

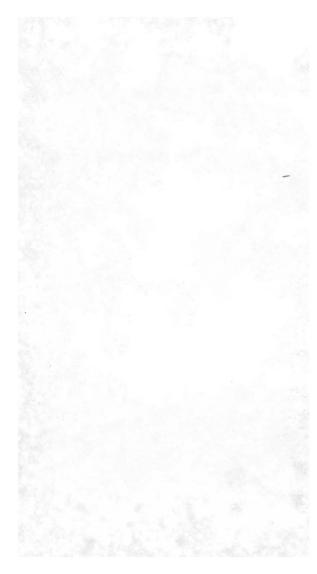
RAY BRADBURY

TOMORROW MIDNIGHT

Eight famous stories of wonder and adventure by the king of Science Fiction.

ILLUSTRATED IN COMIC BOOK FORM:





A burnt-out rocket drifting through a field of stars...

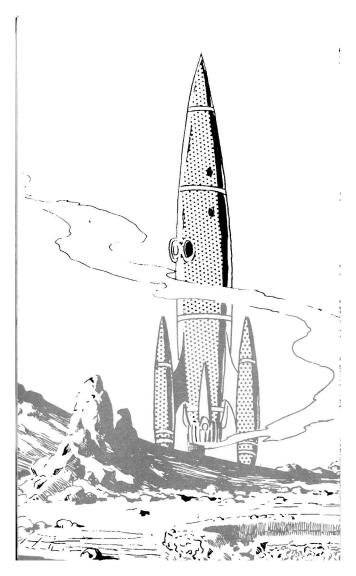
A voyage to the farthest reaches of space—in a ship that will never leave Earth...

A sleepy Ohio town, perfectly preserved —on Mars...

This is the haunting world of imagination Ray Bradbury explores in *Tomorrow Midnight*.

Selecting from the many hundreds of his published stories, the King of Science Fiction presents eight of his all-time favorites, stories of the wonder and mystery of the days to come...

Illustrated in comic-book style!



## TOMORROW MIDNIGHT

# Ray Bradbury

Adapted for E.C. Comics by Albert B. Feldstein

Illustrated by

Will Elder • Wally Wood • Joe Orlando • Al Williamson • Jack Kamen • John Severin

BALLANTINE BOOKS · NEW YORK



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#### INTRODUCTION

If you went down into my cellar you would find not mushrooms but old Sunday panels of *Prince Valiant*, 27 years of them, neatly put away.

If you went up into my attic you would find an entire run of *Tarzan* color comics from the year 1932 on up through 1937, along with daily strips from the same years.

Somewhere in between, here and there about the house, you would find Big Little Books and nice editions of *Mutt and Jeff* and *Krazy Kat* and *Popeye* from the early Depression years. Very late in the day, these are being rediscovered by my four daughters as if they were freshly born.

As you can see, my home has always been a cartoon-oriented home. I still pleasure myself daily with B.C., Pogo, Li'l Abner, and Peanuts. Someday, I would like to have the leisure time to write my own Sunday panel and have it drawn completely by my dear friend Joe Mugnaini who has painted the jacket illustrations for many of my books. But that is some time off in the future. Right now, you hold in your hands a copy of Tomorrow Midnight, stories of mine adapted into comicstrip form by Al Feldstein and well done—in some cases superbly done—by the old E. C. Comics illustrators. It goes almost without saying how pleased I am to have this second

volume available, along with *The Autumn People*.

As for the stories themselves, each was written to express a certain hope or lay the ghost of a personal nightmare. More often then not, in much of my fiction, I have had the good fun of scaring myself, which means I take joy in passing on the scare to someone like yourself. Older people who don't understand this have truly forgotten an original truth about boys and boys-become-men. One of the reasons we go into Space is to lose ourselves again, know magic, plumb mystery, ride high, be glorious, and have the heck frightened out of us. And we will be frightened not only by other worlds and creatures on those worlds, but by ourselves. We are still the greatest mystery and we shall spend several million more years trying to figure ourselves out.

These stories then, are ways of figuring a part of myself, which means also a part of you, since we all run in the same human race together. I hope you like them. I hope we may do more work like this together in the coming years. I don't really believe the future is as dark as I sometimes paint it. I only show you Tomorrow Midnight so that you may think hard, work well, and survive happily into the Day After Tomorrow's Noon.

October 25th, 1965

Ray Bradbury Los Angeles, Calif.

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# TOMORROW MIDNIGHT





HE DREAMED HE WAS FORTY-ONE AGAIN, HE AND KATIE SITTING ON A GREEN HILL SOMEWHERE WITH A PICNIC LUNCH, THEIR HELICOPTER BESIDE THEM. THE WIND BLEW KATIE'S HAIR IN GOLDEN STRANDS AND SHE WAS



... THEY KISSED AND HELD HANDS, NOT EATING ...

OTHER SCENES. QUICK CHANGES OF COLOR. GREECE, ITALY, SWITZERLAND, IN THAT CLEAR, LONG AUTUMN OF 1997. AND THEN... NIGHT MARE. KATIE AND LEONARD



KATIE AND LEONARD IN A GREEN PARK OUTSIDE THE CITY, GEORGE HIMSELF APPEARING ON A PATH IN TIME TO SEE...

GEORGE CRIED OUT IN HIS SLEEP. HOW HAD IT HAP-PENED? WHERE HAD PHELPS SPRUNG FROM? WHY HAD HE INTERFERED? THE RAGE. THE STRUGGLE. THE ATTEMPT TO KILL LEONARD PHELPS...



GEORGE HILL AWOKE, WEEPING. HE ROSE CLUMSILY. HE SAW HIMSELF IN THE WAITING-ROOM MIRROR, AND HE LOOKED ALL FIFTY OF HIS YEARS. IT HAD BEEN A WRETCHED ERROR. BETTER MEN THAN HE HAD TAKEN YOUNG WIVES ONLY TO HAVE THEM DISSOLVE AWAY LIKE SUGAR CRYSTALS IN WATER. HE EYED HIMSELF, MONSTROUSLY. A LITTLE TOO MUCH STOMACH, A LITTLE

TOO MUCH CHIN ... MR. HILL, WE'RE READY нин? он... FOR YOU NOW! YES ...





GEORGE DREW FORTH A SIGNED CHECK FOR TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS. THE DARK MAN HANDED HIM A RELEASE...



GEORGE SIGNED THE MAN DEPARTED ...

THE ROOM WAS SILENT. GEORGE FELT FOR THE GUN IN HIS POCKET. A LOT OF MONEY. BUT RICH MEN CAN AFFORD THE LUXURY OF CATHARTIC MURDER. THE VIOLENT UNVIOLENCE. THE DEATH WITHOUT DEATH. THE MURDER WITHOUT MURDER/NG, HE WAS SUDDENLY

HE WATCHED THE DOOR. THIS WAS A THING HE HAD ANTICIPATED FOR SIX MONTHS, AND NOW IT WAS TO BE ENDED. IN A MOMENT, THE BEAUTIFUL ROBOT, THE STRINGLESS MARIONETTE, THE REPLICA OF KATIE WOULD APPEAR, AND...





HE WHIRLED. HE LET OUT HIS BREATH. SHE STOOD BEHIND HIM. SHE WAS DRESSED IN A FEATHER-SOFT GREEN GOWN. HER HAIR WAS BRIGHT ABOUT HER THROAT AND HER EYES WERE BLUE AND CLEAR...

YOU'RE... HOW ELSE COULD I BE, GEORGE?



HIS VOICE WAS SLOW AND UNREAL.
HIS HEART POUNDED SLUGGISHLY.
HE MOVED FORWARD AS IF WALKING
UNDER A DEEP PRESSURE OF WATER.



HE WALKED AROUND AND AROUND HER, TOUCHING HER. HIS EYES FILLED WITH TEARS...





HER FINGERNAILS WERE PERFECT AS SEASHELLS. THERE WERE NO SEAMS, NO FLAWS. HE LOOKED UPON HER. HE WANTED TO KISS HER LIPS. . . GIVE ME TIME. YOU WANTED TO TALK TO ME I'LL GET TO IT! ABOUT LEONARD, DIDN'T YOU, GEORGE? YOU KNOW I SPEND ALL MY TIME WITH HIM NOW.



SOMETHING BEGAN TO STIR IN HIM. HIS FACE GREW PALE. HE KNEW WHAT WAS HAPPENING. THE HIDDEN ANGER AND REVULSION AND HATRED IN HIM WAS SENDING OUT THOUGHT IMPULSES. THE MARIONETTE. THE INVISIBLE STRINGS. HE WAS MANIPULATING HER BODY. THE DELICATE TELEPATHIC WEB IN HER WONDEROUS HEAD WAS RECEIVING HIS DEATH THOUGHTS...









SHE LAY SHUDDERING, HER SENSELESS MOUTH CLICKED WIDE AND SOME INSANELY WARPED MECHANISM HAD HER REPEAT IT AGAIN AND AGAIN...

GEORGE HILL DROPPED TO THE FLOOR. THE LAST THING HE REMEMBERED WAS FEELING THE REAL BLOOD POURING UPON HIS HANDS IN A FRESHET...





THE ANGER AND THE DESTRUCTION WERE PURGED AWAY. THE MEMORY WAS SO TERRIBLE THAT HE WOULD NEVER KILL AGAIN. SHE WAS *DEAD* NOW. HE HAD *HAD* HIS WAY. HE WENT DOWN IN THE ELEVATOR AND OUT INTO



HE STOPPED AT THE CURB AND WATCHED THE TRAFFIC FLASH BY, HE TOOK DEEP BREATHS OF THE GOOD AIR AND BEGAN TO RELAX...







IT HAD BEEN RAINING FOR TEN DAYS, IT RAINED NOW ON THE PRISON WALLS. GEORGE HILL PUT HIS HANDS OUT OF THE BARRED WINDOW TO FEEL THE DROPS GATHER IN POOLS ON HIS TREMBLING PALMS. HIS LAW-YER LOOKED UP AT HIM... SHE WASN'T REAL. I IT'S THE LAW. DIDN'T KILL HER. AND THE OTHERS ARE TONIGHT, I'M TO BE SENTENCED, TOO, THE EXECUTED. PRESIDENT OF MARION-ETTES, INC. WILL DIE AT MIDNIGHT. HIS ASSISTANT WILL DIE AT ONE. YOU ... AT ABOUT ONE- THIRTY ...

#### GEORGE HILL TURNED LISTE: NING TO THE RAIN ...

THANKS. YOU DID ALL YOU COULD. I GUESS IT WAS MURDER, NO MATTER HOW YOU LOOK AT IT. THE PLAT AND THE PLAN. IT LACKED ONLY THE REAL KATIE HERSELF.

TEN YEARS AGO, YOU
WOULDN'T HAVE
RECEIVED THE DEATH
PENALTY. MAYBE TEN
YEARS FROM NOW YOU
WCYULDN'T FITHER. BUT
THE USE OF MARIONETTES
HAS GROWN SO IN THE LAST
YEAR, THEY HAD TO HAVE A
WHIPPINYG BOY TO SCARE
THE PUBLIC OUT OF IT!

GOD KNOWS WHERE IT WOULD ALL THE GOVERN-MENT'S RIGHT. WIND UP IF IT WENT ON. THERE'S THE I SEE THAT SPIRITUAL SIDE OF IT, TOO ... WHERE NOW. THEY DOES LIFE BEGIN OR END? ARE CAN'T LET ROBOTS ALIVE OR DEAD? IF THEY AREN'T ALIVE, THEY'RE THE MURDER BE NEXT THING TO IT. THEY REACT. LEGAL, EVEN IF THEY\_THINK. IT 15 DONE WITH MACHINES AND TELEPATHY AND WAX. . .







GEORGE HILL STOOD STARING OUT OF THE LITTLE BARRED WINDOW. A RED LIGHT BURNED IN THE WALL SUDDENLY. A VOICE CAME OVER THE AUDIO...



MR. HILL. YOUR WIFE HER. I SHOT HER. I IS WAITING SAW HER FALL ... IN THE ANTEROOM. WILL YOU SEE HER?

SHE'S DEAD. I KILLED MR. HILL. I HEAR YOU! I HEAR DO YOU WY YOU! SHE'S DEAD ... SHE'S DEAD, CAN'T SHE HEAR LET ME BE. I KILLED YOUR HER, I WON'T SEE HER, SHE'S DEAD!

GEORGE POUNDED AT THE WALL OF HIS CELL WITH HIS FISTS, A PAUSE ... THEN ... VERY WELL. MR. HILL! THE RED LIGHT WINKED OFF ...

LIGHTNING FLASHED THROUGH THE SKY AND LIT HIS FACE. HE PRESSED HIS HOT CHEEKS TO THE COLD BARS AND WAITED AS THE RAIN FELL. AFTER A WHILE, A DOOR OPENED AND HE SAW TWO FIGURES EMERGE FROM THE PRISON OFFICE BELOW. THEY PASSED UNDER AN ARC LAMP.



IT WAS KATIE. AND BESIDE HER, LEONARD PHELPS...

HER FACE TURNED AWAY. THE MAN TOOK HER ARM. THEY HURRIED AWAY IN THE BLACK RAIN... INTO A WAITING CAR ... } KATIE! KATIE! SHE'S ALIVE! GUARD! GUARD! I SAW HER! SHE'S NOT DEAD, I DIDN'T KILL HER, NOW YOU CAN LET ME OUT ...





HE LEAPED UP AND CLAWED AT THE BARS, BELLOWING...

THE CAR DROVE AWAY,
KATIE AND LEONARD INSIDE... DROVE AWAY TO
PARIS AND ATHENS AND
LONDON NEXT SPRING
AND VIENNA IN THE
FALL... KATIE! COME
BACK! YOU CAN'T DO

THIS TO ME!

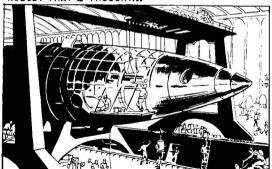
BEHIND HIM, THE GUARDS MOVED FORWARD TO TAKE HOLD OF GEORGE HILL WHILE HE SCREAMED.

# I BOGIST

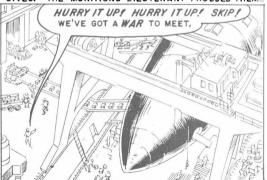
AT THE RATE THINGS ARE COMING AND GOING, IT'LL TAKE A FEW HUNDRED YEARS TO BREAK ME DOWN INTO RUST AND CORROSION... MAYBE LONGER. IN THE MEANTIME, I'LL HAVE MANY DAYS AND NIGHTS TO THINK IT OVER. YOU CAN'T STOP ATOMS FROM REVOLVING AND HUMMING THEIR LIFE-ORBITS INSIDE METAL. THAT'S HOW METAL LIVES ITS OWN SPECIAL LIFE. THAT'S HOW METAL THINKS. WHERE I LIE IS A BARREN, PEBBLED PLATEAU, WITH PALE, WEEDY GROWTHS AND A FEW HUNCHED TREES COMING UP OUT OF PLANETOID ROCK. THERE'S A WIND COMES OVER THE PLATEAU EVERY MORNING. THERE'S RAIN COMES IN THE TWILIGHT, AND A SILENCE COMES DOWN EVEN CLOSER IN THE NIGHT. THAT'S MY WHOLE LIFE, NOW... LYING HERE WITH MY JETS TWISTED AND MY FORE-PLATES BASHED...



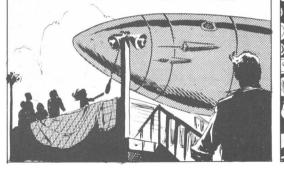
I WAS A WAR ROCKET. MY BIRTH-PERIOD, AND THE BASE WHERE I WAS INTEGRATED... SKELETON, SKIN, AND INNARDS... WENT THROUGH THE USUAL BIRTH-PAINS. IT IS A DIM PORTION IN MY MEMORY, BUT WHEN THE FINAL HULL WAS MELTED TO ME, THE AWARENESS WAS THERE. A METAL AWARENESS. I COULD THINK, BUT TELL NOBODY THAT I THOUGHT...



FORE AND AFT THEY PLACED THEIR SPACE-ARTILLERY NOZZLES, AND WEIGHTED ME WITH SCARLET AMMUNITION. I BEGAN TO FEEL MY PURPOSE, EXPECTANTLY, PERHAPS A BIT IMPATIENTLY. MEN HUSTLED IN AND OUT OF ME WITH SMALL RUBBER-TIRED TRUCKS BEARING EXPLOSIVES. THE MUNITIONS-LIEUTENANT PRODDED THEM...



Then there was some fancy business about a christening. Some official's daughter crashed a bottle of foaming liquor on my prow. A few reporters flicked their cameras. And a small crowd put up their hands, waved them, and put them down, as if they realized how stupid it really was wasting that fine champagne...



AND THEN I SAW THE CAPTAIN, METAL BLESS HIM, FOR THE FIRST TIME. HE CAME RUNNING ACROSS THE FIELD, THE MASTER OF MY FATE... THE CAPTAIN OF MY SOUL. I LIKED HIM RIGHT OFF. HE STOMPED ABOARD AND CRACKED OUT ORDERS...

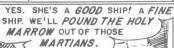


THEY RAPPED ME TIGHT. THEY EXPELLED THE CROWD. SIRENS SHOUTED ACROSS THE BASE APRON. THE CREW DID THINGS TO MY ALIMENTARY CANAL. THE CAPTAIN SHOUTED. THAT WAS THE SLAP ON MY BACK THAT BROUGHT ME MY FIRST BREATH, MY FIRST SOUND, MY FIRST MOVEMENT. MY CAPTAIN POUNDED ME INTO LIVING...

I THREW OUT WINGS OF FIRE AND SMOKE, SUDDENLY I WASN'T METAL LYING IN THE SUN ANY MORE. I WAS THE BIGGEST DARN BIRD THAT EVER SANG INTO THE SKY, MAYBE MY VOICE WASN'T ANYTHING BUT THUNDER, BUT IT WAS STILL SINGING TO ME. I SANG LOUD AND I SANG LONG...

It was the first time i'd seen the world, i was surprised to find that it was round...

YES, I LIKED MY CAPTAIN. HIS NAME WAS LAMB. IRONIC FOR A MAN LACKING LAMB-LIKE QUALITIES. CAPTAIN LAMB SAT IN MY CONTROL ROOM, CRACKING HIS KNUCKLES...





THE YOUNG MAN NAMED CONRAD SAT BESIDE THE CAPTAIN AT THE DUO- & CONTROLS...

WE'D BETTER. THERE'S VUS'! BOTH
A GIRL WAITING IN OF YOU? YOU
YORK PORT FOR US
AND HILLARY



THE TWO OF US. BOTH SPACE IS A FUNNY ON THE SAME WAR-ROCKET, AT LEAST I PLACE TO CAN KEEP MY EYE ON TALK ABOUT LOVE. IT'S HIM. I'LL KNOW HE'S NOT DOWN THERE LIKE LAUGH-ING OUT SCUDDING ALONG ON MY ACCELELERATION... BIG CATHE-DRAL TRYING TO MAKE A WALTZ OUT OF A HYMN.

THEY WERE PART OF ME... LAMB AND CONRAD AND THE CREW. LIKE BLOOD CORPUSCLES PULSING IN THE ARTERIES OF A WARM BODY. AND LIKE ANY BODY, THERE WERE MIGROBES TOO. DESTROYING ELEMENTS. THEIR NAMES WERE LARION AND BELLOG...

NOW AS FAR AS KILLING SO DO I!

LAMB GOES... THAT'S OUT! THEN WE

WE'RE ONLY TWO AGAINST HIT THE

THE REST. I WANT TO ENGINES,

COLLECT THAT MONEY EH, LARION?



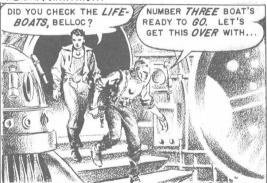
A WELL-PLACED TIME-SEEMS A BOMR SHOULD WORK SHAME MIRACLES WITH NICE NEW THE MAIN JET-ROCKET. ENGINE. AND NEVER WHEN IT HAPPENS TESTED WE CAN BE OUT BEFORE. AND AWAY IN AND IT ALL SPACE IN GOES BOOM PLENTY OF BEFORE IT HAS TIME. PROVEN ITSELF...

DON'T GET SENTIMENTAL, BELLOC.
YOU'RE GETTING PAID FOR IT. NOW
HERE'S THE PLAN. THERE'S A
CERTAIN AMOUNT OF CONFUSION
DURING THE SHIFT CHANGE-OVER.
HALF THE CREW'S GROGGY. THE
OTHER HALF'S TOO TIRED TO
WORRY. NOW, DURING THE NEXT
CHANGE-OVER, WE'LL...

SELF-PRESERVATION IS AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING THING. YOU FIND IT IN METAL AS YOU FIND IT IN MEN. MY BODY WAS TO BE ATTACKED. FROM OUTSIDE I FEARED NOTHING. FROM INSIDE, I WAS UNCERTAIN. I DIDN'T APPROVE OF THE IDEA...



LARION AND BELLOC WENT BELOW TO THEIR STATIONS.
THE CHANGE-OVER PROCEEDED. THE POISON WAS IN MY
HEART...WAITING...



MARS CAME UP AHEAD LIKE A RUDDY DROP OF DRIED BLOOD. THE WAR I'D NEVER SEEN BUT ALWAYS HEARD ABOUT WAS OUT THERE. I WANTED TO BE PART OF IT. I WANTED TO GET THERE WITH LAMB AND HILLARY AND CONRAD AND THE OTHERS. I MARION CLIMBING RUNGS, ON HIS WAY TO GET THE TIME-BOMB, BELLOC, WAITING BELOW. TIME GETTING SHORTER... SHORTER...



I THOUGHT ABOUT CAPTAIN LAMB AND THE WAY HE BARKED ORDERS, ABOUT HILLARY AND CONRAD THINKING ABOUT A WOMAN'S LIPS, ABOUT BELLOC, WAITING. AND SUDDENLY... THERE WAS A HISS, AN EXPLOSION...



SOMEBODY SCREAMED. I KNEW WHO IT WAS AND WHERE IT WAS AND WHAT IT WAS...

WARNING BELLS CLAMORED THROUGH ME. CONRAD SCUTTLED DOWN THE RUNGS, YELLING. HE VANISHED TOWARD THE ENGINE ROOM...



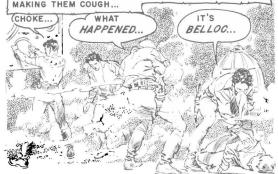
HILLARY GRABBED THE SHIP'S CONTROLS AND FROZE THEM, LISTENING AND WAITING, HE SAID ONE



THE CAPTAIN GOT THERE FIRST. HE TOOK ONE LOOK AND SCREAMED...



CONRAD GRASPED A VALVE-WHEEL GLINTING ON THE WALL, TWISTING IT, GRUNTING. THE LOUD GUSHING NOISE STOPPED. STEAM-CLOUDS BILLOWED IN MY HEART, WRAPPING CAPTAIN LAMB AND THE OTHERS TIGHT...



MY VACUUM VENTILATORS BEGAN HUMMING, CLEARING THE STEAM. THEY SAW BELLOC, LYING THERE. HE SAID NOT A WORD TO ANYBODY. HE JUST BLED WHERE THE EXPLODED OIL-PIPE HAD CAUGHT HIM ON THE NOSE AND CHEEK AND PLUNGED ON BACK INTO HIS



FOOTSTEPS ON THE RUNGS, LARION CAME DOWN, HE LOOKED AS IF SOMEBODY'D KICKED HIM IN THE STOMACH WHEN HE SAW BELLOC LYING THERE, HIS FACE SUCKED BONE-WHITE, STARING, HIS JAW DROPPED...



LARION BEGAN TO LAUGH. HE DARTED ABOUT SUDDENLY AND LEAPED UP THE LADDER RUNGS...

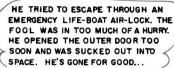


CONRAD RUSHED UP THE LADDER AT LARION'S HEELS. CAPTAIN LAMB WATCHED THEM GO, LISTENING TO THE FADING FEET ON THE RUNGS, GOING UP AND UP...



A FEW MINUTES LATER, CONRAD CAME BACK DOWN THE LADDER. HE HELD UP THE TIME-BOMB...

IT'S A GOOD THING THAT WHAT OIL-PIPE BURST, CAP.
LARION TRIED TO HIDE THIS IN SUPPLY. IT'S A BOMB. HE AND BELLOG...

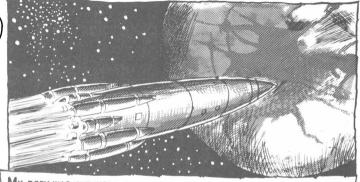




## THE CAPTAIN LOOKED PUZZLED ...

THAT'S FUNNY. HE KNEW HOW THOSE AIR LOCKS WORK. HE WOULDN'T HAVE MADE SUCH A STUPID MISTAKE. IT... IT MUST HAVE BEEN AN ACCIDENT... OR... OR... SOMETHING ELSE!





MY BODY WAS CLEANSED. THE ORGANIC POISON WAS ELIMINATED. MARS WAS VERY CLOSE NOW. RED. BRIGHT RED. IN ANOTHER SIX HOURS WE WOULD BE ENGAGED IN COMBAT...

T SCREAMED I TALKED TO THE STARS. I DIS-I HAD MY TASTE OF WAR. WE DROVE DOWN, CAPTAIN SECTED MARTIAN ROCKETS WITH QUICK CALM STROKES LAMB AND THE MEN INSIDE ME, AND I PUT OUT MY ARMS OF MY RAY-ARMS. AND SPUNKY LITTLE CAP LAMB FOR THE FIRST TIME, AND I CLOSED MY FINGERS OF POWER GUIDED MY VITALS, SWEARING AT THE TOP OF HIS AROUND MARTIAN SHIPS ... FIFTEEN OF THEM ... LUNGS... LET'S GO, YOU DIRTY @## \* ?!!S!
LET'S KNOCK 'EM OUT OF THE UNIVERSE!

ONE DAY CONRAD COLLAPSED UPON THE CONTROL DECK WITH A SHARD OF SHRAPNEL WEBBED IN HIS LUNGS ...



AND IT WAS HILLARY WHO TOOK THE NEWS BACK TO YORK PORT, TO THE GIRL THEY BOTH LOVED...

AND OTHERS OF THE CREW DIED WITHIN ME, THEIR BLOOD SPILLING OUT UPON MY DECK PLATES, WARM AND THICK. SLOP, THE COOK. AYRES, THE NAVIGATOR...



WE KNOCKED HOLES IN THE VACUUM WE GOT WHAT WE WANTED OUT OF WAR, AND THEN... QUITE SUDDENLY ONE DAY... SPACE WAS SILENT, CAP-TAIN LAMB SHRUGGED HIS

OVER. THE WAR'S OVER...
THIS SHIP IS BEING CONVERTED
INTO A CARGO-FREIGHTER...



## THE CREW MUTTERED, SHIFTING

THEIR FEET... IT'S BEEN GOOD. I
WON'T DENY IT. I HAD A FINE
CREW AND A SWEET SHIP. WE
WORKED HARD. WE DID WHAT WE
HAD TO DO. AND NOW IT'S ALL
OVER, WE HAVE PEACE.



PEACE. IT MEANS GETTING DRUNK
AGAIN... LIVING ON EARTH AGAIN. IT
MEANS FORGETTING HOW FREE-FALL
FEELS ON YOUR GUTS. IT MEANS
LOSING FRIENDS. AND IT MEANS
LEAVING THIS ROCKET...



WE LANDED IN YORK PORT WITHOUT FANFARE. THE CREW PACKED THEIR DUFFLE BAGS AND LEFT. CAPTAIN LAMB LINGERED AWHILE, WALKING THROUGH ME, SWEAR-ING UNDER HIS BREATH...

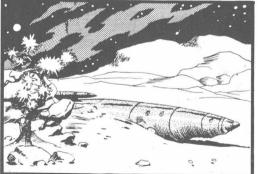


... AND AFTER A WHILE, HE LEFT TOO ...

I WASN'T A WAR-ROCKET ANYMORE. THEY CRAMMED ME WITH CARGO AND SHIPPED ME BACK AND FORTH TO VENUS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS. I HAD A NEW CAPTAIN AND A STRANGE PEACE-FUL ROUTINE COMING AND GOING ACROSS THE STARS...



NOTHING IMPORTANT HAPPENED UNTIL JULY 17TH, 2243. THAT WAS THE DAY I CRACKED UP ON THIS WILD, PEBBLED, LITTLE PLANETOID WHERE THE WIND WHINED AND THE RAIN POURED AND THE SILENCE WAS SO VERY SILENT...



A ROCKET THINKS IN ITSELF, BUT IT LIVES THROUGH ITS CREW AND ITS CAPTAIN. I'D BEEN LIVING ON BORROWED TIME SINCE CAPTAIN LAMB WENT AWAY AND NEVER CAME BACK. I LAY THERE THINKING ABOUT IT ALL... HELPLESS... LIKE A GIGANTIC METAL CHILD, AN IDIOT WHO NEEDS CONTROL ... WHO NEEDS PULSING HUMAN, LIFE-BLOOD...



UNTIL ONE DAY, AFTER THE RAIN, I SAW A SILVER SPECK IN THE SKY... A SHIP. IT CAME DOWN A HUNDRED YARDS FROM MY SILENT HULK. A MAN CLIMBED OUT. HE CAME WALKING UP THE PEBBLED HILL. HE STOOD IN MY AIR-LOCK DOOR AND I HEARD HIM SAY...



... AND I KNEW WHO IT WAS...



HE CLIMBED THE RUNGS TO MY CONTROL ROOM AND STOOD THERE, SWAYING, REMEMBERING ALL THE OLD TIMES WE HAD TOGETHER...



SILENCE. HE QUIT YELLING FOR PEOPLE WHO COULDN'T ANSWER HIM. HE SAT DOWN IN THE CONTROL CHAIR... TALKED TO ME...

THINGS ARE TURNING BAD ON VENUS. COLONIALS
REVOLTING. YOU'RE OLD-FASHIONED, BUT YOU'RE
PROUD AND TALL, AND A FIGHTER! YOU CAN
FIGHT AGAIN! SO HELP ME GOD, I'LL BE



AND SO I'VE BEEN LYING HERE, WAITING FOR THE REPAIR CREW TO COME, WAITING WITH A STIRRING OF MY OLD ANTICIPATION. I'VE BEEN DEAD A WHILE, AND CAP LAMB HAS SHOWED UP TO SLAP ME BACK TO LIFE. THEY'LL GO OVER ME FROM SEAM TO SEAM... AND SOMEDAY SOON, CAP LAMB WILL STOMP INTO MY AIR LOCK AND SHOUT...



...AND I'LL BE LIVING AND BREATHING AND MOVING AGAIN... OFF TO WAR AGAIN! OFF TO WAR...

THE END

WE WERE JUST A LOT OF KIDS. WITH CUT FINGERS, LUMPY HEADS AND WHINING TENOR VOICES. WE LIKED OUR GAME OF MIBS AS WELL AS THE NEXT RUMPLE-HAIR; BUT WE LIKED THE ROCKETS MORE!

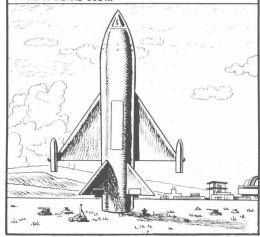
[ QUIT BREATHING. I DIDN'T SUCK ANOTHER BREATH UNTIL THE SHIP WAS OUT ON THE FIELD, DRAGGED THERE BY CHUG-GING TRACTORS, AND FOLLOWED BY A LOT OF LITTLE BUG-LIKE MECHANICS IN ASBESTOS SUITS AND FIREPROOF VISORS, EVERY LINE WAS LIKE PERFECT STEEL MUSCLES SLEEPING THERE, READY TO WAKE UP WITH A ROAR, JUMP UP AND HIT ITS SILLY HEAD AGAINST THE MILKY WAY'S CEILING, AND MAKE THE STARS FALL DOWN LIKE FRIGHT-ENED CONFETTI. YOU FELT IT COULD DO THAT, KICK THE UNIVERSE RIGHT IN THE BELLY AND TELL IT TO GET OUT OF THE WAY... GOOD LORD! GEE



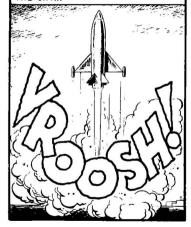
It was something to 'good Lord' about, it was a hundred years of dreaming all sorted out and chosen and put together to make the hardest, prettiest, swiftest dream of all. It got me in the stomach, too... It got a steel grip there that made me sick with longing and envy. And when the pilots strolled onto the field, my feet walked with them...



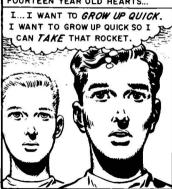
AND THEN THE PRELIMINARIES GOT OVER WITH. THE FUEL WAS IN THE ROCKET AND THE MEN RAN AWAY FROM IT ON THE GROUND LIKE ANTS RUNNING LICKETY FROM A METAL GOD...



... And the dream woke up and gave a yell and jumped into the sky...



... AND THEN IT WAS GONE, ALL THE VACUUM SHOUTING OF IT, LEAVING NOTHING BUT A TREMBLING IN THE AIR AND THROUGH THE GROUND, AND UP OUR LEGS TO OUR FOURTEEN YEAR OLD HEARTS...



I BIT MY LIPS. I WAS SO DARNED YOUNG, AND YOU CANNOT APPLY FOR SPACE WORK. YOU HAVE TO BE CHOSEN ... CHOSEN ...



THE OTHER KIDS WENT OFF LAUGHING BREATH –
LESSLY, TALKING, AND LEFT PRIORY AND ME THERE
TO LOOK AT THE SPOT WHERE THE SHIP HAD BEEN.
THE OTHER KIDS WERE OKAY. THEY LOVED THE ROCKETS, TOO. BUT I HAD THE FEELING THAT THEY
WOULDN'T BE DOING WHAT RALPH PRIORY AND I WOULD
DO SOMEDAY. RALPH AND I WANTED THE STARS FOR EACH
OF US, MORE THAN WE WANTED A FISTFUL OF BLUEWHITE CLEAR-CUT DIAMONDS...



IT SPOILED EVERYTHING ELSE FOR US...THAT TAKEOFF. BECAUSE OF IT, I FLUNKED MY SEMANTICS TEST ON MONDAY. BUT I DIDN'T CARE. IT GOT SO BAD, I HAD TO USE SLEEP- MASSAGE MECHS EVERY NIGHT TO GET MY EYELIDS SEALED. THEN, MY TEACHER SPOKE TO ME...

LOOK HERE, CHRISTOPHER. IF THIS KEEPS UP, I'LL HAVE YOU RECLASSIFIED AT THE NEXT PSYCH-BOARD

I'M... SORRY, SIR.





HE PICKED UP A SMALL TAB OF RECORDS WITH MY NAME BLOCKED ON THEM. HE FLIPPED THROUGH IT. I HAD A FUNNY STONE IN MY STOMACH, JUST LYING THERE...

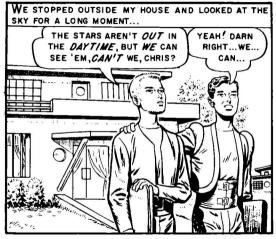


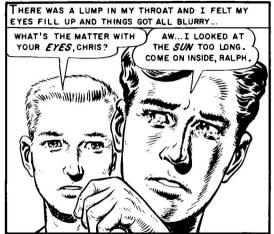
RALPH PRIORY AND I SLID HOME FROM FORMULA-SCHOOL TOGETHER THAT AFTERNOON. I TOLD HIM WHAT HAD HAPPENED.

I TRIED TO GET BACK TO WHAT'D WORK, BUT I COULDN'T. HE DURING THE REST OF THE SAY. DAY, THE TEACHER KEPT CHRIS? LOOKING AT ME AND LOOKING AT MY RECORD AND CHEWING HIS LIP. THEN HE MADE AN AUDIO-CALL ...

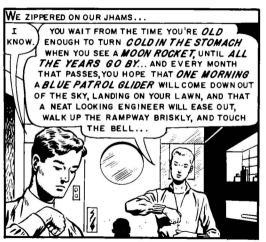
I COULDN'T HEAR YOU...YOU A WORD. BUT DON'T THINK WHEN HE SET THE YOU'LL BE AUDIO IN ITS CRADLE, SENT AWAY HE STARED AT ME DO YOU, WITH THE FUNNIEST CHRIS? THAT LOOK IN HIS EYES. WOULD BE PLAIN DIRTY!

MAYBE I NEED A WE'LL STICK GOOD MENTAL GOING IT TOGETHER. OVER, RALPH. I CHRIS. DARN CAN'T GO ON THEM, THEY FLUBBING MY CAN'T TAKE YOU STUDIES THIS AWAY NOW, WE'RE PALS. IT WOULDN'T WAY. BE FAIR.





WE YELLED UNDER THE SHOWER SPRAY IN THE BATH-CUBICLE, BUT OUR YELLS WEREN'T ESPECIALLY CONVINCING. EVEN WHEN WE TURNED ON THE ICE-WATER. AND LATER WHILE WE WERE STANDING IN THE WARM-AIR DRYER, I LOOKED AT RALPH ... SOMEHOW I THINK THE OTHER KIDS'LL CHRIS, THE GROW OUT OF IT, BUT I DON'T THINK J INTERPLANET PATROL WE WILL RALPH. I THINK WE'LL J SELECTS. YOU CAN'T KEEP WAITING. APPLY. YOU WAIT!



## RALPH'S FACE DARKENED...

YOU KEEP WAITING FOR THAT PATROL GLIDER UNTIL YOU'RE TWENTY-ONE. AND THEN ON THE LAST DAY OF YOUR TWENTIETH YEAR, YOU GET GOOD AND DRUNK AND LAUGH A LOT AND SAY WHAT THE HECK, YOU DIDN'T CARE



## WE BOTH JUST SAT THERE, DEEP IN THE MIDDLE OF HIS WORDS...

I .. I DON'T WANT THAT I KNOW DISAPPOINTMENT, CHRIS. RALPH. I'M FOURTEEN, JUST T'VF LIKE YOU. BUT IF I TALKED REACH MY TWENTY-TO MEN FIRST YEAR WITHOUT WHO'VE ANYONE OF THE PATROL WAITED TOUCHING THE BELL AT AND THE ORTHO-STATION.





IT WAS MY MOTHER. SHE DIDN'T LOOK MUCH OLDER THAN TWENTY-FIVE, FOR HAVING RAISED ME AND WORKED IN THE GOVERNMENT STATISTICS OFFICE. SHE WAS LIGHT AND GRACEFUL AND SMILED A LOT, AND I COULD SEE HOW FATHER MUST HAVE LOVED HER MUCH WHEN HE WAS ALIVE...



ONE PARENT WAS BETTER THAN NONE. POOR PRIORY, NOW, RAISED IN THE ORTHOPEDICAL STATION ... YOU CAN STAY HERE ) HECK. GEE. THANKS! I'LL WITH US TONIGHT. YES! GO AUDIO IN AND PRIORY, WE WANT TELL THEM ... YOU . DON'T WE, CHRIS?

WHEN RALPH WAS GONE, MOTHER LOOKED AT ME INTENTLY AND CAME AND SAT DOWN NEXT TO ME. SHE BRUSHED MY HAIR WITH A NICE LITTLE MOVE OF HER FINGERS, THEN SHE SAID

SOMETHING'S HAPPENED, CHRIS! SOMETHING'S DON'T TELL ME, WORK TODAY. ONE FROM YOUR TEACHER. ONE THEN, MOM. I DON'T THEN, MOM. I DON'T THEN, MOM.





WHEN I WOKE THE NEXT MORNING, PRIORY WAS GONE. THERE WAS A NOTE PINNED ON THE SLIDING DOOR, IT SAID...

'SEE YOU AT FORMULA CLASS.
YOUR MOM WANTED ME TO DO SOME
WORK FOR HER. SHE GOT A CALL
THIS MORNING, AND SAID SHE
NEEDED ME TO HELP. SEE YOU.



PRIORY RUNNING ERRANDS. A CALL IN THE EARLY MORNING FOR MOM. STRANGE. SUDDENLY I HEARD THE KIDS DOWN BELOW ON THE LAWN-COURT...



MY MOTHER'S VOICE. IT WAS QUIET AND IT HAD SOMETHING FUNNY IN IT. SHE WAS STANDING IN THE DOORWAY BEHIND ME, HER FACE PALE, DRAWN, FULL OF SOME SMALL PAIN ...







BEFORE I COULD SAY ANYTHING ELSE, THERE WAS A SOUND IN THE AIR. IT CUT THROUGH THE VERY SOUND-PROOFED WALL OF THE HOUSE. IT CAME CLOSER. IT LOWERED ITS PITCH AND CAME DOWN. I SWALLOWED. ALL THE FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY AND DOUBT WENT AWAY... INSTANTLY...



I HEARD FOOTSTEPS COMING UP THE RAMP BELOW. FOOTSTEPS THAT I HAD WAITED FOR A LONG TIME. FOOTSTEPS I HAD BEEN AFRAID WOULD NEVER COME. SOMEBODY TOUCHED THE BELL, AND I KNEW WHO IT WAS...



HE LOOKED AS IF HE HAD BEEN BORN IN HIS UNIFORM. IT FITTED LIKE A SECOND LAYER OF SKIN. AS SIMPLE AND AS PERFECT AS A UNIFORM COULD BE MADE, BUT WITH ALL THE POWER OF THE COSMOS BEHIND IT. HIS NAME WAS TRENT. I STOOD THERE, LISTENING...



NO ONE EXCEPT THOSE WHO KNOW NOW. YOUR MOTHER AND YOUR TEACHER. YOU WANT TO ASK WHY, DON'T YOU? WHY YOU CAN'T TELL IT TO YOUR FRIENDS, BUT YOU'RE AFRAID TO ASK. I'LL EXPLAIN...



WE SELECT
ABOUT TWO THOUSAND YOUNG MEN
EACH YEAR FROM
EARTH'S BILLIONS.
OUT OF THAT
NUMBER, ONLY
HALF WIND UP
AS SOLAR
ENGINEERS. THE
REST MUST
RETURN TO



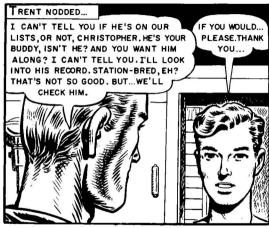
THEY'VE FLUNKED OUT, BUT
THERE'S NO REASON FOR EVERYONE TO KNOW. THEY USUALLY
FLUNK OUT, IF THEY'RE GOING
TO, IN THE FIRST YEAR. AND
IT'S TOUGH TO FACE FRIENDS
AND SAY YOU COULDN'T MAKE
THE GRADE IN THE BIGGEST
JOB OF THE UNIVERSE. SO



YES, AND THERE'S ANOTHER
REASON. HALF THE FUN OF
BEING A KID IS BEING ABLE TO
LORD IT OVER OTHER KIDS, BY
BEING SUPERIOR IN SOME WAY.
WE TAKE THAT FUN AWAY.THEN
WE'LL KNOW IF YOU WANTED TO
GO INTO THE PATROL FOR MERELY
EGOTISTIC, GLORY REASONS, OR
FOR THE PATROL ITSELF.



IF YOU'RE IN IT FOR SIR. A QUESTION PERSONAL CONCEIT ... PLEASE, I HAVE A YOU'RE DAMNED, IF FRIEND NAMED RALPH PRIORY, HE'S FROM YOU'RE IN IT BECAUSE YOU CAN'T HELP IT, AND AN ORTHO-STATION YOU HAVE TO BE IN IT ... AND... YOU'RE BLESSED.





HE SALUTED ME AND I WATCHED HIM TURN AND WALK OFF AND I HEARD THE PATROL CAR GO UP INTO THE SKY SINGING AWAY. MOTHER WAS BESIDE ME, HOLDING ME ... OH, CHRIS. CHRIS ... MOM. HOW ... HOW WILL I TELL PRIORY? WHAT ABOUT HIM?

MOTHER WAS ALWAYS AHEAD OF MY THOUGHTS. SHE KNEW WHAT TO DO ALL THE TIME ... YOU'RE GOING AWAY, CHRIS. THAT'S ALL. BUT, MCM, TELL HIM THAT. TELL HIM YOU NEED PSYCHO-REORGANIZATION. HE'LL UNDERSTAND.







WE TOLD RALPH HOW I WAS GOING AWAY AND HOW MOM WANTED HIM TO COME LIVE WITH HER. IT WAS FUNNY, BUT RALPH NEVER EVEN ASKED ME WHY I WAS GOING ... OR WHERE...OR FOR HOW LONG. BUT IN THE DARKNESS ON THAT LAST NIGHT, JUST BEFORE WE FELL ASLEEP. HE WHISPERED ... I...I'M AWFULLY YOU'RE ... NOT WAITING ANY MORE, ARE YOU, CHRIS? TIRED, RALPH.



MOM WASN'T HOME ON SATURDAY WHEN IT CAME TIME TO LEAVE, I FOUND A SPOOL OF AUDIO FILM ON MY BED AND INSERTED IT IN THE VIEWER, SOFT HAIR... HER WHITE FACE...AND THE WORDS...

I HATE GOOD-BYES, CHRIS. I'VE GONE TO THE LAB TO DO SOME EXTRA WORK. GOOD LUCK. ALL REMARKS MY LOVE. WHEN I SEE YOU AGAIN...YOU'LL



THAT WAS ALL. I RAN IT THROUGH FOUR TIMES ...

PRIORY WALKED TO THE VAC-TUBE WITH ME.WE LOOKED AT EACH OTHER AND HE SWALLOWED ... CHRIS. I'LL BE WAITING JUST LIKE MAYBE IT WON'T YOU WAITED AND DON'T HAVE TO BE LONG, PRIORY. WAIT ANY MORE. I'LL WAIT. I HOPE NOT. S81

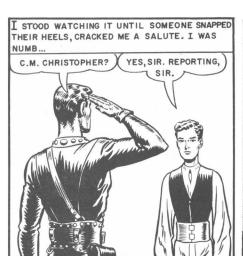
THE TUBE DOOR SEALED. I WAS HURLED AWAY TO THE ROCKET PORT, AND PRIORY WAS LEFT BEHIND.

 ${f I}$  STEPPED OUT OF THE TUBE AT THE PORT. IT WAS A FIVE HUNDRED YARD WALK TO THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, IT TOOK ME TEN YEARS TO WALK IT, IT WAS ALL CHOKED UP IN MY HEART AND IT WOULDN'T GO AWAY. AND IT SWAM AROUND IN MY EYES AND IT PULLED MY LIPS DOWN, HARD. . . NEXT TIME I SEE DON'T TELL I'LL WAIT, CHRIS... YOU, YOU'LL BE ANYBODY A MAN... FELT SMALL THERE ... WALKING, WALKING ...

THE AFTERNOON ROCKET FOR VENUS WAS JUST TAKING OFF AS I WENT DOWN THE RAMP TO THE OFFICE. IT SHIVERED THE GROUND AND IT SHIVERED AND THRILLED MY HEART.



I was beginning to grow up awfully fast.







I LIVE IN A WELL. I LIVE LIKE SMOKE IN THE WELL. LIKE VAPOR IN A STONE THROAT. I DON'T MOVE. I DON'T DO ANYTHING BUT WAIT. OVERHEAD, I SEE THE COLD STARS OF NIGHT AND MORNING, AND I SEE THE SUN. AND SOMETIMES I SING OLD SONGS OF THIS WORLD WHEN IT WAS YOUNG. HOW CAN I TELL YOU WHAT I AM WHEN I DON'T KNOW? I CANNOT. I AM SIMPLY WAITING. I AM MIST AND MOONLIGHT AND MEMORY. I AM SAD AND I AM OLD. I WAIT IN THE COOL SILENCE, AND THERE WILL COME A DAY WHEN I NO LONGER WAIT...



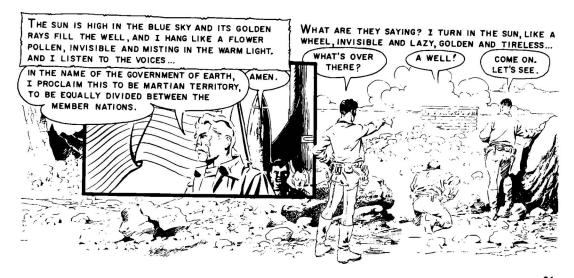


Now IT IS MORNING. I HEAR A GREAT THUNDER. I SMELL RED FIRE FROM A DISTANCE, I HEAR METAL CRASHING...



I wait. I listen. I hear voices, far away. Alien 80 voices. They speak an alien tongue I cannot know, no word is familiar, I listen...





# THE APPROACH OF WARMTH. THREE OBJECTS BEND OVER THE WELL MOUTH AND MY COOLNESS RISES TO



### A SOUND OF RUNNING. THEN ...



#### THE WATER RIPPLES SOFTLY AS THE BUCKET TOUCHES AND FILLS. I RISE IN THE WARM AIR TOWARD





THE SOUND OF WATER IN THE HOT SUNLIGHT. NOW I HOVER LIKE A DUST, A CINNAMON, UPON THE SOFT WIND...



#### Now I KNOW WHO I AM ...

NO. I DIDN'T TOUCH ANY, IT'S NOT THAT. I WAS JUST BENDING OVER THE WELL, AND ALL OF A SUDDEN MY HEAD SPLIT. I...FEEL BETTER...



MY NAME IS STEPHEN LEONARD
JONES AND I AM 23 YEARS OLD AND
I HAVE JUST COME IN A ROCKET
FROM A PLANET CALLED EARTH AND
I AM STANDING WITH MY GOOD
FRIENDS BY AN OLD WELL ON THE
PLANET MARS...



I LOOK DOWN AT MY GOLDEN FINGERS, TAN AND STRONG.I LOOK AT MY LONG LEGS AND MY UNIFORM AND AT MY FRIENDS. AND I ANSWER THEM...



THE FOOD IS GOOD. IT HAS BEEN TEN THOUSAND YEARS SINCE FOOD, IT TOUCHES MY TONGUE IN A FINE WAY AND THE WINE WITH THE FOOD IS WARMING. I LISTEN TO THE SOUND OF VOICES. I MAKE WORDS THAT I DO NOT UNDERSTAND. I TEST THE AIR...



I TILT MY HEAD AND REST MY HANDS HOLDING THE SILVER UTENSILS OF EATING. I FEEL EVERYTHING...



I NOD MY HEAD AND IT IS A GOOD NOD. IT IS GOOD TO DO THINGS AFTER TEN THOUSAND YEARS. IT IS GOOD TO BREATHE AIR AND IT IS GOOD TO FEEL THE SUN ON THE FLESH AND IT IS GOOD TO FEEL THE FINE IVORY SKELETON BENEATH. I SIT ENCHANTED...



THE OTHERS HAVE GONE MURMURING TO THE SILVER SHIP FROM WHICH THEY CAME. REGENT STANDS BY THE STONE WELL, LOOKING DOWN. I STAND HIGH AND IT IS A LONG WAY TO THE GROUND WHEN I LOOK DOWN FROM MY EYES IN MY HEAD. I WALK TO REGENT, AND IT IS GOOD WALKING...



#### REGENT RAISES HIS HEAD AND LOOKS AT ME...



AND AS I SAY THAT, I REACH OUT AND TOUCH REGENT'S ARM...

THE SAND IS FIRE AND THE SHIP IS SILVER FIRE AND THE HEAT IS GOOD TO FEEL. I SMELL THE ROCKET BOILING IN THE HOTNESS OF THE DAY, I STAND BELOW THE PORT...

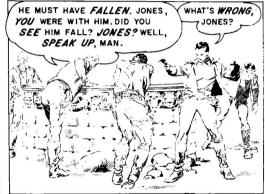


ONE OF THEM RUNS TOWARD THE WELL. I BEGIN TO TREMBLE... A FINE SHIVERING TREMBLE, HIDDEN DEEP, BUT BECOMING VERY STRONG. AND FOR THE FIRST TIME I HEAR IT, AS IF IT, TOO, WERE HIDDEN IN A WELL. A VOICE CALLING WITHIN ME, TINY AND AFRAID...



AND THERE IS A FEELING WITHIN ME AS IF SOMETHING IS TRYING TO GET FREE... A POUNDING ON DOORS, A RUSHING DOWN DARK CORRIDORS, AND UP PASSAGES, ECHOING AND SCREAMING...

THE MEN ARE RUNNING, ALL FIVE OF THEM. I RUN WITH THEM BUT NOW I AM SICK AND THE TREMBLING IS VIOLENT...





THEY STRETCH ME OUT AND THE SEIZURES COME AND GO LIKE EARTHQUAKES AND THE DEEP HIDDEN VOICE IN ME SCREAMS...



I CLOSE MY EYES. THE SCREAMING STOPS. THE SHIVERINGS CEASE, I RISE, AS IN A COOL WELL, RELEASED...



WHAT KIND ... I SAY! AND NOW MY NAME IS SESSIONS AND OF SHOCK? MY LIPS MOVE CRISPLY, AND I AM CAPTAIN OF THESE MEN. I STAND AMONG THEM AND I AM LOOKING DOWN AT A BODY WHICH LIES COOLING ON THE SAND. I CLAP MY HANDS TO MY HEAD. CAPTAIN! WHAT YIT'S NOTHING JUST A /S IT? HEADACHE. I'LL BE ALL RIGHT ...



WE CARRY THE BODY BACK TO THE ROCKET WITH US, AND A NEW VOICE IS CALLING DEEP IN ME TO BE LET OUT. FAR DOWN IN THE MOIST EARTHENWORKS OF THE BODY, IN RED FATHOMS, IT ECHOES AND PLEADS... HELP, HELP, HELP,...





THE BODY IS LAID OUT IN THE SHADOW OF THE ROCKET AND THE VOICE IN ME SCREAMS IN THE DEEP UNDERWATER CATACOMBS OF BONE AND CRIMSON TIDE. I CLAP MY HANDS TO MY MOUTH...BUT IT COMES OUT...



A GUN IS IN MY HAND, I LIFT IT. I MUST STILL THE SCREAMING VOICE INSIDE ME. AN EXPLOSION...



THE SCREAMING IS CUT OFF. SHADOWS RUN TOWARD ME. I DROP TO THE SAND, HOW GOOD IT FEELS TO DIE.

I OPEN MY EYES AND THERE IS THE CAPTAIN LYING ON THE RED SAND, HIS SKULL SPLIT BY A BULLET, HIS EYES WIDE, HIS TONGUE PROTRUDING BETWEEN HIS WHITE TEETH. AND I I BEND TO TOUCH HIM, THE MEN ARE HORRIFIED, THEY STAND OVER THE TWO DEAD MEN AND TURN THEIR HEADS TO SEE THE DISTANT WELL WHERE REGENT LIES LOLLING IN DEEP WATERS. AND I SAY...

A CROAKING COMES OUT OF THEIR DRY LIPS...A WHIMPERING...A CHILD-INST THIS AWFUL DREAM. THE MEN TURN TO ME AND ONE OF THEM SAYS...









THE MEN CLAMOR, I GO TO THEM AND TOUCH THEM WITH A CONFIDENCE THAT ALMOST SINGS IN ME ...



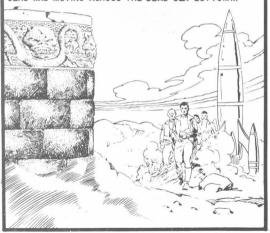
I TOUCH THEIR SHOULDERS AND THEIR ARMS AND THEIR HANDS AND WE ALL FALL SILENT. FOR WE ARE ONE...



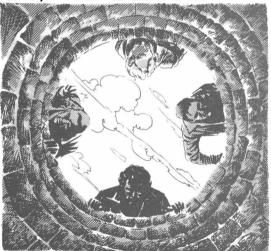
No! No! INNER VOICES, CRYING, DEEP DOWN INSIDE US...
UNHEARD. WE ARE SAMUEL MATHEWS AND WILLIAM
SPAULDING AND FORREST COLE AND JOHN SUMMERS, AND WE
SAY NOTHING BUT LOOK UPON EACH OTHER WITH OUR
WHITE FACES AND SHAKING HANDS... AND WE SAY...

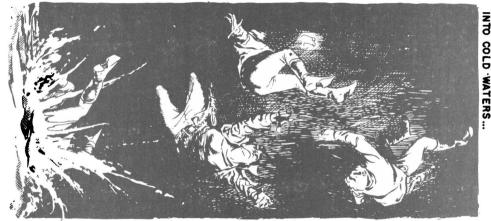


No, no, no! four voices scream, hidden and layered down and stored forever. Our feet walk in the sand and it is as if a great hand with eight fingers was moving across the dead sea bottom...



WE BEND TO THE WELL, LOOKING DOWN. FROM THE COOL DEPTHS, FOUR FACES PEER BACK UP AT US...





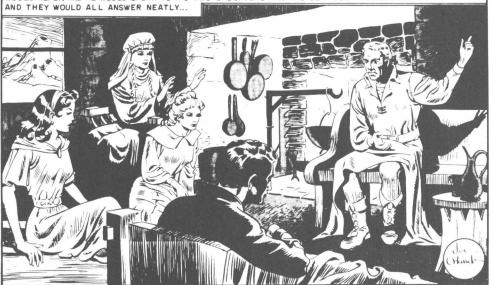


SMOKE SING



# The CYG LESS

Whenever the wind came through the martian sky, he and his family would sit in their stone hut and warm their hands over a wood fire! The wind would stir the canal waters and almost blow the stars out of the sky, but mr. Hathaway would sit contented and talk to his wife, and his wife would reply, and he would speak to his two daughters and his son about the old days on earth.



MR. HATHAWAY WENT OUT INTO THE MARTIAN NIGHT!
IT WAS THE TWENTIETH YEAR AFTER THE GREAT
WAR! MARS WAS A TOMB PLANET! WHETHER OR NOT
EARTH WAS THE SAME WAS A MATTER OF MUCH
DEBATE FOR HATHAWAY AND HIS FAMILY ON THOSE
LONG MARTIAN NIGHTS! HE CALLED INTO THE HUT...



HATHAWAY GAZED UP AT EARTH BURNING GREEN IN THE WINDY SKY! THEN HE LOOKED ACROSS THE LONG-



## HATHAWAY MOVED QUIETLY DOWN THROUGH THE SERIES OF RUINS ...

WELL, I'M GOOD FOR ANOTHER
TWENTY YEARS IF I'M CAREFUL!
SOMEONE MIGHT COME! EITHER
ACROSS THE DEAD SEAS OR
OUT OF SPACE IN A ROCKET ON
A LITTLE THREAD OF RED FLAME!



HE CAME TO A SOLITARY MARTIAN GRAVEYARD... A SERIES OF SMALL HEXAGONAL STONES ON A HILL SWEPT BY A LONELY WIND! HE LOOKED DOWN AT THE GRAVES WITH CRUDE WOODEN CROSSES ON THEM, AND NAMES ...



TEARS DID NOT COME TO MR. HATHAWAY'S EYES! THEY HAD DRIED LONG AGO...

DO YOU FORGIVE ME FOR WHAT I'VE DONE? I WAS VERY MUCH ALONE! YOU DO UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU?



HE RETURNED TO THE STONE HUT...
AND ONCE MORE, JUST BEFORE GOING
IN, SHADED HIS EYES, SEARCHING
THE BLACK SKY...

ONE KEEPS WAITING AND WAITING AND LOOKING, AND ONE NIGHT,



THERE WAS A TINY RED FLAME ON THE SKY! HE STEPPED AWAY FROM THE LIGHT OF THE HUT...







A MINUTE LATER...AFTER A LONG, WILD STARING ... HE APPEARED IN THE LOW DOOR OF THE HUT! THE WIFE AND THE TWO DAUGHTERS AND THE SON TURNED THEIR HEADS TO HIM! FINALLY HE WAS ABLE TO SPEAK...



HE BURNED WHAT WAS LEFT OF NEW NEW YORK THAT MORNING AT THREE! HE TOOK A TORCH AND MOVED INTO THE PLASTIC CITY, AND WITH THE FLAME TOUCHED THE WALLS HERE AND THERE! THE CITY BLOOMED UP IN GREAT TOSSES OF HEAT AND LIGHT! IT WAS A SQUARE MILE OF ILLUMINATION, BIG ENOUGH TO BE SEEN OUT IN SPACE! IT WOULD BECKON



HIS HEART BEATING RAPIDLY WITH PAIN, HE RETURNED TO THE HUT! HE HELD UP A DUSTY BOTTLE INTO THE LIGHT ... SEE? WINE I SAVED, JUST FOR TONIGHT! I KNEW THAT SOMEDAY SOMEONE WOULD FIND US! WE'LL HAVE A DRINK TO CELEBRATE

### HE POURED FIVE GLASSES FULL ...

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME! REMEMBER THE DAY
THE WAR BROKE? TWENTY YEARS AND SEVEN MONTHS
AGO! AND ALL THE ROCKETS WERE CALLED HOME
FROM MARS! AND YOU AND I AND THE CHILDREN



WE RAN OUR HORSES... ALMOST KILLING THEM, REMEMBER? BUT WE GOT TO THE CITY A WEEK LATE! EVERYONE WAS GONE! AMERICA HAD BEEN DESTROYED! EVERY ROCKET HAD LEFT WITHOUT WAITING FOR STRAGGLERS! REMEMBER? REMEMBER?



# HE LIFTED HIS GLASS ...

AND IT TURNED OUT WE WERE THE ONLY ONES LEFT!
LORD, LORD, HOW THE YEARS PASS! I COULDN'T HAVE
STOOD IT WITHOUT YOU HERE...ALL OF YOU! I'D
HAVE KILLED MYSELF WITHOUT YOU! BUT WITH
YOU...IT WAS WORTH WAITING! HERE'S TO US,
THEN...AND TO OUR LONG WAIT TOGETHER!



HE DRANK! THE WIFE AND THE TWO DAUGHTERS AND THE SON RAISED THEIR GLASSES TO THEIR LIPS! THE WINE RAN DOWN OVER THE CHINS OF ALL FOUR OF



HE HURRIED ACROSS THE LAND TO THE VAST METAL STORAGE SHED! INSIDE WAS THE GOLD-STORAGE UNIT AND POWER PLANT HE'D REPAIRED AND RESTORED, JUST AS HE'D REPAIRED CLOCKS, TELEPHONES, AND SPOOL-RECORDERS OVER THE YEARS IN HIS SPARE TIME! THE SHED WAS FULL OF THINGS HE'D BUILT! FROM THE DEEP FREEZE, HE FETCHED RIMED CARTONS OF BEANS AND STRAWBERRIES AND A CHICKEN TWENTY

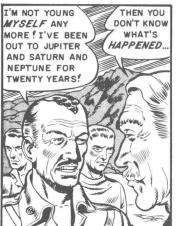


THE AIR WAS FULL OF COOKING ODORS WHEN THE ROCKET LANDED! LIKE A BOY, HATHAWAY RACED DOWN THE HILL! HE STOPPED ONCE BECAUSE OF A SUDDEN SICK PAIN IN HIS CHEST! HE SAT ON A ROCK TO REGAIN HIS BREATH, THEN RAN ALL THE REST OF THE WAY! HE STOOD IN THE HOT ATMOSPHERE GENERATED BY THE FIERY ROCKET! A PORT OPENED! A MAN



# CAPTAIN WILDER JUMPED DOWN AND STOOD THERE LOOKING AT THE OLD MAN...

GOOD LORD! HATHAWAY. VIT'S BEEN FROM MY OLD CREW .. A LONG FROM THE FOURTH TIME, EXPEDITION! CAPTAIN 'M OLD.









THEY WALKED ON UP THE HILL TO THE HUT! HATHA-WAY'S WIFE APPEARED FOLLOWED BY THE TWO DAUGHTERS, TALL AND GRACIOUS, AND AN EVEN TALLER SON...

ALICE! YOU OF ... COURSE, CAPTAIN WILDER! REMEMBER \* MY DAUGHTERS, MARGUERITE AND CAPTAIN SUSAN! MY SON, JOHN! YOU WILDER? REMEMBER THE CAPTAINSURELY

HANDS WERE SHAKEN AMID LAUGHTER AND MUCH TALK!
EVERYONE MOVED! FOLDING TABLES WERE HURRIED
OUT WHILE HOT FOODS WERE RUSHED FORTH, AND
PLATES AND FINE DAMASK NAPKINS AND GOOD SILVER-



CAPTAIN WILDER SHIFTED HIS SILVERWARE CLUMSILY! HIS FACE WAS SUDDENLY PALE! THE MAN NEXT TO HIM WHISPERED...







MRS. HATHAWAY LADLED QUICK SPOONS OF SOUP INTO THEIR BOWLS! CAPTAIN WILDER WATCHED HER DRIFT AWAY, DRIFT WITH HER PINK FACE WARM, SMOOTH AS AN APPLE, UNWRINKLED AND COLORFUL! AFTER A WHILE WILLIAMS LEFT...

WHERE'S HE CHECKING THE ROCKET, MRS. GOING, CAPTAIN? A HATHAWAY! BUT AS I WAS SAYING. YOU CERTAINLY LOOK VERY WELL AND YOUNG ...

CAPTAIN WILDER TALKED MECHANICALLY, NOT HEAR-ING HIS WORDS, THINKING ONLY OF WILLIAMS RUN-NING DOWN THE HILL AND CLIMBING BACK TO TELL WHAT HE FOUND...



## HATHAWAY STOOD UP...

A TOAST TO ALL OF YOU! IT'S
GOOD TO BE WITH FRIENDS
AGAIN! AND TO MY WIFE AND
CHILDREN, WITHOUT WHOM I
COULDN'T HAVE SURVIVED
ALONE! IT IS ONLY...THROUGH...



HE DID NOT CRY OUT AS HE FELL FORWARD OVER THE TABLE AND SLIPPED TO THE GROUND!WILDER KNELT AND TOOK THE OLD MAN'S HAND! HATHAWAY'S VOICE WAS BARELY AUDIBLE...





HE WAS DEAD! WILDER AROSE, WENT TO ALICE HATHAWAY, AND LOOKED INTO HER FACE ...











YES! FOR YEARS ON END WE SAT AND TALKED! HE LOVED TO TALK! HE LIKED THE STONE HUT AND THE OPEN FIRE! WE COULD HAVE LIVED IN A MORE MODERN HOUSE IN THE DESERTED CITY, BUT HE LIKED IT UP HERE! HE TOLD ME ALL ABOUT HIS LABORATORY AND THE THINGS HE DID IN IT! HE WOULD SIT AND LIGHT A CIGAR AND TALK TO US! THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING HE COULDN'T





# AFTER THE FUNERAL, WILLIAMS NODDED AT THE STONE HUT...

HERE'S MY GUN! WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO IF YOU CAN DO ABOUT THEM? ANYTHING ABOUT YOU CAN'T LEAVE THIS, YOU'RE A THEM HERE, LIKE 冒 BETTER MAN THAT ... AS THEY THAN Z

FIVE MINUTES LATER, WILLIAMS RETURNED ... SWEATING ...





ON NIGHTS WHEN THE WIND COMES OVER THE DEAD SEA BOTTOMS AND THROUGH THE GRAVEYARD, OVER THE FOUR OLD CROSSES AND THE ONE NEW ONE, THERE IS A LIGHT BURNING IN THE LOW STONE HUT! INSIDE ARE A WOMAN, TWO DAUGHTERS, AND A SON TENDING A LOW FIRE FOR NO REASON AND LAUGHING



AND NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, YEAR AFTER YEAR, FOR NO REASON AT ALL, THE WOMAN COMES OUT AND LOOKS AT THE SKY FOR A LONG MOMENT... LOOKING AT THE GREEN BURNING EARTH... NOT KNOWING WHY



... AND THEN SHE GOES BACK AND THROWS A STICK ON THE FIRE, AND THE WIND COMES UP AND THE DEAD SEA GOES ON BEING DEAD!

-THE END-

# there will come soft rains...

THE SUN CAME OUT FROM BEHIND THE RAIN. THE HOUSE STOOD ALONE IN A CITY OF RUBBLE AND ASHES. THIS WAS THE ONE HOUSE LEFT STANDING! AT NIGHT, THE RUINED CITY GAVE OFFA RADIO ACTIVE GLOW WHICH COULD BE SEEN FOR MILES. THE ENTIRE WEST FACE OF THE HOUSE WAS BLACK, SAVE FOR FIVE PLACES. HERE, THE WHITE SILHOUETTE OF A MAN MOWED A LAWN. THERE, AS IN A PHOTOGRAPH, A WOMAN BENT TO PICK FLOWERS. STILL FARTHER OVER, THEIR IMAGES OUTLINED IN ONE TITANC INSTANT, A SMALL BOY, HANDS FLUNG INTO THE AIR...HIGHER UP, THE IMAGE OF A THROWN BALL...AND OPPOSITE HIM, A GIRL, HANDS RAISED TO CATCH THE BALL WHICH NEVER CAME DOWN...



THE FIVE SPOTS OF PAINT... THE MAN, THE WOMAN, THE CHILDREN, THE BALL REMAINED! THE REST WAS A CHARCOAL LAYER...

THE MORNING HOUSE LAY EMPTY. IN THE LIVING ROOM, THE VOICE-CLOCK SANG, REPEATING AND REPEATING ITS SOUNDS INTO THE EMPTINESS...



IN THE KITCHEN, THE BREAKFAST STOVE GAVE A
HISSING SIGH AND EJECTED FROM ITS WARM INTERIOR EIGHT PIECES OF PERFECTLY BROWNED TOAST,
EIGHT EGGS SUNNYSIDE UP, SIXTEEN SLICES OF
BACON, TWO COFFEES, AND TWO COOL GLASSES



# S OMEWHERE IN THE WALLS, RELAYS CLICKED... MEMORY TAPES GLIDED UNDER ELECTRIC EYES...

TODAY IS AUGUST 4,2026! TODAY IS MR. FEATHERSTONE'S BIRTHDAY! TODAY IS THE ANNIVERSARY OF TILITA'S MARRIAGE! INSURANCE IS PAYABLE ... AS ARE THE WATER, GAS, AND LIGHT BILLS ...

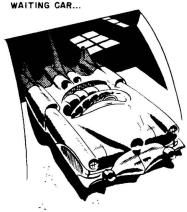
# THE VOICE CLOCK SOUNDED AGAIN.

EIGHT-ONE! TICK-TOCK! EIGHT-ONE O'CLOCK! OFF TO SCHOOL! OFF TO WORK! RUN! RUN! EIGHT-ONE ...

BUT NO DOORS SLAMMED, NO CAR-PETS TOOK THE SOFT TREAD OF RUBBER HEELS, IT WAS RAINING AGAIN OUTSIDE. THE WEATHER-BOX ON THE FRONT DOOR SANG QUIETLY...



OUTSIDE, THE GARAGE CHIMED AND LIFTED ITS DOORS TO REVEAL THE



AFTER A LONG WAIT, THE DOOR SWUNG DOWN AGAIN. AT EIGHT - THIRTY, THE EGGS WERE SHRIVELED AND THE TOAST WAS LIKE STONE. AN ALUMINUM WEDGE SCRAPED THEM INTO THE SINK...



...WHERE HOT WATER WHIRLED THEM DOWN A METAL THROAT WHICH DIGESTED AND FLUSHED THEM AWAY TO THE DISTANT SEA. THE DIRTY DISHES WERE DROPPED INTO A HOT WASHER AND EMERGED



OUT OF WARRENS IN THE WALL, TINY ROBOT MICE-LIKE THINGS DARTED. THE ROOMS WERE ACRAWL WITH THE SMALL CLEANING ANIMALS,



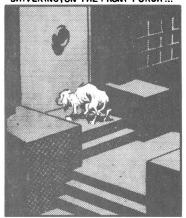
THEY THUDDED AGAINST CHAIRS, WHIRLING THEIR MUSTACHED RUNNERS, KNEADING THE RUG NAP, SUCKING GENTLY AT HIDDEN DUST. THEN, LIKE MYSTERIOUS INVADERS, THEY POPPED BACK INTO THEIR NOOKS. THEIR PINK ELECTRIC-EYES FADED. THE HOUSE WAS



TEN-FIFTEEN. THE GARDEN SPRIN-KLERS CAME UP IN GOLDEN FOUNTS. THE WATER PELTED WINDOWPANES, RUNNING DOWN THE CHARRED WEST SIDE WHERE THE HOUSE HAD BEEN BURNED EVENLY FREE OF ITS WHITE PAINT...



TWELVE NOON. A DOG WHINED, SHIVERING, ON THE FRONT PORCH...



THE FRONT DOOR RECOGNIZED THE DOG'S VOICE AND OPENED. THE DOG, ONCE HUGE AND FLESHY, BUT NOW GONE TO BONE AND COVERED WITH SORES, MOVED INSIDE, TRACKING MUD. . . .



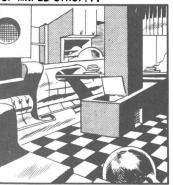
BEHIND IT, ANGRY MICE WHIRRED...
ANGRY AT HAVING TO PICK UP MUD...
ANGRY AT INCONVENIENCE. FOR
NOT A LEAF FRAGMENT BLEW UNDER
THE DOOR BUT WHAT THE WALL
PANELS FLIPPED OPEN AND THE
SCRAP RATS FLASHED SWIFTLY
OUT...



THE DOG RAN AROUND, HYSTERICALLY YELPING TO EACH DOOR, AT LAST REALIZING, AS THE HOUSE REALIZED, THAT ONLY SILENCE WAS HERE! IT SNIFFED THE AIR AND SCRATCHED AT THE KITCHEN DOOR...



BEHIND THE DOOR, THE STOVE WAS MAKING LUNCH... PANCAKES WHICH FILLED THE HOUSE WITH A RICH BAKING ODOR AND THE SCENT OF MAPLE SYRUP...

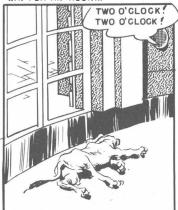


THE DOG FROTHED AT THE MOUTH, LYING AT THE DOOR, SNIFFING, ITS EYES TURNED TO FIRE...

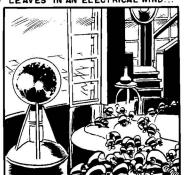




... AND DIED! IT LAY IN THE HALL-WAY FOR AN HOUR ...



DELICATELY SENSING DECAY AT LAST, THE REGIMENTS OF MICE HUM-MED OUT AS SOFTLY AS BLOWN LEAVES IN AN ELECTRICAL WIND...



Two-fifteen. The dog was gone!

IN THE CELLAR, THE INCINERATOR GLOWED SUDDENLY AND A WHIRL OF SPARKS LEAPED UP THE CHIMNEY...



TWO THIRTY-FIVE. BRIDGE TABLES SPROUTED FROM PATIO WALLS. PLAYING CARDS FLUTTERED ONTO PADS IN A SHOWER OF PIPS. MARTINIS AND EGG SALAD SANDWICHES MANIFESTED ON AN



FOUR-O'CLOCK, THE TABLES FOLDED LIKE GREAT BUTTERFLIES BACK THROUGH PANEL WALLS...



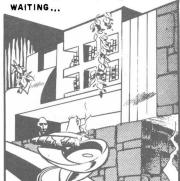
FOUR-THIRTY. THE NURSERY WALLS GLOWED! ANIMALS TOOK SHAPE... YELLOW GIRAFFES, BLUE LIONS, PINK ANTELOPES, LILAC PANTHERS... CAVORTING IN CRYSTAL SUBSTANCE! IT WAS THE CHILDREN'S HOUR...



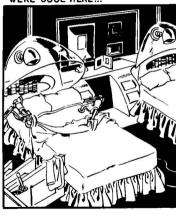
FIVE O'CLOCK. THE BATH FILLED WITH CLEAR HOT WATER...



SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT O'CLOCK. DINNER.
IN THE STUDY... A CLICK. A CIGAR
POPPED UP IN THE METAL STAND
OPPOSITE THE HEARTH... HALF AN
INCH OF GREY ASH ON IT, SMOKING,



NINE O'CLOCK. HIDDEN CIRCUITS WARMED THE BEDS, FOR NIGHTS WERE COOL HERE...



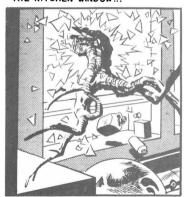
THE FIRE BURNED ON THE STONE HEARTH AND THE CIGAR FELL AWAY INTO A MOUND OF QUIET ASH ON ITS TRAY...



THE EMPTY CHAIRS FACED EACH OTHER BETWEEN THE SILENT WALLS. AND THE MUSIC PLAYED...



AT TEN O'CLOCK THE HOUSE BEGAN TO DIE! THE WIND BLEW A FALLING BOUGH CRASHED THROUGH THE KITCHEN WINDOW ...



CLEANING SOLVENT, BOTTLED, SHATTERED OVER THE STOVE!



THE ROOM WAS ABLAZE IN AN



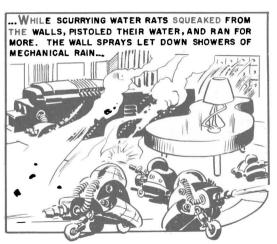
THE HOUSE LIGHTS FLASHED ON WATER PUMPS SHOT FROM THE CEILINGS ...



BUT THE SOLVENT SPEAD ON THE LINOLEUM, LICKING, EATING, UNDER THE KITCHEN DOOR, WHILE THE VOICES TOOK UP THE CHORUS... THE HOUSE TRIED TO SAVE ITSELF. DOORS SPRANG TIGHTLY SHUT, BUT THE WINDOWS WERE BROKEN BY THE HEAT, AND THE WIND BLEW, SUCKING UPON THE FIRE...



THE HOUSE GAVE GROUND AS THE FIRE IN TEN BILLION ANGRY SPARKS MOVED WITH FLAMING EASE FROM ROOM TO ROOM THROUGH THE HOUSE ...



BUT IT WAS TOO LATE! SOMEWHERE, SIGHING, A PUMP SHRUGGED TO A STOP. THE QUENCHING RAINS CEASED. THE RESERVE WATER SUPPLY WHICH HAD FILLED BATHS AND WASHED DISHES FOR MANY QUIET DAYS, WAS GONE! THE FIRE CRACKLED ON...



IT FED UPON PICASSOS AND MATISSES IN THE HALLS, LIKE DELICACIES, BAKING OFF THE OILY FLESH, TENDERLY CRISPING THE CANVASES INTO BLACK SHAVINGS...



Now the fire LAY IN BEDS,STOOD IN WINDOWS, CHANGING THE COLOR OF THE DRAPES



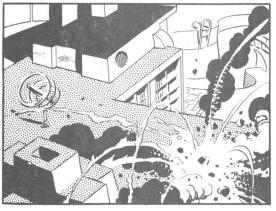
AND THEN REINFORCEMENTS!
FROM ATTIC TRAP-DOORS, BLIND
ROBOT FACES PEERED DOWN WITH
FAUCET-MOUTHS GUSHING GREEN
CHEMICAL...



THE FIRE BACKED OFF, AS EVEN AN ELEPHANT MUST AT THE SIGHT OF A DEAD SNAKE. NOW THERE WERE TWENTY SNAKES WHIPPING OVER THE FLOOR, KILLING THE FIRE WITH A CLEAR COLD VENOM OF GREEN



BUT THE FIRE WAS CLEVER! IT HAD SENT FLAMES OUTSIDE THE HOUSE, UP THROUGH THE ATTIC TO THE PUMPS THERE! AN EXPLOSION...



THE ATTIC BRAIN WHICH DIRECTED THE PUMPS WAS SHATTERED INTO BRONZE SHRAPNEL ON THE BEAMS THE FIRE RUSHED BACK INTO EVERY CLOSET AND FELT OF THE CLOTHES HUNG THERE...



THE HOUSE SHUDDERED, OAK BONE ON BONE, ITS BARED SKELETON CRINGING FROM THE HEAT, ITS WIRES, ITS NERVES REVEALED AS IF A SURGEON HAD TORN THE SKIN OFF TO LET RED VEINS AND CAPILLARIES QUIVER IN THE SCALDING AIR. HEAT SNAPPED MIRRORS. THE VOICES WAILED...



...LIKE A TRAGIC NURSERY RHYME. A DOZEN VOICES, HIGH, LOW, LIKE CHILDREN DYING IN A FOREST, ALONE, ALONE. AND THE VOICES FADED AS THE WIRES POPPED THEIR SHEATHINGS. IN THE NURSERY, THE BLUE LIONS ROARED, PURPLE GIRAFFS BOUNDED OFF, PANTHERS RAN IN CIRCLES, CHANGING COLOR...



VOICES DIED. IN THE LAST INSTANT UNDER THE FIRE AVALANCHE, OTHER CHORUSES, OBLIVIOUS, COULD BE HEARD ANNOUNCING THE TIME, PLAYING MUSIC, REMINDING THE HOT FLAMES OF DUE BILLS. DOORS OPENED AND SLAMMED. A FEW LAST CLEANING MICE DARTED BRAVELY OUT TO CARRY AWAY THE HORRID ASHES...



AND IN THE KITCHEN, AN INSTANT BEFORE THE RAIN OF FIRE AND TIMBER, THE STOVE COULD BE SEEN MAKING BREAKFAST AT A PSYCHOPATHIC RATE...TEN DOZEN EGGS, SIX LOAVES OF TOAST, TWENTY DOZEN BACON STRIPS, WHICH, EATEN BY FIRE STARTED THE STOVE WORKING AGAIN, HYSTERICALLY HISSING...



THE CRASH! THE ATTIC SMASHED INTO THE KITCHEN...THE KITCHEN INTO THE CELLAR...CELLAR INTO SUB-CELLAR. DEEP-FREEZE, ARMCHAIR, FILM TAPES, CIRCUITS, BEDS, ALL LIKE SKELETONS THROWN IN A CLUTTERED MOUND DEEP



THEN, SMOKE ... AND SILENCE!



DAWN SHOWED FAINTLY IN THE EAST, AMONG THE RUINS, ONE WALL STOOD ALONE. WITHIN THE WALL, A LAST VOICE SAID, OVER AND OVER, AGAIN AND AGAIN...

TODAY IS AUGUST 5, 2026 TODAY IS AUGUST 5,2026! TODAY IS ... ) -THE END-



THE SHIP CAME DOWN FROM SPACE. IT CAME DOWN FROM THE STARS AND THE SILENT GULFS OF SPACE. IT WAS A NEW SHIP, THE ONLY ONE OF ITS KIND, IT HAD FIRE IN ITS BELLY AND MEN IN ITS BODY, AND IT MOVED WITH CLEAN SILENCE, FIERY AND HOT. A CROWD HAD GATHERED AT ITS NEW YORK LAUNCHING SITE AND SHOUTED AND WAVED THEIR HANDS UP INTO THE SUNLIGHT... AND THE ROCKET HAD JERKED UP, BLOOMED OUT GREAT FLOWERS OF HEAT AND COLOR, AND RUN AWAY INTO SPACE ON THE FIRST VOYAGE TO MARS! AND NOW, IT WAS DECELERATING WITH METAL EFFICIENCY IN THE UPPER ZONES OF MARS'S ATMOSPHERE...





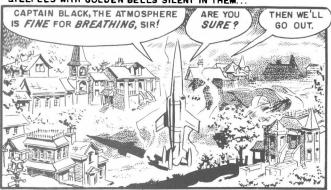
## Navigator Lustig, archaeologist Hinkston, and captain John Black watched mars swing up



THE SHIP LANDED SOFTLY ON A LAWN OF GREEN GRASS.OUTSIDE, UPON THE LAWN, STOOD AN IRON DEER. FURTHER UP THE LAWN, A TALL BROWN VICTORIAN HOUSE SAT IN THE QUIET SUNLIGHT. AN OLD SWING WHICH WAS HOOKED INTO THE PORCH CEILING SWUNG BACK AND FORTH, BACK AND FORTH, IN A LITTLE BREEZE...



AROUND THE ROCKET IN FOUR DIRECTIONS SPREAD THE TOWN, GREEN AND MOTIONLESS IN THE MARTIAN SPRING. THERE WERE WHITE HOUSES AND RED BRICK ONES, AND TALL ELM TREES BLOWING IN THE WIND, AND TALL MAPLES, AND HORSE CHESTNUTS. AND CHURCH STEEPLES WITH GOLDEN BELLS SILENT IN THEM...





AND IT'S A DO YOU THINK SMALL TOWN THAT THE CIVILI-LIKE AN EARTH ZATIONS OF TWO TOWN. INCREDI-PLANETS CAN BLE! IT CAN'T PROGRESS AT BE, BUT IT /S. THE SAME RATE AND EVOLVE IN THE SAME WAY. HINKSTON?

I WOULDN'T STRANGE, HECK! HAVE THOUGHT IT'S ABSOLUTELY SO, SIR. IT IMPOSSIBLE! 15 QUITE LOOK OUT THERE . STRANGE! TELL ME IFIT'S LOGICAL THAT MARTIANS SHOULD HAVE PORCH SWINGS. VICTORIAN HOUSES LAWNS, CHESTNUT TREES ..



THE THREE MEN CAME OUT INTO THE SUNSHINE. IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL SPRING DAY, SOMEWHERE A PIANO PLAYED, SOFTLY, DROWSILY. THE SONG WAS BEAUTIFUL DREAMER. LUSTIG BEGAN TO TREMBLE! HINKSTON'S VOICE WAS FEEBLE...



THE SOFT WIND BLEW THE SKY WAS SERENE. SOME-WHERE A HORSE AND WAGON TROTTED AND ROLLED BY, BUMPING...



WHY NOT? HOW ELSE CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE HOUSES. THE LAWNS, THE IRON DEER, THE FLOWERS, THE PLANO MUSIC? SAY THAT THERE WERE SOME PEOPLE IN THE YEAR 1905, PERHAPS, WHO HATED EARTH, AND THEY GOT TOGETHER, IN SECRET, AND BUILT A ROCKET AND CAME OUT HERE TO MARS...



BUT THE WORK, THE WORLD HINKSTON ... THE WAS A WORK OF BUILDING/ DIFFERENT A COMPLEX THING. PLACE IN 1905 ... LIKE A ROCKET ... THEY COULD HAVE KEPT IT A SECRET MUCH MORE EASILY.

YOU MAKE IT SOUND ALMOST REASONABLE, HINKSTON!

IT /S, SIR! IT
HAS TO BE! LOOK
HOW OLD FASHIONED
EVERYTHING IS.
WE HAVE THE
PROOF HERE



HOLLOW ECHOES SOUNDED FROM THE BOARDS AS THEY WALKED ACROSS THE PORCH AND STOOD BEFORE THE SCREEN DOOR. INSIDE THEY COULD SEE A CRYSTAL CHANDELIER AND A COMFORTABLE MORRIS CHAIR. CAPTAIN JOHN BLACK RANG THE BELL ...

I... I BEG YOUR PARDON, IF YOU'RE SELLING SOME-THING, I'M MUCH TOO BUSY | BUT WE'RE STRANGERS AND I HAVEN'T TIME ... HERE, MA'AM! WE'RE FROM FARTH, AND WE TOWN GOT HERE AND HOW YOU GOT HERE!

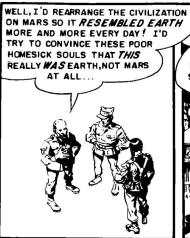
THE WOMAN ADDRESSED THEM AS THOUGH SHE WERE ADDRESSING CHILDREN...



## SHE SLAMMED THE DOOR, THEY LOOKED AT ONE ANOTHER...

ANOTHER ... WISCONSIN? BUT ... NO! NO! WE CHECKED EVERY MILE OF THE WAY! WE WENT BUT ... COULD WE HAVE GOTTEN OURSELVES PAST THE MOON AND OUT FOULED UP AND BY INTO SPACE. I'M SURE ACCIDENT COME BACK WE'RE ON MARS, SIR! TO EARTH?

HOW DOES THIS SOUND TO YOU, HINKSTON? SUP-POSE, AS YOU SAID, ROCKET TRAVEL OCCURED YEARS AGO, AND WHEN THE EARTH PEOPLE HAD BEEN HERE FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS THEY BEGAN TO GET HOMESICK FOR EARTH. FIRST A MILD NEUROSIS ABOUT IT, THEN A FULL-FLEDGED PSYCHOSIS! THEN, THREATENED INSANITY! WHAT WOULD YOU DO, AS A PSYCHIATRIST, IF FACED WITH SUCH A PROBLEM?



GOOD ENOUGH! CAPTAIN! THAT WOMAN IN OH ... MY THAT HOUSE BACK LORD. THERE JUST THINKS SHE'S LIVING ON EARTH! IT PROTECTS HER SANITY! SHE AND ALL THE OTHERS IN THIS TOWN ...

LUSTIG STARED DOWN THE QUIET. DREAMING AFTERNOON STREET ... WHAT IS OH, SIR ... SIR ... WHAT IT, LUSTIG? ) I SEE ... WHAT I SEE NOW BEFORE ME ... OH ..

AND LUSTIG BEGAN TO CRY. HIS FINGERS CAME UP, TWISTING AND TREMBLING, AND HIS FACE WAS ALL WONDER AND JOY AND INCREDULITY. HE BEGAN TO RUN, STUMBLING, AWKWARDLY ...



Now Lustig was running at full speed, shouting. HE TURNED INTO A YARD HALF-WAY DOWN THE LITTLE SHADY STREET AND LEAPED UPON THE PORCH OF A LARGE GREEN HOUSE. TWO OLD PEOPLE STOOD IN THE DOORWAY, THEIR FACES LIGHTING UP...



ALBERT LUSTIG SOBBED AS HE HELD THEM, TURNED THEM, KISSED THEM, HUGGED THEM, CRIED ON THEM, HELD THEM OUT AGAIN, AND BLINKED AT THE TWO LITTLE OLD PEOPLE...





IN THE LIVING ROOM OF THE OLD HOUSE IT WAS COOL AND A GRANDFATHER CLOCK TICKED HIGH AND LONG IN ONE CORNER...







FAR AWAY, OUTSIDE IN THE SUN-LIGHT, THERE WAS A SOUND OF VOICES AND A GREAT HELLO...



CAPTAIN BLACK STOOD LOOKING AT HIS SHIP! THE PORT WAS OPEN AND HIS CREW WAS STREAMING OUT, WAVING THEIR HANDS. A CROWD OF PEOPLE HAD GATHERED.



IN AND THROUGH AND AMONG THESE PEOPLE THE MEMBERS OF THE CREW WERE RUNNING, TALKING, LAUGHING, SHAKING HANDS. PEOPLE DID LITTLE DANCES. PEOPLE SWARMED. THE ROCKET LAY EMPTY AND ABANDONED...



A BRASS BAND EXPLODED. THEN, EACH MEMBER OF THE CREW WITH A MOTHER ON ONE ARM, A FATHER OR SISTER ON THE OTHER, WAS SPIRITED OFF DOWN THE STREET, INTO COTTAGES OR BIG MANSIONS. AND DOORS SLAMMED SHUT...



THE CAPTAIN'S MOUTH REMAINED OPEN. ALONG THE SIDEWALK UNDER THE MARTIAN SUN, TALL, SMILING, EYES BLUE, FACE TAN, CAME A YOUNG MAN OF SOME TWENTY-SIX YEARS...







HINKSTON WAS GONE, HE HAD SEEN HIS OWN HOUSE DOWN THE STREET AND WAS RUNNING FOR IT. EDWARD GRABBED CAPTAIN BLACK'S ARM AND MARCHED HIM ...

THERE'S THE HOUSE, REMEMBER IT? HECK! I JOHN. REMEMBER BET I CAN BEAT YOU TO THE FRONT DOOR ...

THEY RAN. THE WIND ROARED OVER CAPTAIN JOHN BLACK'S EARS. THE GROUND ROARED BENEATH HIS FEET. HE SAW THE GOLDEN FIGURE OF EDWARD BLACK PULL AHEAD OF HIM. HE SAW THE HOUSE RUSH FORWARD... THE DOOR OPEN ... THE SCREEN SWING BACK ...



IN THE DOORWAY, MOM, PINK AND PLUMP AND BRIGHT. AND BEHIND HER, PEPPER GREY, DAD, WITH HIS PIPE



IT WAS A LONG AFTERNOON. THEY FINISHED LUNCH AND THEY SAT IN THE LIVING ROOM AND HE TOLD THEM ALL ABOUT HIS ROCKET AND HIS BEING CAPTAIN...



AND THEN IT WAS NIGHT AND HE LEFT THE LAND OF CIGAR SMOKE AND PERFUME AND BOOKS AND ASCENDED THE STAIRS, TALKING, TALKING WITH EDWARD. EDWARD PUSHED OPEN THE DOOR AND THERE WAS THE YELLOW BRASS BED AND THE OLD BANNERS FROM COLLEGE DAYS...



THE LIGHTS WERE OUT. THEY WERE IN BED, SIDE BY SIDE, AS IN THOSE DAYS, HOW MANY DECADES AGO ...



## CAPTAIN BLACK LAY PEACEFULLY, LETTING HIS THOUGHTS FLOAT...



HE LAUGHED OUT LOUD, ALMOST. HE HAD THE MOST RIDICULOUS THEORY ALL OF A SUDDEN, IT GAVE HIM A KIND OF CHILLED FEELING, JUST SUPPOSE ...



WHAT A CLEVER WEAPON TO USE AGAINST EARTHMEN WITH ATOMIC WEAPONS! WHAT MORE NATURAL? WHAT MORE SIMPLE? A MAN DOESN'T ASK QUESTIONS WHEN HIS MOTHER IS SUDDENLY BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE; HE'S MUCH TOO HAPPY! AND THE BRASS BAND PLAYED AND EVERYBODY WAS TAKEN TO PRIVATE HOMES. AND NOW WE ARE ALL IN VARIOUS BEDS, WITH NO WEAPONS TO PROTECT US, AND THE ROCKET LIES IN THE MOONLIGHT, EMPTY...



AND IT WOULD BE SO SIMPLE FOR MY BROTHER, HERE IN BED BESIDE ME, TO TURN OVER AND PUT A KNIFE INTO MY HEART WHILE CHANGING FORM, MELTING, SHIFTING...BECOMING A ONE-EYED, GREEN, AND YELLOW-TOOTHED MARTIAN...







CAPTAIN JOHN BLACK BROKE AND RAN ACROSS THE ROOM! HE SCREAMED TWICE ...



HE NEVER REACHED THE DOOR ...

In the morning, the brass band played a mournful dirge, and from every house came little solemn processions bearing long boxes, and along the sunfilled streets, weeping and changing, came grandmas and grandpas and mothers and sisters and brothers, walking to the grave-yard where there were open holes freshly dug and new tombstones installed...



THE COFFINS WERE LOWERED! SOIL WAS SHOVELED IN ON THE COFFIN TOPS! THEN THE BRASS BAND SLAMMED AND BANGED BACK INTO TOWN AND THE CROWD, WITH MELTING FACES, SHIFTING LIKE WAX, STOOD AROUND AND WAVED AND SHOUTED AS THE ROCKET WAS TORN TO PIECES AND STREWN ABOUT AND BLOWN UP...



MANY NIGHTS FIORELLO BODONI WOULD AWAKEN TO HEAR THE ROCKETS SINGING IN THE DARK SKY. HE WOULD TIP-TOE FROM BED, CERTAIN THAT HIS KIND WIFE WAS DREAMING, AND LET HIMSELF OUT INTO THE NIGHT AIR. FOR A SILENT MOMENT HE WOULD LET HIS HEART SOAR ALONE INTO SPACE, FOLLOWING THE ROCKETS. NOW, THIS VERY NIGHT, HE STOOD HALF NAKED IN THE DARKNESS, WATCHING THE FIRE FOUNTAINS MURMURING IN THE AIR... THE ROCKETS ON THEIR LONG WILD WAYS TO MARS AND SATURN AND VENUS...





BRAMENTE, WHO ALSO WATCHED THE ROCKETS
THROUGH THE MIDNIGHT HUSH, SAT ON A MILK CRATE...



BRAMENTE SHOOK HIS GREY HEAD... FOOL! YOU'LL NEVER GO. THIS IS A PERHAPS RICH MAN'S WORLD. WHEN I WAS MY YOUNG, THEY WROTE IT IN FIERY SONS ... LETTERS: THE WORLD OF THE FUTURE ... SCIENCE ... COMFORT ... AND NEW THINGS FOR ALL. HA! SIXTY YEARS. THE FUTURE BECOMES NOW. BUT DO WE FLY IN ROCKETS? NO. WE LIVE IN SHACKS LIKE OUR ANCESTORS BEFORE US.



## BRAMENTE SNAPPED ...

IDIOT! HOW WILL YOU CHOOSE? WHO NO! WILL GO? IF YOU GO, YOUR WIFE WILL HATE YOU, WHEN YOU TELL HER OF YOUR AMAZING TRIP, OVER THE YEARS, WON'T BITTERNESS GNAW AT HER?

YES! AND YOUR CHILDREN? WILL THEIR LIVES BE FILLED WITH THE MEMORY OF PAPA, WHO FLEW TO MARS WHILE THEY STAYED BEHIND. THEY WILL THINK OF THE ROCKETS ALL THEIR LIVES. THEY WILL LIE AWAKE. THEY WILL BESICK WITH WANTING... JUST AS YOU ARE SICK NOW. THEY WILL WANT TO DIE IF THEY CANNOT GO. DON'T DO IT,



DON'T SET THEIR GOAL, I
WARN YOU! LET THEM BE
GONTENT WITH BEING POOR.
TURN THEIR EYES DOWN TO
THEIR HANDS AND TO YOUR
JUNK YARD, NOT TO THE
STARS.
BUT...



SUPPOSE YOUR WIFE WENT, BODON!?
HOW WOULD YOU FEEL, KNOWING
SHE HAD SEEN AND YOU HAD NOT?
NO, BODON!! BUY A NEW FURNACE,
WHICH YOU NEED, AND BURN YOUR
DREAMS WITH IT...



THAT NIGHT, BODON! LAY AMONG HIS NERVOUS CHILDREN, BESIDE HIS MOUNTAINOUS WIFE, TWIST-ING AND STARING AT NOTHING...

BRAMENTE IS RIGHT! BETTER TO INVEST THE MONEY, WHY SAVE IT WHEN ONLY ONE MEMBER OF THE FAMILY CAN RIDE THE ROCKET. WHILE THE OTHERS REMAIN TO MELT IN FRUSTRATION?

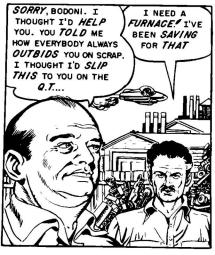
In the morning, the children rushed in, the two boys fighting over a toy rocket, the two girls carrying dolls which duplicated the inhabitants of mars, venus and neptune, green mannequins with three yellow eyes and twelve fingers...



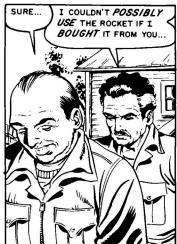
WITH HIS BREAKFAST CURDLED WITHIN HIM, FIORELLO BODONI WORKED IN HIS JUNK YARD, RIPPING METAL, POUNDING IT, READYING IT TO BE MELTED IN THE NEW FURNACE HE WOULD BUY. COMPETITION HAD KEPT HIM ON THE INSANE EDGE OF POVERTY FOR TWENTY YEARS. IN THE AFTERNOON, A MAN ENTERED BODONI'S JUNK YARD...

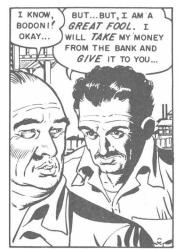


OF COURSE IT'S ONLY A MOCKUP. YOU KNOW. WHEN THEY PLAN A ROCKET THEY BUILD A FULL-SCALE MODEL FIRST. HAVEN'T OF ALUMINUM. YOU MIGHT MAKE A THE SMALL PROFIT IF YOU MELT HER MONEY! DOWN. LET YOU HAVE IT FOR TWO THOUSAND ...

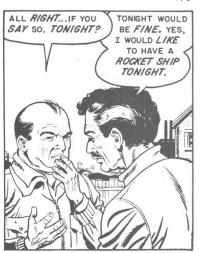












THAT NIGHT, THERE WAS A MOON. THE ROCKET WAS WHITE AND BIG IN THE JUNK YARD. IT HELD THE WHITENESS OF THE MOON AND THE BLUENESS OF THE STARS. BODONI LOOKED AT IT AND LOVED IT. HE WANTED TO PET IT AND LIE AGAINST IT, PRESSING IT WITH HIS CHEEK, TELLING IT ALL THE SECRET WANTS OF HIS HEART...



THE ROCKET SMELLED OF TIME AND DISTANCE. IT WAS LIKE WALKING INTO A CLOCK. IT WAS FINISHED WITH SWISS DELICACY. BODONI WHISPERED EXCITEDLY...



HE SAT IN THE PILOT'S SEAT. HE TOUCHED A LEVER. HE HUMMED IN HIS SHUT MOUTH, HIS EYES CLOSED...



THE HUMMING GREW LOUDER, LOUDER, HIGHER, WILDER, STRANGE, MORE EXHILARATING, TREMBLING IN HIM AND LEANING HIM FORWARD AND PULLING HIM AND THE SHIP IN A ROARING SILENCE AND IN A METAL SCREAMING, WHILE HIS FISTS FLEW OVER THE CONTROLS...



HE FELL BACK, EXHAUSTED AND PANTING. HIS SHAKING HANDS CAME LOOSE OF THE CONTROLS. HE SAT FOR A LONG TIME, BREATHING OUT AND IN, HIS HEART BEATING. HE HEARD THE FAMILY RADIO PLAYING SOME DISTANT MUSIC. HE SAT FOR HALF AN HOUR CONSIDERING THE ROCKET AND HIS FAMILY...



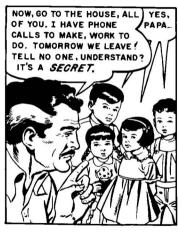
AND THEN HE STEPPED FROM THE ROCKET AND BEGAN TO WALK, AND AS HE WALKED, HE BEGAN TO LAUGH, AND WHEN HE REACHED THE BACK DOOR OF HIS HOUSE, HE TOOK A DEEP BREATH AND CALLED...



THE CHILDREN BALANCED IN THE WINDY JUNK YARD, UNDER THE GLOW-ING ROCKET, NOT TOUCHING IT YET, THEY STARTED TO CRY, MARIA LOOKED AT HER HUSBAND...



HE TURNED TO THE CHILDREN ...



THE CHILDREN EDGED OFF FROM THE ROCKET, STUMBLING. MARIA WAITED ...



WITHOUT A WORD, SHE TURNED AWAY. BODONI WATCHED HER GO... WHISPERING



BODONI STARTED TO WORK. THROUGH THE MIDNIGHT HOURS TRUCKS CAME, PACKAGES WERE DELIVERED, AND BODONI, SMILING, EXHAUSTED HIS BANK ACCOUNT, WITH BLOW TORCH AND METAL STRIPPING, HE ASSAULTED THE ROCKET, ADDED, TOOK AWAY, WORKED FIERY MAGICS AND SECRET INSULTS UPON IT. HE BOLTED NINE ANCIENT AUTOMOBILE MOTORS INTO THE EMPTY ENGINE ROOM. THEN HE WELDED THE ENGINE ROOM SHUT, SO NONE



#### AT DAWN, HE ENTERED THE KITCHEN ...



SHE WOULD NOT SPEAK TO HIM ...

AT SUNSET, HE CALLED TO THE CHILDREN ...





# THE CHILDREN HURRIED TO THE ROCKET. BODONI STOOD BEFORE HIS WIFE ...



## AT THE DOOR OF THE ROCKET, THE





THE SHIP WAS QUIET AS A STOPPED CLOCK. THE AIRLOCK HISSED SHUT BEHIND THEM. HE STRAPPED THEM ALL, LIKE TINY MUMMIES, INTO RUBBER HAMMOCKS...



He jerked ten switches, the rocket thundered and leaped. The children danced in their hammocks, screaming...



THE MOON DREAMED BY. METEORS BROKE INTO FIRE-WORKS. TIME FLOWED AWAY. THE CHILDREN SHOUTED. RELEASED FROM THEIR HAMMOCKS, HOURS LATER, THEY PEERED FROM THE PORTS...



THE ROCKET DROPPED PINK PETALS
OF FIRE. THE CHILDREN'S EYES DROPPED
SHUT. AT LAST THEY HUNG LIKE
DRUNKEN MOTHS IN THEIR COCOON
HAMMOCKS... ASLEEP...



BODONI TIPTOED TO THE AIRLOCK.
HE PRESSED A BUTTON, THE AIRLOCK DOOR SWUNG WIDE...



HE STEPPED OUT ...



INTO SPACE? INTO INKY TIDES OF METEOR AND GASEOUS TORCH? INTO SWIFT MILEAGES AND INFINITE DIMENSIONS? NO. BODONI SMILED ...



ALL ABOUT THE QUIVERING ROCKET LAY THE JUNK YARD. MARIA STOOD IN THE KITCHEN WINDOW. BODONI WAVED TO HER...



IN THE CENTER OF THE JUNK YARD, MANUFACTURING A MAGIC DREAM, STOOD THE QUIVERING PURRING ROCKET...SHAKING AND ROARING, BOUNCING THE NETTED CHILDREN LIKE FLIES IN A WEB...



BODONI WITHDREW INTO THE ROCKET.
HE BREATHED EASILY, HE PRAYED...

OH, LET NOTHING HAPPEN TO THIS ILLUSION. LET ALL SPACE COME AND GO, AND RED MARS COME UP UNDER OUR SHIP AND THE MOONS OF MARS, AND LET THERE BE NO FLAWS IN THE COLOR FILM.LET NOTHING GO WRONG WITH THE HIDDEN MIRRORS AND SCREENS, LET TIME PASS WITHOUT CRISIS ...

BODONI AWOKE, RED MARS FLOATED NEAR THE ROCKET. THE CHILDREN SOUFALED



BODONI LOOKED AND SAW RED MARS AND IT WAS GOOD AND THERE WERE NO FLAWS AND HE WAS VERY HAPPY... AT SUNSET OF THE FIFTH DAY, THE ROCKET STOPPED SHUDDERING.



THEY WALKED ACROSS THE JUNK YARD, THEIR BLOOD SINGING, THEIR FACES GLOWING...



AT BEDTIME, THE CHILDREN GATHERED BEFORE BODONI ...



VERY LATE IN THE NIGHT, BODON! OPENED HIS EYES. HIS WIFE WHISPERED...





RAY BRADBURY is the author of more than a dozen novels and collections of short stories that have made him one of the most celebrated writers of our time.

Born in Waukegan, Illinois, in 1920, he has lived for most of his life in Los Angeles, where his family moved in 1934. After graduating from high school he supported himself by selling newspapers while he began to write, and published his first story in 1940. Since then, hundreds of stories by Ray Bradbury have appeared in such magazines as Galaxy, Esquire, Astounding Science Fiction, Playboy, Harpers and The Saturday Evening Post. Among his film credits is the screenplay for Moby Dick, starring Gregory Peck and directed by John Huston. His books include The Martian Chronicles, Dandelion Wine, The October Country and the famous Fahrenheit 451, currently being filmed by the French director, François Truffaut. Most recently, he has written a group of plays, produced as "The World of Ray Bradbury" in Los Angeles and New York.

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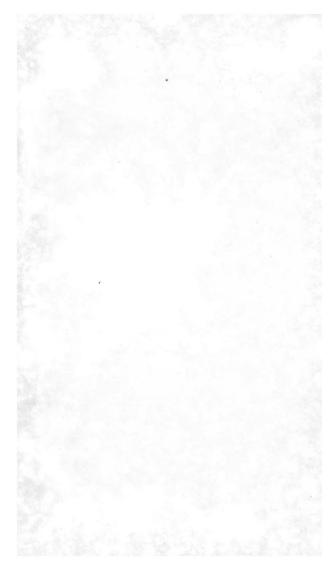
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