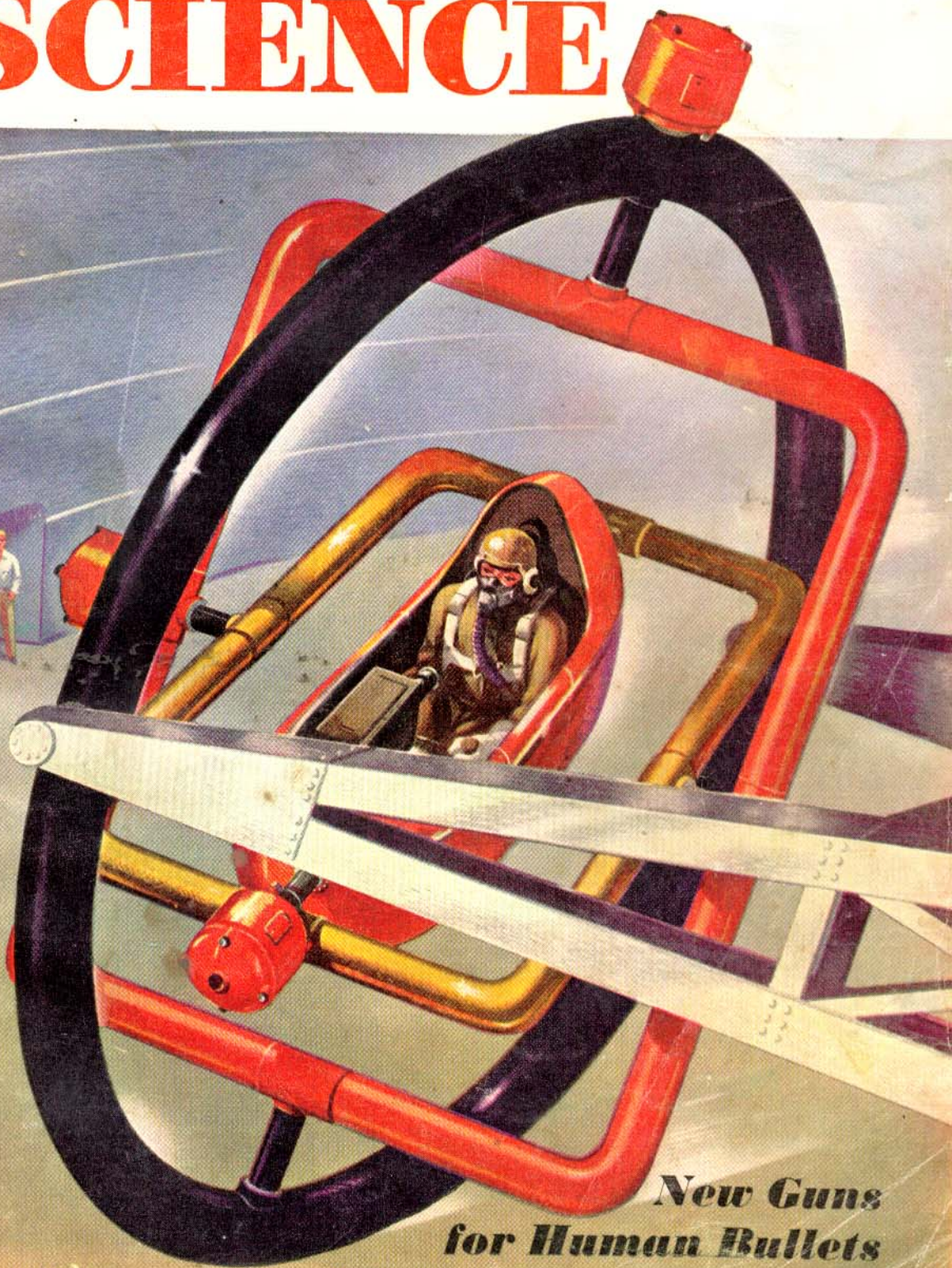


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**New Guns
for Human Bullets**

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LESTER
FIGANS



Gus Wilson

From the back of his car, Kiskum exhumed an easel, a canvas, and a palette, and went quickly to work.



and the Deepee

The little artist had no money, but he had a smooth tongue and a problem Gus knew how to solve.

By Martin Bunn

"HERE stands Kiskum." Mrs. Miller giggled, and Gus Wilson turned to stare at the man unexpectedly there beside them. They saw a little fellow dressed in paint-smear'd corduroy pants, a threadbare shirt—also paint-specked—and a

velvet ribbon that was twisted into a flaring bow around his neck.

"So what?" said Gus.

The visitor jabbed the end of a long index finger into his chest. "Kiskum—me! The lady will permit that I resume the chapeau?" He bowed in the direction of Mrs. Miller. Flashing a likable smile, he pulled on a



stained blue beret. "Here stands Kiskum. You, meestair?"

"My name's Wilson." Gus laughed.

Kiskum grabbed his hand and pumped it vigorously. "Pleestameetcha! You geeve me a wrench, heh?"

"Why should I give you a wrench?"

"I geeve heem back queek."

"Oh—that's different," Gus said. "What kind of wrench?"

"A munkey wrench." Kiskum's fast-moving hands measured off eight inches of air. "Like so."

Gus got him the tool. Kiskum bowed to Mrs. Miller and marched to the door.

"Such an *odd* character!" gushed Mrs. Miller.

Gus sadly surveyed the ruin that Mrs. Miller had made of a good automobile engine and got back to the diagnosis that Kiskum's arrival had interrupted. "I'm afraid you'll have to leave your car here till tomorrow," he announced.

Stan, who had gone outside, barged back into the shop. "That guy's got the floor boards up and he's taking off the cover of

his transmission—with our wrench! What'd'ya think of *that* for nerve!"

Gus laughed and went to the door. Mrs. Miller and Stan followed.

Muttering to himself, Kiskum was working on his car—an old one which had obviously had a hard life as well as a long one. He straightened up when he saw Gus. "I feex heem myself," he said hastily. "I got no kesh. I am a deepee."

"You're a what?" Gus demanded.

"A deepee," he repeated. "What you call a displeased person."

"Oh," Gus said sympathetically, "A displaced person. That's tough. Did the war—"

Kiskum shook his head violently. "It is not the war which has displeased me. It is my landlord. I got no kesh. He displeases me on the sidewalk. So!"

Gus smothered a grin. "That's tough, too. What are you going to do now?"

Kiskum's expressive hands sketched a wide gesture. "I trevel," he declared. "But my car it goes only in the slow motion." The man yanked at the gearshift lever. "He stick in the low gear. So!"

Gus nodded. "How long has the gearshift been stuck?"

Kiskum shrugged his shoulders. "Since I start to trelv this morning. Before that—two, three months."

"Do you mean to say," Gus demanded, "that you've been driving in low gear for two or or three months?"

"I feex heem," Kiskum explained, "but he don't stay that way. When he stick the first time, I go to the garage. The mechanic say my transmission got to be overhauled. I got kesh. I have it done. Two weeks more, he stick again. The mechanic say my transmission got to be—how you say it—rebushed. I got no kesh, so I drive in slow motion to the lot where I stand my car. I take off the transmission cover and look inside. When I put it back it works fine. But it sticks again. Every three times I drive I feex heem once."

Gus rubbed his chin. "I'll take a look."

"I got no kesh," Kiskum warned.

"I didn't say I'd fix it for you," Gus replied gruffly. "I just want to look."

It didn't take him long to find out what was wrong. The shifting rods were loose in the transmission case—the bushings in which they rested had worn sloppy. As a result, the end of the shift lever could climb out of its notch in one position. When this happened, both lever and rod jammed fast.

"It can be fixed," Gus told Kiskum, "but it would be rather expensive to do it properly."

"I got no kesh," Kiskum said glumly. His face brightened. "I propose to you a swap. You feex my car—I paint your peecture."

"An artist!" Mrs. Miller gurgled.

"I am what you call a helluvagood artist," Kiskum said with dignity. "I show you." He reached into the back of his car and yanked out large paintings and small ones which he propped in a row against the shop's wall. Mrs. Miller greeted each addition with a squeal of delight. He made a final trip to his car and came back with a portait of an unwholesome-looking old man with a cockeyed leer and a hobo beard. "My mesterpiece!" he told Gus proudly. "You feex my car, I paint you like heem. So?"

Gus had made up his mind that while this might be Art, he preferred the curvations nifties on the shop calendar. "No soap," he said with finality.

Mrs. Miller had been digging frantically into her recollections of six women's club lectures on art appreciation. Now she came

up with the word she had succeeded in remembering—she wasn't sure what it meant, but she isn't one to fuss about the meaning of a word so long as it sounds impressive. She gazed soulfully at the picture of the unprepossessing old man. "Beautiful—oh, beautiful!" she breathed. "What *chiaroscuro!*"

Kiskum went slowly over to her. "Madam permits?" Mrs. Miller giggled. He took her well-rounded cheeks between his palms and gently tilted her head. "Ah, yes—charming!" He turned briskly back to Gus. "You feex my car—I paint your lady. So?"

Highly delighted, Mrs. Miller started flustered explanations. Stan snickered. Gus grinned. "Well—O.K.," he said. "Help Stan push your bus into the shop."

Kiskum did. Then from the back seat he exhumed an easel, a canvas, and a palette. With the businesslike air of a man whose time is valuable he carried the shop's only chair over to a window, posed Mrs. Miller in it, and went to work.

So did Gus. He started by lighting his pipe while he stared thoughtfully at the exposed transmission. Then he drew out the gearshift lever and examined both the pivot ball and the end that engaged the notches in the shifting rods. "Seems to me," he told Stan, "all we have to do is get the lever to ride about three thirty-seconds lower."

"Sure," Stan assented. "All you have to do is weld on that much metal, grind it to the right shape, and case-harden it."

"Is that the only fix you can think of, son?" Gus asked.

"Heck, no! We could put in a new transmission or rebush the old one," here he lowered his voice to make sure it wouldn't carry beyond Gus's ears, "but I don't think Mrs. Miller's picture'll be worth that much to you—except maybe to hide a hole in the wall!"

His employer laughed and shook his head. "Try again, youngster. You're missing at least two good bets."

Stan pursed his lips, squinted, and assumed an expression of deep concentration. "Well, if you could take three thirty-seconds off the bell bottom—"

"Now you're getting there," Gus assented. "And you wouldn't even have to take off that much." He peeled off the gasket and measured its thickness. "One thirty-second. You'd only have to take off another sixteenth if you left out the gasket."

Stan nodded vigorously. "That's pretty neat, boss. Want me to do it?"

"Pretty optimistic, aren't you? It's no cinch to chuck that housing in the lathe."

"But you said. . ."

"I said that was one way. There's an easier way still."

"O.K." Stan let his shoulders slump with a defeated air. "I give up. You tell me."

"The pivot, of course. Take off the right amount of metal from the bottom of the pivot ball, and the lever will move down. Let's go."

With Stan watching, Gus applied a blowtorch to the bend of the shift lever, straightened it, chucked it in the lathe, and carefully turned a fraction of an inch off the ball. Then he rebent the lever.

"That should do it," he said. "You carry on, Stan."

Leaving Stan to his job, Gus walked across the shop. Kiskum looked up, "You feex my car?"

"It'll be ready to roll in a minute."

The artist brushed in a dozen swift strokes. "Completed—done!" He jumped up and bowed to Mrs. Miller. Almost before Stan could replace the floor boards, he had tossed his equipment into the car, hopped in after it, started the engine, and shifted gears. "Ah! I am out of the slow motion! Now I travel!" The old engine roared; he waved his hand and drove out.

Mrs. Miller hurried over to look at her portrait. Her figure is generously upholstered, and Kiskum's brush had painted what his eyes had seen. From the canvas a fat, goggle-eyed woman stared back at Mrs. Miller. Her face reddened with rage. "I don't look like *that!*" she shrieked. Then she tried to smile. "Only, of course, it's Art! I'll hang it in the living room—yes, over the fireplace." Doubt assailed her again. "But I *don't* know what Henry will say!"

She floundered out, taking the still-wet picture.

"I know what Henry'll say," Stan suggested, "When does the balloon go up?—that's what! Lookit here, boss—I don't get it, the way we fixed that gearshift. We never did the job that way before."

"That's right—we didn't," Gus admitted, "but we never did the job on a car that was as badly treated as that one. A dentist doesn't put a gold inlay in a tooth he's going to yank. Kiskum's car has another year or two at most, so we gave him a quick, cheap, easy job that will work fine for at least that long. We saved time and money, Kiskum got a job that's plenty good enough, and Mrs. Miller got a portrait that's so much like her it hurts. You figure out who got the worst of the deal." END

For Other Useful Auto Hints From the Model Garage, Turn the Page.

