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# **Wheels Within**

**By CHARLES DE VET**

**Illustrated by DON SIBLEY**

Never ask "Who am I and where do I come from?" The answers may not be what you'd expect!

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W

hen did the headaches first start?" asked the neurologist, Dr. Hall.

"About six months ago," Bennett replied.

"What is your occupation, Mr. Bennett?"

"I am a contractor."

"Are you happy in your work?"

"Very. I prefer it to any other occupation I know of."

"When your headaches become sufficiently severe, you say that you have hallucinations," Hall said. "Can you describe what you see during those hallucinations?"

"At first I had only the impression that I was in a place completely unlike anything I had ever known," Bennett answered. "But each time my impressions became sharper, and I carried a fairly clear picture when my mind returned to normal the last time. I felt then that I had been in a room in a tall building that towered thousands of feet over a great city. I even remembered that the name of the city was Thone. There were other people in the room with me—one person especially. I remembered her very clearly."

"Her?" Hall asked.

"Yes."

"Was there anything unusual about this woman?"

"Well, yes, there was," Bennett said, after a brief and almost embarrassed pause. "This will sound pretty adolescent, but—"

Hall leaned forward attentively. "It may be relevant. You're not here to be judged, you know; I'm trying to help you."

Bennett nodded and spoke rapidly, as though trying to finish before he could stop himself. "She was a woman who exactly fitted an image I've had in mind for as long as I can remember. She was tall, fair—though brunette—very beautiful, very vivid, very well poised. I seem to have known her all my life, but only in my dreams, from my very earliest ones to the present. She's never changed in all that time."

He halted as suddenly as he had begun to talk, either having nothing more to say, or unwilling to say it.

"Have you ever married, Mr. Bennett?" Hall prodded gently.

"No, I never have." Again, Bennett stopped, adding nothing more to his blunt answer.

"May I ask why not?"

Bennett turned his face away. "I was hoping you wouldn't ask that. It makes me sound like a romantic kid." He looked at the doctor almost in defiance. "I've always felt that some day I would meet this girl, or at least someone very much like her. I know it's not a rational feeling—maybe I've even used it as an excuse not to get married—but it's like spilling salt and throwing a pinch over our shoulder; we aren't superstitious, yet we don't take any chances."

Dr. Hall didn't comment. He ended the questioning period and put Bennett through a series of tests. Then they sat down again and Hall offered his diagnosis.

"The neurological examination is essentially negative, Mr. Bennett. In other words, there is no organic reason that I can find for your headaches. That leaves only one other possibility—an emotional disturbance. I'm a neurologist,

remember, not a psychoanalyst. I can only give an opinion about the cause of your complaint."

Bennett waited expectantly.

"Headaches without organic causes are generally the result of repressed anger," Hall went on. "That anger can stem from any number of traumatic situations or attitudes, all deeply buried in the unconscious, of course, or they would not have the power to hurt us. From what we know of you, however, it seems to be the result of frustration. In other words, you have created a fantasy image of a completely unattainable woman, and therefore none of the women you meet can fulfill your expectations. Since she is unattainable, you naturally feel a sense of frustration."

"But who could she be?" Bennett asked anxiously.

"Someone you knew in childhood, perhaps. A composite of real and imaginary women. Usually, it is an idealized image of your own mother."

Bennett sat frowning. "All right, let's say that's so. But where do the hallucinations of the city of Thone fit in?"

"This is something that has to be tracked down in a series of analytical sessions, so all I can do is guess. If one is unable to reach a goal in a real environment, the obvious answer is to create a fantasy world. That's what you appear to be doing. It's a dangerous situation, Mr. Bennett. Potentially, at least."

"How so?" Bennett asked, alarmed.

"The general tendency is toward greater and greater divorcement from reality. I suggest immediate treatment by a competent analyst. If you don't know of one, I can recommend several."

"I'd like to think it over."

"Do that," Hall said. "And call me when you've decided."

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T

he third day after he consulted the neurologist, Bennett's headache returned. As

before, drugs were of no help. When the pain became blinding, he lay back on his bed, placed a cold cloth on his forehead, and closed his eyes.

Suddenly the realities he knew were gone and he was back in the dream-city of Thone.

Persons and objects were much clearer now. Bennett saw that he lay in a receptacle shaped like a rectangular metal box. It was padded, reminding him unpleasantly of a coffin. The woman he had seen before was again with him, but now he knew that her name was Lima. Behind her stood a man; a tall, dark man whose eyebrows joined over the bridge of his nose, and whose forehead was creased in a permanent frown. The woman held out her arms to Bennett. Her lips moved, but no sound came from them.

Bennett's spirit seemed to rise from the flesh—he could see his body still lying there—and he followed the woman. As he approached she retreated and, try as he would to reach her, she remained just beyond his grasp.

After what seemed hours of futile pursuit, a cloud formed between him and the woman. When it dissipated, he had left the world of Thone. He was in a trolley-bus, in his own world, and vaguely he recalled having left his room, gone down to the street, and boarded the trolley—during the time he had followed Lima, in his hallucination. It seemed that he had a definite destination then, but now he could not recall what it had been.

His attention was drawn to the outside by the flickering of lights that flashed in through the bus windows. Bennett looked out and saw that he was in the Pleasure Section of the city, traveling through the Street of Carnivals. He watched the fronts of the amusement buildings pass before him and he read their advertisements listlessly.

Suddenly one sign seemed to spring out from all the others:

**LIMA  
MYSTIC OF THE MIND**

He left the trolley at the next corner and made his way through the crowd to the brightly lit carnival building.

Inside, he found a chair and seated himself. The show's act appeared about half over. It was pretty evidently charlatan stuff, Bennett decided, but the black-hooded mystic on the stage held his attention. She was a tall woman, with a

slender figure and fair flesh. She was poised, or perhaps it was indifference to the crowd.

A runner went through the audience touching articles of clothing or ornaments, and the woman without hesitation named each one he touched. The act was slightly different from most Bennett had seen in that the runner said nothing, merely touching the articles to be named.

The next portion of the show consisted of a mind-reading act. Bennett expected the usual routine of writing a question on paper, which would be sealed in an envelope and placed in a container on the stage.

He was surprised when the runner returned to the crowd and asked for volunteers for thought-reading.

A short man with a bright yellow necktie raised his hand. The runner made his way through the crowd to the man and touched him on the shoulder before turning back to the mystic. He still said nothing.

"This man is thinking that he should have stayed at home tonight," the mystic said. "There are wrestling matches on the teletone, and he would have enjoyed them more than this show. Besides, he would have spent less money that way than he has tonight. And he does not like to spend money unless he must."

A titter of amusement went through the crowd as the man blushed a dull crimson.

The runner touched a second man.

"This man wishes to know the winner in the eighth race at the horse tracks tomorrow," she said. "I am sorry, but, because of Public Law one thousand thirty-two, Section five-A, I am prohibited from answering a question of that nature."

The third person contacted was a woman. She raised her hand, then half changed her mind when she saw that the runner was turning toward her. But then she defiantly tossed her brown hair back from her face and allowed him to touch her shoulder.

"This woman is wondering if her lover is true to her—and if her husband will find out about them."



This time the crowd laughed when the embarrassed woman turned pale and rushed up the aisle toward the exit.

No further hands were raised and the show ended with a short address by the runner: "I hope you have enjoyed these truly marvelous and mysterious demonstrations. Now the mystic, Lima, is available for a short time for personal interviews. The fee is very reasonable—one dollar a minute. Anyone wishing an interview please step forward."

The mystic pulled the hood from her head, smiled, bowed at the crowd, and left the stage.

Bennett gasped.

"The woman of the city of Thone!"



## Y

ou have paid in advance for twenty-five minutes of my time," Lima said, as she smiled in amusement. "Perhaps you had better begin your questions, instead of merely staring at me."

Bennett brought his thoughts back with an effort. "Your performance was exceptionally good," he said very soberly. "I enjoyed it. And so, apparently did the other customers. It is a clever routine. I'll admit I can't figure out how you do it."

"Remember what Barnum said," Lima replied lightly.

"At least you do not take yourself too seriously," Bennett observed.

"On the contrary." Lima countered, "I take myself very seriously. You, however, do not. You are paying for my time and the customer is always right."

"Tell me," Bennett asked abruptly, "have we ever met before?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Have you any objections to telling me about yourself during our interview? Who are you? What is your background?"

"I will be glad to tell you about myself, if you think it will be interesting," she replied, after a barely perceptible pause. "How I came by this exceptional ability of mine, I have no slightest conception. I only remember that when I was young, and still without the intellect to evaluate social mores and customs, I was often placed in positions of awkwardness by my ability to read minds. At an early age, however, through the council of my parents, I learned to keep this knowledge to myself.

"By the time I reached my twentieth birthday, my parents were both dead and I was alone in the world. I had never learned any occupation. I made some attempts to use my mind-reading to some advantage to myself, but soon found that I encountered the opposition of the medical associations as well as the law. As a consequence, I turned to show business as the one means of earning a legitimate livelihood. There is not much more to tell."

"Can you actually read minds?" Bennett asked insistently.

"I can."

"Then what am I thinking now?"

"You are thinking," Lima said, with no semblance of a trance or any of the other usual antics of professional mystics, "that I look exactly like a woman you have never seen, but whose image you have carried in your mind since your childhood."

For just a moment, the startling accuracy disconcerted Bennett.

"I have a problem which is quite annoying," he pushed on almost frantically. "Can you tell me what my problem is?"

"You have been subject to extremely severe headaches, which you have been unable to remedy, either by sedatives or with the help of a neurologist. Am I correct?"

"More than you could possibly know! Look, I came here believing you were a fake. That didn't matter—it was the fact that you looked like this other woman that counted. I'm convinced now. I want your help. Can you help me, or at least tell me whether the neurologist is right about the cause of my headaches?"

"He is wrong," Lima said. "I can tell you what causes them, but I am afraid that I will have to ask for another hundred dollars for that extra service."

Bennett was momentarily irritated at this evidence that their relationship, at least as far as she was concerned, was strictly business. But he shrugged off the feeling. He drew five twenty-dollar bills from his pocketbook and placed them on the table before her.

"If you remember," Lima said, folding the money carefully and tucking it into the neck of her dress, "five months ago a building which you had contracted to build fell, when it was nearly completed, and two workmen were killed."

"I remember very well."

"You found that the collapse of the building was caused by faulty material which you had bought through a subcontractor. You are still investigating to determine where to place the blame, and are on the point of doing so."

"Go on," Bennett breathed softly.

"You are quite certain that the person responsible is John Tournay, ostensibly a reputable contractor, but actually an unscrupulous scoundrel. You have a choice of exposing him, with great personal danger to yourself—Tournay is a dangerous and ruthless man—or remaining silent and knowing that you are a coward. The difficulty of that choice is causing your headaches."

"You may be right," Bennett admitted without hesitation. "I haven't had time to think the matter through quite that far. What would you advise me to do?"

"That is something which cannot be advised. The answer lies within yourself. You are either a big enough man to do the right thing—which you yourself recognize—or you are a small man and will take the safer, less honorable course. The decision and the integrity lie within yourself."

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B

ennett slumped. "I see that. Then there's nothing more that you can do for me?"

"But there is," Lima replied. "I can cure your headaches, if you wish—for an additional hundred dollars."

"That would be a cheap price." Bennett drew his wallet from his pocket. "My

cash is rather low. Would you accept a personal check?"

"Certainly," Lima said. "But, first, let me explain about my cure. There is some mental unpleasantness involved which you may consider worse than the ailment."

"I doubt that. I can't imagine anything worse than this agony."

"Your mind will be placed under my control and led through a dream sequence. I will follow a logical progression of events, using your actual past as background. While you are under my control, your experiences will be far from pleasant. I will allow your mind to follow its own anticipated course of events, influencing your thoughts only slightly—directing them into as unpleasant channels as possible. In fact, to make the cure certain, at least the culmination must be quite devastating. Do you agree to undergo such rigorous mental punishment?"

"But why do I have to?" Bennett asked, astonished and worried.

"That pattern will act in the manner of a counter-irritant. Your mind is like a spoiled child, rejecting anticipated unpleasantness. Under my influence it is subjected to possible alternative experiences, which are so much worse than the one it originally feared that it will gratefully accept the lesser evil."

"That sounds reasonable," Bennett agreed. "When could we begin this treatment?"

"Immediately, if you are willing."

"I see no reason for waiting."

"Then, if you are ready," Lima told him, "lie on this couch. Keep your eyes on mine." She spoke slowly, evenly. "Remember that you are doing this of your own free will, that you trust me. I am your friend and would do you no harm."

Her voice droned on as Bennett looked into her eyes. They merged until they became one large, placid pool of restfulness, and he found himself drawn into them.

He sank peacefully, quietly—completely.

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## W

When the telephone rang, Bennett knew it was the district attorney returning his call, and that the die was cast. Until this ugly business was brought to a conclusion, his life would be in constant danger.

"Leroy Bennett speaking," he said. "I have had collected some information that I think will be of very great interest to your office."

"Information about what?" the voice at the other end asked briskly.

"I have proof that John Tournay is responsible for the death of two men, in an action involving criminal collusion."

"If what you say is true, I will be glad to see your evidence," the district attorney said. "Could you deliver it in person? There may be some questions I would like to ask you about it."

"Certainly," Bennett replied. "When would be the most convenient time?"

"Later in the day. I have a case going on. How would four-thirty this afternoon suit you?"

"That would be fine."

The rest of the day dragged slowly. At four o'clock Bennett left his office and took the elevator to the ground floor. Under his arm he clutched the briefcase which might spell death for him.

A moment after he left his office building, he knew he had made a mistake—a fatal one!

Idly, at first, his mind's eye watched the driver of a long gray sedan, parked at the curb, start up its motor as he approached. The car pulled away from the curb when he came alongside it.

Through an open rear window, Bennett saw a man with a dark, brooding face—with black eyebrows that joined over the bridge of the nose—glowering at him. At the same instant he saw the blunt nose of an automatic resting on the lowered glass of the window, just below the chin of the frowning man.

Incredibly, even as he realized that he was about to die, Bennett's first thought was not one of fear, but rather that this dark man was the other person he had

seen in his hallucinations of the city of Thone!

Then, as one part of his mind drew back in terror at what it knew was about to happen, another part wondered at the mystery of Thone and the people in it. Where did that hallucination fit in this mist of life which was about to end?

He felt three hard, solid blows punch shockingly into his body. There was pain, but greater than that was the terror that whipped his panicked mind.

"Lima," Bennett whispered with his last stark thought as he dropped to his knees.

He groped for the sidewalk with one hand, to steady himself, and never reached it.

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## I

t's over now," Bennett heard the mystic say. "Please try to relax."

He found himself fighting with awful exertion to raise himself from the sidewalk—which had turned into a couch. His clothes clung to him with a clammy wetness that chilled him.

He flung his arms out in a frantic gesture that knocked a lamp from an end-table and sent it crashing to the floor.

Not until then did he feel the mystic's firmly gentle hands on his shoulders, urging him down, and know that he was not actually dying. He lay back for a moment, gasping great gulps of welcome air into his lungs.

"I think you will be all right now," Lima said.

"You were right when you said the experience would not be pleasant," Bennett said, still battling for breath. "I hope the results will be worth it."

"I believe you will find that they are," Lima told him reassuringly. "Also, it can be of assistance to you in still another way. The sequence your dream followed—being a natural, perhaps even a probable, aftermath of your past decisions and movements—could actually happen. Therefore it would be wise to avoid such decisions in real life."

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A

t the end of two weeks, Bennett had collected all the information he needed on Tournay's illegal activities. The investigator he hired was very thorough, and unearthed several other incriminating schemes in Tournay's past. With the evidence he had on hand, Bennett was certain that Tournay would be convicted in any court.

This time he intended to evade the fate he had suffered in the dream by acting differently. He hired a shrewd lawyer—the best obtainable—had him draw up the evidence in legal form, and presented it to the district attorney, with the demand for Tournay's immediate arrest. He knew that immediate action would be his best protection.

That evening, when he left his office building, he felt the peace of a man whose task has been well done.

It took almost a full second before the sight of the long gray car jerked his thoughts from their pleasant introspection and back to dread reality. Tournay's black-browed face leered at him as it had in the dream and he felt his body tense as it waited for the pistol slugs to strike.

His mind scurried in its trap within his head and, strangely, it turned to the mystic for help.

"Lima!" he called desperately.

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A

gain Bennett felt himself struggling with that awful exertion to drag his body from the couch on which it lay.

"It's all over now," he heard Lima say.

He sat up. "What happened?"

"This will be hard to believe," Lima said, "and I will not try to prove it to you, but it is true. The mind has many powers which cannot even be imagined by

anyone who has not lived with those powers as I have. When you called me, your mind attuned itself with mine, and its need and its demand were so powerful that together we turned time backward. You are now back in my dressing room, and it is the exact time at which you originally came out of your dream."

"That's impossible!" Bennett protested.

"Nevertheless, it happened. I only ask you to keep in mind one thing. Someday, when your mind has been made more facile, you will understand how I am able to do this. It will even appear logical to you. Now, however, the only thing I can tell you is *believe it!*"

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## B

ennett had no intention of muffing this second chance. After he had collected the information about Tournay's criminal activities, he also dug into his past for a man who had cause to hate the contractor. He found the man he sought, a man as ruthless and unscrupulous as Tournay himself, one who could fight him on his own ground.

Roger Clarkson had been the controller of a string of bookie joints, before he had been framed by Tournay, and convicted, to serve ten years in prison.

Clarkson had been released from prison six days before. He found that Tournay had gained control of his former criminal empire. Everyone, including Tournay, knew that the only thing preventing Clarkson from taking revenge was the opportunity.

Bennett sent his information to Clarkson and sat back to await the results. That evening, as he was about to leave his office building, some inner caution warned him to take no chances. He stepped cautiously out into the street, looked both ways for the gray sedan, and saw that the street was empty, before he walked to the corner.

He arrived there just in time to meet the long gray sedan as it drove up.

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## O

nce more he fought the awful exertion on the mystic's couch. This time he came out of the blackness with his mind clear. "You've saved me again," he said to Lima. "Have you turned time backward again?"

"Yes," she replied. "But I have given you all the help I can. The next attempt you make, you will have nothing on which to lean except your own strength."

"But why do I always arrive at the point where I'm being shot by Tournay, regardless of what course I choose? Is there no way I can beat him?"

"If you believe in fate as strongly as I do, you will accept that conclusion as inevitable. The long gray sedan is the symbol of your death. You cannot avoid it—at least not as long as you persist in passive action."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Just this. You wish to see Tournay punished—your sense of justice demands it. But each time you try to have someone else administer that punishment. It appears to me that the only possibility of your breaking this fateful progression of events is for you to administer the punishment yourself. You probably realize the danger of trying that. But I can't see where you have any other choice."

"In other words, you feel that the only chance I have of preventing Tournay from killing me—is to kill him first?"

"Yes," Lima said. "Are you strong and hard enough to do it?"

Bennett thought for only a brief moment before he nodded. "I'm desperate enough, at any rate."

This time he did not leave immediately. He had to find out something first. He put his arms around Lima's shoulders and drew her toward him. She put her face up and he kissed her waiting lips. They were sweet and, if she did not return the ardor of his kiss, he did not notice it.

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## M

r. Tournay is not in," the girl at the desk told Bennett. "You might try his home."

At a pay-booth in the lobby, Bennett called Tournay's home. The voice that answered was that of a tired woman, one who has given up hope. "Mr. Tournay called me a short time ago and said that he would be in the office of a Mr. Leroy Bennett, in the Lowry building, if anyone called," the tired voice said.

Bennett hung up and caught a cab. His quarry had walked into an ideal place for their meeting. For better or for worse, he would soon bring this conflict to an end.

In his office, Bennett found that Tournay had been there and gone. He had left a message: "Tell Mr. Bennett that Lima sent me!"

So that was it—Lima had used Bennett as a dupe! He could not figure out her purpose, but he knew that he could never trust her again. She had been against him from the first. Perhaps even she, rather than Tournay, was the prime menace. He decided that he must kill them both, before they had the chance to kill him. Touching the small flat pistol snuggling in its shoulder holster, he knew the pursuit must continue immediately.

He rode the elevator to the ground floor, and he felt his mind working with a clarity and a precision which he had seldom experienced before. This time he knew he would win.

Shrewdly, before leaving the building, Bennett looked out through the glass pane in the door first. He waited only a moment before he saw the long gray sedan as he had expected. They would not trap him again. Ducking back, he walked rapidly toward a side exit.

Night had fallen by the time he reached the carnival building. He did not ring the bell. Instead, he walked to the rear, climbed the stairs of a fire-escape, and softly opened the window of a bedroom.

He stepped inside just as softly and stood listening for breathing. He heard none. This was probably too early for Lima to be in bed.

The bedroom door was open. Bennett could see a light coming from another part of the apartment—probably the living room. He paused to steel himself for what he must do. The time had come when he would have to be savagely ruthless.

He found Lima sitting on a couch, reading a book. He suspected that she still had some control over his mind and he had no intention of letting her influence him. She must be killed before she could read his intention.

"It didn't work." Bennett spoke just loudly enough to startle Lima into raising her head.

As she looked up, he shot her squarely between the eyes.

In an agony of frustration, Bennett saw the flesh of her forehead remain clear and undisturbed. He knew he could not miss at this range, yet she was unhurt. He lowered his sights and shot at the white neck beneath the fair head. She still sat there, returning his gaze, unperturbed, unmarked by the bullets.

He pumped the four remaining bullets into her body. The only part of her that moved was her lips.

"It's no use, Leroy," she said. "Haven't you guessed? You are still in your dream. You can't kill me there."

Suddenly the implication struck him with its awful simplicity.

"Good God!" His voice rose. "Do you mean I've never been out of my dream?" He hesitated while the thought sank in. "My remembrance of coming out of it was only part of the dream itself," he murmured. "That was why you were able to turn time backward at will."

A cold calmness returned to him.

"Tell me," he said, "am I still in the dream?"

"Yes," Lima replied.

"Then I demand that you free me now!"

"As you wish," Lima said sadly. "And may God help you."

Bennett wrenched his body from the couch on which it lay and struggled to his feet. Though the dream had seemed real enough, he could look back on it now and see it as any other dream.

He breathed easier, and then stopped abruptly when he heard a voice behind him say, "You are still a dead man!"

Bennett whirled and found himself facing Tournay. And Tournay held a pistol aimed at his heart.

Bennett turned desperately back to Lima. His lips formed her name, but the

sound died almost before it was uttered. This time, he saw, she would not help him. Her features had hardened and no mercy or compassion registered on them.

"There is no escape," she said.

A fleeting thought went through his mind of springing at Tournay and trying to reach him before the gun could be fired. But one glance at Tournay's face made him realize how futile—and fatal—that would be.

Tournay's finger tightened on the trigger of his gun and Bennett thought ahead in despair to what was to come. One thing he knew: He did not want to die! Was there no way out?

The answer came like a cry of relief. There was a way—Thone! The city of his enigma. Tournay and Lima could not harm him there.



## F

or just an instant, Bennett's vision blurred. Time paused, and the next moment he knew he had returned to Thone. The sounds of the alien city floated up to him and he stirred.

He grasped the sides of his coffinlike bed with fingers that had lost their sense of touch. He pulled himself up to a sitting position and looked about him. On one side stood Lima, though now her features were not those of the implacable, merciless mystic, but rather those of a woman in love.

She smiled happily and said, "At last you have returned."

Bennett strove to move his tongue and lips to ask questions, but they refused, as though numbed by long inaction. He turned to his other side and gazed questioningly at the replica of Tournay who stood there.

Tournay's image spoke. "We had quite a time bringing you back, Sire. But now it has been accomplished—for good."

Striving to move his throat muscles, Bennett finally forced a sound, and then words, through his lips.

"Tell me," he pleaded. "Who are you? And, more important, who am I?"

He turned to Lima for an answer, realizing that now she would help him if anyone would.

"Doctor Tournay will explain it to you," Lima replied, indicating the dark man.

Imploringly, Bennett turned back to face Tournay.

"I see that very little of your memory has returned yet," Tournay said. "In a short while, everything—all your past—will come back to you. Until then, perhaps I had better explain to you who you are. My words will help trigger your returning memory, and speed up the process."

"Please do," Bennett begged.

"You are Benn Ett, *Le Roy* of the city-state of Thone, in the year 4526 A. D. Six months ago, the strain of governing the city began to undermine your health. Acting under my advice, you decided to take a somno-rest cure.

"This rest cure," the doctor continued, "is quite standard practice in our time. We had a little difficulty bringing you out of it at the end of six months. Evidently your somno-existence must have been very pleasant."

"Do you mean that the existence I remember was merely an induced figment of my imagination?"

"Yes. You see, the best rest that can be given a mind is to give it not sleep, but pleasant work. Therefore, under my manipulation, you were given a pseudo-existence in a past era of history. You were led to conceive yourself as occupying a position, which, after close study, I deduced would be the most suitable and relaxing for you."

"But if that is true, why did my dream have to end so unpleasantly—I might say, so nearly fatally?" Bennett demanded.

"The more successful I am in choosing a pleasant existence for a patient in the somno, the more difficult it is to bring him out of it," the doctor replied. "Your unconscious mind, realizing how happy you were in your simulated existence, and how it would have to return to the rigor and stress which unnerved it before, fought with all its strength to remain where the somno had placed it.

"The usual practice in bringing a patient back to reality is for the doctor to enter the dream and convince him, by whatever means may be necessary, to return.

Sometimes, however, the patient is so firmly tied to his somno-existence that drastic measures must be used. This is usually done by means of making the somno-existence so anxiety-producing that the patient is glad to return.

"Your particular release was one of the most difficult that I have ever encountered. In fact, I was unable to bring you back myself, and asked your wife, Lima, to enter the somno with me and help force you to return."

Bits of recollection, which had been edging into Bennett's memory, burst through in full force, and he remembered. It was true. He *was* Benn Ett, *Le Roy* of the city-state of Thone.

He turned to Lima and, as he read the glad light in her eyes, he knew that she had witnessed the return of his complete memory.

"Welcome home," she said.

—CHARLES V. DE  
VET

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