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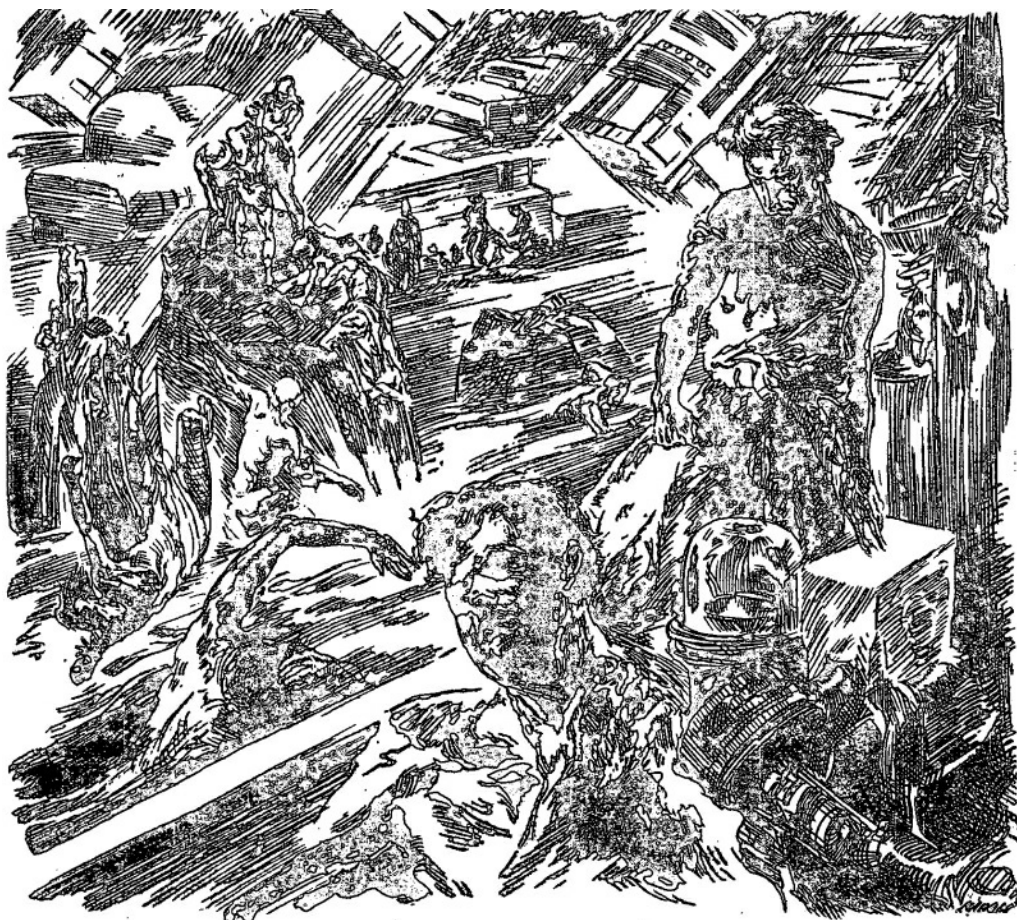
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# Chaos

John Russell Fearn, writing as Polton Cross

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*What happened to fabled Atlantis—to her ultra-civilized people, her amazing science? Nal Folan knew, to his horror!*



The whole city—even the continent—was sinking

For nearly two hours Nal Folan had been seated almost motionless, held in the grip of profound abstract reasoning. In this time only his right hand had moved, turning over the sheets of light durable metal foiling covered with a maze of figures and mathematical computations. He had been working alone in complete silence, a single living man in the midst of a towering array of scientific apparatus.

Finally he laid aside the last sheet of foiling, stretched muscular arms, and got to his feet. He was tall, young, dressed in a brief toga-like costume, his legs and arms almost bare. Nal Folan was a perfect creature of his race. Product of a magnificent science built up through generations.

The clock on the far wall of the huge laboratory showed him it was nearly seven in the evening. He nodded to himself, brushed the thick black hair from his forehead with his hand, and then hurried to the door. A short walk down a gleaming corridor

and up a flight of emergency steps brought him to the immense flat roof which extended over the entire area of the laboratory. Save for a distant figure the square expanse was deserted.

But the distant figure was all Nal Folan wished to see. He smiled to himself and walked swiftly across the space, his soft-footed sandals making hardly any noise. Before he had covered more than half the distance however the figure turned and began to hurry towards him—a graceful girl in brief garments similar to his own, her black hair streaming to her shoulders.

“Nal!” she murmured, as they seized each other’s hands.

He did not answer for a moment. Gently he kissed her oval face, looked for a moment into the darkness of her eyes. Then putting his arm about her waist he walked with her to the high metal rail which entirely encircled the roof parapet.

“I thought you’d forget,” she said, smiling up at him. “With so many other things on your mind.”

“It would take more than wave-mechanics to make me forget you, Mydia,” he answered. “You said seven o’clock and the laboratory roof, and that’s enough for me. You didn’t have any difficulty in getting here, did you?”

“Not particularly. I used the stairway from the street.”

He nodded. “Good. As long as we remain up here on the roof we’re within bounds. But we can’t go down into the laboratory, of course. Visitors are not allowed—not even when they are as beautiful as you are. Old man Grifa would go crazy if he found the rule had been broken.”

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They were both quiet for a moment. Over in the west the sun had vanished in the magenta and orange of the warm spring evening. The sky was pale blue and empty, a star or two winking here and there. No wind stirred. From this high eminence the young man and woman had an uninterrupted view of the city, a metropolis wider than it was high, nowhere rising above three stories except in the case of this laboratory.

The buildings were all of white metal, incorrodible, gleaming now with the strings of lights in the windows. Faintly, drifting on the still air, came the hum of the mighty engines which controlled the aircraft, the radio-television systems, the atomic powerhouses, and the climate.

“Not a bad city to live in,” Nal Folan commented at length, his elbows on the rail and his young, powerful body half stooped as he gazed towards the west.

“Atlantis?” The girl smiled. “It’s a wonderful city, Nal, and you know it. Yet even with our scientific perfection I suppose there is still a good deal to be learned. You

and your wave-mechanics theory, for instance.”

Nal Folan meditated, his keen gray eyes shifting to the distant Sphinx and Pyramids, just outside the city. The Sphinx was a recent creation, a gigantic idol of stone etched out by scientific engineers, a traditional god which the race still worshipped despite their immense grasp of scientific realities. The Pyramids were for a very different purpose. They housed the ashes of the city fathers who had at last come to the end of their three-centuries.

“Just what,” the girl asked presently, “are you trying to do in the laboratory, Nal? You’ve only given me vague hints. It’s important, isn’t it?”

He straightened up and regarded her. “Important enough, yes. Grifa and the others are coming tomorrow morning to see my demonstration. If it is successful I may become the Third Physicist. After that, a few more years say, and then I’ll have the same position as Grifa himself. That’s worth striving for.”

“That I know,” Mydia said. “You’ve mentioned it many times. But it still doesn’t explain what you are *doing*. Please remember that I’m only a very commonplace machine-minder in the climatic powerhouse and—”

“Commonplace!” Nal caught her shoulders and shook her gently. “If beauty were commonplace, which it isn’t even in this city, you might be right. Certainly not otherwise. My work?” He seemed suddenly conscious of her question. “It is a method of proving that an electron-area is not limited to being merely a microscopic probability.”

Mydia looked at him solemnly, her pretty face troubled. Then she sighed. “It serves me right,” she said. “I shouldn’t have asked you. I don’t know the first thing about electron-areas.”

“Then why bother?” he asked, smiling. “I asked you to come here after your machine shift so that we could talk—not of mathematics and probabilities but about ourselves. You and me—our coming marriage—the things we intend to do.”

Mydia was silent, looking down at the city. Men and women were going back and forth. Silent vehicles skimmed up and down the broad avenues. To the east the emptiness of the sky was broken as an exploration flyer, detailed to seek out fresh lands for expansion, came down on the guiding radio-beam.

“You—haven’t changed your mind?” Nal whispered, frowning.

The girl laughed. “Of course not! Can’t I be silent for a moment or two without you thinking that? I was just considering. It’s so *safe* now for us to be married, to have children, and not be afraid that they will be destroyed. It was so different in our grandparents’ time.”

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Nal nodded, reminded of events of two generations ago, six hundred years. At that time the entire race had fled through the void from the fourth planet nearest the sun. Gigantic geological changes and the consequent evaporation of their normal air and oceans had driven them out to this safer world.

Now they could look upon the planet they had left and see the merciless corrosion of ferric oxide going on before their eyes. But here they were safe, established. In this one city, the only city so far on Earth, the third world, was encompassed the entire nucleus of the mighty race—twenty thousand of them.

“We have to expand, colonize, marry, intermarry—spread ourselves all over the world,” Nal murmured, repeating the words of Brada, their monarch. “That is right and as it should be. We are not upsetting anybody who normally belongs to this planet. Except for us it’s a dead world.”

The twilight deepened. The girl moved slightly.

“Are we going home, Nal, or do you intend to spend more time in the laboratory?”

He seemed to make up his mind about something before he replied.

“Mydia, we share most of our joys and sorrows, don’t we?” he asked.

“All of them,” she answered, her eyes luminous.

“Then I’m going to show you what I’m up to,” he decided. “Be hanged to rules and regulations! They can’t say anything to me, anyway. I’m too important a research scientist for that. Come below and see for yourself.”

He caught her arm and she followed promptly across the roof and down the emergency staircase into the silent corridor which led to the department in which he had been working. Normally the staff in the building ceased work at five. Only special research, such as Nal had been engaged upon, made it necessary to delay beyond that hour.

“We’re quite alone,” he said, as he ushered her into the gigantic hall-like room. “Come along.”

He closed the door behind her and in wonderment she gazed about her upon the towering giants of instruments. Though she was accustomed to scientific equipment in her daily work as a machine-minder she had never before encountered such apparatus as here. Most of it was for research work, or the product thereof, and therefore not in general use but reserved exclusively for secret experiments.

Finally Nal stopped beside the bench at which he had been working. He gestured briefly to the metal foils with the mathematics thereon and then waved to what seemed to be a highly polished ball standing on the summit of a glittering rod, its base firmly bolted to the metal flooring.

“That,” he said, “is the product of these figures.”

Mydia contemplated the object for a moment or two and then she looked vaguely disappointed.

“Not very—impressive, is it?”

Nal smiled. “It isn’t meant to be. In fact, the fewer gadgets there are around it, the better. It connects to the switchboard here”—he nodded to it—“and this blue push-button controls it. The button is the power-feeder. The thing itself is a converter-globe, made to react directly on the etheric waves of matter.”

“How?” Mydia questioned, puzzled.

“Well, it—” Nal broke off in surprise as the visiphone buzzed suddenly. Puzzled, he pressed the switch which opened the audiophone. Simultaneously, a face remarkable for its massive strength and mature wisdom appeared on the screen.

“Oh, there you are, Nal.” The deep, genial voice of Grifa, the First Physicist of Atlantis, came over the speakers. “I’d like you to come to my apartment for a few words. About your demonstration tomorrow.”

“Er—yes, sir.” Nal moved his hand behind his back so Mydia would understand to keep out of range of the instrument’s visual pickup. “I’ll be glad to, sir. Right away?”

“Yes. I won’t keep you long.”

Nal switched off and glanced ruefully at the girl. She breathed an expressive sigh of relief.

“Good job the old boy decided to ’phone instead of coming here personally,” she said.

“I’ll have to go.” Nal looked momentarily annoyed. “But I don’t expect I’ll be long. Then I’ll come back and finish what I was going to tell you. You don’t mind waiting?”

“Of course not. Even *looking* at this place passes the time.”

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Folan nodded and strode quickly across the laboratory. Left to herself the girl stood gazing about her, and finally she returned to a study of the polished, harmless-looking globe. It still didn’t appear much of an achievement for eighteen months of concentrated effort. Her thoughts began to wander—playfully, then dangerously. The curiosity that is within every human being was getting the mastery. The blue button, Nal had said. To press it on and off surely couldn’t do any harm? It looked tempting.

She passed her fingertip gently over it, considered, and then she pressed it sharply on and off. Inside the metallic globe there was a faint whirring sound like blades spinning round in heavy air. Since the effect ceased the moment she released



the button she tried again and jabbed the button inwards more sharply.

Then to her horror the button top slipped just under the socket edge and remained jammed!

Panic got her immediately. She fiddled and fumbled with her fingernails to get the button back into the central position, but it remained obdurate. Wildly she glanced about her for something thin and sharp. Above her the mystic metal globe had started to glow and the ghostly whirring had become a steady, constant sound.

A pair of forceps on the bench seemed the most likely thing. She dived for them and then stopped dead, stupefied. Suddenly her left arm had been painlessly, completely amputated from the elbow! The incredible horror of the fact paralysed her for a moment. Then she turned her head to stare at the impartial, glowing globe.

Suddenly it was no longer a globe. It was a blazing sun and she was infinitely far out in space. There were a few seconds before the air inside her body exploded outwards in the unpressured void, and then Mydia had literally blown to atoms a million miles from Earth.

Nal Folan found the First Physicist in his most genial mood in the big, quietly furnished apartment he occupied in the center of the city. Grifa himself was a tall, eagle-nosed man, white-haired now, but with all the strength of two hundred years. When Nal entered he was busy at his desk under the flood of cold light radiance in the glazed ceiling.

“Come in, Nal, sit down.” He motioned to a chair and then set aside his work and considered the young man across the desk. “I understand that you are ready to make your demonstration tomorrow morning?”

“Of the electrical converter, yes,” Nal agreed. “I’ve worked it out to the last detail. I think it will fulfill all I’ve claimed for it—and thanks for giving me the time to finish it.”

“It is the purpose of us Elders of Atlantis to allow promising young scientists to develop their theories,” Grifa smiled. “Otherwise, how could science expand? However, I sent for you so that I can have all the details. I want to think the matter over before tomorrow.”

“I have everything recorded, sir. I’ll go and—”

Grifa raised a hand as Nal half rose. “Sit down, boy. Never mind the actual technique—just give me the outlines. That will be all I’ll need for the moment. I haven’t even the vaguest outline of your plan, yet, remember.”

“Well, sir, I’m seeking to prove that it is possible to study the exact position of an electron, instead of the present annoying condition where in you can’t know the position and velocity of an electron simultaneously.”

“In other words you have devised a means whereby the basis of all matter can be studied without, say, the very action of light impact itself dislodging the electron before it can *be* studied?”

“I am dealing, sir, in probability,” Nal said quietly. “An electron, as we understand it, is purely a probability. It is within a given area of waves of inconceivable smallness. We cannot say for certain that it is *here* or *there*. We assume the *probability* that it is.

“The waves in which an electron is assumed to exist veer off into space, maybe into other dimensions, which makes the job of pinning down the actual position of the electron itself all the more difficult.”

“Quite so,” Grifa conceded. “And what have you done about it?”

“I’ve devised a converter. It emits energy waves which are identical with those existing round the ‘probable’ position of the electron, at which point of course the waves are densest. Therefore, instead of a central core of tremendous energy which weakens as it travels—as all waves weaken as they travel from the source—I maintain the same energy strength for any distance.”

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Grifa looked astonished for a moment. “What you really mean is that instead of the electron wave being infinitesimally small it can be made as large as—as you wish?”

“That is it exactly,” Nal agreed, “because the original energy is carried onwards and outwards from the core for any distance we wish. It means that instead of having to try and examine an electron in a microscopic area we can have an area of several feet, yards, miles, whatever we wish. It makes the study of an electron wave and the electron itself absolutely possible.”

The First Physicist was silent for a long time, brooding. Then he got to his feet and shook his gray head slowly.

“I don’t quite like it,” he muttered. “The electron-probability, Nal, is the basis of all known matter. It operates in its small area by natural laws and because of that matter remains stable. If the area be extended it means that the particular piece of matter involved will lose its cohesion. It might even be transplanted! Did you stop to think of that?”

“I did,” Nal assented. “That is why I have devised a spring button instead of a normal switch. The particular matter I intend to ‘treat’ tomorrow will only be exposed to the influence for a split second. Then we can study the result. Naturally, only split-second energy release can be used at first until we know what we are dealing with, otherwise we might unlock matter itself.”

Grifa became silent again, gazing pensively out of the window. Then after a while he frowned and motioned Nal to his side.

“What do you make of that?” the First Physicist asked, pointing.

Nal studied the view of the lighted city, but it was only by degrees that he became conscious of something amiss with it. It looked as though a V-shaped wedge had blotted out one section of the lights with a darkness which was absolute. At the very apex of the wedge was a tiny glowing point.

Even as he tried to understand the mystery, something passed through the building in which Grifa and he were standing. It was a curious surging motion as though an immense wind had passed through solid matter and then subsided again.

“Great heavens,” Nal whispered suddenly, his eyes suddenly becoming round with alarm. “That point is approximately where the research laboratory is. Surely it isn’t possible that—Mydia!” he breathed. “But—but she *couldn’t* have—!”

“What in cosmos are you talking about?” Grifa snapped, seizing Nal’s arm tightly. “What’s wrong, boy? You’re not suggesting that something has happened to your converter, are you?”

“I—I don’t know. I hardly dare think—”

“What do you mean by ‘Mydia’? What has a woman to do with it?”

Nal turned suddenly. “I’ve got to find out, sir.”

He headed from the apartment with long strides and the savant followed him. When they reached the street they found it jammed with milling crowds, and from here the amazing V-fault across the city was more than ever obvious. The buildings within this segment had entirely vanished. Those on the fringes of it were neatly, flawlessly, bisected.

“Come on!” Grifa snapped, pushing his way through the men and women with Nal at his side. “There’s something devilishly wrong here.”

With the realization that they were taking a desperate risk they hurried to the outermost edge of the V-section, but once they passed into it they experienced no ill effects. There was solid ground, smooth as the face of a black mirror, from which all traces of buildings and the people who had been within them had utterly disappeared.

Without commenting, though his face was grim, Grifa hurried along the smoothness towards the solitary point of light which shone like a star. Then presently he slowed up, Nal beside him, as both of them became conscious of surging waves beating about them again.

“There’s only one answer to this,” Grifa snapped. “That converter of yours is working—too well! We’d better get out of its influence. We seem to be in a direct

line. That point of light is where the laboratory ought to be.”

“I’m going on, sir,” Nal said grimly. “I left a girl in that laboratory—Mydia Fro. I intend to marry her. I’ve got to find her.”

“You left a—”

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Nal did not wait to hear what more his outraged superior might have to say. He sped down the black, shining vista towards the solitary spot of light, oblivious to whatever danger there might be. In time he realized that the entire front of the research laboratory had disappeared and that the floors were visible sectionally with that glowing ball on the topmost floor of all.

Nal raced through the entrance way of the building and up the stairs, finally burst into the laboratory itself. All the lights were out. What illumination there was came from that baleful ball atop its glittering pole. It was bright amethyst in color, setting up a tautening static in the air.

Appalled, Nal fell back before that baleful circle. He looked about him anxiously. Of Mydia there was no sign. Breathing hard he raced over to the switchboard and found the jammed button. He beat on it frenziedly—and then stopped, his attention arrested by a new and horrifying sight. At his feet lay a perfectly severed forearm, appearing just as though it were cast in wax. He did not touch it. He just stared bewildered.

Then, his rugged face ghastly in the lavender glow, Grifa came to his side, panting for breath.

“Too late now for recriminations, Nal,” he said. “You say there was a woman in here? Obviously that arm belonged to her. It must have been severed by a shift in electronic paths—cleanly, painlessly. In other words, the probability that her forearm belonged to the rest of her arm suddenly ceased to exist and the forearm materialized elsewhere—on the floor here.”

“But where is she?” Nal panted, staring around. “What’s become of her?”

“I don’t know, any more than one can ever predict where a probability wave is. As to what happened, this button—”

The First Physicist turned on it savagely—but at the same instant he found himself quite unhurt on a rising stretch of ground outside the city. Nal was beside him, not a lock of his hair disturbed, not one shade of alteration in his horrified expression.

Grifa did not say anything immediately. He was contemplating the city and grappling with profound issues at the same time. From this rocky eminence it looked as though the city were splashed with inky holes where buildings had utterly vanished

and left smooth, mirrorlike ground. There was a disturbance in the air too, a wraith or so of wind, which in a climate automatically controlled at dead level calmness could only mean one thing—the Climatic machines had been affected.

“Nal,” the First Physicist said finally, gripping the young man’s arm, “you’ve released something which we can’t stop—or at least that woman Mydia Fro must have done so. The button jammed and the converter ran on and on. That means that all the time it runs electron waves extend their area, in the way you outlined, and their extension shifts other waves, and so on ad infinitum.

“The whole mass of probabilities which make up matter as we know it is in a state of complete flux. For instance, while we were in the laboratory the probability that we *were* there collapsed before the probability that we were *here*—and here we came, on the instant, without any conception of transit. That, I imagine, is explainable by an electron leaping from one orbit to another without ever being in the space between. No gulf is there to be crossed. One state dissolves and another appears, remote from the original state.

“At any moment,” Grifa finished somberly, “the probability that we are here may collapse again and we may be—anywhere. In the former state matter was more or less stable. Now it is stable no longer.” Grifa clenched his fists and stared upwards at fast forming clouds. “I said it was something we couldn’t stop,” he muttered. “But we’ve got to! It can mean the end of the world—the probability, even, that the world itself does not exist, or anything upon it.

“Come with me,” he finished curtly, jerking his gray head.

Nal said nothing, but he turned and followed the savant down the rocky slope which led to the pock-marked city. They entered it by skirting its edges, avoiding the streets which were now thronged with surging, chattering people trying to discover what was happening. Many of the buildings still stood unharmed, including the one in which Grifa had his headquarters and, deep down in the basement, his private laboratory.

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He entered it in a few minutes with Nal behind and switched on the lights.

“We are no safer from probability waves down here than we are anywhere else,” he said, “but at least we may have a chance to hit back. We can’t approach that converter-globe again without risking destruction or transplantation to heaven knows where. So the obvious answer is to destroy it from a distance by vibratory waves.”

Turning, he went over to one of the instruments with which the laboratory was filled. He paused at length before an apparatus which reminded Nal of a telescopic reflector.

“When we came from our home planet,” the savant said, operating switches which made the instrument turn on a massive central pillar, “we brought three of these vibratory guns with us in case there should be dangerous life on this world.

“We never needed to use them and this one has remained in case of attack from space. It directs a molecular vibration upon any given object at any distance, passing through intervening matter in the form of an X-ray. Now, let us see what the predictor tells us.”

He studied a balanced needle swinging in a vacuum globe and operated more controls. Nal watched the needle turn gently until it pointed exactly parallel with the direction of the gun barrel.

“The needle is now pointing to the converter-globe two miles away,” Grifa explained. “Any great center of electricity attracts the needle—or if need be any particular mass of matter.”

He broke off. “We are dead-sighted on that abominable creation of yours. Let’s see what we can do with it.”

Switches moved. Power hummed. Nothing of a visible nature left the gigantic projector, but after a second or two the needle in the vacuum-globe suddenly jumped into a vertical position and became steady. Grifa gave a deep sigh and stood back.

“It’s destroyed,” he said thankfully. “The electrical mass is no longer there. The needle proves it. We had better look for ourselves.”

They hurried out of the laboratory together and to the main room on the ground floor. From the window they gazed out beyond the milling people and caverns of darkness to the spot where a glowing point of light had been. It had vanished. There was void.

“And—and should that cure the trouble?” Nal asked at last.

“Perhaps.” The First Physicist turned from the window as an eddying gust of wind hurled unexpected rain against it. Outside, lightning blazed transiently. “Perhaps,” he repeated moodily. “At least it means that the effect cannot go on being created. What remains can only be from the initial trouble and ultimately the balance should settle down. We destroyed it in the only way we could. Cutting off the power would not have done it. It was alive within itself.”

“And—Mydia Fro?” Nal asked somberly, then he turned and looked sharply at the desk where Grifa usually worked. In a sudden blur the desk vanished and left empty floor.

“So,” Grifa muttered, “the effect still goes on. So I suppose it will do until every displaced probability wave has found its proper position and a new order of things is

established. It may take years—centuries—aeons.”

A clap of thunder drowned the remainder of his words. Nal looked about him dully, still almost bereft of the power to think. In fact only two realizations had any deep significance for him. One was that Mydia had gone, he knew not where. The other, that he had brought about the destruction of the city he loved.

Then with devastating abruptness the storm which had been gathering since the breakdown of the Climatic machines burst in a deluge of rain against the window. It rattled violently, rattled again to the booming roar of a hurricane wind. Nal turned a grim face and stared outside. Across the broad avenue three giant buildings dissolved even as lightning illuminated them. For a split second there was a vision of swirling humanity fleeing for shelter—

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The ground trembled as deep down under the earth probabilities gave way to new probabilities and matter in places ceased to be, or was transferred elsewhere.

The lights in the glazed ceiling died and a moment afterwards the visiphone buzzed for attention. Grifa strode across to it on the wall, his way lighted by a chaotic blaze of forked lightning. As he pressed the switch no face appeared on the glass screen but a troubled voice chattered to him.

“Excellence, I have been trying to make contact with the king. Probably he has been killed. There are none left who can take control. This is the First Adviser speaking. What am I to do? What has happened?”

“I—I have seen things appear and disappear without reason. The latest reports from our exploration fliers state that even our traditional Sphinx and Pyramids have been transported two thousand miles to the middle of an empty desert! How could that come about?”

“The explanation is scientific, my friend—a gigantic scientific flaw,” Grifa responded. “There is nothing you, or I, or anybody can do about it. Watch out for your own safety, until the disturbance subsides. The whole basic structure of matter is undermined.”

The communication was cut off suddenly. An entire wall of the building dissolved and Grifa and Nal found themselves battered by cyclonic winds and saturating rain before they even had a chance to move. The First Physicist went sprawling. Nal seized him and dragged him to his feet again.

“We’ll have to find shelter!” he shouted into the savant’s ear.

Drenched, Grifa gazed at the chain lightning whiplashing the raging heavens. He shook his head.

“There’ll be no shelter for us, son—not for days or weeks, maybe not for years.

Everything in this area is toppling into a new balance. The effect will go throughout the planet, progressively, maybe even into space itself for generations yet to come.”

“But we might survive,” Nal said desperately. “Some of us have got to, if only to perpetuate the science of our race.”

“Some of us will,” the savant agreed. “But as I see it, after the horror that has been released they will almost certainly be witless savages, groping for shelter in a shattered, bewildering world. Science and education always vanish before elemental fury, Nal.”

The earth gulped and heaved. Both men staggered heavily amidst the swamping rain. Far away to the east, momentarily lighted by the lightning, was a clear silver line carrying with it a roar which penetrated even the storm.

“That’s—that’s the ocean!” Nal gasped, fascinated. “It must mean that our whole city is sinking—perhaps even the continent itself. It’s a tidal wave! It’ll crash down on us! Do you understand, sir?” he shouted. “Then you say some of us will survive!”

“Some will, as the waters subside.” The First Physicist stared at the advancing line for a moment. “What you have done, Nal, will be long remembered,” he said at length. “Those who come after us—generations as yet unborn—will wonder whence came a Sphinx and Pyramids in the middle of a desert. Whither went a race of scientists who must have existed in this part of the world.

“Unexplained things in unexplained places—eternal riddles. Mighty objects that could never have been moved by mortal agency. All the work of shifting probabilities which began this night.”

Grifa seemed suddenly possessed of visionary power in the face of imminent death.

“Perhaps the perfect balance will never be found. New probabilities will appear like bubbles in the space-time continuum, but with gradually diminishing frequency. Human beings and animals will vanish from the midst of their fellows without trace. Ocean ships which must come again in course of time will sail and never be heard of again. Airplanes will hurtle through the sky and into unexplained extinction.

“Out in space stars will come and go for no known reason. Shiftings—probabilities, until the perfect balance is attained when thermodynamic equilibrium is reached in the unthinkable distant future.”

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Suddenly Grifa was gone, transposed by a probability shift to a lonely planet circling Antares. For a second or two he gazed upon the lonely, deathly world on which he stood and then he died, torn asunder by the explosion of air within him.



Nal Folan, still on earth, gazed stupidly at the spot where the First Physicist had been. Then he glanced up at the roaring waters sweeping down upon what remained of tottering Atlantis.

He started to run. He had no idea where, over rocks and fallen metal, with the mighty tide surging irresistibly behind him.

Then it had vanished. Nal was reeling through long rank grass under a calm moon and stars. Nowhere was there a sign of Atlantis, of havoc, of tidal wave. Probability had decided that he should be an unknown distance from the spot where Deluge had struck.

Survivors? The thought twisted through his mind. Perhaps others would come, to begin anew the task of building a race, which in turn would forget the past with each succeeding generation, which in turn would wonder upon the marvels, the mysteries, the unexplained riddles in the world about them.

Forever more there must be a planet in which there was no certainty, from which there would one day spring a Principle of Indeterminacy, a world wherein one might step from the everyday into a new probability and be gone from fellowmen forever; where one might fly the heavens and never be heard of again. Where one might sail the oceans and never reach port. Where one might find the tombs of Egyptian kings in Pyramids that had once held the ashes of the dignitaries of Atlantis. . .

Nal smiled wearily. These were things for the future. For the moment he had survived. Perhaps he would continue to survive, to hand down records which in course of time would become legends of a master-race of Atlantis which had perished in the Deluge. . . . He had to find others of his own kind somewhere—somewhere in this calm, unknown land where the moonlight shone silver on softly waving grass.

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.  
[The end of *Chaos* by Polton Cross [John Russell Fearn]]