

SUPER-SCIENCE FICTION

Vol. 3 — No. 4

June, 1959

CONTENTS

NOVELETTE

- BEASTS OF NIGHTMARE HORROR *by Richard F. Watson* . 62
Monsters too weird to be real brought hideous death

SHORT STORIES

- TERROR OF THE UNDEAD CORPSES *by Russell Thompson* 2
It was a ghastly horror, far, far worse than death!
- CREATURES OF GREEN SLIME *by James Rosenquest* 22
A horrible mockery of life was waiting — for us
- THE DAY THE MONSTERS BROKE LOOSE 44
by Robert Silverberg
People were eaten in the streets like tidbits
- MATING INSTINCT *by Lloyd Biggie Jr.* 96
It seemed monstrous. Two sexes needed to reproduce!
- THE ENORMOUS DIAMOND *by Bill Wesley* 110
The gem was beautiful — the price was calamity

FEATURES

- LOOK TO THE STARS *by Scott Nevets* 43
- NUCLEAR NEWS *by Steven Røry* 95
- GALACTIC CREATION *by Edgar P. Straus* 128

COVER *by Kelly Freas*

ILLUSTRATIONS *by Emsb.*

W. W. Scott — Editor

SUPER-SCIENCE FICTION is published bi-monthly by Headline Publications Inc., at 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke, Mass. Editorial office at 1790 Broadway, New York 19, N. Y. Second class postage paid at the post office at Holyoke, Mass. Single copy 35c. Subscription rates, \$4.00 for 12 issues. Not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, and all such materials must be accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes. All stories printed in the magazine are fiction, and any similarity between the characters and actual persons is coincidental. Copyright 1959 by Headline Publications Inc. All rights, including translation, reserved under International Copyright Convention and Pan American Copyright Convention. Printed in the U.S.A.

BEASTS OF NIGHTMARE HORROR

by RICHARD F. WATSON

NOVELETTE

illustrated by EMSH

The monsters were far too fantastic, far too weird to be real. They were like evil dreams come to life. Yet they caused real terror, real destruction, real death!

THE strange monsters made their first appearance on what was otherwise a pleasant early spring afternoon on the Terran colony-world of Cameron. Cameron had been settled three years before; its population consisted of some five thousand hard-working settlers. They had built themselves a neat, well-constructed village in the heart of the fertile plain of Cameron's largest continent, and for three years the colonists had known no trouble. Then, out of nowhere, the monsters came.

They were first seen at the western edge of town by a ten-year-old colonist named Jimmy Wellington. Jimmy had finished his classes for the day and was on his way home to put away his books and go out to help his father in the fields. On a young colony-world like Cameron, there was little leisure time for anyone old enough to man a power-spade or guide an electroplow.

He was twenty feet from the front door of his family's plastic-extrusion dwelling bubble when an unexpected shad-



ow passed overhead—the effect of a great cloud cutting off the light of Cameron's sun, perhaps, except that on Cameron clouds were rare events. Startled, Jimmy looked up. The "cloud" had passed by. And it was no cloud. It was, he saw with astonishment, some gigantic flying creature, winging eastward over the village.

Jimmy gasped. The creature's wingspread was at least fifty feet. Its wings were broad leathery expanses, dull red in color, pumping effortlessly up and down in lazy sweeps. Set between the huge wings was the body: short and thick, bright yellow in color, with two rending claws and an enormous beak. Jimmy caught a glimpse of crimson eyes and a forked blue tongue. Then the creature was gone, its shadow floating beneath over the houses of the colony like a faithful companion.

It was a stunning sight. Supposedly Cameron had no large forms of life at all. At least, in three years none had ever been discovered. There were a few small mammals, no bigger than rats or squirrels, and the

seas held fairly large fish. But nothing the size of the flying creature had ever been seen on Cameron before.

And then Jimmy turned to see the other monsters—

Four of them, marching with steady tread down the broad street. In the lead was a bulky creature taller than the tallest bubble-house on the block. It ambled along on four enormously thick legs that ended in flat pads. Horns a dozen feet long sprouted above its immense eyes. Gleaming yellow tusks projected from its vast opening of a mouth. The beast was covered with short, stiff green fur.

Close behind came a two-legged one, almost as tall, with drooling lips and savage claws. On the ground crawled something like a serpent with a hundred legs, twenty feet long, whose yawning mouth displayed a frightening array of razor-sharp teeth.

The final creature was even more terrifying: a smaller creature, no more than ten feet high, with ropy tentacles growing in clusters of six from each shoulder, and a face that

writhed with wriggling blue projections that looked like worms.

JIMMY stared, goggling with bewilderment, at the creatures trooping down the quiet street toward him. They were less than a block away. The street was empty; everyone was either at work in the fields or else downtown doing construction work or administrative jobs. Jimmy let his books drop unheeded to the ground and sprinted frantically for the entranceway to his home.

He burst through the swinging hatch and bolted it behind him. Heart pounding, eyes wide with disbelief, Jimmy snatched up the phone and cranked the handle for the operator.

She answered, after a moment. "Downtown. What is it, please, 403?"

Jimmy said, "Miss Bryson, this is Jimmy Wellington. I've got to talk to Colony Director Majeski. The most horrible sorts of monsters are coming down Cleveland Street—"

In the small town that the Cameron colony really was, everyone knew everyone else

fairly well. The telephone operator said in reproachful tones, "Jimmy, you ought to know better than to waste Mr. Majeski's time with silly fibs! And I always thought you were such a *good* boy, too. If your parents heard you were spreading silly rumors like—"

"Look, Miss Bryson, there really *are* big animals coming down Cleveland Street. They're right outside my house right now."

"Jimmy—"

Sweat cascaded down the boy's neck and shoulders. Through the front window he could see the creatures clearly, outside the house. They had gathered round the bubble-dwelling across the street, the home of the Jenkinse, and they were prodding at it inquisitively. Jimmy prayed that the Jenkinse were out in the fields, and not at home. The big one with the horns and tusks was trying to push the house over.

Fighting to keep his teeth from chattering with terror, the boy said, "They're right outside now. Pushing over the Jenkins house. There's a big

one with tusks, and a slithery one with a lot of legs, and something with wings flew past a few minutes ago—”

The operator began to say something, suddenly screamed, and the phone went dead. Jimmy stared at the useless receiver for a moment, cranked the phone fruitlessly, and finally hung up. Looking out the window, he saw that the monsters had finished with the Jenkins bubble-house—it was an upended ruin now—and had moved on, proceeding in steady fashion down Cleveland Street to the more populous section of the colony.

The phone had gone dead because the operator's attention had been distracted by a sudden shape drifting past the window of her cubicle in the Cameron Communications Center. The flying beast, advance guard of the marauding monsters, had winged past her window, peered inquisitively in, and flapped on past.

Miss Bryson knew that the first rule in tending a switchboard is to remain on duty, no matter what happens. But this was an exceptional circum-

stance. She ran to the window. The immense beast was circling over Liberty Square. It was swooping—

People who had been peacefully going about their business in the street below now scattered, running for their lives. As Miss Bryson watched, chilled, the flying monster made a diving attack, seized someone in its gnarled talons, and shot upward again, until it was only a winged blur against the brightness of the sun.

She ran back to her switchboard. The board was bright with calls, now, but she ignored them. Hastily she plugged in the jack that contacted her with the office of Colony Director Majeski, five blocks away on Jefferson Street.

Majeski snatched up the phone impatiently. He was a big man, with enormous physical strength and a virtually limitless capacity for hard work, who had been in charge of the colony since its inception. He picked up the phone with his left hand, continuing to scribble notes about future expansion plans with his right.

"Majeski speaking."

"Helene Bryson at Communication Center. We've been invaded, Director Majeski! Terrible monsters—man killed in Liberty Square—things prowling on Cleveland Street—big one with wings—"

"Whoa! Hold it! *Hold it*, Helene! Have you gone out of your wits?"

"It was awful," the girl gabbled. "Jimmy Wellington called, said he saw monsters near his house. I didn't believe him, of course. But then this—this *thing* looked in my window, some sort of flying monster the size of a house, and then it swooped down on the Square and grabbed somebody up and flew away with him—"

Majeski wasted no time telling the girl her story was impossible. He knew that Helene Bryson was too sensible to be peddling hallucinations, and, in any event, if her story were true quick action would be needed.

He said sharply, "Okay. Get off the wire and find me Police Chief Eames on the double."

The phone clicked. A moment later the voice of the

colony's police chief said, "I tried to get you before, boss, but the line was busy. Some kind of crazy monster just grabbed up Mike Carter and flew away with him. And the people at the west end of town are going crazy—more monsters up there, ripping up houses—"

"All right," Majeski said. "Try to keep things calm. Sound a general alarm and get your men assembled. Dust off the guns and we'll start fighting back."

IN the short history of the Cameron colony, there had never been a major emergency. Never a famine, never an epidemic, and certainly never an onslaught of hostile alien beasts. The colonists were caught unprepared.

There was no armed force, only a twenty-man police corps that served chiefly as a roving accident-prevention outfit, since there was no such thing as crime in the colony. Crime is a rarity in any young colony.

The police corps had a few large weapons—medium-range tactical guns—but except for

the semi-annual drills required by law, they had never had occasion to use the artillery. Now they gathered, cradling the unfamiliar weapons under their arms. The general alarm had sounded, wailing out over the farmland, and the colonists had come in from the fields to see what was the matter.

There was no sign of the flying creature. But the other four had continued their steady advance down Cleveland Street, marching west to east across the town. As they went, they destroyed and ruined and killed when they could. Observers with communicator units broadcast a running report of the creatures' whereabouts.

The police corps advanced, reinforced by as many of the colonists as could use guns. A small army of nearly a hundred stalked up Cleveland Street, led by Majeski and Police Chief Eames.

"Lord," Eames breathed. "There they are!"

They were plainly visible now—four enormous creatures that looked as though they had stepped out of a nightmare or

out of some fantastic tridim film. Even at a distance of half a mile, their loud rumbling bellows were plainly audible.

Majeski turned to the defenders. "Okay. We'll stop here and wait for them."

The little army dug in, setting up artillery. Behind them, the townspeople watched grimly.

When the nearest of the monsters was a quarter of a mile away, Majeski gave the order to fire. A gleaming mortar shell arched into the air, aimed straight and true. The monster made no attempt to avoid the shell. It waited for it, even though obviously the trajectory would carry right through its hideous body.

Suddenly—as the shell reached its target—the monster *flickered*. Its very existence seemed to cease for a moment; it returned, wavy and immaterial, and instants later the shell crashed to the ground a hundred yards behind it, throwing up a tremendous barrage of shattered pavement.

Eames gasped. "Damned if the shell didn't pass right through the beast!"

"Fire another round," Majeski ordered.

Another round was fired—and another, and another, while the men with rifles peppered away at the eyes of the approaching beasts. But the weapons did not avail. They passed impotently through the bodies of the creatures, landing and doing real damage to the street behind them.

And still the animals advanced. Now they were less than a hundred feet away. Seizing a rifle from one of his men, Majeski fired again and again, with a kind of hopeless desperation.

At his side, Eames whispered, "We'd better fall back. Those things can't be stopped!"

And indeed they could not. But before Majeski could give the order to drop back, the creatures had reached them—and went right on through. It was as if they were images painted on the air, rather than solid beings. They drifted past the colonists and continued on their way.

Majeski signalled for a halt in firing. "We're only wreck-

ing our streets, and the creatures don't seem to suffer."

But suddenly a shadow appeared overhead—the fifth monster, the winged one. It was plunging downward toward the assembled band of colonists. There was no time for anyone to move. Majeski took one startled step; then he felt the pressure of the air disturbed by the beating of the great wings, stared for a moment into malevolent crimson eyes—and then Police Chief Eames was gone, snatched away from Majeski's side. Looking up, the Colony Director saw Eames writhing in the grasp of the talons, already five hundred feet above the ground.

"Quick! Fire at it!" Majeski ordered.

"But the Chief—" someone protested.

"He's as good as dead already," Majeski ordered. "Fire!"

Reluctantly, the men opened fire. And an incredible thing happened. As the shells approached the upsweeping monster, it too wavered and seemed to become transparent. Police

Chief Eames, released, plunged downward. The shells dropped back to the ground, exploding and scattering the watchers. And, when the barrage had ended, the flying creature had solidified again and flew in defiant circles many hundreds of feet above the ground.

LATER that day, when the strange invaders had gone, the people of Cameron took stock of their losses. Night was coming; the big moon glinted in the sky, and the smaller one was just beginning to rise. Ordinarily the nights when both moons were in the skies of Cameron were festive nights, when people stood outside staring at the glory of the heavens, and lovers nestled in each others' arms in the fields. But tonight no one noticed the beauty of the sky.

The monsters had gone as suddenly and as strangely as they had come—simply winking out of existence, vanishing as if into a pocket of invisibility. But they had left behind a trail of death and chaos.

Fifteen colonists were dead. Two had been carried up by

the winged monster and released high above the ground—Eames and Parker. The remaining thirteen had been killed by the wandering marauders as they pursued their eastward way through the village.

Nearly thirty homes had been partially or completely destroyed by the invaders. A dozen other homes had been damaged by the colonists' own shells as they passed through the monsters. And the damage to the streets caused by the useless shelling would take many months to repair, and would remove many useful workers from the task of expanding the colony.

The colonists met that night in their town hall to discuss the frightening situation. During that afternoon Majeski had ordered all building and construction halted; all able-bodied men were placed on immediate militia call.

During the town meeting, a hundred men roamed the village, armed with tactical weapons and carrying communicators, in case the monsters should make an unheralded re-

turn visit. Even if weapons were useless against them, the colonists had to remain on guard lest they be taken again by surprise.

At the rostrum, the colony's leaders discussed the bewildering invasion.

"I think it's an invasion from some other continent of Cameron," suggested Martin Baird, the colony's chief medical man. "The survey scouts examined this part of our planet pretty thoroughly before they recommended it for human colonization, and they didn't report seeing any such animals of the size we saw today. Perhaps these creatures were lurking on the other side of the sea, and came across to try to drive us out."

Paul McAfrey, head of the colony's construction teams, shook his head. "I disagree, Martin. The survey scouts took a good look at *all* the continents of Cameron before we came here. And they reported that the place was not inhabited by any form of large animal life. I don't see how they could have overlooked beasts so big. My guess is that it's an inva-

sion from some other planet."

Colony Director Majeski broke in to say, "It doesn't matter much *where* the creatures came from, at the moment. What we have to decide is what to do if they come back for another visit.

"Is there anything we *can* do?" Martin Baird asked in a pessimistic tone.

"I don't know," Majeski said heavily. "Our guns didn't do any harm to them. All we achieved was the blowing up of our own streets."

"The creatures seem to exist on two states of matter," said the colony's scientific leader, Henry Brickman. "When they're in the normal state, they can do damage—and presumably they can be destroyed. But the moment we try to destroy them, they shift to that state of non-matter, and our shells go right through them."

"At least they can't do any damage themselves while they're in the non-matter state," McAfrey pointed out.

"But we can't very well keep up a constant bombardment," said Brickman. "For one thing, we don't have enough ammuni-

tion for the kind of perpetual barrage we'd need. For another, our shells do damage when they land. If we don't shoot at the monsters, they remain in normal state and kill our people and wreck our homes. And if we *do* shoot at them, our own shells destroy what we've built."

"Call in the Patrol!" shouted a deep voice from the first or second row of assembled colonists.

Director Majeski rose to his feet. Anger and pain showed on his massive face. "If we call in the Patrol to help us, we'll be admitting our weakness as a colony. I refuse to believe that this is a situation Cameron can't ultimately handle itself."

"How are you going to handle it, then?" Brickman challenged. "What happens if the monsters come back?"

"We'll work something out!" Majeski thundered. "There has to be a defense."

"Not against creatures that are unlike anything else in the galaxy," Brickman retorted. "I think it's definitely a case for the Patrol. We can't possi-

bly fight off these creatures ourselves."

"No Patrol," Majeski said adamantly. "Not until we're sure we need outside help."

"Put it to a vote!" someone yelled from the back of the hall.

Doubt appeared on Majeski's face. Calling in the Interstellar Patrol was a risky step; it indicated a possible lack of self-reliance that might go hard against the colony when the time came to ask Earth for complete independence. And Cameron's record was spotless up to this point.

"Put it to a vote!" someone else cried.

Majeski shrugged. "All right," he said. "We'll put it to a vote. Those of you who think Cameron Colony can fight its own battles without calling in outsiders, stand up and let yourself be counted."

There was silence in the big hall. Hesitantly a few men in the front rows came to their feet, looking around at the others self-consciously. Then, gradually, the ringing fervor of Majeski's words began to take hold. A dozen colonists rose;

then fifteen and twenty more. The movement became contagious. Within moments, nearly three quarters of the people in the hall were standing.

"Very well," Majeski said. "Now let's see those who think we ought to yell for help."

Barely fifty people stood up, most of them rising half-heartedly and slipping quickly back into their seats when they saw that they were very much in the minority.

"I don't think it's necessary to call for a count," said Majeski. "I'll assume it as the wish of this assembly that we'll refrain from calling in the Patrol. Now—in case of further attack—the first step will be to work out a schedule of alarms. Regular work schedules will be temporarily suspended and reassignments will be made. We'll have a round-the-clock lookout squad posted effective right away.

"Brickman, I want you to call a meeting of your science people and see if you can figure out any convincing explanation for these on-again-off-again monsters that attacked us today.

"Tomorrow morning we'll send out scouting planes to search for the home base of these monsters. Perhaps if we drop a bomb on them by surprise, they won't get a chance to shift to their non-matter state. Does anyone have any questions?"

"Just one," Brickman said. "How are we going to defend ourselves against monsters that can't be harmed by artillery fire?"

"We'll work something out," Director Majeski said darkly. "We'll have to."

IT was an uneasy night in the colony. The lookouts paced the streets all night, while in the bubble-houses the colonists slept in uneasy half-wakefulness, fearing that at any moment some lookout would cry that the attackers had returned. But the night passed without incident; the morning sun rose as always above the little colony, and no further attack had taken place.

Majeski and his innermost council had worked all night, preparing revised schedules for the colony in the current emer-

gency, and when morning came the schedules were posted at the usual notice-boards.

Fifty men were assigned to the task of repairing the shattered streets. A hundred workers were given the task of building new dwelling-places for the families that had been made homeless during the attack. A crew of ten scouts was chosen to man the colony's five two-seater jet planes, and an investigation area was chalked out for each of the scout teams.

The upheaval caused by the attack of the monsters would set the colony's growth schedule back badly. But, Majeski realized grimly, nothing could be done about that. He had no choice but to suspend construction of the new school, the recreation center, and the other half-finished colony buildings.

Agriculture and food production had to go on, of course, but colony expansion would have to be curtailed until the threat of the monsters was ended.

Work continued through the morning. The morale of the

colonists remained high despite the surprise attack, and they set to work vigorously clearing away the damage and rebuilding the ruined houses. Director Majeski held meetings all morning, in the hope that someone would be able to suggest a workable means of fighting off the monsters.

No one had any suggestions to offer. The situation was simply beyond their comprehension. For three years they had labored peacefully to build their colony, and now, out of the blue, came unkillable creatures to shatter their tranquil existence.

The chief hope was a surprise attack on the monsters' home base. But, as reports came in from one after another of the airborne scouts during the morning, that hope grew dimmer and dimmer. They had covered hundreds of square miles already, without a single sign of the creatures.

There was not even a hint of the track that monsters so huge must have created while traveling through the heavily-wooded regions surrounding the settled areas. The scouts were in-

structed to range still farther afield, within the limits of their fuel supply, before returning to the colony.

In the colony, no one could refrain from looking back over his shoulder frequently to see whether the new attack had come. No one doubted that there would be a second attack, and probably a third and a fourth and a fifth. The dark shadow of fear hovered over the colony.

And, shortly after noon that day, the alarm sirens began to scream.

This time the marauders had approached the city from the north. They had first been sighted by the lookout squad posted at the extreme northern end of the settlement, along the wide central avenue known as Madison Boulevard that ran lengthwise through the colony. At five minutes after twelve the monsters appeared—winking abruptly into view at the entrance to Madison Boulevard.

There were seven of them this time. Two were flying creatures of the kind that had seized Police Chief Eames, but

they differed from the original in that they bore a single bony spike ten feet long mounted between their crimson eyes.

Behind these two came the remaining five: a ponderous thing that looked like a magnified hippopotamus, but with none of the hippo's sleepy characteristics; this was a fiercely vigorous creature whose gaping mouth snapped shut and open hungrily. Its marching-companion was a thin, towering monster forty feet high, with dangling boneless tentacles, and a cilia-girdled orifice in its midsection.

Three others brought up the rear—an eight-legged scaly creature with a long, powerful tail surmounted with six sharp bony projections; a scuttling, crawling thing like an animated carpet covered with eyes; and a creature that hopped along on a single powerful leg, reaching for its prey with arms that tripled their length to make the catch and then contracted to normal size again.

The first casualty was recorded only moments after the appearance of the new mon-

sters. One of the winged beings flew downward, impaling a lookout squadman on the point of its unicorn-like spear, and flew off with the man still feebly writhing. The other lookouts fled, sounding the alarm as they ran. The attack had been resumed.

As the shrill wailing of the general alarm burst out over the colony, Majeski's defense plan went into effect. Women and children hastened to shelter. The men ran to the weapons dispensaries, grabbed their artillery, and hastened into the streets.

"The invasion is at the north end of the city," came Majeski's booming amplified voice. "Five creatures are advancing down Madison Boulevard, and two flying beasts are at large over the city."

Machine-gun emplacements were established in the middle of Madison Boulevard, while snipers stationed themselves atop buildings along the path of the invasion. That proved a poor idea; the two winged creatures dropped from the sky without warning, spearing the defenders unawares and

carrying them away to death.

The weird procession advanced down the streets. Only a couple of unwary colonists were captured—the one-legged hopper lashed out with a telescoping arm to snare a fleeing woman, and the animated carpet seized a man and tore him to shreds. The machine-gunners waited in the middle of Madison Boulevard—but, before the creatures came within range, they split off, shuffling into the side streets.

Cursing, Majeski ordered pursuit to counteract the change of tactics. The monsters were at large, roaming through the streets where colonists lay hidden. The dull boom of gunfire echoed through the city, but again to no avail; the monsters simply shifted into their non-matter state whenever under fire, returning to their more destructive normal phase once they were out of range.

The onslaught continued for nearly an hour. The monsters, moving at will, wrecked house after house, smashing or overturning the bubbles in search of victims, while the winged creatures disorganized the de-

fenders by their downward plunges.

Then, as quickly as they came, all of the monsters vanished, except one of the winged ones. It circled leisurely over the town, too high for the guns of the defenders—and a loud voice boomed out, "This is only the beginning, Earthmen! Leave this planet at once or you will be completely destroyed!"

THERE was no need for an open town meeting this time. Majeski and his group of advisers came together, two hours after the end of the raid, to decide on the colony's next step.

Majeski read the statistics of the second attack. "Fifty houses destroyed, nearly seventy people killed and a hundred injured."

"And it was a brand new bunch of monsters this time," Brickman said. "What nightmarish horrors these were! I didn't believe the universe could spawn such repulsive-looking things."

McAfrey said, "It seems obvious to me that we're the vic-

tims of some kind of illusionary process."

"What do you mean?" Majeski asked.

"Simply that Brickman's right—the universe *can't* spawn giant horrors like these. There's no rhyme or reason to these monsters. They look like something out of nightmares, all right—not like any creatures that could have evolved normally on any known planet."

"So you think we dreamed them, eh?" Majeski demanded.

McAfrey shook his head. "I didn't say that. But it might be some kind of mass hypnotism—"

"Hypnotism that can kill seventy people?" Majeski asked sharply.

McAfrey shrugged. "I don't have any explanations at all. Neither do the rest of us."

"What about that message?" Martin Baird said. "We all heard it. In English, warning us to leave this planet at once."

"It's some kind of planet-sized blackmail," Majeski said. "An attempt to frighten us off Cameron."

"A damned good attempt,

too," Brickman said acidly. "A few more raids like these two and we might just as well pull up and go. We can't defend ourselves. And so far it's only been a handful of monsters. What would happen to us if a hundred came at a time? Or a thousand? We'd be wiped out before we could fire a shot."

Majeski was silent, brooding over the abrupt and violent end to three years of peaceful progress on Cameron. His council members discussed the situation back and forth in increasing tones of hopelessness. Finally Brickman turned to Majeski and said, "I think there's only one possible thing to do."

"And that is?" Majeski asked.

"The Patrol. Dammit, we can't be stubbornly proud about it any more. We're licked. Maybe even the Patrol won't be able to help us. But at least they'll evacuate us while we're still alive. We can settle somewhere else—"

"After three years of hard work here," Majeski said.

"What else can we do?"

Majeski did not reply. His eyes showed pain—the pain of a strong man faced with a situation totally beyond his own strength. It was a defeat for Majeski to have to call in the Patrol. But he knew he had no choice.

Further stubborn insistence that Cameron could handle these invaders itself was suicidally wrongheaded. If he kept maintaining that the Patrol should not be summoned, his advisers might possibly remove him from office and summon the Patrol themselves.

He gestured hopelessly. In a heavy voice he said, "Is it the opinion of this council that we should ask for help?"

The vote was unanimous. Majeski rose from his place at the head of the table. "Very well. Prepare a request for help and send it out on wide-band galactic communication at once."

The message was duly sent. And, several hours later, it was picked up by the relay monitor station of the Interstellar Patrol's base on Kandoris IV, five hundred light-years from Cameron.

The Patrol's main job was a troubleshooting one. Its staff roved from galaxy to galaxy as required to help out any of Earth's multitude of newly planted stellar colonies. But it was considered a black mark against a world to call in the Patrol for anything but the most dire emergency. A sun going nova, a sudden alien attack—these were valid reasons for asking for help. Anything less might be construed by Earth as a sign of weakness.

Signalman Dworshak read the Cameron message off the decoder intake, ran a check to verify it, and switched on the communicator channel of Patrol Leader Avery.

"What is it, Dworshak?" the Patrol Leader asked.

"Message just came in, sir. A request from Cameron Colony on Danimor III—they've been invaded by some kind of weird monsters and they're unable to fight back."

Avery glanced at his adjutant, Captain Morse. "Morse, get me the specifications on Cameron Colony, Danimor III. Go ahead, Dworshak. Do they

give any further details about this invasion?"

"All they say is the monsters are of enormous size and don't seem to mind artillery shelling. So far they've had two attacks, eighty-five dead and a lot of property damage. They ask immediate help."

"I see. Hold on, Dworshak." Avery took the chart from Captain Morse, ran his finger down the list of planets, and stopped at Danimor III. He nodded. Earthtype planet, third out of six worlds, located at a distance of some five hundred light-years from Kandoris IV. That meant it fell within his jurisdiction. "All right," Avery said. "Send a message to Cameron right away. Tell them we'll have a Patrol squad out there in—ah—make it eight hours. When you've sent that message, ring up Crew Seven and get them ready for immediate departure."

Avery let the communicator unit drop back into its magnetofield. "Giant monsters," he snorted. "Impervious to artillery shells. What won't these colonials think of next?"

AN hour later, the three slim ships that comprised Crew Seven of the Kandoris wing of the Interstellar Patrol were en route, gliding through the no-space congruencies across the light-years to Cameron. Avery himself piloted the leading ship; Morse guided the second, and a Captain named Norton handled the third.

Six hours after departure, the three ships snapped out of no-space and into the normal continuum. Ahead of them lay the golden star that was Danimor. The Patrol fleet homed in on Danimor's third world, the one that had been named Cameron for its first discoverer.

At his signal controls, Dworshak made contact with the groundside operative at the Cameron spacefield and received landing coordinates. The three ships spiralled round the green-and-brown world in front of them, hooking into the diminishing orbits of landing, and made perfect touchdowns on the bare soil of the spacefield. It was exactly ten hours since the S.O.S. from Cameron had gone out to the Patrol.

As the Patrolmen left their ships, a delegation of Cameronites came forward to greet them. A big, grim-looking man with an air of authority said, "Who's in charge?"

"I am," Avery said. "Patrol Leader Avery."

"Glad to see you. I'm Majeski. Colony Director. It wasn't my idea to send for you fellows, but the circumstances left me no choice."

Avery nodded. "Well, we'll have a look around. Monsters, you say."

"And a threat."

"Threat?" Avery repeated.

"After the second attack, yesterday afternoon, a message in English was broadcast to us: something like *Get off this planet, Earthmen, or we'll continue to destroy you.*"

Avery's eyes narrowed. "This planet was supposed to be uninhabited when you colonists took it over, wasn't it?"

"That's what the survey scout people told us," said Majeski.

"Have you done any scouting yourselves since these two attacks?"

"We've sent some two-man planes out to explore the immediate vicinity. We simply don't have the kind of long-range jets we'd need to have a look at the other continents. But we haven't found a thing within a thousand-mile radius of the colony."

"Yet these monsters have twice popped out of nowhere and laid the colony to waste?"

"That's right. Twice on successive days. They haven't come back yet today."

"And you've tried to defend yourselves?"

"With such weapons as we have, which aren't very much. A colony-world isn't supposed to bother much about defense, you know. Our job is to build."

Avery nodded. "What happens when you shoot at these—ah—monsters?"

"The shells don't have any effect. It's as if the beasts are nothing more than illusions."

"Maybe that's all they are."

"Illusions don't kill ninety people and wreck a hundred homes, Leader Avery," said Majeski coldly. "Come along to the damage area and I'll show you what I mean."

There was no alien attack that day at all. The Patrol squad examined the wreckage and agreed that something strange had indeed been going on. But they had nothing else to go by except verbal descriptions of the invading monsters, and, Avery had to admit, the monsters sounded like nothing ever seen on any world of the universe.

On the day after the arrival of the Patrol, the third attack on the colony took place. This time nine monsters converged on the town from three sides—one group entering at the west once again, another appearing at the southern end, the third coming through from the farm regions to the east.

Avery and his Patrol outfit were stunned witnesses to the brief, furious encounter. The creatures raged through the city, doing damage wherever they could, and whenever any hostile bullet was fired at them they simply shifted into a non-material state and let the missile fly harmlessly past them.

The attack lasted some forty minutes. And once again, at the conclusion of the onslaught,

the enormously amplified voice rang out over Cameron:

"This is the third attack, Earthmen, but it will not be the last. Leave this world at once—or prepare yourselves for total destruction!"

Fifty people had died in this new invasion, seventy others were homeless, and nearly two hundred had suffered minor injuries. Majeski and his advisers met in the Colony Director's office, and this time Avery and four officers of the Interstellar Patrol were with them.

"Well?" Majeski demanded. "Can you help us, Avery, or should we just pack up and get out? I'm a stubborn man and I'd hate to see this colony forced to disband—but I can't ask my people to stay here and face certain death."

The Patrol Leader shook his head. "Give us a little time to figure this thing out."

"Time? What good will that do?"

"We'll relay a description of the invasion to Patrol Central, on Earth. They coordinate all Patrol activities. Perhaps there's been a similar attack

on some other world—maybe there's additional information—"

"We can't fight an enemy we're unable to hurt," Brickman said bitterly.

Avery turned on the white-haired scientific director. "You called for the Patrol," he snapped. "Let us worry about handling this. Take me to your communications center."

As the Patrol group left the room with Brickman, Majeski glared sourly around at Baird, McAfrey, and the others. "You see? They regard us as dirt. Stupid colonials."

"Maybe they can save us," McAfrey said tiredly. "Let them have their arrogance. The Patrol is our only hope now, and we all know it."

TWO hours later, Avery and his sub-officers returned to the headquarters of the Colony Director.

"Well?" Majeski asked. "Anything new?"

"We've got the answer," said Avery. "We checked with Patrol Central and they reported six other cases of this kind of attack. Two colonies

were completely wiped out—Heifetz in the Deneb system, and Millman out Procyon way. What we've got on our hands, gentlemen, is nothing less than a full-fledged galactic war."

"What?" Majeski asked incredulously.

"A galactic war that began six months ago," Avery said. "And a war that Earth may lose even though the enemy doesn't fire a single shell."

"What are you talking about?" Majeski demanded. "*What* enemy?"

"A small humanoid race out of the Andromeda Galaxy, millions of light-years from Earth. We don't know what they call themselves. The Patrol has captured some, but they let themselves be put to death before they'll speak. They're ugly little green oxygen-breathers. Their own galaxy is overcrowded. They want *lebensraum*—so they're marching into our part of the universe."

Majeski was puzzled. "Small green humanoids? But what about the monsters?"

"Thought-projections," Av-

ery said. "We don't know how they do it, but it's a devilish stunt. Somehow they have projectors that can amplify and solidify mental images. It takes a tremendous amount of power, but they seem to be tapping a nospace vortex to give it the boost it needs. The monsters really *are* nightmare creatures. Right out of the nightmares of the little beast-men out of Andromeda."

"No wonder our shells don't have any effect!"

"Of course. The images are solid only when the enemy wants them to be. As soon as there's any sign of a hostile counter-attack, they simply alter the projection flux and dematerialize the images."

"When they're solid, we can damage them—but we can't catch them unawares. And once they dematerialize, our weapons can't touch them. But—what do they expect to gain by this business of monsters?"

"They hope to drive you colonists out," Avery said. "It's much simpler than fighting with you. It only takes a crew of eight or nine aliens to man the projection station, some-

where on Cameron. And you're totally at their mercy. They can keep on raiding you with their phantom killers until you're forced to pull out and abandon the planet to them. Which is what they really want.

"They can't tolerate Terran colonization because of their own tremendous expansion. They need every planet they can get, the devils!"

"Well, they won't get this one," Majeski said. "We'll fight back—somehow."

Avery nodded. "If we can only find their projection station, there won't be any trouble. But they're not easy to find. We have an entire planet to search to find one tiny encampment. Once we do, it'll be the end of the monster invasions. But until then—"

"Don't worry," Majeski said. "Now that we know what they are, we'll manage to hold our own until you've rooted them out."

But the problem, Avery thought when he had left the Cameronite men, was not going to be solved as simply and as easily as all that. When speak-

ing to Majeski, the Patrol Leader had minimized the implications of the report he had received from Patrol Central.

So far, six other cases of Andromedan invasion had been reported. On two colony-worlds, the colonists had been driven off completely before the arrival of the Patrol. On the other four planets, all attempts to root out the alien invaders had failed, and the colonists still lay in danger of constant attack by the creatures conjured up by the thought-projectors.

No successful counter-attack had been carried out yet, either by colonists or by the Interstellar Patrol.

And the Adromedan attack was spreading like an ugly cancer. Cameron was the seventh world to report invasion. Before long, Avery thought gloomily, there might be dozens—hundreds. The entire galactic network of Terran colonization might be imperiled by the insidious onslaught from Andromeda.

Patrol Leader Avery spent the day working out an investigation-pattern. His fleet of

three ships was all he had to go by, since the tiny Cameron airships were useless beyond a limited distance. And the Andromedan base might be located anywhere in the millions of square miles of Cameron's six continents.

The Patrol ships were equipped for atmospheric navigation and for very delicate detection operations. But, Avery knew, it might easily take months or even years before every inch of Cameron was covered.

He sent out his men. He commandeered the five colonial two-man planes and sent out men in them to fine-comb the immediate area once again. Majeski recognized that as a veiled implication that the Cameron men might have overlooked something important in their examination of the area, but the Colony Director held his feelings in check.

He had called in the Patrol, and, he forced himself bitterly to remember, he had to give the Patrol absolute authority now.

The three Patrol spaceships went out on more distant roving

operations, to the border of the continent and then across the great seas to the other, supposedly uninhabited, continents beyond them. Patrol Leader Avery himself remained behind in Cameron Colony to coordinate the exploration operation and to receive further messages from Patrol Central on Earth, if there were any.

A week went by. The monster attacks continued, at intervals of about a day and a half, and though the defenses of the colony improved to such an extent that they could mobilize the artillery within seconds after the arrival of the nightmare creatures, each attack took its toll in lives and property.

Nearly two hundred colonists had fallen since the afternoon when Jimmy Wellington first saw the monsters approach the town. The once neat streets now were blackened and shell-cratered; the colony looked like a battleground. The colonists themselves were fear-haunted people, all but Colony Director Majeski, whose features showed sadness at the destruction of his colony, but

whose spirit remained indomitable.

"Any time you say the word," Avery told him, "we can signal for evacuation. It may take months for us to root the Andromedans out. The colony may be totally destroyed by that time."

"No," Majeski replied stolidly. "We're not going to run away. We'll last this thing out, and when it's over we'll rebuild."

Avery shrugged. "It's your colony, Majeski. I can't force you to evacuate. But your colonists can."

"Are you suggesting the possibility of a revolution against me?"

"I'm not suggesting anything. You're a stubborn man, and I admire you for your guts. But we're up against a pretty stubborn enemy."

"I know that. But we're not leaving."

ON the eighth day after the arrival of the Patrol, a coded signal flashed across the Eastern Sea to Leader Avery's headquarters in Cameron. It was from the most distant of

his three roving exploratory ships. It said simply, *We have located the alien base*, and gave the coordinates.

Immediately Avery ordered the other two ships to return from their wanderings. His own flagship stopped at Cameron to pick up Majeski and Avery himself, and then all three ships converged on the point where the Andromedan base had been located.

From forty thousand feet up, they could see it plainly on the infra-red visioscope: a tiny encampment, three or four tents clustered round a small spaceship, nestling in a valley between two thrusting mountain-ranges in the heart of the largely-unexplored eastern central continent of the planet.

Avery beamed a message to the aliens on full-band transmission. "Your location is known. You have half an hour to leave this planet, and then we will be compelled to destroy you."

"Destroy them now," Majeski hissed. "Why give them advance warning like that? Drop a bomb on the little kill-

ers and make an end of it!"

"No," Avery said. "There's no formal state of war. I'm obeying interstellar law by ordering them off. If they make no reply, I'm within my rights in bombing them. But not until then."

A reply was not long in coming. It thundered out of the loudspeakers of the hovering spaceship.

"Earthmen! Your threats do not frighten us. We repeat our warning. Leave this planet immediately or we will continue our raids until the last of you is dead."

"Well?" Majeski demanded. "Do you need any further excuses for wiping them out?"

"No," Avery agreed. He opened the inship communicator channel. "Attention all hands. Bombing formation: prepare to drop ten-kiloton fission bomb on target below."

The bomb was placed in firing position; the ship wheeled into bombing formation. On the ground, no sign of defensive activity was forthcoming. Avery gave the order for the bomb's release. The small atomic weapon plummeted true

to the target. There was a bright flare of light, and the mushroom cloud rose heavenward—

And when the cloud cleared, the Andromedan base could still be seen, unharmed, in the center of the area of atomic destruction.

"Another projection!" Avery growled. "They've fooled us with their damned gadget!"

"Not even an atomic bomb did any good," Majeski said.

"It would have—if we'd dropped it on the right place. But that wasn't the Andromedan camp below us. It was just a phony—a decoy that they created with their projector to dupe us. The real camp may be thousands of miles from here."

Signalman Dworshak cut into the communicator circuit. "New message from the aliens, sir, just coming through. Want me to switch it over to you?"

"Of course, Dworshak."

"—so you have failed, Earthmen. You will not destroy us with your clumsy weapons. Evacuate this planet now, while you still live."

Avery looked away, scowling. "The little devils! We'll

send them back to Andromeda yet!" He opened the main circuit again. "Dworshak! Can you get any directional fix on that Andromedan broadcast?"

"I've been trying, sir. But they've got a vector-scrambler working, it seems. I keep coming up with five or six different equally likely points of origin."

"All right," Avery said wearily. "Let's head back to the colony. We've done all we're going to do out here today."

The three ships turned, heading away from the smoking slagpit they had so uselessly created. An hour later, they landed at the Cameron spacefield, six thousand miles away, after rocketing up out of the planet's atmosphere and returning again at the proper point.

There had been another attack on the colony in their absence. A formation of winged creatures had swept overhead, swooping down to kill four people, before an artillery barrage drove them off. Ammunition was running low. Colony morale was running even lower. And time was running out,

as even Majeski was grudgingly beginning to admit. The colonists could not take much more. Another week of strike-and-vanish raids and they would be screaming in the streets, calling for Maejski's overthrow and immediate evacuation to some safer planet.

Three times in the next five days, Avery's exploring ships came upon what they thought were alien bases, and each time they dropped a bomb without warning—only to see, by the disappearing and immediate reappearing of the "base," that their target had only been another projected illusion.

During those five days, there were two further attacks on the colony—one a minor one, the other a severe and prolonged attack which cost a dozen lives and nearly depleted the colony's supply of heavy ammunition.

Time was running out.

IT was the end of the second week since the coming of Avery and his Patrol outfit.

Avery's men had dropped five atomic bombs—half of the entire supply they had brought with them—and five times they had wasted their bomb on a phantom decoy. Three hundred of Cameron's five thousand people were dead. And still the loathsome dream-projected monsters raged through the city.

On the fourteenth day, one of Avery's scouts discovered yet another alien base—this one at the very edge of the continent where the colony was located, some two thousand miles to the east of Cameron on the shore of the ocean. The scout had flown over the alien camp, noted its location, and returned to the colony.

"They can't *all* be illusions," Avery said wearily. "One of these times luck is bound to be with us, and we'll drop a bomb on the right place."

"We can't be sure," said Majeski. "They may be hiding in an underground cave somewhere, and projecting these little camps just to keep us tied up and wasting bombs."

Avery shrugged. "One of

days we'll blast them. We're bound to."

The Colony Director chuckled.

"What's the joke?" Avery asked.

"You're starting to sound like me, Avery. Making brave noises so you don't need to admit that you're licked."

"Do you think we're beaten, Majeski?"

"If I did, I'd ask for an evacuation. But I don't think the situation is very cheerful, Avery. Not at all."

"Maybe this is the one," Avery said hopefully.

"If it isn't, you'll just have wasted another bomb. I have a better idea."

The Patrol Leader glanced up. "*Anything* is a better idea. What's yours?"

"Instead of whaling away with an atomic bomb, send an observer in on foot. Parachute him down in the forest a couple of miles from the observed camp and let him take a look around. If the place is a fake, he can signal you and you won't waste a bomb. If it's the real thing, he'll give the word

and you can wipe the filthy aliens out."

Avery brightened. "It's worth a try, I suppose. Except that it's risky business. I hate sending one of my men into an alien camp alone."

"You won't have to," Majeski said. "I volunteer for the job."

"You?"

"That's right. Any objections?"

"Plenty. This a job for the Patrol, not for a civilian, Majeski."

"I'm the head of Cameron Colony. Either let me take the job, or I'll withdraw my request for Patrol assistance and order you off the planet."

"But—"

"Well, Avery?"

The Patrol Leader slumped in his seat. "It's a suicide mission, Majeski, if it really is the alien base and they catch you. But if you're set on committing hara-kiri, I guess I can oblige. We don't have time to argue. If you're bullheadedly going to insist on volunteering, I accept your offer—reluctantly."

The spaceship hovered forty

thousand feet above the surface of the planet. The ejection hatch was open, and a figure clad in a bulky dropsuit stood with his mittened hands grasping the release lever. He waited, while the quiet voice in his headphones counted off numbers for him.

"Ten nine eight seven six five four three two one *jump*, Majeski!"

The figure in the dropsuit yanked down on the release lever and the metal arm catapulted him through the ejection hatch. A jet flared behind him—a tiny rocket strapped to his back, designed to force him down through the spaceship's slipstream. Down and down he tumbled, spiralling through the thin air. Even with the protection of the dropsuit he could sense the bitter cold all about him.

The voice in his headphones never left him. It was the voice of Avery. "Can you hear me, Majeski?"

"I hear you fine."

"You've dropped ten thousand feet. How does your head feel?"

"It's still attached to my neck."

"Okay. You've dropped fifteen thousand feet. You're twenty-five thousand feet above the ground. Put your hand on your chute ring."

"Got it."

"Good. Count to five and pull."

Majeski counted out loud. At five, he yanked on the ring and the chute ballooned out. He glanced up over his shoulder after the sudden jolt to'd him that his free fall had been arrested and he now drifted gently. He could barely see the grayish-blue fabric of the chute above. It was a special low-visibility fabric, chosen to prevent observation from the ground.

It seemed to take forever for him to land. He dropped, finally, into a heavily forested area, coming down between two big trees without fouling his chute. He cut himself loose, climbed out of the cumbersome dropsuit, and took a positional reading. Then he activated the tiny microphone in his chin-band and called Avery in the hovering spaceship.

"Landing successful. I'm

four miles due west of the Andromedan base. I won't call you again until I'm there and have looked around. Get your bomb ready just in case this one *isn't* a fake."

"Right."

"And don't be itchy on the trigger. Wait till you hear from me."

"Check, Majeski."

BREAKING the contact, the Colony Director began to walk. Spring was several weeks old, here in the east, and the trees were ripening into their summer brilliance. This was fertile land out here, he thought. It was a wonderful planet.

Someday they would build their second city here, on the eastern coast—after the aliens were driven off.

He walked at a steady pace, following his compass. He felt no sense of fear, only the nagging dread that perhaps this base, too, might be only an illusion. But he knew strangely that it would not be a mirage. Fate owed that much to him.

After half an hour of constant trek through the forest,

he paused and took a new positional reading. He was less than two miles from the supposed location of the alien base. He moved on. Fifteen minutes later, he checked again: three quarters of a mile more. Twelve or thirteen hundred yards, that was all.

His spirits rose as he drew nearer and saw unmistakable signs of activity: trees had been felled, a path had been cleared in the forest. This was it, he thought. The hidden base from which the attacks on his colony had been projected!

When he was about half a mile away, he could see the alien spaceship—a sleek blue point rising above the trees. Now he proceeded more warily. He was armed with a blaster and with a knife; the latter had been his own idea. Getting closer, Majeski could see the tents as well, three of them.

And—he sucked his breath in sharply—there was one of the aliens!

The Andromedan was coming out of a grove of fruit-trees to the left of the path, laden with a basket of gathered yellow applefruits. No doubt he was providing for the aliens'

meal tonight. Majeski smiled coldly.

The Andromedan was an ugly little creature. He was humanoid, a squat, stocky bowlegged being with glistening green skin, who wore only a brightly woven cloth round his middle. The alien was hairless and slimy-looking. Majeski scurried up behind him, raising his knife.

The Andromedan turned just as Majeski began to lunge. The Colony Director got a good look at the alien's face—little piggish eyes, a flattened snout, a wide mouth from which prominent yellow incisor teeth projected—and then he drove the keen blade deep into the Andromedan's belly and twisted upward. The alien dropped his basket of fruit and tumbled soundlessly to the ground. Majeski looked up quickly; no one had observed.

He exulted. One of the aliens was dead! *That was for Dave Eames*, he thought. A repulsive bluish fluid was gushing in irregular spurts from the alien's body. Majeski knelt and efficiently slit the creature's throat, just in case the first slash had not com-

pletely killed it. Then he moved on.

There was no doubt, now, that this was the real base. Majeski smiled. The proper thing to do was to make a quick exit, get to a safe distance, and notify Avery that this was the right target. But Majeski had no such notions. He continued toward the three tents.

He turned toward the right and entered the first one, blaster drawn. Three aliens were in it, bent busily over complex machinery. Majeski glanced at the gleaming vision-screens on the wall and saw the images in miniature of hideous monsters. An attack on the colony was under way!

He fired quickly. His first bolt went searing through the body of the nearest Andromedan. *That's for Mike Parker*, he thought. He fired again, killing another. *For Eleanor Johnson*. The third stared at him, piggish little eyes ablaze with fear, and Majeski shot him in the face. *For Tom Davis*, he said to himself.

He was pleased to see that the images on the screen

blanked out the moment he had begun firing. A nauseous stench of burned flesh was rising in the tent. Majeski turned. There were still two tents more.

He entered the second and found four Andromedans at work, servicing some sort of complex power generator. He killed two of them at once; the third leaped wildly at him with a wrench in his hand, while the fourth dashed out of the rear of the tent.

Majeski's bolt caught the oncoming alien in the throat and hurled him back against a live grid of the generator, where he sizzled briefly and charred to a crisp. But for the first time a hitch had developed. One of his intended victims had gotten away.

The Earthman burst from the tent just in time to see three additional Andromedans come racing toward him from the remaining tent. He ducked as some kind of energy bolt whizzed past his ear; firing, he cut down the closest Andromedan. As he aimed for the second, the remaining alien scored a hit: the energy bolt sang in the air and cut through

Majeski's body like a dart of flame.

Wincing, Majeski put one hand to his stomach and methodically cut down the two surviving aliens before they could fire again. He looked around. All was quiet in the Andromedan camp.

Motion was an effort, but Majeski forced himself to look in the third tent. It was empty. There had only been eight or nine of them, then, and they were all dead.

He activated his microphone and said in a weak voice, "Come in, Avery....come in."

"Majeski! What's been going on down there? We haven't heard from you for so long we thought you were dead."

"No....not dead yet."

"What's been happening?"

"This is....real camp. Andromedans here."

"For the love of God, get out of there, then—and we'll bomb them to bits."

"No—don't. All dead."

"Dead?"

"I....killed them," Majeski said hoarsely. "All of them. But their machines....intact. You come down, take them, study them. Thought projec-

tors. Use their own weapons against them, drive them out of the galaxy...."

"Majeski! Are you all right?"

"Not....exactly."

"What do you mean?" Avery asked.

"I....wounded. Blaster bolt in the belly. Not....going to last long."

"Majeski!"

"But....aliens all dead," the big man said through pain-clenched lips. "Captured their base. And the colony....the colony....is safe....we can rebuild, expand....a second city soon...."

The effort was too much. Majeski clutched his side and toppled forward. Half an hour later, when the spaceship had landed and Avery and his Patrol unit had reached the alien base, they found Majeski sitting upright, dead, with the shattered bodies of Andromedans everywhere about.

But Majeski was smiling. He had saved the colony—and *he* had done it, not the Patrol. In death, his face gleamed with triumph.

THE END