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**TONIGHT THE
STARS REVOLT!**

A Novel of Pirate Worlds
by GARDNER F. FOX

**CAPTIVE of the
CENTAURIANESS**

Female warriors raided the Galaxy
to fill their harems on Alpha C

POUL ANDERSON

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PLANET STORIES



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Captive of the Centaurianess

A Novel of Primitive Future Worlds

By POUL ANDERSON





The entire System was after Ballantyne. Earth wanted him. The Jovian war-fleet jetted on his trail. But mainly Ballantyne feared his big-bosomed, sword-swinging space-mate —Dyann the Amazon from man-starved Alpha C3.

THE hero is the child of his times, in that his milieu furnishes him with motives and means, and yet the hero seizes the time and shapes it as he will. And he remains an enigma to his contemporaries and to the future.

Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the strange story of the three whose discoveries and achievements determined the whole course of history. The driving idealism and bold military genius of Dyann

Korlas; the mighty wisdom, profound and benign, of Urushkidan; above all, perhaps, the transcendent clarity of mind and inspired leadership of Ballantyne—these molded our century and all centuries to come, and yet we will never understand them, they are too far beyond us and their essential selves must be forever a mystery.

—Vallabhbhai Rasmussen, *History of the Twenty-third Century, v. 1*

I

THE tender loomed above the crowd of passengers and leave-takers, a great shining bullet caught in floodlights against the dark, and Ray Ballantyne quickened his steps. By Heaven, he'd made it! The flight from San Francisco to Quito, the nail-biting dawdle as he waited for the airbus, then the flight out to Ecuador Spaceport, the last walk through the vast echoing hollowness of the terminal, out onto the field—and there it was, there the little darling lay, waiting to carry him from Earth up to the *Jovian Queen* and safety.

He kissed his fingers at the tender and shoved rudely through the swarm of people and Martians. He'd already missed the first trip up to the liner, and the thought of waiting for the third was beyond endurance.

"Hey, chum."

As the heavy hand fell on his arm, Ballantyne whirled, his heart slamming against his teeth and his spine dropping out. The thick-set man compared his thin sharp features with the photograph in the other paw, nodded, and said "All right, Ballantyne, come along."

"*Se llama Garcia!*" gibbered the engineer. "*No hablo Inglés.*"

"I said come along," said the detective wearily. "I thought you'd try to leave Earth. This way."

Ballantyne's free hand reached up and crammed the fellow's hat down over his eyes. Wrenching loose, he turned and ran for the gangway, upsetting a corpulent Latin woman en route and pursued by a volley of imprecations. He shoved aside the passenger before him and ran into the solid wall of an impassive Jovian ship's officer.

The Jovian, a tall muscular blond in a dazzling crispness of white uniform, looked at him with the thinly veiled contempt of a proper Confed for the lesser breeds of humanity. "Ticket and passport, please," he said stonily.

Ballantyne shoved them at him, glancing shakily back to the detective who had become entangled with the indignant woman and was being slapped with a

handbag and volubly cursed. With maddening deliberation the Jovian scanned the engineer's papers, compared them with a list in his hand, and waved him on.

The detective caromed against the same immovable barrier. "Let me by!" he gasped.

"Your ticket and passport, please," said the Jovian.

"That man is under arrest. Let me by."

"Your ticket and passport, please."

"I tell you I'm an officer of the law and I have a warrant for that man. Let me by."

"Proper authorization may be obtained at the main office," said the Jovian coldly.

The detective tried to rush, encountered a bit of expert judo, and tumbled back into the crowd. Every able-bodied Jovian was a well-trained military reservist.

"Proper authorization may be obtained at the main office," repeated the immovable barrier. To the next man, "Your ticket and passport, please."

Ray Ballantyne dashed the sweat off his brow and permitted himself a nasty chuckle. By the time the hapless detective had gone through all that red tape, the tender would be well on its way.

Before one of his country's secret police the Jovian would have quailed and said nothing. But this was Earth, and the Confeds loved to bait Terrestrials, and there was no better way than by demanding the endless papers which their file-clerk mentalities had devised.

The engineer went on into the tender, found a seat, and strapped himself in. He was clear. Before Heaven, he was away!

Even the long Vanbrugh arm did not reach to Jupiter. Ballantyne's alleged crimes weren't enough for the Earth government to ask his extradition. He could stay on Ganymede till the whole business had blown over, and then—well—

He sighed, relaxing—a medium-sized young man, slender and wiry, with close-cropped yellow hair and features a little too sharp to be handsome. His thin deft fingers rearranged his overly colorful tie and straightened his sports jacket. Always wanted to see the Jovian System, anyway, he rationalized.

The tender's airlock sighed shut and a stewardess went down the aisle hand-

ing out anti-acceleration pills. She had the full-bodied, pure-blooded good looks of the ideal Jovian together with their faintly repellent air of hard, purposeful efficiency. The rockets began to throb, warming up, and a siren hooted.

Ballantyne turned to the man beside him, obsessed with the idiotic desire for conversation found in all recent escapees from the law or the dentist. "Going home, I see," he remarked.

The man was a tall specimen in the gray Jovian army uniform, with colonel's planets on his shoulders and a chestful of ribbons and medals—about forty, closely shaven head, iron jaw, ramrod spine. He fixed the Earthling with a chill pale eye and said, "And you, I see, are leaving home. Two scintillating deductions."

"Ummm—uh—well." Ballantyne looked away, his ears ablaze. The Jovian clutched his heavy portfolio tighter to his side.

The tender shook itself, howled, and jumped into the sky. Ballantyne leaned back in the cushioned seat, staring out the port at the fire-starred unfolding of space. The Jovian colonel sat rigid as before, not deigning to yield to the pressure.

They came up to the *Jovian Queen*, where the great liner held her orbit about Earth, and Ballantyne glimpsed her long metal shape, blinding in the raw sunlight, as the tender swung in for contact. When the airlocks joined there was a steady one-gravity as the spaceship rotated on her axis. Whatever you could say against the Jovians—and that was quite a bit—they did maintain the best transport in the Solar System. Earth's heavy passenger and freight haulers were in tight financial straits competing with the state-subsidized lines of Jupiter.

An expressionless uniformed steward took charge of the passengers as they entered the ship, herding them to their respective destinations. Ballantyne lugged his valise toward third-class section. He'd have to share his cabin with two others—how had the mighty fallen! Thinking over the decline and fall of the Ballantyne pocketbook, he sighed, and the suitcase seemed to drag at him. He'd hit Ganymede pretty broke, unless . . .

He opened his assigned door.

"Put—me—down!"

Ballantyne dropped his suitcase and his jaw. Within the narrow cabin a Martian was struggling in the clutch of a six-foot armored woman.

"Put—me—down!" he spluttered. He coiled his limbs snakelike around the woman's brawny arms, and a Martian's four thick, rubbery walking-tentacles have formidable strength. She didn't seem to notice. She laughed and shook him a bit.

"I—beg your pardon—" gasped Ballantyne, backing away.

"You are forgiven," said the woman. Her voice was a husky contralto, burdened with a rippling, slurring accent he couldn't place. She shot out one Martian-encumbered arm, grabbed him by the coat, and hauled him inside. "You be the yudge, my friend. Is it not justice that I have the lower berth?"

"It is noting of te sort!" screamed the Martian, fixing Ballantyne with round, bulging, and indignant yellow eyes. "My position, my eminence, clearly entitle me to ebery consideration, and ten tis hulking monster—"

The Earthling let his gaze travel up and down the woman's smooth-muscl'd form and said in an awed whisper, "I think you'd better accept the lady's generous offer. But—uh—I seem to have the wrong cabin—"

"Are you Ray Ballantyne of Earth?" asked the woman.

He pleaded guilty.

"Then you belon vith us. I have looked at the passenyer lists. You may have the cot."

"Th-thanks," shivered Ballantyne, sitting down on it.

The Martian seemed to give the fight up as a bad job and allowed himself to be placed on the upper bunk. "To tink of it," he squeaked. "Tat I, te great Urushkidan of Ummunashektaru, should be man-handled by a sabage who does not know a logaritm from an exponent!"

Urushkidan. Ballantyne knew the name of the Martian mathematician, the latter-day Gauss or Einstein, and stared as if this were the first Martian he had seen in his life. Urushkidan looked like any other of his race, at least to the inexperienced eye. A great gray-skinned cupola of a body balanced four feet high on the walking tentacles, with the two slim, three-fingered

arm-tentacles writhing from either side of a wide lipless mouth set beneath that torse. Big unwinking eyes behind horn-rimmed spectacles, flat nose, elephantine ears—"Not *the* Urushkidan?" he gasped.

"Tere is only *one* Urushkidan," said the Martian.

THE amazon sat down on her own bunk and laughed, a Homeric shout of laughter ringing between the metal walls and shivering the furniture. "Welcome, little Earthman," she cried. "You are cute, I think I vill like you. I am Dyann Korlas of Kathantuma." She grabbed his hand in a bone-cracking grip.

"One of the Centaurians," said Ballantyne feebly.

"Yes, so you call us." She opened her trunk and began unpacking. Ballantyne watched her with appreciation and some curiosity. He'd only seen the Alpha Centaurian visitors on television before now.

She looked human enough externally, aside from a somewhat different convolution of the ears. Internally there were plenty of peculiarities, among them a skeletal and tissue structure considerably harder and denser than that of *Homo Solis*. Alpha Centauri III—or Varann, as its more advanced nation had decided to call it after learning from the terrestrial explorers that it was a planet—was Earth-like enough in a cool and bracing way, but it had half again the surface gravity.

Sexual differentiation also varied a bit from the Solar norm. The Centaurian men were somewhat smaller and weaker than the women. They stayed at home and did the housework while their wives conducted the business. In the warlike culture of Kathantuma and its neighbor states that meant going out, cutting the other army into hamburger, and stealing everything which wasn't bolted down.

This—Dyann Korlas—was something to write home about as far as looks went. Her size and the broadsword at her waist were intimidating, but her build was magnificent in a statuesque, tiger-lithe way. She looked young, her skin smooth, and faintly golden, a heavy mass of shining bronze hair coiled about the haughtily lifted head. Her face was close to the ideal of an ancient Hellenic

sculptor, clean straight lines, firm jaw, brilliant gray eyes under heavy brows. She wore a light cuirass over her tunic, sandals, a bat-winged helmet on her head.

"It—ah—it's strange they'd put you in the same cabin with me," said Ballantyne hesitantly.

"Oh, you are safe enough," she grinned.

He flushed, reflecting that the ladies from Centauri were in little danger from any Solar man. Very likely it was the other way around. Then he recalled that their native titles translated into things like warrior, district-ruler, chief, and so on. With their arrogant indifference to mere exploration and ethnology, the Jovians had probably assumed that Dyann Korlas was male. Well, he wasn't going to enlighten them.

He looked up to Urushkidan, who was morosely stuffing a big-bowled pipe. "Ah, I know of your work, of course," he said hesitantly. "I am—was—a nuclear engineer, so maybe I even have some appreciation of what it's about."

The Martian preened. "Doubtless you have grasped it bery well," he said generously. "As well as any Eartman could, which is, of course, saying bery little."

"But, if I may ask, sir, what are you doing here?"

"Oh, I have an inbitation from te Jobian Academy of Science to lecture. Tey are commendably interested and seem to realise my fundamental importance. I will be glad to get off Eart. Te air pressure, te gravity, pfui!"

"But a man, uh, Martian of your distinction—traveling third class—"

"Oh, they sent me a first-class ticket, of course. But I turned it in, bought a tird class, and banked te difference." He scowled darkly at Dyann Korlas. "Tough if I must be treated so—Well." He shrugged. A Martian shrugging is quite a sight. "It is of no matter. We of Uttu—Mars as you insist on calling it—are so incomparably far advanced in te philosophic virtues of serenity, generosity, and modesty tat I can accept wit equanimity."

"Oh," said Ballantyne. To the Centaurian, "And may I ask why you are going to Jupiter—ah—Miss Korlas?"

"You may call me Dyann," she said sweetly, "and I vill call you Ray, so? I

wish only to see Yupiter, though I doubt it will be as glamorous as Earth." Her eyes glowed. "You live in a fable. The flyin and travelin machines, auto—automatic kitchens, television, clocks an vatches, exotic dress. Aah, it vas vorth ten years travelin yust to see them."

BALLANTYNE reflected on what he knew of Alpha Centauri. Even the fantastically fast new exploratory ships took ten years to cross the interstellar gulf to its wild planets, and there had only been three expeditions so far. The third had brought back a group of curious natives who were to report to their queen what the strangers' homeland was like.

He imagined that the spacemen had had quite a time, with that score of turbulent barbarians crammed into a narrow hull though of course they'd passed almost the whole voyage in suspended animation. The visitors had spent about a year now on Earth and Luna, staring, asking endless questions, wondering what their hosts did with themselves now that the U. N. had brought the nations together and ended war. There hadn't been much trouble. Occasionally one of them would get mad and break somebody's jaw, and then there'd been the one who was invited to speak at a women's club . . . He chuckled to himself.

"Are these Yovians humans like you?" asked Dyann.

"Uh-huh," he nodded. "The moons were colonized from Earth about a hundred and twenty-five years ago. They declared their independence about sixty years past, and nobody thought it was worth the trouble to fight about it. Though maybe we should have."

"Vy that?"

"Oh well, the colonists were misfits originally, remnants of the old Eurasian militarisms. They did do heroic work in settling and developing the Jovian System, but they live under a dictatorship and make no bones about despising Earth and considering themselves the destined rulers of all the planets. Last year they grabbed the Saturnian colonies on the thinnest of pretexts, and Earth was too chicken-livered to do more than give them a reproachful look. Not that the U. N. has much of a navy these days, com-

pared to theirs."

Dyann shrugged and went on unpacking. She hung an extra sword on the wall, unshipped her armor and put it up, and slipped into a loose fur-trimmed robe. Urushkidan slithered to the floor and opened his own trunk, pulling out a score of fat books which he placed on the shelf over his bunk and expropriated the little table for his papers, pencils, and humidior.

"You know—ah—Dr. Urushkidan—" said Ballantyne uneasily, "I wish you wern't going to Jupiter."

"And why not?" asked the Martian beligerently.

"Well, doesn't your reformulation of general relativity indicate a way to build a ship which can go faster than light?"

"Among oter tings, yes." Urushkidan blew a malodorous cloud of smoke.

"Well, I don't think the Jovians are interested in science for its own sake. I think they want to get you and your knowledge so they can build such ships themselves which would be the last thing they need to take over the Solar System."

"A Martian," said Urushkidan condescendingly, "is not concerned wit te squabblings of te lower animals. Noting personal, of course."

Dyann pulled an idol from her trunk and put it on her shelf. It was a small wooden image, gaudily painted and fiercely tusked, each of its six arms holding some weapon. One, Ballantyne noticed, was a carved Terrestrial tommy gun. "Qviet, please," she said, raising one arm. "I am about to pray to Ormun the Terrible."

"Barbarian," guffawed Urushkidan.

Dyann took a pillow and stuffed it in his mouth. "Qviet, please, I said." She smiled gently and prostrated herself before the god.

After a while she got up. Urushkidan was still speechless with rage. She turned to Ballantyne and asked, "Do the ships here carry live animals? I would like to make a small sacrifice too."

II

THE bulletin board said that in the present orbital positions of the planets, the *Jovian Queen* would make her voyage at

one Earth-gravity acceleration in six days, forty-three minutes, and twelve seconds, plus or minus ten seconds. That might be pure braggadocio, though Ballantyne wouldn't have been surprised to learn that it was sober truth. He hoped the time was overestimated. His cabin mates were a little wearing on the nerves. Urushkidan filling the room with smoke, sitting up till all hours covering paper with mathematical symbols and screaming at any interruption. Dyann was nice-looking but rather overwhelming. In some ways she was reminiscent of Catherine Vanbrugh. The Engineer shuddered.

He slouched moodily into the bar and ordered a martini he could ill afford. The place was quiet, discreetly lit, not very full. His eyes fell on the stiff-laced Jovian colonel, still clutching his portfolio like grim death, but talking with unusual animation to a stunning Terrestrial redhead. It was clear that ideas about the purity of the Jovian stock—"hardened in the fire and ice of outer space, tempered and beaten into the new and dominant mankind"—had been temporarily shelved.

If I had some money, thought Ballantyne gloomily, I could detach her from him and enjoy this trip.

The bartender informed him, with some awe, that the man was Colonel Ivan Hosea Domenico Roshevsky-Feldkamp, late military attaché of Jupiter's Terrestrial embassy and an officer who had served with distinction in suppressing the Ionian revolt and in asserting Jupiter's rightful claims to Saturn. Ray was more interested in the girl's name and antecedents. Just as he'd thought, an heiress on a pleasure trip. Expensive.

A couple of genial Earthmen moved up and began talking to him. Before long they suggested a friendly game of poker.

Oh-ho! thought Ray, who knew that sort. "Sure," he said.

They played most of the time for a couple of days. Luck went back and forth but in general Ray won, and toward the end he was a couple of thousand U. N. credits to the good. He let his eyes glitter with febrile cupidity, and the sharks—there were three of them all told—almost licked their lips.

"Excuse me a minute," said Ray, pocketing his winnings. "I'll be back, and then

we'll play for real stakes."

"You bet," said the sharks. They sat back, lit anticipatory cigars, and waited.

And waited.

And waited.

Ray found the redhead remarkably easy to pry from the colonel.

The girl thought it would be just too much fun to go slumming and have the captain's dinner with him in the third-class saloon. He led her down the thrumming corridor, thinking wistfully that before he knew it he'd be in Ganymede City and as broke as he'd been to start with.

Urushkidan crawled slowly by, waving an idle tentacle at him. The Martian walking system was awkward under Earth gravity and, their table manners being worse than atrocious, they ate in a separate section. It was Dyann who really started the trouble. She strode up behind Ray and clapped a heavy hand on his shoulder.

"Vere have you been?" she asked reproachfully. "You have not been in our cabin for two days and nights now."

The redhead blushed.

"Oh hullo, Dyann," said Ray, annoyed. "I'll see you later."

"Of course you vill." She smiled. "Ah, you dashin' glamorous Earthmen, you make me feel so small and veak." She topped him by a good two inches.

They came into the doorway of the saloon and three familiar figures barred Ray's passage.

"What the hell became of you, Ballantyne?" demanded one. His geniality was quite gone. "You was going to play some more with us."

"I forgot," said Ray huskily. The three men looked bigger than they had, somehow.

"It's not sporting to quit when you're so far ahead," said another.

"Yeah," said a third. "You ought at least to give us our money back."

"I haven't got it," said Ray.

"Look, pal, things happen to people that ain't good sports. They ain't very popular, and things happen to them. Where's that money?"

They crowded in, hemming him against the wall. Beyond them, he could see Colonel Roshevsky-Feldkamp staring coldly at the tableau. Ray wondered if he hadn't put the

players up to this. They wouldn't have dared start trouble without some kind of *sub rosa* official hint.

“COME on back to our cabin and we'll talk this over, pal.”

The redhead squeaked and shrank aside. A meaty hand closed on Ray's arm and dragged him half off his feet. Dyann bristled, one hand clapped to her sword. “Are these men annoyin' you, Ray?” she asked.

“No, we just want a quiet little private talk with our friend,” said one of them. “Just come along easy, Ballantyne.”

“Dyann, I think they are annoying me,” said the engineer, the words rattling in a suddenly dry and tightened throat.

“Oh, vell, in that case—” She smiled, reached out, and grabbed a collar.

There was a minor explosion. The man catapulted into the air, hit the ceiling, caromed off a wall, and bounced on the floor. Sheer reflex sent knives flying into the hands of the other two.

“Ormun is good!” shouted Dyann joyously. She gave the nearest gambler a fistful of knuckles, tossed him into the air, clutched his ankles as he came down, and whirled him against the wall.

The third was stabbing at her back. Blindly, Ray grabbed his arm and pulled him away. He snarled and lunged at the engineer, who tumbled backward clutching after the nearest weapon. It happened to be Colonel Roshevsky-Feldkamp's massive briefcase. He grabbed it free and brought it down on the gambler's head. It hit with a dull *thwack* and the fellow lurched. Ray hit him again. The briefcase burst open and papers snowed through the air. Then Dyann got the enemy from behind and proceeded to tie him in knots.

The redhead had already departed, screaming. Ray sank to one shaky knee and looked up into the colonel's livid face.

“I'm terribly sorry, sir,” he gasped. “Here, let me help—”

He began stuffing papers back into the briefcase. A polished boot hit him where it would do the most good and he skidded through the disorderly mass. “You unutterable fool!” raged the voice above him.

“You would kick my friend, huh?” asked

Dyann indignantly.

A revolver clanked from the colonel's belt. “That will do,” he snapped. “Consider yourself under arrest.”

Dyann's broad smooth shoulders sagged a little. “I am so sorry,” she said meekly. “Let me help just a litle.” She stooped and picked up one of the unconscious men.

“March!” rapped the colonel.

“Yes, sir,” whispered Dyann abjectly. Then, being almost next to him, she rammed her burden into his belly. He sat down with a thunderous *oof* and Dyann kicked him behind the ear.

“That vas fun,” she grinned, picking up the revolver and sticking it into her belt. “Vat shall ve do now?”

“YOU,” said Urushkidan acidly, “are a typical human.”

Ray looked despairingly out of the brig at him. “What else could I do?” he asked wildly. “I couldn't fight a shipful of Jovians. It was all I could do to talk Dyann into surrendering.”

“I mean in fighting in te first place,” said Urushkidian. “I hear it started over a female. Why don't you lower animals have a regular rutting season as we do on Uttu? Ten you could spend time tinkering of something else too, something constructive.”

“Well—” Ray couldn't suppress a wry smile, “those are constructive thoughts, of a sort. But what happened to Dyann?”

“Oh, tey questioned her, found she couldn't read, and let her go. But tey won't let her see you.”

“I suppose Earth would raise more of a stink over her being arrested than it's worth to the Jovians. But what's her literacy got to do with it?”

“Te colonel's papers, you idiot. Tey are bery secret. Doubtless tey are information about Eart's defenses, obtained by his spies and to be brought home by him in person.”

“But I didn't read them either!”

“You saw tem. Tey are implanted in your subconscious memories and a hypnotreatment could extract tem. An illiterate like Dyann lacks te word-gestalts, she would not remember eben subconsciously, but you— Well, tat is luck. Maybe Eart can sabe you.”

“Oh, no!” Ray clutched his head. “They won't bother. They don't give a damn. I'm

wanted back there, and old Vanbrugh will be only too pleased to see me get the works."

"Banbrugh—te Nort American Councillor?"

"Uh-huh." Ray leaned gloomily against the door. "I was just a plain ordinary engineer till Uncle Hosmer left me a million credits. Damn him, I hope he fries in hell."

"A man left you money and you don't like it?" Urushkidan's eyes bugged so they seemed in some danger of falling out. "Shalmuannusar, what did you do wit it?"

"I spent it. I spent damn near every millo in a year."

"On *what*?"

"Oh, wine, women, song—the usual."

Urushkidan clapped his tentacles to his eyes and groaned. "A million credits!"

"It got me into high society," went on Ray. "I made out as if I had more than I did. I met Catherine Vanbrugh—that's the Councillor's daughter—and she got ideas that I might make a good fifth husband, or would it be the sixth? Well, she wasn't a bad-looking wench, and I—uh—well—about the time my money gave out and I went into debt, she was really after me. It was somewhat urgent. I skipped, of course. Old Vanbrugh got the cops after me. I barely escaped. He's got enough influence to—well, it boils down to the fact that the Jovians can do anything to me their little hearts desire."

He strained against the bars. "Can't you do anything, sir? Your fame is so illustrious. Can't you slip the word to somebody?"

The Martian puffed out his chest above his eyes and simpered. Then he said with mild regret, "No, I cannot entangle myself in te empirical. My domain is te beauty and purity of matematics alone. I advise you to accept your fate wit philosophy. Perhaps I can lend you Ekbannutil's *Treatise on te Unimportance of Temporal Sorrows*. It has many consoling toughts."

He waved affably and waddled off. Ray sank to the bunk.

Presently a squad of soldiers arrived to escort him to the tender which would take him down to Ganymede. Colonel Roshevsky-Feldkamp was there, as stiff as ever, though the bandage behind his ear set his cap somewhat askew.

"Where am I going?" asked Ray.

"To Camp Muellenhoff, outside the city," said the Jovian with a hard satisfaction. "It is where we keep spies until we get ready to question and shoot them."

III

IT TOOK Dyann Korlas about two Earth-days to decide that she didn't like Ganymede.

The Jovians had been very courteous, apologized in a stiff way for the unfortunate misunderstanding aboard ship, and assigned her a brawny young sergeant as guide. Their armament was much more in evidence and much more interesting than Earth's but granting that spaceships and atomic bombs and guided missiles were more effective than swords and bows and mounted lancers, they took all the fun out of war and left nothing to plunder. She missed the brawling mirth of the war-camps of Varann among these bleak-faced and endlessly marching men in their drab uniforms.

The civilians were almost as depressingly clad, and even more orderly and obedient than those of Earth. Only the arrogant, bemedaled officer caste had any touch of dash or glamor about it. The Terrestrial concept of sexual equality had been interesting, even exciting in a way, but these Jovians had inverted the natural order of things to a repulsive extent.

She had seen the sights, and those were impressive enough—the grim rocky face of Ganymede, with mighty Jupiter eternally high in the dusky heavens; the bustling, crowded, machine-crammed underground cities, level after level of apartments, farms, factories, shops, barracks—but Earth could show more. Her guide promised to take her to the other moons of the Jovian Confederacy but she felt as bored by the thought as he seemed to be.

She got the impression that she was hurried along, from sight to sight and speech to speech, without ever a chance to talk to anyone and find out what really was dreamed and striven for on this land. To be sure, the Jovians all talked endlessly about a superior way of life and their right to return to the green vales of Earth whence their forefathers had been cruelly made to

flee. But if they were going to fight why didn't they just hop in their ships and go there?

The dictator's face seemed to be framed wherever she turned, a small and puffy-eyed man in an elaborate uniform. Martin Wilder the Great. Her guide the sergeant, one Robert Hamand, said in an awed tone that she might be introduced to the dictator. He looked hurt when she yawned.

And what had become of Ray? Hamand knew nothing and seemed to care less. The secret police officer had said he would be held for a short time as a lesson and then released but surely he'd look her up if he were free. She contrasted the Earthling's liveliness with the quiet men of Varann and thought that he would be an ornament to anyone's harem even if there couldn't be issue between the two species.

On the third day, as she got up, she decided to ask counsel of Ormun. She washed, singing a cheerful song of clattering swords and sundering skulls, stowed away a breakfast that would have sufficed two humans, and walked into the sitting room of the apartment assigned her.

Hamand was waiting, very straight and correct in his uniform. "Good day," he said, bowing from the waist. "Today we will go topside again and visit the Devil's Garden. Then at eleven forty-five proceed to Robinsburg where we will lunch until thirteen hundred and then go on to—"

"I must take an omen first," said Dyann.

"I beg your pardon?"

"You need not do so, you have done no wrong." Dyann prostrated herself before the god. Then, struck with a sudden thought, gestured at Hamand. "You too."

"What?" cried the sergeant.

"You too. She might be offended if you do not pray."

"Madam," said Hamand, stiff with indignation, "I am a Jovian of the machine age, not a savage groveling before superstition."

DYANN got up, knocked him to the floor, and rubbed his nose in the carpet before Ormun. "You vill please to grovel," she said urbanely. "It is good manners." She laid herself prone again, keeping one hand on the sergeant's head, and repeated

several magic formulas. Then she rose to her knees, fished three Centaurian dice from her pocketed kilt, and tossed them.

"Ah-hah," she said. "The omen says—hm, let me see now, I am not a *marya*. I think they say go to Urushkidan." She bowed deeply before Ormun. "Thank you, my lady. Now come, we go find Urushkidan."

"You can't!" gibbered Hamand. "He's doing important work. He's at the Academy—"

Dyann strolled out and he trailed futilely in her wake, still protesting. She inquired her way along the many tunnels and corridors and ramps to the Academy of Science. There were no slideways. Everyone walked. The Jovian leaders, with their concern over physical fitness, insisted that there be as much assorted exercises as possible to compensate for Ganymede's low gravity. To Dyann, weight was feathery. She bounded twenty or thirty feet at a time when the crowd thinned enough.

The Academy, a combined college and technical research institute, had a good-sized sector to itself. There was a broad open space covered with turf and the uniformed students and professors went from one to another of the doors which opened on the grass. Dyann loomed over an undersized academician who gibbered in answer to her that Dr. Urushkidan was in *that* sector and then scuttled away.

There was an armed sentry in front of the door. Seeing none elsewhere, Dyann concluded shrewdly that he was posted because of the potential military applications of Urushkidan's work. He slanted his rifle across her path. "Halt!"

"I must see the Martian," said Dyann mildly. "Please to let me by."

"No one sees him without a pass," said the guard.

Dyann shoved him aside and opened the door. He yelled and grabbed her arm. That was his big mistake.

"A man," said the Varannian reprovingly, "should have respect for women." She yanked the rifle from him and hit him in the stomach with the butt. He flew across the plaza, retching, rolled to one elbow, and snatched at his sidearm. Dyann leaped, landing on his face with a crunch of bone

"You savage!" he gasped. "You cruel, murdering—"

"I thought you Jobians were always talking about te glories of war and te rutless superman," snickered Urushkidan. "Also destiny and tings. Better call te camp as she says."

A few minutes later the ship lowered into the walled enclosure of Camp Muellenhoff. It was a dreary place, metal barracks lying harsh under the guns of the watchtowers, spacesuited prisoners clumping to work through the thin chill air of Ganymede. A detail hurried up and shoved an unarmed, suited form into the airlock.

Their leader's voice rattled over his helmet radio of the ship's telereceiver, "Major, sir, are you sure they want this man in the city now? We just got an alert to look out for a couple of escaped desperadoes."

Dyann slammed the outer valve in his face by the remote-control lever and the little ship stood on her tail again and flamed skyward.

A somewhat battered Ray Ballantyne crawled out of his suit and blinked at them. It had been a rough two or three days, though they hadn't gone very far with him. The truth drugs must have satisfied them that he was not an intentional spy, and thereafter they had simply held him until orders for his execution should come. He swayed into Dyann's arms.

"Oh, my poor Ray," she murmured. "My poor, poor little Earthlin."

"Hey, wait a minute," he began weakly.

"Just lie still, I will take care of you.

"Yeah, that's what I'm afraid of. Lemme go!"

They sat down again on a remote mountaintop, gave the policeman a spacesuit, and kicked him out of the ship. He was still wailing about barbarous and inhuman treatment. He said something too about wild beasts.

"And now," said Dyann, "let us get back to Earth before the Yovians find us."

"This crate'll never make Earth," said Ray. "I've flown 'em—let me at those controls, Urushkidan."

They heard it as well, the ominous sizzling and knocking from the engine-room shields, and felt the ship tremble with it.

"Is tat te carboning te man was talking

about?" asked the Martian innocently.

"I'm—afraid—so." Ray shook his head. "We'll have to land somewhere before the rockets quit altogether. Then it'll take a week for the radioactivity to get low enough so we can go back there and clean them out."

"And all the Yovian army, navy, police, and fire department out chasin us by now," said Dyann. Her clear brow wrinkled. "I fear that Ormun is offended because I left her amon the heathen back there. I am afraid our luck is runnin' low."

"And," said Ray bleakly, "how!"

IV

THEY used the last sputter of flame to sit down in the wildest and remotest valley they could find. Looking out the port, Ray wondered if they hadn't perhaps overdone it.

Beyond the little ship there was a stretch of seamed and gullied stone, a rough craggy waste sloping up toward the fang-peaked razorback ridge of the hills, weird flickering play of shadows between the looming boulders as the thin wind blew a veil of snow across the deep greenish-blue sky. Jupiter was an amber scimitar low on the northern horizon. They were near the south pole with a sprawling panorama of sharp stars around it fading out near the tiny sun. Snow lay heaped in drifts beyond the wind-scoured rocks, and the far green blink of glaciers reflected the pale heatless sunlight from the hills.

Snow—well, yes, thought Ray, it was snow of a sort. All the water on Ganymede was of course solid ice. So were the carbon dioxide and ammonia. But the temperature often dropped low enough to precipitate methane or nitrogen. The moon's atmosphere what there was of it, consisted mostly of argon, nitrogen, methane, and vapors of the frozen substances—not especially breathable.

The colonists used the standard green-plant air-renewal system, obtaining extra oxygen from its compounds and water from the ice-strata, and heated their dwellings from the central atomic-energy units. Ray hoped the ship's equipment was in working order.

There was native life out there, a few scrubby gray-leaved thickets, a frightened leaper bounding kangaroo-like into the hills. The biochemistry of Ganymede was a weird and wonderful thing which human scientists were still a long way from understanding, but it involved substances capable of absorbing heat energy directly and releasing it as needed. The carnivores lacked the secretions, obtaining them from their prey, and had given the colonists a lot of trouble because of their fondness for the generous supply of heat a human necessarily carried around with him.

"And now what do we do?" asked Ray.

Dyann's eyes lit with a hopeful gleam. "Hunt monsters?" she suggested.

"Bah!" Urushkidan snaked his way to the small desk bolted to the cabin floor and extracted paper and pencil from the drawers. "I shall develop an interesting aspect of unified field theory. Do not disturb me."

Ray looked around the ship. Behind the forward cabin, which held bunks and a little cooking outfit as well as the controls, there was a larger space cluttered with assorted physical apparatus. Beyond that, he supposed, were the gyros, airplant, and misbehaving engines. "Is this a laboratory boat?" he inquired.

"Yes," said the Martian. "I chose it because they are always kept ready to go out for gibing field tests to new apparatus. Get me a table of elliptic integrals, please."

"Look," said Ray, "we've got to do something. The Jovians will be combing this damned moon for us, and it's not so big that we have much chance of their not finding us before we can clean out those tubes. We've got to prepare an escape."

"How?" Urushkidan fixed him with a bespectacled stare.

"Well—uh—well—maybe get ready to flee into the hills."

"How long would we last out there?" The Martian turned back to his work and blew a cloud of smoke. "No, I will devote myself to the beauties of pure mathematics."

"But if they catch us, they'll kill us!"

"They won't kill me," said Urushkidan smugly. "I am too valuable."

"Come on, Ray," said Dyann. "Let's go monster-huntin'."

"Waaah!" The Earthman blew up, jumping with rage. In the low gravity, his leap cracked his head against the ceiling.

"Oh, my poor Ray!" Dyann folded him in a bear's embrace.

"Let me go! Damn it, I want to live if you don't!"

"Be serene," advised Urushkidan. "Look at it from the aspect of eternity. You are one of the lower animals and your life is of no importance."

"You octopus! You conceited windbag! If I needed any proof that Martians are inferior, you'd be it."

"Temper, temper!" Urushkidan wagged a flexible finger at Ray. "Be objective, my friend, and if your philosophy is so deficient that it will not prove *a priori* that Martians are always right—by definition—then consider the facts. Martians are beautiful. Martians have an old and peaceful civilization. Even physically, we are superior—we can live under Earth conditions but I dare you to go out on Mars without a spacesuit. I double-dog dare you."

"Martians," gritted Ray, "didn't come to Earth. Earthmen came to Mars."

"Certainly. We had no reason to visit Earth, but you, of course, came to Mars to admire our beauty and wisdom. Now please fetch me that table of integrals."

"There is nothing we can do to help ourselves," said Dyann, "so we might as well go huntin'. Afterward we can make love."

"Oh, no!" Ray grunted. "If I had that damn interstellar drive I'd get out of this hole so fast that—that—that—"

"Yes?" asked Dyann.

"GODS of Pluto!" whispered the man. "That's it. *That's it!*"

"Get me that table!" screamed Urushkidan.

"The drive—the faster-than-light drive—" Ray did a jig, bouncing from floor to wall to ceiling. "We've got a shipful of equipment, we've got the System's only authority on the subject, we'll build ourselves a faster-than-light engine!"

Urushkidan grumbled his way back into the lab. "I'll get it myself, ten," he muttered. "See if I care."

"The engine—the engine—Dyann, we can escape!" Ray grabbed her by the arms and tried to shake her. "We can go home!"

Her eyes filled with tears. "You vant to leave me," she accused. "You vant to get rid of me."

"No, no, no, I want to save all our lives. Come on, give me a hand, we've got some heavy stuff to move around."

Dyann shook her head, pouting. "No," she said. "You don't love me. I won't help you."

"Oh, Lord! Look, Dyann, I love you, I adore you, I worship at your feet. But give me a hand."

Dyann brightened considerably, but said only, "Prove it."

Ray kissed her. She kissed back and he yelled as his ribs began to give way.

"Yowp! Some other time, honey. I want only to save your life, don't you see?"

"Some other time," said Dyann firmly, "is not now. Come here, you."

"Stop tat noise!" yelled Urushkidan, and slammed the laboratory door.

"Ve will honeymoon on Varann," sighed Dyann happily. "You shall ride to battle at my side."

Much later the aroma of coffee drew Urushkidan back into the forward cabin. A disheveled and weary-looking Ray Ballantyne was puttering around the hotplate while Dyann sat polishing her sword and humming to herself.

"Now," said Ray, turning with what seemed like relief to the Martian, "just how does this new drive of yours work?"

"It is not a dribe and it does not work—it is a structure of pure matematics," said Urushkidan. "Anyway, te teory is beyond te comprehension of anybody but myself. Gibe me some coffee."

"But you must have an idea how it would work in practice."

"Oh, no doubt if I wanted to take te time I could debise someting. But I am engaged in delopoping a new teory of cosmic origins." Urushkidan slurped coffee into himself.

"We've got to build it and escape."

"I told you you are of neiter beauty nor importance. Why should I take time wit you?"

"But look, if the Jovians capture you they'll force you to build if for them. They have ways. And then they'll overrun Mars along with all the other planets. The only

thing that's held them back so far is the difficulty of interplanetary logistics. But when you have ships that can cross the orbit of Pluto in a matter of hours or minutes that isn't a problem any longer."

"Tat would be unfortunate, yes. But I am in te midst of a bery new and important train of tought. It would be more unfortunate if tat were lost tan if a few ephemeral Jobians conquered te System. Tey wouldn't last a thousand years, but a genius like me is born once in a million."

Dyann hefted her sword. "Do as Ray says," she advised.

"You dare not hurt me," said Urushkidan with a smug expression, "or you will neber get away."

He went over to the desk and began investigating the drawers again. "Where do tey keep teir tobacco? I cannot work witout my pipe."

"Jovians," said Ray glumly, "don't smoke. Tey consider it a degenerate habit."

"What?" The Martian's howl rattled the coffeepot on the hotplate. "No tobacco?"

"Only your own supply, back in Ganymede City, and I daresay the Jovians have confiscated and destroyed it by now. That puts the nearest cigar store somewhere in the Asteroid Belt."

"Oh, no! Te new cosmology ruined by tobacco shortage. Urushkidan stood thinking a moment, then came to a sudden decision. "Tere is no help for it. If te nearest tobacco is millions of miles away we must build te faster-tan-light engine at once."

RAY made no attempt to follow the Martian's long-winded equations in detail. What he was interested in was making use of them, and he proceeded with slashing approximations that brought screams of almost physical agony from Urushkidan.

Essentially, though, he recognized that the scientist's achievement lay in making what seemed to be a final correlation of relativity and wave mechanics, something which even the Goldfarb-Olson formulas had not fully reached.

Relativity deals with solid bodies moving at definite velocities which cannot exceed that of light, but in wave mechanics the particle becomes a weird and shadowy psi

function and is only probably where it is. In the latter theory, point-to-point transitions are not velocities but shifts in the node of a complex wave. It turned out that the electronic wave velocity—which, unlike the group velocity, is not limited by the speed of light—could be imparted to matter under the right conditions, so that the most probable position of the electron went from point to point at a bewildering rate. The trick was to create the right conditions.

"A field of nuclear space-strain is set up by the circuit, and the ship, reacting against the entire mass of the universe, moves without need of rockets—right?" asked the Earthman.

"Wrong," said Urushkidan.

"Well, we'll build it anyway," said Ray. "Here, Dyann, bring that generator over this way, will you?"

"I want to go monster-huntin'," she sulked. "Bring—it—over, you lummo!"

Dyann glared, but stooped over the massive machine and, between Ganymede gravity and Varannian muscles, staggered across the floor with it. Ray was checking circuits on the oscilloscope. Urushkidan sat grumbling about heat and humidity and fanning himself with his ears. The lab was a mess of tubes, condensers, rheostats, and tangled wire.

"I'm stuck," wailed Ray. "I need a resistor having so and so many ohms along with such-and-such a capacitance. Find me one, quick."

"If you would specify your units more precisely—" began Urushkidan huffily.

Ray pawed through the litter on the floor, putting one object after another into his testing circuit, glancing at the meters, and throwing it across the room. "It's vital," he said.

"Will this do, maybe?" asked Dyann innocently, holding out the ship's one and only frying pan.

"Get out!" screamed Ray.

"I go monster-huntin'," she pouted.

Absent-mindedly, Ray tested the frying pan. It was nearly right. By Luna, if he sawed off the handle—

"Hey!" yelled Urushkidan.

"I don't like the thought of eating cold beans, cold canned meat, and raw eggs any better than you," said Ray. "But damn it,

we've got to get out of here." He soldered the emasculated pan into his circuit. "Starward the course of human empire," he muttered viciously.

"Martian empire," corrected Urushkidan.

"It'll be Jovian empire if we don't clear out of here. Okay, big brain, what comes next?"

"How should I know? How can you expect me to tink in tis foul tick air, and witout tobacco?" Urushkidan turned his back. Dyann clumped in, spacesuited, sword in one hand and rifle in the other. "I saw monsters out there," she said. "I'm goin out to kill them."

"Oh, yeah, sure," muttered Ray without looking up from his slide rule. "Urushkidan, you've got to calculate the resonant psi function for me."

"Won't," said the Martian.

"By Heaven, you snake-legged bagpipe, I'm the captain here and you'll do as I say."

"Up your rectifier." Urushkidan was emptying his ash tray in search of tobacco shreds.

The airlock clanged behind Dyann. "I'll be damned," murmured Ray. "She really is going out after them."

"It is a good idea," said Urushkidan, a trifle more amiably. "Tey habe sensed te radiations of our ship and are probably coming to crack it open."

"Oh, well, if that's all—*Hub?*" Ray sprang to the nearest port and looked out.

"Gannydragons," he groaned. "I thought they'd been exterminated."

"Tose two don't seem to know it," said Urushkidan uneasily. "All right, I'll calculate your function for you."

THERE were two of the monsters moving toward the boat. They looked like thirty feet of long-legged alligator, but the claws and beaks had ripped metal in earlier days of colonization. Dyann lifted her rifle and fired.

A dragon screamed, thin and faint in the wispy atmosphere, and turned his head and snapped. Dyann laughed and bounded closer. Another shot and another . . .

Something hit her and the gun flew from her hand. The dragon's tail smote again and Dyann soared skyward. As she hit the

ground the two monsters leaped for her.

"Ha, Ormun!" she yelled, shaking her ringing head till the ruddy hair flew within the helmet. She crouched low and then sprang.

Up—over the fanged head—striking down with her sword as she went by. The monster whirled after her, greenish blood streaming from the cut and freezing.

Dyann backed against a looming rock, spread her feet and lifted the sword. The first dragon struck at her, mouth agape. Dyann hewed out again, the sword a leaping blaze of steel, the blow smashing home and exploding its force back into her own muscles. The dragon's head sprang from the neck. She rolled under the lashing claws and tail to get free. The headless body struck the other dragon which promptly began to fight it.

Dyann circled warily about the struggle, breathing hard. The live dragon trampled its opponent underfoot, looked around, and charged her. The ground shuddered under its galloping mass. Dyann turned and fled.

The dragon roared hollowly as she went up the long slope of the nearest hill. She saw a high crag and scrambled to its top, the dragon rampaging below her.

"Nyaah!" She thumbed her faceplate. "Come and get me."

The monster's dim brain finally decided that the ship was bigger and easier prey. Turning, it lumbered down the hillside. Dyann launched herself into the air and landed astride its neck.

The dragon hooted and snapped after her. She climbed higher, grabbed its horn with one gauntleted hand, and hung on for her life. The steed began to run.

Hoo, bang, away over the hills with the moonscape blurring in speed. Wind shrieked thinly about Dyann's helmet. She bounced off her seat and came down again, a landslide rumbled behind her. The dragon zoomed up the ridge, leaped from a bluff, and started across the cratered plain beyond. Dyann dragged at the horn, turning its head, fighting the monster into a circular stampede. "Ha, Ormun!" she yelled. "Ha, Kathantuma!"

In an hour or so the dragon stopped and stood gasping. Dyann slid stiffly to the ground, whirled her sword over her head,

and decapitated the monster. Then she skipped home, laughing.

"Dyann!" cried Ray as she came through the airlock. "Dyann, we thought you were dead—"

"Oh, it was fun," she grinned. "Fix me a sandwich." She sat down, got up rather quickly, and opened her arms to Ray. He retreated nervously toward the lab. Urushkidan snickered and slammed the door in his face.

V

THE eighty-six hour day of Ganymede drew to a close. Jupiter was at the half now, a banded amber giant in a sky of thronging wintry stars. Ray wiped his grimy hands and sighed.

"Done," he said, looking fondly at the haywired mess filling half the lab and reaching back toward the engines. "We've done it—we've conquered the stars."

"My little Earthlin is so clever," simpered Dyann.

"I am horribly afraid," said Urushkidan, "tat tis minor achievement of mine will eclipse my true accomplishments in te popular mind. Oh, well." He shrugged. "I can always use te money."

"Umm, yeah, I never thought of that," said Ray. "I'm safe enough from Vanbrugh now—you don't arrest the man who's given Earth the Galaxy—but by gosh, there's a fortune in this little gadget too."

"For me, of course, when I have patented it," said Urushkidan.

"What?" yelled Ray. "You—"

"Certainly. I inbented it, didn't I? I shall patent it too. Tell me, should I charge an exorbitant royalty or would tere be more money in mass sales at small price?"

"Look here," snarled Ray, "I happen to know how this thing is put together too."

"Do you?" grinned Urushkidan nastily.

"Uh—" Ray looked at the jungle of apparatus and gulped. He had only a few fragmentary drawings. By Einstein, he had no idea how the damned thing worked.

"But we helped you," he protested feebly.

"When you pay your mules and cows, I may consider gibing you a small percentage," said Urushkidan loftily.

"You've already got more money than you know what to do with, you bloated

capitalist. I happen to know you invested your Nobel Prize in mortgages and then foreclosed."

"And why not? When te royalties on tis engine start coming in, and I get my second Nobel Prize, maybe ten I can afford an occasional cigar. You Earthlings neber reward genius. All tese years I've had to smoke tat foul pipe— And tat reminds me, we habe to test tis machine. Where is te nearest tobaco store?"

Ray sighed and gave up. Martians had replaced Scotchmen in the lexicon of thrift, but Urushkidan set some kind of new record.

He sat down in the pilot chair and started the atomic generator on high-level conversion. "I hope it works," he muttered nervously. His fingers moved over the improvised control panel for the star drive. "Hang on, folks, here goes nothing."

"Nothin," said Dyann after a long silence, "is correct."

"Oh, lord! What's the matter now?" Ray went back to the new engine. Its circuits were alive, tubes glowed and indicators blinked, but the boat sat stolidly where it was.

"I told you not to use tose approximations," said Urushkidan.

Ray fiddled with the main-drive settings. "It's like any other gadget," he complained. "You sweat yourself dry designing it from theory, and then you have to tinker till it works."

He began changing the positions of resistors and condensers, cutting sections out of the circuit to work on them. Urushkidan shredded a piece of paper, wetted it, and tried to smoke it.

"Ray!" Dyann's voice came sharp and urgent from the forward cabin. "I saw a rocket flare."

"Oh, no!" He sprang back to her and peered into the night sky. A long trail of flame arced across it. And another, and another—

"The Jovians," he groaned. "They've found us."

"They may not see us," said Dyann hopefully.

"They have metal detectors. We're done for."

"Vell, ve can only die vunce. Kiss me,

sweetheart." Dyann folded Ray in one arm while the other reached for her sword.

The patrol rockets went over the horizon, braking, and swam back. Blast-flames splattered off the valley floor and frozen-gas vapors boiled furiously up toward mighty Jupiter.

The boat telescreen blinked its indicator light. Numbly, Ray tuned it in. The lean hard face of Colonel Roshevsky-Feldkamp sprang into its frame.

"Ah, there you are," said the Jovian.

"If we surrender," said Ray, "will you give us safe conduct back to Earth?"

"Certainly not. But you may be allowed to live."

Urushkidan spoke from the lab. "Ballantyne, I tink te trouble lies in tis square-wave generator. If we doubled te boltage—"

THE first patrol ship sizzled to a landing. Roshevsky-Feldkamp leaned forward till his face seemed to project from the screen and Ray had a wild desire to punch its nose. "So you've been working on our project." He said, "Well, so much the more labor spared us."

Dyann cut loose with a short-range blaster she had located somewhere on the lab ship.

"Urushkidan will die before he surrenders to you," said Ray belligerently.

"I will do noting of te sort," said the Martian. Experimentally, he cut the square-wave generator back into the circuit and turned a dial.

The boat lifted off the ground.

"Hey, there," roared the colonel. "You can't do that!"

The Jovian soldiers who had been pouring from the grounded ship looked stupidly upward.

"Shell them!" snapped the colonel.

Ray slammed the main star drive switch clear over.

There was no feeling of acceleration. They were suddenly floating weightless and Jupiter whizzed past the forward port.

"Stop!" howled the Jovian.

The engine throbbed and sang, energy pulsing in great waves through its shuddering substance. The stars crawled eerily across the ports. "Aberration," gasped Ray.

"We're approaching the speed of light."

Space swam and blazed with a million million suns. They bunched near the forward port, thinning out toward the rear, as the ship added its fantastic velocity vector to their light-rays. A distorted pale-green globe grew rapidly before the vessel.

"Vat planet is that up ahead?" pointed Dyann.

"I think—" muttered Ray. He looked out the rearward port. "I think it was Neptune."

"Triumph!" chortled Urushkidan, rubbing his tentacles together. "My teory is confirmed. Not tat it needs confirmation, but now even an Eartman can see tat I am always right. And oh, how tey'll habe to pay!"

The colors of the stars shifted toward blue in front and red behind. Doppler effect, thought Ray wildly. He was probably seeing by radio waves and gamma rays now. How fast were they going, anyway? He should have thought to install some kind of speed gauge. Several times the velocity of light at least.

"Ha, this is fun," laughed Dyann.

"Hmmm—we better stop while we can still see the Solar System," said Ray, and cut the main drive.

The ship kept on going.

"Hey!" screamed the Earthling. "Stop! Whoa!"

"We can't stop," said Urushkidan coolly. "We're in a certain pseudobelocity-state now. Te engine merely accelerates us."

"Well, how in hell do you brake?" groaned Ray.

"I don't know. We'll habe to figure tat out. I taught you knew tis would happen."

"Now I do." Ray floated free of his chair, beating his forehead with his fists. "I hope to heaven we can do it before the food runs out."

Dyann looked at Urushkidan speculatively. "If vorst comes to vorst," she murmured, "roast Martian—"

"Let's get busy," gasped Urushkidan.

IT TOOK a week to improvise a braking system. By that time they were no longer very sure where they were.

"This is all my fault," said Dyann contritely. "If I had brought Ormun along

she vould have looked after us."

"One thing that worries me," said Ray, "is the Jovians. They aren't fools, and they won't be sitting on their hands waiting for us to come back and give the star drive to Earth."

"First," said Urushkidan snappishly, "tere is te problem of finding our sun."

Ray looked out the port. The ship was braked and, in the normal space-time state of matter, was floating amidst a wilderness of unfamiliar constellations. "It shouldn't be too hard," he said thoughtfully. "Look, there are the Magellanic Clouds, I think, and we should be able to locate Rigel or some other bright star. That way we can get a fix and locate ourselves relative to Sol."

"Tere are no astronomical tables aboard ship," pointed out Urushkidan, "and I certainly don't clutter my brain wit mere numerical data."

"Vich star is Rigel?" asked Dyann.

"Why — uh — well — that one — no, it might be that one over there—or perhaps—how should I know?" growled Ray.

"We will simply habe to go back te way we came, as nearly as we can judge it," said Urushkidan.

"Maybe ve can find somevun who knows," suggested Dyann.

Ray thought of landing on a planet and asking a winged, three-headed monster, "Pardon me, do you know which way Sol is?" To which the monster would doubtless reply, "Sorry, I'm a stranger here myself." He chuckled wryly. They'd encountered a difficulty which all the brave futuristic stories about exploring the Galaxy seemed to have overlooked.

They had headed out in the ecliptic plane, very nearly on a line joining the momentary positions of Jupiter and Neptune. That didn't help much, though, in a boat never meant for interplanetary flight and thus carrying only the ephemerides of the Jovian System. Presumably they had gone in a straight line, so that one of the zodiacal constellations was at their back and should still be recognizable, but the high-velocity distortions of the outside view had precluded anyone's noticing which stars had been where.

Ray floated over to the port and looked out at the eerie magnificance of unknown

space. "If I'd been a Boy Scout," he lamented, "I might know the constellations. The thing to do is to head back toward any one which looks halfway familiar, since that must be the one which was at our stern. But I only know Orión and the Big Dipper." He looked at Urushkidan with accusing eyes. "You're the great astrophysicist. Can't you tell one star from another?"

"Certainly not," said the Martian huffily. "No astrophysicist eber looks at de stars if he can help it."

"Oh, you want a con—con—star—picture?" asked Dyann innocently.

Ray said, "I mean one we know, as we see the stars from Sol, or from Centauri. You're nice to look at, honey, but right now I can't help wishing you Varannians were a little more intellectual."

"Oh, I know the stars," said Dyann. "Every noble learns them. Let me see —" She floated around the chamber, from port to port, staring out and muttering to herself. "Oh, yes. There is Kunatha the Hunter-threatened-by-woman-devourin-monster. Not chanyed much."

"Huh?" Ray and Urushkidan pushed themselves over beside her. "By gosh," said the Earthling, "it does look like Virgo, I think, or one of 'em. Dyann, I love you to pieces."

"Let's get home quick, then," she beamed. "I vant to be on a planet." During the outward flight she had been somewhat discomforted by discovering the erotic importance of gravity.

"You steer us home?" screeched Urushkidan. "How in Nebukadashatbu do you know te stars?"

"I had to learn them," she said. "Every noble on Varann has to know—vat you call it?—astroloyee. How else could ve plan our battles wisely?"

"Astrology?" screamed the Martian. "You are an—an—astrologer?"

"Vy, of course. I thought you vere too, but it seems like you Solarians are more backward than I supposed. Shall I cast your horoscope?"

"Astrology," groaned Urushkidan. He looked ill.

"Well," said Ray helplessly, "I guess it's up to you to pilot us back, Dyann."

"Vy, sure." She jumped into the pilot seat. "Anchors aweigh."

"Brought home by an astrologer," groaned Urushkidan. "Te ignominy of it all."

RAY started the new engine. They could accelerate all the way back and use the brake to stop almost instantly—it shouldn't take long. "All set," he called, and the rising note of power thrummed behind his words.

"Giddap!" yelled Dyann. She swung the ship around and slammed the main drive switch home.

Ray looked out at the weirdly distorted heavens. "There should be some way to compensate for that aberration," he murmured. "A viewplate using photocells, with the electron beam control-fields hooked into the drive circuit—sure. Simple." He floated back to the lab and began assembling scattered apparatus. In a few hours he emerged with a gadget as uncouth as the engine itself but there was a set of three tele-screens which gave clear views in three directions. Dyann smiled and pointed to one of them. "See, now Avalla—the Victorious - warrior-returnin-from-battle - vith-captive-man-slung-across-her-saddle-bow — is taking shape," she said.

"That," said Ray, "is Ursa Major. You Varannians have a fantastic imagination."

A blue-white giant of a sun flamed ahead, prominences seething millions of miles into space. Dyann's eyes sparkled and she applied a sideways vector to the star drive. "Yippee!" she howled.

"Hey!" screamed the Earthman.

They whizzed past the star, playing tag with the reaching flames while Dyann roared out a Centaurian battle chant. Ray's subconscious mind spewed forth every prayer he had even known.

"Okay, ve are past it," said Dyann.

"Don't do such things!" he said weakly.

"Darlin," said the girl, "I think we should spend our honeymoon flyin' through space like this."

The stars blurred past. The Galaxy's conquerors looked at the splendor of open space and ate cold beans out of a can.

"I think," said Dyann thoughtfully, "ve should go first to Varann."

"Alpha Centauri?" asked Urushkidan. "Nonsense. We are going back at once to Uttu and civilized society."

"We may need help at Sol," said the girl. "We have been gone—how long—about two weeks? Much could have happened in that time."

"But—but—it's not practical," objected Ray.

Dyann grinned cheerfully. "And how will you stop me?"

"Varann—oh, well, I've always wanted to see it anyway."

The Centaurian began casting about, steering by the aspect of the sky. Before many hours, she was slanting in toward a double star with a dim red dwarf in the background. "This is it," she said. "This is it."

"Okay," answered Ray. "Now tell me how you find a planet."

"Hmmm—well—" Dyann scratched her ruddy head.

Ray began to figure it aloud.

"The planets—let me see, now—yeah, they're in the plane of the two stars. They'd have to be. So if you go out to a point in that plane where Alpha A, your sun, seems of about the right size, and then swing in a circle of that radius, you should come pretty close to Varann. It has a good-sized moon, doesn't it, and its color is greenish-blue? Yes, we should be able to spot it."

"You are so clever," sighed Dyann.

"Hah!" sneered Urushkidan.

At a mere fraction of the velocity of light—Ray thought of the consequences of hitting a planet when going faster than light, and wished he hadn't—the spaceboat moved around Alpha A. It seemed only minutes before Dyann pointed and cried joyously, "There we are. There is home. After many years—home!"

"I would still like to know what we are going to do when we get there," said Urushkidan.

He was not answered. Dyann and Ray were too busy bringing the vessel down into the atmosphere and across the wild surface.

"Kathantuma!" cried the girl. "There is my homeland. See, there is the mountain, old Mother Hastan. There is the city Mayta. Hold on, we're goin' down!"

MAYTA was a huddle of thatch-roofed wooden buildings at the foot of a fantastically spired gray castle, sitting amid the broad fields and forests and rivers of Kathantuma with the mountains shining in the far distance. Dyann set the ship down just outside the town, stood up, and stretched her tigress body with an exultant laugh.

"Home!" she cried. "Gravity!"

"Uh—yeah." Ray tried to lift his feet. It went slowly, with some strain—half again the pull of Earth. Urushkidan groaned and wheezed his painful way to a chair and collapsed all over it.

"Let's go!" Dyann snatched up her sword, set the helmet rakishly on her bronze curls, and opened the airlock. When Ray hesitated she reached and yanked him out.

The air was cool and windy, pungent with a million scents of earth and growing things, tall clouds sailing over a high blue heaven, and even the engineer was grateful for it after the stuffiness of the boat. He looked around him. Not far off was a charming rustic cottage. It was like a scene from some forgotten idyll of Earth's old past.

"Looks good," he said.

A four-foot arrow hummed past his ear and rang like a gong on the ship's hull.

"Yowp!" Ray dove for shelter. Another arrow zipped in front of him. He whirled at a storm of contralto curses.

There were half a dozen women pouring from the charming rustic cottage, a battle-scarred older one and five tall young daughters, waving swords and axes and spears. A couple of men peered nervously from the door.

"Ha, Ormun!" yelled Dyann. She lifted her sword and dashed to meet the onslaught. The oldest woman caught the amazon's blow on a raised shield and her ax clanged off Dyann's helmet. Dyann staggered, shook her head, and struck out afresh. The others closed in, yelling and jabbing.

Dyann's sword met the nearest ax half-way and broke across. She stooped, picked the woman off her feet, and whirled her over her head. With a shout, she threw the old she-warrior into two of her nearest

daughters, and the trio went down in a roar of metal.

Centaurian hospitality, thought Ray.

A backhanded blow sent him reeling. He looked up to see a yellow-haired girl looming over him. Before he could do more than mutter she had slugged him again and thrown him over one brawny shoulder.

Hoofs clattered down the narrow dirt road. A squad of armored women riding animals reminiscent of Percherons, but horned and red of hide, were charging from the town. They swept into the fight, wielding clubbed lances with fine impartiality, and it broke up in a sullen wave of red-splashed femininity. Nobody, Ray saw from his upside-down position, had been killed, but there were plenty of slashes and the intent had certainly been there.

Th harsh barking language of Kathantuma rose on either side. Finally an understanding seemed to be reached. One of the riders pointed a mailed hand at Ray's captor and snapped an order. The girl protested, was overruled, and tossed him pettishly to the ground. He recovered consciousness in a minute or two.

Dyann picked him up, tenderly. "Poor Ray," she murmured. "Ve play too rough for you here, huh?"

"What was it all about?" he mumbled.

"Oh, these people vere mad because ve landed in their field, but the qveen's riders stopped the fight in time. It is only lawful to kill people on the regular duellin grounds, inside the city limits. Ve must have law and order, you know."

"I see," said Ray faintly.

IT WAS a large and turbulent crowd which gathered at sunset to hear Dyann speak. She and her companions were on a raised stand in the market square, together with the scarred, arrogant queen and her troop of pikewomen and cavalry. In the guttering red flare of torches, Ray looked down on a surging lake of women, the soldier-peasants of Kathantuma gathered from all the hinterland, brandishing their weapons and beating clangorous shields in lieu of applause. Here and there public entertainers circulated, thinly clad men with flowers twined into their hair and beards, strumming harps and watching with great

liquid eyes.

Ray was still not quite sure what the girl's plan was, and by now didn't much care. A combination of the dragging Varannian gravity and the potent Varannian wine made him so sleepy that he could barely focus on the milling crowd. Urushkidan slept the sleep of the just, snoring hideously.

Dyann ended her harangue and the racket of metal and voices shook the surrounding walls. After that there were long-winded arguments which sometimes degenerated into fist fights, until Ray himself dropped off to sleep.

He was shaken awake by Dyann and looked blearily around him. Dawn was streaking the horizon with cold colorless light, and the mob was slowly and noisily dispersing. He groaned as he stretched his stiffened body and tried to brush the dew off his clothes.

"The natural life—Hah!" he said miserably, and sneezed.

"It has been decided," cried the girl. She was still as fresh as the morning, her cheeks were flushed and her eyes ablaze. "They agreed at last, and now the var-vord goes over the land and envoys are bound for Almarro and Kurin to get allies. How soon can ve leave, Ray?"

"Leave?" he asked stupidly. "Leave for where?"

"Vy, for Yupiter, of course!"

"Huh?"

"You are tired, my little bird. Come with me, and ve shall rest in the castle.

Ray groaned again.

HOW do you equip an army of barbarians still in the early Iron Age to cross four and a third light-years of space?

A preliminary question, perhaps is, Do you want to?

Ray emphatically didn't, but he had very little choice in the matter. He was soon given forcibly to understand that men kept their place and did as they were commanded.

He went to Urushkidan and poured out his sorrows. The Martian, after an abortive attempt to steal the spaceship and sneak home, had been given a room in one of the castle towers and was covering large sheets of local parchment with equations.

This place, thought Ray, has octopuses in the belfry.

"They want to go to Jupiter and fight the Jovians," he said.

"What of it?" asked Urushkidan, lighting his pipe. He had found that dried bark could be smoked. "Tey may eben succeed. Primitibes habe often obercome more advanced and better armed hosts. Read te history of Eart sometime."

"But they'll take us along."

"Oh. Oh-oh! Tat is different." The Martian riffled through his papers. "Let me see, I tink Equations 549 trough 627 indicate—yes, here we are. It is possible to project te same type of dribing beam as we use in te faster-tan-light engine so as to impart a desired belocity bector to external objects. Toward or away from you. Or—look here, differentiation of tis equation shows it would be equally simple to break intranuclear bonds by trowing only a certain type of particle into te pseudo-condition. Te atom would ten feed on its own energy."

Ray looked at him in awe. "You," he whispered, "have just invented the tractor beam, the pressor beam, the disintegrator, and the all-purpose, all-fuel atomic motor."

"I habe? Is tere money in tem?"

Ray went to work.

The three expeditions from Sol had left a good deal of assorted supplies and equipment behind for the use of later arrivals. Most of this had been stored in a local temple, and sacrifices were made yearly to the digital computer. It took an involved theological argument to obtain the stuff—the point that Ormun had to be rescued was conceded to be a good one, but it wasn't till the high priestess suddenly disappeared that the material was forthcoming.

The Ballantyne-Urushkidan circuits were simple things, once you knew how to make them. With the help of a few tolerably skilled smiths, Ray hammered out enough of the new-type atomic generators to lift the fleet off Varann and across to Sol. He built the drive-circuits carefully, designing them to burn out after landing again on Varann. The prospect of the amazon planet's people flitting whither they pleased in the Galaxy was not one any sane man could cheerfully contemplate.

The spaceships were mere hulks of varnished and greased hardwood, equipped with airlocks and slapped together by the carpenters of Mayta in a few weeks. The crossing would be made so rapidly that heating and air plants wouldn't be needed. Once the haywired star drives were installed, a pilot sketchily trained for each vessel, and every hull crammed with a couple of hundred yelling warriors, the fleet was ready to go.

They poured in, ten times as many as the thirty ships could hold, riding and hiking from the farthest of the continent's little kingdoms to be in on the most glorious piracy of their dreams. Only Dyann cared much about Ormun, who was after all merely her personal joss, and only Ray gave a good damn about the menace of Jupiter. The rest came to fight and steal and see new countries. They were especially eager to kidnap husbands—the polyandrous system of Varann worked undue hardships on many women, and Dyann shrewdly gave preference to the unmarried in choosing her followers.

As to the practicability of the whole insane idea—Ray didn't dare think about it.

Three hectic months after his arrival at Centauri, the barbarian fleet left for Sol.

JUPITER swam enormously in the forward ports, diademed with the bitter glory of open space, growing and growing as the ship rushed closer. Ray pushed his way through the restless crowd of armed women that jammed the boat. "Dyann," he pleaded, "couldn't I at least call up Earth and find out what's happened?"

"Vy, I suppose so," she said, not taking her eyes off the swelling giant before them. "But be quick, please."

The human fiddled with the telescreen. Three months ago the notion of calling over nearly half a billion miles with that undersized thing would have been merely ridiculous. But that was another byproduct of Urushkidan's theory. You used an electron wave with unlimited velocity as a carrier beam for your radio photons. It induced a similar effect in the other transmitter. No distance diminution. No time lag. Anyway, not within the limits of anything so small as the Solar System. Ray got

the standard wavelength of the U.N. public relations office, the only one which he could call freely without going through a lot of red tape.

A blurred face looked out at him. He hadn't refined his circuits to the point of eliminating distortion, and the U.N. official resembled something seen through ten feet of rippled water—at least, his image did. But the voice was clear enough. "Who is this, please?"

"Ray Ballantyne, returning from Alpha Centauri on the first faster-than-light spaceship. Calling from the vicinity of Jupiter."

"This is no time for joking. Who the devil are you and what do you want? Please report."

"I want to give the U.N. Patrol the secret of faster-than-light travel. Stand by to record."

"Hey!" screamed Urushkidan. "I never said I'd gibe—"

DYANN put her foot on his head and pushed him against the floor.

"Oh, well," he said. "Trough te incredible generosity of myself, ten, te secret is made freely available—"

"Ready to record?" asked Ray tightly.

"I said your humor is in very bad taste," said the official, and switched off with an ugly scowl.

Ray blinked weakly at the set for a while. Then he tuned in on Earth broadcasts until he caught a news program. Jupiter had declared war a month ago, defeated the U.N. navy in a running battle off Mars, seized bases on Luna, and was threatening atomic bombardment of Earth unless terms were met. "Oh, gosh," said Ray.

"Such an invasion could only be launched on a shoestring," said Urushkidan. "Te U.N. still has bases closer to home, it can cut Jobian supply lines—"

"And meanwhile poor old Earth is reduced to radioactive rubbish," said Ray gloomily. "And those gruntbrains in charge won't believe I've got the decisive weapon to save" them."

"Would you believe such a claim?"

"No, but this is different, damn it."

"Ganymede dead ahead," shouted Dyann. "Stand by for action! Get ready to make a landing."

VII

THE flagship-spaceboat slanted into the moon's atmosphere with a whoop and a holler, blazed across the ragged surface, and lowered outside the great dome of Ganymede City. The clumsy hulks behind her wallowed after at a more leisurely pace.

Lacking spacesuits, the amazons were faced with a certain problem of entry. Dyann hovered over the spaceport and opened her disintegrators full blast. The port disappeared in a sudden tornado of boiling rock and leaping blue fires. When she had sunk a fifty-foot pit, she went down into it, hung before the side of it facing the city, and narrowed the dis-beam to a drill. In moments she had cut a tunnel through to the lower levels of the city.

Air began streaming out, ghost-white with freezing water vapor, but it would take quite a few minutes for the pressure within to fall dangerously low. Meanwhile Dyann sailed blithely through her tunnel, disintegrated various walls and bulkheads to clear a landing space, and set down amid the ruins of the city's factory level.

"All out!" she cried. "Hai, Kathantuma!"

Ray buckled on his helmet with shaking fingers, drew his sword, and followed her out the airlock, more because of the press of bodies behind than from any desire for glory. In fact, he admitted to himself, he was scared witless. Only Urushkidan stayed behind—the lucky devil.

The rest of the barbarian fleet streamed in one by one, landing clumsily and discharging their clamorous hordes. When the clear area was filled, they landed on top of each other and the armored warriors jumped down in a flash of edged metal. After they were all in, Urushkidan projected a beam and melted the passageway shut against the escape of air and heat. Also, thought Ray sickly, against a quick retreat.

"Hoo, hah!" Dyann's sword shrieked in the air above the helmeted heads of her milling army. She started down the nearest corridor, running and bounding and whooping. The amazons were hard on her heels, and the racket of clashing armor and girlish voices was shattering.

Up a long staircase, five steps at a time, into the hall beyond that, spilling out over a broad plaza—

A machine gun raved and Ray saw three Centaurians tumble to the floor. As he dove for it himself, he looked across the square and into the muzzle of the thing where it sat in one of the branch corridors. There might be only a skeleton garrison left in the city but it had reacted with terrifying swiftness. Ray tried to dig through the metal floorplates.

The air was suddenly thick and whistling. A solid rain of spears and arrows loosed. It didn't leave much of the machine gun crew. One of the amazon officers—they had some notion of firearms—picked up the .50-caliber under one arm. When a squad of Jovian soldiers appeared down the hallway, she held it against her knee and used it tommy gun style. It worked.

Ray was carried along by the tide. In this weird struggle, modern firearms weren't of decisive use. Boiling through the miles of gloomy hallways and narrow apartments, the fight was almost entirely hand-to-hand, and that was exactly what the Varannians loved.

Dyann vaulted over a row of bodies and hit a Jovian squad with all her mass and momentum. She trampled two men underfoot while her sword howled in a shearing arc around her. A Jovian grenadier hurled his pineapple in her direction. She snatched it out of the air and tossed it back. Wildly, he caught it and threw it again. Dyann laughed and pitched it once more—very shortly before it went off. Turning, she skewered one Jovian, kicked another in the belly, used her sword's guard as a knuckle-duster against a third, and cut down a fourth in almost the same motion. The squad broke up.

Ray saw an inviting door and scurried for it. There was a bed to hide under. Two Jovian soldiers came in at that moment, fleeing the barbarians.

Ray's helmet and cuirass were as good as a uniform, or he would have shouted "Hail, Wilder!" As it was, the nearest man lunged at him with a bayonet. Ray's sword clattered against the weapon, driving it briefly aside. The Jovian snarled and probed inward, but a bayonet is clumsy com-

pared to a well-handled blade and Ray had done a little fencing. He beat the assault back and thrust under the fellow's guard.

The other man had been circling, trying to get in on the fun. Now he charged. Ray whirled to meet him and tripped on his scabbard. He clanged to the floor and the rushing Jovian tripped on him. Ray got on the man's back, pulled off his helmet, and beat his head against the floor.

Rising, he checked the two rifles. Empty—the Jovians must have used all their clips in an attempt to stem the Centaurian thrust, which explained their choice of cold steel against him. But they had full cartridge belts. Ray reloaded one of the guns and felt better.

Peering carefully out the door, he saw that the fight had moved somewhere else. He started back toward the ships, the safest place he could think of.

AS HE rounded a corner a tommy-gun blast nearly took his head off. He yelled, dropped to the floor just in time, and let the gun fall from his hands.

A hard boot slammed against his ribs. "Get up!"

He lurched to his feet and stared into the faces of a Jovian detachment, the black-clad elite guard of the dictator himself. Martin Wilder the Great huddled in their midst. Colonel Roshevsky-Feldkamp was at their head, in charge of Jupiter's home defense, Ray thought wildly, and tried to stretch his arms higher.

"Ballantyne!" The Jovian officer glared at him for a long moment. "So you are responsible."

"I had nothing to do with it, so help me I didn't," protested Ray between the clattering of his teeth.

"You brought these savages in, you and your damned faster-than-light engine. If it weren't for your hostage value, I'd shoot you now. As it is, I'll wait till later. March!"

They went carefully down the glutted hall-street. The Centaurians had been picking up souvenirs from every shop and apartment they passed. "Don't think this will accomplish anything," said Wilder pompously. "You may have driven us from our capital, but we have already called for

help from the other cities—from the whole Jovian System. The fleet is on its way.”

So the amazons had taken Ganymede City. And now they'd be too busy looting to think about counterattacks from outside. Ray groaned.

“We have to get out of here, sir,” said Roshevsky-Feldkamp. “We don't want you to be caught in the fighting.”

“No, no, that would never do,” said Wilder quickly.

“There is a military airlock this way, with spacesuits. We can get out on the surface.”

“I will strike a new medal,” chattered the dictator. “The Defense of the Homeland Medal.”

“And afterward we will take those ships.” Roshevsky-Feldkamp's hard face lit with a terrible glee. “And then the stars are ours.”

“Hoo-ah!”

The shout rang down the hallway. Ray saw a Centaurian band, staggering under armloads of assorted plunder, emerge from a side passage. The Jovians brought their rifles up.

Something like an atomic bomb hit the group from the rear. Dyann's war-cry shrieked above the sudden din. She hadn't been altogether a fool.

Ray was shoved back against the wall by the sudden whirlpool of struggling bodies. He ducked as a Varannian sword whistled overhead. Dyann was wading in among the Jovians, kicking, striking, hewing like a maniac. She split one enemy apart, pitched another into a third, turned around and chopped loose. Her warriors got to work at her side.

A panting Jovian backed up close to Ray, lifting his rifle anew to shoot down the bronze-haired girl. The Earthmen thoughtfully removed the soldier's pistol from its holster and shot him.

“My little hero!” cried Dyann happily. “I love you so much!” She beat down another man's gun and broke his head.

The fight ended. Most of the Jovians had simply been knocked galley-west and submitted in a stunned way to being bound and hoisted to Varannian shoulders. Ray had a glimpse of Martin Wilder the Great and Colonel Roshevsky-Feldkamp being dragged off by a squat and muscular amazon

with a silly smirk on her sword-scarred face. They were destined for her harem, and he couldn't think of two people he'd rather have it happen to.

Only there were those Jovian ships—

Ray had no way, just then, of knowing that Urushkidan had prudently taken the spaceboat outside again and was using its long-range beams to disintegrate the fleet as it came down. He hummed an old Martian work song to himself as he did. There are times when even a philosopher must take measures.

OFFICIAL banquets are notoriously dull affairs, and the present celebration was no different. That the Luna-based invaders had capitulated on hearing of the disaster at home, that a democratic government with U.N. membership had been set up for a permanently disarmed Jupiter, and that the stars were open to mankind, seemed to call forth only bigger and better platitudes.

Ray Ballantyne, drowsy with food and cocktails, nearly snowblind with white tablecloth, would have fallen asleep except for the fact that his shoes pinched him. So he listened with some surprise to the president of his alma mater telling what an outstanding student he had been. As a matter of fact, he recalled, he'd damn near been expelled.

Urushkidan, crammed into a Martian-designed tuxedo, smoked a thoughtful pipe at his right and made calculations on the tablecloth. Dyann Korlas, her shining hair braided around a stolen Jovian tiara, looked stunning in a low-cut evening gown on his left. The dagger at her waist was to set a new fashion on Earth, but there had been some confusion when she insisted on having Ormun the Terrible placed in front of her and grace said to the idol. Oh, well.

“—and this dauntless genius of science, whom his university is pleased to honor with a doctorate of law—”

She leaned over and whispered in his ear—it could only be heard for three yards around—“Ray, vat vill you do now?”

“I dunno,” he murmured back. “I want to get a patent on that damn interstellar drive before Urushkidan does, but after that—well—”

“It vas a lot of fun vile it lasted, wasn't

it?" Dyann's smile was wistful. "But I have been thinking, Ray. I am goin' back to Varann and carve me out a throne. You—vell, Ray, you are too fine and beautiful for such rough vork. You belong here, in the glamor and bright lights, not out with a lot of coarse unruly women who might hurt you."

"You know," he said, "I think you've got something there."

"I will always remember you," she said sentimentally. "Maybe some day ven we are old, we can meet again and bore the

youth with talk of our great days." She looked around. "If only we could sneak out of here now and have a farevell party of our own—I know a bar—"

"Hmmm." Ray stroked his chin. "This calls for tactics. If we could sort of slump down in our chairs, as if we were tired—and Lord, I am!—and gradually sink out of sight, we could crawl under the table and through that door—"

As he crept from the hall, Ray heard Urushkidan, called on for a speech, begin the detailed exposition of his latest theory.
