



## **Morale**

Leinster, Murray

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## About Leinster:

Murray Leinster (June 16, 1896 - June 8, 1975) was the nom de plume of William Fitzgerald Jenkins, an American science fiction and alternate history writer. He was born in Norfolk, Virginia. During World War I, he served with the Committee of Public Information and the United States Army (1917-1918). Following the war, Leinster became a free-lance writer. In 1921, he married Mary Mandola. They had four daughters. During World War II, he served in the Office of War Information. He won the Liberty Award in 1937 for "A Very Nice Family," the 1956 Hugo Award for Best Novelette for "Exploration Team," a retro-Hugo in 1996 for Best Novelette for "First Contact." Leinster was the Guest of Honor at the 21st Worldcon in 1963. In 1995, the Sidewise Award for Alternate History was established, named after Leinster's story "Sidewise in Time." Leinster wrote and published over 1,500 short stories and articles over the course of his career. He wrote 14 movie and hundreds of radio scripts and television plays, inspiring several series including "Land of the Giants" and "The Time Tunnel". Leinster first began appearing in the late 1910s in pulp magazines like *Argosy* and then sold to *Astounding Stories* in the 1930s on a regular basis. After World War II, when both his name and the pulps had achieved a wider acceptance, he would use either "William Fitzgerald" or "Will F. Jenkins" as names on stories when "Leinster" had already sold a piece to a particular issue. He was very prolific and successful in the fields of western, mystery, horror, and especially science fiction. His novel *Miners in the Sky* transfers the lawless atmosphere of the California Gold Rush, a common theme of Westerns, into an asteroid environment. He is credited with the invention of parallel universe stories. Four years before Jack Williamson's *The Legion of Time* came out, Leinster wrote his "Sidewise in Time", which was first published in *Astounding* in June 1934. This was probably the first time that the strange concept of alternate worlds appeared in modern science-fiction. In a sidewise path of time some cities never happened to be built. Leinster's vision of nature's extraordinary oscillations in time ('sidewise in time') had long-term effect on other authors, e.g., Isaac Asimov's "Living Space", "The Red Queen's Race", or his famous *The End of Eternity*. Murray Leinster's 1946 short story "A Logic Named Joe" describes Joe, a "logic", that is to say, a computer. This is one of the first descriptions of a computer in fiction. In this story Leinster was decades ahead of his time in imagining the Internet. He envisioned logics in every home, linked to provide communications, data access, and commerce. In fact, one character said that "logics are civilization." In 2000, Leinster's heirs

sued Paramount Pictures over the film *Star Trek: First Contact*, claiming that as the owners of the rights to Leinster's short story "First Contact", it infringed their trademark in the term. The U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia granted Paramount's motion for summary judgment and dismissed the suit (see *Estate of William F. Jenkins v. Paramount Pictures Corp.*, 90 F. Supp. 2d 706 (E.D. Va. 2000) for the full text of the court's ruling). The court found that regardless of whether Leinster's story first coined "first contact", it has since become a generic (and therefore unprotectable) term that described the overall genre of science fiction in which humans first encounter alien species. Even if the title was instead "descriptive"—a category of terms higher than "generic" that may be protectable—there was no evidence that the title had the required association in the public's mind (known as "secondary meaning") such that its use would normally be understood as referring to Leinster's story. The Second Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the lower court's dismissal without comment. William F. Jenkins was also an inventor, best known for the front projection process used for special effects in motion pictures and television in place of the older rear projection process and as an alternative to bluescreen. Source: Wikipedia

**Also available on Feedbooks for Leinster:**

- *Operation: Outer Space* (1958)
- *Mad Planet* (1920)
- *The Aliens* (1959)
- *Space Tug* (1953)
- *The Wailing Asteroid* (1960)
- *Talents, Incorporated* (1962)
- *Operation Terror* (1962)
- *Long Ago, Far Away* (1959)
- *A Matter of Importance* (1959)
- *Space Platform* (1953)

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# Part 1

"... The profound influence of civilian morale upon the course of modern war is nowhere more clearly shown than in the case of that monstrous war-engine popularly known as a 'Wabbly.' It landed in New Jersey Aug. 16, 1942, and threw the whole Eastern Coast into a frenzy. In six hours the population of three States was in a panic. Industry was paralyzed. The military effect was comparable only to a huge modern army landed in our rear... ." (Strategic Lessons of the War of 1941-43.—U. S. War College. Pp. 79-80.)

Sergeant Walpole made his daily report at 2:15. He used a dinky telephone that should have been in a museum, and a rural Central put him on the Area Officer's tight beam. The Area Officer listened drearily as the Sergeant said in a military manner:

"Sergeant Walpole, sir, Post Fourteen, reports that he has nothing of importance to report."

The Wabbly, uncombatable engine of war, spreads unparalleled death and destruction—until Sergeant Walpole "strikes at the morale" of its crew.

The Area Officer's acknowledgment was curt; embittered. For he was an energetic young man, and he loathed his job. He wanted to be in the west, where fighting of a highly unconventional nature was taking place daily. He did not enjoy this business of watching an unthreatened coastline simply for the maintenance of civilian confidence and morale. He preferred fighting.

Sergeant Walpole, though, exhaled a lungful of smoke at the telephone transmitter and waited. Presently the rural Central said:

"All through?"

"Sure, sweetie," said Sergeant Walpole. "How about the talkies tonight?"

That was at 2:20 P. M. There was coy conversation, while the civilian telephone-service suffered. Then Sergeant Walpole went back to his post of duty with a date for the evening. He never kept that date, as it turned out. The rural Central was dead an hour after the first and only Wabbly landed, and as everybody knows, that happened at 2:45.

But Sergeant Walpole had no premonitions as he went back to his hammock on the porch. This was Post Number Fourteen, Sixth Area, Eastern Coast Observation Force. There was a war on, to be sure. There

had been a war on since the fall of 1941, but it was two thousand miles away. Even lone-wolf bombing planes, flying forty thousand feet up, never came this far to drop their eggs upon inviting targets or upon those utterly blank, innocent-seeming places where munitions of war were now manufactured underground.

Here was peace and quiet and good rations and a paradise for gold-brickers. Here was a summer bungalow taken over for military purposes, quartering six men who watched a certain section of coast-line for a quite impossible enemy. Three miles to the south there was another post. Three miles to the north another one still. They stretched all along the Atlantic Coast, those observation-posts, and the men in them watched the sea, languidly observed the television broadcasts, and slept in the sun. That was all they were supposed to do. In doing it they helped to maintain civilian morale. And therefore the Eastern Coast Observation Force was enviously said to be "just attached to the Army for rations," by the other services, and its members rated with M. P.'s and other low forms of animal life.

Sergeant Walpole reclined in his hammock, inhaling comfortably. The ocean glittered blue before him in the sun. There was a plume of smoke out at sea indicating an old-style coal-burner, its hull down below the horizon. Anything that would float was being used since the war began, though a coal-burning ship was almost a museum piece. A trim Diesel tramp was lazing northward well inshore. A pack of gulls were squabbling noisily over some unpleasantness floating a hundred yards from the beach. The Diesel tramp edged closer inshore still. It was all very peaceful and placid. There are few softer jobs on earth than being a member of a "force in being" for the sake of civilian morale.

But at 2:32 P. M. the softness of that job departed, as far as Sergeant Walpole was concerned. At that moment he heard a thin wailing sound high aloft. It was well enough known nearer the front, but the Eastern Coast Observation Force had had no need to become unduly familiar with it. With incredible swiftness the wailing rose to the shrillest of shrieks, descending as lightning might be imagined to descend. Then there was a shattering concussion. It was monstrous. It was ear-splitting. Windows crashed in the cottage and tinkled to the sandy earth outside. There was a pause of seconds' duration only, during which Sergeant Walpole stared blankly and gasped, "What the hell?" Then there was a second thin wailing which rose to a scream....

Sergeant Walpole was in motion before the second explosion came. He was diving off the veranda of Post Number Fourteen. He saw someone else coming through a window. He had a photographic glimpse of one of his men emerging through a doorway. Then he struck earth and began to run. Like everybody else in America, he knew what the explosions and the screamings meant.

But he had covered no more than fifty yards when the third bomb fell from that plane so far aloft that it was not even a mote in the sky. Up there the sky was not even blue, but a dull leaden gray because of the thinness of the atmosphere yet above it. The men in that high-flight bomber could see the ground only as a mass of vaguely blending colors. They were aiming their bombs by filtered light, through telescopes which used infra-red rays only, as aerial cameras did back in the 1920's. And they were sighting their eggs with beautifully exact knowledge of their velocity and height. By the time the bombs had dropped eight miles they were traveling faster than the sound of their coming. The first two had wiped out Posts Thirteen and Fifteen. The third made no sound before it landed, except to an observer at a distance. Sergeant Walpole heard neither the scream of fall nor the sound of its explosion.

He was running madly, and suddenly the earth bucked violently beneath his feet, and he had a momentary sensation of things flying madly by over his head, and then he knew nothing at all for a very long time. Then his head ached horribly and someone was popping at something valorously with a rifle, and he heard the nasty sharp explosions of the hexynitrate bullets which have remodeled older ideas of warfare, and Sergeant Walpole was aware of an urgent necessity to do something, but he could not at all imagine what it was. Then a shell went off, the earth-concussion banged his nose against the sand, and the rifle-fire stopped.

"For Gawd's sake!" said Sergeant Walpole dizzily.

He staggered to his feet and looked behind him. Where the cottage had been there was a hole. Quite a large hole. It was probably a hundred yards across and all of twenty deep, but sea-water was seeping in to fill it through the sand. Its edge was forty or fifty feet from where he stood. He had been knocked down by the heaving earth, and the sand and mud blown out of the crater had gone clean over him. Twenty feet back, the top part of his body would have been cut neatly off by the blast. As it was... .

He found his nose bleeding and plugged it with his handkerchief. He was still rather dazed, and he still had the feeling that there was something extremely important that he must do. He stood rocking on his feet, trying to clear his head, when two men came along the sand-dunes behind the beach. One of them carried two automatic rifles. The other was trying to bandage a limp and flapping arm as he ran. They saw the Sergeant and ran to him.

"Hell, Sarge, I thought y'were blown to little egg-shells."

"I ain't," said Sergeant Walpole. He looked again at the hole in the ground and swore painedly.

"Look at that," said the man with the flapping arm. "Hell's goin' to pop around here, Sarge."

The sergeant swung around. Then his mouth dropped open. Just half a mile away and hardly more than two hundred yards from the shore-line, the Diesel tramp was ramming the beach. A wake still foamed behind it. A monstrous bow-wave spread out on either hand, over-topping even the combers that came rolling in. It was being deliberately run ashore. It struck, and its fore-mast crumpled up and fell forward, carrying its derrick-booms with it. There was the squeal of crumpled metal plates.

"Flyin' a yeller flag just now," panted one of the two privates. "We started poppin' hexynitrate bullets at her an' she flung a shell at us. She's a enemy ship. But what the hell?"

Smoke spurted up from the beached ship. Her stern broke off and settled in the deeper water out from the shore. More smoke spurted out. Her bow split wide. There were the deep rumbles of black-powder explosions. Sergeant Walpole and his two followers stared blankly. More explosions, and the ship was hidden in smoke, and when it blew away her funnel was down and half or more of her upper works was sliding into the sea, and she had listed suddenly.

Sergeant Walpole gazed upward. Futilely, of course; there was nothing in sight overhead. But these explosions did look like the hexynitrate stuff they put in small-arm bullets nowadays. A thirty-caliber bullet had the explosive effect of an old-style six-pound T.N.T. shell. Only, hexynitrate goes off with a crack instead of a boom. It wasn't an American plane opening up with a machine-gun.

Then the beached ship seemed to blow up. A mass of thick smoke covered her from stem to stern, and bits of plating flew heavily through the air, and there were a few lurid bursts of flame. Sergeant Walpole suddenly remembered that there ought to be survivors, only he hadn't

seen anybody diving overboard to try to get ashore. He half-started forward... .

Then the sea-breeze blew this smoke, too, away from the wreckage. And the tramp was gone, but there was something else left in its place—so that Sergeant Walpole took one look, and swallowed a non-existent something that came up instantly into his throat again, and remembered the urgent thing he had to do.

"Pete," he said calmly, "you hunt up the Area Officer an' tell him what you seen. Here! I'll give you a report that'll keep 'em from slammin' you in clink for bein' drunk. Grab a monocycle somewheres. It's faster than a car, the way you'll be travelin'. First telephone you come to that's workin', make Central put you in the tight beam to head-quarters. Then go on an' report, y'self. See?"

Pete started, and automatically fumbled with his limp and useless arm. Then he carefully tucked the unmanageable hand in the pocket of his uniform blouse.

"That don't matter now," he said absurdly.

He was looking at the thing left in place of the tramp, as Sergeant Walpole scribbled on one of the regulation report-forms of the Eastern Coast Observation Force. And the thing he saw was enough to upset anybody.

Where the tramp had been there was a single bit of bow-plating sticking up out of the surf, and a bunch of miscellaneous floating wreckage drifting sluggishly toward the beach. And there was a solid, rounded, metallic shape apparently quite as long as the original tramp had been. There was a huge armored tube across its upper part, with vision-slits in two bulbous sections at its end. There were gun-ports visible here and there, and already a monstrous protuberance was coming into view midway along its back, as if forced into position from within. Where the bow of the tramp had been there were colossal treads now visible. There was a sort of conning-tower, armored and grim. There was a ghastly steel beak. The thing was a war-machine of monstrous size. It emitted a sudden roaring sound, as of internal-combustion engines operating at full power, and lurched heavily. The steel plates of the tramp still visible above water, crumpled up like paper and were trodden under. The thing came toward the shore. It slithered through the shallow sea, with waves breaking against its bulging sides. It came out upon the beach, its wet sides glittering. It was two hundred feet long, and it looked somehow like a gigantic centipede.

It was a tank, of sorts, but like no tank ever seen on earth before. It was the great-grandfather of all tanks. It was so monstrous that for its conveyance a ship's hull and superstructure had been built about it, and its own engines had been the engines of that ship. It was so huge that it could only be landed by blasting away a beached ship from about itself, so it could run under its own power over the fragments to the shore.

Now it stopped smoothly on the sandy beach, in which its eight-foot-wide steel treads sank almost a yard. Men dropped down from ports in its swelling sides. They made swift, careful inspections of predetermined points. They darted back up the ladders again. The thing roared once more. Then it swung about, headed for the sand-dunes, and with an extraordinary smoothness and celerity disappeared inland.

## Part 2

"... The Wabbly was meant for one purpose, the undermining of civilian morale. To accomplish that purpose it set systematically about the establishment of a reign of terror; and so complete was its success that half the population of a state was in headlong flight within two hours. It was, first, mysterious; secondly, deadly, and within a very few hours it had built up a reputation for invincibility. Judged on the basis of its first twelve hours' work alone, it was the most successful experiment of the war. Its effect on civilian morale was incalculable." (Strategic Lessons of the War of 1941-43.—U. S. War College. Pp. 80-81.)

Two of the members of Observation-Post Fourteen gaped after the retreating monster. Sergeant Walpole scribbled on the official form. Just as the monstrous thing dipped down out of sight there was a vicious, crashing report from its hinder part. Something shrieked... .

Sergeant Walpole got up, spitting sand. There was blood on the report-form in his hand. He folded it painstakingly. Of the two men who had been with him, one was struggling out of the sand as Sergeant Walpole had had to do. The other was scattered over a good many square yards of sandy beach.

"Um. They seen us," said Sergeant Walpole, "an' they got Pete. You'll have to take this report. I'm goin' after the damn thing."

"What for?" asked the other man blankly.

"To keep it in sight," said Sergeant Walpole. "That's tactics. If somebody springs somethin' you ain't able to fight, run away but keep it in sight an' report to the nearest commissioned officer. Remember that. Now get on. There's monocycles in the village. Get there an' beat that damn Wabbly thing with the news."

He saw his follower start off, sprinting. That particular soldier, by the way, was identified by his dog-tag some days later. As nearly as could be discovered, he had died of gas. But Sergeant Walpole picked up one of the two rifles, blew sand out of the breech-mechanism, and started off after the metal monster. He walked in the eight-foot track of one of its treads. As he went, he continued the cleaning of sand from the rifle in his hands. The rifle was useless against such a monster, of course, but it is quaint to reflect that in that automatic rifle, firing hexynitrate bullets, each equivalent to a six-pounder T.N.T. shell in destructiveness, Sergeant Walpole carried greater "fire-power" than Napoleon ever disposed in battle.

The tread of the Wabbly made a perfect roadway. Presently Sergeant Walpole looked up to find himself scrutinizing somebody's dining-room table, set for lunch. The Wabbly had crossed a house in its path without swerving. Walls, chimneys, timbers and planks, all had gone beneath its treads. But they had been pressed so smoothly flat that until Sergeant Walpole looked down at his footing, he would not have known he was walking on the wreckage of a building.

It was half an hour before he reached the village. The Wabbly had gone from end to end, backed up, and gone over the rest of it again. There was the taint of gas in the air. Sergeant Walpole halted outside the debris. His gas-mask had been blown to atoms with Observation-Post Fourteen.

"They're tryin' to beat the news o' their comin'," he reflected aloud, "which is why they smashed up the village. The telephone exchange was there... . Tillie's under there somewheres... ."

He fumbled with the rifle, suddenly swearing queerly hate-distorted oaths. Tillie had not been the great love of Sergeant Walpole's life. She was merely a country telephone operator, reasonably pretty, and flattered by his uniform. But she was under a mass of splintered wood and crushed brick-work, killed while trying to connect with the tight beam to Area Headquarters to report the monster rushing upon the village. That monster had destroyed the little settlement. There was nothing left at all but wreckage and the eight-foot tracks of monster treads. Sometimes those tracks crossed each other. Between them wreckage survived to a height of as much as four feet, which was the clearance of the Wabbly's body.

Something roared low overhead. Sergeant Walpole swore bitterly, looked upward, and waited to die. But the small plane was American, and old. It was a training-plane, useless for front-line work. It dived to earth, the pilot waved impatiently, and Walpole plunged to a place beside him. Instantly thereafter the plane took off.

"What was it?" shouted the pilot, sliding off at panic-stricken speed across the tree-tops. "They heard the bombs go off all the way to Philly. Sent me. What in hell was it?"

A thin, high, wailing sound coming down as lightning might be imagined to descend... . The pilot dived madly and got behind a pine forest before the explosion and the concussion that followed it. Sergeant Walpole saw the pine-trees shiver. The sheer explosion-wave of that egg, if it

hit an old ship like this in mid-air, would have stripped the fabric from its wings.

"Set me down," said Sergeant Walpole. "They're watchin' us from aloft. I sent a man on a monocyce to report." But he told luridly of the thing that had come ashore, and of its destructiveness. "Now set me down. Gimme a gas-mask an' clear out. You ain't got a burglar's chance of gettin' back."

The pilot set him down, and began ticking away on a code sender even as he landed. Then he climbed swiftly away from the Sergeant, headed in a weaving, crazy line to westward. Then things screamed downward and the Sergeant clapped hands over his ears once more. The ground quivered underfoot, though the eggs landed a good three-quarters of a mile away. The training-plane dropped like a plummet. The sharpness of a hexynitrate explosion carries its effect to quite incredible distances. The fabric of its wings split to ribbons. The ship landed somewhere and smoke rose from it.

"He shouldn't ha' gone up so high," said Sergeant Walpole.

He struck across country for the treads of the Wabbly once more. He saw a school-house. The Wabbly had passed within a hundred yards of it. The school-house seemed deserted. Then the Sergeant saw the hole in its roof. Then he caught the infinitely faint taint of gas.

"Mighty anxious," said Sergeant Walpole woodenly, "not to let news get ahead of 'em. Yeah... . If it busts on places without warnin', it'll have that much easier work. I hope I'm in on the party when we get this damn thing."

There was no use in approaching the school-house, though he had a gas-mask now. Sergeant Walpole went on.

## Part 3

"... The Wabbly made no attempt to do purely military damage. The Enemy command realized that the destruction of civilian morale was even more important than the destruction of munitions factories. In this, the Enemy displayed the same acumen that makes the war a fruitful subject of study to the strategic student." (Strategic Lessons of the War of 1941-43.—U. S. War College. Pp. 81-82.)

At nightfall the monster swerved suddenly and moved with greater speed. It showed no lights. It did not even make very much noise. Then the second flight of home-defense planes made their attack. Sergeant Walpole heard them droning overhead. He lit a fire instantly. A little helicopter dropped from the blackness above him and he began to heap dirt desperately on the blaze.

"Who's there?" demanded a voice.

"Sergeant Walpole, Post Fourteen, Eastern Coast Observation," said the Sergeant in a military manner. "Beg to report, sir, that the dinkus that brought down the other ships is housed in that big bulge on top of the Wabbly."

"Get in," said the voice.

The Sergeant obeyed. With a purring noise the helicopter shot upward. Then something went off in mid-sky, miles ahead, where a faint humming noise had announced the flight of attack-planes. A lurid, crackling detonation lit up the sky. One of the ships of the night-flying squadron. From the helicopter they could see the rest of the flight limned clearly in the flash of the explosion. Instantly thereafter there was another such flash. Then another.

"Three," said the voice beside Sergeant Walpole. Another flash. "Four... ." The invisible operator of the screw-lifted ship was very calm about it. "Five. Six." The explosions lit the sky. Presently he said grimly. "That's all of them. I'd better report it."

He was silent for a while. Sergeant Walpole saw his hand flicking a key up and down in the faint light of radio bulbs.

"Now shoot the works," said the helicopter man evenly. "All the ships that attacked this afternoon went down. One of them started to report, but didn't get but two words through. What did that damned thing use on them?"

"A dinkus on top, sir," said Sergeant Walpole formally. "I'd found a monocycle, sir, and was trailing the thing. I'd come to the top of a hill

and seen it moving through a pine-wood, crashing down the trees in front of it like they wasn't there. Then a egg came down from Gawd-knows-where up aloft. I stopped up my ears, thinkin' it was aimin' for me. Then I seen the ships. Two of 'em were fallin'. They landed, an' I heard a coupla other explosions. Little ones, they sounded like."

The helicopter man's wrist was flicking up and down.

"Little ones!" he said sardonically. "Those ships were carrying five-hundred-pound bombs! It was those you heard going off!"

"Maybe," conceded Sergeant Walpole. "There was twenty or thirty ships flyin' in formation, goin' hell-for-leather for the Wabbly. They were trailin' it from the air. They were comin', natural, for me, because I was between them an' it. Then my pants caught on fire—"

"What?"

"My pants caught on fire," said Sergeant Walpole, woodenly. "I was sittin' on the monocycle, tryin' to figure out which way to duck. An' my pants caught on fire. The bike was gettin' hot. I climbed off it an' it blew up. My rifle was hot, too, an' I chucked it away. Then I saw a ship go down, on fire. The Wabbly'd stopped still an' it didn't fire a shot. I'll swear to that. Just my monocycle got hot an' caught on fire, an' then a ship busted out in flames an' went down. A couple more eggs come down an' three ships dropped. Didn't hit 'em. The concussion blew the fabric off 'em. Another one caught fire an' crashed. Then another one. I looked, an' saw the next one catch. Then the next. It was like a searchlight beam hittin' 'em. They flamed up, blew up, an' that was that. The last two tried to get away, but they lit up an' crashed."

The pilot's hand flicked up and down, interminably. There was the steady fierce down-beat of the slip-stream from the vertical propellers. The helicopter swept forward in a swooping dash.

"The whole east coast's gone crazy," said the 'copter man drily. "Crazy fools trying to run away. Roads jammed. Work stopped. It leaked out about the planes being wiped out to-day, and everybody in three states has heard those eggs going off. You're the only living man who's seen that crawling thing and lived to tell about it. I've sent your stuff back. What's that about the thing on top?"

"I hid," said Sergeant Walpole, woodenly. "The Wabbly sent over gas-shells where the ships landed. Then it went on. Headin' west. It's got a crazy-lookin' dinkus on top like a searchlight. That moved, while the ships were catchin' fire an' crashin'. Just like a searchlight, it moved an' the ships went down. But the Wabbly didn't fire a shot."

The helicopter man's wrist flexed swiftly... .

"Gawd!" said Sergeant Walpole in sudden agony. "Drop! Quick!"

The helicopter went down like a stone. A propeller shrieked away into space. Metalwork up aloft glowed dully red. Then there were whipping, lashing branches closing swiftly all around the helicopter. A jerk. A crash. Stillness. The smell of growing things all about.

"Well?" said the 'copter pilot.

"They turned it on us—whatever it is," said Sergeant Walpole. "They near got us, too."

A match scratched. A cigarette glowed. The Sergeant fumbled for a smoke for himself.

"I'm waiting for that metal to cool off," said the helicopter pilot. "Maybe we can take off again. They located us with a loop while I was sending your stuff. Damn! I see what they've got!"

"What?"

"A way of transmitting real power in a radio beam," said the 'copter man. "You've seen eddy-current stoves. Everybody cooks with 'em nowadays. A coil with a high-frequency current. You can stick your hand in it and nothing happens. But you stick an iron pan down in the coil and it gets hot and cooks things. Hysteresis. The same thing that used to make transformer-cores get hot. The same thing happens near any beam transmitter, only you have to measure the heating effect with a thermo-couple. The iron absorbs the radio waves and gets hot. The chaps in the Wabbly can probably put ten thousand horsepower in a damned beam. We can't. But any iron in the way will get hot. It blows up a ship at once. Your monocycle and your rifle too. Damn!"

He knocked the ash off his cigarette.

"Scientific, those chaps. I'll see if that metal's cool."

Something whined overhead, rising swiftly to a shriek as it descended. Sergeant Walpole cowered, with his hands to his ears. But it was not an earth-shaking concussion. It was an explosion, yes, but subtly different from the rending snap of hexynitrate.

"Gas," said the Sergeant dully, and fumbled for his mask.

"No good," said the 'copter man briefly. "Vesicatory. Smell it? I guess they've got us. No sag-suits. Not even sag-paste."

The Sergeant lit a match. The flame bent a little from the vertical.

"There's a wind. We got a chance."

"Get going, then," said the 'copter man. "Run upwind."

Sergeant Walpole slid over the side and ran. A hundred yards. Two hundred. Pine-woods have little undergrowth. He heard the helicopter's engines start. The ship tried to lift. He redoubled his speed. Presently he broke out into open ploughed land.

In the starlight he saw a barn, and he raced toward that. Someone else plunged out of the woods toward him. The helicopter-engine was still roaring faintly in the distance. Then a thin whine came down from aloft... .

When the echoes of the explosion died away the pilot was grinning queerly. The helicopter's engine was still.

"I said it could be done! Pack of fat-heads at Headquarters!"

"Huh?"

"Picking up a ship by its spark-plugs, with a loop. They're doing that up aloft. There's a ship up there, forty thousand feet or so. Maybe half a dozen ships. Refueling in air, I guess, and working with the thing you call a Wabbly. When I started the 'copter's engine they got the spark-impulses and sighted on them. We'd better get away from here."

"Horses in here," said Sergeant Walpole. "The Wabbly came by. No people left."

They brought the animals out. The horses reared and plunged as there were other infinitely sharp, deadly explosions of the eggs coming down eight miles through darkness.

"Let's go. After the Wabbly?" said the 'copter man.

"O' course," said Sergeant Walpole. "Somebody's got to find out how to lick it."

They went clattering through darkness. It was extraordinary what desolation, what utter lack of human life they moved through. They came to a town, and there was a taint of gas in the air. No lights burned in that town. It was dead. The Wabbly had killed it.

# Part 4

"... which panic was enhanced by the destruction of a second flight of fighting planes. However, the destruction of Bendsboro completed civilian demoralization... . A newscasting company re-broadcast a private television contact with the town at the moment the Wabbly entered it. Practically all the inhabitants of the Atlantic Coast heard and saw the annihilation of the town—hearing the cries of 'Gas!' and the screams of the people, and hearing the crashings as the Wabbly crushed its way inexorably across the city, spreading terror everywhere... . Frenzied demands were made upon the Government for the recall of troops from the front to offer battle to the Wabbly... . It is considered that at that time the one Wabbly had a military effect equal to at least half a million men." (Strategic Lessons of the War of 1941-43.—U. S. War College. Pp. 83-84.)

They did not enter the town. There was just enough of starlight to show that the Wabbly had gone through it, and then crashed back and forth ruthlessly. There was a great gash through the center of the buildings nearest the edge, and there were other gashes visible here and there. Everything was crushed down utterly flat in two eight-foot paths; and there was a mass of crumbled debris four feet high at its highest in between the tread-marks.

They looked, silently, and went on. They reached a railroad track, the quadruple track of a branch-line from New York to Philadelphia. The Wabbly was going along that right-of-way. There was no right-of-way left where it had been. Rails were crushed flat. Culverts were broken through. But the horses raced along the smoothed tread-trails. Once a broken, twisted rail tore at Sergeant Walpole's sleeve. Somehow the last great plate of a tread had bent it upward. Presently they saw a mass of something dark off to the left. Flames were licking meditatively at one of the wrecked cars.

Then they heard explosions far ahead. Flames lighted the sky.

"Our men in action!" said Sergeant Walpole hungrily.

He flogged his mount mercilessly. Then the sky became bright in the distance. The horses, going down the crushed-smooth trail of the treads, gained upon the din. Then they saw the cause of it, miles distant. A train was burning luridly. Its forepart was wreckage, pure and simple. The rest was going up in flames and detonations. Munitions, of course. The Wabbly was off at one side, flame-lit and monstrous, sliding smoothly out of sight.

"Ten miles of railroad," said the 'copter pilot calmly, "mashed out of existence. That's going to scare our people into fits. They can drop eggs till the cows come home, and every egg'll smash up a hundred yards of right-of-way, and we can build it back up again in four hours with mobile track-layers. But ten miles to be regraded and laid is different. Half of America will be imagining all our railroads smashed and starvation ahead."

A piercing light fell upon them.

"Shut it off!" roared Sergeant Walpole. "D'y'want to get us killed?"

He and the 'copter pilot swerved. There was a car there, a huge two-wheeled car, whose gyroscopes hummed softly while its driver tried to extract it from something it was tangled in.

"I commandeer this car," said the 'copter pilot. "Military necessity. We have to trail that Wabbly."

Someone grunted. Lights flashed on within. The 'copter pilot and Sergeant Walpole stiffened to attention. The stars of a major-general shone on the collar of the stout man within.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the pilot, and was still.

"Umph," said the major-general. "There seem to be just four of us alive, who've seen the thing clearly. I hit on it by accident, I'll admit. What do you know about it?"

"It come on a tramp-steamer—" began Sergeant Walpole.

"Hm. You're Sergeant Walpole. Mentioned in dispatches to-morrow, Sergeant. You, sir?"

"Its weapon against our planes, sir," said the 'copter man precisely, "is a radio beam carrying several thousand horsepower of energy. When it hits iron, sir, the energy is absorbed and the iron heats up and blows up the ship. The Wabbly's working with a bomber well aloft, sir, which spots planes from below by picking up their spark-plug flashes in a directional loop. The bomber aloft, sir, drops eggs when the Wabbly's attacked. Sergeant Walpole reports several planes disabled by their fabric being blown off their wings."

"I know," said the major-general. "Dammit, the front takes every ship that's fit to go aloft. We have only wrecks back here. You're sure about that spark-plug affair?"

"Yes, sir," said the 'copter pilot. "My ship crashed, sir. I started the motors again, trying to take off. Eggs began to drop about me instantly."

"Nasty!" said the major-general. "I was going to join my men. We've flung a line of artillery ahead of the thing. Motor-driven, of course. But if they can pick up motors by the spark-waves, the bomber knows all about it. Nasty!"

He lit a cigar, calmly. The gyrocar shifted suddenly and backed away from the thing it had been tangled in.

"Why ain't the bombers been shot down?" demanded Sergeant Walpole angrily. "Dammit, sir, if it wasn't for them bombers—"

"Up to an hour ago," said the major-general, "we had lost sixty-eight planes trying to get those bombers. You see, it works both ways. The bombers drop eggs to help the Wabbly defend itself. And the Wabbly uses that power-beam you spoke of to wipe the sky clean about the bombers. I wondered how it was done, before you explained, sir. Do you men want to come with me? Get on the running-board if you like. We shall probably be killed."

The gyrocar purred softly away, with two horses left wandering and two men clinging fast in a sweep of wind. They found a ribbon of concrete road and the wind sang as the car picked up speed. Then, suddenly, it bucked madly and went out of control, and, as suddenly, was passing along the road again. The Wabbly had passed over the roadway here.

And then they heard gunfire ahead. Honest, malevolent gunfire. Flashes lit the horizon. The gyrocar speeded up until it fairly hummed, and the wind rushed into the nostrils and mouths of the men on the running-boards. The cannonade increased. It reached really respectable proportions, until it became a titanic din. As the road rose up a long incline, a shell burst in mid-air in plain view, and the driver of the gyrocar jammed on the brakes and looked down upon the strangest of sights below.

There were other hills yet ahead, and from behind them came that faint, indefinite glow which is the glow of the lights of a city. At the bottom of a valley, a mile and a half distant, there was the Wabbly. Starshells flared near it, casting it into intolerable brightness and clear relief. And other shells were breaking upon it and all about it. From beyond the rim of hills came the flashes of guns. The air was full of screamings and many crashes.

The Wabbly was motionless. It looked more than ever like a monstrous, deadly centipede. It was under a rain of fire that would have shattered a dreadnaught of the 1920's. Its monstrous treads were

motionless. It seemed queerly quiescent, abstracted; it seemed less defiant of the shell-fire that broke upon it like the hail of hell, than indifferent to it. Yes, it seemed indifferent!

Only the queer excrescence on its top moved, and that stirred vaguely. Star-shells floated overhead and bathed it in pitiless light. And it remained motionless... . Sergeant Walpole had a vague impression of colossal detonations taking place miles above his head, but the sound was lost in the drumfire of artillery nearer at hand.

Then a gun on the Wabbly moved. It spouted a flash of bluish flame, and then another and another. It seemed to fire gas-shells into the town, at this moment, ignoring the batteries playing upon it. It was still again, while the queer excrescence on its back moved vaguely and shells burst about it in a very inferno.

Then the treads moved, and with a swift celerity the Wabbly moved smoothly forward and up the incline toward the cannonading guns. It went over the top of the incline, and those in the gyrocar saw its reception. Guns opened on it at point-blank range. Now the Wabbly itself went into action. In the light of star-shells and explosions they saw its guns begin to bellow. It went swiftly and malevolently forward, moving with centipede smoothness.

It dipped out of sight. The cannonade lessened. Two guns stopped. Three... . Half a dozen guns were out of action. A dozen guns ceased to fire... . One last weapon boomed desperately at its maximum rate of fire... .

That stopped. The night became strangely, terribly still. The major-general put aside his radivision receiver. Though neither the helicopter pilot nor Sergeant Walpole had noticed it, he had opened communication the instant the gyrocar came to a stop. Now the major-general was desperately, terribly white.

"The artillery is wiped out," he observed detachedly. "The Wabbly, it seems, is going on into the town."

They did not want to listen, those men who waited futilely by the gyrocar which had witnessed the invulnerability of the Wabbly to all attack. They did not want to listen at all. But they heard the noises as the Wabbly crashed across the town, and back and forth.

"Morale effect," said the major-general, through stiff lips. "That's what it's for. To break down the morale behind the lines. Good God! What hellish things mere words can mean!"

# Part 5

"... The only weak spot in the Wabbly's design, apparently, was the necessity of using its entire engine-power in the power-beam with which it protected itself and its attendant bombers from aerial attack. For a time, before New Brunswick, it was forced to remain still, under fire, while it fought off and destroyed an attacking fleet eight miles above it. With sufficiently powerful artillery, it might have been destroyed at that moment. But it was invulnerable to the artillery available... . Deliberately false statements were broadcast to reassure the public, but the public was already skeptical, as it later became incredulous, of official reports of victories. The destruction of New Brunswick became known despite official denials, and colossal riots broke out among the inhabitants of the larger cities, intent upon escape from defenseless towns... . Orders were actually issued withdrawing a quarter of a million men from the front-line reserve, with artillery in proportion to their force." (Strategic Lessons of the War of 1941-43.—U. S. War College. P. 92.)

The major-general left them at the town, now quite still and silent. Sergeant Walpole said detachedly:

"We'll prob'ly find a portable sender, sir, an' trail the Wabbly. That's about all we can do, sir."

"It looks," said the major-general rather desperately, "as if that is all anybody can do. I'm going on to take command ahead."

The 'copter pilot said politely:

"Sir, if you're going to sow mines for the Wabbly—"

"Of course!"

"That power-beam can explode them, sir, before the Wabbly gets to them. May I suggest, sir, that mine-cases with no metal in them at all would be worth trying?"

"Thank you," said the major-general grimly. "I'll have concrete ones made."

Sergeant Walpole grunted suddenly.

"Look here, sir! The Wabbly stops when it uses that dinkus on top. This guy here says it uses a lotta power—four or five thousand horsepower."

"More likely ten or twenty," said the 'copter pilot.

"Maybe," said Sergeant Walpole profoundly, "it takes all the power they got to work that dinkus. They were workin' it just now when the artillery was slammin' 'em. So next time you want to tackle it, stick a flock

o' bombs around an' attack the bombers too. If they're kept busy down below, maybe the planes can get the bombers, or otherwise they'll get a chance to use a big gun on the Wabbly."

The major-general nodded.

"We four," he observed, "are the only living men who've actually seen the Wabbly and gotten away. I shall use both your suggestions. And I shall not send those orders by radio—not even tight beam radio. I'll carry them myself. Good luck!"

A non-commissioned officer of the Eastern Coast Observation Force and a yet uncommissioned flying cadet waved a cheerful good-by to the major-general in charge of home defense in three states. Then they went on into the town.

"Monocycles first," said Sergeant Walpole. "An' a sender."

The 'copter man nodded. The street-lights of the town dimmed and brightened. The Wabbly had paused only to create havoc, not to produce utter chaos. It had gone back and forth over the town two or three times, spewing out gas as it went. But most of the town was still standing, and the power-house had not been touched. Only its untended Diesels had checked before a fuel-pump cleared.

They found a cycle-shop, its back wall bulged in by wreckage against it. Sergeant Walpole inspected its wares expertly. A voice began to speak suddenly. A television set had somehow been turned on by the crash that bulged the back wall.

"The monster tank has been held in check," said a smug voice encouragingly. "Encountered by home-defense troops and artillery, it proved unable to face shell-fire... ."

"Liars!" said the 'copter man calmly. He picked up the nearest loose object and flung it into the bland face of the official news-announcer. The television set went dead, but there were hissings and sputterings in its interior. He had flung a Bissel battery at it, one of a display-group, and its high-tension terminals hissed and sparked among the stray wires in the cabinet.

"That makes me mad," said the 'copter man grimly. "Lying for morale! The other side murders our civilians to break down morale, and our side lies about it to build morale back up again. To hell with morale!"

Sergeant Walpole reached in and pulled out the battery. Bissel batteries turn out six hundred volts these days, and they make a fat spark when short-circuited.

"For Gawd's sake!" said Sergeant Walpole. "If they can pick up sparks from a motor, can't they pick 'em up from this? What the hell y'doin'? Y'want 'em droppin' eggs on us? Say!"

He stopped short, his eyes burning. He began to talk, suddenly groping for words while he waved the high-powered small battery in his hand. The helicopter man listened, at first skeptically and then with an equally hungry enthusiasm.

"Sergeant," he said evenly, "that's an idea! A whale of an idea! A hell of a fine idea! Let's get some rockets!"

"Why rockets?" demanded Sergeant Walpole in his turn. "Whatcha want to do? Celebrate the Fourth o' July?"

The 'copter man explained, this time, and Sergeant Walpole seized upon the addition. Then they began a hunt. They roved the town over, and it was not pleasant. When the Wabbly had gone into that town there had still been very many living human beings in it. Some of them had believed in the ability of the artillery to defend the town against a single monster. Some had had no means of getting away. But all of them had tried to get away when the Wabbly went lurching in among the houses.

For them, the Wabbly had spewed out deadly gases. Also it had simply forged ahead. And the two living men in their gas-masks paid as little attention as possible to the bodies in the streets, most of them in flimsy night-clothing, struck down in frenzied flight, but they could not help seeing too much... .

In the end they went back to the artillery-positions and found signal-rockets there. Two full cases of them, marvelously unexploded. A little later two monocycles purred madly in the beaten-down paths of the monstrous treads. Sergeant Walpole bore very many Bissel batteries, which will deliver six hundred volts even on short-circuit for half an hour at a time. The 'copter man carried some of them, too, and both men were loaded down.

When dawn came they were hollow-eyed and gaunt and weary. It had started to rain, too, and both of them were drenched. They could see no more than a couple of hundred yards in every direction, and they were hungry, and they had seen things no man should have to look upon, in the way of destruction. They came upon a wrecked artillery-train just as the world lightened to a pallid gray. Guns twisted and burst. Caissons, no more than shattered scraps of metal, because of the explosion of the shells within them. And the tread-tracks of the Wabbly led across the

mess. Steam still rose, hissing softly, from the bent and twisted guns which had burst when they were heated to redness by the power-beam. And there was a staff gyrocar crumpled against a tree where it had been flung by some explosion or other. There were neither sound nor wounded men about; only dead ones. The Wabbly had been here.

"Hullo," said the helicopter man in a dreary levity, "there's a portable vision set in this car. Let's call up the general and see how he is?"

Sergeant Walpole spat. Then he held up his hand. He was listening. Far off in the drumming downpour of the rain there was a rumbling sound. He had heard it before. It was partly made up of the noise of internal-combustion engines of unthinkable power, and partly of grumbling treads forcing a way through reluctant trees. It was a long way off, now, but it was coming nearer.

"The Wabbly," said Sergeant Walpole. "Comin' back. Why? Hell's bells! Why's it comin' back?"

"I don't know," said the 'copter man, "but let's get some rockets fixed up."

The two of them worked almost lackadaisically. They were tired out. But they took the tiny Bissel batteries and twisted the attached wires about the rocket-heads. They had twenty or thirty of them fixed by the time the noise of the Wabbly was very near. There was the noise of felled trees, pushed down by the Wabbly in its progress. Great, crackling crashes, and then crunching sounds, and above them the thunderous smooth purring rumble of the monster. The 'copter man climbed into the upside-down staff car. He turned the vision set on and fiddled absurdly with the controls.

"I'm getting something," he announced suddenly. "The bomber up aloft is sending its stuff down a beam, a tight beam to the Wabbly. Listen to it!"

The uncouth, clacking syllables of the enemy tongue came from the vision set. Someone was speaking crisply and precisely somewhere. Blurred, indistinct flashes appeared on the vision set screen.

"They ought to be worried," the 'copter man said wearily. "Even an infra-red telescope can't pick up a damned thing through clouds like this. And the Wabbly's in a mess without a bomber to help... ."

Sergeant Walpole did not reply. He was exhausted. He sat looking tiredly off through the rain in the direction of the approaching noise. Somehow it did not occur to him to run away. He sat quite still, smoking a soggy cigarette.

Something beaked and huge appeared behind a monstrous oak-tree. It came on. The oak-tree crackled, crashed, and went down. It was ground under by the monstrous war-engine that went over it. The Wabbly was unbelievably impersonal and horrible in its progress. There had been a filling-station for gyrocars close by the place where the artillery-train had been wrecked. One of the eight-foot treads loomed over that station, descended upon it—and the filling-station was no more. The Wabbly was then not more than a hundred yards from Sergeant Walpole, less than a city block. He looked at it in a weary detachment. It was as high as a four-story house, and it was two hundred feet long, and forty feet wide at the treads with the monstrous gun-bulges reaching out an extra ten or fifteen feet on either side above. And it came grumbling on toward him.

## Part 6

"... Considered as a strategic move, the Wabbly was a triumph. Eighteen hours after its landing, the orders for troops called for half a million men to be withdrawn from the forces at the front and in reserve, and munitions-factories were being diverted from the supply of the front to the manufacture of devices designed to cope with it. This, in turn, entailed changes in the front-line activities of the Command... . Altogether, it may be said that the Wabbly, eighteen hours after its landing, was exerting the military pressure of an army of not less than half a million men upon the most vulnerable spot in our defenses—the rear... . And when its effect upon civilian morale is considered, the Wabbly, as a force in being, constituted the most formidable military unit in history." (Strategic Lessons of the War of 1941-43.—U. S. War College. P. 93.)

As Sergeant Walpole saw the Wabbly, there was no sign of humanity anywhere about the thing. It was a monstrous mass of metal, powder-stained now where shells had burst against it, and it seemed metallically alive, impersonally living. The armored tube with vision-slits at its ends must have been the counterpart of a ship's bridge, but it looked like the eye-ridge of an insect's face. The bulbous control-rooms at the ends looked like a gigantic insect's multi-faceted eyes. And the huge treads, so thick as to constitute armor for their own protection, were so cunningly joined and sprung that they, too, seemed like part of a living thing.

It came within twenty yards of the staff-car with the 'copter man in it and Sergeant Walpole smoking outside. It ignored them. It had destroyed all life at this place. And Sergeant Walpole alone was visible, and he sat motionless and detached, unemotionally waiting to be killed. The Wabbly clanked and rumbled and roared obliviously past them. Sergeant Walpole saw the flexing springs in the tread-joints, and there were hundreds of them, of a size to support a freight-car. He saw a refuse-tube casually ejecting a gush of malodorous stuff, in which the garbage of a mess-table was plainly identifiable. A drop or two of the stuff splashed on him, and he smelled coffee.

And then the treads lifted, and he saw the monstrous gas-spreading tubes at the stern, and the exhaust-pipes into which he could have ridden, monocycle and all. Then he saw a man in the Wabbly. There were ventilation-ports open at the pointed stern and a man was looking out, some fifteen feet above the ground, smoking placidly and looking out at

the terrain the Wabbly left behind it. He was wearing an enemy uniform cap.

The monster went on. The roar of its passing diminished a little. And the 'copter man came suddenly out of the staff-car, struggling with the portable vision set.

"I think we can do it," he said shortly. "It's in constant beam communication with a bomber up aloft, and I think they're worried up there because they can't see a damned thing. But it's a good team. With the Wabbly's beam, which takes so much power no bomber could possibly carry it, the bombers are safe, and the bombers can locate any motor-driven thing that might attack the Wabbly and blow it to hell. But right now they can't see it. So I think we can do it. Coming?"

Sergeant Walpole threw away his cigarette and rose stiffly. Even those few moments of rest had intensified his weariness. He flung a leg over the monocycle's seat and pointed tiredly to the trail of the Wabbly. It nearly paralleled, here, a ribbon of concrete road which once had been a reasonably important feeder-highway.

"Let's go."

They went off through the rain along the road, nearly parallel to the route the Wabbly was taking. Rain beat at them. Off in the woods to their right the Wabbly's noise grew louder as they overtook it. They passed it, and came abruptly out of the wooded area upon cultivated fields, rolling and beautifully cared-for. There had been a farm-headquarters off to one side, a huge central-station for all the agricultural work on what once would have been half a county, but there were jagged walls where buildings had been, and smoke still rose from the place.

Then the Wabbly came out of the woods, a dim gray monstrous shape in the rain.

The helicopter man pulled the ignition-cord and a rocket began to sputter. He made a single wipe with his knife-blade along the twisted insulated wires of the Bissel battery, and a wavering blue spark leaped into being. The rocket shot upward, curved down, and landed with enough force to bury its head in the muddy ploughed earth and conceal the signal-flare that must have ignited.

"That ought to do it," said the 'copter man. "Let's send some more."

Sergeant Walpole got exhaustedly off his monocycle and duplicated the 'copter man's efforts. A second rocket, a third... . A dozen or more rockets went off, each one bearing a wavering, uncertain blue spark at its

tip. And that spark would continue for half an hour or more. In a loop aerial, eight miles up, it might sound like a spark-plug, or it might sound like something else. But it would not sound like the sort of thing that ought to spring up suddenly in front of the Wabbly, and it would sound like something that had better be bombed, for safety's sake.

The Wabbly was moving across the ploughed fields with a deceptive smoothness. It was drawing nearer and nearer to the spot where the rockets had plunged to earth.

It stopped.

Another rocket left the weary pair of men, its nearly flashless exhaust invisible in the daytime, anyway. The Wabbly backed slowly from the irregular line where the first rockets sparked invisibly. It was no more than a distinct gray shadow in the falling rain, but the queer bulk atop its body moved suddenly. Like a searchlight, the power-beam swept the earth before the Wabbly. But nothing happened.

The 'copter man turned on the vision set he had packed from the staff gyrocar. Voices, crisp and anxious, came out of it. He caressed the set affectionately.

"Listen to 'em, Sergeant," he said hungrily. "They're worried!"

The voice changed suddenly. There was a sudden musical buzzing in the set, as of two dozen spitting sparks, in as many tones, all going at once.

"Letting the guys in the Wabbly hear what they hear," said the 'copter man grimly. "If God's good to us, now... ."

The voices changed again. They stopped.

The Wabbly itself was still, halted in its passage across a clear and rain-swept field by little sparking sounds which seemed to indicate the presence of something that had better be bombed for safety's sake.

A thin whining noise came down from aloft. It rose to a piercing shriek, and there was a gigantic crater a half mile from the Wabbly, from which smoke rose lazily. The Wabbly remained motionless. Another whining noise which turned to a shriek... . The explosion was terrific. It was a bit nearer the Wabbly.

"We'll send 'em some more rockets," said the 'copter man.

They went hissing invisibly through the rain. The Wabbly backed cautiously away from the spot where they landed, because they were wholly invisible and they made a sound which those in the Wabbly could not understand. Always, to a savage, the unexplained is dangerous. Modern warfare has reached the same high peak of wisdom. The Wabbly drew

off from the sparks because it could not know what made them, and because it had used its power-beam and the bomber had dropped its bombs without stopping or destroying them. It was not conceivable to anybody on either the Wabbly or the bombers aloft that inexplicable things could be especially contrived to confront the Wabbly, unless they were contrived to destroy it.

"They don't know what in hell they're up against," said the 'copter man joyously. "Now lets give 'em fits!"

Rockets went off in swift succession. To the blinded men in the bomber above the clouds it seemed that unexplained mechanisms were springing into action by dozens, all about the Wabbly. They were mechanisms. They were electric mechanisms. They were obviously designed to have some effect on the Wabbly. And the Wabbly had no defense against the unguessed-at effects of unknown weapons except... .

Bombs began to rain from the sky. The Wabbly crawled toward the last gap left in the ring of mysterious mechanisms. That closed. Triumphant, singing sparks sang viciously in the amplifiers. Nothing was visible. Nothing! Perhaps that was what precipitated panic. The bombers rained down their deadly missiles. And somebody forgot the exact length of time it takes a bomb to drop eight miles... .

Sergeant Walpole and the 'copter man were flat on the ground with their hands to their ears. The ground bucked and smote them. The unthinkable violence of the hexynitrate explosions tore at their nerves, even at their sanity. And then there was an explosion with a subtle difference in its sound. Sergeant Walpole looked up, his head throbbing, his eyes watering, dizzy and dazed, and bleeding at the nose and ears.

Then he bumped into the 'copter man, shuddering on the ground. He did it deliberately. There was a last crashing sound, and some of the blasted earth spattered on them. But then the 'copter man looked where Sergeant Walpole pointed dizzily.

The Wabbly was careened crazily on one side. One of its treads was uncoiling slowly from its frame. Its stern was blown in. Someone had forgotten how long it takes a bomb to drop eight miles, and the Wabbly had crawled under one. More, from the racked-open stern of the Wabbly there was coming a roaring, spitting cloud of gas. The Wabbly's storage-tanks of gas had been set off. Inside, it would be a shambles. Its crew would be dead, killed by the gas the Wabbly itself had broadcast in its wake... .

# Part 7

"... It is a point worth noticing, by any student of strategy, that while the Wabbly in working solely for effectiveness in lowering civilian morale worked upon sound principles, yet the destruction of the Wabbly by Sergeant Walpole and Flight Cadet Ryerson immediately repaired all the damage done. Had it worked toward more direct military aims, its work would have survived it. It remains a pretty question for the student, whether the Enemy Command, with the information it possessed, made the soundest strategic use of its unparalleled weapon... . But on the whole, the raid of the Wabbly remains the most startling single strategic operation of the war, if only because of its tremendous effect upon civilian morale... ." (Strategic Lessons of the War of 1941-43.—U. S. War College. Pp. 94-96.)

A major-general climbed out of a staff gyrocar and waded through mud for half a mile, after which he, in person, waked two sleeping men. They were sprawled out in the puddle of rain which had gathered in a torn-away tread from the Wabbly. They waked with extreme reluctance, and then yawned even in the act of saluting in a military manner.

"Yes, sir;" said Sergeant Walpole, yawning again. "Yes, sir; the bombers've gone. We heard 'em tryin' to raise the Wabbly for about half an hour after she'd blown up. Then they cut off. I think they went home, sir. Most likely, sir, they think we used some new dinkus on the Wabbly. It ain't likely they'll realize they blew it up themselves for us."

The major-general gave crisp orders. Men began to explore the Wabbly, cautiously. He turned back to the two sleepy and disreputable men who had caused its destruction. His aspect was one of perplexity and admiration.

"What did you men do?" he demanded warmly. "What in hell did you do?"

Sergeant Walpole grinned tiredly. The 'copter man spoke for him.

"I think, sir," said the helicopter man, "that we affected the morale of the Wabbly's and the bombers' crews."

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*The Aliens*

The human race was expanding through the galaxy... and so, they knew, were the Aliens. When two expanding empires meet... war is inevitable. Or is it...?



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