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Out of Time — Out of Mind *Edwin Klein*

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You can say that I am crazy if you wish — everyone else seems to think so — but I swear I am telling the truth. It was three minutes before four when I entered Professor Benton's laboratory on the day of his accident or whatever you prefer to call it. I remember the time because my physical chemistry report was due at four — you know Professor Benton was a stickler for punctuality. I knew he wouldn't accept it after four so I had hurried to his laboratory. He was funny about things like that — I remember how he used to say in class that Time was nature's most important factor.

I suppose I entered his room with almost an air of triumph, because my report was on time. He was working on something in the corner of the room and didn't appear to hear me enter. I had to cough and shuffle around a bit to attract his attention, and when he finally turned he seemed rather annoyed at the interruption.

"Yes, yes, just leave it on my desk," he snapped, irascibly I thought. He looked rather strange — almost crazy, twisted, mousy pinched features, eyes burning with a light I had never seen before. I hesitated an instant then laid my report on his desk and had turned to leave the room when he called me back.

"See here," he said, "I have a task for you to do." His voice had taken on a note of authority that I am sure it never had in the classroom — authority that was further emphasized by a pistol which he leveled at me — his eyes glaring over the sights.

He gestured with the gun towards a heavy oak chair, equipped with heavy, leather straps, which was securely anchored to the floor. He indicated that I should seat myself into his chair. With a few swift motions the Professor had me securely strapped into position. Then he stepped back from the chair and leered at me with a diabolic grin that drew his thin lips over yellow teeth.

"My colleagues all think I'm quite mad, you know," he remarked as he prepared a hypodermic syringe filling it with a dark, viscous liquid. "That's why I was forced to secure your assistance by such high handed methods. You aren't one of my best pupils, but I think you are sufficiently apt to serve my purpose admirably."

In the next few minutes he had explained a lot about isotopic quasi-elements that emanated strange rays cutting chords across the arch of time and how the human mind could travel along the chord as an electrical impulse travels along a wire. I didn't even pretend to understand most of what he said. He showed me a mass of complicated equipment that he had hidden behind a screen. Its aluminum and copper parts glistened evilly in the light of the mercury vapor lamps illuminating the room. He explained that it was the element disintegrator that was to liberate the time-crossing rays.

"And so you see I have conquered Time. And you, willing or nay, shall assist me in the crucial test, for I intend to transport my mind a billion years in the future."

He bared my arm to insert the hypodermic need. I lunged violently against the straps that bound me. I started to scream for help.

"No need for that," snapped Benton impatiently. "The college was so kind as to make this room soundproof so that my experimenting would not disturb the rest of the faculty. You will find this drug harmless enough. Just a scopalmine derivative that will serve to numb your conscious mind and leave you abnormally receptive to my thoughts which I shall endeavor to transmit over a billion years of time. As I explained my mind must be detached from my material self to make the journey and must merge with the first intelligent being I encounter on the time beam. Therefore I will be without identity and the thoughts you will receive, dear pupil, will be in truth the thoughts of that being via my mind and the time beam. Cheerio!" and he plunged the needle into my arm. A pleasant lethargic feeling took command of my senses and I drifted into unconsciousness.

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I was in a large hall filled with a soft glowing light that seemed to come from everywhere at once. Oddly enough everything was perfectly familiar. My whole life had been spent in that room. I was Jakar, one of the Intelligents. It was good that I was an Intelligent. Many others like me occupied the room for this was the hall of the embryo Intelligents who upon reaching maturity would be absorbed by the Intellect. We were brains surrounded by soft protoplasm that transmitted all necessary impressions of sound, sight, hearing and smell during our preliminary experience. I, Jakar, had reached maturity. Soon I would lose all identity in the multi-brained Intellect which controlled Society. I had been created for that purpose. Since my conception I had been subjected to concentrated implied knowledge so that I would be prepared for my niche in the many-phased Control.

A vestige of emotion not quite removed by evolution made me feel pride in being an Intelligent rather than a Worker. Workers were necessary to perform the mechanical processes of Society, but they were sorry creatures. In the last billion years their physical characteristics had not changed appreciably. They still had trunks containing their vital organs, four appendages for purposes of locomotion and mechanical skills, a bulbous protrusion contained their sensory centers, plus sight receiving and olfactory organs, and an oral cavity by which they fed. Their minds were completely subjugated to the Intellect and all emotions detrimental to Society such as love, fear, hate, or pity had been removed so that they were perfect instruments for the Intellect.

One of the Workers entered the room to bathe me in the nutritive fluid that furnished fuel for my growth. I felt the stimulation of the liquid reach every cell. The archaic physiologies of the Workers were not adapted to this form of nourishment but had to absorb through their oral cavities quantities of synthetic gruel similar to the food used by the Ancients before the Age of Science.

During my bath, I felt an impulse from the Intellect. It was not the usual

influx of knowledge, but a summons. The time had come for the merging with the Intellect. I felt a vague feeling of satisfaction; my preparatory existence was completed. A Worker carefully lifted me from my place and stepped into a small tube car. We sped swiftly towards the Vault of the Intellect. This was my first glimpse of life outside the Hall of Embryos. We passed Workers preparing a new passageway from the plastic that is the basis of all our construction. This plastic can be made rigid or flexible, transparent or opaque. When completed, the plastic transmits uniformly the blue-green light that eliminates shadow and sight-sense fatigue.

We entered the Vault of the Supreme Control. A vast pulsating mass occupied the larger portion of the immense room. I was borne to my position. I was content. In a moment I would be subjected to a blast of mental energy that would forever destroy my identity and weld me into an integral part of the Intellect.

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I fought my way back to consciousness. For a moment I sat there dazed. I tried to move but the straps held me firmly. My memory slowly returned. My head throbbed dully and I was sick from the drug. The hands of my watch stood at twelve-thirty-five. I had been in the chair for over eight hours.

I could see Professor Benton seated in a chair similar to mine. His eyes were open and he was breathing regularly. I spoke to him. He did not answer. I assumed that he had not fully recovered from the strain of the experiment. Minutes passed. I spoke again. I called louder and my voice shook for I suddenly realized the truth. I realized that the mind of the Professor who had conquered Time was sealed forever in the Intellect — a billion years in the future.