The Amazing Sequel To:

EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

SKELETON MEN OF JUPITER

Lost on Jupiter

A John Carter of Mars Romance
CONTENTS

LOST ON JUPITER

by

WILLIAM GILMOUR

BEING THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF THE FAMED WARLORD OF BARSOOM ON THE PLANET JUPITER

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THE ORIGINAL AND ONLY AUTHORIZED EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS FANZINE

"I STILL LIVE"—Edgar Rice Burroughs
I had just finished reading—for perhaps the tenth time—the last of the highly publicized accounts which narrate the astounding adventures of the renowned John Carter, Warlord of Mars. Inasmuch as I already knew the story, this visit was merely an excerpt from a contemporary novel, I have often found myself lost in thought pondering as to how and where this noteworthy tale was brought to a final conclusion.

Those of you who have had the opportunity of reading the adventures of John Carter will recall that in the first five volumes of this magnificent series, the warlord, after valiantly fighting the Huns on Mars, was stricken with an unknown and indeed an all-but-unknown disease. But in the last volume, nobody, not even I, could have imagined, even in the wildest of dreams, that I would cross this enormous expanse which separated two worlds—but I did cross.

In a story already told, you saw how, through a snare, I was overpowered by the human-like skeleton of Jupiter known as Mars, and subsequently transported to the great planet. These Morgors, who had virtually conquered the entire surface of their home planet, had carried their lust for power to other planets which might have included the ultimate subjugation of the solar system itself. They had discovered the secret of space travel, and, most importantly, had achieved a method by which they could render their ships immobile by means which could well be the determining factor in the success of their infamous plot.

They enlisted the aid of a degenerate Barsoomian prince named Multis Par, and, from him, the Morgors learned that if they were to establish themselves in the last great city of Mars, they must take me prisoner, who, as Warlord, am well informed with data relative to the disposition of the armament and air fleets of the various nations. Multis Par couldn't have known much about me, for if he did, he would have died a thousand deaths before disclosing a single shred of information helpful to their motives. Nor did I speak when they confronted me with an added inducement of loosening the tongue through the consequent capture of my incomparable mate. Both of us preferred torture and death rather than perfidy.

However, with the aid of others, I managed to escape, procure a ship and release Dejah Thoris from her prison. But the company of Dejah Thoris, my betrothed, and a Mariner pilot, I saw her safely away to the island of Zanor, but the Morgors recaptured me before I could enter the ship. Zanor was the country of my Savator friend, Zan Dar, who had promised us safe conduct in a grand outflank, or character for her, as you know, are what all mankind of Jupiter call themselves.

What further befell me was experienced lightheartedly as I had every reason to believe that my mate, the Princess of Helium, was in safe hands.

At last, I again escaped from the Morgors, and the shaping of events formed in such a manner that I was able to seize a ship. After rendering it invisible, I flew out upon the vast ocean which separated me from the country of Zanor and Dejah Thoris, and such an ocean as I am a stranger to. As I flew over it, I could see people moving about within its limits, and upon demagnetizing the hull, the ship became visible to those below and they called upon me to land. Bringing the ship slowly to the ground, I opened the door and stepped outside...
CHAPTER I

It was with no little feeling of apprehension that I advanced upon the little group of people who had gathered at the edge of the village to receive me after my ship had touched the ground. In the innermost recesses of one's mind, there is that peculiar instinct which gives one a premonition or danger and, at one time or another as the cause arises, this inherent quality comes to the surface warning him of impending trouble. Having no occasion to be so, I could not help but feel that everything was not as I had so enthusiastically hoped during my long and hazardous flight across that storm-lashed ocean—a storm which had seen my craft tossed about like a feather, every moment of its endurance threatening to precipitate me into the depths of the colossal sea below which created waves of titanic proportions and dwarfed the loftiest mountains in insignificance.

There had been times when the storm abated in strength and the velocity of the wind died down to a mere whisper, and then my hope around me became a scene of the utmost tranquillity had I not looked down at that terrible expanse of churning tidal waves, ever present due to the constant shifting of the planet's four nearest moons. It was during periods, such as these, that I had given much thought to my reunion with Dejah Thoris upon my arrival in Zanor. I also gave some time for conjecture as to what must be done in order to thwart the spectre-like Morgors in their plans for the subjugation of my beloved Helium. As quickly as possible I must again return to Mars and warn Tardos Mors of the coming invasion and then decide what must be done to combat this menace and bring about its downfall. And the sooner I was to be reunited with my incomparable princess, the sooner I'd be able to put into effect a plan which would see us back to Barsoom and Helium.

I harbored no delusions that my present craft could possibly cross the vast expanse of interstellar space for it needed little more than a minute inspection with the naked eye for my senses to perceive that this craft was incapable of space travel. This meant that, if Zanor could not furnish me with a more feasible solution to the problem confronting me, I must again return to the land of the Morgors and find the means of acquiring a flyer such as the one that had brought me to this strange world. That my present craft was capable of the invisibility process leaned heavily in my favor and certainly would be an important factor toward my success. I need not return to the Morgors to obtain another ship.

However, be that as it may, the moment at hand required my fullest attention, and as I approached the little group of people more closely, I could see that there was distinct hostility written upon their countenances and my senses seemed to say that neither Dejah Thoris nor the others were within the village. In any case it was now in the fire and I had no alternative but to try to make the best of the matter, so I raised my arm in a token of friendship, but had no sooner done so when the foremost in the group whipped out a sword with lightning-like swiftness and pressed its point against my naked chest. At a word from him, two or the others at his side quickly disarmed me and then stood directly in front of me and faced the man who had blanched the sweat from my face and eyes across my features. He then lowered his sword and proceeded to walk slowly around me until he was directly in front of me again.

"You certainly aren't a Morgor," he said, "and yet you are no Savator. What brings you alone in a Morgor ship to the village of Kor Zan? I am Kor Zan. Speak, fellow!" and he raised his blade again to my chest.

"My name is John Carter," I said, "and I am from another world called Barsoom. I came here in this ship which came from the Morgors, seeking the land of Zanor."

"You are indeed in the land of Zanor," replied Kor Zan, "and I have heard of Barsoom which lies far beyond the cloud envelope surrounding all Eurubus; but how came you to Eurobus, and why?" I was brought here from Barsoom by the wind, carried through no fault of my own," I answered, deciding to play it square with Kor Zan, for it took no second guess to see that this community was at odds with the skeleton men. I thereupon gave him a brief account of what had happened since the time that U Dan had inticed me from my garden in Helium.

For some time Kor Zan stood scrutinizing me as if weighing a decision. Finally, he sheathed his sword and spoke: "For countless ages we Sav- ators have been constantly harassed by the Morgors who come from another world. We, being a primitive people, haven't the means to successfully counter these attacks; depending solely upon our swords as the principal weapon in our defense. Although we always give a good account of ourselves, it does not alter the fact that we have sometimes been carried off into slavery when they leave. Thus, you have the reason for these precautions.

"I am inclined to believe you, John Carter, for I am the father of Zan Bar, who was taken in a Morgor raid, but, if it is as you say, and he and your mate escaped, they have not yet shown up here."

Then my instincts had been correct. But what could have happened? I had seen their ship safely away after U Dan had, at my command, forcibly re- strained Dejah Thoris from returning to my side to die or be recaptured. Or rather, I had seen her safely aboard before the door closed rendering the ship invisible. There had been nothing to indi- cate that they weren't speeding toward Zanor as I had supposed, nor was there any reason to suspect that they would try to attack me or anyone else with a naked blade. Could it be possible that they were still within the confines of the Morgors? Or did they escape only to have been lost in that hideous sea which had so nearly claimed me? I could not bear to think of this second inference as I well knew that one could not last for more than an in- stant in those tumultuous waves.

Kor Zan saw the consternation which swept over my men and stepped forward, laying a hand upon my shoulder. "Come into the village, my friend," he said, kindly, "and partake with me of food and drink. For you are fatigued after so long and perilous a journey."

I must admit I was feeling a little the worse for wear, being both tired and hungry, so, with a nod, I accepted his invitation and Kor-Zan, with a grand gesture, waved aside the group standing behind him; and, with his hand still upon my shoulder, we walked into the village.

CHAPTER II

My first impression of the village of Kor Zan was that of tolerable indifference, but an I more closely examined the structure of the huts we passed, I could see that they were built entirely of solid rock, apparently hewn from the side of the mountain on which the village lay. As there were hundreds of these huts, some being two stories high, my imagination was staggered by the thought
of the immensity of the project, and of the time and effort that must have been consumed in the construction of such a village.

That the dwellings were indeed hewn from the mountain-side was evidenced a moment later when we came upon a small excavation in which men were busily engaged at chipping out stone from what had once been a circular cliff. I could see that the cliff's face, from the summit, had been inwardly cut for some eighteen or twenty feet, leaving at its base a rectangular block of stone about eight feet high and five feet wide.

From the tools at their disposal which were, as far as I could see, nothing more than crudely made hammers, chisels and shovels, countless ages of time must have passed since that day in the dim and distant past when some progenitor of these aboriginals extracted the first blow in the rock and began the herculean task of carving an entire village out of solid rock. I was later to learn, much to my dismay, that the terrific storms that buffeted the region made living in solid stone houses imperative, and anything of a lesser nature would constitute plain suicide as those intense were these Jupiterian storms.

We continued down the main village street of stone, worn smooth by myriad footfalls of the ages, until we came to a two-story dwelling in which cross-like sides were polished to a dull lustre and, upon entering, I could see more of the amazing qualities in the crude architecture of these primitive people. Unlike the drear interiors of the Morgors' homes, these were carved into beautiful etchings of symmetrical design, giving a pleasant atmosphere to the room.

After satisfying my hunger at a meal served by Kor Zan's mate, I was led up into the narrow flight of stairs to the apartment on the second floor in which there were no windows; the only other opening other than the doorway through which we entered, was an oblique slit about two inches high and eight or nine inches wide on the near the ceiling on the inside of the roof, and through this slit a small amount of light was filtered from the outside. Kor Zan told me that these small openings were all in the sleeping rooms and served as ventilators. At one side of the room was a door on which were piled several furry animal hides and, immediately Kor Zan had shut the room, I laid down and at once fell asleep.

As there is no way of measuring time, as we know it, on this world of perpetual daylight, I had no way of knowing how long I had been asleep before I was rudely awakened by what seemed to be a vigorous shaking of the door on which I lay. Abruptly, I sat up to the accompaniment of the most frightful wail that had ever smote upon my ears. Completely mystified, I arose unsteadily and made my way to the head of the flight of steps which I descended as rapidly as possible to the floor below. Kor Zan, his mate and two other females were standing there and where I had feasted earlier and upon which lay a small rectangular receptacle which gave off a brilliant light. This artificial illumination was necessitated by the apertures which served as windows being tightly closed by slabs of stone wedged in from the outside of the building, shutting off all the natural light.

"What is wrong?" I demanded in a loud tone to make myself heard above the din.

Kor Zan's reply was lost in a crashing sound which reverberated throughout the hut and threatened to bring it down. He finally made himself heard, he rose and shouted: "A great storm is upon us..."

I followed him into the outer room where a great stone slab completely blocked the doorway through which I had first entered the hut. I was wondering how this tremendous weight had been put into place when Kor Zan applied his shoulder to one side of the slab and, with hardly an effort, commenced moving it away from the doorway, much to the amazement of the others. At a glance, I saw how this was accomplished. Just inside the threshold, a trough of the same dimensions as the base of the slab, had been chiseled out of the floor to a depth of about eight inches in the back of the trough lay a thick, dark-colored liquid which acted as a lubricant upon which the great stone could be moved with ease. The trough extended to the left of the doorway for the full width of the slab, where it therein rested when not in use. At the right of it was a lookout against the wall was a small block of stone, smooth but for a hand-hold at one end and I could see that this block would fit perfectly into the trough as to be hardly noticeable when the great door was not needed.

Kor Zan succeeded in sliding back the slab until he had an opening of an inch or two and, stepping aside, shouted: "Look!"

The crescendo of the storm was tenfold as I peered out beyond the small crack and was astounded by the appalling sight which met my eyes.

The rosy hue of the Jupiterian atmosphere was gone, and in its place was a scene of sickly yellow. The entire upper regions was a seething mass of billowing clouds which was moving across the sky with incredible speed. Great trees and boulders were hurtling through the air like so many toys tossed by the arm of a mythical giant, and now and then a boulder would come smashing to the ground only to disappear in dust as the fury of the wind from here and there was a glimpse of some gigantic animal which had the misfortune of being carried aloft. The creature came sailing along, head over heels, and a moment later was gone from sight to an unknown fate.

The summit of the mountain seemed bent to the raging tempest, so violent was the storm's wrath; and a short distance away, I saw a mighty forest giant being torn from the ground, a few remaining roots holding it for a mere instant as if in supplication to the gods before it was borne away on the wings of the wind.

But most terrible of all was the sense of utter despair which besiegled me as I thought of the safety of my ship. Would it still lie at the edge of the village as Kor Zan said, or was it possible that it could never survive this frightful upheaval of nature. I motioned Kor Zan to close the slab, and we returned to the inner chamber.

"How long will it last?" I shouted.

"It is difficult to tell," replied Kor Zan.

"Sometimes they pass very quickly. At other times, I've seen them last for several ales."

But I must see to my ship," I said, emphatically; and, if it hasn't already been carried away and destroyed, I must get it to a safe place. What think you, Kor Zan, of its chances for survival?"

Kor Zan shrugged. "I do not know, my friend," he said. "It is possible that the full force of the wind may have missed it entirely, but do not at all seem to think that your ship may have been thrust too high in the face of such an omnipotent storm, but," he added, in a tone which lacked conviction, "there is a chance."

We had eaten three times and slept once since the storm began and still it had not ceased. Every now and again one of the ears would rise up, chafing with apprehension over the fate of my craft. I was thoroughly convinced that, were I to return to the land of the Morgors and begin my quest..."
saw, for, barring the possibility of her ship being lost at sea, I could reasonably assume that she was still there, but whether in the harbor or elsewhere, I could not conjecture.

The more I let my mind dwell upon the subject, the more I became incensed with the perplexity of the situation; and if Kor Zen entertained the slightest conviction that my ship still stood, I decided that I must ascertain the truth for I could not afford to overlook the possibility, however slim. If it were still there, I could transfer it to a more favorable position in the lee of the storm, thus reassuring its safety until the storm had passed.

Finally, casting the recollection aside, I announced to myself that I would try to make it back to where the ship lay, and whether he had anticipated my coming decision or whether he had seen the futility of attempting to dissuade me, he silently rose and preceded me to the great stone doorway in the rear room.

"I can see that it's useless to try to inhibit your determination in attempting this foolhardy venture," he admonished, "but if you must go, try to keep the huts between yourself and the force of the wind, keeping as low to the ground as you can."

He then placed his hand at my shoulder and opened it far enough to permit the passage of my body. I thereupon proceeded to inch my way around the corner of the wall until I stood on the outside with my back braced against the jamb of the doorway. As the great stone doors swung open, I felt Kor Zen say something which sounded like "good luck" but I could not be sure as his voice was lost in the turbulence that was now upon me.

Well, the die was cast. I stood for a moment collecting my bearings. Without further attempt at a crouching position and plunged into the wind. I was immediately swept backwards and had not caught hold of the projecting door jamb where I had been standing an instant before, my venture would have been finished hardly had it begun. As it was, I had an exceedingly difficult time clinging to the jamb, but I finally managed to pull myself into the doorway where I lay panting with exertion.

I saw that the force of the storm was being directed from the direction in which the ship lay, and I therefore preferred the corner opposite to the one where I had been standing. In other words, if I prostrated myself, my head into the wind to offer the least resistance, I may, with moderate certainty, be able to gain slow progress to the head of the village street if I kept a hut between myself and the brunt of the wind. I had a pre-rehearsal in my mind of an Apache Indian I slowly worked myself out into the open space which separated Kor Zen's hut from the next and, by taking advantage of any hand-holds with which my groping fingers came in contact, I found myself making headway against the wind. Presently, I was on the threshold of the next hut.

Proceeding in a like manner, I slowly made my way from hut to hut until at last I was at the foremost building on the street. I peered around the corner and, with a shout of exultation, I saw that what had become an obsession with me, still standing as I had left it, less than a hundred feet away!

My joy was short lived, however, as I realized that the direction in which the ship lay was now at right angles to that which I had been pursuing. That fact that the remaining distance across wind; but my spirits had been so elated by my success thus far that I quickly dismissed from my mind any misgivings as to my ability to traverse the space between in safety.

But I had no sooner left the comparative protection of the huts than the gusts of wind I felt myself being lifted from the ground, but luckily my fingers came in contact with a projection in the stone flagging to which I clung tenaciously. The wind had swung my legs around so that when I pulled myself to the ground I was facing the direction again at right angles to that in which I had been pursuing. The wind, fully prostrate, I began another series of barrel-rolls, but this time they were less than twenty feet from my goal when I realized that I had blundered. The further I rolled from the proximity of the village, the more violent the fury of the wind became, and, as I felt the inward pressure upon my legs, I dropped to the ground near the base of the wall until my fingers were raw and bleeding, but this time I encountered no rewarding projection.

With a jerk, I was borne from the ground and swept into the air with incredible swiftness.

CHAPTER III

That I was fully cognizant of the storm's violence and had witnessed the consequences of it you can rest assured upon the word of one who had had the misfortune of being carried aloft, it had in no way patterned a preconception of what my own fate would be if I should suddenly be thrust into a similar position. Had I conceived such a picture, it certainly couldn't have attained the magnitude of the sensations I now felt as I was hurled through space.

That there could be but one outcome I hadn't the slightest doubt, and with each turn and twist of my body, I fully expected to be dashed to pieces against one of the numerous mountain peaks in the area. In fact, it had seemed to me that my arms and legs as stabilizers, I somewhat managed to regain my equilibrium, hence being carried along on a more or less even keel. I saw that the mountains were below me and that the rate of speed at which I was being blown, so much the part of the debris around me, was terrifying in the extreme.

The panoply beneath was of both granduer and desolation and with each passing mile the scene became more wild and barren, completely devoid of any trees or vegetation, all of which was either swept away or which burrowed to a depth of twenty miles or more, were predominant; and here and there, trees whose boles must have measured a hundred feet in diameter, dotted the landscape, rearing their storm-lashed heads a mile above their bases.

I traveled down through the base of Mount Humbert and saw that which I had traveled over that vast Jupiterian island, and I was beginning to wonder what my final fate would be when I became aware of the close proximity of a large tree limb bearing down upon me, and before I could make an effort to dodge the thing, I was struck, a glowing blow on the side of my head with such forceful impact that everything before me went black.

A throbbing headache accompanied the slow return of consciousness and the first thing my senses perceived was the death-like silence around me. Except for a slight swaying motion of my body and a faint rustling, as of leaves disturbed by a gentle breeze, all was as still as the tomb. I opened my eyes and saw that the rosy hue had returned, and that I was lying at a grotesque angle, spread-eagled in what seemed to be a large net of fine threads which entwined my body from head to foot. I immediately tried to extricate my arms and legs but soon found that it was an impossible task. I thenceupon commenced to thrash about in an attempt to burst the fine threads that held me, but this, too, proved to be beyond my strength and only served to entangle me the more. With an epithet of disgust, I gave up my efforts, completely baffled.

The angle at which I was enmeshed gave my eyes full command of all before and above me, and I saw that I was enveloped in either a large bush or the uppermost branches of some tree, but whether or not the network which held me was part of its natural growth I could not tell, for, as far as I could see, the periphery of this network was lost in the foliage. By straining my right arm
and twisting my body to the left, drawing out the resilient material, I was able to turn far enough to see what was beneath me, and to my surprise, I saw that I was no more than ten feet from the ground which was of a grassy nature much like the green awards of Earth.

As I was contemplating my dilemma when my thoughts were interrupted by a rustling sound from the turf below and, twisting again so as to command the scene beneath, I observed that the sound emanated from only a dozen feet away and was coming from the tree in which I was imprisoned. At that moment, there burst upon my vision the most horrid creature my eyes had ever perceived on three worlds!

At the edge of the shrubbery from which it had emerged, eying me intently—great protruding eyes of a brilliant scarlet, like two immense disks of glowing fire set in a purple colored face much smaller in proportion as to what those great eyes should have prescribed. Below the eyes and underneath the jaw-bone, were three pairs of slavering mandibles each about two feet long, moving inwards and outwards, scissor-like. On top of the cranium was a large conical boss, structure which gave the width of the creature's head a curiously uneven form and then forward for about four feet, terminating in a razor-sharp edge just above the eyes. There was no neck, and its round, hairy body, supported on twelve jointless legs, measured fully ten feet in diameter. As near as I could see, it had no tail.

That the creature had been lying there in the shrubbery since my incarceration, I did not doubt, for even if it hadn't, it was unanswerable that it could have heard the movement of that great body long since.

Suddenly I realized, with no little horror, that what it was that held me tightly enmeshed! I was in danger of being outmatched and overpowered, I was not lying in the shrubbery, out of sight, waiting for a victim as a spider waits for a fly; and at the moment, I constituted its next meal!

With a feeling slightly akin to terror, I saw the creature slowly moving toward me, its twelve legs waving about like the tentacles of an octopus, and, after another futile effort to release myself from the web, I resigned myself to fate.

To die thus helpless! It was humiliating, to say the least. Prince Oberon of Terra and Warlord of Mars, forming the diet of an alien beast in an unknown corner of an alien world. Oh, for the feel of a trusty sword with which to cut my bonds and face the creature! If die I must, how horrid would it be to die unarmed, with naked steel in hand in pursuit of my vocation!

The creature was only a few feet away when I again heard a crashing sound in the brush, but this time it was directly to my rear and out of my sight. The death of these two monstrous monstrosities rushing in to share the feast? I surely thought so, and as the crashing grew louder in volume the creature before me halted its advance, its horrid, tuft-like mandibles ruffling about its head. It let forth a low, hissing rumble, and swung its massive bulk pliably to the right and stood facing whatever was coming up to my rear. Now, hoarse shouts broke the air, and there suddenly burst into view directly below me, a half-dozen man-like creatures brandishing long swords and yelling wildly.

These warriors proceeded to encircle the monster and, at a word of command from one, attacked it with vicious incentive.

My mind was in such a state that what they were—utterly fearless of the beast and they commenced darting in and out with amazing celerity, hacking and jabbing with their swords. No less fearless was the beast, however, and, standing its ground and hissing shrilly—a veritable giant, annoyed at this rash interruption at mealtime. as the effects of the sword thrusts began to draw blood, the creature, infuriated with rage and pain, rushed blindly among its attackers who nimbly sidestepped each thrust of the deadly weapons into the beast's sides as it went by. I had never seen such sure-footed quickness! It reminded me of a mongoose with a cobra at bay.

Presently one of the attackers leaped in close, his sword poised to deliver a fatal blow. His saucer-like eyes but, upon dodging one lashing tentacle, he either became over-optimistic or misjudged his own prowess, for another tentacle whipped around his waist with lightning-like speed and swept the unfortunate warrior into the lethal mandibles which pierced his body as though it were a pin-cushion. The beast then cast the warrior to the ground and, using its head proterubence like a meat cleaver, proceeded to rend the body into pieces. NowI, facing the sword thrusts of the five remaining warriors, the creature commenced to scoop the bloody chunks into its cavernous maw and, in less time than it takes to tell it, its victim's remains were gone.

This episode marked the beginning of the end for the monster. The unrelenting swords had now pierced its vitals and had weakened the creature to the extent that its rubbery legs had a difficult time supporting its great bulk. They sagged like jelly out of its body, and staggered and stumble constantly. Then one of the five warriors, with a shout of triumph, leaped in at close quarters and drove his blade to the hilt into one of the creature's great eyes. With a loud crack of escaping body fluid to the ground and, after a few spasmodic twitchings, it lay quite still.

The victorious warriors then proceeded to remove the creature's furry pelt with daggers and knives drawn from their sheaths supported on their hips, and in an amazingly short time the hide lay stretched upon the green turf. Three of the warriors then commenced to scrape the inner surface of the hide, removing all vestiges of adipose blood and tissue while the other two hacked off large portions of the still quivering mountain of raw flesh. When they had accomplished their respective tasks, they laid the cuts of dripping flesh upon the pelt and all five began to work at the sensuous meat of the creature's legs. After all twelve skins had been removed and scraped, they dissected each vertically into thongs about two inches wide. Turning again to the pelt, they took one side and folded it over itself in the middle. One of them then took the remaining sides they now had an oblong bundle which they tied securely with the thongs of skin from the creature's legs.

When this was finished, one of the warriors gathered some dry leaves and piled them near a large limb in which he cut a small depression with his dagger. He then placed a small quantity of the leaves into the hole and, taking a stick of wood, he put one end into the leaves and commenced whirling it rapidly back and forth through his palm. Presently a thin line of smoke rewarded his efforts and the brisk fire thus blazing merrily.

The other warriors, in the meantime, had cut off some of the remaining flesh from the bloody mass of pulp that had been the monster and, splitting it on the ends of the sticks, began grilling the meat over the flames.

I was beginning to wonder when these warriors would call a temporary halt to their activities in order to free me from my predicament, when it occurred to me that none of them had so much as cast a momentary glance in my direction. Could it be possible that they were completely unaware of my presence?

This assumption proved correct a few moments later when, becoming somewhat annoyed at their seeming ignorance, I called down to them to release me from my bondage.
To say that the warriors were surprised when my voice broke the silence would be putting it rather mildly. They stopped abruptly and peered into the foliage of the tree; and, as their eyes met mine, a vague sense of absolute incredulity crossed the features of each. The one whom I had designated as being the leader cautiously advanced until he stood directly beneath me. After a moment's scrutiny, his incredulous look changed to one of sardonic amusement.

"Ho, warriors," he called to his companions, "come hither and see what we have here!"

The others approached until all five were grouped around my base. "What manner of man is that," demanded one; "and what is the fool doing in the sorath's web?"

"He has red skin," observed another. "I have never seen such before. He's no Haskian, of that I am sure. Perhaps he is one of those fire demons who tell us the truth.

"Or the sorath's spawn," jibed a third with a loud guffaw.

The warriors spoke in the Jupiterian language with which I was familiar; only the slight accent to the words and it bore out a fact which was in evidence with me since my advent upon the great planet—that, as it is on Mars, the language is universal. At least it is in the part of the planet's surface I have explored, having heard no other or any other indication that there is another, among the several races I have encountered.

After a few more comments and jests, two of the men reached up with their swords and commenced cutting the strong thorny thicket. Presently, I was able to extricate myself and with a bound, I landed on the ground beside them.

CHAPTER IV

Now for the first time I was able to observe as to what manner of man it was who had saved me from the thing which they had called a sorath. I saw that their aspect was much like that of the Savators, except for the receding foreheads which gave them the frontal appearance of being bald, but long struggling locks hung from the crown of the head and draped over both sides of the shoulders. Their skins were of a pale yellow; of the old held, all five were naked but for loin cloths of tanned hide.

The warriors, too, were perceptibly curious, examining my features and attire with evident mounting interest.

"Who are you," asked he who was the leader. "How did your skin become so red; and what is this strange accouterment you wear?" He plucked at one of my harness straps, letting it snap back against my chest.

"Jak the Farmer," I replied, "a stranger in your country. Where am I and how far is it from Zanor, the country of Kor Zan, the chief?"

"I know naught of what you speak," said the leader, candidly. "I have never heard of anything so puzzling as this unknown world in Hask. You're either here or you're not here and never were—and my eyes tell me that you are standing in front of me. And what is this Zanor of which you speak? There is no such place. All that I have explored or any part of the world and have explored most of its interior, but I have never seen nor heard of any place of which I have had no knowledge.

"If you have had the world," I said, astonished, "then have heard of the Morgor whom their power and influence stretches from pole to pole."

"I am Jak, son of Zog, king of the world," said he, aridently. "In the knowledge of Hask there is none more proficient nor artful; and if I have not heard of or seen anything; then it does not exist; and I have never heard of anything you have mentioned."

He spoke with such firm conviction and finality that at once became convinced that these being had no conception whatsoever of any other lands beyond their own boundaries, for, if they had, doubtless they would at least have had some indelible suggestion of the tyrannical Morgor who had occupied every known clime upon the planet or Jupiter, so, concluding that further commitments would be quite incomprehensible, I decided to draw him out.

"How large is the world," I asked, "and where in it is Hask?"

"Hask is the world," he exclaimed, emphatically; "and it is very large. "Do you see Rohazaron yonder?" He extended a roritioner in the direction of a large, imposing volcano from which a thin wisps of smoke was lazily drifting upwards. "This is the end of the world, and from this peak you can barely discern the boundaries, in every direction, far in the distance. But, I know not why I am telling you this as it is common knowledge to any fool."

"Could only tell you I am not of Hask," I cried in altercation. "I am a stranger here."

Jak shrugged. "As you will," he said, and, after indicating to the others to resume grilling the meat, he took my arm and led me to the top of a small hill.

"There is the end of the world," he said, sweeping his arm in the general direction of a majestic range of mountains which lay beyond our frontage—mountains whose summits were lost in the clouds as far as the eye could see, or the horizon, in opposite direction. "The limits of Hask," he said, "are too far distant to be seen in this direction, suffice it to say that they are a full twenty marches away. Assuming a look of arrogant satisfaction, he added: "Did I not tell you that Hask is large?"

"It is a very large world," I acquiesced, thinking of what the reaction would be if I told him that this world of his was merely a small pinpoint of territory on the largest planet of our solar system.

Solitarily, I commenced to understand just what sort of country into which I had been cast. The closest mountain barrier was about five miles distant from where we stood and, as near as I could see, it appeared to be oblong-like, smooth, and absolutely perpendicular for a height of some twenty-five miles where it disappeared into the lower extremities of the cloud envelope. This barrier extended to right and left, gradually circling inward until it became obscure in the distance.

This revelation, concurring with Jaks's outline, gave me the disquieting impression that we were thus hemmed in, and it was imperious to investigate any other or by the same means by which I had apparently descended into this strange land.

Sharp cries from behind interrupted further reasoning and Jak, without a word, turned and ran up the hill of the hilltop, passing from sight into the thicket behind which we had left the other warriors. Puzzled, I followed at a brisk pace and, upon entering the clearing, I saw all five Haskians seated, talking to Jak, with some seven or eight hairy, ape-like creatures, all of whom were none the less proficient and agile as were their opponents. Intermingled with the sound of clashing blades and the hoarse cries of the Haskians were fierce bellows much like those of addled bulls which came from the throats of the hairy attackers. FASCINATED, I stood at the edge of the shrubbery watching the mêlée with increasing impulsion. When I had been disarmed by Kor Zan's men upon my arrival in Zanor and not able to defend myself before the coming of the storm made it impossible, consequently, I was completely unarmed when the wind bore me from the ground. Now, as I saw that Jak and his men were being hard pressed by the outnumbering attackers,
At this point, one of the bestial creatures espied me and, with a bellowing roar, he bore down upon me with brandished sword. Just then I caught the glint of the Krak's sword in the blood and joy of the chase. As the sword flashed upward, I realized it was against the sky. The Krak had been defeated by the sword, and with it, my enemies.

The Krak was no mean swordsman, but he was not my equal. In the end, his pride in his sword was his undoing. He was not able to withstand my assault. He had no equal in the use of the blade, and I felt I was the weight of a sword in hand. He was no equal to my blade, and I felt it was against the sky.

Whirling, I saw at a glance that one of the Haskians had been despatched and that Jak and his surviving companions were waging a losing battle against seven beasts-man.

Without hesitation, I leaped into the fray and in less than ten Earthy seconds another had fallen to the relentless endeavor of my sword. As the Krak's blade flashed above my head, I pressed my advantage with renewed vigor, and in a relatively short time, the last of my seven opponents lay dead upon the ground—my blade having secured victory for the original number without reservation and with no attempt to border on the bravado, for, just as the artist takes pride in his skill with the brush and the surgeon is aware of his potency with the scalpel, I, none the less, am proud of my prowess as a swordsman in my vocation by choice.

Needless to say, the surviving Haskians were overwhelmingly grateful for my part in the battle. They had not been aware that they had been attacked by the beings from the sky.

"I can well believe that you are not of Haek, John Carter," said Jak, enthusiastically, "for I have never seen such a superb display of swordsman-ship as you. You fought like a varitable fied ia.

I managed to end the topic of admiration by jerking my thumb at the inert bodies of our erstwhile foes. "Who or what are those creatures?"

"They are Duug," replied Jak, "and no creature in all Haek is more ferocious and more blood-thirsty than one of them. They are ruthless killers by nature, it being their incentive to kill for the pure joy of killing, and anyone who has the misfortune of being seen by the Duugs, can expect to be given no quarter. They roam in small groups over the length and breadth of Haek, usually more than twenty to a group including the females and young, and, as a general rule, they are semi-feral and have no desire to take their homes in the trees. They migrate constantly and are never in the same place for two successive sleeps."

Jak's companions had now finished grilling the north meat of which they had offered me a generous portion and I learned that they had finished up it in a consummate fashion and its origin insomuch as it induced the most exquisite of food. The flesh was quite palatable and delicious in the extreme. I learned that these monstrous saurians were ferociously hunted by the Haskians for the abundant amount of food they furnished, and due to some inexplicable manifestation of nature, the flesh of these beasts would be kept, exposed, for some weeks without any signs of spoiling. The hides, too, were highly regarded, being used for sleeping furs and body attire.

I also learned, insomuch as the entire Haskians had been defeated by the sword, and with it, my enemies.

During the meal, I outlined the plan for the next day. We would be moving up the river and into the mountains to find a suitable place for our camp. We would then send the others to gather food and water.

The meal over, Jak's men entered the surrounding thicket, emerging a short time later, each with an armful of branches of various lengths. Taking two stout limbs, each about seven feet long, they placed them under the gravel, and let them rest about three feet apart. With their daggers, two of the warriors cut the smaller branches to appropriate length, laying each cross-wise between the two larger limbs, while the third man tied each branch securely with the fibers to the outlying shafts at which they were crossed. Presently, they had a rude litter, upon which they placed the hide of the north meat, containing the huge supply of meat from the north meat.

"You will, of course, accompany us to Haek," spoke Jak to me, preparatory to their departure, "since I can offer no solution to your quandary other than to live out your life as a Free man in the village of Xog, my father. It is regrettable that these Morogres of whom you speak constitute a menace to your world and the lands which you say are beyond Haek; but you are here and here you must stay, for in the existence of man has the conception of leaving Haek been realized."

I must say that these tidings were anything but comforting. But, being invested with the perserverance that has long been characteristic of me, I had no intention of resolving myself to live out my life among the Morogres simply. I was exploring every latent consideration that there may be an existing means of access to the world beyond the impenetrable wall which encompassed me.

Patience, also, was a virtue with which I had been endowed. Unquestionably, the realms of madness would long since have descended upon me had I not had the fortitude to endure the innumerable states of repression which has been so much a part of my long and arduous career. So, for the present, I decided to wait and watch, indicating to Jak that I would accompany them, two of the warriors thereupon picked up the litter and with a backward glance at the scattered bodies of friends and foes, started off in the direction of the village of Xog, king of the world.

CHAPTER V

Moving in a leisurely fashion along a well-worn path, we finally came to a high mound and, bringing up the rear, conversed freely. I learned that these Haskians were mostly hunters by profession although some devoted their talents to farming and building. A few, also, were armers, in which they forged weapons, tools and domestic utensils from the ore refined. Their world consisted of the principal village of Haek and five other villages of a
lesser degree. All six were ruled by Kog, the king, with each of the others having a sub-chieftain who governed in his respective habitat, but all governmental standard and procedure came down from Hakk and was the law of the land.

We had now emerged from the maze of undergrowth, the trail skirting the edge of the wil-spruces, and finally, on the other side of which was bordered by a low, rocky escarpment. At the area’s other extremity was an enormous abutment of the mountain range which hemmed Hakk, stretching far above and gradually fading from view as it blended into the upper atmosphere. Frequently, a low, ominous rumble, which seemed to come from beneath our feet, broke the stillness and brought our little cavalcade to a halt.

"This," said Jak, "is called The Valley of Spouting Waters." The rumbling grew louder in volume, accompanied by a sharp hissing as of pressure being released from a steam locomotive. Suddenly, at about a hundred yards to our left, there burst from the boggy ground, a column of water shooting into the air for thousands of feet. This column remained at its height for several minutes then slowly receded and sank gurgling into the ground. No sooner had it sunk from sight, however, when another eruption far to our left occurred shooting upward for some miles before reaching its pinnacle and tumbling off in a veritable deluge of steam and spray.

"Do you see that pit near the center of the valley?" asked Jak, pointing across the swamp to what seemed to be a deep, rocky area in the center of which was a circular orifice about a hundred feet wide. "That," he continued, as I nodded acknowledgement, "is the lair of The Great Fountain, which is the source of life with Hakk. Without it, it would be a mere body of water, with no life in it except the rain in which our streams and lakes are replenished of their supply of water."

I turned my head from the direction of the swamp and looked him straight in the eyes. His implacability was clear, but extremely hard to believe.

"Do you mean to say," I said, incredulously, "that this geyser—this Great Fountain—erupts with such force that it waters all Hakk with its spray?"

"Yes directly," replied Jak; "but it does water all of Hakk. The Great Fountain, unlike the lesser of its kind, projects its waters far aloft into the clouds where they are absorbed and carried to all parts of the world, later falling back in the purest of rain. The Great Fountain will spout several times before a single drop of rain fails—Listen!" he cried abruptly, "do you hear it? I believe it is about to erupt!"

A dull, booming rumble issued forth from the great hole across the swamp, increasing in volume until it reached a deafening pitch. Suddenly, from the mouth of the pit, there leapt into view, a great mushroom of water which shot skyward at such an appalling rate of speed that it was lost from sight in an instant.

I was aghast at the spectacle before me. There was a column of water, a hundred feet wide, shooting billions of gallons upward and not a drop falling back to the ground below. That the clouds could possibly absorb such a prodigious outpouring of water was utterly absurd and ridiculous. Some other solution to this inferable, but highly incongruous, theory must lie, unseen, in the depths of the clouds above. Of that I was certain, but I said nothing to Jak for I hadn’t the slightest inclination to contribute in explanation of this remarkable phenomenon.

The Great Fountain remained at its peak for a much greater time than the lesser geyser, and eventually I saw the great mushroom of water disintegrating into the clouds, descending very rapidly and finally disappearing into the pit from whence it came.

Resuming our journey, the trail led up the rocky escarpment which bordered the valley and finally out upon a vast meadow-like plain, dotted with gorgeously colored shrubs and trees. Multi-colored flowers, superlatively flamboyant and of a uniform height, grew in riotous profusion, putting to shame the most exquisite of the horticultural beds of Earth. My senses reeled in response to the enchanting fragrance which assailed my nostrils.

We entered this natural garden and had proceeded forward for a mile or two when Rok, the warrior who was in the van of our column, came to a sudden halt and beckoned Jak and me to come forward.

"What do you make of that?" he asked, pointing in the direction in which we were proceeding.

My eyes followed his extended forefinger far out over the plain. At first I could see nothing but the gently waving plumage of myriad blossoms, but after a moment’s observation, I saw what appeared to be two humans racing at top speed over one several paces ahead of the other. Both were advancing toward us but on a diagonal course to our own. All five of us now stood abreast watching the rapidly approaching runners and as they came near, their feet did not quite allow the priests of a sudden halt and beckoned Jak and me to come forward.

"What took place in the ensuing short interval of time happened so fast that the telling of it seems like an eternity."

As the first faint notion of the priest’s bellow became discernible, our Haakians immediately whirled their swords and charged madly toward the two runners. Not knowing as to what the others would do, as neither of the runners were yet close enough to be recognizable, I had waited for them to take the initiative—and well it is that I did.

They had no sooner commenced their mad charge, and I, drawing my blade, was about to follow suit, when I suddenly detected the movement of a long, scaly body gliding along the ground in such a manner that I knew it for a dragon and his quarry. The creature was slithering swiftly toward them from a direction directly opposite that from which they were coming and at a scant hundred yards distant.

It is a known fact that, due to the lesser gravity of the planet Mars, I have been able to perform seemingly miraculous feats of agility, such as leaping for great heights and distances at a single bound. No less agile, however, was I on the planet Jupiter, for it has been my experience that its axis gave my Earthly muscles the same capabilities as they had upon Barsoom.

Instantly, I judged the situation before me at a glance. The reptile would intercept the foremost runner long before Jak and his comrades could interfere, and it was apparent that none had as yet seen the approach of the simian creature for both parties continued on their original routes, the two runners bearing head-on into the monster which was moving rapidly to meet them from the flank of Jak’s advance.

With a shout, I sprang forward in great leaps and bounds, passing my companions as though they were standing still, and, as I neared the creature, I saw that it was already too late, for it reared on its tremendous head and, with distended jaws, prepared to receive the first runner. I now saw that this runner was a female, apparently of the same race as my comrades and as she saw the sudden appearance of the terrible jaws before her, she vomited a single trickle of terror and turned sharply to the right. At that moment, without lessening my speed, I drew back my arm and, with all the strength at my command, hurled my sword at the creature just as terrible jaws were about to close upon the girl. The sword penetrated the reptile head, inflicting merely a superficial wound, but it was enough to momentarily restrain those awful jaws. The great head turned and struck vainly at the impaled sword,
which, was quite beyond its reach, and by the time it regained its composure the girl was safely away. The Duag, however, was not so fortunate. He came rushing headlong behind the girl and, as the vicious head reared in front of her arms, the Duag, too, veered sharply, but not quite in time to escape. With a screech he had the girl. He plunged past just as the creature's head turned to face them after snapping at my sword. As it were, the Duag, with a nimble side-step, nearly precipitated the girl. In self-defence, and with the teeth of her fear, jaws strung, clung to the lower part of his hairy leg, upholding him.

With a final bound, I landed a few feet from them at precisely the same moment that the Duag fell lifeless. Without hesitation, I gripped the hilt of my sword and extricated it from its position in the reptile's body. Two quick strokes and I had despatched the creature and swiftly pulled the prostrate Duag out of reach of the great body which was thrashing wildly in the maelstrom of death.

I released the panting Duag who was emitting low, guttural moans and, upon inspecting his injured member, I saw that the severed head was still impaled in the flabby calf below the knee. I thereupon grasped both jaws and, as gently as possible, slowly forced them apart until they became disengaged from the Duag's leg. I then cast the horrid head aside with the gesture of disgust. Meanwhile, several companions had arrived on the scene and the girl, with a stifled cry, threw herself, sobbing, into Jak's arms.

The others immediately approached to where I stood over the fallen Duag.

"Is he dead, Jak?" asked Seta.

"Yes," I answered, "he despatched him. He is in his death struggles now," and I jerked a thumb at the rapidly diminishing reflexes of the serpent's body. "Did the Duag. Have you killed him yet?" and Rek glanced at the injured beast-man behind me. "Ah, he is not dead!" he exclaimed. "Here, I will finish him!"

"Wait!" I said sharply as he raised his sword. "Why?" cried Rek in an inordinate manner. "Because he is a Duag, that is why. If he is allowed to live, he will doubtless run us all through as the opportunity presents itself. He cannot be slain," and again Rek raised his sword to strike.

No matter how bestial the creature, or what his sanguinary attributes may have been, I could not idly stand by and see cold-blooded murder committed upon a man he was without mercy. I promptly grasped Rek by the wrist, staying his uplifted arm. "He will not be slain!" I said, firmly.

At this juncture, Jak approached, accompanied by the girl who was still sobbing quite uncontrollably.

"Ula tells me," he announced, "that Sar has led a successful revolt in seizing the reins of government, and that Hask has fallen with Xog, my father, a prisoner in his own palace."

CHAPTER VI

Conflicting emotions appeared upon the countenances of the members of our group with Jak's startling revelation.

Open-mouthed, Ula, one of the litter-bearers, stared blankly at Jak as if looking directly through him, while the other bearer, Gof, assumed a questioning attitude, looking first at Jak, then to the girl, Ula, as if anticipating another to deny that which his ears could not believe.

Rek, on the other hand, immediately grasped the full significance of the announcement, for he clasped the hilt of his drawn sword, applying pressure until his bluish fingers whitened while he "So," he spat, venomously, "the horyth, Sar, has crawled from his slimy lair and into the open. His traitorous carcass should have long since been run through with a loyal blade. That, John Carter, is a horhyth,' and he swept his sword around to puzzled looks at the words behind him, "a rousing coup to the pompous Sar, and even then I am perpetratin' a rank injustice upon the reptile."

After a brief explanation to Ula as to who I was, Jak bade him to relate what she knew of the events which eliminated in the overthrow of Xog the king, and, for my benefit, to elucidate her account in such a way that I could follow the narration without unnecessary questioning.

She had been quite frank and honest, and I saw that she was beautiful. Her hairline, while higher than ordinary, was much lower than that of her male counterparts, the hair itself falling in flowing waves across her shoulders. Drawing a deep breath which terminated abruptly in an audible sob, she spoke:

"It is well known by all that Sar has long aspired to the throne of Hask, not merely because he believes that it is his prerogative, but also because the throne would undoubtedly offer him the free hand he seeks in rejuvenating the age-old ritual which was climaxed by the casting of a living Haskan into the mouth of Moharanzen, the mountain or fire. This practice has long since been repudiated by the ancestors of Xog, who, for men of their generation, were strong enough in their beliefs that this outrage upon an intelligent and rational people was unprecedented and immoral, and they constantly endeavored to effect the abolishment of this barbarism by inciting rebellious uprising against the traditions which their efforts defeated, and it has been handed down that two of these ancestors, father and son, were themselves cast into the fiery crater upon the termination of one such defeat. Even that failed to stop the insurrectionary movement, for despite the defeat, the movement still continued to carry on the heroic task. Finally, Rab, the grandfather of Xog, rallied enough followers and led a successful coup against the regime of the depraved despot of that time. In so doing himself, he ascended to the throne of Hask. Since then, this affront upon man's dignity has all but been forgotten, being only the shadow of a memory upon the minds of the oldest among us. As you may have guessed, John Carter, Sar is of direct lineage to the dynasty who practiced this cruel and wanton custom. It was his grandfather who was usurped by Rab, who, in turn established under a just rule, our present system of laws by which Hask has thrived and prospered.

"Sar has long been an exponent of the wiles of his forbears, and maintains that human sacrifice to majestic Moharanzen must be revived to appease the wrath of the fire demons who dwell within its flaming bowels. Most Haskians, being much too prudent, have never taken this man and his doctrines very seriously. Quite to the contrary, Sar has always been considered something of a public fool, and, by most, has been taken for granted as such. Finally, however, by the injection of subterfuge and fear, he has now amassed a considerable following, all of whom are willing to support him through promises of impunity from the ultimate disaster which he says will befall those who remain loyal to Xog."

"I first became aware of the trouble when I was awakened from the last sleep by the sounds of shouting and clashing of blades in the courtyard below my chamber. Apprehensively, I hurried to the balcony, dressed in the disguise of a small force of Xog's soldiers, besting off the attack of a lesser number of Sar's men. They were almost directly beneath me and fighting furiously. Across the court, and also beyond the palace grounds, I could see other small groups of combatants. But I am sure that similar skirmishes were taking place simultaneously in all parts of the village wherever Xog's men were posted. Sar's strategy was to hold the king's
forces at bay while the main body of rebels, under Sar himself, and the palace with the element of surprise on their side. The plan's success depended upon a quick seizure of the palace ere the bulk of Xog's forces could be pressed into service, reinforcing those who were then on duty. Hardly before anyone else, and Xog's agent had worked to perfection. In the palace, Xog fought valiantly at the head of his men, but they were no match for the sheer weight of numbers which bore down upon them and they were inevitably overpowered. Xog himself was overpowered upon the portals of the palace flanked by a contingent of his warriors just as his other men were fighting a general retreat to the palace pursued by the loyalists, who, by this time, were being greatly reinforced by many others of the king's guards who heard the sound of combat throughout the village reached their ears.

"Throwing both arms high over his head, Sar brought the fighting to a standstill on the very portals of the palace where he stood.

"Warriors of Haak!" he shouted, "lay down your weapons! The palace has fallen and Xog, the pretender, is my prisoner. Dare you risk his life by advancing further? I, Sar, in the name of my imperial forefathers, proclaim the throne of Haak to be again in the hands of its rightful owner, the true king! Lay down your swords, I say! Lay them down or your glorious Xog dies at my command!"

"It is needless to say that the royal warriors lost no time in complying with this demand. So general was the rout, that Xog, and almost at once the air resounded to the echoes of falling steel as sword after sword was dropped to the stone flagging of the courtyard.

"Sar then spoke again, this time assuring all that his own safety and their families surrender themselves to him, whereupon those of the nobility who were then in the crowd immediately stepped forward and were hustled roughly into the palace. I saw that Jud, my father, was one of them.

"I could watch no further, so I quickly closed the curtain shielding my eyes from the sordid scene below. With my head reeling from the stunning impact of what had taken place before me, I turned from the embassary and did the only thing of which I was then capable—threw myself upon my sleeping furs and burst into tears. Presently, however, a rough hand jerked me to my feet and I found myself staring at the leerless faces of two of Sar's bodyguards. I was part of a detachment who were sent to arrest all members of the nobility and that I was to accompany them to the palace at once.

"Sar, seated upon Xog's throne, was grinning maliciously as I was brought in. He was, as it were, the focus of the party and, with something of an effort, I managed to control my dampened spirits, drew myself straight and stood haughtily before him. His fervent eyes seemed to penetrate into my very soul as they slowly—significantly—ran over my features. When he finally turned his attention to me, he stared at me thus. Finally, he said: "But this one not with the others, but conduct her to the king's private chambers. There, the fair daughter of Jud will become acquainted with her fate at my convenience."

"As the sudden alarm of their clan were hurled escorted into the presence of Sar as I was led away, horror-stricken by the all too clear ultimatum which Sar's words portended. The two warriors took me through a narrow corridor leading from the throne room to the apartment of Sar, where the council of the nobles was held. Then, very loyally for my hearing, the two stood outside the locked door and jealously buried lurid insinuations at each other—insinuations relevant to my coming fate at the hands of Sar—a fate, needless to say, which we feared would be worse than death. Forever, they finally departed, their hollow laughter ringing mockingly in my ears as they retraced their steps back through the corridor by which we had come.

"Glancing about, I saw that the room was devoid of furnishings but for a large marble bench on one side, and a smaller stool-like bench upon a small wooden table. The room's farther end was a small alcove in which was a pile of sleeping furs, and I hurriedly probed their folds in search of a weapon or sort but found nothing. In total despair I sat down upon the large marble bench and stared at it. Resting my eyes again perceived the small stool there on the floor, a sudden notion smote my senses. Quickly I crossed the room and seized the little stool, returned and stood over the large bench, raised and placed the stool high overhead and with all my strength dashed it against the thick marble of the larger bench. I repeated this procedure again and again until my efforts were rewarded when the stool broke into a number of pieces. Selecting the stone fragment of about four inches in length by approximately the same dimension in width, I tucked it out or sight beneath the folds of my robe. Then scooped up the remaining pieces and carried them into the alcove, hiding them beneath the pile of furs. Resuming my seat on the marble bench, I waited.

"My wait was of short duration for presently I heard the door being unlocked and Sar entered with the royal sash of Xog draped over his shoulder. Written upon his countenance was an over-exaggerated expression of regal bearing. With an evil smile he advanced toward the marble bench where I sat, his eyes blazing in lust which accentuated his purpose all too clearly. No words of signs or fear or altered emotions other than that of sheer contempt, I arose just as he launched himself upon me in the manner of a wild beast attacking its prey. As he relentlessly forced me back toward the alcove and the pile of furs therein, my own mind was a blank. Grabbing firmly the hidden piece of stone, withdrawing it, I raised my arm over his shoulder and brought the stone down viciously on the side of his head above the left ear. I sprang back as he felt his grip relax and he sank soundless to the floor. Almost immediately, however, I regretted my action as the thought that I may have killed him entered my tortured brain. Xog's life would quickly pay the forfeit had this happened, but a brief inspection allayed my fears as I saw that he had merely fainted.

"I entered the main apartment of Xog, and by another exit, carefully made my way to the outside behind the palace. Luckily no one was about, and I boldly stepped into the street and at a leisurely pace I proceeded down the main street of the village. Once outside the village and out of sight, I commenced running until Haak was left far behind. I knew that Jak had left on a hunt, and I was contemplating how to I could possibly find him when I was at last, by this time, near the edge of the forest. I managed to elude his men once again and once again I was racing for my life—or my honor, probably both. There is nothing more to tell that isn't already known to you."

"Looking at Jak depressingly, she asked in desperation, "What possibly can we do?"

CHAPTER VII

"What can we do?" repeated Ula, as silence followed her first query.

"Have you any idea, I asked, "where Xog is being held prisoner?"

She shook her head. "I do not know," she said; "although it is more than likely that he has been cast into the ancient dungeons beneath the palace. I'm sure that Sar is quite competent of such an act."

"That, then," I said, decisively, "will be the first thing we must do. We must establish the
exact whereabouts of Xog and effect his liberation."

"Yes," agreed Jak. "At present, that would be our only alternative. It would be foolhardy to attempt to undertake the task of rescuing Xog from his ill-begotten throne as long as my father's life hangs in the balance. Once Xog is free we can then proceed against Sar."

"It will not be an easy matter to free Xog even should we hobbled to a spot about, admiring the skeptical Rek. "Doubtless, the hordy Sar, is well aware that the power he holds over all Haak depends upon his ability to keep the king a prisoner, and he will make every effort to do so. The time may yet come on a dark or indistinct day, the sun next day, followed closely, and after a series of turns, we passed into a thicket of tangled brush and emerged at the entrance to a well-defined cavern, the interior of which was faintly illuminated by diffused light filtering down from its roof." This is the cave I mentioned," said Jak. "I discovered it by chance when I was a boy, and as far as I know, there is no other Haakian now living who is aware of its existence. We shall be quite safe here."

Then following a meal of Sort seaweed our entire company sought some much needed rest after Jak had ruled out the suggestion of placing a guard at the cave's entrance."

"I am quite sure," he said, "that none of Sar's men, or anyone knows of this cave. Even if someone has knowledge of it, there is little likelihood that it will be visited at this particular time. But if it should so befall that this remote possibility occurs, the odds are better than even that the visitor will not be friendly. No, a guard will be unnecessary. Let us get some sleep." I must have slept for a considerable period for when I awoke I felt very much refreshed. The others also were astir, being assembled around a small fire giving forth a comfortable conversation. Go-gu, sitting a little apart from the group, was administering some sort of remedy to his injured leg by dabbing it with what appeared to be a handful of crushed leaves or weeds. "Where is Haak in relation to this cave?" I asked, as I joined those by the fire."

"You can see the entire village from the top of the gorge," replied Jak. "We have decided that one of us should proceed to Haak for the purpose of delivering the news of our confinement, and also to obtain whatever information which would be of assistance in effecting his rescue. Rek has offered to undertake this venture and he is leaving at once."

I nodded. "Before I slept, I said, 'I, myself, have thought about Haak,' I reasoned that being unknown I would fare much better than any of you, but I failed to calculate the effect my red skin would have on the populace. Such as it is, my presence would quickly become known to Sar and the information we seek may be long forthcoming by unavoidable delays." Jak smiled. "Your presence would certainly create quite a stir," he declared. "That is beyond question."

"I have many friends within the village," said Rek, "and not being of the nobility, I may, in natural demeanor, mingle among them without being arrested by Sar's men. I shall endeavor to gather the details essential to our purpose and return here to the group as quickly as possible."

"You say," said the girl called Zor. "that you can see Haak from the top of the gorge? I shall accompany Rek as far as there, where I will be able to observe this village of yours. I shall return shortly."

"Hate me as you choose and pass through the cave's entrance and into the maze of brush. We emerged from the fissure and stood momentarily scanning the rocky wall we must climb to reach the summit of the gorge, when Go-gu the Duag appeared from behind and approached Rek and I with an eager look of potential invitation written upon his
countenance. I noticed that his lips had stiffened to the extent that he walked quite normally with no apparent effort. "What a glorious look at Hek, I smiled, and nodded approvingly. "Come," I said.

After a somewhat precarious ascent we reached the summit of the gorge and looked out upon a wide expanse of fertile lowland lying almost directly beneath us and upon the other by the rocky mesa where we stood. Through the center of the valley wound a placid river and upon both sides of its banks lay the village of Hek.

"I'm glad," I said. "Since I was apprised of its being, I had formed a vague mental concept of a small group of rude dwellings palisaded with hewn timber! Here before me lay a well-balanced city of modest dimensions. Two-story buildings that were a storehouse of produce had but one level and were built on a regular plan and bounded by successive parallel streets in each direction and intersecting at right angles. The streets were laid in flagstone as were the road-beds of the several bridges which spanned the river. The supporting beams and framework of these bridges were constructed of heavy timber. Near the center of the city was a rambling four-story structure built entirely of what looked like white limestone and upon each of its corners rode a lioness which was mounted by a grotesque, open-jawed gargoyles facing outward at an oblique angle from the building's walls. The main entrance to the building was fronted by a spacious patio upon which a number of men strolled back and forth. Two others stood motionless at each side of the portals.

"Xog's palace," explained Hek, as he noticed the direction of my eyes. "I see that the northis has employed an adequate number of guards at the palace entrance.

Spontaneously, I had counted eight guards in all when there came from the doorway and out upon the patio another group, but the distance was too great to distinguish individual features of sex, but it was only too great to see that some of the group were bound neck to neck behind the other, and that the balance was holding them out into the courtyard. No super-intellect was required to interpret the all too obvious roles of deft presidents.

"What do you make of that?" I asked of Hek.

"I'm sure I do not know," he replied, "unless...

We continued to watch the demonstration until the group who had emerged from the palace were assembled in the courtyard, of whom the haidmen clad the flanked on both sides by the others with one assuming a position at the van. They stood thus for a time as though orders were being issued from who stood at the front, for we could see his arms waving about as in emphasis to spoken words. Finally, the entire group moved across the courtyard and into an adjacent street where they passed from our line of vision. We caught occasional glimpses of the procession as it passed intersections, and then it seemed in the distance which allowed us to keep it in view. We saw many other individuals joining the rear of the column, its progress, which we now saw was to the outskirts of the city at a point almost directly below us. Leaving the city, the procession disappeared, the slope of the summit we stood, but turned on a lateral course along a worn roadway which lay by about a half-mile below.

Hek stiffened abruptly with an exclamation. "I was right," he cried. "I know now why the northis were warning the trek of no return for those poor unfortunate in fetters. Look! Need I speak further?" He extended his arm, traversing slowly the procession's route of progress, which gradually led upward diagonally across our frontage, tracing the mesa at a point some two hundred yards to our left. Some five miles beyond this point rose Hoharan, the mountain of fire, standing sublime in majestic grandeur, towering far above its neighbors of lesser stature, and here it was that Hek's arm paused.

Deliberating for a moment upon sudden whim which smote my brain, I faced Hek resolutely. "Show me the shortest way you know of to the mouth of the crater." He looked at me as though possibly my red skin may prove its worth after all—by being the virtual salvation of Hek.

CHAPTER VIII

Whether or not Hek had an inkling of my intentions was not apparent upon his visage, but the peremptory manner of my command spurred him to instant action. Without a word, he set off across the plain with me following closely at his heels. Reaching the point where the roadway from below crossed the mesa, we bore to the left along the road, down a short declivity and out upon a veritable sea of porous rock, deposited over an enormous area from eruptions of a by-gone era. Here, the road upon which we ran lost all symmetry and it was with no little difficulty that we found sure footing as we hastily picked our way across this rugged terrain. I saw that this area extended toward the lower slopes of Hoharan, and later learned that the volcano was entirely circumfused by this unbroken field of hardened lava.

Eventually, however, we emerged upon the slopes of the great mountain and began our arduous climb to the top. The way led upward, winding and twisting over what once may have been a clear-cut trail that had long since deteriorated to the ravines of time, but as we neared the summit, narrow chasms, expelling phlegm-like vapors, began to descend into the lower slopes of Hoharan, but at the very top of Hoharan's peak and, turning, we saw, far below, the slow moving procession about half-way across the lava field advancing toward the lower slopes of the mountain.

"They are using the same general path which we ourselves used," explained Hek, "but when they reach the more hazardous area of the fissures, they will undoubtedly swing off upon another and much safer trail which arrives at the peak of the mountain on the opposite side of the crater."

The outer periphery of the summit of the volcano lay on a more or less concentric plane, but its contours were disrupted by numerous depressions which converged upon the crater such as the spokes to the hub of a cart-wheel. These depressions were evidently formed by the flow of lava of another age. That the volcano had been dormant for a long period was evidenced by the great amount of erosion visible on the surface of the rock. The mouth of the crater was perhaps three hundred feet in diameter, forming a huge circle broken by a number of outcroppings of jagged rock.

"Do you know the exact site where the rites will be performed?" I asked of Hek.

He pointed to a dark spot in the outer slopes, jutting over the crater's edge at about a hundred feet away. "There is where the rituals were held from the time of the ancients until the ascension of Hek," he said. "Doubtless, Sar will continue to follow the unholy three-wit with his steps. I hope to be at this same point. What is it—that you have in mind, John Carter?"

"I am not quite sure," I replied with a wry smile; "but if Sar is a believer of the divine convictions which he has so magnificently exploited, he will have the surprise of his life coming to him."

The cursory plan of action lying loosely in my mind was greatly enhanced when, upon glancing
underneath the broad outcropping, I noticed a nearly level projecting from the inner wall of the crater and running beneath on both sides of the jutting crag above. It extended on a horizontal plane some thirty feet below the rim of the crater and at its greatest dimension the ledge was about four feet wide, while its smallest width could be measured in inches.

With a nod of satisfaction, I then explained to Rek and Go-gu something of the plan I had in mind, to which Rek beamed in whole-hearted approval.

When we heard the subdued sound of voices, and, looking downward, we observed the throng moving on a circuitous route around the side of the mountain, shunting the more precariously, fissure-infested way by which we ourselves had ascended, I told my companions to seek concealment on the slopes of the peak, cautioning them to remain hidden until their better judgment allowed them to expose themselves, as I saw them disappear over the outer rim, I again put my earthly muscles to use and leaped over the mouth of the crater, landing lightly upon the ledge at the site of its greatest width, which was almost underneath the overhanging crag above. The sulfurous fumes which at first smote me as I entered were not intolerable but these discomforts were somewhat alleviated after a few moments as I became acclimated to the sudden variation of conditions. Far below was a surging sea of molten lava, flames, lapping upon the outer wall of the mound and involuntarily shrinking back against the side of the crater putting as much distance possible between myself and this sizzling inferno of bubbling rock.

After what seemed like an eternity of isolation on the brink of hell, I heard the remote murmur of voices, gradually increasing in volume until I knew that the long-awaited procession was directly overhead. A woman's distressing wail rang out over the general confusion and I waited no longer. Taking a few steps back along the ledge to another place from where I appeared to be upward and outward over the fiery pit, landing erect on the very lip of the projecting crag above.

As I had beforehand anticipated, my unexpected appearance had a paralyzing effect upon the crowd. They stood in wide-eyed awe and consternation as though suddenly dived in the powers of speech and motion. Stepping forward, I folded my arms across my chest and haughtily scanned the rows of faces before me.

"Who is he?" I asked, "who is called Ser?"

At the sound of my voice, the foremost in the group shrank back shaking as though stricken with palsy and it took no second guess to know that this was the self-styled monarch. Further identification was evidenced in a long, serpentine-like sack of bright yellow fur which draped over his shoulder depending to the knees.

With this obvious betrayal of identity, I wished I could have recalled my question, but I promptly countered by pointing an accusing finger at him.

"You!" I shouted, "why is it that you did not speak when I asked for you? Do you not know that I am well aware that you are Ser? Step out that I can so address you properly."

A his apparent display of unprecedented pre- vision, those immediately in the rear of Ser impulsively began pushing him forward and away from them, and as he became separated from the group, I thought that he would collapse, so great was his shaking.

"What—who—who are—you?" he finally managed to gasp.

"None should know better than Ser," I snapped; "or can it be possible that even he doesn't rec- ognize a fire demon whom he has—why—yes—certainly I do," he blustered. "I was merely startled by your sudden entry, and regaining a little of his composure, he turned to the assemblage and said in a voice which wavered noticeably: "Warriors and people of Haek. It seems that we have been honored by the divine presence of a fire demon himself—a presence which is decisive in itself and in direct rebuttal to the flagrant conduct of the defiler Acog and his fathers before him who have, until this revelation, contended in the name of his genealogy. Here before your eyes is the proof necessary to justify the sacred policies of my revered ancestors. Does this not confirm, beyond doubt, that the fire demons exist and were but awaiting Ser to restore the sacrifices which are rightfully theirs?"

"Ser speaks spurious words," I said in a loud tone. "I did not appear before this company to sanitize the debased deeds of his ignominious ancestors, but to enlighten you to the fact that we are here at your request to commend our contempt of such deeds. We are extremely annoyed at the manner in which you have been duped by this fool here," and I again pointed an accusing finger at the self-styled king.

Ser staggered as the full impact of my words crashed into his brain.

"Then why," he asked, insidiously, "why is it that this fact was never made known to my illustrious forefathers?"

"Oh, at it!" I said. "Contrary to the appearance of a fire demon before them, our anger was evident by another means."

"And what then was that?" demanded Ser, beginning to show signs of obtrusiveness as he realized that he was being forced into the position of a defeatist in the eyes of the entire assemblage.

"Has Roharazan erupted since the ascension of Rab?" I asked, knowing that the extent of eruption upon the mountain's surface gave evidence that the volcano had lain dormant for at least the three generations since that worthy's successful uprising.

"No," cried Ser; "but what has that to do with it?"

"Had Roharazan erupted before the ascension of Rab?" I asked.

He was about to reply, and then abruptly clamped his jaws together and was silent as the light of understanding filtered into his consciousness.

"I had it!?" I fairly shouted at him.

"Yes, many times," came from one of the captives in the rear, seeing the ray of hope which the import of my words implied, and realizing that nothing was to be gained by remaining silent. "My great-grandfather and his offspring," he continued, "and he told of his father and grandfather telling of great eruptions, but their rulers always demanded more offerings to Roharazan, saying that enough wasn't being tendered to pacify the fire demons within."

"Can you not see that we were showing our highest degree of displeasure by these eruptions?" I said; "that it was a sign to cease the malevolent pilferage of man's dignity—not to further enhance it."

It was then that Ser went into a veritable frenzy of hatred and frustration as he now realized that his house of cardas was collapsing about him. His face took on a look of bestial fury as it twisted in his head with the thought.

"He lies!" he screamed. "He is an imposter! No true fire demon would profess such arro
gerie to the consecrated stonements of the ages. Seize him! Seize the imposter and cast him into the flaming fiery hole whose name he claims!" "Back!" I shouted, as several of the warriors drew their swords and advanced toward me. "You cannot harm me! Did you not see me emerge from the bowels of Roharazan in the manner besetting a true fire demon? So you not see my fiery skin burn furthest from the root of my entity by selling forth the consuming fires to engulf you?"

The warriors hesitated, and one sword slipped from nerveless fingers, clattering to the rocky surface of the outcropping, and as though this
was a prearranged signal the entire company of warriors unsheathed and dropped their swords, drew back menacingly at the captives, cowering in fear.

"Cowards!" hurtled screaming at his men to pick up their swords, suddenly lost all vestige of what little sanity he had left. He whipped out his sword and rushed blindly at them up to reach them at the foreman. With a grim smile, I decided to play with him as a cat plays with a mouse and I made no attempt to defend myself. Just as he believed that he was about to run me through, I nimbly leaped upward, screaming "My lord, he passed beneath me," but I had reckoned on the hands of fate which unyieldingly reached out and brought my little game to a abrupt end.

As I touched the ground after leaping over his head with whirled, and saw him catch his foot on a small protuberance which served to increase his momentum, and sent him plunging, screaming, over the lip of the crater and down into the depths of the seething holocaust below.

CHAPTER IX

After commandeering the cowering warriors to release the prisoners, I pondered the situation of Sar. Though Sar is not the main design for this expedition, I was determined to find out what his intentions were. Better than I had dared hope, my role as a fire demon had consummated its purpose, but with a quite unexpected climax. I had hoped to see Sar alive, for no better bargaining-partner than his own life could have been needed to facilitate the safe release of Xog. Now, further plans would be necessitated to prevent Xog's execution before word of Sar's death reached the ears of his jailers. This I discussed with Rek, who, accompanied by Go-gu, came up from his hiding place just as Sar went hurling to his death, and the already amazed features of the crowd were further augmented upon seeing a Haek in social contact with a fierce janggan. "But," said one, "when the true purport of Roharzen's fire demons becomes known, then surely these traitors will see the error of their ways and hasten to release Sar befall them also."

"I think," said I, "that it would be better if we refrained from spreading the word of Sar's death until Xog is released from confinement. It would be my guess that if we had employed as guards only those who he has unquestionable trust— but wait!" I cried suddenly, "I believe I have it! We will proceed to the cave where Jak and the others await. There, these people and those who were to be committed to Roharzen's care, while we and the others of our group are taken into Haek supposedly the prisoners of these warriors here. They will then take us directly to the dungeons under the pretext of imprisoning us, and once we are there, we can overcome the guards and free ourselves."

"Is a good plan," admitted Rek, "but will not suspicion be aroused if we are escorted to the dungeons in possession of our weapons?"

"I have thought of that also," I replied, "we must relinquish them to these warriors in return to them as use when they are needed."

"That is well and good," said Rek; "but even though they have all sworn allegiance, I am sure that there will be no treachery upon the part of but one of them."

I shot a reproachful look at the company of warriors. "For the simple reason," I said, "that upon the first sign of treachery, I will thence turn the traitor into a living pillar of fire."

If it occurred to anyone why I chose to keep officers in the company to the Haek's guards and thus eliminate the need for all the stratagems and stealth, it was not apparent upon their countenances, but the expressions of awe and soliloquy which did appear gave me confidence that I could be relied upon to support me to the limit.

Instructing the warriors to retrieve their fallen swords, we began the return journey to the cave and in due time we were met at the entrance by Jak and the others, to whom we told the story of what inspired since Rek, Go-gu and I had left, concluding with an outline of the plan for Xog's rescue in accordance with the change in demeanor of the accompanying warriors.

"I agree," said Jak, addressing the warriors, "that the part you are about to assume will not be unwarranted."

It was decided that Ula should remain in the cave with the others, Jak informing them that, immediately upon their return, he would send a messenger to acquaint them with the facts whether they be good or bad. My four Haekian friends, Go-gu and I then unsheathed our swords, handing them to Sar's erstwhile warriors who insisted upon their being left there by the opposite side from where their own swords depended, and the march to Haek was begun.

For the most part, after entering the city, our seeming capture was treated with pathetic stares from the populace as they saw their king's son and his fellows being escorted to the palace under guard, but for as many stares of compassion that there were for the four Haekians, an equal amount of expressions of amazement and wonder were given at the sight of Sar and myself.

We reached the palace grounds without incident and were promptly accosted by the guards as we mounted the steps to the patio. Theirs, too, were stares of wonder as they saw the mixed company.

"Where is Sar?" demanded he who was in charge.

"Sar stopped across the courtyard at the home of the noble, Jud," spoke one of our warriors. "We captured the wench who assaulted him and he has taken her there to teach her some manners before bringing her to the palace."

"That does not suit me," the night-club added, "Sar will conduct his session in etiquette in a chamber that is free of small benches."

"Doubtless," laughed the guard; "but where in all Haek did you find this motley group?" and he indicated my companions and me with a jerk of his thumb.

"We encountered and captured them on the slopes overlooking Haek," said our warrior glily. "Sar instructed us to take them to the dungeons immediately."

"Pass, then," said the guard, but as we moved toward the palace entrance he suddenly shouted: "Wait! Why is it that these three are to be imprisoned? They are not of the nobility?" He pointed to Long and myself.

"Ask Sar," answered our spokesman. "He told us to jail them all."

Apparently satisfied, the guard waved us on and we passed through the portals and into the palace. Immediately we turned left, and I left along a corridor at right which was a narrow stone stairway that took us downward in a circular fashion, our descent being illuminated by bright flares which flickered upward from small cressets fixed upon the walls at various intervals. After a short number of steps, we came to the foot of the stairway which entered into a long, dank corridor on both sides of which were narrow doors, each being equipped with a heavy wooden bar by which it was locked. These doors were interspersed evenly for the corridor's entire length, and more
than likely, they housed the deposed nobility of Haek who had been condemned by Sar.

Raising his arm as a signal to halt, the warrior who had proved himself to be an excellent spokesman turned and procured our swords from the fallen warrior; then he carried them.

"You had better take these now," he said. "It may not be as easy to decease the guards ahead as it was at the palace entrance, and it may be that we will need every available sword at any moment we were facing inevitable defeat at the hands of a past master of the sword, suddenly, at a word from one, thrust all three blades at me simultaneously. I managed to parry the three swords but in doing so, I took a quick side-step to throw over the outstretched arm of one of my victims. I fell heavily to the floor, my blade spinning from my grasp, and looked up at the glaring faces and brandished swords of my executioners. Before they could strike, I used the Coup de Grâce, I was aware of a veritable fury of flying fur and saw my opponents bowled over like ten-pins, crashing headlong into the wall with an impressive, skull-splitting thud. Emerging from the entangled heap of bodies, and facing my astonished eyes, was the grinning features of Go-gu the Duag.

Casting him a quick smile of appreciation, I retrieved my sword only to see our surviving foes surrendering themselves to my comrades. Our losses were three men, no extra victors, but we had preserved our swords and the message.

Unbarring the door which I had successfully defended, I threw it open and saw, standing beyond the threshold, a man of medium stature and of stately carriage—Xog, king of Haek.

"Father!" cried Jak, springing forward and embracing the king.

"What means this?" asked Xog, obviously bewildered. "I heard the sound of battle, but—what is this person? His eyes were directed at me.

"It means," cried Jak, jubilantly, "that Haek is forever cleansed of the vile stains of pollution in which it has floundered, for Sar is dead! And this," he went on, turning to me, "is the man of another world who, through his remarkable and unselfish efforts, has turned the sting of defeat into the glory of victory. Xog, King of the World, I present to you, John Carter, Earl of Mars and Prince of Haek.

What more could I return the monarch's bow of acknowledgement; and Jak, after sending a messenger ahead to proclaim the good tidings, removed his belt and scabbard and fastened them around the waist of Xog. He then requested that I assume a position of escort upon the king's right, while he took a similar position upon his left.

Proceeding thus, and followed by Go-gu and the warriors herding their prisoners, we ascended in triumph to the palace above.

CHAPTER X

When the word became known of Sar's death and of the restoration of Xog to the throne of Haek, there was much cause for celebration. Runners were despatched to the lesser villages of the realm to proclaim a period of great festival. In Xog's palace, a stately banquet was given in my honor in which I was seated at the head of a massive table and flanked on both sides by the nobles of Haek. Even Xog took an inferior seat by placing himself at the foot of the table.

How long the revelry throughout the land lasted, I know not, for I was then devoted to other matters. It may have been days, for time as we know it, does not exist upon this huge world of perpetual light. Eventually, however, the city gradually resumed its former status as the thriving seat of the government; and I found myself with a great deal of time in which to pursue a detailed inspection of the city. By this time, my true origin had become known to all, but the awe-some
cast yourself into The Great Fountain? My remark was but a jest; tell me, John Carter, will I then also be but jesting?"

"It is no jest, my friend," I said. "Could you think me mad if I told you that, contrary to your belief that it is absorbed in the clouds, The Great Fountain projects its waters elsewhere than at the spot of its own abumut? That somewhere below the lower extremity of the cloud envelope this great stream must change its trajectory to deposit its waters in the world beyond? True, it would be unthinkable to imagine such an idea to the human mind; but one in which to cast a water-proof container large enough to carry me within it."

Jakt scoffed at the idea of attempting such an impossible scheme and commenced to play with the sand in the crevices of his retinue, and from which the soldiers were paid. Of course, there are Martian huts I have seen which also employ this system of expenditure, but it served to illustrate the practical similarity of human nature regardless of where in God's vast domain it evolves.

Much of my time was spent participating in hunting expeditions in the company of Jak, Xog, and others with whom I became acquainted. This not only provided recreation of the moment, but it also permitted me to explore the vicinity of the great barrier cliffs whenever the chase took us into close proximity with them. Ever and uppermost in mind was my finding of a way of access to the world beyond, and the solution of the riddle that there was no break in the smooth walls which would offer a possible means by which to scale the cliffs, I doggedly examined every mile, every foot and inch of that part of the great carrier which I chanced to be nearest.

Soon, very little of my time was spent in the city, between hunts, I would generally set out alone to some distant extremity of the land which I had not yet covered. Sometimes Go-gu or Jak or Xog accompanied me on these excursions but, as always, it was with the same depressing result. Not even the slightest rift broke the uniform fastness in which the mountains were formed.

On one such expedition, and accompanied by Jak, my quest led us along the base of the great mountain to the Valley of Spouting Waters, and again I stood in awe at the spectacle of the geysers shooting their waters far upward.

It would be a quick solution to your problem, John Carter, I said to Jak, with a whimsical smile, "if your remarkable powers permitted you to thread the intangibility of the great cloud envelope above. Then, all that would be necessary would be for you to cast yourself into the Great Fountain and be projected aloft where you could arrive at the distance to the mountain-top. But I am afraid that you would either drown or be scalced to death in the attempt," and he chuckled at the droll humor which his words induced.

For some time Jak's words of casual logic rang repeatedly in my mind, and the wide expanse of the Great Fountain emasculated, and then slowly visioned its imaginary course far up into the clouds. A quick look at the obstacle stretching parallel to this course with a scant seventy-five yards of space between, and the solution to the disappearing waters of the Great Fountain lay before me in conspicuous simplicity.

"You have unwittingly given me the answer, my friend," I said, exultantly. "as impossible as it may seem, your remarks provided me with a material element as to why the waters of The Great Fountain refuse to fall after being cast aloft. Also, it has given me the means by which I may gain access to the outside world beyond the cliffs."

Jak drew back as if I were quite mad. "Do you mean to say," he cried, "that you would literally
one such rumble increased in intensity threatening to burst my ear-drums, I knew the time had come and that this was it.

Suddenly, there came a sharp jerk and I felt as if I'd been flattened by a steam roller. I heard a great crashing upon the outside wall of the sphere as the giant litter was rent asunder, and I lost consciousness.

CHAPTER XI

Once, during a visit to Earth, I had wondered what the man in the barrel had thought as he was about to be precipitated over the falls at Niagara. Had he pessimistically anticipated the worse to happen? Or had he entertained the belief that he would successfully navigate the raging waters? Whatever the case, he undoubtedly was of strong heart and dauntless courage, but it certainly would be open to question if he would so much as consider attempting anything in the nature of what I was now undergoing.

The sensation of a gentle rocking motion accompanied my slow return to consciousness, and as my faculties reverted to normality I realized that I was gasping for breath and suddenly became aware that within the sphere was all but exhausted. Hastily unfastening the safety belts, I lunged for the door and threw it open, admitting the life-giving air. Sucking in great lungfuls, I saw that the sphere was bobbing upon the surface of a large lake and, except for the faint lapping of the water upon its sides, not a sound broke the silence of my surroundings. The nearest shoreline was perhaps a thousand feet off and without further regard I dived into the lake and set out for it with all the power strokes.

I swam toward a short stretch of sandy beach which was almost directly in line with the course I had first taken, and presently I felt solid ground beneath my feet and I waded the remaining distance to shore. Not until I was upon the shore did I look around and was completely encircling the lake was a series of rugged mountain peaks, but to the left from where I sat, I saw that the range was much higher in elevation and that its peaks were hidden in the clouds which couldn't have been much more than a mile overhead. I also noticed that a great furrow dented the surface of the mountain-side like a giant sluice and it led downward from the clouded regions to the lake below. Without doubt, this was the channel formed by the glacial waters of the Great Fountain in Hank, and as if in supplement to my thoughts, there suddenly came a great rush of water, spilling down the furrow and flowing into the lake. The Great Fountain had again erupted! Somewhere in the fastness of the clouds the geyser deviated from the perpendicular toward the abrupt, spilling over its peak to become the inlet of this mountain lake. As I continued to watch, the rushing waters swiftly subsided and the channel was empty again.

I had not the slightest idea as to where I was, or how far the great storm had carried me from Kor Zan's village, I decided that one direction would be as good as any, so I arose and struck out along the lake shore in that direction, wanting to keep the channel lay which carried the waters of The Great Fountain down into the lake. Reaching the lower slopes of the mountain range, I began a slow ascent and soon topped the crest where I looked out upon a far-reaching panorama which was expanded greatly by the height of the mountain peak where I stood. Before me lay a vast ocean of desolate wasteland. Not even a tree seemed to break the solidity of the terrain, but I knew that the high altitude from where I observed, belied the depth of the desolate substance. I also noted that the entire descent, while far and long, was on a more or less gradual plane and as I started downward I found progress to be far from difficult.

After what must have been hours, I reached the lower regions and struck out across the vast desert, which I now saw was studded with numerous shrubs and stunted trees of many shapes and varieties.

My survival depended upon my coming into contact with a settlement of Savators or any other form of human or near-human life and by whom, I hoped, could direct me to the village of Kor Zan. But as I covered mile after mile, not a sign was evident to enlighten my senses to the fact that a human had ever trod the ground upon which I was walking.

Hunger became a serious problem as nothing that grew was of an edible nature. However, I did not suffer from thirst for I had discovered that the fruit of a certain type of shrub, while having no food value, was literally filled with a tasteless liquid having all the thirst-quenching qualities of water. I had seen food in the form of several species of small animals but it was impossible to stalker the wily creatures with a sword or a dagger. Consequently, I made a rude bow from a branch or one of the many scrub trees, stringing it with a tough fiber from a low-lying patch of creeper-like shrubbery, and with one of the several arrows I had fashioned, I made my first kill, cooking it over a small fire made by the simple method of friction.

Onward I plodded, ever hoping that by surmounting each succeeding hill, it would reveal a village or a sign of habitation, but the further I went, the more desolate the surrounding territory became. Finally, not a sign of game rewarded my endeavors, and then, what was left of all its forms disappeared from the landscape, depriving me of the water-filled fruit which I had hitherto found in abundance. Soon, I began to suffer intolerably from lack of moisture and I found myself driving onward more by sheer determination than by physical capability. Staggering and stumbling, I refused to succumb to the relentless elements of nature, literally crawling forward when I ultimately found that I could not regain my feet. Then, even crawling was beyond my efforts and I lay quite still hardly knowing if I were dead or alive.

Suddenly, an unwavering drone which steadily increased in volume, broke the stillness of my surroundings and, turning my eyes, I saw a Morgor ship cruising low over the terrain and approaching the direction in which I lay. As it drew near, I feebly waved my arm in hope that its occupants would see me, and as it passed overhead I saw it swing about and circle for a landing. It came to rest fifty feet away and, with great dexterity, I crawled toward it. The door flung open and leaping from its interior was the figure of Vorion, the Morgor whom I had befriended and who had piloted the ship in which Dejah Thoris and the others had escaped.

My heart leaped convulsively. I was saved! I had overcome insurmountable privations which had threatened to leave my bleached bones lying forever in an unknown desert on a vast, unexplored world. Shortly, I would be reunited with my incomparable mate and, as it has always been my wont, all would soon be well again.

The End

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Copy of a map of Haak, redrawn from a rough sketch by John Carter