

# SPAWN OF MARS



NO ONE WAS MORE SURPRISED THAN I WHEN MY APPLICATION WAS ACCEPTED BY THE ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION'S DIVISION OF EXPERIMENTAL SPACE TRAVEL AND I WAS ASSIGNED TO THE M-XAR-2! OUT OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND THIRTEEN SPECIALISTS THAT HAD WORKED ON THE M-XAR-2 (MARS EXPERIMENTAL ATOMIC ROCKET-2), ONLY FOUR WERE PICKED! AND OF THE FOUR... I WAS THE ONLY WOMAN...

DISTANCE TO PLANET... NOW...

THREE HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND MILES!

WE'LL BE LANDING SOON...

WOOD

THE TAKE-OFF FROM EARTH HAD BEEN LITTLE MORE THAN ROUTINE! I HAD BEEN ON THE FOURTH ROCKET TO THE MOON! BUT NOW... NOW WE WERE NEARING MARS...

THERE'S *DEIMOS*, MARS' OUTER SATELLITE! ITS DIAMETER IS JUST A LITTLE OVER TEN MILES!

MISS BELMONT! WE'LL BE LANDING SOON! BETTER STRAP IN!



AND SO, AS THE M-XAR-2 PLUMMETED TOWARD THE SURFACE, IT WAS TURNED BY ITS GYRO UNTIL IT FELL TAIL FIRST...

ROCKET TUBES... ROCKET TUBES... COMMENCE FIRING... NOW FIRING...

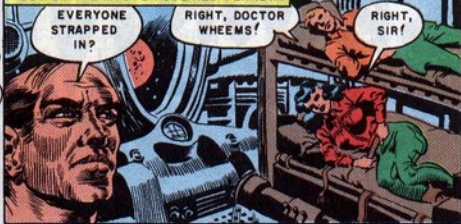


YES... I, JEAN BELMONT, WOULD BE THE FIRST WOMAN TO SET FOOT ON THE MYSTERIOUS RED PLANET...

EVERYONE STRAPPED IN?

RIGHT, DOCTOR WHEEMS!

RIGHT, SIR!



FROM MY RECLINED POSITION ON MY BLACK-OUT COUCH, I WATCHED IN FASCINATION AS THE AMBER COLORED SPHERE LOOMED LARGER AND LARGER ON THE COLOR TELE-SCREEN...



SOON OUR SPEED BEGAN TO INCREASE AS MARS' GRAVITATIONAL PULL TOOK HOLD AND BEGAN TO SUCK US TOWARD IT...

NOW ENTERING 6-FIELD! GYRO ON, SIR! GYRO ON, SIR! SHIP TURNING... SHIP TURNING...



THE FALLING SHIP SHUDDERED AS THE ATOMIC ROCKET ENGINES BEGAN TO FIRE! THE SHIP BEGAN TO SLOW IN ITS FALL TOWARDS THE SURFACE OF MARS...



SUDDENLY, THERE WAS A SHARP JOLT... AND IT SEEMED AS THOUGH THE SHIP WOULD BREAK APART! THE ROCKETS SHUT OFF AUTOMATICALLY! EVERYTHING WAS STILL! WE WERE DOWN...





I RUSHED TO THE PORT AND STARED OUT! A BREATHTAKING SIGHT MET MY EYES! THE SURFACE OF MARS... NEVER BEFORE SEEN AT SUCH CLOSE RANGE BY HUMAN EYES...

LOOK! WE'VE LANDED ON A PLATEAU BETWEEN TWO CANYONS! THERE'S VEGETATION DOWN THERE...

THESE CANYONS MUST BE THE SO-CALLED 'CANALS'! THERE'S A NETWORK OF THEM COVERING MARS...



WELL, MISS BELMONT? WHAT'S THE WORD ON ATMOSPHERIC CONDITIONS?

OXYGEN CONTENT... SUFFICIENT! HMMMM!

PRESSURE'S LESS, WE'LL BE ABLE TO MOVE ABOUT WITHOUT SPACE SUITS, IF WE USE THE DECOMPRESSION CHAMBER...



AND SO, AFTER SPENDING SOME TIME IN THE DECOMPRESSION CHAMBER, WE CLIMBED FROM THE SHIP...

WHEW! IT FEELS GOOD TO GET OUT OF THOSE CRAMPED QUARTERS!

WHAT SAY WE MAKE CAMP, AND STAY OUTSIDE THE SHIP AS LONG AS WE'RE HERE?



WE SET UP A FEW PLASTO-TENTS AND MADE OURSELVES COMFORTABLE.

DOCTOR WHEELS AND I ARE GOING TO DESCEND INTO THE CANYON TO EXPLORE THE VEGETATION FOR SIGNS OF ANIMAL LIFE!

I'LL REMAIN WITH MISS BELMONT...

REALLY, DOCTOR FAIRBANKS! YOU NEEDN'T BOTHER! I'LL BE ALL RIGHT!



DOCTOR FAIRBANKS, OUR NAVIGATOR, WAS THE ONLY ONE OF THE THREE WHOSE AGE APPROXIMATED MY OWN! DOCTOR WHEELS, OUR ATOMIC-ENGINEER, WAS FORTY-ISH... AND DOCTOR BRADLEY, OUR BIO-PHYSICIST, WAS IN HIS EARLY FIFTIES...

ALL RIGHT, MISS BELMONT... IF YOU INSIST!

I DO, DR. FAIRBANKS! THIS PLATEAU IS QUITE BARE! I'LL HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO GET TO THE SHIP IN AN EMERGENCY!



FAIRBANKS SHRUGGED AND MOVED OFF WITH THE OTHERS! I SMILED AFTER HIM! IN HIS OWN SHY WAY, HE'D BEEN TRYING TO MAKE A PLAY FOR ME DURING THE WHOLE TRIP! AFTER THEY DISAPPEARED OVER THE CANYON EDGE, I BUSIED MYSELF SETTING UP MY EQUIPMENT! I WAS THE M-XAR-2'S GEOLOGIST! AFTER AN HOUR I BEGAN TO FEEL VERY STRANGE...

...FUNNY! I HAVE THE WEIRDEST FEELING! LIKE I'M BEING WATCHED!



I TRIED TO IGNORE THE STRANGE, UNCOMFORTABLE FEELING I HAD... AND BUSIED MYSELF WITH MY INSTRUMENTS FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE DAY! WHEN MY THREE ASSOCIATES RETURNED...

WELL? WHAT DID YOU FIND?

WE DIDN'T ENCOUNTER A THING, MISS BELMONT!

WE DID FIND SOME TRACKS, THOUGH! THERE'S DEFINITELY SOME SORT OF ANIMAL LIFE HERE!



THAT NIGHT WE ALL SAT ABOUT THE CAMPFIRE DISCUSSING OUR VARIOUS OBSERVATIONS! FINALLY I COULDN'T STAND IT ANY LONGER...

I... DON'T KNOW HOW TO SAY THIS, BUT I HAVE THE FEELING WE'RE BEING WATCHED! SOMETHING IS OUT THERE... IN THE DARKNESS!

NOW, NOW, JEAN! DON'T LET YOUR IMAGINATION GET THE BEST OF YOU!



THE NEXT DAY, THE THREE MALE MEMBERS OF THE EXPEDITION SET OUT ONCE MORE TO EXPLORE...

I'LL BE ALL RIGHT, DOCTOR FAIRBANKS!

I JUST THOUGHT YOU'D FEEL SAFER...

TOWARDS LATE AFTERNOON, DR. WHEEMS AND DR. BRADLEY RETURNED... ALONE! THEY WERE PALE AS GHOSTS AND SEEMED QUITE SHAKEN!

WE'LL BE BACK BEFORE NIGHT-FALL, MISS BELMONT!

WHY DON'T YOU STAY IN THE SHIP TODAY, JEAN?



WHERE... WHERE'S DOCTOR FAIRBANKS?

WE WERE ATTACKED! IT WAS HORRIBLE! HORRIBLE!



IT WAS THE MOST GHASTLY MONSTER IMAGINABLE! IT SPRUNG FROM THE UNDER-BRUSH DOWN THERE...

BEFORE WE COULD ACT, IT CAUGHT FAIRBANKS IN ITS SLIMY, DISGUSTING TENTACLES AND SLITHERED OFF WITH HIM...

THEN HE...

HE'S DEAD, JEAN! HE COULDN'T HAVE SURVIVED...

LORD! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE! IF I SEE ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE CREATURES, I'LL GO OUT OF MY MIND!





I WAS HEARTBROKEN OVER DR. FAIRBANKS' DEATH! WE PACKED THE EQUIPMENT INTO THE M-XAR-2 AND PREPARED TO TAKE OFF...

EVERYTHING'S ABOARD, DOCTOR WHEEMS!  
ALL RIGHT! LET'S GET STRAPPED IN!  
WAIT!



I HAD BEEN STANDING NEAR THE PORT WHEN A MOVEMENT CAUGHT MY EYE! I STARED OUT OVER THE BARE PLATEAU! A RAGGED FIGURE STUMBLED TOWARD THE SHIP...

GOOD LORD!  
IT'S FAIRBANKS!  
KEN! KEN!



I SWUNG OPEN THE PORT...PRESSED THE DESCENT LADDER SWITCH...AND RUSHED DOWN! I RAN TO KEN AND THREW MYSELF INTO HIS ARMS...

OH, KEN! KEN!  
I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!  
JEAN... DEAREST!



I BEGAN TO SOB UNCONTROLLABLY! KEN HELD ME IN HIS STRONG ARMS AND COMFORTED ME...

HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO GET AWAY FROM THE LOATHSOME THING, FAIRBANKS?  
I... I DON'T KNOW! I WAS LUCKY, I GUESS!  
DON'T TALK ABOUT IT, KEN! COME ABOARD! WE'RE GOING HOME...



BY THE TIME WE REACHED EARTH'S GRAVITATIONAL FIELD, MY HEADACHES HAD SUBSIDED... AND KEN AND I WERE RADIANT...

YOU TWO LOOK WONDERFUL!  
THANK YOU, DOCTOR WHEEMS! I FEEL WONDERFUL! KEN HAS ASKED ME TO MARRY HIM WHEN WE GET BACK!



ALL THE WAY TO EARTH, I NURSED KEN BACK TO HEALTH! I GUESS THE STRAIN HAD BEEN TOO MUCH FOR ME! I BEGAN TO SUFFER FROM SEVERE HEADACHES.

JEAN! WHAT'S WRONG? YOU DON'T LOOK WELL!  
I'M ALL RIGHT, KEN! IT'S JUST... MY HEAD! IT HURTS SO...



KEN COMPLAINED THAT THE EXCITEMENT OF OUR ARRIVAL WOULD BE TOO MUCH FOR HIM, SO HE REMAINED IN THE SHIP WHILE DOCTOR BRADLEY, DOCTOR WHEEMS AND I RECEIVED THE CHEERS OF THE CROWD THAT HAD GATHERED TO WITNESS OUR RETURN...

TOO BAD KEN CAN'T COME OUT TO SEE THIS, JEAN!  
IT'S BETTER THIS WAY, DOCTOR!  
HE'S BEEN THROUGH TOO MUCH!



AFTER THE CHEERING CROWDS HAD LEFT AND THE LANDING SITE WAS DESERTED, I TOOK KEN TO A WAITING ATOMICAR... AND WE SPED INTO TOWN TO HIS APARTMENT...



TOMORROW WE'LL BE MARRIED, DEAR, AND THEN WE CAN BE TOGETHER!

YES, JEAN! TOGETHER, ALWAYS!

AND SO, THE NEXT DAY I BECAME MRS. KENNETH FAIRBANKS! WITH THE MONEY WE HAD RECEIVED FROM OUR MARTIAN EXCURSION, KEN AND I BOUGHT A SECLUDED LITTLE PLACE IN THE COUNTRY...



AH, THIS IS THE LIFE, EH, JEAN?

IT'S BEAUTIFUL UP HERE, KEN! I LOVE IT!

MONTHS WENT BY! KEN AND I WERE VERY HAPPY! THEN... ONE DAY... WE RECEIVED A LETTER...



IT'S FROM DOCTOR WHEEMS, KEN! HE AND HIS WIFE ARE COMING UP FOR A VISIT!

OH?

THE NEXT DAY, DOCTOR AND MRS. WHEEMS ARRIVED! KEN WAS IN HIS ROOM DRESSING AT THE TIME...



IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, JEAN!

I'D LIKE TO FRESHEN UP A BIT, MRS. FAIRBANKS!

OH! FIRST DOOR ON YOUR LEFT UPSTAIRS, MRS. WHEEMS!

MRS. WHEEMS DISAPPEARED UP THE STAIRS AND DOCTOR WHEEMS AND I BEGAN TO CHAT! SUDDENLY...



GOOD LORD! THAT WAS MY WIFE!

MRS. WHEEMS CAME DOWN THE STAIRS... HALF-RUNNING, HALF-FALLING! SHE WAS WHITE AS A SHEET! SHE RAN TO THE DOOR AND RUSHED OUTSIDE...



MRS. WHEEMS!

JANET! WAIT!

I WATCHED FROM THE DOORWAY AS DOCTOR WHEEMS CAUGHT UP WITH HIS WIFE! I COULD SEE HER WIDE-EYED TERROR AS SHE POINTED TO THE UPPER PART OF THE HOUSE...



SUDDENLY, I HAD A STRANGE SENSATION! A FEELING THAT I WAS BEING WATCHED! THE SAME FEELING I HAD HAD BACK THERE... ON THAT MARTIAN PLATEAU...



I SPUN AROUND! KEN WAS ON THE STAIRS...

OH...KEN? SOMETHING VERY STRANGE JUST HAPPENED TO MRS. WHEEMS!

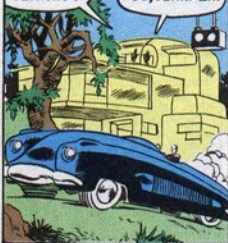
I KNOW!



THE SOUND OF AN ENGINE MADE ME TURN! DOCTOR WHEEMS' ATOMICAR WAS SPEEDING AWAY...

THEY'RE... LEAVING!

LET THEM GO, JEAN! I...



KEN TOOK ME IN HIS ARMS AND LOOKED INTO MY EYES SOFTLY...

I'VE GOT TO TALK TO YOU... JEAN!

WHAT IS IT, KEN? I DON'T UNDERSTAND ALL OF THIS...



PERHAPS I CAN EXPLAIN! YOU SEE... IT ALL BEGAN WHEN I FIRST SAW YOU... WHEN YOUR SHIP LANDED AND YOU CAME OUT ONTO THE PATEAU! I FELL IN LOVE WITH YOU IMMEDIATELY!

KEN! STOP IT! YOU CAME WITH US...



NO, DEAREST! I DIDN'T! THE REAL KEN FAIRBANKS CAME WITH YOU! I WAS THERE BEFORE YOU! I WATCHED YOU... HUNG AROUND YOUR CAMPFIRE TILL I LEARNED YOUR LANGUAGE... THEN... ATTACKED KEN AND KILLED HIM! YOU SEE... I AM A MARTIAN!

BUT... YOU... KEN... YOU BOTH...



YOU ONLY THINK YOU ARE SEEING KEN, DARLING! I MAKE YOU THINK IT! I'RE HYPNOTIZED! REMEMBER THE HEAD-ACHES? I... I THOUGHT I COULD TAKE HIS PLACE THIS WAY... THAT MAYBE YOU'D LOVE ME AS I LOVE YOU!

I DO... I DO! I LOVE YOU! YOU KNOW THAT...



IN REALITY, I AM VERY HORRIBLE BY YOUR STANDARDS, JEAN! YOU REMEMBER HOW WHEEMS AND BRADLEY DESCRIBED ME WHEN I ATTACKED KEN? THAT'S WHY I MUST PROTECT YOUR EYES FROM ACTUALLY SEEING ME BY THIS HYPNOTIC SCREEN...

I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE! I LOVE YOU FOR WHAT YOU ARE...



OH, DARLING! THEN WE CAN BE HAPPY! WE'LL GO AWAY... BEFORE DOCTOR WHEEMS COMES BACK...

YES, DEAR! I'LL PACK A FEW THINGS...

AS WE SPED UPSTATE, I STUDIED KEN! NATURALLY I DIDN'T BELIEVE HIM! THE SHOCK OF BEING CAPTURED BY THAT HORRIBLE MARTIAN MONSTER HAD BEEN TOO MUCH FOR HIM...

BUT... IN TIME... HE'LL GET BETTER! POOR MRS. WHEEMS! KEN MUST HAVE SURPRISED HER...

WHAT ARE YOU THINKING JEAN?

KEN LOOKED AT ME! I SMILED INTO HIS SOFT BLUE EYES! HE SMILED AT ME WARMLY! WE NEVER SAW THE SHARP TURN IN THE ROAD...

LOOK OUT!

WHEN I OPENED MY EYES, I WAS LYING IN THE MIDST OF THE WRECKED ATOMICAR! I GLANCED OVER AT WHERE KEN SHOULD HAVE BEEN! INSTEAD... LYING BESIDE ME WAS THE MOST LOATHSOME, DISGUSTING CREATURE I HAD EVER SEEN...

IN MY Hysteria AND NAUSEA, I CRAWLED FROM THE CAR AND STUMBLED AWAY! I DIDN'T EVEN LOOK BACK AS IT EXPLODED INTO FLAME...



WHEN I CAME TO, I WAS LYING IN A HOSPITAL BED! I WOKE UP SCREAMING HIS NAME...

...KEN! I... I... WHERE AM I?

YOU WERE IN AN ATOMICAR WRECK, MRS. FAIRBANKS! YOUR... YOUR HUSBAND WAS KILLED... BURNED TO ASHES...

MY... MY HUSBAND...

WE FOUND HIS IDENTIFICATION BRACELET! I... I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL, MRS. FAIRBANKS. BUT... PERHAPS YOU MAY FIND COMFORT IN YOUR HOUR OF SADNESS! WE'VE EXAMINED YOU! DO YOU KNOW YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE A BABY?

