

THE SONS OF JAPHETH

By RICHARD WILSON

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*His duty was clear and simple: strafe Noah's
ark and kill every human on it. The tricky
part was making sure the animals lived!*

Pilot Officer Roy Vanjan happened to be spaceborne when the Earth exploded. In that way he escaped the annihilation along with one other man, revered old Dr. Garfield Gar, who was in the space station.

Roy had backed well off in preparation for a mach ten dive on Kabul, which the enemy had lately taken over. He had one small omnibomb left in his racks and Kabul had seemed to be about the right size. But then the destruction of Earth changed his plans.



He watched, expressionless, as the planet exploded. He shrugged. There was nothing to do now but go see Dr. Gar.

Roy's foescope clamored insistently and he tensed, thinking a spaceborne enemy was on him, but it was only a piece of exploding Earth stumbling by.

Dr. Gar was alone in the space station because all able-bodied men had been called to fight World War V. The governments of Earth, in a rare moment of conscience during the Short Truce, had agreed that Dr. Gar, as the embodiment of all Earthly knowledge, should be protected from harm.

Pilot Officer Roy Vanjan didn't receive as warm a reception from old Dr. Gar as he might have, considering that they were the only

two people left. The old man was combing his white beard with his fingers and didn't offer to shake hands.

"Well," said Roy as he defused his bomb and secured his single-seater in the spacelock, "I guess it's all over."

"Scarcely a historic statement," Dr. Gar said, "but it describes the situation."

"If you don't have anything for me to do I'd just as soon have a drink. They usually let me have a stiff one after I complete a mission."

Dr. Gar examined the hard young pilot from under shaggy white eyebrows. "I do have another mission for you but you can have a drink first. Peach brandy is all that's left."

"That'll be fine," Roy said. "I was never particular."

"Then you're my man," Dr. Gar said, giving him a deep look, "because I want you to go back in time and destroy humanity."

"Whatever you say." Roy's training showed. "But if I may comment, wouldn't that be superfluous? Except for you and me the human race is finished. We've achieved our objective." He spoke without irony.

"Never *my* objective."

"I'm not a scholar and I mean no offense," Roy said, "but I believe it was the co-ordinated spatial theory you announced back in '06 that made it possible."

"Misapplication," Dr. Gar said wearily, not wanting to go into it further for such an audience. Though, he thought, he'd never have another. "Come into my study and have your brandy."

"I still don't understand," Roy said later. He reached tentatively for the bottle. When the old man made no objection he poured a second stiff one.

"You want me to go back in time and wipe out all human life," Roy said. "I assume you'll tell me when and where. All right. That would destroy our ancestors and so we'd cease to exist, too. Wouldn't it be simpler to kill ourselves now? That is, if you see no point to our further existence."

Old Dr. Gar watched the other remnant of Earthly life twirl the brandy in the goblet. He looked at the viewscreen. It showed a panorama of rock dust and steam where Earth had been.

"You forget that we have annihilated everything," Dr. Gar said, gazing pensively at the screen. "Mankind, the animals, plant life and the tiny things that creep the earth or swim the waters. Your mission will be more selective."

"Selective? How?"

"You'll destroy man, but the rest will live. They may evolve into something better."

"If you say so, Doctor." Roy's devotion to duty was a well-worn path. "Assuming you have the machine and I can operate it."

"The machine is merely an attachment. It will plug into the instrument panel of your spacecraft. It operates automatically."

"Good enough. You always were a whiz at these things. How far back do I go? And who do I kill?"

"I want you to strafe the Ark, exercising care not to hurt any of the animals," said old Dr. Garfield Gar.

"Noah's Ark?" Pilot Officer Roy Vanjan asked. "You mean during the Flood?"

"Yes, I've computed it exactly. You won't have to worry about getting there at the wrong time."

"You mean after the forty days' rain, so I'll have good visibility. Good-o." He agreed readily and he'd do as the doctor said, of course, but he permitted a trace of skepticism in his inflection and a searching look into his goblet.

"No, not the fortieth day," Dr. Gar said, "but in what we are told was the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month. The animals need dry land. I have it all figured out."

"I hope so. I mean I'm sure you have. You're the doctor, of course, but wasn't there some doubt about the accuracy of the old Book? I didn't know you were a fundamentalist."

"Am I not the repository of all human knowledge?" Dr. Gar asked. He was not a bit angry with Roy Vanjan. "Am I not the last best hope? Has not all else failed us?"

"Well, sure—"

"Did not the Noahic Covenant, under which human government was established, fail? Has not Japhetic science been our undoing?"

Roy looked lost. "I'm no scholar, Doctor."

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