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WAR OF THE GIANT APES

By
**ALEXANDER
BLADE**

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Front cover painting by Edmond Swiatek, illustrating
a scene from "War of the Giant Apes."

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WAR OF THE GIANT APES

By **ALEXANDER BLADE**

**The Council of Earth plotted to take
over Mars—but Mars had planned it that way**

A powerful ray of energy swept from the front
of the giant space cruiser, bathing the white
ape in its glow, taking control of its mind . . .





THE great earth space cruiser hovered in the thin Martian atmosphere, a sleek, tapering monster of metal, its atomic engines stilled now.

In the control room, Dan Moran, Commander, Space Patrol, stood before the visiplat, his eyes tense with excite-

ment as he stared at the rapidly approaching Martian city.

Beside him he heard Blake Fenton, second-in-command, suck in his breath. Fenton, tall and with a long face that gave him an appearance of being hawkish, was staring with narrowed eyes. There was excitement in them, too, but unlike Moran, there was something else. A shadow of speculation, as if his thoughts were far ahead of the present, planning secretly.

"So this is the great Martian civilization." Fenton's voice came abruptly,

and Moran noted a subtle sarcasm in it.

Before Moran could reply, a warm, feminine voice sounded from behind them. It was Gene Phillips, Correspondent for Inter-World Press.

"I think it's positively thrilling, Blake," the girl said, the excitement in her voice matching that in Dan Moran's eyes.

Moran turned to her and smiled.

"You're right, Gene, it is a sight to witness. You're looking at a city that may well be thousands of years old."

Fenton laughed. "If what I'm looking at is any evidence of culture, then Mars certainly doesn't have much to offer."

The girl turned surprised eyes on Fenton. "But how can you say that, Blake? After all, you can't expect other worlds to be as highly advanced scientifically as earth! If they were, then the Martians would be visiting us instead of us visiting them!"

Moran cast a nod of approval at the girl, his eyes taking in her slim figure, caressing for a moment the soft wealth of auburn hair, and the deep blue pools of her eyes. There was much about Gene Phillips that stirred hidden emotions in Dan Moran, emotions that he had always told himself he had no right to possess. His life had been dedicated to the service of the newly formed Space Patrol. He had been a member of it ever since his twenty-first birthday. That had been ten years ago. Ten years that had seen the science of earth conquer space in a first trip to the Moon, and after that, an establishment of steady commerce between the home planet and its satellite.

There had been little time for the normal pleasures of other men, he knew. But he had never been sorry. He had been a member of a young and growing profession. He had risen rapidly. And today he was Commander of the first

great space cruiser, a ship that had been built for a particular purpose, a purpose he was now ready to carry out.

But as he looked at the girl now and nodded his approval for her defense of the Martian civilization, he felt again that hidden stir of emotion within him. He wondered if his life were really complete, tied up in his work, with little time for the things that a girl like Gene could offer him.

"You're right, Gene, I'm afraid Fenton is forgetting that our two civilizations have developed along radically dissimilar lines."

Fenton fixed his narrowed eyes on Moran then.

"That part I'll admit is true. However, I'm still waiting to see those great apes of yours."

MORAN turned back to his study of the visiplat. He saw the ancient Martian city looming quite close now, as the giant space cruiser glided high in the thin atmosphere of the planet.

And it brought the same thrill to him that it had brought nearly a year ago when he first sighted it in the initial scouting trip of the red planet. As he looked, he heard Fenton's voice speaking again.

"You must admit there isn't much to it. Just a mass of great square stone buildings. Not a far cry from the middle ages on Earth."

Fenton's words brought a feeling of anger to Moran. He turned to him.

"This is something of a different way of talking for you, isn't it, Fenton? If I remember, it was you who talked the Council into constructing this ship for this mission. If it was only for political reasons, then why did you bother to come along?"

Once he had said the words, Moran was sorry that he had. There was nothing to be gained by arguing with Fen-

ton. The man had achieved his present position aboard the cruiser with a mixture of political and scientific pull.

"Aren't you forgetting something this time, Moran?" Blake Fenton's voice was polite, but pointed. "The brain-thera-ray is my invention. How else would you expect to control one of these giant apes? Or possibly you might have some personal reason for not wanting me here."

Moran shot a quick glance at the man. "Exactly what do you mean?"

Fenton shrugged and let his gaze flick toward the girl. There was meaning in that shift of glance, and Moran colored as he caught its import.

There was a tense silence for a moment, and then Gene Phillips laughed.

"I must say, this is a fine time for petty arguments! But really, Blake, while I feel complimented that you insinuate my presence is anything more than professional, I can assure you you're wrong. Isn't that true, Commander?"

Moran felt his color heighten and he turned away from the probing gaze of the girl. She was right, of course. He had never made his inner feelings known in any way, but Fenton, shrewd as he was, had recognized a potential rival in the figure of Moran. And he had chosen this psychological moment to make the fact known.

Moran felt a sigh of relief sweep through him as the girl changed the subject.

"I'm dying to see one of these creatures of Mars. But the city looks deserted! Are you certain this is the place you first discovered them?"

Moran nodded. "Yes. But don't let the fact that the city looks deserted, mislead you. I had a chance to study the habits of the apes on my first trip, and I discovered that they live mostly underground. The buildings you see are

only the external portions of their dwellings. You'll be seeing one of them soon. Their senses are very acute, and they'll know of our presence soon if they don't already."

"Will we capture the first one we see?" the girl asked.

Moran shrugged. "That part is up to Fenton, here."

And as he said it he thought back to nearly a year ago, when he had first met Gene Phillips. It had been before a meeting of the Council on Earth, when he had been summoned to give another full account of his exploration trip. He had wondered at the time why it had been necessary to rehash something that was already well known. But then he had seen Blake Fenton also for the first time. And he had been introduced to the man, a prominent politician with, oddly enough, a scientific background.

Fenton had spoken smoothly before the Council, suggesting that a great cruiser be constructed for another trip to Mars. And that its mission be to secure a specimen of the giant apes to be brought back to Earth for study.

MORAN remembered how he had casually mentioned that it might prove somewhat difficult to persuade one of the huge creatures to cooperate for such an endeavor. And then Fenton had spoken smoothly once more, playing his trump card before the Council, explaining that he had recently completed an experiment, out of which had come a device he called the brain-thera-ray. It was a machine that Fenton claimed could control the thought patterns of any living thing in its grip.

And Moran remembered how Fenton had held a demonstration before the Council, first with a member of the Council itself, putting a metal cap on the head of the man and adjusting controls on a machine he had brought into

the chamber where they were meeting.

Under Fenton's direction then, the Councilman had seemingly lost his will power and had followed every command Fenton had given him.

The Council had been impressed with Fenton's machine, and when Morgan had argued that while it might work on humans, what guarantee did they have that it would work on animals—Fenton had proven he was prepared for such an eventuality.

There had followed a scene that was unparalleled in the history of the Council. Into the great chamber Fenton brought a number of caged wild beasts, ranging from lions, tigers, and gorillas, to an elephant that had been led in by an attendant.

Each of the creatures had been subjected to the thought machine, and each of them, under the prompting of Fenton at the controls, had become a docile creature, responding to any command he gave it.

And after that there had been applause from the Council, and, Moran remembered, from Gene Phillips herself, who had witnessed the scene.

It had been decided then that a great space cruiser would be built, with Dan Moran in command, to be sent to Mars for the one express purpose of subduing and bringing back to Earth one of the great apes that made up the Martian civilization.

Now, as he looked into the visiplat and watched for the first sign of one of the great white apes, he wondered to himself why he had even objected at all to the proposed plan. It had certainly seemed logical to everyone on Earth that a study of one of the creatures of another planet might be of invaluable help to our own culture and science.

And yet, somehow, Moran knew that he did not like the idea. It was nothing he could actually put his finger on, noth-

ing that he could have said in violent protest to the Council, but it was there, just the same.

He remembered when he had first come in close proximity with one of the great white apes on his first trip to Mars. He had flown his tiny scout ship close over the great stone city. He had seen the apes peering up at him in apparent curiosity, but with no apparent concern.

And now, as he looked again at that city, he felt that possibly the answer lay in that fact itself. The apes had *not* shown any concern. And that fact troubled him subconsciously. For it did not seem reasonable that creatures on an alien world would look at the first vestige of man in his roaring ships of space and show no interest whatever. He had tried to answer this feeling by assuring himself that the creatures did not possess enough intelligence to evince more than idle curiosity. But he could not accept this when he considered that the city itself was evidence of intelligence, no matter how crude.

He remembered how Gene Phillips had come up to him afterwards and laughingly asked, "Don't tell me you're afraid of these creatures, Commander Moran! I can't really believe that."

And he had smiled at her in return. "It isn't that, Miss Phillips, it's probably the soldier in me, always seeing danger, or at least looking out for it."

And she had nodded in reply and said that she would like to hear more about the Martians and couldn't they have dinner sometime. And it had started like that. With Gene making the first overture. And it had gone on for nearly a year now, while he fought with the new emotion inside him, and watched as Blake Fenton attached himself firmly in the girl's friendship, with an evident eye toward winning her entirely for himself.

THE thought rankled, now that Gene had made such a positive reassurance just a few moments before, that their relationship was nothing but a professional interest. But he also remembered that she had asked a question, leaving it up to him to answer, and he had failed to do so.

"Look! Dan! Over there—coming out of that building on the edge of the city!"

Moran's thoughts broke off abruptly as the girl's voice sounded excitedly in his ear. He could feel her slim figure touch his and sense the warmth of her nearness as she gazed over his shoulder into the visiplat.

He followed the girl's pointing finger and saw it then.

A great white ape, by Earth standard over fifty feet tall, had lumbered its immense bulk from the cavernous opening of one of the buildings and was standing on its haunches, staring up at them with great, curious eyes.

"It's unbelievable!" the girl uttered, her voice touched with awe.

And Moran turned to Fenton with a trace of irony in his voice.

"Are you satisfied now, Blake? There's one of my Martian pets looking up at you right now."

Fenton's eyes were glued to the visiplat, and there was a tense hawkishness about his features. He was staring more intently at the great ape than seemed necessary.

"That's him—that's the one we'll take! What a specimen he is!"

Moran frowned at the almost triumphant note in Fenton's voice, but then he caught some of the excitement of the moment as the girl's fingers touched his hand.

"Look at him, Dan! Won't he be a sensation when we get him back to Earth?"

Moran nodded slowly and turned to

Fenton who was still watching the ape.

"All right, Blake, it's your show from here on in. You'll get a real chance to show what you thought your machine can do, now."

Fenton's eyes were confident as he turned to them. "You'll see. Watch!"

He moved away then from Moran and the girl and fixed his attention on the controls of the brain-thera-ray that had been installed as part of the cruiser's equipment.

Moran watched as Fenton's fingers flicked swiftly and expertly over the controls of the machine, and a hum of power swept through the control room as the machine came to life.

Moran guided the huge ship directly over the edge of the city to the spot where the great white ape stared up at them in seeming unconcern.

Then he saw the long nozzle of the transmitter in the prow of the ship curve downward under Fenton's guiding fingers, and then there was a static discharge of electricity from the end of the nozzle.

Almost at once the ape on the ground beneath them jumped spasmodically as the force of the ray hit his giant body. Then the creature assumed again its pose of idle curiosity.

"What's the matter, Blake, doesn't the ray have any effect on it?" Gene Phillips asked anxiously.

Fenton smiled. "He's completely under my power right now. Watch."

Fenton spoke into a microphone-like segment of the controls before him.

"Walk out on the plain, away from the city."

Moran heard Fenton's measured words. Heard them uttered slowly, deliberately, the same way he had heard Fenton command the beasts in the demonstration on Earth.

And then his eyes fastened on the visiplat and the figure of the great

white ape. For the huge beast had suddenly moved. Its great body was lumbering slowly away from the building and out upon the rocky plain beyond the edge of the city.

"Look! Dan—the ape is following Blake's command!"

Moran heard the girl speak excitedly beside him and he nodded. But what he saw failed to bring a feeling of triumph to him. He realized in that moment that he had subconsciously been hoping that somehow Fenton's machine would fail to have any effect on the Martian. It was not a feeling of jealousy, he knew. It was something else. Something he felt deep inside him but could not define.

Again Fenton's voice gave a slow command through the thought control apparatus.

"Sit on the ground and wait. You feel no fear. You are glad we are here. You want to come along with us in this ship. We are your friends."

WORD by word, the thought was transmitted to the great white ape beneath them. And as Moran watched, feeling a grim fascination at the way the huge beast responded to Fenton's words, he saw the ape suddenly sit on the rocky ground and stare up at the ship, a complacent expression in its enormous eyes.

Fenton turned away suddenly from the machine and stared at Moran.

"You can land the ship now. And then the tricky part comes. Someone will have to go out there and put the thera-cap on the creature's head."

Moran felt his lips tighten at the way Fenton said that. For he knew very well that it would be his job to do it. To refuse, or to send other members of the crew out there alone to face the huge animal, would have been to admit cowardice. To admit what Moran felt

was what Fenton would like to have him do in the presence of the girl.

"I'll take a few of the men and see to it," he replied briefly and turned to his controls.

In a few moments he had maneuvered the space cruiser to a position close by the quietly waiting ape. Then he set the great space vessel down slowly on the surface of Mars.

There was a slight scraping of sound as the huge ship touched the ground beneath it, then it rested motionless and Moran turned away from the controls. As he did so he saw a look of concern in Gene Phillips' eyes.

"Dan, be careful. . . ."

A momentary smile crossed Moran's face as the girl spoke. Then he heard Fenton laugh shortly.

"He has nothing to be afraid of. A child could carry out his part of the mission, as long as the ape is under thought control. I'll see that nothing happens to him."

Moran felt a touch of anger at the sarcasm in Fenton's voice. "You don't have to worry about me, Blake. I can take care of myself."

Then he turned and strode into the companionway connecting the control room with the operations room.

He gave swift orders to other members of the crew, and then felt someone touch his arm from behind. He turned and saw the girl standing beside him.

"Isn't it dangerous, Dan—I mean the atmosphere. . . ."

Moran shook his head. "The air on Mars is thin, Gene, but the oxygen content is sufficient to sustain life. We've already checked that. This shouldn't take long. Then we'll be on our way back to Earth."

He saw the troubled look that was in the girl's eyes and felt a deep satisfaction in what was reflected in them. Even

though the ape was under Fenton's personal control she still felt concern.

"You go back in the control room with Blake. You can watch from the visiplate."

He saw the girl nod her head and then turn back down the companionway. Then he turned to the waiting crewmen. He could see a look of tenseness on their faces and uncertainty.

He pointed to five of the men. "You men will be in charge of the hydraulic extension. Follow my hand signals closely and release the thera-cap when I give the signal."

He saw the crewmen nod and then he turned to the airlock.

It hissed open a moment later and then he walked calmly through it and down the short flight of metal steps to the surface of Mars.

A cold wind met him, whipping around his face as his feet touched the ground. His lungs drew in the rarefied atmosphere, and while he knew it was enough to satisfy the demands of his body for the moment, he also became aware that it would not be wise to remain outside for too great a time.

And then his eyes fell on the white ape ahead of him.

SEEING the giant beast for the first time at such a close range, and with his naked eye, brought a strange feeling to Moran. He felt pitifully small beside the gargantuan figure, and ill at ease. While he knew it was powerless to harm him, he also knew that one single sweep of either of those mighty paw-like hands would crush his body to a pulp.

He turned for a moment to watch the side of the great space cruiser open up like a giant clam, revealing the huge, specially prepared interior that had been constructed to house the specimen ape on its return trip to Earth.

And he saw the crewmen already operating the hydraulic extension mechanism, long, jointed claws of metal that held the huge thera-cap that would be placed on the head of the ape.

He was walking across the ground then, straight toward the ape.

As he reached the huge creature he became aware of the sound of its tremendous breathing. It was like a rushing sound of angry winds, and he saw the giant breast of the ape heaving as it sucked in the rarified atmosphere in great gulping movements.

He stopped suddenly as the beast moved. At what was obviously a command from Fenton at the thought controls, the ape leaned over on its back and lay on the ground.

Behind him, he heard the extension mechanism go into operation and he saw the metal claws reaching out from the side of the ship, the thera-cap held on a level with the ape's head.

Moran moved swiftly to a position beside the great creature's head as the thera-cap loomed above him.

He gave swift hand signals and watched as the metal headpiece slowly descended upon the head of the ape. A humming sound came from the thera-cap, and electrical charges crackled on the twin magnetic poles sticking up on top.

Then the cap fell into position on the head of the ape, and Moran knew that his job was finished.

He watched as the hydraulic extension was retracted back into the ship, and then, as he started to turn away from the giant ape, he caught the creature's eyes fastened on his.

An eerie sensation passed through Moran as he gazed into those deep black orbs. For while there was a complacency in them, there was still something else, too. Something that spoke of hidden thoughts, or brutal instincts.

And he felt in that moment a chill. For it suddenly became apparent to him that only Fenton's thoughts at the controls of the thera-ray prevented this giant beast from killing him like a fly.

And even as the thought ran through his mind he heard the hum of the thera-cap suddenly vanish.

For the first time since he had stepped from the security of the space ship, Moran felt panic touch him. And along with it, the realization that Fenton might have planned it this way. With the thought control off, there was nothing to prevent the ape from its natural movements.

And the power was off.

Moran's eyes were held by the gaze of the giant ape. Those huge black orbs seemed to flicker as control of its mind was restored to it. And even as he watched, one of the paw-like hands started to reach out for him.

It was a slow movement. Slow enough to give Moran warning. He jumped away from the side of the beast and ran desperately for the airlock of the space ship.

Behind him he heard a roar of sound that emanated from the great ape's throat. But even as he ran, the thought struck him that it was not a roar of rage, but more like a mocking laughter.

And then he had reached the airlock.

He turned, in time to see the thera-cap crackling with power again, and the huge beast, under Fenton's thought direction, getting to its feet to lumber toward the open section of the ship waiting to receive it.

THEN Moran watched the airlock close behind him and he strode toward the control room, a grimness lining his mouth.

"Dan! Thank God you're safe!"

Gene Phillips ran forward to meet him as he entered the control room. He

nodded to her and then turned to Blake Fenton.

"I suppose there's a reason why the power failed at that precise moment, Blake?" he said angrily.

Fenton had contriteness in his eyes as he shrugged.

"I'm sorry, Dan. But it was something I couldn't help—a loose connection as I switched the controls over to the thera-cap. I fixed it just in time. . . ."

Moran stared at his rival for a long moment. When he spoke again he couldn't keep the sarcasm out of his voice.

"It could have been a fatal accident, Fenton, and a convenient one."

He heard the girl gasp. "Dan! You can't mean that—why I was here when it happened! What a horrible thought!"

As he saw the shocked look in the girl's eyes, Dan Moran knew that he had said the wrong thing.

"I'm sorry, Gene, guess I was a little edgy. It was a rather uncomfortable moment."

He saw the accusing look leave her eyes then, and she nodded understandingly.

"Of course, Dan. I'm sure Blake understands too."

But he refused to look back at Fenton. Instead he turned to the controls of the ship and issued swift orders through the inter-radio set.

And then his fingers moved swiftly across the controls and he felt the great door in the side of the ship slide shut.

And then the ship lurched in sudden movement, and as Dan Moran stared into the visiplat, watching the planet's surface recede beneath them, his mind was a whirling echo of thought.

For he knew in that moment that it could have been an accident. That the connection might have been loose, just as Fenton had said. But he also knew that it might not have been. That it

might have been deliberate. That it might have been meant to happen just at that moment, to allow the great ape to loose its animal passion and crush the life from his body.

It might have happened that way. And it would have removed him from Fenton's path. And out of Gene Phillips' life.

And as he thought, he remembered how the ape had looked at him in that moment. How the deep mockery had been evident in those brute eyes. And how sluggishly the giant creature had moved, when it would have taken but a single lightning movement to end his life.

But it hadn't happened. The controls had been off and the ape had not killed him.

And he asked himself the question why? And he wondered again about Blake Fenton. And the accident. . . .

His fingers tightened grimly to the controls of the space cruiser as it shot swiftly away from the ape city below them.

And even as the ship gathered speed, Moran saw the city beneath him come to life as other giant apes suddenly appeared.

He heard the girl comment on the sight of the apes and he heard Fenton reply. And he wondered to himself that it was indeed strange that the apes had waited until the ship left. Why then had one appeared?

He drove the thoughts from his mind and set the automatic controls that would send the great cruiser on its path back to Earth.

WHAT's the matter, Dan? You seem sort of restless. Is there something bothering you?"

Dan Moran felt the girl's nearness as her voice came lowly beside him. For a moment the monotony of the Council

meeting left him as he turned to Gene Phillips.

"Why do you ask that, Gene?"

The girl shrugged. "Maybe it's just a hunch. But I've been watching you ever since we got back to Earth—for the full two weeks as a matter of fact. You've been getting more restless every day."

He nodded slowly and when he spoke his voice held a note of weariness.

"I'm afraid you're right. Frankly, this whole thing's getting a bit out of hand. What started out to be something of an adventurous interlude is turning into an event of national importance. The Council has done nothing for the past two weeks but investigate the white Martian ape. One meeting would have been enough for all that."

The girl's face held a surprised look. "Can you really be serious? Why, this is the biggest thing that's ever happened! Think of it! A being from another world—here on Earth! And look at what we've already learned about the Martian culture and background from the ape's mind."

Moran sighed. "Yes, I know. And maybe that's one thing that bothers me."

"Bothers you? What's that?"

"Maybe I'm just a sentimental fool, but I don't think it's fair to treat a member of an alien race like this. After all, what if the tables were turned, and it was one of us who were captured by beings on another planet. How would we feel about being made a specimen against our will?"

Gene Phillips laughed softly. "So that's it! Well, maybe you've got a point there, but on the other hand, don't forget that there's a question of intelligence involved. Since our civilization is on a much higher level; then it becomes our right to assume the role of

being the master—”

Moran shot a studied look at the girl. “That’s another word I don’t particularly care for. And while we’re on the subject of changes in people, what about yourself? Haven’t you gone a little off the deep end on this Martian ape business?”

The girl looked at him for a moment before replying.

“Aren’t you forgetting that I’ve got a job to do? The Martian ape is the biggest news in telecast today.” She paused, then let a half smile cross her face. “Or is it something else you mean?”

He frowned. “What else would I mean?”

“Oh, maybe Blake Fenton. . . . You don’t like Blake, do you?”

Moran slowly digested what the girl had implied. And he felt himself color as her meaning became clear to him. Blake Fenton was the man who was really pushing the Martian investigation before the Council. And Fenton was the man who was in the limelight with his thera-ray control of the great beast. She was implying now that his lack of interest in the event might be due to a jealousy of Fenton. And as the thought drove itself home to Moran, he felt a momentary anger wipe away his embarrassment.

“My personal opinions of Fenton have nothing to do with my attitude,” he said a trifle sharply. “But I don’t mind admitting that I’ll be glad when this circus is over with and I can get back to the Patrol.”

“Meaning you don’t care to see Blake anymore?”

“That’s about it.”

“. . . And I suppose I’m included in that too. . . .”

The anger left Moran’s voice then. “I didn’t say that, Gene, as a matter of fact, I—”

His voice broke off as he heard the insistent pounding of the gavel from the Chairman’s table.

“The Council will come to order!”

MORAN saw the girl switch her gaze away from him, and he knew that his moment had been lost. And as he turned his eyes toward the center of the huge Council chamber, he felt a bitterness inside him. It was always that way. Just when he felt he might be able to say what was innermost inside him, something always happened to prevent it. But then his attention was drawn by the Chairman’s voice.

“The Council recognizes Blake Fenton with his proposal.”

Moran saw the tall figure of Blake Fenton rise from a table before the council platform. There was a satisfied smile on the man’s face as he bowed to the council members and then to the gathered audience. Moran saw Fenton’s eyes afix themselves to those of the girl for a single instant, and out of the corner of his eyes he saw the girl smile encouragingly at Fenton.

Then Fenton turned back to the council and his voice came clearly.

“Gentlemen. My proposal is simple. I think we all agree that the scientific aspects of the Martian ape are important. But there is another matter pertaining to this event that is equally important. And that, gentlemen, is the fact that people all over the country are clamoring to see this being from another planet. And it seems to me that we owe it to our people to let them have a chance to see for themselves what the Martian is like—and how completely in our power the thera-ray has made him.”

Fenton paused to let his words have the proper effect, and Moran had the feeling that Fenton was enjoying his position in the limelight.

"So, gentlemen, I propose that we take the Martian ape on a tour of the country. In advance let me say that there will be no danger involved. I have in mind a specially constructed vehicle which will house the necessary equipment for the thera-ray. This vehicle will accompany the Martian, maintaining complete thought control at all times."

Moran's voice ended and he stood waiting. The members of the council glanced slowly at one another, and as Moran watched, he saw them nod toward the chairman.

Then the chairman's voice replied.

"The council believes your suggestion is in order. And authorization is granted. You will be in complete charge, Fenton. And any assistance you may require will be made available to you."

Blake Fenton bowed his head in a gesture of acceptance. Then he spoke again to the chairman.

"I do have one request to make at this time. I would like to have Commander Dan Moran assigned for special duty with me on this project. I realize that the Commander's work with the patrol is quite important, but since it was he who first discovered the Martian civilization, and his efforts aided me greatly during our recent trip to Mars, I would like to have him work with me now."

As Fenton's voice ended abruptly, Dan Moran was aware that his mouth had dropped open in sheer astonishment. For a moment he couldn't be certain that he had heard correctly. But then, as he heard the Chairman bang his gavel and call to the clerk, "Have Commander Moran step forward," he knew that he had not been mistaken.

The clerk had already turned toward the audience and Moran felt the clerk's eyes on him as the man's voice ordered, "Commander Moran, will you please

step up before the Council."

And as Moran sat almost stunned in his seat, he heard the girl beside him whisper: "Isn't that wonderful, Dan? Now what do you think of Blake!"

But Moran didn't have time to answer her. He had risen to his feet and slowly made his way up the aisle until he stood close beside Blake Fenton and the Council Chairman.

AS HIS eyes met those of Fenton, Moran felt a sudden anger rise inside him. For he read in Fenton's eyes a mockery, as if the man had known that what he had suggested would be distasteful to Moran.

Then Dan's gaze switched to the Council Chairman and he bowed his head in an acknowledgment of respect.

The Chairman cleared his throat.

"Commander Moran, it has been suggested by Mr. Fenton that you be put on special assignment with him. The Council is inclined to agree—"

"If it please the Council, sir," Moran interrupted hastily before the Chairman could finish, "I would like to say that I am highly honored with the suggestion, but I would like to decline."

The Chairman's eyes, for a moment showing a trace of anger at the way Moran had interrupted him, now showed astonishment.

"You say that you would like to decline, Commander? I'm sure I do not understand your reasons. . . ."

"It's very simple, sir," Moran replied. "I'm a soldier and my duty is with the Patrol. And I would like to add that I feel my qualifications are somewhat overrated for the type of work Mr. Fenton had in mind."

The Chairman studied Moran in silence for a moment. And Dan, watching the man's face, knew that the Chairman was about to accept his refusal.

But then Fenton spoke beside Dan,

his voice smooth and polished.

"If I may, sir, I would like to say that we all know how very important the Commander's position is with the Patrol, but I am sure that his services will be much more valuable in this present circumstance. I request again that the Council assign Commander Moran to the Martian project."

Dan felt his anger rise again, but he knew that any further arguments on his part would be taken as insubordination. He remained silent as the Chairman pondered the situation a moment. Finally:

"The Council concurs with Mr. Fenton. Commander Moran, you are hereby assigned to coordinate your efforts with Mr. Fenton."

The Chairman's voice ended abruptly then, and Dan slowly nodded his acceptance of the order.

He saluted before the Council and turned abruptly on his heel and strode past Blake Fenton. There was a look of satisfaction on Fenton's face that Moran did not miss.

He strode swiftly up the aisle then, past the girl and outside the doors of the Council room.

"Dan! Wait a minute!"

Moran paused, and turned to see Gene Phillips hurrying up to him. There was an irritated frown on the girl's face.

"Dan! Aren't you carrying this thing too far? After the praise Blake gave you before the Council. . . ."

"I think I made my position quite clear before the Council," he said, a touch of anger still in his voice.

"But why? Surely you must realize that this is a big break for you—you'll have your name on every telecast, and—"

"As a keeper to the Martian ape, and Fenton's errand boy," he replied.

The girl looked at him for a long moment and then shook her head. "This

isn't really like you. There must be something else. . . ."

And then Moran saw Blake Fenton approaching them. A smile was on Fenton's face.

"I don't know whether I was more surprised, or the Council, Dan," he said. "If I really thought you had meant what you said. . . ."

"I meant it," Moran retorted. "I don't know what your purpose was in requesting me, but I don't mind telling you that I don't like it."

THE smile left Fenton's face. "That's too bad. But it's too late now. Doing anything further would only cause a lot of unpleasantness for all of us. As it is, we'll be together for awhile again. The three of us."

Moran's eyebrows lifted. "The three of us?"

Gene Phillips laughed. "Of course! You don't think I'd take any other assignment right now! The Martian ape is the hottest copy and the biggest break I've ever had!"

Fenton smiled again. "So you see, Dan, it will be like old times. And don't worry too much about the work. It will all be very simple. I've already had a truck specially built that will house the thera-ray controls. And it will only be a few hours work for you to learn how to handle them."

Moran pursed his lips thoughtfully. "You mean I'm to be in charge of the ape during the tour?"

Fenton nodded. "That's right. It will add a touch of glamor to the whole thing. The man who first discovered the Martians, with the first Martian to visit Earth."

"And just when does this tour begin?" Moran asked resignedly.

"We start at once. We'll cover the West Coast first and then go across country to the East. I've made all the

necessary preparations already.”

Fenton finished speaking and then turned to the girl. “And now, Gene, how about having dinner with me. We can arrange the telecast details together.”

Moran saw the girl hesitate for a moment as she looked toward him before replying. When he remained silent she said, “Why, all right, Blake. Maybe Dan would like to join us?”

Moran shook his head. “Thanks, but I’ve got some things to take care of at headquarters. Routine checkout. I’ll see you both later.”

He watched them as they walked off. And he stood for a long moment, his mind turning over what had occurred. It seemed more like a comedy than anything else. That he, a Commander of the Solar Patrol, should be delegated to the task of playing nursemaid to a Martian ape. It was almost laughable.

And yet he knew he could not laugh. For he had a strange feeling that there was something more to it. It was too pat. Fenton had asked for his services for a reason. It wasn’t logical. It should have been the last thing Fenton would have wanted. It would have left him a clear field with Gene Phillips with Moran back on duty with the patrol. But now, Fenton had demanded his assignment. Why? And just what made this tour of the country with the Martian creature so important?

He shook his head slowly, knowing that he did not have the answers. Wondering if he ever would. And then suddenly he brightened. At least Fenton had given him an opportunity to be near Gene Phillips. And suddenly he realized that he wanted to be near the girl.

And then he smiled to himself. Whatever Fenton’s game was, he felt confident he could beat him at it.

He strode toward Patrol headquarters at a fast pace.

THE crowds at Seattle had been terrific. People had poured out to the city limits by the thousands to see the strange creature from Mars. To listen as Blake Fenton explained over public address systems that the ape was under complete mental control at all times.

And then the usual questions had been asked about Mars, and Fenton had given the usual answers. And then, Moran had put the ape through the prepared routine that Fenton had worked out.

The huge creature would roar mightily and thrash its great fists against its chest in thunderous sounds. The crowds would look on in an awed fascination at the might of the white ape, and then would applaud after the demonstration was over as the ape sat down calmly on the ground and stared with a stupidly glazed expression at the onlookers.

And so they had traveled down the state of Washington and through Oregon. And everywhere the crowds had been gigantic. And always the same routine, the same awe on the faces of the people, and the applause for Fenton as he wound up each demonstration.

But then Moran had begun to notice a change. It wasn’t in the actual routine they went through. The motions were the same. It was in the manner Fenton spoke to the people. There was more aggressiveness in his voice as he spoke of Mars and the creatures inhabiting the planet. And as Moran watched the eyes of the gathered people, he saw their faces fastened on the face of the great ape, and an almost eager tenseness about them.

And he was watching the same thing now on the outskirts of San Francisco. There were thousands of people gathered to see the Martian ape. And Gene Phillips was busy with her telecast equipment in her own vehicle parked close to the thera-ray truck.

Moran watched as Blake Fenton spoke to the crowd over the public address system. And a frown creased his forehead as he listened to Fenton speak.

"There is a new world waiting for us. What you see before you is a product of that world—an ancient culture, developed along different lines than ours. But a culture that lacks our scientific progress. We have a task before us, in adapting this newly opened path for our own advancement. It is the moment Earth has long been waiting for. It is the moment Mars has been waiting for—for us!"

And as Fenton's voice trailed off, Moran felt a chill sweep through him. For as he looked at Fenton, saw the enthusiasm that was sweeping the man, he heard the crowd begin to cheer tumultuously. The fire that had been in Fenton's voice had been caught by the crowd, caught and fanned into lusty voicing of their approval.

And yet, Moran was not sure just what they were cheering. He wondered suddenly if the crowd knew itself. For Fenton's words had been a mastery of double-talk. Meaning without meaning.

And then Dan turned his head away from Fenton and his eyes fastened on the mighty figure of the ape. The huge beast was staring straight at him, its semi-dazed eyes for a moment watchful.

And the chill that he had felt at Fenton's words returned to Dan Moran in that moment. It was something he could not explain. But somehow, as he looked into the ape's watching eyes, he felt that there was something there. An invisible bond that was just beyond his comprehension.

And then he heard Fenton speaking to him.

"Snap out of it, Dan! The people are waiting for an exhibition of the

thera-ray! Let's get to work."

The mood passed momentarily then, and Moran went through his motions with the thera-ray controls. And as usual, the ape responded to his every voiced thought suggestion.

And then finally the show was finished and again came the loud applause from the gathered crowd.

And then he watched as uniformed police began to disperse the meeting.

"HELLO, boys, did you put our Martian friend to bed properly?"

Gene Phillips smiled from her seat at the restaurant table as Moran and Fenton walked up and sat down.

"Everything's taken care of," Dan replied. And as he said it he smiled slowly, for what the girl had asked had been literally true. In every town they had visited it had naturally been impossible to provide adequate quarters for the huge Martian beast. And it had been necessary to keep the ape on the edge of each city, with the ground as his bed. Before leaving the ape alone a thought suggestion had always been given, commanding the huge creature to sleep, and as always, the beast obeyed the thought suggestion.

"Don't you fellows get tired sleeping out in the open like that?" the girl asked as they gave their order to the waitress.

Fenton looked over at Dan and shrugged. "I don't mind, and I'm sure the Commander has done it before."

Dan nodded. "It just gets a little monotonous. I've been meaning to pick up a radio for a little relaxation, but I've never gotten around to it."

"Well, I can fix that," the girl answered. "I've got a portable telecast set at my hotel room. After dinner you can walk over and pick it up."

She smiled as she said it, and Dan felt again that strange feeling deep within him. He shot a quick glance

over at Fenton and saw the distant look in his eyes, as if he had not heard what the girl had said.

And he realized suddenly that Fenton had been acting strangely lately. He remembered again the way the man had spoken that afternoon.

"Thanks, Gene, I'll take you up on that," he replied and then turned to Fenton.

"Blake, would you mind explaining just what you were talking about this afternoon?"

Fenton came out of his reverie at Moran's words and passed a curious glance across the table.

"What I said? I can't think of anything that needs explaining."

"You know what I mean," Dan insisted. "That talk about a new path for the advancement of Earth, and that Mars has been waiting for us. The crowd seemed to get what you were driving at, but it missed me by a mile."

For the first time a shadow of a smile crossed Fenton's face. He stared for a moment at Moran and then the smile faded as an eager light entered his eyes.

"So you missed the point, eh, Dan? How about you, Gene, did you understand it?"

Moran switched his gaze over to the girl. And as he looked at her he saw that her eyes were filled with the same light that Fenton's showed.

"Why of course I did, Blake. We've learned everything we need to learn from the Martian about his race, and there's nothing to prevent us from extending the boundaries of Earth!"

It was the way in which the girl said it that struck a chill of astonishment through Dan. It wasn't possible, and yet he had heard her say it with her own lips.

"Are you implying, Gene, that you'd be in favor of a declaration of war between Earth and Mars?"

THERE was shocked surprise in Moran's words as he spoke to the girl. But he saw her look over at Fenton instead of replying. And then Fenton spoke.

"That's exactly what she did say, Dan. And you yourself noticed that the people caught the idea enthusiastically! But, actually, it wouldn't be war. To have war you must first have opposition. . . ."

Dan's eyes stared in a weird fascination at Blake Fenton.

"You can't be serious! You must be joking. . . ."

Fenton laughed then. "Joking? You should know by now that I never joke."

And the way Fenton said it he knew it was true.

"But this is mad! We're on a goodwill tour, a—"

"That reminds me," Fenton interrupted him. "I won't be with you after tonight. I'm returning to Washington at once. You'll continue to Los Angeles as planned. I'll join you again at the San Diego Patrol Base."

"You're leaving for Washington?" Surprise was again in Dan's voice. "But what for?"

Fenton shrugged. "I received orders to return at once for an important meeting with the Council."

Dan frowned. "I didn't know that. When did the orders come through?"

"This afternoon," Fenton replied. "After the demonstration."

Dan remained silent for a moment, thinking. Then he said slowly, "But I was with you all the time. It's funny I didn't hear about it. . . ."

Fenton laughed. "You were probably thinking about something else. Maybe Gene here?"

There was a sarcastic note in Fenton's voice with those last words, and it brought a flush to Moran's face. And it also brought him back to the present.

He heard the girl laugh at Fenton's remark.

"I'm sure Dan doesn't give me a second thought! He's too anxious to get back to the Patrol!"

And Fenton's voice came lowly. "Maybe he will, soon. . . ."

Dan glanced sharply at him. "What was that? Were there any orders for me?"

Fenton shook his head and glanced at his watch. "No. . . . You'll carry on as I've said. We'll meet in San Diego—you'll probably go back on active duty then." He glanced at his watch again and pushed his chair back. "I'm sorry, but I'm catching the evening flight, a special. I'll have to leave you both now."

And as Fenton arose, Dan was still not satisfied with the man's explanation. There was something queer about the whole thing. The manner of the man, the change in him. And even the girl. . . .

He heard Gene Phillips saying good-bye to Fenton and then they were sitting at the table alone.

"What's the matter, Dan? You have hardly touched your food!"

Moran looked slowly over at her. "I'm not hungry, I guess. . . . If you're ready, we can leave. I should get back to the thera-ray truck."

The girl nodded and rose. Moran followed her, paying the bill as they left.

Then they walked slowly down the street toward the girl's hotel.

"You're sure you don't mind my taking the radio set with me?"

Dan held the small portable in his hand and turned toward the door of the girl's room.

"Not at all, Dan. Do you have to go so soon?"

He paused then, and studied the girl's face.

"I should . . . Gene, you weren't serious back there at the restaurant, were you?"

She frowned. "Serious? Why of course I was. Dan, haven't you noticed the trend of the country?"

He stared at her for a long moment, weighing his words. He didn't know just how to say them now. Everything was confused in his mind.

"I'm afraid that that's something I'm guilty of missing completely. But apparently you and Fenton know what it's all about."

There was a momentary puzzlement in the girl's eyes, a dreamy expression that blanked her features for a second.

"I'm not sure, yet, Dan . . . Not yet. . . ."

He had the impression that she was not talking to him, but to herself.

And as he looked at her face, he suddenly forgot about everything else. The feeling inside him welled to his lips.

"Gene, I—"

His voice stammered off into silence then as he saw that she was not listening to him. She was thinking of something. Something or somebody. And as the thought flashed through his mind, he felt instinctively that she must be thinking of Fenton. And the words that he had been about to utter to her, the moment that he felt sure had belonged to him, was suddenly gone.

"I'll see you tomorrow, Gene. Good night."

And as he opened the door the girl was still standing, the dreamy expression in her eyes.

He closed the door softly behind him and left the hotel.

WHEN he reached the camp, he saw one of the special police officers approach and recognize him.

"Oh, it's you, Commander. See you brought a portable radio with you."

Dan nodded. "Is everything all right?"

The officer shrugged. "Guess so. Beats me how that thera-ray machine works, though. I thought it was supposed to put the ape to sleep for the night. I walked by him a little while ago and he was awake."

"Awake?" Moran frowned and passed by the officer. He hurried through the remaining distance to the thera-ray truck. And as he approached, he could see through the dim night light, the huge prone figure of the Martian ape on the other side of the truck.

He put the radio set down beside his sleeping bag and crossed around the truck. He stood there, a few feet away from the gigantic ape, watching it closely.

The huge breast of the creature rose and fell in methodical movements, and its eyes were closed in what appeared to be a deep slumber. He frowned again to himself. Of course, the officer might have been wrong. . . .

Slowly he crossed back to his sleeping bag and sat beside it, feeling the warm night air blowing gently around him. He lit a cigarette and blew a long thoughtful streamer of smoke into the star-lit heavens. And as he gazed at those stars he felt a pang of yearning. For he knew that that was where he belonged. Up there, away from the turmoil and confusion of the Earth's surface. Up there where he could think out the questions that raged in his mind.

He sighed and reached over to flick on the radio set. And as his fingers turned the switch he glanced over at the Martian ape.

He saw a pair of watchful eyes gleaming at him through the dim light.

A startled feeling swept through Dan as he returned the gaze of the awakened ape. And a question pounded through his mind. *How could the ape be con-*

scious? He was under the full control of the thera-ray!

His eyes tore away from those of the ape and centered on the thera-ray truck. He could see the twin towers of the thought control mechanism glowing in the darkness, sending out the stream of energy that controlled the metal cap on the head of the ape. The ray was working, just as it should have been, and yet . . .

His eyes swept back to the figure of the ape. He saw the eyes of the giant creature staring at him, and though he couldn't be sure, he felt that those eyes held a laughter in them. And something else . . .

And then suddenly the radio began to play. A soft pleasant stream of music welled from the set as Dan stared at the awakened ape.

He was about to get up and go over to the thera-ray controls and repeat the command he had given the ape earlier, when suddenly he noticed something that seemed to be happening to the great beast.

The music spread outward from the radio, adding a weird touch to what Dan was witnessing. For he saw the figure of the ape suddenly shudder and a low rumbling sound issue from the beast's throat. And then the eyes that were staring at Dan suddenly took on a glazed look that he could see even in the dim light.

And as he watched, he saw those eyes roll upward, showing the whites of them, and then the lids slowly closed and the great figure relaxed.

Dan got to his feet slowly, surprise blanking his face. This was something he had never seen before. And consternation swept through him. It was almost as if the huge creature had been hypnotized . . .

And as the thought sped through his mind he turned to the radio.

THE music was pouring out from the set, a steady stream of sound, caressing the night air about him. And then he gazed back at the figure of the ape. And it suddenly came to him. As impossible as it sounded—he was right! The ape *had* been hypnotized! It had happened the moment the music poured forth from the set. The giant creature had shuddered and its eyes had glazed and rolled in their sockets . . .

He stared at the Martian as the fact confirmed itself upon his mind. And as he thought back rapidly, he knew that this was the first time the ape had heard music. There had never been an occasion before for the ape to be subjected to music of any kind. And now, the first time the ape had heard the soft sounds, he had reacted violently, his huge body completely under a strange hypnotic spell.

Dan sat down beside the radio feeling a great excitement pour through him. He reached out slowly with one hand and turned the dial of the radio.

The music cut off abruptly as he tuned in another station and heard the voice of a newscaster.

But his eyes were on the great figure of the ape. As the music vanished, he saw the giant figure breath in a tumultuous movement, and the great eyes slowly opened. They fastened on Moran and as Dan watched, he saw a look of puzzlement in them.

Quickly he got to his feet and strode over to the thera-ray controls. He adjusted them to their maximum output and gave the oral command he had given earlier.

"Sleep . . . you are tired . . . sleep . . ."

And as his thoughts were transmitted through the mechanism to the thera-cap on the ape's head, he saw the eyes of the Martian watching him intently. And just before they closed in slumber at

his mental command, he thought he saw again that look of laughter in them.

Then he returned to his sleeping bag and sat beside the radio. The voice of the newscaster caught him suddenly.

" . . . and the Council has announced that the recent project has been completed. Kept in the utmost secrecy until this moment, it can now be revealed that the great space fleet has been constructed and is ready for instant military use at the San Diego Patrol Base. The ships are the largest ever conceived by Patrol engineers. And work has been at top speed. An important meeting is scheduled for early tomorrow at Council headquarters in Washington. What will come out of that meeting will be news that will electrify the world. . . . And that concludes . . ."

The voice of the newscaster droned on in a monotone, completing the broadcast. But Dan Moran was no longer listening. He reached out and flicked off the set, hardly aware that he had done so.

. . . A great space fleet . . . completed at top speed . . . instant military use . . .

THE words flashed through his mind again and he thought about them in a shocked silence. What did it mean? What could possibly be the plans of the Council that they had constructed a huge space fleet in utter secrecy and at top speed?

And then he remembered the last part of the announcement . . . an important meeting scheduled for early tomorrow at Council headquarters in Washington. . . .

And a frown creased his forehead at that thought. For he remembered what Blake Fenton had said about receiving a special order to return to Washington at once. It could mean only one thing. Somehow, Fenton was tied in with the

special meeting that was to take place in the morning. Called back by orders, Fenton had said. And yet Dan knew that it was impossible for Fenton to have received any orders without him knowing about them. But how then?

And as he thought about it, he suddenly became sure of one thing. Whatever those plans were that involved the Council meeting and Blake Fenton, they also involved the space fleet that had been built at the San Diego Patrol Base. And if they involved Fenton, then they must also involve the present assignment and the Martian. . . .

And as Dan looked over at the huge still figure of the Martian, he felt again that chill of unknown dread sweep through him. He thought of Gene Phillips and the peculiar way she had been acting, at the dreamy look on her face, and the way she had talked. . . .

It was a jumbled picture in his mind. A puzzle where the pieces were all mixed up. They were there, he knew. But he couldn't fit them into their proper place. And somehow, he also knew, he had to complete that picture. There was an urgency about it that frightened him. He knew he would not rest until he had the answer.

He gazed up into the star-lit sky and found the planet Mars, a twinkling dot up there in the heavens. A peaceful looking dot of light, so far away. What possible bearing did it have on the puzzle in his mind?

He wasn't sure, but as he stared at the twinkling planet, he began to see a little more clearly. And as he saw, a horror of suspicion gripped him. A suspicion that he knew he must make certain of. Only then would he be sure.

And Mars continued to twinkle in the heavens.

DAN looked over the heads of the great gathered crowd that had

swept out of Los Angeles to see the Martian ape.

In the telecast truck beside him, Gene Phillips was issuing orders to the crew operating the television apparatus. As she felt Dan's eyes on hers, she turned to him.

"This is going to be the big day, Dan," she said, her features tense with an expectant light.

He looked at her and slowly nodded. She didn't know what he was thinking, he knew. But she was right. It was going to be a big day. For today he would know. . . .

And then he heard the voice of the special narrator that had met them in Los Angeles. The man who had been sent to take over Blake Fenton's task of explaining the Martian to the gathered people.

And as the man talked, Moran looked at the faces of the thousands of people kept behind orderly police lines. They were all fastened on the huge figure of the ape standing behind the thera-ray truck, standing quietly, its huge eyes impassive as it returned the stare of the audience.

And the narrator's voice picked up a note of enthusiasm.

"And what you see before you, this creature of another planet, is only the beginning. Soon we will extend the frontier of Earth further than we have ever dreamed! Mars awaits us! Its people need the guiding hand of Earth . . ."

And the voice of the narrator swept onward, building to a climax of enthusiasm.

And as Moran watched, he saw the faces of the crowd take up that enthusiasm and follow it with a thunderous burst of applause. And as Dan watched, he had the feeling that these could not possibly be the people of Earth he was watching. These could

not possibly be the words of the government he knew, the Patrol he had served and made his life's work. For what was being said was beyond all comprehension. They were words of war, of conquest, of—

And then he received a signal from the narrator. The time had come to show the people the effect of the thought-controlled Martian. And Dan turned to the controls of the thera-ray.

As his fingers stepped up the power of the machine, his eyes caught those of the ape. And again he felt that silent laughter in those dark depths. Then he tore his gaze away and issued his oral commands one by one into the thought transmitter.

And the ape followed the mental suggestions Dan had given it.

And finally he said: "Sit on the ground and face the audience."

And the ape sat down beside a huge boulder of rock. And Dan prepared for the final show of control, the moment of fear that would sweep through the crowd as the ape seemingly went out of control only to be brought back at the psychological moment.

He had done it many times. He had always given the order for a show of rage and the giant ape would thunder its wrath in a mighty bellow of anger. But now, as he prepared to issue the command, his fingers slowly crept to the master switch of the thera-ray controls. And as he started to speak into the transmitter, his hand, in a concealed movement, turned off the machine.

"Pick up the boulder beside you and threaten the crowd with it."

As the words left his lips, Dan's eyes swept up to the face of the ape. He saw the huge creature's gaze fastened dutifully on the crowd beyond. And he saw the hand of the ape slowly reach down beside it and pick up the boulder. And then the ape raised the boulder

over his head and a thundering roar of rage snarled from its throat.

And as Dan watched, his heart seemed to stop beating, for he knew for sure that the ape had responded without the thera-ray control! *He had shut off the machine just before he had given the command!*

HE HEARD the crowd gasp in sudden tense fear as the huge creature seemed to be about to hurl the missile into their crowded ranks.

And then Dan spoke again into the dead transmitter.

"Put the boulder down. Your body is completely relaxed. . . ."

And he watched as the huge beast slowly lowered the rock to the ground and released it. And then the snarl left its face and a complacent look spread over it.

Dan's hand trembled as he reached over and secretly flicked on the power switch again. He heard the thunderous applause of the audience, but it was a dim echo in his mind. For he knew a startling truth now. A truth that had been born a suspicion the night before, a truth that was the final piece in the jumbled picture in his mind.

The ape had reacted without the stimulus of the thera-ray control! And that could only mean one thing. . . .

He blanked the thought from his mind before it could be born. For there was danger now. A danger that sent a chill up his spine. Danger that was more terrible than any weapon man had created. For he knew that the ultimate weapon was being used at that very moment. A weapon that man as yet only dreamed of, but that another race had perfected beyond comprehension. . . .

He forced himself to turn toward the telecast truck then. And as he saw the crowds of people breaking up under the orders of the police, he saw the face of

Gene Phillips staring at him, a dreamy expression on her features, and excitement in her eyes.

"Did you hear it, Dan? Isn't it wonderful? The news is flashing over the tele-wires right now!"

Dan nodded his head slowly, a griminess in his eyes as he looked at the girl.

"Yes, Gene, I suppose it is . . ."

And then the girl's face brightened as she looked at him.

"And you, Dan! Your orders coming through to return to the Patrol Base! Isn't that what you've been waiting for?"

Moran stared at her in a shocked silence for a moment.

"My orders? What orders?"

The girl looked at him queerly. "Why, you know, they came through just a few moments ago. . . ."

There was a sudden confusion on her face as she spoke. As if she did not understand why he had asked the question.

And then, behind the girl, the portable telecast screen suddenly flickered with life and the face of Dan's Commanding Officer, General Talbot, appeared on the screen.

"Commander Moran, return to Base Headquarters at once. You will turn over the Martian to Blake Fenton when you arrive. Then report to me."

Dan stared at the face on the screen and then slowly nodded, knowing his own image was being transmitted back to the Base.

"Yes, sir. I'll return at once."

Then the screen blanked out and the girl laughed. "There, you see? They had to repeat the order for you!"

But Dan Moran did not return her laugh. For he knew that the screen had not transmitted any order to him a few moments before. And yet the girl had known. *The girl had known!*

He turned then to the thera-ray con-

trols and his eyes swept up to find the eyes of the Martian staring down at him. The laughter in those great orbs was not concealed now. It was a taunting laughter that brought a strange fear to Dan. For he knew suddenly that he was being toyed with, as a child plays with a doll. And he could read a challenge there . . . What was he going to do about it? . . . What *could* he do about it? . . .

"I'LL take over the thera-ray controls now, Moran," Blake Fenton said crisply as Dan halted the truck near the Patrol Base headquarters. Fenton stepped up beside the cab and spoke the words as Moran climbed down from the vehicle.

"I see you got back from Washington in a hurry," Dan replied, watching the man closely. He saw Fenton's eyes glance at the towering figure of the ape, standing close beside the truck, and then Fenton looked back at him.

"That's right, Moran. But I believe the General is waiting to see you. You'll receive further orders from him."

Dan saw Fenton turn on his heel and walk toward the rear of the truck.

He followed the man briefly with his eyes and then slowly walked toward the Base Headquarters building. As he walked his eyes took in the staggering sight in the distance of a giant fleet of space cruisers. Cruisers that were as large if not larger than the one that he had used to bring the Martian back to Earth. And as he looked at that great fleet, poised for instant flight, he felt again the dread sweep through his body.

Then he had reached the Base building and he returned the salute of a guard as he entered.

Moments later he was being ushered into the office of the Base Commander. And then he stood before General Talbot's desk, saluting.

"Commander Moran reporting as directed, sir."

The General returned the salute and Dan noticed that the man stared at him with a detached look.

"At ease, Moran. You may smoke if you wish."

Dan nodded and relaxed. He lit a cigarette and waited for the General to speak. The officer leaned back in his chair and a slow smile spread across his features.

"You're a very lucky man, Moran. You're about to be given the greatest opportunity of your lifetime." He paused for a moment, to let his words have the proper effect, then he went on.

"The Council has instructed me to put you second-in-command of the task fleet, Moran."

Dan tried to keep his features relaxed. "Task fleet, sir? You mean—"

"I mean, Moran, that Earth is about to invade Mars. Surely you have been aware of the situation?"

The full horror of what the General had just said broke upon him then. And he knew that his worst fears were being realized. For what had been only rumor before, was now officially sealed.

"There was rumor, sir . . ." Dan replied slowly.

"Rumor!" the General scoffed. "This is no time for jokes, Moran. Of course you knew. Every officer in the Patrol knows. Just as every person on Earth knows by now! But enough of that. You don't seem very happy over the high honor the Council has given you."

Dan slowly nodded his head. "Of course I feel honored, sir. . . . But you mentioned I was to be second-in-command? . . ."

The General sat forward in his chair, his eyes still fixed on Dan, and they were still staring with the detached expression he had noted before.

"Yes. Blake Fenton will be in com-

mand of the attacking fleet. You will act under his orders from the control ship. The Martian is being placed in the ship at this moment, in the specially constructed hold."

"Blake Fenton, sir?" Dan asked in surprise, ignoring the latter part of the General's statement.

"That's right, Moran. The Council has appointed Fenton as Commander of the fleet."

"But Fenton's not a Patrol officer, sir! He's not even a soldier!"

The General's glazed eyes continued to stare at him. "He was appointed by the Council, Moran. That's all that is necessary. You will report to Fenton at once. The fleet is scheduled to depart shortly. That is all, Moran."

A protest rose to Dan's lips, but died there. As he looked into the General's face, saw the same dreamy expression there that he had seen on the face of Gene Phillips, he knew it was useless to argue. For the situation was hopelessly beyond control. An impossible situation that was like a wild nightmare. But a nightmare that was slowly becoming a grim reality.

"Yes, sir," Dan replied and saluted. Then he turned on his heel and walked out of the office.

AS DAN walked slowly toward the open port of the giant flagship of the fleet his eyes took in the scene around the gathered armada. It was strangely still. Where there should have been a bustle of excitement, there was nothing. The airlock in the side of the flagship had already been closed, housing the Martian behind it. A single guard saluted as Dan walked up the ramp to the open airlock of the control room.

Then he was inside the huge ship, and as he stepped into the control room, he stared in surprise at the figure of

Gene Phillips, standing beside a portable telecast receiver. The girl was talking to Blake Fenton as he walked up.

"Dan! I'll bet you're surprised to see me! I managed to get the necessary permission to cover the invasion—with Blake's help!

Moran stared for a long moment at the girl.

"This is no place for a woman, Gene . . ."

Fenton laughed. "If you mean there'll be danger, you're wrong, Moran. The Martians won't stand a chance against us!"

And again Dan noticed the feverish light in Fenton's eyes. The way he talked. So sure. So certain. It was idiotic talk, the babble of children playing a game. Only Dan knew that this was not a game.

"I understand I'm to be under your command. Just what are your orders?"

He saw the detached eyes of Fenton stare at him. "You may take over the controls, Moran. The Council Chairman himself will give the order to take-off. All we can do is wait."

Dan walked slowly around the two and stood before the controls of the space cruiser. He knew that this was what he had wanted, to return to active duty with the Patrol. But he also knew that it was not the kind of duty he had hoped for. This was madness. A madness planned by an intellect far greater than anything man had ever dreamed of. . . .

And then suddenly the telecast screen flickered into life. And the face of the Council Chairman came into focus. And there was the same expression on the Council Chairman's face that Dan had seen on the others. A detached, dreamy expression. As if the man's thoughts were far distant.

And then the Chairman spoke.

"The time has arrived. In thirty seconds you will depart from the Earth on your great mission. You take with you the mightiest fleet ever assembled by man! And the hopes of every Earthman along with it!"

And then the Chairman's face faded and was replaced by a sweep second clock. Dan watched as the second hand swept downward, heard the airlock hiss shut from outside the control room. And he knew the moment was at hand.

As the second hand reached its appointed place, Dan shot the controls into position and he felt the mighty cruiser blast away from the Patrol Base.

And as the great ship rose in a streak of flame, its atomic engines blasting the trail toward outer space, he saw the rest of the fleet shoot away from the Home Base in the visiplate.

He reached over and switched on the inter-ship radio.

"Commander Moran speaking. All ships will report."

As the words left his lips he flicked on the telescreen controls. He licked his lips nervously. For he knew that this was to be the moment he dreaded. For he was awaiting an answer from those other ships. An answer that would be the final piece in the horrible picture he envisioned.

And no answer came.

He adjusted the telescreen controls with a grim hand, and one by one the control rooms of the other ships in the fleet came into focus.

And each one was empty. There wasn't a single Patrol Officer on any of them!

VERY slowly then Dan turned away from the telescreen. He stared into the visiplate, saw the blackness of outer space close over the fleet, knew that their speed would now increase until they approached the speed of light. And

the distance between Mars and the Earth would vanish.

He thought desperately then. There had to be a way out, for he was certain now. He knew the terrible plan that had been set in motion.

He turned away from the controls and faced Fenton and the girl.

"Listen to me!" his voice was strained as he shouted at them. "Gene! There isn't an invading army with us—we're the only Earthmen in the entire fleet! The other ships are under robot control with this one! Do you know what that means? Do you know what's happened to you?"

And they stared at him with blank expressions. Only in Fenton's eyes did Dan see any reaction to his words. And it was a subtle look, a dull flicker that rose from their depths. A look of mockery, as if Fenton knew something deep within his subconscious.

And then suddenly Dan stiffened.

A voice spoke to him. A voice that did not come from the control room. Not from the lips of Fenton or Gene Phillips. A voice that echoed in a rumbling thunder in his mind. He felt it sweep over him, a force so great that his body was numbed with it.

"It has been an interesting game, playing with you, Commander Moran. But now the time has come for the game to end. Do you know who is speaking to you?"

The voice ended abruptly, and with a chilling sensation, Dan knew where the voice had come from.

"*You!*" he whispered, horror creeping into his voice. "*The Martian!*"

"That is correct, Commander. I am called Mogar amongst my own people. You may address me as such if you wish."

"Then I was right—you are responsible for all this!"

There was a sound of deep thunder-

ous laughter from the ape's mind.

"Yes, Commander. And I have watched you closely, played my little game with you, seeing just how intelligent your race actually is. You alone of all the Earth people I did not control mentally. For you see, Commander, every man and woman on Earth has been under my mental control since the day we landed on your planet!

"Only you did I allow mental freedom. I knew you could not obstruct my plans, and I was curious to know if you would recognize what was happening to your people. And you nearly fooled me. That little trick you pulled on me when you shut off the thera-ray controls. I missed it at the time. And I wondered what had suddenly made you aware of my powers. . . ."

And as the ape's voice trailed off, Dan's mind seethed with thought. His mind raced back to the day they had first captured the Martian. He remembered now that he had thought it strange that only one Martian had appeared. And afterwards, when they had shot away from the surface of the planet, he remembered that the Martians had suddenly appeared to watch the space ship leave. It had been planned that way. He knew it now. Now when it was too late.

And he knew other things. The reason for the tour of Earth cities. To put the people even further under the control of the Martian, to keep their attention as the Council, under Mogar's mental direction, constructed the huge space fleet.

AND as he thought of the space fleet, he wondered again. What was it for? Why had this Martian directed the science of Earth. . . .

And as he thought, the voice of Mogar laughed in his mind again.

"You are absolutely right, Com-

mander. Things worked out just as you have deduced. It was all planned. From the first time you scouted our planet. And you wonder why I have done this? Why your Earth science has been used to construct this huge fleet? I will tell you. Now that it is too late for anything to stop my plans.

"The answer is very simple, Commander Moran. We of Mars have developed along entirely different lines than you of Earth. Our science is a mental one. Yours is a mechanical one. We have none of your mechanical development on Mars, a sad but true fact. And our planet is old and can barely sustain life any more.

"It is for this reason that I have used the mental powers of my race to control your people. This huge space fleet will not attack Mars as your foolish leaders were made to believe. Instead, members of my race will return to Earth in this fleet. We will make it our new home.

"As we approach Mars I will direct each of the ships, through you, to a city of my people. The ship will land there and take on members of my race. Then we will return to Earth. . . ."

And as the voice of the ape trailed off in Dan's mind, the chilling question left his lips.

"And what of Earth? And its inhabitants?"

Even as the voice of Mogar laughed contemptuously, Dan knew what the answer would be.

"Your people have served their purpose. We of Mars will take over your planet, and your Earthmen will die. . . ."

It was true then. The thought that had raced through Dan's mind. The final horror that had swept up inside him. And the picture was now complete. It stood out in all its ghastly relief.

He stared into the visiplat, saw the dot that was Mars streaking ever closer under the terrific speed of the space fleet. And he knew that once they reached Mars it would be too late.

"There is nothing you can do, Commander, rest assured. I am going to take over complete control of your mind from this point on. You will act only under my directions. Do exactly as I say."

And as the voice of Mogar stilled again, Dan felt the mighty intellect of the Martian converge upon his brain. And in that split second Dan knew what he must do. For deep in his subconscious a memory made itself evident. And he masked the thought even as it was born so that Mogar would not be aware of it. For he knew something. Something that even the mighty brain of Mogar had failed to grasp. And it was the only chance. . . .

Dan felt the overpowering wave of thought from the Martian sweep through him, and already he felt his own will power vanishing.

But he moved. In the last moment of control his body possessed he moved. Up beside the motionless figures of Fenton and the girl. And then his hand shot out and closed over the switch of the telecast set.

Instantly the screen flickered into life and Dan saw the face of a newscaster on Earth. He heard the voice of Mogar laugh mockingly.

"What good will it do you to contact your Earth people?"

But Dan's fingers already had switched the station he was receiving. The screen blanked for a moment as the new station began to come into focus.

And it was then that he lost control of his body. It was a sensation of utter helplessness as the mighty thoughts of Mogar enveloped him.

But his eyes were still fastened on the screen. And the picture cleared. It was a studio on Earth, and an orchestra was playing a routine telecast program.

And the music suddenly flooded the control room.

AS THE sound struck his ears, Dan felt the mighty grip of Mogar loosen on his mind. He felt the sudden paralysis that gripped the mind of the Martian, and a fierce hope swept through him. For he had remembered how the music had affected the beast, hypnotizing its sensitive mental balance. And it was doing it again. . . .

And then suddenly the Martian's control vanished and Dan knew that the creature was in a trance-like state, the same sort of state he had put the people of Earth in.

And as the Martian's control left him, he heard the girl suddenly sob beside him.

"Oh, Dan! My mind is free—it's been horrible! . . ."

And as Moran reached out and adjusted the controls of the telecast program, bringing the music in loudly, he saw Blake Fenton move toward him.

"You fool!" Fenton's voice snapped out. "Turn off that music! Mogar's control is gone without it!"

Moran whirled on Fenton, surprise in his eyes. "Good Lord, man, don't you realize what this means? We can still beat them before it's too late!"

Fenton shook his head savagely. "Beat them! You really are a fool! Mogar has promised me complete control of Earth after his people reach it! Do you know what that means to me? Power that no man ever dreamed of—and you're not going to stand in my way!"

He moved forward then, and the girl moved in between them.

"Blake! You're mad! You don't know what you're saying!"

Fenton's fist shot out and hit the girl's chin savagely. She uttered a single cry of pain and then fell backwards, against Moran.

Dan lowered her to the floor of the control room as Fenton's hand reached out to switch off the telecast set. Then Dan lunged forward, his fist striking out in a desperate movement.

He caught Fenton's face in a grazing blow and the man staggered back. Then Dan leaped forward and Fenton's foot kicked upward, catching him in a numbing blow.

Pain seared through Moran in that moment, an agony that sent him reeling backward against the telecast machine. His body hit it a jarring blow and even as he lunged forward again, he heard the music from the set begin to waver. As he lashed out at Fenton again he knew that he had upset the delicate balance of the machine, and the fear spread through him that its power would fail.

He met Fenton's attack with a fierce desperation. His fists smashed into the man's face, and then Fenton groaned and his knees began to buckle under him.

Once more Dan smashed his fist into Fenton's jaw. And then Fenton collapsed to the floor, blood running from his torn mouth.

Dan staggered back from Fenton's unconscious figure. His eyes rested upon the white face of the girl as she lay on the floor where Fenton's blow had thrown her. But he knew he didn't have time to help her now.

He threw an anxious glance at the telecast machine. He saw the image of the studio orchestra on Earth flickering, and the sound of the music was mixed with a rising static. It might cease at any moment. And if it did . . .

HE STOOD before the visiplat then, his eyes fastened on the rapidly approaching disc that was Mars. And as he stood there, counting the seconds as they sped by, and listening to the sound of the music grow more and more confused and distant, he knew that it would not be long before Mogar regained control of his mind.

And then his fingers were at the controls, slowing the speed of the great space fleet as the surface of Mars grew in the visiplat.

And from the distance he could see a huge portion of the planet's surface. And he saw the irregular dots on the surface that marked the cities of the Martians. Cities, where even now, he knew, giant white apes were staring up into space, waiting for the fleet that was thundering down toward them. Waiting to board those vessels and return to Earth. . . .

And then Dan Moran's hands flew rapidly over the controls. He released the robot controls on each ship of the fleet at a time. And as each one was released, he reset the controls, locking each vessel in a new course.

And then he waited.

And as the music grew more discordant from the telecast, his eyes watched the ships of the fleet flash down through the Martian skies. Flash down and separate in their new courses.

Dan felt a strange thrill course through him as he watched them thunder through the thin Martian atmosphere, heading straight for the Martian cities that dotted the otherwise barren landscape of the planet.

And then the first ship struck.

There was a flash of light. Intolerable to behold as the atomic engines of the ship exploded in a mighty blast of atomic energy. And the city was obliterated in a cloud of rising smoke and flame.

And another ship struck. And another.

Until the surface of the planet was a mighty holocaust of flaming destruction. The terrible force of atomic power that was destroying the ape cities.

His eyes were held in an awed fascination at the sight. But then, as the music almost faded away completely, he wheeled from the visiplat and set the controls of the space ship into a locked position.

He felt the ship begin to thunder toward the Martian atmosphere as he rushed over to the girl and picked her still limp body in his arms.

Then he was dashing through the companionway and into the auxiliary rocket chamber. He breathed a sigh of relief as he saw the slim tapering scouting ship that rested in the airlock.

And then he was inside the scouting ship, laying the girl gently on a chair before the control panel. Hastily he strapped her safety belt to her waist, as she opened her eyes.

"Dan—"

"There's no time to talk now!" he told her, seating himself before the controls of the tiny craft.

And his fingers flashed across the control panel.

There was a rumble of sound from the mother ship as the airlock hissed open. And then the tiny ship shot out from its side, out and away into the fringes of outer space.

Dan's eyes were glued to the visiplat of the vessel as he maneuvered away from the mother ship. He saw the huge space cruiser thunder down toward the surface of Mars.

And then the voice of Mogar thundered in his mind.

"You tricked me!" Mogar screamed. "You did have a weapon! But your machine is no longer functioning—and you will die! *You will die!*"

HE HEARD the girl sob beside him, and he knew that the might of the Martian's thoughts were controlling her too. And then he saw a projected image of the control room of the mother ship. He saw Fenton staggering to his feet, driven by the power of Mogar's brain. And Fenton was moving slowly toward the controls, even as Mogar's thought wrath blasted into the mind of Dan Moran.

There was a numbing pain that shot through Moran in that moment. And he knew that in seconds his life would be ended by the terrible power of that thought blast.

And in the final moment, as he felt his consciousness leaving him in a terrible agony of pain, his eyes saw a brilliant corruscade of light shoot up from the surface of Mars. The space ship had struck the surface and exploded in a burst of atomic energy.

And the grip of Mogar's mighty intellect vanished from Dan Moran's mind.

He sat weakly in his seat before the control panel, feeling a cold sweat bead-

ing his forehead.

And beside him the girl touched his arm with her hand.

"... Dan—is—is Mogar dead? ..."

He nodded weakly. "Yes. And the last of his race with him. . . ."

"... And Fenton . . ."

A grimness lined Dan's lips. "Fenton deserved to die. He was willing to plot against his fellow men with a race of aliens. . . ."

He heard the girl sigh, a touch of horror in the sound she made. "It was terrible—I couldn't think for myself—every word I uttered I was forced to say . . ."

"I know," Dan nodded wearily as he set the controls of the ship back toward Earth. "But it's all over now, Gene. Earth is saved . . . and so are we. . . ."

And then she was in his arms, sobbing against his shoulder. And as he held her close against him, he knew that he would not have to try to say the things he wanted to to her. The words would come easy now.

But not for a long moment—not until after his lips left hers.

CYBERNETICS—NEW SCIENCE



By **H. R. STANTON**



DR. NORBERT WIENER, an American mathematician, in cooperation with a number of friends, physicists, biologists, biophysicists, and others, has instigated studies into a new branch of knowledge, which he calls "cybernetics." Cybernetics is a Greek word meaning "steersman" and it was the name chosen to describe this new science which is the study of the human brain and nervous system in connection with the modern machine. It is a science which is concerned with the methods of communication and control both in the nervous system and in machines. It is surprising what subtle analogies may be drawn between control mechanisms and the human nervous system.

It is a definite fact that there is a strong comparison between the human brain and a modern complex computing machine. The physical quantity that cybernetics is concerned with is "feedback," so well known to communication engi-

neers. Dr. Wiener, in an article in the current *Scientific American*, explains clearly what is meant by this.

Suppose you consider the act of picking up a pencil. Previously it has been thought that primarily what occurred was that the brain telegraphed a signal to the arm muscles and they went ahead and did the job. This is still true, but there is a more complex relationship to be considered. The amount of distance by which the hand has failed to pick up the pencil in some elusive way provides back to the brain a signal stating its position. In other words there is feedback to prevent the hand from overshooting its target. This quality is now discovered to be of great importance in considering how the brain works. The human nervous system is a closed system comparable to a computing mechanism. It is not simply a "thought-nervous impulse-act" device. The quality of feedback is everywhere.