

PLANET STORIES



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IMAGE OF SPLENDOR

By LU KELLA

From Venus to Earth, and all the way between, it was a hell of a world for men . . . and Apprentice Burnerman O'Rielly particularly.

THE intercom roared fit to blow O'Rielly back to Venus. "Burner Four."

"On my way, sir!"

At the first flash of red on the bank of meters Apprentice Burnerman O'Rielly had slammed the safety helmet on his head; he was already throwing open the lock to the burner room. The hot, throbbing rumble whipped around him and near crushed his breath away. Power! Power of the universe trapped here and ready to destroy its captors given one chance! Swiftly O'Rielly unlocked the controls and reset them. The throbbing rumble changed tone.

Old Callahan's voice crackled now through the helmet's ear contact. "Well, Mr. O'Rielly?"

"Fusion control two points low, sir."

O'Rielly wondered had Callahan passed out, was so long before the old Burner Chief demanded hoarsely, "Didn't you lock them controls before blast-off?"

"If every control hadn't been locked in correct setting," O'Rielly answered from his own angry bewilderment, "the error would have registered before blast-off—wouldn't it, sir?"

"So a control reset itself in flight, hey?"

"I don't know yet, sir."

"Well, Mr. O'Rielly, you better know before we orbit Earth!"

The icy knot in O'Rielly's stomach jerked tighter. A dozen burners on this ship; why did something crazy have to happen to O'Rielly's? In a hundred years, so the instructors—brisk females all—had told O'Rielly in pre-flight school, no control had ever been known to slip. But one had moved here. Not enough to cause serious trouble this far out from Earth. On blast-down,

though, with one jet below peak, the uneven thrust could throw the ship, crash it, the whole lovely thing and all aboard gone in a churning cloud.

Sweat pouring off him, O'Rielly prowled around his burner. Design of the thing had been bossed by dames of course; what on Earth wasn't any more? Anyway, nobody could get to a burner except through its watch room. Anyone entered or left there, a bell clanged, lights flashed and a meter registered beside the Burnerman's bunk and on the Burner Chief's console up in the fight room full of beautifully efficient officers. Ever since Venus blast-off O'Rielly had been in Four's watch room. Nobody had passed through. O'Rielly knew it. Callahan knew it. By now the Old Woman herself, Captain Millicent Hatwoody, had probably inquired what was in charge of Burner Four.

Well, ma'am, O'Rielly searched every cranny where even a three-tailed mouse of Venus could have stowed away. His first sight, and O'Rielly saw himself washed out, hustled to sweeper on the blast-off stands of some God-forsaken satellite. He staggered back into his watch room. And his brain was suddenly taken apart and slapped together again. Felt that way.

She was sitting on his bunk. No three-tailed mouse. No Old Woman either. Oh, she was a female human, though, this creature at which O'Rielly stood gaping. Yes, ma'am!

"I was in your burner room." Her voice matched the rest of her, a blend of loveliness unlike anything outside a guy's most secret dreams. "I couldn't stand the heat any longer and I couldn't open that big door. So I moved one of your controls a

tiny bit. All the noise in there, naturally you couldn't hear me walk out while your back was turned resetting the control."

O'RIELLY suddenly felt like turning her over his knee and whaling her until she couldn't sit for a year. This, mind you, he felt in an age where no Earth guy for a thousand years had dared raise so much as a breath against woman's supremacy in all matters. That male character trait, however, did not seem to be the overpowering reason why O'Rielly, instead of laying violent hands upon this one's person, heard himself saying in sympathetic outrage, "A shame you had to go to all that bother to get out here!"

"You're so kind. But I'm afraid I became rather sticky and smelly in there."

"They ought to cool the air in there with perfume! I'll drop a suggestion in the Old Woman's box first chance I get."

"You're so thoughtful. And do you have bathing facilities?"

"That door right there. Oh, let me open it for you!"

"You're so sweet." Her big dark eyes glowed with such pure innocence that O'Rielly could have torn down the universe and rebuilt it just for her.

Yes, ma'am, O'Rielly was floating on a pink cloud with heavenly music in his head. Never felt so fine before. Except on the Venus layover when he'd been roped into a dice game with a bunch of Venus lads who had a jug to cheer one's parting with one's money.

A bell suddenly clanged fit to wake the dead while the overhead lights flashed wildly. Only the watch room door. Only Callahan here now. Old buzzard had a drooped nose like a pick, chin like a shovel.

When he talked he was like digging a hole in front of himself. "Well, what about that control?"

"What control?"

"Your fusion control that got itself two points low!"

"Oh, that little thing."

Callahan said something through his teeth, then studied O'Rielly sharply. "Hey, you been wetting your whistle on that Venus vino again? Lemme smell your breath! Pah. Loaded yourself full of chloro-

phyll again probably. All right, stand aside whilst I see your burner."

"Charmed to, Burner Chief Callahan, sir," O'Rielly said while bowing gracefully.

"Higher than a swacked skunk's tail again," Callahan muttered, then snapped back over his shoulder, "Use your shower!"

O'Rielly stood considering his shower door. Somehow he doubted that Burner Chief Terrence Callahan's mood, or Captain Millicent Hatwoody's, would be improved by knowledge of the she who was in O'Rielly's shower now. Not that the dear stowaway was less than charming. Quite the contrary. Oh, very quite!

"You rockhead!" Only Callahan back from the burner. "Didn't I tell you to shower the stink off yourself? Old Woman's taking a Venus bigwig on tour the ship. Old Woman catches you like you been rassling skunks she'll peel both our hides off. Not to mention what she'll do anyway about your fusion control!"

"Burner Chief Callahan, sir," O'Rielly responded courteously, "I have been thinking."

"With what? Never mind, just keep on trying whilst I have a shower for myself here." Wherewith Callahan reached hand for O'Rielly's shower door.

"Venus dames," O'Rielly said dreamily, "don't boss anything, do they?"

Callahan yelped like he'd been bit in the pants by a big Jupiter ant. "O'Rielly! You trying to get both of us condemned to a Uranus moon?" Callahan also shot a wild look to the intercom switch. It was in OFF position; the flight room full of fancy gold-lace petticoats could not have overheard from here. Nevertheless Callahan's eyes rolled like the devil was behind him with the fork ready. "O'Rielly, open your big ears whilst for your own good and mine I speak of certain matters.

"Thousand years ago, it was, the first flight reached Venus. Guys got one look at them dames. Had to bring some home or bust. So then everybody on Earth got a look, mostly by TV only of course. That did it. Every guy on Earth began blowing his fuse over them dames. Give up the shirt off his back, last buck in the bank, his own Earth dame or family—everything.

"Well, that's when Earth dames took



over like armies of wild cats with knots in their tails. Before the guys who'd brought the Venus dames to Earth could say anything they was taken apart too small to pick up with a blotter. Earth dames wound up by flying the Venus ones back where they come from and serving notice if one ever set foot on Earth again there wouldn't be enough left of Venus to find with an electron microscope.

"VENUS boys rared up and served notice that if Earth ever got any funny notions, right away there wouldn't be enough Earth left to hide in an atom's eyebrow. Touchy as hornets on a hot griddle, them Venus guys. Crazier than bed bugs about war. Could smell a loose dollar a million light years away too. Finagled around until they finally cooked up a deal.

"No Venus dames allowed within fifty miles of their port. Earth guys stay inside the high-voltage fence. Any dame caught trying to leave Venus thrown to the tigers for supper. Same for any Earth guy caught around a Venus dame. In return, Earth could buy practically everything at bargain basement prices."

"Oh, I was shown the history films in pre-flight," O'Rielly said, still dreamily. "But not a peek of any Venus dame."

"Pray heaven you'll never lay eyes on one nor have one get within ten foot of you! Even though you'd know she'd be your damnation wouldn't make a whit difference—you'd still act sappier than thirty-seven angels flying on vino." Callahan suddenly stared at O'Rielly. "Holy hollering saints!"

"Now, now, Burner Chief Callahan, sir," O'Rielly responded with an airy laugh. "No Earth guy for a hundred twenty-five years been near one and lived to tell it, has he?"

"So the whispers run," Callahan murmured with a queer flame dancing into his eyes. "So the old whispers still run."

"Never a name, though. Never how it was done." O'Rielly snorted. "Probably just a goofy tale set loose by some old space bum."

"Oh?" Callahan bristled up like a bad name had been bandied about. "Seen them ditty bags Venus bigwigs have, ain't you? Some big enough to stuff a cow in. Notice how nobody ever dares question a big-

wig's bags, even through customs? Just run 'em through the big Geiger that tells whether there's any fusible junk inside. Well, our boy got himself one of them bags, stuffed himself inside and joined a bigwig's pile of 'em.

"Didn't pull it whilst on the Venus port during a layover either, when a crew check would of turned him up missing. Pulled it on vacation. Started on the Earth end. Made himself a pair of beards to paste on his ears of course. Wove Jupiter wiggle worms in to keep the beards moving. Wasn't like the real thing, but good enough to flimflam Venus guys."

With suddenly enlivened interest O'Rielly looked at Callahan. "Hey, how come you know so much?"

"Hah? What?" Callahan blinked like waking from a trance; even groaned to himself, something that sounded like, "Blabbering like I'd had a nip myself—or one of them dillies was radiating near!" Then Callahan glared fit to drill holes in O'Rielly's head. "Look! I was a full Burnerman before you was born. Been flying the spaces hundred twenty-five years now. Had more chances to hear more—just hear more, you hear! Only tried to clear your mind about Venus dames so you could put your brain on your control mess. So now put it! If you ain't high on vino and ain't been made nuts by a Venus dame, what answer do we feed the Old Woman?"

"Search me," Apprentice Burnerman O'Rielly responded cheerfully.

"Of all the loony apprentices I ever had to answer the Old Woman for! Aw, lemme out where I can think of something to save me own neck at least!"

Was all O'Rielly could do to keep from rolling on the deck with glee. Old Callahan had been flimflammed for fair! The dear little stowaway was saved! And O'Rielly would now think of grand ways to save her lovely neck and his own forever.

O'Rielly's shower door, however, opened abruptly. O'Rielly had not opened it. O'Rielly, however, suffered a cruel stab of dismay. Surely his dear stowaway had been listening through the door. Why didn't she have brains enough to stay hid until Callahan was gone!

At sight of her, of course, Callahan's

eyes near popped from his old head.

"Berta!"

"Oh, I'm Trillium," she assured Callahan sweetly. "But Grandmamma's name is Berta and people say I'm just like she was a hundred and twenty-five years ago."

"HAH? What?" Callahan blinked like his brain had been taken apart and was being slapped together again. "O'Rielly! Aw, you angel-faced pirate, couldn't you hide her somewheres better than that? Shut up, you don't have to explain to me, but God help the whole universe if we don't flimflam the Old Woman!" With which ominous remark, rendered in a zesty devil-may-care manner, however, Callahan threw himself into O'Rielly's shower.

O'Rielly stood looking thoughtfully at lovely, womanly, exquisite Trillium. Just like that, O'Rielly felt as sparkling of mind as a spiral nebula. "My locker!" he crowed with inspiration and yanked open the doors under his bunk. He glimpsed a black ditty bag, also the cap and coverall uniform of a baggage boy.

"I threw them in there before you came on duty before blast-off," Trillium explained. "I knew the bunker room would be warm."

Trillium—with her shape—passing as a boy hustling bags through this ship, O'Rielly chortled as he tucked her under his bunk. "Now don't you worry about another thing!"

"Oh, I'm not," she assured him happily. "Everything is going just the way Grandmamma knew it would!"

O'Rielly's shower opened and Callahan, glowing like a young bucko, bounced onto the bunk. "Well, did you hide her good this time? No, don't tell me! I want to be surprised if the Old Woman ever finds her."

"If what old woman finds whom?" a voice like thin ice crackling wanted to know.

The watch room's door had opened. Wouldn't think the Old Woman was a day over seventy-five, let alone near two hundred. Out of her uniform probably lent a helping hand or three to the young snap of her figure. Frosty blue of fancy hair-do, she was, though, and icy of eye as she

looked at O'Rielly and Callahan still lolling on the bunk.

Her voice was an iceberg exploding. "At attention!"

Never in his right mind would any crewman dare fail to come stiffly erect the instant the Old Woman appeared. Behind her stood a colorfully robed specimen of Venus man, Handsome as the devil himself. Fit to snap lesser men in two with his highly bejeweled hands. Fuzzy beards trailed from his ears and kept twitching lazily as he sneered at the spectacle of two men meekly acknowledging the superiority of a woman.

She was fit to put frost on a hydrogen burner. "Mr. Callahan, I asked you a question, did I not?"

"Believe you did, ma'am," Callahan responded cheerfully. "And the answer is, ma'am, that Apprentice Burnerman O'Rielly and me was discussing—ah—matrimony, ma'am. Mr. Apprentice Burnerman O'Rielly here is considering it, ma'am."

Wasn't too bad a fib. The more O'Rielly thought of Trillium, the more ideas he got of doing things he'd never dreamt of before in his life. Yes, ma'am!

"Wasting your time talking nonsense!" Old Woman's look was fit to freeze O'Rielly's brain, then she gave Callahan the look. "I sent you down here to find the answer to that fusion control slippage!"

"Oh, you'll have the best answer you ever heard of before long, ma'am!" Callahan assured her heartily. "The subject of nonsense—I mean, women—merely chanced to arise whilst we was scientifically analyzing the control phenomenon, ma'am. Naturally I offered this innocent young Burnerman the benefit of me long years of experience. Why," Callahan said with a jaunty laugh, "dames mean nothing to me. Indeed wouldn't bother me none if there wasn't one of the things left in the world! Present company excepted, of course," Callahan hastened to say with a courtly bow.

"Say at attention!" Old Woman sniffed the air near Callahan's face, then in O'Rielly's vicinity. "Smothered it with chloro-pyli probably," she muttered through her teeth, "if it is that vino." Something horrible as a plague flickered in her eyes, then the old ice was there again. "Ap-

prentice Burnerman, don't you know what your shower is for? Then use it! Mr. Callahan, remain at attention while I inspect this burner!" She tendered a cool glance at the Venus bigwig. "Care to join me, Your Excellency?"

"May as well." His Excellency glanced at O'Rielly and Callahan much as he might at a couple of worms. Could bet your last old sox no female ever told any Venus man what to do.

The shower units were equipped so no Burnerman need be more than two steps from his responsibility. To keep the Old Woman from possibly blowing her gaskets completely, O'Rielly simply stepped in, shut the door, flipped a switch and tingled as he was electronically cleansed of person and clothes. By time he finished, the Old Woman and His Excellency were already coming out of the burner room, dripping with sweat.

Old Woman opened the shower with her customary commanding air. "You first, Your Excellency."

"My dear Captain," His Excellency replied like a smoothly drawn dagger, "always the lesser gender enjoys precedence."

No Earth dame ever admitted any guy was even equal to any female. Old Woman, a prime symbol of her gender's superiority, whipped a razor edge onto her own words. "Facilities of the Captain's quarters are more satisfactory."

"No more so than those of the Ambassadorial Suite."

SEEMING to grind her teeth, the Old Woman turned abruptly to leave O'Rielly's watch room. Was all O'Rielly could do to keep from busting out laughing for joy.

Old Woman had been flimflammed for fair! Dear Trillium was saved! And betwixt O'Rielly's grand brain and Callahan's great experience she'd be happy forever.

A fine loud "thump," however, was now heard. Old Woman whirled back and yanked open the doors under O'Rielly's bunk.

"Of all the sappy hiding places!" Callahan yelled, in surprise of course.

"Trillium?" His Excellency bellowed as

if stung by one of the sabre-tailed hornets of his native planet. "Trillium!"

"Trillium," O'Rielly pleaded in loving anguish, "why do you have to keep coming out of hiding just when nobody's going to find you?"

Her eyes merely became deep pools in which O'Rielly would have gladly drowned himself if he could.

"There are rewards," the Old Woman said with the deadly coldness of outer space, "for Earthmen found in a Venus woman's company, and for her leaving her planet."

"Shut up!" His Excellency's ear beads were standing straight out sideways. "I'll handle this!"

"May I remind His Excellency," the Old Woman snapped, "that I represent Earth and her dominion of space gained by right of original flight!"

"May I remind the Captain," His Excellency declared fit to be heard back to his planet, "that I am the Personal Ambassador of the President of Venus and this thing can mean war!"

"Yes! War in which people will actually die!" As His Excellency paled at that grisly remark, the Old Woman spoke through her teeth at O'Rielly, Callahan and Trillium. "All right, come along!"

O'Rielly joined the death march gladly. He felt the way Callahan looked: ready to wrap his arms around Trillium's brave loveliness and protect it to his last breath of life.

Old Woman led the way to her office. Jabbed some buttons on her desk. Panels on opposite walls lit up.

"Presidents of Earth and Venus, please," the Old Woman stated evenly. "Interplanetary emergency."

Highly groomed flunkies appeared on the panels and were impersonally pleasant.

"Madame President's office. She is in a Cabinet meeting."

"Mr. President's office. He is in personal command of our glorious war efforts."

Old Woman sighed through her teeth. "Venus woman aboard this ship. Stowaway. Rattle that around your belfries."

The flunkies' faces went slack with shock, then were replaced by a blizzard of scrambled faces and torrents of incoherent voices.

Finally on the Earth panel appeared the

famous classic features. "The facts, if you please, Captain Hatwoody."

The Venus panel finally held steady on universally notorious features that were as fierce as an eagle's, in a fancy war helmet. "Trillium! My own granddaughter? Impossible! Dimdooly," Mr. President roared at his Excellency, "what's this nonsense?"

"Some loud creature is interfering," Madame President snapped with annoyance.

"Blasted fools still have the circuits crossed," Mr. President swore. "Some silly female cackling now!"

The parties in the panels saw each other now. Each one's left hand on a desk moved toward a big red button marked, ROCKETS.

"So," Mr. President said evenly. "Another violation by your Earthmen."

"By your granddaughter, at least," Madame President replied coolly.

"An innocent child," Mr. President snapped, "obviously kidnapped by those two idiotic Earthmen there!"

"Oh, no, Grandpapa," Trillium said swiftly; "I stole away all by myself, and Mr. O'Rielly and Callahan have been very helpful."

"Impossible!" Grandpapa President's ear beards stood near straight up as he roared, "You couldn't have stolen away by yourself! Trillium, tell the truth!"

"Very well. Grandmamma told me how."

OBVIOUSLY Trillium's poor little brain has been drugged," His Excellency Dimdooly declared. "Grandmamma Berta wouldn't know the first thing about such things!"

"Impossible!" Grandpapa President agreed. "I've been married to her for a hundred and twenty-four and a half years and she's the finest rattle-brain I ever knew!"

"She learned," Trillium stated emphatically, "a hundred and twenty-five years ago."

"Hundred twenty-five," Grandpapa president growled like a boiling volcano.

"The year some Earthman. . . . Never did catch the devil. . . . Berta? Impossible!"

Madame President's shapely finger now rested full on the button that could launch the fleets of war rockets that had been pre-aimed for a thousand years. "I'm afraid your Ambassador is unwelcome now," Ma-

dame President stated coolly. "Your granddaughter's actions have every mark of an invasion tactic by your government."

"What do you mean, her actions?" Grandpapa President's finger now lay poised on the button that had been waiting a thousand years to blow Earth out of the universe. "My grandchild was kidnapped by men under your official command! Weren't you, Trillium dear?"

"No. One of us stowing away was the only way we Venus women could bring our cause to the attention of Earth's President. If Earth will only stop buying from Venus, you won't have any money to squander on your wars any longer no matter what happens to we revolutionaries!"

"Revolutionaries? Such claptrap! And what's wrong with my wars? People have to have something to keep their minds off their troubles! Nobody around here gets hurt. Oh, maybe a few scratches here and there. But nobody on Venus dies from the things any more."

"But Venus men are so excited all the time about going to war they haven't time for us women. That's why we always radiated such a fatal attraction for Earthmen. We want to be loved! We want our own men home doing useful work!"

"Well, they do come home and do useful work! Couple weeks every ten months. Proven to be a highly efficient arrangement."

"More boys to run off to your old wars and more girls to stay home and be lonely!"

"Now you just listen to me, Trillium!" Grandpapa President was all Venus manhood laying down the law. "That's the way things have been on Venus for ten thousand years and all the women in the universe can't change it!"

"I have been in constant contact with my Cabinet during these conversations," Madame President said crisply. "Earth is terminating all trade agreements with Venus as of this instant."

"What?" Grandpapa's beards near pulled his ears off. "It's not legal! You can't get away with this!"

"Take your finger off that trigger, boy!" a heavenly voice similar to Trillium's advised from the Venus panel.

Whereupon Grandpapa glared to one

side. "Berta! What are you doing here? I am deciding matters of the gravest interplanetary nature!"

"Were." Features more beautifully mature than Trillium's crowded onto the panel too. "From now on I'm doing the deciding."

"Nonsense! You're only my wife!"

"And new President of Venus, elected by unanimous vote of all women."

"Impossible! The men run Venus! Nobody's turning this planet into another Earth where a man can't even sneeze unless some woman says so!"

"Take him away, girls," Berta ordered coolly, whereupon her spouse was yanked from view.

His bellows, however, could be heard yet. "Unhand me, you fool creatures! Guards! Guards!"

"Save your breath," Berta advised him. "And while you're in the cooler, enjoy this latest batch of surrender communiques. We women are in control everywhere now."

"Dimmy," Trillium was saying firmly to His Excellency, "you have beat around the bush with me long enough. Now say it."

DIMDOOLY—the mighty, the lordly, who had sneered at the sight of mere Earthmen kowtowing to a mere woman—swelled up fit to blow his gaskets, then all the gas went out of him. His car beards, however, still had enough zip left to flutter like butterflies. "Yes, Trillium dear. I love only you. Please marry me at your earliest convenience."

"Well, Grandmamma," Trillium said with a highly self-satisfied air, "it works. And just like you said, Earthmen meant nothing once I knew we Venus women had our own men in our power."

"Those crewmen there," Grandmamma President said, "seem to be proof enough that we Venus women no longer radiate any threat to Earth's tranquility."

Yes, ma'am, O'Rielly sure felt like proof of something all of a sudden. Worse than the hangover from that crap game with Venus vino. He looked away from Trillium and took a look at Callahan. Old guy looked away from Grandmamma President like he was packing the second biggest headache in history.

"Hmmm, yes," Madame President of Earth observed. "Reactions agree perfectly with the psychoanalytical research project we have been conducting on the subject of the Venus female influence. Madame President of Venus, congratulations on your victory!"

"Long may the superior sex reign on Venus too! We shall be delighted to receive an Ambassadors to discuss a new trade treaty at your earliest convenience."

"Thank you for cancelling the old trade agreements at the psychological moment," Grandmamma President said cordially. "What with the communications mixup, we managed to have the scenes on these panels broadcast throughout all Venus. When the rug went out from under the top man, the tide really turned in our favor. Now, Trillium, you take over Dimmy's credentials."

"The Ambassadorial Suite, too," Madame President of Earth said graciously. "Anything else now, Berta?"

"I should like," Grandmamma President Berta said charmingly, "that Mr. O'Rielly and Mr. Callahan be suitably rewarded for assisting our revolution better than they knew."

"Of course," Madame President of Earth was delighted to oblige. "No doubt Captain Hatwoody knows what reward would satisfy their needs best."

The Madame Presidents switched to a private circuit, Trillium dragged Dimdooly off somewhere and the Old Woman eyed O'Rielly and Callahan. Especially she eyed Callahan, like running chilled drills through his old conniving brain. "I award the pair of you five minutes leisure before returning to your stations."

"Oh, well," O'Rielly muttered, once he and Callahan were safely beyond earshot, "could have been rewarded worse, I suppose."

"What you expect for being flimflamed by a foreign dame, the rings of Saturn? Lucky we ain't programmed to be hung, shot and thrown to the crows for breakfast." Callahan's old pick-and-shovel face wore a little grin like the cat that nobody could prove ate the canary.

"You—I mean, that Earth guy a hundred twenty-five years ago," O'Rielly said in sudden thought. "If Venus dames wanted

to be loved so bad, why did Trillium's Grandmamama let him go?"

"Venus guys wasn't so busy playing war all the time," Callahan mumbled, like to himself, "they'd of found out the answer centuries ago. Yep, guess our boy was the only guy on Earth or Venus to find out and live. Dames bossing both planets now, though, his old secret won't be one much longer. Venus dames could of let it out centuries ago themselves but didn't, just to spite Earth probably. Later, was part of organizing to take over Venus, I guess."

O'Rielly still had memories of the way he had felt about Trillium before her revolution. "All right, Callahan, why did 'our boy' leave Grandmamama?"

"Yes, ma'am," Callahan sighed like he hadn't heard a word O'Rielly said, "you could sweet-talk 'em, kiss 'em and hold 'em tighter'n Billy-be-damned. And that's all."

"I'm not sure," O'Rielly said, "what you mean by, 'that's all.'"

"Anybody ever seen anybody but a Venus guy come built with ear beards? Course no'."

"But I thought our boy was wearing the best fakes ever."

"Ain't nothing can match the natural growed-on variety, no, ma'am. Venus guy kisses a Venus dame, his beards grabs her roundst the ears."

"So what?"

"Tickles 'em, boy, tickles 'em!"