

THE WELL OF THE DEEP

By LLOYD BIGGLE, JR.

Illustrated by
DICK FRANCIS

IN the center of the table stood a miniature sun. In other places, on other tables, it might have been taken for a not-too-effective table lamp, since its plastic surface diffused the yellow light feebly. In the board room of Solar Productions, it was a sun.

Bruce Kalder relaxed dreamily, and watched the "sun" flicker on and off when the chairman of the board thumped on the table. Old Holbertson was powerfully worked up about something, but he had talked in such long-winded circles that Kalder had abandoned hope of finding out what was bothering him.

A billion burrowing humans had made a world under the Earth's crust—now one man had to keep it from being in vain.

WISH

Kalder suppressed a yawn, and looked across the table at June Holbertson. "She shouldn't wear low-cut dresses to board meetings," he thought. He'd been intentionally avoiding looking at her because he didn't want the board members to think that his appointment was mainly due to her influence. But it was a foolish attitude to take. They probably already knew it, and besides, everyone else in the room was watching her. Everyone except old Holbertson.

She smiled faintly, and winked at him.

Old Holbertson thumped the table again, and paused to take a sip of water. "Kalder," he shouted, "this is

damned serious, and it's your problem. What are you going to do about it?"

Kalder turned slowly, and faced the chairman of the board. From a condition of easy relaxation he had been slammed into one of stomach-twisting panic. His hands lay paralyzed on the arms of his chair. His dry tongue touched his dry lips, and recoiled.

Old Holbertson had talked for maybe twenty minutes, and Kalder had listened attentively most of that time, and he hadn't any idea what problem had the old man so upset. Worse, he still didn't have much of an idea as to what his job was supposed to be.

June came to his rescue.

"Uncle Emmanuel, this is Bruce's first board meeting. Don't you think he should know more about the problem before we ask him to solve it?"

Old Holbertson sputtered. "He's been on the job since this morning, hasn't he? What's he been doing?"

From the other end of the table, Paul Holbertson spoke. "Takes more than three hours for a man to learn his way around this place."

"Bah!" old Holbertson said. "If he doesn't know where the men's room is by this time he . . ."

"I move," Paul Holbertson said, "that we ask Mr. Kalder to have a full report ready for the next board meeting."

Seconded and passed. Kalder breathed easily once more, but he did not relax again.

WHEN the meeting broke up, Paul Holbertson crooked a finger at Kalder, and he and June followed him out. "My office, I think," Paul said. He escorted them in, and found chairs for them.

June sat down, and lit a cigarette. "Thanks, Dad," she said.

Kalder said, "I thought I was going to be fired before I'd learned what all the buttons on my desk mean. Look—I don't mean to be disrespectful, but I listened as attentively as I could, and I still don't know the problem."

"Emmanuel rambles," Paul said. "Getting on in years. He'll retire in another year or so, and we'll miss him. Given some alternatives, he's almost infallible in making the right decision. Trouble is, in this case we have no alternatives. We have nothing. But you don't know what the problem is. We're having trouble with our writers. Hence your title, Director of Writer Personnel."

"What sort of trouble are you having?"

Paul Holbertson took a long time getting a cigar lit. He leaned back, stared at the ceiling, and puffed deeply. "They don't write," he said.

"Yes," he went on. "We have competent men. We know, by their past performances. We pay the highest rates paid anywhere. We have the best writer's Tank in the industry, and we operate it at peak efficiency. And they don't write. We've always maintained a big inventory, fortunately, and kept more writers than we really needed, so we would have a big output and enough quality to keep us on top. But the situation has really been getting worse for years and now it's approaching the critical point. Our inventory has sagged. We've been dipping into the stock of scripts that have already been rejected, and even that won't keep us going much longer. To quote

Emmanuel, this is damned serious.

"Solar Productions leases four wires, and our contract stipulates that we must run twenty-four one-hour films per day on each wire. That adds up to ninety-six films per day, which is a lot of films. We don't have any trouble shooting it. Our organization is tops, there. So are our facilities. We could shoot two hundred a day—if we had the scripts. But we can't get the scripts."

"There hasn't been any reduction in personnel?" Kalder asked.

"Certainly not. We have more writers than we've ever had, and we keep hiring them. We hire some that frankly are not qualified, just in the hope they'll produce *something* for us. The quality keeps going down, and the number of scripts turned in gets less almost daily."

"We," Kalder said, with a heroic attempt at nonchalance, "need an incentive system. Scrap our contracts. Cut our guaranteed wage to the legal minimum. Pay a bonus for each completed script, and work out a system of bonuses for quality."

Paul Holbertson shrugged, and waved his cigar. "Obviously we did all that. Long ago. It didn't help. And I'll tell you one more thing that didn't work out, just so you won't try it. I got the foggy

idea that the Tank was involved in some way, so I closed it down for a month. It damned near ruined us. Production dropped literally to zero. It spurted a little when I opened it up again, but not for long, and it's been dropping ever since. Well—get to work on it. And remember this—no childish simple idea is going to solve this thing. We have some highly capable people on our staff, and none of them can cope with it. The trouble is, we're dealing with writers, and writers, damn them, are artists. They're a super-human branch of the species, or maybe it's sub-human. They don't function normally, even when they act normally. They spend their lives giving tangible form to the intangible, pulling things out of their imagination and making them real, and that's something neither you nor I will ever understand. All I can say is, good luck."

"Thank you," Kalder said.

It was a big chance—a chance any of his friends would have jumped at gleefully. He also had a hunch that, as far as the Holbertsons were concerned, it was his only chance.

Either he showed them that he was worthy of June, or they showed June how incompetent he was. They were a hard-boiled family. And all he had to work on was a prob-

lem that'd had them stumped for years!

BY his third day on the job Kalder had learned his way about the executive and editorial offices and gained a passing familiarity with the files. He decided to visit the writers' Tank. The company's swing train had just left, but since his new job was depriving him of his usual daily exercise in tennis and swimming, the idea of walking appealed to him.

He was carefully briefed on the route before he left, but he ran into trouble immediately. Q tunnel, which was the direct route to the Main, was blocked off. A guard waved him away as he started to enter. The last of the Q tunnel population was moving out. Men, women and children slouched past him. Each man cradled a TV set preciously in his arms. Women and children carried pathetic bundles of belongings. A few women also carried TV sets—lucky families, to have two!

"What's up?" Kalder asked the guard.

"Radiation seepage," the guard said shortly.

Kalder walked a short distance and turned off into a narrow passageway, thinking he might find his way through to the Main without going all the way to R tunnel. There were numbered doorways along the passage, but

few doors. In the rooms beyond there were people, and at least one TV set. Sometimes there were several. Men, women and children sat around them, watching intently.

The passage divided, divided again, and gradually narrowed. At one point he met a woman, and they had to edge past each other sideways. He left the area of living quarters behind him, and paused in surprise to contemplate the unbroken walls of the passageway. He vaguely recalled reports of a critical housing shortage. The reports were certainly true, because the number of TV sets he had seen in some of the rooms could only mean that several families were living there. But there would be room for a lot of families on this passageway, if someone would do some digging.

Eventually he found his way through to the Main. The huge, brightly lighted tunnel swarmed with humanity. Government swing trains came at regular intervals, moving slowly as their tractor drivers shouted people out of the way. Long lines waited in front of the supply depots. Many factory shifts were changing, the men of the new shift reporting with glum faces for their hour's labor.

Kalder stepped into the doorway of a medical clinic, amazed, watching house-

wives jostle for position in a fresh meat queue. He had passed this way many times before, but always in a swing train or private car. He had passed through blindly. Now he was seeing, for the first time, that vast lower class politely referred to as *the people*.

He saw them as potential customers of Solar Productions, which made them important to him.

As he continued to watch, he saw them as human beings like himself. And in some way which he did not exactly understand, that made them more important.

IT was afternoon when he reached Solar Productions' producing unit. He went to the executives' dining room for a late lunch before he rode the elevator down to the Tank. His name brought him a quick interview with Barney Fulton, the Tank's manager.

Barney was a kindly old man who had been with Solar in one capacity or another all his working life. "The boss said you'd be around," he said. "I'll give you any help I can, but, hell, I haven't got any answers."

"I'll have to ask some foolish questions, because all of this is new to me," Kalder told him. "Now—just what is the Tank?"

"It used to belong to Production," Barney said. "They

still use it when they need it, but that's only for the big scenes. Even then the writers kick up a fuss about it. They've pretty well taken the place over. The same thing has happened at the other studios. The Tank is supposed to give them ideas. Maybe it does. Who knows how a writer thinks? Jeff Powell, he writes nothing but love stories, but when he comes in here he goes on an adventure jag. Maybe that gives him ideas for love stories. Who knows?"

Kalder scratched his head, and said, "I don't. Maybe you'd better let me look at it."

"Sure." Barney went over to the door of his office, and shouted. "Pete! This is Mr. Kalder, the new vice-president. Take him through the Tank, and don't let him get killed."

Pete gave Kalder a broad grin, and led him away.

They signed in at one of the Tank's entrances, and stepped through a doorway to a scene of overwhelming grandeur. The spaciousness fairly took Kalder's breath away. Accustomed all his life to rooms and passageways, he could only stand and stare.

Ahead of them was a tangled jungle. Beyond it a hill rose steeply, and beyond that, other hills. There were glimpses of forests, of distant mountains. Overhead the ceiling arched upwards and upwards and away to a far dis-

tant, brightly lit dome.

"Pretty big, eh?" Pete said proudly.

"It's tremendous," Kalder said.

"We have it on a twenty-four hour day—day and night and everything. At night we turn off the lights and turn on the stars. We got a moon, too. Come on. We'd better stay clear of the jungle. They're shooting a jungle film there, this afternoon."

THEY skirted the jungle, climbed a tall hill, and stood looking down on the lovely, still blueness of a lake.

"Where to?" Pete asked.

Kalder consulted his notebook. "I'd like to look around, to see what the place is like. And then—do you know a writer named Walter Donald?"

"Sure. Big fellow, with blond hair. I know all the older ones. They've picked up some new ones lately, but not many of them have been using the Tank."

"I'd like to find Donald."

"I'll call in."

Pete went over to a control point to make his call, and came back shaking his head. "They dunno where he is. He probably didn't make any special request. Sometimes a writer just looks around until he finds something that interests him."

"I see," Kalder said. He'd been checking through a lot of

records, and he had a hunch that Donald could give him a clue as to what was wrong with the writers. Donald had been the most prolific man on the staff, even though his output had fallen along with that of the others. Then suddenly, a month before, his work had stopped all together. Kalder found that Donald had entered the Tank and stayed there. He had signed in, and he had not signed out. He could not be located anywhere. Kalder wanted to know what he was doing.

"Donald has been in here for a month," he said to Pete. "Isn't that a little long to be just looking around?"

"Well," Pete said, "he's a writer . . ."

Down in the jungle, an elephant trumpeted and a rifle shot rang out.

Kalder shivered, and sat down on the thick, simulated grass at the hilltop. Below him, a man rowed a small boat along the lake shore. Pete handed Kalder his binoculars. "It's Jeff Powell," he said.

Kalder watched the awkward movements of the man in the boat. "Where would be a good place to look for Donald?"

"Couldn't say. If he hasn't asked for anything special, he could be anywhere. It's a big place."

"I think I'd better talk to Barney," Kalder said.

He went to the control point, and asked Barney to have his men keep a lookout for Walter Donald. Barney said he'd have the concessionaires look for him; if Donald had been in the Tank a month he had to be getting food from somewhere or he was dead. Kalder told him he'd check again later.

In the boat on the lake, Jeff Powell was getting ready to fish. Kalder had seen enough films to understand what he was doing. In fact, he thought he could have given him a few pointers.

After half a dozen timid gestures, Powell managed a feeble cast. As his lure hit the water the lake boiled and erupted. Powell knelt in the boat, pole bent double, and battled the monstrous fish.

A trio of shark fins crossed the lake in precise formation, and circled the boat. Powell hauled valiantly on his line. The fish sounded, returned to the surface, suddenly shot off under the boat. Powell spun, lost his balance, and toppled overboard.

"Damn," Pete said. "There he goes again."

Kalder raised his binoculars and watched Powell drown. It was a drawn-out process. He gurgled and threshed, and his pathetic cries were frightening. Finally he sank out of sight.

"Barney said one more time would be the end of it," Pete

said. "We're not going to let him near the water again until he learns how to swim. Now we get another \$16 resuscitation bill."

TWO men came hurrying along the shore. They splashed into the water, hauled out Powell and carried him away.

"We ought to leave him be dead," Pete said. "He don't write nothing but love stories anyway."

"If he writes anything at all," Kalder said, "we need him."

An airplane roared overhead. Kalder watched it curiously, saw a man jump, saw a parachute billow out. It floated down towards the lake. The shark fins converged immediately as the man hit the water. He got a raft inflated, and pulled himself in just as the sharks made their rush.

Pete chuckled. "If Barney ever put teeth in them sharks, you'd be missing a lot of writers."

Kalder continued to watch the airplane, which cut its motors abruptly and was lowered to the ground behind the trees on the other side of the lake.

Another shot rang out in the jungle. Kalder got to his feet, and they circled the lake. At the next control point Pete called in.

"Donald is hanging out around Area Five," he said.

"That's the big forest over yonder."

"What's he doing there?"

"Don't know. That's where he's been eating. One of the concession men knows him. Want to find him?"

"If we can."

"We'll take a look."

Beyond the lake, they came to a desert. They plodded onwards, sinking deeply into loose sand. In a small ravine they saw a man lying. His clothing was ragged, his figure emaciated. He croaked after them, "Water!"

They walked on. "That's Bill Morris," Pete said. "He asked Barney what it felt like to die of thirst. Barney told him to go out in the desert and find out."

Kalder nodded. Some of the writers used the Tank as a direct source of information. Others seemed to use it as a diversion—like Jeff Powell, who came in for adventure. Bill Morris would be getting an excellent idea of what it would be like to die of thirst in a desert. Except—He'd certainly been at it for several days, and that was a big investment in time in order to get the background for maybe one scene in an hour film. He might be able to use the background in several scripts. But still . . .

They left the desert and came to gently rolling farmland. Cattle grazed by a small, meandering stream.

Oddly enough, they were real cattle.

Never having seen any, Kalder stopped to stare. They were eating something which had been spread out on the ground for them.

Pete pulled Kalder to the right, and they entered a forest. "Area Five," he announced.

THE synthetic trees were large, and well-spaced. Synthetic grass covered the ground between them. There was no undergrowth.

"Shouldn't be hard to find him," Pete said.

They separated, and met again further on, in a clearing. Kalder thumped on metal, and looked upwards. "What's this?"

"Vent," Pete said. "Solar power inlet. They're all over the place."

"What's inside?"

"Machinery and stuff."

Kalder circled around the vent. The thing was enormous but he quickly lost interest in it and studied the surrounding forest. His hand came in contact with a door handle. He stopped in surprise, and opened the door.

The vent stretched upwards an interminable distance, and ended in a blaze of light. Kalder staggered backwards, hands clasped to his eyes. It was a moment before his vision returned to him, and when it did he saw,

a couple of feet below the door, a metal grating that spanned the vent. On the grating lay a man.

Pete was beside him, looking in. "That's Donald," he said.

It was a big man, a blond man, but his skin was burned black. Kalder said in alarm, "Donald?"

"Let me alone," Donald said. "Get the hell out of here."

He lay face down on the grating. He was nude, and he did not move when he spoke.

"Maybe he's sick," Pete said. "He don't look so good. Shall we take him out?"

Donald sat up. "Sick?" The dark skin of his face twisted with convulsive bitterness. "You're the sick ones. The dead ones. I'm getting some sunshine. This is one of the few places on this cursed planet where any can be had. Care to join me? Then get out! And leave me alone."

Kalder introduced himself. He was, he explained, concerned about Donald because he'd been in the Tank for a month, and because he wasn't doing any writing. Would Donald mind telling Kalder what he was trying to do?

"I'm trying to bore myself," Donald said.

He lay down again, and added, "It isn't easy."

Kalder and Pete withdrew quietly, and closed the door.

"Out," Kalder said. Pete

obligingly led him to the nearest exit.

KALDER sought out his father that evening, to the older man's intense surprise.

Doctor Kalder had wanted his son to study medicine. Kalder knew only too well the deadly monotony of the medical profession. Besides, he had no difficulty in finding more amusing ways of spending his time.

It was only when he found that June's family sternly disapproved of a young man of twenty-seven who had no occupation or profession that he decided to go to work.

Doctor Kalder was on night duty at a small branch clinic. There were no patients, and the doctor had the place to himself.

"How is the job going?" he asked. He had been relieved when his son finally decided to do something.

"I don't know," Kalder said. "Tell me, dad, what's the value of TV?"

The doctor smiled slowly. "My guess would be that without it we'd have a serious situation on our hands in a matter of days. Maybe a revolution. Why?"

"Tell me why?" Kalder said. And as the doctor looked at him in perplexity, he added, "I just want to hear someone talk about it."

The doctor sighed. "So it

has you discouraged already. You'll have to learn to apply yourself, Bruce. What will happen to the human race if you youngsters shirk your responsibilities? When the big move comes there won't be enough educated and professional people to keep things going."

"TV," Kalder reminded him. "Why?"

"There's nothing for people to do—most people. It keeps them occupied. That's pretty obvious, isn't it?"

"It seems to me that there's lots of things people could be doing. We keep hearing about the housing shortage. I saw a mob of people moving out of Q tunnel over in Section 27. There won't be any places for them to go unless they move in with someone else. They have all that time to watch TV. Why doesn't someone put them to digging?"

"It's been tried," the doctor said. "They won't do it. That's what brought on the last riot, seven—no, eight years ago."

"Why won't they do it?"

"They're satisfied with things the way they are. The four hours a week they accept, because it's always been that way. As long as we're able to feed and clothe them, and they're healthy, and they have fifteen films to choose from every hour, they won't take more. Oh, they'd like better quarters if someone else

would fix them. But, as for doing it themselves—why, the men grumble about that for hours, and the women grumble about the time they spend waiting to buy their supplies.

"I see," Kalder said. He got to his feet. "How many doctors will we have thirty years from now?"

"Enough for the present situation. Health is pretty well under control, down here."

"But supposing we're ever able to get back to the surface?"

"We won't have enough of anything."

"I wish someone had spelled this out for me ten years ago."

"I tried, Bruce," the doctor said. "I tried my best. Maybe I didn't spell very well."

"Maybe I didn't listen very well. But—thanks."

Before he went home to his own plush quarters in the Bachelor's Club of Section 317—the section of the wealthy—he walked around for a long time in a maze of passageways, looking through doorways at the flickering TV sets.

PAUL Holbertson bent over the charts, and fingered one thoughtfully. "Mmm, yes. I can see you're working at it. We didn't try this. Getting anywhere?"

June leaned forward anxiously, her hands clasped.

"I can state the problem," Kalder said.

"The problem is that they're not writing."

"No. That's only one result. The problem is they have lost interest in their subject matter. And they have lost contact with reality."

Paul Holbertson grinned slyly. He said to June, "You'll have to keep this boy away from the library."

"I've done some reading," Kalder said. "I've studied my charts. And I've talked with a lot of writers. With a recorder. Listen."

The voice was Walter Donald's bitter, accusative. "I shall write no more comedies about pirate ships. Or the private lives of queens. Or romances about knights in armor. Or adventures in space. God, what a laugh that is! Man in space—when he can't even get out of a hole in the ground! We're drugging the people and ourselves with stories of things that aren't, and can't be—and I'm beginning to doubt that they ever were. Those things I can't write, and I won't. What I can write I don't know."

Kalder snapped it off.

The president of Solar Productions said soberly, "This is more serious than I thought. Are they all like that?"

"They're all getting that way. Are our competitors having the same trouble?"

"I haven't any direct information, of course, but I'm certain they are. Only yesterday I suggested to Roger Atley that we might be willing to give up one of our wires, so we could concentrate more on quality productions. He practically begged me not to think of such a thing. Which means he'd have a tough time finding someone who could provide material for it. Where do we go from here?"

"We try to think of a way to renew their interest in their subject matter and put them back in touch with reality. I'm going to the library. By the way, I won't be ready to face the board tomorrow morning."

"I don't think it will be necessary. Leave your charts with me, and write up a short summary of what you've accomplished to date. You've done an interesting thing, here, comparing number of scripts with time spent in the Tank. We'll kick it around, and I'll tell them you'll have some definite recommendations for the next meeting."

June took his arm as they went out, and in the corridor he placed an affectionate kiss on her forehead, and one considerably more affectionate on her lips.

"Going to save the family business?" she said.

"Is it that bad?"

"Every hour on the hour, we have to have four new

films ready. One comedy, one romance, one adventure, and one miscellaneous. That's ninety-six deadlines to meet every day. We've even taken to sneaking an old film in now and then, just to pad things out, but people have terribly long memories, and it will be bad if we're caught. So—yes, it's that bad."

"I believe there's more at stake than you realize," Kalder said.

"What do you mean?"

"Things are much worse than you think."

THE Tank always seemed the same, in spite of the fact that there were different writers around, or writers doing different things. At Ar-
ea Five Kalder found writer Jeff Powell lying on the synthetic grass, staring at the synthetic forest. If Powell saw Kalder, he ignored him. Walter Donald was in his usual place in the vent. He made it very clear that he would like to ignore Kalder.

"I have a problem," Kalder said, "and I need your help."

Donald rolled over on his stomach. The pattern of the grate was firmly impressed into his dark skin.

"As a special favor," Kalder said, "Will you help me?"

Donald did not look up. "What kind of problem?"

"I'm trying to get a script written. It's about a writer. He and his family live in a

small room over in Section 495. He's the only writer that lives around there, and all the other men are factory workers. This writer works hard at writing, and his family can't understand why it takes so much time. The other men work for an hour, and then they come home and watch TV with their families. The writer works long hours, and he has to spend days in the Tank, looking for ideas. He makes good wages, and his family can have luxuries other families can't afford, but his children just can't understand why he's never home to watch TV with them. I can't think of a way to end it. Can you help me out?"

Donald said flatly, "Nuts. Didn't you ever read Code? They'd never film a thing like that."

"Of course they'll film it, if I can get it written. Question is, could you write it? I realize you've never done anything like that, and if you don't think you could handle it, just say the word. I'll look for someone else."

Donald sat up. He stared dully at Kalder, his scowl wrinkling dark lines in his dark forehead. The sunlight had bleached his blond hair to a startling whiteness. He said, "I know Code forwards and backwards. I could get fired for wasting time on something like that."

"I'm taking the responsi-

bility," Kalder said. "Could you write it?"

"I don't know." He got up, and climbed out of the vent. "A writer, you say? How many children?"

"That's up to you. How many children do you have?"

"Three. Three children. They want him to watch TV with them, you say? But he hates TV, of course, because he writes scripts for TV, so whenever they turn it on he . . ."

He pulled on his clothing and wandered away, mumbling to himself.

KALDER went back to the edge of the woods, and sat down beside Powell. Powell did not look at him. "In autumn," he said, "the leaves turn color. Nature paints a masterpiece in the forest. By and by, the leaves fall to the ground. If I waited here long enough, do you suppose these leaves would change color and fall?"

"Those leaves will never change color," Kalder said.

Powell winced. He regarded Kalder gravely. "Friend, have you ever seen a tree? No, not this junk. A real tree. Have you ever felt one? I've put lots of trees into my scripts, but I never saw a tree. Isn't that ridiculous? What does a tree feel like? What does it taste like? Can you taste a tree?"

"You write romance, don't

you?" Kalder asked the writer.

"When I write, I write romances. Romances with trees. Meet me under the green willow tree, my love. The weeping green willow tree. Do you know what a weeping green willow tree looks like? Production doesn't. I went to the library once, and found a picture. Production made my weeping green willow tree into an oak."

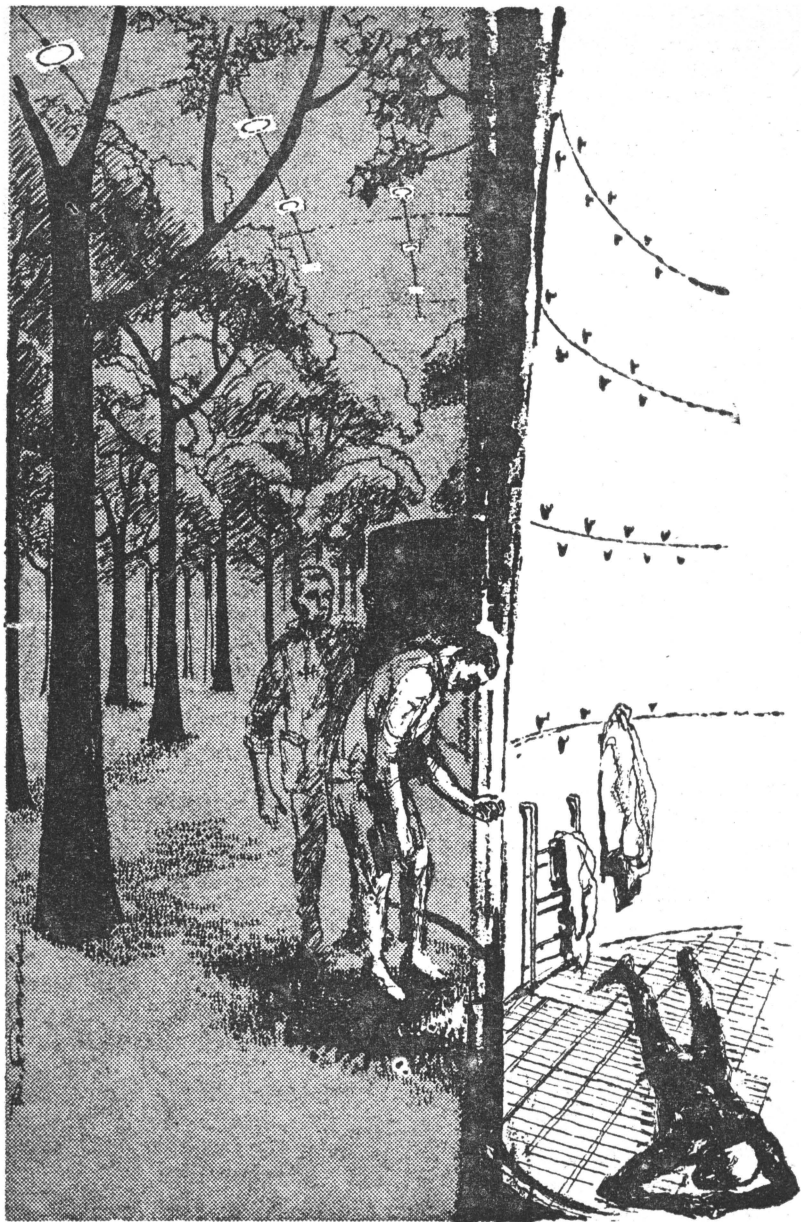
"According to the records, you've written a few comedies, too. Think you could handle a romantic comedy?"

"I am not feeling funny these days."

"This would be different. There's a man who works in a factory, and he can't get along with his foreman. They hate each other, and they're always fighting about something. Then the foreman's son falls in love with this guy's daughter. The two mothers get to know each other, and they try to help the kids while the two men are trying to keep them apart. I suppose it would be quite a job to keep it funny. If you don't think you could do it . . ."

"Yeah," Powell said. "Then the kids decide to break it up, to keep the old men happy, and the old men decide to pretend to be friends to keep the kids happy. Yeah." He pushed himself erect. "Say, mister, did you ever hear about Code? They'd never film it."

"Certainly they'd film it.



I'd take care of that for you."

"If you say so. Let's see, now. The foreman keeps trying to spy on his son, and the other guy keeps trying to spy on his daughter, so the two keep running into each other while . . ."

Kalder slipped quietly away. Wild profanity attracted his attention from the direction of the lake. A writer whom he did not know by sight was attempting to fish, and on his first cast Barney's monster of the deep had snapped his line.

"I have a problem," Kalder said. "I want to get a script written. There's this fellow who lives in a small room with his family, and when radiation seepage makes everyone move out on the next corridor, three families had to move in with them. He doesn't like it, so he goes off to an undeveloped corridor and digs out a new room for his family. Then he decides one room isn't enough, so he digs out two more. Everyone thinks he's crazy, wanting so much space, and when he gets through the government decides he has too much space, so five families are moved in with him. Do you think you can write it?"

The writer dropped his fishing pole. He stuttered, "What—what about Code?"

SOME of the faces were hostile. Several were violently angry. June Holbertson

looked hurt; her father seemed merely puzzled.

Kalder said calmly, "I accept full responsibility."

"That's all very well," old Emmanuel Holbertson sputtered. "You accept the responsibility, but it's our reputations that are ruined!"

"To continue my report," Kalder said, "I have organized a small group of the company's writers. They represent ten per cent of the total, and they are out-producing the other ninety per cent at the rate of ten to one. I have had fifty production units assigned to my control. Those units are shooting scripts as fast as my writers can produce them. I have assumed full responsibility for the company's fourth wire, the miscellaneous channel, and for the past two weeks that channel has carried nothing but films I have produced myself. I will ask the Chairman of the Board: Has he received any complaints about the fourth channel programs?"

"I saw some of those films myself, Kalder, and I'm complaining!"

"We adopted Code for a good reason, Bruce," Paul Holbertson said. "You shouldn't have thrown it out without discussing it with the board."

"I was given complete authority to take the steps I thought necessary to solve a problem. I have solved the problem. I did discuss what I

intended to do with half-a-dozen top-level government officials, including the head of the Board of Censorship. They approved the project, and I have letters of congratulation from them on the way it's been working out. They think TV is going to help them solve some of their problems. I have checked with the Information Center, and I find that our fourth channel programs have taken over the popularity lead."

"Code," Paul Holbertson said, "is the reason for our existence. You seem to have missed the point entirely. TV has a purpose, and a very important purpose."

"Code was stupid those many years ago when it was adopted. Or is it generations ago? It was stupid then, and now it's idiotic. With your permission I'll give you my reasons for the action I've taken."

Interruptions exploded around the table. A vice president put the motion: the position of Vice President and Director of Writing Personnel to be abolished immediately, and Bruce Kalder dismissed. Seconded and passed.

"Thank you," Kalder said. "I regret that our relationship was so short-lived, but for the time that I have been connected with Solar Productions, I am more grateful than I can tell you."

He turned away with only

one regret—June, who sat blinking her eyes to keep back the tears.

He had gained much, and he had lost much, but one of his gains was the realization that there were more important things than his personal happiness.

JUNE left her chair suddenly, and hurried after him. Outside the door, Kalder gripped her arm. "I'd like to show you something," he said.

They caught a company swing train, and rode over to the Tank. Night was approaching in Barney's domain. The ceiling lights were being gradually dimmed. In time they would go out, and the artificial stars would be turned on.

He led her along a jungle trail, and over the hill and along the lake. She said, "It looks very real, doesn't it?"

"It looks like our idea of real. But this, and our idea, are both false. You know that, don't you?"

"This is the first time I've ever been here. What do the writers do?"

He did not answer. They walked down to the lake, and removed their sandals. The shark fins paraded towards them as they waded in. Kalder said, "The trouble is, you and I, and the board, and all those like us have lost touch with the people. The people live in a reality that is differ-

ent from ours. Children of the wealthy receive the best educations, choose the careers they want, and look forward to a happy and useful lifetime. They live in comfort. They have clubs, and recreation facilities. There is room for those things, for a few people. The wealthy have a rather satisfying existence.

"But what about the people? Their education is limited. There aren't the facilities, and they don't really need any. They're just hanging around and reproducing themselves so there will be plenty of people when we get ready to go back to the surface. They do a little work, they eat and sleep, and the rest of the time they watch TV. They escape into a fantasy that doesn't exist and probably will never exist again for centuries—a world where there are trees, and plants, and animals, and rivers of pure water."

"Isn't it good for them to get their minds off the way things are?" she said.

"That's Code. The Code philosophy. The Code tyranny. It's horrible. The people have given up. They've surrendered completely. When we first moved underground people must have slaved to achieve what we have now. They built well. And then, when the machines were operating and living quarters prepared, there seemed to be

nothing for them to do. So the film companies were established to give them TV, and the companies worked hard to provide settings that would seem real. The films let the people dream of what they had lost. They are still dreaming. There are more of us now, and the people are crowded. But no one plans ahead. No one is interested!"

They waded out of the lake, and the shark fins drifted away. They dried their feet on the synthetic grass, and put on the sandals, and walked on.

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

"Form my own company. I won't have any trouble getting a wire or two. The old companies just can't get enough scripts for the ones they have. It won't be easy, but I think it will work. We won't have high production costs. We can shoot our films right out in the corridors, or in anyone's living quarters. Scripts won't give us any trouble. Donald is turning out five a day. He just can't stop, and some of the others are doing almost as well."

"Isn't that strange, when they couldn't write according to Code?"

"The first script writers wrote about something they remembered," Kalder said. "They wrote about a world they had lived in—the world the way it used to be. And

then there were those who were told what the others remembered, and each generation got one more step removed from what was once reality. The Tank was supposed to be kind of a crutch for the writers' imagination to lean on, but we're so many years removed from the kind of reality it represents that it has lost its value. Men get tired of crutches. They'll always prefer walking without them."

HE caught her arm as they stumbled through the sand of the desert.

"Feel like doing battle with Solar Productions?" he asked.

"With you, I do."

He slipped his arm around her, and led her through the trees of Area Five. He opened the door of the vent, and pointed upwards. "Look."

She looked. Above was blackness, and a glimmer of light. "What is it?"

"A star," he said.

"I've seen films about stars—going to the stars."

"Perhaps men will, some day. But they'll have to get out of the ground first. There'll be a long wait, and we can't spend it dreaming. We need to be getting ready, so when our children, or their children, or grandchildren climb out, they'll be able to fight and win back this world. It'll be hard for the first ones out. Maybe they'll think they would have been better off staying underground, and TV films will show them what a grand, comfortable life that was. But they'll make the move. They must make it, and we'll have to start planning now."

"I remember a film about a star," she said. "A little girl saw it, and made a wish."

"Do you have a wish?"

"I think I do." They wished together, looking up.

END

TWO MINDS ON THE MIND

Few fields of science have suffered as much from the encumbrances of poor definition as hypnosis. We have been much too prone to lump hypnosis in the same category in which we file our ideas on witches, warlocks and wizards; even orthodox science is inclined to approach the subject with very much the attitude of an average man investigating a haunted house; he doesn't believe in ghosts, but he definitely hopes he won't meet one!

—Bernard C. Gindes

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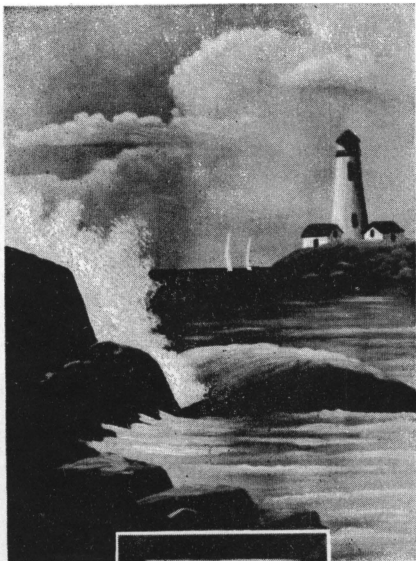
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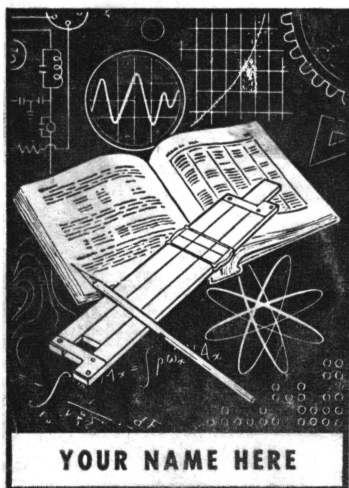
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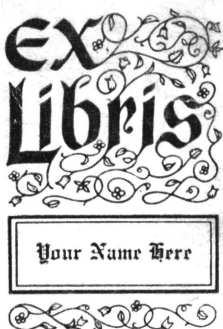
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