

## AMAZING STORIES

The Author has below started a series of extraordinary hypothetical stories which draw heavily upon the imagination but which pique the curiosity of the thinking reader, by projecting the reader several years into the future, when doubtless air travel will have practically supplanted land travel, when science will have achieved the "impossible" in effecting frequent and comparatively easy communication with the planet Mars, and when life will have become completely controlled by the limitless possibilities of scientific invention.

Not only are these stories ingenious but stimulate breath-taking thrills, by depicting the possibilities of life on the earth many years after the present generation has become extinct. The author has indeed a vivid and picturesque imagination and you must agree that he writes with astonishing reality.

## THE HIDDEN KINGDOM

By JOHN P. MOORE

SYNOPSIS— (PART TWO)

BEGIN READING HERE:

YOU ARE BEING TOLD of my adventures as a member of H. S. Turner's secret expedition to the planet of Mars, which left Earth on the night of September 8, A. D. 2030, in the forward end of the eminent scientist's marvelously constructed rocket ship.

Our turbulent and miraculous course through vast space having been recorded for you in The Shot Into Space, I sought in the first part of the present story to give you an accurate account of what followed when our "ship," finally, after endless eternities, during which we became more or less insane, crashed into something firm and moved no more, it being shortly after this that we emerged cautiously from the close-fitting interiors of our especially constructed "iron coffins," in which our bodies were confined the greater part of the hazardous trip, and beheld a great mass of bent and twisted metal; and it was then, for some reason unknown to us, that we lapsed into unconsciousness.

Strangely, the next time consciousness came to us we were in a dark, cell-like room. Bound hand and foot, we were stretched out on the hard stone floor.

Unwilling to believe the worst, and undoubtedly, a bit out of my head, I tried to convince myself that I was dreaming, that I was in fact at my Philadelphia apartment, and, to make sure, I started yelling for Bennett, my manservant.

This illusion, however, was shattered at once, for my three scientist companions

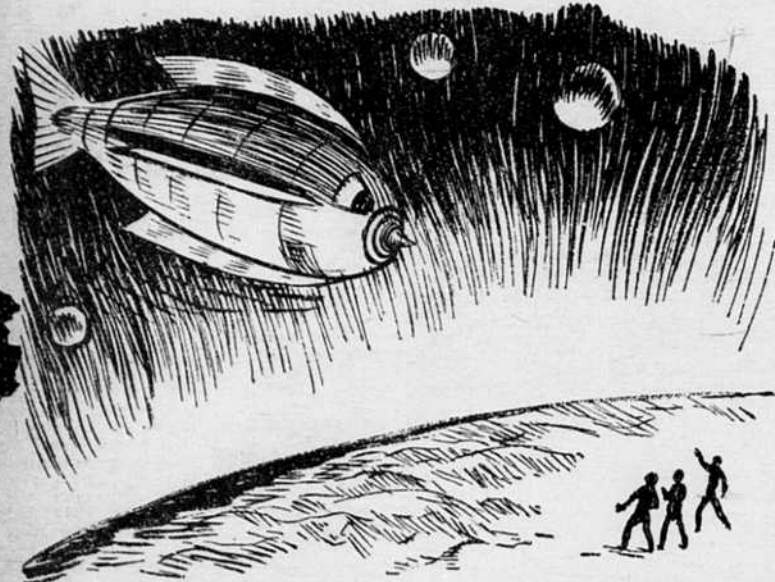
regained consciousness at that time and proceeded to refresh my memory. Still, I held hopes that we had not reached Mars, that we had in fact crashed back to Earth, for we became aware of the most familiar noises—like the work-a-day progress of a great city!

Yet, shortly after this four of the most peculiar looking creatures entered the room, like four black-faced ghosts—about the size of twelve-year-old children, mere slits for mouths, drawn apart in cut-throat grins, tiny black eyes sunk deep into their heads, huge protruding ears, long beaky noses, and all clothed in flowing, grey-looking robes! And all of them were brandishing small, dirk-like knives clutched in huge, iron-like fists.

Believe it or not, they addressed us in English!—broken to be sure, but nevertheless, English! We were forthwith accused of entering the kingdom of Els against the wish of a mysterious Great One. Further, we were branded as spying Pragians—whatever that meant! and Mr. Turner started to explain that we were from Earth, but one of the devils stopped suddenly and delivered a terrific blow on his face, turning then and warning his companions that it was a "Pragian trick."

Meantime I was "seeing red," and when they finally freed our ankles and wrists so that we could stand up, I lost my temper and in a raging fury, plowed into them—again and again; but quite suddenly about a dozen more of the peculiar creatures appeared in the doorway and soon a great mountain of living flesh and bones piled on top of me!

NOW FINISH THE STORY.



"It looked like a huge fish; shaped that way. It had huge red eyes."

I am never quite certain as to how I came to be stumbling along that long, dark passageway! I have a vague picture of my three companions cowered against the wall, half-frightened, half-mad expressions upon their dark faces. I seem cloudily to recall being lifted bodily upwards and hearing at the same time, of an awful doom which would come to us once we were taken to a mysterious Great One, at the palace of Kay. . . . Suddenly a great shaft of light reached down and almost blinded us. Struggling frantically, we were approaching the end of the passageway, and the next instant we were propelled, like three projectiles, into the open.

All thoughts of struggle, of fear, deserted us. The sight that met us was incomprehensible! The reaction could have been seen in our lips, and our staring eyes! Only amazement was left. Straight ahead, we could see the length of a long, narrow street. It looked like it had been hewed out of solid stone, what with the two endless and uniform rows of stone building fronts, twelve stories high. Too, a seething mass, it was.

There must have been ten thousand of these peculiar little creatures out there waiting to get a first glimpse of us!

This, alone, would have been enough to paralyze us with wonder. But it was not all. As we were herded together now into the vanguard of the mob, Mr. Turner uttered an exclamation and we managed to turn for an instant and follow his gaze upwards. Now we were utterly speechless! We had every right, I contend, to expect to see sky. Yet, we didn't! Instead, what we saw looked like a vast roof of glazed glass, long and narrow, stretching over the heads of the milling mob as far as we could see! It—

But Mr. Heaton caught our arms and commenced to babble. "Necessity IS the mother of invention!" he half-screamed. "They are so far away from the sun—so cold! They build their cities into the planet's crust, and roof their streets with—"

He never finished. A great wall went up and the seething masses began to part before us as the deep seas part before the bow of a ship. It wrought havoc with our souls! Our captors fell into the spirit and began pounding huge fists against their bulging chests, jumping up and down, howling, with a boastful satisfaction. The voice of the mob took on the unmistakable tones of deep-seated hatred. The sea of black

faced were now those of fiends. Fists shook and lips spat!

"Serpents of Pragus!" I heard. "All spying Pragians do be scum! Their blood! The righteous citizens of the Great Kingdom of Els do lust for their blood!"

And there went up a great cheer. A mob suddenly began closing in on us. Our guards began shouting something about the Great One, but it was drowned. The next instant they were being sent tumbling head over heels and swallowed up by the howling mob, and in the flip of a finger we four men from Earth were surrounded by thirty or so spitting, cursing fanatics! At least, so it seemed as they began to shout: "To the Plain of Death do they go! Too vile they be to filthify the presence of the Great One! Whoop! Cast them outside we fearless Elsians will!"

Another great wail arose from ten thousand mouths. Numb with fear, we felt ourselves being roughly turned about and rushed back in the direction in which we had come. In a comparatively short time we were back at the mouth of the tunnel, and soon it was like a great sewer choked with rats!

What followed immediately I do not know. I seem to be able to recall other and hopelessly vain struggles; I seem to remember being half-dragged, half-carried past the closed door which was the entrance of our recently vacated prison chamber, and, yes, I have a vague recollection that we strove vainly to halt the procession there, but were carried on with the mob through a darkness which seemed to suddenly incline upwards . . . up . . . up, toward a circle of light far ahead—

Four Negro explorers being rushed to a mysterious doom because they entertained the audacity to delve into the unknown!—Brent, novelist; Brown, Turner, and Heaton, eminent scientists!

The passageway finally emptied into a large circular chamber, and we became very cold. At the same time, a vibrating cheer came out of the darkness behind, and, while our thirty or so captors answered them lustily, we became aware that the milling mass had for some reason sagged behind.

It was suggestive of something very awful! Why didn't they follow to see us die? What were they afraid of? The answer came soon. Very soon. Huddled together, we saw a half dozen of them place a heavy sort of a ladder against the circular skylight above, after which one of them went to the wall and pushed something; we saw the great disc overhead begin to move upwards, and the next instant a great wave of biting-cold air reached down and set us trembling to our very toes!

So this was the end. I gave up. We all did. One by one, we were whipped up the ladder and the great disc fell back in place, leaving us on the frigid surface of Mars—three tiny specks in an incredibly vast planet of trackless snow and ice!

Mr. Heaton suddenly screamed. Already beginning to freeze to death, we swung around! And you talk about your earthly fear. You don't know what it is! Already upon us and moving swiftly over the snow, we beheld something that made us want to die! It looked like a huge fish; shaped that way. It had huge red eyes, a mouth, and a swishing tail. It was green in color, and it made a soft, purring noise—

Well, we were half dead any way. By the time the thing reached us, we had sunk stiffly down on the hard snow. It was the end. . . .

"Good God! Look!" It was Mr. Turner. We did. Nothing mattered now. We saw and we didn't see. There was neither amazement nor fear among us. We were half dead. It was just a mirage anyway. We waited. Something opened in the thing's side. A dozen of heavily wrapped, peculiar little creatures

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## The Daring Sacrifice

As Told To

RALPH MATTHEWS

Continued from Page Six

have no guarantee I'll ever come back. I have always carried a pretty good line of insurance with no one to collect it. We don't love each other, so what difference do a few thoughts make?"

Tom called Janice in. The look on her face showed that she was undergoing a terrible strain. From the way she looked, I could tell that she had been anxiously waiting in an adjoining room to hear what my verdict would be.

"Don't be alarmed," I assured her, after Tom had broken my proposition to her. "You'll be as safe as a dollar up there with me. It is merely a solution to an embarrassing situation for us both. You need me, and God knows I'll need you up there all alone, that is if you can cook."

When the Montrealer pulled out of Grand Central Station the next day, Dr. Melvin Coleman and his bride were aboard, and a handsome couple they made, if I do say it myself, in spite of the dark rings that circled my eyes and a hacking cough that caused people to look at me pityingly.

Four years ago that was. The months saw the spring melt into a sweltering summer. We fished along the bank and often spluttered up the river in an outboard boat to the edge of the Thousand Islands that dotted the water that separated the United States and Canada. Summer passed into winter, and a fat squaw from a reservation Indian camp came down many miles through the snow to help when the baby was born. Equally fat neighbors of French-Canadian descent, who knew not the meaning of our color prejudice, brought dainties from their pantries and congratulated me on having such a fine boy. Janice lying there on her soft white pillows, looked at me knowingly. Tears trickled down her cheeks as the wide brimmed circuit riding minister wanted to know why we named the baby Tom instead of Junior.

"It's after her father," I explained. Chopping logs for fire wood to keep them warm, tracking the forest for game to make them broth hardened my muscles. Spring found me a new man. Four years of this, years in

jumped down into the snow and rushed toward us. I closed my eyes.

But the next moment I was being lifted up, and when I opened my eyes I saw that we were being carried into the queer monster's belly (I subsequently learned that it was, in fact, a Pragian airship), and I can now just barely recall the grating sort of deep voice that seemed to be saying:

"A bright trick it do be! Again, the cunning of Pragus do triumph over the addled-brained Elsians! It be well that our good ship did catch signals from the thirty Pragians good and true, who even now do continue to deceive the thick-headed Elsians! Haw! Haw! Haw! May the good God always smile on our kingdom's worthy spies! . . . Now, let us be gone to the noble kingdom of Pragus with these four curious, half-dead supermen!"

THE END

The next amazing story will appear in the Illustrated Feature Section at an early date.

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which we came in contact with the outside world only through the occasional mails, the distant blast of the river liners that plied the water from Kingston to Montreal, our books and our radio.

Janice has stuck it out, helped me regain my health, suffered hardships and privations with me, never complaining. Even when the snow drifts cut off our supplies one winter, she faced it bravely.

The howling winds that played

Continued on Page Eight

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