

TARA and the SPACE RAIDERS

By Charles S. Strong



nity figured that Gonda's ships would not be able to reach the satellite for another two days. A call was sent out for Haneesh, but he was so far away that it would be impossible for him to return in time.

The next forty-eight hours were busy ones. The men worked with a will, not merely because Tara was goading them, but because they realized that their own lives were in jeopardy. On the morning of the second day the space raider ships were bright and large in the sky. All during the night Gonda and his men had been sending powerful ray beams at the force shield. One pirate came to Tara and said:

"They are powerful force rays. There are some places where they have warped the magnetic screen. What are we building here?"

"These are guns of our own," Tara told him. "If Milgra is satisfied that they are properly placed, we can begin to show Gonda what he is up against."

The pirate hurried away to locate the sub-chief and about twenty minutes later Milgra hurried up and asked:

"What are your orders, Tara?"

"Are the guns ready?"

"They are," replied Milgra. "But what sort of ammunition are we going to use?"

"Negatrons," Tara replied.

EVERYTHING was peaceful and happy in the stronghold of Haneesh on a small satellite of Venus. Tara and her companions were wondering whether it was merely the pride to action that would endanger all of them.

One day she was called to the synchro-screen and looked at an image of a dozen large ships hurtling toward the home of the Brotherhood.

"Challenge them!" she told the pirate who was on guard.

The pirate issued the challenge and increased the focus of the screen so they could see the speaker about to answer the challenge on the approaching ship. A cruel face loomed up before them, and a grim voice said:

"I am Gonda, chief of the Uranian corsairs. We have heard of your pirate's paradise and would like to settle there."

Haneesh was away on an expedition and Tara was in command. But her experience with the wild members of the Brotherhood was limited, and she did not know upon how many she could depend. This

seemed to be a matter for her alone. Finally she said:

"You may circle Venus until Haneesh returns. Then if he wishes you to spend any time among us, he will be in touch with you."

Gonda laughed coarsely, then replied:

"I shall be there to greet Haneesh when he returns. He will be my guest."

The screen blacked out then. Tara turned from the synchro-screen to one of the space telescopes and shouted:

"What is going on here?"

Others peered through the powerful glasses and Milgra, one of the sub-chiefs replied:

"It seems as though this Gonda has a powerful war fleet. What can we do?"

"We must develop long-range weapons at once," Tara declared. "In the meantime, throw up the magnetic screens."

THERE was a hum all about

the encampment as the generators that would develop the magnetic field were turned on, the force shield built up around the village of the Brotherhood.

Calculators in the commo-

The Pirate Queen Battles Against Gonda's Evil Army!

"At least we'll use them first. Then we'll switch to positrons."

Several of the pirates looked at the girl as though they believed she were losing her mind. But they were well-disciplined and when Milgra issued the orders, they stood by their weapons and waited for the assault from the men of Uranus. Then, however, they were jarred by the combined impact of blasts from the raider ships against the magnetic screen. At one point a pirate shouted:

"They're breaking through!"

screen. The men watched with interest as the magnetic screen whipped back into place. Then suddenly they saw a curious phenomenon. The raiding ships were spun around in circles as though they were chips in a whirlpool.

Ray blasts bounced off the magnetic screen at an angle and caromed out into space. The ships backed away thousands of miles, and from their erratic actions it appeared that their commanders had little or no control over them.

"Gonda will not give up so easily," Tara said as she

watched the remaining ships assemble in feet formation and withdraw.

Apparently they held a council of war and decided that the men of Haneesh and Tara could smash them into smithereens if they were so minded.

As their ships withdrew in the direction of Uranus, Milgra said:

"Your strategy was certainly effective Tara, but I still don't understand it."

"Gonda defeated himself," Tara said simply. "He moved his craft into our magnetic



But Tara was calm and collected: She was counting the intervals between the ray blasts from the raiding ships and knew that each blast required a space of ten minutes before the strength of the ray could be restored. Gonda was immediately outside the screen now.

SUDDENLY, immediately after the latest raider blast, Tara shouted:

"Open the magnetic screen! Negatron guns, fire! Aim for the sterns of the raiding craft!"

There were several moments of capable activity, then a series of blasts rushed out through the open magnetic

screen. The men watched with interest as the magnetic screen whipped back into place. Then suddenly they saw a curious phenomenon. The raiding ships were spun around in circles as though they were chips in a whirlpool.

Ray blasts bounced off the magnetic screen at an angle and caromed out into space. The ships backed away thousands of miles, and from their erratic actions it appeared that their commanders had little or no control over them.

"Gonda will not give up so easily," Tara said as she

watched the remaining ships assemble in feet formation and withdraw.

Apparently they held a council of war and decided that the men of Haneesh and Tara could smash them into smithereens if they were so minded.

As their ships withdrew in the direction of Uranus, Milgra said:

"Your strategy was certainly effective Tara, but I still don't understand it."

"Gonda defeated himself," Tara said simply. "He moved his craft into our magnetic