

## JONATHON HEDWIN WHITE

The most dangerous person in the world was Jon H. White.

Mass murderers have always fascinated people, but there is a penchant for pouring over the grisly details of their acts. It is more important – and more interesting – to look at the psychology of such individuals. For without motivation, the mechanical means of mass murder would be merely so much junk, and nobody would die.

Regrettably, there are shards of insanity in many of us. As we delve into the case of J.H.W., you may possibly find yourself looking back over the shoulder of your own psyche. Do not worry – this is perfectly normal.

At the time of which we speak, White was in middle-age, a tall man but with a stoop due to long periods of study and an aversion to physical exercise. His hair had once been yellow, but was now faded to grey. There was still enough of it to fall over his washy blue eyes, from where he pushed it back with long fingers terminated by dirty, overlong nails. He was not a person who put much credence in cleanliness, and in periods of stress had a habit of picking his nose. In an effort to curtail this activity, his mother had once warned him that continued attention to his nostrils would result in his nose taking on the appearance of that of a pig, which it did. With fleshy wax-like lips and a scrawny neck, the upper portion of White's body was not attractive. Neither was the lower portion, which included a concave chest and shuffling, over-large feet. In fact, the only reasonable part of his cadaverous form was his waist, which was trim enough to support a military belt, from which he liked to hang a repeating rifle.

Of White's history, only little is of interest. He attended an all-male school, where by dint of unremitting study he obtained the top academic standing and was automatically designated Top Boy. It is symptomatic of his narcissistic character that he used this to justify a place on the front row at the annual school picture, where he sat beside a weak-willed Principal who would have been better advised to give the boy a kick in the arse. It was at this morally rotten school that his mates coined his nick-name *M & M*, referring to the two things in which he excelled: mathematics and masturbation.

At University, White entered what was known as the 'nerd stream', and studied mathematics and physics. His nick-name followed him from school, by virtue of another boy

who made the transition between the same two institutions and whose name was Maglington. The latter was a sociable fellow, who kept a small dog in his rooms. Maglington, who was studying geography, once remarked that White had “no more moral strength than a wet noodle.” This may or may not have been correct; but next day the owner found his dog nailed to his door.

At the Institute of Physics, Jonathon Hedwin White finally encountered people with academic skills the equal of his own but who could not be bullied. In fact, White’s first attempt to put down one of his fellow academicians resulted in a peremptory punch in the nose, which thereafter resembled even more that of a pig. This response came as a surprise to White, and there is no record of any reprisal against the other person involved.

Also about this time, White became interested in girls. This might, in a less introverted soul, have presented a route to salvation; since as many men have discovered, women will put up with any number of character flaws so long as there is some prospect of love. In White’s case, the female road to normalcy was unfortunately cut off quite soon, because none of the seven girls he asked out would take the chance. The male theoretical physicist had by now quite a reputation in things academic, but still no sense of things practical. He had drawn up a list of females to approach, based on the premise that his own I.Q. would find a response in (at least) one of the female members of the Institute. He was so sure of this hypothesis that he was baffled when it utterly failed. He was particularly puzzled when he was declined by number seven on his list – the librarian at the Institute, whom he regarded anyway as not really an academic, and had only added as a remote stop-gap because she had large breasts. This librarian, whose name was Molly Quadron, felt vaguely sorry for Jon White; but her experience told her not to consider him even as a one-time date. She had worked at a mill in order to put herself through college, gotten casually pregnant in her last year and decided on an abortion which had caused her major depression, obtained her degree and a job, and was now secretly sleeping with the Institute’s head gardener, whom she was trying to turn into a husband. She had been surprised when the physicist White had asked her out; but as she put it: “I’d rather be seen dead in a ditch with a lamp-post.” Whatever this meant is obscure, but her female friends found it amusing, and made mental notes to decline White if he should ever come asking for dalliance. As for the man himself, he retreated to his apartment, confused and resentful. There was something here which he did not get. Or in his interpretation, something which the *girls* did not get. He slouched around his room for several days, working on quantum field theory and playing with his penis.

When, on emerging, he overheard a passing remark to the effect that Molly Quadron was to be married to the head gardener, he felt both shamed and angry. Impotent, he sneaked out that night and deliberately trampled some tulips.

Telekinetics was a big corporation with a small pure-research group headed by a spinster of indeterminate age called Gwenyth Garris. Maybe she saw something in the sexually-repressed Jonathon White to which she could relate. Anyway, she hired him and he became one of Gwen's 'bright boys'. It was at Telekinetics that Jonathon Hedwin White was one day to obtain access to the technological equipment which – in conjunction with his own metal abilities – would put him into a position where he could change the world. It is therefore important to understand what happened at Telekinetics over the period of White's tenure. Please appreciate that the following comments are not intended as an *apology* for the corporation, but rather an account of events which led up to W day.

Gwen Garris was a nice person, whose major fault was that she tried to minimize or cover up bad things. For example, during the introductory talk to the new group of hires (of whom White was one), her necklace of amber beads broke, showering the hardwood floor of the auditorium with bouncing brown baubles. A more self-confident lecturer might have exclaimed "Oh, shit!" and kicked the offending gems into a corner before resuming the talk. But Gwenyth tried to act as if nothing had happened, plucking up the stones one by one and stowing them in her meagre cleavage, while attempting to keep her knees together to preclude the view of the mainly male audience up the space between her innocent thighs. History might conceivably have taken a different course, had Gwen Garris been a confident woman who wore pants. As it was, Jonathon had a view of palpitating pale thighs up a maidenish skirt, which reawakened old lusts and the memories of bygone insults. In some people, perceived slights do not disappear with time, but merely accumulate, to form a burden which is destined for ruction.

With the dozen new recruits, the Garris group numbered around fifty. They were all theoreticians, with backgrounds in physics, chemistry, electronics and mathematics. There were also a couple of astronomers, thrown in for good measure. As it happened, the latter two members of the research group at Telekinetics were both female. Their concerns about White during his period with the company are now available as declassified documents. Both girls detested White. Though his chronological age was in the 30's, his attitude towards the other gender was typical of a 14-year-old. However, it would be a mistake to assume that the man's

problems had only to do with sex (or the lack thereof). The records show White was significantly upset by the death of his mother. That harridan had supported her son financially throughout his life; but her passing revealed an essentially worthless estate, which obliged White to remain at Telekinetics just in order to make a living, a situation which turned up the temperature on his resentment against society.

Of White's father, little is known. The single-family house was sold in anticipation of the parents moving into a condominium when Jonathon left to attend University. However, the father apparently decamped with the proceeds of the sale plus the pretty, plastic-smiled real estate agent.

At Telekinetics, White junior made many novel contributions to science and caused even more arguments of a social kind. It is a strange fact, that people will put up with more insults from an individual, the more the latter is perceived as academically gifted. This topic is, however, more suited to the pages of a Ph.D. thesis than the present journalistic account. Here let us merely record the main factors which led up to White Day.

Scientifically, White helped solve two of the major problems with the teleportation of objects from one point in space to another. These were: *first*, the massive energy cost; and *second*, the loss of coherence between source and destination. These problems are illustrated in the declassified briefing notes of an experiment which involved Gwen's 'bright boys' and the corresponding practical team known as Ronald's 'wrenches'. A refrigerator was decomposed atom by atom into wave functions, sent from the laboratory at Telekinetics to the intersection of Main Street and Union Boulevard in the local town, and reconstructed. Unfortunately, the town was plunged into black-out, and the door of the refrigerator materialized half-way across the sidewalk from the freezer. The latter example of decoherence explained why nobody at Telekinetics wished to try the experiment on themselves, despite the obvious commercial appeal of personal teleportation.

Sociologically, White's character was a desert of emotions, broken here and there by poisoned oases of turpitude. He lacked for example, any discernible sense of humour. Most people possess *some* appreciation of humour, though there are wide variations in type and amplitude. Jonathon W. appeared to have no sense of the concept of silliness. He was once asked, at the end of the company's annual party. "How many theoretical physicists are needed to install a light bulb?" (The neanderthatic nature of this joke attests to the dreary nature of year-

end company parties.) White was stumped for an answer; which was supposed to be something like: “Half-a-dozen, with one to hold the bulb and five to argue whether it has a right-hand or left-hand screw.” Looking puzzled, he said, “That makes no sense. I’ve got fluorescent strip lights.” There is something about this response which attests not only to a lack of humour but also to a surfeit of self-importance. White’s conceit was also evident in his disregard for the feelings of his fellows. Who would not be repulsed – even at a boring party – by an individual who picked his nose and surreptitiously mixed the fruit of his nostrils with cream cake before gulping down the combination?

This kind of disregard for his colleagues was particularly pointed when it came to women. The two female astronomers who were attached to the Garris group were pleasant girls, unphased by their peripheral status at Telekinetics. It did not really matter to them that teleportation over planetary distances was an intangible goal – though one of potential significance. They were happy to work out parallaxes against the possibility of a future experiment, while in the meantime dating the male members of Ronald McLewan’s group of engineers. There was, naturally, a friendly rivalry between the thinkers of Gwen’s ‘bright boys’ and the workers of Ronald’s ‘wrenches’. It was a productive tension, resulting in a counterplay of research which kept both groups focussed on what Telekinetics wanted: a practical means of teleportation. Unfortunately, while White contributed more than his fair share of brilliant ideas to this aim, he also acted to thwart it by an excess of antisocial behaviour. Events came to a crisis one weekend in spring.

The Telekinetics complex is situated on the edge of town, and is surrounded by gardens and small groves of trees. The sap was rising in the latter, and what may have passed for the same process appeared to have afflicted White one sunlight-filled evening. He had already checked out the academic affiliations of the two girls, hoping to find that their refusal to go on dates with him was correlated with a lack of academic standing. Disappointed, he found that both girls had published several erudite papers, and were both Fellows of the Astronomical League. The A.L. was not a trivial organization. Indeed, it was on par with the P.L. – the Physical League – to which White had been elected a Fellow after a process that could only be termed cantankerous. White, blinkered by academic matters, could not understand why the two girls had refused his repeated advances. He decided to renew his attack, using a pictorial approach. This was suggested to him by the emblem of the Astronomical League, which was a

large sky-pointing telescope flanked by two wheel-like supporting mechanisms. On his computer, he proceeded to alter this image. The telescope became a penis, and the wheels became testicles.

White sent the image to the girls at about dinner time, with an invitation for them to visit him in his apartment at midnight. (He seemed to assume that they, like him, had nothing better to do on a weekend evening in spring.) White was proud of his computer-assisted picture. The saggy testicles were resplendent with hairs, and the taut penis shed a life-like globule of semen.

The physicist lay down on his bed, awaiting midnight. A habitual night-owl, he filled in the time by re-reading one of his own papers, *The Deconstruction, Transfer and Reconstruction of Wave Functions, with Possible Applications to the Teleportation of Real Objects*. As midnight approached, his mind wandered from the algebra of quantum mechanics to the practical usage of two girls in a bed...

Midnight arrived.

There was a knock.

White, dressed in a night-gown, opened the door to find two beefy security guards.

The next day there was a high-level meeting between Gwenyth Garris, Ronald McLewan and the Director of Personnel, Roger Strange. The last's name had nothing to do with its bearer being odd. Rather the name was a linguistic throw-back to an era where it meant "strong". Living up to this, the Director of Personnel started the meeting with a bluff statement: "Have you got anything to say as to why I shouldn't fire this misfit?" Strange was technically in control of all the personnel at Telekinetics, whose production and marketing divisions greatly outnumbered the research and engineering ones, so he was understandably offhand about White. There followed a long discussion. Gwen Garris, who valued White's ideas, had thoughtfully asked for the assistance of Ron McLewan, whose practical work benefited from the insights of the "misfit." At the end of an exchange of views which encompassed everything from the Big Bang to a portable refrigerator, Strange went quiet. Then he pronounced: "You can keep him til the end of his contract. But if he does anything else stupid, he's out. *Also*, for the interim, he's on probation, and has to meet with Gwen at least once a week, so we know if he's got any more weird ideas up his cranium."

Gwen Garris, coming away from the meeting, looked deeply troubled. Ron McLewan tried to lift her gloom, noting that she had won a reprieve for one of her 'bright boys'. He even

went so far as to put an arm around her thin shoulders. But the woman was worried. “Putting White on probation is only going to make him worse,” she predicted.

This prophecy was eventually to be proved accurate.

There followed, however, a hiatus during which White was oddly quiet. He did not, for example, pester the two female astronomers any more. As it later transpired, his apparent lack of interest in inter-office sex was due to his discovery of a part-time prostitute in town who called herself Flamingo. Certainly, she had long, thin legs and spindly arms; and some of her less appreciative customers, referring to her nose, called her “Honker”. We cannot be sure, but it may be that these beings on the edge of normal society found some mutual solace in their nasal attributes.

For a while, Flamingo with her honker and White with his pig’s nose got along, albeit they only saw each other twice a week. But eventually their relationship foundered on two of the rocks which have fractured even traditional marriages: money and philosophy. The money issue was trite. White was a lousy and inept lover, in addition to being a cheapster. But as a regular visitor, he came to believe that he deserved a rebate, something which the lady was not willing to grant, since as she put it “I do all the work anyway.” The philosophy issue was more complicated. White was an exceptional physicist, but could not understand that the local hooker was indifferent to his latest research on quantum mechanics. He stormed out one evening, omitting payment but leaving a paper on wave functions instead.

Fuming in his apartment back at Telekinetics, White set about putting the results of his researches into a new order. It was as if he was marshalling his equations to fight some academic war.

A short calculation, found afterwards, showed how its author had prescribed the events of White Day. Unlike the massive files of teleportation physics, the note about their application to people was on a scrap of paper, written in an unpracticed, spidery scrawl:

*Let there be  $n$  steps. Assume decade agents and a total population of 10 billion. Then  $10^n = 10 \times 10^9$  implies  $n=10$ . Neat! Can count on fingers. According to R. McCrap’s data, assume each step takes 10 seconds. Then total time is  $10 \times 10$  seconds – a bit under two minutes. They won’t know what hit them!*

This time estimate, and other factors, have led some analysts to draw a parallel between White Day and the day which saw the end of the Second World War. In that case, a great

military establishment led to one man dropping an atomic bomb the size of a car battery on a city; killing directly (by the explosion) and indirectly (by radiation damage) something of the order of a million people. The time of the falling bomb in the air was of the order of minutes. In the case of White Day, a great science organization led to one man, being in possession of a compact device which by an unforeseen application made it possible to kill billions in short order.

The question of *how* White was able to act is, however, much easier to answer than the *why* of it. This is because, while reams of analysis exists on the man, little is actually known of him. In fact, what you have read above is a compact version of almost everything in the public record. He left us no accounts of teenage angst, no records of a troubled twenties, and no note explaining what was in his mind as he approached his fortieth birthday. Various comparisons have been made between White and other despots who have attained notoriety by their evil actions. Much of this didacture involves military people, such as Ghengis Khan, Attila the Hun, Napoleon Bonaparte, Joseph Stalin, Adolph Hitler and that most recent of villains Abdullah Alright. However, apart from his habit of hanging a rifle from his belt beneath a raincoat, White showed little propensity for things military. An objective analyst might focus less on his rifle than on the dirty raincoat used to conceal it. This because there is one (unsubstantiated but reliable) account of White using his raincoat in the traditional flasher mode, to reveal his sex organs to an unsuspecting child.

Cutting away the superfluous speculation of psychologists, there are only a few plausible reasons for why White did what he did. There are pros (and cons) for all of these. Thus:

- (a) He did it for money (though there is no record of any payment).
- (b) He did it an attempt to reduce the world's over-population problem (though he did not otherwise care about the people of the planet).
- (c) He only *planned* to do it, and events got out of control (a possibility, though he had previously shown no forbearance in his other egocentric acts).
- (d) He did it as a means of getting his name recorded in history as the most famous murderer of all time (along the lines of Lee Harvey Oswald's assassination of John Kennedy and that man's version of democracy, Pol Pot's extermination of his subjects to form pyramids of their skulls, and Abdullah Alright's decapitation of 365 members of his parliament and the subsequent use of their heads as a day calendar).

(e) He did it because he just hated people.

This writer believes – insofar as it is possible to give a logical explanation for White’s actions – that the last reason is the most plausible. However, you (the long-suffering reader) are of course free to make your own judgment, after we review the happenings of White Day.

The stage-managed woods which surrounded the buildings of Telekinetics Incorporated were lashed with rain that morning. The coppice outside White’s window alternated between dark green and watery silver, depending on how the wind shepherded the leaves. Over the horizon of subdued hills there struggled a lacklustre sun.

It was a suitably miserable day.

Jon White – whose soul had never been uplifted by a ray of sunlight anyway – ignored the weather and rolled out of his dirty bed. Feeling under it, he pulled out his rifle. The chamber showed ten bullets, which were actually mini-bombs, each capable of great destruction. He repeated to himself “They won’t know what hit them!”

The room was cool, so he drew a dressing gown over his naked form, noting with satisfaction that he had a small erection. He put the rifle on the table, and from a drawer drew a box of ammunition. The rifle was actually capable of carrying eleven bullets in its breach, if they were squeezed in. He lifted one of the small torpedoes, but decided against trying to force it into the weapon: he did not wish to take the risk of a mechanical malfunction; and in any event there was something appealing about the powers-of-ten strategy he had planned. He dropped the extra round of ammunition into the pocket of his dressing gown.

In the bathroom, he peered into the mirror, undecided whether to shave. Behind him, the shower gave off a faint musty smell – the olfactory signature of neglect. Studying his face, he noted that his habitual weak growth had only produced a surface stubble on his chin. As well, shaving would necessitate maneuvering around the spots which had plagued him since youth. He decided against, and merely splashed some water into his pale eyes.

Donning his raincoat over the dressing gown, he exited his apartment, leaving the rifle on the desk inside the locked room. It was quiet in the corridor. This was the first day of a long weekend, and many of the other tenants had left on mini-vacations. Also, as he was reminded when he emerged into the damp dawn air, it was still early.

Scowling against the rain, White walked quickly to the nearest entrance of the Telekinetics building. Inside, he walked even further along deserted corridors, before stopping at the door of the laboratory complex occupied by Ronald McLewan's 'wrenches'. Using a code pilfered from one of the engineers at the company's year-end party, the 'bright boy' entered the complex which housed the teleportation equipment.

Ozone tingled his nostrils. Slightly excited by the alien nature of the place, White paused and rehearsed the line he would tell if he were discovered: delivering a new calculation on the transmission of objects around the world which needed practical verification. He felt the reassuring equation-filled foil in the pocket of his dressing gown, by the side of the bullet. The excuse was plausible, and without the rifle, he could pass as an innocent, over-eager geek.

Which, of course, he was not. In fact, his planning was meticulous. He rapidly located the room which housed the latest version of the Teleporter; and in an hour, his sharp theoretician's brain had absorbed every aspect of the practical side of the machine. It was a gigantic thing – rearing up to the ceiling where it ended in a shiny dome, this above a refrigerator-sized cavity that sat on top of a neutrino generator, the whole shrouded in sensors and wires. It was an impressive invention. To a liberal-arts scholar, its bald head and tangled leads might have suggested a modern Medusa, whose snakey locks had been the victim of an inept barber.

But to Jon White, the Teleporter was merely a machine. One he could control. A convenient experiment he could use to enable extermination.

Certain that he understood the practical side of his mission, White left the laboratory and headed back to his apartment. He made no effort to wipe his fingerprints from the various levers he had handled. Likewise, he did not clean up the DNA-carrying mucus from the control panel of the Teleporter, where he had sneezed on it.

Paul Tibbets – the pilot of the plane which dropped the atomic bomb that ended the Second World War – might have been uncertain as to whether his cargo would function or not.

Jonathon Hedwin White – by comparison – was sure that his scheme would work, and that there would be no need for a forensic follow-up to his planetary fratricide.

In his apartment, White picked up the rifle and checked it carefully. Though of modern construction, it still had considerable mass. This would require the use of significant energy, but his research had shown how this problem could be solved. The other result of his theoretical

labours – the problem of lack of coherence of a teletransported image – he also knew how to circumvent, by a fine-tuning of the Teleporter. Also, the rifle was of relatively simple design, so that its reduction to hologramatic wave functions would be easy. The same comment applied to the transponder. This device was a modified version of the one many people bought at their local electronics store, designed to direct power from one room to another in the typical energy-efficient home. Using his long and dexterous fingers, White bound tape around the transponder and the barrel of the rifle. Then he used the heat from the apartment's food-preparation unit to fuse the two things. The result looked like a gun with an overly large telescopic sight. Hefting this hybrid weapon, White knew that if there were to be a hitch in the teleportation process, it would not lie in the rifle but rather in the more intricate challenge of projecting his own body around the globe.

White left his apartment, re-checking in his mind the calculations he had performed on the computer about the teleportation of human bodies. He was certain that his equations predicted coherent imagery; but even if by some quirk this failed, his own body here at Telekinetics would be unscathed. In fact, his calculations would – if they had ever come into the possession of Telekinetics Incorporated – have secured his future there. For he had essentially side-stepped the technical problems of teleportation by the brilliant device of sending a *copy* of the subject, not the thing itself. This is why Jonathon White was sure that his own body would be unharmed in the experiment he was about to perform.

He was thinking about the theoretical problems he had overcome when he ran – totally unprepared – into a practical one: Gwentyth Garris appeared around the corner of the building.

The rain had abated, but was still strong enough that both individuals were walking with bowed heads. White saw Garris coming, and stopped, uncertain what to do. The woman, however, did not look up. The result was a collision that sent the female sprawling onto the gravel of the sidewalk.

White was suddenly seized with panic. His plan was based on the assumption that nobody would be around this early on the start of a three-day break. It had not occurred to him that employees like Gwen Garris – who had few friends and were dedicated to their jobs – might turn up to finish outstanding work. What to do?

The woman – confused – started to scramble to her feet. As she did so, she showed again the view between pale thighs which White had experienced several years before, when her necklace had broken and she was intent on recovering both it and her innocence.

The man – also confused – felt a physical tumescence between his legs which fought with a cautioning mental clangour.

It was (again) one of those occasions when an apt phrase from Gwen Garris might have eased the situation into insignificance. Unfortunately, she looked up, saw Jon White, and became scared. The blood drained from her face in some automatic response to his history and reputation. She stuttered “Oh! It’s *you*...”

White heard the fear in her brittle voice, and simultaneously realized what a threat Garris was to his mission. He opened his raincoat and unhooked the rifle from its belt. His penis poked errantly from between the folds of his dressing gown. It was a question of which would shoot first.

The rifle spoke, and Gwenyth Garris dissolved into a biological mess.

Leaving the woman’s blood to spread in the steady rain, the man turned and marched with determination to the Telekinetics building.

*Accelerate*, he thought.

The project was too important to be derailed by the discovery of a corpse, or the arrival of yet another early worker.

White fumbled at the door of the laboratory which housed the Teleporter. *Nerves*, he reasoned. *Shut them down*.

In front of the machine, now calmer, he set the controls. “All I need,” he muttered aloud to himself, “is two minutes.”

He began to clamber into the compartment of the device which held the object to be copied. Already, there was a deep hum that reverberated from the smooth walls of the laboratory: the klystron building energy for the first transmission.

Suddenly, he stopped, thinking.

Then he climbed out of the Teleporter’s cubicle. Opening the breech of the rifle, he looked at the nine slugs which remained after the destruction of Gwen Garris. *No good*, he thought. *Spoils the pattern*.

Rummaging in his pockets, he found the extra mini-bomb. Shoving it into the rifle's energy chamber, he felt a renewed focus. The fates were on his side. *Ten times ten times...*

He climbed back into the chamber, his head bent and the rifle stowed between his concertinaed legs. Closing the door, it stuck on the hem of his raincoat. "Damm!"

There was not much time. Preprogrammed, the Teleporter's energy source was thrumming, beating in his intestines with steady insistency. Overhead, a faint blue light surrounded the shiny dome of the device, shedding superfluous energy as it prepared to discharge its main power around the globe.

White dragged the blocking bit of his raincoat into the cubicle, and slammed the door. Somewhere, a siren started to wail – warning of a massive power drain.

Then... ZAP!

In Times Square, New York, a copy of White appeared from nothing, complete with dirty raincoat and rifle. In that crowded thoroughfare, his ten shots easily found ten victims, and ten people died.

Precisely ten seconds after the first White, ten others materialized. Some of these were near to the original, while others were more remote. All had ten rounds in their rifles. A hundred gunshots produced almost as many casualties.

The wave of death spread out inexorably, like the wave which had originated in the first atomic bomb to be used on people. But unlike that, the new wave did not diminish with distance. Fueled by new apparitions of Jon White, the teleportation wave forged across the continent. Until it met the Chicago wave, coming from the opposite direction. These two crests coalesced, and with combined force spread outwards with even greater strength. Eventually, they met the wave of death-dealing Whites propagating from Los Angeles, and again there was a joining...

Bubbles plus bubbles makes bubbles. This was a new kind of war, waged with the fizzy generals of Coca Cola and Pepsi Cola. And it was a *fast* war.

In Tiananmen Square, Beijing, the first White to appear was so ethnically strange that the Chinese looked on – stupefied – while the apparition killed the standard ten people. The next generation of Whites appeared and did their deeds before the government had time to blame the

West. The Beijing wave met the Shanghai wave, and soon the most populous country in the world was being decimated. Inside of two minutes, China's population problem was history.

In Trafalgar Square, London, things went less smoothly. The first White to materialize did so on the edge of one of the famous fountains, where a startled but gutsy kid pushed it into the water. The discombobulated copy floundered for a while, cursing the fact that the original had never learned to swim. In the meantime, the child's minder – who by chance was an army reservist earning extra weekend money through babysitting – grabbed the rifle and clubbed White on the head with it. There followed a furious fight. The girl had basic combat training, and the kid had teeth – which it sank into White's left ear. The thrashing in the fountain alerted one of the policemen who habitually hang around the Square. He arrived as the exhausted girl gave a last kick to the groin of the nearly-unconscious White. The policeman said "What's all this, then?" However, a second White had materialized ten seconds after the first on the steps of the National Gallery. He callously shot the policeman, the babysitter and the child.

England, uninvaded since the Battle of Hastings in the year 1066, was doomed ...

Jonathan Hedwin White, when he staggered out of the Teleportation unit in the laboratories of Telekinetics Incorporated, did not really know if his crusade had been a success or a failure.

All he knew for sure was that he felt very sick, with a stomach which seemed to be pressing up into his mouth.

Along the sidewalk between the company building and the one in which his apartment was located, he came across the remains of Gwenyth Garris. As if the bloody corpse was taking what revenge it could muster, it caused Jonathon White to throw up.

Leaving behind the mess of vomit-covered entrails, White lurched along the path. Somehow he got the outer door of the building open, crawled up the stairs, and entered his own place. He collapsed onto his bed, breathing heavily through stinking lips.

After a while, he was startled by an authoritative knock at the door of the apartment.

Sighing with self-pity, White slid out of his smelly bed and lurched over to the entrance.

He opened the door, and saw...a copy of himself.

White was raising a hand in protest, when his doppelganger shot him through the heart with the ten-billionth bullet.