

Collectomometer



Bob clambered onto the roof of the ultra-sleek Buick Decapod, slipped his shoes into the foot locking mechanism to steady himself, then aimed his Sears Deluxe Hydrogen Ion Collector at the sun as it sank towards the western horizon. “OK, I’ve got target in my sights and am ready to initiate hydrogen pick-up,” he said. “Can you hear me down there, Ned?” His partner slid over to the passenger seat and picked up the phone. “Roger on that, Bob. You’re coming in loud and clear.” He turned a knob on the control panel. “I’m activating the Collectomometer *now*.” A shrill whistle enveloped the car’s cockpit, and Ned flung open the door to let the noise out. The whole car yawed, and Bob had to lock his knees to stay upright. “Easy there, Ned. I almost dropped the dang DHIC!” But Ned didn’t hear him. He was suddenly aware of a voice emanating from the telephone receiver, a voice that he hadn’t heard since the Army Intelligence dentist had removed all those fillings in his molars last year – a voice that now instructed him to slide back over to the driver’s side of the car, turn on the ignition, and floor the accelerator pedal. Which he did. The Decapod hit the low retaining wall with such force that Bob was catapulted over the precipice. “Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaab!” he said, the Doppler effect modulating the pitch of his protest as he fell hundreds of feet to an unwelcome prospect below. The Deluxe Hydrogen Ion Collector, however, hung in midair, so powerful was its connection to the sun’s rays. Hundreds of hydrogen ions, sparkling with unbridled energy, streamed into its maw, then continued on to the Collectomometer in the Buick. The intake was fast and furious, and Ned should have been monitoring it, but he was aware of only the disembodied voice that continued to urge him to drive the car over the cliff. The Collectomometer, however, had other ideas. The growing mass of ions soon overwhelmed its storage tank, and it began to hemorrhage hydrogen, in the process turning an unhealthy shade of blue, then orange, then puce. The air around the car followed suit. And, after another minute, so, unfortunately, did Ned.