



Llana of Gathol

Edgar Rice Burroughs

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FOREWORD

Lanikai is a district, a beach, a Post Office, and a grocery store. It lies on the windward shore of the Island of Oahu. It is a long way from Mars. Its waters are blue and beautiful and calm inside its coral reef, and the trade wind sighing through the fronds of its coconut palms at night might be the murmuring voices of the ghosts of the kings and chieftains who fished in its still waters long before the sea captains brought strange diseases or the missionaries brought mother-hubbards.

Thoughts of the past, mere vague imaginings, were passing idly through my mind one night that I could not sleep and was sitting on the lanai watching the white maned chargers of the sea racing shoreward beneath the floodlight of the Moon. I saw the giant kings of old Hawaii and their mighty chiefs clothed in feather cape and helmet.

Kamehameha came, the great conqueror, towering above them all.

Down from the Nuuanu Pali he came in great strides, stepping over cane fields and houses. The hem of his feather cape caught on the spire of a church, toppling it to the ground. He stepped on low, soft ground; and when he lifted his foot, the water of a slough rushed into his footprint, and there was a lake.

I was much interested in the coming of Kamehameha the King, for I had always admired him; though I had never expected to see him, he having been dead a matter of a hundred years or so and his bones buried in a holy, secret place that no man knows. However, I was not at all surprised to see him. What surprised me was that I was not surprised. I distinctly recall this reaction. I also recall that I hoped he would see me and not step on me.

While I was thinking these thoughts, Kamehameha stopped in front of me and looked down at me. "Well, well!" he said; "asleep on a beautiful night like this! I am surprised."

I blinked my eyes hard and looked again. There before me stood indeed a warrior strangely garbed, but it was not King Kamehameha. Under the moonlight one's eyes sometimes play strange tricks on one. I blinked mine again, but the warrior did not vanish. Then I knew!

Leaping to my feet, I extended my hand. "John Carter!" I exclaimed.

"Let's see," he said; "where was it we met last—the headwaters of the Little Colorado or Tarzana?"

"The headwaters of the Little Colorado in Arizona, I think," I said. "That was a long time ago. I never expected to see you again."

"No, I never expected to return."

"Why have you? It must be something important."

"Nothing of Cosmic importance," he said, smiling; "but important to me, nevertheless. You see, I wanted to see you."

"I appreciate that," I said.

"You see, you are the last of my Earthly kin whom I know personally. Every once in a while I feel an urge to see you and visit with you, and at long intervals I am able to satisfy that urge—as now. After you are dead, and it will not be long now, I shall have no Earthly ties—no reason to return to the scenes of my former life."

"There are my children." I reminded him. "They are your blood kin."

"Yes," he said, "I know; but they might be afraid of me. After all, I might be considered something of a ghost by Earth men."

"Not by my children," I assured him. "They know you quite as well as I. After I am gone, see them occasionally."

He nodded. "Perhaps I shall," he half promised.

"And now," I said, "tell me something of yourself, of Mars, of Dejah Thoris, of Carthoris and Thuvia and of Tara of Helium. Let me see! It was Gahan of Gathol that Tara of Helium wed."

"Yes," replied the war lord, "it was Gahan, Jed of the free city of Gathol. They have a daughter, one whose character and whose beauty are worthy of her mother and her mother's mother—a beauty which, like that of those other two, hurled nations at each other's throats in war. Perhaps you would like to hear the story of Llana of Gathol."

I said that I would, and this is the story that he told me that night beneath the coconut palms of Oahu.

BOOK 1. THE ANCIENT DEAD

CHAPTER 1

No matter how instinctively gregarious one may be there are times when one longs for solitude. I like people. I like to be with my family, my friends, my fighting men; and probably just because I am so keen for companionship, I am at times equally keen to be alone. It is at such times that I can best resolve the knotty problems of government in times of war or peace. It is then that I can meditate upon all the various aspects of a full life such as I lead; and, being human, I have plenty of mistakes upon which to meditate that I may fortify myself against their recommission.

When I feel that strange urge for solitude coming over me, it is my usual custom to take a one man flier and range the dead sea bottoms and the other uninhabited wildernesses of this dying planet; for there indeed is solitude. There are vast areas on Mars where no human foot has ever trod, and other vast areas that for thousands of years have known only the giant green men, the wandering nomads of the ocher deserts.

Sometimes I am away for weeks on these glorious adventures in solitude. Because of them, I probably know more of the geography and topography of Mars than any other living man; for they and my other adventurous excursions upon the planet have carried me from the Lost Sea of Korus, in the Valley Dor at the frozen South to Okar, land of the black bearded Yellow Men of the frozen North, and from Kaol to Bantoom; and yet there are many parts of Barsoom that I have not visited, which will not seem so strange when there is taken into consideration the fact that although the area of Mars is like more than one fourth that of Earth its land area is almost eight million square miles greater. That is because Barsoom has no large bodies of surface water, its largest known ocean being entirely subterranean. Also, I think you will admit, fifty-six million square miles is a lot of territory to know thoroughly.

Upon the occasion of which I am about to tell you I flew northwest from Helium, which lies 30 degrees south of the Equator which I crossed about sixteen hundred miles east of Exum, the Barsoomian Greenwich. North and west of me lay a vast, almost unexplored region; and there I thought to find the absolute solitude for which I craved.

I had set my directional compass upon Horz, the long deserted city of ancient Barsoomian culture, and loafed along at seventy-five miles an hour at an altitude of five hundred to a thousand feet. I had seen some green men northeast of Torquas and had been forced up to escape their fire, which I did not return as I was not seeking adventure; and I had crossed two thin ribbons of red Martian farm land bordering canals that bring the precious waters from the annually melting ice caps at the

poles. Beyond these I saw no signs of human life in all the five thousand miles that lie between Lesser Helium and Horz.

It is always a little saddening to me to look down thus upon a dying world, to scan the endless miles of ocher, mosslike vegetation which carpets the vast areas where once rolled the mighty oceans of a young and virile Mars, to ponder that just beneath me once ranged the proud navies and the merchant ships of a dozen rich and powerful nations where today the fierce banth roams a solitude whose silence is unbroken except for the roars of the killer and the screams of the dying.

At night I slept, secure in the knowledge that my directional compass would hold a true course for Horz and always at the altitude for which I had set it—a thousand feet, not above sea level but above the terrain over which the ship was passing. These amazing little instruments may be set for any point upon Barsoom and at any altitude. If one is set for a thousand feet, as mine was upon this occasion, it will not permit the ship to come closer than a thousand feet to any object, thus eliminating even the danger of collision; and when the ship reaches its objective the compass will stop it a thousand feet above. The pilot whose ship is equipped with one of these directional compasses does not even have to remain awake; thus I could travel day and night without danger.

It was about noon of the third day that I sighted the towers of ancient Horz.

The oldest part of the city lies upon the edge of a vast plateau; the newer portions, and they are countless thousands of years old, are terraced downward into a great gulf, marking the hopeless pursuit of the receding sea upon the shores of which this rich and powerful city once stood. The last poor, mean structures of a dying race have either disappeared or are only mouldering ruins now; but the splendid structures of her prime remain at the edge of the plateau, mute but eloquent reminders of her vanished grandeur - enduring monuments to the white-skinned, fair-haired race which has vanished forever.

I am always interested in these deserted cities of ancient Mars. Little is known of their inhabitants, other than what can be gathered from the stories told by the carvings which ornament the exteriors of many of their public buildings and the few remaining murals which have withstood the ravages of time and the vandalism of the green hordes which have overrun many of them. The extremely low humidity has helped to preserve them, but more than all else was the permanency of their construction. These magnificent edifices were built not for years but for eternities. The secrets of their mortars, their cements, and their pigments have been lost for ages; and for countless ages more, long after the last life has disappeared from the face of Barsoom, their works will remain, hurtling through space forever upon a dead, cold planet with no eye to see, with no mind to appreciate. It is a sad thing to contemplate.

At last I was over Horz. I had for long promised myself that some day I should come here, for Horz is, perhaps, the oldest and the greatest of the dead cities of Barsoom. Water built it, the lack of water spelled its doom. I often wonder if the people of Earth, who have water in such abundance, really appreciate it.

I wonder if the inhabitants of New York City realize what it would mean to them if some enemy, establishing an air base within cruising radius of the first city of the New World, should successfully bomb and destroy Croton Dam and the Catskill water system. The railroads and the highways would be jammed with refugees, millions would die, and for years, perhaps forever, New York City would cease to be.

As I floated lazily above the deserted city I saw figures moving in a plaza below me. So Horz was not entirely deserted! My curiosity piqued, I dropped a little lower; and what I saw dashed thoughts of solitude from my mind—a lone red man beset by half a dozen fierce green warriors.

I had not sought adventure, but here it was; for no man worthy of his metal would abandon one of his own kind in such a dire extremity. I saw a spot where I might land in a nearby plaza; and, praying that the green men would be too engrossed with their engagement to note my approach, I dove quickly and silently toward a landing.

CHAPTER 2

Fortunately I landed unobserved, screened by a mighty tower which rose beside the plaza I had selected. I had seen that they were fighting with long-swords, and so I drew mine as I ran in the direction of the unequal struggle. That the red man lived even a few moments against such odds bespoke the excellence of his swordsmanship, and I hoped that he would hold out until I reached him; for then he would have the best sword arm in all Barsoom to aid him and the sword that had tasted the blood of a thousand enemies the length and breadth of a world. I found my way from the plaza in which I had landed, but only to be confronted by a twenty-foot wall in which I could perceive no opening. Doubtless there was one, I knew; but in the time that I might waste in finding it my man might easily be killed.

The clash of swords, the imprecations, and the grunts of fighting men came to me distinctly from the opposite side of the wall which barred my way. I could even hear the heavy breathing of the fighters. I heard the green men demand the surrender of their quarry and his taunting reply. I liked what he said and the way he said it in the face of death. My knowledge of the ways of the green men assured me that they would try to capture him for purposes of torture rather than kill him outright, but if I were to save him from either fate I must act quickly.

There was only one way to reach him without loss of time, and that way was open to me because of the lesser gravitation of Mars and my great Earthly strength and agility. I would simply jump to the top of the wall, take a quick survey of the lay of the land beyond, and then drop down, long-sword in hand, and take my place at the side of the red man.

When I exert myself, I can jump to incredible heights. Twenty feet is nothing, but this time I miscalculated. I was several yards from the wall when I took a short run and leaped into the air. Instead of alighting on the top of the wall, as I had planned, I soared completely over it, clearing it by a good ten feet.

Below me were the fighters. Apparently I was going to land right in their midst.

So engrossed were they in their sword play that they did not notice me; and that was well for me; as one of the green men could easily have impaled me on his sword as I dropped upon them.

My man was being hard pressed. It was evident that the green men had given up the notion of capturing him, and were trying to finish him off. One of them had him at a disadvantage and was about to plunge a longsword through him when I alighted. By rare good luck I alighted squarely upon the back of the man who was about to kill the red man, and I alighted with the point of my sword protruding straight below me. It caught him in the left shoulder and passed downward through his

heart, and even before he collapsed I had planted both feet upon his shoulders; and, straightening up, withdrawn my blade from his carcass. For a moment my amazing advent threw them all off their guard, and in that moment I leaped to the side of the red man and faced his remaining foes, the red blood of a green warrior dripping from my point.

The red man threw a quick glance at me; and then the remaining green men were upon us, and there was no time for words. A fellow swung at me and missed. Gad! what a blow he swung! Had it connected I should have been as headless as a rykor. It was unfortunate for the green man that it did not, for mine did. I cut horizontally with all my Earthly strength, which is great on Earth and infinitely greater on Mars. My longsword, its edge as keen as a razor and its steel such as only Barsoom produces, passed entirely through the body of my antagonist, cutting him in two.

"Well done!" exclaimed the red man, and again he cast a quick glance at me.

From the corner of my eye I caught an occasional glimpse of my unknown comrade, and I saw some marvelous swordsmanship. I was proud to fight at the side of such a man. By now we had reduced the number of our antagonists to three. They fell back a few steps, dropping their points, just for a breathing spell. I neither needed nor desired a breathing spell; but, glancing at my companion, I saw that he was pretty well exhausted; so I dropped my point too and waited.

It was then that I got my first good look at the man whose cause I had espoused; and I got a shock, too. This was no red man, but a white man if I have ever seen one. His skin was bronzed by exposure to the sun, as is mine; and that had at first deceived me. But now I saw that there was nothing red-Martian about him.

His harness, his weapons, everything about him differed from any that I had seen on Mars.

He wore a headdress, which is quite unusual upon Barsoom. It consisted of a leather band that ran around the head just above his brows, with another leather band crossing his from right to left and a second from front to rear. These bands were highly ornamented with carving and set with jewels and precious metals. To the center of the band that crossed his forehead was affixed a flat piece of gold in the shape of a spearhead with the point up. This, also, was beautifully carved and bore a strange device inlaid in red and black.

Confined by this headdress was a shock of blond hair—a most amazing thing to see upon Mars. At first I jumped to the conclusion that he must be a thern from the far south-polar land; but that thought I discarded at once when I realized that the hair was his own. The therns are entirely bald and wear great yellow wigs.

I also saw that my companion was strangely handsome. I might say beautiful were it not for the effeminateness which the word connotes,

and there was nothing effeminate about the way this man fought or the mighty oaths that he swore when he spoke at all to an adversary. We fighting men are not given to much talk, but when you feel your blade cleave a skull in twain or drive through the heart of a foeman, then sometimes a great oath is wrenched from your lips.

But I had little time then to appraise my companion, for the remaining three were at us again in a moment. I fought that day, I suppose, as I have always fought; but each time it seems to me that I have never fought so well as upon that particular occasion. I do not take great credit for my fighting ability, for it seems to me that my sword is inspired. No man could think as quickly as my point moves, always to the right spot at the right time, as though anticipating the next move of an adversary. It weaves a net of steel about me that few blades have ever pierced. It fills the foeman's eyes with amazement and his mind with doubt and his heart with fear. I imagine that much of my success has been due to the psychological effect of my swordsmanship upon my adversaries.

Simultaneously my companion and I each struck down an antagonist, and then the remaining warrior turned to flee. "Do not let him escape!" cried my comrade-in-arms, and leaped in pursuit, at the same time calling loudly for help, something he had not done when close to death before the points of six swords. But whom did he expect to answer his appeal in this dead and deserted city? Why did he call for help when the last of his antagonists was in full flight? I was puzzled; but having enlisted myself in this strange adventure, I felt that I should see it through; and so I set off in pursuit of the fleeing green man.

He crossed the courtyard where we had been engaged and made for a great archway that opened out into a broad avenue. I was close behind him, having outstripped both him and the strange warrior. When I came into the avenue I saw the green man leap to the back of one of six thoats waiting there, and at the same time I saw at least a hundred warriors pouring from a nearby building. They were yellow-haired white men, garbed like my erstwhile fighting companion, who now joined in the pursuit of the green man. They were armed with bows and arrows; and they sent a volley of missiles after the escaping quarry, whom they could never hope to overtake, and who was soon out of range of their weapons.

The spirit of adventure is so strong within me that I often yield to its demands in spite of the dictates of my better judgment. This matter was no affair of mine. I had already done all, and even more than could have been expected of me; yet I leaped to the back of one of the remaining thoats and took off in pursuit of the green warrior.

CHAPTER 3

There are two species of thoat on Mars: the small, comparatively docile breed used by the red Martians as saddle animals and, to a lesser extent, as beasts of burden on the farms that border the great irrigation canals; and then there are the huge, vicious, unruly beasts that the green warriors use exclusively as steeds of war.

These creatures tower fully ten feet at the shoulder. They have four legs on either side and a broad, flat tail, larger at the tip than at the root, that they hold straight out behind while running. Their gaping mouths split their heads from their snouts to their long, massive necks. Their bodies, the upper portion of which is a dark slate color and exceedingly smooth and glossy, are entirely devoid of hair. Their bellies are white, and their legs shade gradually from the slate color of their bodies to a vivid yellow at the feet, which are heavily padded and nailless.

The thoat of the green man has the most abominable disposition of any creature I have ever seen, not even the green men themselves excepted. They are constantly fighting among themselves, and woe betide the rider who loses control of his terrible mount; yet, paradoxical as it may appear, they are ridden without bridle or bit; and are controlled solely by telepathic means, which, fortunately for me, I learned many ago while I was prisoner of Lorquas Ptomei, jed of the Tharks, a green Martian horde.

The beast to whose back I had vaulted was a vicious devil, and he took violent exception to me and probably to my odor. He tried to buck me off; and, failing that, reached back with his huge, gaping jaws in an effort to seize me.

There is, I might mention, an auxiliary method of control when these ugly beasts become recalcitrant; and I adopted it in this instance, notwithstanding the fact that I had won grudging approval from the fierce green Tharks by controlling thoats through patience and kindness. I had time for neither now, as my quarry was racing along the broad avenue that led to the ancient quays of Horz and the vast dead sea bottoms beyond; so I laid heavily upon the head and snout of the beast with the flat of my broadsword until I had beaten it into subjection; then it obeyed my telepathic commands, and set out at great speed in pursuit. It was a very swift thoat, one of the swiftest that I had ever bestrode; and, in addition, it carried much less weight than the beast we sought to overtake; so we closed up rapidly on the escaping green man.

At the very edge of the plateau upon which the old city was built we caught up with him, and there he stopped and wheeled his mount and prepared to give battle. It was then that I began to appreciate the marvelous intelligence of my mount. Almost without direction from me he maneuvered into the correct positions to give me an advantage in

this savage duel, and when at last I had achieved a sudden advantage which had almost unseated my rival, my thoat rushed like a mad devil upon the thoat of the green warrior tearing at its throat with his mighty jaws while he tried to beat it to its knees with the weight of his savage assault.

It was then that I gave the coup de grace to my beaten and bloody adversary; and, leaving him where he had fallen, rode back to receive the plaudits and the thanks of my newfound friends.

They were waiting for me, a hundred of them, in what had probably once been a public market place in the ancient city of Horz. They were not smiling. They looked sad. As I dismounted, they crowded around me.

"Did the green man escape?" demanded one whose ornaments and metal proclaimed him a leader.

"No," I replied; "he is dead."

A great sigh of relief arose from a hundred throats. Just why they should feel such relief that a single green man had been killed I did not then understand.

They thanked me, crowding around me as they did so; and still they were unsmiling and sad. I suddenly realized that these people were not friendly - it came to me intuitively, but too late. They were pushing against me from all sides, so that I could not even raise an arm, and then, quite suddenly at a word from their leader, I was disarmed.

"What is the meaning of this?" I demanded. "Of my own volition I came to the aid of one of your people who would otherwise have been killed. Is this the thanks I am to receive? Give me back my weapons and let me go."

"I am sorry," said he who had first spoken, "but we cannot—do otherwise. Pan Dan Chee, to whose aid you came, has pleaded that we permit you to go your way; but such is not the law of Horz. I must take you to Ho Ran Kim, the great jeddak of Horz. There we will all plead for you, but our pleas will be unavailing. In the end you will be destroyed. The safety of Horz is more important than the life of any man."

"I am not threatening the safety of Horz," I replied. "Why should I have designs upon a dead city, which is of absolutely no importance to the Empire of Helium, in the service of whose Jeddak, Tardos Mors, I wear the harness of a war lord."

"I am sorry," exclaimed Pan Dan Chee, who had pushed his way to my side through the press of warriors. "I called to you when you mounted the thoat and pursued the green warrior and told you not to return, but evidently you did not hear me."

"For that I may die, but I shall die proudly. I sought to influence Lan Sohn Wen, who commands this utan, to permit you to escape, but in vain. I shall intercede for you with Ho Ran Kim, the jeddak; but I am afraid that there is no hope."

"Come!" said Lan Sohn Wen; "we have wasted enough time here. We will take the prisoner to the jeddak. By the way, what is your name?"

"I am John Carter, a Prince of Helium and Warlord of Barsoom," I replied.

"A proud title, that last," he said; "but of Helium I have never heard."

"If harm befalls me here," I said, "you'll hear of Helium if Helium ever learns."

I was escorted through still magnificent avenues flanked by beautiful buildings, still beautiful in decay. I think I have never seen such inspiring architecture, nor construction so enduring. I do not know how old these buildings are, but I have heard Martian savants argue that the original dominant race of white-skinned, yellow-haired people flourished fully a million years ago. It seems incredible that their works should still exist; but there are many things on Mars incredible to the narrow, earthbound men of our little speck of dust.

At last we halted before a tiny gate in a colossal, fortress-like edifice in which there was no other opening than this small gate for fifty feet above the ground. From a balcony fifty feet above the gate a sentry looked down upon us.

"Who comes?" he demanded, although he could doubtless see who came, and must have recognized Lan Sohn Wen.

"It is Lan Sohn Wen, Dwar, commanding the 1st Utan of The Jeddak's Guard, with a prisoner," replied Lan Sohn Wen.

The sentry appeared bewildered. "My orders are to admit no strangers," he said, "but to kill them immediately."

"Summon the commander of the guard," snapped Lan Sohn Wen, and presently an officer came onto the balcony with the sentry.

"What is this?" he demanded. "No prisoner has ever been brought into the citadel of Horz. You know the law."

"This is an emergency," said Lan Sohn Wen. "I must bring this man before Ho Ran Kim. Open the gate!"

"Only on orders from Ho Ran Kim himself," replied the commander of the guard.

"Then go get the orders," said Lan Sohn Wen. "Tell the Jeddak that I strongly urge him to receive me with this prisoner. He is not as other prisoners who have fallen into our hands in times past."

The officer re-entered the citadel and was gone for perhaps fifteen minutes when the little gate before which we stood swung outward, and we were motioned in by the commander of the guard himself.

"The Jeddak will receive you," he said to the dwar, Lan Sohn Wen.

The citadel was an enormous walled city within the ancient city of Horz. It was quite evidently impregnable to any but attack by air. Within were pleasant avenues, homes, gardens, shops. Happy, carefree people stopped to look at me in astonishment as I was conducted down a broad boulevard toward a handsome building. It was the palace of the Jeddak,

Ho Ran Kim. A sentry stood upon either side of the portal. There was no other guard; and these two were there more as a formality and as messengers than for protection, for within the walls of the citadel no man needed protection from another; as I was to learn.

We were detained in an ante room for a few minutes while we were being announced, and then we were ushered down a long corridor and into a medium size room where a man sat at a desk alone. This was Ho Ran Kim, Jeddak of Horz. His skin was not as tanned as that of his warriors, but his hair was just as yellow and his eyes as blue.

I felt those blue eyes appraising me as I approached his desk. They were kindly eyes, but with a glint of steel. From me they passed to Lan Sohn Wen, and to him Ho Ran Kim spoke.

"This is most unusual," he said in a quiet, well modulated voice. "You know, do you not, that Horzans have died for less than this?"

"I do, my Jeddak," replied the dwar; "but this is a most unusual emergency."

"Explain yourself," said the Jeddak.

"Let me explain," interrupted Pan Dan Chee, "for after all the responsibility is mine. I urged this action upon Lan Sohn Wen."

The Jeddak nodded. "Proceed," he said.

CHAPTER 4

I couldn't comprehend why they were making such an issue of bringing in a prisoner, nor why men had died for less, as Ho Ran Kim had reminded Lan Sohn Wen. In Helium, a warrior would have received at least commendation for bringing in a prisoner. For bringing in John Carter, Warlord of Mars, a common warrior might easily have been ennobled by an enemy prince.

"My Jeddak," commenced Pan Dan Chee, "while I was beset by six green warriors, this man, who says he is known as John Carter, Warlord of Barsoom, came of his own volition to fight at my side. From whence he came I do not know. I only know that at one moment I was fighting alone, a hopeless fight, and that at the next there fought at my side the greatest swordsman Horz has ever seen. He did not have to come; he could have left at any time, but he remained; and because he remained I am alive and the last of the six green warriors lies dead by the ancient waterfront. He would have escaped had not John Carter leaped to the back of a great thoat and pursued him.

"Then this man could have escaped, but he came back. He fought for a soldier of Horz. He trusted the men of Horz. Are we to repay him with death?"

Pan Dan Chee ceased speaking, and Ho Ran Kim turned his blue eyes upon me. "John Carter," he said, "what you have done commands the respect and sympathy of every man of Horz. It wins the thanks of their Jeddak, but—" He hesitated. "Perhaps if I tell you something of our history, you will understand why I must condemn you to death." He paused for a moment, as though in thought.

At the same time I was doing a little thinking on my own account. The casual manner in which Ho Ran Kim had sentenced me to death had rather taken my breath away. He seemed so friendly that it didn't seem possible that he was in earnest, but a glance at the glint in those blue eyes assured me that he was not being facetious.

"I am sure," I said, "that the history of Horz must be most interesting; but right now I am most interested in learning why I should have to die for befriending a fighting man of Horz."

"That I shall explain," he said.

"It is going to take a great deal of explaining, your majesty," I assured him.

He paid no attention to that, but continued. "The inhabitants of Horz are, as far as we know, the sole remaining remnant of the once dominant race of Barsoom, the Orovars. A million years ago our ships ranged the five great oceans, which we ruled. The city of Horz was not only the capital of a great empire, it was the seat of learning and culture of the most glorious race of human beings a world has ever known. Our

empire spread from pole to pole. There were other races on Barsoom, but they were few in numbers and negligible in importance. We looked upon them as inferior creatures. The Orovars owned Barsoom, which was divided among a score of powerful jeddaks. They were a happy, prosperous, contented people, the various nations seldom warring upon one another. Horz had enjoyed a thousand years of peace.

"They had reached the ultimate pinnacle of civilization and perfection when the first shadow of impending fate darkened their horizon—the seas began to recede, the atmosphere to grow more tenuous. What science had long predicted was coming to pass—a world was dying.

"For ages our cities followed the receding waters. Straits and bays, canals and lakes dried up. Prosperous seaports became deserted inland cities. Famine came. Hungry hordes made war upon the more fortunate. The growing hordes of wild green men overran what had once been fertile farm land, preying upon all.

"The atmosphere became so tenuous that it was difficult to breathe. Scientists were working upon an atmosphere plant, but before it was completed and in successful operation all but a few of the inhabitants of Barsoom had died. Only the hardiest survived—the green men, the red men, and a few Orovars; then life became merely a battle for the survival of the fittest.

"The green men hunted us as we had hunted beasts of prey. They gave us no rest, they showed us no mercy. We were few; they were many. Horz became our last city of refuge, and our only hope of survival lay in preventing the outside world from knowing that we existed; therefore, for ages we have slain every stranger who came to Horz and saw an Orovar, that no man might go away and betray our presence to our enemies.

"Now you will understand that no matter how deeply we must regret the necessity, it is obvious that we cannot let you live."

"I can understand," I said, "that you might feel it necessary to destroy an enemy; but I see no reason for destroying a friend. However, that is for you to decide."

"It is already decided, my friend," said the Jeddak. "You must die."

"Just a moment, O Jeddak!" exclaimed Pan Dan Chee. "Before you pass final judgment, consider this alternative. If he remains here in Horz, he cannot carry word to our enemies. We owe him a debt of gratitude. Permit him then to live, but always within the walls of the citadel."

There were nods of approval from the others present, and I saw by his quickly darting eyes that Ho Ran Kim had noticed them. He cleared his throat. "Perhaps that is something that should be given thought," he said. "I shall reserve judgment until the morrow. I do so largely because of my love for you, Pan Dan Chee; inasmuch as, because it was due to your importunities that this man is here, you must suffer whatever fate is ordained for him."

Pan Dan Chee was certainly surprised, nor could he hide the fact; but he took the blow like a man. "I shall consider it an honor," he said, "to share any fate that may be meted to John Carter, Warlord of Barsoom."

"Well said, Pan Dan Chee!" exclaimed the Jeddak. "My admiration for you increases as does the bitterness of my sorrow when I contemplate the almost inescapable conviction that on the morrow you die."

Pan Dan Chee bowed. "I thank your majesty for your deep concern," he said. "The remembrance of it will glorify last my hours."

The Jeddak turned his eyes upon Lan Sohn Wen and held them on him for what seemed a full minute. I would have laid ten to one that Ho Ran Kim was about to cause himself further untold grief by condemning Lan Sohn Wen to death. I think Lan Sohn Wen thought the same thing. He looked worried.

"Lan Sohn Wen," said Ho Ran Kim, "you will conduct these two to the pits and leave them there for the night. See that they have good food and every possible comfort, for they are my honored guests."

"But the pits, your majesty!" exclaimed Lan Sohn Wen. "They have never been used within the memory of man. I do not even know that I can find the entrance to them."

"That is so," said Ho Ran Kim, thoughtfully. "Even if you found them they might prove very dirty and uncomfortable. Perhaps it would be kinder to destroy John Carter and Pan Dan Chee at once."

"Wait, majesty," said Pan Dan Chee. "I know where lies the entrance to the pits. I have been in them. They can easily be made most comfortable. I would not think of altering your plans or causing you immediately the deep grief of sorrowing over the untimely passing of John Carter and myself. Come, Lan Sohn Wen! I will lead the way to the pits of Horz!"
