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# The Time Ray of Jandra

by Raymond A. Palmer



(Illustration by Leonard)

A group of men came out of a building dragging a struggling screaming woman. They dragged her to the edge of the wall, and as the monster saw them, it moved immediately below them.

I WAS born on the ocean-going sailing vessel, *Sylvester*, during a raging storm, a little over forty years ago, and for lack of a better name was christened Sylvester Gale, as suggested by the name of the ship and the storm in which I first saw light. My mother had been picked up on a raft some hours before I was born, too much exhausted to give her name or explain her presence on the raft. She died at my birth and thus left me a nameless waif, dependent on a rough-and-ready grizzled old sea-captain for my education and rearing. The name proved to be prophetic, for my life has been stormy and adventurous. Now, forty years later, I find myself in a strange position; for although those forty years have passed as surely as I was born, I am now, in reality, only twenty-seven years old, and having quit my seagoing career in favor of a peaceful little chicken farm overlooking the Pacific, I delight in setting down the momentous happenings of my life, reliving strange events as I write. The following record is the history of my life during those thirteen missing years.

In 1944, when the second "World War broke out, I was shipped as second mate of the steamship *Merida*, bound for Loanda, Angola, on the southwest coast of Africa, with a cargo of mining equipment for an English mining concern. Our passage was none too smooth, and as we neared the coast, we ran into a bad blow, which drove us some five hundred miles southward off our course before the *Merida* piled up, late in the afternoon, at the mouth of a good-sized river. I now know that it was the Kunene River, which empties into the Atlantic about one hundred miles north of Cape Frio.

I reached the beach in safety, but, horrible to tell, I was the only survivor other than a young pig which the ship's cook had kept for a playmate and companion. Rescuing the pig and letting it romp about on the beach, I sat down to think. I was alone on a strange

coast, without companions or means of sustenance. The pig, I reflected, could be my companion for but a day or two, or until I got hungry. After that it would serve as a means of sustenance for a few days, perhaps even for a week, as it weighed nearly thirty pounds.

While I sat debating ways and means of saving myself from my predicament, without arriving at a definite conclusion, I was aroused by the lengthening shadows to the realization that sunset, which comes suddenly in this part of the world, was near. I looked about, and shouted with joy on seeing that the beach was littered with boxes and barrels of every description. Nondescript articles were scattered over the sand all along the point where the river emptied. With my heart materially lightened, I set about pulling the wreckage above high water mark.

My enthusiasm was slightly dampened when I saw that most of the boxes were labeled "Cradle Screening" and various other articles used in hydraulic mining. But among the debris I found one of the hammocks used by the sailors of the *Merida* while aboard ship. By the time darkness had fallen, I had the hammock slung between two trees at the edge of the rocky promontory upon which fate had cast me. Climbing into it, I placed the pig at my feet more with a view to future meals than for companionship, and strange to say, considering my surroundings, was asleep almost immediately.

Fiction writers have either overrated the danger and numbers of ferocious animals, or perhaps the angel of luckless mariners watched over me that night, for not a sign of man-eating lion or even chattering monkey was evidenced for the succeeding twelve hours.

ON the second day after the *Merida* piled up, I killed the pig, keeping its flesh in an icy spring I had discovered, until, tiring at last of inactivity, I decided to attempt to find a

settlement. Trusting to luck to send me in the right direction, I tossed a coin into the air. Heads I designated as up the beach and tails as the signal for the opposite direction. The coin fell into the sandy soil and I was nonplussed to find that it stood on edge between two small stones. At last I decided to go inland, following the river: a course against all reason, for what could I expect to find in the interior? But as its adventurous aspect appealed to me, the question was settled without even a recourse to reason.

Packing the remains of the pig into a piece of canvas and arming myself with a pistol and a miner's pick, which I had discovered in one of the boxes, I set out, cleaning the pistol as I went. Since there were only six shots in the chamber of the weapon and I had not found any more among the wreckage, it behooved me to conserve my ammunition.

Approaching the river, I followed it into the forest. After some very difficult walking through tangled vines and underbrush, I suddenly broke through an especially tangled spot into a sort of clearing. A path, well defined in spite of the fact that it did not seem to have been traveled for some time, led me on, still following the river bank. I took this path to be an indication of a settlement further on, and for two days I followed it, covering, at a rough estimate, about twenty miles a day. On the eve of my second day of marching, I came to the beginning of a paved roadway. I was dumbfounded! A paved road in that section of the country was unbelievable! But what a road it was! Completely blocked in some places by an indescribable confusion of tangled creepers and brush, even trees growing out of crevices in the cement-like material of which the road was composed. It had the appearance of not having been traversed by vehicles of any sort for ages. Even afoot it was hard going.

I followed this road for what must

have been some forty miles, and towards the evening of the fifth day after leaving the beach I came to its end. And now a strange sight met my eyes! Before me rose the partially destroyed buildings of a vast and ancient city. Coming closer to a huge pile that seemed to be practically intact, I stood still in wonder. Was this an ancient city? Where the plaster and bricks had fallen away, thick steel girders came to view, proclaiming the modernness of the construction. And yet the building was old—incredibly old. The stones had been worn almost entirely away by time and the elements, and when I tested its hardness by striking the side of the building with my mining pick, the latter seemed to rebound as if it were made of rubber. Where I had hit the wall, there was revealed but a very small nick. That stone was harder than granite! The tremendous signs of wear convinced me that this was in fact no modern city; on the contrary, it was one of the oldest cities of the earth, perhaps even antedating the last glacial epoch.

Activated at last by a compelling desire to see the inside of this building, which still towered twenty stories into the air, I entered a square opening that gave evidence of having once supported either a door or a window. Grooves in the side gave the impression of a sliding window rather than a door. As I entered, my eye fell upon a peculiar gargoyle, which pointed downward as if the building had at one time been higher. It was now on a level with the ground where it looked ludicrous. One would expect such ornamentation at a higher level.

Inside the building stretched long corridors, well-lighted by numerous windows. At the foot of these windows were strewn the dust and debris of ages, with here and there a glittering piece of glass glinting out of the heap.

Advancing down a corridor, I came to a solid stone door that completely blocked the

way. Noticing a knob in the center of this door, I grasped it and pulled downwards. There was a grating sound, and the huge structure rose into the ceiling, and I could see that it was almost five feet thick. I passed through the opening and found myself in a room that surpasses description.

I SHOULD call it a hall rather than a room, for its size was enormous. It was fully three hundred and fifty feet long and about one hundred and twenty feet high. There were absolutely no windows or openings of any kind in the room except the door by which I had entered and a similar door at the other end, yet the room was brightly lighted by sunlight, whose source of entry I could not discover.

Along one wall was an array of the most surprising objects my eyes had ever beheld, resting in a succession of niches in the wall, and ranging from one end of the room to the other. At the end nearest me the niches were only a few feet in height and three feet in width. As my eyes traveled to the other end of the room, I noted that the niches became larger and larger. The final niche was similar to the first in width, but it was fully one hundred feet in height. The niches themselves were not so astounding as what they contained. The first few seemed empty but further along I could see the glint of a glass-like substance.

Examining the first niche more closely, I saw that it contained an extremely small glass tube that was visible only by means of a magnifier suspended above it. As I progressed down the hall, looking at the contents of each niche, I noted that each tube was slightly larger than its predecessor. In the large niche at the end was a tube whose huge gleaming bulk towered fully to the top of its hundred foot recess. All these tubes were shaped like a straight lozenge rounded off at the ends. In the large tube a thick cable-like

metal wire entered at the bottom rounded end, and, looking up, I could see that a similar cable entered at the top end. The terminals of these wires were metal plates which faced each other. Otherwise the tube was entirely empty. In the small tubes the wires were mere hairs and the plates apparently thinner than gold leaf. In the first tube of all the wires were so thin as to be completely invisible, even under the magnifying glass.

I moved to the center of the room and counted the niches. There were exactly ninety-two. What were these ninety-two tubes supposed to represent? In a space of about six inches between every two niches I saw engraved in luminous characters a symbol which I took to signify the nature and name of the tube next to which it stood. If those characters had only been written in English!

The other wall was just as interesting, if not more so. It was dominated by a large circle about seventy-five feet in diameter, around the outer rim of which were arranged ninety-two little white discs that looked like frosted glass. Ninety-two again! What was the meaning of this number? In the center of the circle a large purple disc, reminding one of the hole in a doughnut, further ornamented the circle.

This large circle was duplicated in miniature by a raised, table-like disc mounted before an operator's chair, except that, instead of white discs around its circumference, there were small push buttons, and in place of the purple central disc there was a little lever. Just above this raised disc-board was a dial with figures on it somewhat like a clock. Three hands, all of different lengths, radiated from the center of this dial.

I had been so busily engaged in examining the interesting features of this novel room that I had not noticed that the light was fading and all was becoming dim and gloomy. The sun was evidently setting and I had not over thirty minutes of light left in

which to explore. I looked about to see if there was some switch that might betoken artificial illumination, but there was none. The only switches were the ones on the discboard. I determined to experiment with some of the buttons and pushed the first and nearest one. A sudden loud crash behind me caused me to wheel in sudden alarm. The door through which I had entered was closed! I turned and pressed the button again and was rewarded by a muffled clang as the door again rose into the ceiling. Closing it again to assure myself that there was nothing mysterious in its operation, I began to press the rest of the buttons.

The first one I pressed caused the opening of the other door and after I had closed it, I pressed the next button. One of the white discs above in the large circle flashed once and became dark again. Here was a little light at least. The next buttons resulted in the same thing and so on for about fifteen buttons. After I had pressed the sixteenth button, I became aware of a dim blue radiance and turning toward the opposite wall, was astonished to note that each of the first sixteen small tubes glowed with a point of violet or blue light I turned again to the disc-board and pressed the rest of the buttons in quick succession. Each resulted in a flash from its corresponding white disc above and each lit up one of the tubes. The last tube glowed red in all its enormity and filled the hall with light. In the mingled play of ninety-two different shades of light, the room seemed to sway and belly out as if blown by the wind. My hand looked twice as large and seemed to detach itself from my wrist in the rainbow of colors. My clothes seemed to flicker as if afire. Fascinated, I played with the buttons as a pianist plays with his keys, flashing chord after chord of these many-hued lights.

I GLANCED at the central lever of the discboard. What light did this important-looking lever illuminate? Did it light the purple disc above? If so, where was the tube that should light with the flash? Without pausing to think, I pulled it down suddenly as far as it would go. There was a flash of purple light and as it flashed to each tube, the fire in each seemed to pass through the glass and enter the hall itself. The colors blended and formed a gray blur that blackened into darkness. Almost immediately it merged into bright daylight and faded to darkness again before I could see anything. The alternating white and dark flashes became so swift that they finally blended into a solid gray blur. I felt a strange whirling sensation in my brain and grew dizzy. I felt terribly sick at my stomach. My dizziness increased until I could hardly retain my senses. In terror I groped for the switch and as I did so, my eyes fell on the dial above the discboard. It was a blur of moving hands; the longest hand entirely invisible, the next one a faint blur, and the short one moved rapidly around its path. Strange to say, the dial was the only visible object in the room. I felt myself falling to the floor and grasped the switch in time to pull it back. With a crash the room came back into view, the hands on the dial stopped suddenly, nauseating pains gripped me and I fell senseless to the floor.

When I regained my senses, there was a bustle of life and activity in the hall. It was filled with a dazzling bluish-white light which made me squint. Four strange men were moving about the room, evidently engaged in assembling a machine of some sort, for scattered pieces of apparatus lay in disarray all over the hall. Where had these men come from? And their dress—it was outlandish. I had never seen men dressed in such clothes, except perhaps in the occasional theaters I had

visited on my rare shore leaves. Their arms and legs were wound about by a seemingly endless band about an inch wide. They wore a short leather skirt that reached to their knees, a plain band of some dark material around their bodies, while the shoulders and chest were bare except for a strap around the neck from which a peculiar emblem hung down over the chest and back. Knees and elbows were bare also, presumably to allow freedom of movement. Their skin was a healthy white, with red cheeks and the flush of healthy blood in their veins, but their hair was a dull and lifeless white.

I rose unsteadily to my feet and walked over to the nearest one. He seemed not to notice me as I approached, and I accosted him in a loud tone. He paid no attention. I was dumbfounded!

“Hey,” I shouted angrily, “Are you deaf?” Still no answer. I strode over to grasp him by the shoulder as he bent over his work. I meant to whirl him around and confront him. Imagine my surprise when I grasped nothing but thin air and fell heavily to the floor from the energy I had so uselessly expended! I was utterly astounded. Had I missed his shoulder when I grabbed? Cautiously I extended my hand and attempted to touch him. Truly, my hair rose on end and I staggered back in horror. My hand passed entirely through his body and he seemed not to notice my presence. Suddenly he straightened and stepped toward me. Before I could move from my tracks to avoid a collision, he had walked straight through me! A sudden terror gripped me and I turned and ran from the room.

I ran the full length of the corridor outside before my terror permitted me to stop my mad dash to get away from the accursed room. I came to a stop before a large window and tried to collect my thoughts as I stared uncomprehendingly on the scene before me. Was I dead? Did my lack of ability to touch any object mean that I was no longer an

inhabitant of this earth? Gradually all thoughts of my probable whereabouts dropped from me as I became aware of what lay beyond the window.

FAR below me lay the streets of a mighty city. Teeming thousands of people and vehicles thronged the thoroughfares. A dull roar came up to me from the street. On all sides, as far as the eye could see, magnificent buildings thrust their imposing heads into the sky. The air was filled with myriad cigar-shaped aircraft, similar to Zeppelins except that there were no cabins slung beneath them. The sides were lined with windows and it was evident that they carried no gas-bags to support them in the air. Some strange power activated them, as there were no propellers visible. Through the windows I could see that they were packed with human beings. As I watched, a brilliant blue ship settled to the roof landing stage of a nearby building and disgorged its passengers.

This kaleidoscopic scene was bathed in an indescribably brilliant blue-white light which fairly made the eyes ache. I looked at the sun, and as soon as my eyes fell upon it I covered them with my hands and staggered back. Although it was the size of the sun I had known, it was twice as bright, glaring forth like a white-hot furnace.

Footsteps behind me caused me to turn to see one of the peculiarly attired men walking toward a flight of stairs. I determined to accompany him and see where he was bound. This strange ability to remain invisible to all about me was becoming engrossing. Accordingly I trod immediately behind him as he descended the stairs. He was talking to himself, but I could not understand a word he was saying. He continued down, flight after flight, with me in close pursuit. Finally we came to the ground floor and my guide walked down the corridor to the door which led outside to the street. He stepped through the doorway, and as I went to follow him I ran

straight into a wall of solid, painful substance. Nothing blocked my view of the street, but before my searching hands I felt a wall of cold rock. It was the only thing in this strange world that I had been able to touch since I regained consciousness, and by some queer twist of fate, it was the only substance I could not see.

My guide I saw striding down the street outside, but I was powerless to follow. Sadly perplexed, I wended my way again up to the floor where I had first seen the city. I stood looking out of it when suddenly I noted a gargoyle beside the window. Something familiar in its appearance struck me. It was the gargoyle of the window by which I had first entered this mysterious building! Again I was dumbfounded, for here was this gargoyle fifteen stories above the street, and just a short time ago I had seen it on a level with the ground. I leaned out of the window to get a closer view of it, and as I did so my pistol left my pocket and fell outside the sill. It dropped only about six inches and then hung as if suspended in the air! I reached down and an exclamation escaped my lips. To my sense of touch my pistol lay on solid ground! All around as far as I could reach with my hands there was solid earth, grass and pebbles under my fingers. I could feel them, but I could see nothing!

Slowly the explanation of it all dawned on me. Somehow or other those tubes in the hall had placed me in a different dimension. I did not doubt that this dimension was time. But to what point in time had I been transferred? Past or future? I understood now why I had been unable to pass through the door below. The level of the ground in relation to the building had changed since the time I was now in. Yes, I must be in the past! Suddenly reassured, I jumped out of the window and stood on solid ground outside. Rather timidly, though, I began to walk over the invisible but substantial earth, for the sight

of the depths below me made me tremble. To my vision, I was two hundred feet above the street. Below me moving throngs went to and fro. Had mortal man ever before been in such a position as I now occupied? Imagine walking over invisible terra firma hundreds of feet above visible earth!

THEN began one of the strangest sightseeing tours I have ever undertaken. I walked slowly along on the invisible sod, observing the strangeness of the life below me. Many of the people depended entirely on the use of their limbs to go from place to place, but some sped down the center of the street on peculiar three-wheeled chairs. They sat in these with hands on a steering bar before them, and from time to time pressed a button on the front of the chair-car according to their desires in speed and the signals of the traffic signs in the streets. These signs were nothing else but huge revolving bars mounted on a post above the heads of the traffic. They were colored yellow and blue and I noticed blue seemed to be the signal for resumption of traffic, for the chair-cars all stopped when the yellow bar faced them. This applied to the pedestrians also.

Nowhere could I see any automobiles or street cars, nor in fact any other ground vehicles besides the chair-cars. The only other mode of traffic made itself known in a rather startling way. I looked up for a moment from my interested inspection of the streets to see flashing along in the sunlight before me one of the peculiar Zeppelin-like airships. It came speeding straight at me, and, as I tried to duck, struck me squarely in the chest with its sharp prow. As it passed over and through me I could see the interior of the car. Its lower part was occupied by softly humming machinery and the upper part was lined with seats divided by an aisle running its full length down the center. There was no sign of a driver or conductor, the ship seemingly taking its

course without the guidance of anyone inside the ship. My sensations as the ship forged along through me were peculiar in the extreme. As each object in it came towards my head, I could hardly resist the temptation to duck, although I began to realize it could never touch me.

After it had passed I resumed my walk, and as I progressed to the edge of the city I noted that I was coming nearer to the ground. Just ahead and on a level with me was the edge of the city. It ended abruptly in a high wall many feet thick that separated the city from a luxuriant and steaming jungle beyond. There were no trees such as we know, nor bushes; all was composed of huge hundred-foot ferns and long waving fronds. The ground was covered with rotting vegetation and muddy-looking water lay in brackish puddles all about. I stood in wonder, contemplating this strange jungle, and as I watched, the fronds in the distance began to wave.

Through the waving ferns I could indistinctly see the approach of some huge animal. It looked like an enormous alligator standing on its hind legs. As it suddenly burst out into the clear space below me, I gasped in amazement. It was a mighty, gleaming, plated monster that stood on two enormous hind legs with ridiculously short and small forelegs held high above the waving fronds. Its small, wicked head turned to and fro as it inspected the wall of the city. A long, heavy tail dragged behind it and I was given a demonstration of its power when it became caught between two huge ferns. With a careless flip of its tail the monster swept both ferns to the ground, shattered to pieces.

It seemed to be waiting for something to appear on the top of the wall to my right, for it stared steadily toward this spot, giving vent the while to earth-shaking growls and roars. Suddenly, a group of men came out of a building that abutted on the wall, dragging a struggling, screaming woman in their midst.

They dragged her to the edge of the wall and, as the monster saw them, it moved over to a point immediately below them. Cold sweat broke out on my forehead. What were they going to do? Were they going to feed the poor woman to that awful prehistoric monster? My question was answered immediately, as the woman was cast off the wall. She was caught in mid fall by the hungry beast....

What kind of people were these that could so cruelly and heartlessly cast this woman to such a horrible fate? What had she done to deserve it? In that moment the glamour of my position vanished. I determined to turn my efforts henceforth to getting back into my own time at any cost.

AS it was now growing dark, I hastened back to the building I had left early that morning. As I entered its dark shadow, I was stopped by the peculiar actions of a man in a long cloak immediately below me. The street was deserted by this time and I watched him to see what he was up to.

He waited, crouching in a dark doorway, while a lone striding figure approached down the street. As the figure drew opposite his hiding place, he sprang out, drew a long sword from beneath his cloak and with a vicious stroke, ran his victim through. I had shouted in warning, a shout that died in my throat as I realized my powerlessness to prevent the deed below me. I looked again at the scene. The murderer was rifling the pockets of his victim. Suddenly, from the areaway of the building beside the murderer a group of men sprang out, and before the killer could move from his tracks they had surrounded him and made him fast with a peculiar sort of metal collar attached to a chain which was carried in the hand of the leader. This group of men were obviously the police of this strange city, for they wore a uniform of a sort: bright red leggings, yellow cape, and a leather holster containing

weapons—a sword, a short knife and a peculiar little hollow tube with a small glass bulb on one end, strapped about their waist. In addition they wore the leather skirt I had observed on all the males of the city. It was with a slightly better regard for the city, that I turned toward the only place I might call home—the building from which I had first emerged.

I stood at the window of the building musing over my position in time and wondering how I should get back into my own dimension, when a faint, distant roar jerked me out of my preoccupation. A lion! Again it roared, and this time something peculiar in the tone made the hair on the back of my neck stand up in an overwhelming horror. I realized suddenly that it was not distance that caused the far-away feeling, but actual faintness! The lion could not be more than fifty feet away, but I was powerless to see it, for the simple reason that the lion was not in the dimension of the city, but in my own dimension! I could touch the ground in that dimension, so why couldn't the lion touch me? However, the horror of my predicament sent me scuttling in terror through the window and back into the room of the four scientists—for such I assumed them to be. I had no desire to have an invisible lion tear me to pieces nor, for that matter, any lion at all. Once inside the walls of that room, I had a feeling of at least temporary security.

### CHAPTER III A Strange Predicament

I HAVE always been able to sleep in any place and under any circumstances, so it was not long after I lay down on the hard floor that I fell into a sleep full of dreams of giant monsters gulping down whole crowds of people, and of sneaking, cloaked creatures

thrusting their sharp swords into defenseless men and women. These dreams were counterbalanced in a measure by lines of grinning murderers being led away with enormous chains about their necks.

When I awoke it was broad daylight, but there was no one in the room as yet. As I sat up and rubbed the sleep from my eyes I stretched my arms and touched the wall as I did so. A sudden thought struck me. How was it I could touch the walls and floors of this building, and nothing else? The explanation, which was simple, took me some time to figure out, but I finally came to the conclusion that the walls, being present in both kinds of time, were therefore materially present in both dimensions.

Having nothing else to do, I decided to explore the building and later take another stroll about the city. Accordingly, I went first to the top floor and inspected each room that was not closed. They were empty for the most part, but some of them were storerooms for a multitude of strange objects: giant tubes, intricate pieces of machinery, row upon row of storage batteries, glass vessels filled with some peculiar liquid, and a variety of pieces of furniture. All the floors above the scientists' room were similar to the top floor, and I passed on to the lower floors. These seemed to be living apartments, for most of them were closed and the ones that were open contained a bed and a few chairs. When I came to the second floor, I stumbled on a room that was to prove of great interest to me during the next few weeks. It was occupied by a number of little seats and benches, just as is a modern schoolroom. There were books lying on every bench, and, forgetting myself for the moment, I attempted to open one and glance at the contents. My failure chagrined me thoroughly, for I was eager to learn something of the language of the city, so that I could learn what was going on from the talk of those around me.

During the day, I had seen a few groups of people listening intently to the harangues of a few debating individuals. They had evidently had an interesting subject, for the crowds had alternately cheered and booed the two speakers. I determined to wait until school should begin, but was frustrated by something I had hitherto overlooked. I realized that I was hungry! Where could I lay my hands on any food in this place? When I realized that I could get no food, my hunger redoubled and my fears increased. Something would have to be done. True, I had had about twenty pounds of pork left in my canvas sack, but that had been left at the edge of the jungle when I first came upon the city, so it was still in the other dimension. But wait! Could I not touch it as easily as I could the earth of my former dimension? I seized upon the faint hope and rushed from the building. I remembered that I had come on a straight line toward the window, so I retraced my steps in the same direction.

I covered the distance, as nearly as I could judge, from the window to the forest, and dropping on my knees, I searched the ground thoroughly all around. I hunted for over an hour and finally, just as I was about to give up in despair, I came upon the canvas. I believe it was then that I received my greatest shock. True, I had found the canvas, but canvas will not keep a man alive. It was torn open and its contents gone! No doubt, the lion of the night before had found it and eaten it. I stumbled to my feet wearily. As I did so, I scraped against a bush. Eagerly I felt of its invisible branches. It was covered with berries! I began picking them, but as I stuffed a handful into my mouth the thought of poison came into my mind. I could not see these berries to recognize their nature, nor could I even see whether they were ripe or not. But my hunger finally overruled judgment, and I filled my stomach with them. Some were not yet ripe and were very sour, but by picking

only the largest ones I managed to get the ripest. I laughed when I thought of the peculiar sight the bush would have presented to anyone in the other dimension. I know I would have stared astonished, if I had seen a bush mysteriously shaken with no visible agency to cause the movement. I retraced my steps to the city with an uncomfortable feeling in my stomach, but, in my eagerness to return to the schoolroom, I ignored it and hurried back. When I arrived, school was already in session. The pupils, dressed exactly like their elders, were sitting at their desks with their open books before them, listening to the explanations of the teacher.

I HAVE read a few novels from magazines I had gotten hold of during my sailing career, and I remember the scoffing I had directed at the "love at first sight" maxim most of the writers employed. But I will admit that I changed my views with my first sight of that teacher. The only word I can think of to describe her is stunning. I could call her heavenly, divine, and all that sort of rubbish, but I was not raised that way, and even these words would fail to describe her beauty. She was small, not much over five feet in height, with dark, wavy, rippling hair and brown eyes. Her complexion was light and, although she evidently used some sort of artificial coloring on her face, making her cheeks too bright a pink to be natural, the effect was pleasing on the whole and effectively threw her pearly white teeth into prominence. As her hair was dark, I would naturally have supposed her skin to be dark also, but, as I was to learn, it was one of the peculiarities of the people of the city to have light skin, no matter what the color of the hair. Keeping my eyes on her face, and listening to her melodious voice, I utilized my new found ability and slid into the seat of a small boy in the first row. His little arms, apparently protruding from my own body, held an open book before him. It was

filled with pictures with curious symbols beneath them and the teacher was evidently reading them to the pupils. Suddenly she addressed the pupil on my right, who arose and began reading from the first page of the book. My boy, if I may call him that, also turned to the first page. I listened as he read, and noted the heading of the paragraph or, as I should say, the column he was reading, as the words were written in columns down the length of the page. The word at the top he pronounced "hask," and I glanced at the picture to see what "hask" might be. Staring at me from the page was one of the little boys around me or a replica. So, hask was evidently a boy. I chuckled. This was not going to be so hard, especially with the good looks of the teacher, although I sometimes found myself looking at her instead of paying attention to the reading that was going on.

After school was out I followed the teacher to see whither she was bound. She stopped at a slot near the door and inserting a round object, withdrew a printed card. Reading it as she walked, she left the building in the direction I had gone the day before. I followed her to the wall where I had witnessed the seemingly cruel feeding of the monster. A crowd was congregated on the wall and the tyrannosaurus was roaring and barking outside as he did on the other occasion. I was disgusted. Were these people congregated to see another such brutal spectacle? Was my teacher here for the same purpose? I waited to see.

From the door where the woman had been dragged another procession came. There was no dragging now, as the victim was a man, and I have since learned that there is no yellow streak in any of the males. He marched bravely, or should I say arrogantly, to his fate, and to cap it all, himself leaped into the monster's jaws with a nonchalant gesture at the crowd. I recognized him in that moment as the murderer of the night before. So this was

their method of punishment for crime! I suppose their method was just enough, but I can never reconcile myself to the terribleness of it. They could at least have executed them by hanging or the sword. As he leapt, I watched the teacher and derived a certain amount of satisfaction from the fact that she covered her eyes and turned away. So she was not so cold-blooded as some of the other females who laughed uproariously at the disgusting sight of the criminal's legs protruding from the monster's mouth.

SHE melted into the now dispersing throng, and I stood for a moment debating what to do for the rest of the afternoon. As I was hungry, I advanced across the wall and gathered my dinner of berries; and this time I was lucky enough to stumble on a banana tree. The fruit, although small and not of a good quality, filled me with satisfaction and I marked the place in my memory for future visits, although it promised to be a hard job to find an invisible banana tree every time I was hungry. After I had finished, I stuffed a few bananas into my pockets and took my way toward the center of the city. I had not explored that portion before, having confined my efforts to getting to the edge of the city on the other side. Now I laid my course straight toward a huge building near the center that overtopped all its neighbors, as the upflung torch of the Statue of Liberty surmounts the shipping of New York.

I continued straight along my way, ignoring the streets and passing over the mounds that marked in my own dimension the apparently standing buildings of this city of long ago, and soon arrived at the portals of the building. It was evidently the center of legislation and authority in the city, for inside there were many solemn gatherings, all debating on some unknown subject—unknown to me because of my ignorance of their language. I determined to try harder than

ever to master it by attending the class of the beautiful teacher every day. Having no means of knowing what the discussion was about, I soon tired of the place and passed on.

As I neared the exact center of the city I came upon one of the most stupendous things I have ever witnessed. Below me was a hole in the earth a full mile in diameter and extending down into the center of the earth until its bottom was lost in the distance. Standing around the hole, and kept away from its edge by a protecting wall about ten feet high, were a crowd of people. At intervals along the wall were shouting men, who evidently had something to show, for they often indicated a peculiar object at their sides. Men and women were offering them coins and peering into this object, so I too hurried over and endeavored to get a glimpse of the scene in the glass ball, for such it proved to be. For a moment no one was bending over it and I got a clear view of the scene. I gasped in amazement, for in the ball I could see the bottom of the great hole. Men were swarming about in it, or rather on top of a huge metal disc at the bottom, that was the exact size of the hole. From the edges of this disc swirling vapor was rising and being drawn off through vent holes in the side of the great hole.

As I watched I could see the great disc sink slowly downwards. A feeling of awe came over me as I realized that the vapor arising around the sides was the only remaining vestige of the solid rock that was being disintegrated beneath. What was the purpose of this vast hole in the earth? It must have been very hot at the bottom for all the workers were dressed in something that looked like asbestos, and leading down the side of the pit were pipes that betrayed their refrigerating nature by the heavy coating of frost they carried. The workers at the bottom were merely extending these pipes and fashioning new vent-holes as a lower level was reached, keeping pace with the

disintegrating disc.

The hole was brilliantly lighted all the way down and, advancing on my own solid but invisible earth, I moved over to the center of the pit. Looking straight down I noted that the pit was not entirely straight, as slight variations occurred where one side of the disc had apparently reached a softer, or more easily disintegrated, spot in the rock. These faults were not large, though, and in the main the pit was straight. I looked down at the center and found that the walls came together there, far below—proving that the pit was more than thirty miles deep, since the focal point of a mile-wide pit is approximately that distance.

I must have gazed too long at the pit, for I suddenly became frightfully dizzy and could scarcely crawl to the edge of the hole. My dizziness lasted all the rest of the afternoon and I made my way back to my base, as I was now beginning to term it, and tried to go to sleep without my supper, feeling too miserable to eat the bananas in my pocket. For the next few weeks, I determined, I would devote myself to learning the language of this strange, yet wonderful and terrifying, city.

#### CHAPTER IV The Time Ray

FOR three weeks I attended the classes of the beautiful teacher, leaving the room only long enough to eat my meals of berries and bananas. Several nights I had spent the greater part of the remaining hours of light in studying out of books accidentally left open on the desks. My progress had been swift, for the language of the city of Jandra (for this I learned was its name) was exceedingly simple, having but about ten thousand words altogether, of which I believe I learned about seven thousand. I found that any glass vessel was called by one name unlike our different

names for dishes and other glass utensils. There was only one word for any article of wearing apparel, and thus the extreme paucity of their language, which at first was very confusing to me, was explained. They simply called similar objects by the same name and let it go at that.

During these three weeks I had come to love this teacher madly; and my inability to talk to her, the knowledge that I could never hear her dear lips speaking to me—since she would never be aware of my presence—plunged me into the depths of despair. She was ever in my thoughts, even when I was watching the interesting experiments of the four scientists of the room of tubes. Through my newly acquired knowledge of their language I learned the story of the tubes; and their presence and the purpose for which they were built was explained. These men were a few of a group that was attempting the passage, either backward or forward, of the dimension known as time. Several attempts had been made and finally a partial success was attained when one of them succeeded in traveling into the past, by means of the tubes and apparatus that had brought me back in time; but it was a complete failure for their purpose, because when one was sent into the past via the tubes, there was no means of returning. One of their number had been sacrificed in this attempt and thus there were now only five left. Four of them were engaged on a machine in this room, while the fifth was at work in some city they designated as Porthus, which, from the motions they made when they mentioned it, was evidently somewhere above our heads; as I now believe, they meant one of the other planets, probably Mars.

It was about the second week of my tuition that I witnessed one of these experiments, the invention of the man who had been in Porthus. He arrived, one day, with a load of equipment and proceeded to set it up

on the floor of the hall. It was a simple-appearing little machine, consisting of a glass cabinet with an electrode on each side. Wires from each led to a series of storage batteries that were of the same type as those stored above in the upper floors. Before demonstrating its action, he engaged in a long discussion with the four men, explaining how the cabinet caused one to move through time. His explanation reached the extent of a lecture, and I shall reproduce it here as faithfully as I can remember it, also allowing for my incomplete knowledge of their language and the varied meaning of their words.

“When Oranus Drey (the scientist who first succeeded in going into the past) undertook his unfortunate journey, he forgot to think of his return. I have made certain of a means of return by a system of levers by which I can reverse the action of the instrument so as to return at any moment by a simple motion of my finger. The cathode ray, as you know, will ionize a thin and attenuated gas in a closed tube. An ordinary atom is electrically neutral, that is, it has no apparent charge of electricity, for the negative charges of its revolving electrons are offset by a positive charge in its nucleus. But when the molecules of a substance are broken up by chemical action, by the effect of high temperature, or by an electric discharge, the pieces are electrically charged, becoming ions. By ion we mean an atom from which a negatively charged electron has become detached, thus leaving the rest of the atom positively charged and therefore ready to combine with any other ray which the electrode may discharge. Thus when the ‘Time Ray,’ as I call it, is discharged, the particles become changed in their relation to time and are sent into a different dimension. My invention is an improvement over the cathode ray I speak of, and I am able to ionize solids as well as gases. Now, watch closely as

I step into the cabinet and go into the future.”

AND with his words, he stepped into the cabinet, closed it tightly, and with a wave to his companions, turned on the current. What happened afterward is not quite clear to me, as I do not understand the meaning of the things I saw, but I will describe them so that anyone reading this may understand, perhaps better than I did.

The walls of the cabinet became a play of iridescent colors similar to a soap bubble, while, in the upper portion of the cabinet and in each wall where the electrodes were, a corona formed, crackling viciously. Small sparks flickered in the air inside the cabinet. The walls took on a brilliant radiance and the figure of the man inside began to glow with the colored rays. Suddenly, with a sharp click, the radiance faded, the cabinet disappeared, and of the apparatus, batteries and all, nothing remained with the exception of something the four scientists were staring at with horror-bulging eyes. I could see no significance in the presence of several gallons of water spilled on the floor, but the words of one of the scientists made the horrible fact clear: “He forgot to take all the elements along with him. The elements of hydrogen and oxygen were left behind. It is a lesson to us—to be sure that all the elements are affected by the ray.”

I shuddered when I thought of the unfortunate man who was eternally traveling on into the future. Soon after the horrible experiment that ended so tragically, the four scientists left the room and I returned to my classes.

When I considered myself sufficiently educated in the language of Jandra, I undertook another trip to the center of the city and the great pit. I saw nothing new except that the pit was several miles deeper than formerly, and, as it seemed to me, an ominous-appearing vapor was issuing from the top of the hole. When I obtained a glimpse

of the bottom through the glass viewing balls, I found that the workmen were no longer fashioning vents to take off the vapor, but were confining their efforts to extending the cooling pipes, allowing the vapor to ascend as it might.

They were evidently working under difficulties, as there was something like a foot of a soft powdery substance upon the floor. The vapor rising from the pit obscured the view somewhat and I turned my attention to the conversation of the groups of people standing round, in an effort to learn the meaning of all this astounding and apparently meaningless labor. Did not these people realize that the earth is molten at its core and did they not know that they must break through the crust of the earth very shortly? The earth’s crust, according to the general belief, is about sixty miles thick on an average, with an enormously compressed sea of molten lava beneath it. What would happen, should this terrible sea of white hot matter be loosed in the hole? I trembled to think: it would undoubtedly rival the eruptions of a volcano.

Wending my way through, or rather above, the crowds, I gathered the gist of a tremendous story, of a vast undertaking, consisting in a deliberate effort to penetrate to the earth’s supposedly hollow interior! I will repeat, arranged in sequence as nearly as I can, the story of the great pit’s beginning and its purpose, as I was able to piece it together from the scattered conversations I overheard.

It seems that about two years previous a group of men, called (as nearly as I can translate) “Interiorists,” convinced themselves and a group of rich men that the earth was hollow and that great benefits were to be derived from the opening of a passageway through to the imaginary inner world. A year had been spent in recruiting vast sums of money from the extensive holdings of these rich men in their native land, Atlantis. As a

result, the great physicists of the realm were called together to design and construct a machine capable of doing the vast amount of digging that would be necessary to penetrate the estimated fifty miles of earth between the two worlds.

Much money had been wasted on great and expensive machines whose operation was really good on the surface, but which, as soon as rock bottom was struck, bored their way for a few feet into the underlying soft limestone and then refused to budge another inch. Several such machines were constructed before a really great discovery was made, in the form of a rotating, plunging drill that first bored a small hole, and then, rising, again descended, this time plunging its way through as much as sixty feet of rock at a single blow. This drill penetrated to a depth of eight miles and then stopped, stuck fast in a layer of granite; nor could it again be raised to the surface.

Hopes were low at this point, when the obscure chemist, Korthandahl, announced his discovery of a disintegrating vibration, whose mode of action I could not learn, but I gathered that it was electrical in its nature. The great disc at the bottom of the pit was constructed to utilize the discovery, and now after six months of action, it had penetrated to a depth of thirty-nine miles.

THE lower classes of Jandra had watched the experiments with dubious interest and a group was even formed that swore to destroy any successful machinery. They had laughed at the first experiments, but as the success of the disintegrating plate became more and more apparent they became sullen and menacing. Convinced that the earth had a molten interior, they had made several attempts to destroy the plate, but had been repelled by the armed forces of the ruling class. On one occasion they had nearly succeeded. Managing to get to the wall surrounding the pit by massing their

forces and waiting for an auspicious moment, when the guard was being relieved, they had dumped into the pit several hundred pounds of explosive stolen from a government arsenal. But, being ignorant of the use of the stuff, they had neglected to include percussion caps; so the explosive had failed to explode.

After this attack, which had proved so nearly successful, vigilance was increased and the arsenals were more carefully guarded, making it practically impossible to repeat the undertaking. For several months nothing had been heard of the "Preventists," as the leading rebels called themselves, but lately, when the vapors had gotten out of control, and the ominous cloud that continually hung over the pit reminded the people of the warnings of this group, they flocked to the order in droves and insisted on being admitted to membership. The populace was becoming terror-stricken and was demanding that operations cease at once. The only response to the demand had been the increase of the guard around the pit and the addition of another crew of workmen to remove the dust which now settled so deeply on the floor of the hole.

This, then, was the situation when I came on the scene. What happened later I will relate from my own observation. After I had learned this much, I advanced over the hole for another view of its interior, but was frustrated by the dense clouds of smoke which were now issuing from the opening. Suddenly through the murk there appeared the form of an airship such as carried the traffic of Jandra. Its blue prow hove up before me and landed on the edge of the pit. Thirty blackened and dogged men stepped from it and refused to work any longer at the bottom of the shaft. The heat, they said, was becoming unbearable, and they were convinced that the earth was molten at its core and not hollow as they had been led to believe. As they told their stories, I noticed that cordons of guards were being slowly drawn around the thirty workers.

Having aired their views and demanded their discharges, the men found themselves confronted by armed soldiers who surrounded them on all sides and led them away. Then all hell broke loose. The unorganized populace, who had been watching the proceedings, suddenly surged forward in a body and in a moment all order was lost in a melee of struggling men and women. For perhaps fifteen minutes the battle raged, then, upon the advent of reinforcements for the guards, the people withdrew, grimly protecting the thirty men in their midst.

I STAYED around all day watching the proceedings. Finally, finding that there was to be no more excitement that day, I left for my base, stopping on the way to eat my dinner of bananas and berries. As I entered my building, I could see the column of smoke waving like a long plume in the breeze and overshadowing the other portions of the city.

When I arrived in the hall of tubes, I found another experiment in progress. This time the machine was constructed on an entirely different principle from the cabinet-like machine, whose operation had resulted so disastrously. It was in the shape of a huge glass ball, seven feet in diameter, mounted on a succession of graduated metal discs connected to a strange dynamo. These discs were approximately an inch thick, and, as there were ninety-two of them, the entire machine, ball and pedestal, was very nearly fifteen feet high. In the top of the glass ball there was a large electrode, and in its base there was imbedded a large metal plate which formed the anode. This anode was insulated from the base of the machine by a layer of some substance that I took to be a combination of a kind of bakelite and rubber mat. The electrode at the top was also insulated where it issued from the glass globe, and from its outer end a series of wires extended to the dynamo and to each of the

metal discs below, which were insulated from one another by sheets of the same strange material. On one side, near the base, was a round plate of glass, threaded with a fine screw thread and evidently intended as a means of ingress and egress, for a round hole in the ball, also threaded, provided an opening just large enough to permit entrance.

As I inspected the great glass ball, the four scientists were talking together. They also went through the motions of farewell, which in Jandra consisted of patting the top of one's head and bowing slightly at the waist. They were evidently making sure that, if something did happen, they should have at least said good-by!

When they had finished their discussion and good-byes, one of them advanced and crawled into the globe. The three others outside screwed the cover in tightly and covered it with some substance not unlike sealing-wax, while the one inside did the same on the inside. When this was done, all was ready for the turning on of the current, which was done by the man inside the glass ball. The manner of starting was practically duplicated from the start of the first experiment I had witnessed, with the exception of a slight whine from the dynamo. The single corona began to crackle overhead and the small sparks again flickered in the air inside the ball, and the walls took on the same brilliance that had marked the first experiment. But the remainder of the experiment seemed to be entirely different.

In the first place, the globe did not disappear, but the man inside did. He seemed to glow for moment, shivered, then dissolved in a cascade of sparks. The glass ball was untenanted, but the dynamo whirred on and the three scientists stood silently watching. For perhaps ten minutes nothing happened; then a slight luminescence inside the globe caused them to lean forward expectantly. Suddenly, with the same shower of sparks that

had marked his going, the figure of the man reappeared inside the globe. He switched off the current and then slumped to the floor. Quickly the other scientists unscrewed the cover of the entrance and dragging the one inside out into the open air, began the working of the arms and pressure on the lungs that betokened resuscitation. There was a slight fluttering of the eyelids as the unconscious scientist began to breathe regularly again, and when he finally opened his eyes the process was stopped. He was very weak and regained his feet with difficulty; but on his face was a smile of triumph that told, better than any words could, how well he had succeeded.

He staggered over to a small dial and, reading the figures thereon, shouted with joy. He had traveled seventeen thousand years into the future! This in itself astonished me; but his words, when he described the age he had visited, or as much of it as he could see from inside the globe, really made me lean forward in amazement. For he described the room exactly as I had first seen it, and two objects that he saw, I recognized, namely, the mining pick I had salvaged from the wreckage of the Merida and a sailor's cap that lay beside it. He had taken pictures of the scene, and I eagerly looked as he showed them to the three scientists. Yes, it was my hat and my pick, and to prove it more forcibly, there were my footprints all over the hall in the dust that had covered the floor! To say that I was excited is putting it mildly, as I fairly jumped up and down when I realized that here was a means of returning to my own dimension. I ran to the machine, but stopped suddenly as I plunged half way through it! *I had forgotten that I could touch nothing in this dimension except the things that were present in both.* I was stunned. Was I doomed to remain in this terrible existence all my life? In despair, I slumped to the floor and buried my head in my arms, sobbing like a baby after the reaction.

## CHAPTER V Into the Pit!

AS soon as the scientists had retired, I tried to sleep, but I was not destined to succeed that night. I had barely closed my eyes when a faint, strangely menacing noise beat upon my ears from the distance. It was the shouting of a multitude, and, from the sound, it was coming closer. I sprang to my feet and went to the window. I could see the waving torches as the mob drew nearer, and I decided to investigate. I did not wish to miss anything of the weird drama that was being played in Jandra, seemingly for my own benefit. I suspected another attack on the pit, and ran in that direction, but I soon retraced my steps when I noticed that the crowd had stopped. They were congregated around a huge building that I judged to be the place where the cigar-shaped aircraft were kept during the night. By the time I arrived the fighting was already nearly over; the guard of the building, being few, had succumbed quickly.

The mob had swarmed into the building and now, through one of the large openings in the wall, one of the huge airships was being shoved. As it came in sight, the remaining people in the street cheered, and, dashing into an opposite building, soon reappeared in the tower. This tower, I had found, was the place from which the ships were controlled. During the daytime there were only three men in the directing room, but as travel was very lax at night, there was only one man there, serving more in the capacity of watchman than operator. He put up a stiff resistance, but was finally overcome as the door crashed in and the mob swarmed over it. One of their number sprang to the operator's seat, and throwing a switch, began to maneuver the stolen ship towards the northern

section of the city, where he caused it to settle to the ground. The mob had followed and was now engaged in loading something into the ship until it fairly sagged. Whatever they were loading in was heavy, for each man staggered under a ridiculously small piece.

When they had finished, the operator pressed a button, and the great ship rose ponderously into the air and headed in the direction of the pit, I suddenly realized what they were going to do and gasped as I thought of what would happen when that ship was dropped into the shaft. A drop of over forty miles would cause the ship to attain a tremendous acceleration and I feared for the solidity of the remaining bit of crust. If this held, the disc would be destroyed, and perhaps a calamity would be averted—but suppose it did not hold! As I wanted to be present when the ship was dropped into the hole, I raced over the uneven ground, barking my shins and getting many a mean bruise as I ran headlong into solid objects. I reached the edge just as the ship was maneuvering into position over the pit. The guard of the pit were helpless, for they had not thought of this contingency; they could only watch in terror as the ship slowly neared the center of the hole. Several of their number raced off, probably in search of the scientists who were supervising the construction of the hole. They soon returned, bearing a strange apparatus. This they set up and then aimed it at the ship, which was hovering like a menacing thunderbolt above the pit. I judged that it was a disintegrating machine somewhat similar to the disc that was engaged in digging the shaft to the inner world. But it was destined to failure, for as the crowd saw what was going on, they surged forward in an irresistible mass and, just as the current was turned on, overturned the machine. It swung around as it fell, sweeping the earth, and of the fiercely struggling mass of people and soldiery there remained, in a few moments, only a thick cloud of dust that

settled slowly to the ground.

At this moment the hovering ship, at the motion of the operator in the directing tower, plunged into the abyss with a sighing rush of air. I advanced over the hole and watched its descent. Straight as a plummet it fell, gaining speed and dwindling to a speck, until it was hidden by the rising column of dust that swirled in its wake.

The very earth seemed to hold its breath, as it waited for the catastrophic explosion I was sure would follow. It seemed an interminable age of waiting before the first echo of the crash came. It grew in volume until, from a sighing roar, it became a crashing thundering. The ground began to shake and the roaring grew to intense proportions.

THE first indication the people of Jandra had that all was not well, was the thunder of the great law building as it leaned gently over and toppled its tower into the pit. All the great buildings in sight were swaying like huge pendulums and, as they fell, they carried their smaller neighbors with them. I stood transfixed, still over the hole, until I was aroused by a stupendous roar immediately below me. Surging up the tunnel, in a cloud of belching flame, came a seething sea of boiling lava! I was suddenly engulfed and could see nothing but a ruby red swirling mass around me. My terror had been absolute as the fiery mass rushed at me, but now, realizing my immunity, I walked blindly, stumblingly, through the red mass for a seemingly interminable period. Finally I came to a spot above the lava, which was spreading swiftly on all sides except to the north, where it was held by the still standing portion of the law building. A tremendous column of lava was shooting from the pit to a height of nearly a mile. It shot out obliquely, falling far to the south and completely engulfing the southern portion of the city. The night sky was a brilliant ruby red in which the moon was a

vague pink spot. Parts of the city that were not entirely engulfed were blazing fiercely, adding to the red glare.

I suddenly thought of the machine and the scientists. What were they doing during all this destruction? I increased my speed as I realized that they would try to escape by going into the future. My breathing quickened. If they went as far as formerly, would I not be able to touch the machine if it were in my own dimension as well as in this? I fairly raced as I thought of this, and I arrived at the building far in advance of the flames. As I burst into the room I found the dynamo whirring, but there was no sign of the scientists. They had already left—were even now on their way into the future. I leapt to the ball and tried to touch it; but evidently they had not yet reached my own time. I waited, occasionally touching the ball to see if it was in my own dimension. As I waited, I walked to the window and took a look at the now almost completely destroyed city. Only the northern portion had escaped the lava, and even this lay in ruins from the earthquake with the exception of a few buildings. The fountain of lava was not nearly so high now and it suddenly ceased altogether as another severe tremor shook the earth. A nearby building, already leaning precariously on its foundation, fell to earth with a shuddering crash. I rubbed my eyes. Yes, it was true. The earth seemed to be rising swiftly; the entire surrounding city was rising until the ground was almost level with my window. I suddenly became aware, however, that it was the building that was sinking, and not the earth that was rising. I felt no downward surge because I was already on the level to which the earth now appeared to come.

Suddenly the sound of the dynamo behind me ceased, and I turned in apprehension. To my joy I found that I could touch it, and hastily unscrewing the cover, I crawled inside. Replacing the cover by means

of a handle on the inside, I hurriedly splashed some of the waxy substance over it and turned to the switch. Through the glass walls I caught a last glimpse of the now smouldering ruins, before I turned the current on. The dynamo had barely started to hum at full speed before the switch was mysteriously turned off again. Knowing that the scientists had turned it, finding their journey resumed, I again threw it over and clung desperately to it to prevent it from being turned off again. I watched the dial on the wall; the hands were speeding around their tracks; twenty thousand years, twenty-one—twenty-two—twenty-three, and continuing on up to thirty-four thousand years. Here I released the switch as I knew that my time was seventeen thousand years into the future and taking into consideration the seventeen thousand that the scientists had already traveled, I reasoned that at thirty-four thousand I would be in my own time. A strange weariness seized me and I had barely strength to open the glass door and crawl outside before I succumbed and sank to the floor.

THE room was just barely glowing with the pink tint of sunrise, when I staggered to my feet with a groan of agony as a sudden surge of dizziness swept over me. I walked unsteadily in a sort of sideways stagger until the dizziness abated and I could orientate my senses to my surroundings. I stared uncomprehendingly about the room, noting the thick layer of dust, crossed by footprints that led about the hall with no seeming purpose, crossing and recrossing as they traced their way about the hall. My mind was gradually emerging from the fog that had engulfed it and suddenly it all swept back to me: the pit of the Interiorists, the attack of the Preventists, and the cataclysm that had resulted in the destruction of Jandra.

These footprints in the dust of the floor were my own, made before my memorable

experiment with the discboard controlling the tubes. All at once the thought of the globe that had brought me back in time entered my mind, and I stared about in search of it. There was no sign of it nor of any-of the other apparatus. I suppose it had gone, under the guidance of the scientists, into new realms of time. As I stood thinking of the events through which I had passed, with my eyes bent to the floor, my attention became riveted on one of the footprints on the floor before me.

A low cry of astonishment escaped me; these were not new prints! They were covered with a layer of dust a full inch in depth and I noted with swift realization that all about me was uniformly covered with the dust, with no evidence of disturbance for years except the spots that, marked the place where I had emerged from the globe and the spot where I now stood. The niches in the wall were shapeless piles covered with dust. Shapeless piles! Where were the tubes? Scraping away the layer of dust on the floor near one of the niches I found the remains of the tubes; shattered fragments of glass and bent and twisted remnants of metal electrodes. The operation of the tubes after so many centuries of inactivity had doubtless proved too much for them and they had collapsed.

Selecting several heavy pieces of the metal electrodes, which I found to be of platinum, I left the hall, giving but a passing glance to the large circle on the opposite wall. It too, had collapsed and one half lay in dust-covered fragments on the floor while the still hanging part leaned uncertainly outwards. I turned my back on this only remaining fragment of the vast works of the city of Jandra and advanced down a long corridor out into the blessed dimness of my own sunlight: blessed indeed, for it furnished the best proof that I had returned to my own age! I stood for a moment gazing at the surrounding jungle and the few miserable piles of grass-grown ruins that were all that remained of the mighty

city of Jandra, and as my gaze returned to the ground at my feet I saw something that looked like a rusty pick. It was my pick—the one I had found in the wreckage of the *Merida*! But what had happened to it? Every vestige of the wooden handle had disappeared and the head was so badly rusted that it fell to pieces when I touched it. How could a pick rust so badly in the short time I had been in Jandra? Why, it was barely a month ago, according to my reckoning, that I first stepped from the jungle at the edge of the city and deposited the pick at the doorway of the building next to which I now stood.

Giving the problem up in perplexity, I began the journey to the coast. All went well for two days, and then on the third day I met with an accident that nearly proved my death. Rounding a turn in the trail, I came full upon a huge lion. With a startling roar, he charged straight for me. Clutching my pistol in my hand, I let the beast have it, firing the entire six shots before the charging lion toppled over at my feet, knocking me over with the momentum of its dead weight. White and shaken, I rose to my feet and surveyed the body. I shuddered as I noted the gaping jaws, the curving claws and the yellow teeth that had so recently been gaping to rend me. I again took up my journey to the coast, although not in such high spirits as before. I was continually darting nervous glances into the underbrush at the edge of the trail, on the lookout for more of the man-eating beasts. I now had no means of protection and threw the useless pistol away to lighten my burden. I was still subject to occasional fits of dizziness and frequently had to stop and cling to a tree bole while I waited for my head to clear.

FOUR days later I reached the coast, coming out of the forest onto the same beach from which I had set out, five weeks before. But it was changed! The two trees at the head of the promontory were mere rotting stumps and of

the boxes and barrels there was not a sign. These indications of seeming age perplexed me greatly, and I pondered over the matter as I sat on the sand to decide what to do. As I sat there I noticed a smudge of smoke on the horizon. It was a ship, and was headed straight for the little harbor. In two hours it had come close enough to anchor, and just as night fell I heard the anchor chain being paid out.

I spent a restless night, and in the morning attracted attention by waving and shouting. Soon a boat put off and headed for shore. Half an hour later I was aboard the *Havana Shipper* bound for Havana.

When introductions were over, the captain asked how I had come to be stranded on such a lonely coast. When I explained that I was the only survivor of the *Merida* which had sunk off this coast about five weeks ago, his eyes opened wide and he looked at me as if I were mad. Finally he managed to stutter, "Five weeks ago! Why man, the *Merida* went down thirteen years ago; in fact on Christmas day, 1944. It is now August 22, 1957."

I straightened as though I had been struck a blow in the face. Thirteen years! It was entirely too incredible. Gradually a realization of what had happened came over me. The machine in which I had returned from Jandra had operated a little too long. I had taken it for granted that the first scientist had gone exactly seventeen thousand years into the future when he had in reality gone a few years less. Therefore my calculations had been thirteen years off. But I was the gainer. Thirteen years had passed without my becoming any older! To find myself only twenty-seven years old in a year that should see my fortieth birthday was novel, to say the least. I decided to tell the captain nothing of my experiences. He would consider me crazy, and I certainly was as sane as anyone. Several days later I landed in Havana, and from there took a ship to San Francisco. Further upstate, I found a wonderful little chicken farm and

purchased it with the money I had realized from the sale of the platinum electrodes of Jandra.

Soon after settling down, I was the recipient of a visit from two men who introduced themselves as the former owner of the *Merida* and a friend of his who had decided to accompany him on his quest for information of the fate of the *Merida*. In some manner the news of my reappearance in civilization had reached him; and as I was the only survivor, he had decided to visit me and learn what had really happened to his ship. Its disappearance, he told me, had been accounted a mystery until pieces of wreckage had been found off the African coast.

Bidding him be seated, I plunged into an account of the wrecking of the *Merida* and when I had finished, he sat thinking for a few moments and looking at me sharply asked, "And where have you been during the past thirteen years? Not that I wish to be inquisitive, but my companion here has heard of a certain statement of yours which you made upon your rescue. You seemed thunderstruck when you were told that thirteen years had passed since the sinking of the *Merida*. How did you come to believe that it was only five weeks? Perhaps it is none of our business, and then perhaps it is. We are waiting."

I debated for a moment the wisdom of telling these men my story. They would disbelieve it anyway. Then the thought of the priceless treasure of platinum that lay on the floor of that dust-covered room decided me; and I began my story while the two men listened intently. When I had finished they sat back and the owner of the *Merida* laughed aloud. Not so his companion, who sat with gradually growing belief plainly outlined on his countenance.

"Just where is this ruined city?" he asked, and upon receiving the information he calmly stated that he was going to Africa to

find the platinum electrodes. His companion stared at him in amazement. "Are you crazy?" he began, but was silenced by a sharp look.

THE scientist, for as such he now announced himself, asked sharply, "Do you know anything of physics?" When I replied in the negative, he nodded his head.

"I thought so. Then you would undoubtedly like to know just what happened to you in that globe, and what happened in the room full of tubes when you first made your journey into the past. Both of the tubes you describe, are, as nearly as I can determine from your rather hazy descriptions, giant variations of the Crookes tube. The round globe by which you made your return was one of the more familiar types, but, as I see it, used a ray similar to the cathode ray but having a vastly different action.

"As for the tubes that took you back in time, I have not much to say. It is probably a form of Crookes tube or perhaps a Geissler

tube. What the scientists of that nation did was to flash the purple 'Time Ray' on the tubes and speed up the motion of the particles in the tube so that they vibrated at such an enormously fast rate that they changed their position with regard to time."

The scientist rose to his feet to signify the interview was at an end, and, bidding me good-by, departed with his companion. I wondered whether he would find the city and whether the platinum would still be there. Or would he perhaps stumble upon an even greater adventure than I had found: an adventure in the future with the three scientists who are now without any home except a desolate, lava-spattered landscape with here and there a building still partially standing like the larger bones of a shattered skeleton. Two years have now passed, and I have had no further news from this scientist. He has not returned. Will he some day come to my little cottage with a story to rival my own? I often wonder.