

RUSTY'S SPACE SHIP



BY EVELYN SIBLEY LAMPMAN

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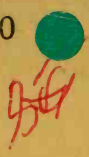
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Rusty's space ship



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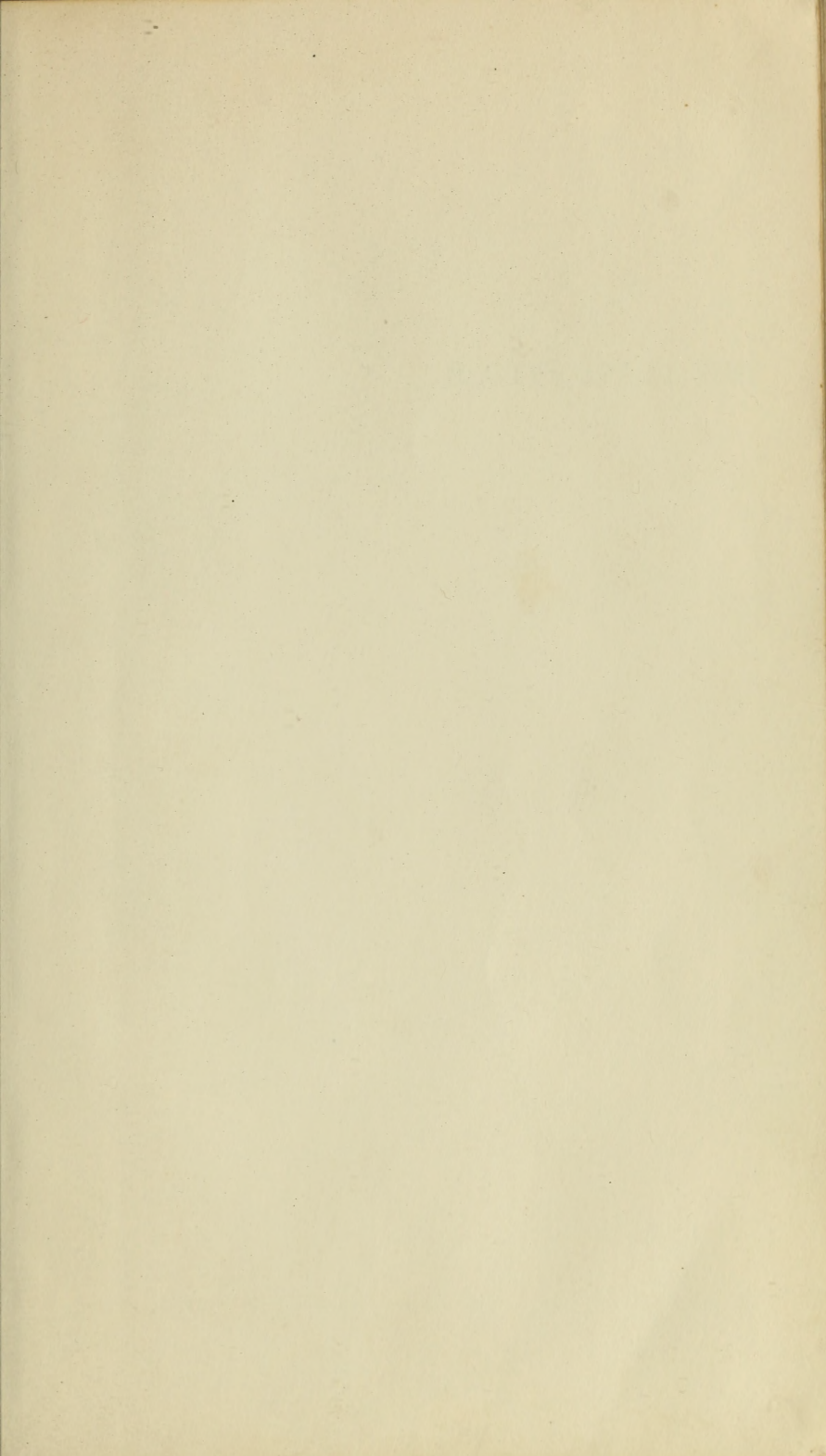
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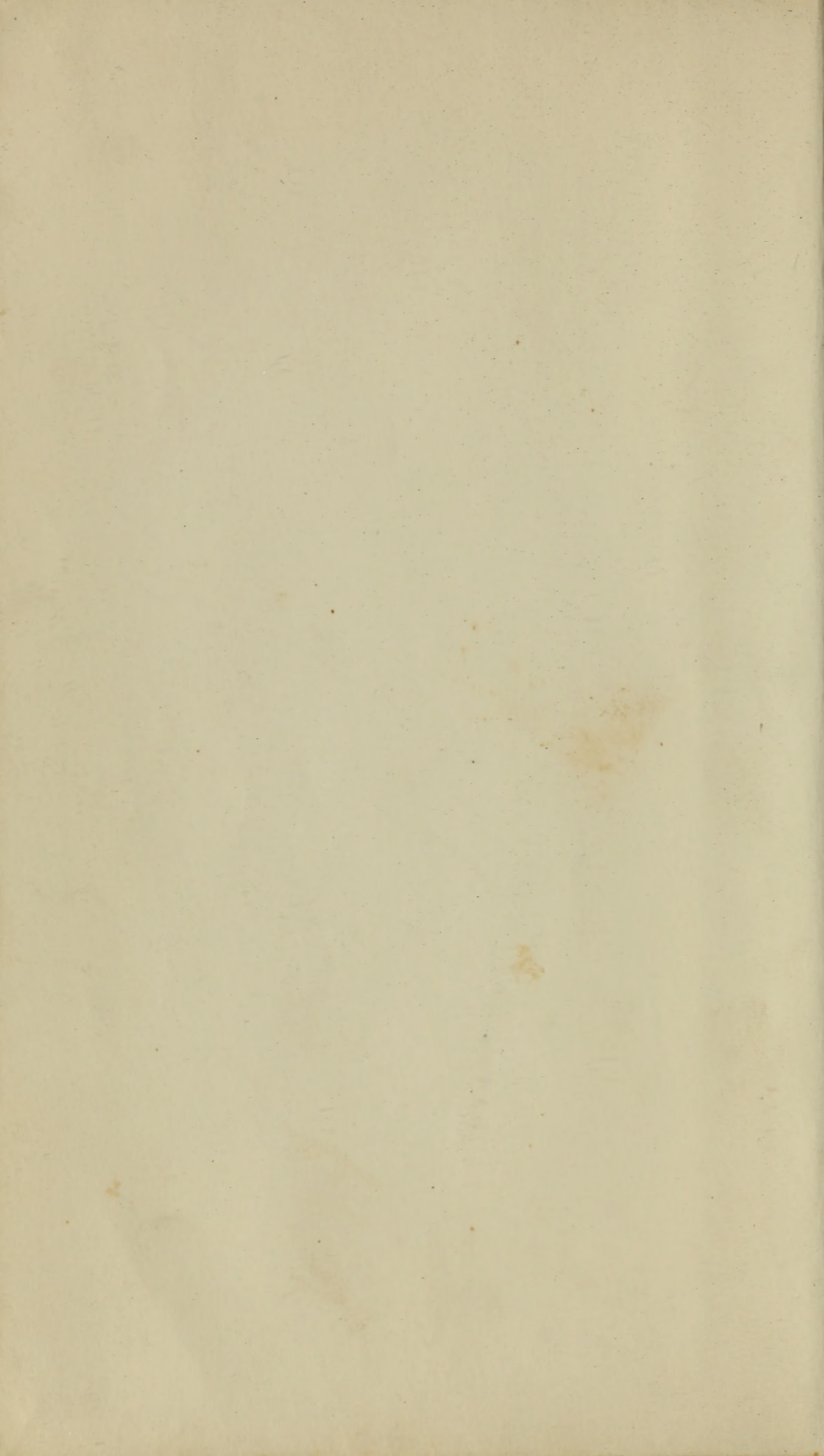
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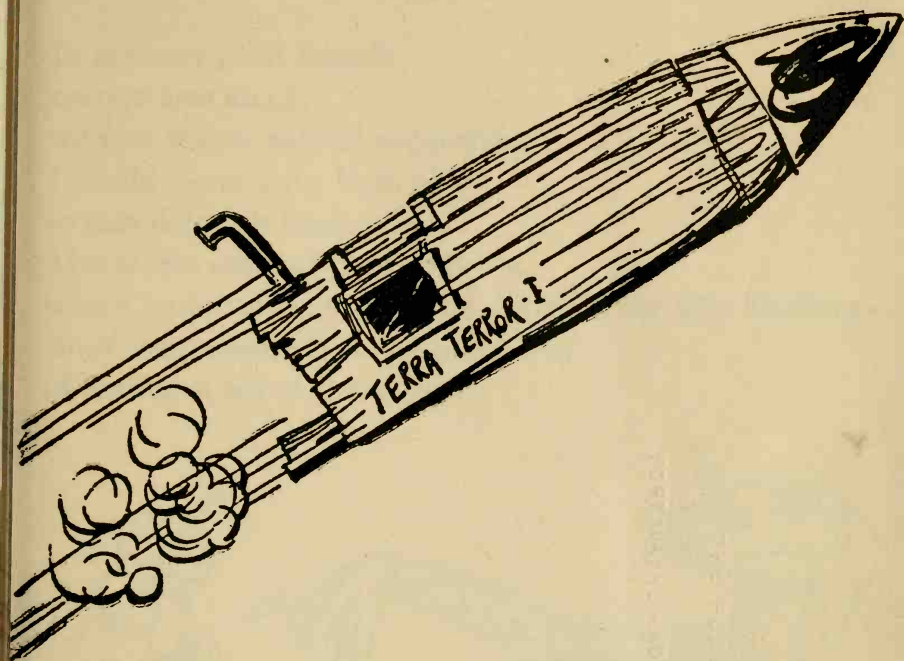
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RUSTY'S SPACE SHIP

HUSTON'S SPACE SHIP



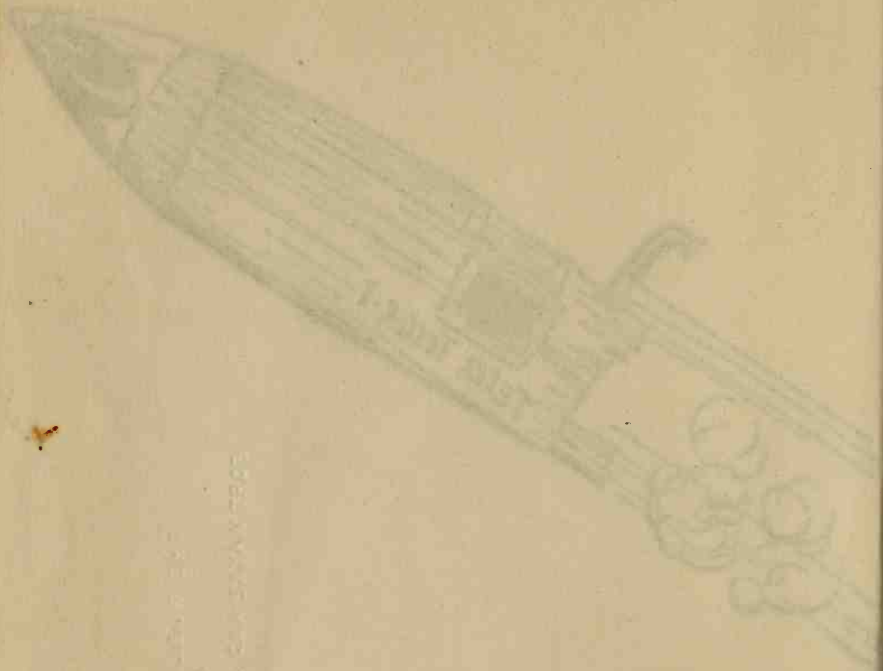
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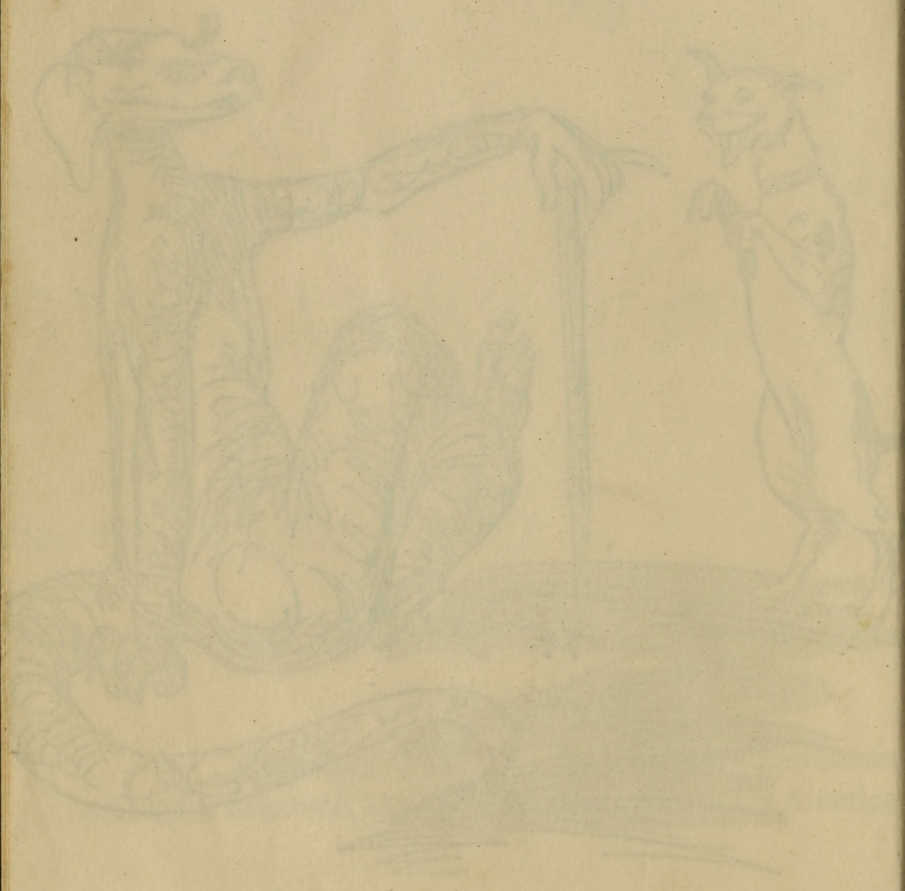
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To my very good friends,
TOMMY AND BILLY,
without whose helpful suggestions
I would never have been able
to complete this book.

Also to the original TERRA TERROR,
which, unfortunately, must be chopped up into kindling,
since there seems to be no other way
of getting it out of the garage.



To my very good friends,
 TRACY AND BILLY,
 without whose helpful suggestions
 I would never have been able
 to complete this book.
 Also to the original artist, whose
 which, unfortunately, had to be clipped up into fragments
 since there seems to be no other way
 of getting it out of the garage.



RUSTY'S SPACE SHIP

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1

Susan slowed her steps as she reached the open garage doors and peered curiously inside. When she saw only Rusty hammering away on the bulky contrivance built of wooden boxes and uneven lengths of lumber, she hesitated. Rusty was so intent on whatever he was hammering that he did not see her, but Cookie got up from the cement floor and advanced, wriggling with pleasure. Cookie

was Rusty's dog, a small black and white spotted animal, which showed evidences of so many breeds that it would have been hard to trace her genealogy. Susan reached down and petted the delighted Cookie.

"Good Cookie," she said. "Hi, girl."

Rusty turned at the sound of her voice and grinned in the same friendly way he used to before he had suddenly decided that it was beneath his masculine dignity to play with girls.

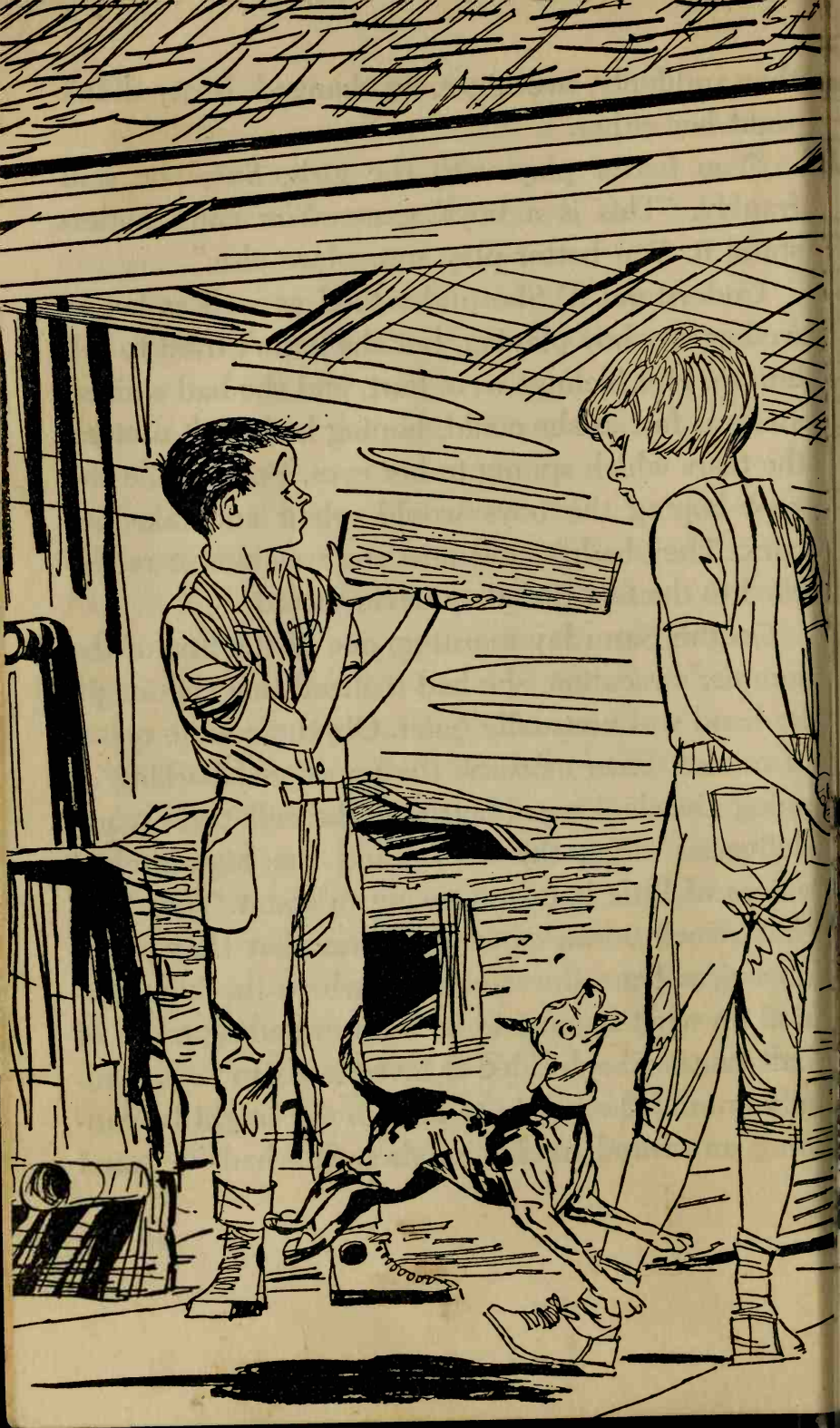
The two of them had lived next door to each other all their lives, and up until six months ago they had played together constantly. Susan had no use for dolls and tea parties, for jumping ropes or dressing up in Mother's old clothes and playing house. It was more exciting to help build a perilous tree house or to play ball with Rusty and his friends. For a long time she had been welcomed by all the boys, since she could throw a ball as far and as fast as any of them and swat it with equal facility. She still could, but during the last school year she had begun to get the impression that she had lost some of her popularity with members of the group. She was always the last to be chosen for a side, and there were certain slurring remarks about her being a girl. For a while Rusty remained her champion,

then suddenly, overnight, he changed. Rusty didn't want her either.

"You better play with the girls, Sue," he said frankly. "This is a boys' game. You can't understand it. You better play someplace else."

Understand it! She understood as well as he, as well as any boy playing, but she hadn't tried to tell him so. Her feelings were hurt, and she had walked away as fast as she could, hoping he hadn't noticed the tears which sprang to her eyes. For a while she kept hoping the boys would relent and take her back. They hadn't, and now she was almost reconciled to the fact that they never would.

On this Saturday morning, one of the first of the summer's vacation, she had realized that the neighborhood was unusually quiet. Oh, there were noises of course, lawn mowers, the occasional barking of a dog, the clanking of bottles as the milk truck made deliveries along the street, and the high-pitched voices of little kids, too young to count. The thing that struck Susan as unusual was that there were no voices from the vacant lot where the boys carried on what seemed to be a never-ending series of ball games. She decided to investigate, to walk casually around the block, as though she might be running an errand for her mother. She had hesitated



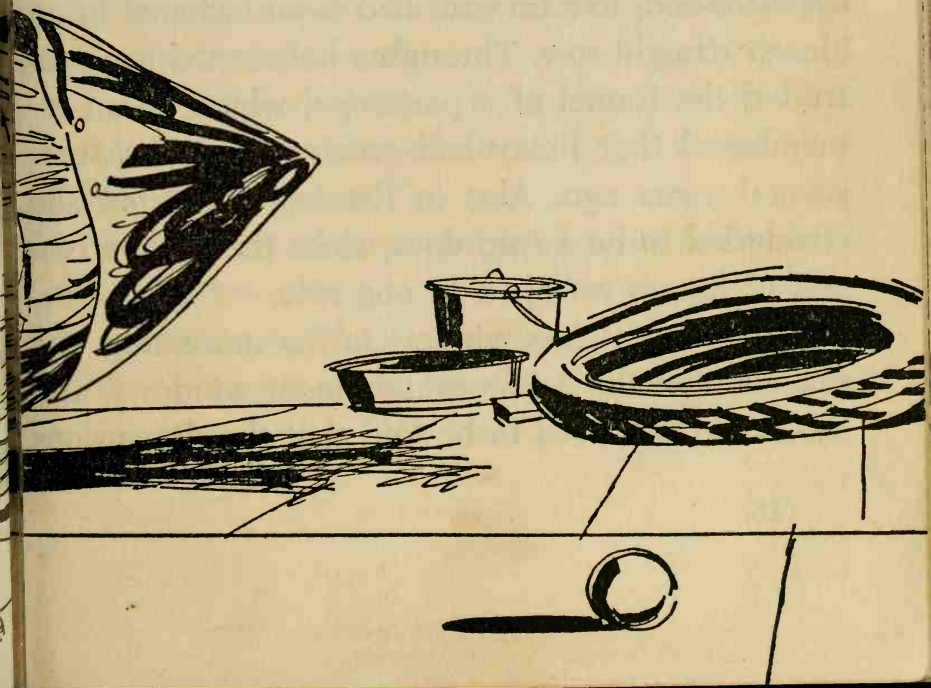
when she heard the pounding going on in Rusty Adam's garage. It was a heart-warming experience when Rusty glanced up and smiled at her, and almost like a miracle when he addressed her in a casual, friendly fashion.

"Hi, Susie. Where you going?"

"Well, no place special," she admitted. "Just walking around. It's sure quiet this morning."

"Yeah," nodded Rusty, looking momentarily annoyed. "Day camp started today, and most of the gang went to see what it was like. I tried to tell them it would be just like last year and the year before. They'll be fed up by tomorrow and start dropping out."

The knowledge that Rusty was alone, that no neighborhood boy was likely to appear and remind her old friend of the fact that he was lowering his



masculine standards by talking with a girl, gave her confidence, but not quite enough to venture inside without an invitation.

“What are you building?” she asked respectfully.

“A space ship,” said Rusty promptly. “Want to see it?”

Only then did she cross the once so familiar half of the Adamses' garage which had been turned over to Rusty for a workshop. Cookie tagged affectionately at her heels, looking up with happy brown eyes. Cookie had missed Susan very much and was overjoyed that the rift between her master and her favorite friend was at last mended.

The space ship was roughly eight feet long and three feet wide. It would have resembled a covered box except that boards had been nailed on one end in such a way that they reached a point. On the opposite end, five tin cans had been fastened in an almost straight row. Through a hole in the top protruded the funnel of a periscope, which Susan remembered that Rusty had received for Christmas several years ago. Also in the top was what she concluded to be a trap door, since there were two sets of hinges attached to one side.

There was a glass window in the space ship, the exact size of the Adamses' basement windows, and Susan did not need to be told that the dimensions

were not by chance. Rusty's mother kept a supply of window glass cut in that size because someone in the family was invariably locking all the doors from the outside, and they had to break a window to get in. Other people would have kept a key hidden someplace, on an outside rafter or in the garage, but that never seemed to work with the Adams family. They thought the only thing to do was to keep extra panes and window putty on hand, and more than once these things had come in useful to Susan and Rusty in some of their building projects. It made her feel more left out than ever to see that Rusty was still using windowpanes and putty.

"Well?" asked Rusty expectantly.

"Pretty good," approved Susan. She felt that had she been in on the planning she might have suggested a few improvements, but this was not the time to say so aloud. "Is this the nose?" She nodded toward the pointed end.

"Sure," agreed Rusty. "Back there are the five rockets." That explained the five tin cans. "How do you like her name?"

"Terra Terror I" was painted on one side of the ship in rather straggling black letters.

"I'm not sure," hesitated Susan.

"Terra means earth," explained Rusty in a superior tone.

"I know that. But why terror? What are you, a space bandit or something?"

"Certainly not. We just want everybody to know they can't fool around with us, that's all. We aren't terrors so long as everybody in outer space behaves himself," explained Rusty. Then he added, "Besides, it sounds good together. Terra—Terror. Get it?"

"Let's see the inside," said Susan, refusing to commit herself.

"The hatch is on top. Of course there's an emergency exit if we should ever get in a tight spot and need it. See these two boards?" He stopped and kicked at the front, just before the joining of the pointed nose. "They're not nailed on very tight. But it's only for emergencies. We never go in that way."

The trap door lifted easily, and Susan, clutching Cookie, who refused to be left behind, climbed up onto the ship and lowered herself through the hole. Things were better inside than out, she decided. Of course it was impossible to stand up, for with the hatch cover down the roof was too low, but there was enough room for the two of them to sit side by side.

There was quite a complicated control panel which Rusty had secured by sending in a cereal-box top and twenty-five cents. It was studded with many buttons marked "Freeze Ray, for use on

comets," "Electric Ray," "Coder," "Decoder," "Take-off," "Steady Course," and "Landing." There was an opaque square, which Rusty told her was the screen through which the pilot might view his course, and a square with a circle in the middle, which was the radar unit.

"Pretty good," approved Susan, a little impressed in spite of herself. "What's all this stuff here on the shelf?"

"That's our equipment. Two ray guns, and our membership cards for the space patrol, and our outer-space books, and hammer and nails, and of course my telescope. That's what I got for my birthday."

"I guess you must keep your food over there." She changed the subject quickly. Talk of membership in a space patrol to which she could never belong made her uncomfortable.

"Sure. We're kind of low on supplies right now." He frowned. "I picked up a bottle of milk off the front porch when I went by, and there's a box of crackers and a jar of honey and a couple of oranges. But we generally keep more on hand than that. You never know when you'll be called out on a mission."

"Where do you go on your missions?"

"We go to the moon all the time. That's just a take-

off point. We've been to Venus and Mars, and next time we're going to one of Saturn's moons, the big one with the atmosphere, Titan."

"Oh," said Susan in an offhand tone. She was aware that she would have to do some reading about astronomy. It would never do to let Rusty get ahead of her in some field of knowledge.

"I better get back to work," he decided. "I'm nailing on a piece of armor plate. It's to deflect meteors. We have to go through the Great Rocky Belt between Mars and Jupiter to get to Saturn."

"Of course," agreed Susan promptly.

Rusty got out first. She handed Cookie to him, then scrambled out herself and prepared to stand by while he continued his hammering. Then, growing curious; she leaned over to inspect what he was doing more closely.

He was nailing on a piece of metal, but she couldn't imagine where it had come from or what its former use could have been. It was perfectly round and about four feet across. The nails seemed to pierce it without too much trouble, and it was flexible, for as she watched, Rusty bent it easily to reach down over the other side of the ship. It barely cleared the painted name.

"What is that? The bottom of a washing machine or something?"

“What?” asked Rusty, hammering furiously. He was not sparing the nails. They were spaced at two-inch intervals all along the rim of the circle.

“That thing you’re nailing on. What was it, in the first place?”

“I don’t know. I found it.”

“Where?”

“In the city dump. Pete and I rode out there on our bikes yesterday to see if we could find anything valuable, and I found this. Somebody’s thrown it away, so I brought it home. The minute I saw it I knew it was just what we needed for the Terra Terror.”

“Wouldn’t it be nice if there was enough to cover the whole ship?” speculated Susan.

“You can’t have everything,” Rusty reminded her. “I like it on the nose. That’s the important part, anyway. The nails go in easy, too, only you have to be careful to get them in the right place when you start pounding. Once they’re in, you can’t get them out.”

“It’s nice,” admired Susan. “It shines, even in here where the sun doesn’t hit it.”

Rusty was pleased.

“Here,” he invited. “You can help me nail if you want to. There’s another hammer.”

It was fun working at something with Rusty again, almost like old times. Once he nearly spoiled it by

stopping to inspect the row of nails she had hammered and being surprised that they were straight. Susan bit her lip to keep from snapping at him. Of course she could hammer a nail straight. She had been doing it as long as he had.

It was distressing to discover that he had surpassed her in one field of knowledge, however. In the past few months he had been reading astronomy and space books, and she hadn't known about it. She hadn't even known he had a telescope.

"Do you look at the stars much?" she inquired politely.

"Oh, sure. Planets are more fun, though."

Stars, planets, what was the difference? She couldn't wait to look it up herself. She had to ask why, and he explained eagerly, glad of the opportunity to display his new knowledge.

"Stars are suns. There's nothing on them to see much. They're just hot gas like our sun. Planets, though, are different. They're satellites of suns. The Earth is a planet. Our sun has nine planets, Mercury, Venus, the Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto."

"Everybody knows that," she said airily. "Tell me something I don't know."

"All right," he said suspiciously. "Planets have

satellites, too, their moons. How many moons does Saturn have?"

Susan thought fast. Personally she had never heard of more than one moon, but since Rusty was making such a point of it, there must be more.

"Two," she said loudly.

"Ha!" he hooted. "It's Mars that has two moons. Saturn has nine. And the biggest one, called Titan, has an atmosphere. Only you can't breathe it, like you can ours, because it's full of poison gas."

Then they looked up, startled. From the open garage doorway they had received a message. No one had spoken aloud, yet there was no doubt about the meaning of the words.

"There's the saucer!" came the message. "There's Gwump's saucer. By the rings of Saturn, I've been lucky this time"

Openmouthed with surprise, they stared at the strange figure in the doorway.

2

At first they thought the person in the doorway was a child dressed up for playing house in his mother's clothes, for he was not over three feet high and the fur coat he wore dragged on the ground. They could not see his face, for a man's felt hat was pulled down over his ears, and the limp brim drooped low over his nose. In one hand he carried a leather bag, and in the other was clutched a large round piece of silvery

metal which dragged behind him as he walked. It was identical to the metal they had just finished nailing onto the space ship. After the first shock of surprise, Susan had a second shock, this one of recognition.

“What are you doing in my mother’s fur coat?” she demanded sternly. “And my father’s fishing hat? They were hanging on our clothesline to air out. I saw them there myself just a little while ago.”

The stranger did not answer. Instead he advanced, in a hopping sort of fashion, to the space ship and reached toward the silvery disk. When it did not come loose in his hand, they immediately had the feeling that he was annoyed.

“By the lost Themis,” they seemed to hear him say. “What’s the matter with the thing? It’s attached itself to something, someway.”

He put down the bag and the piece of metal and, using both hands, attempted to pry off the treasure which Rusty had found in the garbage dump. The row of nails held fast.

“Hey,” said Rusty crossly, “what do you think you’re doing? You leave my meteor deflector alone.”

For the first time the stranger appeared aware of their presence. The hatbrim tilted as he cocked his head to see them better.





A TERROR I

"Who are you?" They didn't hear his voice, but they heard the question clearly.

"I'm Rusty Adams. And this is Susan Northrup. Who are you?"

"I am Tiphia, page to Mighty Gwump. I have come for his saucer. If you hold it by some Earth magic unknown to me, I command you to revoke the spell."

"Susie," gasped Rusty in amazement, "we can't hear anything, but I know what he's saying. He must be a little man from outer space."

"Phooey," said Susan in disbelief. "He's playing a joke on you, and you've got your head so full of that stuff, you'll believe anything."

"But how does he do it, then? Make us understand what he says without talking?"

"It's a trick," insisted Susan. "Maybe he's a ventriloquist or something. He must be throwing his voice, or we couldn't understand him."

All at once Tiphia seemed to wilt inside Mrs. Northrup's winter coat. They had sensed that before he had been trying to frighten them. Now they knew he was the one who was frightened.

"Please, please," came the message from Tiphia. "Give me Gwump's saucer. He'll have my whiskers if I don't bring it back to him. This is my first assignment. My very first assignment. I can't fail."

"I guess you'd better give it back to him," said Susan. She felt that the eyes, still hidden under her father's fishing hat, were ready to cry. "It must belong to him."

"It does not," objected Rusty hotly. "It's mine. I found it at the city dump. And anything at the dump is thrown away, so it's finders keepers. Besides, I couldn't take out all those nails if I wanted to. They're in too good."

Susan went over to inspect the metal disk. As Rusty had said, there never had been such a thorough job of pounding nails. Each one was flattened down so that it almost disappeared into the metal. It would have been close to impossible to work the edge of a screw driver under one of them. She turned sympathetically to Tiphia and tried to explain.

"I'm afraid he's right. See, the nails go all around the edge. We can't get them out again. They're fastened onto Rusty's space ship. He can't give you back your piece of metal without giving you the space ship."

"And you certainly can't expect me to do that," said Rusty. "Besides, you have another one. What do you want with two of them?"

Tiphia regarded the round of silvery metal on the ship, cocking his head to see it better. To their amazement, they could tell exactly what he was

thinking. His thoughts didn't come through with the same clarity as his direct messages. They were a little blurred and distant, the way it is with a bad telephone connection. But they could be understood.

"Very well," ran Tiphia's thoughts. "If I cannot return Gwump's saucer without taking this peculiar thing to which it is attached, I will take them both. The Mighty Gwump will know what to do about it when I get them there."

"Oh no, you don't!" cried Rusty in alarm. "You don't take the Terra Terror anywhere. It's mine. It belongs to me."

He threw his arms over the space ship, as though to protect it. Then, realizing it was too big to hold, he reached over to raise the trap door and began scrambling up and down inside.

"By Cassiopeia, the Queen," ran Tiphia's thoughts, and Susan could tell that he was perplexed. "Where did the Earth creature go? The thing must be hollow inside."

He made a move as though he himself were going to climb up after Rusty, at which Cookie began to snarl and bark. Tiphia drew back in alarm.

"Stop it, Cookie," ordered Susan.

"Thank you," thought Tiphia gratefully. "Thank

you for stopping that threatening creature from attacking me. What is it called?"

"Cookie," answered Susan. Then she realized that Tiphia was not asking Cookie's name, but what kind of animal she was. "She's a dog. You know what a dog is, don't you?"

"No," shivered Tiphia. "Are you sure it will not attack me?"

"Not unless you try to hurt Rusty or me. Or unless you tried to take something away that Cookie thought didn't belong to you. Mrs. Adams always has to shut Cookie up when the garbage man comes. Cookie can't understand about garbage. She seems to want to keep it."

"Bright Arcturus!" marveled Tiphia. "This is a pretty celestial stew."

"She won't hurt you so long as we're friends," encouraged Susan. "And we'll be friends if you don't try to take the piece of metal away from Rusty. Here, pet Cookie a little."

Tiphia drew back again in alarm.

"Tell the beast I mean you no harm. Tell her that the saucer shall not be separated from the boy who found it. At least, not by me. Tell her I only wish to see where her master has hidden himself."

"It's all right, Cookie," said Susan obligingly. She

picked up the little dog and held her in her arms. "You can climb up and look in now if you like. I'll hold her."

But Susan couldn't hold Cookie. The moment Tiphia began to climb the side of the space ship, the dog began to bark and struggle.

"You'll have to come back," called Susan. "I don't think Cookie trusts you yet. She doesn't want to let you out of her sight."

Reluctantly Tiphia came back down, and Susan saw a flash of shining green when the fur coat fell open. The next moment the coat was securely in place and the green had vanished.

No thoughts came from Tiphia, and Susan realized he was waiting for her to solve his problem. He still wanted to see inside the space ship, and he expected her to make it possible.

"I tell you what," she decided. "Cookie and I will go inside, then you can come. She ought to think that's all right."

Just before she disappeared down the open hatch, Susan saw that Tiphia was doing something to the metal disk nailed onto the nose of the space ship. "He's probably trying to get it loose again," she told herself. "Poor thing. It really must belong to him, or he wouldn't have its mate.

A moment later Tiphia lowered himself down the

hatch. The metal disk, which he had previously carried open, was now folded up like an umbrella so that it wouldn't take up so much room.

"What did you let him come in for?" growled Rusty.

"He won't hurt anything," soothed Susan. "Besides, he won't stay long. It's too cramped in here for three people."

Surprisingly enough, it didn't seem nearly so cramped with three of them as it had with two. Before Tiphia had arrived, Susan and Rusty had been forced to sit close together. Now their shoulders were no longer touching. There was even room to move about.

Tiphia was looking this way and that, his thoughts forming one question after another. Obviously he had never been inside a space ship before, even a play one like Rusty's, and he didn't know what anything was for. He thought so fast and wondered so rapidly that it was impossible for them to follow him. Then, just as suddenly, he stopped thinking about everything at once and concentrated on one thought.

"A present! I must give these nice children, especially the little girl who seems the most polite, a present."

He fumbled at the drawstrings of the bag he was

carrying and brought out a handful of colored candies. They were small candies about the size of pills, and they appeared to be every bit as hard. With the tips of his clawlike fingers, which barely protruded from the coat sleeve, he carefully picked out a blue one, a red one, and a pink one and handed them to Susan.

“Thank you,” she said courteously. She didn’t really want them, but he seemed so anxious to give them to her, it would have been rude to refuse. She popped them into her mouth.

Again Tiphia selected three of the candies, the same colors as before, and reached across toward Rusty. At that moment Cookie who knew all about candy and had been watching eagerly gave a lunge forward. Tiphia dropped the candies in alarm, and Cookie chased after them, licking up one after another with her pink tongue.

“By great Polaris! I did not mean them for that surly beast,” thought Tiphia angrily. “Now we shall never be rid of her. And what will Gwump say?”

“I’m sorry Cookie got your candy,” apologized Rusty. “She’s an awful pig when it comes to anything sweet. That’s why we call her Cookie. But don’t worry. She can have my share. You don’t have to give me any.”

“No, no,” objected Tiphia quickly. “You must

have some. You must. And I, too, must have some.”

Once again he counted out three of the colored candies, and this time Rusty managed to get them before Cookie. Then Tiphia himself swallowed three, or at least the children thought he swallowed them, for they disappeared somewhere under his hatbrim.

“Thanks to the wisdom of Mighty Gwump, I have extra glasses,” continued Tiphia. His thoughts were beginning to race jerkily, as though he were hurrying against time. Once again he reached into the leather bag, and this time he brought out three pairs of dark goggles, two of which he offered the children.

“What does he want us to do with these?” wondered Susan.

“I guess he’s playing space ship,” decided Rusty. “He should have told us that’s what he wanted to do, instead of making such a big secret about everything.”

“But why glasses?”

“You can’t go in outer space without them,” explained Rusty. “The sun would blind you in a minute. I’ve got a pair of dark glasses over there with my space stuff on the shelf, but these are a lot better than mine.”

"Maybe you should put yours on Cookie," laughed Susan. "She might look at the sun too."

"Good idea."

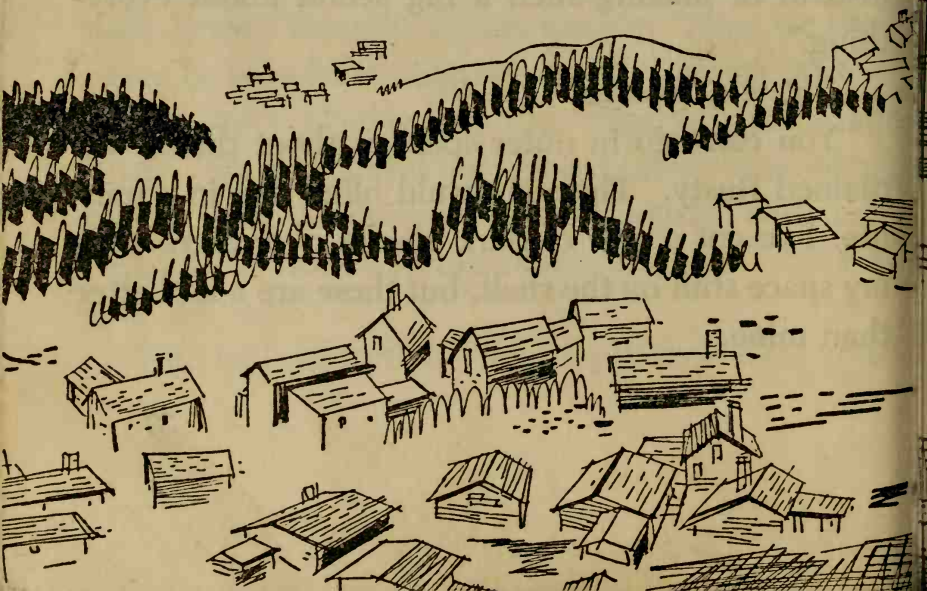
Both Rusty and Susan thought it was very funny when Rusty got his own dark glasses from the shelf and fastened them over Cookie's eyes. They were held in place by elastic, so by tying the knots firmly, Rusty made them secure. Cookie didn't like it, and Tiphia didn't approve either, but they paid no attention.

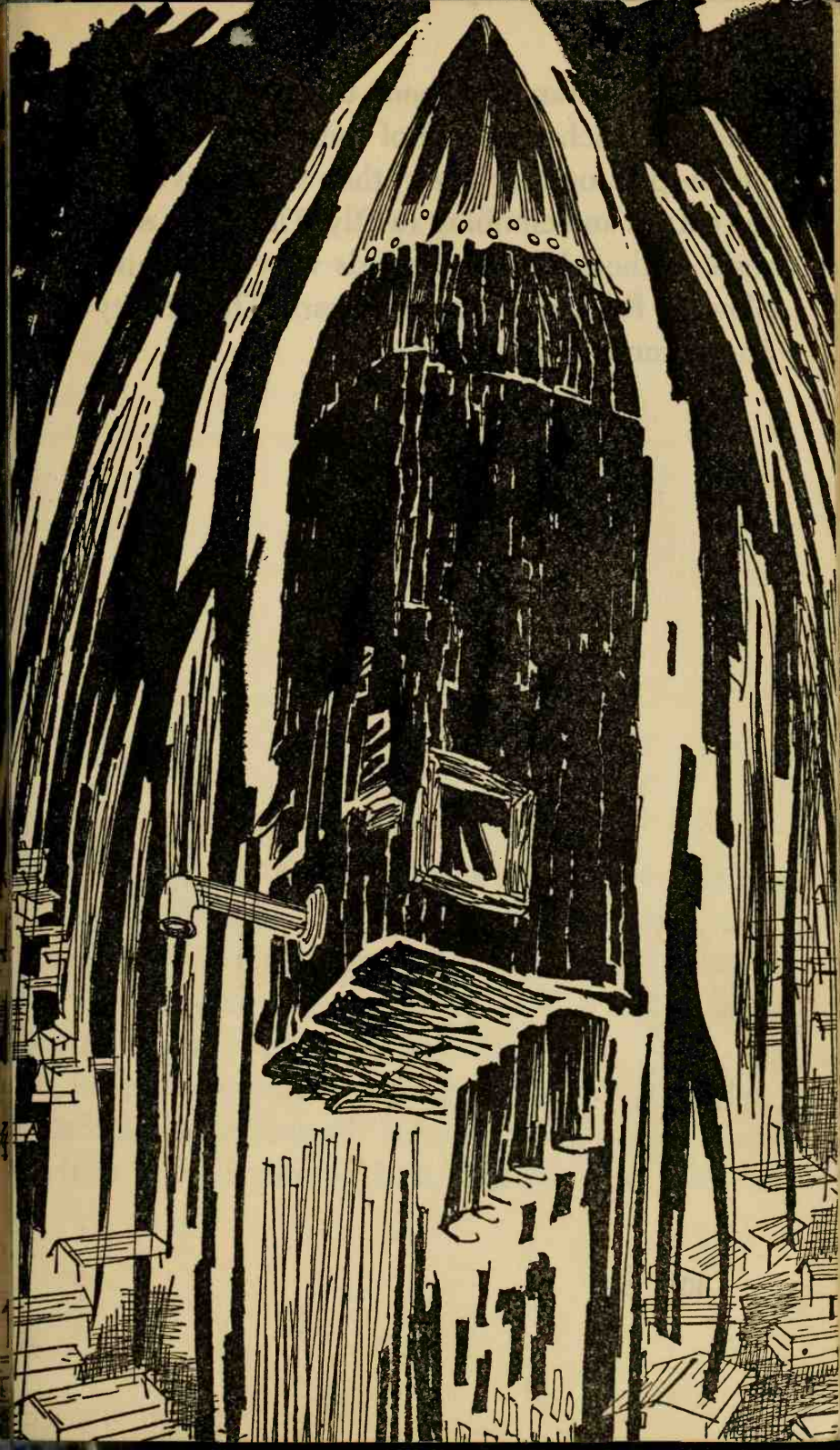
"My," said Susan, "I'm getting warm, aren't you? It's like I had a fever or something. I feel all dried out."

"Me too," agreed Rusty in amazement. "Want some milk? There's a bottle of it over there."

"No, no," objected Tiphia. "No time. Close the hole in this thing. Quickly! Quickly!"

His will was so strong that Rusty obeyed without question. He reached up and jerked the hatch cover





shut. At the same moment the space ship gave a shudder which threw all of them back on the floor. The next thing they knew, they were moving out of the garage and climbing swiftly. There was a sudden rush, as though all four winds were simultaneously blowing full gales past their ears. Then Rusty and Susan knew nothing at all.

3

“I’m delighted that you two are finally coming around,” thought Tiphia. “The only bad feature of my job is that it’s lonely work. I was looking forward to company on the return trip, and it didn’t seem quite fair of you to sleep all the way.”

Rusty received the message as he was struggling back to consciousness. It came from the darkness which was all around him, and for a moment he

thought he was in his own bed, awakening from a bad dream. He still remembered what had happened, the strange little figure muffled in Mrs. Northrup's fur coat and concealed by Mr. Northrup's limp-brimmed hat; how they had all climbed into the space ship, and how, miraculously, it had seemed to leave the ground. Of course that was impossible. It couldn't happen. A homemade space ship, with toy controls from a cereal-box top, couldn't really fly. Yet he still had the distinct impression of being off the Earth. If he could only see, but all around him was darkness.

"Susie!" he shouted suddenly, remembering that she had been with him at the start of this strange experience. "Susie, where are you? Cookie!"

He heard a feeble whine, then Cookie's panting breath, the way she sounded after she had been running hard. Susan's voice answered him drowsily.

"Rusty, where are you? My nose is being pinched."

"Leave it alone!" They both sensed Tiphia's instant command, although, as it had been in the garage, they could not hear the actual words. "I had to take measures. Fortunately I had dropped into the pockets of the Earth garment I borrowed the clamps which attached it to the line. They served

to close the holes in your noses. Otherwise, you might try to use them."

Rusty reached up and felt his nose. Sure enough, a clothespin had been clamped over it tightly. Angrily he pulled it off, and the next moment he was panting for breath as hard as Cookie.

"Put it back on this instant!" ordered Tiphia. "Do you want to do away with yourself?"

Rusty snapped the clothespin in place once more and immediately felt better. How strange it was not to require air. At home people suffocated for lack of it. Here, wherever he was, it seemed to be harmful.

It was very quiet, except for the sound of Cookie's frenzied attempts to breathe.

"Cookie!" Rusty cried in alarm. "She's being hurt!"

"It won't last long," soothed Tiphia. "It will be over in a minute, and it's better this way."

"No! That's murder. You can't do that. Look in your pocket. Maybe there's another clothespin."

"I can explain *you*, perhaps," objected Tiphia. "But not that—that creature."

"If you don't give me another clothespin I'll take mine off and put it on Cookie," threatened Rusty. "She's my dog, and I love her."

"Very well," disapproved Tiphia. "Reach out your hand. I'll put the other clamp in it. But when we get

to Eopee, you'll just have to explain things to Gwump yourself."

Rusty felt the clothespin drop into his hand. He followed the sound of Cookie's painful breathing and fumbled around in the darkness until he managed to get the clamp over her nose. It must have given instant relief, for Cookie stopped panting and licked his hand gratefully.

"Where are we?" Susan's small voice asked the question in a frightened whisper.

"We're coming in on the Earth's only moon in a moment or so," reassured Tiphia. "Ordinarily I'd go



right through, but you two are unused to space travel. It will make a nice rest for you."

"The moon!" cried Rusty in amazement. "That's impossible. Nobody's ever gone to the moon. They can't fly that high."

Tiphia ignored the remark. He seemed to be resting quietly in the darkness without even troubling himself to think.

"Tiphia," said Rusty sharply, and sensed that Tiphia had brought his thoughts to attention. "How could we fly so high as the moon? There's no atmosphere. We couldn't breathe."

"Certainly not," agreed Tiphia's thoughts. "That's why you swallowed the pink transforming drop. You won't need to breathe so long as it's in effect. The clamp on your nose is just extra precaution. Earth noses are such stubborn things. They get in the habit of doing something and just can't stop. Our noses are much better on Eopee."

"But we'd explode on the moon without space suits," objected Rusty. He was still unconvinced about the matter of breathing, although he did seem to be able to manage without it.

"The red transforming drop. It dried up all the liquid in your body. You're as dry as Mercury herself. You can't very well explode if there's no liquid in your tissues or veins to come to the boiling point."

Tiphia seemed to be laughing at him. Rusty didn't like it, but he didn't know what he could do about it.

"Then we'll freeze to death when the moon is turned away from the sun, and roast to death when it's shining on it," he insisted desperately.

"How stubborn you are," thought Tiphia. "Do you feel either heat or cold now? Of course not. The blue transforming drop took care of that. Why don't you relax and enjoy the ride?"

"Rusty," whispered Susan softly, "what does he mean? Where are we going?"

"We're in my space ship," he told her. "And if Tiphia's right, we're going to the moon. But maybe it's just a dream."

"How could we both have the same dream?" she objected. "And I don't want to go to the moon."

Tiphia hastened to reassure her.

"We won't stay there long. It's only a rest stop on the way to Eopee. I thought you'd enjoy bouncing around a bit. Then we'll be on our way."

"Maybe it is a dream," admitted Susan. "How could you build a space ship that would really fly, Rusty? What did you do to it?"

"I don't know."

"Of course you know." Tiphia's thoughts came to them reprovingly. "You shouldn't pretend it was an accident. You did it deliberately, then you refused

to do anything about it after it was done. Now you'll just have to suffer the consequences."

"What did I do, Tiphia?" asked Rusty in a puzzled tone.

"You fastened Gwump's saucer, the one that caught on an air current and went flying into outer space, onto this contraption of yours. I couldn't get the saucer loose when I came to fetch it, so I had



to take the contraption too. You wouldn't let me take the contraption without taking you, so I had no choice. And what Gwump is going to say about the whole thing, I'm sure I don't know."

Now Rusty understood. He understood all too well. He had read every account about flying saucers on which he could lay his hands. Even Susan, who had paid little attention to astronomy and space ships, had heard about flying saucers. Perhaps even Cookie had heard of them, for at that instant she began to whine.

"But there isn't such a thing as a flying saucer," protested Susan finally. "Not really. People just think they see them. They can't happen."

"But they do happen," Tiphia informed her sadly. "They happen every time Gwump loses his temper at tea and bangs his teacup against the saucer. The contact of metals sets up a disturbance, and the first thing anyone knows the saucer just takes off by itself into space. Then of course someone has to take another saucer and go after it. That's exactly what happened. You had found Gwump's first saucer. You wouldn't let it go when I came to get it. So here you are."

"How long had you been on the way?" asked Rusty weakly.

"I started yesterday." For some reason there

seemed a hint of embarrassment in Tiphia's admission.

"Yesterday! The day I found the saucer in the garbage dump," cried Rusty. "You sure traveled fast to get here so soon."

"I should have been here sooner, but I—I was delayed." There was no mistaking Tiphia's embarrassment now. "This is my first mission, and I did so want it to be successful. It would have been, too, only I got all mixed up and forgot where I was going."

"Forgot where you were going?"

"Yes. You see, Gwump told me. He explained quite clearly that his saucer had landed on the planet Earth. A planet is an easy mission. If it had landed on one of the satellites—the moons—of one of the planets, it would have been much harder to remember. It was really quite simple—only, I forgot. There I was—wandering around in the Great Rocky Belt—and the name Earth simply faded from my mind. I just couldn't go back and admit I'd forgotten. I had to stop at four planets before I happened onto the right one. Of course after that it was a very simple matter to locate the saucer."

Rusty's eyes were beginning to accustom themselves to the darkness. Although he could not make out objects inside the space ship itself, there was dis-

tinctly an impression of light coming through the pane in the window. He inched himself over and pressed his nose against the glass.

Straight ahead was the moon. It had been one of his favorite studies through the new telescope, but never had he been able to see it so clearly. It seemed to be so close that he could reach out and touch it, a great shining ball hanging in a dark velvety sky. There were the dark and light spots which his astronomy books had told him were craters and dry plains and mountain ridges. He tried to remember some of the names. The craters were called such things as Copernicus and Messier and Tycho. The plains, or marias, so termed because once men believed them to contain water, went by such enchanting names as the Stormy Ocean, the Cloudy Sea, the Misty Swamp; while the moon's mountain chains were known to Earth astronomers as the Great Wall, the Alps, and so on.

"We're going to land there at night," Rusty said in a disappointed voice. "The sky's all dark. We won't be able to see anything."

"Oh yes, you will," Tiphia hurried to reassure him. "The sky always looks black when there's no atmosphere. It only looks colored when the sun's rays are filtered through air molecules. There are none on the moon."

"I don't like everything so dark," objected Susan
"Let's go home."

"Don't cry, Susan," pleaded Rusty. "It will only make things worse. Here, I've got a flashlight somewhere with my space stuff. I'll get it for you, then you'll feel better."

He fumbled his way forward, groping for the shelf which contained the membership cards, the astronomy books, and other equipment which the space patrol kept in readiness. As his fingers found the cold metal of the flashlight, he felt a moment's anxiety for fear the batteries might have worn down from overuse.

But the batteries still worked. When he pressed the button, a circle of light pierced the darkness, and he moved his hand slowly, throwing its beam first on Susan with Cookie in her lap, both wearing goggles, and clothespins on their noses, then on around the cabin. When he came to the spot where he imagined Tiphia's messages were coming from, the light stopped and for a moment it seemed to dance and waver in Rusty's hand.

Mrs. Northrup's fur coat and the felt hat were now in a tumbled head midway between floor and ceiling. Curled on top of the pile, and using them as a pillow, was a shining green creature somewhat resembling a lizard, although with much longer fore-

and back legs than the ordinary lizards with which Rusty was familiar. Moreover, the four limbs ended in distinct fingers and toes instead of the customary claws. The creature had protruding ears, shaped not unlike the ears of men or apes, but made without any openings for sound to penetrate. However, it was fortunate that they were there, for without something to use as hooks, it would have been impossible to hold in place the dark goggles which the green lizard wore before his eyes.



4

“Are you Tiphia?” gasped Rusty, and Cookie began to make growling sounds in her throat.

The green scales trembled with agitation.

“Hold her tightly. Don’t let that dog beast come close to me. Although she does not think as clearly as you, I can tell she is planning to attack me.”

“Not if you don’t hurt us,” said Susan, clutching tightly to Cookie’s collar. “Not if you turn this space ship straight around and take us home.”

"I can't do that," thought Tiphia earnestly. "I've already told you, I lost a whole day because I forgot where I was going. Now I'll have to make straight for Eopee. We'll be off just as soon as I've given you a chance to bounce a little. You should thank me for that. I purposely made the saucer crawl along on this trip so you two would get used to it. Ordinarily it have taken us only a second to come from the Earth to the moon. We'll travel much faster after this."

"A second!" cried Rusty in amazement. "Susie, flying saucers must travel at the speed of light. That's 186,000 miles a second!"

"Oh, we can go even faster than that if we want to," corrected Tiphia.

"Then turn around and have us home in another second," ordered Susan. She was not even a little impressed.

Tiphia thought hard to convince her that he couldn't do that.

"Gwump will send you home. He'll have to. You wouldn't care for it on Eopee, I'm afraid, and on Eopee everyone must be happy. Gwump can't do anything else but send you home if you don't like it. Surely you don't begrudge an hour or so, when it means my whole career. If I don't get back soon, I'll never be entrusted with another mission."

"Oh, come on, Sue," urged Rusty, his eyes brightening at the prospects of exploring the moon. "Nobody will miss us in the next hour or so, and we didn't have anything to do anyway. Tell you what I'll do. You explore the moon without making any fuss, and when we get home I'll let you join the space patrol."

"Well—" Susan hesitated. The prospect was inviting, but there was something else to consider. She turned toward Tiphia. "Are you sure you won't try to eat us when we get to wherever it is we're going?"

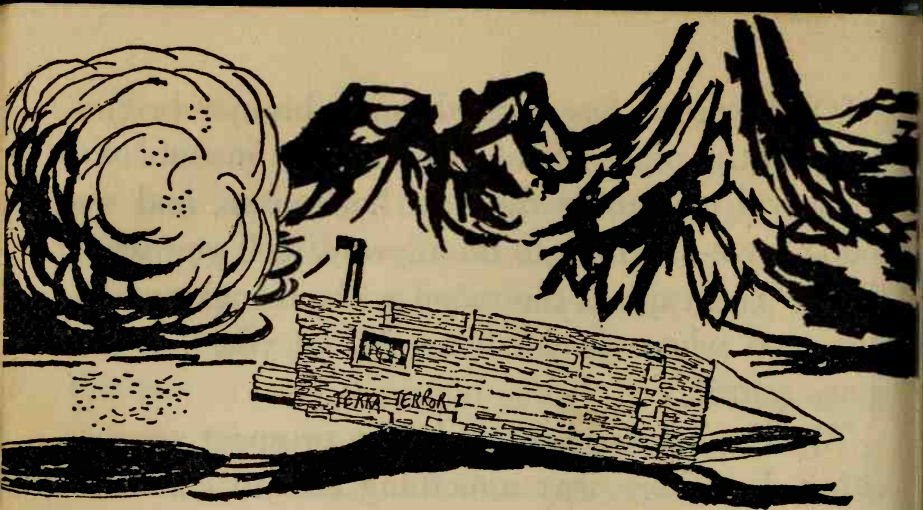
"Eat?" Tiphia was puzzled at the word.

"Chew us up with your teeth and swallow us."

"You're not one of Gwump's transforming drops, so there would be no reason for swallowing you." Tiphia's thinking was distinctly labored. "And I'm sure I don't know what you mean by the words 'chew' or 'teeth.'"

Susan tried to explain, and found it was easier to open her mouth in order to show him. Rusty sensed what she was trying to do and turned the beam of the flashlight in her direction. When he turned it back, Tiphia opened his own mouth. The huge gums were smooth and black and covered with hard skin. There was not a tooth in sight.

"There now," said Rusty in a pleased voice.



“You’ve nothing to worry about, Susie. Come look out the window. We ought to be ready to land any minute.”

The space ship was certainly settling toward land, but it was the strangest land they had ever seen. It was like seeing a black-and-white movie, for there were no splotches of color to break the monotony, no green grass, no blue water, no brown earth. Everything was gray, from silvery tones to the deeper shades, which were almost black. There was no gentleness in the landscape which appeared in the window. Angles were sharp and distinct. The mountains rose abruptly to pointed, jagged peaks, then dropped off sheerly on the other side.

The space ship landed, then seemed to change its mind, for it bounced up and down a couple of times before it finally settled back and remained

stationary. The scene outside the window stopped moving back and forth. They had arrived on the moon.

"It's perfectly safe here. Do get out," urged Tiphia. "Only take care to have your moon legs under you."

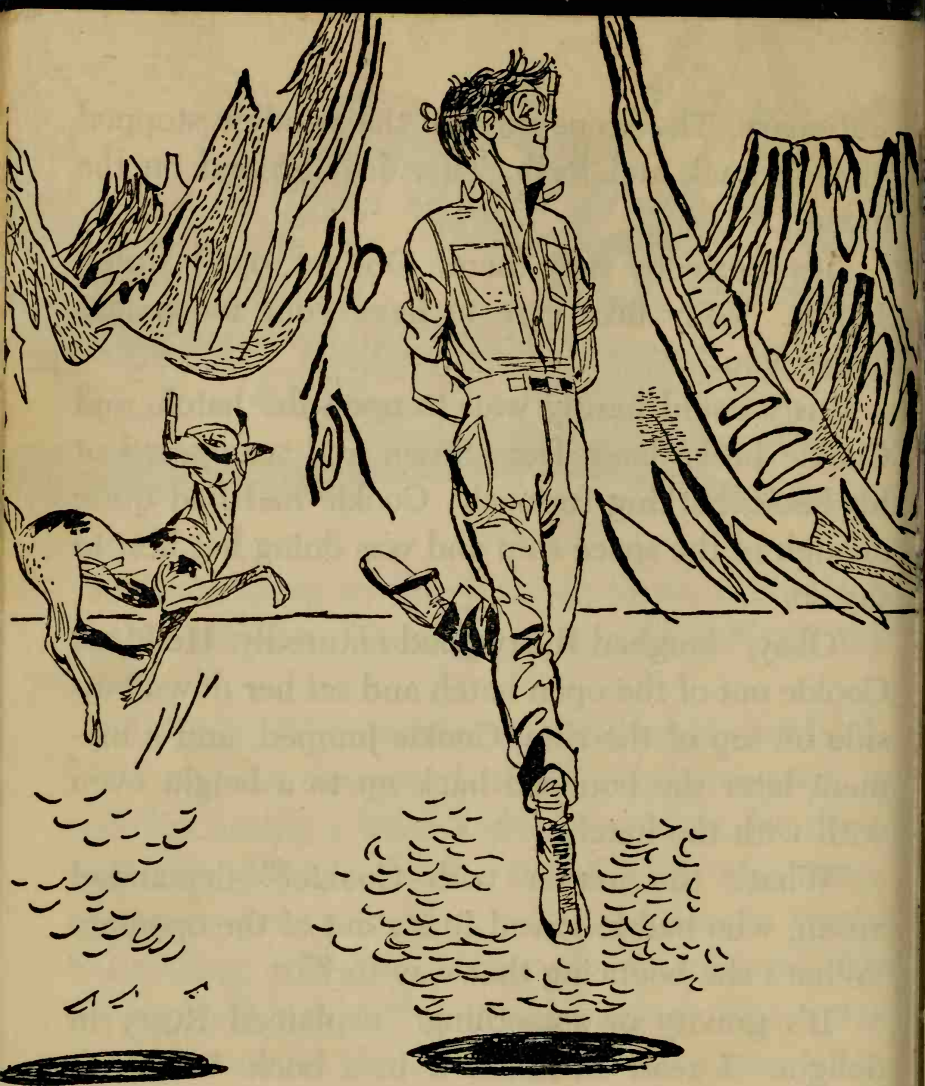
Rusty could hardly wait to open the hatch, and Cookie broke loose from Susan and scampered at his heels, barking furiously. Cookie had had quite enough of the space ship and was doing her best to say so.

"Okay," laughed Rusty good-naturedly. He lifted Cookie out of the open hatch and set her down outside on top of the ship. Cookie jumped, and a moment later she bounced back up to a height even with with the hatch.

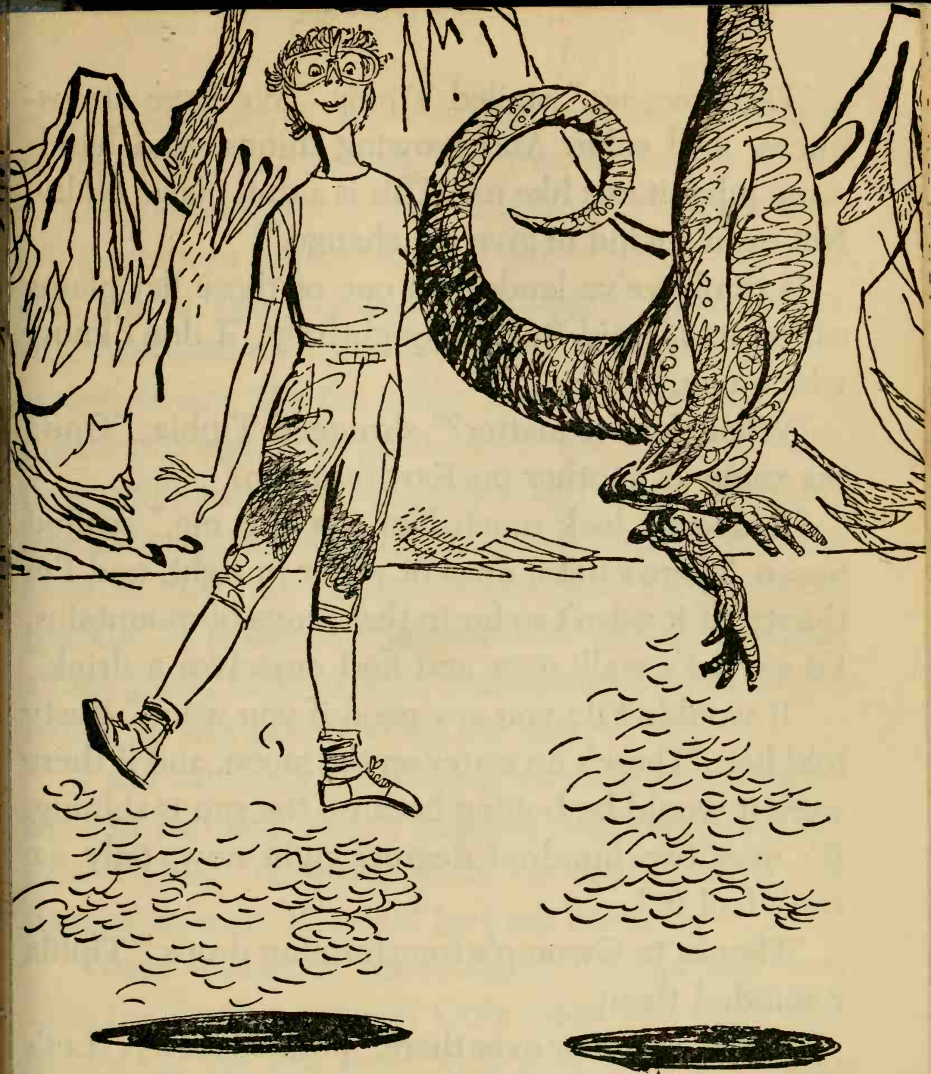
"What's the matter with Cookie?" demanded Susan, who had followed Rusty out of the opening. "What's she bouncing that way for?"

"It's gravity or something," explained Rusty in delight. "I read all about it in a book. We don't weigh as much here as we do at home. That's what Tiphia meant by bouncing around. Come on. This will be fun."

They jumped to the ground, and both of them bounced when their feet struck, just as Cookie's had



done. It was fun to walk on the moon, for with each Earth step they soared a foot or so into the air. By this time Tiphia was beside them. He walked upright, despite his lizardlike form, keeping his tail curled like a round doughnut on his back.



“Nice, isn’t it?” he observed. “Much nicer than walking on Earth where the land doesn’t help you at all and the first thing you know you’re all tired out. We walk this way on Eopee.”

“Is the moon like Eopee?” asked Susan.

“Dear me, no,” smiled Tiphia. “We have atmosphere. And color. And growing things. And handsome inhabitants like me. This is a dull place, really. Not even a wind to give it a change.”

“I think we’ve landed on one of those flat plains called seas,” said Rusty thoughtfully. “I don’t know which one.”

“What does it matter?” shrugged Tiphia. “One’s the same as another on Earth’s moon.”

“It doesn’t look much like a sea to me,” scoffed Susan. There’s not a drop of water in sight, and I’m thirsty. If it wasn’t so far to that range of mountains, I’d say let’s walk over and find ourselves a drink.”

“It wouldn’t do you any good if you went,” Rusty told her. “There’s no water on the moon, and if there were it would be boiling because the sun is shining. It’s over two hundred degrees right now, only we can’t feel it.”

“Thanks to Gwump’s transforming drops,” Tiphia reminded them.

“There’s a crater over there,” pointed Rusty. “Let’s go explore that instead. It’s closer.”

Tiphia showed them the easiest way to get around on the moon. You stood with two feet together and hopped. When you landed on the ground, the force carried you forward in another hop, and so on. It

was no trouble at all. Walking was like standing in one place and letting the ground do the work.

The plain on which they had landed was flat and wide, perhaps thirty miles in circumference. On one side was a long chain of tall, jagged rocky peaks that stretched up as though to pierce the black, star-spangled sky. On the other side was the rim of a gigantic crater. The plain itself was covered with fine, dark, pulverized sand, like an ocean's bed. Unlike the ocean sand on Earth, this was dull gray, and even in the full sunlight there was no glittering sparkle. At irregular intervals were pitted eruptions which Rusty insisted were craters and toward one of which he was now leading the way.

"I still say it's a good thing we didn't come after the sun had set," Susan insisted, hopping along beside Tiphia. "Because the moon doesn't have any light of its own. It would be dark here."

"There would be Earth light," Tiphia told her. "See the Earth up there? Only mind you don't look directly at the sun, even with your dark glasses."

The Earth was a huge ball in the dark sky overhead. Susan gave a start of surprise when she saw it, for it looked, from the moon, just as the moon looked from Earth. There was only one difference. The Earth was as big as four moons put together.

"The Earth never sets on the moon," Tiphia informed her. "So it's never really dark here. It gives sixty times as much light as the moon."

Rusty was waiting for them when they came up to the crater.

"It's just a big hole," he told them in a disappointed voice. "That's what the books said, but I didn't believe it."

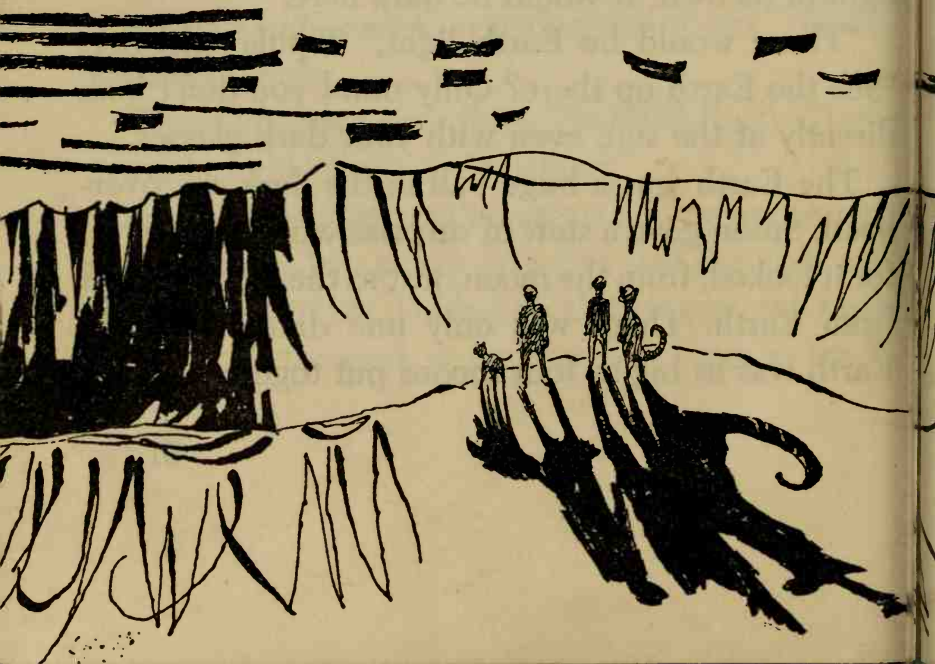
"What made it?" asked Susan.

"Maybe a falling meteor dug it out. That's one of the theories. Do you know for sure, Tiphia?"

Tiphia shrugged his scaled shoulders.

"I've never been here before. Gwump would know. Gwump knows everything. But I never heard him mention the subject."

"I don't suppose he ever said anything about there being a man on the moon either?" asked Susan.



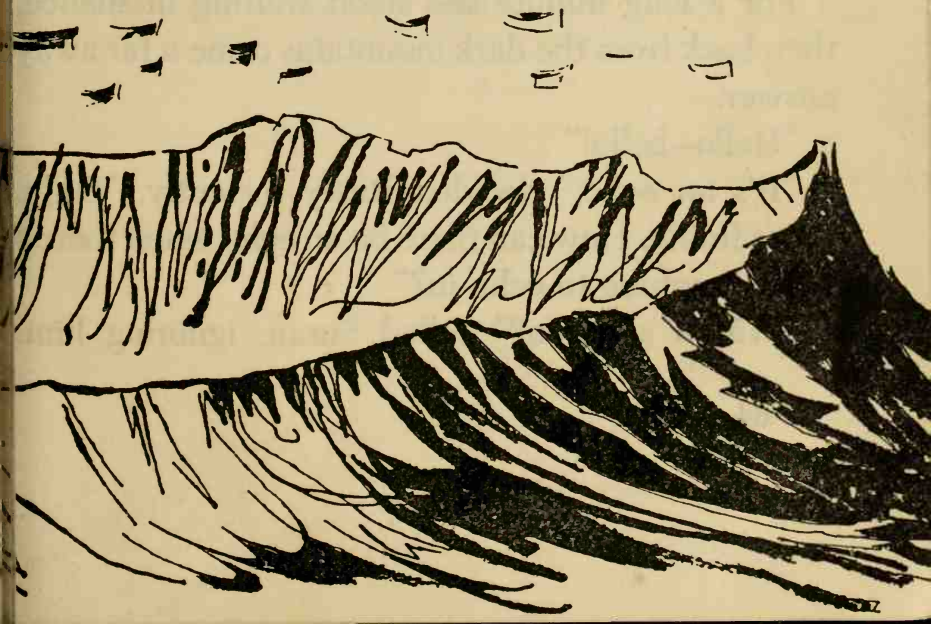
"No, he didn't. But you could call out. If there is one, and he answers, you'll know that there is."

"Sue, don't be so silly," scoffed Rusty. "You know there isn't a man on the moon. It's just something they tell little kids. I should think, now that you've seen the place, you'd know without asking. No one could live here."

"I suppose not," she agreed meekly.

Tiphia now informed them that they must return to the space ship. They had wasted quite enough time on the moon, and since they had agreed there was nothing more to see, they must continue on their journey.

For some reason which neither of them could explain, the green lizard had become somewhat upset. His thought processes, usually so easy to follow, were jumping this way and that until it was impos-



sible to tell what was going on in his mind. They only sensed that Tiphia was disturbed about something.

“Get in. Get in quickly,” he urged them as soon as they reached the ship. “And this time prepare yourselves for a fast ride.”

Rusty scrambled up the side, stopping at the top to reach back for Cookie. Susan placed the little dog in his hands, but before she climbed up herself, she turned to Tiphia.

“Please,” she said. “I’ve got to try it. I’ll probably never be back on the moon as long as I live. I’ll never have another chance to see if there’s a man on it. I’ll have to try your way.”

She cupped her hands around her mouth and called toward the distant mountains, for there was certainly no use in calling toward the empty plain.

“Hello,” she called. “Hello, hello!”

For a long minute she stood waiting in silence, then back from the dark mountains came a far away answer.

“Hello—hello!”

“It’s an echo,” decided Rusty instantly. “Only, that’s funny. How can there be an echo when there’s no atmosphere to echo in?”

“Where are you?” called Susan, ignoring him.

After an interval, "Where—are—you?" repeated the thin voice from the rocky crags.

"That's enough," urged Tiphia. "Come along. Come along."

"Are you a hermit?" shrieked Susan, brushing Tiphia away, and the voice answered sadly, "Hermit?"

"You better come on," advised Rusty. "Tiphia's getting mad."

"All right," agreed Susan reluctantly. But she had to have one last word with the distant voice. As she climbed up the space ship, she shrieked as loudly as she could, "Good-by, good-by!"

Tiphia, now thoroughly agitated at the delay, followed her up the side and into the ship. Just before he turned to close the hatch behind him, the last words from the mountains of the moon came to them quite clearly.

"Good-by. Come back again."

5

“Did you hear it?” demanded Susan in excitement as the ship began once more climbing into space.

“Well, I thought I did,” admitted Rusty reluctantly. “Only I couldn’t have. It must have been a trick or something. Tiphia must have done it.”

“He didn’t either,” objected Susan indignantly. “It was a voice, and it answered me. It was polite, too. It invited us to come again.”

"It's just imagination, Sue," insisted Rusty. "You wanted to have the echo answer you, so you imagined it did. There isn't a man on the moon. He couldn't possibly live there. There's nothing for him to eat. Nothing for him to breathe. It's over two hundred degrees when the sun shines, and way below zero when the sun goes down. You have to be sensible about it."

"But I heard him," repeated Susan. "You heard him too."

"We couldn't have," said Rusty. "There was a trick to it somewhere. Because we couldn't have heard anything. The moon's like a vacuum, like outer space. There isn't any sound in a vacuum."

"Then how can I hear you talk, and how can you hear me?"

"Maybe we're talking the way Tiphia is," said Rusty slowly. "I tell you what. You say something, only don't really say it out loud. Just move your mouth and think it. Let's see if I know what you're saying."

At that moment they were once more plunged into darkness. The moon was now so far behind that light did not reflect through the window. Instead, hundreds of glowing, untwinkling stars seemed to push against the glass.

"Nuts," said Rusty in disgust. "Now I'll have to find the flashlight again."

"Here it is," said Susan in a surprised voice. She pressed the button and a circle of light pierced the blackness.

"Give it here," ordered Rusty. "Where did you get it? The shelf's clear across the cabin, and I know I left it there."

"I don't know." Susan sounded even more puzzled than before. "Something cold came up against my hand, and it was the flashlight. I don't know how it got there."

Instead of giving it to Rusty, she turned the light around the cabin. It was as though they were in an entirely strange room, a room which could happen only in a dream. In the first place, it had grown larger. In the beginning, Susan and Rusty had almost filled the floor space when they sat side by side. It was a little surprising that anyone as large as Tiphia could fit in without crowding. Now there was plenty of room for all of them, with some to spare. Not only had the walls spread apart, but the ceiling had been raised so they could move about in an upright position. In the space between four walls, floor, and ceiling, everything seemed to be floating. The milk bottle, the honey jar, the crackers and oranges, Rusty's books and maps, all were off

their proper places on the shelves and were now suspended in space. Cookie, too, was bobbing about several feet off the floor and apparently very unconcerned about the matter, since she was scratching for fleas just as busily as ever.

Susan turned the flashlight's beam on Rusty. While he was still in the sitting position he had taken as they left the moon, his whole body was now raised six inches from the floor. She turned it down to look at herself and saw that she, too, was comfortably suspended in space.

"How about that?" cried Rusty in delight. "I read about this happening, but I could hardly believe it. It's because there's no gravity. Hey, this is swell, isn't it? It's more comfortable than sitting on a cushion."

"I don't know," said Susan doubtfully, pushing the box of crackers away from her. "Things keep bobbing around and hitting me. Tiphia, where are you?"

The green lizard paid no attention to her question. In the darkness they could sense his thoughts whirling round and round without making any sense that they could understand. Susan turned the beam of the flashlight round until she found him, and to their surprise they saw that Tiphia was curled up in a quivering ball next to the ceiling. The glisten-

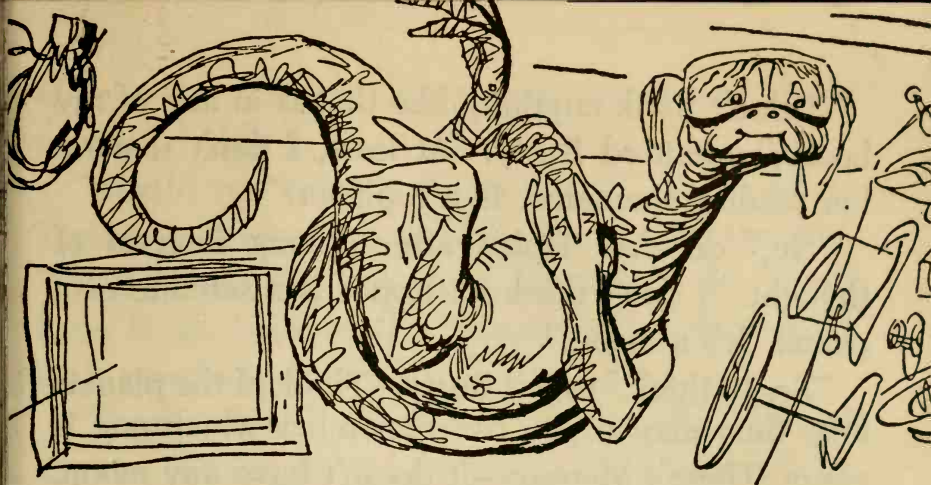


ing scales moved up and down rapidly, as though the creature were racked with sobs.

“Tiphia!” cried Rusty in alarm. “Tiphia, what’s the matter?”

“What will I do?” Tiphia’s thoughts slowed down so they could at last understand what he was thinking. “Gwump will be wild. He will never trust me again. It will be the end of my career.”

“Why will Gwump be angry?” asked Susan gently. “If it’s because you’re bringing us with you, you



don't have to at all. Rusty saw the moon, and now I'm sure he'll let you have your flying saucer back again. Why don't you take us back to Earth? Then you can go on, wherever it is you're going."

"But I can't. That's just it. I've forgotten where I'm going."

"To some place called Eopee," Rusty reminded him.

"But where is it?" implored Tiphia. "Tell me where it is. I've forgotten. It's gone from my mind. And how can I go there if I don't remember?"

"Rusty can help you," said Susan quickly. "He's got a lot of books on astronomy at home. You just take us there and he'll look it up for you."

"Would you?" They felt Tiphia's spirits brighten.

"I don't think anything like that is in any of my books," admitted Rusty. "At least, I don't remember reading the name. Is it a planet?"

"No," decided Tiphia after a long interval of thought. "I don't think so. Eopee is a satellite of a planet. It's a moon."

"Try to think," urged Rusty. "Think of the planets first, then maybe you can remember which one is yours. There's Mercury—it doesn't have any moon, though. Neither does Venus. Then the Earth, and Mars—that has two. And Jupiter has twelve and Saturn nine. Uranus has two, Neptune four, and we don't know whether or not Pluto has any moons. It's too far away."

"The names don't sound right at all," admitted Tiphia weakly. "And I can't remember. Oh, Gwump will be wild. He'll be simply furious, and everyone will look down on me. I'll lose all my friends, because no one will have anything to do with someone who forgets."

He was so miserable and unhappy that Susan felt sorry for him. After all, she knew how it felt to lose one's friends, to be left out of things.

"We've got to help him," she told Rusty.

"I'd like to," he admitted, "but I don't know how I can help if I never heard of Eopee. If it's a satellite of some planet, it hasn't been discovered yet."

Or else the name is different in our books. That's probably what it is."

"Would you know it if you saw it?" Susan asked Tiphia, and when he nodded, she decided briskly, "Then there's just one thing for you to do. You'll have to go back to the planets—all of them—and look around in their skies."

"That's what I already decided to do," agreed Tiphia. "Of course it will take a little time. I'll be later than ever getting back, but it can't be helped."

Now that someone had approved of his course of action, he brightened up considerably. He smiled at them genially, and through both their heads began to ring the words of a song. Of course, since it was carried on in Tiphia's mind, there was no actual melody, but there was a lilt to the words which made them sure it was the Eopeean equivalent of music.

*Oh see the pretty rainbow
That dances in the air.
We wish it were a rainbow,
Although it can't be there.
The sun is warm,
The grass is pink,
The sky is red and gold,
And Gwump, our mighty ruler,*

*Five hundred decades old.
Happy Birthday, Gwump!*

“Is that a song for a special occasion, Tiphia?” asked Susan politely when the green lizard had finished.

“Yes indeed,” agreed Tiphia. “It was an ode to Gwump on his last birthday. Our poet laureate wrote it especially for the occasion. Inspired, don’t you think?”

“It didn’t make much sense to me,” said Rusty. “Songs ought to have some sense to them.”

“It has a lot of sense,” insisted Tiphia angrily. “It’s a very realistic song. Very descriptive.”

“Whoever heard of pink grass? Or somebody who lived to be five hundred decades old?”

“That’s Gwump’s age.” Tiphia was distinctly huffy. “How would he know all he knows otherwise?”

“And I suppose your grass is really pink?”

“Certainly. And we don’t have rainbows, either. We only wish we had. In fact, it’s the only thing we ever wish for that we don’t get. I can’t understand what goes wrong. But if we keep wishing, it will happen. It’s sure to.”

“I don’t believe it,” scoffed Rusty.

“You’ve hurt his feelings,” reproached Susan, for

Tiphia, looking decidedly offended, turned around in midair and began paddling toward the window. A moment later, however, he seemed to have forgotten, for he looked over his shoulder at them jovially. "Come on down on the floor, you two, and look out the window. Just give yourselves a push with your hands, then grab onto something. It's the only way to get about in space."

"The side by the window isn't the floor," objected Rusty, trying to follow Tiphia's suggestions for moving around, and finding it wasn't easy to do. "That's the wall."

"They're all walls and all floors and all ceilings in outer space," Tiphia informed him. "One never knows which side is going to be up. Don't quibble about things. I thought you'd like to see the first planet from the sun. We'll be there any moment now."

"Mercury!" exclaimed Rusty in excitement. "Are we going there?"

"We'll have to try them all," admitted Tiphia. "Once I'm on the planet, I can decide whether one of its satellites is Eopee. We've agreed that there is no other way to do it."

"You could have skipped Mercury," said Rusty, "because it doesn't have any satellites. Neither does Venus. So that only leaves seven."

"Eight," corrected Tiphia.

"You're thinking of the Earth. And we've already been on its moon. Not counting the Earth, there are only six planets which have moons," said Rusty in a superior tone.

"Somehow that doesn't seem right," worried Tiphia.

"Sure it's right. I tell you, I've studied this stuff, and you're wasting your time on Mercury."

Tiphia looked as though he might cry, and Susan wished that she knew a little more about astronomy so she could argue with Rusty. Rusty was such a hard boy to convince once he made up his mind about something.

"Maybe it has an undiscovered moon," she said quickly. "Astronomers don't know everything yet. I think Tiphia's perfectly right to start with Mercury."

"Thank you." Tiphia smiled at her gratefully. "We'll be landing any second now. But first we ought to all have a transforming drop. It's quite warm on the first planet, and we wouldn't want to feel the heat."

They all swallowed a pink, a blue, and a red pill. Tiphia hesitated a moment before giving any to Cookie, but in the end he finally did.

"I hope we'll be landing on the light side," said

Rusty eagerly. "Mercury never turns on its axis, so one side is always dark."

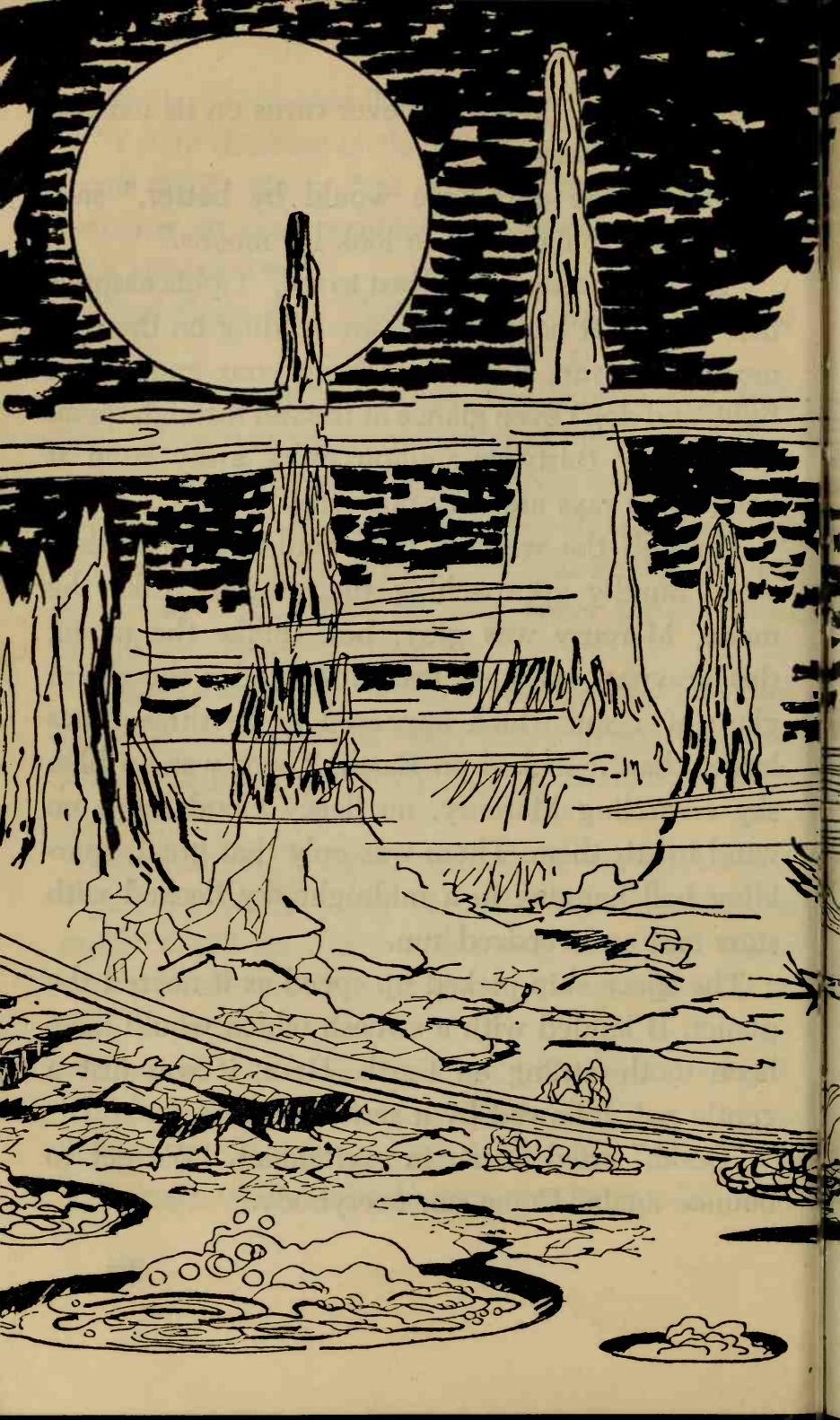
"Maybe the dark side would be better," said Susan, "if Tiphia wants to look for moons."

"It won't matter in the least to me," Tiphia assured her. "But as it happens, we are landing on the side next to the sun. Be sure to keep your goggles on tight, and don't even glance at the sun through them. We're only thirty-six million miles away from it here, so its rays are very powerful."

Through the window they could see that they were rapidly approaching their target. Like the moon, Mercury was gray; but, unlike the moon, this grayness sparkled brilliantly under the direct glare of a sun which appeared to be three times larger than it looked on Earth. There was no blue sky encircling Mercury, no fleecy clouds, and no wind to stir them. There was only that great, sparkling ball hanging in a midnight sky flecked with stars and an oversized sun.

The space ship picked up speed as it neared the planet. It landed with a swoosh which would have been tooth-rattling on Earth. Here, it was just a gentle pat, followed by a series of bounces.

"Good," cried Susan in excitement. "We get to bounce again. Come on, everybody."



"I'll go first," announced Tiphia with dignity. "I am the messenger, and this is my mission."

"I can see why it didn't make any difference which side we landed on," called Susan over her shoulder as she raised herself out of the hatch. "The sky's black, and you can see all the stars and the sun, too, and it's broad daylight. It looks funny."

"Then get out of the way and let me look," said



Rusty indignantly. "You're blocking the hatch. Here, take Cookie. She wants to bounce some more too."

Although Mercury was the same color as the moon and even more buoyant, as they discovered when their feet hit the ground, it didn't look the same at all. There were no great mountain ranges, only individual jagged peaks and crags, and the earth was split and torn in great furrows and cracks. Over everything seemed to hang a haze which wasn't exactly smoke and not exactly steam, but which reminded the children of both. They saw no sign of living matter, no blade of grass, no tree trunk, nothing but dried, cracked rocks and powdery earth. Moreover, the sparkle which they had glimpsed from the air was collected in multitudinous pools, some microscopic, others several feet across.

"I don't think there's a man on Mercury," said Susan decisively. "I'm not even going to call for one."

"It's a good place to bounce, though," grinned Rusty, proving his statement by jumping up and down. "Do you realize that anything that weighs a hundred pounds on Earth only weighs twenty-seven pounds here?"

"I don't like it very much," admitted Susan. "I wish Tiphia would hurry." She said this loudly, hoping that the green lizard would overhear. But

Tiphia was very busy at the moment scanning the star-spattered sky overhead and made no comment.

“What’s the matter with Cookie?” cried Rusty in alarm.

Cookie had bent over one of the small pools as though to drink, then had drawn back as quickly as though someone had stuck her with a pin. Now she was barking angrily.

“Maybe she’s found something,” said Susan.

“She’s a smart dog,” said Rusty. “Maybe she thinks the water in these pools is poison and she’s warning us not to drink it.”

“I hope not,” said Susan, bouncing over to see for herself. “I don’t feel hot after that transforming drop, but my mouth is sort of dry. A drink would taste good.”

Rusty followed, and together they bent over the pool. There was certainly something strange about it. It was bubbling and boiling away furiously.

“Hot springs,” decided Susan instantly. “Mineral water.”

Rusty shook his head.

“I don’t think it’s water,” he decided. “It’s too thick. It looks like that silver stuff that comes in thermometers. Only, of course, that doesn’t boil.”

Just then Cookie gave a surprised yelp. When they looked at her, she was staring at the ground

between her front feet. A small spot of thick, dark silver was bubbling where it had not been a moment before.

"Where did that come from?" wondered Susan.

"Hurry!" cried Rusty, snatching Cookie up in his arms. He had suddenly remembered something he had read. "We've got to get out of here. Mercury's so hot that tin and lead will melt. That's what just happened to Cookie's dog license."

"It couldn't have just dropped off her collar and started to boil?" protested Susan, but she hurried just the same, picking her bounces carefully to avoid any of the large bubbling pools.

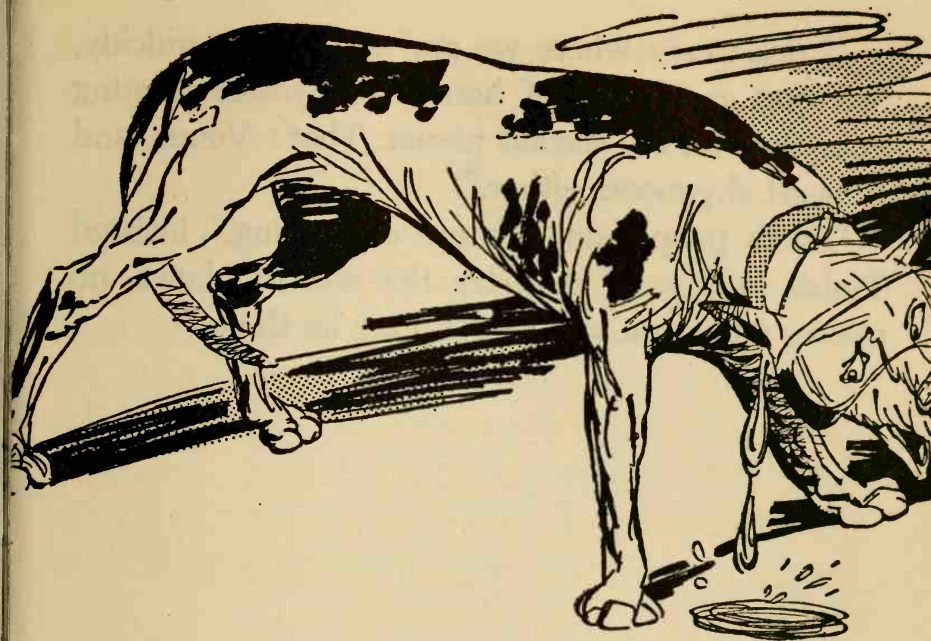
"Rusty!" she cried in new alarm. "My shoes are smoking! I think they're going to catch fire!"

"Get into the Terra Terror," he ordered sternly, tossing Cookie on top and motioning her to jump inside. "Look how it's blistered the wood. If any of the nails should start melting, I don't know what we'd do."

Tiphia came bounding over to them, shaking his head sadly.

"The first planet has no satellite," he told them. "I looked and looked, but you were right. Eopee isn't here, and we'll have to go on to the second."

"Get us out of here. Hurry," yelled Rusty. "We're about to burn up!"



Tiphia shook his head disapprovingly as he inspected the blistered boards of the space ship. They sensed him thinking about the inferiority of the products of Earth and how much better things were done on Eopee. He refused to hurry, however. The children and Cookie crouched in the cabin, waiting, while Tiphia got the second flying saucer and carried it outside again to the nose of the ship. They heard the scraping of metal on metal, then deliberately Tiphia joined them and curled up in one corner.

“We are going to the second planet from the sun,” he announced.

"I don't care where we go," said Rusty quickly, "so long as it's out of here. Only you're wasting your time on the second planet. That's Venus, and it hasn't any moon, either."

"Earth people don't know everything," insisted Tiphia huffily. "I shall try the second planet, no matter what you say. Eopee may be there."

6

"It's getting light outside," announced Rusty. "We must be getting into some atmosphere again. The sky's turning gray, and I can see clouds ahead. Lots of them."

Susan paddled her way across the cabin and looked out. The trip from Mercury had seemed long only because it had been made in darkness. Actually it was only a few minutes. They had decided it was

best to save the batteries in the flashlight for an emergency, and it was a comforting relief to see that the blackness of the sky about them was lessening. The stars were putting out their lights one by one. Soon the gray would change to blue. Susan knew it would happen and held her breath, waiting.

She was so busy waiting for the blue to come back in the sky that at first she did not notice when Cookie began to pant. But Rusty heard, and directed the beam of the flashlight on the little dog.

"That's funny," he said in a puzzled voice. "I thought the clothespin must have come off her nose. But it hasn't."

Then Rusty, too, began breathing hard. Like Cookie, he opened his mouth as though gasping for air. Susan looked at them in amazement. She let out the breath she had been involuntarily holding as she waited for blue sky, and found that she was struggling for another. Her eardrums began to pound, and she was afraid her heart would burst.

"Tiphia!" she gasped. "Tiphia! Quick!"

At first Tiphia ignored her. He was still sulking because Rusty had insisted there was no need to visit Venus. It had grown light enough now to see inside the space ship, and Susan reached over and yanked frantically at his coiled tail. Tiphia switched it angrily, but he did glance briefly in her direction.

The next moment he had uncoiled himself and was fumbling in the drawstring bag.

“Quickly. Quickly.” His message reached Susan as though from a long way off. “Swallow another transforming drop. A pink one. You’re beginning to breathe again, and you mustn’t. This is carbon dioxide. It will kill you.”

She obediently gulped down one of the pink candies, and her discomfort stopped abruptly. Tiphia handed another of the pink drops to Rusty and a third one to Cookie.

“By flying Pegasus!” observed Tiphia disapprovingly. “You Earth people use up the transforming drops at a great rate. It’s lucky I have a good supply on hand.”

“Maybe we should have another blue and red one, too, Tiphia,” suggested Rusty meekly. “I don’t know what your Gwump put in them, but they sure work.”

Tiphia’s annoyance vanished.

“Gwump is the greatest ruler of all the galaxies. He is never wrong, and he can do anything,” he gloated. “But you won’t need a blue or a red one right now. There’s plenty of air on the second planet, although not the kind Earth people can breathe, and the temperature is the same as in some parts of your own planet.”

"Are we coming in?" demanded Rusty in excitement. "I want to see Venus."

"I don't think you're going to be able to see anything at all," said Susan doubtfully. "Not unless we fly out of this swarm of birds and bugs."

There had been time for Susan only to glimpse the blue sky she had been searching for before they were enveloped in a great cloud of flying creatures. At first they reminded her of tropical fish with gauzy wings, for they were every color in the rainbow, and each one glowed and sparkled with an iridescent sheen. But unlike tropical fish, they seemed to come in every shape and size. Some were large as eagles, others as small as gnats. There were round fat ones, long thin ones, some shaped like corkscrews, others which were almost square and boxlike. They soared and darted this way and that, and each one had an open, gaping mouth. If a small one came close enough, one of the larger creatures promptly swallowed it, then, without missing a wingbeat, continued on, its mouth once again open and waiting.

"We'll move right through them," Tiphia reassured her. "They're made of gasses, you know, so they're very light, no matter how bulky they look."

"What kind of gas?" demanded Rusty. "And how can they be made of it?"

"Carbon dioxide mostly," Tiphia informed him.

"There's not much else here to use. And why shouldn't they be made of it? On Earth, you people are made of the things your planet provides, aren't you? It's the same elsewhere."

"Are they alive?" asked Rusty doubtfully.

"They think they are. Just as you think you are. It's all a matter of viewpoint."

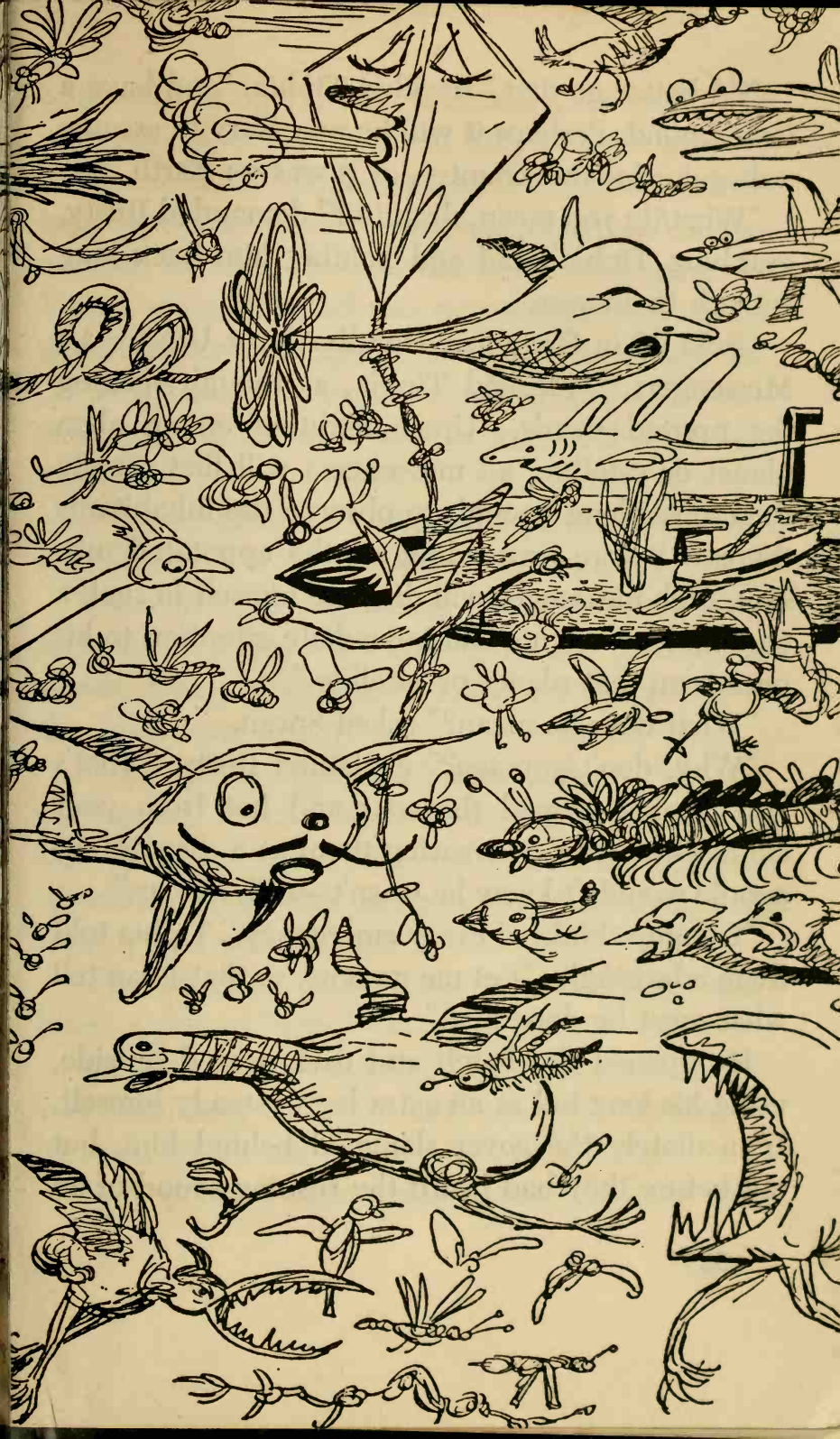
The Terra Terror seemed to leap sideways in the air, and the flying creatures scattered before it.

"Only an air current," Tiphia reassured them. "We're nearing ground. You can put your spectacles in your pockets if you like. You won't need them here, and the wind may blow them off if you don't."

Obediently they took off their dark glasses, and Rusty removed Cookie's for her. They were so accustomed to seeing Tiphia in goggles that he looked strange without them, especially now since they noticed that, unlike lizards on Earth, he had eyelids edged with a fringe of sweeping lashes. He was pleased when Susan complimented him on their length, but informed her that long eyelashes were the usual thing on Eopee. Gwump had arranged for his subjects to have them as a protection against sunspots.

There was no bouncing as the space ship landed on Venus. It descended with a resounding plop and stayed there.





"I'd better go first," decided Tiphia, "and have a look around. Perhaps it will be necessary to assume a disguise for this country, as it was on Earth."

"What do you mean, disguise?" demanded Rusty, grabbing Tiphia's tail and holding him back long enough to answer.

"Rule 26 in Gwump's 'Handbook for Use by All Messengers,'" recalled Tiphia, as though reciting the printed words. "Upon alighting on an alien planet or satellite, all messengers will first secrete themselves long enough to observe the inhabitants thereof. Before proceeding on the appointed mission, each messenger will disguise himself in such a way that he will not call immediate attention to his person on that planet or satellite."

"What does he mean?" asked Susan.

"Why, don't you see?" explained Rusty. "That's why Tiphia swiped the coat and hat from your clothesline. He was wearing them as a disguise, so people wouldn't know he wasn't—well, like us."

"Gwump thinks of every emergency," Tiphia told them admiringly. "Let me go now, so that I can tell what must be done first."

He opened the hatch and disappeared outside, using his long tail as an extra leg to steady himself. Immediately the cover slammed behind him, but not before they had heard the rushing sound of an

approaching high wind. It roared past them with such fury that for a moment they thought the ship itself would be carried away. The space patrol's supplies and groceries, which had settled on the floor as soon as they reached the outer atmosphere of Venus, were scattered this way and that. Susan began to gather them up and stack them on the shelves.

"That's almost a tornado," said Rusty. "Anyway, it sounded the way I always imagined a tornado would sound."

"I hope Tiphia was hanging onto the ship," worried Susan. "I hope it didn't blow him away."

"He's pretty heavy," Rusty reassured her. "And anyway, Gwump's probably warned him about winds. He's just looking around, getting the lay of the land, most likely."

As he spoke, the Terra Terror began to shudder once more. Another rush of wind was passing by, but this one seemed to come from the opposite direction. They both clung to the sides of the ship until it had passed.

"That's funny," said Rusty. "The winds here must blow back and forth."

"Or around and around," suggested Susan. She was beginning to feel a little uneasy. "Maybe we can see Tiphia out of the window."

They pressed their noses against the tiny glass

and stared out at the Venusian landscape. They could see no mountains, only a level stretch of glistening plain that went on and on until it merged into a cloudy sky. There were no rivers or pools in the view outside the window, but here did seem to be low growing things of a variety Rusty and Susan had never before seen. They could hardly be called trees, for there seemed to be no central trunk. And they weren't exactly bushes, for it was impossible to distinguish leaves. They resembled nothing except masses of shining, iridescent material which looked a little like rubber. From each of the large masses extended tendrils which waved and groped in the air in a manner suggestive of an elephant waving his trunk. But except for the motion and shape, there was no other similarity. The tendrils, as well as the masses from which they extended, were gaily colored, purple and lavender, red and green and orange.

"What are they?" whispered Susan.

Rusty shook his head.

"I don't know. But they can't be alive."

At that moment the wind began again. It came from the same direction from which it had first blown, and with the wind came a whole parade of balloon-like balls. They bounced along before the

gale, thousands of round, rolling, multicolored balls. Some were the size of ordinary balloons on Earth, others were smaller, while many were gigantic things, four or six feet across.

As the balloons tumbled by, the tendrils of the nearby bushes began to twitch and grope. Some of them were successful in ensnaring one of the passing balls, and when that happened it was drawn up inside the tendril and into the mass itself. Through the thin, sheer wall the children could see the balloon as it continued to bounce around inside the bush.

"They're cannibal bushes!" cried Rusty. "That's what they are. They're eating the balloons whenever they can catch one."

The wind rushed by, taking the last of the bouncing balls with it, and once more all was quiet in the space ship.

"I don't like this," said Susan. "I wish Tiphia would come back."

"So do I," agreed Rusty soberly. "He's been gone long enough to find twenty disguises. Maybe I'd better go outside and look around."

"No," objected Susan. "What if that wind comes back and you get blown away? What if one of those cannibal bushes reaches you with its trunk?"

"That's so," agreed Rusty a little fearfully. "Maybe I'd better wait a little longer. Tiphia's sure to be back soon."

They continued to wait. Twice more the wind, carrying its cargo of bouncing balls, blew back and forth. Still Tiphia had not returned.

"I've got to go look," decided Rusty. "I'll tell you what. There's a coil of rope over there under the space-patrol shelf. I'll tie it around me, and you can hang onto the other end. Then if the wind starts up, you can yank me back."

It seemed the only sensible thing to do. They had to look for Tiphia, and he was not to be seen through the limited range offered by the small window. Susan fastened the rope around Rusty's waist, jerking the knots tight so they couldn't possibly come loose. Then they waited until the moment when the wind had died down, for they had been trying to keep track, and had decided the big gusts were about five minutes apart.

Rusty raised the hatch cover and poked his head outside. It was a little disappointing, for the view was very much the same as the one they had glimpsed through the window. Venus had no mountains, although there were eroded rocks here and there on the vast plain. The ground was reddish brown, but sparkling, as though it might contain

minerals of some kind, and there seemed to be no end to the number of strange bushlike masses that apparently thrived upon it. Rusty looked up at the sky. It was covered from horizon to horizon with clouds of those iridescent insects and birds through which they had passed earlier. Even the sun was obscured by them.

"Come back, come back," called Susan in alarm, tugging at the rope. And Rusty realized that the wind was beginning again. He lowered himself inside and jerked the cover shut just in time.

"Did you see him?" shrieked Susan, trying to make herself heard above the gale.

"Not yet," said Rusty reluctantly. He didn't like to admit that he had been so busy looking around that he had forgotten his original purpose, to discover the green lizard. "But I'm going back as soon as I can."

This time he raised himself waist-high in the open hatch, supporting himself by the palms of his hands. Although he could see much farther, it was disappointing to realize that there was nothing different to see. There was no green lizard in sight.

He was suddenly aware that one of his hands had begun to hurt. It felt as though a rock was gouging into his palm, and when he looked, he saw that this was exactly the case. It seemed strange that there

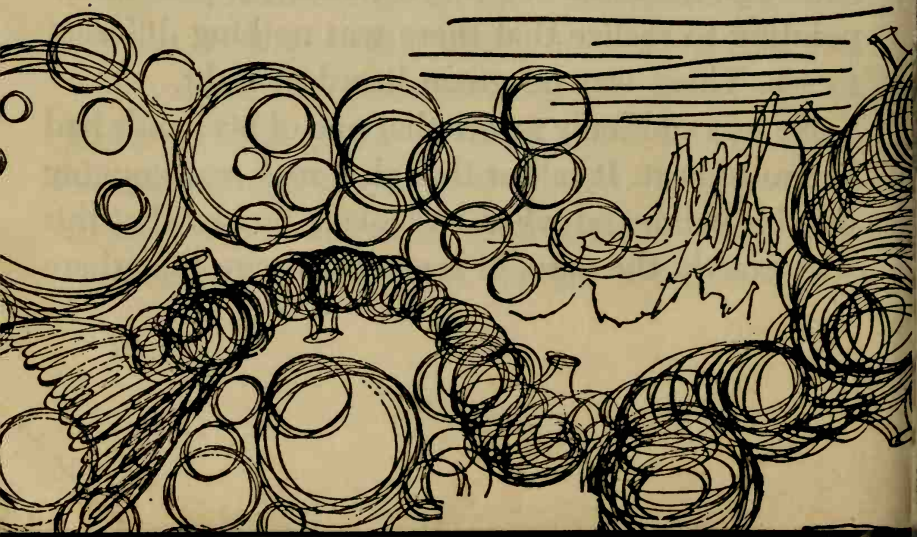
should be a rock or pebble in the particular spot on the space ship. Surely their motion through air would have knocked it loose. Then he looked more closely and saw that the whole outer surface of the Terra Terror was studded with small pebbles, some the size of grains of sand, others as large as peas.

"Meteorites!" he cried in excitement. "Susie, we've got meteorites stuck all over our ship. Real ones!"

"Do you see Tiphia?" she called anxiously. "Never mind about any old meteorites. Look for Tiphia!"

But Rusty did mind. All his life, at least as much of his life during which he had heard of meteorites, he had wanted one. This was his opportunity. He reached into his jeans pocket and found his Boy Scout knife. Perhaps before the next wind started he would have time to dig one out for a souvenir.

It was just coming loose when he felt something cold against his fingers. A moment later his hand was enveloped in a thin, purplish substance which was





rapidly moving up his arm. He could see his hand and arm through the rubbery skin, but when he tried to move it, he couldn't. He looked up in alarm and realized what had happened. One of the tendrils of a nearby bush had reached over and was beginning to envelope him.

"Susie!" he yelled. "Pull!"

The rope tugged at his waist, but the purple tendril held fast. It was now up to his shoulder and moving around his neck.

Rusty acted instinctively. The tendril had fastened itself onto his left arm, and the knife was still in his right hand. He struck out at it wildly, and with a sharp crack the blade went through the skin. As he watched, the purple tendril began to melt. It went down as the air goes out of a balloon, with an initial rapid spurt, then with a gentle collapse. The tendril itself dissolved, then the melting process began on the larger mass to which it was attached. As Rusty watched, what had once been a ponderous, bulky object was flat with the ground, a purple pool against the brown dirt.

"Rusty! Rusty, the wind!" called Susan frantically.

He dived inside the hatch, jerking the cover shut behind him.

"I'm not going out there again," he told her, trembling a little in spite of himself.

"Maybe you won't need to," she shouted. Her nose was against the window, and he saw that she was beginning to smile again. "Tiphia just went by. I saw him, all curled up inside one of the biggest balloons, a yellow one. I guess that's what he's going to use for a disguise. Anyway, he's bouncing around out there with the others."

But Rusty knew better. His experience with the purple tendril told him exactly what had happened.

"No, Susie, no! He's not disguised Don't you see? He's been caught by the balloon. He can't get out!"

7

“But what will we do?” cried Susan. “How will we ever get him out of there? We can’t get close enough to that ball for you to stick it with your knife. And maybe it wouldn’t work on the ball the way it did on the bush.”

Rusty had described his close encounter with the purple tendril, and Susan had trouble believing it. It seemed impossible that anything so huge and

cumbersome as one of the rubbery masses would dissolve at the simple prick of a pocket knife.

"I think it would. Don't you remember? Tiphia said those flying things there in the sky were made of gas," Rusty reminded her. "He said they were very light and that the ship would push right through them. Probably everything on the ground is made of gas too."

"Then why don't they break when they bounce against the space ship or a rock?"

"Probably some of them do when they hit one of the rough corners. And I'm sure they'd break if they hit a sharp rock. We can't see any of that from the window. All we can see is the smooth side of the ship, and they wouldn't break on planed lumber. They'd only bounce off."

"Then how can we make sure that the ball which swallowed Tiphia hits a corner?" she demanded practically.

"I don't know," said Rusty soberly. "We'll have to figure out something, though."

He sat down on the floor and closed his eyes to help himself concentrate. From time to time the Venusian wind rushed back and forth outside, rocking the Terra Terror gently every time it went by.

Cookie seemed to sense that something was wrong, for she growled in her throat and tried to

drown out the sound of the wind with her barking.

"He's still bouncing back and forth," reported Susan finally from her post at the window. "He just went by in that yellow ball. Only it seems to me he doesn't show up quite so much as he did. His green color seems to be fading."

"Then we've got to do something right now," decided Rusty in alarm. "Maybe the ball's digesting him or something. We've got to get him out."

"But how?"

"There's only one way. I've got to go out there with my knife. You'll have to hang onto me with the rope from in here. When the balls go by, I'll try to puncture the one that's got Tiphia."

"I'll go too," said Susan. "I'll help you. With two of us, we ought to be able to catch the yellow ball."

"You can't. There's only one knife," Rusty reminded her.

"Maybe there's something over here I can use for one." She fumbled through the equipment on the space-patrol shelf, and a moment later her face brightened. "A nail! I can stick nails into them. It will work every bit as well as your old knife!"

Rusty sighed. Susan didn't realize how frightening it was on Venus, or she wouldn't be so anxious to go. Still, he had to admire her nerve. For a girl, she

was the bravest person he knew, and he himself would feel a lot better with her beside him.

"There's only one rope," he reminded her sadly. "And that wind would blow you away. You know it would."

"Then we'll take turns," she decided, giving in reluctantly. "You jab them the first time, and if you don't catch the yellow ball, I get to try when it blows back."

"All right," agreed Rusty. "Now remember, we'll have to leave the hatch open this time when the wind blows. So we'd better tie the rope to something, and you hold it besides."

They fastened the end of the rope to one of the shelves, which fortunately was nailed tightly in place. Susan's eyes were shining with excitement as Rusty raised himself out of the space ship. If she only knew, he thought to himself, she wouldn't be so anxious to take a turn.

The wind was rising again. It began to sing in his ears as he lowered himself to the ground and pressed close to the ship for some protection. The open knife was clutched tightly in his right hand. In front of him, but fortunately at a safe distance, one of the colored masses began to stir and quiver, and its long tendrils whipped around nervously. A long way off,

against the horizon, he could see a dancing iridescent cloud as the balls began to blow once more in his direction. Above the increasing noise of the wind he could hear Cookie's frenzied barking within the space ship. Cookie was greatly upset because she had been left behind.

The wind was whipping at him now, and he had to brace his legs far apart in order to maintain his footing. Its noise was growing louder by the instant, and Cookie's bark inside the space ship was almost drowned out. Then her yelps grew louder and shriller. They sounded almost in his ear. A moment later something soft and furry struck against Rusty's arm, and he realized with horror that it was Cookie herself. Somehow she had managed to jump out of the open hatch. For a second she was there beside him on the Venusian plain, then the wind tumbled her forward and she was lost from him in a great avalanche of bouncing, gaily colored balls.

There was not time to think of Cookie now. Rusty had to strike out with his knife from right to left, for whenever one of the passing balls touched him, it began settling over the part of his body which it touched. An instant prick of the knife released him, however, and when the wind passed by, taking the last of the balls with it, the ground around him was

dotted with small pools of pink and yellow, red and green and purple.

Inside the space ship, Susan was calling to him.

“Rusty! Rusty! Are you all right? Did you see Cookie? She jumped out!”

He rubbed his eyes, which were watering from the force of the wind. Then he rubbed them again, afraid that they were playing him false. Coming toward him across the sparkling plain was Tiphia. The green lizard’s mouth was stretched wide in a toothless smile, and in one of his forelegs he carried a panting but obviously delighted black and white dog.

“Tiphia” cried Rusty in amazement. “Are you all right? How did you get loose? And how did you find Cookie?”

“She found me.” Tiphia’s thoughts poured at him happily. “Oh, to think that at first I did not want to bring this heroic dog-creature along. It makes me ashamed to even remember it!”

“Is that you, Tiphia?” called Susan, sticking her head out of the open hatch. “Oh, I’m so glad you’re safe. Come inside, all of you, before the wind starts blowing again.”

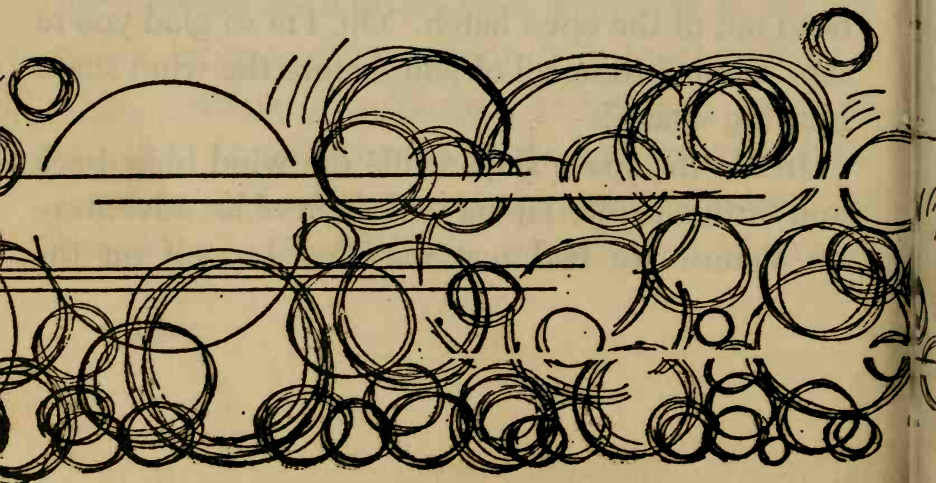
Inside the space ship, while the wind blew back and forth outside, Tiphia told them of his adventure on Venus. He had just uncoiled himself on the

ground when the wind came up, and although he was heavy enough to stand against it, he had no defense against the huge yellow ball. It had promptly swallowed him, and then he had been blown back and forth, unable to help himself.

“It was a dreadful feeling.” Tiphia shuddered. “Just to go tumbling this way and that and not to be able to stop oneself. I knew that if I could only prick a hole in that tight skin my troubles would be at an end. But I had no sharp-pointed instrument.”

“You ought to have claws or fingernails,” said Rusty.

“On Eopee, where everyone is a friend to everyone else, claws are unnecessary.” Tiphia held out one of his upper limbs for them to inspect. The end spread apart like fingers, but there were no nails on the smooth, rounded points. “So I was helpless until this adorable dog-creature came to my rescue. Oh, you should have seen her out there among the bouncing balls. She turned her head this way, and one popped. The other way, and another popped.



The other way, and another popped. Her jaws worked up and down, and the balls kept wilting before her like candles in a gust of wind."

"And finally she bit the ball that had swallowed you," said Susan wisely.

"Exactly," nodded Tiphia. "The moment I was free, I knew I could never again be parted from this fearless heroine. I snatched her up before the wind blew her away, and here we are!"

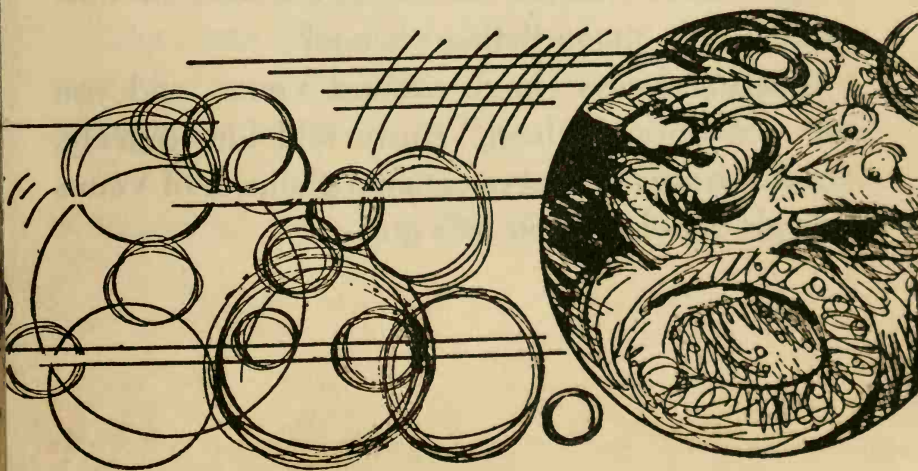
"Yes, here you are," said Rusty thankfully. "And now that you are here, let's get out. I don't like this place."

"Not yet. I haven't looked to see if Eopee is one of Venus's moons," Tiphia reminded them. "That's why we came here in the first place."

"Don't go back out there," pleaded Susan. "It's too dangerous."

"But I have to look," insisted Tiphia. "I can't be sure unless I look."

"Venus doesn't have a moon," insisted Rusty stoutly. "The books all say so."



"Books can be wrong," shrugged Tiphia. "I'll just pop out, taking this fearless dog-creature with me, and have a look in the sky.

"You can't take Cookie," insisted Susan, snatching up the little dog and holding her tightly. "I'm not going to trust her outside again."

"I'll tell you what," said Rusty. "Use my periscope. You can turn it around and see as much of the sky as though you were outside. Here, I'll show you."

Tiphia was greatly impressed with the periscope. He put his eye to it and revolved it slowly, his thoughts making quick exclamations of delight. Then the delight gave way to misgivings, and he turned to Rusty doubtfully.

"Are you sure this thing works? Can I really see the true sky through it?"

"Sure you can. It's got a mirror inside, and you're looking at the reflection in the mirror. What do you see?"

"Flying things. Great clouds of gaseous flying things. I can't even see the sun or the stars. So how could I see a moon if there is one?"

"There's always clouds around Venus, and you can't see through them," Rusty told him quickly. "On Earth we only get occasional glimpses of Venus through the clouds. So let's go."

"Very well," sighed Tiphia reluctantly. "We might as well. Put on your dark glasses again. And I think we'd better have transforming pills all around. All three colors this time."

Rusty and Susan put on their glasses, and Rusty fastened the third pair in front of Cookie's eyes. They each swallowed a pink, a blue, and a red pill, then Tiphia, timing himself to avoid one of the rushing winds, went outside, carrying the folded flying saucer. They could hear him rustling around on the nose of the ship and the sound of scraping metal as the two saucers were rubbed together.

"He's making contact," whispered Rusty. "You remember, he said the flying saucer went into space after Gwump had banged his teacup around. I wish he'd let me do it once."

Tiphia crawled back inside the ship and closed the hatch behind him.

"We'll be off in a minute," he thought.

"Where?" asked Susan. "Where are we going this time, Tiphia?"

"To the fourth planet."

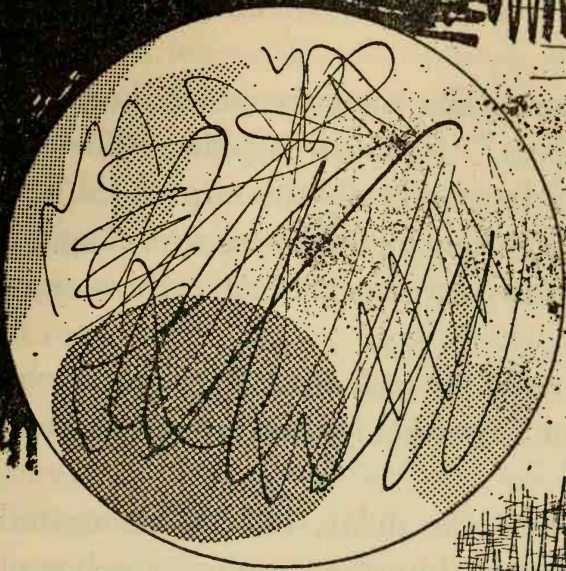
"The Earth is the third planet from the sun," Rusty reminded her quickly. "We don't need to look there. We're going to Mars."

The Terra Terror shot upward, scattering clouds of iridescent winged creatures to either side of it.

8

“We’re out of space!” cried Rusty in excitement. “There’s Mars ahead. I can see it just as plain. There’s the polar caps on each end. And the big red space in the middle. I wish I could see one of the canals.”

It had seemed a very short trip, probably because they were a little tired from their exhausting experience on Venus. They had been glad of the rest, but suddenly they were all revived.



“There’s blue sky,” gloated Susan, squeezing in beside Rusty at the window. “Only it isn’t blue. It’s violet!”

“True,” smiled Tiphia. He took off his dark glasses and placed them carefully in his drawstring bag, motioning to Rusty and Susan to do the same. “We’re almost there. Get ready to bounce again. Mars is another of those helpful planets like Mercury. You’ll have no trouble getting around here.”

His warning was just in time. The children clutched each other as the Terra Terror came to rest, bounded up, then resettled with a slight crunching sound.

“What’s that?” cried Rusty in alarm. “Are we breaking up?”

“It’s only those pesky meteors which keep attaching themselves,” frowned Tiphia. “They’ve slowed our speed tremendously this trip. We’d better take time to pick them off before we set out again. There’s no sense in carrying all that extra weight with us.”

“I think we ought to pick up things before we leave,” said Susan. “They get messed around so when we’re in space.”

Rusty frowned at the delay, but Tiphia waited politely as she gathered up the supplies—the box of crackers, the bottle of milk, the hammer and nails and books which had been floating around the cabin and had now fallen heavily to the floor. Cookie, barking joyfully at the reassurance of having the floor remain where it belonged, attempted to help and only got in the way.

“I’ll take her outside,” volunteered Rusty. “You two can come when you’re ready.”

“Wait!” Tiphia stopped him quickly. “I must go first. Remember Gwump’s orders.”

“They didn’t do you much good on Venus,” muttered Rusty under his breath, but just the same he waited.

“It’s funny that I’m not hungry yet,” said Susan

thoughtfully, putting the jar of honey back on the shelf. "It seems like we've been gone a long time. Maybe we'll starve to death, Rusty, and not even know we're doing it."

"I'm not hungry yet either," agreed Rusty in surprise. "Only maybe it hasn't been as long as it seems since we left home. Up here, where space is all black, it seems like night, but maybe it isn't. How long have we been on our way, Tiphia?"

The green lizard did not bother to answer. Having observed that Susan had finished with her house-keeping, he reached up and opened the hatch. A moment later he was crawling outside.

"I wonder what it's like on Mars," said Susan. "Let's look out the window."

"At least there's no wind like there was on Venus," decided Rusty. "I hope there's no round balls or rubbery plants that want to swallow you."

"I don't think there are," said Susan over her shoulder. "At least, I don't see any. But I do see a pool of water with stuff growing around the edges. Moss and ferns. But they don't look dangerous. Tiphia's standing right beside them, looking down into the pool, and they aren't bothering him."

"Then come on," said Rusty quickly. "Let's not wait any longer. It must be safe enough or Tiphia wouldn't just be standing out in the open."

As Tiphia had promised, they all bounced when their feet struck the red soil of Mars. Cookie, being the lightest, bounced the highest, and while Rusty and Susan enjoyed the feeling immensely, Cookie was tired of it. Her excited, protesting yelps carried across the thin Martian air, and Tiphia turned and motioned for them to join him at the pool.

As they hopped over, both children glanced from side to side, examining their surroundings curiously. Like Venus, Mars had no real mountains, nothing but low, rounding knolls. There was no sparkle in the reddish earth, despite the sun which glowed brightly in the cloudless sky. And while there was considerable vegetation of the low-growing sort, it didn't look quite right. The ferns, which flourished all around the many shallow pools, had thick, solid leaves instead of fronds, and their colors were in shades of copper instead of green. There were low-spreading plants, like lichen, but they had yellow and orange leaves and stems.

"We must be close to the equator," said Rusty wisely, "because we saw the polar caps from the air, but here there's no snow in sight."

"Where are the little men?" demanded Susan. "You always hear about little men from Mars, and I want to see them."

Rusty couldn't tell her. He had scoffed at a man

in the moon, but he wasn't at all sure there weren't men on Mars.

They reached the pool where Tiphia was still standing and peered over the edge. It was large for a pool, although too small to be called a lake, and either the water was exceedingly clear or it was very shallow, for the bottom was plainly visible. But the exciting thing was that it was filled with pink fish, which did not behave at all like the fish on Earth. These were all crowded into the end next to Tiphia, and they swam as close to the surface as they dared. All were staring upward with great black eyes, and even when Cookie barked, which she did immediately, they did not seem frightened.

"So this is what's on Mars," said Rusty in disgust. "Nothing but fish. Even if they are a funny color, they're still fish."

"Can you understand them, Tiphia?" asked Susan. "Are they talking to you?"

"They're not talking to me," admitted Tiphia. "In fact they're not communicating at all. But they're thinking, and I can read their thoughts. They're wondering what we are and what we mean to do."

"Then why don't you tell them?"

"I can't get through to them. They are one of the lower orders without powers of reasoning. Stupid things."





“They are stupid. They wouldn’t even be fun to catch,” decided Rusty, turning his back on the pool and looking around. “Hey, there’s clouds coming up over there on the horizon. If you want to look for your moon, Tiphia, you’d better get started while the sky is clear.”

"By Orion, the hunter, I should," agreed Tiphia hastily. He turned away from the pool and began studying the violet sky.

"Those are the funniest-looking clouds I ever saw," said Susan in a puzzled tone. "They're the wrong color."

"Everything's the wrong color here," Rusty reminded her.

"Yes, but whoever heard of yellow clouds, and blue ones? And they're coming so fast, too. Long ribbons of them. There must be winds on Mars after all, or the clouds wouldn't blow so fast. I hope they aren't as bad those on Venus."

The clouds were certainly racing toward them in two great streams, like the exhausts from the tails of jet planes. They came from the north, where Rusty had earlier glimpsed one of the polar caps. One of the clouds was the color of daffodils, while the other was a blue intense enough to be visible against the violet sky.

"There's Phobos," observed Tiphia, more to himself than to them. "It's just rising now."

"Where?" cried Rusty in excitement. "Where's Phobos? I want to see it!"

Tiphia pointed toward the west. A round, silvery object was climbing over the smoothly rolling countryside. It came very fast. As they watched, it

changed from a quarter to a half, then to a full ball, and began rising rapidly in the sky.

"That's the closest moon to Mars," Rusty told Susan in a superior tone. "It goes so fast it's in the sky only four hours at a time."

"Where's the other one?" asked Susan curiously. "You said Mars had two moons, and I only see one."

"Deimos is farther away," Tiphia informed her kindly. "From here it would look just another star to you. Of course an expert, such as I, would never mistake it for one."

"I can't even see it," admitted Susan. "I can't see any stars. Only the sun and that big moon."

"Really?" Tiphia was surprised. "You earth people must have poor eyesight."

"We can see them at night," protested Susan.

"Oh, but to miss the beauty of the stars by day!" thought Tiphia sadly. "We do things much better on Eopee."

"Do you see your own moon?" asked Rusty impatiently. "Is Eopee up there?"

Tiphia regarded the sky for a long time. He looked straight above him, then to the east, the west, the south, and finally to the north. When his eyes came to the blue and yellow clouds, which by this time were almost upon them, he seemed to shake himself all over.

“Quick! Quick! To the space ship!” His orders came to them sharply. “I sense danger.”

The children did not wait to question him further. Even Cookie felt the urgency in Tiphia’s thoughts and started bounding toward the Terra Terror. By this time they could hear a humming sound overhead. It was a little like an airplane motor and something like a swarm of bees, and it seemed to come from the direction of the blue and yellow clouds. No one stopped to investigate further. They bounced as fast as they could.

The gravity of Mars helped them reach the space ship before the clouds. At home, on Earth, they could never have done so, but here they were just able to close the hatch before they were overtaken. Susan tumbled in, followed by Rusty with Cookie in his arms, and last of all, Tiphia.

At first they were too tired to move and could only lie weakly where they had thrown themselves. The light within the ship grew dim as the window was blocked blue and yellow clouds, and the humming noise grew even louder. Finally Rusty’s curiosity got the better of him, and he crawled over to the window.

“Look” he called. “They’re ants. Flying ants! Millions of them, all blue and yellow. They’re flying round and round the Terra Terror trying to get in.”



"Ants! said Susan in surprise. "Is that all? Whose afraid of ants?"

"You will be," insisted Rusty, "when you see how many there are. That humming sound is the noise of their wings."

It was Tiphia's turn to look out the window. When he finally looked back, his face was very grave.

"I've been listening to them," he informed the children, "and the situation is very dangerous. As far as these flying ants are concerned, they can only sting a little. They're the messenger service and can only hope to delay us. I'm afraid they've succeeded, because now the soldiers and workers have arrived."

"But what can they do?" demanded Susan. "All we've got to do is step on them."

Tiphia motioned to her to take his place at the window beside Rusty. The green lizard was clearly upset, for once again his thoughts were whirling around and around in that dizzy manner which made them impossible to understand.

At first Susan could see nothing out the window but what appeared to be a blue and yellow swirling fog. When she looked at it intently, however, she was able to see that it was composed of tiny, winged insects. Except for their color, they were very like the flying ants she remembered on Earth.

although certainly she had never seen them in such numbers.

"Well, are you scared now?" asked Rusty.

"I guess I am a little," she admitted meekly. "They'd fly in your face. You couldn't even see."

The blue and yellow fog outside the window stopped spinning. For an instant it was stationary, and Rusty and Susan could see each individual insect distinctly as it hovered, wings half raised to support itself in midair. It was as though the ants were listening to a command, and perhaps they were, for the next moment the wings resumed their motion, and the cloud began to raise itself upward. In another instant the mixed forces had separated themselves into two regiments, one blue, the other yellow, and each was flying off in an opposite direction.

"Oh, Sagittarius! Oh, Antares and Regulus! What do we do now?" thought Tiphia in despair. "Oh, why did I ever want to be a messenger? Why did I ever leave the pink slopes of Eopee for outer space?"

The children looked at him uneasily. Tiphia was shaking with fear. Each of his green scales palpitated in the Martian sunlight, which was now free to stream through the space-ship window.

"What's the matter?" demanded Rusty. "Didn't you see? They've gone. We're safe now."

"They have only gone for more soldiers and more workers," Tiphia told them hopelessly. "They decided the job was too big for one army. They've gone to get reinforcements."

"Then let's get out of here now," said Susan quickly. "Take your flying saucer outside and rub it against the other one, Tiphia. What are you waiting for?"

"Too late. Too late." Tears were running down the green lizard's face, and he waved weakly toward the window.

This time when the children looked, the Martian plain presented an entirely different picture. The reddish ground was now covered with a carpet of glistening bluish-black insects. The advance guard had already reached the ship, and from as far as their eyes could see, the line of marchers, hundreds of thousands abreast, was still coming from the north.

"Jeepers!" cried Rusty, almost too impressed to be frightened. "Did you ever see so many ants? Millions of them. Trillions!"

"We'd never be able to squash that many," agreed Susan, her own eyes wide with astonishment. "What do you suppose they're doing on top of the ship?"

As rapidly as each ant reached the space ship, he disappeared from view, and the logical answer was

that he had climbed up onto it. A few minutes later the children were sure this was the case, for they could hear tiny noises from every direction on the roof. Crunch! Crack! Squeak! Grind!

“What are they doing?” Rusty demanded of Tiphia, and the green lizard shook his head sadly.

“Removing the meteors which have covered the ship. Even ants cannot swallow rocks, and they have to do that before they can get to the wood itself.”

“Do you mean they’re going to eat the Terra Terror?” demanded Rusty indignantly. “It’s my ship. They can’t. I won’t let them.”

“They’re very hungry,” Tiphia told him sadly. “They’re hibernated all winter, and now they’ll swallow whatever they can find. They aren’t particular. They can’t be. There’s not too much to swallow on Mars.”

9

"I don't believe it," said Susan in a shaky voice which meant that she did believe it but was trying to convince herself it wasn't so. "Ants don't eat wood!"

"Some of them do," said Rusty grimly. "Aren't termites a kind of ant?"

"I don't know."

"Well, anyway, there's one thing sure. I'm not

going to let them eat the Terra Terror. Why, when they got through with that they might want to eat us, you and me and Cookie and Tiphia!”

“Oh no!” objected Susan in horror.

“Well, maybe not Tiphia,” amended Rusty thoughtfully. “I don’t think an ant or anything else could crack through those hard scales of his. They’re like metal.”

“Do you think so?” Tiphia brightened considerably. “I wouldn’t care to be broken up and swallowed like one of Gwump’s transforming drops. And if I’m safe, perhaps the saucers are too.”

“Tiphia, I think you’re awful,” cried Susan. “You’re only thinking of yourself. And after Cookie saved your life on Venus, too.”

“True!” Tiphia grew thoughtful. “I am indeed in your debt, and debts must always be repaid. It’s one of Gwump’s strictest laws.”

“Then how are you going to do it?” demanded Rusty.

“I don’t know,” admitted Tiphia. “I must consider. I must think.” And his thoughts began whirling this way and that, arriving nowhere at all.

“It’s going to be up to us,” decided Rusty. “He’ll help if he can, but we’ll have to think of the plan.”

“If we could only get our hands on some of those meteors, maybe we could throw them at the ants,”

said Susan. "You know, use them for ammunition. If we threw fast, it might drive them back long enough for Tiphia to get the space ship started."

Rusty came and looked out the window beside her. The ants were making a neat pile of meteors piled from the space ship. It must have been a tremendous undertaking for them, he thought. It had taken real jabbing with his pocketknife to work one loose, yet the ants had only their strong jaws to use as levers. The meteors were exceedingly heavy. It took two ants to carry one no larger than a grain of sand. As for the larger meteors, that was an undertaking which required the united pulling and hauling, pushing and tugging of over a dozen of the largest workers.

"I don't know how we'd get the meteors," said Rusty doubtfully. "If we opened the hatch, the ants would all swarm in here. They're all over the top and sides of the ship."

"Maybe if we opened and closed it fast we could keep most of them out," said Susan. "Those that did get in, we could step on. Tiphia could get the meteors for us. He'd be safe enough."

"What we really need," frowned Rusty, "is something to draw them away from the ship and keep them away awhile. Then we wouldn't have to bother throwing things."

"Sure," said Susan scornfully. "If they'd just go away and stay away, we'd have no trouble at all."

"I know," cried Rusty in excitement. "Food! That's what they're after. That's what draws ants. And we've got just the kind of food they like. Honey!"

Susan regarded him in admiration. It was a brilliant plan and she wished she had thought of it herself. Then her face grew doubtful.

"But how are you going to get it out to them? How are you going to get it away from the ship so we can get off the ground?"

"Tiphia will have to carry it. He'll have to go out the hatch fast and run off a little way. And he'll have to leave a trail of sticky honey behind for the ants to follow. Then he'll drop the jar, and they'll all be so busy trying to crowd in after the honey that that they won't even notice we're taking off."

"Rusty, that's wonderful!" exclaimed Susan. "Why, that's the best idea I ever heard. Of course we'll have to stand by the hatch waiting to squash any of them that happen to come in when Tiphia goes out."

"That's simple," he told her airily. "Let's go tell Tiphia."

Tiphia had a little trouble getting all the details of Rusty's plan in his head, but once he understood he was just as enthusiastic as they.

"It's brilliant!" he decided. "Worthy of Gwump himself. Oh, Gwump will be proud to welcome you to Eopee. Anyone who is able to think of escapes like that is worthy of the post of prime minister."

"Oh, we can't stay long enough for Rusty to be prime minister," Susan reminded him hastily. "We have to go right home, you know."

"By the way," said Rusty curiously, "did you have a chance to see whether Eopee is an undiscovered moon around Mars? Or did the ants come before you finished looking?"

"I had finished," Tiphia told them sadly. "Eopee is not a satellite of Mars. We must go on."

"Then let's get going," suggested Susan briskly. "Here's the honey jar. We'd better open the lid before you get outside so it will be ready. And don't forget to take your spare flying saucer with you, or to use it on the way back in."

Tiphia got to his feet, but before he would accept the jar of honey from Susan he adjusted the tight goggles before his eyes, since, as he reminded them, neither his eyes nor his long-lashed eyelids were covered with scales. There was no question about danger to his ears or nose. His ears had no openings at all, since Tiphia did not need them for hearing, and his nostrils could be completely closed at will. next he tucked the folded flying saucer under one of

his front legs and, clutching the opened jar of honey, made his way to the hatch.

"Get ready to close it fast as soon as he's outside," Rusty reminded Susan. "I want to see what's going on out there."

"You close it yourself," she retorted. "I'm waiting here to squash ants."

Rusty undid the hook, and with a mighty rush Tiphia attempted to raise the cover with his head. Although he pushed with all his might, the cover remained tightly in place.

"Odd! Odd!" thought Tiphia. He tried again, but with no better success.

"Whats' the matter, Tiphia?" cried Susan. "Can't you open it?"

The green lizard shook his head, and his face wore an expression of considerable surprise.

"We'll all push together," decided Rusty. "One—two—three—push."

The hatch cover remained firmly in place despite their hardest efforts.

"They've sealed us in," decided Rusty indignantly.

"No." Tiphia shook his head firmly. "There's just so many ants out there that they've weighed down the cover. That's why it won't open. The ants are too heavy to lift."

"Think, Tiphia," urged Susan desperately. "See

if you can tell what they're saying. Maybe they'll tell us a way out."

"They're only thinking of their jobs," reported Tiphia sadly. "All I can get is millions of little thoughts from the roof. They're all thinking about removing meteors."

"From the roof?" said Rusty quickly. "You mean they're all up there on top?"

"Except those who are going up and down the side. And those who are stacking meteors on the pile on the ground."

"How about the front and nose of the ship?"

Tiphia closed his eyes and tilted his head. He listened intently.

"There are no thoughts coming from that direction," he told them finally. "I do not believe there are any of the enemy out there. If there are, they are not communicating."

"Then that's the way you'll go out," decided Rusty. He looked at Susan triumphantly. "Wasn't I smart to build an emergency exit? You never know when it will come in handy."

The two loose boards in the front of the ship were as easily removed as Rusty claimed. Luckily, they were nailed in place from the inside, so he had only to loosen them with the claw of his hammer and slide them out. Through the opening they could see

a strip of red Martian landscape with not even a single ant on guard.

"Get out fast and rush around to the back," whispered Rusty. "Just sprinkle a few drops on the ship to let them get a taste. Then start running."

Tiphia nodded. The opening was hardly large enough, but he managed to work his bulky form through somehow. When Tiphia was once outside, Rusty stood the boards in place over the hole to disguise the fact that it was there, and he and Susan rushed to the window to look out.

By that time Tiphia had arrived at the back of the ship and had already scattered a little honey about. The ants had discovered it and were stopping work immediately. There were so many of them that they had not all be able to have a taste, but some inner instinct told them there was far more succulent food than dry wood at hand. They dropped the meteors they were carrying and working on to find out what it was.

Tiphia did not have to run very fast to keep ahead of them. As a matter of fact, he only hopped along in a leisurely fashion, holding the tilted honey jar so that a tiny stream of amber liquid poured out on the ground. Behind him came an eager bluish-black, glistening hoard of ants. They crowded and jostled and stepped on each other, trying to get to the honey.

“The ground’s black with them!” exclaimed Susan.
“I never saw so many ants in my life.”

“He’s going down to the edge of the pool,” said Rusty. “That’s far enough away, I should think. But there’s no way for him to get back except by stomping on ants.”



"I don't care if he does," said Susan bitterly. "They were going to eat us."

Tiphia halted beside the pool. They saw his arm circle high in an arc, dripping honey from the air. Then he threw the jar, which by this time must be quite empty, as far as he could. A moment later he was bounding back toward the space ship, but the ants did not seem in the least disturbed by his departure. All they thought of was that delicious, sticky food, the like of which they had never before tasted.

Rusty hurried to remove the boards from the emergency exit and stood waiting with hammer and nails. The minute Tiphia was inside, he must nail them back in place, for there would be only a short time before they were in outer space.

They heard the light clinking sounds as the two saucers were rubbed together. Then Tiphia was squeezing through the hole and Rusty was hammering as fast as he could.

"I was splendid, wasn't I?" Tiphia was very proud of himself. He leaned down and patted Cookie fondly. "Perhaps I can't puncture things with the sharp bones in my mouth, but there's no one who can outsmart an army of ants as well as I can."

"I hope we don't meet any more, though," said Susan. "We're all out of honey."

The space ship took off slowly this time. It rose

from the ground, then seemed to flutter gently in thin Martian atmosphere as though reluctant to take off into outer space.

"Have they hurt the Terra Terror, Tiphia?" cried Rusty in alarm. "Did those ants do something to make it act this way. It doesn't want to fly."

"No indeed," Tiphia reassured him. "We'll get under way very soon. I slowed down the beginning deliberately. You see, I'm a little reluctant to leave the scene of my great victory. I'm giving myself the pleasure of one last look."

Below them, a great black splotch, like a gigantic pool of spilled ink, glittered in the midst of the red land. It was the army of ants, still clustered around the honey pot.

Then Rusty saw something else. From the south a long, black, straight, unwavering line cut through the red soil. And from the east there was a similar line. Both lines seemed to inch along, as though they were moving slowly forward.

"The canals!" he cried in excitement. "I see the canals on Mars. Look! There, and there!"

"Nonsense," smiled Tiphia. "Those are just the lines of reinforcements called in by the messenger ants. It's a pity they'll never get there in time for the refreshments."

10

"Where are we going, Tiphia?" asked Rusty.

They had left Mars far behind, and it now glowed like a bright tangerine in the black sky.

"To the fifth planet."

"That's Jupiter," Rusty told him quickly. "You'll have a chance of finding Eopee there. Jupiter has twelve moons."

"I hope so, I'm sure. As a matter of fact, I'm be-

ginning to recognize sky-marks. I've been this way before, when I came to Earth. It's a very dangerous part of the heavens."

"Why is it dangerous?" demanded Susan.

"Because it's the Rocky Belt," explained Rusty. "It's just full of meteors and asteroids, all sizes of them. One of them's nearly five hundred miles across."

"We've been through meteors before," Susan reminded him. "Don't you remember? The ants picked them all off for us. And they didn't hurt us one bit."

"Those were only little ones," argued Rusty. "But even so, it's not what the books said would happen. Meteors are supposed to explode in white hot gas when they hit. They should have made us explode too. I can't understand it. Maybe Tiphia's flying saucer had something to do with making them act the way they did."

"Then it can probably do something about the big ones," said Susan. "Can't it, Tiphia?"

But Tiphia was paying no attention to them. He had shut off his mind and was floating quietly. Beneath his dark goggles, the ends of his long lashes protruded slightly as they drooped over his scaly cheeks.

"Has he gone to sleep?" asked Susan. It was a reassuring thought. Tiphia knew about meteors,

and if he could sleep through them, she did not need to worry.

Rusty looked regretfully at the buttons on the control panel, especially at the one marked for use on comets, and at the ray guns. It would be fun to go through space shooting at sky targets, but he knew that these wouldn't work anyway. It was safer to trust in Tiphia. He turned off the flashlight in order to save the batteries, and the cabin was enveloped in darkness.

"Well," said Susan in surprise, "one of the oranges just floated up against me. I guess I'll eat it. I'm getting a little hungry. Do you want one too?"

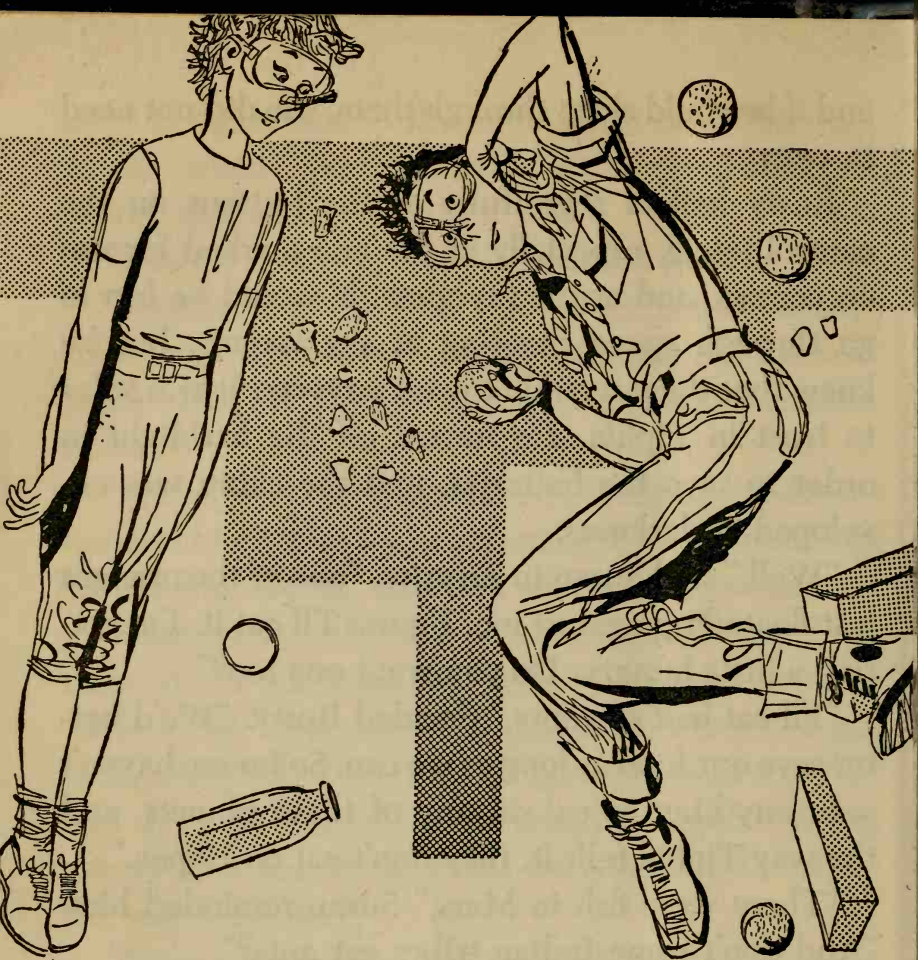
"I'll eat half of yours," decided Rusty. "We'd better save our food as long as we can. So far we haven't seen anything to eat on any of these planets, and the way Tiphia tells it, they don't eat on Eopee."

"There were fish in Mars," Susan reminded him. "And don't some Indian tribes eat ants?"

Rusty scorned a reply. He was trying to find something to do with his orange peelings. As fast as he put them down, they floated, and because Susan had removed the skin in small pieces there so many of them that they kept bobbing around in front of his eyes and hitting him in the face.

"Where can I put these peelings?" he demanded.

"In your pocket. You've got everything else in



there. Why shouldn't you use it for old orange peels too?"

Rusty had been about to do that very thing, but since Susan suggested it in such a slighting tone, he stopped. Was she trying to insinuate that his pockets were little better than a garbage can?

"I think we'd better throw them outside," he de-

cided. "After all, the first rule of a space ship is to keep everything nice and clean and in its place."

Susan giggled at the idea of trying to keep everything in its place in outer space. The milk bottle floated by her just then and she reached out and pushed it away. It was upside down, but that didn't matter. There was no danger of the milk running out when they were outside the scope of gravity.

Rusty pulled himself along the side of one wall. At that moment the Terra Terror seemed to be traveling upside down, for the hatch cover, usually in the roof, was now part of the floor. He reached toward the hook but jerked his hand back when Susan screamed at him.

"No, Rusty! Don't!"

"Don't what?"

"Don't open the hatch. I know that's what you're going to do. You can't throw the peelings out unless you do."

"I'm only going to open it a crack," he explained. "Just long enough to throw them out."

"But you mustn't. You'll let in all the outside air."

"There isn't any air to let in," he reminded her. "We're in outer space."

"Well, don't open it anyway. It might be dangerous."

"Phooey," said Rusty. He jerked back the hook

and opened the hatch a small crack. The ship gave a violent lurch to one side. Rusty looked a little frightened at the sudden motion, but he tried to pretend it was nothing. He opened his hand to get rid of the orange peelings but had some trouble getting them loose. They clung to his fingers as though reluctant to leave the space ship, and he had to pick off each one carefully and drop it well outside before he could close the hatch. As he did so, the ship gave another violent lurch.

"There!" he said with some relief. "You see how easy it was? Nothing happened, and we don't have all that garbage floating around."

"I guess so," agreed Susan. She pulled herself forward by means of grasping one of the shelves, then gave a push with her feet against the wall which sent her soaring in the direction of the window. "Let's see if we can spot any of those big asteroids yet."

As usual in outer space, the sky was black and there was no question about the quantity of meteorites and asteroids. They could see most of them plainly, for they reflected sunlight. Sometimes the ship passed through showers of them which struck against the sides like hail. Again they seemed to be sailing in an expanse of black velvet. Sometimes at a distance they could see a gaseous meteor which

burst from a central core like the spokes of a blazing wheel, and at other times a silver rotating body, not always cylindrical, but with jagged edges as though it had freshly broken from a larger mass. They all moved very rapidly, fifty times as fast as a rifle bullet, Rusty informed Susan, but fortunately none, except the very smallest meteors, seemed to be in the orbit of the space ship.

"You know, there's something funny out there," decided Susan. "I've watched them go by twice, and if I didn't know better I'd swear there were orange peelings in this sky."

"Orange peeling!" exclaimed Rusty, and took his eyes off a distant rotating asteroid to look closer. As he watched, a handful of scattered orange-colored fragments drifted by the window.

"It is! There are!" he cried in excitement. "It's the peelings I threw outside a minute ago. They're made into a satellite now. Our satellite!"

"Satellite?"

"Sure. Don't you see, they'll follow us wherever we go in outer space. And they'll go round and round us, just like the moon goes around the Earth. They'll never leave us. We couldn't get rid of them if we tried. Not until we land somewhere, of course."

"My!" said Susan, wrinkling her nose. "I'm glad it was only orange peelings you threw out. What

if it had been dirty dishwater? Or a dead mouse?"

Tiphia opened his eyes and smiled at them. They heard his thoughts directed toward them happily.

"I see you're amusing yourselves. I'm glad you're not bored. It's a long trip to the fifth planet, 483 million miles from the sun."

"We're looking at the meteors and asteroids," Susan told him. "And at our new satellite. Rusty made it when he threw some orange peelings outside."

Tiphia joined them at the window. He had his own way of progressing around the cabin. He merely sat in midair and, using his two front limbs as oars, paddled forward. It seemed to work in air as well as water at any rate, Tiphia always got where he wanted to go.

"I do hope we don't run into the tail of a comet," he worried now, making his flat nose even flatter by pressing it hard against the glass. "Comets are such nuisances, and they're likely to be around this season. It's been a good year for growing comets."

"Where do they grow?" asked Susan.

"Out there, where it's cold. And that reminds me, I'm feeling a bit chilly myself," admitted Tiphia. "Suppose we have a transforming drop all around."

They swallowed one each of the pink, blue, and red candies, then returned to the window. By this

time the space ship has revolved again, and the window was on the bottom, which was convenient, since they could all stretch out along the wall.

Rusty and Susan settled down to enjoy themselves, for the shifting, changing shapes were as good as kaleidoscope, but Tiphia had scarcely put his eye to the pane when he drew back in horror.

“A meteor! One of those big, gaseous, burning meteor’s coming straight toward us. We’re directly in its path.”

A great, blazing ball, with fiery radiating spokes like a gigantic pinwheel, was indeed headed in their direction. It grew larger by the minute.

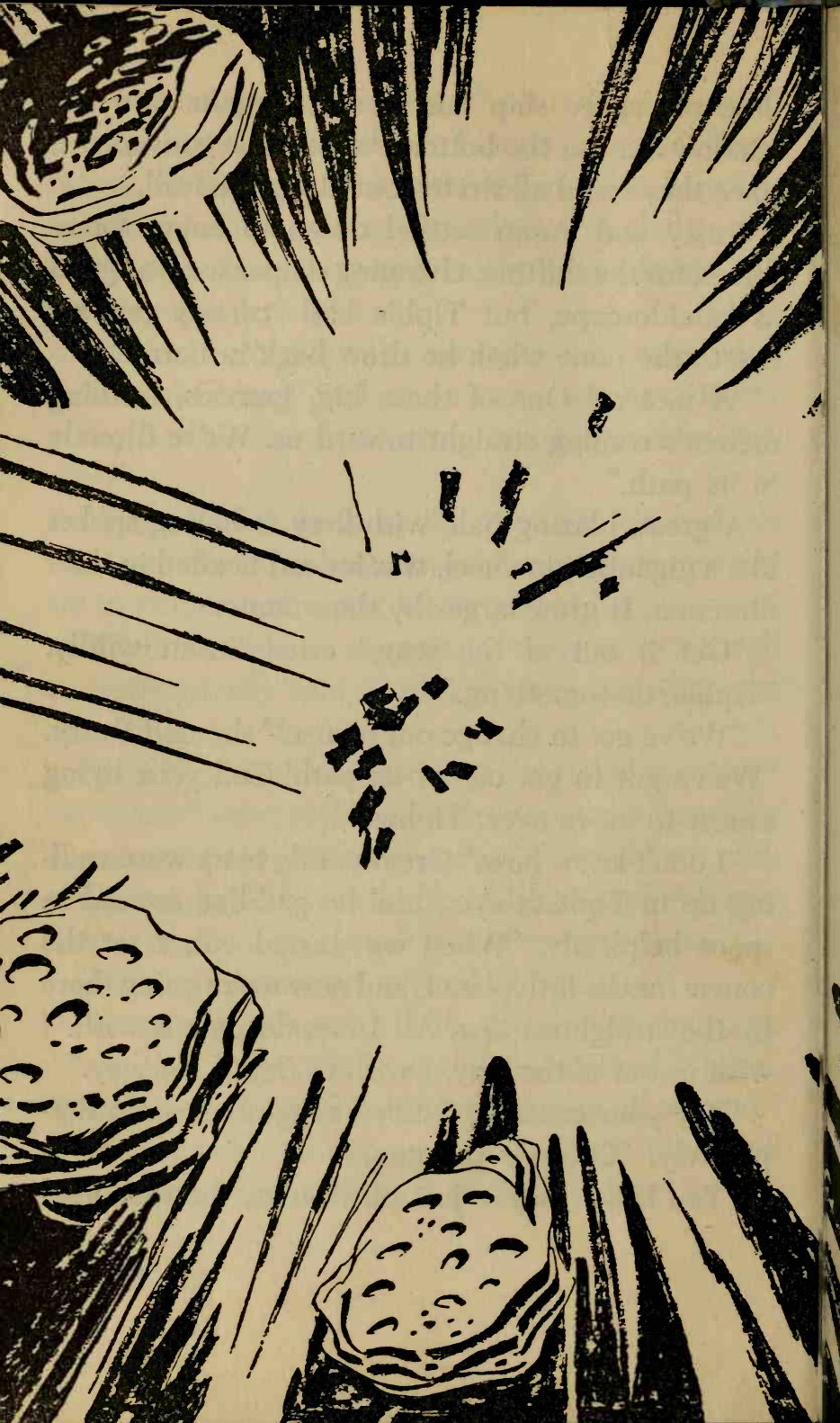
“Get it out of the way,” cried Susan wildly. “Tiphia, do something.”

“We’ve got to change our course!” shouted Rusty. “We’ve got to get out of its path! Tell your flying saucer to move over, Tiphia.”

“I don’t know how.” Great pearly tears were welling up in Tiphia’s eyes, and he paddled around in space helplessly. “When we started out, I set the course for the fifth planet, and now we’re going there by the straightest line. All I can do now is wish. I wish us out of the way. I wish us out of the way.”

“Try your controls, Rusty,” suggested Susan desperately. “Or your ray gun.”

“You know they’re just playthings,” he reminded



her scornfully. "We've got to think of some way to get out of that meteor's path."

"I wish, I wish, I wish," thought Tiphia frantically.

"Maybe we could budge the ship over," said Susan. "If we all pushed together on the heaviest side, maybe it would shift that way."

"That's no good. All of us put together wouldn't have enough weight. But I know what will move it. Remember when I opened the hatch, how the ship jumped?"

"Of course," agreed Susan, her frightened face



brightening hopefully. "Do you think you can make it jump far enough to get out of the way of the meteor?"

"All I can do it try. You better stay by the window and call signals. I won't know which way I'm making the ship move."

Susan pulled herself over to the side by the window. She had to push Tiphia out of the way to get there, for he was still floating around, wringing his hands desperately. His thoughts were now making incomprehensible whirligigs.

The meteor was very close to them now. Its burning core hurt her eyes even behind the protection of the dark glasses.

"I'm going to open the hatch," called Rusty. "Tell me which side of the center we go to."

She felt the ship lurch suddenly, and the core of the meteor shifted slightly to the right. A moment later Susan heard the sound of the hatch being closed violently. The ship lurched once more, this time to the left, and they were back where they had been in the beginning.

"When you open it, we go off to one side. But when you close it, we come back where we were. You'll have to do something quick, becасue it's almost on us."

"I'll try opening it wide. As far as it will go."

Rusty's voice sounded frightened, although he was trying to remain calm. "I only opened it a little way before."

This time the ship gave a more violent lurch than ever. After that it hung motionless a moment, then gave a shudder and lurched again.

"That did it!" screamed Susan. "Hold it open, Rusty."

A second later the cabin of the space ship was enveloped in blinding light. Susan turned her eyes away from the window. She saw Tiphia, who was now bumping back and forth against the ceiling in the manner of a rubber ball. His thoughts were repeating the same thing over and over, "I hope the meteor doesn't hit us! I hope the meteor doesn't hit us!" The light grew so intense, even through her dark glasses, that Susan had to close her eyes. She felt the ship jerk again and knew what had happened. Rusty, unable to hold the hatch cover, had allowed it to bang shut. They had veered back to the left once more.

Trembling, she waited for something to happen, but nothing did. A moment later she heard Rusty's voice, panting with exertion and excitement.

"Boy, that was close. The meteor's gone by, and I bet we didn't miss it by an inch!"

Tiphia's thoughts, happy and confident once more, came to them.

“Don't tell me that you two Earth children were worried. You needn't worry when you're with me. I just wished that meteor out of the way, and it moved right over.”

Then they were conscious that Tiphia had begun to sing in his own peculiar fashion. Again they could not hear the melody, but the words were quite clear.

*In Eopee there is no greed,
You wish aloud for what you need,
And if you're too polite to say,
Why, Gwump will grant it anyway.
All hail, Eopee, hail!*

11

Whether it was due to Tiphia's wishing the large meteors out of their way, or because whenever the children saw one in their path they changed the course of the ship by opening the hatch, they could not be sure. Whichever it was, they soon began to see a lightening in the darkness and knew that Jupiter was just ahead.

'I'm so glad,' said Susan. 'This clothespin is begin-

ning to pinch my nose. I'd like to get into some real air again so I can take it off."

"I don't think you can on Jupiter," Rusty told her doubtfully. "The books all say that there's ammonia and poison marsh gas in its atmosphere. You can't breathe that."

"There's Jupiter's moon number eleven," Tiphia informed them. He had taken over Rusty's periscope and was busily engaged in turning it this way and that.

"There used to be a twelfth moon," remembered Rusty. "Only it got lost somewhere. Anyway, the books say it was found once, then they couldn't find it any more."

"We must make up time," thought Tiphia absently. "I see moon number ten and nine. I think eight's just coming in sight."

"Nothing looks like a real moon to me," said Susan in disappointment. She had been staring out the window for some time. "They just look like more big meteors or asteroids."

"They are moons, though," Rusty assured her.

"What's their names?"

"Only the first four were ever named. After that the astronomers kept on discovering more and more of them, so they got tired and just gave them numbers. I hope one of them is Eopee."

“Not that one.” Tiphia shook his head disapprovingly. “The one we just passed was nothing but a ball of frozen ammonia. At least the other moons of Jupiter have had the good taste to be made of rock. Ah, here comes number four. That’s not Eopee, either.”

“Number four is Callisto,” remembered Rusty. “We’re getting down into the moons with names now. Ganymede should be in the next orbit.”

“I see it,” squealed Susan. “It’s a big one, too!”

“Both Callisto and Ganymede are bigger than Mercury,” Rusty told her. “But that means we’re down to the last two, and we still haven’t seen Eopee.

“No.” Tiphia looked as though he might cry. “Oh, Eopee! My beautiful Eopee! Where are you?”

“Maybe you should try to think again,” suggested Susan helpfully. “After all, it’s been a long time since you tried to remember which planet Eopee belonged to.”

“I can’t think,” admitted Tiphia. “I’m too cold to think. Don’t you two find it a little chilly?”

It was cold, and obviously getting colder every minute. The windowpane was becoming frosted over with ice so that they could hardly see outside.

“We’d better have another of those pills of yours,” decided Rusty. “They don’t seem to last as long as

they did before. It's lucky you've got plenty of them."

Tiphia's eyes grew serious as he looked into the drawstring bag. Perhaps he didn't intend them to read his thoughts, but they did so anyway and realized with alarm that the supply of transforming drops was diminishing rapidly. Tiphia hoped they would hold out until they reached Eopee.

"This is one way we can find out if his wishes are really granted," whispered Rusty, accepting three of the colored pills and popping them into his mouth. "He'll have to wish for more transforming drops."

"But what if it isn't so?" murmured Susan. "What if the rule only works on Eopee and doesn't in outer space?"

It didn't make them feel any happier to know that Tiphia was thinking the same thing.

The transforming drops worked immediately, and in no time at all they had stopped feeling the biting tang of the cold. Then suddenly, without warning, they dropped from midair onto the floor of the space ship. They had reached the atmosphere of Jupiter.

"We'd better start tidying up," said Susan as she always did on these occasions. "It's such a mess in here with everything scattered around."

Rusty helped her, but when he picked up the cardboard carton of milk, he stood for a moment regarding it thoughtfully.

"This has got heavier somehow," he observed, and gave it a tentative shake. There was no answering gurgle of splashing milk.

"What's the matter?" asked Susan.

"It's frozen," he told her. "Frozen solid! I just remembered. The temperature of Jupiter is minus 210 degrees Fahrenheit."

"No wonder we were cold. That's colder than the North Pole, isn't it?" Curiously Susan began examining the other food which she had been gathering up to replace on the shelf. The remaining orange was hard and frosted over as though it had just



come from the deep-freeze. The crackers in the box were heavy wedges of ice.

“My,” said Susan in mild alarm, “I don’t think I’m going to like Jupiter. Let’s not even stop, Tiphia. You already know that Eopee isn’t one of her moons. Let’s just keep on going to the next planet.”

“Nothing doing,” objected Rusty quickly. “Now we’re here, we ought to look around. When are we going to land? I can’t see a thing through the window. It’s too icy.”

As though in answer to his question, the space ship settled on Jupiter. It was not at all like the gentle landings on Mercury or Mars, followed by a little bounce or two. It was not even like the ordinary landing they had made on Venus. Here it seemed that the planet reached up and grabbed the Terra Terror, pulling it to the ground with a force which shook the passengers thoroughly. Scarcely had they recovered from the effects of that when they heard the muffled sound of a great explosion and felt the ship rock beneath them.

“Let’s get out of here,” cried Susan. “Somebody’s shooting cannons.”

“Is it a war?” Rusty asked Tiphia anxiously.

“War?” Tiphia considered the word carefully. It was plain that wars were unheard of on Eopee, and he did not understand. But he realized that the chil-

dren were afraid of something, so he smiled to reassure them.

“We will not stay here long. There is no need to since I have already observed the fifth planet’s satellites. Wait here a moment until I make sure there are no enemies about, then you can come outside for a moment.”

Tiphia clambered through the hatch, and after a moment or two his thoughts came back to those inside the ship.

“There’s no sign of life as far as I can see, and I can see a good way off. Come on out and look around for yourselves if you want to.”

Rusty stood up, and at that instant the Terra Terror was shaken by another terrifying explosion. It seemed to come from close at hand.

“I think Cookie and I will stay right here,” called Susan. “I don’t like the sound of that. I think we ought to leave.”

Rusty would just as soon have retreated himself at that point, but he was embarrassed to say so. Tiphia was evidently quite unafraid and expecting someone to join him, so Rusty forced himself to go on.

They had landed on the shore of a great body of liquid which rolled on like a wide river. Unlike an ordinary river, however, this one was colored bright

red, and its source seemed to be in the long line of icy cliffs which bordered the opposite side. From time to time one of the jagged peaks appeared to explode, which accounted for the sound they had heard earlier, and a great avalanche of red, burning liquid poured down its side to add itself to the quantity already contained in the river.

“What do you suppose it is?” asked Rusty weakly.

“This is the planet you call Jupiter,” Tiphia assured him.

“I don’t mean that,” said Rusty, rubbing his eyes, which for some reason had begun to smart and burn. “I mean that red stuff in the river. It isn’t water, is it?”

“There is no water on Jupiter,” Tiphia reminded him. “That’s liquid ammonia. It’s made by the cliffs of frozen ammonia which persist in exploding. Jupiter, you see, is in a changing period, and—”

At this point Tiphia’s thoughts were cut short. He seemed to rise in the air, as though jerked from his feet by unseen hands. Then the same force carried him along, two or three feet above the ground, in the direction of the frozen mountains to the south.

At the same moment Rusty felt himself snatched up by hands which he could not see. He was too surprised to call out, even when he was flung across an invisible shoulder. Then he was being borne along, with his head and arms hanging downward.

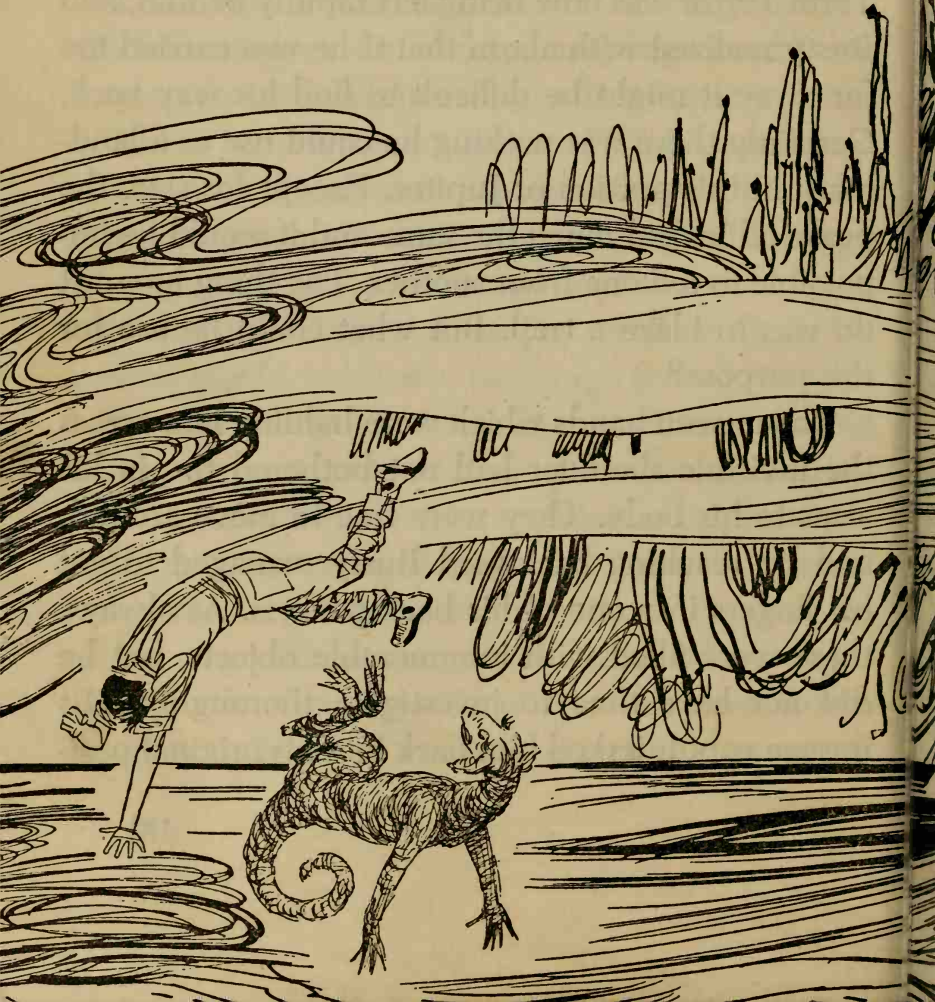
Although he clawed and kicked with his feet, it did no good at all. He could not free himself.

The ground over which he was being carried was frozen solid. It stretched on one side to the edge of the scarlet river, while the other side continued in a white expanse as far as he could see. There were cliffs and mountain peaks scattered here and there, and these seemed to rise abruptly from the level ground like spikes. There was no gradual slope at beginning, and hardly any slope at the top. The Terra Terror was now being left rapidly behind, and Rusty realized with alarm that if he was carried too far away it might be difficult to find his way back. Certainly there was nothing he could use as a landmark in this portion of Jupiter. Except for size, the peaks all looked much the same and it would be impossible to tell one from another. The thing he must do was to blaze a trail. But what could he use for the purpose?

The unseen hands which were holding him across the invisible shoulder had not bothered to pin his arms to his body. They were free to move around, and by reaching backward Rusty managed to get his fingers into one of his back pockets. As always, these were filled with innumerable objects, but he did not have time to investigate thoroughly. His unseen captor jerked him back into his original posi-

tion immediately. There was only time to make one frantic grab before his arms were once more dangling loosely toward the ground.

However, it had been worth the effort, for his fingers were clutching a folded sheet of multicolored paper. Rusty knew what it was. It was a double-page advertisement, torn from a magazine. It depicted various models of a certain make of car which he admired very much. It was a beautiful advertisement showing station wagons of robin's-egg blue,





sedans of brilliant yellow, sports cars of fire-engine red. He enjoyed taking out the picture and discussing the merits of various models with his friends, but he had no misgivings about relinquishing the treasure to the present cause.

Carefully he tore off a bit of blue station wagon and dropped it on the frozen ground. Even after they were several feet past, the bright blue dot was plainly visible. He tore off another bit and dropped that too. If he worked carefully, his captor would not know what he was doing. Suddenly he realized that Tiphia was sending a message to him.

"Rusty, are you all right? Are you all right, Rusty?"

"Somebody's carrying me," he called out. "Somebody I can't see."

"They're carrying me too," Tiphia told him. "I'm right behind you. I can see you perfectly. But I can't see anyone else. You seem to be doubled up in air."

"Can you hear them think?" demanded Rusty. "Ask them who they are."

"I have. They don't answer. And they don't seem to be thinking, either. At least, if they do think, it doesn't come through to me."

"Can you see what I'm doing?" called Rusty incautiously.

"I can see that you're being carried along, just as I am," Tiphia's thoughts interrupted him quickly.

“Don’t think about anything else. It’s not wise to take chances until we know what this is all about.”

Tiphia understood perfectly that he was blazing a trail back to the ship, Rusty realized. But just in case their unseen enemies might be able to read his thoughts, he was advising Rusty not to think about it.

“I’m sure it’s all right,” Rusty called. “They would have guessed before this if they could read thoughts the way you can. I haven’t thought of anything else for a long time. Besides, if you can see what I’m doing, whoever is carrying you ought to be able to see it too.”

They were carried on and on. The Terra Terror became only a tiny dot in the distance, then disappeared entirely. Perhaps that was because they had begun to wind in and out through a group of jagged, icy peakes, which fortunately did not seem to be the kind that exploded. Rusty tore paper and dropped it frantically. With so many twistings and turnings it would be difficult to follow, particularly since he had run out of the colored pieces and was now having to use the white background.

Without warning, the invisible captors halted, and Rusty and Tiphia were tossed on the hard ground. A moment later they felt the same rough hands which had snatched them up in the first place. Then they felt something else. It felt like rope or

cord, only it couldn't be, since they could see nothing at all. Whatever it was, it was used to truss them up tightly, and before they realized what was happening they were bound hand and foot so that they could not move an inch.

For a time Rusty was too frightened to speak, but when it became apparent that nothing more was going to happen, he turned his head. Tiphia was lying beside him, his four limbs tight against his sides, his tail done up in a knot.

"Tiphia," whispered Rusty, "where are they? Did they go away?"

"I don't know."

"Can you move?"

"Not even my tail."

"Why did they bring us here and tie us up, then leave us? Who are they, anyway?"

"I'm only a messenger," Tiphia reminded him sadly. "I only run errands. I don't know the answers to questions."

"We've got to get out of here," said Rusty in his natural voice. "Maybe if we yelled somebody would come."

"I've got a better idea," Tiphia told him. "And I'm working on it already."

"What?"

"I'm wishing for someone to rescue us. So that means somebody will."

12

In the space ship, Susan and Cookie waited for Rusty and Tiphia to return. From time to time they heard the explosions outside as the icy crags erupted more red liquid into the scarlet river, but neither of them wanted to investigate. Cookie was particularly frightened. She cowered low on the floor, making whining noises in her throat, and her brown eyes were fastened on Susan as though imploring that they leave this terrifying spot.

Susan sat as patiently as she could, expecting her friends to return at any moment. They had closed the hatch cover as they left, and she couldn't see out the window because of its thick coating of ice, so there was nothing to do but wait. It did seem, though, that they were gone a very long time. She couldn't even hear their voices in the silence between the explosions.

Presently it seemed to her that it was not so easy to see as it had been before. She had to squint to make out the titles of the books on the shelf, and even then she couldn't be sure it wasn't guesswork. She knew what the letters were. Perhaps she was only imagining that she could make them out.

"Cookie," she said in alarm, "it's getting dark. Pretty soon it will be night, and they aren't back yet."

Cookie made a feeble attempt to wag her tail but offered no real answer. Susan got to her feet.

"We're going to have to go look for them," she decided. "Rusty never could remember about time. We don't want to stay here when it's night."

Cookie whined. It was very plain that she would have preferred staying in the Terra Terror, but she did manage to get to her feet.

"I wish I had something to scare anybody away with," said Susan thoughtfully.

She looked at Rusty's ray guns and discarded them

instantly. They could never be mistaken for anything but toys. There was the hammer, which would be a formidable weapon at close range, but it had a very short handle. Then there was Tiphia's flying saucer. It was folded up into a round object about three feet long. She picked it up and discovered that it was light to handle but that the metal seemed sturdy and hard. If she had to use it as a weapon, doubtless it would inflict some pain. Moreover, the end seemed to fit nicely into her hand, like a baseball bat, and it would also serve as a walking stick if the ground proved to be rough and uneven.

For some reason or other she gained confidence the moment she took hold of the flying saucer. It wasn't nearly so frightening to venture forth on Jupiter as it had seemed.

"Come on, Cookie," she said in an almost cheerful voice. She raised the hatch cover and pushed the little dog outside. A moment later she followed herself, the saucer clutched firmly in her right hand. For a moment both of them sat on the top of the Terra Terror looking about with eyes which began to smart and water.

"I can't smell it with this clothespin on my nose," decided Susan after a moment, "but from the way my eyes are watering I'll bet that red stuff in the river has a lot of ammonia in it."

Cookie barked agreement.

"But I wonder what makes it so red," continued Susan. "Ammonia's white. Maybe it's because it's boiling when it comes out of those rocks. Or maybe it's mixed with something else."

Cookie barked once more and jumped to the ground. She landed with a thud which seemed to take her breath completely away for a moment. Susan followed more closely. She reached over the side and planted one end of the saucer on the frozen ground, leaning on it for support as she jumped. Even so, she felt a jar as her feet struck the earth.

"There's no bouncing here," she told Cookie, shaking her head disapprovingly. "Which way shall we go? I don't see them, do you?"

Cookie yelped and started trotting off along the river bank. At least she tried to trot, but each foot seemed to weigh twice what it had before. She had to pick it up and set it down laboriously, and when Susan started following she found that the same thing was true with her. She felt heavy and weighted down. The ground underfoot seemed determined to slow her progress.

Cookie couldn't understand it. She turned and came back to Susan, looking up at her piteously.

Suddenly Susan felt a hand on her left arm. She felt the fingers closing tightly, and another hand

reaching for her waist. Although she could see no one, she acted instinctively. She reached across with her right hand, and the flying saucer flayed the air. Again and again she struck at the empty space, and the hands loosened their grasp and were gone. She was standing free, shaking with fright.

Then before Susan's eyes an amazing thing happened. Cookie arose in air, as though she had been lifted from her feet. Cookie didn't like it. She barked and snapped and tried to bite, only there was nothing holding her into which she could get her teeth. A moment later she was moving through space toward a cluster of jagged mountain peaks to the south.

Susan started after her, screaming and shaking the flying saucer. No one was going to steal Cookie! No wind of Jupiter—and obviously it must be a wind, since she could see nothing—was going to carry the little dog away. It was hard going. Never had she encountered such difficulty covering ground, but eventually she caught up. When she reached out for Cookie, however, something invisible seemed to hold the dog fast, so Susan did as she had done before. She struck at the empty space with the metal rod in her hands, and instantly Cookie tumbled heavily to the ground.

Cookie was whimpering with fright, so Susan



picked her up and tucked the dog under her left arm. In her right hand she brandished the flying saucer, occasionally using it to whip through the air. Each time it gave a threatening "whoosh" which not only made her feel better but would let anyone around know that she meant business. She was no longer frightened, only angry, and she stamped along determinedly as though daring anyone to try to stop her.

There was no question about the fact that twilight was coming on. The sun, which seemed much smaller here than it did at home, was sliding behind a cluster of icy crags. What she could see of the sky was already fading in color. Not a great deal of sky was visible, however, for it seemed to be exceedingly cloudy overhead. The clouds were not the same as those above the Earth, either. These were bright green, as green as mint jelly, and they were formed in peculiar shapes. Some were long streamers or bands, others were almost squares and rectangles. All of them appeared to be perfectly flat, and there was none of the billowy, fluffy kind which Susan had always admired the most.

Jupiter was an unsatisfactory planet, she decided, a planet of green clouds, red rivers, exploding icy mountains, and unseen enemies. There were no trees, no grass, no flowers on the hard frozen ground.

She pulled herself up sharply. She must be mistaken about the flowers, for there was certainly something bright blue on the ground before her. Could it possibly be a blossom trying to thrust its head from the chilly soil? She bent over and inspected it more carefully. Then she picked it up. It was a scrap of paper, colored blue on one side only, and its jagged edges proved that it had been torn from a larger piece.

Who could have had paper on Jupiter? Certainly not the owners of those cold, grasping hands which had tried to clutch at her. Paper was a product of Earth. She had seen none on Mercury or Mars or Venus. It must have been brought here by someone who came from Earth, and that someone could only be Rusty.

They went this way," she told Cookie joyfully. "It must have dropped from Rusty's pocket. Let's go."

A little farther on she found another blue scrap, then a red one and a yellow one. By this time she guessed that Rusty was leaving a trail. Twirling the saucer from side to side, she went on, carrying Cookie, who only howled when she was placed on the ground and refused to walk.

It was much harder to follow the trail when they reached the cluster of peaks. By this time it was

definitely twilight, and Rusty had run out of colored pictures. The white scraps were difficult to find on the frosty ground. Susan had to bend low and peer intently in order to see them at all, and to do this she had to put Cookie down.

As she had done earlier, Cookie began to howl. She threw back her head and pointed her nose to the green clouds and proved without a doubt that one of her ancestors had been a hound.

“Cookie,” reproved Susan. “Stop that!”

But Cookie didn't stop. She howled louder and louder. Then, without warning, she stopped of her own accord and tilted her head as though listening. From within the cluster of peaks came a muffled, faraway cry.

“Cookie! Cookie! Help! Help!”

Cookie attempted to run, and Susan tried to run after her, flourishing the saucer. There was no mistaking that voice. It belonged to Rusty. Cookie plodded this way and that, around one jagged spire after another. Apparently there was no scent on the ground which she could follow, but her ears were good and Rusty kept calling.

It was almost dark by the time they stumbled upon Rusty and Tiphia lying side by side on the cold ground under the ledge of an icy cliff.

"Well," said Susan disapprovingly. "What do you two think you're doing? Get up?"

"We can't," Rusty told her, turning his head a little so Cookie wouldn't lick him in the eye. "We're tied."

"Don't be silly."

"But we are," Tiphia assured her. "Surely you don't think we'd lie here like this if we could help it."

"I don't see anything holding you."

"You can't. But there is. We couldn't see whoever brought us here, either. But we felt them."

Susan remembered the hands which had clutched at her, the unseen thing which had lifted Cookie from the ground, and understood.

"I'll try to untie you," she said. "Only I don't know where to begin."

"Do begin on my tail," urged Tiphia. "It has such a cramp from being done up this way that I can hardly bear it."

"I can't even see your tail," objected Susan. "You're lying on it. Roll over."

Tiphia tried, but he could only puff and pant without getting anywhere.

"Maybe he's frozen to the ground," said Rusty in a worried voice. "See if you can pry him loose."

Susan stuck the edge of the metal roll under

the green lizard. He moved quite easily then, flopping completely over onto his stomach. Now she could see that his tail was indeed fastened into a most uncomfortable-looking knot, and she touched it gently with the end of the saucer. Immediately the knot was loosened and the tail stretched out to its full length.

"It's magic!" shouted Rusty. "Run the saucer up and down. See if it will work on his arms and legs. And use it on me too."

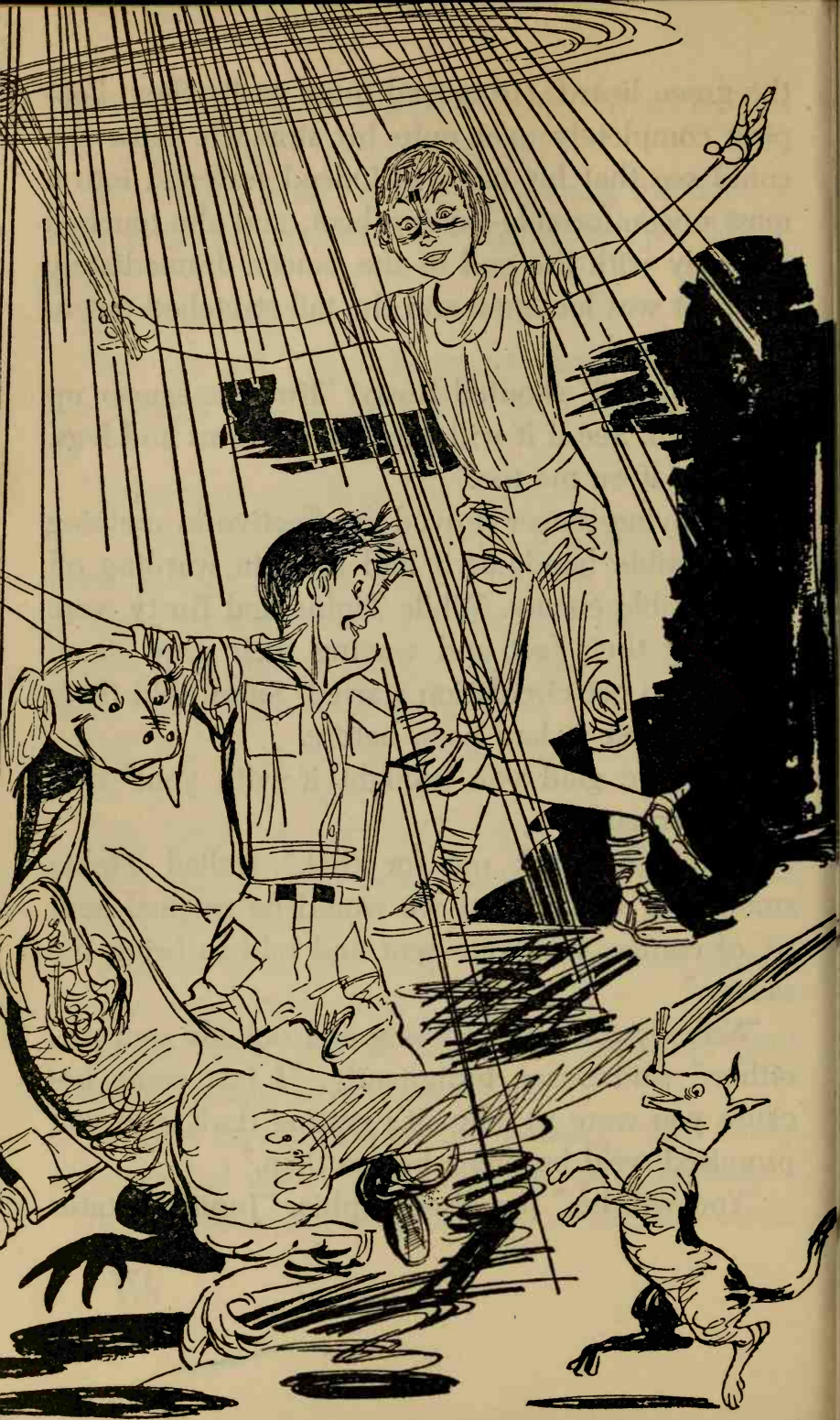
The flying saucer proved as effective in undoing the invisible bonds as it had been in warding off the invisible enemy. While Tiphia and Rusty were stamping their feet and waving their arms in an attempt to get circulation started, Susan told them how valuable it had been before.

"I'm sure glad you brought it with you," said Rusty fervently.

"You can thank me for that," smiled Tiphia smugly. "I wished that we would be rescued, and so, of course, you were sent and told to bring the saucer."

"Nobody told me anything and nobody sent me, either," said Susan indignantly. "I just came because you were so long. It's getting dark, and you promised we'd be home before then."

"You will be," promised Tiphia. "Jupiter rotates



on its axis about every ten hours. Days here are less than half as long as they are on Earth. Just leave everything to me. I haven't failed you yet, have I?"

"I didn't see you leaving any trail for Susan to follow," said Rusty. "I was the one who didn't fail in that."

"Nevertheless, neither of you would have been able to do anything at all without my wishing or Gwump's saucer," Tiphia reminded them. "I suggest we unfold it and all walk beneath it on our way back to the ship. It's time we set out for the sixth planet, whatever it is."

"It's Saturn," said Rusty.

"Saturn?" Tiphia considered the name carefully. His thoughts were very busy. "How lucky that you happened to mention the name of the sixth planet. There was a whole lesson in Gwump's instructional course for messengers devoted to the planet Saturn. Fortunately I'm a good student. I remember it perfectly."

13

“Is it far from Jupiter to Saturn?” asked Susan.

They were traveling smoothly through space, and once again the stars seemed to be pushing each other aside in order to see inside the tiny window of the ship. As soon as they left the atmosphere of Jupiter behind, the ice had disappeared from the glass and they were again able to see outside.

“Just a hop, skip, and a jump,” Tiphia assured her.

Rusty didn't agree.

"It's a long way. Jupiter's 483 million miles from the sun, and Saturn's 886 million."

"We'll never make it home by dinnertime," worried Susan. "I think we ought to go back."

"We can't," objected Tiphia quickly. "I must find Eopee. My career as a messenger depends on it. Besides, you may rely on me. Haven't I brought you safely so far?"

"Don't forget you had some help," muttered Rusty.

"Each time I wished to be out of there," insisted Tiphia, ignoring Rusty's remark. "That's the thing you can't seem to get through your earthly heads. If I hadn't wished, nothing would have happened. We'd probably still be there."

"I wonder what those things on Jupiter were," shuddered Susan. "And what they meant to do. Maybe they didn't really mean any harm at all."

"You think it was their idea of a joke to tie us up and leave us there?" asked Rusty scornfully.

"It could have been. Maybe."

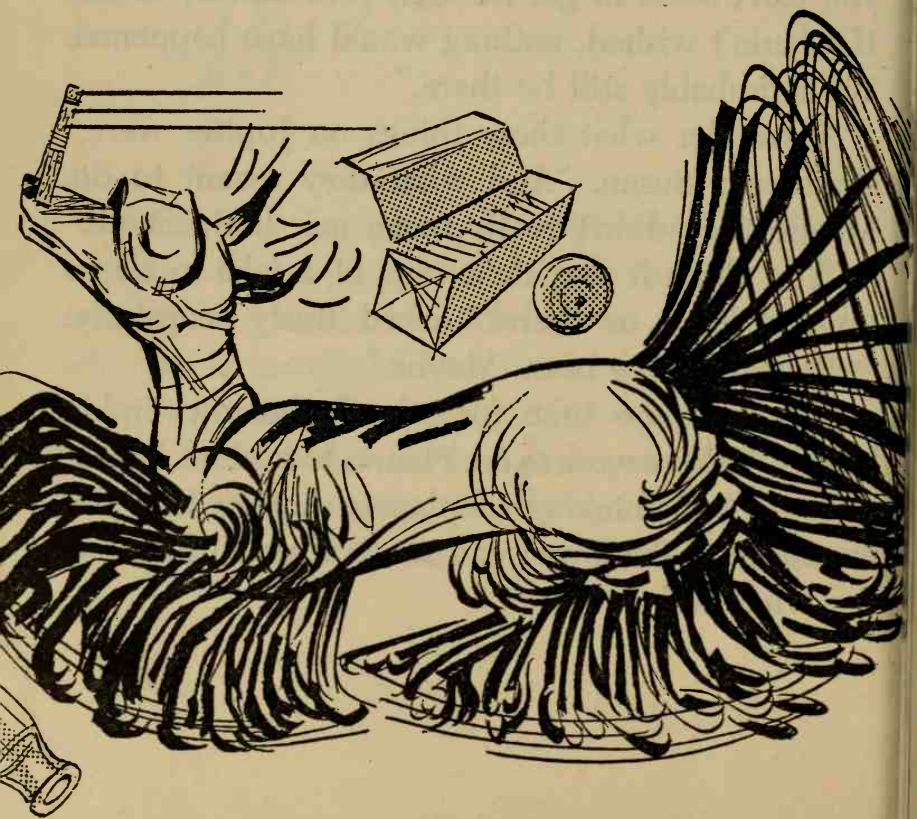
"We have no time for jokes," thought Tiphia briskly. "We've work to do. Planets to explore. Eopee to find. And thinking of planets, Saturn isn't too far ahead. I think you can see it if you'll look out the window."

The children had been floating about aimlessly in the limited space of the cabin, but now they both began to paddle their way toward the window. Cookie, thinking it was some kind of game, followed, her fat little legs working rapidly and her tail going round and round like a propeller.

“Jeepers!” said Rusty in astonishment as soon as he was in a position to look outside.

“Oh!” breathed Susan beside him. “Oh, how beautiful!”

Against the blackness of space hung a glistening golden ball encircled in the middle by a series of sparkling rings which seemed to spin and dance



and give off a separate radiance of their own. As they watched, the ball appeared to turn gently, as though blown by some unseen wind. It looked a little like a mobile cut from gilt paper, and something like one of those fragile gold ornaments made to hang on Christmas trees, yet either of these would have been a pale imitation of Saturn.

"I'm so glad we're going there," said Susan. "I know there's no horried invisible people there like there were on Jupiter."

"I am too," said Rusty. "I've always wondered what those rings really were. Some books say they're cosmic dust, and some say they're tiny moons spinning around. Now we can find out."

"Oh, we're not going to land on Saturn," Tiphia assured them hastily. "That's forbidden. We'll land on Titan."

"Titan?" repeated Susan in a disappointed tone.

"It's one of Saturn's moons," explained Rusty. "It's the biggest one. It's the only satellite in the whole system that has an atmosphere. The rest of them are just like our moons."

"Except Eopee," objected Tiphia.

"I'm beginning to think there isn't any Eopee," muttered Rusty.

"But I want to go to Saturn," protested Susan.

"It's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. Why can't we?"

"Rule 83 in Gwump's 'Handbook for Use by All Messengers,'" remembered Tiphia. "No messenger will attempt to land a flying saucer on the planet Saturn. Moreover, he shall keep a safe distance from the revolving rings. If it becomes necessary to make a landing in Saturn's vicinity, a suitable place to do so may be found on the satellite Titan."

"But why Titan?" protested Rusty. "There's a lot of moons closer than that. I want to get up where I can see what the rings are made of."

"And I want to go to Saturn itself," repeated Susan stubbornly. "You made me go to Jupiter, and I didn't want to. I didn't really want to go to the others, either, but I went."

"Gwump always knows best," worried Tiphia. "And he said Titan."

"But it's so far away," argued Rusty. They had agreed to save the flashlight's batteries for emergencies, but now he turned it on recklessly, flashing the beam around the cabin. He reached up to catch a book which was bobbing by, and a moment later gave a grunt of satisfaction as he began turning the pages rapidly.

"This is the one," he told them. "It gives the names of all the planets and their satellites. Let's

see now—Mars, Jupiter, Saturn. That's what we want. Diameter at equator, 74,200 miles. Rotation 10½ hours—that's almost as fast as Jupiter. Moons—here we are. There are nine of them, and Titan is the sixth moon away."

"How many miles?" asked Susan.

"It doesn't say," frowned Rusty. "But Japetus, the eighth moon, is 2,210,000 miles from Saturn. So Titan is still a long way off if it's only the sixth."

Tiphia was visibly upset. They could hear his thoughts racing back and forth. "Gwump says—the children want—Gwump says—it would be nice to please the children—Gwump says—perhaps it would be all right to go *just* a little closer—Gwump says—"

"Tell you what," said Rusty. "Why don't we compromise? You want to land on the sixth moon. We want to go at least to the first. How about making it the third? That's Tethys."

"I want to go to Saturn," repeated Susan stubbornly.

"It's just possible that one of those closer moons could be Eopee," said Rusty slyly. "Probably you know them by different names than the ones given in the book."

"It's possible," admitted Tiphia reluctantly, "although I hardly think it's probable. We're getting farther away from the sun every minute. And Eopee

is warm. Perhaps it would be wise, after all, to turn back."

"Not until I get a closer look at those rings," cried Rusty in alarm. "We've come this far, Tiphia. Just a few minutes longer won't matter."

They were getting close enough now so that Tiphia could recognize the moons as they went by. Since the space ship had to stay in a course completely outside their orbits, the distance was too great for either Rusty or Susan to make out details, but Tiphia inspected each one carefully, shaking his head as they passed.

"That's not my Eopee," he told them sadly. "Eopee was never like that ice-coated ball."

He rejected Phoebe and Japetus and Hyperion, and the Terra Terror began slowing its speed for Titan just ahead. Titan was not covered with ice. Even from a distance they could see the deep reddish tinge of the satellite.

"It looks to me like Mars," said Susan disapprovingly.

"Yes, it does," agreed Rusty quickly. "It's almost as big. And it probably has ants, too."

"What if it does? I saved you on Mars," remembered Tiphia. "Singlehanded, I lured the ants away from the space ship. It was one of the most glorious rescues of all times."

"But you couldn't do it again. Not without a honey pot," said Rusty. "You don't want to spoil your record, do you?"

"Gwump said to land on Titan," insisted Tiphia, but his protests seemed to be growing a little weaker.

"There's no sense on landing at all," said Rusty. "If we just swing around in a circle, you could get a look at the other five moons, the ones close to Saturn. Then you'd know whether or not one of them was Eopee. Why take the time to land the ship? We'd better keep on going."

"I suppose I could do it," agreed Tiphia. "It is sometimes possible to change course in space, although I've never attempted it myself. We could try. And you're right about saving time by not stopping to land. Gwump didn't say I had to land. He said *if* I needed to. And I don't. Not at all. I can see all I need to from the window."

The ship now began to take a jagged course through the heavens. It went this way and that, sometimes on its side, sometimes completely upside down. This had no effect on its occupants, for since they were floating anyway, they could hardly be upset. Rusty and Susan clutched the wall next to the window, their eyes fastened on the brilliantly ringed planet which drew closer and closer by the second.

"I think I can see colors," decided Susan. "It doesn't look all golden the way it did before. It's sort of greenish at each end."

"I can count the rings," announced Rusty. "There's three of them, with dark spaces in between."

"There's Dione." Tiphia was busy counting moons. "That can't be Eopee. And Tethys coming up. No indeed! Enceladus? Where is Enceladus?"

Rusty glanced at him quickly. The green lizard was so absorbed in the moons that he was forgetting how close they were coming to the planet. Enceladus was the second moon. Only Mimas was nearer. If they circled Mimas, they would certainly be near enough for Rusty to inspect the composition of the rings.

The satellite Enceladus slid by the window and was rejected by Tiphia. He was looking for Mimas now, but the children had eyes only for the planet itself. They were so close that it seemed to fill the whole sky, and only a portion of it could show through the window at one time. Its dazzling reflection filled the cabin so that every object stood out as though they were in broad daylight.

"That's not Eopee, either," thought Tiphia. Since Saturn's great mass was blocking the window, he had been forced to resort to the periscope in order to make his inspection. "Another disappointment.

Well, there's nothing to do now but wish to go back, and I do. I, Tiphia, messenger of Mighty Gwump of Eopee, wish the royal flying saucer to return over the course it has just come."

At first the children, intent on the mysterious beauty of Saturn, were unaware that anything was wrong. Then, little by little, they sensed that Tiphia was upset. His thoughts began to race around as they always did when he was confronted with a perplexing problem.

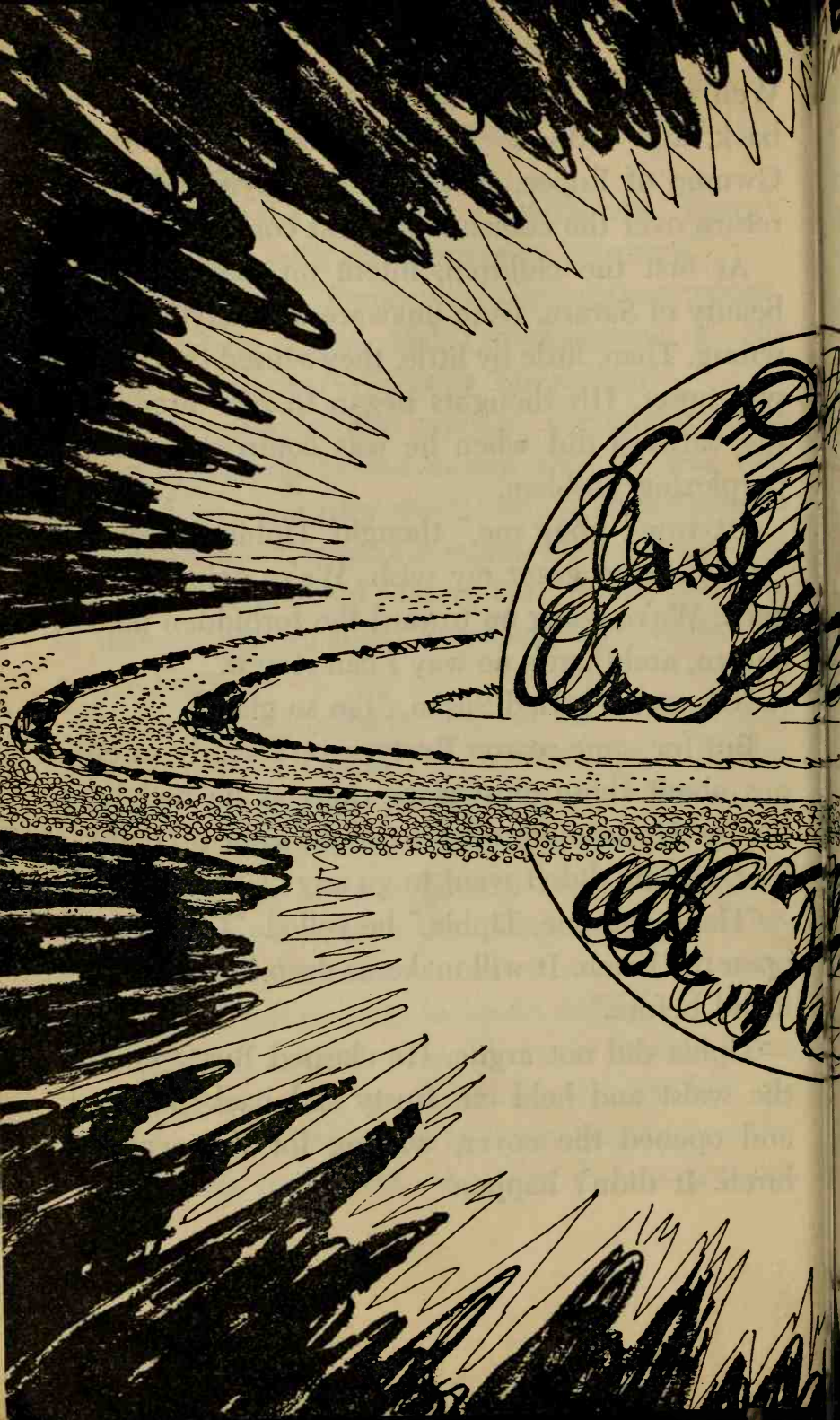
"It won't obey me," thought Tiphia frantically. "It refuses to grant my wish. We're going on, not back. We're going on toward the forbidden planet, Saturn, and there's no way I can stop it."

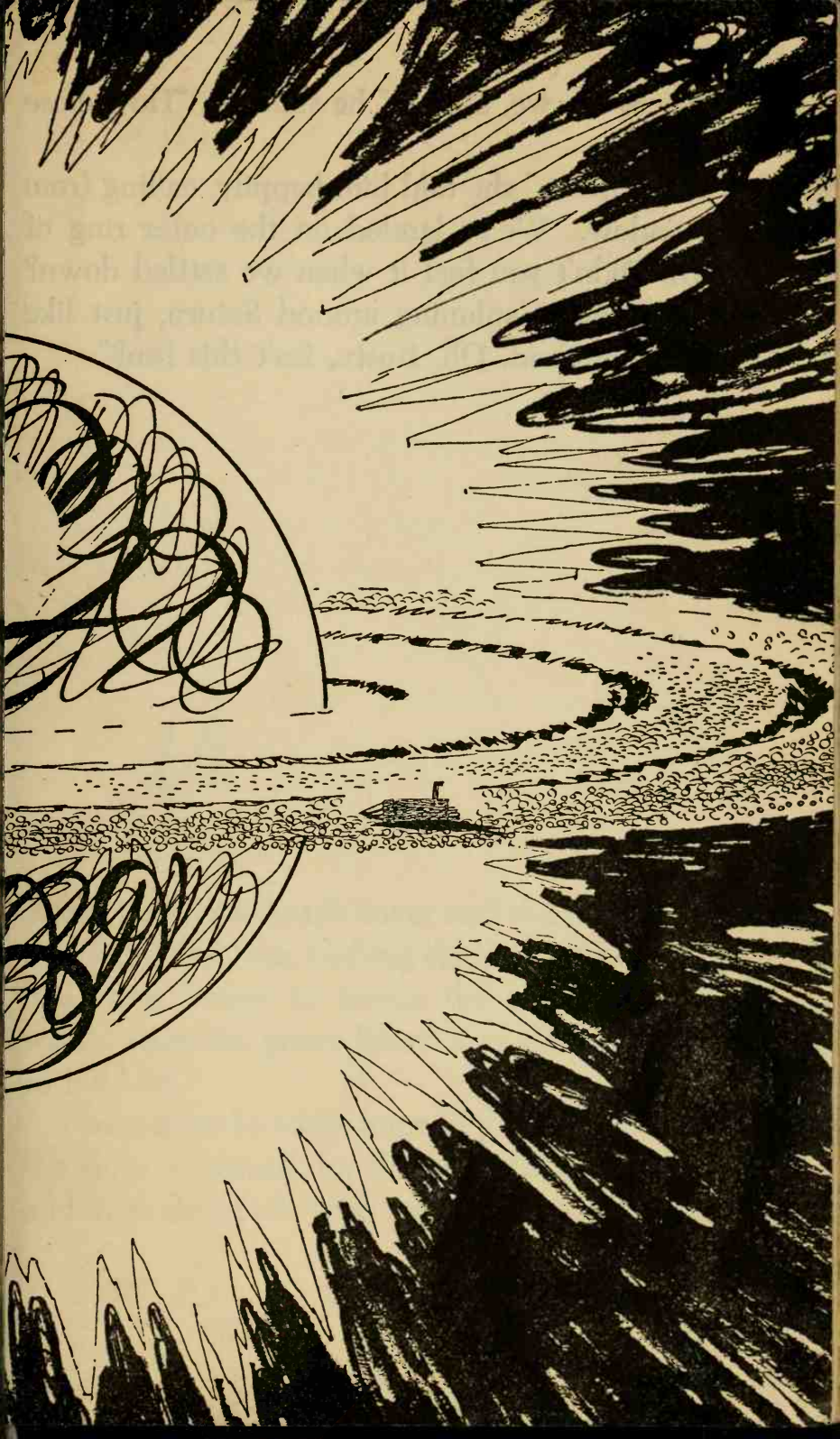
"Oh, good," cried Susan. "I'm so glad."

But for some reason Rusty wasn't nearly so curious about those mysterious rings as he had been before. He seemed to have caught some of Tiphia's fear, and he didn't want to go any closer.

"Hang onto me, Tiphia," he yelled. "I'm going to open the hatch. It will make us drop back, the way it did before."

Tiphia did not argue. He clasped Rusty around the waist and held on. Rusty slid back the hook and opened the cover, waiting for the expected lurch. It didn't happen.





“Where are we, Susan?” he shouted. “How close are we?”

“We’re there,” she told him happily, calling from the window. “We’ve landed on the outer ring of Saturn. Didn’t you feel it when we settled down? And now we’re spinning around Saturn, just like a merry-go-round. Oh, Rusty, isn’t this fun?”

14

Rusty closed the hatch cover and slid the hook over the nail. There was nothing else he could do. Tiphia had been forced to loosen the grasp around his waist, since the green lizard was shaking too hard to hold on.

There must be some force of gravity surrounding the rings of Saturn, for things had stopped floating and had dropped once more to the floor. Rusty

stepped over a tumbled heap of books and scattered supplies so that he could look out of the window.

As Susan said, they had settled down on the outer ring of the planet and were now being carried around with it. It was not the dizzy spin that it had seemed from a distance, but rather an inevitable circling at a leisurely speed. The three rings were clearly evident now, each of them separated by dark strips of space.

The outer ring, on which they were riding, was made up of billions of small, ice-coated moons, as thickly collected as gravel on a river's bed. Next to this was a wide dark area of space, after which came a second brilliantly shining ring, probably made of even smaller icy moons. Next was another dark area, then the third ring, which seemed to be transparent and sparkled brightest of all. Enclosed by the rings was the planet Saturn, great and golden as a topaz. Like the rings, it also revolved, and the sun's reflection caught upon it, flashing like a polished mirror.

"Oh, Rusty," said Susan in a hushed voice. "Just look! There's a palace, all shining with jewels, and a drawbridge that you can let up and down. And look! There comes a knight on a white horse. He has a white plume in his helmet."

"Where?" demanded Rusty, rubbing his eyes. All he could see was the brightly shining expanse of the planet.

"There! On Saturn," said Susan impatiently. "You'll have to look hard. I couldn't see it myself at first, but after you keep looking for a long time it becomes very plain. There's a fountain, too, and the water's all rainbow-colored as it comes down."

"I think you're nuts," said Rusty frankly. "I don't see any palace or fountain. Do you, Tiphia?"

"No." The green lizard shook his head. His own eyes were fastened on the revolving Saturn as though they were hypnotized. "I see Eopee! I see the pink grass, and the blue ocean that smells of hyacinths. I see all the birds and beasts who live there in harmony. They're dancing in the sunlight. And I see Gwump, Mighty Gwump. He is looking into the sky. He is looking for me. And he is not angry. He is only worried!"

"The palace is gone," said Susan in a disappointed voice. "It just sort of faded away. Oh, but this is even better. I see something else. There's lots of children playing. They're playing ball, Rusty, see? And there are girls on the team as well as boys. Look! That's a girl just coming up to bat now. Look, Rusty! Look!"

Rusty looked. He stared at the mirrored sides of

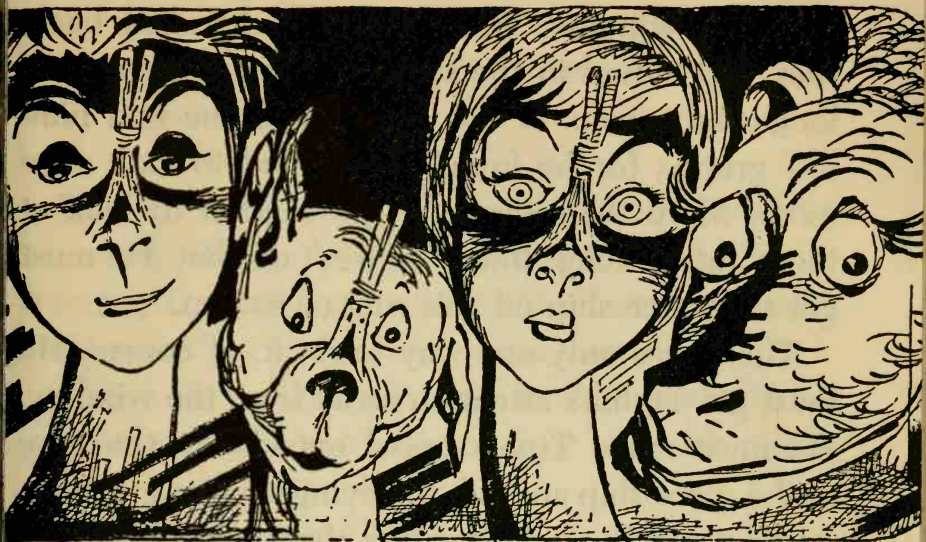
the planet on the opposite side of the protecting rings. He saw no palace, no Eopee, no ball game. But as he stared, something else came into view, dimly at first, then with such an intensity that he could see every detail.

He saw a parking lot. It seemed to stretch for miles, and every inch was occupied by red and blue and yellow and black cars, the kind he especially admired. They were like the pictured advertisement he had carried around in his pocket. As he watched, a group of boys about his own age appeared. They inspected the cars, then each one selected the one he liked best and drove it away. The scene before Rusty changed, and he was following the boys in their cars, following them to a race track where they drove around and around with no one to stop them.

“Jeepers,” said Rusty in disbelief.

Beside him Cookie whined with delight, the way she always did when she was about to receive a fresh bone with some of the meat and gristle still clinging. Rusty glanced at her absently, then pulled himself up sharply. Cookie’s eyes were fastened on the revolving planet. She was wriggling all over with excitement.

“Don’t look!” cried Rusty quickly, and tried to push them away from the window.



If everyone saw something different on Saturn—saw the thing he most wanted to see—the planet must be exerting some hypnotic charm. Rusty remembered a story his teacher had read to them in school about some ancient warriors who, in order to get past a certain treacherous coast, had to stuff cotton in their ears. Otherwise they would have listened to the songs of some beautiful mermaids—Rusty thought they were mermaids, certainly they weren't ordinary girls, for who would listen to them?—and would have been lured to death on the rocks. Perhaps those visions on Saturn were something like that.

It was impossible to get any of the three away

from the window. When Rusty had jerked back, they had closed in the space so that there was no longer any room. It was just as well, he told himself grimly, for he found he wanted to look once more. More than anything, he wanted to look at those automobiles. But he mustn't do that. He must get the space ship off this ring of Saturn.

There was only one way to do it, of course. He must get Tiphia's attention away from the window. He must make Tiphia crawl outside on the nose of the space ship and rub the flying saucers together. As Rusty understood it, when that particular metal was brought into contact with another piece of the same metal, it caused one of the pieces to go flying off into space. That's what had happened when Gwump banged his teacup and saucer together. That's how it started flying out into space in the first place.

He jerked frantically at the green lizard's tail and was rewarded by one of Tiphia's curious songs without music.

*On Eopee we have no foes,
We have no colds to plague the nose
And even skunks smell like a rose,
On Eopee.
Oh, life is simple, not complex,*

*We never have to wash our necks
Because there is no dirt to vex
On Eopee.*

"Susie," cried Rusty, giving the green lizard up as a bad job. He would have to have help in distracting Tiphia's attention. "Susie, we're in trouble, and you've got to help me. Susie, listen!"

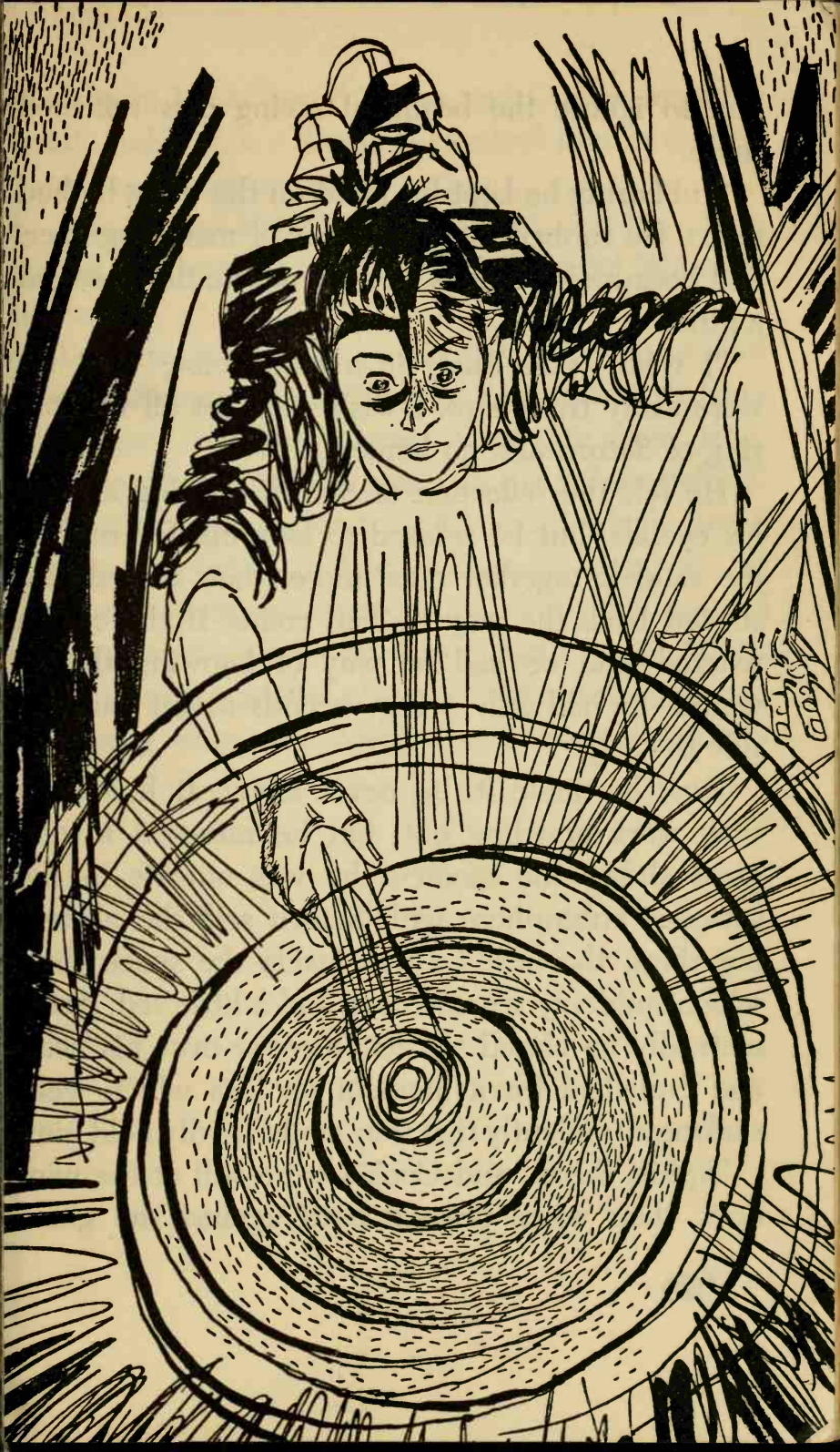
"Oh, look!" exclaimed Susan in excitement. "That girl hit a home run, and the boy before her only fanned out!"

Clearly Rusty could look for no help from Susan. It was up to him alone. He picked up the metal roll which, unfolded, was a flying saucer. He hadn't the slightest idea how to go about the job. Tiphia had said Gwump banged the cup against the saucer, but when the green lizard had been busy at the nose of the ship, those inside had heard no banging. They had heard only a soft rubbing noise, a gentle clinking. Perhaps, too, there was something Tiphia said, some special word which impelled the saucer to take off into space. If there were, Rusty didn't know it. The only thing Tiphia had mentioned was wishing. Perhaps one was supposed to wish that he was someplace else all the while he was rubbing the saucers together. It was only a chance, but it was worth trying.

Rusty tucked the folded saucer under his arm and opened the hatch. Instantly he was greeted by a blast of icy air. For a moment he hesitated, thinking he should go back and swallow some of Gwump's transforming drops. Then he decided against it. He must work quickly, and there would be no time for that.

He climbed up on the top of the ship, trying not to look at the revolving planet. The rough lumber was coated with ice and slippery. He tried to clutch with his fingernails but found that it was more satisfactory to plant the palm of his hand flat against the ice. The heat of his body was not enough to melt the thick layer, but at the same time it was easier to hang on that way. Once he glanced down, and all the twinkling little moons in the ring seemed to be laughing at him. He glanced away as quickly as he could.

It took longer than he expected to crawl forward to where the flying saucer had been nailed over the nose of the ship. He was trembling with fright and cold by the time he reached there. His fingers were so numb that they could hardly hold the metal roll. Although he kept his eyes down, concentrating on Gwump's saucer, he could almost feel the pull of the glistening planet through his lids. It was as though Saturn was willing him to look again, daring



him to ignore the beautiful racing cars reflected there.

Stubbornly he kept his mind on the thing he had to do. He rubbed the two pieces of metal together, and because his fingers were so numb, they banged a little.

"I wish," said Rusty in a loud voice, "that we were away from here. I wish we'd get off this old ring of Saturn and go home."

He felt the reflection of Saturn burning against his eyelids, but he refused to look up. He rubbed the saucers together once more, then turned and started back the way he had come. If the charm worked—and he had no way of knowing that it would—he had only a few seconds to get back inside the ship.

How he made it, he never knew. It had been slow work crawling out, but he returned in one great slide. One moment he was outside in the sub-zero atmosphere with Saturn and the glistening rings, the next he was inside the space ship, which suddenly seemed dark and a little sad. Automatically he closed the hatch cover over his head and crouched for a moment on legs which were shaking so violently that they could hardly hold him.

Tiphia, Susan, and Cookie were still at the window, their noses pressed hard against the glass.

Suddenly Rusty heard Susan and Cookie begin to wail, and Tiphia's thoughts reached him in a great surge of disappointment.

"Oh no, no! My Eopee! I see you, and now I am being torn away from you. Stop the ship! We must go back!"

But the space ship would not stop. There had been the sound of cracking ice as it tore itself from the frozen ring, then it was soaring into space, leaving the most beautiful planet in the galaxy behind.

Rusty began looking hastily for Tiphia's drawstring bag before it became too dark to see. He needed Gwump's transforming drops badly, and as soon as they recovered from their enchantment he was sure that the others would need them too. It had grown very cold indeed inside the Terra Terror.

15

Tiphia was very upset about Rusty's method of getting them away from the rings of Saturn once he found out about it.

"You had no instruction," he worried. "It takes years of training before Gwump allows a messenger to touch one of his saucers. It has to be done in the approved manner."

"It worked, didn't it?" said Rusty huffily.

"It certainly did," answered Susan.

Now that they were far away from Saturn's spell, she was a little ashamed of herself for having fallen under it. Rusty had been stronger than she. He had fought against it, and only because of his bravery had they broken loose at all.

"But you didn't say where you wished to go," insisted Tiphia stiffly. "You said 'home,' which gives the saucer entirely too much leeway. You should have wished for a specific place. How can you expect a piece of metal to know what you consider home?"

"Well, anyway, we're going somewhere," said Rusty. "And that's better than just spending the rest of our lives riding round and round."

"And probably starving to death while we were doing it," shuddered Susan. "Eventually we're bound to get hungry, but I'd never have known about it so long as I was looking at that ball game."

"We'd have frozen to death before then," corrected Rusty. "You three didn't even know the pills were wearing off."

Even Tiphia had to admit that was true, but the reminder set him to worrying again about the number of colored drops left in the drawstring bag. They had swallowed three apiece upon leaving Saturn, and only a small handful now remained.

"Why don't you look out the window and see if you can tell where we're going?" coaxed Susan, hoping to divert the green lizard's attention to pleasanter matters. "Doesn't Gwump give his messengers instructions on astronomy?"

"To be sure," agreed Tiphia, brightening up. "And I was always very good at it, too. I got high marks on all those examinations."

In the darkness they felt his body brush past them as he made his way to the window. A second later they could sense his excitement.

"Ursa Major is just above us!"

"Ursa Major is the Big Dipper," Rusty told Susan. "And it's over Uranus. We must be going to that planet next."

"I think you're right," nodded Tiphia. "I think that's where the saucer means to take us. Come and look for yourself."

"I'm not sure I want to look. It might be like Saturn," objected Susan, but nevertheless she followed Rusty to the window.

There was no doubt but that they were rapidly approaching a huge, greenish planet.

"I must start checking satellites," decided Tiphia, reaching for the periscope. "Perhaps Eopee is here."

"I doubt it. Uranus is 1,782 million miles from the sun. It's going to be even colder than Jupiter

and Saturn, and you said Eopee was warm," said Rusty. Then he added thoughtfully, "It does have five moons, though."

Tiphia began to concentrate. They could read his thoughts as he recognized and checked off the satellites of Uranus.

"Miranda? No, that's not Eopee. Oberon? No. Titania? Where is Titania? Wrong again. Umbriel?"

"I'm scared," confessed Susan to Rusty. "After what happened on Saturn, I'm not sure it's safe to go to Uranus."

Rusty didn't answer. He had lost a great deal of his own original enthusiasm for stars and wasn't at all sure he wanted to visit Uranus himself. Meanwhile, they were coming closer and closer to the planet. From farther away, its glow in the dark sky had been of a definite greenish hue, and now the color began to grow even more intense.

"Maybe it's covered with grass," suggested Susan hopefully.

"It couldn't be," frowned Rusty. "It's too cold for grass to grow. At least the kind of grass we have at home."

"Umbriel, no," rejected Tiphia as they skirted the orbit of still another moon. "Ariel? No, no, that's certainly not Eopee. Another disappointment."

Everything dropped suddenly to the floor of the

space ship by way of announcement that they were now in the gravitational pull of Uranus. Almost at the same moment, the blackness of the cabin was dissolved in daylight, and blue sky peeped through the window.

“Atmosphere!” cried Rusty. “We’re going to land!”

In excitement, they all crowded around the window, trying to get a glimpse of the planet before the space ship settled. All they could see was a vast expanse of green. It could hardly have been trees or grass. It was too solid for that, and there were no shadings such as are made by different kinds of foliage. It certainly wasn’t water, for although the sun shone full upon its surface there was no reflected glitter.

“What is it?” asked Susan timidly.

“I don’t know,” admitted Rusty. “We’ll land in a minute, then we’ll know.”

But they didn’t land. The ship came very close to the planet, but not close enough for a good inspection. Then, as though it had suddenly changed its mind, it turned a complete circle in the air and started soaring. The green planet grew smaller as they watched, and the blue sky at the window was blotted out by darkness. Once more they were in outer space and traveling at an even faster rate of speed than they had ever done before.

"What happened?" demanded Rusty.

"It's your fault," Tiphia reminded him. "You didn't tell the saucer where to go. You said you wished to go home. While it may not know where home is, it certainly knew home wasn't Uranus."

"Maybe it will take us to Eopee," suggested Susan. "Eopee is home to the saucer."

"Oh, do you think so?" For the first time since he had been forced to leave Saturn, Tiphia was really happy.

"I hope so," Susan shivered, "because I'm getting cold again."

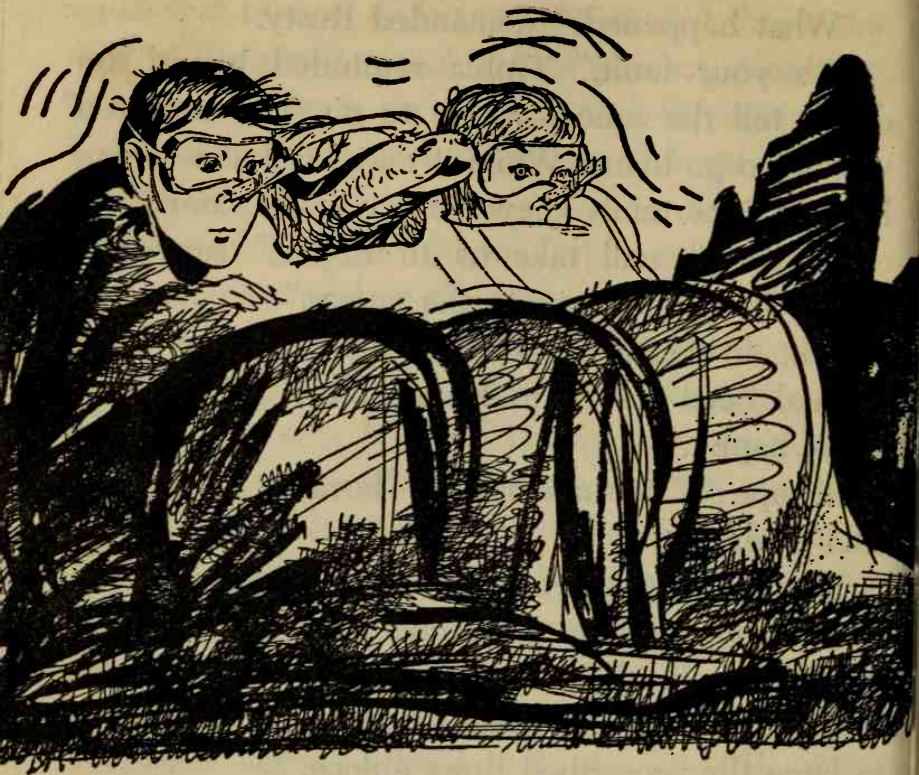
Tiphia dutifully reached for the drawstring bag. He was longer than usual passing out the drops, and they realized that he was counting them. There were just fifteen left. It took twelve for all of them to have the proscribed three apiece.

"Maybe we'd better wait a little," suggested Susan bravely. "We could wrap up in Mother's fur coat."

"Perhaps it would be better to wait," agreed Tiphia, closing the bag.

They all huddled together in one corner and spread Mrs. Northrup's fur coat over them. Although it helped some, they were still cold.

"I hope we don't waste time going to Neptune or Pluto," said Rusty. "Neptune's Uranus's twin. We're likely to find more of that green stuff, what-



ever it is, and more cold. Pluto's even colder yet, and it's so far away from the sun that it's almost dark there."

"Don't talk about cold," pleaded Susan through chattering teeth.

"Home, home," thought Tiphia earnestly. "I wish to go to Eopee! I wish to go to Eopee!"

It was quiet in the space ship, quiet and dark and cold. They could tell that they must be moving rapidly by the speed with which the stars changed

places in the windowpane. Otherwise, there was no sensation of motion at all. Suddenly, however, the stars began to move up and down as well as from side to side. Rusty watched them for a moment, then, despite the cold, he crawled out from under the coat to investigate for himself. A moment later he called to them from the window.

"Tiphia! Susie! Look! I think we must have changed into a satellite. We seem to be going round and round something."

They could feel a slight pull of gravity. True, it wasn't a great force such as was given off by the planets. It wasn't even as much gravity as they had felt on the moon. But Rusty's supplies no longer floated. They would even have stayed on the shelves, except that the circumference of the circle made by the Terra Terror was so small that they were constantly toppling off.

"I can't see anything," said Susan. "How can we be a satellite if there's nothing for us to revolve around?"

"Something must be there, though," insisted Rusty stubbornly. "The funny thing is that we're still going forward at the same time that we go around and around. I just can't think what it could be."

"Nobody can think when they're so cold," decided Tiphia. "The moment has come to swallow

our transforming drops. When we are warm enough, doubtless we can decided what must be done, if anything.”

The drawstring bag was no longer where he thought he had left it, and the flashlight, too, was mislaid. They had to grope around in the darkness until Susan called out that she had found the light. Rusty wanted to turn its beam out the window immediately, but Tiphia insisted they all swallow transforming drops first.

“Otherwise we might become engrossed in our new problem and freeze to death without knowing what’s happening to us,” he reminded them.

It was wonderful to feel warm again. Their icy fingers and toes thawed instantly, with none of that burning sensation which always happened on Earth when anyone first began to warm too cold hands before a fire. The pink drops made them feel better, also, for although they had hardly been conscious of the fact, they must have been trying to breathe once more, and the need for air had given them a funny, stuffed-up feeling.

“Now,” said Rusty firmly, “I’m going to shine the flashlight out the window and see what this is all about.”

At first they could see nothing at all, except a sparkle or two as the light seemed to catch mo-

mentarily on a reflection. There was no doubt but that they were circling something in their dizzy flight forward, for the untwinkling stars surrounding them had become almost a blur as they went round and round.

"You aren't holding the light steady," complained Susan. "How can you expect us to see? Besides, I don't think there's anything there."

"Oh, but there is," corrected Tiphia. They could tell that he was frightened. "We've been gathered up by a new comet in the making. This is the birth-place for them, out here where it's so cold. Ours is just starting on its race to the sun. We're being carried along with it."

16

“Well, at least,” said Rusty in a voice which tried to sound brave, “we’re headed back to the sun. Comets always aim for the sun. As long as we stay with it, we won’t get any colder, and eventually we should get quite warm.”

“I don’t see how it can be a comet when it doesn’t have any tail,” objected Susan.

“It will have one, though,” Rusty told her. “Com-

ets are made like snowballs. They roll around, picking up atoms and molecules and frozen gases. It takes a long time for them to form, billions of years. Then pretty soon they start rolling toward the sun. They go faster and faster, and when they get close enough, the sunlight begins to melt the gases. They don't drop off. They just follow along in the comet's orbit, and the sunlight pushes them back to make the tail."

"Are we going to be part of the tail?"

"I guess we are."

"I'd better wish us away from here," decided Tiphia hastily. "I've no desire to be part of the gassy tail of a comet."

Before he had time to do anything about it, however, the ship lurched and seemed to settle back before it continued spinning forward. The glass at the window, which a moment before had been dark, was now filled with glowing light. It was like a continuous display of fireworks on a Fourth of July night, for it glittered and blazed and flared up in a shower of multicolored sparks.

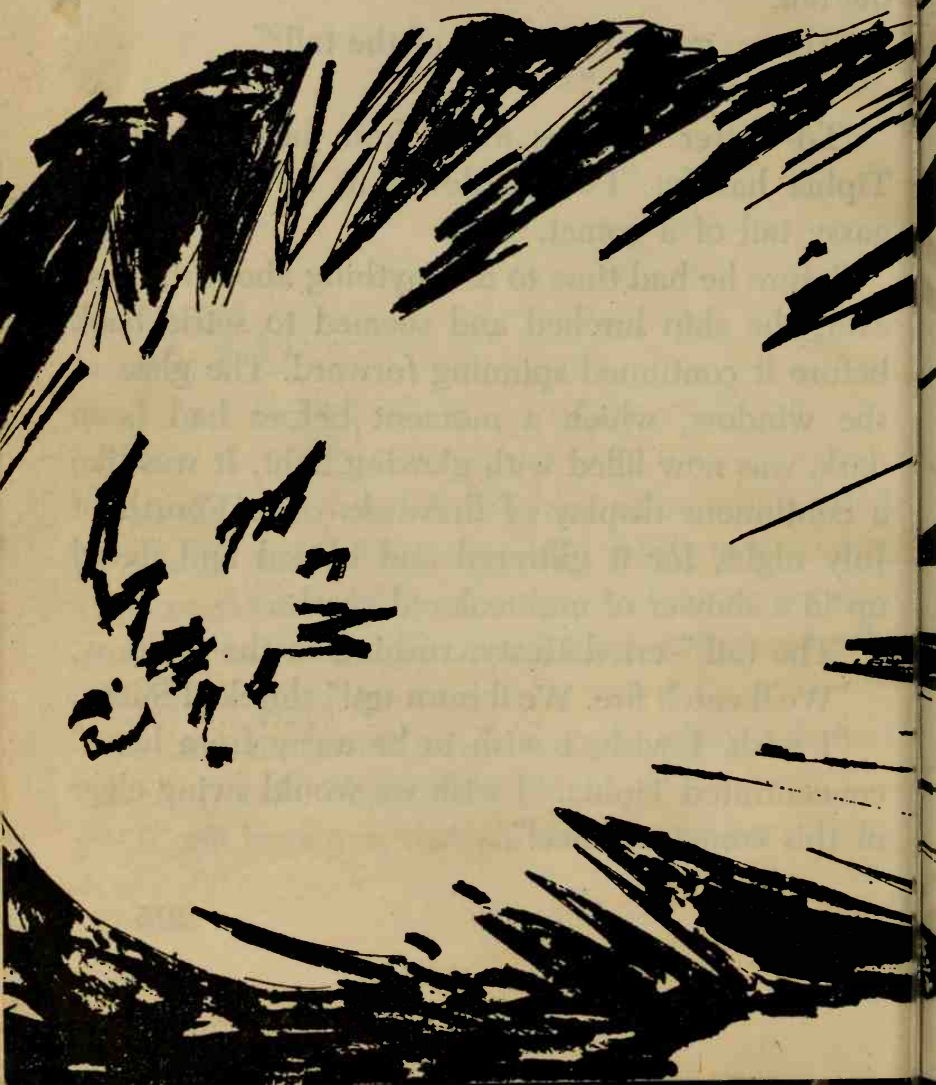
"The tail!" cried Rusty, rushing to the window.

"We'll catch fire. We'll burn up!" shrieked Susan.

"I wish, I wish, I wish to be away from here," concentrated Tiphia. "I wish we would swing clear of this comet at once!"

“We don’t seem to be afire,” said Rusty in surprise. “I can’t understand it. That stuff is blazing away all around us, but the wood of the ship isn’t even scorched.”

“It’s like sparklers,” decided Susan. “You know, those things on wire that you light? The wire gets hot, but the sparks don’t burn you at all. I sort of





like it," she decided after a moment. "It's a lot better than traveling along in the dark."

"Maybe it is," agreed Rusty thoughtfully. "And you know, since we're traveling back the way we came, I think I've got an idea."

"What?"

"If we keep on going, pretty soon we'll come back toward the Earth. Then if we can just figure some way to get loose from the comet's tail, we can drop right down, and we'll be home."

"We'll probably land someplace in the middle of China," said Susan.

"Can you think of a better idea?"

"Well, no," she admitted reluctantly. "At least we'll be on Earth and we won't have to worry about air to breathe. How long will it take us to get there? I'm beginning to get hungry."

"Eat some crackers."

"I'm not hungry enough for that."

"You will be," prophesied Rusty, looking very glum. "I just remembered. Comets don't travel too fast. Not as fast as flying saucers, anyway. It will be years and years before we get back to Earth if we stick with this."

"There!" Tiphia smiled at them in pleased satisfaction. "Everything's taken care of. It won't be

long now until we're on our own again. You see, I've wished to be rid of the comet."

"Oh, Tiphia," protested Susan. "Wishing isn't enough."

"It's always been before," Tiphia assured her mildly. "I was a little worried about the wishes coming true so far away from Eopee, but they have. Every time I've wished for something, it has happened."

"But don't you see? Somebody always did something to make it happen. On Venus it was Cookie's sharp teeth that got us away from the bouncing balls. And on Mars it was the honey jar that got rid of the ants. And on Jupiter I came after you with the saucer, and on Saturn Rusty did something about getting us away. Maybe your wishing helped, but it takes more than that."

"It never hurts to help the wishing along a bit," agreed Tiphia. "What do you suggest?"

"We could try opening the hatch," said Rusty finally. "It made us change course when we wanted to get out of the path of the meteors."

"But I wished them out of the way," objected Tiphia. "Every time I saw one in our path, I wished and wished."

"And while you were wishing, I did something



about it," said Rusty flatly. "I'm sorry, Tiphia, but I don't think your wishes have done much good."

Teardrops caught on Tiphia's long lashes and squeezed under his goggles to roll down his scaly cheeks.

"If that's true, I haven't been any help at all,"

he sobbed. "You three have taken care of me. I haven't done anything to help you one bit. I only brought you into danger."

"Of course you've helped, Tiphia," cried Susan quickly. She glared at Rusty and came over to pat the shaking, scaly shoulders. "None of us could have carried the honey jar on Mars. And don't forget, they were your transforming drops. If you hadn't shared them with us, you'd have plenty left now for yourself."

"That isn't enough," cried Tiphia. "Gwump's messengers are expected to be alert. They must meet any emergency. And I'm a failure."

"No, you're not," said Rusty. It made him feel uncomfortable to see anyone cry. "We'll get out of this somehow. I'll try opening the hatch. Maybe we can pull ourselves loose that way."

"Yes, do," agreed Tiphia earnestly. "Open the hatch as you did before."

"I'll watch at the window," volunteered Susan, "and tell you if anything happens."

Rusty slid the hook off the nail and held open the hatch cover as high as he could reach. The light from the comet's tail grew even more brilliant than before, but the ship continued on its round circuit undisturbed.



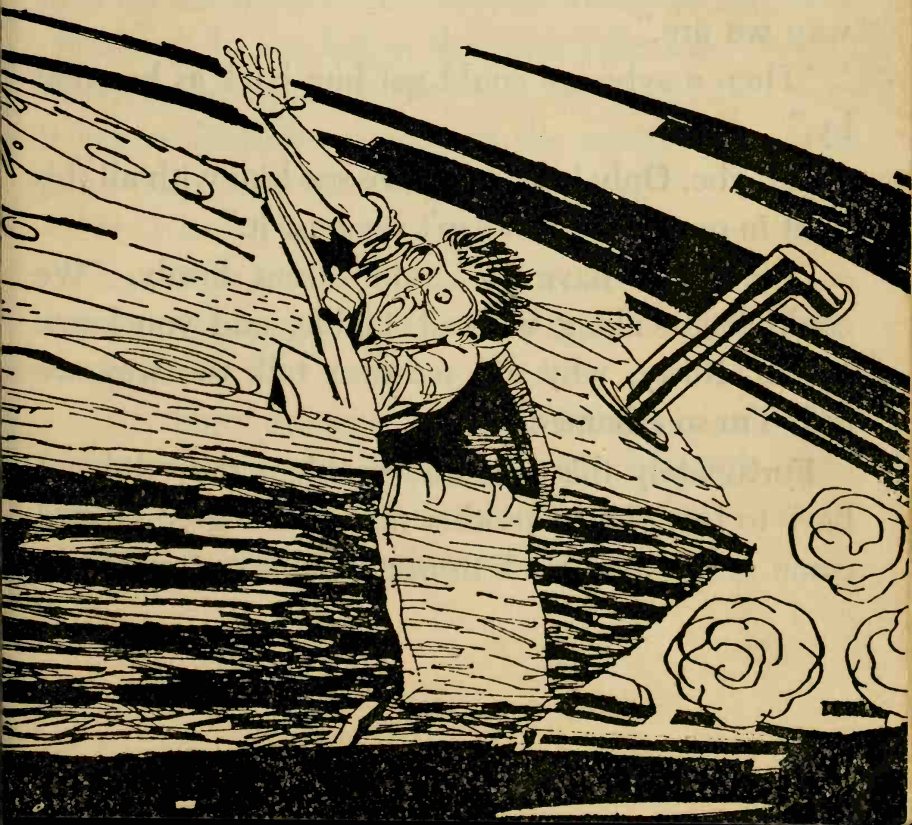
"Nothing happened." Rusty's voice was filled with disappointment as he closed the hatch.

"Try again," encouraged Susan. "Maybe it will next time."

Rusty raised the cover once more, and as he did so he felt himself being brushed aside and off his feet. A great green body forced its way through the opening and disappeared into the fireworks display outside.

"Tiphia! Tiphia! Come back!" shrieked Rusty.

"What's the matter? Where did he go?" cried



Susan in alarm. From her post at the window, she hadn't seen what was happening.

"He's out there. On the nose of the ship," said Rusty. "Tiphia, come back here. You'll fall off! You'll get hurt!"

Cookie sensed the alarm in Rusty's voice and began to bark, while Susan left the window and came over to crouch beside Rusty. They both stared up at the changing, glittering, fiery mass through the opening.

"If he fell off, where would he go?" whispered Susan.

"Nowhere. He'd just be another satellite. He'd just float round and round the comet's tail, the same way we are."

"Then maybe we could get him back as he went by."

"Maybe. Only how could we see him with all this light in our eyes? You can't see past it."

"We'd just have to," said Susan firmly. "We couldn't get along without Tiphia, and you know it. Oh, Rusty, why did we ever talk the way we did? I'm so ashamed."

Fortunately this was one problem they did not have to face, for in another minute the green lizard came scrambling back through the opening. Rusty

slammed the hatch cover in place the moment Tiphia was inside.

"I did it," Tiphia thought proudly. "Now no one can ever say I'm no help."

The ship gave a jerk which threw them all off their feet. When they picked themselves up, they found they were once more floating freely about the cabin and that the sparkling light at the window was growing dimmer.

"What did you do?" gasped Susan.

"He got us free from the comet!" shouted Rusty. "Look! There it is behind us. We're really making time now!"

Tiphia smiled at them proudly and loosened his grip on the silvery roll of metal which he had been clutching. In the last of the faint light now coming through the window, they saw the flying saucer as it began floating airily about the cabin. Then once more they were traveling in darkness.

"That was a brave thing to do," said Susan. "Going out there in all that fire and rubbing the saucers together. I would have been afraid. Did you burn yourself?"

"I've singed my eyelashes, but they'll grow again. There was nothing else about me to catch fire," Tiphia reminded her. "On Eopee, we're of more practical construction than you earthlings."

"I'd have been scared too," said Rusty honestly. "Ice was bad enough. Fire is a hundred times worse."

"Well, so was I, as far as that goes," admitted Tiphia. "Let's think of something else and forget it."

But it was hard to find anything else to think about. Their minds were too filled with relief at being rid of the comet. Even Tiphia's thoughts kept coming back to it as he remembered those frightening moments when he had literally walked through the burning gases to reach the nose of the ship. True, their flames had not seared the heavy scales on his body, but behind the dark glasses his eyes had burned and smarted. He was thankful now for the darkness which allowed him to relax. Finally he stopped thinking entirely, and the children, knowing that he was asleep, remained quiet. Tiphia had earned a rest.

"Let's see if we can tell where we are," whispered Rusty finally, when he had remained silent as long as he possibly could. "Seems to me we've been riding a long time."

He paddled his way to the window, and Susan followed, glad of the opportunity to be doing anything at all. Rusty reached there first and immediately called out in surprise:

"Tiphia! Look! Wake up, we're passing a planet!"

Susan grasped the edge of the window and held on, her eyes staring hard through the pane of glass.

"It's red!" she exclaimed. "It's a red planet, and there's black lines——"

"Canals!" cried Rusty. "That's Mars, just as sure as anything. Or it was." For by this time the Terra Terror had sped swiftly by, leaving the red planet far behind. "We must be going back the way we came."

"Maybe we took a short cut," argued Susan. "We haven't passed Saturn or Jupiter, or gone through the Rocky Belt."

"There isn't a short cut, so we must have passed them," insisted Rusty thoughtfully. "We're going faster now than we did when we came. We're going so fast that you can't even see the stars. I hope we'll be able to stop whenever we get to wherever it is the saucer's taking us."

"We'd better wake Tiphia," said Susan in a frightened voice. "I think the ship's running away with us."

It took them some moments to locate the green lizard, but they finally found him, stretched at full length, gently floating just under the ceiling. Rusty got on one side and Susan on the other. Both of them shook as hard as they could.

At first they could not rouse him at all, then gradually they were aware that Tiphia was beginning one of his little songs.

*A messenger from Eopee
Of Andromeda galaxy,
My training is the very best,
I've passed with honors, every test.
I represent—*

At this point the song broke off. Susan had succeeded in arousing Tiphia with a mighty shake. She did it alone, for at the second line Rusty had fallen back in surprise. The long hours spent over the astronomy books had not been in vain. He knew now where Eopee was. Tiphia's song, uttered in those moments when he was still half asleep, had contained the answer.

"Tiphia!" Rusty cried in excitement. "You're looking in the wrong galaxy. Your satellite isn't in this one at all. You come from Andromeda galaxy!"

"Andromeda!" Tiphia was instantly wide awake. Susan, who was still clutching his shoulder, felt him begin to quiver with delight. "Of course! I remember now. I remember perfectly. I started out. I came a long way. It's different traveling from one galaxy to another. You have to make different ad-

justments. You can't just set the saucer controls from one planet to the next the way we did. You have to— But never mind. I won't bore you with that. Anyway, I reached your galaxy. There I was in the Milky Way, and I'd forgotten the name of the planet for which I was bound. Earth is such a small, insignificant planet, you know. It was my first mission, and I was nervous about it. It's no wonder I was confused."

"Andromeda galaxy!" repeated Rusty in awe. "That's a long way. You had plenty of time to forget. Andromeda galaxy is a million and a half light-years away. And light goes over six trillion miles a year."

"It is quite a trip," agreed Tiphia. "But so long as I know where I'm going, I don't mind. I enjoy travel."

"Will you be able to get back there if it's so far?" asked Susan gravely. "There are only three transforming drops left."

"I'll just make it," Tiphia assured her. "Three is exactly the number I'll need for the journey."

With no warning at all, they were thrown flat on the floor. The milk bottle, the box of crackers and the other supplies came tumbling after them. It was no longer dark inside the space ship, for blue sky was peeping in at the window. They had reached

the atmosphere surrounding some planet, and its gravitational force was pulling them toward it.

"Where? What?" sputtered Rusty.

Cookie began to bark loudly as their ears were filled with the sound of rushing air. It was impossible to stand or even sit up. They were going too fast.

"I think Cookie's clothespin's come loose," gasped Susan. She was feeling suddenly breathless herself, as though her lungs were crying out for the air which had been too long denied them.

Tiphia laughed indulgently.

"It won't matter," he explained. "She doesn't need it any more. Neither do you. Take them off, both of you. You're home."

With a whish and a slap, the Terra Terror settled down and was still. After a moment, Rusty crawled to the window and looked out. They were resting in the same spot from which they had started, in the workshop half of the Adamses' garage.



17

Nothing had changed very much in the time they had been gone. The workshop looked just the same. The box of empty Coke bottles which Rusty was going to carry down to the grocery someday was still there. The hammers and box of nails which they had used to nail the flying saucer in place still lay on the ledge under the window.

Susan went to the door and looked outside. There

was no sound of lawn mowers in the neighborhood now, but she could hear the voices of small children playing in the distance. The pavements were dry, and the rambler rose was a splotch of crimson against the side of the house, so it was still summer. Perhaps, though, it was another summer. It seemed that they had been gone a long time. She filled her lungs with air, breathing as deeply as she could, and felt gingerly at her nose. It still felt pinched. She wondered if it would ever recover from the clamp of the clothespin.

Cookie was running this way and that, wagging her tail and wriggling with excitement, but neither Tiphia nor Rusty had said anything. Susan turned back to them and realized that Tiphia was thinking his good-bys.

"I'm sorry that I took you into so much danger," thought Tiphia earnestly. "I can see now that it was a very foolhardy thing for me to do. Earth people are not ready to go flying into space. Perhaps someday they will be, but the time has not yet come. I put your lives into great peril, and only because I was selfish. I was thinking of myself, trying to be a good messenger and recover Gwump's saucer. They aren't always recovered. An experienced messenger would know when it was better

to return empty-handed. But I'm not experienced. I'm afraid I'm not a good messenger at all."

"Oh yes, you are, Tiphia," cried Rusty. "You are a good one. I was the one who was selfish. I wouldn't give you back something that belonged to you. But I will now!"

He snatched up one of the hammers and began working at the nails which held the saucer fast to the Terra Terror. As before, they were embedded deeply into the metal. It seemed an impossible job, but Rusty continued determinedly.

"Come help me, Susie," he ordered. "This will take all night if you don't."

Susan picked up the other hammer and began prying at nails on the opposite side. Tiphia stood by, watching them fondly, but jumped when they heard a voice calling from a distance.

"Rusty! Oh, Rusty!"

Rusty frowned at the interruption, but he dutifully stopped prying at nails and went to the garage door to answer.

"Yes, Mom? I'm out here, in the garage."

"Why didn't you come in and eat your lunch? I left it out for you before I went to town. It's almost four o'clock. Aren't you hungry?"

"I'm starving!" He hadn't realized it before, but

now that it was called to his attention, he felt empty clear to his toes. "Susie's here. She's hungry too. So are Cookie and Tiphia."

They could hear Mrs. Adams laugh.

"There are sandwiches," she called. "Enough for everybody. If you want juice or milk, you'll have to ask someone to come with you to help carry things."

"Come on, Susie," said Rusty over his shoulder. "We'll be right back, Tiphia."

Susan needed no second invitation, and Cookie scampered with them, too, delighted at the prospects of food. At the back door Mrs. Adams handed out a plate of sandwiches, a pitcher of fruit juice, and a handful of paper cups.

"I never knew you to be so absorbed in anything that you'd forget lunch," she observed, smiling. "It must be quite a game. What is it?"

"Astronomy," said Rusty briefly. "But it wasn't a game. We'll tell you all about it later."

"Only you probably won't believe it," added Susan. "Nobody will."

"Until you see Tiphia," said Rusty. "He's a green lizard. From Eopee. And he talks. Well, not exactly talks, but you can understand what he's thinking. Come on out and meet him, Mom."

"All right," agreed Mrs. Adams, her eyes twinkling. "Perhaps I should. I've never been able to tell what lizards were thinking."

She walked with them to the garage, listening patiently and trying not to smile as they told her of their day.

"We've been to Mercury and Venus and Mars and all the other planets, except Neptune and Pluto," said Rusty. "We didn't go there because we got mixed up with a comet."

"And Tiphia saved us with his flying saucer," explained Susan. "He walked right out in all those flaming gases to do it. And it didn't burn him at all. Only his eyelashes."

"That's nice," said Mrs. Adams.

"And I know what the canals are on Mars," said Rusty triumphantly. "Of all the people in the world, only Susie and I know what they really are."

"And you should see Saturn," shuddered Susan. "No, you shouldn't either. It's not safe. It was Rusty who saved us there, with the flying saucer."

"A real flying saucer?" marveled Mrs. Adams.

"Of course. Two of them. They belong to Gwump. Tiphia came after them. You'll see them yourself in a minute," said Rusty.

He rounded the garage door first, where he

stopped, blocking their way. Susan pushed around him.

"Tiphia!" she called frantically. "Tiphia, where are you?"

"He's gone," said Rusty flatly. "We should have known."

"Maybe he got back in the ship," said Susan. She set down the plate of sandwiches and climbed up to look for herself.

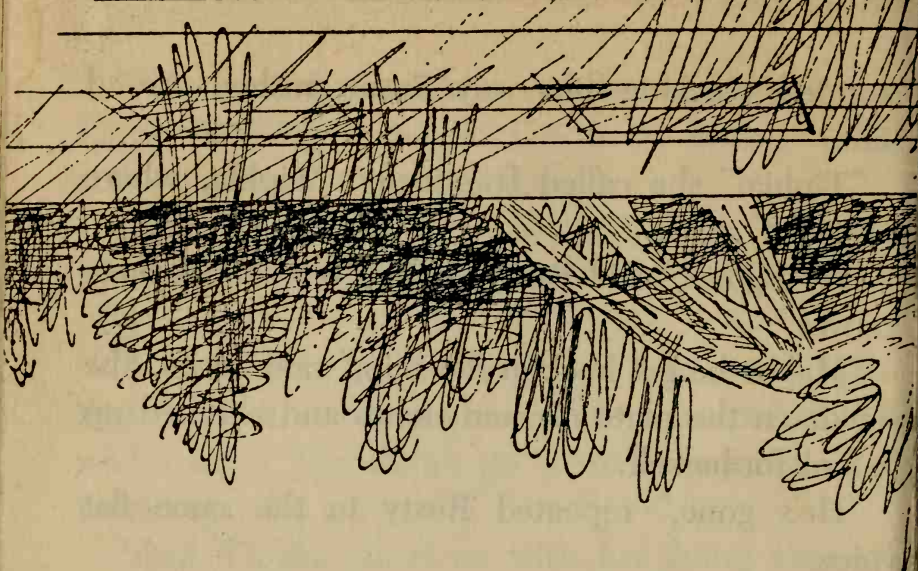
"He's gone," repeated Rusty in the same flat voice.

"Well, he's certainly not inside the ship. Do you suppose he's hiding someplace?"

"No," said Rusty. "You won't find him anywhere. He's gone, and he's taken his flying saucer with him. I don't know how he got it off."

A row of nails marked a large circle on the nose of the ship, but they no longer held a round of silvery metal in place. It had been carefully removed, leaving the nails intact. The Terra Terror looked exactly as it had before. Even the tiny pits and dents left by meteors had been smoothed out.

"Now, now," said Mrs. Adams indulgently. Both children looked as though they were ready to cry. "The game's over, and you've had a lot of fun. Let's not carry things too far. Eat your sandwiches."



She smiled at them and went back to the house.

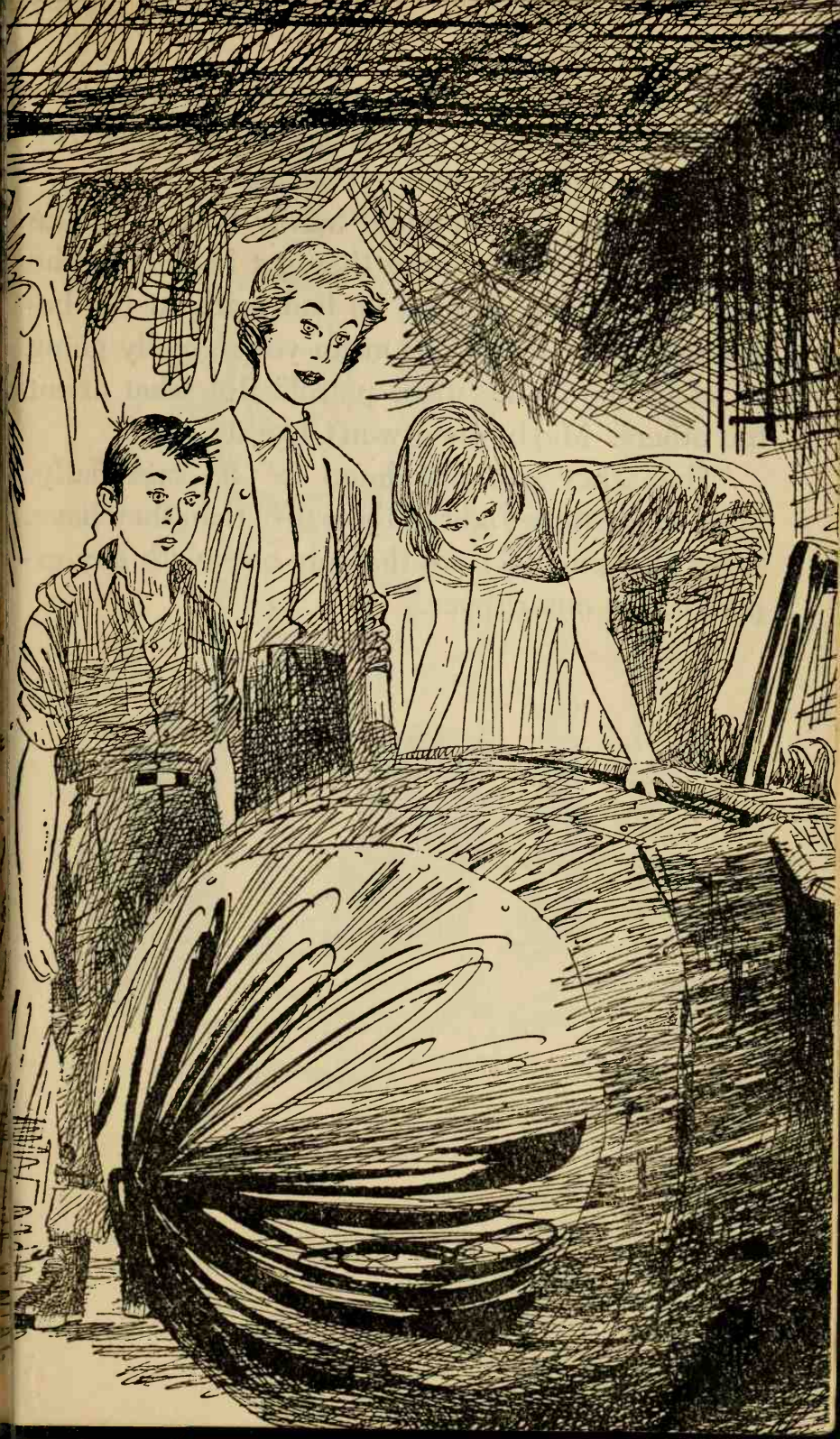
"I can't believe he's gone," said Rusty, going to the door and staring up at the vast blueness of the sky overhead.

"Do you suppose he'll be all right now?" worried Susan. "Will he remember where he's going this time?"

"I have a feeling he will," said Rusty. "I hope so. I wish we could have gone with him to Eopee, though. I'd like to meet Gwump."

"So would I. And see the pink grass, and the ocean that smells of hyacinths. I'd like to see a planet where everyone's happy and only has to wish for something to make it come true."

"Satellite," frowned Rusty. "Tiphia said Eopee was a satellite, not a planet. You'll have to learn to get them straight, Susie. It's the first rule of our

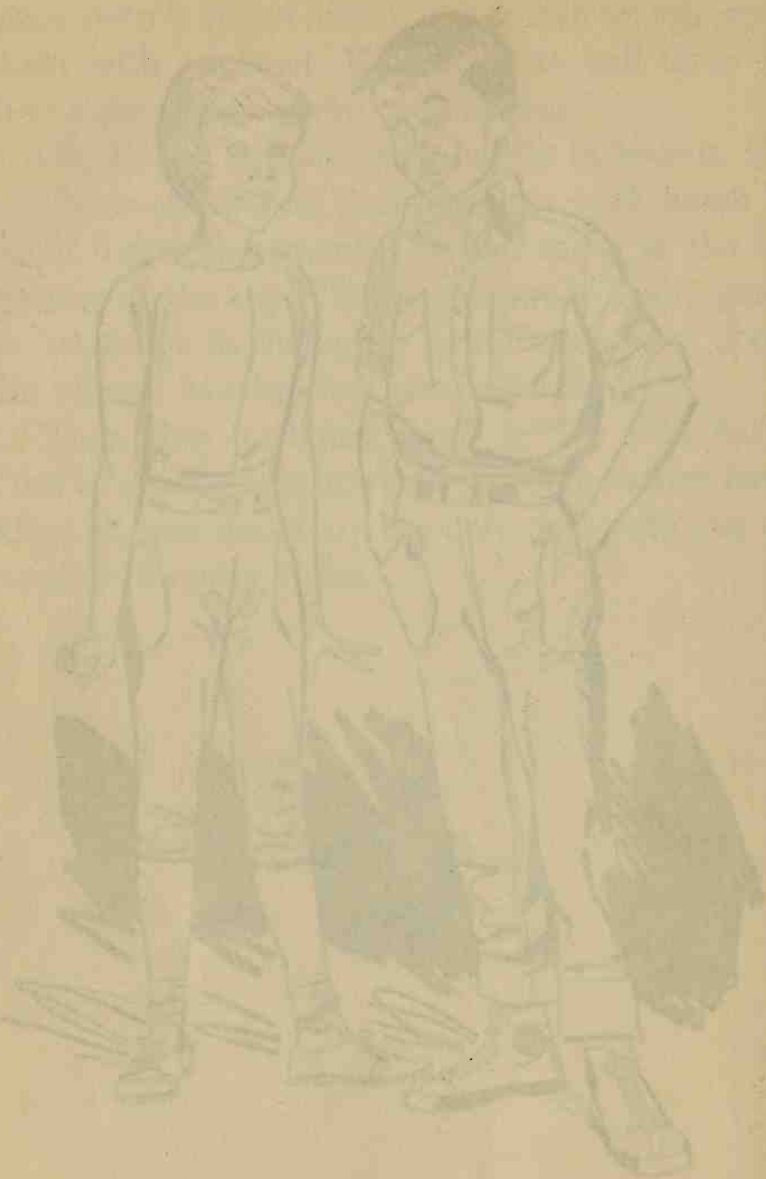


space patrol. Never call a sun a star or mix up a moon with a planet. You've got to call them by their right names or you can't belong."

"Oh, Rusty!" Susan could hardly believe it. She had been afraid that once they got back home he might forget the promise he had made at the beginning of the trip. "You mean you're really going to let me be in the space patrol? But what about the others? Maybe they won't like it."

"Then they can just lump it," he said flatly. "You've got more right in the patrol than they have. After all, you and I are the only ones with any experience in outer space."





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