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THE MILLION CITIES

*An Amazing Novel
of the Far Future*

By **J.T. McINTOSH**

THE SONS OF FRANKENSTEIN
by Sam Moskowitz

SATELLITE

science fiction

AUGUST, 1958

Vol. 2, No. 6

A COMPLETE NOVEL

THE MILLION CITIES

by J. T. McINTOSH

Science had changed the world for every man, and woman on Earth. So great was the challenge, so deadly the peril that the very existence of the human race hung in the balance.

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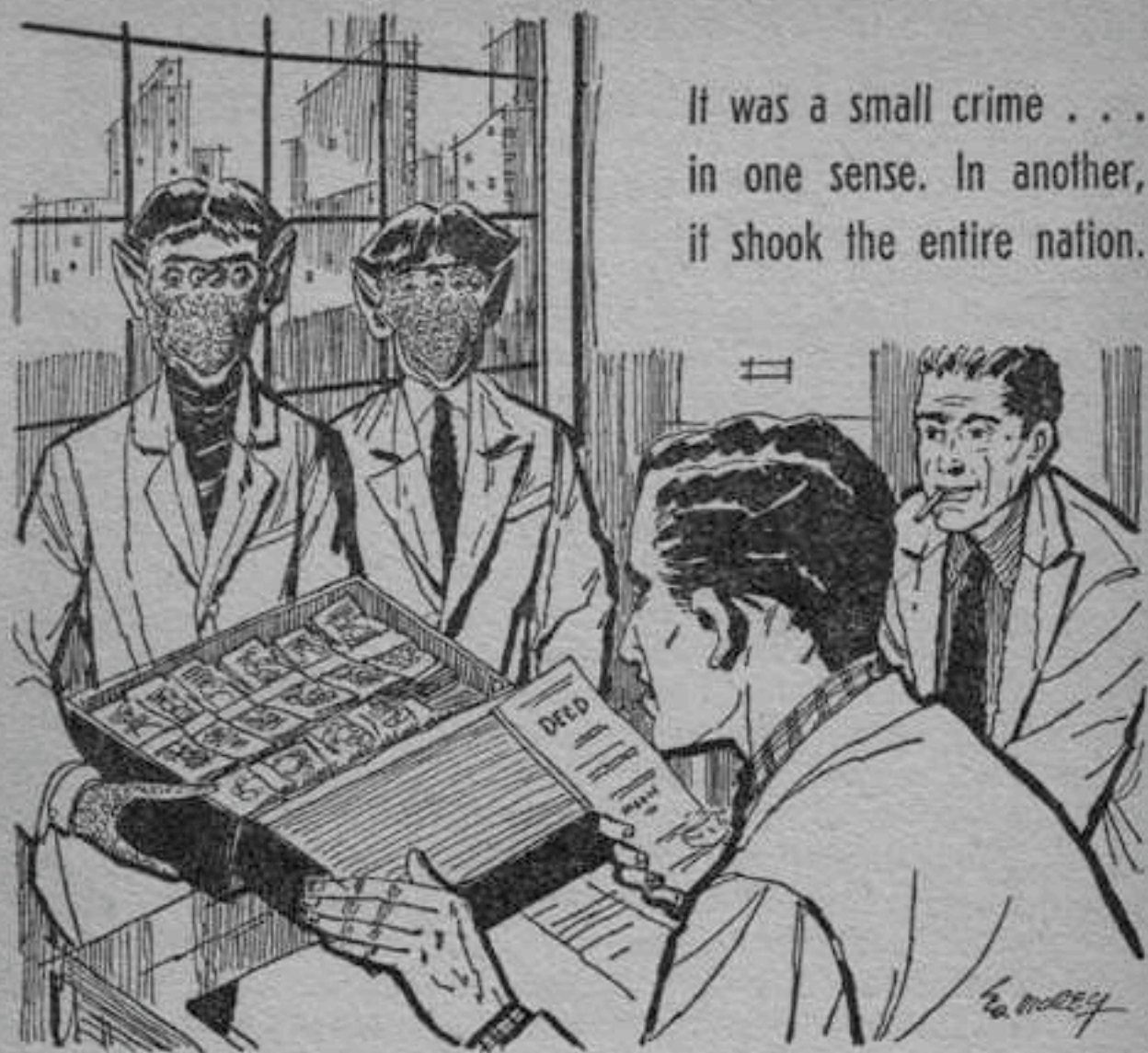
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It was a small crime . . .
in one sense. In another,
it shook the entire nation.

PETTY LARCENY

by LLOYD BIGGLE, JR.

DEAR EDNA,

I'm writing this to tell you things look pretty good, and I'll be back soon, and you can start getting your trousseau ready. Good news, huh baby? I'd like to

get married in a hurry and take off on a long honeymoon, for reasons I'll explain. Kind of get things ready, will you? Blackie and I will be holing up for awhile, so I can't

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give you a date, and I may have to arrive unexpectedly.

We made a big haul—real big—and we've been pinching ourselves about it ever since. It's had some funny results, though, as you'll know if you've been reading the papers. We might have to lay low in Mexico for a few months after we're married, but I don't think you'll mind when you hear what happened.

We were moving across the country, pulling that old gag where Blackie trips over something in a store and breaks his arm. A lot of these small storekeepers don't carry insurance, and they'll jump at a fast settlement rather than risk a law suit, and we were doing pretty well. So when we came to a little Wisconsin resort town, we decided to take a short vacation and then hit the local storekeeper on our way out.

We checked in at a motel, and had a swim, and then we wandered over to one of the night spots for a beer. This night spot has an outdoor cafe right on the lake, and it was a hot night, and the place was crowded. There wasn't such a thing as a vacant table, and we looked a long time before we saw a table with two vacant chairs. We had to make a run for them, because a lot of other people were standing around, but we made it. We came up behind the fellow that was sitting at this table, and as we

moved around him to sit down, I said, "Are these chairs taken?"

He said, "Sssertainly not. Pleasse join me."

Knock me down with a corn plaster, if it wasn't an alien, trilling voice and hissing s's and all. I'd seen plenty of them from a distance—they've been coming in quantities lately, you know—but I'd never had a chance to talk with one. Blackie and I leaned back and looked him over, and he didn't seem to mind in the least. In fact, he was staring just as hard at us.

I think it wouldn't be so bad if only they didn't think they had to look *human*. Even a classy tailored suit tends to look sloppy when you order it five sizes too large and conceal an extra pair of arms under it. The wigs help, of course—they keep the illusion going if you look at one from behind—but from the front they're just hopeless. I've heard that some of them wear false noses. This one didn't, so there was just the row of eyes across where the forehead should have been, and the beak down around the chin, and everything in between just scaly blankness.

I told myself we looked just as odd to him, and after a few drinks we got used to each other. So that's how Blackie and I came to be making small talk with an alien.

It started out as a cloudy night,

but the sky cleared up, after a time, and the moon came out, and made a right pretty reflection in the lake. I won't pretend I was thinking of you, though, with that alien sitting there beside me. I don't think you would have liked that.

The moon was only half there, of course, and the alien stared at it for awhile, and finally he said, "It iss an odd ssshape."

"I suppose you have five moons going around your planet," Blackie said.

"No," he said. "We have none. The phenomena iss entirely new to me." He sat looking kind of vacantly at the heavens, and the moon in particular. "Hass it always had that odd ssshape?"

Blackie winked at me. "Oh, no," he said. "That's only since they started selling it. You can just see the part that's left." Blackie always has business on his mind. "Care to make a small investment?" he said.

"In the moon? Iss it expenssive?"

"Not very. How large a slice would you like?"

The alien looked at Blackie, and then at me. I managed to keep my face straight.

"I will have to dissscusssss thiss with my brother," he said. All the aliens call each other brother, you know.

"Do that," Blackie said. "Where can I get in touch with you?"

"In touch? You refer to—we resside at the Balmy Beach Ressort."

"I'll give you a call in the morning from our Madison office," Blackie said. "Who do I ask for?"

"The name iss Sssim."

We introduced ourselves—not our right names, of course—and the alien bowed like an opera tenor, and walked away—if the way they scoot around could be called walking.

"Sim for simple," Blackie said.

"You don't honestly think you're going to sell him real estate on the moon," I said. "He isn't that simple."

Blackie grinned. "I read an article about the aliens by some doctor, or psychoanalyst, or some such thing. He says they discovered space travel by accident, and they're really a race of morons. They're so stupid, in fact, that no one can figure how they manage to fly those ships."

"But you notice that they do fly them," I said. "And why would they buy part of the moon from us? They can get up there and take it, any old time, and we can't get near it."

"Sim for simple," Blackie said. "All it costs us is a trip to Madison and a phone call. And you'll notice he was too stupid to know anything about the phases of the moon."

When he put it that way, I couldn't very well put up a kick.

Nothing ventured, nothing gained, and all that sort of thing. We drove down to Madison in the morning, and bought ourselves an option on the rent of an office with a five buck deposit, and then Blackie called the alien. He came out of the phone booth grinning.

"He's interested," he said. "He'll be at our office at ten tomorrow morning. Now we got work to do."

We put in a busy day. We got a sign painter to paint SURPLUS PROPERTY DISPOSAL UNIT NO. 437 on the door of the office. We rented some office furniture, hired ourselves a secretary on a day-to-day basis, and Blackie went out for a long conference with a not-too-reputable printer. He had a lot of junk printed up—phony deeds, and purchase agreements, and receipts, and the like. Blackie has a flair for that sort of thing.

He sent me out to get some maps of the moon. Believe me, I had a time. That isn't the sort of thing you pick up at the corner filling station. I finally got the library to make me some enlarged photographs of pictures.

By evening things were pretty well organized, and the next morning the aliens arrived right on schedule and the secretary showed them into the inner office. You could see by the expression on her face she was wondering what the hell was going on. And by the

way, she was a tough old dame about fifty, so you got no cause to be jealous.

The aliens had a couple of things bothering them. During the night they'd taken a run up to the moon to look the property over, and they were kind of upset to find that the whole moon was there. Sim had thought that people were buying chunks and totting them away, which would account for the odd shape he'd seen from Earth. Blackie soothed everything over by telling them we were just lighting up the part that hadn't been sold yet, but that led to a new complication. They didn't want to buy just part of the moon. They wanted the whole thing.

That was possible, Blackie told them. But of course it would be necessary to buy back the parts that had already been sold, which might be expensive. Sim said, in effect, hang the expense. They wanted the whole moon. Very well, Blackie said. If they would be back at one o'clock with the cash, he'd see what could be done. The price? I won't mention it, baby, except to say that when Blackie started quoting figures I nearly passed out.

We exchanged bows, and the aliens left.

"We can't get away with this," I told Blackie. "It's too much money. They'll raise hell when they find they've been took."

"Nuts," Blackie said. "They've

made a fortune with those rare metals they've been peddling here on Earth. This much money is just petty larceny to them. They can afford to laugh it off. It'll be a good, cheap education for them."

Sure enough, the aliens were back at one o'clock, and Blackie sold them the moon. All of it. He passed over a fistful of impressive-looking papers, and they passed over a suitcase full of money. Blackie made their deed effective at midnight on the sixteenth, which gave us three days to make a sudden disappearance.

We congratulated them on their purchase, and they thanked us for our courteous service, and Blackie got out a bottle and we drank toasts to each other. I sat there with my hands sweating waiting for them to go, and they didn't seem to be in any hurry at all.

"What doesss thiss mean," Sim said finally, "Sssurpluss Property Dissspossal Unit."

I could see Blackie's eyes light up. "Just what it says," he told him. "We dispose of all kinds of property. Could we interest you in anything else?"

"Yesss, it isss quite possssible that we might like sssomething elssse."

Blackie sat there behind the desk, drawing dollar signs on a pad of paper, and the aliens waited for him to say something. I was too nervous to open my mouth, from wondering what the

aliens might be thinking. Those faces of theirs are just about the ultimate in dead-pans.

"I'm afraid the property is pretty well scattered," Blackie said. "It would take a great deal of time to show it to you."

"Not at all," Sim said, once he understood what Blackie meant. "We would be glad to furnissh the transssportasssion."

Which is how Blackie and I got a ride in one of their space ships. I won't brag about it. I was sick from the minute we took off. It didn't affect Blackie. He was all over the thing, but he said afterwards that he couldn't make head nor tail of it.

Anyway, we went along with them, with Blackie keeping that suitcase clamped under one arm. Our first stop was New York, and Blackie started things off by selling them the Brooklyn Bridge.

It took some selling. They had a tough time understanding just what the thing was for, and after that, I suppose, figuring out what good it might be to them. They stalked along the bridge, looking it over, and a police patrol car stopped to see what was up, and since the official policy is to be friendly to aliens, the police cooperated by keeping the crowds back, which lent an official atmosphere to our expedition.

They finally got it across to us that it was the river that bothered them. I thought at the time that

they were afraid the river would dry up and make the bridge worthless. Right now I don't know what they thought. Blackie solved the problem in a hurry by adding ten grand to the purchase price, and throwing in the East River, and they snapped it up. They also bought the Empire State Building, and then we went down to Washington and sold the Washington Monument. Blackie tried to interest them in the Capitol Building, but they wouldn't have any part of that.

We were tempted, by then, to take them around the world and dispose of Buckingham Palace, and the Eiffel Tower, and the Taj Mahal, and a lot of other famous things, but I said nix, and Blackie agreed with me. What we had already sold added up to enough money to last us the rest of our lives, and if we sold them too much stuff it might get the thing out of the petty larceny class and cause a lot of trouble.

So we told them it was getting late, and we'd show them some more stuff in the morning. Back to Madison we went. It was late evening, by then, and we went up to the office, and Blackie gave them another stack of official-looking papers, and they gave us two more suitcases full of money.

And the aliens were all set to take legal possession of the moon, and Brooklyn Bridge along with the East River, and the Empire

State Building, and Washington Monument at midnight of the sixteenth, Eastern Standard Time. Or so they thought.

"It hasss indeed been a pleasssure," Sim said.

"The pleasure was all ours," Blackie told him.

We had another drink together, and another series of bows, and they left promising to be back promptly at ten A.M. for another shopping tour. We left right after them, leaving a bonus for the secretary and instructions to get rid of the aliens and close down the office. We headed straight west, sold our car in Minneapolis and bought another one, and on the sixteenth—yesterday—we were holed up here in Colorado.

I still couldn't figure out how the aliens could be so stupid, but Blackie said they were just morons, and they didn't even know how to fly their space ships, since they'd taken us to New York by way of Mexico City. I said the important thing was that they'd gotten us there, and in nothing flat, too, and we let the matter rest.

We were just getting up this morning when we got the news on the eight o'clock newscast, how Brooklyn Bridge, and the Empire State Building, and the Washington Monument all disappeared last night between midnight and one A.M. The people who were around those things had some odd

stories to tell, and I don't quite understand how the aliens managed it. People using the bridge got off, and those wanting to use it couldn't get on, and then—presto, the bridge was gone.

Same thing about the buildings. We didn't hear anything about the East River, so I guess it's still there. Maybe that was a little too much for the aliens, or maybe they were satisfied with the water that was under the bridge. Or maybe they're coming back for it later.

We didn't hear anything about the moon, either. It was cloudy around here, last night, but you'd think it wasn't cloudy everywhere, and if the moon was gone someone would miss it. That's been kind of bothering us. I think maybe the aliens found the bridge, and the Empire State Building,

and the Washington Monument enough work for one night, and they let the moon go until later. We'd like to know, but we figure it would be too dangerous to start calling the papers and the observatories to ask if the moon is still there.

Right now it's only four in the afternoon, but Blackie is already standing outside waiting for the moon to come up. I kind of think he'll be disappointed.

Sooner or later someone is bound to blame the aliens about this, so I hope you won't mind a few months in Mexico. And we might even have to go on to Brazil.

But you can blow the works on that trousseau, baby, and I'll be seeing you.

Loads of Love,

Spike



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