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NEXT ISSUE

MURRAY LEINSTER

popular author of *Nightmare Planet* will appear with a very human and entertaining story of a child who grew up light years from the planet Earth and of the conflict between his environment and his instincts.

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FRANK M. ROBINSON

swiftly rising young writer makes his first appearance in *SCIENCE-FICTION+* contributing a suspenseful short story with an ending that has a real, solid punch.

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An unusual feature of our next issue will be Dr. Leslie R. Shepherd's article *Physics of Space*, which contains many surprising findings concerning space travel, including the mathematical chances of a meteor hitting a space ship; how deadly the cosmic rays would be; whether space is really black, and many other seldom considered facts.

Science-Fiction⁺plus

preview of the future

OCTOBER, 1953

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will be paid by this magazine for each Short-Short Science-Fiction Story. These stories must be real science-fiction, not fantasy, and should not run over 1,000 words. The Short-Short + will occupy one full page.



This design, symbolizing science-fiction, is displayed with all stories of a serious scientific-technical trend. Such stories contain new scientific ideas which are certain to be realized in the future.

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THE LABOR PAINS were increasing. The dainty Martian doctor arrived and examined her briefly. He chattered away at the Martian nurse in charge. Although she understood Martian, Jean's mind registered the conversation dimly, for the odd amnesia of birthing dulled her to everything.

The next spasm contracted her womb. She breathed deeply, slowly, as she'd been taught, expanding abdominal muscles to give the womb more freedom. All her energy was concentrated on breathing and relax-

that your fragile wives could not carry on our oxygen-loaded Terra. Could there be a greater indignity?

How she and the other girls had prayed for failure in implantation, devised schemes for miscarriage, for some small way to abort the fetus successfully, even with the penalty of slow-burn! Jean vividly remembered the slow-burning she had had to witness two years ago when she was sixteen. It had taken agonizing, shrieking hours for that girl to be consumed by the creeping, crawling, crisping organism.

Freedom of the race

ing, but slowly the doctor's words reached her mind. "Such a healthy animal, an excellent breeder. I have high hopes that everything will go all right in this case. If so, I'll insist the commissioner use her again. It's against our policy, but we are desperate."

"So," thought Jean in her semistupor, "that's what happened to the girls who didn't come back to the Center. They died insuring life to these multiple monsters. They weren't set free. Viny was right and we wouldn't believe her. She must be dead, too."

Again the Martian nurse ordered her to turn over, and Jean felt the cold metal of the fetoscope on her swollen abdomen. She tried unsuccessfully to breathe deeply as another contraction gripped her, and she wanted so to turn back to her side. It wouldn't matter what she wanted . . . she was just an animal incubator. There would be no narcotic ease to this birth. There was too much danger of asphyxiating the Martian get whose lungs at birth were curiously delicate.



"Beside her were the Martian parents of the get within her."

"O ingenious conquerors," she thought. "You arrive on our good green Earth from your desiccated world. You end our petty national squabbles by enslaving us. All the indignities and offices of slavery are heaped on every head. And they all pale with banality against your crowning psychological coup. You make us bear, not half-breeds toward which we might conceivably grow attached, but your own spawn

A Short-Short + by ANNE McCAFFREY

(Illustration by Peter Poulton)

The pains crowded in on each other with so precious little time between for rest—rest that meant survival for her. She couldn't be far from the transition to second-stage labor, she thought with hope. Her fellow brood mares had said it was easy—that a Martian was so small it emerged easily.

That was before the vogue of multiple births.

The rare instances of multiple births to a Martian were always stillborn . . . until the experiment of transplanting twin placentae into a Terran womb, resulting in successful birth of twins. After that, the fad was on. With a little scientific help, twins, triplets, quintuplets, of whichever sex desired were reluctantly borne by Terran girls.

In the midst of this mirthless reminiscence, Jean felt an irresistible urge to bear down and she responded automatically. She heard around her sudden movements, excited brusque orders from the Martian nurse who had never left her side for four months.

She was conscious of several more Martian voices now, and very bright lights. She opened her eyes wearily and saw she was in the delivery room, her bed being pushed against a slab table. Beside her were the Martian parents of the get within her . . . their odd yellow wolf-eyes gleaming in the dark.

Then she felt the hands of the Terran nurses on her, moving her to the delivery table. The girl at her head fumbled to catch her under the arms and was severely reprimanded by the nervous Martian doctor.

"You'll burn slow if you harm her," he shouted in his high, whining voice.

"She'll be all right," the nurse replied, with unexpected firmness for a Terran answering a Martian.

The nurse bent low and said softly in Jean's ear: "Don't worry, baby, everything will be all right—another batch of dead, deformed offspring for our eager Martian 'liberators.'"

Jean snapped alert despite the excruciating pain.

The Terran nurse smiled. A grim, triumphant smile. "German measles," she whispered. "Eighty per cent of Earth women who catch the disease from their third to fifth month of pregnancy produce children with some defect or deformity, deaf mutes, mongolian idiots, and blind. In the case of fragile, Martian offspring, the total is one hundred percent. There hasn't been a normal Martian baby born in six months."

Jean remembered six months ago, when she had a slight fever and flushing of the skin! It was too mild for the Martians to notice and over so quickly that she hadn't complained. Pregnant women's greatest fear was now their savior! This was only the beginning. Terra would be free.

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