

Wonder Stories, November, 1934

# One Prehistoric Night

by Philip Barshofsky



(Illustration by Paul)

The alien horde watched the battle of the giants with bated breath.

With a reverberating roar, a huge torpedo-shaped body leaped up out of the dim steam-laden horizon and came rushing towards a large and rugged island, followed by a fiery tail and leaving behind a trail of falling sparks. The piercing rays of the noonday sun picked up bright reflections from the surface of the hurtling metal monster. They also showed that the strange visitor bore orange and green markings. The noisy arrival had four rounded, metal "fins" that made it appeal-like some great arrow afire. The fins all began at the blunt prow ending in a slope against the side of the craft, and appeared to be used as observatories with perfectly transparent ends.

The rear part of the rocket-ship sprouted many propulsion tubes. These now rocked the quiet waters with a thunderous concussion. From the center of the blunt nose and the under and side parts, there also extended short tubes to be used in maneuvering the space craft.

The island, its destination, which was surrounded by almost a world of water, (being about the only piece of habitable land on the planet) bore gigantic growths that towered toward the large, blazing red sun. Its surface shook to the heavy footfalls of frightfully crude creatures, that seemed to be some grim experiment of Nature.

Amid heartbeats of thunderous noises, the rocket-ship shot down toward the foliage-covered ground and skimmed over the green tops. Upon reaching an open space where trees and ferns had surrendered the ground to a wide patch of sand, it landed in a burst of fire that somewhat softened its earthward plunge.

At the immediate silence of the ship's propulsion tubes, other noises quickly became perceptible. Strange noises that having been drowned out at the ship's arrival, now rose vigorously into the humid air. From far and near came the hissing and shrieking of

monstrous reptiles—reptiles that infested and reigned supreme on this world millions of years ago. Millions of years ago, in the Jurassic period, they lived—a span of years which took up about six per cent of the life on the earth.

The heavy landing of the space-ship shook the ground, and before long a group of tall trees hid the approach of an inquisitive allosaurus, that behind the outermost fringe of trees came to a rest. With its comparatively small but strong forelegs, which rarely, if ever, touched the earth, it grasped a tall, thin tree to balance itself, while it gazed hesitantly upon this strange being.

The reptile carnivora seemed to pay not the slightest notice to a large rent in its side, from which blood freely flowed. Now and then it turned its head sidewise like a bird to eye the uneven ground, as if it awaited the earth to betray, by its involuntary tremors, the approach of some creature that the cold-blooded reptile could better understand than that large egg-like thing. Overhead a shrilling archaeopteryx, partly hidden by the fogs that rose from the warm earth, attracted the momentary gaze of the huge sentinel. Not knowing whether to brave the sudden terrific heat, which the fires of the rocket-ship had created, or to abandon the glittering, quiet thing before it and hunt elsewhere, the monster stood for a moment perplexed.

Suddenly, in its dilemma, the hungry allosaurus felt the ground vibrate to the dancing feet of some prehistoric combatants that fought for life and food. That signal decided the question. Instantly the short-witted reptile forgot the metal arrival as it turned and made off in the direction of the battle. A sole breeze wafted to its nostrils the enticing odor of blood that had already been carelessly spilt.

With its powerful hind legs, which were almost as long as its body, allosaurus

leaped in tremendous bounds, covering ground with, amazing speed as a frothy, white foam fell from its long, hissing jaws. Already the dying screams of one of the combatants pierced the air.

The ground heaved and trembled as from all over creatures hurried toward the scene of the battle. Soon the foggy air was filled with the shrilling and screaming of the hungry monsters of an infant, planet.

Animals mostly of a smaller type crowded and soon filled a small clearing that was made by the careless fighters in their efforts. Many small individuals were crushed to death beneath the ponderous feet of their larger brothers in the rush for food, and provided another mouthful or so. Here an angry reptile tore into bits a small scavenger that stole a piece of meat from its possession, and in doing so added to its meal. From above, powerful jaws snapped off its head in turn. Thus mere meat was provided.

Usually the smaller creatures grabbed a bit of meat and dashed off with it, fearful of losing it to some larger animal, while the larger creatures remained, surer of their ground. As the noises increased in volume, hungry mouths fed and empty bellies became filled.

Slowly the blood-red sun set, leaving the steaming forests solely in the possession of the noisy dinosaurs that were the inhabitants. The metal alien lay beneath the subdued glare of the stately moon. With the parting of day, a round door, close to the ground, slid aside and an amazingly small creature stepped out, the door closing immediately behind it. The four-foot arrival, without any noticeable form of physical defence, could hardly have been any more than a mouthful for any of the giant preying carnivora.

An orange skullcap covered a large head from two beedy eyes set under a high forehead, to the back of a short, thick neck.

Two pairs of arms and one pair of legs betrayed the fact that this creature had probably evolved from some six-legged creation. A thin green metal tunic covered the remainder of the short body. From a thick black belt, two blunt hooks supported a like number of small, round tubes, and one of the thin arms always hung near them. The little being seemed ready for any form of attack as its watchfulness plainly showed.

The strange creature whistled a few notes which, explained, would read as, "Come out. It is cooler than when the sun shone."

As the door again opened, another and a third of the like species stepped out slowly, hesitantly. They formed a silent group not far from the space-craft, while they gazed up at the planet Mars, hanging like a crimson jewel in the sky. One began to whistle, he who had first stepped forth from the ship.

"Our mother planet. See how she looks at us with a burning eye."

"From here we cannot see the misery on the faces of our people," answered he who had first stepped out after the whistle.

"Yet," the first one whistled, "that bright world will soon be uninhabitable, and might have been the death of our race had we not discovered this more inhabitable world."

"Our scientists were right when they explained that this planet wouldn't be too hot for us; and everyone thought we should roast here. Its daylight cannot be much hotter than its night, so as far as heat is concerned, this planet will suit us."

A silence reigned, pierced by reptilic yells from the outside, to which these creatures paid no attention. Each was enveloped in his own thoughts—tremendous thoughts. A world was dying and a desperate race sought a more habitable place, one where their lives would not be endangered. Now a suitable planet was discovered, one that would safely harbor their race. But what form of life existed on this planet?

In a happy frame of mind, the third creature whistled a series of short notes.

“The atmosphere is pure and innocent in composition here, free from any form of contamination which years of needless warfare caused on our world. The ocean water can be utilized by our motors and the ever-rising steam can be caught and condensed to drinkable liquid, being of the same composition that we are used to. The soil is very active, and as for the greater gravity, these specially constructed black belts will take care of that until we become more accustomed to it.

“At the rising of the sun, we will plant the seeds of the wonderful quanghnni tree and some others to see if they bear on this soil the same good, sweet fruit that they bear on Mars. Soon we will fortify ourselves, for who knows what creatures inhabit this world, and at the first hours of dawn, our space-ship will go back to our own planet with the glad tidings, leaving a small colony here to prepare this place for our entire race. This I overheard our Commander tell the chief pilot after we had landed and made the tests.”

Having had enough of star-gazing, they looked around them and into the deep, dark forests from which they heard issue loud animal noises, the first being again whistled, betraying solid confidence.

“What have we to fear of noisy, lowly beasts; we are well armed and can surely defend ourselves against brainless animals,” and he touched the tubes that hung from the black gravity-belt. Then he added, “Come, now it is time to awaken the others so they will immediately begin preparing our fortifications.”

In the hours of darkness, the machines contained in the sky-flier hummed with vibrant activity. Work went on also on the outside of the alien metal monster.

A wire barrier conducting thousands of

volts of electricity had been thrown up and it now encased the sandy landing field. The uppermost wire was suspended about twenty feet above the ground and ran through insulated metal posts that had been taken out of the sky vehicle.

Large circular holes were dug as the preparations for a metal fortress. Gangs of these strange beings worked in orderly confusion within the wire enclosure. A few stiff guards stood nervously listening to the strange, noisy goings-on outside of their electrical protection.

Thick, insulated wires were connected onto the wires on the enclosure and led to large digging and welding tools of various shapes. One of the digging tools threw sand in a steady stream into a large container, while it bored deep into the ground with a group of metal bars, the ends of which resembled a bent shovel. Its actions rivaled those of a dog digging for a buried bone.

But if those within the electrical wall showed extreme activity, so too, creatures on the outside of the wall were active, although the survival of their specie did not depend on them, which was not the case with the desperate Martians.

A couple of miles away, two yelling reptiles fought, one for food, the other for life itself. A large, noisy thunder-reptile, a mountain of living flesh, was trying desperately to defend itself from a bloodthirsty, screeching allosaurus. The former, a herbivorous reptile that dwelt mainly in the fresh waters of the island because of its bulky thirty-five tons, was hissing angrily at its agile harasser. Caught away from its favorite haunts, it was almost helpless against the smaller but more energetic carnivora. Because of the construction of its body, the herbivorous reptile was not made for too-active movements on land; therefore it tried to reach water, in which it would be safe from Dinosaur Allosaurus.

With a reptilic scream, as if tired of it all, it suddenly turned, almost bowling over its dancing opponent with its long, muscular tail which was easily a third the length of its entire body, and made off in the direction of a large, muddy lake. Screeching, the tremendous carnivora bounded along after it. The ground shook beneath their weight, as both disappeared noisily into the dank forest.

A lumbering, yet more agile diplodocus, a herbivorous reptile resembling the huge brontosaurus or thunder-reptile, but more slenderly built and with an exceptionally small head, made its way through the forest, accidentally stepping on a small reptile in its path, that was a bit too slow in escaping. A tiny bunch of broken bones, well squashed into the soft ground, was all that remained as the monster passed, as mute evidence of some insignificant tragedy. Quietly the reptile passed on, oblivious to the damage it had wrought. It, too, made its way to an inland body of water. Before it had reached its destination, it stopped to eat some young, luscious growth, wholly forgetful of such a thing as water.

Here and there the beaten underbrush and broken trees attested to some vigorous battle that had reigned. Large insects flew or ran along the forest floor looking for food or prey. Everywhere it was hunt or be hunted, and sometimes both. It was miraculous how any of the creatures managed to grow to maturity.

Near a large swamp, hordes of tiny reptiles that had recently emerged from their eggs played and ate together. These little cold-blooded bodies ran noisily, squeaking as if joyful of being alive. They eagerly devoured slow, clumsy insects and small growth. Sometimes a miniature combat arose, in which two small reptiles bit, scratched, and tumbled in the soft, warm ground. At the approach of their larger brothers, they scattered, hiding beneath the plentiful growth, their baby-

hissing lost in louder noises. Suddenly a large insect, with snapping mandibles, snatched up a baby reptile and disappeared with it writhing in its iron clutch. Not one of the small reptiles seemed to notice or care about its sudden departure.

Not far from this natural incubator, a fleeing morosaurus dashed into the ocean that washed a loamy shore, to escape from a large flesh-eating monster. Silently it swam along the edge of the water, hoping to lose its pursuer that was afraid of the salty water, persistently following its course on land.

Suddenly the pursued set up a tremendous shrilling; a gigantic shark had bitten its long tail into three pieces, one of which remained in the fish's cavernous mouth, while a second and third floated free, the center of a large and widening red spot. Kicking frantically, the morosaurus fell over on its side, while its long neck remained upright. Its yells rang clear and loud, as with the bloody stump of its tail it was unable to reach the land, and if it did, the hungry carnivora eagerly awaited it.

The dying reptile began to turn and heave as numerous preying fish assailed its body, tearing off huge chunks of meat. Yelling, the disappointed carnivora on the land gobbled up a dead fish that had floated in toward the shore, and disappeared in search of less elusive prey, clumsily stepping on three insect gladiators in its path.

Although morosaurus never swam the dangerous waters of the ocean, instinctively preferring the inland bodies of water, its minute brain had decided to chance the ocean rather than certain death at the jaws of the reptile carnivora. Now, however, at the expense of its life, it learned why it had always shunned the ocean.

Back within the Martian wire protection, the alien preparations still went on. Already large green metal stems, embedded in the large circular holes in the ground, supported a thin

metallic platform, upon which stood a sentinel near a thick, stationary electron-gun. Above, the skeleton of the second platform was being erected. In two metal huts reposed concentrated supplies. A third hut was being thrown up. Three great electric lights illumined the amazing scene.

A tall, round structure that was partitioned into many cubicles would serve as housing for the small Martian colony that was going to remain. Three digging machines tore holes deep into the earth, then some Martians, carrying small containers, turned small dials on their black gravity-belts and fell slowly into the holes. Chemical tests of the ground were being conducted.

Nearby, a group of these intelligent aliens were cutting small growth and testing them with many forms of apparatus. Small successes brought whistles from the workers. Insects, and even a small reptile was not safe from their prying compounded eyes. After they had made a thorough examination of the creature's external appearance, they cut it open, much to the embarrassment of the writhing reptile.

Everything was as methodical as if it had all been prepared in advance, and every Martian knew exactly what he was to do. Tirelessly the alien horde labored on, struggled to make this planet, yet in its infancy, theirs—plans that thwarted those of Nature.

With surprise, the unearthly being felt a new vibration in the ground, one that didn't come from their machinery. The earthly tremors became more distinct; the creature that was the cause of this new note in the ground was apparently approaching them.

Although the workers labored on, they looked up more frequently and the armed guards became more tense. Their three-fingered hands rested on the heat-ray tubes, ready for instant action.

From the nearby trees, a serpent-like

head and neck appeared, and as the forest giants swayed, a large, massy body waded through their midst. The bright electric lights shone on a hill of crude and bumpy flesh. Tiny eyes in a ridiculously small head held some twenty-five feet above the ground, peered down on these aliens of a different world.

Brontosaurus advanced to "meet" these creatures. A machine set on the head of one of the Martians hummed, then stopped at the turn of a switch.

"No thoughts," the wearer whistled.

This was the signal for dozens of heat-ray tubes to flash into instant action. Brilliant purple lights stung the body of the forty-ton thunder-reptile. Hundreds of black burnt spots appeared on the surface of its body. Hissing angrily, it stepped up to the wire barrier.

Instantly the guard on the metal platform whistled a loud note as he stuffed something soft and fluffy into a crevice in the side of his head. The horde of Martians below did likewise. No sooner had they finished than the stationary gun thundered into action, for the puny heat-rays seemed not to affect the attacking reptile at all, and their wire protection, a vital necessity, was being threatened.

With a stupendous roar that absolutely rocked the surrounding forest and caused hundreds of creatures to fall where they stood, an invisible stream of electrons shot out of the muzzle of the gun, striking the huge brontosaurus, just as it was about to crash the puny wire safety. The reptile halted in its tracks. Its mouth opened to howl in agony, but no sound issued forth from that gigantic throat. Its body began to change visibly to a greenish color. It began to shiver. Then, from a terrible dinosaur, Brontosaurus became a mass of struggling green worms!

At the metamorphosis, the thunder of the electron gun ceased, and the sudden silence seemed unearthly. But then reptilic noises began again to fill the humid air.

A soft plump, and the green mass fell onto the wires and a large, brilliant flare lit the surrounding forest. The hot wires electrocuted the alien mass and transformed them to pieces of blackened cinders. The thunder-reptile had died as a horde of unearthly green worms.

The electron gun, which released a flow of loose electrons, caused in organisms violent molecular metamorphosis that changed completely the organism, often forming, if properly adjusted, from one individual, many living organisms. Inorganic compounds were also transformed, if enough power was applied, by this amazing gun.

The weight of the fallen worms had broken a set of wires that had almost short-circuited the electric current. The mending of the broken wires began at once.

One of the workers began to whistle in a disgusted tone, "And we had to fly three-fourths of this planet to come to all this"; he had cut a great gash in his thin arm by accident. A blue liquid gushed to the surface of the hurt appendage.

On Mars the air was so thin that its inhabitants had to whistle, piercingly and shrilly, to make themselves heard. After ages of shrill whistling, their hearing organs had become permanently attuned to high tones and thus many low, earthly noises went by them unnoticed.

No one answered this sally of the injured Martian, which they knew was brought on by pain. But one creature that stopped its digging machine for a moment felt that if it did not express its opinion, it would most certainly burst.

"Yet it is the best that we could find. We never really expected to find this world habitable for us; and it even has meat in tremendous abundance although the vegetable matter is unfit for food. We are safe from death here, and our young will grow up happily. Is that not better than a lingering death on Mars?"

One who mended a broken wire whistled in gleeful tones, "Yes, it certainly is better, and much more so. We will establish the first colony on this planet, but soon our entire race will be here. Then will come my little family, and all will be well. We will then be safe from death. Can not that be worthy of our most desperate efforts?"

A guard who was recharging his heat-ray tube turned the high-pitched conversation into a new channel. "I wonder how the scouts to the other two planets fared?"

As all the Martians became very busy, no answer greeted his query and the work went on in silence. From nearby, reptiles made the night hideous with their loud yells. Many could not hear, for the electron gun, in tearing loose electrons from special compounds, for the firing charge, had caused such noise as to render them partly or wholly deaf. That, however, wasn't such a serious handicap as most of them could easily detect tremors in the earth to warn them of the approach of any creature, but the animals expressed surprise at the novelty of their new physical condition.

Again the earth announced the approach of some monstrous visitor and the Martians again became tensed. A smaller monster appeared on the fringe of the forest. The thought-transmitter again betrayed the fact that the confronter was of some low order.

The forty-foot morosaurus gazed not on the six-limbed aliens; they were only tiny reptiles to it, reptiles that must stand off reverently at its approach, but the queer, round space-craft held its gaze. Was it some egg? Maybe it was good to eat!

The Martians, not caring to have anything to do with such monsters, hoped that the curious reptile would depart, or at least leave them unmolested. It was not a show of intelligence to waste ammunition on creatures that caused no harm. But the guards kept a steady eye and a tense arm on their heat-tubes,

ready, if the morosaurus became too inquisitive.

“See,” a Martian whistled, “it has a large head and is itself much smaller than the other one was. Does it also want to investigate our little nest?”

Without warning, two creatures simultaneously appeared on the sandy ground, but from different directions. So engrossed had the Martians been in Morosaurus, that except for the vigilance of a guard, they would not have noticed the approach of the two new visitors. Now all eyes turned toward them, and the trio was carefully inspected for any signs of uncontrollable curiosity in the “nest” of the Martians.

Each visitor had a different purpose in view. The allosaurus had scented the morosaurus and was hungry for meat. The grotesque stegosaurus was hurrying to its favorite grazing grounds and it habitually crossed this particular piece of land.

The reptilic monsters never seemed to rest. The heat at night, coming from the warm earth, kept them awake and, in the daytime, the hot sun kept them especially active. They must have rested, if they ever did, when and where the desire seized them.

With a scream of triumphant hunger, the allosaurus leaped at the morosaurus, which had turned to defend its lengthy carcass. Its head shot out and powerful jaws snapped at the hungry carnivora, biting off a piece of flesh from its chest. Screaming, the two circled warily, each seeking an advantageous hold. Their ponderous steps thumped the soft ground, while the awed Martians gazed on a battle supreme.

Although morosaurus was herbivorous, he did not seem to mind a bit of meat, if it could be obtained. His microscopic brain did not warn him of the danger it took in order to get this titbit, hence it undertook a battle with the reptile carnivora.

Morosaurus' long tail swept and

mashed the undergrowth, while its pounding feet broke stems and crushed them into the ground. The bodies of the two prehistoric giants broke trees and pounded the ground unmercifully. The earth reverberated to their dancing, and wherever they were, creatures of every sort knew that a noble battle was going on.

Snapping, biting, tearing, and screeching, the combatants tore the night with their gigantic efforts. They both tumbled on the ground, their bodies breaking trees with loud snaps, in prehistoric clinches. Always they separated, streaming blood, but otherwise unharmed—apparently. The carnivora's powerful legs tore at the herbivorous reptile, while the latter's tail kept the former busy, and sometimes landed stinging blows. The stomach of allosaurus was becoming impatient when his chance came.

While the battle had been raging, the stegosaurus, before any of the Martian guards could attempt to stop it, had, in sudden fear at the approach of some creature behind it, plunged into the electrical wiring, and with a horrid scream, became a charred mass of flesh and horny plates, while it pulled down a few lines of wiring in its fall.

Shutting off the current, the Martians set immediately about repairing the new break in their wall, while the remainder kept interested eyes on the battling pair, hoping that in their efforts they would keep away from the wire wall.

Not in their wildest dreams had the Martians imagined the existence of such monsters. They knew that against such creatures, if they attacked in unison, their weapons would be useless and they themselves would be slaughtered without the slightest hesitation on the part of their reptilic attackers. Yet their case was desperate, and though they had one electron gun, they had come prepared for emergencies and had



brought parts for another one. The electron gun seemed to be their only weapon strong enough to hold off the reptilic monsters of this world.

With this in mind, one of the Martians uttered a series of low whistles and a small body of Martians detached themselves from the group of on-lookers and entered the space-rocket, where there were motors that would aid in assembling another electron gun.

At the scream of the stegosaurus, the morosaurus, in sudden surprise, turned its head. That gave the hungry allosaurus its chance and it leaped to the side of its herbivorous combatant. As morosaurus turned back its head, the allosaurus, with a scream, leaped astride its opponent, almost breaking its back in the fall.

Instantly the herbivorous monster turned its head to bite at the carnivora, which seized the terrifying head in its short forelegs and held it while its powerful teeth sank into its prey's long neck; at the same time its long legs squashed the sides of its opponent. The jaws of the morosaurus locked in a useless flesh hold on the side of the carnivorous fighter. Allosaurus bit large pieces of living flesh from the desperate morosaurus that released its hold so as to seek a better one. At this, the allosaurus' jaws locked in a death clamp near the head of its prey, where the neck was the thinnest.

The alien horde watched the battle of the giants with bated breath. The ground was torn and scarred; the growth was trampled and demolished, almost as well as their mechanism could have done it. But the most harmful effect the battle had caused was the fact that it had brought ever-hungry carnivora and insects to the scene, which was immediately outside their enclosure.

The earth again began to tremble at the weight of approaching creatures whose bellies craved meat—meat that would be found on the dying body of the morosaurus. The

herbivorous giant, in its death agony, carried its victorious opponent and itself, on aimless legs, into the wire enclosure; and the wire, which had not yet been mended, carried no electric current.

Interested in the battle and hence unprepared, the startled Martians had expected to see the morosaurus fall dead at least from loss of blood, instead of the two combatants, as one, rushing into their enclosure and up onto their space-ship, causing it to turn on its side.

The allosaurus, seeing the space-craft and supposing it to be more meat, greedily leaped onto the ship, denting its smooth exterior, and crashing the transparent metal used as glass. For a moment it resembled King Kong atop the Empire State Building.

Nowhere, except on the rocket-tubes, could the victorious carnivora find a tooth hold, and as heat-rays burnt black spots on it, the warning was given and hearing organs were again stopped up as the roaring electron gun went, for the second time that night, into reverberating action.

Excepting the thunder-reptile, never had the electron gun had such a huge organic target. Always its target had been some enemy space-ship, or Martian soil had been changed into some useful metal, but such a mountain of living flesh had never before been touched.

After the allosaurus had been transformed into a wriggling pile of green worms, the heat-rays burned the loathsome results. Then a terrifying horde burst onto the sandy clearing, from all sides of the forest—animals. Almost a solid hundred of them faced a puny wire wall. The element of excitement immediately manifested itself in the Martians. They milled around for a moment, nervously preparing for wholesale slaughter.

Cold-blooded monstrosities of various sizes, with empty bellies, faced the alien horde, as if accusing them of trying to wrest from Nature a world that did not belong to

them. Not a second did these hungry creatures waste. With one accord they surged forward.

The noise of the battle had not been the only thing that had caused their appearance. All night a steady rumbling in the earth had aroused their excitement, but they could not locate the source. Therefore, many were hungrier than usual as they had wasted many hours in a vain search. Naturally this battle brought up a larger hungry mob of animals than was usual.

Hissing and yelling, they forced their way to the dead, but unchanged morosaurus. After a timely warning to the Martians, the electron gun went once more into a thunderous activity, at which Hell broke loose. The gun easily drowned out all sounds, so it appeared that reptilic mouths opened in silence.

The wire protection, bearing no current, as it had not been mended, disappeared instantly. Had the hungry stampeding mob more brains and less stomach, they would have fled in panic at the terrific din of the gun, but as it was, they fearlessly came on crushing down their own kind.

Magically there appeared amongst them green, loathsome, crawling worms that were instantly pounced upon by hungry insects that the scent of blood also brought. A Martian guard went down as a large flying beetle sank long mandibles into his neck. A tiny reptile carnivora grasped a Martian by a leg and bit it easily off, as the alien being drew himself away whistling in agony. The lights went out and only the light of the moon and stars showed the turmoil that reigned.

Yells of agony, screams of the dying, alien whistles, and the noise of stamping feet were all lost in the clamoring of the electron gun that chose a large creature for a target and transformed it directly. Luckily for the hungry creatures the second electron gun had not a chance of being constructed, for the space-

ship had been turned on its side by the rush of the dead morosaurus and the machinery didn't function properly.

Heat guns shone a steady light, cutting, burning, slicing, and killing; but it wasn't enough. The electron gun suddenly stopped its thundering activity; some insect, escaping the notice of the guard, had investigated its inner works and its dead body now hampered the action of the mechanism which had become jammed. As the voice of the electron gun died out, the noise of the triumphant reptiles rose to shrill heights.

A struggling Martian, lost in the midst of fighting animals, was bitten to pieces, and insects pierced his thin skin very easily. His body was finally a mass of blood that attracted the notice of more creatures. A large pile of loathsome green worms fell and smothered a horde of insects that were busily devouring the body of a writhing, small reptile. The body of a dead Martian jerked in various directions as it was torn apart.

Screams of the beastly and whistles of the intelligent intermingled and pierced the air as one. Thrashing bodies filled what had once been an alien landing field. Reptile fought reptile and Martian.

An attempt, by the aliens, was made to get to their ship, but their venture ended in death, sudden but painlessly merciful. Even the impassive moon gasped in awed surprise.

The last group of Martians made their last stand, surrounded by hungry mountains of living flesh. Crowding together in a defensive bunch and facing the outside, they cut a brilliant wall of heat. From above, by means of a tremendous leap from the backs of the surrounding animals, a blood-mad creature fell amongst the Martians and broke their defense.

With the death of her last scout on Earth, the Martian race was destined to believe the third planet from the sun uninhabitable, though they never learned why.

More animals arrived and many battles raged around the body of the strange metal monster of another world. The wounded fled, leaving comparatively few hungry beasts to gorge themselves with a sudden abundance of meat. Over the masses of green, helpless worms swarmed insects of all sizes—earthly insects bent on the extermination of an unearthly specie.

As usual, the sun rose and, with its usual dignity, glared majestically down on the warm

earth. Where in the night there had been an alien electrical barrier, now lay piles of bones and the bodies of dead animals, attesting to the savageness of the inhabitants of an infant planet. Here and there lay the round skull of a Martian, a skull that denoted intelligence—a skull that was a sort of prediction that seemed to foretell of a specie that would, millions of years in the future, rule the earth.

Stupid earthly creatures had preserved the world for earthly intelligence to come aeons later.