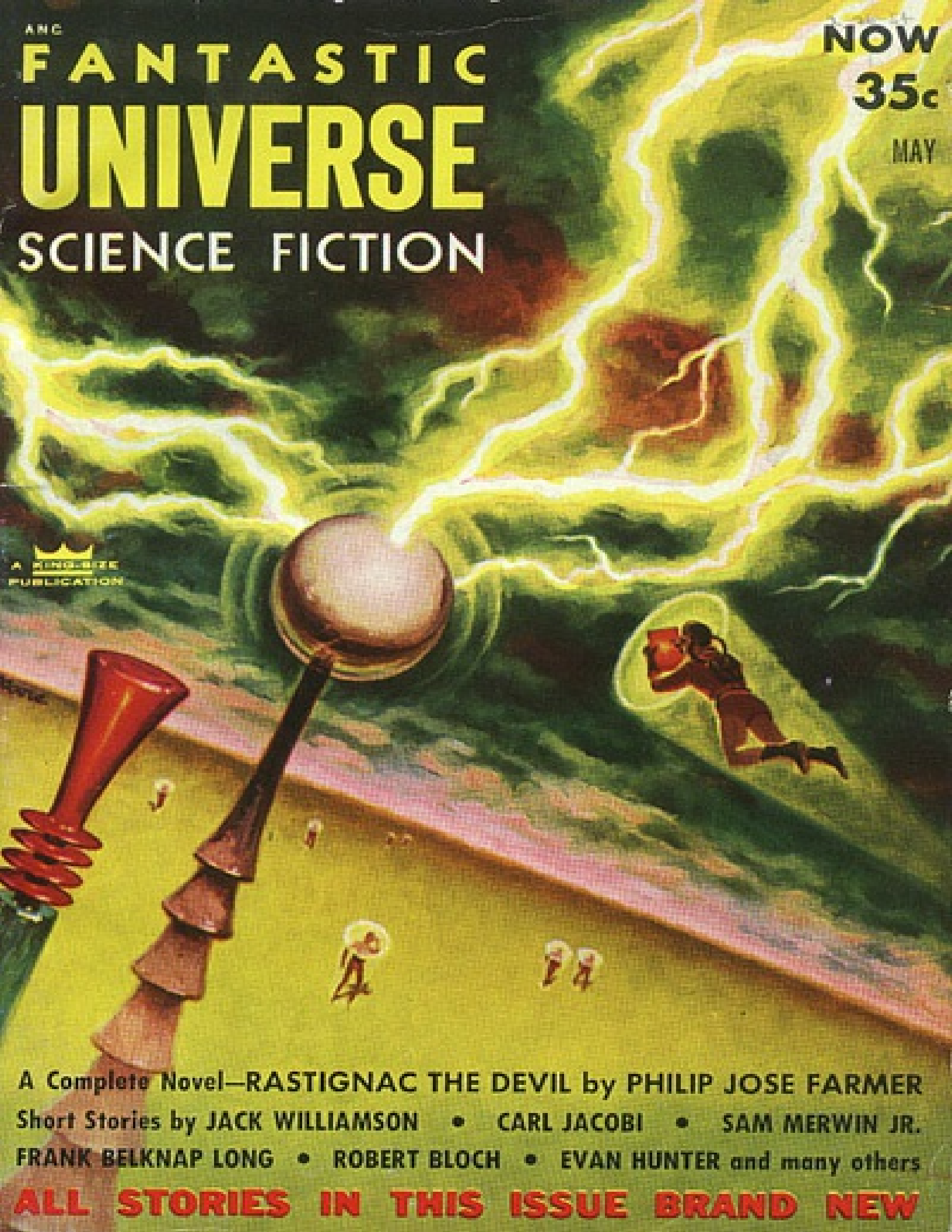


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Made in Tanganyika

Carl Richard Jacobi

Published: 1954

Categorie(s): Fiction, Science Fiction, Short Stories

Source: <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/29242>

About Jacobi:

Carl Jacobi (July 10, 1908 - August 25, 1997) was an author. He wrote short stories in the horror, fantasy, science fiction, and crime genres for the pulp magazine market. Jacobi was born in Minnesota in 1908 and lived there throughout his life. He attended the University of Minnesota from 1927 to 1930 where he began his writing career in campus magazines. Jacobi died on August 25, 1997. Source: Wikipedia

Also available on Feedbooks Jacobi:

- *The Street That Wasn't There* (1941)
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Transcriber's Note: This etext was produced from *Fantastic Universe* May 1954. Extensive research did not uncover any evidence that the U.S. copyright on this publication was renewed. Minor spelling and typographical errors have been corrected without note.

On his fortieth birthday Martin Sutter decided life was too short to continue in the rut that had been his existence for more than twenty years. He withdrew his savings from the Explosion City Third Federal Bank, stopped in a display room and informed a somewhat surprised clerk he was taking the electric runabout with the blue bonnet. The ground-car, complete with extras, retailed for a tidy three thousand credits.

To accustom himself to the car's controls Sutter chose Highway 56 for a driving lesson. He tooled the electric runabout up into the third level, purred out across state at an effortless two hundred, then descended via a cloverleaf to ground tier and entered a maze of subsidiary roads that led through the summer countryside.

In this manner he drove the major part of the afternoon. Travel was light, away from the elevated lanes and he enjoyed himself.

At four o'clock he began to look for a convenient place to turn around. It was then that he sighted the roadside stand ahead. Above it a freshly painted sign read: tv sets. latest models. special wholesale prices!

Sutter smiled. Whoever heard of selling television sets on a country highway? It was like—why, it was like selling eggs in the lobby of the Hotel International! Then it occurred to him that his own TV set had not been in good working order for more than a year. The olfactory control had jammed last week while he was watching a Sumatran tribal ceremony, inland from Soerabaja, and he had been unable to smell the backdrop frangipani blossoms. It was time he bought a new set... .

Sutter touched a stud and the electric runabout coasted to a halt. As he climbed out of the car and walked across the highway toward the stand, he thought for a moment there was something wrong with his contact lenses or perhaps his eyes.

The stand and the sign above it appeared to waver uncertainly, to become disjointed as though viewed through uneven glass. But the effect passed and Sutter approached the stand and nodded to the individual tilted back in a chair beside it.

He was a rawboned man with a thatch of thick black hair and small watery eyes. He was dressed, oddly enough, in a pair of tight-fitting trousers of white lawn, a flaming red tunic and a yellow cummerbund.

"Yes, sir," he said. "Can I show you something in a new TV?"

"Where are they?" asked Sutter, surveying the empty stand.

"Out back," replied the man. "Just a minute and I'll show you."

He rose lazily from his chair and led the way around to the rear of the stand. Sutter could have sworn he had seen an apple orchard behind the structure as he rode up, but he must have been mistaken for now he saw a low-roofed, aluminum-walled building there, huge doors open on one side. It looked, he thought, somewhat like a hangar... .

Two hours later Sutter arrived back at his home in town. He parked the car, went around to the rear compartment, lifted out a large packing case and carried it to his sitting room. There, with the aid of hammer and crowbar, he stripped away the protective boards and then trundled the cabinet to an unoccupied corner.

It was certainly a unique TV set. A very new model, the salesman had said. The cabinet was shaped like a delta with a cube surmounted on the pointed end of the triangle. The cube held the screen, the triangle, the controls. Finished in a subdued ochre color, the set captured the light of the dying day that filtered through the bay window and gleamed with a soft radiance.

Sutter looked at the control panel and his smile of satisfaction faded somewhat. It looked a little complicated... .

Instead of the usual knobs there were five small spoked wheels, each closely calibrated in lavender with resilient studs that seemed to be made of plush. Below this was a small dial with the legend *Element of Probability* lettered on it.

Sutter was about to switch on the set when the door buzzer sounded. He crossed to the door and pulled it open.

A tall gangly man stood there. Swarthy, face partially covered by a neatly trimmed beard, he looked the conventional picture of a story-book villain. He wore a broad-brimmed hat and an under-slung pipe was clamped in his teeth. He said in a deep booming voice, "Are you Mr. Martin Sutter?"

"Yes, I am. What can I do for you?"

The man said his name was Lucien Travail. He explained that he had been looking for a room and that Mrs. Conworth, the landlady, had informed him she had no vacancies but suggested that her roomer, Mr. Sutter, might be interested in a roommate.

"Of course I realize you don't know me but I believe our strangeness will be offset by our mutual hobby."

Sutter was silent, waiting for him to continue.

"I collect shells," Travail said.

For thirty years Sutter had pursued a hobby which had begun in his boyhood days during summer vacations at the seashore—the collecting of exoskeletons of mollusks and crustaceans. Long ago his assortment of cowries, spiny combs and yellow dragon-castles had outgrown their glass cabinet and overflowed into three carefully catalogued packing cases.

To Sutter, anyone who liked shells was a person above suspicion. Thus it was that two days later, after a casual checking of the bearded man's references, he invited Travail to move in with him.

During those two days Sutter tried unsuccessfully to put his new television set into operation. But the set refused to work. Turn the queer dials as he would, all he could get on the elliptical screen was a blur of blinding colors.

On the evening of the third day Travail looked up from his newspaper, said, "It says here that the president of the Federal Union Congress is going to make a speech in New Paris. Will you tune him in?"

Sutter frowned. "I would," he said, "but my set is out of order. I should call a repair man, but I had hoped to get it regulated myself."

Travail laid down his pipe. "Out of order, eh?" he said. "I'm sort of handy with gadgets. Let me take a look at it."

He walked across to the cabinet, turned it around and stood peering at the complicated chassis. A small brass nameplate caught his eye: *Manufactured by the Tanganyika Company, Dodoma, Empire of Tanganyika, East Africa. Under charter of the Atomic Commercial Enterprise Commission. Warning: Permit only an accredited employee of this company to touch wiring.*

Travail snorted. "Accredited employee, my foot! I know as much about these things as they do."

He went into the kitchen and returned with a screwdriver. While Sutter looked on with apprehensive eyes, he began to tinker with the wiring. Suddenly there was a dull report and a flash of flame. Travail jerked his arm back as a thin streamer of smoke and the smell of burning insulation entered the room.

"You've broken it," said Sutter accusingly.

But his voice died abruptly as the screen flared into light and a low hum sounded behind the panel. An instant later the light became subdued and a streak of tawny yellow took form. The yellow slowly coalesced into a sandy stretch of beach with long rolling swells washing up on it, to recede in a

smother of foam. Through the amplifier came the muted roar of the breakers and the low soughing of the wind.

"Well, we got something at any rate," Travail said. "I wonder what it is."

Sutter stared, fascinated. The view of the beach seemed to come into sharper focus as he watched, and he saw now that it was an incredibly lonely scene, with the sea stretching away to a vanishing point and a stand of stunted spruce flanking the width of sand. But what caught his eye and held him almost in a trance was the array of objects littering the sand at the water's edge.

They were shells. Not the prosaic commonplace shells usually found on a New England shore nor even the brighter colored, more intricately formed shells of tropic seas. These were shells he had never seen before, even in library collections. Alien and soft-hued and lovely shells that caused his collector's heart to jump wildly. He saw a delicate star-shaped thing that might have been fashioned of porcelain and enameled with the brush of the Mings. He saw spiral coverings from uncatalogued cephalopods, many chambered and many hued. He saw shells of a thousand shapes and designs, all incredibly beautiful... .

Sutter forgot everything else as he sat there staring at that collector's paradise.

"I'll see if I can get something else," said Travail.

"No!" said Sutter quickly. "Don't touch it!"

He continued to stare hungrily at the alien shells until suddenly the scene before him grew dim, then faded completely away.

Travail laughed shortly. "Somebody sold you a fluke. This set must be an off brand. Incidentally, isn't Tanganyika a colony governed by the Federal Union Congress?"

"Yes, it is," replied Sutter. "I don't understand this at all. There's no *Empire* of Tanganyika."

Next morning after breakfast Sutter announced that he was driving into the country to visit a friend. There was no reason why he should not have told his roommate the truth—that he was going to look up the man who had sold him the TV set. No reason except for the odd fact that Travail had made no mention of the alien shells, and Sutter kept thinking that a shell collector would have been immediately aware of the rareness of them.

Once again Sutter drove out across state and down the highway where he had seen the roadside stand. But when he reached the spot there was no sign of the stand. The big oak tree which had shaded it and the rail fence on the adjoining property were there. But no stand. As Sutter stared with perplexed eyes at the spot he saw something he had not noticed before.

At the edge of the highway was a large granite boulder with a bronze plate fastened to its slanting surface. Sutter got out of the car, approached it and read:

This property has been preserved as a State Park to commemorate the first successful trial explosion of the Hydrogen Bomb which took place on this site and marked the beginning of an era.

It seemed to Sutter as he stood there that the surrounding silence grew more intense. Then he passed through a wide gateway and began to stride across an evenly clipped lawn toward a grove of trees beyond. Halfway he paused and glanced absently at his watch. It was exactly twelve o'clock noon.

And abruptly the scene before him slipped out of plumb. The sky and the lawn seemed to alter positions, to rotate madly as in a vortex. The whirling ceased and the next instant Sutter stood on the

shore of a lonely sea with a tawny width of sand stretching out before him and the waves washing up almost at his feet. Then he saw the shells...

It was the beach of the alien shells! There they lay, scattered about the sand, hundreds, thousands of them, alien and delicate and lovely, exoskeletons the like of which he had never seen before. Their pastel colors blended with one another to form a horizontal rainbow extending into the measureless distance.

And somehow, as Sutter walked among them, picking his way with care, the years of his life seemed to slip away and he was a small boy at the seashore again, entranced with his first shell discovery. He could even hear his mother's voice calling "Be careful, Martin! Don't go too far!"

He walked on and on, slowly, uncertainly, until the beach and the sea began to waver like a heat mirage. And suddenly the shells and the water vanished and he was on the green grass again with the grove of trees just ahead. He turned, saw a white highway with his car parked on the shoulder.

Dazedly, Sutter walked back to the car...

All next morning he ruminated over his strange experience. Toward noon the pieces of the puzzle began to fit slowly together in his mind. But the partial answer at which he arrived seemed too fantastic for belief. Could it be possible that when he had stopped at the roadside stand he had blundered, in some inexplicable way, into another dimension?

Sutter had a layman's knowledge of Einsteinian physics, and he knew that experiments in Time were being made every day. Only last week he had read in the paper of an army officer who had reportedly Time-traveled some twenty-two minutes. And a year ago the Belgian scientist, Delgar, claimed to have entered a secondary world which he declared impinged on our own.

Assuming all this to be true, then it could be that the Tanganyika television set was a product manufactured in Future Time by a company that, by Sutter's Time standards, didn't yet exist.

The following day saw Sutter begin an experiment of which he was rather proud. Travail had said that he had tried to tune in the noon news broadcast yesterday on the TV and had turned the set on from twelve o'clock until five minutes after. At a nearby appliance store Sutter purchased a clock control which would turn his television set on and off at any chosen time. He set the control for two o'clock, then managed to lure Travail out of the house for the afternoon by giving him an invitation he'd received for a lecture on marine life at a local club. Next, he drove again to the H-bomb site and stood waiting in the grass-like park, watch in hand.

At precisely two o'clock there came that queer staggering of earth and sky. The trees gave way to the stretch of sand; the waves, leaden-colored and cheerless, dotted with white caps rolled up on the lonely shore. As before Sutter felt that same exhilaration, that same reversal to the spirit of his youth. But despite his mental excitement he maintained an awareness of the situation and a remembrance of why he had come here.

When he walked among the shells this time he carried a large basket with him and he picked up shells and dropped them into the basket, selecting those that were the most alien.

In due time the basket was filled to overflowing and Sutter stood still, waiting. Once more the surrounding landscape underwent its change. After the whirling had ceased and the initial feeling of vertigo had passed Sutter carried the full basket back to the car and began the long drive home.

As he drove he mused over what Travail would say when he saw these shells. Then on second thought, he decided not to show them to him. Travail was getting on his nerves. He had obviously lied about his interest in shells. On discussing the subject with him Sutter found he did not know the first thing about them. In fact, he regretted taking him in as a roommate.

He was convinced that Travail's friendly good-fellowship attitude was just a pose, cloaking a so

far mysterious motive. But it could be that Travail knew of the value of Sutter's shell collection. Yesterday a letter had come from the Federal Arts Museum offering five thousand credits for the lot, and while he had made no mention of the amount, Sutter had been foolish enough to tell Travail there had been an offer.

"Are you going to sell?" Travail had asked.

"Certainly not. They're worth five times the price they offered."

"Are they really?" said Travail. "That makes my own collection seem worthless by comparison."

Oh, Travail could be clever all right! Why else had he made no comment about the alien shells they both had seen on the television set, if he did know something of the value of shells?

Arriving home, Sutter entered by the rear door and carried the basket of shells to his bedroom. There he took them out and one by one spread them on the table. He drew a goose-necked lamp down close and from the table drawer took out a powerful ato-magnifying glass. Then he selected one of the larger shells and began to examine it.

After a while he took a small keyhole saw which he kept for such purposes, and very carefully began to cut the shell into two equal portions. Once again he moved the ato-glass and began to study one of the sections. But the lamp was not very powerful, and insufficient for the tiny details. Sutter abruptly remembered the four-position lamp in the sitting room. He took the shell and the ato-glass and went to the front room, hoping that Travail was not there.

To his relief he found the sitting room deserted. The television set stood silent in a corner and as he passed it Sutter switched it on, then crossed to the four-position lamp and turned it up full. For a second time he peered through the ato-glass long and intently.

The bisected shell appeared to be a spinal univalve, resembling the familiar cephalopoda, *nautilus*, with thin septa dividing the many chambers.

Behind him the Tanganyika TV swelled on, the screen presenting that same scene of the beach of shells. As it did so Sutter uttered a startled exclamation.

Under the magnifying glass the chambers in the bisected shell suddenly became more than outgrowths of marine organism. *They were rooms!* Tessellated ceilings, microscopically mosaic inlaid floors, long sweeping staircases with graceful slender balustrades and tall almost Ionic columns... .

Heart pounding, Sutter looked again.

He saw that it was actually the light from the television set that was illuminating the interior of the shell, lighting it with a strange radiance that seemed to extend outward from the shell in a steadily widening cone. His hand touched this cone, and it possessed a curious solidity.

He hadn't been mistaken. *There were rooms in that shell!* Narrow corridors with arched doorways opened off alcoves and galleries. One vaulted chamber had a kind of dais in the center of it. The entire inner structure was fashioned of pastel-tinted walls which caught the light of the TV and radiated it to every corner in a soft glow of effulgence.

A magnetic lure swept over Sutter. He felt an overwhelming desire to step into that cone of light...

Whether the exoskeleton expanded to admit his entrance or whether his own figure magically dwindled he could not tell, but the next instant he found himself in a fairy palace with all about him a world of silence.

A long broad hallway stretched before him. At the far end a ramp angled upward to a higher level. Sutter walked forward slowly, aware in a vague way that he had entered another plane that was at

once a microcosm and a macrocosm. On the second level the way ahead divided. After a moment's hesitation he chose the left-hand passage, passing through a keyhole-shaped archway into a broad amphitheater, empty of furnishings, with a kind of terrace or gallery at the far end. Emerging upon that gallery, Sutter saw that he had reached the outer limit of the shell. The edges of the wall before him were cut off, jagged and rough, where his saw had done its work.

He was looking out upon the normal world that was his living room.

He stiffened as the door to the room opened and Lucien Travail entered. He sat down before the center table and carefully, systematically began going through the contents of the table drawer. Startled, Sutter watched from his strange vantage point. Travail had not noticed that the television set was turned on, and the high-backed davenport apparently hid the cone of blue light from his view.

He took a sheet of paper from the drawer, began reading it. With a start Sutter recognized his letter from the Federal Arts Museum.

And as a wave of wrath swept over him, Sutter saw that the beach scene on the television set was slowly fading away. Fear and a realization of his strange position struck him. He turned and ran madly back across the amphitheater, down the ramp and along the long hallway to the point where he had entered the shell. Even as he approached it the cone of blue light dimmed, wavered and was replaced by a wall of partial blackness.

Sutter sent his hands clawing desperately at that wall as it flickered twice and momentarily became translucent again. He forced his body between folds of palpable darkness, slid into the vanishing blue cone. Instantly he found himself in his normal world, standing in the center of the sitting room. Travail looked up, startled.

"Hullo. Where did you come from?" he said finally.

Sutter said, "What are you doing in my drawer?"

"I was looking for my tobacco pouch," Travail replied easily. "I'm sure I left it here on the table last night. I thought the maid might have put it in the drawer."

In his bedroom Sutter wrapped each of the alien shells in a sheet of newspaper and restored them to the basket. He placed the basket on the top shelf of the closet, concealing it with a couple of old hats.

He didn't sleep well that night. His mind reviewed over and over his strange experience. Toward morning he fell into a deep sleep and dreamed a wild dream of walking down a broad highway, flanked on one side by an endless line of television sets and on the other by man-high hills of alien shells.

He had his breakfast at the little coffee shop around the corner. But halfway back to his apartment he suddenly thought of Travail alone in the house with his shells. He broke into a run and he was panting for breath when he reached his door.

The basket of shells was still on the shelf, but the newspaper wrappings were loosened, and the bisected shell was entirely free of covering. And he had not left them that way last evening.

Had atomic transmigration attempted to draw the shells back into the Time sphere to which they really belonged? Sutter was a logical man, and even as this thought came his mind rejected it. It must be Travail. He had taken a sample shell from the basket and even now perhaps was dickering with the officials of the Federal Arts Museum on a price.

Sutter picked up the bisected shell and went into the sitting room. He carefully placed the shell upon the table so that the light from the television set would fall directly upon it. Then he sat down to wait.

As he waited he mentally viewed the material prospects of his discovery.

If the Federal Arts Museum had offered five thousand credits for his old collection, they would surely double their price on these rarities. He saw himself the recipient of a fat check, his name and picture in the papers, television interviews, lecture assignments, world fame ...

And to think that Travail had the brazen nerve to believe he could cash in on his good fortune!

"Damned bearded coot!" Sutter mumbled to himself. "He must take me for an utter fool!"

Footsteps sounded and his bearded roommate entered the room. Was it fancy or did Sutter see in those grey eyes a gleam of mingled avarice and satisfaction?

"Have a cigar?" said Travail casually.

Sutter shook his head. "You know I don't smoke." He crossed the room, adjusted the controls of the television set and watched the familiar beach scene come into sharper focus. As the sound of the washing waves boomed from the speaker, the cone of bluish light took form before the bisected shell. Sutter moved the shell slightly so that it lay at directly right angles to the panel of the TV set. Travail, drawing on his cigar, watched him curiously.

"What are you doing?" he asked at length.

"Little experiment. Stand over here and I'll show you. Here, in front of this cone of light."

Travail took the place indicated. His face was emotionless as he looked beyond the light into the bisected shell.

"Now walk forward," commanded Sutter.

"I'll do nothing of the sort," said Travail, starting to back away. "What are you up to anyway?"

Sutter had no plan in mind beyond an overwhelming desire to put a bad fright into his roommate in payment for what he considered a monstrous act of duplicity. It would serve Travail right if, once he entered the secondary plane of the shell, he would be forced to stay there a while. A good scare would cause him to leave, maybe.

Sutter moved up behind the bearded man and gave him a violent shove forward. "In you go!" he cried hysterically.

Travail pitched head foremost. But, spinning, he clutched at Sutter's arm, gripping it with the desperation of a drowning man. Half inside, half outside the cone of blue light he seemed propelled into the depths of the bisected shell by an irresistible force. In vain did Sutter fight to release the hold upon his arm. His squirming legs fastened themselves about the legs of a heavy Windsor chair, kicked frantically.

The chair spun from between his feet and lurched heavily across the room where it fell hard upon the television set, shattering the glowing screen into a thousand fragments. Simultaneously, Sutter slid forward into the bisected shell as the cone of light vanished after him. . . .

Mrs. Conworth, the landlady, reported the disappearance of her two roomers on August first, a week after she last saw them. First, however, to the disgust of the police, she cleaned their apartment, giving to the trash man all valueless and inconsequential articles, including a box of old sea shells which she found in the closet. It was a curious fact that neither Sutter nor Travail possessed relatives or friends to make inquiry as to their whereabouts and thus without incentive the official search died into nothing.

Mrs. Conworth rather regretted the loss of her bachelor roomers and, as she said to her neighbor across the street, she kept one memento of them—a thing that looked like a shell but wasn't a shell. She thought it must be one of them optical illusion things.

"When you look at it in a certain way," said Mrs. Conworth, "it seems as if there are two tiny men inside it, fighting to get out."



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Food for the mind