ALSO BY KIM STANLEY ROBINSON

Red Mars
Green Mars
Blue Mars

The Martians

Antarctica

Escape from Kathmandu
The Memory of Whiteness
A Short, Sharp Shock
Down and Out in the Year 2000
Icehenge

The Years of Rice and Salt

KIM STANLEY ROBINSON

Vinland the Dream

and Other Stories

HarperCollins Publishers
He returned to the very tip of the point, feeling the wind like slaps on the ear. He sat with his legs hanging over the drop, the ocean on three sides of him, the wind pouring across him, left to right. The horizon was a line where purest blue met bluest black. He kicked his heels against the rock. He could see just well enough to tell which pages in the notebooks had writing on them; he tore these from the wire spirals, and bunched them into balls and threw them away. They flew off to the right and disappeared immediately in the murk and whitecaps. When he had disposed of all the pages he had written on he cleared the long torn shreds of paper out of the wire rings, and tossed them after the rest.

It was getting cold, and the wind was a constant kinetic assault. He went back to the car and sat in the passenger seat. His notebooks lay on the driver’s seat. The western horizon was a deep blue, now. Must be eleven at least.

After a time he lit the candle and set it on the dash. The car was still rocking in the wind, and the candle flame danced and trembled on its wick. All the black shadows in the car shivered too, synchronized perfectly with the flame.

He picked up a notebook and opened it. There were a few pages left between damp cardboard covers. He found a pen in his daypack. He rested his hand on the page, the pen in position to write, its tip in the quivering shadow of his hand. He wrote, ‘I believe that man is good. I believe we stand at the dawn of a century that will be more peaceful and prosperous than any in history.’ Outside it was dark, and the wind howled.

Remaking History

THE POINT IS not to make an exact replica of the Teheran embassy compound. Exasperated, Ivan Venutshenko grabbed his hair in one hand and pulled up, which gave him a faintly Oriental look. It’s the spirit of the place that we want to invoke here.

‘This has the spirit of our storage warehouse, if you ask me.’

‘This is our storage warehouse, John. We make all our movies here.’

‘But I thought you said we were going to correct all the lies of the first movie,’ John Rand said to their director. ‘I thought you said Escape From Teheran was a dumb TV docudrama, only worth remembering because of De Niro’s performance as Colonel Jackson. We’re going to get the true story on film at last, you said.’

Ivan sighed. ‘That’s right, John. Admirable memory.'
VINLAND THE DREAM

But what you must understand is that when making a film, *true* doesn’t mean an absolute fidelity to the real. ‘I’ll bet that’s just what the director of the docudrama said.’

Ivan hissed, which he did often while directing their films, to show that he was letting off steam, and avoiding an explosion. ‘Don’t be obstructionist, John. We’re not doing anything like that hackwork, and you know it. Lunar gravity alone makes it impossible for us to make a completely realist film. We are working in a world of dream, in a surrealist intensification of what really happened. Besides, we’re doing these movies for our own entertainment up here! Remake bad historical films! Have a good time!’

‘Sure, Ivan. Sure. Except the ones you’ve directed have been getting some great reviews downside. They’re saying you’re the new Eisenstein and these little remakes are the best thing to hit the screen since *Kane*. So now the pressure is on and it’s not just a game anymore, right?’

‘Wrong!’ Ivan karate-chopped the air. ‘I refuse to believe that. When we stop having fun doing this’ — nearly shouting — ‘I quit!’

‘Sure, Sergei.’

‘Don’t call me that!’

‘Okay, Orson.’

‘JOHN!’

‘But that’s my name. If I call you that we’ll all get confused.’

Melina Gourtsianis, their female lead, came to Ivan’s rescue. ‘Come on, John, you’ll give him a heart attack, and besides it’s late. Let’s get on with it.’

REMAKING HISTORY

Ivan calmed down, ran his hands through his hair. He loved doing his maddened director routine, and John loved maddening him. As they disagreed about nearly everything, they made a perfect team. ‘Fine,’ Ivan said. ‘Okay. We’ve got the set ready, and it may not be an exact replica of the compound —’ fierce glare at John — ‘but it’s good enough.

‘Now, let’s go through it one more time. It’s night in Teheran. This whole quarter of the city has been gassed with a paralysing nerve gas, but there’s no way of telling when the Revolutionary Guards might come barrelling in from somewhere else with gas masks or whatever, and you can’t be sure some of them haven’t been protected from the gas in sealed rooms. Any moment they might jump out firing. Your helicopters are hovering just overhead, so it’s tremendously noisy. There’s a blackout in the compound, but searchlights from other parts of the city are beginning to pin the choppers. They’ve been breaking like cheap toys all the way in, so now there are only five left, and you have no assurances that they will continue to work, especially since twice that number have already broken. You’re all wearing gas masks and moving through the rooms of the compound, trying to find and move all fifty-three of the hostages — it’s dark and most of the hostages are knocked out like the guards, but some of the rooms were well-sealed, and naturally these hostages are shouting for help. For a while — and this is the effect I want to emphasize more than any other — for a while, things inside are absolutely chaotic. No one can find Colonel Jackson, no one knows how many of the hostages are recovered and how many are still in
the embassy, it's dark, it's noisy, there are shots in the distance. I want an effect like the scene at the end of *The Lady from Shanghai*, when they're in the carnival's house of mirrors shooting at each other. Multiplied by ten. Total chaos.'

'Now hold on just a second here,' John said, exaggerating his Texas accent, which came and went according to his convenience. 'I like the chaos bit, and the allusion to Welles, but let's get back to this issue of the facts. Colonel Jackson was the hero of this whole thing! He was the one that decided to go on with all them helicopters busting out in the desert, and he was the one that found Annette Bellows in the embassy to lead them around, and all in all he was on top of every minute of it. That's why they gave him all them medals!'

Ivan glared. 'What part are you playing, John?'

'Why, Colonel Jackson.' John drew himself up. 'Natch.'

'However.' Ivan tapped the side of his head, to indicate thought. 'You don't just want to do a bad imitation of the De Niro performance, do you? You want to do a new interpretation, don't you? Besides, it seems to me a foolish idea to try an imitation of De Niro.'

'I like the idea, myself,' John said. 'Show him how.'

Ivan waved him away. 'You got all you know about this affair from that stupid TV movie, just like everyone else. I, however, have been reading the accounts of the hostages and the Marines on those helicopters, and the truth is that Colonel Jackson's best moment was out there in the desert, when he decided to go on with the mission even though only five helicopters were still functioning. That was his peak of glory, his moment of heroism. And you did a perfectly adequate job of conveying that when we filmed the scene. We could see every little gear in there, grinding away.' He tapped his skull.

'De Niro would have been proud,' Melina said.

John pursed his lips and nodded. 'We need great men like that. Without them history would be dead. It'd be nothing but a bunch of broken-down helicopters out in a desert somewhere.'

'A trenchant image of history,' Ivan said. 'Too bad Shelley got to it first. Meanwhile, the truth is that after making the decision to go on with the raid, Colonel Jackson appeared, in the words of his subordinates, somewhat stunned. When they landed on the embassy roof he led the first unit in, and when they got lost inside, the whole force was effectively without leadership for most of the crucial first half-hour. All the accounts of this period describe it as the utmost chaos, saved only when Sergeant Payton – *not* Colonel Jackson; the TV movie lied about that – when Payton found Ms Bellows, and she led them to all the hostage rooms they hadn't found.'

'All right, all right.' John frowned. 'So I'm supposed to be kind of spaced out in this scene.'

'Don't go for too deep an analysis, John, you might strain something. But essentially you have it. Having committed the force to the raid, even though you're vastly undermanned because of the damned helicopters breaking down, you're a bit frozen by the risk of it. Got that?'

'Yeah. But I don't believe it. Jackson was a hero.'

'Fine, a hero, lots of medals. Roomfuls of medals. If
he pinned them on 'he'd look like the bride after the dollar dance. He'd collapse under their weight. But now let's try showing what really happened.'

'All right.' John drew himself up. 'I'm ready.'

The shooting of the scene was the part they all enjoyed the most; this was the heart of the activity, the reason they kept making movies to occupy their free hours at Luna Three. Ivan and John and Melina and Pierre-Paul, the theoreticians who traded directing chores from project to project, always blocked the scenes very loosely, allowing a lot of room for improvisation. Thus scenes like this one, which were supposed to be chaotic, were played out with a manic gusto. They were good at chaos.

And so for nearly a half-hour they rushed about the interior of their Teheran embassy compound – the base storage warehouse, with its immense rows of boxes arranged behind white panels of plywood to resemble the compound's buildings and their interiors. Their shouts were nearly drowned by the clatter of recorded helicopters, while intermittent lights flashed in the darkness. Cutouts representing the helicopters were pasted to the clear dome overhead, silhouetted against the unearthly brilliance of the stars – these last had become a trademark of Luna Three Productions, as their frequent night scenes always had these unbelievably bright stars overhead, part of the films' dreamlike effect.

The actors playing Marines bounded about the compound in their gas masks, looking like aliens descended to ravage a planet; the actors playing hostages and Revolutionary Guards lay scattered on the floor, except for a few in protected rooms, who fought or cried for help. John and Pierre-Paul and the rest hunted the compound for Melina, playing Annette Bellows. For a while it looked as if John would get to her first, thus repeating the falsehood of the De Niro film. But eventually Pierre-Paul, playing Sergeant Payton, located her room, and he and his small unit rushed about after the clear-headed Bellows, who, as she wrote later, had spent most of her months in captivity planning what she should do if this moment ever came. They located the remaining comatose hostages and lugged them quickly to the plywood helicopter on the compound roof. The sound of shots punctuated the helicopters' roar. They leaped through the helicopter's door, shafts of white light stabbing the air like Islamic swords.

That was it; the flight away would be filmed in their little helicopter interior. Ivan turned off the helicopter noise, shouted 'Cut!' into a megaphone. Then he shut down all the strategically placed minicams, which had been recording every minute of it.

'What bothers me about your movies, Ivan,' John said, 'is that you always take away the hero. Always!'

They were standing in the shallow end of the base pool, cooling off while they watched the day's rushes on a screen filling one wall of the natatorium. Many of the screens showed much the same result: darkness, flickering light, alien shapes moving in the elongated dance-like way that audiences on Earth found so surreal, so mesmerizing. There was little indication of the pulsing rhythms and wrenching suspense that Ivan's editing would create from this material. But the actors were
happy, seeing arresting images of desperation, of risk, of heroism in the face of a numbingly loud confusion. Ivan was not as pleased. ‘Shit!’ he said. ‘We’re going to have to do it again.’

‘Looks okay to me,’ John remarked. ‘Son of Film Noir Returns From the Grave. But really, Ivan, you’ve got to do something about this prejudice against heroes. I saw Escape From Teheran when I was a kid, and it was an inspiration to me. It was one of the big reasons I got into engineering.’

Pierre-Paul objected. ‘John, just how did seeing a commando film get you interested in engineering?’

‘Well,’ John replied, frowning. ‘I thought I’d design a better helicopter, I guess.’ He ignored his friends’ laughter. ‘I was pretty shocked at how unreliable they were. But the way old De Niro continued on to Teheran! The way he extricated all the hostages and got them back safely, even with the choppers dropping like flies. It was great! We need heroes, and history tells the story of the few people who had what it takes to be one. But you’re always downplaying them.’


‘Sure!’ John admitted. ‘Great Woman too, of course,’ nodding quickly at the frowning Melina. ‘It’s the great leaders who make the difference. They’re special people, and there aren’t many of them. But if you believe Ivan’s films, there aren’t any at all.’

With a snort of disgust, Ivan took his attention from the rushes. ‘Hell, we are going to have to do that scene again. As for my theory of history, John, you both have it and you don’t. As far as I understand you.’ He cocked his head and looked at his friend attentively. On the set they both played their parts to the teeth: Ivan the tormented, temperamental director, gnashing his teeth and ordering people about; John the stubborn, temperamental star, questioning everything and insisting on his preeminence. Mostly this was role-playing, part of the game, part of what made their hobby entertaining to them. Off the set the roles largely disappeared, except to make a point, or have some fun. Ivan was the base’s head of computer operations, while John was an engineer involved in the Mars voyage; they were good friends, and their arguments had done much to shape Ivan’s ideas for his revisionist historical films, which were certainly the ones from their little troupe making the biggest splash downside – though John claimed this was because of the suspenseful plots and the weird low-gee imagery, not because of what they were saying about history. ‘Do I understand you?’ Ivan asked curiously.

‘Well,’ John said, ‘take the one you did last time, about the woman who saved John Lennon’s life. Now that was a perfect example of heroic action, as the 1982 docudrama made clear. There she was, standing right next to a man who had pulled out a damn big gun, and quicker than he could pull the trigger she put a foot in his crotch and a fist in his ear. But in your remake, all we concentrated on was how she had just started the karate class that taught her the moves, and how her husband encouraged her to take the class, and how that cabbie stopped for her even though she was going the other direction, and how that other cabbie told her that Lennon had just walked into his apartment lobby, and all that. You made it seem like it was just a coincidence!’
VINLAND THE DREAM

Ivan took a mouthful of pool water and spat it at the spangled dome, looking like a fountain statue. 'It took a lot of coincidences to get Margaret Arvis into the Dakota lobby at the right time,' he told John. 'But some of them weren't coincidences - they were little acts of generosity or kindness or consideration, that put her where she could do what she did. I didn't take the heroism away. I just spread it around to all the places it belonged.'

John grimaced, drew himself up into his star persona. 'I suppose this is some damn Commie notion of mass social movements, sweeping history along in a consensus direction.'

'No, no,' Ivan said. 'I always concentrate on individuals. What I'm saying is that all our individual actions add up to history, to the big visible acts of our so-called "leaders". You know what I mean; you hear people saying all the time that things are better now because John Lennon was such a moral force, travelling everywhere, Nobel Peace Prize, secular pope, the conscience of the world or whatnot.'

'Well, he was the conscience of the world!' 'Sure, sure, he wrote great songs. And he got a lot of antagonists to talk. But without Margaret Arvis he would have been killed at age forty. And without Margaret Arvis's husband, and her karate instructor, and a couple cabbies in New York, and so on, she wouldn't have been there to save his life. So we all become part of it, see? The people who say it was all because of Lennon, or Carter, or Gorbachev - they're putting on a few people what we all did.'

John shook his head, scattering water everywhere.

REMAKING HISTORY

'Very sophisticated, I'm sure! But in fact it was precisely Lennon and Carter and Gorbachev who made huge differences, all by themselves. Carter started the big swing towards human rights. Palestine, the new Latin America, the American Indian nations - none of those would have existed without him.'

'In fact,' Melina added, glancing mischievously at Pierre-Paul, 'if I understand the Margaret Arvis movie correctly, if she hadn't been going to see Carter thank his New York campaign workers for the 1980 victory, she wouldn't have been in the neighbourhood of the Dakota, and so she wouldn't have had the chance to save Lennon's life.'

John rose up like a whale breaching. 'So it's Carter we have to thank for that, too! As for Gorbachev, well, I don't have to tell you what all he did. That was a hundred-eighty degree turnaround for you Russkies, and no one can say it would have happened without him.'

'Well - he was an important leader, I agree.'

'Sure was! And Carter was just as crucial. Their years were the turning point, when the world started to crawl out from under the shadow of World War Two. And that was their doing. There just aren't many people who could've done it. Most of us don't have it in us.'

Ivan shook his head. 'Carter wouldn't have been able to do what he did unless Colonel Ernest Jackson had saved the rescue mission to Teheran, by deciding to go on.'

'So Jackson is a hero too!' 'But then Jackson wouldn't have been a hero if the officer back in the Pentagon hadn't decided at the last minute to send sixteen helicopters instead of eight.'
'And,' Melina pointed out quickly, 'if Annette Bellows hadn't spent most of a year daydreaming about what she would do in a rescue attempt, so that she knew blindfolded where every other hostage was being kept. They would have left about half the hostages behind without her, and Carter wouldn't have looked so good.'

'Plus they needed Sergeant Payton to find Bellows,' Ivan added.

'Well shit!' John yelled defensively, which was his retort in any tight spot. He changed tack. 'I ain't so sure that Carter's reelection hinged on those hostages anyway. He was running against a flake, I can't remember the guy's name, but he was some kind of idiot.'

'So?' Melina said. 'Since when has that made any difference?'

With a roar John dove at her, making a big splash. She was much faster than he was, however, and she evaded him easily as he chased her around the pool; it looked like a whale chasing a dolphin. He was reduced to splashing at her from a distance, and the debate quickly degenerated into a big splash fight, as it often did.

'Oh well,' John declared, giving up the attack and floating in the shallow end. 'I love watching Melina swim the butterfly. In this gravity it becomes a godlike act. Those muscular arms, that sinuous dolphin motion . . .'

Pierre-Paul snorted. 'You just like the way the butterfly puts her bottom above water so often.'

'No way! Women are just more hydrodynamic than men, don't you think?'

'REMAKING HISTORY

'Not the way you like them.'

'Godlike. Gods and goddesses.'

'You look a bit godlike yourself,' Melina told him. 'Bacchus, for instance.'

'Hey.' John waved her off, jabbed a finger at the screens. 'I note that all this mucho sophisticated European theorizing has been sunk. Took a bit of Texas logic, is all.'

'Only Texas logic could do it,' Pierre-Paul said.

'Right. You admit my point. In the end it's the great leaders who have to act, the rare ones, no matter if we ordinary folks help them into power.'

'When you revise your proposition like that,' Ivan said, 'you turn it into mine. Leaders are important, but they are leaders because we made them leaders. They are a collective phenomenon. They are expressions of us.'

'Now wait just a minute! You're going over the line again! You're talking like heroic leaders are a dime a dozen, but if that were true it wouldn't matter if Carter had lost in 1980, or if Lennon had been killed by that guy. But look at history, man! Look what happened when we did lose great leaders! Lincoln was shot; did they come up with another leader comparable to him? No way! Same with Gandhi, and the Kennedys, and King, and Sadat, and Olof Palme. When those folks were killed their countries suffered the lack of them, because they were special.'

'They were special,' Ivan agreed, 'and obviously it was a bad thing they were killed. And no doubt there was a short-term change for the worse. But they're not irreplaceable, because they're human beings just like
us. None of them, except maybe Lincoln or Gandhi, was any kind of genius or saint. It's only afterwards we think of them that way, because we want heroes so much. But we're the heroes. All of us put them in place. And there are a lot of capable, brilliant people out there to replace the loss of them, so that in the long run we recover.'

'The real long run,' John said darkly. 'A hundred years or more, for the South without Lincoln. They just aren't that common. The long run proves it.'

'Speaking of the long run,' Pierre-Paul said, 'is anyone getting hungry?'

They all were. The rushes were over, and Ivan had dismissed them as unusable. They climbed out of the pool and walked towards the changing room, discussing restaurants. There were a considerable number of them in the station, and new ones were opening every week. 'I just tried the new Hungarian restaurant,' Melina said. 'The food was good, but we had trouble, when the meal was over, finding someone to give us the check!'

'I thought you said it was a Hungarian restaurant,' John said.

They threw him back in the pool.

The second time they ran through the rescue scene in the compound, Ivan had repositioned most of the minicams, and many of the lights; his instructions to the actors remained the same. But once inside the hallways of the set, John Rand couldn't help hurrying in the general direction of Annette Bellows's room.

All right, he thought. Maybe Colonel Jackson had been a bit hasty to rush into the compound in search of hostages, leaving the group without a commander. But his heart had been in the right place, and the truth was, he had found a lot of the hostages without any help from Bellows at all. It was easy; they were scattered in ones and twos on the floor of almost every room he and his commandos entered, and stretched out along with the guards in the rooms and in the halls, paralysed by the nerve gas. Damn good idea, that nerve gas. Guards and hostages, tough parts to play, no doubt, as they were getting kicked pretty frequently by commandos running by. He hustled his crew into room after room, then sent them off with hostages draped over their shoulders, pretending to stagger down the halls, banging into walls – really tough part to play, hostage – and clutching at gas masks and such; great images for the minicams, no doubt about it.

When all his commandos had been sent back, he ran around a corner in what he believed to be the direction of Annette Bellows's room. Over the racket of the helicopters, and the occasional round of automatic fire, he thought he could make out Melina's voice, shouting hoarsely. So Pierre-Paul hadn't gotten to her yet. Good. Now he could find her and be the one to follow her around rescuing the more obscurely housed hostages, just as De Niro had in the docudrama. It would give Ivan fits, but they could argue it out afterwards. No way of telling what had really happened in that compound twenty years before, after all; and it made a better story his way.

Their set was only one storey tall, which was one of the things that John had objected to; the compound in Teheran had been four storeys high, and getting up stairs
had been part of the hassle. But Ivan was going to play
with the images and shoot a few stair scenes later on,
to achieve the effect of multiple floors. Fine, it meant
he had only to struggle around a couple of narrow
corners, jumping comatose Revolutionary Guards, look-
ing fierce for the minicams wherever they were. It was
really loud this time around; really loud.

Then one of the walls fell over on him, the plywood
pinning him to the ground, the boxes behind it tumbling
down and filling the hallway. 'Hey!' he cried out,
shocked. This wasn't the way it had happened. What
was going on? The noise of the helicopters cut off
abruptly, replaced by a series of crashes, a whooshing
sound. That sound put a fine electric thrill down his
spine; he had heard it before, in training routines. Air
leaving the chamber. The dome must have been
breached.

He heaved up against the plywood. Stuck. Flattening
himself as much as possible he slithered forward, under
the plywood and out into a small space among fallen
boxes. Hard to tell where the hallway had been, and it
was pitch-dark. There wouldn't be too much time left.
He thought of his little gas mask, then cursed, it wasn't
connected to a real oxygen supply. That's what comes
from using fake props! he thought angrily. A gas mask
with nothing attached to it. Open to the air, which was
departing rapidly. Not much time.

He found room among the boxes to stand, and he
was about to run over them to the door leading out of
the warehouse - assuming the whole station hadn't been
breached - when he remembered Melina. Stuck in her
embassy room down the hall, wouldn't she still be

there? Hell. He groped along in the dark, hearing shouts
in the distance. He saw lights, too. Good. He was hold-
ing his breath, for what felt like minutes at a time,
though it was probably less than thirty seconds. Every
time he sucked in a new breath he expected it to be
the freezing vacuum, but the supply of rushing, cold -
very cold - air continued to fill him. Emergency supply
pouring out into the breach, actually a technique he
had helped develop himself. Seemed to be working, at
least for the moment.

He heard a muffled cry to one side, began to pull at
the boxes before him. Squeak in the gloom, ah-ha, there
she was. Not fully conscious. Legs wet, probably blood,
uh-oh. He pulled hard at boxes, lifted her up. Adrenaline
and lunar gravity made him feel like Superman with
that part of things, but there didn't seem to be anywhere
near as much air as before, and what was left was
damned cold. Hurt to breathe. And harder than hell to
balance as he hopped over objects with Melina in his
arms. Feeling faint, he climbed over a row of boxes and
staggered towards a distant light. A sheet of plywood
smacked his shin and he cried out, then fell over. 'Hey,'
he said. The air was gone.

When he came to he was lying in a bed in the station
hospital. 'Great,' he muttered. 'Whole station wasn't
blown up.'

His friends laughed, relieved to hear him speak. The
whole film crew was in there, it seemed. Ivan, stand-
ing next to the bed, said, 'It's okay.'

'What the hell happened?'

'A small meteor, apparently. Hit out in our sector,
in the shuttle landing chambers, ironically. But it wrecked our storage space as well, as you no doubt noticed.'

John nodded painfully. 'So it finally happened.'

'Yes.' This was one of the great uncontrollable dangers of the lunar stations; meteors small and large were still crashing down onto the moon's airless surface, by the thousands every year. Odds were poor that anyone would hit something as small as the surface parts of their station, but coming down in such numbers ... In the long run they were reduced to a safety status somewhat equivalent to that of mountain climbers. Rockfall could always get you.

'Melina?' John said, jerking up in his bed.

'Over here,' Melina called. She was a few beds down, and had one leg in a cast. 'I'm fine, John.' She got out of bed to prove it, and came over to kiss his cheek. 'Thanks for the rescue!'

John snorted. 'What rescue?'

They laughed again at him. Pierre-Paul pointed a forefinger at him. 'There are heroes everywhere, even among the lowest of us. Now you have to admit Ivan's argument.'

'The hell I do.'

'You're a hero,' Ivan said to him, grinning. 'Just an ordinary man, so to speak. Not one of the great leaders at all. But by saving Melina, you've changed history.'

'Not unless she becomes president,' John said, and laughed. 'Hey Melina! Go out and run for office! Or save some promising song-writer or something.'

Ivan just shook his head. 'Why are you so stubborn? It's not so bad if I'm right, John. Think about it. If I am right, then we aren't just sitting around waiting for leaders to guide us.' A big grin lit his face. 'We become the masters of our fate, we make our own decisions and act on them—we choose our leaders, and instruct them by consensus, so that we can take history any direction we please! Just as you did in the warehouse.'

John lay back in his bed and was silent. Around him his friends grinned; one of them was bringing up a big papier-mâché medal, which vaguely resembled the one the Wizard of Oz pins to the Cowardly Lion. 'Ah hell,' John said.

'When the expedition reaches Mars, they'll have to name something after you,' Melina said.

John thought about it for a while. He took the big medal, held it limply. His friends watched him, waiting for him to speak.

'Well, I still say it's bullshit,' he told Ivan. 'But if there is any truth to what you say, it's just the good old spirit of the Alamo you're talking about, anyway. We've been doing it like that in Texas for years.'

They laughed at him.

He rose up from the bed again, swung the medal at them furiously. 'I swear it's true! Besides, it's all Robert De Niro's fault, anyway! I was imitating the real heroes, don't you see? I was crawling around in there all dazed, and then I saw De Niro's face when he was playing Colonel Jackson in the Teheran embassy, and I said to myself, well hell, what would he have done in this here situation? And that's just what I did.'