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SHE WAS MADE FOR LOVE!

a rowdy story

by

ROBERT SHECKLEY

∞ Infinity

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Editor—LARRY T. SHAW

Production Manager—HELEN SKALET

Associate Editor—MONTY HOWARD

Art Director—RICHARD KLUGA

Assistant Editor—LEE HOFFMAN

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Accept No Substitutes

By ROBERT SHECKLEY

RALPH GARVEY'S private space yacht was in the sling at Boston Spaceport, ready for takeoff. He was on yellow standby, waiting for the green, when his radio crackled.

"Tower to G43221," the radio buzzed. "Please await customs inspection."

"Righto," said Garvey, with a calmness he did not feel. Within him, something rolled over and died.

Customs inspection! Of all the black, accursed, triple-distilled bad luck! There was no regular inspection of small private yachts. The Department had its hands full with the big interstellar liners from Cassiopeia, Algol, Deneb, and a thousand other places. Private ships just weren't worth the time and money. But to keep them in line, Customs held occasional spot checks. No one knew when the mobile customs team would descend upon any particular spaceport. But chances of being inspected at any one time were less than fifty to one.

Garvey had been counting on that factor. And he had paid eight hundred dollars to know for certain that the East coast team was in Georgia. Otherwise, he would never have risked a twenty-year jail sentence for violation of the Sexual Morality Act.

There was a loud rap on his port. "Open for inspection, please."

"Righto," Garvey called out. He locked the door to the aftercabin. If the inspector wanted to

The Sexual Morality Act was fierce to buck, but the Algolian sex surrogate was . . . er . . . even fiercer!

Illustrated by ED EMSH

look there, he was sunk. There was no place in the ship where he could successfully conceal a packing case ten feet high, and no way he could dispose of its illegal contents.

"I'm coming," Garvey shouted. Beads of perspiration stood out on his high, pale forehead. He thought wildly of blasting off anyhow, running for it, to Mars, Venus. . . . But the patrol ships would get him before he had covered a million miles. There was nothing he could do but try to bluff it.

He touched a button. The hatch slid back and a tall, thin uniformed man entered.

"Thought you'd get away with it, eh, Garvey?" the inspector barked. "You rich guys never learn!"

Somehow, they had found out! Garvey thought of the packing crate in the after cabin, and its human-shaped, not-yet-living contents. Damning, absolutely damning. What a fool he'd been!

HE TURNED back to the control panel. Hanging from a corner of it, in a cracked leather holster, was his revolver. Rather than face twenty years breaking pumice on Lunar, he would shoot, then try—

"The Sexual Morality Act isn't a blue law, Garvey," the inspector continued, in a voice like steel against flint. "Violations can have a catastrophic effect upon the individual, to say nothing of the race. That's why we're going to make an example of you, Garvey. Now let's see the evidence."

"I don't know what in hell you're talking about," Garvey said. Surreptitiously his hand began to creep toward the revolver.

"Wake up, boy!" said the inspector. "You mean you *still* don't recognize me?"

Garvey stared at the inspector's tanned, humorous face. He said, "Eddie Starbuck?"

"About time! How long's it been, Ralph? Ten years?"

"At least ten," Garvey said. His knees were beginning to shake from sheer relief. "Sit down, sit down, Eddie! You still drink bourbon?"

"I'll say." Starbuck sat down on one of Garvey's acceleration couches. He looked around, and nodded.

"Nice. Very nice. You must be rich indeed, old buddy."

"I get by," Garvey said. He handed Starbuck a drink, and poured one for himself. They talked for a while about old times at Michigan State.

"And now you're a Customs inspector," Garvey said.

"Yeah," said Starbuck, stretching his long legs. "Always had a yen for the law. But it doesn't pay like transistors, eh?"

Garvey smiled modestly. "But what's all this about the Sexual

Morality Act? A gag?"

"Not at all. Didn't you hear the news this morning? The FBI found an underground sex factory. They hadn't been in business long, so it was possible to recover all the surrogates. All except one."

"Oh?" said Garvey, draining his drink.

"Yeah. That's when they called us in. We're covering all spaceports, on the chance the receiver will try to take the damned thing off Earth."

Garvey poured another drink and said, very casually, "So you figured I was the boy, eh?"

Starbuck stared at him a moment, then exploded into laughter. "You, Ralph? Hell, no! Saw your name on the spaceport outlist. I just dropped in for a drink, boy, for old time's sake. Listen, Ralph, I *remember* you. Hell-on-the-girls-Garvey. Biggest menace to virginity in the history of Michigan State. What would a guy like you want a substitute for?"

"My girls wouldn't stand for it," Garvey said, and Starbuck laughed again, and stood up.

"Look, I gotta run. Call me when you get back?"

"I sure will!" A little lightheaded, he said, "Sure you don't want to inspect anyhow, as long as you're here?"

Starbuck stopped and considered. "I suppose I should, for the record. But to hell with it, I won't hold you up." He walked to the port, then turned. "You know, I feel sorry for the guy who's got that surrogate."

"Eh? Why?"

"Man, those things are poison! You know that, Ralph! Anything's possible—insanity, deformation. . . . And this guy may have even more of a problem."

"Why?"

"Can't tell you, boy," Starbuck said. "Really can't. It's special information. The FBI isn't certain yet. Besides, they're waiting for the right moment to spring it."

With an easy wave, Starbuck left. Garvey stared after him, thinking hard. He didn't like the way things were going. What had started out as an illicit little vacation was turning into a full-scale criminal affair. Why hadn't he thought of this earlier? He had been apprehensive in the sexual substitute factory, with its low lights, its furtive, white-aproned men, its reek of raw flesh and plastic. Why hadn't he given up the idea then? The surrogates couldn't be as good as people said. . . .

"Tower to G43221," the radio crackled. "Are you ready?"

Garvey hesitated, wishing he knew what Starbuck had been hinting at. Maybe he should stop now, while there was still time.

Then he thought of the giant crate in the after cabin, and its contents, waiting for activation,

waiting for him. His pulse began to race. He knew that he was going through with it, no matter what the risk.

He signalled to the tower, and strapped himself into the control chair.

An hour later he was in space.

TWELVE HOURS later, Garvey cut his jets. He was a long way from Earth, but nowhere near Luna. His detectors, pushed to their utmost limit, showed nothing in his vicinity. No liners were going by, no freighters, no police ships, no yachts. He was alone. Nothing and no one was going to disturb him.

He went into the after cabin. The packing case was just as he had left it, securely fastened to the deck. Even the sight of it was vaguely exciting. Garvey pressed the activating stud on the outside of the case, and sat down to wait for the contents to awaken and come to life.

THE SURROGATES had been developed earlier in the century. They had come about from sheer necessity. At that time, mankind was beginning to push out into the galaxy. Bases had been established on Venus, Mars and Titan, and the first interstellar ships were arriving at Algol and Stagoe II. Man was leaving Earth.

Man—but not woman.

The first settlements were barely toeholds in alien environments. The work was harsh and demanding, and life expectancy was short. Whole settlements were sometimes wiped out before the ships were fully unloaded. The early pioneers were like soldiers on the line of battle, and exposed to risks no soldier had ever encountered.

Later there would be a place for women. Later—but not now.

So here and there, light-years from Earth, were little worlds without women—and not happy about it.

The men grew sullen, quarrelsome, violent. They grew careless, and carelessness on an alien planet was usually fatal.

They wanted women.

Since real women could not go to them, scientists on Earth developed substitutes. Android females were developed, the surrogates, and shipped to the colonies. It was a violation of Earth's morals; but there were worse violations on the way if these weren't accepted.

For a while, everything seemed to be fine. It would probably have gone on that way, had everyone left well enough alone.

But the companies on Earth had the usual desire to improve their product. They called in sculptors and artists to dress up the appearance of the package. Engineers tinkered with the surrogates, rewired them, built in subtler

stimulus-response mechanisms, did strange things with conditioned reflexes. And the men of the settlements were very happy with the results.

So happy, in fact, that they refused to return to human women, even when they had the opportunity.

They came back to Earth after their tours of duty, these pioneers, and they brought their surrogates with them. Loud and long they praised the substitute women, and pointed out their obvious superiority to neurotic, nervous, frigid human women.

Naturally, other men wanted to try out the surrogates. And when they did, they were pleasantly surprised. And spread the word. And—

The government stepped in, quickly and firmly. For one thing, over fifty percent of the votes were at stake. But more important, social scientists predicted a violent drop in the birth rate if this went on. So the government destroyed the surrogates, outlawed the factories, and told everyone to return to normal.

And reluctantly, everyone did. But there were always some men who remembered, and told other men. And there were always some men who weren't satisfied with second-best. So . . .

GARVEY heard movements within the crate. He smiled to himself, remembering stories he had heard of the surrogates' piquant habits. Suddenly there was a high-pitched clanging. It was the standby alarm from the control room. He hurried forward.

It was an emergency broadcast, on all frequencies, directed to Earth and all ships at space. Garvey tuned it in.

"This is Edward Danzer," the radio announced crisply. "I am Chief of the Washington branch of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. You have all heard, on your local newscasts, of the detection and closure of an illegal sexual substitute factory. And you know that all except one of the surrogates have been found. This message is for the man who has that last surrogate, wherever he may be."

Garvey licked his lips nervously and hunched close to the radio. Within the after cabin, the surrogate was still making waking-up noises.

"That man is in danger!" Danzer said. "Serious danger! Our investigation of the molds and forms used in the factory showed us that something strange was going on. Just this morning, one of the factory technicians finally confessed.

"The missing surrogate is not an Earth model!

"I repeat," Danzer barked, "the missing surrogate is *not an Earth model!* The factory opera-

tors had been filling orders for the planet Algol IV. When they ran short of Earth models for humans, they substituted an Algolian model. Since the sale of a surrogate is illegal anyhow, they figured the customer would have no kickback."

Garvey sighed with relief. He had been afraid he had a small dinosaur in the packing case, at the very least.

"Perhaps," Danzer continued, "the holder of the Algolian surrogate does not appreciate his danger yet. It is true, of course, that the Algolians are of the species *homo sapiens.* It has been established that the two races share a common ancestry in the primeval past. But Algol is different from our Earth.

"The planet Algol IV is considerably heavier than Earth, and has a richer oxygen atmosphere. The Algolians, raised in this physical environment, have a markedly superior musculature to that of the typical Earthman. Colloquially, they are strong as rhinos.

"But the surrogate, of course, does not know this. She has a powerful and indiscriminate mating drive. *That's where the danger lies!* So I say to the customer —give yourself up now, while there's still time. And remember: crime does not pay."

The radio crackled static, then hummed steadily. Garvey turned it off. He had been taken, but good! He really should have inspected his merchandise before accepting it. But the crate had been sealed.

He was out a very nice chunk of money.

But, he reminded himself, he had lots of money. It was fortunate he had discovered the error in time. Now he would jettison the crate in space, and return to Earth. Perhaps real girls were best, after all. . . .

He heard the sound of heavy blows coming from the crate in the after cabin.

"I guess I'd better take care of you, honey," Garvey said, and walked quickly to the cabin.

A fusillade of blows rocked the crate. Garvey frowned and reached for the de-activating switch. As he did so, one side of the heavy crate splintered. Through the opening shot a long golden arm. The arm flailed wildly, and Garvey moved out of its way.

The situation wasn't humorous any more, he decided. The case rocked and trembled under the impact of powerful blows. Garvey estimated the force behind those blows, and shuddered. This had to be stopped at once. He ran toward the crate.

Long, tapered fingers caught his sleeve, ripping it off. Garvey managed to depress the de-activating stud and throw himself out of range.

There was a moment of silence. Then the surrogate delivered two blows with the impact of a pile driver. An entire side of the packing case splintered.

It was too late for de-activation.

GARVEY backed away. He was beginning to grow alarmed. The Algolian sexual substitute was preposterously strong; that seemed to be how they liked them on Algol. What passed for a tender love embrace on Algol would probably fracture the ribs of an Earthman. Not a nice outlook.

But wasn't it likely that the surrogate had some sort of discriminatory sense built in? Surely she must be able to differentiate between an Earthman and an Algolian. Surely . . .

The packing case fell apart, and the surrogate emerged.

She was almost seven feet tall, and gloriously, deliciously constructed. Her skin was a light golden-red, and her shoulder-length hair was lustrous black. Standing motionless, she looked to Garvey like a heroic statue of ideal femininity.

The surrogate was unbelievably beautiful—

And more dangerous than a cobra, Garvey reminded himself reluctantly.

"Well there," Garvey said, gazing up at her, "as you can see, a mistake has been made."

The surrogate stared at him with eyes of deepest gray.

"Yes ma'am," Garvey said, with a nervous little laugh, "it's really a ridiculous error. You, my dear, are an Algolian. I am an Earthman. We have nothing in common. Understand?"

Her red mouth began to quiver.

"Let me explain," Garvey went on. "You and I are from different races. That's not to say I consider you ugly. Quite the contrary! But unfortunately, there can never be anything between us, miss."

She looked at him uncomprehendingly.

"Never," Garvey repeated. He looked at the shattered packing case. "You don't know your own strength. You'd probably kill me inadvertently. And we wouldn't want that, would we?"

The surrogate murmured something deep in her beautiful throat.

"So that's the way it is," Garvey said briskly. "You stay right here, old girl. I'm going to the control room. We'll land on Earth in a few hours. Then I'll arrange to have you shipped to Algol. The boys'll really go for you on Algol! Sounds good, huh?"

The surrogate gave no sign of understanding. Garvey moved away. The surrogate pushed back her long hair and began to move toward him. Her intentions were unmistakeable.

Garvey backed away, step by step. He noticed that the surrogate was beginning to breathe heavily. Panic overtook him then, and he sprinted through the cabin door, slamming it behind him. The surrogate smashed against the door, calling to him in a clear, wordless voice. Garvey went to the instrument panel and began to evacuate the air from the after cabin.

Dial hands began to swing. Garvey heaved a sigh of relief and collapsed into a chair. It had been a close thing. He didn't like to think what would have happened if the Algolian sexual substitute had managed to seize him. Probably he would not have lived through the experience. He felt sorry at the necessity of killing so magnificent a creature, but it was the only safe thing to do.

He lighted a cigarette. As soon as she was dead, he would jettison her, crate and all, into space. Then he would get good and drunk. And at last, he would return to Earth a sadder and wiser man. No more substitutes for him! Plain, old-fashioned girls were good enough. Yessir, Garvey told himself, if women were all right for my father, they're all right for me. And when I have a son, I'm going to say to him, son, stick with women. They're all right. Accept no substitutes. Insist upon the genuine article. . . .

He was getting giddy, Garvey noticed. And his cigarette had gone out. He resisted a tremendous desire to giggle, and looked at his gauges. The air was leaving the after cabin, all right. But it was also leaving the control room.

Garvey sprang to his feet and inspected the cabin door. He swore angrily. That damned surrogate had managed to spring the hinges. The door was no longer airtight.

He turned quickly to the control board and stopped the evacuation of air. Why, he asked himself, did everything have to happen to him?

The surrogate renewed her battering tactics. She had picked up a metal chair and was hammering at the hinges.

But she couldn't break through a tempered-steel door, Garvey told himself. Oh, no. Not a chance. Never.

The door began to bulge ominously.

Garvey stood in the center of the control room, sweat rolling down his face, trying desperately to think. He could put on a spacesuit, then evacuate all the air from the ship. . . .

But the spacesuits, together with the rest of his equipment, were in the after cabin.

What else? This is serious, Garvey told himself. This is very serious. His mind seemed paralyzed. What could he do? Raise the temperature? Lower it?

He didn't know what the surrogate could stand. But he had a suspicion it was more than he could take.

One hinge shattered. The door bent, revealing the surrogate behind it, pounding relentlessly, her satiny skin glistening with perspiration.

Then Garvey remembered his revolver. He snatched it out of its holster and flipped off the safeties, just as the last hinge cracked and the door flew open.

"Stay in there," Garvey said, pointing the revolver.

The Algolian substitute moaned, and held out her arms to him. She smiled dazzlingly, seductively, and advanced upon him.

"Not another step!" Garvey shrieked, torn between fear and desire. He took aim, wondering if a bullet would stop her. . . .

And what would happen if it didn't.

The surrogate, her eyes blazing with passion, leaped for him. Garvey gripped the revolver in both shaking hands and began shooting. The noise was deafening. He fired three times, and the surrogate kept on coming.

"Stop!" Garvey screamed. "Please stop!"

Slower now, the surrogate advanced.

Garvey fired his fourth shot. Limping now, the surrogate came on, her desire unchecked.

Garvey backed to the wall. All he wanted now was to live long enough to get his hands on the factory operator. The surrogate gathered herself and pounced.

At point-blank range, Garvey fired his last shot.

THREE DAYS later, Garvey's ship received clearance and came down at Boston Spaceport. The landing was not made with Garvey's usual skill. On the final approach he scored a ten-foot hole in the reinforced concrete landing pit, but finally came to rest.

Eddie Starbuck hurried out to the ship and banged on the port. "Ralph! Ralph!"

Slowly the port swung open.

"Ralph! What in hell happened to you?" Starbuck cried.

Garvey looked as though he had been wrestling with a meat grinder and come out second-best. His face was bruised, and his hair had been badly scorched. He walked out of the ship with a pronounced limp.

"A power line overloaded," Garvey said. "Had quite a tussle before I could put everything out."

"Wow!" Starbuck said. "Look, Ralph, I'm sorry to put you through this now, but—well—"

"What's up?"

"Well, that damned surrogate still hasn't been found. The FBI has ordered inspection of all ships, private and commercial. I'm sorry to ask it now, after all

you've been through—"

"Go right ahead," Garvey said.

The inspection was brief but thorough. Starbuck came out and checked his list.

"Thanks, Ralph. Sorry to bother you. That power line sure kicked up a mess, huh?"

"It did," Garvey said. "But I was able to jettison the furniture before it smoked me out. Now you'll have to excuse me, Eddie. I've got some unfinished business."

He started to walk away. Starbuck followed him.

"Look, boy, you'd better see a doctor. You aren't looking so good."

"I'm fine," Garvey said, his face set in an expression of implacable resolve.

Starbuck scratched his head and walked slowly to the control tower.

GARVEY caught a heli outside the spaceport. His head was beginning to ache again, and his legs were shaky.

The surrogate's strength and tenacity had been unbelievable. If she had been operating at her full capacity, he would never have survived. But that last shot at point-blank range had done it. No organism was constructed to take punishment like that. Not for very long.

He reached his destination in the center of Boston and paid off the heli. He was still very weak, but resolutely he marched across the street and entered a plain graystone building. His legs wobbled under him, and he thought again how fortunate he was to have gotten the surrogate.

Of course, the surrogate, with her amazing vitality, had also gotten him.

It had been brief—

But unforgettable.

He had been damned lucky to live through it. But it was his own fault for using substitutes.

A clerk hurried up to him. "Sorry to keep you waiting, sir. Can I help?"

"You can. I want passage to Algol, on the first ship leaving."

"Yes, sir. Round trip, sir?"

Garvey thought of the tall, glorious, black-haired, golden-skinned women he would find on Algol. Not substitutes this time, the real thing, with the all-important sense of judgment.

"One way," said Ralph Garvey, with a little smile of anticipation.

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• **The next *Infinity* goes on sale FEB. 11!** •