

Miss Canary had no chance of clearing enough for a ducket to Earth, and her only hope of shaking Callisto was to mix herself up in a shady deal with Dirty-Jets Ryan and his crew. . . .

THE OVERSIGHT OF DIRTY-JETS RYAN

by Anne Walker

I AM SITTING IN GRZHINDY'S Olde Tyme New-Yorke Room, nuzzling some Martian kabibs, which come pretty good at Grzhindy's what with Grzhindy being something of a South Martian himself, and anyway this is the only galley whatsoever in New New York or on Callisto for the matter of that. And I am reflecting on what an unjust world it is to be sure, whether you are Earth-side or on a little slug like Callisto.

Because what is the floor-show but a little doll called Canary and who has a most remarkable voice, and here she is stuck on Callisto where her audience has hair growing out of its ears, though this audience will always give her a big mitt because she will always fade any request for any song she knows, and she even goes to the Clinic to render request numbers for citizens pushing escape veloc-

ity, and in fact she is safer alone on Callisto, where dolls are in crash demand, than most dolls would be with a guard of combat robots. The chances are that no job on Callisto ever builds her mazoo to critical mass for a ducket to Earth, even allowing for tips because no guy is risking unfriendly comment by making his tips as big as his better or possibly his lower nature would suggest.

Well Miss Canary is paying out with "The Only Rose on Mars" when who should peek in but Dirty-Jets Ryan, Joe the Schmoe, and a third party, in that order. Now Dirty-Jets is a space-bum who is notable for his habitual bad luck in having to conduct forced landings off base, which is regarded by the Customs sniffers with suspicions amounting to certainty. Joe the Schmoe though by no

means an impressive guy except if you rate him on his beezer, is rumored to remove property weighing up to several tons single-handed, but this may not be so unlikely at that because the rumors identify these properties as deliveries left in orbit for their owners to collect. The third party is in no way familiar to me but I wish to say that I do not regard this as a grievance, as he has a long, mean pan and his kisser is dogged down as if cracking it will cost him maybe five chips a crack.

These characters scan the layout with some chagrin because they do not see a place to berth or even lodge a stein right off. But it so happens that I am snatching my ration all alone, and what do they do but come across and join me. They tell me I need not lift, but in any case this is impractical without anti-grav, as the silent gazumbo is already berthed beside me. This makes me very nervous indeed, but I compute that the worst is that I am stuck for the tab, which goes to show how mistaken a guy can be.

Well at first they pay no attention to me while they knuckle down to some very dense conversation. They conduct this in English which is most unconventional on Callisto where anything but Intergloba is frowned on, but as my personal family are no better than immigrants from Old New York, I can track and they do not

even realize that I am Mr. Bug-ears.

This conversation is of a very engrossing nature as Dirty-Jets is in hyper-space about a deal which I consider to be nothing but illegal, but maybe his judgment is warped by what he states will be quite galactic profits because when Dirty-Jets smells a profit, why there you are. It seems that there is this planet named Clayburn Van Slyck IV, though whether the IV is the serial number of the planet or of Clayburn Van Slyck, I do not gather, and here is one case where the views of the Patrol on giving a planet the great big go-by, are endorsed by all and sundry, since the population is of a most repulsive nature and discourages guests by popping off their skiffs, sending back ambassadors with total think-erasure, and other forms of disapproval. But in spite of all this, it seems that Dirty-Jets has a contact with some big pow there though he does not say at this time how he pulls it off.

"I tell you," he says joggling a free-float squash-ball, "these ragmops have so much makings for high-power jewelry lying around loose that they will shovel it across like hot ash if we do this job for them. All you have to do, Joe," he says "is raise a few Geigers on my sample so my creditors do not clamp on to The Ruptured Duck," and he rolls the ball to Joe the Schmoee.

Now at this point what do I realize but that this ball is not a ball at all and in fact I wish to state that it is undoubtedly the most white-giant sized emerald I ever scan and I am greatly shaken up by this spectacle. But I can see where publicity will be most distasteful to Dirty-Jets and even a very small percentage for handling such a deal will be as good as the Spacemen's Retirement Benefits, and I say as follows: "Well, Dirty-Jets, I might get you an inside drop with Phillip le Fifi, who is very broad-minded in such affairs."

But Joe the Schmoe quickly says, "Well now, the fact is that I bring my friend here to meet him up with a customer, who has priority," and he blasts off as if his oxygen is running out far from base.

Well, Dirty-Jets is now most conversational and explains how his saucer, The Ruptured Duck, is incapable of even a forced landing, suppose he gets it up to start with, till he negotiates some repairs. "And," he says, "you will wish these repairs to be of high quality because obviously we cannot leave you romping around after bugging such a confidential deal, and in fact at the very first romp I will singe your ears. But," Dirty-Jets says, "the pay will be liberal so do not fret."

Well, I can see how this is a case where controversy will only

upset Dirty-Jets who is a very sensitive guy, and I am wishing that I keep my hatch sealed like the character beside me who says nothing so far but "Ulp" when he downs his tranquillizer, when Joe the Schmoe hauls up and who does he have in tow but Miss Canary. Now at this I am so perturbed I forget all about my own hardship because I do not care to see Miss Canary lose her candy in one of Dirty-Jets' burn-offs, till I realize that after all this rock is worth more than she will pull down in eighty years rendering songs at Grzhindy's.

But I am not so happy again when Dirty-Jets sells her a bill about joining the trip, because it is well known that Dirty-Jets is very temporary with his dolls and if I buttinsky I am likely to get dropped out the air-lock to walk home in my socks. But Dirty-Jets tells her how even a popular doll such as she is cannot dispose of her emerald on Callisto without arousing the low, suspicious natures of the Customs sniffers. "But," he says, "when we go Earthside, we can pay the squeeze and never miss it. This is just a marker for you, sweetheart."

Now Miss Canary gets a big field from these remarks but anyone can see that she gets an even bigger field from Dirty Jets himself because he is a strong-built guy with curling black hair and blue eyes and a little Jack-of-

spades moustache and the sort of hell-off manners that young dolls go for. I do not know anything that will cure this point of view in young dolls except maybe experience and often not even that. But I can also see that Joe the Schmoe is greatly downcast.

Well, from then on I am over-seeing repairs on The Ruptured Duck and this and that, which I do with great care because of my health, and the silent gazumbo sticks to me like a magnetic boot. His name is Zeb and he does not give out with any other or with anything much but "I 'low so" or just "Yup". He is a type I scan so far only in tales of outdoor living, which can pussyfoot blindfolded through untamed forests and eat spaghetti in a high wind without getting tomato-sauce on his bib and is generally a most discouraging type.

But once we boost, Miss Canary makes up the average for him, not only by rendering with songs but by cooking in a most astonishing style and chirping gaily to one and all and keeping Dirty-Jets under auto-pilot for the present and altogether rating as a little breeze of outside air. Even Zeb remarks "Mighty purty" when she renders, and washes plates for her, and she makes him large dollops of potato-chips of which he is inordinately fond. Only Joe the Schmoe regards her flitting here and there as if he has something on his mind

and rubs his beezer and does not respond to her chirping to any extent though at most times Joe is a benign guy especially with dolls.

Well, quicker than you can say Clayburn Van Slyck IV we set down, and we are hardly cool when Dirty-Jets pops off to hitch locks with this big pow he has contacted and hauls me and Joe the Schmoe with him. This is a very big pow tagged Vzbl-89 as near as you can put it, but I will state that I am greatly disappointed by his royal shakedown which resembles nothing so much as the Callisto dump.

We zero in by a walkie-talkie radar as the Ragmops are too averse to our appearance to act as guides, till we reach Vzbl-89's personal doss-down. And when I get a fix on him, if I know any place to duck I am getting out of there like a scalded cat, because if I am one-quarter as repulsive to him as he is to me, I do not wonder that his pals give us the push. He reminds me of the butt end of the tree in New Central Park which I view before they plug it in, only he is very active and in among himself he has eyes like egg-plants bugging out and other things I do not much enjoy. In front of him is a dingus that grates his remarks into Intergloba as follows: "Do not think I am fluttered by your ghastly appearance. I will use you unflinchingly and I will pay you well if you come through."

Well whatever else you can say about Dirty-Jets Ryan, he is anyway a vertebrate and he says like this: "Lay down your hand, Your Imperial Ragmops, as our time is expensive and we would not wish to break the bank."

I do not know what Vzbl-89's translator makes of this, but Vzbl-89 logs us the situation. It seems that these Ragmops, though allergic to human beings, are very fond of such spectacles as you will see at the Museum of Modern-Modern Art, although personally I will not give you a dried-up Z-ration for the whole museum. They get this junk through Vegan traders, and it seems that a neighbor who is a pain in whatever pinch hits for Vzbl-89's neck, has clamped his lunch-hooks on a very superior specimen of modern-modern art by a beaver named Miro de Braque Tutthope, and in fact this specimen is as modern as a new-laid egg and Ragmops from Vzbl-89's territory are skipping over the state line in flocks which reduces Vzbl-89's status more than somewhat, and what Vzbl-89 wants is that Dirty-Jets should nab this peep-show.

"Why," says Dirty-Jets, "I can do better yet for you. I can have this beaver Tutthope set you up with a gallery," he says.

But Joe the Schmoie now cuts in with some very disconcerting data, because Joe is always an outstandingly well-informed guy. It seems

that this beaver Miro de Braque Tutthope is very high strung and one day in a fit of pique over the moldy state of public taste, what does he do but stage a protest sit-down on the New Greenwich Village power-pile and before the gendarmes can fish him off he is fried sunny-side-up and scratched from all future dabbling. So the only course left is to proceed according to plan.

"Of course," Vzbl-89 grates, "you could not get into Flff-73's shebang if he did not radar you in like I did, and the sacred picture is hung in the central egg-chapel to influence the hatching eggs. But," he says "once every kloon Flff-73 takes it out for a public showing and parades it to the sacred grove and pokes it in there while they all gzrch outside. You could easily bob in while they are gzrchng and toot off with the sacred picture."

Now Dirty-Jets Ryan is a very fast guy with a suspicion and so he says, "This is all very fine. But if this snatch is such a free lunch, why do you not pull it yourself?"

"Why," Vzbl-89 grates back, "because any of our Master Race is noticeable to any other even in the dark. But you flat-eyed monsters are practically no shape at all and will blend perfectly with the background, and this is why I call you in in the first place," he says.

Now from what I see of the local shrubbery, he is quite right

about this, as the bigger upgrowths make me think of a mob of stiffs doing a pyramid act, and Dirty-Jets evidently thinks the same because he laughs and says, "Lay on, MacWhuff."

Vzbl-89 twiddles into the next cave and shows us his jackpot, which is several no-shape holes in the floor filled up with rocks of various sorts, some of which are just plain rocks but more of which are uncut emeralds and sapphires and this and that, and you can gravel a fair sized hydroponics tank in any one of several colors out of this load. We study the display for quite some time till Dirty-Jets remarks "All we can carry away, huh?"

"Sure," Vzbl-89 says, "if you are really so stupid. But I would not cheat even a monster and will pay off in Zhsh roots if you like."

"No," Dirty-Jets says. "We are plenty stupid and this will do."

So Vzbl-89 programs us on where Flff-73's sacred grove is, and about the next kloon when all of Clayburn Van Slyck IV's moons are bunched up, and gives us the old here's-your-hat-what's-your-hurry routine.

Well back at the saucer, we find Miss Canary in full chirp because some of the Ragmops kindly leave us a ton of fresh vegetables which she claims are great delicacies. Even Zeb is all thawed out to two above zero because one of these vegetables closely resembles a

skiff-size potato and Miss Canary makes him some chips which are without doubt the all-time title-holders. So we heave-to and wait for the kloon.

Now as this approaches, Dirty-Jets and Joe the Schmoe and Zeb prepare for action but they count me out because they do not want any chickens on such a deal as this, and anyway somebody has to chaperone The Ruptured Duck and Miss Canary. They stick their belts full of sparklers and nuggets and they are not wearing much but belts so that they will blend with the background like Vzbl-89 says. They have a rucksack of food because they intend to be on location well in advance, and they take a reef in their upper lips except Zeb whose lip is reefed tighter than a bip-drum at all times, and take off on safari.

Naturally I am somewhat restless because if an accident befalls Dirty-Jets Ryan I do not think Joe the Schmoe can handle anything bigger than little bitty skiffs for removing property in orbit and Zeb is useful only for leading the way through untamed forests. Miss Canary flits around the saucer assembling lunch and singing tra-la. "You seem very confident," I say.

"Of course I am confident," she says. "Hughie—Mr. Ryan—is the cleverest and bravest man in the Galaxy, and such a contract as this is child's play for him. Do you not think so?"

Well, I would rather have Miss Canary singing tra-la than worrying, so I do not express my reservations but mop up with her lunch including potato-chips and help her swab off the crockery and chat merrily of this and that, and so forth and so on. But about the time our task-force is due I rubber out onto the balcony and scan for dust on the road while Miss Canary in the galley is rendering with various ditties and presently she renders with one which she has been working overtime recently and which is a very long-whiskered ditty called, "My Hero," and just as she is really giving out with, "Come, come, I love you only, Hero Mine!" what do I observe but human-figures coming very rapidly indeed.

These are Dirty-Jets and Joe, and their knee-action is really most remarkable. They do not even slow down at the ladder but continue on up as they are at null-G, and this is not so surprising at that because the scenery is buzzing with Ragmops who are moving almost as fast as they are. Dirty-Jets slams me inside the lock and has the outer door clamped before I can get up, and roars, "Acceleration-couches. Minus twenty count-down." And unlikely as it seems, he boosts at one and the same moment the intercom calls, "Zero."

Now when we are in hyperspace and flutter weakly to the lounge, Dirty-Jets is very apolo-

getic. "But," he says, "I do not figure to linger till the Ragmops remember the do-hickies they use for popping off skiffs." And it is universally agreed that he has shown great foresight, and Miss Canary begins to pass out the nose-bags she is preparing all day to celebrate jackpot, even if we do not hit it. But then she suddenly does a double-take'em and says like this: "Where is Zeb? Did the take-off hurt him?"

Well at this Dirty-Jets looks very cast down and replies in a low, sad voice, "No, the Ragmops got him."

Now I do not consider this to be very strange, all things considered, and though I do not actually wish Zeb any bad luck I much prefer that the Ragmops get him rather than Dirty-Jets because Zeb will not boost us in twenty seconds or even at all and I suppose Miss Canary will feel even more so. But she looks as if the air has been let out of the cabin and after a long while she says as follows: "Oh!" and keeps on serving.

I am much surprised at her distress even if Zeb does help her to swab the crockery, but I am even more surprised when she puts a chill of zero Kelvin on everything all the way home and does not even render. And altogether it is a great relief when we berth at a set-down called Idlewild near Old New York.

Of course there is the customary

to-do with customs sniffers but we do not have even communicable diseases on board, and finally a sniffer smacks a sticker on the front door to spring us. Now no sooner does he do this than Miss Canary ankles onto the balcony carrying her little suitcase and begins saying good-bye to me. I can see that Dirty-Jets is much jolted and he says in a hearty voice, "Stay in orbit a minute, baby, till I get suited up and I will show you the town."

Well Miss Canary gives him a look that will put a ground-frost on the sunny side of Mercury and says, "You have already shown me all I care to see. I do not have any use for cowards." And down she goes.

Dirty-Jets looks for a minute as if he will cut up rough, and then he shrugs and says, "Well that is a doll for you. If they think you are under high G they will strap you down tenderly but when you are in free-float they will give you a punt out the lock."

Now I feel that Dirty-Jets has a point here, and I am greatly bewildered myself by Miss Canary sounding off as she does which will be a great knock to her reputation as a fair-minded doll. However I do not see any percentage in bandying repartee on the subject, so I simply get my own duffle and bow out.

Well first I invest a few weeks seeing New York but even the

wad I draw at Uncle Sammy's for the gravel I palm while I am inspecting Vzbl-89's gravel-pit runs thin and I pick up my passage-option and boost for home.

Naturally when I am on Callisto to Firmo again, I lay a course for Grzhindy's and what is the first thing I see but Joe the Schmoe putting the fission on a ration of gefillte soybean. So I slot in opposite him and ask about his health and stand him a couple of tranquillizers, and after the second tranquillizer I lead up to what is on my mind since we part, like this: "Joe whatever causes the disaster back yonder? I get the impression that Dirty-Jets thinks the deal is a shoo-in."

"Well," Joe says, "since you are in on it, I will break radio-silence, although I do not call it such a disaster at that. I am very fond of Dirty-Jets but," he says, "he is very temporary about his dolls and Miss Canary is a nice little doll, and in fact she is the loveliest doll I ever get my viewplates on, and it is a crime if Dirty-Jets busts her all up," Joe says rubbing his beezer. "And besides, if this big bull lugs home a crate of ice, he will plunk the bottom clean out of the market including Miss Canary's emerald, and she will be without visible means of support till she spears a contract which is not easy even with her voice.

"But of course," he continues, "it is Zeb and not me who pushes

the firing-button in a most surprising manner. He is programmed to walk through untamed forests without scaring the deer, and all such, but," Joe says, "he has his limitations. You will remember how Miss Canary is so involved in whomping up dinner that I offer to whomp up our lunches, and what do I whomp for Zeb but these white-giant potato-chips he is so fond of, and so I do help indirectly to hair things up. Although," he says, "if I precog what will come of it, who can say I will not do it anyway."

"Well," Joe says, "Zeb cons us in to this sacred grove without scaring any deer, and we settle down with our lunches to wait for the game. And sure enough pretty soon the Ragmops begin to arrive like a baseball crowd which gives me the cold shiveroo as they are no cuter out of their caves than they are in them, but they do not notice us because for their money we are no shape whatsoever and also we remain strictly behind trees or whatnot. So by and bye here comes a Mardi Gras of Ragmops festooned with assortments of refuse and finally a crew carrying this dab of Miro de Braque Tutthope's, and although Miro de Braque's style is a bit difficult to pin down, it certainly fits in nicely with the scheme of decoration.

"Well," Joe says, "they shove this dab in the grove, and all begin rolling their eggplants and

tying knots in their twiddlers, like a camp-meeting in Venusport Aquarium, but they do not make even a squeak. It is most disturbing, but Dirty-Jets finishes his coffee and gives the high sign and we stand up. Now at this there is a noise behind us like a horse having lunch in a bin of ship's biscuit, and what is it but Zeb standing up, because however many Boy Scout badges he may have, no guy is going to eat potato-chips without dropping crumbs particularly such outsize chips as these, and in fact Zeb is practically ankle-deep in crumbs which go scronch when he moves his feet, and not only that but Zeb lets go with a "Mighty Purty!" you can hear out to Sirius. Now at this all the Ragmops around and about shoot their twiddlers straight up and bug their egg-plants, and Dirty-Jets yells, "Red Alert!" and fires off like a super-photic missile and naturally I take the hint but," Joe says, "the last I see of Zeb he is scanning his feet in a disjointed way, though I suppose he will soon get over his surprise and tag along. But as we approach home plate, I see that such is not the case and inform Dirty-Jets, who considers Zeb a valuable asset and if we do not have Miss Canary back on the ship he may turn around and frazzle up a mess of Ragmops and try to recover Zeb. Because whatever else you can say about Dirty-Jets Ryan, which is quite a bit to

be sure, he is a fighting fool and is not apt to abandon a valuable asset without a struggle. So I am glad about Miss Canary because our chances are not five to twenty-three if we blast it out with the Ragmops. And from there on," Joe says, "you are as well programmed as I am."

"Well," I say, "this is indeed a stirring tale and it clears up several points that had me grounded. But," I say, "I am still not as well programmed as you are because I still wonder why Miss Canary makes this knock about Dirty-Jets being a coward."

"Probably," Joe says taking a deep haul on his mug, "it has something to do with him running out on Zeb. Of course, I take something of a knock myself on that account but," Joe says in a flat voice, "this does not greatly matter because young dolls are not much for guys with out-size beezerers anyhow. The main thing is that Miss

Canary is clear of Dirty-Jets and has a nice roll and a chance to meet up with plenty of young guys who will clamp onto her till death do them part if she says so, and who have stock-size beezerers."

Now I am deeply surprised and I say that up to now I do not score Miss Canary so low as to boot a guy because he sacrifices a valuable asset to save her life, and I think Miss Canary's noggin is out of contact.

"No," Joe says finishing his tranquillizer, "she does not see it that way because—and Dirty-Jets helps this mistake no little by leaving the eating-simulator in Zeb's program—little as you might suppose it of any doll who works for Grzhindy, she does not hitch that Zeb is nothing but an android robot. And so," Joe says, "she gets a warp that Dirty-Jets runs out on a live tovarich. And now I must go see a Martian about a kark," he says.



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