

STRANGE ADVENTURES ON OTHER WORLDS—

# PLANET stories

SEPT.  
25¢



Space travel was dead. Verboten. Then a few mad, fleeing star-pilgrims stole

## THE ARK OF MARS

a novel of infinite worlds by LEIGH BRACKETT,  
also ROBT. MOORE WILLIAMS - JAMES McKIMMEY - HAYDEN HOWARD

Rights for this book: [Public domain in the USA](#).

This edition is published by Project Gutenberg.

Originally [issued by Project Gutenberg](#) on 2021-01-09. To support the work of Project Gutenberg, visit their [Donation Page](#).

This free ebook has been produced by [GITenberg](#), a program of the [Free Ebook Foundation](#). If you have corrections or improvements to make to this ebook, or you want to use the source files for this ebook, visit [the book's github repository](#). You can support the work of the Free Ebook Foundation at their [Contributors Page](#).

The Project Gutenberg eBook of The Flight of the Eagle, by Sol Galaxan  
This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most  
other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever.  
You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project  
Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). If  
you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the  
country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: The Flight of the Eagle

Author: Sol Galaxan

Release Date: January 09, 2021 [eBook #64238]

Language: English

Character set encoding: UTF-8

Produced by: Greg Weeks, Mary Meehan and the Online Distributed  
Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FLIGHT OF  
THE EAGLE \*\*\*

# **The Flight of the Eagle**

## By SOL GALAXAN

*It was a new and mysterious plant. It could make its own weather; it was sentient, and it prospered on Venus. But Earth needed it desperately. And Bat Kendo, the radar-mutant, was told to bring it in.*

[Transcriber's Note: This etext was produced from Planet Stories September 1953.

Extensive research did not uncover any evidence that the U.S. copyright on this publication was renewed.]

---

Humans are a strange breed. Forgetful. They grow accustomed to the wonders they live among so easily that they never really figure up the cost. A little time passes and the bright memories tarnish and are covered over with newer ones. And the men who picked up the check and maybe paid with their lives? Forgotten.

For example, when you're sitting comfortably in the New York to San Francisco stratojet, and you take the trouble to look down at the lush verdure of the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada, do you ever remember that a few short years back that lovely fertile parkland was a rocky, barren waste? Or when you taste the delicious tropical fruits that are brought to your table from the Mojave Basin, do you think of Bat Kendo, the man who made all that possible? Like fun you do! I'll give you ten to one you never heard of Bat Kendo. Maybe you don't even know that the reason those once sterile wastelands are now the larders of the North American continent is ... weather-plant. And I'll give eight to five you don't even know where that weather-plant came from, or how it got here, or what it cost. Not in money ... in lives.

Well, I know, and for once I'd like to have someone stand still long enough so I could tell the story. The minute anyone sees an old spaceman like me coming, they jet the hell out of there fast. "Old Captain Morley's got another shaggy dog to comb out!" they say, and beat it. My stories, it seems, are too old fashioned for this modern age. Just because I, and a lot of others like me—only maybe not so lucky—spent our lives opening up the spaceways instead of sitting home on

our venturiis, we're "odd characters" and "old space-hacks," and our stories are tall tales—yarns to be avoided, or laughed at if it's not possible to avoid them.

Okay, I expect that. But I still want to tell how that weather-plant came to be where it is now, and what Bat Kendo had to do with it. He was my shipmate on the R. S. *Eagle*, and I think he's got a little credit coming to him.

The history books will tell you that during the last few years of the 20th Century the population of North America increased by something like 600 per cent. They might even tell you that this put such a load on the continental resources—food, mainly—that famine became a possibility for the first time in the history of the continent. Things were pretty tight. People were actually starving amid the technological wonders of the time. Hydroponics were tried, but they fizzled badly.

The only answer seemed to be complete utilization of all available land area for food production. And that meant that a lot of land that couldn't grow weeds had to produce edible crops. That's the way things stood back in '02, just after the William Robert Holcomb Foundation's R. S. *Explorer* returned from Venus with what the botanists thought might be an answer.

Of course, the Earth-Luna System was well traveled even then, but it took the big money of the Holcomb Foundation plus a whopping World Federal Government grant to make a deep space mission feasible.

It was a Holcomb Foundation metallurgist's synthesis of impervium that made deep space navigable. Before this time all ships were chemical-fuelled because the weight of lead needed to shield atomics would nail any spacer built to terra firma ... but good. Chemical ships could make Luna, but no farther. Lucky to get that far with the pumps feeding the jets a stream of monoatomic hydrogen as thick as your arm. A ship could carry about enough juice to get up the necessary seven-a-second with maybe enough for landing ... maybe. Even then plenty of ships that carried a pound or two of mass too much arced back to Earth and splashed themselves all over the ground. Others got up escape-velocity only to run dry trying to land on Luna. Their metal bones are still up there; if you care to look for them.

Impervium changed all that. Here was a metal that was easily worked, as light as a good quality aluminum-magnesium alloy, and strong as steel. And it was impervious to everything except neutrino bombardment. That was the ticket to

deep space. Atomics were in and chemicals out. I might add that none of us were sorry to see them go, either.

Luna remained the jumping-off place. And Foy City was the staging area for trips to ... UP. Before the successful flight of the *Explorer*, Foy had been just a combination mining and scientific camp. After the *Explorer* returned from Venus, spacemen began to pour up from Earth, and Foy City became one of the rowdiest places under Sol. Jetmen and pilots, tubemen and ABs, all the restless flotsam of humanity flowed up to Luna in a steady stream to mingle with the miners from the Diggings and the longhairs from the Cosmiray Labs and the big dome of Starview.

Mars was reached and colonization began. And men set up a settlement on Venus. The Holcomb Foundation was convinced that they had the answer to the critical food shortage on Earth. Weather-plant. The one useful thing that stinking Venus produces.

Weather-plant is a moss-like plant that will grow almost anywhere. The Foundation botanists found that it gathered nitrogen and water in some inexplicable way, and they became interested in its possibilities. Something had to be done about soil reclamation back on Earth, or starvation would strangle the race. Weather-plant looked like the answer. What the smart boys couldn't have guessed was that in addition to its other strange properties, weather-plant was intelligent—sentient, at least. And they didn't know that it liked its wet, foggy environment very, very much.

---

I hit Foy City with a mammoth thirst and very little spending money. A bad combination. I had a Pilot's rating and a brand-new Second Officer's ticket, and I needed a job.

I'd been handling a regular chemical flight out of Foy to Montevideo for a one horse concern that was still trying to make the low grade uranium ore found on the Moon pay off. When I came down onto the great pumice plain of Mare Imbrium that served Foy as a spaceport, the patched-up blow-torch I was jockeying blew a venturi and buried herself under twenty feet of pumice. If it had happened on Earth, we'd have been cooked, but Luna's one-sixth gravity saved our hides. Those were the days before tractor-pressor beam landings, you see. Back then you landed a can by balancing her on her tail-flare like a ball on a water snout. And that was a rough go anyway you want to look at it.

Anyway, after the pileup I quit. There was some difference of opinion on that particular point between the company and me. They claimed I was fired.

Quit or fired, however, I didn't get paid, and that led me to seek solace in the local pubs. That, in turn, led me to the city drunk-tank for the night, and that's where I ran into Bat Kendo....

Bat was Chief Tubeman on the R. S. *Eagle*. He was also a mutation. Not that he wasn't human or anything like that. And he certainly wasn't the much kicked around "homo superior." He merely had an extra sense. We all have it dormant. Bat had it well developed. That's why he was called Bat. People thought he could see in the dark. It wasn't that. Try closing your eyes and moving your head slowly toward an obstruction. If you are very careful and very alert, you'll be able to sense the obstruction before you touch it. Well, Bat could "see" things that way ... perfectly. He even used to pick up beer money by getting into the ring blindfolded and letting pugs throw punches at him. They hit him, but not often. And when they did connect it wasn't because he didn't sense the blows coming; it was because he was slow on his feet and generally three quarters drunk.

Bat's father, Nakano Kendo, had grown up in Nagasaki. He'd been exposed to radiation by the second atom blast there. Bat had befuddled the geneticists by showing up a mutation one generation before he was supposed to. He used to laugh about that.

His mother had been Russian. Certainly you couldn't tell his nationality by looking at him. His face held a suggestion of the Asiatic, but trying to place him anthropologically would have been as difficult as finding a pure Anglo-Saxon, whatever that is.

Bat was just the product of an insane age. A child of a man whose germ plasm had been dosed with radiation. But for all of that Bat Kendo was normal. Two arms, two legs, two eyes. Only his built-in radar marked him as different. That, and his terrific taste for booze. I never saw him sober. Yet to see him, you'd never guess he was perpetually saturated. There may have been bigger drunks in space, but I never knew one.

As a tubeman, he never had an equal. As an all around right guy, he never will have.

It was Bat that talked me into signing on the *Eagle*. They needed a Pilot, and where a better place to find one than in the Foy City drunk tank? I knew the *Eagle*, of course. Everyone in the Luna-Earth System did. She was a five hundred tonner, newly converted to atomics and fitting in the Foundation yards for a flight to Venusberg.

She was going to pick up a full cargo of weather-plant from the settlement. A hundred tons of it. And brother, that's a lot of weather-plant.

This was to be the first quantity shipment of the stuff. The "pilot-shipment." The botanists suspected a lot and had great hopes. But it was up to the *Eagle* to get the stuff to Earth. She was the only ship available for the trip with enough storage space for the plant, and when I listened to Bat talk about it, the flight began to take on the aspect of a mercy mission.

I knew people were going hungry back Earthside, and old Bat was really steamed up about it. I dare say if it hadn't been for his pep talk I'd never have signed on. Deep space was still new, and I liked living. But Bat talked me into it, and as soon as the turnkey shook us out of the sack and shooed us out, Bat and I headed for the Foundation yards and the *Eagle*.

My first view of the ship didn't do much to make me happy about the trip. She looked old and scabrous standing tall on her tail fins out on the flat, glaring plain of Mare Imbrium. Her hull was meteor-scarred and eroded by atmospheric friction, and there seemed to be an abundance of patch-welds on her.

Her tubes, however, were spanking brand new, and after I had inspected her control-tube-pile system—as all prospective pilots have a right to do—in company with Bat and Captain Reynard, I signed.

Reynard was a decent enough skipper. He wasn't much of a disciplinarian, but the boat only carried a crew of twenty, so that was no problem. As an astrogator, he had quite a reputation, and he'd been out to Venus before on one of the ships that lugged the settlers and scientific personnel out there.

There wasn't much fanfare when the time came for our departure. Ships were lifting every day for Mars just then, and the departure of one for Venus didn't seem important. Before we left though, a Holcomb Foundation man came aboard and spoke to us about the importance of our trip. He said that if we didn't bring

back the weather-plant in good shape, things might turn nasty on Earth. It would be another year and a half before Venus and Earth came into conjunction again, and by that time it might be too late for the thousands who were going hungry back home. It gave us a sense of responsibility, all right. And it particularly had an effect on Bat.

---

We lifted from Mare Imbrium on 11/9/02 Earth Date. I recall that I gave her 2G, easing her up to 6G and holding that acceleration for sixty hours. By that time our speed in MPH wouldn't have made sense. I revelled in the power under my hands, and the feeling that I could actually waste an erg or two without having to worry myself bald about landing. The *Eagle* carried fifty pounds of ingot thorium as fuel, and with our new atomics, that would have taken us to Centaurus, if we'd had the time. It was wonderful to be able to keep the boat under a steady 1G all the way to turn-over instead of having to endure the endless nausea of free-fall. Even seasoned spacemen never got used to free-fall, and atomics eliminated it, thank God!

The sunward flight was something to remember for sheer beauty. Earth and Luna faded astern until they were just a bright point of light. The sun blazed like a ball of white fire ahead of us, and Venus grew brighter and brighter against the breath-taking backdrop of the Milky Way. It was a gorgeous sight—but frightening, too. I had the feeling that I was terribly exposed, as though I were standing balanced atop the spire of the Holcomb Tower, five hundred stories above the teeming streets of New York. Agoraphobia, I think the psychs call it. The others felt it too. In fact one of the jetmen went slightly off his rocker and had to be jugged. But most of the men came through the first fear of deep space well enough, and as an astrogator Captain Reynard was strictly one hundred per cent.

I didn't see much of Bat on the trip, since he was down in the heavily sheathed tuberoom with his "black-gang." But I could tell whenever he was on watch, because if I turned the interphone on without warning, I could almost invariably hear his beery baritone singing the praises of:

"That Lulu! Belle of ol' Foy City  
Who wears two hammocks...."

Bat was something of a poet, in his lighter moments—though most of his stuff was lamentably unprintable.

I did get in on one little session with him and about a dozen of the crew. That was down in the forecandle where he was entertaining the off-watches by letting them blindfold him and then try to hide a bottle of the tetrant alky we called our "rations." Naturally, he always found it, and naturally he always drank it. It took them most of the sunward trip to wise up to the fact that he was a mutation with his own detecting system already built-in—courtesy of the Manhattan Project and Nakano Kendo's irradiated gametes. The crew lost most of its alky rations that way, and old Bat soaked the stuff up like a sponge.

We passed turn-over point and then the long fall down to Venus began—three weeks of it.

Contact was established with the settlement while we were still above the stratosphere, and our Ultra-wave-radar went into action, the endless scanning that is absolutely essential to the landing of spacecraft through cloud layers.

I don't mind admitting that there was a cold sweat on my brow when I started down through the soup. The reports from UVR indicated plenty of clearance from the mountains, but I was still leery. Some of those peaks are reported to be as high as 200,000 feet. The *Eagle's* gyros were screaming and the muffled thunder of the jets filtered through every plate of her. I'd let her slide a bit and then snatch her up with a blast of the jets. Each time I touched the firing consoles, I could hear the moan of the blasted atomic particles rushing through the venturiis, and I could see the glitter of the cloud moisture that hugged the ports as it absorbed lethal radiations from the tail-flare.

Then the clouds began to thin and I could make out the pattern of the spaceport beneath us through the billowing formaldehyde mists that serve Venus for an atmosphere.

I was a wreck by the time the *Eagle's* fins touched the ground and the dancing fire of the tubes flickered and died. I felt her sag as she sank slightly into the mushy soil, and then I was cutting the power switches and listening to the slowly descending whine of the gyros as they coasted silkily to a halt.

I looked out of the ports at the miasmatic swamp that surrounded us, at the fifty foot ferns in ghastly colors, at the alien, repellent trees that grew pulpy and squat all around the settlement. This was Venus....

---

Venusberg wasn't the great domed city then that it is now. Back in '02 it was just a group of pressurized Quonset huts. There were about sixty men there, mostly maintenance workers and horticulturalists, and five women. Four women were scientists, the fifth Bat Kendo spent his planet-leave with.

The settlers were very cordial with us. I guess we must have been like a breath of the home world to these poor characters who lived there.

I accompanied Captain Reynard on a tour of the cultivated areas and the settlement itself. We were shown how the weather-plant was cultivated and how it gathered nitrogen and water out of the fetid air to deposit it in the soil. We saw how there were always banks of mist over the rows of plants. It gave me quite a shock when I reached down to touch some and the stuff actually shied away from my pressure-suit glove.

"We suspect that the stuff might actually be sentient," the settlement botanist told us.

"You mean the stuff *thinks*?" Captain Reynard demanded.

The botanist laughed. "Oh, no. It's just that when there is a considerable amount of the stuff about it reacts peculiarly. As soon as this ship load of yours gets to Earth, the Foundation staff can really get to work with it and see just what all it can do. We've great hopes for it. It may be the answer to starvation back home."

I looked out over the neat rows of tiny plants that vanished in the misty distance, and I looked too, at the pressing jungle. I began to get a queasy feeling in my stomach. This was alien life. Life that had never been meant for Earth's clean soil. There was no telling what the stuff might do away from here.

"We suspect," the botanist was saying, "that the high formaldehyde content of Venus' atmosphere has an inhibiting effect on the action of the plant. We have isolated small amounts in formaldehyde-free air, and gotten some interesting results. Freed of its native ecology, we believe the stuff can actually create its own weather."

His voice faded away as far as I was concerned. Somewhere in my head a bell was trying to ring. There was something here that was escaping this botanist and Captain Reynard. I couldn't put my finger on it. I had the crazy feeling that

something, like the Purloined Letter, was hidden here. Something obvious, something that could be, under the proper circumstances, dangerous.

But I didn't figure it out. Not just then. Not until it was too late. All the clues were there; the plant and the way it could gather water vapor and nitrogen, the threat of taking it from its native ecology. Everything. But I didn't tumble. Not until it was too late and the obvious had taken a toll. In lives....

On 23/35/02 Venus Date the *Eagle* was fully loaded and ready for the long haul back up to Earth. The colonists gathered to bid us farewell, and the party was a corker. Bat did his human radar act somewhere along about the time the fifteenth libation was poured. He was at his extra-normal best, telling astounded colonists just what they were doing with their pinkies at ranges up to three hundred yards in pitch darkness. I could have told them that he was almost as good as UVR, but that might have spoiled the effect.

Three hours later we had bid an enthusiastic good-bye to that mushy ball of swamp and stench those poor colonials called home, and the valves sighed shut in the *Eagle's* flanks. The loading cranes pulled away and our own were retracted. The ramp was cleared and the lift-ship alarm blared through the *Eagle*.

The gyros reached operating RPM and I let my hands play over the consoles. The boat shuddered and lifted slowly on a tail of fire. I fed her more power and the accelerometer moved up to 2G. I held her there until we broke out of the clouds and into the crystalline cobalt of the ionosphere. I swung the power lever over and the *Eagle* leaped upward, her needle-nose pointed for home.

We were well past turn-over, in fact just about nineteen hours from Earth when things began happening.

Bat called Control, his voice tense with excitement. "Morley! There's something coming ... fast! I can feel it!"

I started to ask him what was coming in fast, and whether or not he could "see" it clearly through the metal of the ship, but I never finished. UVR flashed a red alert warning on my control panel ... and it was the last warning it ever gave.

The panel screeched: "METEOR SWARM!" and went dead. The lights flickered and went out as the *Eagle* bucked and roared in protest. The sound of tearing metal knifed through the hull, and then the whooshing sound of escaping air.

Alarm bells clattered futilely—bulkheads slammed. The ship's self-sealing mesoderm saved most of the air, but not before the pressure in the boat dropped from 14.7 down to 6 lbs. per square inch in about two seconds and doubled me up in an agony of aero-embolism. For a long while there was silence, and I fought the glittering knives of pain that seemed to be cutting me into hamburger. Then the lights came back on, dimly. There was still life in the old *Eagle*.

---

---

I staggered to my feet and rang the tuberoom. A pilot's first instinct is to check the power. No matter what has happened to his ship, if there's power there's hope.

"Morley...!" It was Bat calling back through the interphone. "We've had it down here! The sheathing is gone and I've got three men killed!" I could hear the sound of metal sizzling in the background as Bat looked about for more dope to pass on. As it was it looked bad enough. If the sheathing was shot, that meant that he was taking lethal doses of radiation even as he spoke to me.

"Bat!" I shouted, "Bat, you crazy fool! If that place is hot, get out of there!"

I got no reply.

"Bat! That's an order! Put the pile on automatic and get the hell out!"

"No soap, Morley...." Bat's voice seemed edged with pain. "You know the autos won't last for more than thirty minutes. Strictly ... emergency stuff...." And then his voice grew even tighter. "The storage, Morley! Those stinking ... rocks ... took ... out ... the storage! All the thorium went out ... the side ... they hit ... the storage bunker!"

That tore it. Without thorium ... without even an extra gram ... the best we could hope for was making it to Earth. Luna and its lovely one-sixth gravity for a crash landing was out.

I tried to get Captain Reynard on the phone, but there was no answer from his quarters. I didn't need a diagram to figure out that he was either dead or so tied up with bends that he couldn't reach the phone.

I started the compressors and the pressure began to build up, but the mesoderm

I started the compressors and the pressure began to build up, but the mesoderm patches wouldn't stand more than 9 lbs. Well, it had to do.

The griping pains eased a bit inside me and I tried to take stock of the situation. Station by station, I called the crew and assessed the damage. It was plenty.

The whole communications deck was gone and the only radio on board that worked was the tiny panel set in control. The UVR was mangled and so was its crew of four men. Three tubemen had died in the tuberoom and I didn't know how badly Bat might be hurt. No one could enter because the place was hot. The thorium was gone and the sheathing on the pile too. I looked in on the Captain and scratched him off the list. Death from bends is not a pleasant thing to see. The *Eagle* was my command now. As pilot and Second Officer, I took over, for better or worse.

I returned to Control and gave the crew a quick rundown on the situation. Work parties were made up and the wreckage cleared away. The dead—the ones we could find—were wrapped in celoflex and consigned to space. I mumbled a prayer over them as they slipped out into the void. They weren't all Christians, but somehow I had a feeling that they wouldn't mind too much. There's something about the immensity of the cosmos that makes men relinquish their petty prejudices. And when I got back into Control and watched the tell-tales on the Geiger-Muller Counters down in the tuberoom, I said another prayer—for Bat Kendo.

I kept wondering why we had hit that meteor swarm. The normal chances of such an encounter are in the vicinity of a thousand to one. Bits of memory kept tugging at me, but I couldn't get things properly trimmed up until a call from Bat in the tuberoom furnished the key.

"Morley, there's a piece of those damned rocks down here ... and it's melting!"

Ice! Water! Weather-plant! The pieces of the puzzle began to fit now. The swarm was ice ... superhard ice ... tempered by the awful cold of the void. And the weather-plant in the hold—one hundred tons of it—had attracted it hungrily! The plant had more than just an affinity for water! It acted like a magnet! There had probably been nitrogen dissolved in the water, too, and that had added to the plant's attraction!

A sick feeling moved into the pit of my stomach and stayed right there. There was no way of jettisoning the cargo, and there wasn't enough fuel for a try at

was no way of jettisoning the cargo, and there wasn't enough fuel for a try at airless Luna! That meant....

I could hear the Venusian botanist's words echo mockingly in my ears. "... we suspect it can create its own weather!"

I knew real fear then. I looked at the great greenish globe of Earth that grew hourly larger beneath us, and shuddered....

---

Seventeen hours later we were into the ionosphere. My instruments warned that I had just enough thorium left in the pile to keep the *Eagle* up for another hour and ten minutes. The radar was gone, but the weather-plant was fat and healthy.

I tried to pick up a good spot for the landing. The Mojave Desert. Chances for clear weather were better there than anywhere else, though I could guess even then what our chances were.

The *Eagle* shuddered to a vibrating halt, balancing on her tail-flare at about twenty five miles. The gyros were climbing the sonic scale, sending their shrieking whine through every deck of the crippled ship. I looked outside, and cold sweat beaded my face. Even at this height, a fine mist was forming around the *Eagle*.

Freed of Venus' formaldehyde atmosphere, our tons of weather-plant were happily doing their job. Drawing water vapor out of Earth's air. It liked fog. *And it could make its own weather!*

I looked at the chronometer. I had just one hour now to get this ship down through this soup that clung to us—without UVR. I had one hour to do the job or gravity would do it for me.

I let her slip down to fifteen miles and held there, gyros protesting. The mist thickened. I rang the crash alarm, sending all hands who were not actually engaged in the running of the ship to their quarters and the crash-hammocks. My hands were icy cold.

The *Eagle* sank slowly down to five miles and hung there like a ball bouncing on a jet of water. The mist billowed about us, turning radioactive from the vicious lashing of the tail-flare.

I knew that the weather was perfectly clear perhaps two hundred yards away from the ship, but the weather-plant was creating the soggy weather it liked and I was being effectively blindfolded by the—

Blindfolded!

I grabbed for the interphone. "Bat!" I yelled, "Bat! Can you see anything below?"

Old Bat knew right away what I wanted, but his answer wasn't what I wanted to hear. "Too much metal under me, Morley ... too much metal." His voice was unsteady and seamed with pain.

I glanced at the chronometer. Thirty seven minutes left. And the fog clung to the ports.

"Morley," Bat sounded something like himself for just a minute. "I've got a notion. Maybe ... maybe it will work. Break out a pressure-suit and get the craneman on the ball. And Morley...." Here I could imagine that he was smiling. "... break out a bottle of the skipper's bonded stuff, will you?"

"What are you dreaming up?" I demanded anxiously.

"We have to get this cargo down," Bat said thinly. "You remember what the Foundation man said before we left ... people need food, Morley...."

"What are you thinking about?" I asked again, and then as realization came, I added angrily: "Never mind that! I know what you're planning Bat, and you can forget it! I'll get this can down all right!"

The voice from the interphone was dry as dust. "Like hell you will. Who are you kidding?"

I had no answer there. Without UVR to guide me, I was blind. I didn't have a chance to get the *Eagle* down, and we both knew it.

"I'm coming up," Bat said, "The automatics can take care of things down here now."

I glanced at the chronometer. Twenty-two minutes to go. Bat was right. The autos could carry on in the tuberoom now. I felt them cut into the circuit.

---

My heart was heavy as I called a craneman into control to handle the equipment. Together we unlimbered a pressure-suit from the locker. Then I found the skipper's rations and uncorked a bottle. In a moment Bat was in Control. When I saw him my stomach muscles tightened. He looked as though he'd been broiled. His face was a swollen mass of angry flesh and his clothes were seared into his hide. Every movement must have been sheer hell for him, but he staggered into the suit and made himself fast to the Control crane.

Before calling for the steelglas helmet, he reached thirstily for the skipper's bottle and took a long pull.

"Ahhh," he breathed, "That's fine stuff ... real fine." He offered me the bottle, grinning painfully. "Have one on me, Morley...."

---

I let the fiery liquor drive down the lump that was sticking in my throat and handed Bat the bottle. He finished it in two swallows, looked at it regretfully, and tossed it aside. It landed in the corner of Control where it lay, rocking senselessly back and forth with the jolting movements of the boat.

Bat fastened his helmet on and started for the valve. I wanted to reach out and stop him, but I couldn't. I wanted to say something to him ... but what? How do you thank a man for buying your life with his own? What do you say to pay a man for his pain and his torture?

That's right. You don't say anything. And neither did I. You just stand there and watch, with your heart a lump of lead inside you. I did that, and no more.

He turned toward me just as the inner valve closed on him and the cable he dragged behind him. "See ya," he said with a clumsy wave. And then he was outside in that radioactive mist of death, riding the crane out and down. Hanging by a thin cable in that stinking fog and using his useless mutational powers to save the hides of his ship and shipmates ... *and* the load of weather-plant that meant food to the stay-at-homes.

The mass-ratio altimeter gave its last reading—four miles—and then it was through, its sensitive coils thrown out of phase by the mass of the planetary globe under us. Here, now, was where UVR should have taken over.

But there was no UVR. Only a man hanging at the end of a cable in a glowing mist that was burning his last chance of life out of him.

I heard his instructions clearly over the small panel set. "About three miles up now."

I let the *Eagle* down slowly. Two miles. One. Hold. Three thousand feet. Two. One. Hold. Five hundred feet. Hold. Mojave Desert right under us. Baldy off to the right. Lancaster about twenty miles north. Down easy....

The tail-flare was splashing against the desert beneath now, turning the clinging mist into a ruddy shroud. A glance at the chronometer showed about three minutes fuel.

"Let ... her ... down ... slow." Bat's voice was fading fast as the terrific heat seared him and the radiation burned deep.

The fuel should be gone now. No time left. Two hundred feet, one hundred, fifty, thirty....

I heard Bat's voice sob just once through the radio. "Oh ... dear God...!" And that was all.

No time. No fuel.

Silence!

The thunder of the jets stopped abruptly, leaving a frightening void. The *Eagle* slewed about sickeningly and dropped the remaining thirty feet like so much lead. There was a rending crash as her tail section crumpled, battered plates sinking into the sand, and then she settled wearily to a halt amid the bubbling magma of atomized earth....

---

So the pilot-shipment of weather-plant got here all right, and it exceeded the Holcomb Foundation's fondest hopes. It brought fertility where there had been only barrenness. Long rows of it still bring richness and life to the soil and the danger of famine is gone forever.

Just remember now, the next time you take the Pacific stratojet. Look under you at that garden of plenty. See the rows upon rows of richly bearing plants. Look

at that garden of plenty. See the rows upon rows of heavy bearing plants. Look too at the interstices where a tiny Venusian moss called "weather-plant" makes it all possible.

Bat Kendo? He died. He died doing what he wanted to do, and that's something. The others maybe weren't so lucky. Of course you never heard of Bat, or of the *Eagle* for that matter. All this happened a long, long time ago, and the old memories tarnish. Now people take their lives pretty much as they find it, and they never wonder about the guys who made it what it is.

Yes, humans are a strange breed. Like I say ... forgetful. Very forgetful.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FLIGHT OF THE EAGLE \*\*\*

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away--you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at [www.gutenberg.org/license](http://www.gutenberg.org/license).

## Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations

concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed,

marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ web site (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org).

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation  
The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the

Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's web site and official page at [www.gutenberg.org/contact](http://www.gutenberg.org/contact)

#### Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit [www.gutenberg.org/donate](http://www.gutenberg.org/donate).

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg Web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: [www.gutenberg.org/donate](http://www.gutenberg.org/donate)

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works  
Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a

copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our Web site which has the main PG search facility:

[www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org).

This Web site includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.