



Fee of the Frontier
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From inside the dome, the night sky is a beautiful thing, even though Deimos and Phobos are nothing to brag about. If you walk outside, maybe as far as the rocket field, you notice a difference.

Past the narrow developed strip around the dome, the desert land lies as chilled and brittle as it did for eons before Earthmen reached Mars. The sky is suddenly raw and cruel. You pull your furs around your nose and check your oxygen mask, and wish you were *inside* something, even a thin wall of clear plastic.

I like to stand here, though, and look out at it, just thinking about how far those ships grope out into the dark nowadays, and about the men who have gone out there on a few jets and a lot of guts. I knew a bunch of them ... some still out there, I guess.

There was a time when nearly everything had to be rocketed out from Earth, before they organized all those chemical tricks that change the Martian crops to real food. Domes weren't fancy then. Adequate, of course; no sense in taking chances with lives that cost so much fuel to bring here. Still, the colonies kept growing. Where people go, others follow to live off them, one way or another. It began to look like time for the next step outward.

Oh, the Asteroids ... sure. Not them. I did a bit of hopping there in my own time. In fact—on account of conditions beyond my choice and control—I spent too much time on the wrong side of the hull shields. One fine day, the medics told me I'd have to be a Martian for the rest of my life. Even the one-way hop back to Earth was "not recommended."

So I used to watch the ships go out. I still remember one that almost missed leaving. *The Martian Merchant*. What joker thought that would be a good name for an exploring ship I can't imagine, but it always happens that way.

I was starting my cross-country tractor line then, and had just made the run from Schiaparelli to Asaph Dome, which was not as nice as it is now but still pretty civilized for the time. They had eight or ten bars, taverns, and other amusements, and were already getting to be quite a city.

One of the taverns near the western airlock was named the *Stardust*, and I was approaching, measuring the sand in my throat, when these spacers came out. The first one in sight was a blocky, dark-haired fellow. He came rolling through the door with a man under each arm.

Just as I got there, he made it to his feet somehow and cracked their heads together exactly hard enough to bring peace. He acted like a man used to handling things with precision. He glanced quickly at me out of

a square, serious face, then plunged back through the splintered door toward the breakup inside.

In a moment, he came out again, with two friends who looked the worse for wear. The tall, lean youngster wore a junior pilot's bands on the sleeves of his blue uniform. His untidy hair was ruffled, as if someone had been hanging onto it while in the process of giving him the shiner.

The other one was shorter and a good deal neater. Even with his tunic ripped down the front, he gave the impression of making it his life business to be neat. He was turning gray at the temples and growing a little bulge under his belt, which lent a dignity worthy of his trim mustache and expression of deferential politeness. He paused briefly to hurl an empty bottle at someone's head.

"Better take the alley there," I told the blocky one, on impulse. "It'll bring you out at the tractor lot and I'll give you a lift to your ship."

He wasted no time on questions, just grabbed his friends and disappeared before the crowd came out. I walked around a couple of corners and back to my tractor bus. This lot was only a clear space inside the Number Four Airlock. At that time, two or three tractors came in every day from the mines or other domes. Most of the traffic was to and from the spaceport.

"Who's that?" asked a low voice from the shadows.

"Tony Lewis," I answered.

The three of them moved into the dim light from the airlock guardpost.

"Thanks for the steer," said the blocky one, "but we can stay till morning."

He seemed as fresh as if he had just landed. His friends were a trifle worn around the edges.

"Keep playing that rough," I said, "and you may not make it to morning."

He just grinned. "We have to," he said, "or the ship can't blast off."

"Oh, you three make the ship go, huh?"

"Just about. This is Hugh Konnel, the third pilot; the gent with the dignified air is Ron Meadows, the steward. I'm Jim Howlet, and I look after the fuel system."

I admitted that the ship could hardly do without them. Howlet's expression suggested that he was searching his memory.

"Lewis ... " he murmured. "I've heard of Tony Lewis somewhere. You a spacer?"

"Used to be," I told him. "Did some piloting in the Belt."

Young Konnel stopped fingering his eye.

"Oh, I've heard of you," he said. "Even had to read some of your reports."

After that, one thing led to another, with the result that I offered to find somewhere else to relax. We walked south from the airlock, past a careless assortment of buildings. In those days, there was not much detailed planning of the domes. What was necessary for safety and for keeping the air thicker and warmer than outside was done right; the remaining space was grabbed by the first comers.

Streets tended to be narrow. As long as an emergency truck could squeeze through at moderate speed, that was enough. The buildings grew higher toward the center of the dome, but I stopped while they were still two stories.

The outside of Jorgensen's looked like any other flimsy construction under the dome. We had just passed a row of small warehouses, and the only difference seemed to be the lighted sign at the front.

"We can stop at the bar inside while we order dinner," I said.

"Sounds good," said Howlet. "I could go for a decent meal. Rations on an exploring ship run more to calories than taste."

The pilot muttered something behind us. Howlet turned his head.

"Don't worry about it, Hughie," he retorted. "It'll be all over the dome by tomorrow anyway."

"But they said not to—"

"Mr. Lewis won't say anything, and he's not the only spacer who'll guess it."

It was easy to figure out. Ships did little exploring in the Belt now—plenty of untouched rocks there but nothing really unknown. "Exploring" could only mean that a hop to Jupiter was in the works at last. There had already been rumors about a few wide swings outside the Belt.

Well, it was just about time.

I would have liked to go too, and it was more than just a spacer's curiosity. To my mind, man *had* to move out in space. Being only halfway in control of his own planetary system was no state to be found in by the first interstellar visitors.

That is a meeting bound to happen sooner or later. It would be better for the human race to be able to do the visiting, I thought.

The inside of Jorgensen's always surprised new visitors to Asaph Dome. It was different from anything on Earth, and yet not too much like the real Mars either. That way, Jorgensen hoped to catch both the sandeaters and the tourists. The latter came to rough it in local color, the former to dream of a better world.

"Hey! Look at the stars over the bar!" exclaimed Howlet.

To begin with, the bar was of pinkish sandstone, smoothed and covered by a coating of plastic. Behind it, instead of less imaginative mirrors or bottle displays, Jorgensen had had some drifter paint a night desert: all dull pink and bronze crags smothering in sand under a black sky. The stars twinkled like glass beads, which they were. Lights were dim enough to hide the Martian austerity of the metal furnishings.

"The Earth tourists spend a lot of time here," I told the trio. "Seems they'd rather look at that sky than the real one outside the dome."

The dining room was for the souls of the locals, who could admire the desert more conveniently than find a good meal. It was mostly green and white, with a good deal of the white being crystal. In the corners stood fake pine trees which Jorgensen had repainted every month; but what drew the sandeaters was the little fountain in the middle of the room.

Real water!

Of course, it was the same gallon or two pumped around and around, but clear, flowing water is a sight on Mars. When the muddy trickles in the canals began to make you feel like diving in for a swim, you stopped in at Jorgensen's to watch the fountain while his quiet, husky waiters served your dinner most efficiently.

"Say, this is a cut or two above ship chow," admitted Konnel when the food arrived. "What's that? Music too?"

"They have a trio that plays now and then," I told him. "Sometimes a singer too, when not much is going on in the back room."

"Back room?" Howlet caught up the words.

"Never mind. What would you do right now with a million? Assuming you could beat the wheel or the other games in the first place."

"Do they use ... er ... real money?" asked Meadows, cocking an eyebrow.

"Real as you like," I assured him. "It collects in these places. I guess lots of sandeaters think they might pick up a first-class fare back to Earth."

"Do they?" inquired Konnel, chewing on his steak.

The string trio, which had been tuning up, eased into a quiet song as he spoke. We listened as the question hung in the air, and I decided that the funny feeling under my belt was homesickness, all the stranger because I owned three homes not too far from the Martian equator.

"As far as I know," I answered, "the luck seems to run to those who can't go back anyway, for one reason or another. The ones just waiting for a lucky night to go home rich ... are still waiting."

The door to the back room opened, letting through a blend of talk and small mechanical noises. It also emitted a strikingly mismatched couple.

The girl was dark-haired and graceful, though not very tall. She wore a lavender gown that showed a good deal of trim back as she turned to walk toward the musicians, and what the gown overlooked the walk demonstrated. The man was fat enough to make him seem short until he approached. His face and baldish dome were desert-reddened, and his eyebrows were faded to invisibility. Jorgensen.

Nodding casually to various diners, he noticed the new faces at our table. He ambled over lightly for one of his bulk, and it became apparent that he was far from being blubbery. His belly stuck out, but he could probably knock the wind out of you with it.

"Hello, Tony!" he said in a wheezy tenor. "Introducing some friends to the best hamburger joint on Mars?"

Then he leaned on the back of Konnel's chair and told a couple of his old prospecting yarns to make sure everybody was happy, while the girl began to sing with the trio. She had hardly enough voice to be heard over Jorgensen's stories. I noticed Konnel straining to listen.

Finally, Jorgensen saw it too. Leaving Howlet and Meadows grinning at a highly improbable adventure, he slapped the boy on the shoulder.

"I see you noticed Lilac Malone, boy. Like to buy her coffee?"

"C-coffee?" stuttered Konnel.

"Made with water," I reminded him. "Awful waste here. Like champagne."

"I'll tell her she's invited," said Jorgensen, waggling a finger at her.

"The fellows are going out in the morning," I tried to head him off. "They don't have much time—"

"All the more reason to meet Lilac while they can!"

We watched her finish her song. She had rhythm, and the lavender dress swirled cutely around her in the Martian gravity; but, of course, Lilac would never have made a singer on Earth. Her voice was more good-natured than musical.

She arrived with the coffee, said "hello" to me, waved good-bye to Jorgensen's back, and set out to get acquainted with the others. Catching Howlet's wink, and suspecting that he was used to getting Konnel back to space-ships, I relaxed and offered to show Meadows the back room.

He muttered something about his gray hairs, but came along after an amused glance at Lilac and Konnel.

Jorgensen's gambling room was different from the bar and dining room as they were from each other. Decorations were simple. Drapes of velvety synthetic, dyed the deep green that Martian colonists like, covered the walls. Indirect lighting gave a pretty gleam to the metal gadgets on the tables. Because they used a heavier ball, roulette looked about the same as on Earth, and the same went for the dice games.

"Interesting," Meadows murmured, feeling in his pocket.

He pointed a thumb at the *planets* table. It was round, with a small, rectangular projection for the operator's controls and calculator. In the nine differently colored circular tracks, rolled little globes representing the planets. These orbits were connected by spirals of corresponding colors, symbolic of ship orbits swooping inward or outward to other planets.

"You pick yourself two planets," I explained. "For better odds, pick a start and a destination. The man throws his switch and each little ball is kicked around its groove by a random number of electrical impulses."

"And how do I win?"

"Say you pick Venus-to-Saturn. See that silver spiral going out from Venus and around the table to the orbit of Saturn? Well, if Venus stops within that six-inch zone where the spiral starts *and* if Saturn is near where it ends, you scoop in the stardust."

Meadows fingered his mustache as he examined the table.

"I ... ah ... suppose the closer you come, the more you win, eh?"

"That's the theory. Most people are glad to get anything back. It's honest enough, but the odds are terrific."

A couple of spacers made room for us, and I watched Meadows play for a few minutes. The operator grinned when he saw me watching. He had a lean, pale face and had been an astrogator until his heart left him in need of Martian gravity.

"No coaching, Tony!" he kidded me.

"Stop making me look like a partner in the place!" I answered.

"Thought one night you were going to be... . No winners, gentlemen. Next bets!"

The spheres had come to rest with Pluto near one end of a lavender spiral and Mercury touching the inner end, but no one had had the insanity to bet that way. Meadows began to play inner planet combinations that occasionally paid, though at short odds. He made a bit on some near misses, and I decided to have a drink while he lost it.

I found Howlet, Konnel, and Lilac Malone in the bar admiring the red-bronze landscape. When he heard about Meadows, Howlet smiled.

"If it isn't fixed, they better prepare to abandon," he laughed. "People look at that face and won't believe he always collects half the ship's pay."

Lilac saw a chance to do her duty, and suggested that we all go in to support Meadows. I stayed with my drink until Jorgensen drifted in to have a couple with me and talk of the old days.

After a while, one of his helpers came up and murmured something into his big red ear. He shrugged and waved his hand.

The next time it happened, about twenty minutes later, I was on the point of matching him with a story about a petrified ancient Martian that the domers at Schiaparelli dug out of a dry canal. Jorgensen lowered his faded eyebrows and strode off like a bear on egg-shells, leaving me there with the unspoken punch line about what they were supposed to have dug up with the Martian.

Well, that build-up was wasted, I thought.

Quite a number of sandeaters, as time passed, seemed to drift in and out of the back room. Finally, Howlet showed up again.

"How'd you make out?" I asked when he had a drink in his hand.

"I left my usual deposit," he grinned, "but you ought to see Meadows! Is he ever plugging their pipes! He ran Mercury to Pluto, and it paid off big."

"It ought to; no one ever makes it."

"He did it *twice*! Plus other combinations. With him making out our daily menus, I'll never know why I'm not lucky too. Know what he's doing?"

I lifted an eyebrow.

"He's lending money to every loafer that puts the beam on him. But the guy has to show a non-transferrable ticket for passage to Earth."

"Darn few can," I grunted.

"That's why he keeps sending them out with the price of one and the promise to stake them when they get back. I never saw such expressions!"

At that point, Jorgensen sailed through the curtained doorway between the bar and back room. A craggy, desert look had settled on his red moon-face. He introduced me to two men with him as if someone were counting down from ten.

"Glad to meet you and Mr. Howlet," said the one called McNaughton.

I recognized "Mr. V'n Uh" as Van Etten, a leading citizen of the dome who had been agitating with McNaughton and others of the Operating Committee to form a regular police department. Jorgensen seemed to have something else on his mind.

"Howlet, how about having a word with your shipmate?"

"What's he done wrong?" asked Howlet blandly.

Jorgensen scowled at a pair of baggy-seated sandeaters who strode through the front door with pale green tickets clutched in their hands. They sniffed once at the bar, but followed their stubbled chins into the back room at max acc.

"I don't say it's wrong," growled Jorgensen, glaring after the pair. "It just makes the place look bad."

"Oh, it's good advertising, Jorgy," laughed McNaughton. "People were forgetting that game could be beaten. Now, Mr. Howlet—"

Jorgensen talked him under.

"It's not losing a little money that I mind—"

Some of the drink I was sneaking slipped down the wrong way.

"Well, it's *not*!" bellowed Jorgensen. "But if they all pick up the broadcast that this is where to get a free ride home, I'll have just another sand trap here."

Howlet shrugged and put down his glass. Van Etten nudged me and made a face, so I got up first.

"Never mind," I said. "Being the one that took him in there, I'll check."

Two more men came through the front door. The big one looked like a bodyguard. The one with the dazed look carried a small metal case that could be unfolded into a portable desk. He went up to Jorgensen and asked where he could set up a temporary ticket office for Interplanet.

While I was watching over my shoulder, three or four sandeaters coming out of the back room shoved me aside to get at him. The last I saw before leaving was Van Etten shushing Jorgensen while McNaughton grabbed Howlet by the tunic zipper for a sales talk.

Inside, after getting through the crowd at the *planets* table, I could see that a number of betters were following Meadows' plays, making it that much worse for Jorgensen. Even Konnel had a small pile before him, although he seemed to be losing some of Lilac's attention to Meadows.

While the little spheres spun in their orbits, the steward counted out money into twitching palms, wrote names on slips of paper, and placed bets. Somehow, he hit a winner every five or six bets, which kept his stack growing.

I joggled Lilac's elbow and indicated Konnel.

"How about taking him out for a drink so an old customer can squeeze in for a few plays?" I said.

The money-glow faded gradually from her eyes as she focused on me. She took her time deciding; but from the way she snuggled up to Konnel to whisper in his ear, it looked as if she might really be stuck on him. He winked at me.

Such a gasp went up as we changed places that I thought my cuff must have brushed Pluto, but it was just Meadows making a long-odds hop from Earth to Uranus. The operator no longer even flinched before punching the distances and bet on his little computer, and groping in his cash drawer to pay off.

I stood there a few minutes, wondering if the game could be fixed after all. Still, the man who invented it also made encoding machines for the Earth space fleet. Meadows must be having a run of blind luck—no time to interrupt.

On my way out, Howlet caught me at the door of the bar.

"How about some coffee?" he asked. "We'll have to start back soon. You'll be surprised at the time. Dining room still open?"

"Always. Okay, let's sober up and watch the fountain."

Only two or three women and a dozen men sat in the restaurant now. The part-time musicians had disappeared for a few hours of sleep before their usual jobs. We ordered a thermos pot of coffee and Howlet asked me about McNaughton.

"I guess it was on the level," he said when I described the man's Committee position. "He got a boost out of how they had to patch up some troublemaker he knew, after that bar fight we had. Wanted to make me chief cop here."

"Some domes have regular police forces already," I confirmed.

"So he said. Claimed a lot of police chiefs have been elected as mayors. Then he said that someday there will be a Martian Assembly, and men with a start in dome politics will be ready for it, and so on."

"He's exactly right," I admitted. "When do you figure to start?"

"Maybe the next time I pass through." He winked. "If it's still open."

I relaxed and grinned at him. Somehow, I liked his looks just then.

"You shouldn't be gone too long. It's a good spot to put your ladder down."

He helped himself to more coffee and stared into his cup. I knew—the watches near the end of a hop when you wondered about the dead, oily air, when the ones off watch kept watching the astrogator's expression, when you got the idea it was time to come in out of the dark before you made that one slip.

How many pick their landing? I thought. How many never know how close they come to making their mistake, or being a statistic in somebody else's?

"Why the double trance?" asked Meadows.

He brought with him a vague memory of departing chatter and tramping feet in the background. Howlet shoved out a chair for him.

"Everything okay?" asked Jorgensen, bustling up. "Buy anyone a drink?"

"What have they got there ... coffee?" asked Meadows, sniffing.

"Jimmy!" yelled Jorgensen to a waiter. "Pot of coffee for Ron! Hot!"

He slapped Meadows' shoulder and took his glowing red face away.

"What makes him your buddy?" I asked Meadows.

"In the end, I missed Mercury by ten inches and they got most of it back!"

Then was no answer to that. He must have been half a million ahead.

"What about the sandeaters you promised to stake?" asked Howlet, grinning like a man who has seen it happen before but still enjoys it.

"Some of them helped me lose it," said Meadows. "Now they will all just have to use those tickets, I suppose. Where's Hughie and his little friend? Coffee all around and we'll get on course, eh?"

"Thought he was with you," answered Howlet.

"I'll look in the bar," I volunteered, remembering the kid had left with more of a roll than Meadows had now.

A casual search of the bar and back room revealed both nearly empty, a natural condition just before dawn. No one had seen Konnel, apparently, so I went outside and squinted along the dim, narrow street. Four or five drunks, none tall enough to be Konnel, were slowly and softly singing their way home. The door slid open behind me and the other two came out quickly.

"Oh, there you are! I asked around too," said Howlet in a low voice. "Can you trust that Jorgensen? They wouldn't let me in the office behind the back room."

"He's a better sport than he looks," I said.

"I wonder," murmured Meadows. "He looked queer when I was so far ahead. Or maybe one of his huskies got ideas about keeping a handy hostage... ."

Howlet suddenly looked dangerous. I gathered that he thought something of the boy, and was heating up to the door-smashing stage.

"Let's check one other place," I suggested, "before we make a mistake."

My starting off fast up the street left him the choice of coming quietly or staying to wonder. They both came. I could feel them watching me.

I turned right into a narrow street, went along it about fifty yards, and paused where it was crossed by a still narrower alley. Hoping I remembered the way, I groped along the lefthand branch of the alley. A trace of light had begun to soften the sky over the dome, but had not yet seeped down to ground level.

Howlet's soft footsteps trailed me. I knocked on what seemed to be the right door. There was no answer—only to be expected. I hammered again.

"No one aboard, it would appear," murmured Meadows.

It was meant as a question. I shrugged in the darkness and banged longer and louder. Finally, listening at the flimsy panel, I detected muffled footsteps.

The door opened a crack.

"It's Tony Lewis, Lilac."

The black opening widened, until she must have seen the two behind me. She wore a thin robe that glimmered silver in the dim light.

"Send the boy out, Lilac," I said.

"Why should I?"

That much was good; she might have pretended not to have him there.

"He has to catch his ship, Lilac."

Behind me, I heard Howlet stir uneasily. The door began to close, but my foot was in the track. Howlet could not see that.

"Don't shut it, sister," he said, "or we'll smash it down!"

He could have too, in about ten seconds, the way they build on Mars.

"You wanna get yourself lynched?" Lilac warned him.

"Over a—on account of *you*?"

"Shut up, Howlet!" I interrupted. "Let me talk to the lady alone!"

He must have understood my tone; he let Meadows pull him away a few steps.

"And less of the 'lady' business outa *you*," said Lilac, but low enough to keep it private. "We both know Mars, so let's take things the way they are."

"That's why I came, Lilac. Taking things that way means he has to go."

"What're you gonna say? He has a job to do, or some such canal dust?"

"Not exactly. They might pick up another third pilot. They might manage somehow without any. But he won't like himself much, later, for missing his chance."

She swung the edge of the door back and forth in impatient little jerks. Finally, she took her hand off the latch and let it roll free. She still blocked the opening, however, and I waited.

"Look, Tony," she said after a pause, "what makes you think I couldn't settle down with him? I never figured to be an ... entertainer ... all my life. With the stake I already got together, we could start something. A mine, maybe, or a tractor service like yours. Mars is growing—"

"Pull your head inside the dome and breathe right!" I snapped at her. "I don't mind your dreaming, Lilac, but there isn't any more time."

It was light enough now to see her stiffen. She glared at me.

"You tryin' to say I couldn't make a home here? You know better, Tony. Some of the best known women on Mars didn't exactly come here first-class!"

I held up my hand. She was beginning to get loud.

"It wouldn't matter if you were a princess. It's not what he'd think of you; it's what he'd wonder about himself, piloting a sand-buggy instead of a rocket."

In the alley, one of the spacers shuffled his feet impatiently. I hurried on, hoping to clinch it before she turned stubborn.

"*You*, at least, ought to understand men better than most, Lilac. Maybe it doesn't make sense, but it would be smarter to grab him after he's had his share of space instead of before."

It was hard to breathe without sounding loud in the stillness. Just as I had to swallow or choke, Lilac's shoulders slumped an inch or two.

"I'll wake him up," she said in a tired voice.

Feeling as if I had struck her, I stepped back into the alley. A few minutes later, Konnel slipped out and shut the door behind him. No one said a word. From the set of his shoulders, it seemed that he might be just as glad the alley was dim; but he simply trailed along behind.

We walked back to Number Four Airlock in a silence that had me counting the footsteps. When we reached the tractor parking lot, I cleared my throat.

"Wait a minute. I'll warm up my sand-saucer and give you a lift to your ship."

"Maybe we won't need to impose on you any more, Tony," said Howlet. "Looks like those machines over there are going out."

I followed his gesture and, by luck, caught the eye of a driver I knew. I waved and jerked my thumb at the spacers beside me.

"Let's go!" said Howlet as the tractor slowed. "Thanks for everything, Tony. Get yourself some sleep; the night watches in these domes are rough."

Konnel waited until they were a few steps away. Even then, he hesitated.

"Forget it!" I said. "You aren't the first spacer they had to pump out of some odd corner. Look me up when you get back!"

He shook hands and trotted after his friends. They scrambled up the ladder to the cab. The tractor picked up speed, lumbering into the airlock.

Later, a little after noon, I crawled out of bed and watched the flare of their pipes as the ship streaked up into the dark Martian sky. I hoped they would make it—almost as much as I wished it could have been me.

Well, I still come out to the wall of whatever dome I find myself in, to watch the sky a while—not that I'll see *those* boys coming down at this late date! They must have splattered to a puddle on Jupiter, or slipped back into the sun, or taken up a cold, dark orbit out where they'll never bother anyone. Nobody will ever know for sure, I suppose.

If I had it to do over again?

No, of course I don't feel funny about it. If they weren't the ones, it would have been another crew. By the law of averages, a certain number of bad tries seems to go with every new push out into space. Maybe there's no reason it has to be like that, but it always has. When the bad luck is used up, someone makes a new frontier.

Why say "superstition"? Each new orbit out from the sun has cost plenty in money, ships, and lives; it's the admission price.

Sure, it was too bad about Konnel and his little girl—who, by the way, later married a very important man in Asaph Dome. It would have been nice to see Meadows wind up rich, or for Howlet to become mayor of the dome, but what could I do? Which one should I have talked into staying

for the sake of love or money or power, without even being able to go in his place?

Every time Man pushes ahead a little, a percentage of the pushers pay the fare. Still, it will be healthier if we push out of this planetary system before someone else pushes in.

For all we know, they may be on the way.

THE END

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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....

Horace Brown Fyfe

A Transmutation of Muddles

An experienced horse-trader, bargain-haggler, and general swapper has a very special talent for turning two headaches into one aspirin pill....

Horace Brown Fyfe

The Talkative Tree

Dang vines! Beats all how some plants have no manners--but what do you expect, when they used to be men!

Horace Brown Fyfe

Satellite System

Fyfe's quite right ... there's nothing like a satellite system for a cold storage arrangement. Keeps things handy, but out of the way....

Horace Brown Fyfe

Flamedown

It was, of course, one Hell of an ending for a trip to Mars—

Charles Cottrell

Jack of No Trades

First we discovered the Willy Maloon category. Then we discovered Willy himself. Then we data-researched, and postulated a theory. Everything was easy, until it came to the question of proof.



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