

IMAGINATION

*Stories
of Science
and Fantasy*

Stories

THE COSMIC JUNKMAN (Novel—25,000 words) by Rog Phillips.....	6
FIRST CAPTIVE (Novelette—8,000 words) by Evan Hunter.....	62
EARTHMEN ASK NO QUARTER! (Short—5,000 words) by Fox B. Holden	84
PROJECT: EARTH (Novelette—8,000 words) by Philip K. Dick.....	98
BLESSED ARE THE MEEKBOTS (Short—5,000 words) by Daniel F. Galouye.....	120
MAN-TRAP (Short—2,200 words) by Hal Annas	136

Features

INTRODUCING THE AUTHOR.....	2
THE EDITORIAL	4
FORECAST OF COMING ISSUE.....	4
INVENTED — TOO LATE!	96
BINARY ECLIPSE	97
DUST FREE — LUNA!.....	119
THE PLANETS — WHEN?.....	142
IMAGINATION SCIENCE FICTION LIBRARY.....	144
FANDORA'S BOX	146
LETTERS FROM THE READERS.....	154
TOMORROW'S SCIENCE	164

DECEMBER 1953

Volume 1

Number 11

William L. Hamling
Editor

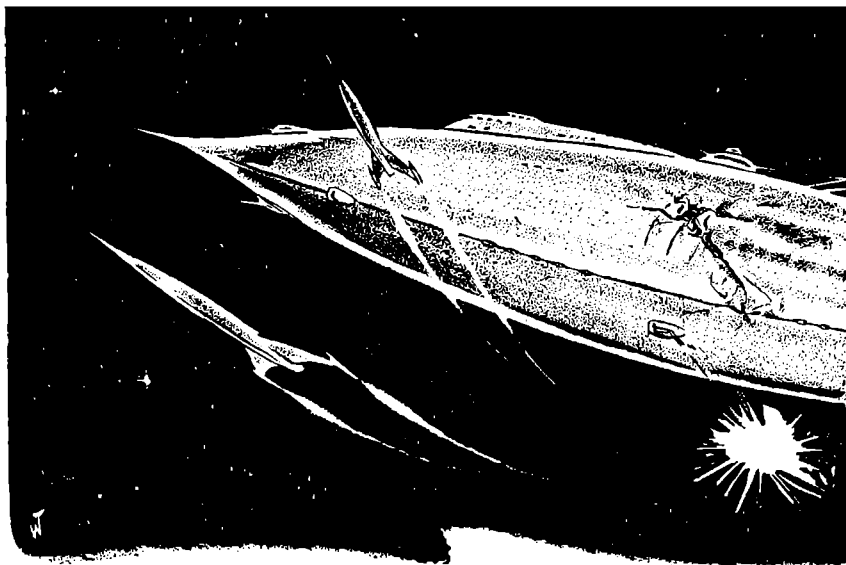
Frances Hamling
Managing Editor

Malcolm Smith
Art Director

January Issue On Sale
November 27th

Published monthly by Greenleaf Publishing Company, 1426 Fowler Avenue, Evanston, Ill. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office at Evanston, Ill. Additional entry at Sandusky, Ohio. Address all manuscripts and subscriptions to IMAGINATION, P.O. Box 230, Evanston, Ill. We do not accept responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts or art work; submissions must be accompanied by stamped, self-addressed return envelopes. The names of all characters that are used in stories are fictitious; any resemblance to any person, living or dead is coincidental. Copyright 1953, Greenleaf Publishing Company. Subscription rate \$3.00 per year. Printed in U. S. A.

Front cover by Malcolm Smith, illustrating THE COSMIC JUNKMAN. Interior illustrations by W. E. Terry and H. W. McCauley. Cartoons by Vogel, Law, Kohler, and Schaffy. Astronomical photo, back cover, courtesy Mt. Wilson and Palomar Observatories.



General Taylor knew that Earth could not resist the invaders, so he ordered all units to surrender. But one commander thought he meant —

EARTHMEN ASK NO QUARTER!

By

Fox B. Holden

“LET them in, sergeant.” The white-haired New United Nations World Space Force chief spoke the words as though he had been forced into

the most humiliating surrender in history. And he had been.

What could he tell them? They were not fools, after all, and he was so impossibly exhausted . . .



Uniform was a mess. All day and all night, words, words, . . . and nothing. Too many useless, powerless words, all adding up to nothing. Foreign space admirals, ground-force field marshals, defense secretaries from a dozen capitals.

Where were the ion-field cannon that had been promised for the last twenty years? Where were the new main-drives? The new alloys? Promises, always promises—but where in God's name *were* they?

And now—now it didn't matter any more.

He let his massive frame slump tiredly for a moment, elbows flat-

tening some of the official litter strewn across the broad desk-top, head in his big hands.

"General Taylor, sir—"

He forced the thoughts from his brain with almost the same physical force with which he shoved his tired body erect.

"Yes, yes, thank you, sergeant. Good morning, gentlemen. Sorry to have kept you waiting."

There were perhaps thirty of them, all civilians, all crowding for a spot nearest the huge desk, all with stub pencils and sheafs of crumpled newsprint in their hands. A couple of flash-bulbs went off.

"General, can you tell us what the aliens' intentions are?"

And it had begun.

"I'm authorized to tell you that the alien space ship is hostile. But, under the circumstances we are convinced with reasonable certainty that their hostility may be . . . mollified to an appreciable degree."

He watched them as they got the official double-talk down word for word. And then, "In other words, General—we are counter-attacking?"

"Sorry. That information is classified."

"About how high is the alien, sir?"

He is circling Earth in an orbit about two thousand miles out, passing our own stations about once every forty-eight hours."

"How big is the ship, sir? About what shape?"

"It is a cigar-shaped vessel, approximately three miles in length and slightly under one at maximum diameter."

"Have any of our own ships as yet had actual contact with this craft?"

"Yes, there has been contact. I am sorry that for the time being the result cannot be disclosed."

"There are rumors, General, that the 402nd Space Wing sent a five or six-ship element of J-83 Lancers from Lunar Base, and that the ships have not reported back. Is this true, sir?"

"It is true that they have not been heard from since they left."

Then a young, unquavering voice cut in softly. "When is it to begin, sir? And when will we—"

"You may—write, gentlemen, that the invasion of Earth has already begun. And, that we have absolutely no defense against it. None. Because of that fact, the decision of the New U. N. Joint Chiefs has been that there should be no needless loss of life. You may write that we have—that we have already surrendered."

His face felt as though it were hewn from wood—a strange wood with a fever in it. He had spoken far beyond his authorization. But they had to know. They could not be lied to forever. And the lies had always, ultimately, been worthless things. He was so *tired*.

"General, can you tell us *why*?"

The group was white-faced, still. The flash-bulbs had stopped popping. The first impulse to bolt the General's office for the nearest bank of press telephones had somehow died even as it had arisen. Belief and disbelief mingled as one in the eyes of each.

"I'll try gentlemen," Taylor said wearily, leaning across the desk, his knuckles white against the smooth surface. "I could talk about our stressing of cultural advancement in this 21st century, rather than technological . . . a

trend that has always made us of the military fearful of the future—now at hand—but what's the use of rehashing problems of the past . . . Plainly and simply, gentlemen, the Invader is superior to us in every phase of known warfare. Add to that the element of a surprise attack and you find us as we are at this moment—beaten, irreparably."

No one said anything. There was nothing to say.

General Taylor sank into his chair and stared at them, a grim hopelessness in his eyes.

Then the newsmen walked from the room. Slowly and silently.

ROBERT Manning, civilian Pentagon clerk, told himself that the Invaders might better kill everybody off and get it over with than to just regiment the hell out of everything. A man couldn't even stay home so his wife could take care of his cold for him.

He sneezed. If allowed to live it, there were perhaps forty years of life yet for him. Forty years, and they would be slave years. It was all too damned new and just hadn't got through to him yet. What in God's name was it going to be *like* . . .

There was a sickness in his stomach, and he knew it was not from his cold.

"Manning—"

He looked up. It was Sweeney, the chief clerk. Manning always thought of him as a man who should've been a first-sergeant somewhere. He was big enough and loud enough, and certainly had temper enough.

"Yes, Mr. Sweeney?"

"Need these damn records right away. They all here? Each reel double-wound with positive and negative both?"

"Yes, sir." Sweeney picked up the bundlesome stack of microfilm reels. "Mr. Sweeney—"

"What is it?"

"Are—are *They* going to get 'em? All of Earth's Space outpost and military records—*everything*?"

"After the Joint Chiefs make out emergency recall orders for every last damn unit, they are. They will check each set of orders against every unit record here, all the way from Corps down to each individual ship." Sweeney grunted. "Then they'll burn 'em, positives, negatives, everything . . . then when the ships come in, they will destroy them too."

Manning felt something turn over inside him. "General Taylor, —"

"What the hell can Taylor do? Christ, you're better off than he is. Once every ship is back here and busted up, he won't even have a job. Maybe not even a head."

"Every ship. They're all there,

Mr. Sweeney. Positives and negatives double-wound on every reel."

"They better be. Or *you* won't have a damn head!"

Sweeney turned and steamrolled out of the office, with every existing record past and present of General Taylor's New U. N. World Space Force under one beefy arm. For security reasons, Manning realized, there had been made but a single copy and negative for each of its units.

His desk was an old one, practically an antique dating back to the 1940's, and his sonotyper was buried deep in its insides on a wooden shelf that folded out to meet you in an awkward manner when you pushed the desk-top up, over and down.

Manning pushed, and with a couple of bronchial grunts produced the sonotyper. He fed in a continuous paper spool, turned on the current, unhooked the compact microphone from the machine's side, and began dictating the rest of his day's work.

Something got kicked viciously out of the key-bed. Black, shiny squares of something. All he needed was for the sonotyper to go haywire and start shooting its complex insides all over.

He stopped dictating to remove his glasses and dry his streaming eyes. His vision cleared, and for an instant settled on the shiny

things that had landed near the front edge of his desk.

Hunks of microfilm.

He picked them up, held one to the light. Words. He fished in a drawer, found a magnifying glass that was used for half-obliterated old files.

He could see the words better, but they were backwards. He had the negative. Impatiently, he grabbed the other square. And read it.

And shivered. And again, it wasn't his cold that was bothering him. He would have to call Sweeney right away—

... Light Space Brigade, Experimental. Temporary outpost, Callisto. Force: 20 Lancer-type J-88 destroyers. Complement: 600. Commanding: Col. Geoffrey Steele—

He felt his insides turning to cold jelly. He would have to call Sweeney. God! Sweeney would skin him alive. Somehow, the tail ends of one of the double-wound reels must have stuck out a little, got sliced neatly off when he'd hastily jammed its pan-cover back on after inspecting it. Then the severed squares of microfilm had slipped down, unnoticed, through one of the desktop cracks where the sonotyper fold-away unit was. And landed in the key-bed. Only Sweeney wouldn't understand it that way. And the Joint Chiefs—

Oh God no!

He had to think.

And he thought of that other name. On the microfilm record—Steele, it was, who commanded 600 men, twenty J-88s . . .

He thought of forty years of slavery.

And then he was doing a crazy thing—crazy—

While no one looked, Robert Manning sneezed and blew his nose and touched the flame of his cigarette lighter to the two squares of microfilm.

THE white-faced communications sergeant stood just inside the door, and this time he failed to be impressed with the unusual smartness of the Colonel's acknowledging salute. The thick sheaf of yellow papers he held in his left hand was trembling visibly, noisily, and he couldn't make it stop.

"Well, Grady, what is it? You look as though you'd picked up a telepath message from one of our Callistan cap-crawlers, or something—" He reached out for the quaking message the sergeant held, and the communications man smiled nervously and held it out to him.

"Sorry, sir. I—I guess I just—"

"No trouble, boy?" The stocky black-and-silver uniformed figure paused in its movement, the thick

pile of yellow papers momentarily forgotten. All of Steele's personnel seemed like sons to him. Even the raw recruits who had previously never been further out than Earth's own Moon. Sometimes, during the lonely hours there had been in the fastnesses of Space, he had surmised it was because there had never been a real son of his own with whom to share the adventures of his calling.

But hadn't it been Space itself that had denied him those many things other men could take for granted—the things for which he had never quite been able to trade? Forty years of it. Venus to Pluto. Deep Space at the System's rim and beyond, to the very edge of Infinity itself.

Sometimes this deep hurt within him seemed too great. And yet, somehow, it seemed always worth the venture. One day, no matter the cost or the hurt, men's outposts would be flung to the stars themselves. This thing he knew.

The sergeant was speaking, and there was a fear in his eyes.

"Something's—happened, home, sir. You'd better read this right away. All the way to the very end, sir."

Steele ran a freckled, stub-fingered hand slowly and deliberately along the close-cropped iron-gray side of his squarish skull.

Attention all stations, the message read. URGENT IMPERATIVE. Earth has been successfully invaded. The rapidity, timing, and infallibility of the attack has made the necessity of immediate capitulation unquestionable. The following-listed units are therefore commanded, for the good of the planet, to return to home Earth bases at once, with all armament either completely dismantled or destroyed. The conquerors have warned that failure to comply with this command will result in wholesale liquidation of Earth's populace.

The long list of outposts followed for fifteen closely-spaced pages. The message was signed *Taylor, General, New United Nations World Space Force, Commanding.*

Steele suddenly felt himself struggling to keep order for full-scale attack bottled in his throat.

Then he fought to keep from simply cursing.

He fought to keep the hot, quick panic in him from boiling into some unthinkable suicide.

The sergeant still stood before him, the thing of awful fear deep in his eyes.

"Get Major Zukow at once, sergeant."

"Yes, sir. But sir—"

"What is it?" His jaws hurt, and he could feel the words hissing

from between his teeth.

"The list, sir. We're the smallest and newest unit there is, so we'd be right at the bottom, page fifteen. But we're not there. We're not listed at all, sir."

He looked. Grady was right. And OK'd and signed by Taylor himself, no mistaking that.

"Get Major Zukow, sergeant. On the double!"

"Yes, sir!" The communications non-com stumbled awkwardly; acclimatization to lesser gravities came quickly only with long experience. He recovered, and then in a curious loping fashion began to run.

FOR terse seconds Steele spoke clipped words into a unit-communicator. And then he waited for Zukow.

It would be a moment or so yet. He looked at the message again, re-read it, tried to glean information from it that it didn't contain. It told what, but it didn't tell *why*. Nor even how. It was just a command, to be obeyed like any other command. No, it wasn't the soldier's place to question. Never the soldier's place to question.

Here is an ideal, they would say. Here is the thing you must work or fight for. Here is what is worth believing in. And the soldier believed. If he did not he

was fortunate, for then he just had a job to do. But if he believed, he was the most hapless creature in the Universe. For sooner or later, the ideal wore thin as a facade for the more practical expediencies which moved behind it. What true ideal there was with the soldier, yet, his was not the freedom to serve it . . . And when the ideal was suddenly scrapped; when they said now, now it is all over, now this is what you must do—here is a new thing to believe . . .

Forty years, from the bogs of Venus to the wastes of Pluto . . .

He looked again at the list headed *ALL UNITS*: and checked them, one by one.

Grady had been right. Experimental simply wasn't there. Maybe an experimental Light Space Brigade on a dark little world like Callisto could get lost in the shuffle.

But he knew better. With Earth at stake, Taylor would allow no such error. Taylor knew every one of his units by heart, he must . . .

He thought about Taylor. He thought about him the way he had known him as both soldier and individual, as general and as a man. Character. Principle. Guts. The three biggest things about Taylor. A man who followed orders to the letter—a man who would sur-

render of his own volition, no matter what price to pay the piper . . . that was where the principle came in; the character, the guts.

He looked at Taylor's facsimile-signature again. Signed by force? By threat? Obviously. The message itself said as much. But if somehow there'd been a mistake, a record overlooked, Taylor would know, and would—

But who else would know? At a glance, who else would know? And then how much would Taylor dare?

For one of the rare times in his life, Steele was frightened to his core.

"Colonel Steele, sir!" Major Zukow snapped a perfunctory salute, put himself at rest and lowered his towering square-cut body into a laxer chair. The healthy pink in his broad face and the purposefulness in the set of his clean-cut features made him look younger than he was, and the close-cropped black hair was like an added insigne of his profession to his perfectly-fitted uniform.

"You'd better take a look at this, Georgi. And then we've got to get things moving." Steele handed the order across his desk.

He waited while Zukow read. He watched Zukow's face. It seemed to gradually coagulate.

And when he was finished, Steele said, "Now find us on there!"

"But I don't—anything else, any other details? Is this—?"

"It's as true as the leaves on your shoulders, Major. And that's all there is, so far. Grady will be in with anything else when and if it should come. Well? What are you thinking?"

"Thinking? If this damned thing isn't some criminal joke, there's no thinking to it, Colonel. We just go, period. I'll get—"

"Just a minute. Did you try to find us on there? What do you make of that?"

"A mistake. Some clerical mistake, that's all. What else could be made of it? On an order like this?"

Steele shifted in his swivel-seat, and a neglected spring squawked its protest. "Suppose," he began slowly, "it was a mistake, Major. But Taylor put his name to it anyway, just the way it is. Now, do you think he'd be *likely* to miss such an error?"

ZUKOW hesitated, a scowl corrugating his wide forehead. "No I don't think so, but whether he was likely to or not hasn't anything to do with it. The mistake was made—he didn't catch it, but he signed it, sent it, and it means us like all the rest of 'em, period!"

"I think he caught it, Major."

"What do you—"

"I mean just that. He caught

it. *And still signed it!*"

"Colonel, don't be crazy! With a gun in his back—"

"Just the point. The people holding the gun would of course have grabbed the records as a check against Taylor's written command. It's the only way they'd have of knowing what was what. They'd do all they could to make sure they were given the complete works, of course, but ultimately, they'd have to trust Taylor—trust his fear of their terrible power and staggering advantage. Only—let's say there *was* a mistake. One way for it to be caught. Taylor—he'd know at a glance—the one man who would. And he still signed it!"

"Nuts, Colonel, nuts! What you are suggesting is absolute nonsense. With the lives of billions of people in the balance, you mean he'd—"

"Leave it up to us."

"With only twenty J-88s? With a planetful of people in the balance. Sir, do you think Taylor's a lunatic or something?"

Steele groped for an answer that would take the cold logic out of Zukow's questions. The exec had to be wrong. There must be an answer.

"Zukow," he heard himself saying at last, "there were only three of our craft out today—all behind the Big Boy, and I've ordered

then in—damped, and clammed up. I've grounded the rest. And if we don't get anything from communications within the next couple of hours, like a Notification of Error and Correction—"

"You must be out of your head, Colonel." Zukow stood up, towered over the big desk. Veins in his wide forehead stood out redly, accentuating the growing color in his stiffened face. "In a couple of hours we go into eclipse! Not for long, but while we are, we won't be *able* to pick up anything. Suppose *then* the notification comes? While we're working out some crazy plan still thinking Taylor was trying to pull a cute one? Do you think we can take a gamble like that? Do you think we have the *right* to take a gamble like that?"

"As it is," Steele replied slowly, "our people are to be slaves. For all we know, forever."

"A little dramatic, aren't you?"

"Would you call it a situation to be taken lightly?"

The other straightened, said nothing.

"Major, Taylor was taking a shot in the dark. 'We're a fantastically slim hope—but we're the *only* one he's got!'"

"And I think that right now you are a greater enemy to Earth than all her Invaders!"

"'Liberty or death,'" Major,

that's what Taylor was saying to us when he knowingly put his signature to a fluke error!"

"Oh for God's sake Colonel, come off it! It sounds just jim-dandy but you haven't even got a plan! Infinity to zero, those are your odds! And if I thought you were seriously considering *not* going in, I'd—"

"Yes, Major, you'd what?"

The door opened. It was Grady. There was a communication folder in his hand.

Silently, Steele took the folder. There was an expectant look on Zukow's flushed face as his superior read the brief message. Then Steele looked up.

"No," he said. "It's not a Notification of Error and Correction. Simply a follow-up directive ordering all recalled craft to navigate the final ten thousand miles of their Earth-approaches in intervals of not less than twenty minutes each. Seems the Invaders have their entire headquarters and supply set-up in a mother-ship circling Earth—and they aren't taking any chances."

"Under these conditions, then —"

"As far as we are concerned, Major, the conditions are the same!"

For a moment Zukow stood immobile, his dark eyes snapping down to lock with Steele's. But

the colonel's did not flinch. And then the Major pivoted, and left Steele suddenly alone in the small office.

HE had hardly completed the all-units bulletin when the call-buzzer from Operations sounded. Within the next hour his six hundred men, his twenty small J-88 Lancers would be loaded to the fins with all the arms they could carry, and then . . .

Fleetingly, the thought nagged at him. Was Zukow a coward—or right? Twenty tiny J-88s balanced against the lives of four billion people . . . Yet there would be surprise, and the over-confidence of a powerful victor after an easy conquest. And more, there would be the will of a small band of men.

He flipped up the buzzer-switch, and the Operations lieutenant appeared on his small desk viewer.

"Yes, lieutenant? Did your group have some difficulty in understanding my bulletin?"

"No, sir. We're getting things Space-shape at our end right now. But, sir—you said that twenty craft were to be prepared."

"Yes that's correct. All of them."

"But there will be only nineteen, sir. Major Zukow blasted off nearly a half-hour before your announcement, in a completely unarmed J-88 and—he said—on your

authorization."

For a moment Steele said nothing. His mind seethed, yet he understood.

"Very well, lieutenant. You will stand by for a second bulletin."

The young officer's face faded from the screen, and Steele tried to think. Obvious, of course, but he wondered how much Zukow could be blamed. A frightened man. A coward, perhaps, doing what he thought was right.

But it was *not* right!

And they must now act swiftly. For if the enemy were warned in sufficient time . . .

Infinity to zero, Zukow had said, were his odds. Perhaps.

But there would be nineteen J-88s, armed to the fins . . .

THEY had kept Zukow waiting three hours after he landed. He had immediately been placed under guard upon setting the unarmed Lancer down at National Spaceport, and they had not believed him until his shouts of protest had been overheard by one of their officers. It had almost been for nothing—

But now they were taking him to the Pentagon; into Taylor's own suite of offices.

And Taylor was there. A different-looking Taylor than Zukow remembered—no longer the bulky, solid-looking figure. Wan, drawn,

as were those few of his staff working with him under the orders of the alien commander.

It was the alien who spoke. Taylor sat white and silent.

"My officers inform me that you have attempted to convince them of an impossible story, Earthman," he said. He was man-like, only taller. His head was bald and like a fleshless skull, and there was the glitter of a strong intelligence behind the widely-spaced double-lidded red eyes.

And Zukow repeated his story. Shamefully, fearfully, he told it. And as he did, new color flushed Taylor's lined face, then subsided to the whiteness of helpless anger.

"Your story will be checked carefully," the alien commander said in a slurred, yet fluent English. "If it is true—"

And that was all he said. There was a sudden flurry of movement, and General Taylor had wrested a weapon from the alien's belt. He squeezed its trigger in quick, desperate spasms, squeezed, squeezed . . .

Zukow lay headless on the floor. Zukow—the alien commander, and his guards.

"Hide them! We've got to hide them!" Taylor was yelling at his paralyzed aides. "If Steele can pull it off—can wreck that hellish mother-ship of theirs, they'll be

cut off down here—done for! Come on for God's sake help me!"

They sprang into action then.

And with the weapons from the slain aliens, waited silently behind the bolted office door.

Taylor's wasted frame was tensed. Minutes . . . hours . . . or death in seconds, perhaps. They could only wait.

THEY came out of the Sun.

Nineteen flat, finned, streamlined shapes, orange flame gouting from them as from the lips of Hell itself, hurtling headlong with some terrible vengeance glowing in their overheated tubes.

Then Space was suddenly gaping holes of searing color, bursting soundlessly as the nineteen became seventeen, fourteen, twelve.

The twelve became ten, and it was as though the bowels of the Sun itself had erupted to the right and to the left of them, and everywhere before and behind them.

Eight of them completed the first pass, and already there were yawning holes in the gleaming hide of their enemy.

They turned, came on again. Their torpedo-tubes sparkled, and five full salvos struck. The alien mother-ship spilled white flame from a gaping rupture in her flank, and three ships were left to close a second time.

Then two flat, finned, stream-

lined shapes did not pull from their pass. They hurtled, instead, headlong into the wounded juggernaut's very heart.

Drunkenly, and with almost deliberate slowness, it split in two, a slain thing, spewing its broken structure and shattered creatures with crazy abandon toward the great blue seas of Earth beneath.

One now there was, its flagship insigne half-scorched from its twisted, battered hull. Yet it hurtled through the blackness of Space toward the planet below it, the flush of victory shimmering in its overheated tubes.

THERE was little to be said. General Taylor stood at the side of the white hospital bed, and

Colonel Geofferey Steele, his head swathed in bandages, looked questioningly up at him.

"General, did Major Zukow—"

Taylor's mouth was grim. "He reached us—and the aliens. But we . . . managed to take care of the situation . . . to give you time." The General's features softened. "You and your crew---a magnificent job. Earth is proud—"

"We were lucky, sir," Steele attempted a grin. "Tried hard not to make any mistakes . . ."

Taylor smiled then, his laughter an emotional release they had both been seeking. "I—occasionally overlook mistakes!" he said.

And then the two men laughed together. For a long time.

The End