

Weird Tales

ALL STORIES NEW — NO REPRINTS

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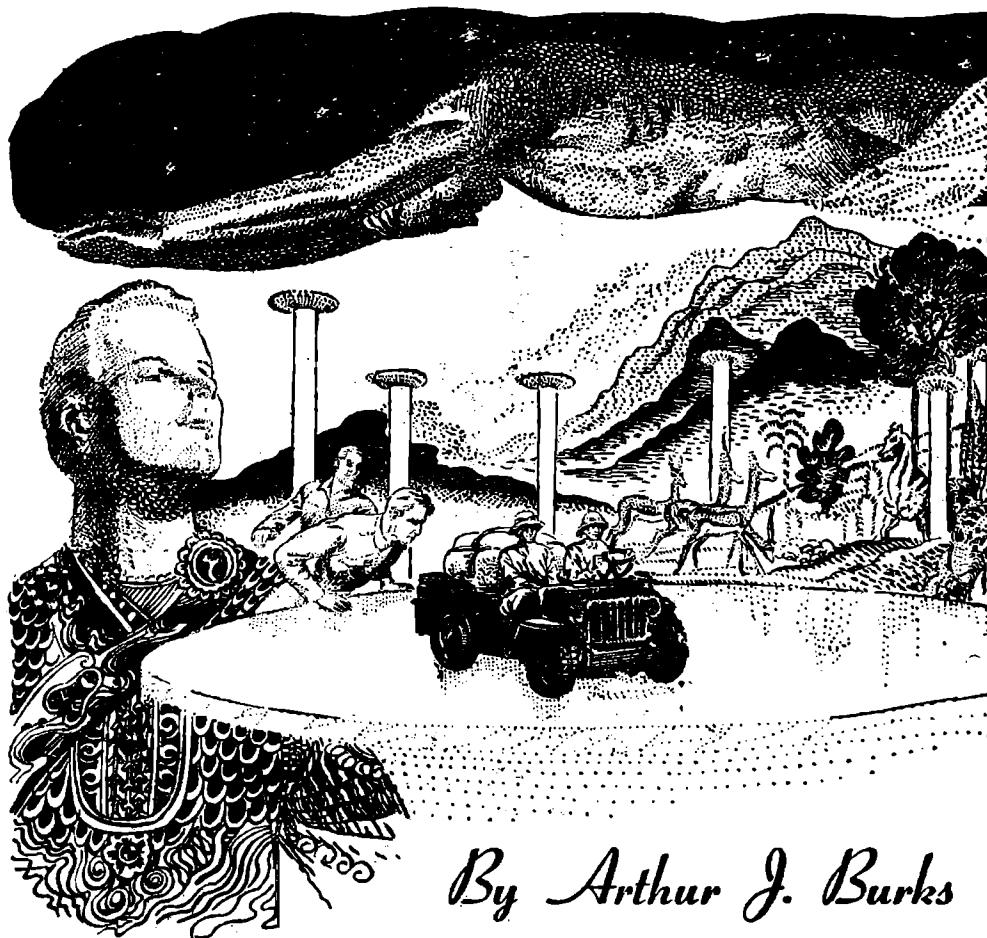
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Shallajai



By Arthur J. Burks

CHAPTER I

ROSE QUARTZ PRISONERS

TAKE it from an old Orientalist, there is no such thing as chance, accident, or a miracle. It wasn't luck or accident that made those wild Gobi goats lead Gol Rank, Doctor Gol Rank, and me into the Garden of Eden. My name is Sherm Carnes. I'm a doctor, too, of Natural Sciences, with enough experiences around the world during the past thirty years, half of them in Asia, not to take anything for granted.

Gol Rank and I were driving our jeep leisurely here and there on the Gobi, never too far from the Wells of Shallajai, taking care not to get ourselves involved in the drifting red sands which here have eroded the very centuries, when a herd of goats jumped into view from nowhere.

I knew that other explorers and archeologists sometimes amused themselves by chasing the goats and even the Shallajai dog-bears, in cars or on horseback, but I had never gone in for it myself. I was looking for something else, something you'd never guess. Do you know your Bible? Well, you don't have to know much of it

.... here where all time is now.

to remember how Moses wandered for forty years in the wilderness because of the "stiff-neckedness" of his people. The world

or even millenniums, and I began finding proof. . . .

Then came the brief respite that proved



Heading by
Vincent Napoli

takes it for granted that the wilderness referred to was somewhere near what is now known as the Holy Land. I believed the story, but not the place. I had been sure for years that the "wilderness" of Moses and his brethren was in or on the border of Gobi Desert. I raised the men and money and went hunting for proof. I figured that the "forty years" were more like centuries

to be no respite at all; Gol Rank and I chased goats.

"Don't you ever get tired of tinned meat?" said Rank, when we ran into the goats.

"Meaning, I take it," I said, "you think we might run down one of those critters?"

"Something like that." Gol Rank is thirty-five to my fifty-five and sometimes he gets too big for his breeches. Sometimes he fails in proper respect to age and wisdom; that's why I liked him, I guess. Sandy-haired, freckled, pale blue eyes, Gol Rank certainly didn't look like a picture book hero or adventurer. He looked just what he was: my assistant excavator and putter-together.

I gave chase to the goats. If they had been smart the goats would have taken to the first sand dune and I'd have been stuck. But they ran on the best ground, exactly as if they were daring us to run into them. I began to have visions of cracking one on the rump, even with a rickety jeep, breaking its leg, and having to kill it to ease its suffering—after which Gol Rank and I, and whatever other of our Chinese and Mongols we invited would eat of it. I trusted it would not be too tough, but no matter how tough it was, it would be better than tinned stuff.

"Step on it, Sherrin!" yelled Rank. "You've got the brutes right in your hands! They're going straight into a pocket!"

It looked like it, too. Suddenly the two dunes between which the goats were leading us began to narrow down. It looked to me as if they ran together far ahead of the speeding goats. The goats, too, began to behave as if they sensed some sort of trap, and I expected them, any second, to try to break back past us, or take to the dunes and lose us. Then it became clear they had missed their chance, for suddenly there was rock, or glistening crystal, in place of the sand. If the stuff wasn't quartz, rose quartz besides, then I had never seen rose quartz. In a matter of seconds we saw enough rose quartz. . . .

"Keep your mind on the goats!" said Gol Rank. "The rose quartz won't run away! It's been here longer than the goats!"

The goats were pretty crazy by now. If we had had rifles it would have been easy to do them in, at least one of them. Gol Rank wasn't such a much as a marksman, and he couldn't drive a jeep any better than he could shoot, so I had to drive.

The goats had been playing, up to now, but something in this narrowing defile of quartz scared the daylights out of them. They really got down to the business of running. They left the jeep behind as if it were standing still. But since there didn't seem to be any way out we continued to follow them. They vanished ahead of us.

"The way turns," said Gol Rank. He took off his helmet and let what breeze there was blow through his sparse hair. Then he took off my helmet to give my hair—a lot sparser—a touch of the breeze of our own passing. We slowed down when it looked as if we'd hit one side or the other of our strange highway, and wondered what had happened to the goats. We came to a turn. We came to the end of a *cul de sac*. We saw no goats. They had vanished. They could not have jumped or climbed out of the way. They must have flown out. They had no wings. They were *gone*! Not only that, but we turned left into the end of the way, with that rose quartz all the way around us except in our rear. The sun upon the stuff was blinding. The sun over Gobi is a tough proposition at any time. Driving along this strange way hadn't helped my myopia a bit, nor did it help when I stopped the jeep in a dead end so close and narrow I couldn't even turn my front wheels, and felt the full force of the sun as well as the full blaze of its reflection on the quartz. Now the quartz walls were fully thirty feet above us, in all directions except to the rear. Gol Rank and I looked at each other. Sweat stood out on him in big beads. It was hotter in here than in Hades itself.

"Let's get out of here!" said Rank. I had stalled the jeep. I jammed the starter. The motor refused to respond. Rank shook my arm. "I don't like this," he said. "Let's get going! I don't want to disappear like those goats!"

"Well, do you think I do?" I asked. "We're stalled. I filled the gas tank. The motor is in good shape. There is no reason why she won't go—except that she won't."

I kept on talking, wanting Gol Rank to talk when I stopped. I'm not easily impressed by anything, and I don't go off the deep end very often. You don't, if you're

at home in the Orient and in sites of ancient ruins. If you did you'd have ducked out long ago. But this thing that had happened to Rank and me was too much like. . . .

"We can pull her out, turn her, and push it back out," I said. "For myself I've enough of this place already!"

Rank tried to get out on his side of the jeep. His feet came in contact with the rose quartz. I hadn't realized it was so close. I tried my side. Same thing. Well, there were other ways. I set the gears in neutral, stepped onto the broad hood, pushed against the rock directly ahead. Nothing happened. I stepped back to the rear of the jeep, intending to step out and *pull*. But when I got back there it was clear it wouldn't work.

There wasn't room to step out behind the jeep! The rose quartz was snugged up against the rear seat! Yes, I remember what I said. We turned into this place from a wider way because we thought the goats came this way.

"Well, Gol," I said, "it looks as if we're trapped. One thing is left. There's no roof to this trap. I can stand on your shoulders, or you can stand on mine. . . ."

"And reach the rest of the thirty feet!" said Rank. "Haven't you noticed that the walls are getting higher . . . and higher . . . and higher?"

I hadn't, but now I did. The walls were getting higher for just one reason. We were lowering away to somewhere; where that was only the bibulous gods who look after scientists knew, and when that thought came to me I couldn't possibly have realized how close it was to the truth. A scientist has little time or mental room for mythology, whether it be the Buddhist, Taoist or Jesus myths. Naturally a scientist studies such stuff, because he wants to know everything about everything.

In our modern-day jeep, Gol Rank and I, two latest of the world's curious in the world of science, were being lowered by some mysterious elevator, into depths we knew nothing of, somewhere in the Gobi, not too far from the wells of Shallajai.

"What do you suppose was in the water we drank from Shallajai?" said Rank.

"Hashish!" I snorted. "Obviously! Or raw opium!"

"Anyway," he said calmly, "we both saw the rose quartz—or *did* you?"

"I did," I replied. "I still do. We're taking a ride on some kind of elevator of the stuff."

"In a place where no elevator could possibly be," said Rank. "In a spot where Gobi goats become invisible or take wings around the nearest corner!"

Strangely, though we both estimated we were fifty or a hundred feet below ground level when we stopped, there was no darkness. There was a rosy glow in the air. There was no breeze, yet I for myself felt as soothed and relaxed as if there *were* a breeze, a cool one, moreover, like none we ever experienced in the Gobi. We sat in the jeep when it stopped, looking at each other. Then the quartz directly before the jeep moved away from us, circled to the right, proved to be a door, and the jeep, still in neutral, slid down a gentle incline onto golden sand. The door of quartz closed, apparently of itself, without the slightest sound.

I stared at Gol Rank. He stared at me. We were, at first sight, inside a greenhouse. It looked, in those first few seconds, to be of vast proportions. There were innumerable trees, lushly green, glistening golden, royal purple, Chinese red. . . .

There were plants, shrubs, grasses. Now, I know my trees, my plants, shrubs and grasses. But I didn't know a single solitary one of those I saw around me. I looked at Gol Rank. He shrugged, spread his palms wide, didn't say anything whatever. He knew even less than I, which was no news to me, at that.

We looked around us. I couldn't even see where we came in. Our jeep tires made no impression on the ground inside the "greenhouse."

"Blow the horn!" said Rank. "There must be somebody in charge of this joint."

I was so afraid, on the instant, to blow that horn, that I knew I had to blow it if only for my own self-esteem's sake. I blew it. Weird echoes went rolling through the trees, through the strangest jungle man had

ever seen—had ever seen, that is, within recorded history time. Almost at once a whistle sounded in answer. It was such a whistle as I had never heard before. I looked at Rank again. This time he just raised one shoulder, and his face was a little pale. There was something unnerving about that whistle.

We waited. Around one of the trees, so suddenly he almost made us jump, came a man.

He was well above six feet tall, six feet six or so, I thought, with hair the color of the sun, eyes the deepest blue I've ever seen, a build that would have made Apollo Belvedere retreat into the Labyrinth. He wore garments out of this world. The nearest thing to them anybody is likely to know are the imperial robes of His Majesty Hsien Feng, the great Manchu ruler of China in the 1850's, and these only to people who have visited the inner museum in Peking's Forbidden City. They were gowns copied from the gold of the sun, the blue of the sea and sky, the white of scrubbed clouds. His shoes had the curled-up toes of Chinese, Tibetan and Mongol royalty. I stared at his hands, expecting to see those long hideous fingernail protectors which Chinese elite used to wear to prove they never worked, and required their feminine favorites to wear. This man had normal fingernails. He smiled at me.

"A proper gardener," he said calmly in English, "can't be so careful of his hands. Welcome to Shallajai, Doctors Goldrick Rank and Sherman Carnes! You have been expected, of course, for much longer than you have any idea!"

"Well," I said, trying to appear dignified as I stepped out of the jeep and went around to stand beside Rank who had also stepped to the ground, "at least you speak English, as well as we do, I should guess."

"Better," said the blue-eyed one calmly, "but that is to be expected. After all, I know it from its beginnings. I know, also, exactly how it will be spoken a hundred years from now. Naturally, that gives me an advantage."

"A nut, sure as shooting!" said Gol Rank. "We've just got sunstroke, Sherm.

We'll snap out of it when the sun goes down; then we'll return to our base camp."

The man chuckled, then laughed aloud, throwing his head back the better to enjoy it.

"A nut if you like, until you know better," said the other. "Your jeep will be all right where it is until you need it again. Would you care to come with me?"

I hesitated, looking back at the place where we had come through the rose quartz door.

"Look, my friend," I said, "you have the advantage of us. This also smacks somewhat of duress. At least let us know your name and what you are."

"Oh, I do apologize," he said. "My name is Taminuz!"

"Tammuz!" I said. "Not a Chinese name, a Mongol or Tibetan name, but Babylonian! Tammuz, Gol, in case you don't know or remember, was the Babylonian god who supposedly presided over the Babylonian counterpart of the Garden of Eden! And you, my friend, are named for Tammuz?"

"No," he said, chuckling. "I am not named for Tammuz. I am *the* Tammuz, Tammuz in the flesh!" He raised his hand just as he turned. "But don't allow surface misconceptions to interfere with your first impressions. I am Tammuz, as I've just told you. Also, I am just as human as you are. So were, and are, the great figures of what *you* call mythology. But it's very simple, really, here where all time is *Now* and we have eternal use of the Sea of Glass!"

CHAPTER II

THE SEA OF GLASS

NEITHER of us had ever seen anything like it. I had been in the Belgian Congo, the Amazon Valley, Ceylon, the Philippine Islands; I had never seen such jungles. I knew Gol Rank had not. There were no such jungles, not anywhere—except here; here in the heart of the Gobi, within hearing of the whispering wells of Shallajai.

How can you make a reader or a listener believe something you don't believe your-

self, even when you know you've gone through it? Even when the proof is overwhelming, if ever proof to human ears, eyes, nose and fingers is overwhelming? How can human senses prove anything, accept anything as proof?

There was rose quartz in the Gobi. There was everything there. It had been the site of many long-vanished civilizations, cities to marvel at; civilizations and cities of which there remained not one single provable trace in human archives anywhere—known to man, that is. There were records in the rocks, Gol Rank and I had found many, were finding more. When our reports, carefully documented, proved as far as men can prove anything to other men, were given to the world, the world might well be amazed.

What started me? Chinese legendary history, said to date back a million and a quarter years. Then, or thenabouts, there had been the first man, P'an Ku. P'an Ku, according to legend, still lived; but he had got fed up with the world and gone to live on the moon. . . . Science has often had to start with less. Now, about this *Tammuz*, even if he was the *Tammuz* of Babylonia, while a mere sprout compared to P'an Ku, he would still be some thousands of years older than the proverbial three score and ten. Even Hilton's Shangri-la called it quits at something under three hundred years of age, and the oldest Chinese of recent record was still under three hundred—old enough in all conscience.

We walked through the jungles, all the way between the trees, among the brush, being perfect with a perfection impossible to describe to anybody who didn't see it. Planned horticulture, even that of the green-fingered Japanese, had nothing like it . . .

"Of course not," said Tammuz, leading the way, "*this* was done by the First Experts!"

"Mind reader?" I asked.

"Of course," said Tammuz. "Mind reading is simple, after all. Anybody can do it who takes care to command his own reactions. We could travel faster, but it is better you see everything."

There were animals among the trees. I recognized many of them. One, a Siberian tigress, ten good solid feet of cat, full grown, with long dugs that indicated kittens somewhere, rose from a bed of grass as we almost ran over her, pricked up her ears at Gol Rank and me. My heart jumped into my throat. Tammuz scarcely noted the savage, dangerous feline. The tigress came to me, then, mouth open, eyes utterly friendly, rubbed a huge head against my side, almost knocking me over!

"She isn't a lion, and you're sure no lamb," said Gol Rank, "but if the two of you should lie down together I wouldn't be surprised! What kind of a dump are we in, anyway?"

"What kind of a . . . a dump, as you call it," said Tammuz, "would you expect Tammuz to operate?"

There was a chuckle in his voice, as if he were enjoying himself. I pinched Gol Rank; he did the same for me. His fingers were like pliers. He twisted them, and *burt*. Tammuz chuckled again.

"What's so unbelievable about terrific longevity?" queried Tammuz. "Can you, a scientist, think of one good reason why people should die at *any* age—unless by personal choice? Mankind, as even scientists know, has free will, the right of choice; man has the same right with his own life as he has for everything else. Just because he has ceased making use of it, allows himself to grow old . . ."

THREE were more animals. Great cats, a number of them. They didn't even bother to get out of our way. And there were older things, like eohyppus, the ancestor of the horse; like the various *canis* forbears of the dog, the pre-mammothian elephant . . . and they were real, for all of them were obviously pets, or friends of man, for they came and rubbed against us, every last one of them. Not one ran away from us, showed the slightest fear.

"The greatest indictment of man," said Tammuz, "is that animals, birds, snakes, fear him! He even fears his own kind: Often he fears himself! Tragic! That's why you're here! Ah, here is the Sea of Glass.

We can look further later, or we can 'travel' via the Sea of Glass."

It wasn't much, not at first; didn't seem to be. Looked like a greenish pond, bulging upward toward the center like, maybe, the lens of a telescope. It was a hundred feet across, about. There was a railing around it, of rose quartz too. It was just higher than our waists. We could put our elbows on it, look down into the sea. It was like looking into a flea circus. Later I was to feel sure that was the best kind of comparison. Tammuz did something, punched a button, I think.

We three stood side by side, Tammuz in the center, Gol Rank on his right, myself on his left. A circle of light appeared on the Sea of Glass directly under us. No mistaking what it was: a section of the Gobi Desert which included both our camp, with our Chinese busily engaged, and our Mongols, and the Shallajai Wells, so deep, slender, whispering and mysterious.

"Video, Tammuz," I said, "is old stuff."

Tammuz chuckled. I was beginning to like this harmless nut.

"It is indeed!" he said. "Some millions of years older even than you think! Pay attention, now . . ."

Gol Rank and I stared. We saw ourselves leaving camp in our jeep. We saw ourselves driving to the Shallajai Wells. We saw ourselves returning, jumping the goats, chasing them into the area of sand dunes. We followed every move, without breathing almost. It was all just as it happened.

"Has to be movies of some sort," I said. "Though where your cameraman was I've no idea."

"It is not a picture," said Tammuz. "This is *you*, Doctors Rank and Carnes, coming to pay me a visit!"

"Impossible!" I snapped. "How, even if you could play tricks with time, could we be both there, chasing goats and, I admit it now, looking a trifle silly, and here with you, watching?"

"Because," he said calmly, "during a given lifetime you are everywhere in your allotted span of it; rather, in that section of it which your wilfulness has caused you to allot yourself!"

I let some breath out. "I'd like to know how you could possibly prove such a thing," I said.

"Simple," said Tammuz, "speak to yourselves, there. They can hear you easily. As a matter of fact they can *see* you, too!"

I raised my hand, hailed myself in the Sea of Glass. "Hi, George!" I called. The figure in the car answered. "Hi, Counterpart!" And I snapped at Tammuz. "That does it. This can't be us, in a past time, for there was no such hail while we chased those goats!"

"*When that day comes*," said Tammuz softly, "*time shall be no longer!*"

"Tammuz the Babylonian," I said, "would scarcely be quoting from the Apocalypse!"

"Why not?" he asked, "I am a worker in it, one of its manipulators! That's how I happen to have special authority to explain to you a *little* of the working of the Sea of Glass!"

The Sea of Glass began to make sense then. It was out of the Apocalyptic Vision on Patmos, "a sea like unto a sea of glass!"

"Exactly," said Tammuz. "Much of the Apocalyptic Vision was of ages long vanished when the Visionary 'saw.' Naturally, being human, he could not keep from 'coloring' his vision. It was our intention that it be so. Man could not know *all* . . . can you imagine what he would do, even now, if he, even *one* man of him, one city of him, one nation of him, possessed the secret of the Sea of Glass?"

"What good is it?" I asked. "A toy, no more. A take-off on video, the movies, radio maybe. I don't know what else."

"More than you could catalogue," said Tammuz. "At any moment I can look at any spot on the earth. I can then iris in any individual on that spot. I can talk to him, *if allowed*, and provided I give him, thus, no advantage over his fellows. I can change his whole life, provided I do it through his subconscious, and am willing to take the responsibility."

I stared at the man, for crazy though he might be—and nobody I ever knew looked less so—he was a man, one I liked, respected, and trusted.

"Show me!" I snapped.

He showed me. He proved it. It still did not need to be much ahead of what the world of science—which meant every well read twelve-year-old dabbler—already knew. After all, I had come to the Gobi, following hunches and theories based on study, to advance the cause of science. This might be a Chinese who had done the same thing, hiding himself beyond the reach of American colleges and the Russian Gestapo.

"Nothing you can prove," I said. "Nothing that can't be faked. Any good Hollywood director can work it!"

He had shown me Washington, the President and his cabinet in a tense meeting. He had shown me Stalin in the Kremlin, listening to his stooges. I, who understood no Russian, could understand everything they all said, though they did not speak English or any language I knew. The Sea of Glass, by some method I did not yet see, was also a language unscrambler. I began to suspect it had possibilities even the Visionary of the Apocalypse had not guessed.

"Well, Carnes," said Tammuz, still amused, infinitely patient, "suppose you name it."

"You know, of course, why Gol Rank and I are in Gobi?"

"To check your theories relative to the Semitic wanderings in the wilderness!"

"Exactly!" I stared at him. If he and everything he represented lived in the eternal Now, and there were tricks he could play with time . . .

"Everything that has happened," he said calmly, "remains, no matter what. You would hear the cymbals of Miriam? It's as simple, with the Sea of Glass, as showing two doubting Thomases in a jeep! Want to see workmen on the Pyramid of Gizeh? Hear the shouts of the taskmasters? Watch the Hebrews make bricks without straw?"

"You know what I want," I said. "If I am on the right track, how about a little proof?"

Tammuz stared at me. "We never, except for grave reasons, or in times of world crisis, satisfy ordinary human curiosity, but this time I am allowed to do so. There is

one condition: when you leave Shallajai you will remember none of it, either of you!"

I shrugged. I knew you couldn't blot out memory, even if you were Tammuz of Babylon.

"But I *can*," he said. "I *must*. You must attain information in the normal human way—if it is to be used!"

I think he pushed something else. I had noticed the intricate signs, cabalistic, weird, cuneiform, all around the rose quartz railing which separated us from the Sea of Glass. Suddenly, right under us, where we had seen ourselves as Tammuz had seen us, chasing goats in that fool jeep, we saw the marchers of long ago! There was no mistake about it. They were there, suffering as they marched, hunting the land that had been promised. I could see the gaunt faces of the starving, the thirsty, the endlessly wearied. I could hear the moans of men, women, children. And it all began near the encampment of Gol Rank and myself. I whirled and looked at Tammuz.

"Right under our camp?" I asked.

"Yes, else you'd never have been sent for, would never have been brought here, would never have been given this help."

"But these people all died before the movies, before video, before the Vision of the Apocalypse!"

"Correct," he said, "*and before the first Chinese, P'an Ku!* For your information, P'an Ku himself has stood right here and seen the wanderers, and to *him* it was just as long ago!"

"And I suppose *you* manipulated the Sea of Glass that he might see!"

Tammuz shrugged. "I did. I have been around since, more or less, the beginning of Now. I was one of the few charged with the care of developing man."

"I suppose, if I insisted," I said sarcastically, though I did not, even that early, doubt him in the least, "you could produce P'an Ku himself to convince me!"

"You will meet him during your indoctrination course here in Shallajai," said Tammuz, bowing. "You will meet many others, too. They are old friends, out of many long-agos."

I stared at him. This had taken seconds

and had not taken my attention very appreciably away from the Wanderers. I looked back at them. I could see the sweat on the coats of their mules, horses, sheep and goats. I had not known mules were so old. I heard singing, then . . .

"You say these people, as I see them here, are *alive*?" I demanded.

"In time, yes, which is *Now*. It is most unusual. It has never been allowed before, but if you wish, you may talk to any one you select, here in the Sea of Glass!"

"You mean you'll *materialize* him, or her?"

"Not exactly. People do not *die*. They *change* . . . it's not easy to explain to the time-bound. But if you wish you have but to speak to anyone you see—I prefer you would speak to obvious leaders, all of whom understand the secrets on which Shallajai is founded—you have but to signal and that one will be here, beside you, even as I am. You can ask questions, and receive truthful answers to questions that may never be answered with your picks and shovels, your Chinese and Mongol laborers!"

Well, I didn't do it. I was afraid somehow, because, as yet, I could not explain it. I had seen enough of the Wanderers. Before I could say anything, Tammuz knew; the scene vanished back into its proper place in "Now." I raised my head. There were many other men, now, and women, elbow to elbow around the Sea of Glass. I could not help it; my eyes darted to the head and shoulders of the most exquisite woman I had ever seen or even dreamed of. I whirled to Tammuz to start asking questions. Tammuz looked grave this time, no amusement in his eyes.

"I haven't yet mentioned the fact," he said, "that with the Sea of Glass we probe Infinity, the Microcosm and the Macrocosm, beyond any limit we are now allowed to reveal. P'an Ku has stood here, for example, and talked face to face with Plutonians! The woman in whom you are interested, incidentally, is one of the greatest scientists in that part of the Universe where our responsibility runs; she came to us just now, via the Sea, from . . ."

"Venus!" I heard myself saying, and I didn't mean it as a joke or a wise-crack. She happened to fit and super-fit the Venusian legend. She looked up, met my eyes, smiled; my heart jumped up, spun around like a puppy chasing its tail, then lay down flat, figuratively at her feet.

"Mercury!" said Tammuz, shaking his head. "But Venus is part of her regular itinerary, so you are not so far wrong!"

CHAPTER III

MYSTERY OF THE SUMMONS

MAYBE you'd better hold your hat. Maybe you'd better prepare for some unusual mental gymnastics. For now it comes thick and fast, maybe before you can get your hands up.

Every human being on this earth, who has ever lived on this earth, including *you*, has visited Shallajai and talked with Tammuz of Babylon or one of his assistants. Some of you, a very few, *remember*. It is not intended that others remember. If you remember you are one of the chosen few. You are no better than your neighbor, but perhaps more advanced on the Highway of Life, the Ladder of Evolution, if you remember. For you remember only what Tammuz intends you to remember; you have earned the right to remember because you have proved you can be trusted with memory. That takes some explaining. And explaining takes time, human beings get bored; because they are bored they do not advance very rapidly. Mostly, I think, they go backward. If it were not for Tammuz and the entities he called his First Experts, mankind would go backward to complete destruction.

Listen a moment. Tammuz, with a flick of the wrist, a bat of either eye, could make all Sahara blossom like a rose. He could plant it, by proxy of course, with plants exactly suited to its every part, for the plants were grown in Shallajai; Tammuz grew them; pardon, *grows* them!

China, all of Asia, is by way of being a treeless waste. There are exceptions of course. But take China, a desolation. He

could have done to China what he could have done to the Sahara. Tammuz and his brethren could have flowered the waste places of the world with plenty; he could have made it utterly unnecessary for man ever again to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. He still *can*!

Earth, as we know it, is the arena wherein men struggle for existence, grow old in a matter of heartbeats, die in agony, or die slowly and long. Earth is the arena of want and desolation. But in Shallajai, the Shallajai of Tammuz of Babylon, the gent I'm writing about, everything existed to supply every lack in the world! Was gold needed? It grew in limitless quantities in Shallajai; it *grows* in limitless quantities. . . . I have difficulty speaking in the present tense, in remembering that riches beyond human conception, riches of the spirit and the flesh, exist and have always existed in the place called Shallajai.

"All you have to do," I said to Tammuz when we'd been in Shallajai a couple of hours and could have seen little of it, actually, "to make every man on earth utterly independent, is to open the granary doors of Shallajai."

He looked at me sadly. "That," he said finally, "is true."

"Then what kind of an expeditor, co-ordinator, or whatever you call yourself, are you, to let man live in utter destitution when a flick of the wrist . . . ?"

"Man lives as he does," said Tammuz, gently interrupting me, "because he so elects. He has free will. He can do as he pleases. He pleases to do as you as well as I *know* he does. Who destroyed China's forests, turning the land into bare unproductiveness?"

"Why, er, I suppose the Chinese!"

"And their conquerors, yes; but they would not have been conquered if they hadn't earned defeat in war. Who do you suppose destroyed the fertility that once was the golden heart of the Sahara?"

I jumped at that. "Then it *was* fertile once!" I said. "There were great cities"

Again he interrupted. "There have been great cities almost everywhere in the world you can name. There have been great civi-

lizations even where the deepest seas now roll. A lot can happen, a lot *has* happened, in the last few billions of earth years!"

I stared at him, trying to picture even a little of the knowledge which must be his if he had been here since the Beginning, forever in possession of the Sea of Glass. My brain reeled with the possibility.

"You and your's," I said finally, "are actually the masters of the world!"

"No! *Men* are masters of the world. If they were not, if they had not been given dominion, we could do more. But that is not the law. We must obey the law, do you understand?"

"But in effect there is nothing you cannot do to, for or with, mankind. It is true, then, what one of ours recently said, that 'man is property!'"

"No, forever no! You are as I am, except that I have used my talents differently," said Tammuz. "You must work out your own destiny; that is the law. So when we see forests wasted, wars planned and fought when there is actually no reason, when we see men, crying women and starving children, dying by *millions*, how do you suppose we feel that we are not allowed to do anything about it, when we could do *everything*?"

"Then you're not master here!" I said. "For all your wealth and power you are not master here!"

"Is the earth master of the known universe? No, not even the sun is that! There are greater suns, suns beside which ours is a child's toy. I am an integer, just as you are."

"But who is to stop you if you turn loose all this power and wealth?"

HE COUNTERED with another question. "What do you think would happen to it? What, for instance, would you do with what you would surely call *your share*?"

I thought I could answer right away, just as anybody would have thought the same thing; but then no answer seemed to make the least bit of sense.

"These animals," he said to me once, "are as animals were *intended* to be, companions, friends and helpers of man—be-

fore man decided he must rule, and they fled from him in fear!"

I tried to remember things: Francis of Assisi and his kinship with birds and beasts, of the great teachers to whom man had paid little heed; all had walked closely with the birds. And even our own Indians knew the language of the trees, of grasses, of flowers. Yeah? Who would get away with that kind of talk now? Nobody! You'd find yourself in the booby hatch if you tried it. Suppose I came in from the fields and gave my brother scientists messages from the flowers? You can guess what it would have been like. Yet painters, great musicians and poets, *know*. They don't know very well, but they *feel*, because feeling is all that man has left; he has lost everything else; as he has lost fortunes on a turn of the cards, the flip of the dice.

But back to our knitting. Every human being on earth has visited Shallajai, remember that. Not only that, but people, especially people in great trouble, visited Shallajai every time they fell asleep! Yes, that's what I said! Every time they fell asleep! That's why you *go* to sleep. Yes, when you sleep your body rests, but what happens to *you*? You go to Shallajai . . .

THIS is how it works. You know how Gol Rank and I got there. We actually entered in some fashion I'm none too sure of, probably were put to sleep first, through the Sea of Glass. That's what happens to *you*. You don't remember? Of course not. If you remembered you'd have an advantage over your fellows, because it is not intended that you remember.

Everybody dreams, everybody, maybe not often, maybe not at all, *to remember*. How much do you think is real of that dream, how much false? Unless you're further along than most, the greatest percentage of it is completely false. It's the part you don't remember that's true. You went to Shallajai, if you merited the trip, either because you did something or failed to do something you should have. But it is not intended that you remember, *save subconsciously* so your memory is literally smeared with meaningless dreams, rubbed

over you so you'll forget what Tammuz and his brethren intend you to forget!

The Sea of Glass, we soon saw, was the central or main Sea of Glass. There were branches, branch lines, if you like, to make it easier to grasp, all reflecting the Sea Itself. There were assistants of Tammuz, like telephone operators at a vast switchboard, allotted to each of the "Seas" which served a particular section of the world, a particular race, color, creed, even a particular industry. There wasn't, *isn't*, a time, waking or sleeping, when one human being anywhere is not under benign, friendly, even loving, observation—not only as to his actions, but as to his thoughts. His toil at whatever he is doing, wasting his substance or wasting himself, registers on the "Sea" which is responsible for his bit of earth—*every least single bit of it*. If he starts to do something wrong, though the effect of his action may influence the whole world for ages to come, even the mighty Tammuz can only advise him subconsciously that some other course is better. But the man does not have to follow Tammuz' advice. He can go ahead, bull along on his own, even if he wrecks the world, for that is the law!

"I don't believe it," I said, aghast when Tammuz explained it. I knew there was a great deal I did not get. "Suppose you show me how it works." I was paying little attention now to the other men and women who stood around the Sea of Glass. Most of them were from other systems in the Universe, here to take note of the operations of Tammuz. They did not *need* to come; they had Seas of Glass of their own, they *wished* to come . . .

"Well, New York is asleep," said Tammuz. "It is three o'clock in the morning. Pick someone you know there . . ."

I mentioned the first man who came to mind.

"Doctor Lestring, the surgeon," I said.

Instantly, there in the "Sea" was Doctor Lestring, asleep. Tammuz looked at him for a few moments. Then he told me all I knew about Lestring, and more. He spoke with respect of Lestring, one of the world's great surgeons.

"In a few hours," said Tammuz, "he must perform a delicate operation on the brain of a delicate child, a child whom he realizes instinctively will become one of the world's great leaders if she does not die under the knife. He refused to operate yesterday; *he insisted he must sleep on it first!* That means he expects to come here. Now you will see why wise people sleep on their decisions, though they themselves may not know!"

Doctor Lestring then opened his eyes, though Tammuz had given no signal of any kind, and stepped out of the Sea of Glass. Just like that. There seemed to be two Lestrings, the man asleep and the Lestring who came to Shallajai. One could have been the soul, or spirit, of the other—but I, being a scientist, believed in no such claptrap!

"Good morning, Tammuz!" said Lestring in a voice I knew as well as I knew my own. "How are you, Carnes, Rank? Is Paracelsus waiting for me, as usual?"

I gasped. Lestring looked at me.

"Yes," he said, "the Paracelsus, who took surgery lessons under Hippocrates. I come to him whenever I doubt my own ability. Trouble is, I never remember. I won't remember when I go to operate in a few hours—but *I'll know just what I'm doing, and Leah Halleck will live to make a new bright world for crippled children.*"

Lestring turned and went away. His counterpart, asleep in New York, slept on—except that he sighed and turned his back on Tammuz, Rank and me!

"Actually then," I said, "Lestring has no say about it at all! He's predestined to operate on and save the life of Leah Halleck!"

"Tomorrow," said Tammuz softly, sadly, "he may decide, in spite of the fact that right this instant he is being shown how to save her life, that she is not strong enough to undergo the ordeal. Then she will, as you call it, *die!*"

"But not if you took the law into your own hands and *made* him operate successfully!"

"The life of one child, even one like Leah Halleck, weighs little against one man's will, his *free* will. If we were to

force the issue, against Lestring's best judgment . . . well, take a look at the world you ran away from to hunt Semitic fossils! The world is filled with people who are in some way or other exerting their human will against universal law!"

I looked into his eyes, suddenly feeling naked, ashamed.

"And right this instant, in the back of your mind," he said to me softly, "you yourself are thinking that there must be some way you can heave me and mine out of here, and play godfather to all the world with what has been shown you here!"

I felt myself getting red all over, from heels to head, for Tammuz was right. I could see myself master of all this—I'll list a few more things in a moment—distributing largess to the world, stipulating first, *laying down my own law, understand*, that the nations of the world disarm, disband their military forces, smoke the pipe of peace together. Then I'd start working on families—but always trying to enforce my own will!"

And just what, besides the Sea of Glass, did Tammuz have of use to the world? Atomic energy for commercial, for human comfort? He had it, the simplest kind of formula. A child could have worked it out. The latest in telephony? He showed me that the telephone, the telegraph, the radio, all the mechanisms of which we are so proud, were merely crude preparations for the moment when man could talk to and even visit, anybody on earth, in a heartbeat of time, merely by *thinking* of that one. Telephony, telegraphy, radiography, videography—all were hints of general clairvoyance, clairaudience, clairsentience, to come—when man had earned it!

The depths of the Pacific Ocean, just to cite one thing, seven miles down, in utter darkness too profound to be imagined even, under pressure nothing manmade could endure, could be, can be, turned into a Garden of the Gods, where under surroundings man has during eons forgotten, people of tomorrow may live and enjoy perfection.

"No place on earth or under it, above, below or in the seas," said Tammuz, "is beyond the *earning* of man. Thousands of

times he has had the limit; as many times he has pooped the riches of the Cosmos away; Now he crawls slowly back, while My Masters watch, in absolute patience, hoping that *this time* he will use better judgment, knowing even as they hope, that he will do nothing of the kind. And that is not all. . . .

"How much is a man of science supposed to swallow?" I asked savagely. "I may wish to ask something about the sun, moon, or stars!"

"Man must ride this merry-go-round," said Tammuz grimly, the first time he had been grim at all, "*until the very least among mankind*—the pygmy of Ituri forest, the Andaman Islander, the Gaiapo Indian, or it might be *you!*—has become as advanced as the Senior Entity in Shallajai! And even that is little more than a beginning, for after the earth there are other" he slowed down there, stopped.

"It seems to me," I said, "as if it would never end."

"A simple fact you learned in Sunday School, George," he said gently. "Did not your elders promise you eternity? Then you became a scientist and refused to accept more than three score and ten years!"

"A new slant on time," I muttered, staring at the Sea of Glass, to which we returned after a leisurely walk in a near section of Shallajai. "You, Tammuz, and others like you, must become awfully bored with us. You've been here millions of years, waiting for us to amount to something."

"Why not?" he retorted. "I was, in effect, a pygmy of the Ituri Forest, an Andaman Islander, a Gaiapo Indian—I was even as low in the scale of evolution as *you* are! (I was none too sure he grinned!)—and Someone waited for *me!* The least I can do is pay my debts. That's true of all of us."

I tried to mask my thoughts from him, tried to think without thinking, without showing it. I could, I realized, pay all my "debts" of omission and commission to the end of time, just by grabbing Shallajai. I decided to do it—after I had got enough lowdown to be sure of working the combination.

If there was no chance, no accident, why

had I been brought to Shallajai, anyway? I began to realize my near approach to godhood, my affinity with the great Workers Behind the Scenes.

I asked Tammuz: "Just why did you bring Rank and me here?"

"You are about to make discoveries it has been planned for ages that man shall have *exactly now!* You are here to know just what they are, so there will be no wild guesses!"

CHAPTER IV

THE WHEELS OF SHALLAJAI

"DO YOU believe in miracles?" said Tammuz. "Of course I know that, as a scientist, you don't. You're right; there are no miracles; there never were!"

I stared at this man who was himself, if we had not been entirely deluded, a miracle.

"There were and are no miracles," he was very grave. "Yet I tell you flatly now that Moses *did* strike water from the rock, did turn a staff into a snake before Pharaoh, did part the waters of the Red Sea with his wand so that his people could cross dry-shod. I tell you the most unbelievable of all 'miracles', that Joshua *did* in fact prolong the day in Ajalon. . . ."

I began to look incredulous at this point, without a doubt, as I thought of what staying the earth in its course for a whole day would do to the celestial set-up, to say nothing of catastrophic results on earth, but Tammuz nodded.

"*It can be done,*" he said, "*if you know how, as did Joshua the Son of Nun!* You will know how, in your turn, for in your excavations, Gol Rank and Sherm Carnes, you will find the mechanical devices of Joshua, the rod or wand of Moses. . . ."

"Next thing," I said sarcastically, "you will be telling us we'll find the chariot in which Elijah took off!"

Tammuz smiled. "At least you *do* know of some of the hints that man has been given through the ages! Listen, you two, you want to know why you're here! This is the reason. You are going to re indoctrinate your people—if they give you time enough. Not with the wand of Moses, or the ma-

chinery of Joshua, or the chariot of Elijah; those are still too far in advance, in the future, even for people who can fly non-stop around the world. But you're going to give your people lost techniques which lead slowly, gradually, in accordance with your own laws of evolution, progress, up to these articles you will find in Shallajai. Your own great economists are insisting that there are too many people in the world, even when great devastating wars have just wiped them out by the millions. But I say to you that here Shallajai, in the bottom of the very pits you are digging now in the Gobi, seeking the secrets of the distant past, you will find implements whose secrets, if you discover them, *will make it possible for every human being in the world to live, anywhere on the face of the earth, in an area no larger than your great state of Texas!*"

"You have all these gadgets here, Tammuz?" I asked. I wasn't groveling or cringing to Tammuz. I'd never believed in a God who compelled men to demean themselves, or exacted sacrifice, or browbeat or punished them. Maybe I didn't believe in any at all, but even this Tammuz was far and away a greater being than the Master of any piece of literature I knew.

"Here we have long since come to the end of 'gadgets,'" said Tammuz. "What are gadgets? What are airplanes, telephones, explosives? They are all brought together and constructed by *men*, from the ingredients which the First Experts, down the ages, have made ready for them. But whence comes the knowledge where from to make these things? First, from the Beings who guide the peoples of earth. . . ."

"Property again!" I said.

"No. In the world you know best the best-equipped lead the least-equipped, or try to. That's what we do—or try to do. And even the most powerful can do no more than try. So, you are going to bring new things, 'gadgets' if you like, to the world, but you are going to bring them in such a way that a man, *no man*, is at once completely equipped with the Creative Fiat. Gadgets come from men's minds—and the most nearly perfect gadgets of all, which the wise men of all ages have used, are

men's minds. You will lead men just one, or perhaps two, steps further along the way to the spot where he can wave his hand, or not wave his hand, if he feels lazy, and create, as by a 'miracle', anything he wishes! Suppose one man could do that now?"

"If he were an American," I said, "he would create a super atom bomb and blast a big hole where Russia now is! If he were a Russian the United States would become, almost at once, a raging green sea! If he were . . ."

Tammuz held up his hand.

"So you see? Now, gentlemen, Sahara has been a waste long enough; a beginning must be made to restore it. That requires unusual knowledge. It requires the ability to alter weather over a vast area. . . ."

"Miracle?" I suggested.

"Machinery," he said. "Man *must* not be able to do it directly from mind *yet!* So, in your digging, three months from today, you will find models of rain-making equipment built before P'an Ku. It will look like an ordinary discus, such as your athletes throw. But it contains power, even after all these ages. Its insides contain mechanical contrivances whereby dampness in the air, even over Sahara, is collected above the land where the first work is to be done, and rain made to fall. . . ."

It didn't seem difficult, just hearing it. I could just see such a gadget, a Sea of Glass in Miniature, from which, perhaps the heat of the sun could be reflected, or the heat could be absorbed entirely, or as desired, and the weather regulated. . . .

"Communications," Tammuz went on, "in the flesh, are still man's *greatest* obstacle to brotherhood and understanding. It is notable that a *bomber* first flew around the world non-stop! But there is a faster way. One evening, after a certain event in Jerusalem, a Great Teacher suddenly appeared among His people, though all the doors were closed and locked! Remember it? Every person can do the same thing; but no man *knows* that he can. Nor will any man have such knowledge for ages yet to come. He has to be led up to realize the limitless extent of his own abilities and powers! It must be gradual. That is why

you will also find an ancient instrument which, by the very nature of man, must be far less effective than this Sea of Glass!"

I interrupted him there, forgetting all about taking possession of Shallajai to make a good thing for myself out of it.

"I once read some silly Tibetan stuff about an Atlantean 'Door called Dox,'" I said. "I never even dared let my fellow scientists know I read such stuff. But it was just a door that did not open, yet if you had it in New York and wanted to go to San Francisco, you regulated it to tune in San Francisco, stepped through the door and there you were—in San Francisco!"

"Crude," said Tammuz. "True, too. The Atlanteans did have it. But it is still far in the future for the world as matters now stand. Man is reaching for something like this—only he *thinks* he is making rockets that will travel around the world, or that he can fire at any spot on earth from some synthetic satellite of his own building. You're going to discover a vehicle called *kmerzed*. It resembles an airplane, slightly. When it crashed and plowed into the Gobi, millions of years ago, at the spot where you're going to dig it up and try to reconstruct it, it was traveling fifteen thousand miles an hour! It required no pilot. Any passenger could fly it. You just stepped into it, spoke into a receiver, explained where you wished to go, a record was cut, and *kmerzed* did exactly as the record commanded!"

"**W**HY could not the passenger simply command the *kmerzed*?" I asked. "Oh, never mind, I know. Even then the passenger could not be trusted with so much individual power; it had to be strained through something!"

"I am sorry," he said, "but that is true. It is just as true now. Man must be held in check by his machines, until he knows how to control himself; then he will be able to control the world; at which time the world will not require control!"

"Look," I said, "I disapprove of the world, including myself, as much as you possibly can, but let's be practical, shall we? You've shown me things, promised me others. You can do tricks with time. Good,

cut back to the time when that rain-making disc you mentioned controlled the weather!"

He shrugged. "Naturally, it was over the Gobi, when the spot where you're digging now was a great city—called En-don!"

"En-don?" I repeated.

"People refer to it now as 'Eden,'" he said, "and talk as if they knew all about it. Now, have a good look at En-don!"

In order that I should know exactly what he meant, he showed me first—and Gol Rank, of course—just what my Chinese and Mongols were doing back at the excavation. I expected to see them all loafing, Gol and I being absent, but they were working like beavers. Tammuz cut past them into the ground, down and down, and showed us the disc he had mentioned. First he showed us fragments, and my mind and Rank's began putting them together; but the Sea of Glass did it faster. Then there was the entire disc. The Sea of Glass began, seemingly, to ride back along that disc—well, you've seen in the movies how spinning wheels indicate the passing of time? Like that. The disc spun. Then it rested, atop a slender column of gleaming marble. Then the "lens" of the Sea of Glass trolleyed back, and we saw many other columns, with the discs atop them. We were allowed to see cross-sections of the discs, with machinery inside them. There was machinery inside the columns, too.

But that wasn't what got us the most; Tammuz had prepared us for that. Now the Sea of Glass spun us in the crucible of time somehow, and we saw the Gobi itself as once it had been, as complete and perfect in itself as was this strange area of Shallajai in which we now stood beside Tammuz to marvel. Rank and I both recognized landmarks before Tammuz had to mention them. But the Gobi we knew had no rivers—only the deep-down mysterious whispering of the wells of Shallajai. This ancient Gobi, or "En-don," was beautified by rivers and streams that were almost *alive* in their joyous usefulness. There were trees loaded with fruits. There were buildings that were music made visible; the whole Gobi was a city, not pack-jammed together, but every piece of land utilized, with the

buildings set in parks, beside streams, musical waterfalls . . . well, it *could* have fathered the legend of Eden!

Briefly, without comment, Tammuz showed us houses where men and women played, gambled, threw other men and women to beasts. I didn't wonder, for very long, why he showed us *this!*

"They were getting ready even then," I said, "to poop the whole thing away!"

He did not even nod. He just looked sad, for a brief moment.

"You might as well see *kmerzed*," said Tammuz.

"See it, at fifteen thousand miles an hour!" I said.

"No," he said, "ride in it. Here it is!"

There in the Sea of Glass, right under us, was the *kmerzed*. It wasn't an airplane but a rocket, by the looks of it. That it belonged in the ancient clay under our excavation I did not even think about just then.

"Where do you wish to go?" asked Tammuz. "Pick a spot where people are asleep; we don't wish to set the world by its ears!"

"I'll set down on the airfield at Belterra, in Brazil," I said. "But how am I going to be sure it isn't a dream?"

"Get out at Belterra," said Tammuz quietly, "and procure something that will prove it to you."

I remembered back to when I had spent some months at Belterra. There was a fence beside the airfield. A vine grew on it, a *maracuja peroba* vine, on which grew a lemon-sized fruit, juicy and delicious, which made my mouth water just to remember.

Tammuz touched the railing of the Sea of Glass. A door opened—*what kind of a door was this, of which he did not once speak?*—and Rank and I stepped down, into the *kmerzed*. It was commodious, comfortable. I spoke into the transmitter. "Take us to Belterra, Brazil, the airfield there, and land!"

I didn't say whether to go east or west. It didn't much matter, if memory served. It was about the same distance either way. One hour there, one hour back, if Tammuz wasn't hypnotizing us. It seemed less than that. In fact, my watch got it at forty-five minutes. We didn't feel a thing, see a thing.

No bumping, no nothing! We just looked out and there was the airfield at Belterra, it was night, and I got out, went to the fence, picked half a dozen of the *peroba*, we got back into the *kmerzed*. We hadn't eaten half the *perobas* before Tammuz himself opened the door for us and I tendered him one of Brazil's nicest fruits. He shook his head.

"Naturally," I said, "if *peroba* grows in Shallajai, this can all be a trick!"

"It does not grow here, it just happens," said Tammuz, "which is exactly why I *hoped*—just *hoped*, mind you!—that you would collect the *maracuja peroba* to prove your journey to Brazil! Of course, if you doubt, and care to search through Shallajai. . . ."

I did not doubt—I told myself.

"I'm anxious, we're both anxious," I said to Tammuz, "to get back to our digging, since we now know what we shall find. Is there anything you wish to tell us before we ask your permission to leave?"

HE SHOOK his head slowly. His face was very serious.

"Since earliest times," he said, "no day has passed that mankind has not been told. First it was handed down verbally, from wise father to wise son—and men laughed. Then it was written down, and science called it myth. . . ."

"You mean . . . ?" I began.

"That every so-called miracle mentioned in every religious book in the world, was deliberately given the world in order to help mankind's scientists to advance the welfare of mankind. They were merely expected to analyze those 'miracles'; not deride, laugh at and cast them out. . . ."

"After all," I interrupted, "you'll have to admit that the plagues of frogs, flies, water turning into blood, scorpions, locusts and the like, are pretty hard to swallow!"

"Do you think so?" he said softly. "Then why do your military scientists wallow in dreams of *bacteriological warfare*? It's old stuff, gentlemen, old stuff! And the reporters of yesterday were sometimes just as inaccurate as they are today!"

I took that one on the chin.

"We may return here when we've uncovered the disc and the *kmerzed*?" I asked.

"No, not as you are now, not in a jeep, not chasing goats!" he smiled a little. "There is a limit to what I am allowed to disclose. I have almost reached it. When you see me again you will see me as Lestring does, as almost everybody else in the world does; but you will not remember!"

We followed Tammuz back to our jeep.

We got into the jeep, started to say goodbye to Tammuz. But he wasn't anywhere, and Rank and I were just chasing goats over the face of the Gobi! When we realized, we headed back for our camp. We didn't talk.

CHAPTER V

AGELESS ARTIFACTS

WE DIDN'T tell ourselves we didn't believe it, we just didn't discuss it. There was the Brazilian fruit to remember, the visions of things past, of things to come—or had we seen any of the future?

Men are strange. It never occurred to us to wonder that out of all the world Tammuz had selected us to take messages to the world. We were "chosen." Everybody thinks he's "chosen" for something, and doubtless he is. As we shot back through the desert in a jeep whose motor now ran perfectly, I turned and looked at the goats. Who could know whether they were the same ones, and just what happened to us, and them? We could have driven into a dream of some kind. Maybe there was something queer in the waters of the deep wells of Shallajai, of which we had drunk thirstily.

We circled around the bodies of several dead men. The dog-bears were eating them. It was Mongol "burial." These dog-bears were definitely not friends of man! I didn't remember having seen one of them in the strange unearthly garden of Tammuz. There had been bears, and dogs, but the two combined, no.

There was some concern on the part of our Chinese and Mongol laborers when we got back to camp. When we got out of the jeep I stared at Gol Rank.

"You believe it, Gol?" I asked.

"I believe it," he said. "Have you stopped to figure out how much water we'll draw in the world when we are in possession of the disc and the *kmerzed* thing? We can be richer than Croesus."

"No," I said, "we can't. Do you think Tammuz wants us to have those gadgets for our personal use?"

"Look, sucker," said Rank, "while I remind you of something! We were digging in this hole *before* we got caught in a mess of ethereal rose quartz! We'd have found those gadgets with no help from Tammuz, provided they're down below us. If we hadn't gone chasing goats he wouldn't have been in it anywhere!"

"Then you *don't* believe," I said. "You don't think there is really any control over man's destiny, in spite of what we've been through?"

"I believe *something*, but just what it is I can't say," said Rank. "But listen a minute. While we were driving back from the dream section of Shallajai," there was something approaching contempt in his voice, contempt for me, contempt for himself, "I turned and look over our rear seat. You had to drive, see? Well, did I see any rose quartz, anywhere we saw it just before we came out of the Sea of Glass and found ourselves being hornswoggled by Tammuz? I didn't see anything—except sand dunes as far as the eyes could reach. NO rose quartz, nothing! We've been had, that's all. . . ."

"And if, inspite of us being had," I said, "we find the disc and the *kmerzed*, what then? And what of the fruit we picked up in Brazil?"

"I believe we experienced it somehow," he said. "That's what I mean when I say I believe. There's possibility in the human brain, even in yours or mine, beyond man's own conception, for look here! Suppose we do find the rain-making disc and the *kmerzed*. Didn't we come to the spot *before* Tammuz, just as I said?"

"Yeah," I pointed out, "but how did we happen to come to just the right spot? If, of course, we *did*?"

Gol Rank shrugged. "How does any explorer ever find anything! Something in him

whispers—or . . . or . . . something! And you worked out a theory, remember?"

"With no discus in it, no *kmerzed*," I said calmly.

I made a mistake after that, but maybe I'd have done it again after knowing and thinking about it. I called our laborers around us. I explained to the coolies, to the Chinese and Mongols, that somewhere down under us were artifacts of absolute rarity. They hadn't been seen or suspected in the world since P'an Ku. They pricked up ears at mention of P'an Ku, for few outlanders find the name even in a cross-word puzzle. I had two foremen, a Chinese and a Mongol. Each racial group was handled by its own boss. The men understood that they were to be very careful. Many feet down, we did not know just how many, they would find certain things. I even went so far as to draw plans of them! Then I became aware that the Chinese and Mongols were staring at me with their mouths open.

"You just have to be careful not to break these things," I told them. "The disc is intact, but the other thing, which looks like an airplane, crashed here millions of years ago and broke up somewhat. I must have all the pieces so I can restore it!"

The men did not say anything. They did not even jabber, and when a coolie doesn't jabber he's very sick, dead, or *awed*. The two foremen waited after the men went back to their digging. The Chinese acted as spokesman.

"This is not good, Carnes *hsien sheng*," he said, the Chinese words meaning something like "Mister." "Even coolies know there were no airplanes, even a very short time ago! As for the disc, perhaps—but for weeks now we have been digging in cement-hard clay, thickened with pebbles, quartz, an occasional precious stone. There have been other things, but these were expected. Now the two *mei kuo jen* (Americans) go out into the desert, are gone some hours longer than expected, and return to tell us that somewhere under this clay that has not been disturbed since P'an Ku there are two especial things! The men do not understand. They will begin to think. They are already afraid of the bones, skulls and footprints we

have found here! Is there something one might tell them? How does Carnes *hsien sheng* see deeply into the earth now, after all these months when he has not been able?"

Maybe there was a devil in me when I answered. I could see where superstition might get them down.

"Tell them," I said, "that I have it straight from P'an Ku himself!"

"Is this an order, *hsien sheng*? If it is, then not a Chinese or Mongol will work on beyond the moment I tell him! He will not believe it, but he will not work, fearing its truth! And if, when we do dig on, we find these things you mention . . ."

Both foremen shook their heads. Their faces were gray.

"They might kill both of you," said the Mongol, "to keep you from disturbing the relics of the ages—*P'an Ku's* *relics*!"

"Well, tell them we consulted an itinerant fortune teller we ran into at the Shallajai wells!"

I said that on the spur of the moment, thinking of the fortune teller every Chinese knows, the one with the can full of sticks on which fortunes are written, and the little bird that takes your money and selects a stick with your "fortune" on it. But Chun Juar, the Chinese, and Ta Kuei, the Mongol, didn't for a moment think of such a one. Both stared at me even more aghast. Then they looked at each other.

"That would be even worse," said Ta Kuei. "It has been known since the Shallajai wells existed, that they *whisper*! Some gifted persons can understand the whispering. Sun Yat Sen was inspired by whispers out of the wells. Long ago Genghiz Khan listened to the whispers. Emperors and empresses of China for ages have sent seers to listen to the whispers. . . ."

"True," said Chun Juar. "Is it not true of the Mongol rulers also?"

I was getting in too deeply. Gol Rank pulled at my arm.

"The foremen themselves will be leaving if you don't button your lips!" he told me. "Let's drop it and get busy with running our normal business."

I nodded, led the way into the pit, which

covered an area of about fifteen acres, altogether, some more deeply worked than other parts, some scarcely scraped. It depended on where we found the most interesting artifacts. But I remembered something seen in the Sea of Glass, something perhaps not intended for me to see—the spot below which the disc and the *kmerzed* would be found. I walked right to the area above the disc, first, and Rank nodded; he had noticed, too. We gave that area to the Chinese, told them to work down carefully over a much wider area than was necessary. The *kmerzed* location was as far away as it could be from the disc and still be within the outlines of our original survey of the digging.

"Now," I bade them all, "dig! Your pay is increased fifteen percent, and we're going to work two hours more each day!"

Coolies didn't mind the additional work, but I should not have increased their pay. It suggested something they preferred not to believe—a feverish impatience on our part to find something—*something that possibly should stay buried!*

When I put Gol Rank over the Chinese end, with responsibility for the rain-making disc, I could just see him as overlord of the Sahara, or the Mojave, or Death Valley, turning it into a garden spot, any or all of them in turn, then starting a real-estate boom in each one, lining his pockets with more millions than any man before him ever had, even Midas, even Croesus. Only, I was sobered a little now. I was seeing, ever so blurredly, that it wouldn't do. If the world needed this sort of thing, and Heaven knew the world did, then no *one* man should have an exclusive on it—even *me!*

I took over the *kmerzed* area.

For a solid month we uncovered artifacts that would have turned the world green with envy and merely threw them out into the rubble we took out of the two pits. I fully intended to dig them out again at some later time. There weren't so many Dawn Men extant, and dinosaur eggs were not so plentiful that we could just shrug them away. But I was after the disc and the *kmerzed*. Every night, before we went to bed, Rank talked and figured. He cov-

ered sheets of paper with arithmetical progressions; he worked out algebraic equations; simple arithmetic wouldn't do to suit him.

"I believe it's here, Sherm," he said. "I dream of it. I see old Tammuz in my dreams once in a while, looking awfully stern and shaking his head at me, but that's just a dream, like the Shallajai dream we had. Yet I believe some of it, about the disc, because I want to, because I've always wanted to be rich, powerful, famous."

"Not even one nation, not even the United States," I kept telling him, "should have a monopoly on either the disc or the *kmerzed*. Tammuz intended for us to see that the *whole world derives benefit from what we find!*"

"And just what will the business men, the rulers, the generals of the world think of us if we don't feather our own nests?"

"They'll think we're visionary lunatics," I said, "but we'll know we're playing proper ball with Tammuz, P'an Ku, Chemosh, Baal, and the other Guardian Entities we didn't get around to meeting when we were being indoctrinated by Tammuz! That's his word, remember? We are to reindoctrinate the world!"

"I'm no world leader," said Rank. "I'm just an ordinary guy named Rank who never had two yachts to rub together his whole life! This is my chance. I'm not going to miff it."

THEN came days of discouragement, lack of belief, lack of faith—when even the quite frightened coolies began to perk up because it was clear we wouldn't find anything.

The disc came to view on the blade of a coolie's shovel, just like that. The coolie saw it and froze, like a statue. I just happened—or does anybody ever "just happen?" to be looking down into the disc pit when the disc showed up. Before anybody said a word Gol Rank knew. He whirled. It was as if all the Chinese had become statues on the instant.

Then Gol Rank jumped at the disc, grabbed it. I noted, just before that, in every visible particular it was one of the

discs we had seen on the columns in ancient En-don.

Rank sat down with it on his knees. He leaned back against the wall of the pit. His arms sagged. The disc rolled off his lap. It didn't break. It wasn't made of the stuff that breaks. The ancient ones made *this particular disc to last*.

I dropped down the side of the pit where the coolies were still frozen. I took one look at Gol Rank. He was dead. Deader'n a door nail!

I knew he was dead, had known it while dropping into the pit. Looking back, I must have known it the first time he suggested that we make ourselves rich with our findings.

By a queer instant of clairvoyance—what else could it have been?—I knew that I could touch the disc without harm to myself.

I picked it up, turned to the coolies. They knew Rank was dead. They saw me hold the thing that had killed him. It was too much. They screamed, jabbered, fought one another until blood came, trying to get out. I didn't try to stop them. That was up to Chun Juar. He wasn't trying to stop them. He himself was fighting to escape from this devil pit.

After the Chinese were out I followed, taking it easy, all but forgetting Gol Rank for the time being. I sat down in my folding chair, in front of our tent, Rank's and mine, and looked at the disc. At once, as if I could see them behind my lids, I saw the discs of En-don the columns on which they stood—and how their machinery worked. In some subtle fashion, and at once, I was being shown how it was possible to make this disc practical.

A shadow fell on me. I looked up at Ta Kuei, my Mongol foreman.

"We're finding pieces of strange metal," he said. "My men are afraid to go on. They won't go on, for me. But if you, whom the buried lightning does not harm, were to promise them that they will come to no harm either, then I believe they will work on!"

I hoped so, too, for there wasn't a Chinese left in camp.

CHAPTER VI

START FROM SCRATCH

IT WASN'T a plane, I knew when I got the pieces together, many days later. It wasn't a rocket, either. It was a Lines-of-Force Machine of some sort. It followed certain waves. Could it have been *thought* waves? Thought waves slowed down by passage through the transmitter and the record from which its authority derived? I would never forget that two-hour trip to Brazil and return to Gobi, when I had spoken thus into the *kmerzed* transmitter.

"I wish to be taken to the airfield at Belterra, Brazil."

Thought slowed down by mechanical means! Well, why not? Beams of light were too fast, sound too slow. The rocket traveled at around fifteen thousand miles an hour. To think of traveling to Brazil required less time than that . . . but wait a moment!

If I were to *will* myself to Brazil, or anywhere, would I not have to see the way in detail, in the eye of my mind? Is that not exactly what happens when one flies anywhere? Someone else may do it, like a pilot who depends upon his navigator, but the navigator must know where he is every second of a long flight, either on instruments or "seat of the pants."

Quick as thought. . . .

It was something to go on. I have a good memory. I had made a little study of the *kmerzed* on the flight to Brazil. I could see the metal—unknown to me as yet—of the *kmerzed* being assembled. I could see this in my mind with each new piece we took out of the old clay under Gobi. My Mongols stayed on with me without argument when I made it clear that I at least *thought* there was no danger to them.

I buried Gol Rank. There was nothing else to do. I had the exact location for his family. I realized that he had died, not of anything that had shocked him, in the discus, but from a heart attack brought on by sheer excitement. But I'd never have been able to sell that idea to the Chinese, none of whom ever returned even for his money. In

a way I was responsible for Gol's death; if I had kept my mouth shut about what I was sure we would find, deep down, they would not have gone nuts with fear when he died.

I did a packing job on the *kmerzed* and the discus. During my spare time I drew up plans for reconstructing them. Then, just to make sure they did not fall into wrong hands, I memorized them and threw away the plans. I had a feeling, all this time, that Tammuz was guiding and helping me.

I wasn't satisfied about Tammuz, you can be sure of that. And before I paid off my Mongols and broke up my camp in the Gobi, before, in fact, I did some additional digging and took possession of the materials we uncovered and treated so cavalierly while we were hunting for the discus and the *kmerzed*. I got thirty large cases of ancient artifacts which proved to me that this, the Gobi, had been the "wilderness" through which the Semites had wandered for forty years-centuries-millenniums; these artifacts would have delighted me beyond anything if I had never heard of the weather-control discus and the *kmerzed*. These two things, these "discoveries," overshadowed everything else.

And there were strings hanging out where Tammuz was concerned. I was not satisfied with the way that contact had ended. There were strings hanging out, somehow. Maybe I *did* go to him for instructions while my "body" slept, but I did not remember, and it was not adequate as an explanation. It argued for acceptance of the soul, or spirit, as a fact, and I would have none of it, or *thought* I wouldn't.

There had been no rain, no wind, no storms on the Gobi since Gol Rank and I started our unplanned, historic goat drive. There should be jeep tracks.

First, though, missing Gol Rank as if he had been closer than a brother, I drove to the whispering wells of Shallajai. Deep, old, mysterious, dug by nobody knew whom or when, they were life to hundreds of Gobi Desert travelers.

I listened above the wells, seeking in the whispering some hint of the voice of Tammuz. I drank deeply and heartily of the water, on the off chance that there was

something soporific in it. I waited to give it a chance. There was nothing, I felt, though I could have been mistaken. The legends of the wells had started somehow, generations in the past. As for the whispering, well, there is always something mysterious about whispers in a deep well. There were no words for me in the whispering. And yet, Sun Yat Sen, if that legend were true, was a hard-headed gent; he didn't play the sucker easily. And Genghiz Khan was the greatest dictator in historical times—if that legend was true: that he had got inspiration from the whispers in the Shallajai wells.

I CAME away from the wells. All I needed now, in retracing our steps of that memorable day in the rose quartz, was to jump the same goats at the same place. It did not happen. I saw no goats. But I knew the spot where we had jumped them when I came to it. I found our jeep tracks quite easy to follow. The way led between two sand dunes. I watched right and left for the beginning of the rose quartz highway. It did not come. The jeep tracks just led on and on.

They turned left, naturally, where they had to stop. I stopped at the end of the jeep tracks, and stared in utter amazement—for leading on away was a clear opening in the sand dunes, and beyond the last marks of the tires were the footprints of the goats which had escaped us. No mystery about it at all; we had simply stopped, our motor stalled, and the goats had run on into the Gobi! There was no rose quartz, there hadn't been!

Yet how explain our advance information on the discus and the *kmerzed*?

I could almost hear Tammuz chuckling. I was so sure of it I stood up in the jeep and looked all around. Nothing. No goats. No dog-bears. No Tammuz. No Dream-Shallajai.

He had said I would not return as I was then—it suddenly came back to me. My only re-entrance to Tammuz' garden was via the Sea of Glass, but how. . . ?

"I know you're watching, Tammuz," I said into the clear air of the Gobi, "so here

goes nothing—provided I can do a simple thing like going to sleep!"

I had a tarp in the jeep. I made a sun-shade. I killed the motor. I made myself comfortable on the back seat of the jeep—no mean feat in itself. I refused to think of how Tammuz had constructed the Rose Quartz Highway, then struck it like a tent. Maybe he commanded Universal Material of some sort, mentally. He had at least got me hipped on the business of the power of mind.

I dozed off.

I stepped out of the Sea of Glass and shook hands with Tammuz!

"Do not regret your friend Gol Rank," was the first thing he said. "It was his time. He would have gone no matter where he had been. He has to start again!"

"I had to make sure it wasn't a pipe dream, Tammuz," I said.

"But to all intents and purposes it *is*!" he told me. "For you *are* here in a dream."

"I don't feel any differently, though I *know* it's a dream," I told him. "First thing, what about Doctor Lestring and Leah Halleck, did he operate?"

Tammuz smiled. "Of course, and successfully. He has been here many times since, to prepare for even more miraculous surgery! You, too, are back now—and never forget: *every human being comes here, to the seat of central control, whenever there is real need!* And only a few are allowed to remember in part, though never entirely. The rest we cause to be buried in trivial dreams. You, too, will forget. You will start from scratch with your two archeological finds when you waken. You will remember nothing of columns, of En-don, of inner machinery. . . ."

Then I awakened in the jeep, under the tarp, chuckling to myself. I hadn't tried to put something over. That would not have been cricket, but I had kept a careful diary of all this, so how could I forget? Had Tammuz actually *meant* for me to remember more than his laws allowed, to give me the bulge on other investigators into the past? Was I wrong in planning to use my notes?

I decided I wasn't, though the idea that I might not, sort of angered me.

I SPEEDED the jeep back to the camp. En-route I scared up a flock of goats I jammed on the brakes, halted until they were well beyond reach. I'd had enough of chasing goats. They got a man muddled, at least *these* had. Now I, simple though I was, was in position to set aside what had seemed to be a decree of Tammuz. He said I'd forget, but I knew I wouldn't. "Start from scratch," he said. I didn't need to. The innards of the disc, the capitals of the columns in En-don, the machinery in the columns; the details of the *kmerzed*. It was all in my head, never-to-be-forgotten. Yet when I began work, to my amazement I found myself unbelievably forgetful! My plans did not look right, nor did they work out. Nothing I "remembered" worked out. And all the time I kept trying to take advantage of what I had not been supposed to remember, but was *sure* I did, in spite of evidence to the contrary that made me think I was becoming senile, I seemed to hear an eerie bodiless chuckling which might have been that of Tammuz muted with distance—or maybe it would have sounded out of the depths of Shallajai's whispering wells.

I got nowhere, nowhere at all, until I resigned myself and started from scratch!

