

**JALU of Radiant Valley** By **Orlin Tremain**

1940

MARCH  
20c

# Fantastic

## ADVENTURES

SEE  
BACK  
COVER

### The LITTLE PEOPLE

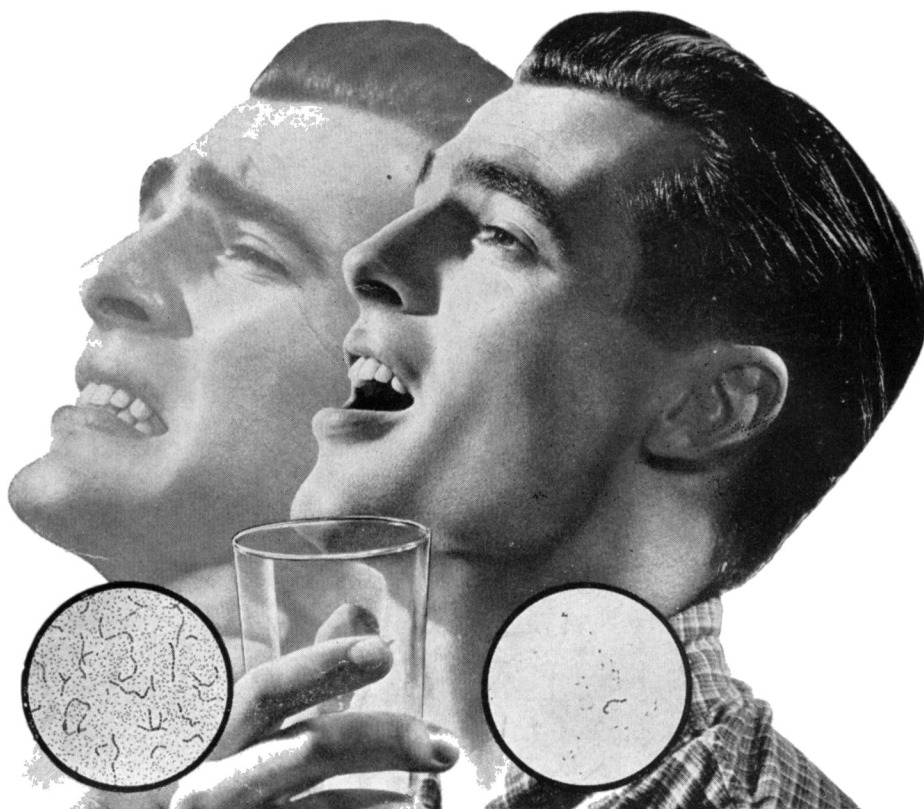
By EANDO  
BINDER



GREAT  
STORIES  
BY

PHIL NOWLAN ★ NELSON S. BOND ★ F.A. KUMMER, Jr.





**NOTE HOW LISTERINE REDUCED GERMS:** The two drawings above illustrate height of range in germ reductions on mouth and throat surfaces in test cases before and after gargling Listerine Antiseptic. Fifteen minutes after gargling, germ reductions up to 96.7% were noted; and even one hour after, germs were still reduced as much as 80%.

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## *Germ Reductions Up to 96.7%*

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# Fantastic

## ADVENTURES

VOLUME 2  
NUMBER 3  
MARCH  
1940

## Contents

### STORIES



The Priestess Who Rebelled returns next month in another thrilling fantasy laid in the future when women rule the world and few men retain their self respect



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ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY  
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FANTASTIC ADVENTURES  
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- ✓ THE LITTLE PEOPLE.....by Eando Binder 8  
To one of the Little People, venturing into the domain of the Big People was the height of adventure. But brave little Atho became too bold . . . !
- ✓ JALU OF RADIANT VALLEY.....by Orlin Tremaine 30  
One lone woman against seven madmen isn't too great odds when that woman is Jalu The Golden fighting for the love and life of her Kalen.
- ✓ THE MAN WHO WEIGHED MINUS TWELVE. by Nelson S. Bond 48  
There are a lot of odd things connected with the phenomenon of weighing less than nothing, but Uncle Herman didn't suspect the danger facing him.
- ✓ VOLCANO SLAVES OF MU... by Frederic Arnold Kummer, Jr. 54  
"When a golden-haired stranger comes, then is the fall of the city of Cnef near." Such was the legend that spelled trouble to Kirk, The Wanderer.
- ✓ LUNAR LOOT.....by Edwin Benson 64  
How could the pirate know exactly when and where to intercept his victims in space, where ships are as hard to see as motes in the dark?
- ✓ THE PRINCE OF MARS RETURNS (Part II—Conclusion)  
by Phil Nowlan 70  
Dan Hanley brings back to Mars the glory and romance of the past as he plunges across the red world to battle for Lilrin of the Ta n'Ur.

### FEATURES

The Editor's Notebook.....	6
Fantastic Hoaxes.....	28
Romance of The Elements.....	83
Quiz Page.....	84
Reader's Page.....	85
Introducing The Author.....	92
Correspondence Corner.....	94
Life On Neptune.....	96
Contest Page.....	97

Front cover painting by Robert Fuqua depicting a scene from *The Little People*

Back cover painting by Frank R. Paul

Illustrations by Robert Fuqua, H.R. Hammond, Julian S. Krupa, Leo Morey, Jay Jackson, Joe Sewall.





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# The Editor's Notebook

## A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

**W**ITH this issue FANTASTIC ADVENTURES has appeared seven times, and in almost any sport, any omen, any tradition, the number seven has a special significance. And so, with this seventh edition of your favorite magazine, we are presenting an especially fine issue.

From the front cover, featuring a sensational new novel by Eando Binder, who today holds the enviable position of fantasy's top writer, after a career of seven years—again the magic number!—to the back cover by the famed Paul, we have assembled an issue that fairly bubbles with lucky sevens. We'll point out a few of them.

**"THE LITTLE PEOPLE,"** written by Eando Binder as a rush order, has turned out to be, in your editor's mind, one of the finest bits of work Binder has ever turned out, and ranking with his recent great success in our companion magazine, AMAZING STORIES, "Adam Link's Vengeance," also written as a rush order. It seems allowing Binder only seven days to complete a manuscript is a good way to insure a super-yarn. Seven again!

**T**HE front cover, by the increasingly popular Robert Fuqua, is a fitting creation to present in connection with Binder's yarn. It is interesting to note that this cover was painted before the story was written!

**T**HEN there's Orlin Tremaine, bringing back the very popular heroine of a prize-winning story some months back. It's Jalu, the Golden Girl, in a swell fantasy-adventure laid in that mythic-real valley, Kalendar. You'll enjoy, we predict, the new "Jalu of Radiant Valley" as much, if not more, than the first story about the radium girl, and John Kalen, American ruler of another "lost world."

**T**HERE seems little need to mention that Nelson S. Bond is back with another humor yarn. This author has really done some bell-ringing with his shorts, and we know you'll go for this newest effort. Remember Dr. Fosdick, in the old AMAZING STORIES? Bond has something of those old yarns in his stories.

**T**ALKING about returning characters, here's another one. Fred-eric Arnold Kummer, Jr., brings back that robust adventurer, Kirk, The Wanderer, in another ancient setting. This time it's the city of Cnef, and a harnessed volcano.

**A**ND of course, the final instalment of Phil Nowlan's already successful return to science fiction. Dan Hanley promises to take Buck Rogers' place in science fiction, so long left vacant by his adventures into "comic-land" and "movie-land." And already it looks like a contender for first place.

**T**HE other day, Don Wilcox, author of "The Robot Peril" in our January issue, dropped in. He's doing another yarn for us that seems to top anything he's done to date, and that means a lot, because Don, as you've no doubt noticed if you've glanced at the contest page, has copped first prize for his January story. And by way of demonstrating how worthy the yarn was of its rating, it got a

final standing of .83 out of a possible 1.00, which means it tops by .02 any previous rating in either FANTASTIC ADVENTURES or AMAZING STORIES. So, without a doubt, we must admit that this story is the best, and most popular, we've published since we began awarding special prizes.

Hearing this news, Don dashed out of our office, and the words we heard floating back in his wake were: "You ain't seen nothing yet!"

**Y**OUR editors want to thank both readers and authors for the many Christmas cards. They were very gratifying, but where, oh where, are we going to pile them!?

**W**HEN the stars in the sky "go Hollywood"—that's news! Come with us to the new Buhl Planetarium in Pittsburgh, fifth and latest to be built in the United States, and witness this wedding of science and showmanship.

The audience is assembled for the show. But where is the familiar sight of the huge dumbbell-shaped Zeiss projector which throws the stars and planets on the "sky" of the vaulted ceiling?

Wait! The lights are dimming, a section of the floor is sliding back and—ah, there is the projector, rising out of the pit like the orchestra in a super cinema palace! At last the scientists are becoming conscious of showmanship!

After this build-up we are permitted to watch the simpler wonders of the universe—but who can resist asking at the end: "What, no Mickey Mouse?"

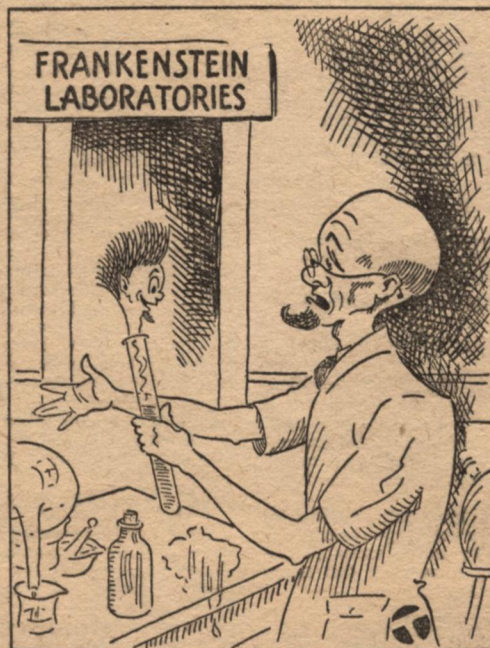
**S**CIENCE now has solved one of the problems of a fantasy editor. After reading hundreds of manuscripts in a vain search for "something to smack the reader between the eyes in the next issue," he decides there is only one way to forget his troubles. He goes to the nearest soda fountain and has a couple of cokes—for a wash! The next morning the manuscripts don't help that "constant, excruciating, burning, boring headache" at all!

So, science comes to the rescue! Says the savant, the presence of alcohol in the system causes histamine, a protein substance, to pour into the blood stream,

which in turn expands the blood vessels of the head. With enough alcohol, you get a "big head" and the already mentioned headache. But not any more, for your editor! For he has been emancipated by science. Histamine, administered in minute quantities, will take down the swelled head! Sort of a "hair of the dog that bit you" thing! So, you authors, submit a little histamine with your yarns.

**O**NCE again this year, Don Wilcox brought in a box of candy in appreciation for a prize check and as a Christmas gift. And once again, we tell you it was good!

**W**ITH these observations, your editors close this showing of the observatory. Drop in again next month, and we'll try to show you a few star tidbits you haven't seen before. Because the telescope will be peering about the fantasy world meanwhile, and it won't miss much of importance. Meanwhile, drop us a line about this issue. We think you'll like our "lucky seven." *Rap.*



"Hi'ya, Pop!"





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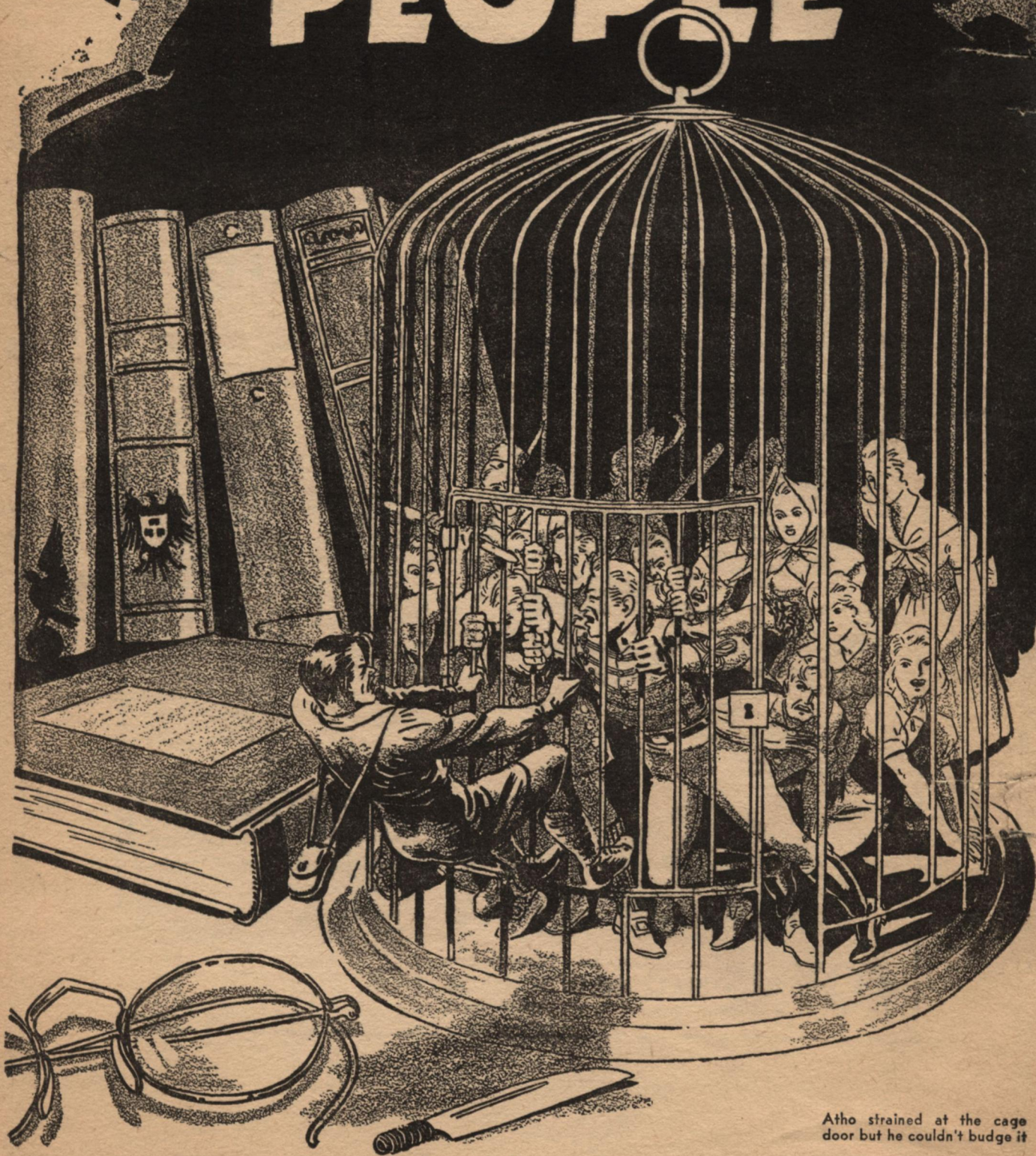
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# The LITTLE PEOPLE



Atho strained at the cage door but he couldn't budge it



## By EANDO BINDER

### Never must the Big People know that we exist! Such was the tenet of the Little People, but Atho and Koro broke the law

THE view from the window, in line with Paul Scott's eye, included a grand sweep of the low, wooded Catskills. A chill spring sun and a morning haze combined to lend an air of mystery, enchantment. One could imagine strange things in hidden grottoes out there.

"Did you sleep well, dear?" asked Helena, his fiancée, pouring a steaming cup of coffee.

"Not so well," Scott confessed, running a hand through his tousled black hair. "I'm not used to this mountain quiet, away from the city. Or else it was the rat I heard." He sniffed appreciatively at the beverage's aroma. "Mm, nothing like a cup of hot Java on a snappy morning."

"Rat?"

Dr. Asa Bolton snapped the word, the first since his gruff morning greeting. He frowned a little at his young guest. "Hasn't been any for a year, since I brought the cat. Imagination, young man."

"I don't think so," returned Scott cheerfully unruffled at the older man's scathing tone. "I heard a scurrying sound, along about three o'clock, in my room. Typically rat-like. I did imagine something, though—was sniffing around my clothes. I struck a match but saw nothing."

"Naturally. There was no rat at all." Dr. Bolton could be crusty, even insulting at times.

"Another thing," said Scott, his even disposition fading a trifle. "I heard Tommy padding around. You can't fool a cat. He was stalking prey. Later, I heard him pounce on or at something. Evidently he missed. I heard him footpad out of my room. I finally fell asleep."

"You dreamed it all." Dr. Bolton grinned coldly. "You won't enjoy your stay up here if you imagine rats, snakes and spiders like those from the city always do when they spend a few days in the country—"

"The eggs and bacon are getting cold, Dad," Helena interposed. "What a silly discussion in the first place, for two grown men to carry on!"

"No rat!" muttered Dr. Bolton single-mindedly. "As for Tommy—"

"By the way, where *is* Tommy?" Helena darted her eyes about in surprise. "He's usually begging around the breakfast table."

"Out hunting birds, no doubt, since there aren't any rats for him," suggested her father pointedly.

Helena left for the kitchen for more bacon, warning

her fiancée with a glance not to keep up the trivial argument.

Scott sighed and said nothing. Why let Dr. Bolton make his stay up here unpleasant? The elderly scientist had always been cold and scientific in attitude, and with age had become irritable. He was sharp-featured, wore pince-nez, and a goatee. It was his yearly custom to spend the spring and summer months in this isolated region, filling out his notes on biological research done in the city.

Helena, was sweet, on the other hand. She made up for her father. Scott allowed himself to glow. There would be quiet tramps in the woods with her; views from the higher knolls. A communion with nature and with the sense of mysterious things that lay over this wild land. Scott was the opposite of the scientist, in nature. He hoped to write a book up here.

His thoughts were interrupted by a sharp scream. It was from Helena, in the kitchen.

Scott dashed there. Helena was standing in the further doorway, looking down on the steps leading to the cellar of the old, ramshackle house.

"What is it, Helena? What—"

Scott, beside her, followed her pointing finger. The big, lean cat—Tommy—lay on the third step, dead. Clotted blood soaked its tan-mottled fur. Scott stepped down, kneeled, and raised the head by one ear. The throat was torn out. Scott stared, looking closer. Torn out? It almost looked as though—but no, that must be sheer imagination.

*Who or what would cut a cat's throat?*

"So it is a rat!" Dr. Bolton's voice was enraged, at this collapse of his previous stand. "And a big one, to get Tommy like that. Well, I'll get *him*! Helena, where are those rat-traps? No, never mind, I'll find them myself. Get out you two. Get out."

They left the fuming man, realizing his raw temper had been salted by the incident.

SCOTT enjoyed the hike he and Helena took. Hand in hand they struggled up a bald peak and looked down over rolling hills that faded into dim distance. It was quiet, sylvan, and again—mysterious.

"Who knows what queer things lie hidden beyond the sight of mortal man?" Scott mused, half smiling at himself.

"Washington Irving found that sort of inspiration here," agreed the girl, in their mutual mood. "The Headless Horseman, Rip Van Winkle, the ghost crew



of Hendrik Hudson—"

They laughed, then, and ran down the hill. They made a day of it, munching on sandwiches Helena had brought. When they returned to the isolated house, Dr. Bolton was gruffly pleasant. Before bedtime he pointed out the three rat-traps he had placed in strategic places, baited with raw bacon. They were the spring type, effective against uneducated country rats.

"I'll get him!" the scientist muttered, as though it were his only purpose in life.

Scott was awakened from a sound sleep by the pistol-like snap of a trap, in the middle of the night. He smiled at the thought of what Dr. Bolton's triumph would be, in the morning, and turned on his other side. But he was awakened again by a snap, a few minutes later. And then a third. All three traps had sprung. Three rats? Strange, in such quick succession. But Scott was too tired to puzzle over that.

In the morning, Dr. Bolton appeared at the breakfast table with a frown over his sharp features.

Not noticing, Scott asked: "How many rats were caught—three?"

"Three?" The scientist's goatee fairly bristled. "None! And I don't appreciate the humor of *this*, Paul Scott!"

He thrust out a torn bit of brown wrapping paper. Scott read the three scrawly words: "Can't catch me!"

"I found it in the third sprung trap," raged Dr. Bolton. "You deliberately sneaked down in the middle of the night, Scott—"

"Dad!" Helena's tone was shocked. "You can't believe Paul did it—"

"Then who did?" snapped Dr. Bolton. "An intelligent rat that writes notes?"

Scott and the girl looked at each other, wonderingly.

"It must have been an intruder," Helena stammered uncertainly. "A—a tramp!"

"With the doors locked, and no ground floor windows open?" Dr. Bolton glared at Scott. "I won't have a practical joker in my house! Helen will drive you to the station. You can catch the next train at—"

With studied calm, he reached for his vest-pocket watch. His face grew apoplectic, after he had fumbled a moment.

"It's gone! My gold watch!"

## CHAPTER II

### Battle in the Moonlight

YOUNG ATHO looked down over the slope from his concealed vantage. Bright moonlight shafted down between the tall trees. The merrymakers gambled over the grassy space, chatting and laughing and dancing. He knew them all, of course, the young people around his age of twenty summers. It was the Full Moon Festival, gayest of them all.

His eyes lighted. There was lovely Elva, fairest

of the girls. She danced in a direct, argent beam from above. Her white, downy robe flowed about her shapely limbs. Her long, night-black hair streamed as she whirled with a grace no wild creature could match. Yes, she was lovely and perfect. Atho's pulses throbbed.

Then he frowned a little. He saw Koro. He was sitting there, hugging his knees, gazing raptly at the pirouetting figure. Was she dancing for him? Atho hated the thought.

Then he glowed within. He had waited for the right moment, the height of the merriment. Now was the time . . .

He sprang up, in full view, in a sharp moonbeam that lime-lighted him as though on a stage. One arm aloft, he shouted.

"Eyooooo!"

His young clarion voice carried down the wind, startling the merrymakers. The dancing stopped and a hundred faces turned toward him. Some of the more timid darted for shadows, for one never knew what danger lurked in the wild. Several of the young men leaped for their bows and spears.

Then one call came back, in recognition. "It's Atho! He's returned. Eyooo, Atho!"

They all knew him then. "Come down, Atho! Eyoo, Atho! What have you brought?" It was a mixed chorus.

Atho leaped high into the air, in pure exuberance, reversing his heels about one another a half dozen times before he landed. Then he yelled back:

"I have come back. And I have brought with me a great prize!"

"What is it? Let us see, Atho!"

The crowd now streamed up the slope toward him. Atho folded his arms, head held high, waiting till they had gathered in a semi-circle before him. He waited a little longer till Elva had struggled to the front, eagerly. Her dark, wondrous eyes met his, and only then did Atho move. Again he leaped high, his strong lithe body a study of animal grace.

"Show us, Atho! Please, Atho—" They were craning their necks, trying to see into the thicket behind him.

Atho strode to it and stooped, knowing all eyes were on him. He turned around with a burden in his arms. He set it at his feet, leaning it against his thigh. It was huge and round, almost half as high as he was. Both sides were flat and smoothly metallic, reflecting the moonlight in a burnished golden blaze.

"It is of gold!" said an excited voice from the group.

"But what is it?" queried another.

Atho waved a hand for attention, as the murmurs grew. Holding with one hand the large handle with which it was equipped, he pressed with his other fist on a protruding knob. Some of the girls shrieked as one whole side of the object fell away, on a hinge. Revealed was a shiny glass dial, and behind it black numbers on a circular white plate, with two metal hands slowly moving around. And they noticed now,



in the hush that came over them, that the large object made a beating sound, like a machine.

"It is what the Big People call a 'gold watch'," Atho informed them, using the alien accent and words. "It tells them the time, perhaps more accurately than our sun-dials."

Atho stood proudly. Their admiration was for him as well as the amazing prize. He had carried that great, ponderous thing on his back for miles and miles.

No mean feat, for Atho of the Little Folk was just six inches high.

"WHERE did you find it?"

"How did you get it?"

"How did you dare take such a great thing from the Big People?"

"Tell us the story, Atho!"

Atho's chest expanded and his eyes sparkled with achievement.

"It was easy. I went to the house that sits alone beyond Bald Mountain. There were three Big People in it. And a clawed-one; they call it a 'cat.' It is a fierce, quick beast. It can see in the dark, like we can. It stalked me the first night, as I looked for something worthy to take. It pounced at me once. It was almost as quick as I, but I ran and hid in a garment on a chair. The cat could not wind me, because of the garment's man-odor. The man must have heard. He lighted a torch, looking, then went back to sleep, breathing in the roaring way they do. Thus I escaped an encounter with the cat at that time, but when I left my hiding, it stalked me again."

A child of nature, Atho was demonstrating with pantomime. He went around in a circle on all fours, lifting his hands and his feet carefully, to represent the cat.

"I saw I would have to deal with the cat, or give up my venture. It had stalked me to a dark place on steps leading down. I crouched low, against the wood. When it sensed me, its tail switched, and it leaped. I could barely see its monstrous claws sweeping toward me, for there was little light. But I was ready. With a lightning stroke, I hurled my lance into its throat. While it clawed at the spear, I darted close and cut its throat open with my flint axe."

Atho made a violent arm motion, with an invisible axe.

"It died quickly, and the cat's death was a mystery to the Big People, in the morning. I heard their rumbling speech. They spoke of traps. During that day, scouting around, I saw what I wanted—the gold watch, in the older man's garment. I got it at night, when he had undressed. Then, before I left, I sprang the three traps with the butt of my spear! They made noises like thunder, but they caught only the wind! The Big Ones thought they were trapping a brainless creature called a rat!"

At this, the Little Folk laughed. And then, as though at a cue, they chorused out:

*"The Big Ones are clumsy and witless,  
We are so clever and spry,  
They never will, never will catch us,  
Not to the day we die!"*

It was an age-old chant, born in a dim past. It was a chant of pathetic defiance, for the Little Folk lived in the shadow of a world dominated by the Big Ones. It was a chant of time-worn frustration, a rune of pitiful pride, never rendered to the Big Ones' ears.

ATHO had drunk to the full of the moment. It was not often that one of the young men returned from a jaunt among the habitations of the Big Ones with such a remarkable prize.

But all the while Atho had watched Elva. Her reaction seemed strangely aloof. Almost, her eyes seemed to scorn him. He had hoped to move her most. He had, in fact, fulfilled his dangerous mission only to enlarge himself in her regard.

Yet there she stood, indifferently. Beside her, dark-faced Koro looked on sulkily. Atho well knew that *he* begrudged the triumph of the gold watch. Koro had long been his rival for the affections of Elva, since she had entered womanhood.

Atho felt a sickening drop in his elation. In the time of his absence, had Koro perhaps swung the scales in his own favor? But no. The ribbon of bethrothal did not gleam in Elva's silk-black hair. She was still free. And Atho felt a quick upsurge of spirit. He had yet one more thing to tell. Surely it would stir her from that calm.

He held up his hand.

"I did one other thing," he spoke. "In one of the traps I left a message, written on a piece of their own writing skin, with one of their own writing sticks. I wrote—'can't catch me!'"

Atho waited with a pleased anticipation for the roar of delight from his audience. But it did not come. Instead, there was a concert of gasps.

"But that is against the First Law!" said one voice. It was Koro, who had stepped forward. "The First Law says we must have no direct traffic with the Big People!"

Atho was taken aback.

"The message was not a communication," he objected. "Nor did I reveal myself. I did not violate the First Law."

"The Elders might think otherwise!" Koro replied pointedly.

The eyes of the two young men clashed. Atho trembled. He had often felt he must fight Koro. But he relaxed. It was the Second Law never to fight among themselves.

"Let us not tell the Elders!" rang out a voice from the group. "Atho meant no wrong!"

The thought struck instant reception. "We will not tell the Elders! We will keep it a secret! Atho is daring and brave! Let us all dance!"

Joining hands like happy children, they formed a



huge ring around Atho as he hoisted the gold watch to his shoulders and strode down the slope. Beyond the ring, those with reed-flutes and three-stringed lyres resumed their music-making. There was no thought of rhythm or melody. It was free, wild, Pan-like, yet unconsciously harmonious. A human ear would have found the pipings and flutings strangely sweet and soothing, in tune with nature.

Atho deposited his burden at the end of the glade, among a heap of other articles spirited away from the Big People. Rings, strings of beads, silver coins, pins, needles, even a box of matches lay there. Atho noticed with pride that his gold watch stood out among them, both in size and resplendence.

They were thieves, the Little Folk, but only in principle. It was not the thought of wealth, which meant nothing to them. It was the thrill of outwitting the Big Ones, slipping their most prized baubles from under their very noses, as children love to hide things from their elders.

Atho turned now and sought Elva, after putting down his weapons. The ring had broken up in separate cavorting groups. Other girls danced across his path, invitingly, but Atho smilingly brushed them aside. He would dance only with Elva tonight. He saw her at last, standing at the edge of the glade, conversing with the ever-present Koro.

She turned quickly at his approach, her eyes full upon him, and Atho hoped it meant she had been waiting for him to seek her out. Koro turned, frowning.

Their eyes clashed again.

"Well, Atho the mighty!" greeted Koro with the mockery of envy. "Let us hear more of your boasting. Perhaps, in your modesty, you did not tell of a Big One you slew!"

"With your tongue as a sharper weapon than my spear, I might have," retorted Atho. To Elva he said, more softly: "I would like to converse with you—alone."

"Alone?" Elva drawled. "But there is much dancing going on. Why miss any of it?"

Atho didn't know if she was serious or teasing. "Just for a minute or two," he said.

"Elva is about to dance with me," Koro asserted, grasping the girl's hand possessively.

She jerked it free. "I do not like that, Koro!" she flared. "And I will converse with you, Atho—alone."

Koro fell back at the sudden rebuff. Grinning, Atho led the girl away, under the shadow of a fern which loomed like a tree. The music and sound of light, shuffling feet faded into the background of forest silence.

**A**THO stood awkwardly silent for a moment, leaning against a toadstool. Though in the eyes of the Big Ones Atho might seem tiny and insignificant, he was, in proportion, a miniature Hercules. Great wide shoulders and a broad chest narrowed down to the flat waist of an athletic body. The arms and legs rippled with smooth, deceptive muscles. He was bare

except for a light, spider-silk shirt, and trunks of mole-skin upheld by a belt of snake-hide.

His features were regular and weather-tanned. Keen blue eyes peered beneath a mane of nut-brown hair cut low. His rugged jaw and straight lips spoke of one who had never blanched before danger. Yet now, before the beauteous Elva, he seemed to have lost even the courage to speak.

"Did you miss me while I was gone?" he asked finally.

"We all missed you," the girl said, plucking a blade of grass and twining it about her arm.

"You are cool to me, Elva," Atho grunted. "I brought the gold watch back only for you."

"I cannot use it!" Elva's laughter tinkled. "And as Koro said, you are quite a braggart about it!"

"But I do not mean to be," protested Atho. "Elva, you are unfair. You know the exploit is as much a pleasure to all of us, as to I who accomplished it. We all enjoy such a coup against the Big People—"

"Yes, I know." The girl was suddenly serious. "Those Big Ones are frightful, aren't they, Atho? I've never seen one. What sort of monsters are they?"

"Monsters?" Atho, who had been among them more than once, was thoughtful. "No, not monsters, Elva. We were told that as children so that we would be properly afraid of being seen by them. They are much like us, only twelve times as tall and bigger. They are like us in other things. They eat and laugh and dance and—love!"

Elva's eyes were round in wonder. She had many misconceptions of the Big People. "You mean they can be tender toward one another?"

Atho nodded solemnly.

"Yes, that I know, for I saw two of them, man and woman, together. They sat at the summit of Bald Mountain. I had gone out to hunt, as I did not like their strange food, some of which I tried. They sat arm in arm, and the man whispered to the girl—"

Sudden inspiration lanced in Atho's mind. "He said to the girl that she was the loveliest creature in all the universe. The 'universe' is their word meaning all the worlds beyond the sky, if there are such. But he was wrong. For you, Elva—you are the loveliest creature in all the universe!"

Elva blushed. She stood in a pattern of intermittent moonlight streaming down through the fern fronds. With her black, moon-gilded hair, warm brown eyes, and slim rounded figure, she was close to being that ultimate paragon, at least in Atho's eyes.

Atho felt that now the moment of moments had arrived. His arms slipped about her. She was rigid for a moment, then yielded to the embrace. She turned her face up, like a beautiful flower, and her rosy lips were an invitation . . .

**A**THO never completed the kiss.

His quick ears caught the pad of slinking feet. He swung the girl behind him, darting his eyes into the





"Look!" said Atho proudly, "I got it from the Big People!"



black shadows of a thicket nearby. Two red, ferocious eyes pierced back. And then silently, sharp teeth gleaming, a ferret sprang forth at the two lone figures. A tiny beast to normal humans, but to the Little Folk it represented a monster, nearly twice as large as they.

There was no chance to call for help from the others. Atho cursed himself for having slipped so far from the glade, where the killer would never have dared come. For the Little Folk, in numbers, were no easy prey, as the wild forest hunters well knew.

Atho had instinctively reached back of his shoulder for his slung spear, then remembered he had left his weapons beside the pile of trinkets, in the glade. He was unarmed! In flashing thought, he realized there was only one thing to do.

First, with a quick shove, he pushed Elva behind the toadstool, where she would be safe from any direct onslaught.

"Don't move!" he warned her.

She nodded in understanding. The Little People did not lose their heads in danger, they who knew of it every day of their lives. But she managed to encourage with her eyes.

All this had taken but a second. The Little Folk, a dozen times smaller than the Big Ones, were also a dozen times quicker, by the compensations of not-unkind nature. As quick, in fact, as any comparably-sized creatures of the forest.

The deadly ferret had scuttled half-way across the intervening space. Atho did not wait. He charged forward himself, and from his throat issued a challenging cry:

"Eyooo! One of us will taste blood, my friend! Eyoooo!"

Then he had no more breath to waste. His little feet pattered over moss, and his body tensed forward in a running crouch. The ferret loomed horse-size, beady eyes glittering. Its head snapped to crunch its victim, as they almost met.

But its intended victim twisted aside at the last split-second. Atho's very maneuver of rushing forward disconcerted the plunge of the ferret, who usually caught a creature running away, or half paralyzed in fright.

Atho grinned as he side-stepped, with a quickness that was almost a blur of motion. The Little Folk had one great advantage over their natural enemies—intelligence. Atho would use that factor.

The ferret turned, quick as a snake. For a moment it hesitated, eyeing the still, crouching form of Elva and debating whether that might not be the quicker possibility.

Atho saw, and dashed forward again, forcing the ferret to choose him. It darted forward. Atho dug his heels into the moss, stopped short, and slipped sideways again. The ferret's teeth scraped his thigh. When it turned, Atho was dancing a foot away, tauntingly. Three more times the ferret charged, in as many seconds. Atho was always beyond its nose.

Atho was breathing easily despite his exertions, but

realized the game could not continue forever. One crunch of those ruthless teeth and he would be badly wounded. At the next charge of the beast, Atho waited till the last instant and then leaped straight up. His body twisted in mid-air.

When he came down, he was straddling the furry back of the ferret.

Elva, trembling and moaning behind the toadstool, gave him up for lost. Never before had this been heard of, leaping on the back of a killer-beast. Atho would be tossed off, thrown to the ground, and would be lying at the mercy of those formidable jaws. Almost, Elva darted out, to at least die with the young warrior.

Then she saw an amazing thing.

Atho's plan was instinctive. He wrapped his legs around the ferret's neck, hanging tight so that its furious hunching did not shake him loose. Then, when the head turned on its supple neck to snap at his legs, Atho's hands darted forth. He grasped the snout in one hand, the lower jaw in the other. The muscles of his shoulders and arms became whipcord, as he pried apart.

In proportion to his size, Atho was far stronger than any six-foot man, by another rule of fair-minded nature. He wrenched the jaws apart with his powerful little arms. The ferret screamed in agony. And there was a sharp snap.

Atho leaped off and kicked the beast in the side. It slunk away, with its lower jaw hanging limp and broken. Panting and laughing both, Atho strode back toward Elva.

"Eyoo!" he cried. "That beast will think twice again before attacking the Little Folk!"

Elva had arisen and threw herself in his arms.

"You are"—she sought a word—"wonderful! You fought for me, Atho?"

"For you!" he agreed, bending his head.

But again their kiss was interrupted. Koro stepped from behind a fern stem, a spear balanced lightly in his hand.

"I heard the commotion and came running, with this spear," he stated. "Were you attacked? Where—" He looked about, as though for an enemy.

Atho stared coldly. "For one who came running, your breath is remarkably quiet. Were you perhaps waiting behind that fern, to use your spear *after* I had been killed?"

"Koro!" Elva's voice was shocked. "Were you eavesdropping all the time we were here?"

Koro shrugged off the accusations. "Come, why quarrel on Festival Eve? Let us join the others."

Atho conquered rage at Koro's planned interference. Atho was satisfied. His courtship of Elva had passed into a more intimate phase, what with the bringing of the gold watch and the battle for her protection. No need now to hurry their relationship, despite Koro and his methods.

They joined the frolic in the glade. To the tinkling of gold-spun cymbals and the fluting of snail-shell



horns, they danced. And never had Atho's limbs felt so light, or Elva swayed so bewitchingly, as they gazed in each other's eyes.

### CHAPTER III

#### Atho's Sentence

A CLARION horn sounded suddenly, loud and clear, and the dancing stopped. It was the ceremony signal.

Now, from all the surrounding region for a mile, the Little Folk emerged from their homes. The older ones, and children, and mothers with babes in arms—all congregated in the glade, where the previous dancing among the young ones had only been the start of the Full Moon Festival. The homes they came from were the hollowed-out interiors of stumps, and wind-falls, and briar-patches growing thick over underground warrens. It happened at rare times that one of the Big People wandered through their camouflaged village, little realizing that around him were the Little Folk, lying hidden with bated breath.

Now the total population gathered in the moonlit glade, perhaps a thousand in all. Around the edges of the assemblage the appointed guards stationed themselves, armed with bows, spears and flint-maces. A hush settled as the Elders approached, the twelve oldest and wisest. Wrinkled, stooped, long-bearded like gnomes, hobbling slowly, they made their way to the center, where an altar of bright stones had been quickly erected.

It was a fairy scene, known to mankind's history, but never really believed.\*

The ceremony began.

"Oh Spirit of Life," began one of the Elders, "make us fleet as the wind!"

"*Fleet as the wind!*" chanted the assemblage in full-throated chorus.

"Make us strong as the trees!"

"*Strong as the trees!*"

On and on the echoed invocation went, a chant older than any writing known in the outside world. It ended with the line:

"Protect us from the Big Ones!"

This keynote of the brief ceremony rolled plaintively through the silent night forest. Once a month it trilled into the sky, under the light of the benign moon, as it had for countless full moons before.

That was all. Then, because the Little Folk were by nature happy creatures of the wild, bowed heads raised and the festivities assumed full swing. Honey, the nectar of flowers, sweet herbs, luscious nut-meat, and the soft flesh of insects passed freely. Nothing was cooked, for they ate of the freshest and sweetest of nature's bounty.

Later, another little ceremony occurred, indulged by the Elders. The heaped trinkets stolen from the Big People were raised aloft by willing hands and paraded all around the glade, sparkling in the moonlight. Atho, with his gold watch, marched at the head proudly. Voices, young and old, chimed out:

*"The Big Ones are clumsy and witless,  
We are so clever and sly,  
They never will, never will catch us,  
Not to the day we die!"*

And Atho was allowed the privilege, at the end, of striking a match.

Grasping the matchstick, sword-sized to him, he scraped the knobbed end against the box-stretcher, then held it aloft as a flaming torch. The Little Folk used fire, in the bitterness of winter for heat, but knew nothing of the science behind the making of matches. In many ways, the Big People had mystifying things in their civilization, little of which the tiny forest people knew or cared about.

The flame was not allowed to burn more than a few seconds. It might attract night birds of prey. Atho extinguished it in a conch-shell of water, placed at hand.

Atho felt glowingly happy. Elva was radiant beside him. Then a voice spoke in Atho's ear, startling him.

It was old, venerable Zutho, of the Elders. The two young people bobbed their heads respectfully.

"You are back, young Atho," greeted Zutho. "And I have heard you brought the gold watch."

"Yes, Father," exulted Atho. "I took it from under their very noses!" He told the story briefly.

"A brave but foolish deed!" Zutho shook his head. "What madness has come upon this generation? This mingling and sneaking among the Big People is dangerous. It might lead to disaster for all of us. We Elders have thought seriously at times of forbidding any further of such exploits! In my time, youngsters were content to show their prowess by hunting a killer-beast and dragging its head back. Why must you, nowadays, scurry about under the feet of the Big Ones?"

Atho smiled.

"In your time, you avoided such exploits?" he queried. "Who was it taught me many words of the Big People's language, and their writing? Who was it, in his youth, who spent much time—a year perhaps—listening to their talk and examining their writings? And who was it imitated so many of their achievements, their knowledge, even occasionally their

\*The persistent legends of all races of the existence of such creatures as fairies, gnomes, dwarfs, and similar little people indicate that a great basis of fact must certainly underlie them. No more romantic stories have ever been told than these legends of little people. That such a race exists, or has existed, can hardly be doubted. Nor can it be reasonably said that they do not exist today. It reality, the world is still a vast unexplored place, wherein many strange things exist, unknown to man. How else can we explain many of the mysterious things we all can relate as true experiences? How else explain some of the mysteries revealed by the late Charles Fort? Perhaps someday concrete evidence of the existence of a race of little people will be revealed.—Ed.



clothes? Who was it, Father?"

OLD Zutho coughed a little, and sighed, in memory. "Yes, my son, it was I. It is true that many of the things of the Big Ones are good. And I cannot blame you for the gold watch. The fire of youth burns strong. And those exploits are our only way of showing defiance, even if secret, of the shadow of the Big Ones over our lives and freedom. Still, it is dangerous. We Elders ask only that you young people remember that, every second of your lives."

A knot of young people had gathered around, to hear. They nodded solemnly.

Zutho went on, somewhat garrulously.

"For ages, the only way we Little Folk have survived is to keep out of their knowledge. At times, in our dim history, we tried traffic with them. But the last time was so long ago that even in the recordings of the Big People it is fable. For every such venture meant disaster. We were called evil little beings. Or else we were displayed for the sport and enjoyment of the Big Ones. Our communities were sought out, destroyed. We were enslaved. There can only be one race ruling Earth.

"And so, we must be wisely content to exist in widely isolated little communities here and there on Earth. The First Law has been engraved in our policy for thousands of years—never to have traffic with the Big Ones.

"Remember that today, despite our song, they are not so clumsy and witless. Or superstitious about us, which used to be our race's best protection. Finding us, they would likely not destroy us. But we would have a worse fate—slavery. They would study us, and train us, and *breed* us—all for purposes of their own. Our free, wild, reasonably happy life beyond their knowledge would be gone."

The group listening had heard a similar lesson from babyhood on, but it always struck a new, chill note in their hearts. Atho hung his head. His gold watch exploit did not seem so wonderful now.

But old Zutho smiled then.

"I did not mean to be harsh, Atho. The ruling Elders of our race, in succession, have never wanted to make our restricted life any more limited than necessary. The gathering of trinkets is harmless sport, so long as you are cautious and do not violate the First Law. And I'm sure you, Atho, haven't violated that principle."

It was not a question, merely a statement. But it hung in the air. The young people shot guarded glances at one another, remembering the note Atho had dared write.

Atho himself stood for a moment dumbly. Could he keep such a rankling secret? But he knew it was not in his nature to be dishonest. Better to tell now and have it over with. He opened his mouth to speak, looking up at Zutho with sudden resolve . . .

Another voice sounded first.

"Father! Atho did violate the First Law. He

wrote a note to the Big People! It is my duty to tell it!"

It was Koro's voice, ringing out loudly and self-righteously.

The young people around Koro shrank away from him, darting him glances of disgust.

"What is this?" demanded Zutho. "Atho, is it true?"

Atho flushed deeply. "It is true." He told of the note.

Old Zutho sighed in relief. "No harm was done," he commented. Then his voice crackled angrily. "But it is an offense against the principle of the First Law. You will have to be punished, Atho, as a lesson to others!"

THE other Elders came up, as a boy was sent to get them. In the meantime, whispers had gone around the glade. The entire population gathered about. Atho stood shame-faced, wishing he had never set eyes on the gold watch.

Zutho turned from the group of Elders, his wrinkled old face grave.

"Actual violation of the First Law would merit death," he spoke. "But you had no intentions of communication with the Big People. Therefore, your punishment will be light. One year of woman-status! For one year you will be barred from men's work and status. You will not hunt or gather food. You cannot marry. You will work with the women, washing and cleaning and preparing food. And for that year you will be barred also from the Full Moon Festivals!"

A year of woman-status! Atho gasped. For a year he must be an object of scorn and pity, doing woman's work, denied his rightful place as a male! All for writing three little words on a piece of paper for the Big People to read as a taunt!

"It seems heavy punishment, I know," added Zutho. "But remember, Atho, that in writing those three words, giving the Big People a clue to our existence if not location, you endangered the lives and liberty of our entire community!"

Atho's first bitterness dissolved to resignation. He nodded humbly.

Old Zutho was shaking his head sorrowfully. "Only you had told me yourself, Atho! That is more disappointing to me than the deed itself."

Atho made no attempt to insist he had been on the verge of telling. It would sound false. He saw the triumph now, in Koro's eyes. How meanly he had plotted to interrupt Atho's courtship of Elva! And would Elva wait a year?

His eyes asked her that. And her eyes, in return, seemed to say yes. Atho felt some uplift of a leaden spirit.

Then he heard a whisper in his ear. Koro had sidled up.

"With you out of the way for a year, as a rival, Elva will be mine! I am going to the Big People and bring back a prize beside which your gold watch will



be trifling!"

Burning words came to Atho's tongue, but he had no chance to answer.

A shout of alarm went up, suddenly, from the alert guards.

A huge shadow passed athwart the glade, in the shape of a winged creature. A thousand pairs of eyes looked up fearfully. It was one of their most dreaded nocturnal enemies—the great owl. Almost silently it swooped down, as big—to the Little Folk—as a giant airplane.

Yet for all of its unexpectedness, the Little Folk were not panic-stricken. They melted away into the protecting thickets, quicker in their flight than the owl was in its lumbering plunge. The Elders were carried away by strong young arms. Yet a few stragglers were endangered.

The twang of spider-silk bowstrings sounded as the armed men loosed a barrage of agate-tipped arrows of bone. Lodging in the bird's heavy plumage, they did no harm. The owl's eye was its only vulnerable spot.

All of the stragglers reached the safety of the glade's thicket-edges, where the great owl could not pursue. All but one. A young girl had stumbled, fallen, and lay stunned. The killer-bird swooped down over this easy prey. Still no arrows had taken effect. A groan went up from the watching people. The girl was struggling to her knees, but now the huge bird was close . . .

At the moment the alarm had sounded, Atho had grasped Elva's hand and pulled her into the thickets. Now, turning, he saw the plight of the little girl. He snatched a long, wooden spear from a guard's hand and leaped out into the glade again, seconds before other armed men saw and attempted to run to the rescue. The killer-bird's claws had already encircled its victim and its wings beat to rise, as Atho stopped to cast.

He was twenty-five feet from the owl. In the scale of measurement used by man, it was a distance of three hundred feet, in proportion to his height. He leaned back on one heel, tipping the spear rearward in his right arm till its butt touched the ground. All his muscles froze into the rigidity of contraction. His flint-blue eyes fixed themselves on his far target, calculatingly. Every nerve and fiber of him centered on the aim.

Then he flung the spear forward with all the impetus of his arched body. It sailed through the moonlight with a deadly whine and buried itself for half its length in the owl's right eye.

With a raucous scream, the great bird released its burden, and flapped erratically away. It blundered into a tree trunk and fell to the ground. When some of the guards had arrived, its wings were stretching in the rigidity of death. Atho's cast, one long to be remembered, had pierced its brain. Armed men remained, to ward off scavengers. Later, the bird would be stripped of its feathers, skin-fat and sharp claws, all useful to the Little Folk.

Out in the glade, the Little Folk reappeared, laughing and dancing again. Even the little girl so near doom was smiling and continuing her gorging on honey and flower-petals. The Festival would be no less merry for the tense episode. It made no difference. Their lives were eared to quick danger, quick battle, quick forgetfulness.

Nor did it make any difference to Atho. There was no mention, nor did he expect any, of a change in his sentence. Yet for many a long winter, mothers would tell their children of the mighty cast of Atho, killing an owl single-handed.

The sounds of merriment in the glade faded behind Atho, as he was led away by Zutho. His sentence would begin immediately, and the rest of the Festival Eve he would spend laboring. Atho felt grimly amused over his own situation. He had this night brought the gold watch, almost won Elva, defeated a ferret with bare hands, and killed an owl. It should be a night of triumph. Instead, he was beginning a year's sentence of woman-status, for meddling with the Big People!

Thought of the gold watch brought remembrance of Koro, and his boast of bringing back a greater prize . . .

## CHAPTER IV

### Venture Among the Big People

PAUL SCOTT awoke and raised his head from the pillow.

The sound he had heard continued, a scrape of leather, clearly audible in the utterly quiet house. It came from the hall, where he remembered now that he had left his binoculars, in their case, on the floor. Was the mysterious intruder back, the one who had stolen Dr. Bolton's gold watch, a week ago? It was the conclusion they had come to, after much perplexed conjecture—and argument.

Reaching his hand under the pillow and gripping the pistol there, Scott climbed from his bed and tip-toed to the open door. Listening for a moment, he heard the noises louder now, from the hall. He could see nothing in the pitch darkness, but abruptly the noises ceased.

And Scott had the weird feeling that eyes were upon him. The hairs of his neck stiffened. Then the noise resumed—a quick tug, a metallic scrape, and a patter of quick footsteps!

Scott groped frantically for the hall switch, found it, and snapped it on. Light almost blinded him.

"Stop, or I'll shoot!" he said hoarsely, waving his gun at chest height. Before he finished he saw that there was no intruder in the hall—at least on a level with his eye.

Then he glanced down, thinking of his binoculars. An incredulous gasp ripped from his throat.

There they were, and they seemed to be running away by themselves, the neck-cord dragging! He



confusedly made out little legs. Suddenly the binoculars clattered to the floor, half way to the back door. Something small and squirming had tangled in the twists of the cord. It fell and lay quiet, as though stunned.

It took Scott several seconds to believe what his eyes saw. They were dazzled both by light and incredulity. He stood paralyzed, with no thought of aiming his gun or even moving.

When he did move, finally, someone else moved before him. It was Dr. Bolton, emerging from his bedroom, directly in front of where the binoculars had fallen. The scientist clutched the little form, just as it recovered and attempted to jump away. He held it up, before their eyes.

"Paul—Dad—what happened—"

Helena had slipped from her bedroom and come up behind Scott. Her eyes fastened to what her father held, and slowly widened.

"Why, it's—*it's a little man!*" she whispered, and for a while no other word was said. Their three pairs of eyes slowly convinced their skeptical brains that it was just that.

"Well, there it is, Dr. Bolton," said Scott finally, with a calmness he did not feel. "Our 'rat,' and 'intruder.' It was trying to carry off my binoculars. Its feet tangled in the cord and it fell. It accounts also for the note in the trap, and for the disappearance of your gold watch. It, or another of the—Little Folk."

"Little Folk!" echoed Dr. Bolton dazedly.

"Yes," mused Scott, the first shock of surprise over. "I'm enough of a student of mythology to believe the Little Folk once existed—and apparently still do! Or call them elves, sprites, fairies, pixies, peri, kobolds—anything you will. Different times had different names for them. They have kept out of man's sight, living in woodland. There might very likely be a community of them in some hidden grotto in these Catskills, as the original Dutch settlers firmly believed, over a hundred years ago."

"Elves, fairies, pixies—" Dr. Bolton was shaking his head, as though unwilling to accept that explanation. "It's perfectly proportioned, like a human being. Do you suppose it's intelligent and can understand—"

He was suddenly shaking the small form in his hand. "Do you understand our language, little man?" he demanded. "Who are you? What are you—"

Helena clutched her father's arm. "Don't, Dad! You're frightening him half to death. Poor little creature, look how he's trembling."

"You'll never get an answer out of him that way," said Scott, a little angrily, at the scientist's roughness. "Here—set him on this table and give him a chance to get over his fright. Probably just the sight of us is enough to scare him witless."

Dr. Bolton complied, placing the tiny figure on the nearby hall table, under the glow of a lamp. Now they saw clearly that it was a human-proportioned mannikin, six inches high, dressed in a queer, abbreviated costume. Its skin was tanned by outdoor life. It

looked like a bronzed little statuette, exquisitely carved. They watched it breathlessly, as it slowly raised on one elbow, peering around. Its little chin quivered. Its tiny eyes shone with fear.

Scott bent his head over it. He spoke gently. "Don't be afraid, little man. We won't harm you. Do you understand me? Are you one of a community of little folk like yourself?"

The small figure relaxed a little, at the soft, soothing tones. Then, to their startled surprise, it nodded.

Scott went on excitedly, but still softly. "Can you speak our language? What is your name?"

KORO'S rapidly beating heart eased now, his first fright over, at being caught by the Big People. This wasn't so bad. They weren't going to harm him. He had understood their words, most of them. In common with many of the younger folk, he had learned the Big People's tongue from old Zutho. It had been great sport, for a while, to speak to each other in their language, and even pretend at times they were the Big Ones.

Koro was thinking rapidly. He must escape. But for the present, they were watchful. He must lull them, and await his chance. In the meantime, why not talk with them? He felt a sudden surge of wild daring. Yes, why not? It was something no other of the Little Folk had done.

He stood up, looking at them.

"I—am—Koro," he said haltingly. He yelled, knowing they had dull ears. "Koro—of—the—Little—Folk!"

To Scott and his companions, the little man's voice was a high-pitched piping, as though a chirping bird had learned to talk. They looked at one another in breathless wonder. Even now they could hardly believe it was true.

"He speaks our language!" Helena said in awe. "Isn't it amazing?"

"Koro, of the Little Folk!" Scott murmured. "'Once Upon a Time,' he quoted, "'when fairies lived on Earth'—and they still do!"

"What a discovery!" Dr. Bolton suddenly burst out, his scientific instincts alert. "What a find! You can call them fairies, if you want, but do you know what this means—scientifically? An unsuspected race of little creatures with intelligence! Little men with human minds! It's unprecedented. I must study them—"

He suddenly bent over the tiny captive. "How many of your people are there? Where do you live?"

Koro shrank back. The First Law rose screamingly in his mind—never to have traffic with the Big People! He must not tell them. He shook his head violently, trembling.

Scott nodded, intuitively realizing what it meant.

"He won't tell you that, Dr. Bolton. The Little Folk keep out of our way, and I can see why. Would we give such information to seventy-foot giants? We caught this little fellow by sheer accident. You



wouldn't get him to betray his people for love or money!"

"Money—my gold watch—bright things!" Dr. Bolton muttered, in rapid thought. He darted into his bedroom and returned with items which he heaped before the little man—several coins, a pearl-handled penknife, a ring of keys, and his wristwatch.

"Look, Koro—all yours! And the binoculars, too, since you wanted them." He used a wheedling tone, as with a child. "I mean no harm to you and your people."

"I—will—not—tell!" piped back Koro, though his little eyes glittered at the prizes beside him. "It is against the First Law!"

"I admire the little fellow!" breathed Helena.

"Can you blame him for not leading what to him are monsters to his people?" agreed Scott.

"But I *must* find out more about this, study them." Dr. Bolton turned back to the tiny captive. "Koro, would you like to have anything you want? Would you like to have a high place in our world? Honor, prestige, fame—if you understand those things? I can make you an important figure in our world, you and all your people—"

Koro listened, vaguely stirred, and felt vastly pleased at this eager interest in him.

But all the while he had been tensing himself. They were not so watchful now, as at first. Suddenly he acted. With the quickness of a mouse he ran to the edge of the table and leaped down. Their clumsy hands clutched at the spot he had been in seconds too late.

The leap to the floor, though six times his height, meant nothing to his light, springy muscles. He landed catlike, ran to the binoculars still lying there and heaved them to his shoulders in one swift motion. He scuttled across the floor, and this time he made certain the cord trailed safely behind his twinkling feet.

To Scott and Dr. Bolton, the whole thing was almost a blur of motion. It was like running after a rabbit, when they gave chase. Scott followed, through the hall, into the kitchen, and to the basement door, open six inches. He heard the little man bounding down the steps, in the dark. There was no electric switch in the basement. By the time Scott had dashed for the flashlight by the sink, and gone down, there was no sound at all from the little escaped prisoner.

Ten minutes later, after searching, he found the old rat hole that burrowed through dirt and wood to open air. It was no use to look outside.

"Well, he got away," shrugged Scott. "With my hundred dollar binoculars too, the little thief! Imagine a man running at full speed carrying a refrigerator! They must be incredibly strong, for their size. But so are insects."

"I'm sort of—of glad he got away," Helena murmured.

Dr. Bolton blew up. "The greatest scientific discovery of the century in my hands—and it's gone!

Scott, I think you deliberately got in my way, and made only a half-hearted chase. I've seen you move twice as fast on a football field."

Scott smiled but said nothing.

## CHAPTER V

### Koro's Revenge

KORO strode into the glade, with his mighty prize on his back.

Some of the young people danced there, in the light of the crescent moon. In the day-time, the Little Folk slept. But every night, between shifts of their light labors, there was dancing and music and laughter, for the Little Folk enjoyed life.

Koro was weary and somewhat thin. For a week he had struggled back, over hill and valley, resting often with his huge burden. But now his spirit sang. Elva was there, dancing, and there was no Atho present to spoil the moment. Atho was down in the village, with the women, laboring out the terms of his sentence.

"Eyoo!" called Koro. "It is I, Koro. And look what I have brought!"

The merrymakers turned and watched in wonder. Koro strode directly before Elva and lowered his prize. Its two tubes glinted with glass at both ends, and its shiny metallic surface sparkled brightly.

"How huge it is! That is a wonderful prize! What is it, Koro?" the crowd demanded.

"The Big People call it 'binoculars,'" stated Koro proudly. "When you look through one end of either tube, everything becomes tiny. When you look through the other end, everything grows large and near!"

There was a scramble to test this amazing statement. Awed gasps arose as some managed to peer through, at both ends, seeing each other's faces either reduced or enlarged.

"I brought it for you, Elva," Koro announced boldly. "No other has brought back a greater prize for the girl he—adores. Not even Atho, with his paltry gold watch!"

Elva started, at the name Atho, but she didn't say anything.

"You are speechless, Elva, at the magnificence of the prize!" Koro crowed. "I will dance with you to-night, Elva. And—talk with you!"

Elva answered finally. "You must be very tired, Koro. Perhaps you had better rest—"

"Tired?" Koro scoffed. He swung the prize to his shoulder again. "Come, we will show this to Atho himself!"

The procession, with Koro at the head, marched through their thicket paths to the main center of their community, beyond the dancing glade.

"Eyooo!" the cry went up. "Koro has come back with a mighty prize!"

Then, in chorus—



*"The Big Ones are clumsy and witless,  
We are so clever and sly,  
They never will, never will catch us,  
Not to the day we die!"*

Koro stopped before the hollowed stump which held part of their stores of food, slowly being readied for the coming winter. The strong bark door, seemingly a part of the original surface, swung outward in his hands, to reveal Atho cutting insect flesh with a group of women.

"Eyoo, Atho!" called Koro. "Leave the *other* women for a moment and come out. Look at my prize, beside which your gold watch is nothing!"

Atho came out. He gasped a little.

"You took *that* from the Big People?" He went on honestly. "Yes, it is a greater prize than mine."

Koro stared around proudly. It was good to be the hero of the hour, in all their admiring eyes. He caught Elva's eye.

"Elva, come here," he said confidentially. "Before all, I will avow my intentions toward you—"

Elva moved, but she stepped beside Atho.

"And I," she spoke clearly, "avow my intentions—that I am betrothed to Atho, if he will have me. And I will marry him when his year's penance is over!"

A WONDERING, joyful light came over Atho's face. Since the start of his woman-status he had not had the right or opportunity to speak words of love to her. And his humiliation had been great. For many days he had wondered if Elva would learn to despise him. Now his doubts and inner tortures were dissolved.

The crowd about tinkled out in happy cheering. For over a year the little community had wondered which Elva, the fairest of girls, would choose of Atho and Koro, the two most spirited of the young men.

Koro's face darkened, as the acclaim of the audience showed their whole-hearted favor of the choice. Hatred poured from his eyes toward his triumphant rival. As Atho and Elva kissed before all, sealing their betrothal, daggers pierced Koro's heart.

A sudden hush came over the assemblage.

One of the Elders had come down the path. What is all this hubbub about among you young ones?" demanded old Zutho. "A betrothal? Is that cause for disturbing—"

He stopped, as his eyes fell on the binoculars, and then transferred to Koro.

"You have dared take such an enormous thing from the Big People, Koro, perhaps at considerable risk?" he snapped angrily. "This prize-seeking will yet lead to trouble. There must be a stop to it. Next some young fool will attempt a prize beyond his powers, and the First Law will be violated. Koro, did the Big People hear or see you at all?"

Koro started. All the way back from his venture, he had told himself over and over that he must never tell what had transpired. He avoided Zutho's eyes.

"Of course we won't harm you," assured Dr. Bolton. He went on eagerly. "And will you show us where you little folk live?"

"Yes—on one condition. There is a girl called Elva—"

Scott interrupted, grasping the scientist's arm. "I don't think we should have anything to do with it," he asserted. "This little beggar is a renegade, betraying his people!"

"Yes, Dad," Helena chimed in, frowning at the little man. "We have no right to—"

"No," he muttered.

Wise old Zutho caught something in his face. "Koro! You are hiding something! Answer me truthfully!"

"Nothing, Father. Nothing happened!" But Koro's voice was quivering. The fright of that moment when he was caught by the Big People came back vividly.

"Koro!" persisted the Elder. "Something frightened you terribly, back among the Big Ones. Tell me what happened. You must! Perhaps the whole safety of our people lies at stake. Koro, speak!"

Weakened by his arduous journey, and his nerves already upset by Elva's choosing of Atho, Koro broke down. He told the whole story, with the hysteria of a cornered rat.

When he had finished, Zutho's face first showed relief. "Luckily you escaped, before harm was done." Then his face became stern, grim. "But the prize seeking must stop. In behalf of the Elders, I hereby forbid it, from this moment on. And Koro, you must be punished. . . ."

Eyes slowly widened, as they saw what rested in Zutho's relentless face.

"I sentence you to woman-status for life!"

Koro's shoulders sagged as though a mountain had fallen on them. For the first time, the crowd about realized what a potential menace the Big Ones must be, if the Elders imposed such drastic sentence on what was still not an actual violation of the First Law. For Koro had not had traffic with them willingly and had only been caught through over-eager effort in prize-seeking.

Koro turned away brokenly. Even Atho and Elva pitied him.

But that same night, Koro was mysteriously gone from the community of Little Folk. . . .

PAUL SCOTT awoke when something tugged at his ear. Then a little piping voice shrilled in it.

"It is I, Koro, of the Little Folk! I wish to talk with you Big People!"

A few minutes later, joined by Helena and her father in the lighted living room, Scott set the little man on the mantel, where they could hear him better.

Koro eyed them, and for a moment thought of running away, panic-stricken, while there was yet time. But where? Back to the community, to serve out a lifetime sentence? And to realize that Elva could



never be his? Those devil-thoughts had driven Koro to flee. Driven him to seek out the Big Ones. Hatred and bitterness against his people ate within his little soul.

Koro spoke with gestures.

"I wish to live with you Big People. I do not want to go back to my folk. They have sentenced me to a lifetime of degradation and humiliation. And anyway, I am sick of living like a worm, in secret, as our people always have. I wish to live in your world. You Big Ones have promised not to harm me."

"But I'm not going to harm them," insisted Dr. Bolton. "All I want to do is observe them in their natural habitat. With Koro's help, we can do it. His eyes narrowed shrewdly. "You call them fairies. Perhaps they have moonlight dances, according to legend. Think of the chance of seeing that!"

Scott had already thought of it. A chance to see the Dance of the Fairies! It appealed to him, with all the appeal of things mysterious and unknown. . . .

Full moon night, Koro had told them, would be best.

THEY stared out over the glade, waiting for the first of the Little Folk to appear. They were fifty feet from the glade itself, and concealed behind thick bushes. Koro had warned them that they must make no slightest sound, for his people had sensitive ears.

Scott waited breathlessly. It had been a week since little Koro had come to them. In that week, Dr. Bolton had spent long hours conversing with the mannikin, taking notes. They had seemed to become almost intimate. Scott didn't like it. They had too much of the air of two plotters who, though one was a giant and one a midge, were kindred souls.

"Hsst!"

It was a warning from Koro, perched on Dr. Bolton's shoulder.

Out in the glade, the Little Folk trooped into view. Their chirping laughter and bird-like voices tinkled through the clear air. Thin flutings and the piping of tiny horns sounded weirdly, like faraway echoes. And the Little Folk danced, their tiny, sinuous bodies flashing in the spotted moonlight that slanted down through tall trees. They formed a ring at times, tripping daintily around and around in that enchanted circle. The music was wild, the dancing unrehearsed, but it was more supremely artistic than anything ever achieved in the outer world.

Scott realized that. Realized he was witnessing something few mortal eyes had ever beheld. It was a glimpse into fairyland, so exquisitely perfect in setting and execution that it stung the eyes. It was something ancient and sacred, and divinely wonderful. He could feel Helena's hand trembling in his and knew that she, too, felt the witchery of the scene.

Scott turned his head.

Little Koro was whispering in Dr. Bolton's ear, pointing into the glade. And suddenly the scientist jerked his hand. Scott was startled to see the glint of

a long string, leading to the space over the glade. At the same time something that hung at a height of ten feet dropped in the forepart of the glade. It had been in shadow. Scott hadn't noticed it, nor, apparently, had the Little Folk—until too late.

Scott saw a hoop of wire descend, and billowing out from it, like a parachute, was mosquito netting! The hoop dropped, encircling a group of the little dancers.

It was a trap!

Like the vanishment of a beautiful dream, the glade scene had broken up. The Little Folk melted away, like swift shadows. But those caught within the hoop were still there, struggling to escape the folds of the netting. They had been snared like little animals.

Scott grabbed Dr. Bolton's arm as he leaped up.

"What have you done?" he demanded angrily. "How could you shatter such a wonderful thing? When did you set up the trap?"

"This afternoon," returned the scientist. "While you and Helena were wandering somewhere. And while the Little Folk slept, as Koro informed me. Forgot to tell you. Now let me go, before they get away."

Dr. Bolton wrenched himself away and ran to the glade, Scott and Helena following.

SOME of the Little Folk had scurried back and were already heaving up one side of the heavy wire loop, to rescue those within the netting. Some of the girls had been dragged free. But at sight of the Big People's lumbering forms approaching, they darted away with thin pipings of fear.

Dr. Bolton stooped, upended the loop, and closed the mouth of the netting-sack. His eyes gleamed as though he had bagged prize game. He held it up before his eyes, counting the squirming forms within. Their moanings of fright were muffled by the cloth.

"Eight men and one of their girls," he said. "They managed to rescue other girls, the little scamps. Well, these will do for the present."

Koro had been peering down closely from his perch on the scientist's shoulder. "And the girl is Elva! It is as I wished!"

Scott cursed. He felt like taking the little traitor in his fingers and squeezing till he shrieked. Evidently Koro had plotted this in detail with Dr. Bolton, to drop the net at the right time, and catch her.

"Poor things—" Helena murmured, but her father did not hear.

As the party tramped back to their car, parked five miles away—which was the nearest they had been able to come in this wildwood—Scott spoke bitterly.

"I still don't think it's right, Dr. Bolton!"

"Right!" snapped the scientist scoffingly. "I haven't broken any law, have I?"

"You've broken a moral law," retorted Scott. "As much as if you had raided a pygmy village in Africa and kidnapped some of them."



"Scott, be reasonable," the scientist said impatiently. "This is in the interests of science. You call them fairies, in romantic nonsense, but this is far more significant—scientifically. Go back to the so-called Missing Link, maybe a million years ago. Evolution fashioned from that progenitor all the primates—apes, monkeys, gorillas, baboons, and the various species of sub-man, like Pithecanthropus, Heidelberg, Neanderthal, and finally homo sapiens. And this pygmy offshoot!"

"Or else it was a white pygmy branch whose chromosomes carried smallness as a dominant, rather than recessive, character. True man rose rapidly and killed off his intelligent rivals, back in pre-history. But this little pygmy offshoot race, perhaps because of its smallness, survived. This will make scientific history, when I announce my results, after a study of the Little Folk! And you prate of moral rights!"

Scott subsided. What could he say, against that cold, scientific attitude?

"As for Koro, my little friend," added Dr. Bolton, "I did him a return favor. Caught his little Elva for him. Seems to be his light o' love!"

## CHAPTER VI

### Atho Goes Forth

ATHO was mechanically peeling insect shells from its juicy meat, when the clear blast of a horn sounded. It was a loud, brazen sound that rang through the community like a wailing siren.

The alarm! Seldom used, it denoted great emergency, as when a monstrous bear happened to stumble into their community, sniffing around hopefully.

Dropping his flint implement, Atho sprang to the bark door and flung it wide, leaping out. Pandemonium reigned. The Little Folk were milling about, jabbering excitedly. Soon those who had been in the glade came flying up, yelling.

"The Big People! They have come! A trap fell! Nine of our people were captured and taken away! And Koro was with the Big People!"

Never in the memory of those now living had such a great calamity happened. Stark fear and anguish arose in all their tiny hearts. A wail quivered in the night air, from their combined throats.

Old Zutho and the other Elders hobbled forth, hearing the grave tidings.

"Hark!" Zutho yelled out. "Quiet yourselves and listen to me. We must not cast our wits on the ground!"

The assemblage fell silent, turning their heads to Zutho.

"My people," he said in his cracked tones, "this is our lot in life—to ever scurry from the feet and brutality of the Big Ones. It has happened before, in our long history—many, many times. Do not think this generation is the first to be so cursed. But this generation is the first to be cursed, in a long time, with

the presence of a traitor—Koro! If he ever returns, I pronounce sentence of death upon him, for traffic with the Big People, as the First Law states!"

He shook his head bleakly.

"But he may not return. Fool that I was, I should not have been so unthinking, when he fled. I did not think he would go to the Big Ones, and betray us. No, I did not think that. It is hard to believe that any of us would be a traitor. . . ."

His voice trailed away brokenly, and all the Little Folk felt the weight of that lost trust in one of them.

Zutho waved his emotions aside.

"There is only one thing to do now. We must move, before the Big Ones return for more of us. We must leave this place, that has been our happy home for two centuries, and seek another secret spot. We will find another grotto, for our homes, and another glade for our dancing, and we will continue life there. . . ."

His voice stopped, and all knew why it ended. For this was but a repetition of what had happened countless times before. In their new home they would dwell happily—till the next time. . . .

The Big Ones ruled Earth.

Old Zutho's voice suddenly became almost a snarl. "And I forever banish from our memory the name of Koro, who betrayed us! Cursed be he, till the end of time!"

"Cursed be he, till the end of time!" chanted the crowd, giving vent to their anger.

Zutho composed his features. "Who were the victims?"

One of those who had been a witness in the glade, barely escaping the hoop himself, answered, giving the names of the captured men. "And one of the girls," he finished. "Beauteous Elva."

"Elva!" It was a whisper from Atho. All eyes fell on him pityingly.

"Elva!" This time it was a half-shriek. "My Elva—"

He stopped, choking, and there was not an eye there that did not have a tear in it.

Zutho patted the young man's shoulder. "I am sorry it had to be she, my son. But we must accept fate. There can be no reprisal, or rescue, or revenge. We cannot war on the Big People for these things. We can only scurry away from their mighty feet—"

Atho shook off the hand. His nostrils flared as he flung his head high.

"I go," he said in a cold, deadly voice. "I go to the Big People—"

"I forbid it, Atho!" said Zutho sternly. "It is senseless. We can only flee, I tell you—"

"I am going!"

Some of the other young men tensed forward half eagerly, as though to join him, but old Zutho shook his head, waving them back. He put his arm on Atho's shoulder.

"I understand, son. Go! But promise me one thing—that you will not attempt to kill a Big One. If that



happened, they would hunt us like wolves and stamp us into the earth!"

"I promise, Father. But Koro . . ." He did not finish the threat. And with that, Atho went to the young men's quarters, picked up his weapons, and stalked from the village.

He left behind him a scene of hasty packing of food, essential paraphernalia, and organization of the march toward a new home. It was tragic, this uprooting of an olden home. It was the exodus of a wandering people who never knew a true safety.

ATHO made his way through the wild woodland at a steady, untiring lope. His strong, lithe muscles could keep up the pace for days. It would take him three days without sleep to reach the lone house of the Big People beyond Bald Mountain, where Elva lay in captivity.

His limbs were encased in leggings, he wore shoes, and head was bare. Only his spider-silk shirt and moleskin trunks covered his torso. His weapons were three. Behind his back was slung a quiver of toothpick-sized bone arrows, and ashwood bow beside it. In his belt hung his flint-headed axe. In his hand he balanced a long lance, whose end was one of the Big People's steel needles, an ideal point to the wooden shaft.

In the first hour, to test his eye, Atho unslung his bow and fitted it with an arrow, when he heard the drone of a wasp. The insect appeared, as big as his head, darting over a patch of berries, looking for some unlucky caterpillar.

It was a small, swift target. Atho pivoted, bow taut, sighted for the wasp-thin thread that joined the stingered thorax to the body. He let fly and the silver of bone neatly sliced through the body-thread, sailing on to embed itself in a tree branch beyond. The severed halves of the wasp tumbled to the ground.

Altho grunted in satisfaction. Good enough. He had full control of his nerves, and needed it. He went on. His eyes, as he swung along, darted constantly on all sides and above. Many dangers lurked for the unwary.

And suddenly one of them materialized. There was a warning hiss, to his sensitive little ears, and a long sinuous form shot out of a thicket he was passing. It was a snake, python-sized to Atho with its length of three feet. The blunt head and sharp fangs aimed straight for Atho's head.

A snake is one of the quickest of beasts. Even the swift little shrew is no match in speed of striking. But the snake's thrust missed Atho, by the scant margin of a thistle thread. For Atho moved the quicker.

Altho's body twisted aside like a steel spring. The snake struck again, and again Altho swerved. At the same time he leaped backward, bringing up his lance, balancing it lightly in casting position. Then he changed his mind. The snake, with its keen, lidless eyes, would dodge the cast.

Atho instead clutched the spear's shaft with both

hands, over his head. When next the snake's great head and cavernous red mouth lunged at him, Atho stood his ground. He thrust his spear forward like a lightning bolt. The fine needle-point, ground by flint to incredible sharpness, passed between the fangs into the roof of the mouth. Up and up it pierced, under the drive of Atho's full strength. It jarred against the upper bone of the snake's skull.

Atho let go the shaft and scrambled back. He watched as the snake, with its brain pierced through and through, threshed wildly over the ground. Not till many minutes later did final paralysis come. Atho approached then and jerked his spear out, wiping off the pale blood on a leaf. At any other time, he would have stayed to strip the skin, useful for clothing and winter shelter, and haul it back to his people.

But he loped away, at a run, the snake already forgotten. His destination and present purpose were far grimmer than mere battles with forest killers.

ON the second day, his constant exertion demanded food. He had not wished to carry any, as a burden slowing him. He must hunt. Slowly to a walk, he began creeping from grass-patch to tree-bole, silently as the wind, seeking prey. He came upon a grasshopper, drowsing in the daytime heat. It was half as long as Atho. He crept close, within spear thrust, and jabbed it down into the thick thorax, pinning the creature to the ground.

The grasshopper spun about on this axis of impalement. Atho was careless, watching. Something suddenly struck him violently in the chest, and Altho tumbled head over heels backward. He righted himself dazedly, gasping for breath. He grinned at himself. The grasshopper's hind leg had a kick to be respected.

When he staggered back, the grasshopper was weakening. Atho chopped off its head with his axe. The legs still struck out feebly, as though unaware it should now die.

Not wishing another encounter with those powerful legs, Altho waited. Suddenly his ears pricked. He heard leaves rustling, perhaps a dozen feet away. Then he saw it—a field mouse, nibbling and rooting among ground berries. Atho licked his lips. There was real food for his famished muscles. Red meat, instead of the blubbery, unsatisfying insect tissue.

But the mouse was not an easy creature to stalk. One step toward it, and it would likely hear him and scamper away, at a scuttering pace that even Atho could not match. Slowly, quietly, the tiny hunter reached a hand behind his back and again unslung his bow. Fitting an arrow to the spider-silk string, he took careful aim, let fly.

The arrow sped straight and true. It impaled the side haunch of the mouse and buried itself completely, splicing the heart in half. The mouse ran twenty feet and then lay still, bleeding to death.

Atho dined well of raw tender flesh and arose with renewed strength surging in his veins. He resumed his steady lope.



Would he never reach his destination? The way seemed stretched by some diabolical means, because of his anxiety for Elva. Atho knew he hadn't lost the way. Not he, to whom every bit of moss, every slant of the sun's rays, every twist of the ground, was a signpost of direction.

But he must hurry, hurry. . . .

And then, as though fate wished to hinder him, another killer stalked him. This time a truly formidable foe. Not the great bear, for he was big and clumsy like the Big People and could be avoided as easily as a lumbering mountain. Not the deer, whose hard hoofs could be side-stepped and who took no note of flesh as food. Nor yet the weasel or badger or wolverine, for they were all kill and no brain.

It was the cunning fox, the one creature who combined a canny brain with swiftness and power.

Atho spied it first, as a glint of red fur far ahead, and stopped as though he had struck an invisible barrier. His little heart hammered, and he stepped back, hoping to sneak away. But unfortunately he was upwind from the fox. Its keen nose told it of the mannikin within range, and the red fur began to slink toward him.

No use to run. The fox was a demon of speed. No chance to climb a tree in such short time. There was nothing to do but back himself against a stump and await the great, fearsome assassin.

There were the arrows, of course. Atho unloosed three, but knew he would never strike those little, gleaming eyes which were not the target of the owl's great saucer-eyes. And thick fur could never be pierced by his tiny shafts.

Now the fox was close, jaws slaving. Atho unhitched his flint-headed axe, and held it in one hand. His ready spear was in the other. This was to be a battle beside which the struggle with the ferret in the glade had been a child's game.

The fox was three times as long as Atho's body, and perhaps ten times as heavy. Its jaws in one mighty snap could crunch Atho in half. The fox had all the advantage—speed, power, weight and size.

But Atho had courage all out of proportion to his size.

The fox loped up almost carelessly, sure of its victory. Its lips drew back, revealing sharp ferral teeth. It sat for a moment three feet from its victim, as though grinning at this foolish little tidbit who did not even run, as every sane rabbit at least tried.

Then it lunged forward, jaws wide for the kill.

**A**THO timed his stroke and brought down his flint-axe on the sharp, pointed nose. The fox leaped back with a bark of pain. The blow had been light and glancing, but it drew blood. With a snarl, the killer circled and came at Atho from the side, to drive him into the open.

But Atho knew that was fatal. Cunning must be met with superior cunning. Still with his back to the stump, slowing Reynard's attack by its presence, Atho

swung again at the nose, heavily. This time he clipped off a piece and the fox howled in pain.

Then from its throat issued a growl of rage. Gnashing its teeth, it closed in thrice more. And thrice more Atho's arm beat down, gouging into the fox's tender snout. The killer's dark, beady eyes clouded with beserk fury, and Atho knew he had evened the odds, for rage is the poison of reason.

Had the fox quietly and in its cunning worried Atho out of position, the battle would have ended in time with Atho's death. But now the killer lunged without thought, clumsy in its sheer rage.

The death-stroke—now was the time. . . .

Atho leaped, as he had leaped before the ferret. Twice his height he leaped and landed on the fox's neck. Digging his toes behind the jowls for a foothold, he raised his lance and plunged it down, through the fox's throat. All this in a blur of swiftness.

With a gurgling bark, the fox hunched. Atho's feet slipped and he flew through the air, to land with a thump on the ground, his breath knocked out for the second time that day. When he arose, gasping and staggering, the fox was threshing wildly, clawing at the lance that pierced its throat and drained its life blood.

A half hour later, Atho kicked the carcass.

"Eyoo!" he cried, withdrawing his spear and waving it over his head. "Eyoooo! I have killed a fox!"

Then he sobered from his wild elation at the great deed—there was no false modesty in Atho—and resumed his grim journey.

Nothing else worthy of concern crossed his path. The night of the third day he reached the lone house of the Big People.

## CHAPTER VII

### Among the Big Ones

**A**LL was quiet in the house as Atho crept through the rat hole he had used before, and emerged in the basement. He padded up the steps, bounding lightly from one to another. But the door here was closed!

Atho pondered. Then he slipped back through the rat hole, and outside he plucked a supple ivy-vine from an oak tree, and returned. After several casts, the loop he had made caught around the doorknob. Drawing himself up, hand over hand, he grasped the doorknob in his arms and twisted, at the same time pushing with his feet against the jamb. The door creaked open two inches, and Atho lowered himself to the floor.

He stood silently for a moment. The Big People had not heard.

Now, where were the captives? Atho did not dare call out. He would have to search the house. His nocturnal-sensitive eyes would make them out if once they were within sight.

His little form crept silently as a mouse through the giant rooms, first the kitchen, then the hall and living





Atho clenched his weapon tightly and faced the mouse

There before a table sat the third of the Big People, the man of the gold watch. His face was the face Atho had disliked from first glimpse. There were hard, cold lines. No emotion or sympathy or kindness lay there. He was turning the pages of what Atho vaguely knew to be a book.

Then Atho started violently.

Koro was there, too, standing on the table before a glinting surface that reflected his image, as still waters did. He was turning and admiring himself and his clothes. He was dressed in a miniature copy of the Big People's clothing, evidently made for him. They



room. He found no sign of his quarry.

Then, in another room, he found the first of the Big People, breathing loudly and regularly in sleep, in his bed. Atho looked at the face of the young man, from the rear bedpost, and almost thought of waking him. He looked kindly, somehow. But no. He was one of the terrible Big People, who had captured Elva and the others for some purpose known only to the Big People's heartless minds.

He crept out and into another bedroom. Here lay a woman-figure. Her face was sweet, but troubled-looking. Somehow, she reminded him of his Elva. These two, the man and girl, had been the ones he had heard whispering love-words to each other, on Bald Mountain that time. Was it possible—just possible—that they would know, therefore, what his love for Elva meant? How his heart was torn and pained by their separation? Would they help him, if they knew?

Atho pondered that for a long moment. If only he knew! But no, he could not take a chance. The Big People were an unknown quantity. They were cruel monsters, all of them, caring little about the tiny folk who happened to live in their world.

As he pattered out of this room, he saw a gleam of light from an upstairs room. At the top of the steps, he peered cautiously around a partly ajar door, into a brightly lighted room. He almost gasped aloud.



were stiff, awkward garments, and ridiculous on Koro, but he seemed pleased.

At sight of Koro, Atho's lips had writhed. And the rage that pounded in his little breast was a killing rage. Almost, he leaped out, to fulfill the urge. But that would be folly, at this moment.

THE Big One's voice rumbled out. "Yes, Koro, I will civilize you and your people. You have been living like little savages. You look perfectly human in our clothing."

"I will be famous in your world, will I not?" Koro piped back. "And I will be the governor of our people there?"

The Big One nodded absently, going back to his book.

"Here is the clue," he said, as if thinking aloud. "Eohippus, the tiny horse, survived in a world of mighty killers, because of its smallness. You Little Folk survived for the same reason. Our common ancestor evolved the man-branch. I will show that analogy in my papers—" His voice trailed away in deep thought. Koro shrugged, understanding little of that.

Atho crept away.

Koro, breaking the sacred First Law into a thousand pieces, plotting with the Big One the enslavement of his people, deserved death. But first, Atho must find Elva and the others, and rescue them if possible. They were not in the lighted room, as his swift eyes had taken account.

He pattered to the only room left, also a bedroom, but untenanted and dark. He noticed, finally, the high shelf against one wall, hung over a large item of furniture—a writing desk. On the shelf lay a queer object, a sort of cage of wire-netting. It was the same material the Big People used before their windows as screens to keep out insects, which they didn't care for as food.

Atho stiffened, as he stared, his eyes returning to full night-vision after the glare of the other room. He saw movement, beyond the wire-netting. A tiny form was pacing there, and Atho saw that it was one of the captives from the glade. Not Elva, but one of the men. Were they all there?

Atho had to find out, though it would be tricky business with Koro and the Big One awake and near. Atho crept back to the basement door and retrieved his vine-lasso. Returning to the bedroom, he pondered the task before him, and then laid down his spear and bow, which would be in his way. With only the lasso and his flint-axe dangling in his belt, he clambered up one leg of the chair before the desk. From the chair he reached the top of the desk.

His eyes glanced around in instinctive appraisal, as always in the pursuance of something untried. Queer things lay on the desk—a pair of gloves, an inkstand, several pins and a writing pen with a steel dagger at the end. Atho did not know their names or uses. Nor did they concern him.

The shelf was still high out of reach. He cast with

his lariat for an iron projection that jutted out from the shelf beside the cage. The vine, though supple, was not easy to handle. The cast was four times over his head—twenty-five feet by a comparable scale of measurement.

Each time the vine fell back, it made a slithering sound, loud to Atho's ears. If only they wouldn't hear, in the other room! Those in the cage did, however. They crowded to the netting, looking down wonderingly. Atho made a gesture to keep silent, and they nodded.

But he almost cried aloud himself when he saw Elva's face there. He waved and slung his vine-rope, with renewed determination.

Finally it caught, and quickly Atho hauled himself to the shelf. The captives pressed against the wire-netting.

"Atho!" one of them breathed.

"Quiet!" hissed back Atho. "On your life. I will try to open this cage."

Elva pressed before him, her lovely face haggard and strained. Atho silently cursed the wire-netting that prevented his touching her. But their eyes spoke their love.

"Are you all right, darling?" he whispered anxiously. He noticed now the strange costume she wore, like that of a Big One of the feminine sex.

"Yes, but it has been horrible," Elva half-sobbed back. "We have been forced to wear their kind of clothing, made by the woman of the Big Ones. We were told we must never expect to go back to our woodland home, and must learn to be like the Big People. Oh, Atho, our whole life will be ruined!"

"And Koro brought this all on us!" Atho ground out angrily.

Then he sprang away. Time was flying. He went to the cage-door but found it beyond his powers to open. Some strange metal device locked it securely. After examining all sides of the cage, he drew a breath and unslung his flint-axe. He would grind through the wire-netting.

He began to rub the razor-sharp edge across several strands of the hard wire. It made a scraping sound, so loud that Atho stopped with a beating pulse. Surely the Big One in the lighted room must hear. Or if not he, then Koro with his keen ears. But no interruption came and Atho sawed away steadily, with the anxious hopeful eyes of the captives on every motion. One of the wire strands parted suddenly. Atho's spirits surged. A dozen more and a way would be open.

At last it was done. Atho dropped his flint-axe and thrust the split wires apart. The two-inch wide aperture was just enough for the little captives to writhe through. Atho extended his hand, and Elva came first. Then the others, till they all stood on the shelf. Atho slid down the rope to the desk top and caught Elva as she followed. The others began to follow.

Suddenly there was a shout behind Atho. He whirled.



KORO stood there, having just clambered to the desk-top from the chair. Shocked surprise was in his face.

"Atho!" he gasped. "I thought I heard noises—"

And with that Koro raised his voice in a shrill scream, before Atho could reach him. "Dr. Bolton! Help! The captives are escaping! Dr. Bol—"

Atho flung himself forward. He drove against Koro's legs as he tried to run and flung him heavily to the desk-top. Koro squirmed erect and backed away from the blaze in Atho's eyes.

"You are going to die, Koro!" Atho said in a low, deadly tone. "I am going to kill you with my bare hands!"

The man who had just descended the rope charged forward grimly, but Atho waved him aside.

"Back! Back!" he commanded. "This is my privilege!"

Atho jumped forward, battering at Koro's face with his hard fists. In desperation, Koro fought back. He had no further chance to turn, or breath to cry out. Blood streamed from his nose as Atho's blows took effect. Twice more Atho grasped him by the middle, raised him, and flung him on the desk-top, so that its implements rattled. Then he flung himself on the stunned Koro, to grasp his throat and choke the treacherous life from him.

"Atho!" Elva's voice rang warningly. "The Big One comes—"

Atho paused. He had forgotten that danger, in his blinding rage. Koro had the chance to suddenly leap up and back. He snatched up something, and when he turned, Atho was faced by a sharp murderous weapon—

Atho barely checked his renewed attack in time to keep from impaling himself. He had no weapons himself; the spear and bow were below on the floor, the flint-axe above on the shelf. And Atho had to scramble back as Koro, face alight with triumph, charged at him, handling his weapon as a sword. One thrust, and the sharp point would kill Atho. The pseudo-sword flicked several times, as Atho dodged desperately, and once its point tore a gash in his arm.

Atho faced quick death.

And then something was thrust in his hand. It was a large, heavy implement, its end equipped with a steel part, which Elva had dragged from its place near a glass bowl filled with dark fluid.

With the quickness of thought, Atho raised it in his two hands, as a lance, and drove it forward.

Koro had just lunged forward, thrusting with his sword, intent on delivering the death-stroke . . .

There was the pound of heavy feet at the door and then brilliant electric light flooded the room.

Dr. Bolton rushed forward, having heard Koro's cry of alarm. He reached the desk, stopped, staring at the strange tableau on his desk top. Two little men came at one another. One held a pin as a weapon, and lunged forward with it. But the other twisted aside agilely, gripping the desk's writing-pen in his

hand. With a furious thrust, he impaled his adversary.

And the victim—it was Koro—fell dead.

Dr. Bolton stood rooted in surprise. It had happened too quickly for him to intervene. He was aware that Scott and Helena had just entered, still in their night-clothes, staring in horrified fascination at the little drama.

Then a slow smile came over Dr. Bolton's face.

"The little devils!" he murmured. "It's just like a play, performed for our benefit, by puppets on a stage! Think of the sensation they will be to the world. They're natural born little actors, by Heaven—"

"Good God!" exploded Scott. "Don't you realize, Dr. Bolton, what a tragedy this represents to the Little Folk? The traitor, Koro, meeting his just reward for betrayal. It's not a play. To them it's the meaning of their whole life—"

On the desk-top, Atho looked down at the dead body of Koro, wild exultance in his veins. It was the first time within memory that one of the Little Folk had killed another, but never had cause been more just.

Elva's soft hand was pulling at his arm.

"We must flee, Atho!" she cried. "The Big People will catch us again!"

Atho awoke to the exigency of the moment. His eyes darted about, but he saw no escape. The doors of the big room were closed, the windows down. They might leap to the floor and lead the Big Ones a merry chase, but eventually they would be caught.

"There is no escape," Atho announced to his party, almost calmly.

"But what will we do?" Elva moaned. "I cannot stand further imprisonment—"

Atho put his arms around her protectingly and patted her shoulder. All the while, he had been hearing what the Big Ones spoke.

"Listen!" he told her. "Listen to the Big People. I think perhaps there is a drama unfolding among them, as vital as ours—"

DR. BOLTON had waved a weary hand, at Scott's last words.

"Nonsense! Must we argue about this forever? Look at it rationally. We'll civilize the Little Folk. We'll find a place for them in our civilization. As little actors and acrobats, they'll delight audiences. Or, if you will, think of more serious tasks for them. As surgeons' helpers, with their quick little hands, performing delicate operations beyond our skill. Or as makers of fine watches, tools, instruments—oh, I see limitless possibilities, if they're trained right."

"Trained?" Scott groaned. "Like little slaves!"

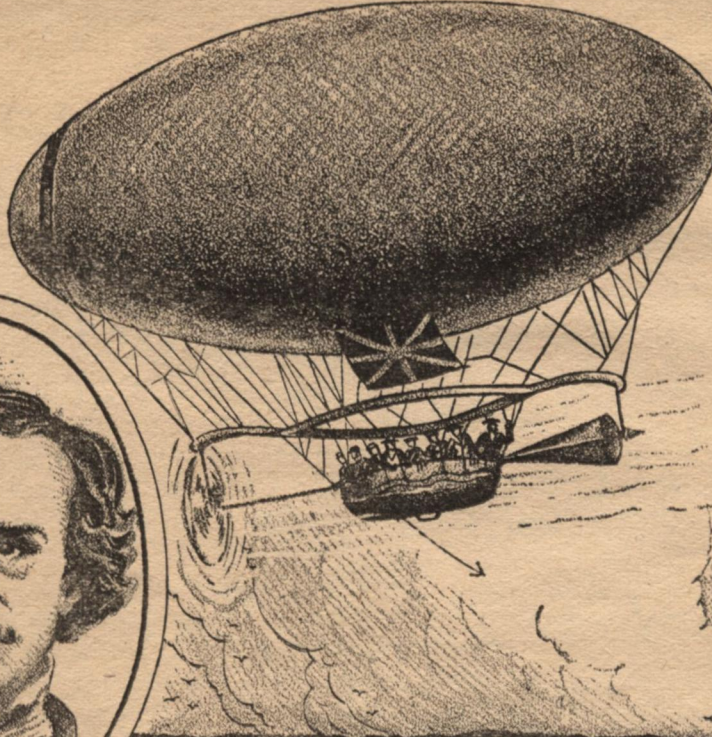
Shrugging, Dr. Bolton moved closer to the desk-top, where the Little Folk had gathered in a knot. They shrank back.

"Back in your cage," he said. "The new one too. He'll replace Koro. Don't try to escape. You can't get out of this room. I will lift you one by one—"

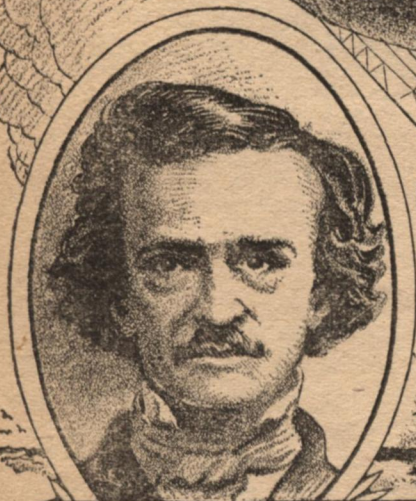
(Concluded on Page 47)



# Fantastic



ON APRIL 6, 1844, A PARTY OF "SIX GENTLEMEN AND TWO SAILORS" TOOK OFF FROM ENGLAND, WITH THE INTENTION OF CROSSING THE CHANNEL. HOWEVER, THEY TOOK VISAS WITH THEM FOR ALL COUNTRIES WHERE THEY MIGHT CONCEIVABLY LAND. CAUGHT BY A HIGH WIND, THEY **CROSSED THE ATLANTIC** TO SULLIVAN'S ISLAND IN THREE DAYS. THIS WAS THE STORY PUBLISHED BY THE **NEW YORK SUN** ON APRIL 13, 1844.



**EDGAR ALLEN POE**

AUTHOR OF THE STORY REGARDING THE **FLIGHT** ACROSS THE ATLANTIC,

AN ALARMING ACCIDENT THAT ALMOST ENDED IN DISASTER, HAPPENED JUST BEFORE DAYBREAK ON THE SECOND DAY OF THE CROSSING. **NOISES** OF CONCUSSIONS IN THE BALLOON AND A RAPID SUBSIDENCE OF THE WHOLE MACHINE CAUSED GREAT ALARM. HOWEVER, THIS CAUSED MERELY BY ICE FORMATIONS . . .



GREAT EXCITEMENT PREVAILED IN NEW YORK WHEN THE **EXTRA** APPEARED ON THE STREET COPIES WERE SOLD OUT IMMEDIATELY,



SIR **EVERARD BRIGHTHURST**, ONE OF THE **EIGHT** PERSONS TO CROSS THE ATLANTIC.

MR. **MONCK MASON**, SUPPOSED INVENTOR OF THE **GIANT BALLOON**



# hoaxes

## THE BALLOON HOAX

By WILLY LEY

**T**HE readers of the *New York Sun* on April 13th, 1844 who were looking for European news in their paper were somewhat disappointed to find that the vessels bound for New York had not yet arrived. But then they saw an item that seemed much more important than all the missing news. It read:

**"ASTONISHING INTELLIGENCE BY PRIVATE EXPRESS FROM CHARLESTON VIA NORFOLK!—THE ATLANTIC OCEAN CROSSED IN THREE DAYS!!!**

**Arrival At Sullivan's Island Of A Steering Balloon Invented By Mr. Monck Mason.**

We stop the press at a late hour to announce that by a private express from Charleston, South Carolina, we are just put in possession of full details of the most extraordinary adventure ever accomplished by man. *The Atlantic has actually been traversed by a balloon, and in the incredibly brief period of three days!* Eight persons have crossed in the machine, among others, Sir Everard Bringhurst and Mr. Monck Mason. We have barely time to announce this most novel and unexpected intelligence, but we hope by ten this morning to have ready an extra with a detailed account of the voyage."

Naturally every reader of this item was waiting eagerly for the announced extra that appeared in time just as predicted. It bore the title "*The Extra Sun*" and was a single sheet, 24 by 19 inches, printed on one side only.

The people who almost fought battles among themselves for the privilege of buying the *Sun*, found on that sheet a very vivid account of the history of the invention of the dirigible (then called a "steering balloon"), the journal of the flight and even a woodcut representing not the airship itself but the model of it that had been built and tested before the inventor had started construction of his actual airship.

While New Yorkers were reading the *Extra Sun* until only tatters were left—this has to be taken almost literally, there exists now only one known copy of the extra and even that is not in the files of the newspaper office or in the files of one of the large libraries—the other newspapers did not lose time in going after the news themselves. They soon discovered that it did not exist. Strangely enough they did not even pay much attention to the deception. Only the *New York Herald*, the paper that really printed the European news three hours ahead of the others on April 15th, 1844 made an editorial remark about the *Sun's* balloon story. They wrote that their news were of practical value to business men, not a hoax—a humbug that would make an old horse laugh and say "I'm satisfied, come, take my bridle and skin off, not forgetting the old iron shoes, I'm ready to die! Farewell, oats!" So far they were right, but the final remark did not hit the mark. They said that the *Sun*, if it delighted to publish such stuff, should continue to do so, but that they should engage a better writer for it.

That was a mistake, the author of the balloon story was: *Edgar Allan Poe*. Of course, it was not known then that the already famous E. A. Poe had written the story, because anonymity was kept until Lowell wrote on Poe's request an article about him and about the balloon hoax in the February Issue, 1845, of *Graham's Magazine*.

The reason why Poe wrote the article is easy to explain: he needed money, having just arrived in New York with his wife, Virginia, and possessing exactly \$4.50. I do not know whether Poe wrote the piece in question as a fiction story first and changed the names of the persons into those of actually living aeronauts (who

were known to the public) later. At any event the story was printed with these names and was therefore credited as being true by the reading public until the real truth became known.

After an introduction saying that "the air as well as the earth and the ocean has now been subdued by science and will become a common and convenient highway for mankind" Poe proceeded to describe preliminary experiments with a large model first. He told that Mr. Monck Mason—who, together with Mr. Robert Holland, who was also among the alleged passengers of the balloon, had actually made a remarkable balloon flight from England to Germany eight years earlier—had built an ellipsoid balloon, 13 feet 6 inches long, 6 feet 8 inches high and holding 320 cubic feet of hydrogen gas. The balloon model was equipped—said Poe—with a fan-shaped rudder that could also be turned flat (to work as an elevator fin) and a propeller of two feet diameter. A clockwork-like spring device in the gondola turned the propeller and imparted to the model a speed of more than five miles per hour! After the encouraging tests of the model Mr. Monck Mason then proceeded to have a large balloon of very similar appearance built. It was, following Poe's narrative: "composed of silk, varnished with the liquid gum caoutchouc. It is of vast dimensions, containing more than 40,000 cubic feet of gas; but, as coal gas was employed in place of the more expensive and inconvenient hydrogen, the supporting power of the machine, when fully inflated, and immediately after inflation, is not more than around 2,500 pounds. . . . The supporting power being estimated at 2,500 lbs. and the united weights of the party amounting to only 1,200, there was left a surplus of 1,300, of which again 1,200 was exhausted by ballast cordage . . . (follows a list of provisions, instruments, etc.) and various other indispensable articles including a coffee warmer contrived for warming coffee by means of slack lime. . . . All these articles with the exception of the ballast, were suspended from the hoop over head."

There were, however, Poe was careful to point out, a few differences between the model pictured in the *Extra* and the actual ship. The gondola of the actual balloon *Victoria* "is much smaller and lighter, in proportion, than the one appended to the model. The rudder is very much larger, in proportion, than that of the model and the screw is considerably smaller."

The party of "six gentlemen and two sailors" took off into the air in England on Saturday, 6th of April, 1844. The plan was to cross the English Channel and to reach France where the balloon was to land as near to Paris as possible. As a precaution the aeronauts had procured passports for themselves with visas from all the countries where the balloon might conceivably land.

At first everything worked beautifully.

But then a high wind came up and, quoting from the "journal" of the voyage, "the steel rod connecting the spring with the propeller was suddenly jerked out of place and in an instant hung dangling out of reach." When the machinery, which did not avail very much against the high wind, was finally repaired the *Victoria* was already over Atlantic waters. Then one of the travellers made the suggestion to take advantage of the strong and apparently steady wind blowing westward and to try an Atlantic crossing. Everybody agreed, with the exception of the two sailors who were, of course, overruled. And the *Victoria* set out on its voyage with a speed of more than 60 miles per hour.

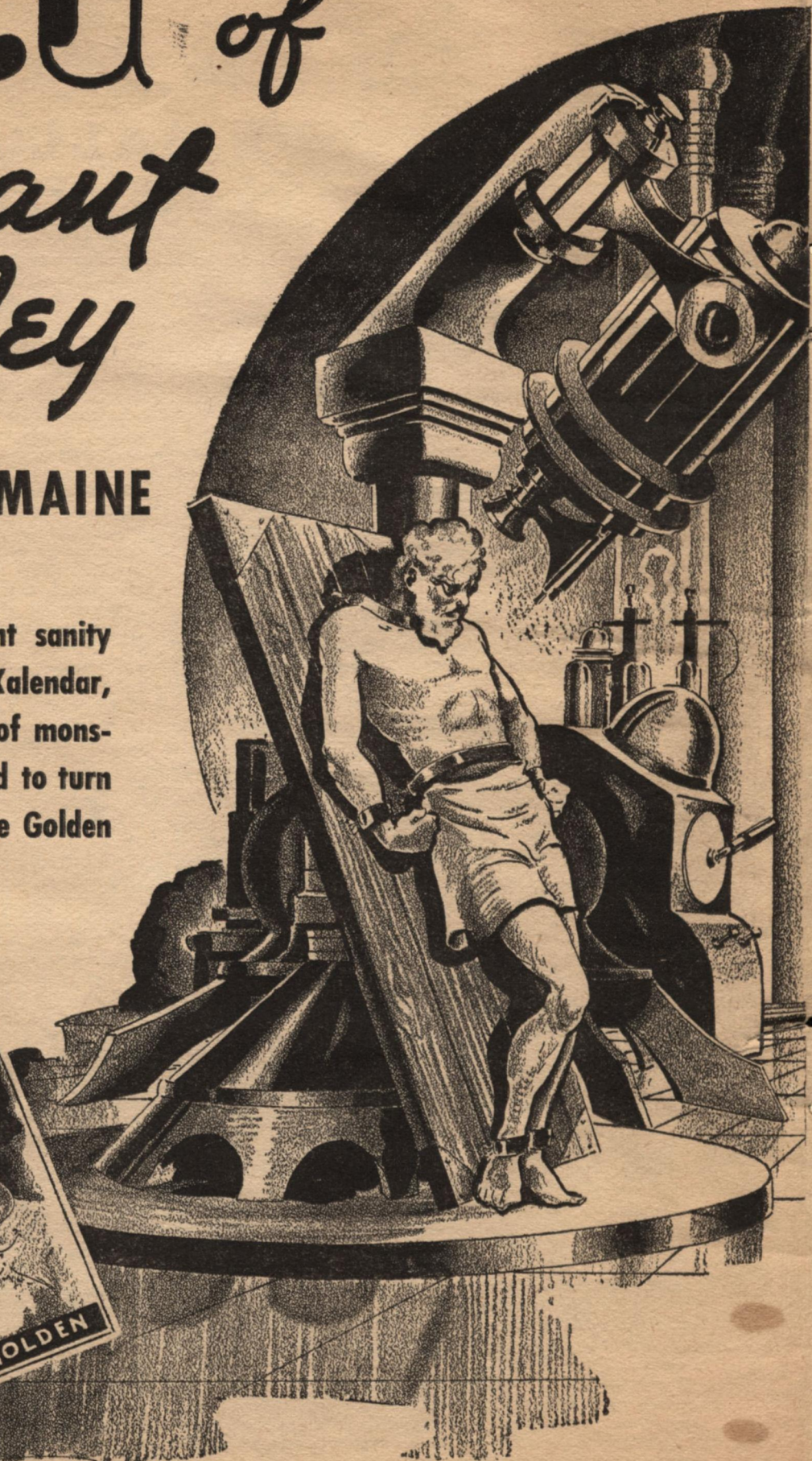
The trip itself was described as being fairly uneventful. The next day, Sunday, the 7th of April, the gale had slowed down to about 30 miles per hour and had veered more northwards. But the spring-operated propeller enabled the rudder to keep course due West. The balloon finally landed at Sullivan's Island after being in the air for 75 hours, which is curiously enough the average time needed for a transatlantic crossing by the ill-fated *Hindenburg*.



# JALU *of* *Radiant* *Valley*

By ORLIN TREMAINE

When John Kalen brought sanity to the seven madmen of Kalendar, he loosed a hellish flood of monsters on the valley he hoped to turn into a Utopia for Jalu, The Golden





John Kalen pulled the lever down slowly and generators whined and crackled. The madman writhed beneath the beam that flooded down on his head

"OUT there," said John Kalen, waving an arm toward the valley that lay below the towering balcony of the palace, "is Utopia—turned Hell!"

He whirled to the old man who stood beside him. "Gared Dulon, something must be done!" he exclaimed.

The Primate laid a hand on the younger man's arm. "You are not happy, my son? What is it you wish to do? After all, you are Kalen of Kalendar, ruler of all this valley, of Okka, and of all your illustrious father founded many long years ago. Here in Okka we have Utopia. Out there, what can we do? The "breath" has made them mad."

"First we must stamp out the Erzpa plants that surround the valley. The pollen must no longer pollute the air, to make men mad."

"Granted. But that will not help those who have already breathed of it."

John Kalen turned once more to view the valley. "No," he said slowly. "But there are other ways to help them. There are scientific means—"

"What means?"

"Listen, Gared Dulon," Kalen went on swiftly. "Nearly fifty years ago my father came to this valley, bringing his scientific knowledge, and he succeeded in setting up a Utopia. Then he died, and you sent Jalu, your daughter to New Yerk to find me. But when we arrived, we became separated, and the council failed to recognize me as the Kalen's son. I was exiled, out there, among the renegades, the victims of Erzpa, and I fought with them, lived with them, learned about them.\* While they exist, there

\*See "Golden Girl of Kalendar," published in the September, 1939 issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES.—Ed.





can be no Utopia in Kalendar."

"No Utopia—with me?" came a clear voice from the doorway leading to the balcony.

"Jalu!" exclaimed Kalen, clasping her to him as she ran forward.

"No Utopia?" she repeated coquettishly after he had kissed her lips.

He took her soft hand in his. "You are my wife," he whispered, "and that is more than Utopia; it is heaven. But I have dreamed of a perfect land, a perfect place for us to live. A place of understanding, and happiness, and equality. Not just we two, but for all in the valley. And I *must* make that dream come true."

Her face shone. "How like your father you are; good, wise, strong . . . How thankful I am that I became the first woman to leave Kalendar\* for the world outside, to find you, and that I should love you. I too, dreamed, and my dreams came true. Now your dreams must come true too; and I will not rest until you have succeeded. Do it, my Kalen, and begin to-day!"

Gazing down into the radiant face of the Golden Girl, John Kalen felt like the king he had become.

He turned to the Primate, father of Jalu, and said to him, "Send me a few at a time, the mad ones! The insane renegades of Tagoland. Then I will show you the means at my command."

Gared Dulon looked surprised, a little frightened, but he did not hesitate for so much as a second—and Kalen knew that through all the generations of Kalendar, to hesitate had been for the one who hesitated to die.

NEXT morning in the audience hall of the palace\* of Kalendar, John Kalen, garbed like a Caesar in

\*The palace of the Kalen is a building constructed of the native white marble which also occurs in the ruins at Lake Tahi and at Lake Tago. Jacob Kalen, first supreme ruler of the civilized area of Kalendar, added the wings at either end; installed the semi-private porches, the swimming pool, conservatory, and other modern relaxation media which make the palace a self-contained world of all around convenience. He installed the motion picture theatre in an upper gallery, and the gymnasium. And he completed the sanitary system by adding nearly a score of bathrooms, the fixtures for which were hewn of solid blocks of marble in accordance with his drawings, by the artisans of OKKA.

(Following his lead the houses of the entire area of walled Kalendar were similarly equipped.)

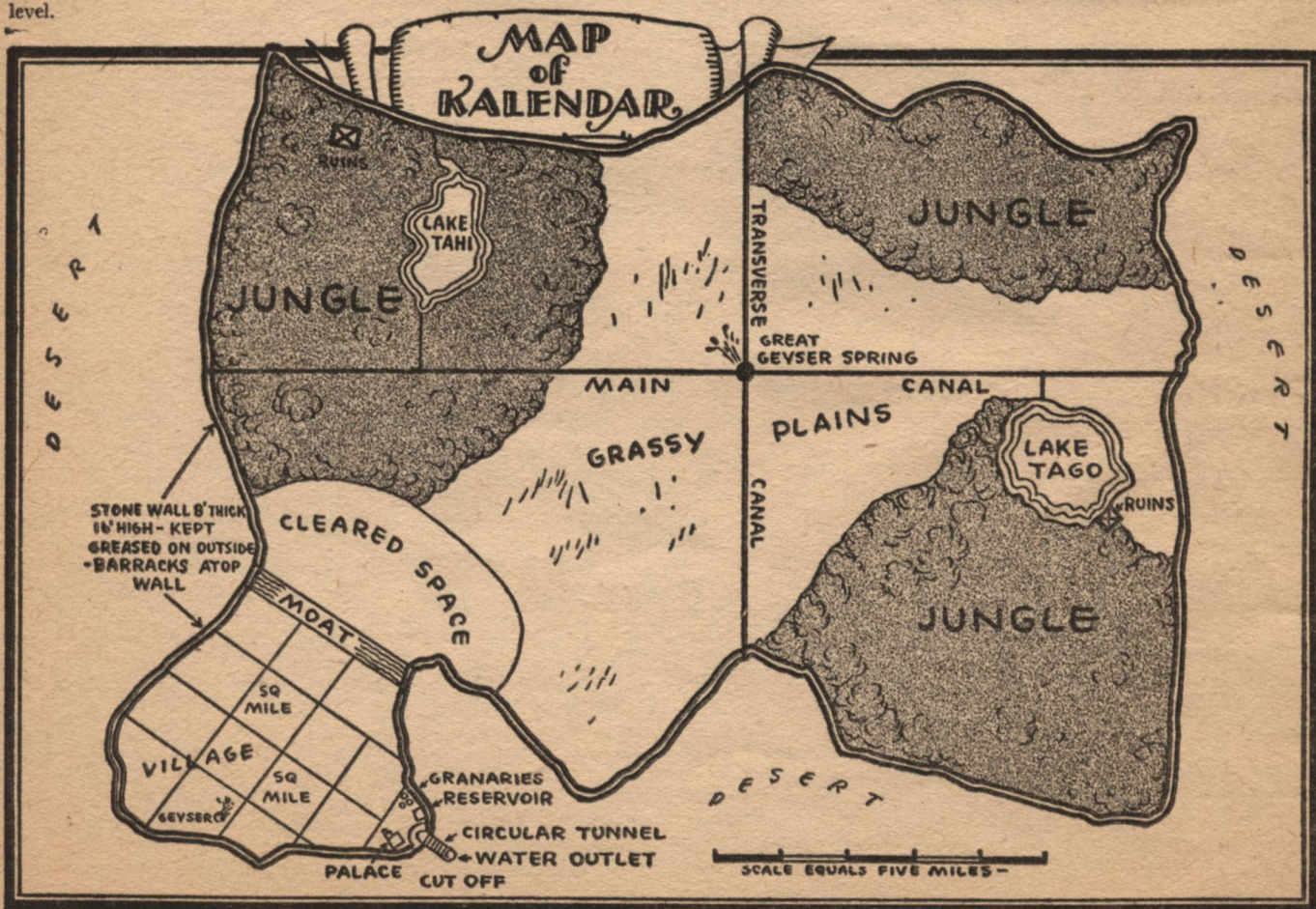
On the topmost floor of the palace, he installed an astrological laboratory with a telescope which enabled him to set down many astute observations on the planets of the system.

\*KALENDAR is a plateau valley in the Andes Mountains, in South America. It cannot be discovered from the air because dangerous air currents make airplane flight impossible at this point. The peaks and ranges which surround it run from 17,000 to 19,000 feet altitude.

Thirty miles to the South, aircraft can cross the Andes at 11,000 feet altitude. Twenty-two miles to the North there's a 13,000 foot level.

Therefore the existence of the country and of the valley has remained a secret to the outside world, except for its penetration by Captain Jacob Kalen (1869-1938) who managed to gain ingress in 1893 but who held his secret inviolate.

The valley level is 5,600 feet altitude. Surrounding walls are smooth for 200 feet upward, then rise in jagged lines for 12,000 feet more. The sun only touches the valley 3 or 4 hours a day. But





the days of Rome's greatest glory, awaited the coming of the mad ones. The folk of Tagoland, the renegades who were not mad, brought the mad ones. Dewar, who had once befriended Kalen when the latter had been exiled from Kalendar proper, commanded the guards who brought the mad ones. Kalen could see in the eyes of all of them, that they thought him a little mad himself, that he thus bade mad renegades to enter the very palace.

There were two score of the insane, and as they came cringing and staggering into the audience hall, the bowmen of Dewar stood aside, arrows nocked, to shoot them down if they attempted to do anything to the Kalen and his Queen. Strange mewling sounds came from the lips of the mad ones. Most of them had not shaved for years, nor had their hair been cut. Most of them were in rags. Most were bony skeletons, with deep, sunken eyes. But Kalen thought he could see remnants of the men they had once been. He could even make a guess at the origins of some of them.

He lifted a hand and pointed to one, and said:

"What is your name? Where did you come from? What brought you to Kalendar?"

The man began to chatter like an ape. His mouthings set the others to chattering, too. Some of them barked like dogs. One man uttered a sound like a prowling panther in the jungles. They all made strange sounds, but none emitted a sound that was like human speech. The minions of Dewar moved forward. Kalen turned to Jalu, said:

"Tell Dewar that these men are not to be molested. They are mad, yes, but madness is curable if the brain itself is not injured. I almost went mad when I had my first experience with Erzpa,\* the 'breath'."

Jalu spoke rapidly in Kalendish, which John had not yet mastered. There was something in the tones of her voice, no matter the language she spoke (she

\*Erzpa is the native name for a species of plant (*nicotine gentian*) which flourishes in a prescribed area of not more than 300 square miles of plain outside of Kalendar. Its so-called "breath" is a pollen so fine that it floats in the air with the slightest breeze.

The pollen, inhaled, attacks the sinus sac in a violent manner leading to temporary insanity. Continued exposure brings about a permanent obsessive insanity; a form of dementia praecox which leads its victim to unite in seeking the destruction of any living man or woman not so afflicted.

The so-called "outer renegades" are comprised of men who have strayed inside the deadly area of the Erzpa pollinated air. There is little doubt that many of the missing exploration parties of the last five decades are among these insane.—Ed.

the peculiarly radio-active soil produces crops, and the reflected light of the sun is intensified and prolonged by the radium qualities of the smooth rock walls which provide a dim, twilight emanation even at midnight.

Kalendar is never *dark*. It gets deep dusk. But no black night. Thus the growing season is FAST.

Snowfall in winter is sometimes very deep. Five to seven feet of snow is common. But there is *no wind*, and no drifting.

Fuel for heat, is wood from the forests, cut and hauled during the summer. Seasons are the reverse of what we in the north temperate zone experience. July and August are the worst months of winter. February is the hottest month of the year.

When the winter is severe (July and August) the farmers all live in OKKA except a skeleton force which remains on the farms to feed stock. In OKKA the snow is melted with live steam. The streets are kept open, and the canals free of ice.

The enclosed, organized nation of Kalendar contains about 18 square miles of extremely fertile land. The territory is intersected into square mile plots, by canals 12 feet wide and six feet deep. There are twelve farms on each normal sector. Three of the sectors contain additional farms because of their slightly larger area. One sector is occupied by the city of OKKA with its homes, manufactures, parks and shops. And one sector is occupied by the King's Palace, granaries, government building, and the homes of the nobles.

The city of OKKA is the trading center. It maintains cobblers, weavers, tailors, boat-builders, carpenters, plumbers, bakers, butchers, grocers, and artisans in hereditary lines. A system exists whereby a boy showing aptitude for painting or sculpture, may be "traded" for the son of an artist who shows no such aptitude. He still lives with his own family. The "trade" merely concerns his occupation, and involves the transfer of the hereditary lines in one generation cycle.

The families of the soldiers also live in OKKA.

The city is sanitary, self-governed, efficient. The "Ogdon" (mayor) is a member of the Kalen's Council of Nobles, appointed by the Kalen every second winter. School is mandatory for all children between ages of six and sixteen years.

The total population of OKKA is 16,000 people, of whom 8,000 are of the "unmarried" generation. Each of the 160 farms has an average population of 5, the farmer, his wife, two children, and a man to help in the fields.

Thus the total population of organized Kalendar is about 17,000 people. It never falls below that figure—and hasn't exceeded 18,000

in more than a century.

The renegade population of the outer valley has been estimated all the way from 3,000 to 10,000 people. Actually each estimate has been a blind guess.

The average farm production of the countryside is about 60,000 bushels of wheat; 30,000 bushels of corn; 30,000 bushels of oats; 30,000 bushels of rye; 30,000 bushels of beans. 2,000 acres are devoted to lush pasturage for cattle and sheep. Another 1,000 acres is devoted to gardens, truck, green corn, etc., which is abundant. Milk is supplied to the entire population through the small herds kept on each farm.

All deliveries are made by flatboat, through the canals.

Sugar is unknown in Kalendar (except that it is supplied to the Kalen's table from the outer world. Supplies being brought in by each rare expedition).

\*Twenty Noble Families, the heads of which comprise the Kalen's Council of Nobles, have beautiful mansions facing the canals and walls on both sides of the sector.

One of the twenty is named "Primate" and lives in a sumptuous palace to the left of the Kalen's own palace.

These nobles comprise the Kalen's escort on his hunting trip, etc. . . . except that the Kalen and Primate may never leave the sector at the same time as these two alone hold the secret of exit from the valley.\*

The sons of the nobles make up the Kalen's Guard. 20 young men.

There are 3 servants in the home of each noble; 10 in the palace of the Primate; 50 in the Kalen's Palace and Gardens; 30 servants are assigned to caring for the sector, keeping the canals clean, the grounds in order, repairing the Kalen's sporting goods.\*\*

Fifty clerks of various ranks, live and work in the government building—which is open at all times to all free citizens of Kalendar.\*\*\*

Athletic games are played by most of the populace, and there is an annual tournament, sort of a local "Olympic Games" on the tournament ground in the Kalen's Sector. This is the big annual event of the nation.

\*It is notable that a serious breach of the law had occurred when John Kalen arrived in Kalendar. The Primate had entrusted his secret to another and had gone hunting. It was fortunate for him that he was Jalu's father. He speaks English and is a master of hypnosis.

\*\*The servants, 147 in number, are slaves captured as children from the renegade population of the outer valley. They are kindly treated and are happy because their lot as slaves in Kalendar is far better than that of the unfortunate renegade population.

\*\*\*The clerks are free subjects of the Kalen.



spoke, fluently, at least five tongues) which went right to his heart. Dewar nodded when Jalu had finished. She spoke sharply at his nod, and Dewar dropped to his knees, touched his forehead to the marble floor.

The mad ones stared unwinkingly at John Kalen. Slowly he looked them over, one by one. Then he did something that brought gasps of consternation from the lips of all who saw. He rose from his throne, strode to stare intently at the nearest of the mad ones. Then he nodded, as though to himself, and strode to the next one. He stared at this one for a long moment, shook his head, moved on. As he did so the second man spat at him. Instantly every arrow in the place was drawn to its head. If Kalen had not held up his hand, the man who spat would have been filled with arrows as though he were a pin-cushion.

Kalen studied each man in turn, as though they were troops, he an inspecting officer. Then he came back to the throne, pointed out seven of the mad ones, had them taken aside.

"I know them. It's hard to pick them out with all the hair on their faces, but there are some I can't mistake."

"But I don't understand, John. How do you happen to recognize them?"

"Since I was a small boy I have been crazy about the exploits of explorers. My father, you know, was like a god to me. He visited the unknown places of the earth—like this one. He was a strange man who could not live where people did the routine, ordinary, civilized things. So, I studied the lives and works of other explorers, when he denied me complete knowledge of his. I know those seven men from pictures of them I have seen at various times. Fortunately, besides being deeply interested, I have an excellent memory. Now, your father will take these seven to the shower spray,\* see that they are scrubbed until they are clean, shaved, and properly dressed. Then, bring the seven back to me."

**N**EXT morning the seven were back. There was something new, radiant about them. They were clean-shaven; their matted hair had been trimmed. Clean clothing had been given them. But for their madness, which gleamed from their eyes, they might have been the explorers they had once been. Kalen studied their faces intently. Then while Jalu remained on the second throne, he took one of the seven into a chamber behind the throne.

Set up in the room was a maze of intricate ma-

chinery, a panel set with switches and dials, and an inclined board fitted with clamps and bands obviously intended to secure a human being.

Selecting one of the madmen, he directed several of the bowmen to strap him on the inclined board, then trained a large projector upon his head. Stepping to the machinery controls he pressed a switch and a high pitched whine came from some hidden generator.

As an afterthought he sent the bowmen from the room, and only Gared Dulon remained. For several minutes the projector beat down on the writhing form of the madman. Then, abruptly, he quieted and stared about dully. Kalen switched off the machine, stepped forward, and while the Primate watched anxiously, released the madman. He addressed him:

"You are Sven Pedin," he said calmly. "Seven years ago you vanished in the jungles, at the headwaters of the Amazon. The world gave you up as lost."

The man simply stared at him. His eyes were blazing with the madness of the "breath." Kalen caught the man by the shoulders, shook him savagely, said.

"Are you Sven Pedin?"

In a low voice came the man's answer, the first words he had uttered, perhaps, in several years—that even remotely resembled words.

"I am Red Eric, the Viking!"\*

Kalen shook him again. "You are not Eric the Red," he stated. "You are Sven Pedin. You are a greater man than Red Eric. You are twice as great as Red Eric. There is nothing, with your vast scientific knowledge, that you may not do. I shall see that you do it. I shall put scientific knowledge and equipment at your disposal. You have no further cause for fear of any kind. You are not mad; you have simply hidden away from terror. Now, the terror has gone, and you must come from hiding. I, Kalen of Kalendar, command it! Say after me, 'I am Sven Pedin! I am Sven Pedin!'"

The man licked his parched lips. His eyes showed the strain under which he labored as he sought to obey.

"I am Sven Pedin! I am Sven Pedin!" he managed to croak.

"I am a great scientist!" urged Kalen. "I am a great scientist!"

A light began to break in the face of the mad one.

"I am Sven Pedin!" he repeated. "I am Sven Pedin! I am a great scientist. I am a great scientist! It's true, I am a great scientist! But who are you? I have never seen you before! And what is this regalia you wear? Where am I?"

"I am the new ruler of Kalendar, a lost world in the high ramparts of the Andes, Mr. Pedin," said John

\*The shower spray is a radio-active spray situated in the cavern which is the only entrance to Kalendar. To those entering the valley, the shower spray is the means of rendering the tissues of their body immune to the burning effect of the radium saturated walls of the valley, and the inevitable serious burns that would result from even touching one of the Okkarians. John Kalen himself suffered such a burn upon first touching the Golden Girl, before he underwent the radio-active bath under the shower spray. This spray, coming from the cliffs, is impregnated with radium salts of a peculiar nature found only in the Kalendar mountains.—Ed.

\*This man has one of the common hallucinations of madmen who, fleeing from their own terrors, imagine themselves some great man of the past, behind whose greatness they try to hide from fear. Sven Pedin, experiencing the terrors through which he must have passed before he somehow sneaked up the tunnel into Kalendar, and became one of the renegades, had made himself believe he was a man who had been dead for nine hundred years.—Ed.



Kalen quietly. "And you are never again to flee from yourself, from your terrors. I have made you sane and, sane, you are one of the world's great scientists. Here in Kalen I have work for you that will fulfill your destiny. Work that will fully bear out the promise of your genius."

"You cured me . . .?"

"Yes," said Kalen, "your brain was inflamed by the pollen of a certain plant. I removed that inflammation with infra red rays. Now, I wish you to do the same thing with six of your scientific compatriots. They are Viljalmir Larson, Michael Verdier, Lucifer Cadget, Vincent Precio, Frank Racine and Pierson Riegel. . . ."

**S**LOWLY Sven Pedin spoke those names, rolling them over his tongue as though they were some precious food. His eyes, fixed on those of John Kalen, were now the eyes of a sane man—though Kalen gave most of the credit to the superb intelligence of Sven Pedin himself.

"Those six great men *here*?" said Pedin.

"Yes. They are mad, as you were. They have been here for all of the time since the world gave them up for lost. You, for instance, Mr. Pedin. Do you know the date?"

"Not exactly, but it must be about the middle of January, 1932."

"Correct, except that it is 1940!"

"1940! And, Pierson Riegel, for one! I was hunting news of him when I . . . when something . . . I don't just know what . . . but I was in the jungles of the Amazon. I had mastered several Indian dialects, and heard some talk of a white man. By the descriptions I knew Pierson Riegel, and began hunting him. He had been lost then for eight years. Now, if I've been lost for eight years, Pierson has been mad, or what the world calls mad, for . . ."

"Sixteen years!" said Kalen. "Now, I wish you to repeat what I have done to you on the brains of those other six men. But before you do it, Pedin, I must exact a promise from you. Bear in mind that I believe it is right and proper that your best place is here in Kalendar, that here is your destiny to be worked out, regardless of what your plans may have been when you . . . when you . . . stepped into darkness, because of 'the breath . . .'"

"Erzpa! I've been trying to remember! The 'breath!' Yes, I remember talk of it, and how it drove men mad. But you wished to exact a promise . . ."

"That you will make no attempt to leave Kalendar without my permission! That you will exact a promise from each of the men whom you will make whole, that he will not attempt to leave Kalendar, ever, without my permission."

Sven Pedin straightened. There was a quiet dignity in him. His eyes were frank, open, wholly untroubled.

"I can make no such promise," he said. "I know

nothing of Kalendar, though it seems clear that I must have suffered horrible things here. My work should be for the betterment of the world, to increase its knowledge. I shall go if it appears right, in my own judgment, for me to do so. But I shall ask the others to promise, and inform you if they agree or refuse."

John Kalen bowed. "I appreciate your sincerity. I shall see that you do not want to leave. For here is perfection, or a basis on which it can be built—from which it may be sent out to the world in a manner you and your brother scientists, after discussion with me, may decide upon. I shall fight for what I believe to be right, and you must keep in mind that my power here is that of life and death."

Sven Pedin bowed.

"If it seems proper to me to oppose you, I shall do so, then. I can see that you will be a worthy antagonist. If, in the end, we are to disagree, so be it."

Kalen put out his hand to Sven Pedin. The two men, sizing each other up, shook hands. Even as they did so, Kalen realized what tremendous potential opposition to himself he was creating, if Pedin, with a brain eight years disordered, turned against him. But great excitement was in him, for he knew that in the seven men he had selected—and in the others who also would be cured, and set as helpers to the seven—he had endowed Kalendar with the best intellects of modern man.

How would their great knowledge be used? Would it be to make Kalendar the perfect place he knew it could be? Or would it, through madness, be turned against John Kalen and his golden Queen? What would these strong men, so many years pariahs, mad pariahs who had known no contact with the world, say and think and feel when they first met the people of Kalendar and Tagoland socially?

A vague terror began to grow in him, and he almost wished he had left Sven Pedin a madman. He could still leave the other six, and lift no obstacles before his own happiness. But John Kalen was a *man*.

"The other six will be sent to you, Pedin," he said. "Dulon, here, will see that part of my palace is set aside for you. I trust that the future will not make it necessary for me to tear down what I have just built. For I will slay you, and all your fellows, to protect Kalendar from the rest of the world."

"If," said Pedin, smiling a little, "you are not yourself destroyed!"

"It's a bargain!" said Kalen grimly, going back to Jalu, his face grave, thoughtful.

## CHAPTER II

### Cradle of Science

**K**ANDU and Jastro and Wherl had been the Kalendarish Council when Kalen had first come to his kingdom. And because they had not known him they



had exiled him, into the jungles outside the village of Kalendar. There he had met Dewar, enemy of the Kalendish people, and had been befriended by him, had befriended him in turn. Reinstated in Kalendar, Kalen had sent Kandu, Jastro and Wherl to Tagoland, to cement friendly relations between the Kalendish and the renegades. That the three were his enemies, because he had thus humiliated them, he knew full well.

But perhaps, when the two alien groups had become one, they would forget, and be thankful to him that he had united Kalendar, and made it the best place in all the world where men might live. And it was for this reason that he restored sanity to the scientists among the renegades, and set aside for them a great wing of the palace, where they were to do whatever seemed proper to them, to make Kalen's own dreams for Kalendar come true.

And then, to estimate the situation, and after Sven Pedin had easily built more graceful boats to ply the canals of Kalendar, with as especially beautiful boat for the royal pair, Kalen and Jalu—the king and queen set forth on a voyage of exploration, guarded by Orkus, the commander of the royal guard, and his loyal henchmen.

"I always wished," said Kalen, when they first set out in their royal barge, "that I had lived in Cleopatra's time, and had been one of her favorites, so that I could ride with her in one of her royal houseboats, on the Nile. Now I know why I was not a contemporary of her's, for nothing could be better than this."

"No, John," Jalu answered softly, "nothing could be better. This is utterly perfect."

As they left the palace sector, they could see across the valley of rich level farms to the wall of the little nation. Along the sheer granite cliff the barge moved, weaving in and out, past the last of the Noble's houses, past farm, and meadow, cattle and country houses, to the great wall with pacing sentries on its top. The great grilled iron gate lifted at their approach and the barge slid through to the outer valley where they could glimpse, miles away, the jungles around Lake Tahi. And in between a grassy, beautiful plain. Far off toward the right was the great geyser, larger even than the geyser in the village of Kalendar. That these geysers had something to do with the perfect climate of Kalendar, Kalen knew. The radio-active elements in the walls that—in some places almost three sheer miles high—surrounded Kalendar, and Tagoland, even beyond Lake Tahi, played their part in the lost world's perfection. They covered the whole strange land, at night, with dim, ethereal glow. Only human beings immunized to radium could live in such a place for any great length of time. The waters of Kalendar were nectar, in which the most delicious of fish swam—thanks to the foresight of Captain Jacob Kalen, father of John. Nature had combined most of her miracles to make of the Lost World of Kalendar a Paradise.

Now and again, as the royal barge took them along

the great canals, Jalu looked toward the jungle areas, and John Kalen could feel her shudder. For three nights of his exile Kalen had struggled through the jungles of Tagoland, and time after time had frozen to immobility, his heart in his throat, as the heavy tread of beasts that must have been monsters, came toward him, hesitated, passed on.

What were those beasts? Panthers? Jaguars? Ocelots? Bears? Wolves? Or unearthly combinations of them? Who could say what this inner world might not show the startled eyes of men, if the men who hunted in the jungles were lucky enough to find them? The fact that they were unknown was what filled John Kalen with misgivings. He read through all the records his father had left—and the old man had kept a diary for the fifty years of his reign here—and found no descriptions of the creatures he knew must inhabit the jungles.

AS the barge touched at small fishing villages along the canals where the executive skill of the erstwhile council was being put to its best use, men came down and smiled at them. At such moments, Jalu, the Golden, was at her best. If she had been an angel, her light could not have shone more brightly. Cleopatra, in her days of greatest glory, could not have been lovelier, more regal. With each passing second she became more dear to John Kalen. He could not think of a time before he had known her without an empty feeling in his heart and a lonely aching in the depth of his soul.

Then he would remember things—how the seven scientists he had rescued from madness had looked at her, when they had been granted audience, just before the beginning of the lazy inspection tour. Their eyes had made Jalu straighten and look away.

The light of Jalu was over all the great amphitheater of the valley. She was the queen of the sunken land, brighter to all its denizens even than the sun—whose light struck straight down into the great pit for less than four hours each day. But when the sun had struck down, and passed the towering ramparts, it left its warmth behind it in the ageless rocks. That warmth gave life to everything in Kalendar—even the hideous, unknown beasts. Life was rampant, lush. Grass grew greener and more luxuriantly—John thought he could almost hear it growing, even above the gentle lapping of the water against the prow of the royal barge—than anywhere John Kalen had ever been in the world.

Paradise!—except for the secrets that all Kalendar knew the jungles must hide.

When night came the barge was moored wherever it might be, and the lovers, while their guard erased itself, so that even the murmuring of their voices could not be heard, sat side by side and gloried in the eerie radiance which possessed Kalendar after "dark."

Now and again, as they sat side by side, Jalu would stiffen. But she would not speak of what was in her



mind, and Kalen would not ask her. For he, too, would usually see. . . .

Formless piles of what appeared at times to be black smoke, or gray smoke, or drifting fog, against the walls of the jungles. Sometimes the piles took shapes like elephants, or tapirs, or wolves—or anything one might care to imagine. Their feet in the leaves made sound, but from their mouths came no sound at all. It was as though the monsters had been struck dumb by the miracle of Kalendar. Now and again beady discs of flame showed fleetingly in the midst of the formless blobs.

Steadily they came out from all three great patches of jungles. And Orkus, the commander, did an unheard-of thing. He approached his sovereigns without waiting to be sent for. There was terror in his face as he looked at Jalu, and spoke in Kalendish.

"Something dreadful is happening tonight," he said. "I feel it. The men feel it. And now, the beasts of the jungles feel it. For they are coming. And note, my queen, that the eyes of the beasts converge upon the royal barge? My life is forfeit, I know, if I offer suggestions, but there is danger here!"

Kalen, who had picked up Kalendish rapidly, understood every word.

"Cast off, Orkus," he said. "Make haste, back to Kalendar and the palace. Station bowmen all around the gunwales of the barge. Your life is forfeit only if anything happens to your queen!"

AS the barge, propelled by a water-wheel contrived by Sven Pedin, got under way, the formless creatures broke into crazy, nightmarish gallops. They started closing in on the barge. They were huge things, and the canal was narrow. Kalen knew, watching them come, that the very least of them could leap onto the boat from either bank.

Orkus' bowmen stood to await the attack. They held their arrows until there was no possibility of missing. Then, they released them, while the barge sped on along the canal that had suddenly become a way of death. No sound came from the pursuing nightmares. The grassy plain seemed only to be a great bed of protoplasm, in ghastly ferment, dotted with eyes of many colors.

Kalen heard the arrows strike into the soft flesh of the charging, silent creatures. But he saw not one of them go down! He saw a gray patch of life, with what appeared to be the rudiments of feet below it, receive one of the longest arrows, and come right on, as though it had not even felt the blow that would have downed an elephant.

"Faster! Faster, Orkus!" he said. "Faster the boat, faster the firing!"

"The arrows, sire," said Orkus. "Soon we shall have shot them all away!"

"Then you must win your way to Kalendar with speed."

How they ever made it, pursued by nightmares, the Kalen was never afterward to remember. But when

they had jumped from the boat, and the Kalen had bidden Jalu, with two guardsmen, to make for the palace, while he remained behind to help Orkus fight off the silently horrible pursuit, he knew that something was happening in Kalendar that had never happened anywhere, in all the world, before. And he knew it had been *planned*, and *ordered* though he, the Kalen, the only one with authority to plan and order anything in Kalendar, knew nothing of the plan or order!

The beasts gave back before the increased fire of Orkus and his men, now augmented by rifle-fire from the rest of the palace guard, and the Kalen whirled back to the palace. He would not leave her now until he knew exactly why this strange unearthly thing had happened.

But though he searched the palace from top to bottom, calling Jalu's name as he went, he could not find her, and she did not answer!

Grimly, he turned toward that part of the palace set aside for the use of the scientists. No sooner had he done so than all that part of the palace became a wall of white-hot flame, through which not even John Kalen's power could help him go! Out of the heart of the flame came the voice of Sven Pedin, grim but triumphant.

"The rulership of Kalendar has passed into new hands, John Kalen! Too bad, but we feel that such a perfect place should be exploited by men with superior knowledge. It is quite impossible for you to thwart us!"

"Where is Jalu, Pedin? Where is my wife?"

"Safe, Kalen! She will be freed—*perhaps*—when we have perfected our control of the beasts, and the beasts have destroyed such Kalendish folk as may oppose us. You doubt our power, Kalen, developed in your absence? Then listen, for at my whim I give voice to the beasts of Kalendar!"

The voice of Sven Pedin ceased. But no sooner had it stopped than a bedlam of sound broke out in Kalendar—sounds such as mankind had never before heard on this earth, because in the days when there had been such sounds, man had not yet been evolved to hear them!

## CHAPTER III

### Rebels of Kalendar

THE eerie light which possessed the wing of the palace assigned to the scientists, became itself a moving entity. It spread rapidly from a scientists' section, into the adjoining rooms. It passed through the marble as though it had not been there, flowing as easily through it as if it had been ether. And the force of it drove the guardsmen from the palace.

The light literally drove John Kalen out into his own courtyard, whence he looked back to see all his palace a blazing pile of light, in which the palace stood



in hot relief, as though it were all aflame.

But inside, he knew, were Jalu and the scientists. They had, by some miracle of science, he decided, compelled the radium waves to their will, and were using them now, combined into sheets of flame, to wall themselves about. Not even the ramparts of Kalendar could have been more effective.

Fleeing before the light at which human eyes could not possibly look for more than a heart-beat of time, the guardsmen moved away from the palace. Kalen himself must also break ground before the impalpable, grim might of the cold, radio-active fire.

And all the time a devil's chorus was going in the great pit that was Kalendar. The roaring as of lions, the coughing of great cats, the bellowing of bulls—all the sounds that great beasts made, including the drumming sound of the alligator when it slams its jaws shut upon its prey—rocketed and rolled back and forth between the endless sounding boards that were the walls of Kalendar.

"Orkus," shouted Kalen. "Around me, with all your men. Signal the people of Kalendar to meet us in the village square at Okka. We are shut off from the palace, the beasts of the jungles have been brought under control by our enemies—and will be forced to destroy us! We must fight for our lives! To Okka, everyone!"

There was a half smile on the face of Orkus as he listened. Here was a Kalen to his liking, one who commanded his men in person, who himself liked a fight against odds. And there was a tremendous, haunting sorrow in the Kalen's eyes, too, as now and again he looked back toward his palace where Jalu was held prisoner. Yet the Kalen never faltered in his flight with the migration to Okka where within the hour, 17,000 people, men, women and children, were mobilizing for battle with the unknown.

The great pile of light in which the palace stood, like a great electric beacon in the far distance, began to grow dim. The sound of the beasts increased in volume, until it made the flesh crawl, and was an assault upon the ears that was almost unbearable.

"Somehow, Orkus," he cried, "they rule the beasts with the rays. When the rays dim at the palace, when the fire seems to burn lower, the sounds of the beasts grow louder. Here they come!"

The great beasts, as though urged forward by the senselessness bred of hydrophobia, flooded into the village streets. Great red tongues were lolling. The light which was the palace was projected over the square as if by a giant magic lantern. Balls of white fire seemed to float like clouds over the village.

The air was suddenly, grimly, filled with poisoned arrows.

A three-inch cannon roared. Kalen saw the shrapnel smash into the wall-to-wall ranks of the formless beasts. He saw red blood, like crimson fire, burst from the shapeless bodies. The sounds the beasts made rose into a mighty crescendo of frenzy—which became mightier than mighty when the precipice walls

hurled back the echoes. Away to his left Kalen heard his command passed along. A machine-gun from the arsenal began to chatter.

ORKUS stood beside the Kalen, panting, trying to tell him something.

"I left word, when you went on your tour, sire," he said, "that our three tractors be brought into the city, piece by piece. They have been reassembled. Perhaps, when we have done our best with machine-guns, and arrows. . . ."

"I'll tell you when, Orkus," said Kalen. "Look toward the palace intermittently, and tell me when anything new transpires, if you can see that far."

The sound of battle filled all Kalendar. The sound of bestial roarings, of rifle shots, of cannon explosion, was like the end of the world, because of the echoes that sounded as though they would never die down in a human lifetime. Still, though the walls of houses on either side of the street—and of all streets—were smeared red with the blood of the beasts, the beasts kept coming. They screamed in rage and fear, yet seemed incapable of retreating. They were like robots, which, set in motion to the front, could not retreat or change their direction. The control of the scientists over them was complete—while the creatures lasted.

"Sire!" said Orkus. "The beasts! I have never dreamed of such a thing. . . ."

"Well?" Kalen shouted at the top of his lungs, with his mouth against Orkus' ear, to make himself audible.

"Strange things have been done. But these are not creatures of the jungles, sire! I see a rabbit, larger than a tai. . . ."

A rabbit as big as a cow! Its squeal of terror magnified in the same proportions!

"And mice, sire!" said Orkus. "And rats! All of them enlarged beyond anything the mind of Kalendar could conceive!"

So, the sounds he heard were the sounds of ordinary creatures—most of them—magnified as their bodies had been magnified by the mad knowledge of Sven Pedin and his associates! But a mouse or a rat as big as a cow, and driven mad with fear, could be a dreadful enemy, a dreadful attacker!

"We'll try the tractors on them shortly, Orkus," said Kalen. "Where are they?"

Orkus pointed. The tractors had driven into the middle of the square, the roaring of their motors lost in the screams of the beasts of Kalendar. Beasts that were piled deeply along all the streets leading off the square. The men and women of Kalendar were fighting with all the courage they had to keep from losing their village to the beasts—and Sven Pedin's men.

"Sire," said Orkus, "notice what drives the beasts to us? While the light is focused over the square, the rays that keep Kalendar aglow at night, throughout the whole area of the valley, are missing!"

"I know," said Kalen. "Mad scientists have har-



nessed and confined the rays to their own purpose. The beasts simply do the natural thing, and charge blindly at the source of light, because they have never learned the meaning of the dark! There has never been real darkness in Kalendar, until tonight. Look, the geyser!"

Orkus whirled to look at the geyser in the village, the beautiful geyser which, at night, reflected the prismatic colors of the radiations from the walls of Kalendar. No water spouted from it! They both knew, then, that the waters of the great geyser had also fallen away to a trickle or less—and Kalen's heart sank. Heaven only knew—and perhaps Sven Pedin did—what the failure of the geysers would do to the climate and the water supply of Kalendar.

If the husbandry failed, and there was no food, there could be no life, for very long, in Kalendar. If the granaries were not fully stocked. . . .

"Look, sire!" said Orkus. The cupola of the palace!"

KALEN whirled and looked up. The cupola of the palace seemed to hang above the square of Okra, though it was five miles away! It looked like the calyx of a great white flower—with white flame for the petals. In the midst of it, like a priestess out of some olden time, when the world was very young, and gods and men mingled with one another, stood Jalu the Golden One, her arms uplifted, her face raised as though she prayed.

Angel Gabriel, Kalen thought, must look as Jalu's image looked at this moment. So distinct, in the midst of the glare, was she that Kalen could see every gorgeous curve of her, the lithe perfection of her limbs, the glory of her golden hair.

Her voice cut through the sounds the beast made, and the sounds of the Kalendish battle to survive.

"Parley with the rebels, sire! Parley and save our people! They only wish to be escorted beyond the rim, and beyond the deserts back of the rim, so that they may return to their homes—safe after they have passed the areas where the 'breath' might strike them down again!"

Kalen's heart sank. Jalu, prisoner of Sven Pedin, was begging him to let the rebels go—when the rebels had plainly tried to destroy every living thing in Kalendar. But what was this? Jalu, completing her speech, continued, contradicting it:

"I have said these words because I promised. I promised because, if I did not, Sven Pedin and his rebels swore to destroy all the village, and every living thing in it, with the same power they have imposed upon the beasts! But here me, Sire! If you capitulate to the rebels, I shall cast myself down from this high place, into the heart of the flames! I would rather die than that Kalendar be less than what we both desire!"

Kalen, his face a mask of grim composure, snapped at Orkus:

"You heard? Set the tractors in motion. Cover

them with every sort of fire we command. Have the people of Kalendar attack behind the tractors, and the fire of our guns, rifles and arrows. Never a backward step for any man or woman, while he or she is alive, and can stand. Let there be no end until the danger from the beasts is ended! After that I shall have other commands for you!"

Kalen turned and looked at the angelic figure in the light-projected cupola of the palace. He kissed the tips of his fingers to her image as the tractors began to roll.

## CHAPTER IV

### Counterattack

JOHN KALEN had read of mythical lands where the tiniest of creatures could become, in a split second, great monsters. Of lands where the greatest of beasts could be reduced to invisibility for very smallness. That such things were possible by mechanical means he had never believed. But now he had no choice. And he understood why the cries of the charging creatures were so outlandish. A flea, for example, blown up by mechanical magic to the size of a donkey, would at least make a sound that a man could hear—but which he had never heard before, because the noise the creature ordinarily made was above the human range of hearing.

It was a horrible thing to contemplate. In this luxurious fairyland, protected by the mighty ramparts of the Andes, all sorts of crawling creatures could be found—all the bugs, and worms, and grubs, and snakes, and bees, and butterflies. For the science of Sven Pedin and his associates to make them grow to tremendous proportions with the aid of the radioactive properties of Kalendar itself, not only did not now seem unreasonable, or impossible, but the proof was here before his eyes.

And so he took active command of the counter-attack, as the men and women of Kalendar, and even the sturdiest children, understood that they must fight to the end, or the very weight of numbers, the monstrous size of the attackers, would smother them, and they would die.

Kalen jumped to one of the tractors, driven by a Kalen guardsman who appeared to be thoroughly enjoying the task laid out for him. The tractor, in effect, was a tank of murderous power.

It headed into one of the streets which was filled from side to side with a nightmare horde of creatures. Great insects from the soft loam, and from under the rocks of Kalendar. They piled one atop the other in the rush to reach the lights of Okka. It was better that it happened like this, that the creatures come to light to be destroyed, than that they simply remain motionless in the dark—growing out of all conceivable bounds, until the valley was a horror of nightmare growths.

Out of the night, into the glow of the headlights



of the tractors, came eyes that were like fire, like emeralds, like diamonds—and that were as big as dinner plates. Eyes blazing with the madness of abysmal terror which the creatures themselves could not understand. To those creatures the tractors, the people who drove them, were simply other creatures that, like themselves, sought the light for a reason none could comprehend.

Bullets sprayed from the guns mounted on the tractors, straight into the midst of the countless eyes. Kalen saw some of the eyes go out like broken globes. He saw some of the creatures wilt like deflated balloons, and slither down among their fellows, or be carried on the backs of their fellows. Through the spaces between creatures that were in dreadful ferment he could see some of the fallen which were being trampled into bloody shapelessness by their own kind, or shot down by the defenders of Kalendar.

**T**HEN they made contact and Kalen was hanging on, holding his breath with the horror of it, as the tractor rode onto the squirming bodies.

Gory gouts of blood splashed right and left before the tractor Juggernaut. The odor of destruction was a grim and ghastly thing. Kalen, his face grim, noticed some of the creatures as they came. A beetle forced its way through the press to meet the tractor. Its mandibles were scythes, many feet in length, armed with spines that were like swords. The beetle attacked the tractor head on, and for a moment the motor of the tractor hammered and pounded and could not advance. Calmly the driver smashed at the beetle with leaden slugs from his machine gun.

One of the slashing mandibles neatly decapitated the driver. The tractor swerved to the right, would have smashed into a house-wall, had not John Kalen himself, swung her back into line, and driven her on, over the body of the smashed and broken and mephitic beetle.

A great, hairy creature suddenly possessed the street; filled it from side to side. It came forward with hideous undulations, rising in waves along its body . . .

"A caterpillar!" gasped Kalen. "It could crawl over a man and smother him, perhaps even crush him, with its weight!"

He speeded up the tractor to meet this new menace. It rocked and rolled and bucked as it slid over the dismembered parts of creatures Kalen had no time to catalogue in his mind. The countless eyes of the caterpillar were blazing as Kalen smashed headlong into it.

The tractor hesitated for just a moment. It was as though it had run into an invisible net, or its tractors had simply struck sand, or mud. Scarcely noticeable—and then the tractor was eating its way through the street, and through the Paracelsan incubus.

Street's end, and out of other streets the tractors were debouching, and the people of Kalendar. They were fighting as human beings had never fought be-

fore in Kalen's experience. Their battle-cries were cheering to a commander who needed the bravest his fighters could give him. They were attacking with everything—with the weapons of war, and with clubs, with pitch-forks, and shovels, and pick-axes, and scythes, and with swords and knives. The Kalendish had driven the creatures back from the village. Now that they seemed to have the situation in hand, or would have, as soon as they had cleared the canals beyond the village, through which the creatures had come on the bodies of one another—there was much to be done in Okka, to make it livable again.

While the Kalendish drove the creatures back, or slaughtered them as they charged, Kalen selected every fourth man, and all the women, and sent them back into the village.

The houses of the village were all of stone. He bade the natives bar their doors—and then put that which the horror had left in the streets to the torch. As he issued the command—which, because royally issued, became a "decree"—he smiled grimly to himself, trying not to think of danger all this might bring to Jalu the Golden.

For with fire raging in the streets of Okka, destroying the vestiges of the beasts, the scientists who had loosed the horror would be desperate.

Pedin's only chance of escape lay in the stoppage of the geysers which fed the canals. Once the canals emptied themselves down the circular tunnel he could walk down the steps to freedom—but that time was still many hours, perhaps days, distant. Meantime there was much to be done.

Thinking of winged creatures, Kalen's heart went cold. What sort of winged creatures were there in Kalendar? He had seen many small birds with gorgeous plumage, several varieties of hawks. Why had not the black magic of Sven Pedin done something with these? He was afraid even to think of them, lest his thoughts travel telepathically and the scientist rectify the apparent oversight.

**B**ACK in Okka, supervising the cleansing of the village, his ears became accustomed to the sounds of battle in the valley beyond the canals. The tractors had driven over canals on the hastily contrived causeways, and were racing and roaring and crashing back and forth in the fields beyond.

The Kalendish folk had the situation in hand at the moment, provided they did not grow so weary that fresh vanguards of the beasts might overthrow them.

Kalen now led his guard toward the palace. Five miles of weary trek before he looked up at the cupola in the projection of which he had last seen Jalu. For a moment he thought the strange fire the scientists had made, encompassing the palace, had devoured or was devouring her. For he saw her dimly through sheets of flame, like a white statue in the midst of a burning building. But she was looking right at him, and he knew that she lived.

"If anything happened to you," he directed silent





Bravely the warriors of Kalender fought against the horde of incredible monsters that swarmed out of the darkness



words at her, "I would slay Sven Pedin and his associates as I have slain the beasts they created. I would do it if I had to smash my way through this fire, whatever it may be."

Even as he watched Jalu, and heard the sounds of battle in the valley miles away and the sound of flames increased within the palace, two masculine figures, dressed in what seemed to be golden armor, moved up out of the cold flames that enveloped the palace, to stand before Jalu. He could not, of course, hear what they said to his queen. But he could see the proud lift of her head, and sense her contempt for these men who were not hesitating to sacrifice lives for their own escape from the lost world of Kalendar. One of the men, Sven Pedin himself, Kalen saw when the man half-turned, grasped the wrist of Jalu.

Jalu thrust him back. There was tremendous power in Jalu by Nature, and now, in her fury, her power was greater than that of any man. Sven Pedin went down, out of sight of Kalen, from her thrust. Curses came out of the flame, and five more men appeared—all the men of Sven Pedin, unless he had taken as his assistants, during Kalen's absence from the palace, more of the erstwhile mad ones. There had been fully two score of one-time outside dwellers he might have used.

Violent hands were laid upon the golden one. Kalen, unthinking, cried out to her.

"Jalu! Jalu!"

She raised her head and saw him then, and he could feel her love for him flow out through the cold flame, and envelop him, and warm him with its steadfastness. But before Jalu could answer, Sven Pedin's voice spoke out of the fire.

"You have beaten us temporarily, Kalen," it said. "But we are determined. We are armed with knives. We are coming out of the palace, with your Queen as a hostage. There will be knives against her lovely body. If anything happens to any one of us, she will die, unless . . ."

"Unless what?" The Kalen's voice was heavy.

"Unless you give us your word that we will be allowed to go forth in safety from Kalendar."

"It is useless for you to give such word, John," came the voice of Jalu, strong with courage, "for I will die before I will allow them to so make use of me!"

"You heard, Pedin?" said Kalen. "I do not need to answer. You are staying to be punished. The brains that conceived of the beasts can do the things I wish done for Kalendar, under guard. The treason which caused their coming into being can bring the curious of the world to Kalendar, to destroy it, to overrun it, to make it less than the perfection I desire. So, you shall not go! And if anything happens to Jalu I shall destroy all of you, to the last man, with the slowest of slow tortures!"

There was a long pause before Pedin answered again.

"Then hear me, Kalen! What I have done to the

beasts I can do to the birds!"

"I know. It will make no difference. Birds as big as rocks will still have to come close to human beings to strike and slay—and can themselves be struck and slain!"

"And I can, Kalen," went on Pedin, "do the same thing to your people! Think of men, women and children so big that their feet would smash in the roofs of their own houses as they walk! Think of *human* monsters released in the valley—monsters so big they could not possibly squeeze through the tunnel by which escape is possible! What do you think of *that*, Kalen?"

"I do not change my answer—unless Jalu sees fit to change hers."

"Can you believe, John, that I would change?"

"Then, Pedin," said Kalen, "I shall capture you!"

No sooner had he spoken than the many hands snatched Jalu the golden one from sight, into the heart of the strange cold-hot flame. She went without protest, struggle, or a single cry.

## CHAPTER V

### Proof of the Pudding

**J**UST what scientific principle was back of what Pedin had done in Kalendar? And was planning to do to the inhabitants? And why hadn't the concentrated rays worked on men as well as animals from the beginning? That it was possible to divert the rays from human beings seemed certain. And Pedin must have made sure of that, not caring himself to be in Kalendar when and if it became filled with Gullivers. But now, he had promised to turn perfect Kalendar into a hell beyond imagining. Would he really go so far?

As though in answer to Kalen's thought, the voice of Pedin again came out of the light which surrounded, emanated from the palace.

"I warned you, Kalen. Now I'll prove that I can do it!"

Kalen's heart dropped into his boots. His mind had been bent on the task of somehow releasing Jalu, though he had so far not thought of a single possible way. The sound of struggle against the beasts had almost died out toward Tagoland, where the citizens of both Kalendar and Tagoland were mopping up on the Frankenstein monsters of Pedin.

In a matter of an hour or so, the struggle would be over.

But a strange, awesome tension was growing in the valley of Kalendar. The dim light which usually blazed was no longer in evidence, because Pedin's science had harnessed it to the palace of the *Kalens*. Thus the bottom of the valley was black as Erebus. A strange coldness was settling over the valley, too, and Kalen bethought himself of the two geysers that had subsided, and of their effect in turn upon the warm canals which bisected the valley, east and west,



north and south.

The settling coldness filled Kalen with dismay. Kalendar's floor was a mile above sea-level. Its surrounding peaks were sometimes as high as nineteen thousand feet above sea-level. The sun's rays, warming the walls, kept them warm until far into the dim-lighted night. They were cooling faster tonight than they had at any time since Kalen had come to his kingdom.

Kalen shivered, wondering if, by disrupting the routine of nature, Pedin and his associates had not already done her damage that might never be rectified. A cold wave would destroy the jungles of Kalendar, perhaps. It would destroy the fruits of the trees, the grains of the field. And whence could Kalendish folk then find food with which to survive?

Kalen gritted his teeth. If Pedin had done such a thing to Kalendar, then he would wish, before the end, that he had never been born! Kalen imagined holding the man's neck between his palms, closing the hands, and slowly twisting, until Pedin died. He cursed himself for having given Pedin back his sanity. Yet he knew he would have done it all over again. Kalendar the perfect needed the brains of Pedin. Somehow or other Kalen had failed to impress upon Pedin the value of remaining in Kalendar, as against going into the selfish outside world.

All the best that outside world had to offer could, in time, be brought into Kalendar. Even motion pictures! The secret of the place had been kept for fifteen centuries, proof that it might be kept yet another fifteen centuries. And now, if Pedin, making free with the laws of nature, as written for Kalendar, destroyed the paradise, or made it less a paradise than it could be. . . .

A LONG-DRAWN cry of terror burst from the heart of the valley. It wasn't the cry of one person, or of a dozen, or of scores, but of all the people who were out there, destroying the beasts. The cry was one which, wordless, yet somehow described a cataclysmic happening, beyond the power of man's chosen words to relate.

Kalen, fear gripping his throat, half expecting to find men growing before his eyes, to gigantic proportions, or to find that he himself was shooting up like a rocket, raced across the palace sector, and out into the valley. As he ran he shouted:

"Orkus! Orkus! What's going on out here?"

But his voice could not be heard above the screaming of the Kalendish, and for several moments none of his subjects recognized their ruler. When those nearest him did, they flung themselves on their faces in terror, that they had not recognized him sooner. But even as they did so he could read a certain something in their eyes. . . .

His people were wondering if his own coming to power in Kalendar had not brought this on them. In effect, he knew it had. For had he not become the *Kalen*, and restored and caused to be restored, the

sanity of the principal scientists among the renegades, this ghastly thing which made them scream in terror would not be coming to pass.

There was a shout in answer to his call for Orkus, after his people had passed the word along:

"Orkus! The *Kalen* is calling for his commander!"

Kalen halted, frozen in his tracks, and knew the answer at once. Pedin had selected a victim for his proof of what he could do to mankind with his rays. He had selected the commander of the guard, Loyal Orkus himself!

Kalen heard the commander coming. Orkus had been leading the fighters against the beasts, and had driven them back across the wall toward Tagoland. Now, hearing his name, Orkus was coming back. But his voice came from high up!

In the pitch darkness Kalen could not see his commander, but he knew the truth. And the great voice of the commander was like thunder in the valley. It grew as the voice approached. And as it came it seemed to mount into the air, as though the sound itself were shot aloft. Orkus, returning to his master, was growing into the sky with ghastly speed!

The cry which Kalen had first heard had come from those nearest Orkus—who had seen him start growing. The cry had come from mouth to mouth, back to Kalen, traveling with the speed of which only bad news is always capable.

In heaven's name, what unimaginable horror *was* this? The sound of Orkus' voice, as he kept screaming madly, "Who calls Orkus to his master?" simply *soared* into the sky. The feeling that an invisible giant was rushing upon him took possession of Kalen. And his people, there in the dark ahead of him, were racing and screaming away from Orkus' shouting, as they had not fled from the beasts of Kalendar. What a horror it must have been for them, when one of their own number began to grow to Gargantuan proportions! It was enough to fill them with terror already, that the dim glow which always filled their valley by night had faded out, and that animals they had always trodden upon, unheeding, had become monsters they had been compelled to exterminate, with everything in their power.

Kalen began to feel the ground tremble underfoot. Orkus' voice, now high above the floor of the valley, broke into great booming laughter. And then, dimly, the monster began to appear out of the gloom. When Kalen hazarded a guess as to Orkus' height he could not believe it himself. Orkus was many times the normal height of Orkus, and many times his girth—and still growing. What such mad growth did to the human brain there was no way at all of knowing—yet.

But this thing that Pedin had done to Orkus, Kalen knew he could do to every human being in Kalendar if he wished—including *Jalu*! *Jalu*, the Golden, *Jalu* the perfect, could become a monster like Orkus. And if she retained her magic beauty the fact would but add to the horror of it.



**H**ORROR gripped Kalen as he saw Orkus marching. Orkus, looking down from his swiftly and constantly increasing height, used every possible care to keep from trampling his people underfoot, thus proving one thing more to Kalen: human consideration was not driven from human beings by the rays. Now and again Orkus stooped from his great height, and gathered up several people in his mighty hands, setting them aside in safety.

Now and again he moved this way or that, to keep from stepping into the canals and clogging them up completely. He moved through the edge of the fields of Kalendar, and smashed the trees flat with his great bare feet. His legs were vast columns, his arms were like trees from which limbs had been shorn—save that his arms were hairy, and the hair itself was almost like the limbs of trees.

"Ho! Ho!" cried Orkus. "Who calls Orkus to his master?"

"Orkus!" yelled Kalen. "Orkus! Do you realize what is happening to you? Listen to me! I, the Kalen of Kalendar, command you to listen. You are in deadly danger. There is nothing to stop your growth, save only the walls of Kalendar. If you grow until you fill the valley from side to side, and keep on growing, your own growth will catch you in the valley, like a great rat in a great trap, and you will die! It is your life that is at stake."

Orkus paused, clearly hearing the voice of his master. His eyes gleamed as he looked down, and the gleaming eyes seemed actually to shoot up to greater height. Kalen could almost hear the fear in the ballooning body of Orkus. And now he had the ear of the giant Orkus, had made the monster afraid.

"What shall I do, sire?" he said. Perhaps he had not meant to speak loudly, but the result of Orkus' voice, crashing against the great ramparts of the Andes, was a foregone conclusion. The walls themselves seemed to shake and tremble with the impact. Far down the valley a rock slid from the tipmost heights, crashed, into the valley, into the jungles beyond Lake Tahi.

"Go to the far end of the valley, Orkus," said Kalen, desperately, his voice a squeak compared to that of Orkus, so that he wondered if the monster would even hear his voice, from among the rocketing, booming echoes of his own, "around the biggest bend in the walls, and stay there. If you continue to grow, try to see whether or not you can climb out of the valley. Not by the way that ordinary-sized people come in, but by the cliffs themselves. Perhaps, beyond the influence of the rays . . ."

Orkus waited to hear no more. The big man, understanding, and knowing that even seconds were precious, turned swiftly. Now, running away, he lost no time, wasted no precious seconds to guard against placing his tremendous feet upon the bodies of his own people. He simply ran to save his life, and his people made way for him, saving their lives if they could. Their screams of terror ranged and rolled and

echoed all through Kalendar.

And then, Orkus was gone, and Kalen, suspecting what might next happen, turned back to the village of Kalendar, his heart heavy in his breast, his fury against Pedin growing by leaps and bounds.

**T**HE Kalendar cleaners had worked wonders in the streets of Okka. Much of the mess of destruction had been cleared away, buried, burned, destroyed. Okka was livable again, or would be with a few more hours of work. Little in the nation seemed to have changed, except that the cold light still possessed the palace.

Standing before the palace, his face a mask of concentration, was Gared Dulon, the Primate, Jalu's father. That the man loved his daughter Kalen knew. That his intelligence was worth calling into conference was unquestionable.

"The Kalendish folk," said Kalen, "are swift, efficient workers. I am amazed that they completed the cleaning-up task so soon."

"The beasts," said Dulon, without turning his head, "dwindled to normal size after they died. A few minutes after. It took time for them to grow, time for them to dwindle. But dwindle they did—and all our people had to do was sweep up corpses with brooms. The corpses were thickly piled, that's all, as though a horde of locusts had attacked the village of Kalendar. Now, sire, what shall we do? What do you think will be the next move of the foreigners you restored to sanity?"

Kalen winced, detecting reproach in the tone of Dulon's voice.

"I am going to accede to the wishes of Pedin," said Kalen. "He and his men have me beaten. And it means that the secret of Kalendar will be given to the world."

Kalen raised his voice, calling to Pedin:

"I've had enough, Pedin! I'll provide safe-conduct for you and your men, out of Kalendar, and beyond the reach of Erzpa, provided you will leave behind you all scientific observations you have made."

No answer came from the palace. Not even Jalu made answer. That something was wrong was thus definitely and instantly proved.

"Answer me, Pedin!" bellowed Kalen. Dulon added his voice to that of Kalen. "Answer, Pedin! It is a fair compromise."

But Pedin did not answer, nor did any of his associates, nor Jalu.

It was the palace itself which made an answer!

## CHAPTER VI

### Deep Aurora

**A**RROWS of light and pencils of light, speared out from the big globe of fire that hemmed the palace around. With them as they sped went a crackling sound, such as snow blink made against a cold and



starry night. Wierdly the pencils sped away, in all directions through Kalendar. As they went they made, each of them, and all of them together, the crackling sound, the most awe-inspiring Kalen had ever listened to.

They struck the jungles, like tiny streaks of lightning, and were gone. They struck the walls of Kalendar and seemed to stick there, like light-arrows driven deep into the stone by invisible bows in invisible hands.

Far down the valley sounded a shriek, as though a giant were dying in torment. It came to Kalen that it was the voice of Orkus, and he wondered how the giant died, and whether the shriek were the last the man would ever make. If Pedin caused the death of Orkus . . .

Kalen pressed forward, but the Primate, father of Jalu, would not approach the palace. Instead he turned and vanished in the direction of his own dwelling place, with little moans in his throat which seemed to Kalen to be moans of fear, and Kalen thought his Primate was running away to hide, because there had, tonight, been quite too many unbelievable things in Kalendar.

Kalen found that he could get closer to the palace than had hitherto been possible. If virtue continued to be lost by the light that globed the palace, and he could win through it . . .

"Jalu!" he called. "Jalu!"

But out of the palace came no sound whatever, save the crackling of the arrows of light as they sped here and there, and everywhere, through Kalendar. Kalen noted an odd thing as the light streaks sped away: they struck him, caromed off, or passed through him, yet they did him no harm. He could not even feel them.

Closer he pressed to the palace, when he discovered that he was somehow immune to the rays. Now he was mounting the steps of the palace of *Kalens*, calling out as he went to Jalu the Golden:

"What is happening? Are you all right, Jalu?"

And still no sound came from the palace, save the crackling of light. But near the great door that stood open, Kalen turned and looked back—to see a sea of faces as the Kalendish folk pressed forward behind him.

And over their heads, while he waited for the rays to diminish even further, so that he might fight through to the inside of his palace, he saw something that somehow struck hope into his heart. The geyser, miles away toward the village, erupted with a great roar. So much, at least, was returning to normal—though the geyser erupted to a greater height than he or anyone in Kalendar had ever seen it, as though it spouted its waters with all the force that had been dammed up since they had receded to nothing, through some necromancy of the scientists.

If the great geyser, out in the grassy plain, were also erupting, perhaps all Kalendar was returning to normal. But what of Jalu?

HE could stand the suspense no longer. He was going in, no matter what the rays did to him. The dome of light about the palace was growing slightly dimmer, but only slightly. It might take hours before the lights returned to normal, as the geysers were returning. He could not spend hours away from Jalu. The silence of the people within the palace was ominous.

He whirled, his back to them, to make the rush into the heart of the fire. In their eyes he had seen what he thought was accusation—accusation of him, that he was afraid, and he could not face it. Better to face the fires themselves. Into the thick of them, then, he plunged. Their heat seemed to rip the very flesh from his bones. Yet he did not fall, did not even stagger, as he felt the stones of the great hallway under his feet.

He swerved toward the door of the hallway that led to the wing that had been set aside for the scientists. As he did so, the bright glow went out in a room to his right, as light goes out when a switch is snapped off.

He hurried into that room, panting, looking about him for the glorious form of his beloved. But she was not there, and the room was empty. The fire seemed to have wrought no havoc on the divans, the tables. Everything was as he had last seen it.

Having lost Jalu to Pedin and his associates, because he had allowed her to walk to the palace ahead of him, to be captured, he was now intent, though his life be forfeit, on regaining her. There would be no life worth living without her.

"Jalu!" he called, his voice like a raven's croaking. "Jalu!"

But still there was no answer. Some of his breath regained, he tried again to breach the door, still guarded by the flames the scientists had spun around them as a fortress in which to make terms with Kalen. And here, for a minute or so, the fires held him back. Then with head bowed, as though he fought against a hurricane, he flung himself forward. It was as though he swam against a terrific current, fought a cyclone, or pushed against a mighty door that moved ever so slightly. The fact that he was not hurled back, that he did not drown, that the cyclone did not destroy him, was proof that he could win if he kept on fighting.

And keep on fighting he did, until he suddenly burst into a great room where there was no fighting, but only calm and peace—with all the sounds of Kalendar drowned out—and saw the machines, or some of them, that Pedin and his associates had made.

But only their wreckage, for Jalu the Golden, an angel of destruction in her fury at being held prisoner, had gone berserk among the machines. With a great club in her hand, a club that would have been heavy even for the hand of Orkus, she was laying about her. She brought the club down upon a domed, glass thing of huge proportions, in which tiny wheels were in motion—and in the instant the dome was smashed



asunder, and the wheels were ripped apart, and the delicate machinery was in ruins.

Kalen, seeing none of the others, whirled and looked back the way he had come. He could now see through the door of the palace, out of the wing of the scientists. Little by little, destroying the machines that Pedin had made, Jalu the Golden was releasing the power of the rays.

Kalen, smiling a little, did not interfere. Jalu, sensing his presence, turned and looked at him. But her eyes were filmed as though she did not see him. She turned back to her work of destruction, and Kalen followed her—from room to room as she moved, destroying the work of the hands and brains of Pedin and his associates.

AND finally, when she was finished, and all the work of the scientists was in ruins; over all Kalendar everything was normal. The glow that came each night had come again. The geysers roared, as the great, hot, water-volcano erupted. Jalu, making an end, dropped the great club and ran to Kalen's arms.

He kissed, and was kissed by her.

"Where is Pedin?" he asked. "Where are Pedin and his men?"

"I happened to remember something," she said, "while they were holding me prisoner, and promising that dire things should happen to Kalendar and its people. There is a legend of Kalendar, a tale of a ruler of centuries ago—the very first chief. He discovered this place by accident, as he was hunting. And the place was guarded by monsters and great beasts. That the great pit was a place of gold, this ruler and all his people knew, because of the way it glowed at night. And so, it must be conquered. He caused a great cudgel to be hewn from the stoutest wood of the forest, and upon it he asked the blessing of all the priests of the time, the priests of his own people, the priests of the natives of this high land. And then he lowered himself into Kalendar, conquered it with his blessed cudgel, became the first chief, and named the place Tagoland. It simply occurred to me that whether or not there was any truth in the legend, a lot could be said for the persuasive qualities of a nice heavy club.\*

"So I got the club from the treasure room, and came to find Pedin and his associates. I am afraid I was

a little coquettish, John! For one by one, I lured the men away from Pedin, and from one another—lured each one when the others did not notice. When each man came, I struck but once with the club."

"Jalu, you *didn't*! You didn't knock them out, one by one!"

"I did, John. I knew myself as the Queen of Kalendar. I also knew myself as a woman who wished to be back with her Kalen. And I couldn't be queen or wife while I was a prisoner of the rebels. I did what seemed to me to be the simplest thing. And when I had put the last one out of commission, I started work on their machines. The result you can see for yourself!"

Kalen kissed her again. Then, with Jalu as his guide he went, one after another, to the rooms where Jalu had outwitted the scientists. By the time they had been gathered together, Kalendar had returned to normal, so far as its nature was concerned.

Pedin, the only one of the scientists still alive, looked very sheepish and resigned.

"Pedin," said John Kalen, "I once asked you to make me a promise. I ask it again. Make it, and you may live and work again, though you'll be watched. I wish you to use the genius you displayed in enlarging the beasts, in harnessing the lightnings of Kalendar, to make Kalendar the Utopia men have sought since they realized that life, and the world, were far from perfect."

"The promise, Sire," said Pedin, bowing in all humility, "is freely given. But there is a condition . . ."

"And that?"

"That your Queen forgive me too, and try to forget the indignity imposed upon her. For I would be unhappy all my life if I knew that she could not forgive or forget. You see, Sire, even when I was sure that, with the experiment upon Orkus, we would force you to allow us to leave Kalendar, I was surer still of something else: that if I left Kalendar, never to come back, the eyes of Jalu would haunt me forever."

Jalu the Golden spoke, her voice like music.

"It is a glorious thing to be so appreciated by genius. I have already forgotten. I now forgive. . . ."

The scientist dropped to his knees instantly, in obeisance to Jalu the Golden. Kalen, worshipping her as he did, awed as he would always be by her almost divine beauty, almost knelt to do her honor himself. But then he remembered that he was the *Kalen*, who did not accord honors, but received them. The thought made him grin. Jalu, sensing his delight, turned and looked at him. And perhaps she read his thoughts about honors given and received—and gave him the greatest within her power.

She rushed into his arms, that he might hold her close. The coming of Orkus—a puzzled Orkus, again of normal size—at the head of the palace guard, interrupted the silent embrace of the Kalen and Queen who, though they lived together until both were of a great age, would always be lovers.

THE END.

\*According to legend, fifteen centuries ago, an eagle left a baby boy in the valley of Tagoland. Later another eagle deposited a baby girl. This pair became the parents of the twenty noble families which comprise the ruling council.

Council replaced the Chief of the legend of the Cudgel. This chief, believing the radium to be gold, had lowered himself to the valley floor by ropes, fought off the jungle beasts and built a home. Some braves and squaws had followed him and from them descend the population of the nation.

The renegades of Tagoland are more obscure as to origin. Outcasts from the walled nation include explorers who have by chance climbed the tunnel during the one day each year that it can be freed of water. They also include convicted criminals, for Kalendar maintains no penal institution.

In addition the renegades of Tagoland include several thousand persons concerning whom nothing is known.—Ed.



## THE LITTLE PEOPLE

(Concluded from page 27)

Dr. Bolton extended his hand toward the pair that stood arm in arm. The little man struck at his fingers with the pin he had picked up, pricking him.

"We will not be your slaves!" Atho piped defiantly. And beside him, Elva sent a pleading glance at Scott and Helena.

Dr. Bolton gasped, then scowled blackly. "Little man, I'll—"

His hand reached again, as though to grasp Atho and squeeze—

Scott clutched the scientist's arm and whirled him about.

"I've had enough of this, Dr. Bolton!" he blazed. "For three days you've played with these creatures like an all-powerful god. You forced Helena to make those little clothes that are utterly hateful to them. You've been trying to cram our civilization down their throats. You want to take them from their free, happy life in the wild and gear them like tiny cogs in our mechanical civilization. Can't you see it would destroy their souls? Can't you see the pain and fright in their little eyes as we monsters talk over their fate?"

"And can't you see how those two love one another, man and girl, just as Scott and I do?" Helena murmured, staring down tenderly at Elva in Atho's arms.

"They're entitled to their own lives, and they're going free!" Scott concluded. "I won't let them be the guinea-pigs of science, the playthings of the world.

They were never meant for that."

"How romantic!" scoffed Dr. Bolton. "But from the practical, scientific viewpoint, it's silly talk." His voice became harsh. "Scott, if you stand in my way—"

But Scott was through talking.

His fist lashed out, clipping the scientist neatly on the chin. Without a sound he crumpled to the floor.

"Sorry, Helena, I had to do it," Scott said.

Shock faded from Helena's face. "You had to do it," she agreed. "He'll get over it. He has all the data he needs, to publish a paper. And Koro's body as proof. And some day he'll realize we were right. I'm sure he will. It was just his scientific zeal and the wrong viewpoint on the Little Folk."

They smiled down at the Little Folk, arm in arm. Atho and Elva, also arm in arm, smiled back. That one thing the race of giants and race of midgets had in common, if nothing else.

"Will your people be safe in a new place soon?" Scott asked.

Atho nodded. "They are migrating now. By tomorrow, there will be no trace of them."

Scott strode to the door and opened it. The Little Folk leaped to the floor and followed as he opened the door leading out into the still, calm night. Like scampering kittens, the little people melted into shadow, capering in their sheer delight.

And faintly, the two Big People seemed to hear the tinkle of fairy horns and the laughter of tiny voices, under the soft full moon. . . .

# HOW NEWSREELS COVER THE WAR!

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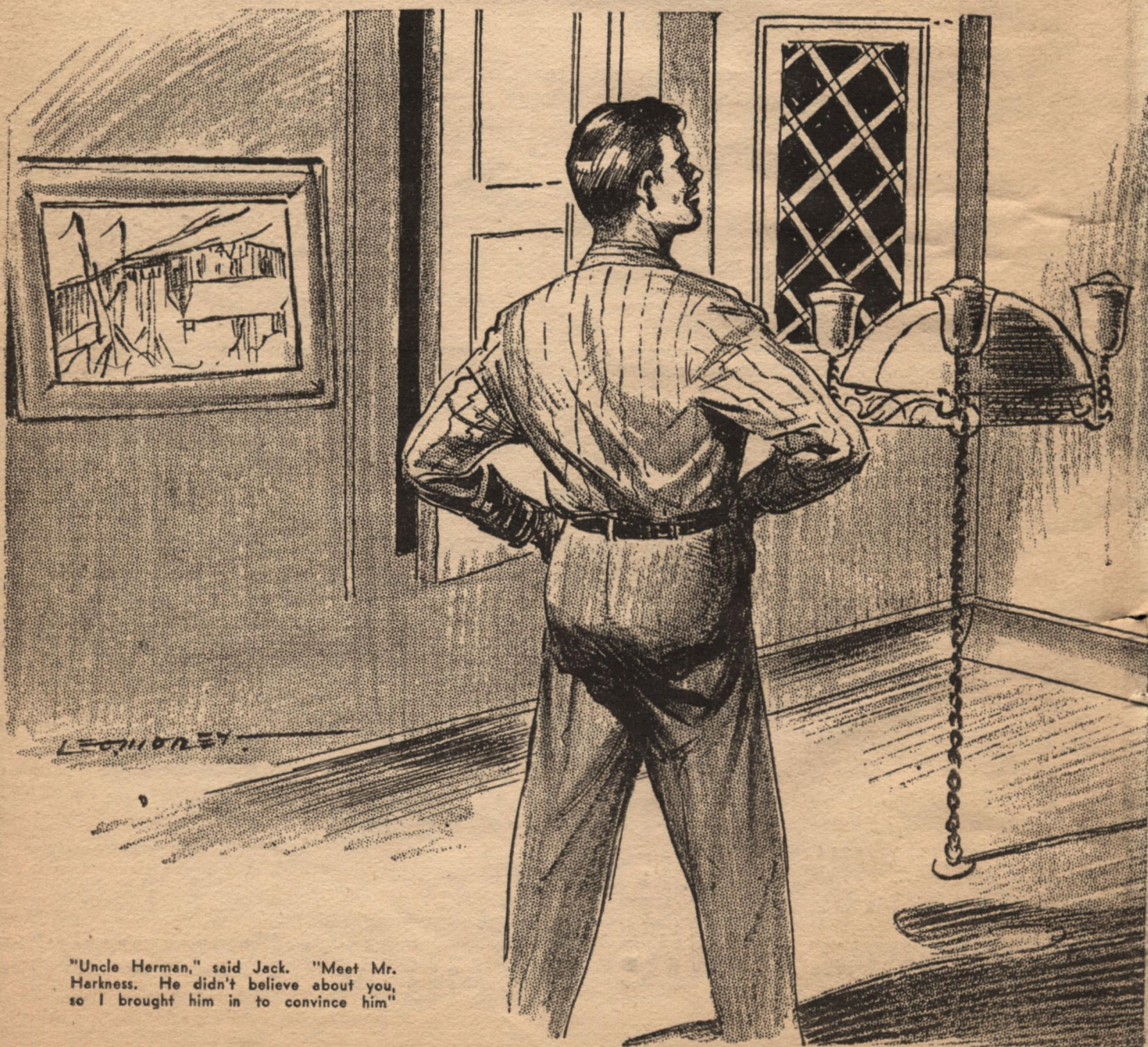
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# The Man Who Weighed By NELSON S. BOND Minus 12

It's a tremendous bother to find yourself weighing less than nothing, but even such a phenomenon can be turned to profit. Take horse-racing for instance . . .



"Uncle Herman," said Jack. "Meet Mr. Harkness. He didn't believe about you, so I brought him in to convince him"





IT served Jack damn good and right for talking so much. I finished the last handful of salted peanuts while he was telling the one about the old maid school teacher and the stammering salesman. After that we took a gander at the refrigerator and discovered we'd polished off all the beer, so Jack said let's go to bed. So we did.

It was plenty drowsy and the bed felt good. But I still had my worries, you understand. In spite of Jack and his friendly chatter, there was still the Gold Stakes for me to fret about. And my nag, Printer's Ink. And the idiotic 126-pound impost the track officials had slapped on him.

I lay there for awhile, though, thinking what a swell guy Jack was, and wondering what in hell he had been so mysterious about. He'd said he had figured the way out for me, and he'd laughed when he said "way." So I'd spent all that day waiting, and now I was waiting for sleep to come and get me.



And then suddenly I heard it. A little pitty-pat sound from the room below mine. No, not the room. It was more as if someone were scraping the ceiling.

I thought, "Mice?" But I knew it wasn't mice. So I thought, "Rats?" But that was wrong, too. Then I thought, "Hey, burglars!" and sat up in bed. I yelled, "Jack!"

Jack stopped sloshing water around and came out of the bathroom. "Whazzup?" he said.

"Listen," I told him, "there's somebody downstairs. You got a gun? It sounds to me like—"

Jack cocked his head and listened for a second. Then he grinned.

"Oh, that? That's just Uncle Herman."

"Uncle Herman? I didn't know how you had an uncle."

"Can I help it if I have relatives? He came here to live with us a couple of months ago."

I said, "What are you trying to do, kid me? Uncle Herman wasn't at dinner tonight. And besides, if that's his room below mine, he's either nine feet tall or he has wings. Those sounds are coming from the ceiling of that room!"

Jack looked embarrassed. "Yeah," he said.

"What do you mean—yeah?"

He said, "Look, Bill, I'll tell you all about it in the morning. That's the answer I had in mind for you, only I couldn't do anything about it today. You see, Uncle Herman is a little—well, odd."

"Oh," I said. "I'm sorry, Jack. I didn't know."

Jack's face darkened. He said stiffly, "Don't be a dope. He's not off his button. He's perfectly normal mentally. His trouble is—well, I guess you'd say physical."

I agreed with him. "You've got something there, pal. He's twelve feet tall and folds up like a jack-knife. What's he doing now? Standing on his head and tap-dancing on the ceiling?"

"He's—" began Jack. Then he shrugged. "Oh, to hell with it! Come along!"

"Where?" I asked. "It's getting kind of late."

"You wouldn't believe it if I told you. And I'm as impatient as you are. Come on!"

SO we went downstairs. Jack knocked on the door of the room just below mine and a pleasant voice called:

"Come in! Come in!" So we went in.

That is, Jack went in. I *fell* in. It hadn't occurred to me that there might be anything abnormal about the doorway, so I didn't even notice that it began about a foot above the floor level. As a result I took a nosedive over the portal and made a three-point landing on my puss.

It knocked me groggy for a minute. That's the main reason why, when I staggered to my feet, I went panicky over what I saw. I took one horrified look around me, then made a flying tackle for the only substantial thing in a cockeyed universe—the chandelier a few feet before me.

I wrapped my arms around this and held on for dear life. I guess I must have yelled, too. If I didn't, someone else must have been squawking.

"Jack! For God's sake get me down out of here!"

Then Jack's size twelves were beside my nose, and he was lifting me up, saying:

"Take it easy, guy. It's all right."

All right! All I could figure was that either I had suddenly become drunk, or that the world had gone haywire, or that Congress, in secret session, had repealed the Law of Gravity. Because the room was upside down! Completely, perfectly, illogically upside down!

The "floor" on which we stood was actually the ceiling. It was neatly papered to match the walls. The room had two windows, and in each of these the curtains were carefully draped skyward. Some pictures on the walls were topsy-turvy, the light fixtures were reversed.

And up above— Well, if you want to know what it looked like, stop reading this and stare at your ceiling. Try to imagine you're up there looking down. Get it? That's what the furniture looked like to me. I hollered again and grabbed at Jack, ducking out from under a divan that looked like any second it would drop and smack me on the konk.

Then came the killer-diller. The same voice that had asked us to come in now spoke again, this time somewhat petulantly.

"John, what's the matter with your friend? Is he intoxicated?"

I looked up. There, calmly seated in one of those upside-down chairs, staring down at me with an expression of mild annoyance, was a chubby, pink-cheeked elderly gentleman in dressing gown and carpet slippers.

Jack said, "Uncle Herman, this is Bill Harkness, my friend. He runs horses. He's spending the weekend with us."

Uncle Herman said, "Well, he doesn't have to be so noisy about it, does he?"

But he rose and took three steps across the floor—I mean the ceiling—no, I mean the floor—oh, to hell with it! Then, gravely, he leaned down and shook my hand.

For an instant I had a sensation of curious lightness. I didn't know whether he was going to pull me up with him, or whether I was going to drag him down to my level. But nothing happened. And then Jack said:

"Bill heard you walking around, Uncle. He couldn't understand it. So, knowing you were still up, I thought I'd bring him down to meet you."

UNCLE HERMAN nodded, beaming. "Quite right, John. Very thoughtful of you."

He smiled at me. I guess it was a smile. From my angle, the corners of his mouth turned down instead of up. He said, almost proudly:

"I suppose you are wondering about—all this?"

I was indeed. I was wondering about a room which



had on its ceiling chairs, tables, bookcases, divans—all carefully bolted and fastened. More particularly, I was wondering about a man who could live in such a room.

I said, "If you don't mind, I'd like to know how the—I mean, what causes—"

"To be honest," confessed Uncle Herman, "I don't know myself. That is, not yet. However, I've been working hard on the problem, and have several theories." He nodded toward his bookcase. "You see, it all began about three or four months ago. Until then, I was just the same as other men. Wasn't I, John?"

"Hm-m," said Jack.

Uncle Herman folded his newspaper loosely, laid it on his knee. Instantly it cascaded toward the floor. I grabbed it and handed it back to him. This time he tucked it into his bookcase.

"Thank you, Harkness. As I was saying, it began about four months ago. I was doing some research in my laboratory—I am, or was, an experimental chemist, you know—when suddenly I experienced a strange, lifting sensation. I distinctly felt my feet move a few inches off the floor.

"In a few seconds the feeling passed. Naturally I said nothing about it to my associates. I assumed it to be merely a giddy spell, a moment of vertigo. But a few days later—"

"Yes?" I said.

"A few days later, while having dinner at a downtown restaurant, it happened again. This time I floated a full twelve inches off the floor. It was only by exerting a strenuous effort that I succeeded in pulling myself down.

"In the course of this—er—unfortunate incident, I upset a glass of water. Thus I attracted some attention to myself. I assure you, it was most embarrassing. Most!"

He looked at me as if expecting some comment. But I said nothing. How the hell can you tell a guy you're sorry he's a human blimp?

Uncle Herman shrugged and continued. "The restaurant incident caused me some alarm. I visited a physician, who assured me I was in perfect health. But at his office, during the examination, I discovered one other peculiar fact. My weight. I weighed only one twenty-four!"

I said, "One twenty-four? But surely, sir—"

Uncle Herman beamed. "I know. I look much heavier, don't I? My build is that of a man of one seventy-eight; which, in fact, was my weight before this—er—all began.

"But apparently some strange chemical reaction, possibly the result of my experiments, had assumed control of my body. For as the weeks passed, I experienced with increasing regularity these spells of 'falling upward'. And after each spasm, I found that I had lost a little more weight! I dropped to ninety-three, then to seventy, to thirty-one. Until, finally—"

"But, sir!" I interrupted. "That's impossible!

Why, your bones alone would weigh more than that!"

"Until finally," continued Uncle Herman impatiently, "I attained my present weight. Which, for some weeks now, has remained static. And that weight is—*minus twelve!*"

I ROSE. I must have looked sort of grim. I was fed up with this nonsense and more than a little bit sore at both Jack and his precious "Uncle Herman." How they had devised and accomplished this trick, I had no idea. But I knew it *was* a gag. Clever, yes—but a trick. And a dirty one. Robbing a guy of a night's sleep—

I said, "Well, thanks for the bedtime story, boys. Now, if you'll excuse me—"

Jack looked at Uncle Herman and said, regretfully: "I'm sorry, Uncle. I thought he'd understand."

Uncle Herman looked none too pleased. "I wish you would select your friends from the more intelligent—" He sighed. "Oh, well. I'll show him, if you wish."

I said, "Show me what? What's the next act?" and reached for a cigarette.

Jack stopped me. He said, "If you don't mind, Bill—Uncle detests the odor of tobacco smoke."

So I shoved the fag back in my pocket and Jack disappeared. When he returned he was lugging the bathroom scales. He put them on the floor—our floor, you know, not Uncle Herman's. And he reached up a hand to Uncle Herman.

"All right, Uncle," he said.

Uncle Herman said, "The weight first, John."

"Oh, yes." Jack disappeared again. This time he brought back a big weight, the kind they use in warehouses.

He said, "Look, Bill!" and placed it on the scales. The dial spun to read "20."

I said, "Ta-da-daaaah! So it weighs twenty pounds. So what?"

"Well," said Jack, "here's what. Ready, Uncle?"

He handed Uncle Herman the weight. Immediately the chubby little man began floating floorward, turning as he came down. He landed, puffing slightly, on his feet before me. I saw then that he wasn't a tall man; just an ordinary, friendly looking little old Dutchman. He was holding on to the twenty-pound weight for dear life.

He said, "I believe this will convince you, Mr. Harkness, that my story is no exaggeration—"

And he stepped onto the scales.

I took one look, then gulped. Then I looked again and gulped some more. Because the dial of that instrument hovered, despite the twenty-pound weight and the additional weight of Uncle Herman, at the figure "8"!

I said, "Hey! But that's impossible! Nobody can weigh less than—"

"Oh, yes," interrupted Uncle Herman pleasantly. "I can. As a matter of fact, I do. Here, John."

He handed back the weight, and immediately floated



ceilingward again, somersaulting very capably as he went so that he was finally upside down to us again. His voice continued as rationally as if everything were quite in order.

"You see, there are several possible theories to explain my—er—peculiarity.

"As I told you, this unusual trait first manifested itself as a result of some chemical experiments I was conducting. Unfortunately I have no idea just which experiment was responsible for my—er—change.

HE paused a moment. "I had made several small experiments on the day in question. One involved a study of lighter-than-air gases, another had to do with magnetic inductions, a third was concerned with the isolation of neutronium particles.

"It is possible that I in some way counter-magnetized myself against the attraction of Mother Earth. As you undoubtedly know, Earth is a strongly charged electronic particle in the macrocosmos. Einstein\* has shown us that electricity, magnetism and gravitation are three manifestations of one underlying principle. Therefore it is possible that I received a charge opposite that of Earth's polarity—you understand?"

"No," I said.

He sighed. "Well, there is another possible explanation. It may be that in some way, one of the chemicals I was dabbling with acted as a catalyst, altering the chemical structure of my body—perhaps I should say the ionic structure—so that the atoms which are a part of me became neutronium atoms."

"New—new what?" I asked him.

"Neutronium. A—er—fearfully heavy condensation of matter. You see, if by some necromancy my bodily atoms had been converted into neutronium, I would have a potential weight equal to that of Earth, despite my lesser mass. In other words, my gravitation would counterbalance that of the Earth itself. I would weigh—"

"Wait a minute," I gasped. "You mean you'd actually weigh as much as the Earth?"

"A trifle more. I would weigh, in round figures, six thousand million, million, million tons and—er—twelve pounds."

I glared at him, but he didn't even crack a smile. The little twerp was serious about all this! I said, sort of hoarselike, I guess.

"And the third possibility?"

He smiled beatifically. "Now we come to the most likely of all. It is my honest belief that in some unusual fashion, the nitrogen elements of my physique have been superseded by elements of helium—thus making me considerably lighter than air! I have not yet been able to prove this to my own satisfaction. Nitrogen only accounts for two and one-half percent of the human body. It would seem that—"

"It would seem that," I interrupted him dizzily, "I lost track of what you're talking about a half hour ago! If it's all the same to you, I think I'll go back to bed."

So I did. And this time, leaving the room, I was careful to step over the sill as I went out.

I DIDN'T sleep very well that night. I finally got to bye-bye land about three-thirty, but even there I had no release from the tormenting thoughts Uncle Herman's tale had inspired. I dreamed all night that I was falling into the sky, grabbing at treetops and mountain peaks as I soared starward. And even my unconscious was wondering what Jack had meant by saying that he had my way out. He hadn't told me yet, and I had been too dizzy to ask. Just that damned mysterious smile lingering on his good-natured face . . . and there was Printer's Ink running fourth, fifth . . . lingering on his good-natured face and now it was merging with a lunar crater that was coming up to swallow me whole.

"Jack!" I was yelling, suddenly, sitting up in bed.

He came running down the hall, his robe half off. "Told you not to eat so fast," he said, sleepily. "Indigestion?"

"Only mental," I said. The sweat was running down me. "Listen, if you don't come out with an answer or two, I'm going to leave here in the morning for a sanitarium."

"I know a good one," he answered. "Specializes in horse players." He yawned and sat down on my bed. "Here, wipe that honest perspiration off your brow. Now then, the trouble with you is that impost, isn't it?"

"Oh-h-h," I groaned, "that impost. A hundred and twenty-six pounds. Damn those stewards."

"Let me get it straight again. They put that impost on, which means that your horse has to carry 126 pounds, either in the jockey's weight, or in some other additional weight to reach that figure?"

I nodded, dully.

"Ever think what Uncle Herman could do to weight requirements?" said Jack, idly.

It was as if somebody had jabbed me with a live wire. "What?" I screamed. "Do you mean—"

"Take it easy," said Jack, sitting down on me. "No, Uncle Herman can't ride. I said take it easy. Let me finish. I said I had the way out, though, remember? Way: w-e-i-g-h," he spelled, laughing. "I've worked out the most sensational gag you ever heard. See how you like it."

Still sitting on me, and I confess it was necessary, he outlined his idea to me. When he finished I had a fever. "It can't work," I said, almost crying. "It's fantastic. It can't possibly—"

"You still don't know Uncle Herman," Jack said, gravely, with that lousy twinkle coming back to his eyes. "In the morning, we'll ask Uncle Herman if he'll play with us. He's a nice egg."

Nice? He was wonderful. I didn't sleep any more

\*A refugee from Nazi Germany, Dr. Albert Einstein, discoverer of the theory of relativity, is now living in Princeton, N. J., where he is a member of the Institute for Advanced Study.—Ed.



that night, if you want to quibble and call what had happened to me before, sleep. But in the morning we all had a short talk. And then we made plans.

YOU know the Gold Stakes. It's the second richest race in the United States. \$75,000 added. Limited to those thoroughbreds selected by the Stakes Committee as the "outstanding racers of the year."

My horse, Printer's Ink, was one of the invitees by virtue of victories in the Rose Challenge, and at Narragansett and Churchill Downs. The other dangerous entries were Freda, the gallant filly who had won the Pimlico Special, and Jolly Tar, victor at Saratoga and the Flamingo.

The trouble was the handicapping of the stewards. The filly, Freda, had been assigned only 112 pounds. Jolly Tar had been imposed with 120. And here I was — or rather here Printer's Ink was — spotted against the finest field in horsedom with a top weight of 126!

That in itself was enough to lengthen odds against him. When we reached the track the afternoon of the big race, the pari-mutuel boards told the story. The public had established Jolly Tar as the favorite at 3 to 2. Freda was 5 to 2. And Printer's Ink was barely ahead of the ruck with a wager rating of 4 to 1.

Uncle Herman, who was sitting in the back seat of our car, bundled in an overcoat the pockets of which we had loaded with shot to keep him stable, glanced at the boards and cluck-clucked.

"Dear me, Harkness! It doesn't look as if your horse is strongly favored."

"Why should he be?" I asked. "He's carrying a top load. But we'll fix that! Let's go to the weighing room."

We found the Committee sitting in judgment on the jockeys soon to ride in the big race. My boy, little Teddy Symes, saw me and came over disconsolately.

"I've weighed in, Mr. Harkness. I tipped the scales at one hundred, so I've got to carry twenty-six pounds on the side." He was far from happy about it. "They shouldn't oughta do us like this. Geez—"

"It's okay, Teddy," I told him. "We're winning."

I went to the table just as a burst of cheering from outside told that the fourth race had ended, that the Stakes was to begin within a few minutes.

I said, "Well, gentlemen, you are quite satisfied with my jockey?"

The chairman nodded. "Quite, Mr. Harkness. I'm sorry we found it necessary to burden Printer's Ink with so great an impost, but—"

"Oh, that!" I grinned and waved a hand in what I hoped was an airy fashion. "Think nothing of it. Matter of fact, you didn't give Printer's Ink *enough* weight to keep him from winning. You underestimate my horse, gentlemen. He's a real champion!"

That staggered 'em. Stewards are accustomed to being bawled out by owners, not praised. They cheered up. I continued:

"By the way, there's nothing in the rule book to prevent a horse from carrying *more* than his assigned weight, is there?"

They stared at me. Finally the chairman said:

"I—er—I'm afraid I don't understand, Mr. Harkness."

"I mean, it is my privilege to let my horse carry a double weight if I want to, isn't it?"

THEY all looked nervous. One of them started leafing through the code book hastily. He spoke for the entire Committee.

"There's nothing against it, no. But why should you—"

"Call it just a whim," I said. "Coupled with a desire to prove to the public what a really great horse Printer's Ink is. Very well, then. You may wish to make the announcement that Printer's Ink will carry, in addition to his regular jockey, a *second* rider. Uncle Herman, here."

They looked at Uncle Herman, chubby, pink-cheeked, smiling, an obviously middle-aged and obviously heavy man. Then they looked at me. The chairman's face darkened.

He said stiffly, "My dear Harkness, if you think this is funny, if you're trying to turn the Stakes into a comedy—"

"Far from it!" I said. "I believe I'm within my rights, gentlemen. Come on, Jack. Come on, Uncle Herman."

Uncle Herman had no right in the tackroom. So we met the horses as they marched through the chute toward the track. There we stopped Teddy Symes, and to his great amazement I told him to move up and make room for Uncle Herman.

The kid's eyes almost popped out. He wailed:

"But, Mr. Harkness!"

"You do as I say," I told him, "and everything will be okey-doke. Okay, Uncle Herman—off with the overcoat. Up you go!"

He dropped the lead-weighted coat and zipped onto the rump of Printer's Ink. A couple of handlers standing nearby gasped. Uncle Herman wobbled. For a minute I thought he was going to lose his grip and float right on up to the flagpole. Jack grabbed his leg quickly.

"Hold on tight, Uncle Herman. Don't let go of the jockey; not even for a second."

"All right, boys," grinned Uncle Herman.

Honest, he was having the time of his life. Teddy Symes still looked as bewildered as a cross-eyed drunk in a mirror maze, but he was a good jockey. He had felt—even though he could not explain it—the sudden lifting of weight from Printer's Inks' back, as Uncle Herman hoisted.

And then the bugle blew "Boots and Saddles" and the public address system blared the announcement of the richest race in the East, and the horses moved toward the barrier. And I grabbed Jack and started running.

(Concluded on Page 69)



# VOLCANO SLAVES



THE sea was calm, oily, and the galley slid like a ghost-ship over the low swells. Fog hung in an opaque pall, blotting out the moonlight, and a strange despairing lethargy seemed to grip the rowers in the ship's waist. Even Memar, the stocky broad-shouldered captain appeared ill at ease, for his eyes swung from side to side in a vain attempt to pierce the curtain of fog and darkness.

Kirk Bradley, perched upon the galley's carven taffrail, glanced at the shipmaster and laughed deeply.

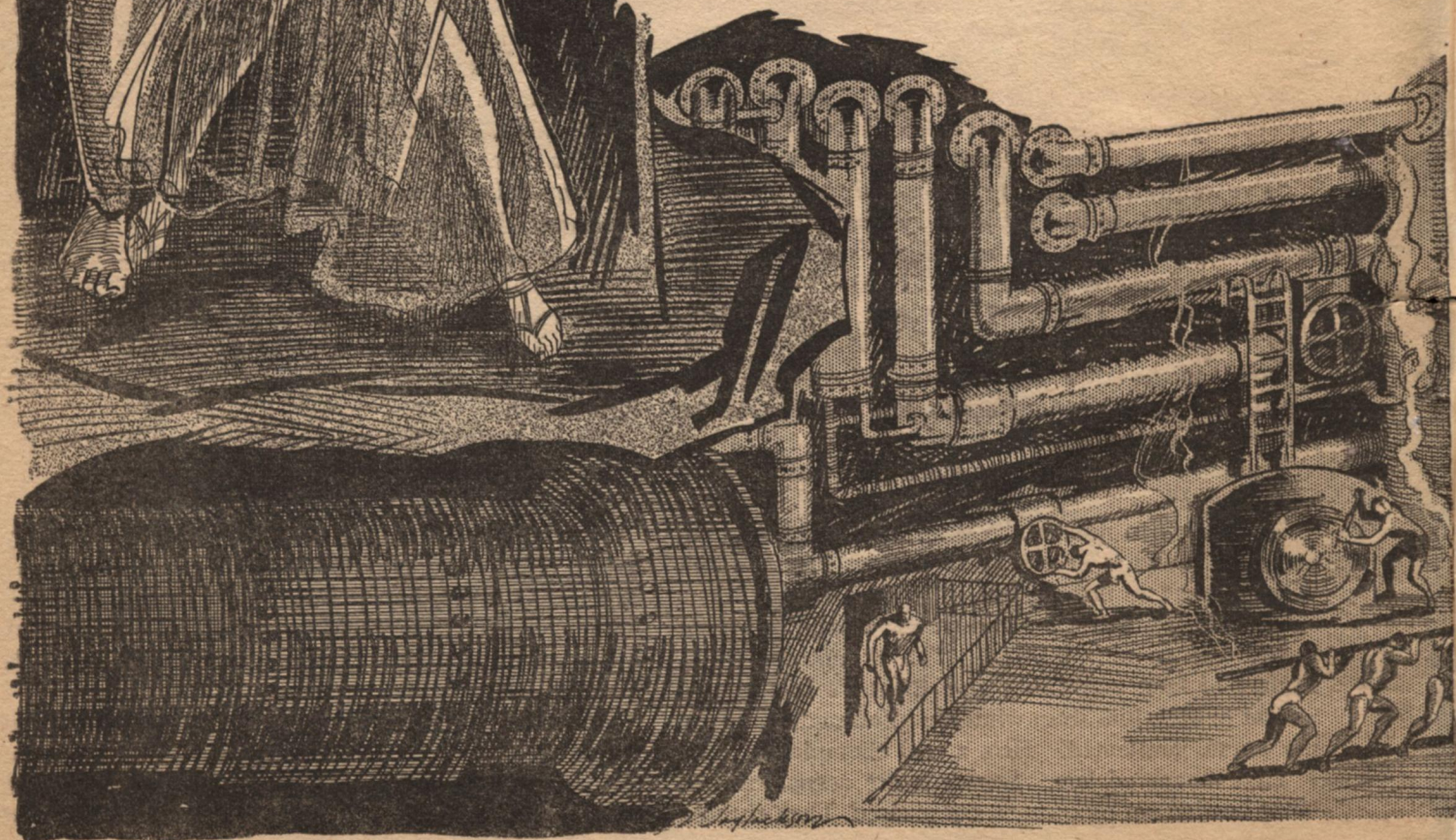
"You look as though you were expecting ghosts to walk out of the mists . . ." he chuckled.

"Quiet!" Memar shook his grizzled head. "Sound travels far in a fog!"

Kirk wiped the blade of his great bronze axe, reflectively. These men of Mu, he had found, were haunted by strange fears, yet when it came to a fight their bravery was unrivaled. Another of the contradictions of this strange, contradictory land of the past. . . .

"Listen!" Memar raised his hand. A distant boom-

Down in the pit they saw great machines that clanked and roared





# OF MU

BY  
**FREDERIC ARNOLD  
KUMMER, JR.**

ing of breakers was audible. "Those are the shores of Cnef, mightiest of the seven kingdoms of Mu! Terrible are its warriors in battle, and its priests, its magi, masters of fearful supernal arts! No science can equal theirs, nor can they be equalled in cruelty, or wickedness! Men say that glowing red devils rise from the bowels of the earth to work wonders for the men of Cnef! Pray that we reach Tanlis safely!"

Kirk grinned. Sailors, he decided, were the same in any age, with their superstitions. He swung down to the deck, gripping the haft of his axe.

"Bring on your devils, Memar," he said. "Heklos here grows rusty from disuse. If these men of Cnef

are so terrible . . ."

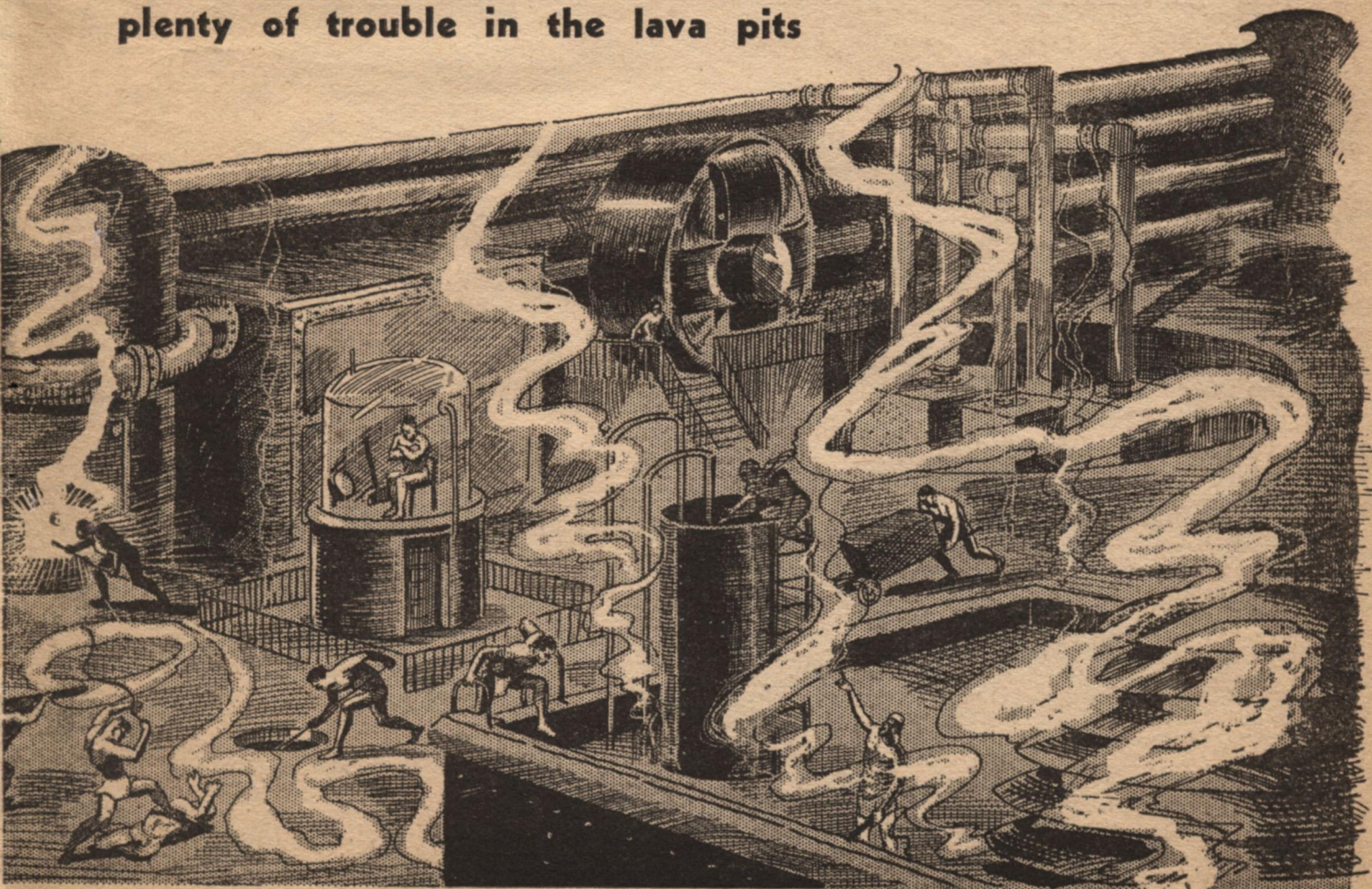
The American broke off, listening. A new sound echoed through the swirling white mists. A beat of oars, a crack of whips, a loud "ha!" as of oarsmen completing a stroke. This, he knew, was a war-galley; for peaceful traders used no whip-scourged slaves.

"Gods of Mu!" Memar, face pale, threw his weight upon the steering oar. It was too late. Like a phantom ship in the fog, a sleek black galley raced toward them, its decks crowded with warriors.

"Pirates of Cnef!" Memar muttered. "You will wear the rust from your blade this day, outlander!" Then, cupping his hands, "Out swords! Haste!"

At Memar's shout the rowers dropped their oars, reached for the weapons that lay beneath their benches. A flight of arrows from the oncoming galley sent half a score of them rolling to the floorboards. Kirk caught up a shield, a fierce light of battle in his blue eyes, braced himself for the shock.

**Kirk, The Wanderer, comes to the ancient city of Cnef and finds an old legend waiting to give him plenty of trouble in the lava pits**





It came with a rending, splintering crash. The war-galley's ram stove the trader's hull, and the latter staggered like a deer struck by a well-aimed arrow. Then from the attacking vessel poured a torrent of brass-armored warriors, swarthy, black-haired men, shouting fiercely, waving their curved swords.

The swiftness of the attack broke all opposition. The men in the merchant ship's waist offered only feeble resistance before throwing down their arms. Kirk and Memar, on the after deck, were quickly surrounded by a circle of gleaming swords.

With berserk rage the American whirled his axe, hewing through armor and bone. Behind him he could hear Memar gasping as he fought off the savage attacks. Three of the dark, grim men of Cnef leaped at Kirk, swords raised. In an arc of death the axe lashed out, splitting one of the three in twain. At the same instant, the heavy bronze shield swung wide with all the power of Kirk's knotted muscles; the snarling lion's head at its center crashed into the second man's face, sent him reeling to the deck.

All this in an instant, yet the third man had had time to strike. Kirk swayed away from the blow, but the sword-point ripped a bloody gash across his shoulder. Before the man could recover for a second thrust, however, a twist of the American's wrist drove the butt of his axe against the Murian's chin, toppled him from the poop.

"So, men of Cnef!" Kirk laughed. "Who is next to taste Heklos' kisses?"

They fell back, muttering in awed wonder, before this blond giant who laughed at death. The galley's captain, a powerful, black-bearded man, swore.

"At him, dogs!" he roared. "Will this outlander put the pack of you to flight?"

With a shout of rage they surged forward again. From the corner of his eye Kirk saw Memar go down under a hail of blows, leaving him alone to carry on the struggle. A hopeless struggle, he realized, against such odds. Yet if he could reach the rail, leap over it, he might be able to swim off into the foggy darkness, reach shore.

He sprang toward the rail, hacking a way through the press of men. Once, twice, three times, the red-

dened axe fell, and as many Murian warriors with it. Only the powerful, black-bearded captain stood between him and freedom. Kirk raised his blade with a deep-throated cry of triumph.

The leader of the men of Cnef made no motion to protect himself, giving only a short, grim nod. Kirk saw a flash of brass behind him, and the heavy hilt of a sword crashed against his temple. He dropped his axe, swayed, the world spinning before his gaze. One thought crossed his mind . . . that he would be the first man to die ten thousand years before he was born. The thought amused him, he smiled dazedly. Then the sword hilt struck his temple again and all went black.

THE doubtful distinction of dying a hundred centuries before the year of his birth was, however, not to be Kirk's. He awoke with a bitter, hacking headache to find himself, securely bound, on the foredeck of the Cnefian galley. Such of the merchantman's crew as remained alive were lying like roped cattle in the lee of the bulwarks. Beside him, Kirk saw the burly, black-bearded captain, peering into the thinning mists. As the American moved, his captor turned, grinning narrowly.

"Alive, outlander?" he said. "Good! I had hoped you might not die. You'll make a rare gift for our lord, Great

Amenes of Cnef. These" . . . he motioned to the other captives . . . "will do as workers in the Place of Fire. But a golden giant such as you can be only a king's slave. And in so giving, I, Hanath, will gain favor in our master's eye." He lifted the American's big bronze axe, swung it. "A weapon fit for the gods! It shall be mine, now, outlander! Slaves need no arms!"

Kirk shook his aching head. A slave of the men of Cnef! He remembered Memar's words of the great science, the cruelty of this, the mightiest kingdom of Mu. And the glowing red devils . . . were they part of this Place of Fire of which the captain spoke? He lay still, turning these thoughts over in his mind. Then came cries from the swarthy warriors . . . cries of joy and triumph. "Cnef! Cnef!"

With an effort Kirk swayed to his knees, gazed over the galley's gilded bulwark. Dawn had flung its pink mantle over the sea and in the pale light he could see

*SINCE the first appearance of these stories relating the experiences of my friend Kirk Bradley in the fabulous land of Lemuria, I have been the recipient of many letters, some of them none too academic, demanding to know how it could be possible for an American of this, the 20th century, to go backward into the antediluvian era of Mu. And I am frank to confess that Kirk has never yet divulged his secret to those who are numbered among his friends. Indeed, it is not altogether certain that he himself understands the forces at his command. Moreover, he is not in the slightest interested as to whether anyone believes him or not.*

*If I were clever, I suppose, I should offer learned explanations of time-machines, secret drugs, or mental projection . . . explanations which, by the sheer weight of multisyllabic words would bludgeon the reader into a dazed acceptance. Unfortunately, Kirk is emphatic in his denials of any such rationalizations.*

*Once, to be sure, he made mention of the extra-dimensions, saying that it was generally accepted today that other worlds might exist coincidental with our own. And he went on to say that since time and space are relative, if not dependent upon each other, it was more logical to his way of thinking that the extra-dimensional worlds, instead of being peopled by bulge-eyed monsters, should be, instead, merely previous time-cycles, leading infinitely into the past until they meet, in some great Einsteinian circle, the infinite future.*

*Just what Kirk meant by this, I cannot hazard a guess. Perhaps some greater mentality than my own may unravel that skein of words . . . or perhaps, as some persons claim, Kirk Bradley is the most gifted liar since Ananias. Yet no matter what one's previously-formed conclusions may be, when one hears of the mighty civilization of Mu from Kirk's own lips as he stands leaning upon Heklos, his great bronze axe, with a far-away look in his eyes, it is impossible not to believe. A strange and fantastic picture it creates in one's mind, this big blond American striding like some legendary giant through that rich, exotic, and wonderful land which lies today lost beneath the ocean so ironically called the Pacific. And of all the tales Kirk tells, there is none, perhaps, so gripping as that of the fall of Cnef. I have passed it on to my good friend, Fred Kummer, Jr., who knows better than I how to set words to paper.—BRAD BURNES.*



land, not a half mile away . . . land, and a mighty city. Sight of it, looming through the morning mists, was an awe-inspiring spectacle. Cnef was cyclopean, its immense buildings towering above broad streets, green parks, and pleasure gardens. The work of Titans, it seemed, huge, sombre, implacable. Towers thrust like gaunt, spatulate fingers at the sky; an air of incalculable hoary age clung to the dull grey stone.

Vast as the city was, the mountain dwarfed it. Rising sheer, majestic, the peak stood like a menacing colossus, dominating the work of man. Waves from the sea washed its slopes, while rows of quays, with their tangle of masts and rigging, clung about its base. Smoke writhed in a sullen column from the cratered crest; on the land side Kirk could see what appeared to be gargantuan machines, cranes, derricks, and great wheels, with human figures moving like ants about them.

"The Place of Fire!" Hanath said, pointing toward the mountain.

"Place of Fire?" Kirk repeated. "What . . ."

Hanath laughed.

"You may learn, outlander, before long," he said. Then, turning, "Bend your backs, dogs! Row! We must make port at once!"

## CHAPTER II

### The Priest and the Prophecy

LUXURY, riches, Kirk had seen in the other kingdoms of Mu . . . but none of these could compare with the splendor of this palace of Cnef. Like some vast cathedral, it seemed, with its tall arched windows, its tessellated marble, its inlays of gold and ivory. On a throne of cunningly-wrought ebony Amenes sat, a withered, yellowish man with the marks of lechery and degradation about his thin lips. Tall guards in silver armor stood behind him, while near-nude girls lolled upon the steps of his dais, their bodies like polished alabaster in the warm sunlight that streamed through the vaulted windows. Great flagons of wine stood at hand, and a hot throbbing of lutes stirred the air.

Kirk, hobbled by ropes, glanced about the hall as Hanath told the story of his voyage. None of the faces of the assembled nobles of Cnef offered him encouragement. Cruelty, lust for power, decadence, and bestiality were stamped upon the features of men and women alike. Only one countenance held Kirk's gaze . . . that of the slim, proud girl standing in the shadow of the throne. Her dress was that of one of the dancing girls, but her eyes glowed with disgust, fierce hatred. Here was a girl, Kirk thought, who was worth more than all the gold and intagliated gems of this glittering pig-sty. He smiled, thought he caught an answering nod from her when Hanath twisted his captive's head about as one might twist the head of a show-horse to face the judges.

"Observe the color of his eyes, highness," he said. "Where has one seen such yellow hair and pale skin?

And for all his size, he moves quickly, a lion in battle. Seven of my men fell before his axe."

"Seven!" Amenes' dulled eyes lit up. "Here then is one to give us sport! Who are you, outlander? Where is your homeland?"

"Kirk, I am called. And I come from . . . another world." The American replied. "A world far superior to this."

"So?" Amenes smiled thinly. "You will prove its superiority. Loose his bonds! Let him face three of my guardsmen!"

A space was cleared before the dais, and ringed with warriors. Three of these Cnefian fighting men, silver armor gleaming, spears raised, waited in the center of the circle. With a quick movement Hanath cut his captive's bonds, pushed him into the impromptu arena. Kirk drew a deep breath, glanced swiftly about. The huge hall, the wrinkled, dry-lipped Amenes, the rows of harsh, unfriendly faces. . . . Then he saw the dark-haired girl smiling encouragement at him and he turned to face the three warriors.

A shout rang through the hall as the spearmen advanced, their weapons poised. Kirk braced himself, crouching. Suddenly the javelin of the foremost warrior licked out like a striking cobra. Kirk ducked and the spear slid harmlessly over his shoulder. As he came up, his fist cracked against the Murian's jaw and the man crumpled limply to the floor.

No time now to snatch up the fallen spear; the other two men were upon him. Kirk leaped back to avoid their thrusts, then dove at the ankles of the smaller of the twain, sent him sprawling to the floor. Muscles standing out in great ridges, he surged to his feet, still gripping the fallen man's ankles. Then, remembering the wrestling matches of the 20th century, he began to whirl.

In an airplane spin the inert body circled about him, preventing the third warrior from getting in a thrust of his spear. All at once Kirk released his hold upon the victim's ankles; the warrior hurtled through the air, slammed into the third guardsman. Down went both, in a wild tangle of arms and legs. Before they could recover, the American had gathered up the three spears, snapped them over his knee, and tossed the pieces at the foot of the king's dais.

"Gods of Mu!" Amenes quavered, clawing at his sparse beard. "Here indeed is a warrior! The captivity of my guards might well be his!"

"Will you make a bull captain of your guards, then, highness?" A cadaverous man in sable robes strode before the throne of Cnef. "Better use for such brawn at the Place of Fire. He claims his race is superior to ours of Cnef. Let him prove it by besting the priests of the Fire as he has bested your guardsmen." The dark man whirled, eyes mocking. "Fetch a vase, a lute!"

SLAVES ran from the hall, returned bearing a glass vase of almost bubble-like thinness, a three-



stringed lyre. The priest set the vase carefully upon the floor, turned to Kirk.

"Can you shatter this vase," he demanded, "and yet touch it neither with your flesh nor some inanimate object nor yet fire?"

Kirk frowned. This was, he knew, some trick. Memar had warned him of the skill of the magi of Cnef. Yet to break the vase without touching it, heating it, or hurling something at it. . . . He shook his head.

The dark priest laughed. "Watch, then!" he cried, picking up the lyre.

Once, the necromancer struck the instrument, and a queer high note echoed through the hall. The dark man tightened the strings, struck again, producing an even higher note. At the third weird, shivering chord the vase suddenly shattered to bits.

A shout of wonder echoed through the hall. Kirk grinned. A trick, of course, but a good one. Certain notes could easily shatter fragile glass. He should have realized. . . .

"And now," the priest said softly. "Show us your skill, stranger of the superior race!"

Kirk glanced about the hall, troubled. With time, and a well-equipped laboratory he could show these Murians wonders aplenty. But to perform marvels on the spur of the moment. . . . Suddenly an idea struck him. He waved his hand contemptuously.

"A simple trick!" he said. "Can you make fire with water?"

"Fire with water?" The gaunt priest laughed. "No, outlander, nor can you!"

Kirk picked up a round-bellied glass flagon of wine, poured out its contents.

"Fill this with water," he demanded.

Slaves scurried to do his bidding. Kirk glanced about the great hall, noting once again the harsh face of the nobles of Cnef, the intent gaze of the pale, dark-haired dancing girl. His fate, he realized, depended upon the outcome of this trick. Very deliberately he approached one of the arched windows, held the flagon in the yellow sunlight. Adjusting it until the beams passing through it were concentrated in a single spot on the rich hangings, he waited, motionless. Within a few moments the silken hangings on the wall had begun to smoulder, smoke, under this natural burning glass, then to glow with flame.\*

A shout went up from the crowds of spectators.

Quickly Kirk beat out the flame, turned to the priest.

"Have I made fire with water?" he asked, grinning.

"Aye!" the man cried, his voice quavering through the hall. "And you have done more! You have shown us who you are! Listen to me, great Amenes, and you, men of Cnef! Long ago the prophecy was made that one day would come a stranger with hair like sunlight, slaying armed men with his hands, draw-

ing fire from water, and making mock of the priests of the Fire! And it was prophesied that this outlander would bring about the downfall of Cnef! Heed, and beware!"

A look of superstitious fear crossed Amenes' thin face. "Downfall of Cnef?" he muttered. "Gods! If this be so . . ."

Then from the shadows of the throne stepped the dark-haired girl.

"Will the ruler of Cnef be frightened by this croaking raven?" she cried. "Priests are quick to prophesy doom . . . when they fear a rival may supplant them!"

"Eh?" The withered king glanced from the girl to the priest and back again. "There is truth in what you say, child. Yet a prophecy . . ." He toyed with the great emerald that hung about his neck. "We will consider this at length. Meanwhile let the stranger be confined. This talk of doom hangs like a cloud in my brain. Wine, music!"

One glimpse Kirk had of the sallow king draining a jeweled goblet, his haunted eyes on the writhing bodies of the slave-girls, then Hanath motioned to guards. Through shadowy passages they led the American to a small cell hewn from rock beneath the palace. The black-bearded noble locked the massive door, and, accompanied by his guards, left Kirk in his prison.

VERY carefully the American went over the room.

No means of escape presented itself. Kirk ran a hand through his brassy hair. The whole series of events confused him. What did these men of Cnef intend to do with him? Would he be sent to the mysterious Place of Fire, as had the other prisoners from the galley? If so, what was there about the mountain that inspired such dread? And the dark-haired girl . . . why had she been so interested in his behalf?

Kirk thought of the huge machines he had seen on the slopes of the volcano. They spoke of a high degree of civilization in this strange land of Cnef . . . though what their purpose was, he could not guess. Certainly machines of some sort must have been used to construct this cyclopean city. Kirk turned these problems over in his mind until at length, worn out by the experience of the past few hours, he threw himself upon the floor and fell into a troubled sleep.

It was the grating of the lock, the creak of the door that awakened him. He sprang to his feet in time to see a cloaked figure advancing toward him through the shadows. More, in one hand the intruder held a naked sword. Kirk leaped back, suddenly aroused.

"Who . . ." he began, then broke off in amazement. As the shadowy figure let drop its cloak, he saw that it was the slim, proud dancing girl!

"Quiet!" The girl motioned for silence, handed him the sword. "Come!"

Kirk gripped the weapon; it was light compared to

\*Many home fires have been caused by sunlight passing through glass goldfish bowls and striking curtains or rugs.—Ed.



his great bronze axe which Hanath had appropriated, yet a stout blade for all its lack of weight. He shot a glance at the girl. Who she was, or why she had released him, he did not know . . . but with freedom from his prison and a sword in his hand, nothing else seemed to matter.

"Let's go!" he whispered, following her across the threshold.

Along winding corridors the girl led him, threading her way through the gloom with the sure step of one familiar with every turning. Now they were passing through great halls, lit by jeweled lamps. Kirk could see sumptuous tapestries, richly-carved furnishings; a procession of hideous bas-reliefs marched along the walls, gods, kings, and long-dead heroes of Cnef, half-obliterated with age, peering with blind, evil eyes from the grey stone. The rooms seemed haunted by ghastly spirits of the past, imprisoned in the stone of its walls.

Still the dark girl led the way through the shadows. Dimly Kirk could hear shouts of revelry, maudlin voices, the hot beat of music. Once a drunken warrior lurched from a side-passage, satyr-like, in pursuit of a laughing, thinly-clad slave girl. Intent on his quarry, he paid scant heed to the two fugitives. More and more frenzied grew the music as Amenès, Lord of Cnef, celebrated the triumph of his war-galleys.

The dark girl was moving more swiftly now, her bare feet pattering on the cold marble. A breath of night air swept along the corridor, and Kirk could see moonlight pouring through an arched doorway. They were about to step from the building when a brawny sentinel emerged from the shadows, barred their path with his spear.

"None may leave without permission," he grinned. "Back to your quarters, girl! And as for this giant . . ." The guard paused, aghast, as Kirk stepped into the square of moonlight. "Gods! The outlander! Free!"

As the sentinel drew back his spear, Kirk sprang forward. Sword met spear-haft, bit through, leaving the guard only a wooden stump. For just a moment the unarmed warrior stared at the great blond giant towering over him, then fell to his knees in surrender.

"Bind him," the girl whispered. "Quick!"

**K**IRK secured the man with strips torn from his cloak, deposited the inert form in a pool of purple shadow. Following close at the girl's heels, he passed through the postern gate into the street beyond.

Velvet tropical darkness cloaked Cnef. The hour was late, and while frenzied revelry resounded through Amenès' palace, the remainder of the gigantic city was still. Kirk, breathing in the cool air from the sea, laughed joyously.

"Where now, girl?" he demanded.

"There!" She pointed. "The Place of Fire!"

Kirk followed her gaze. The volcanic peak loomed vast against the sky; a lurid red glow issued from its crater, throwing an eerie light over the great machines

upon its slopes.

"Into the lion's mouth!" the American grinned. "Why?"

"To rescue Jarnac of Tanlis!" Her eyes flashed exultantly. "I am Mara, his daughter. We were captured by Amenès' men, my father sent to the Place of Fire and I made a dancing girl of the palace. When I saw you, outlander, I knew you hated the men of Cnef, would help us in an attempt to win free of this cursed city. And I needed one of your strength to handle the galley . . ."

"Galley?" Kirk muttered. "First tell me how you expect to free your father?"

"Thus!" Mara drew from beneath her robes a cunningly-carved jewel. "Hanath's seal! I took it from him, along with the key to your prison, as he lay in a wine-sodden stupor at Amenès' feast! Hanath is a favorite of the king, and his seal will win my father's release. Once free, we can board one of the galleys in the harbor, set sail for Tanlis. It will be noon before Hanath awakens, realizes that his sead is gone. By which time, with this wind, we will be beyond pursuit." She turned toward the Place of Fire, started up the slope, a proud determined figure, chin firm, wind pressing her cloak against her slender body.

Following her, Kirk threaded through the maze of strange cranes, stranger machines, around which wretched slaves toiled. They seemed to be heaping great piles of immense bricks, six feet on a side and of an igneous volcanic composition, upon sledges, preparatory to hauling them to the city. All Cnef was built of this same sort of stone, and Kirk wondered if the Place of Fire were some sort of quarry. Yet if so, why the great machines . . .

Mara was mounting a sort of catwalk that soared in a sweeping arc over the toiling slaves. At its other end were two huge bronze doors, heavily guarded, that led into the face of the mountain. The girl approached the sentries, exhibited the great seal.

"Emissaries of Hanath, Master of the Galley," she said coldly. "We wish to see the officer in command."

"But" . . . the captain of the gate shifted uneasily, his burnished armor winking in the red glow . . . "none are to be admitted after nightfall."

"Am I to take that word back to Hanath?" The girl's voice was like a lash. "He feasts with Amenès, the All-Powerful. A word from him to mighty Amenès and you . . ."

"Nay, nay, my lady." The captain bowed hastily. "Who am I to vex the All-Powerful? Haste, dogs! The gates!"

**G**UARDS sprang toward levers, tugged at them.

Slowly, ponderously, the massive bronze portals swung inward; a gust of hot, foul air struck Kirk as he entered the great stone hallway. Not until the doors had swung shut behind them did the captain speak.

"What is your wish, my lady?" he asked, disregarding Kirk, whom he took for a body slave.



"Fetch the worker Jarnac of Tanlis," she said imperiously. "My lord Hanath desires that the slave be brought to the palace . . . to provide sport for Mighty Amenes' guests."

"Sport?" The captain grinned. "He's too old to provide much amusement. A few touches of the lash and he dies. Yet it shall be as my lord Hanath commands. I myself will fetch the man. Wait here!"

The captain disappeared into a side-corridor. Kirk shot a smile at Mara.

"So far, so good," he murmured. "What's this Place of Fire all about, anyhow?"

"About?" The girl's eyes narrowed. "Judge for yourself!"

She moved toward the rear of the hall, pushed open a door leading onto a broad gallery. Kirk stepped out upon it, gave a sudden gasp.

The scene before them was incredible, even in this incredible continent of Mu. It reminded Kirk of a Doré illustration of some new and terrible inferno. Below lay a vast hall, all crimson flame and grotesque shadow; frightful heat and noxious gases rose in choking waves. At one side of the hall were vast pipes, white-hot, protruding from a wall of solid rock. Row upon row of them, stretching off in the distance until the great cavern curved out of sight. Pipes, Kirk realized, that tapped the molten lava of the volcano's core, faucets, with immense valves to regulate the flow of liquid stone.

Emerging from the wall, the glowing pipes circled about great boilers, to create the steam-power that drove the masses of gargantuan machinery. Here was the source of power which had enabled the men of Cnef to build their cyclopean city to run the great cranes and derricks outside, to stamp out the beams and girders that supported the great blocks of stone.\* Power . . . and an escape valve, drawing off the excess lava which might have overflowed from the crater to engulf their city.

Nor was this all of the uses of the Place of Fire. As the lava circled the big turbines, it passed, ever cooling, through the pipes until it reached a great pit at the rear of the cavern. Here the molten stuff ran from the pipes into oblong moulds of sand to form the huge blocks of which the buildings, quays, and roadways of Cnef were made. Power, building material, and a means of checking the volcano's eruptions! Small wonder the men of Cnef held the Place of Fire sacred!

"You see?" Mara's voice was bitter. "For two years my father has labored here!" She pointed to the wretched, half-naked slaves, toiling in the inferno below; heat, exhaustion, and the overseer's lash had reduced them to dull-eyed robots, waiting only the release of death. "May the gods curse Amenes, and his land of death! May Kotheb and Narayana smite

this city until one stone remains not upon another! May their own fires consume them . . ."

"Quiet!" Kirk gripped her arm as footsteps sounded behind them.

THEY reentered the hall to find the captain and a bent, grey-haired slave standing there. The slave had not succumbed to the dull, animal-like passivity of his fellows; his eyes were keen, intelligent, and his mouth firm, though marked with pain. At sight of Mara he drew a quick, startled breath, but the girl interrupted him.

"That's the one," she said coldly. "We'll take him to Hanath at once. Small danger of his escaping this giant." Mara motioned to Kirk.

"As you wish, my lady." The captain bowed, turned to the lever that opened the massive gates. Jarnac shot an agonized glance at his daughter, was about to speak when Kirk stopped him.

"Quiet!" The American whispered. "Once we get outside . . ."

The massive bronze doors swung slowly open. Mara, Kirk, and the dazed Jarnac stood waiting. In another moment they would be free of the Place of Fire. It would be a simple matter to board one of the galleys in the darkness that cloaked the stone quays. Then with a favorable wind . . . Still gripping the old man's arm, Kirk strode toward the entrance . . . then suddenly froze in his tracks.

The doors of the Place of Fire had swung open . . . and there on the metal catwalk leading to them stood the lean, dark priest whose prophecy to Amenes had resulted in Kirk's imprisonment. At sight of the American, the priest's sallow face twisted with rage.

"The outlander!" he exclaimed. "Why is he here? And free?"

"This should explain!" Mara extended the carved gem. "Hanath's orders . . ."

"Hanath had lain in drunken stupor these three hours past!" the man cried. "Seize them! This is some trick!"

Kirk saw the captain hesitate momentarily, glance at his men as though undecided. Drawing his sword, the American plunged forward. Only the priest barred their way, and if they were swift enough, they might reach the darkness beyond the volcano's glare before the dazed captain set his men in pursuit. Motioning to Mara and her father to follow, he sprang toward the priest, sword raised. His opponent was unarmed, save for an iron-bound staff, but this he threw up to ward off the blow. With a crash the sword met the iron-ringed staff . . . and where the bronze axe Hanath had taken would have shorn through, the tempered blade snapped. Kirk gave a grunt of disgust, threw down the stump of the sword and hurtled forward, groping for his adversary's throat.

In that instant the priest's hand slipped beneath his robes, reappeared clutching a fistful of green powder. This, with a quick gesture he hurled into the Amer-

\*This is not so fantastic as it seems. In Italy, at the famous Valley of Hell, the power of a volcano has been harnessed to run turbines.—Ed.



ican's face.

Kirk, expecting no such attack, plunged headlong into the cloud of greenish dust. A form of lye, it burned his eyes, blinding him. For a moment he groped in vain for his opponent, then the guards of the door seized him, bore him, blind, helpless, to the ground. Dimly he heard the priest's voice, harsh, mocking.

"I shall return Hanath's seal to him . . . and tell him how it has been used. Take the three of them to the pits below. The Place of Fire is a certain cure for rebellious spirits."

### CHAPTER III

#### The Place of Fire

THE casting pit was a hell of heat and gas. Kirk, stripped to the waist, his body covered with a paste of soot and sweat, watched the molten lava ooze from the nozzle of the pipe into a square mould of wet sand. As the mould filled, there came a shout from the guards, a crack of a whip. Kirk took his place at the blistering hot chain, tugged with aching muscles upon it. Under the efforts of half a hundred slaves, Jarnac and Mara among them, the nozzle swung to another mould, poured its torrent of molten rock into it. By the time a dozen such moulds had been filled, the first block was cooled sufficiently to be dragged away, its mould of sand reshaped, and the process repeated.

As Kirk tugged at the chain, he glanced at Mara. The girl was exhausted, half conscious from the terrible heat. Her frail body was emaciated, marked by the red weals of the lash. Her father seemed crushed by the sudden failure of his hopes, the sight of his daughter in this place of horror. Kirk redoubled his efforts, seeking to lighten their labor.

Behind the toilers of the casting pits great masses of machinery roared and clanked. Fantastic shadows, cast by the red glow of the lava-pipes, sprawled upon the walls like grotesque demons. Huge dies pressed out beams, metal columns, bronze doors, myriad objects of metal, while tortured workers hammered and filed rough castings into shape. Amenes had decreed newer and greater towers, vaster fortifications, colossal walls and wharves . . . and there was no rest in the devil's workshop they called the Place of Fire.

At length a crashing of cymbals announced the end of the shift. Weary slaves staggered from the pit, while a new shift sprang to take their places. Kirk saw Mara slump, fainting, to the ground, Jarnac at her side. Quickly the American picked up the inert girl.

"This way," Jarnac muttered. "Gallery 28 is cool and none go there since it is believed a place of ghosts."

Kirk followed the old man through a maze of corridors, murky caves, and into a long slanting passage. At its end the air was cool, and only a faint reflected

light from the distant workshops reached them. Kirk placed the girl on the floor, straightened up, frowning. Somewhere he could hear a slow thud . . . thud . . . thud . . . like the beating of a giant heart. Jarnac, noticing his expression, smiled.

"Waves," he announced. "The sea lies beyond this wall of rock. But the legends of the slaves say it is the heart of Almuran, king of Zac, who died here, a captive. So they fear to enter this corridor. Ah, child" . . . he touched the girl's forehead as she moved slightly . . . "do you feel better now?"

"All . . . all right," Mara whispered. "So cool here . . ."

"Gods of Mu!" Jarnac's eyes were bitter. "The sight of you, toiling in this cursed place! And only because you tried to rescue me! My child . . . a slave!" He turned to Kirk, agonized. "They say you are a mighty warrior, skillful in the dark arts. Surely you must know some way to escape this hell! It does not matter about me . . . I am old, tired. But Mara, my daughter . . ."

Kirk shook a weary head. All his 20th century knowledge was of no use without chemicals, equipment. Here in these caverns he was as helpless as the most ignorant slave. There was no way . . .

"Think!" Old Jarnac pleaded. "There must be some secret, some unknown science of your world! If we could arm the other slaves, force open the gates . . ."

Kirk glanced at the pale girl, noted the whip-marks across her shoulders. She had risked her life to save him . . . He clenched his fists savagely. If only there were some way! But to overcome hundreds of armed guards, force the great doors . . . If only he had one gun, one grenade!

Suddenly Kirk stopped his pacing, stared at the wall of the corridor. In the faint light he could see brownish crystals adhering to it. Brownish crystals. All at once a thought crossed his mind. He had seen similar deposits in limestone caves, and the walls of ancient stone buildings. Saltpetre! Wall-saltpetre, or more correctly, lime saltpetre!\* And sulphur was almost invariably found near the vents of volcanos! That left only charcoal, easily obtained by burning wood! Gun-powder!

Kirk straightened up, eyes blowing. If they could manufacture gunpowder, store it in this unfrequented corridor, they would have a force to overcome the warriors of Cnef. Bombs made of clay, in the hands of the slaves, would act as hand-grenades to disperse the guards, while a charge of powder would blow open the bronze gates . . .

"Jarnac! Mara!" he exclaimed. "There's a

\*Wall-saltpetre occurs as an efflorescence on the walls of caves or old stone buildings, while volcanic sulphur is found as a sublimate around or on volcanic vents, as a result of the interaction of sulphur dioxide and hydrogen sulphide. As mined it is always contaminated with limestone or gypsum, but heating melts off the pure sulphur. During the 16th century, in Italy, where sulphur abounds, crude gunpowder was made by raw sulphur, charred wood, and lime-saltpetre scraped from the walls of old buildings.—Ed.



chance . . . a slim, dangerous chance, but it may work! And if it does, we'll gain freedom!"

THE days that followed were a mad nightmare of toil for the three prisoners. When the others of their shift fell exhausted from the hours of labor at the casting-pits, they forced themselves to frantic efforts in collecting the ingredients with which to manufacture the explosive.

Saltpetre was scraped from the walls with pieces of stone, charcoal easily obtained by burning bits of wood stolen from the workshops. As he had expected around a volcanic vent, Kirk located a strata of sulphur ore in one of the passages. Digging it free, they heated it over the fire that produced their charcoal and obtained reasonably pure sulphur.

Days passed, and they became work-worn phantoms, forcing themselves on by sheer force of will. Twice they had almost been surprised by the guards at their work, but on each occasion they had beaten out their fire, lain still, scarce daring to breathe, until the sentries passed by the supposedly haunted gallery. None of the other captives were told of their plans, for fear of betrayal. When the time for the attempt came, things would happen too quickly for an alarm to upset their plans.

The store of gunpowder, placed in a great rude jar that Mara had made from clay, now amounted to several hundred pounds. Enough, Kirk realized, for their purpose. The next step was to fashion rough clay bombs with fuses of twisted, powder-impregnated cloth. When all was in readiness, Kirk would distribute them among the off shift, along with slivers of wood which, lighted, would serve to touch off the grenades. One swift rush, with bombs exploding on all sides, would, Jarnac said, send the guards into a panic, win them freedom.

The day on which they planned to commence the manufacture of the clay bombs, found the three captives toiling grimly in the casting pit, swinging the great nozzle back and forth over the moulds. Bodies seared with heat, eyes half-blinded by the flare, hands torn by the rough chain, they waited for the clash of cymbals that would mark the end of their shift. Above the roar of machinery, the hiss of steam, rose the plaintive chant of the slaves singing their melancholy, yearning melody as they worked. Then at last the clashing of the great gong and the song abruptly died away.

Kirk dropped the heavy chain, watched the slaves file off to the gloomy caves in which they ate and slept. The American, joining Mara and Jarnac, started to follow them. When they reached the vaulted doorway, however, a group of warriors wearing the silver armor of Amenes' bodyguard stopped them. Mara gave a sudden stifled scream. Hanath, a saturnine smile on his dark, bearded face, was approaching the three captives!

"Well met!" he grinned. "The big outlander and the clever dancing girl! Xuan, the high priest, ex-

ceeded his authority when he ordered you imprisoned here. Great Amenes has other plans for the two of you! Plans that will provide amusement for his court while teaching you the folly of disobeying his wishes!" He turned to his guards. "Bind them!"

Old Jarnac choked back a cry of horror.

"No!" he muttered. "Gods of Mu! They can't . . ." In sudden desperation he snatched up a hammer from an anvil beside him, struck down the nearest of the guards. As Jarnac's blow fell, Kirk leaped forward. Hanath groped for the axe . . . Kirk's axe, Heklos . . . that hung at his belt. Too late. The American's fist crashed against his chin, sent him unconscious to the floor.

The next instant Kirk had seized the great bronze axe, leaped with a shout of exultation toward the silver-armored warriors. Three crushing strokes and three of them fell; the remaining two, struck with panic by the sight of this soot-smeared, wild-eyed, berserk figure, took to their heels.

But if the effete palace guards were frightened, the hardened keepers of the Place of Fire were not. A score of them streamed down from the galleries above, brandishing swords and spears, wild figures in the red glare of the molten lava. No chance of winning the gates, Kirk realized. And to take flight into the maze of corridors below meant eventual capture, since there was no other means of escape from the Place of Fire. A few more days and their clay hand grenades would have been completed. But now . . .

Jarnac, eyeing the on-rushing soldiers, seized a torch, plunged into a corridor.

"Quick!" he exclaimed. "We may be able to hide in one of the shafts!"

KIRK, with Mara at his side, followed. Small chance of concealing themselves; in time they must be found. Still, there was no other hope. Frantically they raced along the rocky tunnel. Behind them they could hear the clatter of armor, hoarse shouts from their pursuers.

Old Jarnac ran blindly, hoping to outdistance the guards, lose them in the network of passages. Kirk was grim, tight-lipped, Mara, a wan, frail spectre, eyes deep with despair. Suddenly the American realized that the passage was a familiar one . . . gallery 28, where their store of gunpowder lay! The stuff was useless, now, since there was no time to set a mine or manufacture grenades, fuses. And the gallery ended in a *cul-de-sac*! He shouted at Jarnac, but the old man had taken the familiar route unconsciously, without realizing it. Already the warriors behind them were shouting in triumph, realizing that they had the fugitives trapped.

All at once they were at the end of the shaft, where the great clay jar of powder lay. Jarnac groaned, at last aware of the trap into which he had led the others. In the torchlight Kirk could see the furious exultant warriors surging toward them, their swords flashing ominously.



"Sol!" The American raised the heavy bronze axe. "One last fight, then! They'll pay high for our lives! Heklos drinks her fill this day!" He laughed deeply; all the 20th century veneer had been stripped from him and he was suddenly as primitive, fierce as his Saxon forbears.

Old Jarnac shot a glance at the oncoming warriors, then at the big blond giant standing at his daughter's side.

"No!" he cried furiously, waving his torch. "Let the land of Cnef be destroyed by its own devils! Back behind that projecting rock, outlander! Quick!" Terrible in his anger the grey-haired slave stood above the jar of gunpowder, torch in hand.

"Good God!" Kirk made a movement to stop him, but already the torch was descending. In one desperate lunge the American seized Mara, leaped for the shelter of a projecting rock jutting from the wall of the rough-hewn corridor.

Then a roar, deafening, and a dazzling flash of light. The tunnel heaved like a ship at sea and it seemed to Kirk that an invisible hand struck him to the ground. As in a dream he saw the fierce, triumphant warriors swept down by a hail of flying rock, saw the few survivors fleeing in insane terror along the corridor.

Now another sound, a rushing, rumbling of water. Kirk picked up the stunned Mara, felt a foaming torrent strike his knees. The explosion had blown out the end of the passage and the sea was pouring through the jagged opening! For a split second Kirk stood frozen with horror, realizing what Jarnac had meant by the land of Cnef being destroyed by its own devils. Then, in mad desperation he plunged toward the opening.

ALL the fights Kirk had fought against men were as nothing compared to this struggle against the mill-race that boiled, shoulder-high, through the shattered opening. Weighed down by the unconscious girl, stunned by the force of the explosion, he clawed and dragged his way forward, until at length, exhausted, he gained the slope of the mountain at one side of the opening. Already ominous rumblings were audible below . . . and the tide was still rising!

"Mara!" Kirk shook the girl into consciousness. "Mara! We've got to reach the quays . . . quick!"

She nodded dazedly, swayed to her feet. Then they were running in desperate haste toward the great stone wharves.

The ground was trembling, and clouds of steam poured from the crater of the mountain. Great cracks were appearing in the walls of the cyclopean city, people were pouring into the streets. Wine-sodden men, painted women, fled screaming through the streets; debauched, saturnalian revels gave way to abject terror; cruel warriors, fierce, savage in battle, now were fleeing in panic.

Kirk and Mara, swaying drunkenly with the heaving land, raced along the stone docks. A small stout trading vessel, lying between two ugly war-galleys, caught the American's eye.

"Here!" he exclaimed, leaping onto its deck. A panic-stricken sailor offered feeble protest, but a blow from the flat of Kirk's axe sent him flying into the water. One stroke severed the rope fastened to a ring in the wharf and the blond giant pushed the ship off. Waving Mara toward the tiller, he hoisted the brilliantly-colored sail. The trim little vessel at once gained leeway, heading seaward under a full wind.

Behind them the pirate city of Cnef was a scene of terror. Flame, steam, and volumes of black smoke spouted from the Place of Fire, buildings were crumbling, falling to crush the fear-stricken thousands in the streets. Cnef the mighty was being shaken into a heap of rubble!

Kirk joined Mara at the tiller of the boat, his face drawn. If they could get far enough off shore before the steam generated within the passages and caverns of the Place of Fire . . .

And at that instant it came . . . a terrific, earth-shaking explosion that tossed the little vessel about like a chip, hurling Kirk and Mara to the deck. For long minutes they lay there clinging to the tiller post as huge waves swept their craft seaward. Now rocks were raining about them, churning up the water like shellfire. Kirk staggered to his feet, glanced back. The Place of Fire had split in two! The mountain was cloven as though by a gargantuan axe-stroke, and a torrent of molten rock swept inexorably toward Cnef! Through the clouds of steam and smoke Kirk could see a few terrorized figures struggling up the grassy slopes behind the crumbling city . . . the sole survivors of the mighty stronghold whose science and ruthless courage the rest of Mu had so long feared!

"Gods!" Mara shuddered as the white-hot lava engulfed the titanic city. "Destroyed! No longer need the merchants of Mu fear these coasts, no longer will threats of enslavement in the Place of Fire bow all men to the wishes of Cnef! Thanks to you, outlander . . . and to my father . . ."

Kirk turned his back on the terrible scene of destruction, shifted his gaze to the north-east. In that direction, he knew, lay Tanlis, Mara's home, the most remote of all the kingdoms of Mu . . . Tanlis, the land of mountains, where the little hillmen warred among the vast crags, and the wind howled through gorges a thousand feet in depth, and men whispered of the giant hairy things that lurked in the snowy passes. Kirk drew a deep breath of the keen salt air, gripped the handle of his great bronze axe.

"Wipe Cnef from your memory," he said, "as it has been wiped from the face of Mu! The far horizon calls, with new lands, new sights, new adventures!" Laughing exultantly, he tugged at the steering oar, swung the vessel's prow to the north.







The huge bucket swung and Drago's shot spanged against its metal side



# Lunar Loot

By EDWIN BENSON

**Allan Ryan and John Kane sweated hard for that gold quartz, and they weren't going to give it up to a pirate, no matter how clever he was . . .**

ALLAN RYAN hunched his big, muscular body uncomfortably about within the confines of his metal space suit, lifting one grotesque metal-encased hand to shield his eyes against the torturing glare of the raw sunlit moonscape before him. Even through the partial vacuum of his suit lining he felt the burning heat from the sunlight, unfiltered by any softening blanket of atmosphere. Searing, salty sweat rolled down his nose and dripped to his lips. His body itched almost unbearably from the penetrating actinic rays.

"Cripes!" he muttered to himself. "Another hour of this burning and I'll be ready for the picnic tank. I wish Kane would hurry that signal along."

Fiery tempered John Kane was his mining mate, and right now he was out there in that burning waste setting dynamite charges.

Ryan looked down at the contact box before him, at the wire stretching off into the white glare of the dry crater bottom. That wire would carry the charge to explode the last setting of dynamite in the quartz vein that ran down the side of Tycho's crater wall. Very soon now Kane ought to have the other end connected to the firing caps. Just an hour before they'd finished drilling the holes into the rich, gold-bearing quartz. Then he, Ryan, had returned to lay out the wire and get the spark box ready.

That gold quartz—it was funny stuff. Lousy with grains of gold that could be extracted cleanly by the simple expedient of melting it after they got it back to earth.

Ryan laughed a bit hollowing in his air-tight suit. "If this damn sun was a little hotter, we wouldn't have to melt the stuff. Could go out there with a dipper and take it home in bottles!"

At the thought of the return trip through space with their valuable cargo, half of which would belong to them, his dripping brow corrugated in a black frown.

There was the rub—getting it back to Earth!

The last two ships had been intercepted by Murgot, whose chief occupation was piracy.

Murgot was the scourge of the Lunar Mining Company. Time after time he'd sacked ships, forcing the crews to step from the airlock, just as old-time pirates made their victims walk the plank. Murgot seemed to possess an uncanny knowledge of the time and place

to intercept LMC ships.

When you worked for LMC you staked your life against riches with all the chances on the side of failure. That's why LMC split fifty-fifty with miners.

But Ryan didn't give a whoop about that. He'd taken the mining job because it offered adventure, danger, and the thrill of conquest over man and nature. He wanted enough out of this trip to get a ship of his own.

The bright gleam of Kane's space suit appeared over a sand rise. Ryan waved an arm. Kane responded with two arms raised, then sat down and waited. It was the signal. The charge was ready.

The big man stooped, jammed the lever of the contact box down hard, jerked his head erect and watched. High over the ridge sparkling chunks of quartz rose, flailing high into the airless void under the impetus of the blast. A great column of dust spurted aloft. There was no sound, no ear-stunning explosion, only the mushrooming dust, the flying pieces, and a slight tremor underfoot. No air to carry sound.

Ryan waved an arm at Kane then picked up the contact box and disconnected the wires. He began to wind up, walking slowly forward the while. In a few moments he reached the perspiring Kane and paused to lay one metal-clad hand on his shoulder.

"Let's get the rest of the stuff loaded and back to the dome," he said, his voice now audible to his companion by reason of the contact. "I'm getting red as a boiled beet. We've been out too long already."

"I know it," returned Kane, his piercing blue eyes becoming thoughtful and his tanned face serious. "But old man Lawrence says we've got to finish this time. We leave eighteen hours ahead of schedule."

"I don't like that," growled Ryan. "It'll mean over ten thousand miles of air-travel after we reach Earth, and taking a space ship through air is no cinch. It ain't like a plane. I can't see why that crazy stunt is necessary."

Kane shrugged. "The old man says Murgot won't be expecting us to take off then. 'I'd a darn sight rather meet him though, than crack up in some jungle on Earth, or in the middle of the Sahara. But I guess he knows what he's about.'"

Ryan removed his hand in disgust, breaking the



conversation off. Crossing the ridge, he came in sight of the quartz. The dynamite charge had dislodged huge pieces which lay scattered about on the sand.

On the ridge of the vast crater several miles away was the fort-like dome that housed the rapid-firing guns of the LMC. These amazingly accurate and powerful weapons made it suicide for any ship to attempt mining the precious quartz veins without permission. Company gold was safe while it remained on the moon. It was only those two-hundred-forty-thousand-odd miles to Earth that was breaking the company. And now, the old man was sending them off schedule in an attempt to get a ship through Murgot's net.

Ryan turned his back on the dome and resumed his winding. Kane was already engaged in carrying huge pieces of quartz, which on Earth would have weighed over five hundred pounds, to their ship. Eight tons was their capacity. Finished with the wire, Ryan picked up a small piece of quartz in one hand while he carried the spark box in the other. They'd have to hurry, because they couldn't stay out here much longer. The burning of his skin was beginning to give proof of that.

"Damn Lawrence and his off-schedule idea, anyhow!" he uttered in disgust.

**F**AR below, the pitted surface of the moon was dropping swiftly away. The Earth swam low down on the horizon, and the ship was heading almost directly away from it, beginning the first lap of a great curve that would eventually land them on Earth.

Kane stared from the port, his raw, burned face serious and intent.

Ryan, at the controls, glanced at him and grinned. "Lookin' for Murgot already?" he joked.

The ship shuddered throughout its entire length as he pressed the firing lever for the last rocket discharge. From now on they would coast, using only occasional bursts for steering.

The shuddering ceased and the unutterable silence of space descended on the ship. At an average speed of five thousand miles an hour they would fly until they reached Earth. That meant fifty hours of steady vigil at the controls.

Ryan jerked a thumb toward the bunk.

"I'll take the first watch," he said briefly.

Kane nodded, turned and stretched his body out on the cot, strapping a wide leather belt across his chest. In space a body weighed almost nothing and sudden motions were to be guarded against.

He slept.

For hours Ryan scanned the blackness of space spread out before him, interspersed by millions of brilliant white stars, glowing with an unwinking brightness never seen on earth.

A group of stars blotted out for an instant. He strained his eyes, muttered an exclamation, then pressed the firing lever. The ship leaped forward.

"What the hell!" Kane ejaculated, hurled awake by

the sudden acceleration.

Ryan shot one terse sentence at him that made him leap from his cot.

"A ship, cutting in on us!"

"Murgot!" Kane burst out.

Ryan nodded dumbly and pointed through the port.

There, heading so as to cross their path was a long, black ship, its outlines almost lost against the black background of space.

"The man's a devil!" Kane avowed. "How can he know when and where to intercept us when we're off schedule?"

"There's something more than mere mathematics behind this," growled Ryan. "But whatever it is, we're in for it."

"What are we going to do?"

The big miner shrugged.

"Run for it, I suppose."

He gunned the ship at full power. But inexorably the black ship cut toward them. For several moments it looked as if the pirate would intercept them but running at a diagonal, it fell several miles short as it passed them to the rear.

"He can't catch us!" exulted Kane.

But like a leech the ship swung in behind and began to creep closer, clinging to their trail like grim death and gaining.

Ryan cast a final feverish look at his instruments, jammed the speed lever down to its stop, then glanced through the rear vision port. A grim look came into his eyes.

"She's faster than we are."

Kane peered disgustedly at the black, lance-like shape speeding toward them like an arrow of fate. On its bow was painted the grim white insignia of the skull and crossbones. Murgot had a sense of humor.

"Yes," he put in moodily. "It's no use. He'll draw up beside us and fasten tight to our hull no matter what we do. He knows we can't veer away fast at this speed with our cargo."

They watched helplessly through the ports as the black ship swung slowly in alongside, then grappled tightly to their hull. No use now to try to swing away. They were as rigid as one ship.

A few moments and a heavy air-tight canvas connection extended itself from the port of the raiding ship and clung to theirs, held by powerful suction clamps. Then the inner section bellied out stiffly, filling with air as the pirates prepared for a crossing.

"What now?" asked Kane in a puzzled tone. "How's he going to get in?"

Ryan shrugged. "Nobody has ever come back alive to tell how he does it. But listen, doesn't that sound like a drill?"

Kane listened a moment. "Sure! He's drilling a hole in us!"

Ryan grinned. "A regular safe breaker, eh? Going to blow us open eh? Well, let him work. When he gets it open we'll be ready for him."

"They won't get me without a fight they'll remem-



ber," avowed Kane, his fiery eyes flaming.

The big miner flexed his muscles. "Watch me," he put in. "Murgot hasn't got that gold yet!"

Kane sniffed. "Do you smell anything?"

Startled, Ryan glanced at him. "Gas!" he exclaimed.

There came a hissing noise and a swiftly spreading cloud of gas came through a small hole in the port. Stricken in their tracks by the choking fumes, the two miners slumped to the floor, unconscious.

A SHARP pain in his ribs brought Ryan to consciousness and he opened his eyes to discover that he was lying on a sandy soil under a hot, burning sun. Over him stood a leering, dark-faced man, garishly dressed in colorful clothes, his foot raised for another vicious kick.

"Wake up, you beeg pig. We have work for you!"

Blind rage suffused Ryan as the heavy boot thudded against his side.

"Damn you!" he choked struggling to his feet. He wobbled uncertainly, his mind still clouded by the gas. Lying on the ground beside him he saw Kane's limp body. A little way off was a space ship resting on the sand. Further away a rim of mountains formed the line of demarcation of the tiny valley in which they stood. They were on Earth!

The leering face of the buccaneer swam before him and he lashed out heavily with his big fist. Laughing gleefully at the futile attack, the pirate planted a fist squarely on Ryan's mouth, hurling him to the ground, his lips battered and bleeding.

"Ha, beeg pig, you want to get tough, heh?"

"Cut it out, Drago," another voice cut in sharply. "Do you want to kill him? We have work for him before that."

Ryan staggered dazedly to his feet, turning in stunned amazement toward the speaker.

"Lawrence!" he gasped. "Old man Lawrence, the dome boss!"

The LMC dome boss grinned. "Surprised, aren't you?" he asked.

Ryan gaped at him. "You!" he demanded incredulously. "You—Murgot, the—the pirate!"

Lawrence bowed ironically. "You guessed it the first time."

Ryan's mind cleared rapidly. "So *that's* how the ships were being intercepted so neatly!"

"Sure," Lawrence chuckled, "I schedule them, then go out and intercept them at my leisure at any desired point. And now, with this shipment, I've got enough. The LMC will go broke and my attorneys have fixed it so I'll get the whole thing for a song. With the gold I've gotten from these ships, I can buy out the company at auction. I can take possession, and no one will be the wiser, though I presume many will wonder what became of Murgot, the pirate. However, since he is no longer necessary to my plans, I will allow him to disappear into the void, never to return. It is a good joke."

"So that's why you had us start out eighteen hours ahead of time—so you could land here. . . ."

"Exactly."

Kane staggered to his feet now. "You dirty pirate," he raged. "If I get the chance, I'll wring your rotten, double-crossing, murdering neck. . . ."

Ryan gripped the irate Kane's arm. "Quiet," he warned. "That won't do us any good."

Lawrence laughed ironically. "Nothing will do you any good. After you get through loading your quartz into our smelter, Drago has a little experiment he wants to make. He's always been interested in biology, but he gets so few subjects to vivisection that he hasn't made much progress. However, when he gets to work on you, I think you'll have to agree that his technique is almost perfect."

Ryan stared at the ready, keen-bladed knife in the hands of the grinning pirate and restrained the leap he had been about to make.

"I do neat job," promised the swarthy, gaudy pirate. "But now you come, break quartz, put in smelter."

"I'll be damned if I'll do it!" snapped Kane. "No dirty space pirate is going to make me knuckle down and break quartz."

Ryan halted the tirade that seemed headed for tragedy, with a glance. His lips moved imperceptibly.

"Wait our chance," he whispered tensely.

Kane subsided and followed Ryan as the swarthy space pirate ordered them forward toward the mound of quartz which had been removed from the ship.

For hours, under the blazing sun that told of their nearness to Earth's equatorial line, the two space miners worked, swinging heavy sledges, shattering the big lumps of quartz into small chunks.

But though they watched warily, no chance to escape presented itself. Drago watched them always, an evil leer on his swarthy face, and within call were a dozen armed pirates.

THE sun was setting when they finished shattering the quartz. Ryan swore under his breath as the glancing rays brought a bright gold gleam from the last piece. An especially rich lot of quartz this was. Eight tons they'd broken today, and the ratio was one sixteenth gold to fifteen sixteenths quartz . . . over eight million dollars!

"Now, one more job," leered their guard. "Take the broken quartz to the smelter in a wheelbarrow. Then I do the operation!"

Kane clenched his fists and bristled forward.

"You rat," he choked. "I'll . . ."

Ryan grasped his shoulder and wrenched him back against the quartz pile. Kane fought to escape him.

"Don't," he growled under his breath. "We can always do that. Let's get busy with those barrows. I've an idea."

"No talking there, you beeg pig!" shouted the buccaneer, brandishing his knife. "You no escape anyway." He swung a vicious kick and Ryan sprawled headlong on the quartz pile. As he rose to his feet



his face was bleeding where the sharp fragments had cut.

Kane swore bitterly. "What the hell, Ryan. Are you going to take that? Why not die now, fighting? We'll die anyway, and I'll be damned if I like the idea of cleaning up all the work first."

Ryan glared at him. "You and your temper," he spat out, then lashed out with his fist to catch Kane squarely on the jaw. He went down with an expression of utmost surprise on his face. But the fire was gone from his eyes as he rose and grasped a wheelbarrow.

"Okay," he said, "You're right."

Ryan grinned. "You're all right," he acknowledged. Then his grin faded to a ferocious scowl as he faced the pirate, who was standing, his jaw agape. The buccaneer laughed. "You are crazy," he announced. "Or maybe it ees because you are afraid of Drago? Yes, that ees it. You are yellow!"

Ryan ignored him and for the next half hour they loaded the quartz into the huge maw of the big iron smelter that stood erect in the center of the valley. Below it was a heap of rocket fuel ready to ignite. Its terrific heat, equal to thermite, would rapidly fuse the quartz, whereupon the gold would flow to the bottom and the quartz to the top, completing the separation.

It grew dark and the loading went on.

Kane's arms ached as he trundled the heavy quartz from the rapidly diminishing pile past the space ship, past a huge pile of crates and boxes. He noted the characters **EXPLOSIVE** on one pile as he trundled past.

At last he wheeled the barrow up the incline behind Ryan and prepared to tip his last load into the smelter. Then he gasped as he saw a wooden box slide down as Ryan dumped his own barrow. He caught a flashing glimpse of the letters **EXPLOSIVE** as it dropped.

"How long have you been doing that?" he demanded incredulously, staring down the incline at the leering face of their guard. Several other pirates were now joining him, surrounding the incline. Others were lighting the fuel below.

Ryan grinned as the valley sprang into glaring red from the intense flames.

"Eleven boxes altogether," he said lowly. "Our guard has been so busy sticking out his chest that he didn't see me put those boxes on every time I went past first. He stuck pretty close to you, feeling that you were the dangerous one."

Kane chuckled. "I see your game now. But it isn't going to do us much good. That delegation down there is waiting to receive us, and it looks like this is it!"

The big man grinned. "You wanted to fight," he pointed out. "Now you've got something to fight for." "What?"

"To stay alive until this smelter goes up. Then, in the confusion, maybe we can do something. But come on, it's getting too hot up here."

Ryan turned and faced down the incline. "And

now, you dirty pirate," he muttered, staring down at their guard, "we'll see who's yellow!"

**L**IFTING his barrow he hurled it down and leaped after it. In a moment he was the center of a whirling melee of fighters.

Kane hurled his body down also and swung mightily with an axe handle that fell to his grasp. For a moment he was unable to reach the ring that enclosed the giant Ryan, then he cleared a way with a vicious swing that cracked the skull of a pirate like an egg-shell.

"Move away from the smelter!" gasped Ryan.

Accordingly Kane began to sidestep with each swing until finally they were some hundred yards away from the smelter. A glancing blow felled him in his tracks and blackness whirled before his eyes. A loud yell of triumph echoed in his ears as Ryan stood astride his body and faced the pirates. A yell of defiance burst from his lips to meet their shout as they closed in.

A hurtling body flung itself on his back and he bent quickly, one arm thrown over his neck. With a crash the pirate went to the ground with his neck broken.

Ryan grinned joyfully and sent a fist smashing home into a vicious face. The man went down with a crushed skull.

Suddenly, with a tremendous roar, the smelter belched a great column of flame into the heavens from its open top, then tilted slowly over.

Petrified with astonishment the buccaneers watched it fall. Like a river of molten diamonds the glowing quartz rolled liquidly out and flowed across the sand toward the pile of boxes marked **EXPLOSIVE**.

"Run for your lives!" Kane heard a voice scream. "The whole valley, she will blow up!"

Stricken with fear, the pirates rushed for their space ship, all except one. From the ground rose the bloody figure of Allan Ryan to reach out a long arm and grasp Drago by the neck.

"She may blow up," he yelled into his victim's ear, "But you'll not see it!"

With a vicious wrench he jerked the pirate's back across his knee and pressed. The spinal column snapped and the pirate went limp.

The roar of rockets from the space ship rent the air of the valley, and the fleeing vessel roared aloft. Suddenly there came a tremendous blast as the molten quartz reached the pile of boxes. A terrific burst of flame caught the rising ship squarely. Like a wounded bird it plunged down to explode with a final cannonade against the rim of the valley.

Slowly Kane lifted his head from the ground where he had been flung. He staggered to his feet. Another figure rose some yards away and grinned at him.

"I guess Drago was wrong," Ryan hazarded. "Most of the blast went straight up. The valley's still here, and so are we."

"And so's the gold!" Kane exulted, pointing at the spot where the smelter had stood. "Eight million dollars worth, half ours!"



## The Man Who Weighed Minus Twelve

(Concluded from page 53)

"Come on!" I yelled. "The odds will be going up like a skyrocket, and I want plenty of 'em!"

I was six hundred percent right. The public took one look at Printer's Ink out there carrying double jockeys, then surged like one man for the betting windows. Those who had bet on Printer's Ink were frantically covering their wagers with equal amounts on Freda or Jolly Tar. Those who had backed the other two favorites were increasing the size of their bets.

In sixty seconds the odds on Printer's Ink were up to 7-1. In another minute the machines were offering 11-1, and no takers!

Except us! Jack was in for fifteen C's of his own and an extra five of Uncle Herman's; I was in hock for every last cent I had, twenty-five hundred simoleons. Baby! And at an average of 10-1!

IT'S a shame to tell the next part. After all the build-up, it should be one of those thrillers you read about. Like, "At the quarterpole it was Freda and Jolly Tar neck and neck. At the half the outsider, Frenzy, led by a nose. Thundering down the stretch it was Freda and Printer's Ink—"

But it wasn't anything like that. Printer's Ink was a good horse. More than that, he was a great horse.

Even with a full 126-pound impost he would have had more than a fighting chance to win—but with Uncle Herman astride his rear quarters, hanging on to Teddy Symes for dear life, adding his minus-twelve weight to the race—

Well, at the quarterpost Printer's Ink led by two lengths. It was four at the half, six at the three-quarters. Coming into the stretch Jolly Tar made a bid. It was a good bid. It was so good that when they crossed the finish line Printer's Ink led by only five lengths. Jolly Tar was second, and an outsider, Laughing Girl, came in to show. Freda was way back in the ruck, probably nursing a broken heart.

Then everything was bedlam. The crowd went stark, staring mad, of course. While a radio announcer yammered incoherent sentences of praise into his mike, the mob burst through the barriers and out onto the track to surround this magnificent horse which, carrying two riders, had showed clean heels to the best thoroughbreds in the nation.

At the head of that mob were Jack and I. Jack had the all-important overcoat flung over his arm. We reached Printer's Ink first, tossed the coat up to Uncle Herman. As soon as he put it on, Printer's Ink sagged a little, but no one noticed that in the excitement.

Reporters were crowding us, demanding Uncle Herman's name; asking why we had chosen to pull this spectacular stunt; asking a million other questions. Cameramen were clicking shutters, popping flashbulbs like firecrackers. A handler was trying vainly to lead Printer's Ink to the winner's circle.

I whispered swiftly into Jack's ear. "Get Uncle Herman out of here before somebody get hep. Here, take these—" I handed him the handful of tickets I'd bought on Printer's Ink. "And change 'em for mazzuma. As soon as the excitement's over I'll join you."

Then Tippy Malone, a camera hound from International Press whom I had known for years, struggled through the mob, grabbed my arm beseechingly.

"Bill, for gosh sakes, gimme a break! Some damned fool busted all my bulbs and I didn't get a single picture. I had to dig this old flash unit out of my kit. Please—"

I said, "I'm sorry, Tippy, but—"

"You've got to, Bill! This is the biggest sensation since Upset beat Man-o'-War. If I don't get a picture I'll be fired!"

I said, "Well, all right then. But make it snappy. Uncle Herman!"

He took his pose; not on the horse, but standing beside Printer's Ink, pudgy and smiling in his heavy overcoat. He stroked the horse's nose. Tippy poured powder in his old-fashioned pan, set the box.

"All right. Smile. Now!"

A streak of white flame flared. Everybody blinked. There was a sudden wailing bleat.

"Wait a miiinn—"

Then it died off into the distance, and there came a hollow, puffing sound—a pint-sized burst of thunder from our very midst! Printer's Ink neighed and bolted. The mob howled. Tippy looked up from his box, scowling. He said:

"Hey, where the hell did he go? That's a fine way to treat an old pal, Bill! Tell him to come back!"

But Uncle Herman hasn't come back yet. His room, that elaborate upside-down room in Jack's house, is still waiting for him. His pipe is there, his carpet slippers and dressing gown. And a pile of banknotes that he won riding Printer's Ink to victory.

But Uncle Herman hasn't come back. We don't know exactly why. Or how he disappeared. Tippy Malone showed us the picture he snapped just as Uncle Herman disappeared in a wailing bleat. It doesn't make sense. It shows Uncle Herman, overcoat and all, surrounded by a filmy halo, scooting hell-bent-for-election skyward with something that looks like streamers shooting from his mouth, ears and nostrils.

Jack says maybe the excitement caused still another chemical change in Uncle Herman; that his weight diminished to the point where even lead weights wouldn't hold him down. I have another thought.

Maybe I'm wrong. I have a sneaking hunch that Uncle Herman's reason for being lighter than air was not that he was filled with helium, but that he was loaded to the gills with *hydrogen*! And—well, you know what happened to the *Hindenburg*. And Tippy Malone's old-fashioned flash box emitted a spark—

Anyhow, Uncle Herman hasn't come back yet. We are still waiting and hoping. So keep in touch with me. I'll let you know if we hear from him. . . .



# The Prince of Mars

◀◀ Dan Hanley finds himself facing a hostile world as he sets out to rescue Lilrin of the Ta n'Ur from the ambitious Prince Gakko ▶▶

## SYNOPSIS OF FIRST INSTALMENT

**D**AN HANLEY, Earthman, lands on Mars in his Space Ship to meet the loveliest girl he had ever seen. This occurs after he has concealed his space ship in the waters of a canal, where he believes it will be safe from discovery. When accosted by the girl he finds himself facing the business end of a strange tube-like weapon, but manages to convey his peaceful intentions. She takes him to her tribe's camping place, and when he introduces himself, it causes great amazement and unbelief. They utter, "Danan-lih!" They seem familiar with that name.

Hanley rescues Lilrin, the girl, from a giant spider, and discovers that by saving her life, she has become not only his property, but his wife. Confronted with this amazing situation, he is at a loss.

When he tries to release her from this strange marriage, he insults her, and discovers it is impossible. Later, Lilrin is abducted by a villainous prince named Gakko, and Hanley sets out in pursuit. He learns that Gakko is one of seven rulers of seven independent nations welded into a Federation. It is Gakko's ambition to rule them all, but curiously, there is some sort of event that has been awaited for years, connected with an ancient legend concerning a prince who vanished, named Danan-lih. Hanley sets out with Banur, a young warrior, and they reach a city. At a "gasto," or inn, Hanley rings for entry, and a gong sounds far below. Somehow it has an ominous sound, and Hanley waits for he knows not what. Now go on with the story:

Dan Hanley fired over his shoulder at their pursuers and was rewarded by a hoarse yell of pain.





# Returns

By PHIL NOWLAN

## CHAPTER IX

### I Rescue Lilrin

**T**HERE stood before me, stretching his arms wide and bowing with some difficulty, the first fat man I had seen on Mars.

On the far side of the building, I found, were cage-like structures for the dogs and the dulyals. After ordering my animals to remain in them until I called, I followed the innkeeper back around the building to the metal door.

From here a circular ramp led down to the lower levels. I stopped at the first level to pay my board and lodging with the heavy little red beads (rubies, I think they were) that the Martians use for money, since gold is far too plentiful.

I drew a puzzled glance from mine Martian host when I laughed because the little cage at which I paid was so much like a cashier's corner in innumerable little restaurants on a planet millions of miles away.

My room proved to be on the third level down.

I was shown from my room to the "moccor," which I suppose would be translated in English variously as "lobby," "barroom" or "restaurant." It was on the first level below ground. Here, gathered about the great solid, carved blocks of quartz that served as tables, were seated some score or more of Martians, all of the Ildin class, or Freeman. This I gathered from the green sashes they wore, like my own, with which Banur had outfitted me.

In a far corner of the room was a little party of four, obviously strangers to the village, for like myself they seemed to be interested in their surroundings. They surveyed their neighbors with some curiosity. Two of them were Epsin—Lesser Lords. They wore the red sash distinctive of their class. The other pair were Ildin.

A couple of slaves, obviously members of the party and not inn attendants, garbed in the black that de-





noted their position in life, hovered in the background with big bowls and jugs.

There was a vacant table near the group, and I moved toward them, as unconcerned as I could. They seemed to take no notice of me.

Almost immediately the name "Gakko," although uttered in a hushed tone, caught my ear. I strained to hear more, but without much success for awhile, for one of the inn's servants was placing my food before me.

Later I heard the city of Gakalu mentioned a few times, and there was something said about the seaworthiness of a certain wheelboat, and the necessity of guarding someone well under pain of Gakko's violent displeasure.

I had no doubt it was Lilrin to whom they referred, and that this was the party I was after. Certainly there was something furtive about their manner, something sly that argued there was no good in the business that had brought them here.

I felt for the little automatic under my shirt, and casually unfastened the garment a bit at the neck that I might reach it quickly. None of those in the room had taken particular notice of me as yet, and I was thankful for the rather dull light thrown by the crystal bowls placed in recesses along the walls, in which wicks floated.

I was thankful, too, for the Martian custom that did not require men to uncover indoors, although women were supposed to—a curious reversal of the practice on Earth.

I was trying to decide upon my next step when fate took the initiative.

There was a sudden commotion near a triangular door that gave access to one of the lower level ramps. A slender girl in the black garb of a slave dodged frantically among the tables toward the group I was watching. Her progress was marked by growls and resentful glances.

One or two Ildin half rose in their places, then sank back again quickly enough when they saw the red sashes of the Epsin, who had risen in some alarm as the slave girl fought her way toward them.

But, once she had made her breathless report, the four men, followed by the girl and the two slaves, dashed for the ramp.

In the excitement, I followed.

A turn in the ramp muffled the commotion behind us, and I heard the patter of the conspirators' running feet as they circled downward. I leaped after them, closing the gap quickly, and stopped barely in time to avoid turning another corner and crashing full into them. They paused at the fourth level down and threw aside the leather curtain that concealed a triangular door. With a rush they were through.

In addition to the two Epsin, there were four or five Ildin in the room, and several slaves of both sexes. They had spread out and were cautiously closing in on a far corner of the room where a slim girlish figure, almost denuded of clothing and bleeding from

an ugly gash on the arm, stood at bay.

In one hand she had a spring-gun, with which she kept threatening her enemies, as one or another of them took a chance and tried to advance a step. In her other hand she held my large automatic.

Here then was Lilrin of the Ta n'Ur, the golden-haired, blue-eyed Amazon of the Southern clan whom I had sworn to rescue. Lilrin, gloriously waging the battle of her life against a band of Martian vultures, who leered evilly at her gleaming body, yet respected the deadliness of her weapons. Lilrin—my wife!

Her clear sweet voice rang out now with scorn as she taunted and defied them. And they howled back like a pack of wolves.

"Stop this folly! Throw down that weapon!" roared one of the Epsin, who seemed to be the leader, as he pushed his way forward to face the girl.

"Be careful, Uallo," cautioned the other noble at his elbow. "She means it. She'll do what she says. I know these clansmen of the South. And the Ta n'Ur are the most desperate warriors of them all."

The other hesitated. "But this is ridiculous! She is only a girl, and—"

"The daughter of their leader, their Myar-Lur," interpolated the cautious one. "It is best to take matters slowly."

It was the psychological moment. I acted.

Stepping inside the door, I raised my little automatic and fired a shot into the ceiling. The reverberation in that heavily walled room was terrific. It seemed to stun the Martians. Demoralization was in their faces as they swung about and saw me there like a statue, my gun half raised and a tiny wisp of smoke curling up from it. They shrank from me.

"Come, Lilrin," I said. "We must get out of here. You go first and clear the way. Use my gun if you have to, but I think there are none above who have an interest in stopping us. I'll hold this scum back."

LILRIN looked at me like one who sees a happy vision and doubts its reality. I never saw her look more beautiful than at that moment, disheveled as she was and bleeding from the rather ugly gash in her arm. But there was no indecision in the girl.

With her little shoulders thrown back, her chin high and an expression of regal contempt for Uallo and all his followers, she stepped briskly to my side. For just an instant she paused and looked at me, an inscrutable something in her clear blue eyes. Then she slipped through the curtained door and was gone.

Her disappearance seemed to break the spell.

"Stop them! At any cost!" Uallo roared, and threw himself recklessly at me.

Instinctively the rest leaped with him. Three or four times my automatic roared; four of the enemy pitched headlong. But the distance between us had not been great, and even those who had stopped my bullets plunged into me as I went under from the combined rush, pulling the leather curtain on top of me as I fell outward through the door.



As fast as I could press the muzzle of my gun against a new mark I pulled the trigger, but my head was entangled in the curtain and so many Martians had fallen on top of me that I could not at once wriggle free.

It was then that I heard the heavier roar of Lilrin's gun. Five times, at evenly spaced intervals, she fired, evidently aiming with calm deliberation. Then all was quiet save for the groans of the Martians around me, and the curtain was lifted from my head.

I struggled to my feet, to meet Lilrin's anxious and inquiring gaze.

"Are you hurt, Danan-lih?" she exclaimed. "I was afraid they had gotten you. Now what shall we do?"

In a few breathless sentences I explained to her how Banur had helped me, told her of my dulya cavalcade as we raced up the ramp. We found the "moccor" the inn's public room, deserted. Nor did anyone appear to halt us before I blew a shrill call on the whistle Banur had given me. The great dogs and the yellow apes came racing to us around the corner of the building.

I made two of the dulyals ride double, and Lilrin leaped on the back of the spare dog after I had bound her injured arm with a strip torn from her garment. And then we were racing away from the village, through the yellow-green ferns and back across the plain toward Banur's post.

## CHAPTER X

### I Become a Legend

"YOU'VE canceled the debt of life forfeiture, Lilrin," I said to her.

She gave an odd, quick look and laughed. "No. That didn't count. I told you the slave is obligated to protect the master in battle—and besides, that is the second time you have saved my life. I'm doubly forfeited now, Danan-lih, whether you like it or not."

"I don't—I mean, I do like it—that is—what I mean—I'm not accustomed to enslaving girls," I stammered. "Besides—"

Lilrin sighed. "Then you must be awfully good at things you really are accustomed to," she said, and looked abruptly away over the yellow-green prairie as our strange cavalcade thudded madly on.

For an instant my heart pounded. Did she mean—But, no. That couldn't be! Certainly Lilrin did not want to be a slave. She, daughter of the chieftain of a warrior clan. Slave! Why, the girl was technically and officially my wife!

There was no pursuit. Lilrin and I between us had accounted for nearly all of Uallo's party. It was my impression that none had escaped, except perhaps a couple of the slaves.

Presently the girl's eyes caught my own. "Before three suns have passed, the Ta n'Ur and our allies among the clans will be in arms against some or all of the Polar Cities," she said simply.

Then suddenly Lilrin was all emotion. "Well, let it be!" she cried fiercely, clenching her little fists. "It had to come! The legend must be fulfilled!"

"Legend? What legend do you mean, Lilrin?"

But that was all that she would say. . . .

In due course we neared the agricultural post from which Banur and I had set forth such a short time before. Not twelve hours had elapsed.\*

As we drew nearer an Ildin, or Freeman, rode forth on a dog to meet us. But he paused suddenly some two or three hundred yards away, gazed intently at us, then turned and raced madly for the post, waving his arms and shouting something. But he was too far ahead of us for me to hear what it was.

I thought no further about the Ildin. But when we arrived, I was amazed to see no less than a hundred and fifty spearmen, in full armor, drawn up in military formation. And at their head, in golden armor, a vermilion cloak over one shoulder, stood Banur of the Gap. In the rear stood rank after rank of dulyals, minus armor, but armed with those terrible, short, broad-bladed swords. I halted in surprise.

As if he had been waiting for this signal, Banur tossed his spear into the air.

"Hail to the Hero of the Legend!" he shouted. "To the Alar of the Green Star!"

In amazement I turned to Lilrin, and to my still greater astonishment found her not surprised at all.

"I knew it," she was saying softly. "From the beginning I feared it!" And there was something of both tragedy and pride in the tear-dimmed eyes she turned to mine.

"You heard him say it," she continued. "The Legend of the Green Star! And you, Danan-lih, are the Hero of the Legend. And the Legend shall be fulfilled!"

And then this little golden Amazon with the green-blue eyes did the last thing I had ever expected to see her do. She fainted and tumbled headlong from her saddle.

In an instant I had leaped from my own mount and picked her up in tender arms. Poor kid! She must have gone through a lot while in the hands of Uallo and his villains.

Banur too came running to us, offered to carry her into the little fortress. But Lilrin on Earth would have weighed no more than a hundred and fifteen or twenty pounds. To my sturdier Earth muscles, she seemed no more than thirty-five or forty pounds. I lifted her like a child and carried her into the building.

## CHAPTER XI

### Danan of the Atl Antin

THAT night, while the bright little moons of Mars sped swiftly across the starry sky and Lilrin slept,

\* Captain Hanley's watch was of great convenience. He had found that the Martian day was almost the same as that on Earth.—Author.



Banur told me of the Legend of the Green Star.

"It is a strange mixture," he said, "of historic fantasy and more definite tradition. It has a great hold on the popular imagination, not only among us of the Polar Cities, but among the people of the Southern clans as well.

It is said that once, untold ages ago (Banur went on), no men lived in this world of Mars, which was inhabited by great beasts and by the progenitors of the dullyals, who were supposed to have stooped a bit as they walked, and to have had tails by which they could hang from trees. A quaint idea, that. To think of an animal using its tail in that fashion!

But there was another world, where the vegetation was of a much darker green, and where there were great seas and oceans, yet much land too, for this world was larger. And — another quaint conceit — there were men of many different colors living on this world: black men, brown men, red men, white men with yellow hair, and white men with black hair.

And among all these different kinds of men there was one race superior to the rest, for they were far advanced in intelligence, in the arts and sciences, and were able to make war with lightning and thunder.

Indeed, they had machines which would run themselves and accomplish in trifling time the work of many slaves laboring over a long period. And over these men—the men with yellow hair and green-blue eyes—there ruled a chief whose name was Danan, Alar of the Atl Antin, or Island Men, as these yellow-haired ones were known.

For although their land was large, it was surrounded entirely by an ocean, and thus separated from all other lands.

Now it happened in the course of time (Banur continued) that from out of the void of space, there came rushing a little world or planet that had nothing to do with the sun. Danan's wise men, after making many careful observations and calculations, told him that this planet seemed certain to hit the Green World on which they all lived.

That in particular, this little planet would probably strike the Atl, or island, on which they had their dwelling places. Danan's wise men even went so far as to say that the roving planet would most certainly destroy the Atl, probably the whole world, so that all men would be killed.

It was then that Danan put other wise men to work, constructing a great ship which would fly through the void of space, just as many of the ships of the Atl Antinat that time were able to do. Together with many thousands of his people, Danan set forth, fleeing through space from the doomed world in the hope of finding another which would be habitable.

In time they are supposed to have landed here on Mars, and after centuries of struggle, to have slain all the great beasts and domesticated the dullyals.

But in the meantime, through the great lenses which they used to magnify sight, they saw the little world hit the big one from which they had fled and then

bounce off again, taking with it much of the material of the big world. This became a moon, only much farther away than our two moons, and much larger.

But only portions of the big world appeared to have been destroyed. It seemed to the wise men who watched the collision, that the big world had not been hit where they thought it would be, but on the other side.

Now (said Banur) there had been many more thousands of the Atl Antin who had refused to risk the voyage away from the Green World with Danan, their Alar. Danan wondered if these people might not have escaped annihilation, after all. So he had his great space-traveling ship repaired, and left on a visit back to the Green World, promising to return to his people here.

That, according to the legend, was the last ever seen of the Alar, Danan. But belief, or fancy, or whatever you choose to call it, has persisted through the thousands of years since then that one day, in fulfillment of his promise, Danan would return.

Great interest, too, has centered around the romantic side of the legend, of which there are many versions of widely variant nature. The oldest and simplest form of the legend has it that Danan had no wives, and that when his people were reluctant to let him venture the journey back to the Green Star, he left behind him the girl of noble blood who was betrothed to him, and whom he loved dearly, as a pledge of his return. (Banur concluded.)

To say that I listened to all this in astonishment would be putting it mildly. Banur's description of the catastrophe to the "Green World," his reference to the "Atl Antin" left me gasping. Do we not have our own legends of the lost land of Atlantis, which was supposed to have existed somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean?

Do not other legends maintain that it is from the immensity of the Pacific that the material forming the moon was thrown off? And have not many scientists in recent years receded further and further from the position that the history of man is as simple as that of an evolutionary rise from animalism and savagery?

Have these learned men not inclined more favorably to the theory that innumerable prehistoric civilizations, of which no traces are left, may have preceded our own?

"And now," Banur said solemnly, "we come to the final links in the chain of events. Your name is Dan Hanley—he pronounced it "Danan-lih—while the hero of the Legend is Danan. Lilrin is of the Ta n'Ur, daughter of the clan's chieftain. It is one of the cherished legends of the Ta n'Ur that their entire clan is of prehistoric kingly blood—and you have joined her in marriage!"

**H**EAVENS above—was I, doomed by fate, to live my life as a legend old beyond time itself!

"I will confess," Banur admitted, "that when Gakko's villains abducted Lilrin, the Legend seemed



to be shattered. For the Alar Danan could not be conceived of as allowing another to take from him his mate. But the promptness and daring of your rescue only adds color to the story."

"It was nothing," I protested quickly. "I had superior weapons—" "Of lightning and thunder," Banur murmured.

Me—Daniel J. Hanley—a legend!

"My strength is naturally greater, since gravity is denser on Earth than here on Mars," I almost shouted.

"As befits the Hero of the Legend," he insisted calmly.

"And besides, Lilrin fought as well as I did, and actually saved me when I went down under the rush of Uallo and his followers!"

"Which is only to be expected in a warrior princess of the Ta n'Ur—and the espoused of Danan," Banur concluded triumphantly.

It was useless to argue with him, so I took another angle.

"Well, Banur," I said rising, "it is certainly an astounding coincidence. But to get down to cases. My next step must be to get Lilrin back to her own people."

"No," Banur told me, also rising and bowing low with arms wide, in the Martian gesture of respect for superiors.

"The Ta n'Ur," he announced, "will be here by morning, fully equipped for a long campaign as the bodyguard of Danan-lih and Lilrin the Alar-Lur and Alara-Lur of Mars!"

"Wha—what are you talking about?" I gasped. "Have you gone insane?"

"If I have, Danan-lih, so has my lord Almun, Alar of Borlan, who has learned of you and your fulfillment of the Legend. He personally instructed me to lay his tribute at your feet and to inform you of the irrevocable decision of all the Alarin—except Gakko and possibly his two satellites—in naming you Alar-Lur, Supreme Lord of the Council. Layani, the present Alar-Lur, is retiring, to continue only as Alar of Hoklan."

"But—but—" I protested, suddenly drained of further strength and expostulation.

"They would not dare do otherwise, in view of the popular devotion to the legend. Besides, the situation is the most opportune that has ever arisen to deal with Gakko. For Gakko, with the support of Mui and Donar, Alarin of Trilu and Yonodlu, has determined to stop at nothing to make himself the Supreme Lord.

"The army of Borlan already is on the march to the Gakalun border. The forces of Hoklan follow. Around the other shore of the Polar Sea, eastern, the Tuskidonin will threaten Yonodlu and Trilu, endeavoring to hold them neutral, but attacking if they are unsuccessful.

"Alar Udar and his Ilmonin will take to the sea, skirt both sides of the Polar Ice Cap, and attack the Gakalun coast, centering their operations on the city

of Gakalu. And you, Danan-lih, will be our Leader!"

## CHAPTER XII

### In the Desert

THE morning brought news by dog post. There had been desperate fighting at all the passes in the mountains dividing Gakalu and Borlan, but neither side had gained advantage. The Ilmonin had set forth in their fleet.

Layani, ex-Alar-Lur, with his Hoklanin shock troops, was one-third of the way across Borland in his march to reinforce the Borlanin in the mountains. Before night he would arrive with his bodyguard to make personal obeisance to me and Lilrin.

And the Ta n'Ur had arrived. They greeted us with a great shout and much tossing of spears as Lilrin and I stepped forth, clad from head to foot in the blue of royalty. Every young man and woman of the clan was there, fully armed, to the number of nearly a thousand.

Lilrin, taking direct command, spent the day explaining and demonstrating to me their battle tactics, mounted and unmounted. Before Layani and his Hoklanin arrived, I had a pretty good idea of what the Ta n'Ur could do and how to handle them.

In the late afternoon Layani and his troops arrived. I should have known better, I suppose, after all Banur had told me about the use of dulyals in warfare. But it was a shock to me to find that only the skeleton organization of Layani's force was human.

The men were known as "rintarin," and acted as leaders of dulyal squads of five. The squad normally took the formation of three abreast, two ranks deep, and in the "rintar's" position was in the middle of the rear rank. Thus, as he went into battle, he was perfectly shielded by his five dulyals, and devoted himself almost entirely to directing their actions.

The rintarin were heavily armored, but the dulyals wore nothing but the belts and shoulder straps that held their gear and weapons. All were mounted on dog-steeds of enormous size, of a breed somewhat different from the animals I had seen so far. They were like giant mastiffs.

Layani came to where Lilrin and I stood and laid his sword at our feet. For a moment he remained bending over it, arms stretched wide and palms down. Then he picked up his weapon and, straightening up, appeared to forget that there was supposed to be any difference in rank between us. Not, of course, that I minded. In fact, I should have been very much annoyed if his attitude had been servile, I never could stand "yes-men." \*

\* "Yes-men" remain the curse of modern military machines. There seems to be considerable doubt as to whether army general staffs, under the domination of dictatorial political leaders, will produce that initiative required in successful strategy against the enemy. The Martians, apparently, though well-disciplined, were democratically organized. Hence they would fight with their hearts as well as their bodies.—Ed.



For some time, Layani discussed with us the problems of the coming campaign. Lilrin, I noticed, could barely restrain evidences of scorn for Layani's forces.

"Do the Ta n'Ur never use these great apes for fighting?" I asked her.

She tilted her little nose up a bit and sniffed.

"May the day never come when they do! When the People of Ancient Royalty can no longer do their own fighting, it will be best for them to die."

Not only that, but Lilrin announced her intention of personally leading the clan.

"Is that fitting?" I protested, afraid for her. "How can you be Alara-Lur and at the same time perform the duties of a member of your own bodyguard?"

She laughed softly. "Alara-Lur or not, I am first of all slave-mate of the Alar-Lur. Besides—"

"Nonsense!" I protested. "Then I'll be co-leader of our bodyguard with you, or your second in command." And at that we both laughed.

But Lilrin didn't like the idea of dulyal warfare any more than I did. From all we could learn, there would be approximately the same number on either side. Any way we looked at it, it seemed certain as though we were in for a long-drawn-out deadlock. And this would never do.

"It comes to this, Lilrin," I said. "Get Gakko—and we end the war, avert the necessity of butchering thousands of these poor animals, and save at least many hundreds of human lives."

She nodded slowly. "Yes—but how?"

"Your people are a desert clan," I pointed out. "Why could we not lead them westward, around in a great circle below the line of habitation, until we are directly south of Gakalu—then strike straight north in a piercing raid, take Gakalu and capture Gakko himself?"

"He might not be in Gakalu," Lilrin objected.

I disagreed. "I think he will. The Borlanin and the Hoklanin won't get far in their attacks through the mountain gaps. Gakko's real danger will lie in the attack of the fleet from Ilmo, which will be centered on Gakalu. He will be there to direct the defense of his city from the attack by sea. He won't suspect a raid directly from the south."

Lilrin's little face was grave. "I believe you are right," she said. "And below the gap, quite a distance out in the desert beyond the spot where we— we found each other, the Ta n'Ur have a big dog farm."

"For several years, in secret, we have been breeding a race of desert dogs. They are lithe, speedy animals, requiring little water, and capable of withstanding the heat and dust. With them I believe we could reach Gakalu almost as quickly as the fleet will."

"Then let's do it," I decided, and my blood began to run faster with the knowledge of impending battle.

We took only Banur into our confidence. We left it up to him to spread some story that we had gone into seclusion to await the outcome of the war. Quietly we slipped away with five hundred picked clansmen. It took us a full day to reach the breeding grounds.

The dogs were indeed marvelous specimens. Like all other of the Martian breed, they were as large as horses. But in build they reminded me much of greyhounds, only they were much sturdier.

Morning saw us on our way, the clansmen scorning the weight of armor, but all carrying several spring-guns in addition to spears and swords.

I HAD given Lilrin my smaller automatic, and all the ammunition I had left for it. She had discarded the more cumbersome clothing of the north and all marks of her new rank, to appear in the light garb she wore when I first saw her. I too adopted the dress of the Ta n'Ur, with no distinguishing mark of rank.

It was near noon of the second day when we approached a ridge that looked like the rim of a great circle, toward which the dusty floor of the desert swept up gradually. We halted and looked down.

The ridge curved away from us to the north and south until it was lost on the horizon. Ahead of us was a gigantic depression, the other side of which was barely visible on the western horizon. It was an immense crater, at least four miles deep, I judged, the ground sloping down sharply from our feet at an angle of forty-five degrees or more.

We dismounted to gaze upon a sight which, despite its drab monotony and the ugly shade of the dust, had by its very size the element of grandeur.

There was a small piece of quartz near my foot. I picked it up and threw it far out. It flashed in the sun as it fell, disappeared completely in a little fountain of dust when it hit. And a moment later the whole side of the crater between that spot and where we stood seemed to be in motion.

"Back! Back!" Lilrin cried, and blew a shrill blast on her whistle.

We threw ourselves, men and dogs together, backward just in time to escape slipping over the edge and down into that vast cavity, from which great clouds of impalpable dust were now billowing up like vaporized blood.

"It's my fault," said Lilrin. "I should have remembered that it was there."

"And my bad mistake in throwing the stone," I admitted. "I seem to have started a landslide that has spread for miles."

## CHAPTER XIII

### Attacked!

AT any rate, it was clear that we could not cross the divide. We had to go around. And the question arose as to whether we should risk going farther out into the desert, or cut around it on the north.

We decided ultimately on the latter course. So, keeping well away from the edge, we circled northward. We had traveled some miles further on when we ran into one of those rarest of phenomena on Mars—a



breeze. A wind of this nature always presages a hurricane; and in the desert section, the most terrible of dust storms.

We noticed it first when the great red, billowing cloud on our left, over the crater, began to drift across our path.

Quickly we dismounted and formed a number of circles, the great dogs crouching and whimpering in deep growls while their riders wrapped their charges' heads in cloths, and then attended to themselves. We barely had time ourselves to huddle thus and protect our own heads when the dust swept down on us.

Day became night. The howling wind tore at our garments, and our skin blistered under the oceans of dust and sand that were hurled over us. To take one's head out of the cloth meant almost instant suffocation.

Then my heart stood still. For some reason, the cloak that should have been at Lilrin's saddle was missing. She had just wrapped her dog's head in one that a clansman tossed to her, and thought of herself only when the first blast of stinging dust swept by. Half blinded and in a sudden panic of fear, she began to run, crying out hysterically.

A single leap took me to her side, although the shrieking wind nearly tore my own cloak from my grasp. I drew her down beside me, under its shelter, and put a protecting arm around her trembling form. She nestled close, still quivering. And I thrilled to feel her arm encircling me.

I don't know how long that storm lasted, but it must have been a matter of hours. When at last it was over and we had struggled to our feet, casting aside the dust-laden cloak, Lilrin did not release my hand at once. And then, suddenly conscious of this, she gently pulled her hand away—and blushed.

All around us now the clansmen were emerging. Mound after mound of red dust heaved upward. Dogs and men rose to their feet once more, and there billowed up more clouds of red dust as they shook and brushed themselves off.

We resumed our way. Through the rest of the day and the following night we raced on, the dogs settling down tirelessly to that long, easy, loping pace that ate up the distance so rapidly. Dawn found us with our water almost exhausted, rounding the southernmost end of a great range of mountains.

At this point the range emerged into a line of low, rolling hills, and beyond these hills we came upon another stretch of red dust. Downward toward a band of vegetation it sloped, through the center of which trickled a tiny stream.

Here we rested to refill our waterskins and refresh ourselves, after having first thrown forward a number of scouts. For we were now in enemy territory and might at any moment contact a Gakalun patrol. We were most anxious to avoid discovery, or at least to annihilate any force we might meet, so that word of our raid might not be carried in advance of our arrival at Gakalu.

The canal-valley, however, ran at about right angles to our route to Gakalu, and soon we were again racing on over arid land, which little by little revealed sparse and then more prolific vegetation as we advanced toward the fertile zone.

But early in the afternoon we halted in the protection afforded by a little depression between two hills, where a fairly thick growth of the yellow-green trees with their strange, pale branches gave additional safety.

"From here on, Danan-lih, we should travel only at top speed, but only by night," Lilrin said. "If there are any Gakalun patrols in the neighborhood, they will be only perfunctory in their scouting. It is hard to keep the dulyals at work in the dark, and there is little chance that we would encounter them after night-fall.

"By day we will keep under cover, rest, and maintain a strict watch, that no messenger from the regions through which we have passed shall get through to spread the alarm."

The plan seemed most sensible and I gave it my hearty approval. But Lilrin and I had no opportunity to further develop the understanding that was growing between us. We were weary almost to exhaustion. At least all the Martians were. So I took command of the first watch.

It was well that I did so, for so weary were the sentries that only by making my rounds constantly was I able to keep them awake.

I was making my way cautiously toward one of our advanced posts, located in a clump of trees whose clublike branches were weirdly outlined against one of the moons, when I thought I heard a sound from somewhere beyond.\*

My first instinct was one of suspicion. Yet I was not sure. Nevertheless I hastened forward, walking as lightly as I could.

Then I saw them, a group of struggling figures in silhouette, visible at a spot where there was a little opening among the trees, outlined by the gleam of moonlight. Our sentry was in their midst, fighting desperately and, true to the traditions of the Ta n'Ur, silently as well. So occupied was he in avoiding the vicious rushes of the foemen who circled about him, that apparently he forgot to shout the alarm.

**S**UDDENLY they all closed in on him at once. It was too late now to use the automatic held ready in my hand. So I gave a great shout of warning and leaped for the struggling mass, under which our man had now gone down beneath a heap of sprawling figures.

There was a sudden sharp command from one of

\* Sound travels somewhat differently on Mars than on Earth, probably because of some quality of the atmosphere. Moreover, there is no crackling of twigs such as in an Earth woodland. The branches of Martian trees, when they die, become very dry and powdery. Consequently, difference in atmosphere and trees considered, when twigs are crunched underfoot, the resulting sound is very strange, almost indefinable to an Earth-trained ear.—Ed.



the raiders, who stood a bit aside; a rintar, I judged, by the outlines of his armor. The rest scrambled to their feet and began to run. I took them at first for dullyals, but as they scurried out into the moonlight beyond the copse, I caught the gleam of white skins.

The rintar, still half obscured in the shadows of the trees, turned to meet me. I heard the clang of a spring-gun, and a bolt whistled past my ear. Then I fired.

By the stabbing flame of my gun, I saw the look of amazement and terror on the fellow's face; for his armor, which would stop a bolt from any but the heaviest of the Martian spring-guns, offered little resistance to my steel-jacketed bullet. He went down with a resounding crash of shattered metal.

As our sentry staggered dazedly to his feet, I called out to him to guard the rintar. With mighty leaps then I flashed on out into the moonlight after the fleeing ghostly figures.

I did not fire again, for I was rapidly overtaking them, and my ammunition was precious. As they glanced in terror over their shoulders and saw the great leaps with which I was overtaking them, a mad panic seized them and they scattered pell-mell, running frantically.

Several of them I overtook and struck down. Naked men they were, save for short kilts and sword belts, but they were so terrified by what must have appeared to them as a supernatural pursuer, that none made more than a clumsy defense.

As they were fleeing in all directions, and since the ground on several sides offered promise of protection, I had no other recourse than to use my automatic, after my command to halt and my promise of their lives were disregarded. So one by one I had to shoot them down.

## CHAPTER XIV

### The Tables Are Turned

**B**Y this time, of course, our entire camp was aroused, and the Ta n'Ur, spring-guns and swords ready, came dashing up, Lilrin in the lead. She was breathing hard, one little hand at her swelling breast as though to quell the beating of her heart as she stood before me.

"Oh, I didn't know—I—I couldn't think—I was so afraid that something—had happened to you!"

"It was nothing to worry about, Little One," I said gently. "Except that a party of Gakalunin, in command of a rintar—whom you'll find over there with a bullet in him—surprised our sentry."

The girl's eyes widened. Disdainfully she touched one of the corpses with a cautious toe.

"Are you sure you got them all, Danan-lih? Because if you didn't—the warning may precede us to Gakalu."

I had had no time to count the fellows. "I don't know," I admitted. "I think I got them all, but I'm

not sure. I only know that I plugged every one in sight."

Lilrin was thoughtful for a moment. "The best thing for us to do is to dash on ahead at full speed. If any of those Gakalunin did escape, we ought to overtake them. We should be starting now, anyhow."

So we leaped for our saddles, and in a matter of moments were again galloping over the countryside in the weird Martian moonlight. But gallop as we might, we overtook no one.

As we raced on a thought struck me. "Lilrin!" I called to her. "We should be able to trail the fugitives—if there were any—by the dogs. Let's give them the scent!"

She gave me a puzzled look. "Scent? Why, what do you mean, Danan-lih?"

"Let them smell something belonging to the enemy, and then trail them by the scent," I explained.

"What an odd thought!" Lilrin exclaimed. "Can dogs on Earth do that? I never heard of a dog being able to smell."

So the dogs of Mars differed from those of Earth in more than size! And my bright suggestion was something of a dud.

We had now reached very flat country in the region of fertile, cultivated plains, and the problem of concealment during the following day was a big one. If we were successful, one more dash through the night would bring us to Gakalu in the bleak silence just before dawn.

At this hour dullyals would be torpid with sleep, and we could count on meeting little opposition except from their masters. A headlong attack, pushed home silently at that hour, as the Ta n'Ur knew well how to do it, would probably put Gakko safely in our hands.

But the risk was great, particularly in the matter of concealment for the day. Finally, just before the eastern sky began to lighten, our scouts found an irrigation ditch, an artificial branch of a canal, along both sides of which melon patches stretched for miles.

The ditch was of no great depth, and it was filled with water. At this point then we decided to conceal ourselves. Fortunately the banks of the ditch were sloping. So men and dogs lay down quietly, their heads pillowed on the shallow banks. If now and then a Ta n'Ur head might be seen from a distance, it would be of about the same size as a melon, and probably would attract no attention.

Lilrin and I worked our way upstream about a quarter of a mile, to a spot where the ditch made a right-angled turn, raising our heads cautiously from time to time to gaze across the level ground. Two or three times we saw dullyals laboring in the distance under the lash of an overseer, but there was no sign that our presence in the district was suspected.

Closer we approached to the turn. Again we raised our heads cautiously, Lilrin covering hers with her cloak, that her golden hair might not catch the glint of the sun. Yet all seemed peaceful. No living



creature was in sight, save in the distance. So we went on.

We had not gone twenty feet further before we were trapped. Here, on both sides of the ditch, the melon vines were unusually thick. And from them suddenly there sprang some dozen dulyals, launching themselves at us low and hard, smothering us under the water before we had even a chance to reach for our guns.

Coughing and spluttering we were dragged along rapidly, animal hands choking back our attempted outcries, while ropes of twisted vines bound our arms to our sides. Further struggle on our part at this time was useless.

Upstream a few hundred feet a Martian in the armor of a rintar crawled from the vines beside the ditch and whistled to the dulyals. They brought us to the spot where he waited, and then with a sudden rush swept us off our feet and dragged us up the bank.

At the same instant a number of large dogs bounded up from where they had been crouching low, and in a trice we were each tied to a dog saddle. The rintar and his dulyals leaped on the backs of the other animals. In a twinkling we were being raced across the plain.

I let out a lusty shout, for no dulyal paws were gagging me now, and twisted my head in the direction of the camp. But our capture had not yet been noticed. And my shout evidently did not carry that far; or so I thought.

As a matter of fact, the Ta n'Ur had seen our capture, had even heard my shout, but by this time they had also observed another thing that had escaped Lilrin and myself.

The fields on either side of the ditch, but at some distance back, were thick with dulyals, some fifteen hundred or two thousand of them, whereas the Ta n'Ur numbered only some hundred odd.

ULDOR, who had assumed command at once, saw that to go forward meant certain destruction without any hope of rescuing us. Without the encumbrance of false pride, he withdrew the clansmen swiftly and silently downstream, until they were far enough out of the trap to mount their dogs and race back southward in a well-simulated panic—and at a pace which outdistanced pursuit.

But. Lilrin and I knew nothing of this at the time. . . .

In no time at all we reached a road—the first I had seen on Mars—which ran beside another artificial irrigation ditch. River, perhaps would be a better word, for it was fully half a mile wide and, I gathered, quite deep.

At intervals of two or three miles were spaced little villages, similar to the one in which I had rescued Lilrin from Gakko's followers. Villages E. Rather, groups of entrances to underground dwellings. And little gatherings of slaves and Ildin stood aside to watch us race past, eyeing with casual curiosity the slim figure of the golden-haired girl and the sturdy build of the man with strangely dark hair.

At length we came to a bridge, or more properly a causeway, for it was really more in the nature of a dam with many sluice-gates than a bridge.

Here we were met by a detachment of fifteen Ildin in command of an Eps, a Lesser Lord. And when Lilrin saw them her face fell.

"For," she whispered to me, "they are in the uniforms of Gakko's bodyguards. Galdro would dignify no prisoners except those he thought of the utmost importance by an escort of this sort."

"While we were in the hands of a mere rintar and his dulyals, it looked as though our capture had been an accident. But now I am afraid Gakko knew of our coming all along. Someone—someone has betrayed us, Danan-lih!"

## CHAPTER XV

### We Reach Gakalu

WE were allowed no time to rest. Our arms were freed; but then we were tied to the saddles of fresh dogs. Away we went at breakneck speed, over the causeway and up the road toward the sea.

The Ildin who raced at our sides kept strict military order and maintained a wary watch. But at length the Eps, a handsome though evil-faced young fellow, drew up beside us, and ordered the others to follow.

He glanced at me with arrogant curiosity and then at Lilrin, whose scanty desert garb concealed but little of her youthful curves. The expression in his eyes was not good to see.

"And so," he drawled at length, "Danan-lih, the 'God' from the Green Star, comes to Gakalu! Is your name really Danan-lih?"

"It is Dan Hanley," I replied.

He scowled. "It sounds much the same. And did you really come from the Green Star?"



I struck out with all my power and the man toppled back



"What do you think?" I snapped. And at this he laughed mockingly.

"It is a good story, anyhow," he said, "and one that the people love to swallow. With what, pray, did you darken your hair?"

"That is its natural color," Lilrin cut in.

The Eps turned to gaze appraisingly at her again with that expression that made my blood boil.

"Do that again," I gritted, "and I'll find the strength to break these bonds and tear you apart!"

He glanced at me in pretended surprise, as though he did not understand, but underneath was that air of arrogant mockery.

"I'll make a bargain with you, Danan-lih," he said after a bit. "Gakko knows of your coming—but not of the girl's. These men are mine. Their loyalty to me is above even their loyalty to Gakko. Turn the girl over to me, and say nothing to Gakko about her.

"After I have delivered you at the Council Hall and am no longer technically responsible for you, I will contrive your escape. For Gakko surely intends to have your life," he added smugly to give weight to his evil argument.\*

I saw Lilrin stiffen in her saddle and turn scarlet. The Eps, misinterpreting my own silence, went on in the conceit that his proposal would be received as reasonable.

"The girl appeals to my fancy. To have a warrior lass of the Ta n'Ur among my wives would be most interesting and undoubtedly amusing—"

He never finished that sentence. Although my legs were tied under the dog saddle, my arms were free. At that moment his mount brought him within reach.

I swayed toward the Lesser Lord and grasped his collar with one hand. With a wrench I jerked him clear of his mount—and planted a crashing blow in his face with my other fist.

"Now, Lilrin, *now!*" I yelled. "Make a break for it, straight ahead!"

But the attempt was useless. The dogs on which we were mounted would not obey us, and in a moment we were borne helplessly to the ground by the avalanche of Ildin who leaped at us from behind.

When the pile was unscrambled I still held onto the Eps, choking and gasping from the twisting of his collar. I managed to drive my fist once more into his face before his minions pried me loose and my dog scrambled to his feet.

The Lesser Lord stood there spluttering and cursing, wiping the blood from his face. After a flood of invective he thrust his battered features forward into mine, for his men were holding me so that I could hardly move.

\* The Lesser Lord's eagerness to doublecross Gakko, his commander-in-chief, is not to be wondered at. Throughout history, tyrants like Gakko, who depend on unscrupulous underlings to maintain their power, have been stabbed in the back when they least expected. Indeed, from this history-proven fact may come the original thought behind the saying that "They who live by the sword, shall die by the sword."—Ed.

His voice rasped with bitter malevolence. "Were it not for Gakko, I would—I would—and by the seven Alarin, I believe I will in spite of him! When he does see you, I can tell him you were hurt in resisting capture—"

"And," I interrupted him sharply, "I shall tell Gakko of your treason to him! Perhaps Gakko knows enough of your reputation even now to credit the infamous proposal you just made."

He grew suddenly pale, in strange contrast to the blood on his face. His manner changed just as abruptly.

"Enough!" he said. "It was my mistake. I did not understand your—ah—viewpoint, or I should not have asked you to do anything—er—dishonorable in your own eyes. But I will offer you another bargain."

Ah—so I had won the upper hand, prisoner and all!

"Say nothing of this to Gakko, and I will agree that you and the girl shall have every possible courtesy and comfort as long as you are in my hands. Is it agreed?" he demanded anxiously.

"Agreed," I said; and at this the fear went out of his eyes, though there was much of worry left in his expression. Enough worry, I thought, to make him keep his promise. Or was it?

Through all this the Ildin had sat with wooden faces, though once or twice I caught the suspicion of a fleeting smile here and there among them. The Eps, followers may have been loyal, but evidently they were not personally displeased at his discomfiture. Lilrin too was smiling a bit, but pretending she had noticed nothing.

So we went on, by easier stages now. Nor were our legs bound so tightly, and frequently the Eps had water offered to us and several times food. Once we stopped for a rest, which was most welcome. But I knew that every time my back was to him, the Lesser Lord's eyes were boring into me with baffled hatred.

Finally we reached our destination. Gakalu looked more like a great park or flower garden than the teeming city it was. For miles in every direction the gardens lay, diamond-patterned, between diagonal rows of streets paved in dull red, but with scarcely a building above ground. That is, if the little ornate structures constituting the entrances to the underground city were excepted.

**J**UST below ground another system of streets was laid out in squares, at an angle of forty-five degrees to the paths above. The main arteries of this underground system emerged at strategic traffic points beyond the city. The ground level, in other words, was in reality the "roof" of the city.

The gardens, each surrounded by a low wall made from fragments of the iridescent stone, were places of recreation, rest and amusement. Here an open air café, with tables of intricate golden metal or carved stone, where refreshments were being served among gorgeous varicolored blooms; there, a recreation



center, with crowds watching some game or performance.

Gakko's palace, castle, or Council Hall—whatever one chose to call it, for it served all three purposes—was an edifice of such transcendent beauty as I had never seen before. In general lines it resembled somewhat the modified pyramidal motif that became so general on Earth in the second quarter of the 20th Century.

The structure stood at the very edge of the Polar Sea. In fact, abortive little waves of that windless expanse of water lapped and broke against one face of it, and reached halfway down the two sides.

As we approached down one of the diagonal streets, my heart leaped with satisfaction. There before us lay anchored the Ilmon fleet, our allies, about two hundred yards offshore: great raftlike, flatbot-tomed craft on which huge spring-guns were mounted. Every few moments one of these would hurl a half ton of rock at the castle, which would shatter quite futilely against the iridescent monolith, leaving its surface, as far as I could see, unmarred.

I cursed silently under my breath. It was quite obvious that the Ilmon attack was nothing but a gesture. Gakko had more "men" than the Ilmon could possibly crowd on their ships. Besides, the ruler of Gakalu had the advantage of mobility.

No matter what spot the Ilmon fleet might select for a landing, the defenders could concentrate a superior force there before the maneuver could be made effective. So Lilrin and I had no hope of rescue from the ships.

## CHAPTER XVI

### Condemned by Gakko

**I**MEDIATELY on our arrival, we were hustled through the triangular gate in the base of the castle, on into a tunnel of the same shape, the walls coming together at an angle above to form the room.

The passage inclined upward, curving about until it emerged between bastioned walls of the castle proper on top of the base. Our party was halted here by a shrill order from the commander of a unit of several sturdy young Amazons of Gakko's personal guard.

With some little military ceremony, and a malevolent glance at me, the Eps handed us over to the girl guard, and with his followers turned back down the ramp.



We were immediately seized and shackled. Noting the fetters that were in readiness, Lilrin threw me a meaning glance. I knew what she meant. This was but another evidence that our arrival was expected.

The girl in command surveyed us with interest, but gave me most of her attention. Evidently with my greater height and more muscular build than the average Martian, I was more of a novelty even than a girl warrior of the Ta n'Ur.

These young Amazons were clad in armor, and little else. Each wore upper and forearm guards on the right arm with a large round shield protecting the left. A curiously fashioned corselet or shot cuirass, held up by broad straps, protected the shoulders. Underneath was a broad girdle of heavy leather and metal plates, from which hung thigh guards and a kind of braconniere, a kilt of chain mail.

Shin guards and sandals completed the equipment, except for the short, curved, heavy bladed swords they carried.

"Come!" commanded their leader shortly. She led the way briskly through a smaller triangular gate into the castle, and there was much resonant clashing of metal in the guard's armor as we followed.

Lilrin spoke in low tones to the girl who marched beside her.

"I didn't know there were any girl warriors in the Northern Cities. I thought that only we of the Ta n'Ur, and the other clans of the desert ring—"

"We are the War Wives of Gakko," the girl explained shortly.

"How many wives has he?" I broke in.

The women, God bless 'em! Ask them for a little confidential information and they'll spill the beans every time.

"Thirty-one," she replied, her whole manner becoming more friendly.

"That is, thirty-one War-Wives. The rest don't matter. They are merely slaves,

playthings. We—we rank as Epsin and have all the privileges of men!"

Then, after a pause: "Most of us War-Wives are from the clans south of Gakalu, on the other side of the desert ring from the Ta n'Ur. Gakko will probably make you one of us."

Lilrin bent her head quickly to mine. "He will not!" she whispered tensely.

"You're telling me!" I whispered back reassuringly.

"Are you really Danan-lih?" the girl on the other side of us now asked me.

"I am Dan Hanley," I replied. "Sorry to have to



meet you under such—er—disadvantageous circumstances.” When I want to turn on the charm, it really gushes.

Warrior or no warrior, the girl was pleased. “Yes, that is what they call you—Danan-lih. And there are lots, too, who believe in you, and think Gakko should not oppose your becoming Alar-Lur.”

And she gave me a look that meant plenty!

Further conversation, however, was interrupted by a curt command from the leader as we approached a grille. Through this we could glimpse a great hall decorated with luxurious and colorful hangings, magnificent carvings and statuary, and a riot of immense, brilliant Martian flowers. There came to us the murmur of many voices, with the occasional shouts of men and the shrieks of women drunk with lilquok.

We were motioned to stay where we were. The girl in command approached a section of the grille and pressed on it with her hand. A cleverly concealed little triangular gate opened. She went in, leaving it ajar.

Through this opening we caught a better view of the great tables, of the men and women lounging or sprawling about on the benches and couches. The girl beside me sniffed contemptuously.

“It’s like this every day, since Gakko first hinted at his plan to be Alar-Lur,” she said.

Lilrin looked at her sharply and then nudged me. I managed to get in a knowing wink in reply.

In a moment the leader of our captors returned, followed by an impressive figure of a man. The girl leader of the guard waved her hand towards us imperiously.

“Here they are, Gakko. They were just brought in.”

Gakko, though neither as tall nor as heavy as I, was nonetheless a commanding individual among Martians. He was possessed of somewhat more than their normal height and breadth of shoulder. I judged him to be a man of about forty.

His face, though showing the signs of his dissipated, licentious life, nevertheless indicated both intellect and strength of will. He folded his arms casually and surveyed us with a kind of detached interest.

“So this,” he mused, “is the famous Danan-lih, who threatens the peace and security of a whole world because of a silly ancient tradition.”

I started to make a reply, but the girl leader shrieked a sudden command to “be silent in the presence of the Alar” and struck me sharply on the mouth. So I had to keep silent—especially since Gakko, for all his assumed carelessness of manner, took care to keep several of the girls between himself and us. But for an instant I was on the point of whipping out my concealed automatic and ending the matter then and there.

**G**AKKO continued to gaze cynically at me as his glance swept me insolently from head to foot. For an instant agleam lightened the lazy arrogance

of his eyes. Presently he permitted himself to pronounce upon my fate.

“The man is to be placed in a cell, just as he is, with food to eat and water to drink. But give him no other clothing, and do not let him bathe.”

Suddenly conscious of my somewhat tattered garb, with the desert’s red grime still upon me, I glanced down, puzzled as to the meaning of this strange order. For the life of me I couldn’t tell what he was driving at.

Then for the first time Gakko turned and gazed directly at Lilrin.

“Ah!” he exclaimed, an expression of evil anticipation breaking over his face. “Another recruit—eh, girls?”

He laughed carelessly at the unfriendly glances the jealous young War-Wives threw at Lilrin.

“Let her have every comfort,” Gakko commanded. “And bring her to me in the morning—at the Council—in bridal garb, for I shall wed her and then—but we shall see about that later. And, oh yes—bring the man to me at the same time.”

And turning casually, he sauntered back through the grille, which closed with a little click behind him.

There was an agony of pleading in Lilrin’s eyes as she turned to me. The young warrior girls seemed puzzled and uncertain. They glanced at Lilrin uneasily. Clearly they saw in her a rival for Gakko’s favors, and probably a successful one at that. They were at once jealous and fearful of her possible future position.

As the girl guards marched us along another corridor, Lilrin spoke in low tones to the leader. The girl shook her head in emphatic refusal at first; but Lilrin pleaded, and at last the leader relented. The party halted. Half of the girls dropped back a little distance at their leader’s command and the rest went on a few paces, leaving Lilrin and me alone together.

Lilrin stood very close to me. “I asked her for just a moment, to say farewell. This is the end, Danan-lih. Do you realize it?”

There were tears in the green-blue eyes that looked up at me so forlornly from a white, drawn little face.

Paralyzed by a sudden rush of feeling, I stood motionless, half dazed, in the first true realization of my very real love for this girl.

## CHAPTER XVII

### The Crash of Doom

**L**ILRIN must have misunderstood my silence, for she dropped her gaze and went on in a pathetically breathless way.

“Oh, I understand, Danan-lih, that I have been just an—an accident to you. That it was just the fulfillment of the ancient legend. But that isn’t what I wanted to say, Danan-lih!

“I mean, Gakko has condemned you to death—or

*(Continued on page 86)*



# ROMANCE OF THE ELEMENTS — Bismuth

**I**N THE DAYS WHEN ALCHEMISTS PREACHED THE TRANS-MUTATION OF BASE METALS INTO PRECIOUS GOLD AND SILVER, FOLKS BELIEVED THAT BISMUTH WAS A KIND OF LEAD THAT HAD GONE FAR TOWARD CHANGING INTO SILVER. INDEED THEIR NAME FOR BISMUTH, "TECTUM ARGENTI," MEANT "UNFINISHED SILVER." THUS, WHEN STRIKING A VEIN OF BISMUTH, THE SIMPLE MINERS OF THE DAY EXCLAIMED, "ALAS! WE HAVE COME TOO SOON!"



**F**AR INTO THE 1700'S PHARMACOPEIAS OF THE PERIOD GAVE RECIPES FOR MAKING BISMUTH—!

EVEN SUCH AN AUGUST PUBLICATION AS THE "PROCEEDINGS OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY" CARRIED A SOLEMN STATEMENT THAT BISMUTH WAS MADE OF A MINERAL, CRUDE SULPHUR, MERCURY, ARSENIC AND EARTH. . .

*Georgius Agricola*

**M**ORE THAN TWO CENTURIES AHEAD OF HIS TIME WAS GEORGIUS AGRICOLA, WHO, EARLY IN THE 16TH CENTURY, BELIEVED BISMUTH TO BE A DISTINCT METAL; CLAUDE JOSEPH GEOFFROY PROVED THIS CLEARLY IN 1753; HE SHOWED BISMUTH AS A METAL DISTINCT FROM LEAD, AND DESCRIBED ITS MOST STRIKING FEATURES.



**T**O MAKE THEIR WARE HARD AND SONOROUS WHEN STRUCK, EARLY PEWTERERS ARE SAID TO HAVE ADDED BISMUTH TO THE ALLOYS THEY USED.



**A**N AVERAGE

OF BETTER THAN 99.99% PURE IS THE STANDARD REACHED BY THE BISMUTH USED IN INDIGESTION REMEDIES, POWDERS, ASTRINGENTS, OINTMENTS AND SALVES. PHARMACEUTICAL GRADE BISMUTH IS ONE OF THE PUREST OF ALL METALS MARKETED.



**A** FAST-GROWING USE FOR BISMUTH IS IN LOW-MELTING-POINT ALLOYS USED FOR FUSABLE PLUGS, DENTAL MODELS, AUTOMATIC SPRINKLER HEADS, AND LOW-MELTING SOLDERS. TO BEND THIN-WALLED TUBING INTO SMALL RADII, THEY NOW USE AS A TUBE FILLER AN ALLOY OF BISMUTH, LEAD, TIN AND CADMIUM.

**B**ISMUTH is number 83 in the International Table of Atomic Weights. Its symbol is Bi and its atomic weight is 209.00. It is a shining, brittle, gray-white, crystalline metal with a ruddy tint. Its specific gravity is about 9.8 and its melting point 270°. It is not an abundant metal, but occurs widely. It is used in the manufac-

ture of fusible alloys: Wood's metal and Rose's metal. Wood's metal contains 4 parts of bismuth, 2 of lead, 1 of tin, and one of cadmium, and melts at 60.5°. Rose's metal contains 2 parts of bismuth, 1 of lead, and 1 of tin, with a melting point of 93.8°. These fusible alloys are used in boiler safety plugs, fire curtains, and automatic sprinklers.

Next month: The Romance of Boron.



# Quiz Page

THE following quiz has been prepared as a pleasant means of testing your knowledge of things fantastic and scientific. We offer it solely for the pleasure it gives you, and with the hope that it will provide you with many bits of information that will help you to enjoy the stories in this magazine.

Here's the yardstick for measuring your mental capacity which is being tested by this quiz.

Count 2 points for each correct answer. If you get between 55 and 70 points, you won't have to take up nursery rhymes for intellectual enjoyment. 70 to 85 points merits you a slight pat on the back. 85 to 100 points, and you'd be a suitable companion for Isaac Newton. Get over a hundred points and we'll suspect you of cheating.



## TWO E. Z. PROBLEMS

- Write down the following numbers in figures:  
Twelve thousand and seventy-two.  
Seven hundred and seventy-seven thousand, seven hundred and seventy-seven.  
Eleven thousand, eleven hundred and eleven.
- Write one word with the following letters: DEROWNO  
..... (Hint: follow instructions.)



## KNOW YOUR PLANETS???

Jupiter, named after the ..... of the Gods, is the ..... planet, in the ..... It has a diameter approximately ..... times that of the Earth. It is the ..... planet from the Sun, with a synodic period of ..... days, and a sidereal revolution of ..... years. It has ..... satellites, the four largest bearing the names ..... The visible surface shows a series of ....., with the only permanent feature being the ..... It has the ..... period of rotation of all the planets.



## SCRAMBLED WORDS

A superior Planet. TURIPEJ .....  
Part of the ear. MURD .....  
A geological age or period. GELONICOE .....  
A Conic section. RALOABAP .....  
A well-known astronomer. LAGIELO .....



## TRUE OR FALSE

- If one looks at the south pole of a helix the current passes through the coils in a clock-wise direction. True ..... False.....

- Palm trees grow in the open in Switzerland. True ..... False.....
- The Earth as a whole is approximately 10 times denser than water. True..... False.....
- Alcohol will record temperatures as low as  $-194$  degrees Centigrade. True..... False.....
- The largest of the ductless glands is the pituitary. True..... False.....
- Canada geologically is one of the oldest countries. True..... False.....
- On the Reaumur thermometer the boiling point of water is 90 degrees. True..... False.....
- A concave air-lens in an atmosphere of water converges the light. True..... False.....
- A clepsydra is a prehistoric insect. True..... False.....
- It is estimated that it took the Niagara Falls 25,000 years to cut its way back from the escarpment to its present position. True..... False.....
- Mercury freezes solid at  $-39$  degrees Cent. True ..... False.....
- In a lever of the first class, the weight to be lifted is placed between the point where the force is applied and the fulcrum. True..... False.....
- One million ergs of work are called a joule. True ..... False.....
- The oldest known statement of a theory of evolution is contained in the Hindu Laws of Manu, dated about 8000 B.C. True..... False.....
- Bananas grow with stems pointing up. True..... False.....



## SCIENCE FICTION QUIZ

- Who wrote "The Moon Pool"?
- On which planet was "Violet Ray," a character in the story THE GOLDEN AMAZON by Thornton Ayre, raised?
- What Authors had stories published in the first edition of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES?
- What is the name of Stanley G. Weinbaum's first sciencefiction story?
- Who is the author of "The Empress of Mars"?



## STAR DUST

- How much would a ton of coal weigh on Venus?
- When was the first asteroid discovered?
- How many satellites do not bear names?
- How long would it take for a radio message to get to the nearest star?
- Do the majority of the meteorites consist of stone?

(Answers on page 97)



# READER'S PAGE

## SEQUEL TO HELL IN EDEN?

Sirs:

I have started reading FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, and I think it is one of the best science-fiction magazines on the market. Although I have only read a few issues, I find it very interesting. What about a sequel to the story, "Hell in Eden"?

Jon F. McLeod,  
1225 Willow Court,  
Jacksonville, Florida.

*Maybe if author Lewis can think up a good plot, we'll have that sequel.—Ed.*

## HONORS TO WILCOX

Sirs:

I nominate "The Robot Peril" for first honors. The reasons are not hard to see. It contains the two primary essentials of a good story. It contains plausible science mixed in the right proportions with human interest. It holds the reader's interest right to the end.

It seems to me to be a definite misnomer though. Does the story deal with a Robot Peril? How about it Wilcox?

Paul outdid himself on the back cover. It's the best one in the present series.

The stories were all on a high par. Keep it up!

Edward Robinson,  
Saint Paul's School,  
Concord, N. H.

*What about the Stupodes—human robots? Weren't they a perilous industry?—Ed.*

## "I INSIST . . . !"

Sirs:

I've been reading FANTASTIC ADVENTURES ever since it came out and I think it's great.

I like the larger size and the back covers. When Paul gets through with life on other planets why not have him paint pictures of other planets and their satellites?

I think that "The Prince of Mars Returns" is very good. I can hardly wait for the rest of it.

I insist that you get some John Carter and Buck Rogers stories. Why not have "Armageddon, 2419 A.D." and "The Airlords of Han" reprinted. I'd like to read them and I'm sure other readers would too.

Ed Mong,  
527 S. Park St.,  
Saginaw, Mich.

*Hear that, Mr. Burroughs? He insists on John Carter. What about it? As for reprints, we print only new stories. Our authors must eat, and new stories are better, we think.—Ed.*

## FANTASY BEFORE SCIENCE

Sirs:

I am glad that FANTASTIC ADVENTURES has gone monthly, for it seemed a long time between issues when the magazine was published as a bi-monthly. I like the stories, departments, and features.

"The Time Merchant" was number one, I think, because it was a time yarn without time travel, as the Editor said, and it was written by a swell author, F. A. Kummer, Jr. Thus far I've liked his work.

As to George P. Calvert's question of science, I disagree strongly. Since space doesn't permit me, I can't go deeper into this subject, however I do and will state any move to put FANTASTIC into the science-fiction field would not have my good wishes.

By the way, I'd still like you to get William L. Chester, Creator of Kioga, in FANTASTIC.

Until now I've been sort of suspicious about letters published in newspapers and magazines, but not any more. When my first letter appeared in your publication, I was shocked, amazed, and after the second time I thought I was seeing things. Someday maybe I hope to have a fantastic story published in your magazines.

Glenn W. Roberts,  
4427 N. Parkside Ave.,  
Chicago, Ill.

*We don't know why you should have been shocked. All our letters are actual letters from readers. We'll buy any good yarn Chester sends us. Why not drop him a personal hint? Authors like to hear from their fans. As for your own story, we'll keep an eye open for it!—Ed.*

## 17 SONS OF SCIENTIFICTION

Sirs:

Enclosed herein is our monthly letter of criticism. We are made up of seventeen readers of science-fiction. A few of us send in regular individual letters every month, but here is how the stories in the January issue were rated by the group:

(1) Death Over Chicago, (2) The Time Merchant, (3) The Robot Peril, (4) Captives of the Void, (5) The Gift of Magic, (6) Hell in Eden.

Here are listed some of the topics we discussed at our last meeting. You will notice that only sixteen votes are tabulated. That is because one was absent at our last gathering.

In favor of continuing the large size.....15-1

In favor of Frank Paul on front covers.....16-0

In favor of Frank Paul doing inside sketches.....14-2

In favor of more real scientification stories.....14-2

In favor of more than one comic sketch.....8-8

Favorite author now writing for FANTASTIC ADVENTURES:

Thornton Ayre, 5; Nelson S. Bond, 4; Robert Bloch, 4; Nat Schachner, 2; R. R. Winterbotham, 1.

Secure more stories by:

Ralph Milne Farley, 3; Ray Cummings, 3; Don Wilcox, 2; A. Merritt, 2; "Skylark" Smith, 2; Stanton A. Coblenz, 2; Eando Binder, 2.

Please note that "Captives of the Void" was recognized by one of us as being a story of the "real McCoy" and its author is being established as a favorite by this person, even though he admits it is the first story he ever read by Winterbotham. "The Robot Peril" was a swell sequel to "Pit of the Damned" which appeared in *Amazing Stories* (Vol. 13, No. 7).

It seems that the main complaint about "Hell in Eden" which we selected for last place, is the over abundance of cheap action around which the whole story was built.

"Death Over Chicago" was the unanimous choice for the best story in the issue. I am informed that "Captives of the Void" would have been a "notch" higher if it was about ½ page longer.

"Seventeen Sons of Scientification."

*Your editors are extremely interested in your group, and we welcome your monthly letters. Keep them coming. We keep careful check on how you vote for various things, and if you have noticed, many recent "experiments" on our part are a direct result of some of your group's comments on the magazine. As for Paul on a front cover, we are working on one now.—Ed.*



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## THE PRINCE OF MARS RETURNS

(Continued from page 82)

he will in the morning. And I, who am your lawful bride—even if only in name—must die, too—if you do. But before I wed a Northern beast like Gakko—Here, Danan-lih take this gun! They'd only take it away from me anyhow when they dress me in the bridal garments. Please—"

So carefully I transferred the automatic to my own person. Lilrin could say no more at the moment, for by then I had folded her in my arms, clasping her supple young form close to mine in the glorious realization, at last, of what she meant to me.

"I love you, Lilrin, I love you!" I whispered fiercely.

She relaxed against me like one exhausted, and the tears were now streaming from beneath her lowered lids.

"Now I shall die happy," she murmured. "Now I shall have no regrets."

"We're not going to die—now!" I replied. I glanced at the warrior girls standing attentively along the corridor. They were regarding us with unconcealed curiosity, but seemed in no hurry to end our rather desperate communion.

"Tell me quickly, dear," I whispered. "How many of Gakko's people do you think believe in the Legend?"

"Oh, perhaps the great majority," she said, without any great interest in the subject, but with a wondrous look in her eyes as she gazed up from where her head nestled against my shoulder.

"Then my plan may work! For I believe I know now why Gakko gave me that strange order that I was to be brought before him in Council tomorrow just as I am now, dirty and disheveled."

Quickly I outlined the plan for her. As I talked the glow of

hope and exuberance came back again into her eyes.

"Good!" Lilrin exclaimed when I had finished. "And even if it does not work, my Danan-lih, we shall meet death side by side, fighting to the last!"

She drew herself up proudly and motioned to the leader of the girl warriors.

"We are ready," she said.

So, with many curious glances and whispered comments, for obviously the girl guards were puzzled by the sudden change in our bearing, perhaps even awed a bit at the jubilant manner in which I was going forth to meet a certain death, they conducted us to the next turn in the corridor. Here, after a hasty embrace, Lilrin and I were parted.

They took me to a cell in the tower, about halfway up, from which I had a good view of the westward side of the city and the shore. After bringing me food and a little water, they left me to my meditations and plans for the morrow.

First, I carefully inspected the two automatics, as soon as I was sure I was not under observation. I spent some time in practicing, until I could draw those guns from their concealed holsters with my old-time skill. Then, detail by detail, endeavoring to prepare for every possible contingency, I went over my plans again and again, until at last I dropped off to sleep.

In the morning, four of the warrior girls came to conduct me to the Council Hall. They led me to a grilled door; and while I awaited the signal that would bring me before Gakko, I had plenty of time to study the great room and the throng within it.

Gakko was giving the crowd a harangue that would have



been a credit to an Earthly politician. A master of dramatic art, he was cleverly painting a picture of himself as the popular leader, while holding his cohorts in suspense as to some great revelation he was about to make. He contrived to put across the impression that this matter would be one of great amusement to them, as well as to himself.

"And now," he shouted, "behold the fair barbarian of the desert allies, Ur Lilrin of the Tan'Ur. Is she fair enough, I ask you, to be the bride of—an Alar-Lur?" And he put into this last phrase a subtle suggestion.

My heart pounded as I saw Lilrin step forth with stately grace. Two of Gakko's warrior girls, weapons drawn, were at her side, and two more behind. Gakko, with dramatic dignity, stepped back a pace as with a sweeping gesture he centered the attention of the throng upon her.

There was a sibilant intake of breath all through the hall as Lilrin stepped forward; a murmur of surprise, and then a roar of approval. Her costume was so gorgeous, I could not have blamed the War-Wives for any pangs of jealousy.

Unnoticed for the moment by the crowd, Gakko glanced at the door.

Hastily my guards swung it open. Before I had time to guess their purpose they seized me roughly. Pulling and jerking me this way and that, they hustled me out on the platform in such a way as to make it appear that I was cravenly resisting, and had to be dragged along.

From my appearance in such grimy and tattered garments, and from the manner in which the warrior girls were roughing me I must truly have presented a ridiculous contrast to Lilrin.

A roar of laughter echoed through the great hall.

Now Gakko was shouting. "Can this be the great Dananli of the Legend, the Hero of the Green Star—the Alar-Lur of Mars?"

"No! No!" roared the crowd between gusts of laughter.

"I leave the decision to you, my people!" Gakko shouted, holding up his hand for silence. "Shall this fair barbarian be the bride of Gakko—Alar-Lur or of this false hero of the Legend who now cringes at my feet?"

**G**AKKO pointed dramatically at the spot where he expected me to be. For with this last speech of his as their cue, the girls who were guarding me began again to jerk me this way and that. I sensed their purpose was to trip and hurl me headlong to the floor before him.

Well, I would have to disappoint them. In fact, what with my Earth strength and all, that was precisely what I did. To their utter astonishment, it was the four of them, and not I, who went sprawling when they attempted to hurl me at Gakko's feet.

In a single bound I covered the space that separated me from Gakko. When I felt the floor under my feet again I lashed out with all the momentum of my leap and every ounce of strength in my body. There was a sharp *crack!* as my fist landed on Gakko's jaw.

The blow literally lifted him from his feet and hurled him headlong from the platform and down the steps, where he lay an inert and lifeless mass among his own lesser lords.

For a moment breathless silence pervaded the hall. Not a Martian moved. Slowly, ominously, I stepped forward to the edge of the platform facing Gakko's minions, a gun in each hand.

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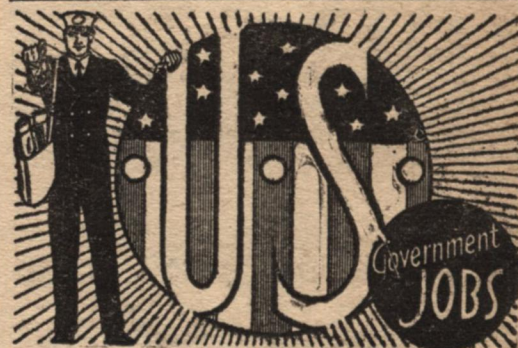
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28x40-20	2.25	30x34 1/2	2.95	30x34 1/2	3.45	34x45	1.45
28x40-19	2.40	30x34 1/2	3.10	30x34 1/2	3.65	34x45	1.75
28x40-18	2.55	30x34 1/2	3.25	30x34 1/2	3.80	34x45	1.85
28x40-17	2.70	30x34 1/2	3.40	30x34 1/2	3.95	34x45	1.95
28x40-16	2.85	30x34 1/2	3.55	30x34 1/2	4.10	34x45	2.05
28x40-15	3.00	30x34 1/2	3.70	30x34 1/2	4.25	34x45	2.15
28x40-14	3.15	30x34 1/2	3.85	30x34 1/2	4.40	34x45	2.25
28x40-13	3.30	30x34 1/2	4.00	30x34 1/2	4.55	34x45	2.35
28x40-12	3.45	30x34 1/2	4.15	30x34 1/2	4.70	34x45	2.45
28x40-11	3.60	30x34 1/2	4.30	30x34 1/2	4.85	34x45	2.55
28x40-10	3.75	30x34 1/2	4.45	30x34 1/2	5.00	34x45	2.65
28x40-9	3.90	30x34 1/2	4.60	30x34 1/2	5.15	34x45	2.75
28x40-8	4.05	30x34 1/2	4.75	30x34 1/2	5.30	34x45	2.85
28x40-7	4.20	30x34 1/2	4.90	30x34 1/2	5.45	34x45	2.95
28x40-6	4.35	30x34 1/2	5.05	30x34 1/2	5.60	34x45	3.05
28x40-5	4.50	30x34 1/2	5.20	30x34 1/2	5.75	34x45	3.15
28x40-4	4.65	30x34 1/2	5.35	30x34 1/2	5.90	34x45	3.25
28x40-3	4.80	30x34 1/2	5.50	30x34 1/2	6.05	34x45	3.35
28x40-2	4.95	30x34 1/2	5.65	30x34 1/2	6.20	34x45	3.45
28x40-1	5.10	30x34 1/2	5.80	30x34 1/2	6.35	34x45	3.55
28x40-0	5.25	30x34 1/2	5.95	30x34 1/2	6.50	34x45	3.65

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Size Rim	Tire	Size Rim	Tire	Size Rim	Tire	Size Rim	Tire
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28x40-20	2.25	30x34 1/2	2.95	30x34 1/2	3.45	34x45	1.45
28x40-19	2.40	30x34 1/2	3.10	30x34 1/2	3.65	34x45	1.75
28x40-18	2.55	30x34 1/2	3.25	30x34 1/2	3.80	34x45	1.85
28x40-17	2.70	30x34 1/2	3.40	30x34 1/2	3.95	34x45	1.95
28x40-16	2.85	30x34 1/2	3.55	30x34 1/2	4.10	34x45	2.05
28x40-15	3.00	30x34 1/2	3.70	30x34 1/2	4.25	34x45	2.15
28x40-14	3.15	30x34 1/2	3.85	30x34 1/2	4.40	34x45	2.25
28x40-13	3.30	30x34 1/2	4.00	30x34 1/2	4.55	34x45	2.35
28x40-12	3.45	30x34 1/2	4.15	30x34 1/2	4.70	34x45	2.45
28x40-11	3.60	30x34 1/2	4.30	30x34 1/2	4.85	34x45	2.55
28x40-10	3.75	30x34 1/2	4.45	30x34 1/2	5.00	34x45	2.65
28x40-9	3.90	30x34 1/2	4.60	30x34 1/2	5.15	34x45	2.75
28x40-8	4.05	30x34 1/2	4.75	30x34 1/2	5.30	34x45	2.85
28x40-7	4.20	30x34 1/2	4.90	30x34 1/2	5.45	34x45	2.95
28x40-6	4.35	30x34 1/2	5.05	30x34 1/2	5.60	34x45	3.05
28x40-5	4.50	30x34 1/2	5.20	30x34 1/2	5.75	34x45	3.15
28x40-4	4.65	30x34 1/2	5.35	30x34 1/2	5.90	34x45	3.25
28x40-3	4.80	30x34 1/2	5.50	30x34 1/2	6.05	34x45	3.35
28x40-2	4.95	30x34 1/2	5.65	30x34 1/2	6.20	34x45	3.45
28x40-1	5.10	30x34 1/2	5.80	30x34 1/2	6.35	34x45	3.55
28x40-0	5.25	30x34 1/2	5.95	30x34 1/2	6.50	34x45	3.65

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(High Pressure)

Size Rim	Tire	Size Rim	Tire	Size Rim	Tire	Size Rim	Tire
28x40-21	\$2.15	30x34 1/2	\$2.35	30x34 1/2	\$3.45	34x45	\$1.45
28x40-20	2.25	30x34 1/2	2.95	30x34 1/2	3.45	34x45	1.45
28x40-19	2.40	30x34 1/2	3.10	30x34 1/2	3.65	34x45	1.75
28x40-18	2.55	30x34 1/2	3.25	30x34 1/2	3.80	34x45	1.85
28x40-17	2.70	30x34 1/2	3.40	30x34 1/2	3.95	34x45	1.95
28x40-16	2.85	30x34 1/2	3.55	30x34 1/2	4.10	34x45	2.05
28x40-15	3.00	30x34 1/2	3.70	30x34 1/2	4.25	34x45	2.15
28x40-14	3.15	30x34 1/2	3.85	30x34 1/2	4.40	34x45	2.25
28x40-13	3.30	30x34 1/2	4.00	30x34 1/2	4.55	34x45	2.35
28x40-12	3.45	30x34 1/2	4.15	30x34 1/2	4.70	34x45	2.45
28x40-11	3.60	30x34 1/2	4.30	30x34 1/2	4.85	34x45	2.55
28x40-10	3.75	30x34 1/2	4.45	30x34 1/2	5.00	34x45	2.65
28x40-9	3.90	30x34 1/2	4.60	30x34 1/2	5.15	34x45	2.75
28x40-8	4.05	30x34 1/2	4.75	30x34 1/2	5.30	34x45	2.85
28x40-7	4.20	30x34 1/2	4.90	30x34 1/2	5.45	34x45	2.95
28x40-6	4.35	30x34 1/2	5.05	30x34 1/2	5.60	34x45	3.05
28x40-5	4.50	30x34 1/2	5.20	30x34 1/2	5.75	34x45	3.15
28x40-4	4.65	30x34 1/2	5.35	30x34 1/2	5.90	34x45	3.25
28x40-3	4.80	30x34 1/2	5.50	30x34 1/2	6.05	34x45	3.35
28x40-2	4.95	30x34 1/2	5.65	30x34 1/2	6.20	34x45	3.45
28x40-1	5.10	30x34 1/2	5.80	30x34 1/2	6.35	34x45	3.55
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## CHAPTER XVIII

### Alar-Lur of Mars

PROUDLY, calmly, as though on parade, Lilrin stepped to my side and stood quietly alert.

A murmur arose in the back of the hall. There was the clang of a spring-gun and the thud of its bolt somewhere behind me. But I had caught a glimpse of the gun, and I fired.

The roar of the automatic stunned the Martians, and there was silence again as the faint fumes of gunpowder floated hazily about me. Then the rintar in the back of the hall who had my bullet in his arm began to shriek. And pandemonium broke loose.

The Ildin — Gakko's Freeman—were milling about and struggling among themselves. Half of them were panic-stricken, fighting to get out of the room. The others fought because they were attacked, or because of they knew not what.

It was in the pit of the Epsin, just beneath our feet, that our danger lay, and in the warrior girls who had been guarding Lilrin and me. I was conscious that several of the latter were now circling in behind us on the platform.

Diversion came just in time to save me the necessity of turning to face the Warrior-Wives. Several of the Epsin made a rush at us up the steps. Raising both guns, I hurled fire and lead at them. One after another they threw up their arms and tumbled backward or plunged sprawling on their faces.

Behind me I heard the warrior girls squealing in fright and scrambling down the steps.

"Thunder! Lightning!" one of them screamed. "It is Danan-lih in truth—according to the Legend!"

I glowered at the crowd. Wherever my glance fell, men shrank back, fear and wonder upon their faces.

I stepped forward a pace then and held up my hand for silence. The turmoil hushed. I pointed to where the lifeless form of Gakko lay grotesquely sprawled.

"There lies Gakko," I said. Then, tapping my chest, "Here stands Danan-lih of the Thunder and Lightning! Danan-lih of the Great Strength! Danan-lih of the Green Star! Are ye Gakko's men or Danan-lih's men — or is there perhaps among ye, one who cares to contest the claim of Danan-lih as Alar-Lur?"

I do not know how the thing would have come out in the end. I was in reality preparing to make a dash for safety with Lilrin, in case my bluff did not work.

But at this moment I heard the soft swish of many feet, marching in unhurried military precision, coming through the grilled doors behind us.

"The Ta n'Ur!" Lilrin whispered jubilantly, but without turning her head. "They have gained entrance to the castle somehow. Uldor did not desert us!"

I don't know how long we stood there, not daring to show our own happy surprise, and not wanting to destroy the dramatic picture by abandoning our pose. But at last we knew that the clansmen had all filed on to the platform, to stand behind us in formidable array.

Then, furtively at first, and finally with a mad rush, the Epsin and Ildin clogged the exits, until at last Lilrin, I and the Ta n'Ur were left alone in the hall.

Lilrin threw herself into my arms, and so ecstatic was our embrace that Uldor barked a sharp command to the clansmen to about-face, that we—or they—might not be embarrassed. It must have been the latter, because Lilrin and I did not even know they were there for a long time. . . .

(Continued on page 90)

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"It was a simple enough matter," Uldor explained later, when we questioned him as to how the Ta n'Ur had gained the castle. "When we found you had been captured, we knew a trap had been set. So we pretended to abandon you and flee.

"We sped back to the border of the desert, and our dogs were so fast we knew no pursuit could have kept up with us. So, instead of returning toward Borlan, we cut deeper into the desert below Gakalu.

Then, following the Great Gakalun Canal, we dashed straight north, and flashed through the city itself to the very walls of the castle before any opposition developed.

"There was commotion inside. The walls were unguarded. We scaled them by shooting a line over a parapet with a spring-gun, and then hauling up a stouter rope. We heard the roar of Danan-lih's guns. The few Gakalunin we met were fleeing in terror. We ran through the corridors toward the sound of the guns. The rest you know."

At this juncture a slave entered and bowed low.

"Master," he said "there is a great crowd without, shouting acclaim to Danan-lih and Ur Lilrin. They have sent emissaries to beg that you will appear before them."

Lilrin looked at me shrewdly. "You can't show yourself this time in these tatters, Danan-lih," she protested, "or they'll expect you to look that way always. Whatever shall we do?" "There's undoubtedly a store of clothing here somewhere," I suggested, "but it might take us hours to find."

Then I got an inspiration. "Hey, wait a moment! I've got myself a swell idea. Danan-lih first appeared on this planet among the Ta n'Ur. Right? His bride is a Myara of the Ta n'Ur. It is fitting that the garb of the Ta n'Ur shall be the of-

ficial dress at the court of the new Alar-Lur—and the Alara-Lur—of Mars!"

It was nothing but a flash thought, suggesting itself to me as a quick solution of a bothersome problem. But Lilrin gave me a startled look, as did Uldor.

"The Ta n'Ur—Descendants of Kings," she murmured in a tone of awe. "And so, my Danan-lih, you have fulfilled yet another prophecy. *'For their garb shall be the garb of Kings.'*

"It is a phrase in the Ancient Tradition, over the interpretation of which our wise men have puzzled for many generations. But come! We have no time to waste! Quick, Uldor, give us clothing!"

AND so a few moments later, garbed exactly alike in the simple costume of the clansmen, Lilrin and I stepped forth from the great triangular gate in the base of the castle, to be greeted by a mighty roar of acclaim from the united populace of Gakalu and the men of the Ilmon fleet, which now was tied up at the quay.

"Hail to Danan-lih and Lilrin, Alar-Lur and Alara-Lur of the Northern Cities!" roared the crowd. "Alar and Alara of Gakalu! Myar-Lur and Myara-Lur of the Ta n'Ur!"

And then, in front of them all, Lilrin kissed me.

So, much as I would like to return to my native planet, I feel that my duty lies here. No Martian, I am sure, could lead anything but a miserable existence on Earth, where gravity is so much greater, and Lilrin says she wouldn't let me go without her.

Besides, she points out shrewdly, the tradition says nothing at all about the "Second Danan" flying off in the void of space on a foolish trip to the Green Star, and besides the people wouldn't stand for it.

As for that Martian who had betrayed Lilrin and  
(Concluded on page 94)

See  
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# AIR ADVENTURES

## FEBRUARY ISSUE

## ON SALE AT ALL NEWSSTANDS



# »»» Introducing «««

# THE AUTHOR

## FREDERIC ARNOLD KUMMER, JR.

Author of

### VOLCANO SLAVES OF MU

**B**ORN March 27, 1913, at Catonsville, Maryland. Now a resident of Baltimore. Unmarried. Six feet tall, 190 pounds, grey eyes and brown hair. Hobbies . . . dogs, chess, table tennis, bridge, fishing, horses.

As for how I got into this writing game . . . well my father is one of America's better-known authors. I was brought up in an atmosphere of twist plots, second-act climaxes, clinch fade-outs, and furious typewriting. Strangely enough, this first hand knowledge of the ups and downs of the literary profession instilled within me a desire for security . . . a longing to sit behind a nice solid desk and dictate letters, confident of a weekly stipend forever and aye. As a result, upon graduation from high school I took a position in the cashier's office for a life insurance company, about the most secure job possible to obtain.

Well, after four years behind that nice solid desk I'd dreamed of, the monotony began to get me. Moreover, there was a venerable gentleman in our office who had been with the company for fifty years, and when one day I discovered his weekly wage to be twenty-five dollars I decided I'd better quit while I had the chance. Next morning big business and I parted, to the intense relief of both parties. I had come to the point where I saw columns of figures in my sleep and the insurance company began to view my cantankerous spirit with alarm. With mutually hollow wishes of success my employers and I went our respective ways.

When the first few weeks of glorious laziness had passed I decided I might as well try my hand at a story until something better came along. That first yarn, I blush to confess, won a True Story prize contest and I received a price of ten cents a word for it. I was hooked. Since then I have been a confirmed author.

After three years of writing confessions, love stories, humor, radio material, detective, adventure, juveniles, or what have you, I tried my hand at science-fiction, of which I had long been a reader. Success attended my first efforts in this most interesting of all fields and I hope to continue in it as long as I am able to turn out salable yarns. I still do historical, detective, and newspaper syndicate work as well, but don't get the kick out of them that I do from science-fiction.

Concerning my methods of work, I am the slow patient type of writer. I look with envy and awe at my friendly rivals who tell me how they "dashed off a novelet this morning" or "batted out a serial over the week-end." A five or six thousand word story is a week's work for me. One day to block out the plot, three days to write it in longhand, a day and a half to type and correct it. On the other hand, I believe my rejection ratio is lower than those of my more speedy friends.

I am extremely fortunate in having had a literary father to guide me in my early attempts. Since then, however, our styles have become as opposite as the poles, his emphasizing modern economy of

words and my own tending always toward color and more color . . . a hangover, no doubt, from several years study of portrait painting. In spite of this difference in style, however, we often discuss plots and ideas to mutual advantage. I also wish to doff a metaphorical hat to my younger brother, Joe, who, as a scientist, helps me with knotty scientific problems.

In response to your letters I bring back Kirk once more, and the long-lost land of Lemuria.

King Solomon, you will remember, was reputed to have at his command demons, whom he could confine within a metal container, and which could, if he so desired, perform miracles of work. Might that not be another way of saying he had the use of steam? Steam confined in a boiler, yet at the disposal of the inventor, and possessing the strength of hundreds of men? The men of Mu had a science far superior to that of known history and it is not impossible that survivors of the cataclysm might have taught Solomon the secret of the "demons."

Then, too, such demons are almost invariably supposed to reside in underground caverns, mountain caves, or similar places. Why is it impossible to suppose that the men of Mu might have utilized the heat from volcanos . . . with which their land abounded . . . to produce steam? More, the lava could be poured into moulds to cool into bricks or blocks that could be used in building, thus saving the labor of quarrying blocks of stone. And such a tapping of the molten rock would draw off excess lava, prevent it from overflowing the volcano's crater to destroy the surrounding land.

Thus, as I see it, the legends of demons prevalent throughout the postdiluvian world may very likely be memories of the great forces of the men of Mu, particularly since these demons or djinns are usually supposed to be at the beck and

call of man, once he knows the secret of their control. This control the warrior kings of Cnef have, in my story, but through Kirk's twentieth century knowledge the same force, steam, is used to destroy the dreaded pirate city of Lemuria.

I had thought, in writing this story, to destroy not only the pirate city of Cnef, but all of Mu as well. Friends of Kirk, however, persuaded me to stay my hand. And so, if you readers so desire, Kirk will follow new adventures in Mu. I hope your decision will be favorable, for I am fond of the blond axeman and enjoy writing about him.

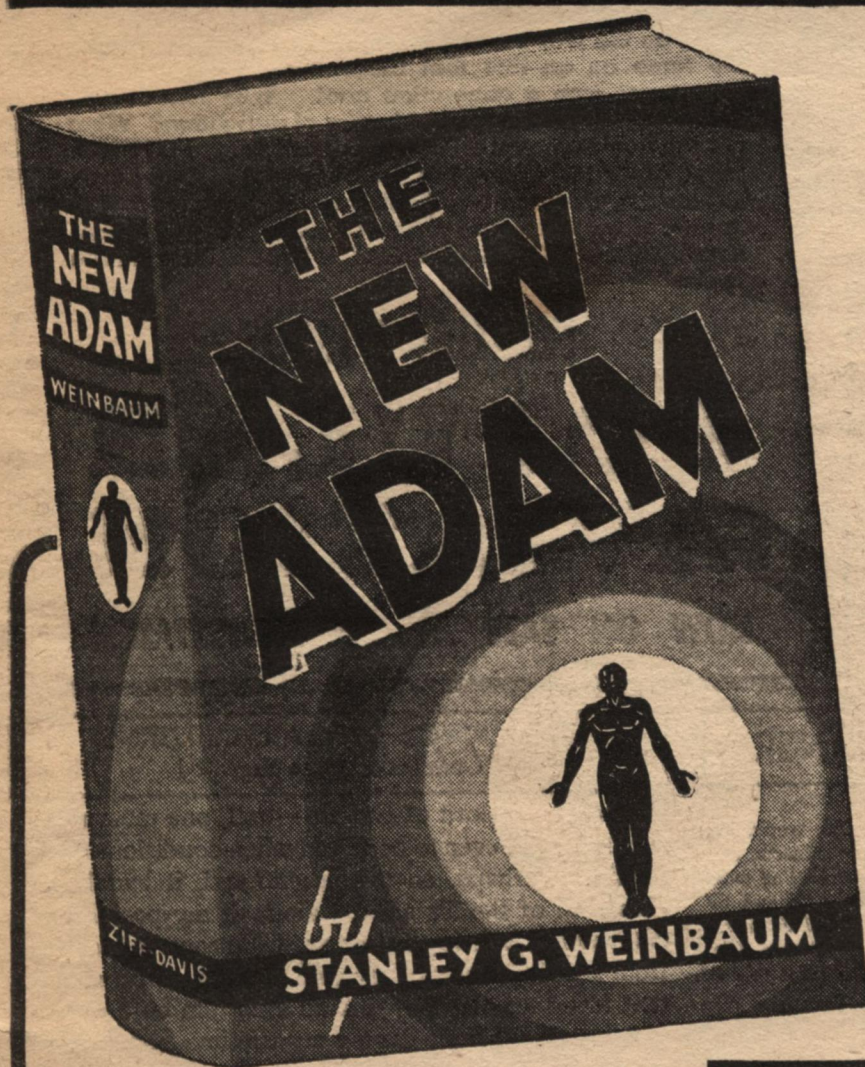
It is my belief that science-fiction is the really big field of the future. New magazines popping up every day give proof of this fact. Western and detective types are beginning to wear a trifle thin, and with science taking an increasingly important part in its daily life, the public is beginning to look to the future instead of the past. So many marvels of science have occurred in recent years that the skepticism of the doubting Thomases is being shaken. No longer do we find the instant reaction: "It's impossible!" Instead they say: "Well I don't know—maybe it's true. It *could* happen." So many of the predictions of science fiction and fantasy writers have come true that no longer is the skeptic prone to veto any science fiction idea.—Frederic Arnold Kummer, Jr., Baltimore, Maryland.



FREDERIC ARNOLD KUMMER, JR.



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## CORRESPONDENCE CORNER

Vince Lehman, 2405 E. Gorden St., Philadelphia, Pa. would like to swap SF magazines and magazines on any other subjects. . . . L. Blatt, 6234 N. Gratz St., Philadelphia, Pa. will purchase Fan magazines, original SF drawings and manuscripts, photo stills and SF books; list items and state prices. . . . Frank Soltis, 5313 S. Washenaw Ave., Chicago, Ill. has various back issues of SF magazines from 1926 through 1929 in good condition, which he wants to sell. . . . Isobel Koch, 3463 Seymour Ave. and Leona Goldman, 809 Arnow Ave., Bronx, N. Y. are desirous of pen pals between 16 and 20 interested in photography and sciences. . . . Edwin Sigler, 2109 Kentucky, Laurence, Kan. would like various SF comics. . . . Chester Hoey, 301 6th Ave., Brooklyn N. Y., "The Dance Idol of America," wants to hear from musicians and weatherforecasters; 24 yrs. of age. . . . G. W. Taylor Jr, 3328 Savoy St., N. S. Pittsburgh, Pa. has complete library of science and weird fiction which he must dispose of within the next 2 weeks, and would like immediate replies from those interested. . . . Wm. Blazek, 4919 S. Komensky Ave., Chicago, Ill. will send the name and address of a foreign, English-speaking person, either sex, anxious to correspond, to anyone sending their age and self-addressed, stamped envelope. . . . Jack Townsend, Box 604 Wilson, N. Car. will pay 20c for all almanacs before 1939. A. B. Parker, 225 N. Willow St., Chattanooga, Tenn. will correspond with all SF fans anywhere, and is mostly interested in mental control and telepathy. . . . Arthur Martin, 3 Old Cottages, Reservoir Rd, Ruislip, Midd'x., England, wants to hear from readers interested in Socialism ideal methods of governments, world-orders, and will answer all letters. . . . Erle Korshak, 150 E. 91st St., N. Y. C. has for sale to collectors SF magazines and books as well as Weird magazines and books. . . . John Cunningham, 2050 Gilbert St., Beaumont, Tex. is interested in corresponding with foreign SF fans, particularly those in Hawaii and Philippine Islands.

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**FEBRUARY ISSUE**

# POPULAR AVIATION

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## THE PRINCE OF MARS RETURNS (Concluded from page 90)

me to the overlord of Gakalu—well, one must realize that spies are ever to be found when conditions of war obtain. Perhaps, on the other hand, it had been a clansman of the Ta n'Ur, jealous of my position and determined to bring me down, by means fair or foul, from a pedestal not of my own making. But whoever that informer may be—I shall seek him out!

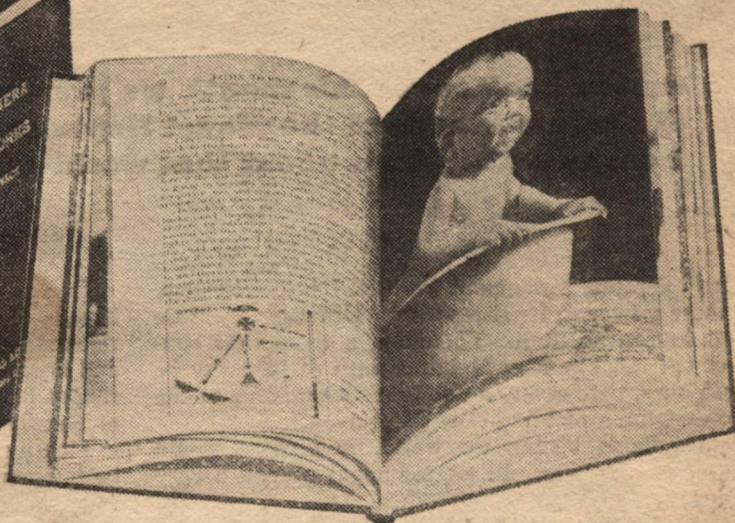
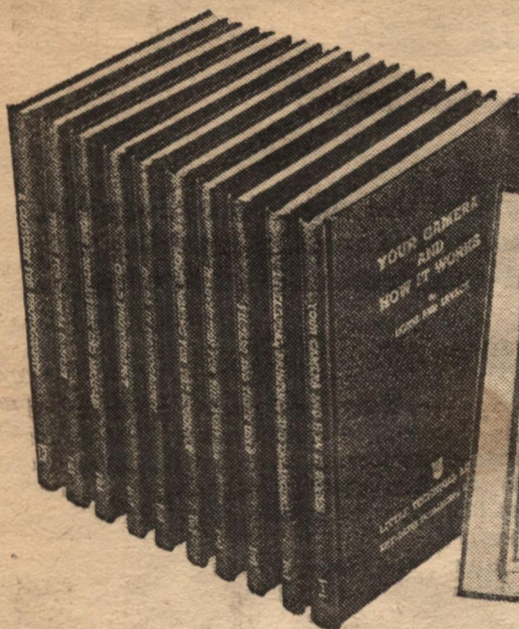
Some day, I hope during my lifetime, someone will rediscover the secrets that died with old Doctor Brandisch, who built the first successful space ship and then promptly went insane when I flashed off to Mars in it.

Some day I shall find time to study the mechanism of that ship and transmit the specifications to Earth by radio, so that, perhaps, a delegation from "the old home planet" may visit us here and see what Lilrin and I have accomplished as the rulers of half a world.

I wish I knew what the other half, below the great equatorial desert, is like. In fact, if I can ever convince Lilrin that I am not secretly planning a return to Earth (for, being a woman, she doesn't like the way the first Danan skipped out and left his bride,) I'm going to have the water pumped out of the old space ship and whisk across the desert in it to have a look at that other hemisphere.



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# LIFE ON NEPTUNE

**By HENRY GADE**

*(See back cover painting by Frank R. Paul)*

**On our back cover this month we present the artist's conception of the inhabitants of the planet Neptune, deduced in imagination from scientific facts about that world as astronomers know them**

Although Neptune is the giant world of the solar system, being almost a twin to its sister-world, Uranus, very little definite is known about it. Therefore, a theoretical conception of the inhabitant of Neptune must of necessity be quite imaginary. However, we do know enough about the planet to draw up a picture of our Neptunian.

To the Earthman, visiting this world, the prospect would not appear very inviting. In fact, it might present a very terrifying aspect.

However, before outlining the possibilities, it might be well to form a mental picture of the known facts about Neptune.

The planet's mean distance from the sun is a little more than 2,800,000,000 miles. (It is interesting to note here that this figure is 800,000,000 miles nearer than it should be, according to Bode's Law.\*)

The orbit is very nearly circular, its eccentricity being only 0.009. The inclination of the orbit is about  $1\frac{3}{4}^{\circ}$ . The period of the planet is about 164 years and the orbital velocity is about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles per second.

Neptune appears in the telescope as a small star of between the eighth and ninth magnitudes, absolutely invisible to the naked eye, though easily seen with a good opera-glass. Like Uranus, it shows a greenish disc, having an apparent diameter of about 2.6". The real diameter of the planet is about 35,000 miles, and the volume a little more than 90 times that of the earth.

Its mass is about 18 times that of earth, and its density 0.20.

There are no visible markings on its surface, and nothing certain is known of its rotation.

From these facts we know this: First, the planet is more than likely mostly liquid, perhaps even a great deal gaseous. Perhaps a tremendous atmospheric envelope, extending for thousands of miles. It is possible that condensation of light crystal formations, and deposits from the atmosphere, might form fantastic plains and caverns on the surface of the liquid portions of the planet.

Our Earthman, wearing a space suit to protect him from poison gases, tremendous air pressure, and acid conditions of the atmosphere, would land on these condensation formations and observe a scene of brilliant color and fantastic line.

\* If we set down a row of 4's, to the second 4 add 3, to the third 6, to the fourth 12, etc., a series of numbers will result which, divided by 10, will represent the planetary distances very nearly, except in the case of Neptune whose distance is only 30 instead of 38, as the rule would make it. This law seems to have been first noticed by Titius of Wittenberg, but bears the name of Bode, Director of the Observatory of Berlin, who first secured general attention to it.—Ed.

Everywhere would be dark, viscous water, with floating islands of crystal of various colors, light metals, etc. Curious stalactite formations would jut from cavern ceilings and floors. And growing things that exist would be mossy, fungus-like growths, with perhaps unhealthy mushrooms of ghastly colors.

Floating in the air, descending from the heights, might be luminous balls of phosphorescent flame. This phenomenon would be dangerous to our earth visitor, and he would have to duck them.

Finally, reaching the water level, he might be startled by a tremendous swish in the dark depths, and a brilliantly colored, lizard-fish creature would flop up onto the crystal formations and advanced toward him with ungainly half-erect motions. Its belly might be equipped with numerous suction cups, by which it could anchor itself to underwater formations, and thus free its arms and legs for tearing loose the tough mossy growths which must form its food. It would be unable to do much hunting of fish, or smaller creatures, because of the tremendous gravity of this huge world.

It is possible that these creatures, like seals, might spend part of their time on land, and even inhabit hollow bubble formations, by the simple expedient of making an entry hole. This might be necessary to escape the dangerous "rains-of-fire" that would descend at intervals as chemicals in the atmosphere combined and ignited.

There would be little of a co-operative nature in the make-up of a Neptunian. He would be more or less a lone-wolf type, and his sluggish life, much of which would be spent in lethargic inanimation, would preclude the possibility of advance either physically or mentally to a very high stage of civilization.

The Neptunian, having advanced to view the Earthman, might sluggishly blink his great eyes once or twice, then wheel and plunge once more into the depths to vanish from view. His curiosity would be extremely limited, and beyond discovering whether or not the new intruder was edible, its interest would wane.

If our earthman were to see a Neptunian engaged in spearing the smaller denizens of the deep, he could be sure that he was gazing upon the most intelligent member of the race!

Neptunians would possess a very thick hide, which might even turn a high-powered rifle bullet. They would be capable of filtering the poisonous gases from the air, and extracting the oxygen necessary to life. They would be cold-blooded animals, and more than likely, they would produce their young by laying eggs, to hatch in the heat of some chemical fumarole.

And no doubt, he'd smell fishy!



# QUIZ PAGE ANSWERS

(Quiz on Page 84)

## TWO E. Z. PROBLEMS

- 12,072; 777,777; 12,111.
- One word.

## KNOW YOUR PLANETS

- ..... King ..... largest ..... Solar System  
 ..... eleven ..... fifth ..... 399 .....  
 11.86 ..... eleven ..... Europa, Io, Ganymede,  
 Callisto ..... belt (bands) ..... Great Red Spot  
 ..... shortest .....

## SCRAMBLED WORDS

- JUPITER.
- DRUM.
- OLIGOCENE.
- PARABOLA.
- GALILEO.

## TRUE OR FALSE

- True.
- True.
- False—it is only  $5\frac{1}{2}$  times as dense as water.
- False—it freezes solid at  $-130$  degrees Cent.
- False—it is the thyroid.
- True.
- False—it is 80 degrees.
- True.
- False—it is a water clock.
- True.
- True.
- False—the description fits a lever of the second class.
- False.
- True—Darwin wasn't the first to figure it out.
- True.

## SCIENCE FICTION QUIZ

- A. Merritt.
- Venus.
- Arthur R. Tofte, Eando Binder, Ross Rocklynne, Maurice Duclos, Frederic Arnold Kummer, Jr., A. Hyatt Verrill and Harl Vincent.
- "A Martian Odyssey."
- Ross Rocklynne.

## STAR DUST

- 1700 lbs.
- Jan. 1, 1801.
- Seven.
- 4 years 4 months 7 days.
- Yes.

# PRIZE STORY CONTEST

The prize winners in the January contest were as follows:

- Author's prizes: First prize: Don Wilcox, author of "The Robot Peril" ..... \$75.00  
 Second prize: Robert Moore Williams, author of "Death Over Chicago" ..... 25.00  
 Reader prize: Dave Stitt, 581 William St., London, Ontario, Can. .... 10.00

Congratulations, Messrs. Wilcox, Williams, and Stitt. You've collaborated excellently in giving us good stories and a good exhibition of judgment in selecting stories. Keep up the good work.

Beginning with this month's contest, we are changing our method of awarding the reader prize, and also changing the nature of the prize. Due to the many letters we receive from readers asking for cover paintings, we will offer, beginning with this issue, the original painting of the front cover. This will replace our previous reader award.

And now, as to how you get this prize: First, although it is necessary to fill out the coupon, with all the stories

rated in order of preference, the fact that you do not rate them in the final correct order has nothing to do with winning. You simply rate them as you please, and even if you are dead wrong, you aren't eliminated. Your letter of 20 words or more telling us why you liked the story you selected as number one better than the others will be the basis of award. The front cover of each issue goes to the reader who writes the best letter. It doesn't have to be fancy, just a plain, honest statement of what that story had that appealed to you.

So, if you've wanted one of these marvelous paintings for your den, here's your chance. Send in your coupon, or a facsimile, or simply list them in the same order as they appear on the coupon (a post-card will do), properly numbered, one, two, three, and so on. All prize paintings will be handsomely framed, and we're sure you'll be pleased—if you win; which is up to you! Come on, let's try.

Author awards remain the same: \$75.00 for first place, and \$25.00 for second. Serials count only in the month of final installment.

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Story

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★ IN MY OPINION the stories in the March issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES rate ★ as follows:

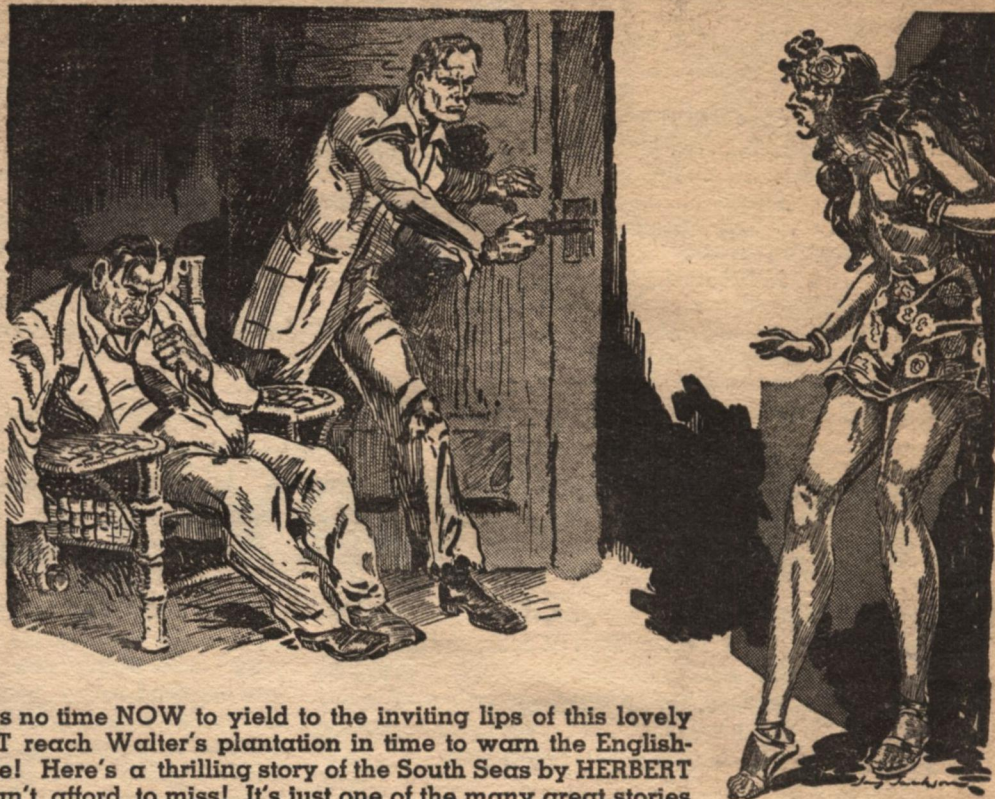
No. Here



# THE RING OF DEATH!

...as Typhoon Kelly slammed the door shut a knife thudded into the wood! He'd made it—just in time! He looked about the lamp-lighted room, a breathless, disheveled figure. An olive-skinned, dark-haired girl stood across the floor, staring at Typhoon with terror-widened eyes... gazing in horror at the glistening, snake-coiled ring he was wearing... the ring that branded him as an unprincipled killer! A reckless grin quirked the corner of Typhoon's mouth... "Quick! Where's the back door, senorita?" he demanded. The girl's fright faded at the sound of Typhoon's voice! She eyed his bronze face and sandy hair with exceeding interest. Her lips parted in a coquettish smile... a smile that! But

Typhoon realized that there was no time NOW to yield to the inviting lips of this lovely Apurito native girl! He MUST reach Walter's plantation in time to warn the Englishman of the plot against his life! Here's a thrilling story of the South Seas by HERBERT DAWSON that you simply can't afford to miss! It's just one of the many great stories packed with exciting adventure, romance and action!



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★ **VENGEANCE OF LOANA**—by **Orlin Tremaine**. Loana had to shame Brian Trent into action to complete her revenge on the bloody raiders from the sea who brought ruthless death to her people.

★ **THIS WOMAN IS MINE**—by **Peter Horn**. The whole island knew Stanhope would come for Rosita, but when he did, a strange thing happened!

★ **THE SMALL BOSS OF NUNALOHA**—by **L. Ron Hubbard**. "Get off this island!" Jim Lanridge told Big Pete Chambers. But Chambers just knocked him down! And knocked him down again!

★ **THE PEANUT PIRATE**—by **David Wright O'Brien**. "I'm Bloody Butch!" said the little pineapple heir out on a pirate cruise. And how he meant it!

★ **SABOTAGE AT SAMARAI**—by **Alexander Blade**. Fury filled Bradford when his ship blew up. There was only one way to fight killers—with killers!

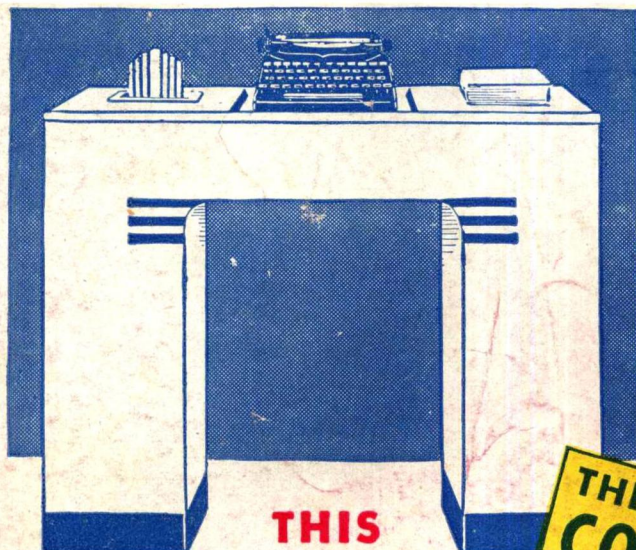
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# LIFE ON NEPTUNE

The man from Neptune lives on a world of great density, and he is forced to fight a grim environment. Tremendous gravity, an unstable surface, probably liquid with little land area, dense atmosphere, all present great problems. (See page 96 for complete details.)

