

Ralph 124C 41+, Part 2

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(Continued.)

“YOU must really think me very forward to keep on talking to you, a stranger, in this fashion,” she resumed; “but you see the trouble is I have not spoken to any living being for the last five days, and I am just dying to talk.”

“Why, how very extraordinary!” 124C 41 exclaimed, “I really cannot understand.”

“It is simple enough, though,” she smiled; “you see, father and I live in our villa half way up Mount Rosa, and for the last five days such a terrible blizzard has been raging that the house is entirely snowed in. The storm was so terrible that no aeroflyer could come near the house; I have never seen such a thing. Five days ago father and my brother left for Paris, intending to return the same afternoon, but they had a bad accident whereby my poor brother dislocated his knee-cap; both were therefore obliged to stay somewhere near Paris, where they landed, and in the meanwhile the blizzard set in. The Teleservice line became disconnected somewhere in the valley, and this is the first connection I have had for five days. How they came to connect me with New York, though, is a puzzle!”

“Most extraordinary—but how about the Wireless?”

“Both the Power mast and the Communico mast were blown down the same day, and I was left without any means of communication whatever. However, I managed to put the light magnesium power mast into a temporary position again, and I had just called up the Teleservice Company, telling them again to direct the power, and getting some other information when they cut me in on you.”

“Yes, I knew something was wrong when I saw the old-fashioned Radia-lamp in your room, and I could not quite understand it. You had better try the power now; they probably have directed it by this time; anyhow, the Luminor will banish the darkness from you.”

“You are probably right,” and raising her voice, she called out sharply: “*Lux!*”

The delicate detectophone mechanism of the Luminor responded instantly to her command; and the room was flooded at once with the beautiful cold pinkwhite Luminor-light, emanating from the thin wire running around the four sides of the room below the white ceiling.

The light, however, seemed too strong for her, and she sharply cried, "*Luxdah!*" The faithful mechanism again responded; the cold light-radiation of the Luminor wire decreased at once in intensity, and the room appeared in an exquisite pink light.

"That's better now," she laughed. "The heater just begins to get warm, too. I am frozen stiff; just think, no heat for five days! I really sometimes envy our ancestors, who, I believe, heated their houses with stoves, burning strange black rocks or tree-chunks in them!"

"I am so sorry for you! It must be a dreadful predicament to be cut off from the entire world, in these days of weather control; I believe it must be a novel experience. I cannot understand, however, what should have brought on a snow blizzard in midsummer."

"Why, you see, our governor had some trouble with the four weather-engineers of our district, some months ago, and they struck for better living. They claimed that the authorities did not furnish them with sufficient luxuries; and when their demands were refused, they simultaneously turned on the high-depression at the four Meteor-Towers and then fled, leaving their towers with the high-tension currents escaping at a tremendous rate.

"This was done in the evening, and by midnight our entire district, bounded by the four Meteor-Towers, was covered with two inches of snow. The four scoundrels, it seems, had erected especially for their nefarious work additional discharge arms, pointing downward from the towers, for the purpose of snowing in the meteoros completely.

"Their plans were well taken, for it became impossible to approach the towers for four days; and they finally had to be dismantled by directed energy from forty other Meteor-Towers, which directed a tremendous amount of power against the four doomed towers, till the latter were fused and melted.

"The other Meteoros, I believe, will start in immediately to direct a lowpression over our district; but, as they are not very near us, it will probably take them twenty-four hours to generate enough heat to melt the snow and ice. They will probably encounter considerable difficulty, because our snowedunder district naturally will give rise to some meteorological disturbances in their own districts, and therefore they will be obliged, I presume, to take care of the weather conditions in their districts as well as our own."

"What a remarkable case!" he ejaculated, and what a fine scientific understanding you have!"

"Oh that is nothing. I am somewhat of a scientist myself, and like nothing better

than to dabble in papa's laboratory. That's why I was so interested when I saw yours," she added.

She opened her mouth as if to say something. But at that moment an electric gong began to ring furiously, so loud that it jarred even Ralph, four thousand miles away. She turned deathly pale, and he asked sharply:

"Heavens, what does that mean?"

"An avalanche has started at the top of the mountain! O God, what shall I do? It will be here in fifteen minutes, and I can't escape—I am snowed-in! What shall I do?" she cried hysterically.

For a few short seconds 124C 41 stood dumbfounded, while every drop of blood left his face. Then suddenly it came back with a rush, and he bellowed out, almost hysterical himself:

"Courage! I will save you! I'll show you how to deal with avalanches! You say your power-mast is up as yet?"

"Yes, but what good does . . . ?"

"Never mind! Speak quick! Your wave length?"

"629."

"Vibratory?"

"491,211."

"Can you direct it yourself?"

"Yes."

"Could you attach a six-foot piece of your blown-down Communico mast to the base of the Power aerial?"

"Certainly—it's of alomagnesium and it is very light."

"Good! Now act quick! Run to the roof and attach the Communico mastpiece to the very base of the power mast, and point the former towards the avalanche. Then move the directoscope exactly to West-by-South, and point the antenna of the power mast East-byNorth. Now run—I'll do the rest!"

He saw her drop the receiver and rush away from the Telephot. Immediately he leaped up to the top of his building, and swung his big aerial around so that it pointed West-by-South.

He then adjusted his directoscope till a little bell began to ring. He knew then that the instrument was in perfect tune with the far-off instrument in Switzerland; he also noted that its pointer pointed exactly East-by-North.

"So far, so good," he whistled with satisfaction. "Now for the fireworks!"

He ran down to the laboratory, threw in one switch, while he threw in another one with his foot, clasping his ears tightly with his rubber-gloved hands. A

terrible, yelling sound was heard, and the building shook. It was the warning siren on top of the house, which could be heard in a radius of sixty miles sounding its warning to all to keep away from tall steel or metal structures, or, if they could not do this, to insulate themselves.

He sounded the siren twice in succession for ten seconds, which meant that he would direct his ultra-power for at least twenty minutes, and everybody must be on his guard for this length of time.

No sooner had the siren blast stopped, while the sound echoed as yet fiercely, than he had seen Miss 212B 423 at the Telephot, beckoning him that everything was in readiness.

He yelled to her to insulate herself, and he could see her jump into a tall glass chair where she sat perfectly still, deathly white. He could see that she clasped her hands to her ears; and he knew that she must hear already the thunder of the death-bringing avalanche.

But already he had run up on his high glass ladder; and having reached the top, he began to turn the large glass wheel whose shaft was connected with the ultra-generator.

He began turning the wheel, and for the first time he looked at the clock. He observed that it was just nine minutes after he first had heard the gong and he smiled, coldly. He knew he was in time.

A terrifying roar set in as soon as he had commenced to turn the wheel. It was as if a million devils had been let loose. Sparks were flying everywhere. Small metal parts, not encased in lead boxes, fused. All sharp objects' emanated long streamers of blue flames, while ball-shaped objects glowed with a white aureole.

Large iron pieces became strongly magnetic, and small iron objects continually flew from one large iron piece to another. Ralph's watch chain became so hot that he had to throw it off, with his watch.

He kept on turning the wheel, and the roar changed to a scream so intense in its sharpness that Ralph had to pull out his rubber ear vacuum-caps so that he might not hear the terrible sound. As he turned the wheel farther around something remarkable happened. The tone of the ultra-generator had reached the note where it coincided with the fundamental note of the building, which was built of steelonium (the new substitute for steel).

Suddenly the whole building "sang," with a shriek so loud and piercing that it could be heard twenty miles off.

Another building whose fundamental note was the same as the one of the first building began to "sing" in its turn, just as one tuning fork produces sympathetic sounds in a similar distant one.

Ralph kept on turning, and the building stopped its sound. As he continued turning the wheel of the generator, the latter gave out sounds sharper and

sharper, higher and higher, shriller and shriller, till the shrieking became unendurable. And then, all of a sudden, the sound stopped abruptly.

The frequency had passed over twenty-thousand, and at this point the human ear ceases to hear sounds.

Ralph turned the wheel a few more notches and then stopped. Except for the flying iron pieces, there was no sound. Even the myriads of sparks leaping around were strangely silent, except for the hissing noise of flames streaming from sharp metal points.

Ralph looked at the clock. It was exactly ten minutes after the first sounding of the gong. He then turned the wheel one notch further and the room was plunged into a pitch-black darkness.

An uninitiated stranger standing—well insulated—on a roof not very far off from Ralph's laboratory, would have witnessed the following remarkable phenomena:

As soon as Ralph threw the power of the Ultra-Generator on his aerial, the latter began to shoot out hissing flames in the direction of West-by-South.

As Ralph kept turning on more power, the flames become longer and the sound louder. The heavy iridium wires of the large aerial became red-hot, then yellow, then dazzling white, and the entire mast became white-hot. Just as the strange observer could hardly endure the shrill hissing sound of the outflowing flames any more, the sound stopped altogether, abruptly, and simultaneously the whole landscape was plunged into such a pitchblack darkness as he had never experienced before. He could not even see his hand before his eyes. The aerial could not be seen either, although he could hear the tremendous energy still flowing away.

What had happened? The aerial on top of Ralph's house had obtained such a tremendously high frequency, and had become so strongly etherized, that it acted toward the ether much the same as a vacuum pump acts on the air.

The aerial for a radius of some forty miles attracted the ether so fast that a new supply could not spread over this area with sufficient rapidity.

Inasmuch as light waves cannot pass through space without the medium of ether, *it necessarily follows that the entire area upon which the aerial acted was dark.*

Our uninitiated stranger who had never before been in an etherless hole, (the so-called negative whirlpool) experienced some remarkable sensations during the twenty minutes that followed.

It is a well known fact that heat waves cannot pass through space without their medium: ether, the same as an electric bell, working in a vacuum cannot be heard outside of the vacuum, because sound waves cannot pass through space without their medium, the air.

No sooner had the darkness set in, then a peculiar feeling of numbness and passiveness came over our stranger.

As long as he was in the etherless space, *he absolutely stopped growing older*, as no combustion nor digestion can go on without ether. *He furthermore had lost all sense of heat or cold.* His pipe, hot previously, was neither hot nor cold to his touch. His own body could not grow cold as the heat of same could not be given off to the atmosphere, nor could his body grow cold, even if he had sat on a cake of ice, because there was no ether to permit the heat to pass from one atom to another.

He remembered how, one day, he had been in a tornado center, and how, when the storm center had created a partial vacuum around him, he all of a sudden had felt the very air drawn from his lungs. He remembered people talking about an air-less hole, in which there was no medium but ether (inasmuch as he could see the light). Now things were reversed. He could hear and breathe, because the ether has no effect on these functions; but he had been robbed of his visual senses, and heat or cold could not effect him, as there was no means by which the heat or cold could traverse the ether-hole.

Miss 212B 423's father, who had heard of his daughter's distress in a roundabout way, rushed back from Paris in his aeroflyer. He had speeded up his machine to the utmost, as if by instinct, he was scenting an impending disaster. When finally his villa came into sight, his blood froze in his veins and his heart stopped beating, because of what was revealed before his eyes.

He could see that an immense avalanche was sweeping down the mountainside, with his house, harboring his daughter, directly in the path of it.

As he approached, he could hear the terrible roar and thunder of the avalanche as it swept away everything in its path. He knew he was helpless to do anything to aid his daughter, as he could not make the house in time, and it only meant the certain destruction of him also; and for that reason he could do well-nigh nothing but watch on hysterically the tragedy which would enact itself before his eyes in a few short minutes.

At this juncture a miracle, so it seemed to the distracted father, occurred.

His eye chanced to fall on the Powermast on the top of his house. He could see, glistening in the sun, the iridium aerial wires which were pointing East-by-North; suddenly they became red-hot; then yellow, then white-hot, at the same time he felt that some enormous etheric disturbance had set up, as sparks were flying from all metallic parts of his machine. When he looked again at the aerial on his house, he saw that a piece of the Communico mast, which apparently had fallen at the base of the power mast, and which was pointing directly at the avalanche, was streaming gigantic flames which grew longer and longer, and

gave forth shriller and shriller sounds. He had the impression, while looking on, that the flames which streamed from the end of the Communico-mast-piece looked much the same as a tremendously long jet of water leaving its nozzle under pressure.

For about five hundred yards from the tip of the Communico mast it was really only a single flame about fifteen feet in diameter. Beyond that it spread out fan-shape like. He could also see that the entire power mast, including the communico mast, was glowing in a white heat, showing that immense forces were directed upon it. By this time the avalanche had almost come in contact with the furthest end of the flames.

Here the remarkable happened. No more did the avalanche touch the flames, than it began turning to water. It seemed that the heat of those flames was so intense and powerful that had the avalanche been a block of solid ice it would not have made any marked difference. As it was, the entire avalanche had been reduced to hot water and steam even before it reached the main shaft of the flame.

A torrent of hot water rushing down the mountain was all that remained of the terrible avalanche; and while the water did some damage, it was insignificant compared to the damage the avalanche would have wrought, if it had continued on its original course unchecked.

For Several minutes after the melting of the avalanche the flames continued to stream from the aerial, and then stopped gradually.

Ralph 124C 41, in New York, four thousand miles distant, had turned off the power of his ultra-generator.

He climbed down from his glass ladder, stepped over to the Telephot, and found that Miss 212B 423 had already reached her instrument. Tears were flowing down her cheeks, and she was so hysterical from her miraculous escape from death that it took her a few minutes before she could find her voice. "Oh, how can I ever thank you, sir, for having saved me from that terrible avalanche? I could see it sweep down—down—nearer and nearer—sweeping everything in its path—snapping trees like matches. I heard its terrifying thunder—I seemed to feel the wind that precedes it—it was actually on top of the house, big like a mountain—and in terror I closed my eyes—. When I opened them again I could hardly believe my eyesight—the avalanche had vanished! I could not believe I was alive till I chanced to look at the Telephot face-plate and saw you climbing down a glass ladder. I knew then that you had saved me, but I don't know yet what you have done with the avalanche!"

"Melted it!", he said simply.

"Melted it!" she echoed, "how perfectly wonderful—and just think how many besides me you saved! There is a town down the valley" . . . she shuddered at the thought of it. "Oh, how can I ever thank you, noble sir—."

“By not mentioning the incident any more. I did what anybody would have done under the same circumstances.”

Before she could answer, an old gentleman, highly excited, rushed into the young lady’s room, and Ralph could see her fly into his arms, exclaiming: “Oh, father dear” —

Ralph 124C 41 with discretion hung up his receiver.

(To be continued.)