

# FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION

No. 33

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- ★ author, well known for unusual and wryly
- ★ humorous tales. His list of credits would fill quite a few pages.

ISAAC ASIMOV needs no introduction; he's just one of the brightest of those science fiction stars that every science fiction editor is constantly seeking.

# MARS TRIAL

## NOVELET

by Theodore L. Thomas

*illustrated by EMSH*

The Auerbach Case was crucial for the Mars colony, for the complications of four sectors brought on a controversy as to whether the English, Russians, Germans, or Americans would try the murderer. And that was the start of ruinous conflict . . .

THE SHIP glittered like a diamond against the fast-darkening sky. The space field lay in deep shadow; but up there where the ship was, the last rays of the sun shone strong. Again it glittered as it turned end-for-end and dropped lower over the field. A slim stream of fire leaped from the stern and visibly slowed its fall. High as the ship was, the roar of its braking jet could be plainly heard by the watching people. The arrival of the monthly ship was an event at the Mars colony, and no

one missed it unless he had to.

The ship dropped lower, and the tearing roar of the Rockets grew louder. It was clear, now, that the ship would not come down in the center of the huge space field but, instead would land in the northeast quadrant. The waiting tenders began to drift slowly in that direction.

When the ship was a few feet from the ground, the crashing pandemonium shook the domes a mile away. Men and women wrinkled their eyes from the sound and children covered their ears. In a mo-



"They'll listen to you," Landers whispered. "You've got to tell them all to go home."

ment it was over; the ship stood tall on the ground, wavering on its tail fins. The floodlight from the American hangar bathed the wobbling ship in brilliant light, and those closest to it could clearly read its name, *Moscow*.

**T**HE TENDERS rolled up fast on their fat wheels to try and put a line on the ship before it fell. But before the closest one could get within a hundred yards, it happened; slowly and majestically, with great dignity and deliberation, the *Moscow* toppled over.

The tenders swarmed over it and slipped wheels under its huge bulk. Spectators admired the smooth efficiency of the tenders as they urged the great ship toward the airlock of the American hangar. Each man in his tender knew exactly what had to be done to get the ship into a breathable atmosphere, without wasting a moment. They had had practice, too; three months earlier, the ship *London* had fallen—and a year before that, it had been the *Washington*. And now, with the *Moscow*, the efficiency of the men who manned the tenders was plain to see, even to the casual eye.

The lock closed behind the *Moscow*, and air surged in with almost explosive force. Men in

coveralls swarmed to the several ports of the ship and opened them from the outside. Skilled technicians went in through the ports and swiftly sought out the parts that might have been damaged by the fall. Two doctors went in with them to see if any of the crew had been hurt. People from nearby domes watched anxiously through the polyethylene walls, hopeful that no damage had been done. And no one noticed a short, stocky man in coveralls; no one saw him slip in through the port, once the first rush was over.

One of the doctors made his way to the bridge. Captain Mihalovna had unstrapped himself and was standing with one hand pressed against the wall and the other pressed against his head.

"You all right, Captain?" asked the doctor.

The captain looked up. "Yes, I think so. How are the rest of them? I've not been able to make contact over the intercom."

"We're checking now. Care to go with me while I make a trip through the ship?"

Mihalovna nodded and fell in behind the doctor, muttering to himself.

"What did you say, Captain?"

**M**ihalovna shook his head. "I said I wish these Earthside engineers would let me redesign a ship. I know how to keep them from falling, but they always know better. Bunch of bright boys, they are."

"I know what you mean," said the doctor. "We have found better ways to process the purple lichen for antibiotic extraction, but the Earthside doctors won't agree that it's any good. They want to do it their way. So we just keep shipping them the whole plant."

"Some day," said the captain. "Some day."

The two men moved slowly down the passageway, looking in at various doors to check the damage to people and equipment. It was hard work to move around in the cramped interior.

They came to the large instrument room amidships. Three members of the *Moscow's* crew were swiftly closing air valves behind the instrument panel. Several other technicians—one of them a short, stocky man in coveralls, helped them. Mihalovna and the doctor exchanged a few words with the men, then moved on.

They had not gone more than ten feet past the entrance to the instrument room when a high-pitched, shrill scream rang

through the ship. They froze in place, gooseflesh racing up their spines as the scream bubbled off into silence, then turned and jumped back to the instrument room.

The short, stocky man in coveralls knelt in a corner over one of the technicians. Again and again, he drove a knife into the body of the fallen man; sobs choked his breath and muttered German phrases burst from his lips.

**F**OR A LONG instant the men watched the scene, stunned; then as one they cried out and moved in on the stocky man. He stumbled to his feet and swung to face them, his back in a corner. His feet straddled the thing on the floor and his body went half forward toward his attackers. He held the knife loosely and expertly in his right hand; his eyes were bloodshot.

Just before they closed in, the stocky man dropped the knife, covered his face with both hands, and fell to his knees. Captain Mihalovna stepped over and kicked the knife across the room. He signaled his men. Two of them took the stocky man and led him out the door, squeezing past groups of men jammed into the corridors, and out onto the floor of the hangar.

The hangar chief met the group. "What happened?"

"Killed a man," said one of the crew. "Knifed him to death. Can you take care of him?"

The hangar chief nodded and looked at the killer. "What's your name, man?"

There was no answer. The stocky man stopped sobbing but kept his hands in front of his face.

The chief reached up and pulled the hands down. "What's your name, I said."

The culprit raised a blood-stained face and said softly, "Auerbach. Hans Auerbach."

"You from the German sector?"

Auerbach nodded.

The chief turned to the circle of men. "Jones, you and Carle and Austin take Auerbach to the Number two tool room and lock him up. Anderson, call Jim Davis and tell him what's happened. Ask him what he wants us to do with Auerbach here. Go." He waved them all off.

**C**APTAIN MIHALOVNA arrived, and the hangar chief asked who had been killed.

The captain shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know; it wasn't one of my men. Let's go find out."

They went back into the ship and re-entered the instrument

room. The body on the floor had been covered with a piece of canvas. Several groups of men had squeezed into the room and were talking quietly.

"Who was he?" asked the captain.

One of the men stepped forward. "His name was Hinton, Fred Hinton."

"What was he doing here?"

"He was on duty in the English sector when the ship came in. He came over to help; that's all I know."

The hangar chief asked, "Does he have any kin?"

"Yes; he has a sister. Elizabeth. But he's not married."

"Well, thank heaven for that." The chief turned to Mihalovna. "Any objection to sending the body over to the English sector?"

"No," said the captain. "I'll have some of my men help. We had better call Perce Whitcomb over there and tell him what happened. He will probably want to make some special arrangements."

**T**HE MAN who had identified the body moved closer. "If I may make a suggestion, Sirs, send the murderer over to us, too. We'll know what to do with him."

Another man stepped forward. "That's right, Sir. We'll take him along. Manager Whit-

comb will want him, anyway; the man killed one of—”

“Wait.” The captain raised his hand. “Manager Davis has Auerbach now.” At the mention of the killer’s name, the listeners looked at one another. “The Managers will get together and decide what should be done with him. It’s out of our hands now, so let’s move Hinton’s body out of here and over to the English sector.” He detailed several of his men to help the Englishmen wrap and carry Hinton home.

After they left, the hangar chief said, “Well, captain, I guess we had better get back to work. The *Moscow* is in pretty good shape and you should be able to take it over to your sector soon. I’m sorry this had to happen, but I suppose sooner or later we had to have a murder here at the colony.”

“Yes, I suppose so. Oh, may I use your phone? I ought to report this to Manager Zherkov. And do you think anyone has reported this to Muller?”

“I don’t know; I’ll call him. That will take care of all four sector managers.”

“Good. Thank you.” Miha-lovna left the ship to place his call.

**G**RADUALLY, things got back to normal. The hangar crew settled down to the job of putting the *Moscow* into

condition to be hauled back to its mother hangar. But every once in a while, a man working on the outside of the ship would stop his work and stare out across the great expanse of landing field. On the other side of the huge field they could see the low, mile-long length of one of the Hydroponics Buildings. To the southwest, a thin finger of smoke pointed down to the Synthetic Plant in the German sector. Less than a mile behind him to the Northeast stood the American Oxygen Station. They could see the Russian Water Station and the British Textile Plant. And off in the greying distance they could see the rising hills rippling like ocean waves with smaller jagged rock formations—like waves beating a continuing assault on the smooth island of ground on which the entire colony lay.

And so the men looked and worked and looked again. There was a feeling of wrongness, vague, uncertain. It was a good colony, a hard-working colony, the first of its kind in the history of mankind. Two thousand men and women from four nations had all put a little bit of their hearts into it. But now, all seemed tainted—tainted by an act forbidden since man first began to reason. Murder had come to the Mars colony.



**J**AMES DAVIS sat at his desk holding his head in his hands. The day had been the usual long, hard one; and just as he had been about to leave for dinner, Anderson had called to tell him about the killing.

He was a man of medium height with thinning jet-black hair. His face and body were round, giving an impression of softness. His eyes were bright blue and looked out at the world with disconcerting levelness. He looked a lot younger than his fifty-two years.

Davis sat back in his chair. Nearby his secretary glanced at him sympathetically. Davis caught her glance and smiled wanly. "What a mess. Will you get Gray Landers over here as soon as possible, please?"

She nodded, picked up the phone and twirled the crank. While she called, Davis walked over to a window in the office wall and looked through it, down the length of the hangar. Over near the great lock, he could see the *Moscow*, ready to start the long haul across the space field to the Russian hangar.

He went back to his desk and shuffled papers around.

**L**ANDERS walked in with his outsuit still on. He sat down in a chair alongside

Davis. "Well, Jim, I hear we have a problem."

"You've already heard about it? News travels fast."

Landers nodded. "It's all over the colony now; but what are the details? All I know is that there has been a deliberate murder. The way I heard it, one of our boys killed a member of the *Moscow* crew."

Davis shook his head. "No. A man named Auerbach from the German sector followed the field crew aboard the *Moscow* and killed one of them."

"Why?"

Again Davis shook his head. "I don't know yet. I'm going to talk to him in a few minutes, and I want you to be there."

"Why?" asked Landers again.

"Because you are next in line here. This may turn out to be a very nasty problem. We've never had a murder, or any other bad crime in the colony before; we've got to face up to it both for now and for the future. This thing will set a precedent." He stopped, dropped his head for a moment, and then looked up and continued, "Besides, you're a lawyer."

Landers got up and began to pace back and forth in the tiny office. Davis watched him

closely. The secretary tactfully left.

**L**ANDERS was a tall lean man, flat of chest but broad of shoulder. He looked older than his thirty-eight years; his gray eyes sat deep in a network of wrinkles. He walked on the balls of his feet, seeming always to be about to spring to one side or another.

"Jim," he said. "I was a lawyer once, a patent lawyer. But even before I came here I was a research director; I haven't had anything to do with law for six years. I'm here on Mars as a technical man; we don't need and don't want lawyers here now. We have order here; we have our rules, and everyone obeys them. We lead a hard life, dangerous, and we all work together. That's the only way we can live under these conditions. There's no room for lawyers; they don't contribute enough to our kind of society." He stopped in front of Davis's desk and stood there, hands on hips.

Davis leaned forward. "What you say is right, Gray, but let me remind you that we've got a murder here; rules have been broken."

Landers dropped his hands and sat down again. "Yes," he said. "We come to that; we've got a murder. But let's leave it

to our Council. Let the Council sit as a criminal tribunal to try this—what's his name?"

"Auerbach."

"Yes, Auerbach. Let our Council try Auerbach. The Council makes all the other major decisions in our sector. The Congress gave it plenary powers, so it can certainly try a murder. Or we can send Auerbach back to Earth, and let them try him there; that'll wipe the whole thing right out of the colony."

Davis nodded. "I've been thinking of doing just that." He got up and said, "Let's talk to Auerbach and find out what this is all about."

## II

**T**HE TWO men walked out of the little inside dome that made up Davis's office and into the hangar dome. Davis located the hangar chief and the doctor who had seen the killing. The doctor described everything he had seen; Davis and Landers listened closely. Then they all went to the tool room where Auerbach was confined.

Auerbach turned to face them when they entered; his face was drawn, and there were dark circles under his eyes.

Davis said, "I'm the sector manager here. Why'd you do it?"

Auerbach drew himself up. "He tried to break up my home. I thought he was my friend, this Hinton. He visited me; he ate with me; he played chess with me. We helped each other with our work; he was a good hydroponics man, too. But then I find that he and my wife are friendly, too friendly.

"I talked to him about it but he only laughed. He said we were on Mars now and a woman was free to choose the man she wanted any time she wanted. I begged him and I begged her, but they told me I was acting like I was still on Earth. I warned them; I told them I could break the old customs, too."

He wrung his hands and the tears started to his eyes. "For a week I thought what I should do. I didn't know; life is hard on Mars. A man has to do what he thinks is right. It was not right for Hinton to take my wife away from me. It wasn't right. It wasn't right. It wasn't—" Auerbach paused, and sobs twisted his body; he covered his face with his hands and cried.

The other men in the room looked at each other, then hastily looked away. Davis talked softly with the doctor, then turned to the hangar chief. "We can't keep him here. This man needs medical care. Detail

three men to take him over to the Hospital dome. Tell Frank Hagen over there to take Auerbach in charge; give him any men he needs to keep Auerbach under close watch."

Davis and Landers watched as Auerbach went out under the watchful eye of three large men carrying weighty spanner wrenches. Then they went back to Davis's office.

"I haven't had dinner yet," said Davis. "Come on over to my dome for a bite so we can talk this out before it goes any further."

"Good idea," said Landers. "The bachelors' quarters hold no charm tonight."

**D**AVIS PICKED up a few papers and the two men left the office and headed for a small lock at the northeast corner of the hangar. Davis slipped into an outsuit. They both took helmets from a rack alongside the lock, dropped them over their heads, and twisted them down. After a brief, almost automatic check of the oxygen in the helmet flasks they passed through the lock and out into the cold Martian evening.

The dome lights throughout the colony were just coming on, giving the domes an eerie, translucent look, in startling contrast to the sharp biting

brightness of the stars that were beginning to shine overhead. The soft warm shoes of the two men pounded gently on the hard red clay surface. They walked in silence, gazing out over the colony that seemed to be coming alive in the crisp Martian evening. They looked down the length of the huge Hydroponics building, lying equally in the Russian and American sectors, and saw the brilliant lights inside blink on and glisten through the polyethylene walls. To the south, in the Russian sector, lay the Water Station, source of all water in the colony. Behind them, to the west in the English sector, lay the Textile Plant. Ahead and slightly north, in the American sector, were the lights that marked the mines from which came all the colony's metals and fissionables. They walked in silence, looking out over the colony, and it was good.

THEY CAME to Davis's dome and entered the lock. The air pressure had no sooner built up than Nina Davis was in the lock to welcome them. "Well, Gray, so nice to see you. You'll stay for dinner of course." Her talk was directed at Landers but her eyes were on her husband.

"Evening, Nina. Yes, thank

you." Landers hung up his helmet.

"Heard the news?" asked Davis.

"Yes, dear. And I'm sorry." She went up to him and kissed him on the cheek. "But don't you worry. The Lord has a reason for everything and He will help you with whatever you have to do. Now come inside where it's warm."

They went into the living room of the dome. Davis gave Landers a cigaret and then set about stuffing a monstrous black pipe with tobacco. The two men dropped into comfortable chairs and smoked, staring reflectively at the ceiling.

Nina listened to the silence for a moment and then began to chatter. "Jim, you'd never guess the news I heard today. We were over at Mrs. Muller's to work out the plans for the new nursery dome. And Sonya Zherkov told us she is going to have a baby. Imagine that. She isn't forty yet but Manager Zherkov must be several years older than you, Jim. Isn't that remarkable? She's so happy. She says the air on Mars must be a lot better than the air on Earth. Even though we have to make our own. I declare—this city of ours is just growing by leaps and bounds. And Gray, that reminds me. When are you going to find

yourself a nice girl and get married and raise a family. You're long overdue you know."

Landers shifted uncomfortably in his chair and said, "Come now, Nina; all in good time. Besides, you're my sweetheart. I can't marry anyone else when you are around to tempt me all the time. I'm just biding my time until I can catch Jim here unawares and alone somewhere, and then I'll—" He stopped and his smile faded and his eyes dropped to the floor. Talk of murder was different now.

NINA PICKED it up as though nothing had been said. "Now you listen to me, Gray Landers; you're not getting any younger. When Jim was your age, he had been married fifteen years. There are a dozen fine girls in the colony who'd make you a good wife. I know that the Earthside statesmen don't approve of marriages here yet, but they're wrong. You just make up your mind and do it soon, anyway. A young man should be married. Why, in my—."

The phone rang. Davis looked sharply at Landers and got up to answer it. Nina kept talking; but Landers did not listen. He tried to hear what Davis was saying but he could

only catch occasional scraps of phrases.

Davis hung up and went back to his chair. "It was Fred Muller. Wants to make sure that Auerbach is all right." He turned to his wife. "Could you just give us something simple and quick. We'll not have time for a full meal, I think."

"It's all ready," Nina said. She placed a plate on a table—a plate heaped with slices of good fresh black bread and slabs of tangy protein slice and yak meat. A dish of creamy oleo, a plate of pungent cheese, and a pot of steaming black coffee completed the table setting.

The two men pulled up chairs and began to make sandwiches. The phone rang. Davis got up, talked for several minutes, and came back to his partially-made sandwich. "Perce Whitcomb from the English sector," he said. "Wanted to make certain we've got Auerbach buttoned up good and tight."

He finished making his sandwich and took a bite. The phone rang.

Davis sighed and answered it. When he got back he said, "Zherkov. Asking the usual question." He took two bites this time before the phone rang again.

He spoke for a moment, then

covered the mouthpiece with his hand and called over to Landers. "Muller again. He wants us to turn Auerbach over to him." He took his hand away, talked to Muller quietly, hung up, then began to make some calls himself.

**N**INA SAW what he was doing. She poured a mug of coffee and then began pouring it back and forth from one mug to another to cool it. Davis finished his calls and returned to the table.

Nina handed him the mug of coffee. "Here, Jim. It's cool enough to drink right down."

He smiled at her and took several swallows. "Gray," he said. "Things are getting hot; we've got to resolve this mess. I just called a meeting of the sector Managers. We'll meet at our hangar, so grab some coffee and let's go." He drained his mug with one long draft.

Landers took one more huge bite from his half-eaten sandwich and washed it down with coffee so hot that it made him gasp.

Davis kissed Nina and Landers thanked her. The two men climbed into their outsuits, put on their helmets and went out through the lock into the Martian night. It was dark now. The light from the stars and the domes shone more brightly

than ever against the enfolding blackness. All the features of the colony stood out against the somber landscape, gleaming, pulsing with life, shouting to the skies that man lived here.

In short order they arrived at the American hangar. When they got inside, they found that Manager Whitcomb of the English sector was already there, pacing back and forth just inside the lock.

Whitcomb said, "Hello, Jim, Gray. I'm deucedly sorry about all this. My people are more upset than I've ever seen them. Elizabeth Hinton—you know, the sister of the murdered man—is near collapse. I think everybody in our sector is over milling around our hangar. I'll have to go back soon and talk to them and calm them down."

**H**E WAS interrupted by the arrival of Manager Muller. Muller shook hands with Davis and Landers, but he merely nodded at Whitcomb. Before the slight could produce any tension, Manager Zherkov came in through the lock and greeted everyone. In a ragged group, the five men walked to the small inside dome used as a meeting room by the American Council. They seated themselves around the table; Landers sat back, away from the

table, in deference to the older men.

Whitcomb started it off. "Look. My people are all in a turmoil over this murder. Hinton was a good man. Capable, well-liked. His sister's a fine girl. My people are taking it as a personal affront. They want to make sure that Auerbach gets what's coming to him. They think we ought to be the ones to make him stand trial. What do you think?"

Muller leaned forward. "Now just a minute. That's what my people are afraid of. We understand that Hinton was forcing his attentions on Auerbach's wife. Now we do not condone murder, but we want to insure that Auerbach has a fair trial; his version must be heard. You English have nothing to do with the trial."

"But it was an Englishman killed," said Whitcomb. "We have a right in this."

"I don't see why. It is a German subject that stands accused. At least I think he stands accused. Does he, Jim?"

Davis said, "Well, we haven't done anything formal about it. He did commit the murder though. There were half a dozen witnesses to it."

"Well," said Muller. "Don't you think we ought to be the ones who ought to hold the trial? —to make certain Auer-

bach has a fair trial, I mean?"

"Now just a minute," broke in Whitcomb. "We can give him a fair trial. It's a British subject that's been..."

"Gentlemen," said Zherkov. "I understand that Gray Landers here is a lawyer. Why don't we ask him what is right to do?"

ALL EYES turned to Landers. He looked reproachfully at Davis and then said, "Well, yes; I once was a lawyer—a patent lawyer, but I'm not any more. This thing smacks of International Law, though, and I don't know anything about it."

Whitcomb said, "But this is a murder, Gray; and the murderer must pay the penalty. You agree with that, don't you?"

"Oh yes," said Landers. "But thinking as a lawyer—which I'm not any more—I find myself wondering if something like the Rule in the McNaghten Case, or maybe the Irresistible Impulse Rule should properly be applied here."

He was stopped by the look of bewilderment on the faces of the four men. Then he understood. "Oh. Those two Rules deal with the defense of insanity. This was a pretty horrible killing, and I wonder if Auerbach was sane when he did it.

If I were his defense counsel on Earth, that's the way my thoughts would be working."

"See?" said Muller. "That's what I mean. How can Auerbach get a fair trial." He sat back and looked around. "Well, I must tell you. I radioed all the details to my government and asked for their advice. This is too much for me to decide."

There was a moment's silence and then Whitcomb said softly, "So did I."

Zherkov shifted uncomfortably in his chair and said, "I did too."

They all looked at Zherkov in surprise. Davis said, "You?"

Zherkov nodded. "Yes. I wanted to be the one who told my government, not someone else. Remember, it happened aboard my ship, a Russian ship."

**D**AVIS TOOK a long breath, a deep breath and said, "Well, I guess there's nothing more for us to do at this time but preserve the status quo. Anybody have any other suggestions or comments?"

They all sat quietly, staring at the table, shaking their heads.

"Well," said Davis. "Let's plan on meeting again tomorrow morning. Is that satisfactory to everyone?"

They nodded and rose from the table.

"Oh Nikolay," said Davis to Zherkov. "My wife tells me you are going to become a father. Congratulations, man. I think that's fine." He held his hand out to Zherkov.

Zherkov smiled and took the hand, flushing slightly. "Thank you. I certainly hope it's a boy."

The others offered their congratulations, then they all said good-bye and went their separate ways leaving Davis and Landers standing at the table.

"I don't like it, Gray," said Davis. "I don't like it at all. This Auerbach thing is separating us into factions. We've spent three years building this colony into a single unit, and now we're falling apart. We've got to find an answer before it's too late."

"I know," said Landers tiredly. He rubbed his hands over his face. "We'll think of something. It's even remotely possible that the Earthside Lawyers can come up with something that will solve this for us. There may be a rule or precedent right in point that will take care of everything. I'm not optimistic, though. I don't know anything about International Law, but I seem to remember Bar Association meetings where some of the boys were talking



about what a mess it is. And that reminds me, Jim. I wish you'd quit telling everybody I'm a lawyer; I'm not a lawyer any more."

Davis smiled. "Gray, you're the only man in the entire colony with legal training. I've been ringing you in because I thought you could help. Maybe you can yet."

"I don't know what I can do. Well, okay. Let's go to bed. We have a hard day tomorrow."

**S**LEEP WOULD not come to Landers. Auerbach stayed on his mind. Over and over, he thought of the alternatives for punishment. The trouble was that Gray Landers was not certain that Auerbach merited punishment as much as treatment. He stretched out on his bed in the dark and then turned the light on and paced back and forth smoking a cigaret. For two hours he argued with himself, consuming his entire week's ration of cigarets. Finally he forced himself to put the problem out of his mind. He lay down on his bed and dozed. But his dozing was troubled. He heard Auerbach's choking sobs; strange shapes floated formlessly through the blackness of the night.

Landers stirred restlessly on his bed. One shape detached itself from the others and float-

ed toward him menacingly. He tried to rise but could not. He broke out in perspiration but he could not move. The shape drew closer until it hovered over his bed. With a mighty effort of will Landers threw off the effects of sleep and flung himself at the figure. He landed on his knees, but his arms reached out and grabbed solid flesh and bone.

He twisted himself sideways and forced the thing off its feet to the floor. Landers let go his grip around the legs and drove his hands for the throat. In the dark he misjudged and his hands struck too low. He felt a swelling and a softness there that caused him to roll off, get to his feet, and turn on the light. He turned and looked down on a wide-eyed woman.

They looked at each other and said nothing. Landers knew without being told that this was Elizabeth Hinton.

**H**E SAW A blue-eyed girl with short brown hair. Her eyes were set up high under the eyebrow ridges; there were dark circles under each eye. The cheek bones were prominent and the nose was long and straight. The mouth was wide and the lips were full and soft. Landers saw that she was not a pretty girl; her face was too rangy, too long.

She rolled over on her side, put a hand on the floor, and rose to her feet in one sweeping singing motion. Landers was amazed at the fluid grace of it. That simple act of getting up off the floor told of a fineness of muscular tone seldom met with. It clothed the girl with a grace and beauty that went beyond the physical appearance of her face.

She stepped back a pace, to be a little further away from Landers, and again the beauty of her motion struck him. Here was a girl whose slightest stirrings could not help but be a liquid flow of bewitching poetry. And Landers watched, hoping she would move again.

She was a tall girl and she wore one of those coveralls that so many of the young women in the colony wore, form-fitting with a bit of embroidery here and there. She was a lean girl, but with a roundness at the hip and chest that made her look less lean, less tall.

They stood and looked at each other in silence and neither one felt uncomfortable under the close scrutiny of the other.

Landers broke the silence first. "You are Elizabeth Hinton."

She nodded. "Yes." Her voice was low and good to hear.

"Miss Hinton. I am very sor-

ry about your brother. It was a terrible thing. Please accept my condolences."

Her eyes darkened as he first began to talk but then flashed fire as he finished. "You," she said scathingly. "You say you are sorry. But you are the one who said this murderer—this Auerbach creature—was insane, so he shouldn't be punished. My brother never tried to take Auerbach's wife; it wasn't that way at all. You. And you're supposed to be a lawyer. Is that what the law stands for? To let a murderer go free?"

LANDERS sighed. "Everybody keeps telling me I'm a lawyer and then giving me hell when I talk like one." He reached for his pack of cigarets, then crumbled it and flung it in a corner when he found it empty. "Look, Miss Hinton. I never said that Auerbach should not be punished; all I did was suggest that the man might have been insane. Now is that so immoral?" He began to get angry. "And what's the idea, anyway? You come in here, waking me up out of a sound sleep, with the gall to give me a bawling out for my honest opinion. Who do you think you are? I've got enough troubles without having to defend myself against ex-

who doesn't like what I say. What do you..."

Elizabeth Hinton had dropped to the edge of the bed and was quietly sobbing, face in hands.

Landers went over and sat beside her. He put a hand on her shoulder and said, "I'm sorry, Miss Hinton. Elizabeth. I'm sorry. I guess I'm not awake yet; I had no right talking to you like that at a time like this. Please forgive me." He gave her his handkerchief.

She took it and wiped her eyes and blew her nose. She started to say something, but the phone rang.

Landers answered it, listened tautly and exploded, "What!" He listened another moment, then slammed the phone back on the hanger. He jumped to the closet and began pulling on a set of work coveralls.

Elizabeth got to her feet, still holding the handkerchief. "What happened?"

"The Germans. They've gone into the Russian sector to the Water Station and cut the water off to the entire rest of the colony. I've got to get over there and see what damage they... Hey!"

He reached out and grabbed a shoulder of her coveralls as she flew past him toward the door. Her momentum sprung the zipper at her throat and

pulled the coverall down over one shoulder. He held on and half turned and spun her back toward the bed. She fell half across it and lay looking up at him.

"No you don't. Your presence there would be all we'd need. You are a firecracker right now, so you stay with me."

HE STOPPED, his eyes fixed on the soft whiteness of her exposed shoulder. An unaccustomed tightness gathered at the base of his throat. She noticed his gaze and hastily pulled the coverall back in place; a light flush suffused her cheeks.

Landers shook his head to snap out of it and finished putting on his clothes. He went over to the phone and dialed a number. While he waited for an answer he said, "Stay there, now. I'm going to see if I can get some water from the Oxygen Station. If you..." He talked into the phone. "This is Landers. How's the oxygen stock." He waited. "Good. Use everything except that stock for water synthesis. Yes, all of it. Pump it into storage tanks. Don't give a drop to anybody unless they carry a note from me. Okay. Go to it."

He hung up and began making more calls, alerting the va-

rious units under his control. He checked back with Davis and outlined his proposed course of action and got approval. He got in touch with the hangar chief and arranged for the entire hanger crew to meet him at the hanger immediately. And he warned everyone about the water situation and issued strict orders about water conservation.

Then he turned to Elizabeth. "Miss Hinton, you stay here. I can't spare a man to take you back home now, but I will as soon as I get back. You stay here and don't go outside. It's dangerous out there."

"I will not," she said.

"What? Look here. I can't wait around and play games with you. Now you wait here until..."

"No."

"Now you listen to me." He leveled a finger at her. "You're not going outside this night. You'll stir up trouble wherever you go. So just..."

**S**HE ROSE from the bed, and he found himself more interested in watching her than in continuing the lecture. She walked over to him and stood in front of him with her hands on her hips. "I'm going with you," she said, "so let's stop wasting time and get started. Where are we going?"

He started to argue, but then a wisdom beyond his years and experience took hold. He nodded and said, "Come on."

They went to the lock of the bachelor quarters and slipped into outsuits and helmets. Once outside, Landers increased the oxygen flow and broke into a trot. Elizabeth matched his stride and they were soon at the hanger. They passed in through the lock and found a few men already there.

Landers immediately set several men to lining up all available tenders near the great lock. As more men came in, Landers told them the situation and described how they were going to move down to the Water Station and try to get the water flowing again to the various sectors.

In another twenty minutes, the crew was ready. The fifteen tenders moved into the great lock and paused while the air was pumped back into the hangar. Then they passed outside and slowly moved forward while the radio contact from tender to tender was checked. Landers was in the lead car with a driver and Elizabeth. Davis stayed back in the hangar with another group of men in case anything should develop there.

The beacons over the hangars at the four corners of the

space field flooded most of the four-square-mile field with light. The light was bright enough to see by as Landers and his men skirted the edge of the field heading due south. They kept their own lights out.

**T**HEY RODE in silence. The fat tires of the tenders made a purring sound on the hard-packed red ground. The men strained forward to see what lay ahead. A mile from the American hangar, they swept into the Russian sector. Two miles further south, they could see for the first time a lot of activity around the Water Station. Lights from tenders flitted back and forth; flashlight beams stabbed the sky and the ground and played over the figures of running men. Landers and his men rode in wedge-shaped formation to within three hundred yards of the Station before they were noticed and several tenders left the milling group and darted toward them.

Landers ordered his men to switch to the normal channel of radio communication and stand by. Then he called to the approaching tenders, "This is Landers. We've come down from the American sector to get the water flowing. Who are you?"

A deep voice answered,

"Good. We need more men. This is Krillitch. The Germans have spot-welded the valves. Have you got any riggers with you to help repair them?"

A voice with an Irish brogue cut in. "Sure there are eight of us here, Gray. Where do you want us?"

"Krillitch," said Landers. "We've got eight riggers for you. Take them away."

There followed some conversation among the Russians, and then a tender peeled off followed by four American tenders.

Krillitch said, "There's a dozen German tenders around here trying to do some more damage. Hang a handkerchief behind the drivers window so we can identify you. Good. Now let's round up these fools."

**T**HE REMAINING eleven American tenders joined the twenty-four Russian tenders and began the weird job of trying to box in the German tenders. It was tedious work; in most instances, three tenders were needed to immobilize one. On two occasions, wheels locked and ripped off leaving four tenders sagging to their sides on the cold ground. The top speed limit of ten miles an hour saved many a life that night. And in the end all the German tenders stood motion-

less inside a tight circle of Russian and American tenders.

The men got out to pick up the men on foot. There was some minor struggling, but soon the Germans all stood docilely in a group. Hand-to-hand fighting in an outsuit was unwise; a slight tear in the suit could be fatal in a very short time.

And so the fight ended, shortly after it began. The men began to walk back to their tenders. Then, without warning, out of the northwest another group of tenders rolled silently out of the night. They pulled up just short of the men on foot. The doors opened and men spilled out and flung themselves indiscriminately on the standing Americans, Germans, and Russians.

Muffled grunts and curses rang thinly through the rare atmosphere. Groups rolled on the ground; feet lashed out; wrenches and pinch-bars clanged off helmets or thudded into shoulders and arms.

Landers side-stepped the rush of a big suited figure but left a leg sticking out; the man fell heavily to the ground and was immediately pounced on by someone else. Landers looked at the melee with a sick heart. At one moment, he was about to hurl himself into the fight; at the next he was about to leave and return to the Ameri-

can sector. But he reconsidered.

He knew that many of the Americans were close to him, since they had been standing together when the attack came. It was hard to distinguish one form from another in the darkness, but Landers did it. He moved from one knot of fighting men to another to pick out his men. Several times he found himself attacked and had to halt his search to defend himself. And each time he found one of his men he shouted an order at him and the man left the fight and disappeared in the darkness. When he'd found eight of them he followed them out of the fight and joined them at the parked tenders.

"Each man take a tender," he said, "and form a line with them. Turn your bright lights on and we'll chase these guys that are on foot. If they don't quit the brawl, we'll run them down. Go to it."

**L**ANDERS got into his tender. Elizabeth Hinton was still waiting in it. "What happened?"

"Some of your compatriots loused things up after we got it all under control. Now we've got to break up a real free-for-all. Sit tight, now; this may be a rough ride."

He pulled the tender forward

and waited for the other eight to line up alongside him. The line was not very straight in the dark, but it served. At Landers' command, they all turned their lights on at once and began to move forward.

They bore down on the area of struggling men. The threatening menace of the big fat tires looming behind the lights was too great to be ignored. Individual fights broke up as the tenders slowly drew close enough to roll over the men who didn't give way. As the line moved ahead, a wave of men grew in front of it. The men on foot stayed in the path of light and fled in front of it. Each man acted the way a rabbit does when it finds itself caught in a beam of light at night; it does not dare attack the forbidding wall of blackness that threatens on each side.

In a short time, there was no more fighting. The tenders herded the men ahead of them toward the Water Station and finally stopped, forming a semi-circle around the western side of the standing men. Landers jumped out of his tender and stood in front of the headlights. He raised his voice loud enough so it could be heard through his helmet and carry through the thin atmosphere.

"Have you gone crazy? Get those injured men into the Sta-

tion. Hurry before some of them lose their oxygen."

**A**BOUT THIRTY men detached themselves from the group and hobbled toward the Station. Some clutched ribs in their outsuits. Some pressed hands over cracked helmets. And some limped or nursed an injured shoulder or arm.

One man walked toward Landers. "What's the idea? These Germans cut off the water. Do you know what that means? Our women and children need water. These bastards have cut off the only water supply in the entire colony. Are we supposed to let them get away with that? First, one of them murders one of our best men and now they cut off the water for the whole colony. What'll they do next? Murder us all? Well, we're not going to let them get away with any more. You're not going to stop us, either. We'll get this Auerbach and hang him from the highest dome in the colony and we'll fix anybody who tries to stop us. That includes you." He jumped forward and swung a wrench at Landers.

Landers had noted the increasing violence of the man's speech, and he was ready. He ducked under the wrench, grabbed the man around the

middle, and threw him to the ground over one leg. He jammed a foot down hard on the hand that carried the wrench, then dropped a knee on the man's throat.

A small group of men detached themselves from the large group and began to move toward Landers. Others lay hold of them and began to restrain them. The entire crowd stirred restlessly. Someone swung a wrench.

**L**ANDERS got to his feet and pulled the prone man up beside him. He turned to face the turbulent crowd and shouted, "Wait! Wait, all of you. You English, listen. I've got someone here I want you to hear. Don't do anything for a minute; stay where you are."

He turned and ran to his tender and leaned in toward Elizabeth. "Look," he said. "You talk to these men and tell them to go home. They're your friends and friends of your brother. Tell them you don't want vengeance or anything like that. Tell them..."

"I will not," she said. "I want to see that murderer punished. I certainly..."

He reached over and grabbed the shoulder of her outfit and pulled her over to him. Their helmets touched. He spoke, staring into her eyes. "Look,

Elizabeth. This is beyond you or me or Auerbach or your brother. This whole colony can collapse right here and now. All the effort of thousands of people for many years will come to nothing this night. You can stop it. You must stop it! Now go out there and tell them to go home."

He looked into her eyes, the lines around his mouth and nose drawn deep. She stared back, eyes wide. He backed out of the tender, pulling her after him. He stood her on her feet and let go her shoulder and took her arm. Still looking in her eyes he guided her around the tender and led her near to where the group of men stood. He let go her arm and said softly, "Now tell them."

She faced the group, silently. They watched her. The tender lights illuminated her face; the men knew who she was, and they waited for her to speak.

For a long moment she stood there, and then finally she said, "Please go home."

No one moved. Everyone looked at Elizabeth Hinton. And she said again, "Please go home."

And then slowly, so slowly, a few men began to drift toward the tenders. More joined them and soon there was a general movement of dispersion.



**L**ANDERS stepped in front of Elizabeth and said, "If there are any riggers in this group, they can use you at the Station to help get the water flowing again." Several men turned back and headed for the Station. Landers went on. "We're making water up at the Oxygen Station. We can't make much but it will have to keep us all going until this Station goes back on the line. When your storage tanks go dry come up and we'll issue a ration of water."

There was a general rumble of agreement, and people began to seek out the tender they had ridden in. Several tenders lurched into motion and moved over to the four disabled tenders. Other men gathered around and they began to discuss the best way to get tenders back to a hangar for repair.

Landers watched for a moment until he saw that there would be no more fighting, then he turned to Elizabeth. "Let's go."

He led her to his tender and helped her in and then got in himself. He started it up, swung it around and headed due north in the direction of the American hangar. To his right, the sky was turning a light gray with a touch of resi-

ness on the horizon. Dawn was breaking.

He looked at Elizabeth's profile, sharply etched against the lightening sky. She sat stiffly beside him, staring straight ahead. Gradually he became aware of an aura of hostility coming from her.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

She stared stonily ahead without answering.

"What is it, Elizabeth?" He reached over and put a hand on her knee.

She brushed his hand away with a sudden motion.

**H**E TURNED his attention to the route ahead, a slow rage gathering inside him. His hands tightened on the wheel, his jaw muscles stood out. A quarter of a mile they went and neither said a word.

Then she spoke, so softly he couldn't hear the first few words, "...yet you made me. My own people too. You made me turn against them, friends of my brother. The only people I have on Mars, and I took sides against them. Englishmen, my countrymen. You—you." She turned her head to face him. "Gray Landers, I think you are a miserable wretch. You'd do anything to protect that murderer. Even force me to do you want." She

looked around. "Where are you taking me? You take me home. Take me home this instant."

For the first time, Landers realized that he was heading toward the American hangar. Without a word he swung the tender to the left to go west, where the English hangar was. His anger abated somewhat but he didn't know what to say to her. He realized his inability to talk, to explain things. He almost sneered at himself; the great Landers, the man with the ready answer, the quick solution. But as he thought about it, he came to realize that he didn't have any answers to talk about. So he guided the tender on, wishing he could talk to her, but not having anything to say; he felt terrible. The ride ended in silence.

Landers stopped in front of the English hangar. Elizabeth got out and slammed the door with a bang as old as woman. He watched her go into the lock, the early dawnlight of Mars showing the sleek form of her, the smooth motion of her. Landers hurriedly turned the tender east toward the American hangar. He drove just inside the northern boundary of the space field. Halfway across, he could look south and see the slight torn marks on the field marking the spot where the *Moscow* had fallen. It seemed

incredible that the ship had fallen just a few short hours earlier.

Landers was tired, very tired, yet he could not look forward to any sleep. He was used to working long hours but somehow this was different. He saw nothing but trouble ahead. He was used to trouble, too, but this time his heart wasn't in it. There was no reason to work, to plan; he sighed and sagged in his seat and wearily completed his journey.

**D**AVIS WAS on the phone when Landers walked into his office. Davis waved him into a chair and Landers gratefully sat down. Several of the section leaders were there, too; one of them handed Landers a thermos of hot black coffee. He poured a cup and swallowed half of it in a single gulp. He rested his head against the back of the chair and closed his eyes while Davis continued to talk. Someone nudged Landers and gave him a cigaret. He smiled his thanks, lighted it, and inhaled deeply. Another swallow of coffee, another drag, and some of the cold deep inside him began to thaw. He listened to the sound of Davis's voice and the low conversation of the others, without hearing what was said. He unwound a little

inside in the warm friendliness of the room.

Then Davis hung up and turned to him and said, "Auerbach is still asleep." And the inside tightness grew again. Landers finished his coffee and said nothing. After a sharp look at him, Davis went on with his business with the section leaders.

Again Landers leaned his head back. He sat with his eyes closed and every once in a while he took a pull on his cigarette. He finished it and ground it out and lay back again. He dozed, and he hardly heard the phone ring. He did not hear Davis answer, but he did hear Davis's explosive ejaculation, "What?"

It jolted Landers out of his daze and sat him up. Davis listened a moment longer and said, "I'll send someone right over." He hung up and looked around the room and said "A group of men just broke into the Hospital dome and tried to take Auerbach out. Hagen says they beat them off but maybe they'll be back. Gray, you had better get over there now. Set up some sort of guard. Do whatever you have to do to make sure nobody gets Auerbach away from us."

Landers ran out the door and found the hangar chief on duty. He explained the situation

and asked for a six-man guard, starting immediately. Then he ran to a lock and slipped into an outsuit. He grabbed up a helmet and stepped into the lock. He dropped the helmet over his head and hit the exhaust switch as he tightened the helmet down. The pumps swiftly began to pump the air out of the lock and back into the hangar.

HAD LANDERS not been so tired and pressed for time, he would have noted the slight cant to the helmet he wore. The joint where the helmet fitted onto the outsuit was a threaded joint, and Landers had cross-threaded it. He would have noticed the increase difficulty in breathing except he was already panting from the running he had done. And so the air in the lock became exhausted and the outer door swung open. Landers took two steps toward it, and anoxia took over.

The early morning landscape shimmered and surged and flashed into a homogeneous grey color. Landers fell to his knees; for the first time he realized what had happened to him. He did not even try to keep his vision in focus; he did not try to stand. On his hands and knees, he crawled to a wall and groped his way back along it. His arms and legs began to

go numb. He pushed on a few more feet and then collapsed on his face. With startling clarity of mind he could feel his senses grow dim to be replaced by a feeling of heat and lightness. Drawing on his last reserves, he forced himself to all fours and crawled on. No longer could he feel whether or not he pressed against the wall, but he crawled on. The time came when his mind blanked out, though his body still moved. It brushed against the floor switch, then fell and lay motionless.

The outer door closed and air began to pour into the lock. The air flowed into Landers's suit through the same imperfect joint from which it had escaped. The incoming air plus the air from the oxygen flasks in the outsuit soon built up to a livable pressure.

**L**ANDERS' first awareness was of a ringing sound in his head. He shook his head and rolled up to a sitting position. Memory came back; he reached up to the helmet and checked its seating in the plastic ring of the outsuit. The crossthreading became apparent. He rotated the helmet and took it off. At the full air pressure of the lock, he sat and breathed deeply time after time. Soon the oxygen deficiency in his body was made up

and he began to feel a little dizzy. When he felt the dizziness, he stood up, put the helmet on and seated it carefully. He checked the pressure in the underarm outsuit flasks; finding it satisfactory, he once more threw the switch to exhaust the air. When the outer door opened, he stood for a moment to make certain the suit was functioning properly. It was, and he ran outside.

He headed toward the Hospital dome, trotting with ground-eating strides. And as he ran his anger began to rise. The thought that he had almost died from such a trivial accident annoyed him beyond measure. It had been a year since anyone in the colony had crossthreaded a helmet. The very children knew better than that. Yet he had allowed himself to get into such a state that he had neglected one of the fundamentals of life on Mars.

He cursed under his breath. He damned Auerbach; he damned Hinton and Elizabeth, and he damned stupid people everywhere—including himself. His stride lengthened and when he reached the Hospital dome he skidded on the floor of the lock to keep himself from crashing into the inner door. He hit the switch and had his helmet off before the pressure built up to maximum. The in-

ner door opened and he followed it in. Ignoring the rack he flung the helmet into a corner and shouted, "Hagen. Doc Hagen. Where the hell are you?"

Hagen came out of an inside dome, followed by several of the men who had gone to the Water Station with Landers. "Hello, Gray. Glad you're..."

"What happened here?" said Landers.

**H**AGEN LOOKED at him in surprise. "Well, a bunch of the boys brought in a couple of fellows that had been hurt in the fight down at the Water Station. I hear you were there." Landers nodded impatiently.

Hagen continued. "One of them had a fractured clavicle, and I had to spend a good deal of time with him. Most of the boys went home but these hung around." He waved at the men around him. "It's a good thing they did. Five guys with masks over their faces came in and demanded Auerbach. I gave them an argument, and one of them hit me on the head with something; I spent the next few minutes sleeping."

"Yeah," said one of the others. "We were in with Joe Dickey chewing the fat. We heard the Doc here hollering and then we heard this scuffle. We

came charging out just in time to see a guy clout the Doc with a wrench. We piled into them and had quite a time while it lasted. They must have been surprised to find us here because they beat it as soon as they could. We tried to keep them here but they outnumbered us. I guess that's about it?"

He turned to the others inquiringly. They nodded. One of the others said, "Yeah. They didn't seem to be very well organized. They weren't sure of what they were doing—hadn't planned it very well. Soon as we showed up, all they wanted was out. If I'd been with that bunch I'd a had Auerbach out of here and dead by now."

Landers nodded. "Okay. Look, I've got some men coming over here to stand guard. Will you fellows stand by til they get here?"

They all said yes.

"Thanks," said Landers. "Grab yourselves a length of pipe or anything long and hard. If anybody tries to come in here with so much as a frown on his face, smash his head open. Don't take any guff from anybody. Got it?"

"Yeah, Gray." Their eyes lighted up. "That's the way, man. Don't worry about a thing here." They went off to find weapons.

**L**ANDERS turned to Hagen. "Where's the phone, Doc?"

"Follow me." Hagen turned away and Landers fell in beside him. Hagen glanced at him out of the corner of his eyes and shrugged his shoulders. They turned into an inner dome and Hagen waved at the phone. Landers went over and dialed a number. He waited a moment, then said, "Hello, Jim. Landers. Say tell me. Have you heard when the Water Station will go back in the line? This afternoon, eh. Well, look, Jim. I think we better break off all normal operations and set up guards at all our installations. This situation has got out of hand; we don't know what's going to happen next. These madmen are just as likely to puncture a dome next. What do you think?"

He listened and then said, "Good. I'll be right back and set things up."

He banged the phone down and said to Hagen, "Watch yourself here, Doc. Things may happen." He ran out of the inner dome and went to the lock. He retrieved the helmet from the corner and dropped it in place as the air exhausted from inside the lock. Once outside he again broke into a trot, heading back to the hangar.

Back inside the hangar, Landers picked up the hangar chief

and a couple of his assistants and they all went to Davis's office. The section leaders were still there. Landers immediately began to outline his plan.

"It seems to me that the trouble spot will be the Oxygen Station. We've got water there and if the shortage grows acute in the next few hours, anything can happen. I think we ought to have fifty men up there who don't mind a fight. We'll arm them with steel pipe. In fact we'll arm all our men with steel pipe. We also want a good-sized guard around the Fissionables Plant and around the hangar here. Every vital installation may need protection."

"How about Hydroponics?" someone asked.

"Good point. Maybe we can work something out with Zherkov."

Davis said, "I hear that Number Two Hydroponics is in bad shape. They've got a line drawn right through it to separate the part that lies in the German sector from the part that lies in the English sector. So it isn't working very efficiently."

**L**ANDERS nodded. "I hope we don't get into the same sort of situation in our Hydroponics with the Russians. Are we still on good terms with them?"

"As far as I know," said Davis.

"Good. Look, Jim. This lack of water is the most immediately pressing problem we have. Why don't we send a few of our best men down to the Water Station to see if we can speed things up? There are three or four down there now, but they could probably use some more real experts."

"Right," said Davis. "Set it up. I'll make arrangements for the women and children. Keep in touch with me. Oh, by the way, I got a radio message from Earth. The Attorney General says we are the ones to try Auerbach. They don't like a murder in our territory."

Landers looked surprised. "What happened to him? He usually lets us alone. Well, see you later." And he went out followed by most of the people who had crowded into the room.

Outside in the hangar Landers took the hangar chief to one side and said, "Send three of your best men down to the Water Station. Tell them to get the water flowing as fast as possible."

"Right, Gray."

"Oh. And set a couple of men to cutting up lengths of pipe. We want everybody ready to protect himself."

"Right."

Landers turned to the rest of the men. "Pass this around to everybody. No holding back if anything starts. The time for gentle treatment is past. If anybody from the other sectors starts anything, smash him down. Don't take anything from anyone. Got that?"

THERE WAS a chorus of yeps, and Landers began to assign the men to their posts. In a half hour the job was done. Landers went back to Davis's office. "Everything is okay so far, Jim. Anything new?"

Davis shook his head. "Not much. Whitcomb called. Says he wants a meeting soon. He's heard from the Prime Minister and is ready to take a position in the Auerbach case."

"Any idea what the position is?"

"No. He was very careful not to give any hint. I don't like it; that's not like Perce. He's usually the most cooperative of men. They all are. But this Auerbach business has quartered us as neatly as possible. I tell you, Gray, if someone sat down and tried to figure out a way to break up the colony, they couldn't pick a better way than this. I don't know where we are going."

"I don't either, Jim. But I'll tell you one thing. We're not giving up. This colony—or at

least the American part of it, is going to stay put. The others can pull out if they want. We stay."

Davis walked over to him and put a hand on his shoulder. "That's the way I like to hear you talk, Gray. We'll try. But five hundred people can't live here alone. We need the two thousand we've got; we can't be self-sufficient with any fewer. It would take a long time to get the caliber of people we need from the United States alone, so we've got to try to make it work with the people we have here and now. It'd take ten years to start over, even if the country went along with another try after this one failed. We've got to find an answer to this Auerbach situation, and we've got to find it soon."

**L**ANDERS stood quietly, staring at the floor. He looked up and said, "I guess you're right, Jim. We can't do it alone. That makes it rough. But we'll find something."

Davis shook Landers' shoulder and then dropped his hand. "That's the stuff. Think about it. See what you can come up with." He turned and walked wearily back to his desk.

Landers said, "Jim, I think I'll make the rounds and see that the boys have things set

up right. I'll call you from each station."

"Okay, Gray. Good luck."

Landers smiled at him and left. He checked around the hangar and found the men alert and ready for anything that might happen. Some were leaning on their lengths of pipe and some were swinging them through the air. A few more were practicing with each other, using the lengths of pipe as if they were quarter-staves. Landers took a tender and headed north toward the Oxygen Station.

He covered the ground in short order and went in through the lock. Just inside there were several men arranged in a semi-circle around the inner door of the lock. They relaxed when they saw who it was.

Landers said, "Keep your helmets handy. These guys may puncture the dome. Have a man stay outside to check on who comes close to the dome. Don't wait till someone gets inside."

"Okay, Gray," one of them said. "Say, there's a guy who wants water. We wouldn't give him any because he didn't have your signature. What'll we do with him."

"Where is he?"

"Here I am, Mr. Landers." A man detached himself and came forward and handed Landers a note. Landers took



it and read it. It was a note from Whitcomb asking that the bearer be given water. Landers recognized Whitcomb's signature.

Landers asked, "How much water do we have on hand?"

"About five hundred gallons."

"Give him a hundred gallons." Landers handed the note back.

The man turned away, accompanied by another.

"If any of our people come for water," said Landers. "Give them half of what we have on hand. Everybody else must have a note from me. Here's where I'll be..."

After checking with Davis on the phone he left the Oxygen Station and went over through the rough country to the Fissionables Plant. Then he checked in at several of the mines. He was heading southwest toward Hydroponics when his radio came to life. It was Davis, and he wanted him back at the hangar immediately. "Nothing wrong, yet. Just get back here quick. We're going to have a meeting."

## V

**L**ANDERS veered in a westerly direction and soon reached the American hangar. He took his tender

in through one of the medium-sized locks. Once inside, he looked around in surprise. There were an unusually large number of people in the hangar. Very few of them were Americans. Landers looked closer and recognized some Germans, some Englishmen, and some Russians among the people gathered here and there. The groups were not distributed; each nationality kept to itself.

Landers went right up to Davis's office. Manager Whitcomb was already there along with his assistant, George Hoyt. They shook hands all around. Davis said, "The sector Managers all agreed that we should have a meeting to settle this Auerbach thing. Seems everybody now knows what he's supposed to do. The others ought to be here in a few minutes."

"Good," said Landers. He turned to Whitcomb. "How're things in your sector, Perce?"

"Well, not too bad, Gray. I'm sorry about that brawl down at the Water Station. A few of our people are hot-headed, but they're calming down now."

"A lot of the people are hot-headed, Perce. Too many of them. They are going to have to change their ways, fast." Landers' voice was flat and he spoke through tight lips. The others looked at him in sur-

prise. Hoyt was about to say something when Fred Muller came in with Fritz Hortman, his assistant. Again there was a lot of handshaking, but the hands did not stay clasped as long as was customary, the smiles were thin, the eyes did not meet. A hush fell over the group and the outside noise became noticeable. Muller went to the table and sat down; Hortman sat down beside him.

Manager Zherkov walked in with Luzhin. More restrained greetings.

Davis said, "We're all here, gentlemen, so let's get started."

**T**HEY ALL moved to the table and sat down. The noise from outside grew louder. Landers got up and went out the door to see what the noise was all about. As he went around the inner dome and got a look out across the main hangar, he stopped and stared. The hangar was almost full of people. Three separate and distinct groups stood there, many men and women, but—Landers noticed with a sinking feeling in his stomach—no children.

Around the outskirts of the crowd Landers saw a few of his own men, very few. And he remembered that he had sent most of the Americans out to guard the various stations. He

broke out in a cold sweat. Practically every adult in the colony was there to see how the Managers resolved the Auerbach problem. The solution couldn't possibly please them all. What pleased the Germans would not please the English; and the Russians were angry, too.

Momentarily, Landers was infuriated with himself for stripping the hangar of men. But it was too late for regrets. He returned to the office and said, "Almost everybody in the colony is out there. Maybe we ought to hold the meeting out front where they can be in on it. Remember—the way we did when we made the decision to let wives and other women come to the colony?"

The others agreed. The four assistants picked up the large table and carried it through the door of the inner dome and set it down out in the huge hangar. Davis called a couple of technicians over and asked for a public address system. By the time the eight men were settled, there were several microphones at the table. The noise of the crowd had increased when the table appeared but it subsided immediately. Once the eight men were seated, the entire crowd sat down on the floor so that everyone could see what was going on.

WHITCOMB, Muller, and Zherkov each pulled a large bundle of papers out of their breast pockets and began to arrange them in front of them. Davis sat with his hands folded in his lap. Landers looked at the men at the table, annoyed at the tension in the air.

Each one showed the signs of strain—dark circles under the eyes, a paleness of the face, deeply etched lines running from the nose to the corners of the mouth, a tenseness of manner. Davis had lost his youthful appearance. For the first time since Landers had known him, Jim Davis looked his full age.

It was Zherkov who spoke first. "Gentlemen, my government takes the position that we should be the ones to take custody of this Auerbach and subject him to trial. The crime was committed aboard a Russian ship. According to the rules of International Law—" and here he read from the papers in front of him, "a public ship is wholly exempt from local jurisdiction. The *Moscow*, since she was serving the entire colony, is a public ship. So by analogy with the International Law that governs ships in ports, the *Moscow* is extraterritorial and anything that happens aboard her

is Russian business solely. So we should take Auerbach.

"Now, Jim," he said to Davis, "you will agree with this, I think, because this principle was established by the Supreme Court of the United States in 1812 by your Chief Justice Marshall. The case is called *The Schooner Exchange*."

Whitcomb leaned forward and said, "Now just a minute, Nikolay. I have *The Schooner Exchange* case on my list, too. Our situation here is different. A murder has been committed. The immunity of a public ship is not complete, not where murder is concerned. Such crimes of violence affect the port in which the ship lies. Now I have here the case of—" he tilted his head back to read, "*Chung Chi Chiung v. the King*."

"In that case, a British subject committed a murder on a Chinese public ship in Hong Kong territorial waters. Then he tried to commit suicide and they took him to a Hong Kong hospital. Later, a Hong Kong court convicted him of murder. The Privy Council said that even if the ship had any immunities, China had waived them; therefore, the Hong Kong court did have jurisdiction to try the case. Now the analogy with our situation here is perfectly apparent. The

Americans have Auerbach in a hospital. They can try him if they want, because you have waived any immunities you might have had by letting Auerbach go into an American hospital. So my government takes the position that the Americans have jurisdiction here and they should try him."

**Z**HERKOV shook his head and said, "My government takes the position that since the murder took place aboard a Russian ship, we should be the ones to try him."

"Now just a moment," said Muller, spreading out his papers. He read, "My government states that there are three rules that limit criminal jurisdiction in International Law. Germany takes a slightly different position from the United States and Great Britain; we follow a different rule. Where the act is directed against the security of the state, that state may assume jurisdiction. German security has been threatened here, so we should have jurisdiction."

"For heavens sake, Fred," said Whitcomb. "It was a German who committed the murder. How could that threaten the security of Germany or the German sector?"

Muller shifted in his seat. "I don't mean the murder—ah, the killing. The thing that started

all this off was Hinton's acts over in the German sector. Hinton set the whole thing in motion while he was in the German sector. Those acts give us jurisdiction. This principle was established in the *Lotus* case. It was stated by the Permanent Court of the League of Nations."

"Oh now, Fred. You can't really believe that anything Hinton did will determine who tries Auerbach. Why we don't even know if Hinton did anything wrong."

"That's my government's position," said Muller.

**T**HE PEOPLE sitting on the hangar floor stirred restlessly. They began talking among themselves and the noise grew greater in volume. Landers muttered something in anger and Davis leaned forward and said, "What was that, Gray?"

Landers spoke harshly into a microphone. "I said that the Earthside lawyers were sure busy last night."

Davis said, "Yes. I understand that Earth itself has worked up a furor over this thing. The United Nations and the rest of the planet has divided up into camps; they are in as bad shape as we are in trying to arrive at an answer to this situation."

The crowd quieted. Zherkov began to speak again. Davis waved his secretary over and whispered something to her. Landers looked out over the crowd, seeking a slim, erect figure. He could not find it, and he grew more annoyed than ever. He tried to relax, listening to the arguments passing back and forth across the table.

The more he listened the more angry he got. His mind went back to the days when he had argued cases before the United States Court of Customs and Patent Appeals, and the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, and the Supreme Court itself, where the Justices baited and prodded the lawyers. He remembered the thrill of advocacy, the pride that comes from a well-argued case when nine Justices could not confuse or confound his position. Yet he'd left it to return to his first love, chemical engineering.

A funny bird was the patent lawyer, a weird blend of technology and law. He was as much a lawyer as any other lawyer, yet not quite considered so. What was it that some colleague had said? A patent lawyer is a man who talks like a lawyer when he's with scientists, and like a scientist when he's with lawyers. Maybe that was right; then, here and now,

Gray Landers was a lawyer. Why not talk like one?

**L**ANDERS sat up straighter in his chair, and the anger gathered like a lump of fire inside him. He knew practically nothing about International Law, but he knew something that non-lawyers seldom realized. Facts were often more important than Law. Once the facts of any situation were clear, so that everybody agreed on them, the Law was easy; for the most part, it followed common sense.

Landers pulled his feet in under him, and his muscles tensed. The argument about cases and position waxed ever hotter around the table. Many of the spectators were now on their feet. The noise from the crowd was growing louder again. Landers almost exploded then, but he forced himself to think. He remembered Darrow, Clarence Darrow—one of the greatest advocates of all time. Darrow had resolved country-shaking cases by making certain that the jury understood every tiny detail about every facet of the case being tried. And with complete understanding, the answer was obvious. Darrow knew the law, but his greatest cases were won without its aid.

And now the uproar was growing. The Managers were

pounding the table. Most of the crowd were on their feet, shouting, some shaking fists.

Landers could no longer control himself. He pulled a microphone over to him and turned up the volume. His voice surged out through the huge hangar. "*Are you all finished with the colony?*"

The noise subsided somewhat. The Managers silently looked at Landers, their papers scattered in front of them.

Gray Landers went on, his voice hoarse and shaking. "I am a lawyer. I am a member of the bar of the District of Columbia. There are a few things about this situation I'd like to comment on."

Complete silence slowly set in. He waited a moment, thinking in the back of his mind about the respect that most people gave to a doctor or lawyer giving his professional opinion.

**L**ANDERS turned the volume down and said, "First, I'd like to ask a simple question: has anyone here defined the precise problem we are faced with? Do any of the Managers know exactly what it is we are quarreling about?"

"Certainly," said Muller angrily. "We're trying to see who should give Auerbach a trial."

"No," snapped Landers. "That is not the problem at all.

The problem is this. Where a German kills an Englishman aboard a Russian ship in American territory on Mars, what procedure are you going to use to decide who tries the killer. Our real problem is not who tries Auerbach; *it is how we decide who tries him.* We are fighting over a question of procedure."

Landers sat back and stared gloomily at the table top and let them think about it. There wasn't a sound in the hangar, except for the noise made by a few men coming in through the locks. Landers leaned forward and glared around at the Managers.

"It isn't important what happens to Auerbach," he said. "What is important is that justice be meted out in a way that we all know is fair. Yet this colony is tearing itself apart on the irrelevant and wrong question of who should conduct the trial. It just doesn't matter who conducts the trial. The future of the colony is the most important thing to think about, but we haven't been thinking about it.

"Look what you are doing. You're letting the Earthside lawyers make dupes out of you; you're doing just what they tell you to do. All of you. The Earthside arguments are based on four thousand years of bick-

ering and squabbling and tugging for power among the nations. International Law they call it. Nuts. What happens to a nation who breaks the so-called International Law? Does anybody here know?"

There was silence.

"I'll tell you what happens in such a case," said Landers. "Nothing. Not a thing. The only way to make International Law stick is for some nation to go to war with the culprit. And when a nation does go to war it is never to enforce law; it is to protect property, or to get more room for people, or any of dozens of other reasons. But it is never to enforce law. International Law is a set of rules that nations obey when it serves their ends. But when International Law gets in their way, Nations simply ignore it; and no one does anything about it, except maybe protest. Yet here you sit trying to apply International Law to the most complex problem ever to confront it. Ye Gods, even the best lawyers on Earth don't know the answer. Yet you let their puerile opinions tear this colony apart. Is that good sense?"

**L**ANDERS stared coldly at each of the Managers; then he looked fixedly at Manager Zherkov and said, "Look at the good the Russians have done

us. When they came here, they soon threw off the slime of Communism; they left it behind, back on Earth. They even quit calling each other 'comrade'; a man's a man whatever you call him, and they soon learned it. They conceived the idea of the Yak Farm, after we found other animals did not thrive here. Everyone of us has found that the Russian people are good people once they get out from under power-mad dictators."

Zherkov shook his head slightly, but he did not speak. Landers went on.

"And the Russians aren't alone. The English and the Germans have been just as necessary to our welfare. Each has done a magnificent job. I only hope the Americans have done as well."

There was a low rumble from the people sitting on the floor of the hangar. Many were talking at once, but nothing ominous was coming out of the hubbub.

Landers raised the volume of the mike and said, "When our governments first set up the colony, they deliberately put essential installations in each sector to force us to cooperate with each other. It worked better than anybody thought. That was a political decision, but it turned out to be the best prac-

tical decision too. Each sector accepted its responsibility to the utmost. We only made one mistake."

**T**HE CROWD was quiet again so Landers turned down the power.

"The mistake we made was to keep referring to the sectors by the names of the different nationalities, like the German sector, the English sector, and so on. The mere existence of those names creates the illusion that a difference exists among us. So when we meet our first social problem, the various governments on Earth have something to seize on and use as a basis for forcing their own different isms onto us. We want none of it; we can't have it if this colony is to survive. Let me point out something that all of us have overlooked."

Landers leaned forward and spoke softly. "We are *no longer Earthmen*. We are Martians! And as Martians we must run things on Mars to suit Martians, not Earthmen. *We* make the decisions, not Earthside lawyers. We *must* throw off the ties of Earth."

He leaned back, pulling the mike to him. "With that in mind, see how easily we can decide the Auerbach case. We all agree he should have a trial but we have disagreed on who

should try him. Well, now, why not have all the sector Managers sit as judges? Impanel a jury out of the entire colony. Or we may not even need a jury since the four Sector Managers will see that justice is done. There are half-a-dozen different ways to go about it, once we get International Law out of our hair. Remember, it isn't important what happens to Auerbach. Maybe Auerbach will hang, maybe he won't; it doesn't matter to the colony. But it *is* important what procedures we use to mete out justice. So why are we fighting over unworkable Earthside rules?"

Landers fell silent, and the hum of conversation filled the hangar. Davis leaned to one side and whispered to his secretary. The other Managers sat back, all of them looking thoughtful. Out on the floor several people got up and moved out of their group to another and began shaking hands. The aisles between the groups lost their sharpness as people shifted around. Then Landers spoke again.

"We have trouble ahead of us even though we work out our own procedures. For instance, suppose Auerbach receives a sentence of life imprisonment. What will we do



with him? We can't keep a life prisoner here."

MULLER said, "How about sending prisoners—whoever they may be, back to their original country on Earth."

Landers nodded. "Good. Something like that may work out fine. Here's another thing. We're a colony, a frontier. Our justice must be fair, but it will also be different from Earth's justice. We lead a hard life and we cannot give an alleged criminal all the niceties of justice he would receive on Earth. So if we return a man to Earth, they might not carry out the sentence. But that's all right; it doesn't matter to us."

Whitcomb leaned toward a microphone and said, "Just where do you think we can draw the line between benevolent justice—justice tempered with mercy—and the harsher justice necessitated by our life here?"

"The line will draw itself," said Landers. "Where good men administer justice as best they can in each case, other men will accept it, once they understand it. That's a good point though, Perce. We will have to inform everyone here about the rules we will work under. It's already happened to me. I told you—my Lord, was it only a few hours ago—that

I thought Auerbach might possibly have been insane. I was later accused of trying to find a way to get him off. So we need understanding of our new procedures, whatever they will be."

OUT ON THE floor a slim girl rose to her feet from amidst a sitting group. Landers saw the swift sure movement of her and he recognized Elizabeth. She picked her way out of the group and came forward. She reached the front row and stopped about fifteen feet from Landers. She raised her hand and pressed her fingertips against her lips and threw him a kiss. Then she sat down and watched him quietly.

Landers looked at her, a slow flush rising over his face. She continued to smile at him, and a soft chuckle ran through the crowd. Whitcomb looked at Landers with a half smile on his face and Landers' blush grew bright red. He looked at Elizabeth again and felt a thickening at the base of his throat. He forced himself to sit back and look calmly out across the hangar.

Muller said, "All right. It is best that we do not follow Earth law in our affairs. But our governments have instructed us nevertheless to do what they say. If we refuse, then what?"

Zharkov nodded and said, "Yes. I don't think our governments will like our cutting them off. They might retaliate. Suppose they refused to send any more ships?"

Davis said, "Then we will build our own. We could do it in a few years. Anyhow, Nikolay, which government would be the first to refuse to send us a ship? What would world opinion say about such a nation?"

Muller said, "Yes, and we still have the purple lichen; they'll need that for a few years yet."

"Well," said Whitcomb. "The only remaining problem seems to be: how are we going to tell our governments? We ought to issue a joint statement of some kind. What'll we say?"

"Well now," said Davis. "I've been waiting for someone to ask that." He opened up a book in front of him and said, "I have here a document that may be just what we want. Let

me read it for your consideration. I'll skip the first paragraph although it is also exactly what we need. The main body of the document reads:

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends it is the right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and...*

