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*A Mighty Nove of The Red World*

**WARRIOR MAID OF MARS . . . . . Alfred Coppel 4**

The Terran Barbarians have landed! Already they plunder a dying, helpless planet! And a whisper rustles through the cold, thin air, across the rust-red sands: "Give us a Leader—and we will fight! Give us back our ancient glory!"

*Two Thrilling Novelets*

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The tiny asteroid with the frightened girl and the wrecked spacer with the grim young man slowly spun closer and closer . . . but the real danger came after the crash!

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Four men, crash-landed on Venus, world of eternal rain. Three men slogging through the drenching gloom. Two men staggering hopelessly on. One man battering through the endless curtains of rain, RAIN, RAIN!

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The blue men had ravaged Terra and reduced Winston Eberly to a contemptible insect. Now here he was, complaining of indigestion!

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*Then terror struck!*

# Unwelcome Tenant

by **ROGER DEE**

**The first Earthman to hit deep space discovered what was so terribly wrong with the world he had left behind. Why couldn't he turn back?**

**I**T HAPPENED JUST BEFORE HE reached the zero point, the no-man's land in space where the attenuated gravity fields of two planets meet and cancel out.

Maynard was dividing his attention equally between the transparent bubble that housed the Mainz pendulum and the two ports, forward and aft, that broke the steel panelling of the control cubicle. He listened critically to the measured clicking of the

Geiger counters and the quiet sibilance of the air purifiers, and in spite of his weightlessness and his total loss of equilibrium he was quite calm.

But deep inside him, under his trained calmness, Maynard felt a steadily growing triumph, a swelling exultation that was a thing quite apart from scientific pride. The feeling that he was a pioneer, an advance guard for a conquering people, elated him and multiplied the eagerness in him when

he turned his eyes to the forward port where Mars hung, full and ruddy, a spotted enigmatic disc of promise.

Earth hung in the after port behind and below him, a soft emerald crescent in its first thin quarter. A warm green sickle that was home, a hustling verdant young world impatient to push its way across black empty space and satisfy its lusty curiosity about its cosmic neighbors.

He was at the end of his second day out, and he had covered roughly half of the distance he must travel. The atomic jets had cut off long ago, at escape velocity, and would not come on again until they were needed to slow his approach. The midpoint lay just ahead; in a matter of minutes now he would leave Earth's waning field and fall free into the grasp of the red planet.

He was watching the cobalt ball of the Mainz pendulum quiver on its thin quartz thread with the first fluttering release of Earth's gravity when the fear came.

Terror struck him suddenly, galvanically, blanking out all reason and all sensation. The control cubicle whirled giddily before his eyes, and the abysmal panic that gripped his mind was a monstrous thing boiling up out of unguessed subconscious depths. It froze him, breathing, like a man paralyzed under an overwhelming electric shock.

It was not fear of death. It was not even his own fear.

It was the blind panic of Something inside him whose existence he had never remotely suspected, Something that shrieked soundlessly in senseless maniac terror and fought to tear Itself free of him.

He was torn by the struggle for an interminable instant, and then it was over. He felt it writhe loose from the encumbrance of his mind, like a madman writhing out of a strait-jacket, and then It was falling back toward Earth, away from him. He could sense It plainly, once It was outside him—a malevolent, intangible Thing that fell back swiftly toward the emerald crescent of Earth.

He sat for a moment dazed while breath came back into his lungs and the steel-panelled cubicle grew steady again before

his starting eyes. And, when It had gone in the distance and he could no longer feel the frenzy of Its terror, he felt the swift unbounded freedom that a spirited horse feels when it has, unexpectedly, lost its rider.

He was still Robert Maynard, but with a difference.

...*He was free.*

THE feeling of utter freedom staggered him. For the first time in his life he possessed himself entirely, without doubt or reservation, a complete and serene entity. He could feel his consciousness still expanding, reaching into every hidden corner of his mind and taking control of functions he had not dreamed of before.

An analogy occurred to him in perfect exactness of detail: he was like a man waking from a vague world of sleep to find that what he had thought a single small room was in reality a spacious house. There were other rooms than the cramped chamber he had lived in all his life—rooms that had been tenanted a moment before by Something else, but which lay open and ready for his own use now that their Tenant was gone. A moment before his ego had occupied a meager one-twelfth of his brain; with Its departure the whole of his mind was his.

As suddenly as that he knew what had happened to him and why, and his incredibly-multiplied intelligence arranged the details of it precisely for his consideration.

He had been host to a parasitic intelligence, without knowing it, all his life. He had moved at Its dictates, following his own will only when It slept or tired or was distracted, never succeeding fully in any endeavor of his own because It was in control and must be obeyed. He knew when he had explored the vacated premises of his newly freed mind that It was only one of many, that all earthmen had Tenants like It, intangible parasitic entities subsisting upon and controlling the human life force.

He thought: *No wonder we have wars on Earth! We have no common ground for agreement because we are under Their compulsion. They know our inherent abili-*

*ties and keep us at each others' throats lest we learn of and destroy them. Everything that man has accomplished has been done in spite of Them.*

He looked with new eyes at the instrument panel under the forward port and was astonished at the crudity of the engines it controlled. He was primarily an astrophysicist, and his understanding of atomic propulsion had been negligible; now its every function was clear to him at a glance. Experimentally he drew a graph of the arc he described through space, and knew to a minute how long it would be before the braking jets slowed his speed for landing.

He raised his eyes to the forward port where the ruddy disc of Mars hung framed against the black velvet backdrop of space like a red jewel burning dully among a random display of lesser brilliants, beckoning him on with the future's illimitable promise.

**H**E SAT quite still for a time on the padded control couch, thinking intently, testing the new powers of his mind as he might have flexed a newly discovered limb.

His first conclusion was inescapable: his Tenant had left him because It could not exist outside Earth's gravity. It had been forced to quit him or perish, and Its departure had made him the first really free man.

They were not invincible. They were not even particularly intelligent, in spite of Their gift of parasitic control, or his own Tenant would have known Its danger. The fact that They were gravity-bound entities gave him the first vulnerable chink in Their armor, an Achilles heel that offered eventual salvation for men. There would be other ways to be rid of Them, and it was his responsibility as the first free man to see that others of his kind were freed as he had been.

He pictured the harmonious integration of an Earth peopled by free men and saw clearly the heights men might reach unhampered by their Tenants. His own possibilities, when he had summed them up, owed him in their extent. There were no limits to what he could do, no bounds to

the knowledge he could accumulate and use.

*This is what being a man is really like. I can liberate a world. Like Moses, I can set my people free.*

The thought set his face shining, suffused him with a glow of anticipated triumph. It was all so simple, now that he was free . . .

In a few hours he would land on Mars, and in a matter of minutes he could set up a beam transmitter to report back to the scientific foundation that had sent him out. He could not tell his fellows the truth because they were still captive, and their Tenants must not be warned; but he could invent a plausible story of easily acquired wealth on Mars that would bring other and larger commercial expeditions swarming after him. With the help of other freed men he could found a new civilization on the red planet, develop means to carry the fight back to Earth and exterminate the Tenants utterly. It would take time, but in the end men would be free.

The Mainz centrifuge spun slowly, and with the swing of its cobalt ball Maynard felt the shift from terrestrial to Martian gravity. He felt the first tiny tug of weight and the slow returning of equilibrium as his body oriented itself to the growing pull of the new attraction.

With the return of equilibrium he suddenly realized that he was upside down and turned to the control board for correction. The cubicle righted itself, rotating gently until the ruddy expanding disc of Mars hung below and ahead of the forward port. The Mainz pendulum ceased to oscillate, the little cobalt ball hanging stiffly at the end of its taut quartz filament.

He was well into the Martian attraction field by now. He made a quick calculation (which once would have taken painstaking hours) and knew that he would release the first braking blast from his forward jets in precisely ten hours. The little ship would nose into a slowly tightening spiral, avoiding the odd-planed orbits of the two tiny moons and, within minutes of establishing his declaration track, he would be ready to land.

He watched eagerly as the red disc of Mars swelled to a mottled globe, blurred

already at the edges by atmospheric refraction. Down there on the dead ground of that ancient world he would set up his equipment and flash back his triumphant message to Earth, a fabulous exultant lie that would bring other men like him swarming to the red planet.

*Free men! Supermen, really, in a new free world. Nothing impossible, then!*

LATER, he shut off the braking blast of the forward jets and felt the soft rubber-foam padding of the couch rise gently under him as deceleration ceased. He was well into his landing spiral, eating up the paltry thousands of miles that lay between him and the shining future.

He lay back on the couch, smiling, his mind busy with the message he would beam back to Earth, planning already the campaign he would carry out. Years must pass before men were freed completely of their Tenants, perhaps decades, but time did not matter. It was essentially a simple task because he and those to come after him would be free of Their compulsion—serene unhampered supermen to whom time was nothing.

In the end they could not fail . . .

Something impinged sharply upon his new perception, a chill groping tentacle of questioning intelligence. The smile froze on his face; he sat up stiffly, numbed with the unforeseen horror of what was happening to him. The groping ceased, and the hungry Intelligence from outside poured into his mind like smoke into an empty room, smothering his feeble attempt at resistance.

He rose and went to the forward port, staring dully down at the uprushing sandy wastes and trying to recall what glorious thing it was that he had been thinking. Or had it been only a dream? Somewhere in the farthest recess of his blunted consciousness a thought formed and floated like a bubble up into his awareness; but like a bubble it burst, and its meaning was lost on him.

*There were Tenants on Earth, it said. Why not on Mars, too?*

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