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WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH

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"Did they for a moment think they could defeat the greatest war lord in the world?"

Yellow Doom

By ROBERT H. LEITFRED

A thrill-tale of the final war against the invading hordes of Asia—a tale of super-science, and death and destruction raining down out of the sky

ALUMINOUS streak of flame curved down the slant of sky toward a rocky headland that jutted out into the Pacific Ocean.

It fell with a hissing rush toward the scattered buildings of the United States naval station at San Diego. No one in the immediate vicinity saw from where it

came. Nor did anyone see it strike. But a bare second after that small streak of flame had exploded into a larger flame, men saw with startled eyes the miracle of burning metal.

Licking flames gathered at the base of the steel mast nearest the ocean, crawled insidiously up the latticed frame of steel, turned it red, then white. The glowing heat sapped the strength of the metal. The mast collapsed, dragging the antenna wires with it. The strange flame followed the copper wires to the second mast, enveloped it from the top, and burned swiftly downward to its concrete base. A matter of minutes, and there was nothing but the tangled wreckage of the broadcasting towers.

No one from the ground had seen the swift descent of the luminous streak of flame. Yet two pairs of eyes had seen it from across the breadth of a continent, from a high-flung tower in New York, thousands of miles away. Ether-vision had accomplished the miracle.

"It's come, Karl," proclaimed Aaron Carruthers in a tense voice. "The thing we have watched for. The menace we have warned our Government against. Look! San Diego is without its air communication. And it's my guess that the same thing is happening to the other naval bases along the west coast."

The speaker surged to his feet before the complicated mechanism of the ether-vision panel. This young scientist was a little above medium in height, and his eyes were those of a dreamer, a searcher. They were also those of a man who had seen strange and startling things. At present they were grim, thoughtful.

"Sit down, Aaron," spoke his assistant, Karl Danzig. "We haven't traced that fireball yet."

Carruthers sat down, and slowly began to twist the dial controlling the directional

antenna. His eyes burned feverishly at what he saw.

Out of the blue above the glowing steel masts, at such altitude as to be invisible from the naval station, a tiny, wasp-like plane circled slowly. Through powerful binoculars its pilot observed the blighting effect of his strange bomb.

Apparently satisfied that his task had been completed according to the desire of the powers he served, he masked his slant, oriental eyes in a glow of satisfaction, and headed his wasp-like plane out to sea.

Across the magnetic screen of the ether-vision ray flowed other scenes, all alike as to detail—naval stations at San Pedro, San Francisco, and the inland air base at Seattle. Without warning they had been cut off from the outside world.

"Karl!" Carruthers' voice was tense. "Try again, will you, and see if you can get me Langham's secretary in Washington. In the meantime I'll try to trace these strange planes so as to locate the carrier ship at sea."

As Danzig picked up the electronic phone, the commercial broadcasts of a continent, from the Panama Canal to Alaska, shifted automatically to Federal control as the Intelligence chiefs of the various nations clamped down hard in a sudden censorship.

THINGS seemed normal for a time, but for a short time only.

There was a restless murmur in the air. It was like the rustle of waves moving over the sands at high tide. It began at the nation's capital in Washington and spread fanwise north, south and west. It was the cry of a people confronted with catastrophe, with fear.

Sirens moaned along the grand trunk highway between Washington and New York. The nation seethed with turmoil. Men with gaunt faces peered anxiously

into the crowded airways above the city's high towers. Men with hollow eyes crouched before the screens of television news that flashed the faces and voices of men who controlled the destinies of several nations—ambassadors from Central America, Mexico and Canada. Long ago had these nations absorbed the creed of their sister republic, a nation on whom they could depend in a crisis—the United States of America.

The year was 2000. The day was the seventh of Jupiter, the thirteenth month of the earth's new calendar. The hour was late in the afternoon as the sun dropped westward in a blood-red haze. A faint afterglow lingered in the sky like the portentous shadow of doom.

What had happened? No one knew exactly except the young scientist, Aaron Carruthers. He had known what was coming and had warned official Washington. The Government had ignored his warnings. It had scoffed at what he called his ether-vision ray. Even in the year 2000 men were skeptical of the revolutionary advances being made in science.

Carruthers thought of his past rebuffs, as he climbed aboard a stream-lined rocket ship bound for Washington. He was still thinking about it a half-hour later as he paused before the building on Pennsylvania Avenue wherein the Government of a great nation was centered. And while he waited in the outer offices of the Bureau of Intelligence, destiny moved forward.

In a room high above the avenue, in the same building, twelve dignified men had assembled. They represented the super-cabinet Government. The old order had passed. Congress and Senate no longer existed. As a relic of the past the two Houses had been discarded for a smaller group. And these twelve men

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were the Government, subject only to the will of the President.

They sat around a long table, in the center of which was built a television screen. Wordlessly they awaited their chief, who had summoned them into executive session.

He came, through a panel door in the wall, quietly and unannounced, a tall, gaunt man, smooth of jaw, sharp-featured, with a mane of iron-gray hair brushed severely back from his intellectual forehead. He acknowledged with a slight nod their courtesy in rising.

"Be seated, gentlemen." His voice was low, soft, a Southern drawl.

In turn he faced each man of his cabinet—the conservative, the liberal, the reactionary. But whatever their beliefs, he read the same thought in the eyes of every man—a determination to stand shoulder to shoulder against the menace shadowing their country.

"The day of reckoning has arrived," began the President. "Wat! It came without any ultimatum until after the first blow had been struck. Yellow doom overshadows our nation."

He rustled a single sheet of paper held between his fingers. "We'll discuss the contents of this ultimatum in a few moments. But first I want to acquaint you with the situation. . . ."

His voice trailed away.

The screen of the Continental news-vision glowed whitely. A shadowy figure began to form. It changed rapidly to the head and shoulders of an Asiatic war lord. There was no mistaking the cold, slanting eyes, the cruel lips, and the needle-pointed mustaches. The face emerging from the electrical impulses of the television screen was none other than that of Marshal Huen Feng Zaryoti.

The war lord's thin lips twisted sardonically as he spoke. "To the President,

his super-cabinet, and to the peoples of the United States," he bowed, "I extend greetings."

He paused for a moment, then continued.

"The time has arrived when the coffers of our Asiatic dynasty need replenishing. We have come to you for what we need. It will be quite useless to rise up in arms against us. Our armies are like the sands of the sea, our air service like black clouds. Our ships, vast fleets, are already at your doors."

His second pause was more significant. "Your President has our ultimatum. Ten hours we give him to comply with our demands. Should he fail to do so, destruction and death will be loosed such as the world has never witnessed. Ten hours. That is positively the limit of time we will allow."

Once more he bowed. "Then his slant eyes, his cruel lips, and his needle-pointed mustaches faded into cold silver as the screen went dead.

"A clever man," shrugged the President. "Using our Continental broadcast band. By now nearly everyone in the country should know the danger we are in. . . . Listen, gentlemen, now that Marshal Zaryoti has finished, to a gist of his ultimatum."

He tapped the desk with finger tips. "First, he demands eighty percent of the gold in our treasury. Second, eighty percent of the gold in National, State and Federal Reserve banks. Third, he seeks full control of our oil, ore, steel and automotive industries. And," he finished, "he insists on a puppet president to head our Government while I go into voluntary exile."

FARNSWORTH, Secretary of the Navy, lunged to his feet. "Not while I head the navy, Mr. President. We'll crush this thing. . . ."

An automatic message recorder began to click. The President tore the printed words from the paper roll. "There's your answer, Farnsworth."

Secretary Farnsworth paled as he read the message aloud. "Fleet steamed out of San Pedro and San Diego at two a. m. on the morning of the seventh day of Jupiter as per secret orders. Signed: Admiral Young, commanding."

"Well?" demanded the President.

Farnsworth chewed impatiently on his lower lip. "I issued no such order, gentlemen."

The President shrugged. "Undoubtedly. Probably the same thing happened to our Air Service at about the same time."

Gettering, grizzled secretary of the Eastern and Western air fleets, jumped to his feet. "Mr. President," he shouted. "I received the order signed by you——"

"Never mind finishing," snapped the President. "I sent no order regarding air maneuvers. Where are our air fleets?"

"The Eastern fleet is scattered over the Atlantic. The Western has been ordered to hold secret maneuvers at Hawaii and the Philippines."

"The Western fleet can be recalled, can't it?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"According to the orders I received, they were not to use their wireless. For twenty-four hours they were to keep in touch with each other by a system of flare lights. It was supposed to be a practise long since abandoned. Anyhow, those were the orders I received."

The President smiled bleakly. "Well, we still have our old-fashioned army, such as it is, and I have every reason to believe our soldiers can still shoot."

"The use of rifles was abandoned three years ago," informed the Secretary of

War. "Most of the men were transferred to tank, transport and chemical service."

The eyes of the chief executive closed wearily. "I had forgotten. Will someone call in the Chief of Intelligence? Ten hours is a short time. Prompt action is essential if we are to survive."

Langham, tall, morose, Chief of the Bureau of Intelligence, entered the conference room. With him was Aaron Carruthers. No one paid the slightest attention to the young scientist. All eyes were riveted on the sphinx-like face of Langham.

The President spoke. "Did your screen pick up Zaryoti?"

"It did, Mr. President."

"You are aware, of course, what conversation took place in this council chamber?"

Langham nodded. "It's my business to hear everything."

"Very well. We have less than ten hours to prepare for war with a mighty power—ten hours before the enemy begins to close in on us along the Pacific seaboard. The bulk of our air force, the powerful Western fleet, is thousands of miles away and out of radio communication. And our sea fleet is seventeen hours from land."

"I understand, perfectly."

"It is also apparent, Langham, that you have not properly guarded this building. Orders have been stolen, signatures forged—all inside work. Zaryoti has outwitted us at the very start."

Carruthers made a sudden gesture. It was an instinctive reflex, the sort of movement one would make in the darkness to ward off an object he could not see, but could almost feel. His eyes at that moment were on the floor. Suddenly they lifted upward. He backed away from the spot, his clenched hands quivering, his

breath snagging somewhere in the back of his throat.

His fingers closed over Langham's arm. "Wait!" he cautioned, tensely. "Say nothing. Not now." His deep-set eyes were veiled with warning shadows.

"Who is this man?" demanded the President.

"Aaron Carruthers," answered Langham. "He wired in the first news of disaster. He's the one man who knows—"

"Nonsense," brusked the President. "Get him out of this room. This discussion—"

"Sorry to interrupt," broke in Langham, imperturbably, "but we need him in this crisis. Once we turned him down. That was a grave mistake. To do so now would be to invite disaster of the first magnitude."

"Enough," snapped the President, irritably. "My orders are to send him from this room. At once."

The eyes of Aaron Carruthers hardened. "I'm sorry, Mr. President. I should have known better than to offer my services a second time. I'll leave as you have ordered. But—"

His voice held a threat of menace to come. "I want to warn you, Mr. President, and also the members of your super-cabinet, that there is an agent of Marshal Huen Feng Zaryoti present in this room."

The President and his cabinet eyed the speaker as if he had suddenly gone mad.

"I hope I've made myself clear," finished the young scientist. "If I haven't, I'll repeat my words. There is an agent of Marshal Zaryoti present in this room listening to everything being said and planned. No. Don't glare at me or at one another. The man I refer to can not be seen—he's invisible."

"Langham!" The President's drawling voice cut through the dazed silence fol-

lowing Carruthers' last words. "Are you certain this man hasn't lost his reason?"

The sphinx-like face of Langham had not changed in the slightest. If the news came as a shock to him, his face revealed no sign of it. "I know Carruthers quite well, Mr. President. As I remarked before, he was the man who gave my office the first news of the destruction of the wireless stations along the Pacific. I know, also, because of his help, how the destruction was accomplished, and the nearest base of operations being used by Zaryoti. He beat my own operatives both in time and in value of information. I hope that answers your question."

THE President turned his eyes full upon Carruthers for the first time. It was plain that he was trying to gain control of himself during a very trying period.

"What made you think, Carruthers, that Zaryoti has an agent in this room?"

The young scientist was staring queerly into space. His lips moved slightly. "Lock the doors, Langham. Quick!" With three quick strides he stood before the President. "I saw his shadow, Mr. President, when he passed in front of one of these wall lights. He's still in this room, I tell you. Within inches of all of us."

"Langham, get this maniac out of the room," thundered Farnsworth. "We're wasting valuable time. There are only nine hours left. Get him out, I tell you."

Carruthers moistened his lips. "And the remaining nine hours will be worse than wasted, Farnsworth, if you discuss your plans against Zaryoti in this room—now!"

The faces of several cabinet members blanched. They turned questioning eyes on the face of their leader. But before he could speak, something materialized out

of thin air—a long, narrow blade of shining steel.

A claw-like hand was visible gripping its hilt. That was all that could be seen. The blade struck downward in a jerking movement toward the heart of the President.

Carruthers leaped. There followed a soft thud, then a harder one as the young scientist collided with the invisible body. The members of the cabinet drew back in horror at something they could not see or understand.

They could see Carruthers struggling violently with empty air. To all appearances he had gone stark mad. They started toward him, Langham leading.

Then they saw the President stagger, clasp his hands to a crimson spot below his heart, and slump to the floor.

"Langham! Quick!" Carruthers' voice was muffled. "Here. I've got him!"

There was a ripping snarl like tearing silk, and the body of the President's assailant was revealed from the waist up.

A blunt object in Langham's hand swished downward. It struck a smooth-shaven head with stunning force. The agent of Marshal Huen Feng Zaryoti collapsed with a grunt.

Carruthers rose slowly to his feet, ripping the invisible folds of cloth from the lower part of the oriental's body. His eyes were bright with the excitement of discovery. In his absent-mindedness he almost forgot the prisoner.

But Langham hadn't. Two of his own men appeared in an open doorway. "Lock this spy up," he ordered. "And keep a strong guard over him. He's tricky. Don't let him escape. I'll question him later."

He turned to the wounded chief executive. The President was unconscious. Langham summoned a surgeon. The

President, still unconscious, was carried to his own private chambers.

"Well," shrugged the Intelligence Chief. "We still have our problem to face."

Farnsworth pounded the table for order. "According to the terms of our new constitution, Langham, I immediately assume control of the chief executive's power in the event of sickness or death."

Langham nodded. "That is the law."

"Very well. Now listen. Your job is to obey any orders I issue. Is that clear?"

"Quite."

"Furthermore, I consider myself and my associates quite capable of handling the present situation. The President and myself turned down this man Carruthers' crazy inventions some time ago. And we're turning them down a second time. Carruthers, you can go. My word is final."

"Don't be bull-headed, Farnsworth," snapped Langham. "If you've got a grain of sense in your head, you'd know that our nation is licked right now. There isn't a thing we can do to stop Zaryoti."

"We've got our sea fleet."

"I'll not deny that. But where is it? Miles away at sea. Before you could get your ships back to the west coast, Zaryoti's own fleet would have anchored in our harbors. And what would happen to our port cities of San Diego, San Pedro and San Francisco?"

"I'm recalling the fleet at once," gritted Farnsworth.

Langham swung on Gettering. "What about the silly order you passed on to your air squadrons? Bah! You may be a super-cabinet but you act like a lot of morons. Try and get your air fleet back and see how far you get."

"I had no idea those orders were forged," replied Gettering.

"Enough!" snapped Farnsworth.

"We'll get along without their wireless equipment. We'll send a rocket ship——"

"If you know anything at all, Farnsworth," broke in Langham, "you'd know that even a rocket ship couldn't make contact, even under perfect conditions, in less than six hours. Six hours for the air fleet to return would make twelve. We have less than nine before Zaryoti strikes."

FARNSWORTH'S face purpled. With a visible effort he held his temper in check. "For the benefit of the rest of our cabinet, Langham, I'll put it this way. What is it you demand of us?"

"That you listen to me as Chief of War Intelligence."

"All right. We're listening."

"There are two things we can do," continued Langham. "We can surrender and agree to the terms of Marshal Huen Feng Zaryoti, which means our utter subjugation, or," he paused significantly, "we can place the country's defense in the hands of this young scientist, Aaron Carruthers. Whatever he demands must be granted."

Farnsworth grunted sarcastically. "And what are this man's demands?"

"I demand," announced Carruthers, "the co-operation of the Secretaries of Air and Navy fleets. Also I'll want all this scare-broadcasting by television stopped at once. The two secretaries and Langham will return with me to my laboratory in New York. From that spot we'll conduct our defense of America."

"Impossible," shrugged Farnsworth, glaring at Langham. "What does this scientist know about national defense?"

"What do any of *you* know?" countered the Chief of Intelligence. "We're up against a shrewd, cunning military genius employing the most modern of ideas and weapons. Carruthers holds the

key—and the only key—to the situation now confronting us."

Farnsworth and the others jumped to their feet. As they did so there was a scraping noise outside the door. It sagged open. One of Langham's operatives leaned weakly against the door-frame. His face was drawn with pain, and there was a crimson bruise on his forehead. His eyes sought Langham's.

"Sorry, Chief," he whispered huskily. "He . . . the prisoner . . . got away. Killed Jerry. And I . . . I couldn't hold—" The voice faded into a confused jumble of words. Abruptly the man collapsed in a crumpled heap—stone dead.

There followed a confused jumble of voices.

Farnsworth rapped for order. "Gentlemen, it must be obvious to you that Langham's men allowed one of Zaryoti's spies to escape, and it cost them their lives. His men, though keen and capable, can not cope with these Asiatics. Why, then, should we turn over all authority and initiative to this scientist who knows even less of their cunning, and expect to save our nation from disaster?"

Langham's drawl cut through the babel of voices around the long table. "Do whatever you please, Farnsworth. But heaven help you if you fail!"

He turned to the young scientist. "You may go now, Carruthers. Your country does not need your services. Sorry I wasn't able to convince the others."

Carruthers rose to his feet. "Thanks, Langham. Good evening, gentlemen."

HARDLY had Aaron Carruthers left to return to his laboratory in New York, when the television screen on the long table glowed, and the yellow face of the Asiatic war lord, Marshal Huen Feng Zaryoti, became visible to every member

of the assembled cabinet. His voice crackled shrilly as he hurled a fresh challenge over the ether:

"People of the United States. Zaryoti, Emperor of a combined Asia, is ready to strike. Eight hours remain for you to submit to my ultimatum. But to prove I have the power to destroy, I will begin at once, striking simultaneously in three places, Los Angeles, Washington and the great power projects of Niagara. Zaryoti has spoken."

High in the air above the capitol whined a siren of alarm. Its strident scream penetrated the room where the super-cabinet faced its first major crisis.

"Bluff!" thundered Farnsworth. He seized a telephone and spoke briefly. "Chief of Naval Operations. Hurry!"

There was a succession of clicks. Farnsworth resumed. "Recall the red and blue fleets out in the Pacific. Order them to steam coastward at full speed. Definite orders will be sent to the admiral in command during the next hour. If there is any question—"

The lights in the room went suddenly black. Farnsworth felt the instrument in his hands grow useless. He shouted. He pounded it against the table. But nothing he could do would restore its usefulness. The wires were dead.

A clamor of bells, whistles and human voices profaned the night. The moan of the sirens increased. Then the city began to rock as if in the throes of an earthquake.

Jamming and pushing, the members of the super-cabinet blundered out into the corridor. At the far end of it were French doors leading to an iron balcony. Onto this balcony they crowded, staring at the wild confusion below.

It was a night never to be forgotten. Overhead were blackness and shifting clouds with only a few stars visible.

Lights from passing cars weaved jerkily as the pavement buckled under the terrific pressure of explosions. Men and women cried out in panic. A building crashed. A second followed it in a cloud of smoking debris. There was a grating rasp of concrete sliding from the walls of a near-by building.

Langham pushed forward to the railing. His eyes were hard. His lips were twisted into a sardonic smile. They parted after a moment. Two words escaped them. "Atomic bombs."

"Eh?" grunted Farnsworth.

"Atomic bombs," repeated the Intelligence Chief. "I thought the invention had been lost. But no. Zaryoti has it. We, our Government, turned it down. You remember, Farnsworth. You were against it. Too powerful. Too fantastic. Well, it looks as if the inventor sold it to the Asiatics. Another blunder."

Farnsworth turned away. "Get me a page, somebody," he ordered. "I've got to get a message through to the Chief of Naval Operations."

"Listen, Farnsworth." Langham grabbed the Acting President by the arm. "Are you altogether blind and deaf? Listen to the mob surging along the avenue. Those people are headed for the open spaces if they can find them. They're terror-stricken. Our machinery of defense has broken down."

"Shut up!"

"It's my job to point out these things. Do you understand what's happened? Our power system has failed. That means no communication of any sort except by courier. And where will we find couriers? They went out of date fifty years ago."

"The fleet!" insisted Farnsworth. "They must be recalled. A way must be found to communicate with them. At once. We must send a rocket ship——"

Gettering's harsh laugh broke in.

"We're licked, Farnsworth. There's not a chance in the world of getting in touch with them. Amateur television sets will soon be reporting the same disaster from the west and north—that is, if they have the power to operate."

Several others of the cabinet added their voices to Gettering's. "Gettering and Langham are right, Farnsworth. We've got to do something, and do it at once before the whole country is destroyed."

Farnsworth's huge bulk weaved threateningly toward those members who were siding in with Langham. "You men listen to me. I know——"

"You know very little," cut in Langham. "I tell you the country is headed for a smash unless you act reasonable. Either run up the white flag and give in to Zaryoti, or——"

"Or what?"

"Carruthers. He's the one man who has the power to squelch this thing. We lost the atomic bombs by your opposition. We may lose Carruthers and his ether-vision ray. Don't make the same mistake twice. . . ."

A ball of fire curved down the sky scarcely a hundred yards away. It struck the pavement. There was no sharp explosion such as men were accustomed to hear when cordite or TNT let loose. There was only a dull first explosion, followed by a deeper and still deeper rumbling as the bomb forced its way down to bedrock.

Abruptly the building housing the cabinet and executive offices began to sway, first to the east, then to the west. There was something breath-taking in the way the structure weaved on its foundations. Men clung to the railing with wan faces and staring eyes.

"Get inside," shouted Langham.

They followed him like cattle. Lang-

ham found a clerk with a flashlight and took it from him. They returned to the conference room. It was impossible to talk intelligibly. Their minds were too upset by the constant jarrings of the atomic bombs.

The strain on the steel framework of the building must have been enormous, but though it weaved dangerously, it did not collapse. Time became an eternity of tortured minutes that extended into the longest hour these men had ever passed through. And to the inhabitants of the nation's capital, time was endless. It was as if the world had come to an end.

Then power came surging through the cables as workers repaired the line breaks. The lights of the city glowed dimly on desolation and ruin. Men and women moved through the ruins like jackals, searching for lost ones, fearing the nearness of the Asiatics, not knowing what to do or which way to turn to escape the wrath of the Asiatic war lord.

Seven hours till doom—the yellow doom of destruction.

FARNSWORTH sat at the end of a long table. In place of the super-cabinet were two men—Langham and Gettering. The message recorder was clicking off catastrophes. Los Angeles was in flames. Her great aqueducts had been bombed, and flood waters were raging throughout the city. The capital was in a state of chaos. Of the power projects of Niagara, no news sifted in. They had evidently escaped.

And there was nothing these men could do but wait for their television call to get through to the red and blue fleets at sea. The call came through. A light glowed momentarily on the switchboard close to the screen. The three men leaned forward. The screen began to brighten with

the projected image of the person soon to speak.

"Operator, operator," called Farnsworth. "Attention. Keep every channel open for incoming reports. All right. We're waiting."

A cloud moved over the television screen. There was a faint click, then the crash of waves against the steel plates of a ship far out in the Pacific. Abruptly the interior of the chief radio officer's headquarters on the flagship melted into the panel.

"Admiral Young," crisped Farnsworth. "At once."

The scene shifted as the officer plugged in on the fleet commander's line. Almost at once the clean-shaven face of Admiral Young appeared in the glowing screen. He was sitting before an exact duplicate of the screen before Farnsworth. Both men could see each other plainly as they talked.

"Invasion has begun," said Farnsworth. "Zaryoti, and a combined Asia. We have his ultimatum. Less than seven hours before hostilities. He's closing in on us. It's the end, I fear. We'll need you. Turn around. Break the fleet into squadrons. Hurry! How long before—"

"Just a moment, Farnsworth." The fleet commander issued a brief order to a subordinate. "All right. We'll be heading for land in five minutes. We lost eight hours owing to a breakdown of one of the first-line ships. That makes us just that much nearer."

"Roughly, how many hours away?"

"Seven hours from San Diego. Longer to San Pedro and San Francisco."

"Good. Can you raise the air fleet from your present position?"

"Tried to an hour ago. No answer to our signals."

"Could you reach them with a scout plane?"

"Not in the darkness unless we had their exact bearings."

"Very well. Keep your operators alert. If we can locate the Asiatic fleet, we'll so inform you. Good-night."

Farnsworth's face was haggard as he turned from the television screen. His ace card had failed him. He had to admit himself beaten unless——

"Langham," he admitted. "I've been a fool."

"Meaning?"

"Regarding Carruthers. I'll take a chance. Everything is organized as well as could be expected. Land batteries ready. Detector crews at their stations. All available navy planes of the Atlantic fleet mobilized and ready to take the air."

His eyes narrowed with worry. "Zaryoti has the edge on us with his atomic bombs. In a pinch our system of artificial fog will help. But what we need most are fighting-ships of the first rank."

"And they are all headed toward the Philippines," finished Gettering, "with special orders not to use their wireless sets. Part of their training. Designed to keep their movements secret from those who might listen in."

Langham spoke briefly into a message recorder machine, then stood erect. "I've commandeered a rocket ship from the Southern Transport. We'll leave for New York and Carruthers' laboratory at once."

MIDNIGHT found the three men ascending to the top floor of a towering skyscraper close to the Hudson River. Carruthers met them as they emerged from the cage that had whisked them upward.

"The gentlemen have changed their minds," announced Langham.

Carruthers nodded. "I understand. I heard everything that occurred in the cabinet room. I also witnessed the action

of the atomic bombs. But the time grows short. This way, please."

Carruthers' friend and assistant, Karl Danzig, was waiting beside an enormous steel door as the four men filed down a long corridor. A moment later it closed behind them.

The eyes of the Government officials became wide with surprise at the paneled whiteness of the room. Most of the far side was taken up with electrical and atomic machines, dynamos, generators and enclosed motors of an advanced and unknown type.

Overhead, concealed lights made the room glow with the same brightness as the sun. And there wasn't a window in any of the walls to mar their smoothness.

Deftly, swiftly, Carruthers seated his guests around the complicated mechanism of the ether-vision machine. In the hands of each man he placed an instrument similar to a microphone.

"These instruments, gentlemen," he told them, "are electronic phones. Keep them away from your mouths. They're extremely sensitive. The moment you raise them to your face to speak your call number, you are immediately connected with the main trunk lines of the city. You will notice the complete absence of wires. And they're fool-proof."

He glanced at his watch and frowned. "Attention now. We're going out into space. Not to fixed limits of wireless antennæ, but into the limitless space of ether."

He seated himself before the complicated dials of his ether-vision panel, thrust a switch forward with his foot, clicked two with his fingers, and slowly began to revolve a dial.

To his left crouched Karl Danzig, eyes and ears alert to the smooth perfection of strange motors. A strange experiment

was about to start. How it would end no one could guess.

The silver surface of a magnetic vision screen became clouded as if actuated by a miniature whirlwind of flying dust particles. Slowly its brightness faded into dull gray, and from gray to a greenish blue.

Strange noises came out of the sound-producer—the dull pound of waves, the throb of engines, and the swishing of parted waters as they flowed along the prow of a battleship. Owing to the darkness, the image was barely visible—a mere blob of shadow. Carruthers switched on the current generated by the strange motors. Below the screen a battery of infra-red tubes glowed sullenly. Almost at once the greenish-blue on the screen faded.

The blob of a shadow took on a definite form as the blackness of night was flung back. And before the amazed eyes of the watchers appeared the ponderous bulk of a fighting battleship. Every line of her great bulk stood out clearly.

Farnsworth clutched at Langham's arm. "The *Texas*. Unbelievable."

Carruthers' fingers contracted on the directional antenna. The *Texas* faded from the panel. Miles and miles of choppy waves flowed into the screen and dissolved away. The tension increased. Other things became visible.

At first they seemed mere splotches of shadow. Then, as the ether-vision ray brought them closer, the hulls and steel-latticed masts of the Asiatic fleet became clearly recognizable.

Farnsworth was breathing hard. "Zaryoti's ships!" he gasped. "But . . . but where are they? Quick! I've got to know."

Carruthers made a rapid computation of figures on the antenna dial. "Roughly, those ships are five hours away from the *Texas*, but between our own fleet and the mainland."

"Find the air fleet!" broke in Gettering. "You're wasting time."

Carruthers ignored him and wrote several symbols on a sheet of paper which he handed to Farnsworth. "There's the latitude and longitude of Zaryoti's sea fleet. They're massed in a solid phalanx, and from the brownish hue discoloring the screen, I would say that they are concealed, not by fog, but by an ingenious and continuous flow of smoke."

Farnsworth nodded and raised the electronic phone to his lips. In a low yet clear voice he began to give orders to the Chief of Naval Operations that would start the American fleet to where Zaryoti's ships lay hidden in the brown smoke-screen.

SLOW minutes dragged as anxious eyes stared into the cloudiness of the magnetic screen. Farnsworth had finished giving orders and was hunched forward close to the screen once more. Gettering was breathing harshly, clasping and unclasping his hands.

A faint drumming emanated from the sound-producer beneath the ether-vision panel. The screen became agitated with what looked like whirling nebulae. Scarlet lightnings crisscrossed its surface.

Carruthers locked the directional antenna in place, and the revealing beam of the ether-vision concentrated on a single point. Into this field floated a dark mass.

The lightnings crisscrossing the magnetic screen were recognizable now as signal flares. Through them, the far-flung squadrons of planes were contacting one another as they shouldered through the night.

The long fingers of Carruthers made a slight adjustment on the control keys. At once the infra-red tubes flung back the darkness, and the wings of the closest ship became visible to the watchers.

Again a swift adjustment on the con-

trol board. The plane on which the beam was focused melted into the screen until there was nothing to be seen except its glistening body.

The quartz windows of the observer's lookout glowed brightly; then they disappeared and the startled watchers found themselves peering into a lighted cabin.

Carruthers broke the spell. "Gettering, who's in command?"

Gettering leaned forward. "General Reilly."

"This his ship?"

The Air Secretary shook his head. His hands clasped and unclasped a second time. "No. You'll find Reilly at the very top of the formation flying at point."

"East or west on the screen?"

Gettering studied the markings on the plane. "This is a third-group plane. Its position should be on the right. I'd say move slightly to the east and get your ray higher up."

More slow minutes dragged as the anxious search for the commanding officer of the missing air fleet continued. Cabin after cabin was examined in a long, careful search. And when they had almost despaired of finding the lead ship of the Western air fleet, the grim face of a middle-aged officer flowed into the magnetic screen.

"There he is," breathed Gettering. "That's General Reilly."

The general sat behind a metal table bolted to the floor. He was staring downward at a map. Except for an aide, a younger officer, he was alone in the forward cabin.

Gettering leaned forward. "Warn him, Carruthers. Quick! A television message."

"Quiet!" snapped Langham. "He had orders not to use his wireless instruments. He might as well be on Mars as far as television waves are concerned."

Gettering sank glumly back in his chair. "But how the devil are we to warn——"

"By positive thought control," announced Carruthers. "What I shall do now is to create electrically induced telepathy."

He turned to his assistant, Danzig. "All right, Karl. Warm up the secondary-band control tubes. If Reilly is the type of officer I think he is, his mind should activate the quartz rod somewhere between the seventeen and nineteen thousand meter range."

Danzig clicked a switch and made a slight adjustment on one of the strange motors beside him. From beneath the control table came the sound as of a mighty wind.

"Cut down the power," ordered Carruthers, "to about six volts."

The sound of the wind faded into a cat-like purr. Carruthers listened intently. All good so far. He turned again to the dials controlling the ether-vision rays.

To the left of the panel, fastened in place with two bands of non-conductive material, was a twelve-inch hollow tube of quartz partly filled with a yellowish liquid chemical. Carruthers' eyes were on the tube. He saw the chemical change from yellow to orange, and from orange to a fiery crimson. Abruptly the liquid in the tube boiled into a smother of bubbles. Then the whole mass inside the quartz rod settled and became the same clear color as the quartz itself.

"What is the dial reading, Karl?"

"Seventeen ninety."

"Seventeen ninety," repeated Carruthers. "Lock the inflow switch so that nothing can happen, and keep a sharp eye on your motors."

Gettering coughed impatiently. "We're wasting time."

"I thought so an hour ago," grunted Farnsworth, "but it didn't help matters."

any. We're helpless any way you look at it unless——"

The snap of an electrical switch silenced their voices. The voice of Carruthers cut in. "I'm going to stimulate my mind till it reaches the same mental frequency as that of General Reilly's. There's a tremendous risk involved, so I'm asking you men not to interrupt me during the experiment."

He twisted the dials on the lower edge of the ether-vision panel to the reading given him by Danzig, seventeen hundred and ninety meters. Beside him rested a band of burnished metal shaped something like a headphone set. Carefully he placed this over his head, making certain that the contact points were on the back of his head, and his forehead.

This done, he switched on the current from the motor Danzig was controlling. His body quivered for a moment as strange electrical currents pulsed through every nerve of his body. He was now ready.

HE WAITED for a moment to adjust himself to the quivering impulses shooting through his body, then with parted lips began to speak in a slow monotone.

"Commander Reilly! Commander Reilly! Listen. Forget whatever you're doing at this moment. Forget everything and listen. Look up!"

The general lifted his head and spoke sharply to his aide. "Please don't interrupt me."

The second officer looked blank. "I said nothing, General."

Reilly frowned and returned to his work.

The voice of Carruthers continued, monotonously. "Danger, danger, danger! Do you hear, General Reilly?"

The watchers saw a strange light flash

into General Reilly's eyes as he raised his head a second time.

"Queer," they heard him mutter. "I don't understand."

"You must understand," insisted Carruthers, putting all the power of his will behind every spoken word. "Concentrate. Listen."

General Reilly's eyes probed space. His jaw twitched.

Carruthers intoned his warning before the officer had a chance to think or speak.

"Your orders are false. You've been tricked. Understand? Tricked into leaving your country at the mercy of the invaders. Get in communication with your superiors at once. Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!"

Reilly's face paled and he shook his head as if to rid it of something unpleasant. The watchers saw him rise slowly to his feet, stare frowningly about him, then heard him speak.

"Captain," he called to his aide. "I'm worried. Something inside me warns of disaster ahead. Unbidden thoughts fill my mind that have come there without any effort of my own. It's as though these thoughts were being forced upon me."

"Better get some sleep," shrugged the other officer.

"Sleep?" mused the bewildered general. "I wonder."

The face of Aaron Carruthers broke out with cold sweat. He must not fail. He dared not fail. Once more he forced his will out into space on the mind of this officer.

"Listen, General Reilly," he droned. "Grave danger confronts your country. Upon you alone rests the responsibility of saving it in its hour of need. Marshal Huen Feng Zaryoti is moving eastward with his yellow invaders. The menace of a combined Asia is threatening our country. Break those orders you received.

They're false. Washington commands you to obey."

General Reilly turned suddenly on his aide. "Send in the chief radio operator, Captain."

"Sorry, General, but the chief operator and his assistant were assigned to another ship of the fleet. Not until we reach the Islands——"

The lights in the laboratory flickered. The remainder of the speaker's words failed. Carruthers twisted uneasily in his chair. Intruders! In the corridor outside the door. His lips twisted to a thin line as he clicked off the switch controlling the ether-vision ray.

"Someone coming down the corridor, Karl. Watch out!"

Danzig lurched to his feet. As he did so the door swung softly inward. A man entered—a man with a shaven head, and with torn clothes. There was no mistaking him. He was the spy who had invaded the cabinet room and who had escaped from Langham's operators.

In his right hand he held a tube of metal. It was thrust in front of his body as he kicked the door shut with his foot.

Carruthers felt his heart constrict. Never had he seen a face so utterly cruel and ruthless. How the spy had reached the top of the building he could not determine, but the fact remained that he was here, and in the room, his beady black eyes gleaming malevolently.

"So!" The man's voice was cultured, smooth, and filled with menace. "I find the brain trust all in one spot. That makes my task easier." He laughed thinly.

Simultaneously Karl Danzig and Gettering sprang forward to seize the intruder. The metal tube whirled in a swift arc, pointing in turn at the body of each man. A blinding violet spark lanced from the tube's hollow core. As if

stricken with paralysis, both men sagged to the floor, senseless.

The tube waved menacingly on Farnsworth and Carruthers. "If I have not made my intentions clear," warned the yellow intruder, "it's because you haven't given me time. Make no mistake. I will suffer no interference. I am here to destroy, but not until I have learned the secrets you possess."

Aaron Carruthers leaned back in his chair, his heart hammering painfully. Success had been so close. Now everything looked black and hopeless.

His mind quickened. How could he disarm this man? How?

"What are your demands?" he asked, stalling for time.

The oriental spoke thinly. "Complete stoppage of all information going out of this laboratory."

CARRUTHERS appeared to consider the proposal. What he really did was something entirely different. His eyes swerved momentarily to the wall close to the ether-vision machine. There was an emergency switch—an electrical cut-off to be used in case of a short-circuit.

If he could pull this switch, he might, under cover of darkness, which would immediately follow, get that powerful weapon from his enemy's yellow fingers.

His arms meanwhile were hanging limp at his sides. He worked the right one behind him. As he did so he heard a faint rustle. The cloth of invisibility. It wasn't much, just a torn fragment. But if he could contrive to use it as a shield to cover the movement of his right arm, he might pull that switch. His jaw hardened. He decided to risk the chance. His eyes swerved to Langham in mute appeal.

Langham nodded—a barely perceptible inclination of the head. He smiled grimly on the agent of Zaryoti. "The Marshal is

fortunate in having so determined and resourceful a man in his service. Some day he will rule the world."

"You think so?" The spy seemed for the moment to have forgotten his intention to destroy.

Langham continued to talk against time. "Like your master, you too have brains, and—please point that tube some other direction. It makes me nervous. See. We three men are sitting perfectly quiet. What is it you wish to know?"

Carruthers heard the drone of their voices, but he couldn't sense the meaning. His mind was concentrated on the thing he was trying to do.

Six hours till doom.

He had the cloth from his pocket now. It was hanging limp in his fingers. He wondered if the spy could see the motions of his twitching shoulders. Slowly and with painstaking effort he began to wrap it around his right arm.

Exactly three minutes had elapsed since the spy had entered. To the young scientist it seemed that many hours. He was ready.

Slowly he extended his arm toward the switch. His heart pounded heavily. Were his arm and fingers completely covered with the cloth of invisibility? He dared not look for fear of disclosing his intentions.

Closer and closer to the wall switch moved the arm of the young scientist. In another second he could feel the hard rubber handle barely grazing his finger tips.

The spy's sharp eyes swerved from Langham to Carruthers. The young scientist checked all movement. But he was too late. The cloth of invisibility slipped from his extended arm. The spy saw and understood.

With an inarticulate cry he jerked around. Carruthers lunged sideways. His

fingers found the switch, jerked it downward, and followed it with his body.

Through the blackness shutting down upon the laboratory stabbed the flame of destruction. Carruthers felt a devitalizing shock numb his right shoulder. But it failed to halt him.

Gathering his legs beneath him he lunged toward the spot where he had last seen the spy. They crashed to the floor in a tangled heap.

Desperately the young scientist reached for the spy's wrist. The metal tube cracked out a hot spark, missing his face by inches. His fingers closed hard over a yellow hand. Slowly, inexorably, he twisted the spy's wrist.

There came a brittle snapping as of live wires coming in contact with each other. The metal tube crackled three times. Then there was silence except for hard breathing.

Langham's voice cut through the dark. "Carruthers!"

"Okay, Langham. The switch. It's on the wall to the right of my chair."

Langham fumbled for a moment. Then the lights snapped on.

Carruthers staggered to his feet. "Look him over. See if he's still alive. He took three jolts."

"Dead," pronounced Langham. "Getting and Danzig are merely shocked. Danzig is beginning to show signs of life."

Carruthers took the precaution to lock the door leading to the corridor. Then he hurried to his chemical laboratory and mixed a strong stimulant which he forced between the lips of the stricken men.

Danzig was the first to recover his senses. He looked around him in sudden alarm. "What a shock!" he husked. "Felt as if a million volts passed through my body."

A moment later Getting shuffled to

his feet. Bewildered for the first few seconds, he stared at the others.

"You were shocked with what looks like a nerve-ray gun," said Carruthers. "Feeling better?"

Gettering peered at the cold body of Zaryoti's spy on the floor, sighed and turned to the young scientist. "Have we still a chance?"

"I think so." Carruthers turned to his assistant. "Feel equal to returning to your controls, Karl?"

Danzig forced himself to his feet. "Sure." He lurched to his former position beside the strange motors.

For the first time since the spy had entered, Farnsworth spoke. "I think we're too late. The air fleet couldn't possibly—"

THERE came a sharp exclamation from Gettering's lips. He had picked up the electronic phone, heard its summons and switched it on. Into the quiet of the laboratory broke the voice of General Reilly.

"Commander of the Western air fleet calling Washington." Then speaking in the code: "Breaking orders believed to have been forged. Just passed over Wake Island. Midway Islands ahead and to port. Instructions requested."

The electronic phone sizzled as Gettering snapped his orders out into space. And there was a hopeful glint in his eyes when he had finished.

The electronic phone in Langham's hands buzzed its summons. He listened stonily to the report, grunted, and clicked the receiver to its hook.

"Head of the Meteorological Bureau," he stated. "He reports all compasses thrown off during the atomic bomb bombardment. At a loss to account for it. Thinks the release of atomic energy overcame the pull of the magnetic poles."

"Interesting," commented Carruthers, "but hardly important in view of the larger things happening. Our next move is to—"

"To locate Zaryoti," broke in Langham, "and destroy him."

Carruthers nodded. "It's our only chance."

Once more he faced the panel of the ether-vision machine. He shoved a foot switch and clicked two with his fingers. Then he slowly revolved the control dial.

"Watch out, Karl. I'm all ready."

Danzig nodded, and crouched above the strange motors.

The silver surface of the magnetic screen became cloudy as before. The same miniature whirlwind of flying dust particles whipped across its glittering surface. Slowly it brightened from gray to greenish-blue.

There was a moment of vast silence, then the hissing flow of waves, the beat of engines, and the pound of waters as they lashed the hull of a fast-moving ship.

Carruthers switched on the current generated by the strange motors. Into action went the infra-red tubes. The darkness shrouding a far-away battle-ship dissolved. For a tense second it seemed as though the steel prow pointing into the ether-vision was going to smash into the laboratory.

A twist on the directional antenna and the revealing ray slithered along the gleaming hull. It wasn't the flagship. Across miles of gentle rollers moved the ether-vision ray, searching in its mysterious way for the rest of the Asiatic fleet.

After a half-hour's search it came upon the main fleet, dim and brownish in the smoke screen. Ship after ship was examined. Battle-cruisers, destroyers, submarines—all were searched, but the headquarters of the wily Asiatic chieftain was not discovered.

Grimly Aaron Carruthers widened his search through space for the headquarters of the Asiatic master mind, Marshal Huen Feng Zaryoti. Time moved inexorably onward. The hand of doom was closing down. Would they find him before it was too late?

Suddenly acting on a hunch, Carruthers widened his search and turned the ether-vision ray into cloud space above the United States. No trace of Zaryoti anywhere. He moved out over the Pacific again and picked up the Western air fleet under Reilly's command. It was moving shoreward in ten compact wings.

A thousand miles to the north the ray disclosed the wasp-like planes of the Asiatics, swimming in slow circles as if waiting for orders. Gettering's funereal voice broke the silence.

"Look!" he gasped. "They outnumber us more than two to one!"

Carruthers said nothing. As he watched the planes he saw them separating into distinct formations. They were about to move. But where? How was he to warn Reilly?

Langham seemed to read his thoughts. "Message interception. It's a long chance, and it might work."

The invisible ether-vision ray swept along the glistening bodies of the wasp-like planes and settled on a ship covered with streamers. Here was authority. The ray probed the inside of its cabin.

An operator with an inscrutable face was just handing a message to an officer wearing the uniform insignia of a commander. The commander studied the written words. Simultaneously, the ray moved closer to the paper.

It was Langham who translated. His knowledge of Asiatic languages, while rudimentary, was enough to grasp the significance of Zaryoti's message to his combined air fleet.

"The time has come to strike," wrote Langham so that the others might see. "The American fleet has been reached and ordered shoreward. Your orders are to destroy it. Use the sacrificial method. One life for each ship of the air. The plan can not fail."

As Langham scribbled his translation, Farnsworth, speaking over an electronic phone, was issuing counter-orders. "Zaryoti is planning to use the sacrificial method," he was telling the fleet commander. "Bring out the steel nets. Attack comes from above."

"Squadrons one and two," wrote Langham, "will converge upon the coast cities of the Pacific. The time has been moved up five hours. Strike and strike hard, using the atomic bombs."

The Air Secretary lost no time in contacting the fortified cities along the Pacific. "Ultimatum of ten hours has been abandoned," he warned each defense commander. "Zaryoti is preparing to strike at once."

Orders and counter-orders flashed the length and breadth of the United States. The ether-vision ray centered on the flagship of the Asiatic fleet. More orders were intercepted. It looked for a time as though this little band of men had solved Zaryoti's strategy.

But the military genius of the Asiatic war lord was not so easily thwarted. Zaryoti, sensing the Americans were intercepting his messages, switched to an involved cipher.

Langham pocketed his pencil. His face was white. Defeat stared him in the face. "Even with an expert cipher man working on these messages we couldn't hope to get them solved under days. It looks—it looks, gentlemen, as though we are a defeated nation."

Carruthers smiled wanly. "Gentlemen, I refuse to accept defeat. I'm going to

find Zaryoti. He's somewhere above. And having found him, I'll find a way to destroy him. Don't leave this room. I am going to need you when the time comes."

He returned to the panel of the ether-vision machine and began slowly to search sky space for the lair of the Asiatic war lord. But though he stuck to his task throughout the night, in the end he had to bow to defeat. Zaryoti's headquarters couldn't be found.

DAWN came up on the Atlantic coast. Then the Middle West. Then on the Pacific coast. Dawn and the red haze of the Armageddon in the disastrous year 2000. And with the coming of dawn came the first heart-breaking news of disaster. The entire Blue Fleet of the United States navy had been wiped out of existence.

San Diego had fallen. San Pedro had been entered and the inner harbor destroyed. For all time the long-range guns of Fort MacArthur had been silenced. And the huge bridge connecting San Francisco with the mainland had been reduced to ashes.

Slowly the yellow tide of invasion rolled eastward, leaving death and destruction in its wake. A protecting screen of fog hovered above the great air and war centers in the Middle West. Above, in the blue, waited the Atlantic air fleet, outnumbered doubly by the vast clouds of wasp-like planes of the Asiatics.

Worn and weary by the night-long vigil, Aaron Carruthers picked up scattered combats in the sky. His face was haggard. So were the faces of the other watchers as they saw their own countrymen going down to desperate defeat in flaming ships.

In desperation Carruthers tuned in on the Continental broadcast band of news. There was no late news, merely a review

of what had taken place the night before. But one item claimed his attention, confirming Zaryoti's threat of the evening before to show his power to strike when and wherever he wished. None of the others had noticed what seemed an unimportant piece of news. Perhaps their thoughts were elsewhere, of things more immediate.

Carruthers spoke slowly as he tried to think his way along. "You gentlemen will remember," he began, "that Zaryoti warned us he was going to bomb Washington, Los Angeles and the great power projects of Niagara?"

They nodded, dully.

"Well," continued Carruthers, "Washington and Los Angeles got everything in the way of destruction that Zaryoti intended they should. But the great power projects of Niagara and the surrounding territory remained absolutely untouched. Instead, the city of Toronto, across Lake Ontario, was destroyed utterly by atomic bombs. The report has just been released."

Farnsworth scoffed at the news. "Who said they bombed Toronto? Zaryoti is too great a military genius to risk open conflict with Canada."

The others nodded in agreement. Zaryoti couldn't be that stupid.

"Nevertheless," Carruthers went on, "someone in his organization made a hideous blunder. There was fog over the region of the Great Lakes last night. And you recall the meteorologist's report of compasses being rendered useless owing to the release of atomic energy and their effect on the magnetic poles? Well, it's just possible that Toronto was destroyed, not because of Zaryoti's orders, but because the Asiatic bombers were thrown off their course in the fog, flew by compass, and picked up the north side of Lake Ontario instead of the south. At that time,

Washington was an inferno of atomic explosions."

"I get your point," agreed Langham, "but what effect it will have on Canada's parliamentary body can not be foretold."

Farnsworth shook his head gloomily. He was thinking of the Blue Fleet somewhere at the bottom of the Pacific.

Gettering broke the silence. "Try the Pacific again, will you? I want to see what is happening to the Western air fleet."

The ether-vision ray probed space once more. Into its luminous screen flowed a panorama of darting and falling planes above the battleships of two great nations.

As they watched the tremendous battle they became aware of something queer taking place before their eyes. The low, blackish ships of the Asiatic sea squadrons were being wiped out. Even as the watchers searched for the reason, they saw with their own eyes a sad spectacle of heroism.

American pilots of General Reilly's air fleet had borrowed a leaf from the book of the Asiatics. They were sacrificing their lives and planes with a devotion equal to that of the yellow men. They knew they could not hope to overcome the vast numbers wiping them from the air. To die meant nothing. But to die without destroying at least two enemy planes was not to be thought of.

They made their decision against the orders of their leader, General Reilly. And having made their decision, they hurled their winged steeds downward, took their air enemies in midstride, and when they knew their bullet-riddled planes would never fly again, hurled them against the decks of the battleships below.

The Pacific became a shambles. But still the yellow men fought on, taking their enormous toll of destruction. And when things looked blackest, a strange thing happened.

Out of the sky dropped a cloud of bright-winged planes. They came with the speed of rockets. Reinforcements for Zaryoti? The white-faced men in the laboratory didn't know. General Reilly's air fleet was half wiped out. If these were Zaryoti's ships of the air, then the war was over. Victory would go to the Asiatics.

Tensely the little band of men waited, their hearts hammering. They had done all they could. They had signaled every move made by Zaryoti. They had sent out exact reports of the positions of air and sea fleets. They could do no more. Zaryoti had played his ace card when he opened hostilities by setting his war machine into motion five hours before the time specified in his ultimatum.

A WASP-LIKE plane came sagging down through the air. A second and a third followed. Something was happening in the sky above.

"Up, up!" urged Gettering. "Get closer to those silver planes."

The ether-vision ray moved up. The silver planes grew larger. Then the watchers knew they were seeing, not silver planes, but armored airships. And painted on the wings were golden maple leaves.

Carruthers spoke huskily. "Canadians!"

There was a new sound coming from the ether-vision—a brittle thunder that drowned the roar of motors. The armored planes were boring into the Asiatic squadrons like oxygen flame into steel.

This was the Canadian way of avenging the destruction of Toronto. Unknown to the world she had made her decision and had joined the United States against the common enemy menacing her borders.

Slowly the tide of destruction began to run in the other direction. With the coming of the maple leaf planes, Zaryoti had met his match in numbers on the Pacific.

His next move, as everyone knew, would be to gather his scattered forces from America's interior.

Carruthers' eyes were bloodshot from staring into the luminous panel. The world was a seething mass of falling planes and exploding fortresses. Wherever he looked there was a hovering shadow of death.

He twisted the directional antenna slightly, and became aware of a lone ship wheeling in a circle above the Asiatic squadrons. He knew this ship. He knew that Zaryoti was not inside. He knew it to be a message center, and therefore in direct touch with Zaryoti himself. As he thought of these things, something clicked in his brain. And suddenly he had solved the problem of how to find the master brain of all this carnage.

"I've got it," he called to the others. "Zaryoti is doomed. Look! This enemy plane circling all by itself. See that steel mast? There is a short antenna fastened to it. The whole thing revolves as the plane circles so that it is always horizontal to a fixed spot out in space."

"A single beam unicycle type?" breathed Langham.

"Exactly. Now, see, we're going inside its cabin and take a reading of the dial at which it is set."

The interior of the cabin flowed across the panel. Carruthers scanned the dial and set down the following figures: 817.04. These figures he checked against the reading of his own dials.

"We'll check these from another point," he went on. "The flagship down below."

He shifted the beam to the wave-crested Pacific and searched for the flagship. After some moments he found it. The powerful beam of the ether-vision moved through its steel hull to the radio cabin. Again Carruthers made a note of

the figures: 891.9. He also checked these figures against those of his own dial.

"Now," he continued, "I won't need their figures. I've transposed them to my own numerals of the ether-vision dial."

With a compass he drew a circle the size of the figured dial before him; then he marked in the points coinciding with the figure readings, halved the distance, and with a ruler, held to the exact center of the circle and touching the point midway of the two readings, he drew a straight line.

"There," he finished. "Somewhere on this line we'll find Zaryoti." He placed the drawing against a plotted map of the United States, checked the angles of the two panel readings and smiled knowingly. "The line runs shoreward to San Francisco, continues northeastward through Omaha, Akron and New York. We'll begin at this end and trace it westward."

He turned to Gettinger. "Contact General Reilly as well as the commander of the Canadian ships. Have planes made ready to leave at a second's notice to a spot I'll designate."

The silence that followed was broken only by the hum of motors as the ether-vision ray moved southwestward along the invisible line Carruthers was following.

MLE after mile flowed into the luminous panel, every one of them empty. Westward moved the beam, searching, searching, searching. Slow minutes dragged on to an eternity of time. Carruthers' eyes ached from the strain. His shoulders slumped, but his sensitive fingers never for a single moment faltered on the dials.

And suddenly, out of the mist above San Francisco, appeared a giant plane, one that the watchers had never seen before. Carruthers checked its position.

The ether-vision beam brought it closer. Its outer walls disappeared. The interior became visible, and then the stiff, military figure of the Marshal himself.

Except for his radio operators, he was alone, staring with cruel slanting eyes at a report one of his operators had handed him. Whatever he thought, whatever he felt was hidden beneath a yellow, serene face.

Carruthers turned to the Air Secretary. "All right, Gettering. Get in touch with the air fleets. Half a dozen planes ought to be enough. Location, approximately ten miles above San Francisco. Hurry!"

But Gettering was already talking into the electronic phone. "In the name of humanity, General Reilly, I command you to destroy Marshal Huen Feng Zaryoti. I've given you the location of his plane. Act at once in conjunction with the Canadian air commander."

Carruthers turned momentarily to the battle out on the Pacific. Reilly had gathered his fleet into a compact wedge and had driven it into the inferno of Asiatic sky fighters. The Canadian armored planes were close behind. Like a destroying cloud, their combined strength swarmed over the battle-ships below. The Asiatic sea fleet had already started away under cover of a smoke screen.

They were helpless against the attack. Gun crews were driven from their stations. Masts were shattered. Antenna wires were destroyed. The retreat was turning into a rout.

The message centers of the scattered Asiatics turned to the high command for orders. They were helpless. They needed leadership. Otherwise their fleets on sea and in the air would be destroyed. Frantically they signaled their leader for orders that would bring an end to the chaos engulfing them.

But the orders never came, and chaos engulfed them.

The ether-vision beam had focused once more on Zaryoti's giant cabin plane. The Asiatic war lord was leering contemptuously at the war-torn world below him.

Did these misguided fools of the United States think their opposition would hold back his highly efficient machines of air and sea? Did they for a moment think they could defy the greatest war lord in the world?

"His face was no longer serene. A shrill laugh crackled from his lips. He half turned around to snap out an order to one of his operators when the laugh froze on his lips.

A brittle staccato drummed against his ears. The giant plane trembled as if shaken by a mighty wind. Two of the operators slumped against the dials of their machines.

The startled leader of the Asiatics moved snakily across the cabin and peered through the quartz portholes into space. His eyes, black as obsidian, became flecked with dangerous lights. The saffron hue of his skin changed to a dirty gray. His lips worked soundlessly.

Realization smote him like a blow between the eyes. It hadn't seemed important at the time, but now he saw it all too clearly. He remembered the report. A squadron of his bombers had become lost in the fog owing to a compass deflection. Against his orders they had destroyed Toronto. A little mistake in itself, but Zaryoti had hoped to smash his way to victory before Canada could act.

As he looked through the portholes he knew that the shadow of death was upon him. His secret place in the sky had been ferreted out. Three swift American planes were circling the giant cabin plane. There

were also three armored planes blazoned with the gold maple leaf of Canada flying beside them. Their concealed machine-guns were chattering savagely.

Pellets of explosive metal were erupting about his head, his arms, his feet. The last of his operators had crumpled over his dials, his head rocking grotesquely with the roll of the plane.

And then Marshal Huen Feng Zaryoti thought and saw no more. The exploding pellets reached his body. Stinging pains lanced his heart. He died standing up, a sneer of contempt on his lips, his face working crookedly.

But as he fell, his arm reached out and closed around a switch in a death grip. The weight of his falling body threw the breaker points together, completing

the circuit. There came a blinding burst of red flame, and before the amazed eyes of the watchers, the giant cabin plane of the Asiatic war lord, and the six destroying planes surrounding it, vanished from sight. Nothing remained but a cloud of white powder that sifted down like snow into the waters of the Golden Gate.

The white civilization of America had again survived the menace of a combined Asiatic attack. When would the next come? No one in Aaron Carruthers' laboratory knew. They knew only that their country had been saved at the last moment. They knew that victory had come at the darkest hour, and that Marshal Huen Feng Zaryoti had passed into oblivion. Beyond that they dared not think.
