

The Choice by Wayland Young

Before Williams went into the future, he bought a camera and a tape-recording machine and learned shorthand [a method for taking notes quickly]. That night, when all was ready, we made coffee and put out brandy and glasses against his return.

"Good-by," I said. "Don't stay too long."

"I won't," he answered.

I watched him carefully, and he hardly flickered. He must have made a perfect landing on the very second he had taken off from. He seemed not a day older; we had expected he might spend several years away.

"Well?"

"Well," he said, "let's have some coffee."

I poured it out, hardly able to contain my impatience. As I gave it to him, I said again, "Well?"

"Well, the thing is, I can't remember."

"Can't remember? Not a thing?"

He thought for a moment and answered sadly, "Not a thing."

"But your notes? The camera? The recording-machine?"

The notebook was empty, the indicator on the camera rested at 1 where we had set it, and the tape was not even loaded into the recording-machine.

"But good heavens," I protested, "Why? How did it happen? Can you remember nothing at all?"

"I can remember only one thing."

"What was that?"

"I was shown everything, and I was given the choice whether I should remember it or not after I got back."

"And you chose not to? But what an extraordinary thing to . . ."

"Isn't it?" he said. "One can't help wondering why."