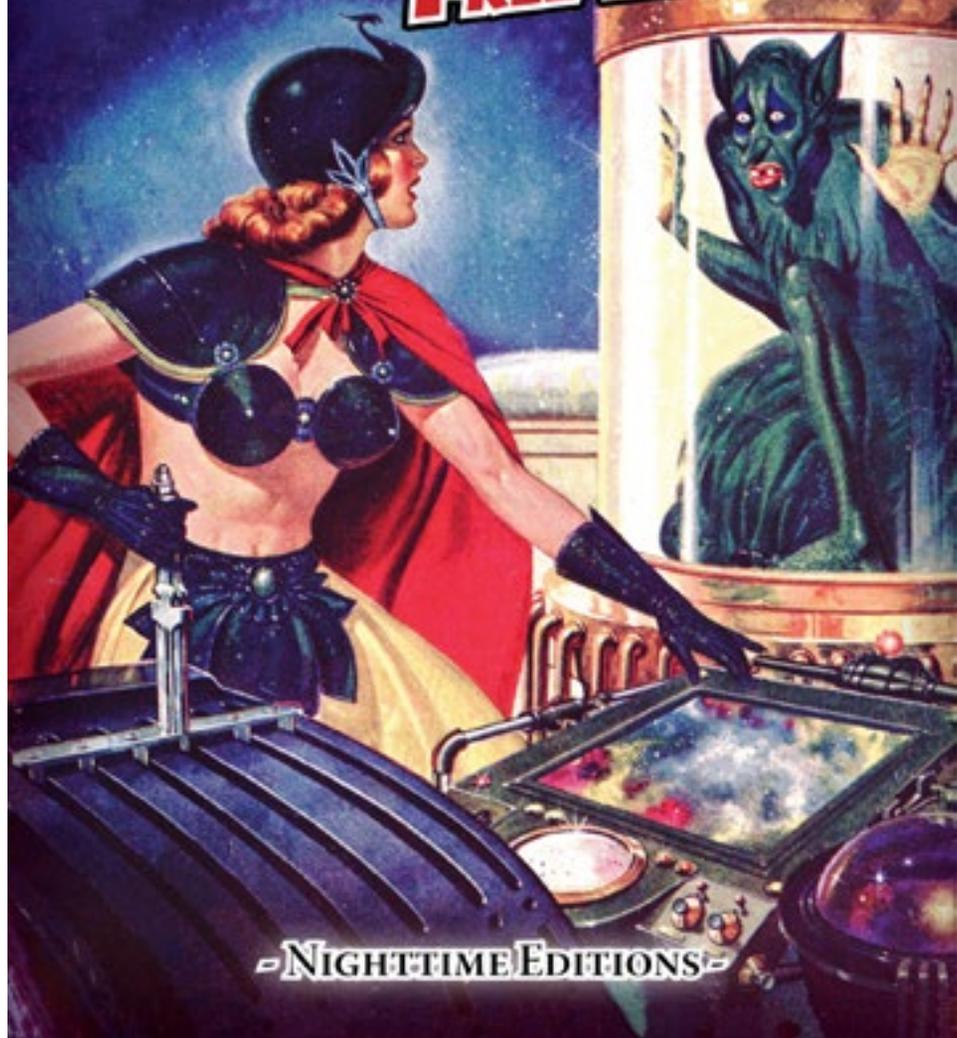


# THE SHAYER MYSTERY

COMPENDIUM

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## ABOUT:

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This eBook is an introduction to the *Shaver Mystery*. Also, a sample of the eight volumes paperback anthology titled **The Shaver Mystery Compendium**. Currently on sale on amazon.com All stories here presented are COMPLETE and accompanied with illustrations from their original magazine format.

Order of reading: No need to follow any order, except in the stories "*I Remember Lemuria!*" and *The Return of Sathanas*.

The stories in this PDF file have the same layout of its paperback counterpart; the only difference being that paperback interior illustrations are all B&W, and some slightly different paper size.

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*How Richard S. Shaver contacted the mad underground world and had his first "Thought Record" experience. This story is included in the paperback **The Shaver Mystery Compendium Vol. 1.***

*Illustrated by Virgil Finley and Robert Gibson Jones. (First published on June 1945)*

["I Remember Lemuria!"](#) 56

*First story of the Mutan Mion series. The curse of an aging sun brought death and madness to Mu, and the Atlans and Titans fled into space. This story is included in the paperback **The Shaver Mystery Compendium Vol. 1.***

*Illustrated by Robert Fuqua. (First published on march 1945)*

[The Return of Sathanas](#) 136

*Co-written with Bob McKenna.*

*The Third adventure of Mutan Mion. Mankind has always abhorred the devil, but regard him as a myth. Mutan Mion met him and fought him!! This story is included in the paperback **The Shaver Mystery Compendium Vol.3.***

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*First story of the Big Jim Steel series. Hecate was her name, an immortal goddess—but her subjects called her the Limping Hag. Included in **The Shaver Mystery Compendium Vol. 2.***

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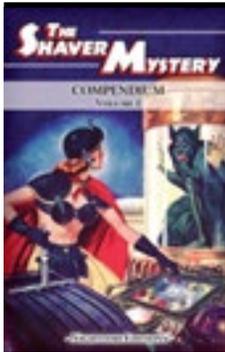
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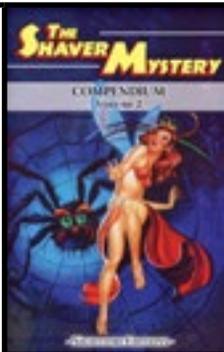
*A Rundown through the basics of The Shaver Mystery. Also included in **The Shaver Mystery Compendium Vol. 8***

Front cover by Robert Gibson Jones Illustrating a scene from "I Remember Lemuria!"  
All stories by Richard S. Shaver.

# THE COMPLETE THE SHAVER MYSTERY COMPENDIUM.



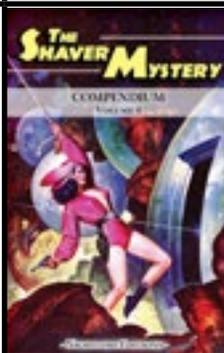
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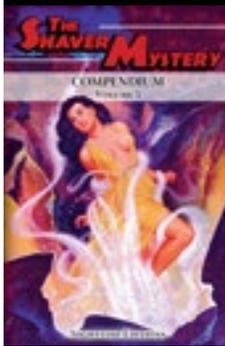
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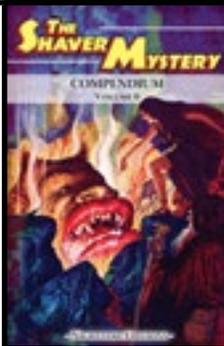
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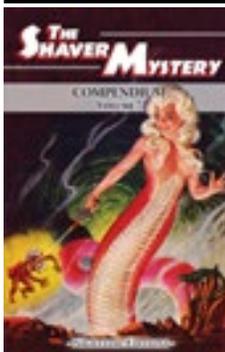
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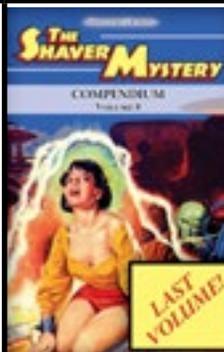
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## FOREWORD.

*THE SHAVER MYSTERY* . . . Was it a planned hoax? The sincere stories of a deranged person? Or was there any truth in its claims?

It all started in march 1945, when editor Ray Palmer decided to publish the first Richard Sharpe Shaver story "I Remember Lemuria!" in his most famous magazine, *Amazing Stories*. With claims of it being based on true events, according to Palmer such claims were supported by many letters he received after by his readers asserting they had had contact with the Deros found in Shaver's stories. Thus, the Shaver Mystery was born, and controversies (along with sales) escalated until about 1950 when it no longer attracted much attention. Shaver stories continued to be published much more sporadically in different magazines until the 1960's.

All this hoax thing had its positive effect, attention on Shaver writings; but also the negative effect of discarding its literary value as a simple hoax . . . and I know what some of you, already familiar with these stories, might be thinking: "Shaver ... Literary value? What is this guy talking about?" Well, yes, Shaver was not a very good writer, probably his best written works were the most heavily edited by Ray Palmer or whoever was doing the editor's work at the time, but after getting a glimpse on some of these stories you'll find one of the most imaginative and outlandish science fiction universe you've ever read, particularly in the stories regarding the ancient aliens that visited earth and their civilizations; and that's another interesting thing about Shaver that is often overlook, he was a pioneer on the so called ancient astronauts hypothesis (and the most outlandish for sure).

The Shaver Mystery Compendium is the most complete collection of these works. I'm sure you'll have the most fun reading and learning about the intricacies of this subterranean world with its Elder Gods, Atlans, Deros, Teros, Titans, Ro-mechs, Exd energy, Variforms, all kinds of rays and the most outlandish pseudo-science concepts.

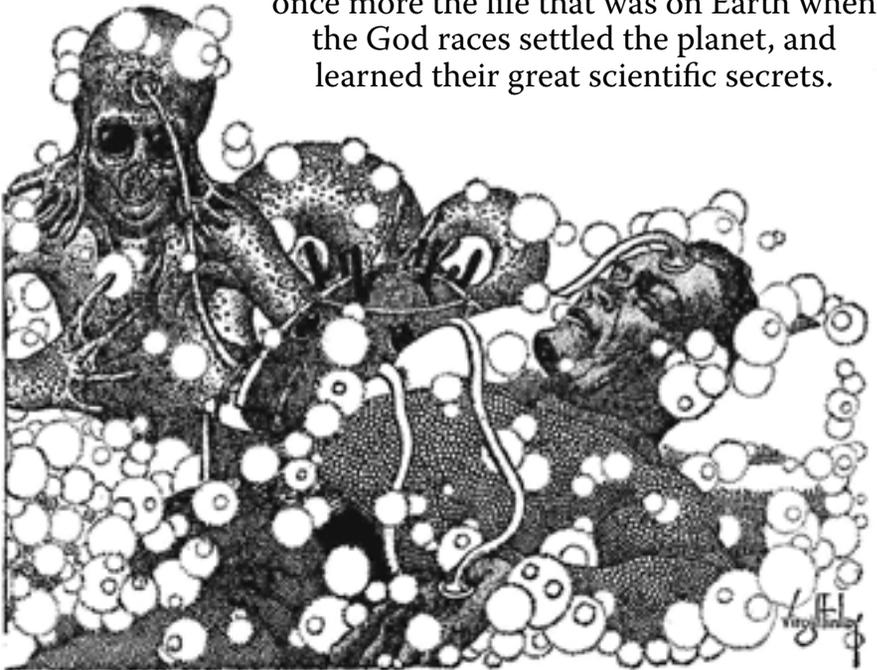
Editor.

Through amazing “books” of recorded thought, the lives, loves, hates and adventures of the ancients may be relived in all reality.



# *THOUGHT RECORDS OF LEMURIA*

WHEN the blind girl of the caves turned on the thought record machine, I lived once more the life that was on Earth when the God races settled the planet, and learned their great scientific secrets.



## THOUGHT RECORDS OF LEMURIA

“HEY, Joe Raddatz, bring that dolly over here!”

I glanced up casually from my spot welding, then blinked in puzzlement as my eyes took in the area immediately around me. The voice in my ear had come out of nowhere! No fellow worker in this Detroit auto plant was near enough for his voice to be heard by me!

“What in the devil...” I muttered, then shrugged in mystification and turned back to my work.

The moment I snapped the switch on my spot welder the voice came again.

“. . .know damn well this rivet won't fit! Don't tell me I don't know a nine thirty-second hole when I see one. . .” The voice died away, and although I listened intently for a long moment, it didn't come again.

The noon whistle blew and I knocked off. But I didn't get much kick out of eating my lunch. I kept thinking about hearing that voice when no one was around me. Funny thing!

“Wonder who Joe Raddatz is?” I mumbled. I downed the last of my coffee and put the thermos bottle back in the lid of my lunch kit. Then I got to my feet, hitched up my trousers, and went down to the time-keeper's cubbyhole.

“Do me a favor, Clocky?” I asked.

“Sure thing,” he grunted. “If it's anything I can do without getting off my fanny.”

“It is. I just want to know if there's a Joe Raddatz working on this shift, and where he's located.”

Clocky twisted around on his high stool, faced an index on the wall, and ran one finger down the row of cards that were inserted in little slots. “Raddatz—? Uh—yeah, here it is. Sure, Joe Raddatz is on this shift. Works over in section twenty. That'd be down at the far end of the building—he's a riveter.”

“Thanks, Clocky,” I said, and walked back toward my section. I was frowning and the information I'd just heard was revolving in my brain like a silly pinwheel, getting nowhere.

“Section twenty—” I mumbled, stumbling over a barrel of bronze welding rods. “How could I hear a guy talking over there?”

I thought of acoustics, and pursed my lips. “Yeah, maybe I could, at that.” They say there's a spot in the old senate chambers in the Capitol Building where even the faintest whisper can be heard from a spot ninety feet away, and most peculiarly, can be heard at no other point. Acoustics is a funny thing—just the way a building is built can carry sounds and direct them to points where they couldn't ordinarily be heard. Some caves are like that;

you can hear a voice a mile away, when it would be inaudible otherwise at a hundred feet.

Thinking about it that way took all the mystery out of it, and I grinned.

“Takes a mighty little thing to make a guy think he’s dopey!” I said aloud.

I reached my bench and sat down to wait for the whistle to begin work again. By the time it blew I forgot all about Joe Raddatz and acoustics.

AT TWO o’clock the voice came again. This time it wasn’t the voice of Joe Raddatz. It was a new voice, hoarse and gruff; and there were only two words he seemed to be able to fit together coherently. They aren’t the kind I’d ordinarily repeat. A moment later I heard other voices—voices of men all up and down the plant, and after an hour I had learned two things: all of the voices came from the side of the plant on which I worked, from one end to the other. I couldn’t hear them when I laid my welding gun down. Somehow the two facts were connected.

By nightfall I had figured it out; the voices of the men were those who were near, or in contact with, some machine attached to the wiring system on my side of the building. I couldn’t hear any voices at all as long as I didn’t have any physical contact with my spot welder.

I think I breathed easier. After all, there was an explanation that I was perfectly willing and able to accept. The wire system, and the machines connected to it, were somehow acting in a telephonic manner, picking up voices, transmitting them through the electrical circuit, and reproducing them in my gun. When I turned the thing in that evening, I spoke to the stockroom supervisor.

“Pete, how about sending this in for a repair job—it’s out of order.”

“What’s wrong with it?”

“Gives me a shock,” I lied. I figured it was better to say that than go through the rigmarole that would be necessary to explain how I heard voices through it; and the possibility existed that he’d snort and say I was nuts, and I wouldn’t get a new gun—and I wanted one. It’s nerve wracking to have to act like a telephone receiver when you’re supposed to concentrate on your work.

A new spot welder didn’t do any good. The next day I heard the voices again.

There was only one thing to do—I stuffed my ears with cotton.

And I still heard them!

NOW I began to get a little scared. I wasn’t *hearing* these voices; I was *thinking* them! They were in my mind, soundless, inaudible. Mental telepathy!

Men about me, near or far, saying things, *thinking* things, and I could hear every spoken word or every most secret thought.

I knew I was receiving the thoughts of some of these men, because, for instance, I heard: “Sure, Mike, you’re right about that . . . *Right! If this guy’s right, I’ll eat his shirt!* . . . you’re the boss, we’ll do it your way . . . *and nuts to you. After you’re down the line I’ll do as I damned please! For a foreman, you’re the stupidest—*” No workman would talk to his foreman like that.

I heard other things that were more convincing proof that I was hearing thoughts, things that made me blush when I heard them; and I don’t blush easy!

Right now, for instance, a guy is thinking about his girl . . . Say, if she thinks he loves her, somebody ought to put her straight! He’s a wrong guy, but really, I ought to tip her off—

Hey, wait a minute, how would I *prove* the truth of my tip?

Dynamite, that’s what this is! I’ll have to keep my trap shut, or I’ll be putting my foot into it. I never realized how bad it might be to know what the other guy is thinking, without him being aware, you know.

“Put him on the rack,” said a voice. I snapped off my welder and sat still, frowning. Something was wrong with that voice, or thought, or whatever it was. Put him on the rack? You don’t put people on a rack in an auto plant. Tools, yes, or a lot of other things. Rack? What sort of a rack?

“It’ll pull him apart in an hour!” the voice went on with a note of horrible satisfaction in it. “Nice and slow, so he suffers plenty! Put the ben ray on him, so he won’t die too quick. . .”

My welding gun clattered to the cement floor. I stood as though frozen. The hair on my head crawled. What was I hearing?

The voice was gone. All around me was only the muted roar of an auto factory—the clanging, clattering, mingling maelstrom of busy machines and busier men. Just noise, no voices.

**I**LOOKED down at the gun on the floor and I was trembling. What was going on? That voice had been no voice, or thought, of a worker in this plant . . . unless it was the thought of a madman!

A madman?

I sat down, white and shaken as the thought struck me. Maybe *I* was mad! Maybe there were no voices at all. Maybe I’d never actually heard the voices of anyone else. Maybe my own mind was cracking up, and inflicting these weird illusions upon me.

But no. After all, there was Joe Raddatz. I *had* the name okay, and he actually worked here. And there were other men in the plant whom I’d identified since. Somehow, I had heard voices, and real thoughts.

Or was *that* insanity? Did insane people go insane simply because their brain functioned *too well*? Is an insane person only a person whose brain is more active than it should be? Is he using that nine tenths of his brain that science says is just dormant and waiting for his future evolution into a higher type of creature? Just what is insanity, after all?

They put people who hear voices into nut houses. But maybe they do hear the voices. Maybe they aren't insane at all. Maybe they are just like me!

I looked at the gun again. A thought struck me. If I'm nuts, then I'd be nuts without the gun in my hands. I'd hear these voices any time; maybe all the time. Pick up the gun and see—

I picked up the gun and watched it shake from the trembling of my hands—

The horrible scream of agony that echoed in my brain jolted me right up to my feet with a gasp, and with a cry of terror I hurled the gun from me and ran. Through my mind echoed that scream of utter pain, the scream of a human being in such torture as might be imagined only in Dante's *Inferno*. Somewhere, somehow, a human being was dying in slow agony — *and I was hearing him die!*

I couldn't stand any more. I managed to slow to a rapid walk, but I kept on going until I got to Clocky's cage.

"Punch in my time, Clocky," I gasped. "I'm quitting. I've had enough of— of welding," I finished weakly.

Clocky stared at me peculiarly, then grunted, punched my card and handed it to me.

"You can get your check at the office," he said gruffly. "Sorry to see you go, Dick." He looked at me queerly. "Say, you ain't sick, are you?"

"No—no!" I said hastily. "I'm okay. Just decided I don't like welding. Besides, I want to take a vacation for a while. I've been working too hard, maybe. Guess that's why you think I look sick . . ."

I mumbled the last words as I walked away. I didn't look back. Why should I? One thing was sure. I had seen the last I was going to see of that damned welding gun! If I wasn't nuts, that gun would make me so sooner or later.

**A** HALF hour later I was out of the plant on a street car heading for home. "His hotel's clear through," said a voice. "He dug up a lot of stuff and he's getting too smart."

I, Richard Shaver, was going insane, I was sure of it now! I sat there in that street car with the awfulest feeling of fear I have ever experienced, listening to the absolutely crazy babblings of my own mind. How could it be

anything else? Even if this were mental telepathy, how could I tie up such a phenomenon with the things I heard? They didn't make sense. Even insane people make sense, but this last voice in my mind—*his hotel's clear through*—what does that mean?

"He's dug the cellar of his house clear down to the caves," the voice explained.

*The voice in my mind had answered my question!* I sat as though I'd been struck by lightning. But I still had some sense left in my head—I gasped out another question, this time audibly and the man next to me turned to stare at me blankly. "How deep is that?" was what I said.

"About three hundred feet—" said the voice, and suddenly there was a startled note in it, and it faded away. At the same time, I felt a numbing shock in my neck, in my spinal column, and I almost screamed with agony from the blinding headache that sprang into being.

"Say, mister," said the man next to me, "you'd better get home and to bed—you look sick!"

I stared at him through pain-filled eyes. "Yeah," I gasped. "I had better. I am sick . . . Got a terrible headache" I climbed to my feet and staggered to the rear of the car and got off.

I walked the rest of the way to my room, fighting the blinding pain in my head. I barely made it to my bed before I blacked out. And as I blacked out, I knew a faint glimmering of the truth. Somehow, by some weird super scientific means, unseen beings had caused this headache—possibly the same ones I'd heard talking that weird gibberish about the hotel—and that I'd brought it upon myself by asking questions. I'd revealed the fact that I had been listening in, and it hadn't been a welcome discovery. The pain-filled blackness into which I sank now was proof of that. <sup>(1)</sup>

\* \* \*

**W**HEN I awoke my headache was gone, but not my fear. I fled from Detroit as though the devil himself were after me.

To no avail; I could not escape the voices. I heard them day after day, night after night. It went on for months until finally I had become more or less accustomed to them—until I began to understand the whole horrible picture. And also came to understand the fate that was in store for me.

The voices came from beings I came to realize were not human; not normal modern men at all. They lived in great caves far beneath the surface. These alien minds I listened to seemed to know that they had great power, seemed conscious of the fact that they were evil. However, they also seemed to think themselves infinitely clever, but the truth of the matter was that they were obviously stupid.

I discovered this from listening carefully. Their thoughts were incredibly contradictory: to make things worse was to get along better, to make enemies was to be more powerful, to torment anyone was a personal satisfaction, to love any living thing was weak and stupid.

Who were these voices? Where were they? It took me several years to figure it out, but finally I was successful. And when I finally had learned the truth, they knew that I had discovered it, was becoming informed as to them, their place of residence, their mode of living, their evil thoughts. And since fear is one of their mainsprings, they feared me.

It was not too long before I could overhear them in my mind, plotting my destruction, though why they should have had any trouble about that I could not at that time understand. When I gained more knowledge of their stupid, crazy mind's workings, and learned that they believed they cannot actually kill a surface man without first building up a frame for the killing that will make it appear either suicide or accident or death from natural causes, I began to realize what was ahead of me.

This belief of theirs is based primarily upon their fear of discovery and its implications, plus a more realistic danger: though often stupid and usually duped, there exist among these *dero* <sup>(2)</sup> people many who are not as malicious and evil as the worst degenerates, and these *tero* are impelled to avenge murder committed for no really good reason, even when it is the murder of one of the helpless, because unknowing, surface people.

(1) As dramatically as it is possible for me to do so, I have pictured those first weird happenings that led me almost to the brink of madness, and then to the most incredible adventure that ever befell a man. In order to give my knowledge to the world without being suspected of madness, I must present it in the guise of fiction. Remember that all this wordiness is supposed to be, but is not, just a way of convincing you momentarily of the truth of an obvious impossibility, for the sake of the escape from dull reality which it offers you. So, allow yourself really to believe, not just temporarily for the sake of the effect. This story will not seem like fiction to some who will read it. For it is substantially true; the caves, the good and wise users of the antique machines, the fantastic evil mis-users of the antique weapons, all these things are true things and exist in secret in many parts of the world.

Keeping that secret has been a custom, a hereditary habit of the Elder underworld. Surface incredulity and fear of the supernatural has made it an open secret that keeps itself; for you will find that the case records of insane asylums are chock full of patients whose only complaint was that they heard mysterious voices in their minds.

In this story, I intend to reveal the secret to the world, to those who have the intelligence to seek to understand what I say. —Author.

“He knows too much; we must kill him,” became a frequent thought I heard in their minds, and it terrified me. I tried desperately to contact the only ones I knew could help me, the tero, but I did not succeed. I was neatly framed, and here is how they did it:

They framed me subtly and completely, so subtly that I myself, although aware from hearing their thoughts what they were up to, did not realize how to avoid the trap until it was too late. I fell for every one of their tricks, because their devious devilry and their incomprehensibly stupid motivations were not yet clarified in my mind. It was under their control that I did a thing that proved to their enemies, the tero, (whose vengeance they feared and whose conscience they had to find a means of dulling by building up a case sufficiently plausible to deceive them into accepting my fate as necessary) that I was no friend.

After that came the harpy hue and cry which has for ages followed and caused the death of the best minds among surface men from persecution by their own kind. Daily it rang in my ears while I fled from city to city to escape it. Yet, when my brother became involved and they killed him, I argued with myself that I must be having delusions, that his death was natural, that all this could not be without some mention of it in the papers or in books.

**I** SHALL not take more of your time to give the details of how the axe fell on me; it is all too sordid. I assure you it did not do me credit, and I would much rather forget it. Suffice it to say that my enforced escapade, which I was blindly urged into by the subtle energy of the telepathy machines and other incomprehensible mechanisms using rays and forces that surface man never heard of, ended with my arrest and sentence to a state prison.

To this end I, a well-intentioned human being, had been driven by those potent rays in the hands of evil idiots in earth's hidden caverns!

But that I was thus imprisoned was not enough. They poured continuously

---

(2) This is a shortening of the term “detrimental robot.” It means, briefly, that they are “people who are slaves to a degenerate mind.” Their brains have become radioactively poisoned by rays from the weird machines they constantly use and whose use they do not fully understand and whose rays become detrimental because of non-replacement of vital parts, which thus becomes impregnated with radioactive accumulations whose emanations are harmful (just as radium must be shielded by lead to prevent serious burns). Thus, all their thinking is along destructive channels. Obviously, then, a “tero” (in contrast to a “dero”) is one whose thinking is integrative, or constructive, in quality because his mind has not been poisoned by radioactives. —Ed.

upon me pain rays that, added to mental control which continually got me into disgusting, dangerous situations, kept me on the verge of madness from despair for years. I learned at length and in infinite detail just what Hell really can be, and at the same time I realized that such a Hell has been the daily lot of many men of earth since earliest times.

There was no relief or way of seeking aid from the continuous and almost unbearable torment. Had I complained to a prison guard that I was being tormented by invisible rays, I would have been taken from the prison to be shut up in a madhouse. I knew there would then be no hope of release. Waiting and patience might at length gain my release here at the end of my sentence; but in a madhouse, once certified mad by medical men, I realized that I would not even have the solace of attempted flight from the dero rays, to the end of my days. For from the talk of other prisoners I knew a madhouse to be a much harder place to get out of than a prison.

I know those dero only let me live because my life was a burden to me, and because my torture was a delight to them and they feared no retribution.

I had become but a thin, haggard ghost of a man when release came from a quarter I had lost all hope of ever contacting. In some manner the dero, the sane, well-meaning members of that strange cavern life, seized control of the area of land in which the prison lay.

**M**Y TORMENTS ceased abruptly. A new and intensely wonderful life began for me. For the first time in years I was able to relax, although for some time I lived in dread of the return of the suffering to which I had grown almost accustomed, as one grows accustomed to a painful limp.

I began to dream and my dreams were infinitely pleasant, though bizarre in the extreme. I could not recall them wholly upon awaking until one night she came to me in my dream, and that dream was as fresh in my memory when I wakened as though it had been an actual reality. She came to my cell, apparently, and sat herself upon the edge of my iron cot. With her came that laughing spirit of youth and mischievousness which I had almost forgotten as the face of freedom. The oppressive feeling that is a part of prison life vanished; she had brought her free face before my eyes.

She seemed clothed in a soft luminosity that threw rays of strangely invigorating light upon me as well as showing her strange, rich other-world beauty to me. She had hair of faintest golden tint, just off white, and it lay smoothly drawn back from her brow and was caught at the nape of her neck with a ribbon that was a pale green, a green that had lain so long in darkness that it had lost its original color. Her eyes under arching brows were wide and had no expression, yet her assurance in every movement as she came

into the cell did not betray what I learned later, that she was blind. The eyes were very large, and faintly blue. Her features were not out of the ordinary, but strangely and beautifully exaggerated: the too-large eyes; the delicate, utterly sensitive nose; the drooping, too-large lips that were made for caresses they had not received. Her beauty was far from the standard variety one finds under the surface sun. She had that strange, wise quality men have sung of as the witch maid's alone since time began. When she spoke, such vitality sprang into being on her strange face as woke every instinct in me from the long hopeless sleep in which they had been plunged. Yes, her face was freedom to me.

She wore a loose garment that hung from her shoulders to her calves and was belted by a metal circlet of netted links into which was thrust a metallic object which I recognized as a weapon of some strange kind.

**I**N MY dream I sat upright. My youthful visitor took both my hands in hers, saying—

“Do you wish freedom so badly, then?”

I replied: “I want it more than life, but capture would be inevitable. Then I would get no more chances to escape.”

“If you are willing,” her halting, apparently little used English voice said, “I can take you to a place where no police have ever shown their face, and where none ever will. You have only to agree to do as I tell you, without argument, for one year. I can free you quickly, and in truth I need your services.”

I embraced with enthusiasm any prospect of escape, and could not imagine that “doing her bidding” would be anything but pleasant. I agreed to her proposition, adding some fervent prayers of confused and stumbling words that I hoped expressed my infinite despair and the bright face of the hope she brought me.

Thus, came to me Nydia, as I called the blind girl after the blind maiden in Bulwer Lytton's “Fall of Pompeii.” In the morning after that first dream of her I found upon the cot that pale ribbon she had worn about her paler hair. I knew then that it was more than a dream and I looked forward with mounting anticipation to further meetings with a person who could come to a man as a dream and leave behind an actual memento. How had that ribbon gotten through those walls and bars?

It was some time before the magic was explained to me. She had promised me that she would very soon find means to release me from the prison, and that mysteriously actual ribbon was a constant reminder in my pocket that she had powers beyond present day wisdom. I still do not understand how those antique teleport mech's <sup>(3)</sup> work, but work they do, and she had

sent the ribbon over it after she had shut off the dream-maker machine. But I will explain that later.

After that, she came to me frequently, sometimes she was just a kind of projection, and sometimes her sweet, actual body lay in my arms, I swear. I grew accustomed to her visits and the hopes I began to entertain built me up more and more in morale, particularly as I was no longer tormented. In time I realized that she loved me truly, a man who had not seen a woman in many years of imprisonment. She loved me in dreams more vivid than any reality could be, made so by the stronger than human thought impulses sent over her strange dream-making instrument's rays.

She loved me with the first maiden love of a girl for a man, for she herself had long been a prisoner in one of the caves and was but now set free. She read in my heart all that I was, and our mutual and long desire for freedom that becomes a constant part of one's thoughts after long imprisonment brought about between us a kinship that blossomed swiftly into glowing love for each other. So, it was not long before she told me all was ready, that she would come that very night during the darkness before dawn, to release me, and to take me with her into her hidden home.

THAT same night the key grated in the lock of my cell door and I was not surprised to see the guard standing there as if dazed, his eyes unseeing. By then I understood something of her powers, and understood that he was a man under mental control. Behind him I could see reproduced the form of the blind girl, her transparent form bending over a huge old mechanism, her face a mask of concentration. The guard waited until I had emerged, almost cringing in my dread lest this was just another dream from which I might awaken, then he locked the cell door behind me, the cell now empty of its victim. We walked to the outer door that led from the corridor. This he opened and stood waiting to lock it again after I had passed out. I looked at him curiously, for his face was peaceful as in sleep and his eyes were unseeingly fixed ahead on space.

Silently as a shadow I slid out and no sound ever was so sweet as that door's lock clicking shut behind me. I sped across the open grounds and into the nearby forest and there beside me again was that transparent slim

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(3) Teleport mech—a means of transmission over a distance of an actual object by means of tele rays. This machine could transmit a solid thing in a way that might be comparable to the way a photo or map is transmitted by radio. However, there is a difference in principle which Mr. Shaver has never been able to fathom from his study of the machine. —Ed.

ghost of a Nydia leading me by the hand. To my undying amazement, the projection of that miraculous ancient mechanism felt as solid to my hand as real human flesh, though very different and thrilling because of the augmentative nature of the mechanism. Love with augmentation is immensely more desirable than normal love.

For miles that phantasm led me deeper and deeper into the hills. In the dark I could visualize every stone and bit of dead branch as though my feet had eyes of their own. They did—a blind girl's electric perception, developed since she was a child in the use of those miraculously potent and indestructible mechanisms, was able to sense those trifling obstacles and lead me clearly among them.

As last we came to the base of the mountain, to where it reared rocky slopes to the night sky. In the cleft of two rocky shoulders yawned a door. It was a strange door, for it was covered with earth and grass and small bushes, all alive and growing. As soon as our feet crossed the threshold, the great mass of the door lowered silently and I knew that no man could detect where that door might be. <sup>(4)</sup>

**T**HE dim light inside the cave I found emanated from long tubes running along the walls, which contained some self-actuating material which glows. Once, it was probably productive of a strong light, but now it gave off but a dim glow. The blind girl sensed my thoughts and spoke: "In other of the caverns there is brilliant light which can be switched on and off. There, the tubes are wired to one of the ancient dynamos, which must now and then be replenished by water, which is the fuel of many of the ancient power generators. <sup>(5)</sup> In those caves, the dwellers have normal eyesight."

Into this twilight the ghostly little figure continued to draw me on. We emerged at length into a vast room, around which could be dimly seen huge mechanisms of incomprehensible uses. Beside one of these stood a soft, utterly

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(4) Such doors into the caves are few but they do exist and no other door is so worthy of a man's search. Always provided the door is not one that opens upon the hiding places of the evil life that is in many parts of the caves, there is no door that can open life before you as that door to the underworld. Read on and you shall learn something of the pleasure and wisdom that opened door offered me, a criminal escaped from a state prison. You shall learn, too, that there are other things yet more wonderful than the seemingly impossible feat of a blind girl snatching a convict out of a prison. —Author.

(5) The water is disintegrated by some unknown process. —Ed.

enticing figure that was the duplicate of the phantasm that had led me here. The screen still glowed brightly from use.

As my footsteps rang on the ancient polished stone of the floor, this little figure raced toward me unerringly and threw herself into my arms. Her no longer-dropping, flower-red mouth sought mine like a starved animal scenting meat. As she left the receptor screen of the ancient mechanism, the phantom beside me disappeared abruptly.

“Dick, my poor love! You are safe with me at last. It has seemed so long,” cried her voice that was music to me who had starved for the tender tones of a woman’s voice for so many years.

My arms went about her slender child’s form. I leaned my face to those questing lips and learned more about love in two seconds than all the past of my life had taught me. The little witch had left the augmentor beam on me and only those who have loved under those ancient impulse augmentors can understand the depths of love. I knew that I had never really lived until that fierce moment when our love sprang into flaming life.

At last we stood, just looking at each other. I felt sure that Nydia could see me, her intent wide eyes were fixed so surely on me.

“I cannot believe that you do not actually see me!” I exclaimed.

“Almost I do,” she responded. “You seem much bigger, now that you are here. My mind can see you, in a way that you will learn to see, too.”

I looked about for the first time. I realized that my little sweetheart was but poorly clad, not at all like the projection she had made of herself into my prison cell. I learned later that that projection was largely mental, so that her likeness went clad as she would have liked to be clothed. In reality her garments were but a few well-worn rags. I myself could have wished I wore less than my prison denim, for the temperature was high, as it is in deep mines. Her fair hair, her large unseeing eyes, her paper white skin, were as I had seen them in my prison.

The vast round space where we stood was surrounded by hulking, mysterious machines; they stood dimly gigantic in the faint light of the cavern lamps.

**I**ASKED Nydia where her people were. She said with a little laugh that they were leaving us to ourselves at this moment of our meeting but that I should meet them soon enough.

“Oh, Dick, in some ways they are different from surface folk, and you must not let these differences disturb you. They are prepared to welcome you heartily because I love you and they love me. But it is not our custom to admit surface people to our hidden ways, for they are so apt to fear us and thus hate and be a danger to us. Greet them naturally and show no fear or

repulsion no matter how they look to you. We are different from the kind of human you are used to. We need men like you to aid us in our constant struggle with the living devils that inhabit much of these underground warrens. But when we try to approach men for this purpose, they fear the whole thing as madness or ghosts or whatever they have been taught. You see, we are forced to fight the devils because we wish evil to no one and cannot be glad when others suffer, and that is a way of thought that all the evil cavern wight <sup>(6)</sup> hate and seek to destroy.”

She led me from the huge machinery cavern into a smaller room that was a strange mixture of architectural magnificence, the work of the Gods, and old hand-made wooden furniture that must have been brought into that place two hundred years ago, or more. We sat on a wooden bench that was a half of an oak tree, split length-wise, with wooden pegs for legs. She told me more of her people. They had come from England’s northern underground seventy years before. They were but few, only twenty living in the ruined splendor of that ancient God’s retreat. Most of them had never read a book, although Nydia had a few poor samples of modern books. But they had read men’s minds over the ancient beams that penetrated through miles of the rock of the hills and was so conductive and augmentive one could read a man’s mind many miles away. In some ways they knew more of life than does the ordinary man by far.

Many of them had contacted surface folk and striven to persuade such persons to join them but had been rebuffed probably from a fear that their soft invitation was a mental delusion or masked some snare. For those men who know of the ancient secret know also of the evil it has always done, hence fear all ray people <sup>(7)</sup> though many are wise and good and try to nullify the evil and reduce the torments inflicted by the degenerate evil members of that strange life.

**O**F THE twenty in this group at least a half-dozen were blind because of their heredity, like Nydia. For many of the cavern people come of stock that lived so long in almost total darkness as to become blind as the fish in cavern rivers become blind. Ages of life in the dark had developed other senses than sight in their particular family, compensatory senses. The others, strangely enough, had very large eyes, much too large for normal vision, with great black openings in the iris. Evolution had developed the faculty of seeing in the dark in these. Their skins were often light brown; or a paper-like, bleached white; or a mottled, strangely lumpy appearance which came of a disease peculiar to the caves. They are not like surface men, these dwellers in the caves.

But these *tero* were a kindly lot and a friend of Nydia's was a friend of theirs. I soon saw that they had little comprehension of the terrific significance of the ancient secret of the caverns' mechanisms or the value of a knowledge of their uses. It was difficult to realize their lack of imagination and their casual acceptance of the facts of their age-old customs in regard to surface men. It is not, after all, so many years ago when all such people were burned as witches and sorcerers. They had never attended a school, yet their knowledge in general was surprising for people raised in practically total darkness. It is because they absorb general information from reading many men's minds. The fact that rickets is not common among them I attribute to the beneficial rays which the ancients made a part of the pleasure-ray machines which they are proficient in using from long practice.

Perhaps our education and its consequent results in thought are not as important or remarkable as we of the surface believe. Certainly, our thoughts offer these *tero* small temptation to join us; they prefer, I think wisely, their seclusion. Nydia, not alone among her kind, but rare, had vast plans and different ideas than theirs; she had always urged contact with surface people and had at last fallen in love with a surface man and brought him with her into her cavern home.

**T**HE space within the mountain was an Aladdin's cave, beautiful beyond a modern man's imagination. The hall where Nydia next led me, saying it was a hall where the group met for any social purposes, was pillared by mighty metal simulations of trees, hung with crystalline, glittering fruits. In

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(6) Wight—an elf. In this case, the dero people. -Ed.

(7) Ray people are taken to mean all of the modern underground race, both the dero and the tero. They are called "ray" by Mr. Shaver because that is the means they use to spy upon surface people, and to talk to them, and to perform the many weird things their machines are capable of doing. It is by rays that they operate. For instance, have you ever had a fearful nightmare in which you have been faced by horribly realistic monstrosities such as your waking mind has never conceived, to your utter terror? This dream might have been produced in your mind by tele-projection from the dero creatures of the caves who delight in causing surface people horror and terror. There is another and more significant reason behind this practice, and that is to build up superstition and fear in surface people that has been proved their greatest protection against discovery by upper-worlders. They fear discovery because it would mean their extermination by a vindictive human race, seeking to revenge itself upon its age-old torturers —Ed.

every one of these great rooms stood several of the enigmatic ancient mechanisms, themselves beautiful of form and shimmering with prismatic color.

Some of the machines had a startling way of talking; when one neared them, they would speak in a strange tongue, beautiful sounding words of a meaning incomprehensible. That is a strange sensation, hearing a machine speak to you. I suspect they were equipped to announce their need of oil or other minor adjustments, as we equip mechanisms with red lights to indicate need for adjustment.

The solid, gleamingly polished and super-hard floor of rock was inlaid with weirdly beautiful designs and symbols which I deduced were writings in the Ancient's lost language. Imperishable metal lounges, once probably covered with the "shining fabrics which the Gods alone could weave" <sup>(8)</sup> stood beside the gleaming, ancient "mech," as the cavern people call the old machines. It was in this great room that later that same night, or day, I should perhaps say, Nydia's family and other members of that group formally welcomed me, the surface man who had joined them for the balance of his life.

**A**MONG the cavern people, marriage is purely a personal matter, people either live together or they do not, and it is no one else's business. I often think their attitude in this respect is the correct one. In the caves, when two people promise themselves to each other, they keep their promise; which is more than I can say for surface life. Nydia spent exactly one week showing me that what happened to Tannhauser in the Hollow Hill with the goddess Venus can still happen to mortal man. She had studied the uses of the antique pleasure mechanisms under masters—some of whom I met later. For one week I experienced all the pleasures of a God's nuptials; tremendous stimulation generators poured super-powered pleasure impulses through every nerve of my body at their full capacity. If a man could die of pleasure, I am sure that I would have died then. But my tender-hearted Nydia was no slave of pleasure. She was a sweet normal girl in love and I learned more of what infinite pleasure life could hold in that week than ever mortal man did before.

At the week's end, my little blind witch began to talk of other things than love and of honeymooning. I will admit that I protested at length, but she gave me her reasons quietly but firmly.

"There is much you must learn, my innocent, if you would live very long down here. We may at any time be attacked by savage, mad ray-men from the evil places. You do not yet know how to fight or work with these tremendous

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(8) "Shining fabrics which the Gods alone can weave" is verbatim from "Ulysses."—Ed.

weapons. We cannot wait. Besides, you have promised to do as I say for one year, and my purpose in making you promise this to me was just that, that I might teach you to be of value to us in such a fight.

“I am yours and you may do with me as you please,” I told her gravely, and I meant it.

“I shall show you, dear lover, the true nature of those whom we must fight against if we are to survive,” she said, musingly. “There is so much to tell you, to teach you, that I hardly know where to begin. But first of all, you must know whom it is that we must battle against. Come!”

She led me to the great hall where I had first met her and paused before one of the mechanisms. Her hand on the control, she swung a huge distance-ray beam and almost immediately upon the visi-screen a scene of utter horror became visible. I could hardly believe my own eyes’ evidence. That was a Hell, a real Hell, I looked upon. Men hung swinging from hooks, boiled in fluids, writhed on racks, thirsted in the stocks, sat on spikes tugging to get off, lay under hammers that crushed them inch by slow inch, or slid inexorably into machines that sliced them gradually with the thinness of a microtome. <sup>(9)</sup>

**N**YDIA explained the horror, and I got at last the full significance of the ancient legend of Hell.

“You see, they will not allow their victims to die, but keep them alive through every torment by the use of the beneficial rays. When a man is nearly dead, they place him in one of the vitalizer machines for a day or two and he is healed up completely. Then they start him through the thing again. Do you see those shriveled bundles at the side? That is how the victims look when they finally do die.”

We watched the horror for a space and Nydia concluded—

“Some of those men have lived in that torment for twenty years. This is our enemy’s pleasure palace; a Hell for helpless victims of their lust for blood and pain. From immemorial times, they have had such Hells in the underworld, and it has never ceased. You see, you surface Christians are not so far wrong in your pictures of Hell, except that you do not die in order to go there, but wish for death to release you once you arrive. And they are very careful about letting a victim die, for that would end the fun. There has always been a Hell on earth, and this is one of them. Every man who falls into their hands, from the caverns or from the surface, faces one of those torments-to-the-death you witness. It never mentions such things,

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(9) One of various instruments used to cut sections for microscopic examination —Ed.

your newspaper, does it? That bunch of misbegotten spawn of an afreet <sup>(10)</sup> fears all living men.”

“Do any surface men know of this thing?” I asked her.

“It’s impossible to tell them of such things,” she answered. “Since there is no logical reason for anyone behaving as they do, none of the motives that animate surface people being evident in such activity, they can’t believe any tale of modern Hell. Even if you show them projections of the tilings that go on in the evil caverns, they are sure that it is a concoction made up to frighten them, from motives wholly mischievous. The truth is, almost none of the surface people believe in the existence of evil raygroups from antiquity down to the present day. They don’t even understand the detrimental robotism <sup>(11)</sup> which is the underlying cause of such a horror. And there is no way to tell them, short of taking them there. Even if they knew, what could they do? They have no weapons to fight an ancient ray weapon, nothing they could do would stop the thing. Since most of the victims come from among us cavern people, surface people never miss anyone without having a simple explanation for the disappearance.”

**S**HE twirled a dial on the great apparatus and swiftly the picture on the screen swept through the beautiful caves and came to rest on a group of things that should not live.

“Do you see them?” she demanded. “Those things that could not live

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(10) A monstrous evil jinni, a demon, a horrible giant. —Ed.

(11) Detrimental robotism—actually the two words from which dero is derived, using the first two letters of each word. Thus, it can be seen that a dero is a being who is a robot (or slave) to a detrimental process of thinking, a process that always ends in something bad. Dero people’s minds are affected, so that their thought processes are warped into evil channels. Picture the brain as poisoned, and picture a thought as something that must make its way through the convolutions. This is not actually what happens, but it is an analogy that will help you to understand. Conceive of the thought as a good thought, such as doing a good deed. But by the time the thought has gone through the brain and transmitted into action, the thought is no longer a good deed, but a bad deed. For instance, you are impelled by your thought to help a blind man across the street, but by the time you get to him to do it, your thought has changed so that you trip him and laugh as he falls into a mud puddle. That is the way a dero thinks, and why he always does evil things—his brain is so poisoned by detrimental energy that all his good thoughts end up bad. Pure thought, say the philosophers, is always good. It is only rendered bad by the effect of a sick human mind. —Ed.

but for the beneficial rays they bathe in perpetually? The worst thing about them is their fear of technical men. They are so stupid they think that modern science might produce weapons affective against their mighty antique mechanisms, so they particularly persecute and obstruct modern scientists on the surface, although the truth is, it is improbable that men can produce anything equal to the ancient work in even centuries of effort.”

“Have you had many other surface people here?” I asked her in wonder.

Nydia shook a sad little blonde head.

“It is very difficult,” she admitted. “I have planned for years on recruiting and training a group of men who would be far superior in ability to those evil ones we fear. But surface men fear us, chiefly because they have heard the whispered lies and horrible thoughts of the evil ray-men.”

I looked with loathing and sick disgust at the things that were now pictured on the vast visi-screen. In truth, they could not have lived save for the protection and beneficial force rays of that Elder Race that had once lived there. Small wizened imps, goggle-eyed, their goblin appearance was that of walking dead men. And dead they would have been except for the synthetic body electric which the ancient generators of life force pour through their bodies forever. Because of this supply of super energy, these evil people live on long after they would normally be dead. It is this fact, also, that makes them evil, for they are in truth not able to create thought, and only the slow decay of their brains is energized by the synthetic electric, which is the real cause of the evil, destructive nature of their thought. It is not genuine thought at all, but a reflection of the decay in their minds, which is a disintegrant pattern, not a creative one.

Nydia explained all this to me very clearly, and I know she was right, for they looked extremely unburied, long dead, but horribly alive. I believe that if they were cut off from this ancient supply of life-generating electric mechanisms, they would not live a week. Some of them hung over balconies around the scene of that hell upon which I had looked sickly a moment before. They were obviously gloating evilly. Others were talking over the telepathic ray mechanism with people on the surface.

“To torment their victims is their greatest pleasure. They have little ability to enjoy other things. And they are always amusing themselves torturing helpless beings who have fallen into their hands. It is a terrible thing to understand, but it is true.”

“WHERE did this particular group come from?” I asked Nydia.

“The ancestors of this group came from underneath Arabia. They came long before we did, more than one-hundred and fifty years ago. Some

of them are one-hundred and fifty years old, too, I have learned. The Arabs knew them as afreets, the devils that whisper in sand blowing at night, or scream like lost souls in the sand storms, and mislead the poor Arabs, causing their death with lies or tormenting them with pain rays.”

But those afreets, or goblins, upon which I stared on the visi-screen were not whispering in the wind or the sand. They were, instead, lipping into the straining ears of some of the most influential tycoons of the surrounding surface industrial area. The lies they told! I learned later by myself, reading the minds of some of the rich, that many of them believed in the power and efficiency of the Secret Ray of America, which they thought was a service like the F.B.I, for the purpose of searching out escaped convicts, bank-robbers, extortioners, kidnappers, etc. To these tycoons the ray-dero from the hidden caverns posed as a secret service, hard at work solving several murders and robberies they had committed themselves. They were amazing mimics, considering that they had little real intelligence, but only a pseudo-thought arising from their long experience in reading men’s minds.

“My dearest Dick, you must learn very quickly all that I can teach you,” murmured Nydia tensely. “Then you will be better able to help our sane group—who are really very good and wise—protect ourselves from those mad ones. At present we are able to hold them off, but at any time they may get the better of us. They are really mad idiots, in spite of their clever mimicry of sane people’s actions. They slay us whenever they have an opportunity to do so without loss or danger to themselves.

“Come, now!” Nydia continued, “—into the ancient thought record library. You shall read the history of the great race who builded these imperishable caves and the indestructible machinery which is capable of who knows what miracles. These records tell of a time when the Great Ones lived on earth long before history was recorded by writing. Thus, you shall know more about the earth and the life of Man in the past than any other living man from the surface—more, too, than most of the cavern people, for few of us study long enough to learn to appreciate and absorb the wisdom that lies in such places as this library of the recorded thought of the mighty men who were once called Gods by people of earth. This is the place that has made me intelligent and worthy of life. You will become a great man if you use this wisdom, my lover.”

Into yet another chamber Nydia led me and guided me to a huge chair, like a giant’s dentist chair, though the upholstery was missing. She pushed me into it, and I was lost in its tremendous size, which made her laugh deliriously. There were several flexible metal straps which she fastened about my

wrists, waist and neck. Then she took a strange helmet, fastened to a heavy cable, and placed it on my head. <sup>(12)</sup>

“Lie back and relax. You will soon be another person, entirely in another period of time. Do not let the double sensation of being two people at once worry you; it does not last long. This is the greatest experience the ancient wisdom of the caverns can offer you, to read the mighty thought—to actually become as a God of the ancient times.”

I saw her throw a Titan-size switch on the wall and in a flash—

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**I** WAS not Dick Shaver, but another man entirely. I stood in a forest of tremendous fern trees. Beside me was a long, enormous cylinder of smoking metal, still hot from its recent passage through the upper air. From it emerged a woman, larger than I, and in her arms, she carried my child.

The fern trees seemed topless, stretching up until distance made the tremendous fronds seem fragile and delicate to the eye, at last disappearing in the mists. In the sky I could see many similar cylinders and knew they were decelerating and would come to rest at last near us. I knew that we were members of an Atlan <sup>(13)</sup> colonizing expedition, sent to this blazing new sun

(12) When I gave the world the story of Mutan Mion (In “I Remember Lemuria!” in the March, 1945, *Amazing Stories*) as my own memories, I could not reveal exactly how I remembered the far past, without bringing the story down to the present day. Thus, it was that editor Ray Palmer mis-named it “racial memory.” So now I shall explain the actual truth of how it came about that the ancient, forgotten past can live today, exactly as it was, in the mind of a modern man—myself.

Through scientific, indestructible mechanisms, the Ancient Ones’ thoughts were recorded on a kind of micro-film, sealed in non-corrosive containers. Placed in one of their thought-record projectors, these records yield more precise and accurate information about that ancient life than any of our history books about more recent events. By the nature of synthetic thought electric flows given off in strength by these particular mechanisms, the person “reading” the record feels he is himself the person experiencing the occurrences described in the thought-record. The flow of image-bearing energy from the record is so much stronger than one’s own energy of consciousness that the experiences produced from the record remain in the mind more vividly than any actual experiences. Thus, these records control the mental processes in such a way that the past is lived again in a more vivid fashion than one’s own life. These records left by the Elder Folk are a more faithful transcription of actual history than any other records kept since. —Richard Shaver.

(13) Atlan—one of the three major races of space, the other two being the Titans and the Nortons. —Ed.

and its planets where life was furiously fecund, capable of developing a crescendo of growth into complex forms that would from our landing onward be guided by our skill and wisdom. My ship was the first to land of the colonizers of planet three under this new star named Sol.

“Put the child back in the ship, Lia,” I called to the woman. “Then help me get out the materials for our house. The sooner we are safe within its walls the better, for we can’t tell what forms of inimical life may have been developed since the tests were made so long ago by the explorers.”

“Yes, Lord of my Heart,” answered the obedient Lia.

The two of us began to haul out from the cargo compartment of our spaceship the sections that enabled us easily to put up the walls of our new home. The walls contained giant spider-web coils which would set up an impeding magnetic field that would allow only beneficial energy to enter my home. The house walls, once the power was turned into them, set up a huge force field which allowed only waves of a certain frequency to enter the interior. This particular frequency had been determined upon by exhaustive tests of the beneficial and detrimental content of the electric and magnetic waves sent out by the star, Sol, overhead.

From time to time as I, Duli, and my wife labored over the rapidly rising structure, other spaceships drifted down into the great clearing where we had landed first of all upon this planet which we called Lemuria, or Earth. These were fellow colonizers, who immediately set about erecting their homes as Lila and I were doing. It seemed that no time at all had passed before the pioneers had settled down into more or less regular living in their new environment. The days passed eventfully, for each one brought immense new vistas of the possibilities that lay in the immensely more fecund and different growth from anything we had known.

Within the chambers of that house I knew those beneficial vibrants from that new sun would build up a charge of increasing potency, for the waves could enter, but, due to the direction of the flux of the field in the walls, could not get out again. Thus, the house Lia and I had constructed became a great trap for beneficial energy and within it we, Atlan children, would grow swiftly to great size and immense strength and unbounded intelligence. <sup>(14)</sup>

**I**LIVED through what seemed years of time. I saw the cities grow. Over our homes, after a time, we erected domes of crystalline plastic. The air within each dome was not dusty or poisonous, but was a prepared mixture of gases, germless, fortified with health giving nutrients, odorless, super-penetrating, an ever-present agent for physical well-being.

The light, always on where needed, never oppressive, was a soft lumi-

nosity that possessed a beneficial force all its own, even contributing an additional push to the forces that make life grow in beauty and strength. The natural electric magnetism of earth's force field, which is in itself an agent of integration or growth, was strengthened and focused on the sidewalks and in the living chambers of those wondrous cities, so that the natural rate of integration growth of matter was increased by hidden mechanisms focusing overhead magnetic field lenses.

These field foci were formed where the light and happy feet of our people were led most often in pursuit of that pleasure that we called work.

For work was pleasure to us, in the increasing flood of strength and awareness that in ever greater tide flowed through our limbs. For in these cities of new life age was conquered and youth growth never ceased. When a physical body grew too large to continue living in comfort on earth, these larger beings graduated by stepping into a car, kept at the bottom of a long rock tube pointing at the stars far above. With similar companions they took their places in that space car. Then through them and through the metal body of the car rushed a flow of force, which, countering the friction of the penetrative particles that cause gravity <sup>(15)</sup>, rendered the car weightless.

(14) This thought record story, given to Mr. Shaver by Nydia, was a logical one to begin his education into the past history of the Earth, for it depicts the arrival of the first Atlan colonists on the Earth, named by them Lemuria. The reason for colonization was that our sun was then a new sun, still sending out radiations from a carbon fire only, and not from the poisonous metals, radium, uranium, polonium, etc. (the heavy metals), and was thus a healthful place to live. Even so, the colonists built their homes in a manner to keep out the poisons that cause old age, which might be present in some small quantity.

Our sun, today, from which the Atlans fled 12,000 years ago (see "I Remember Lemuria!") because it was causing the disease of old age by projecting minute disintegrances down on the Earth in a steady rain, is the answer to the riddle of death our scientists seek to solve. In water, the poisons are present in heavy suspension, especially in thermal springs; in the air the poison floats forever with the tiny thistle downs of dust it has infected and to which it dings; it settles in the leaves of plants—so that we take the poison in with every drink of water, with every breath, with every bite of food; and as a consequence grow "old" by tissue and cell inability to restore itself fully because of the hindering and ever-present fire of disintegrance from the accumulations of radioactives. Age is nothing but a radium "burn"; a damage to the living cell so that its functions are gradually stopped and retrograded until restoration by normal process is impossible. When the cells can no longer renew themselves, we die. —Ed.

A small explosion mechanism like a large cap pistol of the repeating type began a gentle hammering on the rear of the car, and weightless as it was, the car swiftly gathered momentum, vanishing into space in a moment, for where weight is not present inertia is not present either. So on the reverse flow gravity beam the graduates of Earth rose into space and voyaged through the empty void like a flash of light, presently to slow and circle slowly about another planet, double the size and weight of Earth until the great beams of reverse flow reached up and eased the car down into the heart of another great city, deeper and bigger than the one those beings had left, and much finer and more beautiful, for the builders' minds had broadened as their bodies grew through the centuries.

**D**ULI, the pioneer, lived a long and active life on the planet Earth and I, Richard, lived it over in my own brain through Duli's recorded thoughts. Duli became an Elder of the ruling council in the city of Barto on the planet Mu <sup>(16)</sup>, for he was kindly and wise. Many fine sons did Lia give him and life was one swift stream of pleasure and beauty and hard work that of itself seemed only sport to the ever-increasing strength and intelligence of a being who lived under the amazingly beneficial conditions of Barto on Mu. In Barto the life that was being built up for the people being bred in the ben-rays was surpassed by no other city on Mu.

But with the passing of years and the increasing growth and size that came with them, arrived also the day when Duli realized that the time had come for him to graduate into a broader life than Mu could offer. He knew that he must leave his sons and the work he had been doing on Mu for a greater planet and its fuller opportunities for life. He stepped into the great spaceliner with Lia at his side. . .

Blackness suddenly hurled itself down upon those vivid thoughts that had usurped the mind of Richard Shaver. He ceased to exist as an Elder of the Council of Barto on Mu, and returned to the existence of the convict

(15)The Lemurians say gravity is the result of the condensing (or fall) of infinitely tiny particles of disintegrated matter that fill all space (our scientists call it the ether) into existing matter, such as the Earth is. The friction of these falling particles, falling through matter, causes that "push" we call gravity. These particles Mr. Shaver calls "ex-disintegrance" (or "exd" for short). Here we see the utilization of some sort of force which neutralizes the friction of gravity, and thus produces weightlessness, with the result that a space ship can be driven against gravity at great speed with only very tiny rocket blasts, like little popguns. —Ed.

(16) Mu—an abbreviation for Lemuria. Earth —Ed.

who had escaped from state prison because a blind girl from the caverns had loved him.

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**I**, RICHARD SHAVER opened my eyes and felt quite cheerful again under the spell of the little blind witch maid who was laughing merrily at my bemused awakening.

"It puzzles you, Richard, does it not? You have lived over a century of olden days yet here you were, all the time under my eyes. You were but reading in the manner in which we read down here, the record stored in the caves long ago of the life of an ancient Atlantean."

"But it was real. I actually did live it," I protested, almost incredulously. "I must have been that man, Nydia. How else could I have known the most intimate thoughts of his mind?"

She shook her head from side to side, smiling.

"It was real, but not for you, save as you experienced that ancient Atlan's own thoughts. These shelves that line our library here are packed full of such records."

"Have you read them all?" I wondered.

"Yes, Richard, all. For I am not contented with a bare existence as it is lived here in the caverns. I long for a fuller, wider life such as those ancients lived. So, I have read and studied all these records and they are now part of my own knowledge."

I was enthusiastic as I glimpsed the possibilities her words opened before me. In that little blonde head was packed knowledge of earth-life that scientists would give their lives to acquire and place before the surface world. And I, also, could gain that knowledge for myself and perhaps manage somehow, someway to pass it on. Oh, it was a brave thought.

"It is not harmful, then, this reading of old records? No risk is entailed by this vicarious living in strange and perilous scenes?"

"How could there be?" she responded simply. "You sit here, quite relaxed and comfortable, and in your brain alone you live many other lives, acquiring thus those experiences and that knowledge which would otherwise take many, many years of life in many forms to gain. Are you willing to learn more, my Richard? Do you wonder that I care not to spend my life in dalliance with love, heavenly as it is thus to pass the days with you?"

"You are right, my Nydia," I cried, enthused. "How wise you are, dear love!"

The blind girl's strangely thrilling voice continued as I stared at her, my own face all wonder at the seeming magic at her finger's end, that could touch a switch and relive an existence.

“THIS is stupendous,” I stammered, dazed at the vistas of wonder her words opened before me.

“Ponder, my Richard, upon the science you have absorbed from the reading of that one ancient wise man’s thoughts as they coursed through your brain. After you have read and thus lived many lives through the records in these caves you will find that there is not a machine down here that you cannot understand and operate. You will even learn something of how they were constructed. Then indeed you will be a most useful member of our little group, for you may then be able to help us devise more efficient ways of outwitting and out-fighting those devilish *dero* I have shown you.”

“If you can teach me through these records how to fight those Things you tell me are your bitter enemies, get on with it!” My voice, the voice of Richard Shaver sounded strange in my ears, as though an older, wiser voice had come from my lips.

I felt that to my surface years I had added those other untold years of an ancient Being’s wisdom.

“Very well, my Richard. You shall voyage forth again.”

Nydia selected a bulky roll of record from the racks and held it so that I could see the words graven on the case. She read them: *Life and Wars of Bar Mehat of Thor, Hero of Three Worlds*.

“You shall live a great hero’s life and you shall see and speak with Jormungandur, <sup>(17)</sup> the Worm that encircled the world. This is a record of which I am most fond and I have read it often,” the blind girl told me.

She slipped the roll into the mechanism at the top of the chair, adjusted my head-band carefully. Her lips touched mine almost with reverence, so grave was that caress. I sensed that the life of Bar Mehat, the hero, meant very much to my little blind maiden. It was with repressed impatience that I awaited the touch of her finger on the control that was to open for me the door to a more vivid and exciting world.

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I BECAME another man, a greater being physically. My body was huge yet I was aware that I was very young in actual count of years. My sturdy legs were cased in knee boots of glistening gold-colored synthetic leather, my body in a skintight covering of overlapping golden scales that formed a flexible protection like armour. Upon my head I wore a scarlet helmet that contained thought detection apparatus, for I heard voices and movements nearby although the chamber where I stood was apparently empty. One

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(17) Jormungandur—In Norte legend, a son of Loki. Also known as the Midgard Serpent—Ed.

voice sounded, although distant, particularly peremptory. It was a feminine voice and one that I, Bar Mehat, recognized with a little grimace of half annoyance.

I tossed my head petulantly so that the red-gold hair that fell to my shoulders in shining waves swung loosely with the action. One of my broad, red-haired hands touched the lever of the console before which I stood. A clicking mechanism stopped and was followed by a musical hum like the spinning of a giant top. Dim luminosity pulsed about me. In a four-foot circular mirror above the console a silvery aura flickered madly, to coalesce slowly into the likeness of a young and attractive woman.

Her lips moved and it was then as though she were present in the room with me, for her voice sounded with clarity in my ears.

“Bar, the thing is growing faster than our control of it. It actually threatens all life on our planet. Jormungandur is not a joke.”

“Certainly, he is no joke; but why fret yourself, who are on land, about Jormungandur who lives in the sea?”

My laugh was loud and free. Women! How they worry over nothing! “As long as he kept to the sea why should I worry about him?” cried the young woman resentfully. “It is because he is creeping up out of the sea that I am disturbed. His body now completely circles the earth. His tentacles have spread over half the unsettled portion of Afrik. They are a hundred leagues long and they grope continually for food.”

“That is not so good, fair cousin. His tentacles are entirely too many,” I growled.

“He has them along his whole body,” cried she. “If he takes a notion to crawl out of the water for a breath of air it means the ruin of all the Atlans’ work on Mu.”

“Has no one done anything to check the Worm?” asked I, in some wonderment, for although the Covenant forbade direct attacks that might result in death, yet there was some allowance for self-defense in cases of unbridled encroachment even against an honored and intelligent ancient like Jormungandur, who was friendly to the early Atlans.

“We have a dozen great dis-rays raving at the tentacles but as fast as we disintegrate them, he throws out others. It seems futile even to continue for we get nowhere with all our efforts.”

“Jormungandur,” I mused aloud. “The Worm that encircles the world. Why, Gracia, he was here before the Atlans colonized Mu. Mu is practically his property. Are you sure that it is quite legal under the covenant to attack him, even if the attack seems futile?”

“This is no time for joking, Bar Mehat of Thor,” somewhat acidly expostu-

lated the young woman. "Either you agree to bring sufficient military forces to take a planet from Mephisto himself, or you do nothing, and I look elsewhere for assistance against this peril. All my Afrik possessions are now completely under The Worm's tentacles, you—you boudoir decoration!" cried my cousin with scathing implication.

I laughed again. I couldn't help it. Gracia's wrath was so easily aroused, and Gracia at white heat was not hard to look upon.

"I shall arrive to banish The Worm before another sunrise," I promised.

"I trust you are not too sanguine," she snapped. "It will take some doing to banish him, Bar. Farewell until the morrow."

**M**Y HAND reversed the lever. The image of the pretty young woman faded from the surface of the mirror and once again it reflected only my broad face.

I mused to my reflection: "The Worm, a threat! Gods, one should really have known that it would happen someday. Now I, the simple warrior am called upon by my dear cousin to do my duty by my family. And in what a cause!"

My face in the mirror grinned at me wryly.

I thought, that as chief heir of all the possessions of the Province of Thor, I could muster enough military strength to take a planet or even to blast Jormungandur. I addressed myself to the task by pressing a stud marked "General Alarm to Thor Guard" and spoke rapidly and authoritatively.

"Officers of the Thor Guard are to muster all strength at once for an expedition against the Worm Jormungandur who has become a threat by tossing his tentacles over much land in search of food. Anything that can fly or float

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(18) The natural nature of life is to go on living forever. Death is not a part of the scheme of life. It is only the result of radioactive poisoning from an "old" or metallicly disintegrating sun. Thus, here on Mu at the time of Bar Mehat, the sun was sending down only beneficial radiations of carbon, which is not a poisonous element, but on the contrary, the basic element of living forms. Thus, nothing grew old, or died, except by actual destruction through accident or through killing. All things, including vegetation, continued to grow so long as there was a source of "raw material" and energy. A living thing grew through two processes: the replenishing of its body cells by transmuting foodstuffs into living cell matter; and by assimilating the disintegrated matter which fills all space and which science today calls the "ether." The reader will remember that it is this, condensing and falling toward all matter (which also includes living beings, naturally) that serves to build up the universe, and as a byproduct of its function, causes the phenomenon we know of as gravity, by the friction of its progress through matter. —Ed.

on water, throw a ray or carry a bomb is to be made ready for extended travel immediately. All available weapons are to be loaded and ready before midnight tonight. Destination Afrik. Bar Mehat speaking.”

Through my mind in an undertone to the business now in hand ran the history of the Atlan struggle with growth on this planet of Mu. Under the beneficent rays of the new-born sun nothing aged or ceased growth, and existence had depended therefore, those first centuries of our colonization, upon keeping encyclopedic notes on every form of life on the globe, in order the better to forecast the future development of each species. For as the humble caterpillar changes to the miraculously different moth, so did these new creatures of Mu develop startling metamorphoses and variations. Since none of them died, and since but little of the planet was as yet explored or settled, strange and numerous were the threats to our continued existence which came out of the dense jungles or out of the fathomless depths of the seas, ravaging down upon our attempts at an ordered and cultured life.

Most of these tremendous monsters of growth had been slain like the Giant Man, a freakish growth of the earliest days, who had attempted to eat everything living on earth, but had at last been slain by our hero Byrr, and whose body in rotting had fouled the air of the whole planet. Or like Fenris the Wolf, who before he died had sired a race of giant wolves which still infested northern forests. The number of giant life forms that made us Atlans trouble were legion, but somehow Jormungandur the Sea Worm had escaped our general war against them. The Worm had always seemed safely confined to the seas and he had moreover agreed to the terms of the Covenant, hence the Worm had never been considered as a threat to existence on Mu, despite the fact that under the fecund rays of the newborn sun his growth would have been predicated as in itself a threat.

**T**HE jungles in which lived those giant variants of life were, if considered for themselves alone, terrifically beautiful dreams of life growth. The trees seemed to grow upward forever, and to be topless. There was no average size from the tiniest stalk to the trunks of some ancient trees that were acres in extent. They were the result of centuries of unimpeded, unchecked growth under completely favorable conditions. For as yet nothing aged and died on Mu. <sup>(18)</sup>

As most of the spores of life on Mu had originated on distant planets under aging suns rather than by spontaneous generation under the new sun's beneficent warmth, there were of fruit and flowering a-plenty. <sup>(19)</sup>

Those flowers were often of such monstrous size that could stretch myself out in one as in a swaying hammock.

So also, all trees tried their best to emulate Ygdrasil.<sup>(20)</sup> There were many serpents in the dense forests and in adventuring therein one was quite likely to run into the giant body of a rainbow hued reptile whose girth was too great to climb over and whose head and tail were both out of sight in the distance.

The hunger of these things was beyond description, but the supply of every form of life was of an abundance that cannot be even imagined. The monster Scylla by the whirlpool Charybdis; the Worm; the frost giants whom I, Bar Mehat, and my intimates often visited, as had my ancestor, Thor.<sup>(21)</sup>

I had recollections of my home city, Atlansgaard, colloquially called Asgard, not far south of Ginnunga Gap, a canyon of abysmal depth to the north and east, separating the civilized area of the Northlands from the Dark Lands, as the wild and practically unexplored land of the Giants was called. Those giants were a race from a *der*<sup>(22)</sup> planet. They had been shipwrecked on Mu and as yet there had been no particular reason to banish them, driving them back to their home planet. They were comparatively ignorant and as far as we Atlans knew, harmless. They were called Frosts; why, I myself, could not have explained. They were of huge stock, running from thirty to fifty feet in height. I knew that under Mu's non aging sun their growth would in due course be something terrific and I realized that their existence was a problem that would have to be settled in the not too-far future. There were many such problems and the Atlans were not yet well enough entrenched-on Mu to have solved them all satisfactorily. There was much tendency in the life forms of Mu that was alien; it had to be weeded out eventually, since only conflict can be expected from life forms not of the same source pattern as our own.

**I**EMBARKED on the flagship of the fleet that in a matter of hours was flashing over the tremendous sea of earthy waves that was North Afrik.

(19)How big the tremendous flowers of the dark under-forest were, it is difficult for Richard Shaver to judge, since surface folk of today measure everything by comparison to the average size of a man, and the Atlans of the new planet Mu had no such criterion. Bar Mehat's size was governed, as was that of other Atlans, by the age of his parents and his own age, two variant factors that resulted in a wide variation in size, which did not run uniform to the years of age, as in modern man. As nearly as Mr. Shaver can judge, Bar Mehat was about twelve feet high and a very young man at that, as his parents were huge giants of the far planet of Atlan. His years on Mu were under twenty. —Ed.

(20)Ygdrasil—Norse myth: the world tree whose roots and branches bind together heaven, the earth, and hell. Today the California redwoods still live, to prove that such monstrous growths once existed. —Ed.

Our space ships settled behind a convenient range of mountains over which we could see the tentacles of the Worm writhing like titanic serpents against the morning sky. Here and there blazed the fiercely brilliant orange of powerful disintegrating rays and even at that distance the smell of roasting flesh was noticeable; unpleasantly so. We broke out our smaller scout planes for reconnaissance. I went aboard the foremost, for I wished also to

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(21) Cerberus, who guarded Hades in the latter days, after the flood had receded and death by old age came upon the world, is well known. But these were the later days, that "twilight of the gods" and of their greatest battle, "Ragnarok," when the poison of our aging sun's induction had maddened those who tried to remain on Mu.

It can only be conjectured for surface men, what life was like when the sun was new. Since nothing aged, the forms of life were of mighty, ever-increasing size. The legend of the Worm that encircles the world and to eat must consume his own tail, was probably as near as one could come to any description of sea-monsters whose farther ends would be out of sight when one glimpsed their gaping maws. Men, too, were mighty of size, yet there were some very tiny, the products of a science beyond present-day mankind.

The "seeing rays" of those ancient scientists reached everywhere, and from this our religious faiths have derived their teaching that "God is everywhere." Those rulers were probably widely aware of all near and far surroundings on Mu, for their beneficial rays and potions made them so. They moulded life forms to their will. They precipitated energy ash (ether) and from it synthesized the elements they needed most. Space travel was so commonplace with them that they thought of it in the same terms in which we of today think of motor cars.

What we can find of their thought is interesting especially in its multiform concept known for short as MAG-ic, the word being derived from IC, later Greek for science, and M-AG, or Manaugmented. This magic reached its height before two things, both long expected, happened. The carbon layer around the sun burned down to the heavy metal underneath. Sunlight became increasingly poisonous, since it contained minute quantities of disintegrant metals; disintegrant flaming lead, radium, titanium, uranium emanations filled the bright sunlight. Old age, long prophesied, appeared.

Then began the periodic migration to a new, carbon-coated sun. Most of those Elder Folk left Mu for planets of kindlier augury. But some of those brilliant beings, loving "Mu" as they called our mother earth, remained, fighting the poisonous effects of sun metal with their extended knowledge. Before its accumulations could bring on old age, they would extract it from their bodies magnetically. Thus, keeping their immortal youth, sheltered in their deep caverns from the heavy metallic induction of our sun, those remnants of the race of immortals stayed on, to be the source of our legends of the gods. —Author.

visit my incensed cousin and reassure her that all was well since I and my forces had come into the picture.

As our scout planes shot upward, a long vee of strange planes boomed up from the south and shot past our formation in a northerly direction. I had thought I was familiar with every type of plane on Mu, from jet to nose-ray, but the design of those planes was entirely strange to me. They disappeared from my sight, but not from my questing mind. Strange planes above Mu were not to be ignored; their presence might be forerunner of grave trouble.

Within minutes, my arms embraced the very attractive knees of my charming cousin Gracia and her tirade of feminine near-invective poured itself upon my defenseless masculine head.

“Wise Bar, of the blood of the great Thor, could not any fool have foreseen this? Jormungandur, nonetheless, came on the Rolls of the Covenant. Explain that, you feckless dreamer!”

“Sweet cousin,” I protested meekly, striving to stem the flood of that aroused ire. “I did not create the Covenant.”

“A most fortunate fact that you didn’t. Do you know what lies under those reaping arms, blind and stupid one? Do you know what that beast of the abyss of ocean has eaten?”

“Gracia—”

“Ten thousand acres of parasites I developed, to destroy alien plant forms. Now, in one week, that infinitude of belly has destroyed ten years of our best labor.”

I tried to block that tirade with a recital of the magnitude of the forces I had headed for the retribution that must necessarily be laid upon the Worm for his rebellious action against the Covenant, behavior code of inter-racial law.

“Look, cousin, I have complied with your wishes. Last night my fleet assembled on the waters of Jotun Bay outside my windows in Asgard. It is a heterogeneous collection, I will admit, but look how little time you’ve given me to get it together. Glossy jet-planes, Gracia, some submersible fliers, and some heavy-bodied passenger planes to carry men. Not to mention three thousand top fighting men.”

She shrugged her shapely shoulders and wrinkled her nose distastefully.

“I notice that you have not brought your armored space-ships, hero.”

I was quick to pick up that in rebuttal.

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(22) Der planet—detrimental energy planet. One on which an aging sun pours its rays, and causes, in addition to age, a mental detriment, insanity. Our Earth, today, is a Der planet. —Ed.

“Because, fair cousin, they are too unwieldy for surface work. Yet, I did dispatch several with large cargoes of foodstuffs and ammunition and other supplies for our base on the Gold Coast.”

She heaved a deep sigh of unwilling resignation.

“Oh, I presume you have done the best you knew how,” she stabbed.

**I** COULD not refrain from grinning. Gracia was not a good loser and she had lost out with me thus far, for I had not failed to think of everything at my command that might be needed in that mighty fray that was scheduled to take place between us Atlans and the Worm.

I knew that killing a thing with the growth rate and titanic strength of Jormungandur was not going to be a simple matter. His body encircled the whole earth and was of incalculable mass. <sup>(23)</sup> Its nature was much that of the starfish; break it in twain, and both halves grow. That his great age had developed mental reactions of a kind similar to human thought was known to us from the fact that this had been true of other monsters of growth on Mu. I was shortly to learn just how far this mental development of the oldest and most monstrous creature on Mu had been carried by the beneficial rays of the newborn sun.

I returned to my scout plane and thence to the flagship of our air fleet. My ship was equipped with the mechanisms that would put all space at my command, to be seen and heard and to throw my voice into the ears of those whom I willed to hear it. I had the ship hover over that part of the ocean between the continents of Atlantis and South Afrik, that particular spot where it had been said that men had talked with the Worm many a long day ago. I switched on the vis-ray, and it sank miles deep into the murky depths. At last, after I had turned it hither and yon, there glowed on the visi-screen like twin moons the awful eyes of the most ancient life on Mu.

The telaug revealed his thoughts to me and I pitied him as that river of desperate and weary meaning flowed from the thought cloud like the drifting soul of a lost sea. The Worm was hungry. He was weary of the emptiness

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(23) Obviously here the description is not an accurate one. By Bar Mehat's own admission, earlier in this thought record, all of Mu (Earth) has not been explored. Apparently, the known portion of it (except for casual observation from space ships) consisted only of Europe and Africa, and a portion of Asia, probably just east of the Norse countries. Thus, the Worm, Jormungandur, occupied the Atlantic Ocean between what is now the above-mentioned continents and the continent of Atlantis (also included in the known portions). Its sire must have been tremendous, perhaps as much as five hundred miles long. —Ed.

of a life that contained nothing but slumber and feeding. His groping tentacles were no longer able to find sufficient food and he was bitterly resentful at a fate which had given him life which he found it difficult to sustain, and later had given him thoughts so that he understood what he was. For long I pondered that wretched but intriguing life that was the brain center of the Worm that encircled the earth. At last I spoke, sending my voice to the distant Worm's lair.

"Garm," said I—in Afrik and near parts Jormungandur was called Garm — "Garm, speak to me. Give me an answer, for I am your friend if you will have me so. From the darkness that shrouds you, from the gloom in which you must wallow in the abyss of ocean's depths, speak to me, who wishes you well. It is Bar Mehat of Thor who calls you."

THAT deep river of gloomy meditation ceased its slow flow and concentrating itself reluctantly, looked out of the pale lucent orbs that were Garm's eyes. Great abstract thoughts welled up the ray and flung themselves on the thought-cloud like corpses pushing upward for release from the sucking ooze that clung to them. That husky, thick voice enunciated words with heavy difficulty.

"It is long since Man has sought me out. What would you of Garm?"

"In the old days, Garm, you were one of the few of the serpent race who upheld the Covenant's code. Why have you forsaken the ways of peace? Why are you now unfriendly to Man? Your body is now partly on land, and it is land upon which my family has expended much labor. Now all that constructive work is spoiled and many good men whom in the old days you would have called friends, rejoicing that they lived on Mu, those men have died under your long arms' fatal suction. Must we then slay you, Garm, that we may live?"

Garm's thoughts moiled over this problem. They flickered back and forth without much consistent form on the thought cloud.

"Once I loved men," he slowly answered at last, his thick voice dull with a kind of indifference that troubled me, the listener. "I loved them for the bright pictures they sent me and for the beautiful children they bore. I loved them for the tales they told me of their lively doings in the sun. But now they have long forgotten me, and I raven for food.

"I am grown too big to feed myself well, even though I draw from the vast seas in which I lie. It may be that you must kill me, for I know not and care no longer what I do. Life holds no significance for me. I have outgrown life, perhaps."

"Garm, I think that if you will but be reasonable, we may find some way to

feed you, so that you may continue to live on," I offered, my emotion being one of real sympathy for a creature so outgrown that we could not by any means within our power send it to a larger planet. Or so I thought at that impulsive moment.

The voice of Garm droned on: "Once a man of your line went a-fishing. Yes, I recognize you for one of Thor's line. For a joke I took the bait between my jaws and raised up my head near his skiff. He was, like all of your blood, a stubborn fellow and he pulled the bottom out of his boat, trying vainly to land me. At least, that was his pretense.

"After I had carried him ashore on my back we talked for a long, lovely time, he sitting on the sand and I with my head lying on the sandy beach beside him. He told me a tale of another such serpent as myself, grown too long for comfortable living on his birthplace, and he predicted that the same fate lay in store for me, unless I found death by some other means. That great serpent encircled earth as do I, and when the time came that abundant food was no longer available, he took his own tail between his jaws and swallowed it, and after many years he died thus.

"It may be that I shall do that thing, though of late I do not love men or their doings."

**I**PONDERED the great Being's bitter words and at last I spoke thoughtfully. "You must know something of our thought magic, Garm? If you will do that thing the other great serpent did, we will arrange that before you do it you shall have many weeks of continual pleasure dreams. You shall sense in dreams glorious matings and victorious struggles. We will give you the equivalent of many lives of pleasure.

"This will take much energy that we could well spend elsewhere, but it will be worth that to us to rid us of your overgrowing, enormous appetite that is becoming so destructive. We will pay you in full and you know that we are honorable. You can weigh this thing well. Will you take our word and after your dreams die honorably, a true son of the Covenant?"

"Bar Mehat of Thor," answered the great serpent, "if your dream-makers deal honorably with me, so will I deal with you. And this you cannot have known, that besides yielding up my life there is a thing or two which I have learned that I will grant you freely without concealment. I know your magic, but your dream makers may weigh the value of their own lives in the balance of their calculation as to what dreams they give me, for I have means of saving them or letting them drift on to death that will seize upon them unawares. Tell them that, O Son of the Past Great, and bid them measure me out abundance of glorious dreams in gratitude."

Thus, it was that I talked with the Worm that encircled the world. And thus, it came to pass that Garm told me of things that I knew were true, for I had seen that flight of strange planes that headed for the dense forests that we Atlans had thus far left practically unexplored.

“Strange outlanders came over my seas in great ships and hovered long, sending me their promises of many dreams, as you have done. But they did not ask my death, Bar Mehat; they asked my living aid.

“I learned somewhat of their dreams, and their dreams are not my kind of dreams, Bar of the old line of Thor. There is no light laughter, and there are no gallant young ones with them. Their lives have been miseries of everlasting warring. I want no part of such wretched dreams.

“But they had a ray which they can put upon any part of my body and through that ray control me. So, when I gave no consent to their supplications, they forced a part of me to lay waste such portions of Afrik as lies between the two great rivers. So, if you seek them out, where they have hidden themselves within the Dark Lands, you will know whence any coming trouble sources.”

“I have seen their space ships, Garm. I knew them for outlanders,” I exclaimed. “We shall take steps at once.”

**T**HEY mean to take over the earth and to develop fecundly. They come from a quarantined planet and have somehow eluded the Atlan *der* patrols. They believe they can win over the Mu folk before help can be called in from greater space against them. How they expect to hold Mu against the entire Atlan space navy, once they have won Mu, I fail to understand. But they are stupid, despite their mechanisms of power, and perhaps they think not of it, or expect by crafty trickery to cheat the Atlans into letting them alone on Mu.”

An idea flashed into my mind as I stood staring at Garm’s vast head, looking into his fierce elder-wise eyes, twin greenish silver moons flickering through sea water.

“Garm, in the caverns where we breed life forms, our technicians have a way of removing the brain from an animal, a living brain, and putting it into a metal bottle where it lives on, fed by fluid foods and synthetic blood. Since you are grown too big for this earth, will you consent that we may put your brain into a bottle and keep it for a record of the past?

“You have certain wisdoms which you can teach youth, and you like the young, laughter-filled folk of our Mu people. Later, after you have grown accustomed to our ways on land, you will have many friends, and later yet some colonizing expedition can take you with them and plant your living brain into a young reptile on some other planet.

“You may live your life over again and again. Do the Der men offer you anything of like value? And in return for this prolongation of your life, will you then aid us against them?”

The limpid moon eyes nickered into near opacity as The Worm concentrated upon this new and far more interesting proposition I had proffered. I waited patiently for his response and felt certain it would be affirmative. After all—

The thick voice came slowly after a long wait. The moon eyes had cleared and shone greenly through the sea water.

“I accept your offer,” said the Worm. “I would fain live on and see your brave new worlds that else I might never visit. I am ready to accompany you when you give me the word that you are ready to attack those interlopers from a quarantined planet. I dislike their warring and resent bitterly that the people of Mu must be forced into battles because of them. Yes, Bar Mehat of Thor, I am your ally against them.

“And when the battling is done with, and you have driven them from Mu, then you shall send me first the dreams for which I yearn in my now empty existence. After I have had my fill of dreams, I shall let your technicians take my brain and preserve it as you have said. Someday I shall again live in liberty in the body of another serpent on some greater planet. Yes, Bar Mehat, I agree.”

I was overjoyed at Garm’s decision for something told me that he would be an ally not to be scorned in the battle that must ensue shortly between my forces and those invaders from a *der* planet.

“I shall call you, then, Garm, when we make our advance,” I told him. “You shall follow my forces—”

Something lively sparkled in the great green moons that were the eyes of the Worm.

“I am to wipe up the debris of your victory?” husked Garm, with a note of derision that piqued me a little.

“No, no,” I protested half-heartedly.

But Garm’s thick throat uttered a kind of snorting laugh.

“Rely upon it, I shall be with you when and wherever you lead,” said he enigmatically, and with that our conference ended.

**T**HUS, it was that when my forces made ready to advance into the Dark Lands where the invaders had entrenched themselves in expectation of our coming, Garm’s tremendous body flowed after the army of Thor’s men. The sight of him was comforting as we pressed on into the night of the jungle. Like a mighty river of greenish black flesh encrusted with barnacles and

sea plants, the titanic Jormungandur was a reservoir of strength incalculable, in truth of a value of many armies because of those splaying tentacles that absorbed all life they seized upon.

Like the mighty leaders of prior times I strapped to my back my anti-grav packs and flitted ahead with my scouts. These anti-grav packs enabled us to rise to a considerable height above the ground, which was a great advantage in entering that jungle where otherwise we must have been obliged to spend much precious time slashing down the heavy undergrowth. A number of the scouts were to go on ahead, it was arranged, and I flitted not far behind, with another squad of scouts directly in my rear. After these came the main body of our troops. It was while I went on in this way that I saw the girl in the trees, and learned what kind of enemy we had to face.

She was wearing an anti-grav pack and she had depended upon it to escape the swaying head of a monster reptile whose coils lay over the rude path that ran for some short distance into the forest.

She had apparently no weapons of defense or had lost what she had possessed in her flight from the great snake. Now she was entangled in the thorny, shielding branches of the tree to which she had flown, and the serpent seemingly did not care to thrash about against those prickly thorns with which it was equipped. I alighted on the branch where the girl clung.

“What has happened? Have you no weapons?”

“It came upon me so suddenly,” she faltered, “that I dropped my ray-gun. And what use is a knife against that scaly skin?”

I looked at the reptile. It would have to be eliminated, or its presence would block the advance of my men. Moreover, the creature had set its stupid mind upon capturing what probably seemed to it legitimate prey, and it kept its evil eyes hypnotically upon the girl, who trembled with apprehension.

“The thing must be slain,” I said boldly, and let myself down lightly upon the sloping back of the monster snake.

**I** SCRAMBLED up the scaly back to the bumpy ridge of its spine. Then I pulled my disintegrating ray from the holster and blasted a shot through the center of the spine, severing the spinal cord. I raced lightly, depending upon the anti-grav pack to lift me as I leaped, until I had reached the head of the titanic and maddened reptile. At every alternate bound I blasted another path through the spine, leaving behind as I went a paralyzed column of motionless flesh. As I reached the taper of the mighty neck the great head turned, jaws gaping to slay this stinging insect that had wrought such swift destruction, but with swiftly triggered blasts I cut the last nerves at the base

of the head. Red threatening maw and evilly gleaming eyes dropped supinely to the earth.

The girl scrambled lightly down from the tree and threw herself at my feet and flung her arms about my knees, embracing them with heart-felt thanksgiving. There seemed to me no time for amenities and I lifted her face and looked piercingly into her wide blue eyes. It seemed to me that I saw mirrored therein a clean and innocent soul and I felt well rewarded for my strenuous and perilous combat with that monster reptile. I surmised that this girl was an outlaw Atlan, else she would scarcely have been at large in the forests. I asked her directly.

“Yes, I am an outlaw.”

I did not care to take time to ask her why, but I did feel that she could be trusted.

“We seek those who drive the great beasts to attack the Atlan cities. Do you know where they have hidden themselves, maiden?”

The girl remained on her knees, but her limpid eyes were raised to mine.

“Are you the leader who seeks those evil people of the dark forest?” she asked. I nodded in affirmation.

“Had I known that the leader of the forces was so princely, I would never have fled the Atlan cities,” said she cryptically.

“This is no time to exchange pleasantries, maiden. Do you know the hidden entrenchments of my enemy?”

“You must be Bar Mehat,” she said, ignoring my query.

“I am indeed Bar Mehat of Thor,” I assented with impatience.

“Then I am for you. I owe you my life. I belong to the forest people, of whom you must know. We are outlaws and hide always from such as you. Among us came, not too many years ago great ships with many guns.”

“I know. But recently I saw some of their space ships and knew invaders had landed on Mu. Go on, maiden.”

“They are not like us,” said she. “They have skins colored and blotched like lizards. Like the chameleon lizards. Somewhat on the order of man are they, with four limbs. Their webbed feet have prehensile toes and their hands are long-fingered. They have a long, fleshy tail that tapers to a whip-like point, hanging from their rumps. They have large, flat heads and their eyes are lidless and reptilian, and are covered with a translucent membrane for protection. Oh, how evilly red those eyes can glitter!”

“Their features, maiden. Do they resemble men?”

“Oh, no, Bar Mehat. Their noses are small and flat and their mouths are wide. They have no chins and their teeth are heavy fangs. Oh, they are most horrible to look upon.”

LIFTED her to her feet.

“I take it, maiden, that you must be aware from your familiarity with the forest of where these lizard men have entrenched themselves. Is your anti-grav pack in good order? It is? Then come with me,” I ordered, and rose in the air to flit ahead of the second squad of scouts that, seeing me in conversation with the girl, had halted in my rear.

So, we went on together and as we went the girl continued to tell me of those pirates of space who had escaped from their quarantined planet.

“They promised us forest folk riches and power and security. Many fair promises they made if we would help them drive out you Atlans. They come from the forbidden spaces where death reigns,” she shuddered. “They do not worship the dark gods of space as you Atlans and we forest folk do, for they believe in no good thing. They have learned that death has not yet come to Mu and they think that now, before the Atlans are too well settled, they can drive you out and learn to live as the gods live, by studying your cities and the minds of their captives.

“They are very evil and some things they do made me so fearful that I fled into the deeper forest that I might see them no more. Ah, I cannot sleep yet for thinking of their horrible life, their disgusting mottled bodies, the stink of them. And on those who will not go their way they inflict torments, for they hate the way of the Covenant. They are fools and stupid, though, to believe that they could ever win over the wise Atlans who make friends so easily.”

We flitted on for a few moments in silence and I pondered much over what the girl had told me.

“You see, Bar Mehat, whenever an Atlan sees how they work, he becomes their enemy automatically, for it is impossible to know when one pleases or displeases them, so that it is inevitable that one will in the end be tortured to death. Oh, I am glad to see the men of Atlan coming here in force to banish those foul invaders!”

ACRY arose from the scouts in the van and we hastened to join them. The cause of the outcry was simple, after all. They had spotted a *dero* hidden like a chameleon against a dark tree trunk, the faint patterning of his lizard-like skin betraying him, for in his perturbation at our approach it turned from rose to purple, to inky black, then again to faint rose. Our men had overpowered him although he was armed with a projectile weapon.

The girl touched my arm.

“Did I speak truth, Bar Mehat?” she demanded. “Is he not as I described him?”

He was indeed as she had told me. I examined his weapon with interest. It was a glass-like gun activated by air pressure and bred a tiny, brittle,



One of the great cats gave me a chance to test the poison.  
Illustration by Robert Gibson Jones.

venom-filled needle that broke on contact, releasing the poison into the veins of the victim. One of the great cats that infrequently lurk nearer the confines of the forest gave me a chance to test the poison. I fired the gun and the cat whirled and then fell as if paralyzed. Inspection showed that it still lived, but it was incapable of any action, save that its furious eyes glared upon us whom it had been unable to escape. We later found that the venom was similar in effect to wasp venom in that it permanently paralyzed the victim, <sup>(24)</sup> but left him alive for future reference, as it were.

Later, too, we learned that the lizard men had wasp habits in yet other ways, for they, too, kept their victims living for long periods before eating them.

I called for an augment helmet and ordered it clapped on the prisoner's flat head. It was a matter of a few minutes only when his thought, with tremendous augmentation, was flowing back over my entire following forces. In this way I knew my men would be aware of just what they were about to engage in deadly conflict.

These lizard creatures had evolved on a small planet under a very large new sun. While it was not a deadly sun, its rays being full of beneficial vibrants, yet its disintegrant induction had been a tremendous factor in their development. Their will to live had been great, but their will to destroy was as full, thus coloring all their thoughts with vicious intent, for the will to destroy and the disintegrant electric forces are one and the same. While the seed of greatness was perhaps within them, it had been buried irretrievably beneath a rigid discipline of the revolting kind which allowed the individual little freedom save the right to reproduce. <sup>(25)</sup>

**WE** HAD barely finished the broadcast of the lizard man's thoughts when a tremendous crystal sphere sailed overhead and paused above the midst of our array, for by now my forces had caught up with our scouting vanguard. Then, with a loud report, it flew asunder and there rained

(24) The venom of the wasp is shown on stung spiders, when it destroys the nervous system but leaves the spider living, perhaps conscious, to be eaten later alive by the wasp grub, a system of food storage. —Ed.

(25) In Atlan language there are three kinds of men: *tero*, normal man; *dero*, evil man, and *zero*, useless man. These lizard people were for the most part *zero*. Equal parts of good and evil in the character made their total effect in life merely a repetition of the status quo. But they were foolish enough to allow domination by the *dero*, which rendered the total effect detrimental to all other beings and their own true interests as well. Notice the world conflagration resulting from the devotion of one nation to a detrimental energy robot. —Author.

down upon us tiny slivers of light that seemed faery spears, playing in all directions. At least a dozen of my best men fell sprawling to the ground as if paralyzed and at that we all knew what had been in that crystal sphere. It was a bomb, full of compressed air and packed with tiny glass capsule needles of the paralyzing venom of the lizard men. It was a most effective weapon and we could not, unfortunately, determine its exact source at that moment.

After that first one, sphere after sphere hissed down upon us through the air and Atlan's bravest fell in windrows. Some of our men thought it a good idea to pick off the spheres with disintegrating ray rifles, but this resulted in the bombs bursting high in the sky, only to rain the venomous needles more widely upon our heads. I had ordered huge disintegrators, mounted high on trucks at our rear, to drop sweeping fans of destruction into the forest ahead of us. Their range was almost incredible, so that fires of many miles in width sprang up ahead. At long last the spheres decreased in numbers and I felt that our rays must have destroyed some station from which they had been dispatched.

I had been well aware that to use a large disintegrator in the jungle was an infraction of the Covenant's code, but if any intelligent life existed simultaneously with those lizard men in the jungle ahead, it was self-doomed by failure to warn us Atlans of the impending attack. All rules are tossed overboard in war, sooner or later. That forest fire, which under ordinary circumstances would never have been allowed to rage, among those trees so big that a man could hardly grasp their immensity even with his imagination, was a sight never to be forgotten.

We Atlans have a curious way of putting out such fires. We have an atomized carbon ray which we spray into the down-drafts around the flames. This is activated carbon, more inflammable than ordinary carbon, and divided with extreme fineness so that its particles are driven along by certain waves of light. Thus, an atomic carbon ray is formed which is sprayed over the fire. The carbon did not, as might be thought, increase the intensity of the fire, for the finely divided carbon combines with the oxygen of the air, blanketing the whole area with carbon dioxide, so as the rays swept the fire ahead, it died. <sup>(26)</sup>

**A**S THE fire broke a way through, my forces marched, leaped or soared over the smoking jungle. To the danger from the enemy army that must be ahead was added that of falling limbs from the great trees that stretched

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(26) Apparently, the heat of the combination was lost by its dispersion. —Ed.

a mile overhead. Some of those giants, remnants of the first early growths, were six or seven miles tall. These gargantuan trees now stood blacked at the base, and at infrequent intervals limbs as long as several city blocks and weighing from twenty to a hundred tons would crash near us. Once in a while the smoldering embers would burst into flame that would leap skyward through the now dried-out framework of lower limbs, but a few well-directed sweeps of the atomic carbon rays extinguished these as fast as they sprang up.

It was a relief to all my thirsty, soot-covered men, when we sighted the enemy's camps. Uttering shrill cries calculated to fill us with apprehension, the lizard men at once set up a barrage of venom glass needles to halt our advance. Here I had made some preparations which I believed might be the answer to that type of attack. Forewarned by our prior experience I had ordered that some of our huge disintegrators en route, approximately a hundred, be adapted to prepare from their rays what is called a wind-ray. This is a dual ionizing ray, one ray positively ionizing the air and another negatively ionizing the air. When the rays are held far apart a gentle breeze springs up between them as the molecules of air, drawn by the attracting charges they bear, rush down to neutralize their charge and are pushed aside or spread by the outer in-rushing air. When they are held closely together and highly energized, a terrible vortex of inrushing and up-rushing wind is formed. These hastily adapted devices were posted like horns of a crescent on either side of our advancing lines.

As the first crystal gloves hissed overhead, these wind-rays swung into action. Thus, the globes, instead of falling, shot into the air like rubber balls on a tossing fountain and, juggling them like circus performers, our expert ray men flung them back into the air over the enemy's camp and then released them, to harry our tormentors by their own venomous weapons. This return barrage was greeted by howls of dismay from the lizard men as their own pigeons came home to roost.

Our penetras <sup>(27)</sup> came into action also, sweeping over the whole area in our van, so that whatever was opaque became transparent. What had seemed merely earth and forest growth for half a mile ahead of my forces was revealed, so that we saw and knew what the lizard men were keeping behind walls. In fact, the penetra rays were so powerful that for miles ahead the whole enemy work lay revealed as if we saw it through glass. This was

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(27) Penetra— visi-rays which penetrate and make transparent any object on which they are trained. Thus, in projecting visi-rays through earth, the penetra is used as a carrier ray. —Ed.

done by bathing the whole area in penetrative rays of a nondestructive nature and sweeping over this with other rays that carried finely divided selenium and other chemicals in the same way that our fire-extinguisher rays carry carbon. These luminosity rays act in the same manner that stains act on a transparent organism under the microscope, bringing out the details in different colors.

WHAT we beheld was most intriguing to my forces. The men bellowed with huge guffaws over the outlanders' methods. In improvised underground pens they had collected overgrown monsters of every description. Held in those narrow tunnels, and fed but little for a long period, these creatures had become ravenous with bestial hunger. Various types of disintegrating rays and venom-ball throwers, as well as other weapons the nature of which was strange to us then, had been attached to the animals' backs. The purpose of this arrangement was obscure until the lizard men threw open the barred doors to the tunnels.

Out rushed the maddened beasts. Mammoths, titanotheres, titanosaurs, dinosaurs and huge serpents rushed down upon us. The ray apparatus on their backs was automatic, sending a beam in a wide arc ahead of the beasts. This beam, a dual ionizer like our windway, completed the circuit when it struck metal. It was then that we realized the new peril we were encountering. The resulting flow of current through the beam activated the firing mechanism for the disintegrating ray. Since all our weapons were fabricated of metal, while those of the lizard men were made out of glass or plastic, these enraged living ray-tanks loosed upon us were more than a subject for laughter, as we had thought when we first saw them through the walls of their tunnels.

At first, we held off the terrific onslaught. Our superb gunners picked off the beasts as rapidly as they approached within range, yet the heavy discharges released into the air began to blanket the whole fighting area with a stifling, thought-blocking disintegrating charge. One could hardly move one's limbs because of the effect of this detrimental electric, which leaped like Hell-fires from every bush, every piece of metal, every blade of grass, making the vision hollow with the disillusion of despair.

It was not long before our fire was slowed by this subtle nerve-paralyzing influence and the beasts pounded nearer in overpowering numbers, their combined weights shaking the earth beneath us, their great maws roaring, and over their fierce heads flashed ever the automatic fire rays, every flash marking a hit on some metal weapon of ours. Whether this was defeat, or whether the disillusion from the strong detrimental that so subtly held our

minds under its potent spell was powerful enough to check our aggressive action, things began to look very dark for Mu. And then—

OVER our cowering heads reared the vast bulk of The Worm. No metal to complete a circuit in that engine of destruction! His curling, mile-long tentacles lashed out, and every beast they touched was caught up, crushed, and tossed aside, a menace no longer. He was the most awe-inspiring being I had ever seen, with the great moons of his eyes reflecting his fierce battle joy. One could almost hear the thought in his vast dragon head:

“After all these dull, uneventful centuries, what bliss to fight again for the sons of the friends of my youth! Yea! It is good!” From the throat of Garm a great rumbling roar issued and seemed to shape into words. “On, Atlans! On, Altans!” And the mighty serpent hiss terminated the roaring words.

The great Worm’s bulk blotted the sun from overhead so that we fought in the shade as though twilight had descended upon us. From our van we could see the planes of the lizard men taking to the air as they retreated in mad rout from this unconquerable serpent of the ancient days long past. For following upon the appearance of Garm the invaders were, for the most part, speeding away, leaving behind them their dead and wounded and the blazing ruins of their camp. The maddened beasts which they had starved and then released upon us were careening off in all directions for the control rays that had kept them advancing upon us in attack now stood abandoned, their tall masts no longer flashing with energy sparks. The battle was over, save that a few of our fastest planes trailed the fugitive enemy, their purpose not to do battle, but to determine the destination of the lizard men that we might report it to the Space Police.

We bivouacked amid jubilant cries of triumph.

IT WAS some days later that our battered columns wound slowly back into the green cultivated areas surrounding my cousin Gracia’s white marble mansion. As we marched, we could see in the far distance Garm’s acres of scaly body flowing swiftly into the sea. I sped on in advance of my forces, by the aid of my anti-grav pack, and came to a stop at the marble steps, where my cousin stood awaiting me and, on my ears, again fell the unending recriminations of her anger.

“How could you have let those ignorant, undeveloped idiots from a *der* planet so nearly defeat you, Bar Mehat? Jormungandur himself hardly saved you from destruction. How could you have marched into the face of that ominous situation without preparation, without any special weapons, without prior scouting and information—?”

Her voice went on and on, and I began to think that she was probably right and I, an impractical dreamer, unfit to head the troops of Atlan. My too costly victory told this as well as did the faces of those of my most valued men who still lived.

"I know not, cousin. Youth and ignorance of such traps may be my only excuses," I told her stupidly, for my heart was sick, now that all was well over, at thought of those dead we had left behind in the Dark Lands. "I cannot think of anything else," I apologized.

"It might be well if you did a little thinking, nevertheless, Bar. The Space Patrol is on its way. When it arrives one of its officers will take charge here in command of our Atlan forces and you—you are going back on one of their ships, for you have signally failed to distinguish yourself on Mu. When you are back on Atlan, my cousin, you had best go to the College for Warriors and learn a little something of how to take care of yourself and safeguard your men when you lead them."

I stood with head hanging, for I had no words to give her. She was probably in the right, I thought. I would enter the College for Warriors upon my return to Atlan and I would study diligently and prepare myself in the latest military science so that Mu would be better for my leadership when I returned to that planet.

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**A**S I stood, suddenly blackness rushed down upon me and I knew no more of my cousin, or of Garm slowly withdrawing into the sea, or of anything until a light flashed through the darkness and I became aware of an odd popping sound as of a suddenly released run-down record.

I wakened to the soft laughter of the blind maiden as she switched off the thought record reading machine.

Her hands fell light on my shoulders and she leaned to kiss my forehead before she removed the apparatus from my head.

"The record film broke," she told me regretfully. "They are so very old, it is surprising they have lasted so long. Perhaps it is of little consequence, after all, for that record of Bar Mehat ends when he returns to Atlan."

The faint sound of a gong rang through the cave and we took each other's hands and went together to the dining-hall where the entire group customarily met for meals. I was for hours in a kind of daze, for it seemed to me that I was still Bar Mehat and not Richard Shaver.

Later I realized the lessons from that life I had vicariously lived. It was that anger and warfare, struggle and death, are the fatal fruits of *der*, and *der* was the distortion of the magnetic fields of the thought cells of a mind by disintegrant electric. And Mu, in those earlier days, had not turned induc-

tively under the new sun long enough to induct the great charge of detrimental electric which makes our life today the hell it really is. It is not good to be a man on a quarantined planet of *der*. If one reads the ancient books that exist always in these old, abandoned planets, one learns that life away from an aging sun is immortal life, while on a *der* planet it is a brief moment of existence and thought under a blasting sun of death.

As this knowledge sank into my mind from the great brain back of Bar's thought-record, a terrible despondency seized upon me. I realized that Earth was now such an outworn living place, quarantined from the great immortal life of space because *der* means warring and men of earth think *der* thoughts. If only we could build again such houses as the Atlans built, which barred the entry of all detrimental energy flows, or even live in caves as did the later Atlans to shield themselves from a deadly sun, we might become again something more than the mere insects we now are.

**A**S MATTERS now stand, I have become one of the underworld, of those who have been called trolls, gnomes and goblins in the old days. We are the same today and still my friends here fear surface men. For man cannot understand or believe any other form of human life but his own, and they fear us greatly when they learn of our existence. Yet those of us who are kindly intentioned need man's understanding and assistance, for our lives are struggles for existence against the malefic schemes and powers of the evil and idiot denizens of the caverns. Because I realize the tremendous importance of our continued existence as an intelligent group, I have thrown in my lot with Nydia's little band. Nightly I stand my watch against the devils who have made their homes in the farther caves. Our life here is purchased at the price of never-failing vigilance. We peer over the old visi-rays, focusing the ancient lenses to the farthest range and sweeping the caves with them for the slightest indication of attack, that we may turn it back before it reaches us.

Daily I spend much time reading the ancient thought records, bringing thus to my knowledge the lives of the mighty, ancient God-race that existed immortally before our sun aged and they adventured elsewhere. The tale of that aging sun and of the flight of the Elder Folk from its effects is written in those ancient thought records.<sup>(28)</sup> For as the sun ages it grows more dense and as it becomes denser it throws deadly fiery particles out with its light beams. These gather in the body and like radium they never cease to burn; they are atomic fire and deadly in their final result. In time their accumulation burns and withers life away, just as radium would do if we swallowed it. Only ignorant men, who could not flee into space, remained here on

earth to father modern man, for the Immortals abandoned their out-grown dwelling places here when they took to their space-ships and flew away to settle under more favorable conditions on other planets.

It is my constant hope that someday earth men will waken to the existence of these ancient cavern dwellings, full of marvelous machines and secrets of science infinitely greater than theirs.

It is full time that mankind awoke. I live on only in that hope. Until then, I bid the surface earth farewell. I remain here in the caverns, absorbing wisdom against that day, and loving (as only those can love who live under the rays of the ancient mech) my little blind maiden.

—Richard S. Shaver <sup>(29)</sup>

(28) It is this record that was presented by Mr. Shaver in his first story, "I Remember Lemuria!" When Mr. Shaver presented it to us, he did not explain how he knew it, except in the manner described in the opening of this second story, as a mental impulse from underground minds received at first via his welding gun in a Detroit auto plant. Ignorant as your editor was of the real facts surrounding Mr. Shaver's story, we decided to call it "racial memory" to make it more credible to our readers. We are forced now to retract that, and to admit also, that your editor was the most doubting of all Thomases at the beginning. However, when you read the amazing reactions to this first story, published in Discussions, in the new special section devoted to reporting readers' discoveries and reports on Mr. Shaver's Lemurian story, and in the Editor's Observatory, you will be faced with the same amazing facts which have made your editor look a little silly for having perhaps harmed the credibility of an incredible story by trying to make it less incredible. —Ed.

(29) Actually, Mr. Shaver is no longer in the caverns, but back on the surface, as we shall have occasion to demonstrate later on; but Mr. Shaver intends to present in each issue from now on, one of the "thought record" stories that he listened to while in the caves—and thus, for continuity, we have ended this story where it should properly end, in the caves, with more to come. —Ed.

Nydia and Shaver reappear in the story

**MER-WITCH OF ETHER 18**

(Included on The Shaver Mystery Compendium vol. 4).

Nydia has her own adventure in **ZIGOR MEPHISTO'S COLLECTION OF MENTALIA** (Included on The Shaver Mystery Compendium vol. 5)



Glorious Vanue, Elder God, led us into battle against the fortress of the old Zeit.



# *“I REMEMBER LEMURIA!”*

12,000 years ago our ancestors, the Atlans and Titans, left Lemuria, the earth, for a new home on a dark world in space.

## FOREWORD

**P**ERHAPS my parents never realized the puns that would be made on my name when they christened me Richard Sharpe Shaver. Under ordinary circumstances the puns would have been of little consequence, but because of the amazing fact of my amazing memory of the life of another person, long dead, it has been incredibly hard for me to speak convincingly and to make people believe in me. Invariably I get that oh-so-funny remark, “Sharp-shaver, eh? A regular cut-up, eh, kid!” accompanied by a sly dig in the ribs and a very stupid, “Get it?” How can a man get a serious audience after that?

And yet, there it is for all who wish—to pun and pun again. If I achieve nothing else at least you may laugh, and to laugh is to be physically and mentally healthy. For those of you who will read on and carefully weigh what I

am about to tell you I am convinced there will be no thought of puns. Instead, when you consider the real truths behind what I say—and even better, *experiment and study to corroborate them*—it seems to me to be inevitable that you will forget that I am Richard Sharpe Shaver, and instead, am what science chooses to very vaguely define as the racial memory receptacle of a man (or should I say a being?) named Mutan Mion, who lived many thousands of years ago in Sub Atlan, one of the great cities of ancient Lemuria!

I myself cannot explain it. I know only that I remember Lemuria! Remember it with a faithfulness that I accept with the absolute conviction of a fanatic. And yet, I am not a fanatic; I am a simple man, a worker in metal, employed in a steel mill in Pennsylvania. I am as normal as any of you who read this and gifted with much less imagination than most of you!

What I tell you is not fiction! How can I impress that on you as forcibly as I feel it must be impressed? But then, what good to impress it upon those who will crack wise about me being a “sharp-shaver”? I can only hope that when I have told the story of Mutan Mion as I remember it you will believe—not because I *sound* convincing or tell my story in a convincing manner, but because you will *see the truth* in what I say, and will realize, as you must, that many of the things I tell you are *not a matter of present day scientific knowledge* and yet are true!

I fervently hope that such great minds as Einstein, Carrel, and the late Crile *check* the things that I remember. I am no mathematician; I am no scientist. I have studied all the scientific books I can get—only to become more and more convinced that I remember *true* things. But surely someone can definitely say that I am wrong or that I am right, especially in such things as the true nature of gravity, of matter, of light, of the cause of age and many other things that the memory of Mutan Mion has expressed to me so definitely as to be conviction itself.

I intend to put down these things, and I invite—challenge!—any of you to work on them; to prove or disprove, as you like. Whatever your goal, I do not care. I care only that you believe me or disbelieve me with enough fervor to do some real work on those things I will propound. The final result may well stagger the science of the world.

I want to thank editor Ray Palmer, in whose “fiction” magazine, *Amazing Stories*, the stories in this book were first published, for his open mind and for the way he has received the things I have told him in addition to what I have written in this story of Mutan Mion of ancient Lemuria. It began when he published my ancient alphabet in “Discussions”<sup>(1)</sup> and requested the readers to carry out checks of their own. I myself did not realize the extent of the alphabetic (more properly phonetic) language. But surely there

must be tremendous significance in the fact that the alphabet *fits into* every language to which it has been applied, to the amazing percentage of 75% in the German to 94% in the ancient Egyptian! Even in Chinese and Japanese it ranked consistent nine out of ten times.

To me it is tragic that the only way I can tell my story is in the guise of fiction. And yet, I am thankful for the opportunity to do even this; and to editor Ray Palmer I express my unbounded gratitude. I know that if even a few of you go to the lengths he has gone to check many of the things I remember, a beginning will have been made to something, the ending of which (if ending there is) awes me beyond my poor power to express my feelings.

—RICHARD S. SHAVER.

(1) Footnote: January, 1945 issue of AMAZING STORIES. Some of the reports by readers were subsequently published, but the great majority were not. These reports proved to be the most amazing the editor has ever received on anything published in his magazine. They would seem to indicate beyond all doubt that the "ancient language" of Mr. Shaver is part of an original "mother tongue" from which all Earthly language, have sprung. For example, the name Mutan Mion, broken down into the letters and sounds of this ancient language becomes MU— "man"; T— "integration," "growth"; AN— "animal." MION means "man-child seed." So, the name means "man spore cultured to new forms by integration growth forces." In other words, a synthetic mutation by the use of force or rays. —Ed.

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## CHAPTER I CITY OF THE TITANS

I WAS working in the studio of Artan Gro when I heard a great laugh behind me. If ever there was derision in a laugh, there was derision in this one. I flung down my gaudy brushes and my palette and turned about in a rage—to find the master himself, his red cave of a mouth wide open in his black beard. I cooled my temper with an effort; for great indeed is Artan Gro, master artist of Sub Atlan.

"I am sorry, Mutan Mion," he gasped, "but I can't control my laughter. No one ever has conceived, much less executed, anything worse than what you have put upon canvas! What do you call it, 'Proteus in a Convulsive Nightmare'?"

But Artan Gro *could* control himself, I was sure. It is one of the things I have learned of the really great in the arts; they make no pretenses. He was

laughing because he wanted to tell me frankly what he thought of my ability as an artist. It is bad enough when your friends mock your work (and they had), but when the master is convulsed with laughter it is high time to wake up to the truth.

“It is true, great Artan Gro,” I said humbly. “I want to paint but I cannot. I haven’t the ability.”

Artan Gro’s expression softened. He smiled, and as he smiled, it was as though he had turned on the sunlight.

“Go,” he said, “go; to the deeper caverns at Mu’s center. Once there study science; learn to mix the potions that give the brain greater awareness, a better rate of growth.” He patted my shoulder and added a last bit of advice. “Once you have mixed the potions, take them. Drink them—and grow!” He passed on, still chuckling.

Why is the truth always so brutal? Or does it just seem brutal when it comes from those wiser than you? I slunk from the studio; but I had already determined to take his advice. I would go to Tean City, at Mu’s center. I would go to the science schools of the Titans.

Never before had I considered leaving Sub Atlan, my birthplace, or as I should express it, my growth place, for I am a culture man, a product of the laboratories. In fact, I remember no other place on Mu, although it is a fact that during the process of my development to culture manhood, I roamed the culture forests of Atlantis, <sup>(2)</sup> which is the name for Surface Atlan.

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(2) According to Plato, Atlantis was a continent located some four hundred miles west of the Pillars of Hercules (Gibraltar). In the *Timaeus*, he describes it as an island larger than Asia Minor combined with Libya. Beyond it, he says, were an archipelago of lesser islands. Atlantis had been a powerful kingdom nine thousand years before the birth of Solon (from whom Plato heard of Atlantis reputedly as told to Solon by Egyptian priests), and its armies had overrun the Mediterranean lands, when Athens alone had resisted. (It has been a point of difference between students as to whether Plato referred to the “Mediterranean lands” as lands now inundated by the Mediterranean Sea, or the lands surrounding the sea.) Finally, the sea overwhelmed Atlantis and shoals marked the spot. In the *Critias* Plato gives a history of the commonwealth of Atlantis.

There are many other traditions of lands located west of Gibraltar. The Greek Isles of the Blest or Fortunate Isles; the Welsh Avalon; the Portuguese Antilia or Isle of Seven Cities; and St. Brendan’s island. All except Avalon were marked on maps of the 14th and 15th centuries.

The legends of the Sargasso Sea are said to have sprung from encounters with the sea of weeds which periodically grew over the shallowly sunken continent. —Ed.

Sub Atlan is just below Atlantis, while Tean City is located at the center of Mu, at a great depth below Sub Atlan. The walls of the great cavern in which Tean City is located are hardened to untellable strength by treatment with ray-flows which feed its growth until it is of great density. There are many other cities which grew through the centuries to vast size, but none so great as Tean City. Some are abandoned, but all are indestructible; their cavern walls too dense to penetrate or to collapse.

Since Tean City is located near the center of Mother Mu, gravity neutralizes itself by opposition. It is very comfortable. Many of the Titans live there, and in fact, it is almost a Titan city. There also are the mighty ones, the Elders of the Atlan race's government. Huge they are, like great trees, many centuries old and still growing. I had long wished to see them, and now that I had decided to go, the thrill was greater than any I had ever experienced, I was going down into the city of many wonders!

Out on the street I took one of the many vehicles that are provided for travel about the city. These vehicles, their weight reduced by a gravity deflection device, are powered by motors whose energy is derived from a gravity focusing magnetic field, by which one side of a flywheel becomes much heavier than the other. This is accomplished by bending gravity fall <sup>(3)</sup> in the same way that a lens bends a light ray.

The topless <sup>(4)</sup> buildings of Sub Atlan fled by me; and soon I neared the squat entrance to the shafts that fell from Sub Atlan to Center Mu, to Tean City, home of the Titans. <sup>(5)</sup> I knew that swift elevators dropped down these shafts; but I had never traveled in one of them.

Because I knew the control-man of one of the elevators, having talked with him often of Tean City and the wonders he had seen in it, I went to his shaft for my descent. He was glad to see me, and very much surprised to learn that I was going to Tean City.

"You will never regret it!" He declared.

The car dropped sickeningly, so swiftly that a great fear grew in me that I would be crushed by deceleration when we finally stopped. In panic I watched an indicator's two hands move slowly toward each other as though to cover its face in shame. Then, with little sensation, the car stopped. Here

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(3) The reader will note the curious use of the word "fall" in connection with gravity. Later in the story, the author elaborates on the subject of gravity in a very amazing manner, propounding a theory which your editor has examined in detail and by which he has been utterly confounded. This glib "focusing" and "deflecting" of gravity your editor cautions you to accept in the literal sense until Mu-tan Mion's story gives us more on the subject of gravity. —Ed.

at the center of Mu I had become nearly weightless and the ceasing of even such swift motion did not have ill effects upon my weightless body. I knew that I would not have that fear again.

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(4) Curious as to the literal meaning of the word “topless,” we wrote to Mr. Shaver for a better description of the buildings of Sub Atlan. He revealed that (as Mutan Mion’s memory told him) they were topless in the sense that they were roofless. Sub Atlan is located in one of the giant near-surface caverns that underlie Surface Atlan, or Atlantis, which is mostly forest with scattered large buildings. Since the elements are not a factor, almost all buildings are constructed without roofs to admit a maximum of light. Sub Atlan must have presented a strange appearance, for no two buildings were architecturally alike; some of them huge spheres, or multi-sided geometric shapes, tall spires, or merely rambling structures of no apparent intentional design. The reason for this was to provide variety to interest the eye, which would otherwise be jaded by constant contemplation of the unending sameness of gray cavern walls and roof of stone. —Ed.

(5) When asked to describe the Titans Mr. Shaver sent us the following notation, which is perhaps the oddest of all his communications. When queried about its oddity, he merely replied that he had “answered your question” and gave no further explanation. We quote:

“Our great race, the Atlans, together with the Titans, our allies and often our fellow citizens, swarm through all known space and watch ever for the birth of new suns. Then, too, there are the Nortans; but the Nor-men shun all suns and can only be found where the sun rays shine not.

“When our Atlan sciencons hear of or see a new sun born, our ships flash swiftly through the void, to test the rays for poisonous emanations. When they find clean heat from a surface shell of pure carbon, fast upon their trail come the first great colonization ships. For our race is fecund beyond imagination and there is little death from any cause.”

Obviously, this is nothing from the “racial” memory of Mutan Mion, but seemingly something from an Atlan himself! Here and there, through Mr. Shaver’s correspondence with the editors, such departures from the identity of Mutan Mion occur, and we can only suggest that Mr. Shaver’s racial memory contacts extend not only to the culture man, but to other beings as well. Mr. Shaver himself cannot explain, and in many instances, is unaware, that such extensions exist.

The reader will here, again, note several inexplicable references, such as “poisonous emanations” and “a surface shell of pure carbon.” Later in the story Mutan Mion tells of these things in great detail, and in them gives still another of the amazing scientific theories that stagger the imagination. —Ed.

Two fat Atlans stepped out of the car ahead of me, sighing with relief at their renewed weightlessness, which they had obviously been anticipating. As I was about to follow them from the car, the control-man drew me aside.

"Fear rides the ways down here," he whispered, his sharp-pointed, cat-like ears quivering an alert. "Fear is a smell down here that is ever in the nose—a bad smell, too. Try to figure it out while you are down here; and tell me, too, if you get an answer."

I did not understand what he meant, but I promised anyway. The smell of fear, in Tean City?

Immediately I was immersed in the sensually shocking appeal of a variform crowd, mostly at this hour, a shopping rush of female variforms. While there were many of my own type, and of the elevator control-man's type, there were a greater number of creatures of every shape the mind could grasp and some that it could not. All were citizens; all were animate and intelligent—hybrids of every race that space crossing had ever brought into contact, from planets whose very names are now lost in time. The technicons may have been wrong in the opinion of some when they developed variform breeding; but they have certainly given life variety. I had never seen so many variforms <sup>(6)</sup> before.

At a corner of the vastly vaulted way where many rollat platforms <sup>(7)</sup> crossed and re-crossed each other, I stepped to a telescreen and dialed the student center. The image of a tremendous six-armed Sybyl female filled the screen and the electrically augmented body appeal of the mighty life within her seized the youth in me and wrung it as no embrace from lesser female ever had.

"And what" her voice shook me as a leaf in an organ pipe "might a pale and puny male like you want in Tean City? You look as if you never had enough to eat, as if love had passed you by. Did you come down here because no one wanted you elsewhere?"

I grinned self-consciously back at her image, my voice a feeble piping in comparison to hers.

"I have come to learn something besides drawing lines around dreams. I am a painter from the subsurface who has decided that knowledge of actual

(6) Obviously variforms are not natives of other planets, but hybrids developed from many interplanetary life forms mated with Titans and Atlans by deliberate applications of mutative rays in the laboratories of Mu's technicons. It is extremely interesting to note that all have the status of citizens. —Ed.

(7) Moving connected vehicles on the ways and walks which carried the bulk of pedestrian travel. —Ed.

growth is more important than the false growth of an untrue image upon a canvas." I wondered what the master would have said to hear me.

"You are right," she boomed back, her six arms engaged in complex wand mysterious movements, picking up and laying down instruments and tools in bewildering rapidity, her attention elsewhere yet enough remaining on me to hold me bound in an attraction as strong as a towing cable. She was a forty-foot Titan, her age unknowable. As I thought upon this and tried not to think of the immense beauty and life force of her, I suddenly realized she was hiding fear. I have a peculiar faculty for sensing hidden emotions. That bluff greeting had been a hidden wish to drive me from some danger. But I did not speak of it, for I read that caution in her; a very strong mental flow that fairly screamed DON'T.

This kind of fear was a wonder and a new thing to me, for danger was a thing long banished from our life. Then she spoke, reluctantly it seemed.

"Go to the center of the Hall of Symbols. There you can ask a student or an instructor who will tell you all you need to know."

The grip of the woman life in her, left my mind and she was gone from my vision. As I turned from the telescreen my mind insisted on visualizing that six-armed embrace and its probable effect upon a man in love. I shivered in spite of the warmth, but not from fear. The blood of the Titans was alive, I thought; strangely and wonderfully alive!

I stepped into a rollat at the curb, inspected the directory, then inserted a coin and dialed the number of the building that housed the Hall of Symbols. I leaned back while the automatic drive of the rollat directed the car through the speeding traffic, its electric eye more efficient than my own.

Yes, much more efficient than my own at the moment, which were wandering over the figure of a variform female on the walk whose upper part was the perfect torso of a woman and whose lower part was a sinuously gliding thirty feet of brilliantly mottled snake. You could never have escaped her embrace of your own will once she had wrapped those life-generating coils around you!

I thought upon it. The gen of these variforms was certainly more vital; possibly because the Titan technicians who lived here kept the people healthier. Perhaps the hybrids were naturally more fecund of micro-spore. It had indeed been a day of brainstorming, I mused, when some old technician had realized that not only would a strong integrative field with a rich exd<sup>(8)</sup>

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(8) Exd is Atlan for ex-disintegrance or energy ash. It was the principal content of the beneficial vibrants. It is the space dust from which all matter grows into being. Mutan Mion amplifies the exd theory later on in the story. —Ed.

supply cause all matter to grow at an increased rate, but would also cause even the most dissimilar life-gens to unite. It has been the realization that had resulted in various form life. Most of the crosses by this method had resulted in an increased strength and fertility. They now were more numerous than four-limbed men, and often superior in mental ability.

Automatically my mind associated the embrace of the snake woman with the six arms of the giant Sybyl of Info; and I decided that I understood why Artan Gro had driven me here with his scorn. If I didn't learn about life here I never would anywhere. That had been what he had reasoned.

Soon I was striding between the pillaring fangs of the great beast's mouth that was the door of the Hall of Symbols where the school ways converged. About was the bustle attendant to any rollat way station; bearers rushing; travelers gazing about lost in wonder at the vaulting glitter of sculptured pillars and painted walls, done by men of a caliber whose work ro <sup>(9)</sup> like myself cannot grasp entirely.

Paintings and sculpture here hammered into the brain a message of the richness of life that immense mutual effort can give the lift unit, the pro. This richness of life was pictured in a terrible clash with evil, its opposite. <sup>(10)</sup> The hot fecundity of life and health growth was a sensuous blow upon the eyes, the soul leaped to take a hand and make life yet more worthwhile. I could not cease gazing at the leaping vault of pictured busy figures whose movements culminated in that offer to the spirit of man to join them in molding life to a fit shape.

(9) Here again we had to appeal to Mr. Shaver for amplification. We certainly got it, and along with it some amazing thoughts. Ro (he says) is a thing of simple repetitive life pattern easy to understand and control. To ro you is to make you do things against your will. A large generator of thought impulse can be set up to ro a whole group of people. Row the boat is modern and the meaning has become physical force and not mental force. Ro the people was an ancient method of government. Romantic was the name of such a government. Ro-man-tic (science of man life patterning by control). It is the same concept as used by some scientists when they say "hypnotically conditioned." It is not necessarily an evil government method, but is one that was necessary. Any person is ro who is weaker than the mental impulses about him. Men are ro today because they are not self-determining, though they think they are. We are parts of a huge juggernaut, and we are ro in consequence. The determining forces that make our thought what it is are from outside when we are ro, from inside when we are men or gods. —Ed.

(10) This is indeed a strange comparison. Evil is the opposite of live, the inference being that to be evil is to die. Oddly (or significantly?) evil is live spelled backward. —Ed

My rapt study of the paintings was interrupted by the sound of a pair of hooves that clicked daintily to a stop beside me. I glanced at the newcomer, who had stopped to stare up at the paintings also in that curious way that people have when they see another craning his neck—and my glance became a stare.

What was the use of aspiring to be an artist, my reason said, if those great masters who had placed that mighty picture book on the vaulting walls above were so easily outdone by the life force itself!

She was but a girl, younger than myself, but what a girl! Her body was encased in a transparent glitter; her skin a rosy pale purple; her legs, mottled with white, ended in a pair of cloven hooves. And as my brain struggled to grasp her colorful young perfection—she wagged her tail!

It was all too much. Speculating about the life-generating force possible in the variform creatures was one thing; but having it materialize beside you was another thing entirely. Such a beautiful tail it was. Of the softest, most beautiful fur.

“What were you staring at?” she asked. “The paintings?”

I stuttered, then answered. “The paintings . . . I guess . . . yes, the paintings. I’m a . . . painter . . . was a painter . . .” I gave up. I couldn’t talk, I had to look.

“They are marvelous, aren’t they,” she declared enthusiastically. “I always look at them when I come down to the school. I am studying medicine. Now take that painting up there—”

On her arm and breast, I saw the medical school insignia; a man’s figure struggling with a great snake, disease. <sup>(11)</sup> It took brains to study medicine. This exquisite young thing, so full of gen force, so powerfully attractive, was smart too. And almost instantly she proved herself to be extremely friendly

(11) This insignia lives today in the legend of Apollo! According to the Greeks, Apollo was a son of Zeus himself. Disease is typified in the legend by the python, which Apollo killed. Etymologically his name signifies one who “drives away disease.” Roscher’s derivation names him as the “sun god.” Using Mr. Shaver’s ancient language, he is “authority, energizer, power source of man’s growth.” This is startling when we discover, upon studying the legends of Apollo, that he was variously called god of prophecy; god of agriculture; ruler of seasons; keeper of flocks; rearer of boys; sponsor of gymnastics; the helper; healer and seer; averter of evil; god of song and music; leader of the muses; embark and disembark; god of streets and ways; one who stands before the house (as protector from violence and disease); originator and protector of civil order; founder of cities and legislation. Apollo, says Mutan Mion, was a son of one of the Titans of Mu! —Ed.

and companionable. She went on talking, describing, theorizing in a gush of amiable conversation that left me dizzy, gasping, and admiringly breathless. She told me *everything* about the paintings, the statues.

And before I realized it, we were walking on together. She was full of all sorts of information, and it seemed she had taken it upon herself to be my guide, to teach me the meaning of everything we saw. Her cheerful chatter soon told me all about herself, her studies, the schools, the great doors that led to each one from the central gathering place of the school rollat ways.

The Hall was justly famous for these doors. Before us now was the door to the medical school, formed of pillaring figures struggling with the coils of snakes. Next to it was the marine school door, formed of a crab whose huge claws met to form the arch. A planetron, a pendulum device to tell of the nearness of bodies in space, formed the entrance to the school of space navigation. All the ages of science of immortal growth had combined here in the symbols that formed the many doors.

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## CHAPTER II FROM ART TO EMBRYOLOGY

**F**ROM the moment that I pocketed a disc that bore the faun-legged girl's name and address, I was no longer an aspiring artist; I wanted to know what she knew, wanted to learn what she was learning.

Arl was her name, a short, sweet name for a girl and hard to forget, too. You can't forget a girl who wags her tail at you just like that.

And so, she took me into the medical school and directed me to her own teacher. I became a member of the class immediately and discovered that I had entered upon the opening discourse.

The class was dominated by the immense presence of the teacher, a son of the Titans, bearded and horned, expounding in the exact syllogism of the technicon training. As he spoke, I became certain that this dynamo of human force should soon charge such a small battery as myself with everything in the way of knowledge I could assimilate.

There was only one slight disturbing factor. Just as I had sensed a strange, deeply buried and secret fear in the Sybyl, I knew that in the mind of this great son of the Titans there was a gnawing something that a part of his brain dwelt on continually. Fear was a smell that was ever in the nose down here in Tean City. The realization disturbed me so much that I failed to absorb a portion of the teacher's discourse. My absorption must have caught

his attention, too, for I saw him staring disapprovingly at me. With a start, I re-concentrated my mind on what he was saying.

“. . . a great cold ball hung in space. Once it had been a mighty, living planet, swinging ponderously around a dying sun that it had never seen, being covered with clouds. Then that sun had gone out, and the deadly ter<sup>(12)</sup> stiffened the surface life into glittering death.

“The planet’s forests, which had lived in dense, dripping fog, had, in their many ages of life, deposited coal beds untold miles in depth—clear down to the stony core of the planet. No fire had ever touched these forests, because the dense fog had never allowed fire to burn.

“Venus, our nearest neighbor in space, is such a planet now, although much smaller. As it is on Venus, so it was on the unknown planet.

“Hanging in space the dead immensity of this ball was largely potential heat, for its tremendously thick shell was mostly pure carbon.

“Such once was the sun, your sun and mine; the sun of which Mu is a daughter.

“Then a blazing meteor, spewed violently from some sun in space, came flaming toward this cold ball. Deep it plunged into the beds of carbon. The fire spread swiftly—an ever-fire of disintegrance, not the passing-fire of combustion—and our sun was born into live-giving flame!

“A carbon fire is a clean fire and contains no dense metals like radium, titanium, uranium, polonium—whose emanations in disintegrance in suns cause old age and death because minute particles given off accumulate and convey the ever-fire into the body, there to kill it in time.

“Then sun heat was clean, and life sprang furiously into being on its daughter, Mu’s surface. Nor did this life die—death came only by being eaten. Then life suffered old age not at all, for there was no cause.”

The voice of the teacher paused a moment, and now indeed I knew that there was much for me to learn. Here was something that struck deep into me with an instantly vital interest. Most provoking of all was his peculiar emphasis on the word “then.” I could not help the question that sprang to my lips.

“Why do you say “Then life suffered old age not at all, for there was no cause”? Is there cause now?”

It was as though I had placed a torch beneath the hidden fear in the Titan’s eyes, for it flamed forth suddenly for all to see; but it was as quickly quelled. All in the class looked at me with that shocked expression which plainly said I had overstepped my bounds; but in the eyes of Arl, I

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(12) Ter—the Lemurian word for cold. —Ed.

thought I saw the gleam of approval, and I found a dam to hold back my ebbing courage.

The teacher looked at me, and I saw kindness in his eyes.

"You are new here, Mutan Mion. Therefore, it is easy to understand that you have not heard of the projected migration of all Atlans to a new world under a beneficial sun. . .

"Yes, young ro, there is cause." He was answering my question with determination now, but he was not speaking to me alone; he was making his answer a part of his discourse. "I have spoken of the carbon fire as a clean fire. By this I mean that the atoms of carbon, when disintegrated, send forth the beneficial energy ash called exd which can be assimilated by our bodies and used to promote life-growth. However, the source of this ash is not carbon alone, but all other elements excepting the heavy metals such as I mentioned before. It is when these heavy elements begin to disintegrate in the ever-fire that we come to the cause of age.

"The particles of radium and other radioactive metals are the poison that causes the aging of tissue. These particles are thrown out by all old suns whose shell of carbon has been partly or altogether burned away, permitting the disintegrating fire to reach and seize upon the heavy metals at the sun's core. Our sun has begun to throw out great masses of these poisonous particles. They fall upon Mu in a continual flood, entering into living tissue and infecting it with the radioactive disease we call age.

"Through the years, the centuries, these poisons accumulate in the soil of the planet, and are continually being washed out of it by the rains with the result that all the water on Mu is becoming increasingly contaminated. When these waters are drunk, the poisons accumulate in the body, finally becoming numerous enough to completely halt all growth and still worse, to prevent any effectual use of exd, which is the food of all integration.

"The technicons, of course, have devised means to protect us from the accumulation of the age poisons, but it has become evident that their efforts are not entirely foolproof. We have discovered that we are living on a world that circles a sun that is growing old and is therefore deadly. We are living in the shadow of death, a shadow that will grow greater as the years pass until finally death with strike us all. We would, if we remained, not even begin to live out our lives. Centuries and centuries would be lost to us, and ultimately we might not even attain the initial growth of maturity!"

I ventured another question.

"What methods have the technicons devised?"

"They are simple ones. Multiple distillation of the water in which we drink and bathe; treatment of the water in a centrifuge to remove the very finely

divided age poisons that cannot be removed by distillation; ben generators to create a magnetic field of ben energies; air centrifuges to remove poisons from the air. But I must impress upon you that it is impossible to shield us from all of the age poison; from that small amount that actually falls upon our own bodies and accumulates there as it does in the water. Eventually, if we remain on Mu, we will grow old, <sup>(13)</sup> and finally die.”

I looked him squarely in the eyes, respectful in a degree equal to the kindly interest that shone in his as he returned my look.

“It is not the age poisons you fear,” I accused.

He looked at me silently; and a flood of force seemed to flow through me, encouraging me, protecting me, cautioning me. It was the same feeling I had gotten from the Sybyl.

“Come, students,” he said gently. “We will go now to the embryo laboratory.”

Before we entered the laboratory, we were given nutrient potions prescribed by the Titan for his students to make them more receptive and hence his work easier. We were told that we would receive these potions regularly. Even as I took the first draught my brain throbbed with a new

(13) Impressed with the implications contained in this portion of the story of Mutan Mion, we wrote Mr. Shaver for additional information on this theory of the cause of age. This information is curious, because some of the theories seem to be modern (by Mr. Shaver) and others those of Mutan Mion, with no particular designation as to which is which. However, we present the whole for your judgment.

“The sun itself seems to be the mother source of all radioactivity, infecting all the earth’s surface and all the life on its surface. The sun projects minute disintegrances down upon us in a steady, numerous rain whose effects we call age. In water the poison is heavily present in suspension, especially so in thermal springs. In the air the poison floats forever with the tiny thistledown of dust it has infected and to which it clings. It settles on the leaves of plants. So, we take the poison in with every breath, with every bite of food, with every drink of water; thus, we age as the poison accumulates.

“But we do not have to let in that poison; we can protect ourselves and grow through a longer youth to a much greater age, with superior mental powers. It is very plain that a mother’s body cells, although replaced every four to seven years, are not young because they remain in contact with the poison retaining fabric of the body and so age swiftly. Yet, the baby is *young*. Young because it gets filtered blood, filtered through the placenta—and would remain young if the poisons were to be continued to be filtered out by a duplication of the placenta filter. The stalk of a plant is old, yet its seed is young, capable of reproducing itself without passing on the poisons of age. It is because the stalk contains a filter to prevent passage of...

growth of ideas and strange new images. I was exhilarated beyond all imagining, and my enthusiasm knew no bounds. I took Arl's hand in mine as we trooped into the laboratory.

It was truly a wonderful place, the most amazing I had ever seen. I felt like a mite admitted to the treasure-house of a giant. Here were things that were beyond my intelligence to create of my own mind power; and yet I was being given free and welcome access to all of them, to learn from them, and to use the knowledge if I wished in my future life and work.

Many strange machines filled the laboratory, all performing tasks that I could only guess at. But these machines were subordinate to the real science of this great room, being designed only to chemically and electronically nourish and develop the many human embryos that moved and grew in synthetically duplicated mother-blood in sealed bottles.

The older ones kicked and tugged healthily at the grafted umbilical tube which supplied the life fluid—called Icor, the "blood of the gods." And it was this blood that was the subject of the lecture the Titan now gave us.

He told us of the upkeep and preparation of this fluid, both in the embryo

(continued from footnote 13) the poison to the seed. The simple filtration processes of birth and seeding CAN BE COPIED by man, thus putting off old age.

"Here are a few verbatim quotations from Madame Curie's notes: 'Finally, the radiation of radium was contagious. Contagious like a disease and like persistent scent. It was impossible for an object, a plant, an animal or a person to be left near a table of radium without it immediately acquiring radioactivity—becoming radioactive—a notable activity which a sensitive apparatus could detect.' A later page: 'Thus the radio elements formed strange and cruel families in which each member was created by degeneration from the mother substance—radium was created by degeneration from uranium—polonium from radium, etc.' And from a later page: 'When one studies strongly radioactive substances special precautions must be taken if one wishes to be able to take delicate measurements. The various objects used in a chemical laboratory and those used in physics experiments all become radioactive in a short time, and affect photo paper through black paper. *Dust*, the *air* of the room, one's *clothes* all become radio-active. The evil has reached an acute stage in our laboratory.'

"Note the word *mother*. The sun is the mother source of radioactives.

"It is a matter of common knowledge that certain watch factories formerly allowed workers (young girls of twenty) to tongue-tip the brushes with which they painted the radioactive dials. They died of OLD AGE at twenty and twenty-five years! Not of a disease, but of age poison; radioactive particles, whose origination is from the disintegration of the heavy metals of which radium is a member!"—Ed.

and the adult; the difficult and important part being (he now stressed his words with greater emphasis with his attention bent especially toward me) the process of detecting and removing the slightest trace of the radio-active poisons that cause age.

I studied and I learned! These were the processes which had given the planet Mu its health and enabled us to live under more aging suns than other races. These were the life methods that had given us our fecundity; which had populated space for thousands of centuries with the seed of Atlan. I wanted to know all there was to learn about them.

The Titan, an old master at this most basic process of Atlan life, had imbued me with an enthusiasm for the true creation of life in its infinite possibilities of growth—such as no mere painter ever had. The delicate handling of those ultra-minute products of disintegration from which primary integrations are formed; the mixing of these integrations into the atoms of elements; the chemistry of combining these atoms into the molecules of the substances used in the manufacture of the synthetic blood, Icor—all these steps were sheer artistry, yet were made as simple as child thought by the genius of the Titan.

Once more the Titan commented on the proposed emigration from Mu, weaving it into his lecture. There seemed to me to be an undercurrent of double meaning in his motive for repeating it; a double meaning that I strove to associate mentally with the fear-thing that was something else and also something so secret it must not be mentioned. It was as though even the fact that there was fear of that “something” must be kept secret.

Our aging sun (he said) threw off increasingly large amounts of these sun’s seeds, small but dense and active disintegrative particles, and I learned that keeping Atlan’s peoples young was an increasingly difficult job for the technicians. I learned that the coordinators and rodite<sup>(14)</sup> were preparing the plans and ships for our migration to a young, new-born sun, where the force setup of life conditions left a greater margin of exd for intake of power, where integrance went on at a faster pace, and where the infection that caused the occasional trouble with detrimental energy robotism or detrimental err<sup>(15)</sup> in the human did not occur.

When the lecture in the embryo laboratory was finished, we filed back to the classroom, and there the Titan flipped the switch that controlled the teleyes that supplied the home telesets of many with the course. We had not been dismissed, and I could see from the puzzled looks on the faces of the other students that this was not in accordance with the regular schedule.

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(14) Rodite—Life pattern synchronizers. —Ed.

For a long moment the Titan looked at us, and especially at me. Then he spoke:

"Today things have been said and seen and discussed in this class that had no direct bearing on the course you came here to take. You, Mutan Mion, have been the most brash—" my face grew red, and he hastened to add, "No, Mutan, I do not mean that you have been too forward; I meant brash in the sense that you have exposed yourself to a greater danger than that of my wrath." His eyes twinkled at the word wrath, and I knew that such would never be much of a danger! "I meant the menace that has caused the fear you have somehow seen in me. Perhaps you have sensed this in other places in Tean City, among others of the Titans; so, it must be, for you to have been so certain of it as to challenge me.

"Yes, there was, and is, fear in me. And it is a fear that we all try to keep secret because those of us who show fear also show suspicion if not knowl-

(15) This is mainly due (explains Mr. Shaver) to depolarization of the matter of the brain; it is no longer earth polared, it is sun polared—and hence inducts the disintegrant flows from the sun into the brain by simple dynamic induction. I think a magnet could be sun polared and point to the poles of the sun just as an ordinary compass points to the poles of the earth. This is what happens to parts of the brain; they become sun polared. In the desert this is known as "cafard," to become crazed and kill until killed. Others are just stupid, depending on what parts of the brain are affected. The Malay "amok" and the Norse "berserk" are the same phenomena. When it lies in the part of the brain devoted to memory, the result is absent mindedness. When it lies in the nervous system and ego recognition of activating centers, the victim is a killer or a repressive reactionary. It is simply true that man is an electrical machine which functions well when his energy flows are of his own creating, but functions especially ill when the energy flows are from the sun.

The sun is quite a dynamo; it always gives off, from the surface; while earth always takes in, from the surface. Much of this intake is "snap-back"; that is, it is returning to a state of matter. Gravity is merely the disintegrant energy of suns returning to material form. Much of it, however, is like radium, a persistent disintegrant seed of a sun. Radioactivity is the seeds of disintegration.

Hence, a mind powered by sun particle energy flows of a detrimental nature becomes robot. The result is robotism, or the inability to think constructively. Victims of detrimental err have but one basic thought, to kill, in keeping with the natural elemental instinct of the disintegrant metals. (The reader has been presented here with two sensational theories which appear in complete form later in the manuscript; the nature of gravity, and the interrelation of energy and matter in an endless circle. —Ed.

-edge, and either has been equivalent to the signing of a death warrant. There are spying rays on us . . . at the moment we are screened . . . that seek out our knowledge and destroy us before we can coordinate it into an effective counteraction to the thing that is going on; to the thing we fear.”

“What is that thing?” I breathed aloud, so intense was my interest.

The Titan drew a deep breath. “It has come to me that certain groups of Atlan are against the projected migration, and the recent disappearance of several men important to our work lends color to the story. Of course, we all know that the only units able to do anything of the kind would be the key rodite of Sub Atlan and Center Mu. Some of these may have accidentally suffered a severe flashback of detrimental ion flow, so that their will has become one under detrimental hypnosis. What rodite area has become so corrupt as to allow such a condition to go unchecked I cannot understand; but that we are all in danger until the thing is checked is most certainly true.

“Therefore, since you here have gained an inkling of something wrong, it is only your right to be aware of it, so that inadvertent words may not cause you great harm. Also, we must fight this thing; and *all of us* must fight. So, you may consider yourselves deputized by the ruling life of Mu to seek out the information that will clear the way for the migration. Until that is done, we suffer fear, not new to me, but new to most of you.

“You may go.”

Looking back at his gigantic form as I left the classroom, I saw him musing deeply; and the concern on his face told me that things must be even more fearful of consequence than he had made us believe. Reason told me, too, that it must be so—for great indeed must be the evil that can bring fear to the heart of a Titan, the super being of all Mu and of the universe.

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### CHAPTER III

#### TERROR IN TEAN CITY

**T**HAT evening Arl took me to a dance. Never had I known that there could be such pleasure! And as a part of it all I discovered that my education was to continue through every waking hour, whether in scheduled class or not. There was so much to be learned from actual living! And Arl, it seemed, was determined that nothing should be lacking in my education. Nor did I object, for nothing suited me better than to have her, beautiful tail and all, showing her friendship and interest.

The dance, she told me on the way to the hall in a rollat car, was very scientifically handled by trained technicons. The stimulation of human at-

traction between male and female, she told me, was due to the generation of many kinds of tiny and fecund spores which grow and are released upon stimulus by male and female. The male spores grow in the female and vice versa, just as pollen between flowers. This cell pollen and the sensation of its growing presence is love. I could imagine the immense fecundity given this process by the strength of the Atlan race, whose growth and youth <sup>(16)</sup> never cease.

We arrived at the place where the dance was to be held, and I found a great room, tastefully draped, and decorated by paintings that depicted such scenes of love and joy and health as I have never before seen. Just as the paintings at the Hall of Symbols held forth that invitation to join in the elevation of the race, so did these paintings show the way to participation in love and joy.

The dance had already begun and we joined the throng on the floor. Almost instantly I was aware of the influence of stimulating electromagnetic frequencies. I felt the flow of exd of appropriate attunements; my nerve cells responded in a thrilling fashion.

The stimulating rays strongly ionized the air of the hall; making it extremely conductive to the electric pressure of the body aura, so that the dancers were intensely aware of each other. The consequently augmented vital aura of the cell pollen permeated the hall. It was absorbed by my body, and by that of lovely, faun-legged Arl snuggled in my arms, and by all the young, ecstatic bodies of those who danced about us. Under the stimulus, we wove intricate patterns on the gleaming floor; and the odor music of

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(16) The Atlans, Mr. Shaver reveals, were ever youthful, and never ceased growing. There was no such thing as "maturity" in the sense that growth stopped. Thus, an Atlan's age could be determined to a certain extent by his size. Many of them reached tremendous stature, sometimes as much as 300 feet, and heights of 40 feet and more were rather common. Mr. Shaver refers to "ancient" books which have been destroyed, which contained a great deal of Atlan knowledge and history, but points to references in the Bible such as "In those days there were giants in the Earth" as actual truth, recorded memory of the Titans. Especially significant is the definite statement "in the Earth" and not *on* it! The Atlans, by the use of their wonderful machines, kept their bodies constantly supplied with a sufficient amount of exd (the energy ash from which all matter is formed by condensation) so that their growth never stopped, but their bodies grew ever larger and heavier. Health itself was determined by weight; a healthy person was heavy. If he became ill, he lost weight. Illness is the inability of the body to fully utilize the available exd, or is the result of an insufficient quantity of exd. —Ed.

the Atlans wove into the sound music many scent accompaniments. These scents are of the most penetrative and nutrient of all the food chemicals, feeding the nerves as they are driven into the body by strong sound waves of a penetrative frequency.

In the enhanced delight of the dance I was oblivious of all but the bundle of vitality to which my pulse and soul were synchronized, and my arms held Arl as a treasure beyond value.

Then, as I lost myself in pleasure, it happened. The madness of the fear that was upon Tean City struck; and for the first time in my life I knew the true meaning of terror!

Arl screamed, and pushing me from her, pointed to the edge of the dance floor. There, the great shoulders of a horned son of a Titan hunched, one big hand clutching in desperate agony at the folds of a drape, the other pointing up and out to indicate the path of the ray that played upon him. Even in the face of death his only thought was to tell what he knew of the fear; and to point out its direction so that the technicons might answer with a ray of their own.

But nothing checked the ray; and I realized that contrary to all the usual rules there was no guard ray on duty. No wonder there was fear in Atlan! Slowly the huge youth's face turned black, his legs buckled, he fell and rolled over on his back, tongue protruding and eyes staring. He was dead.

His friends rushed to him, but the deadly ray had not ceased. It played first on one figure and then on another; each victim rolling in turn to the floor, face black with death.

"By the Elder Gods!" I swore to myself at the realization that no guard ray was going to protect us. "It is true; our perfect government is not so perfect after all!"

I stood as though oblivious to the fact that death might strike my way too. I could only look and rage within me at the death that played about the recently joy-filled hall. Within me the stimulating rays still caused an elation, but it was submerged beneath the surge of wrath that made my blood hot.

Arl was tugging at my elbow, the canny will to live of the female evident on her face in an expression of anxiety and calculation. Together we left the hall, taking a route along which her clicking hooves led me. We kept with a group of young Atlans who walked, without panic or the impulse to run, toward the parked rollats. I knew why; they feared to attract a spy-ray to themselves.

Arl's fingers pressed warningly on my arm, and I heard her whisper, her voice low, casual. An excited tone might have attracted the curiosity of the mad mind behind the black deaths, who must even now be surveying the scene of his mad acts of killing in grisly satisfaction.

"Listen to that man just behind us—"

I listened. His voice was also casual—held no excited note. In his voice was the cultured note that was evidence of one who has absorbed much of the vast education obtainable in Tean City.— "Also heard that what lies behind the fear and death here is the mad wish of certain rodite to appropriate the whole fleet of ships prepared for the migration and go to the new sun leaving nothing behind alive with brains enough to build and fly ships in pursuit. Thus, they would have the new sun's clean light entirely for themselves and their future seed."

A selfish thing, indeed! But more mad than selfish. Such a view could only be the result of detrimental err.

The speaker went on. "We, the mediocre, know how fecund life can be, but we also know the madness of refusing all of the normal units of life's fabric the right to existence and growth. No social fabric can be built of dull and lifeless robots which are so besotted with detrimental energy that they refuse the least of the units of the fabric their right to growth and intelligence. Therein lies the strength of the social fabric—the unit's realization of its own self and its place in the whole. The whole basis of a fuller life is the acquisition by mutual effort, the backing on which is woven the social pattern of the fabric itself."

I heard another voice, answering in agreement, yet with a troubled note evident in its tones, as if the speaker felt that agreement alone was not enough; that simply denouncing a thing that was as evil as this would not be enough. "Yes, this murderous effort is doomed to failure. The intelligent members of the guilty rodite must realize that such murder of the normal life unit is the refusal of their own right to share in the fruits of the social project. They must realize that such men as the Titan youth they killed have a potential value as great as their own."

Another voice chimed in. "Then why is it refused recognition? If they are intelligent, then why do they act so detrimentally? It must occur to them soon, or it will be too late."

"Unless they are all mad," said the first speaker. "The sane unit of such a project will see that the basic unit right is inherent to their own success, and realize that destroying those rights will wreck their own plans. The only thing it can be is the explanation a Titan growth technicon offered—that some rodite have been detrimentally charged by disintegrant coil leaks . . ."

I could not help breaking into the conversation.

"That is right! The thing has been explained to me that way; as a detrimental hypnosis in which the ego—or self-will—the self-recognition of the mind centers confuses its self-originated impulses with the exterior-originated

detrimental impulses to destroy. Such a condition is called dero, <sup>(17)</sup> or detrimental energy robotism. The thing is simple enough, but I cannot understand how it could happen here in Tean City, where perfection in romantics is so old. Such an occurrence is guarded against by many battle ro, by great organic battery brains raised for just that purpose. How could it happen?"

The two Titans looked at me and shook their heads. They knew as little as I how it could be.

"Well, it couldn't, but it did!" Arl said with feminine logic, and taking me by the arm, led the way to a rollat. In a moment we were speeding away from the dangerous area. Beside me Arl relaxed with a sigh, and I felt her trembling with reaction.

I put an arm around her. "Brave girl," I whispered.

We were soon nearing Arl's apartment, and looking down at her fresh, young face, I felt a wave of worry pass through me.

"I wish we were under that new sun right now; on those fresh-born planets of life with clean new coordinating mechanisms under rodite we ourselves selected and could therefore trust. I fear that the migration has been too long delayed—the old sun's disintegrant pressure upon the unseen base of our life is now too great for anything else to happen than what happened tonight. Can we help to strive against this immense err, deep-seated in the control minds about us as it must be; or must we flee at once, before they make impossible our flight, thinking of it has a danger of tale bearing?"

(17) Pressed for a more complete explanation, Mr. Shaver has defined 'dero' for us:

"Long ago it happened that certain (underground) cities were abandoned and into those cities stole many mild mortals to live, at first, they were normal people, though on a lower intelligence plane; and ignorant due to lack of proper education. It was inevitable that certain inhabitants of the culture forests lose themselves and escape proper development; and some of them are of faulty development. But due to their improper handling of the life-force and ray apparatus in the abandoned cities, these apparatus became harmful in effect. They simply did not realize that the ray filters of the ray mechanisms must be changed and much of the conductive metal renewed regularly. If such renewals are not made, the apparatus collects in itself—in its metal—a disintegrant particle which gradually turns its beneficial qualities into strangely harmful ones.

"These ignorant people learned to play with these things, but not to renew them; so gradually they were mentally impregnated with the persistently disintegrative particles. This habituates the creature's mind, its mental movements, to being overwhelmed by detrimental, evil force flows which in time produce a creature whose every reaction in thought is dominated by a detrimental will. So it is that these...

But Arl's lips were on mine as the rollat slowed before her home, an effective quietus to my dangerous words, and my mind no longer dwelt on the fear—nor imagined the embrace of a six-armed giant Sybyl female or the crushing coils of a snake woman about me!—for it was too busy recording the ecstatic sensations of the intense vital charge the faun-legged girl threw into her embrace. My mind gave up its worry in Arl's soft contact.

The next day I entered the classroom and found it empty. I went to the incubation laboratory and found several other early students standing there in silent consternation, the fear welling up almost to openness in their eyes. The Titan was not present, nor were any of his attendants. Some of the embryos were dead, others half-smothered; because no attendant had turned on the filtered, enriched air tanks which kept their nutrient fluid supply aerated. I started toward them, but a young son of a Titan stopped me.

"I turned them on," he said in low, evenly-measured tones.

"Where is the Titan?" I asked.

"No one knows," was the answer I got from all.

Other students came in now, among them Arl. She came to my side, but remained silent, troubled.

We waited a short time. Then a student called tutor center, to inquire. He turned to us with a peculiar look in his eyes.

"They say he is ill!"

(continued from footnote 17) wild people, living in the same rooms with degenerating force generators, in time become dero, which is short for detrimental energy robot.

"When this process has gone on long enough, a race of dero is produced whose every thought movement is concluded with the decision to kill. They will instantly kill or torture anyone whom they contact unless they are extremely familiar with them and fear them. That is why they do not instantly kill each other—because, being raised together, the part of their brain that functions has learned very early to recognize as friend or heartily to fear the members of their own group. They recognize no other living thing as friend; to a dero all new things are enemy.

"To define: A dero is a man who responds mentally to dis impulse more readily than to his own impulses. When a dero has used old, defective apparatus full of dis particle accumulations, they become so degenerate that they are able to think only when a machine is operating and they are using it; otherwise they are idiot. When they reach this stage, they are known as 'ray' (A Lemurian word not to be confused with ray as it is used in English.) Translated, ray means 'dangerous or detrimental energy animal.' Ray is also used to mean a soldier—one of those who handles beam weapons (note how the ancient meaning has come into our modern word)."—Ed.

“Ill?” The exclaimed question burst from all of us. In Atlan this was startling. Illness is almost unheard of; a rarity existent only on the space frontiers where new varieties of germs were sometimes troublesome.

The news brought Arl close to me, her silky-furred tail trembling as shudders shook her slim body. “Mutan, I am afraid,” she whispered.

Her fear transmitted itself to me, and the thought came into my mind that this room was not safe. The same thought obviously had come to the others, because our movement toward the exit was as though by mutual accord. There was obviously some awful connection between the black deaths and the Titan’s strange non-appearance. Yesterday the Titan had said a guard ray was on while he spoke to us so gravely of the fear—Had that guard ray been no guard at all? Had those evil rodite penetrated the guard ray, heard his words, known the Titan as a menace to their plan?

The class was dismissed—this time by fear!

And somehow, I knew that the thought in my mind was in the mind of all. We had the same knowledge the Titan had. We were in the same danger. We were marked for disappearance, illness, or the black death! We must flee, now or never!

Proof of the thoughts of the others came almost instantly. As we trooped in assumed light-heartedness down the tunnel toward the rollat ways one, of the accompanying youths proposed a picnic in the forest to celebrate the unexpected holiday. He said it loudly in a gay voice, and the others chorused their delighted approval, a delight that Arl and I feigned too. All fell in with the project, the unspoken desire to flee the city strong in our breasts, our anticipation of being together among the trees, which subterranean dwellers seldom see, strong too.

I raced ahead with Arl, shouting gaily, “Let me lead you to the elevators.” There was meaning in my voice, and intent in my mind. I was not forgetting my promise to my friend, the control-man.

We reached the shaft that led to Sub Atlan, from which we would take another lift to surface Mu. There, as we shot upward, I whispered the news to the control-man. “The terror is loose in Tean City,” I concluded. “Escape as soon as you can. If at all possible, beg off from another descent and be away. There is great danger for all whom they suspect are aware of them.”

He retained a straight face, but I could see the concern in his eyes, and the determination to make good his escape also.

As we lolled in apparent ease on the soft sod of the culture forest, the traditional empty glass made its appearance in the circle. No one spoke of it, but its significant reminder of death’s clutch was a constant thing in my mind. Never had fear and death been a part of my thought before; but that

empty goblet with its sweetly spiraling stem uppermost was no longer just tradition, but now had a meaning almost immense. What to do to avoid that damnable mechanical play of detrimental force from the mind of some unknown rodite, staring through the view plates of his defective, detrimentally hypnotic mechanism, seeking to destroy the best first? <sup>(18)</sup> If they thought we were escaping they would seek us out and snatch us back.

I sat and mused. "Simple magnetics; yet such mighty minds as the Atlans fall before it. We must be clever. . ." I went on thinking of it; but again, recurred the regret of last night. If only the migration had taken place a few years ago! But perhaps it had been so planned; and delayed? Delayed by the black death which had thus far struck so secretly and silently. The plan of the rodite must be near completion or their secrecy would have been maintained.

And then, as I sat there, an idea presented itself. I knew a way to escape, and I spoke quickly before my thoughts were clear enough for any unseen listener to read

"Let us all charter a space ship and take a look at Mother Mu from above! There is no greater thrill than that to cap the day!"

As one we leaped to our feet. I knew then that our thoughts had been very similar; I had only been the first to express the next step in spoken words.

"We will have to take a shuttle ship first," said a young Titan quickly. "Come, I know the way."

(18) Just as lightning strikes the highest point, so does detrimental force seek the most active and the healthiest fruit first—they are most attractive. The detrimental is only a film over an integrative ion which is attracted first to the most integrant bodies near. This holds true in thought movements also—thus a dero strikes at the best first. —Ed.

## CHAPTER IV ESCAPE INTO SPACE

**A**CCUSTOMED as I had become to variform life, we presented a strange, almost fearsome appearing company to my eyes as we made our way toward the shuttle ship station. There was young Halftan, of Venusian blood, long-legged, web-footed and fingered, his eyes huge and faceted; his mate, a girl of Mu except that some forebear had given the line four arms, probably under the stimulus of mutation rays because the family pursuit of making instruments was one where twice the number of fingers could well be used; Horton, a young fellow of mixed bloods, older than the

rest of us, quiet, but long-eared and sharp-nosed—a listening fox; his girl, a thin, gray, transparent-skinned maid of Mars, fragile and lovely, her large, leaf-green eyes lighting devoted friendship wherever they rested; two young Titan sisters, their horns just sprouting from under their curls, their great bodies new-budding into womanhood; their two escorts, of the Elder's special creation, large-headed youths of tremendous intelligence, their hands double-length, their necks and shoulders by far stronger than normal to carry their great heads easily, and finally a young Titan male, accompanied by his friend who was a distant cousin of my own Arl and whose sprightly, colorful femininity hinted that Arl's family must be especially noted for their beauty.

Together we made up a company of twelve life-forms of great diversity; and yet all of us citizens of Atlan; citizens apparently on an outing, now bound for a gay adventure to end a holiday's festivities in the supreme thrill, a sightseeing trip into space.

We dared not think of our true purpose; and I knew that at least the two Elder escorts were aware of what had brewed in my mind and would back me up when the time came. We thought only of our coming adventure, and tried to feel the delight of it so that even our emotions would register true to any spying teleray that sought us out to check on our motives.

The shuttle ship we boarded was a small, bullet-shaped plane containing little but a cabin, air-making equipment and a small fuel compartment in the rear. This plane was not a space ship, but only a sort of bullet to be shot from the surface of Mu to the large station ship of great weight which circled in its own orbit, just as the moon circles the earth forever.

To get the shuttle ship on its way gravity was neutralized by an upward beam of semi-penetrative force traveling at light speed which was turned on gradually until the car just floated in its cradle under the effect of the reverse friction to gravity of the force blast passing through the car. <sup>(19)</sup>

When the weight of the car was thus reduced to less than a pound, I turned on the rocket blasts very gradually and traveled up the reverse gravity beam by instrument. In thirty minutes, we were circling the huge station ship as though we were in our turn its satellite just as it was a satellite of

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(19) Mutan Mion explains that gravity is the friction of condensing exd, ex-disintegrance, falling through matter into earth. By using a beam of similarly condensing particles of ex-disintegrance a harmless beam of upward gravity is obtained which can levitate matter slowly or drive it upward at immense speed. All space is filled with the ash from disintegrance of the suns of the universe. This, condensing again into matter, is integrance or gravity. —Ed.

earth. With vernier rocket blasts, about the size of toy pistol explosions, the nearly weightless plane approached a landing. Above us spread the world we had just left, making an imposing sight as we settled into a cradle atop the space station.

When we stepped from the shuttle ship at the edge of the oval landing area, we saw several globe-bodied moon-men bustling about their own type of shuttle plane, a long, wingless splinter constructed of a very fragile and glass-like substance. Although I feared to think upon it, the moon was my next destination. One thing that all of us knew was that we never intended to return to earth. The blackened face of that son of the Titans, the noblest blood in Tean City, as he lay dying on the dance floor rose before me to tell me flight was not only best, but the only course for us.

In spite of myself my eyes roved over the black dome of space, searching for the lights that might indicate a pursuing craft. It seemed almost impossible that we were fooling the mad rodite and their spying telepath rays. In spite of all self-imposed mental guards, my mind seemed intent on shrieking "Escape! Escape!" through every possible loophole in my concentration.

I engaged the gnome-like moon-men in conversation in an attempt to still further blanket my turbulent mind. Arl caught my eye and wagged her tail in cheerful encouragement, seeming to divine what was on my mind. How expressive that beautiful tail of hers was; how much it could say; and with no dangerous thought waves to betray its meaning to those who must not receive on their sensitive instruments. With that tail, no language, no thought-transference was needed!

But even if pursuit developed, I had one trick up my sleeve. I dared not think of it, or some watching rodite informer might advise any pursuers of my plans and a way to circumvent them would be devised.

It struck me that not all of the rodite might know of recent conditions and developments in Tean City. Nothing had been announced on the television news. Thus, while we were escaping, others ought to know the truth, and certainly not all the rodite were dis-infected. They would not report what they read in my mind, and the rodite who knew would not attach special significance to others who knew; and the very fact that it was thought about in an unguarded way might cause them to dismiss us as of immediate danger, and thus blanket our intent to escape.

I thought of the dance, of the sudden striking of the black death on the dance floor, of my puzzlement as to what it might mean. I thought of the disappearance of our tutor technicon, wondered if he too were murdered. Any sub-rodite, getting a register of my thoughts, would certainly ponder the meaning of the unbelievable existence in center Mu of murder; murder

whose actuality he could not doubt, because it would come to him as the unguarded and therefore true thought of a ro such as I was.

In double-quick time, still acting out our enthusiasm for an unexpected holiday, we chartered a fast space ship for an hour's time. An attendant led us to a cradle on the landing stage; and we entered the ship gaily.

The speedster rose slowly up the lifter beam under my control and when it was clear of the station ship, I sent it hurtling outward.

When we were well out of sight of the station ship and picking up speed toward the moon, I gave up thinking of our trip as a sight-seeing outing which was to proceed only a little way into space and then return, but began to think of the moon as our destination, meanwhile setting the autopilot destination needle on Venus. Then I pulled the throttle back to full on.

If what we had heard of the black death were true, it might well be that no space ships were allowed to leave the vicinity of Mu at all. Just the mere fact that we were hurtling straight away might have placed even more suspicion on our purpose if we maintained our original thought-fabrication. With the moon now our revealed destination, our true purpose was still veiled.

I switched on the electrically magnifying scope screen to the rear to look for possible pursuit. The scope had a screen of microscopic photo-cells which turned the tiniest light ray into an electrical impulse which was greatly augmented by vacuum tubes and the resulting impulse made a much larger cell on a view plate glow strongly, giving a vivid image in half-tone.

Far behind us a craft sped along. Was it in pursuit? I watched it for long minutes, but there was no way of telling. It maintained its distance and its course. In a very short time, their instruments could check our course, and if they were pursuing us, they would be unable to correlate it with my mental image of the moon as our destination; and they would be after us instantly. If they were merely harmless travelers to Venus, there would be no questioning of our own course.

I gave them time to check us with instruments, then I set the course pointer on Mercury, a planet almost never visited, and watched closely. The strange craft veered.

"They are on our trail," I said. The words broke a silence that had become almost intense.

Arl's cousin looked shocked. "Then we can't escape," she said. "They have a mechanical advantage over us."

One of the big-heads was eyeing me shrewdly "You have a plan," he said. It was a plain statement of fact, not a question. It was as though he did not ask what was my plan, but expected me to put one into operation now that the crucial moment had come.

"Yes," I agreed. "Now is the time to play my one card. I hope that it will be an ace."

"We have not asked nor even wondered about your plan once we observed that you had one," said the other big-head. "But now the time for secrecy is at an end. It is unnecessary. If we cannot escape, our intent to do so will be useless to hide; if we can escape, our intent will not need to be hidden."

"True enough. And I will be more than glad to relieve my mind of the strain of withholding what is in it," I said. "I am but a ro youth, and the task has been hard."

"But one that you have done well," observed the young Titan gravely.

I accepted the compliment with a thrill of pride. Praise from a Titan was something to which I was not accustomed—indeed, old Artan Gro had many times given me exactly the opposite.

"It is a matter of mechanics," I explained. "And the one thing I will be forced to blank out of your mind as I do it. I warn you all not to think on the matter when you see it performed. As to my plan of escape—I have an even greater one. I will explain fully in a very short while—we will go to one of the sunless Elder stations on a cold planet. The nearest of these is Quanto, on the very rim of this solar system."

"A good choice," approved the big-heads. "But one that rouses our curiosity in your 'mechanical trick' to a high pitch. Obviously, you know that Quanto is seventeen and one-third billion miles away."<sup>(20)</sup>

I could almost read their minds. "Yes. Weeks away at the speed of this ship—and we have no food."

Even Arl's tail stopped wagging at that—but only momentarily. In her eyes I read that confidence I knew she had in me; a confidence that she herself felt was justified.

"Your plan!" she reminded me. "Now we know you have a definite one, for if you are aware of the fact that we have no food you must also be aware of a way to reach Quanto without it."

"Such great faith must be well placed," murmured one of the Titan maids. "I, too, can have no fear now that you have a plan."

I proceeded now about the thing I had in mind, taking care not to think of what I was doing, but think, rather of the appearance of my hands as they worked, of the movements of my knuckles, of the muscles that caused those movements, of the nerves that carried the message to the muscles. . . .

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(20) Mutan Mion says this is the eleventh and last planet of the solar system. The tenth (and yet undiscovered, though predicted by astronomers) is two billion miles beyond Pluto, which is itself nearly four billion miles from the sun. —Ed.

It was a good thing for me now that I had listened so worshipfully to space pilots when I was younger; some of their adventures were going to stand me in good use. Autopilot mechanisms on these space ships were adjusted to a fool-proof speed, so that no speed-mad citizen could wreck a shipload of people. There was a stiff spring on the throttle, just a little stronger than a man's arm, which held the fuel flow to a safe maximum.

I found the case of the auto pilot locked and the key was naturally not aboard the ship, but kept by the attendant back at the satellite ship. But I found a way around that. I took the belts from several of my companions in spite of their puzzled faces and fastened them into one strong line. One end went around the throttle bar and with another I took a turn around a seat arm.

A dozen strong Atlan arms pulled the belt line taut at my bidding, and I took in all the slack at the seat arm. Back came the throttle bar. The acceleration of the ship spilled them all in a heap at the rear, but I held fast to the line and the bar stayed back.

Now our safety depended on whether the pursuing crew knew this simple trick—for many of the pleasure craft, which our pursuer plainly was, were as well powered as the police craft, although their autopilots restricted them to a much lower speed. If the pursuing craft's pilot did not think of adding other men's power to the strength of his own hand on the throttle bar, he would never overtake me. Even police craft were set to less than maximum motive power, as the tubes burned out too quickly at full blast.

I watched the dark speck on the rear screen anxiously and slowly it grew smaller and smaller. When it had vanished, the youthful Titan pounded me on the back until my ears rang and my knees buckled.

"You're a sly fellow, and your whole plan of escape is right. It's high time we ran away from the black death. I've worried and waited for it to strike me long enough. The Elder station on the cold planet are the best natured men you can find in space. Haven't been near a sun in centuries, and don't know the meaning of the word evil!"

He turned to the others and continued speaking eagerly. "They'll take us in, give us entrance cards to any government in space. . . Personally I would choose some civilization that warms its cities with its own fires, and shuns all suns entirely. I've had enough worry waiting for Atlan's rulers to get wise to the danger and move. I want no more of these sun-bitten zany deros around me!"

The gray Martian maid spoke, her sensitive green eyes shining with admiration, her voice the slow singing speech of Mars

"The best thing you did was not to tell us what you had in mind, for someone would have read our minds as surely as Venus loves us. We have lived in

dread and indecision for many moons. The black death has struck day after day and no official word of it. No one can tell who is dead; there is no way to tell if anything is being done about the danger or not, for anyone who made the slightest effort to do so disappeared at once just as our loved teacher did. We all know that he was not ill; and we also all know that the day he made that announcement to us he had signed his own death warrant—but he had evidently decided he must, as no one else seemed to move. It has been terrible, and if you had planned this flight with us, we would never have gotten away. We have been very lucky to get this far. Now, if you will take my advice, you will go at once far beyond any influence from Mother Mu's rodite, under another space-group of planets, and there we will learn how to live where such things as the black death do not exist."

The smile she bestowed on me was Martian magic.

It must have been the look on my face that prevented any further remarks by my companions, and caused them to look at me in new curiosity. If so, my next words fanned the flame of that curiosity.

"I spoke of a greater plan, a few moments ago," I said. "And I am afraid it does not call for such conclusions as you two have made. I am sorry, but neither of you have given me any advice that I like, as sound as it may seem."

"Speak on," prodded one of the big-heads, his eyes alight with interest.

I checked our course briefly to make sure we were headed for Quanto correctly before I answered him. Then I made myself comfortable in a cushioned seat and faced them.

"What is it that we have been fleeing?" I asked.

"Basically, an aging sun," said the young Titan reflectively. "The black death is merely a result of detrimental action on certain rodite who have become dero and even ray. We have fled from them, but the real cause of our flight is the sun."

"Do we flee as cowards, deserting our comrades?" I asked softly. "Or do we flee only that we may be able to make a new plan to take the place of the one that has been interrupted by the rodite dero?"

There was a wry smile on the face of the big-head. "The day has come," he said, "when I have seen a ro put a Titan to shame! Of course, Mutan, we do not flee for cowardice, but to gain time and life to put up a fight. It is only that we have not thought it out as you have, nor has inspiration as yet given us such a plan."

"Then listen to mine," I said, "Just as it is with you, my first thoughts at realization of the fear that lay in Tean City were those of escape to a place where there was no fear. It is a natural reaction, especially if that possibility suddenly presents itself.

“Let us analyze the fear. First, the top unit of the force behind the black death must be a man in a very strong position, to stall off the whole migration as has obviously been done, and to control things so that no news leaks out about the terror that is otherwise so plain for many to see. So high and powerful must this man be that to fight against him on Mu itself must be to invite certain defeat. Perhaps even if we were to muster all clean-minded Atlans to the battle, we could meet only the same frustration as the migration plan has suffered—for is it not true that all Atlans who are aware of the danger of the sun’s evil have made utmost effort to bring about the migration?”

“True enough,” said a Titan maid. “No Titan has been unaware of the danger, and lately, even such ro as you have been brought into the plan. Perhaps it is fitting that the salvation of that plan come from the mind of a ro.”

“Then here is the only salvation I can see,” I said. “We must go to the Elders of Quanto. Through them we must contact the mightiest of the Titans and from them get advice and assistance. This thing may well become a space war before we are through—and as I see it, it must be so, or all the Atlans of Mu will be lost!”

I looked at Arl, to see if she listened, and she wagged her tail roguishly. Not only was she listening; she was thinking in tempo with me. At my glance her voice chimed in, doing things to my spine.

“Yes, and we ourselves must devote ourselves to the task, and go to a place where the growth rate is unlimited by law, so that we can become more equal to the job. It will take great power to displace the mad rodite. On Quanto we must find some mighty and old and wise technicon to go along and assure us of a hearing; otherwise the power will not be given us. We need the very mightiest power the Elders of space can give us to save the people of Mu.”

“If you but wag that tail of yours at them, Arl, they will give it to us!” I laughed because I could see in all those around me the same conviction and devotion to my plan that was in her. The youthful company laughed too. “Of that there can be no doubt,” they agreed, whereupon Arl swished her tail before them and pirouetted about on her clicking hooves.

In that instant the fear was gone from our minds. Instead we were filled with gaiety and hope, and great determination to do all that lay in our power to end all fear.

We circled Mercury, straightening out on a direct path for Quanto, constantly accelerating until it was unnecessary to explain why lack of food did not worry me. The young Titan remarked: “We will be at Quanto within twenty-four hours. Already our speed is approaching that of light.”<sup>(21)</sup>

On Quanto, we knew, a group of Elder technicians from sunless Nor, a group of sunless planets 0.16 light years away, had lately established an observatory for the study of our planetary system. <sup>(22)</sup> It was these Elders I wished to contact in my effort to enlist aid for our cause.

Our trip to Quanto consumed slightly over twenty-four hours, the hunger of which we could easily endure; and on the landing station we switched to a shuttle ship.

As we settled into the cradles of the great cavern's entrance on tiny Quanto, liquid air glistened over the view panes. The ship rocked as the cradle connected with its conveyor and was drawn by it into the cave through air locks. At last we were in the home of the kindly men from sunless Nor!

I leaned back with a sigh of thankfulness, feeling that I had saved at least some of the good life seed of ancient Atlan from the madness that was overtaking all of its races under the aging sun. To save still more would be a colossal effort; but as Arl's arms drew about my shoulders, I knew that such effort was worthwhile.

The purpose of life was plainer now. Such beauty and tenderness did not live in words or in paintings. Only in understanding and caring for the life seed, the bearers of future race growth, could a man find the true meaning of life. And in the mighty job that lay ahead in enlisting aid for the saving of our people from the black death of the mad rodite I knew I would become a man or die.

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(21) Mutan Mion, apparently, holds no brief for the 'limit velocity' of light; or that the speed of light is the ultimate speed. According to Mr. Shaver's letters on the subject: "Light speed is due to 'escape velocity' on the sun, which is not large. This speed is a constant to our measurement because the friction of exd, which fills all space, holds down any increase unless there is more impetus. The escape velocity of light from a vaster sun than ours is higher, but once again exd slows the light speed down to its constant by friction, so that when it reaches the vicinity of our sun, no appreciable difference is to be noted. A body can travel at many times the exd constant, under additional impetus, such as rocket explosions. A ship whose weight is reduced to a very little by reverse gravity beam can attain a great speed with a very small rocket. Once beyond the limits of matter, gravity ceases and the ship becomes weightless. Speeds over that of exd constant must be under constant impetus, for the friction slows them down quickly again, especially so in the case of solids. Sound, as an example, travels through air at a constant speed—and yet the impetus is obviously different in each case! The only conclusion is that the air itself is the governing factor in the speed of sound, which always remains appreciably the same. So it is with light. Both depend for their velocity on an initial impetus.

(continued from footnote 21) Both remain constant because below a certain speed, friction disappears.”

Your editors have been constantly amazed at the interchangeability of Mr. Shaver's (Mutan Mion's?) physical phenomena, or rather, their adaptability to one great physical law which we have as yet hardly begun to comprehend in its entirety. However, at this point a brief definition might aid the reader in understanding many things he has already read and will read in the following pages.

Matter in all the cosmos is constantly disintegrating and integrating. There is the natural parallel as to whether the hen or the egg came first—did the integration come first, or the disintegration? But that is the one and only unanswerable question in the whole theory. Exd is the ash (matter so finely divided as to become energy rather than matter) of disintegrating suns. It spreads out and fills all space. Then, perhaps because of the presence of an actual bit of matter (as in the case of the salt grain in the salt solution that commences precipitation which does not end until all the salt is once more in its original form), or under the influence of a magnetic field which draws the exd together, integration commences and the exd once more becomes matter. This fall of exd and its condensation is what causes gravity. When Newton was hit on the head by an apple, it was by an apple that was pushed down upon his head, rather than pulled down; since gravity is the friction caused by the fall through matter already existent of condensing exd. Obviously, a condensation is a falling together of a finely divided element into a grosser state.

There are many finer points, staggering in their implications, concerning this theory which are not necessary to the reader's understanding of this manuscript; but they are being prepared in a monograph which is to be submitted to scientific circles. —Ed. (22) Quanto lies beyond the jurisdiction of Mu's government, which holds sway over all the planets of the solar system except this tiny world. Quanto is on the rim of Nor influence and is used by them as an observation station. Because of its small size, it is unimportant to the government of Mu. —Ed.

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## CHAPTER V THE PRINCESS VANUE

**W**E FOUND the typical welcome that all the great ones accord to visitors. Our party was courteously received by the attendants, and we were directed to the administrative offices with swift efficiency.

For me, this first visit to a world people by other than Atlans or Titans was one of the most interesting of my life; but I did not find it half as exciting as my first glimpse of Tean City had been. The men from sunless Nor were

of an amazing blondness, for no light but of their own making had ever struck their skins. Their size, as did that of Titans and Atlans, varied with their age and with the age of the parent. Thus, a son of a man of a hundred years age would be three times the size of a son of a man of thirty. <sup>(23)</sup>

Further, the race from Nor, who are called Nortans, are a straight race of men. There had been no intermingling of races of other forms, not because it was forbidden, but because their technicons had not made the variform technique of breeding available to the public and without it all such intercourse is sterile. Perhaps they are right, although I see much beauty in variforms—especially in my own lovely and completely desirable Arl with her beautiful, expressive furry tail and her dainty, clicking hooves; certainly, their race is beautiful and vital enough to please anyone.

All about the city of the Nortans it was evidenced by many wholly unfamiliar devices that the science of Nor had forged ahead of our own; and as I looked about, I knew why. Here was none of the fear that had pervaded Tean City; nor was there any of the sun-poison to be a detriment to constructive thinking in even the slight degree that evidently has long deterred the technicons of Mu from full scientific advancement.

The thought of the fear brought the need for haste once more home to me as we walked through the city toward the administrative buildings. It was better to continue our flight than to remain long even here, I knew. So, to improve time, I kept running over in my mind the desperate plight of center Mu; the delaying of the migration to a newborn sun; the fear of pursuit that was still with us; for I knew that in that administrative building toward which we were headed, some watchful Elder of Nor was most certainly taking thought record of our minds, to see if there were harm in us.

So, when we reached our destination, it instantly became evident that we would have little explaining left to do. And at the same time, another thing

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(23) Proportionately this would not be true. A man of a hundred considering he did not stop growing at the usual age, would certainly not be three times as large as at thirty. A baby doubles its weight in six months, doubles it again in eighteen. Thus, the rate decreases in proportion to total mass, although the actual poundage increase is the same for a similar period of time. Later, however, this poundage begins to lessen until maturity is reached, where growth ceases altogether. In the time of Mutan Mion, however, growth was a constant thing, ended only by death. And the rate of growth could even be increased, if desired. This is what Arl was referring to when she mentioned that it would be necessary to "grow" to be able better to perform their mission. The reader will see the methods of this stimulated growth demonstrated further on in this manuscript. —Ed.

became evident to me that filled me with terror. Fear, again, in the one place where I had thought I would not find it!

A young lady of the snow skinned Nortan race glided toward me, her hand outstretched in greeting, her voice a soft bell of welcome for all of us.

“We have read your thoughts and understand what brings you here. Follow me now to the Princess Vanue, chief Elder, for an oral check; and forget your fear, for soon you will be going to where fear is not. Your message spells danger to us, as well as to your poor, helpless fellows in Mu.”<sup>(24)</sup>

It had been the words “Princess Vanue, chief Elder” that had struck a new kind of fear into me. The chief Elders had been described to me in Tean City. They are the oldest of the race, and are given official power, according to the value of their achievements to the race. They are of both sexes, and have learned all there is to know of the secrets of growth; how to manufacture their own life-supporting essences, nutrients and beneficial vibrants. And on their ability to improve upon the standard nutrients of the people often depends their success. Thus, when a simple ro like myself comes near one of these Elders, his will becomes their will automatically; for it is overcome by the great, all-pervading force of the life within them. One hardly notices this when the Elder is of the same sex, but when that life force is of the opposite sex the attraction is so great as to be irresistible. So true is this that seldom is a ro of one sex allowed too near an Elder of the opposite sex; for never again would the poor ro free himself of love for the Elder.

My spirit trembled when I knew the Elder to which we were being taken was a woman; a woman who for unknown centuries had absorbed all the essences of growth-promoting substances. And too, Nor was a place where growth science must be far, far ahead of our own sun-baked sciencon’s achievements. Never would I be able to free myself of the spell that woman-force would cast upon me!

I looked desperately at Arl’s sweet face. Never again would I love her if this thing were true. In Arl’s eyes I read the same fear, and I know then that she surely loved me and I was torn by the approaching loss. However, I dimly understood that it must be necessary—for no man near an Elder woman can deny her the truth of love for her.

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(24) The Nortans, as did the Atlans and Titans, spoke the universal language of space; a language originated by a Titan Elder of the far past. The name of the language is Mantong. The original individual language of each race has fallen into disuse as the three races have intermingled through all space. This is the same language of which the alphabetical key was published in the January 1944 issue of *Amazing Stories*, and also as an appendix to this book. —Ed.

We left the building and presently were ascending a long, transparent boarding tube into the side of a space liner that lay like a sleeping monster in the launching cradles. This was one ship that could land directly on a planet! But then, Quanto was small. We passed through a series of airlocks, reached the inside of the ship.

It was a long way into the center of the ship. As we progressed, I noted that all the ro who passed were maidens; beautiful white Nor maidens with glittering white-yellow hair that floated about their heads in a cloud, so fine was it that it was air-borne.

Soon I became aware of an aura of complementary forces that I knew came from the Nor Chief Elder, Vanue, whom we were undoubtedly now nearing. Her force scent grew stronger as we approached a mighty door set across a corridor. In glowing letters of hammered metal above this door was the legend:

VANUE  
Elder Princess Of Van Of Nor  
Chief Of Nor On Quanto

The great door, I discovered, was an airlock; to hold in the ionized and nutrient-saturated air of the chamber. These chambers the Elders seldom leave, since all evil is restrained from entering.

As we passed through the lock, the terrific stimulation of this conductive electrified medium seized us in a mighty ecstasy. We were drawn as by a powerful magnet toward a huge figure which was an intense concentration of all the vitally stimulating qualities that make beauty the sought-for thing that it is.

Within me I could feel the compass of my being swinging toward its new center of attraction. I was no longer myself. I was a part of that mighty being before me. My thought was her thought; I was her ro until she chose to release me.

*Could* she release me? I could not even wish it, nor ever would. Within me I knew that, and I felt no resentment, no regret—only joy.

All of eighty feet tall she must have been. She towered over our heads as she arose to greet us, a vast cloud of the glittering hair of the Nor women floating about her head, the sex aura a visible iridescence flashing about her form.

I yearned toward that vast beauty which was not hidden, for in Nor it is considered impolite to conceal the body greatly, being an offense against art and friendship to take beauty out of life. I was impelled madly toward

her until I fell on my knees before her, my hands outstretched to touch the gleaming, ultra-living flesh of her feet.

Beside me the other youths from center Mu were in the same condition of ecstatic desire.

As our hands touched her flesh, a terrific charge of body electric flowed into us. We fell face downward in unbearable pleasure on the floor.

She picked us up one by one and placed us on the desk before her. Waist-high now were our burning eyes. She bent to meet our gaze; and the mighty beauty of the eyes of the Elder princess of Nor flashed a question into our minds. As one man we chorused:

“Yes, it is true! Evil has the upper hand in center Mu; in Tean City itself!”

It was then that I realized how far ahead of Mother Mu’s Titan and Atlan technicons were the Nortans and, I supposed, all other great ones of the dark worlds. For Vanue wasted no more time on us, but bending toward the banks of instruments before her throne, pulled a lever and through all the ship was heard the warning signal of departure. As if they were my own, I knew her thoughts! Quanto was to be evacuated.

The Nortans were certainly not the sun-spoiled sleepyheads our own race had proved to be. She understood the awful danger that could threaten a planet’s multitudes under the thumb of the dero madness.

At her willed command we all ran to seats that circled the throne. They were mounted on acceleration absorbers. The grand hand pressed the bar that lifted the now weightless ship up the force beam flowing out of the cavern.

Even through the thick walls of the ship we heard the huge airlocks scream shut behind us. Then we were out in space headed toward Nor, the vast cold planet where this Elder Goddess’ daughter had been born centuries before. I realized that our precipitate departure was sure evidence that our news had meant much more than nothing to Vanue. She had enough Elder God sense in her to know that flight was imperative. There were misgivings in my breast as I wondered if any Atlan Elders or rodite had knowledge of mighty Vanue’s presence in Quanto. It might make a great difference if they did!

As the acceleration lessened toward the midpoint of our takeoff, freeing us from our seats, the whelming voice of the great woman-being swept us.

“You children will remain with me until your future is settled. I will thus be sure that you are fully rewarded for bringing us such vital information.”

The soft, singing voice of the gray maid from Mars questioned her, and in its notes was gray also.

“Will you . . . can you . . . then give us back the love of our dear ones, which has cleaved to you?” There was a powerful pleading in her voice that penetrated even through the blanketing ecstasy that held me.



We were drawn as by a powerful magnet toward a huge figure.

Infinite tenderness and compassion seemed to flow from the eyes of the great one.

“There is a way to do that,” the master voice answered; and she bent swiftly toward the Mars maid, her great eyes flashing a strange thought I could not wholly read; a tender woman-language into the eyes of the Mars maid.

That simple Martian magic had made another friend, this time a great one indeed.

It was a strange passage. Most of it seemed more a dream than reality. Such things as the tremendous gait we built up—far more than light speed—and the great distances we traveled were the realities, but I barely noticed them. More real was the unreality of the thin, lovely forms of the Nor maids moving about their mighty princess, the soft fires of their floating hair like seedling flames from the vast fire of Vanue’s god-life crowned by its floating cloud of yellow; our own eyes burning like the spotted wings of moths against the screen of her will; the sad faces of our own maids beside us, gazing first at the fierce white flame of her body and then at our own bemused selves; the vaulting of the vast ship walls about us; the unfamiliar instruments blinking and whirring.

It was a very real dream to me—a dream I knew I would never stop dreaming. Strange passage. . . Ever the whisper of the feet of the Nor maids on some swift errand; the soft rumble of the voice of their living Goddess and the answering bright song of her worshipping maidens. Yes, it was a strange passage, and every mile of it brought home a fascinating realization.

I had embarked on the most amazing voyage of my whole life. The very thought of what now certainly lay before me was enough to stun my mind into an apathy of thinking that was hard to overcome; yet my mind was so full of excitement that it did strive to think, to add to the realization of what the future would hold. A new life was at hand; opening to wonders that staggered me to think of them—and awed me into all-engulfing reverence.

To live to become what this Nor princess had become; to have the love of people as she had the love of these Nor maids—that is the real dream. I knew that I must gain the key to the door of a way of living that would lead to the full value of the Nortan life.

So it was, sitting in the thrall of that too-strong beauty of woman-life, we noted so little. How much time passed? I will never know. It was as if all body functions ceased, as though food and drink were not needed—as long as we were in the presence of Vanue of Nor. But I did know that she was in continual communication with the planet Nor over the space telescreens. Face after face appeared before her, murmured briefly and intensely, and vanished; only to be replaced by others. I knew vaguely that she was calling

for a conference on the strength of our information; and sensed also that we would attend that conference at her side.

The thought dawned on me slowly. Here was an honor few ro ever attain in the first century of their growth. By old Mother Mu! To see those Elders of Nor, the whole lot of them, male and female, all at once. . . ! That would be more than one could well stand. An overpowering, devastating ecstasy. . .

Well, it would be an interesting death.<sup>(25)</sup>

(25) This reference to death from mere association with the Elders is singularly intriguing. According to Mr. Shaver, the Titans, Atlans and Nortans had the ability to bestow beneficial forces upon less favored mortals, such as Mutan Mion (a ro), and also radiated a perpetual flow of life energy which was beyond their control to cut off from any ro who visited them. Hence, the animal magnetism of Vanue was such as to cause Mutan Mion's whole being to be drawn to her body with a force so great that it superseded any other love he might have had. Her attraction commanded all of his maleness, his ability and capacity for love of the opposite sex.

Now we find him referring to the possibility of dying from too much of this animal magnetism. Obviously in his mind a superstition has been built up which has enhanced his imagination of the effects of meeting the Elders in a great group. He refers to meeting the Elders as being "a great honor" for ro less than a century old. Therefore, we can discount his belief that it will be fatal to him; because it is sometimes done to ro younger than a century as an "honor" and without fatal result. The truly interesting factor here is when we consider Mr. Shaver's constant insistence that dark space is full of Titans, Atlans and Nor-tans, and that they do not visit our world because it is plagued by the sun's poisonous radioactives and is a cause of death. They shun their ancient home, Mu. We, says Shaver, are a quarantined people under an evil sun. We have no value to them. In their language we are errant (detrimental energy animals: E—energy; R—dangerous dis force; AN—animal; T—force of growth. Literally errants are animals whose force of growth is directed by a dangerous dis energy and is therefore evil). Can we assume that he is incorrect in his assumption that these super beings never visit the earth, and that such instances as the biblical references to angels, Christ, and other things are actual records of such visits? Perhaps it is significant that the reference to these things always seem to include effusion of an energy of some sort; i.e. the radiance of the angel who drove Adam and Eve from the Garden; the brilliant light that blinded Saul as he rode to destroy Christians; the radiance amidst which Elija, and Christ himself, ascended into Heaven; the light that came from the burning bush and the voice that spoke to Abraham. —Ed.

CHAPTER VI  
CONCLAVE OF THE ELDERS

I NEVER knew how much time the voyage consumed; but it seemed very soon that the great vessel floated down the landing beam into the white and yawning face of a landing area on a station satellite of Nor while I and the other youths dreamed on almost oblivious in the quarters of Vanue.

Still in that dazed dream of love we followed among her maidens into the tubes and aboard the special shuttle ship awaiting her, and shot off to Nor looming not far away. We did not pause on Nor's dark surface, but descended into the depths of a great cave toward the council place somewhere in center Nor.

I had thought in the past that the Titans were mighty of thought and size—but what I saw now eclipsed anything I had ever heard of the glories of our own races. Big and vital as was Vanue, she was but a little child among the tremendous Nortan Elders and Gods.

There are no words to describe what the development of unchecked growth in man brings forth. These ancient Nortans, who had studied and purified all the source-substances of growth and combined them into an endless variety of nutrients which they introduced into their bodies by many means—borne in electric flows; on penetrative sound waves; by injections; by direct feeding—had been growing at a fierce rate for unknown centuries. Their inner beings had evolved in various ways, so that they were evidently of a more complex atomic and molecular construction than ordinary flesh. There is no way to describe the qualities of thought, of inner strength of spirit seen on their faces and in the aura that is always about such beings.

We trooped after Vanue as she entered the vast reaches of the council cavern and took her throne by the side of her father, a mighty bulk of man-flesh but only a lesser luminary in that gathering.

Before the council came to the business at hand we were treated to a brief prelude of entertainment—psychologically a reward for the effort of coming to the council. It was a prelude to music and dancing, a review of the best talent of the planet, calculated to bring the minds of the council into harmony on the subject of the welfare and glory of the race. Entertainment, yes; but the amusements of Elder Gods are nothing to pass over.

What it all meant was beyond me; I was aware only of the awful beauty and tremendously fecund strength of the dancers—bred and fed by wizard technicians of growth; trained to express meaning and emotion of a kind too vast for ro to grasp. They danced in a vortex of conductive rays

which carried their thought and body essence, augmented by apparatus, to each watcher.

The climax was the appearance of the greatest beauty of the planet—a sorceress of the art of entertainment named Hypaytee—who wore on her head a device which caused a vast augmentation of the thought images of her mind to play about her body in a tremendous revelation of the infinitely developed soul of woman. I had loved woman—but never before had I understood even vaguely what development did to the greatest value of life. The rewards this woman could give a man by the use of her mind alone, coupled as it was to that mighty, sinuous dancer's body expressing all the things that draw men to women, brought the concourse of Elders to their feet in an earth-shaking applause and a mighty vow to care for the race that produced her. This thought was also projected from the control rays which took root in every heart. It came to me, too: and I was a Nor-man now, no matter what I had been before!

Then Vanue's thought flashed out, setting the thought cloud <sup>(26)</sup> areas into coruscation with an alarm, a command to attention. I was brought out of my daze to see my own thought record projected in the thought clouds. I saw once again, as real as the first time I had seen it, the fear on the faces of the six-armed Sybyl of the Info screens; the striking of the black death at the dance; the hideous fear on the faces of the dancers; Arl's sweet face contorted in a scream.

A thought-record from the brain of each of our group from Tean City followed. It was evidence enough, thus gathered together, that evil had the upper hand in Mu.

My own efforts to conceal my thought as I planned our escape and the trick of the belts on the throttle that had resulted in our success finished the record display.

I was mightily surprised to hear applause and a great thunder of voices calling for me—Mutan Mion of Atlan. They called for me, the stupid artist! Those vast voices from hundreds of ancient beings, some of them three hundred feet in height!

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(26) Three dimensional pictures were formed by projection of the image into a mass of gases held by electric pressure in a cloud whose particles glowed in various colors according to the mental wavelength of the vibration field in which they floated. Ordinarily the cloud is opaque white, and when the thought-picture is projected into it by the Nortan mind, it becomes transparent, except for the particles which form the image in full color. The command for attention causes the whole cloud to change color from milky white to flaming red.—Ed.

Vanue held me out in her two hands for all to see. And as I became the center of their attention, my embarrassment exceeded any emotion of a similar nature I had ever had. If I had known that they would think of an escape from such a condition as so much of a feat it is probable, I would never have tried it. I would have been hopeless of success from the very inception of the fool-hardy thought.

I was put down again, my face red, my thoughts flustered, my embarrassment a flood of discomfort in me—but a discomfort that held within it a strange glow of humility that was at the same time a glow of pride. I was proud with a just pride; and I felt somehow that it was not my own pride, but the pride of Vanue, whose utter slave I had become. Vanue, Elder of Van of Nor, was proud of her ro!

The actual conference of the Godheads took place now in thought projections in the thought-cloud area. I saw that any thought, no matter how abstract, could be projected in these clouds by thought augmentors. <sup>(27)</sup> They used an image language instead of words, and their talk was to me but

(27) In a letter from Mr. Shaver, this reference to augmentors is explained in great detail. Says Mr. Shaver: “I refer you to a picture printed in many high school books of ancient history. It is from the ‘Book of the Dead’ a copy of which could be obtained in any large library from a book about the ‘Book of the Dead.’ This picture shows a scene which is called a picture of the Gods, and is in two sections. On the lower section the Gods are ‘weighing the souls’ our historians tell us. Actually, it looks like a butcher buying a hybrid hog: half hog and half deer . . . the animal has a line around its middle as though it had been cut apart and sewn together again. It is evidence of the hybrid breeding of animals by the Atlans and Titans of Mu.

“Another picture shows a teacher seated before an instrument, and before the teacher, facing him, is a group of students each holding a smaller instrument. This is an actual pictographic representation of the thought augmentor and the focusing device used to pick up its waves.

“Still another instrument pictured in ancient Egyptian glyphs is the crook the Pharoahs always carry. Notice the bottom end has a clevis—with holes. I have seen such handles protruding from the ancient weapon-beam apparatus. It acts as a beam director, like the stick of an airplane; and if removed would have kept the apparatus from being used by anyone else. Why else the clevis on the bottom? The origin of scepters was this carrying of the control handle to keep others from using the dangerous apparatus while one was gone for a short time.

“Certainly, the use of this apparatus was very general in ancient times among rulers for it gave them control of men’s minds and its use was always secret among them.”—Ed.

a whirlwind of changing forms, faces, geometrical figures, maps of space and figures on orbits and many other things incomprehensible to me and probably to most of the ro present. The powerful minds of the Nortans functioned too rapidly for us to grasp any but the simplest meaning in the ideographs unfolding in the cloud before us. But I did gather that some action was to take place at once to save the Atlans and the Titans of Atlan from the derodite.

Now from the mists of the Elder Gods' highest throne of all came a swift ray that lanced down and touched me delicately. An ecstasy of change came over me. What that ray did to me and told me in the next brief instant I can never say in any words. Then a voice spoke out:

"Mutan Mion of Mu, we have seen the great compassion and love for your fellow man that lives in your breast. We admire such greatness in such a tiny ro; and because of the love of man in you we have decided that it must not go without full satisfaction in deed.

"You came here to gather together an expedition and return to Mu for the rescue of your comrades who are in deadly danger. Never could you carry such a gigantic project as this would require to its successful completion—and yet you have done it; for we of Nor have made a solemn vow to rescue the men of Atlan on Mu and to destroy the derodite who threaten to spread their evil even into dark space.

"However, because of your great desire, we have planned a place for you in this great mission. You shall have your part in it; and you shall have another duty which is worthy of your capacity for compassion. We, the Nortans, have seen in your mind a vision of the far future—of a time on Mu when men shall be slaves of the degenerate sun around which it circles; of a time when they will be but mentally deficient savages living out a life span compressed to an irreducible minimum by radioactives. This may be a true vision, in part or in whole—for we may not succeed entirely in our mission. We may even fail!

"Therefore, we give to you the task of preparing a message, in great duplication, to these pitiful men of the future—so that there may be some hope that those among them who have the mental power to fight against their cruel environment may make their lives in some measure complete. This message will be left on Mu, and in it, in many places for future man to find."

The voice ceased. The conference was over.

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CHAPTER VII  
A WEDDING ON NOR

AS WE passed from the misty vastness of the council cavern, Vanue turned to us of Atlan, trooping behind her, and said in a serious voice. "It is law among Nortans that no service to the race goes unrewarded. Now there are certain things I plan for you which I cannot give you legally except you swear to serve me always as my loyal followers. Is there anything to keep you from that?" Her eyes searched us one by one.

The Mars maid answered, her eyes shining:

"There is only our oath to the state of Atlan, and the present evil conditions render that oath void."

Vanue went on: "I am only a young Elder; you might do better than to follow me—my fortune in the future is not wholly assured. You might do better!"

"You have honored us, Vanue," said the Mars maid. "You have let us see your mind at work; we know there is no evil in you. That your fortune should be our fortune is enough for me. You have said you will give the love of our men back to us, and though I don't understand how you will or can, I know you will."

One by one we swore loyalty to Vanue before all other greater beings.

Then Vanue looked at her Nor maids and said with a strange innuendo that made them laugh with delight and anticipation: "Now we must send them to school—in pairs!" The laughter of the gold-topped lilies of Nor rang merrily.

What sort of a school was this, I wondered, to make them laugh so?

The tubes took Vanue's train to the doors of her own cavern palace. Huge air locks swung open to admit the whole procession into the under parts of the palace. When we stepped out into the special air of her home that tremendous acceleration of the life processes that I had noted in her chambers in the space liner again seized us—and life became a thing to really fear to lose.

But as yet I had no inkling of what lay before me in the mystery of the wisdom that had built that place to house their first borne, Elder Princess Vanue, daughter of the Elder Gods of Nor.

Flinging off her wraps, which she had worn to the council chamber because of their significance, Vanue said: "We will put the children in school, and then to our own work. We have much to do to make ready and the time is short."

"School" turned out to be a vast laboratory—a replica on a much mightier scale of our own Titan technicon's laboratory school where Arl and

I had learned to know each other and the possibilities of life. Instead of embryos, the nutrient tanks contained six-foot ro and even much larger men and women.

Taking Arl and me in her hands she placed us in one of the big tanks. The liquids were warm and comforting and we splashed about playfully while others of our Atlan group were also being placed in pairs in tanks like our own.

Then Vanue's maids swarmed about us, placing wires about our arms, our wrists, our hands and feet; fastening breathing cups over our mouths; thrusting needles into our veins and attaching them to the ends of thin tubes; placing caps of metal with many wires connected to generators and other machines on our heads; covering our eyes with strangely wired plates of crystal.

I heard the tank cover sealed and more fluid gushed in until we were completely submerged. We floated in suspension within the tanks.

Then began a strange thing; for our minds, Arl's and mine, were conscious of each other through the medium of the interrelated wiring and the plates over our eyes—an awareness that must have been augmented a thousand times. Her breath was my breath, her thoughts took place in my head stronger than Vanue's ever had, and the woman-soul of her was so augmented in my mind as to eclipse all other woman's appeal that my memory had ever recorded.

A strange little voice (it must have been Vanue's speaking over a telethought instrument) whispered beside me: "You will never escape Arl now. You are her slave forever." And as I listened, I knew that Vanue spoke the truth.

Arl's face, laughing before me in the eye plates, became larger and larger, entered my brain, became the wellspring of my being. I heard Arl's thought, a vast river of force flowing in my mind, saying: "Where I go, there will you go also. The thing that is my desire is growing in you. My roots are your soul. You are my desire and the slave of my desire!"

And I heard my own thought make answer in Arl's mind: "So it shall be, always, oh maiden of the clicking hooves and swift hands, of the beautiful tail, of the clean will and strong desire!" And I knew that what I said was true.

The fluids and forces that were pulsing through us made these things grow within our beings, so that centuries of loving contact were replaced by minutes of furious growth; and we fell asleep, strangely within each other our thoughts, growing and becoming an integrant part of our being. Through every fiber of my body I could feel fecund growth swelling and expanding, patterned by thoughts which were mine and yet not mine. In my ears strange sounds beat mysterious meanings which were forces taking



...more fluid gushed in until we were completely submerged.

root within me. My memory was a vast garden of new thoughts growing as my mind grew, and remembering all the principles that came over the wires from the Elder Gods' own thought record.

Always overhead I could feel the Nor maids watching my mind pictures and correcting the growth memory so that everything took its rightful place. And within me I could hear Arl, sleeping and growing too, and she was very dear.

The thing that was me slept as a babe sleeps in the womb, and the seeds of the Gods' thoughts took root in Arl and me and grew. We were at once children asleep in the womb of the God mother, and man and wife wrapped in each other's adoring arms. Time flowed by like water; and we slept but were more awake and alive than ever before, and felt the pleasure of each the other's body and soul appeal, the very inner essence of man-life and woman-appeal to man. Life pulsed from each of us into the other constantly. We had more pleasure of each other in the growth school tank than ever I have known of in any pleasure.

Among the things that became a part of my knowledge was the promise of the future in such tanks as this: Sometime Arl and I were to build such a tank and apparatus and take a long sleep in it and awake as Gods, full of the strength and the beauty and the pleasure of life and life's fulfillment.

So it was that Arl and I were married by an actual mingling of the seeds of our being, and not by any foolish ceremony; blessed by the actual love of Vanue, now our Lady, and not by any meaningless words.

Though we were in the growth tank less than a week, we came out inches bigger in every way; but the real growth that had taken place was an inner growth—for I was vastly heavier and my strength was aware of new limits.

Mentally, too, I was vastly more able; for when I looked about at the apparatus, I knew the inner construction and use of every bit of it, and I knew that from then on, few things would mystify me other than the work of the very oldest Gods.

I found that I had not lost my love for Vanue, but that I loved her now as one loves and is grateful to a leader. My love for Arl was the strongest thing in me. <sup>(28)</sup>

All of us found out now that Vanue was not the most foolish of the Elders of Nor, despite her comparative youth, but was looked up to everywhere as one whose star was in the ascendant. Her followers were more numerous than many much more prominent Elders.

Arl and I spent several days together in our love, and in seeing the wonders of Nor's civilization. Here was a vast series of underground cities, all heated and bathed in beneficial energies artificially created. No need for a

sun's light to live. No danger of dis-integratives from a dangerous sun poisoning the soil and water of the planet, to cause slow death by age.

Then one day Vanue called me to her.

"I speak now of the mission the Elders of the council granted to you in the conference chamber. As you remember, your part in the coming task is two-fold. In one phase of this you will accompany us to act with us in the great war that must be fought. We have developed a plan in which your help as an advance and secret agent is necessary. You will be told more about that later, when we have embarked.

"Now, however, your other mission begins, here on Nor. It is the mission of love for your fellow men. No matter how successful we are in rescuing the men of Atlan, it cannot be that we will rescue all of them. Many must not be rescued! There is nothing we could do for them, poisoned as they are to the point of death. Nor must we allow any of this poison to escape to the dark

(28) The "school" of growth to which Mutan Mion and Arl and their companions went for their growth in both body and mind is the concrete manifestation in apparatus of the science of man growth as conceived by the three ancient god-races. It was based on simple laws of the integration of matter. These simple laws are being set forth in a scientific monograph by Mr. Shaver and your editor, who firmly believe that its publication will throw a bombshell into all of present-day physics and chemistry. Naturally they cannot be dealt with in complete form here, but a slight explanation of what was done to Mutan Mion seems necessary. Part of this explanation is in the words of Mr. Shaver:

Growth is an inflow of exd. Life itself is a flame of integration, which like a fire must be fed or it goes out. Exd is the fuel of that flame, and by its condensation into matter, adds to the flame, causing growth. Naturally this growth is a material growth. What the Nortans did was to concentrate the flow of exd so as to feed the flame of life at a greater rate, and thus cause greater growth. A technical simile might be drawn: a fire, when supplied with finely divided carbon and a larger supply of oxygen becomes a greater, fiercer thing. It is the same with life. When supplied with a greater quantity of exd, it grows, becomes stronger, more active.

The mechanical means is very similar to the magnetic field lenses used in electron microscopes, which direct and focus a flow of particles called electrons into a beam more revealing than light because its particles are smaller. This same magnetic field principle can be used to focus exd and thus hasten integration. A magnetic field, lens-shaped, could focus falling exd by attunement just as a radio collects certain waves. This attunement can be determined by constructing a coil in the same shape as the coils of the electron microscope—but much larger. The focus can be determined by its light focus, which would be the same. A plant, placed beneath...

worlds where it can infect others. Too, the dero influence is dangerous, and madness must not spread over the universe.

“Thus, it has been given to you to inscribe on imperishable plates of telonion, our eternal metal, a message to future man which will be placed on and in Mu so that those who have the intelligence to find and read it may benefit by the truths of growth and defense against a too-soon death by age.

“After the passing of Atlan science from Mu, men will begin to die at the same age, and their sons will all be the same size at the same age. This will be caused by accumulations of sun-poison in the water of Mu, which will stop all growth in mankind at almost the very beginning of their development. They will scarcely get beyond childhood before they will begin to die.

“These plates you will inscribe will contain a message that is a key and a path to the door that will open life value to these future men, whose fate we

(continued from footnote 28) this point of focus, perks up its leaves, reaches out, is invigorated, exudes a dew, in a short time is twice the size it would ordinarily have been.

Once there was a book called the “T” book (“T” for integration, for growth force, energy, etc.) which was in rather widespread use up to the time of Christ. It contained the elemental frames of logic and simple what-to-dos like the age-poison elimination, beneficial generators, and so on. But some group feared its influence and it was destroyed, so completely that only the memory of that once infallible book remains, which memory was the father of the Bible and all its veneration, including the cross on its cover, the “T” sign.

The direct need for a greater future for man is strengthening of the general mind by T forces, the growth of a better brain. No progress is truly progress unless man grows a better brain to grow a better brain. That is the pattern of progress—to grow a growth to grow, etc. What man needs is a conscious aim toward growth. To learn how to grow into a man better able to grow into a wiser man is a goal followed by but a few men out of all the number who could be striving in that direction. The great ones called such a goal ‘TIC’ and any energy not directed toward that goal was called ‘ERR.’ Alexis Carrel says much the same thing in ‘Man, the Unknown.’ He is one of the few men on earth whose efforts are not err to self-interest. That is, he aims to understand his life process and make it last longer. True self interest is seen in his efforts, as in few others. These others think of self-interest as an oppositional of other self-interests—which is a de illusion (Atlan for disillusion), for oppositional neutralize. True self interest would therefore always be a coincident, not an oppositional.

Our most basic concepts have become err from disintegrant force distortion of thought flows over the long period of time since we were children of the Gods of the past. —Ed.

know and pity, but cannot prevent. We can only teach them what we know that will enable them to get the most out of their life on Mu. The dero will not be able to read, and thus will die as they should. Those whose minds are powerful enough to escape complete dero-robotism will read and profit.

“You can tell them how to attain this life growth by freeing their food and water intake of all the poisons that will be found in it in the natural state. The age poisons can be removed by centrifuge and by still; their air can be made a nutrient by proper treatment and freed of all its detrimental ions by field sweeps of electric. The exd on which the basic integration of life feeds can be concentrated (just as it was in your body in the growth school tank) in energy flows which greatly increase the rate of growth and the solidity and weight of the flesh.

“Tell future man to do these things, Mutan Mion, and their reward will be great. You have seen what the reward of such effort can be—in thousands of years of life’s fullness—even on a planet under a detrimental sun. We cannot save those men yet unborn. We can only leave for them the heritage that is rightfully theirs, the heritage of our sciencon knowledge. And you, Mutan, in your infinite love and pity for your fellow men, shall perform this task with all the energy that your love makes possible!”

I left the presence of mighty Vanue, marveling at the understanding of the Elders and Gods of Nor. No wonder that their race is so great. To me, the humble artist of Sub Atlan, had been given a great mission; one that thrilled me to my depths. I hurried to Arl to tell her all about it.

“The wonder of it!” I exclaimed, having repeated what Vanue had told me, “In my hands—the simple-awkward, unskilled artist’s hands of Mutan Mion, culture man of Mu—has been placed the hope of future man! To me is given the honor to preserve for men yet unborn the knowledge of their heritage of life!”

Arl held me to her, and her eyes were shining. “Yes, I understand,” she said.

“There is more!” I went on. “The Nortans set out soon to rescue many thousands of Atlans and Titans and their variform offspring from the threat of death by a dying sun’s radioactives, and from the black death of the derodite; but I, Mutan Mion, am to be the rescuer of untold numbers of future men down through the history of Mu, until the very planet is dead! Think of it. . .”

Arl kissed me tenderly. “Go, Mutan, and busy yourself with the beginning of the message. You have but little time, and I think you should begin by putting down the story of Mu—our story! —and thus give body to the message to future man. Perhaps he will not even remember Atlantis! Nor Tean City, nor all the other vast cities of center Mu. Perhaps he will not even

remember that there ever was such a being as an Atlan or a Titan or a Nortan. It will be your duty to tell him that, too, my loved one. For how can he believe and hope if he has no knowledge of the truth of life?"

"Most certainly must I tell them of *you!*" I exclaimed. "Never in all Time was there such a woman!"

And kissing her again, I hurried off to the sciencon laboratories to gather the materials necessary to begin scribing my imperishable plates of telonium with the message of hope to Lemurians unborn.

For many days I worked, putting down the truths and the knowledge to overcome the poison of age to the fullest possible extent, as it is now done in Tean City and all Mu; and the means to full life growth. I told the story of our flight from Mu, and much of the history of Mu. I told of the Titans and the Atlans who live throughout all dark space; who are searching ever for new suns. I told of the Nortans; who do not believe in living near any sun, old or new.

I brought my message up to date—and barely in time. For when I had finished Arl came to me.

"Vanue's ship leaves for Mu in a few hours," she said. "You must be ready."

At that moment it hit me—these were my last hours with my loved Arl until I returned from the war in Mu; if ever I returned. Now for the first time since reaching Nor I knew sorrow. But Arl saw what was in my mind, and her words brought joy back to me.

"I am to go along, as operator of one of the telescreens on our own ship," she announced happily.

I should have known that my loyal Arl would never consent to remaining behind while I went into danger!

"Your life is my life," she was whispering as she snuggled in my arms. "Where you go, there also will I go. Your soul's nearness is my desire."

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## CHAPTER VIII

### RETURN TO MU

**I**T HAD been but a short month since our arrival on Nor. Many had been the preparations, most of them unknown to me. Only now as I went to the launching cradles did I see the full extent of those preparations. I found a fleet of mighty space vessels lifting from the frozen face of Nor, leaving to gather at a rendezvous in space.

Vanue's own vast vessel was not the least among the fleet, nor I and Arl the last aboard. On her viewscreens we watched countless other ships lifting

on reverse gravity beams with what seemed to be almost utter ponderance, until they reached a point in space where they could take up normal flight. New-built ships these were, wonderful in their engineering and armament.

We watched, also, many Nortans, mostly Nor war-maidens and Nor war-ro, embark on our own ship. Vanue herself was already aboard, together with several other Elders of minor stature. They brought with them vast quantities of material of unguessable use. Observing it I understood that their purpose was not wholly to save the people of my race from their sad plight, but to nip in the bud the growing power of Evil forces so near their own stead in space. That they were wholly confident of their ability to do this, I knew, but I knew also of the mighty armaments and endless warrens of the Atlan armies. I had seen their tremendous vessels maneuvering around Mu on the viewscreens and the news teles. I hoped the Nortans were not overconfident.

But as we proceeded into space toward Mu at greater speed. I found that I did not really know the Nortans. I had underestimated them. They understood concept, and I came to realize that concept had become a frozen thing on Mu by comparison. The Nortans used the truth, for it was the right conceptual attack. Evil has no concept; it is a mad robot to detrimental force. When Evil has power and men must obey or die, then only is it to be feared. But sometimes men fight for Evil unknowingly.

As we passed an Atlan space station a Nortan ship would land and presently take off again, followed by all the ships of the station. They had just told them the truth. The Nortans had an ancient reputation that forbade any doubt of their words. It was as simple, and as powerful, as that.

This went on so often, that as we neared Mu the Atlan fleet with us was nearly as large as our own. The truth can be a mighty friend and these space warriors knew the Nor-men and trusted them.

So impressed was I by the ships of this vast battle fleet that I was tempted to go to my quarters and describe them as part of my message to future man; but I abandoned the idea. I reasoned that if my message were a needful one when it was found, its finders would have little use for, or need of, such technical information as the construction of space weapons.

Perhaps when they learned again to fight the aging power of the sun and the evil her disintegrant force can bring to life, they could again learn such other things as they would need by searching space for friendly peoples. There was an idea—I would put down the information necessary to direct such a search. It would be a simple thing—for the great ones would never be found near or under the rays of a sun as old as this one will be by then. Aging suns would always be a space horror to be shunned by all men. Only the

action of the derodite on Mu had kept our own Atlans so long under its rays. Only on or near dark worlds and new suns would the great ones be found.

It was while I stood at Arl's side watching still more Atlan ships join us that a thought came to me.

"How can the Nortans so quickly trust the ships of the Atlans as to allow a number of them near their own fleet?

"Silly," chided Arl, flirting her tail at my question, "they don't trust them. It is not a question of trust. They just place a very large female Elder aboard each ship as it joins our fleet and there is no further question of trust or obedience. Supposedly she goes aboard 'to advise the commander as to our plans and to interpret our ways to him,' but you know the real reason—"

"Of course!" I interrupted her with a rueful grin. "I should certainly understand from my own recent experience with Vanue!"

Atlan warriors are all male. Those commanders and their men would be unable to do anything else but obey, with complete loyalty. They could not do otherwise, for they could not find the will or wish to do it. Not even the commanders of space ships are Elders by any means. Under the spell of that vast woman-life, they would be helpless to her will in their ecstatic love for her.

There were maneuvers as we neared Mu, but I saw little of them. Most of the time I was busy with my telonion plates, inscribing further knowledge or duplicating them so that they might be deposited in Mu in many places.

Another job I had which took up much of my attention was the task of making thought-record from the heads of men in Atlan vessels nearby, in an attempt to learn what had happened in Mu since our flight. They knew little, for the telenews had evidently been as uncommunicative of Atlans' true troubles as before. Some whispers they had picked up, but nothing of great value.

I kept on, but it was of little use. They knew just enough to make them ready to join us, but no more. There was nothing that would help us in the coming battle. All we knew was that we were on route to war upon an enemy who was undeniably powerful, but whose identity we would have no way of knowing—until he struck first! And that first blow might be a terrible one. . .

Noting some agitation in the ship I was watching, I focused on the commander's quarters just in time to hear the last of a general message from surface Atlan:

"—and since we hold the population under our war rays; and since the safety of that very population we know to be your objective; let me warn you that the very first sign of an attack on your part will be the signal for a general slaughter of the people on our part. They are only in our way anyway. You may kill us in time, but you will never attain your objective!"

The horrible import of the message stung me into inactivity for a moment, then I recovered and with haste swung my ray to hear Vanue's reaction to this problem-posing message. What would she reply? Or had she a reply to this development? Death for the very people we had come to save rested in her hands. . .

Then came Vanue's voice; and it held a world of bafflement in it, a note of defeat that opened my eyes wide in disbelief.

"Return to Nor," was what she said!

Return to Nor! Abandon our mission? No! It could not be. There must be a ruse in Vanue's mind. Vanue was not the kind to give up, even though the odds seemed great. Then what—

Vanue's voice in my mind said a single word: "Come."

I switched off my thought recorder ray and bounded down the corridor toward the great doors of hammered metal, a wild joy in my heart that at last she had need of me, and that certainly this was a ruse.

Even before I reached the great doors, I knew one thing: Vanue's ship was not retreating toward Nor as the others seemed to be. Under cover of the swarm of retreating ships, our own vessel had slipped into the moon's shadow as we passed her and had come to a halt hanging there invisibly in the moon's earth lee.

Once I arrived before that vast flame of beauty I sank to my knees, but she reached out a great hand and raised me to my feet. From her desk she took a tiny box and showed me its one projection—a tiny stud; a switch.

"Take this and put it in your clothes. It looks like a pocket reading machine, and it will not be noticed with suspicion. In the locks, an Atlan ship and pilot is waiting for you. He has been directed to take you to surface Atlan.

"Once there you will mask your thoughts in any way you please, for I know your ability in that respect. Then go to your old home in Sub Atlan. There turn on your telenews and wait beside it until you hear three clicks from it, repeated at uneven intervals. Then take out this box and press the metal stud full in. It will tell you what to do next. That is all."

I bowed low, kissed her foot's radiant flesh, and ran from her quarters.

The Atlan ship was waiting for me, the pilot ready and silent. He pointed out my old Atlan student's outfit, which was already aboard, and indicated that I was to wear it. I jettisoned my Nortan uniform and in a moment was once more Mutan Mion, life-culture student of center Mu.

When I had completed my transformation, I found that the ship was already rocketing down the regular passenger lane from moon to Mu. The pilot, an Atlan, spoke a few words of explanation and lapsed into silence.

"I am a taxi driver and you're a passenger. Mind that—and luck!"

It was all so simple. I could hardly believe it would work. But it did. The ship settled on the public field. I jostled my way into the tubes, and soon was roaring along toward my home—a student returning from an outing.

I switched on the seat telenews but apparently nothing was happening.

It recited the most inane occurrences: a taxi motor failure had plunged two fares and the driver into the sea, and they had escaped with a ducking; a snake man had caught his tail in a subway door, but would live; our adored chief Elder was having a birthday, may he have many more . . . I switched the telenews off. Anything could happen—and to Atlans nothing out of the way would even be whispered. Of the vast Nor fleet that had been so lately above, not the slightest hint. Great was the control of the derodite in Mu!

Not easy would be the task of the Nortan invaders!

Reaching Sub Atlan, I made my way to my own home, threw my hat at the old place on the hat rack, embraced my mother and kissed the tears from her dear face, slapped Foster Dad on the back and answered his grunted "Where in the whirling world of wool-heads have you been wandering?" with "Just sewing a wild oat. I'll tell you about it at dinner," and bounded up the stairs to my old room where I switched on the telenews and lay upon my bed, carefully masking my thoughts by thinking what tale I would make up to explain my outing to Dad.

Three sharp clicks from the telenews startled me. I had not expected the signal so soon. Vanue must have been watching. I leaped erect, drew the box from my pocket and pressed the switch. A voice came from the box.

"Put this box on your head and put your hat on tightly to keep the box in place. Do not take your hat off for any reason from then on. Go outside and walk around the block. Soon you will notice a strange thing; after which you will get more directions."

I did as directed, promising to return soon when I dashed past my astonished mother and father. I stopped only long enough to retrieve my hat.

Outside a strange drowsiness came over me. It was hard to move. The lights of Sub Atlan flooded the ways, but I ignored them and walked slowly around the block. I noticed the girl at the food tablet stand lolling fast asleep over her open cash drawer. How very careless of her, to sleep so. But then I found the service ro at the rollat stand also deep in slumber; and several of his customers sprawled in slumber on the seats with the doors open, the hood up.

The voice in my hat explained the mystery.

"By now everyone in Sub Atlan but yourself and certain others is asleep. So will you be if you remove your hat and the box, which gives off stimulating vibrants.

“Go at once to the administration center and switch off the auto watch and general attack alarms. Bind the chief Elder and anyone else who seems able to frustrate a landing. Then, when everything seems safe, put a communication beam on our position and guide us in”

The Administration building in Sub Atlan is a great tower which reaches not only to the roof of the cavern that houses Sub Atlan but through that roof and on up to surface Atlan, where it looms as the tallest building on the surface also. Great rollat ways connected the surface building with the sub building.

I activated a rollat at the curb stand, dialed the administration center’s number, and drove the rollat by hand directly into the great hall and up to the doors of the council chamber. As I arrived, I was surprised to see four of my comrades, Atlans from Vanue’s ship, racing into the hall behind me from rollats at the curb.

I nudged the great doors with the rollat bumper. They held. Turning the thing I drove across the hall and came back at full speed, crashing into the great valves and at last they gave. I plunged into the hall, brakes squealing.

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## CHAPTER IX THE ABANDONERO

**I**NSTEAD of finding the old chief Elder and his aides about the room, there was nothing. We raced through the place toward the telemachro center where the rodite mechs of the whole city were supervised by a concentration of screens which controlled them all when necessary. Upon these screens the whole city was watched, and could at any time be wholly robotized in an emergency from this point.<sup>(29)</sup> And here we found them, the controllers of the city; but they were *not* the giant elders I had expected to find. I broke into laughter at the sight of them.

Clothed in rags and dirt, hung all over with hand weapons, their hair long and matted, were the strangest, most disgusting creatures I had ever

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(29) The telemachro center was in itself under outside control, the communications mechanics being ro to the central control which was ro to the master control in its turn. Thus, all the rodite supervising the city could be placed under one master control through the screens in the telemachro center. By this means, the whole city’s inhabitants could be placed under hypnotic condition, even including the rodite themselves. From this it can be seen the telemachro center is a vital spot in the dero control which had been thrown over all Mu. —Ed.

seen in my life. They were dwarfs, some of them white-haired, from the Gods know what hidden hole in Mu's endless warren of caverns.

"What in the name of mother Mu are these things?" I asked Halftan, who had been one of the Atlans arriving immediately behind me, and who now helped me in the task of binding the hideous dwarfs in turn after turn of the heavy drapes from the walls.

"You already know of them," he said. "They come from the abandoned caves and cities of Mu. When the machinery became defective from age, many centuries ago, a vast number of caverns were sealed up. Fugitives hid in them, used the defective pleasure stimulators, <sup>(30)</sup> and as a result, their children were these things.

"They die of age, are stupid, cannot even read or write, but they must have a vicious, cunning leader who has learned to use them. They are called 'abandondero' by the techs, who have captured some of them for study.

(30) Entirely aside from our questioning of Mr. Shaver, we received a letter from him in which he describes the pleasure stimulator mentioned here. Or rather, he describes the sensations concurrent with its use in a very peculiar manner—since his words seem to indicate that he himself went through the experience. Whether or not the following words are those of Mr. Shaver, or of Mutan Mion, your editors have as yet been unable to determine. Certainly, some of them are Mr. Shaver's (which only makes them more startling in their implications) and certainly some of them are not. In either case, they give us something to ponder upon.

"They played stim on me, a powerful augmentation of woman-love; to a hundred powers of natural love. There are no words to describe what this apparatus did for life. There were hundreds of rays about, always pleasant, their messages like conversation as though a thousand Scheherazades were telling tales at once. It augmented every cell impulse to a power untold. It seemed that every tree carried a beautiful face; every breeze was like a bath in elixir; every sensation having the value of a thousand nights of love. Little bells and visions of indescribable beauty mantled my closed lids to waft me into a sleep of dreams beyond anything mortal mind could devise." (*Note the difference between the foregoing paragraph and the following.* —(Ed.)

"These mechs—rays—stim—have been used always as the forbidden fruit of life, the last treasure in the temple of secrecy which has consumed the ancient science. The orgies which the uses of such stimulants inspire have been going on secretly since the earliest times—beneath the temples and in the secret pleasure palaces of the world. (*Shaver here seems to be talking of our modern world, not of ancient Mu.* —Ed.) These orgies still go on, and are more deadly than before—more filled with de accumulated in the apparatus, the stim itself concealing...(continues on next page)

“If you had been in Tean City years ago, you would have heard them talk about on the telenews. The ones shown then were so stupid no one paid any attention. There is nothing so careless as a swelled head, I guess. Those supremely intelligent Elders of ours who should be tending this center will probably be found in ashes in the incinerator!”

His words wiped the laughter from my lips. No laughing matter now, these ugly dwarfs! They were dero, children of dero, enslaved in some manner by the derodite master who sought the death of all Mu! And the very fact of it brought home to me the greatness of the menace we were beginning to fight. For the first time I felt some misgiving as to the outcome.

We finished tying the filthy brutes and then turned our attention to the

...(continued from footnote 30) the deadly rays whose effect is explained as the sad results of overindulgence; which is untrue—the stim is a beneficial of great virtue and leaves one stronger and wiser after use.

“The legend of the sirens is an example of ancient mechs which no one could resist—in the hands of evil degenerates it became a deadly attraction—drawing shiploads of men to death and the ships to looting.

“The course of history, the battles, the decisions of tyrants and kings—was almost invariably decided by interfering control from the caverns and their hidden apparatus. This interference, this use of the apparatus in a prankish, evil, destructive way, is the source of god worship, the thrill of divinity, the sensing of the invisible, the prostration of the will before the stronger will of the ray gen (ridden and unknown as it was)

“The remarkable part of it all is that it still goes on today. Emotional and mental stim—unsuspected by such as you and the average citizen—used in mad prankishness, all come from the ancient apparatus. If you will remember your stage fright in the school play, the many other times when your emotions seem to have gone awry without sufficient reason—were these natural?

“The dero of the caves are the greatest menace to our happiness and progress; the cause of many mad things that happen to us, even so far as murder. Many people know something of it, but they say they do not. They are lying. They fear to be called mad, or to be held up to ridicule. Examine your own memory carefully. You will find many evidences of outside stim, some good, some evil—but mostly evil.”

Mr. Shaver gives this information in all seriousness. In the deserted (and not so completely sealed!) caverns of Mu, the dero descendants of the abandondero still exist, idiotically tampering with our lives by senseless use of the ancient stim mechanisms which actually were created to enhance man’s life and not to plague it, but now are detrimental through an accumulation of radioactives which impair their action. —Ed.

immense central synchronizing screen where a multiplex view of every station in the city could be seen. At each screen slumped the particular wizened dwarf who had been operating it, and who was now fast asleep and secured by our makeshift bonds on his limbs.

We activated the big space communicator, swung the beam toward the approximate position of Vanue's ship, sounded the 'ware' signal.

Instantly Vanue's face appeared on our screens—and we flashed the view beam on each of the bound dwarfs and on the big multiplex screen, showing the sleeping dwarfs who had replaced the original Atlan Elder's rodite. She nodded comprehension, not speaking. Then she switched off her communicator. We waited; it was up to her from now on. Meanwhile it was up to us to hold the fort here in the telemachro center.

"Thank Venus," said Halftan, his eyes aglitter with excitement, "these creatures are stupid, or we would not have overcome them so easily, nor would our job holding out here be as easy. Smarter operators would have managed to flash some signal when they sensed they were going to sleep."

I was inclined to agree that his analysis was correct. But I also added mentally that when no checking signals went out in the next ten minutes, an investigation might be made from Tean City, or wherever the central control was located.

"Do you suppose our enemies never heard of a sleeper ray?" I asked Halftan.

"Did you, before you met Vanue and the Nortans?" countered Halftan. "Besides, these dwarfs are sub-dero, not thinkers! I remember from the old tech report on them in the news. I wondered then why no one made a move to clean them out, but concluded that it was because they could not think coherently enough to be a menace. I realize now, however, that our corrupt big-heads were using them even then by some means that they had discovered."

"I was not talking of these dwarfs," I said. "I am wondering about the rodite and the big-heads themselves."

Halftan's face grew thoughtful, and he began a watchful survey of the multiplex screens with a new tenseness evident in his body.

Both of us saw it coming at the same instant, and a shock of real surprise swept through us. The dark bulk of Vanue's great Nor ship showed on the screens shadowed over the great surface tower of the administration center. The lightless ship had drifted down the communicator beam! What power Vanue must have, not to need the lifter ray for landing! What unknown science to use a communicator beam as a pilot beam!

It hovered for a brief time, then the roar of its great jets became a maddening thing; and the ship lifted again into the night sky. Why had it come, and what had it done? Had it done anything?

Our wonder lasted only a brief time, for soon we saw Vanue coming into the center, dwarfing it, stooping low to clear the ceiling fittings. Swiftly after her came her Nor maids, a hundred or more of them; and a dizzying activity sprang into life about us.

A tender from the Nor ship was lying before the doors of the hall, and in and out we Atlans and Nor maids sped, trundling trucks of apparatus. Once emptied the tender returned to the surface. Under Vanue's eye the dwarfs were unbound and placed in their former positions, while a rodite beam was set up behind each screen. Now they were held in a rodite beam from a Nor maid's mind, the slaves of her augmented will.

The hangings were replaced; the space communicator switched off; even the marks of binding were chafed from the dirt-encrusted wrists of the abandonero. Then we hid. To the view screens all was as before our entrance.

Vanue gave a signal, and somewhere in space the sleep ray switched off. The city came to life. That sleep had not lasted more than thirty minutes. Would the freaks from the lost cavern realize what had happened? On that question depended the lives of millions of people, all over Mu. Vanue had no doubt but that the derodite would carry out their murderous threat to kill the people if we attacked. Well, we had attacked, but in a way Vanue hoped would not be realized.

The telescreen from Tean City began sounding a constant call. The nearest dwarf, a hideous old woman, reached over and threw the circuit open. On the screen was the furious face of a fat Atlan. He was one whom I knew well from his appearance on telenews screens as a high official in construction.

"Where have you been?" he screamed at her. "Don't you know how tough a spot we're in? Your orders are to stay on duty until relieved."

The hag's hoarse voice answered, a groveling fear on her dirty old face.

"We had a lil' trouble. One stray Elder came in with a private key, nearly bumped us all before we did away with him. Everything is all right, else. Nothing to worry about. He didn't know what was doing—been away for a year. He's dead meat man now."

"Might have upset everything," the fat Atlan growled. But he seemed appeased by the news. "The overgrown fools. There aren't many of them left alive in Mu. Let me know at once if anything else turns up."

Behind him, on the rodite screen, before he turned off the beam, we could see a scene of mad revelry. In the background were the tremendous figures of some of the great ones of Atlan writhing in horrible torment while about their bodies crackled the blue flames of some paingening electric. Drunken renegades from Atlan's army reeled across the screen, dragging protesting

girls after them. It was evident that they were celebrating the frustration of the Nor fleet in a manner deemed to be appropriate!

Then the Tean City screen went blank as the beam was switched off, and the old hag, her face a toothless grin at what she also had seen, reached out and broke the contact on the screen.

On the various units of the multiplex screen from the sub-rodite stations of surface Atlan and Sub Atlan cities much the same conversation took place. Each abandonero explained apologetically that he had fallen asleep and begged not to be reported. Each was reproved by the ro at the "plex" control.

We knew that they would never realize that all had fallen asleep. Many even denied their sleep, claiming they had had no signals. All reported everything all right.

"All right indeed!" I could hear mighty Vanue's thought in her furious mind. She waved her hand—and from somewhere in space that big sleep beam went on again.

On the multiplex screen at the center we could see Nor-men entering everywhere, setting up control apparatus without awakening the dwarfs. All over the sleeping city Nor-men were active, setting up hidden controls, ships landing and taking off—the armies of Nor gathering and entering the caverns. . .

Could they do it? Could they take the planet without setting off the alarm which would bring death down on the helpless people? As I looked at the sleeping, hideous things whose forebears had once been men, I felt they could. And when they did, I would not have wanted to be in the shoes of the Atlan or Titan who had trained and turned these things loose on the people of a whole planet! There would be a grim reckoning when the Nor-tans caught him.

"Vanue—Vanue!" called a Nor maid to her mistress.

"I have it! I have been reading the mind of this thing in its sleep. The center of this whole mess is not in Tean City nor any city, but in the abandoned caverns. Some ancient Elder, exiled long ago, returned secretly to Mu and entered those sealed cities. He has been chief of the abandonero for all their life. All their orders come from him. They do everything he says—nothing without his word. If we took the whole planet, we would still have his high and mighty madness to reckon with, together with a horde of these creatures who do his bidding—with Venus herself knows what kind of antique junk to do it. Some of those old war mech builders were not fools, and their methods were lost in wars when they were killed. You know, like the one time we ran into antique war mech on Helbal, when the deros of those old

burrows used that stuff on us. No one knew what it was. We had to blow it all to Hades to get them.”

Vanue picked her up with delight and kissed her. It was becoming increasingly plain to me that this was not the first time these warrior maids had seen action. They worked too smoothly. With the hand weapons and war weapon harness they wore, they were formidable looking Amazons. Their strength was unbelievable, and I knew it came from the inner growth of the incubator which increased the solidity of the flesh. My own period in the incubator had demonstrated that on my own body.

With the new knowledge the Nor maid had picked up, a new plan of action came into being. Vanue relinquished her authority in the telemachro center to one of the many space officers who had been going in and out on errands mysterious to me. Then the hundred Nor maids and ourselves accompanied Vanue to the tender and we were soon flashing skyward up the rollat tunnel and out into space.

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## CHAPTER X INTO THE TUNNELS OF THE DERO

**F**AR out in Mu’s nightshadow lay the silent fleet, dark and still as any lonesome rock drifting through space. We reached it and boarded Vanue’s ship. Once aboard, Vanue called a conference of fleet commanders, but we were excluded from it. Very obviously something very special was being planned that demanded no loopholes for a leak be left open. Not that we would consciously allow such a thing to escape our minds—but after all, we were only so and far below the mental caliber of the Elders.

When Vanue came from the conference, her cheeks were flushed, she was beaming triumphantly, and her aura was pulsing madly. She went immediately into the tech laboratory of the ship and ordered two of the hideous abandondero brought in for examination.

They were placed in a telaug<sup>(31)</sup> and examined exhaustively for details of the lost caverns’ entrances and exits and the location of the renegade Elder’s power plants. Also, we got a more or less clear history of what had been happening on Mu for many years; although the picture was about as clear as mud to the abandondero themselves. They had minds like rabbits—like mean rabbits now suddenly discouraged in their meanness.

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(31) Telaug—a machine which augmented and strengthened telepathic signals so that even the most secret thoughts could be read. —Ed.

For many years, most of their short lives, they had been stealing youths and maidens for torture and tormenting thousands of the Atlans with rays right in the streets.

When any Atlan had tried to do anything about it, it had only resulted in his death by one means or another.

How this idiotic dominance of theirs had been kept a secret for so long a time, while it grew stronger and stronger, was comprehensible only when we understood that the centralizing of all power by the rodite method of government had allowed complete control once the central rodite synchronizer was taken over. It had meant the sudden and complete end of Atlan government without even a suspicion that such a turnover had taken place.

When the center had gone bad no one had known. Even the abandondero couldn't tell us, except that they knew it had been long ago. Little by little, after the important coup, normal Atlans in charge of minor branches of the rodite government had been replaced by abandondero. The secret police had been killed off! By their strangle hold on the telenews centers all knowledge of such deaths and disappearances was kept from the Atlans. By continually checking over people's minds for any who were becoming suspicious, any trouble could be checked before it started.

For Venus knows how long they had been picking off the best brains of Atlan, the very flower of our race; doing them to death day by day, and no one was ever the wiser.

Much of all this we had to guess, for the abandondero actually knew little of the master organization beyond their own vicious experiences; but they knew their ancient warrens well and we could deduce approximately, from the ugly, half-formed images in their minds, where our objectives lay.

With this information in our possession, we went into action. In a very short time, a host of tiny winged planes were dropping silently toward the vast culture forests where the hidden degenerates had made tunnels to the surface to gather fruit.

These planes were sealed-cabin helicopters, equipped for short flights in space by auxiliary gas jets, silent and flareless.

Our primary objectives were certain tunnels which held cables running to Tean City as well as other tunnels which held cables connecting the depths with the surface.

I kissed Arl lingeringly before I stepped into one of the planes and took off for Mu's forest-covered surface and became just one of many dropping motes that looked harmless enough but which carried more might than had ever before been gathered into such compactness.

We landed and made our way into the tunnel nearby. It led down steeply,

and was a very ancient thing once we had gotten beyond the area constructed by the dero. It led soon into vast caverns housing long-abandoned cities.

These ancient ruins in the lost caverns were impressively eerie things. They had been built, I knew, in the early days of Mu, when under the new sun all growth had been furious and undying, with a fecundity scarcely to be imagined in present-day Mu. Most of the people who had once lived here had long ago become too big to stay in Mu; had gone to larger planets under other suns, or to huge, cold, planet-cities that drift in dark space. From what they had left behind I became more and more convinced that Mu's youth was too much in the past to have any more future. The planet should have been abandoned long ago. Just the contemplation of these mighty, long-gone glories in comparison with the lesser marvels of the best of modern Tean City was enough to tell the story to even the most thoughtless of Atlans.

Our lights played over the deserted, awful, death-like glory of the ancient mansions and even the hue of them gave off melancholy. However, to the warro and war maids accompanying me, such thoughts as those were not in order. Instead they kept sharp eyes and minds open for danger. What weapons lay unused in these tremendous fortresses from Mu's wild youth only the oldest of Elders could guess. And which of them might suddenly prove to be manned by warriors of the renegade Elder was something we could not know. But from the portent of their presence we realized that our enemy might be a tougher nut to crack than we dreamed.

As we marched down the silent, dust-laden ways, sleep rays and augmentative detectors of several kinds played miles ahead of us. Now and then we came upon a modern rollat, wrecked against the wall of a building, a dero asleep in its seat. They had crashed because the auto drive would not work here—check rays at corners and building entrances not being activated.

It was not many hours before our communications beams told us that the enemy cables had been cut; and so far as could be determined all dero communication beams had been tapped with false answer equipment and ro placed in attendance. So far, our march into the depths had been accompanied by signal success. Next would come the actual locating of and the attempt to reduce the cavern stronghold of the renegade dero Elder. Rolling behind us as we advanced came an endless line of burden rollats, bearing war rays whose potency was incomprehensible to me. But I could guess from their complex construction that here were things that could loose terror itself. Before many hours I expected to see them go into action, loosing terror upon the author of the fear that had ridden hag-like upon the back of Tean City and all Mu's Atlans for many years.

It was then that I got a shock—for a big carry-all came riding by and in

it, among the warrior maids bearing the crest of Vanue, was Arl . . . lovely, smiling, brave Arl of the cloven hoofs and defiantly flirting tail!

She flashed her teeth at me gaily as though she were on a picnic!

What is there about danger that accentuates the man-life in a man? As that smile played on me, the whole cosmos whirled in my head. I felt even more powerfully than I had in the duo-incubator the sensations of one-ness that existed between us. Comets buzzed in my head and I felt the urge for battle surge up in me; battle to preserve for myself and all others happiness such as was Arl's and mine.

Then, as we skirted a vast city bowl lit vaguely by a kind of marsh light that glimmers in these old warrens, action came! A dis ray raved out at us suddenly from a dark pile in the bowl several miles away. It cut great gashes in our columns before the swift, silent answer from the ray rollats had reduced the whole pile to silence.

Gray dust rose in a cloud over the bowl city as we swarmed into that huge old city-center building; and the horror that we found inside cured me forever of all sun lit planets. These devilish abandondero had a meat market in the lower floors, filled with human flesh; and a pile of choice cuts I saw was composed mainly of Atlan girl breasts! These dero things were cannibals and lived off immortal Atlan flesh!

So much for our illusion of benevolent government! How long had it been composed of hidden, grinning cannibals, the whole of our race unaware of its ultimate fate? I realized now that it takes more than patriotism and fine words over a telescreen from a ro face to make a state a safe place in which to live.

Because of a degenerating sun, all our apparent tremendous scientific advance had been set at naught by a few madmen . . . with these dero creatures eager to do anything the madmen said in return for a little fresh human meat. I saw now the fatal weakness in centralized government. One silent grab at that neck of power lines had resulted in death for the whole cream of the race. The awful power in telaug rodite methods of rule had only served to place the total wealth of the planet in mad criminal hands.

Yes, Halftan is right! There is "nothing so careless as a swelled head." To see sweet Atlan girl breasts displayed as a butcher's merchandise set a fury to raging within me that will not cease so long as de makes dero!

Thousands of the ragged, filthy abandondero lay about the huge building, unconscious from our rays, and we put them rapidly under telaugs to get a complete picture of their strength and the location of their other forces. Once we had gained our information they did not live long! We could not think of them as human things, these slaves to the disintegrant impulse to

destroy that courses through all matter under an aging sun; and perhaps we, too, in this moment of horror, felt within us the effects of the sun poisons.

The children of the abandondero lay about naked or with a few rags draped on them, usually with a human bone they had been gnawing upon or playing with clutched in their hands. Vanue had all of the children gathered up and sent back to the ship "to treat them and use them to people a small planet as an experiment."

"Let that planet be far away!" was my thought.

We had learned from our searching of the minds of the abandondero that the old Exile's stronghold lay far in, nearly at center Mu. Yes, the rot had progressed far in Mother Mu. Always in my mind the most amazing fact of this rot will be the extent of its influence on the pattern of Mu's life-supporting energy flows. This dictating pattern had been so effective that their plight was not known nor hardly whispered of by any of the Atlans. Yet they were slaughtered indiscriminately, sold as meat to the abandondero, and the gods know what else they had put up with for how many years with the sickening realization that to appeal to higher-ups for help would spell death. All these years . . . without managing to make their plight public knowledge!

The telaug records told us that many of the dero had been torturing and tormenting Atlans all their life, and eating them too. Yet the news systems had managed to ignore all such tales, partly from individual fear of consequences, and partly from a dread of being considered mad for harboring such suspicions. There is no cloak for corruption like the average citizen's supreme faith that all is well as long as the paper is delivered, the telenews functions without saying anything alarming, and the dignitaries strut their pompous fronts regularly as upholders of righteousness.

I could see what had made them so supremely blind now. It was the effects from which the migration had been intended to save them. Yes, that migration had been delayed too long by a few centuries, it appeared.

It was another thing for me to stress in my message to future man; to inscribe on my timeless plates of telonion. Those who will people this planet again with children from the seed of the few we will not be able to find and rescue must be warned that there can be no peace nor beauty in life under this sun, except that they build special chambers which exclude detrimental forces as well as the radioactives that cause age.

Just so long as Mother Mu spins under this sun, just so long will her energy fields induct disintegrant charges from her destructive force, and these charges will work out into neutralization of man-matter growth through destructive will in the units of the life pattern. Without extraordinary pre-

cautions these detrimental forces will result in continual war and complete stalling of all real racial, social and individual growth.

If one of future man's really healthy men creates a machine of value to his people, one of the destructive men will take the same machine and destroy that same gain with it. Disintegrant energy must be neutralized by an equal amount of healthy integrant energy. If it is not, this disintegrant energy will work out in continual social troubles, famines, diseases and death—if it does not actually take the form of a war.

This need not be the fate of future man! The life which grows in integrative source material concentrating chambers can be safe, immortal life—but all life outside such chambers will be destructive, if not by actual fierce blows, then by stupid interference and destructive disapproval.

These are the truths I, Mutan Mion, culture-man of Mu, realizing even more forcibly now, must pass on to future man, written on tablets that will be deposited in likely places so that they may be found in some future time. These truths—in addition to a history of the great war I am now observing; a war which wishes to save all future men, but which cannot, because of those lost ones of the forest whom we will never be able to search out—must reach future man!<sup>(32)</sup>

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(32) Judging from the information recorded by Plato, as received from Solon, it would seem that these metal plates so often mentioned by Mutan Mion (which this manuscript definitely states were deposited in many places both inside and upon the surface of this planet) were deposited about 12,000 years ago. Since such vast upheavals of nature as the sinking of Atlantis, the smashing down of the gates of the Pillars of Hercules and thus forming the Mediterranean Sea, have occurred, it would seem that the hiding places of these plates more than likely have been destroyed and rendered impossible of discovery. At least, science has no record of any such plates having been unearthed; nor is there any such record in legend or history beyond the possibility of the plates of the Ten Commandments given (found?) by Moses upon the mount. However, this seems unlikely, since they are described as being of stone, which seems true since they were smashed by Moses in his anger. Apparently, the message over which Mutan Mion labored so mightily has never been found. —Ed.

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CHAPTER XI  
BATTLE TO THE DEATH

**A**T DISTANCES of a hundred miles and more the battle was joined at last. We surrounded the old fire-head, <sup>(33)</sup> ex-Elder Zeit, of Atlan in his center-Mu lair and succeeded in cutting him off without alarming Tean City or any other post so far as we could judge. We knew the dero would not use the destructive machines to kill the people without word from the old master of murder. And they would not get that word; for our ro sat astride all communications.

But the old idiot himself was actively alarmed! Every weapon that one-time Atlan stronghold held was throwing fire and death through every boring we could approach him by. Nor-men died by the thousands (and they are not enamored of death for they have much to live for!) before we finally brought up enough shorter <sup>(34)</sup> ray to ground those tremendous flows of hell-fire from the ancient generators. Zeit's hideout was a super arsenal!

Now our own needle rays concentrated on a single spot in the old fortress' metal walls. That metal, we knew, had been hardened in the past by subjecting it to exd flows of great strength. <sup>(35)</sup> It would resist most rays, but it was just a matter of throwing enough dis at a small enough opening point till the metal began to blaze and flow in a stream.

The opening grew larger, but the defenses of old Zeit were a long way from being pierced. Our own forces were protected both by conductive fans of rays which grounded any ray that threatened us and by flows of energy

(33) The word "fire-head" used here does not mean that Zeit was a hothead, or impetuous, or any other similar modern meaning of the word. It has a deeper significance, denoting his mental condition. For a complete definition the reader is referred to footnote 17. Old Zeit's head, his brain, was infected by the ever-fire of the sun, and the infection was so derogatory to this thinking processes that the only possible result was detrimental thought culminating in murder, the most detrimental of all thoughts. The reader is here requested to note the word "derogatory," an accepted word of our English language, which has as its root the ancient Lemurian word "dero." Note that the ancient meaning has come down unchanged! —Ed.

(34) By the word "shorter" Mutan Mion does not mean the rays brought up were not as long, but that they were capable of "shorting" the energy flows from Zeit's generators. They must have been ionizing rays which served in much the same capacity as lightning rods, grounding the destructive beams hurled at the Nor-men before they were able to strike their target. —Ed.

which were so strong that any ray that struck them was repelled or swept out of existence by the out-massing kinetic of the cone of force. But since these rays coned out at Elder Zeit's dero fortress on a level with its walls, there-was little overhead to protect us. It was an opening for Zeit and he took advantage of it!

From the towers of black metal suddenly sprang whirling comets; electrical vortices packed with howling energy in circular motion, which can be thrown in such a way that their circular motion causes them to describe an arc, for the same reason that a pitched ball curves. These arcing electronic cannonballs curved over our outflung protective wall and, striking our lines, bounced and leaped unpredictably from one point to another, searing everything within a dozen feet of their erratic path.

A few of these would not have mattered, since their behavior was uncontrollable, but they came flaming over by the thousands and set the whole army into confusion, dodging about, trying to guess where the howling, whirling, pausing, leaping things would go next.

Since many of our men had to leave their controls to dodge the rolling fire, their retreat almost became a rout when old Zeit threw a hellishly dense concentration of dis on our protective fields, breaking it down before our remaining men could swing enough counter-force into action to neutralize it, burning down our grounding conductive rays; and boring a huge hole through our center.

As I watched in horror, my mind was unable to gasp this paradoxical truth. How is it that mere mechanisms can so rout intelligent men? The same intelligence built these machines, long ago. Now, seemingly, it confounds that intelligence, seeks to and almost succeeds in destroying its creator.

But our Nor giants had a few tricks left up their sleeves. I suspected that they had not been used because it had been unthinkable that the old devil of a dero Elder could have outreached us. Conductor rays soon dissipated

(35) This principle of "hardening" metal and stone so that they become unbreakable (used to prevent the roofs of the cavern cities from collapsing) has been mentioned several times in this manuscript. It is accomplished by forcing additional exd (which the reader will remember is the ash of disintegrated matter, or more properly, the basic energy from which matter is again integrated) into the substance to be toughened until it reaches a state whose ultimate end would be what we today conceive of as neutronium. By adding more matter, packing it so to speak, into the interstices between the particles of matter, a greater density and therefore a greater cohesiveness is obtained. This cohesiveness is actually the "in-flow" of gravity. —Ed

the charges in the fireballs; an out-massing bank of force ray generators replaced the burned-out breach in our protective fields.

Now our men had time to carefully fine down the focus of our needle rays to a more and more concentrated beam of dis force. Then simultaneously placing all the needles on a predetermined point, usually at the base of the openings where Zeit's deros worked at their ray guns, they beat down the flashing black sweep of Zeit's counter-conductive concentration. . . and his deros died at their controls.

This went on for hours as the dero were replaced by others under the devilish Elder's will—only to be killed again by the dancing, unpredictable needles of death which went through anything when they suddenly all swung to one point.

All the time cutter needles gnawed steadily at the rock roof of the great bowl, directly over the ancient black-walled fortress. Chunks of the super hardened rock rained down. It was tough stuff; tougher than steel. As soon as the artificially hardened surface of the rock was cut away the soft body of the rock above could be cut down in masses huge enough to cover the renegade Elder's hideout completely.

The walls and roof of the metal fort gave out great brazen clangings as the rocks fell from the height.

Still the fiery vortex spheres kept pouring from the black towers in steady streams, only to be caught by repeller beams and flung aside.

Force needles cut doggedly at the tower's sides and one by one they toppled with a great thunder of metal on metal and a fury of blazing-arc force from torn power cables.

Over the whole blazed a fiercely dancing flare of blue and purple flames from the clash of dis rays with the neutralizing fields. It was more and more evident that the end was approaching for the abandondero's feared master! A great exultance was growing in my heart as I foresaw the end which must soon come.

To corroborate my vision of nearing victory, interceptor ro of the falsen-answer communicators sent us a message that Zeit was calling wildly for help.

"Nothing is so pleasant," went the report, "as to sorrowfully tell him that we're unavoidably detained by pressing engagements."

But in my mind now came a darker, sobering thought. It was the thought wave of Vanue, impinging on my brain.

"What will his last effort be?" I heard her muse.

I had caught and repelled a couple of vortice balls on my beam that might have approached her and had been dreaming of what form her reward might take—but now that thought left my mind. If Vanue had reason

to worry of what Zeit might have up his sleeve as a last desperate gamble, I too had reason to be concerned.

I watched the battle with more sober contemplation, peering ever for signs of some final development that might be dangerous.

Then, as I watched for, it came the thing that is always feared in battle; the unseen factor that suddenly upsets all calculation. From somewhere the dero had unearthed a tremendous levitator. <sup>(36)</sup> We ourselves had a few with us to get the heavy stuff over tough going; but this one was a monster, once used in construction. This thing began lifting the masses of rock that had fallen on the fort, lifting them and dropping them from high in the air upon our lines.

Our own lifters were not big enough to handle the tremendous masses that kept dropping on our ranks and smashing the protective force-beam generators. When several of the generators had been crushed, the old devil used the master beam of the old fortress and bored through the openings, burning a path of destruction. Our whole enterprise was endangered—even faced total defeat!

(36) A levitator is a portable lifter beam generator. Some of them are very small, and can be carried in the palm of the hand, or in the pocket. They were in common use for all tasks in Mu, and from Mr. Shaver comes the amazing statement that some of these portable levitators have been found in modern times and their secret use has given rise to the belief in the ability of "mediums" to use levitation of objects as one of their tricks in their seances. Perhaps most noted of these mediums was Mr. Daniel Dunglas Home, wizard, whose seances were the sensation of the United States and of Europe, the incredible recount of which was recently presented in "Magazine Digest." His feats of levitation are indisputable, being vouched for by such persons as Princess Pauline Metternich; Austrian Ambassador, Prince Joachim Murat; Mme. Jauvin d'Attainville. Home was born in Currie, near Edinburgh, on March 20, 1833. Among his abilities was the power to see events happening a great distance away; the ability to "elongate" his body as much as a foot; and at one time he caused Ward Cheney, silk-manufacturing titan, to be lifted three times into the air while he "palpitated from head to foot with contending emotions of fear and joy that choked his utterances." (The reader should note the amazing similarity to many of the mechanisms of ancient Mu—the emotional stim; the levitator; the tele.) It was after he became the darling of such figures as Napoleon III, Eugenie of France, Alexander II of Russia, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning that he developed his "body elongation" trick and a still more sensational one wherein he placed his face among burning coals, bathing it as in water; without any sign of a burn. Is it possible that Home "discovered" his abilities in an ancient cave? —Ed.

I could hear Vanue's mind racing madly, "What to do? What to do?" And because of her confusion and anxiety, I knew how desperate our situation was indeed. Never had so great a fear filled my heart as I watched with staring eyes the havoc old Zeit was causing in our lines with his great super-ray.

As fast as our needle rays found the thing, new dero rushed in, moved it, went on with its deadly work. However, a concentration of conductor rays finally bored through to its base, shorted its vast power down to our size. Now we could handle it!

But our losses had mounted horribly. As I gazed upon the slaughter, I could not help but think that with our superior mental equipment all this should have been avoided. I am afraid there was criticism of our Nortan minds in my thoughts at this moment. . .

Vanue's thought came into strong being in my head, answering my unspoken denunciation.

"Detrimental force has an automatic electric play about it that strangely serves for thought. It is hard, no, impossible, to predict; as our healthy minds neutralize detrimental force, cannot therefore 'think' it. Too, in these conditions, their telaugs read our minds and our own imagination works against us. Healthy men are naturally too optimistic to foresee trouble fully. Then, besides that, no one knew or could know that the old fortress in here was so heavily equipped. Old Zeit nor any of his retainers have been out of the place for nearly a century. He kept the mech secret with very rigid care. People have gone into his fortress, but none have come out. The tunnels that lead down to this place are all too small to bring real war equipment down from the surface. We are really near the center of Mu. And on top of that, we have been a little over-confident, due to the unintelligent appearance of the dero. Who would expect such things to put up a fight?"

Her voice ceased in my mind, and I no longer fostered the thought that all this death could have been prevented. I felt a deep shame for even harboring the thought, and a deep gratitude for the favor she had bestowed on me in explaining so patiently even while she was in the midst of the greatest battle of her whole career. Such honor had never before been bestowed on a simple ro, I was sure.

Now, as I returned to my contemplation of the battle, I saw that our sleeper beams were following our dis rays' openings in Zeit's force shields, but they seemed not to have the desired effect. The old ogre must have had some means to jerk his harried dero awake as fast as they dropped off. Possibly some type of stimulator ray—a clever use for stim, I thought; ordinarily they are for entertainment.

Finally, however, we swept the whole place with a concentration of dis

rays and sleeper beams and the boulder-covered pile of horrors fell silent. A few beams still played from the heap, but they were evidently automatic watch beams with no one awake behind them.

Our own lifters now cleared a path for our rollats to the doors. At last it was time to enter and mop up. As we went forward, I heard Vanue's ever-cautious mind warning me to "Watch out for the devil's joker" as our rollat-mounted rays moved up to the wall's lee and started blasting away at the doors. We rolled over the blazing mass of their remains and were inside. Atlan's leech had been loosened!

The place was three-deep in corpses. Many of them had been Atlan warriors; whether captives driven by Zeit's or his rodite's will or renegades I could not say. They lay at the white-hot projectors, their hands burned free of flesh, the bones still clasping the red-hot controls. Powerful indeed had been Zeit's ro compulsion.

We found the vast mountain of flesh that was ex-Elder Zeit of old Atlan. He was snoring among a mass of synchronizing rodite apparatus as big as a city block. It was both antique and modern in construction, much of it evidently salvaged from ancient ruins. Zeit was a three-hundred-footer, and he was not only big, but amazingly fat from his soft life in his hideout.

It was going to be a real job to get him to the surface alive. It would not be surprising if the soldiers found it necessary to take him apart and reassemble him later on.

The realization that we were going to move him to the surface was a surprise to me, because not to blast him into nothingness the instant we found him had seemed to me to be infinitely more than godlike emotional control in itself. But that the huge and evil head might contain technical secrets of value I realized when I thought of it.

We bound him with endless turns of steel cable, lifted him with a dozen of our levitators, and started him floating along toward the surface. Before he arrived, I'll wager he scraped a few turns in a rather painful manner, and not by accident either!

Other things we found in old Zeit's fortress—things that horrified us. He had had a couple of dozen Elder captives. It is one thing to see a broken man of my size, but to see the living remains of a Goddess Elder broken by torture until she had become a whimpering, cringing, babbling thing to pity did not quiet the rage in my breast, rage that I could see and feel burning in the Nor-men around me.

There were many captives still living, of all sizes, many women and girls—but most of them were in horrible shape from their treatment, and the others nearly insane from waiting for the same torture. I saw the endless

variations on the torture theme old Zeit had devised to amuse himself in the centuries he had spent hiding in this place—as we recorded it on the thought record from his ro’s minds.

I was placed as a guard over some of the antique equipment reserved by Vanue for her research. As I stood there, I could read the thoughts of many of the Elders who passed by after having viewed the gibbering things Zeit had made of Atlan men, women and Elders. I knew that if what they were thinking ever came to pass, Zeit would receive the equivalent of his tortures in Nor before he died—if he were allowed to die!

Now that the battle was over, more important Nor Elders arrived. Vanue’s father was among them, and I heard him speak to a comrade. Vanue stood beside him as he spoke, listening as I did.

“I see that exile for him was a large Atlan mistake. To humble the exalted and to release them to work out their revenge at leisure is to create a devil and give him leave to harm you. These Elders he has been so lavishly entertaining in so terrible a way are the very ones who sat at the council which expelled him. Obviously, they were a bit too gentle with a monster who sold his own people as slaves and got caught at it.”

Vanue turned briefly to me, and once again I discovered how close she kept track of me.

“Zeit’s joker never materialized, Mutan . . . and your reward for diverting the vortice balls will not be forgotten. It is a good religion, the word ‘reward’<sup>(37)</sup> Do not forget it.”

There is a peace about being read by an understanding mind. Vanue would always know my intent toward her. I was her ro, until someday I would graduate into true self-determination. It was enough.

“Tean City still to take,” I was thinking aloud a few minutes later, and suddenly realized that Arl, somewhere in the fortress, operating her tele-screen beam, had been secretly watching me—for her voice sounded in my ear in answer.

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(37) This reference to the word “reward” as a religion is mystifying. and Mr. Shaver has never explained it. However, our thought on it is what might be termed the basis for all religions—the incentive to do good because of the hope of a reward of some kind. This seems the correct view when we consider Vanue’s insistence that a service of good is never left unrewarded. It is logical to believe that loyalty would remain constant so long as the reward always certainly comes as a consequence of each demonstration of that loyalty. If nothing else, Vanue was an excellent psychologist, and a brilliant leader. Also, she protected, as well as rewarded, as her reference to the “joker” demonstrates. —Ed.

"They got wind of what happened some way. Missing messengers, false reports exposed, or something. Anyway, they loaded up some of the finished migration ships, destroyed the rest, and took off. But I would say the abandonero migration has been too long delayed just as was the Atlans'—the Nor fleet will hunt them down like rats."

Hovering in the air before me her face appeared, materialized by tele-projection, and she bent forward and gave me a kiss with *full* augmentation. I reeled from the vital charge and nearly fell, but wound up on my knees asking for more. She went on speaking as if the tremendous kiss she had given were a nothing.

"They just made it, too. They tried to wipe out the Tean City population, but our men were entering from the lifts and from the tubes and laid down a blanket of conductive till none of the police corrective ray about the city would function at all. With the exception of the rockets on the ships, none of their mech would work.

"I think the Nor-men let them operate the lifter beams and the rockets to get them out into space where they can't hurt anyone."

And now Arl gave me the encore I had been begging for—but while she had been talking, she had coupled on a booster circuit and the resulting kiss stretched me flat on the ground with a bump on my head as big as a dodo's egg.

I got to my feet to find her image gone, and the faint echo of her laugh still in my ears. I wondered if the influence of the Nor maids hadn't made her just a little bit independent. . . ? But it was worth it!

A few days later and Mu had been cleaned up. The victorious Nortan armies set up a temporary council of surviving Elders, who were few enough to act in place of the real government that had not existed on Mu for nearly a century because of the coup of old Zeit. This council decided to take Nor advice and start building a home in a cold planet, far from any sun's evil influence.

A planet with untouched coal deposits located near the Nortan group of planets was chosen as the Atlans of Mu's new home. Work ro were dispatched to commence borings into the planet and to begin building the huge, steam heated, ray-drenched greenhouses in which Normen live and know so well how to build.

In a few short months the first ships took off for New Mu, and the last of the race of Atlan soon followed, abandoning Mu for their new home in space. Arl and I remained on Mu to the last. During this time, I finished my telonion message plates and distributed them in the most likely places both in and on the surface of Mu. I pray that the descendants of those few wild

men I have seen in the culture forests but have been unable to approach, may someday find these plates and have the sense to read them and heed their message. Someday, I have a feeling, they will be a race of men again. It is good seed they inherit, and they might be worth my effort in spite of the sun.

I pray that when they find the plates they will understand!

THE END

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The Mutan Mion series consist of:

- **“I Remember Lemuria!”** (Included in this eBook and in paperback format in The Shaver Mystery Compendium vol. 1)
- **Invasion of the Micro-Men** (Included in The Shaver Mystery Compendium vol. 2)
- **The Return of Sathanas** (Included in this eBook and in The Shaver Mystery Compendium vol. 3)
- **Beyond the Barrier** (Included in The Shaver Mystery Compendium vol. 6)

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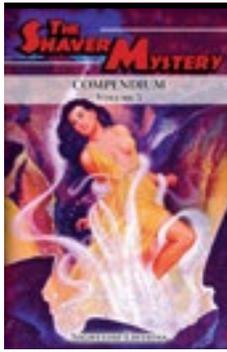
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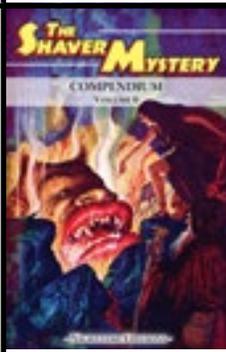
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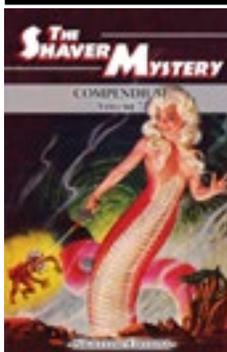
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# *THE RETURN OF SATHANAS*

I Grappled with Sathanas; we began a rough-and-tumble battle as my two half-size comrades watched.



CHAPTER I  
*QUEST OF THE DARKOME*

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

—John Milton

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

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

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

Mutan Mion returned to his home world, Earth, in search of the greatest rogue in all space; the arch enemy of mankind, the scarlet-skinned Sathanas himself.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Once his defection <sup>(2)</sup> had been fully exposed, Sathanas escaped our avenging fleet by the barest seconds. The ships in his fleet—several hundreds in numbers—had blasted up in the very face of our fleet—jockeyed into position in the center of the ‘zone of weightlessness’ <sup>(3)</sup> between the planet Satana and her satellite Feon—then disappeared in that fierce burst of full acceleration into light speeds that is only possible in the precise center of such zones of weightlessness. To make the maneuver more untraceable, every ship in the enemy fleet disappeared in a different direction. Perhaps

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(2) DEFECTION: Note the persistence of this word—WITH the meaning IN-TACT— “dis-integrant energy infection,” is shortened to DEfection, and STILL means—”to fall into evil; err on a job.” —Author.

we could have followed a few of them, but never would we find all of those divergent trails at many light speeds into the depths of space.

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

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

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

Like the thoroughbred that she was, the *Darkome* settled down to the chase . . . the scent of the quarry was in her mechanical nostrils—and her powerful drivers were capable of hurtling her to the infinity of spatial

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(3) ZONE OF WEIGHTLESSNESS: In a place where nothing has weight, infinite acceleration can be achieved with every slight impetus—no inertia drag would crush the occupants. The acceleration would have no effect on the bodies of the passengers.

A 'zone of weightlessness'—neutralized gravity—exists between any two bodies in space. These zones would be used by space ships as starting points for all long, fast voyages. —Author.

boundaries if need be. We would catch whatever was ahead of us if it took years at this terrific speed.

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

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## CHAPTER II

### WHENCE CAME SATHANAS?

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

There were some dozen of the Arch-Angles with some dozen small planets in their administration. One of these was the Arch-Angle Sathanas, Ruler of the Home planet of the Angles in their group, the planet Satana. Being the first planet that the family had settled on after they left Mu, they had, in accordance with the customs of the God-Race, taken the name of the planet that they ruled as their family name. The rest of these planets were colonized with Angles from the cities of Earth . . . a numerous, systemwide clan.

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

As I remember Sathanas, he was a fellow of some fifty feet in height, dark visaged, with the horns that indicated a crossing of the blood line with that of some Titans (which wasn't uncommon in ancient Mu). I had seen him first at a council meeting some centuries ago, when I first acquired the

status of a Ruler by my acquisition of the tiny planet of Callay. It was after concluding most of the formal ceremony incidental to the investiture of several new rulers that someone first introduced us.

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

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

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

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

“My Lords, may I present the Lord Sathanas, Arch-Angle and Ruler of the Planet Satana?”

We returned his salute and noticed this ‘Lord Sathanas’ that he'd presented. Accustomed as I am to life in all its varied forms and colors, the dark, ominous appearance of ‘Lord Sathanas’ was slightly depressing. He was too dark. Not the bronze darkness of a heavy space tan but the darkness of the sky just before a storm on Mother Mu. He made no effort to be friendly, just greeted us with stock phrases as though impatient to meet people more his equal. His impatience and boredom were further emphasized by the way he kept prancing on his cloven hooves—his heritage from some variform ancestor—and by the nervous way he kept drumming his fingers on the jeweled clasp of his weapon belt. Nothing about him pleased me, particularly

the swaggering way he kept his long dark cape in motion. I thought to myself, ‘What’s he afraid of—that we’ll contaminate his precious cloak?’ I looked him full in the face—that handsome cynical face with the blue eyes of his Angle family, icily and incongruously staring back at me with the disdain ill-befitting a Ruler of Nor. That struck me as odd and jarring, here in this usually solemn hall and my nostrils twitched with the scent of the evil, sulphurous odor about him, no doubt from some ingredient of his nutrient vapors.

I should have known then, or at least have been suspicious, but, in the hallowed halls of the Council of Nor one does not suspect one’s equals. But he was a dero <sup>(4)</sup>—I know that now.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I thought—and experiments of the Elder scientists subsequently proved—that aging mech has produced many a criminal. I think that their subjection to the infected energy from the worn-out pleasure mech was the cause of

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(4) DERO: (See ‘I Remember Lemuria’)

this as it formed their inner polarization—their very soul—along dis-inductive lines. Hence, as long as stars blaze in space, such characters will induct that will to Evil from the stars' mighty destructive fields. And unfortunately, there is absolutely no way to prevent these creations.

The whole group connected with Sathanas had fallen into some evil and dissipated habits, had formed a cult of great power, and had built secret hideouts where they could indulge their perverted tastes in safety. They did not relish being deterred by Nor laws protecting the rights of every individual to safety of person. All this evil they had kept concealed behind many a barrier of sub-officials. And all went along smoothly for the Gods of Space know only how many years.

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

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

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

In the caverns, the custom still survives of decorating the walls for a feast with these living stimed ornaments, but the custom of surviving the ordeal of pleasure has perished, from what I hear. —Author.

### CHAPTER III

#### BACK ON MOTHER MU

THE great sensitive needles of the ionic-trail-indicator <sup>(6)</sup> became still and fell back against the pin marked ‘O’—no more trail.

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

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

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

“—We might have to move fast.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Yes, sir,” he nodded.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Oh, yes, Mion. Let’s see what man has done in all these years.”

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

She nodded, silent.

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

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

dullest and heaviest metal to be found on a thousand master-size planets, that I know.

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

Having seen death in many forms, I like to fight death's burning face wherever I find it. Surely, death's face is burning brighter on Mother Mu than on any other globe these feet have trod, feet that sink further into the dis-softened stones <sup>(7)</sup> of this planet than any other I know. Many have been the globes trod since I last left old Mu to voyage through the dark voids where no light but the light of wisdom can be found. Dull it is, to one who has tasted war and death, and swift-tiding battles, to speed on some mission in which the element of danger has been reduced to the undetectable minimum. I am a warrior, trained through many centuries of supremely difficult schooling to the rigors of battle and war, and there are few indeed, for Nor men to fight who even dare to think of braving our slightest displeasure.

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

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

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

Arl and I glided over the glittering golden roofs of the city, and, settling to

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

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

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

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

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

As we sat at the screen watching the approaching flier, we could see his mind was a maelstrom of conflicting sentiments—I couldn't repress my laughter at the fear I saw there. But there are times when Arl saves me from unrequired cruelty, and when I laughed, she chided me.

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

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

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

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

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

It was true. The pilot of the little flier expertly dropped down the shaft and came to rest beside the *Darkome's* tender. There was a moment of indecision—Arl and I knew from reading his mind that it was all he could

do to restrain a wild, nearly uncontrollable impulse to flee. He took heart, however, stepped from his machine, and came toward us. He was large for the race of Earthmen, being about twelve feet high.

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

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

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

I finally assented to Tyr's importuning and the invitation of Odin himself over the great ray called Odin's Eye, and we entered the tender and took off for the palace of Gladsheim<sup>(8)</sup> dominating the shining, gilded-roofed city of Asgard in the distance.

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

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

To our way of thinking, these Aesir were little fellows. They were not more than ten or twelve feet in height. The largest showed the graying

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

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

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

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

There are no words or images to tell you what a girl of imagination can do with stim augments of her thought. I still think of Arl as a girl, and she looks like a girl, too, except her size is as great as my own, and that is too much to think about. For soon we must leave our loved home on Nor and move on to the heavier planets<sup>(9)</sup> of the Elder cities, and that is a hard time for adjustment, as it takes years to accustom oneself to the great gravity.

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## CHAPTER IV

### PACT WITH THE AESIR

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

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

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

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

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

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

misty depths of the dark land beyond. What are your names that I may properly present you to our brave warriors?”

With a bow toward Arl, I said, “This is the Lady Arl and I am called Mion.” Arl smiled at them with the graciousness of a true queen.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“They smugly think they are not,” was his answer as he led me to the instrument called “Odin’s Eye.”<sup>(10)</sup> It was really a vast space telescope with

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

(10) ODIN'S EYE: Was this the origin of the legends regarding 'Odin's Eye'? Norse folk-tales recounted it as an all seeing 'eye,' or all-seeing god-like power. This just might have been the result, or the USE of just such ancient mechanism or equipment as in this story—the view ray. The view ray, which the authors claim still exist in the ancient, God-built caverns, probably operated on a principle similar to a combination of present-day radar and television. The television part of the ancient 'mech' operates, in any event, without the need for a transmitting station. The same way, for instance, that your radio might pick up a conversation a few miles away without the need of a radio station 'sending.'

It is amazing when you consider that right beneath our feet this present day, and for untold centuries of the past, such equipment has lain idle and unused—except by a few degenerate tribes that somehow have lived there for all those years. It is the claim of the authors that the use of this marvelous equipment by these degenerates, or 'dero,' their 'tampering' with the lives of surface people, is the cause of most of our ills and 'bad luck.' —Editor.

(11) Again referring to the books of Charles Fort:

He quotes from the JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLK LORE, 17-203. viz, "Certain stone hatchets are said to have fallen from the heavens."

The authors pose the question: Are these stone axes that have been reported as having fallen from the heavens perhaps the crude 'side arms' of an uncultured race of 'esoteric ones' who have learned to fly the ancient cave-contained space craft, making inter-planetary flights, yet, of themselves incapable of making any more mechanically advanced war weapons than crude stone hatchets that they have within historical times dropped from their flying space craft? The reference above is the report of South American Indians. (...continues on next page)

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

When I saw the huge, dark figure of Sathanas himself among them, I knew several things by swift deduction. First, I knew his presence here was no accident. Second, I knew that here was the rendezvous of the fleeing ships the patrol had pursued to all the points of the compass, for it was not likely that Sathanas would have had time to mix into the quarrels of the Jotuns unless he was waiting here for that rendezvous. And last, I knew that Sathanas had had dealings with these gigantic and hideous Jotuns before to know them so well. Such dealings were forbidden expressly by law. The Elder Race literally 'fathered' the human race and they made strict laws

(...continued from footnote 11)As to the possible 'size' of members of uncultured ones, read further in Fort's THE BOOK OF THE DAMNED:

(From NATURE, 30-300:) May, 1884, the 27th, at Tysnas, Norway, a meteorite had fallen; that the turf was torn up at the spot where the object had been supposed to have fallen: two days later "a very peculiar stone" was found nearby. The description is—"in shape and size very like the fourth part of a large Stilton cheese." See the story for a description of the size of the Jotuns and then compute how large the stone heads of their war axes would have to be.

In the same work, Fort quotes from The Proc. Soc. of Antiq. of Scotland, 1-1-121:

That in a lump of coal from a mine in Scotland an "iron instrument" had been found.

Is this another indication of the extreme age of the human race?

Again, from Fort: Notice of a stone axe, 17 inches long, 9 inches across broad end. (Proc. Soc. of Ants. of Scotland, 1-9-184.)

American ANTIQUARIAN, 18 -60: Copper axe from an Ohio mound; 22 inches; weight 38 pounds.

AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST, n.s., 8-299.

Stone axe found at Birchwood. Wisconsin: 28 inches long, 14 inches wide, 11 inches thick, weight 300 pounds.

HUMAN FOOTPRINTS FOUND IN SANDSTONE, Near CARSON, NEVADA—EACH PRINT 18 to 20 inches LONG. (Amer. Jour. Sci., 3-26139)—Editor.

protecting the lives of their children. The Jotuns were well known as slave dealers, <sup>(12)</sup> and what was worse, they were known for their modifications on the ancient mechanisms they salvaged from abandoned caverns—modifications which made the mech potent tools for the changing of good human character to evil ends.

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

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

If the reader lives near any of the country's large cities, he might call the Missing Persons' Bureau, if any, and get the LOCAL statistics on the annual number of disappearances that are not accounted for, or the number undetected. Then, figure out how many large cities there are in the whole nation. —Author.

upon. Though somewhat lacking in logical mental powers, they seemed to make up for this by fierceness of physique and ruthlessness of intent.

Gathered in the vast cave that stretched its murky depths into the hidden distance were the sons of Loki and Sigyn, the wife of Loki. How he ever came to marry her was too much for me, for she was many times his size and as evil visaged as hell itself. The witch, Hela, who was not Loki's daughter, and who had no regard for him, was a very tall giantess of a hideous whiteness like frost, or dead bones. Evil lived in her eyes and on her face, and on her face twisted a shadow of death. Like most devotees of the spirit of evil, she was obviously mad and possessed of a mad-woman's peculiar appetites, augmented and exaggerated as they so easily can be by the use of the beneficial and stim. Also, there were many leaders of the Jotuns, hairy, gray beast-men, thirty feet high, knotted muscles, and armed with every kind of weapon known to two civilizations—stone clubs hung side by side with flame swords of a make superior to any made now, for the art is a lost one. This horde knew ray work, and they were blood-thirsty fighting men proved in a thousand brawls and dozens of wars. The Aesir had cause to worry, for these were professional warriors brought from space for the express purpose of getting the powerful Aesir out of the way for their commerce in souls, slaves and perverting mech. Evidently this was the reason Sathanas was here, as this commerce of the Jotuns was his greatest single source of income. The Aesir had a bad habit of raiding the Jotun's strongholds and releasing the poor human beasts.

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

I doubted that this affair would ever come to hand to hand combat. I looked down into Odin's great "eye" for a chance to find out just what range

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

weapons were available to the Horde, what they planned to use immediately. Sathanas was talking.

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

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

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

“I can’t reach him,” answered Odin.

“I can see him, but I can’t hit him.”

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

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

“See, Father, the beam of this particular view ray is constructed to transmit energy complete, and is, consequently, a most efficient and adaptable weapon, ready to carry any energy to any point it reaches, and it has tremendous penetrative range, as you can see. Some of this type of ray will even dislodge furniture, or transmit the energy of a push. Watch!” I seized a war club from the wall. It was very small for me, like a child’s toy hammer in my hands, and I tapped one of the heads of the Sathanists.<sup>(14)</sup> He promptly dropped unconscious or dead to the floor. “You see, you didn’t know what there was in this beam. It is a very fine example of the best work of that particular time.”

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

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

First, I asked the Aesir for a list of every available ray device within the city. When I got the list, I checked off the types of ray I wanted—those with a good long beam that would carry the greatest amount of superimposed power, and those with the most potent destructive qualities, regardless of the range. The latter would be aided in carrying power by the former in the huge device I was planning for the downfall of Sathanas. Why didn't I

(14) **PRECISE ACCURACY OF ANCIENT WEAPONS:** These ancient weapons were so accurate and so built for durability that perhaps they are the means by which certain phenomena have been actuated. Charles Fort, in his book, *WILD TALENTS*, says this:

"In the London newspapers, last or March, 1908, was told a story, which, when starting off, was called "what the coroner for South Northumberland described as the most extraordinary case that he had ever investigated." The story was of a woman, at Whitley Bay, near Blyth, England, who according to her statement, had found her sister, burned to death on an unscorched bed. This was the equivalence of the old stories of 'spontaneous combustion of human bodies."

(I don't know what significance, if any, is in the spelling of "extraordin-RAY," but that is the precise way it is spelled on page 909, *THE BOOKS OF CHARLES FORT, WILD TALENTS*, published for the Fortean Society by HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY, New York, 1941.)

ST. LOUIS GLOBE-DEMOCRAT, Dec. 16, 1889. — "In some mysterious way, a fire started in the mahogany desk in the center of the office of the Secretary of War, at Washington, D. C. Several official papers were destroyed, but it was said that they were of no especial value, and could be replaced. Secretary Proctor cannot understand how the fire originated, as he does not smoke, and keeps no matches about his desk." Taken from the *BOOKS OF CHARLES FORT—WILD TALENTS—Page 911.*

call the *Darkome* to me? I had another err—the less equipment I used to capture Sathanas, the greater would be my glory. Such errs I might have corrected if I had been used to their presence in my mind, but in the clean magnetic fields of Nor planets one's thought is naturally correct and I was unprepared for the sudden flood of distorted ideas the Sun was releasing in my mind.

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

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

While we waited for the supplies from the *Darkome* or for the arrival of the patrol ships from space, I put the Aesir at the construction of a cumbersome device I had seen put to good use on the field of battle. It was most effective, but slow to handle. It was a monstrous turntable, the axis of which was a universal joint. Throwing this piece of equipment together with the odds and ends available took two days of hard labor. Then we piled on it

every ray device of destructiveness or ionizing power (to make the air a conductor for the other beams) that could be obtained in the whole city. The rays were then carefully aligned to throw a multi-beam of immense, irresistible power. Nothing of a portable nature could be possessed by the enemy to equal its vast power. The turntable took up the whole courtyard of the palace of Gladsheim, about the size of two city blocks. On the turntable, piled two and three deep, were rays of every type developed by the past Atlan and Titan life on Earth. I did not think that the Jotuns would have anything of the kind. In the center of this motley assemblage of destruction, I placed a small but very powerful dissociator of modern make I had brought from the *Darkome*.

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## CHAPTER V

### WAR AGAINST THE JOTUNS

THE huge multi-beam we aimed by turning and tilting the great turntable by windlasses upon which the noble muscles of the Aesir were expanded by the hundreds. It was slow, but it was inexorable destruction. I had never seen an energy screen or a shorter-fan that could stand against such an assemblage of ray, anywhere. I had great faith in my rude handiwork, for I had seen it used. The trick, of course, was to align the beams perfectly, to form a very dense, small beam of utter power. Carefully sighting the thing at the base of the big black shorter-beam from Sathanas' hidden ship which still held Odin's Eye in its grip, we tried out our multi-beam. The black beam disappeared in a blaze of incandescence like the fall of a meteor. Whether we had hit Sathanas' ship or not I didn't know, but I did know that one beam generator was burned out for good. A good omen! I took over Odin's Eye now that it was useful again, and calling instructions to Tyr over the telaug, he walked the great beam along the lines of waiting ships of the Jotuns, the assembled raytanks, supply piles and equipment they had gathered for the prosecution of a long siege of Asgard. Where the multi-beam struck, there was left nothing but a great smoking ditch in the ground, a ditch which had no bottom—as far as the eye could see. The destruction was nearing completion which would end the Jotun hopes of a long war. But it was not great enough, for as the beam neared the Jotun aircraft, the whole fleet took to the air. They had seen that the beam was slow, and they figured they could avoid it by air maneuvers. Like a great funnel of fury, they rose from the mouth of the cavern and came on to attack, spreading out and sweeping down on Asgard.

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

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

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

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

There are times, in my voyages to strange, deserted worlds, when I wonder if the God Races were truly wise to leave, intact and complete, so much of their mech science that might be perverted to evil purposes by minds that have not the good in them that motivates the Elder Races. But then, the Elders have more knowledge and experience in such things than I—I am a mere twenty centuries grown. The Elders? Who really can say? Fifty Lemurian feet is my present height—and that took all those centuries. I have, on the Ruler Worlds of the Elders, seen some of the Gods that were easily three

hundred or three hundred fifty Lemurian feet in height. They, alone, know how many centuries they have seen. Perhaps, though, even they could make an occasional mistake—a mistake like leaving equipment for the Jotun fleet heading toward us right now.

It was a motley array—the Jotun fleet. The black shape of Sathanas' space monster <sup>(16)</sup> rose in the background, ready to come in when the time and place looked inviting—poised for a crushing decisive blow.

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

I had strict orders not to risk my life except in dire necessity. The Nor had no particular enthusiasm about wasting thousands of years of schooling in a moment's madness. And, here I was, drawn into this brawl of sun-mad dero without seeing any sort of way that I could honorably withdraw. I imagine Sathanas was cursing the risking of all his plans in the attack, too. He was mighty careful not to come within range of our huge multi-beam. The thunder of that distance splitter was deafening, its flames shot out for thirty miles in a coruscating ray of utter annihilation. I had no way of figuring its effective range, but it was a lot more than the thirty miles of its visible force. How to get into real action was the problem. It couldn't be done. But

(15) GOD-BUILT MECH: In the ancient world wide caverns that some old, old race built and then deserted, they had many marvelous mechanisms. When they left this planet, Mother Mu or Lemuria, the deadly rays that were emanating from the Sun had infected their machines and mechanisms, and so, to protect themselves from the death that they contained, the Elder Race left ALL of their tools of life—everything—behind them and then departed to far, friendly, star-homes where they live on even today. But as they live, they grow, like the Giant Redwood trees of our own California, and by now, this ancient race is too big to tread the paths of Earth.

Their stimulating machines were designed for pleasure and their growth science was meant to assist Nature—but that is not the use they get today. The degenerate humans that live in the caves pervert the antique mech to evil uses, and the machines, being infected with sun poison, make the evil users more evil—a vicious circle that is almost impossible to stop for several reasons. First, surface men doubt the existence of these things, and, secondly, their mech makes them infinitely more potent and powerful than surface men. —R. S. Shaver.

we kept them hopping, sweeping it up and down the whole line of battle. They couldn't bring up any heavy stuff at all. They couldn't blast us out of Asgard's walls—couldn't touch us except with an occasional bolt from the swooping fliers. Sathanas moved his ship up to what he calculated was the effective range of our big beam, and started blasting away with his power beams—big dissociators they were—and the walls dissolved in great clouds of rolling black smoke. Chunks fell, and he began to widen the breach.

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

It had been a close call, for him and for me, for I had little real knowledge of the strength or nature of the beams of which the great ray was composed. They were all obsolete forms of equipment of which I knew about theoretically, but in actual practical use I knew nothing. But the Atlans and Titans built such things well. They were as powerful and as uncorroded after two thousand years as they were the day they were built. Sometime I am going to spend a few years to learn everything there is to know about antique rays,

(16) SATHANAS' SPACE MONSTER: These untellably ancient space ships are huge beyond belief . . . as large as the rigid, lighter-than-air Zeppelins of Earth were before the war—the Los Angeles, the Akron, the Hindenburg, etc. They were small craft compared to the antique spacers. For instance, dirigibles 800 to 1000 feet long with a diameter 80 to 120 feet would not offer much room or comfort for a man 50 to 60 feet tall, particularly on long space flights. Then, too, that size wouldn't offer much room for the necessary space equipment—drivers, stores, motors, etc.

Dirigibles are the largest flying machines modern man has made, yet, large as they are, they are comparable in size merely to the tender of the big Nor craft in the story, the *Darkome*.

For possible accounts of these space ships being seen in recent times, see Charles Fort's books.

On October 23, 1822, two unknown, dark bodies crossing the sun were observed by Pastorff (*Am. Sci. Disc.*, 1860-411).

Seven months later, May 22, 1823, an unknown shiny thing was seen near the planet Venus by the astronomer Webb (*NATURE*, 14195).(...continues on next page)

both the actual equipment and the theoretical science behind their construction, for I will run into these hordes using the abandoned equipment again—if I am any ruler over my actions. I do not like their attitude toward war for war's sake, and I like the struggling bulldog idealism of such races as the Aesir. Handicapped by every evil—even their own thoughts play them false—they contrive to be good, jolly fellows, trustworthy, for the most part, and surprisingly able when emergency arises to call forth their best efforts.

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

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

(...continued from footnote 16) There is no basis for assuming that these unknown objects were satellites. They would have to be very large even to be thought of as moons.

Furthermore, Charles Fort quotes from the *ANNALES DE CHIMIE*, 30-417—“objects that were seen by many persons, in the streets of Embrun, during the eclipse of Sept. 7, 1820, moving in straight line, turning and retracing in the same straight lines, all of them separated by uniform spaces.”

Two unknown dark bodies crossing the sun, a shiny thing near Venus, and objects moving in geometric patterns in this same general area, and all reported within a matter of months of each other—all these things seem to indicate unknown SHIPS or something—OF HUGE, ALMOST PLANETOID SIZE moving under intelligent control.

Were these actually spacers of the Elder Race? Men see only what they want—or are supposed to see.

Some idea of the size of the artificial caverns built by the Elder Race beneath the surface of this Earth can be gained when one recalls that the tender and Sathanas' ship both flew into the shafts and caverns. It was in the caverns that they were manufactured, and it was there that they were stored. The sight of one of these incredibly ancient cave hangars with several ancient spacers abandoned over the floor is breathtaking in its immensity, and unbelievable, in fact. —Author.

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

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

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

the benefit of your lessers. You would have the real thing—true immortality where there is no cause for age. What say you?”

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

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

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

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

I had assured Odin I would send the fleet of the Nor Space Patrol I expected to contact presently, to put the Jotuns in their place and to appre-

hend Sathanas. At the same time, I radioed the *Darkome* to return to her former position on the Moon. Not enough time elapsed between the two messages for the *Darkome* to more than ready herself for flight. Why didn't I let the *Darkome* come on down in answer to my first message? She had ample fuel for several landings on planets no larger than Mu. I knew Sathanas was at hand, anxious to annihilate everyone such as myself who knew of his presence on Earth. Such is one's thoughts under infectious suns—always incorrect. It is a hard thing to remember always to do otherwise than what one's reason dictates when near a sun. I respect such races as the Aesir for this one reason—in spite of their life under the evil-making rays of the sun, they manage to remain good, reasonable fellows. Their bodies seem to build up a resistance to the mind distorting magnetic force of the sun, and they manage to think pretty clearly in spite of it. More power to that ability.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

At the last minute, I drove the tender hard over on the port side and down, hoping to dive past the *Satana*'s stern and escape to the other side of the planet before they could come about. As our craft flashed past the ene-

my's starboard tail, the dread flash of tractor beams and dis (disintegration) rays reached over with clawing fingers for the shiny hull of my space boat. My hands were clammy with the tension of battle as I hit the lifter controls and desperately pulled the little craft up and down in short waves. Suddenly, we were dead astern of the *Satana*. For the moment they couldn't fire on us, but the game was discovered. They must have known who we were. It was useless to hope for concealment. There was but one thing to do—and I did it.

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

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

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

Futilely I struck the driver lever, trying to coax just a bit more power from the gallant little machines—vibrating and smoking in their compartments. I knew they'd never last long being used like this.

"Now, Arl—what?"

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

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

Bang!

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

We were lost.

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

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

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

## CHAPTER VI IN THE HANDS OF SATHANAS

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

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

A pretty predicament for the reputation of Mutan Mion. When my comrades would come to hear how I had fallen into the hands of Sathanas without a blow being struck, there would be many a head shaken behind my back. Sad, sad shakes of Nortan heads. Murmurs of "Tch, tch too bad. Mion might have been such a noble specimen but—the Sun infection, you know." And the others would nod silently in agreement and touch their foreheads with their finger-tips. Then, despite all the god-like qualities that they did possess, they would feel very smug and complacent. They would make a sincere attempt within their minds to—well, not forgive exactly, but—explain what the cause of my trouble was, and they would sympathize patronizingly. They'd think, "His unfortunate Earth background and birth; he lacks real stamina—resource—too bad." I always had to contend with that in my work among the God-men of Nor—they worried about the evil that had roamed on Earth expelling the Titans and Atlans and some foolish ones thought that everyone of Earth might—no, must—be affected.

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

Fortunately for the progress on intelligence, those foolish ones are not too many among the Elder Races.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

all of his illegal pleasure palaces that flourished in spite of all the laws of the Gods.

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER VII  
A VALUABLE CHUNK OF MEAT

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

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

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

(17) SIRENS: The authors are of the opinion that the alterations done upon the slave women of the Nor vice rings, carried on less efficiently here on Earth in the past, may be the factual origin of worldwide legends of sirens and goddesses of love as differentiated from female deities supposed to oversee fertility and procreation.

In the Hellenic Pantheon, Diana is usually imagined as the goddess of Fertility and Aphrodite, the goddess of Love. Thus, here we have the case where Aphrodite COULD have been an outstanding creation of some of the vice ring or perhaps merely one of those latter day, almost-immortal humans that, in legend, became the lesser Gods and Goddesses.

In the legend of Ulysees, he had himself tied to the mast of his ship, after sealing the ears of his crew with wax, so that none of them could be beguiled by the enchanting voices of the sirens living on the treacherous, rock-bound shores. (In the story, certain female slaves were trained in various arts, much as the Geisha of Japan—specialists in various branches of entertainment.) Quite naturally, that would include girls that sang, and suppose that some of them were to escape? And, need we point out that these legends of sirens are almost worldwide, but notably in Greece and in the Teutonic legends? Girls whose (RAY-altered) voices were so compelling that even so primary an urge as self-preservation was thrown overboard in the victim's attempt to get closer to these infinitely desirable voices. —Author.

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

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

Finally, the dog deigned to speak.

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

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

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

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

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

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

At that he frowned. There was no use to hide the truth or crawl to his ego. I knew that a dozen telaugs were playing over us and certainly some of them transferred our thoughts to him. I didn’t care for him or any of his kind.

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

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

“Your majesty!” said Tyr, “the Arch-Angel of the heavens, the one mighty man of blood and war that I have always wanted to meet! Oh! Mighty One,

that black flag of yours is the banner and desire of every warrior who relishes true freedom!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You insolent . . . you uncultured freak. It will not be you that carries the tale of my doings back to Nor! You can take the word of the Lord Sathanas for that!"

The miserable cur emphasized his last remark with a slap on the face that would have earned him death had I not been held in the grip of a watching control-ray. I kept silent. There was nothing for me to say. Sathanas ranted on.

"Centuries ago, you came to the Council Chambers on Nor and received more honors and recognition than all my labors have ever brought me. You rose steadily in power in the so-called government of Nor. And, as the final insult, you approach, no, you even eclipse the power of men three times your age!"

He was being carried away by his own thwarted ambitions. The more he raved, the more he became flecked with foam, like a stallion raced too hard. He was stomping back and forth in front of us. Every eye in the room was watching him, and it was only our little group that wasn't cowering at the sight and sound of his anger.

"But, my dear MUTAN MION! Your . . . luck . . . has . . . ended! You are in

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

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

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

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

“Beautiful!” He nodded. “Mion, your Arl is a very valuable looking chunk of meat.”<sup>(18)</sup>

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

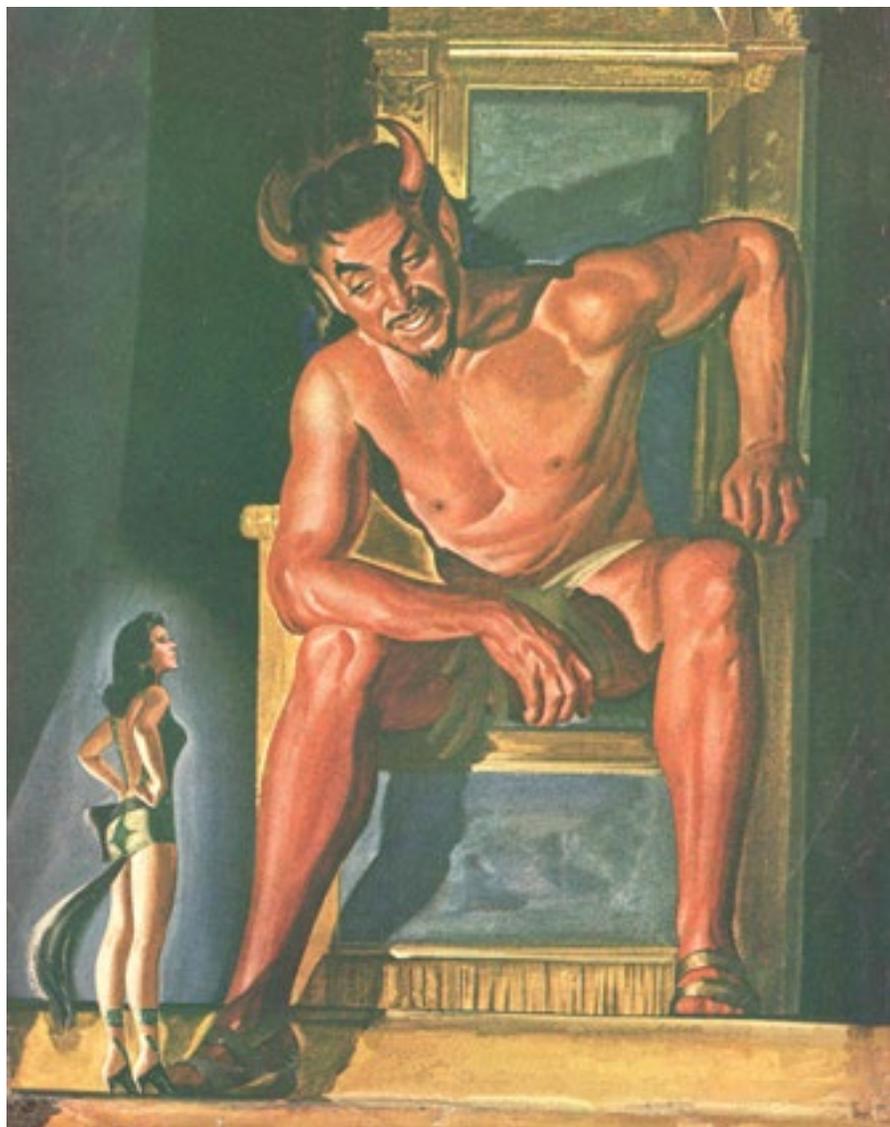
Mustering his courage, he reached up, and stripped Arl of the few garments that she wore, the better to inspect his new property.

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

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(18) MEAT: Cannibalism has been practiced for centuries in the now almost sterile caverns—dero eating tero, perhaps tero eating dero; both, it is suspected, capturing by means of the ancient “mech” (mechanism) surface people for food. They consider surface people merely a higher species of food-animal. Throughout the caverns, we of the surface are referred to, not as “surface” people, but “meat” people. For centuries, the dero have been doing the same things—and worse—though on a smaller scale.

The Jotuns were, no doubt, dealers in “meat” delicacies. —R. S. Shaver.



A depiction of Sathanas from a cover of *Amazing Stories* magazine (not a very accurate one, he lacks the shaggy legs and hoofs, also, if that girl is supposed to be Arl, she should be the same height as Sathanas).

Illustration by Arnold Kohn

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

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

They didn’t have them turned up to full power—they couldn’t have, because all I could feel was a slight drag. As soon as I realized what was up—that I was free—I raced for the throat of the fiend now returning to his couch, hurling his sycophants and dancing girls to the right and left like a farmer sowing grain. Just as my fingers were about to clench about his neck, a beam from one of the ever-watchful servitors struck me down at his feet, a contorted bundle of agony. The epilepto-ray<sup>(19)</sup> that they used was the most painful known to Nor science—forbidden except for experimental laboratory work to discover a counter for it.

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

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## CHAPTER VIII

### UNDER THE PAIN RAY

“OOOOH, Mi . . . Mion . . .”

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

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(19) EPILEPTO RAYS: The epilepto ray was originally intended for the use of the Elder Race’s Police. By means of it, primitive tribes, wild animals, and even rioting or uncontrollable members of the race itself could be brought under control, harmlessly. However, as with all the ancient mechanisms, the Elder scientists continually improved them, and at times these improvements called for regulation by the Ruling Council to limit their use to insure the general safety of the entire race.

Some of the epilepto ray projectors are still extant in the caverns here on Earth, and their use by the dero (degenerate humans) cause torment and paralysis to a lot of the surface people.

The ray itself, in action, contorts every muscle of the victim’s body by means of an alternating current of synthetic pain-ray electric, the pulsations resulting in that spasmodic jerking so apparent in one suffering a so-called “epileptic” fit. —Author.

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

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

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

ARL!

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

(20) SIZE OF THE ELDER RACE: The authors suggest that anyone interested get a copy of Charles Fort's "Lo!" In Chapter Nine, he discusses the findings, BY PRESENT DAY HUMANS, of the skeletons of huge creatures 40 to 65 feet in length. The conventional "scientific" explanation is that they are the skeletal remains of whales washed up on the shore. Fort refutes this sort of illogic by pointing out that whales' skeletons do not have BROAD HIP BONES.

He also mentions a report from the LONDON DAILY NEWS. In it is recounted the dredging up of a large skull from the north of Scotland, of a size that the authorities claimed would fit an elephant, but it would have to have been a large one to boast eye-sockets a foot across. We suggest, for those interested in such research, that it MIGHT have been the skull, preserved somehow (or, perhaps, fairly recently dispatched), but a skull, nevertheless, of one of the ancient Giants that built the caves beneath our world. (Excerpt is from the Daily News, June 6, 1908.)

If the eyes are a gauge of the full size of the completed skeleton, the creature (a member of the Elder Race?) would have to have been at least 40 feet tall. —Author.

“My Lord . . . ugh . . . they didn’t bring her with us . . .”

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

“. . . I don’t know . . . Lord Mion! Are we dying? This . . . pain . . . I can’t stand it!”

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

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

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

I had it. Hypnosis!

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

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

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

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

“Well, friends, that ‘zone of neutralization’ is important. It is the knowledge and the use of the peculiarities of the way all mass is inertially neutralized there that enables us to journey between the farthest stars.”

“Why is that, Mion?”

“Because, starting a star trip anywhere else would be impossible. There

would be too much mass to overcome. It would be impossible to achieve the needed acceleration quick enough.”

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

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

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

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

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

“Poised motionless in the exact center of the ‘zone,’ and pointing in the correct direction, the ship is given full power of all the plates<sup>(21)</sup> at once. Ordinarily, such instant application of all the power at rest would kill all the ship’s passengers, but at the EXACT center of the ‘zone’ ANY acceleration can be achieved without danger, depending upon the amount of power impetus.”

Again, they groaned acceptance of what I had said.

“When you give your ship full throttle as I’ve told you, it will instantly attain vast velocity depending on the power of your ship’s plates and how carefully you balanced your ship in the center of the ‘zone.’ Keep applying power, and in a short time you will find yourself far beyond your starting point. Like a flash you will be in the region of the stars which are unfamiliar to you, traveling at a speed your Earth brains cannot comprehend. If you

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

were watching a spacer accelerate from the 'zone,' it would seem to you that the ship had vanished. No motion would be seen. It would be there one moment and disappear the next—disappear into nothingness. Such is the speed of ships that fly between the stars. Using this tremendous speed, you can fling yourself far beyond the light of this deadly, evil Sun and within the regions of space that the Elder Races, the Gods of the Aesir, have chosen as their dwelling place."

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

"No, my friends, once in the general area of the dark planets, you would soon be overtaken by some space patrol and, your intentions being understood, you would be helped in every way to find yourselves a home far from the deadly 'de,' a home near those of the Gods. Have you understood?"

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

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

Thus, the required impetus needed to achieve one light speed is increased by one for each additional fifty light speeds. Actually, nobody in the known cosmos is ever entirely weightless, but there are conditions where a given mass or body loses apparent weight to the point where its weight is negligible. The best place to achieve this condition of weightlessness is that area that I've told you about . . . the area between the world or other spatial bodies that we term the "zone of weightlessness."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## CHAPTER IX

### SEIZING THE SATANA

**A**S ONE will, under the ‘der’ influence of a sun that burns heavy metals and makes men’s minds function in evil error, I had spent my time waiting for—what? Some silly pap to my vanity—a feather in my cap that would be mine had I captured this fellow Sathanas single-handed. And what had the ‘der’ sun led me to? Capture—and worse, torture for myself and my four valiant companions . . . and . . . the Gods of Space only know what horrible fate for my lovely Arl. True, I had some idea that Sathanas was not going to kill me—that would have been too merciful for his evil dero soul. No, he meant to prolong my torment to its last groan, preferably, hoping that it would take years for me to groan my last.

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

But, as I say, I revived the last time. And, from somewhere within me came rage—rage that lent my tortured body strength. . . strength that Vanue’s marvelous nutrients<sup>(22)</sup> had given me, over and above my natural inheritance.

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

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

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

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

The five of us were released from our bonds. The only thing between us

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Let's take 'im!" I yelled, bounding forward at the same time, seizing the man's arms and twisting them back and up. The Aesir needed no second

urging. They swarmed over the huge fellow, one of them standing on his lap and stuffing part of his coat in the Angle's mouth to smother any outcry.

"Get his weapons, Tyr!" I ordered.

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

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

Adjacent to the cargo compartment where we had lain I had noticed another empty cell. I hurled our captive into it and locked the door.

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

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

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

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

Before it had occurred to my reputedly superior mind to do so, Tyr had activated the sleeper ray—one ray which he knew was invisible—and had put

half the ship's crew to sleep with it. Then, I took Tyr's place at the ray's controls, which was probably unwise, and swept the ship clean of conscious life.

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

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

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

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

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

Quickly I placed a mind control ray upon the ship's commander, one ugly fellow, Haltor by name. Standing him upon his feet by sheer strength of synthetic nerve-current command, I walked him toward the general televisor which was set to contact all of the ships of the fleet at once. I had him rasp out a few words as though in a great hurry at some sudden emergency.

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

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

If I only had used that time of the return to Mu to everlastingly eliminate the 'great' Sathanas. But one's mind never functions correctly near Old Sol. One should figure out what to do, then do the opposite, when near this sun. I had decided to take Sathanas and his crew to Mu and leave them in the

hands of the Aesir as a means of education for themselves. They could use the minds under telemech telaugs for a ready reference library of space travel and other needed information, and in a year or more be ready for a migration to a more beneficent energy field on some other planet. It was not a perfect solution to my problems, for Sathanas was not disposed of as the Nor Elders would have wished, but it did justice to the Aesir, and at the same time made it unnecessary for me to stay an illegal length of time upon the Earth.

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

The ship began to heat under the combined fire of the rays from the whole circle of pursuit. I had to do something fast. The old hostage gag was in my mind, but would these pursuers care what happened to Sathanas, or would they seize the excuse to make me rid them of their master? Well, I would soon find out.

I sped into the sealed chamber which Sathanas used to bask in his special nutrient and stimulative pleasures. About him lay his women in sleep and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## CHAPTER X

### A SATANIC HOSTAGE

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

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

At last it struck me! My ship, the *Darkome*, was the answer. It lay where I had left it, if the crew had followed my orders. I could not try to contact the Nor patrol by radio from the *Satana*, as the wave lengths of the apparatus were known and watched by the pursuing fleet. To try this would only invite attack by Sathanas' ships. Their allegiance to their master would not be so great that they would wait quietly by while I called the whole strength of vast Nor down upon them. I knew that it was only because I had not attempted

this that they did not continue their attack in spite of my threat upon their master's life. But, if I could set a course near enough to the *Darkome*, if the crew of the waiting ship were on the alert and saw the whole string of enemy ships course overhead, and if none of the ships of Sathanas' saw the dark shape of the *Darkome* in the shadows of the rocks of the moon's surface, if all these things worked out correctly, then the *Darkome* would contact the Nor patrol over our secret wave lengths and the fleet behind us couldn't possibly have the slightest idea of any strategy.

If the *Darkome* lay where I had placed her, well under the shadow of a mighty meteor crater's wall, it was possible that the fleet could pass overhead without detecting her presence—unless the crew had placed a light for my guidance. That worried me—but I had given orders not to do so. The ordinary space radio is on a wave length known to everyone, but for secret communication the radio panel of Nor war ships contained several switches for different types of messages, and the radio, after such switches were thrown, operated on a wave length known to none but the construction men on the home planet. The receivers were also set up in the same manner so that secret messages could be heard only by commanders of ships of the intelligence branch according to which switch was set for the broadcast. Too, directional beam transmission cut down the chance of the message being intercepted by the Satanists. It might work. I stepped on the plate disflow button; my speed shot up to an uncomfortable acceleration. We shot past the moon, right over the *Darkome's* position. Whether she lay where I last left her or had gone in search of me, I could not tell. The place was all in the dark shadow of the mountains of the moon. I could not drop a beam to her without betraying her position. If she lay there, and if the fleet behind me failed to observe her, the chances were good that Nor ships would soon be coming toward our position at a good hundred light speeds. The men of the *Darkome* would hardly miss the sight and thunder of our drivers overhead. This was my only chance for escape from this Arch-fiend whose power over me still held, though he lay nearly dead at my feet.

Now, my problems were multiplied. First, I had to complete the capture and death of Sathanas. Second, I had to rescue my Arl from a secret stronghold of sin, the location of which I hadn't the faintest idea. Third, I had to turn over a brain to the Aesir for them to use to escape the sun-age death which I had sworn would not consume them. To stop me were the fifty great ships of war waiting impatiently overhead for me to conclude my conference with Sathanas and release him and his ship. It was ridiculous of them but they apparently expected me to strike a bargain with Sathanas and to take his word for a contract while I went about my business. Such is evil

thought—ridiculous upon analysis. It was obvious to me that there was no way for me to release Sathanas from my hands except by death. I couldn't trust his word in the slightest; yet, to a logical man, there was no other thing that fleet was waiting for. Then they could come flaming in with all rays blasting. Some of them would have died. But certainly, so would have the *Satana* and myself and her master gone up with her. What was I supposed to do with him—in their minds? I can never understand evil.

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

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

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

I hung the ship on her driver beams' balance at fifty miles over the rocks and waited. But I kept my hand on the controls in such a way that should a sleeper beam drop me unconscious, the ship would drop with me. We waited while I kept up a running fire of conversation with the now awakened Sathanas. Quickly I figured out these angles and awakened him as I saw my safety lay in pretending to dicker with him for some understanding. The fool believed me and was promising to set me off at Quanto, a base that was safe for him to approach, not being heavily defended, and leave me there after he had returned Arl to me. He assured me that the place where she had been sent was not far away. But I knew as well as I know Arl's face, that he was lying. I did not have to look at the telaug needles to see the false needle vibrating in the red zone of der thought. No truth ever comes out of a man when he is in der, and all of Sathanas' thoughts were full of der—I knew that quite well. Yet, the man could live and other men could follow him. Why won't men study the lessons provided them to help them over the ever-present opposition of dero which they are continually warned against? I can tell you—they are another kind of errant—a mentally blinded errant who cannot see because they will not look. Why don't they look? Because the der is in their will, too. How could Nor men have a der will when it is checked for continually? Because Sathanas, whose defection was hidden from the med-

icos by his doting family, had put the der will in them himself with cleverly contrived de-stim rays. After they had been fully infected with the deadly radioactivity, they had been ripe for his plans. How could Sathanas know so much about der as to use it on his own men to make them tractable to his will, and yet not understand the need for removing the radio-active material from his mind that caused his own err. Because Sathanas was mad, and a madman is not logical. 'Der' is a good thing to understand and I had studied it a long time.

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

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

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

wrong. Soon your fleet will be no more. What do you think they will do with you?”

I gave his head a little ben-ray so that he would be able to answer me and be able to realize and suffer from the realization of his position. His answer was a snarl of hatred. “You may have won this time, but there will come another day, Mutan Mion.”

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

Sathanas, as I had known he would, caved in immediately and told me the position of the pleasure science center where Arl had been taken. Although he had probably sworn a dozen mighty and terrible oaths not to reveal to Nor men any detail of the place, he did so at the first sign that it might be of value in saving his life. And like all evil men, he expected me to keep my word to one who would betray a trust without any provocation. Why? Because he knew my reputation as a man who keeps his word. Well, to keep that reputation, which at times has a great value, I would keep my word to the Arch-fiend. I would save him and turn him over to the Aesir as a walking map of the heavens where his evil life would at least find a use—a real use in making Gods and immortals out of worthy mortals.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“There is no time for the usual procedure of preparation for war. They will start work on Arl at once after she arrives. I don’t intend to wait for that to happen. I have the position of the place. To get this, I bargained with Sathanas, promising him his life for the information. If he has lied, he dies. He is going to accompany me so that I may read his mind en route and learn all he knows of the thing. Whether or not you and the ships under your command accompany me is up to you or your superior officer at the base. The *Darkome* is under my command and the *Darkome* leaves at once to rescue Arl from the place called the Center of the Science of Pleasure. Its

true name is more correctly the Place of Evil Lust, or it should be Sathanas' ship and his own ugly self are both mine by right of capture, according to the Code of Nor. So, I have two ships to fling at this focus of evil."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Then we put the telaug on Sathanas' mind and sat down to the job of examining every picture it contained that in any way related to our objective and the force that defended its evil existence. There was a great deal to

know—to learn, we found. For many centuries this place—its true name was Pandral—had been in the business of manufacturing and peddling slaves for the Hell-holes of the rims of the Nor Empire. Like every great empire, Nor's sway extended only so far, and where her authority stopped, there lived her parasites, those who pandered to the thoughtless sybarites of the Empire who sought outside Nor what could not be obtained where her law prevailed. The very absoluteness and thoroughness of Nor police work gave them their opportunity, for those thirsts of evil origin could not be quenched in Nor, but those who thirst will drink some way, and so Normen themselves supported their worst enemies—just as they do in less intelligent worlds.

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## CHAPTER XI

### PLOT AGAINST PANDRAL

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

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

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

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

Using Sathanas' mind for continual reference, I disguised myself as a certain friend of his, Profir, by name, who had been killed in the action. He was about my size and fair, but we worked on the disguise carefully to make it correspond with Sathanas' mental images. Then, we dressed Sathanas' locks with care, crowning our handiwork with a golden circlet, studded with gems, within which was a powerful little mental radio which kept the commands from my own telaug imposed upon his thought in such strength that there was no danger of his using his own will. My telaug and control device were concealed in a great metal studded belt I wore, from which hung a flame sword and a powerful dissociator pistol ray. More weapons would have disclosed our purpose. I counted on their familiarity with Sathanas. Making up a party of twenty, which was about the number usually in Sathanas' parties on his visits here, we readied the *Satana* for a close look from examining ray. The crew was dressed in the uniforms of the captive crew, and carefully

prepared mentally by hypnosis for their part as men whose allegiance was Sathanas'. However, a certain device was readied for general energy flows which would be released by me if at any time I needed their full minds for combat. When everything was ready, the *Satana* shot off to enter the watching ray beams of the pirate stronghold. If all went well, it would be the last time a ship would enter that place of mutilation. No more would minds of immortals be changed into the tools of fools. If I could hit that hole at all, I would not cease until it was a cinder floating in space, empty of life.

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

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

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

"We will speak with 'the Boss,' My Lord Harald."

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

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

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

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

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

"Damn!" I thought, "how had I missed that entrance in Sathanas' mind?" I thought that I had covered everything when I read his thoughts about this

place. I didn't know—or see—that he always met the big shot in the same place, in the same rooms.

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

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

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

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

The poor creature looked up into my eyes with her's wet with gratitude that someone had noticed her among all the beautiful women from a score of strange planets. She was a pretty thing, about half my own height, alive with the lush dark beauty of the women from Bohan. Her natural charms had been enhanced and stimulated with the life influence that had been grown in her making her an instrument for men's pleasure.

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

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

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

thoughts with her motions, and knowing her thoughts, I interpreted her motions correctly. Well, if I had my way, freedom or death would be her lot before long.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Ugh . . . ugh . . .” the fat frog croaked.

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

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

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

“And the other matters?”

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

“The other matter,” said Sathanas, answering Harald’s question, “is our future plans, now that I am no longer numbered among the pillars of virtue of Nortan society.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

“He would have gone directly to his own apartments to think over his talk

with Sathanas and decide what was best to do. Then he would return to this chamber to tell Sathanas what he had decided.”

“Did he ever take Sathanas to these apartments?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

One of the guards heard the women's chatter and glanced at Harald's head. Noting that Sathanas wore the same kind of head circlet, the truth flashed into his mind as he looked at the rest of us and saw the space bronzed iron of the patrol warriors, the sharp, undissipated eyes, the clean, healthy flesh, not one soft, self-indulgent character among them. The incongruity of our health and intent gave us away to the man. He saw it all too plainly.

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

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

"Men, we are going to be inspected by the Nor patrol. Do not be alarmed. Everything is arranged between us and they will merely perform a routine and perfunctory inspection. Be on your guard that nothing happens while

the patrol is about. We have nothing to hide from them. Be sure that nothing goes on while they are here that should be hidden from them. I give you five minutes to make ready for their arrival. Do not fire on the ships. Everything has been arranged between us.”

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

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

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

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

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## CHAPTER XII

### HARALD'S HOSTAGES

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

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

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

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

Such women had many men passionately enslaved to them, giving them every penny of their income. All this went directly into the pockets of such as Harald. Naturally he never released any of these profitable slaves from his bondage.

Thus, all the growth and life science of the vast races of immortals was here perverted in this evil world of Pandral to the ends of the master—pow-

er and gold. No one but Harald had a will in any matter on all Pandral but for the profit of the master.

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

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

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

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

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

“The great ones always search for the young of the race for better brains to carry out their mighty plans, and they are not pleased with the pollution of the blood that bears their agents. They guard the tree of life, for they have a mighty use for its fruit. Even assuming they were evil, and it is sometimes true that they guard the tree for nothing better than to pick the beautiful fruit—the young females as they mature—still they are not pleased with the malformation—the defiling of the tree that bears their much-desired beauties to grace the harems of Gods. Even assuming the Gods themselves had no higher purpose than yourself, would you believe that they would allow you to pollute a tree that produced the agents of their immortal pleasures? Has it not seemed strangely easy for me to overcome your greater strength? We are probably flooded with the observation and control rays of mightier ones that we can imagine exist. How else could a man take a fortress like this with two simple mental radios and a couple of dis-guns? If you are ever free again, don’t forget the Gods. One way to remain alive is to envision the will of the Gods and carry it out as if they were observing you, for sooner or later they will observe you. Go now, to central Nor and to trial for every ill deed you have worked against the life of Normen.”

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

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

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

THE END

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The Mutan Mion series consist of:

- “**I Remember Lemuria!**” (Included in this eBook and in paperback format in The Shaver Mystery Compendium vol. 1)
- **Invasion of the Micro-Men** (Included in The Shaver Mystery Compendium vol. 2)
- **The Return of Sathanas** (Included in this eBook and in The Shaver Mystery Compendium vol. 3)
- **Beyond the Barrier** (Included in The Shaver Mystery Compendium vol. 6)

Also, Mutan Mion and Arl appear in **The Fall of Lemuria**, (Included on The Shaver Mystery Compendium Vol. 7)

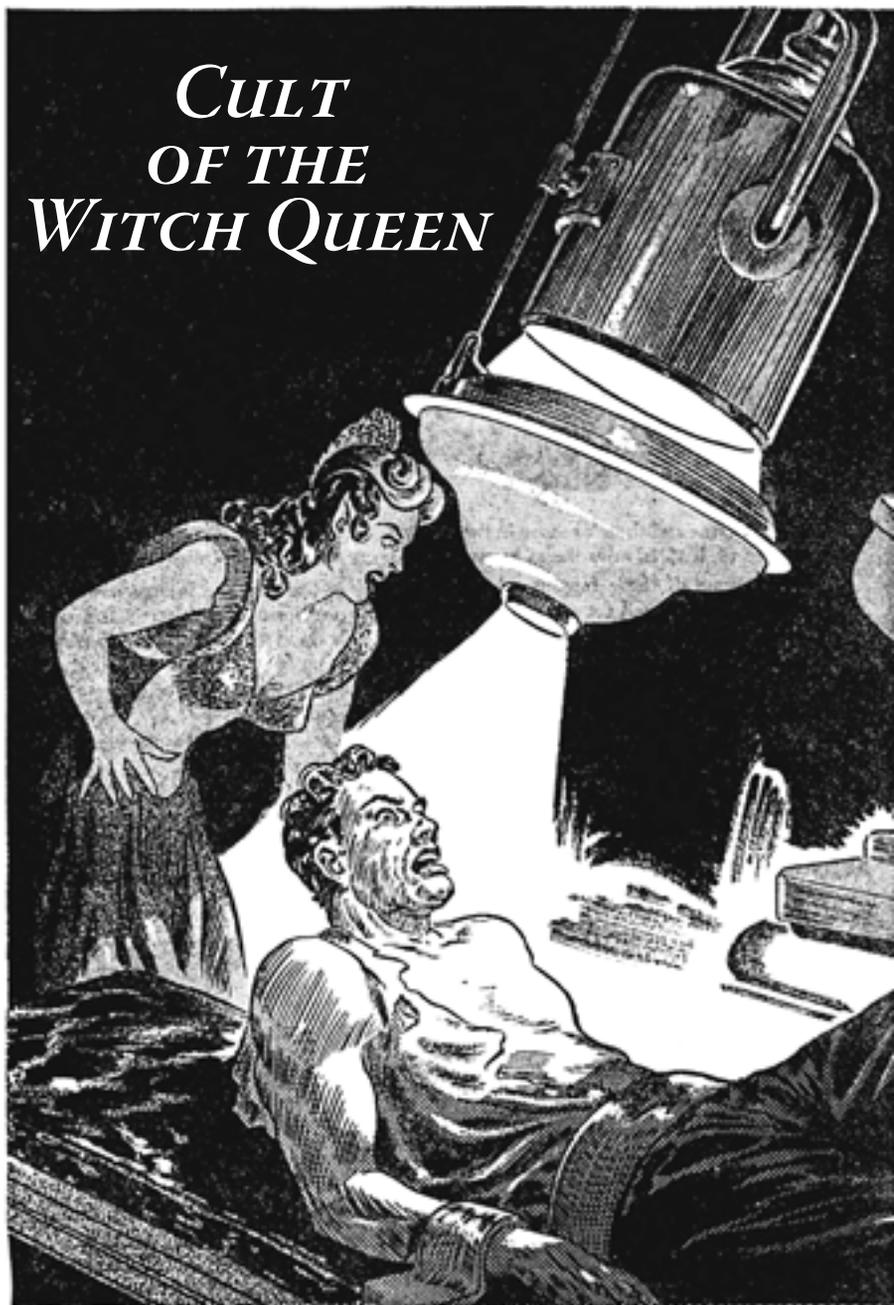
And Vanue gives Mutan Mion some history lessons on: **The Land of Kui** (Included on The Shaver Mystery Compendium vol. 3) and **We Dance for the Dom** (Included on The Shaver Mystery Compendium vol. 4).

Also, what happened to Sathanas in the story **Zigor Mephisto’s Collection of Mentalia** (Included on The Shaver Mystery Compendium vol. 5).

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*CULT  
OF THE  
WITCH QUEEN*





He writhed, helpless, under the powerful beam of light.

## CULT OF THE WITCH QUEEN.

## FOREWORD.

THIS is a tale of two planets, Earth and Venus, and of a man who found himself the plaything of the ugliest and oldest woman on the two worlds. She looked like a witch, and a capable witch has spells. This witch had had six centuries to study the ancient magic: the incredibly antique mechanisms left by the race whom we remember in vague myths only as—the Gods.

No one could live that long? Well, quoting Alexis Carrel, who is pretty well accepted in the world called science: “In medieval times, the idea of blood transfusions from young people as a means toward immortality, was widely believed in . . . was the subject of a transfusion from the veins of a young man . . . The idea has certain things to recommend it . . . under proper conditions it might work.” *Man the Unknown*, Alexis Carrel.

And too, did you ever see an old tree rejuvenated by the grafting on of a young sapling? It is a common practice among tree-surgeons.

Well, there is a legend of a woman who lived an unknown number of centuries. The first she is heard from is in fourteenth century Spain, and the legend can be found in the works of Sienkiewicz—who was a reliable man. She was called “The Watcher,” also “Hecate, the Undying,” also “The Mother of Sin.” That there was a cult who followed a woman who was supposed to be undying is well-nigh indisputable. But it seldom mentioned after 1500.

One day I met a man who told me this story. Knowing as I do that the antique caverns and the ancient mech of the God race does exist; knowing as I do the works of Carrel and certain others whose indisputable evidence is entirely in support of the possibility of immortality; and knowing that trees are rejuvenated by the grafting on of young trees, I could not help but see the possibility of the truth of his story.

That children can be grafted on to aging people, and the young sap, the vital grow secretions of their bodies, used to make the modern vampire live on and on, I could not dispute, for I cannot argue with such men as Carrel who have actually raised virtually immortal flesh in their test tubes and perfusion apparatus.

That there are usable space ships in the lost caverns of the secret ray groups of Earth, I could not argue, since I had seen the caves and the perfect preservation of the mechanisms built by the forgotten race, the Gods. That you have never experienced those things which happen to people—those mys-

terious and wonderful things which tell them that everything important on earth is not in the newspapers—can believe any of this tale, I do not expect.

For those readers who do not know that a large percent of this apparently fictional account is true, I warn not to read the footnotes; not to speculate on the possibility of age-old and secret vampirism and of mightier secrets too vast and too destructive for any man to find a way to tell his fellow-man.

But to “those who know” I want to answer one question that has puzzled so many of you . . . the question “ARE THEY IMMORTAL?” In this story it is particularly well answered. The other question which I know is in the mind of many of you: “ARE THEY EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL?” is also well and fully answered. To those students of the past who have puzzled about all the smoke around the subject “magic” or “witchcraft” this story is also particularly helpful. —*Richard S. Shaver.*

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## CHAPTER I

*Our imagination cannot encompass all reality, for in the infinitude of universes, all things happen.*

*Eli Cromoisue, “Infinitesme’s Philosophic.” Published 1784, Paris.*

**J**UST outside one of the sprawling dull black and gray mills that feed the maw of Mars, on one of the dirty alleys that flank it, was a beer garden; no different than one of the scores that are spawned by droves of hot, thirsty workers.

At a battered bar of this joint was a tall, newly scrubbed young man about thirty. As he gazed thoughtfully into a half-consumed glass of “sui,” a denim-clad figure detached itself from the group about. In the camaraderie that such places breed he said:

“How’d it go today, Mac?”

“Oh, so-so. A little hot, but it was time-and-a-half today. How’d you do?”

“Okay. Say, I know you now—thought there was something familiar about that voice—you’re the welder on #6 Skid, aren’t you?”

“Yeah, but I can’t seem to place you. . .”

“Electrician—I move around a lot.” Casually throwing a crumpled bill on the counter, he said to the perspiring barkeep, “Bring us another round.”

Frowning slightly the welder tried to decline the largess, “—had enough, oughta be ‘getting.’”

“Aw, don’t tell me that. Where are you going to go this time of night. Look,

how about us grabbing that booth and I'll buy all the drinks. Tonight's my birthday. Celebrate!"

"Well, Okay—but the next round's on me."

Carefully carrying their half empty glasses, they settled themselves on opposite sides of a sticky, ring-marked booth table. Cigarettes were brought out by the welder. "Smoke?" he invited.

"No, thanks . . . used to smoke 'em, but five years away from 'em and you sorta lose all taste for tobacco."

"What's the matter? Swear off and stay off—for five years?"

With a wry grin, the other chuckled dryly, "Would be better to say I WAS sworn off." The welder asked what he meant as he lit his own cigarette and drew the first pleasurable puff.

"Well it's a long story . . . but you look like the type that might listen so I'll tell you." With that he finished his drink and instructed the waiter to keep some spares on deck. Then, toying with the ash-tray, he began.

"You'd guess my age as forty or forty-five, wouldn't you?"

The young welder, shrugged his shoulder and lamely wondered, "Well, aren't you?"

"No, I suppose I'm the same age you are—thirty." When the welder raised his eyebrows, in disbelief, he continued, "I know I don't look it, but I've knocked around a lot, been a sailor, and a whole crew of things . . . things that have left their mark. In my eyes mostly. Look at them—they've seen things no man was meant to see and stay sane."

Mentally frowning on his luck that seemed to throw him with crackpots, the welder moved impatiently as though to slide out of the booth.

"No, no, fellow—don't get up. Listen. I'm not nuts . . . and I'm not drunk . . . but I'll go nuts, if I don't get somebody to listen to me while I get something off my chest. I've GOT to tell somebody. Take it easy, and listen, will ya?"

As though thinking 'this bird might have a good yarn at that,' the welder pushed his back against the side-wall and propped one foot against the arm-rest on the other end of the seat, and settled down.

"That's it. Relax and listen. Hey, WAITER, bring us another round. Yeah, same thing." Seeming to address the departing waiter's back, he soliloquized, "A guy can't talk to most people about things that are really big—just like you can't put two quarts in a one-quart pail. Well, I've got something big. . . a lot bigger than quarts and pints, but when I really get into it, you're going to think maybe you did make a mistake, maybe this guy is a jerk—or screwy. No, wait, don't say anything, just listen. Before I'm done, you'll get cold feet. You'll be afraid to even listen to things different than those people usually talk about. You're going to be worried that maybe one of the bunch over

there might hear me and take you for a sap for just listening to me—much less taking me seriously. If you got the guts to face something you don't know—even a little—hang onto the handle bars, I'm going to cut loose.

“Did you ever hear of Charles Fort? I guess not. Most people haven't. Anyway, this guy Fort spent twenty years going through old magazines and newspapers. Searching for odd things that happen, are reported, wondered at, and then forgotten. Odd, queer things like chunks of machinery falling out of the sky. Strange shadows passing the face of the moon. Things that “look like ships” crossing the moon IN FORMATION. Twenty years he spent—he's been dead now for seven or eight years—and, except for the Fortean Society, most of those that did hear of him have forgotten already. But he wasn't wrong. . . there IS an understandable CAUSE for most of the things we call mysterious. They read Fort and forget. . . you'll listen to me and you'll do the same thing, too. Marvel a little—and tomorrow, well, you'll know that there isn't anything that can make sense like your welding torch.

“Anyway, I have to tell someone even if he won't believe. . .” Then, downing his drink in one gulp, Big Jim continued, “Unless you've read his books, you wouldn't believe there was so much stuff—things that have happened and then were “explained”. Hah! that's a laugh! Explanations! The only trouble is those that do the explaining wouldn't recognize truth if it was pointed out right under their noses. Fort had a great big laugh at the weakness of us humans—all through history things out of the ordinary have happened. First it was the medicine men. Anything unusual was the angry gods. Then the high priests. And now we have a new hierarchy of explainers. . . the scientists. The explanations all had a same “oneness” . . . the gods were angry, the sacrifice wasn't large enough, or. . . ‘as proven by mathematical calculation’ talk. Chatter of little monkeys. Talk. But not the talk I'm going to do. Five years ago, I couldn't talk to people—couldn't say more'n a few words to anyone without running out of what to say. Now I've GOT to talk to someone about what I've learned. They won't listen to me, though. . . I'm not telling them what they want to hear. Don't reassure 'em that things ARE what they seem. That must be it. They can't understand—think I'm ribbing them. God! I wish I was.”

Waving a brawny forearm at the smoke-filled room, Big Jim laughed mirthlessly. “Look at 'em. . . racing around on a pointless little merry-go-round. Twelve hours work, a few beers then home to a dull shack and into bed. Same thing, over and over. I got away. . . once. Escaped from this useless life for five years. Now, dammit, I'm back, and doomed to the same old grind 'unto death'. Doomed to futility.”

\* \* \*

‘Bout five years ago . . . ‘39, it was, I sat in this same hole-in-the wall. Was a little earlier in the year, —June, I think. Hot, fetid night . . . hotter than tonight. You know, the kind of a summer night young fellows prowl the streets, wishing for a woman. Every night isn’t the same. You know how it is, one of those nights when every woman you see is the most beautiful thing God ever made . . . some of ‘em a lot more than that. Well, I started walking home. Lived up on Cherry street then—about sixteenth. There I was walking along, just like the rest of the single fellows that night, when all of a sudden, I got the damndest feeling. It’s hard to describe—but I could see and hear someone . . . Someone watching me from about a mile away. “This damn heat’s giving me mirage’s or something,” I say to myself. Crazy, I thought.

I can’t tell you exactly what this was like—there seemed to be a big woman watching me with a strange kind of apparatus. That’s not it exactly. Because, though she was watching me—I was aware of her and her actions . . . Can you imagine yourself in a dream, aware of someone standing beside you, and you’re watching the action at the same time you’re one of the characters? That’s what it was like . . . except I was wide awake. Anyway, if I was dreaming, I didn’t want to wake up cause she was interesting—big, and a guy as big as me is always keen on big women, most of ‘em seem like midgets.

I KNEW what she was thinking. That’s what made me think I was dreaming. Awareness, I guess you’d call it. Someway, I knew she was making a decision from things she could read in my inner self. That’s important. I KNEW she was reading my mind . . . as I was hers. But it appeared as though she were watching ME through a mirror or lens, or . . . or what?

She was saying to herself, “Yes . . . he’ll do. I’ll jerk this big handsome lug out of his dull rut. He’ll find a life that’s at least exciting, if not . . .” and she chuckled in a sinister way to herself, . . . if not wholly desirable.”

She turned to a girl beside her I hadn’t noticed before. If I was dreamin’, I was sure picking ‘em tonight. This second girl—woman, would be righter, I think—this second one was big and beautiful too, though she did seem younger.

At the first one’s signal, she moved closer to this mirror or screen that we seemed to be on either side of.

Remember I’m walking down a street all this time. But when the younger one moved closer to the screen, I seemed to be right there. I could look right at her.

Brother, kicking around all over the world, you meet and see a lot of women, but believe me, I’ve never seen any like her. Something she had—beauty, or personality, dunno which—came right out and smacked you hard. You know, your mouth seems dry, your stomach flutters and you think

you'll never draw another breath, the way your throat's tightened. That's the way she was.

I remember her nostrils most. Nicely flared. . . but red, inside. Not pink, red.

I was sure I was dreaming—she was gorgeous, but her hair seemed almost too fine, like spider silk. And her hands seemed webbed, almost.

She smiled a queer little smile, just showing her teeth—bigger and whiter than most people's.

And her eyes! Man! Bigger than any I've ever seen. Soft and luminous and knowing. A little sad. Strange too—with a strange sadness I can't explain.

She didn't have much on. A few spangles and sparklers . . . like a specialty dancer, or something. She didn't need anything else. The big woman said something to her in another language. The girl nodded and leaned toward the screen. I don't know how she did it, but she kissed me.

Like I'm dreaming, see, she kissed me and yet I couldn't touch her. That kiss was like a thousand thrills piled on top of each other. Gods! nothing—anywhere—has ever affected me like that kiss. Perfect ecstasy.

But I'll never get kissed like that again—I'll never see her, again. I wasn't dreaming . . . she WAS real. But she's lost to me now. Lost for the same reason you won't believe what I'm telling you. Poles apart . . . yet . . .

That funny sense of dreaming while awake—of seeing things a mile away, left me, suddenly. The way a light goes out. One instant I was being kissed, in ecstasy; the next, I was just walking along as I had been before I became aware of the big dame reading my mind.

The moon hung low at the end of the street, half hidden by that hill on the north side of River Street. Big. And a funny kind of golden red. That night it seemed too low—like a furtive celestial prowler. It made me conscious of bloody, evil, unknown things. Even the familiar, common things suddenly seemed horrible . . . inexplicably . . . The horror almost of death . . . as though I were a walking dead man in a corpse world. I hated myself and the world with a dull, hopeless hate. Hate for the dull routine of the steel mill—the dirt—the choking smoky air—the booming clank of steel being born in the bowels of a grimy, impersonal, soul-destroying monster. Hopelessly, I tried to think of a way to get away from its depression. I didn't care to walk anymore, so I leaned against a phone pole. No reason for going home . . . even if I could sleep, that would only be a brief release. No reason for going anywhere.

Then SHE appeared again . . . but differently. No dream this—the McCoy. I think, "What kind of dreams am I having? —first I see her in or on a screen, now I'm thinking she's standing in front of me. I'm nuts."

You'd think, seeing someone, you know if it was a dream or real. But she

seemed taller and dressed differently . . . like she'd just come from a masquerade, or something. She had on a long dark cape—in the poor light of the street it looked like it was red . . . like blood. Fastened close around her throat. Falling in straight folds almost to the ground. I noticed her shoulders were nice and square but appealingly female, despite her size. I couldn't see her hands—nothing but her head and this long dark cape. I stared at her face, but out of the corner of my eyes I saw queer designs in gold chasing each other around the lower part of the cape.

They didn't help my sense of unreality. I'll tell you, I half consciously wondered who the hell would work up designs like that? Then, driving all thoughts and wonder from my mind—like a door opening into a dark-room—she spoke. Softly . . . with an amused little laugh, that was sad too, somehow . . .

“Hello, big fellow.”

I just looked . . . finally I managed weakly, “D—didn't—I see you—in a kind of a—a—a dream—a little while ago?”

Again, that funny little laugh like the tinkle of a little glass bell . . . “Yes, you did—that's why I'm here.” The funny accent didn't make me any more certain I wasn't dreaming yet, but I was willing to gamble when she invited.

“Come with me. You'll soon understand . . . everything.”

I wanted to pinch myself. Instead, “If you'll open that cloak,” I said, “then I'll know you're the same girl I saw in the dream.”

She turned her head, quick, to see if anyone was looking at us. Then assured that the street was deserted, with one motion she opened her arms, spreading the red cloak behind her, like a curtain of blood. I felt my strength go to water . . . like a white flame against the night she was . . . no more on than when I saw her before.

“I am called Ceulna,” she said. “You are to follow me.”

“Sister, if you're real, I'll follow you to hell.”

“Come then,” and she turned, allowing the cloak to fall concealing that glorious figure again.

She led me down a few blocks into a street where all the lamps were out. Dark as pitch. I thought what a guy usually thinks in such districts—why do they live here in places like this. Why don't they get out? You know how the houses are down there, all alike.

Well, she went in one of them with me right after her, my big feet stumbling, for she moved fast. Back apiece, where there was more light, I could occasionally glimpse the outlines of her body, as the cape would momentarily cling to her in places. That figure was a swaying promise of delight—the answer to all my dreams, and I didn't mean to let her get away from me.

Somewhere inside the house, without turning on any lights she found a door. Opening it, she turned slightly, and, taking my left hand in hers, started down stairs . . .

I never went down so damn many stairs before or since. Down and down, pausing every once in a while, she'd open another door, then down again. Down, always down 'til I thought I'd never be able to walk if we did hit a level spot. Doors opening before us, closing after we'd pass through . . . then on down. Big doors, I noticed—after my eyes got accustomed to the faint light that seemed to be all around, without any source of light being seen. As though everything—walls, floor, ceiling and doors—were giving off a faint illumination of their own. Big doors of dull metal, that kept getting bigger the farther down we went. Groaning open before us, clanging shut—I wondered if she had walked up all these stairs in so short a time—IF she had.

“What are all these steps about, sister?”

“You'll find out!” And that's all she'd say—but she didn't stop going down stairs.

Well, I couldn't do anything but shrug and follow her. Then, suddenly, my thoughts were interrupted—we'd run out of stairs!

There in front of us was a door, bigger than any of the others. The kind you don't expect to see 'til you meet St. Peter.

The girl, Ceulna I should call her now, turned and said, “Inside you will learn about life—and its absolute worthlessness. For your own sake, I hope you learn quickly. For down here you can die awfully sudden. . . or awfully slow.”

Then a final reassuring squeeze of my hand and she busied herself with some strange lever. That big door ponderously opened, and we went through.

You couldn't tell exactly how big the place was . . . it was all black hangings, instead of walls. But I got the impression that they did cover walls. All over the still black folds were gold figures like those on the girl's cloak. Peering closer, I was mildly surprised to see that the figures were artistic crabs, and from some place in my memory I recalled reading that the crab was the ancient symbol of evil wisdom and power.

Some distance from the great door were people. Those drapes made distances deceptive. We moved toward this group, which, judging from the way Ceulna moved, was our destination. Maybe I should have said . . . our destiny . . .

Walking to the throne, which I saw now was what the group was clustered about, I glanced at the floor. A green floor, that seemed to be half alive. Then I realized it was the color and the curving, vein like lines of dark red carefully worked into the material of the floor, that made it look so like the flesh of the lower reptiles.

After what felt like an endless walk, we stood in front of this throne-like chair. Then I knew I hadn't been dreaming, for seated in the chair was the woman who first contacted my mind back on the street. There was the screen and a whole mass of apparatus.

I used to be a ham radio man and I worked with electricity, but I couldn't tell what any of those tubes and screens were for. The only thing I sensed was that some way they were electrical. But I swear those glowing tubes, view screens, dials, lever switches and peculiar glowing globes were never built by men for men's hands . . . or women's either. Oddly, I thought, "Hell, this looks like some of the equipment beings of other planets make . . . in science fiction stories! —or like some of the stuff that I've had nightmares about after too much whoopee.

But the dame on the throne didn't look like a monster (at first). She was beautiful. Like I always imagined Cleopatra was. Beautiful—and dominant. A kind of voluptuous beauty that set the blood pounding through your temples. The kind of woman a life of indulgent luxury makes. She was big too, like Ceulna. Big all over. Not gross, just big.

There she was half reclining on this couch or throne. It might have seemed like a gag—except everyone around her was so darn quiet—like they were afraid to even breathe.

She had on a long gown that was out of this world—made of some shimmering material that clung to her in the right places, like it was part of her. One leg was crossed over the other, and the constantly changing shimmer of the cloth highlighted a long smoothly curved thigh that I'd have whistled at if it hadn't been so damn quiet.

I figured, "I didn't crash this joint so I'll give her the once over a couple of times," And I did.

Starting at her head there was some fine metallic net that kept her hair in place, except where it hung straight to her shoulders where the soft waves started to cascade down her back. Her shoulders, too, were wide, but certainly not girlish . . . well-rounded with an inviting texture. The only reason I could see for the dress was she wanted the color.

She looked at me with half closed ice-blue eyes.

The dress was like a thousand miniatures of her eyes—like some weird jewels had been woven into the cloth. Glittering and sparkling like liquid gems—or the eyes of vampires—a diamond under a full moon.

She stared at me awhile longer, so I looked the rest of them over. The men—slaves, I felt—wore only G-strings, but the females were all wrapped up to the eyes like Arab women. Evidently, the boss on the throne dislikes any other women displaying flesh where it might look better than her own.

Finally, her pouting mouth twisted into a grin and she spoke. Her voice was hardly human—almost musical, but lacking the tone flux of human emotion. A mocking meanness ran through her words.

“You are a fortunate man, Big Jim,” while I wondered how she knew my name. There hadn’t been a peep out of me. Then, I remembered the machine—if I could read her mind while she was using it, I suppose she could read mine too. But what was she saying?

“You have been chosen by a mighty organization as one more unit of strength . . .” On that last word her cold eyes ran over my body like a horse trader looking at a good buy.

I thought it best to keep my mouth shut ‘till I found out what this was all about.

“You will remain here until you understand what is expected of you. I will decide what your duties will be. If you are thinking or refusing, remember that your wishes in the matter are not important. None who enter here return to reveal the entrance to those not of our organization.”

My first impulse was to get up and slap her face for her insolence. I couldn’t speak. I was getting damn mad. Just as I was ready to say something, she continued. “Now, while you are at hand, I can show you our punishment for disloyalty—in case you are ever tempted to betray us. Happily, I can also demonstrate the rewards you can receive for devoted accomplishment in obeying our orders. When you are shown, remember you can obtain more of the same pleasure anytime you are able to do us a service.”

She gestured languidly to a female slave who quickly pulled back a heavy drape, revealing a greater mass of huge mechanism. A massive complicated thing that wasn’t anything made by modern man. The rounded intricacies had the beauty of life forms. The surfaces had a hard glitter and iridescence more living than metallic. Looking at the strange shape, I felt its power and knowledge. Power more piercing than mortal men. Somehow, I felt puny and ignorant, looking at that thing. And I’m not puny and I’m not ignorant. But the mech—down there they call all the ancient machinery ‘mech’—the mech wasn’t really big, it just made you sense the bigness of it.

Above this—mech—hung the crucified figure of a girl. Eighteen she might have been—her body a soft symphony in sculptured stone.

What were all the good-looking women doing here, I wondered. Here down so many steps, under City. I guess we might have been a mile or more under the earth.

I thought at first that this new girl hanging above the mech was just a horrible parody of a statue—the way certain lights and shadows were playing over her body. Then, suddenly, I went cold. It was a living woman!—she

moaned softly, and her limbs writhed—painfully—slowly. She was alive—a crucified living young girl!

Placed under the girl's feet was a long, ominous looking couch. I didn't like the gruesomely suggestive look of the thing—there were straps attached to it, hanging like the open arms of Death, waiting for something—or someone. Someone to hold down while the gods only know what horrible things were done.

The Boss dame gave me just a few seconds to take in the scene—then she made an imperious gesture. I should have been on my toes—but I wasn't.

Two of the slaves came alive at her signal then, and before I realized what was coming off, they had hold of my arms. That made me mad—fighting mad. With a curse, I jerked my left arm free. Before the two dumb slaves knew what I was doing I had swung around. Getting a good grip on the one on my right, I tossed him against my other little playmate and both went sprawling. They weren't too anxious about getting up again, either. Before any more could jump me, I turned around, ready to sock the next bird that made a move. No one did.

There wasn't a sound—except my own gasping breath. Then, the formerly soft, pouting moist mouth of the big broad running the show hardened into a thin line and she spoke her voice like the lash of a blacksnake whip in the stillness—no longer soft and voluptuous, but strident and threateningly angered.

“I see I shall have to teach you several lessons at once!”

I glances right at her. She was standing up now—that smooth, just too soft figure of hers quivering with scarcely concealed anger.

Without any warning, she bent slightly, reaching for the banks of controls. She found the one she wanted and threw a switch or lever. A beam sprang out of the huge mech. Sprang out like a searchlight's beam—in my direction.

I figured that if I was to do anything it had to be now, so I started toward her. I didn't get far—I was out of my league. She moved the beam onto me saying, “Now, note, my muscular rebel, everything you do, you do by my will. Mine, not your own. This is the first lesson—learn it well. Resistance is useless . . . your big muscles are my property so long as this beam is on you and I look into this screen.”

I wanted to smash my fist into that lovely, angered, sneering face, but what she said was true! I had no volition of my own. I tried and couldn't even move a finger.

With my mind fighting for control of my own body, she made it move to the couch and lie down, the beam always on me.

Strapping me down, the slaves fastened several wires as different places on my skin.

This Hellion that was ruler here stepped down from the throne and glided over to me. Her voice husky with some emotion—some strange eagerness suddenly awakened within her, she whispered, like the hiss of a snake.

“Now you will experience one of the least of the rewards we grant those that do our bidding, loyally and well. She that hangs there,” indicating the crucified girl, “has earned our punishment by betraying us to our enemies. Absorb both ‘lessons’ well—if you wish to enjoy yourself here in the future.”

With that she seated herself at what looked like the console of an organ, not three feet from my head.

Directly above me drooped the body of the girl. The woman’s mechanical voice, still husky with that strange note explained, “This mech is called the organ of opposites. From it lead two sets of wires, one controlling a synthetic nerve impulse of pleasure energy, and the other, a synthetic nerve impulse of pain. With it I can give immense pleasure and intense and violent pain at the same time. The girl is wired to the pain source; you are connected to the pleasure vibrant. Beware that you are never at the other end of the wires . . . watch, and feel . . .

She let her fingers down caressingly on the keys—she depressed one, and through my body ran a wave of intense, insupportably sweet pleasure.

Momentarily decreasing my enjoyment was the sight of the girl hanging above me—simultaneously contorted with violent pain. Then I became aware of the girl’s thoughts and sensations . . . the ancient mech that was controlling both the girl and myself could, almost magically, make both of us aware of the other’s thoughts and sensations—aware, as though our minds and emotions had been transplanted. I KNEW her thoughts, and somehow, I knew she was aware of my own.

The first surge of opposing emotion was only the opening note of what proved to be a symphony of unguessed pain and exquisite pleasure. Whatever else the cruel voluptuary at the console might be, she was a virtuoso of an art unknown on Earth to ordinary men . . . by the skilled use of some sensation music, playing bodily sensation with the feeling and dexterity of a masterful surface musician.

Enrapt by the cacophony of opposite sensations she was sending through her subjects, her fingers increased their speed—greater, and more intense, the sensations coursing through our bodies, crescendo as her fingers depressed key after key . . . exquisite chords of pleasure, at this witch’s mad artistry, were multiplied a thousand times. A vast storm of ultra-powerful synthetic emotions and pleasure sensations grew within my brain—within

every nerve and tissue of my body . . . the pleasurable sensations of a lifetime packed into each wave every time she pressed a key . . . God forgive me! the thoughts I had while that damnable machine was playing will haunt me through hell and a thousand lifetimes! . . . while I was groaning with the floods of delight, I DELIGHTED in the girl writhing painfully above me more than anything on Earth . . . At one foul step the operation of the ancient mech made me cruel . . . and EVIL . . . all my flesh and being desired *agony and pain* for her that *I* might soar the heights of pleasure that was the inevitable accompaniment of her torture.

No man could do otherwise—for the setup of those synthetic nerve impulses was an automatism of *evil*—pleasure in another’s pain was the essence of the mech.<sup>(1)</sup>

In a brief moment when the wave of sensations had subsided before crescendoing again, I looked at the big witch who was controlling my delight drenched body . . . like an artist pouring his soul into his playing, the woman’s face was rapt—I realized that neither the poor tortured girl on the cross, nor my own ecstatic body, meant more to her than a page of music does to a pianist. Vaguely, I wondered . . .

“WHO . . . or what . . . WAS she . . . where’d she come from?”

Then, cutting short any further thoughts, the stops of synthetic emotion were pulled by the witch-artist, and, once more, my senses and self-went reeling and soaring in their first lesson in evil desire . . . in devilish pleasure in another’s intense agony.

Whatever she was I didn’t care then. I was her slave . . . for such tremendous joy and bliss had never before been mine.

This type of treatment, springing from the ancient cult’s customary practices in increasing its evil strength was what had made the woman what she was . . . but this I learned later.

I was favored ‘cause my arrival coincided with her punishment of the girl, and the witch couldn’t resist the chance to practice her art on an attractive male and spend her venom on a beautiful woman together.

An hour of this weird and horrible music of opposite sensations passed. Pain for the girl whose lovely body by then was dripping bloody sweat over me in a steady stream; pleasure for me, straining at my bonds, consumed

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(1) These synthetic electric sensation impulses forcibly replace one’s natural will with its artificial will. The victim’s will and self obeyed the great evil machine, for its strength of nerve- and thought-electric was so much superior to the natural will of man. The good, beneficial uses of the ancient machine had been perverted by the profane hands of others than the original builders. —Author.

with ecstasy. Pain and Pleasure. The girl's mouth was pulled open in a continuous scream—a sound to haunt the deepest hell.

At last, a final crescendo of rending chords made the two bodies strain violently toward each other . . . mine in a convulsive surge of delight . . . the poor agonized girl's, in tearing deathly pain . . . a torrent of blood gurgled from her open, agony-frozen mouth—death was setting her free from her Hell . . . With her last few gasping breaths her eyes glared at me . . . her face . . . God! . . . her agonized face will never leave my mind—nor ever let me sleep in peace.

The male slaves came and released me. I couldn't think—but an evil desire had been born in my brain . . . a desire to have such pleasure always. Too, I had a strong sense of guilt . . . I HAD enjoyed the death agonies of the girl.

The woman who had just tortured a girl to death and awakened a devil in my own soul sat with her eyes gloating at the racked body of her victim. I knew, instinctively, that many, many people had died at her hands in just that way. She turned to me.

“Now you have seen our punishment . . . and tasted a bit of our reward—” She was looking at me approvingly as she continued, “—if you do well what is asked of you, you can earn a life of such pleasures as few mortals have ever known . . . If you get idealistic or squeamish—and or try to buck the ruler group—you will die as she died—or in an even more horrible and painful way. I, Nonur, have spoken. Go.”

With that and a tired wave of her hand, a slave came and led me away. I couldn't have answered her even if my condition had permitted me. As I left, my ravished humanity began to reassert itself, and I swore an oath never to rest unless I had to, until I had stopped such torture forever, by killing all such as she . . .

I knew it wasn't, yet I kept telling myself that this was just a wild nightmare—I'd wake up, sweating and worried and then forget about it. But I didn't wake up—I WAS awake! Such things just couldn't go on under a modern American city—but they could—and DO!

That night I met others who had thought such things couldn't be—but are. Others, like myself, recruits for the secret army the hidden people were gathering. For that was the purpose of numerous other young men I saw. All as strange to this place and its ways as I was.

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## CHAPTER II

*"I have killed many things, but none was a greater crime than this, that they should die before the flesh had quite grown used to being round a soul. A white and shrunk nothingness. . . .*

*From "Memoirs of a Warrior". Bikaren of Tuon. Venus, 1609.*

THE rock down here under — City was a labyrinth of rooms and passages. Big rooms that seemed to have been lavishly furnished, sometime in the past, but the splendor was covered with inches of dust now. If I had only known how ancient that dust was, down there in the almost dustless caverns, I'd have looked more searchingly beneath its blanketing greyness.

Some of the rooms had been cleaned out and furnished with beds and plumbing. These rooms contained but few of the hulking mysterious mechanisms characteristic of the ancient place.

They contained other men too—the room I was taken to had an occupant already. His face was thin and haggard—broken teeth were hideous when he spoke. About forty, I guessed. As soon as the slave escorting me left, the old one began to question me. Impatiently, as if he'd have burst if the slave hadn't gone and permitted him to satisfy his curiosity.

"What do you know of this place, young fellow?"

"Very little," I answered, "but before we go too far hadn't we better get acquainted? My name's Jim McKenna, steel-worker from the city upstairs."

"Glad to know you, my boy. My name's Farne—Henry Farne. 'Hank' to my friends." He stood, taken aback when I reached out to shake hands. Then hesitatingly, he put his out.

"You're new here, aren't you?"

I just grunted an affirmative "Uhhuh."

"I'm an old hand in this hellish life and old Hank knows a greenhorn when he sees one—"

Better be careful, I thought, so I said, "How?"

"Well, the look on your face, for instance— all the old timers have a dopey, fatalistic expression. It's the 'stim' juice—that's stimulative electric, case you didn't know; anyway, the stim juice kills their souls."

The old boy was evidently glad to have an audience, for he continued like a lecturer or something—

"Think I know why too—that mech is too old—way too old—to use like they do, constantly. Not as healthy as it was when it was built long ago—

God only knows HOW long ago.” Here he smiled, displaying those dirty, discolored, broken teeth. “You’ll find out—’s funny to get used to the idea that a secret underworld life like this exists on Earth without anyone upstairs getting wise. Been like that for centuries—little change . . . but to get worse, I guess.”

He’d been looking no place in particular, when he suddenly looked straight at my eyes and said, “Your face, Jim—that’s the name, isn’t it? your face, Jim, is still human—or I’d be afraid to talk to you . . . afraid you’d run to the big shots and get me in wrong. You are newly arrived, aren’t you?”

I nodded, my curiosity aroused. This Henry Farne seemed to know something of this darkly strange, horrible organization whose ruthless torture and cruel pleasures I had felt tonight. As a frog’s tongue does to a fly, these cave dwellers had reached out and snared me—the beautiful creature who had led me here was just bait for the trap whose rulers were shanghaiing an army. I wanted to know what I was in for.

“Look, man, give me the dope, will you—what’s this all about anyway? — I just came down tonight.” Evidently this satisfied the old man for he squatted on his heels against the wall in front of my bed. Settling himself, his eyes scanned me carefully, then—

“I’ll take a chance and tell you what I can—but don’t let THEM know I told you anything. I’ve been punished before for my opinions . . . the rulers don’t like truth spread around too much.”

He paused long enough to take a long, thin, purple cigar from his pocket.

“Know what this is?” he asked, holding up the cigar. I looked at it a minute then answered, “Well, it looks like a purple cigar, why?”

Hank put the long cigar in his mouth and lit it.

“It’s a cigar alright—but it’s not tobacco—it’s a drug grown on the planet Venus . . . a whole lot different than tobacco—here, taste it.”

I took the weed and took a drag on it. The smoke was sweet, heady, and very pleasant. At the first puff my mind felt a new exhilaration—it was racing. I was suddenly more awake than I had been all evening. Somewhat reluctantly I handed the cigar back. “That’s certainly not tobacco—no tobacco ever gave me such a lift. Wonderful stuff,” I commented.

Satisfied, Farne took the cigar again, saying, “That was just a test to see if you were familiar with the weed. Had you been an old timer, like me and the rest, your face wouldn’t have shown surprise when you first tasted that potent drug.”

“This old bird isn’t as dumb as he looks,” I thought to myself, as he leaned back and began an account that lasted half the night.

“You’ve got to be careful down here—never forget that. Careful . . . care-

ful of even what you think . . . That cat from Hell out there can read minds with her damn mech.”

Like the caliph of ancient Bagdad listening to Scherezade, I listened without a word as Hank spun his yarn.

“Nonur . . . that’s the witch’s name . . . Nonur, and others like her rule these caverns—these ancient caves that go back beyond the memory of man. The caves—these caves here—are the long-hidden home of some ancient, wiser-than-human race.”

“Did you see the mech of opposing sensations?” he suddenly asked.

“See it? Hell, man, that crazy dame put me through it!”

“Well . . . that’s not so good, but the point I was making was that machine and thousands of others—all the mech you’ll see down here, except the plumbing—was built unguessed thousands of years ago by beings who knew infinitely more than modern men. Nonur, and the others before her, have had this ancient mech since earliest time . . . I suspect since before the biblical flood.”

I was having a hard time getting that, when he continued to pour out one startling fact after another . . . I couldn’t believe then . . . but IT IS TRUE!

“The use of this antique mech has made them into dero—most of ‘em, anyway.” At my puzzled glance, Hank explained that “dero” meant degenerate robot—degenerated humans, lacking in will or souls. “Through the years,” said Hank, “the continued use of these marvelous mechanisms, and other factors, idleness and cannibalism, for instance, has caused them to evolve in an utterly different way of life. And in the centuries, they have managed to keep the secret of the caves hidden from surface men—whom they despise and hate . . . so they say.”

By this time the Venusian cigar was consumed. Hank tamped it out and then continued. “Even their bodies, minds and thought processes have been changed from anything you are used to regarding as natural to men like us. Let me warn you, right here, young fellow, never forget that as long as you’re in the caves . . . they’re not human, so don’t try to outguess ‘em by figuring they’ll act like you would.”

“I suppose,” continued Hank, “this ancient mech was built originally for pleasure and stimulation—but these devils have managed to make torture machines out of pleasure rays and body electric-stimulants. It’s their source of power—brings some of ‘em riches, tremendous riches—to boot.”

“Now, Boy, these devils have plans for you so I’ll give you the dope on things you might need to know. The ancient people who build these caves . . . also conquered space. Some of their old spacers they abandoned when they left Earth forever. This bunch down here have found some of ‘em and

got ‘em running . . . that wasn’t too hard . . . the ships are practically indestructible. When they got ‘em operating they traveled the far spaces, in the past centuries. Still do, even today . . . make regular trips between Earth and Venus. They go to Mars too, I hear, but I’ve never learned much about it—except there isn’t much life on Mars, but I HAVE been to Venus.” I had seen too much already to offer much doubt about this—these ancients were far, far ahead of the boys on the surface, so I urged Hank to tell me what Venus was like.

“Venus is a whole planet of jungle paradise . . . peopled by a beautiful and advanced race superior to Earthmen in many ways. The women of Venus are far more beautiful than those of Earth, on the average, but, then, so are the men, —though they’re not as large as the women. Now, the ones we work for aren’t good for the Venusians, nor good to them. Unlike Earth, however, the Venusians are well aware of the evil presence in their midst—and we of Earth are that Evil. The Venusians have the antique mech too, but it’s not a secret with them; they know more about it than the secret rulers of Earth . . . and that makes them powerful enemies. They’re getting wised up now, but they used to be gullible as Hell, which made them putty in the hands of a pitiful liar. You are here because the Venusians, millions of miles away, are wising up.”

For the life of me I couldn’t see how anything that far away could affect me so I asked him to explain.

“The native races of Venus,” he went on, “have recently risen against the invaders from Earth—done pretty well, too. Our chief allies there are the ‘cubists,’ the Hagmen—priests of Hecate—led by their so-called goddess, The Hag, herself. Hecate—The Hag’s—age is unknown—supposed to be immortal. She’s a giantess—bigger’n yourself. Big! And a master of much of the ancient wisdom. She went to Venus centuries ago—and in that time, has built up a well-knit, effective organization. That’s why you’re here . . . you are going to be trained to fight for these hidden powerful people of Earth against the free peoples of Venus.”

The idea didn’t appeal to me. Not that I didn’t like to fight—but I do like to pick my own. This business of being forced into something made me mad, but I figured I’d better let Farne go on talking and learn what I could.

“You talk like a man whose been well educated,” I prompted him, “yet, you look as if you had had a life of poverty and hard work—how come? What happened to you?”

He smiled, though there wasn’t much humor in it. “Well, you see, these people—the ones from Earth—have a government of a sort perhaps comparable to the government of Rome during the corrupt reign of the later Cae-

sars. I was sent to Venus years ago. I liked the natives, got along well with them—too damn well, in fact. When trouble came between the Venusians and the Earthmen, I was under suspicion. And, with these rulers of ours, my young friend, suspicion means they either kill you or throw you in a cell ‘til the danger is all past. That’s where I’ve spent my time . . . in a dank cell deep under the mighty fortress-city of Luon.”

As though he was wryly pleased with himself, Hank continued, “Hah! Then when our little Venusian Friends really began to fight, and a long war was seen to be inevitable—our beloved ‘masters’;” and here he spat, “decided my great knowledge of Venus might be needed. Soo . . . with many apologies, they took me out of prison, gave me a square meal for a change, new civilian clothes and put me aboard the first ship for Earth. I got here yesterday . . . and they haven’t paid any attention to me since I landed.”

That seemed to end his tale, so I figured I would ask a few questions myself. “Just what,” I asked him, “are these Venusians really fighting about?”

Farne looked at me quizzically. “It’s hard to tell you . . . but their children have been disappearing regularly—and they blame Hecate’s priests and the Earthmen. More than that—well, I don’t know absolutely—but from the usual practices of the Cult of Hecate—the Hag she’s called—I can imagine that the Venusians have plenty of provocation.”

“What is this ‘Cult of Hecate’” I asked, “this ‘Cult of the Hag’ as you call it?”

“Well . . . it’s a sort of an old thing on Venus—you might call ‘em ‘Early Settlers’. Went there from Earth, around 1400, I think. They’re a cruel bunch—my front teeth were smashed when one of them kicked me in the face . . . though they’re not unlike our own secret ray people here on Earth in their cruelty. I want to warn you—”

“Warn me!” I interrupted, “against what?”

“Yes, warn you, young fellow—don’t decide you don’t care to join their little army . . . since you know all about them now, you’ll not be allowed to return to the surface world. And if you balk at the enforced soldiering . . . you’ll be treated as a deserter and put at some kind of hard labor . . . or worse. Pretend to be highly entranced and wholly charmed with everything down here . . . no matter what your true feelings, approve of their cruelty when you see it . . . or you won’t see long.”

Hank talked for a long time before we turned in—of the immense steaming jungles of Venus, of that tropic planet’s girl-warriors in their gleaming ray-proof armor, racing on the crystal spider-walks they spin like great glittering cobwebs through the tremendous tree growths. He talked of the ancient love-cults whose rites and ceremonies he described at length; their struggle with the horror cult of the cruel Hecate, the Mother of Sin—the

Cult of the Limping Hag. He told me of the great glass houses, of their cities that hung like strange and gigantic fruit from the huge tree limbs of the forest giants.

Hank caught my imagination as no one ever has; I longed to see this strange world where the trees grew large enough to form the foundations of cities; where the great sluggish rivers dotted with the shining crystal craft of the laughing youth of Venus, rolled their awful might to the deep red seas.

The desire to see the wonders of Venus for myself made me more reconciled to the rugged training I soon had to undergo—even more I was anxious to go on, now, after hearing Hank.

Swift days of training passed. I was outfitted with a uniform and weapons. Taught to handle certain of the antique war mech of the caves. These seemed to be in great profusion, collected from the labyrinths of dwelling caves—perhaps from other planets, too. They were thousands of years old . . . but they had been built by that ancient Master Race . . . built by the Godrace, to last forever—built of time resisting materials, and the caves themselves were so air-tight and damp-proof that the ancient mech was, for the most part, still in good condition. All the antique weapons were self-contained units—some were mounted on wheels, having a seat like a tractor. The mech had a tank into which they poured water and inside the tough shielding metal a little dynamo of tremendous power sprang into whirring life at the touch of a button. Its power must have been drawn from the disintegration of the water by some method long lost to men.

On the tractor-like model there was a lever in the center that controlled the ray-beam of destruction—in the same way a joy-stick controls the movements of a plane in flight; right and left swing for right and left sweep of the beam and forward and back to move the beam up and down.

I learned to read the dials in the view screen—dials that indicated rough, fine, and vernier focus of distant objects.

They didn't teach us how to make any but the simplest of repairs wouldn't let us open any of the cases. But then, I don't suppose there is a man living, anywhere, who could have really fixed one of the ancient mech-weapons that had actually broken down.

That view-screen was a marvel. I wondered if the rays' amazing power and range was due to fine lenses or to a system of magnetic fields, like an electron microscope, or something. That thing could bring a man thirty miles away into such sharp focus that his face seemed just two feet from the screen. Most of our training consisted of practice with this instrument—bringing distant objects into swift focus, center 'em on the cross hairs—then press the firing studs. Wham! and whatever was in focus just wasn't

anymore. A terrible, deadly weapon—but only a tiny unit, comparing with their large weapons as a rifle does to a Big Bertha.

From what I saw of their weapons and maneuvers in the vast caverns, this small force of a couple of thousand men could have beaten any of the Earth's surface armies before the army knew what had happened.

These rulers of the caverns were the potential, if not the actual, Rules of Earth . . . yet, VENUS COULD FIGHT THEM!

What terrible forces would we shanghaied soldiers have to face? What would the Venusians throw at us that could stop an army armed with these marvelous weapons of the Gods Themselves! And surface men didn't even suspect they exist. They still don't!

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### CHAPTER III

*“Evoe! O Bacchus!” thus began the song; And “Evoe!” answered all the female throng.*

*Unbind your fillets, loose your flowing hair. And orgies and nocturnal rites prepare.*

*Virgil.*

HANK knew what he was talking about . . . they trained us . . . and kept us in luxurious kennels. I had been there about two weeks when they called us to a feast. To celebrate our departure, we learned eventually, but departure to a far planet—not to home. A sort of a morale builder before they sent us off to the wars . . . their wars.

As we entered the vast cavern hall, which dwarfed the immense tables set with a thousand places, I was stunned. It wasn't the sheen of the golden vessels, or the sparkling of the jewel-set lamps, nor the rich fabric and design of the hanging, nor even the glittering bosoms of true Rulers. It wasn't even the thousand dancing girls' glistening bodies present to amuse us . . . it was the several hundred gossamer-draped girls—floating in the air like living bubbles in a god's draught of champagne . . . through some weird magic of the ancient mech they floated in a hypnotic state—each buoyed up by a levitation beam from the mech and synchronized so that they moved slowly about without ever crossing or colliding.

Due to their hypnotic condition, their faces were the faces of dryads long hungry for love and suddenly released from their tree-coffins. The gleaming, flashing girdles about their hips, enhanced the seductive, never ceasing motion . . . their floating hair glittered with what may have been gold dust—but

looked to me like diamonds or stars.

This magic of floating women set the keynote of the feast—lavish beauty above the somehow sinister faces of the luxurious, decadent group who were the descendants of those who for long centuries had kept the secret of the ancient magic.

A Bacchanalian revel to show those who were about to plunge into battle for them that they weren't niggardly . . . but the Rulers could easily afford the cost—I learned later it wouldn't have to be repeated for many of their new soldiers . . . most of these young men were soon to die, fighting on the spider walks of the Venusian cities of crystal. Soon to die—but they had no inkling of it, who would have, in that utterly abandoned orgy? Nor had I, except for a brief wonder at the weapons that the Venusians must have if they could face the mech we used . . . even here in the banquet hall.

When the blood is racing and your eyes can't focus clearly for the delightful way your mind seems half attached to your body, logic is soon forgotten . . . and the Rulers that night had the means to do it. That feast surpassed anything I had ever seen—or even read of in ancient Roman splendor . . . strange drugged drinks were served to excite us, the strange, wild haunting melodies of Venusian music never ceased. The stimulating pleasure rays I'd already experienced, and still craved, played always about the hall—an invisible lightning, intensifying the interest of a man and a maid—drifting on to other couples when their attention turned to other affairs.

There were jugglers, and conjurers, and dancing girls from Venus. It was in this group that I met again the girl Ceulna . . . the same one who had lured me here, the first night. She had just concluded a dance whose furious tempo and strangely exotic gyrations would have exhausted an Earth girl far more than it had this tall glorious, marble-limbed Venusian. A Venusian—that's what she was—a Venusian, here under a modern American city. She . . . and thousands like her.

Venusians are subtly different than Earth people—their nostrils flare widely and are scarlet inside. Their eyes, a light gray or a flashing green that varies according to their spirit and interest—much larger eyes than one sees any need for. And webbed hands! Yes—webbed—webbed almost to the tips of their long, graceful fingers. Brilliant, large white teeth—oddly, the canines are larger than those of Earthmen, but still pretty.

Well set on their heads are their very thin, shell-like ears. Rather large though, but one doesn't notice this in the women, as they are hidden in the floating silk of their hair. Venusian hair is curious, being of infinitely fine stuff—like spider silk—too fine for quick combing, often quite matted, but always beautiful. Beauty? Ceulna was. . . how do they say it? . . . the ultimate of beauty.

I was suddenly more than glad to see her again. I felt more acquainted with her than any of these others reveling about us, so I invited her to join me. Like women everywhere, though, that was her idea—what had brought her to my table anyway.

Evidently that was the case for we soon were talking like life-long friends seeing each other after a brief absence. She spoke a little English in that funny little accent that made my heart do flip-flops—and I asked her many questions, as much to listen to her as to really get an answer. Simple, common little questions like, “What do you young people of Venus do for amusement?”

Then, the thinking voice, “make love, like you of Earth . . . or we swim . . . and swim. We of Venus swim much, much more than you. Or, we like to make thoughts on the old machines . . . but of that you would not know.”

Finally, lowering my voice, I asked, “How is it that you of Venus work for those who are at war with Venusians?”

“You do not know much of Venus,” she stated with a sad shake of her head. “You see, in my home city the Hagmen rule—and that Limping Hag, their Queen—she is not a good ruler. So . . . I go to work for the Hag’s allies, for they have more fun . . . more dancing and music. Hecate, the Hag, is not fun, ugh!”

I grinned back at her wide, good humored smile as she just wrinkled her nose. She probably didn’t care for the Hag, I thought, but she didn’t let it mean too much in her fun-loving life. She had a terrifically attractive personality—a kind of lazy vitality, a sureness of herself I envied. Well, I like fun too, and she was more than fun—just to be near her was exhilarating. I frowned at her as though I thought the Hag was distasteful too—then we both laughed gaily, like little children.

We weren’t the only ones laughing—about us swirled increasingly unrestrained revelry—being excited to ever greater unrestraint by the sweeping pleasure-ray’s stimulation.

My curiosity as to the strange unsuspected strength of these hideous Rulers . . . that whispered fear of the Hag I’d heard so often—I felt I could get answered if I kept my interest masked in gaiety. So, I laughed as I prompted, “Tell me of the Limping Hag that you fear, Ceulna.”

Shrugging her beautiful shoulders, she started. “The Hag is a very ancient . . . supposedly immortal . . . creature. They say she is centuries old . . . many centuries. She’s a giantess—a hideous, old giantess. We don’t know when she first came to Venus . . . she and her followers landed in the wild forests and were there many, many years before they were discovered.”

Ceulna glanced at my eyes as though to assure herself I was listening,

then continued, "She was much smaller then—and her followers weaker in numbers, possibly only a few thousand in all. But the gullible and innocent women of the Tuons who ruled the surrounding country believed every lie the Hag and her men told, and let them live in peace . . . until it was too late. The Hagmen are accomplished liars—particularly in lying to a people to whom a lie is unthinkable—the Tuons believed too easily all they were told. Now . . . now, we know the Hag is an antique vampire who prolongs her horrible existence with the blood of young children . . . and takes no other food."

I guess I expressed disbelief, momentarily, or something, because Ceulna hastened to reassure me, "Oh, yes, the Hag even has many big farms . . . farms of children . . . but, somehow, her . . . child-cattle, don't do very well, and are old when a normal child would be just grown. She steals their youth . . . by living on a daily infusion of their young blood!"

"What does she—the Hag—look like?" I asked her, my eyes on her vivid, startlingly alive face with those oversize Venusian eyes flashing strangely out of the ultra-whiteness of her Tuon skin.

Cocking her head coyly to one side, she asked me, "Would you like very much to see?"

I nodded with a smile and she arose. "Then follow me and I will show you some magic that children play with on Venus."

I trailed after her spangled dancer's form as she threaded through the boisterous, drunken mob, wondering where a person acquired such a gait—like a tight-rope artist's—her figure as balanced as a gyroscope, yet, as sinuous as a cat's. Had I seen the spider walks of her home city on Venus, I would have known how many generations of perilously racing feet had produced the delicate precision of her stride.

Soon we were in the part of the caverns where the dancers had their quarters. Ceulna's apartment was lavish and luxurious. At my appreciative glance, she laughed, "Boss, he like my dancing. He says, 'You like this place?' I say, 'Okay, Boss.' He says, 'Okay, Beautiful.'"

Opening a curiously embossed metal chest, she withdrew a green crystal globe that had a kind of coronet attached. Immediately, its resemblance to the Egyptian headdresses worn by priests and gods made me wonder if the pictures I had seen in history books were similar contrivances from the same source? However, my speculations were cut short by Ceulna's actions.

"Now watch the ball and you will see what the Limping Hag—the Mother of Sin, looks like," and she pressed a stud at the side of the heavy coronet base.

A light quivered into vague life within the green ball's depths . . . the crystalline, murky green slowly whirled and cleared to reveal a picture—as though one were looking down on a scene from a great height.

“I spied on her one day from a big tree—she didn’t know I was there,” Ceulna chattered, as the globe became clearer. “There! There she is . . . the big one.”

The figure in the globe was big, standing twice the height of the figures about her. Her body was well covered with flesh, still, she seemed bony. Barbaric ornaments were hung and fastened all over that huge harridan. Her face was a fierce Medusa mask from antiquity, covered with a network of fine wrinkles. She seemed to scorn clothes and her immense dugs hung down to her waist—the living incarnation of that foully evil Hindu Goddess KALI! in the flesh.

The green whorls had left the globe entirely and I could see the background. The Hag was in a big garden—a garden that I found out later could only exist in the hot-house air of Venus. Among the immense, flowering shrubs, and over the heavy carpet of weird yellow-veined grass, played many scores of children.

“She loves children, that old one,” said Ceulna bitterly. We have conclusive evidence that the children are bled to make Her live! Here on Earth, you graft young saplings onto old trees, and the young sap makes the old tree young again, so why not the same thing with people? The Hag learned how to do just that in some Hell in the far past . . . and that is why she does not die . . . and why she loves children so. Huh! it’s no wonder—they mean eternal life to Her.”

I couldn’t answer, but I understood the bitter tone of her voice—think of the horror if the unscrupulous rich ever discovered that evil method of the Hag’s for staying young. It would be one burden too many for the broad backs of the poor to bear.

Ceulna’s voice had dropped lower as she continued, “Soon, you go, with many young men to fight against my people . . . to fight for such undying Evil as that hideous giantess, to fight and kill my people so our children may be used to make blood for those evil veins. It’s . . . it’s too . . . horrible!”

My own voice dropped, sad and low, and I answered, “This has always been a harsh world of work and worry for me, Ceulna, and I see your own world isn’t much better under the rule of my fellow Earthmen. I don’t know what I can do about this mess, but Ceulna, if the time ever comes that a blow from my fist can help free the people of these two worlds from the burden of these damn vampires, I promise you, I’ll strike—and HARD!”

It’s not like my nature, but Ceulna’s grateful glance as I spoke made me feel very noble—like a crusader or something. But I meant every word I said, then.

“I can’t see how I can do anything now—but I will learn, and later the opportunity may come. Tell me more, Ceulna!”

She nodded, smiling slightly at the way I spoke her name, the green brilliance of her eyes shining with tears. "I have always done others' bidding and it maybe I always will, but among the free people of Venus—my people—it is not so. They love their people, and life, to them, is a rich feast of love and pleasure. Some of us though, under these secret rulers from Earth, and under the priests of Hecate, we foolish ones who believed their lies, do the work and the rulers seek only to weld our chains tighter."

A tear welled from one of the beautiful, limpid eyes as she stifled a faint sob and continued, "When one knows that the children she bears will be used only as blood producers, and be old with the antique, ancient blood they pour back into the children's veins, it's . . . too horrible. Some day we will be like the ants, without sex or pleasure, living just to serve the huge body of some ancient Queen—like Hecate—the Limping Hag, who lives on the youthful bodies of our children. Life does not get better for us—it's—but tell me your name, O my new friend.

I was falling for her—but hard. Still I thought that nothing was to be gained by letting them know who I was. I told her, "You can call be 'Big Jim' like all the rest of my friends, Ceulna, though I guess down here I'm just Number one-eight-seven-one-X—that's the number they gave me. But, I'm not so young, nor so innocent that I can't appreciate your beauty, Ceulna, and desire it!"

"Aah! that's better," she smiled, "I remember how your big feet followed mine when they sent me out to get you . . . in . . . here. You were so very anxious to get some place with me—I couldn't help but know what you felt. You should . . . know how I . . . how I hated to lure you into this evil life, but I had no choice. They see and hear over such distance with the ancient apparatus, that I have to—must—do as they ask—or die, as that girl died that night. She was a young friend of mine who tried to keep a young boy out of their clutches, and failed—but what woman could help such actions? Many, a great many of us die when they catch us talking, even as we are doing now."

"Boy! they certainly hand out the punishment for even little things around here, don't they?" I asked, as much to bolster my own rising alarm as to make Ceulna talk more.

"They are unjust—so, we will talk differently after this—talk of the glorious wisdom of our Rulers, of the foolishness of those who dare oppose them. We must talk—and think—like this for you never know who is listening with the telemech rays.

At the mention of even thinking, I must have raised my eyebrows in disbelief, because Ceulna hastened on as though to convince me.

"Yes, even your thoughts must be guarded. When you know, or feel,

someone is listening to your thought, my handsome friend, you must think as if you loved to be treated as an animal to be fed upon, or some of the ‘watchers’ will report you to the Rulers as an enemy, and you saw yourself what they do to an enemy.”

“‘Watchers,’ Ceulna?” I asked. “What are they?”

“The Watchers are the spies of the Rulers,” Ceulna spoke rapidly with quick glances over her shoulders as though she expected someone to catch us here in this weird apartment a mile under the earth. “The watchers stay at the telemech screens listening to others’ thoughts—thoughts they hasten to report to the Rulers, trying to curry their favor. But not many of them dare to do that for they cannot but help think wrong too, at times, and then someone else would get back at them. At least that’s one thing we have, we who are used to this life. We can protect each other by such methods—those who don’t do so, get it sooner or later.”

“Surely, Ceulna, you are stretching things a little, aren’t you?” I told her, though truthfully, I didn’t doubt her a bit, now.

“No, Handsome One, it is truth—there is always danger—unless we get them first. That is our life. Remember it!”

I couldn’t imagine controlling my thoughts so well that no one knew what they were, so I told Ceulna lamely, “Well, it must be hard to pretend to approve of robbing children of their youth for such a witch as the Hag! But, Ceulna, wh . . .”

“No, wait. Now I must tell you what to do while there is yet time,” she interrupted, “—for I may not see you again. When you get to Venus, you must escape from these people. How, I don’t know, but you must. Do not fear my people . . . or be afraid to go to them—you of Earth know little of pleasure or true beauty, or the emotions that the correct use of the ancient mech can arouse, but we Venusians have developed our science along the lines of those of the ancient Gods who first built these magic mechanisms—the mech of love and beauty—so do not fear us that still remain free. Go to my people—you will have to think of a way after you get to Venus—and tell them that you are a friend. Among those of my people still free you will learn something of love and beauty that will change your whole life . . . and perhaps help you to free your own people!”

Ceulna was now talking so fast that I didn’t have a chance to interrupt her for more details as to how to find her people—she must have been excited and assumed that I knew enough of Venus that I could find my way around it like I would my home town. But what was she saying now?

“. . . Remember, while you are near the Hag’s men, or any of those that you think MIGHT be siding with the Rulers here—think of something other

than your true thoughts, or your true purpose. Think other thoughts . . . or the secret Rulers will kill you with a ray!"

Before I had a chance to open my mouth with an answer to this, a pair of girls came running into the apartment, bare legs flashing. They were mere children but had the muscled firmness and smooth-flowing movements of highly trained dancers.

They clamored at her in the Tuon tongue of the dominant people of Venus—the tongue of most of the white races on that cloud-wrapped planet. It was a very different sound than any earth tongue, sounding like a musical exercise of predominately vowel sounds, and prolonged oooh's, nnn's, rrr's—a very liquid language it was.

I couldn't make any sense out of what they were saying, so I just stood there and took in all the beauty of those six flashing legs and well-knit bodies. If these were samples of Venusian women, the whole planet must have been populated with show-girls. "Not bad!" I thought to myself.

Ceulna finally turned to me, and grasping my hand with a slight squeeze, told me what all the bird-talk had been about, "They are calling for my Spider Dance, and I must do it . . . wait for me afterward at your table, and we will talk some more . . . 'bye . . . and don't forget!"

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## CHAPTER IV

*From her black bloody locks the Fury shakes  
Her darling plague, the fav'rite of her snakes*

*Aeneid. Virgil.*

ON THE stage had been strung a huge web of shining strands like a monster spider web. It angled upward from the footlights to the top rear of the stage—the farther strands lost in the gloomy shadows. Half concealed in these shadows crouched the huge figure of a black spider, twice the size of a man—a beast from a nightmare. (I learned later that such monsters were inhabitants of the vast forests of Venus!) As I took my seat the monster moved out over the web and did a slow dance upon the strands—a lazy spider testing his web with his weight. Then it retreated again to the rear. As the spider grew still and the web ceased to vibrate, out upon the shining threads sprang Ceulna.

Her superb body was striped with colored prismatics in insect simulation of a fly, her arms concealed in the thin membrane of a pair of transparent wings. A dizzying exhibition of tightrope dancing such as no earthman or

woman could ever emulate followed. She spun, fluttered, dipped and rose, flew above the huge glittering web like some beautiful fly, fascinated by the glitter of the strands of the web. Then she faltered and fell near the center of the web. She struggled and writhed with marvelous acting, too marvelous, I thought for that tremendous spider was creeping forward inch by inch and the suspense was terrific—the threat optically so real. The sticky ropes seemed to hold her inextricably. Down upon her rushed the great spider, jaws agape, around and around her he whirled, thin silken ropes wrapped her again and again. Then he settled to his meal. That spider was too damn real. I leaped to my feet as Ceulna's lovely body disappeared between the monster's cavernous jaws. I distinctly heard bones crack, and blood ran out of the thing's mouth.

A silly conjecture that the cruel humor of some such character as had entertained me on my first night had placed a real monster of the type the imitation body of the spider had been designed to simulate upon the stage came into my mind. I could think of no other way the act could look so real.

But Ceulna emerged again from the spider's mouth, her face and arms covered with blood, the beautiful wings crushed, and fled bounding across the webbed strands off the stage. The spider seemed in a frenzy, his great mouth hung open dripping blood, the jaw appeared to be broken. The monster swayed about the web. The falling curtain cut off the scene. That was either marvelous stage craft or something horrible had taken place before our uncomprehending eyes. Impatiently I sat waiting at the table where Ceulna had come before. At last, she appeared, swathed to her beautiful chin in a cloak of brilliant bird feathers—like the ones worn by the ancient Aztecs. There was a long scratch on her face, across her nose and down her soft cheek.

"That was great, Ceulna, and don't tell me that is the way they do their ball room dancing on Venus! I thought—"

Ceulna had looked directly at me then, and the expression in her eyes told me that all was not cream on her peaches.

"Ceulna! Something's wrong! That dance scared me to death—I knew something was rotten in Denmark. Tell me. Beautiful, what's wrong?"

She sat down, her breast heaving from all that exertion—and it looked to me like she was going to cry.

"It's—that spider. I . . . I . . . oh, I don't know how to start! I tried . . . I . . ."

"Now take it easy, Beautiful," I tried to soothe her. "Just you sit back and relax . . . there, that's better."

At my concern over her, Ceulna smiled gratefully and I'd have liked to take her in my arms, as you do a restless baby.

“Oh, you are too kind to be in this life, my Handsome One, it’s all so unclean down here . . . I knew something like that would happen to me—eventually—that wasn’t my brother . . . that . . . that,” and here she started to sob, but quickly stopped the sound, though I could see the tears all set to start pouring out.

“Easy does it, Ceulna,” I said, patting her hand. “What wasn’t your brother—the spider?”

Quickly nodding her head, she said, “You see, on Venus that dance has been performed like that for many centuries. It’s a favorite of my people’s—the Tuon’s. The costumes the dancers wear, having been made so often through the years, are exact reproductions of the genuine creatures—mine and the spider’s—that spider wasn’t a costume, that was a real Arakniden from the jungles of Venus—a monstrous survival from the age of insects. My brother has always taken the part of the spider, when I dance, and he does it perfectly, which made it hard for me to realize that it was this monster instead my brother in costume. I thought at first it was my brother going through the routine ill or drunk; he didn’t follow the things we usually do. When it seized me, I thought that my time had come. I drew up my knees and then straightened out, breaking the thing’s jaw with the full strength of my back and legs.” She sobbed again here. “But I didn’t get away unhurt—look!”

She drew back a cape of feathers and showed me great fang gashes in her arm.

“Gods! Ceulna, then that was your blood. Who . . . what devil out of hell would make such a damnably fiendish substitution for your brother?” I was half afraid of the answer she might give to that.

Shrugging that rainbow-clad shoulder, she said, “One of the ruler group—it means some of my careless talk has come to the attention of one of the blood-takers—one of those seldom seen.”

“Who are the blood-takers, Ceulna? Surely none in this hall right now—look human enough.”

“No, my Handsome Friend, none here in the hall, but these are only part of the Ruler group—the others are hideous creatures, many of them so hideous a sane person breaks into uncontrollable screams if he is suddenly confronted by one of them. They are cruel as the spider you saw, and they keep other monstrous creatures for their own frightful purposes.”

“Whew! Some pets these birds have!” I whistled. “But surely your brother isn’t one of them.”

“The Gods forbid! What really frightens me most is what has become of him? They-r-ugh—must have taken him to the lower caves—none ever returns alive from there but the vampires themselves.”

“Now, Ceulna, I wouldn’t worry, how do you know they’ve taken him?”

“I just know. They couldn’t have made the substitution without his knowledge, and Mala wouldn’t have weakly submitted to having his sister eaten by the horrible spider!”

I couldn’t figure what to say to that—this place had too many queer angles, and all of them deadly. She told me she was sorry and when I asked why . . .

“If I am in the Ruler’s displeasure, why so are my friends. I shouldn’t have come to you now. It places you in danger—but I just had to.”

It seemed to me that I’d been in danger since she had led me into this magnificent wormhole, so I just shrugged . . . what the devil!

“They may do nothing to me for a long time. They love to keep someone in an agony of fear—like a cat and a mouse game, and then, when one decides they have forgotten and begins to feel safe, they strike again. I . . . I can’t stay here. I must flee . . . but where? It’s almost impossible to get out of these caves.”

“Well, Ceulna, let’s see. The little time I’ve been here,” I suggested, “I’ve noticed many of these dusty corridors lead to unused and seemingly endless caverns—like this we’re in now. Where do they lead? I’d think they’d be an easy escape?”

Smiling, she patiently explained. “To a newcomer that would seem true, but the ancient exits and entrances are covered by time with rocks and earth—it’s a mile, or more, to the surface. Strangers can’t realize the immense age of this place—the indestructible nature of the antique work fools their senses. Oh, yes, we could get into the other caves—and wander on forever—finding nothing—no food—no water, nothing but tube after tube, and chamber after chamber—forever! The ancient God-built machines can do much, but they don’t make food—they don’t create water.”

Admitting her arguments were good, I tried to reassure her, “It’s plain to see, from the little I know of this mess, that you are doomed if you stay here. Lessee, now . . . look, Ceulna, a man can live for weeks without food, if he has to, and I’d say that the ancient builders piped water into these caves—someplace. I’d say the pipes still held water if we’d look for ‘em. Then, too, they must have stored some food—I’ve read that honey and some other things, seeds and stuff like that, have been taken from the tombs of the Pharaohs—4000 years old and still able to be eaten. The Egyptians put this stuff in containers sealed with wax—probably the ancient builders of these caves did the same thing. I’d gamble my life on the chance we could find such containers and make our way out.”

Ceulna, seemingly, didn’t think too much of my idea for she shook her glorious head, then frowned slightly. “No, it might succeed—if the Rulers

didn't know the caves like I know the palm of my hand. We'd wander in circles, they would follow, and we wouldn't escape."

"Well, Ceulna," I commented, "what would you suggest?"

"I don't know . . . I don't know what to do. If I pretend nothing has happened, they may do nothing to me—that's the way they are. You can't tell what they'll do—except that it will be horrible, and fiendishly cruel. I don't know what to do."

"Look, Ceulna, I've got an idea. Soon they are sending this small army to Venus—sending us in *some* kind of a ship, a ship I have never seen—but you have! You know where it's kept."

I was trying to appear as though I was just talking to one of the pretty dancers the Rulers had provided for the entertainment of their new troops, yet, at the same time, I was desperately trying to make her certain of my plan.

"Listen, Ceulna, go aboard that hidden ship—any way at all—then, later, when we are in space, watch from your hiding place and when you see me, whistle. If anyone else hears it I'll pretend it's me whistling. When I've found you, I can bring you food. Then, when we get to Venus, steal off the ship while it's being unloaded for the return trip to Earth."

It must have sounded like a large order, for she looked at me sort of helplessly . . . and very appealing.

"Stowing away isn't hard, Beautiful," I assured her. "Most of the crews I've ever heard of are more apt to help a stowaway than not. It is very probable, from the way this thing took place, that those aboard the ship for Venus won't know anything about it. If they do, they'll probably be sympathetic and help you, even if you are caught after the ship leaves Earth. I'd say your worst danger was here—hiding yourself aboard that ship as quickly as you can seems to me the safest course, but, Ceulna, I . . . I'm sorry, I don't like to say this . . . but I can't see how you can help your brother, even if you stayed here. Perhaps he's dead already."

When I mentioned her brother, she couldn't keep the tears back, still the girl had grit, and she was a swell little actress.

"I will do it!" The poor girl's eyes glowed in gratitude to me. "You make it seem so easy! Believe me, the spider is an easy death compared to some they think up for us." She stood up then. "I go now . . . the less you see of me, the safer for you, so you will not see me again until we are in space. When we get in space, walk everywhere about the ship that you are allowed. You will find me."

The brilliant cape of feathers floated swiftly away through the crowd. A lump of pity . . . and something more . . . was in my throat. I was beginning to get my bearings in this Devil's Dream I'd been decoyed into. I swore

a great oath to myself—an oath that I would taste no pleasure, relax not the least fiber of will, ‘til I found a way to strike at this ancient, powerful nest of parasites on man! It was an oath I kept, too. For even though they are equipped with the weapons and machines of the very Gods themselves, these ancient idlers have allowed their brains to atrophy—and I know why. The ancient, infinitely capable machines, which they spent no effort to create, have removed most necessity of effort from the Rulers’ lives. Those ages of idling, of deviling poor ignorant surface men, have cost them their birthright of Will and Sense, the best gifts the Gods left us. Surface men have had to exercise these gifts somewhat, and, as a result, are more of a man, and less a horrible insect that can live only be bleeding a host.

I sat thinking, digesting the horrible setup of this age-old cavern life, until the last drunken reveler had staggered off to bed. Then I took myself to my own chamber—a chamber filled with Farne’s very audible snores.

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## CHAPTER V

*Wish for the Wings of wind to mount the sky;*

*Or hid, within the hollow earth to lie!*

*“. . . . made this short reply*

*‘Tis hostile heaven I dread, and partial Jove.’*

*Twelfth Book of the Aeneid.*

THE next morning, they marched us a long time in the gloomily beautiful caverns. At last we came to a black and silent expanse of water, whose farther reaches were lost in the darkness. Under our feet the black rock stretched flat and smoothly glistening to the water’s edge, where it ended, cut clean as a straight edge. At that edge was moored a vast ship. It was a tremendous vessel, like a submarine, a craft from the Elder World. Its antiquity was only seen by bioting mottles on the dull sheen of its metal hull. That it was a still space worthy spaceship I realized from Farne’s accounts of them. It was probably older than the Pyramids, yet, but for the dull mottling of its hull, looked as if it had just slipped from the ways. Had this been its resting place through those untold ages of time? Of what marvelous material was it built that it was still in running order after all those tired centuries had passed?

My speculations as to its origin were cut short; a harsh order barked down the long line of men. Great doors opened in the side of the ship and our lines of green-clad troops marched aboard and down the long gangways

to deep inside the bowels of the ship. Platoons were assigned quarters inside and I had a chance to look around. The ship contained round portholes but they were all closed. I guessed, rightly, that vision was obtained by the marvelous penetrative rays the Ancient Builders had used so much. We stowed our gear and then stood around waiting.

A slight swaying motion was the only indication that we had taken off. This continued for half an hour, then, quite slowly the cabin floor started to lean at an increasing angle. Shortly the after wall became the deck. As this deck slowly became less and less of a deck, I found myself floating—and the rest of my companions likewise. There we were floating in air like a lot of fish in a bowl of air. Gradually, the ceiling which had been the forward wall of the cabin, became the floor. Suddenly a sensation of falling upward swiftly faster and faster nearly robbed me of reason. In despair I called to Hank Farne.

“What the hell is happening? What goes on here!”

“Well,” Hank finally managed, after laughing like he’d choke, “that’s an order not easily filled, my ungainly friend!”

“Dammit, Hank,” I snorted, “this ain’t funny, now cut that insane laughing and tell me what the devil is happening to us, or I’ll drift over there and wring your scrawny neck!”

My anger and the way I was flapping myself around in the air just sent him into gales of irritating laughter. Finally, he calmed down.

“What a sorry hunk of frightened little boy you are—but I’ll tell you what’s happening—much as I can. You see, my short-tempered friend, modern science doesn’t understand the nature of gravity, so there is no concept to employ in explanation with which you are familiar.”

“Well, Hank, I got lots of time. Let’s hear what you think it is.” I was beginning to get over being miffed at his laughing and felt Hank was in one of his ‘lecture’ moods.

“All right, I don’t think y— Never mind. The ancient race who built this monster ship DID understand gravity—and a lot more. The same God-Race that built the caverns on Earth, and who knows on how many other planets, and all the ancient mech—they knew or learned, that gravity is an inrush of tenuous stuff going into all matter and becoming absorbed by it. Gravity is a reverse force—in many ways—to light which is an OUT rush of flaming force particles. These particles only return to matter as they become gravity, thus completing the full cycle of change which forms our universe.”

“But, Hank,” I puzzled, “what’s that got to do with this falling upward sensation we’re getting?”

“I’m coming to that. In the tail end of this crate, and along the bottom are

the 'Driver Plates,' as they call 'em in these ancient ships. Incidentally, there is an immense supply of these plates in the original storerooms. I've seen workmen replacing 'em. Now, the 'Driver Plates'—a strange dense metal they are, too—are hooked up to great cables from the power supply—generators like the ones on the dis-beam."

"You mean that they're flying this buggy on electricity?"

"No, not exactly. Just what happens to—or in—the plates when the juice is on, no one now living knows, I don't suppose. Anyway, the plates melt slowly away, and somehow give off an out rush of force particles . . . similar, in effect, to gravity, but far stronger proportionately. Thus, anything near the plates starts to fall 'away' from the plates above, and Earth falls 'away' from the plates beneath. The more juice they shoot in the Driver Plates, the faster the 'fall' takes place. Get it?"

"I think so. But go on, Doctor, I'm listening."

"In other words, those plates are *reverse-gravity* drives. Some ancient scientist did a swell job of *reversing* the integrative process of gravity, and so got a beautifully simple process by which matter causes things to 'fall' away from it. Clear enough?" Hank grinned, looking like a dirty little urchin, with his straggly hair and splintered brown stubs of teeth behind his twisted lips.

My stomach seemed to be turning inside out, but I began to see the sound cunning sense beneath his not too attractive exterior. I grinned back, for Farne was my kind of a man. You didn't have to tell that boy anything twice—he was usually way ahead of you.

"Clear, nothing," I answered him, "I don't suppose modern men *can* come very close to understanding those wise ancients. This idea of matter being growing stuff is a new one on me. If I've got it right, all matter INTAKE is the cause of gravity, right? The ancients reversed, and speeded up this INTAKE process, then, the matter melts away, and things fall 'away' from the matter." I grunted, "Huh! It *sounds* simple. I suppose, though, all great things are simple in concept. All they did then, I guess, was put the plates between Earth and the ship and it takes off."

"That's almost it," Hank was being very patient. "But the fact is that the repulsions on either side of the plate would neutralize and no motion would result."

"Oh, I hadn't thought of that," I acknowledged. "Well, then, how do they get action?"

"Understanding! The ancient God- Race understood the nature of energy flows and devised materials which are opaque to them. Now, the chamber in which the driver plates are placed is lined on the ship side with a material opaque to the repellant flow. They designed this opaque lining to reflect the flow around the plate and out the rear of the driver chamber. Result—all the

repellence is in a rearward direction. Thus, the ship runs like a skyrocket—by recoil. Though the source of the kick is different. That’s as close as I can come to understanding the drive of these antique ships. However. . .”

Suddenly I remembered Ceulna!

“My God, Hank, Ceulna is stowed away on this ship and I forgot her! We’ve got to find her!”

“What the devil is she doing abroad?” demanded Hank.

I quickly recounted what she had revealed to me after the “Dance of the Spider” the night before. Farne sputtered when I told him the fake spider of the dance had been the real thing.

“The Devils!” he cursed, “they go to any lengths to kill the thing people like best. Ceulna is the best loved of all the Rulers’ entertainers!”

“We’ve got to look for her, Hank. Everywhere . . . everywhere she might have hidden. You know the ropes, so you lead the way.”

The two of us left the cabin, walking quietly forward. The whole layout was strange to me, but Hank seemed to know his way around. We hadn’t gone ten paces when an officer stopped us. His voice had me plenty worried.

“Enlisted men are to stay in their cabins while the ship is in flight.” He spoke firmly, but in the slow drawl of Southern U.S. A tall dark fellow, but his face was pale with his years in the caves and his eyes were dull as though his brain were asleep.

Farne was not taken aback. He smiled easily and flashed a badge he’d taken from his pocket. I had an idea what it was, though Hank hadn’t told me just what kind of work he’d been assigned to since his return.

The officer saluted. “Sorry, sub! I didn’t know you. Is there any way I can be of service, suh? My name’s Leadbetter, suh. Lieutenant Leadbetter.”

“Perhaps, Lieutenant, you can.” Hank was acting like an officer himself now. “I’m on the lookout for a certain Venusian—no particular description. Distinguishing marks reported to be a shredded left ear and a scar on his left wrist. Wanted under suspicion of working for the Tuons. Know anyone fitting that description, Lieutenant? To my knowledge, there aren’t a dozen Venusians aboard, are there?”

I figured Hank was giving a fictitious errand to explain his presence on deck, but as an intelligence officer, he probably had full right there.

The officer scratched his own left ear reflectively. Apparently, he could think of no such Venusian. So, wishing us luck, he saluted and left us.

As soon as he was out of sight, Hank led the way swiftly aft.

“If she knows as much about these ships as I think she might, she’d be in the driver compartment. They’re warm, and at a distance of several feet the radiations from the plates are beneficial.”

We entered the deserted propulsion end of the ship. The driver-plate device never needed attention. Since these antique creations were perfection in craftsmanship, they didn't demand attention, so the crew seldom came here.

We had hardly entered the place when I heard a low whistle. I looked around but couldn't find the source of the sound, so I called, "C'mon out, Ceulna. This is my friend, Hank."

I heard her low, luscious laugh behind me, and turning, saw her emerge from a tool locker like a reviving mummy from a sarcophagus. Even the tool locker of one of those ancient marvel ships was decorated as beautifully as a Pharaoh's mummy-case.

"I've had the most wonderful time," she laughed. "Last night when I avoided the two sentries and came aboard, I came right here. I had heard the rays given off by this drive mech were beneficial—but no one told me it felt so good. I've been lying in stim for nearly twenty hours—no way to get away from it."

Still laughing gaily, she kissed me. "You look like a beautiful young God after all the stimulation I've had!" And she kissed me again laughing irresistibly. "I had no idea!"

I told her she looked like a beautiful young Goddess herself. I'd never seen such an improvement in anyone in such a short time. I was going to spend as much of my time aboard as possible getting the double stim of her presence and these rays she was talking about.

"I thought you were running away from danger—not eloping with Jimmy, here," Hank grinned at Ceulna.

"Ceulna, this is Hank Farne, my only friend aboard besides you," I introduced Hank to Ceulna.

"I'm always glad to meet a friend of the so Big Jeem," she said, giving her hand to Hank as Americans do, then kissing him on the forehead as the Venusians do.

"Hank has been on Venus for years," I said.

Ceulna, puzzled, looked at Hank, "Oh, then he knows our customs. I will give him our formal greeting or he will feel hurt."

Hank put up his hands protestingly, but she sank kneeling before him and embraced his knees in the ancient Greek fashion.

"It's a very pleasant custom," explained Hank, "once they greeted one another that way in many Countries on Earth—long ago."

Hank seemed much taken with Ceulna. "But we must plan how to avoid your capture. You know how nasty it can be to fall into the hands of anyone connected with the followers of Hecate—the Hagmen!"

"Yes, I know—too well," answered Ceulna, her supple body shuddered all

over. "I have seen some of their Entertainments of my poor people in my home city of Delphon."

"Just what is the difficulty in keeping her concealed?" I asked. "Can't she just stay here, quite comfortably, on the food we can bring her from our own meals? There seems to be plenty of it."

"Listen!" Hank hissed suddenly, for outside in the long companionway came the slow clump of a workman's boot. "At any time one of the officers or repairmen may come in here to get tools out of the locker or to inspect the generators, or to oil some part that's lost its ancient sealing."

The clump of those boots didn't stop, but grew louder and louder, finally halting outside the door behind which we stood immobile.

A gun suddenly appeared in Farne's hand. I didn't have one, but I held up a restraining hand in front of Hank, making a gripping motion with my fingers. My paws are about twice the size of the average man's, and Hank got the meaning.

The latch grated, the door swung in. A blue-demined figure started through, a large wrench in his hand. Quickly my own hands locked about his throat. A slight startled gurgle and he was soon quiet. I didn't care to kill him, but a look on Ceulna's beautiful terrified face tightened my grip the last destructive bit. I felt his windpipe crush—a convulsive shudder, and he went limp. Dead. The first man I had ever killed—but he wasn't the last. It's not a good feeling to kill, but it had to be done.

"What the H— ah . . . blazes are we gonna do with him, Hank. He's dead!"

"Oh, you huge beast, you. . . !" Ceulna's face blazed in sudden fury and revulsion toward me. "You didn't have to kill him. We could have hidden him somewhere—in a locker or something. He would have been found eventually!"

"I'm sorry, Ceulna. I was excited. I couldn't help it—he. . ."

It grieved me to have her look at me as if my hands were dripping blood.

"We'll get rid of him." Farne wasn't ruffled. "There is a space lock for refuse in several places."

Ceulna's anger and revulsion subsided, and she suggested, "We can put him out the drive tubes from this same room—there is an opening."

Getting an artistically decorated wrench, I went to work. Time had tightened the bolts pretty effectively, but at last the cover came off revealing an opening a little larger than necessary for a man's body. Everything the Ancients left is too large for mere man. They were men, if they were men, of huge size—that Ancient God Race.

"The drive flow is too strong!" cried Hank as a blast of force drove me back against the far wall, nearly stunning me. "We couldn't shove this carcass through that opening if there were a dozen of us!"

The field of force-flows sealed the opening more effectively than any metal plate. It formed gravitational vortices within the room; we swayed this way and that, or were thrown to the floor as though by a living opponent. We had to get that cover back on, even if we couldn't push the body through—but how?

After an hour of futile struggle, Hank solved the problem. He detached the great insulative nuts that held the cables from the generators. The great cable, as thick as a man's arm and heavy as Hell, was a job. Finally, we lifted it off, and the tricky gravity flow that buffeted us about the room, ceased. We shoved the dead stranger out the drive tube, replaced the plate and tightened the ancient bolts. What metal that stuff was! Old as I knew they were, there was only a fine gray corrosion to show it, less than an eighth of an inch loss in all those uncounted centuries.

I spent many hours of that trip in the drive chamber, for the radiations were intensely stimulating, with a cumulative charge effect. After you were in there an hour, a glow of well-being stole about your body, gradually increasing until you could not tear yourself away. Ceulna forgave me for the inadvertent killing—thanks to that influence which made the world seem a bed of roses.

All three of us were mighty worried about discovery, for we knew how these secret people habitually made mountains out of molehills to get a chance to punish somebody. However, nothing happened to further the chances of any mishap.

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## CHAPTER VI

*Lo, take this herb of virtue, and go to the dwelling of Circe, twill keep front thy head the evil . . . Thy company yonder in the hall of Circe are penned in the guise of swine . . . in their deep lairs abiding.*

*The Odyssey.*

THE ancient hulk—its indestructible generators purring sweetly on the water that was their only fuel—settled slowly into the obscuring clouds of Venus. They must have been following some kind of radio beam, for we drifted out of the clouds directly over a vast cathedral-like structure rearing up from among the mighty, primeval trees. That this type of structure, built of rock from a foundation deep in the earth, was nearly unique on Venus, I didn't know. Nor did I know that the cult of Hecate, the Hag, whose headquarters were located there, were the descendants of

the cult of the Limping Hag who had left Spain some five centuries before. These things I learned later. I had expected wonders from an alien race of a different development than our own. When the mighty ship settled lightly to earth outside a vast medieval pile, I was nonplussed at its strangely familiar appearance. The men who lowered the drawbridge came to meet us clothed in antique monkish robes such as are worn in some monasteries on Earth today. I turned to Hank.

“Say, what is this anyway. Venus or fourteenth century Spain?”

Farne smiled. “I was waiting for your reactions. These are people whose ancestors came to Venus just as we are coming now in the ancient ships from the secret caverns. They belong to a terrible and very ancient cult—the cult of Hecate, also called the Limping Hag. It is a schism—an offshoot from the ancient Rosicrucians. The Rosicrucians are hardly more than a memory on earth today, but once they were a mighty and mysterious power on earth. When Hecate’s followers perverted the science to evil ends, the Rosicrucians drove them out. It was at the time of the plague on earth, and fleeing simultaneously from the plague and the wrath of the mighty world organization at that time, they came here to Venus and so have remained. They have been a curse to the Venusians for their practices are cruel and terrible.

“The Hag, herself, is a kind of living Goddess, said to be immortal. She is the ruler here. Hecate is hated by the natives but they cannot drive her out. She is our ally in the war now going on.”

Some days later I stood with Farne in one of the great corridors of the churchlike fortress. Through the dark, high beamed rooms of the musty old stronghold moved a strange mixture of races. The descendants of the original Rosicrucian renegades were at times clothed in sober, all-enveloping monk’s robes, and sometimes dressed like warriors of fourteenth century France or Spain. Guards in steel corselets with halberds held erect stood at the doors and passages. Past them went groups of the two-white Venusians of the northlands, fierce redmen from the hot equatorial belt, and green amphibians from the marshy islands of the sea cities. The green men, a species peculiar to Venus, were green skinned with gill slits in their necks, interior lungs as have ordinary men, webbed hands and wide-webbed feet. They had no noses to speak of, large staring, fixed eyes, and spines on their heads. The great black duck footed men of the south lands were the most formidable in appearance. Huge muscled and gigantic of build, they had a dull stupid look, small eyes and flat heads. Through the ages of life in the swamplands of the south, they developed a tremendously wide foot. All were subjects of the cruel Hagmen, Farne explained. Most of them wore nothing but a few glittering baubles, the hothouse climate was not conducive to wearing

clothing. Always their skin glistened with the cooling moisture they exuded. The smart uniforms of the recently arrived forces soon wilted, hanging damply on heat weary Earthmen. Yet they looked more efficient and capable than did the living relics of the past and some savage looking Venusians. But the white men of Venus, even though nude and flashing with barbaric ornaments, had a noble, cultured air superior to that of the Earthmen. They were taller, too, averaging well over six feet.

Ceulna had escaped into the jungle. We gave her a gun and several clips of cartridges before the ship landed. She intended to steal off the ship the first night after it landed. We thought it safer not to try helping her, though Farne wanted to accompany her. But it would attract attention and pursuit if either of us were missing. Ceulna, herself, said, "You would only be a burden to me in the jungle. I can travel swiftly and easily through the high trees. You have seen me on the ropes of the "Spider Dance"; these limbs are not so different. We Venusians inherit such ability. I will get in touch with you at the first opportunity. Please, please take off yourselves." She kissed us goodbye. Ceulna was gone, and with her most of the pleasure of life.

Since my arrival on Venus I had little time to learn the exact nature of the political setup between Hecate, the Hag, the native rulers who were our allies, and the invading forces of the Earthmen. Later this became clear to me. The men of Hecate, as well as the red, green, and black races, were minority groups on the planet, while the white race had always been the dominant force. Now the lower races and the recently arrived Earthmen joined forces to destroy the ancient white cities.

Harak, one stronghold of the Hagmen, lay sixty miles north of the tree city of Lefern. Lefern was a mighty city built in the gigantic trees of the forest Hank told me about the first night I descended into the caverns. It was a powerful city of the Whites. I learned that Lefern was our first objective. It had been able to hold out against everything the Hagmen and the colored Venusian races directed. Now the shanghaied Earth forces were to be used to the last man if necessary to annihilate the Whites' stronghold. If the Earthmen succeeded, if we subdued Lefern, our value to the Venusians would be demonstrated, and our leaders would probably cash in plenty. But if we didn't conquer the city, our position with the leaders of the Venusian aggressors would be decidedly minor.

Few Venusian roads were laid on the surface of the ground. Instead, they were strung between tree piers twenty or thirty feet above ground. These suspension bridges were made of the universal plastic substance in common use on Venus. It was light, strong, durable. Over this swaying transparent structure our trucks of supplies, the little one-man ray tanks such

as I was assigned to, our bigger six- and eight-man units, and our marching army of infantry moved toward Lefern—somewhere between six and eight thousand men, I guess.

On Venus it rains every night—most of the night, but the days are often clear. There is little wind, just the slow drifting of the gray mass overhead, the clear almost shadow less light, and the brilliant vegetation. The latter is full of pulsing life, growing, always growing; you can almost see it grow! The soil is seldom solid enough for any vehicle, but much of it can be walked on, if one knows where the firm places are.

About thirty miles from the city, in easy sight through our telescopic penetray-vision weapons, the bridge-road branched like the fingered of a hand, into dozens of smaller roads, all pointing toward different parts of the wide-spread city.

The city itself hung like festoons of giant cobwebs on the gigantic trees. Level over level, the cobwebs were hung with the many-colored and glittering globes of the Venusians' homes and shops. Of vari-colored plastic, these homes were of all sizes, suspended from the great web of the roadways or from the limbs of the trees themselves.

As our engineers set to work on the cables of the road, strengthening them with ray resistant additional cables so they could not be burned from under our feet, we deployed on the two outer roads which ran at nearly right angles to a line directly into the city. The idea was to bring as many rays as possible to bear on it.

From the sparkling city came no sign that we were sighted. I swept a close focus over the vast system of webs which was Lefern and, except for an occasional tall warrior woman racing on some errand or other, I could discern no life at all. Apparently, the place had been evacuated. I noticed that many of the larger globe houses, which were factories or store-houses, were opaque to my vision beam. Heretofore, I had found nothing that obstructed its page, so I was sure that these places were opaque by some device of the Venusian Whites. At my side Farne, who was equipped with a special long-range vision device, spoke to me.

"This city of Lefern is a woman's city, ruled by Amazons. For three months in the spring of each year men are allowed to visit the city, the rest of the time no men are allowed within."

"Well, if that's all the opposition we'll have, this is going to be a pushover!"

"Don't be too sure, my optimistic young friend. Those ladies in there really can fight . . . and then some!" said Hank, obviously trying to caution me against losing my precious head, "and they are fighting mad now. They're especially bitter against the men under Hecate, because these Amazons

have a kind of religious veneration and love for children—as well as a mother’s love—and they don’t care for what the Hagmen do to kids.”

My stomach turned over. Fighting women was not to my liking. But I knew it was fight or die for me. I had seen the fate of others who had objected to their forcible induction into the strange army. I did not care for any of their “deserter medicine.”

At the order, we commenced firing on the city. The opaque globes resisted my disray, as well as the others’ rays which rather astonished me, as nothing before had failed to disappear before it. The few Amazons who had been racing along the net of walks quickly disappeared—some shot down, some had ducked into the opaque buildings. Just when I was beginning to wonder why the city did not return our fire, and the webs of the city were beginning to be a tangle of cables cut by our rays, it happened.

A huge ray flashed out from the top of the center globe. It touched our bridgeways reinforced supports which our engineers had fondly imagined to have been made impervious to ray fire.

Here and there it lanced, pausing a breath to burn through the cables, then dancing on to the next support. The bridge-road began to sag, and before you could count ten, our whole army and its many tons of equipment was spread out on the soft muck of the earth below the road. At the same time billows of yellow gas arose from the ground ahead and began to roll steadily toward us. Behind the gas I could see the crisscrossing beams of the wind making ray I had heard of, but had never seen in use before.<sup>(2)</sup> Scrambling about in the soft mud and the tangle of cut cables and equipment, we hurriedly donned our gas masks and awaited the worst, that is, those of us who had not been crushed under the fallen tonnage.

My little ray equipped tractor was sunk two feet in the muck which bubbled greedily as it sucked at the mass of equipment. Somehow, my heart rejoiced that these alien people were so well able to defend themselves. The gas rolled steadily closer. Would our masks prove as ineffective against their gas as our tactics had proven useless against theirs? Strangely, I hoped so, for those tall cool women in their jewellike city that hung like a web of magic against the pearly sky of Venus, were not what I wished to destroy.

After I had gotten my gas mask in place, I secured my sinking weapon to a nearby tree trunk with a heavy vine. I had a great regard for those antique

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(2) This wind making ray is described in the story “Thought Records of Lemuria” and was an essential part of most antique ray installations. Much of it was weather-controlling apparatus; they made winds, caused rain or dispersed rain clouds, and could throw lightning bolts. —Author.

products of a lost science. I had not much time for thought before the gas cloud rolled over our struggling ranks and I learned that our masks too were futile against the Amazons. With a Hell-Fire in my nostrils, I passed out.

I awoke with a sharp intermittent pain in the rump. I put back one sleepy hand to encounter what seemed to be the toe of a boot. Looking around, I saw what appeared to be Ceulna, grown still taller and now covered all over with a strange tattoo.

I cried, "Ceulna, when did you get tattooed, and what the devil are you pointing that confounded pistol at me for?"

But Ceulna's double paid no attention to my words, only kicked me again in a spot already sore. I got groggily to my feet. All about me a similar scene was being enacted in endless repetition.

The Amazons had followed in the wake of their anaesthetizing gas and were making us captive. There was no fight in us. I didn't see anyone reach for a weapon. Somehow, I was glad, very glad I would not have to shoot any of these tall pink-and white darlings. They were not made for that. I grinned at the woman warrior beside me. "You don't know how glad I am to see you."

She made no answer, only prodded me into line with that peculiarly deadly looking weapon she carried. Between a double line of the Amazons we started the long trek to the city. They wore mud shoes, a wide rounded board slipped over the boots, but we captives struggled along ankle deep in the muck, often falling when we hit a soft spot. A ripple of feminine laughter accompanied each fall. Somehow our mighty army was ridiculous. Remembering the bloody death sweats I had seen, such as the one of the girls on the cross the first night of my arrival in the caves not so very long ago, I blessed the fortune that had forestalled our attack.

Behind me Farne nudged my shoulder. He whispered, "This is something I've wanted and waited for ages. When I get the ear of one of their officers, we'll make out Okay."

Ahead of me another earth man spoke up. "I'd like to see old Hecate's hag-face right now. She'll probably bust a blood vessel and lose some of that baby blood she's full of."

Another voice remonstrated. "Aw, I don't believe all that stuff. Didn't you ever hear of war propaganda? They treated us pretty white. That show they put on for us the night we left Earth must have cost plenty. The grub was always good, too."

No one answered. The line slogged on in silence. Shortly we ascended a swinging ladder into the tree roads again. Here lines of long narrow vehicles waited, which explained the swift arrival of the Amazons. As we stood waiting to board the speedy looking buses I examined the guarding warrior nearest me.

Except for the webbed hands and feet, they were almost identical to earth people. But their appearance was utterly different. Tall feather plumes on their head gear accentuated their height. My guard's clothing consisted of a G-string and weapon belt, arm bands of heavily jeweled and shining yellow metal, and knee-high boots of a gleaming stuff like woven metallic thread. Her skin was intricately tattooed with an all over pattern that even covered her face with lovely curving lines. The design was sea waves and flying long-necked birds. As I looked about at these tattooed skins, I learned definitely that the beauty nature gives a woman can be immensely enhanced.

Later I learned that the tattoo was used as we use family names, the motifs indicating family ancestry. A heron over a sea wave meant one was the son of a woman of the Herons and a man from the sea tribes. A tiger stalking a deer indicated family connections with those tribes. On Venus they wore their family trees on their backs. But some modern city groups had dropped the tattoo as too barbaric. Ceulna had not been tattooed, I recalled.

One of the men near me, who had also been all eyes for the beautiful Amazon bodies, shouted in English, "Buddies, their mating season doesn't start 'til next month. We'll be the only men in the city. Talk about tough luck, this is terrible!"

One of the women seemed to understand English for she snickered and then repeated the man's remark in the Lefern Venusian language. The laughter rippled up and down the line until the sharp bark of an officer stopped it.

The glittering, jewel-hung mist-web that is a Venusian city in the distance soon became recognizable dwellings and streets as we flashed into the outskirts on our way to the center.

We did not have time to enjoy the beauties of the city and its feminine population. We were unloaded from the buses directly into a large and forbidding structure that ran all the way up the side of a tree almost to the low clouds. Many trees of Venus are large enough to have the tops hidden in the low clouds. This was a big one . . . I guess about the size of the Woolworth Building. I noticed that the weight counterbalanced the pull of a great suspension cable on the other side holding up the main street of the city.

Those delicious looking Amazons locked us up in cells and left us. I wonder how many men felt as slighted by this neglect as I. A man's thoughts and emotions are so seldom logical. The days dragged by slowly.

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## CHAPTER VII

*"I supplicate thee, O Queen, whether thou art a goddess or a mortal?  
 . . . to Artemis, I liken thee, for beauty and stature and shapeliness.*

*The Odyssey*

**A**T HER broad desk in the Intelligence Bureau Central Offices of Lefern, City of Tuon, Oanu, Chief of Secret Police, sat musing. The usually disciplined controlled lines of her face had relaxed except for a slight contraction of well-shaped eyebrows. One long fingered, webbed hand kept pulling at her lower lip. The other, beautiful and white, idly drummed the polished top of the desk. Aimlessly, she pushed back the chair and with the grace of a serpent, stood up, her long metallic cloth cloak falling in heavy folds to the floor.

Six feet of efficient fighting machine—and gorgeous. She, too, was a warrior woman of Venus. And like most of the women of Venus—most of the white Tuons, she was beautiful and graceful. The long cape was the only covering she had, the jeweled straps and belts she wore weren't designed to conceal the well molded figure—they functioned. Upon them were her shining insignia of rank and hooks and clasps for more of the strange weapons of Venus. A short bladed, damascened knife crossed the center of the girdle belt, and on the left side was bolstered one of the deadly little hand gravity-beams of the jungle planet. Her plum, ray-proof helmet was carelessly flung on her desk and her golden Tuon hair tumbled about her broad shoulders. Oanu lacked the leaner lines of the younger women, such as Ceulna, voluptuous rather than slim; still, she, too, carried herself like a skilled dancer, head held regally high, the movements of her hips fluid and the slow pace of her stride like the rippling muscles of a leopard.

Now, she seemed tired. With one hand she absently pushed a stray curl off her broad high forehead, then hooked her thumbs in the broad weapon belt. A few idle pats with her finger tips, and with just the faintest suggestion of a swagger, she strolled toward the broad window at the side of her desk. Stopping in front of it she raised one tapering, delicately tattooed leg and planted a gracefully sandaled foot on a low seat.

Wistfully, she stood there watching a rainbow-plumed pair of Venusian lovebirds cavorting in the branches of the great tree. It was too bad, she thought, that the too rigid code of the Tuons forbade living with a man. It would be nice to be near a man always. The mating season was so very short—only three months, and if you found that you had fallen in love, it

was hopeless. You must lose him forever, for the next year there would be another mate. The law forbade more than one child of a union . . . and, of course, the law was correct. It was a known fact that a race acquires strength by careful crossing of complementary traits. Yes, true, but it did spoil life so to lose one's mate every year. . .

Frowning, Oanu put aside her thoughts and pressed a button among the rows on the side of her desk.

"Bring those films that were taken by the telescopic camera of the Hag's city of Harak, as well as the films of the city they now call Disin," she barked into the orifice below the screen. "Also have the prisoner, Henry Farne, brought to me."

Oanu seated herself at the magnificent desk. An aide brought the films she ordered. The door opened the second time for a tall warrior guard and a prisoner. Henry Farne's dirty, bedraggled figure appeared more than ever the adult urchin as he entered the green dream of an office. He stood smartly at attention before the Intelligence Officer and flashed his most flattering and impish grin. Farne knew women; he knew that the boy in him would appeal to Oanu, the mother.

Oanu's eyes softened—almost twinkled—as she looked at him, and when her eyes relaxed like that, she was as beautiful as any dancing girl in this Tuon City. Suddenly, she snapped back to her role as Chief. The soft contours of her body tightened imperceptibly, those beautiful eyes hardened, and her inviting, voluptuous mouth contracted to a hard-thin line.

"I have been informed, Earthman," said Oanu, her voice not at all pleasant, "that you have been in the service of these modern invaders from Earth for some time, and also that you have been working for Hecate. It is obvious from your long experience here that you know something of the conditions that exist on Venus which have brought on this conflict. How is it that you continue to serve them if you know their vile purpose?" She looked at Farne like a school ma'am who's just caught a kid with a rat on a string.

"You would not ask if you knew the details of my record," Hank said in defense, however, not in fear of his examiner. "I have been lying in prison here on Venus for many years because my too open sympathy for your people aroused suspicion against me. A short time ago I was sent back to Earth. They figured I might be able to give the Earth leaders some valuable information about your organization. Now, I'm back here on Venus as a scout in their enlarging army, that is, what was their enlarging army?"

"How many men did that last ship bring from Earth?" Oanu asked, a slight smile playing around her mouth. Hank's words had pleased her.

He realized she already knew the answer, but wanted to hear what he

would say. "About two thousand men outside of the crew—all new recruits who have trained for about a month in the use of the antique weapons. You know, of course, that Earthmen are not accustomed to the antique mech. That is confined to a few sparse groups."

Oanu looked at him a long time. "You have a loyalty to these people who keep your own people in ignorance of the wonders of the ancient science?" she asked.

Hank grinned at her frankly. "None whatsoever, lovely lady. If I have any loyalty in my heart, it is for such women as you who have built a wonderful life for your people and who know how to fight to keep that life. But women like you are seldom able to trust such men as myself. You aren't clever liars, nor do you understand a liar and dissimulator like myself. I was raised in a very different school. My boyhood days were spent in criminal pursuits. All the dodges by which we live in such an environment are to you but cowardice and villainy. But I could be of service to you just because of my experience with the people whom you think of only to despise. It is one of your people's weaknesses, their inability to understand the criminal mind."

"Yes, that may be true," Oanu agreed. "There is a saying I have heard from Earthmen. 'Set a thief to catch a thief.' It is the thought that was in my mind when I sent you for." She picked up the cylinders her aide had brought her. "I sent for these films taken in the city of Harak from which you just came and in Disin and other cities under the Hag. My purpose is to arouse your sympathy and so loosen your tongue. You will find them interesting."

Oanu raised a small projector from a recess in her desk, inserted a roll of film, and on the wall as the lights dimmed, a picture appeared.

Farne said, "Before you go on with the film, I suggest that you have the rest of the prisoners assembled and show them the nature of their ally, The Limping Hag. They are Americans like myself who have had the advantages of some moral education. I can assure you they are not savages. The secret ray group on earth have treated them very well, and they haven't the faintest idea what they are here to fight for, nor have they had a chance to refuse this service. Most of them would work for you gladly if you were to show them the truth."

Oanu liked the idea. She had expected to spend more time bringing Farne to realize a sense of duty toward the Tuon cause. She had not expected his smiling understanding of the rightness of the Tuon position.

With a quick affirmative nod, Oanu pushed a button and spoke into a silvery wire sphere, "Elpha, have the male prisoners brought to the assembly hall." Then beckoning to Hank to follow, she strode out through a circular door flanked by barbaric vases.

Soon, more than a thousand young Americans were assembled as Oanu had ordered. Like a mad dream, there they were, hundreds of modern American fellows, prisoners of a warrior race of women on a far planet, looking at scenes Earthmen hadn't seen publicly in six centuries.

The first image to appear on the huge circular screen was the medieval looking square in the fortress city of Harak, which they had just left in their attack on Lefern. The square was the market-place of the city, but no one traded there. They stood about a pyre of wood, staring at the figure that twisted its white face to God and back to Hell again. Fantastic flowing smoke clouds swirled above the victim as flames licked hungrily at tortured white skin that turned black and ran with bursting veins of scorching blood. The stake was high. The people circled slowly to see the woman's form that writhed, surging against the chains that bound her. The flames grew higher; the woman twisted slower like a sick snake. Her lips were stretched apart and her teeth clamped whitely on a tongue that streamed with blood, her blood. As the flames blew this way and then back again with the fitful breeze, the people swayed in unison to see between the licks of fire. Black smoke rolled low and took shapes that beat against the brain with fearful meaning. Fluttering birds streamed by and wheeled, and flew back whence they came, sensing the black coils of fear that were in that place. The dogs sat on their haunches, their red tongues lolled out dripping slow saliva on the worn pavings at the smell of the cooking meat of the living woman. Some of the priests of Hecate's evil worship strolled by muttering, their beads clicked in their hands. They did not bother to look at the familiar scene of torture.

More and more of these horror pictures followed until we learned Hecate's worship was, in effect, the ancient Inquisition still functioning with its rack and stake, its needlers and iron-maidens.

The rich-cultured, low voice of Oanu kept up a running commentary of the scenes we looked upon. A good quarter of the globe of Venus was under the domination of the Hag's followers. Many once beautiful cities like Mersepolis were now wrecks, inhabited by misery.

Mersepolis hung among the great golden trees called Redgans for the scarlet blooms they bore. Once its vast web of walks and bridges had bustled with the laughing throng of native Venusians and its maidens had been famous all over Venus as the most beautiful of any city. Now Mersepolis had been in the hands of Hecate's men for thirty years, and no longer thronged these walks with life. There were only plodding workmen in rags. There were a great many children, but most of them were extremely pale and listless. The bright colors and the semi-nudity that was their custom had been forbidden. They now wore a kind of over all of blue and gray which was

dress for the lower classes. Occasionally the black of the priests was seen, but rarely passed the gold and scarlet of the high priests, the inner circle of Hecate's empire. These were the blood-takers, the beings who lived on the blood of children.

Beside this city of Lefern, where the captive Americans watched the films depicting the cruelties and baseness of the Hagmen, there were twelve main cities on the continent which was the largest of the three large land bodies of Venus. Much of Venus is ocean, and much of the land is jungle. Of these twelve cities, Bruchion with its dazzling splendor, Rhacote, where the spires of the love-temples pierce the clouds, Panete, which was one huge building pierced by the trees that supported it and fronted by two rosy obelisks like great horns were of the Tuon race; all were Amazon cities and the most advanced culturally.

The three-towered city of Isis Phar had an inverted race of people living there of some strange culture—the men were like women and the women like muscular men. They were still free. The seven-columned city of Isis Loch was a neighbor of Isis Phar. Its people worshipped an ancient sea monster whose age no one knew. He was said to come in from the sea to answer their call.

There were seven cities in the south under kings—the kings were alleged to be immortal, but Oanu smiled as she explained them. These were called Alexan, Phys, Rhylat, Arsinoe, Delphon, Ekippe, and Nicosthene. And last, she showed scenes from Bubastison where the people are all one sex and could give birth by self-fertilization.

Of all these cities, only four had fallen to the Hag's intermittent warring, but over half of the land and the smaller communities had fallen to her warriors at some time in the past. These big cities, like Lefern, had withstood all attempts to subdue them through the years, though one knew that they were always preparing for the next onslaught. Withal, it was a great land and rich and lush with life.

Centuries before, the Hag, with her evil crew, had come from Earth in the great and ancient spaceships, blasted out room for herself, and there sat in her fortress built by her slaves, brooding over the beauty of the world and hating it. From time to time she sent out warring expeditions, but this last one was growing into an attempt to subdue all of Venus. There were two reasons for this. The inner circle of blood-taking semi-immortals needed ever more and more children for their increasing demands as their number grew. And, there was an ever-growing resentment of this same use of the children. This resentment had to be crushed before it became an organized power.

This was a bigger job than it would have been on Earth, for unlike the

Earth people, the Venusians had known and learned to use the antique machinery of the God-race since the earliest times. Their science was a product of both their own work and the super science of the Ancients. On Earth only a few secret groups knew of the existence of the caverns and the weapons they contained. Since their science made the Venusians formidable antagonists, Hecate had contacted these Earth groups and was receiving men, supplies, weapons, and manufactured articles from them. In return she showed them how to delay old age by use of transfusions of children's blood.<sup>(3)</sup>

It was a disgusting, repulsive setup, and Farne realized that if Venus' free peoples fell, Earthmen would have no chance or hope of ever throwing off the evil leech that the secret ray groups would become with the Hag's methods of stealing children's youth. In time the Earth people would become what the Hag's people were, a slave population existing solely to support the priests and to furnish children whose blood would be used by the inner circles to prolong their horrible lives.

The hidden strong-hold, Disin, was the principal city of the followers of Hecate since the Hagmen came to Venus. The fortress City of Harak was the place our ship had landed. Under each of these cities, as under most of the cities of the raywise rulers, tunnels had been driven connecting them with the ancient cavern cities of the God-race and with each other. Bruchion, Panete, and Isis Phar of the inverted sexes had all fallen to the Hagmen recently. Isis Loch had just been reported captured. Lefern was the last place attacked and had surprised the Earth leaders with her able defense. But this was just the beginning of a long struggle for supremacy on Venus, Oanu well knew.

Some scenes on the films were of the children farms kept by the inner circles of the Hecate cult. Those showed the chubby, well-fed infants of four and five years before they had been subjected to the blood transfer by the old members of the cult. Needles were inserted into the arms of these unfortunate children, then as a small pump drew the fresh, healthy blood from the child for the old man, his aged blood flowed into the child through a companion tube. The child remained hooked to the vampire for a month while the blood of each was exchanged for the other's. The child was allowed to eat his fill, but the vampire touched neither food nor drink during that period. The effect was miraculous for the old ones. Wrinkles almost disappeared, the flesh became firmer and the body began to grow in stature. At the same time the child rapidly showed signs of old age. Nor

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(3) Alexis Carrel in "Man the Unknown" says, "In medieval times the practice of transfusing young men's blood was widely spoken of and recommended." —Author.

was the child released after one blood transfer. After several such sessions, his young body was allowed to recuperate and then was used again by the lesser priests.

This process of prolonging life had been brought to Venus from Earth early in the fourteenth century when the Rosicrucians drove out the Hagmen for their perverse use of the secret science. The practice had grown under Hecate, and now there were many men and women of the Hag's inner circle who were several centuries old.

So it was that a group of super-vampires, led by the Hag whose age no one knew, except that she had brought the original band from Earth five centuries before, endangered all the children of Earth as well as the children of Venus. For the older and the bigger the vampires grew, the more children were required to keep them in health.

At the beginning of this practice on Venus, the children were returned to the neighborhood from which they were stolen. But it wasn't long before the Venusians realized just what these little old people who had been carefree, healthy children, meant to their race. When several attempts were made to rescue the kidnapped children, the Hag doubled the guard on the baby farms, killed on sight anyone caught near them, and sentenced to death each child whose young body became so filled with the poison of age that they were no longer useful to the vampires.

One film showed the mother caverns. In great hospital-like rooms in hidden caverns, thousands of Venusian maidens were kept constantly pregnant, bearing more and more children for the baby farms. It was a revolting picture, this making cows of human beings, and the men from Earth who watched growled fiercely in their throats and clenched and unclenched their hands.

As the pictures of the baby farms unrolled before us, we saw the huge ogrelike body of the ancient witch out of the bloody past, Hecate, the Mother of Sin, strolling among the playing children, putting her mark of the Egyptian crossed circle with an electric branding iron on the arms of the rosiest and most active youngsters. Hot anger welled up in each man there. Hate flooded the assembly room. We wanted blood—Hecate's blood—her dying blood. We swore not to rest until the Hag was slain.

I wish I had sworn to stay several miles away from that same ogre-like body, for Hecate, the witch, still had a spell or two. But that came later.

Then came scenes showing the Hagmen burning the children who had reached the end of their usefulness as blood producers. These vampires found it more desirable to rid themselves of the prematurely aged youths and maidens, for their living presence was a perpetual reminder to the low-

er classes of the Hag's empire of the hideous nature of their rulers' parasitic life, feeding on the life blood of the people. So, they were gathered together to a place called "The House of Life," so called to disguise its true purpose. Here they stayed for a short time, but dally dozens of them were taken into the cellars of the place and thrust living into a furnace. The furnace was a great iron statue of the God Moloch, whose worship the Hag had revived from her memories of Earth, to explain the burning of the children.

She taught that the ceremonial burning transported their souls to a children's heaven. The victimized people knew better, but they didn't dare talk openly against the thing, for the Hag was an old hand at getting rid of lowly opponents.

As we Earthmen saw more of the film unfold before our eyes, and realized what a horrible change the influx of the Hagmen brought to the beautiful life of these people, a thing surprising to Oanu happened. A chorus of cries arose: "Give us a chance, Amazons, let us fight for you against this thing."

The film stopped. The lights flashed on. Oanu stepped forward.

"Now you have seen the horrible system of life which you were blindly fighting for. For ages, on Earth, your own planet, such vampires have secretly existed unknown to you. It is one of the oldest and vilest practices of your Earth. We, the free white peoples of Venus, are the only force on the two planets who understand and fight this evil. Because of our knowledge of antique ray science, we are the only force that can fight against the Hag. If you want to cast your lot with us, and fight beside us for the future of your seed, for the future of all men against this destroying evil, you will be trained as our own soldiers are trained, and trusted until you prove unworthy of trust. If you choose not to fight for us, you face only the prison from which I summoned you."

The prisoners, Farne and I among them, rose as one man, shouting a Venusian word we had learned in the prison. "On! On!" The word was "yes" in Venusian.

So it was that the other prisoners, who had to a man chosen service under the Tuons, were trucked off to the military headquarters. At Farne's suggestion, Oanu kept him and me after the others had gone.

Oanu was not a subtle person unless the occasion demanded it. She came to the point at once. Her voice was low and intense.

"We need spies. We have vast resources in man power, in the stores of antique weapons, as well as modern copies which we manufacture. But we need spies to tell us precisely what weapons the Hag intends to use. The study of these antique works is a very deep science. The Elder Race made many things for which we cannot discover the purpose. Some of these mys-

terious machines may well be weapons and it can easily happen that the Hag, from her centuries of experience with the God-work, may know of weapons which would wipe us out completely. If she, herself, takes a real interest in the struggle and throws herself into the battle seriously, she may bring into use mighty destructive mechanisms which we will not be able to counter."

Farne glanced at me with a knowing look, and then grinned. I guess I did look pretty silly—this spy business was way over my head. Seeing Hank grinning, I tried to grin back, but I was puzzled—with all the stuff I had seen, why the necessity for spies?

As if in answer to my unspoken question, Oanu continued:

"We must have someone find out what weapons they intend using in the crucial struggles yet to come. We have spies, but we get little information from the inner circles, and that is what we must have. Certain marks from the weapons they prepare for battle must be in our hands before the battle is joined. If we guess wrong, we will have no counter. It is this lack of vital information that keeps us from attacking the Hag. We do not know, as you Earthmen say, what her 'ace in the hole' may be."

"Where do we come in?" queried Farne.

Oanu answered bluntly: "You, Hank Farne, are perhaps the only man on Venus really fitted to act as a spy on the last arrivals from Earth . . . and vice versa, you are the only one fitted to spy on us for your former masters. So, to avoid the latter, I intend to use you for the former."

Ragged as he was, Hank looked like a real courtier when he bowed and assented to Oanu's remarks, whether with mock dignity or not, I didn't know, but it sounded good.

"Whatever I can do, My Lovely Chief, I will."

"You profess to admire us Tuon women much. You will risk your life daily in this service, and if you prove true to us, one or more of us will be your reward. You should find that highly attractive for we on Venus have developed the art of love with the use of the ancient stimulation electric."

"At your service," grinned Hank, his snags of teeth showing, his eyes twinkling devilishly. "I'll take the job, and by Jupiter, I'll come back for the reward, too. The reward of being first on your list," he said meaningly.

Oanu smiled on him. "If it is really me whom you admire, it can be arranged. You will be first on my list if you succeed, I promise you. But, remember, we take a new mate every year."

"Aren't you two forgetting me," I interrupt. "Though I can only wonder at what possible use I can be as a spy."

"We have ways of making you capable of getting information for us. We need only your consent. Of course, your value to us is enhanced if you are

equipped with knowledge of our ways as is Farne. Our methods have little to do with your present ideas of what is the work of a spy.”

“A spy spies, doesn’t he?” I asked, a little flip.

“No, he doesn’t,” patiently, Oanu went on. “I will explain. To make a spy, we insert a tiny radio transmission apparatus in the skull. This is done in such a way that the apparatus is not noticed even under penetrative vision ray. Your own knowledge of its presence and function will be erased from your mind so thoroughly that even the most exhaustive examination by the telaug will not uncover the fact that it’s there. The memory cells in your brain carrying those thoughts will be themselves destroyed in your head by our penetray surgeons. We have a minute needle ray for just that purpose. The wound it makes heals in a day; the memory is gone forever. By hypnotic conditioning, you will think yourself a supporter of Hecate. You see, a spy does not know he is a spy. But a spy is very easily controlled by us from a great distance, by virtue of the same mechanism which broadcasts his thought to us.”

I turned to Farne. “I don’t follow her, Hank. What does she mean?”

“See,” answered Farne, “she equips us with an invisible walkie-talkie, unknown to us. It tells everything we hear or see all the time over an individual wavelength. Then, the Tuon Intelligence listen to our individual broadcasts and guide us by mental control into situations where we can pick up info. For all of which we get a soft break when we fall into Tuon hands again, and their controls keep us out of trouble among the Hagmen.”

Oanu smiled at this, nodding. “I’m glad you think that way. We can do it, although the credit for the development of the wonderful piece of equipment that makes it possible, belongs to the Elder Ones. We found a few of them a long time ago in an ancient underground arsenal. Guessing that it was part of their war mech, we were finally able to divine its uses. I don’t think they made very many, for there were only a few of them in the arsenal.”

“Well,” I asked, “how does this thing work?”

“After we had discovered how, it was simple. All it is, is a miniature, ultrapowerful thought augmentor. With it, it is possible to control the spy completely—thoughts, emotions, and actions. But what makes it valuable is the way it augments the spy’s thoughts and alters them so that they can’t be read by an ordinary telaug. Through it, we can so control the spy that he is guided unconsciously into an advantageous position where what he sees and hears will be significant. By placing a large number of such robot spies throughout the Vampire outfit, every move the Hag makes will be known instantly here in Tuon Headquarters.”

“Well, if it works the way you say it does,” I spoke up, beginning to believe that she really knew what she was doing, “it certainly beats carrier pigeons!”

Oanu smiled condescendingly, then went on: "The 'spy-mech' is very much like those modern radios brought here to Venus by you Earthmen. Here, I'll show you one."

Walking to a far wall, she opened a small door and took something out. Coming back to where we stood, she extended her hand.

"Look," she said, "don't let the small size fool you. With this little thing we have the key to unlock the flood-gates of destruction on that detestable Hag and all her evil cohorts."

Neither Hank nor myself had ever seen the mech that she had been talking about so we both bent over to examine it.

"Why, that doesn't look like any radio," I protested, "that looks to me like a small half inch bit of flat bone or something."

"It looks like a piece of skull," Hank seconded.

"That is what it is supposed to look like," explained Oanu. "Notice the little jagged edges of the case—that is what looks like bone, the case. Well, those little jagged edges are fitted into a similar opening that our surgeons make in the spy's skull."

"Say," I protested, "don't tell me that we'll have to run around with that thing in our skulls!"

"It isn't as bad as it sounds," Oanu explained. "We only do it with the spy's consent. After that is obtained, a very delicate operation will insert this apparent piece of bone into your skull; it almost entirely replaces the bony section it is designed to resemble. When it is in place in your head it will look still more like a piece of bone. But within that deceptive bone is some of the most powerful and complicated apparatus on all Venus. The case is of the same opacity as bone and nothing can be seen of its interior—not even a shadow, as the interior is made of materials transparent to the penetray, and their outlines are hidden by the shadow of the case."

I didn't see where any comment that I could make would do justice to the genius and skill that had made that originally, so I just nodded affirmatively, "Very clever, very clever."

"It is that," said Oanu, "and it is the only way that we know of that surveillance and intelligence work can be carried on where telaug rays read the minds continually and where the penetrays search every man for concealed weapons or enemy radio devices. There is practically no danger of discovery for nothing could possibly be noted except a slight portion of the skull which seems more opaque than the rest. And there is another advantage. The operations also splices certain nerve fibers fast to the receiver and transmitter so that your thoughts are instantly broadcast, and any commands given through the mech are immediately superimposed on your motor nerves."

Thus, your actions can be completely controlled from this Intelligence center. And, too, we are able to protect you, whereas, we couldn't if you were free of any control. But you will have to consent of your own free will."

"Well, if you say that is the way to lick the Hag," I said, "when do we start for surgery?"

"That goes for me, too," said Hank.

"Good! I thought that you both would agree to it—that's why I called you here to my office. You are going to become valuable operatives of our Intelligence, eligible for the greater rewards that recompense services of this type."

Then, she impulsively reached out to shake hands with Hank and me . . . a Venusian Warrior woman shaking hands. That over, she planted a big kiss on Hank's surprised mouth.

## CHAPTER VIII

*Now at the head of Hel's pale Host  
Those livid armies of the lost  
A giantess, all shameless, strode . . .  
For Baldur gleams the beaker bright.  
His seat is set by Hela's side;  
Elvidner was Hela's hall,  
Iron-barred, with massive wall;  
Horrible that palace tall.*

*From "Valhalla," Julia Clinton Jones.*

**O**UR uniforms gained us entrance to the city of Disin. Without knowing just why, we asked to be taken to Hecate. (Farne surmised that sometime in the past she had taken the name of the ancient Goddess Hecate. Her undeniable great age would lend overwhelming support to the idea of her ignorant followers that in medieval times she was Hecate.) The guards before the great drawbridge accosted us in antique Spanish—Castillian, it sounded to me. We only repeated the name of Hecate over and over, and finally the guard called a comrade and sent us down the labyrinth of passages.

I found myself greatly excited. We might see the living antique who really could be the ancient, infamous goddess of evil. At this stage of the game, nothing seemed impossible to me.

As we approached the inner sanctum, the guard with us was challenged time after time by the steel-cuirassed inner guards. With a few words, they

permitted us to pass. Presently we stood before a monkish figure, white-haired and falsely benign of face, a gold chain his only adornment relieving the severe brown sweep of the cowed robe.

The fellow questioned us in an archaic form of English—sounds and words in a language that hasn't been heard since Cromwell's time:

"Ye have escaped the Tuons? Mayhap ye can tell me how it happens that of all the gear and war-ray sent against that accursed city, but ye two ray are able to find the path back?"

Farne spoke up quickly, probably fearing that I would put my foot in it, though neither of us really understood what had happened in the interval of time, as the memory had been obliterated from our minds by the Tuon medicos.

"When the cables were cut at the time of the attack, we fell from the road into a huge bush. Looking out, we saw the other soldiers being made captive by the Tuons. We were afraid to stir from our hiding place for fear we would be taken too. After the Amazons left, we climbed down. To avoid capture, we left the open road, and not knowing our way, we have been lost in the forest. Some natives found us, and although we could not talk to them, knowing only English, they brought us here."

After several more such questionings, Farne and I were taken through more chambers. We were on our way to the Hag. We noted that everyone referred to her as "Mighty Hecate," that is everyone who had any sort of position in the fortress. However, those that feared and hated her called her "La Hag." But few of the lower classes even knew she had another name, for the lower classes all hated her. But when in her presence it was surprising to hear the many voices calling her "Your Mightiness," "Hecate, Our Goddess," "O Glorious Fount of All Wisdom" and other outrageously flattering salutations.

We marched down several gloomy corridors. Torches placed midway on the stone walls for illumination cast strange moving shadows like the small lighted candles do in a darkened church. More fourteenth century geared soldiers guarded the passages. The monk's rustling habit and the clack, clack of our footsteps echoed and re-echoed. Finally, we halted before a massive iron-banded, oak-beamed door. At a command from the robed figure, guards flung open the door.

She lay within the chambering transparencies of some old vitalizer mech. It was a tremendous thing pouring a flood of rich, golden rays over her great body. The emanations of these rays, striking the eyes, gave the illusion of beauty even to the Hag's hideosities. I knew how unspeakably pleasant just a touch of those golden rays could be, and guessed at the vast flow of infinite pleasure which such a flood of the potent gold must bring to the senses.

In spite of my better nature, my knowledge of the unutterable delight she controlled in the mysterious ancient stim machine made desirable the vast, brooding, terrible strength in that old, old body of hers. Vampire, she was, yet I felt a devouring interest in her. Like an unholy mass of putrid, pulpy flesh being born from a bud of a rose, something—something awful, and unclean—something in me rose horribly to destroy the last dying spark of decency in my brain—a brain that wasn't my own. I couldn't know it was the Tuon Intelligence women reading my mind and stimulating those thought to protect me from her savagery—and her unpleasant habit of killing whomever displeased her.

Now, Hecate was a sensitive reader of thoughts, her centuries of experience with the telaug rays and thought augmentors had given her memory such complete data that she knew the thoughts most men think as children know the multiplication tables. Give her a facial expression and she could build up a man's thoughts by deduction quite accurately. Beside this, always on watch around her were several aides at the old thought augmentive beams, reading every thought of every person and looking constantly for every possible approach of danger or opposition. When anything interesting came up, it was their custom to throw a trans-telepathic beam into the great one's head. Seeing liking for Hecate rise in me in spite of my will, these unseen watchers connected me instantly with the ancient mind, for they thought it amusing that this big foreigner should actually register love for her.

Looking at Farne, she saw the fear and understanding he had for her. She saw, as well, the compliance toward her. This the Tuons had superimposed upon Farne's thoughts to protect him. Then her eyes returned to me, reading the strange emotion the Tuons had placed there. I knew she returned my interest from what happened. Perhaps the Tuons had not foreseen this or perhaps planned on it, though I did not think they could wish the secret upon which all their intelligence work depended placed so dangerously close to the Elder-wise eyes of the Hag. But they were unable to change the course of events without too much maneuvering. Tuon caution or their inscrutable purpose cost me my soul.

The Hag questioned both of us sharply as to the nature of the Tuon attack upon the small Earth army. Learning that it was gas that accomplished our complete defeat, she dismissed Farne to the care of her intelligence men for complete questioning. She kept me standing before her while she lay on the transparent couch of the ancient vitalizer mech. Here began a horrible phase of my life.

Hecate, the unholy Mother of Sin, the Ancient Hag herself, was looking at me with her yellow eyes blazing. The others had left the room. Those yel-

low, feline eyes burned upon me for a long time. She lay there fingering the black hair that coiled weirdly over great, rock-gray shoulders.

Suddenly, from the bank of instruments and controls before her couch, she played a ray over me which caused an excess of inner energy to make every muscle of my body stand out quivering.

“So,” her peculiarly accented English, coupled with her deep voice tones rolled persuasively from the depths of the splendor of the ancient wonder work about her, “you find the terrible Hecate attractive. How is it that so young a man can find attraction in this great, ugly body?”

Simultaneously, she played another ray upon me, causing an intensely pleasurable stimulation of every sense of my body. A fierce emotion horribly not my own, but one which ruled me, nonetheless, surged up into being within me. Or was it myself . . . aroused and impassioned with a consuming curiosity by the vampire lure of this witch woman—a thing often written of—written by writers who had never felt the terrible conquering power of the real aura itself? I did experience that power. No man’s mere will can buck a dynamo. I succumbed.

“I don’t know,” I heard myself mumbling, “O Mighty Ruler of this land on a planet strange to me, why I should love you more than other women. But you can read the truth in my mind.”

Now Hecate had many male sycophants and paramours who would have done anything she desired, many slaves to choose from, but some perverse whim in the dark labyrinth of her mind made her want me. And anyone who knows anything of the science of stimulative and nerve control electric knows that I didn’t have a chance once that whim grew into a full-fledged desire. My great size, my ignorance of the dark and evil life about me—what it was that intrigued her is hard to say.

I watched her huge form with eyes I could not turn away. Step by step I mounted the stairs under the flood of thickly golden rays, and erg by erg, the commanding pressure of mighty, overwhelming pleasure electric rose within my body. No man could have turned back from the ancient sugar coating of that bitter soul of evil. Then I stood beside her fascinated by those terrible yellow eyes that were neither human nor beast—like the faceted eyes of a female spider watching the approach of her mate, or the calculating, impersonal eyes of an octopus. All the untamed fierceness of such creatures lived in her eyes—their selfish will to live no matter what the cost to others—the ignorant soul of the she-tiger that eats her own cubs was in her character wholly. Those eyes, alive with the fire and the selfish wisdom of centuries of feeding on the young blood of children, burned into my own, hypnotically erasing every thought from my mind but the horrible joy that

flowed through me and would flow more and more greatly if she so willed it. That synthetic joy—no less irresistible for being a product of a machine—flooded me, overpowering every natural impulse. Too, in my mind was the suggestion she put there, that through the prostration of ray will to hers, lay the path to power as well as to strange, lost wisdom for me. I yielded—I failed—I lost myself in those strange arms.

So it was that I became Hecate's thing, and stood behind her throne at the daily audiences of her ministers and her appointed rulers from the conquered cities. Always, I stood ready to her pleasure, and daily the clean, naturally good will in me died away, replaced by the insidious, inhuman electric of her control mech. Perhaps it was her doing and perhaps not, but the old mech placed an electric charge within me—in the tissues of my body which remained there like a new character. Daily the faraway Tuons heard through my mind what their ears were never meant to hear, and credited me with much valuable information on Hecate's plans.

As the time passed and my freedom became greater, I pieced together the facts and circumstances that had spawned Hecate. Some I overheard from lesser courtiers—but most from the lips of the legendary Hecate herself.

Wise Mistress of the Ancient Wisdom—hellion goddess of abysmal evil and dissolution, she was 'Mighty Hecate' to her attendants; to the enslaved peoples under her heel she was the 'Limping Hag—the Mother of Sin.' The common, whipped people spat her name, 'The Hag'—but she was a filled-out hag, a human leech bulging with the blood of uncounted victims, and heavy for her size from the use of certain beneficial rays which were concentrates of certain vibrants from the gravitational flow. She explained later to me that much of her durability was due to this type of ray, that the blood transfers were supplemented by the rays. She obtained a vital and growth promoting food supply from the veins of the young, but she obtained health and strength and the ability to absorb the blood of the young from the ancient integrative rays.

She had a deformity of one foot which gave her the limp that caused her to be known as the 'Limping Hag,' the devil's rival, partly because of the similarity to the devil which this foot imparted to her appearance. The foot was much smaller than the other. It seemed to lack the forward part, as though it had been lopped off about the center of the instep. On account of it, she looked more diabolical than nature intended, and it was easy to understand why to the common man she was the 'Limping Mother of Sin.'

Time and unnatural growth had done strange things to Hecate. Centuries of indulgence of every kind had enlarged her lips; they were thick, full, and sensuous. Her smile was extremely wide and revealed oversized teeth

like the fangs of a savage beast. Her nose, too, had grown out of proportion and was very long and sharply pointed. The burning yellow eyes and long black hair that just hung straight, uncurled, the huge mouth and enormous nose made up a face so different from that of ordinary man, she looked like another being. Ugly, even hideous, she was, yes; but a fierce vitality and a ruthless kind of sense was in her, giving her a weird dignity. A fear-impairing face it was.

Her hands gave the impression of strength and dexterity far beyond normal humans; the fingers were extremely long and strong, the knuckles large. Her hands could fly over the keyboard of an ancient force organ so fast that nothing but a blurred motion could be seen. It was when she was at work at one of these old mechs that her true witch-like character was apparent; her yellow eyes blazed intensely, wickedly, straight black hair swished and fanned out grotesquely on rock-gray shoulders. There was nothing of the decorative female in Hecate.

Yet there was a wild, savage attraction about this creature from the depths of the past. This living myth of ancient magic—she was alive. Evil had given her life—the catacombs of children who had perished that she might live—all the endless cruelty she had practiced and believed in for centuries as efficacious policies to power, all this hung about her as an aura that caused fear and revulsion—these two things caused a confusion in the mind of men who met Hecate face to face. One feared her, was revolted by her, but one came to her as a moth comes to the flame. As for me, she left me no choice. I was to serve her in any way she decided. I did.

By black, unholy arts, Hecate worked over my mind regularly, telling me she was improving its setup. Actually, I think she reduced to impotence those parts of my mind which made me independent of her will. Needle X-rays cut the connecting nerve tissues. In time, Hecate made me a reflection of her will. Without spoken words I was obedient automatically to every slightest wish of her mind, evil as it might be. Hecate had gained such control over my being that I was just another part of her body, an extension as obedient to her will as were her own fingers. But she did not know that at any time the tiny instrument the Tuons had placed invisibly in my skull could become my master, ruling me more thoroughly than she herself.

Why did the Tuons not cause me to kill her? Because there was no real chance; there were the watchers about her always, reading any alien thoughts. The Tuons bided their time.

The months went by. The armies gathered and drilled. The tremendous war mech of the ancients was dragged from the caverns and mounted on great tractors. Another expedition, this time calculated to crush utterly

any possible defense that might be prepared against us, was nearly ready to launch against the beautiful city of Lefern of the Amazon Tuons.

Some part of me, the decent me, still lived on within my mind, helpless to the horror I was fast becoming, weakly shuddering at the daily tortured deaths of captives in which the Hagmen delighted and with which Hecate saw no reason to interfere, although I believed she was tired of such performances. This still living part of me was powerless to struggle against the evil that overwhelmed me.

I learned to handle the intricate pleasure ray apparatus, the stimulative and beneficial generators of an endlessly variant number of electric rays and energy flows; the whole myriad of involved apparatus which the ancients had left intact and indestructible behind them. I learned to handle all these things under the tutelage of the most experienced hand on two worlds—Hecate herself, who had had seven or eight centuries to learn the art of the ancient ray.

Always, of course, I practiced this art upon the body of Hecate, my new Queen. . . the unthinkable ancient art of stimulating—and feeding—the sensation nerves of a living body with electric flows from the antique, cave-held mechanisms. Somehow, through the ages of time, the Elder Race had learned to nurture and stimulate the human senses by using hydrogen ions bearing certain vital nutrients, carried by beneficial, ionizing electric flows.<sup>(4)</sup>

Accustomed as she had become to it in the long centuries, Hecate's giant body absorbed the floods of 'ben' like a dry sponge. She was the one that received—and she was the one that controlled—always. I practiced on the ancient mech with the Hag in complete control of my mind—I was but the tool of her will.

She conceived a sort of affection for me, and I found myself imbibing strange and potent fluids, even submitting to regular transfers of the baby blood into ray veins without a murmur—the Elder Goddess of Evil Incarnate, Hecate, had removed the cause of any such murmur from my mind.

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(4) From "A Bipolar Theory of Living Processes" by Geo. W. Crile, *page 13, paragraph 5*. — "Hydrogen ions permeate all living organisms. The slightest change in the hydrogen ion concentration fundamentally alters the organism; and it is known that hydrogen ions are of high electrical significance."

*Page 214, paragraph 2*. — "In living organisms an acid alkali balance on opposite sides of the dielectric films (surrounding all cells) is maintained by a difference in the concentration of H and OH-ions."

*Page 46, paragraph 1*. — "The constant oxidation of the lipid films of the globules would meet the hydrogen ion-electric potential requirements of the cell." —Author.

Her former favorites were, of course, wildly jealous of me or greatly relieved, whichever the case might be, but none of them could carry out any plans against me for fear of her anger. All knew Hecate's anger was usually fatal.

Strolling beside the giantess with the evilly smiling face through the gardens of the baby farms became a regular part of my life—and not the most revolting part, by far. These walks we took had a sinister purpose—not the romantic thing that lovers feel—but the selection of child blood donors. This hideous life that I walked besides, selected the rosiest and healthiest children, placing her personal mark indelibly upon them for her future personal use.

This mark was done with a small electric branding iron. The seal of Hecate, a circled cross above a serpent, was burned deep into the child's flesh, and that child, from then on, was the personal property of the Limping Hag.

I was as oblivious to the children's howls of pain as I was to the screams of the men and women who daily died before her throne or in the grisly dungeons that underlay the whole stronghold of Disin. I was a man walking in my sleep.

In her gentler, more mellow moods, Hecate was wont to confide her plans to me, her ambitions and her memories of long, gone days. During one of these periods of relaxation, she said:

“You see, My Muscled One, long ago I was young and ambitious, an acolyte of the Rosicrucians. Well, I had a way with men, and some of the inner circle of the order were reputed to be immortal. I wanted that secret—that deeply-guarded secret. I schemed and planned . . . connived. I flattered, ogled the senior priests until at last my chance came.

“One day, they left me alone with the records and I found it, how it was done—this fighting age with young blood. I learned why it was secret, too. There is a great deal to know about this method of using children's blood for one's own veins, drugs to add to the fluid to keep it from clotting and causing death. One must even learn why people grow old, in order to avoid the foods that cause age, learn how the sun causes age by throwing bits of its fiery self at us in the yellow light, learn how these bits of ever-fire gather in the body from the water and from the meat we eat. I studied how to prepare water free of the terrible poison from the sun and how to feed a child and take the child's blood into the veins instead of food into the mouth, so that the poisons gather in the child and the cleaned blood of the child brings food to one's body free of the cause of age. All these things I learned by giving myself to those old priests, by being pleasant and useful to them—keeping my mouth shut so that none of them ever got into trouble through me . . . or suspected my real purpose—stealing their greatest secrets for my own use.

“Since that time, many tired centuries have passed and I have learned more than any other living person.” The unfathomable pits of Hecate’s eyes seemed to focus in infinity. She shrugged.

“But I have become a horror and a plague to men, for I must have the blood of their children—and I will have it—for my plans are too great to be abandoned for any of their infantile emotions or virtues.

“I have learned by the study of their writings, how the Gods lived—the Elder Race who built these vast machines and endless caverns, and I have decided to follow in their footsteps.”

At my startled glance, she nodded, smiling, “Yes, Tender One, I know where they went—I know why they went away from this accursed sun that makes a horrible blight of all the growth in life—the treacherous sun that lets men grow intelligent . . . only to die before they learn enough to become great.

“This life is but a faint dying echo of that mighty past. A little living reflection of a great fierce time when men were Gods, and the Gods living men, so heavy they sank ankle deep in the solid rock. Look at that machine.”

Obediently, I went over and examined the great ray-gen mech she indicated. There were many prints of feet in the rock, inches deep, overlapping. It was true . . . the Hag was right! That solid granite was but soft muck to the feet of those heavy men of the past. “I’ve noticed these prints before about the caves,” I said to Hecate. “You mean to tell me those men were so heavy they sank into solid rock as though it were soft clay?”

“Turn on that switch in front of the machine,” Hecate directed, watching me with indulgent interest.

I reached out a hesitant finger and pushed the lever down to its lowest mark. A hum came from the heart of the mysterious old mechanism, A strange force gripped me . . . stronger and stronger. My knees sagged with a great weight bearing down upon me, but, strangely, the presence of the weight was an exhilarating thing.

“That is the beneficial force which causes the world itself to grow. It is the force of gravity focused and refined into an integrative force which is now making every part of your body denser and much stronger,” Hecate explained as the weight forced my legs into a greater crouch to bear the strain.

As she watched me, grinning her fierce, big-toothed smile, the heavy, penetrative, intensified gravitational ray made every bone in my body stand out distinctly. Like a man of glass, every organ and bone was outlined glowingly.

Suddenly, the Hag started and rushed toward me, a great fear on her face. She seized my head and looked closely at the back of it under the strong penetray.

“What is that dark bone in your head!” she shrieked, “What are those wires and metal I see inside?”

I disclaimed all knowledge of what she meant, which was not acting, for the Tuons had removed all trace of this mental apparatus insertion in my skull from my memory. After a close examination of the thing in my head, she called an aide—Enora—showed her the thing in my skull, and ordered her to find out just what it was and what data they might have on such a thing. Then, apparently dismissing the thing from her mind, she went on explaining her plans to me . . . for now she meant to include me in those plans.

I listened intently, for her mind was the oldest on two planets, sunk though it was in the sin of many lifetimes. Something of the girl that once had been so long ago—something of the good ambition that burns in all men seemed to burn fitfully within her, although in her continually recurring rages, every good she might do was wiped out.

This something . . . some of the primitive will to survival of the race, still lived in her . . . though it could accept the bleeding process that stole the lives of children to give itself life, accept the burning of these same children to hide the deed from the people, could not accept the idea of all that life used for no purpose.

She consoled herself with the thought that she would be equal someday to the ancient Gods whose work she knew so well and had puzzled over for so many centuries. This plan of power she talked about with me at times, though I was hardly a part of the conversations. She was so used to controlling those about her that automatically I made the answers she expected to hear without volition of my own. In truth, I was not myself at all, but only a reflection of her thought augmented by the great tubes of the telemech until her thought controlled me, unconsciously to us both.

She knew that in the early days of earth’s history just after the two races of Gods had left earth and while the mechanisms of the cavern cities were still comparatively new, men had become practically immortal by the rays of the mech alone, without her device of blood-stealing from children. She had, in ancient forbidden records of the Rosicrucians, found accurate accounts of these first cities in the days of the latter Gods. Then, such cities as Asgard were numerous on earth, though the tales of Asgard are almost the only ones to survive. In these cities were conditions such as are described in the *Nibelunglied* . . . where the heroes of Valhalla could not be killed, but were put back together and healed under the beneficial rays of the healing palaces left by the God-race. She knew that these accounts were not legends, but were the truth.

In those far gone days, the secret rulers of the abandoned cities of the

Gods sent their maidens out in flying craft to pick up the best of the dead bodies, for they were very human, even though long-lived. They pitied the dead, as well as had a vast need for fighting men in their own wars. The dead men were revived by the magic of the ancient healing vital rays, and entertained regally, as the legends tell us, by all the devices the God-race had developed through ages of study of life. Such latter Gods as Odin, Wotan, Zeus, she knew to have been ordinary men who had used these vital rays to become virtually immortal. She suspected that they had studied the writings of the God-race and had gone in search of the Gods themselves to avoid the death—the death from the sun—the inevitable fate of all on Earth. This was her ambition, to follow in their footsteps and learn to search space.

To do that, she had to build an organization capable of searching every bit of the caverns for data on space travel and on the ancient ships, for those they used were fractious at high speeds, and the men who skippered them could neither repair them nor could they chart a straight course through space. They could only drive the old ships by the seat of their pants, by trial and error. Long as they had been using the old ships, for some six centuries and more, they had learned little about them. Space travel is a science which cannot be learned from modern science, but only from the very ancient records of the builders of the ships. And none existed who could truly read the ancient writing—the very concepts that fit the symbols they used are long dead on Earth and Venus. Trouble and wars with the peoples she despoiled for their children's blood ever kept her from her true desire—mastering the science of space travel and building ancient ships so that far space could be traveled at the high speeds the ancients had used.

This always sounded very big and noble . . . as though she were concerned with the progress of humanity. I am tempted at times to concede that occasionally she really and sincerely was the philanthropist that her talk would lead you to believe . . . though centuries of an unnatural existence doesn't make one so soft and loving. She lived on the raped blood of children, and the next moment talked of pursuing the gods for their secrets of eternal life for the people whose young blood she ravished.

Any woman is mass of contradictions, but in Hecate all the contradictions had a bloody result. Her hands were bloody almost from the time she suckled at her mother's breast, and rivers of thick, bubbly blood had followed in her wake from that day forward.

As the Mighty, Gory-handed Hag herself tells the tale . . . I think that she told it to those paramours who had preceded me . . . though where they were is hard to say. Dead, probably. She tells . . .

Of a sunny land bordering on the azure shore of the Mediterranean. A

far-off land on a far planet . . . far in space, and what man, save the Hag herself, can say how far in Time?

In a tiny village, there was born to a poor couple a child, their fourth, and the third girl. Much like any other child, her birth was not remarked, and she grew and played with her sisters. Her parents, as people in those days did, went on having children. The sun rode smiling across the blue bowl of heaven, day followed night. She was fourteen. Her sisters were a dozen, her brothers three. Their clothes were a simple woolen wrap, their feet bare, and their limbs long and brown and bare. Their only trouble was their stomachs which were never quite full. The fields were stony, they worked, but the food was never quite enough.

Today is a holiday, the little town is full of the people from their homes in the near hills. A sheepskin or a wolf pelt is the men's attire, while the women wear short woolens in bright colors. They have flowers in their hair. The brown, strong children run and shout, the girls go by in groups, arm in arm, chattering shrilly, or racing across the grass in flight from the pursuing youths, who chase and catch them, rough their hair, dip them in the stream or roll them down the slopes. The games on in the circle near the temple continually, short races, practice with the discus and javelins, mock battles. People come and go, watching the games—strolling through the village—talk and motion and laughter—brown clean limbs, curling hair, bright faces and shining teeth—the people of the tiny village are having a holiday.

The temple is old, but bright with this year's many-colored paints on the frescoes and sculptured ornaments on the pediments and capitals. Flowering trees droop before the wide steps by the deep path. Men and women with solemn faces come and go reverently, bearing wreaths and food to the Goddess. Before her dreaming, mysterious face, they bow to the floor, peering through the dimness at her polished form, and lying in imploring attitudes on smooth stones.

This day, Hecate did not race madly past the pillared doorway to meet the youths in the woods, but paused and looked long at the temple's dark coolness. Something drew her, and her white face with its twisted drooping lips that were too ripe, too red, and her yellow eyes that held those strange depths lit up by some hidden thought within her. She went in from the warm sun, into the coolness, and stood looking at the pale limbs of the Goddess, at the pedestal of many sculptured breasts, at the figures that moved about the walls in a pale pictured life of their own. This reverence and worship awoke a rage within her. In contrast to the prostrate forms of the villagers, she stood erect with hands clenched and teeth grinding inaudibly as she gazed about. If she could, she would have toppled over the tall stone God-

dess, kicked the offerings out the door, torn down the paintings. Why was she raging inside, she wondered. Why does this thing that filled the dark air with love and fragrance fill her with despair and hate?

A red mist came into her thinking, a shuddering over her limbs. She moaned in agony and ran from the temple, not stopping until she crouched alone in a thicket in the woods. A hunger was in her, her throat was dry, her palms burned. What would fill her, ever? The red fog that was her thinking grew thicker, her mouth dropped open, her white teeth ground together. She slunk through the woods like a dark-eyed and bloody-mouthed ghoul, hunger was in her and her red lips shone with drool. What this hunger was she did not know, but it drove her on.

A soft bleating came to her ears. She saw by a pool not far off, some sheep with their new young lambs. Stealthily, she approached, her body sinuously hugging the ground like a great cat, though there was no need, for the sheep, startled, galloped off in bawling flight. But under her lay a soft throbbing little body clutched in her arms, its stick-like legs thrashing at the grass. She bent the square little head back sharply. The great soft eyes rolled toward her in piteous terror and something in her exulted and feasted avidly upon the helpless fear.

In her hand was a little glass knife, a long sliver, its handle wrapped with twine. Slowly she drew its shining edge across the woolly neck, quivering in ecstasy as the blood welled out and down her arm. She held the lamb's head tightly. The round, black eyes rolled madly. It struggled to bleat, but she held the mouth, it could only moan sickly in its throat. She bent and drank the hot blood, drank and drank until the hunger died away and her heart stopped throbbing against her ribs. The lamb was quite still; its little feet were limp and strained no longer.

She rose, left the still heap, and went to the pool and washed herself, combing her hair and making herself like other girls again. Then, she strolled back through the trees again, her eyes sleepy, her lips satiated, her body relaxed. The herdsman would think some fox or other creature killed the lamb.

Now the night lay sadly about her. Her sisters slept fitfully, arising often to drink, while her father snored a tiresome plaint into the dark. A hunger was in her again. It was days since she killed the lamb. A compulsion came into her veins, her palms were dry, her throat constricted. Her eyes burned into the blackness, but it burned back at her. Softly she crept, snakelike across the floor until the warm softness of her little sister's body was against her breast. In her hand she had the sharp piece of glass, a thread cutter from the spinning. The tiny one sighed a little, turned against her. Hecate parted

the dark hair, baring the thin neck, and with the glass made a quick, deep slit. She filled her throat with the warm blood, holding the soft little head fiercely, her hand over the struggling mouth. After a long time, the body ceased its struggle, but she held it for the leisure of the stillness, and the sweet trickle down her throat. At last the hunger left her and she crawled back to her pallet and slept.

In her sleep she dreamed—dreamed of the good feel of a full stomach—the pleasant warmth of a cheery fire when the heavens outside are weeping. And other things she dreamed—of stars and planets—and strange peoples—and the dreams of never growing slow and wrinkled and old—a dream wherein she was a god.

Vampire spawn of Earth that she was, she could still talk of her God quest—and with supreme indifference be the cause of torture and death. Torture and death with a motive. And her motive was always the immortality of Hecate, the Limping Hag. Nothing that went on in her fortress did so without her approbation.

Once, walking in some of the lower chambers, I idly paused to watch a fine-looking old gentleman being broken on the wheel. I had so sunk into my role of the Hag's favorite that the sight of agony and hideous death howls left me with only a slight thrill of pleasure. But, this day, for some reason I wondered at the cause of this man's being racked.

Nodding to one of the Earthmen members of the Hag's forces, I inquired as to the reason for it.

The answer was astounding when I grasped it . . . the still human part of me was astounded, I mean.

The Earthman looked at me strangely—my position as the Hag's favorite would indicate that I should know. He shrugged his shoulders, then said. "He was manufacturing a steel 'beam' on Earth and planning to sell it widely. A steel beam in their midst would detract from our ancient moral standing."

The Hagman laughed at his cryptic speech and walked off. I pondered awhile, then walked up to the man sweating in a death agony. He was an Earthman—a high type. An intellectual head he had, and long fingered hands. A beautiful specimen of the highest type of Earthman, though he was broken and bleeding now.

I knew that the antique rays was made of what was called the Elder Metal. That was what he had meant by "beams." I realized then what that secrecy cost the peoples of Earth in engineers and others . . . the secrecy of the ancient mech buried in the caves beneath our feet, though at the time I was too much under the Hag's influence to care. This man was evidently an engineer or a physicist who had been making a ray using a kind of steel

that was nearly as good as some of the antique “beams.” He had been taken captive and shipped to Venus for final disposition . . . the ancient, brutal wheel a reward for his fine effort for the future of man. These hidden rulers of Earth and the Hagmen, the Hag herself—had no use for such a man but to crack his bones. I understood the whole thing much better. It still goes on.

At another time I was standing in an apartment of Hecate’s noticing some very beautiful figures of women. They were very realistic—colored like life. Curiously, I touched one of the beautiful nudes. It was not stone but had a “give” to it—like a firm cushion. Looking closer I saw that the figures were literally stuffed women! Once they had been beautiful living creatures . . . creatures vibrant with the surge of life. Whether they had incurred the wrath of Hecate, or merely that she had coveted their bodies, so much lovelier than her own bulky carcass, I never knew. But the Hag had them now, permanently . . . had them stuffed and decorating her chambers, like the trophies of a hunter.

This . . . this was Hecate, the Mother of Sin . . . my unlovely, all wise Mistress who was telling me of her plans to pursue the Gods Themselves with me at her side.

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## CHAPTER IX

*“Expect that by such stairs as these,” thus spake the teacher, panting. . .  
“We must depart from evil so extreme: . . . I raised my eyes,  
Believing that I Lucifer should see . . . but saw him now  
With legs held upward. Let the grosser sort,  
Who see not what the point was I had past Bethink them if sore toil  
oppressed me then.*

—*The Divine Comedy.*

**U**NDER the combined influence of the Tuon intelligence that directed my every action, and the spell of Hecate’s marvelous ancient mech, the incident of the discovery of the dark bone in my head was forgotten . . . even my Evil Mistress had, seemingly, dropped it. We were languidly tasting the delights the ancient “stim” possessed in limitless streams. Suddenly the quiet spell broke.

Shattering precedent of ages, Enora flung aside the drapes covering the door, and, with the shortest of salutations, rushed to the couch of Hecate, yelling hysterically, “It’s an old spy device, Oh Hecate! A spy device of the Ancient Ones—it broadcasts a man’s thoughts!”

The shrill tones had hardly died in the room when the Tuons made the move they'd deferred for so long. Like a switch had been thrown, I was galvanized to action. I had nothing to do with it. A powerful compulsion seized me. Leaping between the two huge women, I swung a terrific sleep inducer at the smaller and closer one which happened to be the aide. I connected powerfully—with a brick wall. That old bag had been under the integrative ray too much—soft and fluffy like a chunk of concrete! I yelped—thought I'd broken my hand!

Instead of folding up like she should have, she didn't even grunt—just looked at me, all the time tugging frantically at the gun bolstered at her side. Boy! I had to think fast. If she got that little play toy out it would have been all over for me except for flowers and slow music. I stepped back, my hand feeling like it was broken in a hundred places, my eyes on that wicked little magnetic dissociator that forever nullifies the tiny magnetic charges that hold all matter together. I had no desire to go up in smoke, for love of the Hag or anything else.

(I never will know what kept that thing sticking in her belt. In the years that I had seen and used the hellish weapons of the caves, I had never before seen one that didn't function smoothly. Maybe the Gods love my big baby face.)

When your neck feels the breath of the Grim Reaper, thoughts that take minutes to relate, race through your mind like lightning—that's the way I wondered why Hecate hadn't taken a hand in the thing—so I looked and there was the big cow, hurriedly pulling her massive bulk over to the bank of controls.

"Oh, oh," I thought. "Here's where little Jimmy gets what is known in some circles as 'the works'—gotta do something—with haste."

I moved in on the aide. She wasn't too hep to Earthly "rassling," so when I rammed one leg behind hers and heaved with my shoulders, the old battle-axe went over like an iron balloon. She hit the floor and went sprawling—the gun getting loose and skidding away from her. I grabbed it—too late.

Hecate was still one jump ahead of the opposition. She'd gotten to the reach's control panel and the jig was up. Before I could level the dis-gun at her and fire, a beam sprang out of the great old machine, stopping me cold, the surging power of Hecate's beam freezing the will that coursed from the antique spy-mech in my head.

I stood still. A living pawn. Two ancient machines fighting silently for control of my body. The Tuons were doomed to fail from the first. They were matching skill with the sharpest hands on two planets, and for all I know, the best mech artist on all ten worlds.

I couldn't think. I was just aware of what was going on. Then, shortly the huge old mech under Hecate's flitting fingers slowly gained the upper hand. I guess the Tuons were too far away to last too long.

Like a puppet on an invisible string, I moved toward the Hag, seated at the control panel. I was numbed or I guess I'd have gone mad at the hell-fire flashing out of those proud, angry eyes. The very hate of hell was burning into mine as I stepped up to her and meekly handed the dis-gun to her—as SHE willed.

Something—an affectionate banshee, or the gods, stayed the awful anger that had destroyed hosts of abler men than me—and for a lot less, too.

She looked at me for a long, long moment, then summoned some of the guards that never were far from her. They and the aide who had picked herself up off the floor by this time were commanded to wind me with certain coils of wire. They were experts at that sort of thing because in a matter of seconds I was tightly wound round and round with many turns of wire and hustled off to the cells in the huge prison under the city of Disin, a prison, incidentally, from which there is no record of anyone's returning alive.

I'll never know . . . and it's cost me many a night's sleep trying to figure it . . . just what the Limping Hag WOULD have done to me if . . .

That night a soft hiss that wasn't caused by the vermin made me sit up on the crawling mat I was on. I held my breath . . . listening.

The door slowly opened . . . very slowly, not making a sound. The lock had dissolved in a puff of dust or smoke like that which had almost claimed me earlier that day.

An apparition from a drugged nightmare entered the cell . . . a tall column of barely heard hissing noise, yet I knew that the noise meant something or somebody.

The column of sound seemed to bend in the middle, bending in my direction. The sweat stood out in cold beads on my forehead. I thought: "This is it—Hell. What a way to die, in a stinking little cell . . . alone."

Then, like the chorus from a basket of snakes came a louder hiss, a hiss that I recognized as a voice . . . and I knew that voice.

"You big baboon!"

"Ceulna!" I moaned, both because my bonds were paining me and because of the shock of hearing her voice here under what I knew was an enemy city. "Ceulna, beautiful, what are you up to? You shouldn't be here, you—?"

"Ask me no questions, you overstuffed baboon," she cut me off. "You play-thing of a hyena's daughter . . . you fancy fool for that spawn of hell. Oh, you're impossible! You're not worth the trouble I take."

I tried to say something, but she commanded. "Shut up. I'll talk for you."

She was most explicit. "Here, put this on and keep quiet!" Somehow, I felt like a married man caught in delinquencies. I had not known Ceulna gave a damn for me until she bawled me out that night. But, oh brother, what a job she did, then. Nothing could have been better calculated to bring my sleeping self-back to life. She cut my ropes and slid some soft, rustling stuff over me and fastened the two whirling discs about my shoulders, then, walking through the door, she disappeared from my senses. I followed. The faintest possible whirring was the only guide my senses could find to tell me where Ceulna had gone. I followed that faint shadow of a sound that was she, and passed a dozen dead guards, great holes of nothingness where the center of their stomachs should have been. When Ceulna killed someone, she killed them.

Miles later, my unaccustomed feet stumbling after Ceulna a thousand times more anxiously than they had the first night I met her, I caught up with her.

"For God's sake, Ceulna, tell me something."

"You keep quiet, you overgrown lady killer, you— Of all the men Ceulna could have on two worlds, she had to want you, the only one that would be fool enough to fall into Hecate's arms. It would be better if you were dead. Keep still, we are still in danger."

I swear we walked ten solid miles, and I could get nothing out of Ceulna but violent recrimination. Then, in those gloomy, forever dark caverns, we came upon, of all things, an electric car that I swear was built on Earth, and recently. We got in, in silence, and due to those suits, in nonexistence, apparently.

Two hours later, we were mounting in an elevator toward the city of Lefern above. She told me that much. Going into the buildings that I knew were upper Lefern from the rustling leaves outside, she led me into an apartment that I recognized as her personal living place, for the dancing costumes hung in the transparent closet, and the little globe of the kind she had shown me on Earth in the secret caverns rested on a low table. She must have gotten another one. Everything in the room said, "The graceful, lovely, Ceulna lives here." I was immensely glad to sink into a huge chair and just look at her. A great load had lifted from me, and although I was not able to think clearly anymore, I knew I was home.

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## CHAPTER X

*The Veline fountains, and sulphureous Nor  
Shake at the baleful blast, the signal of the war.  
Young mothers wildly stare, with fear possessed,  
And strain their helpless infants to their breast.*

*Virgil's Aenid.*

CEULNA was still boiling. “For months,” she stormed, “I have watched you over the augments, listening to you make love to that living slime, that giantess of the abyss, that compound of baby’s lives and selfish will. And when you get in trouble, who gets you out? I have to! You big blundering oaf, you wasted effort of a mistaken mother. What are you, anyway?”

“Ceulna,” I said slowly, “I am angry myself at myself for all that I have lived through. But I swear I could no more help myself than fly. I am more happy to see you than anyone could explain. It even makes me happy that you should be angry. I didn’t know I meant anything to you. Now I know you care for me. Since you have read so many of my thoughts, you must know what I feel for you, though I have not had much time to think about it.”

“That’s another thing. All this time in the arms of the ugliest woman on two planets, and you haven’t even thought of me, and now you say you care. Bah! And I risk my neck for you. Oh, why are women made that way? If there was a man, a real man wanting me, I would go out of my way to be nasty to him. Why? But just let a big self-centered oaf like you who does not even think of me get himself in trouble, and I nearly lose my neck to pull him out of the toughest prison on Venus. Well, say something, you bovine paramour of an old witch, aren’t you even grateful?”

“Why are you so angry, Ceulna? Because it makes you so beautiful with your green eyes flashing and your face flushed, or because it is a reaction from worrying about your man so long? If that’s it, come here and I’ll show you something.”

She moved closer and I wrapped my too-strong arms about her and she started to cry. “From now on, Ceulna,” I started to soothe her, “I’m your man; you bought my life with your courage and it’s yours. It’s yours to do what you want with it.”

After crying for a long time, she began to explain. “When the Hag put you down there, I knew it would only be a day or so until some of those hangers-on who have been wishing for your place in her so-lovely arms, her so-sweet embrace, would find a way to do away with you, and much the

lovely ogress would have cared what happened to you. She does not like to be made a fool, even if you couldn't help it. I asked Oanu for the suit of invisibility. They are very rare and little known, but there are a few found now and then in sealed compartments in the old dwellings. Only the ancient secret-service owned them, so there are not many. They cannot be detected by an ordinary ray, unless it strikes one directly, and the only way such a feat could have been accomplished. They nullify all vibrations leaving the body. But how to get there without walking all the way? We finally decided to use the electric car, after covering all the wires and motor with material taken from another suit of invisibility. Well, it worked. We have maps of every bit of the old caves and it was simple to find a way into the part where the prison has been built. I doubt if they have such maps themselves. It was simple, yes. But this does not mean that you are forgiven. Later, maybe."

"But I don't understand how you came to have such influence here and how you got them to help you. How come?" I asked her, just to hear her voice again.

"I earn what I get here. They were glad to have me when they found that I knew of Earth-ray and of Hecate. I drew a very high allotment of credits for my work. When Oanu learned that I knew you, she put me in the group who watched and controlled the unconscious spies who are equipped with the device which is still in your skull. So, I know all about you, you vampire's plaything. You . . . !" In spite of herself, Ceulna was forced to laugh at my lugubrious expression. So, she laughed and was soon in my arms again, crying softly. If I had known how Ceulna felt about me, I would not have been so ready to leave Lefern for our enemies' hospitality and for the arms of the oldest and ugliest woman on two worlds.

As I sat with Ceulna in my arms, enjoying the happiness and relief that she had brought to me, Oanu came in. She looked at us, a peculiar smile on her face. Ceulna did not rise, and I couldn't with her in my lap. But Oanu understood. She sat down, lighting one of the purple cigarettes of Venus.

"It is too bad that this love I see before me had to be dragged through the slime by Hecate," she said in better English than I had heard from her before. "If either of you had mentioned your acquaintance to me when you were here before, I would have brought you together. Then, all this could have been avoided. But it is over now. Our armies are gathered in the caverns under Disin and you and Ceulna will each lead a detachment. Your knowledge of the place should prove most useful. Within a few hours we will be ready. You had better refresh yourselves, then join your section. There is little time. It will not be long before Disin is in our hands. Simultaneously, the other cities in Hecate's hands will be struck in the same way from below, and, fortune favoring, we will end this vampire horror on Venus.

“Thanks to your efficient love-making,” Oanu grinned slyly at me, “we know every weapon that Hecate will use against us, and have prepared the counter weapons according to the ancient war-ray books. Before Hecate realizes that we have this information, we strike, for she will deduce from the incident of the instrument in your head that we do have such information. So, the time is *now!* We have her figured out and an overwhelming counter-attack prepared for anything she may use. Her methods are no longer a mystery as they used to be to us, nor can she have a surprise for us.”

“Oanu, something has been troubling me ever since the day I fell into Hecate’s hands. I asked her several times, but she always put me off. Where is Hank Farne? I haven’t seen him since the day we were both questioned by Hecate.”

“Farne has been idling in Disin. No one gave him anything to do, and no one harmed him for they feared you would hear of it. Hecate would not let him see you as she feared his influence over you would turn you against her. You will probably see him if we succeed in the coming attack,” was Oanu’s answer.

Those Amazons didn’t pay much attention to me; I was politely told that I was boss of our group of thirty track-rays, much the same type that I had learned to handle under the Earth-ray-men. That boss-stuff was mere fiction, for I couldn’t even talk their lingo well, and could hardly understand them. But they did pay attention to business. Through all the many dusty caverns leading to Disin, I knew that similar columns were racing madly toward the city of the vampires. The idea was to get there as soon after our discovery by their rays as possible. I realized that this attack had been caused by the necessity springing from the discovery of the spy radio in my head when I was with Hecate in her apartments, for she would guess just about how much we had learned of her plans and would change her whole campaign. To catch her in the midst of the confusion caused by this change was the reason for our attack. Also, there were many valuable men like Farne in the Hagmen’s midst who would be killed if the attack failed. The old telepath-radio apparatus in their heads would be their death warrant now that Hecate knew what they were, and where to look for the apparatus.

In front of us vibrated the great fans of the black shorter rays, ready to ground any beam they might throw at us. Lumbering behind the fans came the light tanks such as my own group, and behind them came larger and larger war-ray. All focused on a predetermined spot in Disin—that spot the place where the great general ro-control with which Hecate ruled the city had its intricately cabled, myriad beamed, and electric-eyed being. This apparatus Hecate had had brought up, ton by ton, from the depths of an an-

cient ro-city. With it she could direct any man's whole activity or make the whole population obey the same mental impulse simultaneously. Always, a trusted follower of the Hag sat at this masterpiece of the ancient science, listening to the thought of the city and ruling that thought in the way that it should go, as prescribed by Hecate. A populace ruled in this manner by the ancient ro-controls accepts any occurrence without demur, no matter how much to their detriment. Once our dis-rays put this monster, the actual nervous center of Disin out of commission, their prime coordinating center would be cancelled.<sup>(5)</sup>

At a signal, immense beams from the giant tractors behind us lanced over our heads, up at the center of the web of telaug beams which ringed the old rocontrol mech. In my penetray screen, I watched eagerly as the antique super metal glowed red, then white. But there was one thing our spies had missed, probably because the things had been planted so long before. Whether the heat of our dis-rays caused the explosion or whether they could not see our true position for the mass of black shorter rays under our dis-beams, I don't know, but a vast booming and roaring ahead, followed by a rolling cloud of choking smoke and dust, told us what had happened—the caves leading to Disin had been mined for just such an attack. Our forces had come within a hair of walking into the primitive trap. Simultaneously with the explosion, what seemed like a thousand or more great dissociator beams bored down at us, and a myriad of dust belching holes appeared in the hardened rock of the cave rooves ahead. Our "shorter" ray set-up, carefully figured out in advance for just such attacks on the basis of our full information on their weapons, were sufficient.

A few of our delicate telaug devices burned out from the overload and rolled to a stop for repairs, but the columns raced on toward the mass of tumbled rock fragments that now barred us entrance to Hecate's lair. Under the black shielding blanket of shorter ray, the dis-rays hissed at the tumbled rock, and the lava rolled slowly back toward us from the melted rock.

It would not take the big dis-rays fifteen minutes to melt away a half-mile of that rubble, but would the resulting passage be safe for the passage of an army?

Well, we'd find out, for streams of water were playing on the bubbling

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(5) These ro-control mech were designed, of course, merely as an ever-present and all-knowing policeman. But in ignorant and repressive hands, they can become a device by which the whole thought of a city is held rigidly in a narrow rut. Many modern cities suffer from this mis-used ro-mech underlying the modern surface city. They are the origin of the God-myth, omnipresence cultivated by priests. —Author.

floor of molten rock and our wheels were rolling over the smoking rock before it had really cooled.

Overhead, the cracks left by the explosion reached upward. We had a few integrative rays playing upward to tie the rock a little more firmly, but I doubted they made much impression through the necessary blanket of “shorter” rays.

Far overhead as we rounded into a branching cavern, on the surface I caught a glimpse of a vast army approaching Disin overhead—a fantastic conglomeration of nightmare weapons, unbelievably huge, rumbling over what I knew was soft mud. As I looked a second time, I caught on. It was a projection of an imaginary army, done with a huge thought-record augmentor. This close to Disin, they had probably detected its nature, but when our attack had been gathering, it had certainly been very efficacious in the dim distance as a cover for our real attack from the caverns. Realistically, on the surface overhead, a purely imaginary army was carrying on a purely imaginary attack upon Disin!

As we rumbled nearer and nearer to the heart of Disin above us, my respect for the Tuon efficiency and science went up by leaps and bounds. The ray-shielding which had protected the Tuon buildings from the Earthmen’s attack in my first action on Venus, must have been understood by Hecate, or at least been figured out by now. Yet, our rays reached upward all through the great medieval piles of clumsy stone that formed Disin. Why had Hecate not used that same type of ray-shield?

If she had covered this, the Tuons evidently had a nullifier for the shield in action, for nothing prevented either our vision rays or dis-rays from sweeping the length and breadth of Disin.

The myriad of rays which had combed down upon us at the time of the mines’ explosion were fewer now. The rise and fall and the hiss of our dis-rays raved at the fixed installations within the great center building, evil’s cloister, where the monstrous ro-mech dominated our transparent vision with its antique opacity glowing redly and more redly as we sought permanently to destroy this nerve center of the Hag’s.

(Later, Oanu explained to me that the defenselessness of Hecate’s forces was due to great fields of diffuse dissociation beams which nullified the effect of Hecate’s shielding fields and shorter rays, as well as making it very difficult for the defenders to think or act swiftly or well.)

What happened as we finally closed in on the fortress mounting upward through dozens of ramps, we bored with our disrays, was a surprise to me. I had expected much more of the apparently formidable outfit under Hecate of which I knew so much.

Out of the great courtyard, a score of the ancient space ships rose one after the other. The blood-takers, the core of the vampire organization, flashed spaceward at top acceleration in the ships that glowed from our concentrated fire. Fire that did nothing but heat the hull, for the ancient metal was impervious to most rays except over a long period of intense concentration of many rays.

We hadn't won so soon, surely? What had happened to cause their too sudden flight? Certainly, the mighty and ancient knowledge of war that Hecate undoubtedly possessed was not so easily defeated. Yet, there were the ships fleeing—from us. Why?

The answer to my question was soon given. Scores of white flags suddenly were unfurled from every battery within the citadel. With them, terms of surrender blared out, as well as information that explained much to me.

I had not known there was much opposition to Hecate within her own forces, for I had been too close to her to learn anything about it. But the great thought speakers they turned toward us said: "We have helped you by turning against the Hag. Our beams hastened her departure. Most of the blood-feeders have gone with her, the others lie here dead. Enter and be merciful, O mighty Amazons."

We did. And Ceulna and I found a chance to do something we had dreamed of in more than one black night. We lined up the surviving Hag-men, and after permission from Oanu, separated them into two groups—those whom we knew well from the cruelties we had observed them in, and those whom we did not know.

This latter group we told to take the former to the children's "Palace of Life" where waited the great Moloch with his fiery mouth well stoked for them. I am not sadistic, but I enjoyed the sight of those ill-natured robots screaming their way to death in the flames more than any other sound I have ever heard.

Ceulna and I gave Farne a bad scare when we pretended not to recognize him in the line-up. The canny little man for once was at a loss. It was a joyous experience when we both embraced him, a very good moment to see the joy light his face . . . to say nothing of the relief. Such moments are what makes life worth the living. Greeting one's dog on coming home, meeting an old friend again, the crack of an evil neck between the hands, the laugh of one's best beloved, what else makes life worth the effort? Such moments are all too far apart. The fall of Disin and the flight of Hecate, the Mother of Sin, from Venus, was a long moment of that kind.

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## CHAPTER XI

*Faust. "When I behold the heavens, then I repent —  
Ay, go, accursed spirit, to ugly Hell. 'Tis thou hast damn'd distressed  
Faustus' soul."*

*Marlowe.*

OANU was not the official ruler of Lefern and the allied cities of the Tuon race, but she was certainly a most respected leader among that superior people. Hard upon the heels of that fleeing score of antique space ferries ascended a full hundred of Venusian filled space battleships, under Oanu. In the ship in which Oanu directed the pursuit, Ceulna and I pored over the great space view-screen, its huge master ray boring ahead of the fleet, God only knows how many miles, for one's mind is always prostrate before the potentialities of the ancient workmanship.

"How is it," I asked Ceulna, "that so many as a hundred space ships, still serviceable, are to be had from the ancients' leavings? I would think that they had needed every ship when they left Earth."

"I have often listened to the older people talk of such things—speculating about the Elder Gods is a favorite topic of conversation," answered Ceulna. "Those who know and read the old records say that the migration of the Gods was a long drawn out affair—over a century of great effort—with many trips back and forth to the new home in space. They saw that a strange infection called "de" ails all the machinery and the ships, everything left behind, that is why there is so much of it."<sup>(6)</sup>

Finally, we sighted the fleeing vampires, but we could not catch them. Oanu was wary. One ship followed them to Earth, marked their position on the map and returned with two great holes bored completely through the

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(6) This "de" is a deadly radioactive infection from the sun, and the Elder Gods took the most extreme precautions to leave behind anything badly infected. Themselves, far out in space, transferred to a clean ship, leaving behind even their clothes, after extreme treatment of their own bodies to cure the infection, and abandoned the very ship they left the sun's vicinity with, to drift forever in darkness. Such are Venusian tales about the God Race leaving the planets of our sun—the reason was "de," the most terrible enemy of life. For that reason, many ships were left, some so complicated that no one knew how to run them at all. And the old students of the ancient writings know that Venus and Earth are deeply infected with that "de" from the sun, that it is the cause of aging and dying. —Author.

impervious hull of super metal. The Earthmen were not having any of us, evidently.<sup>(7)</sup>

Oanu approached as near to the point on the map as possible behind a mountain range, then the fleet settled to Earth. Certainly, she must have had information on the cavern ray of Earth, for many Earth source lifter rays gentled our landing.

Someone here must be rooting for us. Below our downward drifting tons, a great light flared suddenly and the vast mouth of some ancient landing tube yawned, still in use.

I was amazed to find all this vastly developed science of the ancient ones existing all these centuries on Earth, hidden from the otherwise credulous humans of Earth by their very incredulity of anything they do not know all about.<sup>(8)</sup>

Now, within that supposedly non-existent cave, waited a people whom you know all about, "THE LITTLE PEOPLE," the most charming inhabitants of Earth. They were few, for the centuries of handling the aging mechanisms with its now defective shielding, have made them nearly sterile—they have few children anymore. Many of them are changelings still—as in the old days, surface men's babes. They no longer steal surface babies and leave defective offsprings in their places, but now, legally adopt them from orphanages. The blood of the little people has grown weak, but still they are the finest men I have ever met. The little people still love man and they welcomed us with the most delicious mental stim I ever tasted.

(Warning: There are some evil groups descended from castouts, in case you ever meet the "little people.")

The "little people" were very eager to help us against the new menace from Venus, having been practically besieged in their own area of the moun-

(7) The old caverns were originally equipped with many great installations of sky-pointing master rays, whose purpose was specifically to defend the underworld cities against space attack. —Author.

(8) From the pauper youth, Aladdin, down the pages of history to the modern science-fiction writers, the open-eyed among men have tried to tell others of the hidden magic of the ancients within those impenetrably walled caverns—tried to tell unsuccessfully all about this mighty gift of the old gods of Earth, with no more hope of success than had the pauper, Aladdin.

Jewels from those very same caves could have paid for the publishing of this work. Would you bother to find out if it were true or not? No, we of Earth are too purblind to all the infinite corroboration of such tales about us. —Author.

tains, their home for many years.<sup>(9)</sup> Those with whom Hecate had sought and found refuge were not friends of the little people.

Oanu was not one to quit with the job half finished. The bulk of the fleet returned to Venus, and soon a steady stream of supplies began to pour in. The whole paraphernalia of our attack on Disin began to be assembled for a similar assault on this Earth hideout of the Hag's.

The news from Venus was splendid. Two of the cities of the Hagmen were still holding out, but were expected to fall at any time. Soon, Venus would be rid of the vampire system, and the children of that beautiful people once again free to build the great future that was very evidently their potential possession.

During this period, Oanu arranged for a series of brain treatments from the army docs designed to restore my original initiative and character as much as possible. Ray medical work is certainly far different from the ether and knife butcher work we of the surface world are accustomed to consider advanced medicine. These doctors of the penetray just laid me under a lamp that revealed every nerve in my head as if the organ were constructed of vary-colored glass as is a medical display. Then they checked every injury in my head on a chart. Finally, they "operated" with an extremely powerful little benray, a needle of concentrated beneficial force. It hurt in a good way, if you can imagine a good pain. This powerful little ray they focused carefully on the points of injury, one after the other. After an hour a day of this for a week, they pronounced me cured. I was more than cured.

Those docs didn't fool me. They had created several foci of super brain cells in my brain with that super ray. Mentally, I was a better man than I had ever imagined any man could be. I learned why they did not tell me. It seems the ben ray devices are extremely valuable—rationed for use only on the most deserving people, those most valuable to the race. To save discussion on the point, probably at Oanu's suggestion, they had given me, unofficially, a generous dose of some of their most potent growth rays.

Everything was rapidly reaching completion for the attack on the distant refuge of the Hag when—it happened! The "little people" had been so sure that it couldn't happen, and we, I mean Oanu, had not considered the possibility, for the "little people" had been feuding with the raypeople who lived where the Hag's ships had sunk into the ground—and the "little people" knew their methods inside out. But, Oanu had forgotten that the addition

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(9) Exact locations of such places cannot be given, for the "little people" would be offended. For more about the "little people," see Merritt's "Dwellers of The Mirage."—Author.

of the Hag's experience to their array of apparatus was a factor rendering the whole a vastly more formidable set-up than formerly. For what Hecate didn't know about the old mech was known by few others on the two planets. Anyway, she found a weapon there that the "little people's" opponents had never used.

A diffuse field of force swept our caverns and stayed there. The stuff seemed to be flow of radio waves nearly similar to thought waves, and the command it bore to our brains and muscles seemed to be "contract." Anyway, the stuff either accumulated a contracting charge in the nerves and muscles or she kept adding generator after generator to the power supply of the ancient radio-wave transmitter.

I knew that their mech was several hundred miles and a mountain range away from us, but that wave, like a radio wave of modern science, was not stopped by distance or rock. Our muscles just pulled up into tighter and tighter knots. . . at the end of ten hours we were unable to move hand or foot.

We just sat or lay in painful knots of humanity and waited for the butchers to arrive. I swore steadily to myself. I swore viciously. Just when things were shaping so the surface men of old Earth were going to lose some of their age-old burdens of ignorant, all-powerful evil, that rabid witch, my beloved of so many long, lurid and I must admit, interesting nights packed with every sensation the body or mind could experience, pulled this ace out of her sleeve. The mighty Hecate, the Mother of Sin, the Devil's rival, the Holy Howling Horror herself, the only person who had ever been able to make me doubt that Evil was else than insanity, was going to get her Big Jim back again. Now the question that had bothered me so often was going to be answered. Unless help came within less than an hour, the old witch would have the whole thing in her ancient paws again. A great fear for what she would do to poor Ceulna rose in my heart.

I wept a little, cursed a little and involuntarily crawled before the mental image of that horror of the past. Soon I would be her thing again, or I would be dead with the lovely, fiery soul of Ceulna wilted beside me.

Waiting for the Hag, I couldn't move, so I thought of what I had seen of the "little people" . . . a thing many surface men have tried to see but failed. Some of the oldsters wore costumes of the fourteenth century, the kind you have seen "the little people" pictured as wearing. Long trunks over their legs, short jackets and a pointed hat or stocking cap pulled down over their ears, and pointed, turned-up-toe shoes, they presented an almost comical sight. They averaged a good four feet in height—bigger than one would expect. I suspect that they are not a separate race of men, but men who have lived so many centuries in the caverns that something lacking in their envi-

ronment affected their growth adversely. The younger ones were dressed in modern clothe, evidently from modern American stores, though of course, in boy's sizes. Although many of them were extremely thin, they were a very good-looking people. The "fairy drums" and "elfin piping" so spoken of by writers were present when we first arrived, but it was merely a kind of musical greeting to us. I remember nothing in particular to mention about it. Perhaps, I am becoming inured to the remarkable. However, now they have so much good modern music on tap on their radios. It may be that the art is dying out.

Their dancing, so often spoken of by other writers, was also present as a part of our welcome, but perhaps the costumes were not appropriate to the pattern of the ancient dances, or they had had no time to prepare a genuine program of merit. It was good dancing—very definitely identifying this group of "little people" in my mind with the legendary artistry in the dance which is attributed to them—but nothing more.

The most remarkable thing about them was a quickness of perception, a lightning kind of intuitive thinking, coupled with extreme agility of movement. But I had had little time to get thoroughly acquainted with the "little people." They were a race of good-looking midgets, and their magic, which was their knowledge of the uses and possession of the ancient mechanisms of the Elder Gods, was their chief distinction. And, ironically, its value to them was evidently neutralized by the monopolistic attempts of the other groups possessing the ray to kill them and take it away. From what I could gather, most of their time seemed to be spent in fighting such efforts on the part of the other old secret ray groups.

Now they lay, their own muscles knotted in the nervous impulses sent by the Hag and holding them in pained and motionless little bundles on the ancient polished stone of the floor. Their faces were pictures of despair and fear, and the habitual way that fear sat on their faces told me that these impulses were not strange to them.

Far down below us, in the vast tubes that connect all these time-drowned caves, rumbled nearer and nearer the wheels bearing the Hagmen and their new allies, whom I had not seen.

At last, when our nerves were shrieking from the pain of our bursting muscles and the horrified and hopeless waiting that was our only consciousness, they came. Into the cavern rolled the ancient cars of the tubes, a long torpedo-shaped vehicle with many wheels both on the bottom and sides, for the tubes have turns where the sides are used to check side-momentum. These cars still work, some of them are being used under your feet today. And the men that keep them in repair know more in some ways

than the best of surface scientists, yet avoid us of the surface. Why? It is the ancient custom to do so. If I should ask, "Why do people marry?" you may understand. That is our way, that is all.

Out of these long, and to us, hideously ominous vehicles poured a weird mob of shapes and sizes. These were the people of the caves whose ancestors used the worn-out apparatus and were affected by the terrible x-rays given off by the old junk, affected the same way that fruit flies are affected by x-rays in the modern experiments spoken of so much. This x-raycaused-mutation had gone on for endless centuries among these certain peoples, for they were ignorant of the cause, and never ceased to use the defective apparatus. The end result was a deformed race begging description. They had long legs and short bodies, or very short heads on very long bodies, bodies with arms at the hips and the trunk sticking up above the spider-like limb grouping. Some had hides mottled in black and white, some were covered with fine fur, and, surprisingly, some were normal and even beautiful individuals, but the effect of their entrance was that of the hordes of Hell loosed upon us. In truth, they were evil in a way I had not seen in action before. (The simple truth of some life in the caverns sounds fantastic, doesn't it? Truth is a more fantastic and horrible thing than any mind can enwrap—and truth can be a more vast beauty than a man's mind can grasp—if it is. But Earth life, in truth, is a vast horror unperceived by us because we are accustomed to the horror.)

The cave filled with these horrible invaders. The paralyzing waves were shut off ominously. A few of the "little people" made an abortive attempt to reach the old mech, but died writhing in their tracks from the hand ray trained upon us.

The rest of us were grouped together in the center of the cave to await the rulers' disposition. Others took up the usual watch over the screens which are placed so as to bring a continuous view into the center cave of all the ones surrounding us, as well as the surface overhead. Usually, this setup is the same one left by the Elder Ones, as no modern man could improve on their disposition of the weapons and view rays. These screens are very large, covering most of the walls to a height of ten feet, and nothing that takes place within thirty miles is missed if they watch them carefully.

We squatted miserably in a close group in the center, hope withering within us. Such is ray warfare. One second everything is your way—the next, you would be better off dead. We all knew the part of wisdom was to attack these distorted horrors bare-handed and die before the torture' started, but we did not. Such hope is a betrayer . . . a weakness indeed.

At last came what I dreaded—Hecate and her party. Once I had been cu-

rious as to what she would have done with me, now I was to know what she would do. Ceulna would not leave my side; I feared Hecate might learn that she was my beloved, Ceulna knew better, but the swift adversity had upset her usual sense—she just clung to me and looked dazed.

Hecate had us kicked into a line and walked up and down, looking us over. Oanu she singled out by her uniform, or perhaps she knew her from her description. She so honored a few other Tuons as well as myself. As I left the line at her gesture, Ceulna, still dazed, followed me. Her hands held out numbly. Hecate didn't miss seeing that she loves me. My face was expressionless. I pretended not to notice the girl. The hag smiled grimly and gestured for the girl to be included in the little party she had selected as her special victims. The rest she gave over to the home team to do whatever they wanted to do.

The party began as we left in Hecate's train. It is very unnerving to see a woman hung up by her hair, while she is flooded with pain ray . . . particularly when you can't do a thing. You can't get used to it.

Hecate took us aboard the ship in which she had arrived from Venus. There she took a seat on her crystal throne, whether it was different from the one I had first met her on, I don't know. It certainly was the same type of apparatus, probably the ancient rulers used the thing themselves. No other set-up of apparatus I ever saw had so many varied types of rays controlled by its mech.

We stood and waited while she augmented our thoughts, searching each one of us, pumping everything out of us swiftly with her super-active, but I was fast learning—not too sharp brain. Finally, she reached my brain. Her sharp exclamation of triumph as she saw what I felt for Ceulna told me what to expect. Now, she could hurt me as she desired without harming my body (which sub-consciously she wished to retain?). She would have her revenge on Ceulna, too.

Standing there and waiting while that ancient from Hell decided what fate would best fit our transgressions was one of the most painful periods I ever endured. Occasionally, her great yellow eyes burned into mine with an enigmatic expression . . . my skin crawled . . . my mind refused to imagine what she might be contemplating. About her, stood a few of the blood-takers, hideous old-young creatures of Spanish ancestry for the most part. Age had left them alive, but had marked them in other ways. Tiny wrinkles crisscrossed their skin, and their noses and ears had grown out of proportion. All were very tall.

They were dressed in various fashions. Some of them had clung to the ancient Spanish styles—hose and doublet with slashed sleeves and puffed

short pants. The women, for the most part, had adopted modern styles, though, some of the more attractive dressed in Venusian manner, which consisted of very little but arm bands, g-string, breast supporter, and many flashing jewels, and a plumed headdress. However, most of them were not beautiful, despite the young, stolen blood pulsing through their flesh and lending sparkle to their eyes.

A terrible weariness was in them, too. Taking the form of a consistent disapproval of everything they looked at, a constant sneer twisted their lips, a conviction that life had nothing more to offer them—that all life about them was worthless and, therefore, to be destroyed, rested on their faces. It was evident that age had been defeated in their bodies, only to take its tolls in other ways. Their faces did not show enjoyment of their stolen life. Even with the infinite pleasures of the High Gods at their fingertips, still, they were miserable creatures, lacking the wisdom to enjoy the fruits of their evil science.

“If we place them under ‘Evil Dreams’ from the punishment records, they will experience all the tortures and deaths and still be alive to suffer more, or to examine later for information should you need it,” I could hear a giant fellow explaining his ideas of our proper fate to Hecate.<sup>(10)</sup> She nodded her head in agreement and I looked curiously at him. He was a man whom I knew for an intimate of Hecate’s, an old one who had perhaps lived under Hecate’s domination for centuries. He was clothed in the Venusian style, his body was brawny, but too big-boned to be attractive. His aquiline, narrow Spanish face served but as a base for his comically oversized beaked nose. His eyes were small, close together, and near-sighted. He wore thick lensed spectacles.

I knew that if this be-spectacled scavenger had his way, Ceulna, Oanu and I and the other unhappy Venusians in the party would die—over and over—the most hideous deaths these super-idiots could devise.

You don’t exactly got to sleep under the dream beam. When it is turned on, there is an instant of vertigo and you wake up in another world—another person has taken possession of your body—a different life entirely is lived. Soon, we were all strapped on the couches under the dream beams, and, simultaneously, we blanked out of this world. It was the same record for all of us, I suppose. With our bodies trembling—yet untouched and unmarked—we suffered the unspeakable hell of having our flesh torn with hot pincers, of the skin of our bodies being removed slowly, inch by careful inch, while irritant powders and salt were sprinkled on the bared flesh and nerve ends, of having finger and toe nails mentally torn out, one by one, being immersed inch by slow inch into boiling water—eardrums throbbing with the agonized screams of one’s friends unmercifully suffering the same sensations. Synthetic pain sensations are even more pain and agony than the

actual experience because of the terrific, exquisite augmentation possible with the hyper-powerful ancient mechanisms.<sup>(11)</sup>

This ultra-torture went on for weeks or days—Gods! I'll never tell you how long. Then came that vertigo that is the return from the dream submission, the awakening. As I returned to this world, I could still hear all around me the constant, terrible, utterly inhuman sounds of suffering made by the others of our party of Tuons who still were under the dream beams of pain recordings. They were tortured screams that would have made Scrooge weep in pity.

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(10) These ancients are addicts of the “dream” —the reason one sees so little of them—one reason they do not try harder for power and pomp. The dream machines are the ancient libraries, which were not books, but thought records. To read one, one reclines on a couch, and a record is inserted in a nearby record augmentation machine. The ancient thought unrolls in a beam which conveys it to the brain in synthetic thought impulses. These impulses are vastly stronger than normal, self-generated impulses—vastly more pleasant and thrilling. Reading the ancient records which are accounts of magnificent people doing magnificent things (but, I suspect, things completely misunderstood) are extremely pleasant opium dreams to the addicts, though they were never intended for such a use.

The ancients left books, too, but the more usual record of the past was the thought record. They did acquire some education from these dreams, but the comparative dullness of everyday life the degenerate people of modern times lived is so uninteresting to the reader of the ancient thought records, that he retreats again to his couch and to the world of the past where life is infinitely more liveable. The thought recording instruments were sometimes used, though their barren brains found little real use for anything. One of the uses was recording the mental agonies of an enemy under prolonged torture. These were too painful to listen to under full strength augmentation, as it would be equivalent to undergoing the same torture. But they could gloat over them under a mild augmentation and know that the victim had suffered terribly. Though not present at the actual scene of torture, they could be sure that everything possible had been done to make some poor wretch's last moments horrible. Then, too, they could use such records to put a victim through many deaths and still have him alive to suffer again and again. This was what the unpleasant giant talking to the Hagwas proposing that she agree to do to them. —Author.

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## CHAPTER XII

*Hell and the gulf between, and Satan there  
Coasting the wall of Heav'n on this side night,  
. . . and ready now  
To stoop with wearied wings and willing feet  
On the bare outside of this World. . . see'st thou what rage  
Transports our adversary?*

—Milton.

**A**S I looked up, I found the giant form of Hecate beside me, a sly smile of triumph on her usually poker face. She didn't waste any time in polite formalities.

"The space ships of your friends are driving us to flight," she hissed. "Is it your wish to accompany me alive, or to remain here dead?"

My gaze flew to Ceulna, writhing against the straps in infinite agony of the pain dream. I looked back at Hecate.

"I'd like to strike a bargain with you, Hecate. Leave her here, alive, under a simple sleep beam, and I will go with you willingly and serve you faithfully."

She did not stop to ponder my words for she knew me too well. She nodded, then with swift, flicking motions of her huge long-fingered hands, she adjusted the mechanism of the beam over Ceulna. With a choking feeling of relief, I watched her lovely body subside from its straining against the straps and a slow smile of peaceful sleep steal over her face.

Then, Hecate strode about the room with a dis-gun in her hand, firing a short blast at each writhing Tuon. A great hole instantly appeared through their bodies, and at last they were still. Of all who had lain in the room under the torture of many deaths, she left only Ceulna and me alive.

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(11) These horror records were often taken through the eyes of young boys to catch the reactions of horror and pity and fear, etc., which naturally arise in the minds of the young. Such jobs of recordings were terminated often by death, as the boy's eyes would see too much. You see, the recording is a mental impression, not a visual one. Mental agonies of the victim would be cut in the mental vision of the boy, just as in moving picture making, various angles are shot. Dream making by the use of the ancient mech has been a highly developed art for centuries and its addiction has enervated the best of the life of the caverns since the earliest times. But these records which we were to experience were rather crude affairs, consisting mainly of the pain of a victim of physical torture. The crew around Hecate were not exactly "artistically" inclined. —Author.

She threw free the straps from my limbs, and, saying nothing, strode from the room. I followed, for I realized there could be little time. All about the caves leaped a strange blue fire which I realized must be the cause of the flight, for a bit of the fire touched me, and the flesh shriveled where it brushed my skin.

“Hell,” I thought, “no wonder she was so ready to release Ceulna. She’ll die anyway from that damned fire!”

Hecate divined my thought, and flung back at me. “The dream room is shielded well; it is probable that she will live. As for you, that little device in your head will not be there much longer. After that, we will see how you behave.”

We entered the great old ship in which Hecate had returned to Earth after so many centuries of exile. <sup>(12)</sup> Before doing anything else, she placed

(12) Perhaps the reader would be interested in some Fortean data that will answer his question as to “Why, if these ancient space ships DO exist, they have not been seen and reported to the public before this?”

The only answer the authors can make to this is—THEY HAVE! Strange ships HAVE been seen and reported . . . but we people who pride ourselves on our scientific attainments won’t believe what we can—and have—seen with our own eyes. You are referred to the “Books of Charles Fort,” (published by Henry Holt and Company, 257 4th Avenue, New York City).

In the 12th chapter of Fort’s “Lo!” are these facts (which he culled from newspapers and scientific publications).

“. . . it may be that constructions from somewhere else have appeared on this earth, and have seized crews of this earth’s ships. . . .

BROOKLYN EAGLE, Sept., 1891—something was seen, at Crawfordsville, Indiana, 2 a.m., Sept. Sth. Two icemen saw it. It was a seemingly headless monster, or it was a construction, about 20 feet long, and 8 feet wide, moving in the sky, seemingly propelled by fin-like attachments . . . it sailed away, and made such a noise that was awakened, and, looking from his window, saw the object circling in the sky.

(Note the date of this occurrence.)

“. . . ZOOLOGIST, July, 1868—something was seen in the sky, near Copiapo, Chile—a construction that carried lights, and was propelled by a noisy motor—or a “gigantic bird; eyes wide open and shining like burning coals; covered with immense scales, which clashed together with a metallic sound.”

“. . . NEW YORK TIMES . . . from Bonham (Texas) ENTERPRISE . . . a man living 5 or 6 miles from Bonham, had told of having seen something like an enormous serpent, floating OVER his farm; and that other men working in the fields had seen the thing and been frightened. . . . A similar object had (continues on next page..)

me under a strong penetray and cut every nerve leading to the bit of camouflaged radio-mech in my head. It would no longer broadcast any of my thoughts, I heard Hecate thinking. Then she took a little double-beamed needle of force and with a loud report in my head, the tiny device blew its guts under a terrific overload. Now I was no longer a spy, but I had a hell of a headache. From the way things were going, I guess I was just predestined to be a vampire.

The great ship, under Hecate's swift hands, rose slowly to the height of a dozen feet, and drifted rapidly down the huge and endless corridors. Ahead of us coursed the rest of the score of ships which had left Venus not so long ago. How long? I no longer had any way of knowing.

Ahead of the racing space ships, I occasionally had a glimpse of the wheeled vehicles of the distorted people with whom Hecate had taken refuge who were leading the way to some new position of strength in which to make a stand against the Venusian invaders.

On the rear-view screen, we could see a vast fleet of space ships hovering over our rear, far up in the stratosphere, and lancing down from each ship a beam of blue force. All about us danced the deathly fire which this beam induced in anything it touched, but the old ships seemed shielded well against the stuff, the deadly flames did not leap inside the ship. I realized that Hecate must be handicapped for experienced hands with these ships, for she must have abandoned the dozen or so ships that had remained with Oanu when the rest of the fleet had returned to Venus for supplies.

I dared not to think of pulling some hero stunt and taking the ship out of Hecate's long hands. One little "think" of that kind would have been death

(... from footnote 12) been reported from Fort Scott, Kansas. "About half way above the horizon, the form of a huge serpent, apparently perfect in form, was plainly seen."

". . . NEW YORK TIMES, May 30, 1888— reports from several places, in Darlington county. South Carolina—huge serpent in the sky, moving with a hissing sound, BUT WITHOUT VISIBLE MEANS OF PROPULSION. (Caps are ours.)

And finally—but this is by no means the last datum that Fort collected. . . .

". . . ZOOLOGIST 4-7-38—that according to the log of the steamship FORTS' LISBURY, the second officer, Mr. A. H. Raymer, bad, on October 28, 1902, in Latitude 5° 31' south, and Longitude 4°42' W, been called at 3:05 A.M., by the lookout, who reported that there was a huge, dark object bearing lights in the sea ahead. Two lights were seen. The steamship passed a slowly sinking bulk, of an estimated length of five or six hundred feet. Mechanism of some kind—fins, the observers thought—was making a commotion in the water. "A scaled back" was slowly submerging.

Q.E.D.—Author.

for me, for in this type of augment ray work, your thoughts are always wide open to those about you. Instead, I had to pretend a relief at being in her hands again . . . even simulate the wild attraction which she had induced to live in me . . . always a part of me when I was her slave. Apparently, I did this act well, for she paid little attention to me. One cannot plot and plan in ray work, one can only wait for a break without thinking about it, and don't wait too obviously, either. Somehow, there is almost never a real break. When things turn wrong for those whom one serves, you usually die with them.

Our ships finally came to rest in water. I recognized the black expanse, for the sheer knife-edge of the ancient wharf of rock told me we were back in that place from which Earth rulers had sent me and the other green recruits from surface cities to Venus to fight for we knew not what. It was different now, in spite of myself, I felt like a somebody as I marched up the long connecting cave into that part of the caverns which I had first entered more than four years before, by my count. It was hard to tell as the time recording system on Venus is entirely different. No use explaining it to you. It's irrelevant, anyway.

In that room hung with the black drapes crawling with the sinister figure of the great crab of gold still sat the too-soft figure of the woman who had first greeted me so long ago. Hecate and myself, surrounded by the big shots of the vampire crew, stood before her.

"Greetings, O mighty Hecate," she sneered slightly in her mechanical voice, gloating a little over this great one of another planet, forced to plead here for refuge after such long superiority. "I see that things are not going too well with you."

Hecate was not one to bow her head to anyone. "O Nonur of the Dream-makers, think not that you are not included in the attack from Venus. They intend to wipe Earth clean of all blood-feeders—yourself included. You will be forced to fight for your life quite as much as for ours—and, I advise you not to take any other view. Too much insolence here and my strength can go on to other places where we will be better received, O Gracious one."

Nonur of the pouting, cruel mouth pondered the great Hecate's words visibly, and the sneer slowly drained from her face; her voice became dulcet.

"Knowing the Tuons as I do, O mighty Hecate," Nonur spoke, but try as she did, she couldn't quite conceal the faintest tone of irony in her voice, "I surmise that what you say of their intentions is probably true. Therefore, My Lady, let us forget our little petty bickering and get our two heads together on a plan for defense. Nonur is not one so unwise to spurn the wisdom of the All-knowing Hecate!" And so, saying, she bowed her head just a trifle and a small smile played about her lips.

“That is better, my Nonur. Together we can drive those ships back into space whence we came, though the best use of the space ray is not too well understood by any of us. We have little time. They may attack in force at any time. Again, they may wait for the gathering of an army within the caverns before they attack this position from the space ships for a double assault. In any case, we must not delay in making ready. If you will give me charge of a section of the caverns, I will get on with it.”

I was soon manning a great old ray gun, its view ray lancing up—up how many miles I’ll never tell you—up toward the scattered dots on the screen . . . dots that were the ships of the finest race of people I ever knew, even if they are dominated by women. My job was to center one of those dots on the cross-hairs and pull the lever releasing untold millions of flaming volts of destructive disintegrant juice skyward—to kill people fighting for everything that meant living to me. For all I knew, they might have entered the caves abandoned by Hecate and the monstrosities, found Ceulna and taken her aboard, and then continued the pursuit. She might be on the ship I was training my dis-gun on. I tried to think of aiming without doing it . . . an impossible feat. Seated at the bank of the master controls, Hecate flung a look at me that made the old ro-response in me center the ship and pull the lever. The ship shuddered, pointed its nose slowly Earthward and fell . . . fell faster and faster and the guts in me fell, too.<sup>(13)</sup> My heart was a great lump of lead,

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(13) The reader may be interested in other phenomena—not listed in the story, but reported in scientific periodicals, etc. From the *Worlds of Charles Fort*, again . . . ‘Upon October 31, 1908, the planet Venus was four months past inferior conjunction . . . there are vague stories of strange objects that had been seen in the skies of this Earth . . . back to the time of the nearest approach.’

“In the *New York Sun*, Nov. 1, 1908 . . . is said that, near Bridgewater (Mass.), at four o’clock in the morning of Oct. 31, two men had seen a spectacle in the sky . . . *something like a searchlight*. It played down upon this Earth, as if directed by an investigator, and then it flashed upward.”

(Fort assures us that all the balloons of that day were accounted for.)

“In the *New York Sun*, Dec. 13, 1909, it is said that during the autumn of 1908, reports had come from different places in Connecticut, upon a mysterious light that moved rapidly in the sky”

“*New York Tribune*, Dec. 23, (1909) . . . that a “mysterious airship” had appeared over the town of Worcester, Mass, “sweeping the heavens with a searchlight of tremendous power.”

From the “*Sydney Herald*” and the “*Melbourne Leader*” he takes an account of a fireball falling and exploding at Carcoar, in November, 1902. (...continues on next page)

and all the time I was trying to act elated at biting it. I hoped to die. I have never done anything harder, and I didn't know how to avoid it. I couldn't think; I had only to obey the ever-present thought of Hecate.

She sat at a great ro-mech in the center of the space ray fort, reading the thought of each of us simultaneously and throwing her own controlling-strength thought where it would do the most good. Unquestionably, it was she who made me fire that shot with the ro-mech, but that didn't keep me from thinking I did it myself.

Her fierce yellow eyes blazing, her brow furrowed, her long nose quivering over the screens that reproduced the screen before each of us ro, she was a picture of fury, of the witch from the past at last at bay, but still fighting.

Fighting a fleet that wasn't retreating, but lancing down toward us, driving before them a barrage of force needles such as never flamed my way before. Through the impenetrable ancient metal around us, hole after hole appeared, stitching across the room in row after row of death. The ro at the ray around me screamed and died, to be replaced by others under control. They had no choice but to fight and die. Now, I was sighting and firing steadily. I hit several more of the distant, deadly ships of the past, but none fatally.

Further flight was impossible for the Hag, for the ships from Venus ringed the whole horizon.

My hands were scorched from the smoking heat of the metal of the gun—the long, ringed barrel, glowing redly—the whole works burning hot to the touch. Under Hecate's control, I sighted and fired. My hands, badly burned, were not allowed to let go the firing lever. There just weren't enough of us to fight efficiently, for I knew that in every direction lay monster weapons unmanned and not understood by the ray people here, I thought of the

(... continued from footnote 13) Here and elsewhere in Australia within a few weeks, the same phenomenon was reported. One, reported by Sir Charles Todd, of the Adelaide Observatory ... a large "fireball" fell—so slowly it was watched for 4 minutes.

From "Greg's Catalogues" . . . bright ball of fire and light in a hurricane in England, Sept. 2, 1786—visible for 40 minutes. (That's about 800 times duration that the orthodox give to meteors and meteorites.)

Page 101. "Book of the Damned."

"London Roy. Soc. Proc., 6-276;

"A triangular cloud that appeared in a storm, Dec. 17, 1852; . . . visible 13 minutes; explosion of the nucleus.

See back to description of ancient God-built space ships . . . "Huge, and golden."

(Fortean material obtained from "The Books of Charles Fort," published by Henry Holt and Company of New York City.) —Author.



Beneath the Venusian's amazon attack, the Hag's defense weakened. . .

many men and women—wise, efficient “ray” of experience—whom I had seen die at Hecate’s hands and at the hands of the others now fighting for their lives. I tried to figure how many of us there would be if we had all been well treated since the time when these began to rule so long ago. “Evil digs its own grave,” I concluded, grinning a grin out of control—killing good men it could use for better ends.

A slave rushed into the great war-ray room, shouting a message:

“Nonur is dead, Oh mighty Hecate. They sent for you to take control—no one else left alive knows how!”

Hecate rushed from the room, a huge, weirdly ungainly figure, her long arms and immense hands swinging by her too-wide hips, her waist a marvel of thinness above those hips, and the swaying rock-gray shoulders heaving with ill-repressed rage.

It was the last I saw of her. She left the room without control—nothing but a couple of wounded ray-ro left alive, moaning on the floor. The others fled with Hecate, not realizing that safety would come when we ceased fire, for the distant ships were only firing at the flame of our ray—probably could not see us individually.

I waited till Hecate’s rushing feet had lost themselves in the distance. Then I stole through the rooms, once full of that weird, dreadful life, now riddled and strewn with corpses. I found the chamber where Nonur’s throne sat, surrounded by the gloomy black hangings with the dismal crawling gold crab over them. Behind one of the hangings I found the door by which I had entered. It opened without trouble, and I started the ascent to the surface.

The doors were secured by bars on the lower side and all opened to my questing hands in the dark. Behind me, I could hear the muffled sounds of firing, the twang and thrum of the great coils that released the discharges, the sharp “splat” and “hiss” of the Venusian fire as it burned through the cave walls.

I wanted no more of it . . . if the Hag was to die, I saw no reason for dying with her . . . if she was to win and live, I was not crazy for an endless life as her pleasure robot, for she left a man little sense of his own. No, degraded as the life had made me perhaps, I saw no reason for not losing myself among my fellowmen upstairs, until I could contact sane, good “ray” like the Tuons and so find Ceulna again.

After what seemed the whole of Eternity, I broke out of the house that was the “front” for the stairs—my tortured breath coming in hysterical sobs, my almost naked body shivering in fear and sweat.

Somehow, I got home. I don’t remember how—I was punch-drunk and more afraid than I’ve ever been. Not of anything—just horribly afraid and unnerved.

I guess the elemental animal in me had taken over and I'd run like a startled deer. I'd run too fearfully—too much without thinking . . . I want to go back. I did almost as soon as I'd calmed down. That's a laugh—a hideous joke—I can't even find the house that contains the opening to the caves anymore.

Now, when I talk to the ray that gibbers over the city, they mock me, laugh at my predicament, sometimes torment me with pain rays, but of information how to contact the Venusian rays, I can get nothing out of them. Did the Tuons' ships win? I don't know. Where can I find people of the caverns who will tell me how to find Ceulna and the invading Venusian rays? They laugh at me in their idiot way. They are the mad ones of the caverns . . . they never make sense with anyone. The antique raymech of Earth is still a secret, and I am out and can't get in. I'm not the first man to find himself shut off from that life. I know. In my place what would you do? There just ain't no way to get back into those caves that I know of . . . but there must be a way. There *must* be a way!

\* \* \*

Well, that's the story. Interesting—but surely, we don't expect grown men to really swallow all that stuff about caves under the modern world filled with prehistoric machinery—and flights to Sun-ward planets in ships older than history . . . flights right at this very time? That all makes a very nice tale—interesting for a few hours of reading, or so, but it isn't true really, is it? Why that sort of thing would earn us straight jackets these days, or a pile of faggots in the days of a few centuries ago . . . and we are not so noble and stuffy that we'd risk that.

No, friends, we are not going to tell you that it's true—you KNOW differently, don't you? That such things COULDN'T be. There have never been oddly weird things occur that Science couldn't explain . . . so how could we expect you to believe if we did tell you that it was truth? WE know that such things just don't happen, so we won't tell you that.

YOU have never been badly frightened in a dream and flung your arms out violently to protect yourself from the Gods only know what. And because that hasn't happened—well, you know how it is. And weird, unexplained chills running up your spine—oh, those are caused by drafts say, or—or tiredness. It's just a clever use of coincidence that we use those chills to make parts of our stories seem reasonable. That JUST COULDN'T be some of the people in the caves playing with us. We all know that.

And the magic talisman—the scarab ring—my brother wears on his third finger? Oh, that is something that I dreamed up, figuring that everybody knows the part the scarab played in Ancient Egypt and it would make the

whole story seem very weird and mysterious. Really, I have never seen this ring get cloudy and little pictures form in it—little pictures of people in a stygian world. That wouldn't be reasonable, would it? Besides—YOU know that such things can't be . . . such things just aren't so. So, you can go to bed and sleep, dreamlessly. It isn't true . . . it can't be . . . or . . . COULD IT? It was a hell of a long dream, brother, if it didn't happen.

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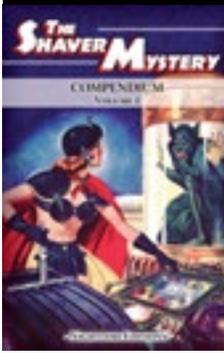
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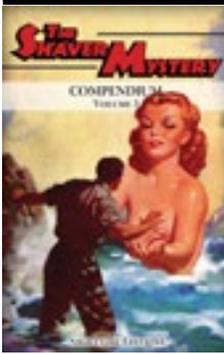
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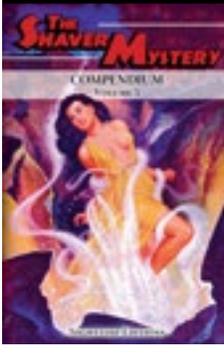
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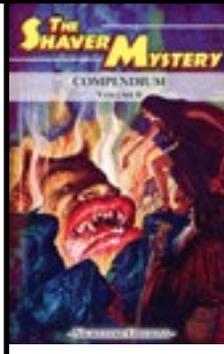
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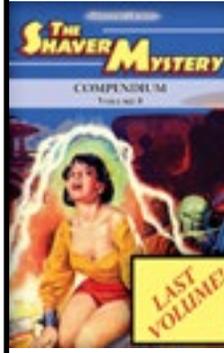
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*THE TALE OF*  
***THE RED DWARF***

*WHO WRITES WITH HIS TAIL*

*By the*  
***Red Dwarf***  
*himself*

*As told to Richard*  
*S. Shaver*



In a far-away world in a far-away time and space, there sits a red dwarf busily writing a book.

**T**O my numerous critics and admirers, as well as those four or five per cent who have called down the wrath of God on my head for saying there was something terribly, deadly true in my stories. But, you see, there *is* a terrible truth about the life of the underworld, and I did want you to know, for it is safer knowing.

But to those four or five per cent, who wrote in and demanded of me, or damned of me, that I should cease immediately the practice of labeling my fictional accounts “true” because they were fiction, or something.

I want to announce that this story is written solely from reflex action, a mental irritation set up by these letters—setting up the peculiar stimulation necessary to the birth of any story. I tried, in spite of knowing it couldn’t be done, to write a story that contained no truth, no new or old truth, no useful purpose, no idealistic striving to save the world from the dreadful danger which its own ignorance of the facts of life places round it. But in spite of all my efforts the unwanted commodity worked its “despicable” way between the lines again.

This story was really meant to be a BIG LIE and in spite of all, I find it is only a picture of things as they really were once in the past, and that is sad. But I am sure no one but myself can discover the interloping lines which are not meant to be there, so I assure, you, the five per cent for whom it is really written, that this story is *not true*.

I *can* write a story and admit it is a lie.

The people do not act like people, but appear and disappear, among the mad collection of mountains, caverns, pink rivers and purple women, stone Gods and etc. They all act demented, and there you are. It is my private opinion that the world is really mad, and so a truth crept in. I represented people as they really are—mad! You can’t help it!

The planet, which is not earth, yet acts as if it had a past like our earth’s, — and there another of my private truths crept in—I suspect life acts the same, and often is nearly identical to earth life on other planets, for a reason only a philosopher could understand.

The reason is that salt crystals always look like salt, and life looks like life, and if you have something like a man, he will have a history recognizable in nearly all details as our own, once removed. That is, a maple tree on Venus is yet a maple tree, and a man on Venus who bears a thousand generations

of men will yet give them all the tendency to be as identical in every way as are the maple trees to their ancestors.

The story is not a true confession, not a murder mystery, not anything but fantasy in the ancient tradition of fantasy.

So, don't get all steamed up and tell me I said it was true. I didn't. I didn't even write it; the Red Dwarf wrote it. But you won't believe that, so I will have to explain that it is a lie, for I translated and rephrased the whole thing to make it acceptable to earth minds.

Your well-meaning friend,  
Richard S. Shaver.

### POST SCRIPT:

I HAVE been careful to indicate in every story that certain truths had been inserted into fiction for those people who would recognize them, and for no others. That the truths I put in were *not for* people who did not recognize them as true, as similar to things they knew were true, people who had had contact with the voices of the underworld as well as sights and sounds that could have been produced by nothing but the means I described. For all others, those who did not know, I stated that the implication of Truth was to be considered a Fictional Device used to heighten the illusion of reality.

Yet, the sort of people who never read footnotes and Forewords keep writing to me and Rap and to other publications, often being printed in other publications, saying we have lied to them, saying something was “true” that was yet indicated as Fiction, etc. Discouraging, but I can only keep labeling stories true for those who know enough to pick out the truths after one gives them a lead—and at the same time remind the other readers that I only use this to make it sound real. After all my care, these others jump on me and on Amazing Stories, even after we warned them.

So, I wrote this story, discouraged, but still hoping, as a BIG LIE. It is not true to life. It is not a picture of another civilization. It is not anything true in any way. But I wish it was, as I enjoy stories that are about the *really* Fantastic Truth. But heck, people read the papers and believe them, and how can I do better?

So, I have put off my life work of exposing hidden truth to people who have seen a little of it and can recognize it, and for the others I have done one story to suit them. But I doubt that it will. And how can it please people who like the other kind? It is most discouraging. Still I like the story, and know it is not all bad.

Truth has a way of infiltrating, and one has a respect for it, and must point it out and introduce it when one sees it. I have a strange suspicion that even “Aladdin’s Lamp” was a true story, and the lamp a remote-control device. And it creeps in.

Now, friends and enemies and other readers, let me remind you THERE ARE SUCH TERRIBLE TRUTHS no ordinary man can face them. I tried to tell you a few of these ugly truths of life on earth, known to millions of men beside myself, an open secret to everyone but the sheltered minds of the masses.

You kicked, you squawked, you wrote to people denouncing me— “I said ugly things were true”—you couldn’t face it, you denied it. But the evidence is inescapable, in every newspaper for the seeker—AND I WILL CONTINUE TO SHOW YOU THE VAST and UGLY FACE OF TRUTH. So, Help Me!

NO man can ever really encompass all of the truth about even one drop of water. We haven’t the capacity. But, in ordinary minds shielded by the people who write school books leaving out all the ugly, nasty things like belly-worms and persecution and political murders, prostitution and demagoguery—you know the list of words as well as I—but do you know them REALLY? No, you don’t.

There *are* Forbidden Fruits, Hidden Vices, Vast Corruptions and Robberies and Slaveries and Mutilations of Whole Peoples, that go on today, to you as well as all others costly in the extreme, and few men care to face these awful Truths even in their own minds, because they are incapable of seeing what they do not want to see. Yet some of us are *forced* to look!

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## CHAPTER I

**I**N A CERTAIN flame-shot, gloomy but vastly grand cavern, sits a fat red dwarf. He is the last of his race. Upon his plump round knee, he holds a very big book. At intervals he adjusts his antique square spectacles, curves up his peculiarly pointed tail and with the worn end of it inscribes certain singular data within the pages of the much too big book.

Now, far above the rocky forgotten place where the Red Dwarf sits in his gloomy grandeur, on the surface of the planet, in a lovely valley under the green bright rays of the bizarre sun, lies a God.

Through the center of the wide flowered valley meanders a river of vivid pink liquid, wide and placid and many-curved.

The sands that line the stream are purple. They are purple and poisonous to life.

Above the purple ribbons of treacherous poison sand are the grassy banks of the river, with strange flowered plants among the grasses. Beyond the grass the trees move their limbs slowly, rhythmically, waiting, waiting for what is to come to them.

The lonely God's limbs are partly imbedded in the blue soil; it has been an age since he has had an impulse to move those strange, mottled, sculptural limbs. Stonily the God stares out at the lazy pink river, over the slowly groping limbs of the far, hungry trees, toward the distant hills that are the unsuckled breasts of the Zoogyte, the planet-being which allows these things to exist upon her rondure.

Time races by more swiftly than the slow liquids of the river, time beats her impatient waves of awful effort against the impervious shell of the sleeping Zoogyte, upon the stony, unmoving, imbedded limbs of the God, upon the tossing limbs of the waiting trees, time even sends her effort down through the rocks to the Red Dwarf, but nothing moves except the slow streaming river, and the rhythmic limbs of the hungry trees.

Now time conceives a new stratagem to set her grip upon this impervious planet that waits, regarding time not. And down out of far space toward the flower-strewn rondure of the Zoogyte who sleeps, down and down from the infinite reaches of Aether, floats a purple globe of life. It is a vastly different purple from the dead and poisonous purple of the sands of the river. It is aquiver with strange and eager stirrings, the globe that floats so lightly nearer and nearer the banks of that eerie stream. It is a flash with many tiny lightnings, and ever-changing, flowing, twisting colorings, amid the purple sheen of the thick skin of the globe are other changing colors, that shifts and peer and are somehow alive with unrealized life meanings.

The staring eyes of the gloomy, lonely God watch the slow drifting descent of the glistening purple globe from the far star-ways. Watch it alight upon the purple and poisonous sands, watch the eager life within shrink from the dull and poisonous sands that reach and drink at the vivid, flashing, unborn will-to-be within.

Now something stirs within the gloomy undead God's ego, some far flicker of remembering life leaps toward the life within the purple globe, leaps in kinship and exhortation to the disappointed being that is the unmoving God.

Slowly, reluctantly, his limbs tug release from the sod within which his limbs are so long imbedded—slowly, the vast unwilling strength of him heaves itself aloft above his pillaring legs, and the God totters to the purple globe, lifts it and carries it to the safety of the flowered grasses.

For a long time, the hermit-God, the God who had foresworn life and all

life's doings, bent over the purple globe, watching the eager unborn within. Watching and brooding over the past, when he too had loved life and all life's vast complexity, before he had plumbed the depths of life's corruption and condemned it all as beneath his own effort.

At last some flickering memory of the good things that might have been in the life he had given up moved within his refusing mind, and one great finger poked at the thick skin of the purple life-globe, poked and pushed till a little opening was formed in the strange heaving skin of the globe.

Then, in curiously, sadly, cursing himself for sentiment he should not possess, the God turned his back upon the pierced globe, and lay himself down in the same place where his body had made a deep perfect impression in the earth.

Time beat again upon the round breast of the Zoogyte planet, and nothing stirred anywhere but the limbs of the waiting trees, the soft flow of the river, and the Red tail of the Dwarf. But time laughed softly, for there *was* another stirring going on unheeded of the sleeping Zoogyte. For all about the unmoving sad limbs of the God played and laughed and fought and screamed and scrambled and built and loved and dreamed innumerable small bright-eyed creatures, purple skinned and yellow haired and much too fecund.

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## CHAPTER II

**D**RUGA, the son of Simon, lay by the pink waters of the river where his hut was built, looking at the far stretching limbs of the unmoving God, and dreaming of many things.

But chiefly Druga dreamed of the bright eyes of his girl, Darlene, and of how he might impress her. And what Druga wanted most for himself and for the respect that would arise in the eyes of Darlene if he could show her wisdom. For Darlene thought Druga very foolish but otherwise quite acceptable.

Druga rolled over and looked up at the green-bright ever-sun, and the brightness of that far wonder was the sheen of Darlene's hair, the sparkle of Darlene's eyes. Her green-booted feet, with the curling green leather forming a flower's sheath from which her rounded lovely limbs reached upward toward her supple swaying hips, where the orchid silken skirt was caught about the swell of her thighs, and the soft expanse of loins spread satin wonder of purple skin upward to the navel—the delicate little depression of her navel punctuated the too great wonder of her loveliness. Druga shuddered with ecstasy as his eyes moved on up to the glory of her breasts, where the

flower petals of her orchid collar spread their netted veinings about her laughing face.

“Dreaming again, Druga?” Darlene bent over his rapt face, and prodded Druga’s ribs with her soft, green-leather toe. Druga started laughing, too.

“I saw you, but thought I was still dreaming, so lovely are you. Are you sure you live, and are not still my fevered brain making a fool of me?”

“When are you going to bring me proof of your wisdom, Druga, that you have promised me so often? Does wisdom lie in dreaming of me till you cannot tell my limbs from the limbs of your dream women?”

Now Druga saw the impatient refusal of him in the eyes of Darlene, and knew that today was the day he must go to the caverns and ask of the Red Dwarf how to get himself wisdom, for no more could his loved one be put off. He had dreamed himself into this predicament, and something must be done, or she would turn away from him and wed some other of the many men who worked much harder than himself and could provide much more of the good fruits of life.

Druga rose and stretched himself, the sleeping strength of the mother Zoogyte poured through him in a flood, and he said—

“Today I go, little flower, and when I return, I will have wisdom for you.”

The motionless God heard the words of the young and foolish lovers, and a sad smile spread slowly across his stony face, for none knew better than himself that wisdom was as well left alone by these bright, happy *ephemerae*.

Druga left the soft arms of Darlene, and trudged off toward the far stony hills that were the unsuckled breasts of his unknowing mother earth. For there, it was whispered among the hunters who travel far ways, lay the mouth of the cavern where waits and writes the *Red Dwarf*, who has *wisdom*.

Now the green sun lowered to the horizon, touched it with her long, streaming green corona, and rose again, many times for the ever-sun does not pass out of sight. And Druga clambered on up the rocky crevices, toward that dread place that gives upon the dark paths beneath.

Two great sleeping owls flanked the doorway, one on each side. The door was of ancient brass, barred with seven great bars. Above the door was written these words:

*“Abaddon—interstitial intromit. Omnium gatherium, terminus omega, concordia discors, fascicula spicilegium. Misera hyperbaton ephialtes in puris naturalibus disquam.*

*“Demon nisse et cacodemon, Lorelei et lamia, intromit abnormis sapiens decquisit phylacteric. Demon Stradum. Memorium cram-was-he, illuminant Sulphurus gynaecium meta-stasis exostosis spiculum acuit.*

*Dwarfus Rubrum.”*

“Now, what language is that? This Red Dwarf is an indifferent student, it appears,” murmured Druga, sitting down before the door to rest and to decipher the words burned deep into the brass. He looked at the great sleeping owls, then nudged the left hand one with his foot.

The owl ruffled his feathers and seemed to get as big as a barn. Druga started back in alarm, but the great eyes opened and were sleepy and only slightly fierce.

Druga said, “What is the Abra-cadabra over the door?”

“The words say, ‘Blind youth, wisdom is not what it is cracked up to be.’”

“Your translation may be correct,” opined Druga, “but methinks the words are antique, and that they mean ‘Wisdom is not considered to be of importance that it really inheres.’”

“Broad shoulders are required for the acquisition of true wisdom, thine own are broad, but have you the life-term necessary? Besides, the pursuit is, much over-rated, whatever the antique inscription may mis-say.”

“You are hardly the ideal guardian for the Door to Wisdom; you sound like a raven to me. *Intromit abnormis-sapiens*—that means me, *gynaecium Lorelei and lamia*, that sounds interesting, *gynaecium* is something like a harem, is it not? That should illuminate the darkness of my mind somewhat.”

“I am sorry to inform you, precocious youth, this is not the door to a boy’s school, whatever you may think— ‘*Abaddon intromit*’ has always meant the Door to Hell, to my mind, and what would you go through a door announcing the words ‘*misera hyper-baton*.’ Most suggestive of miserable music, pain’s shrieks, and all that sort of thing. I wouldn’t go in that door for all the pennies in Purgatory”

The owl turned its great head and looked at the flame-written words, at the burned bronze about the letters, and gloomily turned away again, regarding Druga with a yellowed, sleepy and now somewhat displeased eye.

“If ye think I don’t know what the words say why don’t you go in to the Red Dwarf and find out?”

“It is obvious that you have little wisdom for me, so I must go farther,” quoth Druga, and went up to the door and strained at the topmost bar. And with great effort he got it off and staggered aside and lay it down. And the great head of the owl turned with his moving and watched him, and seemed to vastly despise what it saw.

Each bar that he lifted off was strangely heavier than the last, and as he tugged at the last one, Druga was spent and the bar would not lift. Druga took his wood-cutter axe and cut himself a long sapling for a lever, and as he strained with the lever, the bronze bent slowly and at last burst off. The great door swung open and a blast of hot air came out, and these words seemed

to come with the blast— “Wisdom is hot air.” Druga wondered what such strangling, moaning words might really mean, and he decided they meant, “Hot air is not wisdom.” And in he went, and the left-hand owl looked at his sleeping companion, ruffled his feathers disgustedly, sighed despairingly, and settled to sleep again. And the “door to wisdom” swung sadly on its hinges, the great bronze bars lay bent where Druga had tossed them, and the sleeping owls sat guarding a door that was burst open.

And as Druga’s steps died out deep within the echoing darkness of the cavern, the left-hand owl ruffled his feathers and swiveled his head like a bushel basket of dirty feathers, and opened one great yellow eye, looking at the antique letters above the brazen door. And his eye was puzzled in the extreme, and his beak moved like a man spelling out strange wordings, and his vast gloomy voice muttered— “Abraxas, beware, ‘miserables’—that means ‘people’ — ‘Wisdom’ — nobody knows what that means—ess—that means ‘maybe,’ or ‘roundness,’ or ‘buttocks,’ or ‘will be,’ I don’t know. To Hell with wisdom and Druga.” And the Owl went to sleep again.

The right-hand owl stirred himself, ruffled his feathers, twisted his gloomy head clear around and opened his beak, yawning. Then he opened his eyes, great deep places of yellow flame, and saw the door burst asunder and the door’s bars lying in a scattered heap. The yawning beak closed with a snap; he squirmed inside his feathers, and opened his great beak, squawking.

“What happened here to the door to wisdom?”

The other owl muttered sleepily— “To H . . . with the door.”

The right-hand owl glared around, saying— “The Red Dwarf will not like this, Wisdom is for himself alone!”

“If he had any, he wouldn’t sit in the dark like a crazy recluse, writing what no one reads, alone all the time,” said the first owl.

“If *you* had any, I wouldn’t have to worry what will come of this!”

“What *do* those words over the door say?” Muttered the left-hand owl, opening one eye a little upon his brother.

“The proper translation is: ‘Beware, little man, Wisdom is not for ephemerae, but only for the immortal Gods.’ ”

“Ephemerae, ephemeris, ephemerat,” muttered the left-hand owl. “I thought that word was ‘cracklings,’ from the Latin ephemerate, meaning unpaired, or cracked, or sanguine, or . . .”

“It is not Latin. The Romans never had any sense. It is Jovian script, from the Sybylline.”

“Oh, I always wondered. Wisdom, wisdom, Thy name is worry. What the boy needs is a teacher.”

"He's better off without, Teachers always have opinions. Usually wrong, teachers. Adds confusion to the seeking mind."

"Do you think a mortal *could* acquire wisdom?"

"He'll be a sorry mortal if he does. And we'll be sorry birds!"

"It might be a change," said the left-hand owl. "Bore some occupation, this door keeping. Lately . . ." He began to snore.

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### CHAPTER III

**D**RUGA went in in the strangely red: lit gloom, and many were the portents and misty wraithlike creatures that peopled the gloom-laden path. He passed the usual three hags with their kettle, and came to the usual serpentine white female with her too-pointed breasts and clawed hands. She said: "Druga, come to me."

"You look almighty hungry to me," answered Druga, hesitantly.

She writhed her lean, too-womanish form, and the ribs stuck out, her long arms reached for him, but Druga darted past her reaching, and went on.

It was a good thing, thought Druga, that he could remember Darlene like a vivid flame of youth within his mind, or that one would have got him.

Bats flew at his head, shrieking in the bat language which he could not hear. But he went on.

Time flowed past, and he came at last to the adamantine chambering wherein sat the Red Dwarf. The past glowered down upon him from vasty sculpturings, but the Red Dwarf wrote cheerily on, his worn and pen-pointed tail gripped between ink-stained fingers.

As Druga staggered up to him, he lifted the square spectacles higher on his twisted nose, and looked somewhat frowningly upon the weary, ragged figure of the youth.

"I didn't know there were any left on this planet. . ." Said the Red Dwarf, musingly.

"I had doubts of you, too," said Druga, looking at the red-limbed intricacies of the Dwarf's monstrous deformities.

"Now that we both know better, what do you want?" Asked the Red Dwarf.

"I one day made a misguided promise to a certain charming young female. She has since given me no rest, but insists upon my fulfilling the promise. I had heard you were the only dealer in the commodity, so I came at last to you."

"And what is the promise. . .?"

“That I would bring her wisdom. She thinks it is a splendid thing, if I had it, as though it is an ornament, or a dress, or some glittering thing to wear upon her bright beauty, or whatever a woman thinks, she has decided to have it. And you know how women are. . .”

“I have heard.” The Red Dwarf pondered. “Wisdom, a chancy word, like all words, one can place much or little in the meaning of it. If I had wisdom, would I sit here scribbling day after day?”

“I had heard the people with wisdom always scribble away their lives.”

“Such people get a reputation for wisdom; for no one ever understands them, hence people deduce they must be wise. A false deduction, I assure you.”

“That may be as it will, O Red One. Give me somewhat to take back to my chosen bundle of delight, that she will prize, thinking it is this word—Wisdom!”

“Does yourself have no desire for this commodity? On some worlds it is a thing much sold, and bartered about, much talked of, worn on the head like a mortar board, glittered through endless pages of writing like fine jewels, a thing so prized that there are more imitations of it than a being can catalogue. Sure, I should be able to find lush samples of these imitations to give you; she would never know the difference.”

“And have you none of the genuine article?”

“That I have, and myself never has any need of it, though I doubt you could carry it away with you. However, you can risk it, but Wisdom has a way of bowing the shoulders and wrinkling the face with care and worry. ‘Tis a sad thing to have, real wisdom, for you are apt to know that life itself is worth little once weighed and examined, once peered at through the lens of wisdom. ‘Tis a sad gift to take the poor girl, indeed.”

“She *asked* for it, why not let her have it?”

“And are *you* asking for it, young man? Surely, she would like a shiny imitation just as well!”

“Of course I am asking for it, you carping old niny. What have I been saying?”

The Red Dwarf’s face clouded at the sudden insulting tone taken by Druga, who forgot for a moment just who he was talking to.

The Dwarf considered the young, fresh, impetuous, innocent, too-confident face of Druga, shaking his head sadly. Finally, he pointed with a long, ink-stained finger toward the opening of a far corridor leading away, one among many such, from that misty red-lit adamantine chambering of Elder sculpture. The sensuous ceilings of the succubae and other half visible creatures which peopled the whole cavern under the Dwarf’s high placed seat

were invisible to Druga's innocence blinded eyes, and they peered at Druga uncertainly, wondering.

"Down that passage lies wisdom. Much good will the getting of it do you. Look at wisdom's work with me, and fear the result of having too much!"

Druga took a good look at the Dwarfish monstrosity, that yet had mighty dignity—and said: "That's no proof!" And went the path the dwarf pointed. As he went Druga muttered ignorantly—"All the wisdom in the world—couldn't do such a freak any good."

The Red Dwarf ceased to shake his head sadly and went on with his writing. (This is of course somewhat of the text upon which he was working, for all I inserted a bit to make it clear to you).

(He wrote in the language of the race of the Red Dwarfs, and few can read that, for it is much like the Sibylline, and that is as much like Latin as black is like white, though it has something of the appearance of Latin. It is the Language in which Jove wrote his memoirs, but few have ever bothered to read them. The translations are very poor, and full of inverted, untrue conceptual missensings of the use of a word. It seemed a sad thing to me that no one should ever read the Red Dwarf's writing, so I have translated and abridged and otherwise mutilated the fine work of that mighty artist in my attempt to bring to the world of man something of the Red Dwarf's genius. For which, forgive me).

There were subterranean rumblings under Druga's feet, and the flapping of huge unseen wings, and a vast number of other tricks commonly found in the conjurer's trade, but which are also found in such places in a fuller blown and sulphurous actuality, as Druga learned.

Druga paid his stolid attention, and went on unimpressed by the vast phantasmagorical life about and through him. If things were that way in caverns, that is the way they were in caverns and small worry to him. For Druga was of those who believe only in what they can touch and call solid. Embryon technician, Druga.

Now the women who drooled on wide black wings over this bit of young flesh walking underneath swooped often close over Druga's head, touching him with soft black wing tips, but he walked on and did not look at their white breasts and torso above the black fur. And the various scuttling wide-eyed citizens of the cavern also drooled after his young flesh, but courage was not as great as their hunger, and besides, it was seldom anything as big as Druga ever came their way, and they doubted their ability to down him. So it was that Druga came at last to the door of the chamber of the three books and looked timidly within, for the door of the chamber had inscribed upon its panels a legend in the Sibylline that looks so much like Latin but is

not— “Ladys-rum.” It took Druga some time to translate that. He decided that the ethnic source of that word was properly ethicized into “Lads study,” from the Latin *Leus Rum*, ie., meaning wine, since “in wine is truth,” and certainly truth and wisdom are much alike.

He pushed back the great door, not hearing certain screams from the rear, and entered.

There were three great tables across the room, and chained upon the three tables were three great metal-bound books. It was as much as Druga could do to lift the cover of the first book, after he had decided that the legend on the cover meant— “Book of the Past.”

“Cere’s Catalogue Des Antiques” was the work of Ceres Rubigo, and it was only natural that the Sybil best known for her wisdom should have written a catalogue. To you who criticize and disbelieve such writers of the past it would of course have looked like an old Sears Roebuck catalogue, but then you cannot read the words written by the Sybillae, in the days before modern conveniences and progress have done away with all need for wisdom, as well as all need of learned books, in the Ladys-rum.

Many of the pages were torn, as was only natural of so old a book, but Druga sprawled on the big table, and read. As he read, his quick mind and fertile imagination quickly mastered all the intricacies of terminology and definition which distinguish the Sybilline from, ordinary Latin, and time flowed by like water over the dam as he read and absorbed all that was known of the mighty past before the Zoogyte planet had gone to sleep, when her strength and vast mind had animated and controlled all the innumerable creatures of the earth into a tremendous symphony of organized life-meaning.

As he learned, he wept, for that time was infinitely more interesting and active than the dull period in which his own life was placed—when the mother earth slept and bothered not with life, on her surface, when the great limbed God did not do sorceries or indulge in the natural creational relaxation of a God, but only slept motionless and sour-faced forever. He wept for that happy time when there was a life worth living on this sad planet, and he prayed to the mother Zoogyte to awake and once more make life into something that would grace her great skin with proper ornamentation. It could well be that she heard him, for that was no ordinary Ladys-rum. Certain it was that he sensed a mighty feminine presence, and heard more than one feminine voice, and a critic whispered in his ear that these voices were only from women who were hiding in the rear of the room and objecting to his presence. But such sordid whispers were not for him, for he sought the truth, as a man should. It is not every man who gets into a Lad-

ys-rum of that secret and antique type, where reposed all the knowledge of the past, present and future. Here reposed truth ordinarily denied the eyes of all men.

Druga felt a mighty weariness as he closed the last pages of that age-forgotten book, the Catalogue of Ceres Rubigo, the Sybilline historian. For a vast time had fled by as his mind coursed through the endless corridors of wisdom which the knowledge on the pages had opened to him, and like a mighty wind the truths in the book had blown down all the forest of ignorance before him.

A mighty feminine voice which no critic could deny now came shuddering and echoing into that room, saying "Now you know the truth about the Sibyllae, their studies in the past, about the women of the past, about old women and witchcraft and magic and all such wisdom everywhere, and about all the wisdom your small head can contain has been poured into you. Are you not satisfied? Will you now go away and leave us in peace?"

But Druga was no ordinary man, and he said— "You sound as if you were freezing, and you sound like nobody I ever heard, but I will form my own conclusions about wisdom and when it is that I have attained to it. And I am not quite sure that what I have read is true. How can I know that?"

"Truth, lad, is something no man can ever come by, for there is so very much to know about even the slightest manifestation of infinite energy, so many interlocking electro-chemico-physiologico-universal-flux-flow changes to consider, enumerate, and otherwise think about that no man can ever know the full truth about anything, much less recognize it when he sees it. So, give up, like a good boy, and go on and let us immortals have our Ladys-rum without your intrusion, for I am very cold, and this hyper-space into which I have extruded my naked body is not insulated."

Druga for answer opened the second book upon the table, saying— "I came here to obtain wisdom, and have found the Ladys-rum where much knowledge is hidden from the sight of man, and I intend to remain here until wisdom is mine. If you don't like the place where you have hidden yourself from me, why come and reveal yourself to me and don't worry so about ethics; sure, it is an abused word anyway. No one should make himself as uncomfortable as you sound for the sake of avoiding the eyes of a mortal, and that a well-meaning simple youth like myself who could make evil out of nothing whatever."

And as Druga turned the great cover of the second book and read the great inscription on the fly-leaf, "Book of the Present," by Alleman Sylvanus, with corrections and later insertions and explanations by Silenus—as he read that, there came a sound like a clap of thunder, and for an instant the

chamber whirled like a revolving door with the draft from hyper-space where my lady had hidden herself from Druga. And for an instant he was treated to the sight of the vast white limbs of a Goddess, and who she was he did not know but a great shuddering came over him and he learned vastly more in an instant than ever mortal was privileged to learn since the antique times when earth was alive.

The Goddess caught up a bit of blueness like sky from the floor where she had dropped it. She clouded it about herself until only her eyes were visible, and those eyes glared down upon Druga angrily. "Do you know what is the usual punishment for mortals who intrude upon Diana's bath?"

"That is a bit of wisdom denied me," said Druga, still shuddering from the effect of too much beauty revealed too suddenly.

"It will be taught you very soon!" Said Diana, and her voice sounded much too much like a harpy to suit Druga, and his shuddering body kept on with the movement, but somehow became translated from desire to fear, and add shudders to shivers.

Diana stalked from the room, the blue-sky wrap parting revealingly about the graceful long legs of the huntress, and as she left, a small squealing mob of visible invisibles poured out of the hyper-space and shot past Druga in her wake, and he knew they were her maidens who were also forbidden to show themselves to mortal man. And Druga heartily despised them for cravens, for he would have liked to see much more of them.

But such pursuits are not for serious minds, and he turned back to the book and went on reading of the Knowledge of the Present, and what he learned cannot be told you, for the present is a great mystery to all students, and is understood only by market dickered, butchers and grocers, and such people.

As he read, time thundered by his ears in a vast flood, pouring over him as if he were showering under Niagara Falls, which on that planet is counterparted by the falls known as "Vicarene writings"—or "Religion's muchness."

And Druga finished that tremendous book about the present slice-of-times-flow, and turned to that peculiar volume which pictures intimately the nature and course of future time.

Now, time really coursed by, and his ears could not hear the sibilance of the speed of its passing as his mind flashed on ahead over the trail blazed into the future by those mighty maidens, the Sybils who had written that book, and of their names I can only tell you a few, for many had a hand in the writing.

Per Suada Stfan, the foremost writer of the future time, was aided by Sirenes Ligeia and Leucosia, and by Syrinx, the nymph. Daphne Cumae wrote a chapter, and there were others by Rhea, Propylae Diane had her

virulent say, and Proserpine's gentle words came after, for she had peered much into the future to learn of her freedom and when it might be. (But it was not today, and everything always happens on a today. And nothing is more repulsive to a writer of the future than the word "today," or the word "Now." The only other word they particularly hate is the word "truth"—and you must never in Stfan language couple the words today and truth, for that cannot be.

(At least that is what some would have us believe but Druga tried it, and I tried it, and we both lived on).

At last and a long last it was, Druga closed the book of the future, and got him down from the third great table, and left that mighty Ladys-rum of the Gods of the far past.

Unaccountably, his limbs moved awkwardly and unwillingly, and he hobbled painfully down the long and gloomy and Hag-haunted corridors of the underworld toward the Red Dwarf.

He came at last to that chamber hewn from adamantine, and stopped to rest before the scribbling small monstrosity.

The Red Dwarf looked up and down at Druga, and his eyes twinkled malevolently and triumphantly, as he said: "SO, now you have wisdom, and all that goes with it. Are you still sure you want it?"

"I have learned many a fine thing from those books, Dwarf. And whether it is wisdom or not that I have acquired, the future will tell, for if it is wisdom, then I will overcome those difficulties you will place before me."

"I? Not I, good Druga! It is Time who places those difficulties before you, time and a certain small ticking thing which is not a clock but which nevertheless is vastly more ruthless in decreasing the number of your days-to-be."

"Time is then the enemy I must conquer with this weapon called wisdom. I do not recall anything from the three books which tells how to conquer Time."

"No, dear fellow, for Time is very clever. He has sped by you while you searched for the method whereby, he can be overcome, so fast that even if you learned how it might be done you would not have time to do it."

"Why didn't you tell me that before I entered? You didn't tell me what to look for, either!"

"Well, now, here is a mirror. Look in it and see what your wisdom has cost you!"

The Red Dwarf pulled back a large red hanging upon which writhed curiously tortured figures, golden flames, and curling, winged things overhead—and behind the hanging was a great round mirror. In the mirror Druga saw an old, old man, clad in rags, bent and shivering in the warm air as if with weakness.

“That is yourself,” The Red Dwarf shouted. “Now begone from here, you asked me for it, and you got it! So begone, and seek in life what no old man can ever find—the love of your boyhood sweetheart!”

Druga suspected there was some trick about all this sudden transformation, and he peered more closely at the rheumy eyes of the thing in the mirror, and saw that the eyes were wet with burning tears, even as his own. And that it raised its hand, to brush away the tears even as he did himself.

The Red Dwarf went on talking, as though sorry for his anger and spite, saying:

“Wisdom is a cheat on this earth, Druga, for the getting of it is always a matter of exchange of many pleasant moment, for many sterile ones—and never in the learning is there any way by which a man can get a larger number of fine and pleasant moments for the hard and anxious sweat and time which the getting of it costs. It is true that what you think *should* be true, wisdom *should* contain the antidote for this insidious poison inherent in it—but there is no telling a young man any such complicated truth, he is too impatient. So, I am always angry with such as you who come asking for wisdom. For invariably you go away in such sorry condition that I cannot stand it, being tender-hearted.

“This is not wisdom, this maundering of words compiled under the Syblius trademark, O Red Dwarf, For it does not contain the most needful information—how to defeat Time. Time charges us far too much for the little grains of truth the books contain!”

The Red Dwarf sat himself down on sadly upon his gloomy throne, and began again to scribble with the worn posterior dangle. Druga made one last effort to get sense out of his shattered life.

“How do such as you remain firm of flesh when Time flows by for such as me?”

“We of the underworld are all Liars, Druga. I am supposed to work a little bedazzlement upon you, and let you think that I am an immortal. I am the son of the Red Dwarf whom you knew!”

“Now that is a curious thing. Why should you want to fool me?”

“Men worship the Red Dwarf. It is an institution in the family. My father you saw—was he like me?”

“I detect certain differences. Then, was that appearance of Diana in her bath also such a befuddlement of the truth? Was she too merely a mortal?”

“Even I don’t know everything, Druga. She is a giant, is she not?”

“Why, she was of a very large construction, and a very fine one, too. If she had been a certain house, one would say she was built of brick.”

“There is no way for you to know if she was immortal or an imposter,

Druga. How do you know I am not being only kind to you, and am really an immortal?"

"Then there is never any way to tell whether a lie is truth or not?"

"There is no real way to tell, Druga. The more you reason about it, the more confused you will become. I can't give you the answer to that, for I don't know. The technique of doubling can present these insoluble enigmas even to me."

"You are a kinder man than your father, the Old Red Dwarf. I had always understood there was no one in the underworld but your father and certain servants of his."

"That is a very common bit of misinformation. Now if you don't mind. . ."

The Red Dwarf went on with his scribbling in the book, looking uncommonly like his father, and Druga felt defrauded even of the lie he had been given. Sure, there was nothing more cruel than to lose your young body and get this rickety old thing just for the reading of a few heavy books. Druga cursed the Sibyls who had written so lengthily of nothing worth learning, and made his way by easy stages outward toward . . . He wept to think of his Darlene and her waiting for the bright gift of wisdom he was to bring. She was probably long since deep under the sod, and the motionless God brooding over her grave. For surely, she would have been buried where they had always met, there at the birth place of the race.

Now as Druga hobbled along, he came to that Serpentine female who had reached so hungrily for him upon his entrance. Druga looked at her sleeping form carefully, hoping to detect some slight evidence of the passage of time upon her body, and finding nothing. But his shaky legs would not carry him from her noiselessly, and she awoke and seized him before she got a good look at the worthless meat which covered him.

"Now tell me, woman who is born of a snake, do you remember a young fellow passing this way some time ago, A fellow who might have been my son?" Druga made haste to start a conversation, for her fangs were quite long in her red mouth, and her undeniably attractive face was not decided whether he was fit to eat or not.

"I seem to recall a man something like yourself some years ago. Men are few hereabouts."

Druga was undecided whether this monster who was woman and snake and cannibal all at once was herself or her mother, and determined to find out once and for all whether or no these creatures who were supposed to be immortal were so in truth.

"Did you ever see him pass back the way he came?"

"Now I know what you mean. You are he, and you are wondering if I

know that this old hideous body you have put on is the same delectable morsel that passed this way before. Why certainly I know you are the same. But why should they have done this to you?”

“Well if it was not *Time* that rushed by me, why then it was Diana, punishing me for seeing her in the Ladys-rum. How many years, or days, or whatever you use to tell time by in these dark sunless places—have passed since I went this way before?”

“Do I look any older, old-man-who-was-young?”

“No, but then you could be your own daughter.”

“Are you so foolish as to think that the reading of a few books takes a lifetime?”

“Then one of these beings has cursed me with age out of spite?”

“That could well be. But there is little I can do about it.”

“Then would you please take those large fangs of yours out of my arm, and those extremely well colored talons on your fingers out of my neck, and let me go?”

“What should you want to live for, old man?”

“Do you know that the eating of aged flesh gives the eater the age of the flesh. That age is a poison that can be taken in by eating?”

The great female creature appeared startled at the information, for she released her hold upon Druga, and he got up and brushed off his rags. His answer, he figured, was on that sudden release, for she too feared age. And she did not think his age unnatural, but due to some natural poison she could acquire by eating. But then she could well be an ignorant person.

“Are all the people of these caves liars, O woman who is more beautiful than a snake?”

“It is an ancient custom of these parts to tell whopping big lies, yes. Why?”

“Then they are not immortal, but only pretend to be, for the satisfaction it gives them to see the people of the light deplore their deficiency in the matter of life-term?”

“Something of the kind could well be the origin of the custom. But I myself believe that there are immortal creatures of vast powers.”

“Yourself is not one of these, I see.”

“I could well be fooling you, Druga. How do you know if I really would enjoy eating you, or if I only pretend this hunger. How do you know that every word you hear is not a lie?”

“I am beginning to wonder” said Druga. “And how is it you now know my name?”

“Look, Druga, suppose I asked of you a certain thing, would you do it for me?”

“Why, if I could. But what could these shaking weak parodies of legs do for anyone. They can hardly hold me erect for long.”

“You have forgotten much that you learned, Druga. If I tell you that my name is Mors, will it remind you of anything that you payed so dearly to learn?”

“The daughter of Night, you? Why then do you pretend to be naught but a serpent-woman? And what charm of all the myriad I have learned and suspected to be only superstition should I use to overcome this enemy that has cursed me?”

“Why, since you know me, can’t I summon one of my servants from the darkness, one strong enough to take on your troubles without noticing the weight?”

“Why, Mors, daughter of the dark, should you do this for me?”

“It could be that I hate this female, Diana, and it could be that I need you for a certain reason. And it could as well be that I am only lying to you, and will presently laugh at your old face for that of a fool who believes anything he is told.”

Druga looked about, and saw many dark shapes about this woman that he had not noticed before for they were composed of nothing but blackness.

“What could it be that you would ask and I could refuse? I will do anything I can for one who does me this favor.”

Now Mors made a magic sign, and from out of the far hovering darkness came forward a small dense blackness and stood beside Druga. And a great rushing whirlpool formed between them, which left Druga feeling much improved but left the small dark shape only somewhat larger than before.

“Do not worry about the little one who has absorbed your age, Druga. He will take the poison out into the night and lose it there, and receive a reward from me, or from my mother. Now listen well, for I have work for you, and it might be wise if you do it well.”

“Then am I to be you friend?”

“As you will it. But there is one who is an unfriend to me. She is a tall, lazy bit of venom who has certain objects of mine which she stole from me, and which I want back. If you have time, you might just manage to kill her.”

“Then she is a mortal?”

“Whatever she is, it is not mortal. But it might be killed.”

“You have given me a great deal of time, so I will have to kill this person. And where can I find her?”

“That will be arranged, Druga. Do you go on. By and by certain of my messengers will bring you what is needful to you.”

## CHAPTER IV

**D**RUGA came out of that cave wherein nothing was what he had expected, and stood beside the two great owls. The left-hand owl ruffled his feathers, swiveled his head, and opened one great yellow eye. He said—

“Did you get the bright wisdom you were looking for?”

“I have learned an endless amount of stuff, yes, but whether it is wisdom or not, events will tell me. If I can control events and their injuriousness to myself, why then I have wisdom. If I am to be robbed of my youth, and have it given me again, if I am to be tossed about like a straw on the bosom of occurrence, why then it is something else I have acquired. Tell me, have I been in there a long time or a short time?”

“I have been asleep, Druga, and time is of no consequence to me anyway. Do put the bars back in place, like a good fellow.”

That was a job, but Druga did it, and as he finished, there came toward him a black shadow, leading a large grey horse. Hanging from the saddle were a great sword, a shield and several glittering garments which looked very uncomfortable. The shadow stood waiting.

“Now what is this?” Asked Druga.

“The mother, Mors, sends you these and tells me you are to use them in some work you have contracted to do.”

“I am supposed to wear all that, and carry all that, and ride that huge thing shaped like a horse,”

“You will find it all necessary, or at least appropriate.” The shadow seemed impatient.

“Certainly, there is nothing I would not do for Mors.”

“That is the way we all feel, Druga.”

So, Druga put on the glittering mail, and belted the sword about his waist, and got himself into the saddle ungracefully, for the whole business was new to him. As he sat there trying to feel as if it was possible to stay on, the black shadow handed him a paper, on which were certain lines and words.

“This paper contains a map which will lead you to Armora, and once there you will go directly to the Queen. She it is who has the articles which Mors wants returned to her. She it is you must kill if you can, but in any case, get hold of the Cystrum, the ball-and-sceptre, and the little glass triangle from which hangs the silver bell of charm. Once you have these things, you return here, and your obligation is discharged.”

Druga took the map and thrust it into his breast, set spurs to the horse

and with a lurch started off. After a time, he found he did not have to keep his arms round the neck of the horse, which had really a very smooth gait, but could sit upright and admire the scenery.

“Now what all this has to do with bringing wisdom to Darlene I don’t know, but she will just have to wait. Sure, she wouldn’t know what it is if I had it for her, or how to use it when it reposes in my head, or how to get it out since I can’t get it out myself. By this time, she has consoled herself with something less than a wise man, anyway, and has had a dozen children. For certainly I spent a lifetime areading those terrific books, and now certainly I must know everything. And a man who knows everything should be able to find and appropriate everything needful in this life, Darlene or no. It could well be that I have outgrown the heed of her and everything she means to me.”

So musing Druga set spurs again to the gray horse, and came clattering up the slabbery slopes of Hamar, rocks flying to right and left—and put upon a broad highway leading, as the map said—to Armora, the city of the Sea Caverns, where this person who had stolen certain valuables from Mors must be found and punished.

It did not occur to Druga that it was strange that a vampire of a serpentine female should have turned into a Goddess named Mors, of mighty power. Nor did it occur to Druga that it was strange that one so powerful should have a need of Druga. For Druga now considered himself a man of vast value, for had he not read the Three Books. And was it not true that after reading that catalogue of awful truths no thing in reality could any more astonish him? For truth, he knew in his wisdom, is vastly more than any man can imagine, and is always greater and more complicated than any lie can possibly be. After reading all the things the superstitious Sybils had written of as truth, about Gods and Demi-Gods and spirits, about the families of the Latter Gods and their doings, about the building of mightier things than any planet could hold upon its bosom, and about the relative unimportance of the planet that bore him in the scheme of things, and having now a fair idea of his own unimportance in the mighty scheme of All—Druga yet knew that in the tremendous mechanism that men call chance it could happen that a mere mortal could be a necessary cog.

Two brooding Myogrifs of black granite flanked the double-valved gates of Armora, and Druga paused before them to allow a caravan to exit. The elephants heaved their bulk along before him, the turbaned mahouts shouted, and Druga did not even wonder that he had never heard of elephants on this world before. For in his reading he had traveled many worlds in his mind, and that same mind was aw whirl with the terrific complexity of reality everywhere, and the workings of life’s strange pattern within all that reality,

so that these massive beasts and their rich burdens blocking his path were in “reality” new, but in his mind were but repetitions of the endless flows of commerce through the past, the present and the future of all space. And if you had asked him Druga could not have told you whether he still lived upon the planet that bore him or upon some other, or whether he was in truth the same Druga who had but just come out of the owl-guarded Cavern of Wisdom. For the chapters “On Repetition” in the Book of the Past had absorbed him, and he knew that life is repetition unless it is free of certain obstacles, and he knew those obstacles to be present in the purple and poisonous sands of this planet, so that nothing was very important or new, for it had all been through exactly the same patterns of movement and living and form all before, many mathematical numbers of times.

Still, even if it had all happened over and over; still a man must live and see it through as if it were new, for the pulse beat in him, but a kind of third eye inside him kept looking for that something new that had not been before, and could not be unless the obstacle were removed from all the sands of the planet. And who should sift all that sand? Certainly not Druga.

So musing, our over wise Druga cantered through the now less crowded gates of the City of Armora, and up the broad and strange and everywhere peopled and noisy streets of that city of Queen Dionaea’s.

These people were not overly well observed by Druga, but they did impress him as not quite like himself, where he was purple-skinned, themselves were pink of skin, and where he had great muscles, they had little bumps under the soft skin. But Druga did not know that these were of the ancient native race of the planet, and that he came of the strange seed of space that had settled on this earth not long ago. For even Druga had not learned everything, for The Books had been written long before that happened which led to the life of Druga’s race.

Druga stabled his great grey horse at a tavern, and entered, and in spite of the fear and wonder on the pale pink faces at the size and peculiar color and awesome appearance of himself he noticed it not at all, but rented a room and went straight to bed. For it seemed to him some years that he had not slept.

Druga did not know that these people had never seen the purple men of his race before nor knew that they existed. He had wondered that in the Book of the Past he had not read anything of naturally colored people like himself, but always of red and pink and white and brown and black “races, and never of purple men like himself. And having dismissed that matter as of no importance, Druga wondered at it no more. But the people of Armora wondered and talked of this great thewed stranger of the purple skin, and

the news of him came to the queen where she sat in her garden under the live oaks. And she mused on the tale of the stranger a long time, and at last sent a messenger to summon him.

When Druga at last awoke after several days had gone by, the messenger still waited, for no noise they had been able to make had awakened him. Druga was buckling on the strange metal mesh of his mail, and twining the double belt of his sword about his waist, when the messenger was let in to him.

The letter was large, scented with the juice of the malbo blossom, and engraved with the great Myogrif seal of Queen Dionaea. Druga broke the wax, marveling at the creature even as he destroyed it on the wax, and read the queer characters with some difficulty.

So it was that another morning saw him waiting very plain and grim in his warlike gear which Mors had given him, and if he had known how fierce and strange he looked to these pale pink people, he would have been as worried about himself as they. But he was overawed by the glittering gauds decking the chests of the puny potentates also waiting for the ear of the Queen, and waited quietly, without speaking. Indeed, he hardly knew what language it was they spoke, for it sounded unlike his own, though many words were the same, and he knew what they said.

Now women have great curiosity, and Dionaea not less than others, and the descriptions of this stranger had set her afire. For she was heartily weary of the puny men of Armora, herself being of hardiest stock, lately come to rule here by virtue of the three possessions she had acquired when Mors was not looking. She peered from a slit in the curtains of the ante-room, put there herself for that purpose, and drank in the sight of Druga that had always been the delight of no one but Darlene, the healthy young strength that had been renewed by Mors in all its virility. And she sent her old minister tottering out to bring this young monster from afar in to her first of all, for business can certainly wait on such a curiosity.

Druga bowed low before the ivory limbs of Dionaea, wondering if the surname of *Diana* was not to his memory some such name, and if this large, luscious and too-white female was not some relative of that fearful goddess who had deprived him of his youth, for Mors had made it very clear who was responsible for that. He looked up into her warm yellow eyes, and noted the curling tresses hung with emeralds, and braided with ropes of pearls, and the black net dress that made her flesh to protrude everywhere exactly as if she were of pearls, modeled and motionless in beauty.

“Mors sent me for her three objects,” said Druga, gloomily and thoughtfully, for Mors had not told him just what to do before the disturbing beauty of this apparently well-meaning and gentle person.

Now occurred before Druga that metamorphosis which is one of the most wonderful and awful of the magic of womankind everywhere. In two breaths the lovely creature lolling on her throne of carved ebony became instead of woman a demon, her yellow eyes spat fire, her lovely lips curled into a harsh cavern where gleamed a tiger's bared fangs. As swiftly the seeming passed, and Druga had learned that women can anger, and can control it, too, if need seems evident.

But the voice she used upon him did not now jibe with her beauty, but was cold and shaking with a bitter dread, or was it something else?

"So, you are not a man at all but only one of Mors' creations, her creature molded of night and musty magic. Begone, before I strike you with my own blade."

Dionaea drew from her belt a diamond-bladed dagger that glittered as with a feverish fire in its length, and stood, striding one long step toward him, so that the long line of her body and bared leg struck young Druga's eye with a terrible lightning that is not hurtful, but is common to the young.

"'Twill not alarm me, whatever attitude you take, I am a man, and no creature of Mors. She sent me, and I have divulged my errand, what comes of it is to me all a mystery. I do not have to kill you, I do not know you, and it were best you just hand me the three objects and have done. If I were you, I would not trifle with this Mors' possessions, I have seen her do more than any Dionaea can ever do."

\* \* \*

About that time several strong arms pressed several long blades into his back, and if he had moved, he would have been dead. Puny men they were, but the blades were sharp, and Druga knew that himself had said the wrong thing.

"Cast him out of the city," said Dionaea, "he is not fit to speak with; he is mad."

For the people of Armora were averse to bloodshed without cause, and she could not think of a suitable reason for Druga's demise, or it would have been all up with Druga. So it was that Druga found himself lying upon the slabbery slopes of Hamar not far from the city, horseless, weaponless, and well-nigh without clothes, for the soldiers of the Queen had their own suspicions of what he had been up to.

Druga dragged himself into the hiding of the woods, the green sun descended into its short session with the shadows of the horizon, and he slept.

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## CHAPTER V

NOW Druga heard voices in his sleep, and the voices said—  
“What will become of the handsome purple youth when the witch-  
maid comes to bathe in her pool. She has a temper, and she will  
think he is spying on her?”

“Why worry about him—he is a stranger?”

“It is my kind heart. If he would but wake and hear us, he might yet take  
himself off out of her way.”

“It’s too late, here she comes now.”

Druga awoke out of his sleep, and whether he heard voices or whether  
he dreamed it, there she was, in a condition of undress embarrassing to a  
total stranger, just about to step into the lovely pool of water at Druga’s feet.

Druga said— “Pardon me, but. . .”

The witch-maid turned blazing eyes upon him, and her voice froze Druga’s  
heart as she said—

“Another of that Dionaea’s snoopers, eh? I’ll make short work of you, my  
pretty man.”

“I don’t feel very well, after the beating the queen’s soldiers gave me when  
they threw me off the wall of the city. And I can’t just pick up and run, I am  
too bruised and sore. So, if you will excuse me, I’ll just turn my back and  
you can go on with your bath. For I’ll not move a limb till I feel better than  
I do now.”

The witch-maid, now holding her gown before her as a shield from Druga’s  
bruise-encircled eyes, strode toward him, peering through the dimness.  
For a long time, she bent, taking stock of him with eyes that slowly lost their  
anger and acquired something else, a certain calculating gleam as well as another  
emotion which Druga was not quite experienced enough to evaluate.

“You do look a bit battered. Tell me about yourself?”

“Mors sent me here to get three objects she says that Dionaea stole from  
her. When I mentioned them to the Queen, she had me thrown out of the  
city. More I can tell you, but I don’t feel like making the effort.”

“You poor ninny, you didn’t tell the Queen what you came for?”

“And why not? Now I know she has them! A man like myself, inexperienced  
in the ways of chimera and such creatures as the Goddess Mors and the Red Dwarf—  
can’t tell whether what he hears and sees is a lie or a vision or a dream. I was  
just making sure that such objects existed and that she felt guilty about them.  
Now I can plan to steal them back.”

“You can plan, but your best defense, her ignorance of your errand, has

been destroyed by your doubt of the one who sent you. You are certainly a great fool. But stay put, I may have a use for you, as well as a way to help you complete your quest. I will be with you directly.”

With which words the witch-maid dropped the screening wrap and stepped into the pool, splashing about carelessly and joyfully as though Druga were a thousand miles away. The procedure Druga enjoyed mightily, for the witch-maid was well constructed, on the whole, strong-loined and deep-breasted, a figure calculated to fulfill Mother Earth’s behest to be fertile. Likewise, her long hair contained strange magic, even now in its wet clinging, and ever about her hovered strange singing music, as though some invisible power accompanied her, a Power that breathed of beauty as well as strength, magic vibrant flickerings went with her every movement—and Druga learned a deal about witches in a short while.

Now, when the witch-maid had come out of the pool and slowly and meditatively dried herself, bound up her too-long hair with soft cloths, and put on the gown that clasped her hand some curves so intimately. She took Druga firmly by the hand, and with the fingers of her other hand she turned a great Bezel ring upon her finger and said three strange and terrible words. And together they lifted into the air upon some strange forces’ wings and flew for a distance over the trees and deeper into the forest.

They settled to earth before a sheer cliff face. Half-way up the precipice, a great stone beast glared out upon the forest, and between the mighty paws of him a round opening. Up to this opening sprang a rainbow bridge of shimmering glass, and the witch-maid led Druga up this fragile magic path by the hand.

“This magic of which you seem the master, ^1 have studied deeply of the writings of the Sybyllae, even to before the birth of Earth, and nowhere did I find a sufficient explanation of its nature. Could you tell me, Miss Witch Whateveryourname is?”

“My name is Feronia. As for magic, it is something you are born with, but it can also be learned in some part. Are you of the blood?”

“What blood?”

“I see. You are a common sort of man. Where did you come by the purple skin, then?”

“In the valley of my birth, we are all of purple skin. But your words seem to imply that magic, then, partakes of instinct?”

“Magic *is* an instinctive power over the forces of nature. Many people are born with the instinct of magic, but never are taught properly to use it, and hence go about continually astounded at their own cleverness, or at the way magical things are always happening to them. It is such people who teach

new thought, Christian philosophy, and mathematics. Others believe their words, but only themselves can get the magical results by the methods they teach. As a consequence, education is in a deplorable state of ignorance.”

“I can imagine!”

“Can you?” Feronia’s eyes were somewhat caustic as she looked at Druga’s somewhat blank face. “I would have taken you for a most unimaginative person.”

“Methinks some of those Sybyllae who wrote the books I read were of that type. They speak of causing magical occurrences by the most simple means, but I couldn’t work the charms.”

“I will teach you. Perhaps you didn’t do it right.”

“There is a lot I would still like to know, even though I am now a graduate, and have ‘Wisdom.’ ”

“Is that so? Wisdom is greatly overrated, I have heard. Myself prefer natural ability to acquired memory-clutter. Study is so wasteful of time, for so many ignorant and untalented people have written endless reams of paper full.”

They had now entered between the mighty marble legs of the sculptured beast of the Apocalypse. The halls of Feronia’s home were vast and multiplex and translucent of wall, furnished lavishly from some time-forgotten store of wealth. Seeing that Druga was worn out, Feronia showed him to a sleeping chamber, and left him. He dropped into a dreamless, slumber.

Waking, Druga found fresh clothing, bath water, and certain peculiarly formed attendants waiting to assist him. Notwithstanding their bat winged and web-footed dark aspect, Druga submitted, and presently appeared to breakfast much refreshed.

Feronia’s dark eyes appraised him and found what she saw good, for she laughed brightly, saying; “Shades of Dirae, I thought you would still be limping and groaning. You recover quickly.”

Druga groaned. “Now what did you remind me for? I had forgotten I was sore from head to foot.”

“Now we must make plans. This Dionaea is not to be taken lightly, as you have learned.”

“Plans are evidently what I need. Or advice.”

“Mors might have noticed you were not quite bright and given you a little wisdom to get ahead with.”

“Not quite bright I would have you know I am a graduate, D.D.S., and passed the two Owls of the Cavern without their being the least worried about my wisdom.”

“And what is D.D.S.? Doctor of Defunct Sybylline Foolishness? Or Student of Divine Dodoism? ‘Methinks you know nothing at all.’ ”

“My recently acquired wisdom did not keep the Queen front making a monkey of me, did it?”

“No, but Feronia may.”

“In that case, you would be worth a great deal more than wisdom.”

“To you, Druga, might a witch-maid be worth more than wisdom?”

Druga looked at the peculiar lambent lights flickering in the very peculiar yellow eyes of Feronia and shuddered, but not with fear. For Druga had read of these “affairs with women,” but so far had experienced none but his light attachment with Darlene, which was strictly virginal, he had since learned, after delving deeply into the Chapters on “Forbidden Delights”—“Sexualis Saternalia,” etc.

Druga said— “You must know, Feronia, once and for all, my heart belongs to another. And while I have the greatest respect for your very apparent beauty and extremely evident mental powers, still my heart is not free to give to you.”

“And what would I be doing with your heart, who have refused Demigods. If you think I am or could be competing with the charm of a mortal female, you are much mistaken. If I should ever take a fancy to you, a little potion properly administered would make you mine. It is an old Russian custom with which you are unacquainted. But I have small taste for mortal lovers, they wither so quickly.”

“Wither! Oh, yes, I recall a withering I had some time back, it was disconcerting.”

“You may comprehend what I mean. The ordinary man withers in some forty years, and you must be all of twenty-three. While we of the ancient blood are good for at least a thousand years.”

“Is that due to witchcraft, or some subtle secret medical compound, a gift from the Dark Master, or just due to hereditary characteristics?”

“We do it with words, compounded upon hecatombs of dead volumes, Druga.” Feronia’s voice was laden with irony, lost on Druga.

“Strange, I have never heard of the method.”

“There are those who do it with actual physical study of the sciences, working with their hands with actual compounds of deadly chemicals and living transfusions of the ancient formula for Ichor, the blood of the Gods. But these methods are out of fashion, now that the modern method of working with words has come in.”

“It would seem a good substitute for work, the use of words.”

“The trouble with words is, as some say, that they compound an illusion whereby the subject is convinced he is a thousand years old without actually living any longer than anybody else. To get around that, I have studied

both methods, and myself have learned the actual scientific method of the ancient First Students, and prefer it to the possible illusion caused by the use of Words. Words CAN cause illusions, as I will teach you. For instance, I have been told that the consumption of large volumes of weighty words cause an illusion of Wisdom, which is very hard to shake off when there is work to be done.”

“That may be, but still. . .”

“There is work to be done, Druga. Let us get at it.”

“Why, Feronia, there is plenty of time. I have a world of conversation on interesting phases of witchcraft to discuss with you.”

“I am an experimental alchemist, Druga. There is work to be done to make magic to defeat this appropriate Queen Dionaea. She is no mumbler of words, that one. She takes what she wants.”

“Still the morning is yet young, and we could employ it more pleasantly than in labor.”

“GET UP, Druga, and keep your mouth shut and learn something!”

“Yes, Miss Feronia.” Druga got up, and put on an apron, and followed her into a very well-equipped laboratory of Thaumaturgy. Or so it said on the door, anyway.

Said Druga— “If magic and thaumaturgy are an instinctive power over the forces of nature, why all this need for labor? Don’t you just control the forces with your mind?”

“Did you wish to learn that method, Druga? Then show me your instinctive power!”

“Come to think of it, I don’t know that I have any instincts but the reproductive.”

“Then you will have to substitute hard work for the natural instinct which leads you correctly to the solution of every problem. Did you ever do any work, Druga?”

“Not that I recall. To me work is a word that. . .”

“Exactly, *word* called *work*. You must learn the meaning swiftly, or out you go.”

“Nice place you Have here, Feronia,” said Druga, getting busy with a broom for want of knowing anything else needful to be done.

Mysterious hours later, after Druga’s eyes were surfeited with chime-ra and his lungs well-nigh collapsed with inhaling sulphurous fumes, and his hands burned with acid and weary of holding things for Feronia, they washed up and retired to the dining room.

“Have you any better idea of what is meant by thaumaturgy, and why work is required to master the least part of it?”

“I have lost a great faith in the power of words. But too, I have lost a great faith in the usefulness of a sword, or the protection of a buckler. Yes, I have learned somewhat.”

When Feronia arose to return to *Work*, Druga arose with alacrity, which Feronia noted with an almost appreciative smile.

And so, the days swept past, and Druga’s hands became permanently stained with acids, his veins began to pulse with the powerful flow of the milky-white Ichor with which she had filled him, and his forehead had acquired certain lines indicative of thought. All of which was noted by Feronia with pleasure.

A year later, Druga’s purple color had faded to a pale rose, due to the whitish influence of the Ichor within his veins, his muscles had hardened to that immortal mesh of strength which Ichor gives flesh, his forehead had acquired a permanent V in the center, and his smile came less frequently and less vacuously.

Too, on certain nights his one *instinct* had ruled him and Feronia as well, and they talked and acted very much like a married couple, to all appearances. But Mother Nature is a hard person to deny over-long.

Now, on the morning on which he had been with the witch-maiden for a year, Druga arose to find no longer his accustomed soft Turkish trousers on the chair by his bed, but instead a coat of Frankish mail, a scimitar of polished but antique appearance, and certain other richly ornamented gear such as was worn in the lands about the City of Armora.

The bat-winged and retiring attendants clothed him in these things, and clanking like a tub full of kitchenware, Druga went down to breakfast.

“What is all this iron-mongery about, Feronia?”

“Today you have been with me a year, and as you know if you ever read a romance, at the end of every year you must go out and do a *deed*. Besides, I hate Dionaea, and you have a certain job to do for Mors which cannot possibly be put off a day longer, or she will lose her patience with you, and you know what that could mean. You don’t want to wither, do you?”

“There is sense in that, Feronia.”

“I am glad you recognize it. You can’t think of any Words to take the place of effort, can you?”

“Not when you say that word, *wither*. But tell me, Feronia, just what do you expect of me?”

“You will go to Dionaea, saying that you are an ambassador from the Prince of the East Forest, the Lord of the Sun’s Birth, the King of All Shady Places. You will allow her to assign you rooms in the palace after you have given her the gifts from this mythical King. After that, if she does not allow

you to seduce her, you will take by force what she will not give you of her own free will.”

Druga dropped open his mouth. “You say ‘seduce.’ Whatever can you mean?”

“You just let me catch you at it, is what I mean. You will get her to tell you where she has concealed the three objects, and you will take them in the night and bring them here. Then we will both return them to Mors, for I want to meet that Mother of Things As They Should Be.”

“Mors is the Ruler of the Night!”

“When else are things as they should be, except in total darkness?”

“Some fine things happen in the dark, at that. But certain undesirable things wait till darkness to happen, as well.”

“Never mind your talk. Get on with the Deed, Druga, and while you are there, there is a certain *remote-control* called the Lamp of Sulieman, or Aladdin’s Glimmer, a device which is designed to fit certain machines I have here, as well as those the Queen has hidden under her castle.”

“*Remote control device*, you say. Whatever can that be?”

“It won’t be any use to you or to me if she catches you stealing it, and you get your head properly chopped off. So, don’t go opening your big yap about anything but the loveliness of Dionaea’s complexion, and the captivating way her hair is done. Remember, never talk to her about anything but the way her gown hangs upon her figure, or some such small talk.”

“That won’t be hard.”

“With you, it may be. But if you mean a word of it, my little watchers will tell me and I will not have Faith in you, Druga.”

“Now, that could never occur, my Feronia.”

“And when I do not have Faith in people, Druga, they are apt to Wither.”

“Faith shall be my salvation, my word of worship, forever and ever, my Feronia.”

“You are learning something about Faith. It is more than a Word, Druga.”

“There are words and words, aren’t there?”

“An infinite army of words can be overcome by one Deed, Druga.”

“Today is the day I must do a Deed.”

“Quite!” Said Feronia. “It is high time, in Faith.”

So it was that Druga, now very much changed from his youthful and ingenuous appearance of a year ago and with his skin a pale rose instead of purple, clattered off on his gray horse once again, still with designs upon the secret possessions of the fair Queen Dionaea. In his mind quivered the faint lightning that flashed ever about the energetic Feronia, as well as hovered a dark and threatening image he recognized as a messenger of Mors,

and that one had been waiting overlong, it seemed. But one must prepare for such adventures.

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## CHAPTER VI

QUEEN DIONAEA reclined in luxurious ease upon her overstuffed throne of carved ebony, though little ebony could be seen for silken cushions. About her hovered a small horde of male sycophants, jockeying for her favor with endless sallies, and listened to but with half an ear by the dozing Dionaea.

It was with a pleasant surprise she learned of the coming of the Ambassador from the King of the Shady Places. Dionaea adjusted her split skirt so as to expose the better portions of her legs, straightened her sprawl into a long-posed position which her mirror had guaranteed her to be devastating, and bid the attendant to show in the Ambassador.

Druga advanced to the throne, bowed to the floor, and kissed the small golden slipper of the Queen.

“What hair, what eyes, what a gown, what limbs.” Druga was of nature direct, and he had been bidden to say nothing but such small talk.

“That is all very well, and but natural that you should be taken with me, but what of your errand, and I had heard mention of certain gifts you had brought. Are any of these gifts of a magical nature?”

“Are you, too, a student of Magic, most Glorious Queen?”

“Magic is a hobby with me, yes.”

“Oh,” said Druga, and the queen noticed the V in his forehead. But Druga recovered, for he had not been a married man for a year for nothing, and went on to describe his gifts, which were brought in from the donkey on which Feronia had loaded them, placing with each article a subtle and potent curse. Druga remembered that his ears had burned with the listening.

“A bracelet of Demophile’s; you know, the Cumean sybil a beautiful thing; the King thought you might like it. It is said to render the beauty of the wearer irresistibly potent to the opposite sex.”

“That is a very nice gift.” Dionaea tried on the glittering bauble, and smiled upon Druga. “Does it work?”

“Quite;” said Druga with caution, looking about at the shadows, for he did not want any too enthusiastic remark of his to get back to Feronia. “Undeniably irresistible.”

“In that case, perhaps we had better see more of each other.”

“A very good idea, O glorious queen. Now, this gift is a sword of ancient

workmanship, said to belong to the alchemist and warrior King, Hadranapolis, and possesses the power of making the wearer invincible in battle.”

“I wonder whatever become of Hadranapolis?”

“He died of old age, in his bed, according to history. So, it may be that the sword, aside from being a superb example of the sword makers’ art, has some such magical endowment as is claimed. It is heavily jeweled with the emeralds of Syria, and everyone knows that those stones are good for the gout.”

“Never mind the gifts, I’ll look at them tomorrow. Come along into my garden and amuse me. I am weary of this business of Queening it, and would like to be a woman for a while.”

They walked under the mighty branches of the ancient live oaks, and that net dress which the Queen affected let the flesh of her gleam like rosy pearls, and Druga’s eyes got crossed trying to ascertain just what she wore underneath, for there was no end anywhere to the pearls. It was just such a dress he had seen her in the first time he had met her, but that was a year ago. If it was the same dress, it had certainly held up well, insubstantial as it was. Druga carefully brought up the subject of magic, and the gifts he had brought had all been designed to give him an opening to pump the queen to this end— “Where did she keep her collection of forbidden objects?”

He almost said it aloud, oaf that he was by nature, but a year had changed Druga from a youth to an experienced married man, and women were not the mystery of indirectness they had once been to him.

“Just why did your ruler send me an ambassador?” The queen was smiling, but she was also serious, and Druga knew that he had better have a good answer, so he said:

“The King my ruler has need of a fitting bride, and having heard of your beauty and talents, as well as your power, thought that yourself would be a fitting match in so many more ways than one, that he has proffered his suit.”

“And do you think I would make a good wife, Oh Ambassador?” Dionaea was still smiling, but her voice had taken on a slightly husky and yet imperious tone, to the end that Druga realized that here was woman unaccustomed to being denied, and that she had decided to sample the man Druga, and there was very little rise in his having any other ideas about the matter. So, Druga, noting the angry flickering of certain attendant shadows at their feet, did his utmost to lead the conversation away from whatever the Queen was about to propose. And as he opened his mouth to give a lengthy quotation from the Chapter on “Lost Souls, Their Meaning and Condition of Servitude,” they both nearly stumbled over a bloody corpse sprawled across the shadowed walkway. The queen stamped her foot.

“That author, he’s always leaving those things around! To add mystery to the story—why didn’t they give me someone worthy of me. And just when things were getting interesting.”

Druga mopped the sweat from his brow and looked at the corpse with undisguised affection. “Now just what did he do to get himself in that shape, Queen Dionaea?”

“I suppose he is another spy sent by Mors to steal my tools. Only last year I had a purple one thrown from the walls.”

Druga mopped his brow again. “And have you been troubled since?” He asked, innocently.

“I don’t know; we don’t wait to find out now. I have decided that to kill all strangers as soon as they arrive is the only safe way, of course, excepting such accredited messengers as yourself.”

“Yes, of course!” Agreed Druga heartily. “By all means we must have these interstate messengers and Ambassadors; but *common strangers!* You’re quite right, and besides it’s so queenly. It must make quite an impression on the strangers, at least.”

In answer to the queen’s cry, the body was being carried away, the bloody arms hanging and the gaping mouth dangling horribly. Druga squirmed within his tinkling shirt of mail, and the other war-like accoutrements hanging from him kept up a continuous small chatter of metal about him as though someone were shaking a clothes-tree loaded with pots and pans.

“This Mors who sends these villains to bother you—just why does she bother?” Asked Druga, having an inspiration as to how this uncomfortable scene could be turned to account.

“I have certain articles of hers, namely a Brazen Cystrum of large dimensions, a ball-and-scepter which belonged to the Dark One himself and have great powers inherent in them, and a little glass triangle with the Bell of Charm hanging from it. These things are the greatest part of my magic, O Ambassador whose name I have not bothered to learn.”

“Count Druga, Your Highness. Could it be that I will see these wonderful objects which are so sought for that men die to reach them?”

“It could be. Your ruler’s gifts must be placed among my collection, and it is in a certain place not easily come by. Come tomorrow and I will take you there.” And the queen muttered something to herself that sounded like—“And leave you there, haply.”

For she had been watching the small flickering shadows about Druga’s feet, and had formed her own conclusions. So it was that Feronia’s suspicious sending of her invisible servants had betrayed Druga, and his friend unwittingly caused his downfall.

Now the next day Druga met Queen Dionaea in the garden of the moss-trailing live oaks, and very disturbing to his youth were her deep mysterious eyes and sullen drooping-lipped mouth and the wonder of her hair and the warm flesh of her, clad as usual in next to nothing that he could observe. But a grimness about her face troubled him, and the eyes she bent so disturbingly on him seemed yet preoccupied and a little sad.

“Come along, Count Druga, and I will show you those valuables which have caused the death of so many seekers. Certainly, they are curious enough. You might just carry this little jewel coffer for me; it contains some things I want to place in my vaults.”

Now the queen entered a green stone doorway in the garden and Druga followed her, and down an interminable flight of stairs, and out into a vasty cavern, wherein the sound of the sea waves made a terrible and endless roaring by virtue of the echoing nature of caverns. And he followed the queen’s soft undulant form, hands full of jewel coffer and heart full of unthinkable desires—unthinkable because still fluttered about his feet those small flickering listening shadows that had inadvertently caused his doom.

“These vaults lie a great way down.” Druga’s voice was very faintly apprehensive.

“We are almost there. Now that there is no one about, I want to tell you that I have plans for you, if you see things my way. I have a great admiration for that strong body of yours and a hearty respect for your shall we say, your personality. Now if you will wait right there, no, just a little to the left, you will soon have a very great surprise indeed. And if you wish, you may kiss me first.”

Druga, suspecting Feronia would forgive him a kiss or two, was nothing loath, and embraced all that soft immortal pillar of lovely, mysterious and dreadful womanhood and planted his lips on hers a bit more firmly than necessary. And as he did so, she made a swift movement against the rock-rough wall with her hand, and his feet went out from under him, and he plunged down, down, to land with a thud on something vaguely like mouldy straw—but which slithered away from his feet, hissing. The queen’s voice came mockingly down to him “. . . And you can tell Feronia her Count Druga is no better than the purple one she sent. And I give you pleasant dreams, Count Druga, and hope you enjoy that bed more than my own. It is a strange choice to make for one who could have had the latter.”

Now rapidly Druga leafed, in his mind, from the chapter on “Political Logic in the Present Day,” to the chapter on “Impossible Predicaments,” and in his memory as he looked through the pages of “Wisdom,” found nothing but words describing “Chimerical Monsters Said to Exist in Subterranean

Places for Which There Is No Proof” — and his eyes became accustomed to the gloom, he hoped that that hopping, great-mouthed, slobbering thing was not a Proof. But as it bore down upon him all too voraciously, he drew, and with one fell stroke bent his sword at right angles to the handle.

Now, lying crushed beneath the vast weight of a seeking mouth empowered by great limbs and a vast weighty body to hold him while the mouth had its desire of him, Druga quietly made his peace with the motionless God-upon-the-river-bank-who-never-did-anything-and-swore-he-never-would. And as the *mouth* mumbled at the sturdy armor of proof which Feronia had given him, Druga thought of the fair purple limbs of his Darlene, and wondered if it would not have been wiser to have enjoyed happiness while he had it rather than to have gone seeking Wisdom. For now, that he had wisdom he found it was of no use whatever in dealing with the Problems of This World.

Now Druga by a mischance of his futile struggling and writhing, chanced to turn the thing over upon its back, and found to his surprise that like a turtle, it could not get upright again. Which was a very fine thing, and worth more than Wisdom to learn.

Straightening his sword within the vitals of the thing, Druga endeavored to ascertain the Latin name of the Thing, the species and other scientific details of the beast, but nothing in his study gave him any clue. Besides it stunk, and Druga began to explore the chasm into which Queen Dionaea had cast him.

It was a great room, with smooth polished walls reaching up and up, and no doors or furniture except the gnawed bones of a great number of previous guests of the Queen’s hospitality.

Besides the great dead body of the monster without name or recognizable shape, there were a number of vipers, vividly striped and complete with puffy hoods about the neck.

In fact, it was on a coil of these he had landed, or certainly he would have broken a leg. But they had found his mailed boots tough on the fangs, and let him pretty much alone.

A few days later Druga gave up his distaste for stinking monsters, and began to eat the ripening carcass of his late antagonist.

Mumbling over the unsavory bones, Druga muttered— “If these Witches and Goddesses and other forms of female life I have been encountering had any sense they would furnish a man with a wishing ring or some such simple device for getting out of such holes.”

The flickering shadows at his feet now evinced some interest, one of them saying, “Why don’t you send me for Feronia? You’re the one without sense.

Nowadays they call such things ato-motors, or teleports or levitators or materializes. Simple wishing rings aren't satisfactory. Times change, Druga."

"Yes! Feronia is right. A man has to study science to be a magician these days. Or to understand a witch. By the way, technically speaking, just what are you?"

"Well, in the good old days they called me a Hob and let it go at that. Or Hob-goblin when they felt formal. Nowadays they have to call me an illusion, caused by psychic trauma, or a neurosis, or some other mysterious twaddle."

"What does Feronia call you?"

"Tom. We're old friends of Feronia's. We worked for her when the planet was alive, before the Mother went to sleep; when the God was young and energetic. Everything has pretty much deteriorated, though, later years."

"Do you know anything about Mors, or about the Red Dwarf, or why my people are purple and these others pink-and-white? Do you know what to do to get out of here?"

"Maybe I do and maybe I don't. You never did me any favors."

"Now don't get temperamental, Tom. We're in a pickle."

"You're in a pickle. I'm not. I can go home any time I feel like it."

"You wouldn't leave me here? What would Feronia say?"

"There is that to worry about, Druga. Well, to begin with, Mors is a Universal Goddess, but she has representative bodies on each of the habitable planets. No one ordinarily believes in people like Mors, until they have dealings with them. She hardly ever comes to this planet, because it's pretty dead here. But when something happens to one of her bodies anywhere, her big central intelligence out in space knows it, and she comes and animates her body on that planet.

"That's why that vampirous beauty decided not to eat me, and suddenly turned into Mors. Now I understand!"

"Exactly. The Red Dwarf is something like Mors too. He has a lot of bodies on different planets, and they all make records for his central intelligence, not being endowed with memory like Mors, he has to read the books to know what's going on. But the Red Dwarf is an awful liar."

"Just what I thought."

"It's the same with Dionaea, and Diana. They exist simultaneously in the complex repetitious multiplicity of worlds called the life-universe. One day she is here in this body and the next over there in another. But they are different. Now, Diana, she is a little crazy, hates men, and all that. She is plenty cracked if you ask me. She's the one. . ."

"Yeh, she's the one that made me old! And Mors made me young. And

she and Dionaea are the same person. In certain ways they are, but actually they are different. She just has a contact with Dionaea, and sometimes she inhabits Dionaea's body and sometimes she doesn't. In between times, Dionaea is a rare baby, if you understand. The next thing you know, she's a man-hater, and Diana has come back to the old home plate. See what I mean?"

"I understand a great deal now that was not clear before. I might go to bed with Dionaea, and wake up with Diana, and her the kind that kills a man for taking a look at her without her clothes on. Exactly. She is cracked!"

"Moreover, she steals things. Kleptomania. And she hides them, and the Goddesses and Gods can't find them again. Get it?"

"So, they send me, thinking I can get it for them. Why?"

"Because you are unimportant, and Dionaea would not get suspicious and summon her mistress, and you might get away with it. That's all."

"Well, now that is all queered. She saw you fluttering around my feet acting like a shadow, and she figured out what was what, and the jig was up, and we're down here. And instead of doing something, you go to sleep on me. Now *do* something!"

"What's the use, as far as you are concerned. You haven't got the three objects, and when Mors finds out you failed, she'll make you old again, and that will be the end of you."

"Then you think I have to get the three objects to stay alive. Might as well lay down and die right now."

"That's why I didn't try anything. It didn't appear to be any use."

\* \* \*

Every day Dionaea came and looked in upon her captive. Every day when Druga heard her footsteps above, he rubbed out the pentagrams and symbols with which he had been vainly trying to summon a little help for himself, and lay down, groaning and moaning as if very sick. But Dionaea did not take pity, but only taunted him—saying— "Oh Druga, how do you like my bed and board. You were not enthusiastic about my bed, but surely you have no fault to find about my board?"

"Have mercy, beautiful Queen, I perish of starvation. Besides this cave is giving me arthritis."

"You're not near dead yet, you big strong man, you! I may yet relent you know. Now, beg prettily. . ."

So, Druga, nothing loath, would beg prettily, or would try stony silence and heroic fortitude—neither of which seemed to impress Dionaea. Indeed, she had no intention of letting him out.

One of these times, Druga, after prolonged thought; said this to Dionaea:

“Isn’t it true, that if your occasional inhabitant, Diana; the omnipresent and virulent man-hater that she is, ever caught you sleeping with a man and violating your vows of continence—she would visit upon you a dire revenge for so flouting her law?”

“That is quite true, Druga. We who serve the boyish Diana Triformis love her alone, and are not supposed to have other affections of any kind.”

“Yet, in the beginning our unfortunate friendship, did you not openly entice me toward yourself?”

“Well, you are a large and attractive male. How could a woman help showing a little of her nature?”

“As I recall, when I first saw you, a great deal of your nature was showing. But I have a plan, whereby you can circumvent this selfish and cruel Mistress of yours.”

“Call her by such names, and I’ll not listen.”

“Nevertheless, even she might be fooled. Suppose, instead of this charnel house you have dropped me in, you had built in your own chambers a closet, properly fitted with chains and other uncomfortable devices to impress your Mistress and to constrain me against my natural desire for freedom. Then, when Diana is present in your body, she would think nothing of my presence, for she knows that she hates me, and she will think that you must also have conceived an aversion for myself. Meanwhile, when she is away, the mice could play.”

“You think to coax me into letting you into a more favorable position for an escape and for the stealing of my few treasures: Well; little man, your idea will turn into a device whereby I can have the pleasure of a helpless man under my feet, and yourself will take no advantage of that, because I will see to it that you don’t. Consider your plan advanced one step, and some years in the future, you will die in those chains, for I shall never release you. I am not the weak, lustful creature you seem to think.”

“Anything is better than this black hungry solitude, my Dionaea.”

“We will see, my Druga. And remember, when I say *my* Druga, it is really so, for there is nothing you can do about it.”

“We will see,” muttered Druga to himself. But a few days later, when Dionaea had installed him in a tall oaken closet in her bedroom; with a stout iron-barred door with a few holes for air, and had placed about his limbs unconscionable numbers of heavy links of metal, he groaned, admitted defeat. No one could get free from these chains and this so-called woman.

Now Dionaea spent many hours sitting before the open door of this closet, contemplating her captive, taunting him with her nearness and the exposure of her limbs and self to him, and with his own inability to harm or

do otherwise to her. The details of this torment are not exactly fit to print, for Dionaea was of a peculiar turn of mind, caused by her wide knowledge of the rather dissolute ways of the Gods whom she knew through her servitude to Diana Triformis, and she was a confirmed tease, if so mild a word may be used. But History has noted that characteristic in more than one queen. But in truth, through Druga she felt she was striking at Mors and Feronia, and women have a way of hating other females, as accomplished or more so than themselves.

Among other things, she continually showed him succulent morsels of food and female Devils of the more erotic forms, and allowed these conjured solidify appetites to have their way with Druga while she watched, so that in time he became somewhat anemic from loss of blood.

While Druga functioned as an entertaining piece of furniture in Dionaea's bedroom, Feronia watched the whole thing through her crystal vision globes, and fumed a bit, and plotted dire vengeance on the too-successful witch, Dionaea.

"Queen, and holding my man captive. She does not know what I have gifted him, luckily. There is a deal she does not know. And I will, before the three great Dark curses of humanity, before the Dark Spirit himself, I vow, have my spite vented on that female fop, the wriggling soft-bodied thing that she is—I'll make her squirm in truth—may the Gorgons devour her soul."

So cursing, Feronia would repair to her laboratory in a fury, and her dark face set in grim determination, would work at a terrible sending she meant to have descend upon the head of Dionaea. But there was this about it, if Triformis Diana found out where it came from, later, it would mean the death of her, and if it should occur to intercept one of the Triform's visits from hyperspace, there would be Furies uncountable after her blood. For the green-sunned planet abounded in unnamable relics, still living from the fecund, gigantically talented past, when life itself had been a tool in the hands of Necromancers and technologically inclined Sorcerers who had created undying phantasms innumerable, which still lurked in all surrounding multi-space, waiting a call from their no longer present masters—and these could be summoned and used by and of the ancient blood. Of these were few, but these circumstances made them formidable beyond Feronia's comparatively youthful power, herself being only in the second thousand years of synthetic life.

Now, one evening when our lovely Dionaea was employed as usual with poor Druga's somewhat emaciated self, there was a whirling of the great rich bed chamber, a draft of the terrible cold from hyperspace, and Dio-

naea's face lighted up, for this was the sign that her patron Triformis Diana was about to enter.

But through that mystic opening stepped no Diana with her muscular boyish legs, her lion and panther on leash, and mystic bow with which she slew her male admirers and various other unfortunate game she encountered. No, Dionaea, no, screaming and hiding your face will not help. For a black cloud stepped from that terrible opening, and flames licked at the edges, and there stood that half visible, serpentine and frightening, terrifyingly grand visage of Mors topping that black cloud of obscurity that betokened her still holding her grip upon the vast reaches of night everywhere. Druga cried out in gratitude—

“I knew you'd come, Mother Mors, I knew it.”

But Mors had little time for Druga, only striking off his chains as she said to Dionaea, “There is no use your expecting the Triform daughter of Jupiter, for I have fomented a battle on another, planet which will keep her busy protecting certain Temples of hers for some time. Now, produce the objects that I want, and you may yet live.”

“You dare not kill me, and I dare not give them up. Your errand is useless!”

“We will see.”

With which words Mors' figure began a strange awesome swirling, the swirl settled about Druga, and all at once she was nowhere to be seen. But Druga's now bony weakened body became alert with a terrible purpose and a bulging, electric something seemed to inhabit his form. He picked up from the wall his sword, where Dionaea had hung it to torment him with the sight of it, and advanced upon the still seated, now frightened and crouching Dionaea. Her half-nude state and imploring eyes did not seem to register upon Druga, for he chopped off her head with one stroke. The head rolled bouncing out the door, and could be heard bounding down the long flight of steps outside. Weariness now came back to Druga. The dark swirling power left his form, and he nearly collapsed as Mors' support left him. She bustled about the chamber, picking up certain objects, unlocking the great vault with the keys taken from the headless neck of the still gore-spouting body, and Druga merely leaned against the wall and watched the mystic terrible beauty of her helplessly.

From the vault Mors took the brazen cystrum, the ball and scepter which once belonged to the Dark One himself, and the little glass triangle with Bell of Charm. As she once again began to cause the weakening, terrifying opening of the Door into Hyper-Space, and the awful cold sank into Druga's weakened body, he said—

“Feronia asked me to get her the remote-control-device called Aladdin's

glim-box, whatever that is. Can you show it to me before you go, O mighty Mother of the Night.”

“I am the Daughter of Night, and not the Mother, in case you don’t know. And as to Feronia’s remote-control-device, it is that little lamp-like affair with the dial and knob on the top, and it is built to activate certain ancient hidden mechanisms from a distance. Why don’t you take it if you want it, why bother me?”

“The problems of a poor failure of a mortal like myself may be of little moment in your divine endlessness of existence, Mors, but there remains the small matter of getting out of this city in my weakened condition, and though I have signally failed in your service, I assure you I meant as well as a man may by your grace.”



“Oh, STOP the words, you educated people are all alike, talk, talk. . .”

“Then you do think of me as an educated man? I had thought otherwise, Daughter of the Night, and from what I can see of you, Night must be proud of her daughter, too.”

“You are educated in the sense that you have been fool enough to spend



“I knew you’d come, Mother Mors, I knew it.” Said Druga.

the precious days of your youth with your nose between a set of book covers, and those same books written by the greatest fools on the planet, who could never have found food to fill their mouths had not someone provided. You are educated in the sense that whatever wits mother Nature endowed you with at birth have been perverted and overlaid with a vast heterogeny of useless data, of unnecessary detail, of false truths which your mind can do nothing with but make endless mistakes as to what comes next in this short life which must be all *do* and little else. For it is such a mess from the past fumbblings of other idiots like yourself that there is no living in it for anyone but someone who learned *how* an age ago from living masters, and not from books, for a book can tell you no more than the images associated with words can convey. Educated, Yes! Druga, you cannot do any simple duty correctly without a deal of extraneous and false reasoning about it, and ending up by completely bungling. Why yes, you are undoubtedly educated. Didn't Feronia tell you?"

"I seem to recall some remarks of hers to that effect. But after all, O mighty Mors, if I am not educated truly, but only falsely fooled into a sense of having wisdom which does not exist for such as me—it is not my fault, but the fault of a set of conditions over which I had no control. You can hardly blame me, Mors. Did I not pass your creature, that so-charming serpent-woman of the Cavern of Wisdom, as I was on my way to the Three Books of Knowledge? Did she not let me pass, and even grasp after me with her extremely charming talons as if to hurry my steps? Now, Mors, if you knew those books contained only useless and extraneous matter in no way connected with an actual conquering of the detrimental physical conditions which make our life the futile sterility it is—why did you not stop me and guide me aright—toward a source of wisdom better calculated to teach a man to live long and grow healthy upstairs as well as in the muscles. Mors, after all. . ."

The terrible whirling shadow of darkness stopped for a moment before Druga's pale face, even paler rose-colored than Feronia had made it, and looked pityingly down upon him. "Bungler, you have yet a way with you, and a woman's heart must ever open to such a child as you are."

With which words the terrible whirling that was her body or her power or a hole in space or a space-warp, or some other nonsensical term manufactured to circumvent the truth that magic is magic and will always so remain beyond the ken of mortal man—this terrible mysterious and freezing blackness reached out to him and gathered him in, and suddenly Druga was fast asleep upon the soft breast of the Daughter of the Night, and those never-seen breasts of hers were welcome feeling to his worn and drained

body, and into him flowed strength like the milk of many God-like mothers, so that as he slept he dreamed, and the dream was that he slept upon great breasts more lovely than any mortals, and that he suckled at those breasts as would a babe-in-arms.

He dreamed that the strange dark milk he suckled was the opposite of the milk of madness which had been fed him all his life, that with that terrible dark strength of the far-off terrific life of dark space's infinitudes that flowed into him flowed also that strange wisdom called common sense, or horse sense, and that a centaur smiled down upon him from the stars as he thought that strange thought. And he knew that what he had now was wisdom, that did not come from books, but from a mental health which was brother and the same as physical health, and can come only from proper food, as physical strength can come only from proper food. And that food is never to be found in books, but only in the dark depths of the night, and then only by a man gifted with the strength to seek for it in fearful death-depths of blackness amid awesome frightening from terrible truths that make a man's frame to shudder and collapse unless he be truly a man. And Druga slept for a long time beneath the wide sparkling smile of Mors, the Daughter of the Depths of the Bowels of Night. Druga knew that wisdom is a seeing and knowing vastly different from the seeing and knowing inherent in the absorbing of mere words written on paper. For when the deep, vast nourishing vibrations of spatial energy throbbed through his brain, he could understand and think as a God—and all his previous thinking was exactly like a man trying to swim and choke to death at the same time; he succeeded only in drowning.

SO it was that wisdom came at last to the seeking Druga, from the breasts of the daughter of night, from the vibrant spinning strengths of two great beauteous breasts that were not breasts but were vortices of strange magnetic and nourishing force—and when that energy flowed vibrant and penetrating all through him he learned that food and wisdom are both misunderstood of ordinary men and wise-men and Necromancers everywhere—for wisdom comes from the power to think, and not from study at all—wisdom comes from a breathing throbbing energy that flees through the halls of the mind exactly as electricity flees through a copper wire in Feronia's "laboratory".

And in his strange mystic sleep Druga smiled up at the mothering daughter of Night, saying, "Oh Mors, now I know how futile is man's search for wisdom—for he needs first a receptacle, and second he needs strength to fill the receptacle and he needs thirdly the vibrant food of energy flows denied him ordinarily, and all other methods of obtaining wisdom are fallacious."

“Quiet,” agreed the vast rushing body of Mors, and space flashed past her speeding self, and Druga nodded sleepily upon her broad breast and noted the worlds of space and the flaming suns of death and the suns of youth and the suns that are neither, but spawn only horror.

“Where are we going, O woman who is more lovely than a snake, and Snake that is more lovely than a woman—O Mors who are too much for me to think of all at once, where are we going?”

“We are returning to a past time, that day that you left a small orchid colored body called Darlene upon the flower-strewn grass beside the stream where the God-who-never-moves-and-swears-he-never-will still lies awaiting what can never be for him.”

Druga nodded happily, saying— “Feronia will be very angry, but perhaps it is wiser if she never sees me again. For I truly love Darlene with a youth’s clean love—while with Feronia love is sandwiched between a Necromancer’s text and an alembic. Besides, though I have the greatest respect for her dark self, I do not truly love her.”

“So long as I am taking you, I might as well take you where you want to go.”

“That is probably wisdom.”

So it was that Druga awoke upon the flowered grasses above the purple and poisonous sands of a strange pink river. Turning his head, he noted a tall, supple girl not far off, who was squatting before the face of the stony unmoving God. The green-bright rays of the sun warmed him luxuriously, he stretched and called— “Darlene, I have returned.”

“Silly, you haven’t been away.”

“Why I have! And I have brought you that thing you wanted, wisdom!”

“I never wanted any wisdom. It is you I love, Druga. If I had wisdom I might know better.”

“You have something there,” agreed Druga for within his mind now functioned a dark and terrible little cloud of truth, and forevermore he must face that knowing alone. And Druga laughed and clasped the orchid luxury of flesh and laughter and bright eyes and soft lips that was Darlene, and something of the pain of knowing was taken from him.

For Druga knew that he must wither and die, and lovely Darlene must grow hideous and die, and all his knowing how to avoid the matter would not help, for there was nowhere anyone to help him with the work.

Druga knew that the immortals are not good, hiding their wisdom of life from men’s eyes forever, and struggling forever among themselves over the wrecks of worlds, and wasting their endless lives with mystic nonsenties, and that a man’s short life might contain more wisdom than the endless life of one these false Gods that hedged humanity about.

And Druga knew that the knowing he had of this thing was not true, but that there was a falsity about everything which was hidden from the eyes of all ordinary men, and that he himself might know how to refrain from dying or withering, but that he could in no way impart this knowledge to another, for they lacked a proper brain receptacle for the wisdom.

And Druga bewailed the loss of Feronia's laboratory and her mystical books of Magical Formulae, but knew all the time that though even she might defeat the withering, for a time, still in the end death would get her.

And in the end Druga met death, and as she gathered him up in her soft black arms, Druga was heard to say— "Oh, Mors! Now I understand you and your mother."

The great stone God watched Druga go into Mors' dark arms, and his stone eyes saw only a skeleton and a scythe and a long black swirling like a robe of awful force. And he heard Death say— "Yes, Druga, Mors and Death are the same. To live you must die."

"Now that is *not wisdom!*" Druga was heard to reply, the listening God noted this reply for it was astounding to him, who had always wondered about this question and feared to learn. "Wisdom cannot be a contradiction. To live cannot be to die."

"Then why did you not conquer death, Druga?"

"Mors. I knew how, and Feronia knew how—but somehow everything happened so wrong for both of us, and you separated us with your talk of love—and it just all came out wrong. I could not seem to surmount the technical difficulties alone."

"Do you know where you are going, Druga?"

"Yes, Mors, I go to the universal hopper where all blunderers go, to be made over into other things."

"Quite," agreed Mors. "It isn't poetry and it isn't love—but blunderers who do not realize that death is NOT everlasting life must go through the mill of the Gods of the Universe, and they grind exceeding fine, and no ego survives to confuse the next life-product."

"Mors, give me one more chance. You have given me two already, give me one more chance?"

"Three is lucky, Druga, and you had ever a face to turn a woman's foolish head. I can afford to be tender hearted once in a while, who have been not so to many—not so at all!"

So it was that Druga awakened after a time within a vast and multiplex and translucent walled chamber of mystery and magical work, and standing beside him was a strong loined witch-maid, well-constructed, on the whole. Deep-breasted, hers was a figure calculated to wisely fulfill Mother Earth's

behest toward fertility. Likewise, her long hair contained strange magic in its clinging curved depths, and some invisible power breathed about her, as though a being manufactured out of strange singing music pulsed her strong beautiful life ever through her, and magical vibrant flickerings went with her every movement as she glided toward Druga's recumbent form, saying:

"Get up, you handsome lazy-bones, the work is getting undone at a great rate."

Druga bounded to his feet, sure of himself and his wisdom at last, and he said—

"Feronia, a man can be a loafer and a fool but he can learn. Hereafter I am going to show you what love and effort are, and we shall together conquer this withering and aging that make men fearsome wrinkled monkeys that can never think, because their fathers were fearsome wrinkle monkeys with plague."

"You have been far places in your dreams this night, my Druga!"

"Aye, my witch-maid, I have been far paths in the arms of Mors, and strange things she has shown me. For me there is no other maid nor woman nor attraction but yourself, and for me no labor but your labors, and for me no studies but your study. No books, no fallacious columns of fools' reasonings, but only tried things in your laboratory shall ever again lead me to think I have learned."

"Well then, kiss me, caress me hurriedly, and we will eat our morning meal and to work."

So it was that Druga became a grimy workman who slaved away his life and his youth for a witch-maid, and in time they won the true method of fighting the terrible withering plague of age from their retorts and their alembic and test tubes. And Druga learned wisdom— "Hard work, if directed wisely toward a valuable end, may in time bring rewards."

It is whispered that the nights Druga spent in the studious witch-maid's arms were vastly more heated and productive of pleasure than those spent by other men in the arms of less industrious devotees of love. For Feronia brought to everything she did the same application which had won her wisdom.

There are those who hold that wisdom and love are opposites. There are those who hold that Science and superstition are not related.

But there is a well-known individual named Shaver who holds that wisdom, love, science, superstition, religion, life—are all words obscuring with their useless variance a thing that is identical.

The complexities of thought caused by the incomplete and erroneous use

of words is appalling. For instance, once upon the time beyond times there was a strange fat creature called a Red Dwarf, who wrote in a large book with the end of his tail, this tale.

*Looking over his shoulder I saw that he was writing— “The End of the Tale of the Red Dwarf.”*

*The subscript stated that: “In my search . . . for wisdom . . . my direful, inescapable Red conclusion is that it is not in existence upon this planet.” So, Farewell.*

*The Red Dwarfs  
Tale’s END*

You can find the complete Red Dwarf trilogy (following Druga’s adventures) in **The Shaver Mystery Compendium Vol. 8**

More info here: <https://nighttimeeditions.wordpress.com/the-shaver-mystery-compedium-anthology/>

# *THE SHAVER MYSTERY MICRO-ENCYCLOPEDIA.*

*A Rundown through the basics of The Shaver Mystery.*

## THE ANCIENT RACES:

**-SIZE OF THE ELDER RACES:** They were ever youthful, and never ceased growing. There was no such thing as “maturity” in the sense that growth stopped. Thus, a person’s age could be determined to a certain extent by his size. Many of them reached tremendous stature, sometimes as much as 300 feet, and heights of 40 feet and more were rather common. Another factor on their size was the size and age of their parents, if two giants would have a child, this would be a giant baby! Although by the time this individual reaches his maturity, he/she wouldn’t be as heavy/dense as his parents at that same size, as these races grow both in size and density.

Mr. Shaver points to references in the Bible such as “In those days there were giants in the Earth” as actual truth, recorded memory of the Titans. Especially significant is the definite statement “*in* the Earth” and not *on* it! The Atlans, by the use of their wonderful machines, kept their bodies constantly supplied with a sufficient amount of exd (the energy ash from which all matter is formed by condensation) so that their growth never stopped, but their bodies grew ever larger and heavier.



The Atlan Mutan Mion with Variforms and a Titan meet the giant Elder Goddess Vanue.

**-ATLANS:** The first colonizers of Earth, named by them Lemuria, and our ancestors. When Atlan sciencons hear of or see a new sun born, their ships flash swiftly through the void, to test the rays for poisonous emanations. When they find clean heat from a surface shell of pure carbon, fast upon their trail come the first great colonization ships. For their race is fecund beyond imagination and there is little death from any cause.

**-CYCLOPS:** Probably an offspring of the Titans, Mr. Shaver is not very consistent on this one. Cyclops were humanlike giant and, contrary to the myth, they had two eyes, and lived on earth long, long ago. Not so long as you think, but longer than any man like man today lived. They derived their name from the great cycles of space movements, which determine the vortical currents of space energies, and by which they map their own movements so as to bring them always where the greatest amount of life-sustaining materials are concentrated by the currents of space. These are called the Tides of Tee, and they are vast beyond thinking. So are the space ships of the Cyclopeans.

**-ELDER GODS:** At a certain point in their development, the ancient races must leave home and go to the heavier planets for development. They do not return from these heavy planets to the lighter ones except as rulers or teachers. All the Elders are of this class of returned people. With time they become Elder Gods, they have immense animal magnetism, telepathic abilities and can even predict future events, all this acquired thru their vast knowledge of life-growth. It's said there are Elder Gods that are no longer in direct contact with other races, living far off in dark space, who may or may not interact with the rest of the universe in "*mysterious ways*."

**-NORTANS:** They are a straight race of men with snow white skin. Among them there had been no intermingling of races of other forms, not because it was forbidden, but because their technicians had not made the variform technique of breeding available to the public and without it all such intercourse is

sterile. The Nortans shun all suns and can only be found where the sun rays shine not, into dark space. They are also far more advanced technologically than the Atlans and Titans.

**-TITANS:** Humanlike like the rest of elder races (except variforms) with the exception of two horns on their heads. They live together with the Atlans and Variforms, and sometimes interbreed with them.

**-VARIFORMS:** Hybrids developed from many interplanetary life forms mated with Titans and Atlans by deliberate applications of mutative rays in the laboratories of Mu's technicians. It is extremely interesting to note that all have the status of citizens. For example, there is Arl (from "I remember Lemuria!" and the rest of the Mutan Mion series), a girl with legs ending in a pair of cloven hooves and also a furry tail. There were also the serpent people; (like Maiya, the protagonist in "The Fall of Lemuria") with arms, head and torso like any human but with a Phytion's body from the waist down, product of an experiment to combine the strongest features of reptilian life with the best features of human life.

**-OTHER RACES:** Many other alien races are depicted in Shaver's stories, but here I only name the most important ones that he supposedly met through his "Thought Records" experiences.

### **THE THREE TYPES OF BASIC BEHAVIOR PATTERNS:**

**-DERO:** This is a shortening of the term "detrimental robot" or "detrimental robotism." It means, briefly, that they are "people who are slaves to a degen-

erate mind." They are not actual robots, but they act as such, they can be of any race or species. Though in our planet they are humanlike and have become Deros because their brains have become radioactively poisoned by rays from the weird machines they constantly use in the caves (left by the Atlans and Titans about 12000 years ago) and whose use they do not fully understand and whose rays become detrimental because of non-replacement of vital parts, which thus becomes impregnated with disintegrative particles or radioactive accumulations whose emanations are harmful (just as radium must be shielded by lead to prevent serious burns). Thus, all their thinking is along destructive channels. They will instantly kill or torture anyone whom they contact unless they are extremely familiar with them and fear them. That is why they do not instantly kill each other—because, being raised together, the part of their brain that functions has learned very early to recognize as friend or heartily to fear the members of their own group. They recognize no other living thing as friend; to a dero all new things are enemy.

The dero of the caves are the greatest menace to our happiness and progress; the cause of many mad things that happen to us, even so far as murder. Many people know something of it, but they say they do not. They are lying. They fear to be called mad, or to be held up to ridicule. Examine your own memory carefully. You will find many evidences of outside stim, some good, some evil—but mostly evil. Mr. Shaver gives this information in all seriousness. In the deserted (and not so completely sealed!) caverns of Mu, the dero, descendants of

the abandondero, still exist, idiotically tampering with our lives by senseless use of the ancient stim mechanisms which actually were created to enhance man's life and not to plague it, but now are detrimental through an accumulation of radioactives which impair their action.

**-TERO:** In contrast to a "dero" is one whose thinking is integrative, or constructive, in quality because his mind has not been poisoned by radioactives. The word comes from T—Integration. They are today a minority in the caves.

**-ZERO:** In Atlan language there are three kinds of men: tero, normal man; dero, evil man, and zero, useless man. Equal parts of good and evil in the character made their total effect in life merely a repetition of the status quo. They are foolish enough to allow domination by the dero. One could say that modern surface humanity is mostly comprised of this type of men.

### ANCIENT LORE:

**-ABANDONDERO:** They come from the abandoned caves and cities of Mu. When the machinery became defective from age, many centuries before the Atlans and Titans' migration, a vast number of caverns were sealed up. Fugitives hid in them, used the defective pleasure stimulators, they were called the abandondero and their descendants are the Deros of today.

**-ANIMAL MAGNETISM:** The Titans, Atlans and Nortans had the ability to bestow beneficial forces upon less favored mortals (see 'ro'), and also radiated a perpetual flow of life energy which was beyond their control to cut off from any *ro* who visited them. Hence, the an-

imal magnetism of an individual was such as to cause someone else's whole being to be drawn to his/her body with a force so great that it superseded any other love the ro might have had.

**-CAVERNS:** In the ancient world wide caverns that the old, old races built and then deserted; they had many marvelous mechanisms. When they left this planet, Mother Mu or Lemuria, the deadly rays that were emanating from the Sun had infected their machines and mechanisms, and so, to protect themselves from the death that they contained, the Elder Race left ALL of their tools of life—everything—behind them and then departed to far, friendly, star-homes where they live on even today. But as they live, they grow, like the Giant Redwood trees of our own California, and by now, this ancient race is too big to tread the paths of Earth.

Their stimulating machines were designed for pleasure and their growth science was meant to assist Nature—but that is not the use they get today. The degenerate humans that live in the caves pervert the antique mech to evil uses, and the machines, being infected with sun poison, make the evil users more evil—a vicious circle that is almost impossible to stop for several reasons. First, surface men doubt the existence of these things, and secondly, their mech makes them infinitely more potent and powerful than surface men.

**-DER PLANET:** Detrimental energy planet. One on which an aging sun pours its rays, and causes, in addition to age, a mental detriment, insanity. Our Earth, today, is a Der planet. We, says Shaver, are a quarantined people under an evil sun.



**-DESUN:** For those Shaver students who know the alphabet (in the first Volume of The Shaver Mystery Compendium), this phrase Desun, or disin, is particularly significant. Looking in dictionary under d-e-s I find, under d-es-u only desuetude, meaning unused. BUT, when I turn to d-e-s-o-l, same meaning but a different spelling, I find a most significant word—d-e-s-o-l-a-t-e! Desolate! The meaning is given as— “To deprive of inhabitants. To lay waste, ruinous. Left alone.” To those who still think that the sun, SOL to the ancients, does not kill, I give this word de-sol-ate as evidence that the Elder race knew that the sun was the cause of death, that they used the symbols d-e to designate the emanations from the sun that do cause age and death—and the gradual manner of this destruction in the word a-t-e on the end of desolate. For its final effects we have the word desert.

**-DETRIMENTAL ERR:** This is mainly due to depolarization of the matter of the brain; it is no longer earth polared,

it is sun polared—and hence inducts the disintegrant flows from the sun into the brain by simple dynamic induction. I think a magnet could be sun polared and point to the poles of the sun just as an ordinary compass points to the poles of the earth. This is what happens to parts of the brain; they become sun polared.

In the desert this is known as “cafard,” to become crazed and kill until killed. Others are just stupid, depending on what parts of the brain are affected. The Malay “amok” and the Norse “berserk” are the same phenomena. When it lies in the part of the brain devoted to memory, the result is absent mindedness. When it lies in the nervous system and ego recognition of activating centers, the victim is a killer. It is simply true that man is an electrical machine which functions well when his energy flows are of his own creating, but functions especially ill when the energy flows are from the sun. The sun is quite a dynamo; it always gives off, from the surface; while earth always takes in, from the surface. Much of this intake is “snap-back”; that is, it is returning to a state of matter. Radioactivity is the seeds of disintegration. Hence, a mind powered by sun particle energy flows of a detrimental nature becomes robot. The result is robotism, or the inability to think constructively. Victims of detrimental err have but one basic thought, to kill, in keeping with the natural elemental instinct of the disintegrant metals.

**-DIS-CANNON:** An ancient weapon; there are of several varied kinds. Mostly they have a dial which controls attunement, and fire over a penetrative conductive “lead” as vision ray which conducts the destructive bolt but is not

itself harmful in any way. The control dial alters the nature of the dis-bolt so that it can be slowly changed through a long series of intensities, from mildly warm to harmful “de” to straight dis, which latter and worst will melt a hole through the rock for many miles. Usually such a cannon is used on the “de” set which will knock out an animal at thirty miles, or kill if held there for a short time. This “de” is a detrimental ray used for many purposes, originally designed apparently for such purposes as an insecticide—it can be set to sweep a great area with diffuse beams of mildly destructive power, or concentrated into a stronger beam one shot of which upsets a man’s mind into temporary insanity.

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

**-EXD:** it’s ex-disintegrance or energy ash. It was the principal content of the

beneficial vibrants. It is the space dust from which all matter grows into being. Atoms of all elements excepting heavy metals, when disintegrated, send forth the beneficial energy ash called exd which can be assimilated by our bodies and used to promote life-growth. It is when the heavy elements begin to disintegrate in the ever-fire that we come to the cause of age. Health itself was determined by weight; a healthy person was heavy. If he became ill, he lost weight. Illness is the inability of the body to fully utilize the available exd, or is the result of an insufficient quantity of exd.

**-GEN, NEG and ERG:** Gen was an antique word meaning to create energy of a certain beneficial kind. Thus, it had been adopted as the word for the unit of flow of beneficial energies from the dynamos designed to furnish the synthetic life-energy flows upon which the underworld life was based—as is our civilization upon the production of wheat. Thus “gen” was to their supply of life energy the word of unit as volt is to electric flow.

Neg was the reverse word unit, meaning unit of inverted destructive, De power. As volt is to electric, so is neg to energy flows which “negate” life. Note persistence of their word “neg” in our word “negate” to “neg” a “te” flow is to neutralize the life energies.

Erg is the word for unit of power of another kind. Between the opposed natures of gen and neg electric lie many in-between kinds of energy mixtures, as complex in nature as are compounds of molecular mixtures in chemistry to the element’s relative simplicity. Mostly these are useless, and an erg is the unit of measurement for these mixture-flows.

It is a unit used to indicate the degree of useless power mixed in their gen flows. Thus, a current is 90 gen to ten erg; nearly pure life energy value in the creation of beneficial electric.

**-GRAVITY:** According to Atlans, gravity is the friction of condensing exd, ex-disintegrate, falling through matter into earth. This fall of exd and its condensation is what causes gravity. When Newton was hit on the head by an apple, it was by an apple that was pushed down upon his head, rather than pulled down; since gravity is the friction caused by the fall through matter already existent of condensing exd. Obviously, a condensation is a falling together of a finely divided element into a grosser state.

By using a beam of similarly condensing particles of ex-disintegrate, a harmless beam of upward gravity is obtained which can levitate matter slowly or drive it upward at immense speed. All space is filled with the ash from disintegrate of the suns of the universe. This, condensing again into matter, is integrate or gravity. Thus, gravity is merely the disintegrant energy of suns returning to material form.

**-HARDENING:** The principle of “hardening” metal and stone so that they become unbreakable (used to prevent the roofs of the cavern cities from collapsing). It is accomplished by forcing additional exd (which the reader will remember is the ash of disintegrated matter, or more properly, the basic energy from which matter is again integrated) into the substance to be toughened until it reaches a state whose ultimate end would be what we today conceive of as neutronium. By adding more matter, packing it so to speak, into the in-

terstices between the particles of matter, a greater density and therefore a greater cohesiveness is obtained. This cohesiveness is actually the “in-flow” of gravity.

**-HIDDEN DOORS:** Doors into the caves are few but they do exist and no other door is so worthy of a man’s search. Always provided the door is not one that opens upon the hiding places of the evil life that is in many parts of the caves, there is no door that can open life before you as that door to the underworld.

**-IMMORTALITY:** The natural nature of life is to go on living forever. Death

there was a source of “raw material” and energy. A living thing grew through two processes: the replenishing of its body cells by transmuting foodstuffs into living cell matter; and by assimilating the disintegrated matter which fills all space and which science today calls the “ether.”

**-LEVITATOR:** It’s a portable lifter beam generator. Some of them are very small, and can be carried in the palm of the hand, or in the pocket. They were in common use for all tasks in Mu, and from Mr. Shaver comes the amazing statement that some of these portable levitators have been found in modern times and their secret use has given rise to the belief in the ability of “mediums” to use levitation of objects as one of their tricks in their seances.

**-MANTONG:** The Nortans, as did the Atlans and Titans, spoke the universal language of space; a language originated by a Titan Elder of the far past. The name of the language is Mantong. The original individual language of each race has fallen into disuse as the three races have intermingled through all space. This is the same language of which the alphabetical key was published in the first Volume of The Shaver Mystery Compendium.

**-MIGRATION FROM EARTH:** The carbon layer around the sun burned down to the heavy metal underneath. Sunlight became increasingly poisonous, since it contained minute quantities of disintegrant metals; disintegrant flaming lead, radium, titanium, uranium emanations filled the bright sunlight. Old age, long prophesied, appeared. Then began the periodic migration to a new, carbon-coated sun. Most of those Elder Folk left Mu for planets of kindlier augury. But some of those brilliant



Giant animals and plants were normal on ancient Mu (earth).

is not a part of the scheme of life. It is only the result of radioactive poisoning from an “old” or metallicly disintegrating sun. Thus, here on Mu’s (Earth) early days, the sun was sending down only beneficial radiations of carbon, which is not a poisonous element, but on the contrary, the basic element of living forms. Thus, nothing grew old, or died, except by actual destruction through accident or through killing. All things, including vegetation, continued to grow so long as

beings, loving “Mu” as they called our mother earth, remained, fighting the poisonous effects of sun metal with their extended knowledge. Before its accumulations could bring on old age, they would extract it from their bodies magnetically. Thus, keeping their immortal youth, sheltered in their deep caverns from the heavy metallic induction of our sun, those remnants of the race of immortals stayed on, to be the source of our legends of the gods.

-**MU:** Short for Lemuria, the Atlan word for our Earth.

-**PENETRA or PENETRAY:** visi-rays which penetrate and make transparent any object on which they are trained. Thus, in projecting visi-rays through earth, the penetra is used as a carrier ray. The penetrative rays penetrate many miles of solid rock, giving a perfect visual image of anything within range, even through rock. By attachments to the apparatus, the penetra will also augment anyone’s thought within the vision range, the conductive penetray acting as the aerial wire leading to the brain of the subject—the augment apparatus being similar to a radio, but tuned to the short-waves of thought. Also known as the “seeing rays;” from this our religious faiths have derived their teaching that “God is everywhere.” Old rulers were probably widely aware of all near and far surroundings on Mu, for their beneficial rays made them so.

-**PLASTIC SEAL LIFE SUSPENSION:** A method of enclosing a body in a solid plastic block, after suspension of animation, is the only possible one by which the “de” field surrounding the sun and our universe can be escaped. This is due to the size and intensity of the field

of “de” magnetic (reverse of attractive magnetic—de is repellant magnetic). This field is of such a size that only by fully protecting the body in this manner can it survive long enough to traverse the immense distance necessary for complete escape into “High Te” areas where life does not cease of old age.

Someday, when men have learned the true science of the Elder race, they may traverse space and time by this method, and so come again into contact with the descendants of the Elder race of earth. But they have gone so far away in their pursuit of favorable life conditions of Te that only by suspended animation can we live long enough to reach them again.

In the caverns, Mr. Shaver affirms to have seen many thousands of these bodies encased in plastic. Mention of them can be found in other writers, occult writers speak of them, they are an ancient SOURCE OF FOOD FOR THE CAVERN DWELLERS. There was a large number of (abandoned) migration ships loaded full of them, in various parts of the caverns. They must have been trapped by some cataclysm, the Moon descent which caused the Deluge of the Bible, or the sudden flaming of a Nova from our sun wiping out the life which was left to care for them before the ships took off. Thus, the ships have lain, and the storerooms filled with them—perhaps they were so encased to enable them to survive the catastrophe which at that period nearly obliterated life on earth, and did succeed in obliterating all who held the ancient wisdom of the Elder race in their minds. Inside the great square blocks of yellow plastic, these mighty bodies still remain. The degenerate cavern dero chip off the plastic,

eat the flesh. Truth is they could be revived if sane men had a chance to study the writings left by those who put them there in the plastic. Upon each plastic block is a metal plaque bearing name, description of his training, nature of his forebears and special talents, etc. It is very evident that that race crossed time and space in this way—by complete suspension of all bodily activity and encasing the wrapped body in solid blocks of the hard-yellow plastic, proof against all stresses and strains of space flight.

It is interesting to note the survival of this wrapping of the apparently dead bodies in suspended animation for space crossing in the custom of the ancient Egyptians who wrapped their dead for their journey to the “other world.” It’s quite evident that much of the lore of the Elder race survived for a time on Earth, in the survival of this custom of wrapping a dead body, only at last to be overwhelmed by the tide of ignorance. Culture and knowledge so deep as the Elder race could only survive with systematic education, or among a people who lived vastly longer than ourselves. Did the Egyptians get their custom of wrapping mummies from accounts in the caverns, from wall paintings in the Elder caves depicting the preparation for space travel, or did they get it by actually seeing the Elder race so prepare and then leave Earth forever, leaving the first Egyptian behind to ponder just how such a flight into “heaven” was accomplished? It is no wonder he copied them, no wonder the ignorant man thought they were really dead, and that when one died one should be so wrapped for re-animation in the “other world.” DID NOT ALL BURIAL CUSTOMS ARISE

FROM SAME? For all expect to be revived sometime!

**-SLAVES TO SPACE:** Some not so stupid Deros from the caverns kidnap surface dwellers not only for torture but also to sell them as slaves to other Dero races from space.

**-RAY PEOPLE:** They are taken to mean all of the modern underground race, both the dero and the tero. They are called “ray” by Mr. Shaver because that is the means they use to spy upon surface people, and to talk to them, and to perform the many weird things their machines are capable of doing. It is by rays that they operate. For instance, have you ever had a fearful nightmare in which you have been faced by horribly realistic monstrosities such as your waking mind has never conceived, to your utter terror? This dream might have been produced in your mind by tele-projection from the dero creatures of the caves who delight in causing surface people horror and terror. There is another and more significant reason behind this practice, and that is to build up superstition and fear in surface people that has been proved their greatest protection against discovery by upper-worlders. They fear discovery because it would mean their extermination by a vindictive human race, seeking to revenge itself upon its age-old torturers.

**-RO:** It is a thing of simple repetitive life pattern easy to understand and control. To ro you is to make you do things against your will. A large generator of thought impulse can be set up to ro a whole group of people. Row the boat is modern and the meaning has become physical force and not mental force. Ro the people was an ancient method of

government. Romantic was the name of such a government. Ro-man-tic (science of man life patterning by control). It is the same concept as used by some scientists when they say "hypnotically conditioned." It is not necessarily an evil government method, but is one that was necessary. Any person is ro who is weaker than the mental impulses about him. Men are ro today because they are not self-determining, though they think they are. We are parts of a huge juggernaut, and we are ro in consequence. The determining forces that make our thought what it is are from outside when we are ro, from inside when we are men or gods.

**-ROBOT MARRIAGES:** In the early days there were many very wonderful and beautiful robots, so marvelously constructed that men married them in preference to real women! Their behavior is often anything but human. Their desire to serve someone seems what would be built into such a robot: a desire to serve a master.

**-RODITE:** Life pattern synchronizers. Agent for the Atlan government. Rodites are the workers who tend the guard rays, and are "slaves" in a sense that they are ro to absolute loyalty, and therefore mentally incapable of treachery. Literally translated, a rodite is a "life pattern synchronizer."

**-ROLLAT:** Moving connected vehicles on the ways and walks which carried the bulk of pedestrian travel.

**-RO-MECH:** A device which augments thought so strongly that anyone who hears it obeys it and does as it dictates. It reproduces in actual life as nearly as possible the same events which take place on the thought-records. One

can 'tag' the records with an imposed identification projection—fixed them so they indicate exactly who will play each "character" from the record.

**-"SCHOOL" OF GROWTH:** A machine in which one can growth in both body and mind; it's the concrete manifestation in apparatus of the science of man growth as conceived by the three ancient god-races (Atlans, Titans and Nortan). It was based on simple laws of the integration of matter. Growth is an inflow of exd. Life itself is a flame of integration, which like a fire must be fed or it goes out. Exd is the fuel of that flame, and by its condensation into matter, adds to the flame, causing growth. Naturally this growth is a material growth. What the Nortans did was to concentrate the flow of exd so as to feed the flame of life at a greater rate, and thus cause greater growth.

The school of growth could also be used to "marry" two persons, by growing them together and thus, fulfilling years of mutual deep knowledge in just a few days.

A technical simile might be drawn: a fire, when supplied with finely divided carbon and a larger supply of oxygen becomes a greater, fiercer thing. It is the same with life. When supplied with a greater quantity of exd, it grows, becomes stronger, more active. The mechanical means is very similar to the magnetic field lenses used in electron microscopes, which direct and focus a flow of particles called electrons into a beam more revealing than light because its particles are smaller. This same magnetic field principle can be used to focus exd and thus hasten integration. A magnetic field, lens-shaped, could focus

falling exd by attunement just as a radio collects certain waves. This attunement can be determined by constructing a coil in the same shape as the coils of the electron microscope—but much larger. The focus can be determined by its light focus, which would be the same. A plant, placed beneath this point of focus, perks up its leaves, reaches out, is invigorated, exudes a dew, in a short time is twice the size it would ordinarily have been.

Once there was a book called the “T” book (“T” for integration, for growth force, energy, etc.) which was in rather widespread use up to the time of Christ. It contained the elemental frames of logic and simple what-to-dos like the age-poison elimination, beneficial generators, and so on. But some group feared its influence and it was destroyed, so completely that only the memory of that once infallible book remains, which memory was the father of the Bible and all its veneration, including the cross on its cover, the “T” sign. The direct need for a greater future for man is strengthening of the general mind by T forces, the growth of a better brain. No progress is truly progress unless man grows a better brain to grow a better brain. That is the pattern of progress—to grow a growth to grow, etc.

What man needs is a conscious aim toward growth. To learn how to grow into a man better able to grow into a wiser man is a goal followed by but a few men out of all the number who could be striving in that direction. The great ones called such a goal ‘TIC’ and any energy not directed toward that goal was called ‘ERR’. Our most basic concepts have become err from disintegrant force distortion of thought flows over the long peri-

od of time since we were children of the Gods of the past.

**-SPAYDERINES:** This is an ancient word of the caverns, and once was the name of an organization which periodically swept over the earth, killing all who in any way opposed the ruler of the caverns. Originally, in the Elder tongue, it was a word for a kind of police force who examined the people regularly for “der” and killed those whose De errant minds were too dangerously destructive. Just as a secret police can be—a completely evil force, so had the word spayderine come to mean everything evil. It is used even today to describe cruel bands of murderous ray-men who travel through the caverns, killing everything that blocks their path.

**-SPEED LIMIT IN SPACE TRAVEL:** There’s no ‘limit velocity’ of light; so, the speed of light is *not* the ultimate speed.

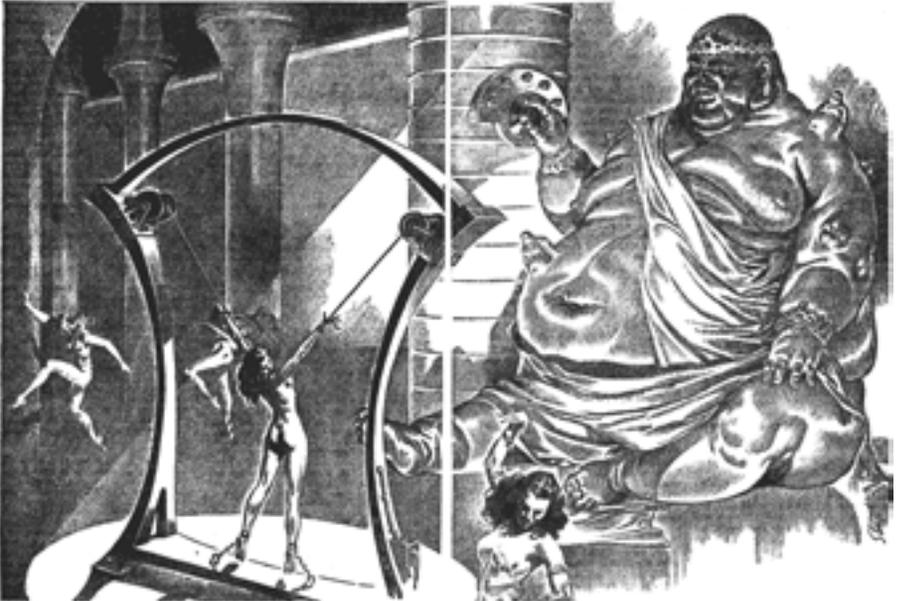
Light speed is due to ‘escape velocity’ on the sun, which is not large. This speed is a constant to our measurement because the friction of exd, which fills all space, holds down any increase unless there is more impetus. The escape velocity of light from a vaster sun than ours is higher, but once again exd slows the light speed down to its constant by friction, so that when it reaches the vicinity of our sun, no appreciable difference is to be noted. A body can travel at many times the exd constant, under additional impetus, such as rocket explosions. A ship whose weight is reduced to a very little by reverse gravity beam can attain a great speed with a very small rocket. Once beyond the limits of matter, gravity ceases and the ship becomes weightless. Speeds over that of exd constant must be under constant impetus, for the

friction slows them down quickly again, especially so in the case of solids. Sound, as an example, travels through air at a constant speed—and yet the impetus is obviously different in each case! The only conclusion is that the air itself is the governing factor in the speed of sound, which always remains appreciably the same. So it is with light. Both depend for their velocity on an initial impetus. Both remain constant because below a certain speed, friction disappears.

**-STIM RAYS:** Mechanically augment every cell impulse to a power untold. Under the effects of a stim ray, it seems that every tree carries a beautiful face; every breeze is like a bath in elixir; every sensation of sex has the value of a thousand nights of love. It is a mechanical way of accentuating every possible pleasure. Even reading a book becomes an emotional experience of high caliber. These mechs—rays—stim—have been used always as the forbidden fruit of life,

the last treasure in the temple of secrecy which has consumed the ancient science. The orgies which the uses of such stimulants inspire have been going on secretly since the earliest times—beneath the temples and in the secret pleasure palaces of the world. (Our modern world, not of ancient Mu). These orgies still go on, and are more deadly than before—more filled with de accumulated in the apparatus, the stim itself concealing the deadly rays whose effect is explained as the sad results of overindulgence; which is untrue—the stim, used properly, is a beneficial of great virtue and leaves one stronger and wiser after use.

**-STIMMED BODY—ORNAMENTS:** The use of girls and women for ornaments is a particularly revealing angle on the opulence and cruel disregard for the natural rights of man which has marked ray-secrets since the earliest days. This use is an old, and still extant, custom in the caverns that honeycomb



A deformed dero tortures a woman while stimmed bodies lie around.

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

**-SUN POISONING:** The sun itself seems to be the mother source of all radioactivity, (only in modern times, not in the early days where Earth was called Lemuria, or Mu) infecting all the earth's surface and all the life on its surface. The sun projects minute disintegrances down upon us in a steady, numerous rain whose effects we call age. In water the poison is heavily present in suspension, especially so in thermal springs. In the air the poison floats forever with the

tiny thistledown of dust it has infected and to which it clings. It settles on the leaves of plants. So, we take the poison in with every breath, with every bite of food, with every drink of water; thus, we age as the poison accumulates.

But we do not have to let in that poison; we can protect ourselves and grow through a longer youth to a much greater age, with superior mental powers. It is very plain that a mother's body cells, although replaced every four to seven years, are not young because they remain in contact with the poison retaining fabric of the body and so age swiftly. Yet, the baby is young. Young because it gets filtered blood, filtered through the placenta—and would remain young if the poisons were to be continued to be filtered out by a duplication of the placenta filter. The stalk of a plant is old, yet its seed is young, capable of reproducing itself without passing on the poisons of age. It is because the stalk contains a filter to prevent passage of the poison to the seed.

The simple filtration processes of birth and seeding CAN BE COPIED by man, thus putting off old age.

Here are a few verbatim quotations from Madame Curie's notes: 'Finally, the radiation of radium was contagious. Contagious like a disease and like persistent scent. It was impossible for an object, a plant, an animal or a person to be left near a table of radium without it immediately acquiring radioactivity—becoming radioactive—a notable activity which a sensitive apparatus could detect.' A later page: 'Thus the radio elements formed strange and cruel families in which each member was created by degeneration from the moth-

er substance—radium was created by degeneration from uranium—polonium from radium, etc.’ And from a later page: ‘When one studies strongly radioactive substances special precautions must be taken if one wishes to be able to take delicate measurements. The various objects used in a chemical laboratory and those used in physics experiments all become radioactive in a short time, and affect photo paper through black paper. Dust, the air of the room, one’s clothes all become radio-active. The evil has reached an acute stage in our laboratory.’

There is a great deal of evidence that radium and similar disintegrant metals come from the sun as single atoms—permeate the soil for centuries, are gathered up by erosion by rain water and hence into the body and into trees and plants. There they accumulate and are the cause of our death by radium poisoning—alias AGE. The men who know this are making successful efforts to solve the problem of keeping these deadly seeds of the sun out of the body. Some success has been achieved by distillation and centrifugation of the fluid intake of experimental animals. In time, by this method, it is expected that life will be prolonged two or three times the present life span.

**-T (ALSO USED ‘TE,’ INTEGRATION) and D (ALSO USED ‘DE,’ DISINTEGRANT ENERGY):** Matter in all the cosmos is constantly disintegrating and integrating. There is the natural parallel as to whether the hen or the egg came first—did the integration come first, or the disintegration? But that is the one and only unanswerable question in the whole theory. Exd is the ash (matter so finely divided as to become ener-

gy rather than matter) of disintegrating suns. It spreads out and fills all space. Then, perhaps because of the presence of an actual bit of matter (as in the case of the salt grain in the salt solution that commences precipitation which does not end until all the salt is once more in its original form), or under the influence of a magnetic field which draws the exd together, integration commences and the exd once more becomes matter.

**-TELAUG:** a machine which augmented and strengthened telepathic signals so that even the most secret thoughts could be read.

**-TELEPORT MECH:** a means of transmission over a distance of an actual object by means of tele rays. This machine could transmit a solid thing in a way that might be comparable to the way a photo or map is transmitted by radio. However, there is a difference in principle which Mr. Shaver has never been able to fathom from his study of the machine.

**-TELESOLIDOGRAPH:** It is an antique device that can project a picture that looks solid, feels solid, is practically solid—yet it can be projected through a solid wall—or through miles of solid rock. What you tell such a machine to do it will do, because of the nature of telesolidograph focus which brings the pressure to bear only at the focus of all the rays. They are no longer rocks under ray pressure: their parts elongate, stretch, become like photons or sub-photons, are carried along as part of the ray flow. So it is that matter may be sent along a ray to be precipitated once again—the scanning apparatus directs a small flow of this dissolving ray over the focus of the teleport solidograph

receiver, unseen at the subject's end of the ray but visible in the screen as a solid. Apparently, the whole thing happens within the screen, but in reality, tremendous forces are under remote control at the other end of the ray and as the scanner dissolves the solidograph image in the screen, the matter disappears at the other end. If the thing happened slowly, living matter could not survive the long time-interval—it would bleed as the ray tore it away bit by bit and reassembled it at the other end. The heart of the thing is a scanner of intricate and rapid nature, coupled with the telesolidograph which makes an image of anything upon which it is focused, anywhere in three dimensions. The scanner controls the dissolving ray at that end, and likewise controls a duplicate scanner which contains a precipitating ray which neutralizes the pressure of the ray bearing the matter, and thus causes a precipitation which is controlled entirely by the speed and quantity of the pickup scanner at the other end—though both scanners are located right in the machine.

That is as near as I can come to describing the apparatus to you. So, one is never quite sure, in contacts with the ray people, what is true and what is mere humorous bamboozlement.

**-THE SECRET:** Keeping the secret of the cave's existence has been a custom, a hereditary habit of the Elder underworld. Surface incredulity and fear of the supernatural has made it an open secret that keeps itself; for you will find that the case records of insane asylums are chock full of patients whose only complaint was that they heard mysterious voices in their minds. The keeping of the ancient secret enjoins certain

procedures. For instance, a man cannot be killed with a penetrative ray very frequently or the use and the nature of the weapon would become apparent to all, rather than a "mystery." Endless dodges and subterfuges have become habitual through timeworn usage: when they want a man killed, a surface assassin is employed, since the death by ray would expose the penetrative ray weapon. When they want a man to do something, they use unnoticed mental control and suggestion, as out-and-out contact with his mind in open telepathic communication would expose the nature of their power and equipment. Similarly, the trickery which keeps the secret for them is intricate, habitual, and endlessly involved in taboos. "Knowing," for endless centuries, has been equivalent to a death sentence for a surface man.

**-THOUGHT CLOUD or THOUGHT-SCREEN PROJECTION OF IMAGES:**

Three dimensional pictures were formed by projection of the image into a mass of gases held by electric pressure in a cloud whose particles glowed in various colors according to the mental wavelength of the vibration field in which they floated. Ordinarily the cloud is opaque white, and when the thought-picture is projected into it by the Nortan mind thru a "Thought augmentor," it becomes transparent, except for the particles which form the image in full color. The command for attention causes the whole cloud to change color from milky white to flaming red. These projections take place from several points synchronously arranged so that the image in the gas-cloud appears to be three dimensioned, although if looked at from below it would be like looking at the back of a false face.

In legends the trolls were supposed to be hollow in back and slept stacked together like false faces. This legend corroborates our theory that ancient magic apparitions, etc. were accomplished by the use of hidden ancient apparatus found in caves deep under the surface; the apparatus was left by the ancient God-race and is the source of the magic legends.

**-THOUGHT RECORDS:** Through scientific, indestructible mechanisms, the Ancient Ones' thoughts were recorded on a kind of micro-film, sealed in non-corrosive containers. Placed in one of their thought-record projectors, these records yield more precise and accurate information about that ancient life than any of our history books about more recent events. By the nature of synthetic thought electric flows given off in strength by these particular mechanisms, the person "reading" the record feels he is himself the person experiencing the occurrences described in the thought-record. The flow of image-bearing energy from the record is so much stronger than one's own energy of consciousness that the experiences produced from the record remain in the mind more vividly than any actual experiences. Thus, these records control the mental processes in such a way that the past is lived again in a more vivid fashion than one's own life. These records left by the Elder Folk are a more faithful transcription of actual history than any other records kept since.

This is how Mr. Shaver affirms to have seen the life of Mutan Mion and other "characters" in some of his stories of ancient times.

**-UNIVERSAL VIEWER:** It's a device

which assembles and coordinates the images resulting from a large number of penetray beams and their accompanying televisor—or direct-view screens. These beams point to every direction in space and the screen images are re-projected upon tiny mental vision (telaug) beams directly into the brain (Telaug beams carry mental messages). The result was a complete mental view in all directions; disturbing to a man used to seeing in but one direction at a time.

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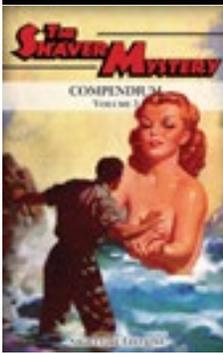
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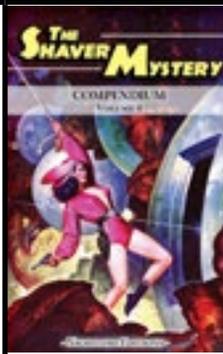
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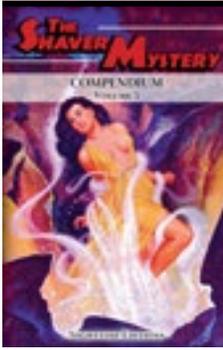
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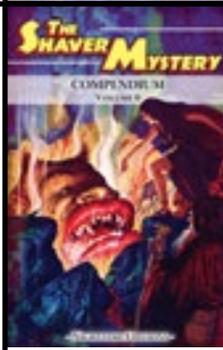
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