

MILES BREUER

THE EINSTEIN
SEE-SAW

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The Einstein See-Saw:

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Miles John Breuer

The Einstein See-Saw

In their pursuit of an unscrupulous scientist, Phil and Ione are swung into hyperspace – marooned in a realm of strange sights and shapes.

Tony Costello leaned glumly over his neat, glass-topped desk, on which a few papers lay arranged in orderly piles. Tony was very blue and discouraged. The foundations of a pleasant and profitable existence had been cut right out from under him. Gone were the days in which the big racket boss, Scarneck Ed, generously rewarded the exercise of Tony's brilliant talents as an engineer in redesigning cars to give higher speed for bootlegging purposes, in devising automatic electric apparatus for handling and concealing liquor, in designing beam-directed radios for secret communication among the gangs. Yes, mused Tony, it had been profitable.

Six months ago the Citizens' Committee had stepped in. Now the police department was reorganized; Scarneck Ed Podkowski was in jail, and his corps of trusty lieutenants were either behind the bars with him or scattered far and wide in flight. Tony, always a free spender, had nothing left but the marvelous laboratory and workshop that Scarneck Ed had built him, and his freedom. For the police could find nothing legal against Tony. They had been compelled to let him alone, though they were keeping a close

watch on him. Tony's brow was as dark as the mahogany of his desk. He did not know just how to go about making an honest living.

With a hand that seemed limp with discouragement, he reached into his pocket for his cigarette-case. As he drew it out, the lackadaisical fingers failed to hold it firmly enough, and it clattered to the floor behind his chair. With the weary slowness of despondence, he dragged himself to his feet and went behind his chair to pick up the cigarette-case. But, before he bent over it, and while he was looking fully and directly at it, his desk suddenly vanished. One moment it was there, a huge ornament of mahogany and glass; the next moment there was nothing.

Tony suddenly went rigid and stared at the empty space where his desk had stood. He put his hand to his forehead, wondering if his financial troubles were affecting his reason. By that time, another desk stood in the place.

Tony ran over this strange circumstance mentally. His mental processes were active beneath, though dazed on the surface. His desk had stood there. While looking fully at it, all his senses intact, he had seen it vanish, and for a moment there had been nothing in its place. While he stared directly at the empty space from which the desk had disappeared, another desk had materialized there, like a flash. Perhaps, there had been a sort of jar, a tremor, of the floor and of the air, of everything. But the point was that his own desk, at which he had been working one moment, had suddenly vanished, and at the next moment another

desk had appeared in its place.

And what a desk! The one that now stood there was smaller than his own palatial one, and shabbier. A raw, unpleasant golden-oak, much scratched and scuffed. Its top was heaped and piled full of books and papers. In the middle of it stood a photograph of a girl, framed in red leather. Irresistibly, the sunny beauty of the face, the bright eyes, the firm little chin, the tall forehead topped by a shining mass of light curly hair, drew Tony's first glance. For a few moments his eyes rested delightedly on the picture.

In a moment, however, Tony noticed that the books and papers on the desk were of a scientific character; and such is the nature of professional interest, that for the time he forgot his astonishment at how the desk had got there, in his absorption in the things heaped on top of it.

Perhaps it isn't fair to give the impression that the desk was in disorder. It was merely busy; just as though someone who had been deeply engaged in working had for the moment stepped away. There was a row of books across the back edge, and Tony leaned over eagerly to glance at the titles.

"'Theory of Parallels,' Lobatchevsky; 'Transformation of Complex Functions,' Riemann; 'Tensors and Geodesics,' Gauss," Tony read. "Hm – old stuff. But here's modern dope along the same line. 'Tensors,' by Christoffel; 'Absolute Differential Calculus,' by Ricci and Levi Civita. And Schrödinger and Eddington and D'Abro. Looks like somebody's interested in

Relativity. Hm!"

He bent over, his constantly increasing interest showing in the attitude of his body; he turned over papers and opened notebooks crowded full of handwritten figures. Last of all he noted the batch of manuscript directly in front of him in the middle of the front edge of the desk. It was typewritten, with corrections and interlineations all over it in purple ink.

A title, "The Parallel Transformations of Equations for Matter, Energy, and Tensors," had been crossed out with purple ink, and "The Intimate Relation between Matter and Tensors" substituted. Tony bent over it and read. He was so fascinated that it did not even occur to him to speculate on the happy circumstance that the mysteriously appearing desk had brought its own scientific explanation with it. The title of the paper told him that its sheets would elucidate the apparently supernatural phenomenon, and all he did was to plunge breathlessly ahead in his eager reading. The article was short, about seven typewritten sheets. He took out his pencil and followed through the mathematical equations readily. Tony's mind was a brilliant, even though an erring one.

Under the first article lay a second one. One glance at the title caused Tony to stiffen. Then he picked up the typewritten script and carried it across the big room of his laboratory, as far away from the desk as he could get. He put the girl's photograph in his pocket. Then he took heaps and armfuls of papers, books and notes and carried them from the desk to a bench in the far corner.

For, as soon as he had read the title, "A Preliminary Report of Experimental Work in the Physical Manipulation of Tensors," a sudden icy panic gripped his heart lest the desk and its papers suddenly disappear before he had finished reading to the end of the fascinating explanation.

We might add that it did not. For many weeks the desk remained standing in Tony's shop and laboratory, and he had the opportunity to study its contents thoroughly. But it took him only a few hours to grasp its secret, to add his own brilliant conception to it, and to form his great resolve. Once more Tony faced the world hopefully and enthusiastically.

PART II

Vanishing Valuables

The police understood Tony's share in the exploits of Scarneck Ed thoroughly, and, chagrined at their failure to produce proof that would hold in court, they maintained a close and constant watch on that gifted gentleman long after crime matters in the city seemed to have been cleaned up and forgotten. For one thing, they still had hopes that something would turn up to enable them to round off their work and lock him up with his former pals; for another, they did not fully trust his future behavior. Nevertheless, for three or four months it seemed as though Tony had genuinely reformed. He lived in and for his laboratory and shop. All day the scouts could see him laboring therein, and far into the night he bent over benches and machines under shaded lights. Then, some other astonishing occurrences distracted their attention from Tony to other fields.

One morning Mr. Ambrose Parakeet, private jewel broker, walked briskly out of the elevator on the fourteenth floor of the North American Building and unlocked the door of his office. He flung it open and started in, but stopped as if shot, uttered a queer, hoarse gurgle, and staggered against the door-casing. In a moment he recovered and began to shout:

"Help! Help! Robbers!"

Before long, several people had gathered. He stood there, gasping, pointing with his hand into the room. The eagerly peering onlookers could see that beside his desk stood an empty crate. It was somewhat old and weatherbeaten and looked as though it might have come from a buffet or a bookcase. He stood there and pointed at it and gasped, and the gathering crowd in the corridor wondered what sort of strange mental malady he had been seized with. The elevator girl, with trained promptness had at once summoned the manager of the building, who elbowed his way through the crowd and stood beside Mr. Parakeet.

"There! There! Look! Where is it?" Mr. Parakeet was gasping slowly and gazing round in a circle. He was a little gray man of about sixty, and seemed utterly dazed and overcome.

"What's wrong, Mr. Parakeet?" asked the building manager. "I didn't know you had your safe moved out."

"But, no!" panted the bewildered old man. "I didn't. It's gone. Just gone. Last night at five o'clock I locked the office, and it was there, and everything was straight. What did you do? Who took it?"

The building manager conducted the poor old man into the office, shut the door, and asked the crowd to disperse. He sat Mr. Parakeet down into the most comfortable chair he could find, and then barked snappily into the telephone a few times. Then he sat and stared about him, stopping occasionally to reassure the old man and ask him to be patient until things could be investigated.

The building manager was an efficient man and knew his

building and his tenants. He knew, as thoroughly as he knew his own office, that Mr. Parakeet had a medium-sized A. V. & L. Co.'s safe weighing about three tons, that could not be carried up the elevator when Mr. Parakeet had moved in, and had been hoisted into the window with block and tackle. He knew that it was physically impossible for the safe to go down any of the elevators, and knew that none of the operators would dare move any kind of a safe without his permission. Nevertheless, with the aid of a police-sergeant, his night-shift, and the night-watchmen of his building and adjacent ones, it was definitely established that nothing had been moved in or out of the North American Building during the preceding twenty-four hours, either by elevator or through a window to the sidewalk.

The newspapers took up the mystery with a shout. The prostrating loss suffered by Mr. Parakeet, amounting to over a hundred thousand dollars, added no little sensation to the story. A huge safe, disappearing into thin air, without a trace, and in its place an old wooden crate! What a mouthful for the scareheads! For several days newspapers kept up items about it, dwindling in size and strategic importance of position; for nothing further was ever found. Every bit of investigation, including that by scientific men from the University of Chicago, was futile; not a trace, not a suggestion did it yield.

Six days later the tall scareheads leaped out again: "Another Safe Disappears! Absolutely No Trace! Some time during the night, the six-foot steel safe of the Simonson Loan Company

vanished into thin air. In the morning a dilapidated iron oil-cask was found in its place. The safe was so large and heavy that it could not have been moved without a large truck, special hoisting apparatus, a crew of men, and some hours of time. The store was brightly lighted during the entire night, and two watchmen patrolled it regularly. They report that they saw and heard nothing unusual, and were very much amazed when shown the oil-cask standing where the safe had been the night before." The accounts in the various papers were substantially the same.

Newspaper readers throughout the city and its environs were very much intrigued. Such a thing was very exciting and mystifying; but it was so far out of touch with their own lives that it did not affect them very much at any time except when they were reading the paper or discussing it in conversation. The police were the ones who were doing the real worrying. And, when the following week two more safes disappeared, insurance companies began to take an interest in the matter; and everyone who had any considerable amount of valuables in store began to feel panicky.

The circumstances surrounding the disappearance of the last of the series, the fourth, were especially amazing. This was also a jewelry safe. Canzoni's is a popular firm that rents a quarter of a floor in a big department store, and does a large volume of moderate-priced business. The receipts are stored in a heavy portable safe in a corner of the silverware section until evening, when they are carried to the large vault of the big store. One

Saturday afternoon after a particularly busy day, Mr. Shipley, Canzoni's manager, was watching the hands of the clock creep toward five-thirty. He leaned on a counter and watched the clerks putting away goods for the night; he glanced idly toward the safe which he intended to open in a few minutes. The doormen had already taken their stations to keep out further customers. Then he glanced back at the safe, and it wasn't there!

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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