

# Weird Tales



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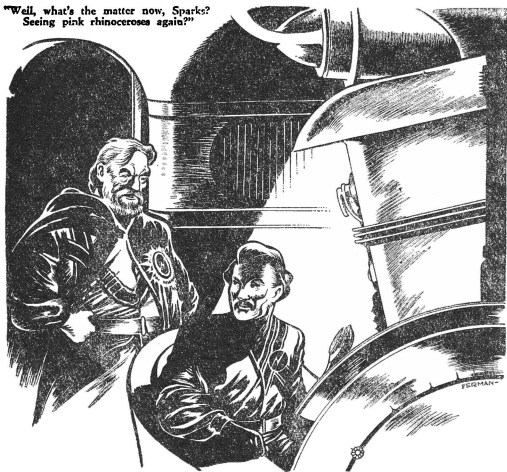
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"Well, what's the matter now, Sparks?  
Seeing pink rhinoceroses again?"



# Where Are You, Mr. Biggs?

By NELSON S. BOND

*That gangling frame, that easy, fluent grin—lost in the nameless depths of the crypts of space!*

**W**ERE supposed to be an Earth-Mars lugger, but when we got to Mars Central spaceport, the bug-pounder there gave me this solar-gram from Terra. It said:

"PROCEED URANUS IMMEDIATELY PICK UP CARGO GALLIUM."

So I shoved a frantic for the Old Man

over the ship audio, and pretty soon he came lumbering up to my radio room, picking his teeth and scowling like a man with only a half a tummyfull of victuals.

"It's a fine state of affairs," he snarled, "when a skipper can't even finish his dinner in peace! Well, what's the matter now,

Sparks? You seeing pink rhinoceroses again? 'Cause if you are—"

"I'm not," I told him with quiet dignity, "and they aren't pink rhinos, they're lavender lobsters, and anyway, I haven't had a drink for months. Or maybe it's since yesterday? Anyhow, here's the grief." And I gave him the wire.

He read it. Read it, your Aunt Nelly—he screamed it out loud.

"Uranus!" he bellowed. "This crate make that trip? They must be stark, staring mad!"

"Them," I agreed, "or me. Flip a coin. What shall I do, Skipper? Tell 'em we can't do it? Tell 'em—?"

"No, wait a minute." Cap Hanson's brow looked like a freshly ploughed field. I knew why. The *Saturn* is an old lugger. And by old, I *do* mean ancient. It was built before the turn of the century, and by all laws of logic and reason should have been taken off the spaceways long ago, only that Cap Hanson and our screwball First Mate, Lancelot Biggs, had demonstrated time and time again, and in startlingly devious ways, that the old scow was still spaceworthy.

But if the *Saturn* were removed from active service, the chances were ten to one that Hanson would be junked with her. Which was Reason Numero Uno—and a damned good one — why the skipper couldn't risk refusing this order.

"We'll go, Sparks," he said slowly. "We've got to. But I could wring his scrawny neck, blast his jets!"

I didn't have to ask whom he meant. "Scrawny neck" would mean only one inmate of our void-perambulating asylum. Lancelot Biggs. Genius and crackpot, scarecrow and sage—and soon to become son-in-law of the skipper.

I said, "But why blame Biggs for this, Skipper? Is it his fault if the Home Office has gone squirrely?"

"It is," grumbled Hanson savagely. "I

never should have agreed to let Diane marry him. He started this mess at my house. Colonel Brophy and him was having dinner with me and Biggs told Brophy all about that new 'velocity intensifier' he invented—"

I shuddered. "You mean the gadget which got us all bolixed up in the negative universe? Till Hank Cleaver came from the past to get us out?"

"That's it. Well, he told Brophy about it, bragged that it would make the *Saturn* the fastest ship in the ether. And now," Hanson groaned, "just because he shot off his big face, we've got to push this leaky old tin-can to Uranus!"

I said consolingly, "Well, maybe everything will be all right, Skipper. I admit Mr. Biggs is a bit of a whacky-pot, but he's pulled us out of plenty of tough spots before. Like the time he thwarted Red Hake and his pirate crew. And the time he beat the *Slipstream*—"

Hanson stared at me somberly.

"Nope, I guess you ain't. You couldn't have."

I said, "Which? Couldn't have what, sir?"

"You mustn't have seen Mr. Biggs on this shuttle."

It was the first time I had realized it, but he was right! And that was funny, because Mr. Biggs and I were old buddies. We were bunkmates once, even. I said, "Well, lift my gravs! Come to think of it, I haven't? Why, Skipper? I guess maybe it's on account of he's busy planning to get married so soon?"

Hanson made sounds like a man being garrotted.

"Marriage! Don't talk to me about marriage! Bert, what does marriage do to a man?"

"Marriage," I replied promptly, "makes the mare go. Or, no—that's money, isn't it? I give up, sir. What?"

"It's supposed," boiled Hanson, "to

make him settle down. Only it ain't. Not in Biggs' case. It's having just the opposite effect. Making him flighty as a coot. Lancelot ain't been worth a tinker's dam on this trip. He can't do a single thing right! Remember our take-off, Sparks? From Long Island port? The one where we—"

"—lifted gravs two full minutes before schedule?" I finished. "Don't I just! I almost did a swan dive through the aft bulkhead. Why? Did he—?"

"Mmm-hmm! And he also plotted the course that took us nine degrees off trajectory. And he heaved the ship into a Van-Maeden spiral by signaling for a double-jet port blast in midspace. And he—" Hanson paused, panting with wrath. "But why go on? The point is, the very thought of marriage has ruined him. And we can't depend on him to help us with this assignment. And Uranus is a long way from here. A *lo-o-oong* way!"

I winced. I said, "Look, Skipper—must you say it thataway? With icicles in your voice, I mean?"

**B**UT orders is orders. We lifted gravs as commanded at 11.20 Martian Constant Time—that's 3-X-9 Solar Relative—and pointed our prow toward the spot in space where, some billion and a half odd miles away, Uranus was lounging about a wan and distant Sun like a gigantic snowball. That is, we attempted to point our prow in that direction. Cap Hanson's astro-trogation came a cropper on this problem. He called me to the control turret. He asked, "Sparks, have you seen him?"

"You mean Mr. Biggs? No, sir."

"Well, go find him. In the first place, none of us except him know how to chart to intersect Uranus' orbit, and in the second place, we don't know how to operate that crazy velocity intensifier of his'n, and—" Fretfully. "—and in the third place, I don't like this in the first place!"

So I made a tour of the ship, and found him where I should have looked first. In his own cabin, raptly fondling a cabinet photograph of Diane Hanson—soon-to-be Biggs. He glanced up as I entered, and his phenomenal Adam's apple, an auricular escalator if I ever saw one, bobbed in greeting.

"Hello, Sparks," he said dreamily, and held out the picture for my inspection. "She's lovely, isn't she?"

I said, "Don't look now, Mr. Biggs, but that cheery little noise you've been ignoring is the audio buzzer beside your elbow. It's for you. The skipper wants you topside."

Biggs looked startled.

"Me? But there must be some mistake. I'm off duty until tomorrow morning."

"Guess again," I told him. "It so happens that you are the only mugg—I mean officer—around here who knows how to finagle that velocity intensifier of yours. So you're elected. After all, if we're going to Uranus—"

That got him. He popped off his hip pockets like a thunderbolt from the blooiel!

"What! Uranus!"

"Okay," I said gloomily. "And you watch yours." I stared at him curiously, though. "What's the matter; didn't you know?"

"Know! Of course not! B-but—" His fluid larynx did handsprings. "But I can't go to Uranus! I told her I'd be home in ten days!"

I said, "Then she'd better not hold her breath till you get there. You led with your chin, Lieutenant, when you told the president of our beloved corporation about your new invention. He'd decided to give it a work-out. And as near as I can figure—" This was what had been worrying me from the start. "It will take us about ten months to get to Uranus, and another twelve to get back!"

But, surprisingly, it was my dejection

that snapped Biggs out of his. The impatient-bridegroom-look disappeared from his eyes, and he grinned.

"My goodness, no, Sparks! Don't you understand the operation of my velocity intensifier?"

"I'm a bug-pounder," I told him. "I understand the space code, and dots and dashes, and Ampies, and I know four languages. That's par for the course."

"It's really quite simple. My velocity intensifier is exactly what the name implies—a device that is attached to the hypatomic motors for the purpose of "stepping up" our normal velocity. It's based on the principle of energy-conservation. A series of parallax-condensers absorb all waste energy, pass it through multiple amplifiers, rotors and—"

"—and all points west!" I finished. "It's no go, Lieutenant. That's one of the languages I don't talk. Give it to me in words of one syllable. How long will it take us to get to Uranus and back?"

"Considering the mean distance of Uranus," answered Biggs quietly, "as approximately 1,560,000,000 miles, and if we traveled at our hitherto 'normal' rate of speed, 200,000 m.p.h., it should take us 7,800 hours, or 325 days, to reach there. And slightly longer to return to Earth."

"Ten months!" I wailed. "I knew it!"

"But," continued Biggs proudly, "with this velocity intensifier attachment, our potential speed is restrained by only one factor. The limiting velocity of light, or 186,000 miles per second!"

"In other words, the *Saturn* is now capable of a top speed of more than 650,000,000 miles per hour!"

I gasped. I said, "Huh? You mean," I said, "the trip to Uranus will take only a little more than two hours?"

Biggs smiled complacently.

"Theoretically, yes; actually it will take somewhat longer. You see, we must allow time for acceleration, for a condensation-

charge to build up in our super-chargers before setting the V-I unit in operation, and for deceleration upon reaching our objective. Also, we are forced to remain below the 'limiting velocity' as a measure of safety. Else we may suffer another translation into the negative universe, as we once did before I learned how to control the intensifier.

"But we will make excellent time. Ninety-six hours should see us landing at New Oslo. And—" His pale eyes lighted. "And, gracious, this is wonderful! Diane will be surprised. If they're going to let me use the V-I unit, we'll return to Earth by way of Uranus in less time than it would ordinarily take to make the Earth-Mars shuttle!"

"But only," I pointed out, "if, when, and as you go make that gadget gadget. While we're gnawing the avoirdupois Cap Hanson's up there biting his fingernails to the knuckle. So shall we join the ladies?"

So he patted Diane's picture good-by, and we went.

LIKE I figured, Hanson was practically meat for the looney-bin by the time we reached the bridge. He manhandled Biggs avidly and propelled him to the plot-table. "Where've you been, Biggs?" he demanded. "No, don't tell me now. Get going on them fingers. They don't make sense to me, nowise! And when do we turn on that thingamajigger of your'n? Bert, where'd you find him? Shut up, you blabbermouth! Don't you know better than to talk when a space officer is cogitating? Can I help, Biggs?"

The one-man wordstorm was deafening. But it didn't seem to phase Biggs. He plunked himself down at the pilot's desk, scribbled for awhile, and came up with an orbit chart for Second Mate Dick Todd, seated at the control-board.

Then he heaved a volley of orders over

the audio to Chief Engineer Garrity, and that was that. He relaxed. The skipper said nervously, "Is—is that all?"

"That's all, sir," said Biggs.

The Old Man looked dubious.

"I don't hear nothing unusual," he said.

"You will in a minute," said Biggs.

"Ah! There it goes now!"

And darned if it didn't! One minute my ears hummed with the familiar drone of the hypatomics, the next, a weird and piercing whine rose in high, shrill crescendo, torturing our ear-drums for a brief instant until it lost itself in an oblivion of super-sonic inaudibility.

That was all. No moment of oppressive weight as if we were lifting gravas at extra gees, no thunderous bellow of rockets, no anything. The ship rode easily, freely. I must have looked disappointed. To Biggs I said, "Too bad, sir."

"Eh, Sparks?"

"Too bad it didn't work," I said.

Biggs chuckled.

"But it did work, Sparks. We're now traveling at a speed in excess of five hundred million miles per hour!"

Cap Hanson gulped and looked green. "F-five—?"

"That's right, sir. If you don't believe me take a peek through the viewpanes."

I moved to the fore-wall, slid back the metal slide that covered the quartzite viewpane. Space lay before us—but *what* space! Not the dark, velvety pall, brightly agleam with an infinitude of starry jewels, that all spacemen know. This was a blotched, striped crazy-quilt of color! Crimson, ochre, emerald—all the hues of the rainbow, of the Aurora. It was beautiful in a mad, fantastic way; there was a faery, magic loveliness to that swift-streaming space that fascinated and at the same time chilled me with dread.

Hanson's eyes bulged, and his voice was fearful.

"We—we've done it again, Biggs!

Busted clean out of our universe into something else!"

"No, sir. This is our universe. But we are seeing it as no man has ever seen it before. Our speed is so great that we are seeing the 'landmarks' of space with a distorted viewpoint. Our relationship—or I should say relativity—is no longer to Earth, or any of its sister planets, but to the Greater Constant, the fundamental motion of the universe itself.

"Thus, at one and the same time, we see the planets as they *are* and as they *were*; they are no longer mere points in space, they are streaks of color." And he grinned. "The stars, too. Pretty, aren't they?"

Cap Hanson made weak motions at the viewpane.

"Close it, Sparks! It's giving me the meemies! So if you're right, Biggs—then what? How do we know when we get to Uranus, or near it? If it's just a streak of color?"

"You must reconcile yourself to an entirely new system of astrogation. Up to this time, pilots have just jetted along until they found their goal, then set course for a landing. But with the V-I unit in operation, we 'fly blind' and set our course by strict, mathematical figuring. I have given Mr. Todd a plot-chart. Four days hence when I cut out the V-I unit and return to normal operation on the hypos, we will find Uranus immediately beneath us. And now, if you'll excuse me—"

"Wait a minute!" said the skipper. "Suppose we was to meet up with something in space? Like a rogue asteroid?"

Biggs shrugged.

"That hazard is neither heightened nor decreased," he said. "Our monitor-beams will still shunt off the smaller ones. As for the larger—well, you know as well as I that we have never yet found a method of overcoming that danger. It is one of the chances we take when we don space

blues. As far as I'm concerned, I'd just as soon not see it coming as to watch it grow larger and larger in the *perilens*—"

Well, he was right there. So since Hanson was fresh out of questions, Biggs hoisted hips back to his quarters. My guess is that he went back to billy-dooing with Diane's picture. What's yours?

I COULD build this up if I wanted to, and offer you a blow-by-blow account of what happened in the next quartet of days. But why bother? The truth is—nothing did. The V-I unit continued to chug along like a dream; our old crate went flashing through space like a quantum with a hot date; tempus squirmed; and me—I was in seventh heaven. I don't mean fifth or sixth, either. This was the easiest shuttle I had ever made. We were traveling so fast, and the V-I unit surrounded the *Saturn* with such a force-field, that my radio was utterly useless.

So I got a vacation with pay. I ate and slept with what you might call 'monotony regularity', and I spent all of my waking hours curled up with a good (i.e. torrid) book.

And at the end of four days, Mr. Biggs disconnected his V-I unit, as called for on his plot-chart, and just like he said, there was Uranus gleaming beneath us! So we landed and spent a night swapping yarns and drinks with the S.S.P. officers garrisoned at New Oslo, then we took on a hold-ful of gallium, and tootle-oo to the refrigerated seventh planet.

"And (this gets tiresome, doesn't it?) we accelerated for a day and a half, then Biggs plotted a course, pushed a button, and once again we were free-wheeling through colorful and star-spangled space.

Life was swell, and life was wonderful, and if there was any fly in my celestial ointment it was the fact that after the first week Lieutenant Romeo "Lovesick" Biggs got tired of staring at his fiancée's image

and insisted on strolling up to my turret to tell me (1) what a wonderful girl she was, (2) how much he missed her, and (3) how he was simply going to *die* if he didn't see her again soon.

Which boring details I had (1) known for years, once having had a heart-throb for Diane myself, (2) figured from his conversation, and (3) high hopes that he would. Quietly!

So somehow it was the afternoon, ship's time, of the fourth day of the return shuttle and Biggs was in my turret, not to mention my hair, and I was hearing for the thousandth time about he wasn't worthy of a gal like Diane, when all of a sudden bells jangled all over the ship, lights flashed the DANGER! signal, and my turret-audio broke into frantic voice, and the voice was that of the pilot on duty, our Third Mate, Bud Wilson.

"Sparks, is Biggs there! Yes? Get him here *quick!* And find the Old Man! Hurry! For God's sake—"

We were out of there like a flash—make that *two* flashes—and pounding through the corridors, up the ramp to the bridge. We met Cap Hanson on the way. The three of us burst into the control-room to find Wilson tearing his hair, and Dick Todd, sweating, white-faced, poring over diagrams on the chart-board.

Somebody yelled, "What's the matter?" and I can't tell you who, because it was probably all of us. And Dick's eyes were haggard pockets in his face.

"*Jupiter!*" he said.

"What about it?" yelled the skipper. "Talk, man!"

Todd shoved the chart at Biggs, pointed with a finger that wobbled.

"It's on our trajectory! Right before us *now!* We can see it—Look!"

And he threw back the shield, and my heart gave an awful lurch. For no longer was the scene before us one of changing, iridescent beauty—the entire pane was cov-

ered by a gigantic, menacing platter. A monstrous missile of death. The planet Jupiter—dead on our course!

Lancelot Biggs' face, which had been keen and alert a moment before, was suddenly a dull, blank mask of horror. Strangled words fought their way from his throat.

"I—I didn't realize! I forgot all about Jupiter when I plotted the return course! I—"

"Forgot!" roared the skipper. "Great comets—forgot!" Then his wrath died in anxiety. "Do something. Turn off that blasted unit of yours so we can loft over her—"

But Todd shook his head.

"That's no use, Skipper. I thought of that. We're too close. We're caught in her gravitational attraction anyway. Even if we were to turn off Biggs' device, there still wouldn't be time to get the rockets hot."

"Lanse—" began the skipper. Then, "Where did he go?"

**B**ECAUSE Biggs had turned, suddenly, and raced from the room! Fled, still clutching the space-chart. Fled, and not a word of advice, regret or hope. And with him went our last dwindling hope of salvation.

Dick Todd's voice was thin.

"Maybe he has an idea, sir?"

Hanson grasped at the thought as a drowning man.

"That's it, Todd. He'll pull us out of this. He's never failed us in the past—"

But even this wishful expression was doomed to swift contradiction. For at that moment the bridge audio flashed, and the voice of a sailor clacked from somewhere below.

"Captain Hanson, sir? There—there's trouble down here! Lieutenant Biggs has violated regulations, sir! He knocked down two men and forced his way into the

auxiliary lifeboat! He—he's locked the door, sir. What shall we do?"

In the moment of silence that followed, I saw something I hope I shall never be forced to look upon again. I saw a proud man wilt before my eyes; I saw a strong man age ten years in as many seconds.

The man was Captain Hanson. The strength sloughed from his shoulders; pain burned deep furrows in his eyes; I could barely hear the whisper that crept from his lips.

"A coward!" he husked. "The man my daughter loves—a coward!"

And there was nothing I could say to refute the accusation. Lancelot Biggs' action had branded him more damningly than any mere words. "A crisis had come—and it had found him wanting. He had deserted his comrades, his ship, and had fled to a lifeboat. Perhaps even now he was getting ready to cast off.

In a swift burst of comprehension, I thought I could understand the reason for this last, unreasonable defection. Lancelot Biggs had met difficulties before and without flinching.

But that was an old, a different, Biggs. Love had come into his life now. Love, and a woman, and all the dreams that happy men dare wish upon.

And these things, staunch and noble in themselves, had weakened the moral fibre of Biggs. Weakened it to the point where, in the face of danger, nothing was important except that he live to return to the arms of his loved one.

These things I could understand. But I could not forgive them. Because love or no love, fear or no fear, a spaceman has a tradition to live up to. And Lancelot Biggs had tossed into the discard the very tradition now upheld by Dick Todd as he said, quietly, "Shall I advise the men, sir?"

And by Captain Hanson who said, "Yes, Todd. And—order Garrity to cut off Mr. Biggs' intensifier. We may die, but



we can die trying to escape. And a slower speed will give us more time—"

"Yes, sir," said Todd, and moved toward the audio. But he had barely reached out his hand toward it when sharp speech rasped from its black throat in remembered tones.

"Stop, Todd! Don't give that order, Skipper!"

It was the voice of Lancelot Biggs!

CAPTAIN HANSON had subdued his rage once. But now his face crimsoned, his great hands clenched, and fury was a ponderable vigor in his voice.

"You! Where are you, sir!"

"In the life-skiff," replied Biggs imperturbably.

Almost insolently, I thought. As if he knew he were speaking from the only place of possible security in a doomed ship. "Todd, do as I say and do it fast! There's no time to lose! Tell Chief Garrity to turn the verniers of my V-I unit *all the way* to the red line on the extreme right! Understand?"

Once again Hanson's roar interrupted.

"Come back here, you coward, and die with your fellow-officers like the man you once pretended to be! What do you mean by skulking in a hideaway, giving orders aboard *my* ship?"

"Shut up!" bellowed Biggs. And it was not just his audacity in speaking thus to a space commander that shocked me, it was the razor-edged intensity of his voice. "Todd—give that order immediately! For God's sake, act! We've no time to lose!"

Todd's eyes sought mine. He knew, as well as I did, that the skipper was too furious to give an intelligent command.

"That — that's the limiting velocity, Sparks!" Todd choked. "Biggs must be insane. We'll be translated again into the negative universe. And no way to get back—*ever!*"

I didn't have to answer. Biggs answered.

"I've taken care of that, Todd! Now, do as I say! Hurry, hurry!"

And—well, am I a fool? After all, Lancelot Biggs and I are old buddies. Once we were bunkmates, even. There came back to me a measure of the confidence I had once had in him. And I nodded to Todd.

"Try it, Dick. We've got nothing to lose and everything to gain. Give the order."

He did. Chief Garrity must have been startled but he was too good a spaceman to argue an order from the bridge. He said, succinctly, "Aye, sir!" And then—

I felt the rocking plunge. The moment of brief, incredible dizziness of frightful speed being intensified to the limiting velocity of light. My head whirled, but somehow I managed to turn, stare at that ominous viewpane. And what I saw there brought a shocked cry from my lips!

White—white—dazzling white—then grayness! No other scene than dim and vacant void, gray, infinite, impenetrable. A glimpse of the lost universe—the matrix negative wherein are flung such mad things as attain a speed beyond that of the limiting velocity.

Then crackling across the room agonizedly, "We're clear, Todd? We're through?"

And Todd replying dazedly, "I—I don't know what you mean?"

"The chronometer, man! Has it touched 9.14?"

"Yes, sir. But—but we're slipping into the negative, Lancelot! We've escaped one death to find another!"

But there was infinite sadness to Lancelot Biggs' denial.

"No you're not, Todd. You're going back to your own universe—now. When you feel the ship lurch, turn the V-I unit dial back to where it was before. Ready? *Now!*"

And there came, inexplicably, a swift

unsteadiness, a lurching halt of the ship. At that instant Todd spoke to Garrity, Garrity obeyed, and—

We were once again traveling smoothly on our proper course. But Jupiter—monstrous missile of solid, terrible death—was no longer before us! *It was behind us!*

AS WE saw that, Captain Hanson laughed aloud. And vast was the joy of that laughter. Relief, happiness, sheer triumph. And apology. And he cried:

"You've done it, son! Forgive me for doubting you. We're safe! I don't know how, but—come on in, boy, and tell us all about it!"

But there came no answer. Only the echo of our own harsh breathing, the dry scrape of our own feet shuffling restlessly. And new terror loomed suddenly in the Old Man's eyes.

"Biggs!" he cried. "Lanse, my boy! Lanse!"

And then—

It was like the faintest, winnowed chaff of sound, breathing from far, far away. A voice speaking. To us. A voice that said:

"—can't come back . . . Skipper . . . Sparks will understand. Tell him . . . mass-energy . . . relationships. And tell . . . Diane . . . I love . . ."

That was all. And my brain reeled beneath the import of those fading words. Suddenly I *knew!* I didn't need to hear Cap Hanson screaming wild orders to the sailors on the aft deck below, nor to hear their answer.

"He's not here, sir. He cast off the auxiliary a moment or so ago."

I *knew!*

LATER, I told them. My explanation was short, for the solution was simple. Simple, once you grant that a man can possess infinite loyalty, infinite courage, in one lean and gangling frame.

"Biggs saw," I said, "that there was

only one way to save us all from death. Oh, he had blundered, yes, but we all blunder sometimes. But not all of us pay the penalty as willingly, as bravely, as he did.

"Jupiter was upon us. Within minutes we would have crashed into the greatest of the solar planets. Only Biggs saw a way out. And that was—to make the speed of our ship *exactly* approximate the speed of light at the moment of impact!"

Dick said, "But how—"

"He told us the answer. Mass-energy relationships. You know the fundamental theory of the Lorentz-Fitzgerald contraction. Objects moving in space are contracted along their major axis in direct proportion to their speed, with the limiting velocity, the speed of light, as their ultimate limit. In other words, at the precise speed of light, this ship existed in only a *unilateral* dimension!"

Hanson said, "You mean we—hurled over Jupiter?"

"No, sir. *We went right through it!* At that tremendous speed, our dimension-extension was zero. Hence it did not affect, nor was it affected in any way by, the bulk and mass of Jupiter.

"It's as though an exceedingly fine wire, moving at lightning speed, were to be propelled through a cake of ice. Only in our case, the 'wire' was of zero dimension, and the cake of ice—Jupiter—did not even recognize that it had been penetrated.

"But—" I shook my head. "But Mr. Biggs realized what this daring scheme meant. It meant that in addition to our size being reduced to the infinitesimal, our mass would be raised to the infinite—for that is the corollary of the contraction theory.

"There had to be some way of getting us back to our normal shape and size. The only possible method was by the forcible alteration of our mass. And — Biggs adopted this method. He placed himself in the life-skiff, gave the necessary orders

from there. Then, after the danger had been averted, he deliberately cast off from the *Saturn*, tossed himself away from us, a living sacrifice to the mathematical gods, that we might be safe."

Todd said, "Our mass, for a moment, was infinite—but when he, however briefly, broke clear, it became *less* than infinite, giving us a chance to cut the motors—"

"That's right."

Hanson's eyes were round and wild and fearful.

"But then—where is he! We've got to turn around right away. Find him! We can't go back without—"

I shook my head.

"It's no use, Skipper. He may be in this universe, infinitely small, traveling at infinite speed; he may be in some other universe undreamed by man. He may be living, he may be dead. But wherever he is—he is gone forever from the ken of man. Lancelot Biggs is—dead. So far as man is concerned, he is dead."

Dick Todd said something then. His words were not clear. They were choked, and he didn't finish the quotation. But I caught the first part.

"Greater love hath no man'," he said.

And the skipper coughed, and his eyes

were red, and he turned away like a broken, aged man.

"Amen," he said. "Amen!"

SO—Lancelot Biggs is gone. Dead, perhaps. Or in another existence, undreamed, unrecognized, by we who spin our fiery trails along the spaceways. And it is a strange, strange thing that he, who of all men looked least like a spaceman, should have lived and died the greatest of them all.

Tomorrow or the next day I must tell Diane. Hanson will not do it because he can't.

He dares not face her when she hears. And I, myself, would sell my soul to be free of that sad duty. But I was Lancelot Biggs' best friend, and this is the least last thing I can do in his memory.

There is nothing else to say. He is gone. Will I ever see him again? That gangling frame, that easy, fluent grin—lost in the nameless depths of the crypts of space. There seems nothing else to say except—good-by.

And so I say it to the stars. The far-flung stars amongst which, somewhere, is the finest man I ever knew.

Is it good-by, Mr. Biggs?

Or is it only "au revoir"?

