

Includes "Mimsy Were the Borogoves," the inspiration
for the major motion picture *The Last Mimzy*

HENRY KUTTNER



the last

mimzy

STORIES

Originally published as *The Best of Henry Kuttner*

MIMSY WERE THE BOROGOVES

There's no use trying to describe either Unthahorsten or his surroundings, because, for one thing, a good many

million years had passed and, for another, Unthahorsten wasn't on Earth, technically speaking. He was doing the

equivalent of standing in the equivalent of a laboratory. He was preparing to test his time machine.

Having turned on the power, Unthahorsten suddenly realized that the Box was empty. Which wouldn't do at all.

The device needed a control, a three-dimensional solid which would react to the conditions of another age. Otherwise

Unthahorsten couldn't tell, on the machine's return, where and when it had been. Whereas a solid in the Box would

automatically be subject to the entropy and cosmic-ray bombardment of the other era, and Unthahorsten could

measure the changes, both qualitative and quantitative, when the machine returned. The Calculators could then get to

work and, presently, tell Unthahorsten that the Box had briefly visited **A.D. 1,000,000**, **A.D. boo** or **A.D. i**, as the case might be.

Not that it mattered, except to Unthahorsten. But he was childish in many respects.

There was little time to waste. The Box was beginning to glow and shiver. Unthahorsten stared around wildly, fled

into the next glossatch and groped in a storage bin there. He came up with an armful of peculiar-looking stuff. Uh-huh.

Some of the discarded toys of his son Snowen, which the boy had brought with him when he had passed over from

Earth, after mastering the necessary technique. Well, Snowen needed this junk no longer. He was conditioned, and

had put away childish things. Besides, though Unthahorsten's wife kept the toys for sentimental reasons, the

experiment was more important.

Unthahorsten left the glossatch and dumped the assortment into the Box, slamming the cover shut before the

warning signal flashed. The Box went away. The manner of its departure hurt Unthahorsten's eyes.

He waited.

And he waited.

Eventually he gave up and built another time machine, with identical results. Snowen hadn't been annoyed by the loss of his old toys, nor had Snowen's mother, so Unthahorsten cleaned

out the bin and dumped the remainder of his son's childhood relics in the second time machine's Box.

According to his calculations, this one should have appeared on Earth in the latter part of the nineteenth century,

A.D. If that actually oc-curred, the device remained there.

Disgusted, Unthahorsten decided to make no more time machines. But the mischief had been done. There were two

of them, and the

first

Scott Paradine found **it** while he was playing hooky from the Glendale Grammar School. There was a geography test

that day, and Scott saw no sense in memorizing place names—which, in the **nineteen-**forties, was a fairly sensible

theory. Besides, **it** was the sort of warm spring day, with a touch of coolness in the breeze, which invited a boy to lie

down in a field and stare at the occasional clouds till he fell asleep. Nuts to geography! Scott dozed.

About noon he got hungry, so his stocky legs carried him to a nearby store. There he invested his small hoard with

penurious care and a sub-lime disregard for his gastric juices. He went down by the creek to feed.

Having finished his supply of cheese, chocolate and cookies, and hav-ing drained the soda-pop bottle to its dregs,

Scott caught tadpoles and studied them with a certain amount of scientific curiosity. He did not persevere. Something

tumbled down the bank and thudded into the muddy ground near the water, so Scott, with a wary glance around,

hurried to investigate.

It was a box. It was, in fact, the Box. The gadgetry hitched to **it** meant little to Scott, though he wondered why **it** was

so fused and burned. He pondered. With his jack-knife he pried and probed, his tongue sticking out from a corner of

his mouth— Hm-m-m. Nobody was around. Where had the box come from? Somebody must have left **it** here, and

sliding soil had dislodged **it** from its precarious perch.

“That’s a helix,” Scott decided, quite erroneously. It was helical, but **it wasn’t** a helix, because of the dimensional

warp involved. Had the thing been a model airplane, no matter how complicated, **it** would have held few mysteries to

Scott. As **it** was, a problem was posed. Something told Scott that the device was a lot more complicated than the

spring motor he had deftly dismantled last Friday.

But no boy has ever left a box unopened, unless forcibly dragged away. Scott probed deeper. The angles on this

thing were funny. Short

circuit, probably. That was why—uh! The knife slipped. Scott sucked his thumb and gave vent to experienced

blasphemy.

Maybe **it** was a music box.

Scott shouldn't have felt depressed. The gadgetry would have given Einstein a headache and driven Steinmetz

raving mad. The trouble was, of course, that the box had not yet completely entered the space-time continuum where

Scott existed, and therefore **it** could not be opened— at any rate, not till Scott used a convenient rock to hammer the

helical non-helix into a more convenient position.

He hammered **it**, in fact, from its contact point with the fourth dimension, releasing the space-time torsion **it** had

been maintaining. There was a brittle snap. The box jarred slightly, and lay motionless, no longer only partially in

existence. Scott opened it easily now.

The soft, woven helmet was the first thing that caught his eye, but he discarded that without much interest. It was

just a cap. Next, he lifted a square, transparent crystal block, small enough to cup in his palm—much too small to

contain the maze of apparatus within **it**. In a moment Scott had solved that problem. The crystal was a sort of

mag-nifying glass, vastly enlarging the things inside the block.

Strange things they were, too. Miniature people, for

example.

They moved, like clockwork automatons, though much more smoothly. It was rather like watching a play. Scott was

interested in their costumes, but fascinated by their actions. The tiny people were deftly building a house. Scott

wished **it** would catch fire, so he could see the people put **it** out.

Flames licked up from the half-completed structure. The automatons, with a great deal of odd apparatus,

extinguished the blaze.

It didn't take Scott long to catch on. But he was a little worried. The manikins would obey his thoughts. By the time

he discovered that, he was frightened and threw the cube from him.

Halfway up the bank, he reconsidered and returned. The crystal lay partly in the water, shining in the sun. It was a

toy; Scott sensed that, with the unerring instinct of a child. But he didn't pick **it** up immediately. Instead, he returned

to the box and investigated its remaining Contents.

He found some really remarkable gadgets. The afternoon passed all too quickly. Scott finally put the toys back in

the box and lugged it home, grunting and puffing. He was quite red-faced by the time he arrived at the kitchen door.

His find he hid at the back of a closet in his room upstairs. The crystal cube he slipped into his pocket, which

already bulged with

string, a coil of wire, two pennies, a wad of tinfoil, a grimy defense stamp and a chunk of feldspar. Emma, Scott's

two-year-old sister, waddled unsteadily in from the hail and said hello.

"Hello, Slug," Scott nodded, from his altitude of seven years and some months. He patronized Emma shockingly,

but she didn't know the difference. Small, plump and wide-eyed, she flopped down on the carpet and stared dolefully

at her shoes.

"Tie 'em, Scotty, please?"

"Sap," Scott told her kindly, but knotted the laces. "Dinner ready yet?"

Emma nodded.

"Let's see your hands." For a wonder they were reasonably clean, though probably not aseptic. Scott regarded his

own paws thoughtfully and, grimacing, went to the bathroom, where he made a sketchy toilet. The tadpoles had left

traces.

Dennis Paradine and his wife Jane were having a cocktail before dinner, downstairs in the living room. He was a

youngish, middle-aged man with soft gray hair and a thin, primmouthed face; he taught philosophy at the University.

Jane was small, neat, dark and very pretty. She sipped her Martini and said:

“New shoes. Like ‘em?”

“Here’s to crime,” Paradine muttered absently. “Huh? Shoes? Not now. Wait till I’ve finished this. I had a bad day.”

“Exams?”

“Yeah. Flaming youth aspiring towards manhood. I hope they die. In considerable agony. *Insh’Allah!*”

“I want the olive,” Jane requested.

“I know,” Paradine said despondently. “It’s been years since I’ve tasted one myself. In a Martini, I mean. Even if I

put six of ‘em in your glass, you’re still not satisfied.”

“I want yours. Blood brotherhood. Symbolism. That’s why.”

Paradine regarded his wife balefully and crossed his long legs. “You sound like one of my students.”

“Like that hussy Betty Dawson, perhaps?” Jane unsheathed her nails.

“Does she still leer at you in that offensive

way?”

“She does. The child is a neat psychological problem. Luckily she isn’t mine. If she were—” Paradine nodded

significantly. “Sex conscious-ness and too many movies. I suppose she still thinks she can get a pass-ing grade by

showing me her knees. Which are, by the way, rather bony.”

Jane adjusted her skirt with an air of complacent pride. Paradine uncoiled himself and poured fresh Martinis. “Candidly, I don’t see the point of teaching those apes philosophy. They’re

all at the wrong age. Their habit patterns, their methods of thinking, are already laid down. They’re horribly

conservative, not that they’d admit **it**. The only people who can understand philosophy are mature adults or kids like

Emma and Scotty.”

“Well, don’t enroll Scotty in your course,” Jane requested. “He isn’t ready to be a *Philosophiae Doctor*. I hold no

brief for a child genius, especially when it’s my son.”

“Scotty would probably be better at it than Betty Dawson,” Paradine grunted.

“He died an enfeebled old dotard at five,” Jane quoted dreamily. “I want your olive.”

“Here. By the way, I like the shoes.”

“Thank you. Here’s Rosalie. Dinner?”

“It’s all ready, Miz Pa’dine,” said Rosalie, hovering. “I’ll call Miss Emma ‘n’ Mista’ Scotty.”

“I’ll get ‘em.” Paradine put his head into the next room and roared, “Kids! Come and get **it!**”

Small feet scuttered down the stairs. Scott dashed into view, scrubbed and shining, a rebellious cowlick aimed at the zenith. Emma pursued, levering herself carefully down the steps. Halfway, she gave up the attempt to descend upright and reversed, finishing the task monkey-fashion, her small behind giving an impression of marvellous diligence upon the work in hand. Paradine watched, fascinated by the spectacle, till he was hurled back by the impact of his son's body.

"Hi, Dad!" Scott shrieked.

Paradine recovered himself and regarded Scott with dignity. "Hi, yourself. Help me in to dinner. You've dislocated at least one of my hip joints."

But Scott was already tearing into the next room, where he stepped on Jane's new shoes in an ecstasy of affection, burbled an apology and rushed off to find his place at the dinner table. Paradine cocked up an eyebrow as he followed, Emma's pudgy hand desperately gripping his forefinger.

'Wonder what the young devil's been up to.'

"No good, probably," Jane sighed. "Hello, darling. Let's see your ears."

"They're *clean*. Mickey licked 'em."

“Well, that Airedale’s tongue is far cleaner than your ears,” Jane pondered, making a brief examination. “Still, as long as you can hear, the dirt’s only superficial.”

“Fisshul?”

“Just a little, that means.” Jane dragged her daughter to the table and inserted her legs into a high chair. Only lately

had Emma graduated to the dignity of dining with the rest of the family, and she was, as Paradine remarked, all eaten

up with pride by the prospect. Only babies spilled food, Emma had been told. As a result, she took such painstaking

care in conveying her spoon to her mouth that Paradine got the jitters whenever he watched.

“A conveyor belt would be the thing for Emma,” he suggested, pulling out a chair for Jane. “Small buckets of

spinach arriving at her face at stated intervals.”

Dinner proceeded uneventfully until Paradine happened to glance at Scott’s plate. “Hello, there. Sick? Been stuffing

yourself at lunch?”

Scott thoughtfully examined the food still left before him. “I’ve had all I need, Dad,” he explained.

“You usually eat all you can hold, and a great deal more,” Paradine said. “I know growing boys need several tons of

foodstuff a day, but you're below par tonight. Feel O.K.?"

"Uh-huh. Honest, I've had all I need."

"All you *want*?"

"Sure. I eat different."

"Something they taught you at school?" Jane inquired. Scott shook his head solemnly.

"Nobody taught me. I found **it** out myself. I use spit."

"Try again," Paradine suggested. "It's the wrong word."

"Uh—s-saliva. Hm-m-m?"

"Uh-huh. More pepsin? Is there pepsin in the salivary juices, Jane? I forget."

"There's poison in mine," Jane remarked. "Rosalie's left lumps in the mashed potatoes again."

But Paradine was interested. "You mean you're getting everything possible out of your food—no wastage—and eating less?"

Scott thought that over. "I guess so. It's not just the sp—saliva. I sort of measure how much to put in my mouth at

once, and what stuff to mix up. I dunno. I just do **it**."

"Hm-m-m," said Paradine, making a note to check up later. "Rather

a revolutionary idea.” Kids often get screwy notions, but this one might

not be so far off the beam. He pursed his lips. “Eventually I suppose people will eat quite differently—I mean the way they eat, as well as what. What they eat, I mean. Jane, our son shows signs of becoming a genius.”

“Oh?”

“It’s a rather good point in dietetics he just made. Did you figure it out yourself, Scott?”

“Sure,” the boy said, and really believed it.

“Where’d you get the idea?”

“Oh, I—” Scott wriggled. “I dunno. It doesn’t mean much, I guess.”

Paradine was unreasonably disappointed. “But surely—”

“S-s-s-spit!” Emma shrieked, overcome by a sudden fit of badness.

“*Spit!*” She attempted to demonstrate, but

succeeded only in dribbling into her bib.

With a resigned air Jane rescued and reproved her daughter, while Paradine eyed Scott with rather puzzled interest.

But it was not till after dinner, in the living room, that anything further happened.

Any homework?"

"N-no," Scott said, flushing guiltily. To cover his embarrassment he took from his pocket a gadget he had found in

the box, and began to unfold **it**. The result resembled a tesseract, strung with beads. Paradine didn't see **it** at first, but

Emma did. She wanted to play with **it**.

"No. Lay off, Slug," Scott ordered. "You can watch me." He fumbled with the beads, making soft, interested noises.

Emma extended a fat forefinger and yelped.

"Scotty," Paradine said warningly.

"I didn't hurt her."

"Bit me. It did," Emma mourned.

Paradine looked up. He frowned, staring. What in— "Is that an abacus?" he asked. "Let's see **it**, please."

Somewhat unwillingly, Scott brought the gadget across to his father's chair. Paradine blinked. The "abacus,"

unfolded, was more than a foot square, composed of thin, rigid wires that interlocked here and there. On the wires the

colored beads were strung. They could be slid back and forth, and from one support to another, even at the points of

join-ture. But—a pierced bead couldn't cross *interlocking* wires.

So, apparently, they weren't pierced. Paradrine looked closer. Each small sphere had a deep groove running around

it, so that **it** could be revolved and slid along the wire at the same time. Paradrine tried to pull one free. It clung as

though magnetically. Iron? It looked more like plastic.

The framework itself—Paradrine wasn't a mathematician. But the angles formed by the wires were vaguely shocking,

in their ridiculous lack of Euclidean logic. They were a maze. Perhaps that's what the gadget was—a puzzle.

"Where'd you get this?"

"Uncle Harry gave **it** to me," Scott said, on the spur of the moment.

"Last Sunday, when he came over." Uncle Harry

was out of town, a circumstance Scott well knew. At the age of seven, a boy soon learns that the vagaries of adults

follow a certain definite pattern, and that they are fussy about the donors of gifts. Moreover, Uncle Harry would not

return for several weeks; the expiration of that period was unimaginable to Scott, or, at least, the fact that his lie would

ultimately be discovered meant less to him than the advantages of being allowed to keep the toy.

Paradrine found himself growing slightly confused as he attempted to manipulate the beads. The angles were

vaguely illogical. It was like a puzzle. This red bead, if slid along *this*

wire to *that* junction, should reach *there*—*but it*

didn't. A maze, odd, but no doubt instructive. Para-dine had a well-founded feeling that he'd have no patience with the

thing himself.

Scott did, however, retiring to a corner and sliding beads around with much fumbling and grunting. The beads *did*

sting, when Scott chose the wrong ones or tried to slide them in the wrong direction. At last he crowed exultantly.

"I did **it**, Dad!"

"Eh? What? Let's see." The device looked exactly the same to Paradine, but Scott pointed and beamed.

"I made **it** disappear."

"It's still there."

"That blue bead. It's gone now."

Paradine didn't believe that, so he merely snorted. Scott puzzled over the framework again. He experimented. This

time there were no shocks, even slight. The abacus had showed him the correct method. Now **it** was up to him to do **it**

on his own. The bizarre angles of the wires seemed a little less confusing now, somehow.

It was a most instructive toy— It worked, Scott thought, rather like the crystal cube. Reminded of

that gadget, he took **it** from his pocket and relinquished the abacus to Emma, who was struck dumb with joy. She fell to

work sliding the beads, this time without protesting against the shocks—which, indeed, were very minor—and, being

imitative, she managed to make a bead disappear almost as quickly as had Scott. The blue bead reappeared— but Scott

didn't notice. He had forethoughtfully retired into an angle of the chesterfield and an overstuffed chair and amused

himself with the cube.

There were the little people inside the thing, tiny manikins much

enlarged by the magnifying properties of the crystal. They moved, all right. They built a house. It caught fire, with

realistic-seeming flames, and the little people stood by waiting. Scott puffed urgently. "Put **it out!**"

But nothing happened. Where was that queer fire engine, with revolving arms, that had appeared before? Here **it**

was. It came sailing into the picture and stopped. Scott urged **it** on.

This was fun. The little people really did what Scott told them, inside of his head. If he made a mistake, they waited

till he'd found the right way. They even posed new problems for him.

The cube, too, was a most instructive toy. It was teaching Scott, with alarming rapidity—and teaching him very

entertainingly. But **it** gave him no really new knowledge as yet. He wasn't ready. Later . later.

Emma grew tired of the abacus and went in search of Scott. She couldn't find him, even in his room, but once there

the contents of the closet intrigued her. She discovered the box. It contained treasure-trove

—a doll, which Scott had already noticed but discarded with a sneer. Squealing, Emma brought the doll downstairs,

squatted in the middle of the floor and began to take **it** apart.

“Darling! What's that?”

“Mr. Bear!”

Obviously **it** wasn't Mr. Bear, who was blind, earless, but comfort-ing in his soft fatness. But all dolls were named

Mr. Bear to Emma.

Jane Paradine hesitated. “Did you take that from some other little girl?”

“I didn't. She's mine.”

Scott came out from his hiding place, thrusting the cube into his pocket. “Uh—that's from Uncle Harry.”

“Did Uncle Harry give that to you, Emma?”

“He gave **it** to me for Emma,” Scott put in hastily, adding another stone to his foundation of deceit. “Last Sunday.”

“You’ll break **it**, dear.”

Emma brought the doll to her mother. “She comes apart. See?”

“Oh? *It—ugh!*” Jane sucked in her breath. Paradine looked up quickly.

‘What’s up?’

She brought the doll over to him, hesitated and then went into the dining room, giving Paradine a significant glance.

He followed, closing the door. Jane had already placed the doll on the cleared table.

“This isn’t very nice is **it**, Denny?”

“Hm-m-m.” It was rather unpleasant, at first glance. One might have expected an anatomical dummy in a medical

school, but a child’s doll.

The thing came apart in sections—skin, muscles, organs—miniature but quite perfect, as far as Paradine could see.

He was interested. “Dunno. Such things haven’t the same connotations to a kid.”

“Look at that liver. Is **it** a liver?”

“Sure. Say, I—this is funny.”

“What?”

“It isn’t anatomically perfect, after all.” Paradine pulled up a chair. “The digestive tract’s too short. No large

intestine. No appendix, either.”

“Should Emma have a thing like this?”

“I wouldn’t mind having **it** myself,” Paradine said. “Where on earth did Harry pick **it** up? No, I don’t see any harm in

it. Adults are conditioned to react unpleasantly to innards. Kids don’t. They figure they’re solid inside, like a potato.

Emma can get a sound working knowledge of physiology from this doll.”

“But what are those? Nerves?”

“No, these are the nerves. Arteries here; veins here. Funny sort of aorta.” Paracine looked baffled. “That—what’s

Latin for network, any-way, huh? *Rita? Rata?*”

“*Bales*,” Jane suggested at random.

“That’s a sort of breathing,” Paradine said crushingly. “I can’t figure out what this luminous network of stuff is. It

goes all through the body, like nerves.”

“Blood.”

“Nope. Not circulatory, not neural. Funny! It seems to be hooked up with the lungs.”

They ‘became engrossed, puzzling over the strange doll. It was made with remarkable perfection of detail, and that

in itself was strange, in view of the physiological variation from the norm. "Wait'll I get that Gould," Paradine said, and

presently was comparing the doll with anatomical charts. He learned little, except to increase his bafflement.

But **it** was more fun than a jigsaw puzzle.

Meanwhile, in the adjoining room, Emma was sliding the beads to and fro in the abacus. The motions didn't seem so

strange now. Even when the beads vanished. She could almost follow that new direction— almost . . .

Scott panted, staring into the crystal cube and mentally directing, with many false starts, the building of a structure

somewhat more com-licated than the one which had been destroyed by fire. He, too, was learning—being

conditioned. . .

Paradine's mistake, from a completely anthropomorphic standpoint, was that he didn't get rid of the toys instantly.

He did not realize their significance, and, by the time he did, the progression of circumstances had got well under way.

Uncle Harry remained out of town, so Para-dine couldn't check with him. Too, the midterm exams were on, which meant

arduous mental effort and complete exhaustion at night; and Jane was slightly ill for a week or so. Emma and Scott had

free rein with the toys.

“What,” Scott asked his father one evening, “is a wabe, Dad?”

“Wave?”

He hesitated. “I—don’t *think* so. Isn’t ‘wabe’ right?”

“‘Wabe’ is Scot for ‘web.’ That **it**?”

“I don’t see how,” Scott muttered, and wandered off, scowling, to amuse himself with the abacus. He was able to

handle **it** quite deftly now. But, with the instinct of children for avoiding interruption, he and Emma usually played with

the toys in private. Not obviously, of course—but the more intricate experiments were never performed under the eye

of an adult.

Scott was learning fast. What he now saw in the crystal cube had little relationship to the original simple problems.

But they were fas-cinatingly technical. Had Scott realized that his education was being guided and

supervised—though merely mechanically—he would prob-ably have lost interest. As **it** was, his initiative was never

quashed.

Abacus, cube, doll and other toys the children found in the box.

Neither Paradine nor Jane guessed how much of an effect the contents of the time machine were having on the

kids. How could they? Youngsters are instinctive dramatists, for purposes of self-protection. They have not yet fitted themselves to the exigencies—to them partially inexplicable—of a mature world. Moreover, their lives are complicated by human variables. They are told by one person that playing in the mud is permissible, but that, in their excavations, they must not uproot flowers or small trees. Another adult vetoes mud per se. The Ten Com-mandments are not carved on stone—they vary; and children are help-lessly dependent on the caprice of those who give them birth and feed and clothe them. And tyrannize. The young animal does not resent that benevolent tyranny, for **it** is an essential part of nature. He is, however, an individualist, and maintains his integrity by a subtle, passive fight.

Under the eyes of an adult he changes. Like an actor on stage, when he remembers, he strives to please, and also to attract attention to him-self. Such attempts are not unknown to maturity. But adults are less obvious—to other adults.

It is difficult to admit that children lack subtlety. Children are different from mature animals because they think in another way. We can more or less easily pierce the pretenses they set up, but they can do the same to us. Ruthlessly a child can destroy the pretenses of an adult. Iconoclasm is a child's

prerogative.

Foppishness, for example. The amenities of social intercourse, exaggerated not quite to absurdity. The gigolo .

“Such *savoir-faire!* Such punctilious courtesy!” The dowager and the blonde young thing are often impressed.

Men have less pleasant comments to make. But the child goes to the root of the matter.

“You’re *silly!*”

How can an immature human being understand the complicated system of social relationships? He can’t. To him, an

exaggeration of natural courtesy is silly. In his functional structure of life patterns, **it** is rococo. He is an egotistic little

animal who cannot visualize himself in the position of another—certainly not an adult. A self-contained, almost perfect

natural unit, his wants supplied by others, the child is much like a unicellular creature floating in the bloodstream,

nutriment carried to him, waste products carried away.

From the standpoint of logic, a child is rather horribly perfect. A baby must be even more perfect, but so alien to an

adult that only superficial standards of comparison apply. The thought processes of an infant are completely

unimaginable. But babies think, even before birth. In the womb they move and sleep, not entirely through instinct. We

are conditioned to react rather peculiarly to the idea that a nearly viable embryo may think. We are surprised, shocked

into laughter and re-pelled. Nothing human is alien.

But a baby is not human. An embryo is far less human.

That, perhaps, was why Emma learned more from the toys than did Scott. He could communicate his thoughts, of

course; Emma could not, except in cryptic fragments. The matter of the scrawls, for example.

Give a young child pencil and paper, and he will draw something which looks different to him than to an adult. The

absurd scribbles have little resemblance to a fire engine, but **it** is a fire engine, to a baby. Per-haps **it** is even

three-dimensional. Babies think differently and see dif-ferently.

Paradine brooded over that, reading his paper one evening and watching Emma and Scott communicate. Scott was

questioning his sister. Sometimes he did **it** in English. More often he had resource to gibberish and sign language.

Emma tried to reply, but the handicap was too great.

Finally Scott got pencil and paper. Emma liked that. Tongue in

cheek, she laboriously wrote a message. Scott took the paper, examined **it** and scowled.

"That isn't tight, Emma," he said.

Emma nodded vigorously. She seized the pencil again and made more scrawls. Scott puzzled for a while, finally

smiled rather hesitantly and got up. He vanished into the hall. Emma returned to the abacus.

Paradine rose and glanced down at the paper, with some mad thought that Emma might abruptly have mastered

calligraphy. But she hadn't. The paper was covered with meaningless scrawls, of a type familiar to any parent.

Paradine pursed his lips.

It might be a graph showing the mental variations of a manic-depressive cockroach, but probably wasn't. Still, **it** no

doubt had mean-ing to Emma. Perhaps the scribble represented Mr. Bear.

Scott returned, looking pleased. He met Emma's gaze and nodded. Paradine felt a twinge of curiosity.

"Secrets?"

"Nope. Emma—uh—asked me to do something for her."

"Oh." Paradine, recalling instances of babies who had babbled in unknown tongues and baffled linguists, made a

note to pocket the paper when the kids had finished with **it**. The next day he showed the scrawl to Elkins at the

university. Elkins had a sound working knowledge of many unlikely

languages, but he chuckled over Emma's venture

into literature.

"Here's a free translation, Dennis. Quote. I don't know what this means, but I kid the hell out of my father with **it**.

Unquote."

The two men laughed and went off to their classes. But later Paradine was to remember the incident. Especially after

he met Holloway. Before that, however, months were to pass, and the situation to develop even further towards its

climax.

Perhaps Paradine and Jane had evinced too much interest in the toys. Emma and Scott took to keeping them hidden,

playing with them only in private. They never did **it** overtly, but with a certain unobtrusive caution. Nevertheless, Jane

especially was somewhat troubled.

She spoke to Paradine about **it** one evening. "That doll Harry gave Emma."

"Yeah?"

"I was downtown today and tried to find out where **it** came from. No soap."

"Maybe Harry bought **it** in New York."

Jane was unconvinced. "I asked them about the other things, too.

They showed me their stock—Johnson's a big store, you know. But there's nothing like Emma's abacus."

"Hm-m-m." Paradine wasn't much interested. They had tickets for a show that night, and **it** was getting late. So the subject was dropped for the nonce.

Later **it** cropped up again, when a neighbor telephoned Jane.

"Scotty's never been like that, Denny. Mrs. Burns said he frightened the devil out of her Francis."

"Francis? A little fat bully of a punk, isn't he? Like his father. I broke Burns's nose for him once, when we were sophomores."

"Stop boasting and listen," Jane said, mixing a highball. "Scott showed Francis something that scared him. Hadn't you better—"

"I suppose so." Paradine listened. Noises in the next room told him the whereabouts of his son. "Scotty!"

"Bang," Scott said, and appeared smiling. "I killed 'em all. Space p1-rates. You want me, Dad?"

"Yes. If you don't mind leaving the space pirates unburied for a few minutes. What did you do to Francis Burns?"

Scott's blue eyes reflected incredible candor. "Huh?"

“Try hard. You can remember, I’m sure.”

“Uh. Oh, that. I didn’t do nothing.”

“Anything,” Jane corrected absently.

“Anything. Honest. I just let him look into my television set, and **it— it** scared him.”

“Television set?”

Scott produced the crystal cube. “It isn’t really that. See?”

Paradine examined the gadget, startled by the magnification. All he could see, though, was a maze of meaningless

colored designs.

“Uncle Harry—”

Paradine reached for the telephone. Scott gulped. “Is—is Uncle Harry back in town?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, I gotta take a bath.” Scott headed for the door. Paradine met Jane’s gaze and nodded significantly.

Harry was home, but disclaimed all knowledge of the peculiar toys. Rather grimly, Paradine requested Scott to bring

down from his room all of the playthings. Finally they lay in a row on the table—cube, abacus, doll, helmet-like cap,

several other mysterious contraptions. Scott was cross-examined. He

lied valiantly for a time, but broke down at last

and bawled, hiccuping his confession.

“Get the box these things came in,” Paradine ordered. “Then head for bed.”

“Are you—hup!—gonna punish me, Daddy?”

“For playing hooky and lying, yes. You know the rules. No more shows for two weeks. No sodas for the same

period.”

Scott gulped. “You gonna keep my things?”

“I don’t know yet.”

“Well—g’night, Daddy. G’night, Mom.”

After the small figure had gone upstairs, Paradine dragged a chair to the table and carefully scrutinized the box. He

poked thoughtfully at the focused gadgetry. Jane watched.

“What is **it**, Denny?”

“Dunno. Who’d leave a box of toys down by the creek?”

“It might have fallen out of a car.”

“Not at that point. The road doesn’t hit the creek north of the rail-road trestle. Empty lots—nothing else.” Paradine

lit a cigarette. “Drink, honey?”

"I'll fix it." Jane went to work, her eyes troubled. She brought Paradine a glass and stood behind him, ruffling his

hair with her fingers. "Is anything wrong?"

"Of course not. Only—where did these toys come from?"

"Johnson's didn't know, and they get their stock from New York."

"I've been checking up, too," Paradine admitted. "That doll"—he poked it—"rather worried me. Custom jobs,

maybe, but I wish I knew who'd made 'em."

"A psychologist? That abacus—don't they give people tests with such things?"

Paradine snapped his fingers. "Right! And say, there's a guy going to speak at the university next week, fellow

named Holloway, who's a child psychologist. He's a big shot, with quite a reputation. He might know something

about **it.**"

"Holloway? I don't—"

"Rex Holloway. He's—hm-m-m! He doesn't live far from here. Do you suppose he might have had these things

made himself?"

Jane was examining the abacus. She grimaced and drew back. "If he did, I don't like him. But see if you can find out,

Denny.”

Paradine nodded. “I shall.”

He drank his highball, frowning. He was vaguely worried. But he wasn't scared—yet.

Rex Holloway was a fat, shiny man, with a bald head and thick spectacles, above which his thick, black brows lay

like bushy caterpillars. Paradine brought him home to dinner one night a week later. Holloway

did not appear to watch the children, but nothing they did or said was lost on him. His gray eyes, shrewd and bright,

missed little.

The toys fascinated him. In the living room the three adults gathered around the table, where the playthings had

been placed. Holloway studied them carefully as he listened to what Jane and Paradine had to say. At last he broke his

silence.

“I'm glad I came here tonight. But not completely. This is very disturbing, you know.”

“Eh?” Paradine stared, and Jane's face showed her consternation. Holloway's next words did not calm them.

“We are dealing with madness.”

He smiled at the shocked looks they gave him. “All children are mad,

from an adult viewpoint. Ever read Hughes'

High Wind in Jamaica?”

“I’ve got **it**.” Paradine secured the little book from its shelf. Holloway extended a hand, took the book and flipped

the pages till he had found the place he wanted. He read aloud:

Babies, of course, are not human—they are animals, and have a very ancient and ramified culture, as cats have,

and fishes, and even snakes; the same in kind as these, but much more complicated and vivid, since babies are, after

all, one of the most developed species of the lower vertebrates. In short, babies have minds which work in terms and

categories of their own, which cannot be translated into the terms and categories of the human mind.

Jane tried to take that calmly, but couldn’t. “You don’t mean that Emma—”

“Could you think like your daughter?” Holloway asked. “Listen: ‘One can no more think like a baby than one can

think like a bee.’”

Paradine mixed drinks. Over his shoulder he said, “You’re theorizing quite a bit, aren’t you? As I get **it**, you’re

implying that babies have a culture of their own, even a high standard of intelligence.”

Not necessarily. There's no yardstick, you see. All I say is that babies think in other ways than we do. Not

necessarily *better*—*that's* a question of relative values. But with a different matter of extension." He sought for words,

grimacing.

"Fantasy," Paradine said, rather rudely but annoyed because of Emma. "Babies don't have different senses from

ours."

"\The said they did?" Holloway demanded. "They use their minds in a different way, that's all. But it's quite

enough!"

"I'm trying to understand," Jane said slowly. "All I can think of is my Mixmaster. It can whip up batter and potatoes,

but **it** can squeeze oranges, too."

"Something like that. The brain's a colloid, a very complicated machine. We don't know much about its

potentialities. We don't even know how much it can grasp. But it *is* known that the mind becomes conditioned as the

human animal matures. It follows certain familiar theorems, and all thought thereafter is pretty well based on patterns

taken for granted. Look at this." Holloway touched the abacus. "Have you experimented with it?"

A little," Paradine said.

"But not much, eh?"

"Well—"

"Why not?"

"It's pointless," Paradine complained. "Even a puzzle has to have some logic. But those crazy angles—"

"Your mind has been conditioned to Euclid," Holloway said. "So this—thing—bores us, and seems pointless. But a child knows nothing of Euclid. A different sort of geometry from ours

wouldn't impress him as being illogical. He believes what he sees."

"Are you trying to tell me that this gadget's got a fourth-dimensional extension?" Paradine demanded.

"Not visually, anyway," Holloway denied. "All I say is that our minds, conditioned to Euclid, can see nothing in this

but an illogical tangle of wires. But a child—especially a baby—might see more. Not at first. It'd be a puzzle, of course.

Only a child wouldn't be handicapped by too many preconceived ideas."

"Hardening of the thought arteries," Jane interjected.

Paradine was not convinced. "Then a baby could work calculus better than Einstein? No, I don't mean that. I can

see your point, more or less clearly. Only—”

‘Well, look. Let’s suppose there are two kinds of geometry; we’ll limit it, for the sake of the example. Our kind,

Euclidean, and another, we’ll call x . X hasn’t much relationship to Euclid. It’s based on different theorems. Two and

two needn’t equal four in it; they could equal y^2 , or they might not even *equal*. A baby’s mind is not yet conditioned,

except by certain questionable factors of heredity and environment. Start the infant on Euclid—”

“Poor kid,” Jane said.

Holloway shot her a quick glance. “The basis of Euclid. Alphabet blocks. Math, geometry, algebra—they come

much later. We’re familiar with that development. On the other hand, start the baby with the basic principles of our x

logic.”

“Blocks? What kind?”

Holloway looked at the abacus. “It wouldn’t make much sense to us. But we’ve been conditioned to Euclid.”

Paradine poured himself a stiff shot of whisky. “That’s pretty awful. You’re not limiting to math.”

“Right! I’m not limiting it at all. How can I? I’m not conditioned to x logic.”

There's the answer," Jane said, with a sigh of relief. "MTho is? It'd take such a person to make the sort of toys

you apparently think these are."

Holloway nodded, his eyes, behind the thick lenses, blinking. "Such people may exist."

"Where?"

"They might prefer to keep hidden."

"Supermen?"

"I wish I knew. You see, Paradine, we've got yardstick trouble again. By our standards these people might seem

super-dupers in certain re-spects. In others they might seem moronic. It's not a quantitative differ-ence; it's

qualitative. They *think* different. And I'm sure we can do things they can't."

"Maybe they wouldn't want to," Jane said.

Paradine tapped the fused gadgetry on the box. "What about this? It implies—"

"A purpose, sure."

"Transportation?"

"One thinks of that first. If so, the box might have come from anywhere."

“Where—things are—different?” Paradine asked slowly.

“Exactly. In space, or even time. I don’t know; I’m a psychologist. Unfortunately I’m conditioned to Euclid, too.”

“Punny place it must be,” Jane said. “Denny, get rid of those toys.”

“I intend to.”

Holloway picked up the crystal cube. “Did you question the children much?”

Paradine said, “Yeah. Scott said there were people in that cube when he first looked. I asked him what was in it

now.”

“What did he say?” The psychologist’s eyes widened.

“He said they were building a place. His exact words. I asked him who—people? But he couldn’t explain.”

“No, I suppose not,” Holloway muttered. “It must be progressive. How long have the children had these toys?”

“About three months, I guess.”

“Time enough. The perfect toy, you see, is both instructive and mechanical. It should do things, to interest a child, and it should teach, preferably unobtrusively. Simple problems at first.

Later—”

“X logic,” Jane said, white-faced.

Paradine cursed under his breath. “Emma and Scott are perfectly normal!”

“Do you know how their minds work—now?”

Holloway didn’t pursue the thought. He fingered the doll. “It would be interesting to know the conditions of the

place where these things came from. Induction doesn’t help a great deal, though. Too many fac-tors are missing. We

can’t visualize a world based on the x factor—en-vironment adjusted to minds thinking in x patterns. This luminous

network inside the doll. It could be anything. It could exist inside us, though we haven’t discovered it yet. When we

find the right stain—” He shrugged. “What do you make of this?”

It was a crimson globe, two inches in diameter, with a protruding knob upon its surface.

“What could anyone make of it?”

“Scott? Emma?”

“I hadn’t even seen it till about three weeks ago. Then Emma started to play with it.” Paradine nibbled his lip. “After

that, Scott got in-terested.”

“Just what do they do?”

“Hold it up in front of them and move it back and forth. No particu-lar pattern of motion.”

“No Euclidean pattern,” Holloway corrected. “At first they couldn’t understand the toy’s purpose. They had to be educated up to it.”

“That’s horrible,” Jane said.

“Not to them. Emma is probably quicker at understanding x than is Scott, for her mind isn’t yet conditioned to this environment.”

Paradine said, “But I can remember plenty of things I did as a child. Even as a baby.”

“Well?”

“Was I—mad then?”

“The things you don’t remember are the criterion of your madness,” Holloway retorted. “But I use the word

‘madness’ purely as a convenient symbol for the variation from the known human norm. The arbitrary standard of sanity.”

Jane put down her glass. “You’ve said that induction was difficult, Mr. Holloway. But it seems to me you’re making

a great deal of it from very little. After all, these toys—”

“I *am* a psychologist, and I’ve specialized in children. I’m not a layman. These toys mean a great deal to me, chiefly because they mean

so little.”

“You might be wrong.”

“Well, I rather hope I am. I’d like to examine the children.”

Jane rose in arms. “How?”

After Holloway had explained, she nodded, though still a bit hesi-
tantly. ‘Well, that’s all right. But they’re not

guinea pigs.”

The psychologist patted the air with a plump hand. “My dear girl! I’m
not a Frankenstein. To me the individual is

the prime factor—nat-urally, since I work with minds. If there’s anything
wrong with the youngsters, I want to cure

them.”

Paradine put down his cigarette and slowly watched blue smoke
spiral up, wavering in an unfelt draught. “Can you

give a prognosis?”

“I’ll try. That’s all I can say. If the undeveloped minds have been turned
into the x channel, it’s necessary to divert

them back. I’m not saying that’s the wisest thing to do, but it probably
is from our stand-ards. After all, Emma and

Scott will have to live in this world.”

“Yeah. Yeah. I can’t believe there’s much wrong. They seem about

average, thoroughly normal.”

“Superficially they may seem so. They’ve no reason for acting abnormally, have they? And how can you tell if

they—think differently?”

“I’ll call ‘em,” Paradine said.

“Make it informal, then. I don’t want them to be on guard.”

Jane nodded towards the toys. Holloway said, “Leave the stuff there,

But the psychologist, after Emma and Scott were summoned, made no immediate move towards direct questioning.

He managed to draw Scott unobtrusively into the conversation, dropping key words now and then. Nothing so

obvious as a word-association test; cooperation is necessary for that.

The most interesting development occurred when Holloway took up the abacus. “Mind showing me how this

works?”

Scott hesitated. “Yes, sir. Like this.” He slid a bead deftly through the maze, in a tangled course, so swiftly that no

one was quite sure whether or not it ultimately vanished. It might have been merely legerdemain. Then, again—

Holloway tried. Scott watched, wrinkling his nose. “That’s tight?” “Uh-huh. It’s gotta go *there*.” “Here? Why?”

“Well, that’s the only way to make it work.” But Holloway was conditioned to Euclid. There was no apparent

reason why the bead should slide from this particular wire to the other. It looked like a random factor. Also, Holloway

suddenly noticed, this wasn’t the path the bead had taken previously, when Scott had worked the puzzle. At least, as

well as he could tell.

“Will you show me again?”

Scott did, and twice more, on request. Holloway blinked through his glasses. Random, yes. And a variable. Scott

moved the bead along a different course each time.

Somehow, none of the adults could tell whether or not the bead vanished. If they had expected to see it disappear,

their reactions might have been different.

In the end nothing was solved. Holloway, as he said good night, seemed ill at ease.

“May I come again?”

“I wish you would,” Jane told him. “Any time. You still think—” He nodded. “The children’s minds are not reacting

normally. They’re not dull at all, but I’ve the most extraordinary impression that they arrive at conclusions in a way we

don’t understand. As though they used algebra while we used

geometry. The same conclusion, but a different method

of reaching it.”

“What about the toys?” Paradine asked suddenly.

“Keep them out of the way. I’d like to borrow them, if I may.”

That night Paradine slept badly. Holloway’s parallel had been ill chosen. It led to disturbing theories. The x factor . . .

The children were using the equivalent of algebraic reasoning, while adults used geometry.

Fair enough. Only.

Algebra can give you answers that geometry cannot, since there are certain terms and symbols which cannot be

expressed geometrically. Suppose x logic showed conclusions inconceivable to an adult mind.

“Damn!” Paradine whispered. Jane stirred beside him.

“Dear? Can’t you sleep either?”

“No.” He got up and went into the next room. Emma slept peacefully as a cherub, her fat arm curled around Mr. Bear.

Through the open doorway Paradine could see Scott’s dark head motionless on the pillow.

Jane was beside him. He slipped his arm around her.

“Poor little people,” she murmured. “And Holloway called them mad. I

think we're the ones who are crazy, Dennis."

"Uh-huh. We've got jitters."

Scott stirred in his sleep. Without awakening, he called what was obviously a question, though it did not seem to be in any particular language. Emma gave a little mewling cry that changed pitch sharply.

She had not wakened. The children lay without stirring.

But, Paradine thought, with a sudden sickness in his middle, it was exactly as though Scott had asked Emma

something, and she had re-plied.

Had their minds changed so that even—sleep was different to them?

He thrust the thought away. "You'll catch cold. Let's get back to bed. Want a drink?"

"I think I do," Jane said, watching Emma. Her hand reached out blindly towards the child; she drew **it** back. "Come

on. We'll wake the kids."

They drank a little brandy together, but said nothing. Jane cried in her sleep, later.

Scott was not awake, but his mind worked in slow, careful building. Thus— 'They'll take the toys away. The fat man—listava dangerous, maybe.

But the Ghoric direction won't show—evankrus dun hasn't them. In-transdection—bright and shiny. Emma. She's

more khopranik-high now than—I still don't see how to—thavarar lixery dist. .

A little of Scott's thoughts could still be understood. But Emma had become conditioned to x much faster.

She was thinking, too.

Not like an adult or a child. Not even like a human being. Except, perhaps, a human being of a type shockingly

unfamiliar to genus Homo.

Sometimes, Scott himself had difficulty in following her thoughts. If it had not been for Holloway, life might have

settled back into an almost normal routine. The toys were no longer active reminders. Emma still enjoyed her dolls and

sandpile, with a thoroughly explicable de-light. Scott was satisfied with baseball and his chemical set. They did

everything other children did, and evinced few, if any, flashes of abnormality. But Holloway seemed to be an alarmist.

He was having the toys tested, with rather idiotic results. He drew endless charts and diagrams, corresponded with

mathematicians, en-gineers and other psychologists, and went quietly crazy trying to find rhyme or reason in the

construction of the gadgets. The box itself, with its cryptic machinery,

told nothing. Fusing had melted too much of

the stuff into slag. But the toys . .

It was the random element that baffled investigation. Even that was a matter of semantics. For Holloway was

convinced that **it** wasn't really

random. There just weren't enough known factors. No adult could work the abacus, for example. And Holloway

thoughtfully refrained from letting a child play with the thing.

The crystal cube was similarly cryptic. It showed a mad pattern of colors, which sometimes moved. In this **it**

resembled a kaleidoscope. But the shifting of balance and gravity didn't affect it. Again the random factor.

Or, rather, the unknown. The x pattern. Eventually, Paradine and Jane slipped back into something like complacency,

with a feeling that the children had been cured of their mental quirk, now that the con-tributing cause had been

removed. Certain of the actions of Emma and Scott gave them every reason to quit worrying.

For the kids enjoyed swimming, hiking, movies, games, the normal functional toys of this particular time-sector. It

was true that they failed to master certain rather puzzling mechanical devices which involved some calculation. A

three-dimensional jigsaw globe Paradine had picked up, for example. But he found that difficult himself.

Once in a while there were lapses. Scott was hiking with his father one Saturday afternoon, and the two had paused

at the summit of a hill. Beneath them a rather lovely valley was spread.

“Pretty, isn’t **it?**” Paradine remarked.

Scott examined the scene gravely. “It’s all wrong,” he said.

“Eh?”

“I dunno.”

“What’s wrong about **it?**”

“Gee.” Scott lapsed into puzzled silence. “I dunno.”

The children had missed their toys, but not for long. Emma recovered first, though Scott still moped. He held

unintelligible conversations with his sister, and studied meaningless scrawls she drew on paper he supplied. It was

almost as though he was consulting her, about difficult problems beyond his grasp.

If Emma understood more, Scott had more real intelligence, and manipulatory skill as well. He built a gadget with his

Meccano set, but was dissatisfied. The apparent cause of his dissatisfaction was exactly why Paradine was relieved

when he viewed the structure. It was the sort of thing a normal boy would make, vaguely reminiscent of a cubist ship.

It was a bit too normal to please Scott. He asked Emma more questions, though in private. She thought for a time, and then made more scrawls, with an awkwardly clutched pencil.

“Can you read that stuff?” Jane asked her son one morning.

“Not read **it**, exactly. I can tell what she means. Not all the time, but mostly.”

“Is **it** writing?”

“N-no. It doesn’t mean what it *looks* like.”

“Symbolism,” Paradine suggested over his coffee.

Jane looked at him, her eyes widening. “Denny—”

He winked and shook his head. Later, when they were alone, he said, “Don’t let Holloway upset you. I’m not

implying that the kids are corresponding in an unknown tongue. If Emma draws a squiggle and says it’s a flower,

that’s an arbitrary rule—Scott remembers that. Next time she draws the same sort of squiggle, or tries to—well!”

“Sure,” Jane said doubtfully. “Have you noticed Scott’s been doing a lot of reading lately?”

"I noticed. Nothing unusual, though. No Kant or Spinoza."

"He browses, that's all."

"Well, so did I, at his age," Paradine said, and went off to his morning classes. He lunched with Holloway, which

was becoming a daily habit, and spoke of Emma's literary endeavors.

"Was I right about symbolism, Rex?"

The psychologist nodded. "Quite right. Our own language is nothing but arbitrary symbolism now. At least in its

application. Look here." On his napkin he drew a very narrow ellipse. "What's that?"

"You mean what does **it** represent?"

"Yes. What does **it** suggest to you? It could be a crude representation of—what?"

"Plenty of things," Paradine said. "Rim of a glass. A fried egg. A loaf of French bread. A cigar."

Holloway added a little triangle to his drawing, apex joined to one end of the ellipse. He looked up at Paradine.

"A fish," the latter said instantly.

"Our familiar symbol for a fish. Even without fins, eyes or mouth, it's recognizable, because we've been conditioned

to identify this particular shape with our mental picture of a fish. The

basis of a rebus. A symbol, to us, means a lot

more than what we actually see on paper. What's in your mind when you look at this sketch?"

"Why—a fish."

"Keep going. What do you visualize? Everything!"

"Scales," Paradine said slowly, looking into space. "Water. Foam. A fish's eye. The fins. The colors."

"So the symbol represents a lot more than just the abstract idea *fish*. Note the connotation's that of a noun, not a

1

verb. It's harder to express actions by symbolism, you know. Anyway—reverse the process. Suppose

you want to make a symbol for some concrete noun, say *bird*. Draw **it**." Paradine drew two connected arcs, concavities

down.

"The lowest common denominator," Holloway nodded. "The natural tendency is to simplify. Especially when a child

is seeing something for the first time and has few standards of comparison. He tries to identify the new thing with

what's already familiar to him. Ever notice how a child draws the ocean?" He didn't wait for an answer; he went on.

"A series of jagged points. Like the oscillating line on a seismograph.

When I first saw the Pacific, I was about

three. I remember it pretty clearly. It looked—tilted. A flat plain, slanted at an angle. The waves were regular triangles,

apex upward. Now, I didn't see them stylized that way, but later, remembering, I had to find some familiar standard of

comparison. Which is the only way of getting any conception of an entirely new thing. The average child tries to draw

these regular tri-angles, but his coordination's poor. He gets a seismograph pattern."

"All of which means what?"

"A child sees the ocean. He stylizes **it**. He draws a certain definite pattern, symbolic, to him, of the sea. Emma's

scrawls may be symbols, too. I don't mean that the world looks different to her—brighter, per-haps, and sharper, more

vidid and with a slackening of perception above her eye level. What I do mean is that her thought processes are

different, that she translates what she sees into abnormal symbols."

"You still believe—"

"Yes, I do. Her mind has been conditioned unusually. It may be that she breaks down what she sees into simple,

obvious patterns—and real-izes a significance to those patterns that we can't understand. Like the abacus. She saw a

pattern in that, though to us **it** was completely random.”

Paradine abruptly decided to taper off these luncheon engagements with Holloway. The man was an alarmist. His

theories were growing more fantastic than ever, and he dragged in anything, applicable or not, that would support them.

Rather sardonically he said, ‘Do you mean Emma’s communicating with Scott in an unknown language?’

“In symbols for which she hasn’t any words. I’m sure Scott understands a great deal of those—scrawls. To him, an

isosceles triangle may represent any factor, though probably a concrete noun. Would a man who knew nothing of

chemistry understand what H O meant? Would he realize that the symbol could evoke a picture of the ocean?”

2

Paradine didn’t answer. Instead, he mentioned to Holloway Scott’s curious remark that the landscape, from the hill,

had looked all wrong.

A moment later, he was inclined to regret his impulse, for the psychologist was off again.

“Scott’s thought patterns are building up to a sum that doesn’t equal this world. Perhaps he’s subconsciously

expecting to see the world where those toys came from.”

Paradine stopped listening. Enough was enough. The kids were getting along all right, and the only remaining

disturbing factor was Hollo-way himself. That night, however, Scott evinced an interest, later significant, in eels.

There was nothing apparently harmful in natural history. Paradine explained about eels.

“But where do they lay their eggs? Or do they?”

“That’s still a mystery. Their spawning grounds are unknown. Maybe the Sargasso Sea, or the deeps, where the pressure can help them force the young out of their bodies.”

“Punny,” Scott said, thinking deeply.

“Salmon do the same thing, more or less. They go up rivers to spawn.” Paradine went into detail. Scott was fascinated.

“But that’s *right*, Dad. They’re born in the river, and when they learn how to swim, they go down to the sea. And they come back to lay their eggs, huh?”

“Right.”

“Only they wouldn’t *come* back,” Scott pondered. “They’d just send their eggs—”

"It'd take a very long ovipositor," Paradine said, and vouchsafed some well-chosen remarks upon oviparity.

His son wasn't entirely satisfied. Flowers, he contended, sent their seeds long distances.

"They don't guide them. Not many find fertile soil."

"Flowers haven't got brains, though. Dad, why do people live *here*?"

"Glendale?"

"*No—here*. This whole place. It isn't all there is, I bet."

"Do you mean the other planets?"

Scott was hesitant. "This is only—part of the big place. It's like the river where the salmon go. Why don't people

go on down to the ocean when they grow up?"

Paradine realized that Scott was speaking figuratively. He felt a brief chill. The—ocean?

The young of the species are not conditioned to live in the more complete world of their parents. Having developed

sufficiently, they enter

that world. Later they breed. The fertilized eggs are buried in the sand, far up the river, where later they hatch.

And they learn. Instinct alone is fatally slow. Especially in the case of a specialized genus, unable to cope even with

this world, unable to feed or drink or survive, unless someone has foresightedly provided for those needs.

The young, fed and tended, would survive. There would be incubators and robots. They would survive, but they

would not know how to swim downstream, to the vaster world of the ocean.

So they must be taught. They must be trained and conditioned in many ways.

Painlessly, subtly, unobtrusively. Children love toys that do things, and if those toys teach at the same time. .

In the latter half of the nineteenth century an Englishman sat on a grassy bank near a stream. A very small girl lay

near him, staring up at the sky. She had discarded a curious toy with which she had been playing, and now was

murmuring a wordless little song, to which the man listened with half an ear.

“What was that, my dear?” he asked at last. “Just something I made up, Uncle Charles.”

“Sing it again.” He pulled out a notebook. The girl obeyed.

“Does it mean anything?”

She nodded. “Oh, yes. Like the stories I tell you, you know.”

‘They’re wonderful stories, dear.’

“And you’ll put them in a book someday?”

“Yes, but I must change them quite a lot, or no one would understand. But I don’t think I’ll change your little

song.”

“You mustn’t. If you did, it wouldn’t mean anything.”

“I won’t change that stanza, anyway,” he promised. “Just what does it mean?”

“It’s the way out, I think,” the girl said doubtfully. “I’m not sure yet. My magic toys told me.”

“I wish I knew what London shop sold these marvellous toys!”

“Mama bought them for me. She’s dead. Papa doesn’t care.”

She lied. She had found the toys in a box one day, as she played by the Thames. And they were indeed wonderful.

Her little song—Uncle Charles thought it didn’t mean anything. (He wasn’t her real uncle, she parenthesized. But he

was nice.) The song meant a great deal. It was the way. Presently she would do what it said, and then. .

But she was already too old. She never found the way.

Paradine had dropped Holloway. Jane had taken a dislike to him, naturally enough, since what she wanted most of

all was to have her fears calmed. Since Scott and Emma acted normally now, Jane felt satisfied. It was partly wishful

thinking, to which Paradine could not entirely subscribe.

Scott kept bringing gadgets to Emma for her approval. Usually she'd shake her head. Sometimes she would look

doubtful. Very occasionally she would signify agreement. Then there would be an hour of laborious, crazy scribbling

on scraps of note paper, and Scott, after studying the notations, would arrange and rearrange his rocks, bits of

machinery, candle ends and assorted junk. Each day the maid cleaned them away, and each day Scott began again.

He condescended to explain a little to his puzzled father, who could see no rhyme or reason in the game.

"But why this pebble right here?"

"It's hard and round, Dad. It *belongs* there."

"So is this one hard and round."

"Well, that's got vaseline on it. When you get that far, you can't see just a hard, round thing."

"What comes next? This candle?"

Scott looked disgusted. "That's toward the end. The iron ring's next." It was, Paradine thought, like a scout trail

through the woods, markers in a labyrinth. But here again was the random factor. Logic halted—familiar logic—at

Scott's motives in arranging the junk as he did.

Paradine went out. Over his shoulder he saw Scott pull a crumpled piece of paper and a pencil from his pocket and

head for Emma, who was squatted in a corner thinking things over.

Well .

Jane was lunching with Uncle Harry, and, on this hot Sunday afternoon, there was little to do but read the papers.

Paradine settled himself in the coolest place he could find, with a Collins, and lost himself in the comic strips.

An hour later a clatter of feet upstairs roused him from his doze. Scott's voice was crying exultantly, "This is it,

Slug! Come on!"

Paradine stood up quickly, frowning. As he went into the hall the telephone began to ring. Jane had promised to call

. .

His hand was on the receiver when Emma's faint voice squealed with excitement. Paradine grimaced. What the devil

was going on upstairs?

Scott shrieked, "Look out! This way!"

paradine, his mouth working, his nerves ridiculously 'tense, forgot the phone and raced up the stairs. The door of

Scott's room was open.

The children were vanishing.

They went in fragments, like thick smoke in a wind, or like movement in a distorting mirror. Hand in hand they went,

in a direction Paradine could not understand, and as he blinked there on the threshold, they were gone.

“Emma!” he said, dry-throated. “*Scotty!*”

On the carpet lay a pattern of markers, pebbles, an iron ring—junk. A random pattern. A crumpled sheet of paper

blew towards Paradine.

He picked it up automatically.

“Kids. Where are you? Don’t *hide*—*Emma! SCOTTY!*”

Downstairs the telephone stopped its shrill, monotonous ringing. Paradine looked at the paper he held.

It was a leaf torn from a book. There were interlineations and marginal notes, in Emma’s meaningless scrawl. A

stanza of verse had been so underlined and scribbled over that it was almost illegible, but Paradine

was thoroughly familiar with *Through the Looking Glass*. His memory gave him the words— ‘*Twas*

briflig, and the slithy toves

Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:

All mimsy were the borogoves,

And the mome raths outgrabe.

Idiotically he thought: Humpty Dumpty explained it. A wabe is the plot of grass around a sundial. A sundial. Time.

It has something to do with time. A long time ago Scotty asked me what a wabe was. Sym-bolism.

'Twas brillig.

A perfect mathematical formula, giving all the conditions, in symbolism the children had finally understood. The

junk on the floor. The toves had to be made slithy—vaseline?—and they had to be placed in a certain relationship, so

that they'd gyre and gimble.

Lunacy!

But it had not been lunacy to Emma and Scott. They thought differently. They used x logic. Those notes Emma had

made on the page— she'd translated Carroll's words into symbols both she and Scott could understand.

The random factor had made sense to the children. They had fulfilled the conditions of the time-span equation. *And*

the movie raths out-grabe.

Paradine made a rather ghastly little sound, deep in his throat. He looked at the crazy pattern on the carpet. If he

could follow it, as the kids had done— But he couldn't. The pattern was senseless. The ran-dom factor defeated him.

He was conditioned to Euclid.

Even if he went insane, he still couldn't do it. It would be the wrong kind of lunacy.

His mind had stopped working now. But in a moment the stasis of incredulous horror would pass— Paradine

crumpled the page in his fin-gers. "Emma! Scotty!" he called in a dead voice, as though he could expect no response.

Sunlight slanted through the open windows, brightening the golden pelt of Mr. Bear. Downstairs the ringing of the

telephone began again.