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Tales of Scientifiction •••

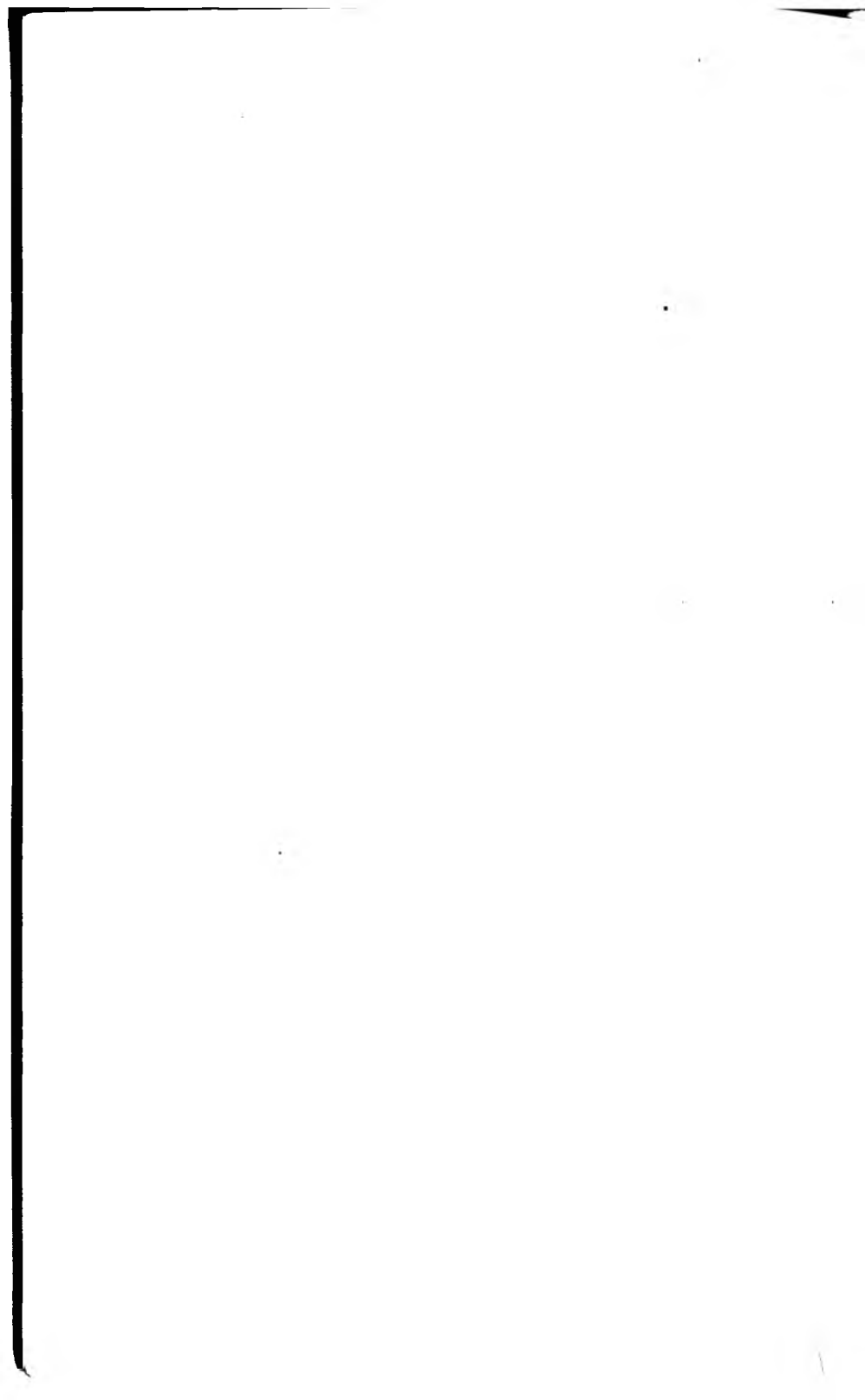
# ASTRO- Adventures

*A Swordsman of Mars*  
by Lin Carter



*Also in this issue*

**Visit the Yo-Yo Falls**  
by Don Wilcox



... Tales of Scientifiction

The logo for 'ASTRO- Adventures' features the word 'ASTRO-' in a large, bold, italicized sans-serif font, enclosed within a rounded rectangular frame that resembles a rocket or a stylized 'O'. To the right of the frame are three horizontal lines of increasing length, suggesting motion or a tail. Below the frame, the word 'Adventures' is written in a smaller, elegant script font.

# ASTRO- Adventures

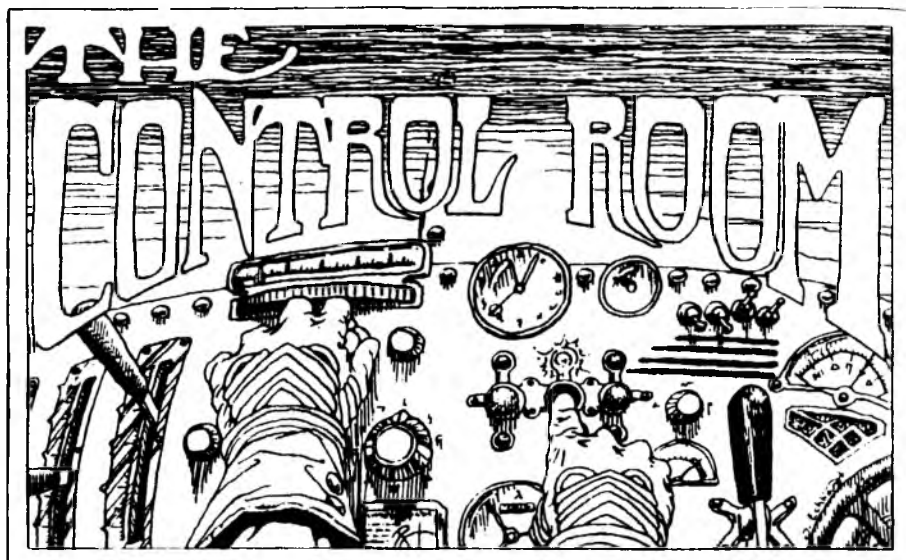
Number Eight

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Everybody here now? OK, guess we can start the briefing. Captain Astro, here. Let me explain what awaits all you space cadets in this, the eighth voyage of Astro-Adventures.

Mike Ashley, famed historian of science fiction, has interviewed pulp SF great Don Wilcox for this issue. Accompanying the exchange is a new tale by the master himself, "Visit the Yo-Yo Falls." How fitting that this publication in Astro-Adventures #8 marks the fiftieth year of Wilcox's pulp writing career!

Carl Jacobi, another veteran of the good old days that have returned via time-warp in our pages, tells the tale of "The Brothers Dalfay," an intriguing scientific-fictional mystery. This story has had quite a journey on its way to publication here. Jacobi wrote it in 1954 and showed it to August Derleth, who suggested that he change the ending. He did. It didn't sell. In 1956 the indefatigable Jacobi revised the tale. Still no luck at either Fantastic Universe or Super-Science Fiction. 1957, another rewrite. That version appears here, or at least most of

it! In the thirty-two intervening years, the second page of the typescript got lost. We have prevailed on earthling Robert M. Price to write a replacement page just for continuity's sake. As if you couldn't tell the difference, the filler text is enclosed in brackets.

Lin Carter, whose suggestions were integral to the format and style of Astro-Adventures, is represented in this last issue with an unfinished piece of a planned novel, A Swordsman of Mars. It was to have been an Edgar Rice Burroughs pastiche in the strict sense, not just "Burroughsian," but actually an adjunct to the Barsoom canon. As you will see in the concluding "Synopsis," Lin had hoped to circumvent the Burroughs estate by avoiding using any of Burroughs' original characters, yet still using place names and Barsoomian terminology. Apparently his publishers did not agree, so Lin began a new draft in which he dropped or altered the overt Burroughsian references, changing the green Martians to lizard men, the red Martians to golden Martians, etc. We have synthesized

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# AN INTERVIEW WITH DON WILCOX

by Mike Ashley

During the 1940s Don Wilcox was one of the leading writers for the Chicago-based SF magazines published by Ziff-Davis, Amazing Stories and Fantastic Adventures. He wrote nearly a hundred stories for those two pulps, plus a few more for the companion titles Mammoth Western and Mammoth Detective. His stories were easily amongst the most enjoyable in those magazines, especially during the war years, and he wrote at least one story, "The Voyage That Lasted 600 years," which is of historical significance as being the first to consider seriously the concept of a generation starship.

When the Ziff-Davis titles shifted their base to new York a number of the stable of writers that had grown up around former editor Ray Palmer drifted away and were lost to the SF field. In some cases this wasn't a bad thing, but Don Wilcox was clearly a writer of talent who had adapted himself appropriately to a particular market and with the passing of that market set out to conquer other worlds. His last appearance in the SF magazines was with "The Serpent River" in the May 1957 Other Worlds, though he had a later story, "The Smallest Moon," in the Boy's Life Book of Outer Space Stories (Random House, 1964).

I spent many years trying to trace Don Wilcox and it was in 1983, through the kind assistance of Will Murray and Ryerson Johnson, that I at last made contact with him and have enjoyed a long and fascinating correspondence ever since. Cleo Eldon Wilcox, to give him his full name and the source of one

of his pen names, is now in his eighty-fourth year and living in very active retirement in Florida where he spends much of his time painting and still occasionally writing--one of the recent fruits of his pen will be found in this issue.

From our correspondence I have pieced together the following interview which brings back to life the fascinating days at Ziff-Davis as well as Don's lesser-known involvement with the television series Captain Video.

First some biographical background. Don Wilcox was born on August 29, 1905, in Lucas, Kansas. He was a graduate of the University of Kansas and also achieved an M.A. in sociology. He taught English, creative writing, sociology and history in several junior and senior high schools, at the Chicago campus of Northwestern University and at the University of Kansas. In 1932 he began to write plays for the high school classes and several feature articles appeared in the Kansas City Star. His first published SF story was "The Pit of Death" in Amazing Stories for July 1939, and that's where our story really starts.

MA: How did you become a science fiction writer?

DW: I broke away from teaching to try writing for a living, after preliminary encouragement while still teaching, but had little idea what I would write. I took my family to Chicago, and began making the rounds of the publishers. By the time I got down the alphabetical list to "R" I thought I was going to get a break from Rural Progress

magazine, but by the time I finished my first article the magazine had folded. I went on through the alphabet and finally came to Ziff-Davis publishing company. The sign on the door said Popular Photography and Amazing Stories. I thought I could write one 'amazing story' for I could think of only one idea in that line. I had read that tests had proved small animals could be instantaneously frozen by liquid air without being killed or injured. Some lifer in the pen had urged that the experiment be tried on him. That was all I needed to get started. I talked with a doctor friend about hormones and took a chance, and Palmer bought my first story and paid me \$90 for it. He rejected the second (involving eyesight and spectacles) but took the third, "When the Moon Died." This came straight from Time's scientific page: an account of the very slow but unmistakable approach of the moon toward the Earth. The story won a readers' award and brought in several comments. The editor and I now became personally acquainted. My early "Dictator of Peace" was the first that received some helpful suggestions from Palmer.

MA: Had you read any science fiction previously?

DW: No, and even after I had started writing it I read very little. The best (to me) ideas came from many other sources: museums, sociology textbooks, ancient histories, the aquarium, the planetarium, Lewis Mumford--he would be horrified!--Will Durant, and even some religious pamphlets left on my doorstep.

MA: So which of these provided the idea for "The Voyage That Lasted 600 Years"?

DW: Sociology. I was fascinated by the idea of how all the space pilgrims in an enclosed environment would relate to one another, their disagreement which almost broke into open war. I had gone back

to KU for graduate work, not seeking a degree, but wishing to pick up background for writing. The staff was suddenly caught short for a teacher and drafted me to fill in--and I sweat blood, soon to be overloaded with 200 pupils--sophs, juniors, seniors and eventually some grad. students who knew a lot more than I knew. The story, though, almost wasn't published.

MA: Why was that?

DW: There was a young new assistant editor, Louis Sampliner, who had been sent back from New York to work with Palmer. The story didn't fit in with Sampliner's concepts of what made up a piece of fiction. However, Palmer decided to read it and easily reversed the assistant's decision. Palmer's experienced hand also changed my quiet title "Children of Space" to his stirring "The Voyage That Lasted 600 Years."

MA: I think I prefer your original. How helpful was Palmer as an editor?

DW: He gave me some good advice from the star. "Keep twisting your plots," was one directive. "Make your villain a regular heel." "I want strong menace but not horror"--at the time this was a most welcome distinction. And also "Get your hero in a tight situation. If he's a hero he'll invent a way out." In a half-serious allusion to his own fiction writing he once mentioned that when he felt things were getting dull he would throw in a corpse.

MA: Did he ever get more directly involved in your stories?

DW: One of my long story efforts, probably "The Lost Race Comes Back" (which I wrote around a St. John cover painting), I became too deeply involved and needed more thousands of words to finish, and my time was up, so I signed off with 'To be continued.' Ray needed the story and, as he explained to me afterward, the purchasers deserved a complete story. So he instantly

took it upon himself to pull the conflicts through into an ending.

MA: So Palmer wrote the ending of the story?

DW: Yes. When I learned of this I wanted to give him part of my check. No deal. Never did he tolerate any such action or yield to such an offer. He was only doing his job. As to my failure to finish my own story, I was asked about it once when some of the staff were having coffee with Ray, and I didn't hesitate to tell what happened. My role was that of a beginning writer who had to be rescued, and I bleated my helplessness. "I simply couldn't wrap it up that fast. It took Palmer's skill to finish it." I believe the fellows knew this was an honest statement, and if my answer gave Palmer a lift, he surely deserved it.

MA: Did you develop any plotting tricks to stop that happening again?

DW: A few years ago my very good friend Ryerson Johnson sent me some of his manuscript of a book on the pulp magazines, editors and writers, and he wrote of me as one of the few who had success with some kind of plotting devices, wheels or something. Nearer the truth would be to say that I would often sketch my own charts and strike some lines across from character to character, sometimes to catch an idea that I couldn't have thought of. My best plotting "trick," if any, was to find a quiet, comfortable place to sit with a notebook, with no opportunity to take a nap, and no chance of being encountered by anyone. That nice big dining room on a lower floor of the LaSalle Railway Station, Chicago, half-empty in the afternoon--not often, but occasionally--this place was almost a guarantee that something would hatch.

MA: You mention Ryerson Johnson though he didn't write for Palmer. Did you become acquainted with any other of Palmer's stable of writers?

DW: I knew Robert Moore Williams

from the first year of my Ziff-Davis contact, and I think of this friendliness as a magnet in encouraging informal social meetings of Palmer and his writers. He had good professional stature and was more sophisticated than most of us at the Ziff-Davis round-ups.

MA: What about William McGivern and David Wright O'Brien who wrote a lot for Palmer?

DW: Bill McGivern and David Wright O'Brien were an inseparable pair of great-humored Irish boys, always looking and acting highly successful, and I'm sure their rough-and-ready confidence was an important influence in their close association with Palmer. When Ziff-Davis arranged for Palmer to make a trip from Chicago to New York to widen his contacts, Dave and Bill went along--two husky, easy-drinking bodyguards for the diminutive little hunchback who was their editorial lord and master. At some time while these two were renting a writing studio in midtown Chicago they kindly asked me if I wouldn't like to come in with them, but I was a loner in my writing habits and appreciated other writers, whether low or high, in small doses. But they were always good company. When the war started Dave and Bill announced that they were enrolling in Japanese language courses to be useful in special capacities. However, the plan soon evaporated. But these two good-looking, well-dressed fellows with their high good humor were greatly loved wherever they went, and I'm sure Mark Twain could have used them. They added color and animation wherever they went, and the swankiest of writers' groups were always proud to see them walk in. As one of my friends liked to say, "They surely have the look of success."

MA: Who else did you know?

DW: I knew Howard Browne at that start of his appearance of the Chicago Fiction Guild. Max Siegel the bookseller asked me to lend

a hand to Browne as though he might be a timid one. No such thing. He was as substantial as a bulldozer. Later, when we were both in New York, I sold some more stories to him while he edited for Ziff-Davis. His two-word instruction to me as a writer was, "Gimme bang-bang."

MA: What about Palmer himself, and life at the Ziff-Davis offices?

DW: When I entered the offices occasionally, I was most frequently noted as an interruption. A card game, usually gin-rummy, would be occupying the attention of editors and their assistants. The fellows must have done their work at nights. On check-days Palmer's office might be a gathering place for several new writers, new faces, all ready to register disappointment if the checks hadn't come in on time. Palmer's stable was growing, partly because new magazines had been added. Palmer's success with Amazing Stories, Fantastic Adventures and some of the other pulp magazines surely contributed to the Ziff-Davis plan to expand. The move from the old building on Dearborn Street, south from the Loop, to the beautiful and commodious offices in the Diana Court Building at 540 North Michigan Boulevard, north of the Chicago River, was a symbol of rising self-esteem. The new office of B. G. Davis at Diana Court included a shower bath. This building of several floors contained such conveniences as small shops, an attractive dining room for business people, and a barber shop. Now that Howard Browne was on the staff as Palmer's assistant, the cronies liked to say that two more barbers had to be added to take care of Ziff-Davis, especially for Browne's daily shave.

Ziff-Davis soon was forced to leave that beautiful set-up when Time magazine needed more Midwest space for circulation and bought the building. Before Palmer and staff had time to grow into their

palatial surroundings they were moved to new offices back toward the edge of the Loop, on North Wabash Avenue. I associate the Wabash offices with a battery of busy artists surrounded by time-wasting, coffee-drinking, card-playing editors and staff. Palmer would sometimes take me in to visit the art department to show me some new cover being painted for which he would need a novel.

Palmer liked coming to our apartment. We invited him for a Christmas eve there in Chicago and when we opened the hall door there he stood with arms loaded with cans of groceries. His Merry Christmas for us! Later, when we moved to a rented house on the lake front at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, he would sometimes appear on weekends, not for overnight, but to enjoy a meal or two before driving back to Chicago in the evening. Helen, my wife, recalls that once he wanted to bake a cake for us and it turned out perfect. Not a ready-mix; he put it together from scratch. I, a "workaholic," was sometimes restless over these spots of weekend leisure. I disappointed Ray by refusing to go along on a drive to some Wisconsin writers' group, where he said there were friends of his who wanted to know if there was really a Don Wilcox or whether he was only one of Ray Palmer's pseudonyms. Sometimes the two of us would work at a picnic table in the lakeside park, he at some editing, I at my latest Ziff-Davis effort--and there was never any conferring. Looking back on all this, I fear I was slightly tense, and perhaps only medium-warm as a friend; it always seemed to me that Dave O'Brien and Bill McGivern were more naturally close to Ray.

Ray and some girl he dated for joyrides had a crash one night that might have been serious for both. He came to see us perhaps a couple of weeks afterward adorned with some bandages. He never gave us



a serious version of what happened. We didn't press him but accepted the typical Ray Palmer comedy version: "There was a bridge abutment coming at us. I thought she was driving. She thought I was driving. Turned out no one was driving."

MA: Before moving on from the pulps, can you tell us how "The Whispering Gorilla" came to be written by you but its sequel by David Vern?

DW: I was almost finished with a yarn, using my portable in a work room in the YMCA at South Wabash, Chicago. I was so tired that I walked off for a cup of coffee and left the story behind. Back to search, but I never found it, and I needed the check, but realized the whole thing was too painful to go through again. I needed to start a new story. I walked through the Lincoln Park zoo where the gorilla, Bushman, was attracting a crowd. There was a guessing contest on the old boy's weight and he looked as though he understood what it was all about. At Ziff-Davis "The Whispering Gorilla" attracted attention at once. Again there was a new assistant editor who had been sent out from New York to find out how it was possible for little hunchbacked, modest Ray Palmer to be running such a successful magazine. David Vern, who wrote as David V. Reed, was intrigued by my having called my star not the "talking" gorilla, but the "whispering" gorilla. He showed an interest in being involved, but the story, completed, owed nothing to this well-intentioned assistant. It went over well, lifted by an attractive cover. Very soon after it appeared the fan mail was strong. Later I was told someone attended one of the fan conventions in New York dressed as the Whispering Gorilla. David Vern saw possibilities in this creature and asked me for the privilege of writing a sequel. I gave him that permission, no strings attached, though I had

thought of doing this myself. And what did he do but kill the gorilla at the end of the story! Well, had I really cared to write another sequel, it would have been no trick at all to bring the creature back to life.

MA: Let's move on from the pulps to your work on Captain Video. How did all that come about?

DW: It may have been Howard Browne who recommended me as a writer who might fill in with a block of twenty plays. I hope I thanked him. I only recall that the opportunity set me on fire with an anxiety to succeed. The Captain Video series was made up of the adventures of the Captain and his sidekick, the Ranger, roving all over outer space, keeping law and order. The daily programs (half-hour if memory serves me) were played live in the auditorium of the old Wanamaker Building on Lower Broadway, New York City. In charge of production was a personable lady by the name of Olga Druce. The success of Captain Video depended greatly upon the smooth functioning of her good brain and untiring energies. I had to put together a trial tv script as a feeler. Soon I was having my first dinner with Olga and her assistant, a young editor-writer named Phil Fenigsen. Following the dinner they each went into the silent reading of the trial script. Their comment was that I should visit a few of the shows, playing live daily.

MA: How did you adapt the script-writing?

DW: While watching the rehearsals, Phil called my attention to some details: to note that the scriptwriter had timed the action to accommodate breaks for commercials once or twice during the play and especially had provided the breaks necessary for any actor to move to another set without interrupting the flow of the play. Before I went to work on actual writing, Olga asked me to read an en-

tire block by another writer that was scheduled for production soon. She expressed some doubts about the plot. Would I please comment freely after I had finished the reading? I immersed myself in the reading, now trying to visualize the characters performing before the camera. Soemthing about the characters troubled me. Good luck was with me. When I returned to Olga I suggested a major shift in the last part of the play. She accepted my proposal and the last part was rewritten for better effect. At this point Olga was ready for me to get busy and outline a new story of my own. I was to bring her as soon as possible not a complete outline but a short summary, the story line. At this point I asked myself, Would I stand or fall on the basis of the approval of this one idea? I decided to triple the order adn wrote three story lines instead of one. And for good measure I drew some simple color pencil sketches to illustrate my three stories.

MA: Did it work?

DW: She was swift in her judgment of my three stories. She set one aside, then concentrated on the other two. What she would like was for me to weave these two into a flow of plot for the twenty plays. Phil Fenigsen agreed with her. As to the pictures, she commented, "If only our budget weren't so tight." She had often wished for some additional art that could be included as fresh glimpses for the cameras.

MA: How did it all seem when it was finished?

DW: As the first of the twenty plays went into action I watched as eager as any Captain Video fan age ten or twelve. It seemed a curious experience at the start. So much of the product of our brain work, mine and Phil's, swept through so fast that I wondered if the viewers were catching it. The wonderful novelty, as I stayed glued to the

screen for scene after scene, was the privilege of viewing those fascinating characters at work.

MA: This was in the early 1950s at a time when the pulps were dying and a number of writers were slipping over to tv. But you neither persisted with the pulps nor tv. What happened?

DW: After that first experience of writing for tv I was utterly exhausted, and I had used a considerable part of my pay in the form of advances. Afterward the mimeographed heap of twenty plays had hardly enough value to be saved. I was forced to realize that there is no feedback from such tv writing comparable to that of writing fiction for books or magazines. Looking back on these months I also see myself drifting away from Ziff-Davis. Perhaps the beginning had been the advent of the Shaver mystery, back in the Chicago days, when I saw Ray Palmer taking on a sort of messianic zeal over building up the wonders of the ghostly, goblinish things that happened to him when in the company of Shaver. I felt that it was all very far-out and Palmer probably read my disdain.

A few years later in Howard Browne's New York office he asked me what I think was a kind and penetrating question. Was I sufficiently interested, he asked, to go and get acquainted with John Campbell and spend an afternoon with him? The question was a test of my purposes. If I had accepted the challenge and had succeeded in doing some writing for Campbell (which I had never tried) my stock would have gone up with Browne and the men at the top. I dodged. Other things were happening. I had taken on the ghosting of a Mormon young people's story for Oxford University Press with good results. And there were other new avenues. All of this encouraged me to decide that this was a good time to try to break away from Ziff-Davis completely.

MA: So what happened next? You

mentioned earlier your artistic abilities. Did you develop those?

DW: The art interest was always there from childhood but not until Helen and I went to Guatemala in 1958 did I start using it professionally. In 1959 I was privileged to start a scholastic magazine, a project of the American School. The bilingual monthly magazine, Caminos, was used by many Spanish language classes in the U.S.A. I had the benefit of faculty help for a share of writings, all translations, some art. I did much of the art work including most of the covers for five or six years. Then in 1965 I became editor of the newly established Opportunity News, a small weekly Spanish-English newspaper for Mexican-American migrant workers in the state of Oregon. That lasted for two years. I then spent eight years in public relations and editing for the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York until I retired in 1975. I then took up oil painting, and have done more than 300, most of them portraits.

MA: And what are you doing now?

DW: I have a studio located in a professional building on a busy street. It's my joy to go there, usually six days a week, to keep various creative projects rolling. Not long ago I did some swift writing for a young couple who are trying to start a magazine. They needed an article. At the end of two days I gave them something entitled "You Too May Retire to a Fanciful Penthouse." It came out in print two days before the New Year. If you were to read it you would say that this old Ziff-Davis fiction-conjurer is still able to ladle out a serving of fantasy. My days have been filled most pleasantly with reading, writing, painting, corresponding and travelling, and I feel there is more yet to come.

MA: I sincerely hope so. Thank you, Mr. Wilcox, and for those of you interested, Don's latest piece, "You Too May Retire to a Fanciful Penthouse," appeared in the December 1988 issue of Generations Today, published in Sarasota, Florida.

# VISIT THE YO-YO FALLS

(at S-T-S 19)

by Don Wilcox

I caught the words of the newly arrived guest through my earphones as she began talking with Director Emerson, my boss. I was pacing along the guard rail of the promenade above the waterfalls, patrolling, when Emerson signalled me to listen. I glanced back toward the window of the office and saw that both Mr. and Mrs. Emerson were listening to the voice--quite a strident voice--protesting about something. Not many people have any reason to be angry with the Emersons, but this newly arrived Mrs. Hovendyke was something savage. "Don't get me wrong. I haven't asked you to murder my husband. I didn't say it."

"Of course not, Mrs. Hovendyke. We'll never quote you."

"There's nothing to quote. Turn off your damn tape. I don't like the way you jump at conclusions. Let's get this straight. First, he's not to know I'm here. Do you get it, Mr. Emerson? And you, Mrs. Emerson?"

Mrs. Emerson bowed slightly and asked to be excused. From the distance she gave me a quick glance, an unspoken warning to look out for trouble. She gave a little signal to her husband that seemed to say, "I'll be in the business office, call me if you need me."

The Emersons rarely made enemies. She was gracious and sensitive to the needs of all guests; he was quiet and considerate. Now that this space-tour stopover, Space Transfer Station 19, was becoming known by affluent tourists from

the Earth, especially from the United States and Europe, Emerson foresaw the time when he would have to attach a NO VACANCY sign to the billboard at the taxi landing area.

The message on the billboard was VISIT THE YO-YO FALLS AT S-T-S 19.

Yes, the popularity of the waterfalls was beginning to reach out like an interplanetary magnet. Such a startling spectacle, combined with the convenience of natural conditions with some similarities to those of the Earth, such as a rotation period of approximately 30 hours, clouds that softened the sun's intensity, and surface air that facilitated human hearing, gave the Earth visitors assurance that this asteroid was the place to stop over for some hours of rest while on luxury space tours.

Our guest Mrs. Hovendyke's mission, however, was something more than rest. Mrs. Emerson was saying, "Please go ahead, Mrs. Hovendyke. This conference room is private. You've arrived early, you've breakfasted in your room, and now I think you may wish to rest from the space lag as soon as you've given us your program for the day. Yes?"

"No. You told me I could see the grounds at once--the waterfalls and that deadly drop-off."

"Whatever you wish, Mrs. Hovendyke. Our man Charley is coming up the path to meet you. You're seeing him through the window--the athletic young man in the bright red jacket. I've signalled him."

She was moving restlessly past

the window. I knew she was an actress from the United States who had first crossed to France over a business frustration, then taken to space out of her disturbed mood. She was dressed in enough brightness to walk on stage, right shoulder and arm bare, bracelets and rings flashing. The mass of hair, upswept from the right side of her head, cascaded down over the left shoulder. Her garments were spangled purple and dark green; the lower part of her costume was not a dress but closely fitted pantaloons, ankled with green ribbons. Her air of importance was revealed by the arrogant toss of her head and the haughty actions of her shoulders.

Would Emerson, with his quiet manner, be able to keep her under control? He looked serene in his light gray summer suit; the phones he wore over his head blended with the light brown of his hair and were hardly noticeable.

I stood in the open doorway waiting. Now she had discovered a monitoring screen in Emerson's office and wanted to know whether he could bring in a view of her husband in his cabin. "I want to see him. Don't let him know, but give me a look."

Emerson touched a button and the screen revealed the famous playwright, Guy Hovendyke. As they might have expected, this creator of famous plays was dressed in his underwear, pounding away at the typewriter. A lock of gray, uncombed hair flopped down over his wide forehead. He was tall and angular, yet broad of face, strong features, with a jutting chin ornamented with a sharp bit of gray beard. He swung away from the typewriter for a sip of coffee.

"I hate him," Floss Hovendyke said. "Working, working. Why couldn't I have caught him on the bed with a woman?"

Emerson snapped off the view. They turned to invite me in. "This is Charley, Mrs. Hovendyke. He

knows that you are the playwright's ex-wife."

"Cut that ex-wife line. I hate that expression. Besides, no one has ever proved that our divorce was final. All right, Charley." She turned to give me an appraising look. "Is that the way you always dress? Uniform over your swim trunks? Anyway you've got a pair of good muscular legs. I'll give you the honor of being my bodyguard. Come on, take me for a walk."

Emerson equipped her with a head phone and she and I walked out. She put a grip on my arm as if we were adventuring through dangers. She made some comments about my bright red jacket which had a sort of official look with its horizontal bar of white across my chest and some white braid on my shoulders. We walked at once to the brink of the cliff.

The heavy roar would have made talking impossible without our instruments. "My gory-godamighty!"

She stared at the stream of white water plunging over the edge and her eyes were wide with pleasure and amazement. We moved along the promenade to the right of the actual fall, and here we could look down, down and down, into the vertical drop-off straight below our view, which fell nearly four-fifths of a mile.

"Four thousand feet down to those clouds of mist," I told her. "You're never able to see the bottom from here because it's always clouded over."

I tried to relate to her the explanations which the geologists had supplied to the Earth's newspapers soon after this phenomenon had been discovered. And to describe the startling scenes that became visible from the lower levels. Near the bottom you could see hundreds of vastly larger "Old Faithfuls" bouncing upward a few hundred feet high. "All the fountains on Earth wouldn't equal the uprush that the cataclysm has formed

down there. You've probably read what the scientists have been writing."

Floss Hovendyke's comment wasn't highly scientific but was just right to give me her line of thought.

"This must be the jump-off when they come to commit suicide."

"So you've read some of the reports."

"How often do you have suicides here?"

"The statistics aren't very reliable. You can't be sure. Some people slip accidentally. Gusts of wind sometimes come suddenly. Children sometimes stumble."

She studied the possibilities. I added, "You've probably noticed the guard rail. It needs to be replaced. It has a few breaks."

Her mind was stuck on the theme of suicide. "In case someone decides to go to heaven or hell in a hurry, do they ever find the bodies?"

"Sometimes, far down the river."

"Speaking of my husband--" her thoughts were away ahead of me-- "Speaking of Guy, that workaholic worm we saw back there in his messy underwear, where does he keep his money?"

"Ask him. It isn't my business to know."

"When does he take his walks along this dog run?"

"Odd times. When he needs a break."

"Never at night, I suppose, because of his eyes. I could probably stand out here all night waiting. Just forget my questions." She switched to the mysteries over the so-called soap bubbles. "I've done some reading about this weird waterhole, true or false. Is it a fact about those super-tough bubbles? Do they really exist? When do they rise?"

I shied away from any scientific explanations. "There's plenty of controversy, but you'll probably see some of them."

"What do I look for?"

"Amber-colored globes. They

form down there under that mist. If you go down and look, you'll see an orange-colored ooze being pressed out from the strata of rock. There's a corkscrew roadway that you could follow down the side of the mountain. The bubbles form down there. They seem to breathe air, yet they're lighter than air, and often float up. Listen, Mrs. Hovendyke, why not ask your husband? He can probably describe the things better than anyone else."

She recoiled. "My husband and I aren't speaking. All I have for him is hate. Hate with a capital H, as in Hell."

I didn't comment. I must stand clear of this tormented woman. Was she pure venom for everyone? Or was she a quick-change artist? She was looking at me strangely and I didn't understand her emotions. The tone of her voice changed.

"Don't get the idea that all love has gone out of me, Charley. I could fall in love with a person like you, honest-to-god. But with him, that mess of dead fish, never."

I asked cautiously, "Do you think he doesn't know you're here?"

"He's not supposed to know. I told Emerson--"

"Yes, but my guess is that that talented man Guy Hovendyke, with all his concentration, also lives through his instincts. He probably knows you're here."

"I suppose you think he can smell me, like a dog."

She turned away; suddenly, something had attracted her curiosity. The people along the rail to our left were looking down into the mist below the rushing falls, watching for something. Had someone fallen?

"What happened, Charley? They're looking down through their binoculars. Did someone dive in?"

"I think they've caught sight of one of the orange-colored bubbles rising. Yes--see--away down, to the left, rising out of the gray. There, a tiny globe catching the sunlight."

This was going to take a bit of explaining, because I was sure it was a continuation of an experiment that had begun early this morning.

"They're excited, Charley. This must be the first time they've seen the bubbles coming up."

No, it was more than that. This bubble might contain something they were waiting for. "I think there's going to be a book inside the bubble."

"I don't get it."

"Early this morning they threw a couple of objects in, wanting to test the good and evil superstition that some people want to believe in. Have you heard about it?"

Flossy Hovendyke's answer was vague. Yes, she had read something in one of the sensational magazines on her space flight. The Yo-Yo waters were sometimes believed to have drowned the bad--such as a well-known criminal who had slipped and fallen in--but to have returned a saintly person, a certain celebrated philanthropist, to the shore unharmed. She knew the story had the sound of a hoax, yet there was something in it that she was ready to swallow.

"If that damned dog of a husband of mine ever falls in, he'll go down like a lump of lead, and good riddance." It gave her satisfaction to say it while we watched the globe of amber rise steadily up and up, just out of reach of the rushing falls, and finally float over the railing toward the excited crowd. There is struck the ground, rolled a few feet and broke like a soap bubble. And there lay a book, one of the two books they had packed waterproof and tossed over at dawn. Someone opened the package and the crowd cheered.

"I don't get it," Flossy said. "What's so exciting about a book?"

I gave her the background of the morning's action. Maybe it was just a gag, maybe it proved

nothing. But the fact was, the experimenters had chosen a good book--a book of sermons, symbolically good--and a bad book, that is, one that was obviously evil in intent, because it contained a certain criminal's bag of tricks. Now the Yo-Yo waterfall had come through with miraculously quick service, to the delight of the experimenters.

"Hear them yelling? The good book has returned."

"So in this devil of a river it happens. Bad is lost. Good is saved."

"But you know, Mrs. Hovendyke, it's all a coincidence. In the next twenty minutes another bubble may come floating up to the rail bringing back the criminal's bag of tricks. Right?"

"Evil goes down," Flossy Hovendyke repeated. "Good comes to the top. My gory husband would go down like a lump of lead. But you, Charley, you must be good, not evil. I've heard the story about you." She touched my arm.

"What have you heard?"

"That you actually dived off the walkway after a little girl had fallen. You haven't mentioned it. You're too modest. They believe that a bubble took her in, down there under the mist, but it was stuck among the rocks. You dived down and got into a bubble and were somehow able to set her free. She floated up, and you followed. And you both lived. I didn't understand it when I read it in the newspaper, but now I see what they meant."

I modified her story for accuracy. I hadn't dived from up here but from farther down, yet the danger had been real and the recollection silenced me. I was a bit dazed now, to realize that the story had gone out to the public.

She started to repeat her theme song once again. "If that mess of dead fish that I call my husband ever falls--" and then she broke off with, "Speak of the devil!"

Yes, Guy Hovendyke was coming out of the crowd, walking over toward us. About fifty steps away. Freshly shaved. Dressed in neat white slacks and beige jacket. Hair neatly combed. Walking briskly.

She shrieked. "I don't want to see him!" She swept her mass of black hair down over her face and tried to look away. "I won't talk with him. I'll run."

I caught her arm. "No, don't run, just don't look up. I'll detain him. Just walk away."

"He sees me. He smells me. His instinct--I should have known!"

The dynamic playwright crowded past me and took his wife--or ex-wife--into his arms. He tried to embrace her. She fought and cursed. He slapped a hand over her mouth to cut off her raving.

"So you've come at last, Flossy. I knew it would be just a matter of time until you traced me here. I somehow felt your presence a few hours ago. Whatever your scheme is--"

"Go away! Let me go. You're nobody to me!"

"Let's go where we can talk."

"I'm not talking. I don't know you. I hate your guts and I hate your brains. Making your fortune in New York out of my talent and giving me only half! Trying to force me to learn French and come over to that ghastly chicken coop they call Paris, to keep acting and make more success for you, you cheat!"

"Why did you come here now?"

"Business reasons."

"You're too late. I'm putting my fortune into drama scholarships all over Europe, with extensions out here into space. It's a wide open field."

"You think I haven't heard? The U.S. press is blowing you up into a saint. But they remember how you got your start."

"I got it with your help."

"Where?"

"In New York. But New York isn't

everything. If you had only joined me in France--but you weren't in love with me. You were in love with rich homes, fur coats and space tours. And most of all, liquor."

She jerked free and slapped him. He drew back. In a low tone he said, "If we could only talk sensibly."

She drew a letter from inside her garment. "I've written all I have to say to you." She drew away from him, holding up the pink envelope. He followed her a few steps along the walk. Again he was about to embrace. She slipped out of his grasp. The letter fell from her hand.

She whirled, intending to snatch it from the edge of the ledge. A touch of breeze carried it away a few inches and I thought it would slip over. Guy dived for it, had his hand on it. His ex-wife had also tried for it and her effort crowded him. Did she deliberately push him? Unbalanced, falling forward, he reached back with a quick flashing hand and caught her by the wrist. They both toppled. They both went down.

And down and down. Her wild screams pierced through the roar of the waterfalls.

Suddenly my earphones were filled with the excited wails of the crowd along the walkway, surging to this edge of the drop-off. The twelve or fifteen who had caught sight of the action believed she had pushed him off, then lost her footing and toppled. But I knew he had reached back and caught her wrist as if to save himself.

Falling near each other, they were descending the full four-fifths of a mile to a point where the upsurging torrents, like geysers, might catch them in splashing cushions. Or would the breaks open the way from them to be dashed to their deaths on the jagged floors of rock? Now the gray mists swallowed them up. Was this to be my final memory of two highly talented



persons? I picked up the pink envelope, wondering how her final message to him would be expressed. The letter was blank. I discarded it.

My heart was pounding. I had the impulse to start running down the zigzag cliff path. If I were to go down--if a tragic crash had not already occurred--was there anything I might do, or would they already be lost downstream?

My sympathies were in a whirl. If by great good luck they might become enclosed in bubbles, would they both rise up through the mist? Or by chance would one rise and not the other? Stop! Don't think those silly thoughts! Are you going to let that harebrained superstition get a grip on you?

I borrowed a motorcycle and rode, zigzag-zigzag, around half a mountain and down into the depths of the vast river gulch.

Finally I emerged where the amber substance was oozing out of the walls, back behind the falling waters, as far as I could see. There were small globes of rubber-like transparent bubbles forming, and what a brilliant show! Yellow and orange and deep red when penetrated by the shafts of sunlight. Sometimes rising, sometimes bursting. Packed together, breaking apart, filling fuller, pressed and distorted, popping free, combining, swerving, rising up and up and up--

I heard none of the shrieking and crying that had filled my ear-phones during the fall from above, yet through the strong blends of thousands of sounds, roaring, slushing, pounding, I thought I caught a filtering-through of human voices. And now I saw the bubbles from which those sounds were coming. I could distinguish a sphere containing Guy, waving his arms, and another that held Floss, holding her hands over her eyes. Guy was calling to her. She was moaning.

He was starting to float upward; she seemed in motion, yet not quite rising, just aimlessly tossing.

He seemed to have gained a little control from random actions, pressing his body against one part of the wall that enclosed him. Yes, he was moving his globe downwards, little by little, to come up from underneath her. It was working. Her conveyance started to rise again, bouncing upward little by little. Then the two became interlocked and they were hovering on the level--no, they were perceptibly sinking, a few inches downward, now steady, now downward again. If they came down against the teeth of those craggy rocks, what would happen?

Could I possibly retard their descent, steady them, and start them upward again?

I had climbed to the point of a promontory through a series of dangerous steps, and twice the gushes of fountaining water nearly threw me into the big dashing waves. I had a vision of my red jacket being picked up ten or twelve miles downstream. Then good luck came my way. A bubble had somehow formed around me. I was hardly aware it was forming, but now my vision of everything beyond the curved walls of my enclosure became yellowish-green and gray. The deep shadows guided my actions. Throwing my weight back and forth, I gained control of the bubble's motions. I moved over to where the two of them in their joined globes were turning about slowly.

They saw me. I came from underneath and bounced them upward--just a little--just enough to start them into an ascent. It was working. Slight bounces, then up and up and up . . .

Many long minutes later we realized that although moving slowly we were actually rising steadily. Out of reach of the cascading water. Lifted by occasional updrafts. Up and up and up . . .

Finally, we were looking up toward the cliff's edge, studying the uneven pattern of the railing that we knew marked the edge of

the walkway. People were up there, bending over perilously, watching, shouting, beckoning, cheering. We rolled up over the rail, tumbled forward on the level surface, and then our bubbles burst like soap bubbles, and the substance was lost in the surrounding air. The three of us stood facing each other.

Floss, though in a daze, seemed to realize that it was real, she was standing on solid ground above the waterfall. Her life had been saved. She took off her earphones, not wanting to hear anything, but I'm sure the pounding vibrations of the waterfalls kept bombarding her ears. She dropped to the ground and hid her face in her hands. The crowd had been cheering, but when she looked up, after a moment, and they saw the tears streaming from her eyes, everything was subdued. The crowd stood by in awe.

That afternoon in Cabin Eight, Guy's studio, the couple and I went over it all in low key.

After food and drink, they began to come to life, aware of their motives. Soon they were talking about money.

At the end I could see that Guy had already made his own decisions, long before Floss had arrived on Space Transfer Station 19. His decisions, in my opinion, were not selfish ones. He volunteered that he wanted to give his ex-wife several thousand dollars that would enable her to continue her life in the United States in her accus-

tomed manner. But he would hold to the plan he had set in motion, which was to use two million to educate young talented persons in the field of drama.

However, he would now suggest a special something for the rebellious Floss. Would she like to stay and become his assistant in administering his financial aid to the students?

She didn't anger over this typical Hovendyke gesture, but she didn't take it seriously. She spoke a word of gratitude in her characteristic manner. "I believe there might be something good in you, you mean old he-bitch, but--no, no thanks and goodbye." She slapped him on the shoulder, whipped the tresses of her black hair across his face, picked up the packet of checks he had made out for her, and left.

Mr. Emerson provided secure conveyance for her to the spaceport, where the flying taxi would take her to her ship. In Floss Hovendyke's own way she was happy.

Emerson returned to the playwright's studio with a word for me. "Conference ended? My wife has a dinner waiting for you, Charley. For you too, Mr. Hovendyke, if you'll take the time."

Guy waved him away. "Thanks, but I need to get back to my play." He settled down to his typewriter but turned to shake hands with me. "Thanks, Charley, for the lift. I'll put you in my play."

# THE BROTHERS DALFAY

by Carl Jacobi

Milo Barnes was a queer sort. He ran a column in The Minneapolis Telegram, and he was probably the only newspaper man alive who wore an Alsatian ski cap for an eye shade or kept his spare pencils clipped with a clothespin to his necktie. Yet for all his peculiarities he was highly regarded, and those who knew him were aware that he held a doctorate from Federal Tech in parapsychology.

In spite of his erudition, his column was a folksy down-to-earth affair that obtained most of its news from the smaller towns. Barnes kept an eye on the wire reports from the Telegram's "stringers," and he read thoroughly the country weeklies the mail boy tossed on his desk each day.

This Monday, however, the news from the provinces was--unusual. With his scissors he clipped a story from the Carver County Clarion that bore the head: PIONEER RESIDENT [VANISHES MYSTERIOUSLY. It seemed that Aiden Harcourt, professor at Federal Tech, had just disappeared from his home a couple of days previously. It was his housekeeper who discovered his absence, which wasn't hard to do since the old professor, now in his seventies, hove to old habits, and followed a daily schedule like clockwork, so his absence was conspicuous. Worse yet, it seemed that Professor Harcourt's disappearance was only the latest of several such disappearances of older citizens in the area.

But that was hardly the end of it. As Barnes read on, his curiosity only grew. The news items got stranger and stranger.

Item one: An announcer at radio station WYKL, Grand Prairie, had gone to play the theme music for the Mr. Comedy show but had somehow picked up the wrong record. What came over the air waves instead was an old country tune that generally nobody but the oldest listeners could possibly have recognized. Immediately the station switchboard lit up like a Christmas tree with listener calls. Expecting ridicule and complaints about the gaffe, the disc jockey was startled to find that everyone loved the recording and couldn't get enough of it! He had never even seen the record before!

Item two: A West Bend men's store featured a "Gay Nineties" display in its window. One of the antique articles exhibited was a mustache cup. Before nightfall the store had racked up a complete sellout of all the cups the proprietor had found stored in his cellar.

Item three: An Indigo, Minnesota resident had appeared on the streets of that town, driving an apparently new Model T car. Questioned, he had replied vaguely that he had purchased the car at an auction.

Item four: Reports from various points in South Dakota indicated that a sudden fad for ankle-length skirts was springing up.

Barnes slipped a sheet of paper in the typewriter and began to punch the keys. Half way through his column, he leaned back scowling. It simply wouldn't do. A moment later he seized his hat and rode down the elevator to the morning sunlight.

He reached his parked car and unlocked the door slowly. Indigo,

the home town of the Model T car owner, was a comparatively short drive of sixty miles across state, and Grand Prairie, where the radio station had had such a curious listener reaction, was just across the adjoining county line. He could kill two birds with one stone.

He reached Grand Prairie first. It was a thriving farm community with a wide street and modern prosperous-looking stores. WYKL was housed in a handsome two-story building, its call signal proclaimed in block letters on the roof. Barnes saw a man named Davis, the station manager.

"Y-es," Davies said slowly, "that's the way it happened. We've been using the Mr. Comedy show for two years, and its popularity was just about a cross section of its national Nielson rating. Then the engineer fed in that hill-billy recording by mistake, and everything went topsy-turvy."

"You mean there's still a preference for hill-billy music?" said Milo Barnes.

"Not hill-billy," corrected Davies. "Old-fashioned numbers. Strictly corn. Ta Ra Ra Boom Deay. A Bicycle Built for Two. That sort of thing. We've had to cut fifty percent of our network shows and substitute recordings for them. And the demand is for still more."

"There was no indication of all this before the playing of that record?"

"None whatsoever. It came like a bolt out of the blue."

In the background as Barnes sat there, a loudspeaker murmured monotonously. Now it swelled louder, and the columnist found himself listening to a plaintive melody.

"That's it," nodded Davies. "We're using it as our theme song. Play it during every station break."

Barnes recognized the melody as one he hadn't heard since childhood. It was The Old Oaken Bucket, and the orchestra, with strings and a muted horn in prominence,

was wringing every sentimental drop out of it.

And yet corny though it was, there was something soul-stirring about the music, something that probed deep into his vitals and awakened long-forgotten memories. At the same time he was aware of a deep and strangely compelling voice chanting the words:

How dear to this heart are the  
scenes of my childhood,  
When fond recollection presents them  
to view.

The orchard, the meadow, the deep-  
tangled wildwood,  
And every loved spot which my in-  
fancy knew!

The wide-spreading pond, and the  
mill that stood by it,  
The bridge, and the rock where the  
cataract fell,

. . . The old oaken bucket . . .  
which hung in the well.

Then the voice faded away and the music ceased. But for a long time Barnes sat there in silence.

Leaving the radio station, he cruised around the town, stopping at the bank, the supermarket and several filling stations. In each place, to anyone who would talk, he swung the conversation around to radio and television programs. What surprised him was that the preference for old-time music was not limited to the aged. One teen-aged youth was vehement on the subject:

"Modern music is just so much noise. What we want are the clean melodies of the good old days."

A twenty-year-old girl expressed it somewhat differently:

"All that was worthwhile in popular music ended at the turn of the century. Since then we've done nothing but copy or defame."

Bewildered, Milo Barnes went back to his car. He drove slowly out on the highway again, heading for the nearby town of Indigo.

Indigo was everything Grand Prairie was not. There was no main street, but a sprawling business district had washed over into a ramshackle residential area. The only commercial reason for the town's existence seemed to be two red brick buildings a block apart from each other. Both of these structures bore large signs with the name, DALFAY, in quaint type. In smaller print, one sign read ANTIQUE IMPORTERS and the other CHEMISTS LTD.

On impulse Barnes stopped his car before the antique firm and entered the office. A radio was droning quietly in a corner:

How dear to this heart are the  
scenes of my childhood,  
When fond recollection presents them  
to view . . .

A tall thin man with ink-like hair and agate eyes approached him.

"I'm looking for something a little out of your line," apologized the columnist. "A man in this town purchased a Model T car, supposedly new. Do you know anything about it?"

The man studied him shrewdly. "Newspaper? I've got nothing to say to the newspaper."

Barnes was slightly taken aback. "But surely you can tell me who it is."

Antoine Dalfay--the name was on the bronze plaque on the desk--stood a moment in silence. "Name's William Wescott," he said reluctantly. "Lives over on Center Street."

"He picked up the car at an auction, I understand?"

"No, my firm sold it to him."

"Sold it! May I ask where . . .?"

Dalfay took a little porcelain box from his pocket, and inhaled a pinch of snuff. "This is an antique firm," he said. "We specialize in things that are old. Wescott is a regular customer of ours. He expressed an interest in a Model T car. We got him one,

that's all."

"Got it where?"

"I fail to see that that's any of your business."

Barnes looked at the black-haired man and chewed his upper lip. "Okay," he said. "Thank you for your time."

Outside, the columnist smoked a cigarette thoughtfully, then moved down the street to the second red brick building whose sign read CHEMISTS LTD. As he pushed through the door he got the impression that time had jumped backward a notch. Before him was the same panelled office, the same tall thin man with ink-colored hair. Then he saw that the man was a few years older than his brother of the antique firm. And the name plaque on the desk here read Pierre Dalfay.

Driving back down the highway an hour later, Milo Barnes mentally went over the results of his trip. He had learned nothing from Pierre Dalfay. The man had escorted him through his chemical plant, which he said manufactured a kind of dry cleaning compound, but had been vague when Barnes questioned him about methods involved in the process.

In only one aspect of his trip had the newspaper columnist been partially successful. He had found the man who bought the Model T car. More than that, he had seen the car, which was in perfect condition, and looked as if it had just come off the assembly line. Wescott had admitted purchasing it from the Dalfay firm. Asked why he wanted such an outmoded vehicle, he had become excited.

"I'm not the only one," he shrilled. "There's six other fellers goin' to buy 'em as soon as they can get rid of the new-fangled jobs they're drivin'."

"But why?" demanded Barnes. "Do you realize those cars don't even have a foot-feed?"

"Who needs a foot-feed? Reckon

if they was good enough in 1922, they're good enough today."

For a week thereafter the enigma was thrust forcibly from Milo Barnes' mind. Dumped into his lap was the task of raising funds for the widow and children of a state highway patrolman who had crashed to his death while attempting to catch a stolen car. Barnes plunged into the new work wholeheartedly, and his column bristled with pleas for charity.

When finally he went back to the news, he was shocked. The return-to-past fad was really catching on. Writers on metropolitan newspapers had spotted the trend and were playing it up, and feature writers and magazine supplements were having a field day. The song, The Old Oaken Bucket, had risen to number one tune, but although a dozen different singers and a score of name bands interpreted it, none achieved the popularity of the one that had first broadcast over the Grand Prairie station.

The drift toward older likes and desires was entering all walks of life.

A movie theater in Bismarck announced that "through special good fortune" it had procured a number of old silent films, including Jetta Coudal and Eric von Stroheim in the original version of Three Faces East, Anita Stewart in Old Kentucky, and Richard Barthelmess in Broken Blossoms. A legitimate theater capitalized on the change in public taste by adding to its repertoire East Lynne, and Uncle Tom's Cabin. Barnes went through the papers, noting item after item: a sale of antimacassars at a Mankato department store, a quilting bee by the women of the First Congregational Church, toffee pulls and square dances by the dozen.

What was happening to the mid-west, to the smaller communities in particular? What was the reason

behind all this trend to the past? Did progress move in cycles and had the end of the advancement cycle been reached? Had our culture reached a point of saturation and now was it moving retrogressively? Or was this merely a passing fad that would pass into the limbo like the Charleston and Mah Jong? Barnes smoked a cigar and again rejected the temptation to include the entire crazy story in his column.

A copy boy tossed the country edition on Barnes' desk as he sat there. Mechanically the columnist began to scan page one. Aside from the trend-to-the-past stories, there were the usual political squabbles, threats of foreign wars, automobile accidents. Then a two-paragraph item at the bottom of column three caught his eye.

He strode across the city room to a desk where a heavy-set man was hunched over a typewriter.

"Jarvis," said Barnes, "did you write that story about Professor Harcourt?"

The reporter looked up and nodded. "Sure. What about it?"

"Any word whether he has returned yet?"

"He came back an hour ago, okay except for a little loss of memory. But he was gone two days before his housekeeper reported it."

Barnes exhaled in relief. Ageless, indestructible Harcourt had been physics professor during the years Barnes had attended Federal Tech. Now retired, he spent his time with his inventions and kept open house for a coterie of former students who held world-probing discussions under his direction. Nothing could happen to Harcourt.

But something had. When Barnes called at the familiar brownstone house, he found a difference in the attitude of the professor, a change in his personality. For one thing, Harcourt did not once refer to the good old days; nor was he wearing his usual antiquated

starched collar and tie. His shirt was open at the throat like any college boy's and he chatted jovially about inconsequential events of the day. When Barnes attempted to steer the conversation into weightier channels the old man was uninterested. And questioned about his recent disappearance, he didn't seem to understand.

"Away?" he repeated slowly. "I haven't been any place. What are you talking about?"

The next day Barnes returned to Indigo. Somehow he never doubted that Harcourt's disappearance was another link in the meaningless chain of events. And somehow he sensed instinctively that the crux of the matter lay in Indigo. But motive for the investigation he had none. After all, why should he be concerned if a growing number of septuagenarians vanished from their homes for a few hours? Why should he care if the public suddenly changed its cultural tastes and turned about in the advancement cycle? Then he thought again of Harcourt and the change which had come over the man, and his fists clenched.

For a time he wandered about the town. Outside the establishments of the brothers Dalfay, he paused but did not enter. Instead the cool interior of the Indigo public library beckoned to him in contrast to the hot July street.

An attractive dark-haired girl with startling blue eyes nodded as he paused uncertainly before the desk. "Fiction on the right," she said. "Non-fiction on the left." Her voice was low and musical.

Milo Barnes strolled over to the mystery books. But he was not interested in fictionalized puzzles, and he passed on through a door marked Reference Room. Here the books interested him even less: encyclopaedias, yearbooks, state and national geographies and gov-

ernment reports.

He drew a volume from the shelf and replaced it. And then his attention was attracted by a large book tilted on its side and partially hidden by several bound maps.

The book was A History of Grand Prairie and Indigo by Grant M. Mulhall. He carried it to a table and began to read.

Indigo, according to the text, had been founded by one Sebastian Dalfe (Dalfay), a French immigrant who had been attracted to the site by a phenomenon which had taken place on the night of July 4, 1855. A meteorite had "flamed out of the eastern sky and struck with a thunderous roar." The "astronomical body" had cut away a slice of land and exposed some of the finest granite in the state. An opportunist, Dalfe laid out a claim and became a stone cutter.

From that time on the name of Dalfay figured prominently in the chronicles of Indigo. The family multiplied and prospered, one or more operating the quarry until 1952 when the high-grade stone ran out. The two Dalfay brothers, Pierre and Antoine, apparently a side branch of the family, had appeared in the town suddenly, purchased the property and fenced it off.

Something about the stone quarry had fascinated the author of the history. Three times he described it, and several photographs of the site were included. Barnes studied two of these pictures a long moment, then went back into the main room and asked the girl at the desk for a magnifying glass. He said,

"This man Mulhall who wrote that history of Indigo . . . can you tell me what became of him?"

The blue eyes clouded. "He's dead. If I were you, I wouldn't read that book."

"Why not?"

"It's . . . it's not accurate. Mulhall died before he could finish it. I have other histories . . ."

"No, thanks. I prefer this one."

Continuing to read, the columnist became more and more puzzled. The text rambled wildly. There was an apparently meaningless incident of a herd of cows that had wandered into the quarry and disappeared. Two days later six partly grown calves were discovered, quietly standing by the fence. Again, two small boys had cut through the quarry grounds and had been lost for twenty-four hours. When found, they had told of seeing a castle with many towers "just like the days of King Arthur."

But it was the two photographs that interested Barnes, one dated 1902, the other 1951. As he peered through the glass, a slow tingling crawled up his spine.

In spite of the time differences, the two photographs were exactly the same. Every stone, every pebble, the position of every blade of grass was the same in one picture as in the other!

Barnes lowered the glass, left the reference room and made his way back to the desk. He took out his press card and handed it to the girl.

"I'm very glad to know you, Mr. Barnes," she said. "I've read your column often."

"Look," Barnes said, "I'm making a survey of Indigo, and I wonder if you'd care to help me."

The girl hesitated. "What sort of a survey, Mr. Barnes?"

"A timely one," he evaded. "May I see you after the library closes, Miss . . .?"

"I'm through at five," she said after a moment's consideration. "And the name is Theodora . . . Theodora Bennet."

Barnes' car developed engine trouble that afternoon, and the columnist and the librarian were forced to go about Indigo on foot. Still acting blindly, but with the suggestion of an idea far back in his mind, he let the girl guide him from one end of town to the

other. As she pointed out the pitifully few landmarks with any historical interest, she interspersed her remarks with an occasional fact about herself, but when he tried to probe deeper she became vague and spoke in generalities. Barnes asked her if she wasn't aware of the trend to the past that was making itself felt over the entire midwest. She said yes, of course, she had read the newspapers. Like others, she assumed it was a passing fad.

Twilight found the man and girl walking down a country lane, heading for the stone quarry. On either side of the road a wall of dark spruce cast lengthening shadows before them. The sky was all violet and magenta in the west.

Barnes walked mechanically, a gone-out pipe in his hand. He thought of the pattern of events that had led him to this forlorn little town and of the mystery which seemed to hang like a cloud over it. Or was there no mystery other than in his own mind? Had he simply seized on unassociated events and fashioned them into a puzzle of his own fancy?

They came to a low stile over a barbed wire fence. Beyond yawned an ugly gash in the earth--the quarry.

"This is it," said Theodora. "But why you wanted to come way out here is more than I can see."

Visible in the gathering gloom were piles of crushed rock and a series of rectangular steps in the cliffside where the granite had been quarried. Barnes helped the girl over the stile, climbed over after her.

"I don't like this place," she said.

Barnes made no answer. He was staring across the tumbled piles of stone to a large grey boulder that reared upward like some monstrous beetle. Beside the boulder, the dark air seemed curiously alive, to waver back and forth and glow



with stereoscopic depth.

Presently into this panel, detail by detail, came a background of sentinel-like cypress trees, green fields and a dusty road curving to the vanishing point. An old-fashioned coach-and-four was moving rapidly down the road, the coachman huddled on the high seat, the horses plunging at a full gallop.

It was a French coach of the Napoleonic period, and its presence was strangely incongruous as seen from the abandoned quarry. Through the window-in-space Barnes watched it sweep down a low rise and turn again when it seemed about to burst upon him. The leathern curtains were thrust open to reveal two familiar faces.

The brothers Dalfay!

Barnes stood there staring as the window-in-space faded away and the coach disappeared.

Six days passed. The trend to the past died out as suddenly as it began. There were no further reports of "new" Model T cars, of radio stations reporting a sudden change in listener preferences. The song The Old Oaken Bucket was still being played, but its popularity was waning, and the disc jockey reported that the original version, featuring that strange voice, had been pressed on a platter of inferior material; records became unplayable after a few broadcasts and new ones were unavailable since the transcription company could not be traced. A new tune, Those Waterloo Blues, sung in French by Denis Armande, took its place.

Only one facet of the affair had continued and now was arousing comment among the metropolitan papers and wire services--the disappearances of aged men. Bismarck, Grand Forks, Duluth, Madison--all reported veterans vanishing for a few hours to several days. In each case the victim returned unharmed but with no idea of what had happened to him.

Barnes again called on Professor Harcourt. Helping himself to some of the professor's strong shag tobacco, he spoke quietly and earnestly for the better part of half an hour. When he had finished, Harcourt sat back, lips pursed.

"Are you the only person with those ideas?"

Barnes shrugged. "I don't know. But if I'm not, at least no one else has linked the events together."

Barnes puffed his pipe a moment in silence. "Barnes," he said abruptly, "you're a fool. You come to me with a wild story of a culture change that manifests itself by a retrogression of what we like to call progress. You assume that the sociological mutation is associated in some obscure way with the disappearances of a group of graybeards, and finally you pose the fantastic postulation that a piece of real estate on the outskirts of an agricultural community is the nucleus of the entire phenomenon."

"I suppose it does sound crazy," admitted Barnes.

Harcourt swung away from the window. "Don't misunderstand me. I have no quarrel with your conclusions. What concerns me are your methods of arriving at those conclusions. Remember that it takes more than an idle inclination to cause a change in the culture of a community. . . . You say the antique firm that supplied the Model T car is named Dalfay?"

Barnes nodded.

"I seem to remember a Dalfay from somewhere. . . . I remember now. It was a character in Dumas' Memoirs of a Physician, which I read long ago."

Once again Barnes found it necessary to shelve temporarily his interest in the affair. International Parapsychologists had chosen Mexico City that year for their convention, and with the regular

science editor convalescing from an appendectomy, he was assigned to cover the affair. He caught a plane south.

It was several days before he got around to reading the small town news again. Then his amazement changed to concern as he went through a stack of country weeklies which had been forwarded to him by his home office. Most of the stories of course had been picked up now by the big city papers and were also carried under press association datelines.

The Winona Republican reported a French Empire wine cabinet selling to a local dairy farmer for thirty-four thousand dollars. The same day The Des Moines Sun Times told of a tri-color flag disappearing from a Federated Nations display. And in Superior, Wisconsin a stationery store had a run on postcards illustrating Napoleon's tomb.

Before the week was out nineteenth-century France began to make its impression on the midwest. Farmers and merchants whose background went no farther than the price of tractor in the next county purchased histories and discussed Bonaparte's Russian campaign or the Battle of Austerlitz. Half a dozen towns dropped names like Cross Plaines, River Bend, and Boulder Creek in favor of St. Helena, Elba, Wellington, etc.

The trip back from Mexico City seemed endless for Barnes.

As the plane droned through the stratosphere that name, Dalfay, nagged at him, plaguing him with a dozen half-formed memories. A character in a book by Dumas, Harcourt had said. But Barnes had never read Memoirs of a Physician.

Arriving at the Minneapolis airport, he took a cab to his home, got his car and drove directly to Indigo. He parked outside the library and went in, noting with satisfaction that he was the only other patron in the building.

"Miss Bennet," he said, approach-

ing the desk, "what do you know about Cagliostro?"

Her eyes widened. "Nothing much. What everyone knows, I suppose."

"Tell me," persisted Barnes.

"Well, he was a doctor-mysticist at the court of Louis XVI, but he was an Italian by birth. He traveled through Arabia, Egypt, and Persia and in France claimed to have the secret of the philosopher's stone. He posed as a necromancer and mesmerist, and his real name was Giuseppe Balsamo."

Milo Barnes drummed his fingers thoughtfully. "Did he ever have any assistants . . . followers, I suppose one would call them?"

"Oh, yes. I believe he conducted a school of some kind."

"Would it be possible to find the names of some of those students?"

"That's a big order, Mr. Barnes, but I'll try."

She moved across the room to a tier of shelves and after a moment's study of the titles, took down several volumes. For a quarter of an hour Barnes stood by while she consulted indexes and cross references. At last she uttered a little cry of triumph. The passage she had found listed six students of Cagliostro: Lacrois, d'Aument, Levasseur, Ferran and Dalfé.

"Now skip thirty years," Barnes told Theodora, "and see if you can find that name, Dalfé, again."

Theodora began skimming through the pages of a book, consulted a second and a third without success. She leaned back and tapped her pencil on the chair arm.

"There's the Daubret manuscript . . ." she said, half to herself.

"What's that?"

"A rather off-trail history written by an eccentric French antiquarian who lived in Indigo fifteen years ago. He never finished it, and his wife gave it to this library."

"Get it," said Barnes shortly.

She was gone a long time, but

at length she returned, carrying a thick manuscript. Ten minutes later her finger stabbed at a typed paragraph:

"... and in early April Bonaparte, recently returned from his Egyptian campaign, suffered an attack of desert fever. To treat him, he enlisted the services of two twenty-year-old physicians who had startled all Paris with their cures. Their name was Dalfé!

A gleam of satisfaction appeared in Barnes' eyes. "Now," he said, "turn to the United States. Who do you have named Dalfay?"

"Any particular date or place," she said sarcastically, "or just everything from Columbus to the atomic bomb?"

But at the end of an hour Theodora closed her books with an exclamation of defeat. "Your Minneapolis library is much better equipped to help you," she said. "I'm surprised you didn't go to them in the first place."

Barnes did spend two full afternoons in the Minneapolis library, but even with two efficient librarians helping him, his research was without result. That evening he called on Professor Harcourt. The professor was bent over a small metal box, probing the interior with a watchmaker's screwdriver.

"Hullo," Harcourt said. "You're just in time. I'm conducting a little experiment."

Barnes peeped at the box and saw that one side was studded with several dials.

"You might call this an atomic clock," Harcourt said. "Actually it's the control panel for a time machine which is still in the experimental stage."

"Time machine. Yes, of course..." Barnes spoke with a preoccupied mind. "Now about this..."

"Perhaps you read that last year the Belgian physicist Lothar succeeded in time traveling for a minute, forty-seven seconds," continued Harcourt. "I hope to better Lo-

thar's record. I can project this control panel into the past or the future for several minutes. Watch."

Harcourt set one of the dials and touched a stud. Before Barnes' eyes the metal box faded away and disappeared. Presently it returned to view again.

"You see," Harcourt said. "That control panel moved into the future--our future--and remained there according to our time standards for three minutes. Some day with this control I hope to achieve human time traveling. One must be careful, though; a wrong adjustment, a flick of this switch, for example, and the traveler would be locked forever in that time sphere to which the control has been sent. . . . But enough of my prattling. What did you come to see me about?"

Briefly Barnes told of his activities. Harcourt made steeples of his hands.

"Cagliostro, eh?" he said. "Why him?"

"You yourself suggested it. You mentioned the name Dalfay appearing in Memoirs of a Physician."

"And now you're looking for a repetition of that name in the American past. Did it occur to you that names are pretty unstable things? They can very easily be changed."

"In this case I don't believe it was."

Harcourt sat in thought a moment. "I can tell you one thing that may or may not mean much. Cagliostro--or Balsamo, to use his real name--was in the habit of leaving the French court and, with some of his students, frequenting the district around Fontainebleau."

Barnes looked puzzled. "So?"

"If I'm not mistaken, Fontainebleau is the site of a number of stone quarries."

The columnist returned home in deep thought. He spent the evening reading, trying to guide his mind into other channels. At ten o'clock

the telegram arrived:

UNABLE TO REACH YOU BY PHONE  
TWO DALFAY BROTHERS VERY SUCCESSFUL  
AS BLOCKADE RUNNERS DURING CIVIL  
WAR SOURCE 1866 ISSUE HARPERS MAGA-  
ZINE WILL THIS HELP THEODORA

Milo Barnes paced back and forth the length of the room. Abruptly he jammed on his hat and ran down the stairs to the street. Half an hour later he was speeding down the highway, a puzzled and somewhat irritated Professor Harcourt at his side.

"I don't see what you want with me," grumbled Harcourt. "And I don't see why you insisted I bring along the time-control. As I told you before, it's quite useless with . . ."

They entered the outskirts of Indigo, and Barnes cast a sidelong glance at his companion. The professor was sitting erect, staring out the windshield with puzzled eyes.

It lacked a few minutes of midnight. Barnes turned into a broad tree-lined avenue and drew up before a white frame house. No light showed. He got out of the car, went around to the side of the house and tossed a pebble at an upstairs window. A moment later Theodora's voice called out softly.

"Get dressed and come down," said Barnes.

She was still tucking away a free strand of hair when she appeared on the veranda, but in spite of her haste in dressing she looked trim and attractive in white linen skirt and blouse.

"Where are we going?" she asked.

For answer Barnes led the way to the car, briefly introduced Professor Harcourt who made room for the girl on the front seat. With his dimmers on Barnes drove slowly through the town until he came to the Dalfay chemical plant. Here he halted to glance down the street in both directions, then nudged

the car into an alleyway that led to the rear of the building. He shut off the engine and the lights.

"Stay here and touch the horn if anyone comes," Barnes told Harcourt.

With the girl at his side, the columnist felt his way through the darkness to a back window. It was barred. He tried a second and a third with the same result; a door also was locked, but a short distance away a quick wink of the flashlight revealed a ventilator opening that offered easy access.

They spent an hour in the chemical plant. At the end of that hour Barnes, grimaced and silent, led the way back to the car.

"It's a mess," he said, "a terrible, mad, incredible mess."

"Suppose you explain," Theodora said.

Milo Barnes drove rapidly out of town, turned off the pavement onto a rough gravel road.

"The beginning goes back to the founding of Indigo in 1855," he said. "If you read the history of the town, you know that the quarry was first discovered as the result of a fallen meteorite. What actually happened there we shall probably never know. As I understand it, a doorway was created, leading from our time sphere to the past. Pierre and Antoine Dalfay belong to that past time; that is to say they were young men during the reign of Louis XVI."

"Go on," said Harcourt.

"You remember Dumas' Memoirs of a Physician which is largely concerned with the exploits of Cagliostro. As you know, Cagliostro was a nefarious mystic whose quasi-scientific experiments left their mark on the history of the time. Mesmerist, doctor, avowed necromancer, he conducted an accademie for young men who followed his unorthodox teachings and shared his importance at the royal court."

The columnist paused to glance

at Theodora. The girl was drinking in every word.

"In 1789," he continued, "two of those students, Pierre and Antoine Dalfay--or Dalfé, as they spelled their name then--discovered a strange phenomenon while on a walk with their teacher in the district around Fontainebleau. According to Pierre's diary, which I found at the chemistry plant, they came upon a time-tunnel. Against the warnings of Cagliostro, they entered it and disappeared. From then on the name of Dalfay crops up at regular intervals throughout history . . ."

"And you're using that evidence to postulate that they solved the secret of time travel?" broke in Marcourt.

"Exactly. In Indigo they saw in this power to move from one era to another a means of establishing themselves for material gain. They had only to create a desire for things of the past. To lull the populace into the proper state of susceptibility they used a familiar but newly dressed trick--mass hypnosis. That recording that swept across the country was an expertly conceived device; it was partially keyed in a subsonic register, and the below-hearing-range tones plus the antiquated song and the strange mesmeric voice were all calculated to produce the desired effect."

Barnes paused.

"Now comes the unbelievable part," he said. "As students of Cagliostro, the Dalfays had learned a psycho-biological process--capturing that desire that comes with age--the desire to return to the past--and activating it into a psanopsychological serum. Aged men in whose mental state the craving for the past was a prime requisite were drugged and brought here to Indigo where they were kept in a state of suspended animation until their electro-psychic activity could be transubstantiated into the serum. Once that was accomplished, it was

a comparatively simple procedure to infuse the lymph into the water or food supply of a community."

"But," said Theodora, "I want to know why the public favored the immediate past at the outset and then in the second stage chose to emulate early France?"

Barnes shrugged. "I can't answer that. It was partly a matter of control, I suppose, of acquiring the proper coefficient in preparing that serum. And partly a matter of foisting upon the public certain necessary stimuli. We don't realize the mental power those men possess. Not only were they bent on material gain--traffic in materiel from another age--they were also obsessed with the benefits they conceived the country would derive by returning to the past, the peace and contentment that would come over the people when their fast life was exchanged for a more provincial slower-paced culture. And they had plans that went far beyond that. Once the upper midwest was converted into a Napoleonic way of life, they intended to superimpose a nineteenth-century French governmental code on the country at large."

Barnes swung the car off the gravel road into a narrow rutted lane; a moment later they drew up before the abandoned stone quarry. In the east the first streaks of light heralded the approaching dawn. He shut off the motor and ringing silence clamped down upon them.

"That diary of Pierre Dalfay was pretty explicit about the brothers' movements," he said. "Among other things it contained the information that they made a trip out to the quarry and their time tunnel each day at sunrise."

Theodora nodded. "I've heard gossip around the town. But this is a pretty lonely road and up until now no one has dared or cared to follow them. As a matter of fact the brothers were thought to be an eccentric pair and were left pretty much to themselves."

For an hour they waited. The sound of crickets gave way to the chirping of birds. Harcourt packed and lit his pipe. Then Barnes slid out from behind the wheel and motioned the girl and the professor to follow. They threaded their way around mounds of loose rock and headed toward the grey boulder near the center of the quarry.

There was no window-in-space beside that rock now, and as Barnes peered at the place where he had seen the vision, the air seemed to pulsate back and forth in heat waves. He touched Harcourt on the arm.

"Have you got the control panel?"

Harcourt reached in one of his capacious coat pockets and drew forth the metal box. Barnes took it, turned it over and over in his hands. He saw that one of its dials was calibrated in years, one in months, one in days with variations for the various calendars used through the ages.

"Be careful," warned Harcourt, as the columnist made a setting of one of the dials. "Remember there is no return regulator for a move into the future. Once the control is set and moves forward in time, there is no going back."

Theodora looked up suddenly.

"Quiet! They're coming!"

A large sedan stopped on the road, well back of where Barnes' car was concealed by overhanging willows. The sedan's door opened and two men emerged. Like foreign diplomats, with black homburg hats and portfolios, the Brothers Dalfay crossed over the stile and strode side by side into the quarry.

Barnes drew Theodora and Harcourt behind an outcropping. Thirty feet away the panel-in-space began to

writhe gently, to form a blur of slowly rotating colors. As they watched, that same scene of a dusty road curving through summer countryside took form. Tall cypress trees lined the road, and in the background a rapidly approaching coach could be seen.

The Dalfay brothers advanced to the edge of the panel. The gilded coach came rocking down the road and drew up before them. They stepped into the panel and climbed into the coach.

And at that instant Barnes sprang forward. He ran across the intervening space and poised before the panel. With a full swing of his arm he tossed the time-machine control-box into the coach.

There was a second during which the tranquility of the scene remained unruffled. A second during which the coach, the coachman and the four horses stood like images. Then the light flickered and the scene slowly faded away.

"It's all over," said Theodora quietly.

Later, driving down the country road, Professor Harcourt said,.

"I suppose you know you lost my property forever. You set that control-box for the year 2000, which means that it will be more than four decades before time will catch up with it. However, in the light of all you told me, I suppose it was well worth it."

Barnes nodded. "There might have been other ways," he said, "but this was complete and effective. The Brothers Dalfay are safely marooned in the future, and their trend to the past is now a definite part of the past."

# A SWORDSMAN OF MARS

by Lin Carter

## THE MYSTERIOUS MESSAGE

During July and August, when the heat and humidity make living in the city somewhat less than pleasant, I am accustomed to renting a cabin in the woods around Lake Carlopa in upstate New York. I simply carry along food and cigarettes, plenty of books to read, and my favorite dog, a bull terrier named McGurk. We explore the woods and swim in the lake, and enjoy the rustic solitude and the scenery, which is spectacular.

The nights grow chilly, regardless of the month, so after dinner I build a fire in the big fieldstone fireplace and stretch out with a book, which Gurk basks on the hearth, dreaming his doggy dreams.

On this particular occasion I had brought along several new books I had not yet read, and a few old friends with whom I wished to familiarize myself again--Jack Williamson's Legion of Time, Van Vogt's The Book of Ptath, Dodie Smith's I Capture the Castle, and some volumes of verse.

On the night it happened, July 17th, I had been browsing through the verses of one of the most interesting of all the poets of the East, the Syrian poet Abu'l-Ala, who wrote his lovely and haunting quatrains in the last years of the tenth century, a generation before the birth of Omar Khayyam, whom he so much resembles. In his quatrains he examines the claims of religion and mysticism and explores the mysteries of life and death and of the life beyond. I remember being struck by two quatrains in particu-

lar, these two:

Myself did linger by the ragged  
beach,  
Whereat wave after wave did rise  
and curl;  
And as they fell, they fell--I  
saw them hurl  
A message far more eloquent than  
speech:

'We that with song our pilgrimage  
beguile,  
With purple islands which a sun-  
set bore,  
We, sunk upon the sacrilegious  
shore,  
May parley with oblivion awhile.'

I cannot explain why, but those lines stirred profound depths of thought within me. I took up the yellow ruled tablet I keep close to hand when reading in case I wish to make a note or jot down a quotation for future use, and the pen that lay beside it. These I rested against my knee, and, with uncapped pen in hand, fell into a somber reverie.

My body was utterly relaxed, my mind clear and lucid but deep in thought. Then there fell over me something strange and eerie, a tracelike state, a waking dream. For I was wide awake and fully aware of my surroundings. I could hear the ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece, the rustling of leaves in the wind, the crackling of the fire, the whines of my dog as he chased rabbits in his dream.

Without volition, my hand began to move rapidly across the page of the tablet, inditing line after line in a neat, tight script very

very unlike my own ungainly scrawl. I was aware of this but it neither frightened nor concerned me. Page after page of handwriting followed in this manner.

Two hours later, or a bit more, I aroused myself from this weird trance, drenched in perspiration and shaking with exhaustion, my right hand and arm numb and trembling from strain. I got up and went to bed, falling at once into a deep and dreamless sleep from which I awoke the next morning, rested and refreshed. Only then, over a hearty breakfast of scrambled eggs and Canadian bacon and buttered toast, did I read what my hand had written.

It was the opening pages of the book you are holding at this moment, four or five thousand words of clear, legible handwriting in a hand not my own.

I have no explanation for this, nor do I really expect anyone to believe me. The phenomenon is well known, and a copious literature exists upon it. It is called automatic writing. The psychologists have one explanation for it, involving the creative powers of the subconscious mind; the occultists and spiritualists have another, concerning communications by disembodied spirits in the next life.

I have no explanation to offer, and cannot quite accept either of the alternative answers given by science and religion.

Night after night thereafter, at the same time, again there came upon me that uncanny waking sleep, and each morning more and more of the narrative had written itself.

To this account, I have but one more thing to add. My friend Dr. Kenneth Franklin, the astronomer in residence at New York's famous Hayden Planetarium, told me in answer to my question that the fourteen days beginning on the night of July 17th are the period of the year when the planet Mars comes closest to the Earth.

--LIN CARTER

## Chapter I On Another World

My name is Jad Tedron, dator or prince of Zorad on the planet you call Mars, but which we who roam its dying surface know by the name of Barsoom.

But I was not born Jad Tedron and neither is Zorad truly the city of my birth. My story is a strange one and may indeed be unique in the annals of human experience, for aught I know. I have encountered many mysteries in my life upon the Red Planet which no one can readily explain, and I least of all. But I shall narrate here the tale of my adventure as best I can, confident in the knowledge that no one can do any better than his best . . .

To begin, then: I was born in a town called Logansville in the Texas panhandle. My father, Matthew Dexter, was a physician who moved to this town after graduating from a small medical school in St. Louis. Here he met and came to love the woman who, in time, became my mother. She was a lovely, gracious woman, the daughter of the town banker, but as she died in introducing me into this world, I am afraid that all my memories of her are merely second-hand.

My father's practice ranged over a hundred square miles of arid, sun-baked prairie, and very often I did not see him from dawn to dusk, and in lieu of any other playmate I was forced to amuse myself not only by inventing my own games but also a host of imaginary playmates to enjoy them with.

These were lonely years, as you can imagine, but they were happy years as well. We were not poor, since my mother had inherited a comfortable income from my banker grandfather. Just before my high school graduation, however, there came upon us that phenomenon known as the Great Depression, and the doors of the Logansville bank closed forever upon the stocks and bonds



my grandfather had so assiduously gathered for all those years. At one stroke my father was made penniless, and gone were all his dreams of sending me to college and then, perhaps, on to medical school, so that I might carry on in his footsteps in the practice of that profession which has always seemed to me the noblest and most useful of any known to man, the healing of sickness, the comforting of the ill or injured.

I found a job as a roustabout with a small, rundown traveling circus which carried me, in the years that followed, the length and breadth of Texas and Oklahoma and even Kansas. This unlikely profession was not one of my choosing, but I soon came to love the cheap, garish, carefree life of the circus, and with my strapping inches and rugged physique, it was a profession for which nature, if not inclination, had ably prepared me.

My father never quite recovered from the loss of his fortunes, and although I weekly sent home what few dollars I could spare from my meagre earnings, he began to fail. It was not so much a matter of bodily health, for he had always been robust and hearty, with the stamina of two men, as it was the results of the black mood of melancholy and the feeling that life itself had defeated him. He died soon after my twenty-first birthday. I made my last trip home to the small town which had nurtured me in my boyhood, to bury him . . .

He sleeps forever under the green sod of the small country church beside my mother. God bless them both, and may their eternal sleep ever be bright with joyous dreams.

The demise of my father having severed the last remaining link with the town of my birth, I resolved to travel and to see as much of the world as a man of slender means may do. I soon joined Caul-

field's Flying Circus, a traveling air show which barnstormed the prairies of the great southwest, first as a mechanic and later as a stunt pilot. For I discovered that I possessed a natural talent for tinkering with machinery and an utter fearlessness of flying, both of which talents go into the making of a born aviator.

But it is not my intention to relate here the fairly exciting but basically routine life of Thad Dexter, daredevil stunt flyer, barnstorming pilot and vagabond aviator. For that life was cut cruelly short before I was thirty, during a stunt flight at a country fair in the fields outside of Baxter, Wyoming, when my parachute failed to open until it was too late to do more than barely break my fall.

That I survived that disaster, even for half an hour, is probably due to the iron strength and tireless endurance I inherited from my hardy pioneer forebears. But I did not survive for long; too many bones were broken and my flesh too terribly mangled for nature or medicine to knit.

My last sight was the worn, tired, kindly face of a country doctor whose name I shall never know, as he bent over me, murmuring quiet words of comfort. That, and a strangely prophetic glimpse through a window in the crude little one-room surgery to which the townsfolk had borne me.

For just as the odor of chloroform filled my lungs and blotted out the consciousness of Thad Dexter forever--as one would have thought--I saw beckoning like a bright beacon through the nighted skies that arched above the dusty plains of Wyoming that distant, ruddy spark that was the Red Planet, Mars, the planet of mystery.

For some reason, that red star caught and held my fading consciousness and I clung to the sight of it, blazing like the eternal enigma it is through the dark skies, until

at last my consciousness ebbed and died like a candle blown in the wind.

I died there on the operating table; I know this beyond all doubt or question. But I was reborn to live again in another life on a distant world . . . and that is the first of the mysteries in my story which I shall not even attempt to explain, for they have no explanation.

I had been raised in the simple faith of my mother, but my father instilled in me from my earliest years a healthy scepticism of all who pretend to be able to interpret the unknown secrets of life and death and of the world beyond. It was my father's opinion, which I came later to share, that no man can honestly claim to know for certain anything of heaven or the afterlife or the inscrutable will of God, and that all doctrines and dogmas are shallow and ultimately futile attempts to persuade the gullible otherwise.

And if I took my simple childhood faith with a grain or two of salt, you may imagine what little credence I placed in the foreign religions of alien lands. Such outlandish creeds as reincarnation and metempsychosis or the Pythagorean concept of the transmigration of souls I deemed little more than fanciful whimsies born of the fertile imagination of the East.

There was, therefore, no theory by which I could rationalize or explain, even to my own inner satisfaction, the incredible fact of my rebirth upon another planet which followed upon the termination of my earthly existence on that operating table, of which my last living memories are so clear and unequivocal. Do the dead of our world go into their graves upon this earth, to rise reborn upon the dead seabottoms of ancient and mysterious Mars? If so, in all the span of my second life upon the Red Planet,

I have never met another man or woman who could recall their previous life on Earth (or Jasoom, as they call it) as can I.

Do I truly live upon this strange world amidst its myriad marvels, which floats in the vast abyss of heaven forty-three million miles from my native world, or is this second life naught more than an indefinitely prolonged and amazingly vivid dream born in the dying brain of an injured aviator, clinging desperately to the feeble and faint and flickering spark of life? Or was my former life on Earth the dream, and this strange life on Barsoom the true and only reality?

I can give you the answers to none of these questions, alas. Nor can any priest or mystic or philosopher, I somehow feel certain.

But following the rude termination of my earthly life, I was born again on distant Mars in the city of Zorad which lies in the northern hemisphere of the Red Planet, on a forested plateau which was once, untold millions of years before, an island in the midst of the Xanthus, the smallest of the five oceans of ancient Mars. These oceans, the greatest of which was the mighty Throxus in the southern hemisphere of the planet, have long since dwindled away over the inexorable passage of the ages, and at the time of my advent upon this world all of them had vanished, leaving behind only the dead seabottoms carpeted with rust-red sands broken only by those long zones of ochre moss which the Martians cultivate for food and to produce oxygen which serves to continuously replenish their thin atmosphere.

Once long ago over these ruddy plains the pounding billows of mighty oceans drove, but one by one the seas gradually receded, their waters evaporating into the weirdly purple skies of Mars, as the old planet aged and began to die, save perhaps for the legendary Lost Sea

of Korus which the Martians suppose to exist in the regions of their South Pole, and which may or may not exist in actuality.

The more civilized of the inhabitants of Mars are human in every aspect, save perhaps in their remarkable longevity and in the mysterious power of telepathy which they possess and which enables them to read the thoughts of others or to project their own mental communications over remarkable distances, or to communicate to some degree even with the minds of the curious beasts with which they share their weird world. As for this matter of longevity, a life-span of more than a thousand years is considered the normal life-expectancy of the average inhabitant of the Red Planet. Their skins are red, their eyes generally lustrous black, and their hair of the same shade. In these respects they resemble the American Indians of my native world, but their features are regular and they are, virtually all of them, a remarkably handsome race.

The city of Zorad in which I began my second life is ancient beyond the dreams of Babylon or Tyre. Here once flourished a magnificent civilization ages before those splendid and imperial cities of earthly antiquity were so much as a cluster of crude mud huts built beside the Tigris or Euphrates by primitive men barely emerged as yet from the red murk of savagery. Indeed, from the evidence of the crumbling and long-deserted quays in the oldest, by now abandoned, quarter of my natal city, where once the stately galleons rode at anchor on the restless waves of the lost seas, when Mars was young and fertile, it may be assumed that Zorad was but newly built at least a million years ago.

Into this city I was born and the name of Jad Tedron was bestowed upon me by my proud parents. My station in life in this second existence is considerably more fortunate

than in my first, for I was the only son of Jugundus Jad, the jeddak or king of Zorad, and his presumed and eventual heir.

As the Prince of Zorad and heir to the throne I was raised in surroundings of the most luxurious splendor, my every need or whim satisfied by a host of attendants. My tutors were the most learned and accomplished savants of which Zorad could boast, and they instilled into my young mind all that they retained of the arts and sciences of our ancient civilization, until I became almost as conversant as they in the practice of each skill or subject.

But Barsoom, as I have said, is an ancient and dying world whose resources are dwindling away, year by year, century by century, age by age. Few are the remnants which survive of that splendid and glorious civilization which once, in the planet's youth, spanned the globe, and those few nations which linger on must struggle ceaselessly against one another for the necessities by which to sustain their survival. Thus it is that Mars, which by an odd coincidence was named on my native world for the God of War, is a world of unceasing warfare, where every nation is at eternal and unending enmity with every other, and each of the cities of the dominant red race into which I was born are constantly at war against the ferocious and indomitable hordes of savage and pitiless green men who roam the dead seabottoms in vast numbers and pose a constant threat to the lingering remnants of the more advanced and civilized red race.

Thus I was tutored in the arts of war as well as in the arts of peace, for someday when my sire, Jugundus Jad, could no longer sustain his place and departed upon that last, melancholy pilgrimage down the River Iss to that mysterious paradise the priests of Mars believe to lie in the Valley Dor

on the fabled shores of the Lost Sea of Korus, I must be prepared to take his place at the head of the fighting-men of Zorad, and be ready to defend our homeland against its enemies. In preparation for that day when I would become Jad Tedron, jeddak of Zorad, I was trained virtually from the cradle in the use of longsword and rapier, in the skills of marksmanship with the terrible radium rifles and pistols which have come down to us from earlier aeons and the secret of whose manufacture has long since been lost, at least in those cities which stand yet in the dead sea-bottoms of the lost sea of Xanthus, and in the use of yet other weapons with whose descriptions I shall not bore him who reads this account.

I became proficient, as well, in the piloting and navigation of the remarkable aircraft employed by the dominant red peoples of Barsoom. These extraordinary vessels (which are known by a word in the universal language spoken across the length and breadth of the Red Planet which translates into English as "fliers") are the most surprising and impressive of the few surviving relics of the lost scientific achievements of the ages which preceded our own. In brief, these vehicles, which vary in size from tiny, two-man scouts to gigantic aerial dreadnaughts as huge as earthly battleships, are propelled through the thinning atmosphere of Mars by powerful radium engines. But the element which renders these skyboats truly astonishing, especially to a former aviator accustomed to rickety, flimsy aircraft little stronger than paper kites, is that they are entirely fabricated from a light, durable metal unknown to earthly science. It is difficult to imagine any engine powerful enough to lift an airship of solid metal, even one upon a world with as light a gravity as Mars, but in this skill the Martians are assisted by their possession of an advanced scientific

discovery yet denied to the savants and inventors of my native world.

This discovery is concerned with the several properties of light. The savants of Mars have, thus far, ascertained that any beam of light, whether emanating from the sun or any other source, is divisible into individual "rays," each of which has different properties. Nine such divisions of light are at this time known to the savants of Mars--in fact, it is due to the remarkable properties of the ninth ray itself that the Martians are able to sustain and replenish their dwindling atmosphere. By utilization of the first ray they power their machines; by use of the second, they heat their homes, while the third ray provides illumination for their cities and the edifices which compose them. The eighth ray provides them with the mysterious ability of levitation, for the airships of Mars are weightless as a cloud, although constructed, as I have already said, of solid metal. For their science is able to produce and store the radiations derived from this eighth solar ray in buoyancy tanks which have the amazing inherent power to reduce the metal fliers to a degree of weightlessness only achieved on my native world by dirigibles and balloons filled with hydrogen or helium gas. A slight variation in their use of the eighth ray of light enables them to use it to propel their fliers through the atmosphere at speeds which would have amazed the aviators of Earth in my time.

The sixth ray is perhaps most incredible of all. By its power their projectors are enabled to dissolve matter into nothingness--a veritable death-ray such as those dreamed of by our earthly fantasists.

And thus it was that my second youth was spent in acquiring a knowledge of the arts and sciences of peace, and in training with the

weapons and instruments of war. In both departments of life I achieved a degree of proficiency which was considered highly admirable by my tutors, if I may acknowledge the fact without accusations of vanity by my reader.

Having narrated this cursory account of my birth and youth and schooling, it is not my intention to burden these pages with a more fully detailed description of the education of a Prince of Mars. Suffice it to say that my youth was spent in surroundings of palatial elegance and that I enjoyed every civilized luxury that the condition of royalty affords, and gained considerable competence in the use of weapons and the piloting of sky-craft.

I cannot recall a time when I was not fully cognizant of my former life upon the planet Earth. The knowledge of this first life was with me from earliest infancy, and, in my ignorance, I supposed my acquaintance with my former incarnation to be the general rule. Often, as a child, I must have occasioned severe alarm and consternation to my parents and tutors by my innocent and childish prattle of the details of a strange life upon an alien world, which may indeed have given them cause to fear for my mental stability.

Gradually, I learned to keep silent on these matters, for it was borne home to me by a thousand curious questions and puzzled glances that my knowledge of the experiences of a prior life upon a remote and unknown world were unique to the experience of those around me. At length I learned to guard my tongue, and spoke no more of animals who went about on four legs, rather than six or eight as is common with the beasts of Mars, and on fields of unlikely emerald green rather than the scarlet sward of the rare Barsoomian forests or the ochre moss which clothes the dead seabottoms. Doubtless, as I ceased

troubling them with unguarded reminiscences of another life, my elders were vastly relieved and anxious to assign these uncanny "memories" of mine to the results of an over-active imagination, rather than to an unsteady grip upon sanity itself.

But never did I allow myself to forget the weird and inexplicable enigma of my former life, and when as a youth I peered through the mighty telescopes employed by the Martian astronomers, and saw again the green fields and blue hills and shining seas of the distant planet whereon I had lived my first life, it was with a sensation of nostalgia which no words of mine are potent enough to describe. And there lived ever in the mind of Jad Tedron, Prince of Zorad, as there lives to this day, the mind and memory of Thad Dexter, the vagabond pilot who had dreamed of traveling widely and of seeing strange, far-off lands and peoples.

Well, those dreams have certainly come true, for unto Thad Dexter it had been given by a mysterious and inscrutable Fate to travel further, by some forty-three million miles, than any adventurer or explorer Earth has ever borne to my knowledge, and to visit stranger lands and peoples than any that Columbus or Marco Polo ever knew.

It was in the spirit of this that I surreptitiously experimented with and trained my innate telepathic abilities, and I believe that I have honed to an acute degree the power to project my thought through space far beyond the point which any other denizen of the Red Planet has ever, or ever will, attain. In the thought that it behooves me to impart some knowledge of my discoveries on the planet Mars for the edification of my fellow Earthlings, I have striven to the very limits of my telepathic talent to transmit to the distant world of my birth this very narrative of my adventures.

I cannot know, I shall never know, whether my thought-waves have journeyed intact across the gulf of so many millions of miles of space, or whether they have been received by a terrestrial intelligence sensitive to their wavelength. Nor, for that matter, having been received, if they have ever been recorded or preserved in any manner. For it is easy for me to imagine how natural it would be for an earthly mind to dismiss this narrative of incredible marvels and mysteries upon a weird and alien world as the hysteric phantasies of a disordered brain, or the feverish inventions of sheer imagination, or the incomprehensible fruit of nightmare, or the ravings of a lunatic.

Perhaps these telepathic communications which I now, with infinite concentration, project into the void are lost between the worlds, to disperse in the depths of interplanetary space. But it pleases me to dream that my thought-waves have impinged upon an intelligence capable of their reception and not hostile to their message; an intelligence, it may be, willing to recognize the transcendent significance of the information that human life dwells among the age-old cities and dead seabottoms of a remote world, and that humanity is not alone in the breath-taking immensity of infinite and unknown space.

Only you, who read these words, if indeed you read them at all, can ever know the reality of this, my dream.

## Chapter II

### The Palace of Perfection

As I have stated, I do not mean to bore my reader with a lengthy account of my birth and youth and education on Mars. This is, in part, because, from my way of thinking, my life on this planet up to my twenty-first year was only a

prelude to the magnificent adventures into which Fate soon thereafter thrust me, and all that I had experienced before that fateful day was merely a preparation for what was to come.

The date whereof I speak was the thirteenth day of the Month of Thaad, which was the third month in the Martian calendar. It has lingered in my mind for so long primarily for two reasons, the second and lesser of which is that, as this day fell on the last day of one of the Martian weeks, it was thus virtually identical to "Friday the thirteenth," a date popularly supposed by Earth superstition to be unlucky.

For me, however, it proved an occasion of supreme good fortune, for it was upon that day that my eyes first beheld the incomparable loveliness of Xana of Kanator. And that day I count as the true beginning of my second life.

A Prince of Mars must fulfill many social duties and must often attend ceremonies or social functions he would otherwise have no cause at which to be present. It is much the same with the royalty of my native world, whose position obliges them to lay cornerstones or christen battleships, which are not to be found in the general run of social events which a Duke or a Princess might be expected, by natural inclination, to desire to attend.

As a Prince of the ancient and royal house of Jad I was, therefore, frequently called upon to visit many functions of a purely ceremonial nature. One of these obligations, which either I or my father the jeddak were by custom and tradition expected to fulfill, was to attend the opening to the public of what the Zoradians call "the Palace of Perfection." This edifice is much in the nature of a museum or a national gallery: therein are preserved every artifact surviving from the days of our ancestors which

were considered to have attained artistic perfection. Sometimes the artworks housed therein are the productions of antiquity, such as statues or medallions or tapestries or painted frescoes salvaged from the oblivion that has devoured so many of the great Barsoomian cities. But sometimes--and this is extraordinarily rare--the productions of a living painter or sculptor are esteemed so highly as to merit them the supreme accolade of being placed in the spacious halls of the Palace of Perfection among the sublime achievements of ancient genius.

During the first months of the Martian year, it was the immemorial custom of Zorad to close this museum of the arts and to forbid public attendance while the many exhibits and displays were cleaned or refurbished with exquisite care by master artisans employed for that task. It was during this interval that the works of contemporary artists which had survived the scrutiny of a panel of judges composed of connoisseurs of the arts, and had been deemed worthy of comparison with the masterpieces of the past, were installed in the halls and rotundae of the immense, rambling structure. At the terminus of this period of closure, the Palace was again thrown open to the public in a formal ceremony, over which, as I have just mentioned, either I or my royal sire were expected to preside.

On this particular occasion, as chance would have it, my father was otherwise occupied with a council on military affairs. The savage green horde of Zarkol, who roamed the dead seabottoms of the mighty Xanthus, amidst the which our own city arose, were reported by an air scout in the sky navy of Zorad to be on the move. Customarily, this horde inhabits one of the many dead cities which litter the face of the Red World, abandoned ages since by our ancestors. It is the

city of Zarkol, whencefrom the horde of Druj Morvath, their jeddak, derive their name.

This matter, which might portend a serious threat to the safety of the nation, precluded the jeddak from his merely formal attendance at the opening ceremonies, and I was dispatched from the Palace of a Thousand Jeddaks to take his place.

I recall that it was just before the noon hour of the Martian day that I rode forth from the palace of my fathers by the Gate of the Banths, attended by the officers and gentlemen of my retinue and their equeries.

We were dressed in our ceremonial regalia, and our leather trappings were resplendent with flashing gems and adornments of precious metals, while brightly colored pennons fluttered from the lanceheads borne by my retinue, charged with the colors not only of Zorad itself, but of my own personal ensign.

Crossing the vast plaza upon which the Palace of a Thousand Jeddaks affronts, we loped down a broad stone-paved boulevard lined to either side with immense, flowering pimelia trees, known as the Avenue of Victories from the monuments erected at intervals along the way in commemoration of ancient battles wherefrom the legions of Zorad had emerged to bear away the laurels in triumph over their enemies. It was a brave and splendid sight, the broad boulevard thronged with handsome men and women who waved and cheered as we went padding by on our restive, high-tempered choats. Carpets or awanings in a variety of brilliant hues adorned the carved facades of the noble mansions of the several aristocratic houses of the realm which stood in an imposing row along the way. From rooftop and dome and spire, heraldic banners fluttered in the brisk breeze, charged with a thousand bold blazonries.

Arriving at the Square of the Monuments, upon which the museum-gallery faced, we dismounted smartly, leaving our steeds in the hands of the equerries, and entered this vast temple reared to the genius of men, through gates carven in a remote epoch with the stern and frowning visages of jeddaks and jeddaras whose very names were forgotten ages ago. We were greeted within the central rotunda by a respectable crowd of citizenry, led by the officials and curators of the museum in their ceremonial finery.

"Be you welcome in this palace dedicated to the arts, O my Prince!" declared the seniormost of the curators with a humble bow, which I politely returned, murmuring some stilted formal courtesy decreed by custom from of old.

I will not burden this narrative with an elaborate account of the rituals which followed. They were soon concluded, suffice it to say, and I believe that therein I played my part in a manner befitting the solemnity of the occasion. It would have been discourteous of me to have left the building at the moment my official duties were concluded; thus, gentility suggested that I should spend a little while strolling about the vast domed hall to view and admire the several new acquisitions on exhibition for the first time, before taking my departure.

I thank whatever gods may be that I did so!

For, hardly had I so much as begun my perfunctory circuit of the rotunda, before I paused in front of a large, jewel-bright painting as if thunderstruck. The involuntary gasp of amazement this masterpiece wrung from my lips must have been clearly audible to all who stood within the great room. Aware that I had drawn all eyes to me I laughed lightly, dissembling my awe behind a flimsy pretense of aesthetic pleasure.

It was the portrait of a young woman of such incomparable beauty as I had never heretofore imagined the human features could attain to, nor the brush of an artist express upon his canvas. Her face was an exquisite oval cameo, poised upon a proud and graceful and slender neck, her features delicately chiseled, her great eyes lustrous as black jewels. Her abundant masses of glistening hair, black as a raven's wing, were confined by a gemmed tiara of bizarre design which encircled her brows, and from the starry crest of this coronet there soared a rare single curved plume, shimmering with the peacock hues of bronze and emerald and metallic azure.

Her complexion was clear and flawless, the warm tint of ruddy copper, glowing with the rich carmine of her dimpled cheeks, and her full, perfect lips shimmered like polished rubies. Her raiment consisted of a silken scarf of lucent gossamer through which the lines of her splendid figure could be ascertained. This crossed over one gleaming shoulder and then wrapped itself about her slender, rounded upper body, leaving bare, as is the custom with the women of Mars, her perfect breasts which were, however, partially but discreetly veiled by thin chains of precious metals and narrow necklaces of glittering gems. It was the expression in that radiant and exquisite face which rendered the portrait more than merely an admirable technical achievement. For the hand of the painter had somehow caught the living spirit of his unknown model--the radiant health, the roguish humor of her voluptuous yet playful smile, the fresh, exciting vigor and zest for life legible in her vivacious, laughing eyes--and rendered them immortal, preserved by the brush of genius for all the ages to come.

I stood before this miracle of art as one entranced, devouring



with my eyes the laughing, vivid beauty of this young and delicious creature. Rapt as I was, and all but oblivious to my surroundings, I was aware that my fascinated attention to this one painting was drawing curious stares in my direction, and that puzzled whispers were arising from my audience.

A tactful young lieutenant in my retinue, Rad Komis by name, noticing that my peculiar behavior was attracting attention, cleared his throat behind me.

"An admirable work, is it not, my Prince?" he murmured.

"Oh, admirable, admirable," I said in what I hoped was an offhand manner. "Whose work is this?"

Rad Komis consulted a leaflet in which the new exhibits were listed..

"An artist named Quindus Varro. I have heard of him; a genius, but somewhat eccentric. He lives in a half-ruined villa beyond the city, eschewing the companionship of his fellow men. The painting is entitled 'Xana of Kanator.'"

"Indeed?" I said, pretending polite indifference. "An excellent skill. Let us pass on to observe the other artworks." But upon the tablets of my memory I engraved the name of the artist and that of his exquisite subject.

Early that evening after a light repast in my suite I repaired to the airship hangar atop the roof of the palace, cast off the mooring lines, and took to the skies in my private scout.

The villa in which the eccentric artist, Quindus Varro, made his abode lay directly north of Zorad, beyond those waterfront precincts of the city which had become abandoned with the lessening of the population over many ages.

Silent and swift as a hovering shadow, my flier skimmed above the spires of crumbling palaces and deserted piles of ruined masonry long given over to the stealthy

scavengers of the fungus forest which mantled the hills to the north and east of Zorad. The night was clear and brilliant with stars, and as both of the twin moons of Mars were aloft at this hour, their doubled moonlight transformed the nocturnal landscape into a scene of weird and romantic grandeur. The Martians call the lesser of the twin moons, which Earthlings know as Deimos, by the name of Cluros; while it is much closer to the surface of Mars than is the satellite of my native world, it revolves so slowly that it requires thirty hours and a trifle more to make one complete circuit of the planet. The greater of the two moons, which we call Phobos, the Martians know as Thuria. It soars at a height of only some five thousand miles above the surface of the planet, and completes one circumnavigation of Mars every seven and one-half hours, presenting to the eye the semblance of an immense, luminous meteor hurtling across the heavens from horizon to horizon two or three times each night.

The villa of Quindus Varro was one of the numerous edifices of antiquity which survive virtually intact due to the remarkable preservative qualities of the Martian atmosphere. The facade of this imposing structure was a colonnade composed of marble pillars, of which two were fallen; the remainder served to support a grand architrave whereon were sculptured with deathless skill the noble and graceful and heroic forms of men and women. The upper works presented a rich surface of ornament, heavy with carven faces of allegorical figures, some adorned with noble metals or precious stones. Only the east wing of this palatial edifice was slumping into decay; the remainder of the structure displayed a remarkable degree of preservation.

I brought my flier down to the courtyard before the colonnade, where slabs of marble lay tumbled

about and overgrown with quantities of indigo moss. Tethering the mooring line to the capital of a fallen column, which lay mouldering amidst the rank and untamed growth, I strode up a flight of broken stone steps to discover the towering doors of the portal widely ajar. Within I found a circular rotunda whose marble floor was littered with dead vegetation and matted with indescribable filth. The many-colored moonlight fell in glorious shafts through broken clerestory windows to illuminate walls of gleaming alabaster, hung with tattered, faded tapestries, and to gleam along the dirty rail of a graceful stair which coiled to the second level.

A cracked, peevish voice hailed me from the darkness above.

"What noisome intruder disturbs the solitude of Quindus Varro? There is little else but garbage here to steal, if you be a thief; this, and the poor rags that clothe my body, and a few oddments of the painter's craft. Can it be that my rivals fear the genius of Quindus Varro to such an absurd extent, that they have secured the services of an assassin to forever extinguish that spark of divine fire?"

Another than an inhabitant of the Red Planet might have first suspected an uninvited intruder to be a burglar, but this is not so. On Barsoom, for some strange reason, thievery is so exceptionally rare as to be virtually unknown, and I have not the slightest reason why. It is another of the many mysteries which I cannot explain to my reader (if any shall ever peruse these words). It is almost as if stealing had never been invented by the dwellers on the Red Planet; if so, I greatly fear thievery to be the only crime or vice unique to the peoples of Earth, for the Martian civilisation enjoys, if that is the word I want, every other criminal tendency known to my former planet.

Thus addressed, I stepped into

the pool of moonlight so that the man could clearly see me from above, and announced my name in a firm voice, although neglecting to state my rank in society.

"Jad Tedron, Jad Tedron," the old man mumbled. "I know no Jad Tedron. What do you wish of me, that you must intrude your unwanted presence upon my meditations?"

I announced myself an admirer of his art, come to view such masterpieces as the portrait named "Xana of Kanator," which I had but recently seen for the first time, and, perchance, to purchase a canvas or two, if the price did not exceed my modest means.

At the mention of my purchasing a painting, the old man warmed to something resembling good humor, and even displayed some rudimentary sense of hospitality, affably bidding me ascend to the second story where he maintained his studio, and, once I had entered, whisking dusty cloths and plaster forms from a low bench to provide me with a seat.

This Quindus Varro was a man of severely advanced years such as are seldom encountered on Mars, where a man may keep the trim, supple figure and unlined face of youth for centuries, and where by far the greater portion of inhabitants succumb to violent deaths before age wrinkles their lineaments or whitens their hirsute adornments. He was remarkably ugly, too, which further served to set him apart from the common run of humankind upon this planet, where perfection of form and beauty of features are many times more common than on my native world. For a nose he displayed a swollen proboscis whose broken veins and sanguine hue suggested an overfondness for intoxicants. His face and wattled neck were a mass of sagging wrinkles, and his seamed brow was furrowed by cares or by the years under untidy snowy locks. His rheumy eyes were sharp and keen, however, and

his tongue sharper yet. And, however unkempt his gown and person, I noticed that his brushes were scrupulously clean, his pots of paint immaculate, and the various tools and implements of his art were kept in perfect condition.

"You admire my 'Xana,' eh, Jad Tedron! Mediocre, my dear sir; oh, charming enough for its kind, I'll grant you; but it pales into insignificance before some of my recent work. Come, let me show you the canvas upon which I am presently at work--"

Assuming an air of polite interest mingled with indifference, my beating heart belied, I interrupted to ask if he employed living models, or worked from imagination alone.

"In the case of your 'Xana of Kanator,' for instance," I finished. "Is there such a woman, and, if so, where did you find her?"

Quindus Varro shrugged peevishly. "Oh, she was a high-born lady of Kanator. I did her portrait within the year, you know. This painting upon which I am currently at work, by the way, should interest a connoisseur of your taste and discernment profoundly: the delicate use of line, the subtle balance of color--"

I disengaged myself from Quindus Varro as soon as could decently be managed, purchasing a small, superb, deftly composed miniature, for which I paid easily twice what it was worth, and returned to my flier just as the swifter of the twin moons in its rapid traversement of the sky dipped below the horizon.

My heart palpitated within my bosom; my breath came in light, fast panting. "Xana of Kanator" had a living model! And now I knew where and how to find her, which was the sole purpose which would motivate my entire existence from this point of time forward into the unknown and mysterious future . . .

### Chapter III

Kar Havas, Panthan

And thus it was that a few, careless words from the lips of Quindus Varro touched a spark within me that flamed now with clear, steady, unwavering purpose.

His words had laid to rest at least two of the fears that had haunted my thoughts during the flight to his villa. The first of these was the dreadful possibility that the exquisite girl in the portrait might be an imaginary or ideal figure, painted from sheer visionary genius. But now I knew the portrait had a living model. This knowledge allayed the second fear, that which had been uppermost in my mind. I refer to the possibility that the portrait could easily have been painted many years, perhaps many centuries, before it had been hung in the Palace of Perfection. But Quindus Varro had assured me that he had painted the portrait within this same year, so Xana of Kanator, whoever she might be, must still be in the fresh bloom of that radiant loveliness which had so enchanted me.

A third fear yet gnawed within my breast. And that was that the girl of my dreams was already pledged or even wed to another. Such an eventuality was scarcely conceivable to me, for the gods could not play so cruel and despicable a trick upon one who had never knowingly offended them; still and all, the possibility existed, and I knew that I would never rest until I had proved this third of my fears to be groundless.

During the feverish days which followed I laid my plans with care and cunning. I could not simply do as my impatient heart bid me, and fly to Kanator upon the moment to see in the flesh this entrancing creature. This was impossible for an implacable rivalry has long existed between the cities of Zorad and Kanator; the two realms, so

closely similar in wealth and extent and power, are irrevocably divided by an ancient schism, and the Zoradians and the Kanatorians have been hereditary enemies for a thousand generations.

The cause of the hatred which exists between the two mightiest nations of the Xanthus plains is lost in the mists of antiquity. No one today recalls the original dispute which arose between the rival kingdoms. But the hatred exists nonetheless and is no less vehement for that its origins are long since forgotten.

I could not, for this reason, safely enter the city of my enemies without assuming a disguise or a false identity. For nothing would delight the soul of Lorquas Zed, jeddak of Kanator, more than to discover the princely heir of his ancient foe wandering about the streets of his realm like a moon-struck lover. The moment my flier descended into the landing stages of Kanator, and the emblem of Jad Tedron, Prince of Zorad, was recognized, I would be seized and held captive, either to suffer a lingering and horrible death under the knives of the torturers, or to be held in ransom against a sum so enormous as to beggar my father's realm, or to be restrained as a means whereby to force from him to cede to the Kanatorians vast territories, the loss of which would forever tip the balance of power between our two realms in favor of Kanator.

I resolved, therefore, to adopt a pseudonym and to enter the city of my foes disguised as a common panthan or soldier of fortune. Our cities had exchanged no embassies since the last outbreak of war between us, which had occurred some twenty years before; therefore it was highly unlikely that any citizen of Kanator would be able to recognize my features. The risk seemed to me well worth the taking, for I knew I could not rest until I

had beheld the loveliness of Xana of Kanator in the flesh.

Since I could not make the flight to Kanator in my own private air yacht, which bore at prow and flanks the royal cognizance of Zorad and my own colors, I must procure an unmarked craft. The following morning I descended into the city and entered an establishment where a variety of old or second-hand craft were offered at public sale. After deliberation I settled upon a small, two-man flier of superb trim and balance, which bore no markings. Paying the purchase price on the spot, I maneuvered my new acquisition into a rooftop hangar in a remote, outlying district of the city situated far from my usual haunts, a hangar available at public rental which my aid, Rad Komis, had secured for my purposes only an hour before.

During the next two days I labored on the flier with the knowledgeable assistance of one of the aircraft mechanics who worked in the palace and who had been a trusted and loyal friend to me since childhood. We carefully battered and scarred the sleek hull, a light but durable shell of aluminum and steel, until it looked sufficiently dented and disreputable to the casual glance to pass for such a vessel as might be owned by an unemployed panthan of slender purse. We scraped several sections of the hull and works clean of the metallic grey enamel wherewith the craft was painted, and applied a subtle chemical concoction known to my helper which caused the exposed metal hull to become scabrous and scaly with rust. In no wise did we impair the trim fighting efficiency or flying speed of the snug little craft by these artistic deceptions, which were merely of a cosmetic nature.

In a similar mode to my unobtrusive purchase of the flier, I procured from yet other establishments the plain leather harness and trap-

pings of a down-at-heels panthan, such as might be worn by a warrior of that class. For here again my own trappings and accouterments were of such princely elegance as to be well beyond my powers to disguise. I should perhaps note here that a Martian fighting-man goes nearly naked, as indeed do the inhabitants of Mars in general, regardless of sex or station. A Martian warrior wears about his loins a length of cloth which hangs down before and behind him, boots or high-laced sandals or buskins serve as his footwear, and his waist and upper torso are cinched into a number of buckled straps or leathern belts to which are affixed his weapons and ornaments.

Badges and insignia of rank or family, together with duelling trophies marking victories or kills, often of noble metals set with precious stones, are fastened to these trappings, and the leather itself may be elegantly carved with arabesques or washed in gilt or studded with gems. This suffices for clothing on a planet where there are no genuine seasonal variations in temperature, although a cloak is customarily worn.

To complete my impersonation of a poor panthan, or mercenary swordsman, I purchased trappings of plain, unornamented leather, making certain that the harness I selected was worn and frayed as if from years of actual use. I wound a loincloth of scarlet silk about my lower body, donned plain radium weapons in worn leather holsters, selected a well-crafted and beautifully balanced rapier whose hilt was of polished steel rather than gold and set with semi-precious lapis and agate rather than rare jewels, slung about my shoulders a dark, second-hand cloak of plain and serviceable cloth, and was ready to venture incognito into the city of my enemies.

The flight to Kanator was accom-

plished that same evening, on the fourth day following my conversation with the misanthropic painter. I had taken my lieutenant, Rad Komis, into my confidence and had divulged to him the nature and purpose of my mission, for on a thousand occasions in the past he had more than proved himself unwavering in his loyalty to me and more than worthy of my trust.

The stalwart young officer, who hailed from Vaxar, a city far to the north of Zorad amidst the Omtolian Mountains, and whose years were precisely equal to my own, considered my thus venturing even in disguise into the city of our hereditary foes a rash and foolhardy venture. This opinion did not, I noticed with warm appreciation, impede him from volunteering to share the adventure at my side; indeed, he implored me for permission to accompany me on this perilous voyage. I declined, however, for the deed was mine alone to undertake: never would it be said of Jad Tedron of Zorad that, in following the private passions of his heart, he risked the life of an honest and worthy friend.

Swearing my accomplice to secrecy, then, I departed from Zorad that evening. My flier hurtled through the skies wherein the two moons glowed like great lamps of colored fire, at a velocity which I calculated would bring me within the vicinity of Kanator shortly before sunrise. For many hours I soared effortlessly above the interminable stretches of ochre moss which carpeted the ancient and desolate barrens which once had been the floor of a primordial ocean. I chose the nocturnal hour of my departure for a triple reason: not only should I avoid chance notice in departing Zorad at this hour, but also I might thereby best elude the attentions of the merciless green hordes of Zarkol who are wont to dwell in the ruined and deserted cities which rise

amidst the Xanthian plains and who traverse the dead seabottom in vast cavalcades of chariots drawn by zitidars. And also it seemed to me a good idea to enter Kanator at an hour so early that few would be abroad to observe my arrival.

The flight consumed some hours, which I spent in dreaming on the ravishing loveliness of Xana of Kanator. Some forty xats before the hour of sunrise the speed of my craft slackened and I perceived a splendid metropolis ahead of me, bathed in the glory of the hurtling moons. It was Kanator. And somewhere in that maze of majestic palaces and soaring spires dwelt the exquisite woman to whom already my heart was half given.

I descended to a lower level and entered the city from another direction, so that should any discern my arrival they would not observe me entering Kanator from the direction of Zorad. I traversed the partially collapsed walls at a speed and height and angle of flight that made my arrival as unobtrusive as possible, and descended to moor my flier in a public hangar on the rooftop of a rundown building in what seemed to be a fairly nondescript quarter of the metropolis. I was pleased to see that the attendant paid me not the slightest attention. The fellow merely accepted in the most bored and lackadaisical manner imaginable the coin I silently proffered him for the usual rental fee.

Descending to the street I located a public house and purchased a cup of wine, carefully scrutinizing the bill of fare so as to be certain of purchasing the least expensive vintage, which was in keeping with my pretense of being an unemployed panthan of lean and slender purse. No one paid me any particular notice as I sat in a dim corner, quietly nursing my drink, while thinking through the next step in my plan to find Xana of Kanator.

Fate, however, soon took a hand in the arrangement of my fortunes.

The other men in the room were an ordinary lot: disreputable loafers, seedy tradesmen, repair mechanics and lower-class working men of a variety of common occupations for the most part, probably including in their number a few petty criminals. They tended to be sulken, weary, and rather quiet on the whole--with one exception. This individual was a hulking, loud-mouthed oaf, his coarse features inflamed by drink, who noisily bragged of his amatory conquests and in general made a nuisance of himself.

He had eyed me up and down in a rude, insulting manner when I first entered and quietly ordered wine, and had roughly jostled my arm as I strode past him to the grimy table. I had dismissed this as accidental on his part and thought no more of it, but soon, bored by the inattention of his dull, indifferent audience, who morosely nursed their drinks, shrugging at his boastful monologue, he let his restless and truculent little red-rimmed eyes prowl about the room in search of a readier source of amusement.

My eye caught his as he glanced about. There may have been a small smile on my lips at that moment, I cannot say. At any rate, he stiffened like a predator scenting its prey and directed a surly glare in my direction.

"What are you grinning at, fellow?" he demanded in a belligerent tone of voice. Heads craned to see whom he was addressing in this manner. I shrugged casually and mildly observed that I had not been aware of smiling.

A man may change his leather, but it is difficult to disguise his breeding. I fear my accent and diction revealed me as a man of birth and education, for the ugly oaf sneered and loudly repeated

my words in an exaggerated burlesque of my refined pronunciation. This roused a few chuckles from the crowd, whereupon, basking in the applause and sensing a new victim ripe for the bullying, the man came swaggering over to where I sat and glowered down at me, his surly face heavy with menace.

"I say you're grinning at me," he growled. "I don't like it when strangers who have no business in this district sit and grin at me!"

"I meant no offense. I was not even aware I smiled," I said, careful to keep my tone of voice and the expression on my face neutral. It seemed wisest to avoid this encounter so as not to draw undue attention to myself which might give occasion for speculation as to who I was and where I had come from. But it took an effort of will for me to placate this bully with soft words when my immediate natural inclination was to rise and smash him to the floor with a single blow.

Suddenly, as is often the case with those heavily intoxicated, his manner changed like lightning. One moment he was surly and scowling; in the next he was scarlet and trembling with rage.

"On your feet when you exchange words with Guran Gor, you smooth-faced puppy!" And with those words he slapped he across the face with a savage blow of one massive hand.

All sound ceased; the room became deathly silent. In the next instant those who sat nearby unobtrusively rose to their feet and sidled away from Guran Gor and me, leaving that portion of the room empty. I sat there, pale as death, cold with fury, my face stinging from the blow. The huge man towered over me, hands hovering near the pommel of his sword. He breathed heavily between open, pendulous lips, and from time to time the tip of his tongue would snake out to wet his lips.

There was nothing to do but to fight him.

I sprang from my chair in one lithe, whip-like blur of motion. One fist I balled and drove thudding into the pit of his belly with all the strength of the steely sinews of arm and shoulder. He sagged forward, eyes goggling, and as he did so I brought a terrific uppercut from the floor. My fist caught him on the point of the jaw with an audible crack, like the sound of a sapling suddenly broken. It was a terrific blow and it lifted him an inch or two off the floor. He went floundering backwards, crashing among the tables, and lay sprawled like a dead man.

The tense, watching crowd relaxed, shuffled, eyed me with dull and wary approval, and returned to its drinks again. The man who served us wine emerged from his station wiping his hands on a scrap of dirty cloth, took up the unconscious hulk of Guran Gor by the feet and dragged him out a side door into the alley, returning to give me a passive, noncommittal look before busying himself with the serving of drinks again. The confrontation was over almost before it began, and the room returned to normal.

"I can't help admiring the way you handled Guran Gor just now," said a voice at my elbow. I looked up as a bony little man with the sharp, cunning eyes of a ferret came to my table.

"Thank you," I said.

"My name is Ulvius Spome," he said unctuously. "Let me buy you a drink and let's get acquainted. I might have a job for a fellow who can handle himself as ably as you, but that depends on whether or not you can use a sword as well as you can use your fists."

Shrugging, I indicated an empty chair, into which he slid, calling loudly for service. He ordered a bottle of decent vintage and sat back, examining me narrowly with a little smile on his thin lips. His eyes slid over me, weighing, measuring, calculating. I felt

clammy and unclear as those cold, shrewd eyes crawled over me--it was as if they left behind a trail of slime upon my flesh.

"I am pretty good with a sword," I said. "What kind of a job did you have in mind?"

He poured the wine with a practiced twist of the wrist.

"Easy, now, let's get acquainted a little before we talk business. From the cut of you I would figure you for a panthan, right? And from the dismal slop you've been drinking, I'd say it's been a long time since you worked and that you could probably use a bit of change about now, right?"

"On both counts," I admitted.

"What's your name, and where are you from?"

"My name is Kar Havas," I said without a moment's hesitation, giving the first name that came into my head. Kar Havas had been a boyhood friend of mine, killed in an accident with his flier many years before. "I am a native of Vaxar in the land of Omtol, but I have been working for some years now in Amdor," I added, mentioning a small, insignificant city northeast of Vaxar in the eastern foothills of the mountain country.

Ulvius Spome nodded, then inquired why I had happened to leave my former place of employment.

I laughed in a self-conscious manner. "I became attached to the retinue of a noble house in Amdor, whose master was possessed by a deathly fear his rivals and enemies were planning his assassination. Actually, these enemies existed only in his fearful imagination. It was a snug and secure berth and I could have stayed there for many years to come, but my master's wife began acting as though she found me rather attractive . . ."

Ulvius Spome sniggered. "I get it! So you flew out of there before your master put something or other in your drink, or maybe a knife between your ribs, eh?"

"Something like that," I smiled. "Today, doubtless my former master has a new bodyguard; presumably, he chose one even uglier than himself!"

The little ferret-eyed man burst into a peal of raucous laughter, and poured more wine into my cup, before getting down to business.

It transpired that he wanted me to display my abilities with the sword before one Han Hova, who was gamesmaster of the great arena of Kanator and who managed the gladiatorial combats which formed the most popular sport among the citizens. These gladiatorial contests, so like the gory festivals held in the Roman Colisseum, are a depraved practice into which the Kanatorians have sunk in recent years, since their resounding defeat at the hands of Zorad in the war I have mentioned earlier. The custom of lolling on the rows of an amphitheatre while men fight to the death against savage beasts and other men for your amusement is a loathsome and bestial vice to which, among the many peoples of Barsoom, only the bestial green hordes are customarily addicted.

They are a race of cruel and fiendish monsters, devoid of the slightest trace of sentiment or mercy or friendship or love, and count little better than wild beasts in the estimate of the red Martian civilizations. To learn that Kanator had developed a thirst for these savage spectacles was a clear sign of the decadence into which she has sunken under the dynastic house of Zed. For, while we Zoradians delight in contests of skill between trained swordsmen, and in air races and similar contests between teams of throat-drawn chariots, we hold in the utmost abhorrence the very concept that a battle to the death between brave men is even to be considered a form of entertainment.

This being the case, my gorge rose at the thought of partaking in such disgusting spectacles, and



would have curtly declined had it not occurred to me that if the citizenry attended these games in such vast numbers as Ulvius Spome swore was so, I might find it far easier in this way to discover the whereabouts of Xana of Kanator. And besides, as I was accounted among my fellow-Zoradians a swordsman of superlative skill, it seemed very likely that I should have little or naught to fear as regards the safety of my person during such combats as might ensue in the games.

Therefore, I decided to tentatively accept the offer of Ulvius Spome, although I distrusted his motives and did not in the least like his appearance. We promptly made an appointment to meet at the gates of the great arena of Kanator the following morning, where he promised to arrange for me to display my swordsmanship before the eyes of this Han Hova.

#### SYNOPSIS

I envision a series of at least three books, perhaps five, laid on the Barsoom of Edgar Rice Burroughs, but involving none of the characters or settings used in his famous novels.

On page 23 of Chessmen of Mars, Burroughs states that the region northwest of Helium is one of the least-known areas of the planet. It is completely unknown to the Heliumites, who have never ventured into those parts. I have chosen this, the Xanthus, region as the setting of my new Mars books, so as to avoid employing any of the cities or regions used by Burroughs.

And, since the Heliumites know nothing of the Xanthus region, the inhabitants of the Xanthus region can know nothing of Helium or the other southern cities. In this way, I can avoid using or even mentioning by name any of the characters invented by Burroughs.

The only place-names of his in-

vention which appear in these projected books will be the name Barsoom itself, and the names of the two moons. Without exception, all other place or personal names are of my own coinage, although done, of course, closely in line with the Burroughsian style of names.

This should defuse the Estate from any legal action, since nobody can possibly own an imaginary place or invented combinations of letters such as "thoat" or "jeddak."

After the events described in the three opening chapters of the first book, Jad Tedron displays his sword-skills before the gamesmaster, and demonstrates his prowess in the arena for the next few days. During these days, panthans and vagabond warriors display their skills before the throng, hoping for employment. Jad Tedron secures sleeping quarters in a public house and moors his flier on its rooftop hangar facilities. Ulvius Spome receives his commission for recruiting Jad Tedron from the gamesmaster, and tries to insinuate himself into closer friendship with Tedron but is repulsed.

Walking home from the games one evening, Tedron surprises three masked assassins attacking a lone man, and goes to aid him. He slays one of the assassins and drives the others off, but is slightly wounded in the fray. The man he rescued, Ptol Kovus, is a member of the noble House of Ptol; he takes Tedron home and sees that his wounds are tended to. Since he fears assassination, having made a powerful enemy concerning whom he tells Tedron little, he hires the panthan on the spot as a bodyguard. Tedron rightly feels it would be contrary to the role he is playing to decline employment, and reluctantly accepts.

A few days later, accompanying Ptol Kovus at a glittering social function, he is first lifted into the heights of bliss and then dashed into the depths of despair, when

he encounters the lovely Xana of Kanator face to face, only in the next instant to see Ptol Kovus step forward and embrace and kiss the girl. He later learns that she is the sister of his employer and is being wooed by Zed Tomus, the handsome son of the jeddak of Kanator, Lorquas Zed.

He soon learns that the Ptolian house is a rival for the dais of Kanator and that Zed Tomus desires to take Xana for his mate and destroy her father and brother--the assassins, therefore, conspire not only against Ptol Kovus, but the entire Ptolian family. One night he is awakened by a slight sound and peers from the window to see an unmarked flier, its running-lights muffled, hovering about the upper tiers of the Ptolian palace. As he watches, a wrapped, struggling figure is borne into the craft. At the last possible moment, a ray of moonlight illuminates the features of the captive and her captor--and discovers that Xana of Kanator is being carried off by Zed Tomus!

Jad Tedron mounts his own flier and hurtles in pursuit. His engine is pierced by a projectile from the radium rifles of Zed Tomus' hirelings, however, and the craft floats idly above the dead seabottom, rendering further pursuit impossible. Eventually, with dawn, it drifts over one of the dead cities which litter the plains of Xanthus, and Tedron manages to secure the mooring line to the crest of a tower, descending thereby to the street. Searching for food and drink, he discovers one of the gigantic green Martian warriors chained helplessly to a stone pillar, perishing slowly from hunger and thirst. A cruel enemy has left covered dishes of food and drink, and also the weapons and trappings of the hordesman, in tempting view, but just out of reach.

This revolts the chivalry of Tedron's earthborn soul and he cautiously gives food and drink to the chained warrior, a chieftain

of the Zarkol horde named Zandus Zan, waylaid and bludgeoned into insensibility, then chained and left to suffer a cruel, slow death by his fiendish jeddak, Druj Morvath, who fears his prowess and his popularity among the warriors of the Zarkol horde as a potential rival for the dais.

The red and green Martians are implacable racial foes, but as each needs something from the other, they devise a temporary truce. Zandus Zan agrees to this unheard-of notion because, being coldly emotionless, the green Martians obey strict logic, and since to decline the truce means slow death, it is only the argument of pure reason that he accept the truce, since it is better to live than to die.

Zandus Zan informs Tedron of the whereabouts of his wrecked flier, wherefrom Tedron extracts the tools required to repair his motors. He then places the keys to the chains which bind the gigantic warrior within reach, after cautiously freeing one hand from its bonds and prudently hiding the hordesman's weapons in one of the ruined buildings nearby.

He ascends to his flier and works at repairing the engines, having warily severed the mooring-line so that the green warrior cannot attack him once his back is turned. He flies off, leaving Zandus Zan to his own devices.

Meanwhile Xana, having cut herself free with the small knife every red Martian woman wears concealed upon her person to protect her chastity, swings down the anchor-cable, dropping lightly to the sward. With relief, she watches as the flier of Zed Tomus soars on, dwindling from sight. She finds, with dawn, a forested region not uncommon in these northerly parts, and is seeking nourishment when attacked by a huge banth, or Barsoomian lion.

Zed Tomus eventually discovers that Xana is missing, and searches the dead seabottom for some trace of her. He finds an unknown city

in the Omtolian mountains and is forced to land by two heavily armed patrol fliers. He finds himself a captive in the city of Horah, where a race of listless slaves are ruled by a despotic madman. The mad jeddak is called Nad Puvus and is--or claims to be--over one million years old. He exists in the form of a bodiless head which is attached to pumps and tanks by tubes which circulate fresh blood into his severed head. He controls this race of frightened, will-less slaves by terrific hypnotic powers, and a small cadre of hardened warriors by promises of eternal life in a mode similar to his own.

Xana is rescued from the banth by savage green warriors of the Zarkol horde, and is carried a captive into the dead city of Zarkol where Druj Morvath reigns. He is a huge, bloated, corpulent, and hideously disfigured ogre and Xana knows her life will be the nadir of misery under his mastery. But the warrior who rescued her from the banth is none other than Zandus Zan, who has returned to Zarkol saying nothing of the treachery of Druj Morvath, who dares not reveal before his own chieftains his crime against their champion. On pure whim, because in an unguarded moment Xana yearns aloud for the protection of Jad Tedron, Zandus Zan opposes his jeddak's claim to the girl, claiming her as his own slave, since he took her captive in the first place. Druj Morvath dares not deny his right to the slave, although nursing in his cunning and sadistic brain yet another motive for the destruction of Zandus Zan.

In this and the successive novels of the trilogy we follow the wanderings and adventures of Jad Tedron as he searches for and then finds Xana of Kanator, slowly teaches the pitiless green chieftain, Zandus Zan, that the softer emotions such as gratitude and friendship (des-

pised as weaknesses by the green men) are not totally devoid of worth or meaning.

In the second novel of this sequence, Mystery Men of Mars, our hero and heroine penetrate to a previously unknown underground ocean beneath the Martian surface, called the Forgotten Sea of Korus, where survive among fantastically lush prehistoric vegetation astounding survivals of early Martian life in the form of savage, undomesticated proto-thoats, enormous insect-like [creatures], a host of deadly reptiles almost extinct upon the surface, and a previously unknown race of blue Martians who rule the subterranean ocean in gigantic floating raft-cities.

The blue men sought refuge in the cavern-world a million years ago, as the surface began to die. Now they believe themselves the only living Martians and it is an article of their faith that the surface is not only devoid of life but permanently uninhabitable. They cannot account for the existence of the red Martians they have taken captive, and thus, with a paranoia long inbred, consider them phantoms and ignore their presence.

In the third novel, Goddess of Mars, flying in pursuit of Zad Tomus, who has again captured and carried off his beloved Xana of Kanator, Jad Tedron discovers a city inhabited by people called Azors, who consider themselves of divine lineage as the descendants of Azor Adz, a divinity they believe to inhabit the moon Cluros, and a female divinity, the spirit of the moon Thuria. They are ruled by a gorgeous woman as their jeddara and goddess, Azara, whom they call Daughter of the Two Moons. She conceives of a violent passion for Jad Tedron and would make him her consort, only to be coldly refused, which, of course, leads to his imprisonment in the pits and a succession of adventures.

The climax of the series, or

at least of the trilogy, comes when having disposed of their foes, Jad Tedron and Xana are flying back to Zorad, only to discover that in their absence her father has overthrown the jealous jeddak, becoming jeddak in his place, while Jugundus Jad, Tedron's mighty sire, learning that his son has ventured alone into the stronghold of his hereditary enemies, and becoming alarmed at his prolonged absence, directs his war fleet against the neighboring city. The two hosts are drawn up for battle when Jad and Xana fly into their midst. From the debacle they are saved by the arrival of the Zarkol horde, and it is Zandus Zan who mediates their dispute peacefully--if only to prove that even a coldly emotionless, cruel and pitiless green warrior can be sensible of such weak emotions as gratitude and the repaying of friendship.

If a fourth novel is desired (or more), the next book will be The Wizard of Mars and will concern

itself with a great, if deranged, Martian scientist named Ulthan Ptome whose genius has led him to the discovery of two unknown forms of energy, the tenth and the eleventh "rays" of light, even as his madness has goaded him into declaring himself the emperor of all Mars, which he intends to conquer by reducing every city which opposes his regime to powder before the ferocity of his energy weapons.

A fifth novel might concern itself with a race of warrior women who have sworn undying enmity to all males--Amazons of Mars.

As the territory is sufficiently vast and the active characters sufficiently numerous, the series could, if desired, be indefinitely extended by the continuous introduction of new settings and plot-elements.

But, as of now, I am interested in obtaining a three-book contract for A Swordsman of Mars, The Mystery Men of Mars, and Goddess of Mars.

Continued from p. 2:

both versions, restoring the Barsoomianisms yet preserving Lin's more polished stylistic rewriting. From the similarity between some of the names (Rad Komis, Zandus Zan) and those appearing in his Thongor books (Zad Komis, Zandar Zan), we might suggest a date of 1966, or thereabouts, for the original draft of A Swordsman of Mars. Whether Lin realized he was plagiarizing the title of an Otis Adelbert Kline novel is difficult to say. He often seemed not to recall whether he had read or made up a good idea or title he remembered. At any rate, this unfinished work is a real treat; though Burroughs-influenced space operas are many, actual Barsoom pastiches are few. Like Lin himself who went on to write Burroughs imitations in his Green Star and Callisto series, Michael Resnick (Goddess of Gany-mede, Pursuit on Ganymede) began by writing an actual chapter of the Barsoom epic, The Forgotten Sea of Mars (1965), a sequel to Llana of Cathol. Lin had a copy

of this special ERB-dom publication and was perhaps inspired by it to venture his own Martian tale.

In our eight issues, Astro-Adventures has assembled quite a star-spanning crew of characters including the Nebula, Hautley Quicksilver, Star Pirate, Solar Smith, and Professor Jameson. Our writers (not counting reprints from the pulps) have included in their star-studded ranks Clark Ashton Smith, Neil R. Jones, Don Wilcox, Raymond Z. Gallun, Lin Carter, Richard L. Tierney, Will Murray, and newcomers like Charles Garofalo and Pierre Comtois. Dan Gobbett served wonderfully as reprint editor, and artists Stephen E. Fabian, Robert H. Knox, Allen Koszowski, Jason Eckhardt, and Bruce J. Timm have provided truly out-of-this-world illustration! Thanks to one and all, and especially to you, our loyal readers! May your rockets never misfire and your rayguns never jam, especially when a bug-eyed monster's hot on your trail!

Captain Astro

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