## Adaptation

## John Wyndham

The essential point is, Man was made for Earth, and not for the other planets. And if Man insists on inhabiting the other planets, certain—adaptations must be made.

The prospect of being stuck on Mars for a while did not worry Marilyn Godalpin a lot—not at first, anyway. She had been near the piece of desert that they called a landing field when the Andromeda came in to a bad landing. After that it did not surprise her at all when the engineers said that with the limited facilities at the settlement the repairs would take at least three months, most likely four. The astonishing thing was that no one in the ship had got more than a bad shaking.

It still did not worry her when they explained to her, with simplified astronautics, that that meant there could be no take-off for the Andromeda for at least eight months on account of the relative position of Earth. But she did get a bit fussed when she discovered that she was going to have a baby. Mars did not seem the right place for that.

Mars had surprised her. When Franklyn Godalpin was offered the job of developing the Jason Mining Corporation’s territory there, a few months after their marriage, it had been she-who had persuaded him to accept it. She had had an instinct that the men who were in on the ground floor there would go places. Of Mars itself, as seen in pictures, her opinion was low. „ But she wanted her husband to go places, and to go with him. With. Franklyn’s heart and head pulling in opposite directions she could have succeeded on either side. She chose head for two reasons. One was lest some day he might come to hold the lost chance of his life against her, the other because, as she said:

“Honey. If we are going to have a family, I want them to have everything we can give them. I love you anyway you are, but for their sake I want you to be a big man.”

She had persuaded him not only into taking the job, but into taking her with him. The idea was that she should see him settled into his hut as comfortably as the primitive conditions of the place allowed, and then go back home on the next ship. That should have been after a four-week stop—Earth reckoning. But the ship intended was the Andromeda; and she was the last in the present oppositional phase.

Franklyn’s work left her little of his time, and had Mars been what she expected she would have been dismayed by the prospect of even an extra week there. But the first discovery she had made when she stepped on to the planet was that photographs can be literally true while spiritually quite false.

### The deserts were there, all right. Mile upon mile of them. But from the first they lacked that harsh uncharitableness that the pictures had given them. There was a quality which in some way the lens had filtered out. The landscape came to life, and showed itself differently from the recorded shades.

There was unexpected beauty in the coloring of the sands, and the rocks, and the distant, rounded mountains, and strangeness in the dark deeps of the cloudless sky. Among the plants and bushes on the waterway margins there were flowers, more beautiful and more delicately complex than any she had seen on Earth. There was mystery, too, where the stones of ancient ruins lay half buried—all that was left, maybe, of huge palaces or temples. It was something like that, Marilyn felt, that Shelley’s traveler had known in his antique land:

|  |
| --- |
| Round the decay  Of that colossal wreck, boundless  and bare,  The lone and level sands stretch far  away. |

Yet it was not grim. She had looked to find a sour desolation; the morbid aftermath of eruption, destruction, and fire. It had never occurred to her that the old age of a world might come softly, with a gentle melancholy, like the turning of a leaf in the fall.

Back on Earth, people were looking on the Martian venturers as the new pioneers attacking the latest frontier opposed to man. Mars made nonsense of that. The land lay placidly open to them, unresisting. Its placidity dwindled their importance, making them crude intruders on the last quiet drowsiness.

Mars was comatose, sinking slowly deeper into her final sleep. But she was not yet dead. Seasonal tides still stirred in the waterways, and things still lived in the waters, too, though they seldom gave any more sign of themselves than a vagrant ripple. Among the flowers and the tinkerbells there were still insects to carry pollen. Kinds of grain still grew, sparse, poorly nourished vestiges of vanished harvests, yet capable of thriving again with irrigation. There were the thrippetts, bright flashes of flying color, unclassifiable as insect or bird. By night other small creatures emerged. Some of them mewed, almost like kittens, and sometimes, when both moons were up, one caught glimpses of little marmosetlike shapes. Almost always there was that most characteristic of all Martian sounds, the ringing of the tinkerbells. Their hard shiny leaves which flashed like polished metal needed no more than a breath of the thin air to set them chiming so that all the desert rang faintly to their tiny cymbals.

The clues to the manner of people who had lived there were too faint to read. Rumor spoke of small groups, apparently human, further south, but real exploration still waited on the development of craft suited to the thin Martian air.

A frontier of a kind there was, but without valor—for there was little left to fight but quiet old age. Beyond the busy settlement Mars was a restful place.

“I like it,” said Marilyn. “In a way it’s sad, but it isn’t saddening. A song can be like that sometimes. It soothes you and makes you feel at peace.”

### Franklyn’s concern over her news was greater than Marilyn’s, and he blamed himself for the state of affairs. His anxiety irritated her slightly. And it was no good trying to place blame, she pointed out. All that one could do was to accept the situation and take every sensible care.

The settlement doctor backed that up. James Forbes was a young man, and no sawbones. He was there because a good man was needed in a place where unusual effects might be expected, and strange conditions called for careful study. And he had taken the job because he was interested. His line now was matter of fact, and encouraging. He refused to make it re markable.

“There was nothing to worry about,” he assured them. “Ever since the dawn of history there have been women producing babies in far more inconvenient times and places than this—and getting away with it. There’s no reason at all why everything should not be perfectly normal.”

He spoke his professional lies with an assurance which greatly increased their confidence, and he maintained it steadily by his manner. Only in his diary did he admit worrying speculations on the effects of lowered gravitation and air-pressure, the rapid temperature changes, the possibility of unknown infections, and the other hazardous factors.

Marilyn minded little that she lacked the luxuries that would have attended her at home. With her colored maid, Helen, to look after her and keep her company she busied herself with sewing and small matters. Martian scene retained its fascination for her. She felt at peace with it as though it were a wise old counsellor who had seen too much of birth and death to grow vehement over either.

### Jannessa, Marilyn’s daughter, was born with no great trial upon a night when the desert lay cold in the moonlight, and so quiet that only an occasional faint chime from the tinkerbells disturbed it. She was the first Earth baby to be born on Mars. A perfectly normal six and a half pounds—Earth—and a credit to all concerned.

### It was afterwards that things started to go less well. Dr. Forbes’ fears of strange infections had been well grounded, and despite his scrupulous precautions there were complications. Some were susceptible to the attacks of penicillin and the complex sulfas, but others resisted them. Marilyn, who had at first appeared to be doing well, weakened and then became seriously ill.

Nor did the child thrive as it should, and when the repaired Andromeda at last took off, it left them behind. Another ship was due in from Earth a few days later. Before it arrived, the doctor put the situation to Franklyn.

“I’m by no means happy about the child,” he told him. “She’s not putting on weight as she should. She grows, but not enough. It’s pretty obvious that the conditions here are not suiting her. She might survive, but I can’t say with what effect on her constitution. She should have normal Earth conditions as soon as possible.”

Franklyn frowned:

“And her mother?” he asked.

“Mrs. Godalpin is in no condition to travel, I’m afraid. It’s out of the question. In her present state, and after so long in low gravitation, I doubt whether she could stand half a G of acceleration.”

Franklyn looked bleakly unwilling to comprehend.

“You mean—?”

“In a nutshell, it’s this. It would be fatal for your wife to attempt the journey. And it would probably be fatal for your child to remain here.”

### There was only one way out of that. When the next ship, the Aurora came in it was decided to delay no longer. A passage was arranged for Helen and the baby, and in the last week of 1994 they went on board.

Franklyn and Marilyn watched the Aurora leave. Marilyn’s bed had been pushed close to the window, and he sat on it, holding her hand. Together they watched her shoot upwards on a narrow cone of flame and curve away until she was no more than a twinkle in the dark Martian sky. Marilyn’s fingers held his tightly. He put his arm around her to support her, and kissed her.

“It’ll be all right, darling. In a few months you’ll be with her again,”, he said.

Marilyn put her other hand against his cheek, but she said nothing.

Nearly seventeen years were to pass before anything more was heard of the Aurora, but Marilyn was not to know that. In less than two months she was resting forever in the Martian sands with the tinkerbells chiming softly above her.

When Franklyn left Mars, Dr. Forbes was the only member of the original team still left there. They shook hands beside the ramp which led up to the latest thing in nuclear-powered ships. The doctor said:

“For five years I’ve watched you work, and overwork, Franklyn. You’d no business to survive. But you have. Now go home and live. You’ve earned it.”

Franklyn withdrew his gaze from the thriving Port Gillington which had grown, and was still growing out of the rough settlement of a few years ago.

“What about yourself? You’ve been here longer than I have.”

“But I’ve had a couple of vacations. They were long enough for me to look around at home and decide that what really interests me is here.” He might have added that the second had been long enough for him to find and marry a girl who he had brought with him, but he just added: “Besides I’ve just been working, not overworking.”

Franklyn’s gaze had wandered again, this time beyond the settlement, towards the fields which now fringed the waterway. Among them was a small plot marked with a single upright stone.

“You’re still a young man. Life owes you something,” the doctor said. Franklyn seemed not to have heard, but he knew that he had. He went on: “And you owe something to life. You hurt only yourself by resisting it. We have to adapt to life.”

“I wonder—?” Franklyn began, but the doctor laid a hand on his arm.

“Not that way. You have worked hard to forget. Now you must make a new beginning.”

“No wreckage of the Aurora has ever been reported, you know,” Franklyn said.

The doctor sighed, quietly. The ships that disappeared without trace considerably outnumbered those that left any.

“A new beginning,” he repeated, firmly.

The hailer began to call “All aboard.”

Dr. Forbes watched his friend into the entrance port. He was a little surprised to feel a touch on his arm, and find his wife beside him.

“Poor man,” she said, softly. “Maybe when he gets home—”

“Maybe,” said the doctor, doubtfully. He went on: “I’ve been cruel, meaning to be kind. I should have tried my best to crush that false hope and free him from it. But . . . well, I couldn’t do it.”

“No,” she agreed. “You’d nothing to give him to take the place of it. But somewhere at home there’ll be someone who has—a woman. Let’s hope he meets her soon.”

### Jannessa turned her head from a thoughtful study of her own hand, and regarded the slaty-blue arm and fingers beside her.

“I’m so different,” she said, with a sigh. “So different from everybody. Why am I different, Telta?”

“Everybody’s different,” Telta said. She looked up from her task of slicing a pale round fruit into a bowl. Their eyes met, Jannessa’s china blue in their white setting looking questioningly in Telta’s dark pupils which floated in clear topaz. A small crease appeared between the woman’s delicate silvery brows as she studied the child. “I’m different. Toti’s different. Melga’s different. That’s the way things are.”

“But I’m more different. Much more different.”

“I don’t suppose you’d be so very different where you came from,” Telta said, resuming her slicing.

“Was I different when I was a baby?”

“Yes, dear.”

Jannessa reflected.

“Where do babies come from, Telta?”

Telta explained. Jannessa said, scornfully:

“I don’t mean that. I mean babies like me. Different ones.”

“I don’t know. Only that it must have been somewhere far, far away.”

“Somewhere outside; in the cold?”

“Farther than that.” Telta considered a moment, then she added: “You’ve been up to one of the domes when it’s all dark outside? You’ve seen the stars twinkling?”

“Yes, Telta.”

“Well, it must have been one of those twinkles that you came from. But nobody knows which one.”

“Truly, Telta?”

“Quite Truly.”

Jannessa sat still a moment, thinking of the infinite night sky with its myriads of stars.

“But why didn’t I die in the cold?”

“You very nearly did, dear. Toti found you just in time.”

“And was I all alone?”

“No, dear. Your mother was holding you. She had wrapped you round with everything she could to keep the cold away. But the cold was too much for her. When Toti found her she could only move a little. She pointed to you and said: ‘Jannessa! Jannessa!’ So we thought that must be your name.”

Telta paused, remembering how when Toti, her husband, had brought the baby down from the surface to the life-giving warmth it had been touch and go. A few more minutes outside would have been fatal. The cold was a dreadful thing. She shuddered, recalling Toti’s account of it, and how it had turned the unfortunate mother black, but she did not tell that to the child.

Jannessa was frowning, puzzled.

“But how? Did I fall off the star?”

“No, dear. A ship brought you.”

But the word meant nothing to Jannessa.

### It was difficult to explain to a child. Difficult, for that matter, for Telta herself to believe. Her experience included only the system she lived in. The surface was a grim, inhospitable place of jagged rocks and killing cold which she had seen only from the protected domes. The history books told her of other worlds where it was warm enough to live on the surface, and that her own people had come from such a world many generations ago. She believed that that was true, but it was nevertheless unreal. More than fifty ancestors stood between her and life on a planet’s surface, and it is difficult for anything that far away to seem real. Nevertheless, she told Jannessa the story in the hope that it would give her some consolation.

“Which star did they come from? The same as mine?” the child wanted to know.

But Telta could not say.

“I don’t think it can have been the same one. When the doctors were looking after you, they said that you must have come from a bigger world.”

“Did they have to look after me a lot?”

“Quite a lot.”

“Because of the cold?”

“That—and other things. But in the end they made it possible for you to live here. They had to work very hard and cleverly for you. “More than once we thought we were going to lose you.”

“But what were they doing?”

“I don’t understand much of it. But you see you were intended for a different world. It must have been one where there was more weight, thicker air, more humidity, higher temperature, different food, and—oh, lots of things you’ll learn about when you’re older. So they had to help you get used to things as they are here.”

Jannessa considered that.

“It was very kind of them,” she said, “but they weren’t very good, were they?”

Telta looked at her in surprise.

“Dear, that’s not very grateful. What do you mean?”

“If they could do all that, why couldn’t they make me look like other people? Why did they leave me all white, like this? Why didn’t they give me lovely hair like yours, instead of this yellow stuff?”

“Darling, your hair’s lovely. It’s like the finest golden threads.”

“But it’s not like anyone else’s. It’s different. I want to be like other people. But I’m a freak.”

Telta looked at her, unhappily perplexed.

“Being of another kind isn’t being a freak,” she said.

“It is if you’re the only one. And I don’t want to be different. I hate it,” said Jannessa.

### A man made his way slowly up the marble steps of the Venturers’ Club. He was middle-aged, but he walked with a clumsy lack of certainty more appropriate to an older man. For a moment the porter looked doubtful, then his expression cleared.

“Good evening, Dr. Forbes,” he said.

Dr. Forbes smiled.

“Good evening, Rogers. You’ve got a good memory. It’s twelve years.”

They chatted for some minutes, then the doctor moved on leaving instructions that his guest should be shown to the smoke room. He had been sitting there some ten minutes when Franklyn Godalpin approached with outstretched hand. They chatted over a couple of drinks, and then went into the dining room.

“So now you’re home for good—and loaded with medical honors,” Franklyn said.

“It’s a curious feeling,” Forbes said. “Eighteen years altogether. I’d been there almost a year when you came.”

“Well, you’ve earned the rest. Others got us there, but it’s your work that’s enabled us to build there and stay there.”

“There was a lot to learn. There’s a lot yet.”

Forbes was not falsely modest. He was as aware as anyone of the results of his hard work. One of them was, indirectly the man who was facing him. Franklyn Godalpin was now all that counted in the Jason Mining Corporation, and a powerful man. But without the medical work which had gone into making humans fit for Mars and Mars fit for humans Jason itself would likely have folded up years ago. It made Forbes feel in a way responsible for Franklyn.

“You never remarried?” he asked.

“No.” Franklyn shook his head.

“You should have. I told you, remember? You should have a wife and family. It’s still not too late.”

Again Franklyn shook his head.

“I’ve not told you my news yet,” he said. “I’ve had word of Jannessa.”

Forbes stared at him. It he had ever thought anything more unlikely, he could not recall what it was.

“Had word,” he repeated, carefully. “Just what does that mean?”

Franklyn explained.

“For years I have been advertising for news of the Aurora. The answers came mostly from nuts, or from those who thought I was crazy enough for them to cash in on—until six months or so ago.

“The man who came to see me then was the owner of a spaceman’s hostel in Chicago. He’d had a man die there a little while before, and the man had something he wanted to get off his chest before he went out. The owner brought it to me for what it was worth.

“The dying man claimed that the Aurora was not lost in space, as everyone thought; he said that his name was Jenkins and he had been aboard her, so he ought to know. According to his story, there was a mutiny on the Aurora when she was a few days out from Mars. It was on account of the captain deciding to hand some of the crew over to the police on arrival, for crimes unspecified. When the mutineers took over they had the support of all but one or two of the officers, and they changed course. I don’t know what the ultimate plan was, but what they did then was to lift from the plane of the ecliptic, and hop the asteroid belt, on a course for Jupiter.

“The owner got the impression that they were not so much a ruthless gang as a bunch of desperate men with a grievance. They could, have pushed the officers and the passengers out into space since they had all qualified for a hanging anyway. But they didn’t. Instead, like other pirates before them, they elected to maroon the lot and leave them to make out as best as they could—if they could.

“According to Jenkins, the place chosen was Europa, somewhere in the region of its twentieth parallel, and the time somewhere in the third or fourth month of 1995. The party they stranded consisted of twelve persons—including a colored girl in charge of a white baby.”

Franklyn paused.

“The owner bears a quite blameless character. The dying man had nothing to gain by a fabrication. And, on looking up the sailing list, I find that there was a spaceman named Evan David Jenkins aboard the Aurora.”

### He concluded with a kind of cautious triumph, and looked expectantly across the table at Forbes. But there was no enthusiasm in the doctor’s face.

“Europa,” he said, reflectively. He shook his head.

Franklyn’s expression hardened.

“Is that all you have to say?” he demanded.

“No,” Forbes told him, slowly. “For one-thing I should say that it is more than unlikely—it is almost impossible that she can have survived.”

“Almost is not quite. But I am going to find out. One of our prospecting ships is on her way to Europa now.”

Forbes shook his head again.

“It would be wiser to call her off,” Franklyn stared at him.

“After all these years—when at last there is hope—”

The doctor looked steadily back at him.

“My two boys are going back to Mars next week,” he said.

“I don’t see what that has to do with it.”

“But it has. Their muscles ache continually. The strain of that makes them too tired either to work or to enjoy life. The humidity here also exhausts them. They complain that the air feels like a thick soup all around and inside them. They have never been free of catarrh since they arrived. There are other things, too. So they are going back.”

“And you stay here. That’s tough.”

“It’s tougher for Annie. She adores those boys. But that’s the way life is, Frank.”

“Meaning?”

“That it’s conditions that count. When we produce a new life, it is something plastic. Independent. We can’t live its life as well as our own. We can’t do more than to see that it has the best conditions to shape it the way we like best. If the conditions are in some way beyond our control, one of two things happens; either it becomes adapted to the conditions it finds—or it fails to adapt, which means that it dies.

“We talk airily about conquering this or that natural obstacle—but look at what we really do and you’ll find that more often than not it is ourselves we are adapting.

“My boys have been acclimated to Martian conditions. Earth doesn’t suit them. Annie and I have sustained Martian conditions for a while, but, as adults, we were incapable of thorough adaptation. So either we must come home—or stay there to die early.”

“You mean, you think that Jannessa—”

“I don’t know what may have happened—but I have thought about it. I don’t think you have thought about it at all, Frank.”

“I’ve thought of little else these last seventeen years.”

“Surely ‘dreamed’ is the word, Frank?” Forbes looked across at him, his head a little on one side, his manner gentle. “Once upon a time something, an ancestor of ours, came out of the water on to the land. It became adapted until it could not go back to its relatives in the sea. That is the process we agree to call progress. It is inherent in life. If you stop it, you stop life, too.”

“Philosophically that may be sound enough, but I’m not interested in abstractions. I’m interested in my daughter.”

### “How much do you think your daughter may be interested in you? I know that sounds callous, but I can see that you have some idea of affinity in mind. You’re mistaking civilized custom for natural law, Frank. Perhaps we all do, more or less.”

“I don’t know what you mean.”

“To be plain—if Jannessa has survived, she will be more foreign than any Earth foreigner could possibly be.”

“There were eleven others to teach her civilized ways and speech.”

“If any of them survived. Suppose they did not, or she was somehow separated from them. There are authenticated instances of children reared by wolves, leopards, and even antelopes and not one of them turned out to be in the least like the Tarzan fiction. All were subhuman. Adaptation works both ways.”

“Even if she has had to live among savages she can learn.”

Dr. Forbes faced him seriously.

“I don’t think you can have read much anthropology. First she would have to unlearn the whole basis of the culture she has known. Look at the different races here, and ask yourself if that is possible. There might be a veneer, yes. But more than that—” he shrugged.

“There is the call of the blood—”

“Is there? If you were to meet your great-grandfather would there be any tie—would you even know him?”

Franklyn said, stubbornly:

“Why are you talking like this, Jimmy? I’d not have listened to another man. Why are you trying to break down all that I’ve hoped for? You can’t, you know. Not now. But why try?”

“Because I’m fond of you, Frank. Because under all your success you’re still the young man with a romantic dream. I told you to remarry. You wouldn’t—you preferred the dream to reality. You’ve lived with that dream so long now that is is part of your mental pattern. But your dream is of finding Jannessa—not of having found her. You have centered your life on that dream. If you do find her, in whatever condition you find her, the dream will be finished—the purpose you set yourself will have been accomplished. And there will be nothing else left for you.”

Franklyn moved uneasily.

“I have plans and ambitions for her.”

“For the daughter you know nothing of? No, for the dream daughter; the one that exists only in your mind. Whatever you may find, it will be a real person—not your dream puppet, Frank.”

Dr. Forbes paused, watching the smoke curl up from his cigarette. It was in his mind to say: “Whatever she is like, you will come to hate her, just because she can not exactly match your dream of her,” but he decided to leave that unspoken. It occurred to him also to enlarge on the unhappiness which might descend on a girl removed from all that was familiar to her, but he knew what Franklyn’s answer to that would be—there was money enough to provide every luxury and consolation. He had already said enough—perhaps too much, and none of it had really reached Franklyn. He decided to let it rest there, and hope. After all, there was little likelihood that Jannessa had either survived or would be found.

The tense look that had been on Franklyn’s face gradually relaxed. He smiled.

“You’ve said your piece, old man. You think I may be in for a shock, and you want to prepare me, but I realize all that. I had it out with myself years ago. I can take it, if it’s necessary.”

Dr. Forbes’ eyes dwelt on his face a moment. He sighed, softly and privately.

“Very well,” he agreed, and started to talk of something else.

### “You see,” said Toti, “this is a very small planet—”

“A satellite,” said Jannessa. “A satellite of Yan.”

“But a planet of the sun, all the same. And there is the terrible cold.”

“Then why did your people choose it?” Jannessa asked, reasonably.

“Well, when our own world began to die and we had to die with it or go somewhere else, our people thought about those they could reach. Some were too hot, some were too big—”

“Why too big?”

“Because of the gravity. On a big planet we could scarcely have crawled.”

“Couldn’t they have . . . well, made things lighter?”

Toti made a negative movement of his head, and his silver hair glistered in the fluorescence from the walls.

“An increase in density can be simulated; we’ve done that here. But no one has succeeded in simulating a decrease—nor, we think now, ever will. So you see our people had to choose a small world. All the moons of Yan are bleak, but this was the best of them, and our people were desperate. When they got, here they lived in the ships and began to burrow into the ground to get away from the cold. They gradually burnt their way in, making halls and rooms and galleries, and the food-growing tanks, and the culture fields, and all the rest of it. Then they sealed it, and warmed it, and moved in from the ships, and went on working inside. It was all a very long time ago.”

Jannessa sat for a moment in thought.

“Telta said that perhaps I came from the third planet, Sonnal. Do you think so?”

“It may be. We know there was some kind of civilization there.”

“If they came once, they might come again—and take me home.”

Toti looked at her, troubled, and a little hurt.

“Home?” he said. “You feel like that?”

Jannessa caught his expression. She put her white hand quickly into his slaty-blue one.

“I’m sorry, Toti. I didn’t mean that. I love you, and Telta, and Melga. You know that. It’s just . . . oh, how can you know what it’s like to be different—different from everyone around you? I’m so tired of being a freak, Toti, dear. Inside me I’m just like any other girl. Can’t you understand what it would mean to me to be looked on by everyone as normal?”

### Toti was silent for a while. When he spoke, his tone was troubled:

“Jannessa, have you ever thought that after spending all your life here this really is your world. Another might seem very . . . well, strange to you?”

“You mean living on the outside instead of inside. Yes, that would seem funny.”

“Not just that, my dear,” he said, carefully. “You know that after I found you up there and brought you in the doctors had to work hard to save your life?”

“Telta told me.” Jannessa nodded. “What did they do?”

“Do you know what glands are?”

“I think so. They sort of control things.”

“They do. Well, yours were set to control things suitably for your world. So the doctors had to be very clever. They had to give you very accurate injections—it was a kind of balancing process, you see, so that the glands would work in the proper proportions to suit you for life here. Do you understand?”

“To make me comfortable at a lower temperature, help me to digest this kind of food, stop over stimulation by the high oxygen content, things like that Telta said.”

“Things like that,” Toti agreed. “It’s called adaptation. They did the best they could to make you suited to life here amongst us.”

“It was very clever of them,” Jannessa said, speaking much as she had spoken years ago to Telta. “But why didn’t they do more? Why did they leave me white like this? Why didn’t they make my hair a lovely silver like yours and Telta’s? I wouldn’t have been a freak then—I should have felt that I really belonged here.” Tears stood in her eyes.

Toti put his arm around her.

“My poor dear. I didn’t know it was as bad as that. And I love you—so does Telta—as if you were our own daughter.”

“I don’t see how you can—with this!” She held up her pale hand.

“But we do, Jannessa, dear. Does that really matter so very much?”

“It’s what makes me different. It reminds me all the time that I belong to another world, really. Perhaps I shall go there one day.”

Toti frowned.

“That’s just a dream, Jannessa. You don’t know any world but this. It couldn’t be what you expect. Stop dreaming, stop worrying yourself, my dear. Make up your mind to be happy here with us.”

“You don’t understand, Toti,” she said, gently. “Somewhere there are people like me—my own kind.”

It was only a few months later that the observers in one of the domes reported the landing of a ship from space.

### “Listen, you old cynic,” said Franklyn’s voice, almost before his image was sharp on the screen. “They’ve, found her—and she’s on the way Home.”

“Found—Jannessa?” Dr. Forbes said, hesitantly.

“Of course. Who else would I be meaning?”

“Are you—quite sure, Frank?”

“You old sceptic. Would I have rung you if I weren’t? She’s on Mars right now. They put in there for fuel, and to delay for proximity.”

“But can you be sure?”

“There’s her name—and some papers found with her.”

“Well, I suppose—”

“Not enough, eh?” Franklyn’s image grinned. “All right, then. Take a look at this.”

He reached for a photograph on his desk and held it close to the transmitting screen.

“Told them to take it there, and transmit here by radio,” he explained. “Now what about it?”

Dr. Forbes studied the picture on the screen carefully. It showed a girl posed with a rough wall for a background. Her only visible garment was a piece of shining cloth, draped round her, rather in the manner of a sari. The hair was fair and dressed in an unfamiliar style. But it was the face looking from beneath it that made him catch his breath. It was Marilyn Godalpin’s face, gazing back at him across eighteen years.

“Yes, Frank,” he said, slowly. “Yes, that’s Jannessa. I . . . I don’t know what to say, Frank.”

“Not even congratulations?”

“Yes, oh yes—of course. It’s . . . well, it’s just a miracle. I’m not used to miracles.”

### The day that the newspaper told him that the Chloe, a research ship belonging to the Jason Mining Corporation, was due to make ground at noon, was spent absent-mindedly by Dr. Forbes. Fie was sure that there would be a message from Franklyn Godalpin, and he found himself unable to settle to anything until he should receive it. When, at about four o’clock the bell rang, he answered it with a swift excitement. But the screen did not clear to the expected features of Franklyn. Instead, a woman’s face looked at him anxiously. Fie recognized her as Godalpin’s housekeeper.

“It’s Mr. Godalpin, doctor, she said. “He’s been taken ill. If you could come—?”

A taxi set him down on Godalpin’s strip fifteen minutes later. The housekeeper met him and hurried him to the stairs through the rabble of journalists, photographers and commentators that filled the hall. Franklyn was lying on his bed with his clothes loosened. A secretary and a frightened-looking girl stood by. Dr. Forbes made an examination and gave an injection.

“Shock, following anxiety,” he said. “Not surprising. He’s been under a great strain lately. Get him to bed. Hot bottles, and see that he’s kept warm.”

The housekeeper spoke as he turned away.

“Doctor, while you’re here. There’s the . . . I mean, if you wouldn’t mind having a look at . . . at Miss Jannessa, too;”

“Yes, of course. Where is she?” The housekeeper led the way to another room, and pointed.

“She’s in there, doctor.”

Dr. Forbes pushed open the door and went in. A sound of bitter sobbing ended in choking as he entered. Looking for the source of it he saw a child standing beside the bed.

“Where—?” he began. Then the child turned towards him. It was not a child’s face. It was Marilyn’s face, with Marilyn’s hair, and Marilyn’s eyes looking at him. But a Marilyn who was twenty-five inches tall—Jannessa.

THE END