

WEIRD ADVENTURES ON OTHER WORLDS—THE UNIVERSE OF THE FUTURE



# PLANET COMICS

JULY  
NO. 31  
10c

**GALE ALLEN**  
BATTLES SPACE TERROR IN  
**'FIRE-PRIESTS  
of ORBIT X'**  
**MARS, God of War  
THE LOST WORLD..**



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FOR THE  
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A  
FICTION  
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MAGAZINE

NEXT ISSUE OF PLANET COMICS (No. 32, SEPT.) ON SALE AT YOUR NEWSSTAND JULY 10th



# First Earthman On Mars...

by MONTAGUE  
TRUEX  
Ph.D.



**D**OCTOR Sven Jorgennson sent the message to the world in June, 1943. He spread the rocket fuel over a great area of reddish sand, spreading it thinly, for he could not have had much left after his flight through the trackless void, and then set it aflame by using a long fuse.

He set it just as he had promised he would on that dreary morning in March of Nineteen Hundred and Forty-three. He stood near the escarpment, dwarfed by the sleek cylinder at his back, and it in turn made small and insignificant by the mountain. He had made no speech, for only three men were before him, three men who perhaps held the destiny of the Solar System in their hands. He stood, and waved his gloved hand, then slipped into the round port at his back.

The block of super-steel and insulation swung silently to on hidden hinges, thudded gently into place. Then the rocket ship was just an inanimate length of glistening metal, and the three men were all alone on the rocky plateau.

They ran from the ship, sprang

into the entrance of the cave which had been their secret home for more than two years. Safe, they turned and stared with the awed gaze of men who are seeing a miracle coming to completion.

There were no windows in the ship; and the vision slits were but tiny black scars near the bow. Others were in the metal skin, but closed now because of the flaming energy which soon would sear the man-made ship of destiny. There was no sound, other than the eerie call of a prowling wolf far away, and the cool wind bit deep into sweet skins.

They could see the ship limned in the moonlight, could see the tiny planes of wings that would help guide its flight in the air of Earth, and they marvelled again at the direct simplicity of the streamlining that made the side rocket tubes and the rear tubes fit so perfectly without visible joints.

Redness came to the rear of the ship, came and splashed against the base of the mountain in a fountain of flame. Doctor

Jorgennson was warming the tubes.

And almost before the minute was past, hell boiled from the tapered stern of the rocket ship. It roared in a hell of deadly energy and the echoes boomed and raced through craggy mountains. The watchers cringed from the raving torrent of power, covering their eyes against the blinding light.

And when they looked again, the ship was gone.

It was gone from the slanting cradle that had been its bed for many months. It had fled on that roar of light and blasting flame, and now it rode the heavens high above. It was but a tiny streak of fire, darting through the air, going higher than man had ever gone, drilling its way toward the star-filled firmament above. It was gone, as it had planned to go, and only the three who had been its creators were left to carry their story to the world.

It was completely gone, even its trail sucked out of sight in the blackness of the night, and behind it the men began their weary journey back to the caves





of a war-torn world, to people whose thoughts were with themselves and not with the pioneer who was the first to fly from Earth in a rocket ship.

Doctor Sven Jorgennson was gone, fleeing ever faster from the whirling blue planet that had given him birth. He was riding the fulfillment of a dream born long before in his imagination.

We do not know what actually happened out in space or on Mars, the bloody planet. But we do know what was expected, and we can perhaps paint a word picture of what took place.

Doctor Jorgennson came to, peered blearily about the steel cabin that was to be his home for weeks. He was sick with an illness such as he had never felt before, and the fumes of the drug he had taken still swam through his brain.

He lay on the pneumatic cushion of his bunk, and slowly unfastened the straps which had held him tightly during the take-off. By rendering himself unconscious and placing himself in a spring-supported mattress of

air, he had mitigated the pain and shock that would necessarily come from the rocking blast of hurtling seven miles per second to escape the gravity of Earth.

He sat and swung his feet over the edge of the bunk, and gasped in dismay. He had forgotten that gravity no longer gave a floor and ceiling to his ship—he was floating grotesquely through the air.

Then he laughed, and caught at one of the hand lines he had strung in all directions hours before. He drew himself erect, and found that he was upside down in relation to the instrument panel. Pulling with his hands, he turned himself about in mid-air, until the control board was right side up in relation to his body.

Pulling himself to the floor, he examined the instruments, nodded gleefully when he saw that all were working as he had expected. Turning, he pulled himself to the vision slit, adjusted the retractable telescope so that he could peer backward at Earth.

And as he looked, awe came to him. He was the first of all

men to travel in space. Behind him, swimming in the blackness of the cold void, was blue Earth, the continents still distinct.

He was ill then, cramped with vertigo brought on by his weightlessness. Minutes later, he pulled himself from his bunk, feeling better.

He checked his instruments, making certain that the hum of driving rockets would continue, then made a brief circuit of the ship, making certain that the initial velocity had injured nothing. Satisfied, he came back to the main cabin, took food from the locker.

Lifting a can of water, he punctured the lid, then tried to pour a glassful. Nothing happened. Frowning, he shook the can, gaped, as a splash of water came out, forming instantly into a ball of crystal clearness that floated unsuspended in the air. He smiled, watching it float, then reached out and touched it. Surface tension broke, and the water literally flowed over his hand and up his wrist.

He wiped the water away, then drank by sucking liquid



through one of the holes in the can. He ate then, amusing himself by leaving the food lying in the air until he was ready for it. Later, he was ill, his body still unused to the lack of gravity.

And so the days passed, interminably, his only duties the watching of the instruments, and the recording of his journal. The rockets drummed steadily, comfortably, and his thoughts were his only companions.

The dead moon of Earth was far behind, when he shed the outer shell of the rocket ship. Built in layers of metal and insulation, with the precious rocket fuel in between, each outer shell was discarded as its inner coating of fuel was exhausted.

He blew the outer shell apart along its invisible seams with a timed burst of specially-placed rocket bombs, then watched the pieces whirl about the ship for hours, drawn to it by certain gravitic stress. Later, the quarter-shells gradually fled back behind, and the rocket ship flashed on to its meeting with the red planet.

The days were monotonous, and he kept count of them only for his journal. Outside was only the eternal night of utter space, relieved by the unflickering white dots of stars billions of light years away. Inside, except when he slept, the lights glared endlessly.

He wrote many things in those passing days, thoughts and hopes and actual conditions. His journal would be a living monument to the others who would come later.

His ship shed another shell, and another, and then he was coasting on impetus alone, his rockets silent for the first time in days. He almost went insane then, for he had only his thoughts, and the droning roar of the rockets had ceased their friendly throbbing. But he was as steel-like as his ship, and he forced himself to do calisthenics and games and puzzles to occupy his time and mind.

He had a radio, but it did not work. There was only static, created by solar rays. After a time,

he gave it no more heed.

He saw the red planet growing larger and larger in his telescope, and excitement began to race his blood again, for he was seeing details more closely than had any human. He made countless pictures and drawings, marveling over each new phase shown him, his heart beginning to ache with his longing to feel rich earth beneath his shoes again.

And then he was almost at the last stage of his journey. He reversed his rocket end for end with judicious use of the side rockets, placing it so that the stern rockets could be used to brake his fall.

He could sense the pull of gravitation for the first time in days, and the effect made him as ill as the first weightlessness had. And so the hours and days drifted by endlessly, and he came full into the gravitation of Mars.

The ship plunged like a meteor at the red planet, and he fixed salvoes of rocket blasts to halt the free fall. In speed, the ship came to a comparative standstill, then drifted into the atmosphere of Mars.

He could feel the friction of the air on the hull of the ship, and his hands were gentle and they caressed the firing studs on the panel before him. He held his eyes to the telescopic sights, fired the rockets in a continual blast, panic building in his mind as the ship hurtled toward the ground below.

One last flare of rockets that stalled the ship a hundred feet over the sandy ground, and then it crashed, never to fly again.

Yes, that was the plan. It was to be a one way trip for Doctor Jorgennson. Conditions made it impossible for the ship ever to return under its own power.

And so the ship crashed, and Jorgennson was bounced about like a bug in a cup. He was uninjured, though, and he made his tests of the air outside.

The air would maintain life, and so he stepped outside, carrying weapons now, just in the event that he met hostile beasts.

But he met no beasts. He stood on the gritty red sand of a great

plain, and a few hundred yards away was the edge of rich green vegetation. He stared at the sky, and he gave his thanks, then turned and stared at the creatures which came running over the sands.

They were manlike in build, but they weren't men. To Jorgennson they weren't even human. For a moment, he lifted his gun. Then he lowered it, and stood waiting.

"Hello!" he called.

And at the sound of his voice, the creatures went prostrate before him. He had come from the sky, had come from the blackness of space in a great glittering egg. He was a God, and was to be worshiped.

And so Doctor Sven Jorgennson had finished his flight. He was on Mars, and the world was his to explore. He had found intelligent beings, and they would make it possible for him to live. He had done what no other man had ever done—he had spanned space between two worlds.

Thus it was that a few days later, Doctor Jorgennson had the Martians take the last of the rocket fuel and scatter it over the greatest area possible. Thus it was that astronomers here on Earth saw the liquid flare of flame on the red planet and reported it as a phenomenon. So it is that three men know the true story of how the glistening space ship was built and a smiling blond Swedish scientist traveled to Mars.

Some day that story will be given to the world in every detail. Some day when Democracy has wiped out the intolerance and hate of this world, then other worlds will be explored. And when that day comes, when that pioneer rocket ship spans the star trails to Mars, maybe you can be the first to step from the ship and greet the white man who rushes to greet you. Maybe you can be another Stanley to another Livingston. Maybe you can say:

"Doctor Jorgennson, I presume!"

Maybe.



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