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Cover painting by Edmond Swiatek, illustrating a scene from "The Chemical Vampire"



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Brandishing his sword, the victor looked out over the city

# The SWORDSMAN of PIRA

by Charles Recour

**There are times when a man's blade is a potent force for victory—but what about those times when a man's head and heart deny him the use of his weapons?**



Beside him on the roof lay his fallen enemies

"I THINK he didn't even see us when he said 'hello.' What's the matter with him, Don?" the girl asked petulantly. She half-turned her head to look at the retreating figure in twilight as it strode away. The girl's companion hitched his books under his arm. He smiled.

"He's a brain, Dot. That's his only trouble. I've talked to him a couple of times after class and he's so nuts about math and physics he can't think of anything else. But still, he's a good Joe, I guess. At least the rest of the faculty think so. A full professor at twenty-eight! That's some going. I hope I can do as well."

The dreamy-eyed coed looked up at him. There was more than liking in her eyes.

"Honey, I hope so too, but don't be as absent-minded as he is," she said. "I want a husband, not a thinking machine. I feel sorry for the girl that gets him."

"I've been telling you how lucky you are to have me. Anytime you forget it, think of Professor Wayne Morrow." They both laughed.

A hundred feet down the pathway on the campus, Dr. Wayne Morrow, Professor of Physics, continued his purposeful stride unaware that he was the subject again of student conversation. In many ways he was a striking figure. In spite of the baggy drape of his clothes it was apparent that he had a good frame, even if it was sparsely covered with meat. His six feet of height looked less because of the perpetual stoop and roundness of his shoulders from too much time over ponderous mathematical and physical tomes, but there was really nothing wrong with him that a few weeks of rugged living wouldn't cure.

The heavy glasses aided near-sighted eyes, but they couldn't conceal a com-

plete absorption in thought. The present Wayne Morrow was a far cry from the man who had captained a winning fencing team for the university, and who had spent two years in a Pacific jungle before being called back into a laboratory.

What I need is some action, he thought, his feet crunching on the gravel. I'll bet those kids thought I was some sort of a screwball. That's the trouble with nuclear physics. You get so tied up in it that you can't think of anything else. I'm going to have to relax more, he promised himself, knowing in his heart that he had no intention of keeping the promise.

There was too much to do. Tonight he had to go to Dr. Graves' home. What he wanted he didn't know. Usually a social call was wasted time, but Graves had helped him a lot and he had to reciprocate. Over the phone there had been a quiet urgency in Graves' voice as if he wanted to discuss something important. Well, he'd get it over with. Tomorrow there was that business meeting. Maybe he could work on that banker a little harder and drag another two hundred thousand from him. If he didn't, he knew the cyclotron would never get built.

Musing and dreaming, his mind totally preoccupied, and in spite of his youth, the perfect picture of the absent-minded professor, Wayne continued along the path till he came to the neat row of faculty homes. He walked by Dr. Graves' home before he caught himself. He smiled to himself. *I am getting foggy*, he thought. If I don't cut it out, I'll walk into a brick wall.

He went up to the porch and rang the bell. A minute later the door swung open and the friendly cheery face of Dr. Graves greeted him. He grabbed Wayne's hand and half-dragged him into the house.

"Come in Wayne," he boomed. "It's good to see you. You've been so wrapped up in that damned physics lab of yours that you haven't said boo to anybody. Here, give me your hat. Sit over there and I'll get a drink. The usual?"

Wayne laughed. "Give me a chance to get my breath," he said. "Yes, I'll have the usual—and I *am* sorry I've neglected calling on you, Dr. Graves, but you know how it is when you get interested in something. I'm doing work on the mesotron and—"

"—I know it is when you're especially interested in something," Dr. Graves interrupted. "I'm almost as bad as you, but I had to talk to somebody about what I'm doing and you're the victim. Besides, I need a good physicist—it's been a long time since I did any formal work."

Dr. Graves handed Wayne a drink. He took one for himself.

"Well," he said, "here's to Time—and Time's byways." He lifted his glass and drank. Wayne did the same, an expression of bewilderment on his face. Dr. Graves sat himself opposite Wayne.

"You didn't ask me here to toast Time," Wayne said. "What's the story?"

"But I did. I did just that. I want to talk about Time with you, Wayne. You may be able to help me with my—my—invention. I've made one, you know."

"No, I didn't," Wayne answered. "I thought you never touched a machine. What is it? Since when are philosophers becoming machine designers?"

"Machine designers have always been philosophers, Wayne. Maybe the reverse isn't true—but for once, in my case, it is. What do you know about time?" He almost barked the question.

"Well, now that you mention it, I

suppose I think of subjective time—time as it affects me. I haven't thought about the objective, scientific aspects of time since my last course in relativity."

"No, Wayne," Dr. Graves said, "what I mean, is what does the whole idea of time mean to you?"

"I suppose I think of it as a stream—a flowing stream. That's wrong, of course . . ."

"That's just it, Wayne! That's it," the philosopher said enthusiastically. "Don't you see that's the whole trouble with our attitude toward time. The natural view is the one you presented. We tend instinctively to think of time as a flowing stream, a stream without end or beginning. We regard events occurring in time as we would boats floating on a river. Then we become too 'scientific'—and we let the obvious escape us."

WAYNE lit a cigarette. The whole thing was interesting, but had the usual vague tones of the philosopher. Surely, Dr. Graves didn't want to discuss the philosophical overtones of time with him. What was the point?

"I can see by your eyes, Wayne, that you're wondering what this is all about. No, no, don't deny it. You think I'm a little overworked."

The physicist smiled. "Not exactly, Dr. Graves. I've known you too long. I will admit I'm curious to know what this academic discussion of time means. Please, go on."

"Thanks, Wayne, I will. I think I'll have more than a surprise for you before we're done with this." As the professor spoke, Wayne Morrow felt a sense of peace and relaxation. It was so different from the intense concentration of the laboratory. Dr. Graves continued:

"It's hard for you, a professional

physicist, to think of time in the old simple, natural, subjective way as I suggested most of us think. You automatically want to drag out clocks and yardsticks. You want to begin calculating relativity corrections. Frankly, I think that's a lot of bosh. I *know* the nature of time, Wayne. I know it better than any man on Earth."

His tall, skinny frame sprawled in the easy chair, Wayne watched the professor's intensity and self-absorption increase. Dr. Graves was certainly very excited about his ideas!

"Time is not one stream, but a multitude of rivers, all co-existent. Events and happenings take place in these individual streams independent of each other. I see levels of time where hosts of events are all occurring instantaneously, but without affecting each other. I believe that the primary reason for our present disbelief in subjective time is simply that it has been impossible for us up to now"—Dr. Graves paused suggestively—"to contact any time-line other than our own."

"May I interrupt a moment?" Wayne asked.

"Go ahead, my boy. I know I must sound confusing."

"Are you trying to say that at the same time as our present world, there are other worlds existing, with happenings and events occurring in them, independent of us?"

"Yes, that is exactly what I mean," answered Dr. Graves.

"Well," Wayne said slowly, meditatively drawing on his cigarette, "I see nothing really fantastic in that idea. If I'm not mistaken it is an hypothesis that has been advanced by others."

"Yes, yes, I know that. I don't claim that it's an original theme. In fact, it's as old as philosophy. Even Aristotle suggested it."

"All right," Wayne said. "For the

sake of the discussion, let's say that it's true. We have these independent, yet co-existent streams of time. They do not affect each other. There is no way to show that they do. Therefore, regardless of the truth of their existence, we can only consider them as possibilities. It would certainly make an interesting paper. Are you going to write up the idea, Dr. Graves?"

Dr. Graves looked calmly at Wayne for a few moments. Then the look of concentration left his face. He smiled—then grinned broadly.

"You're much too conservative, Wayne, though that's just what I need in this case—a real old-fashioned conservative." He grew serious again. "I didn't ask you here, Wayne, just to talk about an old man's weird idea. I know how much you think of your own work. Be patient with me for a little while longer."

"Go on, Dr. Graves; I'm listening, believe me."

"If all I could do was to suggest a theory such as I've just advocated, I wouldn't even have asked you here. But I have another theory. I believe it possible for two separate time-streams to be linked! And the method for doing it has been at hand for a long time. It's just that nobody recognized it for what it is. Tell me, Wayne, what happens to an object—or a person—in an extremely strong and intense electric field?"

"Are you asking me as physicist or as a believer in your theory?"

"As a physicist."

"Nothing."

"Are you sure, Wayne?"

"Positively, Dr. Graves!"

"Do you know what has been suggested by several physicists? Do you know that one physicist has said that if an object or a person were suddenly thrust into a strong electric field, it is

possible that he would be rotated through a warped space into the fourth dimension. Have you heard of that?"

WAYNE didn't know whether to agree or disagree. The thing that Graves was suggesting was fantastic.

"Yes," he answered slowly, "I heard of that idea, but I don't believe it."

"I'm not asking that you do, Wayne, I know however—and you must agree—that space is bent and warped in the vicinity of a strong electric field—right?"

"Yes, that's true." Wayne answered.

"Granting that, it must follow that matter located in that space is going to be affected."

"So far, physicists haven't discovered that," Wayne pointed out.

"That's simply because they have not used a strong enough electric field—nor have they located it properly with respect to the subject. Wayne, come with me to my laboratory." Professor Graves got up and walked toward a door at the side of the room. Wayne followed him.

"Laboratory, Doctor? I didn't know you had one," he said.

"It's just my converted library, Wayne. It's not much to look at after a glance at a nuclear shop. But it does the work."

They stepped through the door. Wayne saw a small book-lined room. It would have looked like an ordinary library except for the fact that there were no furnishings on the floor. It was bare concrete. It supported a peculiar chair in the center of the room. A short distance away from it was a complex switchboard and heavy electrical cables led from it to a conduit through the wall.

Dr. Graves swept his arm in a possessive gesture. "Here it is, Wayne. There's not much to it, but it does the

job which I desire of it."

Wayne ambled over to the middle of the room. He touched the chair.

"Is this the apparatus that's supposed to warp space?" he asked.

"That's it, but it doesn't warp space, Wayne. Or rather, it isn't the warping of space that concerns me—it throws time askew." Dr. Graves couldn't keep a note of pride from his voice.

"Let me get this straight," Wayne said. "Are you telling me that if a subject is placed in this chair and you build up a strong electric field around it, that subject will be thrown through a warped space into another time? Is that the core of the whole thing? You know it's rather hard for me to believe—in spite of my regard for you."

"I don't blame you for calling me a liar, Wayne," the professor said dispiritedly. "It's a violation in some respects of all physical laws and I know you find it difficult to believe. But I'm going to demonstrate it to you. Just watch it a moment, Dr. Morrow," Dr. Graves said in mock seriousness and deference. "I think you'll change your mind about a lot of things—in a hurry."

Graves went to the bookshelf and took down a book. He carried it over to the chair which was only an ordinary wooden kitchen chair. To the top of the chair was a metal rod with wires leading from it to the switchboard. A metallic gauze net was also suspended from the wooden rod. Dr. Graves placed the book in the net, letting it dangle freely. Wayne stood to one side, his hands in his pockets, watching with rapt attention.

Graves went over the switchboard. He threw a switch and there was the whine of a generator.

"The generator is a five hundred horsepower alternator driven by an el-

electric motor. I used it as a source of current in order to isolate the system from the power lines in case of trouble. I don't want the power people on my neck," he explained.

"Now watch the book, Wayne. Through the mesh surrounding it, I'm going to send a sudden pulse of about ten thousand amperes."

"But the mesh'll melt immediately, Dr. Graves," Wayne pointed out.

"That's where you'll be surprised. Everyone has always assumed high current through minute wires will melt them. Has anybody tried it? You'll find that the obvious isn't always so obvious," Graves answered.

**H**IS right hand closed another switch. Wayne watched the book. For an instant the gauze glowed with a dull bluish light and the book meshed within it—disappeared!

Wayne's jaw dropped with astonishment. The professor cut the switch. The room was as quiet as before but the book was no longer in the mesh.

"What do you think of my theory now?" Triumph laced Dr. Graves' voice.

Wayne recovered himself. "It's unbelievable, Dr. Graves. Where is the book?"

"Put your hand in the mesh and see if it's there," Graves directed.

When Wayne thrust his hand into the mesh he felt nothing but empty space. The book had vanished completely!

"If I give the mesh a second pulse of current," Graves said, "the book will come back, nothing the worse for the experience."

Again he went through the procedure with the switches. Again there was the bluish halo. An instant later, the book dangled once more in the mesh in exactly the same position that

it had been before its disappearance.

"Incredible!" breathed Wayne. "If I hadn't seen this thing happen, Dr. Graves, I would have called you a liar."

"There it is. You've seen the results of my ideas, Wayne. Even philosophers have to do some practical things once in a while. The question now is, where did it go? Personally—and I base this purely on my own beliefs—I think it has been transferred to and from an adjacent time-stream. You may think differently. If you'll look at the book you'll see it's completely unchanged. It's neither warmer nor colder, neither cleaner nor dirtier, so it's anybody's guess as to where it went."

Wayne looked the book over closely. It was unchanged. He turned to Dr. Graves, but before he could speak, the professor said:

"I know what you're going to say—have I tried it on animals? The answer is yes. And that's why I want you here. I'm going to try it on humans! I'm going to put on that mesh, Wayne. Then I want you to control the experiment. If necessary you can bring in some friends to witness it. What do you say?"

For a long time Wayne remained silent. Finally he said:

"Dr. Graves, you have something here that is terribly great—you know the theory. I'm going to ask you a favor. Let *me* try it. Now don't stop me." His vehemence shut the protesting Dr. Graves' mouth. "You should be at the controls, because you know the most about it. And there's another good reason for sending me—you need a trained observer. Can you think of a better one than me?"

"Frankly, I like the idea of sending you instead of me Wayne, but this may be a more rigorous trip than you know. Do you think you can take it, Wayne? You're not your old self, you know," he



said dryly, glancing at Wayne's thin frame.

"In spite of my being a little out of condition, I want to try it. Besides, I need a little recreation, Dr. Graves. Let's go right now."

"We'll give it a quick try, Wayne, but I'm going to pull you back in five minutes. I better make it three. You don't know where you're going nor what the conditions are. We'll take no chances."

In spite of his outward calmness and confidence, Wayne was a mass of muddled, tumbled emotions as he sat himself in the plain wooden chair and prepared for the incredible journey. To think that he, a normal, sober-sided professor of physics, was going, at this moment's notice, to take a plunge into an unknown time or an unknown dimension. For a brief instant, his spine crawled with fear. Then he remembered his promise to himself. If he kept up at the pace he was going he'd soon be a dried-up shriveled academician, incapable of even thinking. The hot blood surged through him. Here was the promise of excitement and adventure. Here was a chance to go on man's strangest adventure. If Dr. Graves was right, he'd be travelling in time—but the duration of the trip was so short. Maybe, he thought, the whole thing would prove to be hardly worth while. At least one thing he was sure of. He wouldn't be harmed. The fact that animals had made the trip and the return was sufficient evidence of that.

"All right, Wayne. Sit quietly and put on the mesh. We'll give it a try." Wayne came out of his induced reverie with a start. Quickly, but with trembling hands, he slipped the mesh over his head. The mesh was light and thin and felt like a halo of feathers. The whine of the motor and the gener-

ator beat monotonously against his ears. Dr. Graves looked up from the switchboard.

"Are you ready, Wayne?" he called.

His mouth dry and tasteless, Wayne said: "I'm ready."

Wayne saw the professor's arm close the switch. The gauze surrounding his head grew unbearably warm. A bluish corona like an electric discharge emanated from it. Then all similarity to reality vanished. Wayne felt as if he was being twisted and torn. Brilliant colors appeared before his eyes. A kaleidoscope of ever-changing shades of pigment made his eyes hurt. His whole body felt as if it were being drawn through a threaded cylinder. The impression of distortion and twisting persisted.

Suddenly blackness descended on him, the deep, questionless black of pure velvet. Night had fallen on Wayne Morrow. The night of twisted time and space . . .

## CHAPTER II

DR. WAYNE MORROW, Professor of Physics, authority on mesotron reactions, sat erect with a groaning effort. He cradled his aching head in his hands. For an instant he was tempted to lie back and sleep—sleep would give his pain surcease. Struggling against the temptation, he shook his throbbing head. The effort made him wince and involuntarily he cried aloud. Then he opened his eyes.

He looked down the length of his long angular body and discovered he was stark naked. Not a stitch of clothing remained on him. His wrist watch and his identification band too had disappeared. He was as naked as the day he was born. The only familiar thing left him was the very short stubble of his beard—he had shaved

two hours before—or was it two millennia?

He looked around him. The pain was beginning to abate as full consciousness returned and he was able to take stock of his surroundings. He was sitting in the middle of a clearing in what could only be a jungle. Tall heavily boled trees surrounded the small clearing. The grass was thick, heavy tropical stuff, four or five inches high. Through the leafy fronds overhead, he could feel but barely see the intense sunlight which must be beating against the jungleland. Other than that there was nothing to see.

For a brief instant a sense of panic and terror seized him. But the thought came to him: you're safe. In a few minutes, Dr. Graves will throw the switch and you'll be back where you should be. There was no way to estimate time and even as his head was clearing, Wayne had the peculiar feeling that all was not right.

He stood up and looked around. Apparently there was no trail either to or from the clearing. Yet he did not dare risk exploring. What if he wasn't at the spot when the switch back in Graves' laboratory was thrown? He could take no chances. He must remain exactly at this spot. He wished suddenly for a cigarette. He stood a while in the depression formed in the grass by his body and thought. What would he tell Dr. Graves on his return? That the Doctor had been right about a space or time warp was true. But there was no evidence whatsoever of where he was. Judging from the feel of the sunlight's heat, the aura of humidity and dampness, he was very likely on Earth. But when—but where. Wayne was no botanist. He knew nothing of practical natural flora—or fauna—if there was such here.

All I can say to Dr. Graves, he

thought, is that I was in a section of jungle. I don't know where nor when it was. As he stood uncomfortably meditating on these things, an unconscious prickling at his spine gave him the feeling that someone or something was watching him. It was the basic reaction of the primitive man. The hackles rose on the back of his neck and he glanced carefully around, his eyes making the full circuit of the clearing, but he saw nothing.

He felt a desire to run into the jungle. He was torn between the fear of the unknown and the fear of leaving the spot.

Wayne, he told himself, take a grip on yourself. Don't get panicky. Get back into a sitting position exactly as you were or you'll be marooned here. Suppose Graves flips the switch *now!*

Suiting the action to the word, he sat down. As he lowered himself to his former position—slowly, against the prickling grasses—his astonished ears heard the sound of laughter, high, feminine, laughter. He jerked erect. The laughing redoubled in intensity. Desperately, Wayne looked for its source. And he saw it.

A girl had stepped from the jungle wall into the clearing. She wore a brief halter of furred skin with a loincloth of the same. Her hair was jet black and worn in long tresses. She was beautiful and wild, emanating the aura of a cat. Even from this distance he could see her finely chiseled features, her gleaming white teeth, her flower-red lips. She was ravishing.

Wayne's eyes caught all this in a fraction of a second. He felt himself turning a brilliant scarlet as much because of her laughter as because of his nakedness. The skinny six-foot scientist knew and was keenly conscious of what a ridiculous figure he must cut in her eyes—and he resented it. Covering himself as best he could with a handful

of grasses, Wayne started to walk toward the girl. Her beauty he had already noted, in spite of his missing glasses.

But as he approached her, he saw the laughter die down, and she stepped back a little as if to poise herself for flight. But she was not helpless. In her right hand she grasped a huge sword, a longsword similar to a cavalry saber but without the basket hilt. She half-lifted it in a threatening gesture.

"Ga!" she said, enunciating the syllable clearly. Wayne didn't understand the word, but her gestures made the meaning clear. He stopped ten feet from her. How could he communicate with this lovely savage? She took another step backward. She was taking no chances.

**SILENTLY** the foliage behind her parted and Wayne saw the reason for her caution. Two men stood behind her. They too wore furred loinclothes, and in their right hands they carried swords similar to the girl's. For a moment Wayne thought that they were her henchmen or perhaps her bodyguards. He changed his mind as he saw one of the figures raise its hand to its mouth in a gesture cautioning silence. The bearded creatures approached closer to the girl, their anthropoidal features grinning in delight at what was to be their captive. They completely ignored the naked Wayne though they must have seen him.

Wayne came to his senses. "Watch out!" he screamed, "behind you!" His arm shot up in warning. The girl whirled around, just in time to see one of the figures reach out to enfold her in his arms. Her eyes went wide with terror, but she retained presence of mind to act. Wayne saw out of the corner of his eye as he ran toward the scene, that the girl's sword blade licked

out and buried itself in the monster's chest. Instead of a soft girl the beast grabbed a chest full of cold steel. Involuntarily the girl screamed almost in the same breath with Wayne's warning.

Wayne found himself three feet away from the second startled sub-man. The man's sword was raised for the down-chopping blow. The heavy steel whistled to one side of Wayne and at the same time he grabbed the man's throat beneath the bush beard. Wayne clung like a leech, sinking his fingers into the flesh. The stinking breath of the beast was hot against his face and Wayne felt his gorge rising.

The sub-man grunted, his Neanderthal-like features screwed up in pain. Who was this skinny gnat trying to choke him? He dropped the useless sword, seized Wayne's wrists in his hands and tore the choking grip from him as a parent disengages its child's arms. Wayne was flung on his back a couple of yards away. Calmly the sub-man picked up his sword and stepped over to Wayne to finish the job. That was as far as he got.

The girl's blood-stained blade swept down cleaving the sub-man's skull to his chin. He pitched forward silently, half-atop Wayne drenching him in blood.

Breathing like a puffing steam engine from the unaccustomed exercise, Wayne staggered to his feet, unconscious of his bloodied nakedness. He looked at the girl. She smiled at him and this time her smile wasn't mocking and contemptuous. She started to jabber in her monosyllabic tongue and to Wayne's ears it was strangely beautiful. Her voice was musical and her manner pleasant.

"Well, I don't understand what you're saying, honey," Wayne said to her, "but the first thing I'll do is learn." Already she had stripped one of the corpses. She handed the furry loin-

cloth to Wayne. In a moment he had slipped into it. It felt wonderful to be clothed. Especially in front of her. His dignity was preserved and Wayne felt the compelling feeling, that for some reason he wanted her respect, not her contempt. He was thinking how badly he had acquitted himself in the encounter with the sub-men.

The girl reached down and handed Wayne one of the swords. She chattered incessantly, but finally stopped when she saw Wayne shrug his shoulders in the universal gesture of not understanding.

"Stay here, honey," he said. "I'll be back in a minute. I've got to try Dr. Graves once more." She waited puzzled, while Wayne ran over to the depression in the clearing. He sat down, the sword to one side and waited. Something's gone wrong, he thought. Dr. Graves has goofed-up somehow. But there was no fear or regret in his mind. Wherever he was, he felt a confidence and an awareness of living that he hadn't felt for a long time. Wayne waited in the depression for what he judged was about five minutes. There was no sign that anything could occur.

Half-reluctantly, half-eagerly, he got up and walked over to the girl. She watched him curiously. He bent over one of the corpses and removed a long leather thong which he wrapped around his waist. A loop at the left side served as a crude scabbard. Evidently the girl didn't trust him completely yet, for her sword never left her right hand.

"Now, let's talk, honey. I'm going to learn something about you and about this place. The starting point is for me to pick up some language. Here goes." Wayne said rapidly.

Pointing vigorously to himself, he repeated his own name. "Wayne. Wayne. I am Wayne."

"Wayne?" the girl repeated.

"Wayne." She laughed delightedly. She understood perfectly. "Kayna." She pointed to herself, "Kayna."

HER face darkened. She went over to the two corpses. Touching them with her sword she said, "Krag." She swept her arm around indicating the jungle, "Krag." She pointed to Wayne and then to herself, and then indicated that he should follow. Wayne nodded in understanding. She wanted him to follow her. He understood her to mean the jungle was full of what she called "Krag."

And so without further thought of the world he was leaving behind for the company of this beautiful little savage who went around splitting the skulls of Neanderthal "Krag," Wayne followed in her footsteps.

The next few days were an education and revelation for Wayne. Yet he fell into his new way of life surprisingly rapidly. From the cloistered walls of an academy, he was flung through time and space into a savage world, the meaning of which he could only guess. Yet he never felt more alive in his life.

By the tried and true method of identifying objects with sounds, he and the girl were able to converse, rudimentarily at first, necessarily limited to simple nouns and verbs. But Wayne learned quickly and thoroughly and because he was trained in abstract thinking, he soon had a command of language equal to the girl's—almost. And he began to learn about this strange world into which fate had thrown him.

The simple chores of living came less easily. For one thing, he was using muscles that he hadn't used for a long time. At the end of each day's trek he was dog-tired and completely exhausted. But he fought to keep up with the girl. Kayna seemed tireless, and beneath her beautiful body rippled mus-

cles that seemed like fine steel wire to Wayne.

As the days went on, he felt himself hardening. He imagined that as soon as he began to eat regularly he would put on weight to fill out his skinny frame. He was beginning to take a strange pride in his appearance and the sword at his side reminded him of his saber-days at the university. He had not forgotten about Dr. Graves. He blazed their trail by notching a tree trunk here and there but he knew that it was going to be a difficult thing to find his way back unless he had a guide of Kayna's ability.

On the fourth night, after four days of steady travel through the dense thicket of the jungle, they had again made camp. In spite of his fatigue, Wayne felt a consuming desire to talk, to learn more about the girl and the world in which he had been thrown.

Over their usual cheerless meal of fruits and vegetables selected from the profusion to be found in the forest-land, Wayne began to learn about this strange world. Under Wayne's skillful examination, Kayna clearly explained their situation. They were heading toward a sea, a fresh-water sea. She and her people lived in a city on an island in this sea, the Korus, she called it. The city of Korus-tan was the single solitary habitation of people like herself. It was a lovely city, she said, a city of pleasure and enlightenment.

"Wayne," she said, in her clear lovely voice, stumbling occasionally in her descriptions, "you will love Korus-tan, and my people—and they will like you—someday—if we can ever get to Korus-tan."

"Why do you say 'if,' Kayna?" Wayne asked.

"Because the Kraggs rule *this* land. Our people have fought the Kraggs for ages, but never to a decision. They

come at night from some secret city on these shores, from this jungle land. They come in boats by the hundreds and they raid our city and in spite of everything we can do they come back, again and again. That's how I was taken," Kayna said, her lovely face sad and dispirited.

"What do they raid the city for?" Wayne asked. "Are they trying to capture it?"

"No, they have never tried to make a decisive raid—although we think they could if they wanted to. They are interested in only one thing—women and girls. For some reason they are incapable of breeding females and so they must steal our people to build their race. They use us as a sort of fodder," Kayna explained bitterly.

"You mean if they wanted to the Kraggs could take Korus-tan against all the efforts of your warriors?" Wayne demanded incredulously.

"Yes," she said, "there are so many of them."

"Why haven't your people sought out their city or their breeding grounds and destroyed them at their source?" Wayne asked.

"Even if we could find their city—and no one has even returned from it—they are so numerous and such fierce warriors that we couldn't capture it," she answered.

"How did you manage to escape if no one ever does?"

"I didn't escape from the city way—wherever it is—because I was taken as the private property of one of their captains—Gulak was his name. He won't capture anyone ever again. He has my knife blade between his ribs. I threw myself overboard at night and I was washed ashore. This is his sword which I managed to take with me. Oh, Wayne, I hope we can get back to Korus-tan." Her last words contrasted

so femininely with her confidence of before. She was a woman, tender and sensitive underneath her air of competence. Clearly she was lonely and afraid.

**WAYNE** sat staring into the fire for a while before he spoke.

"Kayna," he said, "have you thought about where we'll get a boat when we do find the shores of Korus?"

"If we have to make a raft, Wayne, we will. Let's not worry about that."

"All right, Kayna." Wayne patted her shoulder. She didn't shrink from his touch. A new found confidence was gripping him. He almost felt paternal toward this charming little savage who didn't behave like a savage at all. She had more the manner of a princess, and in his mind's eye he felt himself assuming the role of her protector, but only in his mind. She could probably take better care of herself than he could.

"What do you suppose your family thinks about your disappearance?" he asked, suddenly.

"They've given me up for dead, Wayne. They know that once a girl gets in the clutches of the Krag, she's worse than dead. They must think I've mated with one of the beasts already and accepted my lot as so many have done. My father, though, must be grief stricken," Kayna answered.

"What about your lover?" Wayne asked slyly, glancing at her out of the corner of his eye. She drew herself up. Fire flashed in her eyes.

"That is none of your business Wayne," she said angrily.

Wayne couldn't resist goading her. "You mean you have no lover?"

"No," she said contemptuously, "I have no lover, but I have many suitors. And *they* are all men."

Properly rebuked, Wayne felt the sting of her answer.

"I'm sorry, Kayna," he said. "I didn't mean to offend you. I was just joking."

"I don't think such remarks are in good taste. I am not accustomed to being ridiculed," Kayna said stiffly.

"You laughed at me," Wayne replied softly, "remember?"

Kayna glanced at him. The stormy look on her face could not remain. She started to smile. She fought back the smile, but it broke through.

"It's my turn to be sorry, Wayne. You looked so funny without a loin-cloth and so helpless without a weapon and you were so red!" She broke into a merry laugh. Wayne laughed with her.

"Yes," he admitted ruefully. "I guess I did, but Kayna, if you had come from where I did and under the same circumstances, you would have felt a little more than ill at ease, too."

"I don't understand, Wayne. You tell me you came from a different time. What does that mean? Isn't time now?"

"Don't trouble your pretty head, Kayna. I don't understand it either. All I know right now is that I'm lost in a weird jungle with a beautiful and sometimes petulant girl and I don't know where we're going or whether we'll get there."

"Do you think I am beautiful, Wayne?" Kayna asked archly, after the manner of women of all times and all places. Wayne looked at her loveliness, so scantily clad, so warm and inviting in the flickering firelight.

"Yes," he answered, "you are beautiful, Kayna. The loveliest girl I've ever seen." He moved nearer her. The light flickered and waned on her countenance, accentuating the shadows around her lips. Her eyes mirrored the flame and danced independently of it.

Wayne reached out and took her hand. He held it in his own and bent

his head to examine it. It was a firm shapely hand, the palm, cut and bruised from carrying and wielding the heavy longsword. The nails were symmetrical. Kayna attempted to withdraw her hand, conscious of its dirtiness. Wayne held it tighter. His head bent over it and he pressed his lips to it.

"Why did you do that, Wayne?" Kayna asked. "Why did you kiss my hand?"

"In my world, it is a mark of respect—and affection."

"Is that all?" Kayna's clear eyes were shining at him. Wayne felt a strong impulse to sweep her into his arms, to forget about Krag, to forget about this world, the Korus Sea, the city of Korus-tan, Dr. Graves—to forget everything but holding this exquisite jewel of a girl in his arms.

Abruptly he dropped her hand.

"Sometime, I'll tell you more, Kayna," he said. "Goodnight."

In ten minutes the two of them were sound asleep. And the only sounds that disturbed this quiet section of the jungle along the Sea of Korus, were the sounds of the deep breathing of Dr. Wayne Morrow, Professor of Physics, and Kayna of the City of Korus-tan, in a time and place unknown.

### CHAPTER III

ONLY the creak of the steering oars disturbed the dead silence of the night. That and the hiss of water gently flowing beneath the fast-moving prows of the long boats as their rectangular sails caught the night winds propelling them silently and quickly toward the cluster of lights that was the city of Korus-tan.

There were thirty ships in the fleet, bunched together near enough for a man to shout from one to the other without raising his voice. They were

crammed to the gunwales with the ugly, brutal, beetle-browed Krag. All of them were warriors, armed to the teeth with every variety of weapon that could be used lethally. There were the usual longswords, the knives, the circular metal shields, the leather helmets. Body armor hampered freedom of movement and was no protection against the slashing blows of a longsword or a battleaxe.

Gothar stood in the prow of the leading boat, resting his heavy bulk on the haft of a short stabbing spear. He was scanning the water ahead as the fleet silently approached the harbor of Korus-tan. He was talking with his lieutenant, Somag.

He licked his thick lips in anticipation of the night's coming events.

"The Pirans have a surprise for them tonight, eh Somag?" he laughed. "When their lookouts catch us, they'll think this is another raid. They don't have enough men and what they do have are scattered. They'll never be able to stop us."

His companion, as evil-looking as he, nodded in agreement.

"I'm glad we decided to make a clean sweep of it, this time, Gothar. I'm sick of these foolish raids. Now there'll be women and food enough for all of us—all the time. It's too bad you had to kill Fomar, to convince him to let us finish the job. The Pirans are so soft they don't deserve to live. The only thing worthwhile that they have are their women."

"And what women!" Gothar exulted. "The poor fools think that theirs is the only city in all Pira. If they had more courage they'd explore and raid as we do. Then they'd find that Korus-tan is only one. But they won't have a second chance. Tonight Korus-tan will belong to the Krag."

"And someday we'll be strong enough to take the rest of these miserable fish-

ing cities. When we get enough women we can build an empire of our own. And you know who'll rule it, Somag? I will. By the gods, I'll rule all Pira. And I'll start with Korus-tan. We'll mate with the women and use the men as slaves!" He ranted on in this vein for ten minutes while the lights of Korus-tan crept ever nearer. Somag listened patiently. He was subordinate now to Gothar, but someday that would change too, he thought.

He listened again to Gothar.

Gothar's voice was raging. "On the last raid we made, one of the girls got away. Kayna, her name was. She was the daughter of Thanor and a prize if I ever saw one. She butchered Gulak and went over the side with his sword. I sent a party after her but they never came back. They're probably still chasing her. When they get her, she's mine."

"Don't worry about one girl, Gothar," Somag said. "Tonight you'll have your choice of hundreds." He licked his lips in anticipation.

And so they chatted while the vessels of the sub-men crept closer and closer to the city of Korus-tan, where the Pirans were unconscious of the danger that menaced them.

For some reason, hidden in the complex genetics of the Krag, they were unable to reproduce with their own females. Consequently they used them only as slaves and for the most part killed the majority at birth. It was necessary for them to raid the communities bordering the Sea of Korus, and those located on islands in the Korus, in order to obtain the mothers of their future warriors. Until now, they had limited themselves to simple raids for that purpose alone, taking only enough women to satisfy their needs. This was the first time that a major raid was to be undertaken—less a raid

than a case of actual open warfare.

Gothar was the instigator of the raid. His megalomaniacal mind had decided that now was the time to make the supreme bid for power. He would be the ruler of all Pira. And the Pirans would crumple beneath his powerful forces.

THE encroaching fleet was spotted first by a simple Piran fisherman. His cries of alarm swept across the quiet harbor, setting it into an uproar. The prow of the leading vessel bore down on his small boat and before he could leap into the sea, the hairy arms of the Krag had dragged him into Gothar's vessel.

Tearing himself free, he grasped the axe in his belt and split the skull of the nearest Krag. In the ensuing battle he sold his life dearly for two more of the beasts went down before a longsword pierced his body.

His cries had served their purpose. Running down from the brightly lighted buildings that bordered the waterfront, the Pirans came in every state of dress, so long as they had a weapon in their hands.

They were not unduly alarmed. Such raids were taken as a matter of course. In most cases a few dozen men from the Watch could take care of the invader, often butchering the lot before they made their boats with whatever booty they had taken, usually a few women.

But when the first defenders reached the quays of stone and wood, they knew something was remiss. Here was no trivial raid. This was an invasion. Hardly had the first attackers put foot on shore when the cries of the alarmed Watch were arousing the rest of the city. Men swarmed toward the waterfront.

But a never-ending stream of Krag



poured from the thirty ships that were attaching themselves to any mooring point. Warriors streamed from the vessels by the hundreds. The sheer weight of the attack bore the defenders back. The Pirans were outnumbered from the start. They had no realization that the Krag were so numerous. In all their history no raid of this size had ever been made.

They sold themselves dearly. For every Piran that fell beneath the flashing blade of an upraised battleaxe or longsword, two Krag succumbed in the same fashion. But their resistance was in vain.

Gothar, bloody, and wounded, yet with animal-like courage and undeniable vitality led his forces with irresistible strength against the Pirans. Again and again the longsword of Gothar buried itself in the body of a Piran.

The defenders separated into little groups. Here a body of Piran warriors would be backed against a wall, surrounded and outnumbered by the hordes of Krag. The attackers would press themselves forward only to retire as the Pirans thinned their ranks mightily. But every time a wave of Krag stepped back from one of these islands of resistance, they left the island a little smaller, until eventually a last attack would bring down the remainder of the little group.

The streets ran with blood—both of Krag and Piran. The city of Korus-tan was becoming a graveyard.

Pirans locked themselves into buildings. Their wives and families surrounded them. Anything that would serve as armament was used in the defense of these individual castles. But to no avail. There were too many Krag. Lustful, angry, their hateful natures overwhelmed everything.

Back and forth, up and down the streets, in and out of the flat-topped

buildings the fighting raged. The very ferocity of the battle startled the defenders into a more bitter opposition. But no matter how bravely they fought, the warriors, the sub-men of Gothar, conquered.

On the roof of the flat-topped building that served as the residence of Thanor, King of the Pirans, ruler of Korus-tan, a mob of nobles was gathered. They watched the flames rise from a building here and there that had been fired by the Krag in the madness of their rage against the Pirans.

They watched the little islands of Pirans disintegrate under the pressure of hordes of Krag.

There were tears in the eyes of gentle Thanor. He turned to his group of aides.

"You know what this means to all of us. The Krag have finally learned how weak we are. Else why would they ever attack in this force?"

**H**E SIGHED bitterly: "First Kayna, my beloved daughter, is lost to me—then this monstrous invasion! The gods are looking down on us this night. There is only one thing to do. We must sell ourselves as dearly as possible."

He straightened his bowed shoulders and took the longsword that was handed him. A leather helmet and a shield were given to him and in a trice he looked exactly like his armed nobles.

"Let us go, sir," one of the younger men of the entourage said. "They will soon be here."

"I never thought the monsters would have the intelligence to make an all-out raid like this. They must be led by a renegade," another added.

"I don't think so, Koro," Thanor the king said. "No Piran would ever ally himself with these sub-human beasts. They have learned — that's

all. And we will suffer."

The party started toward the stairway, dimly illuminated by the oil lamps suspended from the walls. Hardly had they reached the head of it, when a horde of raging Krag with Gothar in the foreground bubbled up from it. Without hesitation or loss of time they hurled themselves on the Pirans. Before their momentum was checked they had cut down three of the Piran nobles. But the remaining four were galvanized into action.

The younger men gave a good account of themselves but in short order their lifeblood was running out along the flagged roof. Koro, the young noble with whom Thanor had spoken, screamed as a Krag passed his blade through his body. He coughed out his life an instant later.

Gothar's evil face glittered in triumph as he crossed blades with Thanor. The old man bravely faced him, his sword and shield poised. As Gothar moved to close with him, a half-dozen Krag started to rush in on the King of Korus-tan.

"Get back! Get back!" Gothar screamed. "I'll take the old fool myself—alive!"

His henchmen fell back and let him cross blades with the king.

There was a brief passage at arms. Skillfully the weary arm of Thanor parried the first few strikes of the Krag. But his age was against him. A thrust, a parry, the clash of steel against the king's shield, a twist of the blade and the old man's sword was flung across the roof. Disarmed he stood breathing heavily, waiting for the death thrust from Gothar.

The Krag threw back his head and laughed.

"You're not going to die just yet," he roared. "I want your prestige—it will be useful for dealing with the people

we have left you."

He half-turned to his men. "Take him and truss him up until tomorrow," he ordered.

A dozen Krag moved to obey him. Thanor dropped his useless shield and looked about wildly for an escape. There was only one—the edge of the roof—and below—destruction. He turned and started to run toward the edge. Before he could move three steps the Krag had seized him and tied him securely. They led him into one of the rooms below, posted a guard, and the rest, under Gothar, pursued their orgy of slaughter—and worse.

THE sun rose the next morning on a strange city. The ancient and noble city of Korus-tan, on the shores of the mighty Korus Sea, was no longer the pride of the Pirans. It no longer belonged to the Pirans. The streets, ordinarily so neat and peaceful, so filled with bustling business and pleasure, were silent except for the hoarse cries of the patrols of Krag that ran through them, here toying with a Piran girl, here torturing a Piran man.

The Pirans had no illusions. They knew what was in store for them. The beast-like Krag had always been merciless in dealing with them when they had been so unfortunate as to fall into their clutches. Occasionally fishermen, who had been captured by the Krag and managed—so rarely—to escape, told of the treatment they had undergone. Now the torture was multiplied a thousandfold.

In the throne-room, Gothar had taken up residence and even now was preparing his orders to be given to the captured city.

He sat on an unornamented chair on a little dais, that constituted the seat of power in Korus-tan. Pirans have never been a people who believed in great

formalities and empty gestures. Their plain homes and places of business, emphasized in their king's "palace," was the proof of their essentially kind and simple nature.

In front of Gothar, on the floor, chained together, were the ruling functionaries of the city—those who had been taken alive—and there were not many. Among them was the king, Thanor. He held his head in his hands. The shock of the tragedy that had overwhelmed him and his people was still apparent on his face. Regardless of the humiliation, though, he would face Gothar as any Pira should.

"Well, Thanor," the exultant Gothar said, "the Kraggs are not as stupid as you thought, eh? We didn't expect the taking of Korus-tan would be this easy. Why don't you talk to me? Do you find it distasteful?"

Thanor said nothing, but his eyes grew dark with hate. One of the nobles spat on the floor at Gothar's feet.

The ruler of the Kraggs grew wild with rage. "Kill him!" he screamed at a Krag standing on guard a few feet away.

Without a word, the monster whipped out his longsword and brought it down across the neck of the Pira in a brutal stroke that sent his head rolling across the floor.

No one moved. The Kraggs broke into laughter. The Pirans remained silent.

"That should teach you," Gothar said. He could not keep an hysterical note of rage out of his voice.

"You fools," he ranted. "You utterly stupid animals. Did you think that the Kraggs would be content to prey forever on you for your women? Did you think that we were incapable of organizing a city ourselves? Did you think that we were not men? Well, you'll learn. We are not going to live in holes in the

filthy Pira jungle to come out at night and raid you at your pleasure."

"I—" he ranted, "I am going to be your ruler from now on. I decree that Pirans have but one purpose for living. It is to serve Kraggs in every way. You'll not only provide us with women and girls. You'll work like you never worked before. I am going to build a city of Kraggs that will be the envy of all Pira. Yes, and eventually, we Kraggs will rule all Pira."

THE spittle trickled from his lips as he worked himself into a furious rage. The Kraggs stared in open-mouthed admiration at their leader. No Krag before, in all their known history, had ever had the genius for organizing that Gothar had shown. And the result was that Kraggs were ruling Korus-tan. The beast-men were having their day.

Thanor listened to the raging Krag in silence. The nobles, the few that were left, were not thinking of themselves or the fall of Korus-tan. The fear that coursed through them was sheerly for their women. What hideous and bestial orgies would be celebrated from now on! Every man at that moment wished for death, a wish which must be denied. The women, the girls and the children would be left to the tender mercies of the sub-human Kraggs. Wild thoughts of escape and revenge coursed through the minds of every Pira. But most realized the futility of doing anything now. Only time was on their side. The Kraggs were unpredictable—in that lay the only salvation possible.

The next week in Korus-tan was one of mingled horror and relief. Any Pirans of ruling class were automatically imprisoned and thrown in the long unused dungeons built deep beneath the palace. Under the undeniably efficient leadership of Gothar, the Kraggs saw to

it that the Pirans went about cleaning up the city and restoring normal conditions. Fishing boats went to sea on the broad bosom of the Korus, as usual. But now, in addition to the crews of Pirans, every boat had a guard of Krag according to its size.

In the market places, Krag supervised.

Along the streets Krag patrolled the paths formerly taken by the Watch.

In a matter of weeks, under Gothar's able direction, normalcy was restored to Korus-tan. The major program of Gothar's, the assignment of mates to the Krag, was begun, and the evil work of planning a super-city of Krag was started.

It would take time, Gothar knew, but time was of no importance. For once in their history, the Krag had an organization that was powerful. He knew that undoubtedly other Krag tribes and groups would hear what had happened in Korus-tan. It was inevitable that such information would leak out, but Gothar had prepared for that contingency by making the defenses of the city impregnable against the certain attacks that were to come. Now it was Krag against Krag and the Pirans were slaves and pawns in the struggle.

Gothar was a paradox in himself. Most Krag were little more than beast men, inheriting all of the bad qualities of their Krag fathers and none of the good qualities of their Piran mothers. But somewhere in this primitive world, a mutation of mind had occurred and Gothar was the result.

The days sped on, the Krag becoming more and more confident and powerful each day, while the Pirans languished beneath their yoke, utterly without inspiration or hope.

Gothar had founded a world—a subman had seized a civilization, rudimentary, but a civilization.

## CHAPTER IV

KAYNA often spoke of Korus-tan to Wayne. She described the beauty and the simplicity of the city.

The two of them were still blindly traveling through the jungle hopeful of finding a trail that would lead them to the Sea of Korus.

"Don't you have some system of navigation by the sun or stars?" Wayne asked Kayna one time.

"What is that—that navigation?" Kayna asked, puckering her face in bewilderment and stumbling over the rough equivalent of the word that Wayne had made.

"It's a way of looking at the sky and telling where you are by the position of the sun and the stars. You must have some way to tell where you're going when you're at sea. How do your people do it when they're fishing?" Wayne questioned again.

"I don't know," Kayna answered. "I've never had to learn those things. I had enough servants when I was at home. I am a girl, Wayne." She said the last archly.

"At this rate we can stumble around until we're dead and never find our way to the sea. Besides I wish we could change our diet. I'd like some fish or meat. Don't we ever run into any game or animals that we can eat?"

"That's a good sign, Wayne," she said. "The animals stay inland away from the Korus Sea. I guess they too have learned to fear the Krag. We haven't seen any animals. So we must not be too far inland."

"I hope we find one or the other soon," Wayne grumbled. "The sea or animal-life."

"We will. Sooner or later we must."

As usual when night came they selected a suitable site, built the customary small fire and settled themselves

to eat. Water was no problem. Many plants, peculiar in their tropical splendor and beautiful too, contained adequate and potable quantities of it. Their food consisted of nuts and tubers, and strange flowers that tasted like vegetables. Still it was unsatisfying.

Wayne felt strangely content during these evenings alongside the fire with Kayna. There was something sympathetic and understanding about her. In addition she was intelligent as well as beautiful and he listened, fascinated, to her descriptions of Piran life.

He no longer thought about Dr. Graves. He had lost his place of origin and all of his previous world was a dream. His association with Kayna in this unknown world made the rest of his existence unreal. He dared not think about it. The die was cast and he was now living in a world about which he knew nothing and which bore comparison with his own world only in that it had people in it too. That was the only common meeting ground. The sun, the stars, the flora—and he imagined also the fauna—bore no relationship either to the world he knew. Wayne felt like a stranger who has somehow forgotten completely his point of origin. And it was not unpleasant.

He knew how futile it was to speculate on where Dr. Graves' time or space warper had cast him. He was here; that was enough. And if he had to doubt it, all he needed to do was to look across the flickering fire at the completely lovely and adorable, half-naked little savage that sat opposite him. He felt a guilty twinge using the word "savage." Kayna was far more civilized than most of the girls he had known. She was sweet and good and kind, decent, charming and physically exquisite. That was enough. Fatalistically, he asked himself, why question fate? Your lot has been thrown in with

this girl—make the most of it. With the adaptability of an intelligent human, he did.

And he found himself surprisingly disturbed and moved by her. Kayna was a woman—a girl of exceptional attractions. Wayne could not help but be drawn to her. And the fact that she liked him didn't help to increase the gap between them, either. On several occasions, he had been tempted to seize her to him and to crush her madly against him. But he resisted the impulse. After all, he told himself, it would be unfair to take advantage of the fact that she had to look to him as her protector through sheer necessity.

Physically, Wayne was beginning to feel better than he ever had. Those years spent in the laboratory and over books had done nothing but bolster his ego. Now, he found with surprise that he was looking with pride on his well-filled-out hide, the simple pride of a smoothly graceful and muscular man. It was a good feeling.

During the day he would often jump and run wildly ahead through sheer exuberance. Such a simple task as climbing a tree was a pleasurable effort. He thought back about the short time when such a feat would have left him gasping for breath.

Kayna was fully aware of his physique too. She had a tendency to joke about it.

"Wayne," she asked from the other side of the fire, "are all the people of your world like you?"

"What do you mean?" Wayne said, puzzled.

"You were so tall and skinny when I first saw you. You looked like a tree." She laughed. Wayne grinned.

"If I thought you were laughing at me Kayna, I would thrash you," he said.

"I dare you to."

Wayne jumped toward her like a bolt of lightning, but she was as fast and she simply eluded his grasp, dancing about the fire keeping it between them. She was laughing all the while.

WAYNE feinted as if to run in one direction—then dashed in the other. In an instant she was in his arms. She struggled furiously for a moment. His face was an inch from hers. Suddenly he found his mouth on hers and she was no longer fighting him. Her arms were tight about his neck. They clung together for a minute, then Wayne gently disengaged her arms.

"Kayna," he whispered, "I—I—" He stumbled and stuttered but the words wouldn't come. He couldn't say he loved a savage.

Kayna looked at him archly as she resumed her place by the fire.

"What are you afraid of, Wayne?" she asked. "Is it me?"

Wayne smiled wryly. "Yes," he said, "it's you. Now let's get some sleep." He rolled over, conscious of the length of steel at his side and in its very feeling of uncomfortableness he felt a great security. The longsword had become as much a part of him as his Phi Beta Kappa key had been before. The longsword was a combination tool and weapon used for every purpose from clearing a path through jungleland to serving as a dinner knife. Just through toying with the weapon Wayne's old fencing skill had come back to him and he was anxious almost for an opportunity to exercise it—an opportunity that would vindicate him in the eyes of the girl, he thought, for his sorry showing when he first appeared in this strange land. And so musing, he fell asleep.

The next morning after the usual breakfast of roots and tubers and fruit they resumed their futile, directionless

search for the sea.

Kayna was walking, almost running, fifty feet ahead of Wayne when it happened. There was a ferocious roar and the biggest feline that Wayne had ever seen shot from the jungle straight as a bullet for Kayna. He screamed to the girl. She turned and in the same breath dropped to the ground.

The gigantic spring made by the huge cat carried it far over her, where it landed ten feet beyond her sputtering and growling as it came to its feet for a second run. Wayne had a good chance to observe it. It was exactly like every picture he had seen of the prehistoric saber-toothed tiger, and he knew at least this much—Dr. Graves had hurled him into something more familiar than he knew.

There was no time for speculation. As the tiger turned to repeat his spring toward Kayna, who had half-risen to her feet, Wayne covered the intervening distance.

"Run to the jungle away from the trail," Wayne roared at the girl as he approached her. There was barely enough time for her to do it, but in a mad scramble she managed to hurl herself off the trail, which left nothing between the cat and Wayne.

The beast flattened its ears. Its gaping mouth opened and from it issued an incredible roar like the blasting of a locomotive. Then true as an arrow it shot the twenty feet remaining for Wayne. As the monster approached him Wayne seemed to see everything in startling clarity. It was as if he had been accustomed to facing saber-toothed tigers all his life. While he could feel his heart beating wildly from excitement, there was no fear.

The tiger was almost upon him. Moving with the grace and speed of the trained warrior, Wayne dropped to one knee, at the same time hurling himself

to one side. The tiger's razor-taloned claws missed him by a hair and as the beast shot by him, Wayne's stout right arm thrust out the longsword in a pass of bullet-like speed. He buried it to the hilt, such was the force of the thrust.

**T**HE animal screamed, three feet of steel buried in its chest. Like any primitive woman defending her mate, Kayna ran from her hiding place and started to slash wildly at the dying monster. There was no need for her to do so. It died quickly.

Wayne walked over to the fallen tiger and cautiously withdrew his longsword. He felt Kayna's eyes on him.

"You are a warrior, Wayne," she said. In that simple accolade Wayne felt that he had made the grade. The image of him as a naked skinny boy could be in Kayna's mind no longer.

"Well, at least we can eat now," Wayne said. "Is this good to eat?" He nudged the fallen animal.

"There are better meats," Kayna answered, "but a hungry belly is not too critical."

The two of them fell to work striping meat from the carcass and building a fire. Presently they were gorging themselves.

After eating and resting once more Wayne and Kayna pushed on, always following the tortuous trail in hope of nearing the Korus Sea. After some hours of walking, abruptly Kayna stopped. Her little nose wrinkled and she laughed delightedly.

"Wayne—I smell the Korus!" she exclaimed. "It must be near."

"That's our cue to get off the trail then, Kayna. From what you said, where there's sea there's a Krag. I don't particularly want to tangle with any more of those Neanderthal submen. We'll go to the right," Wayne

directed her firmly.

The two of them left the relatively well-marked trail and set off through the jungle toward the right, carefully maintaining their sense of orientation so that they might return if necessary. It wasn't necessary. Not ten minutes after they had left the trail they saw before them the vast body of the Korus Sea. There was no conventional beach. The jungle came clear up to the sea. This made it awkward to see along the shore and the two of them carefully scanned the little they could see for sight of the Krag. Suddenly Wayne exclaimed:

"There, Kayna! See, down there! There's a boat nosed into the jungle edge."

"I see it. But let's be careful. Where there are boats there are Krag."

They both unsheathed their longswords and cautiously wound their way through the dense jungle undergrowth toward the spot where they judged the boat might be. Not a long time later they saw the clearing.

Drawn up against the shore and moored to a tree trunk was one of the lateen-rigged, thirty foot sloops of the Krag. Squatting around a fire at which they were eating were five Krag, their hairy mouths talking and eating at the same time. All carried longswords, which they used to carve chunks of whatever meat they were eating. There was much laughter and raucous shouting. Wayne and Kayna crept nearer.

"There are five of them, Kayna. All we can do is surprise them. Will you try it with me?" Wayne whispered in Kayna's ear.

A dangerous glint crept into the beautiful girl's eyes. "Of course I will," she said simply.

"All right—now!" Wayne said.

Quietly the two of them ran toward

the seated Krag. They were upon them before the startled sub-men knew what had happened. Wayne's blade lashed out in a sweeping stroke splitting the skull of one of the monsters before he was aware that he was attacked. The other four jumped to their feet, but Wayne noted with satisfaction from the corner of his eye that Kayna's blade was buried to the hilt in a Krag's throat. The remaining three had their longswords ready by now and with the viciousness characteristic of them they swept to the attack from surprised defense.

Wayne found himself sorely beset by two of the creatures. His blade wove a net around him through which nothing could penetrate but he was so occupied in defending himself that he almost had no chance to press home an attack. The clash and clang of blade on blade made the jungle ring. Added to that terrifying sound was the growling and screaming, at times guttural, at times shrill, of the Krags. Wayne had to admit to himself that the sub-men knew how to fence. Theirs was not a continual sweep of saber strokes so wasteful of time and energy. Instead they slithered home thrust after dangerous thrust. Wayne realized that this couldn't last much longer. He feinted a low thrust at one of the Krags. The man parried it, but with the speed of a striking snake Wayne counter thrust and his blade sank into Krag flesh. He whipped it free just in time to parry the stroke of the other Krag.

**B**UT with only one antagonist, Wayne found the going easier. It wasn't long before the look of terror and desperation on the face of the Krag told him that the man was beaten. Suddenly the Krag hurled his longsword at Wayne, who barely deflected it. The Krag turned and ran but the new war-

rior was on him before he had gone five feet. With a subtle thrust Wayne finished him and turned toward Kayna.

She was having a difficult time. The Krag who was battling her was skillful and he was pressing home his attack with vengeance. He was determined to die taking at least the girl with him.

Kayna was giving a good account of herself, but the Krag was infinitely stronger and would have shortly beaten her. Wayne stepped in and engaged the man's blade. There were a few short sharp furious passages and Wayne passed his longsword through the man's body.

He stepped back, breathing heavily.

"That was more than we wanted, Kayna. Did he touch you?" he asked.

"No," answered Kayna, "but he would have in a few minutes more. You are truly a warrior, Wayne. Where did you learn how to use a longsword like that?"

"If I told you, honey," Wayne answered cryptically, "you wouldn't understand—but it was in a fencing academy."

Kayna looked puzzled but did not press the matter. She had long since given up trying to understand Wayne's origin. But there was more than ordinary admiration in her eyes when she looked at him.

The two of them went back to the boat and examined it. It would be awkward for two of them to handle, but it could be done. Wayne was almost completely ignorant of small boat sailing so Kayna almost automatically took command of the situation.

Wayne could see the change in the lovely girl the instant she set foot aboard the boat. There was a sparkle to her eyes that hadn't been there before. She was in her element. She knew what she was going to do. And she had the confidence to do it.



The Pirans were sea-faring folk deriving their living from the sea. That much Kayna had stressed, and so it was only natural that she should be a born sailor—daughter of a king or not.

In a short time, under her direction, both she and Wayne managed to rig a single triangular lateen sail, giving the craft a rakish look. Wayne was forced to smile at the resemblance it bore to the vessels of the early Moroccan pirates. Occasionally there would crop up in his mind thought of his odd position. He, Wayne Morrow, a life-long student of nuclear physics, was aboard a dirty little boat with a ravishingly beautiful, half-naked savage girl, in a land he knew not where nor when, bound for some strange city entirely beyond the ken of his civilization.

But such thoughts were becoming fewer and farther between. Wayne was fitting himself into the role of a primitive warrior—a Piran—with an aptitude that astounded himself. And for some reason he felt the better for it. He was mentally conditioning himself for the inevitable—it was possible that he was going to spend the rest of his life here—possible?—no, probable, and therefore it would not do to have any regrets. The die was cast and Wayne was going to make the best of his lot, whatever was to come.

**W**ITH the sail rigged they got the sloop-like vessel, almost a ketch, off the little mooring and headed out on the awful bosom of the Sea of Korus. Only it didn't really look awful—on the contrary, Wayne thought to himself—it looked magnificent. Now out of the dense jungle, he could see the beauty of the setting sun, the awesome but not fearful proportions of the sea. The lazy gentle motion of the boat tended to make him feel moody but not in an unpleasant way. Nor did the pres-

ence of Kayna, her long black hair wind-blown, do anything to make it unpleasant. She stood in the stern of the boat, her hand confidently guiding the tiller and there was a smile of satisfaction on her face.

Wayne went over beside her. The fragrance of her took his breath away. He forced himself to concentrate on something besides her beauty.

"Kayna," he asked, "do you know where you're going?"

"I can feel it clearly, Wayne. I told you about that inner sense of direction that all Pirans possess on water. I know as surely as my name is Kayna, that we are headed directly toward Korus-tan." She became enthusiastic. "You'll like Korus-tan," she went on. "It is a free city and a happy one. The people are friendly to strangers—but not to Kraggs—and I know my father will like you. Oh, we'll have a wonderful time in Korus-tan."

"But they don't even know you're alive. Will they believe it's you?"

"Of course they think I'm gone forever but that will only double the surprise. We will have a good time, I promise you that, Wayne."

"I know we will, Kayna. I'm very anxious to meet your people. Are all the women as beautiful as you?" Wayne asked playfully.

"Would it be fair to answer that?" she countered.

"I know the answer already. No one can be as beautiful as you, Kayna." The tone of tenderness and seriousness with which Wayne said it, did not disturb the girl's happiness. With the intuitive knowledge of women in all times and all places she knew what was happening—and her own heart was being moved too.

**T**HE soft wind kept the boat moving at a good clip. Night fell fast, but

since the land was already out of sight, vision was not necessary. Kayna's sense of direction functioned just as well in darkness as in light.

They had been drifting on and on for more than three hours. Wayne felt a little touch of terror such as any landsman feels so far out of sight of land. In addition he was guilty that he couldn't relieve Kayna. There was no effort to steering the craft, but Wayne's lack of a sense of direction would not permit him to assume the tiller.

"Kayna," he suggested after a time, "why don't we lash the tiller on its present course and give you a chance to rest?"

"But I'm not tired," she replied smilingly. "I'm so happy to be on the water again and away from that horrible jungle, that I feel I could go on like this forever."

"All right," Wayne agreed, "as long as you feel that way, I guess it's all right. Is there any chance of the Krag's finding this boat? I mean, are we likely to run into any boatloads of them?"

"There is always a chance of that, Wayne. They often are on the lookout for a lone boat, a fisherman returning to Korus-tan from the day's work. But we won't really have to worry about that until we get nearer the city. It's not likely that we'll meet any Krag's this far away unless the gods will it."

Wayne sat back against the stern boards and listened to the slap of the waves alongside the boat. Suddenly Kayna began to sing. In a soft tremulous voice she half-sang, half-chanted a ballad of her people on the sea. It was a poignant melody and like all enduring songs, it was simple. Soon, Wayne picked up the melody and the words and the two of them sang together. Never before in his whole life had Wayne felt so content. His arm

stole around Kayna's waist. She snuggled closer to him and his cheek rested against her hair. They sat that way for a long while, saying very little after the song.

"Kayna — I — I —" Wayne began hesitatingly.

"Yes?" she whispered encouragingly.

There was no time to say anything else. There was a crashing shock against the side of the boat as another and similar vessel lay alongside. It had crept up in the darkness and Wayne and Kayna were so absorbed in each other they had not noticed it. A half-dozen burly Krag's poured across the gunwales. They wore their little leathern helmets and shields and in their hands were the traditional long-swords of fighting men—or sub-men.

## CHAPTER V

WAYNE jumped up from the stern whipping out his longsword in a single smooth action. In the same motion he hurled himself toward the attackers. In spite of the darkness he could make out the outlines of the Krag's. His blade flicked out and there was a hoarse scream as it found flesh. Wayne felt Kayna at his side.

But it was hopeless from the onset of the attack. In the cramped quarters of the boat there was no chance to maneuver or to exercise any skill at arms and the sheer weight of the attackers bore Kayna and Wayne back toward the tiller until Wayne lost his footing and tripped over a rope. The instant he went down three Krag's were on him. Kayna was as easily subdued. Their weapons wrenched from their hands, the two captives were dragged forward to where a squat brutish Krag was stepping aboard amidships.

His eyes lighted up when he saw Kayna. An anticipatory leer crossed

his vicious face, twisting it.

"By Korus-tan, the wench is a lovely morsel!" he roared. "Tie the two of them up. We can use more slaves in Korus-tan—but the girl—ah!"

The Krag did his bidding without question. A lantern was rigged to the mast and the Krag chieftain gave orders. He stood in the prow while roaring his commands but his eyes stole continually toward Kayna.

Wayne felt bitterness seize at his heart. That all went well until now! And some strange words were revolving in his mind. Had he heard right? The Krag had said "*We* can use more slaves in Korus-tan . . ." But Korus-tan was a city of Pirans, of people like Kayna and himself. What did it mean?

"Put six men aboard this craft. I'll take it back to Korus-tan with the girl. Take the man aboard your craft and put about for the city when you're ready." The Krag gave his orders quickly and his men obeyed him unhesitatingly.

Kayna looked at Wayne. There were suppressed tears in her eyes. But she made every effort to be brave.

"Be brave, Kayna," Wayne whispered to her as he was roughly hurried across the gunwales of the touching boats. "I'll find you in Korus-tan. I swear it." A kick stopped further talk. Wayne was hurried across, and thrown ignominiously to the bottom of the other vessel. He could hear Kayna cry shrilly: "Wayne . . . Wayne . . ." Wayne saw the bobbing lantern tied to their former vessel gradually receding in the distance. He could waste no time in worry or regret. Fortunately he knew both he and Kayna would end up eventually in Korus-tan. That was important. Meanwhile he would bide his chances of escape.

He looked around. There were an-

other six Krag aboard his craft. The usual brutish and most evil-appearing one was in command.

Lazily the boat rolled through the night and from the conversation of Krag he was able to overhear the events that had transpired in Korus-tan since Kayna had last been there. The tale horrified him even though he could only imagine the details of the capture of the city. That these monstrous creatures should be running a city such as Kayna had described was unthinkable. Yet they were and apparently with a vengeance.

He heard the Krag often mention Gothar, King of Korus-tan, nor did the name of Thanor, Kayna's father, escape him. Gradually a very clear picture formed, a picture that explained all that had happened in the city. An inkling too could be discerned of the ambitions of Gothar. For some reason, Gothar had been able to weld the motley undistinguished beast-like Krag into something resembling an organization, contrary to all Kayna had told him of the beasts. Kayna had undoubtedly underestimated the Krag. For that matter, the Pirans as a whole had made the same mistake, too.

Therein, thought Wayne, lies the seed of destruction for any peoples. To become contemptuous of a foe, no matter how mean or trivial he may appear, is not a wise policy. It may result in something like this.

So musing on the events of the day, listening to what he could of the Krag's conversation, Wayne fell asleep, making every effort not to despair at being separated from Kayna. He wouldn't have put in words his feeling toward the girl, or if he had, he wouldn't have used the word "love," but it was mighty difficult for him to describe the relationship at all. He fell asleep trying to do it.

KAYNA watched Wayne being taken from her with a feeling of hopelessness and despair. Tears came to her eyes but she suppressed them. Her hands tied behind her back and legs hobbled with a short length of a rope, the Krag carried her to the bow of the little vessel and placed her at the feet of the Krag chieftain. He was grinning sardonically. Kayna looked up at him with hate in her eyes. She could not mask the revulsion and disgust that gripped her. The Krag bent down and without a word pressed his slobbering mouth against hers. She writhed and struggled to be free but she could do nothing. She lay there passive at last.

The Krag sat beside her. He laughed uproariously.

"You don't like Thoomos, eh, wench?" he demanded. "Why not? Am I not as good as that hairless sniveling thing we found you with? When we get to Korus-tan you'll find you'll have to be nice to me if you want to live."

"What do you mean," Kayna demanded indignantly, "when we get to Korus-tan? You wouldn't dare go there with these half-men." Her eyes took in the crew.

"Never fear, you golden-haired spitfire," the Krag said, "I'll take care of you in Korus-tan. And I'll see that Gothar doesn't see you either. He has a liking for wenches like you. I want you for myself."

The continual reference to Korus-tan by Thoomos confused Kayna. She looked puzzled.

"Thoomos," she asked, "what do you mean by taking me to Korus-tan? You know if you are caught there, you'll be cut down like a falling sail. Why do you want to go there?"

An expression of incredulity crossed Thoomos' face.

"How long have you been away from Korus-tan?" he asked.

"Many weeks," Kayna answered. "My father is Thaynor, the ruler. Yes — yes — Thoomos, you can take me back to Korus-tan. My father will reward you and let you go free." Kayna knew that such a thing had never been done but she was grasping at straws.

Thoomos grinned in satisfaction. "That explains everything, girl. Let me tell you something."

He related the events of the preceding weeks when Korus-tan along with its inhabitants, had been captured by the Krag. As the horrible story unfolded, Kayna could hardly believe it, but the Krag told it with such matter of factness that she knew in her heart that it was true. Her heart sank desperately as she realized now the absolute hopelessness of her position. After a time Thoomos loosened her hands so that she could eat, and he made no further efforts to molest her. Kayna knew that he was merely waiting until a more propitious time.

The time went by rapidly, all too rapidly for the girl, and soon the story of the Krag was confirmed. The boat was approaching the outer wharves and jetties of Korus-tan and no attacking vessels poured from the city to seize the Krag. As they got closer to the shore, she could see Krag walking about, swaggering in their new-found power. And everywhere there were cringing Pirans, all the fight knocked from them.

The boat docked, her feet were unhobbled, and Kayna was taken at the side of Thoomos toward some residence in the city. Even as she walked through the streets, she was recognized by hundreds of Pirans and she called out to them. A cuff across her mouth from Thoomos silenced her.

As they walked toward the residence

that Thoomos had confiscated, the beast-man's mind was thinking rapidly. He knew now that beyond the question of a doubt, he had the daughter of Thaynor, the very girl whom Gothar had ordered them to find if possible. He fought a terrible battle within himself. His cupidity battled with his fear of Gothar. Nevertheless his greed overcame his new discipline.

Thoomos violated his new code. He led Kayna directly and quickly to his residence, hoping against hope that none of the Krag's who had seen the girl recognized her.

Fearfully and tearfully, Kayna entered the building which Thoomos had confiscated from some Piran noble. She felt unclean and ashamed as she saw former people she had known serving as common servants to the Krag's, bowing servilely and cringing from expected blows from the beast-men. How the mighty had fallen, she thought. She had no illusions. She knew what was in store for her.

The Krag took her directly to his sleeping chamber. His lusts would not wait. They needed satisfaction at once.

"Now," Thoomos grinned evilly, his eyes lighting as he considered Kayna's perfect figure, "we will have some pleasure. Come here, girl!"

Kayna shrank back from him. She had no weapon and the room was bare but for the sleeping facilities. The Krag seized her harshly again and pressed her to him. Kayna screamed in terror and loathing as those horrible lips came down on hers. She struggled fiercely and beat her fists against Thoomos' chest. He laughed.

"I like a Piran girl to have spirit," he snarled. "It's much more fun."

Suddenly there was a disturbance outside the door. It burst open and a half dozen Krag's armed with long-

swords stood there.

One of them stepped forward, his eyes taking in the tableau presented by the half-naked girl and by the trembling Thoomos — frustrated and enraged. He said:

"Gothar wants the girl you brought back. He thinks she is the daughter of Thanor—he was once king here. Give her to me, Thoomos."

THOOMOS' beady little eyes went from the Krag's face to the girl's. He licked his lips. For a moment he was going to protest. Then the discipline asserted itself.

"All right," he said, forcing himself to say the words, "take the girl. I was just going to test her anyway." He shoved Kayna toward the messenger and his men.

"And you are to come with me, Thoomos. Gothar wants you to explain why you didn't bring her directly to the Pool. Remember the first law of the Krag's? All loot must go to the Pool."

Disgustedly Thoomos nodded. He hitched his longsword about him and accompanied Kayna and the guards.

Another short tramp along the streets, Kayna taking in the sight of a beaten and enslaved people with disbelief. Everywhere they went she was recognized, but no one made a move to assist her. The men looked ashamed and the women cringed from the sight of the little parade of captive and conqueror, but not a hand was raised in her protection. Kayna recalled that Wayne had once made some remark about a people becoming soft. It was true. Her people had become soft. They were no longer their old selves. The Krag's had beaten them thoroughly. As Kayna recalled Wayne, her heart beat faster. If only he were here! She wondered what had happened to him and to where he would

be taken.

Soon the little party arrived at the palace. Kayna recognized the grim changes as they crossed the stone portals. Everywhere Krag's stood on guard, leaning on their longswords and laughing and talking among themselves, deigning only to talk with the Pirans when they wanted to insult the men, or toy with the women.

Kayna and Thoomos were led to the throne-room. How often had she sat with her father in this place. She looked at the throne on its little dais. Seated in it was a huge Krag, obviously the Gothar of whom they had spoken.

When he saw the girl the newly arrived party brought into the room, his booming laugh blasted out.

"Ah! It's Kayna. The last I remember of you was when you slipped a steel blade into Gulak's ribs and slid over the side. I had given you up for dead, wench. What do you think of the court of Gothar I, the ruler of all Pira?"

Kayna remained silent. Anything she would say would only goad this monster into action. She must remain calm and sensible, ignoring the taunts and insults.

"Answer, girl!" Gothar insisted. "Answer, or I'll have your tongue cut out at the roots."

"What do you want me to say? You've destroyed Korus-tan and all the Pirans in it!" she finally shot back in a burst of anger.

"That's more like it!" exulted Gothar. "I like a girl with spirit. And I need a lively one for a queen. Kayna, how would you like to sit beside me on the throne of Korus-tan?"

This time, Kayna refused to answer. She merely looked straight at him, and a half-smile of contempt crossed her face.

Gothar jumped up. "Take her away.

Put her next to her father in the dungeons. She'll change her mind when she's rotted there a while."

Then he turned his attention to Thoomos. Soundly he cursed him out for trying to take the girl. Soon they were engaged in a resounding argument and there was more than one among the "courtiers" whose sympathies were with Thoomos. Why should Gothar have his choice of everything—after all, he ruled merely by the grace of all the Krag's who had served him.

The bickering went on until interrupted by the announcement of food. The social structure of the newly formed Krag empire was rather loosely bound. The cement was no more than greed.

**K**AYNA was taken to the dungeons between two guards. When her father ruled there had been little occasion for using the cells and so she was not at all familiar with the place. She entered the dirty, poorly lighted chambers, hesitatingly, aided every now and then by a suitable shove or push from one of the brutal Krag's.

She was thrust into a cell. The stone door thumped shut behind her. She was alone.

"Father, father!" she called aloud. "Are you here?"

Through the stone walls that muffled everything, she heard her father's voice: "Kayna! My child! Are you here? Are you hurt? What have they done?"

From other cells came similar queries and in a short time Kayna had related all that befell her since she had been first captured by the Krag's. Nor did she fail to boast of Wayne and the protection he had afforded her. After a time when all the questions had been answered and Kayna had learned in detail what had happened in Korus-

tan, she and her father managed to talk at great length. Kayna was shocked at his despair. It seemed to him as if there was no hope or no possibility of ever changing the present state of affairs. The Kraggs had things too firmly under control. On this gloomy note, Kayna managed to sleep, naps that were only interrupted for feeding or for conversation with a despairing group.

## CHAPTER VI

WAYNE awakened the next morning still to find himself stiff and trussed on the bottom of the boat. He was hungry, miserable and uncomfortable. The morning sun was already beginning to get very hot and this combined with the stinking bilge-water that continually washed over him, was enough to turn the stomach of any stout man. Nor was the sight of the beastly Kraggs designed to improve the spirits of a man, but Wayne had changed. In his new-found role in this primitive life, he had developed a philosophy of calmness that would permit him to take the greatest of disasters without faltering. The loss of Kayna was a keen blow, but he did not despair. He lived, he told himself, and come what may, he would see that lovely girl again. He knew now that he loved her and that this world was now his own. Very rarely he found himself thinking of Professor Graves, and then only in the most detached manner possible. He no longer thought of his ego as Dr. Wayne Morrow, Professor of Physics—Twentieth Century—but only and simply as Wayne—he could hear the name on Kayna's lips—almost a Piran of the city of Korus-tan which lies on the bosom of the Sea of Korus.

So meditating philosophically on his new lot, Wayne lay in acute physical

discomfort, watching the unhurried activities of the Kraggs as they kept the boat moving. Even if he were free he knew that it was almost a certainty that he could not navigate the vessel, much less overcome six longsword-armed Kraggs. But it amused him to dream about the possibility.

The day wore on. Wayne was given a little dried meat, biscuit and water, which slaked the acute hunger that had built up within him. He was told often and clearly by the Kraggs that he was destined for the slave market of Korus-tan. But beyond joking at his expense they made no effort to converse with him. They continued with their patrol, operating in a loose and inefficient manner, Wayne thought.

They often encountered boats, fishing craft, on which the wealth of Korus-tan had been built, as Kayna had told him. These boats were now manned by five or six Pirans—slaves—who did the work, guarded by two or three Kraggs, carrying longswords. So consisted the greater part of the fishing fleet. A few patrol boats like the one he was on, carrying from six to twelve men, patrolled the fishing fleet, making sure that all was well.

Wayne felt disgusted at what he saw. He could see clearly that all Pirans were not made of the same stuff as Kayna, or they would never have come to this sorry plight. Determined men could easily have beaten the Kraggs, and soundly, even as they were now.

Actually the Kraggs, according to his lights, could not have prevented a determined revolt. There were more Pirans than Kraggs, and man for man the Kraggs were stupid and unintelligent. They were simply fighting machines. Wayne could not understand the failure of the Pirans to assert themselves. It was hard to recognize Kayna in these sorry people of hers.

And musing in that manner, Wayne spent most of the day. An occasional kick or scuff was his from the Krag, but because he didn't cry out or protest, for the most part the Krag left him alone. There was no sport to be had with this tall, lithe stranger.

Late in the day, the Krag came upon a boat that gave them trouble. It was a small fishing skiff manned by one man. The leader Krag hailed it.

"What are you doing out alone? Come aboard!" the Krag commanded. Wayne was startled as well as the Krag for the reply that came back was anything but placating:

"Come and take me! Come and get me, you dirty monsters!" A shrill voice screamed back.

The Krag leader spluttered with rage and anger. He put the boat about and a merry chase ensued. The larger spread of sail of the Krag sloop gave it too much speed however and the sound of preparation for boarding the smaller vessel came to Wayne's ears. Then there was a bump as the boats came alongside each other. There was a rasp of steel on steel as the first Krag stepped aboard the other vessel, followed by the scream of agony of a dying man. A volley of Krag oaths ripped out. There was more tussling and a man, bound like Wayne, was thrown to the bottom of the boat beside him.

Wayne looked astonished. He was just a wisp of a man, a little, old gnarled gnome, leathery-skinned and watery-eyed, but there was a brightness and twinkle to his face that belied his age. His face was bruised and blood had trickled into his beard, but he was nonetheless chipper.

"And who might you be?" he cackled to Wayne as the angry Krag threw him roughly into the bilgewater with Wayne.

"I'm a Piran fighting for the Princess

Kayna, old man," Wayne answered, "and you're the first fighting Piran besides myself that I've met. My name is Wayne and if my hands were free, I'd give you one."

"Well-spoken, young one," the oldster chuckled. "I might say the same for you—about the fighting man—I mean — for most Pirans' blood has turned to water these days. You know about Korus-tan?"

"Yes, I've learned about it through these beasts." Wayne pointed his head in the general direction of the Krag. "But who are you and what's your name, oldster? I like the manner of your speech."

"I'm called Gelthor," the old man said, "and I've been a fisherman all my life. I managed to be at sea when the Krag captured the city. Ever since I've avoided them—until now—except to occasionally slip one a bit of steel. And by the gods I'll live to feed more of them to the fishes if I run into any more men like you. What's your story, lad?"

WAYNE outlined his tale, omitting any reference to his real origin. He told him about the capture of Kayna, whom the old man seemed to know well. Gradually Wayne got from him a clearer picture of the nature of Korus-tan before the invasion of the Krag. The Pirans had been a peace-loving and democratic people relying little on formality. But through the long years of casual repulsion of Krag raiders they seemed to have atrophied their aggressive instincts, never bringing the thing to a final showdown. The result was that the Krag had done pretty much as they pleased up until the time of this final battle, when they had taken the city.

As night came again, Wayne got to learn Gelthor and his nature pretty well. Here was a man, who in spite of



his age, was filled with the fighting vigor of youth and who could be relied upon to do everything to battle the Krag. He explained to Wayne how he had hidden on the outskirts of the city, avoiding the Krag for the most part, except now and then when he would ambush one.

This had to be done carefully for the Krag were not averse to punishing the innocent with the guilty.

Wayne found himself liking Gelthor the more he talked with him. There was such candor and honesty about him, that Wayne felt completely at home with him. He was a man to admire.

Eventually the talk came around to escape. With the two of them to work together, Wayne felt a confidence that was formerly lacking. As darkness started to drift in on the vessel, Wayne and Gelthor formulated their plans. Ignored by the six Krag, it was a relatively simple matter for the old man to loosen Wayne's bonds. In turn he released the old man's. But they left the ropes draped loosely over them, simulating helplessness. Now all that remained was for a couple of the Krag to approach them, to give them the necessary armament and chance.

About an hour later, a couple of the sub-men approached the bound men. One of them kicked the old man and started to laugh at his grimace of pain. He kicked him again.

"I should kill the both of you, but especially you, old one. Togarth was a good man. You tricked him and killed him." He kicked Gelthor again. Both he and his companion were now right over the two prone men.

"All right. Now!" whispered Wayne.

The ropes dropped from him and from Gelthor. Before the startled Krag knew what had happened, Wayne had seized the speaker by both

feet. He gave a terrific heave and the Krag was over the side of the vessel. His screams were stopped by water.

Gelthor, lacking Wayne's strength, had knocked the other Krag to the bottom of the boat and was trying to strangle him. The huge Krag thrashed around trying to break loose. Wayne bent down, seized the battle axe at the Krag's side, and with a single blow split the man's skull.

The old man arose, found a weapon in the form of a wooden club and stood at Wayne's side. But Wayne had already started to dash toward the stern of the boat where the remaining Krag were congregated. The four of them were fully aroused now. They saw the body of one of their members lying with a split skull in the bilge. They heard the screams of the drowning Krag. Their longsword were out when the fighting bundle of muscled fury that was Wayne, hit them. The first sweep of his axe caught one of them at the juncture of the neck and shoulder and he went down like a pole-axed ox, blood gushing from him in vast spurts.

A longsword flashed toward Wayne's head. He parried it with a neat sweep of the axe and countered with a blow of his own as he stepped back. Fortunately for him and Gelthor, the quarters were crowded and the Krag hampered each other more than they aided.

Wayne stumbled backwards to avoid the flailing longsword blade. He tripped and went down. The longsword blade swept down and Wayne thought surely that this was it. But he reckoned without Gelthor. The old man hurled himself under the blade, a longsword in his hand. He buried it to the hilt in the Krag.

The two other Krag came in at Gelthor and drove him back. But the old man's interference had been long

enough to let Wayne get to his feet. His axe flicked in and out like a lighter longsword and he handled it as effectively. He swirled the blade in a long stroke and beheaded the onrushing Krag. The old man was a skilled man with the sword but the weight and size of the Krag was telling. Fortunately, Wayne came in from the side. The Krag died with a split skull too.

"Heh, heh!" the old man gasped and coughed and spluttered almost breathless from the activity. "We gave them more than they bargained for, eh?"

Wayne dropped the axe and extended his hand.

"I must thank you, Gelthor," he said simply. "You are a fighting man."

The old man wrung it firmly. "I can say the same for you, young one. At least we both behaved like Pirans, not like the milk-spined weaklings who gave in to these monsters." He gestured at the shambles.

"Let's get to work, Gelthor. And then you can navigate this thing to Korus-tan," Wayne directed.

**I**T WAS but the work of a moment to heave the remains of the Krags over the side. They washed the blood from themselves and then had a hearty meal from the generous stores that were aboard. At once Wayne began to lay plans for their activity. The major hope was that they wouldn't be picked up by another patrol boat of Krags before they reached Korus-tan.

Gelthor assured him that it wasn't far now and that the first place they would head for would be Gelthor's hiding place. They would have to study the lay of the land and situation before they could make any attempt to rescue Kayna which, Wayne made very clear to the old man, was his major desire.

Under the skilled hand of Gelthor, the boat was soon set on its proper

course and Wayne could tell from the way he handled it, there would be no problem making shore. The gods had been kind when they threw him in with Gelthor.

As the boat headed shoreward in the darkness, Wayne's mind was a maze of activity. He was free now and had a valuable helper in the form of Gelthor. But from what he now knew of Korus-tan it was going to be no easy matter to find Kayna, much less rescue her. In fact it was perfectly possible, though not likely, that she was not even in Korus-tan at all. He refused even to consider that possibility.

Soon the sound of water lapping against shore-line came to their ears. They had reached Pira and land. Gelthor explained that the point at which they were landing was some five miles south of the city and it was not likely that they'd encounter Krags here. They had enough to do patrolling the city without attempting to guard the entire coast-line. Occasionally searching parties of Krags foraged around the outskirts of the city but for the most part they were content to stay within its limits. Their success at taking the city under the leadership of Gothar had astonished most of them anyhow, though they had readily assumed the role of the conqueror.

When the boat touched the shore, Gelthor and Wayne jumped out, and dragged it into the narrow cove that concealed most landing places in this weird land.

Each armed with a longsword, the adventurers set out along the forested pathway toward Gelthor's hiding place. A few minutes' brisk walk brought them to Gelthor's hiding place, a small hovel constructed in a deeply wooded hollow. Certainly they were safe from detection now.

"Come in, Wayne," the old man said

and bent his wiry frame to stoop through the leafy entry. "You won't find much here, but we'll both be safe for a while at least if the Krag don't find us."

"It suits me," agreed Wayne. "It's better than I imagined." He looked around at the barren little place. It was practically empty of furnishings, and it smelt strongly of fish, but withal, there was an air of homeliness about it that appealed to Wayne. The willingness and friendliness of Gelthor were not lost on Wayne either.

They seated themselves and had a drink of rich heady wine that the old man produced from his cellarette. He winked at Wayne:

"It'll help clear our heads for the work that's coming." He chortled to himself. "I want to slip more steel where it belongs—between Krag ribs."

"You'll get plenty of chance to do that," Wayne promised. "But right now we've got to figure a way for one of us to get into the city and find out where Kayna is and what our chances are of reaching her."

The old man sobered: "Yes," he agreed, "one of us will have to go. I had better do it because I'm more familiar with the city."

"No," Wayne countered, "I'll go. It's too dangerous for you and besides you might be recognized. You can coach me about all I'll have to know and you can draw me a rough map of the city."

**A**FTER much bickering over the point, Gelthor agreed to let Wayne make the first trip into the city. Gelthor spent a long time, a good portion of the night explaining to Wayne all the little details and courtesies that Wayne must be familiar with. Because Wayne, as a Piran, would not be able to wear a longsword, his only weapon was a

stiletto-like knife slipped into his loin-cloth. The old man carefully coached him into wearing a manner of cringing servility, the only attitude it was possible to maintain without getting into trouble with the Krag.

"Don't stay more than a full day—at most two full days," the old man cautioned, "and when you come back here remember to take a devious route in case you're trailed. While you're gone I'll try and gather together all the Pirans that I know haven't been forced into slavery yet. At least those that aren't captured." He cackled grimly. "There are enough of them too. If all Pirans had had their courage, Korus-tan wouldn't be in the state it is, with those stupid Krag acting as lords and masters."

Armed only with the dagger, Wayne set off the next morning very early for Korus-tan. Everywhere he could see evidence of the activities of the Krag and the inactivities of the Pirans under their new rulers. Fields and isolated houses had fallen into disuse. Everywhere there were signs of neglect and lack of care. Activity was at a standstill. At least on the fringes of the city. Slaves do not work well unless the whips are right at hand. And the Krag could not spare that many overseers.

There were burned buildings, mute evidence of the terrorism of the Krag, inflicting such punishments on those who disobeyed them. Above all, the air was electric with the tension of an imprisoned people. The yoke was heavy and obvious.

Several times, Wayne passed parties of Pirans, heading into the countryside in work parties guarded by a few Krag. At such times he hid until the gangs of men passed, and there was no danger of his being discovered. It hurt not to be able to do something. The Krag were merciless in their treatment

of Pirans. They were liberal with their blows and beatings and the cowed heads of the Pirans made Wayne boil with rage and frustration at his impotence. But he calmed himself with the thought that it wouldn't be for long.

It didn't take very long for him to reach the city. His first sight of it astonished him. Surrounded by a crumbling stone wall, the city housed buildings of exceeding beauty and simplicity. Towering domes and minarets much like the Mohammedan style of his own time were arranged in clusters. Wayne saw well the high order of ability possessed by the Pirans and marveled that they had so easily been overcome. The brutish Krag could offer nothing of comparable quality in their whole primitive civilization.

Getting into the city was the next problem. Wayne skirted the walled area for some distance always keeping hidden and within the shadows. As nightfall rapidly approached he had another ally. So it was without much difficulty that he spotted a suitable entrance. It was a gap in the stone walls.

Once in the city Wayne pretended a boldness he didn't feel. He realized that an air of confidence might make him less suspect to any patrolling bands of Krag.

As he worked his way toward the center of Pira, he saw more and more evidence of the subdued and beaten peoples. Nevertheless, he was amazed at the fact that there was not too much confidence among the Krag. All the while there was never a lone Krag to be seen. They always traveled in twos and threes—often in much larger patrols. It was apparent that they feared that the Pirans might make ambush attempts.

Near the building which Wayne recognized as the former palace and now Krag headquarters, was another series

of smaller buildings. The Krag headquarters was well guarded. It looked impregnable.

Wayne surveyed the place from a hidden court across the street.

Near the castle was a small walled house, richly ornamented and evidently formerly belonging to one of the nobility. He noticed that there was little traffic through the gateway. He entered and kept within the shadow of bushes and trees always avoiding conspicuousness. He waited.

**H**IS patience was soon rewarded. A Piran was walking up the pathway toward the house. He was a young man, well set-up, but he too had the hang-dog look of the defeated about him.

Wayne thought swiftly. He wanted no outcry. He leaped out of the bushes, threw an arm around the other's neck, and dragged him back with him into the security of the verdure. He held his poniard to the throat of the cowering Piran.

"Don't be afraid," he whispered. "I won't hurt you but don't make any outcry. I just want to question you. Understand?"

The servitor nodded, the terrified and trapped look going out of his eyes. Wayne released his grip on the man's throat, gradually freeing him completely when he was sure that the man wouldn't raise a cry.

"I'm a Piran too," he said in opening. "You can trust me. First, will any Krag pass here soon?"

"No," the other answered tremulously, "no one will enter here for the next hour."

"Good. Now tell me—and I want the truth. Do you know the Princess Kayna?"

"Yes—I know her." Dumbly.

"Have you seen her brought into the

city by the Kraggs recently?"

"Yes—two days ago she was taken into the palace—and she hasn't been seen since. It is said that Gothar wants her."

Wayne's heart gave a jump. So she was in the city—and not only that—she was in the palace! This was better than he'd hoped.

"Is there any chance of getting into the palace?" he demanded.

"Yes," the other answered, "you can get in, but you can't get out. It's too heavily guarded. There are Kraggs everywhere." Now that he knew he wouldn't be killed, the man's courage started to return. "I don't know you," he said, "but you're wrong if you think I'm a traitor. I'm a Piran too and I've lived all of my life in Korus-tan. But I have to work for the Kraggs like all the men. How can we overthrow them? They're too many and they're armed. We aren't."

Wayne looked at him coldly.

"If you Pirans were more than fools, you'd fight no matter what the odds and you wouldn't let your women be the playthings of the Kraggs," he said, contempt in his voice.

"We fought," the other answered, "we fought like very devils, but somehow we had no organization and the Kraggs were everywhere that night. They were too many and they surprised us. Never in a thousand years did the Kraggs ever attempt an attack like that one."

The prisoner talked freely though Wayne retained his grip on the man and his knife-arm was at the ready for the slightest sign of treachery. It didn't take him long to realize, as the man talked, that he was sincere and speaking the truth. For the first time since he had seen the Pirans he began to understand the odds that had confronted them. Gelthor had been a little too

vindictive in condemning all Pirans so completely. Apparently they had put up a good fight when the Kraggs had attacked, but the odds were simply too great.

Wayne decided to take a chance. He could afford to trust this man, he thought, especially as the man talked so honestly and freely. Wayne learned a lot—at least all that the Piran could tell him. The situation was growing more intolerable day by day, it was clear, and sooner or later there was going to be a revolt. The Kraggs knew this, and very rarely went anywhere away from the mainstream of things without going in a sufficiently large body to prevent being ambushed.

They sensed the hatred that surrounded them and they knew it was but a question of time before the Pirans attempted to overthrow them.

Wayne learned these things not only from his conversation with the prisoner, but from his observation.

"There are many Pirans who haven't been taken by the Kraggs," he told the man, "and they're going to try to retake the city. Every man must be ready to fight like the gods when the time comes. I want you to spread the word around cautiously. Above all make sure that it does not reach the ears of the Kraggs or anyone sympathetic to them—"

"There are no Pirans sympathetic to the Kraggs," the man said enthusiastically. "All we're waiting for is a chance. You'll see when the time comes. Many of us have been tempted to revolt but without organization you know we'd be slaughtered like animals."

Wayne released his grip about the man completely.

"My name is Vanthor," the fellow said, "and I'll remember you when the time comes; believe me, we all want to help."

"I won't tell you when, Vanthor, be-

cause we don't know yet—but it will come," Wayne said warmly, "and when it does, all Pirans must be ready to jump the nearest Krag if they have to do it with their bare hands."

"We will." For the first time there was a smile on Vanthor's face.

Wayne let him go about his way knowing now that by means of the usual grapevine undoubtedly the word that revolt was possible—that there was a spark to ignite it—would go the rounds. At least hope would be aroused. That much had been accomplished.

## CHAPTER VII

THE question now was whether or not to try to get into the palace. Wayne wanted more than anything to see Kayna, to encourage her, to let her know that there were Pirans waiting for her release. The more he thought about the idea, the less he liked it. All that would be accomplished might be nullified if the Krags caught him—which was almost a certainty. He would wait, he decided. He could do more on the outside.

He left the walled garden and retraced his steps toward the city gate where he had entered. As he approached the gate, he noticed numbers of Krags standing near it. This would not do. They were permitting anyone to enter without questioning, but all who left were closely scrutinized, and some were interrogated, though no one was held. He couldn't take the chance. He would have to go over the wall.

Executing a quick search for a suitable spot, Wayne came across one of the numerous gaps in the wall. It was unguarded and he passed through it quickly now intent on returning to Gelthor and whatever the old man might have arranged.

Again he followed the road, often

ducking to one side to avoid parties of Pirans and Krags.

He kept his eyes sharply tuned for the sight of a lone Krag. Wayne wanted a longsword as evidence of his desire to fight when he met the men whom Gelthor by now should have assembled. Soon he spotted a lone Krag proceeding leisurely down the road. Wayne darted into a thicket alongside the road and waited until the man had passed. The Krag evidently did not feel at ease. He glanced around cautiously and often as if he expected ambush. He got it.

As soon as the sub-man had passed Wayne stole up behind him. His muscular arm hooked around the Krag's throat. There was a startled look, a grunt, and then the man's head dropped forward as Wayne eased eight inches of steel into the man's side. Wayne dropped him, stripped him of his shield and longsword and dragged the body into the bushes. Only then did he return to the trail.

Soon he was in sight of the old man's shelter. There seemed to be a great bustle and activity in and around it. While Wayne knew that undoubtedly these were Pirans he could take no chances. He crept cautiously closer. He could hear the old man's high shrill voice:

" . . . I don't know what we'll do exactly yet," it was saying, "but we're going to drive the Krags from Korus-tan, at any cost. And we can do it. Pirans are no cowards—" there was a confirmative mutter at this "—and if I were twenty years younger I'd do the job myself." The men laughed but good-humoredly, not in malice.

Wayne stepped forward into the group of men. There were only about thirty of them, he noticed with some dismay, but at least they would serve as the nucleus of a striking force. Gel-

thor broke off as Wayne approached and greeted him heartily.

"You're back, Wayne," he said, "and none the worse for the experience." His eyes spotted the shield and longsword. "But some Krag is, eh?" he laughed. He turned back toward the Pirans.

"Men, this is the warrior Wayne. He just came back from Korus-tan and he can tell you how rotted the city is under the Krags. All it will take is a push and the monsters and their rule will topple."

Wayne stepped up beside Gelthor.

"He's not wrong, men," he said addressing the group. "The Krags are afraid of their own shadow and even now they fear revolt. They've bitten off more than they can chew. They didn't know that capturing a city is one thing. Keeping it in slavery is another. All Korus-tan needs is a bunch of leaders to start the revolt. And you and I are going to be those leaders."

He stopped the formal talking and asked Gelthor to introduce him to the men. They were a rugged lot. Most of them were fishermen who had been on the broad bosom of the Korus Sea when the capture of the city had occurred and consequently they had managed to hide in the jungle and forest until now, hoping eventually to do something. They were rough and tough but Wayne instantly took a liking to them. They were fighting men and they could be trusted to give a good account of themselves when and if the battle started.

**A**FTER the introductions and a meager meal provided out of Gelthor's stores the parley began and different views were presented as to how the attack should be organized. Wayne considered the presentations and as the impromptu leader approved or vetoed what he thought good or bad.

After much talk a method of attack was agreed upon, thoroughly approved by all. Wayne told them what he had seen in the city. The Pirans were beginning to find the rule of the brutal Krags intolerable. But because they had no leaders, nor any chance to meet in groups, without being dispersed by Krag patrols, they had not taken things into their own hands.

"That's where we come into the picture," Wayne explained. "All of us will sneak into the city tonight under the cover of darkness. We'll go to every Piran that we can and explain that at three in the morning everyone is to attack the nearest Krag. All the Pirans we talk to will tell everyone they can do the same thing. By this sort of chain action we can get the word to everyone. Then when the signal is given, not a Krag will be left alone. They're so poorly organized that they won't know what to do and we'll be able to beat the lot of them."

The whole group was in agreement with this. Already they were anxious to begin. Wayne agreed that they should start at once so as to have given the alarm to everyone possible before the actual attack began. In that way it would help the attack. But once the fighting started, Wayne knew there would be no question about it being taken up by every Piran hand that could hold a sword or axe.

The Pirans were to sneak into the city armed but to hide their weapons until ready for the fight. In case roaming patrols came upon them it would not do to be armed. The Krags might get suspicious.

Everything was carefully worked out. Even more enthusiastic than Wayne was Gelthor. He insisted on accompanying the attackers and doing his part. Wayne agreed. They could not have too many men for this work. It

was going to be a rough night.

Wayne insisted on keeping two Pirans with him, Phothan and Cormar. The three of them would separate and spread the word of the impending attack everywhere. Then they would bring a half-dozen men with them to meet Wayne at an appointed spot before the castle. All of them would then attempt to overwhelm the castle guards breaking in and arming any Pirans they might find there. It was Wayne's intention to lop off the head of the Krag—Gothar—and leave them leaderless as soon as possible.

With everything understood and clarified, the little band headed for Korus-tan. Wayne felt a thrill of anticipation creep up his spine. Here he was, leading an attack on a city existing he knew not where nor when!

The band of attackers met no opposition as they went toward Korus-tan. Nor were they seen. Whenever they encountered a Piran, they explained their plan to him, and he was enrolled into the band. By the time they had reached the city, the little group of thirty Pirans had swollen to forty.

Night had come again and it was no difficult problem to get into the city without being seen by the Krag. After getting over the wall and just before they scattered Wayne gave them an encouraging word.

"Our plan can't fail," he said, fire in his eyes, "if we all do our part. Remember it is for all Pira that we fight. For Pira and her Princess!"

The group softly echoed his words—"For Pira and her Princess!" and then they melted off into the dusk.

For endless hours it seemed, Wayne and his two cohorts, Phothan and Cormar, wandered over their section of the city spreading the word. At first they were greeted with incredulity—then enthusiasm. Every male old enough to

walk prepared for the great event. Wayne warned them that it wouldn't be too easy—they must first arm themselves—and above all, they must try, in the beginning at least, to attack only groups of Krag smaller in number than themselves. Nothing must jeopardize the plan. If it didn't succeed the first time, he stressed, there would be no second time.

The three of them roamed everywhere, dodging patrols of Krag, and spreading the fatal word. Hour after hour they did this. All over the city Wayne knew the same thing was happening. Even in the quiet darkness, he could feel, it seemed, the air of tension that gripped the very air. There was an electric something here, that boded no good for the Krag.

Several times, Wayne and his aides butchered lone Krag who came upon them, but there were not many. Few Krag ventured out alone—they too seemed to sense that living in Korus-tan was a far different thing than capturing it. Their atrocities and brutalities, their seizure of women and girls, had driven the Pirans frantic with hatred and frustration. All this would soon be released and it was as if the Krag knew it. Hence their uncommon caution.

Many times the three skulkers passed places of entertainment, filled with Krag laughing and drinking and joking, toying with Piran girls and mocking Piran slaves. The blood rose in Wayne's heart but he could afford to wait. Tempted as he was to stop the thing instantly, he naturally ignored the temptation.

**E**VENTUALLY they had spread the word around and the city was fully aroused though no Krag knew it. Wayne knew that lurking in a thousand doorways, waiting in a thousand hid-



ing places, were thousands of willing hands ready to strangle the first Krag they chanced on. Now that the city was poised for the supreme effort, Wayne felt better. In a few moments, if all went well, he would see Kayna. How he wanted to do that! More than anything now he realized that she was the primary motive for his doing anything. A month ago had he been told what he knew now, he would have laughed not so much as its impossibility of occurrence, but the ridiculousness of picturing him in a hero's role. But here he was. The thought continually startled him—but always vanished when he pictured Kayna's adorable face.

Crouching in the very garden where he had spoken with Vanthor, Wayne and his two companions heard a rustling sound. Hands on their longswords, they prepared to fight. There was no need to. The men that Phothan had spoken with, and those who had been talked to by Cormar, were assembling. Soon hidden in the little walled garden was a stout fighting force of eighteen men. Wayne figured that would be sufficient to break into the palace. They were armed with clubs fashioned from anything at hand but these crude weapons would soon be replaced with longswords and battleaxes taken from Krag. Besides, their enthusiasm and fighting temper made up for what they lacked in the way of weapons.

"Now this is what we'll do," Wayne explained to them. "It will be no trick for Phothan and myself to climb over the castle wall. Just give us a few minutes. We'll do in the guards—there are only three—quickly, open the gates and arm you somewhat better. From then on, it will be a free for all, with every man trying to arouse any Pirans he finds, and above all, butchering any Krag he can. I think they'll be pan-

ic-stricken but you know they can fight, so don't be over confident. All I ask is that you fight with your head and hands and heart. Remember, we must win. Cormar and I will immediately try to get into the dungeons and release the prisoners there. There are hundreds down there and they'll make a suitable addition to our fighting force—if they're able to walk," he added grimly.

Wayne's voice must have been louder than he thought, for hardly had he finished speaking when three Krag suddenly appeared in the doorway of the house in the garden. They looked around curiously. Longswords in hand they started walking down the path toward the spot where Wayne and his cohorts were concealed, behind the shrubbery.

Too late they saw motion in the bushes. A half-dozen Pirans leaped at them and before they could utter an outcry, they were chopped down. Their weapons were distributed and the little groups settled back once more.

They waited and waited. It seemed like an eternity. But finally the water clock in the tower of the Temple came around and there were three resounding strokes as the priest within beat three times against the hanging bell. The loud low notes swelled over the city. Peaceful Korus-tan was silent—but only for a moment.

As the last stroke died away, Wayne and his men dashed up and toward the castle. Hastily Wayne and Cormar were boosted over the wall. Wayne made the ten foot drop, landing cat-like on his feet followed an instant later by Cormar.

The three Krag watched astounded for a moment and stupefied at the sight of the two armed Pirans. But only for a moment. One jumped up and with a bull-like roar whipped out his blade and started for Wayne. Like a whiplash,

Wayne cut him down. Cormar chopped his man down and the two of them dropped the third man even as his voice screamed the alarm. Without hesitation, they threw open the gates and the fighting force welled in like a huge wave.

Wayne stopped a minute and listened. From beyond the castle walls, he heard with satisfaction sounds that indicated things were happening.

"It's working!" he shouted exultantly. "Come on, men!"

**E**IGHTEEN fighting machines, perfect human specimens, followed Wayne as he tore across the courtyard toward the castle entrance. But the noise and screams of the dying guards had been enough to arouse more Krag. A solid phalanx of them blocked the entrance.

Wayne and his warriors tore into them with the pent-up fury of the last few weeks. Swords and axes rose and fell. There was the clash of metal on metal, the thud of metal on leather, and the softer sound of metal on flesh, but this was smothered by the screams of wounded and dying Krag and Pirans. Bitterly and fiercely the battle for the entrance waged, but the courage and audacity of the attackers was not to be denied.

An evil Krag's face appeared before Wayne. He split it to the chin and the fellow dropped, only to be replaced by another. Wayne cut him down even as a thrust from the man's blade nicked his arm. It drew blood but Wayne hardly felt it.

As fast as a Krag fell another took his place. Nor did the Pirans escape scot-free. Wayne glanced over his shoulder and noted with alarm that his band had dwindled sharply. But even as he saw this, slaves were pouring from their sleeping places. Unarmed or

armed with table-legs and clubs they tore into the fray joyously, chopping down Krag after Krag.

For endless minutes the fracas raged. Gradually the formal lines of attacker and defender intermingled until the whole battle resolved itself into little groups of men or into single combats. But it was still too concentrated for Wayne to tear himself free to do what he wanted.

And he knew that every minute of delay was dangerous. Not so much for the general course of the battle but for Kayna. He had to get to her and soon.

As soon as he would try to thread his way through the writhing struggling groups of Pirans and Krag, he would find his path blocked by a hulking Krag who seemed to sense he was the leader and who tried his best to cut him down. But Wayne was no longer the objective scientist of yesterday. He was purely and simply a fighting mechanism geared to wield longsword and axe with deadly ferocity.

Wayne found himself face to face with a deadly swordsman. The Krag was unusually skilled. Wayne's first impulsive attack, wielding his blade like a sabre, got him nowhere and for a minute the Krag's riposte threatened to spit him like a chicken on a barbecue stick. Barely in time, he parried the deadly thrust and countered but the other was guarded by a weaving net of steel. The Krag grinned in the joy of combat.

"Here, Piran," he jeered, "eat steel!" And his blade shot neatly toward Wayne's head. Instinctively he parried it, saving his skin by a fraction of an inch. His counter thrust was in turn deflected by the Krag. Infuriated by his failure to cut the Krag down, Wayne blundered into a crude attack that almost was his undoing. He overslid himself in a lunge and his foot slipped

in a pool of blood. He went down.

Eyes gleaming exultantly, the Krag brought his longsword down in a sweeping stroke intended to split Wayne from his head to his middle. Wayne crawled forward on his knees and his left hand. Blindly he thrust upward with his right. He felt the blade sink into the Krag's flesh and the down-coming longsword clipped him lightly—comparatively—alongside the head. Everything went black for a moment. He shook his head and staggered to his feet. He looked around. The fight was raging as furiously as ever, yet he sensed victory in the room. More and more Pirans had joined the fray.

"Cormar!" Wayne shouted. He looked again as the Piran put the finishing stroke to a Krag and in an instant was at his side.

"We can make it now, Wayne," the man said. "I'll lead the way. Cover my back."

"Fine," Wayne said. "You've been here before. You ought to know the way to the dungeons."

"I've spent enough time in them," the other grinned. "I should know."

This time Wayne and Cormar managed to get through the press of fighters and they were not molested as they raced through the halls. Evidently, Wayne was quick to notice, the Krags had pulled all their fighting men into the entrance hall, staking all on stopping the Pirans there.

**K**NOWINGLY, Cormar led him to the stone steps leading down into the pits. An awful stench of corruption and decay rose in his nostrils as he went down the stairway. Dampness and cold and gloom radiated from the very walls. Before a huge stone door stood a half dozen Krags. They were talking among themselves, and Wayne could hear them deciding among themselves

whether or not to leave their post and join the fighting.

Wayne and Cormar hurled themselves at the six Krags like the very furies. Before the startled barbarians knew what had happened two of their number were down.

But the other four were not to be taken lightly. They had been picked for their job and they fought well. Wayne and Cormar were an impossible combination, though. Fired by every motive that makes a man human, they were irresistible and their weapons flashed like beams of light. One—two—! The remaining two dropped their swords and ran.

"Don't bother to chase them, Cormar," Wayne insisted. "Help me open this thing."

Cormar stripped the keys from one of the dead jailors. In an instant they had opened the lock and then it took the two of them to swing open the heavy stone gate.

Wayne bounded through the half-open door.

"Kayna!" he screamed, "where are you, darling?"

There was no answer.

Then from the sepulchrous depths of the tomb-like room, a feeble voice muttered:

"My daughter is not here."

Wayne dashed for the cell from which the voice emanated. Cormar was opening other cells and releasing from them staggering wrecks who looked as though they were near starvation—which they were.

"Who are you?" Wayne asked as he fumbled to open the cell.

"I am Thanor, the ruler of Korustan." The man was weak and old and hungry and his eyes were filled with tears. Quickly Wayne explained who he was.

"Now answer me quickly," he de-

manded. "Where is Kayna? I must find her."

"She has been taken by Gothar," the old man answered slowly, "and by now she may be dead."

"Where did he take her, man? Answer! I must find her."

"He took her through a secret passageway leading from the dungeon to the forest." The effort to talk was too much for the old man and he collapsed, unconscious from hunger and fatigue, in Wayne's arms. Wayne turned to question another prisoner. Feebly the man pointed to the opposite corner of the dimly lit chamber. Wayne saw a half-open door of stone.

"I'm going to follow him, Cormar," he said. "Tell Gelthor where I went."

"I'll let out the rest of these prisoners and then follow you, Wayne," Cormar answered.

Wayne went through the stone doorway into the tunnel. It was in stygian blackness. He stumbled along it slowly after he had fallen down a half-dozen times in his eagerness. It was less than five feet high and the floor was uneven. It was ankle-deep in dirt and dust and Wayne choked and coughed as he made his way along it. It seemed endless. For almost an hour he followed the tunnel. Then he was rewarded by the sight of light and the sudden feeling of a rising floor. Speedily he hurled himself forward. When he emerged from the opening, Wayne found himself deep in the luxurious jungle vegetation. But the path of the abductor and the abducted was perfectly clear.

Wayne examined the grass. It was trampled and pressed. Gothar's huge splay feet were detectable. Kayna's delicate foot-imprint was visible also. Filthy, covered with sweat and blood and dirt and looking more like a Krag than a Piran, he made his way along the trail. Here and there were signs

of a struggle. Bits of torn cloth indicated Kayna had continued to fight the Krag.

Every now and then Kayna's footprints disappeared, indicating that the Krag had beaten her into unconsciousness and then carried her. Weak and hungry and exhausted from the night's battle and wild activity, Wayne stumbled along, only half-seeing the trail and conscious of but one thing. He must find Kayna! He must! He must! He told himself that a hundred times.

Every frayed nerve in his body screamed for him to rest. His hunger and thirst were hideous pains that gradually subsided into sensations of dull numbness along with the dozens of other aches and pains that were a part of him.

The running and walking and brushing into trees and bushes, the stumbling and stumbling that he did, tore open the blood-caked cuts that netlaced his body and he felt as if he must die if he dared take another step. Yet Wayne forced himself to continue.

Suddenly it was ended. He saw the broad expanse of the Korus stretching before him. He followed the footprints to the narrow beach and even as he stumbled forward he knew he had failed. There was the mark of a keel in the sand. Wayne looked out over the sea. In the remote distance he could see a boat, an ever-diminishing spec on the horizon. Bitterly Wayne cursed. His longsword clenched in his fist, he raised it to the sky.

"I'll find you, Kayna—and you, Gothar!" He shrieked in rage and frustration—and then collapsed.

## CHAPTER VIII

WAYNE came to, a mass of bruises and aches and his body seemed on

fire. He looked up, the effort of opening his eyes intolerable. Gelthor and Cormar were bending over him, pouring water on him.

"Gothar got away with Kayna," he said dully.

"We know," Gelthor cackled. "Here, drink this. And eat this."

They forced water and fruit on him and in a few minutes Wayne felt as if he were alive once more. He sat up, and in spite of his aching body, he knew that he must do one thing.

"Gelthor," he said, "we can't lose any time. Where is the nearest boat?"

"It's only a short distance down the beach. I'll go with you," the old man answered kindly. "You're not a true Piran, remember?"

Wayne smiled. Some of the fury and anger began to subside. He was able to think rationally again. He and the old man started toward the direction of the boat. Wayne spotted it in the sand, its prow tied to a tree.

"Cormar," he said, as the three of them walked toward the boat, "just Gelthor and myself will go. You can go back to the palace and report what has happened. I imagine the King will get searching parties organized too. Incidentally, how did the fighting in the city go?"

"Ask Gelthor, Wayne. I was with you, remember?"

"I must be dopier than I look," Wayne said wryly. "How did it go in Korus-tan, Gelthor?"

"The Kraggs are being butchered now—what's left of them," the old man said gleefully. "We cut them off from the wharves too and not many got away. It was fun for a while to see the beasts trying to escape the trap."

"I don't imagine many will get away," Wayne said, "Too many Pirans remember their women. If I had only known about that secret passage."

"I feel that way, too," Cormar said ruefully. "I was in that dungeon many times and I didn't know about the passageway. I don't think even the King knew about it until now. Pirans used the dungeon only for a short while."

"Well, it's too late to cry over it now," Wayne admitted.

The three of them untied and launched the boat. It had the usual quota of iron rations, which Gelthor supplemented with fruit and in a few minutes he and Wayne were aboard it. The old man attended to rigging the lateen sail and soon Cormar was merely a dot on the narrow beach.

All through the day the craft bore them onward, but not once did they catch sight of the Krag and his precious cargo. Vainly Wayne scanned the sea hours on end, but there was no glimpse of them to be had.

Gelthor and he rigged every bit of cloth available that would serve to speed them and the little craft cut through the water at a great rate. After a time instead of cursing his fate Wayne accepted their position philosophically and he spent the time discussing the best method of finding the Krag and Kayna.

It was agreed that it was a hopeless task almost, after they had talked about it thoroughly. In that vast expanse of jungle, at whose magnitude Wayne could only guess, what chance was there of finding the two people he wanted?

Gelthor suggested that Gothar would try to find other Kraggs and link up with them.

"I don't think so," Wayne said speculatively, toying with the hilt of his longsword. "He wants Kayna, but he's apparently civilized enough not to attack her. He'll probably try to be alone with her as much as possible. If he only knew what a small chance he

has of seducing her. Kayna, mate with a beast-man! It's unthinkable."

"It sounds logical," Gelthor agreed amiably, "especially when I stop and think that Gothar is not stupid. He knows by now that Pirans will start hunting down any groups of Krags they can find. I imagine he'll stay away from any large groups because they'll be the most obvious target of our men."

"Suppose then," suggested Wayne, "that I go inland while you parallel me along the coast. I'll work fairly well inland and you keep just offshore. Then any time I want, I can reach you, or at least be within range."

"I'll do that," the old man agreed, "but remember, I don't want to be picked up by any remaining Krag patrols. There are lots who haven't heard what has happened in Korus-tan. And until we clean the seas, it won't be too safe. Not that I'm afraid, Wayne—but I do want to live."

"No, no," Wayne protested, "don't take any chances. If you think there is any danger of being picked up by the Krags, run for it and forget about me. I'll hunt for that monster if it takes an eternity."

"I'll try and stay around as long as possible, Wayne," Gelthor assented. "Don't worry about it, anyway."

**I**T TOOK them several days before the shores of that unknown jungle appeared. Wayne had recovered admirably during the trip and was feeling more like himself. The scars of battle were healing well and he chafed to be off into the jungle. As futile as the pursuit seemed, it was at least an activity, and perhaps it was not so fruitless at that when he considered Gothar's nature.

As soon as they reached shore, Wayne slipped on his longsword, heft-

ed his small bag of provisions—he would eat and live off the jungle—Kayna had taught him enough about that—and then started into the thickets. He said good-bye to Gelthor and there was a wrenching at his heart. Wayne had come to like the crochety old man. It was entirely possible that he wouldn't see him again.

Before he penetrated into the jungle, he showed Gelthor the direction he had decided to take, so that the old man would be able to parallel his course. Then he set off.

As before, the going was hard. He came upon no trails and penetrating the jungle thicknesses was not easy, even though his longsword served as an excellent machete. For a week or more Wayne pursued his course, never exactly sure of his directions, but determined to proceed ahead regardless. For a while the journey seemed nightmarish. But gradually the inherent and previously atrophied sense of woodsman'ship that Wayne possessed took firm hold and he moved through the jungle smoothly and craftily.

As Kayna had pointed out wild animals were rare and he encountered none, but neither did he catch any sight of Gothar or Kayna.

He decided to turn seaward again and talk with Gelthor once more. His hastily conceived plan appeared utterly futile.

He turned to his right which was the direction of the sea as well as he could remember it. He was surprised at the depth to which he had penetrated. But eventually he came to the shores of Korus-tan. He scanned the sea for sight of Gelthor. Not a spec showed. Nowhere was there sign of the little craft's lateen-rigged sail.

Scrubbing himself in the fresh seawater and hacking off his beard with the razor he carried, Wayne felt re-

freshed but depressed. For the first time since he had been thrown into Pira, he wished he were not there. But he brushed away the thought as fast as it appeared to him.

He waited a full day, and by nightfall his patience was rewarded. A boat was coming toward the shore. Unthinkingly he waved and shouted as soon as it came within range. To his horror, he saw that it was full of Krag. He turned and ran into the jungle as the boat rapidly came toward the spot where he had been.

Hiding and concealing himself carefully, he watched the brutes disembark and to his surprise, he saw Gelthor. The old man was a sorry sight. He looked beaten and weary and his hands were tied behind his back.

Wayne knew he could easily slip off into the jungle and the Krag would not be able to find him, but he knew equally well that he would never do that. Patiently he waited and watched.

He counted eight Krag. They were all armed. They did not keep a very close watch on the old man. As confident as Wayne was of his ability, he would not dare try to beat all eight of them. Calmly he waited in a tree perch until night, for the Krag gave up looking for the wild figure they had seen waving its arms on the shore.

When night came, Wayne noticed that the old man lay to one side of a fire. One Krag remained on guard duty while the rest slept. This was simple.

Cat-like Wayne crept up toward the guard. The brute did not hear a sound. Wayne's blade separated his head from his body.

He crept over to Gelthor, always on the alert lest he waken any of the sleeping Krag. They did not know how close they were to death. One move on any of their parts and that man would

join his forebears.

Gelthor was overjoyed to see Wayne. His face beamed when Wayne cut his bonds, but he said nothing. A few minutes later after Gelthor's circulation returned, the two skulkers had reached the boat and shoved it from the cove. Wayne laughed to himself when he thought of the sorry plight of the Krag when they discovered the missing boat.

AS SOON as they were safe and could talk, Wayne told Gelthor of his experiences, the complete and total failure to find any sight of Kayna. Gelthor explained that he had been overtaken by the herd with which Wayne had found him.

"Gelthor," Wayne said, leaning his head in his hands, "I'm not going to give up this search. I don't expect you to spend the rest of your time wasting it with me. Take me further down the coast, and I'll disembark and I'll repeat the process. Regardless of how long it takes, I'll find Kayna. What horrors that girl must be going through!"

"Of course, I'll take you down the coast, Wayne," Gelthor said sympathetically, "but I won't desert you. And don't despair, man. Right, I'll bet there are hundreds of small craft patrolling the sea. The Korus is big, but you can be sure Gothar is not on it. Therefore he must be in the jungle somewhere. Thator will send plenty of searching parties there too. You see, Wayne—" the old man put his hand on Wayne's shoulder, —"Kayna will be found. Be patient."

"You're right," Wayne agreed. "It's just that I can't bear the thought of her with Gothar. From what I've been told about him—by you—he's intelligent as well as brutal. That's why I fear he's going to be almost impossible to find."

"He'll be found. Stop worrying."

Gelthor let Wayne off the next morning quite a few miles farther down the coast as he requested. Again he hovered offshore going up and down with the boat, keeping careful watch against the possibility of encountering any more Krag.

Wayne resumed his usual endless trek inland. Under the piercing, intense jungle sun, the jungle became a steaming morass of humidity. The direct light of the sun couldn't penetrate the jungle but it could and did make a miserable oven of it, compounded with moisture.

Half-blinded by his own sweat, Wayne stumbled along, his eyes despite their fatigue never leaving the trail for an instant, constantly searching for signs of Gothar.

He had proceeded in this way for several hours, when he had the uncanny feeling that he had been along this trail before. Then it came to him! Of course he had traveled this path. A diligent search disclosed the barest traces of blade-marks on a few trees, blade-marks that he had placed there when he first met Kayna after coming to this unknown land.

A host of memories were stirring within him. What if he came upon the spot where he had landed? Had Dr. Graves forgotten him? If Kayna was gone would it not be better to return to his own time? A host of questions ran through his mind.

Suddenly his head jerked erect. He listened. He heard the sound of voices. No, it was impossible. He must be hearing things. That couldn't be Kayna. He walked farther along the leafy path. As he burst through a clearing in the jungle, he saw two figures standing three hundred feet away! One was an almost naked girl, dirty, and fatigued, standing before a Krag. It was

Kayna and Gothar.

Wayne's heart leaped into his mouth! This was it. But even as he saw the two, they saw him. The girl half-turned. Wayne could see her mouth open as she started to shout.

"Way—" she called, and the name was broken off as the Krag reached out and struck her unconscious with a mighty blow from his clenched fist. Wayne saw the sub-man catch the falling girl, flip her over his shoulder, and race into the jungle.

The whole tableau had taken seconds. Even as Wayne reacted with hatred, even as the rage surged through, the girl-carrying Krag vanished into the jungle. Wayne set out after him instantly, certain that he would catch the laden Krag within minutes. But he underestimated the strength of the brute.

**L**IVING in the jungle as Gothar had been doing, had made him a superbly muscled machine. And Krags were never weaklings. Spurred by the thought of pursuit and fearful lest Wayne have cohorts, Gothar urged himself along without respite. His desire for the girl was so great that he would not leave her go. After she came to, he even prodded her into running before him, using the tip of his longsword as a goad. Almost exhausted, but driven by fear for both herself and Wayne, Kayna stumbled along. The chase was a nightmare that seemed endless.

Several hundred yards in the rear, Wayne kept up a relentless pursuit. Even though he had the wings of hope, the tangled underbrush made his progress like a snail's pace, it seemed to him.

After the first hour, the pace of the pursued slackened. Gothar could easily escape if he chose to abandon the girl. He knew that in all likelihood Wayne



would not even follow him. But his beaten ego would not permit it. He had lost a kingdom through the interference of this fellow. He would not lose a princess. And besides, somewhere in his strangely primitive—yet advanced—mind there lurked a feeling for this girl that his savage intellect was not fully capable of describing. Call it lust, call it desire, even call it "love." Regardless, Gothar would not give up.

But he could not win the chase. Wayne knew that. Every so often he would catch a glimpse of the fleeing figures and his heart would bound with joy. It was only a matter of minutes now.

Soon Wayne was only scores of yards behind the two figures. At that instant Gothar and Kayna stumbled into a jungle clearing. This was to be it! Gothar decided the issue. Knowing the courage of the girl, he dared not risk her intervention in any fighting which was certain to come now. His fist lashed out again. It caught the unfortunate loveliness of Kayna across the side of the head. She dropped, completely out. The stunned and beaten girl was out of the picture now.

Calmly Gothar waited for the approaching Wayne. Wayne broke into the clearing. At last! He saw the magnificent figure of the Krag. Gothar faced him with drawn longsword. Wayne's own blade was in his hand.

"Prepare yourself for death," Wayne said, breathing heavily after the exhausting trek, "prepare to die. I am going to carve you into little bits of flesh and the jungle ants will strip your bones."

The Krag threw back his head and uttered his thunderous mocking laugh.

Sardonically, he bent in the caricature of a bow. He whipped his longsword through the air until it whis-

tled, as it reflected the sun's light."

"Little man," he said mockingly, "it is you who will die. The swordsman doesn't live who can beat Gothar."

Wayne was forced to admire the calmness and self-confidence of the brute even as his brain seethed with hatred and desire for revenge. He stepped forward, his longsword on guard.

The instant that the blades touched, Wayne knew that he was facing a man of no mean ability. At the first touch of steel on steel, he felt the nervous, delicate, sensing of a swordsman's arm. Here was no crude hacker, but a man who knew what a point was for.

Confident as he was, Gothar played with Wayne's blade in an effort to find the caliber of man against him. The past few weeks had made Wayne a master, too, and Gothar sensed it at once.

Circling each other cautiously, their blades licking out in tentative, testing thrusts, probing each other's defenses, the sub-man and Wayne made a magnificent picture of barbaric splendor.

The only sounds were the harsh breathing of the combatants, the clink of steel on steel, and the rustle of the grass beneath their sandaled feet. Otherwise the jungle was silent.

As soon as he had taken the temper of the man, Wayne opened the attack. His blade licked out in a long lean lunge, his arm and body moving with the speed and accuracy of a striking snake. Even as he lunged Wayne was aware, out of the corner of his eye, of the fallen body, now lying prone, of Kayna. The sight acted as a whip to his senses.

**C**OOLLY and calmly and with equal speed, Gothar's blade moved sideways three inches in a parry whose speed was no less than Wayne's lunge,

and Wayne's blade slithered harmlessly to one side. In the same movement, Gothar enveloped Wayne's blade in a counter parry and Wayne was forced to recover his lunge and step back.

A smile appeared on Gothar's face. He opened his own lightning attack. For a while Wayne faced a wall of shimmering steel from which stabbing points darted. Only by the dint of calling on his every reserve was he able to keep Gothar's licking, seeking blade from his body.

At the last pass of steel, the barbarian's tip nicked Wayne's shoulder and blood started to trickle from the wound. Again Gothar smiled, an evil smile of both anticipation and satisfaction.

Twice more in as many minutes the Krag opened whirlwind attacks. Wayne met them all with a steel curtain of his own, but again in spite of his best, Gothar's blade exacted another touch, this time on Wayne's left arm.

Wayne had been retreating steadily until his back was almost to the jungle wall. He could go no farther. He made a supreme effort to take the initiative. In a furious yet strategic offense, he drove the Krag back toward the center of the clearing. Once he drew blood which bothered the Krag not at all.

The swords were never still a moment. Gradually Wayne allowed his defense to weaken and the Krag saw his chance. The Piran was weakening. Now he must press home the attack! Now! In a whirlwind of flashing steel, Gothar tore into Wayne. For a brief flickering moment, Wayne gave ground.

Gothar's blade, driven with the full force of his body, came at Wayne's chest. There seemed to be no hope of parrying or evading the forceful lunge. Wayne dropped to both knees as the blade shot for him. At the same time he shot his body forward and upward.

His longsword blade sank into Gothar's belly and upward through his vitals. The Krag chieftain screamed one loud shriek of agony. He stumbled backward, wrenching Wayne's blade with his body, and then fell to the ground spilling out his life as he did.

Almost exhausted, Wayne staggered to his feet. He had done the job. The Krag was dead.

Dragging his enervated body to the still form of Kayna, Wayne gathered her to his arms.

"Darling," he whispered, covering her dirt-streaked face with kisses, "are you all right? Talk to me. Please, Kayna, say something!"

The girl's eyelids fluttered. She looked up. For the first time in what seemed like ages she saw Wayne's face instead of the brutal visage of Gothar the sub-man.

Her arms stole out around Wayne's neck and she clung to him.

"My Wayne," she murmured, "my prince."

Wayne's arms tightened around her and they clung to each other for many minutes. Their lips sought each other's hungrily and like all young lovers they forgot their world.

At last Wayne gently disengaged her arms from around his neck.

"You must have rest and care, Kayna," he said.

"I'll be all right as soon as I have some food and sleep," she said. There was a smile of utter happiness on her sorely bruised and beaten face. She was sensitive to the slightest touch. "For a while I forgot how much I hurt," she said, "when you held me in your arms, Wayne."

"You poor thing," Wayne said, his eyes taking in the marks of the brutal treatment she had received.

Very practically he gave her food and water from his little supply sack.

Then he suggested they rest a while.

"Kayna," he said in explanation, "Gelthor, a Piran fisherman whom I've come to know and like well, is waiting offshore for us with a boat. As soon as we're rested we'll go back to Korustan with him. I'm sure your father will be glad to see you."

"Of course, Wayne," Kayna said, snuggling up to him and grimacing gingerly every time she bumped a bruise, "you remember that it was you who did all this. Tell me what happened after you were captured."

WAYNE told her the whole story, playing down his own part as leader of the revolt, but Kayna did not fail to understand. Under his matter-of-fact words she easily sensed exactly who had been responsible for the whole thing.

Wayne wanted to know what had happened to her.

"When I was captured and taken from you, darling," she answered, "I was taken before Gothar. He wanted me. He even offered me to share his throne—" she laughed at the ridiculousness of the offer—"and when I refused he threw me in the dungeons with my father and many other Pirans. We waited there until the revolt started. We could get an idea of the seriousness of the affair by the fear of our guards. At last Gothar came down to the cell and forced me to go with him through that secret passage—"

"I know about that," Wayne interrupted grimly.

"—where he went to the beach and found a boat. You know the rest. We wandered through the forest endlessly. He was continually looking for more Krags and when he failed to find any he was enraged. And he always tried to make love to me. I succeeded in fighting him off, but I couldn't have

much longer. Oh Wayne, I'm so happy."

Suddenly Wayne saw a startled look of surprise on Kayna's lovely face. He wondered for a moment what she was looking at. Then he turned around abruptly. He saw the shimmering haze and a multitude of thoughts surged through him.

It came to him then in a flash. They were in the same clearing that Wayne had been in when he arrived in Pira and met Kayna!

For a moment Wayne didn't know what to think. Then the flood gates of his mind opened and the memories of what had gone before came to him.

As he looked at the shimmering blue haze that hovered in the center of the clearing, he knew that Dr. Graves had not forgotten him. Somewhere and at some time, Dr. Graves was sitting in his laboratory, desperately worried about Wayne's disappearance. Here was the opportunity to eliminate that worry.

As Wayne watched the blue light, it flickered and flared, alternately increasing and decreasing. His head seemed to swell and contract with it. What should he do?

The problem that confronted him seemed insoluble. He could simply step through the veil, explain his plight and return to Kayna. That would be the logical thing to do. But what guarantee had he that he would return to the same place and time? Well, the fact that the haze was floating here and now was the guarantee. Could he afford to take the chance?

"Kayna," Wayne said turning to the girl, who gazed at him sympathetically and who could see the terrific struggle going on in his mind, "I don't expect you to understand this, but believe me. I have a chance to go back to my world. But I love you, Kayna, and I will never leave you. Would you want

to come with me to my world?"

"I will do whatever you wish, Wayne."

He thought and thought. Would little savage Kayna truly fit in the artificial world of a twentieth-century university? Would she be happy away from all the things she knew and loved?

And would he be happy here? That problem filtered through his mind too. Here he was, a professor of physics, a scientist who had spent most of his life living the most artificial life that could be lived, living purely in the abstract. Would he want to live as a semi-savage the rest of his life? Then he recalled how well he had fitted into this strange world. He glanced toward the dead body of Gothar. Yes, he fitted very well into this world.

Wayne looked at the shimmering haze. He looked at Kayna, whose lovely eyes were filled with tears. He picked up a leaf. With the tip of his longsword he scratched the words, "I'm staying—Wayne." With a branch he placed it in the bluish corona. It vanished. He turned his back on the blueish haze. Someone would have to be hurt and it wasn't going to be Kayna.

He bent down.

"Kayna," he said softly, "are you well enough to leave this clearing? We must meet Gelthor as soon as possible."

Kayna's tear-filled eyes brightened. She smiled and drew his head down to hers.

"I'm glad, my darling," she said, "I'm very glad."

Without looking behind, Wayne and Kayna walked from the clearing.

THE END