

★ DENOTES SPECIAL
FEATURE ARTICLE

JULY 1958

Space Travel

FACT & FICTION

- ★ TODAY'S CHALLENGE—SPACE STATION 6
Special science feature by Henry Bott, Research Engineer
- ★ SURVIVAL PROBLEMS FACING—MAN IN SPACE 18
Special science feature by Guenther Schmidt, Ph.D.
- PLANET OF EXILE 30
Interplanetary science fiction novel by Edmond Hamilton
- BLIZZARD-BRAIN 86
Science fiction short story by Darius John Granger
- THE ULTIMATE VICE 100
Science fiction short story by A. Bertram Chandler
- TO PLEASE THE MASTER 110
Science fiction short story by Margaret St. Clair

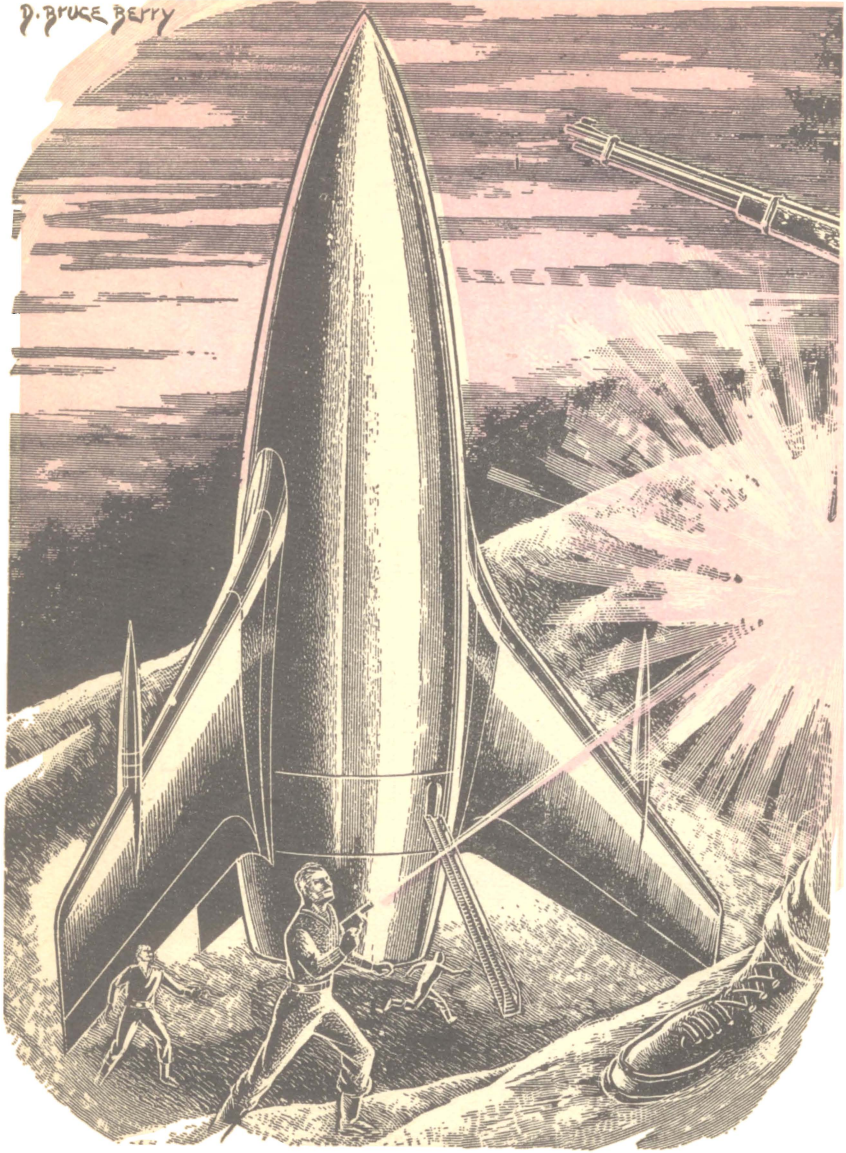
FEATURES

- THE EDITORIAL 4 REMAKING THE EARTH116
- MAGNETISM 28 SCIENTIFILM MARQUEE118
- ROBOT TRANSLATORS 99 THE COSMIC PEN CLUB123

Front cover painting by Malcolm Smith, depicting coming Space Station

Published bi-monthly by Greenleaf Publishing Company, 814 Dempster St., Evanston, Illinois. Address all communications to SPACE TRAVEL, P.O. Box 230, Evanston, Illinois. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office at Evanston, Illinois; additional entry, Sandusky, Ohio. Officers: William L. Hamling, President; Frances Hamling, Secretary-Treasurer, Volume 5, Number 4, Copyright 1958, Greenleaf Publishing Company. Subscription rate: \$3.00 for 12 issues. We do not accept responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts or artwork; submissions must be accompanied by stamped, addressed, return envelopes. Accepted material is subject to whatever revision is necessary to meet requirements and will be paid for at our current rates. The names of all characters used in stories are fictitious; any resemblance to any person, living or dead, is purely coincidental. Printed in USA by Stephens Printing Corporation, Sandusky, Ohio.

D. BRUCE BERRY





Planet Of Exile

by

Edmond Hamilton

What had become of the Earth Farrow had known? Gone were the proud cities and teeming millions. He found only desolation — and fear!

HE WAS RUNNING in blind terror through the rain-swept forest, and he did not know where he was.

He did not know *who* he was. Low branches whipped his face, underbrush clawed at his legs, and he was not even aware of it.

There was nothing in the world but fear, and he must run, and run, and—

A crashing blow suddenly felled him. He lay half stunned in wet moss, and the rain dripped solemnly around him.

After a time, he drew himself to a sitting position. He stared at the enormous rough trunk of a towering pine, inches away from him. Then he began to understand. In his blind flight, he had run right into the tree.

He looked around at the forest. Giant oaks and pines and spruces rose all about him, and underneath them was only the gray obscurity of a heavy day, and the whispering of the rain.

"But what was I running from?" he wondered.

He did not know. He did not know anything, except that he was wet and cold and afraid.

He looked down at himself. He wore a brown coverall and soft shoes. There was nothing in his pockets, no clue to his identity.

He must remember who he was and how he had come to this place, and why he was so afraid. He *would* remember! Something, anything . . .

He crouched there, trying—a wet, dark-haired, lank young man with a smear of blood on his scratched chin, and with frantic eyes.

"It could mean your life, Farrow. The experiment might fail."

Out of the dim blank of not-remembering came suddenly those words, and then the blankness swept back again. He fought the blankness. And suddenly he said aloud,

"Farrow. I am Kenneth Farrow."

He started to his feet, his heart pounding, his breath coming in great gasps. The rain was ending. The giant forest was very silent.

"The experiment might fail—"

Nothing more. Who had said that? He was Kenneth Farrow. But who was Kenneth Farrow and what was it that he so feared?

Farrow looked around, desperately trying to re-awaken numbed memory by sight of some familiar thing. But this forest did not look familiar at all. The trees were too big for any forest he had known. How had he come here?

Looking back, he saw the trail he had left in his terror-driven flight—broken brush, and footprints sunk deep in wet ground.

A sudden hope sprang up in Farrow.

"I can follow my trail back to where I came from. Someone there will know who I am."

He started re-tracing his own trail. It zig-zagged aimlessly here and there, but it led Farrow stead-

ily through the forest on slowly rising ground. Where a great wind-fall lay, he was able to look up at low bare hills ahead.

His foot tripped on something, and he looked down. Broken shards of concrete lay thickly, half veiled by weeds and grass. He saw more concrete fragments, extending away in a wide lane, with big trees growing up among them.

It had been a road, but it must have been abandoned a long time before. Farrow could not understand. He pushed it out of his mind and went on.

Farrow came up on the bare slope. He stopped and stared.

There had been a landslide here, very recently. Rock and raw earth lay on the slope in a muddy mess. A whole steep face of the hill had slipped away.

Up there in the raw new face of the hill, there was a black opening that was like an eye staring down at him. His tracks, deep in the muddy soil, came down from that opening.

Farrow's heart leaped violently. The blind terror was suddenly on him again. But he forced himself to go up toward the opening.

A concrete vault was sunk in the hill here. Its edges showed, stripped bare by the landslide. Its door, of stainless steel with a thick plastic gasket around the edge, had

been sprung and then ripped open by the sliding rocks. It hung wide open on one massive hinge.

Slowly, fatefully, Farrow forced himself to go through that door.

It was shadowy and cold inside the sunken vault, a concrete room no more than eight feet square. At one side of it there was a bunk with a plastic pad. In a corner stood gas-cylinders of a familiar type. On shelves that occupied the rest of the vault were a bewildering variety of objects—two rifles, boxes of ammunition, tins of food, radios, tools. Each object had a white tag tied to it.

Farrow, shuffling his muddy feet on the floor, went toward the shelves. Among the objects there was a batteryless flashlight of the spring-wind type. He wound it, and then flashed its beam on the nearest tagged object. The writing on the tag was brief. It read, "Operation Groundhog Test Sample No. 14. June 17, 1979."

"Operation Groundhog!"

The flashlight fell from Farrow's nerveless hand. He swayed, and leaned against the shelves for support.

As though by a lightning-flash, his mind was illumined and he remembered.

Operation Groundhog . . .

He knew now where he was, and who he was.

HE WAS KENNETH FARROW. And Kenneth Farrow was one of the junior physicists at Eastern University, temporarily detached for special service with the Defense Scientific Commission. The Commission that was planning Operation Groundhog.

It came back to Farrow as he swayed there in the cold shadows. He saw again old Zimmer, spare and austere, speaking to them from the end of the long table. He heard again that dry, precise voice stating to them the problem they must solve.

"Atomic war, gentlemen. It could come at any moment in a surprise attack. Our recent first venturings into space, the satellites and then the moon and Mars rockets, have only heightened international tension. If our enemies knocked us out with a sudden surprise attack, all space would belong to them. They may very well try."

"But we're getting ready," Finetti had protested. "We could hit back fast. And we've started the big underground shelters that will hold all our people—"

"That," Zimmer had interrupted, "is the crux of our problem. How long can those shelters hold our millions? Weeks, months, may go by before radioactive contamination disappears and it's safe to

emerge. We can't store food and air enough to last that long for so many."

And then, Farrow remembered, had come Zimmer's bombshell. The revelation of Hanawalt's process of artificial aestivation.

"A groundhog can sleep while he waits for the time to re-emerge. Not sleep really, but aestivation, hibernation. An almost complete stoppage of bodily processes, so that he requires no food, almost no air. If we were prepared to put our millions in the shelters under artificial aestivation, they too could sleep till it was safe to go out again."

And Zimmer's cool gaze had swept their faces. "Hanawalt's gas can do it, we're sure. It *suspends* metabolism, circulation, respiration, almost completely. It's worked on animal subjects. All we need is a human subject, to go under the gas for six months. We shall use a small vault buried in an isolated location, to approximate actual shelter-conditions."

Zimmer had added, "Naturally, this must be utterly secret. So I shall ask for a volunteer who has no family ties."

And that, Farrow thought, had seemed to leave it up to him. He was the only one of them without wife, child or parents.

He had volunteered, and been

accepted. The vault for the test had been prepared on government arsenal property, here in the low hills of eastern Ohio. The test-vault was finally ready, and in it, right here, Zimmer had given him his final instructions.

"The vault door seals hermetically, and unlocks from either side. When I've left, close and seal it and then release the gas. You'll go to sleep—and won't wake until six months from now when we come and open the vault."

Had a last twinge of conscience penetrated Zimmer's frosty soul? He had paused and said, "I must warn you again—it could mean your life, Farrow. The experiment might fail."

Farrow had wanted to quit, to get out of the place. But pride, vanity, had kept him from it. He had only nodded.

"I know. But I don't think it will."

He had sealed the door, after Zimmer left. He had looked around the vault one last time—at the bunk, at the array of objects on the shelves whose reaction to the gas must be tested also, at the cylinders.

In nervous haste, he had opened the valves of the cylinders. He had lain down on the bunk as the gas hissed. And then there had been nothing at all. Nothing but sleep.

AND WHEN he had finally awakened, his brain still numb with the long aestivation, sheer animal fright at finding himself in the strange vault had driven him out in blind terror through the forest . . .

"But it was the landslide, ripping open the vault door, that let the gas escape and awakened me," Farrow thought. "It wasn't Zimmer. The six months must not be up yet—"

Something struck icily across his thoughts. The road. The ruined concrete road with big trees growing up amid its fragments. It had been a perfectly well-kept road—when he had come here.

How long does it take for great trees to grow where a concrete highway has been?

"Oh, no," whispered Farrow, aloud. "That's impossible."

He couldn't have lain in aestivation that long. They wouldn't have let him do so. Zimmer and the others—they would have come at the end of the six-month period, and awakened him.

"Unless they were all dead," something whispered in his mind.

Farrow told himself that wild imaginings were getting the better of him. There were a dozen men on the Commission who knew the secret of Operation Groundhog. They couldn't *all* have died sud-

denly . . .

Or—could they? Suppose the surprise atomic attack, so long feared, had struck while he was sleeping. Washington would be a sure target. And if all the Commission had died in the nuclear flash, who would know that he, Farrow, was sleeping here?

Farrow uttered an inarticulate sound. He wouldn't believe that. He mustn't let himself believe it. He stumbled out of the dark, cold vault, frantic to prove to himself that it wasn't true.

The light was waning in the heavy sky. Farrow climbed up the slope toward the ridge of the low hills, shakily scrambling and slipping. He turned there and stared out over the wide, shallow miles of Pymatuning Valley. He looked and looked, as the light drained out of the sad-colored sky.

And it was all gone. All the valley as he remembered it, the roads and fields and farms and villages, the trucks and buses and cars, the distant smoke and tall buildings of Steel City. All gone.

A vast and unbroken forest rolled to the horizon, lonely under the advancing night. No smoke, no buildings, no roads, no fields. Only the great trees, a wilderness as savage as if civilization had never touched it.

"The experiment might fail—"

No, thought Farrow numbly. Operation Groundhog's test had not failed. It had succeeded only too well, and he had slept sound while a sudden besom of atomic destruction had swept away the world he knew. The cities of men had gone, and the forest had come back, and in his vault he had slept on and on.

A century? Two? How long, for great trees to grow through a concrete road?

Tears stood in Farrow's eyes. Then this was the end of all man's hopes and dreams? Stricken down, destroyed, at the very moment when he had begun reaching toward other worlds?

He looked, praying to be wrong, praying to see the shining of one familiar light. And there was nothing but the darkness, and he had spanned unguessed time to stand at the end of man's world.

The clouds parted and cleared. The pitiless stars peered down at him as he stood on the dark ridge, stricken and wet and cold.

Then suddenly, Farrow heard a sound, and saw to northward a vertical flash of fire that came down out of the dark heavens as a great bulk settled earthward on wings of flame.

CHAPTER II

SUDDEN REVULSION from despair set Farrow to shouting

wildly at that distant streak of fire that was gone almost as he glimpsed it. He yelled and gestured, shaking with excitement.

He had been wrong, then. He had lain in aestivation, in sleep, for a long time—but civilization could not have been swept away, after all. For that flaming thing could only have been a great rocket, and that implied technologies only a complex civilization could wield.

"I jumped to conclusions too fast," he told himself. "This valley has gone wild, for some reason, but that's all."

All his thoughts were now feverishly bent upon the distant rocket he had seen. He must get to the point where it had landed—a point that could not be far from the Lake Erie shore. He must find the people there, must find out what had happened to the world.

Farrow began to run down the slope. When he reached the area of the landslide, in the darkness his foot slipped on muddy earth and he pitched down the slope in a bone-shaking fall.

He got to his feet, but his first wild excitement was a little sobered. He could not, much as he wanted to, force a way through the forest at night. He would have to wait until morning.

He became aware at the same

time how weak and shaky and cold he was—and the first pangs of hunger stirred in him. Violent emotions had sustained him until now, but now reaction from the long aestivation and the awakening was hitting him.

Farrow went on down the slope to the vault. But when he entered it, its darkness and freezing chill were repellent.

He forced himself to think. He must have food and warmth. The food was here, a few dozen cans of various kinds, among the test-samples on the shelves. Using the flashlight, he rummaged among the test-objects until he found matches, and then tore the paper wrappings off other packaged test-samples.

He had to go back down to the forest for wood. The flashlight helped, but it was a slow business gathering damp brush. And all the time, a sense of unreality mocked him.

He stopped once, as a chorus of long, barking howls came through the night like the very voice of wilderness.

Farrow stood listening.

Painfully, he clambered back with his messy load of wet branches, and piled them just outside the open door of the vault. Even with paper and matches, he had to try several times before he got a fire started.

The fire helped. And the meat from one of the cans, which he opened by means of a test-sample knife, helped even more.

Again, from far away, came the savage barking chorus.

"Sounds more like dogs than wolves," thought Farrow. "Wild dogs?"

Uneasily, he went back into the vault. There were two military-pattern rifles there, and boxes of cartridges. Old Zimmer had included among the test-samples every type of object which would be needed by those who awoke from Operation Groundhog in some future war—and weapons, obviously, would be among such needs.

Hanawalt's gas did not seem to have affected either weapons or ammunition. Farrow put a clip into one of the rifles, and went back to sit behind his fire.

The warmth and the food made him feel sleepy. There was, he thought, an irony in that. Sleepy, when he had just awakened from a sleep that had lasted—

How long?

And what had happened to the world while he slept?

Desperately, he clung to the memory of the rocket. If there were rockets, there could not be universal savagery and decay. For the rockets that had just begun to reach the planets in the years be-

fore he'd begun his sleep, could not exist without technics to produce them.

Farrow brooded until he slipped into a doze, sitting and clutching the rifle. He awoke with the fire out and sunlight streaming past him down the slope.

Hope bounded up in him. Today he would reach the place where the rocket had landed.

A half-hour later he was pressing northward through the forest, the rifle in his hand and extra clips and cans of food in an improvised pack on his back.

FARROW FOLLOWED the line of the nearly-vanished highway. The shards of broken concrete between the trees made tricky footing. But there was little underbrush, and the road would keep him to a straight course.

He came to a stream, the Pymatuning. Stone abutments showed there had been a bridge here but the bridge was gone, and so was all trace of the village that had stood here, except for some weedgrown foundations.

He went on. Remembering the wild dogs, he kept his rifle on the ready. It grew warm, and he judged by the leafage of the oaks and maples that it must be late May.

Late that afternoon, Farrow

crested low, tree-covered hills and then stopped. Below him lay a sandy plain, and beyond that the blue expanse of the great lake. There was something on the plain.

The rocket. It towered, a silvery giant catching the blaze of the sun. There was activity near it, men with machines poking at the ground a few hundred yards away, other men coming and going on the gangway that led up into the great ship.

Farrow almost sobbed with relief. It was more than a rocket. It was a visible sign that all was still well with the world somewhere, even though a valley had gone wild and villages had vanished here.

He raised his voice in a frantic shout to the men down there.

"Wait for me! Don't go away without me—wait—"

He saw their startled faces turn toward him, as he ran down the slope from under the trees.

Two of the men were closer to him than the others. They were stalwart, sunburned men, and they wore satiny-looking gray coveralls cut much like his own. They stared at Farrow as he stumbled toward them.

Then one of them whipped out a short-barreled weapon from his belt and levelled it. A crash like thunder smote the air and a wicked little flash of jagged light darted

toward him.

Farrow's stumbling, unsteady run was all that saved him. He was lurching a little, and the flash of energy or electricity or whatever it was went past him by inches, with a smell of ozone and then of scorched grass.

"Why," he said, shocked, paralyzed by such a reception, "why, you don't understand—"

The second man was also drawing his weapon and the first was now aiming at Farrow with care.

Self-preservation shattered Farrow's paralysis. They were trying to kill him. He flung the rifle to his shoulder and fired.

The rocket-man aiming the unfamiliar weapon dropped it and clapped his left hand to his right shoulder, with a howl of pain. The other man froze in the act of drawing his weapon, goggling at Farrow in an amazement that exactly matched that which Farrow had felt a moment before.

The other rocket-men, farther back by the silvery loom of the ship, seemed also stricken with astonishment by the sharp report of the rifle.

Then, before their surprise passed, Farrow leaped back into the shelter of the trees. An instant later, long streaks of crackling light seared past him, and the trees woke to thunderous echoes.

"Trying to *kill* me!" Farrow whispered.

All of the relief he had felt was swept away, and the changed Earth wore as cryptic and menacing a face as it had in the darkness of the night.

He peering shakily from behind his trees. The rocket-men were running together down there. A tall man with sand-colored hair and an authoritative stride was coming from the rocket, hurrying toward the wounded man and his companion. The wounded man was yelling.

"Barth, a tribesman with a bullet-gun! A *new* bullet-gun!"

Hearing that cry, Farrow felt more amazed than ever. These men spoke English. They were his own people or kin to them. Yet they had tried to kill him on sight. What had happened to the world?

A quick discussion was going on down there, and then the sandy-haired man Barth made an ordering gesture. The gray-clad men began to spread out and advance in a line up the slope toward the trees.

Panic seized Farrow. They were hunting him. And the instinct of the hunted sent him running back through the trees into the forest. Whoever they were, whatever reason they had for their hostility, they must not catch him.

HE STARTED plunging along the slope, keeping to spaces that were less choked by underbrush. Almost instantly, he heard swift footsteps right behind him.

Farrow swung around, raising the rifle. A second time, he stood shocked for a moment into inaction.

It was not one of the gray-clad rocket-men who was behind him.

It was a darkhaired girl with a hawk-fierce, swarthy face, wearing leather jacket and leggings and carrying a compact thing of wood and metal that Farrow could not for the moment identify.

"Not that way!" she exclaimed in a low voice. "They're coming up all along the slope, and will cut you off!"

Farrow kept the rifle trained on her, and her face flashed an expression of exasperation.

"I'm not one of them!" she said. "I could have put a bolt in your back easy, when you ran past me."

With a queer feeling, Farrow recognized now the thing she carried. It was a crossbow, with its crosspiece made of old-looking spring steel, and with a heavy little steel bolt in it ready to fire.

"Who are you?" he whispered.

"I'm Jen, and I'm an Earthly, and I knew you must be one too

when I saw you shoot that Martian," she said quickly. Her black eyes were excited when she glanced at the rifle. "Only, where did you get a new bullet-gun?"

All of her talk went past Farrow except one word. That word hit him with an impact that was stunning.

"Martian?" he repeated, incredulously. "You call those rocket-men *Martians*? That's crazy! They're people like us, they spoke English—"

"What else would they speak?" she demanded, puzzledly. "I was spying on them, and when—"

She suddenly broke off, as though interrupted by some sound that Farrow could not hear, and turned hastily to peer back through the trees. Then she said passionately,

"Will you *move*? They're after us, and in a minute more we'll be cut off!"

The urgency in her voice, the taut look on her keen, weather-browned face, convinced Farrow of the imminence of danger. He did not know yet who she was, nor who those others were, but he knew that they had tried to kill him and that was enough.

He ran. And the girl Jen ran with him and then ahead of him, choosing a way through the bewildering sameness of the forest.

From startlingly close behind him in the green gloom, came a sharp cry.

"Barth's orders! Don't kill him—not yet!"

Whistles rang stridently, and as he ran Farrow realized that those whom Jen called Martians were closing in behind them.

CHAPTER III

JEN PUT on a burst of speed, running like a deer, and Farrow found himself barely able to keep up with her.

She gave him a flashing, worried look as they ran. "They're trying to force us toward the lake—then they'll have us pocketed!"

Farrow realized the danger, for the whistles were now sounding south of them. They were in a trap whose jaws would presently close, and only speed could get them out of it in time, but he did not think he could maintain the pace.

His lungs were laboring and his heart pounding, but an illogical petty vanity made him unwilling to admit that he could not keep up with a girl. He forced himself to keep going, his legs pumping mechanically, until things began to blur before his eyes. Then, as though from a remote distance, he heard Jen speaking.

"We're past them—we can slow down a little."

She kept going, though at reduced speed, and it was moments before Farrow could gasp a question.

"Will they keep after us?"

She nodded, troubledly. "Yes. That new bullet-gun of yours—they'll want to know where it came from, who made it, how many there are."

The sun was setting, the light coming in level broken shafts through the trees and brush. Jen turned sharply to the left.

"I mustn't go straight toward my tribe's village," she said. "We'll lead them southward first."

No more words were spoken as twilight came and deepened. Farrow followed the seemingly tireless leather-clad form on through the darkness for what seemed forever. He started once as a deer crashed out of a covert just ahead. He heard no more whistles from behind.

Finally Jen led into a dense little thicket of trees. A smell of blossoms assailed his nostrils, and with a sudden pang Farrow realized that they were apple-blossoms, and that the thicket was some orchard of the past gone wild.

They sat down on damp leaves, and for several minutes remained silent, listening. Finally, Jen said,

"They can't trail us in the dark. But they'll be after us again in the morning." She added, "No fire. I have dried meat."

"I've better than that," Farrow muttered, and tiredly got a can out of his pack and speared it open with his knife.

Her voice came, in tones of wonder bordering on awe. "A new bullet-gun—and now this! No one has seen such things for a hundred years!"

Her words struck Farrow like the knell of final doom, stripping away the last shreds of hope that he had tried to cherish.

"A hundred years . . ."

All the evidence he had seen but tried to deny, the wildness of a forlorn Earth, the forest that had overwhelmed roads and towns, received final confirmation. Operation Groundhog had carried him across a century.

"Listen," said Farrow hoarsely, "this gun is more than a hundred years old, and so am I. I know it's hard to understand, but—"

He talked jerkily in the dark, trying to tell her the incredible story of his awakening, unable to see her face. When he concluded, there was a silence.

Then Jen said thoughtfully, "I knew you were no ordinary tribesman. And you couldn't be a Martian either, or they wouldn't be af-

ter you now. But it is strange—a man from before the War.”

“Then there *was* a war—an atomic devastation?” exclaimed Farrow.

She said, “Yes. It came very suddenly. One country struck at another, and the sky was full of flying bombs, that in one day and night wiped out a thousand towns and cities. Yes—there was a War.”

And Farrow thought numbly that he had been right, that that was why Zimmer nor anyone else had never come to awaken him from his sleep.

In the darkness, Jen spoke on in a low voice. “Poison came from the great bombs, they say. Poison that drifted on the air, all around the northern half of Earth, and slowly killed all those who had escaped the blasts.”

“Fallout,” muttered Farrow, but the word meant nothing to her.

“A few hundreds of people escaped, on high mountaintops in the west. Later, when the poison died away, they came down from the mountains and spread eastward again. They became the tribes. My people.”

She added with sudden passion, “Does it seem strange to you that we do not have bullet-guns or metal cans of food? We had them, for a time. But when they were used up there were no more, and we could

not make such things.”

He could understand that, too. It took many specialists to make the machines and tools of civilization. And with the cities gone, and only a few random survivors to start things going, there would not be enough such specialized skills left.

HER STRONG fingers suddenly closed on his arm. “I have to touch you, to believe! A man from the old times of cities—”

Farrow interrupted, with the question that was paramount in his shocked mind.

“But that rocket was a product of advanced civilization! Where did it come from?”

“From Mars.”

“Oh, no, it’s impossible!” said Farrow. “Those weren’t aliens, they were men like us, they spoke our own language. It’s fantastic to call them Martians!”

“They are Martians because they were born on Mars,” said Jen. Her voice took a bitter edge as she added, “But they look like us and they speak like us, because once they were people of Earth.”

Farrow was wholly bewildered now. “What do you mean?”

“In the days just before the War,” Jen explained, “Earthmen had just begun to send ships—rockets, you call them—to Mars.”

“I know all about that,” Far-

row said. "They found habitable oases, a few odd forms of life, out there. But no *people*."

"So it is said," she agreed. "But, after the War struck and the poison drifted around the northern half of Earth, there was a people in the far south who knew that in time the poison would drift to them and kill them, and who decided to escape. They had rockets. In the months before the poison reached them, they made more. And as many of them as could left Earth in the rockets and went to Mars."

Farrow was stupefied. That was something he had never imagined, and yet it might just have been possible for many people to escape in that way before world-wide fallout reached them.

"A people? What people?" he demanded. "Australians? South Africans?"

"Who knows their name now?" Jen said. "They went to Mars, those selected by the scientists who planned the escape—the Planners. They left everyone else on Earth to die. But all here did *not* die—our ancestors, on the high mountains, escaped. And after the poison faded away, they came down and spread and grew into our tribes."

Her voice again became bitter. "All this hundred years, those who escaped to Mars have lived there

safely for three generations. Then, a year ago, some of them came back from Mars in a rocket to ascertain conditions on Earth. They were amazed to find that we of the tribes had survived. They said they would help us regain all the civilization that Earth once had."

She laughed mirthlessly. "We believed them. We talked with them—and their leader was that same Barth who now leads them. But we found out they were lying. They did not mean to help us regain civilization! They had only come back to search for metals and ores that are rare on Mars, and were only using us to procure information. When we charged them with that, a quarrel broke out—and they used their weapons and killed many of us. Is it any wonder that we hate these Earth-descended Martians?"

Farrow understood her resentment, and shared it. It wasn't only that the "Martians" had tried to kill him, merely because they thought he was a tribesman. There was more to his feeling than that.

For he visualized an Earth on which civilization was wrecked, and whose people were struggling to bring it back. And those who had fled to Mars and safety, instead of helping the people of Earth win their way back, had come only for ruthless self-seeking.

"But what puzzles me is why all those on Mars don't return to Earth, now that they know the radioactive poison is gone," he said.

"We do not know why," Jen said. "We would have welcomed them, at first. But they want only to use us and dominate us, so now it is war between us."

"I'm on your side in that struggle," Farrow said warmly. "Anything I can do to help your people's fight to progress, I will."

"You can help very much!" Jen said. "You, a man of the past, can —" She suddenly stopped, then gripped his arm. "Listen!"

In a moment she whispered, "They're searching through the woods in this direction. But they can't possibly follow our trail at night—it must be only chance."

Farrow instantly forgot the wider implications, in sharp concern for their own situation. He said, "We'd better run for it."

Jen pulled him back down. "No. It's only a random search, they can't possibly know we're here. Lie still."

HE LAY STILL, crouching beside her in the darkness on the damp leaves, waiting and watching. Then through the dense wild-apple thicket in whose heart they lay, Farrow glimpsed a flicker of light.

It grew stronger and closer, and he heard the sound of a group of men approaching, the crackle of broken briars, the scuffle of boots in the grass. The searchers were going to pass the thicket at a little distance, and Farrow felt a sharp relief.

The relief was short-lived. He heard the searchers stop, caught a murmur of voices, and then heard them come on, straight toward the thickets. The light they carried threw splintered shafts of brilliance through the blossoming, thorny trees. Farrow and Jen crouched lower.

A voice suddenly rang harshly. "All right, we know you're in that thicket—both of you. Drop your weapons and come out!"

By the glimmer of the light, Farrow saw Jen's face wore a stunned expression. She whispered, "How could they trace us here? How could they know just where we are? It's not possible—"

It seemed fantastic to Farrow also that they had been found so easily, and yet it had happened.

"You have three minutes, before we sweep the thickets with energy-guns," warned the harsh voice out there.

Jen got up, clutching her cross-bow. "That's Barth, damn him! I saw him and his men kill my brother the last time a rocket came!

I'll—"

"You haven't a chance," said Farrow. "Listen, you got into this trying to help me get away. I'm going to get you out of it. I'll go out to them—and you slip away the other direction while I'm doing it."

Jen started to object and he said emphatically, "You must get back to your people and tell them about this, and it's the only way you can."

"But you—", said Jen.

He gave her a shove. "I'll be all right, they want me alive. Get going."

Without giving her time to protest further, Farrow started through the thicket in the direction of the light.

"I'm coming out," he said loudly. "But I want a guarantee I won't be blasted down on sight."

"You have my word," said the voice of Barth. "But don't come out with that bullet-gun. Leave it."

Farrow objected to that, speaking loudly and noisily crashing through brush and branches, to cover the sound of Jen's flight. But suddenly he heard another voice out there.

"Barth, T'laa says the girl is escaping out the other side!"

"Get her!" snapped Barth.

Instantly, Farrow turned and

ran back through the thicket the way Jen had gone. Thorny branches whipped his face and briars tore at his legs but he burst straight ahead for now he heard a cry from Jen, of pain or anger.

He came out of the thicket and saw the dark figure of the girl struggling with a bigger male figure. Farrow ran up. He dared not shoot but he reversed his rifle and jammed its butt into the middle of the man. The man made a heavy sighing sound and sat down slowly.

Jen yelled a warning and at the same moment two heavy bodies hit Farrow from behind and jolted him off his feet. The rifle flew out of his hand as he hit the ground. Furious at his failure, he jabbed backward with an elbow and felt a crunch and heard a screech.

Then something hit the back of his neck hard, and Farrow lost interest in everything. He sprawled, and then felt himself turned over, and the light came and shone into his eyes and he saw the blond, square face of Barth looking frowningly down at him.

He saw another man beside Barth, a man who had riding on his arm, half-clinging and half-carried, a thing out of nightmare. It was the size of a big chimpanzee but it had too many arms and legs for any earthly animal, and in its weird, furry, lemur-like face were

big, mournful, round black eyes, peering down at Farrow.

"Good work, T'laa," said Barth to the creature, but it did not answer.

It seemed to Farrow that everything was going around and fading, and only those great, unearthly luminous eyes looking down at him were still there as consciousness faded.

CHAPTER IV

FARROW LOOKED at a smooth metal wall, when he awoke. It was only inches away. He was lying in a narrow bunk on a gas-filled mattress, and a bleak white light came from behind him.

He turned, and then he jumped out of the bunk onto the green plastic floor, his hands balling into fists, a hot anger sweeping through him. He was in a small windowless metal room with a disk of artificial light in its ceiling, and a man stood facing him. He was a young, broad-shouldered man in a gray coverall, with sandy hair and hard blue eyes and an air of self-assured strength of body and mind. Farrow had seen him before. He was the leader whom the rocketmen had called Barth.

One of the "Martians"—the people who fled Earth a century before in the day of disaster, and

now had come back, not to help its struggling people, but for their own selfish purposes! The tough arrogance of this young leader matched what Farrow had heard of these so-called Martians, Farrow felt an hostility to them that deepened his determination not to let them frustrate the struggle of Earth's people back to civilization.

"You're in our rocket," Barth was saying. "You've been out for quite a while."

"Where's Jen?" demanded Farrow.

"The tribesgirl?" said Barth. "She's all right."

"Is she?" said Farrow. "Then let me see her."

Barth's eyes narrowed a trifle. "Listen, no one takes that tone with me." Then he shrugged, and said, "If it will ease your mind, you can see her."

He opened a door and Farrow, feeling weak and unsteady and aware of an abominable ache in the back of his neck, followed him through it.

Barth went down a very narrow corridor, curved like the section of a ring, and opened another door. He did not go in.

"There she is. Sleeping. We had to give her a seda-shot."

Farrow looked into a tiny cabin that was the duplicate of the one he had just left. Jen lay in a bunk,

her eyes closed. The soft leather tunic over her breast rose and fell evenly.

Then Farrow saw who else was in the tiny room, and felt a bristling of the hairs on his neck.

On a stool, close to the head of the sleeping girl, perched a figure out of nightmare. Furry, with a body no bigger than a boy's, it had arms and legs that were bifurcated where they joined its torso, so that it seemed to have eight limbs instead of four. Its face was turned toward the girl and its great, unpupilled black eyes were fixed upon her. It was the strange double-limbed creature he had glimpsed in the forest as he went into the darkness.

There was something so unholy about the alien thing's complete absorption with Jen, that a sort of horror invaded Farrow. He started forward into the room.

"What's that? What's it *doing* with her?" he cried.

The creature turned its head sharply. In the gaze of its unhuman eyes, Farrow read sudden apprehension as he plunged forward.

A hand grabbed the back of his collar, and Farrow felt himself hauled off his feet. Barth had colared him as one would a child.

"Leave T'laa alone," said Barth.

The indignity of being mauled like that transferred Farrow's anger

from the unearthly thing crouched on the stool to the man.

He wrenched around and struck with furious fists. Barth staggered back. His face became unpleasant. He got his balance, then strode forward. Farrow hit him again, but the punch had no steam in it; he was too exhausted.

Barth grabbed him and slammed him against the wall, knocking most of the breath out of him. Farrow swung at him but this time so weakly that Barth contemptuously ignored the blow.

"T'laa is not hurting the girl," Barth said. "Will you be reasonable now?"

"Reasonable, when you tried to kill me?" said Farrow.

"Our guards were a little hasty," Barth admitted. "They thought you were a tribesman. We soon realized you couldn't be one, though."

He motioned toward a metal chair bolted to the wall. "If you're so worried about the tribesgirl, you can stay in here. But sit down. I have some questions."

FARROW GLARED at him, but the wave of weakness that had swept over him made his knees wobbly. He went over and sat down. Barth came over and looked down at him with bright, probing eyes.

"You're no tribesman," he repeated. "With that weapon, and

the things you had in your pack, you couldn't be. But who *are* you? Where did you come from?"

Farrow looked up at him. "What year is this?"

Barth said, "2084, of course."

"I was born in 1945," said Farrow.

He waited wearily for the loud outcries of incredulity that would follow. Then he looked up sharply.

Barth showed no surprise on his face—no surprise at all! That fact so astounded Farrow himself that his anger faded a bit.

Barth asked, "How do you explain this?"

Farrow, upset by the other's complacency, began a halting explanation of Operation Groundhog. He realized how incredible it must sound.

When he had finished, Barth turned and spoke to the furry thing that crouched on the stool. "You were right, T'laa. His story checks with what you got out of his mind."

The thing on the stool answered, in a lisping, slurred voice that made familiar English sound like an utterly alien tongue.

"Yes. The main outlines were very clear."

And as Farrow stared, Barth asked the thing he called T'laa:

"What have you got out of the

girl?"

T'laa made a shrugging movement of his multiple shoulders. "Not too much. She belongs to a tribe that centers around an old village in the forest, fifty miles west of here. There are some two thousand of them. They saw the rocket land and sent out spies to look for it, she being one of them. They plan to attack the rocket."

Barth's jaw set in a cruel line. "I thought so. We'll have a surprise for them."

Farrow burst out. "For God's sake, what is that thing? What does it do—read minds?"

"You might say so," answered Barth. "T'laa is one of the Ibim—the highest indigenous form of life on Mars. His race all have certain parapsychic powers."

Farrow began to understand. "That's how you were able to track us down so fast, in the forest."

Barth gave him a wintry smile. "Yes. The Ibim are quite useful. It's why we brought one with us to Earth this time."

"But you," said Farrow, staring at him, "*you're* no Martians, really. Jen told me how your ancestors fled to Mars after the War. Are you people planning now to come back to Earth?"

The question seemed to touch a sore spot. Barth glared at him and said angrily,

"I'll ask the questions, Farrow. You'll learn more about us later—if you live."

The hectoring tone sent bristles of resentment through Farrow. If Barth was a sample of the Earth-descended folk of Mars, Jen had been right about them.

Yet why should the "Martian" react so angrily to the question about a possible mass-return of his people to Earth? There was some mystery here, Farrow thought.

"You slept through the War and the century afterward, because of a gas," Barth was saying. "T'laa got that out of your mind. Yet we have no record of such a gas being perfected before the War and Evacuation."

Farrow said, "Hanawalt's gas was top-secret. It was to form part of our defenses. And Hanawalt and everyone else on Operation Groundhog must have perished, or they'd have awakened me."

Barth said thoughtfully, "We sent men to the crypt you slept in and they brought back the things there, but there was none of the gas. Do you know the formula of it?"

Farrow thought quickly. He remembered the main chemical base of the formula, all right. But he wasn't going to give these "Martians" anything that might help them against Jen's people. His loy-

alty was to the folk of Earth. At the same time, he had an idea Barth would be ruthless if he thought that Farrow was of no value to them.

He said, "I know it was an ionogen formula, but I can't remember the details."

"T'laa could get it all out of your mind, in time," Barth declared.

Looking at the furry alien perched on the stool, Farrow shivered. The thought of the creature's parapsychic power exploring his mind gave him a feeling of revulsion.

"I'll have to call home," said Barth, "for authorization about you—"

He was interrupted by the hasty entrance into the cabin of a young, serious-looking man in the gray coverall uniform.

Barth said nastily, "I left orders that I wasn't to be disturbed, Sandoz."

The young man called Sandoz looked uneasy. "I know, but we've spotted movement out in the forest, and think it may be a big force of tribesmen."

Farrow's heart gave a leap. So Jen's folk had come! There might be a chance—

Barth was saying, "I'm not surprised, I expected that." He thought a moment, then said, "We'll go up to the bridge. I want to use the

communic anyway. Come along, Farrow. You too, T'laa—I'll need you."

FARROW GOT UP and then paused to look down at Jen. He thought that she looked more like a sleeping child than a forest-running tribesgirl.

He suddenly started violently as with a swish of movement something heavy landed on his shoulder. T'laa had hopped from the stool nearby to a perch on his shoulder. Turning his face in horror, Farrow met the gaze of those saucer-like black eyes only inches away.

He started to make a violent movement of repulsion, but Barth interrupted with a jeering laugh.

"It's all right, T'laa isn't going to hurt you. He finds Earth gravitation a drag, and likes to hitch a ride."

"Yes," whispered T'laa in his lisping voice.

The skin between Farrow's shoulders crawled at the touch of the clinging, furry creature, but he would not show fright in front of Barth. He went out of the little room, with Barth following and locking the door.

The young man Sandoz went ahead, hurrying along the ring-shaped corridor and then up a steep ladder. The ladder was in a circular well, and Farrow looked down

once at the depths of the rocket below him and then shivered and looked up again. He heard a dry, rasping sound from T'laa, on his shoulder, that might have been mirthful.

They came into the dome-shaped nose of the rocket. It had windows, and there were lights going in it, and Farrow saw instantly that it was night outside. Had he been out for a whole day, then?

A middle-aged man with a weathered, brick-red face was peering out one of the windows. He turned and said to Barth, "Hard to see, but there must be several hundred tribesmen out there. I think they're going to rush us."

Barth nodded, and told him, "Mudie, you take the main controls. We'll give them a hot reception. T'laa, try to pick up the minds of the men out there. I want to know when they decide to rush."

"It will not be easy, with so many and at that distance," murmured T'laa. But he hopped off Farrow's shoulder, vastly to Farrow's relief, and clung onto a stanchion beside one of the windows, peering out through the glass.

Barth went over to a bank of instruments in front of which a rabbit young man was sitting. He said, "Get me Planning Center at Syrtis. I want to talk to Grum-

man, audio and video."

The rabbit operator said worriedly, "It may take time to get through to the Chief Planner—"

"Do it," snapped Barth, and the operator hastily began closing switches. His voice started droning in a professional monotone.

"ER-2 calling P-1, Syrtis City! ER-2 calling—"

Farrow said wonderingly, "You're calling Mars?"

Barth smiled. "Yes. We've made a few advances in communics since your day. It may flatter you to know that I'm calling about you."

"About me? What about me?"

"Chiefly, to find out whether you live or die," said Barth calmly. "Think about that."

Farrow saw the sardonic humor in Barth's eyes, watching him, and his dislike of Barth became an active detestation.

"ER-2 calling P-1—"

Barth asked, "Anything yet, T'laa?"

From his perch beside the window the furry Martian creature whispered, "Many minds, many thoughts, out there. One who is the leader is telling them that they must attack quickly."

The operator, after falling silent for a little time, said suddenly, "I'm through to the Chief Planner, sir."

A small screen in the communic flashed into light. Static ran on it,

and then cleared into the face of an elderly man, with a dimly-seen room for background.

It was a good face, Farrow thought at first. Plump and genial and benevolent-looking, with crinkles around the eyes. But when Grumman spoke, his sharp voice counteracted that first favorable impression.

"What now, Barth?" he asked.

Barth spoke out as though not overawed at all. "We haven't come here in enough force. With the tribesmen all hostile, we'll need a bigger force before we can prospect for metals widely. About four rockets, I'd say."

"In other words," snapped Grumman, "your mission is a failure."

"Not at all, sir," replied Barth coolly. "You'll recall that I predicted nothing but another reconnaissance was possible with one rocket, and that my request for more was overruled." He went on, "Something else has come up. This man here—" and he pointed to Farrow.

He rapidly told of Farrow's origin. And the plump-faced man on faraway Mars stared at Farrow incredulously.

"T'laa confirms this?" he asked finally.

"Absolutely," Barth said. "There's no doubt about it. And the secret of that aestivation gas, if

we can get it, will be of value to us."

"Yes," said Grumman, after a moment. "Yes, I can see that." Meeting the calculating stare of his eyes, Farrow wondered how he could ever have thought the man's face a genial one. "All right, Barth, bring him back with you. I needn't say that this too is classified information. You can make your explanations of the mission's failure to the full Board."

The screen went abruptly dark. Barth, his face dark with anger, cursed softly. "By God, Chief Planner or not, he'll find he can't saddle me with his mistakes."

From the window, T'laa spoke suddenly. "They have decided. It is clear in all their minds. They are going to creep in now, and rush us."

"Good," said Barth with vicious emphasis. He nodded to the red-faced man who had taken a pilot-chair in front of the massive main control-bank. He said, "Be ready, Mudie. When I say the word, give them a full blast."

Uncomprehending, Farrow looked at the man Mudie and then back at Barth.

He went over to where Barth and T'laa were peering out the window. He looked out, and from this dome high in the rocket he could at first see the plain and the forest

only as a dark blur. Then, as his eyes became accustomed to the obscurity, he saw that the forest southward was blacker than the plain, and that little blobs of blackness were starting to creep out of the woods. Tribesmen, Jen's people, stealing toward the rocket!

"We'll wait till they're all close," muttered Barth. "Then give it to them. It'll be a long time after this before they bother rockets."

With sudden horror, Farrow understood. Mudie, the man at the controls, was gripping a big lever whose plastic handle was bright red. He knew now what it was, what Barth's plan was. To let the tribesmen steal close, and then suddenly turn the terrific rolling blast of the rocket-tubes loose to incinerate them.

Farrow stiffened. There was a way to prevent that, to warn the tribesmen back. He'd have to risk it, his sympathy was all with the men of Earth and he was damned if he'd let them be wiped out.

Suddenly Farrow saw that T'laa was looking right into his eyes. He knew the Martian creature must be reading his thoughts. He expected T'laa to call out a warning to the others.

But the mournful huge black eyes of T'laa merely stared at him, and then the Ibim turned to look again out the window. He said

nothing.

Instantly, Farrow turned and plunged toward the control-chairs. He grabbed the red lever that Mudie was holding, and pulled it halfway back before Mudie could prevent him.

Thunder broke deafeningly and the whole mass of the rocket quivered and rose, as its tubes exploded fire into the night below.

CHAPTER V

THERE WAS A CRY of rage from Barth, audible even over the thunderous blast below.

"Get him!"

No weapons could be used, here in the vital nerve center of the rocket controls. But young Sandoz, nearest to Farrow, leaped and dragged him back.

Weakened as he was, Farrow was torn loose from his grip on the red firing-lever. Now Barth had hold of him too and they hauled him back against the wall, pounding him, then sliding together along the windows as the whole rocket tilted slightly.

Mudie, the pilot, was frantically hitting a whole bank of small keys, like an organist trying to play an inconceivably complicated fugue all at once. The rocket-tilted back to vertical. Then it settled down on the ground again, and Mudie cut

off the blasts.

In the ensuing silence, Mudie got up, his brick-red face sweating, and exclaimed accusingly, "We nearly went over!"

Barth slammed Farrow against the wall. He said furiously, "You might have wrecked the whole rocket!"

"That would make my heart bleed," said Farrow.

Barth turned to Sandoz, at the window. Sandoz said, "That tore it! The tribesmen ran back into the forest when the tubes let go."

"Of course, that's why he fired the tubes prematurely—to warn them," said Barth. He looked at T'laa, still clinging to his perch by the window. "Why the hell didn't you warn us what was in his mind?"

The furry creature answered, "I was not paying any attention to him. I was concentrating on the tribesmen out there, as you ordered."

Farrow, at that, looked sharply at the little Ibim. He remembered clearly how, just before he made his leap for the firing-control, T'laa had looked searchingly at him and then had turned away from him. He was fairly sure that the Martian creature had read his mind in that moment. But if so, why hadn't he uttered a warning?

Barth, furious and puzzled, said,

"Why in the world would you risk your neck to warn those savages?"

Farrow shrugged. "They're people. Using the rocket-blast on them is dirty fighting."

"That kind of sentiment from a man whose people let loose the War!" said Barth, scathingly. He turned to Sandoz. "Lock him up—in the same cabin as the tribesgirl; we can't spare two cabins."

Mudie, the red-faced pilot, had come over to them and he said, "Why take the tribesgirl back with us at all? Just so much dead weight."

Barth looked at him bleakly. "Just navigate and leave me do the thinking, will you? I have my reasons."

Farrow was pushed out toward the ladder. As he started down it, he looked up and saw Sandoz following him down the rungs. Sandoz' young face was serious, and he carried a gun in his hand.

"We're outside of the control-room now and I can blast you if you force me," Sandoz warned.

"I'd already figured that out," Farrow said dryly.

Nothing more was said until he stepped again inside the little metal cell. Jen still lay on the lower bunk, but was now stirring a little.

Sandoz, keeping his gun on the ready, paused in the doorway be-

fore closing and locking the door. He told Farrow, "You'll be locked in here for quite a while. For your own sake, I'd advise you to make no trouble."

When Sandoz had gone, Farrow went over and looked at Jen. She stirred again, and then looked up at him with wide, dazed eyes.

"It's all right, Jen," he said. Then he added, "I mean, at least we're still alive. We're in the rocket."

He expected her to show hysteria. But Jen did not panic, and of a sudden he felt infinitely sorry for her.

"It's my fault you're here," he said. "You wouldn't be, if you hadn't tried to help me escape from them."

"I only wish I'd been able to kill some of them!" she exclaimed. "How could they have trailed us so easily?"

He told her about T'laa, and also what had happened when the tribesmen had tried to rush the rocket. Reluctantly, he added, "Unless we can get away, and I don't see much chance of that, they're going to take us back with them."

Jen paled a little, but again she refused to show panic. "To Mars? Why?"

"They want me because they want a scientific secret they think I know," said Farrow. "Why they

want to take you, I can't imagine."

Jen's eyes flashed. "My people will not give up. Even if they can't attack the rocket, they'll ring it in, and these Martians won't dare go far from it."

In the dull days of imprisonment that followed, Farrow wondered how their captors were faring in their mission. But the guards who brought them food each day would tell them nothing.

Several times he heard a diminishing roar outside as of jetplanes going away. He supposed the "Martians" had brought planes to aid in their search for the metals they needed, but he didn't think they'd get far prospecting that way.

HE THOUGHT that a fortnight of imprisonment in the stationary rocket had passed, when Sandoz opened the door. The young officer had his gun in his hand, as he spoke to them. His words made Farrow experience a sudden cold thrilling shock.

"We'll be taking off soon. You two had better strap into the bunks and stay there."

At the thought that this was final farewell to Earth, Farrow felt like rushing Sandoz in a wild attempt at escape. The look in Sandoz' eyes warned him that it would be suicidal.

Farrow mastered the impulse. He

said bitingly, "You haven't stayed long on Earth. Didn't the prospecting go well?"

Sandoz answered steadily, "I won't deny that it didn't. We need to come back here with more force, and clear all the tribes out of a big area."

Farrow said suddenly, "You seem a pretty decent sort for a Martian, Sandoz. Will you tell me something?"

"What?"

"Why in the world don't you people just come back to Earth, all of you? It's your ancestral world. You could come back, now that the radioactive poison is gone. Why don't you?"

Sandoz' serious young face became hostile. "Because the Planners have ruled otherwise for the present. And it was our Planners who saved our ancestors, long ago. They know what's best."

He slammed the door shut from outside and locked it. Farrow looked at Jen, and saw that she was very white.

"No help for it, Jen," he said. "Get in your bunk."

He strapped her in. She managed a scared smile, and Farrow bent and kissed her. "Good girl."

He got into his own bunk. Time passed. Then came a clanging of gongs. Suddenly the whole vast fabric of the rocket shook again

to the thunder of its tubes, and a big hand smashed Farrow down into his gas-filled mattress.

He fought to breathe, and after an interminable time, the thunder abruptly died. The pressure upon Farrow lessened. He called down to Jen, and heard her muffled assurance that she was all right.

Time went by and again the gongs warned of blasts. Again the pressure crushed them, and then subsided. And this went on and on until finally there were no more blasts at all. Farrow knew they must be out in space, starting the swing toward Mars. But in this windowless cell, there was nothing to see.

There followed for Farrow and Jen a strangely timeless interval. Their cabin was less than forty square feet in area. There was nothing in it but the bunks, a bolted chair, and the tiny closed-off bathroom cubicle. Once each day armed guards unlocked the door and brought their food, a pulpy vegetarian mess. It was the only way they measured time.

Farrow knew he was enduring the bewilderingly altered gravity and the silent monotony better than Jen. He was child of the cities, but Jen was of the forest people a century later. She talked much of her people, and again Farrow got the impression of a fairly decent

lot of folk laboring against odds to rebuild a ruined Earth, but only getting a bare start at it.

"We thought that all would be well again, when the first rocket came back from Mars," she said bitterly. "We supposed that all Earth's grandchildren were coming home, to help us."

"I just can't understand why they *don't* all come back," said Farrow. "The habitable oases of Mars are limited in area, the first expedition there discovered that. Why do all those people cling to dying Mars instead of returning to Earth?"

Suddenly, after all this time, the monotony was broken. The door was unlocked and Barth stepped in, followed by a heavy-faced young man with a gun in his hand.

After them, moving quite nimbly now on his odd bifurcated limbs, T'laa skipped into the cabin.

"We'll reach Mars before long," Barth brusquely informed Farrow. "It's time we tried getting that gas-formula from you."

Farrow shrugged. "I don't think you'll have much success. It was explained to me at the time, but it wasn't in my department and I can't recall it."

"If it's in your memory at all, T'laa will find it in time," said Barth. "You can cooperate with him willingly, or be tied up."

Farrow could see no point in getting himself bound. And by now he had got over some of his revulsion to T'laa and was curious about the Martian creature.

"I'll go along with it," he said.

Barth shot an order at the heavy-faced young man with the gun. "Stay here, Naramore. Keep across the cabin from them. You know what to do."

HE WENT OUT, relocking the door. Naramore went and stood against the opposite wall of the little room, watching Farrow and Jen alertly, his weapon ready for use.

T'laa approached Farrow. Jen recoiled, but Farrow looked on fascinatedly as the creature hopped up onto the bunk.

"Sit down," whispered T'laa. "Relax. I assure you there will be no hurt or damage to your mind."

Farrow sat down on the edge of the bunk, his face inches away from the unhuman, lemur-like face of the Ibim.

"I want you to look into my eyes," said T'laa.

"Hypnotism?" Farrow asked.

"Not at all. It is to keep your attention from wandering."

Farrow obeyed. The eyes of the Ibim were depthless wells of darkness. Suddenly, Farrow started. It was as though a clear voice had

spoken inside his brain.

"Show no excitement. Can you hear my thought?"

Farrow almost rose to his feet, but T'laa calmly said aloud, "You must relax, if I am to succeed."

The unhuman eyes held no expression. But again there came to Farrow the clear mental voice.

"Can you hear me? If you receive my thought, close your left hand."

By an effort, Farrow mastered his feeling of shock. He clenched his left hand, as though in a gesture of hostile emotion at facing the Ibim.

"Good," said the mental voice. "Neither the guard nor the girl can hear me; I am directing my thought into your brain only. Think your answers, do not speak them. I will read them."

Farrow stole a glance at the guard across the cabin. The man was watching closely, but apparently only on guard against some sudden attempt by Farrow to escape or attack the Ibim. He looked on with an uneasy distaste on his heavy face, as though the process of mind-reading was a bit uncanny and unpleasant to watch.

Jen had recoiled to a corner and was watching in wide-eyed horror. To her, he realized, completely ignorant as she was of parapsychical theory, the whole process must

smack of the supernatural.

"Look at me!" came T'laa's sharp warning thought. "Or Na'ra-more will become suspicious."

Farrow switched his gaze back to meet the absorbing stare of the unwinking, deep black eyes. He formed a thought.

"Then they do not know that you can communicate with me like this?"

"They do not know that," T'laa answered mentally. "They think we Ibim are mere freaks, intelligent animals with a capacity to read thoughts. Our powers, our past, our mental inheritance of ages, they do not suspect."

Farrow began to understand, a little. "Then you do not serve them from choice?"

The thought of the Ibim came bitterly. "I serve them because they would slay me if I refused."

Farrow, remembering something, thought, "So that's why you didn't warn them of my intentions, in the control-room?"

"That is why," came the answer. "Now listen to me. You have wondered why the Earthmen on Mars do not return to Earth now that your planet is free of contamination."

"Yes. Why?"

"Because," came T'laa's thought, "the Earthfolk on Mars do not *know* that Earth is now clean and

habitable. They think it is still a radioactive-poisoned planet. Only the Planners, the oligarchs like Grumman and Barth who have the government in their hands, know the truth about Earth—and they have kept it secret from their people."

Farrow felt stupefied. "Why would they do that?"

T'laa, his expression never changing, shot another thought at him. "I have read their minds. Grumman Barth and the other oligarchs maintain their power because they're the Planners descendants of those who brought the Earthmen to Mars in the great evacuation and because the people feel that their direction is necessary to survive on Mars. But on the wide, plentiful Earth, the Planners could not long hold their power over everyone. So they do not want their people to return to Earth."

Farrow's mind blazed with anger. "But how can they keep it secret, when their rocket-crew have seen Earth?"

"When we reach Mars, you'll understand how they maintain this gigantic deception," answered T'laa. "And that deception must be smashed, for the sake of your people and mine."

And the Ibim added, in an ominous, chilling thought, "You and the Earth girl won't live long when

Barth has no more use for you. We must be ready to act, as soon as we reach Mars!"

CHAPTER VI

THE CRASHING shock threw Farrow hard against his straps, and when he fell back his head grazed the metal corner of the bunk and he saw stars.

There was a great silence.

Still a bit groggy, he clumsily unbuckled his straps and then called anxiously to the other bunk. "Jen, are you all right?"

"I'm all right," she answered. She was getting out of the bunk. "We're there?"

"Yes. We've landed."

He went over to her. Her face was so white, her eyes so wide, that he felt a sudden surge of sympathy. It had been tough enough on him, a man who was accustomed at least to the theory of rockets and space-travel. To a girl of the people who lived their backward lives in little old towns in the great forests of Earth, it must have been an even more shattering experience.

He put his arm around her. "We're on Mars but we'll get back to Earth, Jen—if we're able to reach the people here and tell them what their leaders have been pulling."

She looked up at him a little

doubtfully. "But if you succeed, then many Martians like Barth will come to Earth?"

"Not like Barth," he said. "People just like you and me, Jen—people crowded here on Mars who'd gladly return to Earth and who would be glad to help your own people."

"I do not see how we can even escape," she murmured.

Farrow didn't answer that. He had to admit to himself that the plan T'laa had proposed seemed a faint hope.

"I have read the minds of Barth's men and I know which of them secretly distrust the policies of the Planners," T'laa had told him by thought. "If we can gain one of them as an ally, we can get away."

Could T'laa enlist such an ally? Even if he could, how were they going to smash the most gigantic deception in the history of two planets?

After an hour, the door opened. Sandoz stood there, a gun in his belt and no friendliness on his serious young face.

"We're going out now," he said. "The Chief Planner wishes to see you both."

"About time," growled Farrow.

They went down the long ladder and out of the rocket, moving awkwardly on the heavy-soled Mars-shoes that had been issued

to them. They stood, with Sandoz close behind them, looking wonderingly around, feeling all at once the lighter drag of the gravity and smelling the alien scents on the chill and too-thin air, and staring at the vista that suddenly told them, *You are on another world.*

Under a sky the color of old brass stretched the low mesa of rust-red rock on which they stood. Upon it towered the big rocket that had brought them, and other rockets, and pink cement buildings, all enclosed by a high wire fence with closed steel-barred gates. But the eyes of the man and girl from Earth leaped beyond the fence to the weird distant landscape.

The sun, small and bright, was sinking toward an horizon that seemed quite close. From the top of this mesa, reddish desert dropped gently away, a panorama of infinite desolation in all directions except one. In that direction, the one that Farrow thought of as southward, lay a vast shallow bowl of pale green. He knew it was Syrtis oasis, and he saw that it was almost completely occupied by endless streets of very Earthly-looking cement buildings, running away toward a central section of taller structures. It was an oddly terrestrial city to find here in an oasis of desert Mars.

"I'm damned if it doesn't look

like Los Angeles!" he said.

Sandoz shrugged. "When our ancestors came here from Earth a century ago, they built in the way they were used to building. Come on—we're going to the main offices."

As they went, Jen whispered, "This place is far from the city, and is fenced in like a prison."

Farrow knew why it was, from what T'laa had told him. The rocket-base was isolated out here in the desert, and all but the most trusted officers were kept virtual prisoners here, so that none of them could blab the truth about Earth. The pretext given was that it was so no poisonous contamination from Earth could get abroad.

THEY WENT TOWARD and into a low, long building. It was perfectly ordinary inside, and there was a room where Barth and the Chief Planner, Grumman, were talking.

Grumman's plump face took on the same friendly, genial smile that Farrow had seen in the televisor. A little pudgy in his shimmering white coverall, the picture of an elderly fond-uncle type, he advanced and grasped Farrow's hand.

"You're rather an incredible person, Farrow," he said warmly. "A man from all that time ago—just unbelievable!"

His china-blue eyes beamed at Farrow. "Barth has told me of the scientific secret, the aestivation gas that carried you into our era. A wonderful achievement! We must have its formula—it could be invaluable to us."

Barth, a slightly sardonic look on his face, said, "T'laa couldn't get it yet because the rocket-flight made it impossible for Farrow's mind to relax enough, he says. But a few probings now we're here should do it."

Farrow said flatly to Grumman, "Am I to understand we're prisoners?"

Grumman looked shocked. "Oh, no—of course not. As soon as T'laa has helped you recall that formula, you'll be our honored guests."

He smiled, and the smile was as false as water. But Barth had nodded to Sandoz, and Sandoz took Farrow's arm and said, "This way, please."

To resist might ruin T'laa's plans, so Farrow went quietly along with Jen ahead of Sandoz. He was aware that Barth and Grumman were looking after them.

Sandoz took them into a smaller room, with a desk. Farrow had a sudden impulse to laugh. In a chair behind the desk sat T'laa, and the Ibim looked like an undersized, furry executive. But the expression in T'laa's eyes struck away all

thought of mirth.

"It's all right to talk in here," T'laa murmured, after Sandoz had left them. Then Farrow's hope crashed, as the Ibim added, "My plan has failed."

"What do you mean?" Farrow exclaimed, advancing to the desk. "Did you brace one of Earth's men?"

"Yes," said T'laa. "Sandoz. His mind, I saw, contained suppressed resentment—disapproval of the way Barth and Grumman have suppressed the truth about Earth. I felt him out just before we landed."

"And he turned you down?"

"It seems," said T'laa mournfully, "that despite his uneasiness, he remains convinced by Barth's explanations. Barth has told all the rocket-men that the truth about Earth must be only gradually revealed, lest a mad stampede back to Earth wreck their society. Sandoz still clings to his belief in that."

Increasingly dismayed, Farrow asked, "But has he told Barth about your plan?"

"He hasn't had a chance to do so yet," said T'laa. "I think he has gone to do so now."

Farrow felt the impact of frustration. Then anger surged up in him.

"Then we'll have to get out of here without any ally," he said.

"How do you propose to do

that?" asked T'laa skeptically.

Farrow shrugged. "Strong-arm is the only way, now. When Sandoz comes back, I'll jump him. I've an idea how to catch him off guard. With his gun, we can force him to lead us out."

Jen said with sudden fierce eagerness, "I will help you!"

T'laa made that curious shrugging movement of his multiple limbs. "I do not think there is much hope in such a crude stratagem but we may as well try it. We have very little to lose now."

Farrow thought that T'laa was right about the poorness of their chances but he didn't say so. He said,

"Jen, you pretend to be attacking T'laa, over there behind the desk, when Sandoz comes back. It'll distract his attention a moment. I'll be behind the door, and if I can grab his gun—"

Jen nodded understandingly and went over by the desk, to stand beside T'laa. The little Ibim made a sound like a sigh.

"You children of Earth—you delight in violence. But so be it."

Farrow took up his position beside the door, so that when it opened it would hide him. He waited.

The lock of the door suddenly clicked. The door opened. Farrow tensed himself for the spring, as Jen pretended to seize T'laa furiously

by the throat.

Nobody came in.

Through the crack of the door, Farrow saw Sandoz standing in the opening, his gun in his hand. He was not coming in. He said,

"A foolish trick. Go over and stand with them, Farrow. Fast."

THERE WAS NOTHING else for Farrow to do, and he did it. Jen ceased her pretended attack on T'laa, and man and girl and Ibim faced Sandoz as he came into the room and closed the door. His gun covered them steadily.

Sandoz said in a tight voice, "I'm not a complete fool. I figured you'd try something like this, and didn't want you jumping all over me before I could say something."

T'laa, staring at Sandoz, stirred in sudden excitement. The young officer nodded grimly to the Ibim.

"I see that T'laa has already read it in my mind."

"You are joining us, after all!" exclaimed T'laa.

"Yes," said Sandoz. "I think it's hopeless, I think we'll all likely get killed, but I'm with you. I have to be."

"Why this sudden change of heart?" demanded Farrow suspiciously.

Sandoz' face became dark. He said, "Because I just heard something from Barth. I just heard why

he brought this tribesgirl here from Earth."

He looked at Jen. He said, in a tone of controlled fury, "Do you know why? I'll tell you. Barth is afraid that some of us may somehow start rumors among the people—rumors that Earth isn't a poisoned planet after all. He's determined to forestall all such talk, once and for all. He'll use this Earthgirl to prove Earth is uninhabitable."

"How can he?" Farrow said. "She's from Earth and she's obviously strong and healthy."

"She won't be," Sandoz said grimly, "by the time she's shown to our people here. She'll have had a deliberate dose of radioactive poisoning in the laboratory here, that'll have converted her into a hideous wreck. Barth will show her, and say, "Here's what the natives of Earth look like, from living on that poisoned world." It'll be hard after that to convince people he's lying about Earth."

Jen looked puzzledly from Sandoz to Farrow, not fully understanding the scientific references.

But Farrow felt the icy shock of rage and hatred, of which he had not believed himself capable. He knew, in that moment, that he was going to kill Barth.

"That was too much for *me*," Sandoz was saying fiercely. "I'm going to help you, and we'll smash

this whole hoax of the Planners if we can."

Farrow said, "If we could show Jen to your people right now, they'd know this talk about an uninhabitable Earth is all lies!"

"Yes," said Sandoz. "But first we have to get out of here, and that's a big if." He looked thoughtful. "Barth went back to Syrtis with Grumman, and I'm in charge of you while T'laa works on your mind. I'll try to bluff our way out of the compound."

"And if the bluff doesn't work?" asked Farrow.

Sandoz shrugged. "We'll have to fight our way out. It's night now, and if we can get a ground-car we have a chance."

T'laa, for once not mournful but excited, hopped numbly onto the desk and then to the floor, as Sandoz went to the door.

"Keep ahead of me," Sandoz said. "You two are supposed to be my prisoners. Take the corridor to the right."

They went out into the corridor and started along it. Suddenly, as Farrow and Jen walked ahead of Sandoz and the Ibim, a gray-uniformed man with a gun popped out of a doorway.

"It's all right, Venner," said Sandoz. "Orders from Barth to bring them to the city."

"I was ordered not to let them

leave the building," said Venner, his flat face obstinate and suspicious.

His gun was levelled full at them. Sandoz began an angry protest but Farrow didn't think the bluff was going to work. He tensed himself for a spring that he didn't think would work either.

Then, of a sudden, the man Venner looked stricken and startled. He turned half around, muttering surprisedly, "What—who—"

Farrow didn't know what had distracted him but he didn't wait to ask. He plunged at Venner, his head down, in a butt.

Venner swung back toward Farrow just in time. Just in time to take Farrow's head squarely in his stomach.

Farrow had forgotten the lighter gravitation. The butt not only knocked Venner's breath out, it also knocked the man back violently against the wall. His head hit the cement wall and he crumpled up like a wet string.

"A damn good thing for me he got absent-minded," panted Farrow.

T'laa uttered his dry, small chuckle. "I read in your mind that you were going to rush him. So I shot a thought into *his* mind, to distract him."

"I'll be—," Farrow began. Then, "Thanks, T'laa."

Sandoz had picked up the man's

gun. He snatched open the door at the end of the corridor. "We have to move fast now. When Venner doesn't check in, much will happen."

THEY RAN OUTSIDE, Farrow and Jen moving clumsily on the heavy-soled shoes whose weight counteracted the lighter gravity drag.

The night outside was so cold that it took Farrow's breath away. Jen cried out, and pointed up at the sky. Farrow looked up and was himself stricken by the sight of a sky more brilliant and wonderful than he could have imagined.

The whole black heavens were sown with stars, a cataract of diamonds and emeralds and rubies spilled across the sky. Constellational outlines were lost in that jungle of blazing suns. Across the overwhelming panorama there crept visibly a small, ominously red moon.

"Come on!" said Sandoz urgently.

He was running toward parked cars, low-slung closed vehicles not at all dissimilar to the cars of old Earth except that they had half-tracks.

"Down in the back," he told them. "All three of you."

A moment more and they were huddling in the floor in back, as

Sandoz drove the machine across the compound. Stealing a glimpse over his shoulder, Farrow saw they were approaching a closed steel gate with a guardhouse beside it.

Two men came out, one of them yawning. The yawning man went to open the gate while the other man glanced perfunctorily at the card that Sandoz showed:

"Late, but I guess the girls in Syrtis will still be up," the man said to Sandoz. Then as Sandoz started the car forward he added hastily, "Hold on, you know I've got to look you over same as always."

The man was right beside the car. The other one had the gates half open.

Farrow grabbed up the spare gun that Sandoz had dropped on the floor of the car. As the door opened, he let the guard who peered in have the barrel of the weapon over his head.

"Get going!" he snapped.

Sandoz sent the car hurtling forward. It grazed the half-open steel gate and threw it violently aside, and the gate sent the yawning man who had hold of it sprawling.

Sandoz clipped off the lights and the car roared over a dark sandy waste under the stars. Seconds flashed by. Then from behind them came a ripping sound, twice repeated.

"Firing blind," muttered Sandoz. "But this tears it—they'll call Syrtis and the Planners' police there will be waiting for us."

CHAPTER VII

THE LIGHT of a million stars combined with the sullen rays of the creeping red moon to drip a strange radiance on the landscape. As the car sped down off the mesa, the far-flung blinking lights of Syrtis City came closer, and now they saw the lights of two cars coming out of the city in their direction, very fast.

"Patrol cars, coming out to intercept us," Sandoz said flatly.

"Can't we swing off the road and approach the city from the other side?" asked Farrow. "We might dodge them that way."

Sandoz said, "If we don't hit a rock and pile up, we can. We'll try it."

He swung off the road and the car bumped, pitched and complained as they went across the sandy flats to circle around the big oasis. Sandoz was driving hell-for-leather, and running without lights the danger of a crack-up was real enough.

They had more light suddenly, and its coming gave Farrow and Jen a shock. A second small red moon bounded up from the dark

horizon, and added its rays to the first moon's light in an eery effect.

Jen crowded against Farrow as though for comfort. She said, "Why do we have to go to the city? We could hide out in the wilderness."

Farrow understood. She was a tribesgirl of the new Earth of wilderness, and a city was to her a strange and forbidding thing.

"We have to, because that's where the people are, and we've got to convince them that Barth has been lying about Earth," he told her.

Sandoz said, over his shoulder, "And there's no life possible in the desert between our oases."

"Except the valley of the Ibim," murmured T'laa.

"Your home?" said Farrow.

"Yes." T'laa's tone was yearning. "It holds the last of my people, the oldest children of this world."

"How did you get into Barth's hands anyway, T'laa?" asked Farrow.

T'laa made the curious shrugging movement. "By relying on the word of Earthmen. When they came to Mars a century ago, they made pact with us that they would leave us alone. But Barth and Grumman needed one of us, with our mental powers—and captured me, outside our valley."

"But couldn't you have let your people know—telepathically?"

"Our power of projecting thought is not unlimited in space," answered the Ibim. "I could not reach them from that distance. And we are not a people of war."

T'laa added, thoughtfully, "But now, if we can expose the Planers' deception, it may ward off future evil to the Ibim."

Farrow understood. If the big lie of Grumman and Barth was exposed, the Earthmen would leave Mars—and that would not make the Ibim unhappy.

They were a quarter of the way around the oasis and its great bowl of lights now. Sandoz suddenly pulled up, uttering an exclamation.

"No use. See those patrol-cars? They're coming out this side of Syrtis too."

Farrow saw. Car-lights were speeding out into the desert from several points around the city.

"We've got to risk them, make a dash in," Farrow said. "All we need is a little time to tell your people about this lie, to show them Jen and myself!"

Farrow reached and turned a switch on the dash. "If I could know where their patrols are concentrating, we might slip them. This is an official car and can receive police-communic calls—"

He turned a dial while they all waited tensely, a strange little

crowd in the dark, cold car, their faces illuminated uncannily by the forked red light of the flying moons.

"Nothing," said Sandoz. "Barth thinks fast. He'd know we could hear him. I'll see if there's news of us out on the general wave."

Suddenly, as Sandoz turned the dial, a crisp male voice spoke from the audio.

"Special Bulletin from the Planning Board, repeated! Four people have escaped quarantine at the Rocket Base!" There followed the names and descriptions of the four of them, but with no hint that Farrow and Jen were Earthlings. "These four people are dangerously contaminated by Earth's radioactive poisons, and can communicate a serious poisonous contagion! Report immediately to Planning Center if you see them."

Farrow exclaimed, "Why, damn Barth! He's put out this story about our being contaminated to make people afraid of us!"

"Yes," said Sandoz. "And they will be afraid. This rips our plans right up. Even if we got into Syrtis now, nobody would listen to us. They'd screech for police and run away from us."

THERE WAS A HEAVY silence, and Farrow looked down at the car-lights coming out from the city

—the city whose people could be living on Earth, if they but knew the truth.

"What are we going to do, then?" asked Jen.

Sandoz said hopelessly, "I guess they have us. We can't get to other oases, other cities—they'll have had the same word from Barth, by now."

"Then we just let them take us?" said Jen, incredulously.

"Like hell we do," said Farrow. "So we can't go into Syrtis now, or any of the other Earthman cities—we'll go somewhere else."

"Bravely spoken, but you don't know Mars," Sandoz said. "There is no place outside the oases. Just desert."

"There's the valley of the Ibim," said Farrow. "T'laa's people."

"Oh, no," said the Ibim quickly. "My people will not let Earthmen enter there."

"Not even to save themselves?" said Farrow. "Barth captured you, T'laa. How long before he takes other Ibim for the Planners to use? How long do you think he'll leave your valley undisturbed?"

T'laa's voice was troubled as he answered. "Yes, I fear that too. It is why I wished to help expose the lies, so that Earthmen would leave Mars and leave us in peace."

"We need help, to accomplish that," Farrow pointed out. "First

a place of refuge, then help to get ourselves heard by the people here in spite of Grumman and Barth."

"You don't understand," said T'laa distressedly. "The Ibim will not have you or any other Earthmen in their valley. Our life is in thought. And the presence of alien minds is too distracting to us, not to be borne."

Farrow refused to give up. To blast open the conspiracy of the oligarchy of Planners, they needed allies. They wouldn't find any among the Earthmen on Mars, not after that broadcast. The Ibim were the only chance.

"You've got to make your people understand," he said roughly to T'laa. "You've got to explain that this is the only chance for them to get rid of all Earthmen here, before Earthmen make them big trouble."

T'laa was silent. They waited, and the car-lights of patrols down in the darkness edged closer. Finally T'laa spoke.

"It will be useless. I know the Ibim. But I am willing to try."

"Then get going, Sandoz!" said Farrow. "T'laa will show us the way."

The car rolled again, still without lights, swinging around in a half-circle and heading northward, as T'laa gave directions.

"In this sand we leave a trail a

child could follow," said Jen.

"It makes no difference," Sandoz said over his shoulder. "When day comes they'll have planes out looking for us. Speed is our only chance."

"And even speed is for nothing," murmured T'laa. "I am sure the Ibim will not let you in."

Farrow exploded. "A fine bunch of defeatists I'm travelling with! You all hate Barth's guts as much as I do—snap out of it, and we'll smack him down for good. We can do it."

He added, "Show me how to drive this thing and I'll spell you after a while, Sandoz. Have we fuel enough to get there?"

Sandoz answered dryly, "We've made *some* progress since your time, Farrow. The engine of this car is nuclear. So are all our power plants. It's why we finally had to go to Earth, looking for radioactive ores."

Dawn found Farrow at the wheel, with T'laa beside him and Sandoz and Jen sleeping in the back seat.

A red glow briefly suffused the starry heavens. Then the dazzling little sun bounded up, and the sky changed to lemon and then to brass. Low, rust-red rocky hills marched on either side of them, and miles ahead rose steep red cliffs hundreds of feet high. No blade of

green grass, no water, no life. Nothing but the sand and rock stretching forever under the brazen sky.

Farrow said to himself, "I am on Mars." He didn't believe it. The air was cold and thin, and gravity seemed a little wrong, but those things were not enough to convince him that he had stepped out of his own time and world to this last refuge of civilized man.

He glanced around at Jen. In sleep, her face lost its hawk-like fierceness and softened to childishness. He felt a sudden warm emotion toward her. To the tribesgirl of Earth's forests, all of this must be even more shattering than to him, yet she had not shown fright or weakness. He thought that Jen and her people were worth fighting for, worth helping back to civilization.

"Are you sure that you will be really helping them?" asked T'laa.

Farrow started, and then said, "I wish you'd tell me when you're reading my thoughts, T'laa." Then he asked, "What do you mean?"

"I mean, is a civilization of machines so greatly to be desired?"

Farrow shrugged. "That argument has been going on since the Greeks. I don't know the answer. I know that I was a scientist, that Earth's people had a scientific civilization, and I want them to have it again."

"So that they can again destroy

their world?" asked T'laa.

Farrow looked at the Ibim. "I think they've learned their lesson on that. But what about your people? If your life is in thought, as you said, aren't you too trying to master nature?"

"Oh, no," said T'laa. "We try to understand nature, not to master it."

"But even to do that, you need data."

"Yes," said T'laa, "but we have it—the data of a million lifetimes."

Farrow did not understand, but before he could say so, T'laa held up a furry hand for silence. "Someone comes."

INSTANTLY, Farrow glanced back, but there was no one in sight on the red waste behind them. Then he heard a whistling scream. He stuck his head out the window and looked up, and saw a small plane with unusually broad wings rushing across the brazen sky high above. It curved around and went back in the direction of Syrtis.

"I got the pilot's thought a little," said T'laa. "He was calling Barth that he had located us, that we were only five miles ahead of Barth."

Farrow's answer was to jam the throttle deeper. The car pitched ahead, rocking and pitching each time it hit a small stone. Sandoz

and Jen woke up almost at once, and Farrow, without turning, told them.

"How far to your valley, T'laa?" asked Sandoz sharply.

"Ten of your miles, perhaps twelve."

"Not good," muttered Sandoz. "Barth will have the fastest cars in Syrtis. We'd better hurry."

"I'm not," said Farrow, "exactly standing still as it is."

He sent the car barrelling forward over the hard-packed red sand, its tracs spinning furiously whenever it hit loose sand. The sun stung him despite the chill in the air, and he began to sweat.

The red cliffs came slowly nearer. They emerged from between the low ridges, and ahead of them a two-mile stretch sloped smoothly up to the base of the cliffs. Farrow thought they were going to make it.

"Turn right," said T'laa suddenly. "*Fast!*"

Farrow did so, and next instant a shadow flashed across the sand ahead of him and then a thin sword of fiery energy slashed down from above and hit the ground a little to their left.

He looked up and saw the low plane curving around fast, and already it was whistling back to make another pass at them.

"Barth has told them to stop us,"

said Sandoz grimly.

Farrow thought they wouldn't have a chance if it were not for T'laa and his parapsychic powers. He drove on toward the cliff, and when T'laa called sharply, he was ready and swerved the car again.

The bolt of energy missed again, and the plane swept on, but next moment there was a splintering crash as their right front wheel hit a rounded red rock two feet high. He had swerved right into it.

Farrow frantically fought the wheel, and kept the car from turning over. It slewed around with a protesting screech, and then stopped.

"We're only a mile from the entrance to the valley," said T'laa. "We must run."

They scrambled out. Jen pointed back down the slope, uttering a cry. Two cars glinted in the sunlight down there, coming fast.

The plane came screaming back and they flung themselves down onto the sand. There was a *crack-crash* sound and a scorched smell and wave of heat.

"Quick," said Farrow, jumping up. "Before that dam' plane can come back again."

They bolted toward the cliffs. T'laa led, nimble as a big monkey and looking not unlike one as he ran.

A narrow split in the cliff, a

mere crack, opened before them. They heard the plane coming down again, its unnerving whistling echoing eerily from the cliff-face just in front of them, but this time they simply ran faster and plunged into the crack in the cliff.

It was a crevice no more than six feet wide. There were signs of ancient water-erosion and Farrow thought that it was a natural split which in ages passed had been smoothed out by running water.

He heard motors roaring and looked back out to see Barth's two cars racing up the slope. He had kept the spare energy-gun and now he raised it, asking Sandoz how to trigger it.

"No!" said T'laa sharply. "If there is any violence on your part, the Ibim will never admit you."

And T'laa started along the crack, deeper into the cliff. Farrow followed, taking Jen by the hand, with Sandoz trailing them.

The crack in the cliff was icy cold, and shadowy. The echoes of their own footsteps sounded loud in their ears. Presently, as the crack wound this way and that, other echoes of hurrying feet came to them from behind.

"Barth is still following," Sandoz said grimly. "If it wasn't for what T'laa said, I'd set up a little ambush here."

They ran on, and suddenly there

was more light ahead. The crack debouched abruptly into a great gorge deep within the cliffs, a strange valley whose rock walls rose so steeply and loftily that the morning sun did not penetrate here.

Farther down the cliff-locked gorge, Farrow caught the pale green of plant-life. Then he saw that what he had thought were distant and grotesque rock-formations were massive and fantastic structures of stone. There was a city in this valley of stone and shadows—a grotesque metropolis of turnip-shaped domes and fans and twisted spires, glooming unreal in the dusk.

For the first time, Jen showed fear, recoiling against Farrow.

"It's all right," he said to her. "Come on."

"No, wait," said T'laa swiftly. "You can go no further without permission of the Ibim. From here I can contact them."

They waited tensely as T'laa stood, facing the distant, ancient structures. From the crack in the cliff behind them came louder echoes.

T'laa finally turned his mournful black eyes toward them. He said. "It is as I feared. The Ibim refuse. They say you must go back."

"Back into Barth's hands?" exclaimed Farrow. "Like hell! We're going ahead, with or without permission."

He took a step forward, holding to Jen's arm, and then a cold hand seemed suddenly to grip and paralyze his brain. His limbs refused to obey him. Utterly without volition, he turned and walked back into the narrow pass, with Jen and Sandoz stiffly following him.

"My people say they must *force* you to go back," said T'laa.

CHAPTER VIII

FARROW MADE a frantic mental effort to break the strange control imposed upon him from outside, the control that was forcing him to walk right back into the cleft. They were walking toward Barth, toward death, and he must break free of the mental compulsion.

He could not. His limbs refused to obey his own will. They were obeying the will of others, the projected parapsychic command of other minds. He had known the Ibim could enter and read the minds of other people. He had never dreamed that they could do this thing.

They were almost to the opening of the cleft, about to step into it, Sandoz and Jen walking as stiffly as himself. Farrow saw horror in the tribesgirl's eyes. He wanted to speak to her, but couldn't. Then the figure of T'laa appeared, walk-

ing in front of them.

Of a sudden, the compulsion to move forward weakened. In his mind, Farrow heard a powerful, troubled thought.

"T'laa, stay here! You need not go with the Earthmen!"

And Farrow caught the flashing thought that was T'laa's answer.

"If you send them to death, you send me also. For I brought them here, and must share their fate."

A confused whirl of thought and counter-thought spun through Farrow's mind, disputing mental impulses so brief he could not get them.

Abruptly, the compulsion that gripped his motor-nerves and limbs was lifted from him. He felt shaky, staggering, but was himself again.

Jen uttered a choking cry. Farrow went a little weakly to her side and put his arm around her. Sandoz was swearing. But T'laa spoke to them aloud, in passionate urgency.

"The Ibim have agreed to hear you," he said. "But hurry—"

He led the way down a slope of thin grass, away from the red cliffs and toward the distant shadowy stone city. Before they had gone a quarter-mile, Sandoz uttered an oath. He had turned, his gun out.

"Don't fire!" T'laa warned. "The Ibim will deal with them!"

Farrow swung around. Barth and

a half-dozen other men had emerged from the cleft, and stood there levelling their weapons at them.

The blasts would rip them to pieces, at this range. Farrow swung Jen behind him, in a futile gesture.

Nothing happened.

He stared up at Barth and the other men. They were so close that he could see Barth's square face and sandy hair. Yet still, no one up there fired.

Then, stiffly and mechanically, Barth and his men lowered their weapons. They turned, and walked like slow-moving automatons back into the cleft in the cliff.

"I told you the Ibim would repel them," said T'laa.

"I wish to Heaven they'd killed them!" said Farrow, sweating.

T'laa turned a look of distress on him. "Repress such violent thoughts, or they will tell against you. It was only by great effort that I prevailed on my people to allow you to enter."

Farrow said, "I saw and heard. Thanks, T'laa, for what you did."

"Don't rejoice too soon," said T'laa, worriedly.

Sandoz was still glaring up at the cliff. "What if Barth and his men try it again?"

"They won't—but even if they should, the Ibim will be watching and their combined mental power can drive them back again," said

T'laa. "Now come."

They started down the valley, but like Sandoz, Farrow looked uneasily back from time to time.

The thin grass gave way to neatly cultivated plots of odd, broad-leaved plants of the same greenish-yellow color. A narrow road ran between these to the city.

The buildings loomed ahead in the chill shadows, starkly Egyptian in the massiveness of their stony bulk, but like no Earthly architecture in their fantastic outlines. Extending across the whole valley here, gathered around an heptagonal structure of greater size, these ancient stone piles looked as though the teeth of a million years had gnawed them.

Farrow looked at the undersized, monkey-like figure of T'laa beside him, and asked wonderingly,

"How did your people ever build them?"

"There was a time, long ago," said T'laa, "when we used machines and powers we no longer use. That was when this city was built, and when we arranged the capillary-system underground that draws moisture from deep strata."

Farrow thought that T'laa spoke as though he himself had helped in that inconceivably ancient work, and he felt vaguely puzzled.

They were in the city now, walking in the cold shadows, and from

windows and doorways of the time-eaten structures, the Ibim looked at them.

They were like T'laa, but with differences. Differences of sex and of age. There were small young ones and there were old ones with silver fur, but all looked at the Earthfolk in the same somber, silent way.

JEN CLUNG close to Farrow. And Farrow too felt the shock of their strangeness. Back in his own time, when the First Martian Expedition had come to this world, it had not been dreamed that Mars had such children. The First Expedition, concentrating on the oases, had never seen them.

"Do I get to talk to your people?" Farrow demanded. His purpose was strong in his mind, and these Ibim were their only possible allies.

"Later, you will be examined," said T'laa. "Not now."

He led them toward a building near the big heptagonal structure, and into a doorway. They went down a dusty, cold stone corridor and into a large, shadowy room. There were some thick mats of woven fiber on the floor and some beautiful iridescent vessels and articles of glass, and nothing else.

"You can rest here," said T'laa. He squatted quietly down, splay-

ing his multiple limbs comfortably, and then looked up at Jen, who stood tensely beside Farrow. He said, "Quiet your fears. No one here will harm you."

Jen flushed, and Farrow guessed that T'laa had read her thoughts. He sat down beside the Ibim and said impatiently,

"It isn't rest I want but a chance to put things up to your people. That mental power they used on us and on Barth—it's terrific. It could help us crack the Planners' big lie, fast."

"I do not think you can expect such help," T'laa said discouragingly. "But that will be talked of later. You Earthfolk live so briefly that you are always hurrying."

Farrow said irritably, "You talk as though you were ten thousand years old, yourself."

"I am older than that," said T'laa.

Farrow and Sandoz and Jen stared at the little Ibim incredulously. T'laa said, "Not in body—my body is younger than yours. But my mind is many tens of thousands of years old."

"How? What do you mean?" asked Farrow.

The mournful, luminous dark eyes looked into his. "When one of us Ibim is about to die, he takes care that his mind does not die. He uses our skill at such things to

transfer the whole mental *pattern* of his mind, to a very young, new-born Ibim. Then he dies—but his mind, his memories, all his knowledge, live in the brain and body of the younger Ibim.”

“I never heard this about the Ibim,” Sandoz said sharply.

“There is much about the Ibim you do not know,” T’laa answered.

Farrow was thunderstruck. “You said tens of thousands of years? You mean this passing-on of the mind and memories from one generation to the next, has been going on for—”

“For longer than that,” T’laa said. “There are some among us who can remember Mars when it was a young, living world.”

Farrow gaped, incredulous. Then, suddenly, a vision flashed into his mind, clear and vivid and utterly real.

He looked upon a green and verdant Mars. Down from hills not yet worn away by time sloped the fertile lands, and the river that ran from the hills washed the edge of a fairylike glass city. And of a sudden he was in that city, among the Ibim. But these Ibim were not furred, their bodies were covered with golden down. Their glittering air-fliers buzzed like dragonflies, going and coming between cities far away.

“I lived in that city,” came

T’laa’s thought. “Not bodily—the body of the Ibim who lived there is dust these half-million years, but his memories are my memories, passed down through all the generations.”

Farrow glimpsed a swift kaleidoscope of shifting scenes then—a dozen glimpses of this world down through great stretches of time.

He saw the vegetation dying, and the sand blowing from the ever-increasing desert areas. He saw the glorious glass cities dull and dim and fall slowly to ruin. The dry death crept and crept, and then the last of the Ibim retreated into their ancient stronghold in the valley, no longer making and using machines, living a life of memory and thought.

And then it seemed to him that he stood with the Ibim in the darkness of night and watched great bulks that flamed and thundered coming down from the starry sky, in dozens, in scores. And he heard the Ibim saying,

“The men of the third planet have come to stay, this time. We shall make pact with them, they not to intrude upon us and we not to intrude upon them.”

Of a sudden, Farrow found himself looking into the deep, dark eyes of T’laa, only inches away from his own eyes, in the shadowy stone room.

"And that," T'laa said quietly, "is why I do not think my people can help you."

"But Barth has already broken that pact, by trying to force his way in here!" exclaimed Farrow.

"He has, but he will not do so again now that he knows we have weapons of the mind that can stop him," answered T'laa. He rose to his feet. "Rest now. Later you shall speak."

Farrow, watching him go, felt a premonition of failure. He turned to Sandoz and Jen, and saw the same thought in their faces.

"It was a forlorn hope, anyway," muttered Sandoz. "T'laa warned us of that."

"We can try again to reach your people with the truth, even if the Ibim won't help," said Farrow.

Sandoz shook his head. "We can try, but we won't get far. Do you suppose Barth will just go away and forget us?"

That brought a new thought to Farrow's mind. He didn't think much of the idea, but it would be the only argument he had, when he faced the Ibim—

WHEN HE FACED the Ibim it was hours later, in the big heptagonal building. It was night, and a few glowing bulbs cast an eery radiance over the rows of faces, the silent figures, the luminous

eyes, that were ranked in the stone seats of a gathering-hall they did not half fill.

He had been speaking, tensely and nervously, with Jen and Sandoz behind him, to those silent figures. He could not see T'laa, and it seemed ridiculous to speak his language to creatures who could not understand it, but he knew they understood his thought well enough.

When he was answered, it was in thought, not speech. And the thought came from a silver-furred Ibim whom T'laa had called Vruna.

"No. What you ask is that we meddle in the quarrels between Earthmen."

"I ask that you defend yourselves, - by helping me," Farrow insisted. "If the Earthfolk here on Mars know the truth, they'll be glad to return to Earth. If they don't learn that truth, if they stay here, you'll be attacked by Grumman and Barth."

The answer came. "They will not attack. They have learned now that they cannot enter this valley against our mental weapons."

Farrow laughed mirthlessly. "You don't know much about Earthmen yet. Grumman and Barth are determined to be rid of us three. They can use long-distance weapons that your thought-defences won't stop."

"You say that, Earthman, because you wish us to help you, but

you have no proof of their intentions."

Farrow seized upon the idea that had come to him hours before. He asked a question, knowing that everything hung upon the answer.

"Tell me, have Barth and his men gone back to Syrtis—or are they still outside the valley waiting?"

There was a small pause, then came Vruna's thought-answer. "They have not gone. They are camped outside the pass."

Farrow said quickly, "That's what I expected! Barth has messaged the Planners to send enough men and weapons to attack your valley full force, and he's waiting for them."

Again, the small pause. "You are still only guessing at their intentions."

"Put my guesses to the test," Farrow retorted. "Find out for yourselves if it's true or not."

"How?"

"By slipping out to the camp of the Earthmen outside the cliffs, and reading their thoughts, you can find out exactly what they plan!"

There was a very long silence, and no thought came to him at all from Vruna or any of the silent, shadowy throng. Then, at last,

"We shall make that test."

Farrow said eagerly, "And if we

find I'm right, you'll help us against the Planners?"

"We shall think of that when we know," was the answering thought.

An hour later, twenty Ibim led by Vruna marched out of the dark city in the valley. They went, not toward the cleft, but up through the night along a steep path that climbed the inner cliffs. T'laa had explained that it was another way out that only the Ibim knew.

Farrow trudged behind the silent figures, with T'laa. Sandoz was behind him, and Jen, for the tribes-girl had refused to stay alone among the Ibim.

The rising red moons lit the file of furry little figures ascending the precarious pathway. Looking at them, and at himself and Sandoz and Jen, Farrow thought that it was a strange company indeed that was going forth to decide the fate of two planets.

CHAPTER IX

FROM PHOBOS and Deimos, racing toward moonset now, a mingled radiance angled down upon Farrow as he crouched with T'laa and Vruna. They and Sandoz and Jen were behind a rock, at the base of the dark cliffs over which the whole party had come. Back in the dimness were the other Ibim.

Farrow said, "There's no need for you to read their minds. Look down there."

A thousand yards down the slope, there were lights and activity of hurrying men. Barth and his two cars and six men were not the only ones there now. There were two big trac-trucks, and on them were mounted silver-gleaming mechanisms with sharp snouts. Another half-dozen men were busy around these.

"They're missile launchers," said Sandoz. "They're used by the rocket-base to launch experimental test-missiles—but can use explosive missiles too."

"So that's what Barth sent for," said Farrow. He turned to the two Ibim. "He won't have to go into your valley. He can destroy everyone in it from outside."

There was a silence, and he knew that T'laa and Vruna were reaching their parapsychic probes down into the brains of the men below.

Then Vruna's thought came to Farrow, throbbing with cold rage. "It is true. Barth is ordering the missiles prepared for firing. He and the other Planners are determined to slay you three Earthfolk and preserve their secret, at any cost."

"Secrecy is why he sent for only a small group," Farrow said. "That makes it easier. You Ibim can seize control of their minds as you did

with us in the valley, and—"

"No," interrupted Vruna's thought. "Not all of them. You don't understand. To seize a man's brain takes great mental power, and our powers are not unlimited. In the valley, all of the Ibim combined used their powers against you."

Farrow felt a sharp disappointment. He had been so terrifically impressed by his experience in the valley that he had assumed a few Ibim could mentally master any number of men.

"How many can you control?" he asked.

"Three—perhaps four," Vruna answered. "And even with those, we cannot master them absolutely."

Farrow thought for a minute. "Then concentrate on the men setting up those missile-launchers. Try to make them destroy the launchers."

"And then?"

Farrow said, "Then, while they're still all confused, we rush them. We outnumber them. We can disarm them."

This time, the silence was very long and pregnant. It was, Farrow knew, the crisis of his effort. He knew by now how much the Ibim abhorred violence. He did not know if they could conquer their ancient aversion, in the face of this clear and present threat.

"Why not destroy the launchers and let them go?" asked Vruna.

"Because they'll come back—and next time with planes and bombs if they have to," said Farrow. "You'll always be in danger from the Planners. But if we can break the Planners' conspiracy, tell the Earthmen on Mars the truth, they'll all return to Earth in time and you'll be safe."

They thought about that, though they did not let him receive their thoughts. He waited, sweating, thinking that the missiles would soon be ready for firing.

Then he heard T'laa's powerful thought. "I say that Farrow is right. I have been with Barth and the Planners, I know what they will do to us in time. If we act now, we can have our world free of Earthmen."

With relief, Farrow heard Vruna's thought. "It is agreed among us. We fight. Though I fear the Ibim are not adept at conflict."

He and T'laa rose, and Farrow and Jen and Sandoz followed them back up the slope to the shadows in which crouched the other Ibim.

Sandoz shook his head pessimistically. "It may work. I hope so. But we've got one energy-gun I know how to use, and another one you don't know how to use, and our bare hands. And the Ibim are no fighters."

"I picked up this in the Ibim city," said Jen in a fierce whisper.

In the red moonlight gleamed the thing in her hand, a long glass knife of exquisite workmanship.

"Quiet now," said T'laa in a low voice. They hunched down, watching and waiting.

THE IBIM WERE gathered together, staring down at the busy men and trucks below. In the forked moonlight, the crowd of silent, dark little figures with their great shining eyes made Farrow think for all the world of big monkeys roosting on a temple wall.

Down there, the sound of clacking gears and urgent voices still came to them, and Farrow saw the snouts of the missile-launchers rising into firing position.

He thought that this was a hell of a way to start a fight, to sit here and think at your enemy. And anyway, it wasn't working.

The Ibim sat and stared, never moving.

Suddenly there came a crash of metal from below, and then another, followed by a cry of rage.

"What the devil are you *doing*?" shouted Barth's voice. "Stop them —"

"By Heaven, it's working!" said Sandoz. "The missile-men are smashing the launchers."

A growing turmoil was going on

down there around the trucks. Farrow could imagine the amazement and consternation of those of Barth's men who were not affected, when they saw their comrades sabotaging the launchers. They wouldn't guess right away that the saboteurs were under mental control from outside—

Farrow was wrong about one of them. Barth was quickminded and out of the fist-fight going on around the trucks came his angry shout,

"It's an Ibim attack on our men's minds! Knock them out fast—kill them if necessary!"

Farrow leaped to his feet. "This is the only chance! Come on—and Jen, you stay here with that damned knife."

He and Sandoz ran down the slope and the Ibim, scuttling like apes, swept all around them as they raced toward the fight at the trucks.

Right in front of them, a stalwart man broke free of the fight and whirled to face them. Farrow saw Barth's furious face, and knew they'd been seen. Barth had his gun out but he hesitated oddly.

T'laa, running beside Farrow, said, "I can't hold him—be quick!"

Barth was fighting off T'laa's mental assault, and bringing the gun up. Farrow plunged in a low tackle for his ankles, and felt a

crackling blast of energy above him as he brought Barth crashing to the ground.

They rolled together, Barth trying to club the gun. Beyond him, Farrow had a brief glimpse of the Ibim swarming all over the thoroughly bewildered men around the trucks. He heard gun-blasts and a screech of pain, and then Barth swung the gun against his head, and Farrow's brain rocked. His hold on Barth loosened, and Barth rolled free and levelled his weapon, his face livid with hatred.

Farrow frantically sprang in again but was aware that this time he was too late, and that the blast would cut him in two.

Something glittering flashed past him, and Barth's face changed strangely. He dropped the gun, his hand went mechanically up to the glass thing sticking in his throat, and he fell forward and lay still.

Farrow turned, wild and bewildered, and saw Jen behind him. He said, "Good God, you—"

"That pays for my brother," she said.

He scrambled to his feet. Two Ibim lay dead, and three of Barth's party. The others who had followed Barth were backing away, bewildered by the fight and by the mental attack of the Ibim. Sandoz had his gun levelled at them, and was saying sharply.

"Back away from the trucks! Any man who still has a weapon, we'll kill!"

Vruna, the silver-furred Ibim, stood beside Farrow and Farrow caught the old Ibim's projected thought, one of strong self-loathing.

"There has been enough killing already, and we Ibim have helped in it—for the first time in thousands of years. No more of such filthy work!"

"Listen," Farrow said urgently to him. "We have to go to Syrtis City or everything we've done here is for nothing."

Vruna turned gloomy eyes upon him. "And when we get there, what then—more killing?"

"There need not be," said Farrow. "With your help—and only with it—we could get to Grumman. If we can make *him* admit publicly that the Planners have been lying, that Earth is perfectly habitable, it will be believed."

Sandoz, without turning, said, "No, Farrow, it wouldn't be believed. My people have been convinced too long that Earth is radioactive-poisoned, to change their minds quickly. They must be shown proof."

Farrow stared at him. "Is there such proof?"

Sandoz nodded. "All the photographs, data and reports we brought back from the two pros-

pecting trips to Earth—they all went to Planning Center, to the Planner Board."

"By Heaven, if we can get that stuff and show it to your people, the job will be done!" exclaimed Farrow. He turned to Vruna. "I will not ask you to use physical violence again. But we need your mental help. Will you come?"

Vruna hesitated. Farrow guessed the powerful struggle going on in the Ibim's mind, the conflict between a passionate desire to rid Mars of Earthmen and an equally passionate loathing of violence.

HE HEARD T'laa's quiet thought, projected so all could hear it. "We need not take life in Syrtis, Vruna. But if we prevent the killing of these, our friends, we are saving life."

Vruna's thought finally answered. "We will go. But we will not kill again—not for you, not for ourselves, not for anyone!"

"Then let's get going fast!" Farrow said. "We can leave Barth's men here—disarmed, they can't bother your valley. We'll disable their cars too, and take the trucks."

A half hour later, the two half-trac trucks roared down the slope and onto the moonlit desert. Farrow drove one, with Jen and T'laa on the seat beside him and with half the Ibim crouched down in the

body of the truck. Sandoz drove the other truck, with the rest of the Ibim.

Hour after hour the two trucks raced over the desert, and the nearer moon sank behind the horizon and the light lessened, making their speed still more dangerous. Sandoz led the way with his truck, and Farrow hoped he would not get lost.

It seemed an eternity before Jen uttered an exclamation, and Farrow saw far down in the great shallow bowl of the dark oases, the mass of blinking lights that was the biggest Earthman city on Mars.

"There is not much time," warned T'laa. "It will be day very soon."

Farrow wondered fleetingly if the little Ibim regretted the venture now that the crisis approached.

"I do not," answered T'laa. "But Vruna is very doubtful."

They rolled down the slope of the bowl. Up on the plateau beyond it, the silvery towers of the great rockets loomed against the stars. Those rockets, and more like them, would take Earth's deluded, exiled children back home, if they succeeded. Farrow's resolution hardened.

Sandoz led the way and the two trucks woke loud echoes in the dark and sleeping streets of Syrtis. They passed massive hydroponics

plants, warehouses and factories, streets of cement houses so Earth-like in their look that they testified to the nostalgia of their builders. A few people looked surprisedly at the racing trucks with the launchers on them, but no one could see the Ibim crouched down in the bodies.

"Planning Center," said T'laa, hardly audible over the roar.

Sandoz' truck had turned into a small square that was almost completely occupied by a massive U-shaped cement building. There was a high gate of steel bars leading into the courtyard of the U, and it was closed and had two men on guard behind it.

"This is up to you Ibim," said Farrow to T'laa.

"Yes. Be silent," said T'laa.

One of the guards inside the gate was sharply calling a challenge to the two trucks.

"Is Barth there? The Planners have been waiting all night for him to report back, and—"

The guard suddenly stopped speaking. A strange, stiff expression fell upon his face and upon the face of his comrade. Then he moved mechanically toward the gate.

The Ibim in the trucks were holding both men by mental mastery, Farrow knew. He watched tensely and saw the guard clumsily unlock and open the gate. The

trucks rolled into the court.

Farrow leaped out, with T'laa and Jen after him. He had brought an energy-gun with him, even though he didn't know how to use it. He thought he'd probably destroy himself if he turned the thing loose, but the feel of it was comforting.

Vruna and the other Ibim were piling out of the backs of the trucks, still holding the two guards like zombies, as Sandoz ran and locked the gate again.

"Look out!" said T'laa suddenly. "Others come—"

Two more guards were running out of the main doorway of the massive building, and they had guns in their hands and were firing. The crackling blasts cut low, and Vruna suddenly said in a quiet thought,

"This is what comes of violence. Remember it, my people."

The old Ibim fell, half his side blasted away. Sandoz had turned loose from the gate with his own gun and one of the guards in the doorway fell. The other one suddenly dropped his gun and stood looking wooden and witless, like the two who had opened the gate.

"Hold them," said T'laa's thought, and a shiver of fear and rage went through all the furry crowd of the Ibim. "Hold them."

They held them. The three stood

like statues while their weapons were taken from them. An instant later, Farrow and Sandoz, with Jen and T'laa behind them, were running into the building.

They entered a wide, softly-lighted corridor of pastel-colored concrete, and Sandoz said, "This way."

"Wait. They come," thought T'laa.

A door was flung open and Grumman burst out into the corridor, his plump face angry and scared. There were four other men, from middle-aged to elderly, behind him.

"What the hell's going on here?" Grumman started to say, and then went silent, his jaw sagging as he looked at the quartet coming down the hall, the two grim men with their guns, the tribesgirl and the Ibim.

"The Planners," said Sandoz bitterly. "Oh yes the Planners who knew best for all of us whose wise government alone has made it possible for us to live on Mars. I ought to kill them."

The five men who were the oligarchy of an Earth in exile stared at the guns that covered them unable to believe their eyes.

"First," said Farrow to Grumman, "we want the photographs and data from Earth. Then you're going to make a little speech by tele-

visor to all the people on Mars and prove to them what Earth's really like. You can make it from here, can't you?"

"Yes, he can make it from here," said Sandoz. "All he has to do is to call for an open channel from the transmitter-relay here in Planning Center. And he will!"

Grumman opened and closed his mouth twice before he could speak. Then, trapped and frightened, he tried to gather the rags of his dignity together.

"There was no need—no need for all this force," he stammered. "We always meant to inform our people of the true situation, in time. But the ground had to be prepared, we had to be careful—"

"If you're very careful," Farrow said, "you may get out of this alive. I'm not sure."

TWO HOURS LATER saw Syrtis City a whirlpool of excitement, doubt, and growing jubilation. The televisior broadcast they had forced Grumman to make, the irrefutable proof that had been displayed that Earth was again open to be the home of men, had been like the sudden release of lifelong prisoners. The people of the oases simply could not take it in, at first. But now they were beginning to, and a cry was running through all the crowded streets around Planning Center.

"We're going back to Earth! To *Earth!*"

Sandoz said, "We've locked the Planners in the strongest cell there is here—or they'd be torn to pieces."

T'laa looked at them. "You have done the thing you wished. Now we Ibim will go home."

Farrow stepped toward the furry little figure with the mournful eyes. "But we will see you again, T'laa?"

"I think not," answered the Ibim. "And I think that is good. Vruna was right. We have been friends, but your ways are not our ways."

Farrow watched the Ibim go, and then he turned to Jen.

"We'll be going home too, Jen, soon. All these people—people who never even saw Earth—in time they'll all go there, and it will be going home for them, too."

She nodded, her eyes shining. "With what they know, the things they can do and teach, we'll rebuild Earth as it used to be."

A deep doubt shook Farrow. "And will it all end up as it did before, in total destruction?"

"It won't—it can't!" she said. "Surely we have learned something."

His arm went around her, and he drew her close. "I hope you're right," he said. "I hope God you're right."