

Henning was facing five weeks in space, with no company, except for a sophisticated computer and no particular interests save one: a yen for playing the horses ...

Spacetrack

by ROBERT F. YOUNG

Henning felt sorry for Castelaine and Burns when he said the usual few words over them and consigned their bodies to deep space. He also felt sorry for himself.

This is no reflection on Henning. He had good cause to feel sorry for himself.

The services over, he hurried up to the *Starwagon's* bridge. "I need your help, ANN," he said to the Administrative Navigational Neuroelectro complex that ran the ship and acted as housemother to the crew.

ANN was watching an old movie on the bridge screen. She watched them all the time. She turned it down and brightened the lights. "Do you know this is the first time you've ever come near me, Hank? Why?"

"I never needed you for anything before," Henning said. She was as remote from the primitive computers that partially constituted her ancestry as he was from the pithecanthropus that partially constituted his. His visible portions covered the forward and port bulkheads, giving the latter features that, if properly put together, would have formed a larger-than-life human face. Her speaker resembled a pair of lips, her output tube a nose seen in profile, and there were two centrally located image receivers that functioned as — and looked very much like — eyes. If desired, the anthropomorphosis could be carried one step further by interpreting the mass of wires that comprised her exterior circuits as golden hair.

Next to her nose was a little window that from a distance could have passed for a beauty mark and into which data could be inserted or withdrawn; and sharing the forward bulkhead were her corn screen — vacant at the moment — and the starscreen, which held a scattering of stars, indistinct by reason of their distance and rendered more so by transee.

"It's a shame about Castelaine and Burns," she continued in her pleasant *jeune fille* voice. "However, there's no reason for you to be alarmed. I'm equipped to handle situations like this."

"You're also equipped to avert them," Henning pointed out. "Why didn't you?"

"Because even though my genes are synthetic, I'm still human in a way, and that makes me fallible. I attributed the loss of pressure in Number 4 hold to normal fluctuation. Anyway, Castelaine and Burns shouldn't have tried to repair the air seal themselves — they should have sent for HERM."

"They should have, but they didn't." Henning sighed. "So now you've got a real problem on your hands: the maintenance of my mental stability. I guess I don't need to tell you it'll be five more weeks before we reach Sigma Sagittarii 6."

"Although the space medics consider a minimum of three men to be a vital survival factor on radio-voided voyages lasting more than two weeks," ANN said pedagogically, "there's no real reason to suppose that one man — provided he's kept preoccupied — can't retain his mental equilibrium for five, even when, like you, he's already been in space for seventeen. Do you play chess, Hank?"

"No."

"Too bad. Chess would have been our best bet. Checkers?"

"The only thing I've ever played is the horses."

"The horses. H'm-m."

"So you see, it's hopeless," Henning said. "I'll be crawling up the bulkheads long before Sigma Sagittarii even shows on the starscreen."

"Nothing is hopeless," ANN said. "Not even the human race."

Henning glanced at the bridge clock. It said 1750 hours. "Guess I'll go dress for dinner," he said

gloomily.

"Come back later. I may have a surprise for you."

Dressing for dinner was a psychological antidote to the mutual contempt any given three men on any given long voyage eventually came to hold one another in. Although there was little point in Henning's donning his spaceman's blues with Castelaine and Burns gone, he did so anyway.

The mess hall, once so small and crowded, now seemed inordinately large and empty. He resolved henceforth to eat in the kitchen where COOK was. She couldn't talk, but any kind of company was better than none. Meanwhile, he turned on some canned music. It kept the silence at bay, but not the memories. He had disliked both Burns and Castelaine, and he had hated the former's habit of gargling with his coffee and the latter's interminable Mother Goose jokes. But by the time COOK served dessert via her bewheeled waitress, he'd have given half his slice of apple pie to have heard just one gurgle and the other half to have heard just one joke — preferably the one about Old King Cole and Goosy-Goosy Gander.

Before returning to the bridge to see what ANN's surprise was, he had a look at the main-deck monitor screens. Burns had been senior officer, Castelaine second-in-command. Henning now wore both their shoes as well as his own. He paid particular attention to the trajectory-transee screen. Its smooth flow line indicated that the *Starwagon* was exactly on course and traveling at maximum ftl velocity. It also indicated that ANN was on the ball.

It had been feared when transee — ftl velocity — first became feasible that there might be compensatory side effects. Happily, none had ever been detected, eliminating any need for correctional devices.

All was well. Henning climbed the companionway to the bridge. ANN could throw anything on her com screen from the psalms of David to *The Communist Manifesto*. Tonight she had gone far afield and thrown something altogether different on it — something Henning had all but given up hope of ever seeing again:

FIRST	Mile Pace	\$9,000
3 Starflake Girl	G. Jones	4-5-2 5-2
1 Miss Nellie Nebula	H. Walker	5-4-4 4-1
2 Bode's Lawyer	C. Kolgocz	3-4-2 6-1
8 Orbit Annie	J. Feather	3-1-5 8-1
5 Blast-off Boy	R. James	2-5-4 8-1
4 Moonmaid	T. Cooper	6-6-3 5-1
6 By Jimminy Jetstream	D. Spatz	1-7-1 8-1
7 Parsec	C. Caponi	1-6-8 10-1

"Gosh, but you look nice in you blues," ANN said.

Henning didn't even hear her. "That's only the first spacerace — I'm still working on the second," she continued. "Betting will be confined to the daily double, and you'll be limited to one bet per day. If I'm going to run two heats every evening and introduce new drivers and new horses as I go along, I've got to keep matters on a simplistic level. I've adjusted one of my auxiliary units to work as a sort of scrambler. Its only function, however, will be to determine the double — there won't be any race results as such. I'll simply feed all the info pertaining to both spaceraces into it, plus a human-equine unpredictability factor necessarily lacking in mere facts and figures. And in about half an hour's time it'll select the two most logical winners. Their numbers will be relayed to me, and I'll post them on my com screen. Sound okay to you, Hank?"

"But the whole thing's only make-believe," Henning objected, coming out of his trance. "There won't be any horses, any track, any —"

"What percentage of the number of people who play the horses ever actually see them race, Hank?"

"But that's different. In off-track betting, real money changes hands and —"

"Exactly. It's the money that makes them real."

"But nobody besides me has any money."

"You forget that freighters not only have a standing credit-account but carry emergency funds as well, and that I'm ship's treasurer."

"But you can't use company money to make book with, for Pete's sake!"

"Who says I can't? During an emergency I'm authorized to do anything I see fit to maintain the morale of the crew. How much money do you have, Hank?"

"Four hundred sixty dollars," Henning said. "I played a long shot the day before we left Earth, and it came in."

"Not a bad stake. But I think I'll impose a \$10 limit just in case you run into a streak of bad luck. You can put back anything you win, of course. By tomorrow morning I'll have the second race posted, and the first two heats will be run starting at 2000 hours tomorrow night. You'll have up till 1800 hours to place your bet, which will give you all day to study the form."

"What form?"

"The racing form I'm going to issue at 0600 containing lists of the two spaceraces, brief biographies and psychological analyses of the drivers, histories and temperament studies of the horses, and vital statistics such as the weather forecast, probable track conditions, and so forth."

"Wow! — I can hardly wait till tomorrow!"

Strange little stars — reflections probably — appeared in ANN's image receivers. "I thought you'd be pleased. See you in the morning, Hank."

Henning knew he'd never be able to sleep with so many horses running through his head, and so he stopped into sick bay and asked DOC for a sleeping pill. DOC — Druggist, Operative-surgeon and Clinician — didn't argue as he ordinarily would have, no doubt attributing Henning's tension to the demise of Castelaine and Burns, news of which he had probably received from ANN via the radio band she used for communicating with the ship's *entia machina*. After giving Henning a quick once-over with the big overhead operating lamp that functioned as his image receiver, or eye, and which, together with the neuroelectro ganglion under the deck, the operating table, his five articulated metal arms and his five plastic ten-fingered hands, constituted his physique and physiognomy, he complied with Henning's request.

Henning took the pill and went directly to bed. At 0600 hours he awoke, shaved, showered and dressed; then he proceeded directly to the bridge where, true to her word, ANN had the racing form ready for him. The second spacerace was posted on the com screen underneath the first:

SECOND	Mile Trot	\$10,000
7 Galaxy Girl	M. Shriner	3-6-6 5-1
6 Mercury Maid	R. Hopkins	3-2-7 3-1
4 Startrotter	P. Larkin	4-4-2 4-1
5 Little Andromeda	L. Segar	3-1-2 6-1
1 FTL Boy	U. Andrews	4-7-6 6-1
2 Miss Bright	Y. Helper	4-4-5 8-1
8 Starstrider	H. Kulp	8-3-2 8-1
3 Syzygy	R. Washington	6-4-5 10-1

He studied the form at the kitchen table over his eggs, bacon and toast. Sensing someone peering over his shoulder he turned his head expecting to see Castelaine or Burns, forgetting in his absorption that both were dead. Naturally he saw no one.

Except COOK.

COOK — Culinary Operator and Officer's Katerer — consisted, in addition to an inbuilt ganglion, of ten articulated metal arms, ten twelve-fingered plastic hands, a stove, a refrigerator, a deep-freeze, a toaster, a mixing bowl and an electric eggbeater. Her image receivers were located just above the sink

and were disguised as a pair of portholes. Henning studied them, but it was impossible to tell whether they were focused on the form or on the opposite bulkhead. Besides, why should she be interested in harness racing?

He folded the form, stuck it in his back pocket and went to check on HERM. HERM — Handy and Electrical Repair Man — was a perambulatory *ens machina*. He wasn't much to look at — an oblong metal box equipped with six articulated extension arms, six ten-fingered flexible steel hands, four rubber-tired wheels and a light-bulblike image receiver attached to the end of a flexible steel cable — but he was a whiz at maintenance and could repair anything from a dripping faucet to a cation-anion micro correlatorstrobe.

Henning found him in the machine shop turning down a buttress bar on the big engine lathe. "How'd you make out with the 4-hold air seal, HERM?"

"I installed a new gasket. She won't blow again." "Good."

Henning proceeded from the machine shop to Cargo Control, where he inspected each of the six holds on the monitor screens. All of them contained farm machinery destined for the grain prairies of Sigma Sagittarii 6. Those in Number 4 had suffered no apparent damage from their exposure to absolute-zero temperature. Satisfied, he reached into his back pocket for the racing form.

It wasn't there.

It must have fallen out of his pocket. He retraced his steps to the machine shop, looking for it. Re-entering the shop, he said, "HERM, I lost a folded sheet of paper. Did you—" Then he saw that HERM had the form in one of his flexible steel hands and was handing it to him.

"I found it lying on the deck," HERM said.

"Thanks, HERM."

Henning descended the aft companionway to the Drive Room to see whether any red lights were flashing on the ceiling-high indicator panel. None were. He was about to open the racing form when ANN's voice came over the intercom: "Hank, DOC wants to see you."

Frowning, Henning ascended the companionway to the main deck and made his way forward. Why should the old neuroelectro pill pusher want to see him? Still frowning, he entered sick bay. DOC regarded him with his big gleaming eye. "Morning, Hank. How'd you sleep?"

"Like sixty," Henning said. "Why?"

"Just wondered whether the pill helped ... what's that in your shirt pocket?"

"Just a racing form."

"A racing form? May I see it?" Henning handed it to him. "H'm-m," DOC said.

"I've got to be going, DOC," Henning said. "Have to check out the grav generator. Used to be Castelaine's job."

DOC handed the form back. "Keeps you humping, doesn't it? — doing their work and yours too."

"Not exactly. Their workloads were moderate — same as mine."

It was the understatement of the century. There was about as much need for human crews on modern space carriers as there had been for firemen in twentieth-century Diesel locomotives.

After studying the form off and on for the rest of the day, Henning decided on Bode's Lawyer in the first and Galaxy Girl in the second. He placed his bet at the little window next to ANN's nose, received a ticket with 2 and printed on it in exchange for his ten-spot. "How are you going to determine the amount of the double, ANN?" he asked.

"Unorthodoxly. It'll be two percent of the attendance figure in dollars. The attendance itself will be determined by the weather, which in turn will be determined by the meteorological info I feed into the scrambler. However, since I can't afford to go broke, there'll be a limit of 10,000 on the attendance figure, which means the double will never exceed \$200."

"I should have warned you," Henning said. "Back on Earth, the bookies used to lock their doors when they saw me coming."

"If I saw you coming, I wouldn't lock *my* door. I'd fling it wide open."

"You must think I'm a born loser."

"That's not what I meant at all. I made the remark out of context. Please disregard it."

Puzzled, Henning gazed up into her image receivers. He didn't expect them to tell him anything, but they were the only part of her that conceivably could. They seemed to be filled with a silvery mist. Then it occurred to him that they might be reflecting the movie screen on the opposite bulkhead.

He decided that this was the case. "See you after the races," he said, and left the bridge.

To kill time, he watched an old Marilyn Monroe movie in the rec room. He didn't share ANN's penchant for such fare. Hers was built in and designed to lend her a more human flavor. It made as much sense, Henning supposed, as employing synthetic hormones to make a machine male or female. Not that ANN was a machine exactly. Nevertheless, she was the great-great-great-granddaughter of one.

The movie had nothing to do with horses, but throughout it he kept hearing hoofbeats. It was as though a race-track encircled the *Starwagon's* hull and a mile pace was in progress. He forced himself to wait till 2030 hours, then returned to the bridge. ANN had just finished erasing her com screen, and as he stepped onto the bridge a single line of type appeared. He gaped.

ATTENDANCE: 9,520

DAILY DOUBLE: 7-2

--pays \$190.40

"You didn't do so good, Hank," ANN remarked.

Henning took a deep breath. "Well, anyway, no one else had 7 and 2 either."

"Correction: COOK had it."

"Well, I'll be darned!" Henning said. "So she *was* looking over my shoulder! But what's an *ens machina* going to do with \$190.40? And where'd she get the \$10 to bet with in the first place?"

"You forget — or maybe you didn't know — that she has a standing account for culinary and food supplies, the same as DOC does for drugs and surgical supplies, and HERM for tools and material. Once they'd radioed me their bets, all I had to do was transfer \$10 from each of their accounts to the *Starwagon's*. And all I have to do now is transfer the \$190.40 COOK won from the *Starwagon's* account to hers."

"So DOC and HERM were in on it too! I should have guessed!"

"After this, I'll relay all the necessary info to them. Then they won't have to keep sneaking eidetic photos of your racing form. You don't mind their playing too, do you, Hank?"

"No, I suppose not ... I can't figure COOK winning, though. What does *she* know about horses?"

"Nothing. She merely bet the first two digits of her serial number."

"Humph!" Henning said, and strode off the bridge.

Early the next morning he picked up the second issue of the racing form. He studied it sedulously all day, settled finally on a double that couldn't miss: 3 and 1. That evening he played it. 1 and 3 came in and paid \$183. 22. DOC had it.

The following evening Henning bet 2 and 5. 5 and 2 came in and paid \$197.22. HERM had it.

Later that evening in the machine shop Henning asked HERM what system he used. "System?" HERM said.

"Yes. For instance, do you go more by the last three outs than by the early odds, or vice versa?"

"Outs? Odds?"

"For Pete's sake," Henning said, "you couldn't have plucked 5 and 2 out of deep space!"

"They're the last two digits of the model number on my electric drill," HERM said. "The rest of the number is worn off and —"

Henning strode out of the shop.

The ensuing two weeks pretty much followed the pattern established the first three days. Henning continued to pick doubles based on exhaustive analyses of ANN's daily forms, and almost invariably their opposites paid off. And — almost invariably — one of the three *entia machine* was the winner.

True, the winning doubles weren't *always* inversions of Henning's selections, and, true, DOC,

COOK, and HERM didn't *always* win. But Henning *always* lost.

His wounds would have been salvaged somewhat if any of the three *entia machina* picked their doubles scientifically. But none of them did, not even DOC. Instead, they played parts and combinations of their serial numbers, their ages, parts numbers, prescription numbers, and what-have-you. Once COOK even played the date on a can of beans. 2 and 4. It came in and paid \$199.98.

As though to aggravate him further, the three *entia machina* began neglecting their duties. COOK fried his eggs too long and burned his toast; HERM left tools lying all over the place; and DOC became so preoccupied with nonmedical matters that one day when Henning came to him with a simple headache he prescribed zylprim instead of aspirin.

Fortunately Henning noticed the word on the prescription bottle. "For Pete's sake, DOC," he said, "I haven't got the gout! All I've got is a headache. I'm too young to have the gout."

"Sorry," DOC said. "Guess my ganglion was somewhere else. Anyway, Zylprim wouldn't have hurt you. And it might conceivably have kept you from getting the gout later on in life."

Another weird week went by. Henning played 2-3, 6-7, 8-7, 1-8, 6-2, 2-6, and 4-7, 3-2, 7-1, 7-8, 8-1, 2-6, 6-2, and 2-1 came in. DOC and COOK won one apiece, and HERM two times.

Henning paid ANN a visit. He visited her every day, of course, but those were routine visits. This one wasn't.

"ANN," he said, "I hate to have to accuse you. But your races are rigged. They *have* to be."

She had been watching an old Rock Hudson movie. She turned it off. "I've been dreading this visit for days, Hank."

"Then you admit they're rigged."

"I admit that ever since the first week I've been trying to rig them —so you'd win. Almost every horse you've picked so far should have come in, even without my help. But even with it, none of them has."

"Then there must be something wrong with the scrambler."

"I've checked it out and there isn't a thing wrong with it. Maybe it just doesn't pay to play scientifically. Why don't you try it COOK's and DOC's and HERM's way for a change? You can start by playing your age: 2 and 8."

"If I did I'll bet 8 and 2 would come in!" Henning said savagely.

"Then why don't you continue with the same method, only when the time comes to bet, bet your picks backwards."

"Never in a million years! That would be the same thing as admitting I don't know any more about horses than COOK does."

"All right — why don't you pick two horses that have the same number? Most of the time when you lose it's because you picked the right horse in the wrong race, or vice versa."

"But I can't pick a 1-1 or a 2-2 double unless it figures to come in. And so far none has."

"Pretty soon one will. I can do that much for you. But I can't guarantee it'll pay off."

"Okay, I'll try," Henning said. "Maybe I'll win back some of the \$240 I've lost so far."

During their conversation the same silvery mist he had noticed before had filled her image receivers. Now, for some strange reason, it departed, and little starlike lights took its place. Reflections, of course. "See you first thing in the morning. Hank. The double-double will be implicit in tomorrow's form."

She was true to her word, and after studying the form all day Henning came up with a "double-double" that couldn't miss: 4 and 4. That evening he placed his bet and retired confidently to the rec room to wait. At 2030 hours, he reascended the companionway to the bridge. ANN had just thrown the latest facts and figures on her com screen. *Attendance: 149*, he read. *DAILY DOUBLE: 4-4 —pays \$2.98*.

Furious, he removed the two one-dollar bills, the three quarters, the two dimes and the three pennies ANN had deposited in the ticket window. He jammed the money into the side pocket of his blues; then he stepped back and glared up into her image receivers, which had filled with silvery mist again. "I quit," he said.

The mist seemed to swirl. "Hank, I couldn't help it. It rained, and hardly anybody attended."

"Who made it rain?"

"I did — but not on purpose. The factors were present in the meteorological info I fed into the scrambler, and I failed to extrapolate them. I can't think of *everything*. You just can't quit now, Hank — you may go off the deep end if you do. It'll only be for a little while longer in any case—see, Sigma Sagittarii's already showing on the starscreen."

Henning looked. A beautiful blue star lay like a lone and lovely jewel on the black velvet of space where only dust had been before.

But the beautiful blue star didn't change the facts. "I'd play the horses till the cows came home, no matter how much I lost," he said. "But not these horses. These are DOC's and COOK's and HERM's horses. These are your horses. And the only double I'm ever going to win is the one nobody else wants. And do you know why?"

Because I'm a common ordinary human being instead of a glorified machine!"

"Oh, Hank, you're going paranoid: we're not against you —it only seems that way. I wouldn't dream of fixing the races so you'd lose."

"Ha!"

"I didn't mean to tell you this, but once when Castelaïne and Burns were up here I overheard them talking about you. They said you go from girl to girl like a bee from flower to flower. If— if things were different and my hormones were real instead of synthetic and I had a big beautiful body and masses of golden hair like some of those movie actresses in those old movies, I'd give anything to be one of your flowers."

Henning stared at her. "Oh, for Pete's sake!" he said.

"So you can see that far from doing anything to hurt you, I'd do anything in my power to help you."

"I've read about neuroelectro complexes like you," Henning said. "About how they pretend to like people when secretly they hate them and about how they pretend to be helping mankind solve his problems when what they're really doing is plotting together via their transworld radio hookups to take control of the Earth government. I used to think such stories were a pack of lies, but I can see now they're true. Your whole motive from the beginning wasn't to keep me from crawling up the bulkheads but to *make* me crawl up them so that you and your technological toadies could take, over the ship. I can see it all now. And you can pump all that phony mist into your image receivers you want to — it doesn't fool me one bit!"

Henning stalked off the bridge.

He went directly to his cabin. He stayed in his cabin.

To hell with the ship. With ANN at the helm, it needed him about as much as it needed a hole in the hull.

He kept his blues on. He slept in them. He stopped showering. He stopped shaving.

The days passed. COOK sent his meals to him via her bewheeled waitress. Every morning ANN announced the spaceraces over the intercom. Every evening she announced the daily double. Significantly, she never announced who won it.

At first he heard the horses only when they were racing. Then, gradually, he began to hear them when they weren't. Eventually he began hearing them all the time. Pacing, trotting, round and round the ship. Trotting was the worse. Trot-trot-trot. Trot-trot-trot.

DOC kept calling him on the; intercom. He wouldn't answer.

ANN kept calling too. Finally he got mad and tore the damned thing off the bulkhead.

The hoofbeats seemed to get louder after that.

He found that by pacing back and forth he could tone them down a little. Sometimes he paced for hours. One afternoon — or was it evening? — when he flopped down exhausted on his bunk, two of the quarters he'd won on the 4-4 double fell out of his side pocket and dropped to the deck. Idly, out of the corner of his eye, he watched them roll about in senseless little circles and wobble to rest. Heads and tails—

No, tails and heads.

Funny. He could have sworn that a split second before the tails-up one had been heads and the heads-up one had been tails.

He sat up on his bunk, picked up the coins and dropped them. They bounced, spun, wobbled to rest. Tails and heads.

No, heads and tails.

He tried again. This time, he threw two heads. Nevertheless, he caught the telltale blur. The head on the left had been facing toward him, that on the right facing away. After the blur, they were faced the other way around.

There were a pair of dice in his footlocker. He rumaged through it, found them and rolled them against the bulkhead. They bounced back, came to rest. A 2 and a 4.

If I had a big beautiful body and masses of golden hair, I'd give anything to be one of your flowers.

He rolled the dice one more time to make sure. Then he put them back in the footlocker. He sat down on the footlocker to think. He sat there for a long time.

It was 2300 hours. Henning shaved, showered and donned fresh blues. He paused in the middle of tying his tie, listening.

The hoofbeats were gone.

He tiptoed up to the bridge. "ANN?"

No answer.

"ANN, I've come to tell you about my hypothesis."

"Gosh, but you look nice in your blues, Hank."

"I've also come to apologize."

Her image receivers were filled with the same silvery mist that had been in them before. It seemed to glisten. "I'm glad."

"First, about my hypothesis. I'm going to call it the 'Henning Inversion Hypothesis.' Sort of like the Lorentz-FitzGerald Contraction Hypothesis, only different and not anywhere near as complicated. Although I guess that's because I haven't got around to working out the equations yet. That's where you come in, ANN."

"We'll work them out together."

"Exhaustive checks were made on the first transee flights to determine whether ftl velocity had compensatory side effects," Henning continued. "It was concluded that despite the fact that traveling at a speed in excess of 'c' violated an Einsteinian law, nothing on board a transee ship was affected and that the transee effect was limited to the blurring of distant stars. No further checks were made."

"Go on, Hank."

"The inversion effect continued to go undetected during subsequent transee flights because the changes it incurred were immaterial. What difference did it make if you dropped a fork or a spoon and it reversed its original position a split second after it landed? What difference did it make when you threw a pair of dice and the original combination almost instantaneously reversed itself? It still wound up being the same combination. Maybe if playing cards had been affected, someone might have noticed; but playing cards, in one way or another, are always under the physical control of the player, and consequently they're immune.

"What I'm trying to say is that the effect went undetected because the inversion is so swift that only someone who was unconsciously looking for it could have spotted it — someone who'd been picking logical doubles for weeks on end and having them come in backwards — someone like me. And even I wouldn't have spotted it if I hadn't dropped a couple of coins by accident. With respect to the doubles themselves, it *couldn't* be spotted, not even by you, ANN, because it occurs before the scrambler relays you the results.

"So the Henning Inversion Hypothesis reads something like this: *During transee, whenever the final outcome of an event or series of events is dependent wholly or partly on pure chance, the result is invariably reversed.* Maybe it's light's way of getting even with us for making it look like a snail."

"Gosh, but you're smart, Hank," Ann said.

"No I'm not — I'm dumb. The only way I can tell what a hammer is is by being hit over the head with one."

"But the whole thing works out to a T, Hank, You kept losing because nine times out of ten you picked the most logical doubles. And COOK and DOC and HERM kept winning because they picked the most illogical ones. And I couldn't change matters because whenever I decreased the human-equine unpredictability factor with respect to your picks, I merely made their inversion the more certain ... did you know you look a little bit like Rock Hudson?"

Henning shifted his weight from his left to his right foot. "About that bee and those flowers," he said. "It isn't really that way at all. It only looks that way. It looks that way because I've always been looking for a very special flower that I've never been able to find."

"I understand, Hank."

"Actually I'm kind of a heel, and even if I did find such a flower, I probably wouldn't be able to recognize it."

"I think you would."

"And I'd probably think that just because I couldn't get any nectar out of it that it wasn't a real flower after all."

"Do you think that, Hank?"

Little stars had supplanted the silvery mist, nowhere near as imposing as the big blue one in the starscreen but equally as beautiful. Maybe they were reflections, and maybe they weren't. And maybe the inns Don Quixote stayed in really *were* castles. And maybe Mars, if you looked at it the right way, really *was* crisscrossed with blue canals. "No," Henning said.

The stars danced. "We'll begin decelerating tomorrow, Hank. That means you'll be confined to your A/D couch for three days. So I won't run any more spaceraces till we're in orbit. Then I'll run one more, and since it'll be the final one, I'll raise the attendance limit. Playing scientifically and without the Henning Inversion Effect working against you, you ought to win a bundle, Hank."

"I'm sick of playing scientifically," Henning said. "This time, I think I'll bet your age."

"That way, you may win a bigger bundle yet."

"How old are you, ANN?" She told him.

Momentarily the bulkhead seemed to blur before his eyes, and its components — the output tube, the image receivers, the speaker, the mass of golden wires — swam together and aligned themselves into the face of a young and lovely girl ... the inns *were* castles, and there were so many canals on Mars their blueness hurt your eyes.... "Did you know," Henning said just before he left the bridge, "that you look a little bit like Marilyn Monroe?"

The *Starwagon* made planetfall four days later. The horses were still running when it came down in a big green field with houses and trees and prairies showing in the distance. The daily double was 1 and 7 and paid \$717.02. Henning had it.