatred and rage and revulsion against the Sirians had come to a head. It is like a human stamping again and again on a snake with boots, long after it is dead, with overcharged hatred.

OUR shrieking stopped, as a sound penetrated to our ears. It was a hissing bolt-blast, followed by a tinkling crash.

"We forgot Mog!" Eve yelled. "He's at the engine, smashing the controls!"

I was already leaping to the front of the ship, where Mog was aiming his second blast among the drive-apparatus. I jerked the gun away, so that the blast sped harmlessly against the hull. Mog whirled with a snarl of rage and fear.

"Twice before we battled, Mog," I said, "without coming to a decision. Now—"

It was brief. I grabbed up his nine-foot body like that of a child. I bent him across my chest, as once he had brutally bent a human across his. I slowly pulled as he screamed in pain. The scream clipped off as a sharp snap told of his spine breaking like a twig. I tossed the corpse aside.

I looked around. All the Sirians down here were dead.

Except one.

"Look!" Eve pointed. "Thorg recovered!"

I had not killed Thorg, only dealt him a blow. He had crawled to the door and dashed through it, escaping.

"Let him go," I said. "Let him tell his men of the two metal demons who

will defeat them. And we will, now that we have this ship. We know how to run it now—by thought-control!"

Eve and I clasped hands happily. It was the last factor in the plan that had slowly shaped in my mind during the spying.

"Good job you did, Eve," I commended her sincerely. "Acting the part so superbly of turning against the human race, for the benefit of the Sirians. You even had me fooled for a while!"

"And you had me worried!" Eve returned, sighing in relief. "For a while I thought you might actually mean it! Especially when you took poor Captain Taylor and . . . but you had to do it."

I laughed.

"Taylor isn't dead," I said. "I didn't strangle him. I slipped a finger over a vertebra below the back of his neck and pressed hard. You know the delicate nerve there. Pressed or knocked, it renders the victim unconscious. But not dead. Taylor's alive."

"Adam, you darling!" Eve said. "Our hands are clean after all. Now—"

She was interrupted by the sound of clattering hooves down the corridor, approaching this underground hangar.

"No time to lose," I said hurriedly. "All we have to do now is start this ship's engine and—"

I SLIPPED the thought-helmet over my head.

"Come to life—start—operate!" I commanded mentally in a dozen different ways.

There was no reaction from the mighty engine. I tried vainly for another minute. At the gun, my merest thought had swung it, aimed it, fired it. What more was needed here?

Eve clutched my arm, pointing.

"Mog fired one shot at the controls. Look there—he damaged it!"

I looked. A dozen wires had been

blasted out of what seemed a main and vital unit of the complex mechanism.

Ruined! The ship's drive mechanism was ruined, and with it my great plan. We had only killed off twenty aliens. There were 980 of them left. A formidable force. I could not storm up and wade into them all. Their combined hand-weapon bolts would eventually damage me, defeat me.

I might kill a hundred or two. Hundreds would be left. And the dome would be intact. Ship Two would land tonight, with reinforcements. In one crushing moment, all my carefully planned schemes had smashed.

"I've failed, Eve!" I groaned. "They'll win, now. Our only hope was getting this ship into operation!"

"Can you repair it?" Eve suggested. "I'll try to hold off any attack for a while—"

"Repair it?" I said hollowly. "Repair an engine I never saw or heard of before? I might—if I had enough time. But they won't give us time."

Hopelessly, we prepared to battle to the end. We heard the thunder of Sirian hooves, like a herd of buffalo, and they appeared at the far end of the hangar.

I ran forward and picked up Mog's bolt-gun. I slipped three more from dead aliens and handed two to Eve. We stood shoulder to shoulder and fired. We blazed away, like two metal gunmen, with a pair of guns each, in a battle to the finish.

The first few Sirians that darted from the corridor went down with smoking holes blasted in their bodies by the lightning we hurled. It was no trick to us to handle the guns, and our aim was mechanically without error. Then they came thundering out in a body, at least a hundred of them, spreading in a semi-circle in the large space.

The lightning bolts lanced back and forth.

EVE and I, with our precise aim, picked them off like clay pigeons. But the last twenty surged near enough to blast us with a fusillade of shots. Some of our rivets cracked away. A frontal plate or two loosened. If our inner vitals were exposed, one shot within would short-circuit us and burn out our brains.

We divined Thorg's desperate plan.

Knowing he was up against formidable metal beings who acted fast, he would destroy us fast. At any cost. Even if it took all his men, he would finish us. Better for Ship Two to arrive at a dome empty of Sirians and robots alike, rather than arrive at a dome held by the robots.

A wave of another hundred Sirians spilled out next.

Again Eve and I shot them down with our unerring swiftness. But again, appallingly, rivets flew loose and metal slowly weakened. One shot had clipped away one of my neckbolts, so that a flange dropped away. The next electrical bolt in there would bore into my neck-cables, run up the wires, and blast my brain.

"The next attack," I told Eve somberly, "will get us. Earth is doomed after all!"

"If only Captain Taylor and his men had weapons and could attack from the rear!" Eve said hopelessly.

I started.

"Eve! The weapons are there—on the downed Sirians. Hurry, let's gather them before the next attack!"

We ran among the dead and piled up a hundred bolt-guns. Enough to arm all the prisoners.

"Get these to the men," I said to Eve. "Have them attack from the rear. Keep the Sirians occupied. Give

me one hour if you can. One hour to repair that engine!"

Our plan was desperate, but simple.

When the next wave of aliens boiled out, two hundred of them this time, they withered before the thunder of an Earth tank's gun. We had remembered the tank stored here. Eve was inside, with the bolt-weapons.

Guns spitting, she rumbled the tank forward, plowing through their ranks. The tank darted into the clear corridor back of them, knocking down the last few Sirians in the way. Then it churned madly down the hall, toward the prison.

"Good luck, Eve!" I shouted.

"Godbye, Adam!" her voice drifted back, above the rumble of the engine.

CHAPTER VIII

Adam Link's Reward

YES, goodbye it might be! I swung on the aliens with a snarl. They had forced me to separate from my mate. It always drove me beserk, when Eve was in danger. I would kill—kill—kill—

But only twenty stayed to duel with me. The remaining force, at an order, gave chase to Eve. They realized the threat she would be, at their backs.

Two guns blazing, I shot down fifteen of the twenty. Then my guns were empty. I did not waste time picking up fresh guns from among the dead. I waded into the last five, defying their bolts, like a metal madman. None had made a vital shot.

I picked up one and flung him to the ground as pulp. The second I bowled over and stamped on. I tore the head of the third from its trunk. I punched the fourth so hard my alloy fist sank half-way into his chest. The fifth and last I flung over my head against the wall, with a wet thud.

I was free from attack, for the time being.

I listened at the door. Faintly, I heard the joyous shouts of Taylor's men, drifting down from the halls above. Eve had reached them, killed the guard, yanked open the bars, and distributed the weapons. Already their barks sounded. And the tank's rumble resumed, as a spearhead formed behind it.

We had a rear-attack fighting force now!

I calculated the possibilities. Less than a hundred humans against 600 aliens. The Sirians would win, of course. The tank might confound them for a while, but they would barricade it off in some corridor and force the charging Earthmen to fight hand-to-hand. In the narrow hallway, with bolts sizzling thickly, Eve too would be doomed. . . .

But it would give me time now to look at the engine. Repair it, if possible.

I ran back, and looked the damage over.

I must make another fantastic statement here. I had never seen a space ship before, or even dreamed of one. I knew absolutely nothing of its principle or intricate design, fashioned by alien minds.

Yet in one hour I knew its essential features.

One hour I was free from molestation. The armed and freed Earthmen were putting up a heroic battle. Thorg knew he had to wipe out this armed menace in his midst, before he could come after me.

I could hear the sounds of battle. The triumphant, joyful shouts of the Earthmen, as as last they struck back at the aliens. Captain Taylor's voice was loudest of all, deploying his men in the corridors, sniping, charging, with-

drawing, doling out his men's lives for the largest possible price. And for the longest slice of precious time. The tank's rumble sounded periodically, as it was used to spearhead a sortie, or to cover a strategic retreat.

Humans and robots, united again, were making history under the dome.

One hour they gave me.

One hour in which I examined 5000 engine parts, wires, condensers, tubes, spark-chambers. And then I knew. Knew that the dozen wires Mog's one vital shot had destroyed should be replaced and hooked up in such and such a manner. Wire I took from a bolt-gun's coil. I made the last connection. I slipped the thought-helmet over my skull.

Would it work? Or would all those humans go down for nothing?

EVEN as I adjusted the helmet with feverish haste, the battle sounds died. The shouts of men trailed to dying echoes. They had spilled their blood, to the last man, buying an hour with their lives.

And Eve! The tank's rumble was absent. It had been wrecked. Had a bolt finally ripped into Eve's battered metal body and blasted within? No sound from her. She was gone, too!

Savagely, I commanded the engine to come to life. Obediently, a hum rose back of the panels, as mighty forces came to life and awaited their metal Aladdin's next wish. I began to give the mental order.

"Adam! Adam!"

It was Eve's voice, far down the corridor! Her metal feet pounded, louder and louder. Hooves pounded after her. The last 500 of the Sirians pursued her, to finish the battle underground where it had started.

Eve's flying metal form burst from the corridor. Sirians followed, blazing

away. A hail of lightning sparkled against her alloy plates. Eve stumbled half-way to the ship. She was badly hurt. A lightning-bolt spanged against the back of her skull, where metal had oxidized away under heat.

Eve fell with a crash and lay still. I was there in two huge bounds. I swept up her limp form. It was silent, lifeless. She had paid the price, too, along with Taylor and his men.

I would not wish to describe my feelings of that moment. Earth was saved, but the universe had turned dark, to me.

I ran back to the ship's controls.

"Rocket tubes fire!" I commanded the engine. "Rear and front together, at equal rate!"

Instantaneously, livid flame shot from the multitude of drive tubes. With equal forces from back and front, the ship itself did not move. But all the hangar was filled with a dense, choking, poisonous exhaust gas. This had been my plan.

I turned to watch. With savage satisfaction, I saw all the Sirians racing forward stop, stumble, and claw at their throats. By the dozens they dropped, then hundreds, as the clouds of gas billowed over them. They had lungs. The lungs filled with vapors that choked out their lives. The 500 aliens died in their tracks.

Chief Thorg was among them. I watched him curl to the ground, double up, and die in agony. I gazed down at Eve's dead form. His death soothed, perhaps by a millionth part, the blind agony within me.

I let the rockets blast out for fifteen minutes, filling the whole dome with its poisonous vapors. No being could be alive now. No last lurking Sirian who might be at some watch station.

Only Adam Link was alive now, without lungs to be seared.

I commanded the engine to stop.

Then I sat before Eve, in the dead quiet.

HOURS later I arose. It was night now. Ship Two was due to arrive, If my metal face could have showed it, I was grinning within. A deadly, ghastly grin.

The beacon light shone that night, guiding to Earth the space ship that had plummeted across the gulf of space from Sirius.

The mighty craft lowered from the clouds, rockets drumming. It dipped in salute. Within were 1000 yelling, cheering, rejoicing Sirians, eager to step out on the planet they were to conquer.

I was at a gun. The mighty ship was limned clearly by the searchlight.

"Fire—fire—fire—fire!"

My eyes moved like a raking machine-gun along the length of the ship. The gun thumped in unison, blowing gaping holes in the craft. It broke in gyrating shreds. Horned figures spilled out and fell to the dome.

When the rain of debris had ceased, all was quiet again. Ship Two had arrived.

But no more would.

With my shoulder against one support of the giant long-range radio, I shoved. The framework toppled, bringing the entire machine down with a crash. I stamped all its parts to bits.

Then I looked up, out of the slide-roof, singling Sirius out of the starry hosts. I laughed. Two robots had dealt that mighty sun a staggering blow.

No, one robot.

I went below, again. I picked up Eve's dead form and held it in my arms. Then I gave commands to the engine.

With a powerful bellow, the rear rockets burst forth. The gigantic craft rammed forward, like a caged

lion. Its sharp prow plowed through thin partitions, as through cheese.

"Faster! Faster!" I commanded.

Like a great battering ram, the ship speared for the central power-room of the dome. The nose crunched against the protecting walls, broke them down. The atomic-power generator they had used hummed busily in the center, still automatically gushing untold energy into the storage coils.

The ship plowed into the whole unit, cracking screens. Unleashed energy leaped forth.

"We will be together, Eve," I said. "Even in death."

The cosmos blew up. A million megawatts of raging fury expended itself in one titanic explosion.

The mind of Adam Link blinked out. I wished it so, following Eve into the unknown.

BUT the mind of Adam Link blinked into being again. I was alive!

"Eve, how can this be?" I stammered.

We were sitting up, staring around. We were at the edge of a broken cliff. Ocean-waves were dashing against the new cliff shore. The explosion had not only blown the dome to atoms, but it had severed the entire headland from its matrix. No sign remained of the dome's former site. It was all washed over by lapping, swirling waters.

And we were alive, at the edge of the shism!

One thing had survived with us, from the dome. The blunt prow of the space ship. It had been blown up and away, integrally, with two unconscious metal forms flattened against it. We had landed, with freakish gentleness, in soft sand.

"The prow," Eve said, "was probably designed to withstand head-on collision with any but the largest meteors

in space. It held up and saved us."

I nodded—and then suddenly stared at Eve, aghast.

"You're dead!" I gasped. "Eve, you're dead—"

"Seemed dead, perhaps," Eve corrected. "The bolt singed my brain, knocking me unconscious. Evidently this jar jolted me back to my senses."

I arose, then, hammering my metal fists against my metal chest. Like a metal Tarzan, I gave a bellow of pure triumph. I shook my fist up at the star Sirius.

"Set you back on your heels, didn't I?" I shouted. "In all the universe, no creatures can stand up against Adam Link—"

My legs crumpled suddenly. The chest-beating had loosened a wire within, short-circuiting my locomotor center. I collapsed and sprawled on the ground, helpless.

"Good for you," Eve chided as she took off my chest plates and worked over me. "You bragging fool! It was more luck than brains."

EVE was right. But when a grey ship nosed over the horizon, at dawn, I ran to shore eagerly, to meet its launch.

Joe Trent stepped to shore, with the battleship's captain and fleet-commander.

"Adam Link!" Trent greeted. "How did you do it? You blew the dome up somehow?"

"I did," I returned proudly. "Sabotage with a capital S. You see, I

rammed their space ship smack into the atomic-power unit and—"

Trent and the others listened, puzzled.

"Space ship? Atomic-power unit? What are you talking about?"

"The aliens," I said. "The aliens who built the dome—"

"Yes, of course, the aliens," Trent nodded. "But *which* aliens? All Europeans are aliens, naturally. Tell us, was it the foreign power we expected it was?"

"Don't you understand—" I began, but Eve shook her head at me. I knew what she meant. There was not one stick or stone left of the dome. Adam and Eve Link had seen the aliens, but no other eyes except the eyes of men now dead.

My voice ground to a stop. Trent and the others were patiently waiting to hear which foreign power had been so close to invading America.

"It was Nazi Germany," I said. "But the danger is over now. They won't try again."

Trent stepped forward, taking my hand.

"I thank you, Adam Link, in behalf of America! You will get the Congressional Medal of Honor for this!"

"Of course," I murmured. "But the medal will never be recorded in the records of the country for the truth . . ."

"The world would never believe!" Eve whispered.

Perhaps it is better that they do not.

THE END

« THAR'S GOLD IN THEM THAR METEORITES! »

NATIVE gold panners of Batobalani, Philippine Islands, have a bizarre superstition concerning ways and means of increasing their output. After they have made a good day's haul they place their gold in a dark place alongside of a tektite, which is a glass-like nodule of mysterious

origin believed by many to be a form of meteorite. This is supposed to increase their pannings. They call the tektite "wife or companion of the gold" and have great faith in its creative facilities.

—O. M. Quintine.