

"Your face!"

"That's a motor-driven face-dissolver mask."

"I've read about them. I've never seen one. Who are you?"

"That's why I'm wearing a mask. 'Cause I don't want you to know."



The short story *Competition* was written by Edna Mayne Hull van Vogt under her pen name E. Mayne Hull. It was first published in the June 1943 issue of *Astounding Science Fiction* as a novelette. It was later included in the award winning Science Fiction anthology *Men Against the Stars* (1950) and that same year was adapted as a radio play by Ernest Kinoy for Dimension X. In 1954 the story was included as a chapter in her novel *Planets for Sale* (1954) in which she tied together five previously published stories set in the same universe.

E. Mayne Hull was married to the distinguished SciFi writer Alfred Elton van Vogt. She died in 1975 and after her death scholars who analyzed and compared their writing styles began to suspect that her husband, A. E. van Vogt, had either heavily collaborated with her, or had written the stories himself and used her name as a pseudonym. While he was alive A. E. van Vogt vehemently denied this and praised his late wife's creativity and writing skills. He died in the year 2000 and today, in spite of A. E. van Vogt's vehement denials, he is often credited as the author of her works..

This story is titled *Competition*, but perhaps it would be more aptly titled "Corruption", as an ingenue who ventures into space is used as a pawn between competing business moguls

DIMENSION X
Competition
November 19, 1950

HOST NORMAN ROSE: (cymbal crash) Dimension X - x - x - x - x...
(trails off and blends with sound of theremin followed by repeated gong) Can you predict what will come in one hundred years? Can you see beyond the known dimensions of time and space into the unknown, Dimension X?

theremin loudly throughout monologue

HOST NORMAN ROSE: The Ridge Stars spread 200 light years across space. For the passengers on the immigration spaceship from Earth, they appear to be pinpoints of light in the darkness. The men, women, and children slept in their bunks in the tiered dormitories, or sat reading the immigration folders that described the worlds of the Ridge Stars in glowing, rosy terms. Anne Travis stood before the vision port and searched for the spot of light which would be her new home.

organ joins theremin and then music blends into voices

FX: mixed voices of a crowd

ANNE TRAVIS: You-you can't tell which is which, can you?

LOTTIE ELDERS: Well, I asked the steward for mine. There it is. You see? That nice, bright little star up in the left-hand corner.

ANNE TRAVIS: Oh, uh, that one?

LOTTIE ELDERS: Yes. Alka III. I'm going to meet my son there. He sent for me. Harry always was a good son. I used to say to my husband just before he died, 'Harry is a good son.'

ANNE TRAVIS: I'm going to Dorydora III. My sister's there.

LOTTIE ELDERS: Oh, isn't that nice? It's a wonderful thing for a young girl like you to start life way out here. I used to tell Harry's father that if he had any spunk, he'd be out on the Ridge Stars making a fortune. He was assistant buyer at Bloomingdales's...Kitchenware.

ANNE TRAVIS: I see. Maybe if I asked the purser, he could point out Dorydora III.

LOTTIE ELDERS: Oh, well, you go ahead, dear. You've paid your fare like everybody else. What did you say your name was?

ANNE TRAVIS: Anne Travis.

LOTTIE ELDERS: Well, I'm Lottie Elders, Mrs. Harold E. Elders. Of course, I don't use Harold's name now. Are you all alone?

ANNE TRAVIS: Yes, my folks died last year. That's why I'm coming out to live with my sister.

LOTTIE ELDERS: Oh, why, you poor child, traveling halfway across space with nobody to talk to.

LOUDSPEAKER: Attention! Attention all passengers!

FX: mixed voices of a crowd, overlapping "Quiet" "Quiet"

LOTTIE ELDERS: There it is! I just know it!

LOUDSPEAKER: You are now within the Ridge Star Quadrant. The trip is almost over.

FX: cheering

LOTTIE ELDERS: Oh, this is wonderful!

LOUDSPEAKER: Admiral Racston wishes me to inform you that a vote will shortly be taken to determine on which planet of which sun every passenger of this ship will be landed.

LOTTIE ELDERS: What is he talking about?

LOUDSPEAKER: The majority will decide and all must abide by the decision.

FX: mixed voiced of disgruntled crowd

LOTTIE ELDER: I don't understand. What did he say about a vote?

ANNE TRAVIS: I don't believe it. He said everybody had to go to the same planet, didn't he?

LOTTIE ELDER: But Harry's on Alka III.

ANNE TRAVIS: Look here, Mrs. Elders, they can't get away with this. They can't just set us down anywhere. I've got to meet my sister.

LOTTIE ELDER: Yes, but what can we do?

ANNE TRAVIS: I don't know, but I'm going to find out. I'm going to see the captain right now.

musical transition

PURSER: Landing manifest 12436. Cargo holds 1 through 12 at premium rate, including--

FX: door slides open

ANNE TRAVIS: Purser, I want to see the captain.

PURSER: Oh, look, I'm busy now.

ANNE TRAVIS: What kind of an outrage is this? I'm going to join my sister on Dorydora III. That is where I bought my ticket for and that's where I'm going. Vote or no vote.

PURSER: (TO ANNE TRAVIS) That's what you think, baby. (TO CHARLIE) I'll call you back, Charlie.

ANNE TRAVIS: I want to see the Captain immediately. Do you hear?

PURSER: Yeah, sure, I hear. Perfect in both ears.

ANNE TRAVIS: What's the meaning of this? What are you people trying to get away with?

PURSER: We're not trying, sister. You're in space now, kid. We don't go by Earth-side red tape.

ANNE TRAVIS: But my ticket--

PURSER: Oh, you can paste that in your scrapbook. That's all it's worth. Where you're going, kid, fortunes are made and lost every day. The Ridge Stars are wide open, and what the big operators say goes.

ANNE TRAVIS: But my sister's waiting for me.

PURSER: Oh, she'll get tired. It's a game, kid, and you'll live.

ANNE TRAVIS: The folder said you were encouraging immigration.

PURSER: Oh, sure, sure. But all the improvements in Earth-side working conditions from the past 50 years were to prevent wholesale immigration to the rich. That's why we have to cut the price of the tickets below cost to suck you immigrants out here.

ANNE TRAVIS: Why did you lie? Why won't you take us where we want to go?

PURSER: (CHUCKLE) It's simple, kid. The only way to make a profit is to dump each shipload in one place. Ah, this cargo goes to Delphi II.

ANNE TRAVIS: But-but the announcer said there was going to be a vote.

PURSER: Oh, sure, sure. But, ha, we've got it rigged, so Delphi II, gets it. Simple, isn't it?

ANNE TRAVIS: But-but you can't!

PURSER: Oh, it's not so bad, Delphi. It's okay, real balmy. Great world. Especially for a kid like you.

ANNE TRAVIS: But how would I get to my sister? She's expecting me on Dorydora III. Can I take another ship?

PURSER: Not where you're going.

ANNE TRAVIS: What do you mean?

PURSER: Look, baby. Space travel is an Earth-side monopoly. They own the patents on the rocket power that makes space travel possible. Now, the Ridge government offered a prize for a new kind of power that wouldn't infringe on Earth's rocket patents. But until that drive is developed, you just won't get off Delphi II.

ANNE TRAVIS: You mean you can't travel to another planet?

PURSER: That's right. There isn't any public transport, and only a millionaire could afford a private ship.

ANNE TRAVIS: You mean I'm just stuck?

PURSER: Mm-hmm. Like a fly on fly paper.

FX: footsteps

PURSER: Hey, where you going?

ANNE TRAVIS: Back to my bunk. I want to lie down.

PURSER: Wait a minute. I'm afraid you can't leave here till that boat is taken.

ANNE TRAVIS: Why not?

PURSER: Well, I'm a kindly type, friendly fellow. I always give a straight story to anybody, but that means I've got to keep them under wraps. So, ha, you'll stay right here till we land on Delphi II.

musical transition

FX: mixed voices, hustle and bustle

LOUDSPEAKER: (with echo) All immigrants who have not been cleared, please report to the inspector under the first letter of their last name.

LOTTIE ELDER: Ann! Ann, where have you been, child? I looked all over for you.

ANNE TRAVIS: They kept me in the purser's cabin. Mrs. Elders, what shall we do?

LOTTIE ELDER: I'm sure I don't know. Harry, he's my son, you know. He'll be just frantic.

LOUDSPEAKER: (with echo) Attention! Attention! Any immigrants not cleared or in the proper line in ten minutes will be indefinitely detained.

LOTTIE ELDER: Oh dear, I haven't been cleared yet.

ANNE TRAVIS: You'd better go then. I'll wait for you right here.

LOTTIE ELDER: Oh, be sure you do, dear. I'm so frightened. Oh. Which way do I go?

ANNE TRAVIS: The 'E' line is over there, see?

LOTTIE ELDER: Oh, I don't have my distance glasses. You will wait for me, dear?

ANNE TRAVIS: Yes, right here. Go along now.

FX: rushing footsteps

ANNE TRAVIS: (FRUSTRATED SIGH)

SPACE THUG: All right, you. Come on.

ANNE TRAVIS: What? Who are you?

SPACE THUG: Never mind. Come on. Grab her, Al.

AL: Come on.

ANNE TRAVIS: Let go of me. What's the idea? Let go.

SPACE THUG: Get her.

ANNE TRAVIS: Who are you? Let go. Let go.

SPACE THUG: We can't take any chances, Al. Put her out.

AL: Right.

FX: thump

ANNE TRAVIS: (MUFFLED GROAN)

musical transition

ANNE TRAVIS: (GROANS)

DELANEY: Come on. Up.

ANNE TRAVIS: What happened?

DELANEY: Come on. Sit up.

ANNE TRAVIS: What? Who are you? (GASP) Your face.

DELANEY: That's a motor-driven face-dissolver mask.

ANNE TRAVIS: I've read about them. I've never seen one. Who are you?

DELANEY: That's why I'm wearing a mask. 'Cause I don't want you to know.

ANNE TRAVIS: But there must be--

DELANEY: Look, lady, quit babbling. I hauled you in because you're pretty and intelligent-looking.

ANNE TRAVIS: But why?

DELANEY: You're going to make a thousand stellas for yourself whether you like it or not. Now stop looking like a scared rabbit.

ANNE TRAVIS: You can't do this. I'll-I'll call the police.

DELANEY: The police? (CHUCKLE) What do you know about the Ridge Star government?

ANNE TRAVIS: Nothing.

DELANEY: Obviously. Well, out here, things are different. Now listen. You go to the New Sol Hotel. Soon as you're registered, you go to the Fair Play Employment Agency. They'll take care of you. Now take this. It's a tape reel. Play it back in your room. It'll tell you what to do. After it's played once, it'll destroy itself. Is that clear?

ANNE TRAVIS: I don't understand this at all.

DELANEY: Have you ever heard of the seven day poison?

ANNE TRAVIS: I don't think so.

DELANEY: That's an interesting device. It feeds on the blood. On the seventh day, it undergoes a chemical change and "pfft".

ANNE TRAVIS: Ohhh

DELANEY: Very easy to use. You just inject it like this.

ANNE TRAVIS: Oh!

DELANEY: There. It's all over. For seven days.

ANNE TRAVIS: (WEEPS)

DELANEY: The beauty of this poison is it can be made to look like a lock pattern in many thousands of small variations. The only antidote must be some of the original poison at its base. And I have that.

ANNE TRAVIS: (WEEPS)

DELANEY: Now don't get hysterical. I'll keep the antidote here. You can get it after you've done what I want.

ANNE TRAVIS: But I don't know where I am. I don't know who you are. What if something happens to you?

DELANEY: (TO ANNE TRAVIS) That's your problem. But remember, the police can't help you. I have the antidote to the poison. (TO AL AND SPACE THUG) All right, I'm through with her. Take her out and drop her at the hotel.

musical transition

FX: ringing phone, click

SPACE THUG: Is this room 2635?

ANNE TRAVIS: Yes.

SPACE THUG: Anne Travis?

ANNE TRAVIS: Yes. Who is this?

SPACE THUG: Play that tape reel and get started. We'll be watching ya.

FX: click, click

ANNE TRAVIS: Hello?

FX: repeated click of phone receiver

ANNE TRAVIS: Hello?

FX: repeated click of phone receiver

HOTEL CLERK: Hotel New Sol desk. Can I help you?

ANNE TRAVIS: I was cut off. Someone was speaking to me.

HOTEL CLERK: I'm sorry. There was no incoming call on your line. Can I help you?

ANNE TRAVIS: No. No, never mind.

FX: click

ANNE TRAVIS: I'd better play that tape. I guess you push this button.

FX: plink

DELANEY: You will find in your purse a full cigarette case. Half of the cigarettes are doped. Tomorrow you will be hired as private secretary to Artur Blord. When you're alone with him, you will give him one of the cigarettes. The case ejects two at a time. The outer one is doped. When he's unconscious, push the brown knob on the case. That will call my men and they will come for you. You must come with them if you wish the antidote to the poison. After that, you'll be transported to any Ridge Star you wish. As soon as you play this reel, go to the Fair Play Employment Agency. There's no time to waste. Tomorrow the seven day poison will have only six days to go. Now that the reel is finished, it will destroy itself.

ANNE TRAVIS: Why did they have to pick me?

FX: pop, sizzle

ANNE TRAVIS: (GASP) Oh, the reel! Come on, Travis. You've got seven days.

musical transition

FX: door opens

MORGENSON: Come in, Miss Travis.

FX: door shuts

MORGENSON: Well, well, everything seems in order. I must verify one thing.

ANNE TRAVIS: Yes, Mr. Morgenson.

MORGENSON: You did arrive just yesterday on that immigrant ship from Earth.

ANNE TRAVIS: Oh, yes, sir.

MORGENSON: And this is your first job not only on Delphi, but on any planet other than Earth.

ANNE TRAVIS: Yes, sir, that's right.

MORGENSON: We'll check that, of course. In the meantime, we can go up to see Mr. Blord. You'll be his private secretary. This way, please.

FX: footsteps, door opens and closes

ANNE TRAVIS: Did you say--

MORGENSON: Did I say what?

ANNE TRAVIS: Never mind. Nothing.

MORGENSON: Have you heard of Artur Blord before?

ANNE TRAVIS: Um, not exactly.

MORGENSON: You would if you'd been in the Ridge Stars longer. Amazing man. Amazing. We'll wait here for the elevator.

ANNE TRAVIS: He must be very important.

MORGENSON: Important? There are names out here that they've never heard of back on Earth and the greatest name is Artur Blord.

ANNE TRAVIS: Really?

MORGENSON: In less than ten years, he's made himself an astronomical fortune. Astronomical.

FX: sliding elevator door open

MORGENSON: Here we are, after you.

FX: footsteps, sliding elevator door closed

MORGENSON: Penthouse.

FX: fast whooshing elevator

ANNE TRAVIS: What's he like?

MORGENSON: You'll see. Very dynamic. Sharp. He outsmarts the big shots. The planetary operators. They exploit whole worlds. He exploits them. (CHUCKLE) They hate him, the Ridge Star operators.

FX: sliding elevator door opening

MORGENSON: Well, here we are. Come along, Miss. Travis. Mr. Blord is waiting for you.

musical transition

MORGENSON: Mr. Blord, this is Ann Travis. Her record and references.

BLORD: Not interested. You check 'em. Morgenson, get out.

MORGENSON: Yes, Mr. Blord.

FX: footsteps, door shuts

BLORD: Ready, Miss Travis?

ANNE TRAVIS: Yes, Mr. Blord?

BLORD: Take this dictation. "Chromium field on Transom Four, value 100 billion stellars. Just plain slogging. Let somebody else do it. Tragona Seven. Forest. All treasure wood. Priceless. Dennis Carey, Operator. Hard. Cruel. Brilliant. Should be interesting if..."

Blord's dictation blends into musical transition

BLORD: All right, Miss Travis. (LIGHT SIGH) You're new to Delphi II, aren't you?

ANNE TRAVIS: Yes, Mr. Blord.

BLORD: I like new cities, new planets. They're soulless. They have no culture. No institutions with hardening of the arteries.

ANNE TRAVIS: Yes, sir.

BLORD: Now, I came out here as a wiper in an Earth-side liner and jumped ship at Transom Four. That was ten years ago. You couldn't do that on an old world. Earth-side they develop the science. Out here, we use it. The great developments today aren't in science. You don't believe that, do you?

ANNE TRAVIS: I'm—I'm not sure, sir. Will there be any more dictation, Mr. Blord?

BLORD: Nope, that's all. Don't leave yet. Mind if I smoke?

ANNE TRAVIS: No, no.

BLORD: Like a cigarette?

ANNE TRAVIS: I, sir?

BLORD: I asked if you'd like a cigarette.

ANNE TRAVIS: Oh, thank you, but I have my own.

BLORD: Oh? Earth cigarettes? Would you mind letting me have one? They're very rare out here.

ANNE TRAVIS: Of course.

BLORD: That's an interesting case. Ejects two at a time. Hm?

ANNE TRAVIS: Here, Mr. Blord, take one.

BLORD: Thank you. Hmm. Haven't smoked one of these in years. Light, Miss Travis?

ANNE TRAVIS: Thank you.

FX: clacking thump

BLORD: Oh, dropped the lighter under the desk. I'll get it. Sit back in your chair. It should be down here somewhere.

FX: long low steady beep

ANNE TRAVIS: Ohh, agh.

BLORD: Miss Travis. Miss Travis.

FX: click, rotary phone dial

BLORD: Hello, Dr. Gregg. Blord. I've got a girl here I want you to examine. (pause) No, she's out cold. (pause) Nope. (pause) Had her sitting in that wired chair, and I just threw the switch. There was something phony about her from the beginning. The pick-up needle from her chair was jumping like a kangaroo, and when I mentioned cigarettes, it practically blew a fuse.

ANNE TRAVIS: Mm-mm. Hmm.

BLORD: That's what I want to find out. Why she should be carrying doped cigarettes. I want her examined. The full hypnotism treatment if necessary. I want to find out who sent her. I want to know who's gunning for me.

musical transition

DR. GREGG: There you are, Blord. That's the best I can do short of a full-length narco analysis.

BLORD: You sure about that seven day poison?

DR. GREGG: Absolutely. She's got less than six days.

BLORD: And she was right off the immigrant ship. This is the first time I've had a plant. Somebody found out I hire 'em fresh from Earth.

DR. GREGG: I've got her memory track on that face-dissolver mask. It was Delaney.

BLORD: I thought so. But he isn't working alone. It's that gang working for the prize on the new space drive. I got into the

competition two weeks ago, and I guess they're afraid of losing the money they've put into research.

DR. GREGG: What about this kid? She's got six days to live, and I wouldn't take any bets that they try to save her if she doesn't deliver the goods.

BLORD: They wouldn't even save her if she did. Delaney wouldn't want witnesses. Doc, set everything up the way it was before she went under.

DR. GREGG: What are you going to do?

BLORD: I'm going to let them take me.

DR. GREGG: Wait a minute. They're liable--

BLORD: I know what they're liable to do, Doc. You take care of the girl and leave the rest to me.

DR. GREGG: Okay. It's your funeral.

BLORD: Maybe. Now, let's revive Miss Travis. You set up the projectors. Come on, hop to it!

musical transition eerily anxious

DR. GREGG: All set now. When you reverse the field, she'll come to, and she won't even know anything happened. Do you remember exactly what you were doing when you knocked her out?

BLORD: Sure. I was looking for the lighter under the table for that doped cigarette of hers.

DR. GREGG: Well, ah, I'll be going. Good luck, Artur. You'll need it.

BLORD: I'll be seeing you, Doc.

FX: footsteps, door opens and closes

BLORD: All right, Miss Travis. Now let's take up where we left off.

FX: weee-ooooh

ANNE TRAVIS: Oh, I felt faint for a minute. Did you find the lighter, Mr. Blord?

BLORD: Yes, yes. Thank you. I haven't had a good drag on an earth cigarette in years. It's -- I -- stronger than I...(GROAN)

FX: thump, thud

ANNE TRAVIS: I've got to call those men now. Let's see, the brown knob on the case.

FX: high pitch whine

ANNE TRAVIS: (on the verge of tears) I didn't want to hurt him but, what can I do? What can I do?

musical transition

FX: low engine hum

SPACE THUG: How's Blord, Al?

AL: Out like a light. This dame sure fixed him.

ANNE TRAVIS: Where are we going?

SPACE THUG: Why do you care?

AL: Tell her. In six days, it won't matter.

SPACE THUG: The boss gave orders.

AL: What's the difference? These two are dead ducks.

ANNE TRAVIS: What do you mean?

SPACE THUG: You think the boss will give you that antidote?

ANNE TRAVIS: He promised.

SPACE THUG: (CHUCKLE) Al, he promised.

AL: Did he really?

SPACE THUG: But did he give his scouts honor?

AL: You know, spit twice and cross his heart.

ANNE TRAVIS: Please, please stop it. What will happen to him?

SPACE THUG: To Blord? Well, you got me. The last three guys I brought over here ended up in the disposal unit.

ANNE TRAVIS: You mean they'll kill him?

AL: Wouldn't be surprised.

ANNE TRAVIS: No, no, they couldn't.

SPACE THUG: They don't play for marbles out here in the Ridge Stars.

ANNE TRAVIS: But-but the police.

SPACE THUG: It's just like Earth-side, sister. Police take their cut and arrest a couple of bindlestiffs every night to make it look good.

AL: Blord was playing around with some pretty big men. He knew what he was gettin' into.

ANNE TRAVIS: I didn't think they'd kill him. I don't know anything about the Ridge Stars.

SPACE THUG: Oh, that's tough, lady. Real tough.

FX: klaxon horn

AL: That's the beam. We're here.

SPACE THUG: All right, fasten your straps. I'm taking her down.

FX: theremin, rush of wind, footsteps

ANNE TRAVIS: Where are we going?

SPACE THUG: You're on Delphi I.

ANNE TRAVIS: What is this place?

SPACE THUG: (TO ANNE TRAVIS) A private estate. Very private. (TO AL) How are you coming with Blord, Al?

AL: He's heavy.

SPACE THUG: All right, we stop here. I got to spring the voice lock. Combination: 1, 3, alibi, Peter, uranium.

VOICE LOCK: Repeat. Repeat.

SPACE THUG: Ahhh, these things never work. 1, 3, alibi, Peter, uranium.

FX: click, click, whir, heavy door slides open

SPACE THUG: All right, drag him in Al.

FX: whir, heavy door slides shut

SPACE THUG: Where do you want him, boss?

DELANEY: Clamp him in the chair.

AL: Give me a hand, will you?

SPACE THUG: Yeah. All right. (FAINT GRUNT) Get his feet straight. (GRUNT)

AL: Now, throw the clamps.

FX: click, click

DELANEY: Inject the key stimulant.

SPACE THUG: (TO BOSS) Right, boss. (TO AL) Tear off his sleeve, Al.

FX: rip, tear, grunt

SPACE THUG: All set, boss.

AL: Do we have to keep on the masks? I got a cold.

DELANEY: Nah, I think we can do it without them. Shut off the power.

BLORD: Mmmh. Ugh. Ahhh.

DELANEY: There we are.

BLORD: (GROAN)

SPACE THUG: He's coming to.

BLORD: (HEAVY BREATH) Delaney. What -- what am I doing here?

AL: I think we can get down to business, Blord. We represent 90 companies. We've entered the Ridge Government contest to develop a space drive that won't infringe on Earth-side patents.

BLORD: Oh? Well, Delaney, I've got news for you. Unless one of you has a power drive that's 25% faster than an Earth-side rocket, you're licked.

AL: What do you mean?

SPACE THUG: He must know, Delaney. You said...

DELANEY: Quiet. Can't you see he's trying to get us arguing?

BLORD: When I heard some of the low speeds you boys were using--

DELANEY: Shut up!

FX: slap, grunt

BLORD: All right. You have the floor, Delaney.

DELANEY: Two weeks ago you entered the contest. We know your reputation. You can't afford a failure.

SPACE THUG: Your whole financial structure is a bluff.

DELANEY: We know you have the drive. Blord, you better save time. Tell us now, what's your space drive run on?

BLORD: Twisted rubber bands.

DELANEY: You'll force us to extremes, Blord. All right, take that girl out of here.

ANNE TRAVIS: No, no, let go of me. You can't kill him. I didn't know. You tricked me into getting him here.

DELANEY: Get her out.

SPACE THUG: Come on, sister.

ANNE TRAVIS: Let go!

FX: pow

SPACE THUG: Ow! All right, so you want to play rough?

ANNE TRAVIS: (SCREAM)

musical transition

FX: shuffling deck of cards

AL: Okay, that's 23 you owe me. Your deal.

SPACE THUG: Cut.

AL: I trust you, deal.

ANNE TRAVIS: (GROAN)

SPACE THUG: She's coming to, huh?

AL: That's nice. Deal from the top!

ANNE TRAVIS: Did-did they kill him?

SPACE THUG: (TO ANNE TRAVIS) Who knows? (TO AL) You want the top card?

AL: Nah.

SPACE THUG: Neither do I.

ANNE TRAVIS: Where-where is he?

AL: In there.

ANNE TRAVIS: They'll let him go, won't they? They've got to. I didn't realize they'd kill him.

SPACE THUG: Well, thank you. Just the card I wanted.

AL: A pleasure, I'm sure.

ANNE TRAVIS: Look, you've got to tell me. Are they going to kill Mr. Blord?

SPACE THUG: Look, lady. A) You are interrupting a very important card game. B) You're better off if they do kill Blord.

AL: Let's face it, kiddo. You crimped him good.

ANNE TRAVIS: Crimped him?

SPACE THUG: You think he's going to like you for doping him and getting him into this mess? Blord's a tough guy. When he first come out to the Ridge he killed three men in the mining camp over on Transom when they double crossed him.

AL: (TO ANNE TRAVIS) Sure, if he ever gets out of this, I wouldn't bet a lead slug on your life. (TO SPACE THUG) I'll go with ten.

ANNE TRAVIS: But, if he—

SPACE THUG: Tough luck, sonny. I got three. I'm doubled for spades.

AL: Ahh

SPACE THUG: Yep, if Blord gets loose, I wouldn't want to be in your place.

ANNE TRAVIS: But I -- I didn't understand. They tricked me.

AL: (TO ANNE TRAVIS) I don't think Blord will sympathize. (TO SPACE THUG) Deal the cards, will you?

FX: heavy metal door slides open, footsteps

SPACE THUG: Hold it.

DELANEY: Blord, you're a crawling rat.

BLORD: I'm a realist, Delaney.

ANNE TRAVIS: He's alive.

BLORD: You got me. So I'll make a deal. Now look, we form a joint stock company. [unintelligible] signed over his patent rights to the new firm, and we split the shares.

SPACE THUG: You hear that?

BLORD: You get my space drive. I get 25%. Delaney runs the new company. The whole deal to be publicized, if you wish.

DELANEY: Blord, when this gets out, it'll ruin you. They'll despise you when they find out how much dirt you've eaten.

BLORD: Well, I didn't have much choice, did I? All right. Now the other part of the deal. You got me here through a certain young lady.

DELANEY: Oh, we can dispose of her.

BLORD: No. No, I think I'd like to do that. I'll take her as part of my 25%. Any objections, Delaney?

DELANEY: No, just be careful. Get rid of her clean. We don't want any mess left around for the Ridge government to find.

ANNE TRAVIS: What are you going to do with me? You promised me.

DELANEY: (TO ANNE TRAVIS) Did I? (TO BLORD) Get rid of her, Blord. Only make it clean.

musical transition

FX: low rumbling engine

BLORD: You can loosen your strap now. We're on automatic.

ANNE TRAVIS: Where are we going?

BLORD: Back to Delphi II.

ANNE TRAVIS: I-I didn't understand what they were going to do.

BLORD: I know.

ANNE TRAVIS: I didn't realize.

BLORD: I'm sure you didn't. (pause) Miss Travis.

ANNE TRAVIS: What are you going to do?

BLORD: I'm going to pay you off.

ANNE TRAVIS: Let go of my arm. Let go! Let go of me.

BLORD: Shut up.

ANNE TRAVIS: (WHINING SCREAM)

BLORD: What are you screaming about? Now hold still. This won't take a second. Just one small injection.

ANNE TRAVIS: No, no, don't. Let me go, please.

BLORD: Stop it, Miss Travis.

ANNE TRAVIS: Please.

BLORD: There.

ANNE TRAVIS: (WEEPS)

BLORD: (CHUCKLE) Scratched my face like a cat. Huh?

ANNE TRAVIS: Will it take long?

BLORD: What?

ANNE TRAVIS: For me to die.

BLORD: For you to--? (LAUGH)

ANNE TRAVIS: Stop it, please. Please, stop it.

BLORD: But it's funny. It's very funny. That was the antidote.

ANNE TRAVIS: The antidote?

BLORD: The seven day poison Delaney gave you. I got it from him before we left. Young lady. I knocked you out in my office and had your mind examined. I knew just what you had done. I came here because I wanted to.

ANNE TRAVIS: Oh. You mean you're not angry with me?

BLORD: Certainly not. Besides, everything turned out my way.

ANNE TRAVIS: Your way? But they forced you to give them the drive. You signed away the rights.

BLORD: I'm a percentage man. Let them do the operating. Besides, it was their drive in the first place.

ANNE TRAVIS: Their drive?

BLORD: Yes, it's simple. I knew that after the contest there'd be a merger of research, so I merged it before instead. Wait till they discover they signed away their own patent rights. I don't think they'll feel like laughing then.

ANNE TRAVIS: But to give Delaney control of the new company.

BLORD: Don't you see, I had to get him to go along. He had the antidote to your poison.

ANNE TRAVIS: What about me now?

BLORD: Look at the vision port. Now turn up the scale.

FX: click

ANNE TRAVIS: Ahhh.

BLORD: That's the Ridge. You can have your pick. Name your world and I'll take you there. You said your sister was on Dorydora III.

ANNE TRAVIS: Yes, but...

BLORD: But what?

ANNE TRAVIS: I wonder if the opportunities for advancement aren't greater on your planet, Mr. Blord.

BLORD: You know, Miss Travis, I wouldn't be a bit surprised if they were.

musical conclusion

repeated gong during announcement

HOST NORMAN ROSE: How would you like to live in a world no larger than a single gigantic rocket ship? You'll find out more about it next week on (cymbal crash) Dimension X - x - x - x - x...(trails off)

NBC ANNOUNCER: Today Dimension X has transcribed Competition, adapted for radio by Ernest Kinoy from a story by E.M. Hull. Featured in the cast were Elaine Rost as Anne and Les Tremayne as Arthur Blord. Your host was Norman Rose. Music by Burt Buhrman, engineer Bill Chambers. Dimension X is produced by William Welch and directed by Edward King.

repeated gong

FX: three chimes