

CAUTION. Discard any mental patterns you may have formed of what you think this science-fiction story is like or how it is written. Don't expect anything remotely similar to the science-fiction you are accustomed to reading. This story is a sport. A science-fiction story so unique, so different in plot and approach that it is destined to become one of the most discussed ones ever written. You will either like it very much or dislike it intensely. Either way, it offers uncontested evidence that SCIENCE-FICTION+ has policies elastic enough to accommodate any science-fiction story that is truly exceptional and different. This is but the seventh yarn that Harry Bates has published under his name. Bates has never written a poor story, and both he and the editors feel that this is without doubt his very best.

I BRING YOU A MOST urgent message.

The man who charged me to deliver it is dead. He died to transmit it to you.

I have just come from him. I was with him when he passed away.

I want you to ignore the confusion in the streets. Pay no attention to the Invaders! Read this to the end. There I shall give the message.

I cannot give you the message until I have described all that happened. For you would not feel compelled.

There is confusion here in the city room as I start. It churns all about me, it rises from the street, it comes in over the phones and the wire.

I think there is one of the Creatures on the roof.

Not far from here the body of John Inglis sits upright in a big armchair. At last the great sensitive is at peace. I know he is at peace. His wonderful head lies bent over on his breast. His face is dead white, and there is a small hole in his wrist.

It is John Inglis who transmits the message.

I feel that he is guiding me now (this you will come to understand). I feel I can remember every word that was spoken.

(Interruption. A copy boy has just snatched from my hand the first page of copy, the first "take," and has run with it straight to the composing room. I had hoped for that. Since this story is bypassing the copy desk—and is not therefore to be edited—I shall not write it in the usual newspaper style, but shall tell it as a consecutive narrative.)

I must be fast!

Several hours ago this was a normal world.

I had just turned in a story, and the city editor handed me a phone memo. The superintendent of the building where John Inglis lived had phoned in, saying we might be interested to hear that the sensitive had gone "off his trolley," as he put it. He had an apartment full of cockroaches. He was acting like a friend of the cockroaches. There were strange doings. He himself was very curious. Above the memo in the handwriting of the city editor were the words: "Warren. I think you know this man. Feature?"

Everybody of course knows the name Inglis, and will remember how, ten years ago, the identical twin brothers, John and Robert, astounded the world with their feats in parapsychology. But the name Inglis meant something special to me. I was at Columbia at the same time they were piling up their records there, and I even shared some of their classes. They were the start of my own layman's interest in parapsychology.

It looked like a good assignment. I went to the newspaper's morgue to bring myself up to date. The clerk handed me a number of envelopes stuffed with clippings. At least once each year, in the ten years which have elapsed since their college performances, the Inglis brothers have been the subject of feature stories in this newspaper. One of these features, which appeared last year, was my own, so I already knew the background. All the stories, including mine, were rehashes of their great performances at Columbia as volunteer subjects of the famous parapsychologist Dr. S. T. Whitman. They lived apart. They had always lived lives of seclusion and bleak poverty. The recurrent question of the features was:

Why didn't they ever amount to something? Why, with such powers, did they remain so inconspicuous and poor? Specifically and vulgarly, Why didn't they "clean up" on the races, or the stock market, and take a prominent place in the world?

I spent little time with the clippings, but went and picked up a photographer. I was assigned Willie. That is not his name. Willie is something of a louse. I don't approve of his methods. Naturally, he doesn't like me. But he is considered one of the best pic-men in the business.

Willie is a desiccated little gum-chewer, and a wise guy. As we drove off in my car I tried to warn him to behave.

"This man Inglis is a great sensitive and a mighty nice guy," I informed him. "I had a feature on him last year. This time I've a peculiar tip—something about cockroaches. It sounds like a good story and some swell pictures. Now, Willie, I want you to show him some manners. Lay off him till I'm through. Try to be decent for once. Don't try to catch him in an awkward moment; don't take any candid shots at all. Get his approval on everything. And don't try to force him into any vulgar poses. Get it?"

He was chewing gum, of course. Now he kept on chewing and said nothing.

I said strongly, "You hear?"

"You get your story and don't try and tell me my business," he said, calloused, totally impervious.

"Well, I've told you your business," I came back, a little ugly. "Do you know what a sensitive is?"

"Do you?" he answered. Of course he is not very bright.

"A sensitive is a man who has powers not explainable by known physical laws," I told him—for I doubted very much if he knew, and he'd never admit he didn't know something. "He can perform feats of clairvoyance—that is, see things that exist or are happening at a distance. Or can foretell events which will occur in the future. Or can be the means of psychokinesis. In psychokinesis objects actually are moved without the use of known forces."

He kept chewing away. I thought I knew what he would be thinking. I went on:

"They don't hold your hand in a dim room and tell your fortune, and they don't accept money. They do these things under controlled conditions, in front of scientists—yes, and sometimes in front of magicians, brought there to guard against possible trickery."

"They're all a bunch of phonies," he announced with contemptuous finality, hardly missing a chew.

"The scientists who work with them don't think so," I answered.

"I never heard of one cleaning up on the races," he said, enormously complacent. "I could have smacked him."

"That's right, they don't clean up on the races," I answered. "For one reason they don't try to."

He grinned, and stuck a cigarette in his face and lit it. Thereafter he both chewed and smoked.

"For another reason," I went on, "they usually miss. Even the best of them hit only a fraction of the time, so that their success has to be evaluated statistically. It's that way with John Inglis. He, however, is in a class by himself. He and his brother Robert."

He chewed and puffed. There was simply no way to get to him. I shut up.

I pulled up at the address on the memo—the same place of a year ago. It is an old-fashioned tenement house which has survived alone, lost among two irregular rows of warehouses near the end of a half-deserted street over by the East River. Many of its windows were broken or boarded up. The entrance was a cracked and dirty marble doorway in the center of the ground floor. Galvanized garbage barrels stood in stinking rows on either side of it.

We entered. The hallway was, long and very dark. At the far end was a decrepit door, its windows painted black. Through a break in the corner of one Pane came a trace of dim light from a court in back. To Inglis' door was tacked a small piece of cardboard containing his name, neatly printed by hand.

"Remember your manners," I warned Willie, and then knocked.

There was no answer.

I knocked louder, and there was still no answer. I was still waiting, thinking someone would come. when Willie turned and began kicking the door with his heel. He kicked much too hard. At the noise a man stuck his head out of the apartment door just behind us across the hall.

"I'm the super," he whispered, holding one finger to his lips. He beckoned us into his glaringly

oil-clothed kitchen. "You're the reporters?" he asked. "It was me sent for you."

"Isn't he home?" I asked.

"Yeah, he's home; he never goes out," the man answered.

"What's this about the cockroaches?" I asked.

"Well, that's the thing," he answered. "I don't rightly know what it is, but something's going on.

There's a little girl lives in the house who goes errands for him and yesterday she left the door open and I saw inside. Inglis is always neat as a pin, but I saw there's a lot of cockroaches on his kitchen floor, most of them dead but some of them alive. But that ain't what I mean. He's laid boards over the floor, a little bit off, so he can walk on the boards and not step on the cockroaches. He just walks on the boards. I think he's gone off his trolley."

"How long has he had these boards?"

"I don't know. They weren't there a week ago."

"Does he talk crazy?"

"No. Just the same as always. He don't never say much. Just goes around quiet, his head a little on one side like he's thinkin'. He's always thinkin'."

"Why doesn't he come to the door? He certainly heard us. Is there any way we can tell if he's in?"

"He's in, all right. Come, I'll show you."

Again touching his finger to his lips he led us down the hall to the door at the end and pulled it open. The blank brick wall of a building in back seemed almost to hit me in the face, it was so close. It was so dark there that it would have been hard to read a newspaper.

The shades of the back of Inglis' apartment were pulled all the way down.

There was a narrow concrete walk or alley, walled on the far side by another brick building, which led back along the side of the house parallel with the central hallway within. The super tiptoed around to the first window opening on this alley and put his face at the pane.

The shade there, too, was drawn all the way down, but it was torn, so that there was a small hole through which he could see the interior. He peeped through this hole, then turned to me and nodded a yes, and then I too peeped in. John Inglis, the man I remembered, was there. The room was lighted, and I could see his shoulder and the right side of his head. He was sitting quietly in a large armchair. At first I thought he was asleep, but when I was about to turn away I saw his head move a little.

I gave way to Willie and he put his eye at the hole. It seemed almost at once there was a click, and Willie had his first picture. I gave him a look but said nothing, for that shot certainly didn't have any value.

"He's in there and he's awake," I said to the super. "Why doesn't he answer our knock?"

The man shrugged. "Sometimes he don't like to be bothered," he said.

We went back to the hall entrance and knocked again, very loudly. Even then Inglis did not come to the door, nor did we hear any sound. I began to wonder.

Willie turned the knob. The door was locked. He took something out of his pocket and applied it to the crack of the door near the lock. I couldn't see it, but I knew from office gossip that it was a very thin flat piece of flexible steel. Then he pushed. The door opened inward and he stepped inside. It was an improper thing to do, but, hardly thinking, I followed him inside, the super following close at my heels.

It was completely dark. Willie produced a small pencil flash and swept the room with its narrow beam. We were in a rather large kitchen, the reverse in lay out of the one across the hall. The beam cut to the floor and fingered around.

The super was right. Two board walkways ran the length of the kitchen near the opposite walls, and connecting them at intervals lay several crosswalks. The walks were old planks, lifted four or five inches from the floor. The planks rested on wooden blocks set in tin plates filled with water. Here and there on the floor the thin beam of the flash picked out a cockroach or two, sometimes moving, usually dead.

Willie found a pull chain and jerked on the light. The door leading into the rest of the apartment was closed, and I tiptoed toward it along one of the walks. As I went I heard a click. Willie had taken a second picture. I turned toward him in anger, and it was at that moment, behind and unseen by me, that John Inglis opened the closed door and entered the room.

THE GREAT SENSITIVE stopped inside the door and stood motionless, looking right at me. I felt terribly embarrassed at being caught that way in his place, and he saw it. With the faintest of smiles he said to me:

"That's all right."

I blurted out something about having knocked several times and wondering what was wrong.

"That's all right; I wanted you to come," he said kindly, in his quiet voice.

My friends—all you who read this—John Inglis was a hell of a good guy.

He remained standing there, looking at one, then another.

I suppose all the world has seen his picture, but I had better describe him. He was 31 years old, a man of medium height, a little wide and thick. The thickness was not muscle, it was fat. Evenly, all over, he carried a thin layer of fat. The man never got any exercise.

Anyone seeing him for the first time would likely notice only his head. It was a striking head—large and broad, with hair a mass of course black ringlets. His complexion was milky white. He did not have the thin-skinned esthetic face usually associated with sensitiveness. Quite the contrary: his face was full, the underlying bones large and strong; his skin looked rather thick, and no lines showed in it except around the eyes. But for his head and his eyes, and the relaxed way he stood there, he might have been taken for a truck driver. He was indeed wearing a truck driver's zippered jacket, now unfastened.

His wonderful eyes showed him as one apart. They were blue; even in the glaring yellow light they showed their blueness; but whether they were light or dark I cannot tell you, for they seemed to change color as he moved them, and they seemed to change with his words as he spoke. I think he might almost have conducted a conversation with those eyes. The whites, this time, were quite bloodshot, but even that did not seem to spoil their effect.

No doubt his gaze embarrassed the super too, for that man said, stupidly:

"The door was unlocked so we just pushed in."

"The door was not unlocked; but that is all right," came the quiet voice. "I hope you stayed on the planks," he added, looking at Willie, who had one foot on a plank and the other on the floor. Slowly, contemptuously, I thought, Willie brought the other foot up. Inglis turned back to me.

"Sometime early this morning I remember thinking it would be a good thing to ask you to come, Mr. Warren," he said. (He remembered my name!) "I suppose I practically invited you—through our friend the superintendent." At this the super's eyebrows went up. Inglis smiled slightly. "But I only want to see Mr. Warren," he went on, looking at Willie, "and it may take some time; so I suggest you go back and save your time. I'm sorry," he said, dismissing the other two.

He turned and led the way past the inner door. I followed him through the next room, which was his bedroom, into the rearmost room, the one in which we had seen him through the window. Arrived there we found that Willie had come to. We looked at him.

"This must be private," Inglis said evenly.

Willie's eyes narrowed.

"Look, I'm the photographer," he said. "You can't say anything to him that you can't say to me."

"Out," I ordered. "And no more pix."

He sneered at me. I approached him and suddenly grabbed his camera. He made a jump toward me, stopped, cursed, and then, after thinking things over a moment, turned and left. Inglis followed him to the kitchen door, closed it after him, and put a chair under the knob. Then he came back and asked me to be seated, he himself taking the large armchair he had sat in before. He sighed.

"That man disturbs me dreadfully," he said in his quiet voice. He closed his eyes, and for a second the wrinkles deepened about them. I got down to business at once.

"I know how you feel about these interviews," I said, "but I think I can make this brief and relatively painless. We have all the ancient history at the office. If you will just bring me up to date—tell me what you've been doing this last year—and then—well—tell me why you've got all those planks on the floor."

He said nothing.

"Why do you have them?" I asked directly. "Are you afraid of stepping on the cockroaches?"

"That's right," he said after a moment. "I don't want to kill them."

"Why?" I asked.

"I don't know," he answered, his eyes still closed.

"Most people are only too glad to kill them," I went on, feeling my way. "I don't remember seeing any the last time I was here."

He opened his eyes, and I thought I saw signs of distress in them.

"It is quite recent," he said. "They started coming a week ago. The people upstairs are doing something which drives them down. I think they are poisoning them. A nerve poison. At any rate they come down here to me, and then they die."

"Well?" I asked after a moment. Again I saw the distress in his eyes. I said, "But you don't remove them."

"I know. But some are still alive. They run, and they'd be crippled," he said.

"Is it so awful to kill a cockroach?" I asked.

All my questions seemed to cause feelings of distress in him. He moved his head slowly and said:

"I really don't know how to answer you. The planks seemed like a good idea."

"Better than to kill them and sweep them up?"

"It—just—seemed—appropriate."

There was no doubt at all that I was somehow torturing him. To lighten the moment I said, smiling, "It does look odd."

"I am aware of that," he said, smiling faintly himself.

"You have no planks here, or in the bedroom."

"They rarely come in here. When they do I carefully shoo them back to the kitchen."

He offered nothing further, but sat studying me. I saw that he had something heavy on his mind and was trying to decide about opening up. As I waited and wondered, I had an intuition. I asked:

"Mr. Inglis, does this compulsion about the killing—about the planks—does it seem to be associated with your paranormal powers?"

"Yes," he answered, looking me straight in the eyes.

"Is it a message?" I asked him.

"I think it is."

"For you?"

"I don't know."

For a moment I did not know what to say. Then I asked:

"It doesn't come clear?"

"That's just it," he cried, showing a trace of excitement. "It doesn't come clear."

"How long has this been going on?"

"A week," he answered. "But early last evening there was something new." He rose. "Come with me to the kitchen," he said, beckoning, and led the way back. I followed him, carefully keeping on the planks.

The light was still on, showing unpleasantly several scores of cockroaches along the edges of the floor and lower walls, most of them dead, but some moving. He pointed to a patch of white on the floor at a place just in front of the old-fashioned kitchen cabinet.

"That's flour," he said. "I spilled it preparing dinner last night. Later, when I went to clean it up, I found something."

He stepped to the patch and carefully got down on his knees in front of it, moving carefully to avoid a live cockroach. Extremely curious and equally carefully I let myself down by his side.

Near one edge of the whited area lay a large cockroach, dead. Backward from it lay the trail it had made in its passage from the other side. The trail twisted and doubled; it looked like writing. Suddenly I saw that it was writing. Four words lay spelled out there in a wandering schoolboy hand, certain as can

be! They read, "do not kill us." The last "s" was not quite finished, and the writer lay on its back, its legs folded symmetrically inward, stopped by death at the point where the twisting trail ended.

Chills ran down my back. I stared at the words.

"The poor little devil," Inglis murmured. "It came in poisoned like the others. It died in pain like the others. But in dying it had a task."

"A message," I breathed.

"A message," he said. "'Do not kill us.'"

"It's psychokinesis!"

He nodded. He said, "This happened yesterday—but I already had stopped killing them for a week."

"Because you felt it 'appropriate' not to kill them?"

"Because I felt it appropriate."

I was frightened. The air around me seemed charged with unknown potential. Somewhere in space-time—somehow—an intelligence could conceive this—will this—possessed the undetectable force to effect this. For no one has ever credibly explained psychokinesis. It happens. It has even been produced in the laboratory. From some place unknown, from some thing or condition unknown, comes a force which can move a material object. The nature of the force cannot be detected. Its presence cannot be detected, except insofar as the object moves. It is not gravity, not electricity, not magnetism. It may move either inanimate objects or living matter. If in seances there is genuine contact with the dead—which is far from proved—it is likely that it is by psychokinesis that the vocal chords of the mediums are manipulated in the production of the authentic-seeming voices of the dead ones who "speak."

"This is the rarest of paranormal phenomena!" I exclaimed, awed by what I was looking at.

"Who knows?" Inglis said thoughtfully. "It may be the commonest of the normal."

The implications of his words hit me suddenly, and like a ton of bricks. Again the chills ran down my back.

"Did you effect this?"

"Not that I know of," was his answer.

"It was some entity, or force, or something, working independent of you? Or were you in some sense the medium by means of which it happened?"

"I don't know. But I feel I am involved in it somehow."

"This cockroach has come—been sent—been made to actually write out the message to which you have already been responding for a week," I said.

He sighed, and the tortured look again came to his eyes.

"I can't catch it—I just can't catch it," he said. "I feel no particular urge not to kill cockroaches. It just began to seem appropriate not to kill them. There was no emotion involved. That is the common experience in receiving paranormal intelligence—though there are exceptions, sometimes striking exceptions."

"I just saw a cockroach or two and felt it appropriate not to kill them, and then I took steps not to kill them. I don't think I felt any particular emotion about the cockroaches as such. ... Now this. This is direct and specific. Yet even this message does not cause in me any emotion specific to cockroaches. There are theories and good men and even whole religions devoted to the ideal of not taking life, not even the life of the simplest creatures ... and I have sometimes toyed with the thought ... but I have always sheered away from such mysticism. As things are set up in Nature, life lives on life, animal and plant, right down to the single cell. ... As a sane person, and one of good will, I have merely killed as little as is consistent with the maintenance of my own status as a live animal. Germs I kill; insects, except pests, no. I eat meat. Of course I am inconsistent," he added, darkly contemplative; "but I don't worry much about that. It is a problem that can't be solved."

He sighed, then wearily got to his feet and led the way back to his living room, where he again slumped tiredly in his chair. I followed, greatly disturbed. I wanted to help him.

"Someone, or something, is sending you a message," I began. "Or more accurately, you keep

receiving a message but you don't understand what it means."

"It is probably only part of a message," he said, wearily. " 'Don't kill the cockroaches' doesn't make sense."

He closed his eyes and let his head rest on the back of the chair.

"I'm all in," he said. "I am oppressed by the feeling that I am failing in a matter of great urgency. To be fruitful one must be relaxed; but I can't relax. How can one relax after a week without sleep? I try to sense—which is wrong and sometimes I feel I am close; but it won't come; it just won't come. I am at the end, Warren. I can't go on this way any longer."

I felt terribly sorry for him. I ventured:

"Are there other conditions for optimum reception, and are you complying with them?"

"Best conditions usually are merely to be quiet, to be alone, and to be relaxed; but not always. I've been under great strain lately, but I've had evidence of great sensitivity, more perhaps than ever in the past. But it's not been enough."

He opened his eyes; then, looking vaguely in my direction, he said:

"I am bringing it to an end. I am going to commit suicide."

I was astounded. He was quite serious. His words were spoken with quiet firmness. For the first time it struck me that he might be mentally disturbed—I mean irrational—but this thought: quickly passed from my mind.

I could not at once find anything adequate to say, but only stared at him, in distress myself. This man was no neurotic show-off, but a highly mature, decent, intelligent but terribly bedeviled person. I had no doubt that he was at the end of his endurance.

"You're talking very foolishly," I said finally. "You're tortured; you need help. I'm going to call your brother. He can help you. Where's your phone?"

"I haven't any phone," Inglis said. He was extremely depressed.

"Then I'll send for him." I stood up.

"I haven't any brother," he said.

I didn't understand. Inglis sat without moving a muscle, except that I think he smiled faintly. At last he explained.

"My brother is dead."

I was shocked, then incredulous.

"But he's not dead!" I cried. "He can't be dead! That would be a big story, and no word on such a thing has reached our office!"

"He died last night," Inglis said quietly, still without moving.

"How do you know?" I asked. "You were there?"

"I saw him," he said, and to me he seemed to be seeing him again in his mind's eye. "He came to me. At a little after three this morning. I was sitting in this chair, and at the moment of his death he came to me."

For a moment I was speechless. That was one more paranormal phenomenon—not uncommon—known through the centuries. What unthinkable psychic forces were permeating this helpless man!

Suddenly a frightening suspicion flashed through my mind.

"Did he take his own life?" I asked.

"I feel he did."

"You don't know for sure?"

"No, but I feel he did ... He, like me, has been suffering. He was bearing the same burden."

"Did he give you a message? How did he look? Tell, me, for heaven's sake, man!"

"He was dressed as usual. He wore a jacket much like mine. ... I had been meditating. I looked up and there he was, just inside the door. He was solid and real. He took several steps toward me, then stopped and raised his right forearm. There was a gash in his wrist, and his wrist and hand were splotted with blood. In his left hand was a sheet of paper. He held out the paper—his lips moved—but I heard no words. My God, I could hear no words! There was an expression of great suffering on his

face. For a second or two he held out the paper; then his face softened and became most beautiful . . . and then he dissolved and was gone. ... "

How I felt as I sat and heard these things! I wanted to help Inglis, but I was way out of my depth! Inglis was such a good guy! Somehow I had to rescue him! But how? I sat there paralyzed. Who has ever been in a situation like that!

But my mind did keep working, it seems, for I produced another thought. Eagerly I broached it.

"This Dr. Whitman for whom you and your brother were subjects in school—he's a good friend of yours, isn't he?"

"He was."

"Aren't you still friends?"

"Yes, in a way. I haven't seen him for several years, but that was my doing, not his. I have come to be something of a recluse; I seldom go out."

"All right," I began eagerly—but he interrupted me.

"I know. You want to go fetch him. Perhaps he will be able to help me."

"Yes!" I exclaimed. "There's no one in the world knows you better. He has worked with you, he knows your powers—of course he can help you!"

"I had thought of him," Inglis said. "We used to get some wonderful results together."

"You'll get some more!" I cried, quite excited. "Inglis, it's ridiculous—it's all wrong for you to sit there and talk about taking your life! You need help; he can give it to you—positively. I'm going to get him."

"Fred Warren," he said, looking straight into my eyes, "I have the feeling that several hours from now I'll be sitting in this chair dead, like my brother, and I will be with my brother. Wherever and whatever he now is. That I feel. I don't particularly want it, in a sense. I just feel it. I—I feel it is appropriate."

"You have very often been wrong," I retorted. I was standing. "Inglis," I said, "I'm going to fetch him. You've got to give him a chance to try to help you. Will you promise not to do anything until I return with him? I will take your word."

For a moment he did not answer, but looked thoughtfully through me, as it seemed; then he turned his head. He said:

"I had thought of asking him to come, but I felt, and still feel, it would be useless." He smiled slightly. "You notice how I keep saying 'I feel'? I usually feel nothing at all in the paranormal process, but when I do my feeling usually indicates a hit." He took thought, and I waited. "If he could only help me to dissolve the feeling of 'appropriateness' . . ." he murmured, thinking out loud. "It wouldn't hurt any . . . and he'll be an extra witness. ... " He turned back to me with an enigmatic expression. "You know, Mr. Warren, I wanted you here to witness my death. You have the three things needful: knowledge of parapsychology, competence as a reporter, and resonance with me as a man. It may be my death will give you something to write about. I don't want to put it into words, but perhaps you will sense what I mean. But it might be better with both of you. . . . Yes, get Dr. Whitman. I'm very fond of him. I give you my promise. And while you are gone I shall prepare my body."

I choked down my objection to his last words. I asked:

"May I go to your brother's place? What if he's alive! And aren't you curious about the paper he was holding out to you?"

"He is dead," he replied. "I feel it will do no good. But you may go if you want to."

I asked him the address and he told me. He took a small bunch of keys from his pocket and held them out. "This is my set of his keys," he said.

I took them and rushed out with the feeling I held his life in my hands.

I HAD FORGOTTEN ALL about Willie; I saw him in the hall and hurried past without a word. As I entered the car I found him right behind me, and he took a place in the front seat at my side. He kept his mouth shut. He was much too sore and egotistical to ask any questions, but he was not going to miss

anything if he could help it.

A few minutes later I was at Robert's house. It was a somewhat better building. His box told that he lived on the second floor, also in the back. The keys let us in without delay. I saw more cockroaches. Robert was there. He was dead ... I can hardly bear to write this! He sat in a comfortable armchair much like his brother's, his head low over his breast, his face drained white. On a low table by his right side lay a white enameled basin. His right forearm lay tied to the chair arm so that the hand lay out over its top. There was a gash in his wrist, and the basin was half full. . . .

I kept thinking I was looking at John....

In Robert's left hand was a sheet of paper, just as his brother had described. I took it. On it were some marks. It looked like a drawing or a small piece of chaotic writing—very roughly like chromosomes during the process of cell division. It was meaningless to me. I stuck it in my pocket.

I can't remember exactly the shameful thing that happened then, but I know Willie made a grab for his camera, and I avoided his hand and hit him, and he stood there with his teeth bared, hate in his eyes. And I hated him too, fiercely. But when I left he was close behind me, and he rode up to Columbia right by my side, neither of us speaking a word, only hating and hating. . . .

I knew the campus like a book and without hesitation drove over the forbidden drives straight to the Parapsychology Building. By the time I was in the vestibule Willie again was fastened to me. The students must have thought us mad. I am sure I looked wild; I know I was soaked with perspiration. I took the stairs three at a time and in a moment was at the door of a certain lecture room well remembered from the old days. Without hesitation I pushed through, Willie still at my heels—and there, on the lecture platform, thank God, sat old Dr. Whitman. Twenty or thirty pairs of eyes turned to look at us as I hurried up to the little table behind which the parapsychologist was sitting.

In the lowest voice I could muster I blurted out that I had come on a matter literally of life and death—the life of John Inglis—and the angry look that had come to his face dissolved instantly. He would have pulled me into his office, but when I whispered that I would explain in the car he dismissed the class at once and came hurrying along with me just as he was. I had never seen Dr. Whitman on the campus with his head uncovered, but he didn't take time to pick up his hat.

I got Willie into the back seat of the car, and as I made the curved passage to the gates I began pouring out my story in bits and pieces. The good doctor was appalled. Again and again as we drove back through the streets he stopped my rush of words and made me repeat and amplify and make clearer. I told him about everything: the cockroaches, the walkways, the four written words, Robert's death appearance, the firm bent toward suicide, and finally the morbid scene that met my eyes in Robert's apartment.

I showed him the paper. To him, too, the marks were meaningless.

"The man is tortured!" I kept telling him. "He can't sleep! He has that message, and we can't tell what it means, or even if it's complete. It's worse than labor. You must believe him! He thinks only death will give him relief! He hopes that at the moment of death his message will come clear!"

Toward the end of the drive back Dr. Whitman was exerting himself to calm me.

WHEN WE ARRIVED the street was very quiet; the few trucks lay motionless at the curbs or stood at right angles, backed up to their loading platforms. There were hardly any people about; most of the trucking activity there occurred at night. We entered the house. I knocked on the door and at once escorted Dr. Whitman inside. I pointed without speaking to the walkways and the cockroaches, then I led the way back to the living room.

Inglis met us at the door. He had changed his shirt, and I think he had shaved. The two friends shook hands with affection. Inglis invited us to be seated, and himself sat down in his big chair.

Dr. Whitman sat on the edge of his chair and leaned tensely forward.

"What's all this Mr. Warren has been telling me?" he asked. "You talk about suicide? You shall do nothing of the kind. I am your friend. I probably am your best friend. I have worked intimately with you, and I know a good deal about you. Together we shall work this thing out. You are tortured? There is a devil in your skull? We shall exorcise it."

Perhaps the good doctor's words and manner would have reassured many people, but here he was meeting a different order of experience. Inglis sighed deeply and looked away. He said:

"There is something I've got to know but can't catch. It's of greatest urgency. It's heavy. It permeates my body, it fills all the air around me, it weights me and it devils me. I smother!"

"We shall deliver you," Dr. Whitman said resolutely. "First, let's try some word associations. Attend! I shall speak some single words. I want you to tell me the thoughts and feelings you associate with them. You know the process. Answer quickly. All right, are you ready?"

But Inglis was looking at Willie. He was standing at the door; I had forgotten all about him. Inglis said: "I shall have to ask that man to go outside."

Willie stood there and glared at him.

"Please go," Inglis said. "You disturb me very much."

Willie didn't move, but he spoke. "You're off your nut!" he said hatefully.

It was shameful. "Get out!" I told him. "I'll call you if I want you."

He turned with his hate toward me for a moment, cursed, I think, under his breath, then left the room. We heard the hall door bang.

"That man is not clean," Inglis said.

"He's gone. Forget him," said Dr. Whitman. "All right, John, the first word. Insect."

Inglis did not respond. For a moment he sat looking vaguely up toward the ceiling; then he got to his feet, picked up a book lying on a coffee table nearby, and turned to the side window and placed it upright against the shade over the tear. I had just time to see through it a small motion.

Inglis then returned to his chair and sat leaning forward, his face clasped in his hands.

I said, "I apologize for bringing that man here. But he's considered a good news photographer. He always gets his pictures, and the public eats them up. He's very good at posing a stricken mother weeping over a dead child in a gutter. He never fails to get the blood in, and the baby, if there is one. He is ignorant, stupid, competitive, and heartless, and a complete egotist; he knows only one thing: get the picture. Remember, you excluded him, and I took away his camera. I think you can understand his feelings."

"I understand," said Inglis. "Each one has his flaw. God be merciful to us, animals that we are ..."

He was very low for a while, and it took time to arouse him, but Dr. Whitman's considerate attentions at last brought him to the point where the exploration could begin.

"There will be no more distractions," he said. "John, your associations. The first word, Cream."

"Milk," was the response.

"Book."

"Words."

"Brown."

Inglis smiled a little. "The eyes of the little girl who lives upstairs. She goes my errands. Sometimes she comes in just to visit me. She sings coming down the stairs. Always she sings! She doesn't sing well, but she's not aware of that. She's still so little aware; she sings! She's a darling ... and she twists my heart!"

He was deeply affected. We waited for him to recover. Dr. Whitman gave the next word.

"Insect."

"Cockroach."

"Legs."

"Cockroach."

"Animal."

Inglis writhed as if tortured. After a moment he said, "Cockroach."

"Creature."

"No, no, you mustn't do this to me!" he cried. "I can't stand it!" His head moved from side to side, and he breathed heavily. As we watched him I knew that Dr. Whitman was probing his own mind, trying to understand.

I myself was tortured. I felt something frightening in that little room. It was in the air; it tingled me. For

some time no one spoke. We recovered somewhat, and then I heard Dr. Whitman speaking again.

"Mr. Warren told me about the four words, John. Will you show them to me?"

Inglis led us out to the kitchen. "Be careful where you step," he said. He took a flashlight from somewhere and we stooped about the patch of spilled flour, while he held the light beam on it.

There lay the dead cockroach at the end of its torturous, torturous path. There lay the words. "Do not kill us," the little messenger had said, and so saying died. I heard Dr. Whitman gasp. The weird sensations of just before began to return to me, and my heart beat violently.

The psychologist turned his head and asked gently:

"What do you associate this with, John?"

"I can't give an answer. It's confused. It's terribly confused. It's a torture."

"Do you feel that this is somehow associated with you?"

"Oh, yes!"

We continued to kneel about the patch, looking, each thinking his own thoughts, feeling his own emotions. Dr. Whitman murmured, "This could have happened by chance only once out of—a pageful of digits."

As we were looking at the words a large male cockroach appeared at one edge of the flour patch, near the wall. It started to cross the patch. It was sick. It had been poisoned. It rocked. Sometimes slowly, sometimes rapidly it moved, leaving behind a perfect record of its tortured trail. It passed just underneath the letters of the four words, and at the end it stopped and turned.

I watched it, breathless. It stood there listing a little to one side, obviously in distress. It kept stretching upward to maximum height, then lowering almost to the floor—up, down, up, down. Its antennae waved. I could feel its distress almost as if I were in its place.

But then it began to move forward again. It went crazily as before, sometimes running, sometimes at a crawl; but sometimes now it stopped altogether and only made its tortured up and down movement. It was listing much more. It reached the side it had originally entered. It had retraced its path under the words, keeping just underneath the first trail!

"My God!" Dr. Whitman murmured.

"It's underlined the words!" I exclaimed.

But it wasn't finished. It turned again. It started back for a third passage. It was extremely deranged now, and moved rapidly with wide convulsive jerks. It proceeded just beneath the second trail. When it was a little more than halfway across it came to a stop. Its up and down movements now were terrible and it was listing extremely. Suddenly it fell over on its back. Its legs waved wildly for a moment, then fell motionless, then folded neatly and symmetrically over its abdomen. It did not move again.

Even now my heart beats so I can hardly write this. I was scared! I am sure we all were. There was something frightening in the air. It was all around us. I could not know if it was malevolent, but there was something present! Something that was active!

Inglis sobbed, got to his feet and went back to the living room, and we followed. Without a word each of us again took his seat.

"Do not kill us," murmured Dr. Whitman. "That is the message. It must be the entire message. It was underlined, not added to. Three times it was underlined."

"I can't stand this any longer!" cried Inglis.

"Well, you're not going to take your life," said Dr. Whitman sharply. "There's been progress. We know we have the message. We've only to find out what it means."

"I can't stand any more," repeated Inglis. "Go away. Please go away! Let me handle this myself!"

"And take your life?" asked the doctor.

"I have to!" said Inglis.

"So do crazy men and cowards feel they have to."

"It's more than you know," said Inglis. "I now foresee my sitting here dead. I will be dead by my own hand within two hours. I have no wish for it to be otherwise. I have the strongest feeling that it is appropriate."

This stopped Dr. Whitman. I ventured to enlighten him.

"I think I know the meaning he attaches to the word 'appropriate.' Correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Inglis. It's a feeling that there has been a successful intuition. He feels it 'appropriate' not to kill the cockroaches. He felt it 'appropriate' to lay down the planks. To him the word expresses his awareness of a strong but indefinite compulsion or wish reaching him from the psychic ocean. He thinks that obedience to the compulsions is vital to the message."

Dr. Whitman reacted strongly against this idea. "It's never 'appropriate' for a healthy man of sound mind to destroy himself," he said dogmatically. "He's exhausted. He's plagued by a morbid fancy, nothing more. When he gets some sleep it will be gone."

Inglis watched the doctor as he spoke, and smiled sadly. I watched him too, but I did not smile. I was sure he himself did not believe what he had said. I saw him bite his lip.

"I didn't speak honestly," he admitted. "I do think it is more than a fancy."

Inglis looked fondly at his old master.

"Warren put it very well," he said. "Do you remember how, in our work together, I usually had no idea whether my tries were successful or not? There was no feeling of success when I hit. Only the figures later would show by how much I had exceeded the expectations of chance. You may recall that I told you it was that way even in that terrific series of 93 right calls of the die." He turned to me. "There were six sides on the die. Dr. Whitman rolled it in a hotel room in Philadelphia—though I didn't know where he was. I was in the lab at Columbia. I called the number he rolled 93 consecutive times, then quit without a miss." He turned back to the psychologist. "But I hadn't the slightest feeling of correctness about a single one of those hits. This of course is the usual thing."

"But"—his voice rose—"there were times in our work when I was sure. Sometimes I had a feeling about my call. When you and the others asked what that feeling was like, I would only say it was a feeling of rightness all through my body. The right call satisfied something in me; it seemed to be 'appropriate.' I doubt if I ever used the word in those days, but it describes the feeling I have had this week. To stop killing cockroaches seemed 'appropriate.' Note that the feeling was finally confirmed by the written message; yes, and by the underlinings you yourself witnessed."

Inglis roused and seemed to gather his forces. He continued strongly:

"Now hear this, Doctor. As fond as I am of you, and as much as I respect you professionally, and in spite of all you may say or do, I tell you I feel it is appropriate that I let the blood from my veins; and I shall act on that feeling. I shall do it and I know you won't stop me, for I also know that within two hours I shall be sitting in this chair dead."

Inglis turned his head and looked across the room. His eyes fixed on a large plastic basin of the type used frequently for bathing babies. It was the same type of basin I had seen beneath the wrist of that other Inglis, even then sitting dead and alone in his room.

"No!" cried Dr. Whitman, and he rose to his feet. "Yes," said the afflicted man firmly, returning his eyes to the other's face.

As the two looked at each other the tension was broken by a sound at the ball door. We heard the door open, followed by the light patter of running feet coming in our direction. A little girl of perhaps five years came dashing in and almost threw herself at Inglis where he sat in the chair. She had hardly touched him before she twisted her limber body and stood erect between his knees taking us in. Wide-eyed, with opened mouth, quite unselfconscious, she stood and wondered at us.

"This is my little friend," said Inglis softly, touching her straying hair and shifting position a little so as to look better into her clear brown eyes. But she paid no attention to him and just kept on wondering at us. "We are learning arithmetic," he said.

At these words she became self-conscious; an impish smile spread over her face and she started to squirm. I think she must have been made of rubber, she bent so. At the end she was hangind backward in a sharp bow over Inglis' left knee, her hair dangling almost to the floor.

"How much are two and two?" Inglis asked her.

She squirmed even in that position; then suddenly she straightened up, ran to the door and turned.

"Nine!" she cried triumphantly—and scampered back through the bedroom and away. We listened to her footsteps as long as they could be heard.

"How she sings!" Inglis murmured. "What is her great secret?"

"Her secret is that she's a happy child, and your secret is that you need a few kids of your own," said the psychologist. "Well, you'll have them yet," he promised grimly. "Now look here, John—look—wake up!"

Slowly Inglis turned his eyes to him.

"Tell me, have you tried automatic writing?" The effect of this was surprising.

"No, and I'm not going to!" he answered with much emotion.

"We're going to try it right now," the doctor said firmly.

"No! Please! I can't stand that! It tears me apart!"

"Good," the doctor retorted. "It may let out your devil."

DR. WHITMAN WENT to Inglis, pulled him to his feet and urged him toward a small table in front of some bookshelves. Earnestly protesting, the sensitive let himself be seated at it. The psychologist set before him a pad of paper which he found lying on the bookshelves and stuck his own pencil into his hand. Inglis kept protesting, but the other was inexorable.

"This may solve all your troubles," he said firmly, "but you've got to be co-operative. Please stop this childishness."

Inglis quieted. He sat with the pad before him, the pencil just off its surface. "Don't look at your hand," said the psychologist.

Inglis turned his head so that he was looking at us over his right shoulder. His hand remained motionless. We waited, but nothing happened. Dr. Whitman took out his handkerchief and threw it over the hand and pencil.

At once the hand began to move. It moved rapidly in large motions. When it came to the edge of the paper it moved back to the left and started another line. But Inglis never took his eyes from our faces. We were standing at his side, all but touching him. There was a look of anguish on his face; his eyes seemed to drain me with a deep unworded appeal. He began to breathe heavily, and sometimes made small gasps.

The hand moved faster. The handkerchief fell off to the side, but the hand kept up its rapid motion.

When the hand had written half a dozen lines and the paper was three-quarters full, there occurred a thing more extraordinary even than this. While the right hand continued to write, and with hardly a pause in its motion, Inglis's other hand darted to the pad, tore away the bottom half, reached into a pocket of his jacket and itself began to write on its own half of the pad. Both hands were working, the right rapidly, the left slowly—while the eyes of the man connected to the hands were turned from their work and remained fastened on Dr. Whitman's, only a foot away. Inglis was panting now, his face was contorted in anguish, he gasped loudly and almost rhythmically. But the end was at hand. When the right hand reached the bottom of the paper Inglis wrenched out a groan, threw both pencils at the wall, pushed away from the table and backed to the door of the bedroom. He stopped there, trembling, an indescribable expression on his face.

"I'm split!" he cried.

Dr. Whitman snatched up the papers and looked at them. Over his shoulder I looked too.

The words written by the right hand were indecipherable. What was on the other paper caused my hair to rise. It was a drawing, or ideograph, or group of marks like those on the paper I had found in the hand of the dead Robert! Dr. Whitman took from his pocket Robert's paper and compared the two. Yes, they were very much alike. Both looked something like a drawing of chromosomes in a cell. It was meaningless.

Inglis watched from the doorway with haunted eyes.

Dr. Whitman stepped across the room to a small wall mirror and held the page written by the right hand so that its edge lay along the surface. I saw at once this was mirror writing. Words appeared, run

together, still almost illegible; but gradually we were able to understand most of it. Inglis approached us to look upon the unconscious work of his hand, but the parapsychologist ordered him away.

These were the written words. Where something could not be deciphered I place a question mark.

brown eyes in great distress (?) shameful in the (?) (cumulative?) effects of nosiness noisiness
nosiness god save the mark the animals the poor poor things as if to be different is to be inferior I tell you
it police is coming with another camera (?)

When I had read the last words I at once ran back through the apartment to the hall door. Willie wasn't there. He wasn't outside, either, and my car was gone. I returned with the news to the living room.

"The photographer's gone, and so is my car!" I told Dr. Whitman. "He may very well be going to get another camera."

"And here's this word 'police,' " the psychologist added thoughtfully. "Well, it's of no importance," he concluded.

He studied the phrases, taking his time, now and then making a little nervous click with his tongue. Then he re-examined the left hand's paper, again comparing it with the paper I had found in the lifeless hand of Robert. John Inglis said:

"That's the paper my brother held in his hand when he came to me."

He was pointing to it. He had not yet been permitted to see it. He asked, "Are they alike?"

"Yes," answered Dr. Whitman. "What's written on them?" he asked. He watched Inglis keenly.

"I don't know," came the hesitant answer.

"Your reactions?"

"I don't know. . . . It's confused. It's emotion. It's distressing." After a moment he added, "It's very important."

We all looked at each other, baffled. We sat down as we were before. As for myself, I needed to sit down. The constant tension was exhausting me.

Dr. Whitman studied the page of writing and prepared to proceed.

"I want your associations with these phrases, John," he said. "I'll read them one by one. All right, 'brown eyes in great distress,' " he read.

"I think of the little girl," Inglis replied. "She has brown eyes, but I associate nothing about her with distress."

Dr. Whitman turned this over in his mind, then went on:

" 'shameful in the.' "

"Nothing special."

" 'cumulative (I think that's what it is) ; cumulative effects of nosiness noisiness nosiness.' "

"Nothing special. Of course I detest noise, and, as you know, I've had to endure a good deal of nosiness."

"You know how these things are, John," the doctor interjected. "If we can find one significant thing in this small sample, just one, we'll be extremely lucky. . . . 'god save the mark.' "

"Nothing. That's an old-time exclamation, I believe. I'm sure I myself have never used it. I've never even thought it, that I can remember."

" 'the animals.' "

"That upsets me," Inglis said. "It's all emotion. It's a kind of anxiety."

I could tell that from his face, without hearing his words. Dr. Whitman went on:

" 'the poor poor things.' "

"Nothing much. Doesn't sound as if I could have written that. I don't talk or think that way."

" 'as if to be different is to be inferior.' "

"Yes!" the sensitive exclaimed.

Dr. Whitman leaned forward eagerly. "What is there about that?" he asked.

Inglis seemed to feel for words. "I don't know," he said. "I can't describe it. The words disturb me very much. It is not exactly unpleasant."

"How would you explain your writing those words?"

"I—I—I was about to say they seem appropriate, but I don't want to say that exactly. . . . I don't know. . . . As a concept, that has been in my mind ever since I can remember. It seems to tie in with my behavior toward the cockroaches. Who is this 'superior' man, that he should feel justified in taking the life of anything! Even the life of a cockroach! If to be a Negro is to be inferior, then to be a white man is to be superior; but this also works in reverse. If to be small and brown and have six legs and lurk in cracks is to be superior, then man is inferior to the cockroach. Is man really superior to the cockroach? That depends on the 'if,' and the 'if' depends on whether it's the man or the cockroach who sets the standard. There are no 'ifs' in natural laws."

We turned this over in our minds; then, since Inglis volunteered nothing more, Dr. Whitman continued. He said, "I'll read all the rest in one piece, for it seems to have one group of thoughts except for an interruption. I tell you it police is coming back with another camera." "

"Obviously that is simple clairvoyance or telepathy, if it's true," Inglis said promptly. "Mr. Warren took away the photographer's camera and now he is coming back with another. It may or may not be so. I have no feeling about it. And he could be bringing the police. He's very angry, and he thinks I'm crazy."

I THOUGHT I DETECTED in Dr. Whitman a feeling of disappointment. He sat in thought a moment, then suddenly handed Inglis the two papers with similar marks—the one made by his brother and the one made by his own left hand.

Inglis reacted strongly. A surge passed through his body; he held his breath, then released it and breathed more rapidly. His eyes made quick wide movements, and his lips parted.

"This is the key!" he exclaimed.

"What are your associations?"

"I can't tell you! It's obscure, though very strong. All mixed up. It's all emotion. . . ."

He stopped and seemed to be listening. The psychologist asked:

"Look at the marks. If you had to describe them to someone, how would you do it?"

"I'd say they look like drawings of chromosomes in cells. Fat, curly worms. Each a little different. Two sets, the left and right halves of each set symmetrically disposed."

"What are your associations with the word 'chromosome'?"

"Life. Persistence. Heredity. Mystery."

"Your feelings?"

"Mild. Pleasant."

"Are they feelings of appropriateness?"

"No."

"Look at the marks again. Both you and Robert made those sets of 'fat, curly worms,' as you describe them. Do you have any feeling that your drawing them was what you call 'appropriate'?"

"Yes!" Inglis pushed violently to his feet. "Please don't do this to me!" he cried. "You keep torturing me! You split me!"

Gently, Dr. Whitman coaxed him back to his chair.

"Let's sum up," he said. "We know some important things. We know the message: it is the one written and underscored by the cockroaches. 'Do not kill us.' Your reaction to the words 'animal' and 'creature' was symptomatic especially the word 'creature.' The word 'cockroach,' however much you have been concerned with cockroaches lately, does not affect you at all. You were powerfully affected by the words, 'as if to be different is to be inferior.' You even gave us a little lecture. And now these two drawings, or whatever they are—no reaction to the word or concept 'chromosome,' but a marked reaction to the drawings of the fat, curly worms themselves, and a strong feeling that they are significant. There can be no doubt: the key lies in the nexus: drawings—animals—creatures—inferiority."

He thought a moment. "Have you ever seen an animal, or creature, that looks like the drawings?"

"No!" Inglis shouted.

"Why do you say 'No' with so much emotion?"

"Because I feel it!—and you know that very well! You musn't do this to me, Dr. Whitman! I tell you, you split me!"

Dr. Whitman sighed and sank back in his chair. "Are you stuck?" Inglis asked.

"Yes," was the admission. "For the time. . . Well, there's only one thing to do. You've suffered far too much, John. You've got to sleep. I am going to take you home with me and give you an injection. Tomorrow, or the next day, when you're refreshed, we'll tackle this again."

The afflicted man shook his head.

"I have told you," he said; "I have told you again and again: I feel it is appropriate that I die. That too is symptomatic."

"But symptomatic perhaps only of exhaustion." Inglis regarded his old master firmly.

"I allowed Mr. Warren to fetch you chiefly for one reason. That was the thought that it was only reasonable to afford you a chance to remove the feeling of 'appropriateness' I have toward my death—if you could. I expected you to fail. You have failed. But since you came my feeling of necessity has been confirmed. I now know—I know—that shortly I will be sitting dead in this chair. I have seen myself so. I feel that it will be so. I feel that it is appropriate that it be so. Furthermore, I feel that there is a limitation of time. You cannot counter these intuitions, Dr. Whitman. You cannot controvert my powers. I am being controlled, and you cannot controvert the controls."

"You think that at the moment of death there may be a clear revelation?"

"I will not put into words what I think." "Isn't that being superstitious?"

"I don't know," he said, at bay.

"It is important to you personally that you destroy yourself?"

"I don't know. It might be important for others." "Of course it might. And you would be dead." "I feel it appropriate."

"Don't speak that word to me! I'm sure it is a trap!"

"Everything could be a trap."

The parapsychologist shook his head with compassion.

"You are exhausted, John. You should see your eyes! Can you think I trust your feelings?"

"My powers this last week have been tremendous."

Dr. Whitman rose. "Inglis," he said determinedly, "you are coming with me."

"I am not," said the other.

The doctor turned to me.

"Will you help me?"

I said, "Do you think it likely that the two of us could handle him? Even if we could, would it do any good? A man really bent on suicide can't be prevented."

This balked him. Once more he turned to Inglis and besought him with utmost earnestness to come and be given the means to sleep. Gently but inexorably Inglis shook his head.

The psychologist studied the sensitive for a moment. "Sit down, John," he begged. Slowly the afflicted man complied. Dr. Whitman turned something over in his mind for a moment, then he began talking to him, quietly, soothingly.

"You are tired, John; you are very tired. I know. A week and no sleep? You show it. Have you seen your eyes? Have you ever seen such bloodshot eyes before? Well, I'm going to make one more attempt to help you. I think I can help you to lose some of your tension. I know I can. It should not be difficult; you are so tired. You may not realize it, but you are extremely sleepy. If you should want to close your eyes for a moment, go right ahead. I see it would not be hard for you to fall asleep."

"I am so tired," murmured Inglis. "To sleep—just think!—to sleep, then wake up with all my troubles gone!"

I SAW THE PSYCHOLOGIST with opened mouth seeking a chance to interrupt, but Inglis ignored this and continued himself to speak. "I should think you must be tired too, my old friend." The doctor raised an arm, but Inglis would not let him break in. "You should be tired," he went on, never pausing. "You're not as young as you were. You've experienced great excitements here. Let us all try and relax for a little. While we do I'll tell you something. I assure you you'll be interested. But sit quietly; you too, Mr. Warren. I never could talk to people who sit tense—especially those who are itching to interrupt. We've

all been terribly overstrained, haven't we! Do you know the technique of relaxing? There is a technique; not many people know it. The routine is simple. I am going to tell you."

His voice had picked up; his manner was actually compelling. I think I was surprised. I watched him with much interest; he was charming; he was actually magnetic. I'd never have dreamed he could be so magnetic. He went on:

"First you relax the muscles of your right hand. Like this. Do with me. So. Limp, utterly limp. So you can't feel anything. Not a thing. Let your thumb fall outward if it wants to. That's it. Now the left hand. Relax it. Do it, Dr. Whitman. More. More. No feeling. There is no feeling at all. Now your arms. Both arms. Attend first to the right, then to the left. Alternate. Relax. Droop. Right, left, right, left. Do it, Dr. Whitman. That's it. Now the same with your legs. Start at the toes. No tension. Relax. Let them sleep. Now your calves. One, then the other. Let them feel heavy. They do feel heavy, don't they?"

More and more command was coming into his voice. He never ceased speaking, and kept looking straight into his old master's eyes, with side glances into mine. I couldn't keep my eyes from his eyes. He kept using his hands, pointing with them, relaxing them, drooping them, demonstrating; I saw every motion they made—but my focus was on his compelling eyes. I did feel relaxed . . . more and more relaxed.

"Heavy legs," he was saying. "Heavy arms. Heavy eyelids, too. If you want to close your eyelids, just do so. Close them . . . soothingly . . . close them." I closed my eyes. I couldn't keep them open. "Soothingly close your eyes. That's right. Pretend I am your father. Yes, I am your father. You must obey your father. You are so sleepy. Sleep. Sleep. You are both so sleepy. Your father tells you to sleep. Sleep. Sleep more deeply. So."

A new sharp tone came to his voice. "You are asleep! You are sound asleep! You obey your father. You love your father and want to please him. If I should ask you to lift your left arm and your left leg you would do it, wouldn't you. Of course you would. I am going to ask you." Sharply he commanded, "Both of you, lift your left arm and your left leg!" I obeyed. "Good. Open your eyes." I opened my eyes. I saw that Dr. Whitman like me had raised his left arm and left leg. "Lower your arms and legs." We lowered them. "You are both sound asleep," he went on, "even though your eyes are open. You will remain sound asleep. I am going to perform an experiment, a little inconsequential experiment, a simple readjustment of space-time and matter. I too am going to sleep. I shall sleep very deeply. When you see me sound asleep you will wake up. You will stay asleep until you see me sound asleep, and then you will wake up. And then you will remember everything that happened while you were asleep. You will do this, won't you. Answer me!"

"Yes," we said.

He got to his feet, went and picked up the basin and placed it on the coffee table, then placed the table along the left arm of his chair. From his pocket he took a length of cord and a penknife. He opened a blade of his knife and set it on his knees. He bound his left forearm to the arm of the chair so that his wrist hung out over the edge. He bent back his hand. He placed the point of the knife blade near the turn of the wrist. He hesitated.

I saw his body firm. He jabbed.

THE BLOOD ARCKED out in a solid stream. After a few seconds the flow lessened and became a steady thick red cord. He watched it for a moment, then turned his head to the right and looked at us with an expression I cannot describe but will never forget.

"This is such a poor way to take leave of you!" he cried; "but I had no choice! You were trying to hypnotize me, Dr. Whitman! I had to beat you to it!"

His eyes turned back to the steady red cord, then returned to us.

"When I am sound asleep and quite motionless you will wake up," he said firmly. "Both of you will wake up. When I remain motionless you will wake up. You will remember every word that I speak. Later you will describe every little thing that I say and do. Do you understand? Answer."

"Yes," we said.

A faint smile came to his face.

"I really have something interesting to tell you. It's a confession, Dr. Whitman. There was a period when you used to hypnotize me, do you remember?"

"Yes," was the answer.

"You were testing my powers under hypnosis, for one thing. Well, I played a trick on you one time. I hypnotized you! You had started to hypnotize me, but I hypnotized you. It was a prank and I shouldn't have done it, and I was fearful afterward lest you know that I did it, or find out that I did it; but you never did. I hypnotized you, and you never knew it! Of course I gave you the appropriate post-hypnotic suggestion. . . . How unthinkably intermixed are the threads of our fates! Because once, long ago, I pulled a prank, I remembered it in my extremity and was confident I could do it again. Toward you, Mr. Warren I felt the same confidence for another reason. You are clean, and I've liked you. I've seen you sensitive and sympathetic. I knew you would respond to me."

He turned his head and watched for a moment the cord of blood arcing slightly from his wrist. It was thinner now. He smiled, ever so faintly. "I think I feel a little weak," he said.

Time passed. He brooded. Suddenly he cried, "Oh, how I wish I could talk normally with you! I know it could be done, but I don't dare try. I have been lucky enough. . . . Answer me, Dr. Whitman. Search your mind and answer truly. Did you ever suspect that I hypnotized you?"

"No," was the reply; "but there was one session at which I couldn't account for my time."

The man who was dying smiled a little. After a moment he turned to me.

"Did you find my brother like—this?" he asked. "Yes," I said.

"Which arm did he use?"

"The other one. The right."

"We were mirror-image twins," Inglis said. "We are," he corrected. For a moment he was silent; then he announced quietly, "Now I am really weaker. . . . Well, I shall soon be with him, wherever or whoever or whatever he now is. . . . I have had a tremendous piece of luck in my life: I was one of identical twins. You who are of single birth are half missing. For the identical other is not a separate person; he is the other half of yourself. Day by day and side by side you grow, living extrapolations of all the million matrices of that first single potent pregnant cell; but your sum is always one. Everything the other does, you do; every experience you have, he shares. He is always there to play with, to associate with; what he thinks, you think, and what you feel he responds to in phase. Your pleasures, problems, friends, worlds, are alike. And to one person, at least, you are always important. You live together en rapport.

"But how much extra so this was with Robert and me, with our paranormal powers! Even when apart, consonance was continuous!

"We continued to deviate from the normal throughout life. By the nature of angles, as children we were not deviated far; but as we grew older our psychic peculiarity made us increasingly two freaks and misfits; but ours was the same deviation; we were alike; John plus Robert equaled one. That fine thing we had.

"Our paranormal powers were a tremendous burden. We were sensitive, but much too sensitive. The normal person lives within a shell which gives a measure of protection from the disharmonic waves of the psychic Mother Ocean; we seemed to lack that shell. We could be bruised by a look, wounded by a thought; we could be lifted and tossed and battered and half-drowned in the great swells and riptides of animal emotion from the great submerged herd. With increasing divergence we more and more sought quiet and seclusion. For years it was gladly we lived; but now, I assure you, I am not sorry to die. . . . When I say 'I,' I say 'we.' "

Inglis brooded. Now his hand hung limp, and the inexorable red cord depended from the lithe fingers. He watched it. From time to time it broke, to instantly re-form with a little sound—*pip*. He said:

"Wonderfully, the body is mobilizing to defend its integrity. It will fail. Two quarts of my life are gone. . . . I am very much weaker. . . . I feel at peace now, my dear old master. Can't you be glad for me? Peace for the first time—the first time in such a long time. Is peace an effect of weakness? Oh, definitions! I'm sure that half the troubles of the race of men are semantic ones!

"I wish we could really talk . . .

"It is so peaceful and lovely. Just think, there are people who can feel this way once a week. For a week I was in torture, and now, with letting of a little blood, I am at peace. What was my torture of the past week? I almost forget. There was a message. I thought I was intercepting, or being sent, a message. Confident, I brought you here, to witness the great Change. But I sink slowly into peace, while you remain behind with a new distress. Forgive me! I had thought there might be a message; it seemed so important; but I only subside. . . .

"I shall be with Robert soon. Wherever and whoever and whatever he now is. The Change is coming. and I shall know. . . . The great Change. . . . I have killed many insects; I have seen a hundred cockroaches die; they came to know, and now I shall know. Life: they had it: I still for a moment have it. What is the difference between a cockroach and a man? I know there is one or so, but I no longer can see such little things. We both live, and then we die. Are there separate hereafters for cockroach and man? How can it be thought so! Where in the series does a man start being something special, to rate a special hereafter? Has the cockroach a soul? No. An ape? No. A man-ape? No. An ape-man? Maybe. But a man, yes! Oh human vanity, what quibbling! Experts in the unknowable are agreed that at some arcanic point between cockroach and man there appeared a new, tremendously valuable ticket—something entitling the accredited bearer to a reserved seat in human heaven; apes and cockroaches not admitted. I don't want to go to such a place... "

Inglis' head had for some time been lowering. Now it was low indeed; but from his words he did not appear to be aware how weak he had become. He was pausing not only between sentences, now, but sometimes between phrases. More often the red cord was breaking and re-forming with the little pip. I could not see how much of Inglis' life was in the basin, but he seemed far from unconsciousness. His head was lowered, but his eyes were open and still held forward.

"I am faint," he said suddenly. ". . . There was to have been a message. I did think so . . . or was it only a hope?"

THERE WAS A SILENCE. He seemed to rouse a little. His voice now was quite low, and the pauses longer.

"It is inconceivable. A man dies unexpectedly in London, and at the moment of death he appears to his wife in New York. Rapport in life, communication at death. . . . My brother, only a few blocks away. . . . What force is this? How could I state where those artifacts were, buried twelve thousand years, entombed in a wilderness under twenty feet of earth? But they dug, and they found them, and they were as I had said. I did not vision them, I did not feel anything about them, I just said it; it seemed appropriate. . . . That man in Melbourne . . . amnesia . . . a fugue . . . he didn't himself know who he was, but I spoke his name and around the world they found him. How is this? . . . I have lived in an ocean of consciousness. Or is it an ocean of awareness? No more definitions. It is an ocean of awareness shimmering, pulsing with intelligence, ineluctably interwoven, eons thick. Look upon the unthinkable distances between the universes. What lies beyond? The astronomers say there are a billion Earths, each teeming with its various life. Here we have cockroaches and human beings and apes and bacteria; but what are the creatures of the other Earths? They live. Our experts seem unaware of this and haven't got around to denying them a hereafter; but they are there—different, bizarre, alive. So very very many of them will be life forms superior to ours.

"Life forms—what does that mean? Life. . . . It may be that living creatures never will know what life is; but motion is part of it. Is the virus alive? Will it go to virus heaven when it is no longer a whole? There are not so very many atoms in a virus molecule. They are the same atoms that cooperate to erect an elephant. Their electrons whirl, and all thy piety and all thy wit will not avail to stop them half a second. Eternally the electrons go about their atomic business; I am sure they are alive, momentarily alive, until they meet their opposite charge and themselves experience the great Change. I am not thinking absurdly, my dear friends; it's just that I have nothing to speak with but words. Words. We are all choked with words.

"But I can come close to the truth. There is an infinite and everlasting ocean of Something. In one manifestation matter appears, and universes rush away. So radiantly! Out of the radiant energy more

matter appears and takes its place, and the ultimate universes themselves dissolve back into energy, or are remanifested as energy, while the cosmic ocean heaves and shimmers. Yesterday and tomorrow, today and the light fading from my eyes and the blood out of my veins are one, variously manifesting, clotting and unclotting, seeming to speed and seeming to stand still. It is a One with aspects that our eyes see as changes; differences and changes; and somewhere in it, the ultimate miracle, there lies the possibility of love and kindness. Yes, the atom contains the capacity to be kind. Better, the atom in one aspect is kind. . ."

He stopped speaking, but his voice, edged with hoarseness from his speaking, still seemed to echo through the room. Now only drops were falling. Only their pip could be heard.

For a long time the silence held, but Inglis was still alive. His eyes remained open except for brief intervals, and his head kept lowering, and he kept bringing it back a little. I felt that he had spoken his last words.

Slowly I watched him weaken. His eyes remained closed for longer periods, his head dropped still lower, and remained low longer.

But suddenly he spoke again. Head down, eyes closed, he said:
"Forgive me."

The silence returned, and went on. Occasionally, very infrequently now, there was the pip of a falling drop. Ever so faintly I heard the noises of the great city around us: an attenuated clatter, the vibration from a passing truck, the faint tear of a jet plane far in the sky. We sat unmoving; sat, I think, unable to move. And time passed. And the dripping ceased.

At some point I noticed that Inglis had raised his head. Just the least bit. And his eyes were open. Slowly his head continued to raise a little more, and as it did his eyes fixed on a point low on the opposite wall. As his head raised the eye focus shortened, until he seemed to be looking at something at a place in the air only a few feet in front of him, a little off the floor. My flesh crept.

Inglis' bloodshot eyes watched that place as if it were the only thing in the universe. Back and forth between his eyes and that vacant place my own eyes traveled, while unknown forces crackled and prickled through my every cell. Inglis roused greatly. He turned to us and cried in triumph, "You see?"

I saw nothing.

Again his eyes were back on that vacant place. Again he turned to us and cried, "Do you hear?" But I heard nothing.

"It's the message!—clear at last!" he cried. "They've come! They're in the streets! They're not unfriendly! They're different, but not inferior! Be kind! Do not kill them! Do not kill them!"

These were the last words. He panted; for a moment his eyes held on the vacant place near the floor; then slowly his head dropped to his breast, lower and lower, while his eyes moved upward, still holding on that vacant place, and holding there until the end.

His eyes did not close. He sat there, chin on his chest. For a long time I watched him, and then I got to my feet and bent low over him, close, so close to that wonderful tortured head. Dr. Whitman was there by my side.

I closed his eyes.

Dr. Whitman said, "With blood I could pull him back. Given five minutes I could still save his body, but his mind would be gone. . .

I stood there resonating on a higher plane of awareness. And then I heard a click behind me. I turned. Willie was there. He was holding a camera. He had entered and taken a picture.

I hit him. I hit him hard. I took the camera and smashed it against the wall. I ran out to the street. My car was there, and near it a police car, but both were enclosed in an excited shoving crowd of truckmen. I jumped into my car, started the engine and inched forward. Reluctantly the excited men made way. I streaked through the dusk for the office.

The Creatures had come! I'd seen one! It had fat, curly barbels! I saw it through the legs of the men!

The men were poking the Creature with sticks!

I poured my story into the city editor's ears. He sat in the midst of chaos. He could hardly have understood my words, but he understood my emotion and waved me to my desk.

Now I have written it. *Here is the message! Hear it, everybody—hear it! The Creatures have come! They're not unfriendly! They are different, but not inferior! Restrain yourselves! Be kind! Do not kill them! Do not kill them! Do not kill them!*