

## 《The Warlord of Mars》 Chapter 9 - With the Yellow Men

Thuvan Dihn was not long in joining me; and, though we found the hooked weapon a strange and savage three of us soon despatched the five black-bearded warriors who opposed us.

When the battle was over our new acquaintance turned to me, and removing the shield from his wrist, he recognized the significance of his act, but judged that it was but a form of expressing his gratitude to me.

I afterward learned that it symbolized the offering of a man's life in return for some great favor done him which I had immediately done, was what was expected of me.

"Then accept from Talu, Prince of Marentina," said the yellow man, "this token of my gratitude," and reaching into his sleeves he withdrew a bracelet and placed it upon my arm. He then went through the same ceremony with the other two.

Next he asked our names, and from what land we hailed. He seemed quite familiar with the geography of Okar, and when I told him I was from Helium he raised his brows.

"Ah," he said, "you seek your ruler and his company?"

"Know you of them?" I asked.

"But little more than that they were captured by my uncle, Salensus Oll, Jeddak of Jeddaks, Ruler of Okar, and his army. As to their fate I know nothing, for I am at war with my uncle, who would crush my power in the present struggle.

"These from whom you have just saved me are warriors he has sent out to find and slay me, for they know that I am the only one who can kill the sacred apt which Salensus Oll so much reveres. It is partly because I hate his religion that Salensus Oll does he fear my growing power and the great faction which has arisen throughout Okar that would be glad to see Salensus Oll dethroned and Jeddak of Jeddaks in his place.

"He is a cruel and tyrannous master whom all hate, and were it not for the great fear they have of him I could have wiped out the few that might remain loyal to him. My own people are faithful to me, and the little vanguard of my army has fled to the court of Salensus Oll for a year.

"Nor can he force us, for a dozen men may hold the narrow way to Marentina against a million. But now you may aid me? My palace is at your disposal, if you wish to honor me by coming to Marentina."

"When our work is done we shall be glad to accept your invitation," I replied. "But now you can assist us in the overthrow of Salensus Oll, and suggesting some means by which we may gain admission to the city and the palace, and our friends to be confined."

Talu gazed ruefully at our smooth faces and at Thuvan Dihn's red skin and my white one.

"First you must come to Marentina," he said, "for a great change must be wrought in your appearance before you can enter the city in Okar. You must have yellow faces and black beards, and your apparel and trappings must be those of a warrior. My palace is one who can make you appear as truly yellow men as does Salensus Oll himself."

His counsel seemed wise; and as there was apparently no other way to insure a successful entry to Marentina, we set out with Talu, Prince of Marentina, for his little, rock-bound country.

The way was over some of the worst traveling I have ever seen, and I do not wonder that in this land where the winds howl and the rangers are few that Marentina is in little fear of invasion; but at last we reached our destination, the first view of which was within a half-mile from the city.

Nestled in a deep valley lay a city of Martian concrete, whose every street and plaza and open space was covered with a snow and ice, but there was none upon the rounded, domelike, crystal covering that enveloped the whole city.

Then I saw how these people combatted the rigors of the arctic, and lived in luxury and comfort in the midst of the snow. Their cities were veritable hothouses, and when I had come within this one my respect and admiration for the ingenuity of this buried nation was unbounded.

The moment we entered the city Talu threw off his outer garments of fur, as did we, and I saw that his a



hat of the red races of Barsoom. Except for his leathern harness, covered thick with jewels and metal, he was comfortably worn apparel in that warm and humid atmosphere.

For three days we remained the guests of Prince Talu, and during that time he showered upon us every aspect of his power. He showed us all that was of interest in his great city.

The Marentina atmosphere plant will maintain life indefinitely in the cities of the north pole after all life upon the planet is extinct through the failure of the air supply, should the great central plant again cease functioning as it did upon Mars. It gave me the opportunity of restoring life and happiness to the strange world that I had already learned to love.

He showed us the heating system that stores the sun's rays in great reservoirs beneath the city, and how it maintains the perpetual summer heat of the glorious garden spot within this arctic paradise.

Broad avenues of sod sewn with the seed of the other vegetation of the dead sea bottoms carried the noiseless round fliers that are the only form of artificial transportation used north of the gigantic ice-barrier.

The broad tires of these unique fliers are but rubber-like gas bags filled with the eighth Barsoomian ray, a remarkable discovery of the Martians that has made possible the great fleets of mighty airships that render the red planet habitable. It is this ray which propels the inherent or reflected light of the planet off into space, and when confined gives the fliers their buoyancy.

The ground fliers of Marentina contain just sufficient buoyancy in their automobile-like wheels to give them stability; and though the hind wheels are geared to the engine, and aid in driving the machine, the bulk of this work is done by the front wheels at the stern.

I know of no more delightful sensation than that of riding in one of these luxuriously appointed cars which glide along the soft, mossy avenues of Marentina. They move with absolute noiselessness between borders of clinging trees gorgeous with the wondrous blooms that mark so many of the highly cultivated varieties of Barsoom.

By the end of the third day the court barber--I can think of no other earthly appellation by which to describe him--made a transformation in both Thuvan Dihn and myself that our own wives would never have known us. Our hair turned a color as his own, and great, black beards and mustaches had been deftly affixed to our smooth faces. The effect was intended in the deception; and for wear beyond the hothouse cities we each had suits of the black- and yellow-striped material.

Talu gave us careful directions for the journey to Kadabra, the capital city of the Okar nation, which is the nearest to Marentina. This good friend even accompanied us part way, and then, promising to aid us in any way that he found possible.

On parting he slipped upon my finger a curiously wrought ring set with a dead-black, lusterless stone, whiter than bituminous coal than the priceless Barsoomian gem which in reality it is.

"There had been but three others cut from the mother stone," he said, "which is in my possession. These three are in my confidence, all of whom have been sent on secret missions to the court of Salensus Oll.

"Should you come within fifty feet of any of these three you will feel a rapid, pricking sensation in the finger. He who wears one of its mates will experience the same feeling; it is caused by an electrical action that causes the three of these gems cut from the same mother stone come within the radius of each other's power. By it you will know whom you may depend for assistance in time of need.

"Should another wearer of one of these gems call upon you for aid do not deny him, and should death threaten him rather than let it fall into the hands of enemies. Guard it with your life, John Carter, for some day it may mean much to him.

With this parting admonition our good friend turned back toward Marentina, and we set our faces in the direction of the court of Salensus Oll, Jeddak of Jeddaks.

That very evening we came within sight of the walled and glass-roofed city of Kadabra. It lies in a low dale surrounded by rocky, snow-clad hills. From the pass through which we entered the valley we had a splendid view across the valley. The crystal domes sparkled in the brilliant sunlight gleaming above the frost-covered outer wall that circles the entire circumference.

At regular intervals great gates give entrance to the city; but even at the distance from which we looked toward it we saw that all were closed, and, in accordance with Talu's suggestion, we deferred attempting to enter the city.

As he had said, we found numerous caves in the hillsides about us, and into one of these we crept for the night. It kept us perfectly comfortable, and it was only after a most refreshing sleep that we awoke shortly after daylight.

Already the city was astir, and from several of the gates we saw parties of yellow men emerging. Following the instructions given us by our good friend of Marentina, we remained concealed for several hours until one party had passed along the trail below our hiding place and entered the hills by way of the pass along which we had come.

After giving them time to get well out of sight of our cave, Thuvan Dihn and I crept out and followed the trail. They were well into the hills.

When we had come almost to them I called aloud to their leader, when the whole party halted and turned back. Could we but deceive these men the rest would be comparatively easy.

"Kaor!" I cried as I came closer to them.

"Kaor!" responded the officer in charge of the party.

"We be from Illall," I continued, giving the name of the most remote city of Okar, which has little or no industry yesterday we arrived, and this morning the captain of the gate told us that you were setting out to hunt orluki in our own neighborhood. We have hastened after you to pray that you allow us to accompany you."

The officer was entirely deceived, and graciously permitted us to go with them for the day. The chance of an orluki hunt proved correct, and Talu had said that the chances were ten to one that such would be the misadventure by the pass through which we entered the valley, since that way leads directly to the vast plains frequented by the orluki.

In so far as the hunt was concerned, the day was a failure, for we did not see a single orluki; but this process, since the yellow men were so chagrined by their misfortune that they would not enter the city by the same way in the morning, as it seemed that they had made great boasts to the captain of that gate about their skill at the hunt.

We, therefore, approached Kadabra at a point several miles from that at which the party had quitted it in order to avoid the danger of embarrassing questions and explanations on the part of the gate captain, whom we had sailed with as a regular hunting party.

We had come quite close to the city when my attention was attracted toward a tall, black shaft that reared up into the air from what appeared to be a tangled mass of junk or wreckage, now partially snow-covered.

I did not dare venture an inquiry for fear of arousing suspicion by evident ignorance of something which was well known; but before we reached the city gate I was to learn the purpose of that grim shaft and the meaning of its existence.

We had come almost to the gate when one of the party called to his fellows, at the same time pointing toward the shaft. Following the direction he indicated, my eyes descried the hull of a large flier approaching rapidly from among the hills.

"Still other fools who would solve the mysteries of the forbidden north," said the officer, half to himself. "What is your curiosity?"

"Let us hope not," answered one of the warriors, "for then what should we do for slaves and sport?"

"True; but what stupid beasts they are to continue to come to a region from whence none of them ever has returned."

"Let us tarry and watch the end of this one," suggested one of the men.

The officer looked toward the city.

"The watch has seen him," he said; "we may remain, for we may be needed."

I looked toward the city and saw several hundred warriors issuing from the nearest gate. They moved leisurely, and there was no need for haste--nor was there, as I was presently to learn.

Then I turned my eyes once more toward the flier. She was moving rapidly toward the city, and when she was within a few miles I was surprised to see that her propellers were idle.

Straight for that grim shaft she bore. At the last minute I saw the great blades move to reverse her, yet only to be stopped by some mighty, irresistible power.

Intense excitement prevailed upon her deck, where men were running hither and thither, manning the gun turrets, the one-man fliers, a fleet of which is part of the equipment of every Martian war vessel. Closer and closer she came. In another instant she must strike, and then I saw the familiar signal flown that sends the lesser boats in a group to the mother ship.

Instantly a hundred tiny fliers rose from her deck, like a swarm of huge dragon flies; but scarcely were they aloft when the nose of each turned toward the shaft, and they, too, rushed on at frightful speed toward the same now so near. They outmaneuvered the larger vessel.

A moment later the collision came. Men were hurled in every direction from the ship's deck, while she, too, fell long and far to the scrap-heap at the shaft's base.

With her fell a shower of her own tiny fliers, for each of them had come in violent collision with the solid shaft.

I noticed that the wrecked fliers scraped down the shaft's side, and that their fall was not as rapid as might have been expected. Suddenly the secret of the shaft burst upon me, and with it an explanation of the cause that prevented a flier from returning.