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FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.



WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH



"Kim Idim still reached back into the past."

Armies from the Past

By EDMOND HAMILTON

A weird-scientific tale of adventure, and the clash of armed men—an exciting story of time-travel and a world enslaved—a narrative of our planet two million years hence

ETHAN DREW stood in the lamplit living-room of his pent-house apartment staring up at the sword. There was a yearning longing in his brown, aquiline face and brooding gray eyes as he gazed at the weapon. Slowly he reached up and

took it down from above the stone fireplace.

It was a long, gleaming saber, its hilt and the back of its blade nicked and scarred. Lovingly he ran his finger along those scars that spoke with mute eloquence of desperate battle.

And the brooding loneliness in his dark face deepened.

"Swain, and Pedro Lopez, and all the rest," he whispered. "And Chiri—if I could only see them all again——"

Then sick hopelessness came over his features. His tall, broad-shouldered figure sagged.

"No," he muttered dully. "That was all a million years away."

A million years!

Holding the sword tightly, Ethan Drew no longer saw the luxurious, lamplit room about him. He was looking into memory now—into memory of the *future*.

He saw himself as he had been two years before, Private Ethan Drew of the French Foreign Legion, ambushed with a patrol of his comrades by Arab raiders in the deep Sahara, his companions all dead, and he, the last survivor, about to be killed, when suddenly the miracle had happened.

There had been a blaze of light and force about him, and he had known nothing more. And when he had awakened, it had been in a strange place and a strange time—a time a million years in the future.

He had been drawn across those ages of time by Kim Idim, old scientist of that far day, and Chiri, his slim, lovely daughter. And five other men had been drawn out of past ages by the old scientist, too—five fighting-men of different times, snatched across the abyss of the ages by the old scientist's potent time-ray.

Hank Martin, Rocky Mountain trapper of Kit Carson's day; John Crewe, Puritan soldier of the army of Oliver Cromwell; Pedro Lopez, Spanish conquistador of the troops of Cortez; Swain Njallson, huge Viking sea-raider of the Tenth Century; and Ptah, soldier of the armies of ancient Egypt;

these were the five who had been drawn out of their own times into the future, the same as Ethan Drew.

Ethan had found them staunch and loyal comrades, those five warriors from the past. Together, he and they had dared the perils of that far future time.

Together, they had helped the girl Chiri save her father, Kim Idim, from those who meant to use the old scientist's time-ray for evil purposes.

And at the last, when the very land was sinking under them all into the sea, old Kim Idim had saved the six comrades from death by sending them back, each to his own time. Ethan Drew had awakened once more in the Sahara, in the very year and day from which he had been drawn.

What had happened to Kim Idim and Chiri? That question had been a throbbing wonder in Ethan's mind ever since. Had the old scientist and his daughter escaped into some still further time in Earth's future, as they had planned? Or had they been engulfed by the catastrophe of the sinking continent, and met their deaths?

He did not know. He would never know, and that realization was a cold ache in his heart. He would never again fight shoulder to shoulder with those five loyal comrades from the past. He would never again see Chiri, that lovely girl of the far future whom he had learned to love.

Ethan turned slowly. Still holding the sword, he stepped wearily through the open French doors onto the terrace of his penthouse. He stood there against the parapet, gazing with hopeless longing into the night.

New York slept, a vast pattern of twinkling lights, stretched under dark, low-hanging banks of cloud. Westward, against the cloud-curtain, glided

the red and green lights of the late Miami plane.

"Chiri!" whispered Ethan, his lips hardly pronouncing the name.

Suddenly he stiffened. He sensed a change in the atmosphere, a strange, swiftly gathering hush and tension, a murmur as of unfamiliar forces.

He did not understand. But his gray eyes were suddenly brilliant with dawning excitement, with incredulous hope.

"Chiri?" he repeated tensely.

Then it happened. A blaze of light, a crash of thunder, all about him. And he was hurled into darkness.

THE clash of swords and hoarse shouts of fighting men broke on Ethan's ears as he came back to consciousness. Bewilderedly he opened his eyes. He lay in a small metal room whose high windows admitted a flood of dusky, deep red sunlight quite unlike the sunlight of his own time.

He was lying beside a squat machine of singularly grotesque appearance, crowned by a world-map globe. With a wild leap of gladness, Ethan recognized the mechanism. It was such a time-ray projector as once before had been used to draw him out of his own age into the future.

Then two heads bent frantically over him. It was an old man and a girl, both dressed in short white robes. He recognized the gray hair, thin, lined face and faded blue eyes of the man instantly. And his eyes swung to the girl's face, soft and lovely under a cloud of midnight hair, her red lips parted and dark eyes wide with anxiety.

"Chiri!" he cried, stumbling to his feet. "And Kim Idim! You've drawn me across time again, then? For two long years I've hoped and prayed that you would!"

The girl Chiri flew into his arms. "Ethan, we are in danger!" she gasped. "This is a time two million years in the future from your age. My father and I fled into this time after the destruction of Tzar—and now the Masters who rule Earth in this age are seeking with their slaves to capture us!"

"That is why I drew you and your comrades out of the past again!" Kim Idim cried. "Only from time could I summon help, when the Masters attacked us here!"

Ethan Drew turned, appalled. Through the open door of the little metal house he saw a strange scene.

Outside lay a weird and unearthly forest of huge green toadstools, towering in the dusky light of the westerling red sun. And out of this grotesque toadstool forest, white-skinned men in armor and helmets were surging with uplifted swords toward the little house.

Behind them, urging them on, were a few leaders of totally different appearance. They were tall, red-skinned men with spindly arms and legs, huge chests and high, hairless skulls from whose cadaverous faces looked hollow white eyes. These Masters did not look entirely human!

Fighting with the white slaves of the Masters, holding them back from the house, stood five men: a tall figure in buckskin and coon cap, wielding a clubbed rifle; a Spanish trooper in helmet and cuirass, swearing as he struck with his sword; a big Puritan in felt hat and homespun uniform swinging an enormous broadsword; a huge Viking whirling a gleaming ax; and a small, wiry Egyptian in bronze, stabbing viciously.

"It's Swain, and Hank Martin, and all the rest!" cried Ethan joyfully, starting toward the door.

"Yes, I drew them like you out of time when the Masters first attacked our dwelling!" Kim Idim exclaimed.

"You and Chiri wait here," Ethan ordered. And clutching the sword which he had unconsciously brought across time with him, he ran out and plunged into the fight.

Two of the white warriors were pressing the buckskin-clad frontiersman hard. Ethan fell upon the two from one side before they realized his presence.

Two terrific stabbing strokes—and the two warriors reeled back with their throats gaping and spurting red. Hank Martin, the tall trapper, spun around, and his leathery brown face lighted up as he recognized Ethan Drew.

"It's young Drew, pardners!" he called to the others. "Kim Idim's yanked him across time again, too!"

"Greetings, comrade!" yelled Pedro Lopez as he fought. The Spanish conquistador swore violently as his sword flashed. "Name of God, now we're all here we'll gut these cursed scum!"

"Cease your godless profanity, Lopez!" boomed the stern voice of John Crewe, the big Puritan, through the clashing conflict. "It is no time, when our lives are in peril, to take the Lord's name in vain."

"Osiris, will the dogs never quit attacking?" panted Ptah, the little Egyptian, stabbing furiously with his bronze shortsword.

But Swain Njallson, his blond hair flowing wildly from beneath his horned helmet, his icy blue eyes gleaming, uttered a deep, rumbling laugh as he smote with his great ax.

"Ho, comrade, this is living again!" he cried to Ethan.

All Ethan Drew's swordsmanship came swiftly back into his brain and muscles as he stabbed and hacked.

There were still a half-dozen of the white warriors facing them, attacking fiercely at the urging of the red Masters behind them.

Pedro Lopez slipped on bloody grass and went down. Two warriors leaped in like cats to strike at the fallen Spaniard. But Hank Martin's rifle-butt crashed down on the helmet of one, and Lopez, on his knees, stabbed up in a ripping stroke that disemboweled the other.

"Haw! Haw!" guffawed the buckskin trapper. "Can't ye stand up and fight like a man, Pedro?"

"Let me at them!" roared the Spaniard, rushing forward like a maddened bull. "*Sangre de Cristo*, I'll——"

"They're giving way!" boomed John Crewe's triumphant shout, his massive face flaming with battle-light.

The few remaining warriors were retreating, for the urging shouts of the red Masters had stopped—the unhuman red-skinned leaders had melted back into the forest and vanished.

But as Ethan and his comrades fiercely pressed these last opponents, a scream came from the house.

"Ethan!" shrilled Chiri's silver voice.

Ethan Drew spun around. He shouted hoarsely at what he saw. The four red Masters had penetrated the little metal house from the rear, were dragging Chiri and Kim Idim out of the back.

Yelling, Ethan ran back toward the house, his bloody sword raised. He burst through its two small chambers and out the door in the rear.

There were horses there—the Masters had mounted them and were dragging the stunned old man and the wild-cat-struggling girl up with them. And as Ethan rushed wildly at them, the leader of the four Masters yelled an order.

THE four steeds dashed away into the dusky gloom of the grotesque toadstool forest. Ethan ran wildly after them, but in a moment they were out of sight. The cries of Chiri receded into the distance.

His dark face contorted, his gray eyes wild, Ethan ran back around to the front of the little house. The last of the white warriors there had fallen, and Hank Martin and the others were coming running to meet him.

"Those red devils have got Chiri and Kim Idim!" Ethan cried hoarsely. "While we fought here, they slipped around and into the back of the house. They rode toward the west—we've got to follow!"

"Of course!" shouted Pedro Lopez fiercely, starting instantly forward. "*Por Dios*, they'll regret the day they dared molest the friends of a cavalier of Spain!"

Swain and John Crewe also started unhesitatingly forward with Ethan. But Ptah held them back, the little Egyptian's dark, crafty face urgent in expression.

"Wait!" he cried. "If they were mounted, we cannot soon overtake them. And by rushing blindly after them without knowing where we go, we shall but run ourselves into peril."

"Ptah's right," drawled Hank Martin keenly. "We need to get hosses somewhere. And we need to find out where they'll have likely taken Kim Idim and the gal."

Ethan saw the force of their reasoning, yet every fiber in him quivered with the urge to rush at once through the toadstool forest after the red abductors.

For two long years Ethan had dreamed of seeing Chiri once more. And now, when that dream had come true, when he had even held her for a

moment in his arms, she had been snatched from him to an unguessable fate.

"I think one of them white warriors ain't quite dead yet," Hank Martin was saying. "We might larn somethin' from him."

They hurried back to the dozen sprawled bodies on the trampled grass. The lanky trapper turned one of them over. It was a warrior whose breast bled from two gaping wounds, but whose eyes were still open.

The dying man glared up at them in hate, as they bent over him. Ethan spoke to him, using the language of Tzar which he had learned in the age a million years before this, and which he hoped was still spoken in this further time.

"Where did you and your Masters come from?" he asked tensely.

"From the city Luun—dog!" gasped the dying man, in a tongue much the same as that which Ethan had used.

"Where is Luun? And who rules there, you whites or the red Masters?" Ethan exclaimed.

"The Masters rule, of course," muttered the Luunian warrior. "Ever since they came to Earth a hundred thousand years ago, the Masters have been the rightful rulers of this world and we humans serve them willingly in our cities, of which Luun is the greatest.

"The city Luun," the gasping voice continued, "lies a half-day's march from here across the great plain that stretches west of this forest. It was from Luun that we came today, to capture the old man and girl who the Masters had heard were living alone in this forest."

The Luunian raised himself by a convulsive effort, and his dimming eyes glared up at them in undying hate.

"I have told you the way to Luun,

because I know that if you go there the Masters will slay you all, as befits men who dare rebel against their sacred rule."

Before Ethan could speak again, the Luunian fell back, dead. The six comrades got to their feet.

"It shore amazes me," drawled Hank Martin, "that these white men would let them red devils rule them. You heard him—even when he was passin' in his checks, he claimed it was right and fittin' for the Masters to rule."

"The Masters must be wizards," said John Crewe gloomily. "Aye, demons who by compact with Satan have somehow enslaved the races of man."

"Monsters, devils or what-not, I'm going to Luun after them!" Ethan exclaimed passionately. "Chiri and her father are not going to be their slaves. You others can come or not, as you see fit."

"If any of you is not willing to come," roared Pedro Lopez, his mustachios twitching and his florid face menacing, "he'll measure swords with me, here and now."

"Aw, cool off, Pedro," drawled the trapper calmly. "We're all with Drew, and he knows it."

"Aye," rumbled Swain, a glitter in his eye. "There should be fighting in plenty in such a city."

"Hear how the heathen lusts for blood," John Crewe said with stern disapproval, glowering at Swain.

"He's wrong—we're not going to try to fight our way into Luun," Ethan said swiftly. "That would be hopeless. We'll have to enter by stealth, under cover of darkness, and seek out Chiri and her father and spirit them away."

"Then why not don the armor of these dead men?" cried Ptah, pointing

to the slain Luunians. "In such guise, we could far more easily penetrate Luun undetected."

Although Ethan was chafing at the delay, he saw the force of the suggestion.

"We'll do it," he said. "Quick, men!"

John Crewe frowned disapprovingly at the armor that Ptah was already stripping from the slain men.

"Is a Christian man to wear such pagan attire as that?" he demanded.

"What matters our dress, so long as we carry our good swords?" Pedro Lopez retorted. "When we cavaliers of Spain followed Don Hernando up into Mexico, we were glad at times to wear even the cotton armor of the Aztecs."

IN A FEW minutes, all stood attired in the metal armor of the dead Luunians, though Swain's great limbs were badly cramped by it, and Hank Martin looked uncomfortable.

"Now for horses!" Ethan exclaimed. "These Luunians must have left their mounts somewhere near by. Scatter and search for them."

In fact, a short search discovered a dozen horses tethered near by in the dusky shade of the giant toadstool forest. The steeds bore rude, high leather saddles. And they reared and snorted as the six comrades mounted.

"Now for Luun!" Ethan cried. "Come on!"

He led the way as the little troop galloped westward through the looming, grotesque toadstools.

The sun was setting ahead, casting a broken red blaze through the forest into their faces. The hooves of the running horses made no sound on the soft, moss-like turf.

The marvel of it for a moment took Ethan's mind. He and five comrades

out of ages long before his own, riding through this unearthly world of two million years in the future! But his sense of wonder faded as the desperate urgency of their mission repossessed his thoughts.

"It's plain enough to a certain extent what happened," he called as he rode. "Kim Idim and Chiri came into this time by means of his projector, and built that little house in the forest and lived there alone. And then the Masters heard of their existence, and came to capture them."

"But it still ain't plain to me," retorted Hank Martin, "where them Masters themselves came from."

"From another world, that dying warrior said," Ethan reminded him. And he nodded, momentarily thoughtful, "They looked like creatures of another planet, all right. Yet how did a few of them conquer and enslave all humans on Earth?"

They emerged suddenly, after only a few minutes ride through the toadstool forest, onto a great, empty grass plain. Its rolling swales stretched to the distant horizon, upon which was poised the enormous, dull-red orb of the setting sun.

Reining their horses and gazing ahead, they made out presently against the glowing red shield of the sun-disk, a far-distant cluster of black domes and minarets.

"That's Luun!" exclaimed Ethan eagerly.

Hank Martin's keen eyes squinted. "It's plenty far away. It'll be near midnight, time we get there."

As they spurred forward, the huge red sun-shield sank rapidly from sight, and the distant towers of Luun quickly vanished in gathering shadows.

Stars pricked out in the darkening sky, and looked down like curious

white eyes at the little company that rode steadily on across the night-shrouded plain. Into the sky slowly wheeled strange constellations that Ethan Drew could not recognize, new star-patterns of this future time.

As he rode, he looked up at the planets that shone with calm brightness amid the twinkling stars. From which of those planets had come those red-skinned, hollow-eyed Masters who now were rulers of old Earth?

To Ethan's frantically anxious mind, the ride across the plain beneath those wheeling stars seemed endless. But at last the black domes and towers of Luun loomed large against the light-gemmed heavens, a mile ahead. They had been riding for some time through cultivated fields and pastures.

"Slow down," Ethan called tensely to the others. "From now on, we've got to act like an ordinary group of Luunian soldiers, riding back into the city after duty."

"Me, I don't cotton to cities," muttered Hank Martin, staring distrustfully at the black mass of structures. "An' how can we find Kim Idim an' the gal in that big place?"

"Why, we'll ask one of these people," declared Pedro Lopez. "And if he won't tell us, we'll cut his throat and ask another."

"That is splendid strategy, Pedro," commented Ptah ironically. "A man who can think up such ruses as that ought to be a general of armies."

"Why, it is nothing——" Lopez began grandiloquently, and then as he heard Ptah chuckling in the dark, he exclaimed furiously, "Do you dare make mock of me? I'll show you that Pedro Lopez, the veteran of a hundred pitched battles and countless minor skirmishes, is not to be——"

"Shut up, Pedro," rasped Ethan.

"Do you want to let the whole city know we're coming?"

He continued tautly to the others, "There must be a central prison of some kind in this city, and that would be where the Masters would put Kim Idim and Chiri. We must find it."

"An' when we find this *calabozo*, how're we goin' to git in it an' git them two out?" Hank Martin demanded.

"I have an idea as to that," Ethan told him. "It may or may not work, but we'll try it."

"Aye," boomed John Crewe unexpectedly. "Put your trust in God—and strike hard. That was ever the motto of my leader."

"Keep that rifle out of sight, Hank," warned Ethan as they started forward. "It would give you away. And you keep your ax hidden too, Swain."

Swain Njallson grunted. "I do not like this creeping about by stealth," the Viking grumbled. "It is not my way to slink into an enemy's city in secret."

ETHAN'S heart thudded as they rode into the city itself. The hooves of their horses clattered on the worn stone paving of winding streets that were dark except for an occasional torch flaring in a stone socket. Only a few people were in the ill-lit streets, all of them white slaves and soldiers, and these only glanced at the little passing troop.

The barbaric appearance of the city Luun, the complete lack of artificial light or any other evidences of industrial civilization, puzzled Ethan. If the red Masters had really once come from another world, that implied scientific knowledge which accorded ill with their present archaic form of life. Even in the fight back in the forest, he had noticed that they possessed no other weapons than swords and spears.

As they rode on in a compact band

through the dark and winding ways of Luun, a vast black bulk took form ahead. It was a monstrous fortress in the form of a terraced cube, a brutal pile that rose like a mountain of masonry. By the torchlight that spilled from its myriad windows, they saw that its massive entrances were guarded by solid ranks of Luunian warriors.

"That fortress may be where they have Chiri and Kim Idim!" Ethan exclaimed as he and his comrades reined up and stared ahead through the darkness.

"If so, we can't hope to save them," muttered Ptah. "It would take a great army to force that place."

"I don't think Kim Idim an' the gal are in there," said Hank Martin keenly. He pointed to a smaller structure beyond the great fortress, a low, oblong black building. "Thet looks more like the *calabozo* to me—see the barred winders?"

Ethan perceived that the trapper was right. The windows of the oblong building were heavily barred.

"Yes, that must be the prison of Luun!" he exclaimed with renewed hope.

He turned in the saddle. "I'm going there, and I want you with me, Ptah. The rest of you will wait here."

"How in hell's name do you expect to accomplish anything with only two swords?" Pedro Lopez exclaimed angrily. "We'll all go."

"No!" Ethan ordered. "If we get Kim Idim and Chiri out at all, it will be by trickery. And more than one man accompanying me would arouse suspicion and ruin my plan."

Though the conquistador muttered complainingly, he remained with the others in the dark street while Ethan and Ptah rode on toward the prison, across the plaza in front of the fortress.

As they circled to avoid passing too close to the mountainous cubical fortress, Ethan glimpsed groups of the red Masters inside its myriad torchlit chambers.

"All the Masters of Luun must dwell in that fortress," muttered Ptah. "We have seen none of them elsewhere in the city, and no other place here is so heavily guarded."

Ethan nodded. He told the little Egyptian tautly, "Let me do the talking when we enter the prison."

IN A FEW minutes they rode up to the entrance of the low, oblong prison. It was a great archway closed by barred metal gates. Inside the bars, in a torchlit anteroom, four of the white Luunian guards were stationed.

"A message from the Masters!" Ethan called peremptorily in their tongue. "Summon your officer."

He hoped fervently that they would not notice the different accent and stumbling way in which he used their language. If that gave him away, all was lost.

But the warriors inside seemed to notice nothing. One ran to call their officer, while the others opened the barred gates for Ethan and Ptah to enter. The American and Egyptian did so, dismounting inside the gates as they swung shut again.

The officer of the Luunian guards appeared, rubbing his eyes sleepily and adjusting his metal helmet.

"What word from the Masters?" he asked respectfully.

"Our sacred rulers have sent me to fetch to them the old man and the girl captured today in the forest," Ethan stated sharply. "The Masters would question them."

"But the girl is not here—only the old man is here!" protested the Luun-

ian captain. "Surely the Masters know that?"

Ethan's heart sank like lead. The Luunian was staring at him perplexedly, and he rallied himself.

"Of course they know that!" he snapped. "I did not say I had come for the old man *and* girl—I said I was here to fetch the old man who was captured *with* the girl."

"Your pardon—I understood you wrongly," the Luunian replied. "I will take you to him."

Ethan and Ptah followed him along torchlit corridors of stone, gloomy, chill passageways that breathed the mustiness of ages. Then the Luunian captain stopped and unlocked a door with a clumsy metal key.

"Your man is inside," he told Ethan.

It seemed to Ethan that the officer was staring at him too sharply, with too much sudden interest.

"Very well, you may return to your couch," Ethan said with assumed friendliness. "We will take the prisoner to the Masters."

The officer left them, returning along the stone corridors. And at once Ethan and Ptah sprang into the dark stone cell. Thin hands clutched Ethan's arm from the darkness.

"I recognized your voice!" gasped Kim Idim. "You are mad to take this chance!"

"Where's Chiri?" Ethan exclaimed tensely. "If she's not in this building, where are they keeping her?"

"She is in the dungeons of the fortress of the Masters," Kim Idim answered, his voice agonized. "Yes, because she is young and beautiful, the Masters have sentenced her to take part in the monthly Feast of Life, tomorrow noon."

"The Feast of Life—what is that?" demanded Ptah.

"I do not know exactly, but it is some horrible rite which the Masters practise each month on certain selected human victims, who are never seen alive again," Kim Idim answered, his tone heavy with dread.

"Osiris save the maiden—for we cannot!" Ptah exclaimed in horror. "It would require thousands of men to force an entrance into that guarded fortress. Nor could we enter there by trickery, as we have done here."

"But we've got to get Chiri out of there somehow!" Ethan exclaimed hoarsely. He asked desperately, "Kim Idim, couldn't we stir up these Luunians to revolt against the Masters, and storm the fortress?"

"No, no!" Kim Idim declared. "The Luunians would never revolt against their rulers, for all the people of this city are drugged into hypnotized submission to the Masters."

"Drugged?" cried the Egyptian.

"Yes, I have discovered it since I have been prisoned here," the old scientist told them rapidly. "When the Masters came to earth from another world long ago, they conquered and enslaved humanity by secretly poisoning all water supplies with an hypnotic drug, which subtly changed their brains so that they fell into a state of perpetual awe of and submission to the Masters."

"That was millenniums ago. Since then the Masters, undisputed rulers of the earth, have become decadent and lost almost all their former scientific powers, but they still continue to drug the people of their cities, and those people will never rebel until they cease to be so drugged. Indeed, these Luunians would fight to the death to protect the Masters."

"Then I was right—there is no hope for the girl," Ptah exclaimed. "For if

there are no men left on Earth except the drugged slaves of the Masters, where shall we get the army that would be needed to storm that fortress?"

"I can get that army—yes, and a mighty one!" Kim Idim declared excitedly. "I can do it, if I can get back to my house in the forest where is the time-ray projector."

Ethan, even in his agonized apprehension for Chiri, was stupefied by the implication.

"Good God, Kim Idim, you don't mean you'd get an army from——"

"From the past, yes!" Kim Idim exclaimed. "With the projector, I can draw thousands of men at a time out of dead ages, as easily as I drew you six. Out of the past I can draw whole great armies, and we can lead them back here to Luun, attack the city and the fortress, rescue Chiri and destroy the Masters' rule for ever."

For a space of moments, Ethan and Ptah stared aghast at the old scientist, petrified by the incredible audacity of the plan he had proposed.

To draw great armies of fighting-men out of the past! To raise the hosts of the past against the drugged, enslaved people of the future!

"By the claws of Bast, it is a great plan!" cried Ptah excitedly. "And it is the only one by which we can hope to save the maiden."

"It might be done," muttered Ethan, his thoughts racing. "But it will take hours to get Kim Idim back to his projector, to draw those armies from the past and get them moving toward this city. And at noon tomorrow, you said, Chiri is to meet some hideous fate."

Ethan's jaw clamped in sudden decision. "Ptah, you and the other boys will ride back with Kim Idim to the projector, and help him put his plan into effect."

"And you?" cried the Egyptian worriedly.

"I'm staying here in Luun," Ethan clipped. "I won't leave Chiri here—for if this wild plan of Kim Idim's should take too long, we'd be too late to save her from the Feast of Life. I'll stay and try to get her out of the fortress, and if I fail, you may still be in time. At least, you can avenge us."

"No, Ethan, your resolve is mad!" cried Kim Idim. "I tell you, that fortress is so guarded by companies of Luunian warriors that not even a rat could enter it unchallenged. You will be merely throwing your life away."

"Nevertheless, I'm going to try it," Ethan returned grimly. "Come on, Ptah—we've got to get out of here so you can get out of the city with Kim Idim."

THEY hastened out of the cell, and along the dusky stone corridors. The old scientist walked between the other two like a prisoner escorted by guards.

Ethan tensed as they neared the anteroom within the entrance. Suddenly the little Egyptian halted.

"Listen!" he hissed.

They heard the rapid, obsequious voice of the Luunian captain of guards who had led them through the prison.

"I suspected at once that the man was an impostor and not a messenger from you, Highness," the Luunian was saying. "He did not know that the girl is not here, and he spoke our tongue awry and did not even look like a man of Luun."

"We delayed too long!" Ptah hissed.

The Egyptian's sword flashed out, and at the same moment Ethan Drew's blade rasped from its sheath.

"Keep behind us, Kim Idim," ordered Ethan. "Come on, Ptah."

They pushed on and emerged abruptly into the big stone anteroom just inside the barred prison gates.

The Luunian captain and the four gate-guards were there. And beside the officer was a red-skinned, hairless caricature of humanity—one of the spindle-limbed Masters.

"There are the impostors!" cried the Luunian officer loudly as the three emerged.

The Master's hollow eyes flashed instantly with alarm.

"It is two of the strangers who slew our men in the forest today!" the red creature cried in a shrill, high voice. "Kill them!"

But already Ethan and Ptah were rushing forward. The Luunian captain and one of his men died as they were tugging out their swords, smitten by blades like lightning-bolts.

"Guards!" the Master screamed in his unhumanly shrill tones, scrambling fearfully to one side.

"Open that gate, Ptah!" yelled Ethan. "I'll hold these off!"

As he shouted, Ethan's sword swung in a terrific slicing sweep toward the unhuman red creature who was shouting the alarm. The head of the Master leaped from his shoulders, and black blood spurted from his decapitated trunk as it crumpled.

The three remaining Luunian guards were momentarily transfixed with horror as they beheld the death of one of the rulers their drugged minds revered.

"He has slain one of the sacred ones!" shrieked one of the Luunians. "Kill him!"

The three rushed toward Ethan with swords out, wild rage on their contorted faces.

Ptah was fumbling frantically with the catches of the barred gates. And a distant rush of feet was audible as more

guards came running from elsewhere in the prison building.

Kim Idim thrust a foot and tripped one of the three charging Luunians. As his companions stumbled over him, Ethan stabbed fiercely at them, then slashed downward. It was a brief explosion of steel and motion, at the end of which the man who had tripped and one of the others lay dead, while the third reeled back with his shoulder torn.

"Guards! This way!" he screamed.

"The gates are open!" yelled Ptah.

Ethan grabbed Kim Idim's arm and ran with the old scientist and the Egyptian out of the torchlit prison into the darkness. They heard a roar of rage behind them, as a dozen Luunian warriors poured after them. Ethan raised his voice in a wild shout.

"Swain! Hank! This way!"

Through the dark streets answered Hank Martin's voice in a ringing yell. There was a rush of clattering hoofs, and out of the darkness rode the trapper and Lopez, Swain and Crewe.

"Where's the gal?" yelled Hank Martin.

"We can't reach her—we can only save her if we get Kim Idim back to his machine!" cried Ptah.

"Look out!" bellowed Lopez. "Here they come!"

The Luunian guards, mad with rage, were flinging themselves forward with insane ferocity.

"Kill the blasphemers who slew a Master!" their leader was shrieking.

Ethan whirled, as the Luunians charged. A blade tore his forearm open and another grazed his thigh as he struck in desperate defense.

Ptah was fighting beside him, and now the four mounted men spurred their plunging steeds amid the Luunians. Broadsword and saber, battle-ax

and clubbed rifle, smashed down on the raging warriors. But the crazy, scrambling fight in the dark street went on. Ethan heard a rising uproar all through the surrounding streets. A great bell somewhere in the huge fortress had begun to clang in alarm.

John Crewe, his face flaming crimson, dropped from his horse beside the staggering Kim Idim. He thrust the old man up into his saddle and yelled hoarsely to Ethan.

"Ride for it! I'll hold back these godless ones!"

"No, we won't leave you here!" Ethan cried.

But as he shouted, a sword rang off Crewe's helmet, and the big Puritan sank to the ground, stunned.

ETHAN and Ptah had gained the backs of their horses. The American tried to spur forward to where John Crewe lay, but the maddened Luunians prevented him.

"If we don't git movin', we'll all leave our scalps here!" yelled Hank Martin urgently.

"You can't hope to save either Chiri or Crewe now!" Ptah shouted to Ethan. "Ride, or our only chance to rescue them later will be lost!"

Ethan realized that the Egyptian spoke truth. Luunian warriors were coming on the run from all directions, and the whole city seemed waking to the alarm.

"Out of Luun, then!" he cried.

They dug spurs into their horses and dashed through the dark streets, alive with emerging warriors.

Leaning over their horses' necks, Ethan and his comrades slashed fiercely at the startled Luunians who sought to halt them. The hooves of their mounts waked a thunder of echoes in the dark, narrow stone streets.

Behind them, the alarm bell in the fortress of the Masters was still clanging wildly, and torches were bobbing like swirling fireflies. But in a few moments they were out of the great city, galloping through the darkness over the surrounding farmlands and then over the grassy plain.

"Eastward!" Kim Idim shouted thinly over the rush of wind. "We go too much to the north!"

Ethan reined his pounding steed to the right, and the others followed. Glancing back, he saw the vast black mass of Luun alive with torches, rapidly receding behind them.

Bitter rage and disappointment throbbed in his heart, and fear—fear for Chiri and for his Puritan comrade.

"It's the first time ever I left a fellow soldier in the lurch!" Pedro Lopez was raging as he rode. "Name of God, why did we run away and leave him there to be killed?"

"Your comrade was only stunned—and he will not be killed, at least until tomorrow noon," Kim Idim called. "He will undoubtedly be sentenced to the Feast of Life, like my Chiri. And we shall return to Luun, before the Feast takes place, if my plan succeeds."

"What is this Feast?" demanded the enraged Spaniard. "And what is this plan?"

Ethan shouted a brief plan to them, and he heard their exclamations of bewilderment.

"Holy smoke, whole armies from the past?" gasped Hank Martin. "Why, the scheme is plumb loco!"

"I can do it!" Kim Idim cried. "By simply expanding the field of the time-ray, I can draw an army through time as easily as one man."

"The plan is good!" cried Pedro Lopez exultantly. "*Dios*, we'll show these soft ones of the future how men

of the past could fight! We'll tear their cursed city wide open."

"Aye," rumbled Swain harshly. "By Thor, it will be something to fight shoulder to shoulder with the great warriors of past ages."

"But I can't figger," called Hank Martin, to the old scientist, "why you don't jest use that machine of yours to yank Chiri and Crewe themselves out of the city."

"That is impossible," Kim Idim cried to him. "The time-ray can only operate spatially when it is being simultaneously projected along the time-dimension."

As they rode, Ethan had been clumsily binding an improvised bandage around his wounded forearm. The lights of Luun had disappeared behind them some time before, but Ptah turned in his saddle and looked anxiously back across the starlit plain.

"They'll follow us," the little Egyptian called tautly. "And they'll guess we're heading for the forest."

"Ha, let them follow!" cried Pedro Lopez scornfully. "We'll make mince-meat of those who are unlucky enough to overtake us."

"We must hurry," urged Ethan, agonized with apprehension. "Unless we re-enter Luun with our forces by noon, we'll be too late."

Rushing hoofs drummed the dark plain as mile after mile dropped behind them. In the vague, thin starlight, they could not discern how close pursuit might be behind them.

HOURS that seemed eternities to Ethan had passed by the time they glimpsed ahead of them the dark wall of the grotesque toadstool forest. Without slackening speed, they rode into the deep shadow of the towering growths.

Quickly they came to the little clearing in the forest where Kim Idim's metal house glinted vaguely. They pitched hastily from the saddles of the panting horses.

"It is nearly morning!" Kim Idim declared. "And we must carry the projector out onto the plain—there is not room in this forest for the hosts I shall draw from the past."

"First I'm gittin' back into decent clothes," muttered Hank Martin. "I feel naked in this durned armor."

He and Lopez and the Viking scrambled back into their proper clothing, and then followed Ethan and Ptah and the old scientist into the little house. With Kim Idim directing, the five comrades bent and lifted the massive time-ray projector.

The mechanism was appallingly heavy. Without the great strength of Swain, they could not have carried it. Straining every muscle, they bore the thing out of the house and through the forest. Kim Idim followed with the horses.

Dawn was paling the heavens as they emerged onto the great plain. At the old scientist's direction, they carried the projector to the summit of a small bare hillock. There they set it down.

"Look!" cried Ptah suddenly, pointing westward across the plain. "The Luunians come!"

Two miles away, a dark mass was approaching.

"A big bunch of mounted warriors," muttered Hank Martin. "We can't hold off a crowd like that, out here in the open."

"Hurry, Kim Idim!" Ethan exclaimed tautly. "It's now or never for your scheme."

Kim Idim was already working with frantic speed, twisting the amazingly intricate controls of his great creation,

setting the dials that directed the time-ray along the mysterious time-dimension and in space. The old scientist peered tensely, as he worked, into the glass screen in the projector's face.

A picture, a *living* picture, suddenly appeared in the screen, a vista of a green coast and a blue sea, with a small city of marble and brick buildings on the shore; dignified men in togas, slaves in leather tunics, a few soldiers in crested helmet and armor, walked in its cobbled streets. In the screen, they saw this living scene as though from high above.

"That's a city of the Roman empire!" Ethan cried. "But there are only a few fighting-men there."

"I shall have to find their warriors," Kim Idim panted. He slowly turned a knob.

The stylus touching the world-globe atop the projector moved imperceptibly in answer. The scene in the glass screen shifted swiftly, over the countryside of that imperial Roman province of more than two million years before.

"The Luunians are near!" warned Lopez, and Ethan heard the rasp of the Spaniard's sword as he drew.

"Looks like we're due for a scrap," Hank Martin drawled in agreement, calmly reloading his long rifle.

Ethan saw that the Luunians numbered about two hundred mounted men, led by a half-dozen of the red Masters. They were now less than a mile away, riding steadily forward.

"I have it!" Kim Idim cried excitedly.

Ethan spun back to the projector. In the screen, he looked down on a stone road, and a marching body of some four thousand armored men, winding like a great metal snake along that Roman highway of long ago.

"A Roman legion on the march!"

Ethan cried. "Can you draw them all through, Kim Idim?"

"I think so," panted the old man, his forehead damp, his hands trembling as he touched the knobs.

A fierce, wolfish yell from scores of throats crashed on Ethan's ears. The advancing body of Luunians had seen their quarry on the hillock. They came on in a gallop.

"*Dios*, they'll ride right up over us!" yelled Pedro Lopez. "They'll——"

"Look!" screamed Ptah. "In the name of Osiris, *look!*"

Kim Idim had, a moment before, shut a switch. And instantly, the incredible had taken place.

A Roman legion of four thousand men had suddenly materialized out there on the empty plain.

For a moment, Ethan and his comrades were as stupefied as the Luunians who had stopped in their charge and were staring petrifiedly at the suddenly-materialized legion.

"You've done it, Kim Idim!" Ethan shouted hoarsely.

"Others—other armies of the dead ages," Kim Idim was panting as he reset his controls. "I'll get them——"

The Roman soldiers out on the plain for a long minute stared about them, utterly bewildered by their sudden swift transition from their own world into this, to them, alien one. A babel of cries arose from the legionnaires.

But the confusion of the Romans lasted only briefly. Their officers had glimpsed the mounted Luunians near by. And Ethan and his companions heard the officers bark rapid orders in staccato Latin.

THE Romans responded quickly. The long column in which they had been formed changed shape smoothly and swiftly, its maniples shifting like cogs

of a machine, the knights or mounted men moving out in a screen toward the Luunians, the solid mass of footmen forming up into three divisions facing their potential enemy.

"*Sangre de Cristo*, that's discipline!" shouted Pedro Lopez.

"Keep at it, Kim Idim!" cried Hank Martin, hopping in excitement. "We'll need plenty more men."

The switch of the projector clicked shut again. A second body of men appeared like magic on the plain, some distance beyond the Roman legion.

These were a thousand unmounted men, black-bearded soldiers in peaked metal caps and kirtle-like skirts, bearing tall shields and long, heavy spears. Stunned for a moment, these newcomers began milling about in wild confusion.

"Assyrian spearmen!" yelled Ptah. "I've fought with those devils, more than once."

"Haw! Haw! Look at them Luunians pullin' out!" exulted the trapper.

The two hundred Luunian horsemen, petrified by the appearance of the Roman legion, had come to life with cries of terror as the Assyrian spearmen materialized. They had wheeled, were riding in a wild gallop back toward their city.

Kim Idim, trembling as though appalled by the supernatural audacity of what he was doing, was working like a madman with the projector controls. Every few minutes he slammed the switch shut—and each time, Ethan and his comrades saw a new host materialize suddenly on the plain.

A band of Spartan warriors, stocky men in heavy armor who looked stupidly but fearlessly about them, had appeared after the Assyrians. And close after them came into being a force of a few hundred huge blond men in

horned helmets, Ninth Century Northmen at sight of whom Swain Njallson shouted loudly!

A troop of three hundred mail-clad, mounted Crusaders; a host of white-robed Arab horsemen out of the armies of Abu Bekr; and a full eight hundred of Genghis Khan's Mongol riders, wiry, swarthy little men on shaggy ponies—these three forces appeared swiftly after one another.

Yet still Kim Idim reached back into the past with the potent band of the time-ray, first for a regiment of Napoleon's infantry, tall men in cocked hats and blue and white uniforms, bayonets glinting in the sun; and then for a band of several hundred mounted Indian braves, copper-skinned savages in brilliant feathers and war paint.

"That's a Sioux war party!" cried Hank Martin excitedly as this last force materialized on the plain.

"Can you talk their language, Hank?" Ethan asked tensely, and the trapper nodded.

"Sure can, seein' as how I was a prisoner in one of their villages a hull winter."

"But look!" cried Ptah in consternation. "The armies attack each other!"

Ethan cried out in dismay. Out on the plain, the hosts from the past were wheeling to give battle. Romans, Assyrians and Spartans, Northmen, Crusaders and Arabs, Mongols and French and Sioux—all of them, at first stunned by their sudden transition to this new scene, now seemed to hold the others responsible for the phenomenon.

The *buccinas*, or great curved trumpets of the Romans, were bellowing hoarsely and the legion was moving like a ponderous, irresistible machine toward the Assyrians, who with wolf-like battle cries were marching to meet the Romans. The Spartans stood their

ground like a rock, ready for any attacker, but Crusaders and Arabs, seeing in each other well-known foes, were riding full tilt toward each other. The French regiment still stood bewildered, but the Vikings were on the march toward it, their axes gleaming wickedly. And, far out on the plain, Mongols and red Sioux were circling.

"We've got to stop them from fighting each other!" Ethan cried desperately. "We'll never separate them once they get tangled in battle."

"Hank, fire your rifle into the air," he ordered urgently.

The trapper obeyed instantly. And the ringing report of the rifle brought the eyes of all the thousands out on the plain toward the hillock.

Ethan cupped his hands and shouted to them with all the force of his lungs, first in French and Arabic, then in stumbling, half-forgotten Latin and Greek.

"Do not attack each other!" he yelled to the dazed hosts. "It is we who have brought you into this world. Send your leaders here to us, and we will explain!"

Hank Martin and Swain repeated his cry, the first in the harsh Sioux tongue and the second in his native Northland language. And Ptah added his version for the Assyrians.

"They understood!" Pedro Lopez cried. "See, the leaders come."

"Thank heaven!" Ethan muttered. "Even the Mongols must have understood my Arabic—they're all coming."

From every one of the armies out on the plain, a single man was approaching the hillock. An unspoken truce had been declared between the hosts.

SHEEPSKIN-CLAD Mongol chieftain, Roman commander, French colonel and mailed Crusader leader—these

rode up onto the hillock first. An Arab emir and a Sioux war-chief in full regalia followed. And last, on foot, tramped a stalwart Northman, a heavy-faced Spartan officer, and a cruel-eyed, black-bearded Assyrian captain.

"What manner of men are you and how dare you work your magic upon a Roman legion?" demanded the Roman commander in hard, clipped Latin.

"What world is this?" the French colonel was exclaiming bewilderedly. "*Dieu*, but a few minutes ago my regiment was marching through Saxony, and now——"

And a babble of voices in different tongues broke loose upon Ethan. Only the Mongols and Spartans and Sioux waited, grimly silent.

"You have been drawn far into the ages to be," Ethan answered, raising his voice and repeating each sentence in the different tongues he had used. "Not magic, but the skill of yon old man has snatched you from your own times. And we have brought you into this far age, to fight!

"Yes, we desire you to follow us to the attack of a mighty city which lies but a few hours' march from here. It is a city in which demonic tyrants oppress men of Earth. Only by destroying those tyrants can bewitched people who serve them and fight for them be freed from bondage."

"And if we refuse?" demanded the mailed Crusader harshly.

"Then we shall refuse to send you back to your own ages!" Ethan told them all. "But if you follow us to this battle and conquer, after it is over we will return you once more to your own times and lands."

There followed a taut silence, after Ptah and Swain and the trapper had repeated Ethan's proposal in the tongues spoken by the others.

"I agree, for my legion," the Roman commander said finally, breaking the silence. "For it seems that only by so doing can we win back to our own land."

"Though it goes ill for us to fight side by side with infidels," declared the Arab emir finally, "we shall do so in this case."

The Mongol captain had a contemptuous sneer on his swart, flat face as he told Ethan in stumbling Arabic: "We men of the great Khan are more accustomed to killing Moslems than to fighting as their allies. But we agree also."

The others, one by one, also agreed, some slowly, others, like the Northmen, fired by prospect of battle.

Ethan turned finally to Hank Martin, who had been exchanging harsh syllables with the Sioux war-chief.

"What about those Indians?" he asked.

The trapper grinned. "This chief says it's plain that we've got great medicine, an' he an' his braves will follow us anywhere, so long as thar's scalps to be taken."

"Go back and get your men ready to march at once," Ethan told the assembled captains. And he briefly indicated the plan of formation he desired.

As the leaders hurried back to their respective forces, Kim Idim clutched Ethan's arm.

"Ethan, the sun is already high! We must hasten, if we are to reach Luun before noon—before the mysterious Feast of Life."

Ethan's heart sank as he perceived how far the sun had climbed into the heavens.

"We've lost too much time," he said, his voice raw with anxiety. "Come on!"

He and the four comrades and the old scientist mounted quickly. And they

galloped together down from the hillock and between the armies that were forming up to march.

The solid mass of the Roman legion lay in the center of the great host, with the Assyrian spearmen and Napoleonic infantry on its right, and the Spartans and Northmen on its left. The cavalry formed two wings extending from either flank—the Arabs and Mongols forming one wing, and the Sioux and Crusaders the other.

Ethan raised his arm and waved it in signal.

"Forward!" he yelled, spurring ahead.

His cry was echoed by bellowing of Roman *buccinas*, braying of Mongol horns, fierce Sioux war-cries and silver blare of French bugles.

The plain quivered to the resounding thunder of thousands of feet and hooves trampling forward. The whole great host was moving west, horsemen in a trot, the footmen in a rapid march.

"Yippee!" yelled Hank Martin excitedly. "With this outfit, we'll clean up them Masters an' their soldiers like rollin' off a log."

"There are many thousands of the Luunians," warned Ptah. "And they'll have been warned of our coming by their horsemen who fled back to the city."

"We must concentrate on getting into the city and storming that fortress," Ethan declared tautly. "Chiri and John Crewe will be in there—if they still live."

"We'll tear the cursed place down stone by stone if we have to!" swore Lopez.

DUST arose in a great cloud as the trampling host moved onward. Mile after mile fell behind them, while

Ethan's anxiety rose to fever pitch as he saw the red disk of the sun swinging ever higher.

"We're going to be too late!" Kim Idim cried, the old man's face deathly as he rode. "It lacks but an hour of noon—we shall never make it in time."

"We've got to," Ethan declared violently. "Chiri and John Crewe await death there—we must go faster."

Ptah shook his head. "The footmen cannot march faster than this. They would fall exhausted if they tried."

"Then I'm going to ride ahead to Luun with only the horsemen!" Ethan exclaimed desperately. "By riding hard, we can make it in time."

"You can't attack that great city with only a couple of thousand horsemen!" cried Ptah, aghast. "You'll be outnumbered by a hundred to one."

Maybe we can cut our way into the fortress," Ethan insisted. "Hank, you and Pedro will come with me—ride out now to our horsemen and tell them we're going ahead."

"Ptah, you and Swain and Kim Idim bring the footmen along as fast as you can. If we fail to get into the fortress, we may at least hold up that cursed Feast until you come up with our main forces."

Pedro Lopez and the trapper had ridden hastily to the wings. Now the four bands of horsemen began to forge forward on either side, as they galloped their steeds. They converged together in front of the main host.

Ethan spurred to the van of the gathered cavalry, and shouted back to them, using the Arabic, and Hank Martin repeated in the Indian tongue.

"We ride ahead to force the stronghold of our enemy! Follow me!"

Wild Sioux war-whoop and fierce Mongol shout, deep Crusader battle-cry and fanatic Arabic yell, answered

him as the four great forces of horsemen spurred forward.

The mighty host of footmen dropped from sight behind them as they galloped over the plain, Lopez and the trapper riding hard on either side of Ethan, in the van.

"Chiri! Chiri!" Ethan kept whispering as he rode. He *couldn't* lose her now.

The drum of rushing hoofs marked the passing of fatally slow minutes. And the sun was higher, higher. . . .

"Thar's Luun ahead!" yelled Hank Martin, pointing a buckskin arm.

"And the Luunians are starting to come out to meet us!" Lopez cried.

The domes and towers of the city had appeared on the horizon ahead. Ethan could clearly discern the mountainous square bulk of the fortress of the Masters.

And he could also see that companies of Luunian warriors were already beginning to march out of the city to meet the oncoming hosts of whose advance they had had warning.

"We'll ride right through them into the city!" he shouted.

He drew his sword, and as it flashed aloft in the sunlight, he turned and yelled to the hosts behind.

"Follow me into the city! Charge through these ahead!"

A chorus of wild yells answered him. His two thousand riders massed close together as they galloped onward at headlong speed.

The Luunians, commanded by a number of the Masters, were hastily forming in a long mass across their path, just outside the city. Before they could complete formation, Ethan's horsemen struck their line like a thunderbolt.

A delirium of contorted faces and flashing swords and spears whirled

about Ethan at the moment of impact. He hacked and stabbed, heard Lopez swearing wildly as the Spaniard struck like a madman, felt the armored Luunians in front of them falling and being trampled under the hooves of their horses.

And then that reeling moment of terrific shock and battle was passed, and Ethan was aware that he and his hosts were through the Luunian forces, were galloping now right into the narrow streets of the great stone city.

"To the fortress!" he yelled to Lopez and Hank. "If I fall, lead the others straight there."

"We'll have to chaw through these devils to git there!" shouted the trapper, pointing ahead.

The narrow stone streets of Luun were filling with armored men, warriors who had been making ready to follow the others out of the city to oppose the coming host.

The Masters commanding them screamed orders in their shrill, inhuman voices. But the commands were lost in the crazy roar of battle shouts from Ethan's motley horde as they crashed into the streets of Luun.

"Saint Denis, and at them!" rose the deep shout of mailed Crusaders wielding swords and battle-axes.

"*Muhamad rasul Ailah!*" screamed the fanatic yell of the Arabs as their simitars flashed.

Ethan, as he fought forward, glimpsed his Mongols surging ahead in a parallel street. The swarthy little horsemen were forcing their shaggy ponies, stabbing viciously. And over the whole roar of combat rose the terrible, piercing war-whoop of the Sioux, the red savages clinging like cats to their mounts as their bows twanged and their tomahawks clove down through helmets and skulls.

THE headlong rush of Ethan's forces carried them crashing through the streets, toward the mountainous bulk of the great fortress. But as they entered the plaza in front of the giant structure, Luunian warriors were swarming toward them from every part of the city, by thousands.

Over their heads, the gigantic fortress frowned like a thundercloud as they forced their way toward the doors. Ethan glimpsed Masters running wildly in through the entrances.

"Into the fortress—quick!" he yelled to Hank and Lopez, spurting fiercely ahead.

"Hell's name, what a fight!" gasped the Spaniard, his face wet with blood and sweat, his eyes wild.

Ethan and his two comrades, and a score of mingled Mongols and Sioux, won to the entrance of the huge building.

They rode right inside, their horses slipping and plunging, into great, shadowy stone chambers.

Here scores of the red Masters scuttled before them in terror. A few Luunians opposed them. Men died to the music of clashing steel and clattering hooves in those great shadowy chambers, as Ethan's band forced onward.

They burst on their steeds into a huge circular chamber. At its center rose a big, round stone table, with a ring of many cushioned seats around it.

Upon the high stone table, fastened down by metal fetters, lay a half-hundred men and girls. Into an incision in the arm of each of them had been inserted a thin metal tube, which led down from each to one of the cushioned seats.

"*Dios*, what ghastly thing has been going on here?" Lopez gasped.

"*This* is the Feast of Life of those fiends the Masters!" Ethan cried. "A drinking of the blood of helpless victims! God, if Chiri is dead——"

Chill horror was freezing his spine as he leaped from his horse and ran to the high table of victims. For he knew now the full hideous nature of those red Masters who had come to Earth ages before from another world.

The Masters were vampires, taking their food, not naturally, but through the blood of others. He guessed that it was a custom that they had brought from their own native planet, and that they had kept it up as a ceremonial rite through their generations on Earth.

"Chiri!" he yelled frantically.

"Ethan, I am here!" cried a weak voice.

He leaped up onto the stone table, over the supine bodies of helpless victims, and found her.

Chiri was living, but was pale as death itself. And her great dark eyes had shuddering terror in them as Ethan severed her fetters with a sword-stroke.

"Ethan!" she sobbed as he helped her up. "The Masters—they had begun to drink our life-blood, when the alarm of attack halted the dreadful Feast."

"Loose my bonds, that I may wreak God's vengeance on those unholy children of Satan!" boomed a great, wrathful voice.

"It's John Crewe!" shouted Hank Martin, his taut face lighting.

The big Puritan lay fettered among the other victims. As Lopez shattered his metal bonds, Crewe rose, his massive face flaming red, eyes flashing fanatically.

"Retribution!" he shouted, snatching a sword from the floor. "We shall leave not one of those red demons to defile God's green Earth."

"Out of here now!" Ethan yelled, leaping back into his saddle, with Chiri held tightly in the curve of his left arm. "We've got to fight back out of Luun."

The Puritan climbed to the back of a horse from which a slain Mongol had fallen.

With his remaining followers, Ethan spurred back out through the shadowy stone rooms.

They burst out into the blazing sunlight of the great plaza. And they stopped, appalled by what they saw.

"Trapped!" cried Lopez with an oath.

The two thousand horsemen whom Ethan had led into Luun were milling in the plaza, attacked by Luunian warriors pouring in solid masses from every part of the city, led by screaming Masters. They blocked every avenue of escape.

ETHAN and his companions rode into the milling mass of Mongols and Sioux and Arabs and Crusaders. The young American shouted to his surrounded followers.

"Charge—break through into the eastern streets!" he yelled, waving his reddened sword, Chiri clinging terrifiedly behind him.

"We'll never make it," Hank Martin panted. "They got us boxed."

The horsemen answered Ethan's shouts by charging determinedly toward the eastern side of the plaza. But solid masses of Luunians were an impassable barrier. The drugged white warriors were fighting like demons at the urging of the Masters.

Once more Ethan led his repulsed band forward in a desperate charge—and again they were dashed back by the crowding Luunian hordes.

"It ain't no use!" Hank Martin cried. The trapper's face was terrible

with blood and perspiration, his head bare, his rifle-butt broken away. "We're goners!"

"We'll take plenty of the dogs with us, then," roared Lopez, foaming with rage.

"Kill the red ones, the sons of Satan!" shouted Crewe's great voice. "Rid the earth of as many as we can, before we die."

The Luunians were pressing forward, stabbing up with sword and spear. Horses crashed down with their riders, bodies piled up, as the red Masters urged their hordes on to annihilate the trapped horsemen.

Then through the mad roar of the fight came a new sound, a hoarse, mighty bellowing through the streets.

"That's the *buccinas* of the Romans!" Ethan cried hoarsely. "Ptah and Swain have reached Luun with the main forces!"

The hoarse bellowing of the Roman trumpets swept nearer, louder. And now could be heard the insistent shrilling of French bugles sounding the charge.

In through the city by converging streets pushed the host of footmen from the past. Along three streets clanked the Romans, shields up, swords drawn, faces stern as they fought forward to the hoarse baying of their war-trumpets.

Along streets on either side of their advance came the Spartans and French, the Greeks striding forward like men of bronze in their heavy armor, stolidly hewing down all in their way; the infantry of Napoleon charging with excited battle-cries and leveled bayonets.

And from the south, Ptah was advancing at the head of a thousand blood-mad, wolf-faced Assyrians, while from the opposite direction, Swain Njallson and three hundred berserk

Northmen were smashing with sword and ax toward the plaza.

"Look at them Masters run!" yelled Hank Martin exultantly.

The red Masters were fleeing, darting in all directions frantically as they saw their warriors crumpling beneath that terrible converging attack.

And though the drugged, enslaved Luunians had fought fiercely until now for their rulers, they seemed to become bewildered when the Masters fled. They too gave way and fled.

In less than an hour, it was all over. The last of the unhuman Masters had been hunted down and ruthlessly slain. And the stupefied Luunians had surrendered their weapons.

IN THE plaza in front of the great fortress, Ethan stood with his arm around Chiri. Besides him were five comrades and old Kim Idim.

And before Ethan in the plaza had gathered the thousands of fighting-men of different ages who had conquered Luun. Hundreds of their host lay dead—but the thousands who still lived hailed Ethan with a great shout.

"You have done what you promised to do, have conquered this city," Ethan shouted to them. "Now your work is done, for the Masters here are all dead and the people of Luun will soon become normal again, when they are no longer drugged.

"And now," he continued, "Kim Idim will fulfill his part of our promise and will send you back to your own times and lands. You need but march back across the plain to where his machine waits, and it will be done."

When his words had been translated to them all, there was a pause, a buzz of thousands of voices.

Then a French captain gave voice to his thoughts.

"We'd rather stay here, now that we're here," he told Ethan. "This looks like a good time, a good world. If you let us stay, we'll follow wherever you lead."

"Do the rest of you feel that way?" Ethan demanded.

The answer, when they understood his question, was an overwhelming affirmative shout. Soldiers of fortune all, men without ties, they had no desire to return.

"Then you stay!" Ethan cried. "There are still other Masters in other cities—we shall clean them out, one by one, until all Earth is rid of those red tyrants."

He added with a sudden thought, "There'll be legends back in past times—legends of a Roman legion that strangely vanished, a French regiment that never was heard of again, and so on. But who back there would dream the truth?"

Chiri, clinging to his arm, cried to him anxiously.

"Then you too are going to stay in this time, Ethan—you and your comrades?"

"I shore am," drawled Hank Martin. "Now there's a hull tribe of Sioux here, I feel kinder at home."

"And I remain too," declared Lopez. "If there is fighting ahead, my prowess will be sorely needed."

Swain said merely, "I stay." And Ptah nodded agreement.

"And I," added Crewe. "There be many souls here to whom the word of God should be taught—by means of a little force, if necessary."

Ethan was holding Chiri tight in his arms.

And Hank Martin burst into a loud guffaw.

"I guess nobody needs to ask if *he's* stayin'!" the trapper said.