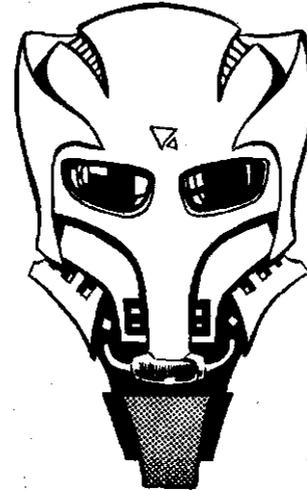


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# ***PLANETS IN PERIL***

**Christopher Black**

*Illustrations by Maelo Cintron*



**A YEARLING BOOK**

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## RED ALERT!

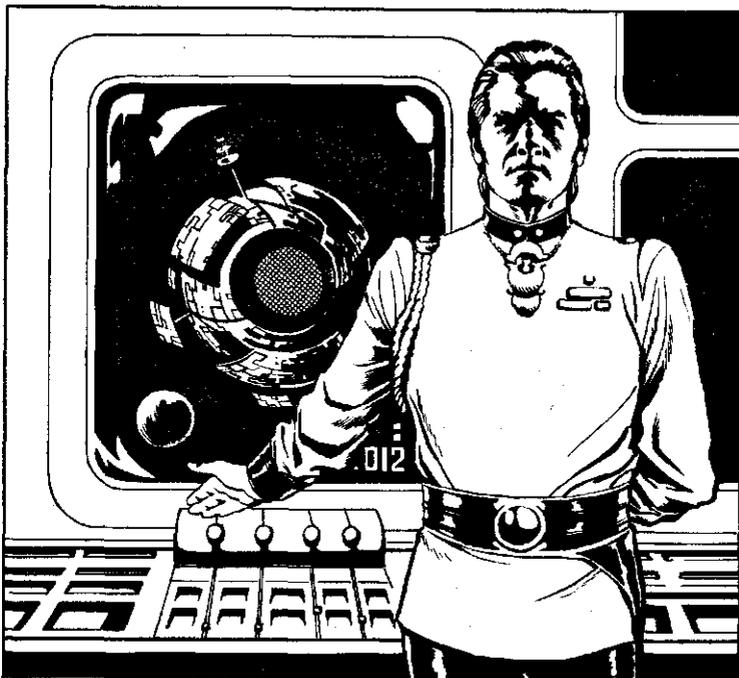
You must *not* read this STAR CHALLENGE™ ADVENTURE in the ordinary human way.

If you read the pages in order, the story will not compute. Instead, follow the directions on the bottom of each page. Everything will depend on the choices you make—each choice can lead you to a different STAR CHALLENGE™ adventure.

To help you along the way, you have a Task/Operational Robot, Model 2. (Call him 2-Tor.) He can do amazing things—from warping you through space faster than the speed of light to talking with you through your mind.

Each time you and 2-Tor complete a mission, warp to page 115 to find out how you rate as a Space Ace!

To begin your adventure, GO TO PAGE 1.



## WELCOME ABOARD!

The year is 2525 A.D., an age when mankind is moving out among the stars.

You've just come aboard the space station *Nebula*, home of the peacekeeping and investigation branch of the NETWORK OF WORLDS. From this man-made satellite you, as a *Nebula* operative, will go out into the galaxy, taking care of trouble.

The *Nebula's* teleportation system can send you anywhere in the galaxy, instantly. Or you can pilot your own shuttle spacecraft, the *Challenger*. If you need help at any time, feel free to send to the *Nebula* for reinforcements.

Remember, the success or failure of your mission (not to mention your own survival) will depend on *your* choices. Successful *Nebula* operatives are people who can make quick, thoughtful decisions.

Hurry! CAPTAIN POLARIS needs you!  
GO TO PAGE 2.

You enter the nerve center of the *Nebula* and go up to the floating command chair, expecting to see Captain Polaris. But the chair is empty.

"Come over here!" the captain orders. He is standing by one of the thousands of vidscreens in the room. On the screen is a large space station against a background of stars. "Recognize it?" Polaris asks.

"The Cosmos Industrial Station," you say.

"We have intelligence that Cosmos Station will be attacked by the battle cruiser *Darkstar*. Maybe you know of the cruiser's commander, Cypor Scarp," Polaris says. "Ever since Scarp and his gang of galactic misfits emerged from the Thonex star cluster, they've destroyed seven worlds."

"Why attack Cosmos?" you ask.

"The station is developing a new person, the Graviton."

You turn to 2-Tor. "Information."

2-Tor's silvery voice recites, "Research files classified—Security Level Q-38 clearance." A click, then it goes on. "Graviton increases planetary masses dramatically. Tests show a 98.3% chance that it will turn planets into black holes. Tough stuff, boss."

"A world-killing weapon!" you gasp.

"Your job is to keep it out of Scarp's hands!" Polaris says.

*Head for the Teleportation Room on page 3.*

You and 2-Tor rush to the Teleportation Room, where you get ready to beam out on priority clearance. Suddenly a vidscreen comes to life, and Captain Polaris's face appears.

"Our deep-space communications net has picked up a message. Mindor-6, the nearest planet to Cosmos, has been overrun. We have no other information."

"Maybe it's Scarp, setting up an advance base to attack Cosmos," you say. "I wonder if we should check it out"



*Do you wish to warp directly to Cosmos? If so, turn to page 78.*

*Would you rather take your shuttlecraft, the Challenger and head for Mindor-6? If so, turn to page 56.*

4

"Only fools would choose to have their heads squeezed flatter than a Raxian panworm," says 2-Tor.

"I'll talk," you shout. "Just let us out" The wall before you slides up with a clang. You find yourself staring at the shining, scaly face of the fiendish Slee from Zard. Slee looks at your uniform, a smile slowly forming on his crooked, bony lips.

"All right, *Nebula* spy," he says. "Where is the data chip with your orders?"



Go to page 5.

5

You hold out a data chip in the palm of your hand, "Here it is." you say. "You'll find it quite detailed."

But as Slee is about to snatch it from your hand, you let it drop to the floor. He bends down to pick the chip up and you give him a chop across the back of his neck.

The tyrant drops, stunned, to the floor of the cell. Before he comes to, you and 2-Tor locate the cell controls. You slam the door shut, trapping Slee inside. "Signal *Nebula* that Slee from Zard has been captured," you say. "Mindor-6 is free."



*You have completed your mission.  
Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*

Is the man really a criminal? Undecided, you watch as the cyborg knocks the man cold with a single burst from his blaster.

"It's good you didn't interfere," says the cyborg. "I might have had to shoot you too."

"We wouldn't have liked that," says 2-Tor.

"Nor would my boss," says the cyborg. He pointed the blaster at you. "You two will make fine workers in the kronium pits of Mindor. From now on you're the slaves of Slee from Zard."

"Slaves?" you say.

"Kronium pits?" says 2-Tor.

"Move!" says the cyborg.

**ZAP!**



"You must take the Graviton," the alien mumbles. "Just be careful to take the right hatch. The wrong hatch will lead to ..."

You shake the alien, but it's unconscious. You look at the two round hatches set in the wall. One is marked with the symbols meaning "exit" in Galactic Interlanguage.

The other hatch carries a strange symbol. You look at 2-Tor. He rotates his head. No answer.

*If you choose to escape through the hatch marked "Exit," turn to page 95.*

*If, however, you wish to go through the strangely marked door, turn to page 35.*

2-Tor channels full power to your micro-pulser. You aim and fire at the center of the panel. In a millisecond it heats white-hot, then explodes.

The three of you step into the smoking room. You find that the blast has knocked out the cyborgs inside and shattered the teleporter controls.

"This station will be out of commission for a long time," says 2-Tor. "Slee from Zard is in for a big surprise."

So are you. The blast brings more Zardian cyborgs. They surround the building and fire a barrage of energy-bolts at you. Your shields flare as the heavy fire begins to overwhelm them.

"You've got to do something!" Calix yells.

"Just wait" You look at the sky. Starfighters swoop down, blasting the cyborgs.

"A *Nebula* Attack Team. When they finish with the troops, they'll take Slee into custody." You laugh. "I bet he didn't count on that when he made his plans."

2-Tor's yellow lights flash. "What he didn't count on was meeting you, boss."

*You have completed your mission.  
Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*

You step through the charred entrance and into a dark, windowless room. The place looks empty.

"Everybody's gone," says Bishra.

The room suddenly fills with blinding light.

"Everybody's gone but us slave-catchers," someone cackles. "Slee will pay us a pretty googol for such a fine bunch."

"What's going on?" you ask desperately.

"They're going to sell us as slaves," Bishra says. "I'm afraid we're heading for the mines."

"But I'm a *Nebula* operative," you say. "I'm no miner."

"Don't worry," laughs the slave-catcher. "You won't be a miner for long—no one survives more than a week."

**ZAP!**

# 10

You roll the *Challenger* 180 degrees and drop down under the massive *Darkstar*.

"Let's aim for the nose of the ship," you say. "A negatron missile will knock out the maneuvering thrusters."

2-Tor beeps. "Okay, boss," he says. "But first we'd better knock off that defense fighter they just launched. She's coming our way at near light-speed."

# 11

You raise your arm, ready to squeeze off a pulse from your micro-pulser. But before the thought can travel from your brain, your pulser shatters into a million pieces.

"Fight fair," says the woman. "No pulsers are permitted. If you want to reach Andron-Poc, you'll first have to defeat me. Choose your weapon: laser sword or energy-net?"

You look about but don't see either the sword or the net.

"I said choose!" she commands.



*If you choose the net, turn to page 96.*

*If you pick the sword, turn to page 34.*

*Go to page 24.*

You pick up the Cube in your claws and wing back through the energy field. 2-Tor doesn't recognize you in your new shape, but luckily, he sees the Cube. That gives the robot a hint that you and the winged creature are connected. Then he makes a detailed scan of his language banks till he turns up one you both can speak.

Together you race out of the Forbidden City. The waiting mutants are overjoyed. They take the Cube and use its knowledge to turn you back to your former self. "We're grateful to you for the Crystal Cube," they say.

"And I'm grateful for the knowledge in the Cube." Even as you speak, your wings wither away to be replaced by your familiar arms.

In a brief ceremony the mutants make you and 2-Tor heroes of their new republic.

2-Tor manages a subspace link with *Nebula* control. You're heroes there, too.

"Thought we'd lost you!" Captain Polaris says. "I sent you some backup. They saved the Graviton, but couldn't find any trace of you. Sit tight We're organizing the rescue party right now."

*You have completed your mission.  
Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*

A week passes. Nearly one hundred troops assemble in the programming compound to try out their new battle suits. As soon as the suits are on, you give them the signal to attack. They turn on the surprised guards, overpowering them.

Then you send your controlled cyborgs outside the compound. They march forward to destroy Slee's battle suit factory. The Zardian defense forces run.

When that battle is over, you contact the *Nebula* for reinforcements. Meanwhile your troops are busy deploying the orbital defense control bases.

By the time *Nebula* Attack Teams arrive Zard is defenseless. And Slee is a prisoner in his palace. All it cost you was four sleepless days and nights, controlling your cyborgs.

You look forward to a rest, but Captain Polaris has other ideas. "We want you back on duty as soon as possible," he says.

"I guess we won't be getting much of a break," you say to 2-Tor.

He gives a happy whistle. "I wonder what kind of adventure Polaris has waiting for us next, boss."

*You have completed your mission.  
Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*

# 14

The only thing you want to do on Zard is destroy Slee's factory. Unfortunately that's not a job currently being offered. "We'll choose the chip room, whatever that is," you say.

The cyborg guard leads you into a small room. He points a strange-looking gun at you.

"We're making micro-microchips here," he says. "So we need micro workers. Prepare to be shrunk!"

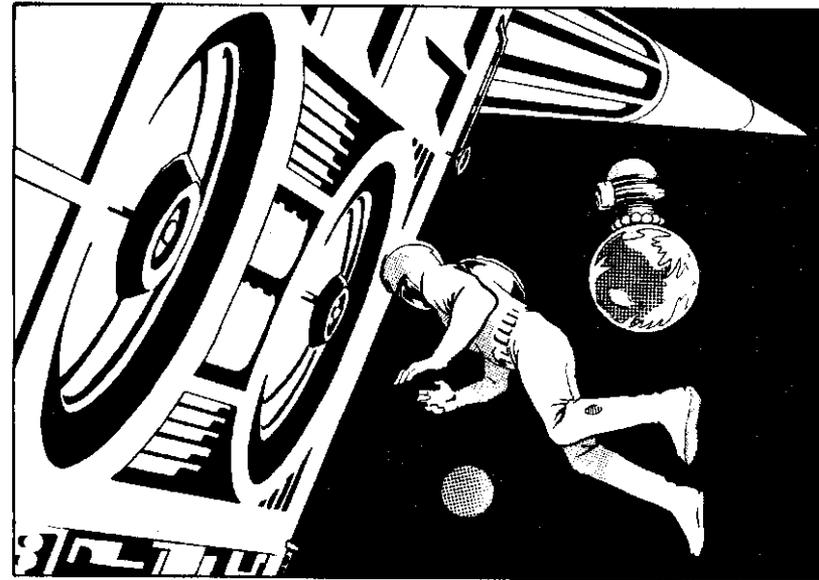
Before you can say a word, the cyborg sprays you and 2-Tor with the gun. You begin to shrink away like a balloon with a slow leak.

# 15

You float silently through the airlock. Ahead is a hatch, which you open. You step into a room with a high silver dome. It's bare except for a single control bank in the center of the room.

You turn to 2-Tor. "We got in slick as a Vegan prat-beast," you whisper.

Then you hear a booming voice. "Kneel down, *Nebula* slime. Prepare to meet the great and mighty Cypor Scarp."



Go to page 37.

Go to page 18.

## 16

With *Darkstar's* commander in your sights, all you can think of is trying to finish him off. You zero in on the battle cruiser's bridge. "Fire one!" A round of negatron missiles flashes at the battle cruiser.

But Scarp is not meekly sitting by. He's firing, too. His huge quark cannons are locked on your little ship.

2-Tor's lights flash red. "There's no way we can slip through this kind of firepower!" The ship's energy shields flare.

Your assault is doomed to failure. And you are just plain doomed.

**ZAP!**

## 17

"I don't like the idea of giving up," you tell 2-Tor. "But in this case it could work to our advantage."

2-Tor whistles. "I hope you're right, boss."

You send out a white surrender flare and cut your engines.

Before long the ugly face of Slee from Zard fills your screen.

"I'm warping in to take over your ship," he says. "And I'm bringing a squad of cyborg guards with me. They're heavily armed. So no tricks."

"Everything is going our way," you say.

"It is?" 2-Tor squeals.

A panel at the rear of the room slides open. Cypor Scarp walks in. He's hardly the frightening creature you were expecting. In fact, he's only three feet tall. The only upsetting thing about him is his head. It's egg-shaped, and half of it is nothing but scar tissue. Somewhere in his career he met an unfriendly laser beam.

"I'll take the Graviton now," he says. "Bring it to me."

You grip the Graviton tightly. Suddenly you're taught that size isn't everything. A beam of purple light, nearly ultraviolet, flashes from Scarp's eye. The light somehow snatches the Graviton right into Scarp's arms.

"Mice trick, eh?" Scarp removes the patch from his other eyes. "Now feel the wrath of my eyes displacer."

You remember the nearby control bank.

*If you decide to dive behind the controls,  
turn to page 61.*

*If, instead, you want to team up with 2-Tor  
and jump Scarp,  
turn to page 71.*



The woman introduces herself as Bishra. She guides you through the ruins of the capital until you come to a low domed building with a blasted door.

"That's strange," says Bishra. "The door wasn't burned when I left here earlier."

"Maybe we'd better not go in." 2-Tor clicks and buzzes wildly. "There's a high probability it's a trap."

But my friends in there may need me," Bishra says.

You grab one of 2-Tor's claws and lead him into the black, leafless forest.

You look around. A sense of evil fills the landscape. Even the air tastes odd—like metal. You touch a tree; It crumbles into dark gray ash. "Charred in a nuclear firestorm," 2-Tor says.

"Tor, let's get out of here." You must jump to regain your balance as the ground shifts under your feet. "Warp us home."

Your robot friend clicks and buzzes for a few moments. "Sorry, boss, I have no idea where you are. This planet isn't in my sector circuits."

You stare at the ruined countryside. "How can we ever survive in a place like this?"

You can't. Moments later the charred earth opens up. Screaming, you fall into the jaws of an underground monster. It had been waiting for someone to drop by. Unhappily, you and 2-Tor obliged.

**ZAP!**

*If you decide to go in, turn to page 9.*

*If you wait outside while Bishra goes in alone,  
turn to page 84.*

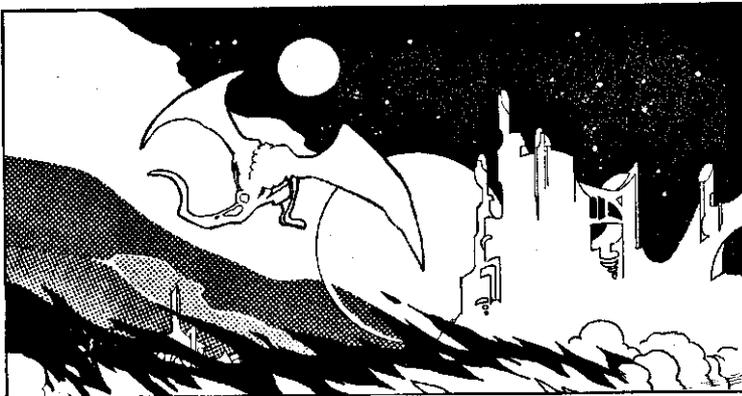
"No time for the Cube now," you say. "That thing has given me enough trouble."

A flap of wings brings you into the air, and through the hole in the flames. 2-Tor stands beyond.

"Tor, it's me," you try to say. But the robot doesn't understand your mutant screeches. Right now, he doesn't even want to learn. He's too busy wondering what happened to his friend inside the wall of fire.

After hours of circling 2-Tor, you give up hope. You take a sad backward look at 2-Tor, then you flap away. You must find a new home, somewhere in the outlands of the mutant planet.

ZAP!



"I can only hold the energy field for a moment, then I'll have to recharge," 2-Tor says. A blue ray flashes from him and strikes the wall of fire. The ray blazes a tunnel through the flames.

You take a deep breath and dash through the inferno. When you get to the other side, you see a shining pillar. Sitting atop the column is a brick-sized hunk of crystal. "The Crystal Cube of Knowledge!" you whisper.

Before you can seize the crystal, something moves. A small, glowing, slick-winged creature swoops down darting a stinger into your exposed hand. Instantly, the hand goes numb.

"Tor!" you shout. "Help me! What do I do now? How will I find a cure?"

You wait for a reply. None comes. The firestorm has totally cut communications.

*If you wait for the field to reopen communications with 2-Tor, turn to page 54.*

*If, however, you decide to take a chance on yanking out the stinger, turn to page 69.*

"Fine," you say. "The faster she's coming in, the better."

You jam your engines into reverse. In less than a second the enemy craft passes over you. It couldn't even get off a shot.

"Fire!" Your negatron missile catches the enemy fighter from behind. A bright flash, then it's gone.

Now you attack the *Darkstar* itself. Your shots knock out the battle cruiser's maneuvering jets. *Darkstar* is helpless to defend herself.

In moments a surrender flare shoots from the bridge of the ship. Your skill and bravery has defeated Scarp's dreams of conquest.

You smile at 2-Tor. Yellow lights flicker on the robot "Good work, boss. What next?"



*You have completed your mission.  
Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*

"By the asteroids of Katar ...!" you exclaim. Then you freeze. A mysterious force has invaded your mind. Sight, hearing, touch disappear as the force moves along your brain paths. Even your memories are invaded and probed.

At last the voice speaks again. "You may pass and claim the Crystal Cube. I know you will use it wisely."

You leave the city with the Crystal Cube. The mutant citizens greet you as a hero. "Stay and help us rebuild our world!" they beg.

All this flatters you, but you refuse. You and 2-Tor must return to the *Nebula*. First and foremost, you're *Nebula* operatives. Your destinies lie with the stars.

*You have completed your mission.  
Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*

"I think the squares with the vertical stripes are solid," you say.

"I'll take your word for it, boss." 2-Tor gives two clicks and a buzz. "I just hope you have a good memory."

Fortunately you do. The squares hold. You hop to safety on the far side of the checkerboard.

Later you channel the rest of 2-Tor's energy into his transmitter and send a message to the *Nebula*. "I'll tell them our coordinates. Then they can come and rescue us," says 2-Tor.

"Let's not forget to tell them about Mindor-6. That way, we can defeat Slee's plans too," you add.

Captain Polaris himself gets on the communications link. "We'll take care of Slee," he says.

"Good," you say. "Just don't forget to take care of us too."

"Don't worry about that," says Polaris. "We'd never leave top aces like you and 2-Tor stranded. See you soon."

"Very soon, I hope," you say. "I'm ready to get home."

*You have completed your mission.  
Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*

You ready your suit's thrusters and make the leap through the firestorm. The next to last thing you hear is 2-Tor's voice. "Too thick, boss!" he says.

The last thing you hear is this sound: SIZZLE!

**ZAP!**

You knock on the panel. Before long one of the square-headed cyborgs opens it up.

"Slee sent us," you say in your most official-sounding voice. "We're here to inspect the teleporter."

"Slee from Zard?" says the cyborg.

"That's right, crater brain, Slee from Zard," you say. "Out of our way."

You enter the room. Then you realize that *you* are the dummy. Inside sits a scaly, green-faced creature—Slee from Zard.

"Seize them, master!" Calix Dune cries. "They're *Nebula* spies."

"Oh, no!" says 2-Tor. His red lights are going full-blast.

Two cyborgs seize you by the arms. "Throw those two in with the kronium," says Slee. "We'll warp them to Zard. They'll help us build the battle suits."

Go to page 102.

You and 2-Tor learn quickly. Soon you're assembling tiny circuit boards all by yourselves. But all the circuits you work on don't go to Slee's battle suits.

2-Tor once worked in the Quantum Maximizer Plant on the *Nebula*. During the next three weeks he builds a booster. Now you can tap into *Nebula's* deep-space communications net.

You let *Nebula* know the coordinates of Slee's factory. Then you give your microscopic location.

In a matter of days a *Nebula* Attack Team has taken the planet You're rescued from the miniature factory.

Captured cyborgs restored you and 2-Tor to your natural sizes. "You may have been small, but you did a big job," says the Attack Team commander. "I'm sure you'll get quite a welcome back at the *Nebula*. Congratulations from all of us."

*You have completed your mission.  
Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*

Send a message to the *Nebula*. "Someone is in big trouble," you shout at 2-Tor. You both dash for the silver hatch.

"I hope we're in time to save the day." 2-Tor's red lights flash.

Inside, you can't believe your eyes. An eight-foot creature with bristling neon hair struggles with a terrified human in a white lab coat. The creature's toothy jaw juts out as it strangles the man. They're both bent over a portable teleporter device.

"Stop him! Stop him!" screams the man. "We can't let him get control of the teleporter! He'll beam the rest of Scarp's men onto the station!"

The terrible force pressed down on your head with blinding pain. "I'm a Network operative. You'll not get a word out of me, Slee from Zard!"

Unfortunately no one will ever get anything out of you, ever again. The force increases pitilessly until you black out, never to awaken.

Later, some may applaud your stand. They'd call you brave and defiant. Others are less generous. They would call your actions stupid and stubborn. You won't care. You'll never hear the praises—or criticism.

ZAP!

"Slee wants our kronium," says the woman. "Mindor -6 has the galaxy's richest deposits. Slee seized our mines. He beams the kronium back to his home planet, Zard, to make computerized battle suits for his soldiers. Then he plans to use them to conquer the galaxy."

"We have to get word to the *Nebula*," you tell 2-Tor.

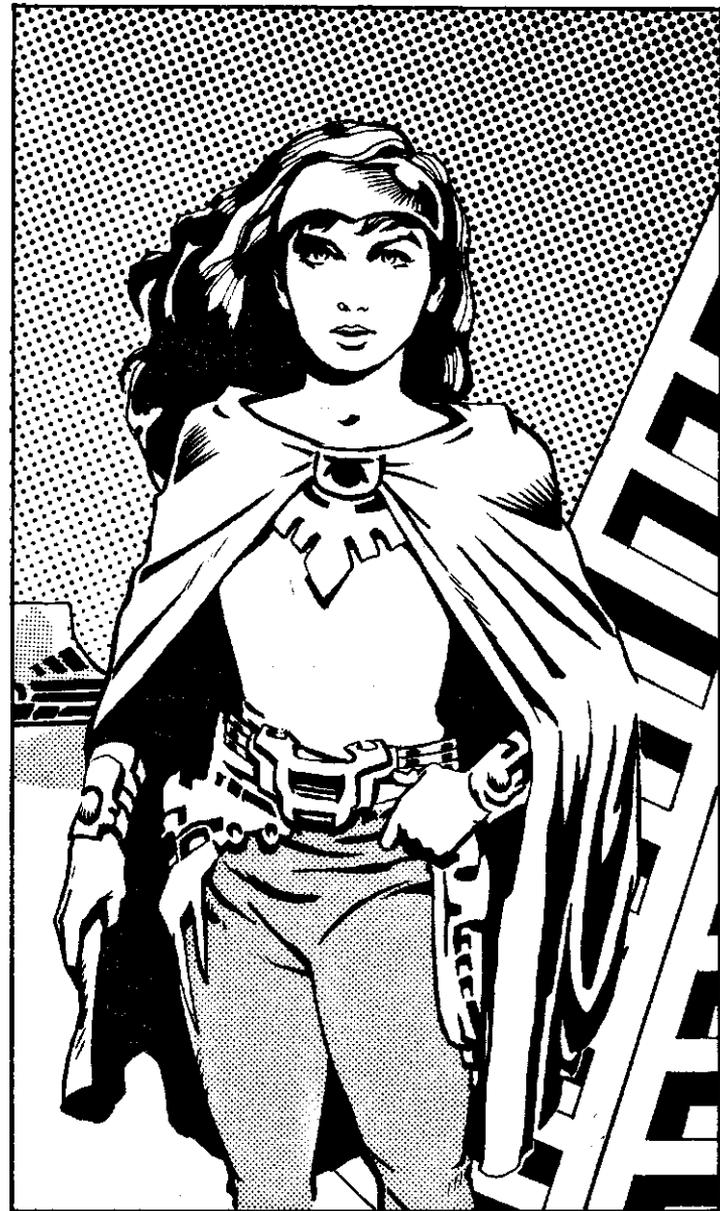
"Right, boss." The robot whistles. "Slee must be stopped, and soon. We can't let him assemble that battle force."

Just then you hear the sound of marching feet. 2-Tor's red lights begin to flash.

"Hurry," says the woman. "Come with me. I'll take you to the rebel base. With your help, we can defeat Slee."

*If you choose to follow the woman, turn to page 20.*

*If, instead, you choose to return to the Challenger to contact the Nebula, turn to page 112.*



"A sword," you say. Instantly a golden laser-sword appears in your hand. For a moment you are lost in wonder, but the woman's attack snaps you back to reality. She slices the air with her powerful weapon.

"Do you really think you can defeat me?" she asks, sneering.

The laser-sword flares to life in your hand. You realize you've made a bad choice of weapons. This is the first time you've even held a weapon like this. And now you have to defend yourself with it.

"No," you whisper. "I don't think I can defeat you."

And you can't. A powerful blow from the woman's sword slices into the staircase. It slashes away the stair you stand on. You go tumbling down. Down into the depths, down into darkness. Down, down, down, to an uncertain fate.

**ZAP!**



You pull open the mysterious hatch. Instantly, you're sucked out in a huge *whoosh*. You hurtle down a tunnel of pulsing green and yellow light.

"Great Galaxy!" you exclaim. "A wormhole! I'm being pulled into another universe."

You must have stumbled onto a Cosmos experiment on dimensional transference. Your head throbs. You feel as though you're being turned inside-out. Then the wormhole dissolves.

You're in another universe where everything is reversed. Stars are black. The sky is bright white. You look about, and you have no way home. Loneliness grips your heart.

Then the green and yellow wormhole pulses into being again. A figure appears. It's 2-Tor!

"Grab on, boss," he says. "Only one chance to catch a return ride." One hand holds the Graviton. Your other hand grabs 2-Tor's claw. Together, you rocket into the pulsing light. When your pounding head clears, you're back on Cosmos. "Warp to the *Nebula!*" you command.

As soon as Polaris hears your report, he sends Attack Squads to Cosmos Station.

"The raiders will get a big surprise, boss." 2-Tor's yellow lights flash. "And we saved the Graviton!"

*You have completed your mission.  
Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*

"Most animals can't stand high-pitched sounds," you reason. "That should work here."

2-Tor unleashes a high-pitched whine. It goes up into the ultrasonic range. The creature takes one step forward, then two. Then it leaps. You'd think 2-Tor was saying "Charge!"

The last thing you see is a mouthful of shining teeth. You should have expected the animal to act abnormally. After all, it's a mutant—an abnormal animal.

**ZAP!**

The guard disappears from view above. But a new scene comes into focus down below. You're shrinking down into a miniature factory. It has equipment, furniture, and, you soon discover, bosses.

"Welcome to the chip room." A flap-eared woman with a pointed chin grabs your arm. "You'll work over here."

She leads you to a long bench. Scores of other creatures solder wires to plastic boards.

"Do your job well and we'll let you live," she says. "Mess up, and we'll feed you to the Zardian arthropod. We keep it next door."

When the woman leaves, you turn to 2-Tor. "Call the *Nebula* for help. We need some assistance."

"Sorry, boss," says 2-Tor. "At this size, my signal will hardly reach across the room. We're on our own."

"Then let's head out that door over there," you say.

"I don't know." 2-Tor's blue lights flash. "Almost anything could be behind that door."

*If you choose to stay on the job, turn to page 29.*

*If you want to take your chances on  
the other side of the door,  
turn to page 73.*

Before the cyborg can get off a shot, you fire a short pulse. It drops him to the hot sands of Mindor.

"Thank you," says the robed man. "I am Calix Dune. Horrible things are happening here on Mindor. You must help us."

Calix goes on. "The planet has been overrun by the infamous Slee from Zard, scaly-faced son of a sunworm. Slee has enslaved his planet. Now he's trying ours.

"Slee forces our citizens to mine the rich deposits of kronium ..."

2-Tor breaks in. "A rare metal necessary in making battle suits. We've had reports that Slee is building such computer-driven space armor. He wants to outfit his whole cyborg army with them."

"Slee has been beaming the kronium back to Zard, his home planet. He's assembling the suits and his army there," Calix Dune continues.

"We've got to destroy that teleporter," you say. "How can we get to it?"

Go to page 39.

Calix leads you over to the windowless, one-story teleporter complex.

"The dome over there is the command center," says Calix. "You should find Slee just inside."

"And where are the teleporter controls?" you ask.

"They're in the main building itself," he says. "But be careful. Those controls are heavily guarded."



Do you want to go after Slee? If so, turn to page 94.

Would you rather knock out the teleporter? If so, turn to page 43.

Your vidscreen suddenly fills with the slick, scaly face of Slee from Zard.

"So, you've been spying on me." He scowls. "The game is up. And you're going down."

You see a starblaster being lowered beneath his ship. "We've got to get out of here, boss," 2-Tor squeals. His red lights flash like mad. "Our shuttle doesn't stand a chance against that blaster."



*If you choose to turn and run, turn to page 68.*

*If you want to stand and fight, turn to page 90.*

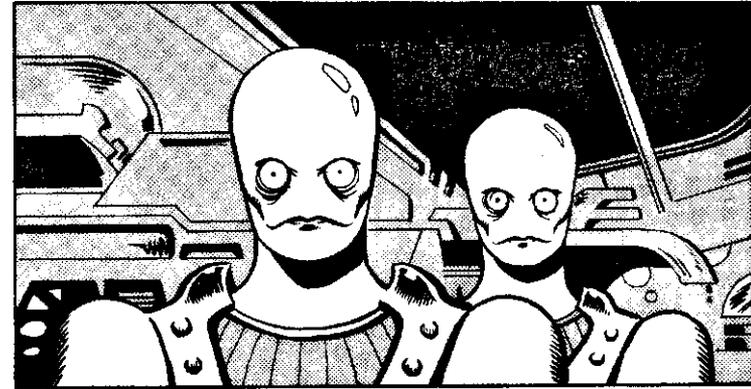
The two bubble-headed guards lead you away.

2-Tor turns to you, his volume low. "I've beamed an SOS to the *Nebula*. They should be on their way soon."

"It had better be faster than soon," you whisper. "I'm not looking forward to meeting Scarp's Rorvian Pest."

"Don't want to meet it?" One of the guards starts laughing. "Maybe you'd rather share a room with the Aflame Hyrex. It's in the cell over there."

"We're feeling generous. Take your choice," says the other guard. "The Hyrex or the Pest? The Pest is in the cell down the hall."



*If you choose to meet the Rorvian Pest, turn to page 62.*

*If you'd rather take your chances in the cell with the Aflame Hyrex, turn to page 76.*

You grasp the force-rope and yell, "Haul away!"

The hooded stranger gives a jerk. Moments later you arrive at a low-ceilinged room high in the tower.

A dozen fanged, snout-nosed creatures sit against the back wall. Each one of them is smiling. 2-Tor is nowhere to be seen.

You get a creepy feeling that something is about to go terribly wrong.

You walk over to the main building. "Let's go for the teleporter control center," you say. You try the door, but it won't slide open.

"We could knock on the panel and pretend to be some of Slee's cyborgs," suggests Calix. "That will get us inside. Then we can take them by surprise."

"Why not blast our way in?" you say. "I admit it may be crude. But it might be effective."

*If you decide to blow away the panel with your micropulser, turn to page 8.*

*If, instead, you elect to talk your way in, turn to page 28.*

Go to page 52.

2-Tor broadcasts an insult in the Hyrex's language. Before long you hear the flaming creature crawling through the duct.

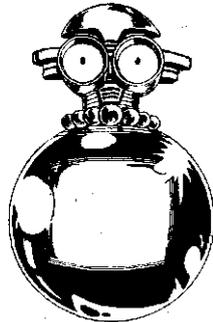
"Now!" you tell 2-Tor. "Move it!"

The two of you scamper through the duct. Ahead is a small airlock. You open the airlock hatch, and the vacuum of space pulls you from the ship.

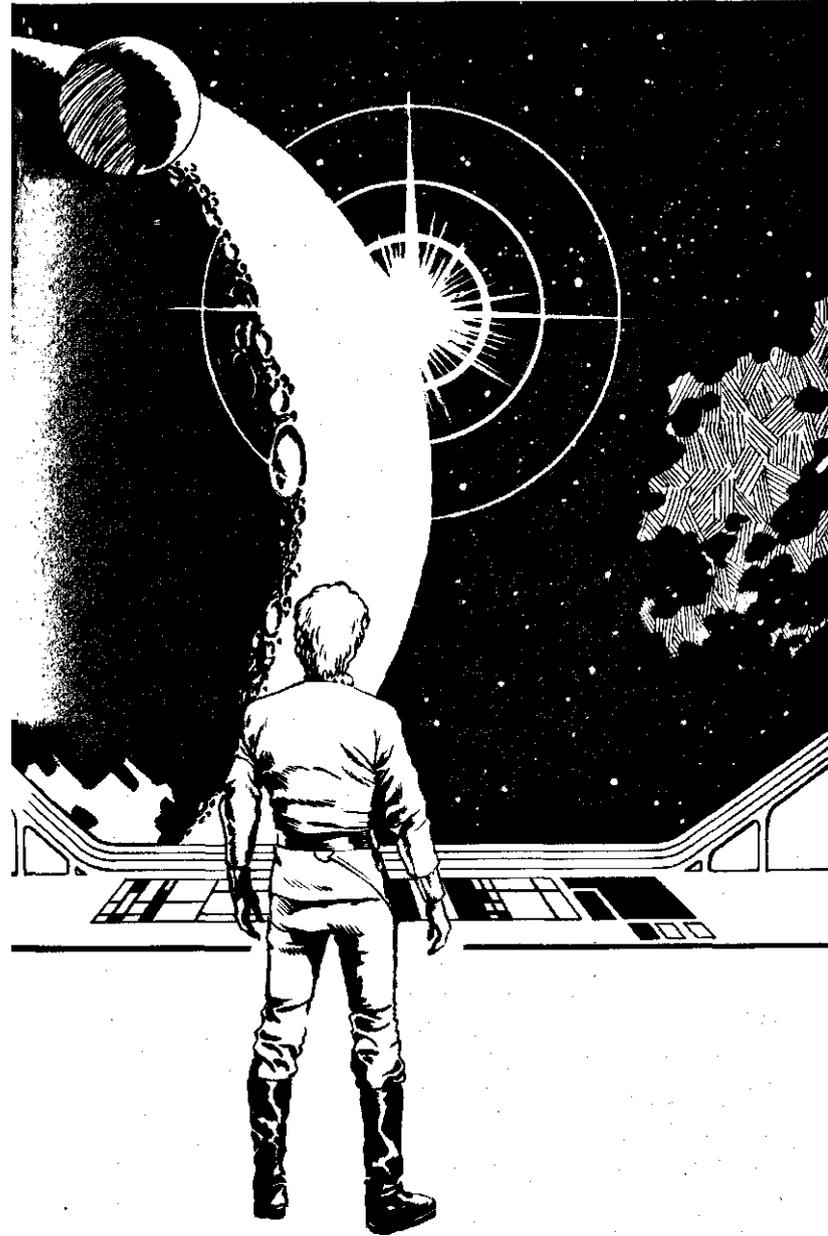
Floating free, you see the *Nebula* fighter fleet hurtling to your rescue. You quickly warp aboard the command ship. Just as you reach the control room, you see the *Darkstar* explode.

As you watch the glowing wreckage of the *Darkstar* twinkling in the void, a hand grips your shoulder. You turn to see the smiling face of Captain Polaris.

"I just wanted to come out and congratulate you. *Nebula* is very proud of you and 2-Tor," he says. "When you return, the Network's bravery award will be waiting for you. You've more than earned it." 2-Tor's yellow lights flash on and off.



*You have completed your mission.  
Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*



Slee's teleporter begins to break you into atoms. But 2-Tor programs in a new code.

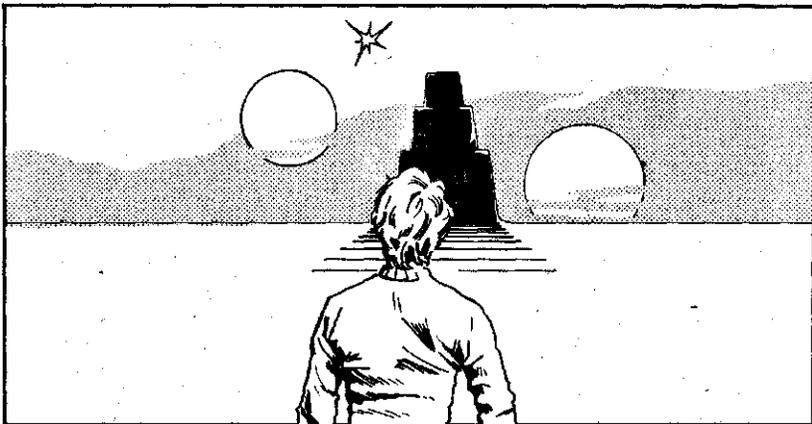
"We'll get a free ride from Slee." 2-Tor beeps worriedly. "I just hope we end up back at the *Nebula*."

Next thing you know, you've been reassembled on an icy plain. Two red suns beam down on you.

"This isn't the *Nebula*, Short Circuit," you say. "And it isn't Zard either."

But 2-Tor isn't there. All you see is a tall black and crystal tower on the horizon. Right then, a pink SOS flare flies from its top.

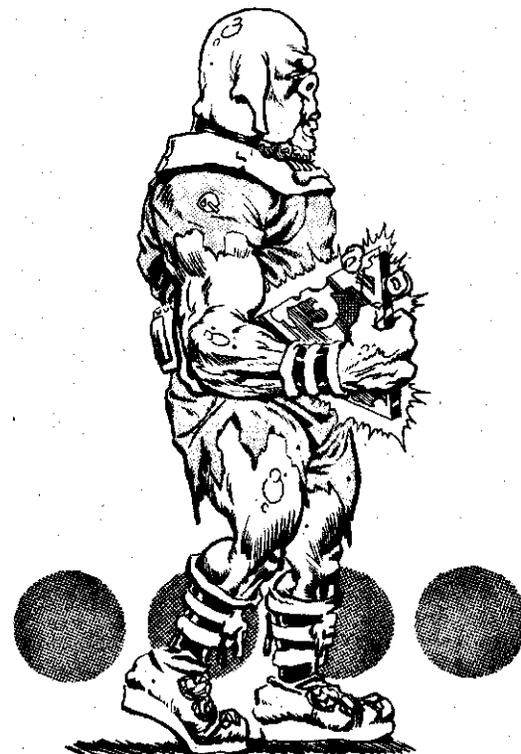
"It's 2-Tor," you say. "And in trouble."



Go to page 111.

You open the door. A hairless creature with limp ears rushes away from you. It seems to be heading for some round hatches in the far wall of the room. Then you see the glowing metal pyramid it carries. A formula engraved in the metal tells you this is the Graviton.

"Hold it!" you shout. Your micro-pulser comes up, set for STUN.



Go to page 80.

"Once we had a great civilization," the mutant woman says. "But that was generations ago. Nuclear war destroyed everything. Radiation killed or mutated all living things on our planet. One thing can save us—the Crystal Cube of Knowledge. It's in the heart of the Forbidden City. If we had it, we'd have the knowledge we need to rebuild."

"Well," you ask. "Why don't you go in and get it?"

"It's the Forbidden City," she says. "Forbidden to us. Mutant monsters have killed everyone we've sent in. Please, visitors from the stars, won't you save our planet?"

The scientist shakes his head. The neon-haired creature turns off its glow. You and 2-Tor look at each other. Now what?

*If you decide to ignore the plea and head into the wilderness, turn to page 21.*

*If, however, you wish to aid the people by going after the Cube of Knowledge, turn to page 105.*

"Programming section?" you say.

"Right this way." Cyborg guards march you through the battle suit factory.

You're chained to a computer terminal where cyborgs guard you night and day. The instructions you punch in will operate the suits in their coming battles. Not only that, they'll control the cyborg troops as well.

Luckily you've had a little programming experience, so you start playing with the codes. A new routine goes into the programs. Now the cyborgs won't respond to Slee and his henchmen. You've programmed them to respond only to your commands.

*Go to page 13.*

You and 2-Tor scurry through the duct. Your robot friend finds a maintenance hatch which leads to the outside of the ship. Yanking open the hatch, you allow yourself to be pulled into the vacuum of space. A few blasts from your suit thrusters take you beneath the *Darkstar*, near the huge ship's lifting struts.

"Look!" 2-Tor points a claw. A fleet of gull-winged fighters streaks toward you. "It's the *Nebula* Attack Team 1 called for."

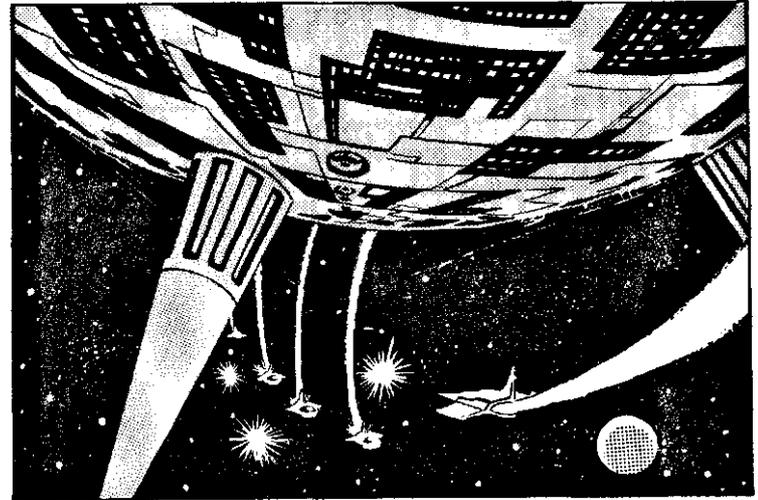
"Good work, Tor. They've brought the *Challenger*," you exclaim. "Have them warp us aboard. I'd like another chance at Mr. Scarp."

Before long you're at the familiar controls of the *Challenger*. You prepare your shuttlecraft for battle as the rest of the *Nebula* force engages the *Darkstar*.

"They're no match for the *Darkstar's* quark cannons!" you exclaim. The enemy battle cruiser has already picked off three *Nebula* starfighters.

You focus your scanners on the *Darkstar's* bridge. Cypor Scarp, now in armor, directs the battle. "I'm tempted to dive-bomb that bridge," you tell 2-Tor.

"The *Darkstar's* underbelly is exposed." 2-Tor's green lights flash on and off. "It offers an excellent target."



If you choose to attack the bridge, turn to page 97.

If your attack is to the ship's belly, turn to page 10.

Go to page 51.

"Now, class," says the hooded figure. "I told you finding specimens for our medical experiments would be easy. Just throw a rope out the window and haul them in."

"Like sea shrikes," one student giggles.

You step away from the man with the rope. He obviously doesn't have your best interests at heart. Right now you need a way to escape. But there are no doors. Even the window you came in through has vanished.

The students rise. Looks like you'll make medical history on this planet. Whether you like it or not.

**ZAP!**



"A lot has happened since I was here last," you say. "But if my memory is correct, we should try the squares with the horizontal stripes."

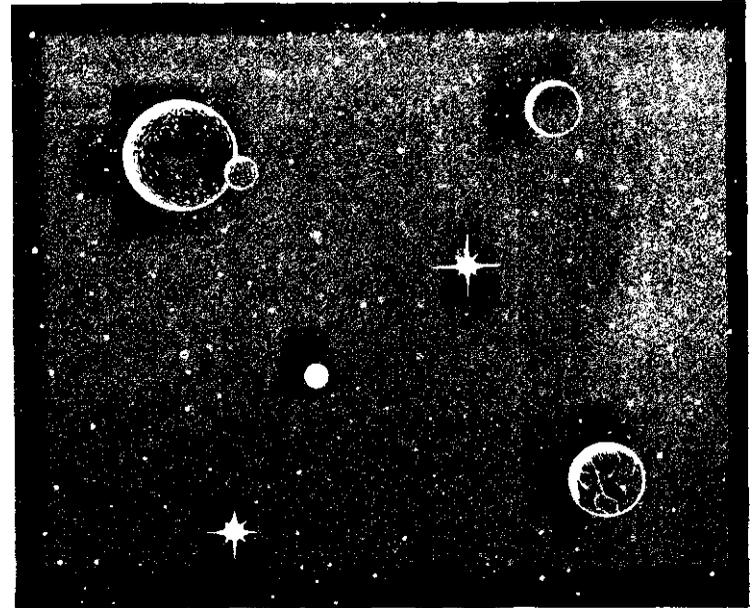
"Are you sure?" asks 2-Tor. His blue lights flash.

"Pretty sure." Both of you move to a square with horizontal stripes. "But then, nobody's perfect."

"You're right!" shouts 2-Tor, dropping into the black, bottomless void.

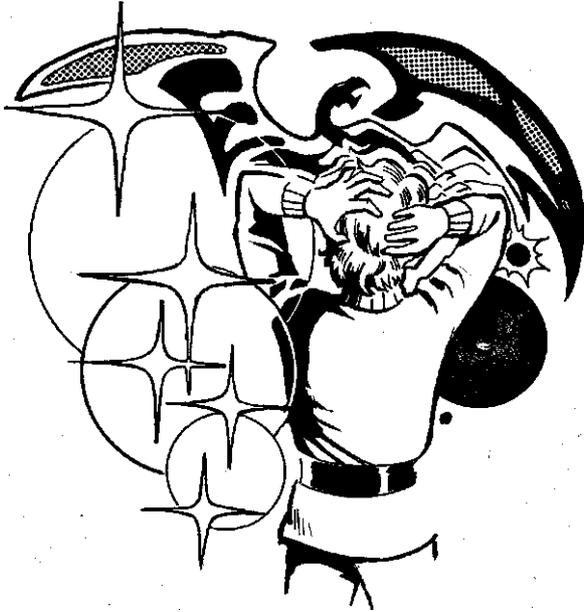
"Oh, noooooo!" you scream, dropping beside the robot.

**ZAP!**



"Tor! Hurry! Please!" you beg. "I'm helpless without you!"

But 2-Tor can't hear you. Nor can 2-Tor help you. All the while, the stinger pumps a molecular altering agent into your veins. Your body becomes tiny, glowing, slick-winged. You're the twin of the creature that stung you.



Go to page 55.

2-Tor's energy field reappears.

You want to get away from here more than anything. Your wings spread preparing for a quick flight through the hole in the wall of fire. If you succeed, you'll be back with 2-Tor.

Suddenly you remember the Crystal Cube of Knowledge.

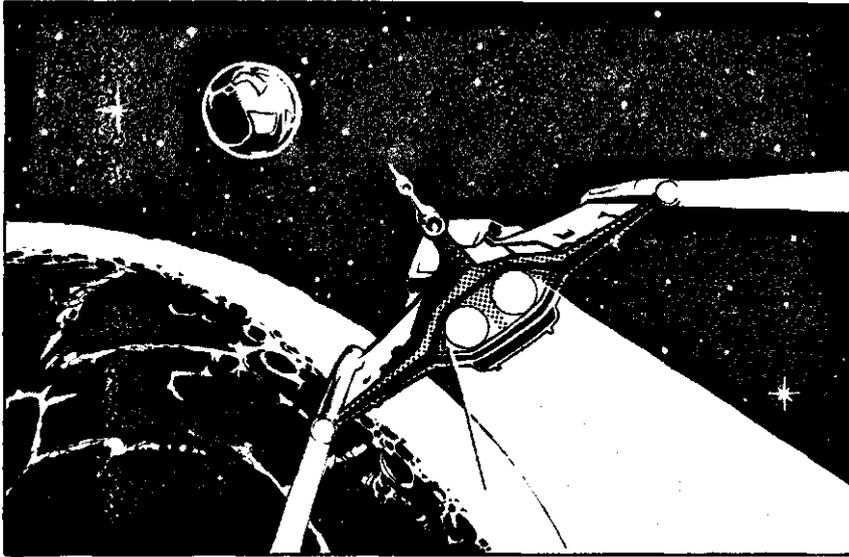
*If you think you should take the Cube with you,  
turn to page 12.*

*If you just want to flee, forgetting the Cube,  
turn to page 22.*

Warping to Mindor-6 would be faster. But you want to use the *Challenger* for this mission. You've just had her fitted with a tachyonic booster, and here's your chance to see how she'll handle at near light-speed.

You and 2-Tor climb into your command seats, punch in the launch code, ignite the engines, and blast! Soon the *Nebula* is far behind.

The ship handles even better than you'd hoped. In four days you're in parking orbit over Mindor-6.



**Go to page 57.**

Your high-resolution scans pick up signs of heavy fighting on the planet's surface.

"It must have been quite a battle, boss." 2-Tor whistles. "I detect major damage."

"Where should we set down?" you ask.

"Two choices," replies 2-Tor. "We can warp down to the old capitol building. It's partly destroyed. But we may find some Mindor leaders there. They could tell us what happened."

"And the other choice?"

"Far side of the planet. I pick up a huge amount of energy being generated. Something is definitely going on over there."



*If you head for the capitol building, turn to page 113.*

*If you head for the unusual power source, turn to page 103.*

You freeze, astonished, as the creature turns its attention to you. It roars and grabs a chair of hardened quasidium.

Suddenly you hear sounds of fighting. They come from the corridor you just left.

"The Graviton!" someone yells. "They've got the Graviton!"

The neon creature raises the chair. It's aiming for your head. You must act now, and act quickly.

*If you decide to rush into the corridor,  
turn to page 87.*

*If, instead, you try to defeat the creature,  
turn to page 60.*

2-Tor begins to vibrate as he delivers the low note. The blast annoys the snouted creature. Its teeth rattle and it quivers. Finally it lets out a howl. You see it run off, hairless tail tucked tightly between its skinny legs.

Now for the Crystal Cube! But a deep voice makes you stop short.

*"Halt or be vaporized!"* The Crystal Cube of Knowledge is only for those with the virtue to use it wisely. Stand while I probe your mind. I must be sure you are worthy."

*If you won't stand for the mind probe, grab the Cube  
and turn to page 108.*

*If you will let your mind be probed,  
turn to page 25.*

The big fellow looks tough, but not unbeatable.

"Distract it, Tor!" you say. And when your robot friend lets off a high-pitched wail, you hurl yourself at the thug's knees. You've played a lot of moonball on the *Nebula*. You know just where to strike.

The blow sends it backward. As it falls, it smashes against the teleporter controls, tripping a circuit. Red lights flash on the machine.

"Cratz alive!" shouts the man in the white coat. "It's activated the teleporter. Hold on!"

You dive behind the control bank. But Scarp sends out another ultraviolet flash which moves the console clear across the room. You're in danger again.

"I see you and your friend do not give up easily," he says. "Perhaps you can provide me with a bit of amusement. Guards!"

At once, two bubble-headed creatures appear. They have eyes the size of Trotops eggs. The guards seize you and 2-Tor.

"Take these two below," Scarp orders. "We'll see if they enjoy the company of the Roman Pest!"

*You have no choice. The teleporting sequence is underway. Teleport at once to page 114.*

*Go to page 41.*

"I'll take the Rorvian Pest," you say.

The second guard waves a hand over an organe sensor. A door swings open just long enough for you and 2-Tor to be cast into the cell.

It doesn't take you long to spot the Pest. The creature's wobbling, jellylike body nearly fills the room. You see a tiny mouth up near the top of this ugly gray blob.

The Pest smiles and begins wobbling toward you. You frantically search for a way out But you're trapped. The Rorvian, it's clear, is more than a pest. It is your doom.

ZAP!



You step through the break in the wall and enter the Forbidden City.

"My sensors pick up a beacon," 2-Tor says. "I believe it's the Crystal Cube of Knowledge." The two of you set out in the direction of the signal, picking your way through the twisted remains of the wrecked metropolis.

"It won't be far now, boss," says 2-Tor.

"Might as well be a million kilometers away," you say. "Look at that."

Blocking your way is a raging nuclear firestorm. 2-Tor whistles, looking over the glowing wall of fire. "The radiation reading is off the scale. I can't scan through the wall. All I detect is the beacon."

"2-Tor, could I risk a quick flight through that mess?"

"Your suit will protect you briefly," 2-Tor says. "But I don't know how thick the wall is. Your suit may fail before you get through."

The robot clicks and buzzes. "We might try another way. I could cut an energy field through that radiation. My power is sufficient."

*If you wish to break through with the energy field,  
turn to page 23.*

*If you'd rather try flying through the flames,  
turn to page 27.*

"We don't mean to harm you," you say.

"I know that," says the woman. "But that cyborg behind you does. Duck!"

You spin around to see a huge, square-headed cyborg about to club you with a stun-bar. You dive for the ground. The woman blasts the creature through its battle armor.

"Thanks," you say, getting to your feet. "Who was that?"

"A soldier." The woman spits. "Commanded by Slee from Zard. He and his troops have overrun Mindor. Most of our people are enslaved."

You know all about Slee—one of the most brutal creatures in the galaxy. His ruthlessness is known on a hundred planets. In the last year, he's totally destroyed more than a dozen worlds.

"What does Slee want with Mindor?" you ask.



Go to page 32.

You take a deep breath, then step onto a square with horizontal stripes. "Hope I made the right choice. Otherwise I'll fall into the v

o  
i  
d!"

**ZAP!**

"I'll need all the help I can get!" You gulp down the blue liquid. "You said this will make me strong, right?"

"I did?" says the man.

You feel strange. "You said it was for strength."

The old man puts a hand on your shoulder. "You didn't understand," he says. "I meant it would give *me* your strength. You see, I must have your energy to defeat Andron-Poc."

You feel your strength flowing away. It goes right into the old man's hand. You try to pull free, but you can't. You're already too weak. You can hardly keep your eyes open.

But you notice the man is no longer old and wrinkled. He looks young and strong. You can only wonder how you must look. But not for long.

**ZAP!**



"Sometimes an orderly retreat is the best offense," you tell 2-Tor. "Hold on. We're going to give your tachyonic booster a real workout."

You blast away nearly at light-speed, catching Slee by surprise. But he's not about to let you get away. The *Firebolt* pours on thrust and catches up to you in no time.

You wait until Slee is right on your tail, then hit the top-board thrusters. Your craft drops away at 90 degrees. Slee's heavy ship can't match the turn. It flies straight on, unable to slow down or turn back.

Now you have Slee right where you want him. 2-Tor had already called for a *Nebula* Attack Team and Slee is rocketing straight into their teeth.

You contact the *Nebula* commander. "Slee from Zard is aboard that gold ship," you report.

"Job well done," the commander says. "You're getting to be the best pilot in the fleet."

You smile at the compliment. Then you reignite your engines, and streak off into the twinkling cosmos.

*You have completed your mission.  
Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*

You're no doctor, but it's plain that you should get the stinger out. You yank it free so it can't pump any more poison into your veins.

2-Tor's energy field reappears. You grab the Crystal Cube of Knowledge and dash to safety. Both of you race from the Forbidden City.

Outside, you present the Cube to the grateful mutants.

"At last we can rebuild," says the mutant female. "Soon we will again be a glorious civilization."

The cube also gives you the coordinates you need. Now you can return to the *Nebula*.

You make your report. Polaris nods. "A job well done. Your warning from Cosmos came just in time. We were able to wreck Scarp's raid. And you found a new planet. Do you think the mutants will restore their civilization?"

You feel confident they will achieve their goal. Perhaps they'll even join the Network of Worlds, which you and 2-Tor proudly serve.

*You have completed your mission.  
Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*

You take 2-Tor's claw as the room fills with rippling violet light. The light wraps around everything—the kronium, you, and 2-Tor. It sinks into your body. Every cell, every atom tingles. Your consciousness dims as you're fed piece by piece into the teleporter.

Next thing you know, you've been reassembled in an identical room. "Guess we made it to Zard," you mumble.

Two stone-faced cyborgs march in. They grab you and 2-Tor.

"More workers for Slee's battle suit factory," one guard drones.

The other cyborg looks at you. "Where would you like to work? In the chip room or in the programming section?"

*If you choose the chip room, turn to page 14.*

*If you'd rather work as a programmer,  
turn to page 49.*

You and 2-Tor race to opposite sides of the mighty Scarp. Since he only has one eye, he can't get both of you. Worse for him, he came into the room with no guards.

Scarp turns and stuns 2-Tor. Before he can wheel about and blast you, you attack. You're a star at zero-g unarmed combat. One chop to the side of his head, and Scarp sprawls on the floor.

You waste no time patching 2-Tor's circuits. "Let's warp for home," you say. "We've saved the Graviton. And we have one of the most wanted outlaws in the galaxy as well!"

*You have completed your mission.  
Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*

You take the left passageway down a damp hall. You travel for hours as the passageway snakes back and forth. You keep reaching dead ends. Finally the tunnel narrows. At last it gives out altogether.

"2-Tor, we've got to get back to the entrance. Use your sensors to find us the way."

The robot stands, buzzing and hooting. "I've been trying that for the last hour," he finally says. "These walls all conduct weird energy flows. My sensors are useless."

Your mouth goes dry. Now you remember the warning you heard earlier. "Follow the authorized path or you will wander forever."

"Forever," you say to yourself. "Forever sounds like such a long, long, time."

**ZAP!**

"Come on, Tor!" you whisper. The door is nearby. Just as you open it, your co-workers see what you've done. "No! No!" they scream. "You'll release the Zardian arthropod!"

You try to slam the door. But it's too late! A big, brown, hairy leg sticks out the bottom of the door. And a huge, twitching antenna sticks out the top.



You don't want to go inside—but you can't let Bishra get hurt. You set your micro-pulser on STUN and climb to the roof.

2-Tor is stationed outside the entrance below. The robot imitates the voice of Slee's soldiers.

"Great Leader," he calls. "Come look. We've captured the rebels."

Slee rushes from the dome. Behind him shambles the warty blob known as the Hage. As soon as Slee spots 2-Tor, he knows he's in a trap. In panic, he turns back. Now he finds himself staring up at you on the roof.

You smile, and squeeze off a burst from your micro-pulser. The tyrant drops to the red soil of Mindor-6. The dim-witted Hage take one look at your weapon and scurries off.

Bishra emerges from the dome, unhurt.

"Slee will soon be on his way to a star prison," you say. "Mindor is free."

"Mindor will never forget you," she says. "You are very brave."

"Only doing my job," you say. "Glad we could help." 2-Tor flashes yellow and whistles.

*You have completed your mission.  
Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*

"The Hyrex," you say, a plan forming in your mind.

You're banking on the fact that the Aflame Hyrex is a fire-generating creature. And when the guards throw you and 2-Tor into the cell, a wash of heat confirms your suspicions.

The Hyrex is a lumbering, flat-nosed beast surrounded by wavering flames. The heat sears your skin, right through your bio-support suit. You race over to a large vent and break off the metal cover.

"When you've got heat, you need a vent," you say. "Come on, 2-Tor. Follow me through this cooling duct. We still have a mission to accomplish."

You and 2-Tor crawl along the duct which leads through the ship's compartments. One compartment catches your interest

"Are those explosives?" you ask 2-Tor.

"Correct, boss," he replies. "That's nitrosite, highly explosive and highly unstable. We'd better get moving."

"Not so fast," you say. "I want to bring that Aflame Hyrex here."

"Are you sure?" squeaks 2-Tor. His blue lights flash.

"The Hyrex will set off the nitrosite. And that will destroy the ship," you explain.

"I understand that part of the plan." 2-Tor clicks and bleeps. "But where will we be when the ship blows up?"

*If you choose to call for the Hyrex, turn to page 44.*

*Go to page 77.*

*If you decide to find an escape route first,  
turn to page 50.*

You and 2-Tor materialize in a bright corridor of Cosmos Station. Plastak-coated ports and hatches lead off in all directions. You hurry down the deserted corridor. Finally you find a hatch marked Graviton: Top Secret.

"In here, 2-Tor," you say, as you reach to open the hatch. Suddenly, a scream comes from behind the shining titanium hatch down the corridor.

*If you choose to enter the Graviton Room,  
turn to page 47.*

*If you head for the source of the scream,  
turn to page 30.*

As you face the slim *Firebolt*, four energy pulses rip from your ship. Every one of them misses.

"We should have attacked from the side, boss. Then we'd have had a chance," 2-Tor says. "But straight on, she's as hard to hit as the point of a pin."

Unfortunately, you're a much easier target. Slee's starblaster beams slams into the *Challenger*. Off you go, tumbling at hyper-light speeds. 2-Tor's red lights flash. "We're doomed!" he cries.

Your shuttle suddenly comes to a bruising halt, throwing you against your seat straps. "What the nyx?" you say.

An image forms on your scanners. It's a Network Attack Squad. Then a face appears on your vid screen.

"Managed to catch you with tractor-beams," the squad leader says. "And just in time, too. We'll take care of Slee from here on. Better head back to the *Nebula*."

*Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*

The creature whirls, ears flapping. You can't risk letting it out of your sight. Aiming carefully, you let loose an energy pulse. It knocks the creature senseless.

You go to the alien's side. It's trying to speak

"Hand of the developer. Nebula team here. We must take the Graviton to safety."

You and 2-Tor crawl through the tube, which leads to an underground passageway. Spying a rusted moving staircase, you head down. 2-Tor flicks on his photon floods to light the way.

At the base of the stairs the tunnel branches. "Which way?" you ask. Then a dim hologram materializes before you. It shows a badly scarred humanoid, who speaks.

"Warning! You are entering a security maze," says the hologram. "Follow the authorized path or you will wander forever."

You have no idea which branch is the authorized path. Nor do you intend to turn back. The mutant community is counting on you.

*If you wish to take your chances following the tunnel to the left, turn to page 72.*

*If you think the right tunnel is the safe route, turn to page 106.*

Go to page 7.

"Mo, thanks." You push the drink away. "Too much is at stake here. I can't risk getting knocked out or sick."

The old man shakes his head. You grab the railing and start up the circular staircase. Soon the man is far behind.

The staircase seems endless. You're thinking about sitting down for a short rest when a tall, metal-encrusted woman comes charging up the stairs behind you. In her hand she holds a flashing laser-sword.

"Prepare to defend yourself!" she barks.

"Things are going just as I hoped," you say, as you disable the *Challenger's* controls.

"2-Tor, I want you to warp us over to the *Firebolt*. Make the leap when Slee appears here on the bridge."

2-Tor flashes green.

Soon enough, Slee and his guards materialize on your ship. He doesn't see you, though, because 2-Tor has already beamed you to the nearly deserted *Firebolt*.

You've gotten the drop on the *Firebolt's* remaining guards. "Surrender!" you shout. "Or I'll blast you with this micro-pulser!"

You take a moment to lock up the guards. Then Slee's magnificent ship is yours. "Chart us a course for the *Nebula*," you tell 2-Tor. "We'll leave Slee on the *Challenger* for the Attack Team you called in. It's disabled, so he won't be going anywhere."

2-Tor beeps. "Aren't you going to miss the *Challenger*?"

"Of course!" You settle back into the padded pilot's seat. "But I think this ship will do quite nicely till we get home."

Go to page 11.

*You have completed your mission.  
Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*

You wish Bishra luck as she steps through the door. There is a moment of silence, then you hear her shout, "Slee! It's you!"

"So it is." The dreadful tyrant laughs. "Now, where are the rest of the rebels? I want answers, Bishra. Otherwise, the Hage here will shake your hand."

"Please, please," begs Bishra. "Not the Hage."

"Oh, no," you whisper to 2-Tor. "There's a Hage in there. It drips acid from its fingertips. One touch can dissolve a person."

2-Tor gives a muted whistle and flashes red.

*If your fear of the Hage makes you wait outside till  
Slee comes out, turn to page 75,*

*However, if you wish to dash inside and save Bishra,  
turn to page 100.*

"That's the guardian of the Cube," says 2-Tor. "Look, there it is."

Your friend is right. A crystal the size of a brick glows on a pillar. It's right behind the snarling beast.

"Maybe we can drive it off with a sonic blast," you say. "Let's give it a try, 2-Tor. See how it responds to a loud sound."

"Okay, boss. What kind of sound do you want?" 2-Tor asks. "High-pitched or low?"

*If you think high-pitched sound will affect the creature,  
turn to page 36.*

*If, instead, you blast it with a low note,  
turn to page 59.*

"Sorry, but I can't take any chances." You fire off a round. The woman drops to the steps. "When you come around, perhaps you'll be willing to talk," you say.

An awful metallic rasp behind you makes you whip around. There stands a square-headed alien in an armored battle suit, his pulse gun pointed right at you.

"Oh, no!" you exclaim. "That's what the woman shot at. She tried to save us, and I knocked her out."

You fire another round. But your pulser is set for STUN and the alien shakes off the blast. Then it's his turn. His pulse-blast sends you and 2-Tor sprawling.

You pass out. But before you do, you hear the same metallic rasp say, "I'll take these two to Slee. He'll make sure they never live to report what's going on here."

*You have no choice. You must go to page 91.*

"Our mission is to protect the Graviton," you tell 2-Tor. "Let's get out of here."

Your mission may be the Graviton, but the creature's mission is to bean you with the chair. Before you reach the exit, you're down.

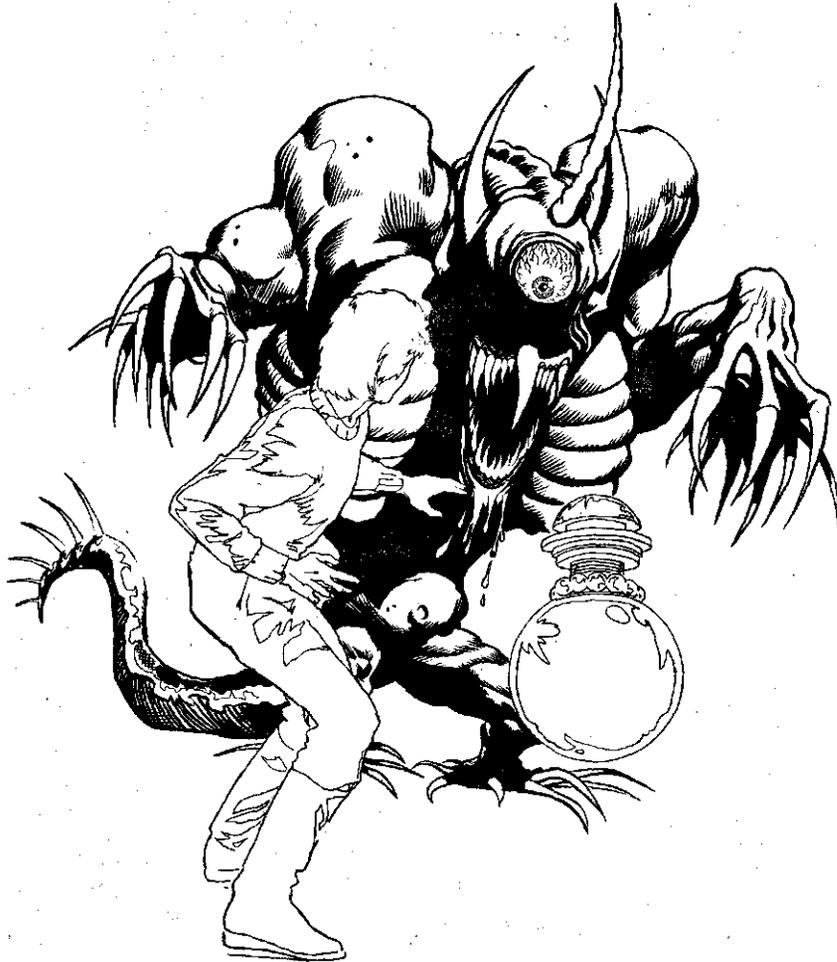
The last thing you recall is 2-Tor beeping frantically. The neon creature laughs hideously as blackness drops over you like a heavy curtain.

You come to and find a face looking down at you. Captain Polaris' face. "You're lucky 2-Tor managed to get a distress call out 1 sent Attack Teams immediately."

Polaris smiles. "We caught the *Darkstar* with only half her crew aboard. The rest were looting the space station. They surrendered without a fight So we saved the Graviton and caught Cypor Scarp."

Now Polaris frowns. "Of course, we did all this while you were asleep."

*You have completed your mission.  
Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*



The creature gives the opened door a shove. You and 2-Tor topple to the floor. Then the arthropod advances. It has a glazed, hungry look in its faceted eyes.

All around you the factory is in chaos. The tiny workers try to scramble to safety. When the arthropod is through, it will have ruined the factory. You won't be around to witness it, though. It will have ruined you first.

**ZAP!**

"Ready the mini-pulser," you tell 2-Tor. "We'll blast him out of the cosmos."

"It's ready." 2-Tor clicks and whistles. "But it's not powerful enough to knock out that ship. This is not a fair fight. I recommend surrender. It may be the only way to save our lives."

*If you choose to surrender, turn to page 17.*

*If you choose to match firepower with Slee,  
turn to page 79.*

You come to, finding yourself in a small white-walled room. It's very bright, but you can't find a light source. You shake your head to clear it, wondering how you got to this strange place.

"Hey, Tor." You look over at the robot. "Where are we?"

"In the custody of Slee from Zard." The answer comes from outside the cell. "I'd like to know the details of your mission here."

Slee from Zard! The very name sends a shudder through you. Slee rules a slave planet on the fringes of the galaxy. Lately he's attacked and looted planets in this sector. Nearly a dozen worlds have felt his wrath. He has no idea of mercy. If he rules Mindor, you're in deep trouble.

A powerful, invisible force suddenly squeezes your head. You fear your skull may explode.

"I don't hear you talking," Slee hisses. "Tell me the *Nebula's* plans and I'll turn off the mind compressor."

Quickly now. Will you reveal *Nebula's* secrets? Or do you want to test the limits of the mind compressor?

*If you choose to talk, turn to page 4.*

*If you decide to keep quiet, turn to page 31.*

You don't hesitate. You snatch 2-Tor in your arms and leap out the window. You're hoping the snow laid down a thick cushion.

You fall for what seems like an eternity. But in the end you land safely in the snow!

It's a short job to dig yourselves out. You hurry away from the tower.

"Once we get to safety we can contact the *Nebula* for help," you say. "I hope we have enough power to get a signal through."

"What's this?" 2-Tor points a claw at the marbelite checkerboard. It blocks your escape.

"That's a void field," you explain. "Some squares are solid. Others are merely illusions. I'm afraid I don't remember which ones are safe."

*If you recall the safe squares had vertical stripes,  
turn to page 26.*

*If, however, you remember the squares with  
the horizontal stripes were safe,  
turn to page 53.*

The storm screams in your ears. But you make it safely through the window.

"Sit down, sit down," says the earless man. He points to a high-backed crystalline chair. "I assume you are here for the robot. The one called 2-Tor?"

"Yes, yes," you say: "Where can I find him?"

"At the top of the tower. The evil Andron-Poc has imprisoned him."

"What does he want with 2-Tor?" you ask.

"He wants his energy," says the man. "At this very moment he's draining the robot. With that energy he can take over the whole tower. Andron-Poc must be stopped."

"How do I get to the top?" you ask.

The old man gestures toward a circular staircase in the room. "That's the way to Andron-Poc," he says. He hands you a glass filled with a blue liquid.

"Drink this," the man says. "For strength."

*If you refuse the drink, turn to page 82.*

*If you drink the liquid, turn to page 67.*

2-Tor pushes a row of color-coded bars next to the dome entrance. The panel gives a high-pitched whir, then slides open. A surprised Slee from Zard sits behind a protanium desk.

"Surrender!" says 2-Tor, floating through the doors. His claws hold a pair of micro-pulsers.

"You surrender!" bellows Slee. The tyrant's guards jump 2-Tor, grabbing the pulsers.

It's your turn to produce a surprise. You've kept a few steps behind 2-Tor. Now you leap into the room to show the cyborgs how zero-g unarmed combat works. A swift kick to the jaw sends one cyborg sprawling. You whip around and give the other one a chop to the neck. Then you aim your micro-pulsar at the stunned Slee.

"End of the line, Slee," you say. "It's prison for you."

"And perhaps a promotion for you, boss." 2-Tor whistles.

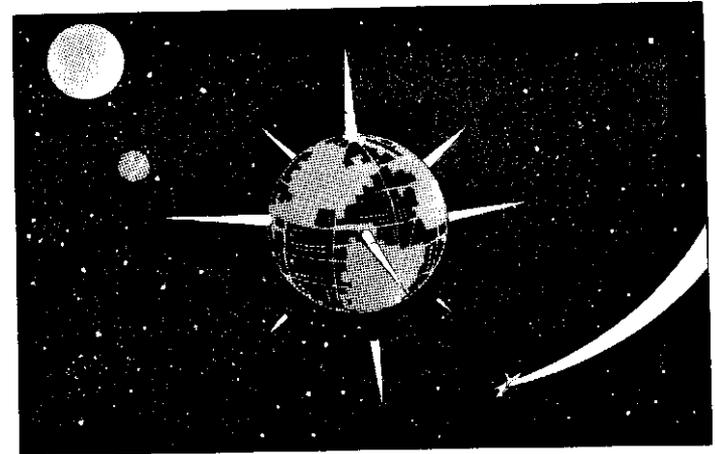
"Perhaps." You smile back. "I feel like I've earned it." 2-Tor flashes yellow lights.

*You have completed your mission.  
Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*

Exit has always meant "out" before. There's no reason it shouldn't mean that now. You load the Graviton into the hatch opening. Making an adjustment to your bio-support suit, you slide in ahead of 2-Tor. The robot slams the hatch shut. Suddenly you shoot into space.

Before you is a massive spike-encrusted ball, bearing the image of an eclipsed sun. You fire your thrusters to avoid smashing into the huge ship. Then you realize the spike ball is the dreaded *Darkstar*. This is the battle cruiser commanded by Cypor Scarp.

"I detect an open airlock at the tip of the nearest spike," 2-Tor says. "We may be able to board and disable the *Darkstar*"



*If you wish to sneak aboard the Darkstar,  
turn to page 15.*

*If you want to use the Graviton to turn the Darkstar  
into a black hole, turn to page 101.*

"I'll take the net," you say.

You hear a loud clap. Suddenly an energy-net appears in your hand.

"There is your weapon," says the woman.

You look down at the net. You once used a similar weapon to capture an Orabeast on Poris-4. The woman shouldn't be more difficult to snare.

You stand your ground and wait till she swings at you with the laser-sword. Ducking out of the way, you let fly the net. Your throw is true. In no time she's wrapped tighter than a pertwing in a web.

Then it's back up the stairs. "Next stop, 2-Tor," you say.

*Go to page 104.*

You close in on the bridge. Now you see the ship's commander, Cypor Scarp, standing beneath the visisteel bridge window.

"Let's finish him off," you say. Your ship is ready to dive.

2-Tor clicks. "First finish those quark cannon under the bridge," he says. "They'll be tough to get through."

*If you go directly for Scarp, dodging the cannons, turn to page 16.*

*If you choose to disable the cannons before going after Scarp, turn to page 107.*

You step gingerly onto a vertically striped square. It's solid. Quickly you hop across the checkerboard to the other side.

After an hour you reach the base of the strange tower. The whole building is composed of rough black crystal.

As you examine the walls, you hear a shout. You look up to see a faceless, hooded figure lowering a force-rope from a high window.

"Grab hold," calls the faceless figure.

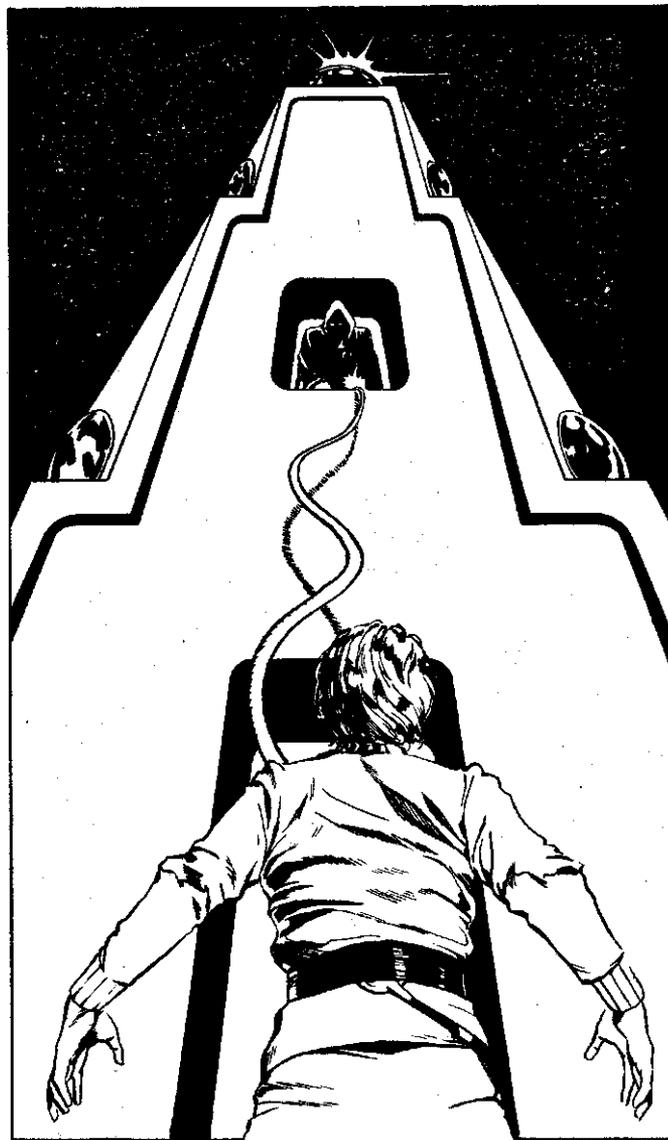
Another window pops into existence in the wall before you. A wrinkled, earless man beckons you in.

"Don't take the rope," he says. "It's a trap. With me you'll be safe."

You wish you had some time to decide what to do. But a tremendous snowstorm howls up out of nowhere. If you don't get inside quickly, you'll freeze.

*If you climb the force-rope, turn to page 42.*

*If you believe the earless man, turn to page 93.*



You check your micro-pulser. Then you burst through the door.

"Don't anyone move!" you command.

The Hage, a squat, warty blob with long arms, leaps up. It can't understand your words, but it understands weapons. It streaks for the door a panic to escape. The Hage even pushes Slee aside with its acid hands.

"Oh, no!" screams the scaly-faced tyrant. "The acid! I'm dissolving!"

As the Hage disappears from view, Slee vanishes into the floor. It only takes a moment or two. Then all that remains of Slee is a thin wisp of smoke.

"Looks like the end of Slee from Zard," you say.

"An end for him," Bishra says. "But a beginning for us. Thanks to you, Mindor is free."

And so are you. Free to pursue another adventure—somewhere in the vastness of space.

*You have completed your mission.  
Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*

You punch a series of buttons marked Gravity Boosters. A tongue of wavering pink gravitons pours over and engulfs the *Darkstar*. The ship presses in on itself. In moments it disappears—reduced to a mini-black hole.

Suddenly, you realize you're moving.

"We're too close to the black hole. It's pulling us in!" 2-Tor's lights flash red.

"I wish you'd mentioned that sooner," you say. Both of you are sucked into unknown depths, from which no one has ever returned.

"At least we destroyed the *Darkstar* and her horrible crew ..." Famous last words.

**ZAP!**

The cyborgs open the door and toss you through. You and 2-Tor land in a room full of green powder.

"Tor," you say. "Can you beam us out of here?"

"I could try, boss. It might be dangerous." Lights flash as 2-Tor uses his sensors. "Slee's teleporter is already on-line. If I activate my warper, there's no telling where we'll be dumped out"

*If you choose to ride the teleporter beam to Zard,  
turn to page 70.*

*If you elect to risk using your own warper,  
turn to page 46.*

You shuttle to the far side of Mindor-6. The power source 2-Tor detected isn't hard to spot. A thick beam of blazing light shoots heavenward. The source? A massive generator, a kilometer wide.

"What do you suppose that is?" you wonder.

"It's a giant teleporter." 2-Tor clicks. "Somebody is moving an awful lot of stuff. That's for sure."

You fire retros and bring the *Challenger* down on a sandy plain. It's not far to the generator.

As you step outside, you see a square-headed cyborg chasing a tall man in a white robe. The cyborg halts, aiming a blaster at the man.

"Help me!" cries the man.

"Stay away from him!" shouts the cyborg. "He's a dangerous criminal!"

*If you choose to let the cyborg fire at the man,  
turn to page 6.*

*If, instead, you want to stun the cyborg with a blast  
from your mini-pulser, turn to page 38.*

At the top of the stairs you find a diamond-shaped panel. Touching the panel makes it slide open instantly. You step into a circular room, lit only by the dim light from the window. The snow still swirls outside.

A tiny beep turns your attention to the shadows. There's 2-Tor.

"Am I glad to see you," you say, rushing to his side. "Where is Andron-Poc, the one who locked you in here?"

"Gone," says 2-Tor. "But only for the moment. Soon he'll be back to drain the rest of my energy."

You hear footsteps coming up the stairs.

"Quickly!" says 2-Tor. "We can't let Andron-Poc find us here!"

In desperation you look about the room. You have only two choices.

*If you choose to grab 2-Tor and leap from the high tower, turn to page 92.*

*If you choose to face Andron-Poc, turn to page 110.*

You bid farewell to the mutants and head for the Forbidden City. Soon you reach the base of the high crumbling wall which surrounds it.

You find two ways to enter. One leads through a jagged hole in the wall. The other way is a scorched steel tube. It juts out of the ground near the base of the wall. The tube, you reason, could let you sneak into the city unseen.

"What do you suggest?" you ask 2-Tor.

"Can't say," the robot says. "I have no input on either entrance. You choose, boss."

*If you elect to go into the tube, turn to page 81.*

*If, though, you want to enter through the wall, turn to page 63.*

"We'll take the tunnel to the right," you say to 2-Tor.

The two of you travel for nearly an hour, until at last you round a corner and spot sunlight ahead. You quicken your pace. The tunnel lets you out in the center of a rubble-strewn city.

"My sensors have located the Crystal Cube of Knowledge," 2-Tor says suddenly. You follow the robot down a narrow alleyway. Then you turn right. A huge, hairless, snouted creature looms before you. It pulls back and snarls. You see a row of teeth that look sharp enough to cut protanium.



Go to page 85.

"Okay, 2-Tor. Let's go for the *Darkstar's* quark cannons." You fire the *Challengers* pulsers. They don't have the firepower to destroy Scarp's guns, but they do knock out the guidance controls.

Now you're free to dive toward the ship's bridge. Another blast of your guns wrecks Scarp's navigational equipment. The *Darkstar* rolls on its side like a dying perth-bloat worm. Moments later Scarp broadcasts a surrender message. You warp him aboard the *Challenger*.

By day's end both you and Scarp are heading back to base. Once there, though, your destinations will be far different. Scarp will head for the *Nebula* star prison. You, mission completed, will...

... report to the *Nebula* on page 115 to find out how you rate as a *Space Ace*.

You boldly step forward and snatch the Cube from its pillar.

"Good," says the voice. "One who risks danger to help others surely is worthy. Take the Crystal Cube of Knowledge. Go. The citizens await you."

You grasp the Cube and set off. A hero's welcome greets you outside.

The mutants set to work with the cube. So does 2-Tor. He finds a way to get in touch with the *Nebula*.

"Great Galaxy!" Captain Polaris exclaims. "We thought Scarp had gotten you! One quick message and poof! you were gone. None of the Attack Teams we sent could find you."

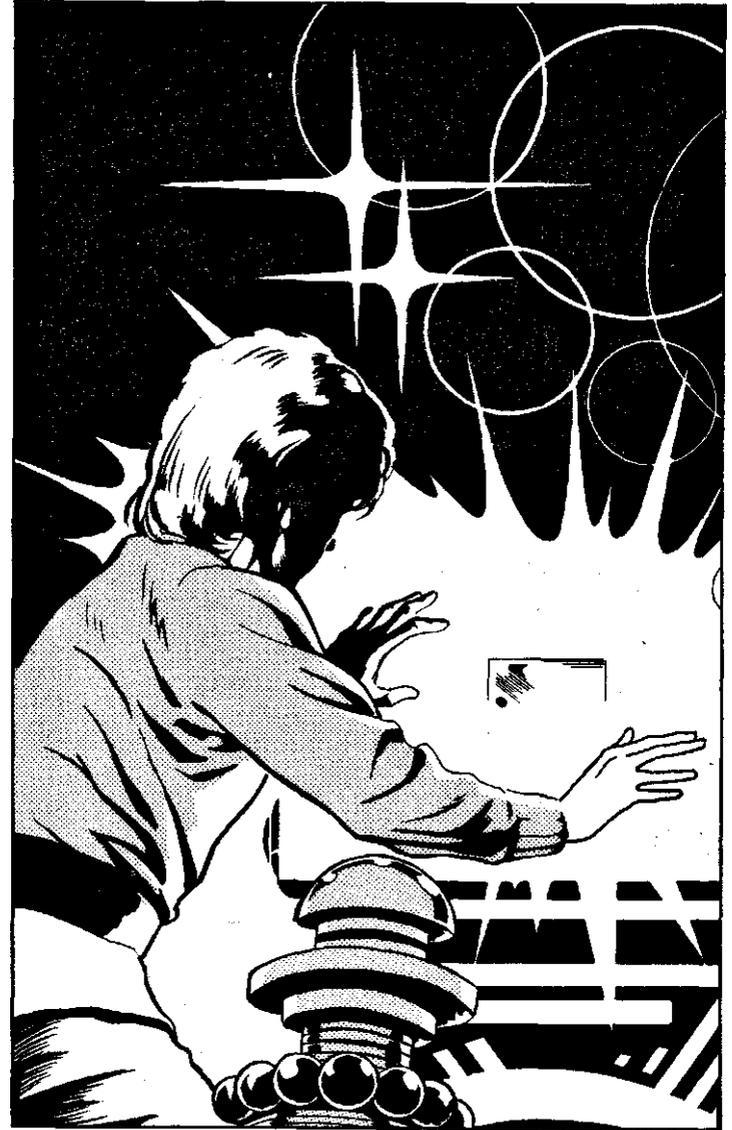
You explain where you went and what happened.

"Don't worry," Polaris says. "It may take a few months to track you down, but a rescue squad is on the way."

"Tor," you say, "we have some time here before returning to the *Nebula*. There's a civilization to rebuild."

2-Tor flashes a series of yellow lights. "After what we've been through, that should be the easy part."

*You have completed your mission.  
Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*

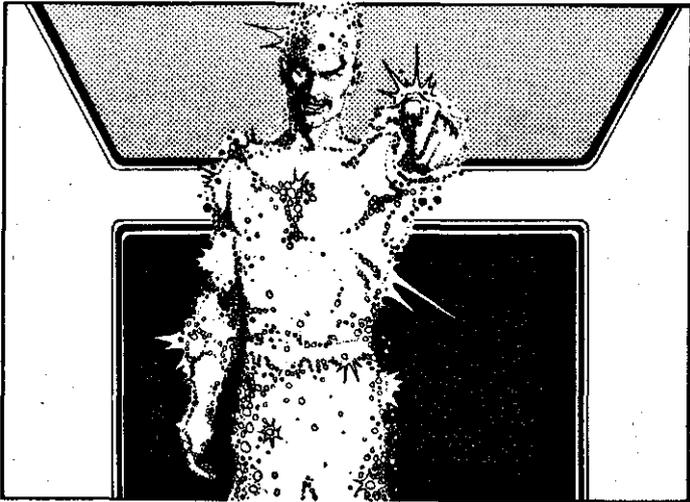


You repair your micro-pulser and aim at the door. But when Andron-Poc appears, his body glows like a reactor gone critical. "More energy!" he crackles.

You can't even squeeze off a pulse. Andron-Poc has drained all the energy from your pulser—and from you. As you collapse, you feel a familiar tingling. Could it be? You're being warped out!

Nanoseconds later, you're in the *Nebula's* Teleportation Room. Dr. Zffrr hovers over you. "2-Tor sent a distress signal with your coordinates."

You turn to your robot friend. All his lights are dark—totally out of energy. So are you. You'll need time to heal before you give your report.



*You have completed your mission.  
Report to the Nebula on page 115  
to find out how you rate as a Space Ace.*

You set off for the tower at once. 2-Tor needs rescuing!

But before you're halfway there you meet a strange barrier. It's a vast expanse of polished marbelite that looks like a giant old-time checkerboard. Some squares are decorated with horizontal white stripes. Others are made of vertical black stripes.

At the edge of the huge board stands a green panel. When you press your hand against it a message is channeled right into your brain.

"Warning, alien. You have come to a void field. Only half the squares are solid. Stepping on the wrong design will drop you into the void. Choose your pattern carefully."

*If you try your luck on the squares with horizontal stripes, turn to page 66.*

*If you think the squares with vertical stripes are the safe ones, turn to page 98.*

You and 2-Tor beam up to the *Challenger*.

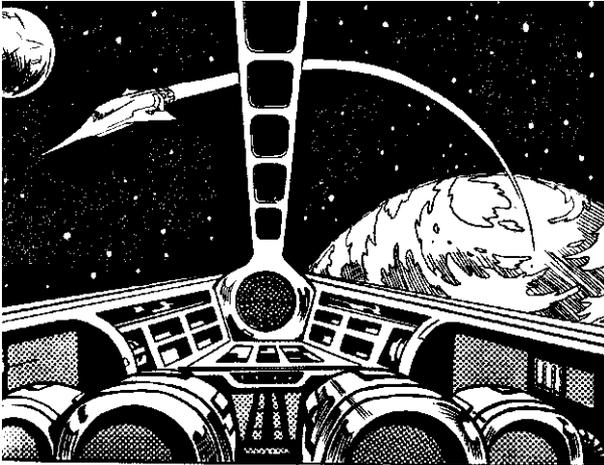
"We must call in the fleet," you tell him. "Slee can't get that kronium back to Zard. The whole galaxy could fall under his domination."

While 2-Tor communicates with the fleet, you see a small ship rising from under the clouds of Mindor-6, heading your way. You focus your high-resolution scanners. The screens show a winged, needle-nosed craft coated with a thick layer of gold.

"That's Slee's ship, the *Firebolt*," you say. "I've seen pictures of her back at headquarters."

2-Tor whistles. "It's a pretty ship."

"Pretty clumsy," you say. "That gold makes her heavier than a bushful of neutrons. Once she gets up near light-speed, she can't stop quickly."



Go to page 40.

Leaving the ship in orbit, 2-Tor warps you down.

You find yourself standing on the steps of what once was a beautiful visisteel and marbelite building. Now it's a pile of twisted beams and smoking rubble.

"I detect a life-form behind that pillar over there, boss." 2-Tor points a claw at a broken hunk of stone on the ruins of the capitol steps.

You set your micro-pulser on STUN. Then you shout in Galactic Interlanguage, "Come out We mean no harm."

You see movement behind the pillar. A tall woman with bulging compound eyes steps out. She holds a large blaster—pointed your way.

"She's a citizen of Mindor," says 2-Tor. "I don't believe she'll harm us."

No sooner has 2-Tor spoken than the woman raises her blaster. She fires off a round that just misses your head.

*If you choose to stun her with your pulser,  
turn to page 86.*

*If you choose to hold your fire and convince her of  
your friendly intentions, turn to page 64.*

The room explodes in a rainbow of pulsing colors. You feel yourself breaking down cell by cell, atom by atom.

The next thing you know, you're standing in a charred, rocky field. A crowd of ragged, half-crazed mutant humanoids surround you.

"Our wishes have been granted!" says a female mutant with pointed ears. "We beg you! Help us! Go into the Forbidden City! Bring out the Crystal Cube of Knowledge!"

2-Tor gives a little squeal. Otherwise he's silent. You're on your own.



*If you decide to run into the barren forest nearby,  
turn to page 21.*

*If you elect to listen to the mutant's story,  
turn to page 48.*



IF YOU WARPED IN FROM PAGE:

13, you get 9,800,396 points.

71, you get 6,250,106 points.

83, you get 8,641,999 points.



CONGRATULATIONS-  
YOU'RE AS SPACEACE!

IF YOU WARPED IN FROM PAGE:

5, you get 506,923 points.

24, you get 785,009 points.

44, you get 446,879 points.



IF CAPTAIN POLARIS  
NEEDS A SECOND IN  
COMMAND, HE'LL KNOW  
WHERE TO LOOK.

IF YOU WARPED IN FROM PAGE:

12, you get 52,689 points.

25, you get 74,489 points.

29, you get 15,615 points.

75, you get 96,757 points.

94, you get 12,420 points.

107, you get 26,159 points.



NOT BAD! PUT IN SOME  
TRAINING TIME ON THE  
*NEBULA* COMPUTER.

IF YOU WARPED IN FROM PAGE:

8, you get 1,929 points.

26, you get 9,432 points.

35, you get 8,243 points.

68, you get 9,998 points.

69, you get 9,886 points.

110, you get 8,238 points.



YOU'RE ASSIGNED TO  
ASTEROID PATROL UNTIL  
FURTHER NOTICE.

IF YOU WARPED IN FROM PAGE:

79, you get 287 points.

87, you get 198 points.

100, you get 823 points.

108, you get 420 points.



GO BACK TO THE SPACE  
ACADEMY!

TO TRY ANOTHER ADVENTURE IN  
*PLANETS IN PERIL*, GO TO PAGE 3.

OR

TO TAKE ON A COMPLETELY NEW CHALLENGE,  
GO TO *STAR CHALLENGE #2:*  
*THE ANDROID INVASION*