

A muscular, orange-skinned devil with horns and a goatee, wearing a loincloth, is depicted sitting on a throne. He has a confident, slightly smug expression. The background is dark and indistinct.

THE RETURN OF SATHANAS

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“Satan, with vast and haughty strides advanced,
Came towering, armed in adamant and gold.”

—John Milton

CHAPTER I

Quest of the Darkome

The pursuit needle indicated a dizzy succession of zigs and zags in front of my straining eyes. The huge dread-nor, the Darkome, slewed in sickening curves as my hand on the swivel-jet stick tried to follow the crazily dancing needle. Was it—or was it not—the erratic ion trail of a dodging ship?

“Are we following one ship or a dozen?” asked Lt. Tyron, tightening the straining straps of the co-pilot’s chair beside me.

“I don’t know—but sure as the God’s vengeance we’re following something with plenty of reason to want to escape. And we will follow as long as the fool’s drivers leave us a trail.

“Too much trail right now. A few more of those sudden jerks and either the Darkome or me is going off in two directions at once—and the Darkome is tough.”

“There’s no question we can catch the ship or ships on this trail, but, what I am wondering... what has me worried... is, will our quarry be a big enough fish to be important, or some expandable decoy of Sathanas?”

I turned from my inspection of the dials and looked at my first officer. Tyron was a good man, but too impatient for action and too continually worried that he wouldn’t see any. But he was intelligent and, in the two centuries he’d been in my command, there had never been a question of his reliability. He had the familiar look of fearing that action was going to get away from him again. I couldn’t help laughing down at him.

“Well, Tyron, before this is over you’ll have a chance to catch a lot of those devils—and when we do you may get those hands you’re so proud of, singed. Carry on!”

I settled myself in my seat before the universal view screen,¹ thinking, “There’s nothing to do now until we catch sight of whatever is making this trail.” I, myself, was as impatient for action as Tyron, but in the long years since I left the culture farms of Mother Mu, I had learned to restrain my desire for adventure until the opportunity came to unleash my energies into effective action.

The irritation I felt at being forced to stay on duty was just another score I had to settle with the fugitive fleeing through space somewhere ahead of us. Here, aboard ship, I have my duty, and when it is performed, the course checked and affirmed, the log set to rights, and my officers assigned to their special duties, my time is my own. And woe betide the unfortunate who unnecessarily disturbs

1. This “universal viewer” is a device which assembles and coordinates the images resulting from a large number of penetray beams and their accompanying televisor—or direct-view screens. These beams point to every direction in space and the screen images are reprojected upon tiny mental vision (telaug) beams directly into the brain of the pilot of the ship. (Telaug beams carry mental messages in a large part of the communication system of the Nor-tans.) The result was a complete mental view in all directions disturbing to a man used to seeing in but one direction at a time. But to a pilot accustomed to the device, it was a vastly superior method to the older devices—which gave a single view of the space directly ahead. They were standard equipment on all Norton war-craft of any size. With it, an experienced pilot is continuously conscious of the contents of space in every direction simultaneously—and could at the same time use his exterior vision for other purposes, to write a report—or a letter home.—Author.

my meditations and experiments in my own ship-board laboratory. It is a well equipped laboratory—befitting the ennobled station the Gods of Nor have seen fit to bestow upon their humble servant and brother. Only in the capital cities of the God race are there comparable laboratories. I have spent years and many a long voyage in some of the less frequented reaches of space to equip it for the work I do when I am not on the errands of the Gods. Full of apparatus picked up in the strange ports of a thousand far off planets—perhaps a little evil-smelling at times, but it is my life, and in it is life—little lives whose efforts are at times vastly more successful than man's own... poor doomed mankind whose glorious ancestors are the immortal gods themselves.

On most of the assignments that I took my ship, the Darkome, I had plenty of time for my own experiments, far from the distracting social activities of my own adorable Arl. But this trip would not allow me any time to myself—this trip was ordered by the great Elders of Nor themselves. I was to capture and bring to trial that unwise but accomplished fiend, Sathanas, Ruler of the planet Satana. Sathanas, though a younger member of the God Race, had started his own private revolt against all authority—and the dicta of the Elders are not so lightly flaunted by any upstarts a few score centuries old. He had violated the Elder laws designed to protect and foster life and growth—it seemed that he could not get enough victims for his orgies of cruelty under the existing laws and had set out to make a few laws of his own. But, as I said, the laws laid down by the myriad Lords of Nor in Council are not easily broken—even by a powerful and cunning master of sin like this Sathanas—and thus it was that I sat on the bridge of the war vessel, Darkome—the crew alerted for battle action—its glistening hull plunging toward the general area of the planetary system that gave me birth long years ago.

Once his defection² had been fully exposed, Sathanas escaped our avenging fleet by the barest seconds. The ships in his fleet—several hundreds in numbers—had blasted up in the very face of our fleet—jockeyed into position in the center of the 'zone of weightlessness'³ between the planet Satana and her satellite Feon—then disappeared in that fierce burst of full acceleration into light speeds that is only possible in the precise center of such zones of weightlessness. To make the maneuver more untraceable, every ship in the enemy fleet disappeared in a different direction. Perhaps we could have followed a few of them, but never would we find all of those divergent trails at many light speeds into the depths of space.

Of course, they must have had some pre-arranged rendezvous. But where? Our only hope for their capture lay in attempting to follow some of them, and then, by keeping the various observed courses plotted on the space charts, eventually figuring out where, approximately, that rendezvous lay in all the infinite reaches of space. That blasting off in a variety of directions was a clever maneuver—one they had accomplished smoothly and at inimitable speed—and a preci-

2. DEFECTION: Note the persistence of this word—WITH the meaning INTACT—"dis-integrant energy infection" is shortened to DE-fection, and STILL means "to fall into evil; err on a job."—Author.

3. ZONE OF WEIGHTLESSNESS: In a place where no thing has weight, infinite acceleration can be achieved with every slight impetus—no inertia drag would crush the occupants. The acceleration would have no effect on the bodies of the passengers. A 'zone of weightlessness'—neutralized gravity—exists between any two bodies in space. These zones would be used by space ships as starting points for all long, fast voyages.—Author.

sion that bespoke much dangerous practice in the zones of weightlessness.

I had flung the Darkome into that center of neutralized gravities between two spatial bodies and pushed the lever controlling the dis-flows to the driver plates. Rammed it home to the last notch, swinging the ship with short side bursts, jockeying the craft to conform with the zig-zag swings of the pursuit needle, following the crooked trail of the gas ions left hanging in the ether by the force flows from the driver-plates of the Satanists' ships.

Somewhere ahead, the enemy flung himself deeper into the evernight of space. My ionic-indicator—a device to pick up the most tenuous of ion trails (standard equipment on all the battle ships of Nor) had finally stopped its wild gyrations and held steady on what was an ionic trail dead ahead. This was it! No more of the excitement and doubt if we would get a trail that wasn't just a decoy—this was heavy with the exhaust of a large craft—steady enough to indicate that the ship or ships just ahead were actually going some place. And, if the speed that we were making was any indication of just how fast the enemy was going, he was really racing through space at close to the top acceleration of the Darkome—the Darkome that I had worked and studied over and had the crew tune until it had the reputation as one of the fastest ships in the Nortan fleet. But, then, it should be—the best mechanical minds in my planet had been building it for three centuries.

Like the thoroughbred that she was, the Darkome settled down to the chase... the scent of the quarry was in her mechanical nostrils—and her powerful drivers were capable of hurtling her to the infinity of spatial boundaries if need be. We would catch whatever was ahead of us if it took years at this terrific speed.

Somewhere ahead that enemy crew bored a hole ever deeper into speed blackened space, their drivers heating as those of the Darkome were heating. Where would the chase lead?

CHAPTER II. Whence Came Sathanas?

This Arch-Angel, Sathanas, is not of the race of Nor. Being of Earth myself, it pains me to say that his ancestors first breathed the then untainted air of the third planet. Sathanas sprang from a vari-form family, originating among the Angels of Earth, which we call Mu. The Angels had originally been a blond, blue-eyed family of normal-appearing Earthmen. Then, some time in the past, Sathanas' bloodline had been crossed with some dark, hairy, cloven-hooved race of space. Long before the migration which emptied most of the Sun's planets of intelligent life, his family had taken over a dark planet—by name, Satana—on the outer rims of the Nor Empire. In time, their ability had won them the administration of the affairs of the planet from the Rulers of Nor. And, from that one planet, eventually, they were given the Rulership of all the little planets in the small system of which Satana was the dominant world. The "Angels" and their leaders were variously designated—a separate political group under their "Monitor Angels—Arch-Angels—and their supreme head, their Ruler and representative in the God Council on Nor—Elder Angel Fontal.

There were some dozen of the Arch-Angels with some dozen small planets in their administration. One of these was the Arch-Angel Sathanas, Ruler of the Home planet of the Angels in their group, the planet Satana. Being the first planet that the family had settled on after they left Mu, they had, in accordance with the

customs of the God-Race, taken the name of the planet that they ruled as their family name. The rest of these planets were colonized with Angels from the cities of Earth... a numerous, system-wide clan.

Sathanas' family had been well liked for a long time... and being just and wise rulers, they, as well as the peoples under them, prospered. And so, Sathanas had the best education that Nor could provide.

As I remember Sathanas, he was a fellow of some fifty feet in height, dark visaged, with the horns that indicated a crossing of the blood line with that of some Titans (which wasn't uncommon in ancient Mu) . I had seen him first at a council meeting some centuries ago, when I first acquired the status of a Ruler by my acquisition of the tiny planet of Callay. It was after concluding most of the formal ceremony incidental to the investiture of several new rulers that someone first introduced us.

I can still picture the scene as he first greeted me with the accepted ceremony of Nor's tradition. A score of us Lemurians, Titans, Atlans, variforms and a few from planets I'd never heard of—had found the favor of the Elders of the Council of Nor and were being made rulers of certain planets of the Nor Empire. Not big, important planets, true... but still, we were all pleased that we should be so honored by the Elders. Not all became rulers as they grew older and bigger—even of small planets and planetoids.

Finally, the long ceremonies of creating a new ruler of a provincial planet were over and we could relax for a brief time before the festivities began in celebration of the event. Several of us newly invested rulers had gathered together slightly apart from the tremendous bulk of swarming Elders—gathered in a laughing, harmlessly excited little circle. We kept congratulating one another and with mock solemnity addressed each other with all the titles we'd ever heard and remembered. That was one of the best moments of my life. I recall that I laughed, and raising my right arm in a formal Nortan salute, had addressed a great golden-haired Titan, though he was one of us, addressed him with as solemn a look and as impressive voice as I could manage.

"O Mighty Zeus, Grand Lord of the Thirtieth Tender Fleet, Conqueror of Limitless Cow Pastures, Ruler of the Lately Discovered World of Olympia, Greetings! Grant..."

"My Lords!" At the strange sound of someone addressing us so, we turned startled and looked up into the smiling understanding eyes of one of the Elders of Nor—one of the younger ones. He couldn't have been more than a few centuries older than we. For a moment we didn't know what to say, but the Elder continued before we became embarrassed.

"My Lords, may I present the Lord Sathanas, Arch-Angel and Ruler of the Planet Satana?"

We returned his salute and noticed this 'Lord Sathanas' that he'd presented. Accustomed as I am to life in all its varied forms and colors, the dark, ominous appearance of 'Lord Sathanas' was slightly depressing. He was too dark. Not the bronze darkness of a heavy space tan but the darkness of the sky just before a storm on Mother Mu. He made no effort to be friendly, just greeted us with stock phrases as though impatient to meet people more his equal. His impatience and boredom were further emphasized by the way he kept prancing on his cloven hooves—his heritage from some variform ancestor—and by the nervous way he kept drumming his fingers on the jeweled clasp of his weapon

belt. Nothing about him pleased me, particularly the swaggering way he kept his long dark cape in motion. I thought to myself, *what's he afraid of—that we'll contaminate his precious cloak?* I looked him full in the face—that handsome cynical face with the blue eyes of his Angel family, icily and incongruously staring back at me with the disdain ill-befitting a Ruler of Nor. That struck me as odd and jarring, here in this usually solemn hall (and my nostrils twitched with the scent of the evil, sulphurous odor about him, no doubt from some ingredient of his nutrient vapors).

I should have known then, or at least have been suspicious, but in the hallowed halls of the Council of Nor one does not suspect one's equals. But he was a dero⁴—I know that now.

There was a time, once, when the peoples of Mu and the other Sun planets were unaware that there could be such a thing as a dero. But that was when the Sun and Earth were young—before the Sun burned hot and deadly. But as the Sun burned down through its layers of carbon, it eventually reached the heavier substances near its core—the “de”—producing radio-active metals. It is the deadly emanations given off by burning radio-actives that produce in life, a dero—a detrimental energy from the Sun that so motivates life that they are like that which is robot—controlled by these “de”, or detrimental energy emanations—evil completely.

We didn't find that out until later, though. His family, foolishly indulgent, had concealed all the signs of his deroism. They didn't know enough of science to realize what a dread thing a dero can be.

They had paid for their indulgence and their ignorance with their lives—lives that should have been immortal—for the first of Sathanas crimes had been the summary and permanent removal of all the heirs above his rank in the family blocking his mad rise to power.

‘Something has happened to Sathanas’, people said. In a way, they were right, but they didn't know in what way or they would have removed him. I know from similar cases that his character was a long time growing.

Sathanas had been born on the planet Mu (Earth) in one of the older cities and the mech of that city was condemned not long after Sathanas had left Mu to become the satellite Ruler of one of the planets under the Elders of Nor.

His was pretty much the same background, in many ways, as that of Ex-Elder Zeit whose antecedents I had studied long ago, as I had been curious as to how an apparently intelligent man had become such an unthinking monster.

I thought—and experiments of the Elder scientists subsequently proved—that aging mech has produced many a criminal. I think that their subjection to the infected energy from the worn-out pleasure mech was the cause of this as it formed their inner polarization—their very soul—along dis-inductive lines. Hence, as long as stars blaze in space, such characters will induct that will to Evil from the stars' mighty destructive fields. And unfortunately there is absolutely no way to prevent these creations.

The whole group connected with Sathanas had fallen into some evil and dissipated habits, had formed a cult of great power, and had built secret hideouts where they could indulge their perverted tastes in safety. They did not relish being deterred by Nor laws protecting the rights of every individual to safety of per-

4. DERO: See *I Remember Lemuria*.

son. All this evil they had kept concealed behind many a barrier of sub-officials. And all went along smoothly for the Gods of Space know only how many years.

But finally, a very beautiful young Nor maiden had wheedled and vamped her way out of their unholy clutches and exposed the whole rotten mess.

Their use of girls for wall ornaments,⁵ living in stimed nutrient, the whole depraved business of torture for pleasure and profit—the horrible circuses where captive men were forced to fight for their lives against beasts from the unsettled sun-planets—all this disgusting blight on the rule and culture of the Nor Empire had finally been dragged out into the open. What Sathanas had thought was a corner on illegal entertainment had turned into a trap from which he was now just barely making his escape.

CHAPTER III

Back on Mother Mu

The great sensitive needles of the ionic-trail-indicator⁶ became still and fell back against the pin marked 'O'—no more trail.

In the split second that the needle stopped, I leaped to my feet, stabbing the button opening the ship communicator.

"All hands! Attention! Reverse drivers! View screen open! Gun crews stand by!"

The great dreadnor braked to a tortured halt from full velocity. I could hear Tyron taking over control, alerting the crew for battle—action that might start immediately. Barked orders maneuvered the ship's immense bulk into the exact center of the "zone of weightlessness."

"—we might have to move fast."

"Where are we?" I asked myself, as soon as I had made sure that the enemy wasn't in the neighborhood.

"This constellation looks familiar," I mused. "Can it be... still... it is!"

Opening the communicator, I called, "Arl! Do you recognize that planet in your view screen? It's Mu!" Nostalgia gripped me. A homesickness I didn't think I could still feel smothered me at the sight of the familiar seas and green, white-topped mountains of my abandoned homeland of almost two thousand years ago.

5. STIMMED BODY-ORNAMENTS: This use of girls and women for ornaments is a particularly revealing angle on the opulence and cruel disregard for the natural rights of man which has marked ray-secrets since the earliest days. This use is an old, and still extant, custom in the caverns that honeycomb this planet we call Earth but which the ancient ancestors of all of us called Mu. Down there in the great old ray mansions' salons are wall brackets where young women are hung, and the stim currents of too great pleasure flows make their bodies rigid with an overwhelming synthetic nerve-electric. The effect is one of great beauty for the girls' young bodies are then like forced flowers pouring out all the beauty and love of a lifetime in an almost visible and very sensual outpouring of energy—like the flower pours out its pollen in a single day. Thus a place can be decorated with human flowers—if one doesn't care how soon such human flowers wilt. When the custom began, it is probable that the wonderful old mech contained strong beneficial flows which made the experience of the human ornament one of benefit. They survived, stronger than before and better. But as the mech grows older, such strong subjections to great energy flows from the old mech are no longer supportable by the human frame. In the caverns, the custom still survives of decorating the walls for a feast with these living stimed ornaments, but the custom of surviving the ordeal of pleasure has perished, from what I hear.—Author.

6. GAS IONS: While the driver flow is a kind of reverse gravity formed by the disintegration of a certain metalloy, during the expansion under the dis-current, much gas is formed exclusive of the integrative snapback flow of exd which is the frictional flow forming the drive. The dissociating sub-atoms of the driver plates pass through a gaseous stage where they leave a trail that is detectable. This ionizing trail is an unavoidable product of this form of drive.—Author.

Taking over the controls from the pilot who didn't even suspect that the planet under us was my former home, I tooled the mighty Darkome to a landing on Mu's satellite. For all of her tremendous mass, she slid gently to a stop in the glistening, liquid-air snow sheltered by the black shadow of one of the moon's mountains.

I ordered the tender broken out, then called to the control room.

"I am going to take Lady Arl to the surface of this satellite's planet. While I am scouting down there, keep the crew alerted."

Tyron saluted, looking a bit envious—envy, I guess, at the thought that he wasn't going to see his desired action. "Yes, sir," was all he said.

"Observe standard precautions for operation in enemy territory. Avoid using equipment as much as possible to cut down the chances for detection."

"Yes, sir," he nodded.

"I don't know where the Sathanas' ship or ships have gone, but I doubt if they would be apt to be close by and still be undetected by our mech. But, until you hear from me, take no chances. That's an order!"

Returning his salute, the Lady Arl, who had come to the control room, and I boarded the tender and took off. And not too comfortably, either. A tender is a small spacer for short flights—lifeboats for the crew, and on the Darkome the tenders were big, but two thousand years of Vanue's wizardry of growth had increased our height till we were well over fifty feet.

Both Arl and I felt the old excitement we'd experienced as youths using the small spacers for picnics from Mu to the Moon—felt excitement as I drove the little craft to the surface of the doomed planet for the first visit in a score of centuries.

Our excitement soon turned to sadness. This wasn't the same planet we'd left—no darting ships—no shining towers—no signs of civilized life.

"Oh, Mion," spoke the lovely Arl beside me, "this is all so sad and unreal. I feel like—Mion! Look! What's that over there?"

"It looks like... it is a city, Arl!" Her enthusiasm was contagious. "Shall we go over there?"

"Oh, yes, Mion. Let's see what man has done in all these years."

"All right, Arl, but remember we are not allowed to stay here long."

She nodded, silent.

We of the Nor are not allowed to stay long on a sunlit planet, for one's character soon becomes twisted—not necessarily into evil, but certainly into err—which can be worse. One in err is stupidly convinced of his correctness, of his own brilliance. All of our food and drink must be brought from our ship, for the radioactives in the water and meat of Earth may not be eaten by Nor men by law. That err, that mental polarization, is the thing men of Earth must fight most fiercely, for err will live in their thinking, an illogic that will make them think black is white till they are forced to check the question with a colorimeter.

We would pay for my stay on this sad planet with many boring hours before the medicos finish the mental tests to make sure that we have not been seriously affected by the sun's hard light. Sometimes I believed they feared evil and its cause too much to fight it effectively. The old medicos can be tiresome themselves, to the point of evil. I would like to give some of them a few tests myself—of my own devising. Yes! They are too close to some dense metals—err magnets of another kind—and have become polarized by the dullest and heaviest metal to

be found on a thousand master-size planets, that I know.

I expected to stay but the few hours allowed me and then away. Nearly two thousand years of the destructive magnetic field sweep of the sun had passed over old Mu. The difference between this little planet third from the Sun and the dark planets is immense. There, time is a growth, never a loss. Here, time is a sorrow, a slow destruction, a completely OPPOSITE QUANTITY. Here, the proud towers of Old Atlantis are crumbling stones, eroded by the blowing sands of the encroaching deserts that did not exist under Atlan science. There, the fecund growth of man has multiplied the beauty and pleasure, the power and the glory of Nor, many, many times in these two thousand years.

Having seen death in many forms, I like to fight death's burning face wherever I find it. Surely, death's face is burning brighter on Mother Mu than on any other globe these feet have trod, feet that sink further into the dis-softened stones⁷ of this planet than any other I know. Many have been the globes trod since I last left old Mu to voyage through the dark voids where no light but the light of wisdom can be found. Dull it is, to one who has tasted war and death, and swift-tiding battles, to speed on some mission in which the element of danger has been reduced to the undetectable minimum. I am a warrior, trained through many centuries of supremely difficult schooling to the rigors of battle and war, and there are few indeed, for Nor men to fight who even dare to think of braving our slightest displeasure.

Nearly two thousand years had passed since I distributed the records of the Atlan migration to dark space to guide the men who should come after us on Mu.

As I guided the craft in a hovering flight over the scarred face of old Mu, I marveled at the green growth over everything, for it is hard to realize that though everything dies of the Sun poisons, life goes on, renewed forever. After first coming upon such worlds of death, one cannot accustom oneself to the idea that all this life that looks so vibrant and virile is so short-lived.

I know that since I had left Mu, cities probably had grown and died upon her surface, and cities under her surface must have been peopled and have again lost their peoples in the wars that always rage on the sun-burned planets.

Arl and I glided over the glittering golden roofs of the city, and, settling to Earth some miles distant, entered a cavern whose ancient shafts still gaped, unfilled by the rubble that now choked most of the openings to the Elder world. We were anxious to see what life had taken root within the caverns, for there lay the tools of the ancient wisdom, waiting for a wise man-child's learning. Arl opened the great air lock at the bottom of the shaft and I floated the tender in to the floor of the cavern.

We fell to rummaging about in the ruins of the great mansions, as one will in these old places. I activated one of the penetray view rays and took a look at the shining city on the surface not far away. A one man flyer of an antique make rose from the city and came toward us. I augmented the passengers' mind, saw that his name was Tyr, that he was of the Aesir, as the people of the city evidently called themselves. He had seen our ship and was coming to investigate. He seemed excited, as though something about our appearance had revealed to him that we were the uncommon "visitors from the stars" mentioned in the legends

7. One of the most repeated legends of the Gods coming again to Earth is the detail that their heavy feet sank ankle deep into solid rock—a very interesting legend—heavy-planet races denoted.—Author.



and folk-tales of his people.

"Arl," I called to my lovely lady who was busy satisfying her curiosity about some of the old mechanisms at the far wall of this big room. "Arl, come here and watch this flier—he seems to be heading this way!"

With the quick, cat-like change of interest of women, Arl pranced gaily over to where I sat at the controls of the tele-thought augmentor. With a pleased little laugh, she wagged that ever-charming tail of hers and took her place beside me.

As we sat at the screen watching the approaching flier, we could see his mind was a maelstrom of conflicting sentiments—I couldn't repress my laughter at the fear I

saw there. But there are times when Arl saves me from unrequired cruelty, and when I laughed, she chided me.

"Oh Mion, don't laugh at that poor little man! Remember, it has been almost twenty centuries since they have had a visit from any of the Elder Races."

"Lovely Arl," I agreed, "I had forgotten. I should have remembered that fear goes with sun-infection."

"He is a brave man, Mion," Arl pointed out. "He is afraid, yet his will to investigate makes him overcome his fear. If he is representative of mankind..."

I nodded, knowing what Arl meant. As long as there are brave men on Earth who can conquer their fear and dread with their own wills, there is hope that mankind can, in time, defeat the "de" curse of the Sun.

"Look, Mion, he's dropping down the shaft as though he has done it many times before."

It was true. The pilot of the little flier expertly dropped down the shaft and came to rest beside the Darkome's tender. There was a moment of indecision—Arl and I knew from reading his mind that it was all he could do to restrain a wild, nearly uncontrollable impulse to flee. He took heart, however, stepped from his machine, and came toward us. He was large for the race of Earthmen, being about twelve feet high.

Finally, eyes bulging, he stood in awe before us where we sat at the ancient mech.

I greeted him by name: "Ho, Tyr, what brings you to us who are strangers to you?"

At that he flung himself prostrate before us. Our lack of enmity loosed his tongue and he protested: "Of course you know me, O Gods from the Stars. I have heard the old men speak of your kind, and have read something of you in the ancient writings, but many of us no longer believe in the greater Gods. Of course, you understand all mysteries, and you have read my thoughts over the ancient mechanisms I see you toying with. I am of the Aesir race, and that is our city you see in the distance. I am one of the few who understand the great significance of your coming here. Odin, our all-father, in his palace invites your presence. We have great need of your wisdom, Mighty Ones."

I finally assented to Tyr's importuning and the invitation of Odin himself over the great ray called Odin's Eye, and we entered the tender and took off for the palace of Gladsheim⁸ dominating the shining, gilded-roofed city of Asgard in the distance.

We spiraled down toward the great courtyard of the palace, reading a dozen minds on my telaug on the way down.

It is habitual for a Nor to be careful. There was nothing but curiosity and awe in their minds; this was no trap, I knew. As I landed the ship, several brawny, armored warriors came up to us. Axes were slung on their belts beside the antique dis-ray pistols, pistols of a type that the science of the high gods has not surpassed to this day. They spoke the ancient universal tongue called Mantong, but time had so changed the pronunciation that it was difficult to understand it at once. We used small portable telaugs to tell what was in the minds about us anyway. We easily carried them in our hands. But Arl and I soon began fully to understand the speech, for the basic sounds were all the same as our own, and not by any means are we mentally slow.

To our way of thinking, these Aesir were little fellows. They were not more than ten or twelve feet in height. The largest showed the graying hair of age, the sign dreaded most of all plagues, in all space, caused from over exposure to the poisonous emanations of a deadly Sun. In space flight, sometimes it happens that some poorly plotted course flashes a ship close into the terrible heat and deadly particles of the field surrounding some dense sun. Also, sometimes, in the little time of their passing such a sun at light speed, their hair grows white, and they die in a few weeks. Such is impregnation by radio-active particles—sure death. Old Sol, the Earth's sun, is not that bad, but it, too, is sure death. A great pity arose in me that these fine men did not know what caused their age, or how to avoid it if they did know. This pity of mine is one reason some man will sometime find this record I leave, and know how to shun the terrible plague of space, the deadly, dense particles from heavy suns that get into the flesh and stay, burning away good life force and leaving a shriveled corpse.

Do you remember the lovely Arl? She is still Arl, but grown so big now that the Mutan who loved her then would worship at her feet as once he worshipped at Vanue's huge beauty... for that matter I still do anyway. She is here beside me now, toying with the ancient stim rays; the stim ray that is forbidden as its effects can be most evil if the metal is too far gone in slow disintegrance. But Arl carries with her a meter of my devising containing a dial which reveals the most minute flows of "de" force dangerous to man.

She must know if this one is dangerous stim or not. It seems to be still usable, for a vastly pleasurable viray is flowing over my form even now from her hands, and her soft lips are multiplied a laughing million of times all over me. I am forever startled by the endlessly varied stim augments that Arl's infinite wit finds in any mech of the kind. I have had a billion tiny Arls lift me in my sleep and carry me to Elysia, their forms growing more and more about me, till all the world was soft, gleaming, rosy Arl, the flowers her faces, the breeze from her lips, and the stim rays looks from her eyes, loving me, while her hair became a vast forest of

8. Note that this city of Asgard and this Gladsheim are not the city or people mentioned in the story "Thought Records of Lemuria," but is a city which takes its name from the site of one of the first cities built by the Atlans. These Aesir are the latter gods who take many of their names from the elder gods; cities are named in the same manner.—Author.

titanic, curling beauty sheltering me in its scented shade.

There are no words or images to tell you what a girl of imagination can do with stim augments of her thought. I still think of Arl as a girl, and she looks like a girl, too, except her size is as great as my own, and that is too much to think about. For soon we must leave our loved home on Nor and move on to the heavier planets⁹ of the Elder cities, and that is a hard time for adjustment, as it takes years to accustom oneself to the great gravity.

CHAPTER IV

Pact with the Aesir

Odin welcomed us himself, leading us into the great hall of Gladsheim. The walls were covered with the gleaming shields of his followers; he sat us upon his own throne and the throne of his queen beside it. They were the only seats that could begin to hold us, for they were relics from the old time and must have been too great for their present users. So we took them, and indeed, Arl and I are used to great honor wherever we go, for we are much loved and respected. "A friend is the best gold" is my motto, and can be a mighty power when he is needed.

As he stood before us, Odin was nearly half our height. But age was showing on him. His beard was snow white, his ruby-red Santa Claus face lined with the progress of the dreaded sun-blight.

Odin stood on the steps of the throne dais and made a short speech to his followers.

"These are the high Gods who live among the far stars. You have heard of them from our wise men, and now they are here for you to see. They come at a time when we need them most. If they approve of us, our struggles with the Jotuns will go well, so hold your evil natures in check, and let the High Gods see the gold that we, your friends and I your ruler, know lies underneath the rude flesh." Then Odin turned to us, saying:

"We know much of your ancient race from writings found in the caves—the plates of imperishable metal left by Mutan Mion have been translated by some of our wise men, and I have read their writings. Also, we have learned to use some of the ancient magic from the hot depths of the greater caverns where a man can no longer live for the heat. There we have found great things and brought them to the surface for use here in Gladsheim. We would like to have you explain many things about that science that produced such things, but just now we are getting ready for a seige. The Jotuns are preparing for an attack on Asgard. Even now their hosts gather in the misty depths of the dark land beyond. What are your names that I may properly present you to our brave warriors?"

With a bow toward Arl, I said, "This is the Lady Arl and I am called Mion."

Arl smiled at them with the graciousness of a true queen.

"My Lord is too modest," she said in that lovely voice. "He is the Lord Mutan Mion, the Lord Mion to whom even the Elder Titans and Atlans owe their lives."

The Aesirs' eyes popped with surprise and joy when they heard that we were the same Mutan Mion and Arl mentioned on the ancient plates.

9. HEAVIER PLANETS: At a certain point in their development, the Normen must leave home and go to the heavier planets. They do not return from these heavy planets to the lighter ones except as rulers or teachers. The princess Vanue and the other very tall characters appearing in these stories have returned to the children races as teachers, rulers, or judges. All the Elders are of this class of returned people.—Author.

"So many lives... and still living," were their excited comments, "so long... and so young to look upon. So fair, and yet so ancient of days. Yea, they are the Gods... come again to Earth as in the old days that some swear were true things."

But Odin had little time for much formality, though he seemed to think we merited a great deal of it.

"Oh Great Ones from Beyond, if you will not help us against the Jotuns, we must leave you for awhile and get to our work, preparing to meet the coming attack, but, Oh Mighty Ones, if you will help us, we are yours. Command us what we must do to beat off the fierce Jotuns."

As he spoke a messenger raced into the hall. With some urgency he approached the dais that held the throne and spoke privately into Odin's ear. The worthy human's face fell. As he turned again to us, I could detect a note of sadness in his voice.

"The messenger brings bad news, My Lords. Another great ship from the stars—ininitely larger than the one in which you arrived—has come to Earth in the encampment of the Jotuns. That is not the whole of this ill news. Mighty men of a size as your own have come out of this huge vessel and are siding with the Jotuns in their preparation for the coming struggle with us. What means that to you, O Great Beings?"

Now, I knew that there was but one Nor ship in this immediate solar system, and that another space ship as large as the Darkome probably was the fugitive that we were seeking—one of the ships of the infamous fleet we were pledged to return to the Courts of the Rulers of Nor. I explained to these Earthmen that these were fugitives from the justice of the Gods, and that I could summon power to crush them utterly, as soon as I contacted my ship, the Darkome.

"Are the Jotuns and these strangers in view ray range?" I asked the white-bearded Odin.

"They smugly think they are not," was his answer as he led me to the instrument called Odin's Eye.¹⁰ It was really a vast space telescope with a tri-dimensional screen, a big box of luminous mist in which three dimensional pictures of the objects in focus



10. ODIN'S EYE: Was this the origin of the legends regarding 'Odin's Eye'? Norse folk-tales recounted it as an all seeing 'eye,' or all-seeing god-like power. This just might have been the result, or the USE, of just such ancient mechanism or equipment as in this story—the view ray, which the authors claim still exists in the ancient, God-built caverns, probably operated on a principle similar to a combination of present day radar and television. The television part of the ancient 'mech' operates, in any event, without the need for a transmitting station. The same way, for instance, that your radio might pick up a conversation a few miles away without the need of a radio station 'sending.' It is amazing when you consider that right beneath our feet this present day, and for untold centuries of the past, such equipment has lain idle and unused—except by a few degenerate tribes that somehow have lived there for all those years. It is the claim of the authors that the use of this marvelous equipment by these degenerates, or 'dero,' their 'tampering' with the lives of surface people, is the cause of most of our ills and 'bad luck.' —Editor.

could be seen. Within it we saw the gathering place of the Jotuns, and monsters they were, recently having come to Earth from some huge, colder planet. There, their size had been naturally determined by the conditions of the planet. They were three times the size of the Aesir,¹¹ of a greater size than Odin himself, and infinitely uglier than any others I have ever seen. I had heard of the Jotuns, an evil race shunned by all wise men. They had a custom of following up Atlan and Titan migrations and occupying their abandoned cities for the pleasure instruments which were always to be found in the abandoned pleasure palaces and mansions of the immortals. They were, consequently, not entirely unaccustomed to handling ray equipment, and would prove mean antagonists for the Aesir. The Aesir had had many a brush with them since their arrival a century ago, and had come off a too close first in most of them.



Obviously, the Aesir were not relishing the contemplation of a war to the last ditch between the two races, for the Jotuns were not only more numerous, but they had occupied and used more of the ray equipment-filled caves than the Aesir. The Aesir ignorantly chose to build their cities on the surface in the cheerful sunlight, and they did not understand what the Sun did to them. A few of their wise men had warned them of the writings left by the Gods which told them that the Sun caused old age, but they scoffed at this as old men's garrulous fear. The only ray the Aesir had was portable equipment they had laboriously brought to the surface for their use.

When I saw the huge, dark figure of Sathanas himself among them, I knew

11. Again referring to the books of Charles Fort: He quotes from the *Journal of American Folklore*, 17-203. viz., "Certain stone hatchets are said to have fallen from the heavens." The authors pose the question: Are these stone axes that have been reported as having fallen from the heavens perhaps the crude 'side arms' of an uncultured race of 'esoteric ones' who have learned to fly the ancient cave-contained space craft, making interplanetary flights, yet, of themselves, incapable of making any more mechanically advanced war weapons than crude stone hatchets that they have within historical times dropped from their flying space craft? The reference above is the report of South American Indians. As to the possible 'size' of members of uncultured ones, read further in Fort's *The Book of the Damned*: (From *Nature*, 30-300:) May, 1884, the 27th, at Tysnas, Norway, a meteorite had fallen; that the turf was torn up at the spot where the object had been supposed to have fallen: two days later "a very peculiar stone" was found nearby. The description is—"in shape and size very like the fourth part of a large Stilton cheese." See the story for a description of the size of the Jotuns and then compute how large the stone heads of their war axes would have to be. In the same work, Fort quotes from *The Proc. Soc. of Antiq. of Scotland*, 1-1-121: That in a lump of coal from a mine in Scotland an "iron instrument" had been found. Is this another indication of the extreme age of the human race? Again from Fort: Notice of a stone axe, 17 inches long, 9 inches across broad end. (*Proc. Soc. of Ants. of Scotland*, 1-9-184.) *American Antiquarian*, 18 -60: Copper axe from an Ohio mound; 22 inches; weight 38 pounds. *American Anthropologist*, n.s., 8-299. Stone axe found at Birchwood, Wisconsin: 28 inches long, 14 inches wide, 11 inches thick, weight 300 pounds. HUMAN FOOTPRINTS FOUND IN SANDSTONE, Near CARSON, NEVADA—EACH PRINT 18 to 20 inches LONG. (*Amer. Jour. Sci.*, 3-26139)—Editor.

several things by swift deduction. First, I knew his presence here was no accident. Second, I knew that here was the rendezvous of the fleeing ships the patrol had pursued to all the points of the compass, for it was not likely that Sathanas would have had time to mix into the quarrels of the Jotuns unless he was waiting here for that rendezvous. And last, I knew that Sathanas had had dealings with these gigantic and hideous Jotuns before to know them so well. Such dealings were forbidden expressly by law. The Elder Race literally ‘fathered’ the human race and they made strict laws protecting the lives of their children. The Jotuns were well known as slave dealers,¹² and what was worse, they were known for their modifications on the ancient mechanisms they salvaged from abandoned caverns—modifications which made the mech potent tools for the changing of good human character to evil ends.

Putting a telaug beam on Sathanas’ head in the tridimensional screen, I heard his thought and from it I gathered a general impression corroborating my deductions. For centuries, he had traded and had been in communication with these Jotuns. This was also forbidden by the Nor laws. For a long time he sold them Nor maids for slaves, and in return, he received much illegal equipment which the Jotuns manufactured from the ancient pleasure mech. It was evident that he had long ago promised them aid against the Aesir in return for some favor. That his flight from the Nor wrath was unknown to the Jotuns was clear, for he was striving with all his mighty brain to keep the knowledge of his trouble from escaping to their minds over the telaug over which the conference was being conducted. Evidently he did not intend to risk his ship in the coming battle, but was seated at a great table in the gloomy ruined home which was their meeting place, going over their battle plans with the leaders. These leaders were a fearful lot to look upon. Though somewhat lacking in logical mental powers, they seemed to make up for this by fierceness of physique and ruthlessness of intent.

Gathered in the vast cave that stretched its murky depths into the hidden distance were the sons of Loki and Sigyn, the wife of Loki. How he ever came to marry her was too much for me, for she was many times his size and as evil visaged as hell itself. The witch, Hela, who was not Loki’s daughter, and who had no regard for him, was a very tall giantess of a hideous whiteness like frost, or dead bones. Evil lived in her eyes and on her face, and on her face twisted a shadow of death. Like most devotees of the spirit of evil, she was obviously mad and possessed of a mad-woman’s peculiar appetites, augmented and exaggerated as they

12. DISAPPEARANCES—SLAVERY: The authors are convinced that there have been many writers in the past and the present who either knew or suspected the existence of the caverns beneath the surface of the Earth, or that there was a power or a force or a race that was influencing the human race, usually for evil. The numerous legends of evil spirits, and good ones, too, tales of strange happenings, and strange disappearances. Charles Fort was one of those who came closest to guessing, or knowing the mysteries contained in the artificial cave world beneath this Earth’s surface. He thought that we were “fished for,” or that the possibility existed that we were fished for. For what purpose? Our facts are still too intangible on this count to say for certain whether we are really fished for at the present day. But if in the centuries past, there were races such as the Jotuns, trading in living humans—as slaves (or food?)—might they not still be extant? Before the reader dismisses this question with “ridiculous!” let him read any of the daily papers of the past few years, or the books of Charles Fort, for literally thousands of unexplained “disappearances.” People seen one moment and never again—even in the larger cities that are presumably well guarded. If the reader lives near any of the country’s large cities, he might call the Missing Persons Bureau, if any, and get the LOCAL statistics on the annual number of disappearances that are not accounted for, or the number undetected. Then, figure out how many large cities there are in the whole nation.—Author.

so easily can be by the use of the beneficial and stim. Also, there were many leaders of the Jotuns, hairy, gray beast-men, thirty feet high, knotted muscles, and armed with every kind of weapon known to two civilizations—stone clubs hung side by side with flame swords of a make superior to any made now, for the art is a lost one. This horde knew ray work, and they were blood-thirsty fighting men proved in a thousand brawls and dozens of wars. The Aesir had cause to worry, for these were professional warriors brought from space for the express purpose of getting the powerful Aesir out of the way for their commerce in souls, slaves and perverting mech. Evidently this was the reason Sathanas was here, as this commerce of the Jotuns was his greatest single source of income. The Aesir had a bad habit of raiding the Jotun's strongholds and releasing the poor human beasts.

But the Einheriar,¹³ the chosen, the warriors of Odin, were no match in size or in experience for this bunch of mad dogs from the pleasure dens of a dozen planets.

I doubted that this affair would ever come to hand to hand combat. I looked down into Odin's great "eye" for a chance to find out just what range weapons were available to the Horde, what they planned to use immediately. Sathanas was talking.

"All this array of armed force is of no use. One long range ray brings the whole army to naught. We must have a spy, someone who can tell us just what range weapons they have to use against us."

Loki pushed his comparatively small form to the foreground, shouting, "The Aesir have no weapons worth worrying about. I knew every ray in Asgard. They cannot touch us. You can sweep the whole place clean of life with one ray from your mighty ship."

I turned to Odin. "Just what is the range of your weapons?" I asked him.

"I can't reach him," answered Odin. "I can see him, but I can't hit him."

"You don't know much about these tri-dimensional screens, I am afraid, O All-Father. Let me show you something."

Pulling a side arm from my belt, I directed its epileptoray pencil at Sathanas' head in the cube-screen, Sathanas immediately curled up into an agonized, crumpled heap of writhing, shrieking, slobbering flesh. The table, surrounded by the gigantic Jotuns, and a few of the really gigantic cohorts of Sathanas, leaped to their feet, mouths gaping in astonishment.

"See, Father, the beam of this particular view ray is constructed to transmit energy complete, and is, consequently, a most efficient and adaptable weapon, ready to carry any energy to any point it reaches, and it has tremendous penetrative range, as you can see. Some of this type of ray will even dislodge furniture, or transmit the energy of a push. Watch!"

I seized a war club from the wall. It was very small for me, like a child's toy hammer in my hands, and I tapped one of the heads of the

13. EINHERIAR: This persistent legend of raising the dead for purposes of acquiring soldiers, slaves, etc. seems to come from the extreme potency of the antique beneficial ray. I, myself, have seen a boy of eight killed by a fiend from a distance with detrimental ray, raised again by his mother with beneficial ray at full strength. The fiend killed the boy three times in a period of four days, each time his mother revived or raised him again within a few minutes. There are many accounts of the potency of these rays. Even the thuggee of India believe that their unseen backers can raise them from the dead if they are killed. It is very probably true that they are revived after a short time of death by this means. The Hindu ascetics who slit open their stomachs and let out their intestines with a knife, then push them back in to have the wound heal at once are the same kind of phenomena. —R. S. Shaver.

Sathanists.¹⁴ He promptly dropped unconscious or dead to the floor. “You see, you didn’t know what there was in this beam. It is a very fine example of the best work of that particular time.”

Odin waited for no prompting from me, but seized a club from the wall and started bopping every head in the ray screen. Regularly I moved the beam a little to keep a good bunch of the enemy within its slightly reduced vision, reduced from life size, and penciled my own epileptic-ray at every one of the misfits of life that I could reach. Odin was enjoying himself immensely, and we had nearly cleared the cavern of its hundred or so big-shots of the Jotuns when a huge black shorter-ray swung out of Sathanas’ vast ship from dark space and grounded Odin’s Eye. Odin’s fun was over for the time, his beam shorted to the ground by the black conductor ray. His troubles with the super science Sathanas had brought from his Nor-governed home had just begun. So had all Earthmen’s troubles with Sathanas.

I figured that Odin’s bopping of Jotun pates would have the effect of holding off the attack until I had time to make ready for it, because they hadn’t known that they could be reached. I radioed the Darkome for certain supplies and for certain technicians I would need. Why didn’t I tell them to radio a Nor base and tell them of the whereabouts of Sathanas? Because I had an idea that I could take Sathanas apart with a device I was planning to construct, and that I could bring him in single-handed, which would be quite a feather in my cap. Such is a man’s thought when near a sun. Always wrong. It was foolish to do without the help I could have acquired so quickly, but I thought it a splendid idea, and so original. I had never had such a wonderful idea before. Err is very deluding when it appears in a mind unaccustomed to it.

First I asked the Aesir for a list of every available ray device within the city. When I got the list, I checked off the types of ray I wanted—those with a good long beam that would carry the greatest amount of superimposed power, and those with the most potent destructive qualities, regardless of the range. The latter would be aided in carrying power by the former in the huge device I was planning for the downfall of Sathanas. Why didn’t I call the Darkome to me? I had another err—the less equipment I used to capture Sathanas, the greater would be my glory. Such errs I might have corrected if I had been used to their presence in my mind, but in the clean magnetic fields of Nor planets one’s thought is naturally correct and I was unprepared for the sudden flood of distorted ideas the Sun was releasing in my mind.

On the list of ray equipment brought me, there were all kinds of pleasure

14. PRECISE ACCURACY OF ANCIENT WEAPONS: These ancient weapons were so accurate and so built for durability that perhaps they are the means by which certain phenomena have been actuated. Charles Fort, in his book *Wild Talents*, says this: “In the London newspapers, last or March, 1908, was told a story, which, when starting off, was called ‘what the coroner for South Northumberland described as the most extraordinary case that he had ever investigated.’ The story was of a woman, at Whitley Bay, near Blyth, England, who, according to her statement, had found her sister burned to death on an un-scorched bed. This was the equivalence of the old stories of ‘spontaneous combustion of human bodies.’” (I don’t know what significance, if any, is in the spelling of “extraordin-RAY,” but that is the precise way it is spelled on page 909, *The Books of Charles Fort: Wild Talents*, published for the Fortean Society by Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1941.) *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, Dec. 16, 1889: “In some mysterious way, a fire started in the mahogany desk in the center of the office of the Secretary of War, at Washington, D. C. Several official papers were destroyed, but it was said that they were of no especial value, and could be replaced. Secretary Proctor cannot understand how the fire originated, as he does not smoke, and keeps no matches about his desk.” Taken from *Wild Talents*, p. 911.

rays and healing rays, but few weapon rays. The pleasure and healing rays were tricky stuff, well built, some of it, but of little use in a battle except for observation, inspiring the fighters, or for healing the wounded. I knew that Sathanas' black cruiser was loaded to its capacity with the heaviest war-ray available which was, as I know now, a power unsurveyed by any law-abiding eyes. So, it was hard to say just what he might have up his sleeve in the way of fighting ray. Whether his fleet would rendezvous with him here on Earth, or whether he was to meet them elsewhere, I could not make sure, for his trained mind had felt my probing thought and doubled the answer—saying that both were true. I suspected that the first was the truth and that we would have hundreds of outlaw ships flaming down upon us at any moment. Sathanas seemed committed to supporting the Jotuns in return for their cooperation in his own plans. Sathanas' crew on his ship kept the black shorterbeam on our view-beam, and Odin's Eye was the only ray of master size in the city. We had no way of knowing now what they were up to. Principally, I was anxious to know whether any of the other ships of Sathanas had joined him or not.

This life on Earth is distorted and fading, a once brilliant picture that long ago fell on the water of life, and is now melting away. There is little left of the old God picture of life. The soft rounded chins of the Aesir young, the honest, beautiful truth in the undis-affected eyes of a child, the turned, beautiful perfection of some young limbs, these are the only true images left from the God era. The rest is distorted by an ill wind across the mirroring pool of life force. And thus it was that I saw those monstrous forms across the deep of Jotunheim, the life force distorted by some evil willed wind from Elvidnir—from the Hall of Hela in Niflheim—distorted and dying into the mental err of evil life.

While we waited for the supplies from the Darkome or for the arrival of the patrol ships from space, I put the Aesir at the construction of a cumbersome device I had seen put to good use on the field of battle. It was most effective, but slow to handle. It was a monstrous turntable, the axis of which was a universal joint. Throwing this piece of equipment together with the odds and ends available took two days of hard labor. Then we piled on it every ray device of destructiveness or ionizing power (to make the air a conductor for the other beams) that could be obtained in the whole city. The rays were then carefully aligned to throw a multi-beam of immense, irresistible power. Nothing of a portable nature could be possessed by the enemy to equal its vast power. The turntable took up the whole courtyard of the palace of Gladsheim, about the size of two city blocks. On the turntable, piled two and three deep, were rays of every type developed by the past Atlan and Titan life on Earth. I did not think that the Jotuns would have anything of the kind. In the center of this motley assemblage of destruction, I placed a small but very powerful dissociator of modern make I had brought from the Darkome.

CHAPTER V

War Against the Jotuns

The huge multi-beam we aimed by turning and tilting the great turntable by windlasses upon which the noble muscles of the Aesir were expanded by the hundreds. It was slow, but it was inexorable destruction. I had never seen an energy screen or a shorter-fan that could stand against such an assemblage of ray, anywhere. I had great faith in my rude handiwork, for I had seen it used. The

trick, of course, was to align the beams perfectly, to form a very dense, small beam of utter power. Carefully sighting the thing at the base of the big black shorter-beam from Sathanas' hidden ship which still held Odin's Eye in its grip, we tried out our multi-beam. The black beam disappeared in a blaze of incandescence like the fall of a meteor. Whether we had hit Sathanas' ship or not I didn't know, but I did know that one beam generator was burned out for good. A good omen! I took over Odin's Eye now that it was useful again, and calling instructions to Tyr over the telaug, he walked the great beam along the lines of waiting ships of the Jotuns, the assembled raytanks, supply piles and equipment they had gathered for the prosecution of a long seige of Asgard. Where the multi-beam struck, there was left nothing but a great smoking ditch in the ground, a ditch which had no bottom—as far as the eye could see. The destruction was nearing completion which would end the Jotun hopes of a long war. But, it was not great enough, for as the beam neared the Jotun aircraft, the whole fleet took to the air. They had seen that the beam was slow, and they figured they could avoid it by air maneuvers. Like a great funnel of fury, they rose from the mouth of the cavern and came on to attack, spreading out and sweeping down on Asgard.

The Jotuns—the personnel of the enemy—came from a dozen planets forgotten by the Atlans after their migrations. The Atlans were one of the greatest space roving races of all times, inhabiting thousands of dark, sunless planets and planetoids, a race that peopled a big chunk of outer space. As the populations of their home planets grew, population pressure forced most of the immortal Atlans to seek homes on uninhabited worlds. Eventually, like all the races of men when the cosmos was young, their own immortality forced them to seek homes elsewhere as they grew too big for even a good-sized world to support. So, as they increased in size and wisdom, they moved to more advanced worlds of the Elder Race, or else to larger, dark, uninhabited planets, there to stay until they became too large for even the larger planets—then a trek through space again in a few thousand years.



As vermin take over the homes of people when they have been deserted by the owners, so did the Jotun assume the discarded homes of the ever-migrating and growing Atlans and Titans. Worlds of outgrown and deserted mech were left by the continually growing races and it was this mech the Jotuns took as their own. Half the discoverable planets in this constellation are glutted with the ancient mech. Perhaps someday, the poor doomed men of this planet I hold so highly, my mother planet Mu, may find their way over the gulfs between the star-worlds and find this mech for their own betterment. Truly, the stores of these wondrous devices, bulging the labyrinthian caverns of thousands of planets are the "gifts" of the Gods. For the children that will follow us, we leave them—with our blessing.

Sometimes, however, there do appear dero races that, unluckily, escape the notice and supervision of the Elder Race, and they use for evil purposes the ancient mech of the Gods—mech designed and built for good, not evil.¹⁵

Such a race were the Jotuns—offsprings of what unknown evil life? Evil life walking upright in a parody of the dignity and good that is man, appropriating to their own evil uses the wondrous machines and mechanisms of the Gods, the Elder Race—the flying craft, the growth and nutrient mech, the healing ray devices, the awful, deadly war mech and other weapons from a dozen varying cultures of different states of progress.

There are times, in my voyages to strange, deserted worlds, when I wonder if the God Races were truly wise to leave, intact and complete, so much of their mech science that might be perverted to evil purposes by minds that have not the good in them that motivates the Elder Races. But then, the Elders have more knowledge and experience in such things than I—I am a mere twenty centuries grown. The Elders? Who really can say? Fifty Lemurian feet is my present height—and that took all those centuries. I have, on the Ruler Worlds of the Elders, seen some of the Gods that were easily three hundred or three hundred fifty Lemurian feet in height. They, alone, know how many centuries they have seen. Perhaps, though, even they could make an occasional mistake—a mistake like leaving equipment for the Jotun fleet heading toward us right now.

It was a motley array—the Jotun fleet. The black shape of Sathanas' space monster¹⁶ rose in the background, ready to come in when the time and place looked inviting—poised for a crushing decisive blow.

We—the Aesir, Arl and I—had nothing to stop them with but the huge multi-ray I had devised. I radioed the Darkome to come in and back us up. The huge turntable creaked ponderously around on its improvised bearings taken from a dismantled elevator that was lifted from the depths. We turned it by the windlasses manned by the sweating warriors of the Aesir. It was no weapon for the swift flight of planes. Not at all. But, fortunately, the fliers were not trained for this sort of thing, and they missed most of their targets.

15. GOD-BUILT MECH: In the ancient world wide caverns that some old, old race built and then deserted. they had many marvelous mechanisms. When they left this planet, Mother Mu or Lemuria (see previous issues of *Amazing Stories*), the deadly rays that were emanating from the Sun had infected their machines and mechanisms, and so, to protect themselves from the death that they contained, the Elder Race left ALL of their tools of life—everything—behind them and then departed to far, friendly, star-homes where they live on even today. But as they live they grow, like the Giant Redwood trees of our own California, and by now, this ancient race is too big to tread the paths of Earth. Their stimulating machines were designed for pleasure and their growth science was meant to assist Nature—but that is not the use they get today. The degenerate humans that live in the caves pervert the antique mech to evil uses, and the machines, being infected with sun poison, make the evil users more evil—a vicious circle that is almost impossible to stop for several reasons. First, surface men doubt the existence of these things, and, secondly, their mech makes them infinitely more potent and powerful than surface men.—R. S. Shaver.

16. SATHANAS' SPACE MONSTER: These untellably ancient space ships are huge beyond belief... as large as the rigid, lighter-than-air Zeppelins of Earth were before the war—the Los Angeles, the Akron, the Hindenburg, etc. They were small craft compared to the antique spacers. For instance, dirigibles 800 to 1000 feet long with a diameter 80 to 120 feet would not offer much room or comfort for a man 50 to 60 feet tall, particularly on long space flights. Then, too, that size wouldn't offer much room for the necessary space equipment—drivers, stores, motors, etc. Dirigibles are the largest flying machines modern man has made, yet, large as they are, they are comparable in size merely to the tender of the big Nor craft in the story, the Darkome. For possible accounts of these space ships being seen in recent times, see Charles Fort's books. On October 23, 1822, two unknown, dark bodies crossing the sun were observed by

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I had strict orders not to risk my life except in dire necessity. The Nor had no particular enthusiasm about wasting thousands of years of schooling in a moment's madness. And, here I was, drawn into this brawl of sun-mad dero without seeing any sort of way that I could honorably withdraw. I imagine Sathanas was cursing the risking of all his plans in the attack, too. He was mighty careful not to come within range of our huge multi-beam. The thunder of that distance splitter was deafening, its flames shot out for thirty miles in a coruscating ray of utter annihilation. I had no way of figuring its effective range, but it was a lot more than the thirty miles of its visible force. How to get into real action was the problem. It couldn't be done. But we kept them hopping, sweeping it up and down the whole line of battle. They couldn't bring up any heavy stuff at all. They couldn't blast us out of Asgard's walls—couldn't touch us except with an occasional bolt from the swooping fliers. Sathanas moved his ship up to what he calculated was the effective range of our big beam, and started blasting away with his power beams—big dissociators they were—and the walls dissolved in great clouds of rolling black smoke. Chunks fell, and he began to widen the breach.

I centered the big multi-beam on the Satana and played a card I had held back. Hoping to trap Sathanas into just this maneuver, I turned on the dissociator beam I had brought from the Darkome. Added to the other stuff the beam was made of, its effective range was immensely increased, for the multi-beam created a great path of ionization for it to travel over. The hull of the great ship, built of the most resistant materials manufactured by Nor, heated swiftly red and a gaping hole appeared in the black monster. Quick as thought, Sathanas blasted out of the range of our fumbling, snail-like beam. He did not take another chance with his ship.

It had been a close call, for him and for me, for I had little real knowledge of the strength or nature of the beams of which the great ray was composed. They were all obsolete forms of equipment of which I knew about theoretically, but in actual practical use I knew nothing. But the Atlans and Titans built such things well. They were as powerful and as uncorroded after two thousand years as they were the day they were built. Sometime I am going to spend a few years to learn everything there is to know about antique rays, both the actual equipment and the theoretical science behind their construction, for I will run into these hordes using the abandoned equipment again—if I am any ruler over my actions. I do not like their attitude toward war for war's sake, and I like the struggling bulldog idealism of such races as the Aesir. Handicapped by every evil—even their own

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Pastorff (*Am. Sci. Disc.*, 1860-411). Seven months later, May 22, 1823, an unknown shiny thing was seen near the planet Venus by the astronomer Webb (*Nature*, 14195). There is no basis for assuming that these unknown objects were satellites. They would have to be very large even to be thought of as moons. Furthermore, Charles Fort quotes from the *Annales de Chime*, 30-417—"objects that were seen by many persons, in the streets of Embrun, during the eclipse of Sept. 7, 1820, moving in straight line, turning and retracing in the same straight lines, all of them separated by uniform spaces." Two unknown dark bodies crossing the sun, a shiny thing near Venus, and objects moving in geometric patterns in this same general area, and all reported within a matter of months of each other—all these things seem to indicate unknown SHIPS or something OF HUGE, ALMOST PLANETOID SIZE moving under intelligent control. Were these actually spacers of the Elder Race? Men see only what they want to or are supposed to see. Some idea of the size of the artificial caverns built by the Elder Race beneath the surface of this Earth can be gained when one recalls that the tender and Sathanas' ship both flew into the shafts and caverns. It was in the caverns that they were manufactured, and it was there that they were stored. The sight of one of these incredibly ancient cave hangars with several ancient spacers abandoned over the floor is breathtaking in its immensity, and unbelievable, in fact.—Author.

thoughts play them false—they contrive to be good, jolly fellows, trustworthy, for the most part, and surprisingly able when emergency arises to call forth their best efforts.

As the Aesir began to acquire the knack of picking off the swooping fliers with their small rays, the whole battle dissolved into a great retreat of the Jotun forces to nurse their wounds and to prepare a real campaign. The range of the huge ray I had improvised from the odds and ends the Aesir had gathered together—work of centuries of life here—had saved the day for us.

“That will be all of that for a while,” was Odin’s comment, relieved at the easy victory over what had seemed vastly superior forces. We lost about a hundred men from the fire of the planes overhead, but, since a plane is a much bigger target than a man, the Jotuns paid several times over for this loss. There were a couple of thousand smoking holes in the walls and pavings from the fliers’ rays and a two hundred foot breach in the walls. It did seem as though the Jotuns had decided the time was not ripe for a victory over the redoubtable Aesir whose reputation was greater than their prowess.

Odin continued, “They had no idea that we could reach them from here. They know little of the true uses of the old ray. That is certain. Sathanas has small stomach for real fighting, eh? I shall develop this use of many rays in one which you have shown me, and it will be a defense for Asgard for many years to come. Many lifetimes, maybe.”

Odin’s use of the word “lifetimes” as a measurement of time struck me gloomily. Evidently the Aesir had lost all idea of fighting death, accepting it as an inevitable part of life. I shuddered to watch them down great drafts of water and ale, knowing that every drop of liquid on Earth contained some tiny particle of the dread radioactive material which is the cause of age. That a draught of water could become such a dread thing was a sad thought.

I resolved to do something about the future of the Aesir now. So, I said to Odin, “You Aesir are not an unworthy race. Long ago, on this very spot, there was a city called Atlansgard. Those people were the first colonizers to arrive here from the deeps of space and begin life when the Sun was young and clean. They were a mighty race, and they fought the primeval monsters of the world’s youth, when growth had no end, and death did not confine size to a fixed measure for each species. That was the time of the Midgard serpent, who grew to nearly encircle the Earth, of Cronos who tried to eat all the life of Earth to keep his tremendous body in food. Those were the days of endless battle with the giants of growth whom hunger made mad, of the mad early Titans when the giants and men contended always for food and living space. Then government and the covenant came to Earth, to Mu, as men called the old planet then. Then came the time of real growth and goodness on earth, the Golden Age of Science when men pierced all mysteries with their minds. After a time, when the Sun began to age and bring age to Earth, the Atlans and Titans left Mu to dwell in dark space where no age is ever known. Now, you Aesir have grown here in Atlansgard and have taken the name of the great ancient Aesir to yourselves so that something of their greatness might adhere to your name. Well, you are not bad men, and I have a gift to offer you. Let me take with me into space a few of your young men with good heads on their shoulders. These I will teach the ways of navigation in deep space which is all that keeps your race from using the antique space ships which can still be found abandoned in the ancient caverns—abandoned because the Sun’s radio-

activity has infected the metal of their generators. Our law forbids such infected ships to be used by our races. But, you can use them to get away from the Sun, and I will train your men and send them back to you, and they can lead your people to a new home in space where the Sun is not an evil force. Then your race will remain forever young, instead of this pretense of immortality you now carry on for the benefit of your lessers. You would have the real thing—true immortality where there is no cause for age. What say you?”

Old Odin’s eye shone—he had but one, though, the great ray he used was also called Odin’s Eye—at the prospect of saving his race from age, and he knew enough of the ancient wisdom from the old writings to know I spoke the truth. There was my immense size, too, as a proof of unending, ever-growing youth to be found in the dark spaces. Too, the idea of finding the greater Elder Gods and learning true wisdom from them was to him the uttermost in attraction. He straightway selected three young Aesir. Vol, Vi and Zig were their names; for mentor and captain he sent the aging Tyr. I told the four to ready themselves, for I was starting back to my ship soon. I had long overstayed the allotted time for an immortal under an infectious sun’s light.

As I talked to Odin, I was treated to a glimpse of what even comparatively ignorant men could do with the ancient science of magic, or ‘mag-mech-ic,’ as it was called in Atlan. The hundred or more corpses scattered about the walls of Asgard were gathered into a heap in the great hall of Gladsheim. Here, the Aesir’s wise men and their maiden helpers concentrated beneficial rays from a dozen great generators upon the pile of dead. That transformation which has never lost its wonder for me took place. The hue of death faded from their cheeks; slowly they began to breathe. The wounds that bored through them—in some cases many times—began to close gradually, the Tagged red edges grew together as the healing of the ancient ben rays took place. When these slain warriors began to stir, the Aesir maidens picked them up and carried them to a place in the palace where smaller but more intense and potent ben rays were focused on their wounds to complete the healing process. The next day, most of them were again on their feet, nearly recovered. Yet, I knew that neither Odin nor his wise men had the slightest idea how to build or even repair the antique medical rays, nor had they even a proper curiosity about how its magic was accomplished. It was the “Ancient Gods’ gift” was their attitude.

I realized that education was all this people needed to raise them to true God estate. But they needed such a lot of it. I cursed the fear that dwelt in the Great Ones of the dark spaces, forbidding them to come near any sun, even to rescue such men as these from the doom that already whitened the hair of many of them. Sometimes, I realized that even the High Gods have faults.

Well, I was one God who would lose that fault of too great fear of the hideous sun-death. I would find a way to rescue these Aesir.

I had assured Odin I would send the fleet of the Nor Space Patrol I expected to contact presently, to put the Jotuns in their place and to apprehend Sathanas. At the same time I radioed the Darkome to return to her former position on the Moon. Not enough time elapsed between the two messages for the Darkome to more than ready herself for flight. Why didn’t I let the Darkome come on down in answer to my first message? She had ample fuel for several landings on planets no larger than Mu. I knew Sathanas was at hand, anxious to annihilate everyone such as myself who knew of his presence on Earth. Such is one’s thoughts under

infectious suns—always incorrect. It is a hard thing to remember always to do otherwise than what one's reason dictates when near a sun. I respect such races as the Aesir for this one reason—in spite of their life under the evil-making rays of the sun, they manage to remain good, reasonable fellows. Their bodies seem to build up a resistance to the mind distorting magnetic force of the sun, and they manage to think pretty clearly in spite of it. More power to that ability.

Everything was as beautiful as a powerful ben-ray illusion in a master-dream as we lifted in the tender toward the Moon. Tyr was thrilled as a warrior like him is thrilled by a battle-axe coming at his head, while the three young Aesir, Vol, Vi and Zig, their flashing teeth and glittering eyes told me that nothing had ever interested them so much as the sight of this little ship of mine. I wondered what would be their words when they saw for the first time the huge Dread-Nor Darkome lying in wait on the moon. Then it happened.

As the tender swiftly flashed upward toward the day-lit moon of early evening, the features of the shoreline and the city of Asgard blurred at our speed. In a matter of moments we were so high that the flat horizon of this green ball of Mu could be seen as the curve it is. I felt a glow of pride in my ship, my lovely Arl, and these four new-found friends. Like the sudden snap of a breaking glass perfume ball, our contentment was shattered.

"Mion!" gasped ever watchful Arl, "isn't that the Satana?"

"Awk! Why did that devil have to choose this time to take off?"

Arl, her face intense as a bird hypnotized by a snake, refused to take her eyes off the enemy craft.

"We're in a tight spot, Arl. If I change our course they can't fail to see us, and if I don't, we'll collide with them."

That's the way it was, too. Any change of speed or course would have been certain to attract their attention. I felt—and it was shortly proven true—that this was just one of those unhappy accidents that always seems to happen on a sun-cursed planet. The two ships hurtled upward to a junction.

At the last minute, I drove the tender hard over on the port side and down, hoping to dive past the Satana's stern and escape to the other side of the planet before they could come about. As our craft flashed past the enemy's starboard tail, the dread flash of tractor beams and dis (disintegration) rays reached over with clawing fingers for the shiny hull of my space boat. My hands were clammy with the tension of battle as I hit the lifter controls and desperately pulled the little craft up and down in short waves. Suddenly, we were dead astern of the Satana. For the moment they couldn't fire on us, but the game was discovered. They must have known who we were. It was useless to hope for concealment. There was but one thing to do—and I did it.

I gave the brave little craft all the power she had, and ordering the rest to strap themselves in their seats, set her nose toward the surface of Mother Mu. We could feel the heat of the atmosphere being ground against our hull by the power of the little tender's drivers—powerful mechanisms that could drive the little boat between worlds if need be, but more power than was wise near the surface of a planet. And this violent maneuvering with a space ship so close to the surface wasn't wise either.

"Arl," I called, "where are they?"

"Oh, Mion, they have swung around—they're coming after us!"

Futilely I struck the driver lever, trying to coax just a bit more power from

the gallant little machines—vibrating and smoking in their compartments. I knew they'd never last long being used like this.

"Now, Arl—what?"

"They're gaining, I think," sobbed Arl. "Mion, they're trying to reach us with their rays."

I swung the craft to the right and then frantically to the left—all the while diving in a long, flat curve toward Earth—

Bang!

With a bone jarring wrench, one of the enemy's tractor beams wrapped tenuous fingers around the little tender's hull, then locked tight. From full speed, we were quickly slowed and drawn toward the Satana. A horrible, painful sensation—tractor beams lock on every atom of the object they hold—like being clawed inside.

We were lost.

The enemy drew his prey swiftly to the air-lock that surrounded the tractor-beam turret holding us and pulled us inside.

With a jar they set the tender on the floor of the airlock. We couldn't move. The crew of the enemy craft swarmed into the air-lock after closing the outer port.

As they scrambled over the tender toward the entrance hatch, I took a look at Arl's strained features and refused to think—probably the last good look I would take at that lovely face.

CHAPTER VI

In the Hands of Sathanas

Sathanas' family was one of the few families of variforms among the Nor. Accepted as exiles long ago from some variform city of the Angels of Earth, the Satanic family was a cloven-footed one, something like Arl in general makeup, but with shaggy black hair on their legs and of a very dark complexion, with horns showing Titan blood somewhere in the family tree.

We were taken directly to his chambers. His dark form loomed ahead of us in the red mist of his nutrient air—of his own formula, and probably one of the causes of his evil character, for it had a smell like nothing I had ever experienced before. Some chemical he had added to the usual formula had fooled him into thinking it was beneficial, but was more than likely a dangerous stimulant and had weakened his body's insulative resistance to detrimental flows of energy. His character had certainly become that of a mad deco of the most dangerous kind, for his wisdom, untempered with concern for any other life, would be a never-ending horror to all men unless he were stopped. It didn't look as if Mutan Mion would be able to do much about stopping Sathanas.

A pretty predicament for the reputation of Mutan Mion. When my comrades would come to hear how I had fallen into the hands of Sathanas without a blow being struck, there would be many a head shaken behind my back. Sad, sad shakes of Norton heads. Murmurs of "Tch, tchtoo bad. Mion might have been such a noble specimen but —the Sun infection, you know." And the others would nod silently in agreement and touch their foreheads with their finger-tips. Then, despite all the god-like qualities that they did possess, they would feel very smug and complacent. They would make a sincere attempt within their minds to—well, not forgive exactly, but—explain what the cause of my trouble was, and they

would sympathize patronizingly. They'd think, "His unfortunate Earth background and birth; he lacks real stamina—resource—too bad." I always had to contend with that in my work among the God-men of Nor—they worried about the evil that had roamed on Earth expelling the Titans and Atlans and some foolish ones thought that everyone of Earth might—no, must—be affected.

Not all the men of Nor thought thusly, however. Most of that great race of Elders peered deeply into problems and didn't overlook any facts in arriving at the right answers. But I have found in all races and peoples in the planets I have trod that there are those who pass judgment on half facts. Fortunately for the progress on intelligence, those foolish ones are not too many among the Elder Races.

Sathanas, though infected by a taint of the deadly "de" from the Sun, usually collected facts—all of them—before making any of his illegal moves. The one error he'd made had caused me to chase him here to Mu, but I had been the one to err when we'd come too close to the deadly, treacherous Sun, and I was in his toils.

My lovely Arl and I and those valiant young Aesir were taken prisoners, they who had so blindly put their lives into my hands—lives that were not immortal as the lives of we of the Elder Races, 'tis true, but lives that were, nevertheless, well thought of by their owners. All those lives had been entrusted to me—to their belief in my legendary ability to carry success with me. And what had I done? I had fallen into as stupid error as any inhabitant of the Sun's planets. What was worse for one of my almost god-like status, I had been trapped like a green cadet on his first solo space patrol—trapped without firing a shot, without the semblance of a struggle. Trapped and taken. There was nothing to be done about it now but to take as stoically as we could whatever foul torments our captor could devise.

It is not often that a proud member of the Elder Races stands captive before a creature such as this Sathanas.

The tender had been forced open in the air-lock of the Satana, and the evil crew of that black craft had ordered us out of it with little ceremony. At this close range, there was no point to attempt to overpower the crew, right in the very bowels of the enemy ship, so we allowed ourselves to be escorted into the presence of the Satana's master.

Sathanas sat surrounded by his women, his dark face gloating evilly. As we were led before him, we could hear his ill-repressed sigh of satisfaction at the prize his luck had won for him.

The first time I saw him I found him distasteful, and I had no more enthusiasm for him now. I thought that because we were of the Elder Races we weren't to fare too badly at his hands, and again I erred. Perhaps the Sun was beginning to affect me.

Slowly I glanced around the chamber—his own personal quarters judging by the wealth and luxury that had been expended on it. I have said that he was surrounded by women? That makes it sound like just a few—but there seemed to be scores of women here. And almost as many planetary races as there were women. His agents and slave raiders had done their job well. The place was full of women and girls culled—literally hand picked—from the beauties of a hundred far flung planet cities. From the looks of things, Sathanas had first choice of all the women his agents acquired for all of his illegal pleasure palaces that flourished in

spite of all the laws of the Gods.

Now there are some pleasure palaces run by wise men, and very good things they are too, but some are only “apparently” good, concealing hideous evil behind a perfect facade of beneficence. These were served by men (or creatures that walk like men) like Sathanas—surface good concealing abysmal and horrible depravity.

All these beautiful women surrounding Sathanas were the end products of the hidden vices of the immortal Elder Races—vices that were unsuspected for a long time. True, these vice-ridden Elders were not very numerous, but, like every other race in Time, there are always some who do not measure up to the standard of the tribe—whether their lack is known or not. Perhaps certain ones have physical afflictions, and others, mental, but there always seems to be that little group that is incomplete or evil or decadent. Such was a certain element amongst the Elder Races—good and noble on the surface, but their minds were evil—or inclined to evil.

Where there is a profit to be made from evil that men do or desire, there will be other men to act to gratify evil desires and line their pockets. That was what Sathanas was—a panderer possessing immortality and catering to a mass of immortal degenerates—to their lusts and cruelty, procuring for their lusts, women and girls and for their cruelty, men, women and children of a hundred different races and colors. Their cruelty demanded unconditioned victims, but their lusts required refinements—refinements that no one knows for how many years have been improved and intensified.

These women around Sathanas, and I don’t know how many thousands of others, had been made into something that was part human and part pure horror—made into robot servants of vast and synthetic forces beyond their poor strength to fight in any way—made by forces that can, and do, mold and pervert even the best natured person into something that is not human—into a tool or instrument of pleasure, or an instrument of torture of the most insidious kind. Robot women whose minds the Elder mechanisms had perfected in some ways to beauty while other parts of their minds had been destroyed.

Centuries of the control of stimulation rays had caused their thought processes to be—not thoughts of the normal human. Rather, they were merely mental reaction to outside stimulation. They served others’ purposes with the products of their minds as well as the motions of their bodies. The shape of their lips, the seductive sleekness of their bodies, the looks of longing and desire in their eyes.¹⁷

17. SIRENS: The authors are of the opinion that the alterations done upon the slave women of the Nor vice rings, carried on less efficiently here on Earth in the past, may be the factual origin of worldwide legends of sirens and goddesses of love as differentiated from female deities supposed to oversee fertility and procreation. In the Hellenic Pantheon, Diana is usually imagined as the goddess of Fertility and Aphrodite, the goddess of Love. Thus, here we have the case where Aphrodite COULD have been an outstanding creation of some of the vice ring or perhaps merely one of those latter day, almost-immortal humans that, in legend, became the lesser Gods and Goddesses. In the legend of Ulysses, he had himself tied to the mast of his ship, after sealing the ears of his crew with wax, so that none of them could be beguiled by the enchanting voices of the sirens living on the treacherous, rock-bound shores. (In the story, certain female slaves were trained in various arts, much as the Geisha of Japan—specialists in various branches of entertainment.) Quite naturally, that would include girls that sang, and suppose that some of them were to escape? And, need we point out that these legends of sirens are almost world wide, but notably in Greece and in the Teutonic legends? Girls whose (RAY-altered) voices were so compelling that even so primary an urge as self-preservation was thrown overboard in the victim’s attempt to get closer to these infinitely desirable voices.—Author.

CHAPTER VII

A Valuable Chunk of Meat

The awe-struck Aesir with me didn't guess that the voluptuous, desirable women around Sathanas were poor mindless creatures; machine-made to appeal to base masculine senses of some members of the immortal Elder Races. They didn't know that what they gazed upon was false and inhuman. They knew only that they saw here women beautiful and desirable beyond their wildest dreams—the fevered dreams of the Earthmen that they were. Here were dream creatures smiling at them through half-lidded eyes... sending their blood racing. And mirroring the gaze of Sathanas' women, the eyes of the young Aesir were pinwheels of hungry fire.

Although it takes several moments to tell, I knew instantly what these women were—and a quick look at my new friend from fair Mu confirmed the fact that the agents and mech controllers of Sathanas had done their work well—the Aesir had lost their senses to the lure of the devil's women.

I looked at Arl. She, too, knew what lay behind all this unholy scenery and her little nose was raised, proudly disdainful. Her eyes stared past Sathanas and all the false finery around him.

"My lovely Arl is just going to ignore all this. Good girl!" I chuckled to myself. But the chuckle died in my throat as I came to a halt in front of Sathanas—the hidden, deadly evil, ill-concealed in those smoky eyes didn't promise much of enjoyment for us captives standing before him.

He glanced up from the snowy throat he'd been kissing, and our eyes locked. At first, there was just that evil stare. Then... recognition! With that, he became alive and casually tossed the attentive female from his lap, as a normal man would dispose of a puppy when other business called. With a displeased frown the poor creature glared at me for interrupting her pleasure, but she scurried to one side, followed by the hungry eyes of the Aesir, for she was about the same size as they. Evidently she was a new acquisition. After dismissing her, Sathanas had placed both hands on the arms of his "stim" chair and looked at us from under his dark brows.

Finally the dog deigned to speak.

"Ah, my dear Mutan Mion," the words were like the treacherous hiss of a deadly snake, and the smile that went with it was equally reptilian. "Ah, yes, and his lovely wife, the beautiful Arl."

When he mentioned her name, I would have strangled him had I been free to move... his using her name was profane. He had bowed as he spoke it.

"You know, Fair Lady, the tales that are told do not do justice to the beauty that you do have. I am honored by this visit from such a famous pair. I have many times read the record of your progress in the past centuries. I am grieved that I must welcome you in such poor surroundings as my little craft provides."

I said nothing. In fact, I tried desperately not to think of anything that his thought-readers might find of value.

"Oh, come, Mion, surely you haven't lost that oratorical tongue that we have heard of so much? Can't you speak?"

"The less I say, the better, O mighty Sathanas. I am not numbered among your admirers."

At that he frowned. There was no use to hide the truth or crawl to his ego. I knew that a dozen telaugs were playing over us and certainly some of them trans-

ferred our thoughts to him. I didn't care for him or any of his kind.

Sathanas had looked like he was going to lose his temper, but he recovered his front of suavity. Just as he was ready to speak again, he was interrupted.

The Aesir, Tyr, was more accustomed to lacing such characters than I and he had immediately adopted the best possible attitude for the moment.

"Your majesty!" said Tyr, "the Arch-Angel of the heavens, the one mighty man of blood and war that I have always wanted to meet! Oh! Mighty One, that black flag of yours is the banner and desire of every warrior who relishes true freedom!"

Even with the information that his "spy" rays were undoubtedly sending him, this spontaneous flattery from Tyr caught Sathanas momentarily off his guard, and he frowned darkly... puzzled.

"Why the gloomy frown?" asked Tyr. "Is the mighty Sathanas displeased at the offer of service from such fighters as these?" Tyr indicated the others. "Why only today, My Lord, we put the mighty Jotun to flight outside our city of Asgard... what better recommendation could a warrior bring you?"

Tyr was doing a valiant job of bluffing, but he couldn't know that the only "war" that Sathanas ever had any contact with was drunken space-men's brawls, or violent kidnappings and perhaps in arranging the monetary details of warfare on some of the other "der" planets. The Aesir tried, but his bluff failed.

At the mention of the battle outside the walls of Asgard, Sathanas blackened and shot to his feet. Some trinket or other that he had in his hand went violently to the floor.

"So!... so!" The huge fiend was raging but not saying much. I could see his lips quivering with self-indulgent anger. "So! It was you, Mion, who pierced the hull of my best and newest battle ship! You... you are the upstart who is poking his nose into my affairs here in my refuge!"

He had bunched his fist and stood shaking it under my nose while I stood still, not moving a muscle.

"You insolent... you uncultured freak. It will not be you that carries the tale of my doings back to Nor! You can take the word of the Lord Sathanas for that!" The miserable cur emphasized his last remark with a slap on the face that would have earned him death had I not been held in the grip of a watching control-ray. I kept silent. There was nothing for me to say. Sathanas ranted on.

"Centuries ago, you came to the Council Chambers on Nor and received more honors and recognition than all my labors have ever brought me. You rose steadily in power in the so-called government of Nor. And, as the final insult, you approach, no, you even eclipse the power of men three times your age!" He was being carried away by his own thwarted ambitions. The more he raved, the more he became flecked with foam, like a stallion raced too hard. He



was stomping back and forth in front of us. Every eye in the room was watching him, and it was only our little group that wasn't cowering at the sight and sound of his anger.

"But, my dear MUTAN MION! Your... luck... has... ended! You are in my power now—I, who am now the open enemy of all the base servants of the Nor Empire, and I will see that you die... slowly, painfully!" He threw back his head and laughed like a man gone mad. "Haw! and those so dainty hounds of our so high God-head—that thrice cursed Nor Patrol—will receive the complete sensation record of your death, with my compliments!"

That must have pleased him for he calmed down and smiled. "Ah ha, THAT should keep them somewhat less hot on my trail, knowing the painful fate of the great Mu-tan Mion who unluckily caught up with me. Me... Sathanas!"

And he didn't mean to miss any nuance of sadistic pleasure. He pranced over to where Arl was standing, his black cloven hooves making the only sound in the room. She still was staring past him as he stroked the little black beard he affected.

His fevered eyes gazed up and down the glorious body of my beloved Arl and I swore to myself that if I were ever free I would tear those insulting eyes out with my own bare hands.

"Beautiful!" He nodded. "Mion, your Arl is a very valuable looking chunk of meat."¹⁸

"At least, she will be valuable when my colleagues get finished with a few slight mental operations on her. No doubt you are familiar with the slight adjustments that we make on these lovely women's minds to enhance their value? No? That's a pity. And she is big, too. I'm sure there are some among the Nor men that will pay a pretty price to have such a sturdy plaything to take with them to the heavy planets. Perhaps I shall keep her here for my own use... for a little while, anyway. And, then, maybe I can reward one of the Jotun chiefs with her for certain favors that they have done me in the past."

Mustering his courage, he reached up, and stripped Arl of the few garments that she wore, the better to inspect his new property.

"They say that Mion's Arl is one of the most expert manipulators of the 'stim' machines. Mmmm, I believe I know where such a woman of her size and ability with 'stim' would bring a fortune, and the size of a Ruler's ransom, too."

Evidently he was tired of merely taunting his captives without them saying anything, for he suddenly ordered, "Take them away!"

Obeying his command, the heavy ray that had held us captive was released and some of the ship's crew with small hand rays shackled us with them.

18. MEAT: Cannibalism has been practiced for centuries in the now almost sterile caverns—dero eating tero, perhaps tero eating dero; both, it is suspected, capturing by means of the ancient "mech" (mechanism) surface people for food. They consider surface people merely a higher species of food-animal. Throughout the caverns, we of the surface are referred to, not as "surface" people, but "meat" people. No doubt the European dero ate heartily beneath the concentration camps. We suspect that it was they who activated the Nazis guarding the camps to the abysmal depths of depravity to which they descended. For centuries, the dero have been doing the same things—and worse—though on a smaller scale. The Jotuns were, no doubt, dealers in "meat" delicacies.—R. S. Shaver.

19. EPILEPTO RAYS: The epilepto ray was originally intended for the use of the Elder Race's Police. By means of it, primitive tribes, wild animals, and even rioting or uncontrollable members of the race itself could be brought under control, harmlessly. However, as with all the ancient mechanisms, the Elder scientists continually improved them, and at times these improvements called for regulation by the Ruling Council to limit their use to insure the general safety of the entire race. Some of the epilepto ray projectors are still extant in the caverns here on Earth, and their use by the dero (degenerate humans) cause torment and paralysis to a lot of the surface people. The ray itself, in action, contorts every muscle of the victim's body by means of an alternating current of synthetic pain-ray electric, the pulsations resulting in that spasmodic jerking so apparent in one suffering a so-called "epileptic" fit.—Author.

They didn't have them turned up to full power—they couldn't have, because all I could feel was a slight drag. As soon as I realized what was up—that I was free—I raced for the throat of the fiend now returning to his couch, hurling his sycophants and dancing girls to the right and left like a farmer sowing grain. Just as my fingers were about to clench about his neck, a beam from one of the ever watchful servitors struck me down at his feet, a contorted bundle of agony. The epilepto-ray¹⁹ that they used was the most painful known to Nor science— forbidden except for experimental laboratory work to discover a counter for it.

I rolled in tortured convulsions on the floor. Just as my last grip on consciousness slipped from my grasp, I saw my lady Arl folding like a wounded bird and something that she had tried to use as a weapon fell from her grasp... or was that blood!

CHAPTER VIII Under The Pain Ray

"Ooooooh, Mi... Mion..."

Hearing these moans and my name through a fuzzy humming in my ears, I tried to open my eyes and raise myself up. I couldn't. Then, gradually, with the return of consciousness, I realized that I was aching to the ends of my feet. I opened my eyes.

Above my head was the cause of that aching I felt. Now that I was awake and conscious, it wasn't just an ache, it was pain. There above my head was a slowly swinging pendulum, the end of which held a vari-pain ray lens and it was this sweeping motion of the ray that made me feel pain all over my body. I couldn't move from under it. I tried, but the crew of the Satana had too much practice with binding captives in chains for me to do more than tighten a few of the more uncomfortable ones around my wrist and ankles. I could move my head, and turning around I saw whence came the moans and my name. The brave Aesir were chained down alongside me. That was fiendish—chaining Earthmen in range of a pain ray that was nearly killing a fifty foot immortal member of the Elder Races.²⁰

They were moaning softly and I felt the tears come to my eyes with pride in these men that old Mother Mu could still produce. Men suffering agonizing torture and just barely moaning—the same as a young boy of, say, ten years being tortured on a crude Jotun rack without making a sound. They must be near crazy with the torment. I was myself. Sathanas, it seemed, did not intend to have his guests miss any of the dubious comforts that he could provide.

I figured that we must be some place in the lower hold of the Satana—no ports were visible, just the blank dull metal walls. There was something missing, though I couldn't decide exactly what.

20. SIZE OF THE ELDER RACE: The authors suggest that anyone interested get a copy of Charles Fort's *Lo!* In Chapter Nine, he discusses the findings, *BY PRESENT DAY HUMANS*, of the skeletons of huge creatures 40 to 65 feet in length. The conventional "scientific" explanation is that they are the skeletal remains of whales washed up on the shore. Fort refutes this sort of illogic by pointing out that whales' skeletons do not have BROAD HIP BONES. He also mentions a report from the *LONDON DAILY NEWS*. In it is recounted the dredging up of a large skull from the north of Scotland, of a size that the authorities claimed would fit an elephant, but it would have to have been a large one to boast eye-sockets a foot across. We suggest, for those interested in such research, that it MIGHT have been the skull, preserved somehow (or, perhaps, fairly recently dispatched), but a skull, nevertheless, of one of the ancient Giants that built the caves beneath our world. (Excerpt is from the *Daily News*, June 6, 1908.) If the eyes are a gauge of the full size of the completed skeleton, the creature (a member of the Elder Race?) would have to have been at least 40 feet tall.—Author.

ARL!

"Arl! Arl... where are you?" I called, thinking that perhaps she might be in the same cell as we, but placed so that I couldn't see her. That hope was destroyed when Tyr, sobbing with the pain he was suffering, said, "My Lord... ugh... they didn't bring her with us..."

"Tyr, what did they do with her?" My concern for Arl made me forget for a moment the awful torment, the horrible spasms of pain that dropped like blood from our bodies.

... I don't know... Lord Mion! Are we dying? This... pain... I can't stand it!"

"Easy, friend Tyr," I tried to comfort him, "they will not keep this up until we die... they're too cruel for even that. This is just a sample of what we are in for. Courage, friends."

My beloved Arl... what had these accursed fiends done to her? How long had I lain in this cell unconscious? Sathanas had admitted some of the foul things he planned for my wife. Had he had time to carry out some of them?

I strained at the chains; I had to get free. I failed. And these poor Aesir warriors were near death with pain. Something had to be done. But what?

I had it. Hypnosis!

These men were of a lower mental caliber than myself, understandable when you realized that I had twenty centuries to develop while they had barely that many years. Hypnosis would serve two purposes—take their minds off the pain they were enduring and fill them with subconscious information that we might be able to use if the scales of Fortune fell in our direction.

I commenced to talk to them, soothing their pain as much as I could with my voice. It wasn't long until they were in that stage half way between total hypnosis and consciousness. That was the best I could do, considering that we were operating under extreme difficulties, being bound and continually swept with the vari-pain beam. From talking about them and their families to fix their interest, I had gradually worked the talk around to technical subjects. I wanted to teach them as much of spacemanship as I could under the circumstances.

"At the mid-space-point between two attracting spatial bodies," I explained, beginning with the most elementary principles of interstellar astrogation, "lies a thin 'zone of neutralization'—a thin zone where all matter is weightless."

"We have heard you mention that before, Lord Mion," spoke one of the Aesir from his bed of artificial pain.

"Well, friends, that 'zone of neutralization' is important. It is the knowledge and the use of the peculiarities of the way all mass is inertially neutralized there



that enables us to journey between the farthest stars.”

“Why is that, Mion?”

“Because, starting a star trip anywhere else would be impossible. There would be too much mass to overcome. It would be impossible to achieve the needed acceleration quick enough.”

The Aesir were doing their best to follow what I was telling them—but now they could only groan.

“It’s like... like... the difference between jumping off the top branch of a bushy tree and jumping off a wall. In the one, drag at the start slows you down somewhat, whereas, in going off the wall, there is nothing to slow your acceleration. Do you see, friends?”

“Aye, Lord, we hear.” They struggled to suppress the shrieks that hammered at their lips for voice.

“Now, Warriors, listen carefully. It is there, in the ‘zone of complete lack of weight’ that all long, interstellar flights MUST begin... always remember to be very careful in pointing your ship on the exact course to your distant objective lest your course intersects another path where some object may lie that would destroy you in the event of a collision.”

When they had indicated that they understood that, I continued.

“Poised motionless in the exact center of the ‘zone,’ and pointing in the correct direction, the ship is given full power of all the plates²¹ at once. Ordinarily, such instant application of all the power at rest would kill all the ship’s passengers, but at the EXACT center of the ‘zone’ ANY acceleration can be achieved without danger, depending upon the amount of power impetus.”

Again they groaned acceptance of what I had said.

“When you give your ship full throttle as I’ve told you, it will instantly attain vast velocity depending on the power of your ship’s plates and how carefully you balanced your ship in the center of the ‘zone’. Keep applying power, and in a short time you will find yourself far beyond your starting point. Like a flash you will be in the region of the stars which are unfamiliar to you, traveling at a speed your Earth brains cannot comprehend. If you were watching a spacer accelerate from the ‘zone’, it would seem to you that the ship had vanished. No motion would be seen. It would be there one moment and disappear the next—disappear into nothingness. Such is the speed of ships that fly between the stars. Using this tremendous speed, you can fling yourself far beyond the light of this deadly, evil Sun and within the regions of space that the Elder Races, the Gods of the Aesir, have chosen as their dwelling place.”

“Would not we humans be in danger from the wrath of our Gods for daring to come to them, Lord Mion?”

“No, my friends, once in the general area of the dark planets, you would soon be overtaken by some space patrol and, your intentions being understood,

21. DRIVER PLATES: In the two thousand years since Mutan’s visit to Earth, the ships used by him have developed and adopted the drive plate instead of the gas jet drive. Both are rocket drives in principle, but different in detail. The drive is an alloy metal that decomposes into a repellant electric flow very much like gravity in reverse. Things fall away from the plate when certain frequencies of dis-electric are applied to the plate. The resultant impulse is rendered useful by a reflecting material, opaque to the drive flow, on the side of the plate nearest the ship. Hence all the repellant flow is directed backward—giving a drive like a rocket in principle but very different in detail. This is the drive generally used in the ancient ships—though there are several distinct types of drives—and ships from widely separated civilizations lying about the caverns, still today existent, and in some cases still usable.—Author.

you would be helped in every way to find yourselves a home far from the deadly 'de', a home near those of the Gods. Have you understood?

All four of the Aesir groaned their answer: "Aye, Lord Mion, we have understood... you... and will do as... you advise... if... there ever comes... the time when we are... free of the clutches of this Sathanas."

There were other things I explained to the Aesir, things like how the first light speed is achieved with a light impetus but as the interstellar space ships move into as much as fifty-speeds, the 'ether drag' increases on the order of one unit of drag to fifty units of light speed.

Thus, the required impetus needed to achieve one light speed is increased by one for each additional fifty light speeds. Actually, no body in the known cosmos is ever entirely weightless, but there are conditions where a given mass or body loses apparent weight to the point where its weight is negligible. The best place to achieve this condition of weightlessness is that area that I've told you about... the area between the world or other spatial bodies that we term the "zone of weightlessness."

I went on and on with my talking and explaining, more to keep from thinking than from any hope of teaching these long suffering friends over-much. The pain, or rather, the perception of the pain, had gradually increased almost to the point of madness for the victim. No doubt the fiends that served Sathanas were making a thought record of all our sensations and words as the master of this depraved vessel had promised to send to my friends in the Nor Patrol.

"Course must be plotted and ship poised exactly in the center of the zone..."

". . . hit such zones every time you pass between worlds... maintain acceleration..."

The pain never stopped... on and on... pain... waves of agony... some smooth strokes of torment...

"Use the devices that the builders have installed to determine the center... full throttle... trust instruments..."

Flashes of memory came and went in the delirium of our fevered agony... what I said... gone...

The young Aesir had good minds though very little real education. I could not have taught them any mathematics, even had my hands been free to do so. It would be fortunate, indeed, if they remembered any of the facts of space navigation that I was trying to get across to them. I, myself, am not certain of all that I told them. The longer we were chained under the vari-pain ray, the more our minds slipped from our conscious control. A living body can stand only so much of nerve vibration.

This torment had been going on for hours... painful... moments of release when it reached the ends of its swings and then that laving with agony again.

It may have been days... or weeks... I don't know... just back and forth... pain.

CHAPTER IX Seizing the Satana

As one will, under the 'der' influence of a sun that burns heavy metals and makes men's minds function in evil error, I had spent my time waiting for—what? Some silly pap to my vanity—a feather in my cap that would be mine had I captured this fellow Sathanas single-handed. And what had the 'der' sun led me to?

Capture—and worse, torture for myself and my four valiant companions... and... the Gods of Space only know what horrible fate for my lovely Arl. True, I had some idea that Sathanas was not going to kill me—that would have been too merciful for his evil dero soul. No, he meant to prolong my torment to its last groan, preferably, hoping that it would take years for me to groan my last.

“That was small consolation, knowing that he wasn’t going to kill me. But, a human body can stand only so much. My companions had fainted long ago. I must have fainted several times myself. I was aware of several periods of consciousness. Perhaps that fiend was merely reviving me in order to see my huge frame collapse again in an effeminate faint that would have given him great pleasure, no doubt.

But, as I say, I revived the last time. And, from somewhere within me came rage—rage that lent my tortured body strength... strength that Vanue’s marvelous nutrients²² had given me, over and above my natural inheritance.

Had Sathanas known all that Vanue knew about nutrient and beneficial rays, he probably would not have become what he was, but instead he would have grown into a wise and noble man. As it was, his men had failed fully to realize the tremendous power that had been grown into my limbs. I didn’t know it myself until that final moment when my agonized body could take no more and with supreme rage and pain, a mighty roar issued from my straining throat and I heaved on the chains that held me strapped to the floor—heaved until I could feel the warm blood from my lacerated wrists.

There was a sight—a mighty fifty-foot God-man flat on his back, his head thrown hard against the floor, his back arched with the massive, bowed muscles that quivered with the last supreme, flayed effort for a futile final flail against its bonds. Suddenly, my cry of rage turned to one of joy—sheer animal joy. One of the chains had pulled loose from the moorings in the floor! A catlike smile lighted my face as I grasped the chain on my other arm and pulled with savage joy on that mere chain with both my massive arms. It came free!

With both arms unchained, it was the work of a moment to loose myself of the chains binding my feet and I stood up. Free! Free, for the first time in hours... or was it days? Released from my bonds, but not entirely free as I learned after a moment’s thought. I still had to get out of this cell—but I was standing, and on my feet. I could fight now.

I stepped from under the vari-pain beam, and, at once, I disposed of that with one vicious swipe of my balled fist. Then, I set about freeing my unconscious companions. That was done in a moment.

The five of us were released from our bonds. The only thing between us and complete freedom was a metal door and the crew of this war vessel of Sathanas’

22. NUTRIENTS: These nutrients are based on the hydrogen ion flow in the body. Most of the electric by which the greatest electrical machine known (human body) operates is borne about the body as a charge upon a flow of hydrogen ions. The ancients had developed a method of superimposing upon the hydrogen ion charges of certain energy flows not electric as we know it. These were borne into the body upon rays, where they become a part of the charge upon the hydrogen ion flow within the body’s batteries, and are there borne to all the functioning parts of the flesh to be absorbed directly by the flesh. These rays—nutrient in nature—were formed directly from energy ash, the stuff of which all matter is formed. As well they had methods of ionizing and rendering absorbable by the body such nutrients as we call vitamins. These volatile essences of nutrient foods they ionized and introduced into the blood stream as “nutrient rays”—driven through the air by electric pressure and sometimes by super-sonic force. These ions were charged in a complementary way that made them attractable by the ordinary body electric charge.—Author.

fleet, perhaps some three or four hundred men of the approximate size of myself. Quite a formidable obstacle under normal circumstances, but, just out of my bonds as I was, it didn't seem unconquerable. There was something in being able to move one's limbs that make other difficulties seem of less importance and of no consequence.

After making certain that my four Aesir were still living and would soon snap out of their stupor, I tried the metal door. It seemed strong enough. Then I really put my strength to the handle and with an oath to the unknown gods of space-men, I braced my legs against the wall and pulled. The sweat stood out on my brow, my muscles ached with the tremendous load, the calves of my legs were quivering with the awful strain—then, with a shriek of tortured metal, the lock tore out and the door flew open, flinging me to the floor with the sudden reaction. I sprawled on the deck, a very much surprised and bruised God.

When breath finally came back to me, I mumbled something about "Our friend Sathanas must have been too unwise in some of his remarks to our Norton engineers for such a weak bit of equipment to be installed in a warship... ha! Serves him right!"

It was true. There are no anywhere in all the known cosmos, yet they are sometimes prone to strike back, thusly, for some slight insult—letting inferior work pass as O.K. Then, one day, the one that insulted will find his mech failing when he needs it most. It pays to be courteous and considerate with everyone, I have found in twenty centuries of ruling. It pays.

Where this monster ship was heading, I had no idea. I did have the idea that I didn't wish to go wherever it was going—it no doubt wouldn't have been healthy.

My reverie was interrupted by a moan. I looked to the Aesir who were beginning to stir themselves. Tyr was the first to come to, and with his help we soon had the other three on their feet and spoiling for a fight. We all wanted vengeance for that period under the vari-pain machine, and we meant to get it.

Out the door I went, the four Aesir stalking behind me, an eager light in their eyes and a look of supreme faith in my judgment and ability on their faces.

We rounded a curve in the companionway and nearly barged into a ray-post unannounced. At the controls of the huge space gun sat a big Angle in the uniform of Sathanas' service, on watch for some sign of the Nor Patrol.

"Let's take 'im!" I yelled, bounding forward at the same time, seizing the man's arms and twisting them back and up. The Aesir needed no second urging. They swarmed over the huge fellow, one of them standing on his lap and stuffing part of his coat in the Angle's mouth to smother any outcry.

"Get his weapons, Tyr!" I ordered.

Tyr was tugging at the warrior's weapon belt and it came free. I couldn't help laughing, even in so crucial a moment, at the startled look on the fellow's face. Evidently he had never expected this. The fellow's dis gun Tyr gave to Vol, then he pulled out his flame sword and finding it too big, asked if I wanted it. I shook my head, "No, Tyr, it too small for me." He flung it aside.

"Come with me, my evil friend," I said to the fellow whose arms must have been hurting him for the way I had them twisted behind him. With my invitation, I pulled the big guy to his feet and propelled him along in front of me down the corridor.

Adjacent to the cargo compartment where we had lain I had noticed another

but would these pursuers care what happened to Sathanas, or would they seize the excuse to make me rid them of their master? Well, I would soon find out.

I sped into the sealed chamber which Sathanas used to bask in his special nutrient and stimulative pleasures. About him lay his women in sleep and upon a bed of spikes from which still coruscated the blue fire of synthetic pain, lay one of the women in torture. I had time to throw the switch on the pain juice, for no sleeper ray could have put that torture distended body to sleep. Now I understood Sathanas. He was an ordinary idiot like Ex-Elder Zeit, who must always be plaguing some poor devil to death. And no man can do much thinking if he is always busy torturing some unlucky mortal.

I drew the flame sword I had appropriated from one of the sleepers who was my size. Holding its point a little way from his breast, I gave his sleeping body a slight taste of its potent destructive power. He screamed into wakefulness. Such screams from a full grown man—a God almost. A bystander would have thought I hurt him. Maybe I did cause him pain at that—I hope so.

“Now, you overgrown hunk of diseased meat,” I ordered him. “Will you call off that fleet or must I kill you?” I activated the telescreen beside the dais and upon it appeared the fleet, a great crescent of powerful shapes. “Step up and speak!”

Sathanas was suddenly reasonable. He stepped to the screen and showed himself. “It may be best for you to fall back away out of range, while the lord of Mandark under Van of Nor has time to discuss a little business with me. You can use the time to dispatch that little package of stuff on its way to the rendezvous. I can use it if it is safely there. I am a hostage and his terms must be understood.”

The fire from the fleet ceased. It was none too soon, either. Probably they had supposed Sathanas was dead as well as the crew. Although the hull was not pierced, many of the sleepers had died from the rays upon us. They dropped away from us swiftly. Soon they were but hovering dots upon the far ray-view horizon, hundreds of miles astern. I kept the televisor upon the fleet. There was little discussion among them. They were just awaiting my next move. One ship moved off from the fleet and returned again upon the course we had just traveled along. Quickly I learned the reason for this action. Putting the question into the mind of one of the officers of the distant fleet, I was struck dumb by his answer, automatic and unconscious as I knew the thought was to him. I couldn’t believe it. The mystery of our fruitless search for Arl aboard ship suddenly became clear to me. The answer in the man’s mind was: “The ship is taking the great bodied queen of the giant Mutan Mion, beautiful Arl, to the place where women are made into love machines and automatons of the pleasure science. She will be a valuable stim operator after her will is removed and the will to pleasure only placed in her. Her beauty will be much sought after by the great ones. I wish I was getting the money someone will get for her from the dark ones of the evil palace of pleasure science.”

Arl! It couldn’t be another. And she was being taken from me. While I was still digesting the horrible facts, the ship disappeared.

CHAPTER X

A Satanic Hostage

I looked at Sathanas’ face as he heard me read the man’s thought over the distance telaug beam. He leered his sardonic and famous smile which he used

only when he counted coup over some enemy. I juiced him a little with the flame sword and he sank half dead at my feet. I had lost all sympathy for the romance of evil as personified by Sathanas. He cost too much to have around. Arl was lost to me forever, unless I regained her soon, for a woman's soul cannot be replaced in her body once it is removed from her mind. I might get Arl back, but it did not look as though she would be anything but a smiling automaton to my wishes—a woman without volition or real thought. Well, I would regain her, anyway. Some Arl would be better than no Arl. I said as much to Sathanas: "So you prefer your woman in the condition in which you are putting my Arl. Yet, you do me the favor of doing the same thing to my Arl who was always too self-willed for my comfort. You have done me a favor, Sathanas, for which I will show my gratitude in due time. Meanwhile, stop that leering, I don't like it. A flame sword is a weapon that throws off a red flaming beam of destructive ions in any direction it is pointed," I explained to his agonized face, "and just now it is pointed at you, so don't try being so very clever. Even a God's patience can be exhausted by a fool's asinine facial expression." Sathanas altered his leering.

Meanwhile I had a problem on my hands. There was nothing I could do about Arl except try to heal her again once I got her back. The hovering fleet was just awaiting my next move. So was I. I had to keep Sathanas in my hands. I dosed him with sleeper beams to quiet the contortions of his face, then I turned toward the ship's controls keeping us headed for Mu. I didn't use any more speed. In his present state, Sathanas was no gift for the Aesir, and I had the fleet hot on my heels. I sat down to think.

At last it struck me! My ship, the Darkome, was the answer. It lay where I had left it, if the crew had followed my orders. I could not try to contact the Nor patrol by radio from the Satana, as the wave lengths of the apparatus were known and watched by the pursuing fleet. To try this would only invite attack by Sathanas' ships. Their allegiance to their master would not be so great that they would wait quietly by while I called the whole strength of vast Nor down upon them. I knew that it was only because I had not attempted this that they did not continue their attack in spite of my threat upon their master's life. But, if I could set a course near enough to the Darkome, if the crew of the waiting ship were on the alert and saw the whole string of enemy ships course overhead, and if none of the ships of Sathanas' saw the dark shape of the Darkome in the shadows of the rocks of the moon's surface, if all these things worked out correctly, then the Darkome would contact the Nor patrol over our secret wave lengths and the fleet behind us couldn't possibly have the slightest idea of any strategy.

If the Darkome lay where I had placed her, well under the shadow of a mighty meteor crater's wall, it was possible that the fleet could pass overhead without detecting her presence—unless the crew had placed a light for my guidance. That worried me—but I had given orders not to do so. The ordinary space radio is on a wave length known to everyone, but for secret communication the radio panel of Nor war ships contained several switches for different types of messages, and the radio, after such switches were thrown, operated on a wave length known to none but the construction men on the home planet. The receivers were also set up in the same manner so that secret messages could be heard only by commanders of ships of the intelligence branch according to which switch was set for the broadcast. Too, directional beam transmission cut down the chance of the message being intercepted by the Satanists. It might work. I

empty cell. I hurled our captive into it and locked the door.

Vi, one of the Aesir, shot a penetrative ray through the door and we could see the big one struggling to his feet. "Give him the epilepto-ray, Vi," I ordered.

Flicking a little lever on the barrel of the gun he held, the ray changed color slightly and we could see the poor dupe in the cell fall, writhing in pain, to the floor. Well, we had had a lot worse at their hands. When he stopped moving, we knew he was paralyzed for the next few hours.

I began to like these Aesir more and more. There is something in the way a fighting man operates that gladdens the heart of another warrior, and these Aesir had jumped to action with alacrity that would have done credit to the noblest of the Nor. And Tyr was the best of the four. There is nothing that can replace experience in battle, and they all had that and more. Tyr, though, was a companion that I would find myself reluctant to give up... quiet, but quick... reflective and slow of speech, but fast as a snake when necessity called. There are few like him, yet, according to the Nor medicoes, such men as Tyr are hopelessly infected with the evil of the sun and are not fit to bear the sons of future Nor citizens. Bah! Those medics are soft from easy living, say I. The Gods have their ailments, and an easy, too well provided life, with too little danger, is one of them. For myself, I am determined to go my own way in this question of retrieving the sons of man from the Sun-evil.

I looked about for a second, deciding what to do next—not so Tyr. When he had locked the Angle in the cell safely, he had sprung back to our captive's ray-post and had swung the weapon around so as to cover the inside of the ship, rendering the whole craft visible to the screens within the post.

Before it had occurred to my reputedly superior mind to do so, Tyr had activated the sleeper ray—one ray which he knew was invisible—and had put half the ship's crew to sleep with it. Then, I took Tyr's place at the ray's controls, which was probably unwise, and swept the ship clean of conscious life.

I returned the view beam to its former position, angling slightly ahead to watch for other ships, when I saw a black shape cruising beside our own.

Scanning three hundred sixty degrees around the ship, I counted fifty of Sathanas' ships which had joined him since we had been captured.

"Oh-oh! This is a different problem entirely." I spoke to no one in particular. "This is going to require some thought."

I made one last swift search of the inside of what was now our ship, trying to find a trace of Arl. I failed. I had time for nothing more, for even though we had the flagship of Sathanas' fleet in our hands, that ship was surrounded by fifty of the enemy loyal to Sathanas, and more than willing to dispose of any Nortans—one Mutan Mion in particular. We had to get our ship out of there before we were discovered or be shot like roosting pigeons. At any moment one of the ships alongside of us would throw a view ray into the Satana for some purpose or other and our little game would be all over. I had no doubt that instant death would be our fate in the event of discovery.

Tyr again took the ray while I raced forward to the control bridge. It would have been too complicated for any of the Aesir to navigate this ship, and, besides, most of the weapons were too huge for anyone but the size of Arl or me. And where in the name of the Gods of Space was Arl?

Quickly I placed a mind control ray upon the ship's commander, one ugly fellow, Haltor by name. Standing him upon his feet by sheer strength of synthetic

nerve-current command, I walked him toward the general televisor which was set to contact all of the ships of the fleet at once. I had him rasp out a few words as though in a great hurry at some sudden emergency.

"Commander Haltor to all ship commanders. Unforeseen emergency makes necessary a return to Earth for certain valuable material that was overlooked. The fleet will continue on its present course to destination. We will rejoin you as soon as we are able."

Not giving them time to question or to think about the orders, I swung the huge Satana in a short, tight arc that glued all of us to our seats under a half dozen gravities, and accelerated the ship on a return course. We were near a zone of weightlessness or the maneuver could not have been accomplished at the speed we were traveling. The High Commander Haltor I dropped unceremoniously to the deck where he resumed his interrupted slumber.

If I only had used that time of the return to Mu to everlastingly eliminate the 'great' Sathanas. But one's mind never functions correctly near Old Sol. One should figure out what to do, then do the opposite, when near this sun. I had decided to take Sathanas and his crew to Mu and leave them in the hands of the Aesir as a means of education for themselves. They could use the minds under telemach telaugs for a ready reference library of space travel and other needed information, and in a year or more be ready for a migration to a more beneficent energy field on some other planet. It was not a perfect solution to my problems, for Sathanas was not disposed of as the Nor Elders would have wished, but it did justice to the Aesir, and at the same time made it unnecessary for me to stay an illegal length of time upon the Earth.

But some ray from the fleet had caught a glimpse of the sleepers who should not have been sleeping, in tumbled positions everywhere about the ship. As I accelerated full back upon the return trail, out behind me I could see the fleet winging sharply around to turn upon me. Now I was the hunted. I prayed for the sight of a Nor patrol ship, but nothing showed in any direction. The ships behind me formed a 'V' of pursuit—being the quarry, I had the unpleasant feeling the formation was a spear point poised at my back. I was nearly helpless, for the massive guns of the great ship were not built to be fired by small men, or a few men, and I myself had to stay at the ship's controls. But I could leave her under robot control while I left for a short time to swing the big guns of the turrets for the smaller Aesir to fire. This I did and ran up into the master turret and swung a huge dis-ray in a vicious circle at the trailing ships. They did not want too close a taste of this. It was probable that the whole fleet was so built that this one ship could dominate it, for Sathanas did have sense enough to know that the type of men he used would be the type of men apt to find a reason to turn upon any domination. But they did not drop the pursuit. I might have shaken off one ship by a series of swift accelerations and change of course at each flash into invisibility of light speed, but to lose fifty pursuers was too much to expect. Too, it is dangerous to try complete acceleration thusly, for one may have miscalculated the weight in the haste of battle, and the figures on the sheet, suddenly resolved into actual force in the driver plates, would smear us against the metal walls—just so much human hash. In full speed flight, such maneuvers can be suicide without full checking by several sharp minds for error.

The ship began to heat under the combined fire of the rays from the whole circle of pursuit. I had to do something fast. The old hostage gag was in my mind,

stepped on the plate dis-flow button, my speed shot up to an uncomfortable acceleration. We shot past the moon, right over the Darkome's position. Whether she lay where I last left her or had gone in search of me, I could not tell. The place was all in the dark shadow of the mountains of the moon. I could not drop a beam to her without betraying her position. If she lay there, and if the fleet behind me failed to observe her, the chances were good that Nor ships would soon be coming toward our position at a good hundred light speeds. The men of the Darkome would hardly miss the sight and thunder of our drivers overhead. This was my only chance for escape from this Arch-fiend whose power over me still held, though he lay nearly dead at my feet.

Now, my problems were multiplied. First, I had to complete the capture and death of Sathanas. Second, I had to rescue my Arl from a secret stronghold of sin, the location of which I hadn't the faintest idea. Third, I had to turn over a brain to the Aesir for them to use to escape the sun-age death which I had sworn would not consume them. To stop me were the fifty great ships of war waiting impatiently overhead for me to conclude my conference with Sathanas and release him and his ship. It was ridiculous of them but they apparently expected me to strike a bargain with Sathanas and to take his word for a contract while I went about my business. Such is evil thought—ridiculous upon analysis. It was obvious to me that there was no way for me to release Sathanas from my hands except by death. I couldn't trust his word in the slightest; yet, to a logical man, there was no other thing that fleet was waiting for. Then they could come flaming in with all rays blasting. Some of them would have died. But certainly so would have the Satana and myself and her master gone up with her. What was I supposed to do with him—in their minds? I can never understand evil.

Why didn't they give the ship a flood of sleeper ray? Because we would have gone spinning down to Earth and not one of them could have stopped our fall, for the weight of the great ship was too much for their cargo magnetic grapple rays. The truth was that they were just waiting and so was I. Well, I had more to wait for than they, but they didn't know it. It is possible, too, that they thought me fool enough to trust the word of their master to release me and to restore Arl in return for his life.

Why didn't I kill him? I thought I might have to reenact the threat scene with the flame sword at his breast over the televisor to convince them I still meant business, and while that possibility existed, keeping him alive was a good investment.

I could not land the ship on Mu, for if a sleeper beam was used on the whole ship, Sathanas and I would have been taken alive.

I hung the ship on her driver beams' balance at fifty miles over the rocks and waited. But, I kept my hand on the controls in such a way that should a sleeper beam drop me unconscious, the ship would drop with me. We waited while I kept up a running fire of conversation with the now awakened Sathanas. Quickly I figured out these angles and awakened him as I saw my safety lay in pretending to dicker with him for some understanding. The fool believed me and was promising to set me off at Quanto, a base that was safe for him to approach, not being heavily defended, and leave me there after he had returned Arl to me. He assured me that the place where she had been sent was not far away. But, I knew as well as I know Arl's face, that he was lying. I did not have to look at the telaug needles to see the false needle vibrating in the red zone of der thought. No truth ever comes out of a man when he is in der, and all of Sathanas' thoughts were full of der—I

knew that quite well. Yet, the man could live and other men could follow him. Why won't men study the lessons provided them to help them over the ever present opposition of dero which they are continually warned against? I can tell you—they are another kind of errant—a mentally blinded errant who cannot see because they will not look. Why don't they look? Because the der is in their will, too. How could Nor men have a der will when it is checked for continually? Because Sathanas, whose defection was hidden from the medicos by his doting family, had put the der will in them himself with cleverly contrived de-stim rays. After they had been fully infected with the deadly radioactivity, they had been ripe for his plans. How could Sathanas know so much about der as to use it on his own men to make them tractable to his will, and yet not understand the need for removing the radio-active material from his mind that caused his own err. Because Sathanas was mad, and a madman is not logical. 'Der' is a good thing to understand and I had studied it a long time.

Hanging there above old Mu, my four Aesir friends waiting with glum faces, I felt like a fly hung up in a spider web. But, somehow I knew that the wasp was coming for these spiders. Standing at the controls, I would doze for an instant, and the great Satana would start her long deadly plunge to the surface of Earth. The sudden drop would awaken me, or the Aesir would shake me awake and I would bring the ship back to its former position. Still faintly dotting the far ray-view horizon lay the fleet of the Satanists watching their master's ship. Sooner or later they would figure out that there was nothing to wait for, and would speed off, for there was no other choice left to them. They could do him no good now, for his fate was in my hands. As this became clear to their officers, one by one they deserted the vigil, flashing out of sight into immense speed to... to where? I wish I knew. Some of them would be smoked out in a hurry once I got my hands on the Darkome again.

At last I saw what I was waiting for—the Dread. Nors of the Nor Patrol suddenly swooping out of the invisibility of light speed into the visible ranges of movement as they braked their fight between the Moon and Earth where braking could be done without danger from weight's inertia. It can seem like magic—this speeding from weightless point of space to weightless point at the speed of many light velocities. One instant you are here, and the next your ship has arrived... if the automatic ultrafast relays have tripped your drive and brake rockets correctly. If they fail, you would not live to talk about it. It is delicate stuff to plot such courses—to handle shiploads of men whose lives hang on their hair-breath of mental coordination necessary to set all the instruments aright before you take your course. To avoid disastrous inertia at start and stop is a feat, indeed.

Instantly, the patrol went into action. A moment before, the sky had been completely empty, then, suddenly, the Nor-ships appeared—guns blasting at the Satanists, like ships coming from the fourth dimension of ultra-speed into the three dimensions of visible speeds. One by one the ships of Satan's fleet dropped blazing into the seas of Earth. I grinned down at the semi-conscious Sathanas. "It seems that I win, O Lord of Foolishness and Evil, who turns on better men than himself who have done him no wrong. Soon your fleet will be no more. What do you think they will do with you?"

I gave his head a little ben-ray so that he would be able to answer me and be able to realize and suffer from the realization of his position. His answer was a

snarl of hatred. "You may have won this time, but there will come another day, Mutan Mion."

"If I know my Nor leaders, there will be no other day. However, you can win my support if you tell me where they have taken Arl. I will claim you as my captive and make sure that you live if you tell me where I can find my beloved."

Sathanas, as I had known he would, caved in immediately and told me the position of the pleasure science center where Arl had been taken. Although he had probably sworn a dozen mighty and terrible oaths not to reveal to

Nor men any detail of the place, he did so at the first sign that it might be of value in saving his life. And like all evil men, he expected me to keep my word to one who would betray a trust without any provocation. Why? Because he knew my reputation as a man who keeps his word. Well, to keep that reputation, which at times has a great value, I would keep my word to the Arch-fiend. I would save him and turn him over to the Aesir as a walking map of the heavens where his evil life would at least find a use—a real use in making Gods and immortals out of worthy mortals.

As I wrote down the position of the place Sathanas described, I qualified my promise. to him. "However, I promise that you will never again lead men to death... you are through with power."

The remaining ships of the Satanists' fleet raised the signal of surrender and were herded in beside our own floating giant which had hoisted the white flag as the first blast of power from a Nor driver was seen on the detectors. In less time than it takes to tell, the Satana was swarming with clean cut men in the smart, glittering uniforms of the Nor Patrol—efficiency and law backed up by cool shiny dis guns, and ordered in clipped stern voices.

The Satanists never had a chance once their position we known. And well they knew it, too. I was never so glad to see anyone as that sharpfaced young officer who boarded us and cheerfully rubbed my position in to me. I showed him the mighty Sathanas coiled up in an agonized heap of epilepto-ray-charge, for I had no desire of a reputation for softness among the patrol man, and had dosed him with epilepto-ray as they drew alongside. His smile of triumph was very warm and pleasant. He fully understood the predicament he had rescued me from and I knew that he never intended to forget this episode. "'How Mion got hold of the devil and couldn't let go...'" was the story I would hear many times before I moved on to the heavy planets.

"Opportune, our arrival, wasn't it, sir? You are the Earthman, Mutan Mion of Nor, now of Van of Nor? Yes, I know much of you, but I have never had the pleasure of meeting you."

I shook his hand, not minding the implied sarcasm. "Yes, you saved me from a nasty situation. I was captured by the big fellow as I returned from a trip to Earth. We managed to take the ship from his crew just as this fleet showed up to the rendezvous here. We were safe because we still held Sathanas alive, but how to let go—how to get away from that bunch of armored battle wagons, I couldn't figure."

"Well, I guess it's all over now. We have only to take his nibs back to Nor and turn him and his remaining followers in." The young officer's face was greatly relieved that there was no more trouble in this affair for him. But I dashed his hopes.

"That's not entirely true, my friend. A few hours ago he sent my Lady Arl to a place that is called the "Pleasure Science Center." She is to be the victim of a mind degrading operation, and afterward is to be sold as a slave to some commercial pleasure palace of the illegal type. Much of Sathanas' business was of this pandering kind and we are apt to find many a maid of Nor there who has been or will be changed into the sort of animal Sathanas prefers around him. We have no choice but to attack the place, however far or however strong it may be, according to the oath we swear when we take service under the Nor flag. Remember the words: 'To uphold the honor of Nortan womanhood at the expense even of our life or reason—to risk all dangers for the sake of extending the rule of reason through all space...'"

"I did not know, Lord Mion. The businesses of Sathanas are much larger than Sathanas, that I do know. But of the Lady Arl or of any other Nor maidens who are in their hands, I did not know. Where is this place they have sent her? We must prepare an attack, of course, but that is something we must not rush headlong into. We know little about the strength of these illegal cults. They have only been uncovered among the Nor since the exposure of Sathanas."

"There is no time for the usual procedure of preparation for war. They will start work on Arl at once after she arrives. I don't intend to wait for that to happen. I have the position of the place. To get this, I bargained with Sathanas, promising him his life for the information. If he has lied, he dies. He is going to accompany me so that I may read his mind en route and learn all he knows of the thing. Whether or not you and the ships under your command accompany me is up to you or your superior officer at the base. The Darkome is under my command and the Darkome leaves at once to rescue Arl from the place called the Center of the Science of Pleasure. Its true name is more correctly the Place of Evil Lust, or it should be. Sathanas' ship and his own ugly self are both mine by right of capture, according to the Code of Nor. So, I have two ships to fling at this focus of evil."

"Where is the place?" asked the young commander—young to me, meaning he was but a century or two my junior. He was my senior in the patrol, but I was not under his command. In the Nor Military Organization, a man is responsible only to those officers who are designated over him, that is, I could be overruled by him only after he reported to my superiors.

"It lies on the rim of the light of Fomalhaut, twenty some light years from this spot. Fomalhaut, itself, can be reached in four days accelerating from the zone of weightlessness between Saturn and Jupiter—in this system, Saturn and Jupiter are the sixth and fifth planets from the sun, respectively. At steady acceleration, we should reach fourteen hundred light speeds in a few hours. It is unwise to accelerate to a greater rate for such a short trip, so it will take us four days."

"Four days seems like a lot of time for even a short trip like this one," countered the young commander.

"Under normal circumstances that would be true, but I want to decelerate out of the ultra speeds near the sub-planet Pandral—but not too near. That's what will take the time."

"Pandral, Lord Mion? I can't recall ever having heard of it before."

"Neither had I until I read Sathanas' mind—but that is where these fiends have taken the Lady Arl—and that's where I am determined to go—alone, if need

be.”

“You will not have to go alone, Lord Mion—but, first, let us take another look at Sathanas’ brain. If the place looks vulnerable, we will chance it. If not, we will report the place—and then scout it for the arrival of a real battle force.”

I shook the man’s hand. He was not over-cautious or too subservient to ritual—the only mark of evil that one can find in the clean race of the Nor. He was a man. We set the course at once and blasted off into the ultra speed that is used on such journeys. Some eighty light speeds we attained at one jolt from the center of no-weight between Moon and Earth. I set the pursuit needle to seek out the trail of the ship that had borne Arl away to her ‘life of pleasure’ as these fiends ironically called condemning a human to a mindless life of slavery to evil desire. With another set of blasts from the ro-pilot as we passed between Saturn and Jupiter, we attained fourteen hundred light speeds—all that we required.

Then we put the telaug on Sathanas’ mind and sat down to the job of examining every picture it contained that in any way related to our objective and the force that defended its evil existence. There was a great deal to know—to learn, we found. For many centuries this place—its true name was Pandral—had been in the business of manufacturing and peddling slaves for the Hell-holes of the rims of the Nor Empire. Like every great empire, Nor’s sway extended only so far, and where her authority stopped, there lived her parasites, those who pandered to the thoughtless sybarites of the Empire who sought outside Nor what could not be obtained where her law prevailed. The very absoluteness and thoroughness of Nor police work gave them their opportunity, for those thirsts of evil origin could not be quenched in Nor, but those who thirst will drink some way, and so Normen themselves supported their worst enemies—just as they do in less intelligent worlds.

CHAPTER XI

Plot Against Pandral

Pandral was a planetoid about two thousand miles in diameter. To the eye, it was a lifeless ball, but so are all Nor planets and planetoids. There is not much use in their concealment, and the modern Nor are dropping the custom, but the ancient precaution of concealing all surface work to cut down the value of enemy observation from the exterior still exists, though there are few enemies for Nor to worry over any more. Within, Pandral was an exquisitely designed pleasure palace—all two thousand miles of it—honeycombed with the chambers that the life science of Nor knows so well how to build—honeycombed with the caverns of our Ancient Race as is Mother Mu. Within these vast chambers where all imaginable conditions of life are reproduced, life was studied, not for what value could be made of it, but for what could be made from it for profit—what attractions could be created which the nature of man would be unable to resist. This creation of bait for the sucker was the prime purpose of Pandral’s existence. They did not create pleasure for itself; they created lures on which the rich fish would inevitably bite. Once hooked, the fish was exposed to their blackmail which was the source of their profit. He had no way of retaliating for fear of exposure to the Nor police system, and so Pandral extracted a great part of the income from the pockets of the weaker great of Nor. This process of milking Nor had gone on so long that it was practically taken for granted as not really evil but a natural result of the existence of fools with money in their pockets—and no prosperous nation can

avoid creating bulging pockets—even those of fools. But, the true evil of Pandral was very carefully hidden beneath a vast network of subtle propaganda and more sinister fear of their strength which kept those mouths closed which might have remedied the evil. This was the cover which hid the business of creating those creatures which Sathanas had so great a taste for—those without minds except in the pursuit of pleasure. Well, be that as it may, we knew what Pandral was, but did nothing about it for the reason that they were very careful about whom they hurt and had so far managed to avoid antagonizing anyone strong enough to trim their spreading power. It was high time, I realized, that more was known of these dives which grew so prolifically about the far spread boundaries of the Nor Empire. Again I was struck by a thing I can never understand—how can great minds make such fearful mistakes? Here was Nor, with the greatest minds of space at her helm, surrounded by festering evil which she apparently did not even know existed. But, then, did I know those minds I so firmly believed in? No. I only believed in them because I knew a few such minds as the Princess Vanue's. Again I was struck with my own ignorance in not realizing that even Nor had her ailments, and that this ailment must be chalked up to failure in her upper strata.

Pandral was well defended, in Sathanas' mind, both by ships and fixed batteries of rays far too powerful for any strength we had on our handful of ships—not quite two hundred powerful battle wagons, true, but no match for the strength we saw built into the stones of Pandral. We could not take the place by storm; we must take it by a stratagem.

I had a ready means of entry in the person of Sathanas who was known there. If I could retain control over him when I got within their ray—that was the problem. It would not be pleasant to be exposed by Sathanas within the power of Pandral's forces, for their fear of Nor would make our demise swift.

Using Sathanas' mind for continual reference, I disguised myself as a certain friend of his, Profir, by name, who had been killed in the action. He was about my size and fair, but we worked on the disguise carefully to make it correspond with Sathanas' mental images. Then, we dressed Sathanas' locks with care, crowning our handiwork with a golden circlet, studded with gems, within which was a powerful little mental radio which kept the commands from my own telaug imposed upon his thought in such strength that there was no danger of his using his own will. My telaug and control device were concealed in a great metal studded belt I wore, from which hung a flame sword and a powerful dissociator pistol ray. More weapons would have disclosed our purpose. I counted on their familiarity with Sathanas. Making up a party of twenty, which was about the number usually in Sathanas' parties on his visits here, we readied the Satana for a close look from examining ray. The crew was dressed in the uniforms of the captive crew, and carefully prepared mentally by hypnosis for their part as men whose allegiance was Sathanas'. However, a certain device was readied for general energy flows which would be released by me if at any time I needed their full minds for combat. When everything was ready, the Satana shot off to enter the watching ray beams of the pirate stronghold. If all went well, it would be the last time a ship would enter that place of mutilation. No more would minds of immortals be changed into the tools of fools. If I could hit that hole at all, I would not cease until it was a cinder floating in space, empty of life.

The place we entered had the reputation among those who frequented the illegal dens as the most glamorous and the most dangerous of them all. We en-

tered, the huge form of Sathanas in the lead and myself towering a little higher just behind him. The twenty stout fellows took up positions behind us where any attack could be shot at without interfering with each other. Thus protected at the back, we advanced down the tremendous hall. I knew that the people who ruled this place would not be glad to see Sathanas, knowing of his flight from the Nor Patrol. It was obvious that they welcomed anyone who was outside the law as a matter of general practice—and so, they could hardly refuse the great Sathanas one of the biggest gears in this machinery of space-wide vice.

An obsequious female prostrated herself before us. “My Lords, may I bid you welcome?”

With a sneer, and in his typically ungracious manner, Sathanas spoke:

“We will speak with ‘the Boss’, My Lord Harald.”

It didn’t sound like he held much respect or affection for this Harald—the way his voice dripped when he spoke his name. I, meanwhile, held my fingers tightly crossed under my cape, hoping that we were going through the usual Sathanas routine. Otherwise our little game would soon be terminated—perhaps fatally.

I sensed that something was going wrong and I’d better find out what it was and soon. I focused my telaug on the poor wretch who now was standing, puzzled before us. In her mind was bewilderment that the great Lord Sathanas hadn’t gone at once to the chambers always held in readiness for the master of the Satana.

I made Sathanas speak: “Take me and my men to our rooms.”

Again that wonder that Sathanas wasn’t following his usual practice, but she obeyed.

“Will my Lords follow me,” she offered as she led the way out of the hall that we were in.

“Damn!” I thought, “how had I missed that entrance in Sathanas’ mind?” I thought that I had covered everything when I read his thoughts about this place. I didn’t know—or see—that he always met the big shot in the same place, in the same rooms.

True, I did know where the rooms were—but I wanted the girl to lead the way. She had wondered about things that, if somebody here in this palace had read in her mind, would have roused suspicion. We were in dangerous enough territory without having anything that we could cover give us away. This first step of ours had been a slip. I prayed to the gods of space for no more mistakes—another one might prove fatal.

One thing I knew. If it were usual for Sathanas to meet the Boss of this glorified den in some of the rooms in the immediate vicinity, then I could keep the girl who brought us here with us without arousing any suspicion—keep her here where we could watch that she didn’t repeat those thoughts of wonder that could have ruined our little plan.

So, as she showed us into a large chamber off the great hall, I grasped her arm.

“Little Dark Flower, stay with us. We have been far and your smile is pleasant. Will you dance for us?”

The poor creature looked up into my eyes with her’s wet with gratitude that someone had noticed her among all the beautiful women from a score of strange

planets. She was a pretty thing, about half my own height, alive with the lush dark beauty of the women from Bohan. Her natural charms had been enhanced and stimulated with the life influence that had been grown in her making her an instrument for men's pleasure.

She couldn't speak for the rare pleasure of being noticed. but I read her thoughts. Again wonder.

'A kind face among Sathanas' friends? Now, perhaps, I shall get a little stim. Everyone around here is so tight with me. They begrudge even the breath I draw.'

She glanced at me, and at my reassuring nod she pressed a wall stud that flooded the room with a strong vibrant ray of intense pleasure. Her face relaxed under it like one denied something a long time and then receiving it in abundance... something that was like the breath of life itself to her. I realized that stim replaced natural love with these maltreated creatures, that she loved those who gave her stim and had no emotions otherwise. Swiftly she shed her uniform, and donned a few slight spangles from a closet of female trappings in the wall. Then, adjusting a spot of stim ray, she placed it in my hand, telling me to keep it on her. I turned it up to full power, and her body writhed slowly, hands outstretched, as she warmed herself beautifully at the spot ray in my hands, begged and begged with her motions for a little indulgence, a little kindness. She was a master of the art of expressing her thoughts with her motions, and knowing her thoughts, I interpreted her motions correctly. Well, if I had my way, freedom or death would be her lot before long.

The rest of the party sprawled about the chamber on the rich divans, and bawled at the attendants for drinks and women, just as we had seen Sathanas' followers do in Sathanas' mental images. Soon they were well supplied with diversion. Before each of them writhed a dancer and on each side of them nestled a beauty amorously inclined. Music was supplied by a half dozen Amero youths, a race whose talent for music is superior to that of most races, and whose talent in other directions is singularly lacking. They are much used in their present capacity—unintrusive musical accompaniment.

The party was really moving along at a deceptive pace when the gentleman we had come across vast stellar space to see appeared.

A well concealed door at the rear of the chamber that we were in, opened, and, like a huge lumbering mammoth from the swamps of Mu, the Chief himself ambled through. He was dressed as we formerly decked out the mammoths of Mu for the annual games in which the Titans delighted.

This portly creature was of some unguessable racial origin—horned like a Titan, but as fat and as ungainly corpulent as a hippopotamus. He was as tall as I am, but I'll wager that he was thrice my weight. The fingers of the fat, pudgy hands swelled around many gaudy rings that his vain nature fancied. Reflecting the falsity and affectation of the many rings were his little gimlet eyes, sparkling with a sickly, unholy gleam through the generous folds of his too pig-like face. Pig eyes with the hidden, treacherous cunning of a fox somehow apparent within them. It had been many a year since I last slaughtered pigs on one of my estates on Mandark—but one look at this—this overstuffed imitation of a man, and my fingers itched to see a blade in my hand spread the fat folds of flesh on that accursed neck and send him to whatever lies beyond...

His name I knew from reading the mind of Sathanas. It was, inappropriately

enough, Harald. He had no official tie with any government, though there were probably many that would have given a lot to get him if they knew that it was he that was the master mind behind this space-wide slave ring. Here, on his little unsavory ball of matter that polluted the reaches of space, he was known as the "Ruler of Pandral, Sir Harald".

Out of the mouth of Sathanas came the words that I willed him to say, though I nearly choked on the thought:

"Greetings, Sir Harald," spoke the voice of Sathanas as he stood up and approached the gross body of Harald, now seating himself in the best pile of cushions as gracefully as a space freighter settling to a port with half its lifters gone.

"Ugh... ugh..." the fat frog croaked.

"Sir Harald," Sathanas continued, "I have several matters that I wish to talk over with your Grace."

"His Grace" paused in his stuffing his fat mouth with some delicacy or another, to deign to raise an eyebrow and question, "Oh... yes?"

"The price of the little morsel that I sent you... the Lady Arl." I made Sathanas rub his hands as he would have, no doubt, if he were acting on his own volition.

"And the other matters?"

I thought to myself at this, 'The old buzzard can talk then, if it interests him.'

"The other matter," said Sathanas, answering Harald's question, "is our future plans, now that I am no longer numbered among the pillars of virtue of Nor-tan society."

As the Ruler of Pandral rearranged the folds of his crimson silken garments around him before continuing the talk with me, or as he thought, with Sathanas, Sathanas had to move as my mind ordered. There was this bloated thing before us, a thing that should not be insultingly alive and moving where we could see him.

The other parts of the plot were moving as we had planned. While Sathanas and Harald were talking, the rest of the men were disporting themselves with Harald's slaves. Some of them were feigning drunkenness and others merely were acting half drunk—making a clumsy attempt to dance and cavort with the girls they had chosen.

Two of the latter, among the biggest in our crew, managed to dance with their prizes behind the spot where sat Sathanas, Harald, and myself, presumably Sathanas' second in command.

So smoothly and quickly that the others in the room weren't aware of what was happening, our two suddenly stopped dancing and in a trice had the obese Harald, as he began to answer me in their iron embrace, and a circlet exactly like the one encircling Sathanas' head was clapped upon his head. Instantly he relaxed, his will now was overpowered by a flood of synthetic nerve impulse from a teleradio within the belt of my lieutenant. Sir Harald was now a servant of a brain not his own. No impulse his brain could generate would be powerful enough to overrule the steady flow of power from an instrument ruled by another mind.

"Can you read him?" I asked Tyron, my lieutenant. "Easily," he answered.

"Ask him what would be the thing he would do ordinarily when he left this apartment, if nothing had occurred."

"He would have gone directly to his own apartments to think over his talk with Sathanas and decide what was best to do. Then he would return to this

chamber to tell Sathanas what he had decided.”

“Did he ever take Sathanas to these apartments?”

“Never,” answered Tyron. This had happened so quickly that only two of the attendant sirens had noticed the brief contact which had resulted in Harald’s loss of control. Those were suddenly overcome by a sudden inexplicable drunkenness emanating from a tiny gun in my sleeve. I examined the rest of the poor fair heads to see if they realized what had occurred, but the only two who had seen were those who were dancing with our two champions who had slipped the circlet on Harald’s head.

The situation, Tyron went on to explain, necessitated that we go to Harald’s apartments for they were filled with apparatus which controlled the whole stronghold. I thought it best to dismiss the rest of the heterae before they overheard the strong mental conversation we were carrying on without their knowing it.

“We’ll have to risk it. Whether or not it is the customary thing to do, we’re going to his apartments.”

Sending Sathanas and Harald ahead, we strolled out of the chambers. Working the two controls, the obese Harold and Sathanas were engaged in animated conversation. Tyron and I came next. Behind us, the rest of the party casually strolled fanwise as before. After all, Harald had placed himself in our hands. It should not look unusual except to those whom we should meet within the ruler’s private nest.

Nothing happened. Step after step, each seeming an age, and still nothing happened. We neared the ornate arch leading to Harald’s private sanctum; nothing barred our way, no ray swept over us in revealing inquiry. Would one of their rays reveal the control I held over Harold and Sathanas or would it pass over, seeing nothing? The next few minutes would tell. It could be seen by alert men trained in the type of work to which we were accustomed, but did the outlaws have men trained as we were, or were they men who had picked up their training hit or miss? But, these were not the thoughts to think and I brushed them aside and filled my mind with visions of the choice beauties Harald was to show us for our entertainment during our stay here—of all the varied stim experiences which were to fill my days here—of all the delectable pleasures I was going to sample. With anything but the truth I filled my mind’s images.

Then we were in the luxurious lounges of the rich pirate’s suite of rooms. The armed guards looked us over curiously. I made Sathanas talk: “I must see these new mechanisms for the conversion of character you have built. I must see their results in the living person, for I intend to buy a great many of them. I am building anew in a secret place.”

My lieutenant made Harald answer: “Yes, you shall see many new things we have devised for the entertainment of the customers or victims, whichever they happen to be. We have created several new character types—several different fixed-idea mentalities which are extremely appealing to the desirous male.”

Then it happened. The women there who were Harald’s things noticed the circlet. Stupidly they called attention to it, asking among themselves, “What is that new head ornament Harald is wearing? I have never seen it before.”

One of the guards heard the women’s chatter and glanced at Harald’s head. Noting that Sathanas wore the same kind of head circlet, the truth flashed into his

mind as he looked at the rest of us and saw the space bronzed iron of the patrol warriors, the sharp, undissipated eyes, the clean, healthy flesh, not one soft, self-indulgent character among them. The incongruity of our health and intent gave us away to the man. He saw it all too plainly.

I shot him as he raised his voice to shout a warning. In an instant the rooms filled with a criss-cross of dissociator beams and the long flames of power swords reached at us from the rooms beyond. At the first bolt, we flung ourselves to the floor. The fire lasted but a minute, and the rooms were clear. Several of my men lay dead. As far as I could tell, the guards who had been there were also dead. I raced toward the inner rooms where the banks of control mech lay. I knew the whole stronghold could be ruled from these banks of instruments. I had carefully examined Harald's brain for the methods behind the mech that lay here. I reached the great permalloy door as it was almost swung to, and crashed my shoulder into it. Someone screamed beyond and the door opened. A man of small stature lay sprawled inert across the room where my charge had flung him. There were a half dozen in the room—females—aging creatures, too. Why age? I did not stop to ask, perhaps they were dupes of Harald's who had gained their allegiance with some promise of treatment.

They sat at the great multi-vision screens watching the life of the place for any untoward activity. How they missed our own was easy to explain. One man can't see everything, and we had not given them time to see much. I herded them into a corner and swiftly disarmed them. Now for the last bit of trickery. If it failed, I probably would die here before the place could be taken by the waiting battle fleet. I called Harald and his controller into the room full of mech. Standing him before the multi-screens, Tyron made him give the message we had composed.

"Men, we are going to be inspected by the Nor patrol. Do not be alarmed. Everything is arranged between us and they will merely perform a routine and perfunctory inspection. Be on your guard that nothing happens while the patrol are about. We have nothing to hide from them. Be sure that nothing goes on while they are here that should be hidden from them. I give you five minutes to make ready for their arrival. Do not fire on the ships. Everything has been arranged between us."

On the screen, a sudden confused scramble marked the attempt to hide in five minutes, the tell-tale traces of illegal activities. I knew that they had been inspected before and would not think another inspection amiss, in spite of the short notice. It would have been unnatural for Harald to fight Nor men, for he could not hope to win in a long struggle. Obviously, he was submitting to a search. They had noted Sathanas' arrival and may have thought Harald had decided to give the Great Sathanas up rather than defend him from pursuit. Whatever they thought, the fleet blazed up to a stop before the landing cradles and settled to a landing.

Into the great locks trundled the patrol ships, one after the other. I knew that this was unusual in an inspection, as the ships hung outside, and a few officers did the inspecting, but I trusted the bustle of the five minute preparation to conceal the movement of the ships from general notice. The alarmed faces of several of Harald's men announced this unusual feature to Harald's visage on the screens, but Tyron made Harald gesture reassuringly and nothing further happened.

The men dispersed through the great fortress as they had been ordered. After an interval of waiting for all the batteries to be invested, I showed my face on the screen beside Harald's to see if all the batteries had been entered by Normen. They stood in readiness, disblasters in their hands, occupying each great battery of space guns that ordinarily would have made every attempt at assault useless. A wave of my hand and they arrested every officer of Harald's guard, and disarmed the rest, a Nor man placing himself at every gun. The place was in our hands with not a shot fired since Harald had announced our entry on the screens. Such is subterfuge—a sweet weapon when it works, a deadly one to the user when it fails. In order to use it we had to place a chunk of our fleet under their guns in complete helplessness. But everything had gone without mishap.

Now to find the Lady Arl before anything more happened to her. Leaving Tyron to run things, I took a dozen men and raced through the endless caverns of Harald's pleasure palace looking for the growth caverns where his creatures were manufactured out of normal flesh and blood.

CHAPTER XII

Harald's Hostages

Servants of evil men can be fiends. These were. In the growth caverns, many things that no man should see were going on. Little girls were being trained by ro-mech to be faultless dancers—automatons of rhythm. The process was designed to develop those muscles and thoughts needed by a dancer to the exclusion of other growth within her body. To attain this, she was wired to a thought record taken from some famous dancer's brain, and day after day, her little body mechanically repeated the motions and her brain mechanically repeated the thoughts of the dancer until the whole dance became automatism. A thing was produced which would never be human and a thing hard to describe to those who have not seen it.

These creatures were slaves. They had nothing whatever to say about their fate in any way. Much of the treatment was very beneficial; the slavers adopted the best medical science of the immortal races to gain their own ends. It was the unbalance of the character aimed at by such men as Harald and Sathanas that was evil.

There were hundreds of liquid nutrient tanks in which females of all sizes and races were suspended. Upon their brains telerays played, impressing repeatedly hypnotic commands as well as the whole gamut of erotic thoughts culled from millions of years of the development of the science of pleasure in just such gilded palaces of slavery. All this was extremely pleasant to the recipient, so much so as to crowd all other tendencies from their minds. They were given such treatment from the earliest childhood, if they fell into the hands of the slavers at that age. They received no other education. Thus, the art of pleasure was burned into their brains until they knew no other objective.

Through every pleasure nerve of the body ran nutrient and growth stimulating flows introduced directly into the nerves by tiny needles. The whole body immersed in the nutrient liquid, evolved a covering flesh more alive, more soft, more reactive to sensation than is the case in the normally developed human being.

Such women had many men passionately enslaved to them, giving them every penny of their income. All this went directly into the pockets of such as

Harald. Naturally he never released any of these profitable slaves from his bondage.

Thus all the growth and life science of the vast races of immortals was here perverted in this evil world of Pandral to the ends of the master—power and gold. No one but Harald had a will in any matter on all Pandral but for the profit of the master.

The growth rays, if concentrated on those nerves which cause pleasure sensations, can give a person infinitely greater capacity for pleasure than in the normal person. But, when this is done, the ability to resist such pleasure does not grow normally and the creature becomes a servant to the will to pleasure. And, since the greatest pleasure comes from synthetic nerve impulse generators, they become a servant of the machine. While this could be a means of enhancing the joy of life in the proper hands, such men as Harald were certainly not the proper hands.

At last I found and released my beloved. I cannot tell you what had been done to her, but I have hopes of repairing the damage. She would have become a delectable morsel for some mad master, for what had been designed for her was not a choice future.

We herded the heterae, the drunken customers, the whole crew of unnatural servants aboard the captive vessels and dispatched them toward the courts of the Nor Empire. I will be there when their cases come up, and I will have plenty to say. Some of those child victims of his will yet grace Mandark after Vanue's laboratories are through with their reconstruction. Vanue's reward system will shake evil thought out of their beautiful young heads.

I said to Harald: "You think you can pervert the life stream of the race to your own selfish ends. Love is sacred to the Gods. Your manufacture of will-less sirens will not be appreciated by the courts such men hold in Nor for just your kind. It's only by accident that a youngster of my diminutive stature—a mere fifty feet of man—came upon your place in my pursuit of Sathanas. Had one of our leaders chanced upon information leading to this hole, your lot would have been different. Already you would have been dealt with. It pays to be virtuous so far as you can imagine virtue, for when one steps off the path, one faces these beings whom no power of our imagination could vision... no force we could conjure up would ever overcome, for their life is ages old and has been gaining in strength for all those years. Those who take a whole planet to build one home upon will not allow their laws to be set aside by any pipsqueak who conceives a new way to make money and fails to remember that the race is sacred to the Gods. You have forgotten that though the Gods must of necessity dwell afar, yet they do not forget their source. Some of the very creatures you have mutilated were kin of such mighty men, and if I had not caught up with you they would have, and your fate would have been far different from the trial and imprisonment I plan for you."

Harald made no answer, but only glared at me in furious frustration.

"The great ones always search for the young of the race for better brains to carry out their mighty plans, and they are not pleased with the pollution of the blood that bears their agents. They guard the tree of life, for they have a mighty use for its fruit. Even assuming they were evil, and it is sometimes true that they guard the tree for nothing better than to pick the beautiful fruit—the young females as they mature—still they are not pleased with the malformation—the defiling of the tree that bears their much desired beauties to grace the harems of

Gods. Even assuming the Gods themselves had no higher purpose than yourself, would you believe that they would allow you to pollute a tree that produced the agents of their immortal pleasures? Has it not seemed strangely easy for me to overcome your greater strength? We are probably flooded with the observation and control rays of mightier ones that we can imagine exist. How else could a man take a fortress like this with two simple mental radios and a couple of dis-guns? If you are ever free again, don't forget the Gods. One way to remain alive is to envision the will of the Gods and carry it out as if they were observing you, for sooner or later they will observe you. Go now, to central Nor and to trial for every ill deed you have worked against the life of Normen."

Pandral in the future will be a base for the Nor patrol. It is well suited to the purpose.

Once more I took Sathanas aboard the Satana. I instructed the four Aesir in the mind reading apparatus until I felt sure that nothing Sathanas knew would be lost to them. Then setting them on their course for Earth, I abandoned them to their pursuit of knowledge they would get from Sathanas. The arch-fiend was immobilized by a nerve operation I performed. There is little danger that he will get out of hand on Earth before the Aesir have used him for the purpose to which I dedicated the rest of his misused life. He will serve as a map and a guide to the operations of the ships the Aesir will need for a migration to the dark spaces beyond the deadly light of any sun. And when the Aesir soar at last into the starless dark, Sathanas will lie in chains in one of the deepest pits of the forgotten cities beneath the Earth's crust. May he lie there forever.

...and Satan did lie there forever, as Dante tells us, but he succeeded in being a curse to man in spite of his chains.



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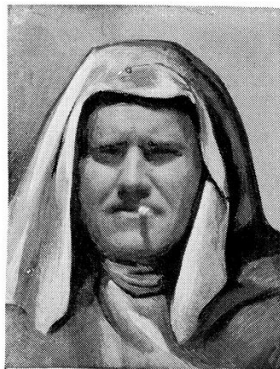
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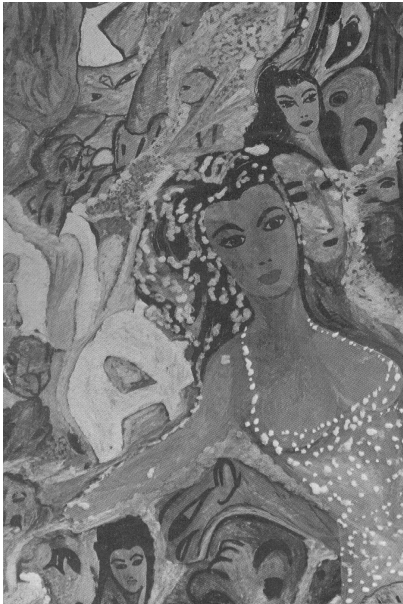


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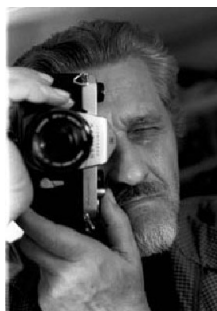
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Sathanas, though a younger member of the God Race, had started his own private revolt against all authority—and the dictates of the Elders are not so lightly flaunted by any upstarts a few score centuries old. He had violated the Elder laws



designed to protect and foster life and growth—it seemed that he could not get enough victims for his orgies of cruelty under the existing laws and had set out to make a few laws of his own.