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THE MAN WHO FLEW

BY CHARLES D. CUNNINGHAM, JR.

The Man Who Flew could not exist—but he had committed a foul crime!

[Transcriber's Note: This etext was produced from Worlds of If Science Fiction, November 1962. Extensive research did not uncover any evidence that the U.S. copyright on this publication was renewed.]

Clouds hung low over the city, gray and dismal. The shining metal thruway partially reflected their somber visage. A few vehicles scurried nervously through the city.

Keller turned away from the window dismally. His conscience was bothering him, and it affected his every movement. Looking over his humbly furnished office, he entertained the thought, not for the first time, that he should change jobs if he wanted to eat.

A buzz sounded—the intercom system. That would be Sally, his secretary. It was a mystery what she would want. Usually she never bothered him except in case of an emergency, and the last client Keller had had dropped his case three months ago.

Apparently it was another customer, unlikely as it seemed. Keller heard voices outside, Sally's irritated and protesting, and a nervous baritone. Abruptly the door opened, disclosing a rugged, bushy-haired C-3 (average intelligence and advanced extra-sensory perception, but unexercised), who was in a bad state of nerves.

He seemed to have forced his way past Sally into the inner office.

Keller flashed a thought at Sally: **How does he look?**

Not so hot, she answered. **I didn't bother to scan much—don't want to lower myself to that depth—but he seems to be a big payer. He's impatient, though. And he wants everything run his way.**

Oh, fine, thought Keller. My first victim in three months, and it has to be the Big Shot type.

He made the usual Q-R opening; curtly and efficiently:

[&]quot;Your name?"

"Uh—Harold Radcliffe."

"Why the hesitation?" But Keller had scanned it already. The man was simply cautious. He continued without letting Radcliffe answer:

"Age?" 33. "Occupation?" Hesitation: Salesman. "Residence?" After writing this and Radcliffe's telephone number down, he closed his grimy black notebook and sat back.

"And now, Mr. Radcliffe, why exactly did you come here?"

Radcliffe, unsure of himself at first, gathered confidence as he noticed Keller's interest growing. He began:

"Well sir, for this job I need one of the best detectives—" he paused at Keller's grimace—"and since you're one of the few detectives in the city who can read minds, and the only A-2 'tec in the state—" He shrugged, and finished, "I figured you'd be the man for me."

Keller saw that he was telling the truth, after a quick check into the man's mind. "All right, Mr. Radcliffe. What's your problem?"

Radcliffe seemed to not be able to focus his thoughts. His mind, Keller saw, was a loose stream of unconnected thoughts, trying to merge into a whole. Keller could read no message out of them. He suspected a block—an unusual thing for a C-3, but not impossible.

He gave up, sat back and awaited the other's response. Finally it came, jerking Keller out of his chair.

"It's murder, Mr. Keller. The murder of my wife."

Murder!

It was the first suspected murder in thirteen years. Ever since the Ricjards case in '04, peace and tranquility reigned in a calm and placid

nation. For thirteen peaceful years there had been no hint of manslaughter other than accidental. It had been conditioned out of humans at the prenatal stage, and unless there was a violent, allencompassing urge to kill, murder was completely out of the question.

It was hard to believe. But it was not a lie; no non-tele could block a lie, and Keller scanned the truth in Radcliffe's brain.

"Wait a minute, Radcliffe. Are you sure it's not murder by accident—unintentional manslaughter, as the police term it? Or it could be suicide. Had you thought of that?"

Radcliffe shook his head impatiently. He rose out of his chair, pacing the floor nervously. "It could not possibly be accident. You'll see that when you investigate the case. Suicide? It's possible. Anything is possible, I suppose, but I would lay any kind of odds against it. We had just been to the theater. We returned to our apartment at about five minutes to eleven.

"After undressing and showering, I started to turn in. I noticed a light on in her room—we sleep in separate rooms—and called to her, to see if anything was wrong. There was no answer.

"I figured that she had gone to sleep with the light on, and went into the room to turn it off. That was when I saw her on the floor." He stopped. Keller read grief, fear and love in his memory.

"How had she been killed?"

"It was a handgun, Mr. Keller. Her face was all blackened and charred. Barely recognizable. But I knew it must be her. Our rooms connect, you see. There are two other doors to each room; one to the outside hall, and one to each bathroom.

"When she was shot, my door was locked on the inside—triple-locked, I remember, because I felt like being left alone that night. It was locked by chain, bar and bolt. It's a fairly ancient apartment

house. We like it that way. Her bathroom door was open and there was no one hiding inside. The same went for my bathroom. And both hall doors were locked and bolted.

"The windows were locked on the inside, and there is no opening to shoot through that would not leave traces. I checked.

"Even if the killer had gotten in some way or other, there was no way he could get out and still leave the doors and windows locked up tight."

Keller thought, there is one way, Mr. Radcliffe. But he kept it to himself for the moment.

He looked up and smiled as confidently as he could. "I'll be glad to take your case, Mr. Radcliffe. Of course you want me to spare no expenses," he added hopefully. At Radcliffe's harassed nod, he relaxed.

Next came the most dangerous part of the job. It was a part which had eliminated several competent detectives from their jobs—the Probe phase. This involved plunging into the subject's mind, and sorting out relevant details which could furnish extra clues. Several Probers had got themselves trapped in the subject's mind, unable to get out because of a mental block or insanity.

It might, however, be unnecessary. He flashed a thought to the girl in the adjoining room: **Sal, should I give him the H-R treatment?**

Answer: **Emphatically! He's hiding something. Not intentionally, but it needs to be uncovered. A superficial scanning of the preconscious doesn't get the job done.**

Keller sighed. The Probe (also called the H-R treatment, because a

certain amount of hypnotism was involved) was trying on not only the subject but also the scanner. He said:

"Now, Mr. Radcliffe, I'm going to go into your subconscious mind and get your impressions of last night. I want you to concentrate on ... let's say ... the moment when you saw your wife." He shut off all of his five senses, and took the plunge.

The image formed:

Shrieking terror. A tinge of ozone in the air. The Creature creeping up from behind. A beheaded teddy bear lying full length on the floor. A hole in the air near the door, colored red. Floating demon—where? Nonononon! The Creature bending over him. Terror—heat. No! THE MAN WHO FLEW. Melting walls. The door (now violet) disintegrating. The teddy bear shriveling now—turns into a snake—

He emerged.

Before he could take full control of his body, a thought came:

Rick? How did you come out?

He flashed her the image. **Lousy. I can't get a true impression-picture to save my life. Just a lousy nightmare, fantasy-symbolism deal. But I did get something out of that mess. I'll let you know about it as soon as I verify it.**

To Radcliffe, since the time when Keller had stopped talking until right now, as Keller opened his eyes and frowned in thought, no time had elapsed. In actuality, the time taken was one and one-half microseconds.

Keller flashed: **Sally, tune in on this conversation, please.**

"Radcliffe," he said slowly, "When did you lose your sight?"

The other man sat up rigidly, then relaxed.

"How did you find out? Did you scan it?"

"No. When I was receiving your impressions, I caught an idea of melting walls. Then there were nameless creatures and demons floating around. I examined your senses when I came out, and saw that you were blind. What is it—sort of a sight perception-tuning sense?"

Radcliffe nodded. "I can sense everything except colors. Everything seems black, white and gray to me." He paused wearily. "Otherwise, there's no difference. No one else knew about it. Not even my wife."

Keller nodded. "Now, let's try it again. Concentrate on the moment when you entered here and saw me for the first time."

He flashed a thought to Sally. **Those Creatures were his fear of the unknown. He's got a lot of fright in there. Probably afraid that the killer would jump out at him from some shadowy corner. I don't quite see how he could visualize different colors, having never seen them before—but that's probably my interpretation of them. Here goes.**

The image:

Heat. Light. The teddy bear rising up again. Fear. THE MAN WHO FLEW. The snake again—coiling—striking—missing. Fleeing. Dying. Melting walls. Voices around him—laughing—shrieking. Colors of the rainbow. The creature dying—dead—dissolving. No more....

Voices again. Talking to him. Telling him—what? His life flashing before him—stopping. His brain—*undressing*? Hole in the air at—the desk? Fear. THE MAN WHO FLEW. Fear-terror-hate-revenge ... determination....

Sally? Did you catch all that mess?

Unfortunately.

Something's wrong, Sally. I should be seeing something akin to the actual events through his eyes. Instead all I get is this meaningless stuff—unless—oh, God, now I see! Pause. **I wonder who the Man Who Flew is?**

You've got me. And how about the dissolving creature?

That shows his confidence in having someone to tell his story to. All his unknown fear is vanishing.

And then there's the hole in the air.

Yeah. I think I'll surface again, and try some straight questions on him.

"Radcliffe," began Keller, "you haven't reported this to the police, have you?"

Radcliffe grinned. "Hardly. That would start the biggest scandal in years. I want it kept quiet until we found out who killed her."

"Well, we've ruled out accidental murder. You found no handgun in the room when you searched it?"

"No firearm of any kind."

Keller nodded. He let his mind drift back over four years—

To a time when he was in love with Mildred Simmons and had proposed to her ... and she had rejected him, saying she loved Harold Radcliffe.

He had walked away, a bitter man. She had had many enemies, he mused, and almost as many friends. He did not know of anyone who knew her who was not either violently for or violently against her and all that she stood for.

He looked up.

"How old was your wife when she died?"

"Thirty-one. Two years younger than I am."

"Do you know of anyone who would want to kill her?" It was a routine question, but to Keller it was very important.

"No. I knew many people who disliked her intensely—I'm not denying that—but not to the point of murder. Of course, she wasn't around me half the time. I might not know."

"Well, Radcliffe, I think that'll be all for today. Mind if I go with you back to your apartment to look it over?"

"I don't live there any more. I moved out after I had disposed of her body. I couldn't stand to live there any longer."

Radcliffe shook hands and departed. Keller read confidence and positiveness that he, Keller, would come through. Keller was not so sure. He decided to have a look around Radcliffe's apartment.

He strolled aimlessly around the apartment for a few moments, pausing here and there to check details which might or might not help him in analyzing the Radcliffes' character: furniture design, carpeting, thermostat setting, toilet articles and so on. Then he got down to a thorough examination of the room.

There were no secret panels or trapdoors of any kind. So entrance by a hithertofore unknown passageway was completely out. He checked the air conditioner to see if any rigmarole could be fixed up with it to make it appear that the victim had been shot with a handgun, but this, too, drew a blank.

After a few more minutes' examination, he decided to return.

On an impulse, he decided to see where Radcliffe had gone. Attuning his mind to the already-recorded pattern of Radcliffe's brain, he

received direction, distance and motion—acceleration, direction, rate.

To his surprise he noted that Radcliffe had turned back and was heading toward Keller's office again.

Hastily, Keller returned to the office before him.

In about twenty minutes, Radcliffe barged in as before. "Keller," he said, "I think I'm going to be called out of town tonight. So if you want any more information directly from me, you'll have to get it now."

Keller flashed: **Sally. Watch his conscious thoughts, and also his impressions. I'm going to try some unconscious identification-response. Wish me luck. Or do you want to burrow around in his subconscious with me a little more?**

I think I will. I'm actually beginning to enjoy it, to tell the truth.

Keller said aloud, "I'll go under again. That'll be the last time."

Image:

Nonono. Fire. Flame. Gun. Fearhateterrorlove.

Radcliffe, I am the creature.

No! Dead. You're not—I hate you—gone. Disbelief. Hate. No fear. Forgetfulness. Block. Withdrawal.

Radcliffe.

Me.

I'm the melting walls.

Terror? Uncertainty. Indecision. Realization. Contemptpityscorn. Sharp mental block. Withdrawal.

```
**Radcliffe.**
```

Me.

I'm the teddy bear. (This was, he thought, Radcliffe's wifeimage.)

Indecision. Realization. Withdrawal. Blank.

Radcliffe, I'm the hole in the air.

But Keller's reply was cut short by a cry of terror in his brain.

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**RICK!**
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It was Sally.

Keller went down immediately.

What? No response. **WHAT?** Still no response. Then he could hear her cry—fading in depth—now dying—gone.

Radcliffe.

Mememe.

Sally.

Memeususwetwowetwo....

It had happened. Sally was trapped in his preconscious, absorbed by his dominating mind block. Gone.

Forever.

Determination, savage and enraged. A desperate shot in the dark:

RADCLIFFE!

Memememememe....

Radcliffe, I am the MAN WHO FLEW.

Nononono. Fear. Terror. Hate. Block. Withdrawal, but incomplete....

Coming out of his Probe, Keller saw the result of his last implanted thought: Radcliffe, now in a tight fetal ball, lay on the floor.

His face was absolutely devoid of expression. His conscious mind was a constant *gobble-gobble-gobble*.

Keller entered the next room, to find Sally sprawled limply across her desk. Mindless, soulless, as if she had never had a mind or soul—Keller lifted her tenderly onto the floor and chose the most merciful way out, disintegrating her body with an atomic gun from the closet.

Then, again, the Probe....

Radcliffe.

Mememe.

I'm Sally.

Nonono. (Gloating.) Gonegonegone.

Radcliffe, where's Sally?

Gone. Satisfaction. Triumph. Laughter. Delirious happiness.

Radcliffe, I'm everything. I'm the creature. The snake, THE MAN WHO FLEW, the hole in the air, the flames, everything you've hated, feared and dreaded.

Withdrawal. Thunderbolt! More and more now.

Frantically, Keller defended himself, throwing up block after block, only to have it torn down by the ever-spreading bolts of pure mental energy. Finally he withdrew into his own body in haste, realizing that Radcliffe's conquest would mean his revival.

When he opened his eyes, Radcliffe was sitting in the chair, yawning.

Probably, Keller thought, he had no knowledge of his fetal state. Good. "Well, Radcliffe," he said, "I need only one more thing to complete the picture. Now focus again on 11:17 last night, when you found your wife dead on the floor."

Image:

Fear. Terror. Anxiety. Nonono. Hole in the air. THE MAN WHO FLEW. Pain. Withdrawal. Complete mental block.

With a shock, Keller realized that in seven hours Radcliffe had been turned into an A-3—just below Keller—thanks to ... Sally.

He analyzed the symbols. Impressions: No teddy bear (no real concern for the wife, then). No creature (no more unknown fears). No snake or demon or flames, signifying evil and terror. Just the hole in the air and the man who flew.

Strange ... he realized that meant one thing—he had to go down one last final time—to end it all....

Radcliffe.

Me.

Radcliffe, who is Sally?

Memeusususwetwowetwo.

Shut up! Radcliffe, I know who killed your wife.

Terror. Shock. Ordeal. Decision. Determination. Yes. We hear you.

**THE MAN WHO FLEW RADCLIFFE! THE MAN WHO FLEW KILLED YOUR WIFE. THE HOLE IN THE AIR IS WHAT YOU SENSED—THE VACUUM THAT HE LEFT WHEN HE TELEPORTED HIMSELF OUT OF THE MELTING WALLS ARE, RADCLIFFE. THE WALLS THAT COULDN'T HOLD THE MAN

WHO FLEW—THE MAN WHO KILLED YOUR WIFE.**
I, I, I, I....

RADCLIFFE, WHO KILLED YOUR WIFE? WHO KILLED YOUR WIFE WITH THAT HANDGUN, AND THEN APPARENTLY DISAPPEARED INTO THIN AIR?

Nonono....

IT'S ME, RADCLIFFE. I AM THE MAN WHO FLEW. HOW ELSE WOULD I KNOW THAT IT WAS AT 11:17 THAT YOU FOUND YOUR WIFE DEAD? HOW ELSE COULD I GO FROM HERE TO YOUR APARTMENT WITHOUT KNOWING IT WAS RAINING? **

Youyouyou....

THAT'S RIGHT, RADCLIFFE. BUT IT'S TOO LATE NOW. ISN'T IT? YOU'RE GONE, AREN'T YOU? NO. RADCLIFFE! DON'T! NONOnonono.... Radcliffe....

Memeusus....

Wethreewethreewethree....

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