

INTERLINK

By JOHN RUSSELL FEARN

When a mental phenomenon causes his fiancée to be a space pirate, Ralph Dale must save her from the firing squad!

AS SHE gazed at the towering cathedrals of light tracing the outlines of the vast Twenty-second Century city there were many thoughts in the mind of Elna Haydon—troubled thoughts chiefly, which even the anticipation of the impending meeting with Ralph could not entirely dispel. They were thoughts too deep for analysis by herself alone—she needed to exchange them with somebody she could fully trust.

At a creamy orange streak in the sky she glanced up, watching that giant S pattern as it rode down through the heavens towards the center of the city.

Ralph Dale of the Interplanetary Police brought his machine down at police headquarters as fast as prudence allowed. After making his routine report, he hurried out to the airbus station.

His mind was centered on one thing only—the gray-eyed, blonde-haired girl who spent her working hours as an electrotype operator in the Federated World Bank—and her evenings with him.

They were simple folk, both of them, supplying their tiny share to the vast backdrop of human industry which kept New York as the hub of the Western Hemisphere's industrial power.

Ralph chafed impatiently as the airbus chugged its way over the caverns of ground radiance where traffic came and went—until at last it brought him to the stop he wanted. He hurried along the bright boulevard, smiling as he saw Elna waiting for him with outstretched hand.

"Ralph dearest, at last! I'm so glad!"

He kissed her gently. His keen eyes searched her face in the floodlights. He had not been slow to notice the almost fervent relief in her voice at his arrival.

"Something wrong?" he asked quietly, as they sat down on a form.

"You've noticed?" She smiled faintly as he nodded.

Then for a moment she looked out over the city and pondered. Her voice was deadly quiet when she spoke again.

"I don't understand what is wrong, Ralph! Whether I'm weak-willed or—oh, I don't really know how to explain it!"

"Can't be illness of the body," he said. "It's unknown in these days."

"Illness of the mind then. It has happened several times recently—an almost uncontrollable urge to do wild, reckless things. So far I've kept a tight hold on myself, but today—Ralph, I'm getting afraid for myself! I even begin to wonder if I am going insane!"

"How absurd!"

He smiled and gripped her arm reassuringly. Her gray eyes searched his face.

Today, Ralph, I nearly murdered Cranfell, the chief cashier of my department!" He started.

"You—what?"

"There! I told you it's serious. And I did it for no reason!"

Ralph was silent for a time. When he spoke, he spoke hesitantly.

"In the Eugenic Record of your family is there any strange characteristic ascribed to your parents?"

"None. And they couldn't have been granted a marriage license if there had been. Nor is there anything in the personal records of dad or mother to explain it. They both died normal deaths—except perhaps dad. He hurried his end because of the strain he put on himself with space explorations."

"Didn't you once say you were born in space?" Ralph asked.

"I was—yes—on dad's exploration ship. He and mother went almost everywhere together. Does it signify?"

"I don't suppose it does. I was merely thinking that space radiations produce queer effects on the brain of a newly born child sometimes, effects which do not become apparent until later life."

The girl sighed.

"Whatever it is I neither like it nor understand it." With a sudden effort she aroused herself. "Oh, let's forget the whole business! How about a show?"

"Now you're talking!" Ralph exclaimed, and caught her arm as she rose beside him.

BUT whatever it was that was affecting Elna must have recurred. The following afternoon Ralph received the stunning news that she had murdered Cranfell, the chief cashier, and then escaped into space in a one-man machine, even though she had never piloted one in her life before!

To Ralph it was all so motiveless, so unreasonable—and the more futile efforts there were made to find her, the more worried he became. He would not—could not—believe the story then in general circulation that the girl was a murderess.

A police dragnet was out for her, of course. But Elna a killer? No! It was preposterous.

A month went by, then there began to drift in from space a series of extraordinary stories—tales of a daring girl pirate who plundered private and commercial craft plying the ways. She murdered without question, too, when necessary.

In fact her reckless deeds were so outstanding that they took precedence over the similar exploits of Delka, a young renegade Martian who seemed to have come into prominence about the same time. Actually there was a surprising parallel between his actions and the girl's.

Then one day a radio-color photograph reached Interplanetary headquarters from space. Ralph Dale's face darkened when he saw it. It was Elna beyond doubt—cold and brazen—nothing like the quiet girl he had known and deeply loved.

"Well?" asked the Chief briefly, as he saw Ralph studying the photograph. "Is it as you thought? Is it the girl you knew?"

"Yes. It is she."

"I must remind you that you belong to the Interplanetary Police, Dale. No personal considerations must be allowed to stand in the way of your duty."

"You can rest assured, sir. The girl I knew was a quiet, hard-working, decent citizeness. I can't explain her about-face, unless her father's love of exploration is in her blood and has suddenly taken this form. The mechanism of heredity, you know. Then there is another angle—"

Ralph stopped, thinking of what the girl had told him of her strange mental aberrations. Perhaps that had been alibi talk.

"Well?" the Chief asked again.

"Nothing; just a thought which occurred to me. Ralph clenched his fist. "Rely on me, Chief—I'll bring her in if it is the last thing I do—if only in revenge for the way she stood me up. Maybe she only pretended to love me so she could figure out the inside workings of the I.P."

Ralph saluted and went out swiftly, heading across the grounds to his space flyer. He made his usual routine check-up of fuel, guns and provisions. Then he was off on his journey.

It was a trip which spread into a week before he discovered anything. Then as he was cruising idly at the halfway line between Earth and Mars he caught a glimpse of a vessel ahead of him. His space-reflector showed it had no recognizable insignia.

Instantly he set the rockets going full blast and swept towards the unknown vessel with ever-mounting speed. He had come within shooting range when his radio burst into life.

"Come a yard nearer and I'll blast you!" Ralph stared at the loudspeaker. Somewhere in the cold, biting tones of that voice he recognized Elna.

"If you do," he replied curtly, "I shall open fire in reprisal. This is a police machine and heavily armed. I think you've more sense than to try anything. I'll give you ten seconds to surrender!"

Ralph looked at the chronometer and waited. It was exactly 3:00 p.m., Earth Standard Time. The

second hand flicked round steadily.

Then suddenly there came from the girl's ship a hail of high-velocity bullets. Ralph heard them rattle on the thick skin of his machine, but they did not penetrate. Instantly he set the rockets going, swung round and dived.

Within seconds he was level with the girl's ship, anchored himself to it with magnetic grapples. To his surprise there was no further sign of attack. He waited in grim expectancy—but still nothing happened. At last he turned to the microphone again.

"I'm coming aboard! One trick and it will be my duty to shoot you. I shall use your emergency lock."

Still there was no answer, nor could he hear any sign of movement through the speaker. It was a surprising development, one which smelled of trickery. He got into his spacesuit quickly. Raygun in hand, he climbed out to the roof of his machine. In a few minutes he had reached the emergency lock of the girl's vessel—emergency in that it could be opened from the outside.

HE SPUN off the screw clamps, lifted the cover and dropped it back gently behind him as he descended the ladder. Still all was quiet, nor was there any indication of life in the narrow steel corridor leading to the control room.

Gun leveled, he went forward, pushed the control room door open with his foot and stepped back to wait a volley. Nothing came. Cautiously he peered inside, then gave a start. The girl was sprawled face down on the floor, apparently unconscious.

It only took him a few minutes to discover that this was not play acting. She was dead out, and it took him ten minutes to revive her. Then she opened her eyes slowly.

"Ralph!" Her voice was only a whisper. "Ralph, what are you doing here?" Sitting up, she stared about her. "What on earth—where am I?"

"It won't do, Elna." Ralph said seriously.

"Won't do? What won't?" She looked at him with wide eyes. "Honestly, dearest, I don't know what's happened. The last thing I recall is being at the desk in my office—then I went dizzy or something. I suppose I must have fainted. The next thing I remember was you bending over me. What's happened? Are we in space?"

Ralph looked at her for a long minute. Then he took her hands firmly and held them.

"I'd like to believe this, Elna," he said quietly, "but unfortunately the law only believes in facts, and my orders are to bring in the girl pirate who has several murders to account for."

"You're—you're not talking about me, are you?"

"Yes—you. It's been going on for two months now."

She gazed at him in such utter bewilderment he realized he had better explain in detail. When he had finished, she was pale with shock.

"Yes, yes—I believe it," she said slowly. "Remember when I told you I thought I was going crazy? I can't think what has controlled me in the interval but it is quite obvious that I haven't been my own mistress."

She clutched Ralph's arm tightly. "Dearest, you've got to help me somehow! Say that you will! Please!"

"I'll do what I can," he replied. "As a private individual I'll do all I can to help you in court, and I'll dig up all the facts possible. But as a police officer I have to arrest you and take you back."

"I'm ready," she said quietly. "Let's go."

The praise Ralph Dale received for bringing in the girl did not stir him in the least. He was deeply troubled, ready to seize on the slenderest clue to help prove her innocence at the approaching trial.

The Chief could hardly be blamed for having no sympathy for Elna. To him, she was simply a cold-blooded murderess, deserving of all she would surely get. In fact, so satisfied was he with Ralph's capture of her that he assigned to him the task of also trying to bring to justice the notorious Delka, renegade of Mars.

Ralph took the report of Delka's activities as graciously as possible, set himself to study it out and, between whiles, try to think of some way to save Elna.

The most recent report on Delka was from Minrod of the Martian Interplanetary Police, who had been close enough to the pirate in a running fight to fire a long-period anesthetic shell through the emergency lock.

But even so, though unconscious, the Martian had still eluded him. Robot controls on his ship had carried him away swiftly to parts unknown. True, he would be unconscious for some time even yet—but somewhere, either in space or in a secret hideout, he was there for the picking up.

"What a hope!" Ralph grunted and tossed the record on one side. Then, its details slowly crystalizing in his mind, he picked it up again and studied the list of events once more.

It was remarkable, but there was almost an exact parallel between Delka's activities and Elna's. His piratical career had begun about the same time as hers, and—

Hurriedly Ralph pulled out the report on Elna, which he had been handed before he had set out to capture her. His heart began to race a little.

She had held up ships and murdered people at almost exactly the same Earth Standard Time as Delka. Most important of all, the hour at which Delka had collapsed from the anesthetic shell coincided exactly with Elna's unexplained faint aboard her machine—3:00 p.m., Earth Standard Time!

Ralph sat motionless, thinking. Then he rose from his corner of the rest room and hurried to the Chief's office.

THE Chief was a good listener, but he was unconvinced. "I take it, Dale, that you are trying to prove some kind of hypnotism on the part of Delka. Is that it? Hypnotism by a Martian over an Earth girl whom he has never seen."

"Not hypnotism, Chief—schizophrenia! Or split personality if you prefer it."

"Schizophrenia, eh? But how do you account for split personality over *two* people?"

"Did you ever hear of twin souls?" Ralph asked tensely.

"Between Earthly twins, yes. But certainly not between Martian and Earthling. It isn't possible, man! They both belong to different planets, and they're opposite sexes."

"That doesn't concern me," Ralph said.

"There *is* a connection somewhere, and I've got to find it!"

"Forget it! Your job is to find Delka and bring him in."

"Overlook Delka for the moment, Chief. My interest is in the fact that from the exact hour Delka was gassed into a long term unconsciousness, Elna has resumed her normal personality! I'll swear that isn't just coincidence!"

The Chief's expression changed, and he rubbed his jaw pensively.

"No," he admitted, "it doesn't seem as though it can be. Well, I know how you feel about this girl—so, within limits, what do you want to do?"

"I want full authority to search her apartment."

"Okay. I don't see it can do any harm. She's on trial for murder and piracy, so anything is legal. All right, go to it."

"Thanks!" Ralph said gratefully. "And in the meantime, as a special favor to me, don't assign anybody else to the Delka case. I'll probably need to bring him in myself before I'm through. The moment I know something I'll pass on the news to you."

With that he hurried off, arriving at Elna's apartment half an hour later. For a long time he searched in vain, then at last discovered the wall safe behind an innocent-looking picture. The papers inside, chiefly legal documents, conveyed nothing of interest—but the black, hide-bound book inscribed *Record of Martian Excursion, 2116*, was a very different matter.

It took Ralph only a few minutes to discover that it was the log book of Ronald Haydon, Elna's father, complete in every detail from the day of his first voyage to the end of the trip.

Presently his hurried reading brought him to entries which interested him deeply—

January 7. Today I am the proud father of a daughter!

January 9. A terrible thing has happened! Today I have been involved in a fight with a wandering

Martian. The battle ended indecisively, but with tragedy as the outcome. The Martian and his wife escaped hurt, as did my dearest too—but our respective children have both suffered severe head injuries—reaction from the blast rays, I think. What am I to do? I cannot bear the thought of losing her. . .

January 10. I have come to an arrangement with the Martian. We are agreed that our two children cannot be allowed to become the victims of our personal hatred. I have decided to use my surgical skill, such as it is, to save my daughter and the Martian boy. Both of them have sustained brain injuries. I hope to God I shall succeed!

January 11. I have succeeded! It has been a dangerous operation. Oddly enough, the left frontal lobe of my daughter's brain has been damaged, and the *right* frontal lobe of the Martian. By grafting part to part, from one brain to the other, and replacing the loss, with synthetic material, I believe I have created ganglia and synapses which will be fully adequate. In each brain, there is a part belonging to the other, but I cannot foresee any trouble in later life since they inhabit different worlds.

January 22. The operation has been completely successful! Elna, as we shall christen our daughter when we return to Earth, is well on the road to recovery, and a recent radio message from the Martian somewhere in the void assures me that his son has also nearly recovered. We have become real friends. I wonder if we shall meet again? I doubt it.

Ralph lowered the log book slowly, then skimmed through the remaining pages. They contained interesting facts, but none so interesting as the information he had already gleaned. He stood up finally, put the book away, then hurried out of the apartment.

HIS next call was at the surgery of Dr. Drayton Grimshaw, the city's foremost brain surgeon and specialist. Ralph soon put him in possession of the facts.

"Well?" Ralph asked. "Do you believe a kinship is at all possible?"

"It's hard to say," Grimshaw answered slowly. "It has been my experience till now that a mental kinship is only possible between twins, and is particularly apparent in the case of the bodies being bonded at birth—Siamese fashion. But here we have a case of two utterly different planets and breeds. So, despite the brain portions being shared between them I cannot see—"

"Oh, this is absurd!" Ralph interrupted impatiently. "The whole thing is as plain as day—even to my untutored knowledge. Look here, would you be prepared to testify in court that a mental link is possible?"

"Well—yes, but not with any conviction, I'm afraid."

"That's all I want to know." Ralph got to his feet. "You'll be summoned when the time comes, and thanks very much."

Thereafter he headed straight for the prison and was permitted to see the girl and impart his good news. She listened to him in obvious amazement.

"But, Ralph, do you think that really is the explanation? Do you believe that that experience my father had with the Martian could possibly—oh, I just can't credit it! I've read of that surgical operation in dad's notes, of course, but I can't see how it could affect me now that I'm a grown woman. You'd think it would have appeared when I was a child."

"I contend that there is no other explanation for your behavior," Ralph said firmly. "Everything fits in. Even if it doesn't in places, it is your one chance to escape a charge of murder and piracy. In court, you must support the idea in every possible way."

She nodded slowly.

"All right—I will."

Ralph gripped her hands.

"Hang on," he smiled. "You'll make out all right in the end—even if I have to shift the universe to do it!"

To Ralph's horror, though, the girl reverted back again to her icy role of a female pirate and killer on the very day of the trial. In court, he heard her swear her own life away. In fact, the whole proceeding

lasted only half an hour and ended with her being condemned to death. She took the pronouncement of sentence with stony calm, then was led back to her cell.

To Ralph, the blow was terrific. Obviously Delka had recovered again, and the girl was under his sway—but whether intentionally or not was not clear.

That night, unsleeping, Ralph sat in his apartment thinking the problem out. The only course left to him was a desperate one, but for that very reason it might work. Elna, as a state prisoner, would be permitted the traditional death before a firing squad, instead of the lethal chamber accorded to the common criminal.

She would be led out into the small courtyard of the prison, with its high encircling walls—at five in the morning, when there would be little sky traffic and few people about.

Ralph's eyes gleamed as he sat thinking. If he were to use his fast space-flyer, hover over the courtyard, then drop a grapple hook. . . .

Elna would undoubtedly seize it and be whirled up to safety. If it failed—well, she was doomed anyway, and by this expedient she *might* have a fighting chance. But he must know exactly what he was doing—the layout, everything. In other words, a reconnaissance was necessary.

Twenty minutes over the prison yard, using infra-red photographic plates, and the thing was done. . .

The following day he spent in a study of the photographs he had developed—then, after a sleep and careful preparation, he was ready for action by four o'clock in the early morning of the day after.

Four-thirty found him above the prison yard at an immense height, using the clouds for cover and a Z-ray detector beam to observe what was going on below. Piercing the pall beneath, the ray gave him a perfect dawn-light view of everything. He waited in tense expectancy.

THEN there were figures in that empty courtyard, coming into view in steady file. Immediately he dived down from the clouds, but just as he did so the withering blast of a heat ray smote across his rear port. It cracked but did not break it. From somewhere above, he was being attacked!

He went into an evading turn and the movement brought him within sight of his assailant. A black space machine, heavily armored, and stained from explorations on many planets, was hurtling down from the heights of the dawn sky with the speed of a bullet. It carried no insignia, no anything—a pirate ship.

Ralph stared fixedly. It was clear now that the attack on him was not being pressed home—that blast had simply been intended to clear him out of the way.

Breathlessly he watched the unknown make a superb power dive towards the courtyard. Without a hitch, a coiling antenna wire dropped. It was Ralph's own plan, but executed by an expert—with one difference.

The antenna was better than a hawser in that its coiling end wound round the girl's body and lifted her right out of the square. Rapidly the antenna withdrew into a floor trap, and the girl vanished with it. Then the ship was streaking into the distance with demoniacal speed.

Ralph hesitated briefly, bewildered by the speed with which everything had happened. Then he glanced at his fuel gauge. That decided him. In a series of wide circles, he returned to the ground, coming to rest in the prison's flying park.

As he clambered outside, he saw the powerful figure of Walsh, the prison governor, hurrying towards him. Ralph waited, grimly prepared for the storm. Of course they were bound to accuse him because of the rescue attempt the unknown had forestalled. It was therefore a big surprise to him when Walsh held out his hand in greeting.

"Nice work, anticipating Delka like that! The only pity is that he was too fast for you!"

"*Delka!*" Ralph ejaculated, startled.

"Why surely! You knew, didn't you?" The governor looked a trifle surprised. Then he gave a taut smile. "But you *must* have! We all got the news that Delka's machine was heading towards Earth on an unknown mission."

"Yes—of course," Ralph muttered, recalling he had been too busy recently to listen to news.

"You did well to pick up his trail, and even better to guess his intentions. Well, what are you going to do now, Dale?"

"Two of the greatest space-pirates are together in the void! Obviously they have been in collusion all the time—and you are an ace Interplanetary man. To me, it all adds up."

Ralph's brain worked fast. Obviously circumstances had played right into his hands.

"I'm going after them," he announced. "Get your men to fuel me up, will you?"

The governor shouted his orders, then turned back to find Ralph looking at him anxiously.

"Governor, would you do me a favor?"

"If I can. What is it?"

"Well, it's rather hard to explain. You know that Etna was—and still is—my fiancée, that I believe in her real innocence?"

The governor nodded slowly.

"I know, but you cannot expect me to do anything which might alter the sentence against her. I am simply here to see that the law is enacted, no matter what."

"I don't expect that, sir. I simply want to play a hunch which may prove her innocence—but I'll need your help. All I wish is for you to ask the Radio Police to stand by with open receivers. And I want you to do the same, because your word on what you hear will be absolute proof.

"I am going to leave my own wrist radio transmitter open from the moment I take off from here. Whatever messages you get over it must be recorded in full. At the same time you might contact Judge Morgan, who tried Elna's case, and Mr. Grimshaw, the brain specialist. Have them listen as well. Think you can do that for me?"

"I can do it," the governor assented, "but it will have to be extremely convincing to make the law rescind its verdict."

"I know that!" Ralph clenched his fist. "But it's just a chance, and I'm going to take it! Thanks again, sir."

HE TURNED away and hurried across to where the ground crew had just finished refueling his machine. Soon he was in the air—and then the void. . . . Slipping his telescopic sights into position, he peered through them earnestly. Here, in this colossal expanse, it was possible to see for vast distances, so vast indeed that Delka's flying start went for nothing. His ship was still visible, the remotest silver atom catching the sunlight against the backdrop of the fixed stars.

Ralph set his course immediately, eased in the speed control notch by notch. With ever mounting velocity, he went streaking through space at a rate which held his lungs in steel bands.

It seemed that Delka had spotted the pursuit, for his ship suddenly put on speed—but as fast as it was, it could not outdistance Ralph's hurtling police flyer.

At last firing range was reached, as Ralph soon found out by the blast of a ray gun directed towards him. He didn't hesitate to retaliate with his own disintegrators. Irregularities of chipped metal appeared in the hull of Delka's vessel.

Ralph snapped on his transmitter.

"Open up, Delka, or I'll blast your ship right out of the universe!"

"It's as well to do as he says," came the voice of Elna through the speaker. Then she spoke directly into the microphone.

"All right, Ralph, come aboard. I'll guarantee your safety."

Ralph's heart gave a leap. It was the normal Elna speaking. That made things a lot easier. He turned and scrambled into his spacesuit, anchored the two ships alongside each other, then entered the renegade's vessel by the emergency airlock. Slowly, prepared for any trickery, he walked into the control room.

The girl was there, quite unharmed, standing by the control board—but she was pale and obviously strained from her experiences. On the other side of the board stood the immense Martian, Delka, ugly as sin, his coarse oddly flat face traced with a deep scar. His big purple eyes regarded Ralph suspiciously. Then at last he spoke.

"You may think yourself lucky that I haven't killed you, my friend! I have only refrained because this Earth girl ordered it. To a certain extent I am compelled to obey her wishes. She and I are mentally

interlinked."

"I know," Ralph said grimly.

"That saves a lot of explanation for me, then. The moment I heard over the space radio that she was to be executed, I came to save her. I had to do it, because her death would have meant my death too—and vice versa."

Ralph glanced idly at the minute transmitter on his wrist.

"I don't understand what you mean by that, DeIke," he said. "Explain in detail."

"We are mental twins. That much you say you know. You may also know that the Martians—particularly the males—have a far stronger mentality than any Earthling because of a more advanced evolution. That is why this girl is dominated by my mind at times instead of mine ever being dominated by hers.

"It is her normal will which makes the domination spasmodic rather than constant. But even as the parting of Siamese twins is likely to bring death, so would the death of either of us bring death to the other through the immense mental shock involved.

"I learned from records of the happening in my infant days which brought this about. There is only one way out. We must remain together until death!"

"Anything but that!" the girl said huskily. "I'd sooner be dead right now!"

"I value my life even if you do not value yours!" Delka retorted. "Just because my being an outlaw has forced you into being one is no reason why I should die because you don't care to live!"

Ralph's eyes gleamed with the light of relief. Those words, acquittal in themselves, had been heard back on Earth by the men who mattered, if the prison governor had managed to arrange it.

"There is one thing I know," Ralph stated quietly. "I was sent to take the pair of you into custody, and I'm going to do it!"

"Not if I know it!" Delka snapped. Reaching behind him, he whipped up a heavy iron bar from the control board bench. His intention was obviously to throw it—but Elna dived for him suddenly. The bar missed its direction and crashed heavily on her head. Without a sound she crumpled, motionless, to the floor.

Ralph leapt, overwhelmed with fury—but a terrific uppercut knocked him flying. By the time he had got to his feet again Delka's ray gun was leveled at him.

"Lucky this girl's thoughts only affect me if she dies," Delka breathed. "Otherwise I'd be unconscious now. Don't move unless you want to die before—"

SUDDENLY there was a clanging from somewhere above. Astounded, Delka glanced up. Ralph too was so surprised that he forgot to seize his advantage and looked at the emergency hatch instead. It opened—suddenly, and the helmeted head of the prison governor appeared, a ray gun in his leveled gloved hand.

"You!" Delka exploded, tightening his hold on his own weapon.

"Don't shoot!" Ralph yelled as he saw the governor's hand move—but he was too late.

A shaft of flame bit straight to Delka's heart. He winced, gave a sobbing sigh, then crashed his length on the floor.

Ralph could only stare dumbly as the governor came down into the control room. Behind him were others—Judge Morgan, Dr. Grimshaw and several high police officials.

"I decided to get them together and follow you," the governor explained when he had taken off his helmet. "We figured from what we had heard over the radio that it was too big a job for you to tackle alone. We heard everything. You need have no fear but that Elna Haydon is as good as acquitted right now."

"*Acquitted!*" Ralph gave a hollow laugh as the brain specialist lifted the girl to the wall bed.

"*Acquitted!* I told you not to shoot! The shot that killed Delka killed her too! You must have heard what he said about interlocked minds."

"I—forgot that," the governor hesitated.

"But she still lives!" Grimshaw cried, swinging round. "There must be a reason—quickly—I've got to

operate on her brain. It's badly injured. Give me a hand, all of you."

Ralph was the only one who did not. He could only watch bemusedly as the ship's emergency kit was brought into use as the surgeon's hands worked steadily under the roughly erected floodlight. It seemed hours before he was through—then the girl was lying, her head bandaged, on the bed. She was motionless, but breathing steadily.

Ralph crept forward and caught Grimshaw's shoulder.

"Doc, will she—?"

"A million-to-one chance," the surgeon breathed, mopping his face. "Her link with Delka was through the subconscious area. Evidently her father made a mistake, being an amateur, in using that region.

"The blow that knocked her unconscious injured that region of her brain, and it also rendered her numb to the shock when Delka was killed. It was a kind of mental anesthetic. She will recover and be a normal woman again, except for two things. Her memory will be very bad and she will never dream. Otherwise—"

"Thank God!" Ralph whispered. Then a sudden thought struck him. "But, Doc, why didn't Delka collapse when she did?"

"He had the stronger mind, and Elna did not die from the blow—therefore he was not affected. . . ."

Ralph nodded slowly and went over to the girl's silent figure. Thankfully, gently, he caught hold of her limp hand, held it imprisoned in his own until at last her eyes opened.

She did not speak. Neither did he. But in that moment they both knew that the kinship with a dead renegade Martian had gone forever.