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# STIRRING SCIENCE STORIES

VOLUME 2

MARCH, 1942

NUMBER 1

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Cover by HANNES BOK

Interior illustrations by BOK, DOLGOV, HALL

**DONALD A. WOLLHEIM, EDITOR**

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Published monthly by Manhattan Fiction Publications, Editorial and Executive Offices, 366 Broadway, New York, N. Y. Copyright 1942 by Manhattan Fiction Publications. Manuscripts should be accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelope, and are submitted at the author's risk. Yearly subscription \$1.80. Single copies 15c. PRINTED IN U.S.A.

# THE DAY HAS COME

by Walter Kubišius

Centuries after the last war had ended, the factories of death still functioned, forgotten in the wilderness, awaiting the call to strike a blow against a foe long dead.

Illustration by Dolgov

**T**HERE was a whirling flash of trees past the window. One wing struck a crag and with a mighty crash the plane erased itself against the mountainside.

Some hours passed before Weaver awoke with a throbbing pain in his arm. A cut shoulder was caked with frozen blood and the first thing he heard was the icy whistle of the cold wind. He staggered to his feet but fell back, fainting, upon a drift of snow and would have been lost were it not for Millet's strong arm.

"Weaver!" Millet shouted above the roaring wind. "Are you all right?"

"I'm okay," Weaver said feebly. "Go to the others."

Millet bent to pick up Weaver's prostrate body and carried it clumsily over the soft snow to the meagre protection of a nearby cave. Here Johnson was waiting by a small fire that was made from parts of the wreckage. Millet placed the wounded man next to the fire and quickly bandaged the bleeding arm.

"This will have to do," he said as he placed the final knot upon a make-shift sling.

"The others! What about the others?" Weaver asked.

"There are not others," Millet said. "Just the three of us. The rest are dead."

"Well! Well!" the little man, Johnson, said impatiently. "Why stand there like that gaping? Do something! We have to get back to civilization! I have an important appointment in Norman next week. The air company will pay for this!"

"We're nowhere near Norman," Millet said, as if taking delight in puncturing the little

man's business-like air. "I talked with the pilot before we crashed, big boy."

"Well? Well?" demanded Johnson.

"There's nothing here. Nothing!" Millet said. "No villages. No cities. No railroads. No radios. Nothing! This part of Canada has been lifeless since way back in 2036."

The three were silent, and for that moment the air was colder and the wind blew with added sharpness. The men shivered and moved together for more warmth.

"Eskimos?" Johnson asked, "there must be Eskimos around here. We'd get food, blubber, fat and all that sort of thing."

Millet slapped his hands together to keep the blood circulating and laughed loudly.

"Point one for civilization!" he said. "Three citizens of New Democracy looking for primitive Eskimos to save them! Ha!"

He suddenly sobered and looked about him, and listened to the howling wind.

"There are no Eskimos here," he said, "When the War Disease came we survived. But the Eskimo is extinct."

"Have we got food?" Johnson asked.

"None," Millet said curtly, to dispel all false hopes.

"I am not sure," Weaver said slowly, "but five minutes before we crashed I—I'm sure I saw a thin line of smoke coming up from a valley. That valley there," he said, pointing toward a mountain range.

"Nonsense!" Millet muttered, looking at the inhospitable icy peaks.

"Nonsense?" Johnson shouted, "What do you mean non-

sense? Who are you to say it's nonsense! Maybe there are explorers here, an expedition of some sort. We've nothing to lose. If there's a village we're saved. If not—"

"If not?" Millet asked, smiling.

Johnson ignored him. He drew his meagre overcoat more tightly about him and went out into the whirling snow. The three took one final look at the wreckage of the plane and the bodies that were already covered by a white mantle. Johnson led the way and Weaver followed, his arm rapidly becoming numb. Millet, face down to avoid the bite of the wind, brought up the rear.

**T**HE SUN was already overhead when they reached the mountain top and saw before them in the valley the strange city. It was a city, in the midst of the snow and the wind of arctic winter, and long spirals of grey smoke from snow-covered factories rose up into the heavens.

Dumbfounded, Millet stared at the city in the valley.

"There!" Johnson said triumphantly, "and you said this part of Canada was uninhabited. That's an industrial city of more than twenty thousand people!"

"In the arctic?" Millet asked, almost talking to himself, "so far north?" He raised his arm and pointed to all the sides of the city. "There are no railroads leaving it," he said.

"Maybe they're covered by snow," Johnson said. "Anyway, there are what seem to be flying fields."

They stopped talking and made their perilous way down to the floor of the valley. The des-

cent proved dangerous, for each drift of snow might hide underneath it a deep chasm. By the time they reached the open valley it was nightfall, and the city was a bare three or four miles away.

They saw the lights of the factories go out and the lights of each individual home brighten. The smoke died from the giant chimneys but each individual house had its own tiny waft of smoke pouring out of its own individual chimney.

As they made their way to the city they saw darkness settle upon it. The lights in the homes died down and when they came to its gates, the city was asleep.

The streets were empty of people. The three exhausted men broke into one of the homes and collapsed before an electrically glowing fireplace.

For a time Weaver was dully surprised that the owner of the house did not bother to come downstairs and ask what they wanted, but he was much too tired to question that as sleep settled upon him and Millet and Johnson.

Refreshed, the three woke up with the morning sun and found, much to their surprise, that the house was empty.

Whoever was in during the night had already left. There were unmistakable signs of chairs having been moved and curtains lifted. It was a wooden house, wooden furniture, and all in simple style.

"They probably let us sleep, not wanting to disturb us," Johnson said.

"Any food in the house?" Weaver asked. Millet got up, stretched and yawned, and went to a small room which appeared to be a kitchen. He came back with two loaves of bread and a jar of water.

"This is all I could find," he said, cutting the bread and sharing it with Johnson and Millet.

"H'm," murmured Johnson as he bit into the first slice, "Tough bread, but pretty good."

"Any idea what city this is?" Weaver asked, crunching the

bread hungrily.

"No," Millet said between thirsty gulps, "Haven't the faintest idea. Factory town, that's evident."

When they had finished eating, they got up to investigate the house but could find nothing that would help them. There was no printed matter of any sort but for one sign which hung, almost reverently, over the mantlepiece. It read: "*The Day Will Come—Be Ready!*"

The other rooms were bare but for necessary furniture and clothes. The three searched the closets until they found warm coats that would fit them.

"This might seem like stealing," Millet said, "but we'll return them when we find out just what position we're in."

**W**ITH STOMACHS full and warm clothes, Millet, Weaver and Johnson stepped out of the house into the street. It was bitterly cold, but there was no wind. The high mountains that surrounded the valley seemed to protect it from too much snow. Not knowing where to go, they walked aimlessly about the streets. Nowhere could they find a single soul.

"They must all be at the factory," Johnson said.

"And the children?"

"In schools and nurseries."

"But they can't *all* be in factories and schools," protested Weaver. "There's nobody home or in the streets. Nobody!"

"Let's look into a factory," Millet suggested.

In the center of the city they found two factories. Both were of tremendous size, stretching for many times the size of a city block. From their mighty stacks stretched black fingers of smoke. A strange feeling of age hung about the factory. The windows were unwashed. Here and there great cracks were in the walls and through them one could see the working men within. The dull roar of the two factories was almost deafening.

"How old it seems!" Weaver

gasped.

"Centuries!" Millet whispered.

"Come! Come!" Johnson said briskly, "We won't get anywhere gaping like that. Let's go in this one here."

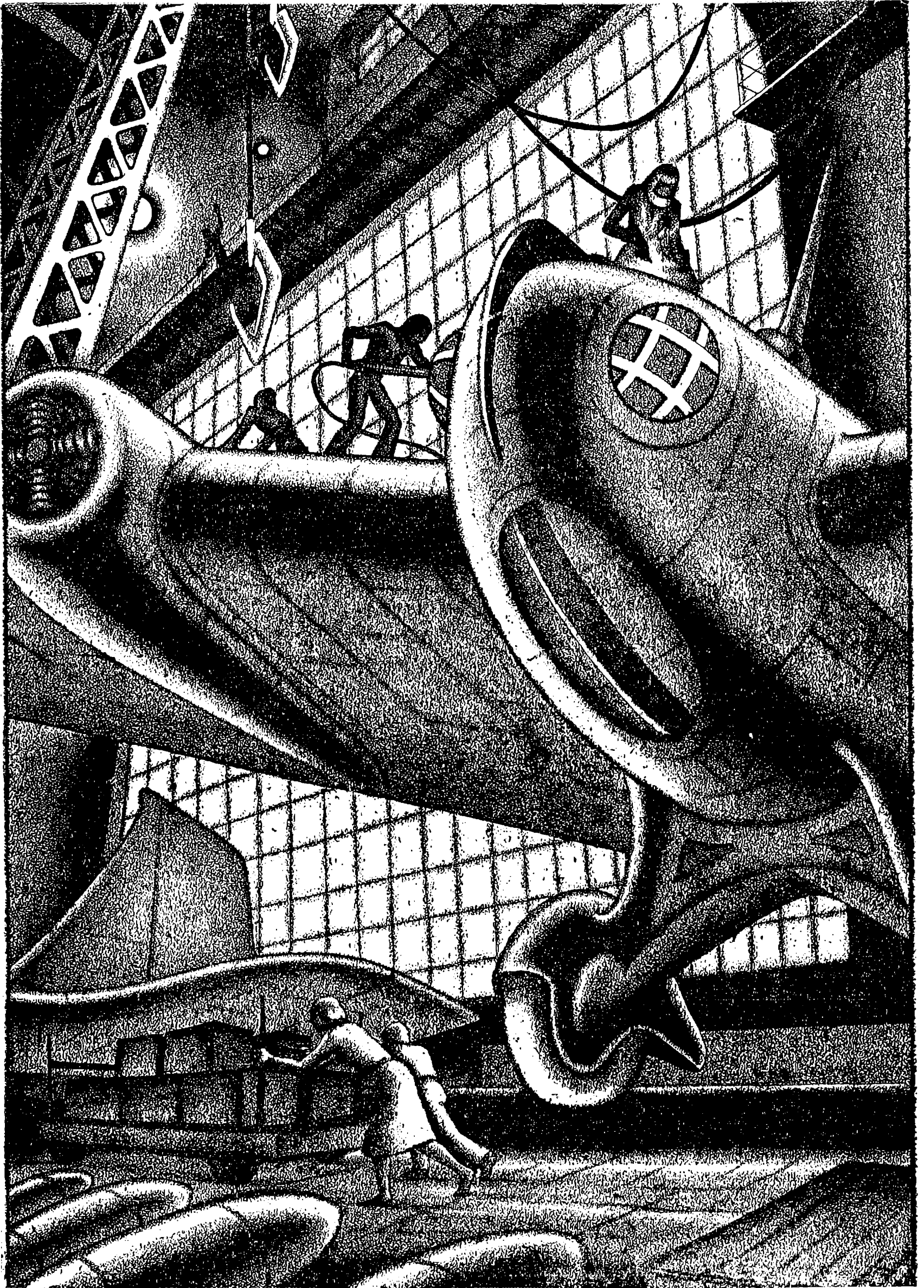
They walked through the aged gate, into the courtyard, and up the wide steps to the door. They opened it, walked in and almost at once were drowned by the clanging and banging of machines in operation. But above the roar of the machines there was yet another sound — the sound of a man's voice, amplified so that it was a booming monotone, overcoming even the shrill screeches of drills and presses.

"... be careful. Always be careful," the booming voice in the factory rang out. "Do not make mistakes. Efficiency counts above all else. Efficiency! Work carefully. Work carefully. Work carefully. Work carefully and enjoy your work. Enjoy your work. Enjoy your work because it is your work. You are working for yourselves. You are working for yourselves. You are working for yourselves..."

And on it went, repeating over and over again inane advice to workmen, urging them to greater efforts and constantly giving them an added impetus for faster and faster work.

"Speed-up deluxe!" Millet said, "What a system!"

Inside the factory they saw the working men and women and children. There were thousands of them. Like automatons each leaned forward at his task. Dynamos and power engines, placed in floors beneath the level, pulsed into life and the conveyor belts moved on. The place was a roaring factory in full blast. Giant cranes screeched along, carrying in their iron hands heavy machines which were placed in position by the waiting workmen. Long lines of coarsely clad men and women stood by the conveyors, each with his or her task. Some of the men handled the delicate tools. Others, the women and the children, did nothing but





watch and sometimes help when a moving mass of machines on the belt rumbled and shook as it rolled on a bumpy part of the conveyor. Immediately they would run to it, push it back upon the belt and then go back to their position, their eyes intent again upon the older men and the older women who handled the drills and who placed the parts in positions.

The three walked along the conveyor belts, surprised that no one stopped them to ask who they were and what they were doing here. They ignored the monotonously droning voice that roared above them, seeming to come from microphones hidden in the roof.

Slowly Millet, Weaver and Johnson began to get the complete picture of the strange factory. Huge boxes were brought in from the outside, obviously from the second factory, and were unpacked. The machinery and parts were assorted and distributed. Motors were sent to one place, girders, wires, steel, plates and glass to other places.

The trio followed the distribution from one end to another. By the time they reached the center of the plant they realized what was being made. At the end of the factory, ready to be rolled out, they saw it.

In the center of the huge, open, unrolled door, final finishing touches being placed upon its wings, stood a giant bomber.

"Warplanes!" Millet shouted to Weaver, trying to make himself heard above the din of the factory, "Giant warplanes!"

**"WHY HASN'T** anyone stopped us?" Weaver asked as they strolled under the wings of the bomber and out into the open air, "Nobody even looked at us while we walked through the whole plant!"

"Suppose they're too busy," Johnson grunted.

"Did you see the children?" Weaver asked again. "Even children! What a factory! It's like

a tomb!"

"Efficient though, isn't it?" Millet smiled, "They're getting the bombers out fast enough. Let's see where they take them."

They watched a crew of men roll the bomber out of the hangar-like opening. They pushed it half-way to the open field and then left it there. Another crew, coming from the second factory, marched to it and then rolled it on—to the second plant. The three men followed.

Once they were inside the second plant with the bomber they saw a strange sight. The finished bomber was rolled on to the center of a scaffold-like structure and the careful work of disassembling and taking apart the giant plane began. The wings were carefully taken off, each individual plate tagged and marked. Not one screw was wasted. Nothing was lost.

"I'll be damned!" Johnson said, astonished.

The three men gathered around and watched. There could be no doubt as to what was being done. The bomber, just finished, was now being taken apart. Its component parts would be packed and sent to the first factory where it would be rebuilt.

"An insane vicious circle!" Weaver said.

"They must be crazy!" Johnson said, "There's no sense in that!"

He stepped forward and seized one of the workmen by the shoulders.

"Hey you!" he shouted, "I want to talk to you! What's going on here?"

The man resisted and tried to get back to his position. When Johnson would not let go he turned quickly and struck at Johnson with his wrench. Johnson yelped a cry of surprised pain and let go. The man immediately went back to his spot by the plane as if nothing had happened.

"Dammit!" Johnson shouted to Millet and Weaver. "He struck me! He's crazy! They're

all crazy!"

"In a way," Millet said soberly. "Yes. But let's get out of here first."

**THEY LEFT** the factory and entered one of the nearby homes where the glowing warmth of the fire-place soothed them.

"All right, Millet," Johnson said. "You'll seem to know the answers. What's wrong with the city? Everybody seems to be mad. They won't do anything. They just work—work—work! That's enough to drive anybody mad!"

"And the rhythm!" Weaver said. "That mechanical voice in each factory roaring over and over again—work—work—work! Be careful! Be careful! Be careful! What is it all?"

"It's our heritage," Millet said cryptically.

"Heritage? What heritage?"

"Do you remember your history? The story of the Second World War and even the Third?"

"Of course. Of course," Weaver said, "But this mad city—what has that to do with the wars that took place two centuries ago?"

"Two centuries!" Millet said, "That's it exactly! For more than two hundred years that factory has been building bombing planes for a war that ended two hundred years ago!"

"You're crazy yourself!"

"Crazy, eh? Not as crazy as the facts of history!" Millet said, "Do you remember the bombings of the Second World War? Wave after wave of enemy planes came, blowing up the factories and industrial centers of the enemy. Coventry, Hamburg, Detroit! All of them smashed to bits! When industrial centers were smashed by air-raids, what is the logical answer? Build factories and plants in out of the way places, far from the arm of the airplane!"

"I suppose you'll say that's how this factory was built?"

"Yes! And perhaps there are still more throughout the arctic! Cities of living dead, still making bombs and bombers after all these centuries. They started something that they could not finish. They'll keep on building those bombers till the machines are worn out and become dust!"

"But the people—the people!" Weaver protested.

"The people!" Millet snorted, "Did you hear the phonograph droning over and over again: you must work—you must work—you must work! Over and over again for two hundred years! It enters into the blood! The child is born and hears those words; you must work—you must work—you must work! He spends his days in the factory—watching and watching until the day that his father dies. Then he too goes up to his positions—working—working—working. Not knowing why, nor caring to know!"

"But the same planes are taken apart!"

"One factory was built for producing planes. Another for dismantling the wreckage of planes that were shot down or brought in from the outside. This went on for generation and generation until it became mechanical. And when contact with the outside world finally died, what was more natural than that the process should continue? And it goes on—and on—and on!"

"But what of the food, what of their supplies and clothes and power?"

Millet shrugged and gestured vaguely. "There are some smaller factories on the other side of the city. They must be bakeries and auxiliary plants. Grain, supplies . . . supplies were laid in from the surpluses to last for hundreds of years. These cities expected isolation. They were places of perpetual seige."

A shiver went down Weaver's spine.

"Horrible!" he said.

"Something must be done about it!" Johnson said, indig-

nant.

"What?"

"Stop the factory! Find their source of power—shut it off!"

Millet laughed, "The men would die! They'd go raving mad! You can't stop a thing that's been in the blood for two hundred years! Touch the power plant and they'd rip you to pieces like a wild animal whose food you try to steal!"

"There must be somebody in the city who is intelligent and who has not become a machine," Weaver said. "From the beginning there was some master, some commander who guided things. His descendant might be here. Find him."

"Yes," Millet said, "there might be one someplace."

"Well! Well!" Johnson shouted, "what are we waiting for?"

**I**T WAS evening and a shrill whistle broke the darkness. The rumble from the factory died down. The conveyors slowed and stopped and the smoke no longer ascended from the chimney.

Long streams of tired men and women walked dully from the factory. Their thin, gaunt bodies moved slowly over the cobbled snowy streets. Their eyes were misty and each one was stooped as if upon his shoulder, the weight of the factory was set.

The three men entered one of the homes. Wordlessly, the woman of the house set three more chairs by the table and placed three more dishes upon it. They ate with the family in silence, and when night came they went to sleep by the fireplace.

In the morning they awoke and followed the family as they dressed and had breakfast. When the whistle of the factory blew the family slowly filed out into the street where hundreds of other families joined them in the procession towards the factory. Wordlessly, Millet, Weaver and Johnson, mingled with the people, constantly alert for an

eye that was not dull, for a face that had more than a blank stare. But it was the same with everyone. Dull—blank—mechanical—living dead—living machines.

They gathered in long lines outside the factory, and when the second whistle blew they marched slowly in.

The three men watched them go and when all had entered they followed. But instead of entering the plant itself, they walked into all the smaller rooms, hoping to find some clue to the mystery.

On the third floor of the factory, quite by surprise, they found her.

The door of a room was slightly ajar.

"There's some rooms here," Millet said, "let's take a look."

Someone inside must have heard them. The door suddenly closed. Millet walked up to it and tried to open it, but it was locked.

"Strange," he said, "the door was open a moment ago."

With his shoulder he pushed tentatively. The wood was old and worn. He stepped back and crashed into the door. It splintered and fell. Millet and the two men entered the room.

Amazed, they stared at the young girl who stood alone, back to the wall, facing them. Her eyes and face did not bear that dull look which characterized every single person in the city. Each movement of hers was cat-like and nervous as she moved along the wall further away from them.

"Hello," Millet said softly.

"A voice!" she said, "You speak!"

"Yes, of course we speak," Millet said, walking a bit towards her, "Don't be afraid. We won't hurt you."

"You—you're from the Outside!" she said, fearfully.

"We're friends," Millet said, "We won't hurt you."

"How did you get here?" she asked suddenly.

"By airplane. We crashed . . ."

"Airplane! Bomber!" she said, her voice becoming high pitched till it was almost a scream. "Then it's true what the books said! You've come here to kill all of us! You came here to destroy the factory! You came here to stop the machines! It's you who wanted the war!"

"No. No." Millet insisted, "we are not going to do anything. Nothing, you understand, nothing. There's no war going on. No war."

"No war!" she cried, "there's always war! Always! The Day will come, my father told me and his father told him. There's always war! ALWAYS! THE DAY HAS COME!"

She pressed herself against the wall, shrinking in terror, her knees weakening until she knelt in the corner. Two tears rolled down her cheeks and then sobs shook her body.

"Crazy as a loon," Johnson whispered. Millet bent down and tried to soothe her.

"There's nothing to be afraid of," he said softly. "We're not going to do anything. Everything's all right. Just stop crying."

She kept on sobbing and then, her confidence won, Millet put his arms around her until her sobs died down.

"This beats everything," Weaver said, scratching his head.

**A** FEW minutes later the three men and the girl sat around the desk. Her face was still wet with tears, but her fear was now gone.

"What's your name?" Millet asked.

"I have none," she said.

"You were born here?"

"Of course!"

"What do you do here?"

"Nothing. I'm the governor of the factory."

Millet repressed a smile and continued. "Why does the factory run?"

"Everybody knows that—to make airplanes."

"But all the airplanes are

taken to the other factory where they are simply taken apart! What's the sense to that?"

She looked at him as if not understanding the question. He repeated it.

"Because," she said, "because we've always done so. That's all! Everybody knows that!"

"But why? Why?"

"I don't know," she said sharply and irritated, "I don't know!"

"Did it ever," he said quietly, "occur to you to stop the machines?"

She stood up, pale with fright and anger.

"Stop the machines?" she asked, trembling. "No! Nobody can do that! Nobody! The factory must go on! It must! It always went on even when the bombers came. Always! Always!"

She was almost hysterical. Millet soothed her and turned to his friends.

"Now try stopping the machines and see what happens!" he said. "This girl is almost normal; think of the others to whom the factory is their heart and soul by birth."

"You're not going to stop the factory! No! No!" she said, "you can't!"

"No," Millet said, "we're not going to stop the factory."

"I always knew," she said softly, "that The Day would come. And it has come! It has come!"

"What Day has come?" Millet asked her, "What Day?"

"The Day when our bombers fly!" she said exultantly. "That Day! I knew it was here when I saw you enter the city!"

"You saw us enter yesterday?" they asked, in great surprise.

"Yes!" she said, "I knew! Today is the Day! I told them, the workingmen, that they should let the bombers fly!"

"Fly?" Millet asked. "Holy Sun! But where? Those bombers fly blind. Their destination was set into the controls over two hundred years ago! Even

the moment that they drop their bombs is all set!"

"To the enemy!" she said, "They'll bomb his cities! Smash his factories! Destroy his roads and communications! Destroy him!"

**L**EAVING her alone the three men rushed to one of the windows and looked out upon the open field. The day before it was empty. Now, upon its white level, were three large black bombing planes.

"They mustn't fly!" Weaver said. "Heaven only knows upon what cities they'll drop their bombs! What a ghastly thing! Ghosts from the past destroying the cities of today!"

Weaver and Johnson rushed to the door but Millet soon called after them.

"It's too late!" he said, "they're leaving!"

It was true. From the window they could see the whirling blades of the propellers as each bomber slowly moved along the runway and up into the air.

The three bombers, like these strange birds, rose high and away over the mountain-tops.

In Millet's mind there was a strange thought. Three black bombing planes, relics of the past, were bombing a glorious new city founded upon peace. What a mockery!

But perhaps the planes would never reach the city. Two hundred years had passed. Perhaps the controls were worn. A wearing of a hundredth of an inch and the three bombers would miss their mark.

Perhaps—but the three planes were already lost in the mists of the clouds. Even the roar of their motors had died away.

After two hundred years the Day had come.