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"Watcher of the Gate reporting to Yamara. Two men-things from above have climbed within the Walls, and one of them has just stumbled through the Gate."

"Report received. Continue your watch."

The graceful young woman stretched lazily, then concentrated curiously. She saw an enclosure of about an acre's extent, surrounded by a weatherbeaten wall. This, in turn, was concentrically surrounded by a similar but larger wall, thirty feet away.

Within the enclosure a slim, good-looking young man was staring with amazement at a sort of shimmering spot of light in the center of the encircled space. Even as she looked, he took a few rapid steps forward into the haze of light. Instantly he disappeared from the enclosure.

THERE WAS a moment of vertigo that wracked him, and then Fred FoXe fell to the ground—or rather, fell further than the ground on which he had been walking. About three or four feet, he guessed, as he picked himself up, unhurt but surprised.

He saw his companion, George Roberts, standing a few feet away, also apparently unhurt. The other was looking around him with a puzzled expression in his usually stolid face.

George turned and saw him.

"Fred," he said. "The walls—they're gone."

The statement startled FoXe, and he glanced back quickly. A feeling of consternation ran through his veins like a thread of ice.

He turned again and took one swift, comprehensive look about his new surroundings. He saw a little clearing, carpeted with a heavy growth of tall, rank grass of which every stalk bore on its tip a small, star-shaped blossom of some pastel color. There was jungle beyond, huge fern trees that spread intense gloom below them. The air was hot and steamy. An upward glance at the sun hanging low over the trees

GATEWAY to YAMARA

by E. Everett Evans

A STRANGE GATE LED HIM

GATEWAY TO YAMARA

shocked him. It was a swollen, blood-red sun. After a moment, he nodded to himself, and the sense of shock passed.

"Well," he said aloud. "We're where we expected to be — approximately."

Roberts turned slowly. "Yeah? Where are we, anyway?"

Fred smiled. "Just about where we were a minute ago, George. But . . ." he added, ". . . I wouldn't say we were anywhere in Canada or the United States, or even in North America. Lord knows what this continent is shaped like right now."

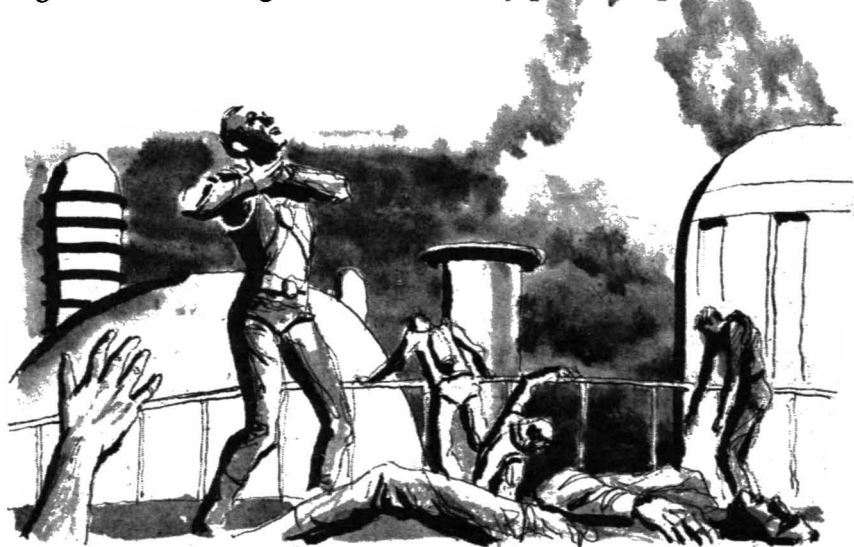
"What in the devil are you talking about?" Roberts grunted im-

patiently. "Are we here, or aren't we?"

"Don't you see, George?" Fred said, his grin warm with victory. "We did it! We found the Time Gate — and we got through it! When I got you into this deal I told you the stories the Indians have been telling me—and this proves that they were right!"

Roberts looked around ruefully. "You got me into something, all right," he said. "These jungles look worse than the ones you dragged me through in the South Pacific. Think there are any Japanese snipers in those trees?"

"I doubt it," Fred smiled. "Old as the Japanese Empire is, it's not



TO A STRANGE FATE . . . AND AN UNDREAMED-OF NEW LIFE!

even a gleam in the Sun Goddess' eye right now."

"Right now! Right now!" Roberts said nervously. "You keep saying that! When is right now, anyway?"

Fred was thoughtful. "That's just it. When we passed through that shimmering spot of light back there inside the walls, we didn't travel very far in space, but I think we went a long, long way back in *time*. The Indian legends I've been listening to mentioned repeatedly a 'Time Gate' into which people disappeared, never to be seen again. And I think that spot of light was it."

Roberts, huge, stubborn fighter that he was, who had been cool and daring under enemy fire as Fred's patrol leader in the Pacific, shivered frankly. "It don't sound so good, does it?"

Fred looked at him grimly. "Sorry you came, Sergeant? I told you the score. You said my years of wandering around the Canadian hills for my doctor's degree in paleontology and listening to old Indian legends had sent me off my rocker, but you agreed to come looking for this place, anyway. You came of your own free will—so don't start griping now."

"Yeah, okay, Lieutenant," Roberts agreed grimly. "I ain't got nobody to blame but myself for listening to your crazy talk about time gates and wacked-up In-

dians." Then he grinned. "But I never was as smart as you was, so give it to me again—slow. Just where are we?"

"I think," said Fred slowly, "that Time Gate is a place where the Past and the Present meet; that when we went through it we went backwards in time a thousand or a million centuries. I'm positive we're now in some pre-historic age, but in the same geographical location."

"Ain't eddication wonderful?" Roberts said witheringly. He looked around again, then exclaimed, "Hey, lookit the sun."

"I did. Eons ago the sun appeared much larger and redder than it does back in our normal time."

"You mean it really isn't any bigger?"

"No, it's just the refraction of this heavier, damper air that makes it seem so big. Like the moon does some nights. But, whenever or wherever we are, we'd better see about whether or not we can get back when we want to. I'm not particularly anxious to stay here the rest of my life."

"Gosh, me neither."

"The ground level is apparently lower than back in our time," Foxe said as they both turned and looked back. "I remember falling several feet when I came through. But I can't see anything to show

where the gate is, can you? No shimmer of light; no anything."

Roberts searched carefully. "Me neither." Then their situation seemed to penetrate. "Yipe! What a spot!" he groaned.

"Uh-huh!" Fred agreed.

There was a strained silence between them as they carefully examined the ground. Soon Roberts called, and Foxe joined him. They examined even more carefully a spot which showed some marks in the dirt, above the grasses and other weird vegetation had been crunched and broken.

"This must be where we landed." Foxe was feeling in the air with his hands as he spoke. Finding nothing, he picked up a rather long stick and tried with that to locate the enigmatic and illusive time fault through which they had fallen.

"Now, Yamara?"

"Wait! He intrigues me. He has passed the first barrier; he has scientific curiosity."

"Which one, do you mean, Yamara?"

"Silence, stupid fool!"

"Well, that's that," Foxe said at last. "It appears we stay here for some time, at least. That being the case, we'd better fix us some sort of place to live in."

"Yeah, the afternoon's about gone. What kinda place?"

"All the jungle stories I've read seem to speak favorably of some sort of a tree-house. Find a couple or stout limbs that're parallel, build a floor across them with branches . . ."

"... and put up some sides and a roof, eh?"

"Sure. That puts you away from the larger ground animals, if any, and all you got to worry about are tree-climbing cats."

"Speaking of animals, how much ammo you got?" Roberts counted rapidly. "I only got thirty rifle shells, and a couple extra clips for my automatic."

"I have twenty-seven shells and four full clips," Foxe inventoried.

"And our hatchets and skinning knives. Boy, we'll have to be careful not to waste no shots."

They started across the clearing toward the jungle, searching for a tree large and strong enough for their purpose, yet easily climbable. Foxe, in the lead as usual, was intensely interested in the giant fern-trees, which so clearly showed him they were now in the Carboniferous age-period.

"There'll be coal and oil under and about those walls, in the present," he thought, then grinned to himself, "the *old* present."

The jungle was heavily undergrown with bushes, interspersed with fallen branches, rotting leaves and fronds from an incal-

culable number of preceding centuries, making the going tough. There was a riot of color everywhere, from millions of strange blossoms, which covered not only the ground but much of the trees as well. There were huge creepers or lianas that drooped from and made strange interlaced patterns between the trees.

Foxe was pleased to discover that he could still enjoy this breathtakingly beautiful scene, even while he was trembling inwardly at their dangerous predicament. He pushed resolutely on.

Suddenly he heard a groan and a curse behind him. Swiveling about, he recoiled at the sight of a tremendous snake, looped along the branch of a tree under which he had just passed. Its head and a dozen feet of its enormous body were swinging downward. Cold with sudden revulsion, he saw his friend struggling helplessly yet valiantly in its constrictive coils.

Wave on wave of sickness flooded Foxe, for he had a phobia against snakes. But he fought it down and, tugging his hatchet from his belt, ran forward toward the struggling man and serpent.

Roberts saw him coming and yelled, "Watch his head. Don't let him fang you!"

"Constrictors aren't venomous!" Foxe yelled back. He leaped onto the cold, writhing body. His hatchet slashed cruelly into the

reptilian body. Roberts' arms were so pinioned by the coils about him that he could not move to fight in his own defense, although his heavy-shod feet were kicking at the snake's body where he could reach it.

The huge python squirmed and twisted more swiftly, seeking now to envelope this new foe in its great coils.

Foxe kept chopping at the same time trying to keep himself from being encoiled. One of the evolutions of the snake freed Roberts' left arm. He quickly yanked his knife from its belt-sheath and joined Foxe in slashing at the great body.

It was hard to hit twice in the same place on that swiftly moving sinuousness. But they kept at it. Great wounds were beginning to sap the reptile's enormous strength. Its movements became slightly slower. The men's chopping and slashing blows were now more accurately placed. They managed to greatly enlarge one wound. Finally Foxe chopped completely through the backbone. He and Roberts concentrated on that spot, and soon cut through the huge body.

The severed section, still convulsively entwined about Roberts, and with Foxe clinging to it, dropped to the ground, where it continued its writhings. Aided by Foxe, the imprisoned man was

finally extricated from the horrid folds.

"You hurt?" Foxe gasped anxiously.

"Nope, just w i n d e d and squoze." Roberts staggered away from the remains, and sank to the ground.

Foxe leaned against a nearby tree. "Snakes! Ugh! Hate 'em. To actually touch one . . . I never have thought I . . ." He was nauseatingly sick.

When at last he recovered a bit, Foxe saw Roberts sitting on the ground, silently watching, sympathetic.

"Looks like that tree-house idea ain't so hot," the big man said finally. "Especially if that baby's got any relatives. Maybe we better go back to the clearing, make a fire, and stand watches this first night. Tomorrow maybe we can figure out something better, eh?"

"You're right there. No more of this damned jungle for me during the dark. Me for the wide-open spaces."

"Now, Yamara? They destroyed Tefani!"

"Wait, I tell you! He had great physical and psychic courage. The second barrier could not stop him."

"Of what barriers do you speak, Yamara?"

"You would not understand."

Watch, protect, and do not molest!"

"I hear and obey!"

Beside a blazing fire, Fred Foxe stood looking about the deepening shadows of the unfamiliar world. A few feet away his companion lay stretched out in highly vocal slumber. They had dined on the last of their rations. It had been too late to think of hunting for meat, nor had they seen any small animals as yet at any time.

As soon as they had returned to the clearing, they started gathering a great pile of dry wood for their night-fire. Roberts carried the heaviest loads, although Foxe used his lesser strength just as vigorously. But soon he noticed that his huge companion was carrying smaller loads; that he was beginning to stop and rest frequently; that he often rubbed his sides as though to relieve a pain.

"Take off your shirt, George," Foxe commanded. "I want to have a look at you. That snake must've hurt you."

"Aw, it's nothing."

"Then I want to see nothing!" He helped remove the shirt, and gasped aloud at the great black and blue welts revealed.

"I take first watch, George, and no arguing," he snapped. "You lie down and get some rest and sleep. You're lots worse off than you'll ever admit. Those bruises aren't

going to heal in a few minutes, you know. Man, you've really been squeezed. Sure no ribs are broken?"

"Well, all right, Lieutenant," George agreed slowly. "No, there's no ribs busted. And you be sure and call me at midnight. I'm no sissy, Fred, and I can take . . ."

"Okay, Okay, I'll call you. Now pipe down. Make yourself comfortable and rest. One good thing, it's hot enough here so we won't catch cold sleeping on the ground without bags or blankets."

It was, indeed, humidly hot. Both men had long since shed the heavy mackinaws they had been wearing against the Canadian winter cold before they came through the Time Gate.

"One sleeps, Yamara. The other stands guard, but is drowsing."

"Watch and protect, but do not allow yourself to be seen."

"I do not understand your forbearance, but I hear and obey."

But Foxe was not drowsing. His eyes were continually darting about, watching closely his surroundings, even if his body was still.

A sudden movement, half-seen from the corner of his eye, roused him to greater vigilance. He wheeled to face it, his rifle at the ready. Just within the fringe of jungle growth he saw a dim,

wraith-like figure gliding noiselessly among the bushes and between the boles of the fern-trees.

Foxe threw more wood on the fire, then examined more closely this strange apparition in the light of the higher-leaping flames. This time he saw not one but a number of them. Slowly revolving his body he could now see them all around him, all moving so silently, seemingly aimless.

Yet the two men were completely surrounded.

Foxe stood perfectly still for moments, nervously watching. Slowly he lifted his rifle. He tried to pierce the gloomy depths to see more clearly who or what was out there. Several times he was on the point of waking Roberts, but each time withheld as the mysterious, spectre-like figures made no hostile move.

"Doggoned if I can make out whether they're men, animals or what," he muttered. The thought of ghostly spirits entered his mind, but he pushed it roughly aside. "I don't think they're men—those shapes are too amorphous for that. And if they're animals, they're like nothing I ever saw or heard of."

He strode forward with what he hoped was the appearance of boldness. "Might as well find out now as later," he grunted. The misty, phantom shapes did not seem to retreat before his ad-

vance, merely continued their apparently aimless moving about.

Suddenly the night air was rent with peal on peal of raucous guffaws that echoed among the trees and across the clearing, waking Roberts and bringing him to his feet with a bound, to find Foxe almost doubled up with laughter.

"What's up?" Roberts demanded, running forward, his gun ready in his hand.

"You are," Foxe replied at last, wiping the tears from his eyes. "So now you can take over and let me get some sleep. Boy, that was the grand champion of all waking nightmares! Thought we were being surrounded by a ghostly army, and it's just those masses of drifting fog-mists.

"Aw, go get some shut-eye, you siap-happy sap."

"I intend to. How are you feeling now?"

"Okay. Plenty stiff and sore yet, but not as bad as I was. The rest did me good."

"It is afraid of shadows and dancing mists, Yamara."

"Yet now he sleeps calmly. It takes fineness of character and mental stability to overcome the barriers of the Unknown. The future race we seek must have those characteristics — and that delicious sense of humor."

Day woke up, yawned rosily,

and smiled upon the visitors from the far future. Riotous noises broke out from myriads of strange-looking birds. Whether they sang only at dawn, or the men had been too preoccupied to hear them before, was a question the two debated briefly.

After a breakfast of fruits which Foxe saw the birds eating, and so considered safe for human consumption, the men set out to search for water. A little gurgling brook not over a dozen yards into the jungle across the glade, provided not only this but also yielded some very fine fish which big George Roberts, happy at the chance to supplement his meagre breakfast, carried back to the fire and cooked. It tasted, but did not look like, trout.

"Well, we won't starve, at least," Roberts licked his fingers and belched contentedly as they stood on the bank of the stream once more.

"And this brook'll make a pathway for us to start our explorations," Foxe declared. He began to move upstream, and Roberts followed. As he pushed along, Foxe blazed several trees along the bank so that they could find their way back to the clearing of the Gate.

They had gone several miles, sometimes having to hack their way through walls of dangling branches, fronds or lianas.

Roberts was leading when they broke through a last wall of heavy growth to find that the narrow brook widened into a more marsh-like place, another semi-clearing.

Foxe saw Roberts striding forward even faster, but soon noticed that the big man was having increasing difficulty in lifting his feet each time he set one down.

"Stay back, Fred!" Roberts yelled suddenly. "It's quicksand, or something like that." He tried to turn back, but Foxe saw that even in the brief pause his companion had become mired nearly to his knees.

Foxe swiftly began gathering a quantity of large, fallen fernfronds and was laying them as a pavement when Roberts, twisting at the hips to look backward, saw him. "Stay out of here, you darned fool! No use you getting caught, too!" His own efforts to extricate himself seemed but to drag him in deeper.

"Stand still, George!" Foxe commanded peremptorily. "You won't sink so fast if you don't struggle. I'll get to you pronto!"

But he didn't, for no matter how thick he piled his improvised paving, it would not hold his weight.

"Well, it was nice knowing you, pal," Roberts grinned, white-faced. By this time he was in nearly to his hips.

"Shut up, you dope," Foxe snapped, but there was a catch in his voice. "We're not licked yet."

Looking swiftly and purposefully about, he ran back towards the edge of the jungle. Clambering into a small tree, he hacked furiously at a long, tough liana with his hatchet. It took only moments to cut off a long section and this he carried back to the slough. It took several attempts, but he finally managed to throw one end so that Roberts could catch it.

Foxe dug his heels into the ground and started pulling. His face grew red, cords stood out in his neck, and his muscles ached with the strain, but the suction of the muck merely pulled the lighter man forward, rather than releasing the imprisoned man.

"Stand by to go to their aid, but wait out of sight."

"Why, Yamara? It is an easy way to be rid of them."

"You dare question me? Obey, instantly!"

"I guess it's no use, George," Foxe panted, his strength gone, his limbs trembling from the strain.

"Tie your end around a tree. I'll pull myself out."

Foxe did so, and the muscles on Roberts' powerful arms, shoulders and back stood out in ridges

as he put all his splendid strength into effect. Slow, heart-breaking moments passed as the tug of war continued. Inch by hard-fought inch Roberts was withdrawing his imprisoned body from the gripping quicksand. But that terrible constriction of the snake had taken toll of his vitality; his struggles became weaker and less successful long before he had released a quarter of his submerged body.

Desperately Foxe looked around him, trying to think of some method of more efficient leverage. His searching eyes noticed a slim but stout-looking tree that seemed more like the trees he knew than those other arborous ferns. At once a childhood trick sprang into his memory.

"Got an idea, George! Slack off a minute!"

With a quick twist he unfastened his end of the liana and, holding it clasped firmly in one hand, climbed as fast as possible up the sapling. As he neared the top, it bent further and further beneath his weight. When he dared climb no higher for fear of breaking or splintering the trunk, he tightly tied the liana to it.

"Get set, George!" he yelled. "Be ready for the yank when I jump!"

"Right! Let 'er go!"

Glancing down to see that the way was clear below him, Foxe

yelled "Geronimo!" and sprang away and down from the bent-over tree. As it whipped back into place, Roberts was pulled clear of the sucking bog and lay, panting and winded, on the edge of more solid ground.

"He has loyalty, too, and resourcefulness. These, too, are characteristics the race needs."

Back in the clearing of the Gate, which somehow neither of them wanted to leave for very long, both men slept long and soundly that night, not bothering to keep watch. The great, swollen sun was well up into the sky when they finally woke and arose. A bath in the brook, and they ate ravenously, then made ready for the day's expedition, this time in the opposite direction.

This time Foxe led the way. They had gone less than a quarter of a mile when, through the foliage to their right, a building of some sort was glimpsed.

It appeared to be of the same sort of stone construction as the two great walls back in the Canadian woods, but not weathered and old as they were.

"What on earth is that?" Roberts gasped.

"I don't know," Foxe shook his head while he studied the strange structure. "Looks like it might be a castle. Or more probably," as

an afterthought, "a temple of some sort. But we certainly want to look at it."

"Well, what you waiting for? Let's get going."

"Yamara, they approach directly to the Place of Living."

"I observe. Test them. But do not kill!"

The two men had turned to wade ashore when a sudden noise stopped them. Almost at once a gigantic, lizard-like snout appeared, followed by a long neck and the forefeet of a huge body.

The thing stopped, too, as it spied them, then with a coughing grunt came on toward them at surprising speed.

"Back, fast!" Roberts yelled as he whirled and started back up the creek. "No room to fight here. Back to the clearing!"

Foxe was almost treading on the big man's heels in the retreat. Splashing, stumbling through the foot-deep water, they reached the glade barely a few yards ahead of their pursuer. As soon as they were on dry land they separated, and turned to fire.

"Aim at the eyes!" Roberts yelled again as they fired at the great head of the giant reptile. The beast was about forty feet long from nose-tip to end of horny-skinned tail. It stood about

fifteen feet high at the shoulders. The extended neck was carapaced, the head long and snouted, the open mouth exposing a large number of sharp-pointed teeth.

Their shots were hitting the monster, biting and *spanging* against its thick, bony hide, disconcerting it so that it seemed in a great state of indecision, turning first toward one and then the other of the men. Its movements were so erratic and swift that Roberts' idea of blinding it was not so easily carried out.

Both men were on the move every second, to escape the rushes of the huge dinosaur, its darting head, or its threshing tail. Its skin of bone-like, over-lapping plates or scales seemed to stop most of the bullets, although it was beginning to bleed in places.

Suddenly Roberts stumbled just as the thing was starting in his direction. Foxe saw him try to roll out of the way, but the giant also stumbled. A great foot stepped squarely on the man's head.

"George!" Fred Foxe howled in bitter anguish.

"Yamara, I . . ."

"I saw. It was accident. I do not condemn."

In a furious rage, Foxe started pumping bullets at the giant saurian. Then he steadied,

quickly, grimly, and with his shots tried to locate and puncture the heart or some other vital spot.

The huge reptile swung about and started in the direction from which that hail of stinging bullets was coming. Foxe ran to one side, then turned towards the rear of the monster. There was a tremendous *swish* of the great tail, which caught Foxe squarely in the side. He felt a wave of pain, then realized he was flying through the air. He landed with a shattering impact, and fainted.

"Yamara, the blow knocked him through the Gate!"

"I observed. Again I know it was unintentional."

"Orders, Yamara?"

"Do nothing, but get out of sight. He is of the breed that will return, for he has pertinacity of purpose. See, even now he awakes and is crawling back to the Gate."

"Then it were better to kill him."

"Silence, fool! He has the qualities the future race must have. And leave that other body alone until I give word to move it."

Fred Foxe came out of his dazed faint to find himself back inside the inner wall surrounding the Time Gate. Groggily he sat up, then crawled over to where he and Roberts had dropped their packs when they first

climbed down inside the inner wall. He carefully skirted the Gate in doing so.

From his own pack he got a bar of concentrated food and a can of fruit juice, upon which he lunched, shivering in the winter cold as he did so. When finished eating, he took a couple of anti-fatigue pills, then lit a cigarette. Getting out the first-aid kit, he applied antiseptic to and bandaged his various cuts and scratches, and taped his badly-sprained wrist.

Then he stood up slowly, looked around at the familiar Canadian woods, at the distant Rockies. At the foot of that peak was the Indian village they had started from—when was it? Days ago, weeks, a month? Beyond that stretched the long trail out of this little-explored region, and at the end of it, civilization, the modern world as he knew it.

He turned and looked at the shimmering light of the Gate. And beyond that lay the dead body of George Roberts, his buddy, who had fought at his side through so many dangers, only to end this way.

He picked up the two packs, pitched them through that enigmatic, shimmering Gate, then jumped through it. Expecting the drop, he landed standing.

His first task was to dig a grave in the soft loam at the edge of the

little clearing with a trenching shovel. In this he reverently buried the remains of his unfortunate friend.

"So long, fellow. You were a real man!" he saluted the long mound.

Making sure both rifles were loaded, he slung one over his shoulder, and with the other at the ready in his hands started once more down the little creek. His sharp eyes peered carefully about and ahead, lest he again be taken unawares by one of those fierce denizens of this primitive world.

"Yamara, he comes again."

"As I told you he would. He has every good trait of character that we desire. Your task with him is done. Return to your watch of the Gate."

"I hear and obey."

As he again caught sight of the now forbidding stone temple or castle, Fred Foxe left the little stream and proceeded more cautiously than ever towards the strange edifice. He climbed warily up the broad stone steps, and went slowly through the opened doorway. Inside he saw a fairly large, bare room, about thirty feet square, he guessed. Leading from it on the other three sides were hallways, empty, dim and mysterious.

He stood motionless, undecided as to which way to go first, when suddenly he had the strangest feeling, as though a will other than his own had taken charge of his mind and was forcing him to enter the right-hand hall. Down this he walked for about fifty feet, his curiosity keeping him from objecting to such cavalier treatment. Coming at last to a large wooden door, he opened it.

Instantly the strange mental control was withdrawn, and he gasped at the sight before him. This stone room was barbarically yet beautifully decorated with dozens of softly-tanned skins of various beasts, most of which he could not recognize, spread about the floor. There were huge hanging drapes and tapestries covering the walls, and brilliant flowers were strewn everywhere about the room. But his eyes noted those things only in one passing glance.

For in the center of the room was a stone bench or bed, covered thickly with more of the soft furs and with silken robes of various hues. On it half-reclined a girl or young woman, whose startling beauty held him rooted to the spot. There was something fascinatingly lovely about her.

"Her coloring!" he marveled then, as he saw it more clearly. "That long, wavy hair is a silver-blue. Can it be a wig? But it

doesn't seem like one. And that pearly-grey skin!" He noted that, grey though it was, it was a living, healthy luster, and after the first shock it was unutterably lovely—far from the dead-grey one sees in very ill people.

He advanced several steps nearer her, drawn by the glowing welcome in her glorious eyes. When he was close enough, he saw that they were a deep lavender, almost the shade of purple *fleur-de-lis*. Altogether, she was the loveliest woman he had ever seen.

"Hello," Foxe said hoarsely at last. "I hope I'm not intruding. But it seemed as though I was rather expected to come here."

She spoke in reply, and her voice was musical, but her words were meaningless to him. However, her smile was entrancing, and when she beckoned him to come to her, he slipped his guns and packs to the floor. He went up to the couch. She extended her graceful hand to him, grasped his, and drew him down beside her on the couch.

His heart was beating rapidly as her fragrance assailed him. She looked deeply into his eyes, and he felt his senses leaving him—and realized just as he dropped off that he was being very swiftly and thoroughly hypnotized. He was asleep before he could fight back.

When he awakened—he had no conception of how long he had been under—he was amazed to find that he could understand her words, could reply in her own language, although his tongue had some trouble making the strange sounds his mind knew.

When he remarked on this, she smiled warmly.

"Yes, it was for that reason I had to place you in sleep, that I might teach you our language quickly. I apologize and hope you are not angry. May I now explain the things you so want to know about me, about us, and this place?"

She poured two tall goblets full of a sparkling wine, and he sipped appreciatively as he listened to an astounding explanation.

"I am called Yamara, and I am from the planet known to your scientists as Venus," she began. "I and others of us came to your Earth for a very special reason, but to make you understand I will have to go back into our planetary history a bit.

"For some unfortunate biological reason the males of our race have always been very small—dwarfs, you would call them. Their heights ranged from two to two and a half of your feet. The females, on the other hand, have always been from five to five and a half feet tall, during maturity."

Yamara explained that the race

of Venus had a known history of about twenty-five thousand years, and that their science had long ago reached a high point in almost all lines of study.

"One of our biological chemists," she continued, her vivid eyes flashing, "finally discovered a drug that would stimulate the male growth glands, and make our men grow taller. It was greeted with great joy by everyone, and put to use at once—too quickly, as it turned out. It was so generally used that in two generations our men began equaling the women in height.

"This was important to our men," she said earnestly. "They had always had to battle the psychological effects of a great inferiority of spirit, because of their small size, in spite of the fact that the women always loved and respected them.

"But soon an appalling thing became apparent." Foxe felt his blood quicken as he saw tears in her lovely eyes. Obviously, the remembrance brought intense feeling with it. "It was found that the men of the second generation grew tall and strong and mentally splendid until they were about thirty Venerian years old." She paused, then went on. "Then—then they rapidly deteriorated, and before thirty-five were dead! It all happened so suddenly, so unexpectedly, that this second

generation were almost all dead before we could find a counter-agent. At present there are less than a thousand native males alive, and since all have taken the growth drug, we know that in a few years all will be dead."

Foxe took one of the girl's slim hands, which gripped his with surprising strength under her emotion. But she continued bravely, telling how the scientists of Venus had long ago developed rockets for flight, and how some daring adventurers had pierced the planet's eternal cloud-blanket and discovered that which was never visible from the surface—the great universe about them. Huge flying laboratory-observatories had been established in satellite orbits above the clouds, and from these the scientists had learned the secrets of the heavens, including the fact that there were other worlds in the solar system.

"With the dying off of our men, we put our greatest resources of knowledge and man-power into the construction of interplanetary ships, in the hope of finding assistance on other planets."

A crew had made a successful trip to their nearest outer neighbor—the Earth—but had found to their dismay that it was in a very primitive age; that the man-like creatures on Earth were little more than animals.

"Why, we . . . oh, I see," Foxe started and interrupted himself. "I keep forgetting that I'm now back in the Carboniferous age."

"That's right. However, our own history made us feel sure that in time these beast-men would develop into real persons, just as ours had done. And, best of all from our viewpoint, these males were as large or larger than their females, which augured well. Our deepest thinkers felt sure it would be possible to open a Way into the future, and this was done in the Time Gate through which you passed.

"Through this Time Gate from time to time came men of many future ages, whom the Venerian women tried to enlist in their fight for survival. However, they did not want just 'males'. They desired and needed mates who would have the finest and highest qualities possible, qualities which they wanted their race to possess. For that reason a series of test-barriers had been devised, in order that only those with the proper attributes would be chosen."

Foxe shook himself mentally. It sounded like an amazing fantasy, all this she was telling. Yet he felt it was truth. He had fallen more and more under the spell of this bewitchingly lovely Venerian girl. She was, in his eyes, as fine or finer than any Earth girl

he had ever known. Like most men, he set high standards for his female companionship, and he had never yet encountered a woman who promised to possess the unique and extraordinary qualities he sought.

Apparently, from the fact that he was here, listening to her, he had been considered acceptable. But George Roberts—. Why had he been killed?

Yamara read the question from his mind.

"That was entirely an accident, for which I am deeply sorry. The guardian creature, whose simple mind I control, was ordered to test you both, but not to kill. But when your friend stumbled, the beast tried to swerve but also stumbled, and stepped on his head. Yes, your friend would have been most welcome.

"Incidentally, the guardian, Drakoni, was once one of our males, as was Teffani, the great snake you killed. They and other males accompanied our expedition here, and just before their bodies died we transferred their egos, their life-forces and minds, into those bodies, the best we could find, that they might continue to live and serve us. Unfortunately, they are gradually becoming more beast than man, as the instincts of their bodies gain greater control of their mental processes.

"But to conclude. This is our problem, and the way we have tried to solve it. The need is desperate, if our race is to survive. We ask your assistance, personally." The glorious eyes were turned pleadingly upon him, and she leaned toward him, hopefully, imploringly.

Fred Foxe was almost dazed with the idea. He had no strong personal ties to hold him to Earth or to his own time. It would be a tremendous adventure—going to another planet. And as for Yamara, he was already half—. He tried to stop the thought, flushing as he remembered her mind-reading ability.

He rose swiftly and paced the room, thinking furiously, for he was an ambulant thinker. Should he go, or not? In a way it was a cold-blooded proposition; in another a great challenge to his manhood.

"One sure thing," he muttered to himself, "I'll never have another moment's peace of mind if I don't think this out and decide here and now." He looked at her.

"It will take some doing, you know—," he said, "—to agree to give up everything that is real and familiar to me in my own world."

Her gorgeous eyes met his. "I know," she said softly. "Think carefully before you decide. You

are under no compulsion to do this. It must be entirely of your own free will."

He drew a deep breath. "And if I decide—against—?"

"You will be taken back to the Gate and guided through it," she said. "No one will hinder you."

With some effort he tore his eyes away from her. No compulsion! The temptation to say the hell with everything, that all he wanted was to be with her, was almost overwhelming.

He continued pacing and thinking. The adventurous excitement of the thing alone was tempting, too. But there was so much more to be considered. Could he possibly find happiness and contentment on Venus, after the first flush of excitement had worn off? Could he exile himself to a new world, to new conditions? Could he leave everyone and everything he knew and liked here?

For nearly half an hour he prowled forth and back, chain-smoking and studying the problem. He felt sure the girl was not now controlling his mind—that she was wisely leaving it to him to decide for himself.

Yamara answered briefly and concisely the occasional questions he asked, but he noticed that each time he looked at her she was mutely beseeching, imploring. And—was there something else in

those limpid eyes? Did he read there a dawning love for him, personally — or was it wishful thinking on his part? For himself, he knew now, definitely, that he had fallen in love with her. She was the one woman he wanted, the one in all the world who seemed to fulfill the requirements a man sets for himself in choosing the woman who is to be his mate for all time.

Finally he came back and sat down beside her again, his shoulders straight with resolve. He took her slender little hand, and gazed deeply and long into her eyes.

"I . . . I'll accept on one condition, Yamara." He flushed and stammered a bit, but spoke honestly. "I . . . I've fallen in love . . . with you, and if I can be your mate, and yours only, I'll go with you. Is that possible, and are you willing?"

She gave him a rapturous smile and drew him into her lovely arms. "Of course it is possible. As for my willingness, I—oh, my darling! I have been hoping and praying to my gods that you would make that very request!"

Late that night, after Foxe had finally fallen asleep, the beauti-

ful Venerian girl carefully drew herself from his arms, rose and tiptoed from the room. She went down one of the long halls, and into a large, dormitory-like room filled with beds, on each of which reclined another startlingly beautiful young woman. At sight of the newcomer they all rose and pushed eagerly forward to greet her.

She smiled and nodded exultantly, joyfully.

"Ah!" came from the group in a relieved and satisfied sigh.

"Who is next?" she asked them.

One of the girls came forward. "I am."

"You all saw and heard everything?"

"Yes," they nodded agreement.

"We observed carefully and understand perfectly."

"Good." She turned to the chosen one. "Hurry to the place of sleeping before he wakens. But be very careful never to let him suspect. For he is, as you have all perceived, the finest specimen of his species we have yet caught in the Gate. We must keep him happy and contented here, that he may breed as many of us as possible—before he discovers that all we yamara are identical." . . . * * *