

TARA and the PRINCE OF ATLANTIS

By Charles S. Strong



HANEESH, the ruler of the pirate stronghold at Phantom Haven on a satellite of Venus, called upon his most trusted henchmen, Tara, Robin and Malo. The Earth girl and her companions did not consider the pirates as real criminals, because they had pledged themselves to fight against tyrants and to help the ordinary people.

"We have a hard problem," Haneesh told the girl. "Several expeditions have reported in that the Planet Celdan is drying up. They have tried unsuccessfully to move the inhabitants to another planet where they will be able to resume their normal life. Thus far they have been unsuccessful."

"What seems to be the difficulty?" asked Tara.

"Here is a report from Captain Balden," Haneesh said. He handed her a teletype message which read:

COLDAN PEOPLE APPROX TO DEATH IN OUR SPACE SHIP STOP CANNOT UNDERSTAND THIS STOP WE HAVE RESCUED THE STRONGERS OF COLDAN EXACTLY FIVE HUNDRED CREW MEMBERS.

"I'll go out to Celdan and look into it," Tara declared.

Haneesh agreed to this, and set long afterward Tara and her two companions were climbing into their space ship, checking the charts for their course to Celdan, and were blasting off the field at Phantom Haven.

Once they had adjusted their automatic pilot on the proper arc, Malo strode up and down the room and snapped his whip with all the venom that marked his most terrible attack against any enemy.

"My wrists are growing stiff," he said.

"I doubt whether we will meet any enemy worthy of your skill," the girl told him.

Robin was watching the visiscreen and the controls, and he smiled. His fingers closed about the butt of his weapon and he half-drew the rap-sword from its scabbard.

"We are on a different sort of a mission," she assured the two men.

lewed the movement about him in the visiscreen. Meteors, planets and other heavenly bodies were visible in the apparatus.

Finally, Robin threw a lever as a bell started to ring. He adjusted knobs and dials and a space ship formed on the visiscreen. Malo cracked his whip and turned to the girl, then remarked:

"Here comes excitement."
Tara laughed, then she said:

"Calm down, Malo. That is Captain Balden's ship. We will be alongside in another quarter of an hour."

Even as she spoke they were moving toward the pirate craft. Finally, Captain Balden's smiling face appeared in the visiscreen and his familiar voice said:

"So they have sent a woman to relieve me. And Tara at that. It is an honor and a pleasure. But this is one problem that you will find too great for you."

AS THE space ship whipped across the sky, Robin fel-

The Inhabitants of Coldan Face Disaster!

Tara chuckled. She looked to her weapons and then motioned for Robin and Malo to attend to this chore, too. Finally the two pirate ships were grappled together. Tara adjusted her broad gold belt, turned down her high boots, and opened the safety hatch in the hull of the space ship. Now that she was about to see the first of the Coldan people she did not know just what to expect.

ROBIN remained at the controls, but Malo followed the girl into Captain Balden's craft. The pirate commander greeted them and led them into one of the rooms at the stern of his ship.

Tara saw the figures resting on a divan-like bed and she studied them carefully. Malo looked over her shoulder and then said:

"They're queer looking, all right. That fellow over there looks as though he has no ears."

"He has ears all right," Tara declared. "You just don't know where to look for them. His nostrils are different from ours, too."

Tara moved toward the fig-

ures before her, and as she touched one of them she saw that he was moving and his breath was coming in gasps. She turned to Captain Balden and asked:

"Whom did you pick up these people?"

"Just three-quarters of an hour ago," Captain Balden replied. "As soon as we spotted you on the horizon, we picked up this trio and started to meet you."

"Leave me alone with them," Tara said. "I'll call you if I need you."

Malo and Captain Balden hesitated for several moments, then turned and left the room. Tara watched them go. Then she hastened to a water-cooler in one corner of the room and filled a large glass bottle. She carried this to the three people from Coldan and held it to the lips of each one.

The men took the water thirstily, and their bodies appeared to regain something of their vigor. Then Tara saturated several cloths and placed them over the faces of the three men.

FINALLY, she left the room and hurried toward

the great water tanks where machinery turned the moisture of the atmosphere into reservoirs that supplied the pirates during their journeys through space. She turned the valve on one of these tanks, then opened the top. When the vast tank was accessible, she checked the temperature of the water.

Satisfied, she sought out Malo and Captain Balden and said:

"I'll need your help now. Carry the three people of Coldan into this room."

The trio set about their job. Tara took her Coldan and dropped him into the water tank.

Malo hesitated, then said grimly: "You'll drown him!"

"Nothing like that," Tara said as her man came to vigorous life. "They are Atlanteans. They live in water, not on land. I don't wonder they are smothering to death."

Malo and the captain hesitated no longer. Tara was right! The race would survive now that she had been clever enough to learn their real background. The pirates all congratulated her on her wisdom.

