

FUTURE FICTION

Vol. 1, No. 2

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FUTURE FACTS

EDITORIAL BY

CHARLES D. HORNIG

“**N**OTHING is impossible.” That’s a pretty broad statement, but we like to believe it. It has been said that nothing imaginable by the mind of man is impossible, and that should certainly include science-fiction. In fact, science-fiction is the only element that permits *everything* imaginable!

The stories that are in FUTURE FICTION today might very well be our FUTURE FACTS. So many things forecasted in science-fiction stories have come to pass that it is only reasonable to suppose that science-fiction will continue to be the soothsayer of coming events.

Here’s a typical paragraph from a hypothetical science-fiction story of fifty years ago:

“And as he entered his Air-Bird, the multitudinous crowd cheered and applauded thunderously. Suddenly a low purring came from the strange machine, and, to the astonishment of the thousands present, the heavy apparatus actually raised from the ground, higher and higher, until it hung hundreds of feet above their heads. Then, with speechless astonishment, the spectators saw it disappear in the distance—a successful flying-machine!”

Now, when we read that paragraph, only one thought comes to our minds: “So what?” It’s not even interesting to us, because it happens thousands of times every day—without the breathless crowds. But imagine how such a thought must have struck our fathers when they were young!

We all know the story about how the heavier-than-air flying machine was actually *proven impossible* not many years before one left the ground for the first time. This should teach us that nothing can be proven impossible. If a thing cannot be accomplished one way, it can be done another—and will be, some day.

Take the paragraph quoted above and replace the flying-machine with a rocket-machine leaving for the moon. Then we will have a typical modern science-fictional conception. We’ve just modernized the old story, throwing it fifty years ahead, and bringing with it the same old type of unbeliever that says “Impossible!”, just as he did a half-century ago about the airplane.

Happily, there are fewer narrow-minds in the world today than there used to be. So many “impossible” fancies have become cold facts right before their eyes that the scoffers have to be careful that something isn’t accomplished even while they are saying it can’t be done.

Many scientific minds are the first to say that rocket ships will never reach the moon, for instance. But they base their prophecies upon conditions as they exist today. They do not figure that a new type of fuel, or insulation, or lighter metal, or some other scientific principle will eliminate the factors that prevent space-travel today—just as the discovery of new principles have made fact of the fiction of yesterday.

Perhaps, fifty years from now, someone will find an old, tattered copy of FUTURE FICTION. It may read to them as modern adventure, instead of prophetic fiction. The stories may only be repeating to them things that are happening in the world (or Solar System) at that time.

So let us imagine that somebody has invented a time-machine. They have gone fifty years or a century into the future, bought a modern pulp magazine of that age. They have traveled back into time, to this very day, and presented this magazine of the future to you.

It is in your hands this very minute, and you are reading it.

It is FUTURE FICTION!

INTERPLANETARY GRAVEYARD

by EDMOND HAMILTON

A great sorrow engulfs Mark Raymond as he returns to Earth from a four-month trip to Jupiter—for he learns that his Ardra had died of a strange malady. But this sorrow turns to abject horror when he finds her grave empty and desecrated by crude footprints!



The cruiser lurched violently off the ground.

MARK RAYMOND'S heart beat in eager expectation as the dumpy interplanetary freighter of which

he was second mate sank slowly toward the New York space-port.

At last, after the long four months' voy-

age to Jupiter, he was back on Earth again!—back where his thoughts had been every day of those months, back on the planet that was home to him and to the girl who filled his dreams.

"I s'pose," remarked grizzled old Captain Thorpe dryly, as the freighter sank into its dock, "that you won't waste any time seeing that gal of yours."

"I'll say I won't—I'm going to marry her tomorrow," Mark replied happily. "So long, captain."

And hastening toward the opening space-door, he was first of the crew to push out into the bright sunlight and bustling activity of the great space-port.

Mark was hurrying toward the taxiplane stands when his eager pace slowed a little. A frown came on his clean, blonde young face as he recognized the stalwart figure and dark countenance of a man striding along the busy docks.

It was Burke Ullman. And as Ullman saw him, the big interplanetary engineer stopped, a curious smile on his sardonic face.

"Just get back, Raymond?" he greeted Mark. "And on your way out to Ardra's house, eh?"

"Yes, I am," Mark said stiffly. "What of it?"

He didn't like Burke Ullman and he knew that the feeling was reciprocated. The big, satirical engineer, his unsuccessful rival for Ardra Aston's affections, had never made any secret of his enmity.

But now, surprisingly, Ullman seemed almost friendly. There was a gleam of something like amusement in his black eyes, but his manner was one of frank cordiality.

"Why, that's fine," he told Mark. "Give my regards to Ardra. And I hope you two are happy together."

Mark's stiffness thawed a little in face of this unexpected friendliness.

"Decent of you to take it that way, Ullman," he said uncertainly.

"Not at all," the big engineer answered lightly. "Run along to Ardra now. I wish I could be there when you meet her."

And with a casual wave of his hand, Burke Ullman strode on among the busy docks. Mark looked after him a little doubtfully. He felt something insincere about the engineer's sudden cordiality—

To the devil with Ullman, he decided, and strode on with quickened pace. His hand happily felt in his pocket for the rare Jovian jewels he had brought home for Ardra. In so few minutes, he'd have her in his arms!

When the taxiplane set him down in front of the shining chromium suburban cottage where lived Ardra and her widowed mother, Mark Raymond paid the driver hastily and then hurried up the walk. He heard a bell ring inside the cottage as he crossed the electric eye on the step.

IT WAS Ardra's mother, a gray-haired woman who still had something of the girl's beauty, who opened the door. Her face was white and drawn, and at sight of the young space-sailor, her eyes filled suddenly with tears.

"Where's Ardra?" he cried eagerly. "I didn't radio I was arriving today—I want to surprise her."

To his amazement, the woman burst into a sob. A sudden fear clutched Mark.

"What's the matter?" he cried. "Ardra—"

Mrs. Aston was sobbing uncontrollably, and her voice was choked.

"Oh, Mark, if you'd only been here! A week ago—a strange sickness that struck Ardra—"

"Where is she? In a hospital?" he cried frantically.

"No, Mark." The woman hesitated, unable to speak for a moment. Then she whispered, "They took her four days ago—to the moon."

The blood drove from Mark Raymond's heart. He reeled, almost unable to stand

in the face of this icy news, this blasting of all his roseate hopes.

"To the moon?" he muttered stupefiedly, through stiff lips.

The girl's mother nodded. She did not need to say more. Mark Raymond well understood her dreadful meaning.

For the only people who were taken to the moon were—the dead! The moon was the cemetery of Earth.

It had been so for almost five centuries, ever since the beginning of space-travel. The moon, an airless, arid desert, was of no practical use to the people of Earth. Except for one thing—as a place to house their dead.

For that purpose, the moon was ideal. There was no corruption or decay on its barren surface, for there was no air or water or bacterial life there. The dead who were laid tenderly to rest there upon marble slabs in the open remained unchanged forever, in seeming eternal sleep.

For centuries now, all the dead of Earth had been taken there and solemnly left to slumber for eternity in the bright sunshine or deep shadow of the windless, soundless, lifeless world. And upon certain designated days, the bereaved could visit the moon and see their dead loved ones sleeping there as though they still lived.

"Ardra—dead?" Mark stumbled, unable fully to comprehend. "But she can't be dead, so quickly. See, I brought her these flame-jewels, from Jupiter. They were to be my wedding present—"

"My poor boy," uttered the woman, in torn sympathy. "If only you had been here! But you could have done nothing—all the physicians could do nothing. Ardra was stricken suddenly one night, died almost instantly. There was no one here but I and Burke Ullman."

"Burke Ullman?" The name stung Mark's numbed mind, and he raised his haggard face fiercely. "That devil—he knew Arda was dead. He was mocking me!"

Then he covered his face with his hands.

And when he finally took them away, his countenance was drawn, lined, years older in appearance.

"I'm going to the moon, today," he said thickly. "I've got to see Ardra again."

"But you can't go today," the woman said anxiously. "It isn't a visiting day—there isn't one for two weeks yet."

"Do you think I'll wait two weeks to see Ardra again?" Mark cried torturedly. "I'm going, now."

"But you know the penalties for visiting the moon except on the official days," Ardra's mother reminded him worriedly. "Please, Mark, wait until—"

But the young man was already stumbling unseeingly down the walk.

Mark never clearly remembered the next hour. He knew vaguely that he made his way back to the space-port, that he hired a small one-man space-cruiser, and that he lied stonily to the port officials, giving his destination as one of the asteroids now close to earth.

His grief so dazed him that he did all these things mechanically, unfeelingly, like a man in a dream. It was only when he found himself out in the cold black vault of space, with the dull shield of earth diminishing behind him as his torpedo-like little craft hummed toward the shining sickle of the moon, that he came to clear realization.

With dimmed, aching eyes, Mark stared ahead at the thin, gleaming sickle of the lifeless world. Somewhere there, in the great city of the silent dead who lay tranced forever on the barren satellite, was Ardra. And though she was dead, lost to him forever, he must go to her. That was all he knew.

The flat, shadowed expanse of the Mare Serenitatis rose toward him, stretching to serrated, rocky mountains whose fanged peaks were tipped with blazing sunlight. Upon this great plain lay the gigantic cemetery of earth, the necropolis in which countless millions of the dead lay dreaming eternity away.

MARK RAYMOND pulled himself together a little, headed his small craft toward the bordering mountains. He dared not land at the official landing field on the northern edge of the great necropolis. For there was the big guard-post, sheltered by an air-tight dome, which held the officials whose duty it was to guard the dead.

There were stringent laws against visiting the moon-cemetery on any but the official days, and under guidance of the guards. Those laws had been devised to protect the dead millions from those who might have dared to rob them of jewelry and other valuables upon their bodies. Mark knew well what chances he was taking in this visit.

But he did not care. What did it matter whether or not he got a term in the Mercurian prison colony, what did it matter whether he lived or died, now that Ardra was gone? All his world, all the future he had so eagerly planned, had faded into nothingness. There was left in his dazed mind only the aching desire to see again the girl he loved.

Softly, with the slightest of jars, Mark Raymond brought his little craft down to rest at the edge of the fanged hills. In a few moments he was inside his space-suit and glassite helmet. A moment more, and he stepped out through the air-lock of his ship.

A soft, silver glow, a wonderful radiance bathed the rocky plain. It was the earth-shine that relieves the lunar nights, the glow of the parent planet that loomed huge and silver in the black sky over Mark Raymond.

Mark started due westward through the unreal radiance. His lead-soled shoes dragged in the white rock dust. About him was the eternal, solemn silence of this world of the dead. He felt like the only living, moving being in the universe as he entered the great necropolis.

This city of the dead had no tombs or vaults, no graves dug beneath the surface.

All those protective devices were unnecessary on this airless world. The dead lay in the open glow of the silver earth, in beautiful simplicity.

Each lay upon a slab of white moon-marble, a few feet high. The slabs formed rows and avenues that stretched far away in the silver glow. Couches of white stone, they seemed, occupied by the motionless bodies of countless men and women and children.

Mark Raymond, his grief-dazed soul feeling doubly all the mystery and awe of death, moved between the rows of slabs, through the hushed, unchanging silence. Through his helmet, he looked at these who had done with life.

They lay as though they were but sleeping. Old men with snow-white hair and calm, wrinkled faces, other men and women still flushed with the prime of health, youngsters and girls in the bloom of youth, children who seemed sleeping tiredly after play.

No sound broke the solemn hush in which they slumbered. No wind stirred their white shrouds or their hair. They lay with quietly closed eyes and silent faces, as though dreaming of the huge silver world overhead, upon which once they had lived and loved and died.

Through the earth-lit city of the dead, Mark Raymond moved in dazed quest of Ardra. He saw by the dates on the slabs that he was in an older part of the necropolis. He moved on toward the north, until he had reached a section of the cemetery whose dead had only recently been laid to rest.

His tragic grief was a tearing thing in his breast as he searched along these newer rows of dead for the girl. It was not thus that he had planned to meet Ardra again! This was not the joyous reunion that he had dreamed of for so many weeks.

He stopped suddenly. His eyes, running along the slabs as he advanced, had seen the name he sought.

"Ardra Aston—2432-2453."

Mark stood, a hunched figure in his space-suit, staring at the chiselled words. For a moment he could not raise his eyes to look at the dead girl on the slab.

Then, with a hard lump in his throat seeming to choke him, he slowly raised his gaze. For a few moments he stared rigidly.

"Good God!" he muttered hoarsely, stupefiedly, inside his helmet.

The top of the slab was—unoccupied!

Mark stared wildly, unable to believe his eyes. What had happened to Ardra's body?

HE STUMBLED forward. Then he saw something that penetrated his dazed mind with an icy shock.

There were tracks around the slab on which Ardra's body had lain—tracks of lead-soled space-shoes, that led away southeastward through the necropolis.

Tracks of whom? Mark knew they could not be the footprints of those who had placed Ardra at rest here, for such prints were always reverently smoothed away.

"My God—grave-robbers!" he exclaimed hoarsely.

The ghastly trade of grave robbery had not been unheard of in this lunar city of the dead. Jewelry upon the unprotected bodies had tempted soulless thieves in the past, had necessitated the rules and guards which Mark Raymond had found it necessary to evade.

But if grave-robbers had been here, why had they taken Ardra's body as well as her ornaments? Mark sensed a ghastly mystery here. Hideous, formless suspicions rose in his mind.

He rushed forward, started to follow the footprints. They were deep, as though their maker had been carrying a heavy weight. And they might have been made a few minutes ago or a few days, since upon the changeless moon-plain they would remain unaltered forever.

Mark's brain was seething with wild,

horrible fears as he frantically followed the tracks through the earth-lit cemetery. Why should anyone want to steal Ardra's dead body?

The trail led out of the necropolis on the east side—and toward the nearby eastern mountains. As he advanced toward their looming, sun-tipped peaks, Mark Raymond saw something ahead that galvanized his muscles.

It was a small space-cruiser that he saw, lying in the deep black shadow of a rocky crag. At first he had thought it was his own cruiser, then had seen that this was a slightly larger ship. And the tracks he was following led straight toward it.

Mark was running now, his muscles strained to take him forward in great, floating leaps. Someone, for some ghastly reason, had stolen Ardra's body and taken it to this ship. And if the craft took off before he reached it—

Mark gasped with relief as he neared the cruiser. He had circles to approach it from the stern, so that he might not be glimpsed through its window-ports. Now, drawing the atom-pistol at the belt of his space-suit, he crept along the side of the little ship.

He stopped, went rigid, as he reached a window-port. Wildly, unbelievably, he stared in through the vacuum-sealed glass. He was looking into the front control compartment of the cruiser, which was brightly illuminated.

Upon a couch lay the lifeless form of Ardra Aston. Her eyes were closed in death, her lovely face white and still, her warm gold hair flowing over her white shroud! Mark's heart throbbed at sight of her, beautiful in death as she had been in life.

Then his eyes swung wildly to the man near the couch—a tall, stalwart man who was divesting himself of his space-suit and helmet. And as the helmet came off, Mark uttered a fierce, hissing exclamation inside his own helmet.

"Burke Ullman!"

It was the interplanetary engineer—the man who had been Mark's unsuccessful rival for Ardra's love while the girl had lived.

Ullman had put aside his suit, and now moved toward the couch on which lay the girl. The hair bristled on Mark's neck as he saw the engineer stoop over the dead girl, touch her hair, caress her with possessive hands.

Mark turned and ran wildly along the cruiser's side toward its airlock. The outer door was closed. But there was a stud on the outside, of course, by which the outer and inner doors could be manipulated.

He touched the stud, and softly the inner door closed; the outer one opened. Mark stepped inside. Another touch of a switch, and the outside door shut; the inner one opened. He stepped into the air-filled rear compartment of the cruiser, a bulky, space-suited figure clutching his pistol.

Mark went tensely to the door of the front compartment. He flung it open with a sudden gesture.

Burke Ullman looked up, startled. The engineer had been bending over the body of Ardra with a hollow needle and a thin vial of green liquid in his hand. He had not heard Mark's stealthy entrance through the airlock.

"Mark Raymond!" he cried, his dark face stiffening in stupefaction.

Mark reached up, unscrewed and tore away his glassite helmet. His atom-pistol covered Burke Ullman steadily. And his eyes were deadly as he confronted the engineer.

"Yes, it's Mark Raymond!" he choked. "And it seems I got here just in time. You fiend, what were you going to do with Ardra's body?"

BURKE ULLMAN seemed to recover his poise. A gleam flickered in his cold black eyes.

"In a way," he said deliberately, "I'm

glad you're here, Raymond. It will enable me to even an old score."

"You make one move and I'll blast you down," Mark raged. "I think I'm going to kill you anyway—a monster who could steal Ardra's dead body for God knows what unholy purpose, ought to die."

"Ardra is not dead," Ullman said flatly.

Mark stared at the engineer, stunned.

"You're crazy!" he cried at last. "Her mother saw her die!"

"She thought Ardra died, that's all," the engineer said coolly. He pointed to a small case on a table which contained a thin glass vial like the one in his hand, but filled with a bright red liquid instead of a green one.

"I injected that red drug into her blood one night, before she could resist or call anyone. It is an absolutely unique drug devised and sold to me by an old scientist out on Saturn. It has the power of inducing a catalepsy indistinguishable from death, one that suspends all the vital processes.

"The physicians Ardra's mother called certified her dead. She was brought here to the moon-cemetery and has lain as dead for days. But she's not dead, and the cold and airlessness of the moon could not affect her body, suspended as its vital processes are."

"You did that?" Mark breathed unbelievably. Then a great throb of joy shook him. He cried, "You can bring Ardra back to life, then?"

"It's what I was about to do," Ullman said calmly. He showed the hypodermic needle and the thin vial of green fluid in his hand. "This is the re-animating drug, the only antidote to the red drug. An injection of it into her blood, and Ardra will live again."

Broodingly, the engineer added, "It was the only way I could ever get her. Her childish infatuation for you was so strong that she wouldn't look at me. I decided recently to take a job offered me out in

the jungle-country of Venus, and I resolved to take Ardra with me, one way or another.

"The two drugs were the answer. I'd had something like this in mind when I bought them from the old Saturnian. I gave her a sudden jab of the red drug, and knew she'd be thought dead and brought to this moon-cemetery. I could wait a few days then secretly steal her body, revive her with the green drug, and be on my way to Venus with her. And that is exactly what I *still* intend to do, Raymond."

Mark Raymond's fingers tightened on the trigger of his pistol. He spoke in fierce, hard tones.

"Ullman, your hellish plan is ended. Hand over that vial of antidote, before I blast you down."

"If you blast me," answered Burke Ullman levelly, "you will destroy Ardra's one chance for life."

"What do you mean?" Mark cried.

"Simply that this vial is the only supply of the antidote in the whole solar system. The old Saturnian scientist who sold me the drugs died soon after. Their secret died with him. Destroy this vial of green liquid, and nothing in the system can ever wake Ardra from her living death.

"So you see, Raymond," crackled the interplanetary engineer's voice triumphantly, "I hold the whip hand here. You can blast me, yes—but not quickly enough to prevent me smashing this vial as I fall. And so when you kill me, you are sentencing Ardra forever to living death!"

Sweat beaded Mark Raymond's forehead as he perceived the strength of Ullman's position. He stared at the gloating engineer with wild eyes.

Burke Ullman raised his hand. The vial of precious green fluid was poised between his fingers, and Mark watched it with stricken, anguished eyes.

"Drop your gun and back to the wall," Ullman ordered crisply, "or I'll let this vial fall and smash!"

"You wouldn't dare!" the young man

cried hoarsely. "I'd kill you the next moment!"

"Would that bring Ardra back?" taunted the engineer. "Think, Raymond—think of her lying out there in the moon-cemetery for year after year, not really dead but not living either. That's what will happen to her unless you obey me."

Mark Raymond's soul was seething with horrible struggle. He knew the engineer meant it, that unless he obeyed, Ardra was doomed forever to sleep in deathly trance.

If he did obey, it meant death for him, Mark knew. Ullman would not let him live. And worse, it meant Ardra would be in the ruthless engineer's power, his captive in some hell-hole of a jungle outpost on Venus. Would it not be better to let her sleep on, than to have her suffer that?

MARK knew he couldn't do it. He couldn't condemn Ardra to an eternal suspended animation. Even if Ullman took her to Venus, there was always a chance that she could escape him. But once that vial smashed, there was no chance for Ardra until the world ended.

The atom-pistol clattered from Mark Raymond's hands to the floor. And stiffly, mechanically, the young man backed to the front of the control-compartment.

A flash of triumph in his black eyes, Burke Ullman swiftly stooped and recovered the weapon. Then, holding it against Mark's side, the engineer with his free hand bound Mark securely to one of the stanchions that supported the control-panel. He used a flexible metal rope, winding it tightly.

Then Ullman stepped back, his dark face gleaming with satisfied hate.

"I knew you would see the light of reason, Raymond," he smirked. "I shall attend to you when I have looked after Ardra."

"What are you going to do?" Mark demanded hoarsely.

"I am going to revivify Ardra. I am

going to give you the satisfaction of seeing her in my arms. And then I am going to give *you* the red drug!"

Mark had expected it when he had made his choice. He had foreseen that he himself would be thrust into the deathlike trance by Ullman. And though his soul was cold with horror at the thought of being plunged into that weird state that was neither death nor life, he knew that he would go into it gladly if it brought Ardra back to life.

Burke Ullman was again turning his attention to the girl. While Mark watched with haggard eyes, the engineer bound her limp wrists and ankles together. Then he filled his needle from the vial of green drug, and placed the point of the instrument against her forearm.

The needle sank in. Mark saw the engineer withdraw it, empty, and then saw Ullman bend over the girl with eager expectation. And with a tortured, yearning anticipation, Mark Raymond also watched her face.

In a moment Ardra's eyelids fluttered. Then a long sigh came brokenly from her parted lips. Her limbs stirred a little under the white shroud. And in a moment more, her lids opened; her blue eyes stared up bewilderedly.

"Burke Ullman!" she exclaimed as she perceived the man bending over her. Swift memory and fear flashed into her face. "You jabbed something into my shoulder—"

"That was in your house, a week ago, Ardra," the engineer told her. "We're not in your home now, we're not even on earth. We're on the moon."

"The moon?" she cried stupefiedly. "You mean—"

"I mean that you have been dead, my dear," Ullman said smoothly. "Not really dead, but enough like it that everyone was fooled. But now I have brought you back to life, and in gratitude you are going with me to make a lonely existence on Venus somewhat more tolerable."

"You're mad!" Ardra cried, struggling to sit up and discovering that her limbs were tied. Then, as her eyes wildly roamed the interior of the cruiser, she saw Mark Raymond tied to the stanchion by the control-panel.

"Mark!" she cried.

"You will have to forget Raymond, my dear," Ullman told the white-faced girl. "He is not going to Venus with us, I regret to say. He is going to stay here on the moon—not dead, but not living, either."

Mark yelled in hoarse rage, twisted wildly to free himself, as he saw the engineer grasp the struggling girl and possessively kiss her lips.

But the tough metal rope that held him to the stanchion was unbreakable. All his crazy efforts could not loosen it. Wildly he looked around him, in vain and desperate search for some weapon within grasp. But there was none, nor were his arms free to use it if he had one.

Ullman lowered the fainting girl's bound form back onto the couch, and straightened. There was a smile of pleasure on his dark face as he picked up the two vials of red and green liquid.

"Now for you, Raymond," he said edgely. "An injection of this red drug, and you will go into a sleep that will last while the universe lasts. But first—"

Deliberately, Burke Ullman uncorked the vial of green liquid and poured it out onto the floor.

"The only supply of the antidote in existence—and it is gone now," he taunted. "Nothing will ever revive *you*, Raymond—nothing!"

And tossing aside the empty vial, Ullman came forward toward Mark, with the vial of red drug and the hollow needle in his hand.

"It will be an easy exit, really," he mocked. "Just a pin-prick and then soothing sleep—sleep from which no rude hand will ever awaken you."

Mark Raymond's wild eyes at that mo-

ment perceived what he had been desperately searching for—a possible weapon, one which had only a chance in a thousand of succeeding, but which was his one last hope.

The starting switch on the control-panel! It was only a few feet from the stanchion to which he was tied, that panel. If he could reach the switch with his foot—

WITH a frantic motion, he raised his leg, prodded with his toe at the panel. Ardra was trying vainly to rise from her couch. Burke Ullman, advancing with the deadly drug in his hand, did not in that first moment realize what Mark was trying to do.

Mark's toe touched the starting switch. He pressed it in convulsively. And with a sudden loud roar from its atom tubes, the cruiser lurched violently off the ground.

The little ship gave but one convulsive leap and then hit the ground again with a jarring impact, as Mark withdrew his toe. That impact rolled Ardra off her couch. And it flung Burke Ullman against the wall of the compartment.

For a moment, Mark had a wild hope that his desperate plan had succeeded. But his hope died swiftly. For Ullman had not been stunned by the sudden jolt, as Mark had hoped he would be. The engineer was scrambling to his feet.

His dark face was deadly now in menace. As he had been flung against the wall, the vial in his hand had smashed, and the red liquid it had contained was dripping from his hand along with blood from the cuts made by the cracked glass.

"A neat trick, Raymond," he rasped, "but not neat enough. It did spoil my little plan to put you to sleep, though."

Impatiently, Ullman flung away the dripping red glass fragments in his hand. And the engineer drew the atom-pistol he had taken from Mark.

"I shall have to use this instead of the drug," he snapped. "It is not as satisfying

to me as the living death I had planned for you, but it will do."

Mark closed his eyes as Burke Ullman raised the weapon. He heard Ardra cry out frantically.

"No, Burke—don't kill him! I'll go anywhere with you, do anything you say, if you spare him!"

There was a moment's silence. The destroying, searing flash that Mark awaited did not come.

He opened his eyes. Burke Ullman was swaying on his feet, and a horrible expression had come into the engineer's dark face.

Stupefiedly, Ullman dropped the pistol and stared down at his red-stained hand.

"My hand—getting cold," Ullman whispered. "Cold, and numb—"

And then he shrieked wildly. "The red drug—it was injected into *my* blood when I fell! Those fragments of glass that cut my hand, let the drug enter my blood—"

He tottered around, began wildly to scabble on the floor where he had poured the green antidote.

"The antidote!" he sobbed. "There must be a little left, a few drops—"

But there was nothing on the metal floor but a drying green stain. Burke Ullman clawed at it insanely.

Then his body slowly stiffened. A strange, blank expression came over his face, and his body sagged along the floor and lay still.

Mark looked down at him dazedly. The engineer lay with face and body still, apparently lifeless.

"Caught," Mark whispered hoarsely. "Caught in his own trap. He's in the living death and nothing will ever revive him—he threw away the last of the antidote himself!"

"Mark!" Ardra was sobbing.

"Try to roll toward me, Ardra," he directed in an unsteady voice. "Maybe you can get me free."

The girl, her hands and feet still bound, inched along the floor to him. She reached up and with bound, nerveless hands fumbled at the metal rope that held him to the stanchion.

In a few minutes, Mark felt the rope loosen. He tore it away, cut the girl's bonds, and then for a long moment, held her tight in his arms.

"Ardra!" he whispered thickly. "I thought you dead—lost to me—"

She stirred in his arms. "Mark, let's get away from here, back to earth. Now!"

He looked down at Burke Ullman's sleeping, apparently lifeless form.

"There's no use to take him back to earth," he muttered. "We'll have to leave him here on the moon, with the dead—to sleep forever, as he meant me to sleep."

He donned his space-suit again and car-

ried the limp body outside. There he left Burke Ullman to slumber forever in the deep shadow of the tall crags.

TEN minutes later, the little cruiser rose from the shadows with a roar of atom-tubes. And as it slanted upward from the shadowy, silent world of the dead, as it headed toward the great, warm, silver sphere of earth, Ardra clung to Mark Raymond's side.

"Don't look back, Mark," she shivered. "I don't want ever again even to look at the moon, when I think that for days I lay there amid the dead."

"No, we won't look back," he told her, drawing her closer to him, happiness returning to his tired, haggard face. "You and I, Ardra, for the rest of our lives—we're going to look ahead."

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