

Axiom's edge

Renegade Sci Fi & Fantasy
Fall 2025



Classic Sci Fi
Stories, Comics,
and More

Philip K. Dick,
Jerome Bixby,
Charles Beaumont

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Welcome to *Axiom's Edge Renegade Sci Fi & Fantasy Magazine!*

Welcome to my magazine, and I invite you to join me for what will hopefully be an ongoing adventure. I decided to create this magazine because I wanted to write my stories and not sacrifice them to what has come of the publishing industry these days. Sadly, if you can even get the attention of the big companies (and several of the smaller ones as well), they may hold the rights to your works for several years after it is published or even longer.

That's not the way I intend for this magazine to work, though. We will pay for the exclusive rights for first publication and will request the right to reprint it at least once (which you will also get paid for). After one year, the rights revert back to you, and you can go want you want with your work. The publishing industry has turned writers and artists into practical slave labor, especially those starting out. At **Axiom's Edge**, we want to be renegades (thus the title of the magazine) and give new (or existing) talent a better chance than the publishing big wigs might.

As for this first issue, it is designed as a proof of concept demonstrating the basic direction we plan to go with this publication. It has mostly reprints of classic sci fi/fantasy stories and comics that are currently in the public domain, along with one of my stories, as well as some new articles and some that have previously appeared on our sites CancelledSciFi.com and Cult-SciFi.com. Going forward, the plan is to have mostly new stories and comics, as well as new articles and reviews covering the sci fi, fantasy and horror genres.

This tryout issue gives the basic layout and concept of the magazine to demonstrate to readers, distributors, and sponsors what we will be putting out going forward. And yes, we are aware that quality of the comic book reprints contained herein are substandard. That is mostly because those stories are in the public domain, and coming by high quality reproductions of that work is not the easiest task. For the new comics to be published going forward, we plan on much better quality, and if we do reprints of older material, we will strive for better visuals.

Apart from that, what you see here will be very close to what we will put out going forward, though we are open to comments, criticisms and suggestions. Our plan is to put out a magazine that appeals to the general sci fi/fantasy reader and covers as much of the genre as possible. And we also want to try to make it as affordable as possible. For the print edition, we have decided to pass on the super-slick, high quality paper because that drives up the cost. We will let **SFX**, **Infinity**, **Star Wars Insider** and others do that because we are not trying to compete with them. We are going for a simpler magazine that offers stories and articles in the genre and that is affordable. And we believe that the way we have put this together succeeds with the quality while keeping the price down. Let us know if you agree, and/or if you have ideas for improvement.

If you would like to contribute stories, comics, articles, etc., go to AxiomsEdgeSciFi.com for more information on submissions. We are looking for new talent and hope to offer a fresh take on the genre that will appeal to a wide yet discerning audience. Also, if you would like to be part of the editorial staff or would like to advertise in the magazine, check out that site above as well.

Our next step will be a crowdfunding campaign to cover the cost and get things moving forward on the first issue with all new material. We will be putting up a campaign site, so keep an eye out for updates at AxiomsEdgeSciFi.com. In addition, we will continue to reprint classics of the genre in a different publication, and you can see a preview of that on the last page of this issue.

We certainly hope that you join us on our upcoming journey through the worlds of science fiction, fantasy, and horror, and we look forward to your feedback as we continue to grow.

--John J. Joex

The Eyes Have It

By Philip K. Dick

It was quite by accident I discovered this incredible invasion of Earth by lifeforms from another planet. As yet, I haven't done anything about it; I can't think of anything to do. I wrote to the Government, and they sent back a pamphlet on the repair and maintenance of frame houses. Anyhow, the whole thing is known; I'm not the first to discover it. Maybe it's even under control.

I was sitting in my easy-chair, idly turning the pages of a paperbacked book someone had left on the bus, when I came across the reference that first put me on the trail. For a moment I didn't respond. It took some time for the full import to sink in. After I'd comprehended, it seemed odd I hadn't noticed it right away.

The reference was clearly to a nonhuman species of incredible properties, not indigenous to Earth. A species, I hasten to point out, customarily masquerading as ordinary human beings. Their disguise, however, became transparent in the face of the following observations by the author. It was at once obvious the author knew everything. Knew everything — and was taking it in his stride. The line (and I tremble remembering it even now) read:

... his eyes slowly roved about the room.

Vague chills assailed me. I tried to picture the eyes. Did they roll like dimes? The passage indicated not; they seemed to move through the air, not over the surface. Rather rapidly, apparently. No one in the story was surprised. That's what tipped me off. No sign of amazement at such an outrageous thing. Later the matter was amplified.

... his eyes moved from person to person.

There it was in a nutshell. The eyes had clearly come apart from the rest of him and were on their own. My heart pounded and my breath choked in my windpipe. I had stumbled on an accidental mention of a totally unfamiliar race. Obviously non-Terrestrial. Yet, to the characters in the book, it was perfectly natural — which suggested they belonged to the same species.

And the author? A slow suspicion burned in my mind. The author was taking it rather *too easily* in his stride. Evidently, he felt this was quite a usual thing. He made absolutely no attempt to conceal this knowledge. The story continued:

... presently his eyes fastened on Julia.

Julia, being a lady, had at least the breeding to feel indignant. She is described as blushing and knitting her brows angrily. At this, I sighed with relief. They weren't *all* non-Terrestrials. The narrative continues:

... slowly, calmly, his eyes examined every inch of her.

Great Scott! But here the girl turned and stomped off and the matter ended. I lay back in my chair gasping with horror. My wife and family regarded me in wonder.

"What's wrong, dear?" my wife asked.

I couldn't tell her. Knowledge like this was too much for the ordinary run-of-the-mill person. I had to keep it to myself. "Nothing," I gasped. I leaped up, snatched the book, and hurried out of the room.

In the garage, I continued reading. There was more. Trembling, I read the next revealing passage:

... he put his arm around Julia. Presently she asked him if he would remove his arm. He immediately did so, with a smile.

It's not said what was done with the arm after the fellow had removed it. Maybe it was left standing upright in the corner. Maybe it was thrown away. I don't care. In any case, the full meaning was there, staring me right in the face.

Here was a race of creatures capable of removing portions of their anatomy at will. Eyes, arms — and maybe more. Without batting an eyelash. My knowledge of biology came in handy, at this point. Obviously

they were simple beings, uni-cellular, some sort of primitive single-celled things. Beings no more developed than starfish. Starfish can do the same thing, you know.

I read on. And came to this incredible revelation, tossed off coolly by the author without the faintest tremor:

... outside the movie theater we split up. Part of us went inside, part over to the cafe for dinner.

Binary fission, obviously. Splitting in half and forming two entities. Probably each lower half went to the cafe, it being farther, and the upper halves to the movies. I read on, hands shaking. I had really stumbled onto something here. My mind reeled as I made out this passage:

... I'm afraid there's no doubt about it. Poor Bibney has lost his head again.

Which was followed by:

... and Bob says he has utterly no guts.

Yet Bibney got around as well as the next person. The next person, however, was just as strange. He was soon described as:

... totally lacking in brains.

There was no doubt of the thing in the next passage. Julia, whom I had thought to be the one normal person, reveals herself as also being an alien life form, similar to the rest:

... quite deliberately, Julia had given her heart to the young man.

It didn't relate what the final disposition of the organ was, but I didn't really care. It was evident Julia had gone right on living in her usual manner, like all the others in the book. Without heart, arms, eyes, brains, viscera, dividing up in two when the occasion demanded. Without a qualm.

... thereupon she gave him her hand.

I sickened. The rascal now had her hand, as well as her heart. I shudder to think what he's done with them, by this time.

... he took her arm.

Not content to wait, he had to start dismantling her on his own. Flushing crimson, I slammed the book shut and leaped to my feet. But not in time to escape one last reference to those carefree bits of anatomy whose travels had originally thrown me on the track:

... her eyes followed him all the way down the road and across the meadow.

I rushed from the garage and back inside the warm house, as if the accursed things were following me. My wife and children were playing Monopoly in the kitchen. I joined them and played with frantic fervor, brow feverish, teeth chattering.

I had had enough of the thing. I want to hear no more about it. Let them come on. Let them invade Earth. I don't want to get mixed up in it.

I have absolutely no stomach for it.

*Philip K. Dick (1928-1982) had his first short story published in 1951 at the age of 22, and continued to write for the rest of his life. Many of his stories were published in the science fiction pulp magazines like **Planet Stories**, **If**, **The Magazine of Science Fiction and Fantasy**, **Galaxy**, and more.*

*He is best known for his works that have been adapted to movies and television like **Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep** (**Blade Runner**, 1982), "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale" (**Total Recall**, 1990), "The Minority Report", (**Minority Report**, 2002), **The Man in the High Castle** (**The Man in the High Castle**, 2015), and more.*

Sadly, he passed away at age 53 from a stroke, but he has secured his place as one of the greats of science fiction literature having penned 44 novels and over 120 short stories in his career. 23 of his works have been adapted to film and/or television with more on the way.

This short piece gives us a glimpse of the author's wicked sense of humor. for it.

Elegy

By Charles Beaumont

It was an impossible situation: an asteroid in space where no asteroid should have been—with a city that could only have existed back on Earth!

"Would you mind repeating that?"

"I said, sir, that Mr. Friden said, sir, that he sees a city."

"A city?"

"Yes sir."

Captain Webber rubbed the back of his hand along his cheek.

"You realize, of course, that that is impossible?"

"Yes sir."

"Send Mr. Friden in to see me, at once."

The young man saluted and rushed out of the room. He returned with a somewhat older man who wore spectacles and frowned.

"Now then," said Captain Webber, "what's all this Lieutenant Peterson tells me about a city? Are you enjoying a private little joke, Friden?"

Mr. Friden shook his head emphatically. "No sir."

"Then perhaps you'd like to explain."

"Well, sir, you see, I was getting bored and just for something to do, I thought I'd look through the screen—not that I dreamed of seeing anything. The instruments weren't adjusted, either; but there was something funny, something I couldn't make out exactly."

"Go on," said Captain Webber, patiently.

"So I fixed up the instruments and took another look, and there it was, sir, plain as could be!"

"There *what* was?"

"The city, sir. Oh, I couldn't tell much about it, but there were houses, all right, a lot of them."

"Houses, you say?"

"Yes sir, on an asteroid."

Captain Webber looked for a long moment at Mr. Friden and began to pace nervously.

"I take it you know what this might mean?"

"Yes sir, I do. That's why I wanted Lieutenant Peterson to tell you about it."

"I believe, Friden, that before we do any more talking I'll see this city for myself."

Captain Webber, Lieutenant Peterson and Mr. Friden walked from the room down a long corridor and into a smaller room. Captain Webber put his eye to a circular glass and tapped his foot.

He stepped back and rubbed his cheek again.

"Well, you were right. That *is* a city—or else we've all gone crazy. Do you think that we have?"

"I don't know, sir. It's not impossible."

"Lieutenant, go ask Mr. Milton if he can land us on an asteroid. Give him all the details and be back in ten minutes." Captain Webber sighed. "Whatever it is," he said, "it will be a relief. Although I never made a special announcement, I suppose you knew that we were lost."

"Oh yes, sir."

"And that we ran almost entirely out of fuel several months ago, in fact shortly after we left?"

"We knew that."

The men were silent.

"Sir, Mr. Milton says he thinks he can land us but he can't promise exactly where."

"Tell Mr. Milton that's good enough."

Captain Webber waited for the young man to leave, then looked again into the glass.

"What do you make of it, sir?"

"Not much, Friden, not much. It's a city and that's an asteroid; but how the devil they got there is beyond me. I still haven't left the idea that we're crazy, you know."

Mr. Friden looked.

"We're positioning to land. Strange—"

"What is it?"

"I can make things out a bit more clearly now, sir. Those are earth houses."

Captain Webber looked. He blinked.

"Now, *that*," he said, "is impossible. Look here, we've been floating about in space for—how long is it?"

"Three months, sir."

"Exactly. For three months we've been bobbling aimlessly, millions of miles from earth. No hope, no hope whatever. And now we're landing in a city just like the one we first left, or almost like it. Friden, I ask you, does that make any sense at all?"

"No, sir."

"And does it seem logical that there should be an asteroid where no asteroid should be?"

"It does not."

They stared at the glass, by turns.

"Do you see that, Friden?"

"I'm afraid so, sir."

"A lake. A lake and a house by it and trees ... tell me, how many of us are left?"

Mr. Friden held up his right hand and began unbending fingers.

"Yourself, sir, and myself; Lieutenant Peterson, Mr. Chitterwick, Mr. Goebelin, Mr. Milton and...."

"Great scott, out of thirty men?"

"You know how it was, sir. That business with the Martians and then, our own difficulties—"

"Yes. Our own difficulties. Isn't it ironic, somehow, Friden? We band together and fly away from war and, no sooner are we off the earth but we begin other wars.... I've often felt that if Appleton hadn't been so aggressive with that gun we would never have been kicked off Mars. And why did we have to laugh at them? Oh, I'm afraid I haven't been a very successful captain."

"You're in a mood, sir."

"Am I? I suppose I am. Look! There's a farm, an actual farm!"

"Not really!"

"Why, I haven't seen one for twenty years."

The door flew open and Lieutenant Peterson came in, panting. "Mr. Milton checked off every instruction, sir, and we're going down now."

"He's sure there's enough fuel left for the brake?"

"He thinks so, sir."

"Lieutenant Peterson."

"Yes sir?"

"Come look into this glass, will you."

The young man looked.

"What do you see?"

"A lot of strange creatures, sir. Are they dangerous? Should we prepare our weapons?"

"How old are you, Lieutenant?"

"Nineteen, Captain Webber."

"You have just seen a herd of cows, for the most part—" Captain Webber squinted and twirled knobs "—Holsteins."

"Holsteins, sir?"

"You may go. Oh, you might tell the others to prepare for a crash landing. Straps and all that."

The young man smiled faintly and left.

"I'm a little frightened, Friden; I think I'll go to my cabin. Take charge and have them wait for my orders."

Captain Webber saluted tiredly and walked back down the long corridor. He paused as the machines suddenly roared more life, rubbed his cheek and went into the small room.

"Cows," said Captain Webber bracing himself.

The fiery leg fell into the cool air, heating it, causing it to smoke; it burnt into the green grass and licked a craterous hole. There were fireflags and firesparks, hisses and explosions and the weary groaning sound of a great beast suddenly roused from sleep.

The rocket landed. It grumbled and muttered for a while on its finny tripod, then was silent; soon the heat vanished also.

"Are you all right, sir?"

"Yes. The rest?"

"All but Mr. Chitterwick. He broke his glasses and says he can't see."

Captain Webber swung himself erect and tested his limbs. "Well then, Lieutenant, has the atmosphere been checked?"

"The air is pure and fit to breathe, sir."

"Instruct the others to drop the ladder."

"Yes sir."

A door in the side of the rocket opened laboriously and men began climbing out: "Look!" said Mr. Milton, pointing. "There are trees and grass and—over there, little bridges going over the water."

He pointed to a row of small white houses with green gardens and stony paths.

Beyond the trees was a brick lodge, extended over a rivulet which foamed and bubbled. Fishing poles protruded from the lodge window.

"And there, to the right!"

A steel building thirty stories high with a pink cloud near the top. And, separated by a hedge, a brown tent with a barbeque pit before it, smoke rising in a rigid ribbon from the chimney.

Mr. Chitterwick blinked and squinted his eyes. "What do you see?"

Distant and near, houses of stone and brick and wood, painted all colors, small, large; and further, golden fields of wheat, each blown by a different breeze in a different direction.

"I don't believe it," said Captain Webber. "It's a *park*—millions of miles away from where a park could possibly be."

"Strange but familiar," said Lieutenant Peterson, picking up a rock.

Captain Webber looked in all directions. "We were lost. Then we see a city where no city should be, on an asteroid not shown on any chart, and we manage to land. And now we're in the middle of a place that belongs in history-records. We may be crazy; we may all be wandering around in space and dreaming."

The little man with the thin hair who had just stepped briskly from a treeclump said, "Well, well," and the men jumped.

The little man smiled. "Aren't you a trifle late or early or something?"

Captain Webber turned and his mouth dropped open.

"I hadn't been expecting you, gentlemen, to be perfectly honest," the little man clucked, then: "Oh dear, see what you've done to Mr. Bellefont's park. I do hope you haven't hurt him—no, I see that he is all right."

Captain Webber followed the direction of the man's eyes and perceived an old man with red hair seated at the base of a tree, apparently reading a book.

"We are from Earth," said Captain Webber.

"Yes, yes."

"Let me explain: my name is Webber, these are my men."

"Of course," said the little man.

Mr. Chitterwick came closer, blinking. "Who is this that knows our language?" he asked.

"Who—Greypoole, Mr. Greypoole. Didn't *they* tell you?"

"Then you are *also* from Earth?"

"Heavens yes! But now, let us go where we can chat more comfortably." Mr. Greypoole struck out down a small path past scorched trees and underbrush. "You know, Captain, right after the last consignment something happened to my calendar. Now, I'm competent at my job, but I'm no technician, no indeed: besides, no doubt you or one of your men can set the doodad right, eh? Here we are."

They walked onto a wooden porch and through a door with a wire screen; Lieutenant Peterson first, then Captain Webber, Mr. Friden and the rest of the crew. Mr. Greypoole followed.

"You must forgive me—it's been a while. Take chairs, there, there. Now, what news of—home, shall I say?" The little man stared.

Captain Webber shifted uncomfortably. He glanced around the room at the lace curtains, the needle-point tapestries and the lavender wallpaper.

"Mr. Greypoole, I'd like to ask some questions."

"Certainly, certainly. But first, this being an occasion—" the little man stared at each man carefully, then shook his head "—ah, do you all like wine? Good wine?"

He ducked through a small door.

Captain Webber exhaled and rose.

"Now, don't start talking all at once," he whispered. "Anyone have any ideas? No? Then quick, scout around—Friden, you stay here; you others, see what you can find. I'm not sure I like the looks of this."

The men left the room.

Mr. Chitterwick made his way along a hedgerow, feeling cautiously and maintaining a delicate balance. When he came to a doorway he stopped, squinted and entered.

The room was dark and quiet and odorous. Mr. Chitterwick groped a few steps, put out his hand and encountered what seemed to be raw flesh; he swiftly withdrew his hand. "Excuse," he said, then, "Oh!" as his face came against a slab of moist red meat. "Oh my!"

Mr. Chitterwick began to tremble and he blinked furiously, reaching out and finding flesh, cold and hard, unidentifiable.

When he stepped upon the toe of a large man with a walrus mustache, he wheeled, located the sunlight and ran from the butcher shop....

The door of the temple opened with difficulty, which caused Mr. Milton to breathe unnaturally. Then, once inside, he gasped.

Row upon row of people, their fingers outstretched, lips open but immobile and silent, their bodies prostrate on the floor. And upon a strange black altar, a tiny woman with silver hair and a long thyrsus in her right hand.

Nothing stirred but the mosaic squares in the walls. The colors danced here; otherwise, everything was frozen, everything was solid.

Even the air hung suspended, stationary.

Mr. Milton left the temple....

There was a table and a woman on the table and people all around the woman on the table. Mr. Goeblin did not go a great distance from the doorway: he rubbed his eyes and stared.

It was an operating room. There were all the instruments, some old, most old, and the masked men and women with shining scissors and glistening saws in their hands. And up above, the students' aperture: filled seats, filled aisles.

Mr. Goeblin put his other hand about the doorknob.

A large man stood over the recumbent figure, his lusterless eyes regarding the crimson-puce incision, but he did not move. The nurses did not move, or the students. No one moved, especially the smiling middle-aged woman on the table.

Mr. Goeblin moved....

"Hello!" said Lieutenant Peterson, after he had searched through eight long aisles of books, "Hello!"

He pointed his gun menacingly.

There were many books with many titles and they all had a fine grey dust about them. Lieutenant Peterson paused to examine a bulky volume, when he happened to look above him.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

The mottled, angular man perched atop the ladder did not respond. He clutched a book and looked at the book and not at Lieutenant Peterson.

"Come down—I want to talk with you!"

The man on the ladder did nothing unusual: he remained precisely as he had been.

Lieutenant Peterson climbed up the ladder, scowling; he reached the man and jabbed with a finger.

Lieutenant Peterson looked into the eyes of the reading man and descended hastily and did not say goodbye....

Mr. Greypoole reentered the living room with a tray of glasses. "This is apricot wine," he announced, distributing the glasses, "But—where are the others? Out for a walk? Ah well, they can drink theirs later. Incidentally, Captain, how many Guests did you bring? Last time it was only twelve. Not an extraordinary shipment, either: they all preferred the ordinary things. All but Mrs. Dominguez—dear me, she was worth the carload herself. Wanted a zoo, can you imagine—a regular zoo, with her put right in the bird-house. Oh, they had a time putting that one up!"

Mr. Greypoole chuckled and sipped at his drink.

"It's people like Mrs. Dominguez who put the—the life?—into Happy Glades. Or do you find that disrespectful?"

Captain Webber shook his head and tossed down his drink.

Mr. Greypoole leaned back in his chair and crossed a leg. "Ah," he continued, "you have no idea how good this is. Once in a while it does get lonely for me here—no man is an island, or how does it go? Why, I can remember when Mr. Waldmeyer first told me of this idea. 'A grave responsibility,' he said, 'a *grave* responsibility.' Mr. Waldmeyer has a keen sense of humor, needless to say."

Captain Webber looked out the window. A small child on roller skates stood still on the sidewalk. Mr. Greypoole laughed.

"Finished your wine? Good. Explanations are in order, though first perhaps you'd care to join me in a brief turn about the premises?"

"Fine. Friden, you stay here and wait for the men." Captain Webber winked a number of times and frowned briefly, then he and Mr. Greypoole walked out onto the porch and down the steps.

Mr. Friden drummed his fingers upon the arm of a chair, surveyed his empty glass and hiccoughed softly.

"I do wish you'd landed your ship elsewhere, Captain. Mr. Bellefont was quite particular and, as you can see, his park is hopelessly disfigured."

"We were given no choice, I'm afraid. The fuel was running out."

"Indeed? Well then, that explains everything. A beautiful day, don't you find, sir? Fortunately, with the exception of Professor Carling, all the Guests preferred good weather. Plenty of sunshine, they said, or crisp evening. It helps."

They walked toward a house of colored rocks.

"Miss Daphne Trilling's," said Mr. Greypoole, gesturing. "They threw it up in a day, though it's solid enough."

When they had passed an elderly woman on a bicycle, Captain Webber stopped walking.

"Mr. Greypoole, we've *got* to have a talk."

Mr. Greypoole shrugged and pointed and they went into an office building which was crowded with motionless men, women and children.

"Since I'm so mixed up myself," the captain said, "maybe I'd better ask—just who do you think we are?"

"I'd thought you to be the men from the Glades of course."

"I don't have the slightest idea what you're talking about. We're from the planet Earth. They were going to have another war, the 'Last War' they said, and we escaped in that rocket and started off for Mars. But something went wrong—fellow named Appleton pulled a gun, others just didn't like the Martians—we needn't go into it; they wouldn't have us so Mars didn't work out. Something else went wrong then, soon we were lost with only a little store of fuel and supplies. Then Mr. Friden noticed this city or whatever it is and we had enough fuel to land so we landed."

Mr. Greypoole nodded his head slowly, somehow, sadder than before.

"I see.... You say there was a war on Earth?"

"They were going to set off X-Bomb; when they do, everything will go to pieces. Or everything has already."

"What dreadful news! May I inquire, Captain, when you have learned where you are—what do you intend to do?"

"Why, live here, of course!"

"No, no—try to understand. You could not conceivably fit in here with us."

Captain Webber glanced at the motionless people. "Why not?" Then he shouted, "What is this place? *Where am I?*"

Mr. Greypoole smiled.

"Captain, you are in a cemetery."

"Good work, Peterson!"

"Thanks, sir. When we all got back and Friden didn't know where you'd gone, well, we got worried. Then we heard you shouting."

"Hold his arms—there. You heard this, Friden?"

Mr. Friden was trembling slightly. He brushed past a man with a van Dyke beard and sat down on a leather stool. "Yes sir, I did. That is, I think I did. What shall we do with him?"

"I don't know, yet. Take him away, Lieutenant, for now. I want to think a bit. We'll talk to Mr. Greypoole later on."

Lieutenant Peterson pulled the smiling little man out into the street and pointed a gun at him.

Mr. Chitterwick blinked into the face of a small child.

"Man's insane, I guess," said Mr. Milton, pacing.

"Yes, but what about all *this*?" Mr. Goeblin looked horrified at the stationary people.

"I think I can tell you," Mr. Friden said. "Take a look, Captain."

The men crowded about a pamphlet which Mr. Friden had placed on the stool.

Toward the top of the pamphlet and in the center of the first page was a photograph, untinted and solemn; it depicted a white cherub delicately poised on a granite slab. Beneath the photograph, were the words: HAPPY GLADES.

Captain Webber turned the pages and mumbled, glancing over his shoulder every once in a while.

"What is it, sir?" asked Mr. Chitterwick of a frozen man in a blue suit with copper buttons.

"It's one of those old level cemeteries!" cried Mr. Milton. "I remember seeing pictures like it, sir."

Captain Webber read aloud from the pamphlet.

"For fifty years," he began, "an outstanding cultural and spiritual asset to this community, HAPPY GLADES is proud to announce yet another innovation in its program of post-benefits. NOW YOU CAN ENJOY THE AFTER-LIFE IN SURROUNDINGS WHICH SUGGEST THE HERE-AND-NOW. Never before in history has scientific advancement allowed such a plan."

Captain Webber turned the page.

"For those who prefer that their late departed have really *permanent, eternal* happiness, for those who are dismayed by the fragility of all things mortal, we of HAPPY GLADES are proud to offer:

"1. The permanent duplication of physical conditions identical to those enjoyed by the departed on Earth. Park, playground, lodge, office building, hotel or house, etc., may be secured at varying prices. All workmanship and materials specially attuned to conditions on ASTEROID K₇ and guaranteed for PERMANENCE.

"2. PERMANENT conditioning of late beloved so that, in the midst of surroundings he favored, a genuine Eternity may be assured.

"3. Full details on HAPPY GLADES' newest property, Asteroid K₇, may be found on page 4."

The captain tossed the pamphlet to the floor and lit a cigarette. "Did anyone happen to notice the date?"

Mr. Milton said, "It doesn't make any sense! There haven't been cemeteries for ages. And even if this were true, why should anyone want to go all the way through space to a little asteroid? They might just as well have built these things on Earth."

"Who would want all this when they're dead, anyway?"

"You mean all these people are dead?"

For a few moments there was complete and utter silence in the lobby of the building.

"Are those things true, that we read in your booklet?" asked Captain Webber after Lieutenant Peterson had brought in the prisoner.

"Every word," said the little man bowing slightly, "is monumentally correct."

"Then we want you to begin explaining."

Mr. Greypoole tushed and proceeded to straighten the coat of a middle-aged man with a cigar.

Mr. Goeblin shuddered.

"No, no," laughed Mr. Greypoole, "*these* are only imitations. Mr. Conklin upstairs was head of a large firm; absolutely in love with his work, you know—that kind of thing. So we had to duplicate not only the office, but the building and even replicas of all the people in the building. Mr. Conklin himself is in an easy chair on the twentieth story."

"And?"

"Well, gentlemen, as you know, Happy Glades is the outstanding mortuary on Earth. And, to put it briefly, with the constant explorations of planets and moons and whatnot, our Mr. Waldmeyer hit upon this scheme: Seeking to extend the ideal hereafter to our Guests, we bought out this little asteroid. With the vast volume and the tremendous turnover, as it were, we got our staff of scientists together and they offered this plan—to duplicate the exact surroundings which the Guest most enjoyed in Life, assure him privacy, permanence (a very big point, as you can see), and all the small things not possible on Earth."

"Why here, why cart off a million miles or more when the same thing could have been done on Earth?"

"My communication system went bad, I fear, so I haven't heard from the offices in some while—but, I am to understand there is a war beginning? *That* is the idea, Captain; one could never really be sure of one's self down there, what with all the new bombs and things being discovered."

"Hmm," said Captain Webber.

"Then too, Mr. Waldmeyer worried about those new societies with their dreadful ideas about cremation—you can see what that sort of thing could do to the undertaking business? His plan caught on, however, and soon we were having to turn away Guests."

"And where do you fit in, Mr. Greypoole?"

The little man seemed to blush; he lowered his eyes. "I was head caretaker, you see. But I wasn't well—gastric complaints, liver, heart palpitations, this and that; so, I decided to allow them to ... *change* me. They turned all manner of machines on my body and pumped me full of fluids and by the time I got here, why, I was almost, you might say, a machine myself! Fortunately, though, they left a good deal of Greypoole. All I know is that whenever the film is punctured, I wake and become a machine, do my prescribed duties in a complex way and—"

"The film?"

"The covering that seals in the conditioning. Nothing can get out, nothing get in—except things like rockets. Then, it's self-sealing, needless to say. But to get on, Captain. With all the technical advancements, it soon got to where there was no real work to be done here; they threw up the film and coated us with their preservative or, as they put it, Eternifier, and—well, with the exception of my calendar and the communications system, everything's worked perfectly, including myself."

No one said anything for a while. Then Captain Webber said, with great slowness, "You're lying. This is all a crazy, hideous plot." The little man chuckled at the word plot.

"In the first place, no cemetery or form of cemetery has existed on Earth for—how long, Friden?"

Mr. Friden stared at his fingers. "Years and years."

"Exactly. There are communal furnaces now."

Mr. Greypoole winced.

"And furthermore," continued the captain, "this whole concept is ridiculous."

Mr. Chitterwick threw down the pamphlet and began to tremble. "We should have stayed home," he remarked to a young woman who did not answer.

"Mr. Greypoole," Webber said, "I think that you know more than you're saying. You didn't seem very surprised when you learned we weren't the men you expected; you don't seem very surprised now that I tell you that your 'Happy Glades' and all the people connected with it have been dead for ages. So, why the display of interest in our explanations, why—"

The faint murmur, "A good machine checks and double checks," could be heard from Mr. Greypoole, who otherwise said nothing.

"I speak for my men: we're confused, terribly confused. But whatever this is, we're stuck, can't you see? All we want is a place to begin again—" Captain Webber paused, looked at the others and went on in a softer tone. "We're tired men, Mr. Greypoole; we're poorly equipped, but we do have weapons and if this is some hypnotic kind of trap...."

The little man waved his hand, offendedly.

"There are lakes and farms and all we need to make a new start—more than we'd hoped for, much more."

"What *had* you hoped for, Captain?"

"Something. Nothing. Just escape—"

"But I see no women—how could you begin again, as you suggest?"

"Women? Too weak; they would not have lasted. We brought along eggs and machines—enough for our needs."

Mr. Greypoole clucked his tongue. "Mr. Waldmeyer certainly did look ahead," he muttered, "he certainly *did*."

"Will we be honest now? Will you help us?"

"Yes, Captain, I will help you. Let us go back to your rocket." Mr. Greypoole smiled. "Things will be better there."

Captain Webber signaled. They left the building and walked by the foot of a white mountain.

They passed a garden with little spotted trees and flowers, a brown desert of shifting sands and a striped tent; they walked by strawberry fields and airplane hangars and coal mines; tiny yellow cottages, cramped apartments, fluted houses and Tudor houses and houses without description....

Past rock pools and a great zoo full of animals that stared out of vacant eyes; and everywhere, the seasons changing gently: crisp autumn, cottony summer, windy spring and winters cool and white....

The six men in uniforms followed the little man with the thin hair. They did not speak as they walked, but looked around, stared, craned, wondered....

And the old, young, middle-aged, white, brown, yellow people who did not move wondered back at the men with their eyes....

"You see, Captain, the success of Mr. Waldmeyer's plan?"

Captain Webber rubbed his cheek.

"I don't understand," he said.

"But you do see, all of you, the perfection here, the quality of Eternal Happiness which the circular speaks of?"

"Yes ... we see that."

"Here we have happiness and brotherhood, here there have never been wars or hatreds or prejudices. And now you who were many and left Earth to escape war and hatred, who were many by your own word and are now only six, you want to begin life *here*?"

Cross-breezes ruffled the men's hair.

"To *begin*, when from the moment of your departure you had wars of your own, and killed, and hurled mocking prejudice against a race of people not like you, a race who rejected and cast you out into space again! From your own account! No gentlemen, I am truly sorry. It may be that I misjudged those of you who are left, or rather, that Happy Glades misjudged you. You may mean well, after all—and, of course, the location of this asteroid was so planned by the Board as to be uncharted forever. But—oh, I am sorry." Mr. Greypoole sighed.

"What does he mean by that?" asked Mr. Friden and Lieutenant Peterson.

Captain Webber was gazing at a herd of cows in the distance.

"What do you mean, you're 'sorry'?" demanded Mr. Friden.

"Well...."

"Captain Webber!" cried Mr. Chitterwick, blinking.

"Yes, yes?"

"I feel queer."

Mr. Goeblin clutched at his stomach.

"So do I!"

"And me!"

Captain Webber looked back at the fields, then at Mr. Greypoole. His mouth twitched in sudden pain.

"We feel awful, Captain!"

"I'm sorry, gentlemen. Follow me to your ship, quickly." Mr. Greypoole motioned curiously with his hands and began to step briskly.

They circled a small pond where a motionless boy strained toe-high on an extended board. And the day once again turned to night as they hurried past a shadowed cathedral.

When they were in sight of the scorched trees, Mr. Milton doubled up and screamed.

"Captain!"

Mr. Goeblin struck his forehead. "I told you, I told you we shouldn't have drunk that wine! Didn't I tell you?"

"It was the wine—and we all drank it. *He* did it, *he* poisoned us!"

"Follow me!" cried Mr. Greypoole, making a hurried gesture and breaking into a run. "Faster!"

They stumbled hypnotically through the park, over the Mandarin-bridges to the rock.

"Tell them, Captain, tell them to climb the ladder."

"Go on up, men."

"But we're poisoned, sir!"

"*Hurry!* There's—an antidote in the ship."

The crew climbed into the ship.

"Captain," invited Mr. Greypoole.

Captain Webber ascended jerkily. When he reached the open lock, he turned. His eyes swept over the hills and fields and mountains, over the rivers and houses and still people. He coughed and pulled himself into the rocket.

Mr. Greypoole followed.

"You don't dislike this ship, do you—that is, the surroundings are not offensive?"

"No; we don't dislike the ship."

"I am glad of that—if *only* I had been allowed more latitude! But everything functions so well here; no real choice in the matter, actually. No more than the Sealing Film. And they *would* leave me with these human emotions! I see, of course, why the communications system doesn't work, why my calendar is out of commission. Kind of Mr. Waldmeyer to arrange for them to stop when his worst fears finally materialized. Are the men all seated? No, no, they mustn't writhe about the floor like that. Get them to their stations—no, to the stations they would most prefer. And hurry!"

Captain Webber ordered Mr. Chitterwick to the galley, Mr. Goeblin to the engineering chair, Mr. Friden to the navigator's room....

"Sir, what's going to happen? *Where's the antidote?*"

Mr. Milton to the pilot's chair....

"The pain will last only another moment or so—it's unfortunately part of the Eternifier," said Mr. Greypoole. "There, all in order? Good, good. Now, Captain, I see understanding in your face; that pleases me more than I can say. My position is so difficult! But you can see, when a machine is geared to its job—which is to retain permanence on HAPPY GLADES—well, a machine is a machine. Where shall we put *you*?"

Captain Webber leaned on the arm of the little man and walked to the open lock.

"You *do* understand?" asked Mr. Greypoole.

Captain Webber's head nodded halfway down, then stopped; and his eyes froze forever upon the City.

"A pity...."

The little man with the thin hair walked about the cabins and rooms, straightening, dusting; he climbed down the ladder, shook his head and started down the path to the wooden house.

When he had washed all the empty glasses and replaced them, he sat down in the large leather chair and adjusted himself into the most comfortable position.

His eyes stared in waxen contentment at the homely interior, with its lavender wallpaper, needle-point tapestries and tidy arrangement.

He did not move.

*You may not realize it, but you may be familiar with Charles Beaumont's work, especially if you have watched **The Twilight Zone**. He got his start in the 1950s writing short stories, many of which had science fiction and/or horror elements. He then started working for television and was a frequent contributor to **TZ**, penning the scripts for 22 episodes including classics like "Perchance to Dream" and "The Howling Man" (both based on his own short stories). He wrote two novels, but neither had sci fi or horror elements, though **The Intruders** does offer some interesting social commentary similar to what we would see from Rod Serling's*

anthology series. Sadly, Beaumont died at the age of 38 from a mysterious brain disease, but his legacy has lived on in his works.



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TRIUMPH OVER TERROR

THE MOST TERRIFYING STORY EVER TOLD... THE STORY OF A TOMORROW THAT NEVER CAME-- YET IT CHANGED THE FUTURE OF EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD ON EARTH!

IS THE EARTH IN PERIL? ARE MARS AND VENUS INHABITED? WHAT IS THE REAL MEANING OF THE FLYING SAUCERS? TO MILLIONS OF AMERICANS, A NEW FORM OF LITERATURE IS IN THE MAKING...

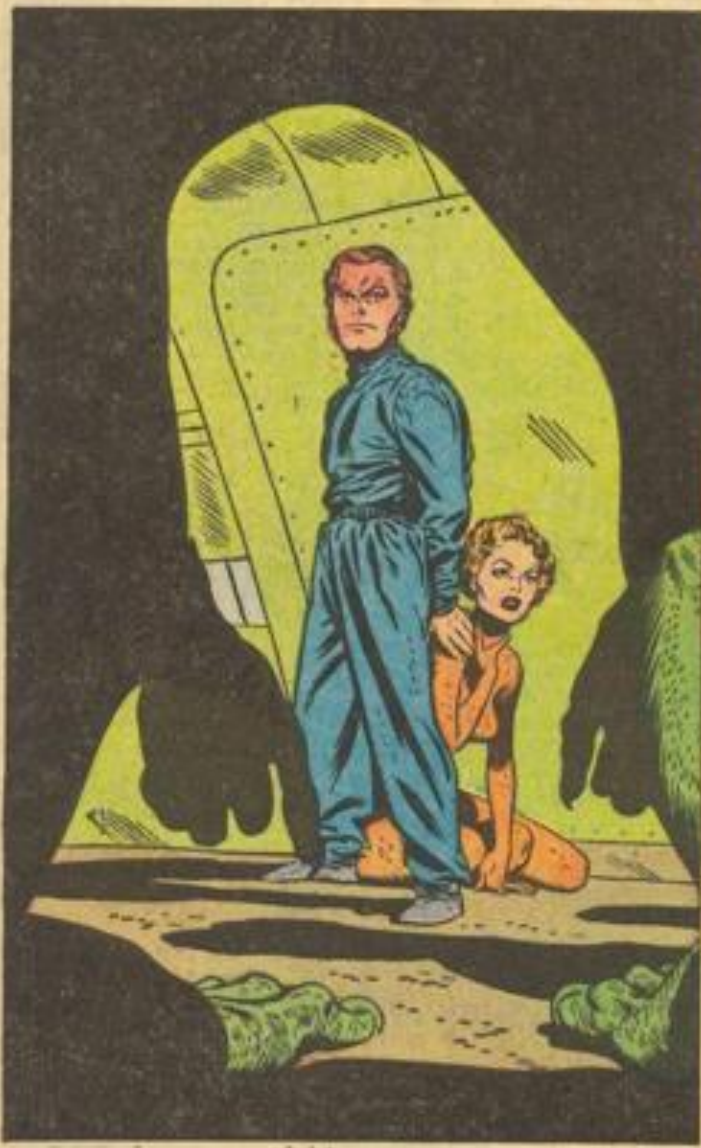


A NEW WORLD OF WONDER IS OPENING UP... THE WORLD OF SCIENCE FICTION! WE TAKE YOU FIRST TO MR. AVERAGE CITIZEN...

TO ME, SCIENCE FICTION IS FIRST-RATE ENTERTAINMENT! IT'S LIKE, WELL, LIKE HOPPING THE SUPERCHIEF AND RIDING STRAIGHT INTO TOMORROW!



WE KIDS LIKE SCIENCE FICTION, TOO! WE NEVER MISS THE SPACE STORIES ON TV AND--



FOR YOUNG AND OLD ALIKE... ON EVERY CORNER NEWS-STAND!



IF YOU ASK ME--SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS DESERVE TO BE POPULAR! THEY HAVE AN UNCANNY GIFT FOR PREDICTING THE FUTURE!

I KNOW! THEY EVEN PREDICTED THE ATOM BOMB!



THE DALLAS COURIER
ALIENS VIA MARS
THE DAILY TIMES-HERALD
WORLD TRIBUNE
STRANGE SIGNALS
A RUMOR!
MIDWEST PHIL
THE DAILY
SALIS
ARMY OFFIC
LOS ANGELES SPEAKER
FINDING SAUCER
ROCKET TO MOON
PREDICTED IN 1953
SCIENCE FICTION TOPS IN POLL



BUT TO THOMAS ALDEN, WELL-KNOWN WRITER OF SCIENCE FICTION...

IT'S FLATTERING TO BE TOLD HOW BRILLIANT YOU ARE! BUT IF I WATCH ANY MORE TV PROGRAMS, I WON'T HAVE TIME TO WRITE THE STUFF!



RIGHT NOW I SHOULD BE WORKING ON A NEW STORY FOR BILL GRAYSON! BUT HE'S A TOUGH EDITOR TO PLEASE! AND I CAN'T SEEM TO GET AN IDEA! PERHAPS IF I--WHA--!



A VENUSIAN BIRD WOMAN!

DON'T LOOK SO STARTLED, DEAR! IT'S ME...YOUR OWN PRECIOUS LITTLE WIFE!



WE'RE GOING TO A SCIENCE-FICTION MASQUERADE PARTY, REMEMBER? COME ON, TOM-- PUT ON YOUR COSTUME! IT WILL STIMULATE YOU-- GIVE YOU IDEAS!

WELL, ALL RIGHT, JOAN! BUT I SHOULD STAY HOME, AND WORK!



A LITTLE LATER, TOM AND JOAN ARRIVE AT THE HOME OF THE WEALTHY SCHOLAR AND PUBLISHER, FREDERICK GATES...

GOOD GRIEF, THE PARTY'S IN FULL SWING! IT'S HARD TO REALIZE WE'RE STILL ON EARTH!

I'M SO GLAD WE CAME! NEARLY ALL OF THE BIG NAME WRITERS IN SCIENCE FICTION WILL BE HERE TONIGHT!





HELLO, TOM!
JOAN SHOWED
ME YOUR
COSTUME
YESTERDAY,
SO I KNOW
IT'S YOU!

BILL
GRAYSON!
UH... SAY
ABOUT THAT
STORY! I - I'M
SORRY...



FORGET IT, TOM!
I'M NOT AN EDITOR
TONIGHT— JUST THE
MAN FROM SATURN!
IF YOU'LL FOLLOW
ME, I'LL SHOW YOU
SOMETHING THAT'LL
REALLY MAKE YOU
GOGGLE-EYED!



A FLYING SAUCER!
H-HOW IN BLAZES
DID THAT GET
HERE?

I CAN'T FIND GATES TO ASK HIM!
OBVIOUSLY HE HAD IT BUILT TO
MAKE THE PARTY SOMETHING TO
REMEMBER! ISN'T
IT TREMENDOUS?



I'LL SAY IT'S
TREMENDOUS!
COME ON, JOAN!
I'VE GOT TO
FIND OUR HOST!
A MAN WHO'D
GO TO ALL
THAT TROUBLE
DESERVES
PRAISE!

TOM!
THOSE
LIZARD
COSTUMES!
THERE'S SOME-
THING... ODD
ABOUT THEM!



DID YOU NOTICE
HOW STRANGELY
THEY MOVE? THEY
DON'T WALK—
THEY GLIDE!

OH, COME NOW!
YOUR NERVES
ARE GETTING
OUT OF HAND!



IT'S AMAZING THAT
GATES DISAPPEARED
JUST WHEN EVERYONE
WANTS TO COMPLIMENT
HIM ON THE SUCCESS
OF THE PARTY!

I CAN'T GET
THOSE LIZARDS
OUT OF MY
MIND! WHY
SHOULD SO MANY
GUESTS WEAR
THE SAME HIDEOUS
COSTUMES?



SUDDENLY...

GATES!
STAY BACK,
JOAN!



BUT JOAN ALDEN IS NOT ONE TO SHRINK FROM
STARK TRAGEDY...

HE WAS
STRUCK DOWN
WITH THIS! IT'S
THE MOST PERFECT
IMITATION OF A
FUTURE SCIENCE
WEAPON I EVER
SAW!

HOW DO YOU
KNOW IT'S AN
IMITATION?
TOM, I'M
FRIGHTENED!
THOSE
LIZARDS!



I SAY THAT THAT WEAPON WAS NOT MADE ON EARTH! LOOK AT THOSE CLAW MARKS--THE WAY THE GROUND'S BEEN TRAMPLED! HE MUST'VE BEEN ATTACKED BY SOMETHING FENDISH!



LISTEN TO ME, JOAN! AT A MASQUERADE PARTY, PEOPLE DO CRAZY THINGS! CHANCES ARE SOMEONE SIMPLY TRIED TO FRIGHTEN GATES! HE STRUGGLED--AND THE PRACTICAL JOKE WENT TOO FAR!





IT'S NO USE, DARLING! STOP FIGHTING THEM! OH, PLEASE--YOU MUST! THEY'LL KILL YOU!



DO YOU THINK HIS LOVE FOR HIS MATE WILL MAKE HIM OBEY US OR MUST WE USE THE PAR-ALYSIS RAY?

IT WOULD BE UNWISE TO USE THE RAY, CLUGG! IT MIGHT KEEP US FROM SCANNING HIS BRAIN WAVES, AND COMMUNICATING WITH HIM THROUGH THE MICRO-TRANSMITTER!



YES... THERE IS NO NEED FOR THE RAY! HE HAS CEASED TO STRUGGLE! WE'LL IMPRISON HIM WITH THE OTHERS UNTIL WE HAVE IN OUR POWER ALL OF THE EARTHIAN WHO ARE DANGEROUS TO US!



FOR A DREAD INSTANT, THE MOON IS ECLIPSED BY A CLOUD! THEN...

THOSE TWO EARTHIAN MUST NOT SEE US! WE'LL SILENCE THEM QUICKLY! SET UP THE BEAM PROJECTOR!



THOSE PEOPLE ARE MY FRIENDS! IF YOU HARM THEM, I'LL-- OH, WHAT A FOOL I AM TO THINK THEY CAN UNDERSTAND ME!



THAT LIGHT! IT'S BLINDING ME--AH!!



YOU INHUMAN DEVILS! YOU'VE KILLED THEM!

HE'S AGITATED! OBVIOUSLY HE THINKS WE'VE KILLED THEM! IF I COULD COMMUNICATE WITH HIM, I'D ASSURE HIM OF THEIR SAFE REVIVAL!



WE COULD'VE KILLED THEM! BUT DOES ONE TRAMPLE ON AN INSECT OUT OF ANNOYANCE? ONLY DANGEROUS EARTHIAN LIKE HIMSELF ARE MARKED FOR DEATH!

YES, THE STRANGE ONES WHO CAN SEE FAR INTO THE FUTURE, AND KNOW WHAT IS TO BE! THEY ALONE WOULD REVEAL OUR PLANS FOR THE CONQUEST OF THIS PLANET!



AN INSTANT OF CHILLY SILENCE-- THEN, AS THE SHADOWS DEEPEN...

CANG!!

INTO THE SPACESHIP FROM THE STARS... STRANGE AND TERRIFYING BEYOND ALL HUMAN IMAGINATION!

DARLING, WE DON'T KNOW WHAT HORRIBLE PURPOSE THEY HAVE IN MIND! W-WHAT IF THEY USE US AS HUMAN GUINEA PIGS--

STEADY, JOAN! THEY'RE HIGHLY INTELLIGENT, AND MAY NOT BE INCAPABLE OF PITY!



CLEVE! CLEVE MARSTON! AND JOHN SPEARS! AT LEAST... WE WON'T BE ALONE!

THAT'S RIGHT, TOM! WE'RE ALL SCIENCE-FICTION WRITERS... UNDER SENTENCE OF DEATH!



TOM, THEY'RE WISE BEYOND OUR HUMAN UNDERSTANDING! THEY KNEW THAT MOST OF AMERICA'S LEADING SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS WOULD BE HERE TONIGHT! THEY FEAR US BECAUSE THEY THINK WE CAN REALLY SEE INTO THE FUTURE, AND WOULD PREVENT THEM FROM CONQUERING THE EARTH!



SO THAT'S WHY THEY STRUCK GATES DOWN! THEY WANTED US TO BELIEVE HE BUILT THE SPACE SHIP-- THAT IT WASN'T THE REAL THING! BY POSING AS GUESTS, THEY COULD SIEZE US BY STEALTH AND BRING US HERE ONE BY ONE!



I PREDICTED THE ATOMIC BOMB-- TWO YEARS BEFORE HIROSHIMA! IT WAS JUST A SHREWD IMAGINATIVE GUESS! BUT THEY REFUSE TO BELIEVE THAT! I'LL NEVER GET OUT OF HERE ALIVE! I'LL DIE LIKE A TRAPPED ANIMAL!



EASY, JOHN! YOU'LL BE IN GOOD COMPANY! STARTING WITH JULES VERNE, SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS HAVE PREDICTED EVERY REALLY GREAT DISCOVERY OF THE PAST CENTURY! WE SHOULD BE PROUD OF THAT RECORD, AND STAND FIRM!



THEY QUESTIONED YOU? WHEN, CLEVE?

JUST BEFORE THEY BROUGHT YOU HERE! THEY MICRO-SCAN OUR BRAINS, AND OUR THOUGHTS ARE FLASHED ON A SCREEN! WE THOUGHT WE COULD SAVE OURSELVES BY DENIALS, BUT-- WHAT'S THAT?







BUT THE FUTURE MAY BE CHANGED! IF WE REMAIN UNHARMED AND YOU RETURN TO EARTH IMMEDIATELY, THE WRATH OF MANKIND WILL NOT BE RELEASED AGAINST YOU! BUT THEN YOU MUST DEPART FOREVER!

THE EARTHIAN SPOKE-- AND WHAT WE SAW AND HEARD WAS HORRIBLE! WE MUST RETURN TO EARTH TO SAVE OURSELVES FROM DESTRUCTION! WE MUST GIVE UP ALL OUR HOPES FOR CONQUEST!

DARLINS, WE'RE COMING HOME!

AND SO JOAN AND TOM RETURN TO EARTH... THE WORLD IS SAVED FROM THE CREATURES FROM SPACE, DEFEATED BY THE GREATEST WEAPON OF ALL-- THE MIND OF MAN! **END**



TARKA

CRUSADER from MARS

in *Mission Through Space*

IN CAASO, THE CAPITOL OF MARS, AN ESPECIALLY CONVENED COURT HAS FOUND TARKA GUILTY OF MURDERING HIS RIVAL FOR ZIRA'S AFFECTIONS! ZIRA HAS BEEN FOUND EQUALLY GUILTY SINCE SHE WAS THE CAUSE OF THE TRAGEDY!



MY LORDS! BEFORE THIS SHAME FELL ON US, WE TWO WERE GOOD AND USEFUL CITIZENS OF MARS! GIVE US THIS CHANCE, I PLEAD WITH YOU, TO REDEEM OURSELVES!



HASTILY A VOTE IS TAKEN...

MY CHILDREN! YOU KNOW THAT EARTH HAS LONG BEEN A SOURCE OF CONCERN TO US OF THE MORE ADVANCED PLANETS! GO THEREFORE, AND SEEK TO CHANGE EARTH'S EVIL WAYS... SHOULD YOU FAIL, EARTH MUST BE DESTROYED, AND YOU WITH IT!



A FEW HOURS LATER, A ROCKET STANDS READY AT THE SPACE-PORT...



TARKA, YOU AND ZIRA WILL REPORT TO LO WINCRO, SPACE MARSHAL OF DISC-STATION #6! HE MAINTAINS A PERMANENT OBSERVATION POST IN THE EARTH'S STRATOSPHERE! FAREWELL!

SEVERAL DAYS LATER, TARKA SIGHTS THE GIANT DISC-STATION...



SPLENDID, ZIRA! THEY'VE PREPARED A LANDING CUFF FOR US!



SO YOU'RE THE FELONS WHO WISH TO WORK YOUR WAY BACK TO GRACE, EH? I AM MARSHAL LO WINCRO!



A FEW MOMENTS LATER, A SMALL DISC-CRAFT WHIRLS TOWARD THE EARTH!



AND IN A SMALL FOREST OUTSIDE THE CAPITOL OF HERZEGOVINA...



THESE EARTH CLOTHES THE MARSHAL GAVE US MAKE A PERFECT DISGUISE!

PERHAPS! BUT HOW VERY FRUMPY THEY ARE!



THE MARSHAL THOUGHT OF EVERYTHING! OUR CREDENTIALS ARE ALL IN ORDER! YOU'RE A BUSINESS MAN AND I'M YOUR SECRETARY-- WHAT DO SECRETARIES DO, TARKA?

MEANWHILE, IN THE HEART OF HERZEGOVINA, PRIME MINISTER VLASHTI DROBINKO IS PROCEEDING WITH THE "SECRET" PLANS OF ATTACK...



...YES, MALAKOFF, I KNOW THE CHEMICALS ARE HARD TO GET! BUT I'M EXPECTING A REPRESENTATIVE FROM A SOUTH AFRICAN CHEMICAL COMPANY AT ANY MOMENT! IF HE'LL SELL US THE MATERIALS, WE CAN FINISH OUR GERM CULTURES!



BALOOSHKA, IT'S TOO BAD WE CAN'T DEAL IN THESE CHEMICALS WITH ANY OF THE BIG FOREIGN POWERS.. BUT WE CAN'T TIP OUR HAND!

YOU ARE RIGHT, SIR! BUT SOON IT WILL DO THEM LITTLE GOOD TO KNOW OUR PLANS, FOR WE WILL DO THE DICTATING... TO THE WORLD!



YOUR EXCELLENCY! THERE ARE TWO CALLERS TO SEE YOU!

OF COURSE! THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CHEMICAL COMPANY! SHOW THEM IN, OSIP!



I AM CLAUDE WHEELER, OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN CHEMICAL ENTERPRISE, AND THIS IS MY PERSONAL SECRETARY, MISS LANDON!

SPLENDID! PLEASE BE SEATED, MISS LANDON, MR. WHEELER!



SO THE TWO MARTIANS ATTEMPT
TO GO THROUGH 'CHANNELS'...



PERHAPS WE CAN GET
SOME ACTION AT THE
PENTAGON!



YOU'LL HAVE TO TAKE
THE MATTER UP WITH
MAJOR JACKSON!
DOWN THIS HALL
TO RING THREE!



THE MAJOR IS AT
A STAFF MEET-
ING! TRY CAPTAIN
JENKS! DOWN THIS
CORRIDOR...



ENTIRELY OUT OF
MY JURISDICTION!
SEE MAJOR
JACKSON!

TANGLED IN RED TAPE, TARKA AND ZIRA
STAND BEWILDERED IN A CORRIDOR...



ARE YOU THE GENTLEMAN
WHO IS WAITING TO SEE
GENERAL HUNT?

I-- YES, I
WANT TO SEE
THE GENERAL!



I HAVE NO
APPOINTMENT
WITH THIS
MAN!

BUT I **MUST** SEE YOU,
GENERAL! I HAVE
INFORMATION OF THE
GREATEST
IMPORTANCE!



REALLY, SIR! EVEN IF YOUR FANTASTIC TALE
WERE TRUE, OUR RADAR SCREENS
WILL STOP THE ATTACK!
GOOD DAY, SIR!

AFTER
LEAVING
THE
PENTAGON,
TARKA
AND ZIRA
VISIT
NEWSPAPERS
AND
BROAD-
CASTING
STATIONS,
BUT
NO
ONE
TAKES
THEM
SERIOUSLY!



WHAT
NOW,
TARKA?

THERE'S ONLY ONE THING
TO DO ZIRA! LET'S GO!



WHEN TARKA REGAINS CONSCIOUSNESS, HE IS A PRISONER...



IF ONLY I
AM IN TIME!



A MOMENT AFTER ZIRA
DELIVERS HER MESSAGE
TO LO WINGRO, MARTIAN
INTERCEPTER DISC-CRAFT
PLUMMET TOWARD EARTH.



AT THE SAME TIME, A
SMALL FORCE OF
AMERICAN JETS STREAK
SKYWARD TO INTERCEPT
ELEMENTS PICKED UP
BY THE RADAR SCREENS.



BUT THE HEAVY CONCENTRATION
OF HERZEGOVINIAN
PLANES IS TOO MUCH FOR
THE SMALL UNIT! THE JETS
ARE SHOT DOWN AND THE
GERM LADEN PLANES
HEAD ON FOR WASHINGTON



WHEN SUDDENLY THE MARTIAN DISC-CRAFT
DROP FROM THE CLOUDS LIKE AVENGING
HAWKS, THEIR PARELLO-RAYS BITING HUGE
GAPS IN THE ENEMY FORMATION...



WHEN RADIO
REPORTS
OF THE
DESTRUCTION
OF THEIR
FLEET
REACHES
HERZEGOVINA
PANIC
SPREADS
AMONG THE
PEOPLE!
DROBINKO
SUMMONS
TARKA
FROM
PRISON TO
GET MORE
INFORMATION,
BUT
TARKA
STRIKES
OUT FOR
FREEDOM...

YOU! THIS IS ALL
YOUR FAULT!
YOU RUINED
EVERYTHING!
I'LL KILL YOU!
I... OHNN!

NOT THIS
TIME,
DROBINKO!
I HAVE
OTHER
PLANS FOR
YOU!



TARKA'S
CRAFT
WHIZZES
TO THE
ROOF
OF THE
UNITED
NATIONS
BUILDING
IN NEW
YORK
CITY!
HE
DEPOSITS
DROBINKO,
AND
SUDDENLY
BLASTS
OFF AS
HE
HEARS
TWO
GUARDS
APPROACH-
ING...

HEY, FRED!
LOOK AT
THIS! I
THOUGHT
I HEARD
A NOISE!

HOW D'YA LIKE
THAT? LOOKS LIKE
DROBINKO! SAY!
THERE'S A NOTE
PINNED TO HIS
SHIRT!



LEADERS OF THE
EARTH!
HERE IS THE
MAN RESPONSIBLE
FOR THE ATTACK
ON THE UNITED
STATES. SEE
THAT JUSTICE
IS DONE.

WELL, OUR FIRST VISIT
TO EARTH WAS
MEMORABLE... BUT
RIGHT NOW THE COUNCIL
IS SIGNALLING! EVIDENT-
LY THERE IS MORE TO
DO BEFORE EARTH CAN
BE FREE OF EVIL!



The End

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SOON THE EARTH WILL BE AN INCANDESCENT BALL AND WILL REMAIN SO FOR MILLIONS OF YEARS... ALL I HAVE TO DO IS TURN ON THE M-RAY!

THE SUN MAKER!

ALDAR, THE GREAT SCIENTIST OF THE MOON'S SUBTERRANEAN WORLD, HAD THE SOLUTION FOR BRINGING HEAT TO THE COLD MOON, BUT IT WOULD MEAN THE END OF THE EARTH AS A HABITABLE PLANET!

IN THE INNER WORLD OF THE MOON, AN ARGUMENT ENSUED BETWEEN THE LUNAR KING AND ALDAR THE SCIENTIST...

OUR SATELLITE COULD BECOME A BEAUTIFUL WORLD LIKE EARTH IF ONLY WE HAD MORE HEAT, YOUR MAJESTY!

BUT YOUR PLAN, ALDAR, IT IS JUST TOO UNTHINKABLE!



YOU MEAN... YOU REALLY BELIEVE THERE IS LIFE ON OUR HOST PLANET, EARTH? I DOUBT THAT LIFE CAN EXIST ON IT! THERE IS TOO MUCH MOISTURE!



BUT I HAVE NOTED GREAT LIGHTS ARE FLASHED ON THE EARTH'S SURFACE AT TIMES THROUGH MY TELESCOPE!

YES, I SAW THEM BUT I BELIEVE THEY ARE MERELY VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS!



EDITOR'S NOTE: THE FLASHES CAUSED BY HYDROGEN BOMB TEST EXPLOSIONS IN THE PACIFIC COULD BE EASILY SEEN BY THE NAKED EYE BY ANYONE ON THE MOON.

AT ANY RATE WE MUST
THINK OF OUR OWN PRO-
GRESS... IF THERE IS
LIFE ON EARTH IT
MUST BE SACRIFICED
FOR OUR GOOD!



THINK OF IT,
BOLAN, YOU, THE
RULER OF THE MOON
WILL BE HONORED
FOREVER FOR
MAKING OUR
SURFACE
LIVEABLE!



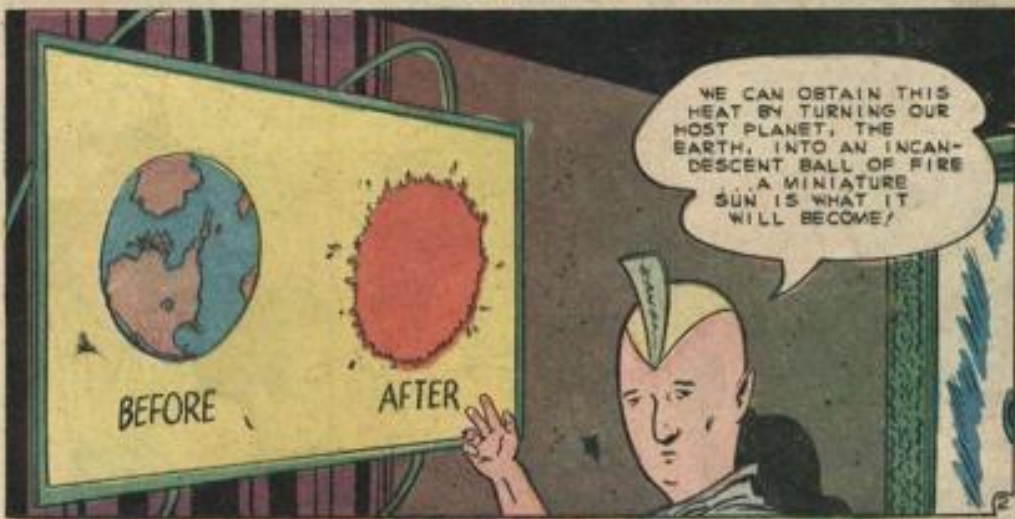
BUT OUR PEOPLE ARE CON-
TENT WITH OUR SUBTERRA-
NEAN WORLD! WE HAVE
LIVED FOR EONS UNDER
THE SURFACE! HOWEVER,
I SHALL ADDRESS THE
PEOPLE ABOUT THE
MATTER...



AND SO BOLAN
THE BOTH, RULER
OF ALL THE
MOON'S 4,000,000
SUBJECTS SPOKE
TO THEM...



MY DEAR PEOPLE, OUR
GIFTED SCIENTIST, ALDAR,
HAS PERFECTED A PLAN TO
GIVE US HEAT SO THAT OUR
SURFACE CAN SUSTAIN
LIFE...



WE CAN OBTAIN THIS
HEAT BY TURNING OUR
HOST PLANET, THE
EARTH, INTO AN INCAN-
DESCENT BALL OF FIRE
A MINIATURE
SUN IS WHAT IT
WILL BECOME!



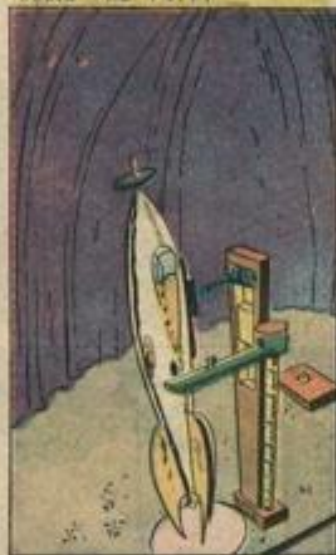


ALDAR WAS GIVEN A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE/ THE PLANS FOR TURNING THE EARTH INTO A FIERY BALL OF HYDROGEN BY A CHAIN REACTION SYSTEM WAS TO BE CARRIED OUT/

ALDAR PAINTED GLOWING MENTAL PICTURES OF HOW THE MOON'S SURFACE WOULD BE GREEN AND FERTILE AFTER THE NEW SUN WAS CREATED/



A SPACE CRAFT WAS DE- VISED THAT WOULD CARRY THE M-RAY AS THE SUN MAKING MACHINE WAS CALLED... AFTER MONTHS OF TESTING, IT WAS READY AND ALDAR AND HIS SCIENTISTS WOULD MAKE THE TRIP/



THROUGH AN AIRLOCK IN A CRATER THE SHIP TOOK OFF, POWERED BY ELEC- TROMAGNETIC FORCES...



THE TRANSFORMATION OF EARTH WOULD BE INSTAN- TANEOUS/

WE MUST GET TO WITHIN 500 MILES OF THE EARTH'S SURFACE... NEXT, WE WILL TURN ON THE M-RAY FOR A FEW SECONDS WHEN WE ARE IN RANGE... THEN WE WILL HURRY BACK TO THE MOON/





END

THE HEAP



OUR STRANGE TALE HERE BEGINS DURING WORLD WAR I...WHEN THE CRACK GERMAN AIR FORCE KNEW ITS GREATEST GLORY...WHEN THE REST OF THE WORLD MARVELLED AT TEUTON AIR DARING...AND A DESOLATE POLISH SWAMP BECAME THE SCENE OF A CREATURE'S DEVELOPMENT INTO A THREAT THAT THE WORLD HAD NOT YET SEEN... A CREATURE THAT WAS BORN BECAUSE A MAN *REFUSED* TO DIE...AND THIS WAS UNFORTUNATE... BECAUSE IT RESULTED IN THE SHAGGY MONSTER KNOWN AS

THE **HEAP!**



AND IN 1946, A MADMAN HAD THE HEAP
SHIPPED TO AMERICA...



IN THE SMALL TOWN OF LAWNSDALE.. RICKIE
WOOD TALKS WITH HIS FATHER...



THAT'S QUITE A MODEL
YOU HAVE THERE, RICKIE!
BUT WHY THE NAZI
MARKINGS?

OH, IT'S SUPPOSED
TO BE A REAL
MODEL OF A NAZI
PLANE, DAD. COME ON
OUT.. I'M GOING TO
FLY IT.



THERE SHE
GOES! LOOK
AT HER
CLIMB!



SOMETHING'S WRONG!
SHE DIDN'T CIRCLE..
SHE'S FLYING
STRAIGHT
AHEAD!



SHE WENT DOWN IN
THE WOODS.. I'LL
HAVE TO GO AND
GET HER!

I'LL SEE YOU AT
THE HOUSE,
RICKIE!



BUT AS THE LITTLE NAZI PLANE ZOOMS
TO EARTH IN THE WOODS, IT IS WATCHED
...BY THE HEAP!

THE MIGHTY *HEAP* CATCHES THE
MODEL PLANE...



THE GERMAN MARKINGS ON THE MODEL BRING EX-
CITEMENT TO A SLUGGISH BRAIN THAT STRUGGLES
TO REMEMBER!



AND NOW IT ALL COMES BACK...THE *HEAP*
SEEMS TO ONCE AGAIN CONNECT HIMSELF
WITH A HANDSOME GERMAN FLIER...AND
FIGHTING PLANES IN
THE AIR...AND HE
HUGS THE 'MODEL OF
MEMORIES'..



WHILE RICKIE WOOD APPROACHES THE
SCENE...

IT WENT DOWN
SOMEWHERE IN
HERE.



OHH..
GOSH!



WHAT IS THAT
THING!...AND IT HAS
MY MODEL!





RICKIE IS AGAIN SET DOWN...AND AS HE WALKS OFF THE HEAP SHAMBLES ALONG BESIDE HIM...



GOSH...THIS AWFUL THING SEEMS TO LIKE ME! MAYBE IT'S HUNGRY!



SUDDENLY, THE HEAP COLLAPSES TO THE GROUND...IT IS HUNGRY...BUT NOT FOR THE KIND OF FOOD THAT RICKIE THINKS!



EVEN A MONSTER LIKE THAT HAS TO EAT! I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN GET!



IT'S SO BIG THAT IT PROBABLY EATS LIKE AN ELEPHANT!



A SCREAM FROM OUTSIDE INTERRUPTS RICKIE!





BUT LITTLE DOES RICKIE REALIZE THE TERRIBLE MANNER IN WHICH THE HEAP "EATS"... AND HE IS SAFE WITH THE MONSTER ONLY BECAUSE OF THE GERMAN PLANE MODEL...*



*...WHICH THE HEAP ASSOCIATES WITH THE BOY...

THE POLICE ARE COMING!
WHAT A SURPRISE THEY'LL GET WHEN THEY SEE THIS MONSTER NIGHTMARE!



HEY! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
...YOU DON'T LIKE THE POLICE, EH?



THE HEAP AGAIN LUMBERS INTO THE WOODS AT THE SOUND OF THE POLICE SIREN...



OKAY...BUT I'LL HAVE TO SEND THEM AFTER YOU!

...AND THIS MONSTER IS ABOUT SEVEN FEET TALL...AND IT'S COVERED WITH GRASS AND ROOTS! IT ISN'T AN ANIMAL, AND IT ISN'T A MAN...

WHAT KIND OF A RIDDLE IS THIS, KID? GRASS...ROOTS...NOT AN ANIMAL, AND NOT A MAN! COME ON, KELLY...LET'S GET BACK BEFORE WE'RE NUTS!



...AND LISTEN, BOY...YOU OUGHTA WRITE ADVENTURE STORIES FOR THE RADIO OR SOMETHING...THERE'S MONEY IN THAT KIND OF STUFF!

I DON'T BLAME THEM FOR NOT BELIEVING IT!



AND THE UNSUSPECTING RICKIE GOES BACK TO THE HEAP...WHO NEVER HAS BEEN SO CLOSE TO A HUMAN THAT HE DIDN'T KILL... BUT NOW HE LOOKS AT THE BOY STUPIDLY AND THINKS OF THAT GERMAN PLANE!

WHAT I'D LIKE TO KNOW IS...WHERE YOU CAME FROM... AND WHAT YOU ARE...



The Holes Around Mars

By Jerome Bixby

Spaceship crews should be selected on the basis of their non-irritating qualities as individuals. No chronic complainers, no hypochondriacs, no bugs on cleanliness—particularly no one-man parties. I speak from bitter experience.

Because on the first expedition to Mars, Hugh Allenby damned near drove us nuts with his puns. We finally got so we just ignored them.

But no one can ignore that classic last one—it's written right into the annals of astronomy, and it's there to stay.

Allenby, in command of the expedition, was first to set foot outside the ship. As he stepped down from the airlock of the *Mars I*, he placed that foot on a convenient rock, caught the toe of his weighted boot in a hole in the rock, wrenched his ankle and smote the ground with his pants.

Sitting there, eyes pained behind the transparent shield of his oxygen-mask, he stared at the rock.

It was about five feet high. Ordinary granite—no special shape—and several inches below its summit, running straight through it in a northeasterly direction, was a neat round four-inch hole.

"I'm *upset* by the *hole* thing," he grunted.

The rest of us scrambled out of the ship and gathered around his plump form. Only one or two of us winced at his miserable double pun.

"Break anything, Hugh?" asked Burton, our pilot, kneeling beside him.

"Get out of my way, Burton," said Allenby. "You're obstructing my view."

Burton blinked. A man constructed of long bones and caution, he angled out of the way, looking around to see what he was obstructing view of.

He saw the rock and the round hole through it. He stood very still, staring. So did the rest of us.

"Well, I'll be damned," said Janus, our photographer. "A hole."

"In a rock," added Gonzales, our botanist.

"Round," said Randolph, our biologist.

"An *artifact*," finished Allenby softly.

Burton helped him to his feet. Silently we gathered around the rock.

Janus bent down and put an eye to one end of the hole. I bent down and looked through the other end. We squinted at each other.

As mineralogist, I was expected to opine. "Not drilled," I said slowly. "Not chipped. Not melted. Certainly not eroded."

I heard a rasping sound by my ear and straightened. Burton was scratching a thumbnail along the rim of the hole. "Weathered," he said. "Plenty old. But I'll bet it's a perfect circle, if we measure."

Janus was already fiddling with his camera, testing the cooperation of the tiny distant sun with a light-meter.

"Let us see *weather* it is or not," Allenby said.

Burton brought out a steel tape-measure. The hole was four and three-eighths inches across. It was perfectly circular and about sixteen inches long. And four feet above the ground.

"But why?" said Randolph. "Why should anyone bore a four-inch tunnel through a rock way out in the middle of the desert?"

"Religious symbol," said Janus. He looked around, one hand on his gun. "We'd better keep an eye out—maybe we've landed on sacred ground or something."

"A totem *hole*, perhaps," Allenby suggested.

"Oh. I don't know," Randolph said—to Janus, not Allenby. As I've mentioned, we always ignored Allenby's puns. "Note the lack of ornamentation. Not at all typical of religious articles."

"On Earth," Gonzales reminded him. "Besides, it might be utilitarian, not symbolic."

"Utilitarian, how?" asked Janus.

"An altar for snakes," Burton said dryly.

"Well," said Allenby, "you can't deny that it has its *holy* aspects."

"Get your hand away, will you, Peters?" asked Janus.

I did. When Janus's camera had clicked, I bent again and peered through the hole. "It sights on that low ridge over there," I said. "Maybe it's some kind of surveying setup. I'm going to take a look."

"Careful," warned Janus. "Remember, it may be sacred."

As I walked away, I heard Allenby say, "Take some scrapings from the inside of the hole, Gonzales. We might be able to determine if anything is kept in it...."

One of the stumpy, purplish, barrel-type cacti on the ridge had a long vertical bite out of it ... as if someone had carefully carved out a narrow U-shaped section from the top down, finishing the bottom of the U in a neat semicircle. It was as flat and cleancut as the inside surface of a horseshoe magnet.

I hollered. The others came running. I pointed.

"Oh, my God!" said Allenby. "Another one."

The pulp of the cactus in and around the U-hole was dried and dead-looking.

Silently Burton used his tape-measure. The hole measured four and three-eighths inches across. It was eleven inches deep. The semicircular bottom was about a foot above the ground.

"This ridge," I said, "is about three feet higher than where we landed the ship. I bet the hole in the rock and the hole in this cactus are on the same level."

Gonzales said slowly, "This was not done all at once. It is a result of periodic attacks. Look here and here. These overlapping depressions along the outer edges of the hole—" he pointed—"on this side of the cactus. They are the signs of repeated impact. And the scallop effect on *this* side, where whatever made the hole emerged. There are juices still oozing—not at the point of impact, where the plant is desiccated, but below, where the shock was transmitted—"

A distant shout turned us around. Burton was at the rock, beside the ship. He was bending down, his eye to the far side of the mysterious hole.

He looked for another second, then straightened and came toward us at a lope.

"They line up," he said when he reached us. "The bottom of the hole in the cactus is right in the middle when you sight through the hole in the rock."

"As if somebody came around and whacked the cactus regularly," Janus said, looking around warily.

"To keep the line of sight through the holes clear?" I wondered. "Why not just remove the cactus?"

"Religious," Janus explained.

The gauntlet he had discarded lay ignored on the ground, in the shadow of the cactus. We went on past the ridge toward an outcropping of rock about a hundred yards farther on. We walked silently, each of us wondering if what we half-expected would really be there.

It was. In one of the tall, weathered spires in the outcropping, some ten feet below its peak and four feet above the ground, was a round four-inch hole.

Allenby sat down on a rock, nursing his ankle, and remarked that anybody who believed this crazy business was really happening must have holes in the rocks in his head.

Burton put his eye to the hole and whistled. "Sixty feet long if it's an inch," he said. "The other end's just a pinpoint. But you can see it. The damn thing's perfectly straight."

I looked back the way we had come. The cactus stood on the ridge, with its U-shaped bite, and beyond was the ship, and beside it the perforated rock.

"If we surveyed," I said, "I bet the holes would all line up right to the last millimeter."

"But," Randolph complained, "why would anybody go out and bore holes in things all along a line through the desert?"

"Religious," Janus muttered. "It doesn't *have* to make sense."

We stood there by the outcropping and looked out along the wide, red desert beyond. It stretched flatly for miles from this point, south toward Mars' equator—dead sandy wastes, crisscrossed by the "canals," which we had observed while landing to be great straggly patches of vegetation, probably strung along underground waterflows.

BLONG-G-G-G- ... st-st-st- ...

We jumped half out of our skins. Ozone bit at our nostrils. Our hair stirred in the electrical uproar.

"L-look," Janus chattered, lowering his smoking gun.

About forty feet to our left, a small rabbit-like creature poked its head from behind a rock and stared at us in utter horror.

Janus raised his gun again.

"Don't bother," said Allenby tiredly. "I don't think it intends to attack."

"But—"

"I'm sure it isn't a Martian with religious convictions."

Janus wet his lips and looked a little shamefaced. "I guess I'm kind of taut."

"That's what I *taut*," said Allenby.

The creature darted from behind its rock and, looking at us over its shoulder, employed six legs to make small but very fast tracks.

We turned our attention again to the desert. Far out, black against Mars' azure horizon, was a line of low hills.

"Shall we go look?" asked Burton, eyes gleaming at the mystery.

Janus hefted his gun nervously. It was still crackling faintly from the discharge. "I say let's get back to the ship!"

Allenby sighed. "My leg hurts." He studied the hills. "Give me the field-glasses."

Randolph handed them over. Allenby put them to the shield of his mask and adjusted them.

After a moment he sighed again. "There's a hole. On a plane surface that catches the Sun. A lousy damned round little impossible hole."

"Those hills," Burton observed, "must be thousands of feet thick."

The argument lasted all the way back to the ship.

Janus, holding out for his belief that the whole thing was of religious origin, kept looking around for Martians as if he expected them to pour screaming from the hills.

Burton came up with the suggestion that perhaps the holes had been made by a disintegrator-ray.

"It's possible," Allenby admitted. "This might have been the scene of some great battle—"

"With only one such weapon?" I objected.

Allenby swore as he stumbled. "What do you mean?"

"I haven't seen any other lines of holes—only the one. In a battle, the whole joint should be cut up."

That was good for a few moments' silent thought. Then Allenby said, "It might have been brought out by one side as a last resort. Sort of an ace in the hole."

I resisted the temptation to mutiny. "But would even one such weapon, in battle make only *one* line of holes? Wouldn't it be played in an arc against the enemy? You know it would."

"Well—"

"Wouldn't it cut slices out of the landscape, instead of boring holes? And wouldn't it sway or vibrate enough to make the holes miles away from it something less than perfect circles?"

"It could have been very firmly mounted."

"Hugh, does that sound like a practical weapon to you?"

Two seconds of silence. "On the other hand," he said, "instead of a war, the whole thing might have been designed to frighten some primitive race—or even some kind of beast—the *hole* out of here. A demonstration—"

"Religious," Janus grumbled, still looking around.

We walked on, passing the cactus on the low ridge.

"Interesting," said Gonzales. "The evidence that whatever causes the phenomenon has happened again and again. I'm afraid that the war theory—"

"Oh, my God!" gasped Burton.

We stared at him.

"The ship," he whispered. "It's right in line with the holes! If whatever made them is still in operation...."

"Run!" yelled Allenby, and we ran like fiends.

We got the ship into the air, out of line with the holes to what we fervently hoped was safety, and then we realized we were admitting our fear that the mysterious hole-maker might still be lurking around.

Well, the evidence was all for it, as Gonzales had reminded us—that cactus had been oozing.

We cruised at twenty thousand feet and thought it over.

Janus, whose only training was in photography, said, "Some kind of omnivorous animal? Or bird? Eats rocks and everything?"

"I will not totally discount the notion of such an animal," Randolph said. "But I will resist to the death the suggestion that it forages with geometric precision."

After a while, Allenby said, "Land, Burton. By that 'canal.' Lots of plant life—fauna, too. We'll do a little collecting."

Burton set us down feather-light at the very edge of the sprawling flat expanse of vegetation, commenting that the scene reminded him of his native Texas pear-flats.

We wandered in the chilly air, each of us except Burton pursuing his specialty. Randolph relentlessly stalked another of the rabbit-like creatures. Gonzales was carefully digging up plants and stowing them in jars. Janus was busy with his cameras, recording every aspect of Mars transferable to film. Allenby walked around, helping anybody who needed it. An astronomer, he'd done half his work on the way to Mars and would do the other half on the return trip. Burton lounged in the Sun, his back against a ship's fin, and played chess with Allenby, who was calling out his moves in a bull roar. I grubbed for rocks.

My search took me farther and farther away from the others—all I could find around the 'canal' was gravel, and I wanted to chip at some big stuff. I walked toward a long rise a half-mile or so away, beyond which rose an enticing array of house-sized boulders.

As I moved out of earshot, I heard Randolph snarl, "Burton, *will* you stop yelling, 'Kt to B-2 and check?' Every time you open your yap, this critter takes off on me."

Then I saw the groove.

It started right where the ground began to rise—a thin, shallow, curve-bottomed groove in the dirt at my feet, about half an inch across, running off straight toward higher ground.

With my eyes glued to it, I walked. The ground slowly rose. The groove deepened, widened—now it was about three inches across, about one and a half deep.

I walked on, holding my breath. Four inches wide. Two inches deep.

The ground rose some more. Four and three-eighths inches wide. I didn't have to measure it—I *knew*.

Now, as the ground rose, the edges of the groove began to curve inward over the groove. They touched. No more groove.

The ground had risen, the groove had stayed level and gone underground.
Except that now it wasn't a groove. It was a round tunnel.
A hole.

A few paces farther on, I thumped the ground with my heel where the hole ought to be. The dirt crumbled, and there was the little dark tunnel, running straight in both directions.

I walked on, the ground falling away gradually again. The entire process was repeated in reverse. A hairline appeared in the dirt—widened—became lips that drew slowly apart to reveal the neat straight four-inch groove—which shrank as slowly to a shallow line of the ground—and vanished.

I looked ahead of me. There was one low ridge of ground between me and the enormous boulders. A neat four-inch semicircle was bitten out of the very top of the ridge. In the house-sized boulder directly beyond was a four-inch hole.

Allenby winced and called the others when I came back and reported.

"The mystery *deepens*," he told them. He turned to me. "Lead on, Peters. You're temporary *drill* leader." Thank God he didn't say *Fall in*.

The holes went straight through the nest of boulders—there'd be a hole in one and, ten or twenty feet farther on in the next boulder, another hole. And then another, and another—right through the nest in a line. About thirty holes in all.

Burton, standing by the boulder I'd first seen, flashed his flashlight into the hole. Randolph, clear on the other side of the jumbled nest, eye to hole, saw it.

Straight as a string!

The ground sloped away on the far side of the nest—no holes were visible in that direction—just miles of desert. So, after we'd stared at the holes for a while and they didn't go away, we headed back for the canal.

"Is there any possibility," asked Janus, as we walked, "that it could be a natural phenomenon?"

"There are no straight lines in nature," Randolph said, a little shortly. "That goes for a bunch of circles in a straight line. And for perfect circles, too."

"A planet is a circle," objected Janus.

"An oblate spheroid," Allenby corrected.

"A planet's orbit—"

"An ellipse."

Janus walked a few steps, frowning. Then he said, "I remember reading that there *is* something darned near a perfect circle in nature." He paused a moment. "Potholes." And he looked at me, as mineralogist, to corroborate.

"What kind of potholes?" I asked cautiously. "Do you mean where part of a limestone deposit has dissol—"

"No. I once read that when a glacier passes over a hard rock that's lying on some softer rock, it grinds the hard rock down into the softer, and both of them sort of wear down to fit together, and it all ends up with a round hole in the soft rock."

"Probably neither stone," I told Janus, "would be homogenous. The softer parts would abrade faster in the soft stone. The end result wouldn't be a perfect circle."

Janus's face fell.

"Now," I said, "would anyone care to define this term 'perfect circle' we're throwing around so blithely? Because such holes as Janus describes are often pretty damned round."

Randolph said, "Well..."

"It is settled, then," Gonzales said, a little sarcastically. "Your discussion, gentlemen, has established that the long, horizontal holes we have found were caused by glacial action."

"Oh, no," Janus argued seriously. "I once read that Mars never had any glaciers."

All of us shuddered.

Half an hour later, we spotted more holes, about a mile down the 'canal,' still on a line, marching along the desert, through cacti, rocks, hills, even through one edge of the low vegetation of the 'canal' for thirty feet or so. It was the damndest thing to bend down and look straight through all that curling, twisting growth ... a round tunnel from either end.

We followed the holes for about a mile, to the rim of an enormous saucerlike valley that sank gradually before us until, miles away, it was thousands of feet deep. We stared out across it, wondering about the other side.

Allenby said determinedly, "We'll burrow to the *bottom* of these holes, once and for all. Back to the ship, men!"

We hiked back, climbed in and took off.

At an altitude of fifty feet, Burton lined the nose of the ship on the most recent line of holes and we flew out over the valley.

On the other side was a range of hefty hills. The holes went through them. Straight through. We would approach one hill—Burton would manipulate the front viewscreen until we spotted the hole—we would pass over the hill and spot the other end of the hole in the rear screen.

One hole was two hundred and eighty miles long.

Four hours later, we were halfway around Mars.

Randolph was sitting by a side port, chin on one hand, his eyes unbelieving. "All around the planet," he kept repeating. "All around the planet...."

"Halfway at least," Allenby mused. "And we can assume that it continues in a straight line, through anything and everything that gets in its way...." He gazed out the front port at the uneven blue-green haze of a 'canal' off to our left. "For the love of Heaven, why?"

Then Allenby fell down. We all did.

Burton had suddenly slapped at the control board, and the ship braked and sank like a plugged duck. At the last second, Burton propped up the nose with a short burst, the ten-foot wheels hit desert sand and in five hundred yards we had jounced to a stop.

Allenby got up from the floor. "Why did you do that?" he asked Burton politely, nursing a bruised elbow.

Burton's nose was almost touching the front port. "Look!" he said, and pointed.

About two miles away, the Martian village looked like a handful of yellow marbles flung on the desert.

We checked our guns. We put on our oxygen-masks. We checked our guns again. We got out of the ship and made damned sure the airlock was locked.

An hour later, we crawled inch by painstaking inch up a high sand dune and poked our heads over the top.

The Martians were runts—the tallest of them less than five feet tall—and skinny as a pencil. Dried-up and brown, they wore loincloths of woven fiber.

They stood among the dusty-looking inverted-bowl buildings of their village, and every one of them was looking straight up at us with unblinking brown eyes.

The six safeties of our six guns clicked off like a rattle of dice. The Martians stood there and gawped.

"Probably a highly developed sense of hearing in this thin atmosphere," Allenby murmured. "Heard us coming."

"They thought that landing of Burton's was an earthquake," Randolph grumbled sourly.

"Marsquake," corrected Janus. One look at the village's scrawny occupants seemed to have convinced him that his life was in no danger.

Holding the Martians covered, we examined the village from atop the thirty-foot dune.

The domelike buildings were constructed of something that looked like adobe. No windows—probably built with sandstorms in mind. The doors were about halfway up the sloping sides, and from each door a stone ramp wound down around the house to the ground—again with sandstorms in mind, no doubt, so drifting dunes wouldn't block the entrances.

The center of the village was a wide street, a long sandy area some thirty feet wide. On either side of it, the houses were scattered at random, as if each Martian had simply hunted for a comfortable place to sit and then built a house around it.

"Look," whispered Randolph.

One Martian had stepped from a group situated on the far side of the street from us. He started to cross the street, his round brown eyes on us, his small bare feet plodding sand, and we saw that in addition to a loincloth he wore jewelry—a hammered metal ring, a bracelet on one skinny ankle. The Sun caught a copperish gleam on his bald narrow head, and we saw a band of metal there, just above where his eyebrows should have been.

"The super-chief," Allenby murmured. "Oh, *shaman* me!"

As the bejeweled Martian approached the center of the street, he glanced briefly at the ground at his feet. Then he raised his head, stepped with dignity across the exact center of the street and came on toward us, passing the dusty-looking buildings of his realm and the dusty-looking groups of his subjects.

He reached the slope of the dune we lay on, paused—and raised small hands over his head, palms toward us.

"I think," Allenby said, "that an anthropologist would give odds on that gesture meaning peace."

He stood up, holstered his gun—without buttoning the flap—and raised his own hands over his head. We all did.

The Martian language consisted of squeaks.

We made friendly noises, the chief squeaked and pretty soon we were the center of a group of wide-eyed Martians, none of whom made a sound. Evidently no one dared peep while the chief spoke—very likely the most articulate Martians simply squeaked themselves into the job. Allenby, of course, said they just *squeaked* by.

He was going through the business of drawing concentric circles in the sand, pointing at the third orbit away from the Sun and thumping his chest. The crowd around us kept growing as more Martians emerged from the dome buildings to see what was going on. Down the winding ramps of the buildings on our side of the wide, sandy street they came—and from the buildings on the other side of the street, plodding through the sand, blinking brown eyes at us, not making a sound.

Allenby pointed at the third orbit and thumped his chest. The chief squeaked and thumped his own chest and pointed at the copperish band around his head. Then he pointed at Allenby.

"I seem to have conveyed to him," Allenby said dryly, "the fact that I'm chief of our party. Well, let's try again."

He started over on the orbits. He didn't seem to be getting anyplace, so the rest of us watched the Martians instead. A last handful was straggling across the wide street.

"Curious," said Gonzales. "Note what happens when they reach the center of the street."

Each Martian, upon reaching the center of the street, glanced at his feet—just for a moment—without even breaking stride. And then came on.

"What can they be looking at?" Gonzales wondered.

"The chief did it too," Burton mused. "Remember when he first came toward us?"

We all stared intently at the middle of the street. We saw absolutely nothing but sand.

The Martians milled around us and watched Allenby and his orbits. A Martian child appeared from between two buildings across the street. On six-inch legs, it started across, got halfway, glanced downward—and came on.

"I don't get it," Burton said. "What in hell are they *looking* at?"

The child reached the crowd and squeaked a thin, high note.

A number of things happened at once.

Several members of the group around us glanced down, and along the edge of the crowd nearest the center of the street there was a mild stir as individuals drifted off to either side. Quite casually—nothing at all urgent about it. They just moved concertedly to get farther away from the center of the street, not taking their interested gaze off us for one second in the process.

Even the chief glanced up from Allenby's concentric circles at the child's squeak. And Randolph, who had been fidgeting uncomfortably and paying very little attention to our conversation, decided that he must answer Nature's call. He moved off into the dunes surrounding the village. Or rather, he started to move.

The moment he set off across the wide street, the little Martian chief was in front of him, brown eyes wide, hands out before him as if to thrust Randolph back.

Again six safeties clicked. The Martians didn't even blink at the sudden appearance of our guns. Probably the only weapon they recognized was a club, or maybe a rock.

"What can the matter be?" Randolph said.

He took another step forward. The chief squeaked and stood his ground. Randolph had to stop or bump into him. Randolph stopped.

The chief squeaked, looking right into the bore of Randolph's gun.

"Hold still," Allenby told Randolph, "till we know what's up."

Allenby made an interrogative sound at the chief. The chief squeaked and pointed at the ground. We looked. He was pointing at his shadow.

Randolph stirred uncomfortably.

"Hold still," Allenby warned him, and again he made the questioning sound.

The chief pointed up the street. Then he pointed down the street. He bent to touch his shadow, thumping it with thin fingers. Then he pointed at the wall of a house nearby.

We all looked.

Straight lines had been painted on the curved brick-colored wall, up and down and across, to form many small squares about four inches across. In each square was a bit of squiggly writing, in blackish paint, and a small wooden peg jutting out from the wall.

Burton said, "Looks like a damn crossword puzzle."

"Look," said Janus. "In the lower right corner—a metal ring hanging from one of the pegs."

And that was all we saw on the wall. Hundreds of squares with figures in them—a small peg set in each—and a ring hanging on one of the pegs.

"You know what?" Allenby said slowly. "I think it's a calendar! Just a second—thirty squares wide by twenty-two high—that's six hundred and sixty. And that bottom line has twenty-six—twenty-seven squares. Six hundred and eighty-seven squares in all. That's how many days there are in the Martian year!"

He looked thoughtfully at the metal ring. "I'll bet that ring is hanging from the peg in the square that represents *today*. They must move it along every day, to keep track...."

"What's a calendar got to do with my crossing the street?" Randolph asked in a pained tone.

He started to take another step. The chief squeaked as if it were a matter of desperate concern that he make us understand. Randolph stopped again and swore impatiently.

Allenby made his questioning sound again.

The chief pointed emphatically at his shadow, then at the communal calendar—and we could see now that he was pointing at the metal ring.

Burton said slowly, "I think he's trying to tell us that this is *today*. And such-and-such a *time* of day. I bet he's using his shadow as a sundial."

"Perhaps," Allenby granted.

Randolph said, "If this monkey doesn't let me go in another minute—"

The chief squeaked, eyes concerned.

"Stand still," Allenby ordered. "He's trying to warn you of some danger."

The chief pointed down the street again and, instead of squealing, revealed that there was another sound at his command. He said, "Whooooooooosh!"

We all stared at the end of the street.

Nothing! Just the wide avenue between the houses, and the high sand dune down at the end of it, from which we had first looked upon the village.

The chief described a large circle with one hand, sweeping the hand above his head, down to his knees, up again, as fast as he could. He pursed his monkey-lips and said, "Whooooooooosh!" And made the circle again.

A Martian emerged from the door in the side of a house across the avenue and blinked at the Sun, as if he had just awakened. Then he saw what was going on below and blinked again, this time in interest. He made his way down around the winding lamp and started to cross the street.

About halfway, he paused, eyed the calendar on the house wall, glanced at his shadow. Then he got down on his hands and knees and *crawled* across the middle of the street. Once past the middle, he rose, walked the rest of the way to join one of the groups and calmly stared at us along with the rest of them.

"They're all crazy," Randolph said disgustedly. "I'm going to cross that street!"

"Shut up. So it's a certain time of a certain day," Allenby mused. "And from the way the chief is acting, he's afraid for you to cross the street. And that other one just *crawled*. By God, do you know what this might tie in with?"

We were silent for a moment. Then Gonzales said, "Of course!"

And Burton said, "The *holes*!"

"Exactly," said Allenby. "Maybe whatever made—or makes—the holes comes right down the center of the street here. Maybe that's why they built the village this way—to make room for—"

"For what?" Randolph asked unhappily, shifting his feet.

"I don't know," Allenby said. He looked thoughtfully at the chief. "That circular motion he made—could he have been describing something that went around and around the planet? Something like—oh, no!" Allenby's eyes glazed. "I wouldn't believe it in a million years."

His gaze went to the far end of the street, to the high sand dune that rose there. The chief seemed to be waiting for something to happen.

"I'm going to crawl," Randolph stated. He got to his hands and knees and began to creep across the center of the avenue.

The chief let him go.

The sand dune at the end of the street suddenly erupted. A forty-foot spout of dust shot straight out from the sloping side, as if a bullet had emerged. Powdered sand hazed the air, yellowed it almost the full length of the avenue. Grains of sand stung the skin and rattled minutely on the houses.

WhoooSSSHHHH!

Randolph dropped flat on his belly. He didn't have to continue his trip. He had made other arrangements.

That night in the ship, while we all sat around, still shaking our heads every once in a while, Allenby talked with Earth. He sat there, wearing the headphones, trying to make himself understood above the godawful static.

"... an exceedingly small body," he repeated wearily to his unbelieving audience, "about four inches in diameter. It travels at a mean distance of four feet above the surface of the planet, at a velocity yet to be calculated. Its unique nature results in many hitherto unobserved—I might say even unimagined—phenomena." He stared blankly in front of him for a moment, then delivered the understatement of his life. "The discovery may necessitate a re-examination of many of our basic postulates in the physical sciences."

The headphones squawked.

Patiently, Allenby assured Earth that he was entirely serious, and reiterated the results of his observations. I suppose that he, an astronomer, was twice as flabbergasted as the rest of us. On the other hand, perhaps he was better equipped to adjust to the evidence.

"Evidently," he said, "when the body was formed, it traveled at such fantastic velocity as to enable it to—" his voice was almost a whisper—"to punch holes in things."

The headphones squawked.

"In rocks," Allenby said, "in mountains, in anything that got in its way. And now the holes form a large portion of its fixed orbit."

Squawk.

"Its mass must be on the order of—"

Squawk.

"—process of making the holes slowed it, so that now it travels just fast enough—"

Squawk.

"—maintain its orbit and penetrate occasional objects such as—"

Squawk.

"—and sand dunes—"

Squawk.

"My God, I *know* it's a mathematical monstrosity," Allenby snarled. "I didn't put it there!"

Squawk.

Allenby was silent for a moment. Then he said slowly, "A name?"

Squawk.

"H'm," said Allenby. "Well, well." He appeared to brighten just a little. "So it's up to me, as leader of the expedition, to name it?"

Squawk.

"Well, well," he said.

That chop-licking tone was in his voice. We'd heard it all too often before. We shuddered, waiting.

"Inasmuch as Mars' outermost moon is called Deimos, and the next Phobos," he said, "I think I shall name the third moon of Mars—*Bottomos*."

*Jerome Bixby was a writer of science fiction and westerns, and he also produced multiple scripts for television and movies. He adapted his 1953 short story "It's a Good Life" for **The Twilight Zone**, and that went on to become a television classic. He also wrote the **Star Trek** episode "Mirror, Mirror", inspired by his 1954 short story of the same name, which introduced the Mirror Universe to that franchise. Among the films he was involved with are **It! The Terror from Beyond Space**, which had a notable impact on Ridley Scott's **Alien**, and **The Fantastic Voyage** for which he provided the story. His final film was **The Man from Earth**—completed on his deathbed—and it has since been considered a classic of the genre.*

The Space-Time Chronicles: Time Enough for Living

By John J. Joex

Jareth regarded the planet that filled the viewscreen before him. It reminded him of his own world, though it was covered with scars from the years of war it had suffered. Kalanna was gone now, incinerated after the Redeemers had caused the sun to go nova. He still felt the pain from the wounds he had suffered when he escaped the planet's destruction on the space-time ship Antropos. He was not fully recovered, nor did he know if he ever would be. But he had to carry out his mission to observe and collect information. The planet on the screen before him had suffered from its own struggles, but perhaps it still had a chance.

"The planet is named Relegar," the voice of Antropos commented. "According to the data collected, it has been in a constant state of war for over one hundred years. But the nations have reached a point where they are ready to return to peace negotiations. I believe the expression 'they have lost their appetite for war' applies in this case."

Jareth smiled at the computer's somewhat human observation. It was a powerful artificial intelligence, but it still needed to learn how to analyze the situations it would encounter—how to see beyond just the facts and develop understanding.

"Many races have found war much easier than peace," Jareth noted. "If these people have found a way to put war behind them, perhaps we have much to learn from their example."

"They have also developed space-fold technology," Antropos continued. "And that will allow them to jump to a planet in another system so that they can replenish the resources that have been exhausted on the surface below."

"What about these gamma-ray readings?" Jareth asked, noting the levels on the monitor.

"Perhaps related to their space-fold tests," Antropos suggested. "I am running an analysis of it now."

"Keep an eye on it," Jareth ordered, "and let me know if anything changes. In the meantime, we will continue our observations."

Yoshi Lar stared through the viewport at the scarred surface of the planet which laid bare the years of war it had suffered. The sight saddened her, but she could not dwell on it as she turned back to the matter at hand. She looked at the control panel and noted the gamma-ray count again. It still bothered her, but she could find no source for the abnormality.

"Status of the dimensional couplers?" Brek Nell's voice broke the silence and diverted Yoshi's attention to her main station.

"Unchanged," Yoshi replied. "Primed and ready to go. The gamma-ray levels remain abnormally high, though. Not certain what's causing it."

"What?" Brek asked as he moved over to Yoshi's station.

"Here," Yoshi said, pointing at the readouts on the screen. "I've not seen them this high before without significant solar activity, but there's nothing out of the ordinary there."

"Could the Daelus be causing it?" Brek asked as concern shrouded his face over a potential threat. "Perhaps some sort of attack?"

"Unlikely," Yoshi replied.

Brek studied the screen for a moment, then asked, "Will it affect the launch?"

"At these levels, it shouldn't," Yoshi replied. "I just don't understand what is causing it."

"Keep an eye on it and let me know if there is reason for concern. Otherwise, stay focused on the system checks. With the possibility of a Daelus attack before launch, we have to stay alert."

Yoshi looked down at the readouts one more time, then glanced out the opposite viewport. The *Arria* lay waiting for its maiden voyage. Within a short time, it would execute a space-fold and travel over fifty light-years across the galaxy in a matter of minutes. It would be the first manned flight of this nature, following the path of several successful automated probes. She felt a sense of pride at her involvement in this historic moment and believed it would certainly bring some hope to her war-torn planet. Though a sense of uneasiness still tugged at her.

"Urgent delivery for Marshall Lenn Duran," the courier announced as he handed the package to the soldier on duty. The man accepted the parcel, then turned to complete the delivery. With a hurried pace, he entered the Marshall's office in the next room and presented the package.

"The reports you have been waiting for," he announced.

Lenn turned away from the geo-terrain table he was studying and snatched the package. He removed the papers it contained as the soldier quietly exited. He scanned the analyses for several minutes and began to nod enthusiastically as he saw the conclusions. He reached over to his com and fingered one of the buttons.

"Commander Marryn here," the voice came from the communicator.

"Yann, have you received the latest reports?" Lenn queried.

"They just arrived," he responded.

"I have the detailed analyses here," Lenn noted. "Looks encouraging. The Daelus resistance is on the verge of yielding. Once they fall, intelligence believes their support will quickly fade. It appears that no one has the desire to continue the war without the Daelus leading the charge."

"That is what I have been hearing as well, sir," Yann confirmed.

"The end may be near, my friend," Lenn said almost to himself as he allowed a slight smile of relief to lighten his demeanor.

"We can only hope," Yann said matter-of-factly. "What are your next orders, sir?"

"Stay the course. Prepare Commander Dieth's group to move into the Melan territory. Their alliance with the Daelus was tenuous to begin with, and I don't believe that they will give in as easily in their attempts to establish autonomy. The fighting there could be protracted, but at least it will be isolated to one region."

"Yes, sir. Anything else?"

"We may be close to ending this war, old friend, but make sure we don't lose our will to fight just yet. We strike hard and quick, and hopefully, they will buckle. And we also must go forward with the strike on the Daelus base at Prath to assure that they cannot sabotage the *Arria* project. Understood?"

"Yes, sir. I agree, sir. Over and out." Yann said as his transmission disconnected.

Yoshi stared anxiously through the viewport as the *Arria* prepared for launch. Her section had checked all of the secondary systems, and there was little more for them to do. Daelus ships had been spotted on the scanners, so security was high, and the military fighters had been scrambled for a counterattack.

"All systems are go, *Arria*," the voice from the command center declared. "You are cleared to activate the space fold. Good travels, and we will be in contact with you soon."

"Transmission confirmed," came the response from the *Arria*. "We are initiating shift now."

Yoshi held her breath as a shimmering enveloped the ship. She had seen this several times previously as the test probes had completed successful dimensional shifts, but now lives were at stake. Five people—three men and two women—had volunteered for the first space fold with people on board. They would jump to a system that one of the probes had discovered, a potentially habitable planet with plant life. The probe had

been surveying that planet for two weeks, and as soon as the *Arria* arrived, it would make contact and download the complete findings.

The shimmering intensified to a bright glow, and the features of the ship seemed to distort like the stretching of a piece of rubber. Then, with a flash, it was gone. In a matter of seconds, the *Arria* had flung itself across the galaxy.

"The *Arria* is away!" A voice declared triumphantly as the sounds of cheering in the command center erupted from the com. "We will establish contact in approximately one hour, once they have recharged their dimensional generators to reopen the portal."

A sense of elation came over Yoshi. The launch had succeeded without any attacks from the Daelus. Her part had been small, but she had participated in a pivotal moment in history. If the reports were correct and this system was habitable, it would mean exploration and discovery. And perhaps a new focus for the population of a planet that had suffered under the yoke of war for too many years.

At that moment, an alarm sounded, tearing Yoshi's attention away from her monitor.

"Alert! Alert!" A voice shouted over the speaker. "Two Daelus ships have moved within range! We are receiving a communication."

Yoshi's heart sank at the announcement. She felt sure this was the attack they feared would come. She turned and looked at the monitor as the Daelus commander appeared in full uniform.

"I am Commander Synh Farusk of the Daelus Command Vessel *Sarshi*," he said in a direct manner over the speaker. He paused for a moment, then a slight smile came over his face, and he continued. "I wish to congratulate you on the successful space fold. This is a great day for our world and suggests a brighter future for us all. We hope to put aside the ways of war and work together with you as we take our next step out in the galaxy."

With that, the transmission ended, and a notice came over the speaker that the Daelus ships had turned away. After a wave of relief passed over the room, all stood up and cheered.

Lenn entered the medical facility and approached Dr. Saan. He had briefings to attend and planning sessions that required his attendance, but he allowed himself just a few minutes for this detour.

"How is she, doctor?" He asked with slight trepidation.

"No change," the doctor replied. It was not the best of news, but at least her condition had not worsened.

"She's still weak," the doctor continued. "But she seems to be responding to the treatment. Hopefully, she will regain some of her strength in the next day or two."

"Can I see her?" He asked, noting the doctor's consternation.

"For a few minutes. I believe she's awake now."

Lenn entered into the small, sparse room to see his wife lying with her eyes closed. He moved to her side and stroked her hair gently. With his touch, she drearly opened her eyes and vaguely smiled at him.

"Hello, my dear," he said softly. "I told you I would not be away long." He took her hand, and she softly squeezed it in lieu of a verbal reply.

Lenn looked at her quietly for several moments, cherishing this brief, peaceful respite he shared with his wife. It pained him to see her this way. But at least he had been able to keep her close by his side. She had given him strength despite her weakened condition, and he stole any chance he had to be by her side.

"The news from the front is good, my dear," he said as he continued to caress her. "The Daelus are on the verge of surrender. Once that happens, the others will lay down their weapons. The fighting should be over in a day or two, and the armistice talks will begin. Very soon, we will be at peace. It's true that the Melans may still have some fight left in them, but that will only be a minor distraction."

He stood and walked over to the window to open the blinds. The city outside was in ruins, but the rising early morning sun seemed to deliver new hope. He turned back to look at his wife, whose beauty, to him, glowed in the sunlight.

"Imagine what this means!" He said with enthusiasm. "This planet will finally be almost completely at peace. We have fought for so long that I believe most people have forgotten what we were fighting for in the first place. It's almost as if we were fighting only because we believed we *had* to fight. But maybe, just maybe, the appetite for war has finally withered.

"I have been in the military now for more years than I recall, but I have lost my desire for this profession. I joined because I felt a duty to serve, and I believed it was an honorable path. But no civilized soldier wants to see war unending. We must know that war is only a *necessary evil* and that peace is our true goal... There has been enough killing."

Lenn returned to his wife's side and took her hand again as he sat next to here.

"We have a chance now!" He declared. "We have a chance for a new beginning! The *Arria* should begin her journey soon; she may have already left by now. There are other worlds out there, and now we can travel to them!" He fell silent for a moment.

"Who knows? Perhaps we could have traveled to them years ago if we had not put so much of our resources into these god-forsaken wars."

He looked into her eyes for support. She managed to return a weak yet encouraging smile.

"It all changes now," he whispered, seeing that she needed rest. "And perhaps we will learn that there is indeed time enough for living."

A faint smile remained on her face as she closed her eyes. He said no more as he held her hand and caressed her forehead while she drifted off to sleep.

He stood and turned to leave. He had to attend to his duties now, but he would return to her side and remain with her until she was strong again.

"The *Arria* should establish contact within twenty minutes," the voice from the command center boomed. "All personnel, please stand by." The station crew waited anxiously for the moments to pass. Some worried the communication from the Daelus commander was a diversion and still feared a potential attack. But others wanted to believe that the fighting had ended.

Yoshi was oblivious to this, though, as her hands danced across her keyboard, and she shook her head furiously in denial.

"Is there a problem?" Brek asked as he approached, noticing Yoshi's agitation.

"It's the gamma rays I detected earlier..." Her words trailed off as she continued to glare at her monitor.

"Have the levels changed?" Brek asked. "Is it a Daelus attack? Will they affect the transmission?"

"You don't understand!" Yoshi hollered in anger as she stood with a look of horror on her face. "They've increased, and the pattern matches that of gamma ray bursts we've previously monitored."

"Gamma ray bursts?" Brek repeated the term, standing dumbfounded as others in the section approached.

"They are sudden gamma ray explosions caused by a star going supernova, then collapsing into a black hole. We've monitored them outside the galaxy, and the energy they release is on an apocalyptic scale. Up to this point, we've only seen the activity occur very far away, but there is no reason to believe they couldn't occur within the galaxy."

"And if they did?" Brek asked. "What would happen?"

"Based on observations, the effects could be... devastating. Depending on how close to the nucleus of the burst, it could threaten life in any system within a thousand light-years, if not completely eradicate it."

"How would you know it's coming? How quickly would the devastation occur?"

"The gamma ray patterns I'm seeing mirror the advance warning," Yoshi answered grimly. "Again, depending on the vicinity, once the burst occurs, within seconds it could potentially melt a planet to its core."

"How close would you estimate it is?"

"Based on the simulation," Yoshi said with a shudder, as if the words were her last, "five to six light-years..."

Lenn stepped outside and felt the cool, late-morning breeze. He knew that he had pressing duties, but he still allowed himself a moment to enjoy the pleasant weather. For the first time in weeks—or perhaps months—he did not hear the distant thunder of artillery. He longed for that silence to continue. He hoped that the Daelus would indeed surrender and the armistice would be agreed to by all sides. He had grown increasingly weary of the fight and felt he did not have the strength to continue for much longer.

He stood silently and allowed himself a moment to enjoy the warmth of the sun. He closed his eyes and felt it comfort him. Then, even as his eyes were closed, a brightness permeated his eyelids and brought intense heat. He opened his eyes to see its source, but it was too late...

In a lonely, scorched point in space, a brief flash indicated the opening of a dimensional portal followed by a transmission.

"Command center, do you read? This is *Arria* transmitting. The space fold went off without a hitch, and we have made contact with the probe. We have retrieved the full analysis of planet designation 56x3, and it is indeed habitable. The damned thing is *covered* with plant life, just teeming with all types of vegetation! The botanists back there will be lining up for the next trip out here. And get this as well, the probe found evidence of *animal life*! We've found just what we were looking for! A habitable planet with plant and animal life. Are you getting this, Command? Do you read? Please acknowledge. Command center, this is *Arria* transmitting. Do you read? Please confirm that you are receiving..."

Jareth stared silently at the control panel in front of him as the message faded away. Antropos had executed a phase shift into null space before the gamma ray burst hit and had now returned to survey the situation. Jareth found himself with no words.

"It is a very unfortunate circumstance," Antropos broke the silence with its stoic observation. "The data collected suggests that this planet could have achieved the technology for the space fold many years prior to this. But the constant state of warfare delayed that accomplishment substantially. They could have also begun their exploration of other planets, and likely colonization, years ago. Many specimens from this planet could have survived the inevitable destruction from the gamma ray burst."

"They didn't understand," Jareth said almost in a whisper. "They didn't understand something we had learned long ago. They didn't understand the fleeting nature of life in this universe. We have seen, we have the perspective, but they were too busy with their petty squabbles. Races exist for a few hundred thousand years, maybe a million. But that is only a blink of the eye to the universe. They were so preoccupied with conflicts and attempts at conquest that they did not realize how cruel the universe can be and how quickly their existence could be vanquished from the cosmos. War will be their epitaph as it has been for many intelligent races that *should* have learned from the futility of their actions."

This story is included in **The Space-Time Chronicles Vol. 1**. John J. Joex is a life-long fan of science fiction and fantasy and runs the sites CancelledSciFi.com and Cult-SciFi.com. He has also written the post-apocalyptic novel **Road Rage**.



Retrospectives: The Heap

1940s Comic Book Series



Long before we had the Swamp Thing or the Man-Thing, Hillman Periodicals introduced the first muck monster to comics with The Heap. Appearing in a SkyWolf story in *Air Fighters Comics* #3, the creature was WWI German pilot Baron Eric von Emmelman whose plane went down in the swamp in 1918. His body decomposed and merged with the vegetation, and he eventually turned into a massive, shambling, semi-human mound, retaining some dim memories and instincts.

Intended as a one-off appearance, The Heap was created by Harry Stein and Mort Leav and originally portrayed as a dangerous monster. But he would eventually go on to star in a solo strip in *Airboy Comics* in which he became a more sympathetic character. Otto Binder—who co-created Supergirl and was a frequent writer for *Captain Marvel Adventures*—took over the writing chores for the strip and turned it into a unique comic book entry.

The tales often had a moody, atmospheric quality as the Heap lurked in swamps, forests, or remote villages, and his appearances were usually shrouded in fog, darkness, or eerie stillness. The strip also tended toward gothic horror and weird fiction, similar to the horror pulps of the time.

Though the Heap was a shambling, monstrous creature, he was portrayed as tragic and misunderstood. He was often seen helping the innocent, even though they may have misunderstood his intentions. Or we was

shown as a primal avenging angel, punishing the wicked. And quite often the stories acted as morality tales or had a cautionary note, similar to themes that Marvel and DC later applied to their own muck monster.

The Heap had a notable run in ***Airboy Comics***, appearing in all issues of that title from Vol. 3 #9 (Oct 1946) to Vol 4 (May 1953). Hillman ceased publication of its comics at that time, otherwise the character would have continued. The series is considered a comic book classic by many, though it is not as well-known to modern audiences. Three volumes of reprints were produced as part of the ***Roy Thomas Presents*** collections, but those are now out of print.

The Story Continues: The Heap was revived in Skywald's ***Psycho*** black and white horror magazine in the early 1970s, and also appeared in a one-shot magazine from that publisher. He returned once again in the 1980s when Eclipse started publishing a new ***Airboy*** comic. The Heap appeared in the title strip and in his own backup stories. He also had crossover appearances in other titles from that publisher. Todd McFarlane later redid the character as part of his Spawn universe, giving his Heap a new origin and look. The original version of the character and the Skywald variant are in the public domain according to the **Public Domain Super Heroes Site**.

Retrospectives: Space: 1999

1975 Television Series



Twenty-five years ago **Space: 1999** had its debut on American television, bringing an ambitious sci fi epic to the small screen. Set in the year 1999 (thus, the title), it follows the inhabitants of Moonbase Alpha as they go on a journey through the stars after a nuclear explosion rips the Moon from its orbit. Along the way, they encounter alien civilizations and cosmic phenomena as they seek a way back or a planet that can become their new home.

This series arrived on the scene in the mid-70s, coming from Gerry and Sylvia Anderson who had created multiple popular Supermarionation sci fi shows in the '60s like **Thunderbirds**, **Stingray**, and **Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons**, as well as the 1970 live-action series **UFO**. The scope for **Space:1999** was big, with one of the largest budgets a television show had seen at that time. It rode the wave of **Star Trek** popularity—which had become a phenomenon in the syndication market after its cancellation by NBC—and arrived on television with much anticipation. The special effects were first-rate for the pre-CGI era and the art direction of the show gave it a certain beauty and alien ambiance. It also followed the typically British trend of mixing horror with sci fi elements.

Unfortunately, though, the stories often did not quite match up to the show's production values. **Space: 1999** was already stretching the boundaries of science with its basic premise of the Moon hurtling from star to star each week (with most having an Earth-like planet). The scripts pushed suspension of disbelief even further, and the wooden acting and slow pacing did not help matters much. Still, the first season of the show has a certain charm as it approaches **2001: A Space Odyssey** headiness with its ambitions, even if the plots easily fall apart upon closer scrutiny.

The show started out strong in the ratings, but had fallen off notably by the end of its first year. It barely survived cancellation and Fred Freiberger—hated by many sci fi fans for allegedly ruining the third season of **Star Trek**—was brought in to “Americanize” the series. **Space: 1999** went through many changes in its second year as it amped up the action and shuffled around the cast (dropping fan favorites like Professor Bergman and Paul Morrow without a word). One of the good additions was Catherine Schell as the alien Maya, but she couldn't help save the show from the monster-of-the-week formula it mostly followed from that point forward, and it was cancelled after it wrapped up its sophomore year. **Space: 1999** had its moments, mostly in its first season, and many who grew up with it still have fond memories of the show. But it has not held up well to the test of time and has since mostly faded as a cult curiosity and guilty pleasure from a past era.

Should It Be Rebooted? No, this one does not need a reboot because the premise is just too far removed from science and there is not really a good way to rework it so that it seems plausible. But that doesn't stop the entertainment industry, and there have been talks of bringing it back under the title **Space: 2099**. Not much has moved forward on that front, though, so perhaps this one will remain relegated to the past.

Sci Fi TV Review: Alien Earth



Before proceeding with this review, I have to confess that I have not seen any of the *Alien* movies beyond 1997's *Alien Resurrection*. I consider the first film in the franchise a sci fi classic, and the second a notable genre accomplishment as well. The third film had its moments, but I hated that they killed off (Spoiler Alert?) Hicks, Newt, and Bishop. By the time they got to the fourth film, it seemed like they had run the franchise into the ground, and I just lost interest. From what I've heard about the films that followed, it appears that trend continued, though perhaps I'll catch *Prometheus*, *Alien: Covenant*, and *Alien: Romulus* at some point.

When I heard about the TV series, it seemed promising enough, so I decided to give it a shot. It acts as a prequel, taking place in 2120, two years prior to the events in the 1979 film *Alien*. A research vessel carrying five alien species crash-lands in a city controlled by Prodigy, one of the five major corporations on the planet. A group of machine/human hybrids is sent in to investigate, while the CEO of the Weyland-Yutani Corporation (which owns the ship) tries to reclaim the cargo.

The introduction of the hybrids is interesting as they differ from the synths of the movies, having a human consciousness implanted in a synthetic body. The show also fills us in on how people on Earth knew about the aliens prior to the events of the 1979 movie. But as it quickly cycles through these concepts and a few others, by the second or third episode I started to feel like I did when watching *Alien: Resurrection*: we've done all this before, and there doesn't seem to be enough new material to justify the latest entry. Still, I stuck with the series and it really started to improve from about the fifth episode on.

On the good side, the hybrids are interesting, and there are plenty of directions the creative team can go with them. The show also successfully replicates the look and feel of the early *Alien* movies, while finally giving us a glimpse of Earth, something we haven't seen up to this point. I also find it intriguing that five companies

control the planet, something I don't recall being mentioned before (though perhaps that came up in the more recent films). Plus, that eyeball alien is super creepy, and hopefully we learn plenty more about it.

On the bad side, there are not many characters here you can sympathize or identify with. The medic Hermit (aka Joe) is one of the few I liked early on, and I eventually warmed up to Wendy (aka Marcy). Timothy Olyphant gives his usual excellent performance as Kirsh, and that character does seem interesting. But he's not necessarily someone I'm rooting for. Boy Kavalier is pretty close to a comic-book character, though Samuel Blenkin is clearly having fun chewing the scenery. Security Officer Morrow could have been a much more compelling character, and while Babou Ceesay delivers a strong, moody performance, I'm starting to worry that the writers may waste his potential.

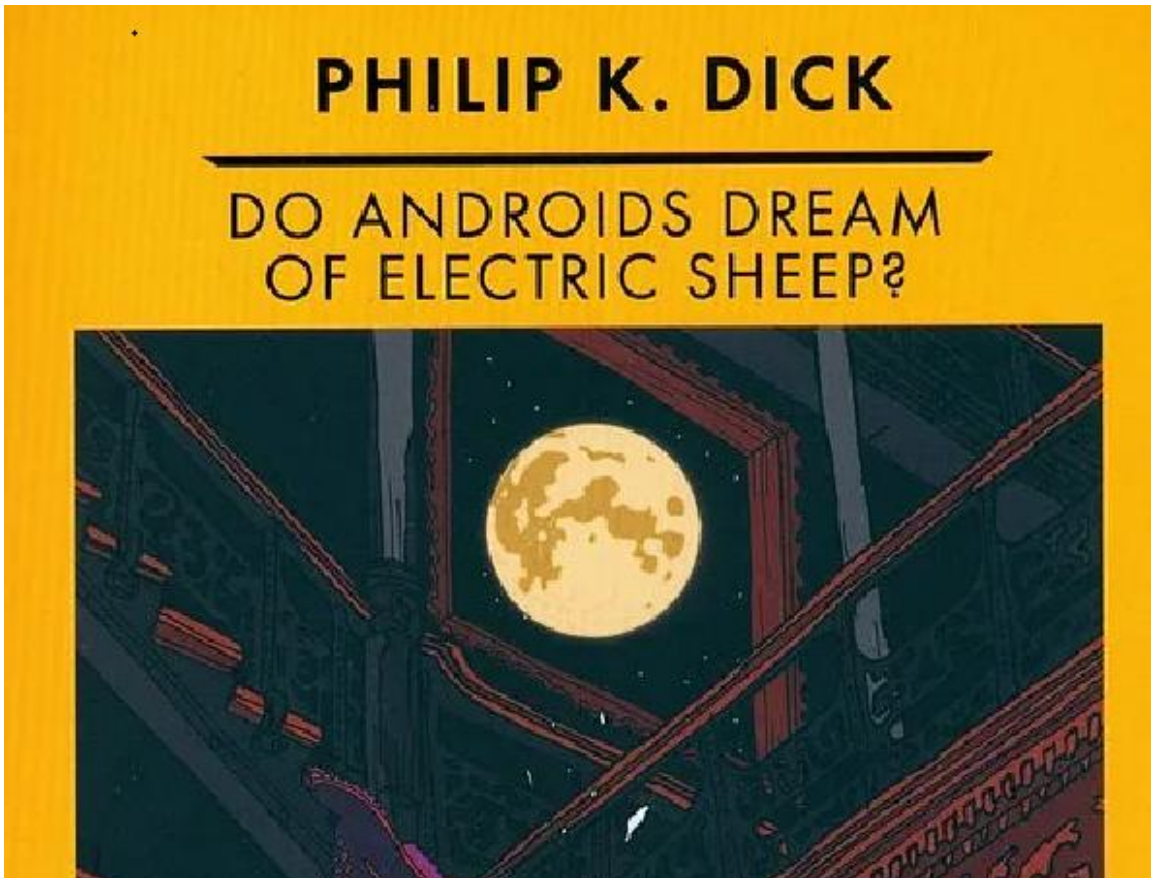
Despite these issues—and the retread feel—overall I am enjoying the show so far. I wonder how far they can go with this as a prequel, and I certainly hope they don't start re-writing canon the way several **Star Trek** prequel shows have. They could eventually jump forward past the first two **Alien** movies and carry on the series from there, or spin off and focus on the hybrids. There's enough of interest to keep the show going for a while, and I just hope they keep moving forward with minimal recycling of concepts already covered by the franchise. The potential for a really great sci-fi series is here; it just hasn't been realized yet.

What's Next? As of this writing, the show has not been renewed yet, but the viewership numbers look good and I expect it to continue to a second season. Creator/Showrunner Noah Hawley has plans for it to run several seasons, and it seems to have enough momentum to carry it for now.

Where Can You Watch It? All 8 episodes from the first season are streaming on Hulu.

Audiobook Review: *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

1968 Novel by Philip K. Dick



Published in 1968 and set in the “near-future” of 2001, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* depicts an Earth left desolate by “World War Terminus.” Nuclear fallout has driven many survivors to colonize off-world planets like Mars, where emigrants are rewarded with android servants. Some of these androids (“andies”) escape their servitude and flee back to Earth, where bounty hunters are tasked with “retiring” them.

In San Francisco, lead bounty hunter Dave Holden is critically injured by a superior Nexus-6 android, and his colleague Rick Deckard is called in to track down six fugitive androids. As Deckard pursues them, he grapples with his depressed wife, who refuses to use mood organs to regulate her emotions, and his yearning to own a real animal, a prized status symbol in this crumbling society. Parallel to his story, we follow J.R. Isidore, a radiation-damaged “special” who befriends three of the fugitive androids when they hide in his near-abandoned building.

Most people know Philip K. Dick’s story from *Blade Runner*, Ridley Scott’s 1982 film adaptation (the title of which actually came from *The Bladerunner* by Alan E. Nourse and has no connections). While the movie borrows the novel’s core structure—a wounded bounty hunter, escaped Nexus-6 androids, and a final

showdown in an empty building—it diverges sharply in tone. In both versions, Deckard visits the corporation that makes the androids—Rosen Industries in the book, Tyrell Corporation in the film—and administers the Voigt-Kampff empathy test to a woman named Rachel, who proves to be an android. But while the movie turns this tale into a brooding, action-driven noir, the book dives deeply into philosophical questions about life, empathy, and what it truly means to be human.

Dick's humans are hollow. They manage their emotions with mood organs, chase social status through owning rare animals, and distract themselves with the fake religion of Mercerism or the endless chatter of ***The Buster Friendly Show***. In contrast, the short-lived androids arguably live with more urgency and authenticity. These themes give the novel depth, but they also expose its flaws.

Dick excels at big ideas—seen in short works like “The Minority Report” and “We Can Remember It for You Wholesale”—but his longer stories often meander. ***Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*** feels padded, with its plot taking a backseat to the book's concepts. Ultimately, it lacks the tight structure that could have anchored its philosophical weight.

Deckard himself is another weak point. He's not a compelling anti-hero but simply underwhelming, coming across as timid and fragile. It's hard to believe he's a top bounty hunter, and harder still to empathize with him, which may be the point, but it distances the reader emotionally.

Despite its flaws, ***Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*** remains a landmark of science fiction. Like ***Stranger in a Strange Land*** by Robert A. Heinlein or ***Foundation*** by Isaac Asimov, its reputation outshines its readability. Genre fans should experience it as an essential touchstone, but go in with tempered expectations, and know that Dick's brilliance often shines brighter in his shorter works than in this uneven novel.

Comments on the Audiobook: The audiobook version that I listened to was read by long-time veteran Scott Brick who has many genre titles to his credit. He delivers his usual good reading, though I have to admit that I did not feel like his voice fit this book very well. His monotone seems to better fit the drier writing of authors like Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clarke and actually complements their prose. His reading here didn't quite seem to flow as well with Dick's writing, though I wouldn't say it was bad or detracted from the book. He did a decent job, I just like him better with other authors. Still, this is a good way to encounter this book, and if you have not read it yet I would suggest getting the audiobook version. Note that it does go under the title ***Blade Runner*** (even though that term is not used in the novel) and claims to be "adapted from" ***Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?***, but it is the original Philip K. Dick novel. It is available from Audible.com and other sellers of audiobooks. The print version is widely available in paperback and hard cover.

Interesting Fact: ***Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*** is widely considered a proto-cyberpunk novel, and the later film adaptation by Ridley Scott is also viewed as a seminal work of that subgenre. The book—and film—have had a lasting influence on cyberpunk, visible in Japanese anime such as ***Akira*** and other works like ***The Matrix*** and ***Black Mirror***.

Sci Fi TV Review: Nautilus



This series acts as a prequel to Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, centering on the exploits of a young Captain Nemo. Set in 1857, it follows Nemo's escape from the oppression of the British East India Company using the prototype submarine, the Nautilus. Nemo has the goal of revenge for his murdered family and stolen homeland and he confronts imperial villains, giant sea creatures, and mysterious lands along with ethical dilemmas amongst his ragtag crew.

The series embraces the spirit of Jules Verne's adventure stories with tremendous glee. There are plenty of derring-do moments, last-minute escapes, and unlikely rescues to fill every episode with excitement. Much of this is done in the Disney tradition, with an onscreen colorful palette, delivering a show designed to appeal to adults and younger viewers alike. And while it can sometimes take this a bit too far, throwing one predicament after the next, it still balances things out well enough with humor and drama.

The Nemo character himself is quite interesting, presented as an Indian prince whose royal family and birthright are stolen by the East India Mercantile Company, giving him the motivation for his hatred toward conquerors and imperialists. This actually originates from the small hints Verne provided about Nemo's past, with the series expanding upon that to set up the motivations for his later crusading efforts against the warmongering governments of the world.

Shazad Latif (*Star Trek: Discovery*) does an excellent job with the character, demonstrating the single-minded drive that can be his weakness at times, while also revealing his more human and sympathetic side. He is supported by a strong cast, consisting of crewmembers who don't just fade into the scenery, along with reluctant passengers that include two strong female characters who prove they can contribute. Georgia Flood

as Humility Lucas and Céline Menville as Loti stand out as women stepping up in the man's world of the 19th century, and they practically deserve a spin-off series of their own.

Nautilus delivers a grand sci-fi epic with excellent production values that could have carried on for years and possibly even adapted the two Jules Verne novels. Unfortunately, that will not happen (more on that below), but perhaps it will reignite some interest in the character and convince some sci-fi fans to head back to the classics and explore the source material.

Cancelled Too Soon? This show was planned as a Disney+ original, but it was cancelled before it aired, and AMC picked it up for a burn-off run. The series had plenty of potential and could have turned into a notable sci-fi franchise, but it has been cut short by corporate execs who have little interest in supporting quality shows.

Where Can You Watch It? All 10 eps are streaming on AMC+ in the U.S. and Prime Video in the UK.

Sci Fi TV Schedule:

This is the schedule of sci fi and fantasy shows on the linear networks and streaming services for **October through December 2025** as of this printing. Note that all dates and times can change without notice. The full info on the shows below is available at CancelledSciFi.com.

Mondays

Streaming [Solar Opposites](#) (Hulu) Season 6 Premieres Oct 13 (All Episodes Available)

Tuesdays

No Genre Entries

Wednesdays

Streaming [Gen V](#) (Prime Video) Continues from Sep, Season Finale on Oct 22

Streaming [Star Wars: Visions](#) (Disney+) Season 3 Premieres Oct 29 (All Episodes Available)

Streaming [The Mighty Nein](#) (Prime Video) **NEW SERIES** Premieres Nov 19 (One Ep per Week)

Streaming [Stranger Things](#) (Netflix) Season 5 Vol. 1 Premieres Nov 26 (All Episodes Available)

Streaming [Percy Jackson and the Olympians](#) (Disney+) Season 2 Premieres Dec 10 (One Ep per Week)

Streaming [Fallout](#) (Prime Video) Season 2 Premieres Dec 17 (One Ep per Week)

Streaming [Stranger Things](#) (Netflix) Series Finale on Dec 31

Thursdays

8:30-9:00 [Ghosts](#) (CBS) Season 5 Premieres Oct 16

Streaming [The Witcher](#) (Netflix) Season 4 Premieres Oct 30 (All Episodes Available)

Streaming [Stranger Things](#) (Netflix) Season 5 Vol. 2 Premieres Dec 25 (All Episodes Available)

Fridays

Streaming [Pluribus](#) (Apple) **NEW SERIES** Premieres Nov 7 (One Ep per Week)

Saturdays

No Genre Entries

Sundays

9-10 PM [The Walking Dead: Daryl Dixon](#) (AMC) Continues from Sep, Season Finale on Oct 19

9-10 PM [Talamasca: The Secret Order](#) (AMC) **NEW SERIES** Premieres Oct 26

9-10 PM [It: Welcome to Derry](#) (HBO) **NEW SERIES** Premieres Oct 26

9:30-10 PM [Krapopolis](#) (FOX) Continues from Sep

Not Scheduled Yet

[The Creep Tapes](#) (Shudder) Returning for 2nd Season

[Invincible](#) (Prime Video) Returning for 5th Season

[Interview with the Vampire](#) (AMC) Returning for 3rd Season

[One Piece](#) (Netflix) Returning for 2nd Season

[Wonder Man](#) (Disney+) **NEW SERIES**

Focus on Sci Fi TV: *Pluribus*



Premiere: November 7th, Apple TV+

Starring: Rhea Seehorn, Karolina Wydra, Carlos Manuel Vesga

Vince Gilligan is well known for creating the crime classics ***Breaking Bad*** and ***Better Call Saul***, but he actually got his start in television on ***The X-Files***, writing 29 scripts for the show—including “Drive” which guest-starred Bryan Cranston and “X-Cops”—and acting as executive producer in later seasons. Now he is returning to his genre roots with the upcoming ***Pluribus*** (aka ***PLUR1BUS***), though this is not your standard sci fi TV series.

The show follows Carol Sturka, a best-selling historical romance author who refers to her work as “mindless crap.” Her world is shattered while on a promotional book tour, when a mysterious virus spreads across New Mexico, transforming humanity into a mass of cheerful and content individuals. Carol is somehow immune to the virus and faces this new reality with a mixture of rage and confusion.

Gilligan told Entertainment Weekly that he came up with the idea while working on ***Better Call Saul***:

During our lunch breaks, I would take long walks around the neighborhood near our offices. My mind would wander and I got interested in the idea of a world in which everyone was nice. There was no way you could insult them. There was no way you could hurt their feelings. But they would do anything and everything for you.

He went on to say:

There's no denying that we live in a country that is very fractured. What interests me about this show and the possibilities for it is that people, I hope, can watch it and say, 'What would the world be like if everybody got along?' There's probably a bit of wish fulfillment in the idea of this show. I don't know that I set out to create that, but I see the real benefit in it now.

He originally thought of a male protagonist, but then realized that Rhea Seehorn—who he worked with on **Better Call Saul**—was perfect for the part. “She’s so funny when she wants to be, but can also break your heart when she wants to.” He then went on to explain the irony of the show:

The drama of the show is that the world’s most miserable person is desperately trying to save the planet from happiness. There’s a surprising amount of drama that we’re mining from that.

Gilligan has referred to **Pluribus** as a genre-bending show that is very different from his previous work on **Breaking Bad** and **Better Call Saul**. It certainly sounds interesting, and it will get the chance to develop its story as it has been renewed for a second season in advance.

Source: ew.com

Focus on Sci Fi TV: **The Mighty Nein**



Premiere: Prime Video, November 19th

Starring: Laura Bailey, Taliesin Jaffe, Ashley Johnson, Sam Riegel, Travis Willingham

The animated fantasy series **The Legend of Vox Machina** has proven quite a hit for Amazon’s Prime Video, having produced three seasons so far with a fourth year on the way in 2026, and a fifth and final season to

follow that. But the creators of the **Dungeons & Dragons**-based Critical Roll universe are not done yet with their fantasy tales as they have new entry **The Mighty Nein** set to premiere this Fall.

Produced by a troupe of actors who live-streamed their campaigns on the internet, the new series is based on the adventures of their second campaign which takes place 20 years after the events of **Vox Machina**. It is still on the world known as Exandria but it takes place on the continent Wildemount which contains the Dwendalian Empire to the west, the Kryn Dynasty to the east, and the Menagerie Coast.

Following is the rundown of the cast and their characters provided by EW.com:

Sam Riegel voices Nott The Brave, a foul-mouthed alcoholic goblin girl who's a master of stealth and crossbow; Liam O'Brien voices Caleb Widogast, a disheveled human wizard adept at fire magic; Marisha Ray voices Beauregard Lionett, a human monk of the Cobalt Soul order who's part MMA fighter, part kick-ass detective; Laura Bailey voices Jester Luvor, a prankster whose best friend is an invisible god named the Traveler; Travis Willingham voices Fjord Stone, an orphaned half-orc sailor who washes ashore after a shipwreck with mysterious magical powers; and Taliesin Jaffe voices Mollymauk Tealeaf, a purple-skinned, horned flamboyant tarot reader for a traveling carnival.

Travis Willingham—the voice of Fjord Stone—went on to add:

*With **The Legend of Vox Machina**, we started with our heroes altogether at once. We really want to buy into who these characters are from **The Mighty Nein** and how they come together slowly — as pairs, sometimes staying lone wolves for as long as possible, and really fighting for what it is they're looking to achieve in the story. That's the thing that really is going to separate Mighty Nein from Vox. You'll see all of them fighting for their own goals and really resisting working together as a team for quite a long while.*

Fans of **Vox Machina** should certainly be looking forward to the show, and it has received the greenlight for two seasons in advance.

Source: EW.com

Coming Soon on Blu-ray



Description: The newly updated and revitalised second season of the iconic BBC sci-fi series is coming to Blu-ray on 10th November 2025. All 13 episodes have been newly remastered from the best available sources, including the original film where available. These stories have never looked or sounded so good on home media. Description: In the distant future, rebel leader Blake (Gareth Thomas) once again boards the fantastical spacecraft Liberator with his crew, continuing their quest to free the galaxy from the tyrannical rule of the Federation and its Supreme Commander, Servalan.

Created By: Terry Nation

Starring: Gareth Thomas, Paul Darrow, Michael Keating, Sally Knyvette, David Jackson, Peter Tuddenham, Jan Chappell, Jacqueline Pearce, Brian Croucher

Special Features and Technical Specs:

- NEW RESTORATIONS OF ALL 13 EPISODES FROM THE BEST AVAILABLE SOURCES
- In Conversation - Matthew Sweet conducts two new interviews, with Brian Croucher who played Travis, and designer Roger Murray-Leach
- Liberation Series 2 - A brand-new feature-length documentary looking back of the making of the series.
- Archival Documentary - Part 2 of the previously unreleased Making Of Blake's 7, featuring extensive interviews with cast and crew
- Jacqueline Pearce Tribute - A look at the life and career of the iconic British actress, who played Servalan
- David Jackson Tribute - Friends and colleagues remember David Jackson (Gan)
- Rare Convention Footage - Previously unreleased panels with the cast and crew
- New Audio Commentaries
- Rare Visual Footage
- Photo Galleries (HD)
- PDF Written Archive
- Production paperwork, scripts, studio floorplans and much more, available for the first time
- Archiva Treats - From the BBC archives

Available from video retailers on December 16, 2025

Sci Fi Movie Schedule:

October

Bone Lake (In Theaters Oct 3): A couple's romantic vacation at a secluded lakeside estate is upended when they are forced to share the mansion with a mysterious and attractive couple. In this darkly hilarious and seductive horror story, a dream getaway spirals into a nightmarish maze of sex, lies, and manipulation, bringing terrifying secrets to light and triggering a bloody battle for survival.

Directed by: Mercedes Bryce Morgan | **Starring:** Maddie Hasson, Alex Roe, Andra Nechita, Marco Pigossi

Tron: Ares (In Theaters Oct 10): This third film in the ***Tron*** series follows a highly sophisticated Program, Ares, who is sent from the digital world into the real world on a dangerous mission, marking humankind's first encounter with A.I. beings.

Directed by: Joachim Rønning | **Starring:** Jared Leto, Greta Lee, Evan Peters, Jodie Turner-Smith, Jeff Bridges

Frankenstein (In Theaters-Limited Oct 17, Streaming on Netflix Nov 7): Oscar-winning director Guillermo del Toro adapts Mary Shelley's classic tale of Victor Frankenstein, a brilliant but egotistical scientist who brings a creature to life in a monstrous experiment that ultimately leads to the undoing of both the creator and his tragic creation.

Directed by: Guillermo del Toro | **Starring:** Oscar Isaac, Jacob Elordi, Mia Goth, Felix Kammerer

Bugonia (In Theaters, Oct 24): Two conspiracy-obsessed young men kidnap the high-powered CEO of a major company, convinced that she is an alien intent on destroying planet Earth.

Directed by: Yorgos Lanthimos | **Starring:** Emma Stone, Jesse Plemons, Aidan Delbis

Queens of the Dead (In Theaters-Limited, Oct 24): Drag queens and club kids battle zombies craving brains during their drag show in Brooklyn, putting personal conflicts aside to utilize their distinct abilities against the undead threat.

Directed by: Tina Romero | **Starring:** Jaquel Spivey, Katy O'Brian, Margaret Cho, Jack Haven

November

Predator: Badlands (In Theaters Nov 7): Set in the future on a remote planet, a young Predator, outcast from his clan, finds an unlikely ally in Thia and embarks on a treacherous journey in search of the ultimate adversary.

Directed by: Dan Trachtenberg | **Starring:** Elle Fanning, Dimitrius Schuster-Koloamatangi

The Running Man (In Theaters Nov 14): The Running Man is the top-rated show on television--a deadly competition where contestants, known as Runners, must survive 30 days while being hunted by professional assassins, with every move broadcast to a bloodthirsty public and each day bringing a greater cash reward. Desperate to save his sick daughter, working-class Ben Richards is convinced by the show's charming but ruthless producer, Dan Killian, to enter the game as a last resort.

Directed by: Edgar Wright | **Starring:** Glen Powell, William H. Macy, Lee Pace, Emilia Jones, Josh Brolin

Keeper (In Theaters Nov 14): A wife becomes isolated in a secluded cabin and has to fend off an unspeakable evil.

Directed by: Osgood Perkins | **Starring:** Tatiana Maslany, Rossif Sutherland

Wicked: For Good (In Theaters Nov 21): Elphaba, the future Wicked Witch of the West and her relationship with Glinda, the Good Witch of the North. The second of a two-part feature film adaptation of the Broadway musical.

Directed by: Jon M. Chu | **Starring:** Cynthia Erivo, Ariana Grande, Jonathan Bailey, Ethan Slater, Jeff Golblum

Eternity (In Theaters Nov 26): In an afterlife where souls have one week to decide where to spend eternity, Joan is faced with the impossible choice between the man she spent her life with and her first love, who died young and has waited decades for her to arrive.

Directed by: David Freyne | **Starring:** Miles Teller, Elizabeth Olsen, Callum Turner, John Early

December

Dust Bunny (In Theaters-Limited, Dec 5): Ten-year-old Aurora has a mysterious neighbor who kills real-life monsters. He's a hit man for hire. So, when Aurora needs help killing the monster she believes ate her entire family, she procures his services. Suspecting that her parents may have fallen victim to assassins gunning for him, Aurora's neighbor guiltily takes the job. Now, to protect her, he'll need to battle an onslaught of assassins -- and accept that some monsters are real.

Directed by: Bryan Fuller | **Starring:** Mads Mikkelsen, Sophie Sloan, Sigourney Weaver

Five Nights at Freddy's 2 (In Theaters, Dec 5): Former security guard Mike and police officer Vanessa have kept the truth from Mike's 11-year-old sister, Abby, concerning the fate of her animatronic friends. But when Abby sneaks out to reconnect with Freddy, Bonnie, Chica, and Foxy, it will set into motion a terrifying series of events, revealing dark secrets about the true origin of Freddy's, and unleashing a long-forgotten horror hidden away for decades.

Directed by: Emma Tammi | **Starring:** Josh Hutcherson, Elizabeth Lail, Piper Rubio, Wayne Knight

Avatar: Fire and Ash (In Theaters, Dec 19): James Cameron takes audiences back to Pandora in an immersive new adventure with Marine turned Na'vi leader Jake Sully, Na'vi warrior Neytiri, and the Sully family.

Directed by: James Cameron | **Starring:** Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldana, Sigourney Weaver, Stephen Lang

Anaconda (In Theaters, Dec 25): Doug and Griff have been best friends since they were kids, and have always dreamed of remaking their all-time favorite movie: the cinematic "classic" Anaconda. When a midlife crisis pushes them to finally go for it, they head deep into the Amazon to start filming. But things get real when an actual giant anaconda appears, turning their comically chaotic movie set into a deadly situation.

Directed by: Tom Gormican | **Starring:** Paul Rudd, Jack Black, Steve Zahn, Thandiwe Newton

Focus on Sci Fi Movies: *Dust Bunny*



Premiere: In Theaters (Limited) December 5th

Directed by: Bryan Fuller

Starring: Mads Mikkelsen, Sophie Sloan, Sigourney Weaver, David Dastmalchian

Bryan Fuller got his start in television, having worked on *Star Trek: Deep Space 9* and *Voyager*, contributing the notable episodes “The Darkness and the Light” and “Empok Nor” to the former show and “Bride of Chaotica!” and “One Small Step” to the latter. He went on to create the idiosyncratic cult-favorites *Wonderfalls* and *Pushing Daisies*, and he executive produced *Heroes* during its first and best season (penning the lauded episode “The Company Man”). Among his other television accomplishments is the *Hannibal* series which he would still like to return to at some point.

Fuller has since turned his attention to the big screen, and *Dust Bunny* will be his feature film premiere, with the description revealing plenty of his trademark quirkiness:

Ten-year-old Aurora has a mysterious neighbor who kills real-life monsters. He's a hit man for hire. So, when Aurora needs help killing the monster she believes ate her entire family, she procures his services. Suspecting that her parents may have fallen victim to assassins gunning for him, Aurora's neighbor guiltily takes the job. Now, to protect her, he'll need to battle an onslaught of assassins -- and accept that some monsters are real.

Not surprisingly, Fuller is reteaming with Mads Mikkelsen on this project, the person who proved that Anthony Hopkins is not the only one who can play Hannibal. In addition, longtime genre-favorite Sigourney Weaver will be onboard for a cast with a one-two punch.

Fuller told **Variety** that the story started as an episode of the 2020 revival of the Steven Spielberg series *Amazing Stories*:

In some ways, it's Spielberg, a homage to those traumatic childhood films of the '80s, like Poltergeist and, particularly, Gremlins. It was conceived and designed to be an Amazing Story story. But as we were developing it for Apple, it was getting noted to death, and there were a lot of stories that we had developed that weren't moving forward in the process at Apple. So I was like, 'You know what, this would be a great movie.'

The movie premiered at the 2025 Toronto International Film Festival on September 9th, and it currently has a 100% Fresh Rating on **Rotten Tomatoes**. Those who enjoy Fuller's works should certainly be eager for its arrival in theaters.

Source: Variety

Focus on Sci Fi Movies: *The Running Man*



Premiere: In Theaters November 14th

Directed by: Edgar Wright

Starring: Glen Powell, William H. Macy, Lee Pace. Emilia Jones, Josh Brolin

The 1987 dystopian film ***The Running Man***, which starred Arnold Schwarzenegger, has become a cult classic, and the movie is a ton of fun. It takes place in a future dystopian world where criminals are given a chance at freedom by participating in a game show where they must run or die. The film is heavy on the satire, and gave Schwarzenegger plenty of one-liners while also giving Richard Dawson his crowning role as the host of the show Damon Killian.

So if they did it right the first time, what's the point of revisiting the property almost forty years later?

Well, that fact is that the 1987 film took quite a lot of liberties with the source material. It was based on the 1982 Stephen King book (writing as Richard Bachman), and his original version had quite a number of interesting sci fi concepts. I read the book years ago and thought that it would actually make a good television series. Director Edgar Wright (***Shaun of the Dead***) also apparently believed it was ready for a more faithful revival, but he aimed it back at the big screen.

In the book, the contestants in the game show are running for thirty days to win cash prizes, and anybody can hunt them down, not just specialized killers. Wright is sticking with that premise, though he is still going for the big action movie look and feel as the trailer demonstrates. He had the following to say in an interview with ***Empire Magazine***:

One of the things about the book that I loved was the fact that Ben Richards is out in the world on his own, so it's like the deadliest game of hide and seek. It does feel like making a road movie in a lot of ways: a very intense, dangerous road movie. Ben is moving through different environments and meeting different people as he tries to survive 30 days out in the wild.

As for Glen Powell (***Scream Queens***) in the Ben Richards role, Wright commented:

I felt it was important to see somebody who hadn't really done something like this before. It's similar to Bruce Willis, when he was still the guy from Moonlighting, before he did Die Hard, where that adds to the suspense. Can they make it?

Whether audiences will accept Powell in a role Schwarzenegger made famous remains to be seen.

Source: *Empire Magazine*

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