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ADAPTATION

from THE BEST OF JOHN WYNDHAM

John Wyndham

SPHERE BOOKS

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INTRODUCTION

AT a very tender age my latent passion for all forms of fantasy stories, having been sparked by the Brothers Grimm and the more unusual offerings in the children's comics and later the boy's adventure papers, was encouraged in the early 1930s by the occasional exciting find on the shelves of the public library with Burroughs and Thorne Smith varying the staple diet of Wells and Verne.

But the decisive factor in establishing that exhilarating 'sense of wonder' in my youthful imagination was the discovery about that time of back numbers of American science fiction magazines to be bought quite cheaply in stores like Woolworths. The happy chain of economic circumstances by which American newsstand returns, sometimes sadly with the magic cover removed or mutilated, ballasted cargo ships returning to English ports and the colonies, must have been the mainspring of many an enthusiastic hobby devoted to reading, discussing, perhaps collecting and even writing, science fiction – or 'scientifiction' as Hugo Gernsback coined the tag in his early *Amazing Stories* magazine.

Gernsback was a great believer in reader participation; in 1936 I became a teenage member of the Science Fiction League sponsored by his *Wonder Stories*. Earlier he had run a competition in its fore-runner *Air Wonder Stories* to find a suitable banner slogan, offering the prize of 'One Hundred Dollars in Gold' with true yankee braggadocio. Discovering the result some years later in, I think, the September 1930 issue of *Wonder Stories* seized upon from the bargain-bin of a chain store, was akin to finding a message in a bottle cast adrift by some distant Robinson Crusoe, and I well remember the surge of jingoistic pride (an educational trait well-nurtured in pre-war Britain) in noting that the winner was an Englishman, John Beynon Harris.

I had not the slightest anticipation then that I would later meet, and acknowledge as a good friend and mentor, this contest winner who, as John Wyndham, was to become one of the greatest English story-tellers in the idiom. The fact that he never actually got paid in gold was a disappointment, he once told me, that must have accounted for the element of philosophical dubiety in some of his work.

Certainly his winning slogan '*Future Flying Fiction*', although too late to save the magazine from foundering on the rock of economic depression (it had already been amalgamated with its stable-mate *Science Wonder Stories* to become just plain, if that is the right word, *Wonder Stories*), presaged the firm stamp of credibility combined with imaginative flair that characterized JBH's writings.

John Wyndham Parkes Lucas Beynon Harris (the abundance of fore-names conveniently supplied his various aliases) emerged in the 1950s as an important contemporary influence on speculative fiction, particularly in the exploration of the theme of realistic global catastrophe, with books such as *The Day of the Triffids* and *The Kraken Wakes*, and enjoyed a popularity, which continued after his sad death in 1969, comparable to that of his illustrious predecessor as master of the scientific romance, H. G. Wells.

However, he was to serve his writing apprenticeship in those same pulp magazines of the thirties, competing successfully with their native American contributors, and it is the purpose of this present collection to highlight the chronological development of his short stories from those early beginnings to the later urbane and polished style of John Wyndham.

'The Lost Machine' was his second published story, appearing in *Amazing Stories*, and was possibly the proto-type of the sentient robot later developed by such writers as Isaac Asimov. He used a variety of plots during this early American period particularly favouring time travel, and the best of these was undoubtedly 'The Man From Beyond' in which the poignancy of a man's realisation, caged in a zoo on Venus, that far from being abandoned by his fellow-explorers, he is the victim of a far stranger fate, is remarkably outlined for its time. Some themes had dealt with war, such as 'The Trojan Beam', and he had strong views to express on its futility. Soon his own induction into the Army in 1940 produced a period of creative inactivity corresponding to World War II. He had, however, previously established himself in England as a prominent science fiction writer with serials in major periodicals, subsequently reprinted in hard covers, and he even had a detective novel published. He had been well represented too – 'Perfect Creature' is an amusing example – in the various magazines stemming from fan activity, despite the vicissitudes of their pre- and immediate post-war publishing insecurity.

But after the war and into the fifties the level of science fiction writing in general had increased considerably, and John rose to the challenge by selling successfully to the American market again. In England his polished style proved popular and a predilection for the paradoxes of time travel as a source of private amusement was perfectly exemplified in 'Pawley's Peepholes', in which the gawping tourists from the future are routed by vulgar tactics. This story was later successfully adapted for radio and broadcast by the B.B.C.

About this time his first post-war novel burst upon an unsuspecting world, and by utilizing a couple of unoriginal ideas with his Gernsback-trained attention to logically based explanatory detail and realistic background, together with his now strongly developed narrative style, 'The Day of the Triffids' became one of the classics of modern speculative fiction, surviving even a mediocre movie treatment. It was the fore-runner of a series of equally impressive and enjoyable novels including 'The Chrysalids' and 'The Midwich Cuckoos' which was successfully filmed as 'Village of the Damned'. (A sequel 'Children of the Damned' was markedly inferior, and John was careful to disclaim any responsibility for the writing.)

I was soon to begin an enjoyable association with John Wyndham that had its origins in the early days of the *New Worlds* magazine-publishing venture, and was later to result in much kindly and essential assistance enabling me to become a specialist dealer in the genre. This was at the Fantasy Book Centre in Bloomsbury, an area of suitably associated literary activities where John lived for many years, and which provided many pleasurable meetings at a renowned local coffee establishment, Cawardine's,

where we were often joined by such personalities as John Carnell, John Christopher and Arthur C. Clarke.

In between the novels two collections of his now widely published short stories were issued as 'The Seeds of Time' and 'Consider Her Ways'; others are re-printed here for the first time. He was never too grand to refuse material for our own *New Worlds* and in 1958 wrote a series of four novellas about the Troon family's contribution to space exploration – a kind of Forsyte saga of the solar system later collected under the title 'The Outward Urge'. His fictitious collaborator 'Lucas Parkes' was a subtle ploy in the book version to explain Wyndham's apparent deviation into solid science-based fiction. The last story in this collection 'The Emptiness of Space' was written as a kind of post-script to that series, especially for the 100th anniversary issue of *New Worlds*.

John Wyndham's last novel was *Chocky*, published in 1968. It was an expansion of a short story following a theme similar to *The Chrysalids* and *The Midwich Cuckoos*. It was a theme peculiarly appropriate for him in his advancing maturity. When, with characteristic reticence and modesty, he announced to a few of his friends that he was marrying his beloved Grace and moving to the country-side, we all felt that this was a well-deserved retirement for them both.

But ironically time – always a fascinating subject for speculation by him – was running out for this typical English gentleman. Amiable, erudite, astri-gently humorous on occasion, he was, in the same way that the gentle Boris Karloff portrayed his film monsters, able to depict the night-mares of humanity with frightening realism, made the more deadly by his masterly precision of detail. To his great gift for story-telling he brought a lively intellect and a fertile imagination.

I am glad to be numbered among the many, many thousands of his readers whose 'sense of wonder' has been satisfactorily indulged by a writer whose gift to posterity is the compulsive readability of his stories of which this present volume is an essential part.

— LESLIE FLOOD

ADAPTATION (1949)

The prospect of being stuck on Mars for a while did not worry Marilyn Godalpin a lot — not at first, anyway. She had been near the piece of desert that they called a landing field when the *Andromeda* came in to a bad landing. After that it did not surprise her at all when the engineers said that with the limited facilities at the settlement the repairs would take at least three months, most likely four. The astonishing thing was that no one in the ship had got more than a bad shaking.

It still did not worry her when they explained to her, with simplified astronautics, that that meant there could be no take-off for the *Andromeda* for at least eight months on account of the relative position of Earth. But she did get a bit fussed when she discovered that she was going to have a baby. Mars did not seem the right place for that.

Mars had surprised her. When Franklyn Godalpin was offered the job of developing the Jason Mining Corporation's territory there, a few months after their marriage, it had been she who had persuaded him to accept it. She had had an instinct that the men who were in on the ground floor there would go places. Of Mars itself, as seen in pictures, her opinion was low. But she wanted her husband to go places, and to go with him. With Franklyn's heart and head pulling in opposite directions she could have succeeded on either side. She chose head for two reasons. One was lest some day he might come to hold the lost chance of his life against her, the other because, as she said:

“Honey, if we are going to have a family, I want them to have every-thing we can give them. I love you any way you are, but for their sake I want you to be a big man.”

She had persuaded him not only into taking the job, but into taking her with him. The idea was that she should see him settled into his hut as com-fort-ably as the primi-tive condi-tions of the place allowed, and then go back home on the next ship. That should have been after a four-week stop — Earth reckoning. But the ship intended was the *Andro-meda* ; and she was the last in the present oppositional phase.

Franklyn's work left her little of his time, and had Mars been what she expected she would have been dis-mayed by the prospect of even an extra week there. But the first discovery she had made when she stepped on to the planet was that photo-graphs can be literally true while spiritually quite false.

The deserts were there, all right. Mile upon mile of them. But from the first they lacked that harsh un-chari-table-ness that the pictures had given them. There was a quality which in some way the lens had filtered out. The land-scape came to life, and showed itself differently from the recorded shades.

There was unexpected beauty in the colour-ing of the sands, and the rocks, and the distant, rounded moun-tains, and strange-ness in the dark deeps of the cloudless sky. Among the plants and bushes on the water-way margins there were flowers, more beau-ti-ful and more deli-cately complex than any she had seen on Earth. There was mystery, too, where the stones of ancient ruins lay half buried —all that was left, maybe, of huge palaces or temples. It was some-thing like that, Marilyn felt, that Shelley's traveller had known in his antique land:

Round the decay

Of that colossal wreck, boundless
and bare,

The lone and level sands stretch far
away.

Yet it was not grim. She had looked to find a sour deso-lation; the morbid after-math of eruption, destruc-tion and fire. It had never occurred to her that the old age of a world might come softly, with a gentle melan-choly, like the turning of a leaf in the fall.

Back on Earth, people were looking on the Martian venturers as the new pioneers attacking the latest frontier opposed to man. Mars made non-sense of that. The land lay placidly open to them, unresisting. Its placidity dwindled their impor-tance, making them crude intruders on the last quiet drowsi-ness.

Mars was coma-tose, sinking slowly deeper into her final sleep. But she was not yet dead. Seasonal tides still stirred in the waters, too, though they seldom gave any more sign of themselves than a vagrant ripple. Among the flowers and the tinkerbells there were still insects to carry pollen. Kinds of gram still grew, sparse, poorly nourished vestiges of vanished har-vests, yet capable of thriv-ing again with irri-ga-tion. , There were the thrippetts, bright flashes of flying colour, unclassi-fiable as insect or bird. By night other small creatures emerged. Some of them mewed, almost like kittens, and sometimes when both moons were up, one caught glimpses of little marmoset-like shapes. Almost always there was that most charac-teristic of all Martian sounds, the ringing of the tinkers-bells. Their hard shiny leaves which flashed like polished metal needed no more than a breath of the thin air to set them chiming so that all the desert rang faintly to their tiny cymbals.

The clues to the manner of people who had lived there were too faint to read. Rumour spoke of small groups, apparently human, farther south, but real explo-ration still waited on the develop-ment of craft suited to the thin Martian air.

A frontier of a kind there was, but with-out valour — for there was little left to fight but quiet old age. Beyond the busy settlement Mars was a rest-ful place.

“I like it,” said Marilyn. “In a way it's sad, but it isn't saddening. A song can be like that some-times. It soothes you and makes you feel at peace.”

Franklyn's concern over her news was greater than Marilyn's, and he blamed himself for the state of affairs. His anxiety irritated her slightly. And it was no good trying to place blame, she pointed out. All that one could do was to accept the situ-ation and take every sensi-ble care.

The settlement doctor backed that up. James Forbes was a young man, and no saw-bones. He was there because a good man was needed in a place where un-usual effects might be expected, and strange condi-tions called for careful study. And he had taken the job because he was interested. His line now was matter of fact, and encouraging. He refused to make it remarkable.

“There was nothing to worry about,” he assured them. “Ever since the dawn of history there have been women produ-cing babies in far more incon-venient times and places than this — and getting away with it. There's no reason at all why every-thing should not be perfectly normal.”

He spoke his professional lies with an assu-rance which greatly increased their confi-dence, and he main-tained it steadily by his manner. Only in his diary did he admit worry-ing speculations on the effects of lowered gravi-tation and air-pressure, the rapid tempe-rature changes, the possi-bility of unknown infections and the other hazard-ous factors.

Marilyn minded little that she lacked the luxu-ries that would have attended her at home. With her coloured maid, Helen, to look after her and keep her company she busied herself with sewing and small matters. The Martian scene retained its fascination for her. She felt at peace with it as though it were a wise old coun-sellor who had seen too much of birth and death to grow vehe-ment over either.

Jannessa, Marilyn's daughter, was born with no great trial upon a night when the desert lay cold in the moon-light, and so quiet that only an occa-sional faint chime from the tinker-bells disturbed it. She was the first Earth baby to be born on Mars. A perfectly normal six and a half pounds —Earth — and a credit to all concerned.

It was afterwards that things started to go less well. Dr. Forbes' fears of strange infect-ions had been well grounded, and despite his scrupu-lous pre-cau-tions there were compli-ca-tions. Some were suscept-ible to the attacks of peni-cillin and the complex sulfas, but others resisted them. Marilyn, who had at first appeared to be doing well, weakened and then became seriously ill.

Nor did the child thrive as it should, and when the repaired *Andro-meda* at last took off, it left them behind. Another ship was due in from Earth a few days later. Before it arrived, the doctor put the situa-tion to Franklyn.

“I'm by no means happy about the child,” he told him. “She's not putting on weight as she should. She grows, but not enough. It's pretty obvious that the condi-tions here are not suiting her. She might survive, but I can't say with what effect on her constitution. She should have normal Earth condi-tions as soon as possible.”

Franklyn frowned.

“And her mother?” he asked.

“Mrs. Godalpin is in no condition to travel, I'm afraid.”

“It's out of the question. In her present state, and after so long in low gravitation, I doubt whether she could stand a G of acceleration.”

Franklyn looked bleakly unwilling to comprehend.

“You mean—?”

“In a nutshell, it's this. It would be fatal for your wife to attempt the journey. And it would probably be fatal for your child to remain here.”

There was only one way out of that. When the next ship, the *Aurora*, came in it was decided to delay no longer. A passage was arranged for Helen and the baby, and in the last week of 1994 they went on board.

Franklyn and Marilyn watched the *Aurora* leave. Marilyn's bed had been pushed close to the window, and he sat on it, holding her hand. Together they watched her shoot up-wards on a narrow cone of flame and curve away until she was no more than a twinkle in the dark Martian sky. Marilyn's fingers held his tightly. He put his arm around her to support her, and kissed her.

“It'll be all right, darling. In a few months you'll be with her again,” he said.

Marilyn put her other hand against his cheek, but she said nothing.

Nearly seven-teen years were to pass before anything more was heard of the *Aurora*, but Marilyn was not to know that. In less than two months she was resting for ever in the Martian sands with the tinker-bells chiming softly above her.

When Franklyn left Mars, Dr. Forbes was the only member of the original team still left there. They shook hands beside the ramp which led up to the latest thing in nuclear-powered ships. The doctor said:

“For five years I've watched you work, and overwork, Franklyn. You'd no business to survive. But you have. Now go home and live. You've earned it.”

Franklyn withdrew his gaze from the thriving Port Gilling-ton which had grown, and was still growing out of the rough settlement of a few years ago.

“What about yourself? You've been here longer than I have.”

“But I've had a couple of vacations. They were long enough for me to look around at home and decide that what really interests me is here.” He might have added that the second had been long enough for him to find and marry a girl whom he had brought with him, but he just added: “Besides I've just been working, not over-working.”

Franklyn's gaze had wandered again, this time beyond the settlement, towards the fields which now

fringed the water-way. Among them was a small plot marked with a single up-right stone.

“You're still a young man. Life owes you some-thing,” the doctor said. Franklyn seemed not to have heard, but he knew that he had. He went on: “And you owe some-thing to life. You hurt only your-self by resisting it. We have to adapt to life.”

“I wonder—?” Franklyn began, but the doctor laid a hand on his arm.

“Not that way. You have worked hard to forget. Now you must make a new beginning.”

“No wreckage of the *Aurora* has ever been reported, you know,” Franklyn said.

The doctor sighed, quietly. The Ships that disappeared without trace consider-ably out-numbered those that left any.

“A new beginning,” he repeated, firmly.

The hailer began to call “All aboard.”

Dr. Forbes watched his friend into the entrance port. He was a little surprised to feel a touch on his arm, and find his wife beside him.

“Poor man,” she said, softly. “Maybe when he gets home—”

“Maybe,” said the doctor, doubtfully. He went on: “I've been cruel, mean-ing to be kind. I should have tried my best to crush that false hope and free him from it. But ... well, I couldn't do it.”

“No,” she agreed. “You'd nothing to give him to take the place of it. But some-where at home there'll be some-one who has — a woman. Let's hope he meets her soon.”

Jannessa turned her head from a thought-ful study of her own hand, and regarded the slaty-blue arm and fingers beside her.

“I'm so different,” she said, with a sigh. “So different from every-body. Why am I different, Telta?”

“Everybody's different,” Telta said. She looked up from her task of slicing a pale round fruit into a bowl. Their eyes met, Jannessa's china blue in their white setting look-ing questioningly in Telta's dark pupils which floated in clear topaz. A small crease appeared between the woman's delicate silvery brows as she studied the child. “I'm different. Toti's different. Melga's different. That's the way things are.”

“But I'm more different. Much more different.”

“I don't suppose you'd be so very different where you came from” Telta said, resuming her slicing.

“Was I different when I was a baby?”

“Yes, dear.”

Jannessa reflected.

“Where do babies come from, Telta?”

Telta explained. Jannessa said, scorn-fully:

“I don't mean like that. I mean babies like me. Different ones.”

“I don't know. Only that it must have been somewhere far, far away.”

“Somewhere outside; in the cold?”

“Yes, Telta.”

“Well, it must have been one of those twinkles that you came from. But nobody knows which one.”

“Truly, Telta?”

“Quite, truly.”

Jannessa sat still a moment, thinking of the infinite night sky with its myriads of stars.

“But why didn't I die in the cold ?”

“You very nearly did, dear. Toti found you just in time.”

“And was I all alone?”

“No, dear. Your mother was holding you. She had wrapped you round with every-thing she could to keep the cold away. But the cold was too much for her. When Toti found her she could only move a little. She pointed to you and said: ‘Jannessa! Jannessa!’ So we thought that must be your name.”

Telta paused, remembering how when Toti, her husband, had brought the baby down from the surface to the life-giving warmth it had been touch and go. A few more minutes outside would have been fatal. The cold was a dreadful thing. She shuddered, recalling Toti's account of it, and how it had turned the unfortunate mother black, but she did not tell that to the child.

Jannessa was frowning, puzzled.

“But how? Did I *fall* off the star?”

“No, dear. A ship brought you.”

But the word meant nothing to Jannessa.

It was difficult to explain to a child. Difficult, for that matter, for Telta herself to believe. Her experience included only the system she lived in. The surface was a grim, inhospitable place of jagged rocks and killing cold which she had seen only from the protected domes. The history books told her of other worlds where it was warm enough to live on the surface, and that her own people had come from such a world many generations ago. She believed that that was true, but it was nevertheless unreal. More than fifty ancestors stood between her and life on a planet's surface, and it is difficult for anything that far away to seem real. Nevertheless, she told Jannessa the story in the hope that it would give her some consolation.

“Because of the cold?”

“That — and other things. But in the end they made it possible for you to live here. They had to work very hard and cleverly for you. More than once we thought we were going to lose you.”

“But what were they doing?”

“I don't understand much of it. But you see you were intended for a different world. It must have been one where there was more weight, thicker air, more humidity, higher temperature, different food and — oh, lots of things you'll learn about when you're older. So they had to help you get used to things as they are here.”

Jannessa considered that.

“It was very kind of them,” she said, “but they weren't very good, were they?”

Telta looked at her in surprise.

“Dear, that's not very grateful. What do you mean?”

“If they could do all that, why couldn't they make me look like other people? Why did they leave me all white, like this? Why didn't they give me lovely hair like yours, instead of this yellow stuff?”

“Darling, your hair's lovely. It's like the finest golden threads.”

“But it's not like anyone else's. It's different. I want to be like other people. But I'm a freak.”

Telta looked at her, unhappily perplexed.

“Being of another kind isn't being a freak,” she said.

“It is if you're the only one. And I don't want to be different. I hate it,” said Jannessa.

A man made his way slowly up the marble steps of the Venturers' Club. He was middle-aged, but he walked with a clumsy lack of certainty more appropriate to an older man. For a moment the porter looked doubtful, then his expression cleared.

“Good evening, Dr. Forbes,” he said.

Dr. Forbes smiled.

“Good evening, Rogers. You've got a good memory. It's twelve years.”

“So now you're home for good — and loaded with medical honours,” Franklyn said.

“It's a curious feeling,” Forbes said. “Eighteen years altogether. I'd been there almost a year when you came.”

“Well, you've earned the rest. Others got us there, but it's your work that's enabled us to build there and stay there.”

“There was a lot to learn. There's a lot yet.”

“You never remarried?” he asked.

“No.” Franklyn shook his head.

“You should have. I told you, remember? You should have a wife and family. It's still not too late.”

Again Franklyn shook his head.

“I've not told you my news yet,” he said. “I've had word of Jannessa.”

Forbes stared at him. If he had ever thought any-thing more un-likely he could not recall what it was.

“Had word,” he repeated, care-fully. “Just what does that mean?”

Franklyn explained.

“For years I have been adver-tising for news of the *Aurora*. The answers came mostly from nuts, or from those who thought I was crazy enough for them to cash in on — until six months or so ago.”

“The man who came to see me then was the owner of a spaceman's hostel in Chicago. He'd had a man die there a little while before, and the man had some-thing he wanted to get off his chest before he went out. The owner brought it to me for what it was worth.”

“The dying man claimed that the *Aurora* was not lost in space, as every-one thought; he said that his name was Jenkins and he had been aboard her, so he ought to know. According to his story, there was a mutiny on the *Aurora* when she was a few days out from Mars. It was on account of the captain deciding to hand some of the crew over to the police on arrival, for crimes un-speci-fied. When the muti-neers took over they had the support of all but one or two of the officers, and they changed course. I don't know what the ulti-mate plan was, but what they did then was to lift from the plane of the ecliptic, and hop the asteroid belt, on a course for Jupiter.”

“The owner got the impression that they were not so much a ruth-less gang as a bunch of despe-rate men with a grie-vance. They could have pushed the officers and the passengers out into space since they had all quali-fied for a hang-ing any-way. But they didn't. Instead, like other pirates before them, they elected to maroon the lot and leave them to make out as best they could — if they could.”

“According to Jenkins, the place chosen was Europa, somewhere in the region of its twentieth parallel, and the time some-where in the third or fourth month of 1995. The party they stranded consisted of twelve persons — including a coloured girl in charge of a white baby.”

Franklyn paused.

“The owner bears a quite blame-less character. The dying man had nothing to gain by fabri-ca-tion. And, on looking up the sailing list, I find that there was a space-man named Evan David Jenkins aboard the *Aurora*”

He concluded with a kind of cau-tious triumph, and looked expec-tantly across the table at Forbes. But there was no enthu-siasm in the doctor's face.

“Europa,” he said, reflectively. He shook his head.

Franklyn's expression hardened.

“Is that all you have to say?” he demanded.

“No,” Forbes told him, slowly. “For one thing I should say that it is more than unlikely — that it is almost impos-sible that she can have survived.”

“Almost is not quite. But I am going to find out. One of our pros-pect-ing ships is on her way to Europa now.”

Forbes shook his head again.

“It would be wiser to call her off.”

Franklyn stared at him.

“After all these years — when at last there is hope—”

The doctor looked steadily back at him.

“My two boys are going back to Mars next week,” he said.

“I don't see what that has to do with it.”

“But it has. Their muscles ache conti-nu-ally. The strain of that makes them too tired either to work or to enjoy life. The humidity here also exhausts them. They com-plain that the air feels like a thick soup all around and inside them. They have never been free of catarrh since they arrived. There are other things, too. So they are going back.”

“And you stay here. That's tough.”

“It's tougher on Annie. She adores those boys. But that's the way life is, Frank.”

“Meaning?”

“That it's conditions that count. When we produce a new life, it is some-thing plastic. Inde-pen-dent. We can't live its life as well as our own. We can't do more than to see that it has the best condi-tions to shape it the way we like best. If the condi-tions are in some way beyond our control, one of two things happens; either it becomes adapted to the condi-tions it finds — or it fails to adapt, which means that it dies.

“We talk airily about conquering this or that natural obstacle — but look at what we really do and you'll find that more often than not it is our-selves we are adapting.”

“My boys have been accli-ma-tized to Martian condi-tions. Earth doesn't suit them. Annie and I have sustained Martian con-di-tions for a while, but, as adults, we were in-cap-able of thorough adapt-ation. So either we must come home — or stay there to die early.”

“You mean, you think that Jannessa—”

“I don't know what may have happened — but I have thought about it. I don't think you have thought about it at all. Frank.”

“I've thought of little else these last seven-teen years.”

“Surely ‘dreamed’ is the word, Frank?” Forbes looked across at him, his head a little on one side, his manner gentle. “Once upon a time some-thing, an ancestor of ours, came out of the water on to the land. It became adapted until it could not go back to its relatives in the sea. That is the process we agree to call progress. It is inherent in life. If you stop it, you stop life, too.”

“Philosophically that may be sound enough, but I'm not interested in abstrac-tions. I'm interested in my daughter.”

“How much do you think your daughter may be interested in you? I know that sounds callous, but I can see that you have some idea of affinity in mind. You're mis-taking civilized custom for natu-ral law, Frank. Perhaps we all do, more or less.”

“I don't know what you mean.”

“To be plain —*if* Jannessa has survived, she will be more foreign than any Earth foreigner could possibly be.”

“There were eleven others to teach her civilized ways and speech.”

“*If* any of them survived. Suppose they did not, or she was some-how sepa-rated from them. There are authen-ticated instances of children reared by wolves, leopards and even antelopes, and not one of them turned out to be in the least like the Tarzan fiction. All were sub-human. Adaptation works both ways.”

“Even if she has had to live among savages she can learn.”

Dr. Forbes faced him seriously.

“I don't think you can have read much anthro-pology. First she would have to unlearn the whole basis of the culture she has known. Look at the different races here, and ask your-self if that is possible. There might be a veneer, yes. But more than that—” He shrugged.

“There is the call of the blood—”

“Is there? If you were to meet your great-grand-father would there be any tie — would you even know him?”

Franklyn said, stubbornly:

“Why are you talking like this, Jimmy? I'd not have listened to another man. Why are you trying to break down all that I've hoped for? You can't, you know. Not now. But why try?”

“Because I'm fond of you, Frank. Because under all your success you're still the young man with a romantic dream. I told you to remarry. You wouldn't — you preferred the dream to reality. You've lived with that dream so long now that it is part of your mental pattern. But your dream is *offinding* Jannessa — not of having found her. You have centred your life on that dream. If you *do* find her, in what-ever

condition you find her, the dream will be finished — the purpose you set yourself will have been accomplished. And there will be nothing else left for you.”

Franklyn moved uneasily.

“I have plans and ambitions for her.”

“For the daughter you know nothing of? No, for the dream daughter; the one that exists only in your mind, whatever you may find, it will be a real person — not your dream puppet, Frank.”

Dr. Forbes paused, watching the smoke curl up from his cigarette. It was in his mind to say: “Whatever she is like, you will come to hate her, just because she cannot exactly match your dream of her,” but he decided to leave that unspoken. It occurred to him also to enlarge on the unhappiness which might descend on a girl removed from all that was familiar to her, but he knew that Franklyn's answer to that would be — there was money enough to provide every luxury and consolation. He had already said enough — perhaps too much, and none of it had really reached Franklyn. He decided to let it rest there, and hope. After all, there was little likelihood that Jannessa had either survived or would be found.

The tense look that had been on Franklyn's face gradually relaxed. He smiled.

“You've said your piece, old man. You think I may be in for a shock, and you want to prepare me, but I realize all that. I had it out with myself years ago. I can take it, if it's necessary.”

Dr. Forbes' eyes dwelt on his face for a moment. He sighed, softly and privately.

“Very well,” he agreed, and started to talk of something else.

“You see,” said Toti, “this is a very small planet—”

“A satellite,” said Jannessa. “A satellite of Yan.”

“But a planet of the sun, all the same. And there is the terrible cold.”

“Then why did your people choose it?” Jannessa asked, reasonably.

“Well, when our own world began to die and we had to die with it or go somewhere else, our people thought about those they could reach. Some were too hot, some were too big—”

“Why too big?”

“Because of the gravity. On a big planet we could scarcely have crawled.”

“Couldn't they have ... well, made things lighter?”

Toti made a negative movement of his head, and his silver hair glistened in the fluorescence from the walls.

“An increase in density can be simulated; we've done that here. But no one has succeeded in simulating a decrease — nor, we think now, ever will. So you see our people had to choose a small world. All the moons of Yan are bleak, but this was the best of them, and our people were desperate. When they got here they lived in the ships and began to burrow into the ground to get away from the

cold. They gradu-ally burnt their way in, making halls and rooms and galleries, and the food-growing tanks, and the culture fields, and all the rest of it. Then they sealed it, and warmed it, and moved in from the ships and went on working inside. It was all a very long time ago.”

Jannessa sat for a moment in thought.

“Telta said that perhaps I came from the third planet, Sonnal. Do you think so?”

“It may be. We know there was some kind of civili-za-tion there.”

“If they came once, they might come again — and take me home.”

Toti looked at her, troubled, and a little hurt.

“Home?” he said. “You feel like that?”

Jannessa caught his expression. She put her white hand quickly into his slaty-blue one.

“I'm sorry, Toti. I didn't mean that. I love you, and Telta, and Melga. You know that. It's just ... oh, how can you know what it's like to be different — different from every-one around you? I'm *sotired* of being a freak, Toti, dear. Inside me I'm just like any other girl. Can't you under-stand what it would mean to me to be looked on by every-one as normal?”

Toti was silent for a while. When he spoke, his tone was troubled:

“Jannessa, have you ever thought that after spending all your life here this really is your world? Another might seem very ... well, strange to you.”

“You mean living on the outside instead of the inside. Yes, that would seem funny.”

“Not just that, my dear,” he said, care-fully. “You know that after I found you up there and brought you in the doctors had to work hard to save your life?”

“Telta told me.” Jannessa nodded. “What did they do?”

“Do you know what glands are?”

“I think so. They sort of control things.”

“They do. Well, yours were set to control things suit-ably for your world. So the doctors had to be very clever. They had to give you very accu-rate injec-tions — it was a kind of balan-cing process, you see, so that the glands would work in the proper propor-tions to suit you for life here. Do you under-stand?”

“To make me comfort-able at a lower tempe-rature, help me to digest this kind of food, stop over-stimu-lation by the high oxygen content, things like that,” Telta said.

“Things like that,” Toti agreed. “It's called adapt-ation. They did the best they could to make you suited for life here among us.”

“It was very clever of them,” Jannessa said, speaking much as she had spoken years ago to Telta. “But why didn't they do more? Why did they leave me white like this? Why didn't they make my hair a lovely

silver like yours and Telta's? I wouldn't have been a freak then — I should have felt that I really belong here.” Tears stood in her eyes.

Toti put his arms around her.

“My poor dear. I didn't know it was as bad as that. And I love you — so does Telta — as if you were our own daughter.”

“I don't see how you can — with this!” She held up her pale hand.

“But, we do, Jannessa, dear. Does that really matter so very much?”

“It's what makes me different. It reminds me all the time that I belong to another world, really. Perhaps I shall go there one day.”

Toti frowned.

“That's just a dream, Jannessa. You don't know any world but this. It couldn't be what you expect. Stop dream-ing, stop worrying yourself, my dear. Make up your mind to be happy here with us.”

“You don't understand, Toti,” she said gently. “Some-where there are people like me — my own kind.”

It was only a few months later that the observers in one of the domes reported the landing of a ship from space.

“Listen, you old cynic,” said Franklyn's voice, almost before his image was sharp on the screen. “They've found her — and she's on the way Home.”

“Found — Jannessa?” Dr. Forbes said, hesi-tantly.

“Of course. Who else would I be meaning?”

“Are you — quite sure, Frank?”

“You old sceptic. Would I have rung you if I weren't? She's on Mars right now. They put in there for fuel, and to delay for proximity.”

“But can you be sure?”

“There's her name — and some papers found with her.”

“Well, I suppose—”

“Not enough, eh?” Franklyn's image grinned. “All right, then. Take a look at this.”

He reached for a photo-graph on his desk and held it close to the trans-mitting screen.

“Told them to take it there, and transmit here by radio,” he explained. “Now what about it?”

Dr. Forbes studied the picture on the screen carefully. It showed a girl posed with a rough wall for a back-ground. Her only visible garment was a piece of shining cloth, draped around her, rather in the

manner of a sari. The hair was fair and dressed in an unfamiliar style. But it was the face looking from beneath it that made him catch his breath. It was Marilyn Godalpin's face, gazing back at him across eighteen years.

“Yes, Frank,” he said, slowly. “Yes, that's Jannessa. I ... I don't know what to say, Frank.”

“Not even congratulations?”

“Yes, oh yes — of course. It's ... well, it's just a miracle. I'm not used to miracles.”

The day that the newspaper told him that the *Chloe*, a research ship belonging to the Jason Mining Corporation, was due to make ground at noon, was spent absent-mindedly by Dr. Forbes. He was sure that there would be a message from Franklyn Godalpin, and he found himself unable to settle to anything until he should receive it. When, at about four o'clock the bell rang, he answered it with a swift excitement. But the screen did not clear to the expected features of Franklyn. Instead, a woman's face looked at him anxiously. He recognized her as Godalpin's house-keeper.

“It's Mr. Godalpin, doctor,” she said. “He's been taken ill. If you could come—?”

A taxi set him down on Godalpin's strip fifteen minutes later. The house-keeper met him and hurried him to the stairs through the rabble of journalists, photographers and commentators that filled the hall. Franklyn was lying on his bed with his clothes loosened. A secretary and a frightened-looking girl stood by. Dr. Forbes made an examination and gave an injection.

“Shock, following anxiety,” he said. “Not surprising. He's been under a great strain lately. Get him to bed. Hot bottles, and see that he's kept warm.”

The housekeeper spoke as he turned away.

“Doctor, while you're here. There's the ... I mean, if you wouldn't mind having a look at ... at Miss Jannessa, too.”

“Yes, of course. Where is she?”

The housekeeper led the way to another room, and pointed.

“She's in there, doctor.”

Dr. Forbes pushed open the door and went in. A sound of bitter sobbing ended in choking as he entered. Looking for the source of it he saw a child standing beside the bed.

“Where—?” he began. Then the child turned towards him. It was not a child's face. It was Marilyn's face, with Marilyn's hair, and Marilyn's eyes looking at him. But a Marilyn who was twenty-five inches tall — Jannessa.

BOOK INFORMATION

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