



HANESSE, the leader of the Brotherhood of Space, came to the pirate ship captained by Male, the good friend of Tara and Robin, and smiled pleasantly as he saw the Earth trio.

"Greetings," he said promptly. "How are things going with you?"

"Splendidly," replied Tara. "Except that there are times when we miss Earth very much. I guess it is merely that I am not used to being so far away from my friends."

"You may not be as far away as you think," Hanesse told the beautiful girl. "There is an Earth colony on one of the moons of Venus. We have made use of these people to bring us news of the Earth, and of the other planets. Sometimes it is valuable to our pirate leaders. It is your turn to go there and bring back the latest information."

At first Tara was inclined to reject Hanesse's suggestion. But she was curious about things on Earth, and this colony was remote enough so that the people might not be aware of the outlawing of Tara and Robin.

"How will we secure this information?" asked the girl.

Hanesse explained something about the colony, then added:

"There is a large white building in the center of it. It is protected by a force shield, but you have repellers on your space ship that will break this down long enough for you to walk through. One of you

will have to stay behind to work them. News from Earth is kept in a large safe in the office of the white building. They do not expect any enemies to break in there, so it will not be too heavily guarded.

Tara made note of the directions while Robin buckled on his sword and Male coiled his whip at his belt. The girl picked up her own sword and fixed it before slipping it into her scabbard.

They bade farewell to Hanesse, then Male was at the controls and the space ship was moving through the air toward the moon of Venus where the Earth colony was located.

IT WAS late at night when they approached the settlement. Here and there a gleam of light marked the position of some of the dwellings. Male cut his motors and coasted toward a landing place several miles from the Earth colony and outside the force shield which was recorded on the sensitive instruments of the pirate ship.

When the ship touched ground, the trio drew lots to determine which one would remain behind to operate the

repellers. Robin received the shortest stick and he settled down near the controls. Tara watched him and there was a curious smile upon her face.

"Don't worry about me, Robin," she said. "I'll be all right. Male is a strong protector." Robin smiled. Male smiled, then stepped out of the ship.

The girl and the space pirate moved ahead. Finally they could feel the force shield ahead of them. Tara signaled to Robin. The repeller waves encompassed them and they felt themselves being carried through the force shield as though they were butterflies upon a swarm of floating leaves.

Inside the shield they came gently to earth. Tara's hand dropped to the hilt of her sword, and Male flicked out the lash of his whip. The first houses of the Earth village were ahead of them.

They saw several youngsters looking out of a window. The children spoke to them and Tara smiled. She asked the way to the white Government building and they directed her immediately.

The building was in the center of the village. Many people were seeing about it, and none of them appeared surprised to see Male and Tara in their midst. The costumes of the pair were similar to those of the other Earth people about them.

"Boy," whispered Male, "this looks as though it's going to be a cinch. There are news bulletins on a board at one side of the door there. We may be able to get all the information we need without going in at all."

Tara and Male studied the posted notices, and made notes of them. Suddenly there came a shout from behind them, and the words threw them into dismay.

"Tara! And the Pirate Male. Seize them!"

THE OUTLAWS OF SPACE BATTLE FOR NEWS OF EARTH!

THE girl and her companion turned with their backs to the wall. Tara drew her sword, although she did not want to injure any of these innocent people who believed they were defending themselves from a dangerous outlaw from Earth.

Male uncoiled his whip and snapped it at the advancing men of the community. The whet-tip snapped with the force of a bullet. Several men moved back.

Suddenly there was a swift attack, and the invading pair were overwhelmed. Tara's sword was smashed to the pavement and struck with a clatter. Male's whip was snatched from his hand and thrown into the dust.

A few minutes later they were in jail.

"A fine job," Tara told her companion. "Now we'll never get the news from home."

Vanna, the jailer, looked up at this comment and smiled. He obligingly picked up a group of dispatches and brought them over to the cell door.

"I see no harm in your reading the news," he said. "You will be going back to Earth as soon as the Space Patrol arrives, so you might as well know what you're up against."

Tara and Male looked over the news bulletins and found

a list of wanted men which Harceeh was anxious to have. In this way he could keep these men at Phoston Haven so that they would not be picked up by the officers of the Space Patrol.

"We've found out what we want to know," Tara said grimly, "but how are we going to get out of here?" Male pointed to the jailer's keys hanging on a nail on the far side of the office. Then he said:

"If my arm was ten feet long we could be out of here in no time."

Tara glanced toward the desk where Male's whip and her own sword were resting. "If you had the whip, you might be able to snag the keys and draw them over here where we could reach them."

Male considered this, then he looked about the cell in which they were harbored. There was nothing in the room but two metal chairs and two cots. Suddenly Tara went over to one of the cots and threw off the coverings. She saw that the framework was made of the thin strips cut from the hide of the Venusian bismurus, a two-legged mammal not unlike a kangaroo.

"There's your solution," she said quickly. Male caught the idea at once and since they

were now unobserved immediately set to work unravelling the bismurus leather and then his skillful fingers worked to weave it into a makeshift whip.

Tara kept watch to see whether Vanna or any of the other Marthones were coming back. Male whispered finally:

"I'll have a try at it."

HE MOVED the long lash of the home-made whip through the bars of the jail cell, flexed them, and finally made a cast in the direction of the keys. The first few tries failed. Then the educated end of the whip snapped around the key-ring and swept it from the nail to the floor. There was a metallic clatter but no one came to investigate it. It was but a moment's work, then, for Male to snag the keys into his grip.

He opened the cell door and Tara hurried out. The pair from the space ship regained their weapons, matched up the news reports and left through a side door.

They were almost to the force shield before anyone spied them. A great hue and cry went up, but Robin was on the job with the repeller and Tara and the pirate captain were seen back in the ship.

"Blast off," shouted the girl breathlessly.

Robin pushed the required buttons and the space ship swept into the air. Then Robin turned to Tara and said:

"It sure took you long enough." There was a crisp note in his tone. Tara looked at Male, then replied:

"The Earth folks were so glad to see us they didn't want to let us go."

Tara chuckled as Robin retorted. At least they could bring Harceeh some real news and she'd tell Robin more about their experience later on when he was not so jealous!

