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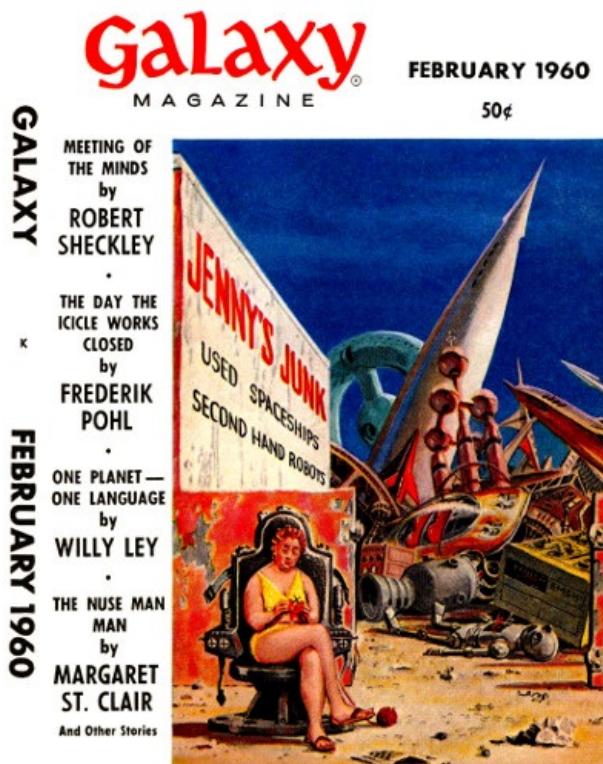
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK EAST IN THE MORNING ***



East In the Morning

By DAVID E. FISHER

Illustrated by DICK FRANCIS

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Natural laws are cliches—"what must be must be," for instance—and what must be in this case was, of all people, Dr. Talbot!

The first thirty years of Henry Talbot's life were the most promising. He was a bright student through high school, and in college his fellow students often used the word "brilliant" in discussing his mentality; occasionally even his instructors echoed them.

Upon receiving his bachelor's degree, he went to graduate school and eventually received his Ph.D. as an experimental nuclear physicist. He applied for and got a research position at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, in the Electronuclear Research Division.

Dr. Henry Talbot, brilliant young scientist, began his career enthusiastically, and ran into a brick wall.

Rather, he crawled up to and against it, for it took several years for him to discover that his life's route lay not on an unobstructed downhill slide. Those years slithered past before he looked up and realized that he had not revolutionized the scientific world; he had discovered no principle of relativity, no quantum theory.

He stopped working for a moment and looked around. All his colleagues were enthusiastic and brilliant young scientists. Where at school, where throughout his life, he had been outstanding, now he was one of the crowd. What had passed for brilliance before was now merely competence.

Henry Talbot felt a vague need which he perceived liquor might fill. That afternoon he left work early for the first time since he had arrived at Oak Ridge. He had to buy the vodka from a bootlegger, Oak Ridge being in a dry county. But, as in most dry counties, that presented no problem. He stopped by Shorty's cab stand, across the street from the police department, and asked Shorty for a bottle. Shorty reached into the glove compartment and, for fifty cents over list price, the vodka changed hands. Henry didn't like to patronize the bootleggers, but he did feel the need for a quick one just this once.

After drinking for several hours in his apartment, Henry Talbot took stock of himself and came to two conclusions:

1. He was satisfied with himself and his life. He had always taken for granted that he would one day be a famous figure in some scientific field, true, but this was actually not so important as, upon casual inspection, it might seem. He liked his work, otherwise he could never have been so wrapped up in it, and he saw no reason for discontinuing it or for becoming despondent over his lack of fame. After all, he reasoned, he had never been famous and yet had been always perfectly content.

2. He liked vodka.

The next thirty years of Henry Talbot's life, now devoid of promise, were fulfilling and content. He worked steadily and drank as the mood fell upon him, publishing on the average one paper a year. These papers were thorough, the experiments well worked out, without contrived results or varnished sloppiness. The publications were accepted everywhere as solid research papers.

Henry Talbot's name became familiar in the nuclear field. He did not find his face on the cover of *Time*, nor was he ever invited to participate as an "expert" on any television quiz programs, yet he was well known to nuclear researchers—at least those in his own country. He was honored with a banquet on his fiftieth birthday. *Person to Person* once tentatively proposed to visit him, but the idea was squelched, a visit to a more buxom personality being substituted.

Sex never reared its ugly head. He had not had time for it when young, and so had never fallen into the habit.

At the age of sixty-five he retired. He canceled his subscription to the *Physical Review*, bought a fishing rod, subscribed to the *New Yorker*, and tried Florida. He started at Tallahassee and fished his way down to Ocala. By the time he had reached St. Petersburg, he had decided to try California.

In California he took up golf. He bought a hi-fi set and a dozen progressive jazz records, advertised as unbreakable. They proved not to be, although in fairness to the advertiser it must be said that Henry Talbot had to exert himself.

He decided to try a world cruise. He left the scheduled tour in Japan and visited the Institute for Theoretical Physics in Tokyo, spending some time there just generally chewing the bilingual rag. When he returned to the United States, he renewed his subscription to the *Physical Review*, canceled his subscription to the *New Yorker*, and looked around for another position.

He went to work for the Arnold Research Corporation on a part-time, semi-retired basis. But he had his own lab, his hours were his own, and in a few weeks he was working full time. No one

was disturbed by this, he did not apply for more money or recognition, he kept to himself, and he began publishing his one paper each year.

On the tenth year afterward his paper was missing, though not missed. He began to spend less time in his lab and more in the library and behind his desk, scribbling on scraps of paper or staring into space. He was forgotten by the Arnold Research Corporation. He was content with his books and his monthly check.

In his seventy-fourth year, Henry Talbot published a paper in the *Philosophical Magazine* on what he called the "Warped Field Theory." The theory was entirely his own, from beginning to end, and constituted—in his opinion—the first real breakthrough in theoretical physics since Albert Einstein's little idea in 1905. The day the article came out he sat behind his desk all day, puffing on his pipe, not merely content but really happy for the first time in his life.

Life continued undisturbed for three more months. Then Larry Arnold, Jr., came into his office, carrying a copy of the *Philosophical Magazine*. Larry Arnold, Jr., was not a scientist but, as he put it, he was scientifically minded and was general overseer, public relations man, and coordinator of coordinators of research.

He humped a few times, groaned as he sat down across the desk from Henry, wheezed twice, smiled once, and said, "Good morning, Dr. Talbot."

"Good morning," Henry replied, folding his hands and trying to look humble yet brilliant.

"I read your article," Arnold said, feebly waving the magazine around before him, "and I don't mind admitting I didn't understand a word of it. Well, I'm not a man to hide his lack of knowledge so I went right out and asked some of the men working here about it. They didn't understand it either. I called up a few people around the country. I—Dr. Talbot, I don't know how exactly to say this to you. I don't know what you intended with this article, but it's got people laughing at us and we can't have that."

Henry kept the same humble look on his face; he fought to keep the same expression. He didn't know what his face might look like if he relaxed for a moment.

"We didn't expect much research from you when we hired you. Well, we know we're not paying you much, and we don't mind if you don't put out much work. Hell, we don't care if you don't put out *any* work. We get our money's worth in good will when people know we've got an old pro like you on our payroll; the young kids can see we won't kick them out when they're all used up. But when you put out papers like this one—" and here he waved the magazine a bit more violently, getting warmed up—"when you do this, and it says Arnold Research Corporation right here under your name, people don't just laugh at you. They laugh at the whole organization. They think that this whole place is going around doing fantastic research like this—this warped field."

He stopped when he saw the look slip a bit from Henry's face, and he saw what was there beneath it. He dropped his eyes and wheezed twice, then heaved his bulk out of the chair.

"I didn't mean to slam into you that way, Dr. Talbot. You know it's an honor to have you associated with the firm. We were even thinking of giving you a testimonial banquet next week on your seventy-fifth birthday.... It is next week, isn't it? Well, what I mean to say is—I mean we all appreciate the good solid research you've been doing all these years. It's just that—well, you won't fool around like this any more, now will you? And we'll just forget all about it. No hard feelings."

He left quickly, and the door closed behind him.

For the first time in seventy-five years, or in the last sixty-nine at least, Henry Talbot cried.

After he cried, he became angry. He wanted to shout, so he left the office early and hurried to his apartment where he could shout without disturbing anyone, which he did. He then took out the vodka, settled Bucephalus, his cat, on his lap and began to pour.



Several hours later Henry Talbot sprawled in the armchair and took stock of himself. He came to two conclusions:

1. At his age, what did he care about fame? He knew his theory was sound, and if the people in his own country didn't appreciate it, what difference did it make? Now, free from rancor, he could understand how they must have received his paper. They all knew old Dr. Talbot—seventy-five and not dead yet. What a ridiculous age for a nuclear physicist! Now he's turning theoretical, they must have chuckled. So they started his paper. And when they came to the first unorthodox assumption, when they reached the first of the many mathematical complexities and indeed paradoxes, they must have closed the magazine and had a good laugh over a cup of coffee.

Had the article been written by some unknown twenty-five-year-old, they would all hail him as a new genius. But coming from old Henry Talbot, the article was ludicrous.

Well, he didn't care. Abroad, he was not so well known. Some countries would not have heard of him at all. They'd read the article seriously, one or two men would understand it. They'd run some experiments to confirm or deny the hypotheses and Henry was confident the experiments would prove him right. He had only to wait. Of course he hadn't much time left, but perhaps they would do it in a year or two, and perhaps he'd still be here to see it and have the last laugh.

2. He still liked vodka.

It was nineteen years before two Finnish physicists, Arkadt and Findrun, ran the necessary experiments. Of the many who had read the article, some knew Talbot and thus laughed it off, some could not understand it and some understood it and waxed enthusiastic. Eventually the enthusiasm spread to the Finnish Institute for Applied Research where the essential equipment was available. The experiments were an unqualified success.

As soon as the experiments were confirmed, Arkadt sent a telegram to Dr. Henry Talbot, in care of the address which had appeared with his original article, informing him of the happy developments. He and Findrun were still celebrating their spectacular success a week later, this time with Dr. Arrhenial, director of the institute, when Arkadt mentioned that he had sent such a telegram and had received as yet no answer.

Arrhenial smiled into his vodka. "Didn't you know? Talbot was seventy-five years old when he wrote that article. I'm afraid you were a little too late for him."

"I didn't know," Arkadt replied.

"A shame," Findrun murmured. "It would have made him so happy."

The telephone rang and Arkadt answered it. His wife was calling, with unusual news. He had just received a letter from America. Imagine that. From a Henry Talbot.

Henry Talbot saw his face on the cover of *Time* magazine. He refused a request to appear on a

television quiz program. (The contestant the network had had in mind to appear with Henry won his money nevertheless, in the category Theoretical Physics, by correctly naming the year in which Einstein first published his Theory of Relativity, the number of papers which comprised the entire theory, the language in which it was first published, the magazine in which it was first published, the year in which the magazine was first printed, the name of the first printer of the magazine, and the year in which he died.) Henry Talbot was termed "The Dean of American Men of Science" by the *New York Times*, which paper triumphantly reported that only thirteen people in the world understood his Warped Field Theory. When asked if there was now anything else for science to do, he replied, "Indubitably." When pressed for more details, he said that his housekeeper always removed his vodka from the refrigerator at three-thirty, and that if he did not immediately return home, it would become unbearably warm.

On the occasion of his ninety-fifth birthday, he was given a gigantic testimonial banquet by the Arnold Research Corporation, "under whose auspices the entire research which culminated in the justly famous Warped Field Theory was conducted."

The next week, when he requested the use of their massive cyclotron to run an experiment, he was told that the machine was in use at the time. A week later, his request was again shunted off. This happened twice more, and Henry went to see Larry Arnold, Jr.

The coordinator was affable, and told Henry that he had checked himself, and that unfortunately the machine was in use and that of course since he, Talbot, was actually at the lab on only a part-time basis, he could not expect to usurp the machine from full-time research workers.

Henry asked what kind of research was being done.

Larry wheezed twice and told him it was investigating certain aspects of the Warped Field Theory.

"I invented the goddam theory and I can't even get at the machine?" Henry shouted.

"Please, Dr. Talbot. Let's be reasonable. You discovered that theory twenty years ago. I mean, after all. You're an older man now, and that's an expensive piece of machinery—"

Henry slammed the door as he walked out, was not satisfied with the effect, came back and slammed it again, this time shattering the glass. He felt a little better, strode down the hall, and resigned the next day, quietly and undramatically.

He disappeared into retirement. Reports of his death were printed occasionally. They were never denied. They stopped after several years, were taken to be final, and his name was not often mentioned by the newspapers.

One hundred and three years after his birth, the Nobel Prize was awarded to Henry Talbot for his Warped Field Theory. The committee decided not to look into the matter of discovering Dr. Talbot's heirs until after the ceremony, expecting that someone would turn up to claim the award in his name.

Henry Talbot accepted the medallion and check himself from the hand of the King of Sweden, making his acceptance speech in hurriedly learned but understandable Swedish. The newspapers of the world devoured him and made big news of the fact that he had been practically fired nine years before. He was deluged with offers of employment, most of which sought him as a public-relations man. He accepted the offer of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. His duties here were non-existent. He would be paid, cared for. He was to think, as much or as little as he pleased. The Institute was apologetic that they had not been aware of his unemployment previously. He was invited to stay with them for as long as he liked. Henry Talbot settled back finally, in comfort.

The research upon which he now embarked was so deep, so complex, that he did not intend to come to any publishable conclusions in his lifetime. He desired no experimentation now; he wanted only to think, to think in purely mathematical terms of the universe as an entity. He withdrew into the sanctity of his study, thankful to Princeton for the peace and tranquility it offered.

Several years later a notice of his death was published in the *New York Times*. Henry did not read the *New York Times*, but the treasurer at the Institute evidently did. His checks stopped coming. Henry did not complain. He had saved a lot of money and his tastes were simple. He did not have to pay a bootlegger's price in Princeton.

In his hundred and eighty-first year, Henry first became seriously aware of the possibility that he might not die.

One night during his two hundred and forty-fifth year—it began to seem to him purposeless, but he still kept accurate count—Henry pushed back from his desk and sighed.

Outside the window, in the gently falling snow, the campus of Princeton looked exactly as it had when he had first come, but things were different. No one now at the Institute knew him; he had known no one there for seventy-five years now. Probably at no other place in the country than at the Institute for Advanced Study could he have kept his study for so long, could he have been left so alone. And it was good, but now he was lonely. Lonely, bored by his solitude, aware of his boredom and utter lack of friends.

He had realized long ago the compensation demanded for eternity. When he had first begun to think of the possibility that he might not die, he had realized that it would mean leaving his friends, his family, and continuing alone. When he had first begun to speculate on his seeming immortality, how it had come about and why, he had known he would be lonely.

This is the way to the Übermensch,
This is the way to the Übermensch,
This is the way to the Übermensch,
Not in a crowd, but alone.

Nearly every great mind within the past hundred years had pointed out the difficulty of man's accomplishing anything in his brief hundred years of life, had pointed out the necessity of immortality to a great mind. And what is necessary will be. But this is the way of evolution: not in a crowd, but alone. One man in a million, then another, then another.

It was statistically improbable that he was the first. So there must be others. But so far, in two hundred and forty-five years, he had not met any that he knew of. Then again, there was no way of knowing. Anyone passing him on the street would not know, and he meeting another would not know.

A purring broke through into his reverie and, looking down, he became aware of Bucephalus, his cat, rubbing against his legs. He laughed, bent down and picked her up. Here was the exception, of course. Old Bucephalus. He laughed again, shaking his head in wonder. He had had Bucephalus for the past hundred and fifty years.

"Now what justification does a cat have for living forever?" he wondered aloud, holding her at arm's length and smiling at her. She lifted one paw and dabbed at his face. He put her down and went to get her milk. "And how did we ever find each other?" Perhaps there was some subliminal way of knowing. Perhaps, without knowing, the immortals knew.

While Bucephalus lapped at her milk, Henry Talbot walked out for a breath of air. He wandered off the campus, finally pausing in front of a candy-and-soda store. He felt a vague curiosity and went in to look at the newspapers. After reading through one, he stood back and sighed. The same old thing, always the same old thing. The new wave of immigrants—he looked again to see where they were from this time; he didn't recognize the name of the place, but it didn't matter—the new wave of immigrants was a disgrace to New York, was destroying real estate values, was a burden to society, to the *last* wave of immigrants who had by now made their place. The President said we would fight, if necessary, one last war to make the world safe for democracy. Statistics showed that juvenile delinquency was on the increase; it was traced to a lack of parental authority in the home.

Always the same old thing.

Only his work was new, always changing. But now, after nearly a hundred and fifty years of thought, he felt he was in over his head. It was getting too abstract. He needed some good solid experimental research, he felt. Something concrete, down-to-earth. He wanted to play with a hundred-channel analyzer, measure some cross sections, determine a beta-decay scheme. But he couldn't ask them here for a lab. He didn't dare tell them who he was. Too much commotion, notoriety. The newspapers again. Good God, no.

He turned to go back to his study, and then stopped dead. He couldn't go back there. His brain was spinning without a clamp; he needed to fasten to something and orient himself in this vast universe. His fingers itched to get at some experiment. He couldn't go back to his study.

He decided to take a vacation. He had never gotten as far as Miami Beach, he remembered. The sun would feel good, and he could do with a bit of a tan.

He flew down that night.

After he had checked in at the Sea Lion, and as he was following the bellboy across the high and wide lobby to the elevator, a woman crossed his path. In her late twenties, perhaps early thirties, she was simply stunning. Dark hair, light skin, blue eyes almost purple with a Eurasian slant to them, long firm legs and slim ankles. For the first time in many a year, Henry stopped to look at a woman.

The bellboy realized that he had walked on alone and returned to Talbot.

"That woman is beautiful." Henry gestured toward her back.

The bellboy smirked. Henry followed him to his room.

Henry lay in the sun for two weeks and grew younger day by day. His skin tanned, his muscles became hard with the exertion of lengthy swims, the creases in his face smoothed out. Still he felt vaguely dissatisfied, empty. He lay on the beach, gazing into the ocean, and knew that something was missing.

The woman he had seen that first night crossed between him and the ocean and continued down the beach. Henry watched her out of sight.

"That woman is beautiful," he thought.

Sex, he thought. I wonder if that's what's missing. There was another aspect to be considered, of

course. Two hundred and forty-five. And then a blonde young lady in a bikini wavered by him and he knew in that moment that he could.

He stood up and walked after her.

"I wonder if I might walk a bit with you," he said.

She looked him over carefully and then shrugged her shoulder, not quite dislodging the upper portion of her suit. "Suitcha self."

After a while she asked, "What business ya in?"

"I'm sort of retired," he explained, finding her very charming and refreshing to talk to. "I had a modest income a while ago. I invested wisely, or prudently at least, and the interest has built up into quite a fortune by now."

"Really," she said.

They walked down the beach, hand in hand.

Five nights later he got out of bed when she fell asleep. He dressed and walked despondently down to the lobby. This was not it, not it at all. God, but her conversation was absolutely impossible. He couldn't stay with her another minute.

His problem was still unsolved. He wanted to get back to work, he wanted company, he wanted *life* again. As he came into the lobby, the woman of the first night passed by him again. She looked at him as she came, and smiled as she passed.

That, he thought, is a lovely woman. He stared at her back. How old would you say she is? Late twenties, not a day over thirty. Yet with a serenity in the eyes, in the smile somehow, that gives the impression of lifetimes of living. Yet not a day over thirty, surely no older than that.

That, he thought, is what I need. A woman like that to sleep with and, yes, to be with, even to talk with. She would not be like the one upstairs. But, he thought, one does not buy a woman like that. One marries her. Somehow, without knowing, he knew that.

And why not?

Why not, indeed?

He returned to his own room, stripped and consulted the mirror. Dye his hair, that was really all he needed. He smiled into the mirror. Forty, he thought, even thirty-five. Certainly, with this tan and slim body and his hair dyed, thirty-five at the most.

He went to bed, happily making plans. A new life opened up for him.

He would take a new name; he would live again. There was nothing to stop him.

That night, in the Sea Lion Hotel in Miami Beach, Henry Talbot died.

Two months later Arnold Bottal, an experimental nuclear physicist of perhaps thirty-five, and his charming wife—with exquisite, nearly purple Eurasian eyes—joined the new country club in Lincoln Hills, New York, where Bottal had newly joined the Applied Physics Division of the Carbide Nuclear Company.

This Arnold Bottal was not a brilliant physicist, but he was certainly competent in his job. The company was satisfied with him. He and his wife bought a bubble home in the suburbs of Lincoln Hills and, together with their cat Bucephalus, lived happily ever after.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK EAST IN THE MORNING ***

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