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**MR. ZYTZTZ
GOES
TO MARS**
A Novel of the Future
By **NOEL LOOMIS**

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BERGLEY

Also
**THE
IONIAN
CYCLE**
A Spaceways Novellet
By **WILLIAM TENN**

A THRILLING
PUBLICATION



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**MR. ZYTZTZ GOES TO
MARS**

**a novel by
NOEL LOOMIS**



CHAPTER I

Men Without Standing

Commander Pickens stared at Cadet Healey across his desk. His face was smiling, but his eyes were like blue ice. "We're a Legion of the Condemned," the commander said.

Cadet Healey answered, "Yes, sir."

Pickens leaned forward. "The Rocket Service is a dumping ground for men who get taken off active duty. There are no criminals or no-goods—that kind never have gotten into the Air Marines—but these are men who for one reason or another have hit bad luck. It isn't their fault—but the tradition of the International Air Marines is that no officer ever loses a ship except by enemy action."

"Yes, sir."

"He's bumped back to his cadet rating, which is no rating at all. He's not an officer and he's not an enlisted man. He can never win a commission again as long as he lives. Calling him a cadet is just a way of labeling him a failure. You know that, don't you?"

"Yes, sir. They're miscarriages like me."

Pickens' blue eyes had lights in their depths now. He was a man of a little under average height, middle age, solidly built, smooth-faced, and half bald.

"We come out here to work it out. Secretly every one of us hopes that he will break the iron-bound tradition. We don't generally admit it and we know that nobody ever has broken it. We have our lives to lose in the Rocket Service, and nothing to gain, not even our former ranks. So long as we live, we'll officially be branded cadets and we'll get cadet pay. The rules say that no man needs more than one chance. You see, don't you, Cadet Healey, that there is no use even hoping?"

"Yes, sir."

"That there's no use risking our lives trying to fly to the Moon and back?" Pickens insisted.

"Yes, sir."

Commander Pickens leaned forward. Now his eyes were intense. "Then you understand this from the start. Cadet Healey: we're going to Mars!"

Healey opened his eyes and looked straight at Pickens for the first time. "You almost make me feel that we *are* going to Mars," he said slowly.

"There are two hundred of us out here who have that one idea."



Healey was awed a little at the intensity of the commander. Things weren't turning out as Healey had expected when the gyro pickup had met him in Wamsutter and flown him across the desert, northwest of Rawlins. He had thought vaguely that the Rocket base would be a bunch of zombies, but now as he looked at Commander Pickens he was impressed with the feeling that they were very much alive, and more than that, that perhaps he himself was alive once more. Pickens had been telling him there wasn't a chance to break through the two-hundred-year-old regulations of the Air Marines, but now, in spite of that, Healey began to wonder how the Marines could ignore the men who should make the first flight to Mars.

"We make our own ranks out here," Pickens said. "They're unofficial, of course, but since you were in the top ten of the class of twenty-one-seventeen, I am promoting you to junior lieutenant."

"Thank you, sir."

"Now, then—" Pickens picked up a heavy file folder. "You are a Healey. For five straight generations the Healeys have furnished admirals in the International Air Marines, and you expected to be the sixth." He did not wait for an answer. "But you picked an unfortunate subject for your thesis, and so you were graduated as a cadet only."

"Yes, sir."

Pickens looked at him keenly. "I suppose your father couldn't even attend the exercises. Regulations would prohibit an admiral shaking hands with a graduated cadet."

"That is right, sir."

Pickens looked at him steadily, then his voice was soft:

"We are going to Mars, Lieutenant, and we'll see if the Air Marines can ignore that. The brass hats think they've buried us out here. Twenty-two ships have left this base in the hundred and fifty years since it was established in nineteen-sixty. None has ever come back and landed safely. They've crashed, blown up, or disappeared in the void. No man on any one of the twenty-two has lived to return to Earth. But we are going to Mars!" There was defiance in his voice and deadly determination in his blue eyes.

Healey straightened. His eyes opened a little. "Yes, sir. I'm in favor of that, sir."

"Now, then," said Pickens. "I'm interested in this paper that got you in bad at school."

Healey began to look alert. "Yes, sir. It was about Atlantis and Lemuria."

"I know. Anything but original. You reviewed some evidence

that has been common property for thousands of years, tending to show that some heavy runaway body passed close to the Earth around the year nine thousand B.C. and caused upheavals which left both Atlantis and Lemuria at the bottoms of their respective oceans."

"Yes, sir." For the first time, a lightness of tone came into Healey's voice. "But when the paper reached Senator Romulus P. Philipuster, chairman of the Military Affairs Committee, there was even a greater upheaval."

Pickens chuckled. "I can well imagine." He looked off into space. "Old Senator Stevens was quite a patron of research. He sponsored the Government's submarine expedition to Atlantis, and I guess he put a good deal of his personal fortune into it. But along came a Philipuster, young and ambitious. Stevens was known as a hard nut to crack, but Philipuster picked the most likely weak spot and conducted an economy campaign. He ridiculed Stevens for spending money on a world of fantasy, and one night in a speech made the remark that there was not an Atlantis and never had been one and anybody who doubted that could go look for themselves.

"He was probably just trying to be funny, but it caught on. Philipuster became known as the man who proved Atlantis was a myth, and he was elected. He probably wished sometimes he hadn't made that crack, but he couldn't back down because the party wouldn't let him. Then you came along and threw it in his face. The party leaders were indignant and demanded that Philipuster do something, so you were chosen for the sacrifice. Is that about it?"

"It seems that way, sir," Healey said morosely.

Pickens' face was grim when he uttered the next words.

"A man should always be careful what he says, even in the heat of argument, because there always is a chance that somebody will believe him." He looked keenly at Healey. "The worst of it is, any of us may do the same thing as Philipuster when he least expects it."

"Not I, sir," said Healey earnestly. "I've learned my lesson. I'll never make an idle remark that might hurt somebody else."

"Well, let's hope so. By the way, your paper offered considerable proof that the Lemurians, so-called, possessed the secret of counteracting gravity."

"Yes, sir."

Pickens eyed him. "If we had that secret here, Lieutenant, what a time-saver it would be!"

Healey's eyes began to glow. "You're right, sir. I hadn't really connected it up. Rocket travel would be a cinch, wouldn't it? We'd go to Mars fast."

Pickens nodded. "I wonder just why Philipuster had you sent here," he said. "Is he deliberately putting you in a place where you can fight back?"

Healey looked at Pickens. The older man was not bitter or cynical, as he might have been. He was fighting back, yes. He was a rebel with bared teeth. But he wasn't fighting Philipuster or even the big brass in the Air Marines. His fight was with the hide-bound customs of the Marines.

Healey, too, began to see beyond any doubt that the only hope

of beating down that two-hundred-year-old tradition was to do something extraordinary, something constructive and something which the whole world would talk about and would respect.

"Yes, sir," he said, and his voice for the first time was vibrant with hope. "Perhaps he is. When do we start for Mars, sir?"

But there followed three years of hard work before they could get started. Commander Pickens knew his business. He was thorough and he was a driver and a leader. Young Lieutenant Healey found that out very soon. And he also discovered that every man on the base was fighting for the right to go up with Pickens and the ship.

The World Council allotted them plenty of money in the interest of research. Pickens hired cowboys from the ranches, miners from the mountains, and farmers from the dry-land of Wyoming to do the manual labor, while they, the two hundred former officers, and Healey, who never had been an officer, worked day and night and in between times.

They got the ship ready. It was a big one, close to eight hundred feet long, and they had built it in an enormous launching-rack out in the middle of the desert where it wouldn't hurt anybody if it exploded. Atomic power had not been adapted for air travel. Propulsion was from the conventional rocket-type engines, but with improved nozzles and new nitrogen-base fuel that had more wallop than nitroglycerine ever produced.

Threaded through all their work, Healey saw, was the secret hope of each man that, if they were successful, they would break down the steel-bound tradition of the Air Marines. Perhaps others beside Healey had fathers in the service. Healey

didn't know. None of them ever talked about it. They only worked.

As for the ship, they knew they could get off the ground, and they knew they could pass critical speed; it was getting back to Earth alive that was the problem.

CHAPTER II

Venture Into Space

It was not until 2120 that they loaded materiel for the take-off. The two hundred former officers of the finest military organization on Earth climbed up the ladder. Healey was with Pickens in the control room.

He heard the commander give the order to seal the hatches, and then he realized that the depressed feeling he had was due to the fact that there had been no word from his father—not even good wishes. He hadn't heard from the Admiral since graduation day, and it hurt. Of course the old gentleman was saving trouble for both of them by forgetting their relationship, but it hurt. And the lieutenant knew that it probably hurt the Admiral a lot more than it did him....

They got into the air, but that wasn't anything unusual.

"Remember," Pickens said grimly to Healey, "we're the seventeenth to get safely off the ground. All this fire and thunder is just as dangerous as it looks."

"Yes, sir," said Healey, but in his heart was a song, a virile song of spaceways and man and the stars, such a song as he

knew men would sing for a billion years.

They had christened her *Phoebus*, the Sun-god, and she lived up to her name. Within eight hours they were spotting a landing place on the Moon. In another hour they were sitting down. The *Phoebus* handled like a dream. She snuggled down on the bare volcanic rock, and Commander Pickens calmly wrote a message for the radio officer to transmit to Earth:

PHOEBUS REACHED PORT ACCORDING TO ORDERS. ALL HANDS SAFE. And he added two words that were grimly remindful of the fate of former ships: SHIP INTACT.

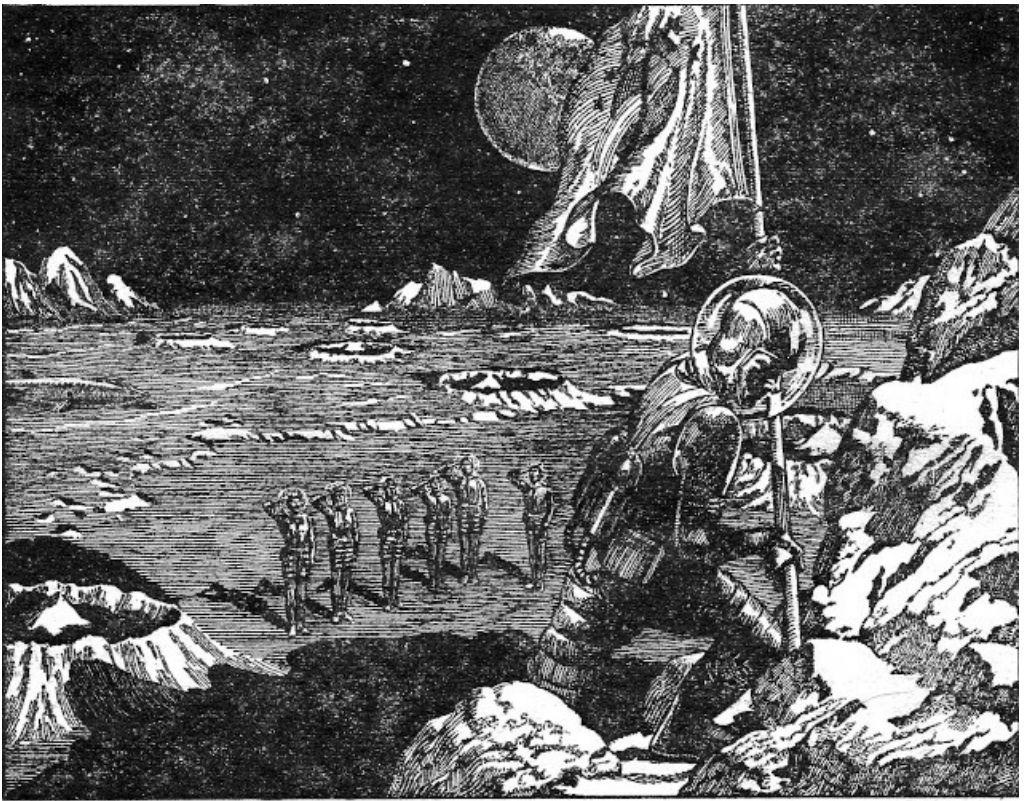
Yes, Pickens looked calm enough, thought Healey, except for his eyes. The rest of his face was bland, unemotional, but the eyes had a fierce, eager fire in their blue depths.

"Lieutenant," he said, and he could not keep the jubilation out of his voice, "we are here!"

Then he said proudly: "Lieutenant, you will take a party of six men and plant the World Council flag."

With nervous fingers Healey fastened up his bulky pressure-suit, led his men into the air-lock, marched up an outcropping of granite with the feel of the Moon-substance under his feet, put the flagpole into a crack and wedged it there with loose rocks, while the honor guard stood at attention. He stepped back and saluted the flag, then they went to the *Phoebus*.





He wedged the flagpole into a crack while the honor guard stood at attention.

The entire ship's company stood at attention when Healey marched in from the air-lock, and he could read on every face the thrill of knowing that they were on non-terrestrial soil. In a lot of faces, too, mostly those of the younger men, he saw the hope that had been with them all from the start—that this was it, that the Air Marines couldn't ignore them any longer.

Two hours later Healey took out the rocket-gyro runabout and investigated the three wrecks of previous flights. The bodies

had mummified from the lack of air and moisture. They gathered the ship's logs from two of the wrecks. The other ship had exploded and burned—or, rather, it had fused. It was one solid mass of metal, like ice cream melted down in the sun.

They took out all the bodies they could recover, for burial back on Earth. They left a cache of supplies for future travelers; they gathered information; they painted an enormous aluminum cross on the rock that the 100-inch-'scopes back on Earth could see, so that even the most skeptical of their critics back home would be unable to deny that Pickens' ship had landed.

At the very last, Healey painted a small face making a long nose.

"That," he said judiciously, "ought to give the scientists at the four-hundred-inch bowl on Aconcagua something to think about."

All the while, Commander Pickens sat inside the *Phoebus* with a grim look on his face and a faraway light in his blue eyes. They made ready to take off, and Healey said:

"Sir, aren't you going to put foot on the Moon?"



Pickens turned to him with a look almost of fanaticism. "The Moon is small stuff. I don't step out of this ship on another planet until we get to Mars."

They took off. It was a little rough getting into the air. The *Phoebus'* stern dragged a little on the upthrust and opened a few seams against the ridge where the flag was planted but the

flag wasn't disturbed, and they welded up the cracks on the way back, behind closed bulkheads.

Eight hours after take-off they were settling down again over the Wyoming desert. Again they landed safely, and this time the whole world was there to meet them—the whole world, that is, except the International Air Marines. If there was an officer of the Marines present he must have been masquerading as a sagebrush, but there were three hundred thousand insane civilians out on the desert, and almost that many reporters—and to reporters who hadn't had a real news story since the atomic bomb back in 1945, this was a video scanner's dream....

Well, they had gone to the Moon and they had come back. They were summoned by the President. They got medals. Congress voted them the pay of their "inactive" statuses and raised everybody's rank. They got everything—except what they most wanted. Apparently the big brass in the Air Marines didn't watch the video reports.

Lieutenant Healey and the rest of the two hundred were disappointed and discouraged—all but Commander—now Captain—Pickens.

"No," he said. "I didn't think a little trip to the Moon would change anything. But wait till we come back from Mars!"

Healey looked thoughtfully at the captain. For the first time, he realized that Pickens, too, had his heart set on reinstatement. But Pickens was more practical than the rest of them. He had been a captain in the Air Marines. He knew how tough they were to crack.

They went back to work. Captain Pickens paid no attention to anything but the *Phoebus*. The gleam would come in his blue

eyes and his jaws would clench and he would say, "We're going to Mars!" And everybody knew they were.

They made several trips to the Moon in the next two years, acquiring information and experience and dexterity in handling the *Phoebus*. They received an assignment of five hundred sailor technicians through the Bureau of Meteorology to help build a bigger ship, and the keel was laid.

But Captain Pickens couldn't wait for the bigger ship. In 2122 they took off for Mars. Pickens had called to Healey the night before.

"You're a Marine in every sense of the word, Healey. I'm making you lieutenant commander. You will continue to be my adjutant."

"Thank you, sir."

"I've put it on the video so your father will see it," Pickens said, suddenly soft-voiced. "I know he'd like to know."

Healey was startled. "Did you know him, sir?"

Pickens' jaws clenched. "I skippered a cruiser under your dad. He's a million per cent. He fought for me all the way through. And he used to dream of the time when you would have a ship of your own, Commander."

"Yes, sir," Healey whispered. It was hard to talk past the lump in his throat.

It was a smooth trip, almost monotonous. Nine days later they brought the *Phoebus* down on the red alkali of Mars. It was afternoon and the sun was overhead, clear and distinct, but its light was pretty feeble.

Healey was trembling with excitement, but trembling inwardly. He kept his face calm as he looked around him and he knew that every man of the two hundred, even though they were hardened spacemen by now, felt just as he did. The officers on the bridge looked at Pickens. The captain took a deep breath and said to Healey:

"Commander, the lock will not be opened until morning. The chemists and biologists, and so on, must have time for their tests. This isn't the Moon, you know." He looked piercingly at Healey.

Healey nodded. "No, sir, it isn't."



That last line of Pickens' expressed the feelings of all, Healey knew, although nobody commented. The Moon seemed like small time stuff now. The Moon was really a part of Earth, but Mars—Mars was a real planet in its own right, not a satellite of Earth. Now they were really interplanetary travelers, and it was a little frightening.

There were issues of rum that night, a hangover from the old British Navy, and each officer on the captain's staff killed a pint of the best Scotch, and nobody slept. Everybody pretended to have too much to do. By daylight every man who could get near a quartz porthole was trying to see outside, and the Old Man—they had assumed the prerogative of referring to Pickens behind his back with that respectful term of disrespect—the Old Man was staring at the ground glass screen of his video.

"Commander," he said to Healey, "what do you make of this?"

Healey stared, and frowned. Yesterday there had been nothing but red alkali. This morning the big ship was surrounded by hundreds of what looked like giant century-plants.

They were as tall as a man, and their "leaves" were waving ceaselessly.

"I don't know, sir," Healey said in a moment, "but it doesn't look any too dangerous."

After some discussion in a staff meeting, Pickens ordered the air-lock opened and Healey was sent out with a landing party in pressure-suits to set up the first World Council flag on a strange planet.

When they got outside they were completely ringed in by century-plants. Healey was too scared to be thrilled. He didn't see how the century-plants could harm them, unless they were poisonous, but this was a strange land, a different world, and it didn't resemble the Moon at all.

But Healey didn't want to let the men see he was scared. He said, business-like, "We'll find an opening here and go through these plants and set the flag up far enough away so it won't be scorched by the rocket-blast."

They approached the wall of plants warily. Some of them were taller than Healey. He looked for a break in their ranks. "It would simplify things if they would move," he thought, and at that moment a path formed unexpectedly before him.

The plants moved back on each side and left a path for them.

CHAPTER III

Moving Plants

Gingerly the party went out a couple of hundred yards, with Healey walking confidently so the men wouldn't guess how he felt. After all, he was only twenty-six and he wore a commander's stripes, even if they were unofficial. A seaman with a sledge drove an iron stake into the hard dirt. They raised the flag and presented arms, then they marched immediately back to the *Phoebus*.

As before, the plants opened a path for them. Healey drew a deep breath of relief, but he felt uneasy, and stayed on the ground until the other men were inside. He was ten feet from the Jacob's-ladder and just ready to follow the men inside when he heard a soft shuffling and looked around to see the plants crowding in on him.

It was eerie. The long leaves waved and danced, and a noise came from all of them that sounded like the wind sighing through the pine trees.

Commander Healey was terrified. He took a step backward, and one giant of a plant, nine feet tall, slithered over the alkali and came to a stop in front of him, between him and the ladder. Its leaves were gesticulating and that odd rustling noise came from it in a broken stream, with breaks and pauses and variations that made it seem almost like a person talking.

Healey had a sudden nightmare vision of being captured by creatures that were not even of the Earth. He ducked under a waving leaf and ran for the ladder. He shot up it and snatched it up after him and slammed the hatch.

Five minutes later, still trembling, he reported to the staff.

He was quite aware that for a moment he had lost his head.

He had run, and he wondered what the Old Man thought. Now that he faced the captain, he thought it would have been better to be a captive of Mars than to have the Old Man think he was a coward.

But Pickens merely looked at him casually.

"Quite a sensation, isn't it, Commander, being on a strange planet?" he observed.

Healey breathed easier and began to get control of himself. Now that the Old Man had forgiven him, he was able to compose himself.

The Old Man was the first to cross-examine him, then the ship's biologist took over.

The biologist asked questions about the plants.

"I am trying to decide whether they should be classified as 'human,'" he explained to the Old Man. "They're unquestionably mobile, and probably sentient."

Somehow the word "human" struck Healey wrong. He was a commander in the Rocket Service, and could he let it be said that he had run from anything human? He spoke up fast.

"They couldn't be human," he said. "They haven't got eyes."

The Old Man stared at Healey. Probably the biologist had his own definition of "human," but he didn't get a chance to say anything. This was a brand new experience for Earth-people,

and since there was no precedent the Old Man made his own precedent right on the spot.

"I think the commander is right," he said slowly. "I don't think a creature would be human unless it had eyes."

And there it stuck. They didn't have eyes, so they weren't human.

During the next two weeks the *Phoebus* sent out exploring parties. The geologist located some promising deposits of plutonium, but there was no sign of life anywhere except the century-plants, who were at once labeled Martians.

Captain Pickens himself finally left the *Phoebus* to feel the earth of another planet. He tried to pick up a handful, but it was caked and hard.

The entire crew was under strict orders from the World Council to cause no harm to any living creature, and especially not to bring back any specimens of living creatures or plants. Any man who would have tried to touch one of the Martians would have been court-martialed. A young ensign, Marvin Browne, complained to Healey that there they were in port and the Old Man wouldn't even let him get a telephone number.

"Never mind," said Healey. "It's a big universe."



The Martians always crowded up and tried to get into the ship when the lock was opened. The tallest one, the one that had frightened Healey the first morning, was especially persistent, and that annoyed Healey.

The tall century-plant shuffled about the ship all day long—the Earth-men couldn't find out where it went at night, but they disappeared—making that odd rustling noise, until finally Ensign Browne called him "Mr. Zytztz," and from then on his name was Zytztz....

To keep from frying the Martians in the rocket-blast, the *Phoebus* left one night at midnight while the Martians were out in the desert.

"Mr. Zytztz will be lonesome when he comes back in the morning and finds us gone," the Old Man said thoughtfully over a sky-chart.

The comment struck Healey as wrong. He wondered if he were getting touchy. "He can't be lonesome, sir. He hasn't got eyes."

"What has that got to do with it?"

That annoyed Healey still more. The Old Man had upheld his definition the first day. "If he hasn't got eyes, he can't be human, and if he isn't human, he can't be lonesome," Healey said defiantly.

The Old Man looked at him and said, "*Hm.*"

It took them eleven days to make the trip back, but they were busy every minute. They had made exhaustive notes and had taken thousands of pictures with X-ray, infra-red, gamma-blue, beta-yellow, and with every known filter and device, and several hundred reels of microfilm. They had air samples, tons of geological specimens, core-drillings, temperature records, humidity readings, radiation records, and cosmic-ray counts.

The biologist had accumulated an astonishing mass of data for a man who had not been allowed to touch the subject, and he

and the botanist section were busy together.

The W.C. radioed that they had prepared a base for the *Phoebus* at Havana, because Table Rock was too far out in the wilderness. They estimated that millions of people would be wherever the *Phoebus* might land and, to avoid a major disaster, they had to keep the crowds in a populated center where they could be handled.

When the *Phoebus* reached Earth, the reception was tremendous. The ship landed at the new spaceport that had been made over from an old trans-Atlantic airfield near the world capital, and the video said that fifteen million persons were in the streets when the men of the *Phoebus* marched to the assembly hall. But of the fifteen million, not one was an officer of the International Air Marines. It was something of a blow to Healey to realize that the Air Marines were still ignoring them. Captain Pickens noticed it, too, and the old gleam came in his eye that meant, "We aren't licked yet. We'll go to Andromeda and back if we have to."

He formally presented his report, which included all the written material and physical evidence from Mars—twelve thousand pounds of reports and photographs alone. Thirty-two scientists and their staffs had done a lot of speculating. Then the Council president informed them that every man on the *Phoebus* had been raised two grades—unofficially, of course, he hastened to add—but they had also in view of facing unknown dangers, etc., etc., been granted a lifetime allowance of full pay at the rate of their new respective ranks, without regard to any subsequent circumstances.

"They've been mighty swell," Admiral Pickens said when he and Captain Healey went to their suite in the International

Hotel.

"Yes, sir." Healey was glum.

Pickens glanced at him. "But the truth is, Captain, there isn't a man of the entire crew that wouldn't give it all back for a Welcome Home from the one place on Earth where they didn't get it."

"It's hard for me to understand," Healey said, and a little bitterness crept into his voice before he could stop it. "Why can't they loosen up?"



Pickens nodded. There was as hard glitter in his eyes.

"It's getting a little hard even for me to swallow," the Old Man said. "I guess there's nobody funnier than people—unless it's Zytztzes."

Healey felt a retort on the tip of his tongue, but he suppressed it.

"Sometimes," he said, "for two cents I'd throw it all over and organize my own air service."

"You'd better raise your price," the Old Man said wisely, "because in spite of its stuffiness and its rigid discipline and its unbending traditions—I suppose one might in honesty say possibly because of those things—the International Air Marines is still the most glorious and the most exclusive military organization ever on Earth. You should know. You would have been the sixth Admiral Healey." The Old Man studied him for a moment. "You're still hoping," he said. "So

do we all, but it's getting slimmer every time we cross an orbit, I'm beginning to understand now what I should have seen long ago. The Air Marines won't risk giving approval for a flash in the pan. Maybe if we stick at it all our lives—" He didn't finish.

The next night Captain Healey was having a relaxing drink in the Patio, minus his braid, because the pariahs of the Marines did not wear their stripes in public. A very large man came by and dropped into the seat across the table.

"Well," he said between hics, "Wunner what the Air Marines think now that the poor cadets have swiped their glory. Pariahs of the Spaceways. Heh, heh! That's a good one. Pariahs of the Spaceways make Air Marines look shick!"

Captain Healey rose to his feet and stood solidly in his blue-green uniform, minus stripes, minus decorations, minus everything but the solid gold buttons of the Air Marines.

"Sir, you are drunk," he said. "You don't know what you're saying."

The big man got to his feet and he was a head taller than Healey and twice as broad. Astonishingly enough, he didn't wobble when he stood.

"Look, Mister." He put a massive forefinger on Healey's chest, and if Healey hadn't been braced he would have been pushed over. "You been handed a dirty deal by the Air Marines, an' I for one am glad you showed 'em up. The dirty—"

He did not finish. Healey stepped back, calculated the range and the resistance, and let the big man have one on the button. It was a very solid punch—so solid, in fact, that the big man relaxed at full length on the floor.

"He insulted the Marines," Healey said ruefully when Pickens bailed him out that evening. "Can't they understand we're not sore at the Marines. We're trying to get *back* in the Marines."

Pickens sighed.

"People probably lack understanding more than anybody," he said.

CHAPTER IV

Mr. Zytztz Comes Aboard

A week later the World Council organized an Interplanetary Bureau, and one of its sub-divisions was the Classification Section. The Old Man was asked for a recommendation for membership in that section, and he recommended Healey.

"It's mostly an honor, more than anything else."

But at the first meeting Healey was elected chairman and then he suddenly discovered that the Classification Section had the task of determining whether non-terrestrial beings were anthropomorphic or, in other words, human.

They had Healey on the spot. He couldn't back down, so he suggested that no being should be called "human" unless it had eyes, and that rule passed unanimously.

Next day he read that the Ethics Section, to forestall trouble, had passed a rule that no non-terrestrial creature of any sort might be made the subject of a post-mortem examination for the next fifty years.

Apparently the entire population of the Earth was extremely conscious of the danger of offending unknown creatures, and pressure was brought everywhere to provide a set-up of laws that would absolutely preclude injury or offense to the Martians or any other inhabitant of a non-terrestrial planet. Senator Philipuster announced that he had received four tons of telegrams on the subject, which, after being duly counted, were carefully burned.

"I shall support protection for all non-Earth creatures," he announced, "at least until we learn more of their background."

"In other words," Healey commented, "until he knows just how far he can safely go."

The World Council then commissioned the *Phoebus* to bring back three Martians on the next trip, provided they were entirely willing to come.

The century-plants were waiting for them the morning after the *Phoebus* landed. The biologist and his staff spent two weeks investigating their lives, but they did not find out much.

Squads were detailed to watch them. They followed the Martians at night when the century-plants went off into the desert, but the plants didn't go anywhere in particular. They went out into the desert and curled up like honest-to-goodness century-plants into little balls as protection against the cold, apparently, but apparently they did not sleep. The squads could not get any closer to them than they could during the day, without the plants' leaves starting to wave and that peculiar rustling noise arising from somewhere in them.

At the end of the two weeks he concluded they were harmless, and that was about all. No Earth-man ever saw a Martian eat or

sleep or open its eyes.

Finally the biologist and the botanist got together and decided to surround them with everything the *Phoebus* had to offer in the way of artificial food, which was considerable—they even had artificial puffed wheat for breakfast.

Then the Old Man said to Healey, "Get us three of them."

Healey went outside in his pressure-suit. It was just before sundown, and Mr. Zytztz and his fellows were all there in their eternal ranks about the ship, as if they were waiting for something. Healey thought, almost as if they had been waiting for a long time, and as if they knew they would get what they were waiting for by the power of sheer patience—patience that might stretch into thousands of years.

Captain Healey stood there in front of Mr. Zytztz for a moment, and Mr. Zytztz began to move and to whisper, almost as if he knew they wanted him and he was eager to go. Healey started up the Jacob's-ladder.

Mr. Zytztz, as always, plodded toward the ladder.

But this time Healey waited when he reached the outer part of the air-lock. Mr. Zytztz's nine feet of waving leaves reached the ladder. Mr. Zytztz did not hesitate. He started up, and Healey could have sworn there was eagerness in the way the leaves wrapped their ends around the rungs of the ladder.



By that time the whole desertful of Zytztzes was weaving toward the ladder.

Healey was a little scared, but this time he knew what he was going to do. He let two more of them get on the ladder and then he signaled for a quick pullaway.

He had been a little worried that the Zytztzes would get frightened and perhaps drop off, but if they weren't at ease he couldn't tell it. The only reaction he got was that the Zytztzes left on the ground acted as if they were disappointed. Their leaves drooped a little when the ladder got beyond their reach, and they stopped, hundreds of them, in one motion.

How they knew the ladder was up was a mystery.

When the three were in, Healey ordered the air-lock sealed and escorted the Martians to their special room. Mr. Zytztz's leaves were moving everywhere, softly touching strange articles and strange materials—or Healey supposed they were strange to him, because after all Mr. Zytztz had lived on Mars all his life and they didn't have anything like steel or brass or polished mahogany on Mars. They had nothing there but alkali and rocks and plutonium and Zytztzes.

Healey left them, to be on the bridge at the take-off. The *Phoebus* was in the air as soon as the other Zytztzes went back to the desert, and then the Old Man turned to Healey.

"Captain, bring in Mr. Zytztz."

"Yes, sir." Healey drew a deep breath and went to the special room. He opened the door gingerly. They had a big box of Mars' desert in one half of the room, but the three Zytztzes were huddled together in the porthole, watching the stars, and they were *intent* about it, Healey thought, as no plant would ever be.

Healey didn't exactly know how to get Mr. Zytztz to the

admiral without taking the other two, but as he opened the door he expected to say something calculated to be funny, like "All right, you egg-plants, get rolling." But Mr. Zytztz turned toward him—that is, Mr. Zytztz revolved in a half circle, and Healey had the queerest feeling that Mr. Zytztz was watching him.

Healey looked hard, but evidently there were no eyes.

"Sir," said Healey, "the admiral wishes to see you—only you," he said.



Of course Healey did not expect them to understand.

He just didn't know what else to do, and maybe if he went through the words, his motions or something would give the general idea.

Well, they understood—so well that it scared Healey half to death. Mr. Zytztz started to shuffle toward him. The other two did not move. Healey wiped the sweat from his forehead and turned and led the way down the corridor to the bridge. Mr. Zytztz followed, bending and weaving considerably to keep his leaves from scraping against the ceiling.

He stood patiently in the center of the room and faced the admiral. That gave Healey a start. How did Mr. Zytztz know which was the ranking officer? Nobody had said a word. How did he know there was anybody in the room? How did he even know this was the room? Maybe it was an accident.

Presently everybody was walking around him, looking him

over and talking about him in a way that would have been very impolite if he had been human, but Mr. Zytztz stood very calm and patient on his stalk and did not even resist when the botanist felt of his "leaves."

Once in a while, after somebody made a remark, that strange rustling would come from Mr. Zytztz, almost as if he was trying to answer.

Well, they got back to Earth in fourteen days. They delivered the three Zytztzes to the World Council, which during their absence had been re-named the Inter-World Council, and already the video-casters called it the IWC.



There was a great banquet, at which three Zytztzes were treated as formally as if they were diplomats from a powerful nation. They were at the banquet table, but they stood; they didn't sit. They listened to the speeches, or at least they were quiet during the talking, even when old Senator Philipuster rolled sonorous phrases like "the dawn of a new era in interplanetary good will" off his tongue for two hours and a half in his official capacity of U.S. Delegate at Large to the IWC. But after the senator sat down and everybody was thinking, "Thank goodness," Mr. Zytztz's top leaves dipped toward the floor and he made those rustling noises.

The Zytztzes were exhibited in New York, London, Moscow, Sydney, San Francisco. But after three months they didn't look very good.

They seemed to be wilting a little. Their leaves didn't look as

fresh and green as they had, and they drooped more and more as they went along.

Captain Healey was in charge of them, and he saw that they were surrounded with every condition they had known on Mars, even to a vacuum chamber with air of exactly the same proportions as that on Mars and at the same pressure and humidity and with the same variations of temperature, but it didn't help.

The only thing he could figure was that they were lonesome, so he persuaded the IWC that they should be taken back to Mars....

On that trip, they were allowed the freedom of the ship, and it did not take long to discover that they were born space-travelers. Mr. Zytztz stayed on the bridge with Healey a good deal, and when Lieutenant Browne, the navigator, was off duty, Mr. Zytztz would study the stars for hours, and presently his leaf-ends would delicately touch the controls as if he was suggesting a change in course.

"And confound it all," Healey told the Old Man, "he's always right when Browne checks on us."

Ether-travel in those days was very much dependent on navigation, for machinery had not yet been developed to allow for all the forces exerted by the various gravitational pulls, the solar drift, centrifugal inertia, strange magnetic currents, velocity, trajectory, planetary orbits, and the still unexplained ether drift. Or, rather, the machinery could be made, all right, but one ship couldn't carry it.

Whether Mr. Zytztz could see or not, he knew how to reach Mars, even though by that time the red planet was much farther

away and it took over a month to get there. Mr. Zytztz would hover over the video screen for hours and then he would go to one of the portholes and stand for hours more, facing the constellation Vela at about fifty degrees minus declination. Sometimes he varied this by standing at the sky-chart and flipping its heavy linen pages with the tips of his leaves.

Captain Healey let him strictly alone, at first watching him, but presently not bothering to do that.

Mr. Zytztz learned what a pencil was for, and he would find a scratch-pad and make notes or calculations, consisting mostly of various arrangements of dots and straight lines. Apparently this was for his amusement only, for he would always crumple the sheets and toss them into the waste-basket.

And whether he could see or not, he had an excellent sense of perception, for he never missed the basket. Captain Healey envied his accuracy.

But Healey discovered one thing: the Zytztzes were not artisans.

One day Mr. Zytztz was using a mechanical pencil and it ran out of lead, and he worked at it for an hour without discovering what was wrong or even how to take it apart. He just stood there turning it over with the tips of his leaves and examining it aimlessly, touching it here and there or pulling on it gently, but obviously as helpless as a baby. He finally gave it to Healey to fix, and the captain decided Mr. Z. wouldn't be much good on an atomic toaster.

It was when Healey gave the pencil back to him with a new lead that he discovered Mr. Zytztz could talk.

A rustling came from somewhere within his leaves and it said

"Thank you" very clearly. Healey had become so used to him that he said, "You're welcome," before he realized what had happened, and then stared at the plant with his eyes wide open and blurted out:

"You can talk!"

Mr. Zytztz's leaves nodded—rather complacently, Healey thought, and the rustling came again, and Healey distinguished more words.

They sounded like, "I'm glad you understand. Our enunciation isn't very good, but I will try to do better."

Healey's mouth was open. Yes, Mr. Zytztz could talk. His words were accompanied by that rustling that made the sounds fuzzy and not too distinct, but by listening carefully, as one would when hearing a foreigner speak an unfamiliar language, one could understand.

Healey was quite unable to see where the sound originated, but the thing that dumfounded him was that, without coaching or teaching, Mr. Zytztz had learned to speak the so-called English language with grammatical perfection in a few months—and not just stock phrases either; like "Give me a ham-on-rye" or "How about a shot in the arm, Buddy, to sweep the cobwebs out of my brain?" but abstract concepts.

"My enunciation isn't very good," Mr. Zytztz had said!

CHAPTER V

For the Sake of Harmony

Healey took a walk. He went down to the bar for a slug of *tequila*. The bartender mixed him a couple of atomic-busters and he took a fresh grip on himself and went back to the bridge.

He told the Old Man about it, but Pickens wasn't so young any more. He refused to be startled by anything. Lieutenant Browne (who had been Ensign Browne) was elated.

"Maybe," he said while Mr. Zytztz was standing before a porthole across the room, "maybe our vegetarian friend could dig up some numbers for me when we get to Mars."

Mr. Zytztz revolved half-way on his stalk. The lieutenant's mouth opened a full six inches. Mr. Zytztz's leaves dipped gently and lifted in what seemed very much like a smile.

"Yes, Lieutenant," he said in his fuzzy voice, "I know some very hot numbers back home." Then his leaves seemed to droop for an instant as if he was sad, and he turned back to the porthole and faced the constellation Vela.

Browne swallowed and Healey said drily, "Down the hall to your left, Lieutenant, and tell Joe to put them on my bill."

Browne stared at him and then said, "Yes, sir," saluted stiffly and went out almost on the double.

A soft rustling came from Mr. Zytztz. "Impetuous, isn't he?" he said without turning around.

"He's just learned," Healey said, "that his mother-in-law is an angel."

"Sorry," murmured Mr. Zytztz, and then he turned to Healey hesitantly. "Don't you think those religious concepts are a little outmoded?"

What could you do with a precocious four-year-old who would insist on exposing the fallacies of the stork story? That's what Healey did with Mr. Zytztz—nothing.

"Look," he said. "I'm sorry about that. I was just trying to be funny."

Mr. Zytztz's leaves were still for an instant, and then they moved sharply and they crackled for all the world like laughter.

"Oh, I think you're very funny," he said softly.

Healey took a deep breath and went over to write up the orders of the day. He looked up once to see Pickens watching him, and the admiral kept his face straight except for a crinkle at the corner of his mouth.

They landed on Mars that night.

Mr. Zytztz said he and his companions would like to be allowed to leave ship at once, so they opened the lock and let them go. Mr. Zytztz promised to be back in the morning.

But it wasn't until Healey saw him and his two companions shuffle across the red alkali in the glare of the landing-lights that he realized how very tired and shrunken they were. Mr. Zytztz wasn't over eight feet tall.

But the next morning they were back. Mr. Zytztz climbed the ladder and rapped on the air-lock door and Healey let him in. Healey was astonished when he saw him. Mr. Zytztz was fresh and green and—well, plump.

He sensed Healey's astonishment apparently, because he said, "Ah, the desert air is wonderful my friend—especially at night."

He answered only vaguely when Healey tried to find out what had made the change, and Healey was forced to the conclusion that it was the quiet and solitude and so on, in other words, the psychological effect of the surroundings. That, of course, assumed that Mr. Zytztz had a mind like a human's.

Mr. Zytztz asked to see the Old Man. "Some of my fellows," he said, "would like to work on your ship."

The Old Man was stunned. "Work!"

"They will work well for you," Mr. Zytztz promised.

The Old Man sputtered. "Well, Nell's bells! I don't need any helpers. I—what do you think, Captain?"

Healey hesitated. Then he said, "What do you think, Lieutenant Browne?"

"Sir," said the lieutenant, speaking only to Healey, "I say a little fraternization will be conducive to better inter-terrestrial relations."



Healey turned back to the Old Man with a perfectly dead pan. "Sir," he said, "I say a little fraternization will be conducive to better inter-terrestrial relations."

The Old Man glared at them both and then at Mr. Zytztz. Mr. Zytztz's leaves were quivering gently.

"We'll take six of them," the Old Man sputtered, "but you'll be held responsible."

"Yes, sir," Mr. Zytztz said promptly. "And we shall receive the

usual rates of pay, I suppose."

The Old Man's eyes narrowed, "Yes," he said thoughtfully, "at least on this first trip. After that it will be up to the IWC."

"Thank you, sir." One leaf raised and dipped in a salute, and Mr. Zytztz shuffled out fast.

The Old Man growled at Healey. "For a plant that isn't human, your Martian friend learns fast."

Healey winced. He had already done a lot of thinking about that.

The Zytztzes made perfect workmen; they were competent, strong, and tireless. But some things they couldn't do—they had to have help for even a simple repair job, but otherwise they had good brains. They followed orders even better than the robots back on Earth.

On the trip home Healey discovered how they had learned the language. They, in effect, read the minds of men. When a man spoke, they got the mental picture from his mind. Healey remembered some of the choice remarks he had made in Mr. Zytztz's hearing before he had any idea about their understanding, and it was, to be conservative, disquieting. He remembered when he had first denied them the right to be classified as humans, and when they reached Havana again he called a meeting of the Classification Section and proposed that the Martians be re-classified. But the other members voted him down, quoting his own law, "They must have eyes."

Healey offered an amendment to repeal that law, but he found out that the bigger an organization is, the more ponderous it is. The section rejected his amendment coldly, and there was nothing else he could do but go down to the bar and initiate an

extended research into the efficacy of atomic-busters. He would have given his unofficial rank in the Rocket Service to correct the injustice he had done the Zytztzes.

In the next few years a good many Zytztzes worked on spaceships, of which there got to be quite a number. The only catch with the Zytztzes was that they had to go back to Mars every six months or so to refresh themselves.

Otherwise they were perfect workmen. They never caused any trouble and they were never ill.

One summer the *Phoebus* was making a trajectory shot over the Sun when Healey spoke to the Old Man about the Zytztzes.

"There is no doubt in my mind that they are human," he said. "A human being has to have a soul, doesn't it?"

The Old Man looked at him sharply. "That is not the same definition you offered a few years back."

Healey blushed. "No, sir. I was wrong, and I'm sorry. They have souls, all right. Any kind of creature that loves the ether as the Martians do—he simply has to have a soul."

The Old Man nodded. "I think you're right. No matter what else a man may be, if he hasn't got that spark inside of him, space travel will give him the wiggles."

The Zytztzes had that spark, Healey knew. From the way they had taken to it from the first, Healey could not escape the impression that they must have had indelible memories of days in the dim past, when perhaps their forefathers had traveled in

space.

"It's funny," Lieutenant Browne said one day. "You'd think they'd been so long on Mars they'd have taken root, but they don't even get space-sick the first time they fly."

"There are a lot of things about them that I don't understand," Healey said.



In 2125 the IWC ordered a census of the Martians. There were exactly seven hundred and seventy-seven. There were, oddly enough, no young ones. All were adults.

In another five years every single Zytztz held a rating of seaman, first class. Only one had advanced beyond that, because space travel very quickly had developed the most rigid caste system of all history. It was an anomaly, being, as it was, developed within the ranks of men who themselves were discriminated against by the Air Marines. Or perhaps it was because of that. At any rate, space-sailors and space-officers were exclusive far past anything the Air Marines could offer. Perhaps it was because of the glamour lent by the proximity of sudden death, but no Earth-man would take orders from a non-human.

The one who had gone beyond seaman was Mr. Zytztz, who had been made a chief bos'n's mate—and that promotion had precipitated a riot and near-mutiny on the crack passenger run to Luna. By intercession of Admiral Pickens, Mr. Zytztz was not demoted, but his authority was rigidly limited to Martians.

No one had any complaint whatever against Mr. Zytztz except

that he was "a century-plant," and presently there was an IWC rule passed that no Earth-man could be put under the supervision of anybody but an Earth-man. That made it official.

But the Zytztzes took it and minded their own business and did their work. Mr. Zytztz asked Healey what to do with his pay, the captain suggested he open a savings account in the Interplanetary National Bank. The next time Healey dropped into the bank, the cashier astonished him with the information that every one of the seven hundred and seventy-seven Zytztzes had ordered their pay deposited in Mr. Zytztz's account.

In the year 2130 the regular census was taken, and it showed seven hundred and seventy-seven Martians. No young ones. All adults. No deaths. No births.

Healey could have asked Mr. Zytztz about that, but somehow he never quite had the nerve. That was odd, too, because Healey gave Mr. Zytztz duties that kept him on the bridge most of the time, and Healey asked him practically everything, and always got an answer. There were no evasions. But there were a few personal subjects on which the captain would think of talking to him, and he would turn to him to speak and something would stop him. Somehow or other Mr. Zytztz emanated quiet reserve that no sensitive man would try to penetrate under ordinary circumstances.

Then Pickens retired. He wasn't an old man, and he had had a complete Osterhus rejuvenation and was good for sixty years more, but he was a defeated man. A dogged look was in his eyes when he told Healey:

"I thought we'd be recognized by the Air Marines when we

went to Mars, but it's no go. I'm giving up. I guess there's nobody more hard-headed than people."

Healey and the rest of the pariahs had given up, too, by now, but no one but Admiral Pickens would admit it. They just didn't think much about it any more.

CHAPTER VI

Wall of Prejudice

Finally Healey was promoted to rear admiral and put in charge of the expedition to Jupiter. They built a newer and bigger ship, and Senator Philipuster's niece, Clarissa, christened it the *Twinkling Star* with a bottle of champagne that made Commander Browne, Healey's adjutant now, lick his lips.

They made a couple of shake-down cruises to Luna and then provisioned for the trip to Jupiter. Healey asked Mr. Zytztz to act as his escort—or valet, as they had said back in the nineteen hundreds—and they set off one night in a blast of green rocket flames that must have lighted up the entire island of Cuba.

Everything went according to plan. Jupiter turned out to be a pretty solid planet with a terrific gravity that was going to strain the *Twinkling Star's* power plant to get away, but the methane gas and so on was in clouds hundreds of miles above the surface, and they landed nicely and planted the IWC flag in the name of God, the IWC, and Senator Philipuster.

They did some exploring and located ores and lots of them, including sources for both americium and curium, Nos. 95 and

96 in the periodic table, but there were no living creatures or growing things of any kind, and Healey was relieved that there would be no necessity of deciding whether anybody was human or unhuman.

After three weeks he called in the two scout-boats and took off with considerable groaning of the power units. After they passed critical velocity they eased up the pounding of the engines and relaxed. Commander Browne and Mr. Zytztz and Admiral Healey were in the control-room.

"Well, Mr. Zytztz," Healey said, glad that the strain was over, "what are you going to do now?"

Mr. Zytztz revolved on his stalk where he had been watching the constellation Vela. His leaves were rather still.

"I'm going to apply for re-classification," he said, "when we get back."

Healey frowned and tried to think of something to say.

"Yes," Mr. Zytztz went on in his fuzzy voice, "I know you have tried, but perhaps if they hear me—well, I don't think they will turn me down."

"Why do you want to be re-classified," Healey asked. "You hold a bos'n's grade already."

Healey could have bitten his tongue when Mr. Zytztz answered, "I want an officer's ticket."

Healey stared at him, and Commander Browne looked at Healey and nodded as if to say, "Why not?" and Healey thought, "Yes, why not?"

But Healey jumbled those thoughts hurriedly, for he had

learned how to scramble his mental waves so Mr. Zytztz wouldn't understand them. He looked at Browne and Browne was doing the same thing. Whenever Commander Browne made those faces he was engaged in some pretty heavy cerebrating.

When they got back to Havana, Healey skipped the ceremonies. It was old stuff by then. He sent Commander Browne as a stand-in and thereby earned his undying wrath, for Senator Philipuster was just back from a month's vacation at Space Travel, Inc's., lunar vacation ground.

Healey went with Mr. Zytztz to the offices of the Classification Section. Healey turned in his resignation, and Mr. Zytztz applied for re-classification.

As the originator of the "eyes" rule, Healey argued its lack of ground. He cited his long acquaintance with Mr. Zytztz. He made him perform all sorts of mental feats that involved perception that could not be construed as anything but seeing. He indulged in the only real oratory of his life.

But the bearded members of the section were anything but vacillating.

"We cannot see any eyes," the chairman said, "so it is fair to conclude that he has no eyes in the human sense of the word." They voted Healey down unanimously.



The chairman asked Healey into his office to look over some matters that had come up during Healey's absence on Jupiter, and when they were inside alone, with Mr. Zytztz waiting

patiently in the reception room, the chairman turned to Healey.

"Look, Admiral, we respect your opinion and all that, but don't you see the—ah, fellow, if you wish—the fellow just isn't human. It wouldn't do, you know. After all, they're only plants. We must preserve the superiority of the human race."

Healey looked at him hard. "What superiority?" he said, and turned on his heel.

He and Mr. Zytztz went back to quarters, and Healey said, "I'm really sorry, Mr. Zytztz. It was my fault in the very first—"

"Forget it," Mr. Zytztz murmured softly, like a breeze through the palm trees.

"But there isn't any reason—"

"Perhaps there is. They have little to go on but past experience, and they—"

"Yes, they're thick from the collar-bone on up."

Mr. Zytztz turned to him and there was the hint of a chuckle in his words.

"Let us not be insubordinate, Admiral," he said gently. "There are few of us who don't sometime make a mistake that inadvertently causes trouble for others. The human organism is so complex, and so primitive, really. Things are done or said where the motivation is not what it seems. A tiny bit of anger or fear creeps in—perhaps fear of losing one's standing in the eyes of others—and the act is performed or the words are spoken without a great deal of logic."

Healey stared at him. "On second thought," he said soberly, "perhaps it is an injustice to try to classify you as human."

A year later Admiral Healey, on an extension of his unofficial leave from the Space Marines, was re-assigned to Space Travel, Inc., to command their new and still bigger ship, the crack passenger-and-perishable-goods liner *Clarissa*. Yes, that was in honor of Philipuster's niece, and was Captain Browne (they had all been promoted again) ever annoyed when he saw her desecrate the second bottle of champagne in less than two years!

"If she was forty years younger," he grumbled, "I'd take her out and let her find out how much better that stuff works on porcelain plates than it does on beryllium plates."

Healey now was a full admiral and a wealthy man at forty-two. He could retire in twenty years more on full pay, and he would then be only sixty-two and in the very prime of life. He could buy a country estate on Aconcagua and devote his time to checking Captain Browne's telephone numbers.

In 2140 the IWC census showed: Martians, seven hundred and seventy-seven.

Some persons were very curious about that, but the Martians didn't talk. The one man who could have found out, Admiral Healey, saw no reason for prying into the affairs of the Zytztzes.

Anyway, Mr. Zytztz wasn't on the Jupiter run for in those days the trip was too long for him.

A couple of years later Healey met Mr. Zytztz shuffling out of the port captain's office at Havanaport. Healey wished Mr. Zytztz had possessed a face, because Mr. Zytztz would have been grinning all over. His leaves were waving and bending and almost dancing in the sunlight. One of the leaf-ends was

curled around a small book.

"Admiral," he purred, "congratulate me! I have just received my coveted officer's license."

Healey looked, and sure enough Mr. Zytztz had a third mate's ticket. How he'd done it Healey didn't know, but probably he had pestered the board until they decided to put him through, and if Healey knew those face-seamed old examiners they must have given him everything in the book.

Mr. Zytztz had his ticket and Healey guessed the examiners figured they were through with him.

"Why did you want a ticket so much?" he asked. "You're making a lot of money, and you don't need *any*."



But Mr. Zytztz was exuberant. "Some day, when I get my master's ticket, I'll have a ship of my own. I couldn't command my own ship now without breaking the regulations, you know."

Healey was not surprised to see Mr. Zytztz down at the spaceport a few days later shuffling along the corridors, watching the ships come in, hoping each time that here was the one where he would get a third mate's berth so he could start working up.

But it was hopeless and Healey knew it. Mr. Zytztz had been labeled "not human," and nobody was going to hire him as third mate. They didn't dare to. Their crews would have jumped ship.

Three months later Healey dropped him off at Mars on the way to Jupiter. Mr. Zytztz was pretty wilted and limp-looking, but he said:

"Thanks, Admiral. See you in Havana."

On the way back to Earth, a shuttle-boat met them out from Mars, and Mr. Zytztz came through the air-lock.

"I have just talked to Mr. Morgan, who represents Ether Fleet, Inc.," he said happily. "He has practically promised me a berth if I can get a master's certificate."

Healey gasped. "A master's certificate!"

"Yes," Mr. Zytztz purred proudly. "He said all their mates hold master's certificates. So I am going back to Havana."

"He didn't actually promise you, though, did he?"

"No, sir, but that was the implication."

Healey thought that over for a while. Morgan had given Mr. Zytztz the brush-off with that phony story about all his mates holding master's certificates. But why hadn't Mr. Zytztz read his mind and known that?

One day Healey asked him, "Don't you still read minds, Mr. Zytztz?"

"Oh, no," Zytztz said pleasantly. "I quit that years ago, because it embarrassed so many persons when they later discovered I could do it...."

Healey sat in on the examination. That board of gray-haired men were grouped around Mr. Zytztz like hawks around a day-old chick. Healey took one look and he knew Mr. Zytztz would not pass this time.

They asked Mr. Zytztz about his ether-time, and he produced a sheaf of discharge slips that would have made most captains envious. Then they began to throw questions at him—questions that came like red-hot rocket jets. They set him adrift in the asteroid belt. They fused his rear jets. They burned out his front jets. They choked up his instruments with ether-dust. They put his chief engineer in bed with space-vertigo. They threw out his navigation officer and gave him a black spot over the entire star system. They eclipsed the sun. They punctured his hull with meteorites.

But Mr. Zytztz wasn't perturbed. He stood there on his stalk in the center of the room and listened attentively and courteously to each question, and gave the answers in his soft, unruffled voice.

He sent a man outside to burn off the fused portions of his rear jets. He took what was left of the front jets and welded them together. He sent the first mate to the engine-room. He navigated by watching the stars, and when they covered the stars he proved to the board that he could draw a line within thirty minutes of true north or within thirty minutes of any given right ascension without instruments of any kind.

That was magnificent. Mr. Zytztz had what might be called absolute orientation. They even put him in a seamless room and revolved and rolled him, and each time his sense of direction performed more accurately than any Earth compass, because it was built inside of him and it was *right*....

He had them on all counts. The one thing they could have stuck him on—the actual details of repairing a piece of machinery—they didn't ask about.

He got his ticket. He got it and set off for the administration

building as fast as he could shuffle, the precious book clutched firmly in his leaf-ends.

No, he didn't get a ship. He offered to take a third mate's berth, but they said they didn't have anything open. He wound up working for passage to Mars.



CHAPTER VII

Philipusters Belong Outside

Several months later Healey heard on the video that his father, Admiral Healey of the Stratosphere Fleet, had retired. It puzzled Healey, because his father was not an old man, and it wasn't like the Healeys to retire so early. Healey saw Pickens on his next landing, and Pickens gave him the story.

"Your father has tried for years to soften up the Air Marines so that you and all of the men who distinguished themselves in the Rocket Service could be restored to active status in the Marines, but they stalled him by saying that he, as an active officer, could not in good taste ask for anything of that sort. So he has retired and he is devoting the rest of his life to bring about a revision of the regulations. It could be, Admiral, that he is very proud of you." Pickens said the last words very softly.

"Yes." Healey was thoughtful. He'd like to see his father. He hadn't seen him since 2116. But if the old admiral didn't have any better luck with the Air Marines' Board on Discipline than Healey had had with the Classification Section, it would be wasted time.

Healey saw Mr. Zytztz many times in the next several years. Everyone in the space lanes knew the Martian. He would ship out as a seaman, or sometimes as bos'n's mate with a crew of Martians, and when he reached port, whether it was on Mars or Luna or Jupiter or Io or Callisto or Ganymede, he would make the rounds, carrying his master's license hopefully with him—but getting nowhere.

It hurt Healey, and the ironic twist of the whole thing caused him a good many restless nights. Then men in the Rocket Service, themselves outcasts of the Air Marines, had tried long and vainly to be recognized. Failing, they formed their own rigid caste. And now Mr. Zytztz was battering his head against the same stone wall of indifference, because he, Healey, who had been one of the most ardent in trying to re-establish himself in the Air Marines, had damned the Zytztzes the first day he had seen them. It caused Healey a lot of serious thought and a lot of self-reproach. As a matter of fact, he would have done anything within his power to make things right for Mr. Zytztz.

But the wall he himself had created was as stony as the one that had created him. He was arguing one day with the port captain on Luna, who had been first mate on the old *Phoebus*.

Finally the port captain said, "I can't give him a ship, Healey. You know that. He's a Martian."

"Well," said Healey stubbornly, "what's wrong with being a Martian?"

The captain exploded. "You know as well as I do that he isn't human. You said so yourself the first time you saw him!"

In 2150 the census showed: Martians, seven hundred and

seventy-seven. All adults.

It was odd. Didn't they ever die?

Some years later Mr. Zytztz came back on the *Clarissa* again as escort for Healey. One night he was standing at a porthole watching Vela when he said:

"Admiral, why don't they give me a berth?"

Healey thought it over. He decided it was time to tell him. "It isn't any compliment to what we facetiously call humanity, but it's time you should know, so you won't keep batting your brains out."

"Yes?" Mr. Zytztz said quietly.

"They won't give you a berth because you're a Martian," Healey said flatly.

"I don't understand," Mr. Zytztz said slowly.

And Healey knew he would never understand. It wasn't Mr. Zytztz's code. He didn't realize how small Earth-men could be.

"Well, it's like this. Any Earth-man is afraid of anything or anybody that he thinks might outdo him, physically, mentally, emotionally, artistically—or what have you. He resents it. And as long as he can hold the other person down, he's likely to. The Zytztzes are the best people in my book," Healey went on warmly, "but that just makes it tougher on you among those who don't know you. If you weren't so intelligent and unassuming and so temperamentally perfect, maybe Earth-men would like you. The way it is, you haven't got a chance."



Mr. Zytztz absorbed all that in silence. Finally Healey said as a clincher, "You may as well give it up. You'll never get a ship." He studied him then, and again he caught the strong feeling of that tremendous, illimitable patience that would conquer anything.

Healey did not retire in 2158. Atomic engines came out in a form adaptable to space ships. Space Travel, Inc., built a new ship called the *Philipuster*, and to Captain Browne's great disgust, the senator's niece splashed a third bottle of champagne on its magnificent burnished hull.

They talked Healey into staying on. It wasn't the money that influenced him, but the fact that there was nothing else for him to do. He had seen Admiral Pickens from time to time, and there was no denying that Pickens was lonely. He had plenty of friends, yes, but he couldn't go down to the Officers' Club and swap stories with the Air Marines. So Healey stayed on.

It was about this time that the Air Marines became the Space Marines.

The new atomic engines required comparatively nothing in the way of fuel. Where previously ninety per cent of a ship's load capacity had been used for fuel, now a few thousand pounds of plutonium or a few hundred pounds of americum from Jupiter could drive the *Philipuster* almost as far as a catboat could sail under the breeze from the senator's speeches.

Space Travel, Inc., thoughtfully doubled Healey's pay, because by now he was an institution. He told Browne the act of being the first man to step on Martian soil had given him more eminence than he could have earned in a thousand years.

Sometimes, after that, he would see Mr. Zytztz, shuffling in or

out of a port captain's office or around the administration building at Havanaport, carrying his worn master's ticket in a leaf-tip. Sometimes he would look haggard and limp, but always he seemed to hope.

Healey would have bought him a ship and given it to him, but he knew Mr. Zytztz would refuse it. He wanted—well, what did he want anyway? He wanted to be master of his own ship—and he had to earn that himself.

In 2160 the census showed no change in the Martians. In 2161 the Space Marines converted all their drives to atomics. Even the old *Phoebus*, now an antiquated tub used mostly for patrols to the moon and back, was equipped with brand new, late-type atomics that very nearly jerked her stanchions loose the first time they tried her out.

So it went until 2170. Healey had a Osterhus and was beginning to think seriously of retiring. Captain Browne ran the *Philipuster*. And Healey used to josh him whenever he showed signs of taking his duties too seriously.

"Some time I want to borrow the telephone of those three redheads you know back on Earth," Healey would say to Browne.

The *Philipuster* was a big ship. They had a crew of nearly two thousand, and on their quarterly trip in the fall of 2170, shortly after the census turned up the customary dearth of births among the Martians, Healey had aboard some fifty Zytztzes as crew members. They made much faster trips with the atomic drive, and so the Zytztzes could stand the jaunt to Jupiter without any trouble.

One night—they called it night because the ship's chronometer

showed past 2100, although it was always dark in the ether—one night Mr. Zytztz was standing at a porthole looking in the usual direction of the sky. Healey was sitting back in his padded chair smoking a good cigar, and Captain Browne was glancing over the reports prepared by his staff. A rustling came from Mr. Zytztz as he said:

"Do you know, Admiral, that in two years the law against post-mortem examinations of non-terrestrial creatures will expire?"

Healey stared at him. Mr. Zytztz was not yet past startling him.

"Well," Healey said finally, "maybe it would be a good thing. Maybe a post-mortem would show that you have eyes, and then you would be re-classified as humans."

Mr. Zytztz answered slowly, "Yes, a post-mortem would reveal eyes—of a kind that would startle Earth-people. But before one holds a post-mortem one must have a body."

"Oh, sure," he said, "but some day a Martian will die."



Deliberately Mr. Zytztz turned clear around. "We never die," he said quietly.

Healey grabbed at his cigar as it fell out of his open mouth. Captain Browne stared at Mr. Zytztz.

"No," said Mr. Zytztz, "for practical purposes we do not die. Our span of life is very long. Eleven thousand years is nothing to us."

Eleven thousand years? Healey frowned. That figure struck a chord somewhere in his mind, but he couldn't bring it to light.

Healey looked hard at Mr. Zytztz.

"Is that why there are always seven hundred and seventy-seven Martians?"

The leaves nodded. "Yes, but I am afraid after the law becomes inoperative, there will be accidents and Martians will be killed."

Captain Browne rubbed his chin. "I don't believe you trust us, Mr. Zytztz," he said gently.

Mr. Zytztz seemed to sigh. "Humans are ruled so much by emotion, and so often those emotions are obscure," he observed.

"I guess you're right," said Browne. "They aren't all as obvious as Senator Philipuster."

"Er—ahem." There was a tremendous snort behind Healey and a great clearing of a throat. Healey spun around in his chair and his mouth dropped open again.

"Senator Philipuster! I didn't know you were on board."

"Just traveling—ahem—incognito, as it were. Don't like to attract so much attention, you know."

"I can well imagine," said Captain Browne, and Healey thought he detected a slight note of dryness.

"I—ahem—" The senator's bushy eyebrows raised toward Mr. Zytztz. "This fellow—he isn't an officer, is he?"

"He holds a master's ticket," Healey said sharply.

"But surely he's not an officer in the employ of my—of Space Travel, Inc."

"No, he is not," Healey said.

"And—ahem— isn't there a ruling that none but officers are allowed to loiter on the bridge?"

"There is," Healey said, and glared at him.

"Then—ahem—well—"

"That rule," Healey said firmly, "applies to civilians as well."

The senator blinked. "You impertinent young whippersnapper! How old are you?"

"Ninety last May."

"Why—ahem—I'm old enough to be your grandfather. I'm a hundred and thirty-two."

Healey got up from his chair. "Nevertheless, Senator, the rule says no loitering, as you pointed out." Healey ushered him to the door.

CHAPTER VIII

Derelict in Space

When the door was closed, with the senator on the other side, Captain Browne walked gravely up to Healey and made motions of pinning something on the lapel of his uniform.

"Your medal, Admiral," he said.

Mr. Zytztz started to shuffle out.

"No," Healey said. "Don't go. Sit down—er, stand up. Hang it, stay here while we talk over the price of old ivory."

Mr. Zytztz hesitated, then he seemed to smile, and he moved back to the porthole.

"Now, your senator there, he's not at all an obscure person. He is ruled by comparatively uncomplicated motives, and—"

"The first ten of which," Captain Browne said acidulously, "in order of importance, are 'Get the dough.'"

Mr. Zytztz seemed to go through the motions of a frown. "I don't wish to be a skeptic, Captain, but—"

"Unidentified object on the port bow, sir," came, the voice of the lookout in the nose of the *Philipuster*.

A red light flashed. Captain Browne sprang to the video screen. Healey watched at his side.

"I don't make it out, sir," said Browne.

Mr. Zytztz was still at the porthole. "It is a ship," he said softly.

They watched. The lookout's voice came again.

"Unidentified object appears to be an abandoned ship, sir," he sang.

"Give position," Healey snapped.

"Azimuth three hundred and fifty-three degrees. Ascension five degrees plus. Distance about three thousand miles. Plane of travel approximately zero with this ship's course. Angle of orbit"—a pause—"estimated at four degrees from the forward extension of this ship's course. Velocity"—another pause—"difficult to determine, but not great; direction of velocity, into the angle."

Browne relaxed. "We'll miss easily, unless the velocity turns

out to be more than expected."

"Watch it," Healey ordered the lookout.

"Abandoned ship believed to be the IWC explorer *Phoebus*!" sang the lookout. Healey's eyes popped wide open. He stared at Browne. "What's the dope here? What happened to the *Phoebus*?"

Browne thumbed through the status reports. Mr. Zytztz had shuffled over toward them.

"Here," said Browne, looking up. "*Phoebus*: condemned two days ago and set adrift with a cargo of high explosive. Latest report is that the ship was not destroyed but only damaged. The tow ship *Rameses* is on the way to drag her from the spacelanes until further disposal is ordered."

Mr. Zytztz spoke, and for the first time in all the fifty years Healey had known him, there was sharpness in his voice.

"How is she classified?" he asked Browne.

"Derelict—temporarily."

Mr. Zytztz wheeled to Healey. "Derelict," he rustled, and it had a throaty sound. "She's derelict. I claim her as salvage, with you two as witnesses." Mr. Zytztz was all business. "That is the law, isn't it?"

Healey stared at him.

"Well—yes."

"Will you give me permission to take all the Martians aboard your ship to man the *Phoebus*?"

"Well, sure, we can get along, but—"

"Then put us off, please, Admiral." Mr. Zytztz said it eagerly.

"Well, now, look—" Healey was frowning hard.

Captain Browne moved to the speaker and looked at Healey. Healey sighed and nodded.

"Reverse fields and prepare to execute three-sixty righthand turn to full stop," Browne ordered.

Mr. Zytztz was positively beaming. "Thank you, sir," he said warmly. A leaf raised in salute and then he revolved and shuffled off down the corridor at high speed.



Bells began to jingle and whistles to blow, and signs appeared in the corridor on ground glass screens: QUIET PLEASE!
THERE IS NO DANGER.

It was no small feat to stop a big ship in the ether, especially on such abrupt notice, and Space Travel, Inc., claimed it cost them in the neighborhood of forty thousand dollars to make a stop like that, in fuel wasted and damage to furnishings. There was one consolation voiced by Captain Browne as he braced himself:

"Maybe Senator Philipuster will fall and sprain his voice-box."

"That comes under the head of wishful thinking," Healey observed.

They stopped. Healey himself took Mr. Zytztz and his fifty or so fellow-Martians aboard the derelict. She was in pretty bad shape in the after hold. A gap as big as a railway locomotive showed in her hull. Things had been shaken up pretty badly.

The pumping system was severely damaged and the oxygen pipes destroyed, controls beaten up, audio and video screens dead, but the atomic engines, for some reason, were not injured.

"Well, Mr. Zytztz, it can be done," Healey said after an inspection. "It can be fixed up, and it'll be your ship, but do you think you fellows can do it? You're not very handy at things like that? Want me to send you some help?"

"No," Mr. Zytztz said decisively. Healey knew what he was thinking. If they took an Earth-man with them, the Earth-man would have an equal share in the salvage, and Mr. Zytztz wanted the ship for him and his race alone.

Healey said, "Okay, good luck," and went on back to the *Philipuster*, but he was very thoughtful.

The senator asked several times on the way to Jupiter for an audience, but Healey had no intention of explaining why they had stopped at the height of trajectory, and so he evaded him.

They made their call at Jove and delivered three hundred passengers, mostly employees of Atompowerinc to work in the americium mines, and a couple of hundred thousand tons of food and supplies, and took on a load of passengers going back to Earth for a rest. Three months' work on Jupiter with its high gravity and artificial air required a man to rest three months on Earth before he could go back.

The *Philipuster* picked up nearly a hundred tons of pure americium and some plutonium which had been produced as a by-product.

Healey did not know what they would do with all the americium because they claimed the new atomic engines

attained ninety per cent efficiency from atomic fission, and Healey knew that they could fly the *Philipuster* to Jupiter and back on no more americium than a strong man could carry on his back.

On the way to Earth Captain Browne said, "Do you suppose we might go anywhere near the *Phoebus*, sir?"

"We ought to," Healey growled. "You've been resetting the course every night to try to meet it."

Captain Browne turned a delicate shade of pea-green. "Sorry, sir," he said.

"Skip it. Just be sure you don't lose them."

Captain Browne was a good navigator. Eighty days later the lookout sang, "Unidentified object on the starboard bow, sir. Azimuth four degrees. Ascension two degrees plus. Distance ten thousand miles."

Healey was amused when a minute later the lookout called the *Phoebus'* name. Apparently the lookout, too, had been expecting to sight her.

The *Philipuster* was already reversing fields. They stopped and tied the *Phoebus* onto them and Admiral Healey and Captain Browne went aboard.



The Martians were glad to see them—Mr. Zytztz especially. They crowded around close, and Mr. Zytztz offered the tip of one of his leaves and Healey shook it firmly.

"How's it going?" asked Healey. "You look a little droopy."

"Very nicely," said Mr. Zytztz. "Very nicely."

Healey looked things over. They had patched up the oxygen system. They had juice in the batteries. They had tried to weld some plates over the big hole in the after hold but they hadn't been able to make the patch stick, and so they had sealed the bulkhead doors and were using only the forward two thirds of the ship. They had tried to repair the pumping system but the main pump was jimmied up and needed some pretty careful lathe work. Healey could see they had been trying to cut some bushings for it, but they all looked like scrap. The lathes that had been left on the *Phoebus* were relics, anyway.

Healey looked at Mr. Zytztz again. "You're withered as the devil," he said. "Why don't you give this up and go back to Mars? You'll cave in if you don't."

Mr. Zytztz faced Healey for a moment, then he seemed to come to a decision. He led them into the control-room and they sat down while he paced the floor, shuffling back and forth on his stalk.

"You two men," he said presently, looking at Healey and Browne, "have always been friendly to us, and you two have done more to help us than all others put together. So I suppose I may as well be frank with you.... You think we're crazy for wanting a ship so much." He paused, then a sound like a sigh came from him. "Well, I'll let you decide for yourself. We've never told the whole story, because Earth-people are—well—" he searched for a delicate word—"Unpredictable."

Healey nodded grimly.

Mr. Zytztz shuffled over to a porthole and looked out toward the constellation Vela. Then he turned toward Healey and

Browne, but one of his long leaves pointed through the porthole.

"We came from there eleven thousand years ago," he said.

Healey was not surprised. He had expected some such thing.

"That is, you mean your forefathers."

"No," said Mr. Zytztz, his leaves rustling. "I mean we—the seven hundred and seventy-seven of us who are still alive."

Healey blinked. "That's right," Healey said. "You told me before that you live a long time. But you wouldn't if you were kept away from Mars all the time."

Zytztz answered, "I don't know. I only know that so much contact with humans wearies us with its—forgive me—with its pettiness and selfishness. We can't endure it without a pause."

"You've been alone here on the *Phoebus*."

Mr. Zytztz looked embarrassed. "I hesitate to say this, but humans leave their mark on everything they associate with. A small amount of their dominant emotions is absorbed even by metal and so on."

"Then, when you get to Mars you don't do anything mysterious at all," said Healey. "You just go out into the desert and rest."

"Wonderful relaxation," said Mr. Zytztz. "That's all we did for eleven thousand years on Mars."

"And you don't have to eat?"

"Practically speaking, no. We can get along very nicely for a hundred years or so of active life, just absorbing what energy we need from the sunlight and the air. Of course, the way we were living on Mars before the *Phoebus* came we could live

forever."

"What planet did you come from?" Healey asked, looking through the porthole.

"The Fourteenth Planet of what you know as the star Gamma Velorum. It's a great deal like your Earth—physically speaking."

"Why in heck did you leave?" asked Browne. "To hunt up some new telephone numbers?"



Mr. Zytztz's leaves rustled softly, as if he was smiling. "Not exactly. Our scientific council heard rumors from the Exploration Committee of a planet in the system of Pi Centaurus that Earth-people were developing a highly organized social and political system, with a complex arrangement of strata in regard to persons themselves."

"You mean class distinction?" Healey said drily.

"Yes, that's about it. Well, you see, on our planet we never had been inclined to differences in position. We are not a highly organized people. In fact, there never has been any need for organization at all. Our physical wants are almost nil, so there has been no incentive for one to get ahead of the others. But our progress committee wanted to become familiar with Earth's system, because we work on the theory that everything of that sort has advantages. So seven hundred and seventy-seven of us were sent on a rocket ship which we bought from the robots of the Eighteenth Planet, to investigate Earth's social system."

"Wait a minute," said Healey, sitting up. "Did you say eleven thousand years ago?"

Mr. Zytztz nodded. "We landed on Earth and found a rather highly developed civilization—that is, compared to what you have now, of course, because I have no other standard. We became acquainted—"

"One second," said Healey sharply. "What part of Earth did you visit?"

"There were only two continents that interested us. One in what is now approximately the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, and the other in what is now the Southwest Pacific."

Healey jumped up. "You don't say! Atlantis and Lemuria! That's what I argued in my thesis fifty years ago. That's what got me kicked out of active duty in the Air Marines. That's what made me an outcast. Those are the two continents that Senator Philipuster maintained were nothing but myths!"

"They were quite real then," said Mr. Zytztz.

"Well, I'll just be plain scuttled!"

CHAPTER IX

Friends Indeed!

Eyes flashing with eagerness, Healey sat down again because he was weak from excitement. After all these years his graduation thesis had been vindicated. By Mr. Zytztz!

"There was only a chain of islands where your eastern

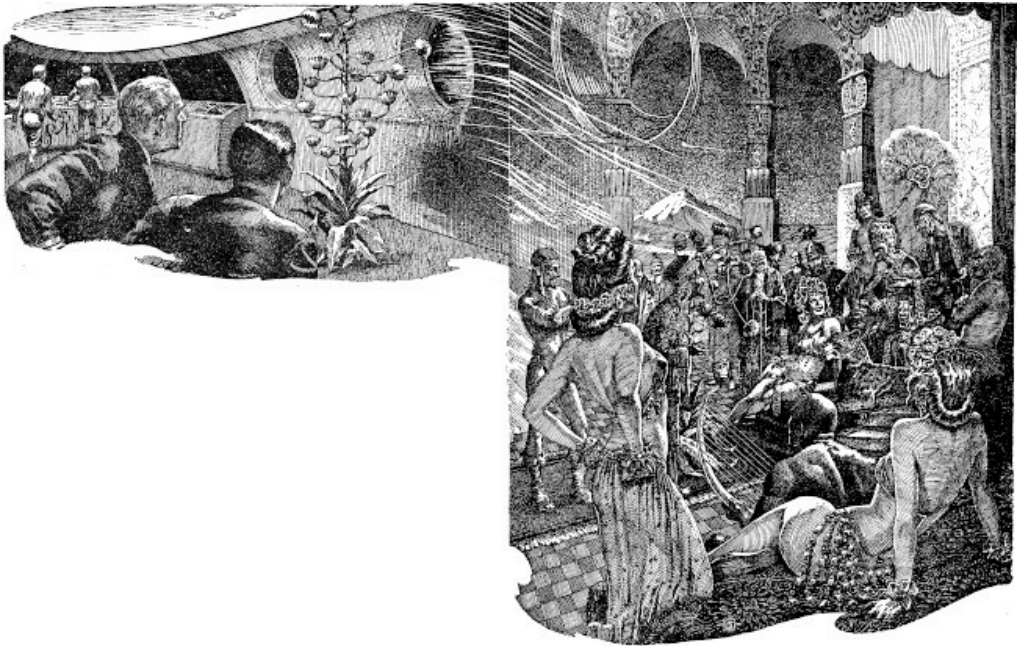
mountains are in North America, and there were some primitive peoples in Egypt, and Southeastern Europe," Mr. Zytztz went on. "But the peoples of Atlantis and Lemuria, who had some interchange and seemed to have developed concurrently, had quite a modern civilization. They had extensive family relationships, marriage, religion, and so on, but the thing that interested us most was the eminence given to persons of education, on the one hand, and persons who in one way or another had accumulated more possessions than they needed for their personal use."

"That hasn't changed," Captain Browne observed.

"How long did you stay there?"

"Almost a year. The so-called rulers took us in charge and just about convinced us their system was a good one and that we could profit by adaptation of it. What you sometimes call California Chamber of Commerce tactics, I believe."





"The rulers of Atlantis took us in charge when we visited their island," Mr. Zytztz said.

Admiral Healey leaned forward. "Tell me just one thing, Mr. Zytztz—did they really have the secret of counteracting gravity?"

"Oh, yes, they did. Their methods of propulsion were crude compared to yours, but they had discovered how to control gravity very competently."

"Do you have that secret?"

Healey and Browne both held their breaths for the answer.

"Well, no, I don't, but I think I know where it is," Mr. Zytztz said slowly.

"Can you get it for me?" asked Healey.

"Yes, I think so."

Healey relaxed, his fingers drumming on the chair arm.

"Go on," he said. "How did you get stranded on Mars? You had a ship."

"I'm getting to that. We weren't satisfied with what we had seen on Earth. Something seemed, as you say, phony. So we decided to get away from the nervousness of Earth and think it over. We left, but a stowaway from the Lemurians turned up almost as soon as we were off the ground. He had been working in the factory where they made their crude aircraft. He was very excited.

"He told us we hadn't gotten the true picture at all; that there were ten unhappy and underprivileged persons to every one of the class we had known, that the ruling class had deliberately misinformed us and kept us from seeing the truth. He was, perhaps, a little fanatical, but he impressed us. We started to take him back to Earth, because obviously he couldn't go to Vela with us. But that excited him; he seized our controls. We operated on a beam that focused on the gravitational power of a body and either attracted or repelled. He tried to do both at once and the controls went completely haywire. Pardon my Earth slang."

"Quite all right," Healey breathed, his eyes fixed on Mr. Zytztz.

"We swung into an orbit around Earth. We tried various things to get away, and—we aren't very handy at such things, you know. We somehow got our beam focused on Earth with all other gravitational influences nullified, and we circled Earth at

terrific speed, with our centrifugal inertia counteracting the attractational force of the beam focused on Earth. We had to go faster and faster and after a few days we approached the speed of light. That gave us tremendous mass and pulled the earth a little out of its regular orbit. We were circling Earth across the poles, and presently the continent now known as America was pulled up out of the ocean bed by our mass, and the two continents of Lemuria and Atlantis were completely inundated by the tidal waves, and both continents disappeared under the water."

Healey took a deep breath. "So that's the story," he said at last.

"Yes," said Browne. "But how can you prove it?"



At this Mr. Zytztz's leaves perked up. "Oh, I can prove it," he said. "We broke loose from Earth and finally landed on Mars. The stowaway spent all his time until he died from lack of nourishment, writing the records of Lemuria. He told all he knew about their science, including the secret of counteracting gravity."

"Great sea of fire!" said Captain Browne, and Admiral Healey's eyes were gleaming with a strange fire that had not been there for many years.

Browne looked at him. "But would even that be enough to swing the Space Marines?" he asked Healey.

Healey's eyes narrowed. "It had better be. With the heat I could put on Senator Philipuster and through him on the Board of Discipline—Philipuster is one of the biggest shots in the world

now, you know. Yes"—he nodded with sudden conviction—"we can swing it, Captain." He looked up suddenly. "Who has this manuscript?" he asked Mr. Zytztz.

"It's in the Lemurian's grave back on Mars."

Healey was on his feet, his eyes blazing now.

"Oh, brother!" he murmured over and over, "Things are going to pop now."

Presently he turned to Mr. Zytztz. "So you crash-landed on Mars and you fellows couldn't fix up the ship because you're not so handy with tools, and the Lemurian didn't live long enough?"

"That's about the story. The ship rusted in spite of all we could do, and gradually disintegrated."

"And you've been waiting ever since to hitch a ride home," said Browne.

"What else was there to do?" asked Mr. Zytztz.

"I suppose that you've made up your mind about class distinctions by now?" Healey said a little acidulously.

Mr. Zytztz was slow in replying. "I think," he said finally, "that it is still short of perfection."

Healey snorted.

Browne said thoughtfully, "I can understand all this stuff about Lemuria and anti-gravity and so on. That's plain enough. But what I can't understand is: you've had eleven thousand years with nothing to do but wait. Why didn't you ever have any offspring on Mars?"

Healey imagined Mr. Zytztz was smiling softly to himself. "Because we're all males. Our wives and sweethearts are all back home in the Velorian system."

Browne gulped and stared at Healey. "Well, no wonder they want a ship," he said. "After eleven thousand years on Mars, I'd want to get back home and raise some little Zytztzes myself."

Healey could not speak for a few minutes. So that was why they wanted a ship—to go home! Home to wives and sweethearts and children and families. Home! Home to a place that was "very much like Earth," after eleven thousand years of patient waiting on the red alkali of Mars.

How tremendously glad they must have been to see the *Phoebus* when she came down the first time. How they must have felt when Healey slammed the air-lock hatch on Mr. Zytztz's face!

Healey stood up. "I'm sold," he said quietly. "I'll see that you get her in, Captain Browne!"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Zytztz was murmuring softly, "I shall be very grateful."

"Captain Browne, send me some equipment over from the *Philipuster*—one complete machine-shop, a small forge, a plastic press, steel and brass stock, food and water. Make up a list. Everything you can think of. Send us all you can find on the *Philipuster*, and as soon as you reach Havanaport, ship the rest to Mars. And include ten tons of americium. That will be enough to take us—to take them to the edge of the universe and back."

Browne swallowed. "Ten tons, sir? That stuff is worth roughly a million dollars a ton."

"I've got three million dollars put away. Here, I'll give you a letter to my attorneys. Maybe—"

Mr. Zytztz interrupted softly. "We Zytztzes have several million dollars. It is magnificent of you to do this for us, but let us expend our common funds first."

"Yea," Healey growled. "I guess you'll have to do that. And we'll still be short a few million dollars. But get it shipped anyway, Captain. My credit ought to be worth something."

"I'm willing to lend you what I have, but that isn't very much," said Browne. "And Atompowerinc will take a mortgage on your soul for the balance."

"Don't worry me with details," said Healey. "Get the stuff."

"Yes, sir."

Captain Browne took the letter from Healey and one from Mr. Zytztz and went back through the airlocks. Presently equipment began to stream across the gangplanks. Everything went well until the ten tons of americium began to come over in small black boxes that held twenty-five pounds each.

Healey was a little surprised to see it for he had figured it would be necessary for Captain Browne to do some fast fenagling on Earth to get that, but apparently Browne was taking things into his own hands on the theory that possession is pretty good title.



CHAPTER X

Mr. Zytztz Goes to Mars

Browne was moving pretty fast, but Senator Philipuster moved almost as fast. In no time at all he came stamping aboard, not so impressive in a space-suit and oxygen-mask.

"I'll have you know, sir, you can't tamper with private property this way," he snorted after he got off his oxygen-mask with jerky fingers.

"I'll have *you* know that I am master of the *Philipuster* and all aboard her," Healey told him. "I deem this fuel necessary to save this crew of Martians from disaster." There! He felt better. He already had cleared Browne.

The senator sputtered. "But the Martians came from our own ship."

"Perhaps they did, but Mr. Zytztz here claimed the *Phoebus* as salvage. Before witnesses."

The senator exploded. His face was red. "But ten tons of americium—"

"It will be paid for," Healey said.

"It's outrageous. They don't need that much to get to Mars."

"I deem it necessary for their salvage operations."

Mr. Zytztz shuffled up. The senator was swelling. "Mr. Zytztz is captain of the *Phoebus* now," Healey said pointedly.

The senator glared and turned purple. "I'll have your ticket for this, you whipper-snapper," he barked at Healey, and stamped back across the gangplank.

The *Philipuster* pulled away in charge of Captain Browne, and Admiral Healey rolled up his sleeves and went to work on the *Phoebus*. At ninety he wasn't ancient, but he wasn't as young as he had been, and he was soft. Nevertheless, he worked long, long hours showing the Zytztzes how to fix things.

When his muscles got stiff, he worked to limber them. He got the pumps going. He himself went outside in a space-suit and welded up the hull. They tore out the damaged partitions. They replaced pipes for water and compressed air, and Healey tested and checked the communications.

The Zytztzes worked tirelessly. They could do things if someone would show them how. And one day, three months later, they turned on the power and straightened the *Phoebus* out of her lazy end-over-end floating and took off for Mars. They reached the red planet in six weeks and landed at the spaceport. Captain Browne was already there with a load of supplies he'd brought himself on a special trip.

He told Healey the money situation wasn't too good. Atompowerinc wasn't sticking out its neck yet by refusing delivery, but they were firm in asking full payment for the americium. It worried Healey a little. That is, he worried for fear that Atompowerinc would attach the *Phoebus* before they could get started for Gamma Velorum. But he didn't say anything about it to Mr. Zytztz.

He went ahead and turned the *Phoebus* over to a repair crew at Space Travel, Inc.'s, spaceport, so the *Phoebus* could be made really ship-shape. That would cost money, too, but the Zytztzes couldn't start a sixty-year trip in a ruptured duck. Then Healey set about getting legal title to the *Phoebus* in the name of Mr. Zytztz.

As soon as the repair work was finished, Healey started loading operations. It would take about three days to get the *Phoebus* loaded, with trucks running in and out of her hold like yellow ants, so Healey turned the job over to Captain Browne, who was waiting for orders, while he and Mr. Zytztz took a trip into the desert to find the Lemurian's grave.

That was no trouble. The Zytztzes had buried the Lemurian in a solid rock cavern and then had cemented it so it was air-tight. A couple of sticks of dynamite opened it.

When the dust cleared out, Healey and Mr. Zytztz went inside.



They found the body—or what was left of it—a faint white outline of a skeleton, formed in bone-dust on the rocky floor. They also found the lead casket that the Zytztzes had sealed shut. In it was a manuscript written in ink on fine parchment. Some two hundred pages, but Healey shook his head when he saw the writing. It was faint but still legible, but Healey said:

"That's almost identical with Mayan hieroglyphs, but it doesn't do us any good, because nobody has ever been able to decipher Mayan. They're probably the same language."





Healey found a lead casket containing a manuscript written in fine script.

Mr. Zytztz waggled his leaves. "That needn't bother you. I can remember enough of Lemurian writing to compile a key. In fact, if you'll give me a stenographer who can understand my speech, I think I could translate this for you in a couple of days

—roughly, at least."

Healey stared at him. "You're a wonder if you can do that."

When they got back to the spaceport, Browne was worried. "A man came in the liner from Earth looking for Mr. Zytztz. He appeared to be a process-server."

Healey looked haggard. "He mustn't find Zytztz. Keep him away. Tell him Mr. Zytztz has gone to Pluto to sell toothbrushes to earthworms. Tell him anything. And whip up this loading. How much longer?"

Browne shook his head. "Two days more, anyway, I'm afraid. There's a load of stuff, sir."

So Healey isolated Mr. Zytztz in an office at the back of a drug store under the spaceport, with a stenographer who had enough imagination to understand the Zytztz language, while he himself went to push the loading.

But next morning Mr. Zytztz sent word for Healey to come. When Healey got there, Mr. Zytztz handed him ninety pages of tele-written copy.

Healey was amazed but he was not surprised. He leafed through the manuscript and when he found the section on anti-gravity he uttered a yell.

"What this won't do to people like Senator Philipuster," he said, and chuckled.

"Simple, too, don't you think?" asked Mr. Zytztz.

Healey clucked his tongue. "Far easier than atomic power. And you can see that it will have to work. It's really nothing but an electronic adaptation of an old type of video circuit. What it

does is get inside of gravitational power instead of trying to fight it."

Healey left Mr. Zytztz in hiding while he went to the video office and transmitted a long message to the Discipline Board, including the information on anti-gravity, and asked them formally to investigate his claim that this was a genuine Lemurian manuscript. That was enough. The Discipline Board knew the angles. They would get the picture—but fast.

Two days later, from over the desert came the Zytztzes, seven hundred and seventy-six of them, streaming into the *Phoebus* to go back home. They counted them seven times to be sure, because there wouldn't be any refunds on that trip.

They had just finished the seventh count when Healey turned around to face a man in a brown suit.

"Mr. Zytztz here yet?"

"No," Healey said grimly. "He isn't here."

"Well, I suppose he will be pretty soon. Looks like you're getting ready to take off."

Healey growled in his throat. He wondered how this fellow would like to take a long one-way trip, but he knew Mr. Zytztz would never approve violence—if he knew about it.

They warmed up the engine, with the brown-suited man standing fast in the control-room, although Healey did his best to walk all over him every time he turned around. Finally Healey went outside and got Browne.

"Bring Mr. Zytztz," he said grimly. "I may have to give this bird a tap on the jaw and take him with us, but get Mr. Zytztz! The *Phoebus* is ready to roll."

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Browne with alacrity.

"You skunk!" Healey said softly. "You'd *like* to see some violence."

"Could be," Browne said.



Healey went back to the ship. Now there was a messenger in a blue suit waiting for him.

"Sign here, Admiral," he said.

Healey signed. He tore open the envelope with nervous fingers and read the single sheet:

John Healey, Care Spaceport, Mars. Have investigated claim of Lemurian manuscript. Electronics experts verify gravitational synchronizer. This board considers your claim established. On recommendation of Senator Philipuster you are hereby restored to active duty in the International Space Marines with rank of admiral. Report for duty with Stratosphere Fleet within thirty days.

Jennings, Captain, I.S.M.
Secretary of Board of Discipline.

Healey blinked. He read it again. Then he drew a tremendous breath, and his chest began to fill with a feeling that he had hungered for since 2117. He was an admiral in the Space Marines—the sixth Admiral Healey.

The goodness of the feeling flowed over him like the morning

sun, and he wanted to shout it to all of Mars.

But the brown-suited man was waiting on the bridge. Healey looked through the port and he saw Mr. Zytztz shuffling rapidly up the gangplank. Healey looked at the brown-suited man and drew back his fist. It was ironic that his first act as admiral in the Space Marines would be an act of lawlessness that would damn the memory of Healeys forever.

The brown-suited man turned, his chin in exactly the right spot. He looked puzzled at Healey's drawn-back arm.

There was a shout from the air-lock. Captain Browne rushed in waving a message.

"They restored me to active duty!" he shouted. "They're restoring everybody who was in the Rocket Service at the time we first landed on Mars."

He read from the message.

FOR MERITORIOUS SERVICE IN ADVANCING
THE CAUSE OF SCIENCE.

He pounded Healey on the back. "I'm a full-fledged captain in the Space Marines!"

Healey straightened and glowered at him. "I am your admiral," he said stiffly.

Browne gulped, then he straightened and saluted. "Yes, sir. Sorry, sir."

"And besides," said Healey, "you blamed near knocked me over." He grinned and put out his hand. "Shake, Captain!"

Mr. Zytztz was shuffling excitedly in the control-room. He was waving some papers, too.

"They've just handed me a receipt for all supplies and all work done on the *Phoebus*. What does this mean?"

"Mr. Zytztz?" asked the man in the brown suit, and shoved an official-looking paper at him.

Healey took the first papers from Mr. Zytztz and scanned them. "Holy jumping—" He stopped. It was too much for him. "Senator Philipuster," he said finally to Browne, "has personally paid or guaranteed all bills incident to the outfitting of the *Phoebus* for the trip to Gamma Velorum."

Browne stared and his mouth dropped open. "Well, I'll be scuppered!" he said slowly.

The man in the brown suit was already gone. Admiral Healey, I.S.M., looked at Captain Browne, I.S.M., and blinked his eyes and shook his head.

Browne took the papers served on Mr. Zytztz. "I'll have these cancelled."

Mr. Zytztz came up softly. "I'm very glad for both of you, gentlemen."

"Thanks," they said.

Mr. Zytztz's leaves were waving and dancing. "You've been more than kind, Admiral. Thank you very much for everything. And that is very small thanks."

"Skip it," Healey said gruffly.

One of Mr. Zytztz's leaf-tips took Captain Browne's hand.

"You, Captain, have done more than your part—much more."

"That's okay," Browne said casually, and Healey knew he was

embarrassed.

Browne turned and said to Healey, "Let's be going—sir."

Healey held out his hand to Browne. The captain took it before he realized what he was doing, then he laughed.

Browne said, "See you at the Spaceport Bar tonight."

"No, Captain, I guess not," Healey answered. He turned to the desk and wrote something on a sheet of paper. He handed it to Browne. There was a puzzled frown around the captain's eyes.

"What's this?"

Healey swallowed hard. "That, Captain, is my resignation from the Space Marines."

Browne's eyes popped open. "What the devil are you saying? Are you crazy, sir?"

"I'm going with Mr. Zytztz," Healey said.

Browne reached blindly for a place to sit. He sat down and began to mutter and shake his head as if to clear away the cobwebs.

"They've got to have somebody," said Healey doggedly. "If anything should go wrong on the trip they'd be utterly lost. They can't make things or repair things. The *Phoebus* is an old ship. There'll be lots of little things go wrong. They've got to have me. Don't you see?" His tone was almost pleading.

Browne looked at him. Healey knew that Browne was thinking of that day when they had planted the flag on Mars, and

Healey had slammed the air-lock door in Mr. Zytztz's face. Browne stood up. He took the resignation in his hand, snapped to attention, saluted smartly. He started to speak, but there seemed to be something wrong with his throat. He wheeled and marched stiffly into the air-lock.

Mr. Zytztz seemed to be studying Healey. "You may do this if you wish, Admiral, but it really is not necessary."

"You know mighty well it's necessary," Healey said. "Besides, maybe I can pick up a few phone numbers when we get to Vela."

Mr. Zytztz's leaves rustled softly. "You will be an old man when we reach home. You'll never live to get back to Earth."

"Close the hatches," Healey ordered. "Prepare to take off. It's a long trip."

Mr. Zytztz hesitated. Then one leaf raised in a regal salute.

They lifted her off the concrete. She slanted up and up and up at tremendous speed, and then, free of Mars' gravitational influence, curved downward into the sixty-year trajectory that would bring them to Gamma Velorum in the southern skies.

The next day they were out far past Uranus and still accelerating at a constant two gravities. Two faint messages came on the videophone. One said:

CONGRATULATIONS, ADMIRAL, AND BEST WISHES. I GUESS THERE'S NOBODY FUNNIER THAN PEOPLE.—PICKENS, ADMIRAL, I.S.M., RETIRED.

The other said:

JOHN HEALEY, ADMIRAL, I.S.M., RETIRED.
CONGRATULATIONS ON BECOMING THE
SIXTH ADMIRAL. WISH I COULD HAVE
SHAKEN YOUR HAND, BUT YOU KNOW
WHAT IS BEST. GOOD LUCK FROM YOUR
DAD.—MARK HEALEY, ADMIRAL, I.S.M.,
RETIRED.

Healey looked up. Mr. Zytztz was on the bridge. He was facing Vela. His leaves were rustling gently. He was going home. And from the way he was staring through the porthole, Healey knew his eyes were open.

Healey softly folded the last message and put it carefully in his breast-pocket. He walked over and stood beside Mr. Zytztz and looked toward Vela. Healey's eyes were open, too, but they were wet.

[The end of *Mr. Zytztz Goes To Mars* by Noel Loomis]