



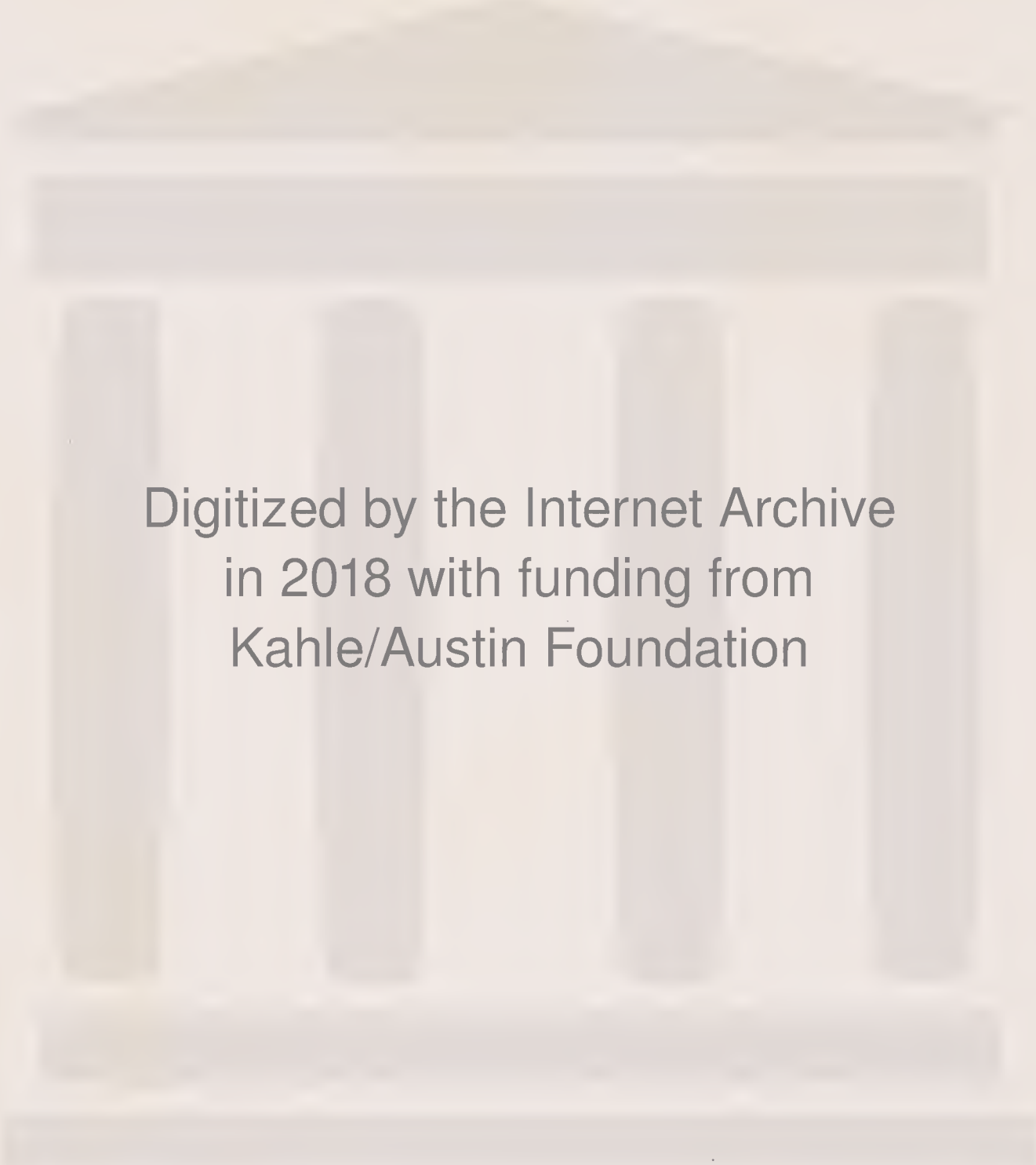
ASIMOV GREENBERG WAUGH

# Amazing Scientists





**MAD SCIENTISTS**



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2018 with funding from  
Kahle/Austin Foundation



# MAD SCIENTISTS

---

**EDITED BY**

Isaac Asimov

Martin Harry Greenberg

Charles Waugh

**ILLUSTRATED BY**

Joel Naprstek



**RAINTREE PUBLISHERS**

MILWAUKEE TORONTO MEXICO CITY LONDON



**BLACKWELL RAINTREE**

OXFORD



Copyright © 1982, Raintree Publishers Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Publisher. Inquiries should be addressed to Raintree Publishers Inc., 205 West Highland Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53203.

Library of Congress Number: 81-17739

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 85 84 83 82

Printed and bound in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Main entry under title:

Mad scientists.

Contents: The king of the beasts / Philip Jose Farmer — Silence, please! / Arthur C. Clarke — The weapon / Frederic Brown — [etc.]

1. Science fiction, American. 2. Science fiction, English. 3. Children's stories, American. 4. Children's stories, English.

[1. Science fiction. 2. Short stories]

I. Asimov, Isaac, 1920- . II. Greenberg, Martin Harry. III. Waugh, Charles.

IV. Naprstek, Joel, ill.

PZ5.M237 [Fic] 81-17739

U.S. ISBN 0-8172-1733-9 AACR2

U.K. SBN 0 86256 051 9

"The King of the Beasts" © 1964 by Galaxy Publishing Corporation.

Reprinted by permission of the author and his agents, the Scott Meredith Literary Agency, Inc., 845 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022.

"Silence, Please!" © 1950 by Nova Publications, copyright renewed by Arthur C. Clarke. Reprinted by permission of the author and his agents, the Scott Meredith Literary Agency, Inc., 845 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022.

"The Weapon" © 1951 by Street and Smith Publications. Reprinted by permission of the agents for the author's estate, the Scott Meredith Literary Agency, Inc., 845 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022.

"Von Goom's Gambit" © 1966 by Victor Contoski. First appeared in CHESS REVIEW. Reprinted by permission of the author.

Published simultaneously in the U.K. by Blackwell Raintree.



# Contents

---

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
Isaac Asimov	
<b>The King of the Beasts</b>	<b>8</b>
Philip Jose Farmer	
<b>Silence, Please!</b>	<b>12</b>
Arthur C. Clarke	
<b>The Weapon</b>	<b>33</b>
Fredric Brown	
<b>Von Goom's Gambit</b>	<b>40</b>
Victor Contoski	



# Introduction

---

ISAAC ASIMOV

Throughout history, there have been people who were thought to possess secret ways of controlling the Universe, and to have methods of disposing of vast powers.

Until modern times, such people were usually thought to be in touch with the supernatural. There were witches and wizards and warlocks and enchanters, all of whom, it was thought, knew spells that could call demons to their aid, or could create storms or other powerful effects. They were felt to have magic abilities, to be able to make themselves or others move through space, or to turn human beings into animals, and so on.

Such powers, if they existed, would be useful indeed, so that people often studied “dark arts,” and searched for “spells” by which they could achieve their wishes and desires. Is there anyone who hasn’t wished for Aladdin’s lamp? Just imagine being able to call up a genie and asking for anything we want.

Just the same, people who do possess such powers are to be feared also. A witch or a magician might be able to get you whatever you want, but what if he or she is annoyed with you. A magician might just as easily turn you into a toad, or make you sick, or cause other misfortunes to fall upon you, or those you love.

It makes sense then, that, throughout history, people who were thought to have supernatural power were feared and hated. They were persecuted and executed. In the 1500s and 1600s a “witch-mania” swept Europe and thousands of innocent old women were tortured and burned as witches. We know they were innocent, for there are no such things as witches or people who can command demons by magical spells.

In modern times, we have something else, however. We



have scientists. They don't have magic spells, but they have instruments and knowledge that can do things beyond anything that was imagined for the ancients. The witches were thought to fly through the air on broomsticks, but scientists have made it possible to fly on large and comfortable airplanes. Wizards were thought to have crystal balls in which they could see what was happening far off, but scientists have developed television. Ali Baba can make a door open by saying "Open sesame," but a scientist can equip a door with an electric eye that will open it as soon as you approach.

Thanks to science you do and experience things every day that were never dreamed of in fairy tales and fantasies.

But now it is scientists who control the Universe, and it is scientists who are feared and sometimes hated. What if a scientist is annoyed with you and uses one of his mysterious devices to do you harm. After all, *you* don't know what makes his devices work. They might just as well be magic as far as you're concerned.

Then, too, science *can* do harm even if scientists don't intend to; even if scientists are anxious *not* to do harm. Think of nuclear bombs, or chemical wastes, or substances that cause cancer.

It is not surprising, then, that some people view scientists today as others used to view witches centuries ago. And it is not surprising that science fiction writers turn out dramatic stories about scientists who are out of control—who are mad and dangerous.



---

---

# The King Of The Beasts

PHILIP JOSE FARMER

---

---

The biologist was showing the distinguished visitor through the zoo and laboratory.

“Our budget,” he said, “is too limited to re-create all known extinct species. So we bring to life only the higher animals, the beautiful ones that were wantonly exterminated. I’m trying, as it were, to make up for brutality and stupidity. You might say that man struck God in the face every time he wiped out a branch of the animal kingdom.”

He paused, and they looked across the moats and the force fields. The quagga wheeled and galloped, delight and sun flashing off his flanks. The sea otter poked his humorous whiskers from the water. The gorilla peered from behind bamboo. Passenger pigeons strutted. A rhinoceros trotted like a dainty battleship. With gentle eyes a giraffe looked at them, then resumed eating leaves.

“There’s the dodo. Not beautiful but very droll. And very helpless. Come. I’ll show you the re-creation itself.”

In the great building, they passed between rows of tall and wide tanks. They could see clearly through the windows and the jelly within.



“Those are African elephant embryos,” said the biologist. “We plan to grow a large herd and then release them on the new government preserve.”

“You positively radiate,” said the distinguished visitor. “You really love the animals, don’t you?”

“I love all life.”

“Tell me,” said the visitor, “where do you get the data for re-creation?”

“Mostly, skeletons and skins from the ancient museums. Excavated books and films that we succeeded in restoring and then translating. Ah, see those huge eggs? The chicks of the giant moa are growing within them. These, almost ready to be taken from the tank, are tiger cubs. They’ll be dangerous when grown but will be confined to the preserve.”

The visitor stopped before the last of the tanks.

“Just one?” he said. “What is it?”

“Poor little thing,” said the biologist, now sad. “It will be so alone. But I shall give it all the love I have.”

“Is it so dangerous?” said the visitor. “Worse than elephants, tigers and bears?”

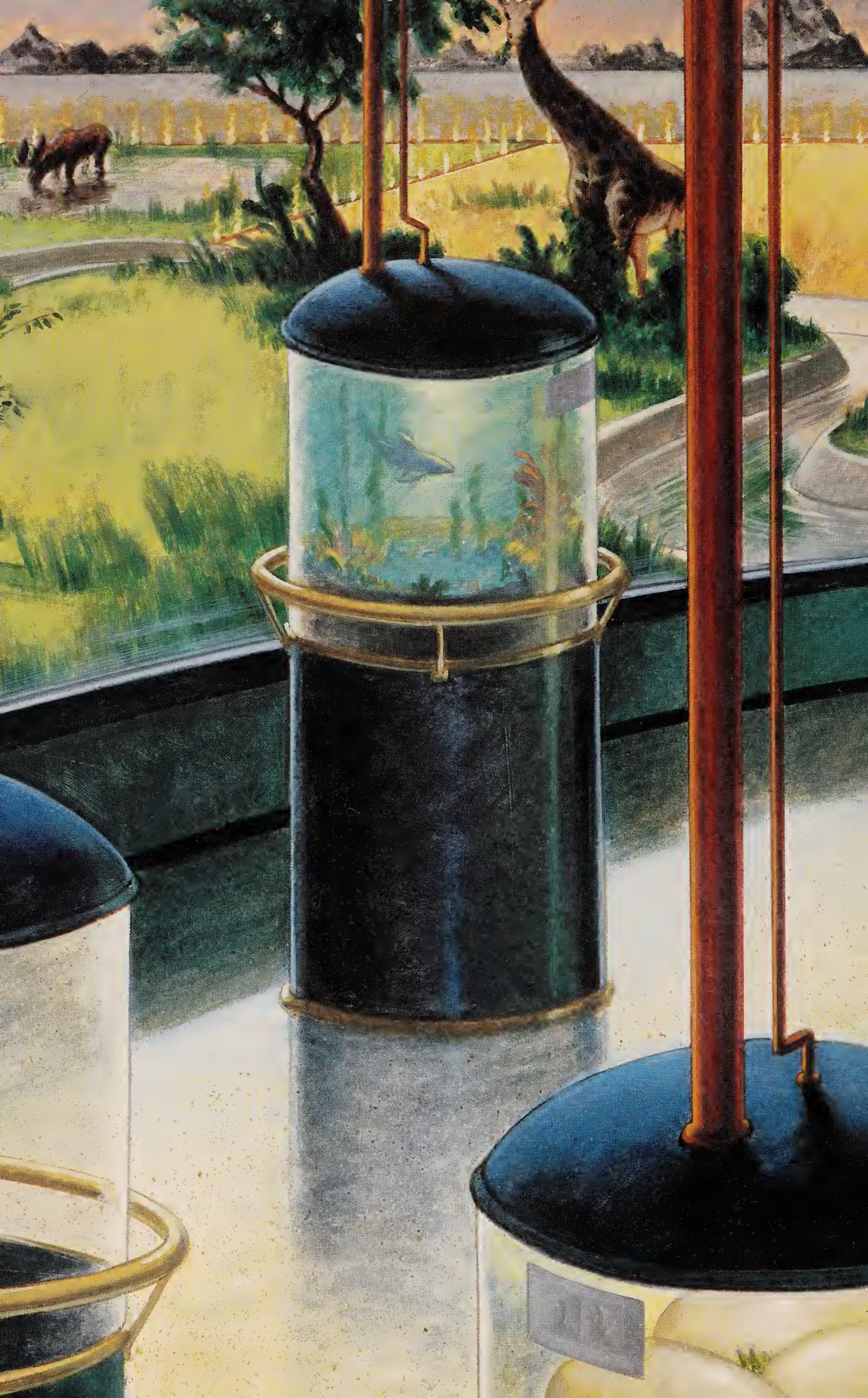
“I had to get special permission to grow this one,” said the biologist. His voice quavered.

The visitor stepped sharply back from the tank. He said, “Then it must be . . . but you wouldn’t dare!”

The biologist nodded.

“Yes. It’s a man.”













---

---

# Silence, Please!

ARTHUR C. CLARKE

---

---

Now that you point it out, it *is* rather extraordinary how the Professor's enemies always seem to get the worst of it. But I think your insinuation is a little unfair. He's really a very kindhearted chap who wouldn't hurt a fly if he could help it. I'm not saying that he doesn't like a scrap, but it's always fair and above board. Well, nearly always. Perhaps that *was* an exception. And you must admit that Sir Roderick deserved all he got.

When I first met the Professor he had only just left Cambridge and was still struggling to keep the Company solvent. I think he sometimes regretted leaving the academic cloisters for the rough and tumble of industry, but he once told me that he enjoyed using the whole of his mind for the first time in his life. Electron Products (1960) Ltd. was just about covering its expenses when I first joined it. Our main line of business was the Harvey Integrator, that compact little electronic calculator which could do almost everything a differential analyzer could for about a tenth of the cost. It had a steady sale to universities and research organizations, and is still the Professor's favorite. He's always improving it, and Model 15 goes on



the market in a few weeks.

At that time, however, the Professor had only two assets. One was the goodwill of the academic world, which thought him crazy but secretly admired his courage; his old colleagues back at the Cavendish were always boosting his products, and he got quite a bit of useful research done for nothing. His other asset was the mental outlook of the business men he dealt with. They took it for granted that an ex-university professor would be as innocent of commercial guile as a new-born babe. Which, of course, was just what the Professor wanted them to think. And some of the poor innocents still cling pathetically to that theory.

It was over the Harvey Integrator that Sir Roderic Fenton and the Professor first came into conflict. Perhaps you've never met Dr. Harvey, but he is that rare creature, the perfect popular conception of a scientist. A genius, of course, but the sort that should be locked in his lab and spoon-fed through a trapdoor. Sir Roderick did a flourishing line of business with helpless scientists like Harvey. When State control put an end to most of his other rackets, he turned his hand to the encouragement of original inventions. The Private Enterprise (Limitations) Act of 1955 had tried to foster that sort of thing, but not in the way Sir Roderick intended. He took advantage of the tax exemptions and, at the same time held industry up to ransom by grabbing fundamental patents from dim-witted inventors like Harvey. Someone once called him a scientific highwayman, which is a pretty good description.

When Harvey sold us the rights to his calculator he retired to his private lab and we didn't hear anything from him until about a year later. Then he produced a paper in the *Philosophical Magazine* describing that really marvelous circuit for evaluating multiple integrals. The Professor didn't see it for a few weeks—Harvey, of course, never thought of mentioning it, now being busy on something else. The delay was fatal. One of Sir Roderick's snoopers (he paid for and got good technical advice) had bullied poor Harvey into selling the thing outright to Fenton Enterprises.

The Professor, naturally, was hopping mad. Harvey was

frightfully contrite when he realized what he had done, and promised never to sign anything again before consulting us. But meanwhile the damage had been done and Sir Roderick was clutching his ill-gotten gains, waiting for us to approach him as he knew we must.

I'd have given a lot to be present at that interview. Unfortunately, the Professor insisted on going alone. He came back about an hour later, looking very hot and bothered. The old shark had asked £5,000 for Harvey's patents which was just a little less than our overdraft at that time. We gathered that the Professor's leave-taking had been lacking in courtesy. He had, in fact, told Sir Roderick to go to blazes and sketched out his probable itinerary.

The Professor disappeared into his office, and we heard him crashing around for a minute. Then he came out with his hat and coat.

"I'm suffocating here," he said. "Let's get away from town. Miss Simmons can look after things. Come along!"

We were used to the Professor's ways by now. Once we'd thought them eccentric, but by this time we knew better. At moments of crisis, a dash out into the country could often work wonders and more than repay for any time lost at the office. Besides, it was a lovely afternoon in late summer.

The Professor drove the big Alvis—his one extravagance, and a necessary one—out along the new Great West Road until we had passed the city limits. Then he opened the rotors and we climbed into the sky until a hundred miles of English countryside lay spread below. Far beneath us we could see the white runways of Heathrow, a great three-hundred-ton liner dropping towards them with idle jets.

"Where shall we go?" asked George Anderson, who was Managing Director at that time. Paul Hargreaves was the other member of the party: you won't know him, as he went to Westinghouse a couple of years ago. He was a production engineer, and one of the best. He had to be, to keep up with the Professor.

"What about Oxford?" I suggested. "It makes a change from these synthetic satellite towns."







So Oxford it was; but before we got there the Professor spotted some nice-looking hills and changed his mind. We windmilled down on a flat expanse of heather overlooking a long valley. It seemed as if it had been part of a large private estate in the days when there were such things. It was extremely hot, and we climbed out of the machine throwing surplus clothes in all directions. The Professor spread his coat delicately across the heather and curled himself up on it.

"Don't wake me until tea-time," he instructed. Five minutes later he was fast asleep.

We talked quietly for a while, glancing at him from time to time to make sure we didn't disturb him. He looked oddly young when his face was relaxed in sleep. It was difficult to realize that behind that placid mask a score of complicated schemes was being evolved—not least, the downfall of Sir Roderick Fenton.

At length we must have all dozed off. It was one of those afternoons when even the noise of insects seems subdued. The heat was almost visible, and the hills were shimmering all around us.

I woke up with a giant shouting in my ear. For a while I lay, taking a poor view of the disturbance; then the others stirred too, and we all looked around angrily.

Two miles away, a helicopter was floating above a small village that sprawled across the far end of the valley. It was bombarding the defenseless inhabitants with election propaganda, and every few minutes some vagary of the wind brought bursts of speech to our ears. We lay for a while trying to determine which party had committed the outrage, but as the amplifiers were doing nothing but extol the virtues of one Mr. Snooks we were none the wiser.

"He wouldn't get my vote," said Paul angrily. "Downright bad manners! The fellow must be a Socialist."

He dodged Anderson's shoe just in time.

"Maybe the villagers have asked him to address them," I said, not very convincingly, in an attempt to restore peace.

"I doubt it," said Paul. "But it's the principle of the thing I'm



objecting to. It's—it's an invasion of privacy. Like signwriting in the sky."

"I don't call the sky very private," said George. "But I see what you mean."

I forget exactly how the argument went from then on, but eventually it veered round to a discussion of offensive noises in general and Mr. Snooks in particular. Paul and George were regarding the helicopter dispassionately when the latter remarked:

"What I'd like is to be able to put up a sort of sound barrier whenever I wished. I always thought Samuel Butler's ear-flaps were a good idea, only they couldn't have been very efficient."

"I think they were, socially," replied Paul. "Even the worst bore would get a bit discouraged if you ostentatiously inserted a pair of ear-plugs every time he approached. But the idea of a sound barrier is intriguing. It's a pity it can't be done without removing the air, which wouldn't be very practicable."

The Professor hadn't taken any part in the conversation; in fact, he seemed to be asleep again. Presently he gave a great yawn and rose to his feet.

"Time for tea," he said. "Let's go to Max's. Your turn to pay, Fred."

About a month later, the Professor called me into his office. As I was his publicity agent and general go-between, he usually tried his new ideas on me to see if I understood them and thought they were any use. Hargreaves and I acted as ballast to keep the Professor down to earth. We didn't always succeed.

"Fred," he began, "do you remember what George said the other day about a sound barrier?"

I had to think for a moment before it came back to me. "Oh, yes—a crazy idea. Surely you aren't thinking about it seriously?"

"Hmm. What do you know about wave interference?"

"Not much. You tell me."

"Suppose you have a train of waves—a peak here, a trough











there, and so on. Then you take another train of waves and superimpose the two. What would you get?"

"Well, it depends on how you do it, I imagine."

"Precisely. Suppose you arranged it so that the trough of one wave coincided with the peak of the other, and so on all along the train."

"Then you'd get complete cancellation—nothing at all. Good heavens—!"

"Exactly. Now let's say we've got a source of sound. I put a microphone near it and feed the output to what we'll call an inverting amplifier. That drives a loudspeaker, and the whole thing is arranged so that the output is kept automatically at the same amplitude as the input, only out of phase with it. What's the net result?"

"It doesn't seem reasonable . . . but in theory it should give complete silence. There must be a catch somewhere."

"Where? It's only the principle of negative feedback, which has been used in radio for years to get rid of things you don't want."

"Yes, I know. But sound doesn't consist of peaks and troughs, like the waves on the sea. It's a series of compressions and rarefactions in the atmosphere, isn't it?"

"True. But that doesn't affect the principle in the slightest."

"I still don't believe it would work. There must be some point you have . . ."

And then a most extraordinary thing happened. I was still talking, but I couldn't hear myself. The room had become suddenly very quiet. Before my eyes, the Professor picked up a heavy paperweight and dropped it on his desk. It hit and bounced—in complete silence. Then he moved his hand, and abruptly sound came flooding back into the room.

I sat down heavily, stunned for a moment.

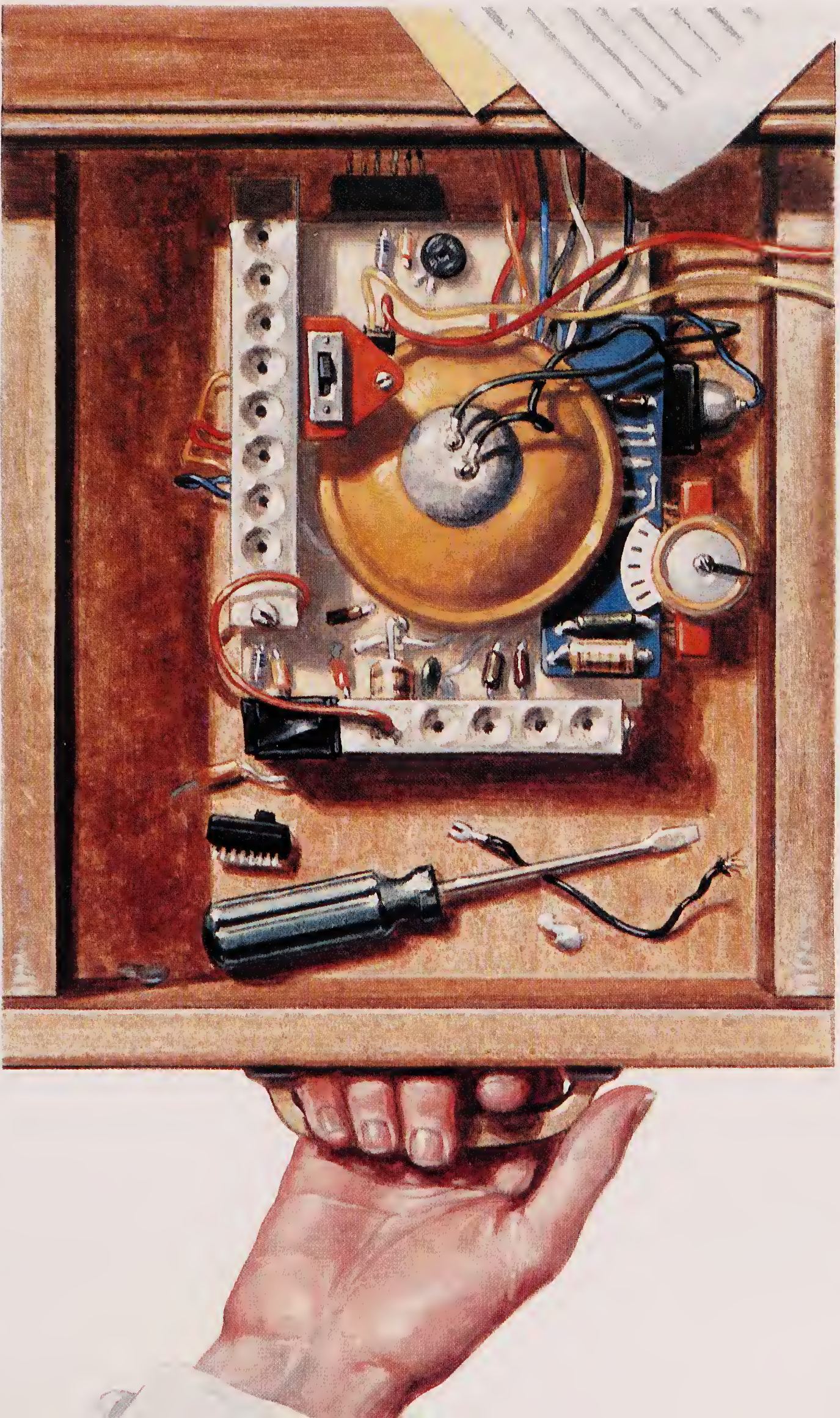
"I don't believe it!"

"Too bad. Like another demonstration?"

"No! It gives me the creeps! Where have you hidden it?"

The Professor grinned, and pulled out one of the drawers of his desk. Inside was a shocking jumble of components. I could tell by the blobs of solder, the wires twisted together and the







general untidiness that the Professor had made it with his own hands. The circuit itself appeared fairly simple; certainly not as complex as a modern radio.

"The loudspeaker—if you can call it that—is hidden behind the curtains over there. However, there's no reason why the whole thing shouldn't be quite compact, even portable."

"What sort of range has it got? I mean, there must be a limit to the infernal thing."

The Professor indicated what appeared to be a normal volume control.

"I haven't made very extensive tests, but this unit can be adjusted to give almost complete silence over a radius of twenty feet. Outside that, sounds are deadened for another thirty feet, and further away everything is normal again. You could cover any area you liked simply by increasing the power. This unit has an output of about three watts of 'negative sound,' and it couldn't handle *very* intense noises. But I think I could make a model to blank out the Albert Hall if I wanted to—though I might draw the line at Wembley Stadium."

"Well, now that you've made the thing, what do you intend to do with it?"

The Professor smiled sweetly. "That's *your* job: I'm only an impractical scientist. It seems to me that it should have quite a lot of applications. But don't tell anyone about it; I want to keep it as a surprise."

I was used to this sort of thing and gave the Professor his report a few days later. I had been into the production side with Hargreaves, and it seemed a simple job to make the equipment. All the parts were standard: even the amplifier-inverter was nothing very mysterious when you'd seen how it was done. It was not very difficult to visualize all sorts of uses for the invention, and I'd really let myself go. In its way, it was the cleverest thing the Professor had done. I was sure we could make it into a profitable line of business.

The Professor read my report carefully. He seemed a bit doubtful on one or two points.



"I don't see how we can produce the Silencer at present," he said, christening it for the first time. "We haven't the plant or the staff, and I want money on the nail, not in a year's time. Fenton rang up yesterday to say that he'd found a purchaser for Harvey's patents. I don't believe him, but he may be telling the truth. The Integrator is a bigger thing than this."

I was disappointed. "We might sell the license to one of the big radio firms."

"Yes; perhaps that's the best plan. But there are one or two other points to consider. I think I'll take a trip to Oxford."

"Why Oxford?"

"Oh, not all the brains are at Cambridge, you know. There's a bit of an overflow."

We didn't see him again for three days. When he came back he seemed rather pleased with himself. We soon found out why. In his pocket he had a check for £10,000 made out to R. H. Harvey and endorsed to Electron Products. It was signed Roderick Fenton.

The Professor sat quietly at his desk while we raved at him. Anderson was maddest of all. After all, he was supposed to be Managing Director. But the thing that rankled most was the fact that Sir Roderick had bought the Silencer. We couldn't get over that.

The Professor still seemed quite happy, and waited until we'd exhausted ourselves. It seemed that he had got Harvey to sell Fenton the Silencer as his own invention, so that its true origin would be concealed. The financier had been greatly impressed by the device and had bought it outright. If the Professor wanted to keep out of the transaction, he couldn't have chosen a better intermediary than the guileless Dr. Harvey. He was the last person anyone would suspect.

"But why have you let it go to that old crook?" we wailed. "Even if he's paid a fair price, which is incredible, why couldn't you sell it to someone honest?"

"Never mind," said the Professor, fanning himself with the check. "We can't quibble at £10,000 for a month's work, can we? Now I can buy Harvey's patents and make my bankers happy at the same time."



That was all we could get out of him. We left in a state of incipient mutiny, and it was just as well that the new calculator occupied all our attention for the next few weeks. Sir Roderick had handed over the precious patents without any more fuss. He was probably still feeling pleased with his new toy.

The Fenton Silencer came on the market with a great flourish of publicity, about six months later. It created quite a sensation. The first production model was presented to the British Museum Reading Room, and the fame it brought was well worth the cost of installation. While hospitals rushed to order units, we went around in a state of suppressed gloom, looking reproachfully at the Professor. He didn't seem to mind.

I don't know why Sir Roderick brought out the portable silencer. I rather think that some interested person must have suggested the idea to him. It was a clever little gadget, designed to look like a personal radio, and at first it sold on novelty value alone. Then people began to find it useful in noisy surroundings. And then—

Quite by chance, I was at that opening performance of Edward England's sensational new opera. Not that I'm particularly keen on opera, but a friend had a spare ticket and it promised to be entertaining. It was.

The papers had been talking about the opera for weeks before, particularly the daring use of electric percussion instruments. England's music had been causing controversy for years. His supporters and detractors almost had a free fight before the performance, but that was nothing unusual. The Sadler's Wells management had thoughtfully arranged to have special police standing by, and there were only a few boos and catcalls when the curtain went up.

In case you don't know the opera, it's one of the stark, realistic type so popular nowadays. The period is the late Victorian era, and the main characters are Sarah Stampe, the passionate postmistress, Walter Partridge, the saturnine gamekeeper, and the squire's son, whose name I forget. It's the



old story of the eternal triangle, complicated by the villagers' resentment of change—in this case, the new telegraph system which the local crones predict will do things to cows' milk and cause trouble at lambing time.

I know it sounds rather involved and improbable, but operas always seem to be that way. Anyhow, there is the usual drama of jealousy. The squire's son doesn't want to marry into the Post Office, and the gamekeeper, maddened by his rejection, plots his revenge. The tragedy rises to its dreadful climax when poor Sarah, strangled with parcel tape, is found hidden in a mail bag in the Dead Letter Department. The villagers hang Partridge from the nearest telegraph pole, much to the annoyance of the linesmen; the squire's son takes to drink, or the Colonies, and that's that.

I knew I was in for it when the overture started. Maybe I'm old-fashioned, but somehow this modern stuff leaves me cold. I like something with melody, and nobody seems to write that sort of music any more. I've no patience with these modern composers—give me Bliss, Walton, Stravinsky and the other old-timers any day.

The cacophony died away amid cheers and catcalls, and the curtain went up. The scene was the village square at Doddering Sloughleigh, circa 1860. Enter the heroine, reading the postcards in the morning's mail. She comes across a letter addressed to the young squire and promptly bursts into song.

Sarah's opening aria wasn't quite as bad as the overture, but it was grim enough. Judging by appearances, it must have been almost as painful to sing as to listen to. But we were only to hear the first few bars, for suddenly that familiar blanket of silence descended upon the opera house. For a moment I must have been the only person in that huge audience who realized what had happened. Everyone seemed frozen in their seats, while the singer's lips went on moving soundlessly. Then she, too, realized the truth. Her mouth opened in what would have been a piercing scream in any other circumstances, and she fled into the wings amid a shower of postcards.

I'm sorry to say that I laughed myself sick during the next











ten minutes. The chaos was unbelievable. Quite a number of people must have realized what had happened, and they were trying to explain it to their friends. But, of course, they couldn't, and their efforts to do so were incredibly funny. Presently pieces of paper began circulating, and everybody started to look suspiciously at everybody else. However, the culprit must have been well concealed, for he was never discovered.

What's that? Yes, I suppose it's possible. No one would think of suspecting the orchestra. That would account for the motive, too: I'd never thought of it before. Anyway, the next day all the papers were very rude about Sir Roderick and there was talk of an inquiry. Shares in Fenton Enterprises began to be unpopular. And the Professor looked more cheerful than he'd done for days.

The Sadler's Wells affair started a whole crop of similar incidents, none on such a large scale but all with their amusing points. Some of the perpetrators were caught, and then, to everybody's consternation, it was discovered that there was no law under which they could be charged. It was while the Lord Chancellor was trying to stretch the Witchcraft Act to cover the case that the second big scandal occurred.

I used to have the copy of Hansard around, but someone seems to have pinched it. I rather suspect the Professor. Do you remember that deplorable affair? The House was debating the Civil Estimates, and tempers had risen to terms, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer was hitting back with both fists when he was suddenly faded out. It was Sadler's Wells all over again, except that this time everybody knew what had happened.

There was a soundless pandemonium. Every time an opposition speaker rose the field was switched off, and so the debate became somewhat one-sided. Suspicion focused on an unfortunate Liberal who happened to be carrying a personal radio. He was practically lynched, while silently protesting his innocence. The radio was torn away—but the silences continued. The Speaker rose to intervene, and *he* got suppressed. That was the last straw, and he walked out of the House,



ending the debate among scenes of unprecedented disorder.

Sir Roderick must have been feeling pretty unhappy by then. Everyone was getting very annoyed with the Silencer, to which his name had been irrevocably welded by his own conceit. But, so far, nothing really serious had happened. So far . . .

Some time before, Dr. Harvey had called on us with the news that Fenton wanted him to design a special high-powered unit for a private order. The Professor did so—for a pretty stiff fee. I was always rather surprised that Harvey carried off the deception so successfully, but Sir Roderick never suspected anything. He got his super-silencer, Harvey got the credit, and the Professor got the cash. Everyone was satisfied—including the customer. For, about two days after the House of Commons incident, there was a robbery at a Hatton Garden Jeweller's, early one afternoon in broad daylight. The extraordinary thing about it was that a safe had been blown open without anyone hearing *either the intruders or the explosion*.

Precisely! That's what Scotland Yard thought, and it was about then that Sir Roderick began to wish he'd never even heard of the Silencer. Of course, he was able to prove that he had no idea of the use for which the special unit had been intended. And, equally of course, the customer's address had been an accommodation one.

The next day half the newspapers carried headlines: FENTON SILENCER MAY BE BANNED. Their unanimity would have been puzzling if one didn't know that the Professor had long ago established excellent relations with all the science reporters in Fleet Street. By another strange coincidence, that same day an agent from an American firm called on Sir Roderick and offered to buy the Silencer outright. The agent called just as the detectives were leaving and Sir Roderick's resistance was at its lowest ebb. He got the patents for \$20,000, and I think the financier was glad to see the back of them.

The Professor, at any rate, was very cheerful when he called us into his office the next day.

"I'm afraid I owe you all an apology," he said. "I know how







you felt when I sold the Silencer. However, we've got it back again, and I think everything's worked out rather well. Except for Sir Roderick, bless his little heart."

"Don't look so smug," said Paul. "You were just darned lucky, that's all."

The Professor looked hurt. "I admit there was a certain element of luck," he agreed. "But not as much as you may think. D'you remember my trip to Oxford after I got Fred's report?"

"Yes. What about it?"

"Well, I went to see Professor Wilson, the psychologist. Do you know anything about his work?"

"Not much."

"I suppose not; he hasn't published his conclusions yet. But he's developed what he calls the mathematics of social psychology. It's all frightfully involved, but he claims to be able to express the properties of any society in the form of a square matrix of about a hundred columns. If you want to know what will happen to that society when you do anything to it—for example, if you pass a new law—you have to multiply it by another matrix. Get the idea?"

"Vaguely."

"Naturally, the results are purely statistical. It's a matter of probabilities—like life insurance—rather than certainties. I had my doubts about the Silencer right at the beginning, and wondered what would happen if its use were unrestricted. Wilson told me; not in detail, of course, but in general outline. He predicted that if as many as point one percent of the population used Silencers, they would probably have to be banned inside a year. And if criminal elements started to use them, trouble would arise even sooner."

"Professor! Are you telling us—?"

"Good gracious, no! I don't go in for burglary. That was a bit of luck, though it was bound to happen sooner or later. I am only suprised that it took so long for someone to think of it."

We regarded him speechlessly.

"What else was I to do? I wanted the Silencer *and* the money. I took a risk, and it came off."



"I still think you're a crook," said Paul. "But what do you intend to do with the thing now that you've got it back?"

"Well, we'll have to wait until the unpleasantness dies down. From what I've seen of Fenton Enterprises equipment, the units they've sold will come in for repair in about a year, so that should get rid of them eventually. In the meantime, we'll get our models ready for the market—fixed, built-in units only this time so that there can be none of these accidents again. And they'll be hired, not sold outright. You might be interested to know that I'm expecting a big order from Empire Airways. Atomic rockets make a devil of a noise, and nobody's been able to do anything about it until now."

He picked up the sheaf of papers and ruffled through them lovingly. "You know, this is quite a good example of the inscrutable workings of fate. It only goes to show that honesty always triumphs, and that he whose cause is just—"

We all moved at once. It took him quite a while to get his head out of the wastepaper basket.







---

---

# The Weapon

FREDRIC BROWN

---

---

The room was quiet in the dimness of early evening. Dr. James Graham, key scientist of a very important project, sat in his favorite chair, thinking. It was so still that he could hear the turning of pages in the next room as his son leafed through a picture book.

Often Graham did his best work, his most creative thinking, under these circumstances, sitting alone in an unlighted room in his own apartment after the day's regular work. But tonight his mind would not work constructively. Mostly he thought about his mentally arrested son—his only son—in the next room. The thoughts were loving thoughts, not the bitter anguish he had felt years ago when he had first learned of the boy's condition. The boy was happy; wasn't that the main thing? And to how many men is given a child who will always be a child, who will not grow up to leave him? Certainly that was rationalization, but what is wrong with rationalization when—the doorbell rang.

Graham rose and turned on lights in the almost-dark room before he went through the hallway to the door. He was not



annoyed; tonight, at this moment, almost any interruption to his thoughts was welcome.

He opened the door. A stranger stood there; he said, "Dr. Graham? My name is Niemand; I'd like to talk to you. May I come in a moment?"

Graham looked at him. He was a small man, nondescript, obviously harmless—possibly a reporter or an insurance agent.

But it didn't matter what he was. Graham found himself saying, "Of course. Come in, Mr. Niemand." A few minutes of conversation, he justified himself by thinking, might divert his thoughts and clear his mind.

"Sit down," he said, in the living room. "Care for a cup of coffee?"

Niemand said, "No, thank you." He sat in the chair; Graham sat on the sofa.

The small man interlocked his fingers; he leaned forward. He said, "Dr. Graham, you are the man whose scientific work is more likely than that of any other man to end the human race's chance for survival."

A crackpot, Graham thought. Too late now he realized that he should have asked the man's business before admitting him. It would be an embarrassing interview—he disliked being rude, yet only rudeness was effective.

"Dr. Graham, the weapon on which you are working—"

The visitor stopped and turned his head as the door that led to a bedroom opened and a boy of fifteen came in. The boy didn't notice Niemand; he ran to Graham.

"Daddy, will you read to me now?" The boy of fifteen laughed the sweet laughter of a child of four.

Graham put an arm around the boy. He looked at his visitor, wondering whether he had known about the boy. From the lack of surprise on Niemand's face, Graham felt sure he had known.

"Harry" — Graham's voice was warm with affection — "Daddy's busy. Just for a little while. Go back to your room; I'll come and read to you soon."







"*Chicken Little*? You'll read me *Chicken Little*?"

"If you wish. Now run along. Wait, Harry, this is Mr. Niemand."

The boy smiled bashfully at the visitor. Niemand said, "Hi, Harry," and smiled back at him, holding out his hand. Graham, watching, was sure now that Niemand had known: the smile and the gesture were for the boy's mental age, not his physical one.

The boy took Niemand's hand. For a moment it seemed that he was going to climb into Niemand's lap, and Graham pulled him back gently. He said, "Go to your room now, Harry."

The boy skipped back into his bedroom, not closing the door.

Niemand's eyes met Graham's and he said, "I like him," with obvious sincerity. He added, "I hope that what you're going to read to him will always be true."

Graham didn't understand. Niemand said, "*Chicken Little*, I mean. It's a fine story—but may *Chicken Little* always be wrong about the sky falling down."

Graham suddenly had liked Niemand when Niemand had shown liking for the boy. Now he remembered that he must close the interview quickly. He rose, in dismissal.

He said, "I fear you're wasting your time and mine, Mr. Niemand. I know all the arguments, everything you can say I've heard a thousand times. Possibly there is truth in what you believe, but it does not concern me. I'm a scientist, and only a scientist. Yes, it is public knowledge that I am working on a weapon, a rather ultimate one. But, for me personally, that is only a by-product of the fact that I am advancing science. I have thought it through, and I have found that that is my only concern."

"But, Dr. Graham, is humanity ready for an ultimate weapon?"

Graham frowned. "I have told you my point of view, Mr. Niemand."

Niemand rose slowly from the chair. He said, "Very well, if you do not choose to discuss it, I'll say no more." He passed a



hand across his forehead. "I'll leave, Dr. Graham. I wonder, though . . . may I change my mind about the coffee you offered me?"

Graham's irritation faded. He said, "Certainly. Cream and sugar?"

"Please."

Graham excused himself and went into the kitchen. He got the coffee, cream and sugar.

When he returned to the living room, Niemand was just leaving the boy's bedroom. He heard Niemand's "Good night, Harry," and Harry's happy, "'Night, Mr. Niemand."

Graham poured the coffee. A little later, Niemand declined a second cup and started to leave.

Niemand said, "I took the liberty of bringing a small gift to your son, doctor. I gave it to him while you were getting the coffee for us. I hope you'll forgive me."

"Of course. Thank you. Good night."

Graham closed the door; he walked through the living room into Harry's room. He said, "All right, Harry. Now I'll read to—"

There was sudden sweat on his forehead, but he forced his face and his voice to be calm as he stepped to the side of the bed. "May I see that, Harry?" When he had it safely, his hands shook as he examined it.

He thought, *only a madman would give a loaded revolver to a retarded child.*













---

---

# Von Goom's Gambit

VICTOR CONTOSKI

---

---

You won't find Von Goom's Gambit in any of the books on chess openings. Ludvik Pachman's *Moderne Schachtheorie* simply ignores it. Paul Keres' authoritative work *Teoria Debiutow Szachowych* mentions it only in passing in a footnote on page 239, advising the reader never to try it under any circumstances and makes sure the advice is followed by giving no further information. Dr. Max Euwe's *Archives* lists the Gambit in the index under the initial V.G. (Gambit), but fortunately gives no page unnumber. The twenty-volume *Chess Encyclopedia* (fourth edition) states that Von Goom is a myth and classifies him with werewolves and vampires. His Gambit is not mentioned. Vassily Nikolayevitch Kryllov heartily recommends Von Gooms' Gambit in the English edition of his book, *Russian Theory of the Opening*; the Russian edition makes no mention of it. Fortunately Kryllov himself did not—and does not yet—know the moves, so he did not recommend them to his American readers. If he had, the cold war would be finished, and possibly the world.

Von Goom was an inconspicuous man, as most discoverers



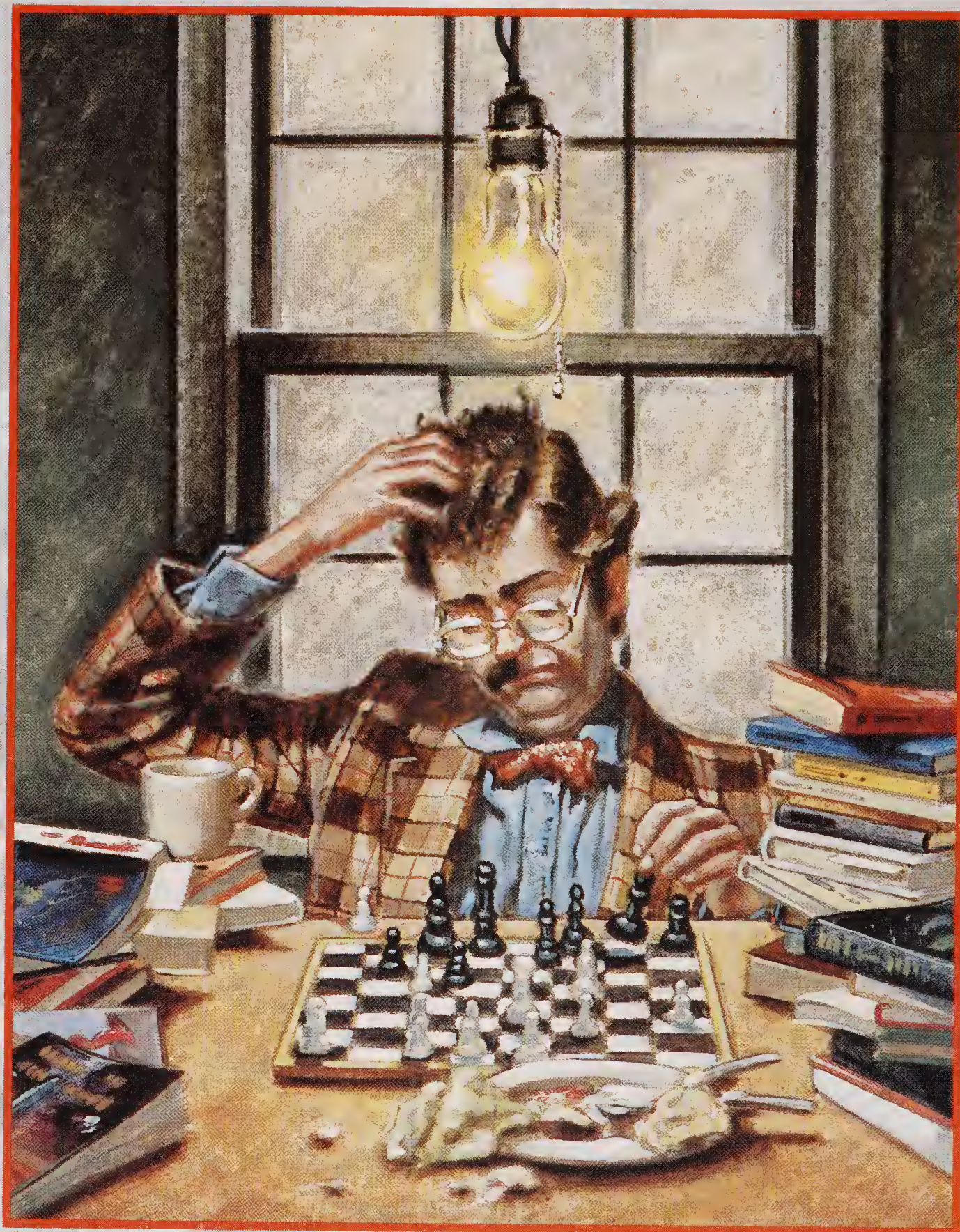
usually are; and he probably made his discovery by accident, as most discoverers usually do. He was the illegitimate son of a well known actress and a prominent political figure. The scandal of his birth haunted his early years, and as soon as he could legally do so he changed his name to Von Goom. He refused to take a Christian name because he claimed he was no Christian, a fact which seemed trivial at the time but was to explain much about this strange man. He grew fast early in life and attained a height of five feet four inches by the time he was ten years old. He seemed to think this height was sufficient, for he stopped growing. When his corpse was measured after his sudden demise, it proved to be exactly five feet four inches. Soon after he stopped growing, he also stopped talking. He never stopped working because he never started. The fortunes of his parents proved sufficient for all his needs. At the first opportunity, he quit school and spent the next twenty years of his life reading science fiction and growing a mustache on one side of his face. Apparently, sometime during this period, he learned to play chess.

On April 5, 1997, he entered his first chess tournament, the Minnesota State Championship. At first, the players thought he was a deaf mute because he refused to speak. Then the tournament director, announcing the pairings for the round, made a mistake and announced, "Curt Brasket—White; Van Goon—Black." A small, cutting voice filled with infinite sarcasm said, "Von Goom." It was the first time Von Goom had spoken in twenty years. He was to speak once more before his death.

Von Goom did not win the Minnesota State Championship. He lost to Brasket in twenty-nine moves. Then he lost to George Barnes in twenty-three moves, to K. N. Pedersen in nineteen, Frederick G. Galvin in seven, James Seifert in thirty-nine, Dr. Milton Jackson (who was five years old at the time) in one hundred and two. Thereupon, he retired from tournament chess for two years.

His next appearance was December 12, 1999, in the Greater Birmingham Open, where he also lost all his games. During







the remainder of the year, he played in the Fresno Chess Festival, the Eastern States Chess Congress, the Peach State Invitational and the Alaska Championship. His score for the year was: opponents forty-one; Von Goom zero.

Von Goom, however, was determined. For a period of two and one-half years thereafter he entered every tournament he could. Money was no obstacle and distance was no barrier. He bought his own private plane and learned to fly so that he could travel across the continent playing chess at every possible occasion. At the end of the two and one-half year period, he was still looking for his first win.

Then he discovered his Gambit. The discovery must surely have been an accident, but the credit—or rather the infamy—of working out the variations must be attributed to Von Goom. His unholy studies convinced him that the Gambit could be played with either the White or the Black pieces. There was no defense against it. He must have spent many a terrible night over the chessboard analyzing things man was not meant to analyze. The discovery of the Gambit and its implications turned his hair snow white, although his half mustache remained a dirty brown to his dying day, which was not far off.

His first opportunity to play the Gambit came in the Greater New York Open. The pre-tournament favorite was the wily defending Champion, grandmaster Miroslav Terminsky, although sentiment favored John George Bateman, the Intercollegiate Champion, who was also all-American quarterback for Notre Dame, Phi Beta Kappa and the youngest member of the Atomic Energy Commission. By this time, Von Goom had become a familiar, almost comic, figure in the chess world. People came to accept his silence, his withdrawal, even his half mustache. As Von Goom signed his entry card, a few players remarked that his hair had turned white; but most people ignored him. Fifteen minutes after the first round began, Von Goom won his first game of chess. His opponent had died of a heart attack.

He won his second game too when his opponent became violently sick to his stomach after the first six moves. His third











opponent got up from the table and left the tournament hall in disgust, never to play again. His fourth broke down in tears, begging Von Goom to desist from playing the Gambit. The tournament director had to lead the poor man from the hall. The next opponent simply sat and stared at Von Goom's opening position until he lost the game by forfeit.

His string of victories had placed Von Goom among the leaders of the tournament, and his next opponent was the Intercollegiate Champion John George Bateman, a hot-tempered, attacking player. Von Goom played his Gambit, or if you prefer to be technical, his Counter Gambit, since he played the Black pieces. John George's attempted refutation was as unconventional as it was ineffective. He jumped to his feet, reached across the table, grabbed Von Goom by the collar of his shirt and hit him in the mouth. But it did no good. Even as Von Goom fell, *he made his next move*. John George Bateman, who had never been sick a day in his life, collapsed in an epileptic fit.

Thus, Von Goom, who had never won a game of chess in his life before, was to play the wily grandmaster, Miroslav Terminsky, for the championship. Unfortunately, the game was shown to a crowd of spectators on a huge demonstration board mounted at one end of the hall. The tension mounted as the two contestants sat down to play. The crowd gasped in shock and horror when they saw the opening moves of Von Goom's Gambit. Then silence descended, a long, unbroken silence. A reporter who dropped by at the end of the day to interview the winner found to his amazement that the crowd and players alike had turned to stone. Only Terminsky had escaped the holocaust. The lucky man had gone insane.

A few more like results in tournaments and Von Goom became, by default, the chess champion of America. As such he received an invitation to play in the Challengers Tournament, the winner of which would play a match for the world championship with the current champion, Dr. Vladislav Feorintoshkin, author, humanitarian and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. Some officials of the International Chess Federa-



tion talked of banning the Gambit from play, but Von Goom took midnight journeys to their houses and *showed them the Gambit*. They disappeared from the face of the earth. Thus it appeared that the way to the world championship stood open for him.

Unknown to Von Goom, however, the night before he arrived in Portoroz, Yugoslavia, the site of the tournament, the International Chess Federation held a secret meeting. The finest brains in the world gathered together seeking a refutation to Von Goom's Gambit—and they found it. The following night, the most intelligent men of their generation, the leading grandmasters of the world, took Von Goom out in the woods and shot him. The great humanitarian Dr. Feorintoshkin looked down at the body and said, "A merciful end for Van Goom." A small, cutting voice filled with infinite sarcasm said, "Von Goom." Then the leading grandmasters shot him again and cleverly concealed his body in a shallow grave, which has not been found to this day. After all, they have the finest brains in the world.

And what of Von Goom's Gambit? Chess is a game of logic. Thirty-two pieces move on a board of sixty-four squares, colored alternately dark and light. As they move they form patterns. Some of these patterns are pleasing to the logical mind of man, and some are not. They show what man is capable of and what is beyond his reach. Take any position of the pieces on the chessboard. Usually it tells of the logical or semi-logical plans of the players, their strategy in playing for a win or a draw, and their personalities. If you see a pattern from the King's Gambit Accepted, you know that both players are tacticians, that the fight will be brief but fierce. A pattern from the Queen's Gambit Declined, however, tells that the players are strategists playing for minute advantages, the weakening of one square of the placing of a Rook on a half-opened file. From such patterns, pleasing or displeasing, you can tell much not only about the game and the players but also about man in general, and perhaps even about the order of the universe.



Now suppose someone discovers by accident or design a pattern on the chessboard that is more than displeasing, an alien pattern that tells unspeakable things about the mind of a player, man in general and the order of the universe. Suppose no normal man can look at such a pattern and remain normal. Surely such a pattern must have been formed by Von Goom's Gambit.

I wish the story could end here, but I fear it will not end for a long time. History has shown that discoveries cannot be unmade. Two months ago in Camden, New Jersey, a forty-three year old man was found turned to stone staring at a position on a chessboard. In Salt Lake City, the Utah State champion suddenly went screaming mad. And, last week in Minneapolis, a woman studying chess suddenly gave birth to twins—although she was not pregnant at the time.

Myself, I'm giving up the game.





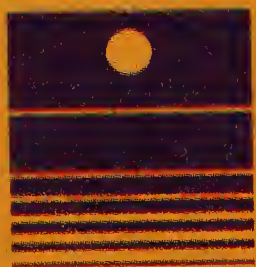












SCI-FI SHORTS

U.S. ISBN 0-8172-1733-9

U.K. SBN 0 86256 051 9

\*06-JYW-407\*