

The Project Gutenberg eBook of The Feeling, by Roger D. Aycock

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: The Feeling

Author: Roger D. Aycock
Illustrator: Jack Gaughan

Release date: March 21, 2016 [EBook #51518]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Greg Weeks, Mary Meehan and the Online
Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FEELING ***



The Feeling

By ROGER DEE

Illustrated by GAUGHAN

**[Transcriber's Note: This etext was produced from
Galaxy Magazine April 1961.
Extensive research did not uncover any evidence that
the U.S. copyright on this publication was renewed.]**

If this story holds true in real practice, it may reveal something about us that we've never known.

"We're just starting on the first one—Walraven, ship's communications man," Costain said, low-voiced. "Captain Maxon and Vaughn have called in. There's been no word from Ragan."

Coordinator Erwin took his seat beside the psychologist, his bearing as militarily authoritative in spite of civilian clothing as the room's air was medical.

"Maybe Ragan won't turn up," Erwin said. "Maybe we've still got a man out there to bring the ship back."

Costain made a quieting gesture, his eyes on the three-man psych team grouped about Walraven's wheeled reclining chair. "They've given Walraven a light somnolent. Not enough to put him out, just enough to make him relive the flight in detail. Accurately."

The lead psych man killed the room's lighting to a glow. "Lieutenant Walraven, the ship is ready. You are at your post, with Captain Maxon and Lieutenants Vaughn and Ragan. The first Mars flight is about to blast off. How do you feel?"

Walraven lay utterly relaxed, his face dreaming. His voice had the waning sound of a tape running down for lack of power.

"Jumpy," he said. "But not really afraid. We're too well conditioned for that, I guess. This is a big thing, an important thing. Exciting."

It had been exciting at first. The long preparation over, training and study and news interviews and final parties all dreamlike and part of the past. Outside now, invisible but hearteningly present beyond the ship's impermeable hull, the essential and privileged people waiting to see them off. The ship's power plant was humming gently like a giant, patient cat.

Captain Maxon passed out muscle-relaxant capsules. The total boneless relaxation that was their defense against acceleration came quickly.

The ship was two hours out, beyond lunar orbit and still accelerating, when, trained for months against the moment, set each about his task. Readings occupied Maxon and Vaughn and Ragan while Walraven checked his communications and telemetering gear.

It was not until the transmitter slot had licked up its first coded tape—no plain text here, security before even safety—and reported all well, the predicted borne out, that they became aware of the Feeling.

The four of them sat in their unsqueaking gimbaled seats and looked at each other, sharing the Feeling and knowing that they shared it, but not why. Vaughn, who was given to poetry and some degree of soul-searching, made the first open recognition.

"There's something wrong," he said.

The others agreed and, agreeing, could add nothing of explanation to the wrongness. Time passed while they sat, seeing within themselves for the answer—and if not for answer, at least for identification—but nothing came and nothing changed except that with time the steady pressure of the Feeling grew stronger.

Vaughn, again, was first to react to the pressure. "We've got to do something." He twisted out of his seat and wavered in the small pseudogravity of the ship's continuing acceleration. "I've never in my life felt so desolate, so—"

He stopped. "There aren't any words," he said helplessly.

Less articulate than Vaughn and knowing it, the others did not try to help find the words. Only Ragan, professional soldier without family or close tie anywhere in the world, had a suggestion.

"The ship's power plant is partly psionic," Ragan said. "I don't understand the principle, but it's been drilled into us that no other system can give a one-directional thrust without reaction. The psi-drive is tied into our minds in the same way it's tied into the atomic and electronic components. It's part of us and we're part of it."

Even Maxon, crew authority on the combination drive, missed his meaning at first.

"If our atomic shielding fails," Ragan explained, "we're irradiated. If our psionics bank fails, we may feel anything. Maybe the trouble is there."

Privately they disagreed, certain that nothing so disquieting as the Feeling that weighted them down could be induced even by so cryptic a marriage of dissimilar principles as made up the ship's power plant. Still it was a possible avenue of relief.

"It's worth trying," Maxon said, and they checked.

And checked, and checked.

"We worked for hours," Walraven said, "but nothing came of it. None of us, even Maxon, knew enough about the psi-drive to be sure, but we ended up certain that the trouble wasn't there. It was in us."

The drug was wearing thin, leaving him pale and shaken. His face had a glisten of sweat under the lowered lights.



The lead psych man chose a hypodermic needle, looked to Erwin and Costain for authority, and administered a second injection.

"You gave up searching," he said. "What then, Lieutenant?"

"We waited," Walraven said.

He relaxed, his face smoothing to impersonal detachment as his mind slipped back to the ship and its crew. Watching, Costain felt a sudden deep unease as if the man's mind had really winged back through time and space and carried a part of his own with it.

"There was only one more possible check," Walraven said. "We had to wait two days for that."

The check was Maxon's idea, simple of execution and unarguable of result. At halfway point acceleration must cease, the ship rotate on its gyros and deceleration set in. There would be a period of waiting when the power plant must be shut off completely.

If the Feeling stemmed from the psi-drive, it would lift then.

It did not lift. They sat weightless and disoriented while the gyros precessed and the ship swung end by end and the steady pressure of the Feeling mounted up and up without relief.

"It gets worse every hour," Vaughn said raggedly.

"It's not a matter of time," Maxon said. "It's the distance. The Feeling grows stronger as we get farther from home."

They sat for another time without talk, feeling the distance build up behind them and sensing through the unwindowed hull of the ship what the emptiness outside must be like. The ship was no longer an armored projectile bearing them snugly and swiftly to a first planetfall. It was a walnut shell without strength or direction.

In the end they talked out their problem because there was nothing else they could do.

"We're men," Maxon said, not as if he must convince himself but as if it were a premise that had to be made, a starting point for all logic. "We're reasoning creatures. If the trouble lies in ourselves we can find its source and its reason for being."

He picked Vaughn first because Vaughn had been first to sense the wrongness and because the most sensitive link in a chain is also predictably its weakest.

"Try," Maxon said. "I know there are no words to describe this thing, but get as close as you can."

Vaughn tried. "It isn't home-sickness. It's a different thing altogether from nostalgia. It's not just fear. I'm afraid—not of any *thing*, just afraid in the way a child is afraid of falling in his dreams, when he's really had no experience with falling because he's never fallen more than a few inches in his life.... When I think of my wife, it's not the same at all as if I were just in some far corner of the Earth with only land and water between us. Even if I were marooned on an uncharted island somewhere with no hope of seeing home again, I wouldn't feel this way. There wouldn't be this awful *pulling*."

Ragan agreed with Vaughn that the Feeling was essentially a *pull*, but beyond agreement could add nothing. Ragan had covered the world without forming a tie to hold him; one place was as good as another and he felt no loss for any particular spot on Earth.

"I only want to be back there," he said simply. "Anywhere but here."

"I was born on a farm in New England," Walraven said. "Out of the land, like my father and his people before him. I'm part of that land, no matter how far from it I go, because everything I am came from it. I feel uprooted. I don't belong here."

Uprooted was the key for which they had hunted.

Maxon said slowly, "There are wild animals on Earth that can't live away from their natural homes. Insects—how does a termite feel, cut off from its hive? Maybe that's our trouble. Something bigger than individual men made the human race what it is. Maybe we've been a sort of composite being all along, without knowing it, tied together by the need of each other and not able to exist apart. Maybe no one knew it before because no one was ever isolated in the way we are."

Walraven had more to say, almost defiant in his earnestness. "This is going to sound wild, but I've been fighting inside myself ever since Vaughn mentioned being pulled toward home. I have the feeling that if I'd only let go, I'd be back where I belong." He snapped his fingers, the sound loud in the room. "Like that."

No one laughed because each found in himself the same conviction waiting to be recognized. Ragan said, "Walraven's right. There's no place on Earth I care for more than another, but I feel I could be back there in any one of them"—he snapped his fingers, as Walraven had done—"as quickly as that."

"I know," Maxon said. "But we can't let go. We were sent out to put this ship into orbit around Mars. We've got to take her there."

Walraven said, "It wasn't easy. The Feeling got worse as we went out and out. Knowing what it was helped a little, but not enough. We held onto each other, the four of us, to keep the group together. We *knew* what would happen if we let go."

The head psych man looked to Costain and put his needle away when Costain shook his head.

"The ship," Coordinator Erwin said sharply. "Walraven, you did put her into orbit?"

"Yes," Walraven said. "We put her into orbit and turned on the telemetering equipment—they'll be picking up her signals by now—and then we turned our backs on each other and we let go. There wasn't any feeling of motion or speed, but I felt a fresh breeze on my face and when I opened my eyes I was standing beside a familiar stone fence on a hill above the house where I was born. You haven't told me, but the others came back, too, didn't they?"

"All but Ragan," Erwin said. His tone made Costain think wryly, *Even the military can snatch at straws*. "Maxon and Vaughn called in. But we haven't heard from Ragan."

"He wasn't left behind," Walraven said with certainty. "Ragan has no family, but he has a home. We're standing on it."

An orderly came in with an envelope for Costain, who opened it and handed the paper to Erwin. To Walraven, Costain said, "It's a cablegram from North Ireland. Ragan is back."

Erwin was still gripping the paper in his hand when he walked with Costain out of the hospital into the bright airiness of a spring day. He glared at the warm, blue sky.

"We'll find a way," Erwin said. "We've proved that we can put men on Mars. With the right conditioning, we can keep them there."

"You're a dedicated and resolute man, Coordinator," Costain said. "Do you really suppose that any amount of conditioning could fit you to do what those boys failed at?"

The long moment of considering that passed before Erwin answered left a fine sheen of sweat on his face.

"No," Erwin said.

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE
THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed,

viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™’s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation’s EIN or federal tax identification

number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.