



Robert W.
Lowndes,
Editor

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*Cover by A. Leslie Ross, symbolizing the threat of "Doomsday's Color-Press"
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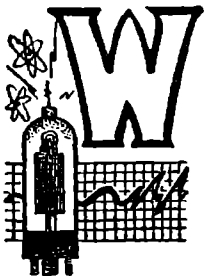
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THE WINNING OF WOCHA



Things seemed familiar on Valeria — astonishingly so. And Phil Jerome was so carried away by the resemblances that he forgot to look for differences!

by R. R. Winterbotham



not make up her mind. Could she be

OOHA had three scrolls filled with mathematical equations, chemical analyses and biological graphs—which should have solved her mating problem; but she could

approaching zero? The term, of course, was Valerian—meaning that she might be losing her grip.

But there might be something wrong with the figures. She checked them again: her chromosomes, her blood type, her pedigree, her weight of 110 pounds, and her curly white hair. Even her olive skin-pigmentation was exactly recorded.

The same answer worked out each time. She was equally suitable for each of the two men who stood there waiting for her minus or plus answer. Love on Valeria was a problem of two factors, but Wooha had three—two suitors and herself. It should have been one plus one and instead it was one plus one plus one; in a problem of this kind something had to be subtracted.

"One plus one?" asked Zileto, stockily-built fisherman from the Quadratic Sea.

"One plus one?" pleaded Yabor, the bow-legged miner from the Pentagonal Deep of the South Plane.

"Answer indeterminate," replied Wooha. There was no emotion in her voice, simply perplexity. Mating was not a problem of emotion on Valeria, where everything was worked out on purely scientific lines.

Zileto, strong, weather-beaten and faded by the chlorine waters of the Quadratic Sea, bowed at a 90-degree angle, indicating that he would abide by her choice, whatever it might be. Yabor, on the other hand, gave only a 45-degree bow, indicating that he would prefer that she select someone else. He had been a bachelor for 57 revolutions of the planet about the sun, and he preferred the state. However, there was law on Valeria; when the law said to mate, one mated.

Wooha had a desirable strain in her vermilion eyes. And these eyes were the same shade, to the last angstrom, as those of Zileto and Yabor. In other respects, too, these two men were the only males on the planet that promised evolutionary progress.

"Science is deliberate," spoke Wooha; "one does not reach a conclusion based upon error. And there must be an error somewhere; no two men should have the same equation."

"We will return after you have checked your figures," said Zileto.

"Yes," said Yabor. "But might I suggest that the square root of minus

one be interpolated in each of our equations?"

Wooha drew herself up proudly; she turned her back on her suitors and left them.

"I am afraid that will be a black mark against you, Yabor," said Zileto. "The square root of minus one is an imaginary number—it hints of primitive emotion."

"I am not afraid of black marks," said Yabor; "in fact, I would rather be single. Somehow, I can't believe that mating and emotions are things to be separated."

"Wooha has no emotions," spoke Zileto.

"One equals one," said Yabor, which was the Valerian way of saying that's what he meant.



Wooha combed out her silvery hair and checked her figures after her suitors were gone. At first, her mating had seemed simple; the preliminary survey had limited her suitors to two, and it had seemed unlikely that a choice would be difficult. But the more Wooha studied them, the more she found them equally suited. True, they did not match in all respects. The bronzed seaman Zileto was younger, 38 Valerian years compared with Yabor's 57; but Yabor had two-thirds greater wealth, which exactly balanced the difference in ages. Zileto was fourteen Rogwyns stronger than Yabor; but Yabor had fourteen ambots greater wisdom, so they balanced there. Whatever one man lacked, he had an equal advantage in something else. Never did a woman of Valeria have a more difficult problem.

WOOHA heaved a great sigh of perplexity. Perhaps an answer would come to her where the air was more clear. Here by the sea, there was high humidity; the blood was not

so sharp. She tossed her head, tied her white hair with a purple ribbon and put on her tin-plated sandals. A moment later, she had emerged from her house onto the roof and was climbing into her gyroscope car. She started the motor and rose gracefully over the housetops; then she adjusted the axis of the machine toward the mountain embankment in the west.

As she flew, she thought; but no answer came. So deeply did Wooha think that she mistook the strange sound that came to her ears for thunder. It rumbled some instants and she realized that it was not an ordinary atmospheric sound. It came louder, like the beating of drums. It screamed in her ears and then, flashing like lightning, a flaming object shot past the front of her car.

Wooha thought she knew the phenomena; although it was unexpected, she showed not the faintest trace of surprise or fright. It was, she told herself, simply a meteor, flashing from the space beyond the cloud laden atmosphere of her planet. Quite often, meteorites had been found on Valeria, and sometimes scientists observed their fall. They had been studied; scientists had learned much from them that could not be observed in the heavens, because of the clouds. On stratospheric trips in specially equipped gyro-cars, Valerians had learned that there were other worlds than their own circling the sun. Meteors might be fragments of these worlds.

The scientific value of watching a meteor alight on Valeria, caused Wooha to set her controls so that it followed the path of the flaming object. But it was going faster than her gyro-car and by the time she caught up with it, the object had settled down on the flat surface—known as the Plane—beyond the mountain range. It had already cooled.

Wooha brought her car down beside it and stepped out onto the soil. The meteorite was strangely cool,

for she realized that descent through the atmosphere should have made it white with heat. Perhaps something had slowed it down; unfortunately she had not thought to check its speed. It was not rough, like most of the meteorites she had seen. It was, instead, long and conical at the nose. Its cylindrical bulk was truncated at the back and there were numerous openings, nozzle-like, something like the jets of the old-fashioned Valerian semi-rockets. The thought struck Wooha at once that this was man-made, perhaps from some outlandish hinterland near the Valerian equator, where the hairy Pithecanthropus dwelt.

She approached the meteorite and her suspicions were confirmed. A door opened in the side and from the interior stepped a man wearing a globe-like helmet over his head. He stood outside the door a moment, looking in the opposite direction from Wooha. He held instruments aloft, worked with them a few seconds, then removed the helmet from his head. He turned, and she saw him the same instant he saw her.

His face was hairy, but he was somewhat more advanced than the sub-men of the Equator. His skin was lighter than hers, and his hair black; but his eyes were strangest of all. They were as blue as the Quadratic Sea.

His hand moved quickly to a triangular case at his side. From it he removed an object, roughly right-angled in shape and tubular in structure. He pointed the tube at Wooha and she drew back; she knew at once it was a weapon, not very different from the needle-guns carried by the mining men, such as Yabor, who often had to kill wave-snakes in the underground caverns of Valeria.

WOoha was not afraid, for a Valerian scientist never lets emotion get the upper hand. She faced the creature calmly and recited an equation which should appeal to his

intelligence: "One minus one equals zero!"

Even a pygmy minded proto-gorilla would realize that by removing her, nothing of value to himself could be gained.

The man-creature regarded her with his gray-blue eyes. He did not seem to understand at first, then finally he seemed to realize that Woooha was harmless to himself and he replaced the weapon. His lips moved and a vibrant growl, pitched in octave ZH, full three tones lower than the thundering voice of Yabor, burst forth.

"By the great horned moon, it's a woman—or at least it's shaped like one!"

The words meant nothing to Woooha, but she memorized them—along with the tonal inflections. Later she would put them through a translator and find out what they meant. That is, if they meant anything, which she doubted. The mathematical cadence was not very intelligent.

He probably was saying that he was hungry. Primitives were always thinking about their stomachs. Well, come to think of it... Woooha quickly switched her thoughts away from this.

She must find out about the man. "Give me your factor, please," she asked. This was a universal expression which even the Venusian monkeys understood.

"Jehoshaphat," spoke the primitive. "even with red eyes, she's more beautiful than a drunken dream."

Again the words escaped Woooha, although she memorized them. Once she had won a minor degree at the Academy by translating the war-call of the Valerian Thudbud, but that animal had a beep-boop arrangement of its syllables that made sense. This creature spoke only in vowels and consonants.

"No denominator," she decided, using the academy expression for something that defied orderly classification.

"A strange name," said the stranger, "but I wouldn't try to pronounce

it. I'll just call you Beautiful." He smiled and Woooha grew nauseated at the display of emotion; surely this was the most primitive thing on Valeria—and it looked so much like a man.

"I'm Colonel Phil Jerome, pilot, navigator and crew of the first flight from Earth to Valeria." He bowed. Woooha noted that it was a 45-degree bow and this was the first thing the man had done that she understood. He was indicating that he didn't care whether she wanted to marry him or not. Had Woooha been capable of emotion she would have been angry; she hadn't considered him as a mate.

"Your syllables are impossible fractions," she said, choosing to ignore the proposal of marriage.

The creature was tame; she could be thankful for that. Now he pointed his big gloved hand at his chest and spoke again: "Me Phil Jerome. Allee samee fly-um hotcha big smoke-buggy from green star up there—" he pointed heavenward.

Suddenly Woooha understood. He was telling his primitive name and indicating that he had come from the heavens. Of course! The other worlds *were* inhabited after all; Valerian speculation had been proved accurate again. Now she understood why the man was primitive; he hadn't had the right environment. Valeria, of course, was the best of all possible worlds, to use the words of the great philosopher Woooleterre; naturally, nothing great could come from anything less.

HE REPEATED the words slowly: "Me Phil Jerome—"

The sub-human held up his hand and stopped her. He pointed to his chest again: "Phil."

"Phil." Woooha managed to ape the pronunciation perfectly. Then she pointed her slender finger at herself and said: "Woooha." The Phil wagged his head. Possible this meant negative. "Beautiful."

"Minus Beautiful, plus Wooha," she corrected. "Equals Wooha."

"Beautiful," said the Phil. He laughed, out loud this time, apparently without shame. Wooha wished he'd stop this vulgar display of emotion.

"Well, I didn't expect you to speak my language," he said, "but I'm surprised that you're intelligent. We thought Valeria might be in the age of reptiles; in some ways, you're almost as highly developed as human beings."

He probably was barking at the cloud glint from the Quadratic sea on the horizon, Wooha thought; primitive apes often did that.

"In fact, you are a human being. Sort of an alibino, although your skin is dark. Nice contrast. And those pink eyes do something to me, Beautiful."

"Impossible equation," Wooha said.

"That must mean 'yes,'" said the Phil. "Don't say 'no' for awhile—let's just work on one word at a time."

He took a step toward her.

"I'm going to take you to the Academy so our scientists can examine you," said Wooha.

"That's great," said Phil, "but all those purrs and snorts don't mean a thing to me; supposing I teach you my language."

"Impossible equation," said Wooha again.

"Ah! The lady says 'Yes.' Well, how do you teach a language. Lessee. When I learned Latin in school, we took up the verbs first, because they were hardest. It was *amo, amare, amatus*, meaning 'love.'" The Phil grinned. "Okay, Beautiful. 'Love.'"

The last word had a funny sound and Wooha repeated it: "Love."

"Fine. Know what it means? Like this—"

He took another step, and Wooha held her ground, even in the presence of primitive beasts true Valerian high-type human shows no emotion.

The Phil seized her in his arms, drew her close to him and placed his lips on hers. He released her. She stood still and calm.

"Get it?" The Phil was flushed, his eyes were disgustingly bright. "No," he said, "I guess you don't; I should have snaved."

"Love," said Wooha. She understood, it was a name for nothing.

"You got it!" Phil exclaimed. "Tell me, Beautiful, are you always like an iceberg?"

"Zero," said Wooha, giving him the Valerian translation for love; to Phil's ears, it came as a whistle.

"I guess it doesn't show on the surface, but it's there. That's a wolf-whistle if I ever heard one."

"Zero plus one," came a voice behind Wooha.

PHIL HEARD the whistle followed by syllables and as Wooha turned, he saw a Valerian male behind her. The figure was Yabor, the miner. In his hand he held a needle gun.

"Is this ape tame?" Yabor asked. "or shall I blast him?"

"Put the gun away, Yabor," said Wooha. "He is zero."

Phil heard the whistle and grinned. "I guess I'm the hot stuff on Valeria. Everybody's talking about me—or rather whistling."

Yabor pointed to his gyro-car parked beside Wooha. "I was going back to the mines," he explained. "and I saw you here. I was not sure that the creature was tame. Funny species." He looked closely at Phil. "Never saw one with blue eyes before."

"He is from outer space," Wooha explained. "Very low mentality—a parabola without a focus."

"I think I'd better look him over. He touched you, and he might be poisonous."

Yabor adjusted his needle gun to a weak power and pressed the trigger. The Phil grew rigid and toppled to the ground.

"That'll hold him for one span of daylight," said Yabor. "It won't take that long to get his complete equation."



GIULLE, record-maker of Valeria, was summoned to the Academy late the next afternoon to examine a new species of sub-human brought to the laboratory by Yabor, the miner, and Wooha, the scientist. Yabor had drawn off samples of the creature's blood and had made measurements, as well as various other examinations.

The complete data was assembled, translated into figures and fed by tape into the electronic equation maker. Within the space of a few minutes the result was brought forth on a scroll. It was a complex four-dimensional rhombus, latitudinally dilex and transversally octoprismatic with triangular oscillatory gymphs.

Giulle examined the graph carefully, then he said: "His equations, Wooha, show that he would make an ideal mate for you; this makes three candidates. Under the law you must make a choice."

"How can this sub-human creature be my mate? His language has no mathematical cadence. It is easy to see that he does not express himself in terms that are scientific. We of the higher race quite often use equations to say what we wish to say."

"Not always," said Yabor.

"No; we have other terms," said Wooha. She squealed this thought. "Sometimes we even use signs. When we speak of invertebrates, we place our hands over our heart—" Wooha made the conventional sign. "But his knowledge of vocalnumerics is zero." She whistled.

"Ah! Talking about me, I see," said Phil. He had been lying on a basalt table beneath the X-ray machine. Now he rose.

Wooha continued, paying no attention to Phil. "I have only learned two words of his language, 'Phil', ap-

parently what he calls himself, and Love,—which is some kind of a gesture, I suppose. I couldn't quite understand the word."

"Now you're talking my language, Beautiful," said Phil. He took a step and seized Wooha in his arms. "Love is wonderful," he said, kissing her.

Wooha managed to free herself, although Phil clung to her hand, evidencing insecurity. "His mentality is zero," said Wooha, whistling.

Phil nodded, "I don't understand your language, but I know what you're thinking, kid."

"The law," reminded Giulle, "says you must choose a mate." He looked at Phil. "He is human enough to come under the law."

WOOHA'S preeminence as the foremost woman-scientist of her world made her selection of a mate an important event. The fact that three men—one of them showing sub-human characteristics—could qualify, was not beyond mathematical probability, considering that Valeria was densely populated in spots.

Accordingly, on the gypsum steps of the Matrimonial Building, throngs of women congregated on the following day. There were only a few men, all present in an official capacity; men were not interested in marriage.

The three candidates, Zileto, Yabor and the Phil were standing on a raised dias at the foot of the steps. Wooha, dressed in a white Ghunskin gown and carrying a bouquet of chartreuse cranzies, appeared in a litter borne by six Equatorial proto-gorillas.

Phil was a little dazed by the proceedings; he had assumed that this was some sort of a ceremony welcoming him to Valeria. However, he didn't quite understand Zileto's presence—unless he was the mayor or something. As Wooha appeared, he smiled and bowed; the women who had assembled clapped their hands—which was the Valerian method of wishing a successful union.

Phil turned to the women, clasped both hands above his head and shook them in a sweeping arc.

Giulle spoke to Wooha. "I'm not certain that the Phil understands the solemnity of the occasion," he said. "I've made a study of emotion in the lower orders of man, and I would say off hand that his is not the attitude of a mating male."

"What is the correct attitude?"

"He should be badly frightened and try to escape," Giulle replied.

Wooha glanced at Zileto and Yabor. True to their breeding as higher-type human beings, they displayed not the slightest emotion of any sort.

"Let me try to explain it to him," she said. "We know that he understands mathematics and he should understand a simple equation."

Wooha came close to Phil. He smiled at her vulgarly she thought. She pointed first to Phil, then herself, giving the equation, "One plus one," the age-old Valerian idiom for mating.

Then she turned to Yabor and repeated the equation. Then she pointed to Zileto and herself. "One, plus one, plus one, plus," she said, pointing to herself first and then to each man with her right hand, and at the same time raising one finger on her left hand until she held four fingers before his eyes. "Minus two." She doubled two of her four fingers. "Equals one plus one." She pointed to Phil, then herself.

For an instant Phil's brow wrinkled. Then suddenly dawn broke. "I get it. These Joes are your boyfriends!" Phil pointed to Yabor and Zileto.

"Boyfriends," said Wooha. She held up four fingers. She doubled two, then straightened them, she doubled two more, then straightened them. "Minus two."

"I get it," said Phil grimly. He turned suddenly on Zileto and Yabor. For the first time, he seemed to no-

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The Winning Of Wooha

(continued from page 53)

tice they wore small, triangular holsters at their side. "It's a little rugged for a stranger," said Phil.

"I am to choose a mate," said Wooha, but only Yabor and Zileto understood her. "Your qualities make me indifferent to the choice; I leave you to settle it between yourselves."

Yabor had suspected this would be her answer and he had been ready.

"Go," said Wooha.

Yabor's hand streaked to his holster. But Phil, if he had not known, caught on quickly, his fist shot out, struck Yabor on the chin. The miner went down to the rocky surface of the dias. His head struck it with a dull sound, like a melon being broken on the sidewalk.

Phil turned to Zileto. The seaman's hand had already drawn the gun from its holster, but now he stopped. He replaced the weapon and folded his arms. "Yella," said Phil.

Giulle ran forward and examined Yabor with the broken head. "He

will live for several hours," said Giulle to Wooha; "I pronounce you man and wife."

The women assembled clapped their hands and Phil turned and bowed. When he turned around, the gorillas were carrying off Yabor on the litter, and Wooha was following—her face as calm and immobile as before.

Phil could not understand. He started to go in pursuit of the woman he had won in mortal combat, but Giulle stopped him.

"She has gone away with her husband," said Giulle. "In three hours she will eat him."

Phil could not understand. Nor did he seem to grasp the fact that the applauding women around him were widows. Not black widows—just olive widows of Valeria, with red eyes and white hair. On his own planet, cannibals wore bones in their noses, and only spiders ate their mates.