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Categorie concurs: *TEXT SPECIALIZAT*

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[The Participants

BURGEON : (The narrator.) A solicitor with philological interests.

HUNTER : A professor of historical theology and ethics.

RANGER: A young man employed at a rocket research station.

BRODIE : A professor of physical science.

SANDERSON: A retired schoolmaster.

UPWATER : A biologist engaged on research work.

DUNN: A linguistic philosopher.

BURROWS : A psychiatrist.]\*

**\*DO NOT TRANSLATE THIS SECTION! Its purpose is purely informative.**

He [Brodie] keeps very strictly to pure physics in his lectures, I'm told, reserving for his private hours his acquaintance with the more adventurous speculations of Heisenberg, Schrodinger, Planck and others.

'I'm minding what you said about cobblers, Mr. Ranger,' he began.

'Oh, do drop the "Mr." please, everyone! I blurted out.

'Very well,' he said, digesting this interruption as carefully as he would have digested some acute observation on the behaviour of anti-particles.

'I thought it was Christian names or nothing with the young people today. I'm minding what you say about cobblers, Ranger. I don't know how it may be with astronomy. I've had to keep my old nose down to physics mostly. If I got your drift rightly, the further you people go with your rockets and satellites and radio-telescopes, the clearer it all grows and the more you feel you know about the universe. So that you can clearly see away on to the time when you'll know everything, I'm just wondering whether it will work out like that at the tail.'

RANGER: No. Of course I don't think we shall ever know everything. There will always be a 'beyond'. But I'm pretty sure we shall know a lot of things we don't know now and pretty soon, too. Why should there be any doubt about it?

BRODIE : I'm just thinking of what's been going on among the physicists. The old Lord Chief Justice defined a specialist as 'a man who knows more and more about less and less'. But some among us are beginning to wonder if he isn't a man who knows less and less about less and less!

RANGER : Oh yes. I think I know what you mean. You can't make up your minds whether matter consists of waves or particles. And the particles don't behave as you'd expect them to. But surely that's the whole difference between physics and astronomy. Physics is always going for the smaller and smaller molecules atoms, electrons, nuclei and so on. But astronomy and astronautics goes out to the bigger and bigger. That's why it is such a relief. It's about time men gave up peering and took to travelling instead. There's nothing like travel for broadening the mind. If we do find something quite different from what we expected, well all the more interesting!

BRODIE : The question I put is, whether you will find anything at all!

RANGER: Oh come!

BRODIE : Or put it this way: you might find that your whole way of thinking about it all has to be abandoned !

RANGER : Yes. And pigs might fly.

BRODIE : No, said Brodie slowly, it's more possible than that. You may know that the physicists who are interested in such things draw a sharp line between what they call "classical" physics that is the science of physics as it was studied before the discovery of relativity and the rest of it, and modern physics you can call it "nuclear" physics if you like. Did you ever hear of Heisenberg?'

RANGER: Of course.

BRODIE : Did you know he said that a constant pursuit of classical physics forces a transformation in the very basis of physics? What if your astronomy turns out to be only a classical astronomy?

RANGER: Well?

BRODIE : Then the further you go, the more you'd cut away the ground from beneath all the ideas that took you there!

RANGER: In any case, it is only a speculation based on analogy. Why should astronomy be like physics?

HUNTER: I don't think that'll do. There's a good deal more than a mere analogy between astronomy and physics. You said just now, Ranger, that the mind of man woke up for the first time three or four hundred years ago. If it did (as to which we'll reserve judgment) the waking began precisely when they started assuming that the laws of physics applied to celestial phenomena. [3653 characters]