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The Golden Girl of Munan

The Golden Girl of Munan

by Harl Vincent

Harl Vincent was the pen name of Harold Vincent Schoepflin (1893 - 1968), a mechanical engineer from Buffalo, New York who wrote science fiction as a hobby. His very first published work was "The Golden Girl of Munan", which appeared in the June 1928 issue of Amazing Stories magazine, the first (and at the time, only) science fiction magazine in the world.

For some would-be writers, finally getting into print scratches the writing itch, and they are never heard from again. For Vincent, though, getting published seemed to open the floodgates. He went on to publish over seventy science fiction stories over the course of the next fourteen years, making him one of the most prolific writers of the time. He stopped writing around the time America entered World War II, and didn't resume until a couple of years before his death in 1968. Because of this, almost none of his work has appeared outside of the pulp science fiction magazines where it was originally published.

"The Golden Girl of Munan" is a rare exception. The story was reprinted for the first and only time in a 2001 anthology called Rainbow Fantasia, edited by none other than Forrest J. Ackerman. Thus, its appearance here on the Johnny Pez blog will mark the second time this story has been reprinted. As an extra added bonus, "The Golden Girl of Munan" will be followed by Vincent's sequel (and third published story), "The War of the Planets", from the January 1929 issue of Amazing. As always, the story will be appearing in a blog-friendly multi-part format. And now, without further ado, the Johnny Pez blog presents:

The Golden Girl of Munan

part 1

I.

Had you been present in a certain studio apartment in New York City at ten o'clock in the evening of January 16th, in the year 2406, you would have witnessed a surprising series of events. As it happened, Roy Hamilton was alone in his studio when the thing occurred which altered his entire life and led up to the historic destruction of Munan.

An unusually handsome man in artist's smock, his hair a tousled dark mass, his jaw set, and his black eyes snapping with determination, Roy alternately sat at his writing desk for a few minutes at a time, then paced the floor in impatient annoyance. This procedure was repeated again and again, his impatience rapidly increasing.

On his desk there reposed an instrument comprising a disc of silvery gray metal, framed in darker gray, and mounted vertically upon a base of similar material. This instrument was Roy's private videophone, and it was the calls from it of a voice repeating, "NY-19-635," that occasioned his numerous returns to it. As he returned and answered his number, a face would appear in the disc and inform him in a monotonous voice that no success could as yet be reported on his call. Each time this was a signal for his renewal of the nervous pacing and muttering, accompanied by further rumpling of his hair.

It was preposterous! Here he had been trying for two hours to get a connection with one of his patrons in Paris. Constant reports there had been that something was wrong with the continental video. Pity that the Terrestrial Videophone Company couldn't keep their confounded voice and vision ether waves working, he thought angrily. Or whatever kind of waves they were! Roy was no scientist.

His number was repeated again. This time, not in the accustomed voice of the operator; but in a low, sweet and compelling feminine one. A voice of gold, thought Roy, as he dashed to the instrument. Surprised, he did not view the usual clear-cut image in the disc; but, as through a dense veil, an extremely indistinct vision met his gaze. The features of the girl could not be discerned. Possibly she was beautiful; possibly not. At any rate, the voice, though far away, was clear, and it certainly was beautiful. The most beautiful voice he had ever heard, it seemed.

"Mr. Hamilton, I must speak rapidly. We have probably upset the entire video system in thus attempting to get you. No doubt the connection will not remain for long," she spoke.

"You know me?" Roy replied, astonished. "I am sure that I have never had the pleasure of hearing your voice before."

"Please, please listen," begged the voice. "There is no time for explanations. What I have to say is of world importance and it may never again be possible to establish this contact."

"All right, lady. Go ahead," said Roy, though he had not the slightest idea as to what was coming.

"Remember your history, the consolidation of the Powers in 1950?" asked the golden voice. "Remember the two thousand undesirables, sent away on the steamship Gigantean? The Gigantean which never returned, and from which no word ever came back to the world?"

"The Terrestrial Government and the world at large thought they were well rid of a bad lot. But the Gigantean was not lost. Neither were the two thousand reactionaries; men and women from all walks of life. The ship eventually reached one of the uncharted islands of the Pacific, where the passengers landed and took up their abodes.

"With materials from the ship, they established their homes. With the machinery from the vessel, one of the scientists of their number did wonderful things. Soon he discovered means of producing a wall of neutralizing vibrations completely surrounding the island. This wall prevented and still prevents the approach of any visitors from the outside world, since under its influence all electrical and mechanical vibrations are entirely stopped. Thus no aeros have ever been able to reach the island, which they called Munan, and the secret has been preserved for four centuries and a half.

"Four hundred and fifty years they have multiplied and now number over a million persons. Many deadly secrets are in the hands of those, whom I must call my people, much as I hate to do so. The lust for revenge has been handed down from generation to generation and now they are prepared. The date has been set when a hundred thousand men will set forth to devastate and conquer the entire outside world, where peace and happiness have reigned these hundreds of years. With them will be carried the deadliest of weapons ever conceived by man, and these are of such nature that it is utterly impossible for your unprepared billions to combat them.

"I cannot dwell on the miseries of Munan. But a pitifully small group of us, mostly women, are against this move and we must prevent it. We have selected you, partly because of your own vitality and athletic prowess, partly because of your close friendship with Professor Nilsson. He, your greatest scientist, we believe will be able to avert this catastrophe, if anyone can.

"But you must both come to Munan. We are sure you will do this, as we have learned of the characters of both through the one spy we have been able to get through to the outside. Think of the utter destruction of probably three-quarters of your inhabitants, which you may be able to prevent.

"We have set a date for your arrival and at the appropriate time we will contrive an accident which will temporarily remove the neutralizing wall and permit you to land on Munan. Convince Professor Nilsson of the extreme necessity of this and come in a fast aero. Win, and your reward will be the everlasting gratitude of the world. Fail, and your fate will be no worse than if you had refused."

Here followed minute directions as to the exact location of Munan. Busy with pencil and paper, Roy barely had time to set down the latitude and longitude; also other necessary information, including the time and date when they would be expected. No sooner had he finished than the dim features and the golden voice faded from his video completely. He was left cold and trembling.

The soft pleading voice lingered in his mind to the exclusion of all else. He tried to picture the girl. Her vision had been terribly blurred, sometimes fading almost entirely from view. The voice, though! That told him she must be young, lovely, tender. Ever a sentimentalist, he envisioned more his meeting with this girl than he did the seriousness of the mission. Instantly, he decided that he would go.

"NY-19-635," spoke the humdrum voice of his videophone operator, "something has been wrong with the video for two hours and a half. The past half-hour it has been absolutely dead all through the terrestrial system; something never before experienced. However, all is well now and you may have your Paris connection."

"Oh, hang the Paris connection!" was Roy's reply. "Give me NY-20-325 right away."

"Hello, Roy," almost instantly responded the deep masculine voice of his friend, as the face of Professor Nilsson appeared in the disc, "what in the world are you calling about at this hour, and what are you so pale and mussed up over? Have you seen a ghost?"

"Maybe I have, Prof, but if I did, it was a ghost with a wonderful voice and such a story to tell as has never been heard before. This is serious. Can you come right over?"

"Well, seeing that it is you, my boy, and seeing that you look so ill, I will do it. But you know that I cannot remain for long."

"You may stay longer than you think, when you hear what I have to tell you."

"Maybe so; maybe not. At any rate, expect me in ten minutes. I am worried about you."

The voice and face of his dearest friend and advisor vanished, and Roy proceeded to remove his paint-bedaubed smock and brush his hair, so as to present a somewhat better appearance when the professor arrived. Observing his reflection in the glass over his dresser, he saw that he did indeed look shaky.

part 2

II.

By the time the professor arrived, Roy was in a much calmer mood, and was seriously going over the information he had jotted down. His friend rushed in, and when he looked at Roy he laughed aloud in relief.

"Well, you certainly look better. What happened to you, anyway?" was his greeting.

"Prof, when I tell you this story, you are going to be as hard hit as I was. Here; what do you make of this?" he said, handing over the paper on which his notations had been made.

"Why, Roy, this is the definite location of some place or other in terms of latitude and longitude. Also, I see the date February first, and the notation 'two A.M. Washington time.' Something about green beacons, too. Where did you get this and what does it mean?"

"That's my own handwriting, and I'll tell you in a minute how I came to write it. In the meantime, sit down and make yourself comfortable for a long talk."

"Roy, have you an atlas around this old workshop of yours?" asked the professor. He seemed suddenly to take more interest in the paper. "I believe this location is out in the uncharted wastes of the ocean somewhere."

"If it is, it will be pretty good proof of what I have to tell you," was the retort.

Roy produced the atlas and the professor at once turned to a double-page map of the western hemisphere.

"Just as I thought," he muttered. "Look here, Roy, are you spoofing me or what? There is not even an island within a thousand miles of this spot, and it is at least that far off any of the transoceanic aerolines."

"Then it shows that I wasn't dreaming. Sit tight and listen to this yarn," said Roy, as they pulled their chairs close to the table.

With the golden voice softly whispering in his consciousness, Roy told his story. The professor listened intently; never interrupting, but occasionally starting in surprise, occasionally nodding as if in confirmation. Almost word for word, Roy repeated the plea of the girl as it had come to him, and when he had finished, the professor sat silent for several minutes, evidently deep in thought.

"Funny," he finally said, "I have always thought there was something mysterious about the disappearance of the Gigantea. You know she was the last one of the old floating ocean liners. When the Powers got together away back there in the middle of the twentieth century, and formed the Terrestrial Government, with headquarters in Washington, there still remained a group of widely scattered radicals, who were against the consolidation. They did not believe that war was actually made impossible forever by the many irresistible weapons which science had developed. They fought disarmament and the consolidation bitterly, and stirred up much discord. Finally, in desperation, the Terrestrial Government rounded up the ring-leaders in various parts of the world, put them on the Gigantea and told them to go wherever they pleased, but to never appear near any inhabited coast on pain of destruction, by means of beam energy, of the ship and themselves. With the abolishment of all surface travel on land and sea, and the establishment of the beam

lanes united all countries with innumerable aero connections, this seemed easy. The only logical course for the exiles was exactly that which was explained by your mysterious voice. I am inclined to believe the whole story."

"I am, too," said Roy, "and I also think that we ought to see this thing through."

"Good for you, my boy. And I am with you to the end." They gripped hands.

Reaching for the paper on which Roy had scribbled the instructions, the professor again scanned it closely. "What is this about two green beacons?" he asked.

"They voice said that we were to land between two such lights when we reach Munan," answered Roy, "and that we could not possibly make a mistake about it, since all of the regular landing stages in Munan are lighted by white beacons at night. She said they would have the green ones especially prepared for our arrival, and in a safe place."

"Strange that no one has discovered this hiding place in all these hundreds of years," mused the professor. "But I suppose the fact that it is so far off the regular lanes of aero travel explains it. That, together with the fact that anyone who might by accident have reached it, never could have returned to tell the tale. Think, though, of how much spying on us they have been able to accomplish in all those ages. Quite naturally their civilization will be as far advanced as our own. They may have made even greater scientific advances than we, if that island has good natural resources. According to history, a number of eminent scientists were originally among them and the descendants of these would undoubtedly have obtained still further knowledge."

"Well, how about getting some sleep?" said Roy, with a yawn. "I am all worn out and tomorrow is another day. Shall we start making our preparations at once?"

"We certainly shall, as we have only a little over two weeks in which to get ready. Your suggestion about the sleep is a good one, though, and I am going home. Good thing we are both bachelors and able to decide for ourselves. Well, good night, my boy. See you in the morning."

The professor was gone and Roy betook him to bed.

part 3

"The Golden Girl of Munan" by Harl Vincent, part 3 This is the third installment of "The Golden Girl of Munan", the first published story by pioneering science fiction writer Harl Vincent; the first two installments can be found [here](#) and [here](#). The story first appeared in the June 1928 issue of *Amazing Stories* magazine, and was republished in 2001 in the anthology *Rainbow Fantasia*, edited by Forrest J. Ackerman and Anne Hardin.

As we join our story, Roy Hamilton, an artist in New York City in the year 2406, receives a videophone call from a mysterious woman who warns him that a society of outcasts on an uncharted Pacific island called Munan are planning to wipe out the rest of the world. She tells Hamilton that he and his friend Professor Nilsson must travel to Munan to foil their plans. When they meet, Nilsson agrees to help Hamilton...

III.

During the succeeding two weeks Roy and the professor were very busy indeed. Many things there were to be accomplished, and they dared take no one into their confidence. One of the most important items was to provide some means of warning the world in case their mission should be unsuccessful. This was done by writing a complete record of the affair and the part they intended to take in it, sealing the records and depositing them with a bank president who was intimately known to the professor. They left instructions that the packet was to be opened only in case it was not called for in person on the fifteenth day of February at noon. They had two weeks from the time of their start in which to save mankind! And mankind had only five days from that period in which to save itself, if they failed! The date set by the Munanese was the twentieth.

This detail satisfactorily arranged, they applied themselves to the task of making ready for the journey to Munan. On the third day after the mysterious disarrangement of the videophone system, which was still the main topic of conversation and conjecture by the experts, the professor took Roy with him to his laboratory.

"Roy," he said, "I have a big surprise for you. One I did not intend to make public at once. Possibly I shall never be able to publish it now. But it is going to serve us admirably in our present dilemma."

"We sure do need any help that can be obtained from your discoveries. I hope that you have something that will save the day," Roy said, as they entered the laboratory building.

"At least," said the professor, "we have here the vehicle which is going to carry us to Munan swiftly and safely. Whether it will bring us back, remains to be seen."

Leading the way to a large room on the second floor, he commenced removing the canvas cover from what resembled the hull of a small submarine boat of the early twentieth century. As the cover was completely withdrawn, there was revealed a cigar-shaped metal body about sixty feet long and fifteen feet in its largest diameter. This did in some way resemble the archaic under-water craft.

"This is a big surprise, my boy," the professor stated, "and we are going to have time to test it thoroughly before starting on the big adventure. This is an aero, the like of which has never before been constructed.

"Unlike the standard aeros mine does not depend upon beam energy for its motive power. Had we to rely upon the regular thing, we should be in a bad way for the job at hand. No existing beam could

be used, since none are set for the proper direction. Thus we should have been compelled either to construct our own beam transmitter, for which there would not be time, or to take the Thomas Energy Company into our confidence and arrange for them to provide our power.

"My aero utilizes stray electronic energy as the old time sailing vessels used the winds of the ocean. But here we obtain both lifting force and propelling power from the losses of the regular energy beams. Of course you know that there are some losses in our standard beam transmission systems. These are very slight, but are constantly building up a supply of stray impulses, completely filling the earth's atmosphere envelope and extending far out into space. This storage of energy will continue as long as it remains unused, and until my discovery there was no means of tapping this huge reservoir. In the meanwhile all space is gradually filling up with these stray electrons, which are merely chasing each other about at terrific speed but produce no useful energy.

"The most important part of my discovery is a peculiar metal alloy which has the property of absorbing this potential energy and converting it into useful forms. If the use of this form of energy ever becomes universal, the present stored supply will eventually become exhausted. When this occurs, the use of the stray impulses will have to be reduced to a total amount not exceeding the usable losses of the regular energy systems. We have no free energy here and never will have. We are merely increasing the efficiency of the present energy systems."

They entered the aero, which was provided with a tiny galley, a small but perfectly equipped dining salon, a cabin having sleeping accommodations for twelve persons, and the control room which also contained the propelling machinery. Storage compartments, refrigerating and heating equipment and ballast filled the spaces

between the rectilinear walls and floors and the curvilinear outer shell. Roy exclaimed at the luxury of the appointments as he followed the professor through the cabin and into the control room.

All of the propulsion machinery and the controls were housed in a cubicle in the bow which was not over twelve feet square. In the center of this, mounted on a heavy pedestal, was a sphere about two feet in diameter. For all the world this reminded Roy of one of the globes used during his school days in the study of the geography of the earth and other planets. The sphere was constructed of metal having a purplish tinge and its surface was covered with fine corrugations. Two small driving motors were in evidence, and the sphere was so mounted as to permit its axis to be swung into any angle with relation to the longitudinal axis of the cigar-shaped vessel. Mounted upon a pair of encircling rings and so arranged that its position with relations to the sphere could be varied at will, was a truncated cone about a foot long and six inches in diameter at the large end. This object was constructed of the same purplish metal and its axis was directed toward the contour of the sphere tangentially.

In the front of the room was the control platform. Two or three control levers, a periscope arrangement for obtaining unobstructed vision in all directions, and a glass case containing the navigating instruments completed the equipment of this pilot house.

"Is this all there is to it, Prof?" asked Roy.

"Absolutely all," replied the professor. "Simple, is it not? Let me explain it to you briefly so that you will understand something of the operation of the aero which is to carry us on our mission.

"You have observed the sphere and the conical object trained upon it. Both are of adamite, the alloy which I mentioned. When in

operation, the sphere is protonically charged, and the truncated cone of adamite collects the electrons, taking them from their regular orbits and redirecting them in a continuous stream against whichever portion of the sphere it is pointed at. If you remember your ancient history, you will recall that in the early twentieth century a vessel for travel on the ocean surface was invented by one Flettner. This vessel obtained its driving force from the winds by means of two large vertical rotors on the deck. In much the same way as these forces, we utilize the stray electronic energy to drive our aero.

"Our sphere may be rotated on its axis in any plane. The electron collector may be directed upon its surface at any angle. By proper adjustments of the angles and the speed of rotation of the sphere, we obtain both lifting power and propulsive force. The direction and speed of our vessel is determined by the force transmitted to its hull through the pedestal. This force is the resultant of the angles and velocities, and its direction and magnitude may be varied at will. We are not limited in this resultant force as was Flettner. He was dealing with winds of low velocity, whereas we are utilizing an electron stream with a velocity of 186,000 miles a second.

The speed attainable by our aero is limited only by the density of the atmosphere and the temperature we can bear in our cabins. I have found that about six hundred miles per hour is as fast as I want to travel at ordinary altitudes, since at much greater speed the room temperature becomes somewhat uncomfortable, even with the refrigeration system in operation. This is due to the friction of the atmosphere on the hull. Of course at greater altitudes, the air density decreases and the speed may be proportionally increased. Were we to proceed outside the atmosphere, we should be able to approach the velocity of light, if we so desired."

This partial, but lucid, description was fairly well understood by Roy, and he was utterly astounded by what he had seen and heard. It

seemed so absurdly simple that he wondered why it had not been thought of centuries ago. And what a storehouse of this energy must now be in reserve, he thought, after the centuries during which these stray impulses had been accumulating.

With the inspection of the Pioneer, as the professor had named his machine, completed, they went ahead with plans for the trip. It was agreed that Roy should gather and store in the Pioneer all clothing, foodstuffs and the like which would be required, while the professor was to spend his time in stocking the aero with the scientific needs of the expedition.

The succeeding nine days were spent in making these preparations, and in making two trial trips in the Pioneer, the aero performing beautifully on both occasions. An important feature of the trial trips was Roy's instruction in the operation of the aero. He learned easily, and was pronounced a finished pilot at the end of the second journey.

All was in readiness on the twenty-eighth of January and the two men contemplated the results of their labor with satisfaction. Roy had provided several changes of raiment for both; tropical and arctic regalia being included, in case of their being take far from their course and making a forced landing in some rigorous climate. Condensed, but appetizing food and drink had been provided in sufficient quantity for a two months trip in case so long a time was found necessary for some unforeseen reason. All such supplies had been carefully stowed away in the rear compartments of the Pioneer.

The professor had installed oxygen apparatus on board the Pioneer in case of the necessity of entering high altitudes. He had packed away, in various compartments, numbers of scientific instruments. The purposes of these were unknown to Roy, but the professor assured him that many might be found necessary. Stores of

chemicals and of laboratory equipment for chemical experiments were included. The professor also had taken a number of odd weapons from his extensive collection. Some of these he said were very effective, regardless of the ancient source. In addition to these, he told Roy, there were weapons of his own devising, which might prove a great surprise to the Munanese, should it become necessary to use them.

With this work completed, the professor set about plotting their course. He proved to be no mean navigator. To be on the safe side, he figured on an average speed of four hundred miles an hour. Their course as laid out, passed directly over New Orleans and measured almost exactly seven thousand miles from New York. It therefore behooved them to leave seventeen and a half hours in advance of the time set by the girl for their arrival. This meant that the start would be made at eight thirty in the morning of January thirty-first, and arrangements were made accordingly.

In the short time intervening, the two were occupied in straightening out their personal affairs so that all would be in order in case of their failure to return. This was a comparatively simple matter for each, since neither had any immediate relatives to be concerned over.

Finally the morning of the fateful day arrived, bright and clear but very cold. At a half hour before the appointed time, both men were in the laboratory.

The sliding roof had been opened over the Pioneer and all was in readiness. With the interior of the aero comfortably heated, both men sat in the control room watching the minute hand of the chronometer as it approached the time of eight thirty. Minutes seemed hours and neither spoke.

At last the time was at hand, and the professor was at the controls.

Precisely on the minute, he turned the switch which started the sphere revolving, and adjusted its angle with reference to the cone, which was pointed directly upward beneath the sphere. Without a sound, the Pioneer arose vertically, gathering speed as the revolutions of the sphere became faster and faster. They were off!

part 4

This is the fourth installment of "The Golden Girl of Munan", the first published story by pioneering science fiction writer Harl Vincent; the first three installments can be found [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). The story first appeared in the June 1928 issue of *Amazing Stories* magazine, and was republished in 2001 in the anthology *Rainbow Fantasia*, edited by Forrest J. Ackerman and Anne Hardin.

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IV.

When the needle of the altimeter registered four thousand feet, the professor changed the angles of the sphere and cone, headed in a southwesterly direction, and settled down to a steady speed of four hundred miles an hour.

At eleven eighteen by the chronometer they passed over New Orleans, and by eleven forty were headed out across the Gulf of Mexico. At one thirty in the afternoon they were leaving the southwest coast of Mexico and passing over the broad expanse of the Pacific. The professor now turned the controls over to Roy, instructing him to keep the helm so adjusted that the needle of the inductor compass continued to point to the vertical mark. The altimeter was to be kept at four thousand feet while the professor went astern for his lunch.

Roy took the controls with enthusiasm. He could not understand the professor's matter-of-factness, though he could understand his hunger, as neither had stopped for breakfast. Roy was beginning to feel the pangs of hunger himself. They were more than five hours out now; practically a third of their journey had been completed. As time passed, the impression left in Roy's mind by the golden voice which had brought about this trip, became stronger and stronger. The rich, mellow tones of this voice seemed to ring in his ears, drawing him on. Something within his consciousness told him that he was going to his destiny. Reckless of the future, this thought grew on him until he began planning all sorts of things. But these were happy thoughts; somehow he had no thought of the dangers to be encountered, nor of the fact that his own life and those of countless billions of his fellow-men depended on the success of this expedition.

His meditations were cut short by the return of his friend, who announced that he was feeling much better after a hearty lunch. Relinquishing the controls, Roy suddenly realized that he was even hungrier than he had thought, and betook himself to the miniature saloon for his own lunch. He found that the professor had kindly prepared an appetizing meal for him. An atomic percolator on the table was busily preparing steaming hot coffee for him, and he shouted his thanks through to the professor before he sat down to eat. The meal was piping hot and delicious. He returned to the controls much refreshed.

By now it was four p.m. by the chronometer; their journey was nearly half over. As Roy peered at the periscope reflector, noting that nothing but the tumbling surface of the Pacific was visible in all directions far below them, the professor startled him with a remark:

"Well, we will not be running into darkness for hours yet, but if my weather sense is correct, we are going to encounter a storm very

soon."

"What," exclaimed Roy, "no darkness for hours? Why, it is after four o'clock now, and these are the shortest days of the year."

"Yes. Four o'clock, Washington time," said the professor dryly, "but you must remember that we have been traveling away from the sunset hour. We shall not see nightfall for four hours or more, if my dead reckoning is correct. At two a.m. tomorrow by our time, we shall be in Munan. There it will be only ten p.m. of today's date."

"Right. I never thought of the difference in time, Prof," was Roy's response, "but look at the periscope. Isn't that a storm coming up, way ahead of us?"

"Yes, that must be the one I smelled," the professor responded, "but the Pioneer has nothing to fear. We shall simply go up over it, and I hope that by the time we reach Munan, the storm will have passed. In fact, I know it will, because such storms usually cover a comparatively small area, although they travel rapidly. However, their speed is as nothing compared with ours, and even if it is traveling in the direction of Munan, we shall far outdistance it."

With that the professor manipulated the controls, and the altimeter at once showed the increase in altitude. Six thousand, eight, ten, twelve thousand feet and there it stopped.

"There is no real need of rising further, as we shall be well above the storm now," said the professor. "But I would like to test out the oxygen apparatus, so we are going up further. I shall be compelled to correct my reckoning on this account, but that will not be difficult, and if we lose any time, it can be quickly made up by increased speed."

Closing one valve and opening another, the professor pulled back

the altitude control; the cone swung way around to a new position, and the Pioneer shot skyward at an angle of about forty-five degrees.

"That is what those railings around the operating platform are there for," laughed the professor, as Roy swung about and wildly grabbed for one to keep his balance. "Better strap yourself into the seat beside mine here, as we may do a little more of this sort of thing before we return to a lower level."

Roy complied, as the professor adjusted his own strap. A slight hiss told of the functioning of the oxygen apparatus, and Roy glanced at the altimeter. Already it showed forty thousand feet, and was mounting rapidly. Their speed was tremendous; fifty thousand feet a minute now by the 'rate of rise' indicator. At their angle, this meant over eleven hundred miles an hour, air speed. Fifty, seventy, one hundred, two, three, four hundred thousand feet read the altimeter and there was the Pioneer restored to an even keel. Roy took a deep breath. It was becoming very cold, but the professor had already turned on the atomic heat and soon the control room returned to a normal temperature.

"I must provide for thermostatic control of the room temperature, when I get the time," spoke the professor, more to himself than to Roy, "but our oxygen supply seems to function perfectly anyhow. We are far outside the upper limits of the atmosphere now, and we have been for several minutes.

"Everything seems to work to perfection," was Roy's only reply, as the descent started at a reduced speed.

When they had finally returned to their altitude of four thousand feet, the storm was far astern, but they could see from the turbulent surface of the ocean that it had been a serious squall. The professor again gave over the controls to Roy and disappeared astern. He

returned soon and announced that they were but slightly off their course and somewhat ahead of their time schedule, rather than behind. Making a minor correction in the setting of the compass, he told Roy that he wanted to lie down for a short while to get a little rest, and returned to the cabin.

Roy had plenty of time in which to think while the professor rested, and as the distance to Munan became rapidly less, he thought more and more on the seriousness of their mission. Still the voice which had brought them kept intruding on his consciousness. He began to believe that there was some thought transference connected with this, for he simply could not shake off the impression of the voice. It was now somewhat different than when he had heard it over the video; then it had been sad and pleading; now it was confident, cheering. But it retained the charm, the golden quality which had first interested and captivated him.

When the professor returned, night had long since fallen and only a few hours of the trip remained. He advised Roy to get some sleep himself, saying that he would remain at the controls anyway until they landed. Roy was too excited, however, and occupied the seat at the professor's side for the rest of the journey.

At last only half an hour remained and soon, directly ahead, they made out a faint speck of light which grew rapidly in size until it was finally discerned as the lights of a city in the distance. Again the Pioneer arose until an altitude of about fifteen thousand feet was attained. All lights were extinguished, with the exception of the small ones in the instrument case, and soon they were directly over Munan. The time was exactly two by their chronometer as the vertical descent commenced, and in a few seconds they made out the outlines of the island.

The city itself occupied only a small portion of the island's surface.

The remainder of its area was in darkness, with the exception of scattered groups of lights which probably marked the locations of farms and mines. Shortly, they located two tiny spots of green light in one of the darkest spots on the island.

"Your friend certainly kept her word," said the professor, as he maneuvered the Pioneer to a position directly over the two green beacons, which appeared to be about three hundred feet apart. "The neutralizing wall must have been out of service all right, and there are the green beacons as big as life."

Swiftly, but without a shock at landing, the Pioneer dropped between the two guiding lights and came to rest as the professor opened the switch.

part 5

V.

With his pulses beating madly, Roy rushed to the manhole, which was the only exit, as well as entrance to the Pioneer. He desired to be the first to set foot on the soil of Munan, but the professor stopped him as he began to unfasten the clamping bolts.

"Not so fast," warned the professor. "We are not sure whether we will be met by friend or foe. Possibly the enemy has learned of your friend's plans and has only allowed us to land so as to make away with us before our world can be warned again. We had better go out armed. Better to die fighting, if we have to die. And if we are met by friends, it will do no harm."

"Professor, you are always right," admitted Roy, as the professor went to the locker where he had stored his weapons.

He returned at once with two small pistol-like contrivances, one of which he thrust into Roy's hand.

"This," he said, "is a very ancient weapon. In fact, this device is one of those which contributed in bringing about the conference of the Powers in 1950, resulting in the disarmament and consolidation of the various peoples of our world. This device projects the disintegration ray which immediately destroys entirely any animate object at which it is directed. Just press this little button and the ray shoots forth, but be sure you have it pointed in the right direction. I am sure that this is just as effective now as it ever was, but we do not know what sort of weapons we may have to combat here. But I suppose we are as well prepared as we can be, under the circumstances."

The weapon was examined curiously by Roy, who had never seen one before, except in the museum.

Unbolting the manhole cover and swinging it open, the professor courteously allowed Roy to leave first, knowing that he was extremely anxious for this honor. They stepped forth into the darkness—even the green lights were now extinguished. Cautiously they left the Pioneer and advanced into a clearing which was dimly visible by the faint light from what few stars were out. Weapons in hand, they waited breathlessly.

Suddenly a voice spoke, clear, sweet, compelling. Roy's heart seemed to leap and turn over in his body. It was the voice of his dreams, and very softly it spoke the words of welcome which he would never forget.

"Dear, brave strangers from The Outside. I was sure you would come. Roy, I have been sending my thoughts out to you for the better part of twelve hours. Several times we were almost en rapport, never quite. Professor, I know you will not fail in this great undertaking. I thank both of you with the deepest gratitude. Follow me to our hiding place, where we shall meet the rest of my group and find a haven for your aero, and rest for yourselves."

While speaking, the girl of the golden voice approached the two until finally she stood beside them. By this time their eyes had become more accustomed to the darkness, and they made out the dim outlines of a small figure, evidently cloaked in some dark material. The features could not be discerned even when she stood directly before them, but the voice of their welcomer thrilled them both.

She grasped Roy's hand, and at its touch his body tingled from head to foot as from an electric shock. Surely the possessor of this tiny

and delicate, although firm, hand needed assistance and protection, he thought as they were led in silence towards the edge of the clearing, where the tree-tops were faintly visible against the almost black sky. As they neared these trees there was a slight rustle ahead of them, and a masculine voice spoke out in a very low tone:

"Is all well, Thelda?"

"All is well, Ramon. You may light your torch," she replied, and with that there was a click and the beams of a hand light revealed the way ahead through the forest.

For a short way they traversed a heavily wooded space and soon, after emerging from the woods and climbing a slight grade in the open, approached the base of a sheer vertical cliff of stratified rock. Feeling along an entirely smooth and unmarked section of this wall, Ramon, their guide, soon found the depression for which he was searching. At his touch, a section of the solid stone swung back revealing the entrance to a long, unlighted passage. They entered and silently the stone door swung behind them. With the way lighted only by the beams from Ramon's torch, they followed a winding passage for a considerable distance and finally reached a large circular cavern, which was so brilliantly lighted as to dazzle them temporarily.

Their guide led them directly to a large council table, around which were seated some thirty people, only about six of whom were men. As they reached the group, all eyes were focused on the strangers, but Roy's eyes were only for the girl at his side. She threw off her cloak as she turned to the council table, and there stood revealed in her transcendent beauty. Even the professor gasped; Roy stood spellbound.

Although small in stature, her slimness and the erectness of her

carriage gave her the appearance of greater height. Vibrant with life, her face was turned partly towards Roy, so that he was enabled to study the perfect profile intently. Fluffy red-gold hair seemed a fitting halo for the piquant oval of ivory creaminess which was her face. Large, golden brown eyes, wide set beneath perfectly arched brows, with their expression of sadness and innocent appeal, belied the firmness of the small chin, the sauciness of the very slightly upturned little nose, and the sweet promise of the rosy lips, now barely parted in excitement.

The words of her presentation of them to the assembly were unimportant to Roy's ears; the voice and the girl herself held him in a trance. To him she became the "Golden Girl" at once. Her mellow voice; her golden coloring; the beautiful spirit reveal by her spoken thoughts; all contributed to this impression. Thelda, her name might be; but in Roy's innermost thoughts she would always remain the "Golden Girl." Then and there he resolved that, whatever the cost, he was going to win this girl for his wife and take her from this terrible island to his own home.

"People," she spoke to the assembled listeners, "these are the two of whom we learned so much through the visit of Thandar to The Outside. This man," turning to Roy, "is Roy Hamilton, to whom I made my plea on the night when we disrupted the videophone system of The Outside. This man," nodding in the professor's direction, "is Professor Nilsson, the famous scientist of The Outside, in whom we have placed our hopes. Both, as we all know, are brave, courageous men, and I am sure that our confidence has not been misplaced. May the Supreme Power, in which we few of all Munanese believe and trust, be their guide and protector."

Thelda then sat at the head of the council table, and her glance met Roy's. A slow flush heightened her beauty and told Roy that his feelings were at least partly returned. Frankly the eyes of each

appraised the other.

A handsome and imposing man, who sat at Thelda's right, arose and addressed the strangers:

"Gentlemen, I am Landon, Thelda's chief advisor," he spoke. "Our dear leader has brought about your coming to us. Like her, we cannot convey to you adequately our gratitude for your noble response to our appeal. We thank you in the name of mankind, which is ignorant of the fate with which it is threatened. For ourselves we care not. Many of those here may lose their lives in this undertaking. One lost his life tonight in contriving the power house accident which closed off the neutralizing wall for a half hour to permit your entrance. We have terrible powers to combat; but we feel sure that, with the help of you two, we shall succeed. After you have obtained the rest which you so badly require after your arduous journey, I shall again call the council together and our entire problem will be placed before you. Our workmen have, by this time, transported your aero to an adjoining cavern, and we believe that you will find yourselves more at home in your own quarters than in any we could provide. We shall now disband until tomorrow and allow you to return to your aero."

With Landon's conclusion, all members arose from the council table and crowded around the two strangers, introducing themselves, and overwhelming Roy and the professor with thanks and with wishes for a good night's rest. These people were a remarkably striking looking lot; the men were physically very powerful and of classic and dignified features; the women, though slightly smaller in stature than those of the outside world, were far more beautiful, with a loveliness that was almost ethereal in character. None could compare with Thelda though; and, as he and the professor were led to another passage by Ramon, Roy kept his eyes on her until she was lost to his view.

They found the Pioneer reposing on the floor of another huge cavern similar to the first. Ramon explained that an opening to the outer atmosphere had been provided at the top of this cavern and that this was of sufficient size, though hidden by underbrush which grew at the top of the cliff, to permit of easy entrance and exit for their aero. How the Pioneer had been transported to this spot, he did not explain. This cavern was unlighted, and they were left at the manhole of the aero in darkness as Ramon departed with his torch.

Entering and flooding the Pioneer with its own light, they soon disrobed and, without further discussion, sank into the deep sleep of utter exhaustion.

part 6

VI.

Roy awoke at one, by his watch; nine o'clock in the morning by Munan time, he remembered, and set his timepiece back accordingly. Finding the professor still asleep, he dressed quietly so as not to disturb him and set forth to investigate his new surroundings. He stepped out from the Pioneer and found the cavern in which she reposed dimly alight from a circular opening high overhead, through which the light of day was admitted, and through which it would be necessary to guide the aero when they left. He returned for a pocket torch, and started down the passage through which they had entered this cavern. When he reached the large council chamber, he found it as brightly lighted as previously. On the far side of the cavern he observed a sort of raised dais on which there was a smaller table than that about which the company had assembled the previous night; also several easy chairs, one of which was occupied by none other than the Golden Girl, who was busily engaged with several books and a large map. At the sight of her beautiful head bent over her work, his heart again behaved unaccountably, and he approached silently, almost reverently.

When within a few feet of the dais, he spoke. "Good afternoon, fair lady. Or rather I should say, 'good morning'."

Somewhat startled, for she had been so absorbed in her work, that she did not notice his approach, she raised her head. When she saw who it was, she smiled and replied, "Good Morning, Roy. I hope that you are now refreshed after a good sleep. And you must not mind my use of your given name. That is our custom. You are to call me Thelda, too."

Again, when their glances met, there was that indefinable something which passed between their minds and told both that a close bond existed. Each was momentarily confused, but Roy seated himself, as Thelda motioned him to a chair beside her own, and soon the embarrassed feeling passed. They found themselves at once discussing seriously the object of the trip from The Outside, as the outer world was spoken of in Munan. Roy was full of eager questions concerning Munan itself, and Thelda launched forth into a discussion of the subject nearest and dearest to her heart.

It seemed that Thelda had been the only daughter of one Paul Serano, who had been the leader of the small group of thinkers who were opposed to the designs of the Munanese against The Outside. He had been working on plans for frustrating these designs for ten years. Thelda's mother had died at the time he first conceived these plans, and Thelda herself had been but ten years of age when this occurred. A few months before the call to Roy and the professor, Serano had been apprehended by the Zar in an attempt to obtain certain information regarding the exact nature of the plans for the conquest of The Outside, and had been summarily executed. This left Thelda an orphan, hunted by the Zar; and the group of faithful adherents to her father's beliefs had made her their leader in his stead. Despite the fact that she was only twenty, she was well qualified to lead them, because she was not only greatly loved by the group, but she had worked with her father constantly since the conception of his idea and was more familiar than any of the others with that which had been accomplished. She was compelled to live in apartments connected with this underground refuge, as were several others of the group, to escape the hand of the all-powerful Zar. Luckily, however, most of the group were not known by the agents of the Zar as being non-adherents. These were enabled thus to live normal lives in the city, and ten or twelve of them were in the employ of the Zarists, endeavoring to get all information possible.

Thelda's father had been a scientist of repute in Munan; the only scientist in the group; and with his demise the group had become desperate, for it was necessary to combat the designs of the Munanese by means of Science. This had necessitated the sending of an emissary to The Outside, which was accomplished with considerable difficulty. The emissary had returned with knowledge of the professor and of his friend, Roy. The call to New York had followed.

By the time Thelda had reached this point in her narrative, the two were joined by the professor. Soon the party was augmented by the arrival of Landon and two of the women members of the group, who were known as Zora and Merna. Zora was a very beautiful woman of possibly forty years of age; nearly that of the professor, thought Roy, as he noted from the corner of his eye that she and the professor had engaged in earnest conversation.

Thelda and Landon decided that it was not necessary to call a meeting of the council, but that the entire situation could be discussed immediately among themselves. Landon was requested to give to the two strangers the entire story in as few words as possible. This being agreeable to all present, the six proceeded to the council table, where a map of the island and city of Munan had been laid out.

Roy and the professor examined this map closely, noting that the island was roughly elliptical in shape, about seventy miles in length and about thirty miles across the widest point. On the map, surrounding the island at a distance of some five miles from the coast, was a broad red line which Landon explained represented the neutralizing wall. The city itself occupied only one end. The rest of the island, which was of volcanic origin, consisted of part mountain and part level land, a small portion of which was covered by forest. The caverns were located almost exactly in the center, and were under

the surface of a mesa-like projection of the largest mountain, which was known as Leyris.

"Friends from The Outside," commenced Landon, "there is much to be done within the next twenty days, if the designs of our accursed people are to be circumvented. For this reason I am going to make my story as short as possible.

"Beginning with the founding of Munan and leading up to the present time, I need not tell you much more than Thelda reported over your videophone system. That conversation was very difficult of attainment, for none of us fully understand the operation of the apparatus which Paul had perfected for this very purpose before his death. However, we did paralyze the terrestrial video system as you know, and Thelda did get her message through.

"Munan was conceived in hatred, and the descendants of those original two thousand have handed down that hatred of The Outside, which gradually intensified through the ages. In each generation there would be a few who, like ourselves, were born with the love of mankind in our hearts, but as quickly as these were discovered by the Zar they were killed off in cold blood. Thus, by a process of enforced evolution, there was developed a race of cold-blooded creatures who call themselves men and women, but who are in actuality, fiends incarnate. There has been practically no internal strife, because the Munanese has a single-track mind. His venom is all directed against The Outside. Such is the power of evolution. Our group is entirely different. In all evolution there are reversions to types, which types may have been remotely located in the roots of the family tree. We are those reversions; thank the Supreme Being. We were born with love in our makeup instead of hate, and none of the early training could remove this love.

"Zar Taled the fourth, our present despotic ruler, decided about

fifteen years ago that the time for the conquest of The Outside was nearing; he set the date for February twentieth, 2406. Meanwhile all efforts of the inhabitants, excepting those in pursuits necessary for the business of living, such as food preparation and the like, have been expended in preparation for the great event.

"The time is approaching rapidly and all is in readiness. Ten thousand aeros have been constructed; each is capable of carrying ten men and a cargo of ten tons. These are stored under heavy guard in the Zar's arsenal directly on the other side of Leyris. They are the product of the not-to-be-despised scientists of Munan, and are very speedy and powerful. The secret of their motive power is known only to a trusted few; but we do know that it is from an inexhaustible source. These aeros, like your own, have no external wings or propelling mechanism. Unlike the Pioneer, though, they are provided with an impregnable means of defense and a horrible and inescapable offensive weapon. They can be made invisible! The mines of Munan have yielded metals and chemical elements unknown to The Outside, and from these our chemists have compounded a substance similar in consistency to the house paint of ancient days. This substance, when applied to its surface, renders the metal munium invisible. The Zar's aeros are constructed of munium and will be absolutely non-existent as far as human vision is concerned. What avail would any of the energy beams of The Outside be against an attacker who could not be seen?

"The offensive weapon is also a product of our chemists. It is a highly concentrated liquid which has the property of completely disintegrating any object with which it may come into contact, excepting only the metal crysinum. The ingredients of this liquid are found only in Munan and are extremely rare, even here. Two hundred years have been spent in accumulating a sufficient supply and storing it away in crysinum containers. One drop of this liquid on the Pioneer would utterly destroy it and all within it. A crysinum bomb

weighing less than one hundred pounds, dropped from the sky on your city of New York, would entirely destroy it with all of its inhabitants, and all within a radius of thirty miles besides. Do you see why we warned you and sent for you?

"The centuries old plan of the Munan is this: On the day appointed, ten thousand aeros, rendered invisible, are to set forth. Each aero will carry a crew of ten men and a cargo of two hundred of the crysinum bombs. Two thousand of the aeros are to head for the North American division, two thousand to the African division, two thousand to the European division and so forth. Each fleet is to spread out over its particular area, destroying the principle cities and industrial centers. No quarter is to be given; in fact none could be asked, since the inhabitants would not have the slightest idea of the cause of the destruction, nor where to sue for quarter. After the wanton destruction of all the great cities and probably eighty percent of the population of the globe, the Munanese intend to take possession and start the foundations of a new civilization in accordance with their own ideas.

"The small group you saw in this chamber when you arrived, with a few workmen who were taking care of your aero, and your two selves, are all that stand between The Outside and this dreadful catastrophe. Possibly we shall fail; but we have every confidence in you, Professor, as the only man who can avert the holocaust; and in you, Roy, as a valiant supporter of our cause and of the professor and his part of the work. That is all."

part 7

VII.

At the finish of Landon's talk, Thelda had bowed her head into her arms, which had been folded before her on the table. Roy sat in stunned silence, while the professor drummed nervously on the table top with his fingers, staring at Landon all the while. Finally the professor started shooting rapid-fire questions at Landon, and Thelda straightened up with interest, though her eyes were brimming with tears. Roy wanted then, more than anything in the world, to take her in his arms; to comfort her and cheer her. He had the utmost confidence in the professor's wizardry.

"Landon," asked the professor, "you say these invisible aeros are stored in an arsenal directly across and on the other side of this mountain?"

"Yes, that is correct, Professor, but this arsenal is under heavy guard, you must remember," replied Landon.

"Have you any samples of the metal crysinum and of the deadly liquid with which the bombs are filled?"

"We have several articles constructed of crysinum but the liquid has never been seen by any of us. In fact, so great is the secrecy surrounding the production of this liquid that the chemists engaged in the work have been kept isolated by the several Zars for centuries. The secret has been handed down through the generations of this one family, who have all been chemists."

"Have you knowledge of the exact location of the storage vault of the crysinum bombs, Landon?"

"We have suspicion that they are stored in caverns similar to these, under the arsenal on the other side of Leyris. Even now, one of our number who is employed in the arsenal, is investigating this very point. She may be discovered as a spy at any time and executed. When Doreen, for that is her name, joins us, you may question her yourself, Professor."

"Very good, Landon. Now you might enlighten me on just one more point. You say that Paul Serano, before his death, had developed the equipment with which you paralyzed the video and made the call to Roy. Is that equipment still in existence?"

"It is, Professor. It is located in a smaller cavern only a few steps from here. I will show it to you."

At this the professor arose and followed Landon through another winding passage, up a flight of steps cut into the stone, and to a small compartment fitted out as a workshop. As he examined the various mechanisms in this room, some completed, other only partly so, he commented to Landon regarding the stone steps that they had just mounted. These were considerably worn as if by long usage, and Landon gravely explained that the caverns had been the refuge of similar fugitives for centuries.

"It is a pity that Paul could not have lived to complete his wonderful work," remarked the professor in admiration, as he examined some of the results of Serano's labor, "but I do see a faint glimmer of hope here. For one thing, here is a beam-transmitter not unlike some of our own, and after I master its workings, we may be able to find a good use for it."

When they returned to the council chamber, several others of the group had arrived, and the professor sat at the table and addressed them:

"Friends, I do not want to seem officious," he said, "but I believe it will be to the advantage of all concerned if you will give complete authority to me over all activities of the group from now on. I see a vague basis for hope, but our work must be done with the greatest care, or failure will be the result. Will this be agreeable?"

Thelda answered at once, "Indeed it will, Professor. I am sure that all here will agree now, and I can vouch for the rest. We trust you implicitly and I, for one, feel encouraged already. Do the rest of you here consent?"

There was a chorus of assent, and the professor asked at once, "Where is Doreen, the lady member, who, you stated, was employed at the arsenal?"

Doreen and the professor drew aside to a settee and conversed animatedly for several minutes. Roy saw that Zora watched this procedure closely, and he chuckled to himself. When the professor returned to the council table, he stated that he would like to have some private conversation with Roy. Not that he had any secret plans, he explained, but that he wanted Roy's advice on something he had in mind before putting it to the test. Naturally there was no objection, so he and Roy retired to Serano's workshop.

"Roy," he said as they entered the room, "this is even more serious than I had contemplated, and although I have an idea forming in my mind already, there is one big obstacle which may block the successful carrying out of the plan. The young lady I just spoke with told me that she is confident that the supply of the deadly liquid and of the crysinum bombs is in one greater chamber immediately beneath the arsenal. She has, however, been unable to locate this chamber, and is now fearful of entire failure, since she has been under more or less suspicion for several days. It is absolutely

necessary that I obtain a sample of this liquid; also that the precise location of the supply be determined. One possibility is suggested by another statement of Doreen's. She told me that Pietro, the commander in charge of the arsenal—a man with a viciousness of disposition not exceeded by any of the Munanese—has a soft spot in his heart for Zora, who is employed in the Zar's palace as tutor to his children. She suggests that, through Zora, this information might be obtained."

The professor flushed as he repeated the last words, much to Roy's secret delight. "Well, how do you think this could be arranged?" asked Roy.

"By the usual power of woman over man," he replied. "The trouble in this case is that Zora has repulsed him for years. Besides, she is under constant surveillance in the daytime, when in the Zar's household. I hesitate to approach her on the subject, as I consider her a very high type of woman and she might seriously resent the suggestion. What do you think?"

"But," Roy answered, "we are all in this thing to the bitter end, and I am sure that she, as well as any of the others, will do anything that might be necessary. I can see your interest in this admirable woman—as you, no doubt, can see mine in the glorious Thelda. But we must not think of personal preferences now. My advice is to put it up to her at once."

They reentered the council chamber, and the professor called Thelda, Zora, and Landon aside to talk over the matter. To his surprise, Zora did not oppose the plan, although she made it plain how repugnant it was to her to be compelled to change her attitude with respect of Pietro's suit. She felt, however, that she would be able to act the part. Knowing how important such a move might be, she did not hesitate. It was decided that she would return to her

duties and again take up her normal life in her city apartment, using her own judgment as to the best means of ensnaring Pietro and inveigling him into a disclosure of the desired information. It was with the deepest regret that the professor completed the arrangements and, as a final precaution, he provided Zora with one of their ancient hand weapons and taught her how to use it. Zora felt that at least a week would be required for her work, and the portion of the group which was assembled bid her good-bye and good luck when she left. The professor accompanied her to the end of the passageway and did not return for some little time. What took place between them at this parting will never be recorded. But when he returned, he seated himself at the council table with the most serious mien he had displayed since their arrival.

part 8

VIII.

After Thelda, Landon, Roy, and the professor had partaken of a satisfying luncheon in Thelda's apartments, they returned to the council chamber. The professor and Landon repaired to Serano's workshop where they spent the afternoon, thus leaving Roy and Thelda together. This suited Roy exactly, and did not seem to be unpleasant to Thelda, either. She spent the time showing him through the various connecting caverns of the underground refuge, and the several luxurious living compartments which had been hollowed from the solid rock. The permanent dwellers were mostly in their living quarters and Roy became better acquainted with these during the several visits they made. More and more he was impressed with the beauty and sweetness of the women in the group. They far outshone the beautiful women of The Outside, not only in physical perfection but in mentality as well. He soon observed that much of their conversation was perfunctory, and seemed to be only a medium of establishing contact for an actual interchange of thoughts. When he remarked about this, Thelda informed him that thought transference among the group was a common accomplishment; that it was a development of their own mentalities and was not shared by the Munanese in general. This amazed Roy and to him accounted for some of the sensations he had had of hearing the golden voice when he was still thousands of miles from Munan. What if Thelda was not reading his thoughts? If she were she must already know that he loved her. It must be then, that she was not unreceptive, since her actions were very friendly, even affectionate. True, this might be due to her gratitude to the two strangers for their response to her plea for assistance. Try as he would he could obtain no inkling of what was in the mind to which his own must be almost an open book. But his

resolve to win this glorious creature did not abate in the slightest degree.

That night when the council assembled, Zora, Doreen, and Ramon were missing. They had anticipated the absence of the courageous Zora, but the non-arrival of the other two caused considerable uneasiness in the group.

Thelda, in calling the meeting to order, advised the members of what had been done thus far. Unanimous approval was given of the acceptance of the professor's leadership, and of what he had already accomplished. The professor then arose and addressed them.

"Dear people. I am not ready as yet to give you any real hope; but I can say that my research thus far has been successful, and that if your dear comrade, Zora, succeeds in her mission, our hopes will be strong indeed. The time is very short, but there is nothing which can be done outside of that which is now being attempted. It will be necessary for Roy and myself to remain hidden away here with those of you who are already forced to reside here permanently. I know that this will gall the adventurous spirit of my friend from The Outside, but it is absolutely imperative, for if either of us ventured forth into Munan and were recognized as strangers and captured by the Zar's police, all of our plans would be brought to naught.

"This afternoon, with the aid of Landon, who provided me with samples of the metal crysinum, I have learned several things of value. As you know, crysinum is as transparent as crystal, as hard as steel, and as light as aluminum. Today I have, in your deceased leader's workshop, succeeded in making a chemical analysis of this metal, also in determining its electrical and mechanical properties. I have also constructed several vessels from this material: retorts, beakers, test tubes, for use in analyzing the deadly fluid when we obtain a

sample. The most important work of the afternoon was the construction of a receptacle of crysinum which may be used for obtaining the required sample with safety. This receptacle must be placed in Zora's hands at once, and I would like to have a volunteer to carry it to the city without delay."

Two-thirds of the assembly volunteered at once, and the professor chose the young woman Allayne and the man Theron to accompany her. Both were residents in the city and, so far, had not been under suspicion. Allayne was well acquainted with the location of Zora's apartment, and Theron was physically well able to protect her from any ordinary danger she might encounter. When these two left, the professor continued:

"What we would like to do is to obtain one of the crysinum bombs from the Zar's storage vault, load it and our entire group into my aero, rise vertically ten or fifteen thousand feet and destroy this island by dropping the deadly bomb from the aero. The group could then proceed to The Outside at leisure, since the destruction of the city and its power houses would forever remove the neutralizing wall. Unfortunately, this is impossible, since the size and weight of one of the bombs is entirely too great to permit its successful removal from the heavily guarded secret storehouse. Our next best hope is to obtain a small sample of the compound, with the idea that I shall be able to determine some means of destroying the entire supply from a distance. That is the reason for Zora's distasteful assignment, and that is why I have sent Allayne and Theron with the crysinum receptacle. Let us have hope."

When the professor finished, there was a babble of excited voices. All seemed pleased with his progress and all were considerably encouraged. As the evening wore on, the uneasiness over the continued absence of Ramon and Doreen increased. Surely some misfortune must have overtaken both. All that could be done was to

hope and pray that they had not been apprehended; that the safety of the remainder of the group had not been endangered by their capture, if captured they had been.

It was very much later when Theron and Allayne returned, and their report confirmed the worst fears of the group regarding the missing members. Doreen had been arrested in the arsenal and executed by the Zarist troops, after being tortured savagely in an effort to learn the whereabouts and identity of her accomplices. The brave girl had steadfastly remained silent and finally died a noble martyr to the cause she had espoused. Ramon had been killed outright by a police officer, when he was discovered in an attempt to carry away some records from the administrative offices of the Zar's "Council of Five," where he was employed. In sadness was this news received by the group. The report of the successful meeting with Zora did little to cheer them up. As yet Zora had been able to do nothing; the turmoil caused by Doreen's discovery made it unthinkable to approach Pietro in any way.

For several days Roy was in a miserable state of mind. The professor spent practically all of his time in the workshop, and Roy felt absolutely useless as an adjunct to the group. What made him feel still worse was the fact that he was being studiously ignored by Thelda. She addressed him pleasantly enough when he saw her, it was true. But he found it impossible to engage her in conversation alone. She always made some excuse to get away, and the little intimate talks in which they had engaged on the first day could not be repeated. After the fifth day he became morose and uncommunicative, spending the greater part of his time in the Pioneer. Little as he saw of the professor, he spoke very little to him when he did see him.

Finally the professor, busy as he was, noticed this, and took Roy to task one night when he returned to his sleeping quarters. "Roy," he

said, "do not let this thing break your spirit. What is tormenting you anyhow?"

"Well, for one thing," was the response, "I am about as much use around here as two tails would be to a dog. Why was I ever chosen for this expedition?"

"That is not the only trouble with you, my boy. Do not think that I am unaware of your love for the little leader of this group. And do not feel discouraged at her actions. The little girl is aware of your feelings towards her, and is only taking some time to make up her mind as to what to do about you. I have observed her closely several times, and am confident that your feelings are reciprocated and that all will be well. Give her a little time, and do not give up hope. As to your uselessness; what is anyone else in the group doing? Outside of my own efforts, in which I do not now need your help, the only other work for the cause is being done by Zora. I am becoming much worried at her silence. We have only slightly over a week left. So forget your grouch, my boy. Get a good night's sleep, and you will feel better in the morning."

Acting upon the professor's advice, Roy turned in. In the morning he stepped out of the Pioneer with more confidence than he had felt in several days. If he could only get out into the sunshine, he knew that we would feel different.

part 9

IX.

Meanwhile, Zora had been having her troubles. She dared not approach Pietro directly, for this would be certain to arouse his suspicion. Instead, she carried on her work in the Zar's household as usual. Evenings, attired in the most attractive gowns and looking her absolute best, she frequented the hotel, where she knew that Pietro was accustomed to dine. On the third evening he encountered her in the lobby and stopped at once. A change in expression came over his cruel face, the admiration and tenderness in his demeanor made him appear, for the moment, almost human. As he addressed her, Zora did something she had not done for years. She greeted him civilly and with a half smile. Thus encouraged, Pietro begged her to dine with him. Not wishing to overdo her part, she refused, but after an hour's insistent pleading on his part, she compromised and agreed to meet him for dinner the following evening. With triumph in his eyes, Pietro left her. She returned to her apartment, there to do a little gloating on her own part. It had not been a bad night's work, she thought.

The following evening Zora appeared at Pietro's hotel, ravishingly gowned, and a picture of mature beauty from the top of her exquisitely coiffured head to the soles of her modishly shod feet. Pietro was speechless with admiration at first, but eventually recovered his equanimity and proudly led her to his table in the dining room.

Dinner was a success. Zora was friendly, but not too much so. Pietro was as if enchanted by his companion's nearness. He was exultant, too, and pressed his advantage to the utmost. He begged her to accompany him to the opera after dinner, but she refused. She

cleverly turned the conversation to the subject nearest and dearest to his vain soul; his high position in Munan, and the arsenal of which he had complete command. Zora feigned great interest when he boastingly told of the importance of his work, and insinuatingly, she flattered him until, in his vanity, he finally offered to take her to the arsenal and show her through it. This was the identical thing for which Zora had maneuvered, but she did not display too great enthusiasm and consented to visit his stronghold the next evening only after considerable persuasion from him. Pietro informed her that he could do her no greater honor; that he was risking his position, perhaps even his life, in thus violating the strict order of the Zar that no outsider was ever to be admitted to the arsenal. He thought that, in thus impressing upon her the risk he was running for her sake, she would reward him by further softening in her attitude towards him. Little did he realize the purpose behind her acceptance of his offer. Little did he realize that he had been tricked into making this offer.

Next night Zora appeared at the hotel as usual, but this time she had with her and hidden in her clothes, the hand weapon which the professor had given her, as well as the crysinum receptacle which he had sent. After dining with Pietro she was taken to a small aero, which left from a landing stage on the roof of the hotel. In a few minutes they had reached the gates of the arsenal, where they were stopped by two huge guards who menaced them with leveled weapons. At a curt nod from Pietro, they lowered the weapons and allowed the two to pass, muttering disapproval. With a growl, Pietro warned them to be silent, on pain of death, and with that they entered.

Now was Zora's opportunity, and she used all the feminine wiles at her command to further put the braggart at her side under her spell. She succeeded admirably, for Pietro took her from one end of the arsenal to the other, explaining to her eager ears all that was seen.

Finally they had completed their inspection of all the buildings on the surface and Zora's heart fluttered wildly as they neared a blank metal wall at the far end of the remotest building. Hesitating for a moment as they faced the wall, Pietro was about to turn around and leave. Something had told Zora that the secret for which she had searched was hidden behind that blank wall, and for a moment she leaned her body close to Pietro, the fragrance of her breath on his face, her eyes bright with expectancy. With a shrug of decision, Pietro took a small instrument from his pocket and placed it close to the metal wall. There was a stream of crackling blue fire between the instrument and the wall and suddenly, before their eyes, the partition had vanished, disclosing a spiral of steps cut into the solid rock and leading downward. He produced a light and again presented the instrument to the point where the metal wall had shut off. Again the crackling flame and the wall was in place, closing them off completely from the room they had just quitted.

As they descended the winding steps Zora counted them carefully while Pietro was informing her, with the greatest solemnity, of the unheard-of privilege she was being accorded. Only five persons in all Munan knew of the whereabouts of this hiding place, he told her. Only the Zar and he were in possession of means of entry, and his life would surely be the penalty were the Zar to learn of this visit. In convincing words, Zora assured him that she would never divulge the fact of the visit to a soul in Munan, making the mental reservation that the professor was not of Munan, therefore that she could tell him without breaking this promise. After counting one hundred and thirty-two steps, Zora followed Pietro into a huge cavern similar to their own council chamber but much larger. Here were stored the nearly two million crysinum bombs, and a vat of the liquid which they contained. Here was the chance for which Zora had worked. She must not fail! Pietro told her of the terrible effectiveness of the bombs, and of the difficulty in producing the liquid content. With the

fanatical fluency of the Zarist, he expanded upon the conquest of The Outside which was so soon to come.

While he talked, his greedy eyes devoured her and suddenly, with no warning, he had leaped to her like a wild animal and, extinguishing the light he carried, had her in his arms and was crushing her to him with brutal strength. Zora struggled frantically and finally squirmed into a position where she was able to withdraw the professor's weapon from the folds of her gown. Breathlessly she held it against Pietro's writing body and pressed the button. There was a purple flare which lighted the entire cavern momentarily, and Zora lost consciousness!

part 10

This is the tenth installment of "The Golden Girl of Munan", the first published story by pioneering science fiction writer Harl Vincent; the first nine installments can be found [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). The story first appeared in the June 1928 issue of *Amazing Stories* magazine, and was reprinted in 2001 in the anthology *Rainbow Fantasia*, edited by Forrest J. Ackerman and Anne Hardin.

As we join our story, Roy Hamilton, an artist in New York City in the year 2406, receives a videophone call from a mysterious woman. She warns him that a society of outcasts on an uncharted Pacific island called Munan are planning to wipe out the rest of the world. Hamilton and his friend Professor Nilsson travel to Munan in Nilsson's newly-designed areo, the *Pioneer*, where they are greeted by Hamilton's mysterious woman, Thelda Serano, and her chief advisor, Landon. They learn that the Zar, the leader of the Munanese, plans to attack the world with a fleet of invisible areos armed with disintegration bombs. Taking charge of the group, Nilsson sends a woman named Zora on an intelligence-gathering mission while Roy frets at his enforced idleness. Zora succeeds in her mission, but falls unconscious while defending herself from an over-amorous military officer...

X.

The eighth day had passed and still no word from Zora. The group was becoming panic-stricken and the professor, although deeply worried and heartsick himself, was endeavoring to calm and reassure them. For three days the members of the group who lived in the city had been unable to learn of Zora's whereabouts. She had not been seen, either at her apartment or at the Zar's palace during that

time. Further than this, it had been reported this last day that Pietro had disappeared, and the authorities were at this moment searching for him. A strange woman had been seen to enter the arsenal grounds with him, but neither had been observed to leave. Possibly, even now, the authorities were searching underground passages for the two. The situation had never seemed more serious.

Roy had been avoiding Thelda for several days, as she had avoided him, though it hurt him greatly to do this. Now, in this hour of darkness, she turned to him for comfort and he was overjoyed. They were seated apart from the remainder of the group in solemn conversation, when all were startled by the shrill cry of a feminine voice from the passage and Zora, haggard, worn, and bedraggled, burst in upon them. Thrusting a small metal cylinder into the professor's hand, she cried, "Here is the sample," and collapsed in a heap at his feet. Tenderly he lifted her limp body and, in sudden abandon, pressed his lips to hers. Realizing that he had betrayed himself, he flushed to the roots of his hair, relinquished her to the women, and rushed off to the workshop with the crysimum cylinder which she had handed to him.

No time was to be lost as the excitement in the city might well lead to their detection. Frenziedly the professor worked in the laboratory, with Roy and Landon drafted as assistants. At last Roy was doing something to help and he was happier than he had been since the first day. Soon Thelda came to the workshop with Zora, who had been revived by the kind administrations of the women of the group. With a fond glance at the professor, who returned it with some embarrassment, she told her story:

"Professor, you must go right ahead with your work," she started, "for I am a hunted woman now and there is a chance that we may be discovered, though I am pretty sure that I left no trace in coming here. It was necessary for me to dispose of seven Munanese with your

marvelous weapon, but as they are utterly destroyed, leaving no tell-tale bodies, the chances that my escape can be traced are fairly remote. If no others saw me, we are safe."

With great rapidity, she told her story up to the point where she had struggled with Pietro in the underground storeroom. All listened intently while the professor proceeded with the first test of the deadly fluid.

Great was the care with which he handled the small cylinder which Zora had brought. He spread on the floor a sheet of crysinum about four feet square, then directed Roy and Landon to bring him as large a loose stone as they could carry from one of the passageways. The two men struggled back with a block of stone between them which must have weighed close to two hundred pounds. This they deposited on the sheet of crysinum in the center of the room. All stood aloof at the professor's bidding as, carefully, he allowed one drop of the precious liquid to fall on the surface of the rock. As it struck, there was a slight puff of yellow vapor at the point of contact. They watched in astonishment as the vapor quickly surrounded the stone with a venomous sputtering. Immediately the rock began to shrink in size and, in less time than it takes to tell, the large piece of solid granite had completely vanished, leaving not a trace on the surface of the glistening crysinum sheet.

The onlookers let forth a simultaneous gasp as the last of the rock disappeared, looking at each other in wondering realization that the properties of this fluid had not been exaggerated in the slightest degree. Zora, as soon as she had recovered from the surprise of the sight, continued with her story, and the professor went on with his experiments:

"When I recovered consciousness in the underground chamber, I realized that I had lain there for a long time. Now I know that it was for

nearly seventy-two hours. I remembered what had occurred. Hearing no sound, I felt around for Pietro's body, but could not find it. However, I found his torch and, as it flooded the cavern with light, I saw that there was no body in sight. Near the spot where I had lain in a coma, I found all of the metal articles his pockets had contained, including the instrument with which he had obtained entrance to the spiral stair. I could not then understand what had become of him--whether he was still alive and had left of his own accord, or whether his dead body had been removed by others. At any rate, I did not forget what I had come for and, advancing to the open vat of the deadly liquid, I filled the little crysinum cylinder carefully.

"Then I approached the instrument which had belonged to Pietro and cautiously crept up the spiral stair. When I reached the metal wall, I listened intently, but could hear no sound. Placing the instrument near the wall, as I had seen Pietro do, I located a small switch or push-button on its side. This catch I pressed. As had occurred when we entered, the crackling flame appeared and the wall vanished. I stepped into the room through which we had passed, and found it deserted. It was still night and I extinguished Pietro's light. With a palpitating heart, I traversed the length of the building and stepped into the open air. Keeping in the shadows as much as I could, I finally came to the gates without having been discovered. My problem now was to get out, and I racked my brain for some means of doing so. Only the two guards were in sight and they paced to and fro before the locked metal gates. Finally I tiptoed close to the bars and addressed the nearest guard softly. He drew over to the gate, and I tried to convince him that Pietro had sent me out alone. He called the other guard at once and both leveled their weapons at me. There was nothing for me to do but point your weapons at each in turn and press the button. As a purple ray shot forth twice in rapid succession, both bodies stiffened, emitted a purple aura for a moment, and disappeared into thin air as we have just seen that stone vanish.

Now I understood what had become of Pietro and I was glad--glad. It is horrible to feel that way, but I could not help it.

"Luckily the nearest guard had been very close to the gate, for, with his disintegration, there fell to the ground the bunch of keys which had swung from his belt. These were within my reach and, thrusting my arms through the bars, I obtained them and let myself out, re-locking the gates behind me. As I ran down the hill from the arsenal, I plunged straight into the arms of four of the Zar's police. Eluding them, I continued at the greatest speed of which I was capable. Apparently they wanted to capture me alive, for they did not discharge their weapons. The first gained on me, then the second and third, and in turn I was forced to dispose of them with the disintegrating ray. I had become exhausted, but I kept on running until I reached the entrance to our retreat. I thought that I had lost my fourth pursuer but, just as the stone swung aside for my entrance, he crept up on me from the underbrush. That was when you heard me scream. Luckily, I was able to get the professor's weapon into action again and I disposed of him as I had the others." She shuddered at the memory of the wholesale slaughter.

All were much excited over this story, especially the professor, but the two women left at once so as to permit the professor and his two assistants to continue with their work.

Zora's narrative was later repeated to the assembled council, who now numbered but nineteen, excluding the three men who were hard at work. Several had been killed that day in the city, during the excitement which followed the discovery of Pietro's disappearance and of the open entrance to the secret vault under the arsenal. The disappearance of the two guards and four of the Zar's police had given the impression that a great conspiracy was under way, and the Zar was executing suspects right and left. The professor would indeed have to hurry.

"The Golden Girl of Munan" by Harl Vincent, part 11 This is the eleventh installment of "The Golden Girl of Munan", the first published story by pioneering science fiction writer Harl Vincent; the first ten installments can be found [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). The story first appeared in the June 1928 issue of *Amazing Stories* magazine, and was reprinted in 2001 in the anthology *Rainbow Fantasia*, edited by Forrest J. Ackerman and Anne Hardin.

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XI.

Two days and three nights the men worked almost incessantly, alternating between the workshop and the *Pioneer* and only obtaining occasional snatches of sleep. During this period none of the group dared leave their hiding place. Thelda and Zora became constant companions. Before long, both had admitted privately their love for the two strangers from The Outside. Thelda ruefully thought of

her avoidance of Roy and the reaction which it had produced. She had done that after the first day for the reason that his thoughts had told her of his love, and she had not been sure of herself. Now she realized that she loved this young man and could never live without him. But she was no longer able to bring his thoughts to her mind, for there was now a misunderstanding between them. She lived in constant dread that her treatment had killed the love which had at first existed. Zora's feelings were of a much calmer nature. She was serenely confident, and happy in the love which she felt sure was returned.

In the meantime, Roy was much too busy to have constant thought of Thelda but, strangely, the golden voice intruded itself upon his consciousness at the most unexpected times. Success had crowned their efforts, and on the morning of the third day, the three tired men burst forth into the council chamber with a shout of triumph which brought all members of the group on a run.

"Folks, we have the solution," the professor exulted loudly. "Listen. Get all of your belongings together at once and carry them aboard the Pioneer. We are all going to The Outside to finish our lives in peace and happiness. And we will destroy this miserable island as we leave."

There was a shout of joy as all gathered around to hear the details. At that moment there was a crash at the entrance to the main passageway. Their retreat had been discovered by the Zarists!

"No time for explanations now, people!" cried the professor. "Get everything you wish to take with you and stow yourselves away on the Pioneer immediately. The entrance stone is some ten feet thick, and should resist their efforts for a long enough time to permit our escape. Evidently they have not learned the secret of opening the door. But hurry!"

The group scattered in all directions as the crashing at the entrance continued with increased violence. Soon there was the sound of automatic rock drills from the passage, but all, except the three men, were already aboard the Pioneer. With a sudden terrific jar and a yell from the attackers, the stone door came down and they swarmed through the passageway. Roy, Landon, and the professor had remained behind to see that all reached the aero safely. As they retreated towards the passage leading to the chamber in which the Pioneer rested, the enemy streamed into the council chamber in great numbers. Roy and the professor shot forth the purple rays from the hand weapons time after time, bringing down many of the Zarists and temporarily stopping the rush. Landon recklessly hurled himself into the massed troops and was down at once. Seeing that nothing could be done to save poor Landon, Roy and the professor ran for the aero and just had time to get the entrance manhole bolted from the inside when the attackers entered the second chamber. In a flash the professor was at the controls and the sphere started revolving as the enemy swarmed around the aero. With a great rush, the Pioneer arose, straight as an arrow, for the circular opening far overhead and they were in the sunshine, rising at terrific speed.

"The Golden Girl of Munan" by Harl Vincent, part 12 This is the twelfth installment of "The Golden Girl of Munan", the first published story by pioneering science fiction writer Harl Vincent; the first eleven installments can be found [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). The story first appeared in the June 1928 issue of *Amazing Stories* magazine, and was reprinted in 2001 in the anthology *Rainbow Fantasia*, edited by Forrest J. Ackerman and Anne Hardin.

As we join our story, 25th century artist Roy Hamilton and his friend (and the world's greatest living scientist), Professor Nilsson, have traveled in Nilsson's aero the Pioneer to the uncharted Pacific island

of Munan. The Munanese, descendants of a group of outcasts exiled from civilized society in 1950, intend to launch a fleet of invisible aircraft armed with disintegration bombs to conquer the world. Hamilton and Nilsson, together with a small group of Munanese dissidents led by the beautiful Thelda Serano, have obtained a sample of the Munanese superweapon and have fled from their hideout in the Pioneer one step ahead of the Munanese authorities...

XII.

When the altimeter indicated thirteen thousand feet, the professor turned the controls over to Roy, instructing him to keep the Pioneer hovering in its present position. He pulled a lever which uncovered all the portholes in the bottom of the aero, and as he rushed back to the salon, he cried to all of the excited group to watch the scene below through the glass covered openings. All complied immediately, kneeling on the floor about the several windows. The professor uncovered a small mechanism which had been installed in the salon, and started manipulating its controls as he peered through the telescopic sight.

"Watch Leyris now, folks," he shouted, and as they turned their eyes in that direction, there was a hum from the machine which the professor was operating. A faint ray, like a beam of sunlight which might have been reflected from a mirror, shot earthward, striking exactly at the last building of the arsenal, which could be seen as a small object far below.

Immediately there came a violent upheaval at that spot and a heavy yellow vapor poured forth from the point at which the ray had been directed. This yellow vapor crawled swiftly over Leyris like an octopus surrounding its prey, and the mountain melted away beneath their eyes as had the stone in Serano's old workshop. The vicious yellow vapor continued to pour forth as from the crater of a volcano,

and all in its path went the way of the mountain.

Munan was overtaken by the fate it had decreed for The Outside. None could escape. No quarter could be asked. None could have been given. No pity stirred the breasts of the little groups watching in awe-struck silence.

When the vapor reached the city, tall buildings sank into the yellow turbulence like pillars of ice undermined by boiling water. The population could be seen swarming into the ocean like a rippling massed formation of army ants. In five minutes all that remained of Munan was a seething mass giving the appearance of ebullient sculptural. This rapidly disappeared into the depths of the Pacific, leaving in its wake a foaming swirl which drew down with it the last of the survivors.

Gone were the invisible aeros. Gone were the deadly fluid and the supply of crysinum bombs. Gone was the race which hated the world with so great an intensity that this same fate had been planned for billions of innocent and unsuspecting victims. Gone were the results of centuries of misdirected mental and physical effort. The Outside was saved!

The various groups around the portholes reacted suddenly; some jumped to their feet and shouted for joy, others among the women sobbing in hysterical relief. Slowly the professor arose from the ray generator and looked for Zora. She came to him immediately and thanked him with tear-dimmed eyes, and the others crowded around, embracing him in their joy and praising him as the deliverer of mankind and of themselves from a most terrible fate. After what they had just witnessed, they could visualize more clearly than ever the awful destruction which had been prepared for The Outside, and their thankfulness knew no bounds.

Disengaging himself, the professor addressed the group, which was crowded into the little Salon:

"Dear friends, we have accomplished what we started out to do. We should be grateful to the Supreme Being who has aided his humble servants in saving the world at the expense of Munan, the accursed. There are only twenty-one of us left now, with poor Landon gone. Though we are somewhat crowded for sleeping accommodations, you will be able to make yourselves fairly comfortable on board the Pioneer for the comparatively short journey ahead. With your consent we intend to return to New York in the shortest possible time. The neutralizing wall has now left us forever, along with the island of Munan, and we can depart unhindered. We shall arrive at our destination in twelve hours. Afterwards I will tell you the story of our labors for the past few days and how this destruction was accomplished. For the present, suffice it to say that, in the experiments with crysinum and the deadly liquid, I discovered that a stream of electrical impulses of a definite frequency would cause a reaction between the fluid and the enclosing metal which would start the destructive action and render the metal no longer resistant. The rest was easy, since we had available the small beam transmitter which had been constructed by your deceased leader. This I was able to modify so as to produce the required frequency, a ray of which you saw projected to the spot which Zora reported as the location of the supply of crysinum bombs.

"Now tell me; do you all wish to return with us to our home and there take up peaceful lives as inhabitants of our world, which nevermore will be "The Outside" to you? Or had you rather be landed in some other location less thickly populated? Roy and I have both grown to love you all during the short time we have known you and we hope to have you always near us."

Enthusiastically, all decided to make the city of the strangers' choice

their own future home, and to remain together as a group, at least until such time as they had become accustomed to the new order of things. In little knots they gathered on the several settees in the salon and cabin, there to discuss plans for the future, which, for the first time in their lives, seemed bright.

part 13

XIII.

The professor proceeded to the control room, where he found Roy anxiously awaiting him.

"Well, it is all over, my boy, and our dear old world is saved," said the professor in a tired voice. "Let me have the controls and we will start for home at once. If all goes well, we will be there in time to get to our own familiar beds by midnight, Washington time. Do you realize that it is now only eight a.m. Munan time? That attack on our retreat was intended as a surprise at dawn. Fortunately none of our number had been able to sleep on account of the excitement and all could thus prepare quickly."

"Yes, I noticed the time before we left," replied Roy, who was still shaken up because of the destruction of Munan which he had witnessed in the periscope. "But, Professor, I do think that you should get some rest at once. You know you not only worked harder, but had considerably less sleep than poor old Landon or myself these past few days. You must be worn out."

"I am pretty well exhausted, Roy," he responded, "but another twelve hours will do no harm. Besides, I feel a personal responsibility for those dear people we are taking back with us. You may relieve me at the controls if you wish, but I want to be here all the time. I would not sleep now if I could."

He took the controls from Roy and headed for home, bringing the speed of the Pioneer to nearly six hundred miles an hour. Softly Roy closed the door as he left.

Seeking out Thelda, he found her alone in the tiny galley, examining the cooking utensils with deep interest.

"I knew that you would come to me, Roy," she whispered as he closed this door also and sprang to her side. "Oh, my dear, why have you been so blind, and why have I been so uncertain? Your mind spoke to mine long before you had even reached Munan, long before I had even seen you. I knew then that you were destined to love me. I think that I have loved you myself ever since I first heard your voice, which was over the videophone."

"Thelda, dearest. My wonderful--golden girl," was all that Roy could say, as he folded her yielding body to him and their lips met in the first kiss. No further words were necessary--their minds were now in close communion and to each was revealed the perfect sincerity and deep affection of the other.

The Pioneer sped swiftly toward what was now to be the home of both. There, high above the Pacific, as Roy and Thelda continued their embrace, the sturdy aero carried another happy pair.

Forward, in the control room, the professor had just turned his beaming face to gaze into Zora's adoring eyes. They smiled in complete understanding, and two more pairs of lips met in a kiss of real love.

THE END

(borrowed from Johnny Pez blog <http://johnnypez9.blogspot.com/>)