



THE GUIDED MAN

"ALL YOU DO," said the salesman for the Telagog Company, "is flip this switch at the beginning of the crisis. That sends out a radio impulse, which is picked up here and routed by the monitor to the proper controller."

Ovid Ross peered past the salesman at the man seated in the booth. Gilbert Falck, he understood the man's name to be, but nobody would know him under that helmet, from which a thick cable passed in a sagging curve to the control board before him.

"So he takes over?" said Ross.

"Exactly. Suppose you've let yourself in for a date where there'll be dancing, and you don't know how?"

"I do, kind of," said Ovid Ross.

"\\Tell, let's suppose you don't. We have in the booth, by prearrangement, our Mr. Jerome Bundy, who's been a ballet dancer and a ballroom dancing teacher-

"Did somebody call me?" said a man, putting his head out of another control booth into the corridor behind the row of booths.

"No, Jerry," said the salesman, whose name was Nye. "Just using you as an example. Aren't you still on?"

"No, he gave me the over-and-out."

"See?" said the salesman. "Mr. Bundy is controlling a man-needless to say we don't mention our clients' names-who's trying to become a professional ballet dancer. He's only so-so, but with Jerry running him by remote control he puts on the finest tour-jeté you ever saw. Or suppose you can't swim-

"Shucks," said Ovid Ross, staring at his knuckles. He was a long, big-boned young man with hands and feet large even in proportion to the rest of him, and knuckles oversized for even such hands. "I can swim and dance, kind of, and most of those things. Even play a little golf. My trouble is-well, you know."

"\\Tell?"

"Here I am, just a big hick from Rattlesnake, Montana, trying to get on among all these slick operators in New York, where everybody's born with his hand in somebody else's pocket. When I go up against them it scares the behooligers out of me. I get embarrassed and trip over my big feet."

"In such a case," said Nye, "we choose controllers specializing in the roles of sophisticate, man-of-the-world, and so forth. Our Mr. Faick here is experienced in such parts. So are Mr. Abrams and Mr. Van Etten. Mr. Bundy is what you might call a second-string sophisticate. When he's not controlling a man engaged in dancing or athletic sports, he relieves one of the others I mentioned."

"So, if I sign up with you, and tomorrow I go see this publisher guy who eats horseshoes and spits out the nails, to ask for a job, you can take over?"

"Easiest thing in the world. Our theory is: no man is a superman! So, when faced with a crisis you can't cope with, call us in. Let a specialist take control of



your body! You don't fill your own teeth or make your own shoes, do you? Then why not let our experts carry you through such crises as getting a job, proposing to a girl, or making a speech? Why not?" Nye's eyes shone.

"I dunno why not," said Ross. "But that reminds me. I got-I've got girl trouble too. Can you really take care of that?"

"Certainly. One of the controllers is the former actor Barry Wentworth. During his youth, he was the idol of frustrated women throughout the nation, and he succeeded in acquiring nine real-life wives as well as innumerable less formal romances. We'll do the courtship, the proposal, and everything for you."

Ross looked suspiciously at the salesman. "Dunno as I like that 'everything.'"

Nyc spread his hands. "Only at your request. We have no thought of controlling a client beyond his desires. What we do is to compel you to do what you really wish to do, but lack the skill or the nerve to do."

"Say, here's another thing."

"Yes?"

"Is there any carry-over effect? In other words, uh, if a controller puts me through some act like swimming, will I learn to do that better from having the controller do an expert job with my carcass?"

"We believe so, though the psychologists are still divided. We think that eventually telegog control will be accepted as a necessary part of all training for forms of physical dexterity or skill, including such things as singing and speech-making. But that's in the future."

"Another thing," said Ross. "This gadget would give a controller a wonderful chance for-uh-practical jokes. Say the controllee was a preacher who hired you to carry him through a tough sermon, and the controller had it in for him, or maybe just had a low sense of humor. What would stop the controller from making the preacher tell stag-party stories from the pulpit?"

The salesman's face took on a look of pious horror. "Nobody in this organization would think of such a thing! If he did, he'd be fired before he could say 'hypospatial transmission.' This is a serious enterprise, with profound future possibilities."

Ross gave the sigh of a man making a fateful decision. "Okay, then. Guess I'll have to go without lunch for a while to pay for it, but if your service does what you say, it'll be worth it. Give me the forms."

When Ross had signed the contract with the Telagog Company, the salesman said: "Now, we'll have to decide which class of telagog receiver to fit you with. For full two-way communication you use this headset with this hypospatial transmitter in your pocket. It's fairly Conspicuous. .

"Too much so for me," said Ross.

"Then we have this set, which looks like a hearing aid and has a smaller pocket control unit. This doesn't let you communicate by hypospatial broadcast with the controller, but it does incorporate an off-switch so you can cut off the controller. And, if you have to communicate with him, you can write a note and hold it up for him to see with your eyes."

"Still kind of prominent. Got 'ny others?"



"Yes, this last kind is invisible for practical purposes." The salesman held up a lenticular object about the size of an eyeglass lens but thicker, slightly concave on one face and thin around the edge. "This is mounted on top of your head, between your scalp and your skull."

"How about controls?"

"You can't cut off the controller, but you can communicate by clicks with this pocket wireless key. One click means 'take over,' two is 'lay off but stand by,' and three is 'over and out,' or 'that's all until the next schedule.' If you want to arrange a more elaborate code with your controller, that's up to you."

"That looks like me," said Ross. "But have you got to bore holes in my skull for the wires?"

"No. That's the beauty of this Nissen metal. Although the wires are only a few molecules thick, they're so strong that when the receiver is actuated and their coils are released they shoot right through your skull into your brain without making holes you can see except under the strongest microscope."

"Okay," said Ovid Ross.

"First we'll have to fit you and install the receiver. You'll take a local anesthetic, won't you?"

"I guess so. Whatever you say."

"Then you'd better have a practice session with your controllers. They have to get used to your body, you know."

"Rather," said Gilbert Faick, taking off his helmet. He was a smallish blond young man about Ovid Ross's age. "You wouldn't want to knock your coffee cup over because your arm is longer than mine, would you?"

The gold lettering on the frosted-glass part of the door said:

1026

HOOLIHAN PUBLICATIONS

THE GARMENT GAZETTE

Ovid Ross had stood in front of this door for fifteen awful seconds with his hand outstretched but not quite touching the knob, as if he feared an electric shock. God almighty, why did one have to be young and green and embarrassable? And from Rattlesnake, Montana? Then he remembered, reached into his pocket, and pushed the switch-button, once.

He remembered what he had been taught: as the controller took over, relax gradually. Not too suddenly, or you might fall in a heap on the floor. That would not make a good impression on a prospective employer.

The feeling of outside control stole over him with an effect like that of a heavy slug of hard liquor. He relaxed. A power outside his body was seeing with his eyes and sensing with his other senses. This power reached his arm and briskly opened the door. Without volition on his part, he realized that he had stridden in and said to the girl at the switchboard behind the hole in the glass



window, in friendly but firm and confident tones:

"Will you please tell Mr. Sharpe that Mr. Ross is here to see him? I'm expected."

Ross thought that alone he would have stumbled in, goggled wordlessly at the girl, stuttered, and probably ended by slinking out without seeing Sharpe at all. The control was not really complete- semiautomatic acts like breathing and walking were still partly under Ross's control-but Falck had taken over all the higher functions.

Presently he was shaking hands with Addison Sharpe, the managing editor, a small man with steel-rimmed glasses. Ross amazed himself by the glibness with which his tongue threw off the correct pleasantries:

"A very nice plant you have, sir . . . I'm sure I shall enjoy it. Yes, the salary mentioned by the agency will be satisfactory, though I hope eventually to convince you I'm really worth more. . . References? Mr. Maurice Vachek of The Clothing Retailer; Mr. Joseph McCue of A. S. Glickman Fabrics. .

Not a word to indicate that this same McCue had pounded his desk and shouted, when firing Ovid Ross: "And here you are, a college man, who couldn't sell bed warmers to Eskimos!~ What the hell good's your fancy education if it don't teach you nothing useful?"

Luckily, McCue had promised to give him a good reference- provided the job were anything but selling. Ross was pleased to observe that his body's deportment under Falck's control, while much improved, was not altered out of all recognition. He still spoke his normal General American instead of with Falck's more easterly accents.

Addison Sharpe was saying: "You'll find working conditions here a little unusual."

"So?" said Falck-Ross.

"For one thing, Mr. Hoolihan likes neatness. That means everybody cleans his desk completely before he goes home at night. Every. thing but the telephone, the calendar, the ashtray, and the blotter pad has to be out of sight."

Ross felt his controller start a little. No wonder! This would be Ovid Ross's third trade journal, and never before had he come across such a ruling. Normally, staff writers and editors were allowed to build mares' nests of paper on their desks to suit themselves, so long as they delivered the goods.

"For another," continued Sharpe, "Mr. Hoolihan disapproves of his employees' fraternizing with each other outside of working hours. He considers it bad for discipline."

At this outrageous ukase, Ross felt Falck jerk again.

"Finally," said Sharpe, "Mr. Hoolihan has a very acute sense of time. He takes it much amiss if his employees show up so much as one minute late, so the rest of us make a habit of arriving fifteen minutes early in the morning to allow for delays. Also, I advise you not to get in the habit of taking your newspaper down to the men's room to read, or ducking out for a midmorning cup of coffee. The staff writer you're replacing thought he couldn't live without his teno'clock coffee. That's why you're here and he isn't."

Ross had an urge to ask how you got to be a trusty. However, he had no control over his vocal organs, and Falck was too well-trained for any such breaks.



"Now," said Sharpe, "we'll go in to see Mr. Hoolihan."

The tyrant overflowed his swivel chair: a big stout red-faced man with a fringe of graying hair around his pink dome of a scalp and great bushy eyebrows. Timothy Hoolihan extended a paw and wrung Ross's hand. He made Ross's bones creak, despite the fact that Ross had gotten his start in life by pitching hay and throwing calves around.

"Glad to have you!" barked Hoolihan in a staccato voice like a burst of machine-gun fire. "You do as we tell you, no reason we can't get along. Here! Read this! Part of every new employee's indoctrination. Ever hear of Frederick Winslow Taylor? Should have! Hundred years old and still makes sense."

Falck-Ross glanced down at the brochure: a reprint of an ancient homily by Taylor on the duties of an employee.

"Now, you hang around a couple of days, reading the files, getting oriented, and we'll put you on a definite assignment. Good luck! Take him away, Addison!"

Overawed by this human dynamo, Ross was conscious of Falck's making some glib but respectful rejoinder and directing his body out of the office.

For the first time since he had entered the office suite occupied by The Garment Gazette, Ross began to try to regain control. He urged his right hand toward the pocket in which reposed the little clicker key by which he communicated with Falck. Evidently Faick realized what he was up to, for he relaxed control long enough for Ross to get his hand into that pocket and press the knob, twice.

At once Falck's control ceased. Ross, not catching himself quite in time, stumbled and recovered. Sharpe turned his head to give him an owlish stare. The managing editor took him around and introduced him to a half-dozen other people: staff writers (called "editors" on this paper), an advertising manager, and so forth. Then Sharpe showed Ross a cubicle with a desk.

"Yours," he said. "Say, are you feeling all right?"

"Sure. Why?"

"I don't know. When we came out of Mr. Hoolihan's office your manner seemed to change. You're not sick, are you?"

"Never felt better."

"Heart all right? We wouldn't like you to conk out on us before you've worked long enough to pull your weight."

"No, sir. My heart was good enough for me to be a practicing cowboy, so I guess this won't hurt it."

Ross settled down at his new desk to read the Taylor article, the burden of which seemed to be that to get ahead one should practice abject submission to one's employer's slightest whim. While he was absorbing the eminent engineer's advice, one of the girls came in and placed on his desk a big ring binder containing last year's accumulation of file copies of The Garment Gazette, which he read.

What Mr. Hoolihan really needed, he thought, was a multiple telagog set by which he could control all his employees all at once and all the time.

During the lunch hour, Ovid Ross telephoned the Telagog Company and asked for Gilbert Faick. After some delay a voice said:



"Falck speaking."

"This is Ross, Ovid Ross. Say, it worked! I got the job!"

"Oh, I know that. I monitored you for a half-hour after you shut me off, and cut in on you at odd minutes later."

"Oh. But say, I just wanted to tell you how much I appreciated it. Uh. It's wonderful. Could I—could I blow you to a drink this evening after work?"

"V,Tait till I look at my schedule. . . Okay, five to six is free. Drop by on your way from work, eh?"

Ovid Ross did. He found Falck, in line with ~his role as professional man-of-the-world, cordial but not unduly impressed by his accomplishment in getting Ross a job. When the first pair of drinks had been drunk, Faick bought a second round. Ross asked:

"What I don't see is, how on earth do you do it? I have a hard enough time managing things like that for myself, let alone for some other guy."

Falck made an airy motion. "Experience, my lad, practice. And balance. A certain mental coordination so you automatically roll with the punch and shoot for every opening. I've got rather a tough case coming up tomorrow. Client wants to put over a merger, and it'll take all my savoir faire to see him through it." He sipped. "Then, too, the fact that it's not my job or my business deal or my dame helps. Gives me a certain detachment I mightn't have about my own affairs."

"Like surgeons don't usually operate on their own kinfolk?"

"Exactly."

Ovid Ross did some mental calculations, subtracting the employment agency's fee and the charges of the Telagog Company from his assets, and decided that he could afford to buy one more round. By the time this had been drunk, he was in excellent spirits. He told Falck of Hoolihan's quirks. Falck commented:

"Why, the damned little Napoleon! If he said that to me, I'd tell him where to stick his job." Falck glanced at his watch. "What's next on your agenda?"

"I don't think I'll need any control for the next day or two, but as soon as I get oriented they're liable to send me out on an interview. So you better stand by."

"Okay. Try to call me a little in advance to brief me. I want to cut Bundy in on your sensory circuits in case he has to substitute for me."

When he got to the Y.M.C.A. where he lived, Ovid Ross telephoned a White Plains number and got an answer in a strong Russian accent:

"Who is cullink, pliz?"

"Mr. Ross would like to-ub-speak to Miss La Motte."

"Oh. Vait." Then after a long pause: "Is that you, Ovid?"

"Uh. Sure is. Know what? I got the job!"

"Splendid! Are you working now?"

"Yeah. It's a high-powered place as trade journals go. I only hope I can stick the boss."

"Don't you like him?"

"No, and neither does anybody else. But it's money. Say, Claire!"

"Yes?"

"I met a swell guy. Name of Falck. A real man-of-the-world. Knows his way around."



"Good. I hope you see more of him."

"How are the wild Russians?"

"About the same. I had a terrible row with Peshkova."

"Yeah? How come?"

"I was teaching the boys American history, and she claimed I wasn't putting enough dialectical materialism into it. I should have explained that the American Revolution was a plot by the American bourgeoisie to acquire exclusive exploitation of the masses instead of having to share it with the British aristocracy. And I said a few things about if even the Russians had given up that line, why should I teach it? We were yelling at one another when Peshkov came in and made peace."

"Has he made any more passes?" asked Ross anxiously.

"No, except to stare at me with that hungry expression all the time. It gives me the creeps."

"Well, someday . . ." Ross's voice trailed off. He wanted to say something like: "Someday I'll marry you and then you won't have to tutor an exiled ex-commissar's brats anymore."

But, in the first place, he was too shy; in the second, he did not know Claire La Motte well enough; and, in the third, he was not in a position to take on costly commitments.

"Did you say something?" inquired Claire.

"No-that is-uh-I wondered when we'd get together again."

"I know! Are you busy Sunday?"

"Nope."

"Then come on up here. The Peshkovs will be gone all weekend, and the hired couple are going down to Coney. Bring your friend Mr. Falck, and his girl friend if he has one."

"Uh? Swell idea! I'll ask him."

Claire La Motte gave Ross directions for reaching the estate which the Peshkovs had bought in Westchester County. After they had hung up, Ovid Ross sat staring at the telephone. He had been hoping for such an invitation. Ever since he had met Claire the previous winter, she had promised to have him to the Peshkovs' place in May or June, and now June was almost over. The Peshkovs had never absented themselves long enough.

Then his old fear of embarrassment-erythrophobia, a psychologist had told him-rose up to plague him. Suppose Falck rebuffed his invitation? The thought gave him shivers. If only he could tender the invitation while under telagog control! But since Falck was his regular controller, he could hardly work it that way. And, having promised Claire, he would have to go through with this project.

Through Wednesday and Thursday, orientation continued at The Garment Gazette. Ross read proof, helped Sharpe with makeup, and wrote heads: AUSTRALIAN WOOL DOWN; FALL FASHIONS FEATURE FUCHSIA; ILGWU ELECTS KATZ. Friday morning Addison Sharpe said:

"We're sending you out this afternoon to interview Marcus Ballin."

"The Outstanding Knitwear man?"



"What about? Anything special?"

"That's what you're to find out. He called up to say he was planning something new in shows. First he talked to Mr. Hoolihan, who got mad and passed the call on to me. Ballin asked if we'd like to run a paragraph or two on this show, so I said I'd send a man.

Heffernan's out so you'll have to take care of it."

"I'll do my best," said Ross.

Sharpe said: "It's about time we ran a feature on Marcus anyway. Quite a versatile and picturesque character."

"What's his specialty?"

"Oh, he plays the violin. He once went on an expedition he financed himself to find some bug in South America. Take the portrait Leica along and give him the works. His place is at i~ West Thirty-seventh Street."

Ovid Ross telephoned the Telagog Company and made a luncheon date with Gilbert Falck. During lunch he told what he knew of his impending ordeal. Falck found a spot on his schedule when he could take charge of the interview.

Ross also screwed up his nerve to pass on Claire's proposal for the weekend to Falck, who said:

"Thanks, rather. I shall be glad to. Shall we go in your car or mine?"

"Mine, since I made the invitation."

"Fine. I'll get a girl."

"Hey!" said Ross. "If you come along to Westchester you can't be in your booth controlling me if I run into an embarrassing situation."

Falck raised his blond eyebrows. "What's embarrassing about a picnic with your best girl?"

"Oh, you know."

"No I don't, unless you tell me."

Ross twisted his fingers. "I don't know her awfully well, but I think she's-she's-nh-well, I suppose you'd say I was nuts about her. And-and I always feel like I'm making a fool of myself."

Falck laughed. "Oh, that. Jerry Bundy's on Sunday, so I'll tell him to monitor you and be ready to take over."

Ross said: "You should call yourselves the John Alden Company." Falck smiled. "Bring on your Priscilla, and we'll bundle her for you.",

They parted, and Ross plunged back into the swarming garment district. He killed time, watching sweating shipping clerks push hand tmcks loaded with dresses, until his controller returned to his booth and came on the hyospace. Then Ross sent in the signal.

Marcus Ballin (Outstanding Knitwear: sweaters, T-shirts, bathing suits) was a medium-sized man with sparse gray hair and somewhat the air of one of the more amiable Roman emperors. Ovid Ross soon learned that his trepidations about having the man insult him or clam up had been needless. Marcus Ballin loved to talk, he was a fascinating talker, and best of all he loved talking about himself.

Over the background noise of the knitting machines in the suite of lofts that comprised his empire, Ballin, with eloquent gestures of his cigar, poured into Falck-Ross's ears the story of his many activities. He told of his travels, his fun



with his airplane and his violin, his charitable and settlement work, until Ross, a prisoner for the nonce in his own skull, wondered how this man of parts found time to be also one of the most successful garment manufacturers in New York.

Faick-Ross said: "But, sir, how about that special show?"

"Oh, that." Ballin chuckled. "Just a little stunt to help my fall line. I'm putting on a show for the buyers with a contest."

"A contest?"

"Absolutely. To choose the most beautiful bust in America."

"What? But Mr. Ballin, won't the cops interfere?"

Ballin laughed. "I wasn't intending to parade the girls in the nude. Nobody in the garment trade would encourage nudism; he'd be ostracized. They'll all be wearing Outstanding sweaters."

"But how can you be sure some of 'em aren't-ah-boosting their chances by artificial means?"

"Not this time. These sweaters will be so thin the judges can tell."

"Who are the judges?"

"Well, I'm one, and I got the sculptor Joseph Aldi for the second. The third I haven't picked out. I called that stuffed-shirt publisher of yours, but he turned me down. Let me see. .

"Mr. Ballin," Ross to his horror heard himself say, "I'm sure I should make a good judge."

Ovid Ross was horrified for three reasons: first, to judge so intimate a matter in public would embarrass him to death; second, he thought it would impair his standing with Claire La Motte if she found out; finally, he would never, never come right out and ask anybody for anything in that crass way. He struggled to get his hand on the switch, but Gilbert Faick kept the bit in his teeth.

"Yeah?" said Ballin. "That's an idea."

"I've got good eyesight," continued Faick, ignoring the mental squirmings of Ross, "and no private axes to grind. . ."

Faick continued his line of sales chatter until Ballin said: "Okay, you're in, Mr. Ross."

"When is it to be?"

"Next Thursday. I've already got over thirty entries, but next year if I repeat it there ought to be a lot more. We'd have to set up some sort of preliminary screening."

Falck wound up the interview and took Ross's body out of the Outstanding Knitwear offices. Ross heard his body say:

"Well, Ovid old boy, there's an opportunity most men would fight tooth and nail for. Anything to say before I sign off? Write it on your pad."

As Falck released control, Ross wrote a couple of dirty words on the pad, adding: "You got me into this; you'll have to see me through."

Falck, taking over again, laughed. "Rather! I have every intention of doing so, laddie."

Back at the Gazette, Addison Sharpe whistled when he heard Ross's story. He said:

"I don't know how the boss will like your getting in on this fool stunt. He turned Ballin down in no uncertain terms."



"I'd think it would be good publicity for the paper," said Ross. "Well, Mr. Hoolihan has funny ideas; quite a Puritan. You wait while I speak to him."

Ross sat down and wrote notes on his interview until Sharpe said: "This way, Ovid."

The managing editor led him into Hoolihan's office, where the advertising manager was already seated. Hoolihan barked:

"Ross, call up Ballin and tell him it's no go! At once! I won't have my clean sheet mixed up in his burlesque act!"

"But, Mr. Hoolihan!" wailed the advertising manager. "Mr. Ballin has just taken a whole page for the October issue, and if you insult him he'll cancel it! And you know what our advertising account looks like right now."

"Oh?" said Hoolihan. "I don't let advertisers dictate my editorial policies!"

"But that's not all. Mike Ballin, his brother-or rather one of his brothers-is the bigshot at the Pegasus Cutting Machine Company, another advertiser."

"Hm. That's another story."

As the great man pondered his problems, the advertising manager added slyly: "Besides, if you don't let Ross judge, Ballin will simply get somebody from The Clothing Retailer or Women's Wear or one of the other sheets, and they'll get whatever benefit-"

"I see," interrupted Hoolihan. "Ross! You go through with this act as planned, but heaven help you if you bring us any unfavorable notoriety! Keep yourself in the background. Play it close to your chest. No stunts! Get me? All right, back to work!"

"Yes, Mr. Hoolihan," said Ovid Ross.

"Yes, Mr. Hoolihan," said Addison Sharpe.

"Yes, Mr. Hoolihan," said the advertising manager.

Ovid Ross spent most of Saturday shining up his small middleaged convertible and touching up the nicks in the paint. He had to journey up to the Bronx to get to it, because automobile storage fees had become prohibitively high in Manhattan.

Sunday morning, the sky was so overcast that Ross had doubts about his party. The paper, however, said fair, warm, and humid. By the time he went all the way up again by subway, got the car, and drove back to Manhattan to pick up Falck and his girl, the sun was burning its way through the overcast.

Falck directed Ross to drive around to a brownstone front house in the west seventies to get the girl, whom he introduced as a Miss Dorothea Dunkelberg. She was a plump girl, very young-looking, and pretty in a round-faced bovine way. She was the kind whom their elders describe as "sweet" for want of any more positive attribute.

They spun through a hot, humid forenoon up the Westchester parkways to the Peshkov estate near White Plains. As they turned in the driveway between the stone posts, Faick said:

"These Russkys rather did all right by themselves, didn't they?"

"Yeah," said Ross. "When they liquidated all the Commies in the revolution of '79, Peshkov was Commissar of the Treasury or something and got away with a couple of trunkloads of foreign securities."



"And he's been allowed to keep them?"

"The new Russian Commonwealth has been trying to get hold of that dough ever since, but Peshkov keeps it hidden away or tied up in legal knots."

"And your Miss La Motte tutors his kids?"

"That's right. She doesn't like 'em much, but it's money."

"Why, what sort of folks are they?"

"Well, to give you an idea, Peshkov's idea of a jolly evening is to sit all alone in his living room with a pistol on the table beside him, drinking vodka and staring into space. Claire tells me he's been getting moodier and moodier ever since those anti-Communist Russians tried to assassinate him last year."

A tremendous barking broke out. Around the corner of the house streaked a half-dozen Russian wolfhounds with long snaky heads thrust forward and long legs pumping like steel springs. The dogs rushed to where the automobile was slowly crunching up the winding gravel driveway and began racing around it like Indians circling a prairie schooner.

"Do we have to fight our way through those?" said Dorothea Dunkelberg. "They scare me."

"Claire will handle 'em," said Ross with more conviction than he felt. "She says they're friendly but dumb."

The sun glinted on red hair as a figure in a playsuit appeared beside the mansion. Claire La Motte's voice came shrilly:

"Ilya! Olga! Come here! Here, Dmitri! Behave yourself, Anastasia!" The dogs loped off toward the house, where the girl seized a couple by their collars and dragged them out of sight around the corner. The others followed. Presently, Claire appeared again and waved an arm toward the parking space. Ross parked and got out.

As Claire La Motte approached the car, Ovid Ross reached into his pocket and pressed his switch button, once. Now, he hoped, he would show up all right in comparison with his slick friend Falck!

He felt Jerome Bundy take over his body and stride it toward the approaching Claire. Behind him he heard a faint wolfwhistle from Falck. Instead of formally shaking hands with her and mumbling something banal while his ears pinkened and his knuckles seemed to swell to the size of baseballs, Ross heard his body bellow:

"Hi there, beautiful!"

Then it clamped its hands around Claire's small waist and hoisted her to arm's length overhead. He let her slip back into his arms, briefly hugged the breath out of her, and dropped her to the ground. As he did so he thought he caught a smothered murmur:

"Why, Ovid!"

At least, thought Ross, he was glad that Bundy hadn't made him kiss her or spank her behind. It was all very well for his controller to take an attitude of hearty familiarity, but that sort of thing could easily be carried too far. Popular mythology to the contrary notwithstanding, many girls really disliked caveman tactics.

Ross's body then affably introduced Claire La Motte to his new friends.



Claire said:

"I thought we'd take a walk around the grounds and then eat a picnic lunch on the edge of the pool. Then later we can take a swim."

"Oh," said Bundy-Ross. "Gil, grab the suits and towels."

Falck brought these objects out of the rear seat of the car and walked after the others.

"Over that way," said Claire, pointing over the trees, "is the Untereiner estate. The Wyckman estate used to be beyond it, but now they're putting up apartment houses on it."

There were the conventional murmurs about the never-ending growth of New York's commutershed, both in size and in population. Claire continued:

"And over that way is the MacFadden estate, only the Mutual Fidelity bought it as a club for their employees. And in that direction is the Heliac Health Club."

"What's that?" said Dorothea Dunkelberg. "A nudist camp."

"Oh. I thought they weren't allowed in this state?"

"They aren't, but it's become so popular the law's not enforced anymore. On the other hand, it can't be repealed because the legislators are afraid the religious groups would raise a fuss."

They started toward the pool when another outbreak of barking halted them. Claire wailed:

"Oh, goodness, they got out again! Dmitri has learned to work the latch with his paw!"

The borzois boiled around the corner of the mansion as if pursuing the biggest wolf in Siberia. One made a playful fifteen-foot spring with its forepaws against Gilbert Faick, sending the telegog controller rolling on the greensward. Towels and bathing suits flew about, to be snatched up by the dogs and borne off fluttering. Claire screamed:

"Yelena! Igor! Behave yourselves!"

No attention did they pay. A couple raced off having a running tug-of-war with Dorothea Dunkelberg's suit, while another amused itself by throwing one of the bath towels into the air and catching it again.

"Playful little fellows," said Falck, getting up and brushing the grass off his pants.

"Very," said Claire, and started to apologize until Faick stopped her.

"Not your fault, lassie. Don't give it a thought." Faick wiped a drop of sweat from his nose. "I'm going to miss those suits, rather. If you find them in the woods, not too badly tattered, you might send 'em back to us."

"Sticky, isn't it?" said Claire. "Anyway we still have the lunch."

"What's to keep these Hounds of the Baskervilles from raiding our food?" asked Ross's body.

"I don't know, until I can get them shut up again and tie the gate closed."

Dorothea said in her faint squeak: "Maybe we could sit in a row on the springboard. They'd be scared to come out over the water, wouldn't they?"

And so it was done. The smell of food attracted the dogs, who lined up on the edge of the pool and whined until Claire, with the men's help,



collared them two at a time and led them back to their kennels.

Gilbert Falck wiped his hands on his paper napkin and said: "Excuse me, people. I just remembered a phone call. May I use the Peshkov phone, Claire?"

He followed Claire into the Peshkovs' palatial living room, where a life-sized portrait of Stalin hung on the wall. As she was pointing out the telephone, Falck casually captured her hand and said:

"I say, Claire, that sofa looks rather comfortable. Why don't we sit down and get better acquainted?"

Claire slipped her hand out of his and said: "You make your call, Gil. I have my other guests to entertain."

Falck sighed and called the Telagog Company. He got Jerome Bundy on the line and said:

"Jerry, your control is laying an egg again. He does all right while you control him, but the minute you let go he just sits staring at the dame with an expression like a hungry wolf."

"Well?"

"I rather thought the next time you take over you'd better give him a more aggressive and uninhibited pattern. The poor jerk will never get anywhere under his own steam."

"I don't know," said Bundy dubiously. "I .thought I was giving him an aggressive pattern. I don't want to queer his pitch by-"

"Don't worry about that. His girl just confided to me she wishes he weren't such a stick. Give him the works."

"Okay," said Bundy.

Falck walked out with a knowing grin. When he came in sight of the other three he called:

"Did somebody say something about tennis?"

Ovid Ross immediately switched his control back to Bundy. He had no illusions about his game: a powerful serve and a bulletlike forehand drive, but no control to speak of.

They made it mixed doubles, Ross and Claire against the other two. To his amazement, Ross found his smashes going, not into the net or the wire as usual, but into the corners of the other court where nobody could touch them. Claire was pretty good, Dorothea rather poor, but Gilbert Falck excellent, with a catlike agility that more than made up for his lack of Ross's power. The first set got up to ~ then 6-s, then 6-6, then 7-6.

Dorothea Dunkelberg wailed: "I can't anymore Gil. I'll pass out in this heat."

"Okay," said Falck smoothly. "No law says we have to. Boy, I rather wish we had those bathing suits. Claire, the Commies wouldn't have some spares, would they?"

"I don't think so; they never keep old clothes. They say in Russia nothing was too good for them and they expect to have it that way here."

They trailed down the little hill from the tennis court and stood looking longingly at the clear, pale-green water in the pool. Ross was aware that Bundy



was wiping his forehead for him. Thoughtful of him . . . But then Ross was horrified to hear his controller say in that masterful way:

"Who wants bathing suits? Come on, boys and girls, take your clothes off and jump in!"

"What?" squealed Dorothea.

"You heard me. Off with 'em!"

"Well, I have a suit-" began Claire, but Bundy-Ross roared:

"No you don't! Not if the rest of us-"

The next few minutes were, for Ovid Ross's impotent psyche, a time of stark horror. How he got through them without dying of an excess of emotion he never knew. He frantically tried to regain control of his right arm to reach his switch, but Bundy would not let him. Instead Bundy took off Ross's sportshirt and shorts, wadded them into a ball, and threw them under the springboard, meanwhile exhorting the others to do likewise and threatening to throw them in clad if they refused. .

They were sitting in a row on the edge of the pool, breathing hard with drops streaming off them and splashing the water with their feet. Ross caught a glimpse of Falck looking at him with a curious expression, between displeasure and curiosity, as if something he had carefully planned had gone awry. The controller was showing a tendency to play up to Claire more than Ross liked so that poor Dorothea was rather ignored. Ross heard Bundy say with his vocal organs:

"We want to be careful not to get that white strip around our middles burned."

"How about finishing that set now?" said Falck.

They got up and walked up the slope to the court. Bundy-Ross, whose serve it was, was just getting his large knobby toes lined up on the backline for a smash when a fresh outburst of barking made all turn. Claire cried:

"Damn! I'll bet they've gotten loose again."

"Isn't that a car?" said Dorothea.

"Oh, gosh!" said Claire as the sun flashed on a windshield down the driveway. "It's the Peshkovs! They weren't supposed to be here till this evening! What'll we do?"

"Make a dash for our clothes," said Falck.

"Too late," said Claire, as the purr of the car, hidden behind the mansion, grew louder and then stopped. "Run for the woods!"

She ran into the woods, the others trailing. There were ouches and grunts as bushes scratched their shins and their unhardened soles trod on twigs.

Dorothea said:

"Isn't that poison ivy?"

Falck looked. "I rather think it's Virginia creeper, but we'd better not take chances."

"Oh, dear! I hope we don't find a hornets' nest."

Bundy-Ross said: "It would be more to the point to hope a nest of hornets doesn't find us."

They came to a wire fence. Ross heard Bundy say: "That's easy to climb over. Hook your toes over the wire, like this."



"Ouch," said Dorothea. "What's on the other side?"

"The Heliac Health Club," said Claire.

"Rather a bit of luck," said Falck, climbing. "The one place in Westchester County where we're dressed for calling."

Ross thought desperately of the switch that would return control of his body to him. The switch was in the right side pocket of his shorts, and his shorts, along with his other clothes and those of his companions, lay in a heap under the springboard at the edge of the pool.

"Have you ever been here, Claire?" asked Dorothea.

"No, but I have an idea of the layout. This way."

They straggled again through the woods. Presently they found a trail. Dorothea shrieked at the sight of a garter snake.

Claire led them along the trail, until they came out of the woods on to a grassy field. On this field stood, in irregular rows, forty-odd canvas-covered platforms about the size and height of beds. On over half these platforms, the guests of the Heliac Club sat or sprawled in the costume of their avocation, reading, talking, cardplaying, or dozing.

One scholarly-looking man, unadorned save for a pipe and pincenez, sat on the edge of his cot with a portable typewriter in his lap. Beyond, some people played volleyball and others tennis. On the right rose the rear of an old mansion; on the left, a row of dilapidated-looking one-room cabins could be seen.

As his eyes, under Bundy's control, took in the scene, Ovid Ross observed several things about the nudists. There were three or four times as many men as women. Most of the people were middle-aged. They were certainly not there to show off their beauty, for many of the men were paunchy and the women pendulous.

After the initial shock had passed off, Ross became conscious of the white equatorial bands of himself and his companions, compared to the uniform brownness of the sun worshippers. A few of the latter, however, though well-browned elsewhere, displayed an angry red on the areas that gleamed white on his own party: the parts normally covered by shorts and halters.

"Good afternoon," said a voice. Ross saw a severe-looking grayhaired woman, deeply and uniformly browned, confronting them. "Have you people registered and paid your grounds fee?"

"No, but . . ." said Falck, then stumbled for words despite his professional suavity.

"Have you references?" said the woman. "We like to know who our guests are."

Ross expected his controller to step into the breach, but even the self-possessed Bundy appeared unable to cope with this situation.

Claire La Motte took the woman aside and explained their predicament. Ross saw the woman's face melt into a smile, then a laugh. Bundy turned Ross's head away to survey the rest of the scene.

Near at hand, on one of the platforms, a well-built middle-aged man with sparse gray hair and the air of an affable Roman emperor smoked a cigar and read a newspaper. Ross was sure that he had seen the man before. The same thought must have occurred to his controller, for Ross's eyes stopped roving with



the man right in the center of the field. The man looked up as if conscious of scrutiny. His gaze froze as it rested on Ross as if he, too, thought that he recognized Ross.

Ross heard his voice say: "Why hello, Mr. Ba-"

"Please!" said Marcus Ballin, with so earnest a gesture that Bundy stopped in the middle of the name.

"Everybody goes by first names only here," continued Ballin. "I'm Marcus, you're-uh-what was that first name of yours?"

"Ovid."

"Okay, Ovid. Come a little closer, please." Ballin lowered his voice. "For me it would be particularly bad if this got out. I'd be considered a traitor to my trade. 'Why, even the garment-trade magazines, yours for instance, run editorials knocking nudism."

"I shouldn't think they'd take it so seriously as that."

"No? Well, you're not old enough to remember when there was a straw hat industry. Where is it now? Gone, because men don't wear hats in summer anymore. And women used to wear stockings in summer too. If everybody. . ."

Ballin spread his hands.

"What would happen if the word got around?" asked Bundy-Ross. "Would the cutters and operators and pressers line up in a hollow square while the head buyer at Sachs' cut off your buttons?"

"No, but I'd be ostracized at least. It would even affect my business contacts. And my particular branch of the industry, summer sportswear, feels the most keenly about it of any. So you'll keep it quiet, won't you?"

"Sure, sure," said Bundy-Ross, and turned to his companions. The gray-haired woman was going away. Claire explained:

"She's gone to get a playsuit to lend me so I can go back and pick up our clothes."

Bundy-Ross introduced his companions by given names to Ballin, who said: "You've got nice taste in girls, Ovid. Claire should be a model. Did you ever try that, Claire?"

"I thought of it, but I'm not long and skinny enough for a clothes model and not short and fat enough for an artists' model."

"Anyway, Claire's too well educated," put in Falck.

"To me you look just right," said Ballin. "Say, Ovid, why couldn't she be entered in my contest? The local talent" (he indicated the rest of the club by a motion of an eyebrow) "isn't too promising."

"V/hat contest?" said Claire.

Ballin started to explain, then changed his mind. "Ovid will tell you. I think you'd have an excellent chance, and there's a nice little cash prize. Three prizes, in fact."

"You certainly make me curious," said Claire.

Bundy-Ross said: "If she's a friend of mine, and I'm a judge, wouldn't it look kind of funny?"

"No, no. If Aldi and I thought you were favoring her, we'd outvote you. Anyway, it's my contest, so I can run it as I please. 'When you can, take her aside and tell her about it."



The gray-haired woman returned with a playsuit. Claire departed at a trot. A few minutes later, she was back with a bundle of clothes.

Ross, as soon as he got his shorts on, strained to get his right hand into his pocket. Bundy let him do so and he pressed the button twice.

Under his own power, Ross walked back along the trail. He lagged behind Falck and Dorothea so that he could begin an elaborate and groveling apology:

"Uh. Claire."

"Yes?"

"I'm-uh-awfully sorry. I don't-uh-know. . ."

"Sorry about what?"

"All this. This afternoon. I don't know what got into me."

"For heaven's sake don't apologize! I haven't had so much fun in years."

"You haven't?"

"No. I've had the time of my life. I didn't know you had it in you. By the way, what is this contest?"

A little confused, Ross told her about the contest to select the most beautiful bust. He expected her to spurn the suggestion with righteous wrath and outraged propriety. Instead, she said:

"Why, that was sweet of him! I'm very much flattered." She glanced down at her exhibits. "Tell him I'll be glad to enter if I can arrange to get off early enough Thursday."

Women, thought Ovid Ross, have no shame. As he climbed the fence, he revised the intention he had held to drop in at the offices of the Telagog Company, knock Mr. Jerome Bundy's block off, and demand that the company remove the receiver from his cranium forthwith. Bizarre though the actions of his controller might seem, they seemed to have added up to a favorable impression on Claire.

Moreover, this infernal contest still loomed ahead of him. While he could no doubt beg off from Ballin, such a cowardly act would lower him in Claire's eyes. He'd better plan for telagog control during this crisis at least.

Back on the Peshkovs' grounds, as he neared his automobile, he was intercepted by a stocky man with an expressionless moonface. The man wore an old-fashioned dark suit and even a necktie. Claire introduced the man as Commissar Peshkov-Bogdan Ipolitovich Peshkov.

Behind the man hovered another of similar appearance, wearing a derby hat. From what he had heard, Ross took this to be Fadei, the chauffeur-bodyguard. Peshkov extended a limp hand.

"Glad to mit you, Comrade," he said in a mournful voice. "I hup you had a nice time."

Ross shook the hand, collected his party, and drove off.

Early Thursday morning, Gilbert Falck entered the offices of the Telagog Company when nobody else was present. There was not even a single controller carrying a client through an early-morning crisis. Without hesitation, the young man got to work on the mechanism of his control booth and Jerome Bundy's next to it.

With a screwdriver he removed the panel that covered the wiring at the front of the booth. He traced the wiring until he found a place where the return



motor leads of his booth and Bundy's ran side by side. With wire cutters he cut both wires and installed a doublepole double-throw knife switch. When the switch was down the controls would operate as usual; when it was up, he would control Bundy's client while Bundy controlled his. However, as the sensory circuits were not affected, each would continue to see, hear, and feel the sensations of his own client.

Falck did not consider himself a heel. But he had fallen heavily in love with Claire La Motte and deemed all fair in love. His effort to have Ross disgrace himself by uninhibited behavior in Westchester had backfired, so that Ross had ended up more solid with Claire than ever.

Ross, while he had not exactly complained to the company about the paces that Bundy had put him through, had asked them to go easy. This request had caused Falck's and Bundy's supervisor to glower suspiciously and to warn the two controllers not to try stunts. Therefore, Falck did not dare to undertake any direct bollixing of his client's actions or to ask Bundy to. He must work by a more subtle method.

He had already tried to date Claire by telephone. She, however, was free only on weekends and had been dated up solidly for the next two by Ross. After this afternoon's contest, some of those dates might no longer be so solid.

Falck measured the panel. With a hand auger, he drilled two tiny holes in it. Then he looped a length of fishline around the crosspiece of the knife switch and pushed both ends back through the upper hole in the panel from the back. He did likewise with another length of line through the lower hole, screwed the panel back into place, and tautened the lines.

Now he had only to pull hard on the upper double length of fishline to pull the switch from the down to the up position. Then, if he released one end of the line and reeled in the other, he would remove the line entirely from the works and could stuff it into his pocket. Similar operations with the lower line would return the switch to its original position.

Later, when the excitement had died down, he would remove the panel again and take out the switch. There was a chance, of course, that the electricians would come upon the switch in checking for trouble, but Gilbert Falck was no man to boggle at risks.

About ten on Thursday morning, Ross's telephone in the Gazette offices rang.

"Ovid? This is Claire. You won't have to meet my train after all."

"Why not?"

"Because Peshkov's driving me down."

"That guy! Is he planning to attend the contest?"

"So he says. Would Mr. Ballin mind?"

"Hm. I don't think so, but I'll call him and straighten it out. I got -I've got influence with him. Is Peshkov coming alone?"

"Well, he wouldn't let his family be contaminated by this example of bourgeois frivolity, but he wants to bring Fadei."

"The goon? No sir! Tell him he'll be welcome (I think) but no bodyguards."

Ross called the Outstanding Knitwear Company and persuaded a dubious Marcus Baum to let Peshkov attend the showing.



The contest took place in Marcus Ballin's showroom, directly underneath his lofts. Despite the swank decor of the showroom, the noise and vibration of the knitting machines came faintly through the ceiling. The showroom had been fixed up something like a nightclub, with a stage a foot high on one side and little round tables spread around in a double horseshoe.

There were over three hundred spectators present, including representatives from The Clothing Retailer and other garment-trade magazines. These distributed themselves around the tables, to which a group of hardworking servitors brought trayloads of cocktails and small edible objects on toothpicks.

While Ivory Johnstone's band from Harlem entertained the audience, Ballin and Ross lined up the contestants behind scenes. Each of the lovely ladies wore a lightweight Outstanding sweater.

These sweaters were so sheer that to Ross they seemed practically nonexistent, following every contour of their wearers' bodies with implacable fidelity. Under normal conditions, this spectacle would have reduced Ross to a state of stuttering embarrassment. But as Gilbert Falck was now operating his body, he could give no outward sign of his feelings.

With a worried frown, Ballin said: "Say, Ovid, where's that little redhead of yours?"

"I'll look." Ross put his head around the end of the backdrop to look over the audience.

Claire La Motte and Bogdan Peshkov were just coming in, the latter the only man in the room wearing a coat. Peshkov said something that Ross could not catch over the distance and hubbub, patted Claire's arm, waved her toward the stage, seated himself at one of the tables, and haughtily beckoned a waiter. Claire started uncertainly toward the stage, then sighted Ross and walked quickly to where he stood.

Ballin said: "All right, Miss La Motte, here's your sweater. This is the third judge, Joe Aldi." He indicated a swarthy, muscular young man with a dense glossy-black beard who stood by with his hands on his hips. "Just step behind that curtain to put it on. Nothing under it, you know."

With these sweaters, thought Ross, it made little difference where she put it on. In looking over the talent, Falck-Ross had already eliminated many of the girls. He had also picked several whom he expected to place high. Among these were (according to the badges pinned to their waist) Miss Loretta Day (née Wieniawski), the noted burlesque queen; and Miss Shirley Archer, a model from the Towers agency. Claire, the unknown amateur, would find stiff competition.

"Line up, girls," said Baum. "Look at the girls next to you to make sure you're in alphabetical order. The A's are at this end."

A female voice down the line said: "Does M come before or after N?"

Ballin continued: "You introduce them first time around, Ovid. Here's the list. As you call each one I'll send her out. Make it snappy, so one's coming out while the previous one's going."

Ballin strolled out upon the stage, waited for applause to die down, and gave a little speech: "So glad to see you all here this fine summer day . . ." (It was drizzling outside.) ". . . our new line of fall sportswear . . . the preminent position



of the Outstanding Knitwear Company - . . . an assortment of fine, healthy upstanding American beauties . . . will be introduced by one of the judges, Mr. Ovid Ross of The Garment Gazette."

Ross came out in his turn. During the first few steps, his spirit quailed within him. After that he found that he did not mind. In fact, if Falck had not been controlling him, he thought that he would be able to manage the act as well as Falck.

As the girls came out he called their names: "Miss Wilma Abbott - . . . Miss Miriam Amter. . . Miss Shirley Archer. . ."

The spectators applauded each one-all but the ex-commissar. Bogdan Peshkov sat alone, his potbelly bulging out over his thighs, drinking down cocktails with great gulps, staring somberly at the scene and occasionally glancing nervously over his shoulder.

Ballin stood just out of sight of the spectators with a duplicate list in his hand, checking the girls' names as they filed past him so that there should be no mix-ups.

Then all forty-six girls came out and lined up on the stage in a double rank. Ballin and Aldi came out, too. The three judges paraded back and forth. The plan was that any judge who thought that any girl had a good chance should tap her on the shoulder, the idea being to reduce the contestants to a mere dozen or so. Falck-Ross tapped Claire La Motte, Miss Archer, Miss Day, and a couple of other lovelies.

The contestants filed off again. As soon as they were off the stage, a couple of those who had not been chosen dissolved into tears, causing their eye makeup to run. Claire La Motte paused near Ross to murmur:

"Ovid, I don't like the look on Peshkov's face. He's drinking himself stiff, and he looks the way he did the night he shot all the panes out of the picture window."

"Oh," said Falck-Ross.

"Can't you hurry this thing through before he gets worse?"

"It'll take half or three-quarters of an hour yet, but I'll do my best."

Ross went back on the stage. The thirteen girls remaining in the contest paraded as before while Falck-Ross introduced them: "Miss Shirley Archer. . . Miss Loretta Day. . . Miss Mary Ferguson . . ."

It did, as he had foreseen, take a lot of time, during which Peshkov's pudding-face stared at him with unnerving blankness between cocktails.

After consultation, the judges eliminated all but three contestants: Shirley Archer, Loretta Day, and Claire La Motte. These paraded one by one as before, then lined up on the stage. Falck-Ross began a whispered consultation with Baum and Aldi. Left to himself, Ross would have had trouble choosing among the three girls. He thought that, aside from personal sentiments, Miss Day had perhaps a slight edge.

Marcus Ballin, whose taste ran to cones, preferred Miss Archer. Joseph Aldi, whose bent lay in the direction of hemispheres, argued as stoutly for Miss Day. Falck-Ross spoke up for Miss La Motte on the ground that, presenting an intermediate or spherocoidal form, she embodied the golden mean.

Ballin and Aldi would not be budged. At last Ballin whispered:



"Put down your second and third choices. We can't stand here arguing all afternoon."

When the choices for the lesser places were written down, it was found that both Ross and Ballin had named Miss Day for second.

"Okay," said Ballin. "Ovid and I will go along with you, won't you, Ovid? Day it is. Now we'll pick second and third prizes. I'd give La Motte second. . ."

As Claire was chosen second, Miss Archer took third. Baum stepped to the edge of the stage with his arms up and cried:

"Ladies and gentlemen: By unanimous opinion of the judges, first prize in this great and unique Outstanding Knitwear Company bustbeauty contest is awarded to Miss Loretta Day--"

"Stop!" said a voice.

"What was that?" said Ballin.

"I said stop!" It was Peshkov, erect and weaving. "De best-looking girl is obvious Miss Claire La Motte. To give de first prize to anodder one is obvious capitalistic injustice. I order you to change your decision. Oddervise, to de penal camps of Siberia!"

"What-what-" sputtered Ballin. Then he pulled himself together and assumed an air as regal as that of the ex-commissar. He gestured to a couple of waiters.

"Remove this man!"

At that moment, in a control booth of the Telagog Company, Gilbert Falck reached down, felt around until he had located his upper fishline, and pulled. When he had drawn the line as far as it would go, he let go one end and pulled on the other until he had the whole thing in his hands. He stuffed the string into his pants pocket. Now he was controlling Bundy's ballet dancer, while Bundy, unknowing in the next booth, was controlling his trade-journal staff writer.

In a dance studio, where the ballet dancer was performing hopefully under the eyes of a troupe manager in the expectation of being hired, he suddenly fell to the floor. Questions and shaking failed to rouse him. He lay where he had fallen, staring blankly and making odd walking motions with his legs and arms as if he were still erect.

At the same instant, while the waiters designated by Ballin as bouncers were staring apprehensively at their quarry, Ovid Ross took off in a tremendous leap from the stage and began bounding around the showroom, leaping high into the air to kick his heels together and flinging his arms about. Ross, imprisoned in his skull, was as astonished as anyone. He thought Falck must have gone mad.

Ross's astonishment changed to terror as he saw that he was bearing down on Bogdan Peshkov. The ex-commissar took a pistol from under his coat and waved it, shouting in Russian.

Bang! Glass tinkled. Ross took off in another leap that brought him down right on top of Peshkov. His body slammed into that of the ex-commissar. The two crashed into Peshkov's table. They rolled to the floor in a tangle of limbs and broken glass and table legs.

Ross found that his body was still kicking and flapping its arms. A kick accidentally sank into Peshkov's paunch and reduced the Muscovite to a half-comatose condition.



Then the seizure left Ross's body. He rose to his feet, fully under his own control. Everybody was talking at once. Several men gripped Peshkov while another gingerly held his pistol. Spectators crawled out from under tables.

Ross looked around, took a deep breath, and walked to the stage. Ballin was flapping his hands while Miss Archer had hysterics.

Ross faced the disorganized audience and bellowed: "Attention, everybody! All but those holding Mr. Peshkov take your seats. We will now go on with the contest. Waiters, mop up the spilled liquor. See that everybody has what he wants. Mr. Ballin was announcing the final results when he was interrupted. He will continue from there on."

So successful was Ross in restoring order that hardly a ripple of excitement was caused by the arrival of policemen to take Peshkov away.

After it was over, Ballin said: "You sure handled that, Ovid. How did you have nerve to jump on a man with a gun? That was reckless."

Ross made a deprecating movement. "Shucks, just an impulse, I guess. Too bad your show got kind of beat up, though."

"That's all right. We got the publicity."

"The only thing that worries me," said Ross, "is that Mr. Hoolihan's apt to think I got entirely too much publicity and fire me. Maybe you as a big advertiser could bring a little-uh-moral pressure?"

Ballin drew on his cigar and looked sharply at Ross. He said:

"Ovid, I've been thinking. The way things stand, you'll be tempted to try a little gentle blackmail on me because of the Heliac Club."

As Ross started to protest, Ballin held up a hand. "The only way to make sure you don't, as I see it, is to make your interests identical with my own."

"Yes?"

"I've got a little venture capital lying loose, and I've been thinking of starting a new trade journal, something like The Garment Gazette but specializing in sportswear."

"You mean a house organ?"

"God forbid! Nothing's duller than house organs. This would be a regular general-circulation journal, run independently of the Outstanding Knitwear Company. The managing editor would have a free hand to call his shots as he saw them. How would you like the job?"

When Ross got his breath back he could only say: "Gosh, Mr. Ballin!"

"However, your first assignment will have nothing to do with the magazine at all."

"Huh? What then?"

"It will be to accompany me to the Heliac Health Club for a weekend of healthful relaxation. After that, we'll be in the same boat!"

The following morning, Ovid Ross turned in His story and pictures on the bust-beauty contest and gave notice. Timothy Hoolihan grumped about Ross's pay having been wasted, since he had not been on long enough to become useful.

"But Mr. Hoolihan!" said Ross. "Look at the opportunity! If I asked Mr. Baum to wait a month, he'd find somebody else. And didn't the Taylor article say to try to please your employer in all things? And isn't he my future employer?"

"Huh," snorted Hoolihan. "Suppose so. Damn it, I don't know what's the



matter with this firm! We have the highest turnover of any trade journal I know of. No sooner get 'em broken in than off they go!"

Ross could have told Hoolihan that his violent power complex might have something to do with it. But he forebore. It would only lead to an argument, and he might want a reference from Hoolihan some day.

Then Ross walked across town to the Telagog Company and told the receptionist: "Uh-send in that salesman, that Mr. Nye."

The salesman came in full of apologies: ". . . and while of course you waived damages in your contract, we are so anxious to please you that we're offering a one-year free extension of your three-months' trial telagog subscription. Moreover, Mr. Falck is no longer in our employ."

"What happened?"

"Our Mr. Bundy, whose wires were crossed with Mr. Falck's, suspected something and came in early this morning to find Falck taking out that switch he installed behind his panel. Falck, knowing how complicated hypospatial circuits are, had figured the electricians would get down to tracing the crossover this afternoon. Now about that extension-"

"Never mind. Just take this gadget out of my head, will you?"

"You mean you don't want any more telagog control?"

"That's right. I found I can do well enough by myself."

"But you don't know. Your erythrophobia may take you unawares-"

"I'll worry about that when the time comes. Right now I feel that, with all I've been through in the past week, I can never be embarrassed again."

Nye looked dubious. "That's not psychologically sound."

"I don't care. That's the way it is."

"We're pretty busy today. Couldn't you come in again next week?"

"No. I'm getting married tomorrow and leaving on a two weeks' trip, and starting a new job when I get back."

"Congratulations! Is it that Miss La Motte that Bundy and Falck were talking about?"

"Yes."

"They said she was a pip. How did you manage it with your shyness?"

"When I walked her to the train, I just asked her, and she said yes. Simple as that."

"Fine. But after all, you know, a man's wedding day and the night following it constitute a crisis of the first magnitude. With one of our experts at your personal helm you need not fear-"

"No!" shouted Ovid Ross, smiting the chair arm with his fist. "By gosh, there's some things I'm gonna do for myself! Now get that neurosurgeon out of his office and get to work!"