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ARTHUR H. CASH

The Think-Drive

Sophia had not been happy about the chastity vow, but George had convinced her it was for the best. He had pointed out that in a Think-Drive he could finish all his paper work by the time he reached Pittsburgh, take care of the correspondence, and still have an hour and a half to plan the sales. He would reach Chicago by one and be able to complete his calls that same day. Nothing was so valuable as time. But Sophia had drawn a long face and said that a Kibuc costs less and would do three hundred on the superpath. "It's not the speed, Love," George had answered. "It's the time. In a Kibuc I can't get any work done, but in a Think-Drive I can work all morning on the sales. I can't compete with Think-Drive salesmen." In the end he had won his point. Besides, when Tom Foster and Ronald Whittier, the very cream of the West Orange young set, bought Think-Drives, their wives had not been so all-fired upset. A man of thirty-five ought to be mature enough to take a chastity vow. Surely the finest transportation of the twenty-first century was not meant to be wasted on old men. And it was more than transportation. It was a great forward step in psychology. Man's lower nature, his own worst enemy, his subdiscursive thought, had been put into harness at last. If a chastity vow were needed for such an advance? Well, it was not easy, but it was elevating. It was a sacrifice to the progress of his era. George felt its nobility.

The Think-Drive swung smartly into a station marked in red neon, 'PSYCH-CHEK.' An orderly trotted out and began to polish the dome.

Arthur H. Cash has taught in the English departments at the Universities of Colorado, and New Mexico, and is currently at Colorado State University. He writes, "My plans are for scholarly study rather than fiction writing. I am interested in the history of the novel, especially in its relation to psychology and ethics. 'The Think-Drive' is an accident."

George slipped the cathodes off his head, got out of the Think-Drive, and went inside.

"Good morning," said the psychiatrist. "Can I do anything for you?"

"I would like to renew my safety sticker. I just got my Think-Drive, but it's been three months since I took the qualifying exam. Just want to be on the safe side. I'm taking my wife for a spin this morning."

"Well, that's wise," answered the psychiatrist. "The required six-months check is really only a minimum. The manufacturer says a quarterly check will give you the best service. This way, Sir."

George followed into the consultation room, sat down at the table, and began rapidly and confidently marking boxes in a test sheet. In three minutes he finished and settled back for the oral questions.

"Any iconistic dreams lately?"

"A few."

"What sort?"

"Type eighteen—spears and cups and platters and such."

"What'd you do about them?"

"Got up and took a drink of water."

The psychiatrist chuckled. "Yep, water's still the best cure ever. Any troubles while you're awake?"

"Well, I still have a gestalt for a pair of trim legs."

"Good answer," said the psychiatrist as he got up to take the examination from the grading machine. "Can't afford to kid yourself in a Think-Drive. Subdiscursive thought can blow up as easy as gasoline if you don't know what you're working with. Fine,"—glancing at the score—"you did fine on the exam." As he sat down to fill in the safety sticker, he handed George a card marked "Chastity Vow."

"But I signed one three months ago," said George.

"The manufacturer asks us to have each customer sign one, just in case. We send it in to Central. Of course, you don't have to. . . ." But George had signed and was going out the door. "Call again," the psychiatrist said.

George pasted the safety sticker on the dome. He slipped the cathodes onto his head, and the Think-Drive glided into the street.

Sophia was waiting on the porch as the Think-Drive pulled up. She came down the steps as the door swung open for her and slid into the other front seat. "It's so beautiful," she said, running her hand over the glass-tex cushion. "Where's the desk?"

"Just a minute." When the Think-Drive had turned into Ninety-

Eighth Street, a block from the house, George swiveled around his chair and unfolded the concealed desk behind.

"Don't you even watch the road?" Sophia asked nervously.

"Not on Ninety-Eighth Street, Love."

"But suppose . . ."

"Love, I know what I'm doing. All class A streets are guide-rayed for Think-Drives just like the superpath." And George went on showing her the desk behind, the telephone, the verbograph, the mathometer, and the rest of the equipment.

"It's certainly efficient," murmured Sophia.

As they approached the superpath ramp, the buzzer sounded and the dashboard flashed red. "Want to drop in on Ruth and Wayne?" asked George. "He's been thinking about a Think-Drive and might like a spin."

"Do we have time? Dinner is at seven."

"Back easily by then." The Think-Drive rolled up the ramp and turned north onto the superpath. It began to pick up speed. Sophia was visibly impressed.

"I just can't imagine how it works," she said.

"Well, women are not psychologically minded, Love," George answered. "You see, the Think-Drive represents the first conquest of subdiscursive thought. The short waves make it possible." Sophia looked blank. "Now you must remember Zublov's experiments, Love, that you studied in school." As soon as he had said it, he was sorry. Sophia's incompetence in psychology had become a dreadful complex, and George didn't like to hurt her. Not that Sophia was not bright. George had never thought that. She had been a literature major, and certainly it took a sort of keen intuition to understand literature. But literature was hardly training for life. George could not understand why a college should require only six hours of psychology.

"Anyway," he went on, "Zublov showed long ago that subdiscursive brain waves were short-length waves. Then the Silco Feed Company Laboratories found that these short waves could be classified and correlated with particular subdiscursive thoughts. From then on it was simple." George pulled a drawer out of the lower part of the dashboard. It contained an apparatus of small electronic tubes and intricate wiring. "This is the brain of the Think-Drive. The cathodes on my head pick up all short waves and transmit them to the brain. The brain translates them into momentum and direction, and the Think-Drive simply does what I think it should."

"I see," said Sophia. "But, George, when you are thinking about the sales—won't you get it confused?"

George laughed. "To operate a Think-Drive, you don't have to think about driving. Whenever you think about something, like about sales, you generate long waves, because thinking about things is at the discursive level. The cathodes won't pick up long waves at all. Only short ones."

"I don't understand," said Sophia

"Well, now look, Love," said George, trying hard to control his annoyance. "The Think-Drive operates on subdiscursive thoughts, the thoughts that are deep down in the mind because they're instinctive or are driven down by habit or something. You know how sometimes you drive the automobile to that old super-market? You go through a maze of stop lights and side streets, but often you do it without thinking about your driving at all. You think about Sally or the club or . . ."

"Or you," Sophia interposed, looking at the safety sticker.

"Or me. But you don't think about the driving. You've been driving long enough so that it's kind of an instinct. That's the sort of thinking the Think-Drive operates on."

George settled back to enjoy the freedom of the drive. The Think-Drive, at cruising speed, was moving along the elevated superpath above the houses of suburban New York at two-hundred and fifty miles an hour. George noticed appreciatively the expanse of sky beginning to tint red in the left edge of the dome.

"George," Sophia began again, "how can you use a desk that's behind you?"

"Quit worrying," George answered reassuringly. "Up here on the superpath or on a class A street like Ninety-Eighth you don't have to watch the road because it's guide-rayed for a Think-Drive. The ray does the watching. But here or anywhere, if the Think-Drive does need directions, it asks for them. The buzzer sounds and the red sign in the dashboard flashes on. Like back there when we came onto the superpath. The Think-Drive asked for directions because we hadn't decided whether to go north or south. As soon as I did decide, the Think-Drive picked up the decision and turned north."

"It's uncanny," said Sophia.

"No, Love. Just sound applied psychology."

George brightened up when, ten minutes later, they reached Ruth and Wayne's house in Salem. George always enjoyed talking psycho-dy-

namics with Wayne, and Ruth knew the rudiments of the science—enough, at least, for social chatter. When the men had gone for a spin, their wives went inside to mix the drinks.

“Wayne comes up for his Think-Drive qualifyings next month,” Ruth said as she opened the liquor chest. “He’s been on the list for over a year and can hardly wait.”

“Oh,” said Sophia.

“Why the ever-so-small ‘oh’? Aren’t you excited about having a Think-Drive?”

“Yes . . .” answered Sophia. “But the vow . . . Do you think that Wayne . . . ?”

“That Wayne can keep his chastity vow?” finished Ruth as she put a martini before her guest. “Won’t be any trouble for him. Or for me,” she added as she took a sip.

“Oh,” said Sophia.

“Do you mean . . . ?” They looked at one another. “Do you mean that George is not ready to take the vow? In that case . . .” She broke off, embarrassed but amused. “In that case, Darling, I’m sorry.”

The trip back was not a happy one. As soon as they turned onto the superpath, Sophia had demanded to know why he had to take a chastity vow. George did not find the explanation easy. “Well, you see, Love,” he began, “erotic thoughts are the one type that can’t be classified as short-wave or long-wave. For some reason the libido, if it gets a hold, infiltrates the entire mind and starts chaotically sending out waves of all lengths. You just can’t stop it once it starts. The Think-Drive knows what to do with normal short waves, but if it picks up erotic short waves it can’t turn them into momentum and direction. It gets dangerously confused. At two-hundred and fifty miles an hour you can’t take that chance. That’s why Uncle Sam only lets the highest type person operate a Think-Drive, the person who can exclude low-level . . .”

But it did no good. He could hear Sophia next to him sobbing softly. He swung his seat toward her and began another approach. “Look, Love, this vow is really a fine thing. It’s the highest sort of sacrifice to the ideal of . . .”

“Oh, my own dear Love,” wailed Sophia, pulling him to her to kiss his mouth.

He felt the jolt as the air brake slammed into the wheel drum. He wanted just to cling to Sophia, but he had to do something. He pulled away and hurriedly began to check the safty mechanisms. Sure enough,

they had lost a wheel. He could see it racing down the superpath ahead of them. Even in his panic he saw every detail of its course as it veered into the drain, then outward and jumped the guard rail. He didn't know what to do! He could see in the mirror that the cantilever had moved out behind to hold the Think-Drive in balance as it lost speed, but it couldn't hold up that bare axle after they slowed to a hundred. He didn't know what to do! Suddenly George saw the guard rail in front of them—then he couldn't see the rail or the superpath. The buzzer sounded, and across the dashboard flashed, in large red letters, 'THINK.'

