STARTLING STORIES

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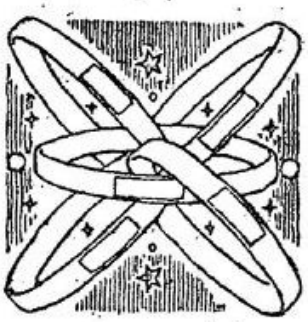

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Randy stood with his hands on the desk, the tiny globe turning majestically in front of him

ROAD BLOCK

An equation changed Burton from a man into a god with power to create and destroy—but the price was high!

THE phone chimed, a soft musical tinkle. The three men glanced at it. Since this was his study, Randolph Burton picked it up.

"Randy?" a voice inquired.

"Yes."

"English speaking. Can you come down to the hospital, please?"

"Sure. What makes?"

"Er—uh—" Burton could feel the doc-

By ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS

tor hesitate and try to choose his words with care. "Lund is here," English finally said.

"Lund!"

"Yes."

"What's he doing there? Is he—"

"Yes," the doctor said. "Bad."

"The devil!" Burton gasped. "What's wrong him? How could he get hurt here?"

"I don't know how he got hurt and I'm not sure what's wrong with him." Fretfulness crept into the voice at the other end of the wire. "But he roused enough to ask for you and he acted as if seeing you was important to him. Can you come right away?"

"Right away," Burton answered. He flung the phone back on its cradle. Jerome Feldman and Colonel Martinson looked questioningly at him. Colonel Martinson was security officer of Blue Mesa. Feldman, like Burton and Lund, was a mathematician, one of the exclusive corps of scientists gathered together here.

"Gentlemen, will you excuse me? That was the hospital. Something has happened to Ed Lund and they want me."

"To Ed Lund!" Feldman rose to his feet, protesting. To him and to everyone else at Blue Mesa, Ed Lund walked on the legs of a giant that carried him far above the heads—and the comprehension—of the average run of men. "But what—"

Randolph Burton, already out the door, didn't even know the question had been asked. Something had happened to Ed Lund. To Randolph Burton this was almost the equivalent of saying that something had happened to God. He headed for the hospital on the run, moving through the underground passages of Blue Mesa as fast as his long legs would carry him.

Of all the safe places that have ever existed on earth, Blue Mesa was considered by those who knew to be the safest. Safe physically in the sense that it was hidden from the enemy, safe also in the sense that even if the enemy penetrated the elaborate disguise that hid it, it was still so deeply buried underground that not even the stoutest atom bomb could do more than jar the seismograph equipment.

And—what was far more important and more difficult to achieve—Blue Mesa was safe mentally. Like brooding hens watching wayward mental chicks, a staff of psychos watched over the mental health of all who worked here. The chemical composition of the food, the way it was served, the air, the colors of the walls, the flooring material in the corridors—not quite noiseless but nearly so—all these things and a thousand others had been planned to produce a balanced mental horizon.

FANTASTIC efforts had gone into hiding Blue Mesa. The very jackrabbits around this hidden laboratory were counted, each coyote had his wail recorded on tape, each eagle drifting in the serene blue above had his flight course plotted, all by automatic instruments that watched and listened with the thousand eyes of night.

Incoming and outgoing personnel and freight came and left by 'copter after darkness and no outgoing man ever knew within fifty miles of where he had been. The pilots who flew the 'copters? Robots. The technicians who built and repaired the robot pilots? No technician ever saw more than a part of the flight orders built into the robots.

There was war in the world but it was far away from Blue Mesa—purposefully so. Neither strategy nor tactics was ever discussed here. No one here was ever taught how to deploy an army, how to conduct an amphibious landing, the purpose of strategic bombing. Protected and carefully guarded Blue Mesa served a different purpose.

Standing outside, Randy Burton was aware that he didn't want to enter the door of this hospital. He was aware of a fretful wish to run away, to run somewhere, anywhere, it didn't matter much. *The escape mechanism,* he thought—something in him seeking a hole to hide in.

The impulse to hide was older than the human race. In fact, if the impulse had

been left out of the human animal there never would have been a human race. The animal somewhere along the way would have gone down the gullet of a saber tooth tiger. So the impulse to run had saved the human race and might save it again.

Burton frowned, despising such thinking. To say that the escape mechanism had saved the human race implied purposive direction of that mechanism. The only purpose, so far as he knew, that the human mind had ever discovered in any aspect of the universe had been put there by the human mind itself—in other words was a projection of man's desires, a reflection of something inside of man, not outside of him.

With every atom of his being, Randolph Burton wished that it were otherwise. He wished it as fervidly as he wished he didn't have to go through this door. There was something in this hospital that he didn't want to see. The tone of English's voice had said it was here. Fears deep within him told him it was here. The door opened.

A white-capped nurse stood before him. "Come in, Mr. Burton. Dr. English is expecting you. If you will follow me, please."

She turned away and he followed her down a spacious hallway painted some restful color that his partly colorblind eyes would never reveal to him. The knowledge that there were colors he could not see was always a vague irritation in the back of his mind.

But if he couldn't see the color of this hallway he could enjoy the air here. He sucked in great mouthfuls of it, always grateful for the way this place smelled. The old-time hospital odor, the burning tang of disinfectants, the harsh irritants to the nose, were not here. This hospital smelled of spring. There was a hint of the fragrance of wild honeysuckle.

Somewhere his deceived ears reported the sound of running water like a spring brook dashing over stones, a pleasing sound. In this place sick men felt younger—it was spring here—and often felt better for no other reason than this simple one. On these walls of unknown color were invisible words carrying such messages as, "I'm feeling fine today."

No human eye could ever actually see the words. They were below the threshold of perception. But all eyes caught fragments of them via the process of subliminal perception. Somehow the content of the message got through to the mind with the result again that sick men began to feel better. Psychosomatic medicine, they had once called it, the treatment of the total personality.

The minds that worked in Blue Mesa were the finest pieces of mental equipment available in the American hemisphere. Because fine equipment deserves fine treatment they got the best.

The nurse opened a door. "Mr. Burton to see you, Dr. English." She stood aside while Burton entered, then quietly closed the door. Dr. English looked up from a spool of film he was studying through an enlarger. A tall man, serious, with so keen a mind that Burton had always wished English had gone into physics instead of medicine, English was frowning now.

"What's up?" Burton spoke.

THE doctor glanced at the clock. "A little over an hour ago they brought Lund in here. He had been found in his study, his head on his desk where he had been working, apparently asleep. When they could not rouse him they brought him here."

"He's alive?" Burton spoke quickly.

"Yes—barely. His heart beats and he breathes. His heart action is growing weaker and his breathing is slowing. At first I thought it was cerebral hemorrhage but there is one thing wrong with that diagnosis. Lund went through a routine physical checkup this afternoon.

"I have the results here—blood pressure, heart action, everything else was normal. That pretty well lets out cerebral hemorrhage *but* I have just made electroencephalograph tests and the brain waves I got are similar to the brain waves we get after performing a lobectomy."

"A lobectomy?" Burton tried to remember the meaning of the term.

"Brain surgery," English explained. "The skull is opened and the frontal lobes are partly dissected."

"I remember now," Burton interrupted. His mind made the obvious connection and the question popped unbidden from his lips. "Has somebody been cutting on Lund's brain?"

English was silent, regarding him with watchful thoughtful eyes as if he was wondering if here were his next patient. Burton made a hasty gesture with his hands. English, saying nothing, continued to regard him in wary silence.

"To heck with what you're thinking," Burton said. "It's my job to think new thoughts. Just because a thing is impossible is no reason why I shouldn't think about it. Nothing is impossible, it's only highly improbable—ten times high minus ten improbable.

"In this case you say you get a brain wave similar to the brain waves after a lobectomy. I know it couldn't happen but your brain waves indicate the damage has been done. How was it done?"

The doctor pressed his head forward into the palms of his hands, rubbed both eyes like a man resting his vision preparatory to looking again at an object he has seen but hopes he will not see again when next he looks. He looked up.

"I don't know how it was done. Why don't you fellows be reasonable? It's hard—"

"We don't know the reasonable from the unreasonable," Burton answered. "Nor the *is* from the *is not*. We can't be reasonable." Fretfulness sounded in his voice; the echo of a persistent uncertainty. "What did he want with me?"

"He said something about a big gun and that you would know about it. Do you know anything about a big gun?"

"*Me?*" Burton was thunderstruck. A big gun! Even the idea appalled him. "I don't have the ghost of an idea."

"Let's go see him," English spoke. He rose to his feet. The bewildered Burton followed him from the room.

Ed Lund was a still, wan figure stretched out under a sheet on a white bed. In a chair beside the bed a special nurse sat watching him. Burton had the impression that an earthquake would not get her eyes off the still figure on the bed but she rose when the two men entered. Lund lay on the bed—just lay there. His breathing was not labored and he did not appear to be in pain but only the slow rise and fall of the sheet showed that he was alive.

Randolph Burton was silent. Here a giant had been brought low. Perhaps Lund's geometry was not quite as well known as Riemann's but his took up where Riemann's left off. It was the geometry of space and hyperspace, in which the sum of the angles of a triangle was equal to more—or less—than two right angles.

Lund had taken the equality sign out of his equations. Building a bridge from the known to the unknown the equality sign says that so many unknowns dealt with in such and such a manner add up to such and such a known. Thus knowledge progresses laboriously from the known to the unknown—and reveals the underlying purpose of the human mind—to know all and to control all.

Lund had said that there was nonsense in this. Why not work directly with the unknowns and describe the relationship of the various factors within an isolated area? Whether you knew them or not did not matter. As long as you could describe them and fit them into an equation you knew all that was necessary.

Few people understood what he was talking about—when he talked, which wasn't often.

"Has he shown any change?" the doctor spoke.

"No, Dr. English. He hasn't moved since you left."

English stepped beside the bed, found Lund's wrist, counted the pulse. His face showed nothing. From the clip of his white jacket he took a pencil flashlight, which he passed slowly back and forth in front of Lund's eyes. Lund's head did not move but the eyes seemed to try to follow the light.

"Can he hear us?" Burton asked.

"I don't know," the doctor answered. "Apparently he sees the light but that

doesn't prove he hears us. You can try."

"Lund." Burton spoke.

The mathematician lay without moving. The sheet seemed to rise and fall a little faster. The doctor reached again for the wrist. "His pulse beat picked up when you spoke. Speak to him again." Excitement crept into his voice.

BURTON leaned over the bed. *"Lund!"* His voice was loud and sharp. The blank eyes of the mathematician seemed to draw slowly into focus.

"He *is* hearing you," English spoke. "Keep it up."

"Lund!" Burton screamed. Lund's head moved.

"Louder," English said. He was breathing rapidly now. "This is close to a miracle."

"Eh?" Burton said, confused. "A miracle?"

Beads of sweat had appeared on the doctor's face. "The tests show actual brain damage. If you blew up a central switchboard and then discovered that somehow you could get a call through you would call it a miracle."

"Oh," Burton said. What English meant was that an improbability of the order-of-ten-high-minus-ten-had-occurred. You could call it a miracle if you wanted to. *"Lund!"* he shouted.

Lund blinked his eyes. Life flickered in them and deep within the pupils recognition showed as a glinting light. Lund's lips moved. His whisper was as frail as a voice from spirit land. "Randy."

"Lund, what happened?"

"What—did something happen?" For a moment confusion showed in Lund's eyes and Burton realized that the man had no memory of the event that had brought him here and probably did not even know where he was. Lund tried to lift his head from the pillow. The effort failed.

"Something—wrong." His mind or what was left of it was trying to pick up familiar pieces. His eyes sought Burton, asking questions. Why was he here in this bed? Why couldn't he sit up? What had happened?

"He doesn't know what happened?" English spoke.

"Randy—".

"Yes, Ed."

Again Lund tried to sit up. This time he made it. As though the victory gave him strength the confusions and the questions vanished from his eyes. "Randy—" Strength crept into his voice. "I've found it."

"Found what?" Burton spoke quickly.

"The ultimate weapon, the Big Gun we've all been looking for here at Blue Mesa."

"The what?" Burton spoke. Incredulity sounded in his voice. They weren't looking for big guns here at Blue Mesa, not directly anyhow. They were looking for new basic ideas. The discovery that niter, charcoal, and sulphur would explode when properly mixed had been a basic idea. All the host of weapons from bombards to rifled cannons had been developed from this basic discovery.

The equation $E = MC^2$ had been such a basic idea. From it had been developed all the variety of atomic weapons. Once the idea was put down on paper the engineers could develop it. Development took sweat, the basic idea took genius—and complete freedom to probe into any dark corner where the mind led.

"The big gun!" Lund whispered. He was sitting up and looking straight at Burton but Randy knew the mathematician wasn't seeing him. Lund's eyes were not focused on him. They were looking through him, seemingly toward lands that lay far away.

"Only it's not actually a gun, Randy. Of course you can use it as a gun if you want—but it would be a shame if you did. It's bigger than a gun!" Excitement crept into his voice and with the excitement came a kind of raspy catch.

Across the bed the doctor made frantic motions to Burton to shut up. Burton and Lund both ignored him. What did it matter to be alive when a giant was talking of big things. "What do you mean, Ed?"

"We are what we have always thought we would be some day—Lords of Creation," Lund whispered.

"Hypo." English spoke tersely to the nurse. "On the double." His hand grabbed Lund's wrist. For a second he counted a pulse rate, then he spoke again. "Randy, beat it."

"Of course." Burton finally realized what might be happening. He started toward the door. Lund's voice caught him and pulled him back.

"The equations on my table, Randy. Get them! They are the basic equations of manipulation of the protein molecule."

"Burton! *Out!*" The doctor spoke like a drill sergeant.

"Get the equations, Randy," Lund spoke. "But watch—watch—" Lund's eyes fixed themselves on Randolph Burton and looked through him to worlds far away. He sighed. His head dropped forward on his chest.

"Okay, Randy," English said. "You don't need to leave."

"What?"

"He's dead," the doctor said.

"I'm sorry. I should have left. I—"

"Don't blame yourself," English spoke. "You didn't cause him to die. Something else did."

He let Lund's head fall back on the pillow, slowly began to pull the sheet up again. The nurse came running in with the hypodermic. English motioned her away.

IN death, a giant looked no bigger than an ordinary man. Randy Burton went directly to Lund's study. Done in soft tones of red, dimly lighted, with book-lined walls, the study seemed a place where any man might sit and ponder.

The picture window was a landscape, a breath-taking panorama of snow-covered mountains rising above dark pine forests, an illusion so cleverly contrived that a man sitting in this room could easily imagine he was actually looking out from his window at white-topped mountains fading away into the distance peak by peak.

So far as Randy Burton could tell Lund's study was just as it had been left. On the desk were scattered sheets of paper—the equations.

Burton folded up in the chair. His fingers groped automatically for a cigarette. He spread the sheets in order. His heart beat picked up. As his mind picked up the meaning of the short-hand symbols written here he forgot everything except the equations before his eyes. Lund and what had happened to Lund, everything except the breath-taking immensity of the concept expressed here, was forgotten.

Here the long search ended.

Here the far-removed descendent of the lungfish, the ancestor of all mammals who first crawled out of the sea and made the first step toward becoming an air breather, here this fish reached his final destiny. Perhaps that destiny was implicit in the first gulping lungful of air ever taken by a living creature on this planet. Randy Burton didn't know about that and didn't care. He was following the footsteps of a giant.

Put into words the equations demonstrated a method by which mind could control, manipulate and shape matter, perhaps create matter out of non-matter. They revealed a way by which the thought forces themselves could act at a distance, the action taking effect not on molecules, not on atoms, not even on protons and electrons—but on the subtle as yet un-named force out of which protons and electrons themselves are built.

These equations developed the geometry—a poor word but the only possible one—of the complex protein molecule of the brain itself. The lucid flashes of foresight, the intuition by which a difficult and obscure problem is suddenly solved, were explained here. The working of the brain in an equation—this Lund had accomplished.

And something more.

This something more was what made Randy Burton gasp. At first he hardly dared believe it but as the idea was rammed home to him again and again belief was forced on him. With these equations any man could use his own mind to create anything he desired—or to destroy anything.

Was this magic? Randy Burton's conditioned mind detoured cautiously

and carefully around the word. This was not magic but it was the goal that had been sought by all magicians who ever practiced the dark art. What the magicians had tried to do, by means of potions, spells, and words of power, Lund had done. Or had he?

Being what he was Randy Burton's mind moved in a set groove, automatically deciding for him that theory had to be decided by experiment. No amount of finely drawn theory was worth two hoots in a whirlwind until it had been subjected to test. Burton knew what he was going to do. But first he got up and locked the door.

Lund's equations were explicit. They revealed exactly what had to be done and how to do it. At first Randy was confounded and a little frightened because no apparatus was needed, no humming electrical generator, no gasoline motor, no hulking atomic pile behind its lead and concrete shields, no acid bath, no beam of electrons, no X-rays. And no tools—the protein molecule of the brain itself was the only tool needed.

The energies used were apparently microscopic at the point of origin and they seemed to act as a catalyst, releasing and controlling stronger energies. They moved from the point of origin to the point of application through unordinary space. This was the word that came to Randy's mind though subspace or hyperspace might have been better words.

All of which was of no importance whatsoever.

The important thing—the utterly important thing—was what the equations could do.

And could they do it?

Randy's forehead furrowed into a V and the lines of concentration deepened on his face. This was the test, the acid bath, of theory. He decided he would create in the air above Lund's desk a small globe.

As he did what the equations said he had to do there sprang into existence above the desk a fuzzy patch of misty light.

Inside his brain he was aware of a sharp flash of pain, a sudden, but microscopic jolt of anguish that was gone as quickly as it had come. He ignored it. Under the pressure of the excitement seething in him he would have ignored death itself. He took control of his thoughts, directing them.

The patch of light firmed. It glimmered with the sparkle of myriads of microscopic jets of radiance, darkened and continued firming. While he stared at it it became a globe about six inches in diameter. It hung there in the air.

The elation in him was like the sound of stars singing in the heavens. The equations had passed the acid bath.

HIS will was to complete the globe. Under the pressure of the energies in his mind, it began to turn. He was not satisfied. It was not complete. He directed the work to go forward. The work went forward. He lost all track of time. When he had finished there hung in the air above the desk a miniature replica of the earth.

It was finished to the final detail. Ice caps sparkled at the poles. There were the dark masses of the continents, the seas of blue green, there was even an atmosphere, with rain clouds.

In Randy Burton at this moment were two feelings, the first, an elation greater than anything he had ever known, the second a compelling sensation of urgency.

The elation held him. In this moment he was not a man but a god. All power was in his hands. The man who understood Lund's equations had the power to loose and to bind, to create life, to destroy it. These powers were within these equations—this power, really.

It was all one power though it took a million—or ten million—forms. The energy of the burning matchhead, the chemical energy of fire, the internal energy of the atom; these energies were different aspects of the same basic energy.

The power to create and to destroy, the power to "smash the sorry scheme to bits and remould it nearer to our heart's desire." This was here. Burton

knew it was here. And he was not a man, he was a god. He had followed in the footsteps of a giant.

The consciousness of the power he possessed rose like a thundercloud in his mind. He knew these equations represented the link between mind and matter, that in one sense they were the long-sought equations of the unified field, which sought a mathematical expression that would unify all of the universal forces.

But these equations, unifying all forces, reduced all energies to one. In essence they eliminated the meaning of the word "force" and the word "matter" —and expressed the concept basic to both.

"If wishes were horses beggars would ride"—it had in these equations been given scientific form. Any beggar who understood them could ride any horse he chose. Any astronomer who knew them could build a space-ship capable of flight to the farthermost stars.

"This is the tool God used in building the universe," Randy Burton thought. He was not a religious man, for religion meant to bind and every impulse in him was to achieve freedom from binding. But if he was not religious he was reverent. And in this moment he was scared.

He had the impression something was watching him from behind. As the thought came to him he jerked around.

Nothing was there—nothing that he could see anyhow. He wiped the sweat from his face and wished there were some way to wipe it from his soul.

Above the desk, the miniature globe turned majestically. He saw it was still incomplete. It needed a moon.

He grinned. To the god who could create an earth, creating a moon was no trick at all. Again the V formed on his forehead and again the lines of concentration deepened on his face.

Again he felt the flashing touch of pain somewhere in his mind. He waited for it to go away. It did not go away. It became stronger.

It flared up like a sudden electrical storm and in a split second grew to the violence of a miniature hurricane. To Randy Burton it seemed that knives were suddenly cutting his brain apart. He clutched his head and slumped forward across the desk.

* * * * *

In the adjoining room three men watching every move he had made took their eyes from the scanner and jumped to their feet. Colonel Martinson was first through the door. Jerome Feldman and Dr. English were right behind him.

The locked door of the study stopped them for a few minutes. An axe from the fire-fighting equipment on the wall solved the problem of the door. They were in the room.

Randy Burton stood with his hands on the desk. In front of his head the tiny globe turned majestically.

"Randy!" English gasped.

There was no answer. Randy slumped into a chair.

The doctor moved around the desk and made a swift examination, knowing what he would find before he found it. Martinson and Feldman stared at the tiny globe.

"What is that thing?" the security officer spoke. He didn't know what it was but he was responsible for the security of Blue Mesa. Slowly with the handle of the axe he poked at the turning globe. The axe touched it.

LIKE a spinning top that has been touched and thrown out of balance the little globe faltered and began to wobble in its orbit. The instant it wob-

bled gravity reached greedy and hitherto forbidden fingers for it. The globe fell on top of the desk.

But the energy of motion it still possessed. Spinning like a top, leaving a muddy path behind it, it wobbled to the edge of the desk, slipped from it, bounced erratically across the floor and came to rest in the corner of the room.

In the quiet study there was a new sound, a soft whimpering.

Lifting a haggard face, Randy Burton stared at the little globe. It was ruined now beyond repair. It was a chunk of round mud. At the sight, tears ran down his cheeks and from his lips there came again the plaintive whimpering cry, like a child who has lost a favorite toy or a god bereft of his first creation. The doctor quickly bent over him.

* * * * *

Later, the top brass and all the scientific personnel of Blue Mesa were gathered in the main lecture hall. Dr. English reported first the facts of the death of Lund and Burton.

"In each case autopsies revealed that the frontal lobes had been cut into microscopically small particles," the doctor stated. "If there is such a thing as a small-scale atomic explosion I would say that such an explosion had taken place in the brains of these men."

English sat down. There was a stir and a rustle in the room. Jerome Feldman rose. The stir fell into quick silence.

In one hand Feldman held sheets of paper, in the other a six-inch lump of mud. Clearly, in a tone of voice which he was determined to hold firm, he told what he had seen happen, how the globe had come into existence, how Burton had died. Then, holding the sheets of paper, he told the story of Lund's equations.

In that listening room there was no sound, no cough, no shift of restless feet, no movement of any kind. It was as if the listening men were afraid to move. Then someone spoke slowly.

"Do you mean to say that those equation reveal a method by which anyone can will an object into existence?"

"I do mean that," Feldman answered.

"If we wanted to will into existence a super atom-bomb, we could do it?"

"I'm almost sure we could."

"If we wanted to will into existence, say, a man, we could do it?"

"I think so," Feldman answered. "It would be mostly a matter of knowing exactly what we wanted. The globe was poorly constructed, mostly of mud, probably because Burton did not know what else to make it of.

"In the case of a man it would be necessary to know the complete function and proper placing of every cell. But presuming we had that knowledge—and we can get it—the man would come into existence."

He paused. No more questions were asked. His voice came again. "I think we have here the ultimate key for which all of us have been unknowingly searching all our lives. A scientist is a man who strives to understand the operation of nature and of natural laws. His purpose, of course, is prophesy, to foretell what will happen but beyond that purpose there is another—to control.

"These equations reveal an ultimate control, they reveal a method by which the protein molecules of our brains can control the basic creative energy of the universe itself. This was Lund's discovery. Any concept that we can imagine we can create."

The room was very still. The silence was broken by a gruff voice speaking. "What's holding us? If we have that kind of power why aren't we using it?"

"A road block is holding us," Feldman answered. "Gentlemen, we have the key to creation in our hands but the minute we use it we run straight into a road block and destroy ourselves. Lund discovered and used it. The atoms of his brain exploded. Burton used it and died. Gentlemen, under the pressure of the creative act the protein molecule itself is unstable. It breaks down. It destroys itself."

His voice rose. He felt sweat on his face, saw it on his hands. "Gentlemen, it is as if God Himself, envisioning the future on the day of creation, saw that

some day the inhabitants of this obscure planet would solve the riddle of their existence, would achieve understanding, would become gods themselves. To guard against this day he deliberately set up an impassable road block to prevent us from encroaching on His domains."

HIS voice rose another notch. "If I am using language that is objectionable my apology is that it is the only language I know. If you do not like the use of the word God, then let me say that I can imagine *some* creature of some kind in some remote time setting in motion the total universe we see around us, creating it if you will, and in such a manner that intelligent creatures were certain to appear in it in time.

"Knowing that their intelligence would some day lead them to him, knowing that the basis of that intelligence would be the complex protein molecules in their brains, He deliberately set up a safeguard by making that molecule unstable when used as a creative agent."

He wiped sweat from his face and was silent.

"Then we can never use Lund's discovery?" a voice asked. Sadly, it seemed, as if here was paradise forbidden.

"We can never use it," Feldman answered.

Their faces reflecting despair, bitter regret, disappointment, as one by one the listening men left the lecture room. They gathered in corners, in quiet rooms, they gathered by twos and threes to discuss what they had heard and what they knew to be true.

The purpose that had brought them together here at Blue Mesa was forgotten. In the face of what they now knew, what did fighting a war mean? Here they faced the ultimate antagonist. They had moved into a realm where war, politics, economics, had no meaning.

It is probable that among them there was no man who hesitated. The impossible did not exist.

It was not impossible. It was only highly improbable.

Jerome Feldman gave words to their feelings and charted their course for them. "We cannot use the equations as they now stand," Feldman said. "But that does not mean we cannot use them in some other form. At least we can try."

Feldman hesitated, then continued. "I imagine it was not easy for the lungfish to learn to breathe air and I imagine many a lungfish died before the transition was complete. I imagine many of us will die before the transition to the next phase is complete. Well, let it be that way."

The listening men cheered him until they were hoarse. If there is a Valhalla for giants no doubt Ed Lund and Randy Burton joined in the cheer that arose at Blue Mesa.

Within an hour Blue Mesa began to hum with new activity as the men gathered there, their spirits soaring like eagles into the bright faraway sky, began seeking a way to turn a road block into a detour sign.

Who rules this universe must set up safeguards—who lives within it must seek ways around them.