

Walter Hain

Project Mars

2050

**They start to the greatest journey
in the history of mankind
and they find the incredible**

A science fiction story

**German version
included**

BoD

PROJECT MARS 2050

A science fiction story by WALTER HAIN

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JERUSALEM - 30 AD

The city which lies at the feet of the two Romans is filled with movement; nevertheless it seems as if deadly silent. The people in the streets hardly speak to each other; many walk about with lowered faces, as if they feel personally responsible for what has happened. A light breeze is blowing, and the clouds hang heavily over the city. In some intangible way, the atmosphere is spooky and threatening.

"Today will be the day," says the Roman. "Today they will crucify him." "Who?" asked the other one who stood next to him. "You know, the Nazarene," replied the Roman. "Oh yes, since he arrived, strange things have happened. Many think he's the Messiah." "If he really is, he could have prevented all this," the Roman ventured. "I don't know, maybe he planned it all this way," replied the other one. "Come on, let's go up to the Mount of Judgement!"

The three crosses lay ready on the slope of the hill. In the middle, the cross of the Nazarene, to its left and right those of the fellow condemned. The last hammer blows echo across the roofs of the nearby houses. Then the crosses are tilted upright and anchored in the ground. The two

condemned writhed in agony while the Nazarene did not utter a sound. He just silently looked at the two women who, in tears, stood below him. One of the condemned braced himself and addressed the Nazarene: "I know that you are someone special. If I could, I would go with you." The Nazarene lifted his head lightly, slowly moved his lips and spoke: "Even this day, you will be with me." The blood ran across his forehead, and from the wounds on his hands and feet. A woman screamed from the surrounding crowd: "What have they done!"

The bodies of the two condemned collapsed into themselves, and their weight cut deep wounds into the flesh. Blood streamed from the cuts. The Nazarene slowly moved his head and turned his gaze upwards. There, in the sky, a small star was glowing, even though it is only afternoon, and still relatively light. With his last remaining energy, he called out: "Father, you wanted it this way!" Then his body, too, sank into the nails on the cross.

The wind rose to a storm and became ever stronger. The people standing around had trouble standing their ground. The clouds were gathering threateningly, and it became darker and darker. In the middle of the clouds, the star continued to glow. It even seemed to have grown in size. "It is a sign!" someone in the crowd screamed. "It is him!" "Look!" called someone else. "The star!"

The star seemed to be getting closer and closer. It kept getting larger and brighter. It scintillated in all the colours of the rainbow, and rotated like a child's top. Something is there, inside it, but the brilliant glow is already blinding the bystanders. One is calling out: "It is a miracle!" while protecting his eyes with his hand. "Yes, it's a miracle," exclaimed another, and, blinded, turned aside. The light

grew until it was almost unbearable, and then quickly faded until it finally vanished. The storm subsided, and a brooding silence settled on the scene. The bystanders kneeled and prayed.

2020 YEARS LATER IN A SMALL TOWN IN THE UNITED STATES

“Wake up, Mr. Parker! Wake up, Mr. Parker! Wake up, Mr. Parker!” A soft female voice is coming from the video-alarm. Parker pressed a button. “Good morning. Thank you for getting up!” the voice continued, and the small screen lit up. Parker switched on the video wall. “Here is the World News,” a speaker announced. “Tensions in the Persian Gulf have escalated further. The United Nations have assembled in an emergency session. A trade boycott is being considered.” Parker stretched, ran his hand through his hair and sat on the edge of the bed. The speaker continued: “The whole world is breathlessly waiting for the launch of the two Mars space ships. The greatest trip ever risked by man commences today. Magellan and Columbus would be amazed if they could witness this event. We have just been informed that the astronauts are already on their way to the control stations. We will be back with more shortly.” A commercial followed. Parker yawned and switched off the flat screen. He went into the kitchen, where Sue Ann, his wife, was already working at the microwaves. George, their young son, is sitting at the table.

“Good morning!” Parker offered. “Good morning!” replied the other two. “Well, George, did you do your homework? You know that today is a big day. Your finals,” he says to his ten-year old son, and stroked his hair. George, bored,

replied: "I know, but that goes for you, too." "How right you are," said Parker, and kissed Sue Ann on the forehead. Parker sat down at the table, and Sue Ann followed him with the English tea to which he has become accustomed since his marriage to the English girl. They all eat in silence.

After a while, Parker glanced over his shoulder into the lounge room. There, on the book shelf, lay an old copy of a German book and some American books which he has often skimmed. He opened a book and looked at a picture in the book. "I don't know, I don't believe that this thing up there is an artefact," he says to Sue Ann. "But even our scientists have examined those Mars shots and came to the same conclusions. That face-shaped mountain in particular looks quite fantastic," says Sue Ann. "In that case, the evolution of man would have proceeded quite differently to the way we have always assumed," replied Parker. "That's what you lot are supposed to find out now," Sue Ann says almost teasingly, and moved over to caress Parker. "Despite the great importance of your mission, I hate to let you go, John," she sighed. "It will be OK!" Parker replied consolingly. "I'll be back for sure. George will look after you while I'm gone," he says with a glance at his son. "He's a dear boy."

"Are you taking Lucy with you?" George asked. "No, I can't," Parker replied. "We are not allowed to take animals with us." "But such a tiny monkey hardly needs any room," George pleaded, "and besides, Lucy wants to be famous one day, too." "Sorry, it's out of the question," Parker says sternly, and looked at his watch. "Gosh, it's time! I have to get to the control centre; please get my things ready, Sue Ann." Parker went into the bedroom and got dressed. Several minutes later, he returned. Sue Ann and George were already standing there, in readiness. They knew what they were in for. It would be goodbye for a whole fifteen

months, or maybe more – who could say with certainty? “Look after yourself, John,” Sue Ann says with moist eyes. “And you two! See you,” Parker replied, and hugged the two firmly. Outside, the taxi is already waiting to take him to the control station. Parker kissed his wife and his son one more time and left, carrying his luggage. He climbed into the taxi and drove off. Sue Ann and George waved.

Twenty years have passed since the leading heads and scientists of some states on Earth decided to build the two Mars space ships. Numerous cargo rockets and shuttles carried the components into Earth orbit. There, they have been assembled into the most gigantic space ships ever constructed by mankind.

One of the two ships, the Tsiolkovski, is a mighty ship built under Russian supervision in cooperation with Chinese scientists. The experiences gained with the Russian and American space stations proved invaluable. The crew, under Commander Andreij Malinov, consisted further of the Afghan Koulaghi, the Frenchman Julien Piccard und Malinov’s wife Svetlana. The Afghan is an experienced doctor, and has successfully looked after the Russian cosmonauts for years. The Frenchman is rather an adventurer, pilot in the French air force and an outstanding mountain climber. He has already conquered two twenty-five thousand footers, solo. Svetlana Malinov would be responsible for navigation and, in an emergency, could also take over the controls. But all have been trained in multiple skills, and could take over one or other function of the other crew members.

John Parker would be the Commander of the other space ship, the Lowell; a space ship which is in every way the equal of the Tsiolkovski. Both space ships are in fact very similar in construction, so that in an emergency each could