



DELPHI  
CLASSICS

# Otis Adelbert Kline

## Complete Works



Series Thirteen

*The Complete Works of*  
**OTIS ADELBERT KLINE**

(1891-1946)



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*The Delphi Classics Catalogue*

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Otis Adelbert Kline". The signature is written in black ink and is centered on the page.

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Version 1

*The Complete Works of*  
**OTIS ADELBERT KLINE**



*By Delphi Classics, 2023*

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*Complete Works of Otis Adelbert Kline*



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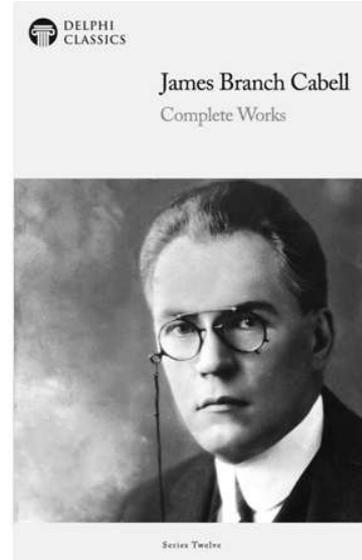
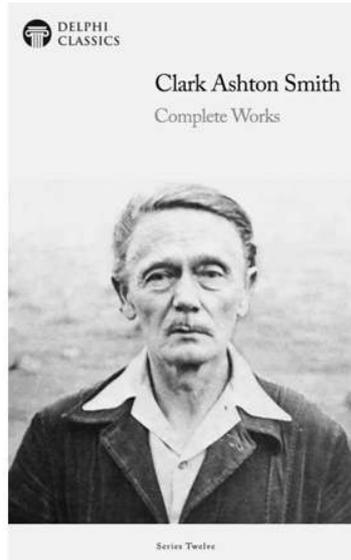
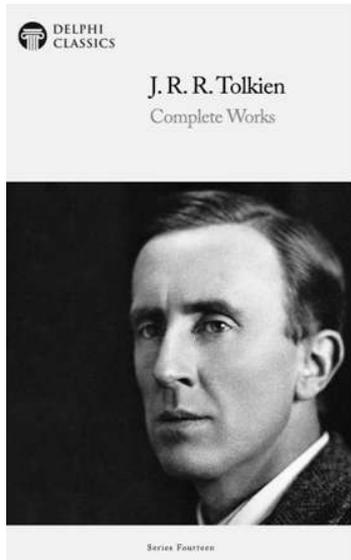
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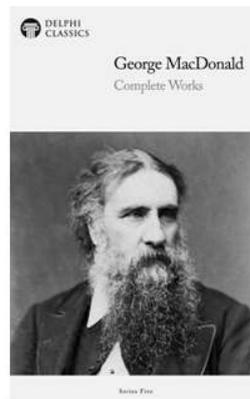
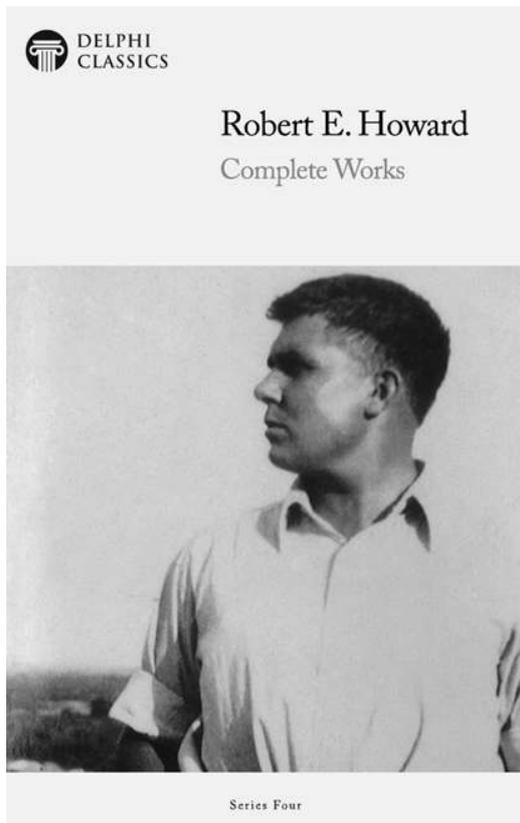
DELPHI  CLASSICS

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# FANTASY AT DELPHI



*Explore worlds you never knew existed...*



## The Venus Books



*Chicago, late nineteenth century — Otis Adelbert Kline was born in Chicago on 1 July 1891.*

## The Planet of Peril (1929)

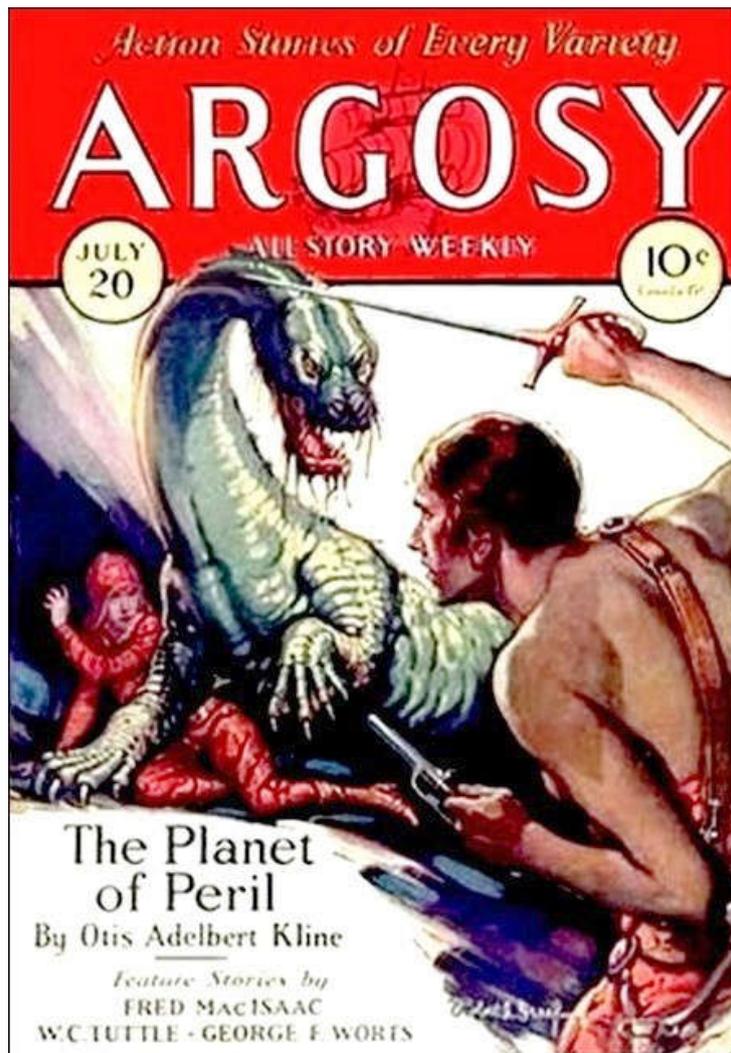


In 1891 Otis Adelbert Kline was born in Chicago, Illinois. His father was Louis A. Kline (1864-1938), a farmer, druggist, violin salesman and chemical manufacturer, as well as a supposed member of the Knights Templar. Kline's mother was Ora K. Kline (1870-1949). The couple were married in 1888. Otis grew up on his parents' farm, located west of Chicago, in Coloma Township, Whiteside County, along with his younger brother Allen. Kline's father had a large, well-chosen library and he was greatly interested in astronomy, which he passed on to his son. They both read and enjoyed H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* when it first appeared in 1898. In later years, Kline recalled how he and his father liked to talk about the possibility of life on other planets. "Perhaps the greatest thrill of all," Kline wrote, "was when Dad and I went together to look through the big telescope at Northwestern University. We had splendid views of Jupiter and Saturn but Mars, which we had wanted chiefly to see, was too low in the mists to be clear."

In his youth, Kline took on various jobs in the countryside. He received his first official notice as a writer in the nation's newspapers by writing songs. He started writing stories for publication after his thirtieth birthday. The new fantasy and science fiction driven pulp magazine *Weird Tales* came along at just the right time for the aspiring writer of strange tales. The first year, 1923-1924, was challenging for the magazine, which nearly foundered. Edwin Baird left as editor at the end of the first year and Kline took over and edited the jumbo-sized first anniversary issue, dated May-June-July 1924, for which he anonymously wrote the seminal essay *Why Weird Tales?* By the time the next issue was published in November 1924, Farnsworth Wright was at the helm.

Throughout the early 1920's, Kline provided a lot of wordage for *Weird Tales* and other pulp magazines. His story *The Phantom Wolfhound* (*Weird Tales*, June 1923) introduced Dr. Dorp, an occult detective, and one of Kline's many series characters. In 1929 he wrote the science fiction novel *The Planet of Peril*, which was originally serialised in six parts in *Argosy All-Story Weekly* during the summer of 1929, before appearing in hardcover later that year, published by A. C. McClurg and reissued in a lower-price edition by Grosset & Dunlap. The first volume in Kline's Venus trilogy, it is a planetary romance, telling the story of Robert Grandon, who exchanges his mind with an inhabitant of Venus. During his adventures, Grandon finds himself a slave, escapes his captors and rises to the leadership of an army of rebels. He eventually marries the princess of the oppressive regime and becomes a benevolent emperor.

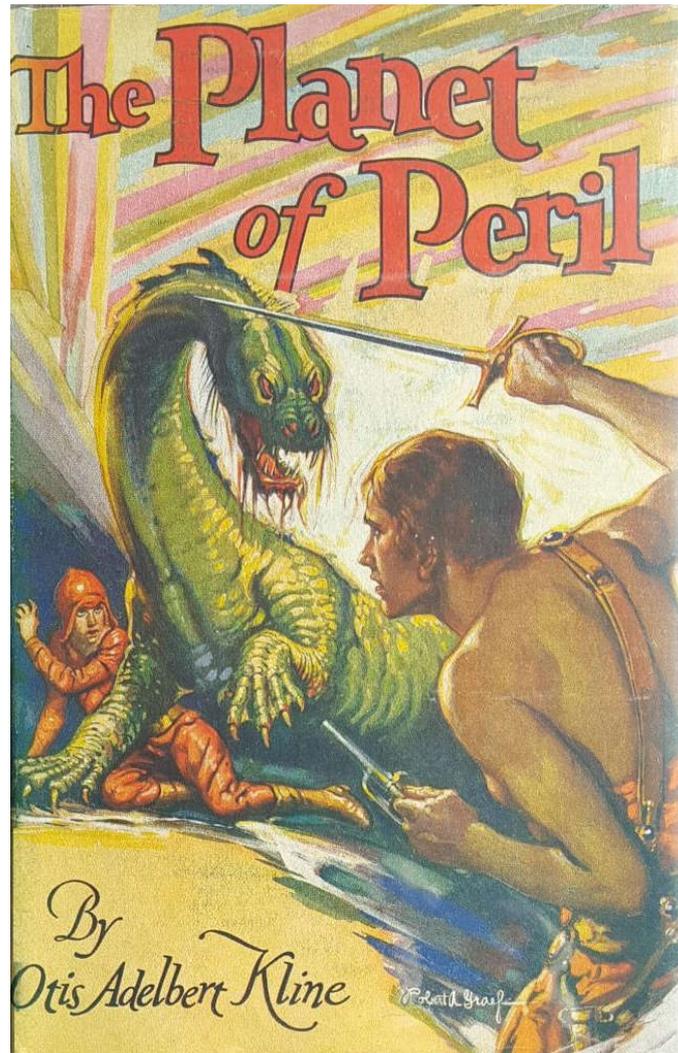
The story was well received in the pulp community, with *Amazing Stories* describing it as, "an exceedingly well-spun yarn which can heartily be recommended to all our readers, and to all lovers of imagination-stirring fiction". The noted science fiction critic P. Schuyler Miller wrote that *The Planet of Peril* was "an open imitation of Burroughs, though on a different planet". E. F. Bleiler found the novel to be "sword-play and fantastic adventure in imitation of Edgar Rice Burroughs, describing it as, "competent pulp adventure".



*The magazine in which the novel first appeared*

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*The first edition*

## CHAPTER I



ROBERT ELLSMORE GRANDON stifled a yawn with difficulty as the curtain went down on the first act of *Don Giovanni* and wondered what was the matter. It wasn't that opera bored him, or that tonight's performance was inferior; in fact, what he had been able to give his attention to struck him as being among the best performances he had seen. But something was distracting him, something he could not put his finger on; and the effort to keep his attention on the music and the performers was tiring him. Perhaps it was just one of those days, he thought.

He was tired of life at twenty-four, he, decided — tired and disillusioned and somehow trapped. After his spell of military service, he'd broken away from family obligations and expectations to join revolutionaries in Cuba. The struggle there had seemed important, worth risking his neck for; but he'd seen, much earlier than some others, that the new regime was just a change of masters. He'd gotten out while getting out was easy and returned to take up the career in insurance administration that his uncle wanted him to take — the uncle who had paid his college expenses. Now, Robert and Vincent Grandon would prepare for the position that Uncle Arthur would be leaving in a few years. It would be a good career for both young men; for while only one could step into Arthur Grandon's shoes, the second spot would be no less desirable.

Very likely, with full effort, he could make the top — but his cousin had the extra measure of devotion to the business that Robert Grandon simply couldn't bring. Robert Ellsmore Grandon yearned for action, adventure, romance — something that seemed to be gone in this world of the Twentieth Century.

He made his way to the bar thinking that he'd chuck it all in a moment for a chance to think and act for himself, for a chance to accomplish something worth while according to his own lights. Yes — insurance was worthwhile, he thought as he sat at the bar and beckoned to Louis, but not worth his while.

Louis looked his way, nodded, and started to mix a Gibson for him. The bartender had a curious grin on his face as he set the glass down. "Did you get the message, Mr. Grandon?"

Robert Grandon blinked. "What message?"

"Didn't you see the papers today?"

Grandon shook his head. "Just glanced at them. What's up?"

Louis went back and bent down, to return with the *Times*, folded to a certain page, and placed it on the bar before him. To Grandon's astonishment, he saw a sketch of himself staring him in the face.

"Had you planned in advance to come tonight, Mr. Grandon?"

Grandon looked up with a puzzled expression on his face. "No — now that you mention it, I hadn't. I was going to ask a friend to come with me next Friday night. Came down this morning to see about tickets, and decided that I'd come tonight alone, when I found that there was a good seat available...Don't know why, now that I think of it."

Louis' face wore a strange smile. "Read that ad, Mr. Grandon. Maybe you are the one."

Grandon picked up the paper. The heading read, "I Want You!" There was no caption under the sketch; beneath it, the text said: "I do not know your name, or anything about you, except that you are in the city. I want to perform an experiment, and you may be the man I need. If you are, you will know by these tokens.

"You will feel an urge to go to a certain place tonight which you may or may not have been planning to go to, and you will want to get there around 8 p.m. Starting at 8:30 p.m., every half hour, I will send you a message. You may not hear it the first or second time, but you may feel distracted. If you are the man I want, it will seem as if a voice is speaking to you. It will be a voice in your mind; it will say 'Doctor Morgan' and direct you to go to a particular spot. There a man will be waiting for you; he will ask you a question which I shall also tell you of when I communicate with you. Please give him a hearing before you decide."

"Looks as if you've gotten the first part of it, Mr. Grandon. You hadn't expected to come tonight, but here you are."

Grandon put the newspaper down. It had been just about half an hour after the performance started that he'd begun to feel distracted and a little irritated.

Louis said, "It's two minutes of nine, Mr. Grandon. Maybe you'll get the message this time."

Grandon sipped the Gibson, with his eyes on the clock. He tried to relax, to let himself open to whatever thoughts might come into his head. He'd heard of experiments in telepathy, and while he didn't find parapsychology too convincing, he had no strong bias against it. In fact, he'd thought that it might be fascinating if this sort of thing could be so. Here would be a new frontier if...

It wasn't exactly a whisper, but there was a softness about a voice he now seemed to hear yet not to hear. It said, "Doctor Morgan." Grandon sat up straight. Again it came: "Doctor Morgan." A third time; then the voice said, "Go to the telephone booths in the lobby. A man wearing a tuxedo with a green lapel pin will offer you a cigarette."

The voice ceased. Grandon waited a moment or two, but there was nothing more.

"Did you get it, Mr. Grandon?" asked Louis eagerly.

Grandon finished his Gibson and put a bill down on the bar. "Could be," he said. "I have a pretty good imagination, you know. Think I'll wait another half hour and see."

He left the bar. Either this was or it wasn't. If it was, then he might as well follow up now as wait another half hour. If it wasn't, it didn't make any difference; he couldn't possibly pay any attention to the opera now, no matter who was singing.

He made his way to the phone booths in the lobby and looked around, oblivious to the feminine eyes that turned to glance at his broad shoulders and curly black hair. No one fitting the description he'd received was in sight. He waited a moment and began to feel foolish.

Just imagination, he decided a little sadly. Well, there was time for a cigarette before he had to get back to his seat. He was reaching for his case when a pleasant voice at his right said, "Try one of mine, won't you?"

Grandon turned and looked into the smiling eyes of a man about his own age. A man wearing a tuxedo with a green lapel pin. He accepted with thanks.

"Excellent performance, don't you think?" volunteered the smiling one, lighting a cigarette himself which he had, unnoticed by Grandon in his confusion, taken from the side of the case opposite the one which he had extended a moment before.

"I suppose so — ah — why, yes, of course..."

Grandon was beginning to feel unaccountably drowsy.

Suddenly he slumped forward, and would have fallen on his face, but for the quick assistance of the friendly young man. A moment later he lost consciousness.

An attendant came running up. "What's the matter with your friend?" he asked.

"Fainted dead away. It's his heart; he's had spells like this quite often lately. Help me get him outdoors."

The two of them carried Grandon outside, followed by the more curious bystanders. When he reached the sidewalk, the young man waved to the driver of a car parked on the other side of the street. It immediately swung across and drew up to the curb.

"Let's put him in the car," said the young man. "I'm used to this — a spin on Michigan Boulevard will revive him. Just needs fresh air. His doctor has told me how to handle him."

They lifted Grandon into the car and the driver put the top down. The young man handed a crisp bill to the attendant and got into the car, which drove away.

## CHAPTER II



WHEN GRANDON REGAINED consciousness he was lying on a cot in a dimly lighted room. He looked about him in bewilderment as he saw four bare concrete walls, a heavy oak door studded with many large bolts, and a small window fitted with powerful iron bars more than an inch in diameter.

There was a chair and a small table with a lamp on it next to the cot. On the table, Grandon saw a sheet of paper. He rolled over and picked it up, switching on the lamp.

“Dear Mr. Grandon,” he read, “I must admit and apologize for technically kidnapping you; but I hope to be able to persuade you shortly that this was both necessary and to your advantage. Now I must ask you to be patient for a little while; I shall see you soon. The drug you were given should be wearing off by evening — you were kidnapped last night — and I can assure you that it will have no harmful after-effects, physical or mental.” The paper was signed, “Dr. Morgan.”

Grandon arose and tottered unsteadily toward the door. It was evidently locked from the outside, for he could not rattle it. He went to the window and peered out. Night had fallen, and a myriad of twinkling stars looked down at him from a clear sky. Not a tree, house, or earthly object of any kind was visible. There was only the starry sky above and the black void below.

He heard the sound of talking, and wheeled about as a bolt slid back and the door opened. Two men entered. The foremost was tall and of large structure; his forehead was high and bulged outward, so that his shaggy eyebrows, which grew together above the bridge of his aquiline nose, half-concealed his eyes. He wore a painted, closely-cropped beard, in which a few gray hairs proclaimed him as middle-aged. Behind him was the young man who had given him the drugged cigarette in the lobby of the opera house.

The young man advanced and extended his hand. “How are you feeling now, Mr. Grandon?” he asked. “Ah, you seem surprised that we know your name. That will be explained to you. I should have introduced myself sooner. My name is Harry Thorne. Allow me to present Doctor Morgan.”

The big man held out his hand and said in a booming bass voice, “This is a pleasure I have long anticipated, Mr. Grandon.”

It was nothing like the voice he had heard in his mind, and yet it was the same voice. Grandon realized that at once; and his curiosity, added to the feeling of confidence in these men’s intentions toward him that the note had imparted, washed away any resentment he might feel at their methods. He clasped the doctor’s muscular hand and muttered an acknowledgment.

“And now,” said Morgan, “if you will accompany us to dinner, we shall start the explanation due you. Afterwards, I shall ask you to read two interesting manuscripts before we talk further; they will tell you far more, and prepare you far better, for the experiment I have in mind than a lecture from me.”

In Dr. Morgan’s drawing room, where night had given way to day while Robert Ellsmore Grandon read two novel-length manuscripts, Dr. Morgan — who had entered just as Grandon was finishing the last chapter of the second box of neatly-typed pages — smiled at his guest quizzically. “What do you think of them?” he asked.

Grandon shook his head. "If I hadn't had the experience of the past day or so, I'd think they were just good stories and nothing more. Even so, they sound fantastic."

"They are," Morgan agreed. "But nonetheless true. To summarize briefly, I started experimenting with telepathy ten years ago, and finally succeeded in building a device which would pick up and amplify thought waves."

"And thought waves, you found," said Grandon, "are not limited by space or time. So you picked up the waves projected by another man who had built a similar device to project them — only this man was on Mars."

"But not the present-day Mars — the Mars of some millions of years ago, when a high human civilization did exist there."

"And you and this Martian scientist, Lal Vak, found that persons who are nearly doubles in physical appearance may have similar brain-patterns — enough alike so that consciousness may be exchanged between them. Your first experiment involved such an exchange between an Earthman named Harry Thorne and a Martian named Borgen Takkor. The man you now call Harry Thorne was born on Mars as Borgen Takkor, while the true Harry Thorne is now living on Mars — and leading a most adventurous and satisfying career from the account I just read."

Dr. Morgan nodded. "He and his princess have had many adventures together beyond those related in the first manuscript. To us, of course, both have been dead millions of years. But it is possible for me to tune in on their lives at any point where Harry was transmitting to me. He has never regretted his choice."

"Then", went on Grandon, "you got in touch with a Venusian named Vorn Vangal, who is a contemporary of Lal Vak and Borgen Takkor. With his help you constructed a space-time vehicle through which your nephew, Jerry Morgan, was able to go to Mars in the flesh. And he, too, made out pretty well."

Morgan nodded. "Yes. I sent Jerry to Mars that way, and hoped that I'd be able to send someone to Venus the same way. But my telekinetic control failed in some way on the return trip, and I never recovered the ship I built for Jerry. Vorn Vangal said he would build one on Venus and send it to Earth for me, so that I could visit him, but I do not know when this will be possible. It may be soon; it may not be for some years." Morgan smiled. "And I'm not too patient a man. I know that it is possible for me to get an account of Venus as seen by Earthmen's eyes — the Venus that was, in relation to the Mars that was — just as I learned about Mars in those two manuscripts you've read. So I asked Vorn Vangal if he could send me the brain waves of two Venusians, to see if I could find their counterparts here on Earth. Then Harry urged me to try to see if there was a Venusian with whom he could change personalities — so I sent his picture and brain-wave pattern to Vorn Vangal."

"I see. And Vorn Vangal sent you the picture and brainwave pattern of a Venusian who was — me."

"Yes. You'll recall that Lal Vak had shown me how to construct a mind-compass, which would indicate whether there were any living persons here on Earth whose brainwaves corresponded with those of the Martians whose pictures he sent me. This would not only aid in my finding such people here on Earth, it would also protect me from disappointment on coming across someone who looked right, but whose brain-pattern did not match closely enough for an exchange of personalities, after all."

"Has that happened?" Grandon asked.

"Only once. But now it's all arranged for Harry; and I hope you'll be interested in going to Venus, too."

Grandon smiled. "After reading those two accounts of conditions on Mars, I certainly am. Of course, I suppose it's nothing like Venus."

“There are differences, of course, but the civilizations are on a somewhat similar level. The planet is known as Zarovia, and your physical counterpart is a gentleman who has been enslaved by an Amazon ruler — a princess with no thought save of her own pleasure. He finds it impossible to escape from bondage, and is therefore willing to make the exchange. Mr. Thorne’s bodily duplicate is a prince of a realm on the opposite side of the planet from that occupied by the slave. The prince has been petted and pampered and shielded from all danger, and longs for adventure; he is willing to exchange bodies for a time with Mr. Thorne. Well, what do you say? Are you willing to make the trip?” Grandon smiled.

“You know, Doctor, I’m a little surprised. You investigated the Earth-born Harry Thorne very carefully, because you’d made a bad choice and sent a criminal to Mars ahead of him. You knew your nephew thoroughly because you were in telepathic communication with him for years though he didn’t know it then. But what do you know about me?”

“Touché!” chuckled Morgan. “I forgot to tell you. I’ve gone a good ways beyond telepathic projection in the last few years. When I contacted your mind, I also got a very full picture of your character and personality — no intimate details, but sufficient to assure me that you were the sort of man I wanted. And that you were very likely to go along with me if the way could be cleared for you...But suppose you tell me of any inhibiting factors; I think they can be cleared up.”

Robert Ellsmore Grandon recounted his personal situation briefly, and Morgan nodded. “Yes,” he said. “This checks with the information I’ve gathered on Mr. Arthur Grandon since you arrived here. He’s sincerely devoted to you, you know. I don’t believe he’ll stand in the way if he knows you want to go on some caper of your own and by your own choice. Suppose you phone him long distance now. Here’s what I suggest you tell him...”

“You were right, Doctor,” Grandon said after bidding his uncle farewell. “Uncle Arthur agrees that Vincent is better suited to handle the firm than I. He just wanted me to try for awhile and see — says he half expected something like this when I disappeared and was concerned lest I forget to let him know.”

“Then we need waste no more time, Mr. Grandon.”

“But — my body will remain here while my personality goes to Venus. What happens to it?”

“You need have no fear about that. The man who comes to inhabit it — forgotten about him, haven’t you? — will naturally be careful of it; for if he loses it there will be no return for him, either to this world or his own.”

“What do we have to do in order to exchange bodies? And how will you keep in touch with me?”

“I will, at regular intervals, establish telepathic rapport with you and Thorne while you are asleep. You will know nothing of these telepathic communications — which will be as detailed as those you read last night — unless I see fit to convey a message to you which will probably come in the form of a dream, so vivid that you will remember every detail. If you wish to communicate with me for any reason whatever, I will learn of it when I establish rapport with you.”

Grandon sighed. “I’m ready. Want me to lie down and look into a mirror the way Harry Thorne did when you sent him to Mars?”

“Right. And the present Harry Thorne will follow you in a few hours — you may meet on Venus, though it isn’t too likely.” He set up the mirror, painted with alternate circles of red and black, as Grandon reposed on the sofa. “Now think of Venus, far off in time and space — millions of miles, millions of years away...”

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*End of Sample*