



**Where There's Hope**  
Bixby, Jerome

**Published:** 1953

**Categorie(s):** Fiction, Science Fiction, Short Stories

**Source:** <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/30715>

**About Bixby:**

Drexel Jerome Lewis Bixby (January 11, 1923 Los Angeles, California – April 28, 1998 San Bernardino, California) was a American short story writer, editor and scriptwriter, best known for his comparatively small output in science fiction. He also wrote many westerns and used the pseudonyms D. B. Lewis, Harry Neal, Albert Russell, J. Russell, M. St. Vivant, Thornecliff Herrick and Alger Rome (for one collaboration with Algis Budrys). He is most famous for the 1953 story "It's a Good Life" which was the basis for a 1961 episode of *The Twilight Zone* and which was included in *Twilight Zone: The Movie* (1983). He also wrote four episodes for the *Star Trek* series, *Mirror, Mirror*, *Day of the Dove*, *Requiem for Methuselah*, and *By Any Other Name*, and he co-wrote the story upon which the classic sci-fi movie *Fantastic Voyage* (1966), television series, and novel by Isaac Asimov were based.

**Also available on Feedbooks for Bixby:**

- *Zen* (1952)
- *The Holes Around Mars* (1954)
- *The Draw* (1954)

**Copyright:** Please read the legal notice included in this e-book and/or check the copyright status in your country.

**Note:** This book is brought to you by Feedbooks  
<http://www.feedbooks.com>

Strictly for personal use, do not use this file for commercial purposes.

**Transcriber's Note:**

This etext was produced from *If Worlds of Science Fiction* November 1953. Extensive research did not uncover any evidence that the U.S. copyright on this publication was renewed. Minor spelling and typographical errors have been corrected without note.

"IF YOU called me here to tell me to have a child," Mary Pornsen said, "you can just forget about it. We girls have made up our minds."

Hugh Farrel, Chief Medical Officer of the Exodus VII, sighed and leaned back in his chair. He looked at Mary's husband. "And you, Ralph," he said. "How do you feel?"

Ralph Pornsen looked at Mary uncomfortably, started to speak and then hesitated.

Hugh Farrel sighed again and closed his eyes. It was that way with all the boys. The wives had the whip hand. If the husbands put up an argument, they'd simply get turned down flat: no sex at all, children or otherwise. The threat, Farrel thought wryly, made the boys softer than watered putty. His own wife, Alice, was one of the ringleaders of the "no babies" movement, and since he had openly declared warfare on the idea, she wouldn't even let him kiss her good-night. (For fear of losing her determination, Farrel liked to think.)

He opened his eyes again to look past the Pornsens, out of the curving port of his office-lab in the Exodus VII's flank, at the scene outside the ship.

At the edge of the clearing he could see Danny Stern and his crew, tiny beneath the cavernous sunbeam-shot overhang of giant leaves. Danny was standing up at the controls of the 'dozer, waving his arms. His crew was struggling to get a log set so he could shove it into place with the 'dozer. They were repairing a break in the barricade—the place where one of New Earth's giant saurians had come stamping and whistling through last night to kill three colonists before it could be blasted out of existence.

It was difficult. Damned difficult. A brand-new world here, all ready to receive the refugees from dying Earth. Or rather, all ready to be *made* ready, which was the task ahead of the Exodus VII's personnel.

An Earth-like world. Green, warm, fertile—and crawling, leaping, hooting and snarling with ferocious beasts of every variety. Farrel could certainly see the women's point in banding together and refusing to produce children. Something inside a woman keeps her from wanting to bring life into peril—at least, when the peril seems temporary, and security is both remembered and anticipated.

Pornsen said, "I guess I feel just about like Mary does. I—I don't see any reason for having a kid until we get this place ironed out and safe to live in."

"That's going to take time, Ralph." Farrel clasped his hands in front of him and delivered the speech he had delivered so often in the past few weeks. "Ten or twelve years before we really get set up here. We've got to build from the ground up, you know. We'll have to find and mine our metals. Build our machines to build shops to build more machines. There'll be resources that we *won't* find, and we'll have to learn what this planet has to offer in their stead. Colonizing New Earth isn't simply a matter of landing and throwing together a shining city. I only wish it were.

"Six weeks ago we landed. We haven't yet dared to venture more than a mile from this spot. We've cut down trees and built the barricade and our houses. After protecting ourselves we have to eat. We've planted gardens. We've produced test-tube calves and piglets. The calves are doing fine, but the piglets are dying one by one. We've got to find out why.

"It's going to be a long, long time before we have even a minimum of security, much less luxury. Longer than you think... . So much longer that waiting until the security arrives before having children is out of the question. There are critters out there—" he nodded toward the port and the busy clearing beyond—"that we haven't been able to kill. We've thrown everything we have at them, and they come back for more. We'll have to find out what *will* kill them—how they differ from those we *are* able to kill. We are six hundred people and a spaceship, Ralph. We have techniques. That's *all*. Everything else we've got to dig up out of this planet. We'll need people, Mary; we'll need the children. We're counting on them. They're vital to the plans we've made."

Mary Pornsen said, "Damn the plans. I won't have one. Not now. You've just done a nice job of describing all my reasons. And all the other girls feel the same way."

**S** HE LOOKED out the window at the 'dozer and crew. Danny Stern was still waving his arms; the log was almost in place. "George and May Wright were killed last night. So was Farelli. If George and May had had a child, the monster would have trampled it too—it went right through their cabin like cardboard. It isn't fair to bring a baby into—"

Farrel said, "Fair, Mary? Maybe it isn't fair *not* to have one. *Not* to bring it into being and give it a chance. Life's always a gamble—"

"*It* doesn't exist," Mary said. She smiled. "Don't try circumlocution on me, Doc. I'm not religious. I don't believe that spermatozoa and an ovum, if not allowed to cuddle up together, add up to murder."

"That isn't what I meant—"

"You were getting around to it—which means you've run out of good arguments."

"No. I've a few left." Farrel looked at the two stubborn faces: Mary's, pleasant and pretty, but set as steel; Ralph's, uncomfortable, thoughtful, but mirroring his definite willingness to follow his wife's lead.

Farrel cleared his throat. "You know how important it is that this colony be established? You know that, don't you? In twenty years or so the ships will start arriving. Hundreds of them. Because we sent a message back to Earth saying we'd found a habitable planet. Thousands of people from Earth, coming here to the new world we're supposed to get busy and carve out for them. We were selected for that task—first of judging the right planet, then of working it over. Engineers, chemists, agronomists, all of us—we're the task force. We've got to do the job. We've got to test, plant, breed, re-balance, create. There'll be a lot of trial and error. We've got to work out a way of life, so the thousands who will follow can be introduced safely and painlessly into the—well, into the organism. And we'll need new blood for the jobs ahead. We'll need young people—"

Mary said, "A few years one way or the other won't matter much, Doc. Five or six years from now this place will be a lot safer. Then we women will start producing. But not now."

"It won't work that way," Farrel said. "We're none of us kids any longer. I'm fifty-five. Ralph, you're forty-three. I realize that I must be getting old to think of you as young. Mary, you're thirty-seven. We took a long time getting here. Fourteen years. We left an Earth that's dying of radioactive poisoning, and we all got a mild dose of that. The radiation we absorbed in space, little as it was, didn't help any. And that sun up there—" again he nodded at the port—"isn't any help either. Periodically it throws off some pretty damned funny stuff."

"Frankly, we're worried. We don't know whether or not we *can* have children. Or *normal* children. We've got to find out. If our genes have been bollixed up, we've got to find out why and how and get to work on it immediately. It may be unpleasant. It may be heart-breaking. But those who will come here in twenty years will have absorbed much more of Earth's radioactivity than we did, and an equal amount of the space stuff, and this sun will be waiting for them... . We'll have to know what we can do for them."

"I'm not a walking laboratory, Doc," Mary said.

"I'm afraid you are, Mary. All of you are."

Mary set her lips and stared out the port.

"It's got to be done, Mary."

She didn't answer.

"It's going to be done."

"Choose someone else," she said.

"That's what they all say."

She said, "I guess this is one thing you doctors and psychologists didn't figure on, Doc."

"Not at first," Farrel said. "But we've given it some thought."

MacGuire had installed the button convenient to Farrel's right hand, just below the level of the desk-top. Farrel pressed it. Ralph and Mary Pornsen slumped in their chairs. The door opened, and Doctor John J. MacGuire and Ted Harris, the Exodus VII's chief psychologist, came in.

**W**HEN IT was over, and the after-play had been allowed to run its course, Farrel told the Pornsens to go into the next room and shower. They came back soon, looking refreshed. Farrel ordered them to get back into their clothes. Under the power of the hypnotic drug which their chairs had injected into them at the touch of the button, they did so. Then he told them to sit down in the chairs again.

MacGuire and Harris had gathered up their equipment, piling it on top of the operating table.

MacGuire smiled. "I'll bet that's the best-monitored, most hygienic sex act ever committed. I think I've about got the space radiations effect licked."

Farrel nodded. "If anything goes wrong, it certainly won't be our fault. But let's face it—the chances are a thousand to one that something *will* go wrong. We'll just have to wait. And work." He looked at the Pornsens. "They're very much in love, aren't they? And she was receptive to the suggestion—beneath it all, she was burning to have a child, just like the others."

MacGuire wheeled out the operating table, with its load of serums, pressure-hypos and jury-rigged thingamabobs which he was testing on alternate couples. Ted Harris stopped at the door a moment. He said, "I think the suggestions I planted will turn the trick when they find out she's pregnant. They'll come through okay—won't even be too angry."

Farrel sighed. They'd been over it in detail several times, of course, but apparently Harris needed the reassurance as much as he did. He said: "Sure. Now scam so I can go back into my act."

Harris closed the door. Farrel sat down at his desk and studied the pair before him. They looked back contentedly, holding hands, their eyes dull.

Farrel said, "How do you feel?"

Ralph Pornsen said, "I feel fine."

Mary Pornsen said, "Oh, I feel *wonderful!*"

Deliberately Farrel pressed another button below his desk-top.

The dull eyes cleared instantly.

"Oh, you've given it some thought, Doc?" Mary said sweetly. "And what have you decided?"

"You'll see," Farrel said. "Eventually."

He rose. "That's all for now, kids. I'd like to see you again in one month—for a routine check-up."

Mary nodded and got up. "You'll still have to wait, Doc. Why not admit you're licked?"

Ralph got up too, and looked puzzled.

"Wow," he said. "I'm tired."

"Perhaps just coming here," Farrel said, "discharged some of the tension you've been carrying around."

The Pornsens left.

Farrel brought out some papers from his desk and studied them. Then, from the file drawer, he selected the record of Hugh and Alice Farrel. Alice would be at the perfect time of her menstrual cycle tomorrow... .

Farrel flipped his communicator.

"MacGuire," he said. "Tomorrow it's me."

MacGuire chuckled. Farrel could have kicked him. He put his chin in his hands and stared out the port. Danny Stern had the log in place in the barricade. The bulldozer was moving on to a new task. His momentary doubt stilled, Farrel went back to work.

**T**WENTY-ONE years later, when the ships from Earth began arriving, the log had been replaced by a stone monument erected to the memory of the Exodus VII, which had been cut apart for its valuable steel. Around the monument was a park, and on three sides of the park was a shining town—not really large enough to be called a city—of plastic and stone, for New Earth had no iron ore, only zinc and a little copper. This was often cause for regret.

Still it was a pretty good world. The monster problem had been licked by high-voltage cannon. Now in their third generation since the landing, the monsters kept their distance. And things grew—things good to eat.

And even without steel, the graceful, smoothly-functioning town looked impressive—quite a thing to have been built by a handful of beings with two arms and two legs each.

It hadn't been, entirely. But nobody thought much about that any more. Even the newcomers got used to it. Things change.

THE END

**Loved this book ?  
Similar users also downloaded**

Gerald W. Page

---

*The Happy Man*

More's "Utopia" was isolated— cut off—from the dreary world outside. All Utopias are....

Horace Brown Fyfe

---

*Irresistible Weapon*

There's no such thing as a weapon too horrible to use; weapons will continue to become bigger, and deadlier. Like other things that can't be stopped....

Mack Reynolds

---

*Combat*

An Alien landing on Earth might be readily misled, victimized by a one-sided viewpoint. And then again ... it might be the Earthmen who were misled....

Jerome Bixby

---

*The Draw*

Stories of the old West were filled with bad men who lived by the speed of their gun hand. Well, meet Buck Tarrant, who could out-draw them all. His secret: he didn't even have to reach for his weapon....

Jerome Bixby

---

*Zen*

Because they were so likable and intelligent and adaptable--they were vastly dangerous

Don Berry

---

*Sound of Terror*

What is more frightening than the fear of the unknown? Johnny found out!

Stephen Bartholomew

---

*Last Resort*

The phenomenon of "hysterical strength" at the physical level is well known. Wonder what the equivalent phenomenon at the psychological level might do....

Dick Purcell

---

*Mr. Chipfellow's Jackpot*

Being one of the richest men in the world, it was only natural that many people anticipated the day he would die. For someone should claim— Mr. Chipfellow's Jackpot.

Richard Olin

---

*All Day Wednesday*

Practically everybody would agree that this is Utopia....

Rog Phillips

---

*The Unthinking Destroyer*

Gordon and Harold both admitted the possibility of thinking entities other than human. But would they ever recognize the physical form of some of these beings?



**[www.feedbooks.com](http://www.feedbooks.com)**  
Food for the mind