

BipedReegan

by Alfred Bester

Part 1 THE BIPED, REEGAN

The strongest man, the last woman, at bay against a world that had destroyed their fellows, take a last grim gamble with eternity that the human race might survive.

IF IT please your Imperial Maternity, the day is won. I have here the full report of the last victory, and if your Imperial Maternity would deign to listen...?

At the first light our forces were drawn up at the crest of the semicircle of hills surrounding the bipeds' last citadel. In the ten moons following our first attack on their cities, only this last stronghold prevailed. Within were less than two hundred bipeds. Like a sickle, our armies pressed close.

We were at all times within close observation of the enemy. Spy-alpha had slipped through their traps and barriers during the dark and had taken up a post in the vast room in which the bipeds were accustomed to meet and talk. Spy-alpha

telecasted to us shortly after the first light that the bipeds were entering the room, and all of us picked up his thought band.

They came in slowly, those bipeds, for they were desperate. The big one with flushed face and beard, called Otis, banged his hand on the table.

"It's hopeless," he said. "What if we do win out?"

The biped with red hair interrupted.

"Not if," he said. "We shall. Chung and I have something new. It can't fail.

We've been working on it for two months. "

Then the biped with slant eyes, the one called Chung, nodded.

"In some ways," he said, "the attack of the ants has worked miracles. First, it ended a war between the Chinese and Whites. Second, it has provided a necessity that is proving to be the mother of miracles. Between Ivar's technique and my theory we have created a new thermodynamics. . . "

"You're too long-winded," Ivar said.

"You're both too optimistic," Otis added. "When do we see this miracle worker of yours? What's it all about?"

"Not yet," Ivar replied. "In three hours it'll be ready for a final demonstration. Not now."

"And if it works?" Otis asked.

"Then we win," said Chung.

"Win what?" Otis demanded. "A slow and sorry death for the race and two hundred men. Two hundred men, I said. You don't seem to understand. The race of men is dead. It died with the last woman. You're only prolonging the inevitable. "

Ivar said: "I'd rather make a fight of it . . . No matter how hopeless it is.

You too, Otis. You're just depressed."

At that moment the vast portal to the room was smashed open and one of the biped

underlings rushed in. He lifted his hand to his forehead and poured out a message so excitedly that Spy-alpha had difficulty following, and so did we. The gist of it, however, was that the ants were attacking.

Instantly we telecast across the entire field of battle. Not an attack was reported in progress, although Marshal-gamma announced that he had moved one hundred thirty thousand of his troops forward slightly to maintain an even line across the crest of the ridge. We turned our attention then back to Spy-alpha in the meeting room of the bipeds.

They were in a state of alarm, doubtless convinced from the reported troop movements that our attack was coming. The red-haired biped, Ivar, was especially concerned.

"I must have three hours more," he repeated over and over. "Three hours will make the difference between success and failure. Can you give Chung and me three hours?"

"I'd like to," Otis said, "but how?"

"I'll tell you how!"

It was the biped, Reegan . . . The one of great daring whose long lean body and reckless lean face we had all grown to hate and fear. The numbers of us whom he had killed mounted to the millions. A wave of fury leaped across the battlefield as all of us telecast our hatred of Reegan. At the room of the bipeds, Spy-alpha warned us to be quiet lest we miss an important detail.

"If we sit here and wait," Reegan snarled, "we can sit and wait until the ants make up their minds what they want to do with us. Waiting's no good. It just plays right into their hands. Ivar wants three hours? Hell, I'll give him sixty-three."

"How?" asked Otis.

"Counter-attack," Reegan snapped. "Give me a suicide squad. Ten men, that's all. I'll go out there and blast the guts off them!"

"The man is crazy," spoke the biped, Chung.

"Sure I'm crazy," Reegan said. "I'm crazy with waiting. I've only got a lifetime to live, and I know there's nothing worth living for anyway. If I die and I've given Ivar his three hours . . . then what the hell?"

Chung said: "What would you do?"

"I'll take ten men and torches," Reegan said. "I'll go out there and stay out until I'm dead. It ought to take them three hours to chew me to pieces. Me and the rest. . ."

"No," said Otis, "I can't let you."

"I'm going anyway," Reegan said. "I'd like to see you stop me."

He arose to his full height and faced the biped, Otis. He raised hand to brow languidly and started out of the chamber. Spy-alpha rushed to precede him so as to learn the site of Reegan's attack, and just then the biped Otis clutched Reegan by the arms.

"One more step," he said, "and I call the guard. No plan is worth your suicide, Reegan."

The biped Reegan shook the arm away. Otis clutched him once more and this time Reegan raised his fist and smote Otis full in the face. He was already out the door when Otis arose and began to shout for the guard. The biped Ivar quieted him.

"Let him alone, Otis," he said. "Don't you know the poor guy's been looking to die since he lost his girl? You'll be doing him a favor if you'll let him kill himself, . . . And you'll be saving the rest of us."

SPY-ALPHA picked up no more of their vibrations, for he had slipped under the portal and was following the biped Reegan down the hall. When he had caught up, the biped Reegan had already summoned ten others, some with the slant eyes and others with the white faces. They were donning the tight suits of metal fabric with the glass helmets and Reegan was handing out the torches.

Our research legions are at present investigating these torches, Imperial Maternity. They consist of large tanks which the bipeds strap over their backs. From the tanks lead two hoses which join in a metal nozzle held in the hand. It is believed that two kinds of substance are carried in different compartments of the tank, and when these substances are mingled at the nozzle, they burst into flame.

"Here is the plan," Reegan said. "We go out through the north gate. From there we. . ."

At this point he uttered an exclamation and Spy-alpha telecast that he had been spotted by biped Reegan. All of us received the blurred impression that he was fleeing rapidly for cover, and then his telecasts ceased. So passed another happy sacrifice for your Imperial Maternity.

Commander-lambda immediately dispatched Spy-zeta and Spy-zeta-prime to the citadel of the bipeds to break through along the same route that Spy-alpha had worked out. Meanwhile the scout legion was advanced slightly to await the first appearance of the biped sortie and report its direction.

The sickle of hills, as your Imperial Maternity doubtless knows, is the length of eight hundred and eight bipeds. It is a perfect formation, the arc of a circle, and at each point, the same distance from the bipeds' citadel as it is long. The height of the hills vary, the tallest being the central flat-topped

peak which covers the mouth of the caverns.

The hills are not steep, for they lead down toward the citadel in a gentle slope which makes our attack easier. Moreover the slope is entirely covered with a low dry vegetation which makes for better concealment.

It was an hour after first light that the scout legion sighted Reegan and the squad. They immediately telecast back and we saw that they were headed due north toward the tall central peak of the hills. Although we had nothing to fear from the bipeds in the long run, it was judged advisable to keep them as far as possible from the cavern mouth, lest they disrupt the mechanism which is our inspiration and very life, as you are aware.

Marshal-alpha, on the left flank, suggested that he be permitted to show his troops so as to lure the bipeds to that side of the hills, and permission was immediately granted by Commander-lambda who, at the same time, ordered Marshal-delta to begin moving troops from the left center toward the left flank to cover the gap that would be created by the maneuver.

At the order your Imperial Maternity's troops clambered to the heights of the dry vegetation by the tens of thousands, and permitted the bright light to glisten on their jet chiton. Almost immediately, the shimmer of light was noticed by the bipeds, who halted and consulted. Fortunately our scout legions were thick in the neighborhood and partially able to translate the bipeds' communication at that important crisis.

The biped Reegan said: "Hell, thousands of them!"

"Lucky for us," said a second. "We can burn up the (word not understood by the scout legion) by the millions without even trying. It's easy."

"Yeah," said Reegan, "it's too easy. That's what makes me suspicious. The trouble with you guys is that you never figure these little black vermin can

think. I tell you they can, They're smart. Smarter than we or they have ever been!"

Nevertheless they turned west toward Marshal-alpha's exposed troops and began to advance. Inasmuch as their plan was designed to delay our attack for three hours . . . that , Imperial Maternity, is a period equal to one quarter a light or one quarter a darkness . . . we had decided to finish them off quickly.

Commander-lambda had already announced that the first faint telecasts from the redarmies had been received. The red armies were reinforcements coming up from the south and were expected to arrive by mid-light.

MARSHAL-ALPHA had not intended to let the troops throw themselves away. The first waves for a distance of ten bipeds remained concealed under the vegetation. It was not until they reported that the bipeds had passed them that the order was given for an attack.

Immediately the troops rushed down the slope from the crest of the hill toward the squad. These at once ignited the torches, which hissed out flame to the distance of two bipeds. The van of the charge was seared to death instantly, but the following waves plunged over their ashes toward the bipeds. And as the bipeds advanced in a rank toward the hill-crest, Marshal-alpha ordered the concealed troops behind them to attack by stealth.

Unfortunately the biped Reagan was alert. Glancing backward, he noticed the action in the rear and instantly called orders to the others. They formed a circle, standing shoulder to shoulder, surrounding themselves with a roaring fiery curtain. In that fashion they slowly reached the crest of the hill and began moving toward the central peak.

Matters were becoming serious when several of the troops just before death

reported that one of the bipeds was throwing flame with his left hand. This meant that an occasional gap was left between himself and the biped to the right of him. When this was understood, troops immediately began to filter through the flame and wait inside until their numbers had grown.

Although the bipeds wore the metal fabric for protection, it had a tactical disadvantage that ultimately proved to be their downfall. They could not sense the attack of our troops on their person. Thus, slowly from the inside, our troops mounted the backs of the bipeds until they were thousands thick from nape to heel. Then, when they had telecast readiness, Marshal-alpha gave the order. The attack was an instant success. As our troops bit through the fabric and swarmed to the skin of the bipeds, they screamed and broke formation. Despite the shouts of Reegan, they dropped the torches and writhed on the ground, striking at themselves with their palms. Instantly they were covered by hordes of our troops, who had been waiting for this.

Two of the bipeds scorched themselves to death with their own torches. The others struggled and screamed for a long time before the venom of our troops then to both sides, the biped Reegan escaped. Despite the thousands of wounds that our troops were inflicting, he ran calmly and swiftly across the crest of the hills, throwing the destructive flame as he ran. When he reached the central peak, from which we had been attempting to lure him, he climbed to the surface of the broad flat stone that covers the cavern mouth, and flamed it clear.

Then, despite the agony of his wounds, he lay down carefully and rolled slowly from face to back and then from back to face, pressing the inside of his fabric suit between the weight of his body and the stone. In such manner he succeeded in crushing those of our troops who had penetrated to his skin. It was a cool device.

Commander-lambda was rushing troops toward the stone in hopes of occupying the biped Reegan with another attack before he discovered the secret, when suddenly Reegan felt the stone shift on its pivots under his weight. He was the quickest, the most alert of the bipeds, and in little time he had swung the stone back, revealing the broad steps that led down into the cavern.

THROWING the flame before him, Reegan descended slowly and curiously until at last he reached the foot of the steps. Commander-lambda had already telecast warnings, and fresh troops were massing along the floor of the cavern to await Reegan. The digger legions were rapidly boring passages down to the roof in hopes that our troops might be able to drop down on Reegan from above.

Unfortunately he moved forward too rapidly for us. Keeping his torch in continual rotation from ceiling to floor and then to both sides, the biped Reegan, passed down the length of the vast cavern until he reached the heavy oak portal which barred the way to the machine room.

This door he burned through, and as it sagged away, he kicked it down and passed into the great domed chamber where the machine lay.

As your Imperial Maternity is no doubt aware, the machine room is a circular vault, the distance of ten bipeds across and almost as high. In the center is the machine itself. It is a structure so complicated that it defies description.

All we know is that it is fed with ore from the pits around the chamber and secretes the gas that is our life and inspiration from crystal tubes which lead to the surface above.

To one side of the machine are the two great masses of straw where the bipeds who made and now tend the machine, sleep. There is a great wooden chamber where

their foodstuff is kept, and a high wooden structure where they eat. The chamber was at all times surrounded on the inside with thousands of our troops who, by the continual menace of their presence, kept the bipeds from escaping and forced them to continue the operation of the machine.

These troops Reagan instantly flamed to death. As he was staring at the machine and listening to its soft hiss, he suddenly became aware of the bipeds lying on the straw masses. He emitted a peculiar sound and ran to them.

"Dinah!" he cried. "In God's name . . . I must be mad!"

She raised her head and cried out. Then Reagan threw his arms about her and crushed her to him. The both of them emitted peculiar sobbing sounds continually and totally ignored the ancient biped with the hairless skull, who gazed at them in astonishment.

AS Commander-lambda received the reports of the biped's peculiar actions, he deemed it wise to attempt a fresh attack. The cavern and steps were already choked with our troops, who were ready at all costs to prevent an escape.

The biped Dinah said: "Wes, darling, this is Doctor Elmer Gropper."

Reagan nodded curtly and aided the ancient biped called Doctor Elmer Gropper to his feet. "There's no time for talk," Reagan said. "First let me get you back to the fort. I can hear all about everything there."

He rekindled his torch and flamed the broken chamber entrance. Then he swiftly removed the metal fabric suit and forced the biped called Dinah to don it. The biped named Doctor Elmer Gropper was too weak to travel, and Reagan lifted him to his shoulder.

Then the biped called Dinah said: "Wes.... Please destroy the apparatus. You'll find out why later. But do it . . ."

Reagan. . . for although she named him "Wes" she spoke to him . . . turned and

played the flame over the machine. It fused and exploded, filling the chamber with a maze of small broken parts. I fear, Imperial Maternity, that we shall never be able to reconstruct it, but in my subsequent report you will see that it is unimportant.

Our troops charged valiantly as the three bipeds came through the cavern.

Reegan, without the metal suit, was especially open to attack, but he moved with infinite caution, carefully flaming the four sides of the tunnel before he would advance a step. Despite our every effort he managed to reach the stairs and mount them.

It was impossible to hold him back once he began descending the slope and we deemed it wiser to let him return to the citadel of the bipeds, where we could attack at our leisure. Our troops drew off and Commander-lambda telecast a message to Spy-zeta and Spy-zeta-prime. All of us caught their response, clear and calm. Zeta-prime was stationed in the council room of the bipeds; Zeta was trailing the biped Ivar, in an attempt to ferret out the new weapon he had spoken of.

The destruction of the machine was a crushing blow to the morale of your Imperial Maternity's troops. Commander-lambda sent out an inspiring message to all of us that victory would still be ours. He commanded us to realign in our old positions along the crest of the sickle of hills and await the arrival of the other armies from the south.

Meanwhile Reegan had reached the citadel. We all tuned in on Spy-zeta-prime to see what future developments might impend. The three bipeds rushed up to the council room, where they were met by the biped Otis and others.

As the biped Dinah removed her metal suit, Otis gasped and stared hard at her.

"A woman!" he cried.

Your Imperial Maternity is no doubt familiar with the anatomy of the male and female of the species. The bipeds discerned differences in sex by vision. The biped Reegan, for example, was tall and built in flat planes to the general outline of a wedge.

The female named Dinah was somewhat shorter and built in curved planes. The shoulders were rounded, the thorax fuller than Reegan's and divided into two upthrust mounds. The waist was extremely narrow but the hips were rounded and almost as wide as the shoulders. Altogether, our research legions believe the species of biped to be the ugliest life form our earth has produced.

SPY-ZETA-PRIME reported tremendous excitement at the appearance of the strange bipeds and especially at the appearance of the female. Then, as they calmed down, Reegan spoke.

"Otis," he said, "this is Dinah. Dinah Shaw. If I've acted like a fool in the past months, it was because I'd thought she was dead."

Otis said: "My God, Reegan, but you're lucky, . . . To find your girl again; .. To bring her back from the dead!"

"Not as incredible as you think," the biped named Doctor Elmer Gropper said. Spy-zeta-prime reported that he was extremely faint, and this was immediately corroborated by the chamber troops who had been guarding that ancient biped.

"Before I tell my story," Doctor Elmer Gropper said, "you'd better tell me yours. We've been pent up in that damned cavern for ten months."

"It's a wonder you're both so healthy looking," Otis said. "Miss Shaw actually looks beautiful . . ."

"You'll understand when I tell you my story," Gropper said. "For that matter, you've probably noticed by now that all of you are much healthier . . . handsomer

and probably more acutely intelligent. Never mind that. Tell."

"It's not much of a story," Otis said. "Ten months ago, we began a war with the Asians. I don't mind saying that things were desperate for America. The Affs on one side and the Asians on the other were pressing us hard. We thought we'd been defeated when overnight every city in the Western Hemisphere was destroyed, down to the foundations. All of them simply dissolved and sank thundering into the earth. Millions were killed. . .

"Then, slowly, the news began to filter through that the same thing had happened to Asia, Africa and Europe. Every city throughout the world had been destroyed. We began to realize that the same menace was striking at both war parties.... Then the ants came. By the billions, they came. They swept over us, destroying food, supplies, communications . . . and lastly us."

"That's all the story?" Gropper asked.

"Enough of it. I don't like to think of my wife . . . of my friends . . ." Otis shuddered. "It's enough to say that the world banded together against the onslaught of the ants too late. We here are the last survivors of a murdered world. . ."

There was a long silence while the bipeds reflected drearily on the swift, sure tactics of your Imperial Maternity's troops that had brought them so low. At last the biped named Doctor Elmer Gropper spoke.

"And I," he said, "murdered your world. No . . . don't interrupt. I want to tell you. It won't be long before none of us are alive to care.... Well.... The story starts twenty years ago at the close of the Second World War. It seemed to me that nothing could ever prevent another war except man himself, and I thought that man was too underdeveloped to ever do that. I decided to help man

develope..."

"You're crazy!" the red-haired biped, Ivar, said.

"No," Gropper answered. "In theory I was right. I reasoned that some time in the far future when man had advanced enough intellectually, he would give up killing. My attempt was to speed up this advancement . . . this artificial evolution of man . . .

"Yes, it could be done. The history of the world bore me out. Evolution had not been a slow, steady progress. It had leaped forward in sudden advances . . . and I discovered what had caused those advances."

The biped Reagan said: "What did?"

"Gas, strangely enough," Gropper replied. "Radon gas. When it is present in the atmosphere in sufficient quantities, it acts as a catalyst on chromosomal genes. It induces a chemical reaction in the molecules that are the characteristic carriers and causes those jumps in development that DeVries called mutations and Darwin called the Survival of the Fittest. "

"Yes," the precise biped, Chung, said. "That is more than possible."

"It's a reality," the female, Dinah, put in.

"Altogether too real," Gropper continued. "I built that cavern twenty years ago and constructed my apparatus there. Those hills are rich in pitchblende. Twenty years ago the Radon gas began to pour forth and I was jubilant. I knew that within a decade, perhaps two, evolution would strike at man and advance him far beyond war and the destructive arts. But last year, when I hired Miss Shaw as my assistant and we descended to the cavern to check the equipment that had been operating for two decades, I realized the horrible error I had made."

Reagan said: "What the hell are you talking about?"

"Evolution is mysterious," Gropper said. "Some hundred and fifty million years

ago the earth and the seas were dominated by the great reptiles. They were the masters of creation. But inhabiting the earth with them lived a small retiring rat-like creature, utterly insignificant in size. Yet in time . . . in evolution, that rat-like creature took over dominance from the reptiles.... Became man.... Became us."

"We all know that," Otis put in.

"But this you forget," Gropper said. "Man conquered the reptiles because he had a quality they lacked. Intelligence. Intelligence conquered brawn, although brawn was more powerful. But intelligence is not the supreme goal of evolution; it is only one of its phases, and just as brawn gave way to intelligence, so our intelligence is giving way to a quality we don't possess, but which is possessed by the species that will dominate the earth through it!"

In precise tones Chung said: "Thought transference! "

"That's it," Gropper cried. "Thought transference! The ants had it. Now, through artificial stimulation, it has been advanced and developed.... Just as your own intelligence has been quickened noticeably. But though you become geniuses, all of you, you will not cope with the ants. That quality of thought-transference will defeat you, just as our brains defeated the more powerful reptilian brawn. How will you fight an army of billions that think as one?"

The biped with red hair said: "Take it easy. We can. Give intelligence just one more try and it may win out. Chung and I have finished our work. Come and see..."

FOLLOWED by Spy-zeta-prime, the group of bipeds arose and left the council room.

As they began to descend the vast ramp to the ground level, Spy-zeta-prime telecast to Spy-zeta to pick them up in the great square courtyard in the middle

of the citadel. This was done and we tuned in on Spy-zeta.

The bipeds were clustering around a structure of high-polished metal which the red-haired slant-eye were demonstrating. It was of the shape of a short earthworm, very straight and the length of twenty bipeds.

"Looks like a rocket," Otis said.

"Exactly what it is. Double-skinned walls so that the blasted lice can't get through. Room inside for two, plus supplies. We can go out in this and swoop over the countryside and blast them to hell with the rocket discharges."

"What's the fuel?" Gropper asked.

"Uranium 235. It breaks down under a cyclotron cross-fire. Practically, I think we've got atomic power. All I know is that one gram of fuel burns for one hour, emitting about six billion calories of heat and exerting a constant pressure of twenty-six point five tons per square inch. The rear half is filled with fuel.... Enough to blow this baby to Andromeda and back.... Enough to burn every lousy ant twice out of the earth!"

At this message, Commander-lambda was extremely alarmed, and his unrest immediately permeated the rest of your Imperial Maternity's troops. It would have been sheer folly for us to have waited sapiently for the attack of the bipeds, and consequently the Commander telecast orders for an immediate attack on the citadel. The red armies marching up from the south he ordered to attack as soon as they reached the citadel, without pause for rest.

It was a glorious hour for your Imperial Maternity. Thirty billions of us marched down the slope toward the citadel of the bipeds. And so great was the interest of the bipeds in the infernal machine that we were not sighted until our first waves reached the water trap that ringed the Citadel.

Without hesitation, our troops plunged into the deep ditches and swam toward the

farside. Quickly, chains of living troops were made, and from these chains, livingbridges were built. Across these bridges swarmed your Maternity's loyal legions.

THE second water trap proved to be a trap indeed. Barely had we reached it when itflamed into the air to prodigious heights . . . a curtain of thick fire.

Commander-lambda telecast the battle-word: "Forward" and so our troops moved. By thehundreds of thousands they threw themselves into the pool of flame, glorious sacrificesfor your Imperial Maternity. Within a short space the fires were smotheredby the countless numbers of blackened, charred bodies. The troops reachedthe citadel walls.

They clambered up like a great rising black wave, directly in the face of the thunderingtorches which the bipeds wielded at the top. And though they fell backwardsin a hail of infinite numbers, the commander knew we must break throughthis time or else fail forever.

Then, faintly, we received vibrations from the red armies that they had sighted thecitadel. Quick to seize on opportunities, Commander-lambda ordered the red armiesto advance with all possible speed and show themselves as soon as possibleto the bipeds. Our own troops he ordered to concentrate at the south side.

As Commander-lambda planned, so it took place. Solid waves of our troops pressed atthe south wall. The bipeds were forced to flame their torches incessantly withoutfail. Yet one looked up for an instant and saw the flashing approach of thered armies. He gasped and called to the biped next to him. Together they staredfor less than a moment, yet in that time hundreds of our troops had passedthe crest of the battlements.

They died, Imperial Maternity, but in the moment when the bipeds were flaming them down along the wall-top, still other troops poured over the crest, and yet more and more until we had taken foothold at the parapet. We had forced a breach in the wall and from that moment, victory was ours.

Steadily we forced the bipeds back from the walls, and our billions swarmed through the citadel, routing them out of their corners and chambers. They fought well, but they fell. All of them.

It was when the bipeds were falling quickly and filling the citadel with their shrieks that Reegan and Dinah rushed to the lower courtyard. Spy-zeta was still there, reporting to us.

"It's all up, Wes!" Ivar cried. "We're finished. Get into the rocket ship ... you and Dinah. Get to hell out of here!"

"Why us?" Reegan demanded. "Why not you and Chung? It's your ship..."

"Chung is dead!" Ivar panted. "Otis is up there, screaming on the wall. Do what I say, will you? Get in! I've shown you how to operate her. Rocket to Hawaii.... To Mars.... Anywhere, To Mars.... Anywhere you like, only get only get away, Adam and Eve . . ."

The red-haired Ivar snatched up a torch, slung it over his shoulder and began flamingus back.

"For God's sake!" he cried. "Will you go?"

They leaped into the mechanism and the heavy portal clanged shut. For a time there was silence. Then suddenly the earth and air was filled with flame and roaring, and the very walls of the bipeds' citadel cracked and crushed down over us.

And when at last the dust and blackness were gone, the citadel was in ruins. The courtyard was merely overturned earth with fragments of broken stone protruding.

Of the mechanism, of the biped Ivar, or the others there was no sign.

Intelligence-mu of the Research Legions persists that the mechanism was a machine for piercing the skies to reach to the very light on high, and claims that it carried off the two bipeds and unfortunate Spy-zeta with it; but I cannot help believing that they have destroyed themselves.

So, if it please your Imperial Maternity, the day is won. On all earth there is no living biped. The earth, the air and the waters . . . all there is in the world is yours. Everything is yours, Imperial Maternity, as am I also.... Your most humble and very obedient servant....