

THE CRIMINAL OF VULCAN II

By

Kenneth B. Blois

INTRODUCTION

As Jerry Hawks returned to his beloved Jupiter he had left his future wife, Vickina, in the hands of one of his trusted aides ... or so he thought. The moment he departed Vulcan II Silob Emos, a powerful underground leader, had ordered raids on several Oosag and Flat-Racian establishments. Silob was clever enough to make the Oosags believe the Flat-Racians had staged them and the Flat-Racians thought the Oosags had done them.

The leaders of both races met in secrecy. Each, thinking the other had accomplished the raids, had their opinion as to how they were to be stopped. Vickina, queen of Vulcan II and Neerg, second natural satellite of the planet, disappeared shortly after being made to sign a paper declaring war between the two races. It was at this time that Jerry became honorably discharged from the Solar Space Patrol and was turning his eyes back toward Vulcan II, to live with his wife-to-be, Vickina.

CHAPTER ONE
(Before The Jury)

"UNIDENTIFIED objects approaching," the metallic voice hollered over the intercom.

"Can you get a fix?" a young man replied, rising from behind the circular desk.

"I'll try," the monotone voice responded.

After a few moments, the silence was again broken by the mechanical voice. "Seems to be a formation of space vehicles."

"I am coming down. Try to raise them on the radio," the blond man stated as he descended through the opening in the floor.

A few minutes later he entered a room covered wall to wall with dials, gauges and meters. Seating himself behind a long enameled desk, built into the smooth glassy wall, he took a microphone off the hook.

"Zutho II calling unidentified craft ... are you from Vulcan II? ..."

The speaker was filled with static for a few moments then a high-pitched voice replied.

"This is the Oosag Army Corps (O.A.C.) leader. You are under arrest. You will land immediately. You bear colors of the Sol Star System and have no business in the Rega-Delta System. We are prepared to wage war. You are to throw your weapons into space and commence landing procedures. End transmission..."

"They are closing formation, sir. We are surrounded," a sharp metallic voice stated behind the seated man.

"They have closed their intercom. Land as directed. I have ejected our weapons into space. Find the nearest clearing and set this ship down. That is an order! ... What are you waiting for? ... I said that was an order!" the man shouted as the ship turned toward an oncoming O.A.C. ship.

"I am not programmed to land until the pre-arranged time. These intruders have not given sufficient information why this ship should leave its pre-arranged course. I will destroy these aliens," came the metallic reply, as the giant robot moved swiftly across the tiled floor. "I will take the controls, Mr. Hawks."

The robot picked up the man in one of its human-like hands and deposited him in a corner of the room. It rolled back to the control panel on its caterpillar-like treads. It pushed a green button at the panel. A red light shot from the nose of the 'Zutho II' and struck the oncoming O.A.C. Wonder Ship (a name given to Jerry's first space ship ... the 'Zutho' ... by the Spider Men on Neerg -- natural satellite of Vulcan II). The beam illuminated the O.A.C. Wonder Ship. When the light had vanished so had the ship ... leaving only empty space.

"I hate to do this to you, Mike..." Jerry stated as he approached the turning machine "but in order to save us..."

Leaping to the back of the robot Jerry opened a sliding door behind its left shoulder. Reaching inside he pulled a yellow handle downward. The robot ceased operating. He leaped to the floor and approached the control panel. Picking up the microphone, he contacted the O.A.C. leader. The Oosags again opened the channel. Jerry was immediately told he had to land the 'Zutho II', even after explaining it had been the robot which had destroyed their craft.

"Volans, I didn't do it! I tried to prevent Mike, but he just wouldn't listen. He didn't let me explain that was the way you greeted all your space friends," Jerry replied as he guided the ship toward the planet.

After safely landing, they were boarded by the O.A.C.

"You," Volans said, turning to Mike, "have created a criminal offense ... and you, Mr. Hawks, have helped him. Both will stand trial before the jury tomorrow morning. Guards ... lock them up."

"Will you stop that pacing ... it's driving me nuts!" Mike screamed, as he tried pulling the bars of the cell apart again.

"It should. You got us into this. If only you'd have listened. Now, unless they have made other arrangements, you will work six months on the prison asteroid and I will go to Neerg (one of Vulcan's moons) for three weeks to mine Roly-X-Xem. We are to appear before the judges in less than one kran," Jerry warned, taking his place on the bunk, suspended three feet above the floor.

The cell Jerry was in was insulated from the snow outside by a thin layer of 'Roly-X-Xem'. It was winter on Vulcan II. In the day temperatures ranged from 25° above zero to 50° below. At night temperature became as low as 150° below zero. If one were to be caught out at night, they were given up for dead ... there was one race, however, who had survived the intense cold, the ferocious Surface People.

It was unbearably hot and sticky in the Southern Hemisphere in summer; daytime temperatures remained around 85-90°. At night in the Northern Hemisphere, the temperature would reach 50-80° above zero.

The corridor beyond the two began filling with soft voices. Four Oosag guards came into view. Jerry jumped off the bed and stood beside Mike, who stepped back from the cell door. The rusty door opened and they were ushered from the cell.

"We go to the council room, where the judges await," stated one of the Oosags as the cell door slammed shut.

Mike and Jerry were escorted down several passages, two Oosags in front, two behind. They came to a stone with an arrow pointing upward. Here they were pushed into a small passageway.

No sooner had the two entered then a sliding rock blocked

their retreat. Mike tried to push the rock. It would not budge. Both looked the opposite way as they heard a scraping. A rock slid across the other opening. Both rocks began moving downward.

"We are in an elevator," Jerry said, pressing his ear to the floor.

"Where are we going?" Mike asked, bending close to the cool floor.

"Up to the council, I suppose," Jerry replied, standing.

At that moment, thick sheets of Roly-X-Xem surrounded them. The side they had been facing lifted. They turned as they heard the door behind rise as well. Four Oosags entered from the first door and secured their wrists. Jerry and Mike were seated in the room with the judges. There were seven in all. Anu, the Blue Man; Somal, a Flat-Racian; Neub, Mole Man; Luza, the Lufwa; Etnafele, Fish Man; King Ssem, Spider Man; and King Luna, king of the Lunaticks.

"King Luna! I thought you were dead! I saw you shoved into space without a spacesuit." Jerry shouted, looking at the round ledge seven feet above where the judges sat.

"You forget, Mr. Hawks, I am not of your solar system. All here on Vulcan II can withstand the intense cold of outer space --- but only I can withstand its vacuum. I have injected myself with a special fluid --- found only on the satellite orbiting the dog star --- which enables my body to survive without oxygen. I said the races here could withstand the intense cold of space, but not for a long time. That is why my companion, who was shot into space with me, died within seconds. Would you be so kind as to look at the screen to your left?" King Luna replied, pressing a button on the panel in front of him.

The room grew dark. In the middle of the screen, a soft glow began to form. It grew into a picture of a spaceship. Jerry recognized the 'Zutho II'. It was moving through space. The edge of Vulcan II appeared on the screen. Three other ships appeared. As one of the smaller ships drew close the 'Zutho II' fired a beam of thin red light. The small ship melted. The other two ships quickly drew up beside the first, then headed for the planet.

"Recognize the scene, Mr. Hawks?" Anu said, as the picture faded and the room once again illuminated.

"Sure. That's when Mike accidentally attacked one of your ships," Jerry replied, turning so he again faced the judges.

"Accidentally! We know you returned to revenge your wife, Mr. Hawks. We hold you on two counts: 1-destroying an O.A.C. Wonder Ship and 2-lying to a judge!" King Luna yelled, rising from his seat.

"Sit down Luna, we have to hold the conference. Do you have anything to say in your defense?" Somal asked.

"What do you mean 'revenge my wife'?" Jerry inquired, standing.

"Sit down! There, that's better. About your wife -- ah,

yes. Vickina disappeared last year about three months after you left for Retipuj. A few weeks after that a note arrived. I have it here. Let me read it to you:

UNLESS YOU OBEY MY COMMANDS, YOUR BELOVED QUEEN, VICKINA, WILL DIE. TELL MY MESSENGER IF YOU WISH TO ABIDE BY MY LAWS.

NITRO THE GREAT

We replied we would see what his commands were before we answered. We received this a few days later:

HERE ARE MY DEMANDS: ALL SLAVES MUST BE SET FREE. ALL JUDGES MUST BE DESTROYED. ALL AIR AND UNDERWATER VESSELS WILL BE ELIMINATED. I MUST HAVE THE ISLANDS OF 'WOLS AND EGA'. ALL FLAT-RACIANS WILL COME ABOVE GROUND ON THE THIRD MONTH FOR THE ENTIRE MONTH. THE MOLE MEN MUST SEE THE SUN FOR THREE SECONDS. LASTLY, I INVITE ALL OOSAGS TO THE NORTHERN HALF OF WOLS. THEY WILL MEET ME NEAR THE BALCES FOREST. IF YOU DO NOT OBEY I SHALL SET MY MONSTER 'MODNAR' AFTER ALL THE JUDGES.

NITRO THE GREAT

We tried to obey his commands but failed. He sent us a note, which said Vickina was dead. Three of us had to be replaced because they had fallen prey to 'Modnar'. We sent a messenger to Retipuj saying Vickina was dead, yet you say you never received this. Strange." King Ssem stated, looking at Jerry for a moment, then at Mike. "Why did you return if not to revenge her death?"

"I came to live as I promised I would do. I received an honorable discharge from the Solar Space Patrol a few months ago. I would have come sooner had I known she was in trouble. What do you intend to do with us?" Jerry responded.

"Your friend will spend a Rya on Foor, the prison asteroid. You shall spend half a Rya on neerg. Go now, for we shall meet again when your terms are up," Ssem smiled, as Jerry and Mike were taken from their chairs and dumped into two holes.

The hole into which Jerry had been dumped read: NEERG. The one into which Mike had fallen: FOOR.

Jerry had been mining Roly-X-Xem for three weeks under the hot suns on Neerg. Today he worked with a Lufwa slave, Enaj. He worked his way over to her position.

"Enaj?" Jerry whispered. "Have you heard anything about Kas Estac?"

"Kas Estac ... YOU know him?" she whispered as well.

"Yes, we were friends. Why?" Jerry continued, seeing her back away at the mention of the name.

"He is the one who sent me here!"

"I don't believe it of him," Jerry half whispered as he

watched her replace the broken blade on the pick she had been using to break the rocks.

"Neither did I. I have been his fiancee for over three years. One day, I think it was two or three weeks after you left Neerg with a load of Roly-X-Xem, he came and told me I was to go with him. I went along. I see now I should have stayed in my home, I would have been better off. He made me sit in a funny looking chair and put on a metal hat. I felt a tingling and then blacked out. When I came to I found myself in this camp. I asked the head guard why I had been brought here he just replied: "Your friend brought you to 'Keep you out of the way'," she replied, standing. "Why do you wish to know about him?"

"When we were friends we made a pledge that if either were to get into trouble, the other would help him out. I am a prisoner here, as are you. I need his help to escape and find my wife. This man called Nitro says she is dead. If he has killed her, I have to kill him. It is an old tradition on my planet. I know where I can find Nitro but not how to escape from here. Can you tell me where Kas is?"

"I will tell you, but it will do you no good ... you will see. He is in the palace of the Red Men," she replied, backing into the cave and once again picking at the yellow ground with her tool.

Jerry remained silent as he continued his work. He spent the remainder of the day in his sweat-soaked shirt then, when it came time to quit, went to the main guard office and asked if he could see Kas.

"Doesn't everyone?" replied the guard as he motioned Jerry to the door he had just entered.

"How should I know? Tell him his friend Jerry Hawks is waiting for him in cell six-fifteen. Could you give him that message?"

"I'll think about it. If I decide to pass along that message ... what will I receive?"

"How about this ..." Jerry replied, handing some flat, square coins to the guard.

"Where did you get these?" the guard asked, suddenly interested.

"I'll never tell." Jerry replied as he walked into the night, dragging the small lead ball attached to his ankle.

"This Mr. Hawks says he knows you, Kas." stated a man in a white suit as he entered the private chamber.

"Ah yes, I remember. When I was a slave, he freed me. I am indeed indebted to him. Where did you say he was, Wazuzu?" the Lufwa asked, standing.

Wazuzu, chief of all races on Neerg, came forward and bowed before the Lufwa. Placing his hands behind his back as the Red Man kissed the man's foot and then rose.

"He is being held in the camp of the great black devil, Nuru. A chariot awaits," Wazuzu stated, as Kas rose and

disappeared through a doorway on one side of the throne.
Wazuzu arose and followed.

"Someone is here to see you, Mr. Hawks," a guard smiled, as he unlocked Jerry's cell.

Kas walked in and sat on the edge of the bunk. The guard shut the cell door and walked away.

"Kas! How good to see you again. I need your help," Jerry whispered. "Is it true Vickina is dead?"

"Your wife dead? When was this?" Kas asked, standing suddenly.

"You mean you are not aware of her capture?"

"No. This is the first I have heard of it. I shall look into this. Now what is it you wish me to do?" Kas asked, retaking his seat on the bunk.

"I want to get out of here so I can search for her myself. Could you get me out somehow?"

"I think it is possible to arrange for an export paper. If it is not possible ... I'll see to it there is a little prison break," Kas said, nudging Jerry and winking.

CHAPTER TWO
(Monster Island)

"The great Silob Emos!" the Blue Man in white robe announced as he stepped from the doorway as a man, trailed by ten Oosags, passed through.

The man arouse much attention ... not because he was such a great ruler, but because his skin was white. On Vulcan II the only people the Oosags had seen with white skin were Jerry Hawks and members of the crew of the spaceship 'Zutho'. Silob was soon to be known all over the planet as a dictator. He took his seat in the decorated chair, numerous buttons covering the arms. He pressed one. An instrument slid into view from beneath the floor. He held the device close to his mouth.

"There has been a prison break on Neerg," he stated, pausing to let the words fill every corner of the room. "One person in particular has escaped ... Jerry Hawks! His color is darker than mine and you can easily identify him when he arrives. I will issue thought guns to all Oosags. As you know, these guns are controlled by your thoughts. I have placed a device on each gun I will distribute which can destroy the person holding it if he, or she, decides to turn the weapon on me. Do not attempt to kill your own enemies ..."

Silob pressed another button. A door opened behind the red chair and a long wooden box was brought in by a robot. It was wheeled in and deposited at his feet. When opened racks of guns and ammunition were found. One-by-one the Oosags filed past the chest. The robot placed a cap on their head and a thin wire to each of their wings. So equipped the Oosag marched up to Silob ... who issued the rifle and a pistol. Each weapon having a wire protruding from its handle it was pulled until it was attached to the headpiece. Thusly fitted the Oosag left and started his patrol of Wols-Ega.

Vickina stared at the starlight entering through the opening in the roof. The light inside the room increased as a door at the far end was pushed open. Recognizing the man who had entered she returned her gaze skyward. As an un-twinkling red star appeared on the horizon she bowed and pronounced a few quiet words. The man walked over and, turning her head toward his, asked her again the question he had sought for over a year.

"You want to save your people? ... Well, why won't you marry me then?"

"I wouldn't marry you if you were the last man on this planet!" she replied, standing.

"It might well come to that. While I have you, I am slowly taking control of this primitive planet. Two years ago I almost had it under my control ... then your friend, Mr. Hawks, had to come and ruin it. For that, I will torture him. This island is my base. Today I have heard of a prison break

and Mr. Hawks made it off that satellite. His companion on Foor also managed to escape. He says he intends to kill me. I have armed all Oosags on the surface and stationed them at different locations around the island. Three hide in the Balces Forest, three Blue Men in the Rebsar Mountains, and there are several Fish Men who have decided to join forces and remain at the bottom of Lake Ekal," the man stated as he sat in a chair near the head of the bed.

"But all those are on Wols. What about the Southern half, Ega?" Vickina questioned, seeing a possible escape route.

"There is no need to guard that. If anything enters from that route, they will wish they hadn't. The Mole Men dwell on that end of the island. Since it takes a week to travel from the tip of Ega to a point where Ega joins Wols I need not worry. At night, the Mole Men come out and devour anything living. Lake Modo at the base of the Modnar Mountains shelters all the Fish Men who have been banned from this half of the island ... they did not bow to my power. There are still a few cities in Lake Ekal who do not fall under my rule ... but they have not, as of yet, taken any actions to stop my rule. I know that it is not wise for me to tell you all these things, but I feel you should know the extent of my power.

"From this day until Mr. Hawks is caught, I leave your door unlatched and remove your bracelets."

At the same moment Silob unlocked the manacles around Vickina's wrists, an Oosag entered the room.

"One of the Mole Men says he has spotted Mr. Hawks and another at the Southern end of the island," the messenger relayed.

"So he wishes an early death does he. He shall not ..." Silob said as he hurried quickly from the room.

Vickina sat on the bed looking at the stars above, rubbing her wrists. "Thank you," she said, "for freeing him."

Perspiration rolled down his face as Jerry leveled the Wonder Ship at three thousand feet. The ship had been given to him by Kas when he broke away from the prison. He had escaped Neerg and picked up Mike Mc Gunnahan on the prison asteroid, Foor. They both had flown, along with several loyal prisoners, to Vulcan II. Jerry had heard the person he was looking for, Silob Emos, was on the isle Wols-Ega which lies between the Ronim Sea and the Otni Aes.

The ship tilted dangerously to one side as a strong gust of wind struck the wing. Mike grabbed frantically at the altitude lever as the craft swung close to the rugged ground. One of the escapees slid through the open door. Mike, sensing the "Wonder Ship" would not make it through the storm, also jumped. He pulled the ripcord on his parachute ... nothing happened! Jerry watched Mike fall toward the ground many miles below.

Jerry manages to get the ship back under control and pulled out of the raging storm. No sooner had he done so than

it dipped downward again ... toward the blue-green Ronim Sea. He struggled with the altitude stick in an effort to bring the ship back under control. All to no avail. The small craft spun dizzily downward toward a watery grave. Donning his chute, Jerry went to help other loyalists with theirs. Last to leave the confines of the ship Jerry watched it catch fire and plunge toward the sea.

Jerry landed on the surface of the restless sea and inflated the raft he had thrown through the door. He crawled into it and lie down. Another man climbed in. Jerry lost consciousness as he glimpsed the 'Wonder Ship' explode.

Jerry lie in the bottom of the yellow raft several hours before awakening. He realized, as he began looking around, the raft was traveling through the water with amazing speed. He raised his head over the lip and saw a strange fish. The other person in the raft sat up. He saw the fish and turned ghastly white.

"What is it, Kas?" Jerry asked, seeing him cover his eyes.

"Loogem ... monster of the deep. It is taking us to Monster Island. We are doomed," he replied, sinking into the folds of the raft.

"Where is this island?"

"The island is located between the Ronim Sea and the Otni Aes. By its proper name the island is called is Wols-Ega ... I call it Monster Island as its only inhabitants are monsters."

"Wols-Ega! But, that is where we want to go! How do you know it is inhabited only by monsters?" Jerry inquired.

"I once worked on Ega as slave to the Mole Men," he replied, dipping his hand into the cool water.

The full moon shed its pale yellow glow upon the two lying in the bottom of the raft as it slid silently through the calm water, interrupted now and then by some strange denizen of the deep coming to surface for air then submerging.

Two figures lay sprawled on the bottom of a raft as the red morning sun rose in the sky far to the left. One of the figures arose. It was a man! He stood up, looked into the distance at a barely visible finger of land. He arouse the other, a shaggy looking creature, by splashing cold water on its face.

"Hey! What you 'doin?" cried the startled figure, wiping his sun scorched face with the white cloth he had pulled from around his leg.

"Land! Kas. Land!" cried Jerry, nearly capsizing the raft.

"Stop jumpin' up 'n down and tell me where this hunk o' land is you nearly capsized us fo'."

"There, Kas, there!" Jerry cried, pointing to a large island looming off to their right.

"O my gosh! It's Wols-Ega all right. Quickly, head for

the green part of the island."

"Why?"

"Can't you see there is more vegetation on the ends of the island than near the middle? You know what that means? If we are to survive, we must eat. Where would be the most likely place to find food? In a desert or in that green area? Think about that for a while ... but while you do, head for the green end."

"Any other reason?" Jerry inquired as he started paddling toward the green end of the island.

"The other end is the domain of the Mole Men," Kas replied as he too started dipping his hands into the water.

The craft swung toward the green end of the island ... the Wols half. A slight wind was arising so Kas hoisted the crude sail he had made from their tunics. They found themselves rushing toward the end of the island. Suddenly the wind shifted and started carrying the raft and its passengers along the side of the island. Carrying them closer to the tip of Ega. Jerry manned a paddle and started rowing. Kas followed, after removing the sail. They drifted perhaps twenty to thirty Kwils before they stopped the raft from traveling southward and had turned Eastward again, toward the island. Half an hour later they landed and slumped onto the sand from exhaustion.

They lie on the beach nearly three hours before one of the figures moved. The man awoke, walked to a near-by bush, stayed briefly then returned to wake up the hairy figure lying prone on the beach. After the other had awakened the man walked to the water and started refining it for drinking. The second figure came and sat down beside him.

"We'll set out after eating, Jerry, and see if we can find Silob. I apologize for my behavior on the raft ... I must have been too tired to realize what I was saying. It must be important you find Silob. I will help all I can."

"Thanks. Now eat." Jerry replied, shoving the rear portion of a half-cooked rabbit toward him.

The morning meal consisted mainly of undercooked rabbit, sautéed tree bark and refined salt water. After eating Jerry threw the scooped out tree bark into the fire and packaged the remaining rabbit in the leaves of one of the surrounding trees. He joined Kas exploring the island.

They had traveled ten kwils when night set in and blocked further progress. They were all set to 'hit the sack' when Kas became disturbed by a flickering light in the distance. He arose from his bed and was about to awaken Jerry when it struck him. He felt the strange pulling first in his feet, then through the rest of his body. He began approaching a hole in the ground. He tried calling for Jerry but found he couldn't move his jaw. He closed his eyes and concentrated. He still felt the pulling ... there was nothing he could do to stop it. He found he could call to Jerry when he was fully concentrating. Jerry came running.

"What happened?" Jerry asked, helping Kas to his mossy bed again.

"I don't really know. A bright light kept bothering me. I gets up, walks over to the light an all o' a sudden I feels this here strange pullin' in me feet. I concentrate and calls you. You knows the rest."

"I wonder how come I didn't feel it? Are you still concentrating?" Jerry asked.

"No. Why?" he replied.

"I think whatever, or whoever, is pulling you toward that pit has limited control. I was outside that range," Jerry replied, settling back in his mossy stretch of ground.

"You mean if there was somethin' in the pit that's its protection?"

"Well, something like that."

"You had to come within range to get me. How come you're not affected?"

"Would you like to try an experiment?"

"Sure, when do we start?"

"Right after we get some sleep."

The red morning sun brought disaster. Jerry awoke to find the camp in shambles. Food was strewn about the muddy topsoil and refined water lie in pools. He walked over to Kas.

"What happened? You were on watch."

"All me precious water ... gone!"

"Aye mournful. What happened?"

"Destroyed. Utterly destroyed. Who could 'ave done such a thin'?"

"Maybe it was something from the pit?" Jerry suggested.

"PIT? PIT? Oh, the pit. Yes, we must explore the pit ... are you coming?" Kas threw back over his shoulder as he started toward the horizon.

They had no sooner stepped into the jungle when ebony men surrounded them. They were dressed in clothes of women, yet they were men of sorts. Dangling from each belt hung a shiny sword. The handle forming a large J. The other weapon was a large spear.

The Pilts, as Jerry discovered later, blindfolded him and Kas and secured their hands. They proceeded toward the pit. Reaching its edge, they were given a push.

Jerry managed to remove his hands from the rope and removed his blindfold. Kas did likewise as they fell through the air. The walls of the pit formed vertical precipices. As the two fell, they noticed the walls gave off a faint glow when touched. Once Jerry brushed against the wall and a piece fell into his pocket. As they continued, they noticed a change in the light. It seemed to get brighter and brighter as they fell downward. Far below Kas spotted a point of light.

"What do you think it is?" he asked, pointing downward.

"It could be the center of this planet. All conditions point to that. It keeps getting warmer and warmer as we

descend. We also seem to be gaining speed. If we hit the bottom of this shaft we will crumble ... but we will have been roasted long before that."

As the two sped downward they felt a sudden jerk and then they were speeding upward. After a few seconds they again changed course and sped downward. After a few rounds, they finally came to a rest. They remained motionless for a few moments. On one of the walls was a path hewn of rocks. It looked as if someone had made a trail.

"W-w-what keeps us up?" Kas asked, looking down.

"I believe we have fallen into a gravity pit. These creatures ..."

"The Pilts," Kas interjected.

"Yes. These creatures, the Pilts, must use this to send down food and supplies to their living spaces. The gravity pit, by the way, is where the gravitational pull is equal all around ... that is, the pull downward equals the pull upward. See that rock over there ... if we can lasso it we can get out of here. Here, give me your rope." Jerry said, taking the rope.

Jerry tied his rope together with Kas's then swung it around his head. He threw it toward the rock. It snaked out over the intervening space, missing the target. His second throw was more accurate and encircled the rock. He pulled the rope tight and crossed the space to the side of the wall. Kas followed.

They had not taken ten steps when the Pilts again surrounded them. Again they were bound and blindfolded. They traveled a short distance on rocky ground and then found themselves walking on soft grass. They were placed in a box and this placed in a pool of clear water. They were taken out of the pool at the bottom via a trap door. On their feet, blindfolds and bonds were removed. Jerry was about to ask his captors why they had been abducted when a fish swimming in the pool responded.

"To answer your question, Mr. Hawks, you were brought here to keep you from being captured by the Frigorians. The only way to save you from these beasts was to blindfold you and throw you down to some loyal Mole Men. You see, we are at war with the Frigorians"

"Who are the Frigorians? Who are you? Are you telepathic? Why did you wish to save us?" Kas began.

"Hold on Mr. Estac. One question at a time. The Frigorians are the Mole Men of this planet. We banned them from the center of the planet and made them stay on the surface where we live. We are now trying to block their escape to their natural habitat by filling the hole that you stumbled upon. You landed on this island and a fight broke out over who was to get you. We won. You see, whoever possesses you may rule the surface people of the planet. You wonder why we can do this, Mr. Hawks? Well, you see, when you step into the atmosphere of this planet with a certain chemical sprayed on

you, you would grow enormously and could stamp out any race on the island. This chemical does not work on our bodies as we are of this planet. You are not.

"You asked who we were. We are Fish people. We live in the lakes, rivers and pools ... but not in the oceans or seas. We would die if we were to touch salt water. We are superior beings ... we could kill the Frigorians if we wanted. But we don't. If we did that, there would be no one to do our chores. Some of us now do our own chores. Some say they like it. Others don't. We are in the mist of losing the Frigorians, as they are becoming wise. We will have to eliminate them. Yes, we are telepaths as you have surmised. We can read your mind, Kas, at any time; but Mr. Hawks ... we never know what you are thinking. You are unpredictable. You react differently."

As they had been talking, Jerry and Kas had been walking. Modu, leader of the fish men, had been swimming in the channel beside them. They now entered a cavern, the largest Jerry had seen. Its coolness seemed to raise a keen interest in Kas. They transversed half of the cavern then stopped and were told to enter a box lying beside the troth Modu swam in. They did this. The box was placed on a moving platform. A lid and chains secured it. It was placed in a boat floating on the large lake. The boat started its motor and moved out to the middle. The box was dropped over the edge and sank to the bottom.

CHAPTER THREE
(Nitro creates a monster)

No sooner had Silob departed than Vickina arose and followed. As she entered the corridor, she saw Silob turn a bend and disappear. She looked up and down the corridor until spotting a door. She quickly ran toward it. A sign above read: 'To the surface'. She heard footsteps ... someone was coming. Quickly opening the door before she knew what had happened she was caught in a great suction. Drifting through space, she heard the door slam in the distance. She lost consciousness as she struck her head on a rock.

Awakening Vickina found an old woman bending over her. The woman had the body of a bird, but a human face. As she sat up the old woman flew to a nearby mountain. Vickina found herself also atop a mountain. Far below a river wound into the distance. She followed the river to a lake. On the other side of the mountain was a forest. She knew there was only one forest on Wols-Ega, the Balces forest, located on Wols in the Rebsar Mountains. She surmised the lake must be Lake Ekal. Vickina knew if she could reach Lake Ekal she would be safe. For in the submerged city of Eman there were several Fish Men who would gladly help in her escape. Now she had a chance. The problem, how to get to the lake. The old woman flew back. Vickina stood.

"You are feeling well again?" the old woman asked.

"Yes. What happened?" Vickina replied, turning toward her.

"We found you lying in an open pit," she replied, pointing to a black spot fifty feet below. "My mate and I brought you to the curing center. The gods have done their work well. You must come with us to our leader."

With that several birdmen and women surrounded Vickina and placed a harness about her. They took to the air ... dragging her with them. As she looked down Vickina saw they were following the river. As they neared Lake Ekal they gradually lost altitude. The water below was clear and Vickina could see a city enclosed in a large glass bubble. It was toward this the birdmen flew. As they passed over the city they stopped and rose to an altitude of thirty feet. One left the group and dove into the water, disappearing from sight as bubbles from the splash covered the surface. When she caught sight of him again he was inside the city. He signaled and they dropped her. Just before hitting the water Vickina took a deep breath.

It seemed like hours before she felt someone grab her legs. She was again able to breathe. As she opened her eyes she saw the birdman surface and join his companions. They flew toward the mountains. Vickina turned to see who had pulled her into the city. It was one of the fishmen. Vickina was on a platform suspended over a large pool. The platform began to move across its surface. She had heard stories of the fish

cities. They were divided in two sections, one for fishmen and the other for humans. Vickina saw she was being pulled toward a large building. She read the large sign suspended across it: THE GREAT NITRO. SCIENTIST, EXPLORER, AND SUPREME RULER OF FISHMEN UNDER THE COMMAND OF SILOB EMOS, RULER OF THE ISLAND ... AND SOON THE WORLD! The platform stopped and a door opened. Nitro appeared. He bade her enter.

"I do not know how you escaped Silob, nor do I care. You are in Eman now, my city now." Nitro said, as they walked through the building. "You have come in time to help with a little experiment."

"Experiment?" inquired Vickina as they turned a corner.

"Step in and you shall see." Nitro replied, opening a door.

Vickina hesitated. After looking at the knife hanging by Nitro's side she stepped inside. The door closed. She tried the door but it was locked. Looking around she found the room barren but for three chairs and a tub of blackened fluid. A closer examination of the chairs found one was insulated with rubber foam while the others had cups of a sort on the arms. There was a small helmet with wires dangling from them on each of those chairs.

"Sit in the one to your right," Nitro commanded, entering from behind the tub. "Not that one! The one without the padding. Yes, that's better. Now place the helmet on your head."

The moment the helmet touched her head Vickina felt a tingling. Nitro walked over to the tub and pressed a button at its side. A panel slid out from the wall near him. Pressing a green button the light in the room dimmed. Several buttons later the panel slid back into the wall and Nitro took his place in a chair not far from the tub.

A blue light shone on the tub from above. Steam began to rise from its surface. Vickina's eyes remained glued to the tub. The liquid began to thicken and form a shape, changing colors as it did. At first it was black, then green, blue, red, and finally white. It became whiter and whiter, warmer and warmer, until it looked as if it would melt anything. Vickina's eyes opened wider as she saw the mass step from the tub and onto the floor on two hairy legs. It advanced until opposite the third chair where it took its seat. Nitro placed the helmet on its head, then pushed a button on the side of the chair.

Vickina felt dizzy. She struggled to keep her eyes open. Looking at the thing seated next to her she saw it grow a hand that began reaching toward her. She blacked out as Nitro induced a small electrical current into her helmet.

CHAPTER FOUR
(Terror in the dark caverns)

"Everything is going according to plan, o master," the Oosag states as it watches his ruler pace back and forth.

"I do not like it. I have been against your plan from the start," Silob replied, sitting in the red chair. Pressing a button on its side a screen appears on the wall next to him. Depressing a second button a large image appears on the screen. "I am aware that many plan to revolt against me. I have tried to correct this by asking Nitro, ruler of the sea people, to create a monster. You see him here taking someone into a room ... oh no, it can't be! It is ... it's Vickina! How did he get her? Ah ... now I remember ... she tried to escape. I must retrieve her before he creates that monster. Prepare the 'Wonder Ship'. I leave for Eman tomorrow."

As the Oosag leaves Silob presses a red button and disappears, reappearing later as the 'Wonder Ship' prepares to leave for Lake Ekal.

* * * * * * * * *

Several fishmen were waiting below the surface as Jerry and Kas were dumped overboard. Each attached a hook to the box and towed it downward. Once inside a cave a large rock was placed in front of the opening. The water is forced out as air is forced in. At the rear of the cave a door slowly opens. The box is pushed through and the top removed. Jerry stands. Kas joins him.

"Where are we?" Kas asked, looking at the fishman swimming nearby.

"You are in Eman. You will be brought before our leader. What he does with you is none of my business. My job is to get you there ... alive," the fishman replies as he brings out a sled and fastens a thong to it.

Jerry and Kas seat themselves on the sled and are pulled along beside the troth. They travel for a mile before coming to the city proper. Jerry saw smoke rising from one of the buildings. He asked why the smoke didn't suffocate the inhabitants.

"Each city is required to have a filter in each chimney and have a factory for refining the smoke into fresh air. As you get to know the city as well as I, you can always spot the refinery. See the tall building with the funnel on its roof? That is the new refinery. If Nitro, our leader, has passed the new law, you will be working there. If he hasn't, you will spend three weeks in the old refinery, where it is more dangerous. You see, when you do not notify us of your arrival, which you didn't, you are classified as an alien and are subject to criminal processing. You are taken before the leader and sentenced."

The fishman had stopped and was untying the sled. A red

man now took Jerry and Kas into a building above the door of which hung a sign:

THE GREAT NITRO. SCIENTIST, EXPLORER AND SUPREME RULER OF FISH MEN ---UNDER COMMAND OF SILOB EMOS; GREAT RULER OF THIS ISLAND ... AND SOON THE WORLD.

Inside a blue man took over guarding the two. Jerry and Kas were escorted down a long hall filled with pictures. They stopped before a room near the end, entered and were seated and strapped into two chairs. The guards left, securing the door from the outside. The room grew dark as the lights were extinguished. A bright spot began glowing on the wall opposite where they were seated. It grew until it covered the entire wall. It formed arms and feet and began to shrink. After what seemed hours the transformation was complete and 'Modnar' stood before them. The creature with the brain of a human and strength of thirty men.

'Modnar' came toward Kas. Kas shrieked in terror as it stretched out its scaly hand and touched his head. As the hand retracted there was a silver band encircling his head. 'Modnar' approached Jerry. Jerry flinched as the great hand touched his head. He felt pain, and then darkness.

When he awoke, Jerry discovered he was lying on a soft velvet-like bed next to Kas and Vickina. He encountered the silver band encircling his head as he combed his hair with his fingers. Bending over the clear pool in the center of the room he saw the band turning the color of his flesh. After a few moments you couldn't tell where it was.

Searching the room Jerry discovered there were many books, pages torn from some and scattered about the floor, others ready to fall apart. He spied three optical instruments. Picking up a few of the books he read the titles: THE HISTORY AND CUSTOMS OF VULCAN II, THE HISTORY AND CUSTOMS OF WOLS-EGA ISLAND, and WHAT ALL GREAT MEN SHOULD KNOW. A sharp pain flashed through his head as he picked up another book. The pain grew so intense he fell to the floor. Staring at the ceiling dots started swirling until forming a blur. He found himself thinking of Jupiter. Imagined he was standing before the Solar Space Patrol Council. One of the older men was speaking.

"Jerry, my boy, you've been with us for let's see, is it thirteen or fourteen? Thirteen? You've been with us for thirteen years. As you know, when a Solar Patrolman, like yourself, gets to be twenty-five or so he has to be put on pension as he is no longer fit for active duty. But you surprise us. You're still in good physical condition. That's why we are going to give you this Honorable Discharge. It's not because you are unfit, you understand, but because you asked over a year ago if you could return to Vulcan II and marry your fiancée. We present you with your discharge so you can do that."

With that the man handed him a golden plaque with his name printed in bold silver lettering: HONORABLE DISCHARGE FOR

JERRY HOWARD HAWKS, ADMIRAL, 3rd BATTALION, SOLAR SPACE PATROL. He passed through the long line of waiting officials, shaking hands as he came to them. In the middle of the line one official started exclaiming: "Jerry! Jerry!"

Jerry awoke abruptly as Kas began shaking him.

"Why did you do that?" Kas asked, as he helped Jerry to his feet.

"Do what?" Jerry inquired, returning to the bed.

"Say that you would kill me tonight." Kas replied, taking his seat near the lone window.

"I didn't say I would kill you. I blacked out for a few minutes and when I come to I find you shaking me."

"Don't lie to me! We both heard you. Didn't we Vickina ... Vickina? ... now where'd she go?" Kas asked, looking around the room.

Jerry joined the search but neither found any trace of her. Jerry bent close to the floor and listened. Yes, he could hear throbbing of machinery somewhere below. Kas fell to examining the floor near the pool. He stopped and started scraping. Jerry walked over and saw he was trying to pry up a loose floorboard. They fell to work removing first one then another board until they uncovered a trap door. They swung it back on its hinges.

Far below the two saw a vast laboratory. From above the room looked like a beehive ... there were many stalls filled with a sort of liquid. Each had a wash basin, a tub and sort of kitchen. Several held animals, others male and female Oosag or Flat-Racians. Jerry was first to descend the metal rungs.

Reaching ground level he raced over to one of the cells and entered. This was occupied by three Oosags. There were eight walls, each made of Orran. Black and lightest of all minerals on Vulcan II, Orran was also one of the rarest. It was only found on the surface of Vulcan II in the area Ropel, guarded by ferocious Surface People. On each wall hung a gold-plated picture of Silob Emos alongside a silver-plated one of depicting Nitro. Kas, who had followed him, lifted one of the pictures. A thick sheet of Orran quickly covered the entrance they had just come through. They were imprisoned!

Using their combined strength they could not budge the door. Kas stopped and turned to see why the Oosag wasn't helping. It has vanished! As Jerry turned he saw a section of the wall moving. He ran over and placed an ear against it. He could hear footsteps retreating. Kas joined him.

"He went in there," Jerry said, trying to move the rock.

"There must be a lever here somewhere," Kas said as he sat on a three-legged stool.

Kas lost his balance as the chair toppled forward. The stone wall rolled back, revealing a steep stairway leading upward. Lifting himself off the floor he walked over to the stairway. Jerry had already started up. After a few steps Jerry noticed it getting dark and the atmosphere was becoming humid. A few more steps and the two were literally feeling

their way along. Jerry reached the top and waited for Kas. Once Kas reached Jerry they started toward the faint sound which sounded like water falling onto rocks. Several hours passed before they emerged from the darkness and saw the pink stream passing over the boulders.

The river gave off a soft glow that filled the cavern with an eerie light. Barely visible at the far end was a stone passage across to the other side. They turned their steps toward this and had walked several hours before discovering they were chasing a mirage.

"What do we do now?" Kas asked, looking back along where they had traveled and then toward each side.

"We follow the river. There must be some higher land somewhere. Since there are no underground mountains this river can only lead us to the surface, then we can get our bearings. We will head toward Soiril and get help from the Oosags. Let's go." Jerry stated, walking forward against the flowing river.

"There's one thing that bothers me ..." Kas began.

"What's that?" Jerry asked, turning as Kas caught up.

"Why is the river is pink? The rivers on the surface are blue-green and don't shed light as this one seems to be doing. What do you think causes the glow?"

"I have a feeling the strange glow is caused by something other than phosfluorescent minerals. Hold it! What did I tell you. See, here the river divides. One is clear, the other a deep red. The clear one," Jerry said, pointing toward the forking river, "goes Northward. The other, toward the East."

Kas bent down and dipped his fingers into the clear stream. "Salt water," he said placing the wet fingers to his mouth. He placed his fingers in the other stream. As he removed them the water dripped like grease. He cupped his hands to bring the water to his mouth. He spat it quickly on the ground. "Blood!" he exclaimed, quickly washing his hands in the clear stream.

"Blood? But how? and whose?" Jerry asked, looking upstream.

"The way it ran over my fingers I'd say it was that of the Surface People. How? I'd give up my job as Royal Emperor of Neerg to find out."

"There's one way ... you with me?" Jerry stated as he started walking Eastward along the Red River. Kas followed reluctantly.

Three hours later both were resting beneath a large gray boulder on the surface. The stream had started out red, turned pink, then white and now blue-green, just like any other on the planet. Kas turned to Jerry.

"I don't get it. It should be red, but it is the same color as the other rivers now. What is going on?"

"The light." Jerry responded as he shaded his eyes against the noonday suns. "Have you been on the surface at night?"

"No, nor do I know anyone who has ... they keep us below."

It is said if we travel the surface at night we will be devoured by the Surface People." Kas replied, looking back to the cave they had exited.

"We'll stay out tonight to see if my theory is correct. As for the Surface People. Who are they and who said they eat people?" Jerry inquired walking back toward the cave.

"They rule the upper portion of this planet. As you already know, the Fishmen exert some control over their movements and use this to make them into cannibals, or Norselts. The ruler under whom I had worked told me, along with several others, that the Surface People were Norselts. He showed us the Oosags and Flat-Racians which were lucky enough to get away with their limbs intact. Where are you off to?" Kas asked, watching Jerry disappear into the cave.

"I thought I heard a noise," came the reply as Kas stepped into the darkness after him.

Without warning both were struck from behind and rendered unconscious by two Surfacemen who had remained hidden near some boulders along the entrance. The two were tied and thrust onto sleds, then dragged along the ground by the Surfacemen. Toward a barely distinguishable purple haze in the distance. The stream a thin ribbon flowing through the haze. The Surfacemen placed the sled on the river and started toward the haze.

Jerry awoke hours later, strapped to a back. They were climbing a rocky cliff, below him was a thin band of blue. Glancing upward he saw blue sky and a few fluffy clouds pass by. To either side were Surfacemen and women carrying Oosags, Flat-Racians, Redmen and Bluemen. He wondered what had happened to Kas. He kicked the person carrying him.

"Watch it will ya!" came the reply. "It's bad enough I get stuck carrying you because I awoke first, don't make it worse by prodding me while I climb!"

"I didn't know it was you. I thought it was one of them." Jerry explained indicating the Surface people around them. "I thought only Birdmen lived atop mountains?"

"Birdmen may live atop the mountain but Surface people live inside caves on the side of the mountain." Kas returned as he climbed onto a wide ledge and followed the line into a cave.

"Doesn't anyone live on the surface itself?" Jerry inquired as the straps which bound him were removed.

"There is one race, that live among the boulders in the desert at the base of the great mountain range. The Epats. They fear only the light of day, which is why all other races come to the surface during the day." Kas replied as they both were ushered toward a pit in the center of the cave.

At the lip of the pit both men, as well as the other prisoners, were pushed one by one into it. The floor was some ten to twelve feet below. The moment the last prisoner was in the pit it was covered and spikes began protruding from the

walls. On the floor was a trap door. Jerry was first to open it after watching others struggle with the locking mechanism. A strong light filled the room. Peering down Kas detected a metal ladder. He grasped the top rung, swung himself over the and started downward. Jerry followed with the remaining occupants of the room.

As Kas descended he noticed the entire shaft was stone with the metal rungs hammered into it. Below he saw a smooth well-worn floor. The light entered through a small opening to the right at the bottom of the shaft. Kas stepped onto the smooth floor, nearly slipping. He retained his balance and moved to one side as the rest of the group caught up to him.

"Well, we're down. Now what?" one of the Oosags asked, turning to Kas.

"Follow this passage to wherever it leads," Kas replied as he started down the well-worn trail.

"Just a minute, Kas." Jerry said, pointing to the floor. "Look. The pathway you're taking has been traveled by many. This other only by a few. Could it be the one you wish to take is the one which those before have taken and never returned from? The Surface people have captured us for a purpose. Leaving that trap door in the pit was not an accident. I think we should take the less traveled route."

"I'm with you." Kas replied, retracing his steps.

"Me too." answered a few of the others.

"I'll stick to this pathway," one Oosag said.

"Us too," replied several others.

"I hope we are on the correct trail." Kas whispered to Jerry as they started off.

The first few hundred feet of passage was illuminated by diffused light coming around a bend. Kas had not taken the lead this time but had let Jerry assume the role. As they walked several members decided they were too slow and raced ahead. The first to turn the bend was an Oosag. It stopped, screamed, then came racing back and stopped.

"What's the matter?" Kas asked as the Oosag sat down.

"The exit ... is blocked by ... by ... the hideous Si Ekim ..." the creature wheezed as it drew its last breath of air.

The creatures seated near Kas and Jerry had heard the Oosag cry the name Si Ekim as it died. Most of them fell to the floor and started reciting words in a strange high-pitched singsong voice. Those who had not recited the words were rolling around in convulsions. Kas was bending down to take part when Jerry asked him who or what Si Ekim was. Kas replied between high-pitched screams.

"Si Ekim is a horrible creature who roams the land of the Surface People. Sometimes it enters the caves, as it was doing when the Oosag rounded the corner, and consumes the Surface People. Anyone who knows the power Si Ekim has knows the ritual and must perform it before it devours them. If the ritual is not performed they will go to the "Land of the

wrong" when they are devoured. I bid you perform this ritual before it is too late. All you have to do is say a prayer until Si devours you, then all will be right."

"You don't really believe you can pray your way out of this, do you? Well, you can't. We have to stand up against this creature with whatever weapons we have. Now, who joins me? ... Well? Then I guess I will have to do it myself." Jerry said as he took three spears from a few of the bending Flat-Racians.

Rounding the bend Jerry could feel the eyes of those bending focusing on him. Before him stood a gigantic spider-like creature with a human head and a set of hands. On its underside was the sign of an insect, a small butterfly. In the center of the butterfly was a black spot with numerous cracks. He figured this was where the mouth was located. Spears in hand he advanced. Moving swiftly he placed one of the spears beneath a large fold near the head of the butterfly. Si fell to one side, white fluid spilling over the entrance to the cave. He placed another spear through one of its eyes. Green fluid spewed from this wound, covering him from head to foot. Si lashed out with its gigantic legs, snaring him, pinioning the third spear to his side. Kas appeared and launched another spear at the creature. Si relaxed its grasp and he fell free.

"What happened?" Jerry asked as he started wiping the goo from his body. "I thought you'd be praying?"

"I thought over what you had said. I found you were right. We gathered the remaining spears and I threw one at Si. We'd better get out of here before anything else happens. I wonder what happened to the other group?" Kas asked as the remaining Oosags and Flat-Racians began appearing in the tunnel, joining them at the entrance.

It was lucky the cave exited at the bottom of a cliff. The cliff face was straight with no hand or footholds and nearly impossible to climb. A clear lake was no more than a few feet from the entrance. Jerry took a quick swim, cleaning the goo from his body and refreshing himself. Kas joined him after a few moments, as did some of the Oosags and Flat-Racians. Soon the entire group was splashing about. It was at this point that a tattered and worn Oosag staggered out of the cave.

Kas was closest and was first to greet it as it collapsed under heavy breathing: "Other way ... trap ... no go through ... dead ... seven ... captured ... three" and then the exhausted Oosag collapsed in front of him, its head in the water.

By this time Jerry was nearly dressed and on his way back to the cave. Exiting was another Oosag.

"What happened?" Jerry asked, helping the creature to a fallen tree.

"We turned a bend in the tunnel and were greeted by a group of Surface People. We tried escaping but some of us were killed. I was captured along with two others. I managed to

sneak off as they were devouring my companions. I got this," he said, pointing to its broken leg, "when I missed one of the rungs of the ladder coming through the tunnel to this exit."

"We have to get out of here before anyone else dies. What about that opening there?" Jerry asked, pointing to a small crevice between two opposing mountain peaks.

"Too far," Kas replied. "How about climbing that rise over there and seeing what's beyond?"

Before Kas had completed his sentence one of the Flat-Racians had leaped to its feet and had started climbing the hill. As it arrived at the top it looked downward and screamed with joy. It raced back to Kas and, speaking a language foreign to Jerry, explained what it had discovered. Kas waited a few seconds and then went to the rise himself. He looked down and called Jerry.

"There's a river we can use to get to Eman. We can get a boat and cross the Ronim Sea to Soiril from there. We can try to reach Vershay, where one of my friends can supply us with enough provisions to continue searching for Vickina." Kas said, standing.

"What are we waiting for?" Jerry said as he started downward.

The way down the hill was rugged so there was no problem finding hand and footholds. As the last of the group disappeared over the edge two white spots appeared inside the cave. They moved around disappearing and appearing at other locations inside the entrance.

Three hours passed since Jerry took that first step which sent him and Kas on the journey to the bottom of the cliff. No sooner had he placed his full weight on a ledge when it started slipping away and he found himself rolling down the side of the cliff amidst stones and debris. He lost consciousness as a passing stone struck his head. The next thing he knew Kas was placing a wet cloth over his forehead. He opened his eyes.

"Where am I?" he said, sitting up.

"You're at the bottom of the cliff." Kas replied as he helped Jerry to his feet.

"What happened? ... Oh yeah ... I stepped onto the ledge and it gave way. How far did I tumble?"

"You weren't very far up, about ten or twelve feet. You were out for three hours though. In less than half an hour it will be night. We'd better find shelter." Kas said, looking around.

"No." Jerry explained, walking over to the river. "We are going down-stream tonight by raft. Let's get busy and cut some of those trees. Where's my knife?"

"Must be in the debris next to where you came down. We didn't bother with it," Kas said as he joined the Oosags who were already starting to cut trees.

Jerry walked over to the slide and started sifting through the debris. He spotted the knife lying three feet

above and climbed up to retrieve it. As he reached out it disappeared into the dirt. He dove after it and also disappeared. Kas was chopping down a tree and failed to see him vanish. Neither the Oosags nor the Flat-Racians were watching either.

Jerry fell through space, catching the knife in the process. As he continued down, a passing rock once again struck him.

"Where's Jerry?" Kas asked, looking up from his work.

"I thought you said he went to get his knife?" replied one of the Oosags, pointing toward the mountainside. "He's not there now."

"What!" Kas exclaimed, looking toward the mountain. "He should have been back by now. Where could he have gone? ... Maybe he discovered another trail. We'll wait two days then proceed to Eman and send back a search party."

CHAPTER FIVE
(The Hidden City)

"She's what!?" Silob shouted, pacing in front of the speechless Nitro.

"She disappeared. I put her and the two men in the 'Knowledge Room'. When I went to feed them, they were gone. The only other exit from the room was the trap door leading to my private laboratory, and my assistant locked that before she left." Nitro explained, standing.

"Let's check that door. I learned a long time ago not to trust assistants. Let's go before they accumulate too great a start." Silob stated rushing out of the room.

As the two reached the room they found the trap door had indeed been breached. They found evidence the three prisoners had passed through it into the laboratory below. They had split up, the girl going South toward the 'Pit', the others had been caught in one of Nitro's cells. That was only a temporary delay though as they had again escaped through another trap door and followed the river to the surface. The girl escaped through the opening where water was let into the pit. The two returned to the laboratory where Nitro contacted one of the Surface People.

"Yes, I have seen the men. We captured them about an hour ago. They are back in the dungeon," the voice in the speaker replied.

"Better check," Silob said as Nitro handed him the microphone. "These two are pretty slippery."

Ten minutes elapsed before the voice returned to the speaker. "They have escaped! They went through a trap door we were not aware of. Most of the prisoners escaped with them. We caught some and slaughtered them. Following the passage they escaped through we found they had killed your pet, Si Ekim."

"Did you remember to put a tracer on them before sending them into the dungeon?" Nitro asked between sighs.

"We always place tracers on prisoners," came the reply.

"O.K., we'll track them down." Nitro stated as he switched off the power to the unit.

"What do we do now?" Silob asked, looking around the laboratory.

"We track them with this ..." Nitro replied, holding a small box-like device before him.

As Nitro turned the set on an image formed. It was that of a group of men talking with Oosags and Flat-Racians. One of the men walked over to the side of a mountain and fell into a hole. The image was cut off and static filled the screen.

"The fool!" Nitro screamed. "He must have placed only one transmitter in the group ... and now that's smashed. Did you get a fix?"

"Yes," Silob replied as he handed Nitro a slip of paper.

"Let's see ... ah yes. I see they are in the Rebsar Mountains on the other side of the village Nuj. We'll fly

there in the super-hydrone. We leave at once. Come." Nitro said, walking past a metal door above which hung the letters 'S-H'.

There was a terrific roar then silence ... the Super-Hydrone had left its pad.

* * * * *

As Jerry awoke he found a girl bending over him, mopping his forehead with a damp cloth. As he looked around he found the room barren except for a door to his left. He returned his gaze to the girl.

"She's pretty," he thought. "I'd say she was in her early twenties. The way she's dressed she spends most of her time in a very warm place."

The girl was clothed in two strips of thin, plastic, multi-colored cloth. One covered her shapely breasts; starting at the left shoulder, down over the right breast, around her right side, up her back, down over her right shoulder to the left breast, around her left side, up her back and ending between one of the previously folds. The other strip wrapped itself around her shapely hips, down one leg, around her derriere, encircled the other leg, and back around her hips and part way down her leg.

"Who are you?" Jerry said, sitting up. "How did I get here?"

"My name is Ta. You really shouldn't be up yet. I can tell you what you wish to know. You were floating in a pool beneath our fresh air duct. You have been out three days. If you want to get up you must put these on," she replied, handing him a bundle of animal skins.

She left the room and waited while he dressed. The clothes consisted of a G-string made from the hide of a Leber and a sort of X-strap which crossed his chest. The X-strap was used in place of the regular belt that he was accustomed to. The Leber roams the surface of Vulcan II and one of the nearer satellites, Neerg. It stands four to five feet tall and weighs three to four hundred pounds. It is the mortal enemy of the Surface People ... who hunt it with bow and arrow every chance they get. Jerry went to the door and opened it. Ta was gone.

Finding the hall deserted he proceeded to walk down it. No sooner had he left his room then the door slammed shut and was locked from inside. He tried opening it but couldn't. Looking down the hallway he found he had very cleverly been led into a trap. At each end there was a metal block. The walls started rising. Below them was dirt. He hit upon the truth ... he was in an elevator.

After a few moments the motion ceased. The barriers at the end were lifted revealing a large circular room with a pool near its center. Ta was seated on some grass near the pool. Jerry made his way to her.

"I want you to tell me something. Where am I and how do I

get out of here to Lake Ekal?" Jerry asked, seating himself next to her.

"You are in Daor. You are a prisoner as well as I am. Those who know me call me Nuru. In the presence of others you too must call me Nuru. In private you may call me Ta. Now that you are awake you are to present yourself to the great Silob Emos. So step back into that thing that flies up and down and wait until the doors open again. Now go." she replied, standing.

"I will do as you wish but you must promise to see me again." Jerry said, stepping into the elevator again.

Before he received an answer the doors closed and he once again felt himself rising. Could he have stayed a few moments longer he might have heard her say: "Yes, you will see me later. This I know. Our leader, the great Silob Emos, has promised me your remains when he has completed his experiments on you."

As the elevator traveled upward Jerry fell to examining the floor. It was covered with a mixture of squares composed of Rople and Roly-X-Xem. The walls were Columbium, as was the ceiling which also had an exit ... a sort of trap door. Pushing the door aside he pulled himself atop the rising cage. Gazing upward he saw many cables. The sides of the shaft held many openings. Some were used to stop the cage, others to store items such as food. One led to a room. As the elevator passed he jumped and entered it.

As he landed he found himself on a bed occupied by one of Nitros' slaves. The slave awoke with a start and pushed him from the bed.

"Who are you? What are you doing here? Wait a minute ... aren't you that Hawks guy ... yes, now I remember. The photo Nitro showed us. You are wanted. Here now ... what are you doing? ..."

Jerry wasted no time knocking the slave out and binding him in his own clothing. Searching the room he came across a hand drawn likeness of himself between the pages of the "Pocket Manual to Better Living" lying atop a dresser. Beneath the picture written in the common language of Vulcan II were the words: LOCATE AND DESTROY. Taking the picture he started ripping it up. Then he took a match and set it on fire. Taking the blackened ashes he wrote on the wall: YOU FAILED AGAIN SILOB.

Exiting the room he silently ran down the corridor to another room at its end. This one had three windows. Crossing to one of the openings he looked out. Below was a large lake. He looked out the other two. Through one he could see three large rivers. Through the other mountains and trees. He ran back to the first room. The slave was lying on the bed, bound and gagged. He removed the gag.

"What lake did I see in the other room?"

"The Juy Olp. The lake all rivers flow into," came the reply after a few moments.

"How do I get out of here?" Jerry asked, peering into the hallway. "There is no escape. Once here, you are here to stay," came his reply.

Picking up the slave he thrust him high into the air and asked his question again.

"There is only one way anyone escapes from this 'Center of the Dead' ..." the slave started. "That is when you are thrown into the 'Pit of the Dead'. But you must be dead to enter."

Releasing him Jerry walked over to the elevator. It was descending. As it passed the ledge he jumped. The elevator swayed momentarily as he landed. The trap door began to rise. He opened it and jumped down through the opening. As he landed he came face to face with Silob himself!

"Well," Silob said, looking Jerry over. "We meet again do we. What do I owe you for this pleasure?"

"You don't owe me anything. You happened to be riding in this when I boarded. Is it my fault that you have to get messed up?" Jerry replied, advancing toward him.

"You don't think I would travel alone do you? Why, just below are three of my men" Silob explained as he inserted his finger into a hole Jerry had overlooked the first time he had ridden the elevator.

"Oh no you don't!" Jerry exclaimed, placing his foot over the finger.

Screaming, Silob withdrew his injured digit. Jerry bent down and pulled the trap door upward.

"Alright. Come on up ... fast." Jerry explained, placing a knife beneath Silob's throat.

"He means it. Better come up." Silob echoed, carefully easing the sharp knife away from his throat.

Jerry forced the knife back under his chin and tilting his head back with his other hand moved toward the open door. Stepping out he noticed two buttons on the frame. He pushed the top one. The elevator doors closed and it shot upward. As he looked around he found himself once again in Ta's apartment. She was seated by the pool. As he walked over she looked up.

"Oh," she said. Then, looking at Silob, "I see you have brought someone with you. It seems the shoe is on the other foot."

"It would appear that way," Jerry replied, forcing Silob to a seated position.

"You'll never get away with this!" Silob shouted, rising.

"Sit down!" Jerry shouted, threatening with his knife.

"Is there any way you know, Naru, of escaping?"

"The only way you can escape is when you're dead ..."

"I know. I know. The 'Pits of the Dead'. What about another way? Is there some other way?"

"Not that I am aware of," she replied, standing.

"How about you, Silob? Do you know of an escape route?" Jerry asked, looking at the elderly man.

"There is no escape." he replied.

"Both of you tell me one thing," Jerry said, looking them. "How did you get into this place?"

"We were dropped by the great Birdmen," Ta replied.

"Oh ... well, I guess we'll all have to float down the river at the bottom of the 'Pit of the Dead'," Jerry said, crossing the room with both of them.

"Why us?" Silob complained.

"I do not wish to leave anyone behind that might send a search party. If I take you alone, Silob, they would send a search party, but it would not be for some time. Naru, on the other hand they might send a search party earlier. With both of you gone they'd figure you had taken her and we could delay their search. Now ... where are those 'Pits of the Dead'?"

"To your right," answered Ta.

To his right were three circular openings. All slanting down at a steep angle. Jerry lowered Ta down the center one and then Silob. He entered next. A river was flowing to one side where they landed. As the water entered it was clear but exited the opposite end of the cavern red. The double suns had set and darkness was creeping in. He discovered some driftwood, which he began fashioning into a raft.

"Night has come," Silob said, looking skyward. "You had better wait 'til morning to make your escape ... otherwise you will be devoured by the Norselts."

"The best time to make escape is now, at night. None will suspect we attempted escape at night," Jerry replied, handing a paddle to Ta.

Jerry was not concerned with the struggling Silob, who had been bound with ropes and thrust to one side of the raft, but with the color of the water. At one end of the cavern he saw it was clear, but that had been near sunset. As he looked back at that same portion of the cavern he saw the water was red like that upon which they were now floating. He deduced his theory had been correct after all. The light affected the coloration of the water. He looked across the raft at Silob. He still struggled with his bindings. He let his eyes drift over the slim figure of the girl. She had changed clothes and was no longer wearing the two-piece outfit she had worn before. She now wore a one-piece outfit consisting of a broad piece of mesh-like material wrapped around her. The mesh outlined her figure beautifully. If it had not been wrapped in several layers it would have almost left her naked.

Silob had turned away so Jerry inched his way over to the girl. Slipping his arm around her he drew her closer. She slipped her arms about his neck and drew his lips to hers. He crushed her body to his. There was a splash and she pulled away as Jerry caught Silob disappear beneath the surface of the water. He quickly dove in after him.

"Couldn't find him," Jerry said as he climbed aboard the raft.

"Wonder why he did that?" Ta asked, looking back at the

spot where the criminal had disappeared.

"You never know what a criminal will do next," was Jerry's answer as he seated himself next to her.

The raft drifted along the river as it wound its way through the mountains. The sky started to darken. A slight wind had arisen. The raft began swaying from side to side as waves began forming in the water around them. Both clung to the side of the raft with all their strength but to no avail. The small raft overturned and flung them into the churning water. He headed for the shore. Ta made for the opposite shoreline. He took refuge beneath a tree on his side of the river. Ta did likewise on hers. Both waited for the storm to subside.

By morning the storm had died down and he could see Ta on the opposite side of the river. The raft was downstream, overturned. The river was nearly a mile wide and several feet deep at that point. He started swimming across toward her fire.

Halfway across the river he was caught in one of the strong undercurrents. It was too strong even for him to master. He was swept downstream several hundred feet before managing to break free. By some quirk of fate he ended up on the same side of the river Ta had been on. He set out looking for her as they now had become separated by a range of mountains.

Three miles from the spot where Jerry landed a slim figure was silhouetted against the sky and rocky-mountainous backdrop. The figure was that of a girl ... Ta. The fire throwing the light to create the shadow was nearly dead. Ta set about gathering wood when she was disturbed by a noise to the North (Jerry was to the South). She spotted a moving bush, she raised a piece of firewood above her head ... ready to strike the thing hidden in the bush. Her eyes drew wide as she recognized the figure approaching ... it was Silob! She dropped the wood and sat down, staring at the man who, in her eyes, had returned from the dead. Silob picked up the wood and placed it on the fire then sat next to the girl.

"You ... you ... you are dead," was all that she could muster.

"Do I look dead? ... You are wondering how I survived without air in the water? ... Two weeks ago in one of my laboratories I had a set of gills implanted. I jumped into the water and propelled myself with these," he said, holding up two empty cylinders. "Of course they are empty now but they were filled with gas before I came down that 'Flying Box' to see you. These bottles were for your Sion (thing that cooks with warmth)."

"What do you plan now?" Ta said, finding her voice.

"I will take you back to Daor. Then I will send a search party to find Mr. Hawks. When I catch him he will wish he had died ... which he will when I finish with him," Silob stated, raising his hand.

In the cup of his hand was a silver disk. Catching the glare of the fire in the disk he flashed a beam into a clump of trees surrounding the slightly cleared area where the two were seated. From behind several of the trees came his loyal Oosag and Flat-Racians. Two Oosags came over to Ta and carried her back into the woods ... toward the underground city Daor. The remaining Flat-Racians formed a group in front of him.

"You must find Mr. Hawks. When you do, bring him to Daor. If you fail you will suffer a fate worse than death. Now go!" he screamed pointing toward the river.

CHAPTER SIX
(Torture, Terror and War!)

Vickina, who had been sitting on the bed, was startled as a pink hand suddenly covered her mouth. Strong arms supported her weight as she was carried through a trap-door and along several rows of cages, holding animals which roamed the surface of Vulcan II. She looked back and saw Jerry's legs appear through the trap-door.

Instead of turning in her direction Jerry went into the room adjacent to the path her captor had taken. Vickina turned and saw she was being taken toward the 'Pit'. Her captor jumped in and swam to one side. He continued dragging as he passed through a circular opening at water level. The other side was a dark tunnel. Before being dragged through she caught a glimpse of her captor ... it was 'Modnar'! She tried desperately to wiggle free but succeeded in having its grip about her waist tightened.

Modnar carried her through many tunnels until, three hours later, it stopped before a huge wooden door. The door was secured by a large wooden beam anchored at both sides through a bracket by which the board was able to slide. Removing the bar Modnar opened the door and walked into a large circular room. It placed her in one of the chairs, strapped her in, then left. She could hear the bar sliding across the door, securing the room.

Vickina looked about. One wall held a large rectangular screen. The others populated with numerous dials and switches atop long wooden benches. She tested the straps. By some quirk they had remained loose. Quickly removing them she started toward the door. Halfway across the room she was stopped by a voice from behind.

"Sit down, queen."

Looking behind her she saw the voice had come from the rectangular screen. Walking over to it she turned the dial at the bottom and an image appeared. A large replica of Nitro's face.

"What am I doing here?" Vickina inquired, looking straight into the rectangular screen.

"I told Modnar to bring you because you are supposed to be dead. Now that Mr. Hawks knows you are not I will have to kill you in order to keep peace on this planet. As long as Mr. Hawks and Mr. Estac do not tell anyone you live, you will remain safe, but the moment you are said to live ... I will destroy you to prove to the people that you are dead," Nitro replied, ending the transmission. The image before Vickina faded.

"But ... but ..." she stammered, looking at the blank screen.

Looking around the room she noticed some cages and went over to examine them. They were metal cylinders with holes in their sides for something to enter through. She stepped into

the one she was looking at. The inside was cool and moist. Suddenly she felt herself falling through space and landed in several feet of water. Looking around she started swimming toward the light that entered the cave.

Outside Vickina made her way to shore. Resting she took her bearings. She was on the surface of Wols-Ega. There were trees all about. She knew somewhere behind them were mountains. If she reached them she could find her way off the island. A movement between the trees caught her attention. The leaves rustled in the wind created by the passing entity. Two large white spots appeared in each tree half-way up. A stone flew from one of the trees. It fell into the water, taking her attention momentarily from the tree. The two creatures hiding in the tree emerged, captured her and disappeared into the trees again.

They were Epats. Although most feared daylight, this band craved it. They had intermarried with Norselts. Their children, which were now taking Vickina to their camp, feared neither light nor darkness. Looking downward Vickina fainted as she saw the desert, streams and trees passing at fantastic speeds.

When she awoke Vickina found herself staring into the face of an elderly woman. She sat up, quickly took in her surroundings. She was in a large oval room. On one side was a sheet of purple material forming a crude wall. Opposite this was a picture of Nitro. The picture was on pivots, forming a doorway to the room beyond. The other two walls were of clear glassy material, one opened onto a rocky landscape. She felt a cool draft on her legs ... as she looked down she discovered she was devoid of clothing. She looked at the older woman. She wore nothing but a clear plastic garment.

Seeing Vickina had recovered, the old woman left the room. She returned with a set of plastic clothing much like her own. Vickina put them on and felt a little better. The old woman took her hand and led her through the pivoting door. They entered a hallway filled with many people wearing clothing of varying colors. Feeling embarrassed Vickina looked at her own clothes only to find that they too had changed from clear to a dull green and blue mixture. The old woman wore a pink shirt and blue pants until they entered another room where once again both sets of clothing turned clear.

They had entered the Epats Royal Throne Room. The King sat on his throne fully clothed, not naked like other visitors entering the room. The two women stepped into the pink light which shone over him, as they did they became fully clothed once again. All around them were Epats. Epats look human except for a third leg which they normally rested on. The king leaned forward toward Vickina.

"You have been accused of swimming in the sacred river. Do you deny this?" he asked.

"I was swimming in the river because I had to ..."
Vickina started.

She was abruptly cut off by a voice from behind:

"See. She admits it was in her nature as one of THEM."

"This is true," the king stated. Then, looking back at Vickina. "Do you admit you are also one of THEM?"

"I have admitted nothing except I was swimming in the river because I had to ..."

Again she found herself cut-off in mid sentence as a from voice behind said:

"Answer the question. You do not have to keep repeating your guilt on the first charge. Are you or are you not one of THEM?"

"Who or what are THEY?" Vickina shouted, returning her attention to the king.

"Are you not one of those horrid Tetraegra Women from Neerg?" the king replied, wrinkling his green face.

"I am afraid you have me confused with some other person." Vickina stated as the king resumed his upright position in the chair.

"Why then was she in the sacred river?" the voice from behind asked.

"Yes. Explain your actions," commented the king, looking again into her eyes.

"As I started to explain: I was swimming in the river because I was escaping from an underground cavern. I was a prisoner of Nitro. I was on my way to the Rebsar Mountains, to escape this island, when your guards abducted me. I would like to continue that journey," she replied, waiting for his reply.

"Why you try so hard to convince us you are not one of THEM I do not know. I do know one thing ... you are one of THEM! You tell a plausible story which cannot be true as one of my men told me he saw you coming from Neerg a few months ago. Guards, take this woman to her cell in the torture room!" the king commanded, raising his arm and pointing to a doorway behind the throne.

Two armed Epats came and taking Vickina's hands led her through the doorway. The hall beyond was dark but even in darkness Vickina saw her clothes had once again turned invisible. As they turned the corner the two Epats stopped abruptly. The darkness around her hid the guards from view. She could barely make out their dim outlines.

Before she knew what had happened she stood in the darkness naked, clothes hastily snatched away by the guards. She started blindly running down the corridor, away from the entrance. She heard footsteps of the two guards rapidly coming after her. Ahead lie the unknown, behind two running male Epats. She did not know how high the ceiling was, nor if there were any pits or crevices. The path sloped downward. She kept thinking of the Epats ... they could see in the darkness. Her eyes could not see very well in darkness so she did not see the pit in front and fell flat on her face. By the time she stood up the guards had caught up. They were talking in a language strange to her ears. By their tone and intermittent

laughter she knew what they were discussing. She tried to run past one but he pushed her into the other. Then he pushed her back into the first.

After a few minutes the two changed techniques ... each time she was pushed she fell into opened arms and was kissed and then sent back to the other. As she started striking them they again changed techniques ... this time as she encountered the male he crushed her to him and gave her a nip on the neck. She was then pushed into the other who did likewise. She caught on to what they were doing ... this was the King's torture. They were to start off down the corridor in the light and then when the door was closed the two men would go wild over the site of a naked woman ... they would play with her as a cat does a mouse, then were to play dirty and finally start eating her. The Epats were cannibals and it was only natural they eat what they considered their enemy.

By now the guards had shed their clothing and as she bumped into them they gave off a little laugh, crushed her to them, kissed her, bit her on the neck and finally her breasts. Finally one of them pushed her into the other with enough force to push them both down. Vickina landed on her back. The man who threw her fell gently face forward onto her. Vickina lost consciousness.

As she awoke Vickina found herself clothed and lying on a soft bed in the same room she had awoken before. She could still feel where the two men had bitten and determined she had been out less than a day. She looked at the door. It was not locked. She arose and walked into the hall. It was deserted. She peered into other rooms as she walked along the hallway and discovered them empty as well. Hearing a noise down the corridor she quickly ran toward the Royal Chamber, where she discovered nearly the entire population surrounding the King and two guards. She made her way through the crowd until standing but a few feet from the King, hidden behind a few Epats. She could plainly hear the words passing between the guards and him.

"After we played with her," one of the guards was saying, "we started biting her, like you instructed. We made her think we had discarded our clothing and were playing with her. She blacked out as I jumped on her when she lie on Mulot. The moment she fell unconscious we brought her here. As she was being dressed you told us to explain what had happened. Now what do we do?"

"There is another woman in the 'Room where none escapes'. Go there and torture her," the King replied, pointing a slim finger toward the door Vickina had been taken through. "Why do you hesitate?"

Mulot answered: "What do we do if one of us is on top and she does not black out?"

"They always black out. Now go!" the King yelled, standing.

The two left through the door indicated. Vickina started making her way back to the entrance. A few feet from it a woman stopped her. "Aren't you going to stay for the ceremony?"

"I don't feel very well," she replied, walking past as the woman moved out of the way.

She had said the first thing that came to mind and seemed sufficient for the woman. She entered the corridor, turned away from the Royal Chamber, toward the room she had awoke in. Behind her the murmuring of the crowd began filling the corridor. She turned a bend and came upon an exit. She was in a cave near the top of the Rebsar Mountains. Trees spread out below her. Rocks above. She turned toward the trees.

Inside the forest she made her way through the foothills until encountering a crystal-clear stream which cascaded down the face of a cliff. She stopped to bathe. The first thing she was going to do after bathing, she told herself, was to get rid of those clothes and get some new ones. What would happen if she were to meet Jerry or Kas in the forest and her clothing turned transparent!

She dove under the water for the knife she had dropped. As she came to the surface she was startled by a man standing on the shore looking at her clothing. She recognized Nitro. He looked up and spotted her. His eyes grew wide as they followed her curving features, magnified by the water.

Nitro held up the clothes, beckoning her to put them on as he turned his back. With little else to do she came out of the water and approached him. No sooner had she taken the clothing then he turned and crushed her to him. She resisted, but to no avail. He was strong. He started kissing her but after a while stopped. By this time she had donned her clothing and found the second knife she had stashed in her boot. She quickly stabbed him in his arm. He fell back, clutching his arm in pain. She advanced on him again ... this time he was ready and wresting the knife from her flung it into the lake. In the same motion he swatted her with the back of his hand rendering her unconscious.

Nitro slung her limp body onto his back and started through the woods, on a narrow pathway. This led to the Flying Super-Hydrone he and Silob had entered the forest in. Seeing Nitro approach Silob opened the air-lock and helped him in.

"What happened?" Silob asked, as Nitro seated himself in the soft couch of the small craft.

Adjusting the controls Nitro replied:

"I went down stream to get some water, right? Well ... I ran into her," he said, gesturing toward the unconscious form. "She put up a fight but I brought her here. She stuck me with this ..."

He handed Silob the knife. Silob took the instrument and examined it minutely giving a cry of astonishment:

"This belongs to the Epats! She must be in cohorts with them ..."

Silob looked over at the awakening girl.

"They took me prisoner," she explained. "They gave me these clothes. I stole some weapons and escaped."

"You know what you have done?" Nitro asked, looking at her.

"You have created the spark that will establish war between the Epats and you. Now that we have you that extends to us as well. We must fight these Epats to escape. Look outside," Silob said, opening one of the windows of the craft.

The cannibals had surrounded the ship. More were entering the clearing. The entrance to the craft began bulging under their weight as they tried to force it open. Walking over to a control panel Silob threw a switch. Epats began dropping from the hull. He had sent a charge of electricity through the outer hull.

After a few minutes the fallen Epats were on their feet and grouping around a large tree. One after another they would climb into the tree. The tree rose several hundred feet, sprouting branches here and there, before there was any foliage. One of the branches hung directly over the Super-Hydrone. They climbed onto this branch.

"They are running away!" Nitro exclaimed, seeing them climb the tree.

"I don't think so ..." Vickina commented, pointing upward through the clear ceiling.

Looking upward Nitro saw the overhanging branch with several Epats clinging to it.

"Why don't we just give them the knife?" he asked, turning the silvery blade in his hand.

"That would do no good ... now that we have killed one of theirs," he replied, pointing to the dead Epat three others were dragging off. His blood had matted and held him to the ship even after the electrical charge had been released.

"What do we do now? Stay and fight? Or run and be safe?" Vickina asked, looking at the Epats above who were trying to enter the glass-like window.

"We never run from our enemies! ... We will stay and fight until there are no more to fight ... or until there are no more of us to fight." Silob stated, pacing back and forth in front of Nitro.

Taking her eyes from the ceiling momentarily Vickina watched Silob. Nitro had joined him and both were pacing the length of the ship. At the moment, they were facing away from her. Looking around she eyed a lever marked EJECTION. Beneath the two men she could see the outlines of a door. Above them a matching door. She waited until they were directly over it and pulled the lever. With surprising speed the ceiling opened and both were thrown through it. She opened one of the panels covering a side window. She saw the two land among the trees at the edge of the clearing. Nitro was first to stand. He approached the ship. She threw the switch she had seen Silob throw when he first had entered the ship. The moment he

touched the hull Nitro flew back, stunned by the electrical charge. Watching his Nitro go down Silob returned to the forest and took refuge in the woods.

Vickina explored the control panel before her. Once she had figured out the controls she raised ship and headed toward the coast. To where she could cross the sea and approach the continent of Soiril by air.

CHAPTER SEVEN
(Refuge in Daor)

Seeing Nitro unable to get quickly away from trouble, Silob started toward Daor by himself. Although he only frequented the city two to three times a year, he expected the 'City of the Dead' would have sufficient arms and ammunition to hold the Epats at bay should they decide to attack. He sensed the Epats in the trees around him. By the time he reached the foothills of Rebsar he felt much safer. Most of the Epats had left as he came within a mile of Daor.

Arriving during the middle of the night Silob made his way up the 'River of the Dead' to Daor's hidden entrance. Inside he took the air-lift to the top floor and sought his room for some needed rest. He awoke in the morning with a slight headache from where the tree branch struck his head as he had run through the forest. He found several servants holding trays of food and clothing.

Several weeks passed. Silob was returning from the uppermost level, where the radio transmission devices lie ... he had just concluded speaking with Nitro. He was in the air-lift descending when he encountered his old foe once again. Jerry dropped through a trap-door in the ceiling.

"Well," Silob said as he looked him over, "we meet again. To what do I owe this pleasure?"

"You don't owe me anything. You happened to be here when I jumped on. Is it my fault you get roughed up?" Jerry replied, advancing on Silob.

"You don't think I would come by myself do you? Below your feet are three of my men," Silob retorted, bending down to release the door.

"No you don't!" Jerry yelled, stomping his fingers. Then standing against the wall: "Alright, come out of there."

"He means it." Silob said, rubbing his fingers. "Better come up." Jerry withdrew a knife from beneath his tunic and held it against Silob's throat. As the air-lift ceased moving he motioned Silob toward the exit. The moment they were clear Jerry pressed a button on the inside and the door closed, the air-lift rapidly ascended. Silob sat down as Ta, whose apartment they had entered, approached and whispered something to Jerry.

"It does appear that way, doesn't it." Jerry nodded.

"You'll never get away with this!" Silob shouted, standing.

"Sit down!" Jerry threatened, flashing the knife.

Jerry talked with the girl for some time before turning his attention back to Silob. "You know any way to escape?"

"There is no escape." Silob returned.

Jerry looked at both of them. "Tell me. How did you get here?"

"We were dropped by the Bird Men," Ta replied.

"Oh well," Jerry said, crossing the room and dragging them both with him. "I guess we float downriver at the bottom of the 'Pit of the Dead'."

"Why us!?" Silob screamed.

"I do not want to leave anyone behind who might give away our position to search parties," Jerry replied ... or at least that is what Silob thought he had said.

Jerry pushed the two through chutes used to dispose of dead bodies and into the 'River of the Dead'. Silob landed in the sand and tried to escape but Ta dropped from the chute at that moment blocking his path.

"Night has come," Silob said, seeing Jerry fall to the ground a few feet away. "We had better wait 'till morning ... otherwise we will be devoured by the Norselts."

After telling Silob and Ta they were leaving right away he began building a raft. Once the raft was completed he boarded with the others. The moment they were mid-river Silob pushed himself off and into the water. He sank to the bottom and became partially covered with mud.

Silob heard a splash and bubbles, then the silent swish of the raft as it passed overhead. He waited nearly an hour, sucking water through his gills to get the oxygen he needed, as the ropes that bound him began to soften. When they were loose he slid them off and rising to the surface swam to shore.

He made his way through the bushes to a point where he saw a girl seated by a campfire ... it was Ta! As he circled around he caught sight of a search party and told the Oosags and Flat-Racians to come on his signal. He sat down opposite Ta. She asked where he had come from and how he had survived. He briefly explained then signaled his companions.

"You must find Mr. Hawks. When you do, bring him to Daor. If you do not your fate will be worse than death. Go!" Silob commanded, pointing downstream.

CHAPTER EIGHT
(Vickina!)

Gazing skyward Jerry detected three great vultures descending in ever tightening circles. He had been without food three days after swimming ashore. The birds closed in and were coming at him from different directions. Weakened by hunger he could only scramble toward a nearby bush. Only one bird survived the mid-air crash as they collided. The survivor hobbled about the ground momentarily, dazed, then commenced tearing into the other two.

Through the bushes he could distinguish the still form of the birds as well a darker one moving beyond them. The dark figure moved closer to the feeding bird. As it came within a foot of the bird Jerry recognized it as an Oosag warrior! It was alone and armed with only spear and a knife. It looked in the direction he was hiding and seemed to see him. The warrior moved toward the bush. Should the Oosag try for him, Jerry felt he was ready to do battle.

The warrior approached, stopping a few feet from the bush. Jerry heard a squeal of pain and the sound of crunching bones. As the warrior pulled the spear from the bush he could see the Leber on the end of it. The Leber is one of the smaller creatures which roam the surface of Vulcan II and Neerg and is very tasty when roasted. The warrior started back toward the feeding bird but stopped in mid stride. He swung around and peered into the bushes again. This time Jerry knew he had been detected and tried to scramble in the opposite direction.

Taking the spear from the dead animal the warrior flung it in his direction. He fell in his tracks, spear protruding from a leg muscle. The warrior approached.

"Who are you? What do you in my land?" the warrior inquired, retrieving its spear.

"I am Jer ... Zutho," Jerry corrected, realizing he should keep his true identity secret for the moment. "I am making my way to Lake Ekal. Who are you?"

"I, Jer-Zutho, am Lae, King of this land. You must be hungry. Come, dine with me ... I regret having wounded you but I do not like strangers. Come, we must bury what remains of my pets," Lae said, walking toward the remains of the birds.

After bandaging his leg Jerry followed. The dead birds were thrown into a shallow pit and covered with soil. Lae cooked the Leber and handed the hind-quarters to him while eating the head. After dining with Lae he parted company and continued his quest.

Alone he followed the well worn path through the trees. Followed it several miles before detecting strange sounds. Looking up Jerry saw a Birdman circling. The moment the Birdman saw him he flew off, but the damage was done and his guard was up again. Soon after the Birdman disappeared Jerry felt he was being followed. He saw three forms vanish into the

woods out of the corner of his eye. Returning his attention forward he was confronted by four Birdmen. Hearing a noise behind he turned to see the three Birdmen who had disappeared into the woods. The four in front began advancing upon him. Spying a slender tree to his right Jerry ran toward it. He had almost reached the trunk when a stone flung at him by one of the Birdmen hit him in the back of his head, rendering him unconscious.

The Birdmen approached the limp body, after securing the legs, held onto the tethering with their claws then flew toward the mountain range barely visible to the south.

Rubbing his head Jerry sat up. He was in a dimly light room. Beyond the door he heard a soft voice. It was feminine. Arising from the soft mattress he approached the door. It was not locked. The voice stopped and footsteps approached the opposite side. Jerry backed away and concealed himself in the space behind the door, still holding the sheet taken from the bed.

As the door opened he threw the sheet over the entering figure. Then tackling the figure, grasped one arm, pinioned it to one side, and removed the sheet. The moment he saw who it was he helped them to their feet.

"Vickina! What happened? How'd I get here?" Jerry hastily asked as he helped her over to the bed.

"I was on my way to Eman when I saw a group of Birdmen dragging a body through the trees. I went for a closer look and saw it was you they were dragging. Never having seen anything except themselves fly I told them I was the Great Silver Bird and had come to claim my victim. I explained this over the communications system, which added to their fear. I told them you belonged to me. They obligingly put you down on some grassy area and flew toward the mountains," Vickina explained as she rose from the bed. "I picked you up and placed you on the bed. You have been asleep nearly three and a half days. I landed in an abandoned cave. We must leave for Soiril, before the creature which inhabits the cave returns to reclaims it. Come, help me with the controls."

Jerry followed her into the control room. It was immense. There were dials and gauges everywhere, some of which were meaningless to him. He looked through the transparent ceiling and saw the rocky cave surface. It was covered with a green tint. By now Vickina had seated herself behind the control panel, not unlike the one in his own ship. She motioned him to take his place beside her. He complied, fastening his belt.

Looking over the controls Jerry commented: "Well, here we go."

He pushed a green button and pulled back on the stick. The motors started vibrating the hull as their whine steadily grew in pitch. Inching another lever forward Jerry grasped the arm rests. The ship moved forward, out into the air. Inching the first lever forward further they rose several hundred feet

and were on their way.

* * * * *

Kas waited until the sun had risen well above the horizon before he and the other escapees started their journey downstream on the make-shift raft. Although he had sent a search party for Jerry when he fell through the hole they failed to turn up anything. So it was that while he was floating downstream they came across a cave. It was growing dark and the Oosags and Flat-Racians started pleading to turn into the safety of the cave until it was light again. Kas finally gave in and turned toward the dark entrance.

The moment the raft was inside the cave it capsized. Several Oosags and Flat-Racians made it to shore with Kas while others fought the current and were pulled under. On shore Kas started looking around to see why the raft had overturned. He spotted a large boulder inside the entrance of the cave, partially hidden by shadows. He sent several Oosags to erect a crude warning to warn other voyagers of the danger. When they returned they set off to discover where the cave led.

The cave emptied into a huge arena. High on the rock walls forming three of its sides were seats. These were not naturally formed seats but had been made from Roly-X-Xem, Kas noticed upon closer scrutiny. Hearing a noise to his left he turned and discovered he was the only one in the arena. A large boulder blocked the entrance. He tried pushing it aside but found it was too large and heavy for him to move. At the far end of the arena a movement caught his eye. He turned and found himself facing a half-starved Norselt! The arena began filling with Oosags and Flat-Racians. The seats were also being filled ... by Birdmen and Bluemen. He thought he saw Nitro seating himself among the Bluemen.

The Oosags and Flat-Racians were led in through a door on the other side of the arena. It closed. The Oosags made a run toward him. The Norselt caught the movement and ran toward them. It caught one and started devouring it on the spot. The door the Norselt had come through opened and three more entered. These took off after the running Oosags. Each caught two creatures and started devouring them. Waiting no longer Kas joined the Flat-Racians while the Norselts were thus occupied.

"Listen," Kas explained, huddling together with the remaining Flat-Racians, "we have to get out of here. Now, this is what we'll do ..."

As Kas explained the plan he occasionally popped his head above the group to see where the Norselts were. It was during one of these times he saw one approaching.

"Now!" Kas said, rushing toward the creature.

As the huddle ended it split into three groups. One circled the Norselt, drawing its attention toward them. The

second approached from behind. The third, with Kas in the lead, broke through the two other groups and threw themselves on the Norselts from the rear. Each Norselt had two to three Flat-Racians on its back. They tried shaking them off but couldn't. Kas gave another signal and the Flat-Racians started slapping their pointed hands across the back of the Norselts. The Norselts started dropping to the ground where they were quickly covered with soil by the Flat-Racians. Their immediate danger removed the Flat-Racians formed a single group and, walking toward the spectators in the stands above, formed a ladder by holding each others legs and climbing atop the one in front of them.

By the time the ladder was complete there were fourteen Flat-Racians standing atop each other. This was possible due to their hollow bone construction. Up these stairs Kas climbed and ran through the crowd to where he had seen Nitro. Arriving he found no trace of the scientist. As he retraced his steps he sought escape from the arena. In doing so he found the Bluemen had regained their senses and blocked all exits. He returned to the arena.

No sooner had he jumped into the arena than Nitro again appeared and gave orders for him and the others to be led to their cells.

* * * * *

The moment they were airborne Vickina saw Jerry was having difficulty with the controls. He used all his strength to keep the ship on a straight course toward the coastline. The Super-Hydrone traveled at a high rate of speed. She thought that was why it wouldn't stay on course ... but, it still didn't explain why he was fighting the controls. By the time Jerry figured out what the problem was it was too late. They were out of fuel and traveling fast over the Ronim Sea. The engine sputtered, shuddered (shaking the entire craft) and finally gave out. They started falling toward the sea far below.

Clambering into a Para-wing (shaped like the wing of a bird, used as a parachute, it could be flown in any direction through the use of small levers near the hands) Jerry helped Vickina into hers and both jumped from the falling craft. Vickina's para-wing opened abruptly and let her glide toward the blue-green sea. Jerry's failed to open. She noticed and quickly angled herself toward his falling body. She caught him and they continued descending but at a faster rate. It was the additional weight which sent her crashing into the sea, causing them to lose consciousness.

Jerry awoke in a semi-light room. He determined he was not the sole occupant, nor was the other Vickina. The other was an elderly man. He seemed not from either satellite of Vulcan II, nor from Vulcan II itself. The man explained he was

from Earth.

"What happened?" Jerry asked, lifting his head to hear the reply.

"You were thrown in here several days ago. They took the girl to the 'Pink Palace'. She is being held for questioning by Nitro. Now that you have recovered, you will be taken before him in the 'Pink Palace'," the man replied, handing him a portion of dried meat.

"How did you get here?" Jerry asked, taking the offering.

"I was with a Oosag fishing-fleet when the storm broke a few days ago. The wind wrecked our boat and we swam for shore. We came upon this island and rested. Nitro's guards discovered us and took us prisoner. I was thrown in here about the same time you were. You know as much as I do. Except that a few hours ago ... when it was dark and I was supposed to be asleep ... a woman slipped in and left this ..." he said, holding up a piece of paper. "It's for you, I think."

Taking the paper Jerry held it to the light.

Jerry, you will find that you can escape by using the tools in the bag I left beside the door. Come to the woods east of the 'Pink Palace'. I will be there.

Vickina

Walking toward the door Jerry spotted the tools. He picked up the bag and started sifting through it. There was a metal bar, an instrument for drilling holes, three sticks of what he figured to be blasting powder, and some matches. Using the bar he pried the wooden door off its hinges. Then placed the blasting powder and matches in his pocket.

The double suns were mid-way across the sky as he opened the door. The sunlight made him wince. He closed the door and opened it a crack. Peering through the opening he saw the wooded area Vickina had described in the note. The large sun, Melcore (which traveled North to South) and Nipnar, the smaller sun (which traveled East to West) met at noon directly overhead but were now at an angle about 30° above the Eastern horizon. At the point of meeting he could see the forest outlined. Between the woods and where he and John, the elderly man who had given him the dried meat, were several Flat-Racian and Bluemen patrolling the grounds. Taking a stick of blasting powder he light it and threw it toward the West with all his strength.

The patrolling guards went to investigate the explosion. This gave him and John the chance they needed. Jerry ran for the woods to the East, John to the West. He reached his destination but John was recaptured and brought back to the cell.

Inside the forest Jerry made for a clearing to his left. As he entered he saw Vickina waving to him from within a balloon shaped object. He ran to her and climbed aboard the craft. She released the ropes and the craft started rising.

Looking downward he saw Nitro running after the ropes trailing along the ground. He caught one and started pulling himself upward.

Grabbing Jerry's knife Vickina started hacking at the rope. It parted and Nitro plummeted downward a few feet before catching another rope and resumed climbing. As he did so the basket tipped and Vickina lost the knife. She watched as it tumbled through the air past Nitro. Nitro's hand appeared over the lip of the basket. He pulled himself over the edge and grinned:

"So, we meet again my pretty one? You shall not escape this time ... but I see you have brought someone ... ah, yes, that scum you call 'Zutho'. Well, Mr. Hawks, looks like I have the upper hand once more." Taking a shiny knife, more than a foot long, from his belt he continued. "You will land this craft. Then I shall give you more instructions. Let's go down!"

The moment the basket touched ground Jerry and Vickina were taken from it by several guards. Nitro commanded them to take them to the 'Pink Palace'. They went willingly ... thinking to escape later.

Jerry found the palace much larger than he had imagined, covering nearly a full mile and rising several hundred feet into the air. The outside had taken on a pink tint as the two suns shone down on it through the moist air. The moisture, Nitro had explained, was to keep the Norselts, who only live in a dry climate, away from the palace.

At the entrance, a wooden door at the base of a large tree, Jerry was taken into a room and searched ... Vickina was given like treatment in another room. Then a metallic band was placed around their heads. They were led down a semi-slippery hallway to a very large pink room. This was occupied by several Bluemen and Redmen. Among the Bluemen stood a tan colored man Jerry recognized as Silob Emos. Seeing Jerry and the girl enter Silob dismissed the Bluemen and Redmen.

"Ah, I see you brought our old friends with you?" Silob said, rising.

"I personally asked them to stop in and visit. At first they wouldn't come, but later they changed their minds ... ha!" Nitro exclaimed, pointing to the headbands.

"Alright, let's cut out the kidding and get down to business," Silob said. Then looking at Jerry: "You sure they're under?"

"Quite sure." Nitro replied.

"Then take the girl to my, shall I say, interrogation room?" Silob winked, then pressing a button on the side of the chair continued: "Take him to the laboratory and give him what he needs. The engine must be completed by tomorrow."

"It will be done, oh mighty one." replied a metallic voice.

The moment the crackling in the speaker died a large silver-covered machine entered and approached Jerry's

motionless form. It approached from behind. The moment it turned to face him it stopped as if in recognition. A dim light seemed to turn on in the back of that mechanical brain. It picked up the limp form and carried it toward the door. Carried him down the pink corridor, into another room. This was not a sitting room like the first, but a laboratory. There were three long tables along one wall and two on another. In the center was a work-bench. It was toward the latter the robot carried Jerry before putting him down.

The robot seated Jerry at the table and handed him a piece of paper:

Mr. Hawks. You will proceed to build a rocket engine which will operate on an entirely new principle. The robot will give you anything you desire ... that is almost anything. You see, we are holding Vickina as a hostage until you complete the engine. You have until tomorrow when the suns reach their meeting point in the sky.

The Great Silob Emos

Jerry looked at the robot and then back to the paper, then began looking around the room. He put his head into his hands as he thought. Thought the hardest he had ever in his life.

Down the hallway, the opposite direction from the 'Sitting Room', was a room known only to a few as the 'Torture Room'. To others it was known as the 'Mad Room'. Vickina knew it as the 'Interrogation Room'. She was seated on a soft and luxurious, hand-made sofa. Three men stood by her side. Nitro, holding a long whip in his hand. Silob, running the edges of a shiny six inch knife up and down his furry pants. The third who had not been introduced was holding several coils of thin rope in his hands, along with several sheets of plastic. Nitro was first to break the silence.

"Will you get into these or do I have to use this!" he said, flashing the whip in front of her face.

"You still have given me no reason why I should dress in that attire." Vickina replied, standing and starting to slip into the plastic ... she couldn't help herself. She was being forced by a voice inside her head chanting: "Do it. Do it. Do it."

"No, no, no." Nitro cried. "Get into the sack, without your clothes ... Oh, alright. We'll turn our heads."

Nitro turned his back, as did the others of the group. Each, of course, holding a corner of the sack. They heard several distinct spla-krumps as Vickina's clothing fell to the floor. The end of the bag Nitro was holding went down. He felt the warm body as it pressed against his fingers. Vickina brushed against his arm a few moments later and sent shivers

up and down his back. Just as he was about to spin around and ask if she was in the plastic yet Vickina announced that she was ready. Silob and the other men gathered the ends of the sack in and waited for Nitro to release his end. Nitro, fully turned and peering into the sack, looked up. He saw the others looking at him so quickly handed his corner to them and turned away so they couldn't see his slightly reddening face.

The third man, known as Juior, held the sack while Silob wrapped the rope around the opening. Nitro, by this time, had gathered Vickina's clothes and handed them to Silob.

"Come on Silob. Just one little" Nitro said, moving his hands toward the opening.

"No!" Silob hastily replied, turning away.

"She felt so warm. Not even for just a little while?" Nitro whined as he tugged at the opening.

"I said no, and I mean NO. If news gets around that you molested her, Mr. Hawks will not build that engine ... and you know what that means. We will be stuck on this planet for years." Silob commented, pulling Nitro's hands away from the opening.

"Even if Mr. Hawks does invent the engine ... there's no promising it will get us out of this galaxy. Let's say he does get it to work and we do get away ... what about taking her with us?"

"Well ... we'll see about that when the time comes," Silob said, as Juior placed the sack on a hook several feet off the floor.

The sack was held by rope which had been wrapped around its opening. The hook was on a pulley attached to another rope that exited the room. The three men followed the second rope, Nitro taking the lead and followed by Silob, then Juior.

The sack was carried along the hallway, outside the room, and down to the end of a large corridor. Here it encountered a large metallic door three feet thick. Nitro pressed a button next to the door and waited until it was fully opened before giving the sack a push. Beyond was a darkened room. When their eyes adjusted to the light in the room the three could see the ramp leading down to the clear pool at its center. The sack had stopped and was resting over the ramp. Silob took careful aim with his knife and threw it at the sack opening. The plastic cut and the bag dropped onto the ramp on the opposite side of the pool.

As the bag slid down the ramp it turned around and was caught on a rock as it passed along a curve. The three men, still gazing intently, watched as Vickina came around another curve naked and slid the remaining ten feet into the pool. Of the three only Nitro's eyes were opened the widest. Silob had turned and started walking back toward the entrance the moment he saw the girl had landed in the pool safely. Juior followed Silob out of the darkened room. Nitro, after a few minutes gazing at Vickina swimming in the lake, followed shortly after.

"Had your fun for the day Nitro? ..." Silob commented as Nitro caught up. "Well, we must stop in and see how Mr. Hawks is doing."

CHAPTER NINE
(Jerry The Inventor)

Jerry had been working steadily nearly nine hours. The rocket engine was nearly ready. He needed another ten hours. The twin suns would rise and cross in mid sky in another nine and a half hours ... he couldn't afford any mistakes in assembling the remainder of the engine. As he placed a screw into the casing there was a disturbance behind him. He turned and saw Nitro, Silob and another seating themselves in the chairs.

"Well, Mr. Hawks, is the engine ready?" Silob asked, grinning.

"Give me another few hours," Jerry returned.

"A few hours he says," mocked Nitro. Looking directly at Jerry "You have less than three to complete your task!"

"THREE HOURS! You said when the twin suns cross. That isn't for another nine!" Jerry exclaimed.

"Have you forgotten the suns cross twice daily. Once in the morning and again at mid-day ... " Juior reminded him, getting up and walking over to the workbench. "What is left to put into this?"

"Just the screws which hold the outer casing to the main unit ... it is held together by nothing but plastic clips right now. It will take at least another ten hours to place the screws in their correct places," Jerry replied, pointing to the bag on the table.

"Don't you think it would be possible to let Mr. Hawks work on another project, after explaining the present one to me? It seems a simple enough job placing screws?" Juior asked, turning toward Silob.

"I agree you have come up with a plausible idea. Please explain how the engine works, Mr. Hawks." Silob replied, as the group crowded around the table.

"Through thought waves. This device," Jerry started as he pointed to a small black box at the base of the engine, "receives your thoughts ... which are collected through this hoop. The hoop is worn around the head, a metal prong piercing the spinal cord at the base of the neck. The thoughts are picked up and become electrical signals.

"The current is amplified, then sent to this section where it is broken down into positive and negative charges. The positive ones are stored in this section ... and the negative ones deleted from this section. They are stored for a matter of seconds before being released into the firing chamber. There they get mixed with their opposite charges. The resultant energy creates an explosion. To aid this explosion a high level current is driven through these black wires to the chamber as well. The explosion pushes the engine, and ship, away from where it originally was. The collector ... this thing down here ... collects the discharge and adds to the explosion, making it more intense. In this way the longer the

engine is operating, the faster it gets driven. The more power it has and will deliver.

"One advantage of the engine is that you control, through your brain activity, the motions of the ship. A safeguard is should you become unconscious the ship will cease movement. But that in some cases could pose a hazard."

"You have done well for your first assignment. You shall rest before moving to your second. We will take you to your private room while the motor is being removed from the room." Silob commented, leading Jerry toward the door.

"Can I see the girl now?" Jerry pleaded.

"We shall visit if you desire." Silob said, turning down the corridor blocked by a metallic door. At the door Silob pressed a button and waited for it to open.

"You will have to remove your clothing. Inside you will find a green and a blue sack. Place your clothing in the green one and climb into the blue one. I will do the rest." Silob stated as they entered the darkened room.

Jerry wasted no time undressing and jumping into the blue sack. Once inside he had the feeling of being lifted to a great height. Then felt he was being moved along horizontally. Below he could hear splashing of water as it broke over rocky surfaces. The movement stopped and he heard a rrr--ii--pppp. He felt light as a feather for a few moments and then impacted a hard surface. He descended rapidly. The bag was torn from his body during the descent on the ramp by an outcropping on the slide.

Jerry felt he was on a metal ramp. He rounded the corner and saw he would enter a clear pool. He held his breath as he hit the surface. It was cool, then grew warm as he became accustomed to it. Rising to the surface he looked around. Finding nothing he swam around the edge. His eyes grew accustomed to the darkness and detected someone swimming toward him. He recognized Vickina and swam to meet her. She too was devoid of clothing. He was happy to see her again.

"Vickina!" Jerry exclaimed as he crushed her to him in the water.

"Jerry! It has been so long since ... Why, what has happened ... you have changed." Vickina said, seeing that he did not hug her as he had before.

"It's this band," he replied, pointing to his head. "It controls my movements. I don't know why, but I seem to be able to think more logically than before. I just completed an engine which I don't even recall building. I don't know how to build a basic engine, more or less the complicated one I finished a little while ago. What have you been up to?"

"Nothing." Vickina replied as they drew themselves up on the sandy beach. "Absolutely nothing. They sent me here yesterday and I have done nothing but roll around in the sand, swim and eat."

"Eat? How does the food get here?" Jerry asked, suddenly sitting up.

"It grows. Come, I'll take you to the forest," Vickina replied, jumping back into the water, swimming toward a green growth on the opposite shore.

Jerry followed her into the pool and as he caught up grabbed her leg and pulled her under the water. The diffused light entering through the water outlined the two as they kissed. Dancing in the water was hard at first but he caught on. You paddled to tread water and keep you head above while you hugged your partner and swam around in circles ... sometimes above water, sometimes below. They danced and frolicked in the water until reaching the small island where they lie down once again and rested.

"He's been down there for three hours Silob. Aren't you going to bring him back so he can get his rest?" Nitro complained, looking through the clear glass at the nude figures reclining on the beach.

"I think he is getting the rest in a way he prefers," Silob said, taking his seat at the control panel.

"Well, why don't you call him back so he can work on another one of those projects?" Nitro probed, his face reddening as the two below caressed each other.

"I have an idea. Why don't you go down and bring him back ... seeing you are partial to the girl," Silob said, motioning toward the door.

"You mean ? ... Gee, thanks! I'll never forget this," Nitro exclaimed, hurriedly entering the room.

"But remember ... leave the girl alone!" Silob cautioned, turning back to the control board. He pushed the button marked "ENTER" and Nitro was whisked down the chute to the island. Silob stood over the clear glass looking down at the two nude humans and shook his head.

Jerry awoke to Vickina's cries. He arose and looked around all in one movement. He was alone on the beach. The screaming came from the forest. He quickly entered and found her lying on a pile of leaves, blood running down her arms and legs. Looking into the trees he detected Nitro hiding among the leaves. He clambered up after him.

"What did you do to her!" Jerry shouted as he grabbed Nitro and pulled him from the tree.

"I didn't touch her!" Nitro screamed, backing away once they were on the ground again.

"Didn't touch her, eh?" Jerry said, slapping him in the face. "Didn't touch her?" he said as he slapped him again. "Why, prey tell, is she bleeding? She rub up against a bush?"

"Yeah ... yeah, that's it. She rubbed up against a bush. How ... how ... how'd you know?" Nitro stammered, re-gaining his courage. "By the way, Silob sent me to get you. Now come with me. Come on! Come! ... Alright." Nitro gave a signal and Vickina vanished. "Now will you come? ... You'll never see her if you don't ... now you get the idea. Here are your clothes.

Put them on and walk through the door over there."

Jerry dressed and walked through the door indicated. On the other side Silob waited. The moment he stepped through the door it was again closed. He looked through the clear glass in front of Silob. He could see the island. He saw Vickina lying on the beach. She sat up and looked around. She looked worried. She started searching. What was she looking for? Then he realized he had been tricked again by these two masterminds.

"We have another duty for you, Mr. Hawks. You must invent a machine that can destroy anything. If you can do this then you will be granted your freedom for a few weeks ... or at least until I can think of something else for you to invent. Now off to your laboratory." Silob commanded, pointing toward the door leading toward his lab.

Vickina awoke and looked around. She didn't see Jerry anywhere. She had a dream Nitro had roughly handled her. She looked at her skin and saw marks of a battle that had almost been washed away. She called Jerry's name aloud several times. There was no answer. She felt warm and decided to go for a swim. Maybe, she thought, when she got back she would find him waiting on the beach. She knew she wouldn't but went for a swim anyway.

"I told you not to touch that girl!" Silob screamed. "It is a good thing I made him think he had seen an illusion. If he knew the truth you wouldn't be here now."

"But I just couldn't resist her charm ... besides, he wasn't awake and I had to shut her up somehow." Nitro complained, looking over the top of the opal table.

"I suppose you're right but, don't let me catch you doing anything like that again. Understand? If I catch you ... you won't get off so easy next time." Silob replied, climbing down from the stone-like chair and onto the cooler flooring.

"I suppose what I did was wrong, but at the time it seemed the thing to do," insisted Nitro as he joined him on the floor.

Silob not only pushed Nitro through the door after the remark, but told him not to come back without devising some form of punishment for himself. Nitro fell into the path of Jerry as he stumbled through the door and into the hallway. Picking himself from the floor he started to apologize, thought better of it and scolded Jerry for walking into him. Then he told Jerry to go to the laboratory and invent a torture to be used in the afternoon. It must look real but mustn't do any damage. Jerry left Nitro standing in the hallway and returned to the lab.

"I am supposed to make an innocent torture for Nitro this afternoon," Jerry explained to the robot, who was gathering some metal scraps from a giant bin on one side of the lab.

"Yes .. master .. I .. shall .. program .. the .. torture

.. while .. you .. undergo .. another .. treatment," the robot replied as it prepared a chair off to one side of the room.

Jerry took his place in the chair and placed the metal helmet on his head. The robot connected three green wires coming from the helmet to a small box near his head. Using his past knowledge and experiences with Jerry he proceeded to transfer this knowledge into the helmet.

The first thing Jerry heard, from the robot, was a section of the tape played at each treatment (of which this was his fourth):

"I am your trusted servant, Mike. You suspected I had been destroyed by the short fall through the atmosphere I had on the trip from Foor, the prison asteroid. Had it not been for the rocket device imbedded in the lower region of my chassis I would not have made the ground safely. I programmed myself to ignite the rockets a few seconds before impacting the ground. I landed safely among a band of roving Oosags. They held me prisoner until meeting Nitro. Then sold me to him for a handful of food.

"Nitro used me, as he does now, as a worker in the laboratory. You will be given information I have been storing in my memory that relates to your past. You were born twice. The first time ..." the monotone continued throughout the night. As the robot worked on the torture for Nitro, Jerry regained information the metal band about his head had drained from him.

When Jerry awoke from the trance he had full possession of his past ... the metal band had released its hold during the night. As he looked around he saw Mike standing over an odd-looking tangle of metal and wires. He walked over and looked down at the device. The robot spoke.

"You are wondering what it is? It is the device where Nitro can fake a torture. He places the victim in the chair and throws this lever. The rest ... lights flash on and off and lots of dials waver. A small electrical current is sent through the victim. This current causes the muscles to contract in jerky motions, giving the appearance of great pain," the robot concluded, moving toward the door. "Someone comes ... it is Nitro."

"So, you have completed my assignment. Well, now you can complete the one Silob gave you. You have done well on this project ... let's see if you do equally well on his ... now get to work!" Nitro shouted, pushing Jerry toward an empty workbench.

The robot started toward Nitro.

"No. Not yet!" Jerry shouted, standing.

"So ... you are becoming friends, are you? We shall fix that. Come ... robot. You have completed your stay. You will go to the metal making machine to make the metal Mr. Hawks requires to complete his work," Nitro said, walking out of the room.

The robot looked at Jerry and then followed Nitro. Jerry

could not see what happened next as the door blocked the scene from view. There was a stifled scream ... then the sound of blood hitting the ceiling and walls. The robot returned and cleaned its claw-like hand in a tub of metal polish.

"We must leave. Take the band from your head and place it in the bucket of liquid over on the workbench," the robot commanded, pointing toward the wooden bench.

Jerry removed the band and placed it within the liquid. The metal began dissolving. He began remembering. He looked over to the robot. "Mike!" he screamed, looking beyond him. He detected a bloody hand groping its way around the corner. Mike turned and fired a projectile at the hand. The projectile held an acid which quickly ate it and the body, leaving nothing except a small wet patch on the floor which quickly evaporated. Mike took Jerry by the hand and led him through a secret passage at one end of the laboratory.

"Where are we going?" Jerry asked as they entered.

"We go to get 'Little Mistress' from dungeon. You help. We must hurry. I can feel her sending out urgent help desires. She is captive in tower on surface of planet," Mike replied.

"Where on the surface?" Jerry asked, looking at the thin shaft of light entering above his head. He stopped. "Mike, boost me up ... I want to see where we are."

"I can tell you master, but it would only annoy you. Step on my hands," Mike replied mechanically raising his arms as Jerry stepped into them.

Jerry poked his head through the opening and looked around. He was somewhere in the middle of the desert. Far to his left he could see a range of mountains. Less than a mile to his right stood a stone pillar with an opening at its top. It stood well over a hundred feet high and more than fifty feet wide. He told Mike to lower him. Inside the tunnel again he commanded Mike to find a way to the pillar.

Mike replied: "We shall follow this tunnel until we are beneath the pillar, if you wish ... for that is our destination."

The passage ended abruptly as they rounded the corner and came to face a stone wall. To the left was a stairway leading up. They turned their steps toward this, Mike leading. So it was that Mike suddenly stopped and turned around, knocking Jerry against the wall. The wall gave way and he fell through space, landing in a pool of water. He looked up at Mike.

"Now what did you go and do that for?"

"I had no information telling me how far away from me you were when I turned. You happened to be traveling too close. I was turning to notify you there was a door ahead. I see you saved yourself the trouble of using it. I shall come down. I would advise you to dry yourself while I come to your level," Mike replied, rolling up the passageway.

A few moments later Mike appeared at the top of the stairway. It started descending. Jerry started to laugh as it tried navigating the stairs. First it would reach out one of

its long arms and balance itself while it dropped one of its spherical feet over the edge and waited for it to touch the step before lowering its other foot. As it placed one wheel over the edge it would start to roll back and forth and slide onto the next step, where it would again slide onto the next step and so on.

"Come on Mike. hurry it up ... we haven't got all day." Jerry said, haughtily.

"I am doing the best I can." Mike returned mechanically.

"That is not good enough ... take those guard rails off and use them as a ramp." Jerry returned, pointing to the flat rails which protected those descending from falling into the pool.

"Why didn't I think of that ... it wasn't in my memory banks I guess," Mike said as it complied.

"That's one thing I had against bringing a robot the second trip anyway. Sometimes they never do the obvious!" Jerry complained as he watched Mike glide down the ramp.

"What you say is true, but we are not human and cannot reason or think by ourselves. We only know what is programmed into us," Mike explained, coming to a stop at the bottom of the stairway.

"Now that you are down, we must find out where Vickina is being held," Jerry said, turning his steps toward a doorway at the far end of the room.

"Bzzzz ... Warning ... Danger ... Stop ... Bzzzz." Mike announced, pointing ahead of Jerry.

"Now what is it?" Jerry asked, angry, wishing to get to Vickina as soon as he could.

"Deep pit ahead ... Bzzzz ... Warning ... Danger .. Bzzz." Mike replied, pointing down at the floor in front of Jerry.

"Where? I don't see any pi-i-i-t!" Jerry suddenly exclaimed stepping into space.

He fell through an almost invisible opening in the floor and landed on a cold stone floor ten feet below. He looked up as the robot spoke.

"Bzzz ... I ... Bzzz .. told you ... Bzzz ... so ... Bzzz."

"Cut the funny stuff and get me out of here!" Jerry yelled, getting to his feet.

"Bzzz .. will do ... Bzzzz." Mike returned, backing away from the pit.

He heard the robot moving around on the floor above dragging something metallic across it. When it appeared again it had the bar it used to descend the stairs. It slid it into the pit. Jerry ascended and emerged a short time later.

"Now. Let us find Vickina." Jerry said, turning toward the door.

"Bzzt ... do not enter .. Bzzzt." Mike said, turning and barring his progress.

"Now what is it? Aliens?" Jerry said in disbelief.

"No .. Bzzt ... It is not an alien .. but it is of an alien nature ... Bzzzt .. it is not in my memory banks ... Bzzzt ... I am not programmed to receive the information from the THING behind the door ... Bzzt ... It does not compute Bzzt." Mike stammered as steam started issuing from the top of its glass-like head.

The robot became covered in steam and ceased to function. It had blown a circuit. Jerry tried to fix it but couldn't. He did not have the experience. He looked at the door. He opened it very cautiously, remembering what Mike had said of what was on the other side.

CHAPTER TEN

(Backwards, Forwards and Sideways in time)

As the door opened Jerry could see nothing but darkness. He looked back at Mike and, keeping an eye on him, backed into the room. The moment he was fully in the room it became bright as day. He found he was in a forest. Trees were in front and behind a lake, not the door through which he had just entered. He noted a stump where the door should have been. Tall grasses were all around. Since he had turned when the room started brightening he had failed to notice the door still stood open but slowly turning invisible.

He walked over to the stump and was about to rest when he appeared in the room again. Mike lie on the floor with parts strewn about. The hole in the wall above the pool was still there. The pit lie uncovered, steel rod protruding from where he had climbed up. He turned again and looked at the door. Beyond he saw darkness.

He walked through the door forward. The darkness disbursed and he was back in the forest. This time it had tall trees with thick trunks. Before it had shorter, slender trees.

Jerry turned and looked backward. Again the stump appeared in the spot the door should have been. As he went over to it he found he was back with Mike. He sat down next to Mike.

"Mike? I go through this door backwards and I find I am in a young forest. I go through it forward and it looks like the same forest but much later. The pool has less water. Now that could happen over a period of time ... that's it! The door must be some kind of portal! Entering backward you find yourself in the past. Frontward and you are in the future? But how do you control how far you travel?"

He stood up, looked around the edge of the door. Knocked here and there as he tried to find some kind of trigger.

"Just an ordinary door," he commented. Then, as he fell to examining the handle: "Wait a minute ... that's odd. The handle has numbers on it ... 21900, 1300, -1800, -520. This must regulate it. Let me see if it comes ... ah, now I have it. Let's see what happens when I take it into the room."

Handle in hand Jerry entered forwards. He appeared in the forest of the future. As he turned the knob to the left trees started shrinking and thinning out. He found he was standing in the forest of the past. Looking at the knob it read 22,000 BC. He wondered about 'BC'. Turning the knob in his hands he looked at the bottom. There was an inscription:

THIS TIME MACHINE BELONGS TO JOHN WARBOW OF EARTH. IF SOMEONE SHOULD STUMBLE ON THIS DEVICE, I ADVISE THEM TO ADHERE TO THE FOLLOWING: 1) IN ORDER TO TRAVEL FORWARD THE KNOB SHOULD BE REMOVED FROM THE DOOR AND TURNED TOWARD THE RIGHT. 2) TO GO BACKWARD, TURN THE KNOB LEFT. 3) TO TRAVEL SIDWAYS, TURN IT IN EITHER DIRECTION ... WHILE STANDING SIDWAYS TOWARD THE TIME PORTAL. CAUTION!!! DO NOT DISCARD THE KNOB IN ANY

TIME ZONE OTHER THAN YOUR OWN ... OR YOU WILL VANISH FROM THE FACE OF THE PLANET. ADDED DANGER: DO NOT DISCARD THE KNOB WHILE IN THE SIDEWAYS TIME ZONE ... YOU WILL CEASE TO LIVE UNTIL IT RETURNS TO YOUR HANDS AGAIN.

Jerry turned the knob over and twisted the dial until it read 29640 A.D. The trees started growing, reaching higher and higher into the sky. As they ceased growing he looked around. To his right, lie a large city. He saw tall buildings and oddly shaped vehicles. To his left a lake with a stump at its edge. The lake had drained considerably since he last saw it ... in the year 22000 BC. Tall grasses surrounded him. Placing the knob in his pocket, he turned toward the city.

At the edge of the city a yellow vehicle pulled up in front of him. He looked inside. It appeared vacant. The vehicle had places where four people could be seated. The side closest to him opened upward as it settled to the ground. A voice came from within.

"Where to?"

"The nearest mechanic." Jerry replied, looking around the vehicle.

"Which kind? Computer, robot, or land?" the voice inquired.

"Robot." Jerry replied seating himself. A large C-like clamp secured him in the seat.

The vehicle soared into the air. Above the trees it moved at a much faster rate toward the tall buildings. He sought to determine what type of material the buildings were made of but found he couldn't based upon materials he knew. As he neared one of the buildings the structure began to take on a rounded shape. It was suspended above ground by beams of colored light which he later discovered were some sort of force field. The mid section ... toward which the air card seemed destined ... was shaped somewhat like a box. Its sides were flat and smooth (unlike the top which was round and covered with stony material). The bottom of the building had numerous diamond shaped windows ... much like an apartment. The air car settled to the ramp projecting from the square portion of the building. The door opened and he was deposited on the floor. The car took to the air, in search of passengers. He walked toward the entrance.

Adjacent to the entrance was a bulletin board. On it, names of residents in the building and their professions. He looked over the list and fingered one: ROBOT MECHANICS. In the column were several names along with the years they specialized in. He had to think back to which year Mike had been created ... 2196, Jupiter time.

"Since Vulcan II began counting when we were in 1974 and their years are approximately the same length as ours, the year Mike was made would have to be added to the 1974 to determine approximately which year group to look for my mechanic in. That would be around 4170," Jerry half said to himself.

Looking at the chart he saw the latest date on the board: 4139. That meant in order to get the right mechanic he would have to go forward another 29 years. The highest marking on the knob read 4168. After that it was blank until 4174.

Entering the building Jerry went to the men's room and waited until the hallway was clear. He set the dial mid-way between the marked years and the blank space and waited as he came to the year selected.

The room began darkening the instant he moved the indicator on the dial. It grew very cold and then warmed again. The room brightened and he knew he had arrived. Opening the door he and peered out into the hall. Beyond, the hallway lie cluttered with rubble. The ceiling had fallen into the second floor. Placing the knob in his pocket he ventured into the hallway, turning toward the platform through which he had entered. As he stepped out he saw it lying in ruins as well. He found the city in much the same shape, then realized what had happened and why the years between 4168 and 4174 had been absent from the dial. The inhabitants of Vulcan II had started some kind of war in 4168 and they had lost. He knew what he must do. He would go back to 4168 and take one of the mechanics to get Mike fixed. He hoped that what was wrong with Mike was so simple even a mechanic from that period could repair him.

He went back to the men's room and set the dial to 4168. Then sat down and waited as the room darkened, the temperature warmed then cooled. The room brightened again. The temperature was below zero as he stepped into the corridor.

The hallway, unlike the last time he had entered, was bustling with people. He made his way to the exit and ran his finger down the chart until reaching: John P. Warbow, Robot Mechanic for 4168. Latest scientific methods used, cheap prices.

He went back to the building and entered the elevator, explaining to the robot in charge he needed to go to the top floor. He was momentarily thrown to the floor as the elevator accelerated upward and then came to an abrupt stop. Picking himself off the floor he exited and entered the dimly light hallway. Walking down the hall he glanced from side to side reading the names until coming to: John P. Warbow.

Opening the door he noted the bikini clad female seated behind the reception desk. He approached her, glancing around the room. In one area were three chairs and an oval table. In another a clear pool. Yet another section held a fountain spurting cool, clear drinking water. Reaching the desk he inquired if he might see Mr. Warbow.

"You have to have an appointment. Do you have an appointment? with him? ... no? Well, I'm sorry, but he cannot see you today," she replied, looking up from her desk where she was busy working some kind of puzzle.

"But this is urgent. I am sure he will see me when he knows what I have come for ..." Jerry explained, walking past

the girl.

"No you don't!" she shouted, pressing a button on the side of the desk.

Jerry was within reach of the door when a pair of metal arms suddenly lifted him into the air. He was deposited in the chair in front of the girl. She looked up.

"Would you like to make an appointment?" she asked, as she continued filing her nails.

"When is the earliest possible moment you can get me in?" Jerry asked, rising from the chair and starting to pace back and forth.

"In an hour or so," came her reply.

"Make the appointment, I will return in an hour," Jerry replied as he began to walk out the door.

"Just a minute, sir?" the girl said, standing and walking over to where he was. With pencil and notebook in hand she asked: "Who shall I make the appointment for? I don't know your name, code, or where you live as well as other essential information."

"O.K. I'll tell you what you wish to know ... at least it'll use up some time. Let's have the questions ..." Jerry said, reseating himself in front of the desk.

"Who are you and where do you come from?" she asked, reseating herself behind the desk.

"Jerry Howard Hawks, from Jupiter in the Star System Sol." Jerry replied, folding his arms as he relaxed in the cushioned chair.

"When were you born and what is your code?"

"I was born in Repnar, 2176. My code? What code?" he asked, leaning across the desk.

"You were born in 2176! That means you are over two thousand years old! Are you pulling my leg?" she asked, reaching behind the desktop.

Jerry saw the move and pulled her hand above the top of the desk. Inside the drawer he could see a green button: **WARNING! USE ONLY IN CASE OF EMERGENCY! THIS IS CONNECTED DIRECTLY TO THE HOSPITAL.**

"I know it may seem hard to believe, but I am. See this ..." he explained, pulling the knob from his pocket. "This is a time machine. I am a time traveler. I am only visiting to find a mechanic to repair my robot so I may continue my quest to seek out my fiancée. Don't look at me that way ... here, I'll show you. Give me your hand. Now, I set this dial for the year 1927 BC and presto ... here we are, in the year 1927 BC"

Jerry took her hand and both went backward in time. As they stopped he reached over and removed the girl's hands from her face. She had been weeping. When he asked why she replied:

"It's just so hard to believe that a person can actually travel in time. But now that you have shown me ... we must get back to the office."

"Then to your office it is." Jerry replied, taking her hand and retwisting the dial to 4168.

They appeared in the office at the moment Mr. Warbow stepped out of his own. He had exited with his back to them. The girl failed to see Jerry place the knob back in his pocket as he tried to step out of the way. As fate would have it he failed to move fast enough and caused Mr. Warbow to drop his packages, falling flat on his face before him and the girl.

Picking himself up he said: "Who is this imbecile who tripped me, Miss Branders?"

"His name is Jerry Hawks, sir. And he did not trip you, you backed into him as you were exiting your office ..." the girl countered, picking up the boxes scattered on the floor.

"When I want your opinion ... I'll give it to you!" John screamed, then, turning to Jerry. "Well, young man, what is it you want? Or are you another of those punks that just comes in here to ruin my schedule?"

"I wanted to talk to you about fixing a very special robot. Since you were the closest year to that in which my robot was manufactured I chose you to replace the essential parts. Bring whatever you may need, but we must leave now." Jerry said, opening the door for the mechanic.

"Now wait just a minute, young man. I'd say you are must be either insane or not from this world. Well ... which is it?" John said, folding his arms.

"I am not the first, and the second is only partly true. I am from another time zone on the same planet you have lived your life on. The robot you have to repair is of a time era corresponding to two years from now. Since you are the only mechanic in this city that would have the latest equipment and most knowledge for fixing the robot, I have come to you for help. Will you help in this endeavor?" Jerry asked, walking over to the man.

"I don't know, but I will do my best. Your story sounds like that of an insane person but ... I will get my tools." John said, stepping back into his office.

A few minutes elapsed and then John returned carrying a black leather case. Jerry opened the door and after leaving the building and catching an air-car hailed by Miss Branders (a distant descendant of Nickina, the doctor on the ship in which Jerry first came to Vulcan II on), proceeded toward the forest. Once inside the forest he told the robot operator the directions for arriving at the spot where the time warp was located. As they arrived at the stump he sent the air-car back toward the city. As it sped off he passed through the time warp and ended up inside the room with Mike.

He waited for the others. After a few minutes he knew why they hadn't made it through the warp so returned to the forest. He saw them jumping over the stump as they had seen him do before he disappeared from view. He told them to hold his hand while he went through the warp. As he emerged in the room with Mike once again he found he had come alone. He sat down and began to think.

Standing abruptly he knew what he had to do. He returned

again to the time where the mechanic and girl waited.

"I'll go through the warp first," he explained. Then, turning toward the mechanic, "then I will throw this knob back into this time zone. You will pick it up and step through the portal. Set the dial to 2200 A.D and step through the warp into the room where I will be waiting. After you arrive I will reset the knob and toss it back to your secretary ... who will reset it to 2200 A.D and join us. I go first."

Jerry twisted the dial to 2200 A.D and stepped through the portal. He arrived where the robot stood slumped in a mass of tangled wires off to one corner of the room. Resetting the dial to 4168 he tossed it through the open doorway. A moment later the mechanic staggered through the door.

"What happened?" Jerry asked, helping him to a near-by bench.

"When you threw that knob back it hit me between my eyes. Be careful next time will you?" he replied, looking toward the robot. "Is that what I am to repair?"

"Yes. I see you have your bag. You may begin anytime you wish." Jerry stated, taking the knob from him and resetting it back to 4168.

This time he gently tossed the knob into the other time zone. A few minutes later the girl stepped into the room, clothes tattered and torn.

"What happened?" Jerry inquired as she sat on the bench, next to her employer.

"You shouldn't have thrown the knob so far. I spent a few minutes looking for that darn thing. I located it in some bushes that eventually tore my clothes before I could retrieve it. Is there any place around here I can get some clothing?" she asked, looking toward the hole in the wall through which Jerry had initially fallen.

"We will supply you with clothing," a voice replied, coming from behind the group.

Turning the girl exclaimed: "Who ... what are you?"

"I can answer," Jerry explained, turning to greet a familiar face. "He is Silob Emos ... Criminal of Vulcan II! How did you find us?"

"Who do you think helped Mr. Warbow build the time knob and time room? Who devised a system where I could monitor anyone or anything which trespasses the time zone? Who do you think made your robot blow its stack so you would venture into the future to find a repairman? Me! Now get moving. You are all my prisoners!" Silob stated, raising his spear above his head.

From all corners of the room Oosags and Flat-Racians swarmed around them. Several Oosags grabbed Jerry and quickly bound him with ropes. Some Flat-Racians grabbed the girl and bound and gagged her, while other fought the mechanic. When all three were subdued they were hung between two poles and hoisted to the backs of several Spidemen who had been silently cowering in a ceiling corner since Silob had entered

the room. As they walked the tunnel, having been given a rough ride up the flight of stairs, Silob came close to Jerry.

"Thought you could get away with murdering Nitro, did you? Well, we shall see about that! I shall have your robot used as scrap in my laboratory. He will be melted down into some equipment I will make for your benefit ... which will hold your life in its construction. You see, if you can solve the problem put to you by the machine you will have the choice of life or death ... life in prison as a slave, or death in the smoke house! Ha ... ha ... ha!"

"If my hands were free! I'd show you who would end up in the smoke house!" Jerry roared, tugging at his bonds.

"So ... it is a test of strength you desire? Well, you shall have that as well. You shall be the main event at the Vulcan II National Tournament of Champions. We shall see what entertainment you provide us. If you manage to survive the tournament, which I gravely doubt, you will still face your sentence with my machine." Silob replied, as he slapped Jerry in the face and moved toward the head of the procession.

Jerry found himself sitting on the edge of his stone bunk thinking of Vickina. Silob Emos had placed him in a cell a few days before. Silob had told him this was part of the treatment given to all contestants who entered the Annual Tournament of Champions. Each contestant was placed in a cell for three days before entering the tournament. He had been given a suit of armor and was entered into the main tournament which would begin at any moment. He could hear the announcer, an Oosag, as it told millions of representatives from all over the surface of the coming event.

"The main event will now take place. As you are aware, our great leader ... Silob Emos ... has single handedly captured this criminal Jerry Hawks. He is to be placed on trial after this event ... if he survives that is! As you know, the main event will be the 'Dance of the Three Deaths'. Coming from the extreme Northern end of the arena will enter this criminal ... Jerry Hawks. Coming from the Southern end will be his opponent ... the Green Mytar! The main event will be about to begin. Prepare yourselves for a fight extraordinaire!" the announcer exclaimed and then stepped down from the announcers box and walked over to the exit, departed the arena.

Hearing a noise Jerry looked into the corridor beyond the bars of his cell. Advancing down the corridor were five guards.

"Aren't taking any chances of me missing the tournament are they?" he said to himself as the cell door opened.

Three of the Holeyman came in and shackled him with chains. Then they pushed him in front as they exited the cell. Two Holeyman in front and three behind they took him to a dressing room off the North entrance to the arena. Here he was dressed in armor the guards had taken from his cell. To Jerry

the armor seemed light, but watching the guards lift it seemed like it weighed a ton.

Once dressed his chains were removed and he was given a short sword and sent into the arena. At the far end a Oosag was pushed in. It was taller than most Oosags he had encountered. It was wider and heavier set. It started advancing, shield and spear held high. He advanced to meet his oncoming foe.

As he was walking he formed a plan on how he was to defeat this opponent. When he was less than two yards from him he ran forward, sword swinging high in the air, aiming for its middle. The Oosag, taken by surprise, was soon thrashing about on the ground in pain. Not pausing in his advance he quickly stepped to the side of the arena and jumped the seven feet to the judges stand where he had spotted Silob watching.

Stunned by the unfolding events Silob could not avoid the slash of the sword as Jerry swung at his head. He avoided getting his head cut off by ducking at the last instant, taking the blow to his shoulder instead. Blood spurting from his shoulder Silob managed a standing position and called to the guards ... who had rushed to aid the Oosag in the center of the arena. As Silob waited the guards return he took up his sword and started fending the blows Jerry was delivering.

"You shall pay for that my friend," Silob said, avoiding a swift upper cut.

"It will have been well worth it. Remember: 'While I live, I think'. You may torture me until the twin suns turn green, but I will always remember I did this to you and smile in satisfaction." Jerry replied breaking through Silob's defense one more time and dealing him a blow to his head. The force sent Silob reeling over the edge of and into the arena.

While several guards came rushing to his aid Jerry jumped into the horrified crowd and became lost to the prying eyes of the guards. The Oosags and Flat-Racians surrounding him made no effort to conceal him. The crowd was so thick even the slightest movement forced others over the protective railing and into the arena where guards after picking up their ruler and helping him from the arena had released several Lebers.

Jerry made his way toward the Eastern exit, where the forest lie to cover his escape. Arriving at the exit he drove his sword into the abdomen of one of the three guards that had been sent to guard it. He slugged another and pushed the third out of his way as he broke into a run toward the wooded area.

The guard that had been pushed aside regained his feet and was soon on Jerry's trail, yelling for other guards. Splitting into groups of three the guards set out in search armed with disintegrator guns and Freezer-ray pistols. It was the second group which entered the forest that picked up Jerry's trail. Not because Jerry had tried erasing his footprints with a bush but because the scent he had left behind.

When the Oosags found the trail they raced back to the

entrance to the forest and reported to the main leader which way it lead. The leader told them to return and keep tracking until they had located Jerry. They were to capture and return him to the arena, unharmed. The leader stressed that he should remain unharmed.

Inside the forest Jerry made his way toward the river. At first he had began brushing away his steps with a bush, but after a while heard guards entering the forest behind and pressed on at greater speed. No sooner had he stopped erasing his trail then he had come upon the river. Seeing a log on the ground he pushed it into the water and climbed on top. The inside of the log had been so rotted that he fell through into the hollow where he lie for a few moments. Poking his head above the debris he quickly pulled it back seeing several hundred Oosags standing on the shore watching him float downstream, frantically waving for him to come ashore.

Inside the log he could hear the Oosags conversing on shore. He was not sure of their drift as he only understood a smattering of the language. He was sure they had given him up for dead for one reason or another as their chattering grew faint. He ventured a look beyond the rim of the log.

At first he could not believe his eyes. All around, as far as the eye could see, were beautiful women clad only in skirts made from long grass which grew around the edge of the lake the log had drifted into. Some were sitting in the shade of trees that dipped branches so low they touched the ground. The trees had no leaves but were more like vines which fitted so close together at the top of the tree it formed a solid sheet. Guiding the log, by the use of a stick he had found floating in the lake, he made his way to shore.

CHAPTER ELEVEN
(Paradise Island)

Once on the island Jerry felt no longer in control. Some strange force had drained his will. He started moving toward the nearest woman. She looked into his eyes and began tearing what remaining clothing she had from her body. His eyes grew wide as she revealed her rounded features. He sat down in the grass. The woman, looked down at him, letting her eyes rove slowly over his body, now and then passing over certain features.

Having her fill she sat next to him and began unfastening his shirt. He watched helpless as she removed his shirt and sandals. Summoning what will he had left he knocked her away and stood up. The woman, lying in the pile of her own clothes, began dressing. He looked about. The other women had begun leaving and were entering a dark cavern. He followed the line. Inside he was rendered unconscious by a blow from behind. Two women carried him to the blackest portion of the cave.

* * * * * * * * *

"Well? Where is he?" Silob asked, raising his head from the bed he had rested on for the past three days.

The Oosag standing in front replied:

"He is dead, sir. He has fallen into the river of no return."

Rising to a sitting position Silob inquired:

"The 'River of No Return'?"

"Nothing which travels the river has ever returned. I knew of a Oosag who ventured downstream. She never came back. It is said her remnants were found floating upstream," replied the Oosag, helping Silob to his feet.

"Is there anyone who knows where the river leads? Are there any places where a fugitive might hide? An island? A cave?" Silob asked, walking over to an instrument which projected a picture of the forest surrounding the arena.

"There is one island. The island where the women dwell. They are its sole inhabitants. They are of the same species as the fugitive which has escaped us," the Oosag said, pointing to a large mass on the screen, which now changed to a close-up of the river.

"Tell me more about this island of women ..." Silob said, stroking his long, gray beard.

"A strange power takes control of every living thing once it touches the soil on that island. It releases its hold during the night, when the women fall asleep. A dark shadow comes during the last moments of light and leads the women into a cave. Here they are chained and remain until morning when the dark form returns, unchains them and leads them to the surface. Once in the light the women once again fall under that influence," the Oosag explained, as details of the island

were revealed on the screen.

"Where on this island did you say this cave was?" Silob asked, turning toward the Oosag.

"I wouldn't have the faintest idea. I have never been there."

"If you have never been there, how can you tell me so much about it?" Silob asked, suspicious.

"The entire upper portion of the planet know these facts about the island of no return. The lower portions of the planet remain ignorant of its existence ... for this reason only can they be called fortunate," the creature replied, opening the door for Silob.

"I have a hunch our prisoner is somewhere on that island. I will go alone. First, I will have a helmet manufactured so that when I am on the island the power shall not penetrate my brain. Now go. I command thee. Go to whoever ranks highest in this region. Tell them to make me that helmet, then report back at once. Go." Silob commanded, waving a finger at the door which exited the arena into the forest.

* * * * *

Jerry awoke to the clanking of chains. Opening his eyes he saw he was chained to the wall of a cave. It was dimly illuminated so he could not see the entrance a few feet to his left. What did catch his attention was a woman removing her grass skirt. He looked about and saw he was the only male in the cave. He knew somehow he was the only male on the island! The locks securing the chains were simple in construction and he was soon free of them. He started feeling along the surface of the cave to locate the entrance. He encountered a woman. Startled, she sat up.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"Jerry Hawks."

"Oh ... You are that MAN!"

"I came a little while ago. Tell me what kind of island am I on?"

"The island of luxury. Does it not prove that to you? It offers what anyone would want. You may eat all the food you want, make anything you wish. Do anything you want," came her reply. Then, after a slight hesitation: "There is one problem ... these luxuries are only granted after you have fallen under the influence of the THING controlling this island. That will happen after a few days. If you succumb to the power upon touching the island, you are set free within moments. If you do not and resist, as we have found, you are either destroyed or given special treatment until you do fall victim to the power."

"What about yesterday? Were you under ITS influence?" Jerry asked hesitantly.

"When a newcomer sets foot on the island we are placed under the influence. I see daylight returning. You will again

be placed under ITS control. Although you will appear to have regained full control ... you will still be under its influence. You had better return to your cell. Hurry," the woman explained as she clambered back to her cell.

"One more thing ..." Jerry started. "What is your name?"

"Here we do not have names. My number is XVI. Now hurry ... back to your cell before IT sees you are missing," the girl replied, giving Jerry a boost with her foot.

He no sooner reached his cell when daylight flooded the cave. Everywhere he looked he could see women fixing their grass skirts around their hips. Some combed their hair with what looked like fish-bones. Suddenly the cave grew dark as a figure appeared at its entrance.

Adjusting to the darkness Jerry saw the figure was a dark shadow with no form, nor body. It advanced toward him. He looked about. The women were sitting in their cells, motionless. Throwing off his chains he rushed toward the shadow. As he approached within a few feet of it he was knocked to the floor by some invisible force.

Picking himself off the floor he looked the shadow over ... he noticed something that caused him to wonder. At its center was a point of light. It radiated in every direction, forming a star-like effect. He saw what he was up against. A force field from another dimension. But which dimension? He was not long in learning as the darkness enveloped him. A second before it surrounded him it became very bright and then dark again. The creature, as the women saw it, departed the cave.

In the split second that darkness engulfed him Jerry was transported from the cool surrounding of the cave to the hot and stuffy inside of a building. One of many tall structures of a magnificent city. The one to which he was transported was of great interest to him. He was transported to the fifth dimension and was in a building overlooking an island in the center of a small lake. Strapped to a chair and placed on the floor outside the building he was overlooking the island. The blindfold, which had been placed over his eyes the moment he was whisked into the fifth dimension, was now removed. He turned in the chair to see who, or what, had removed it. He saw the back of a girl disappearing through the door that led onto the terrace.

He focused his eyes below. He could see the river flowing into the lake. He saw the island he had been on. It was busy now. The girls were playing joyfully on the banks of the river ... some even bathing. He suddenly realized 1) he was devoid of clothing and 2) he seemed suspended in mid-air above the island. The second problem he solved by looking closely at the bottom of the chair. It was implanted in a groove, which was reflecting in the sunlight, in the clear floor.

He turned as he heard a noise from behind. Walking out onto the clear floor came a gorgeous blonde. At first he

failed to notice she too was devoid of clothing. He recognized her as the woman who had first discovered him when he had landed on Vulcan II. Cilma Vul!

"Cilma!" he exclaimed, as she came over to stand in front of him.

"Please restrain your selfish ambitions, Mr. Hawks. There is no Cilma on our registry," she replied as she sat on his lap. "We brought you here for one purpose. To keep you away from those unsoiled women on the island. As you might have guessed, you are no longer in your dimension, nor are you on the planet Vulcan II. You may be here indefinitely. We must warn you ... escape means certain death. You shall be unstrapped momentarily. Until then ... is there anything you wish to clarify?"

"Yes. What do you propose doing?"

"That all depends upon what your reactions will be." she replied, gently lifting herself from his lap and making her way to the partition.

"Now what do you mean by that?" he inquired, trying to rise.

"You shall see," she replied as she vanished behind the wall.

The ropes which held him to the chair were released and he was once again free. At first he did not know what to do. He wanted to find a way out ... he knew that much for sure. The only thing holding him back were the words the woman had spoke before leaving: 'It all depends on your reactions.'. What did it mean? Were they testing him? Was he a guinea pig? A white mouse? Was he to be set free if he passed? or killed if he failed? For the next hour he was like a criminal being interrogated by nosy detectives. The main interrogator, Adyl, was most inquisitive. If the situation were reversed, Jerry thought, he would be doing the same thing.

They asked all sorts of questions. Some were so simple that a person with half a brain could have responded correctly. He was glad when the investigation ended and was escorted to a room where he was to rest. It was equipped with all the necessities. He rested for a few moments and then peered into the hallway. When he was sure there was no one present he snuck out and started down the corridor.

He had not traveled far when he was stopped by a hand on his shoulder. A feminine hand. He turned and followed her into a large room. Here she made him sit beside her on a large bed.

"Who are you?" he inquired.

"I am Adyl. The one who questioned you. You should know better than to attempt escape. There is no escape. Go back to your room and rest for the next session of learning," she replied as she got up to open the door.

"Wait." he said, slowly rising. "You haven't told me where I am nor what I am doing here."

"I suppose you should know ... you are on Vulcan II, but in the fifth dimension ... space. What you saw when you first

arrived is where you actually are at this moment ... except you are moving so fast the island takes on a different shape. The place you arrived originally is called the speed-up room. It is where things of slower speed are brought up to our speed. Do you understand?" she explained, sitting back on the edge of the bed.

"Yes." he responded.

"Why were you brought? You possess great strength. In the few centuries we have existed in the fifth dimension we have been breeding fighters for a colossal fight with a male. Now that we have one, and have tested his mental abilities, we will set him down in the arena to fight her. You must realize by now my guards are waiting to take you to the arena. You must go," she said, pointing toward the door.

Once out of the room, he was whisked off down the corridor to a large ovaloid door. It opened at a command from one of the guards and he was pushed into an arena crowded with females. At the opposite end stood a half-naked woman brandishing a highly polished spear. He was given several arrows and a bow ... these he threw to the ground and trampled, looking at the crowd. There was a loud roar of glee as the woman threw down her spear and advanced toward him.

Turning he ran to the side of the arena in time to miss being hit by her massive fists as she swung at him. He fell over a small rock and ended up flat on his face as he tried to run from the woman. She was atop him in moments ... pounding her fists.

He sprang to his feet to face his opponent and swung a hard right to her abdomen. She fell to the ground, silent. Thinking the game over he started back toward the ovaloid door. Just then several ferocious animals were set loose in the arena.

Two rushed straight for the fallen woman, the other toward him. The woman was devoured within seconds. The three animals were almost upon him as he saw another door open and more animals shoot into the arena.

The moment Silob stepped onto the island he felt a strange sensation in his head. Although he wore a special helmet he still felt the pulling. It pulled him to the nearest woman. He looked at her, tore off the dress she had been wearing and started to fondle her. Then remembering his own mission, which was more important, stopped fondling her.

"Has there been another male on this island?" he asked, picking her up from the ground.

"Just this morning the THING came and took him away," she replied, picking up her dress.

"What kind of THING?" he asked, pushing her over to a tree.

"It was shadowy. It ate the other male and then disappeared. I do not understand why you have not fallen under its control," she said as she struggled within his grasp.

"See this helmet? It was designed to keep other minds from probing mine. You know where this THING took him? I do not believe a shadow such as you describe could devour anything not in the same dimension." Silob replied, releasing his hold on the girl and walking toward the entrance to the cave ... but a short distance from where he had been standing.

"But I saw it with my own eyes," she complained.

"What you saw was an illusion." Silob corrected as he stepped inside. "Now ... where did this thing make him disappear?"

"Where you are standing," she insisted pointing to a blackened spot in the soil.

Silob examined the spot and stood up. He faced the girl.

"This shadow-creature. Did it have a point of light at its center?"

"Why ... now that I think of it. Yes. I guess it did."

"Just as I thought. You had a visitor from the fifth dimension." he stated, sitting on one of the nearer logs.

"I have? Who or what was it?" she asked sitting across from him.

"The visitor, my ignorant friend, was your shadow."

"Oh? ... But what is this 'Fifth' dimension you talk of?"

"You know of the first four? No? ... Well they are: length, depth, height and time. The fifth is spacial. You still don't understand do you? Well, it's like this: suppose we are in the fifth dimension. Everything would seem as it does now except you would be looking down on this island. You would be walking on air. You can go onto the island inhabited by creatures of the dimension known as the NIL dimension ... or normal dimension. You would be able to talk to the inhabitants but would never get a response. You could touch them but they would have no knowledge of this unless you continued for a long time. Then you would no longer be in the fifth dimension but back in the NIL dimension. Now do you understand? ... No? Well forget I ever tried to explain it!" Silob screamed as he stood and started walking around the cave.

The girl left the cave. A short time later Silob turned around and discovered the shadow where she had been standing. It crept along the side of the cave. By the time he discovered it, it was too late. He had been transported into the fifth dimension.

The moment Silob arrived he was up and out of the chair before he realized he was devoid of clothing. The ongoing fight in the arena left no one in the transportation chamber. The attendant had inadvertently left the transporter engaged while attending the fight themselves.

In the hall beyond the transporter room Silob made his way to the arena. He began hearing voices. He arrived at the time the second wave of animals were released into the arena. Momentarily distracted by the newcomer, they veered toward him.

Jerry saw this and turned back to his own predicament. He had managed to elude the first charge through speed. The second charge of animals bore him to the floor of the arena. The other two animals, seeing their meal going to the third, jumped the beast and rolled over and over fighting it for the meal.

Free of immediate danger Jerry looked to the opposite side of the arena and saw Silob had finished slaughtering several beasts himself. He made his way toward the door once again.

Silob, by this time, had taken care of his foes and was advancing on Jerry. Seeing him, Jerry started running toward the door. He was within inches when Silob caught and tripped him. Picking himself off the arena floor Jerry swung a hard right to Silob's chin, knocking him off balance. This was all he needed to get through the door.

Jerry swung the door inward, pushing several young women against the side of the building. He ran through the corridor until reaching the door he knew led to the woman he sought. With Silob close behind he entered and locked the door. The woman was reclining peacefully in her luxurious bed a few feet from the door. He slapped the woman repeatedly until she awoke.

"Who? ... what? ... where? ... oh, it's you. And I see you managed to find your friend as well ..." she said, indicating Silob.

"Him? a friend! Never. He just happened to pop into the arena at a most opportune moment. I want you to transport me back to my own time zone. If you don't ..." Jerry threatened, raising his hand again.

The girl looked at Silob. She smiled and replied: "I will transport you as you wish. But HE has to stay."

"It is done. But you must transport me, not to the island, but to somewhere there is plenty of foliage." Jerry returned, remembering his previous experiences.

"It shall be done. Come, we must not waste a second. The time portal is limited to a few hours each day. We are in the last hour already," she said, opening the door and running down the corridor.

While following after the woman Jerry glanced behind him. It was fortunate he did. Silob had managed to locate a knife and was poised to thrust it into his back. He caught the knife as it descended, wresting it from his grasp. Silob screamed in pain. The knife clattered to the floor. Jerry dove after it. Silob placed a foot on his hand. As the pressure was released Jerry looked up and saw a group of women restraining Silob. One helped him to his feet.

"So we have a fight on our hands, do we? Well, we shall see what we can do about that ..." the woman exclaimed as the two were separated.

The girl Jerry had raced after reappeared and ran into her room. Jerry and Silob, now bound with rope, were taken to

another room not far from the entrance to the arena. Inside the ropes were removed and they were taken to opposite corners where they found several weapons. They knew what they were to do. It was to be a fight to the death with the victor going free.

CHAPTER TWELVE
(To The Rescue)

Chains were placed about Jerry and Silob's ankles, then attached to a pole in the center of the room. The light dimmed and the pole illuminated. Silob picked up one of the weapons lying on the floor and looked at it. Examining a different weapon Jerry pointed it toward Silob and pressed the button on its side. Silob screamed as a bright spot began appearing on his chest. It grew larger and larger. Jerry moved the beam from Silob to his chain. The links began to glow. They became white and melted. Jerry stepped toward the door, weapon in hand.

Silob had picked up a similar weapon from the floor. He pointed it at his own chain and pressed the button. The links soon parted and the chain lay on the floor at his feet. He threw the weapon away and retrieved his original one. He pointed it at Jerry, who was trying to melt the lock on the door. Jerry fell to the floor, clutching his head. Silob quickly exited through the open door.

Outside he made his way down the corridor to the room of the woman Jerry had made promise to help them escape. She was resting when he entered. She quickly jumped to her feet. Silob pushed her back onto the bed.

"You will help me escape? ... won't you!" Silob commanded, twisting her arm behind her.

"If that is what you wish. But the other must remain," she responded, a smile crossing her face.

"No! He must also escape ... won't he?!" he replied, twisting the arm once again.

"If you say so ... but ... "

"No buts. Now tell your guards to get Jerry and bring him to this place you transport us from and hurry." Silob said, releasing his hold.

Walking over to the door she poked her head into the corridor. "Bring the white haired man to me in the transport room," she commanded and watched the guards leave.

Silob followed as he and the girl made their way to the 'Transport' room. To insure his safety he made her walk in front, gripping an arm behind her back. They traveled several flights of stairs before stopping. She said they had reached the floor where the transport room was located. When asked why she hesitated she replied the room was heavily guarded and she doubted if she could enter successfully.

"Let's cross that bridge as we get to it. Now move!" Silob replied, pushing the girl ahead of him.

The words had no sooner fallen from his mouth when he encountered three women guarding the entrance to the room. Only two were armed. Jerry was seated on a stool just within the room. Silob looked at the unarmed guard. Twisting the arm of his captive a little harder he indicated the guards:

"Do you think you can persuade those two to come behind

this partition? Make some excuse so they rush over here. I will take care of the rest. You take care of the remaining guard."

"I can but try," she replied as she stepped into view. Looking behind her she pointed and shouted: "A man is behind me! I will take your posts."

The two women looked behind her at the bend in the corridor. Silob poked his head around the corner. The two dropped their weapons and ran toward him. The girl took up one of the dropped weapons and fired it at the remaining guard, then went to where Silob was. She found him atop one of the women. The other was out cold. He finished off the second woman and she lay motionless as well. He pushed himself away and stood to meet her gaze. There was gleam in his eye. He licked his lips as he reached for her. She pointed toward the open room. He looked and saw the way was clear. He looked back at her and then to the room. He decided it was safer to try the room.

Inside the room Silob was amazed. Electrical equipment lined the walls from one end to the other. Five women operated the machines. Two were administering some sort of fluid to the motionless Jerry.

"Transport us back," Silob commanded, again grasping the girls arm.

"Join your friend," she replied, motioning to the chair next to Jerry.

Silob did as he was bid but kept her with him for insurance. The two women tending Jerry took a belt and secured him with it. Silob replaced the belt around both him and the girl. He told her to give the directions for starting their journey back.

The lights in the room dimmed as the switch was thrown. Silob closed his eyes for a brief second. In that moment he was thrown from the chair and onto the ground. When he opened his eyes he found himself lying on the ground surrounded by tall grass. The girl lie beneath him and Jerry was several feet in front. He rolled off the girl and stood up. He could see the gate to the arena where he and Jerry had fought. One of the guards outside the arena started running toward them.

"Take him to the prison and chain him. Take the girl to my room and leave her there. Get a detail of Oosags and outfit them with the special helmets I had made. Take them to the island. Bring the women to my quarters. Bring only those which will not bear children. Now go!" Silob commanded, breaking into a run for the entrance which led to his private laboratory.

Inside his lab he prepared a liquid and drank it, blacking out momentarily. As he regained consciousness he found he once again was in better spirits. The door to his room opened. The girl was brought in and deposited on his bed. The three Oosags that carried her walked out and closed the door behind them. He walked over to her and began running his

fingers up and down her sides. Her eyes fluttered and she raised herself on the pillow. Looking at Silob and the clothes he was wearing, a frown crossed her brow.

"What are they?" she asked, sitting, moving her fingers through the material.

"These are clothes ... only worn by ... er ... um ... a commoner. You must never wear them, unless you venture beyond the walls of this arena. Out there you will need clothes. If you do not wear clothing beyond the arena you will be torn apart by the great Lebers roaming the countryside. You must report to me each night. For it is here that you must sleep. You shall always be safe from the dangers outside when you stay here with me," Silob stated as he threw the girl to the bed.

She seemed to know what he was after as she puckered her lips as he kissed her. He had just begun slipping his hands beneath her waist as an Oosag ran into the room shouting that the prisoner had awoken. He release his hold on the girl and followed as it led him down to the cells. The girl sat up, a puzzled look on her face.

"So you awaken at last, Mr. Hawks." Silob said, gazing down through the bars in the floor.

"Oooww, my head. What happened? ... Oh, now I remember. I was melting the lock of the room when something struck me from behind. Since there were only the two of us I assume it was you?" Jerry asked as he tried to rise from the floor.

"Not quite. I first freed myself from the chain and then fired another weapon at you. You fell unconscious and I escaped. I made the girl you met in the arena take us to our own time zone. She is here now. Would you like to see her? No? ... Good. I will bring her anyway." Silob stated as he sent a messenger to fetch the girl.

"What do you intend?" Jerry asked, looking at the face grinning down. "You will find out soon enough, my friend." Silob replied as he looked down the corridor. "Ah ... I see your friend has come to visit."

The girl appeared above Jerry, naked as the first time he had seen her. Legs apart she looked into the grinning face of Silob. She saw him staring downward. She looked down and saw Jerry looking up. She saw he was devoid of clothing and had been secured to the floor with rope some ten to twelve feet below where she was standing. Silob looked at the Oosag off to one side. He nodded and it pulled a lever on the wall. The lights in the corridor were extinguished. Jerry heard the cell door open. Something soft landed on him. Warm arms encircled his neck. Cold feet were pushed up under his armpits. He felt a pressure on his mid-section. The pressure stopped as he felt toes digging into his armpits. The pressure on his mid-section decreased and then increased at regular intervals.

He tried to concentrate by closing his eyes. Using all his strength he managed to break free of his chains. Pushing

the girl from him he released the chains securing his feet. The girl jumped on top again and tried to complete what she had started. He threw her to the wall once again. He kept throwing her to the wall each time she tried to straddle him. She was so desperate she managed to pin him one more time. This time he threw her against the wall with so much force he heard a distinctive CR-R-R-A-CK.

He proceeded to climb the wall. He stopped momentarily at the top to throw back the cell door and climb out onto the floor. As his eyes adjusted to the darkness he made out several forms around him. One was the guard which had extinguished the lights. The other Silob. It was toward the latter that he turned.

Having spent five hours in darkness in the cell due to Silob it was easy to vent his frustration on him. He knew immediately after launching himself at the figure he had been tricked again. He stood up, leaving the dark form lying on the floor. It did not move ... neither did the guard. He walked over to the guard and pushed the figure away from the switch. It fell to the floor with a soft T-T-HUM-P. He turned the switch on. On the floor two figures stuffed with soft material to give them shape. He walked to the cell and looked down at the girl. She was gone ... the cell barren. He looked down the corridor. It also was empty. He walked down the corridor until he was in the arena outside. It was deserted.

He looked skyward. It was slightly overcast but the double suns were still able to penetrate the cloud covering. Their golden rays shot through the clouds in many places. Some of the beams shooting into the arena seemed strange as they illuminated the center. They were not soft yellow like the others but greenish. He followed the beam upward and detected a tiny dot in the center of the cloud bank.

Everywhere he looked Jerry could not hear, see, nor detect any form of life. He returned to the laboratory in the main building. He found all equipment had been removed and the room was barren. The only thing left was a scrap of paper lying on the floor. He picked it up.

MR HAWKS, YOU ARE DOOMED. SINCE I FIND NO OTHER WAY TO RID MYSELF OF YOU, I AM FORCED TO DESTROY MY ARENA ... WITH YOU IN IT. YOU NEED NOT ATTEMPT ESCAPE. ALL EXITS REMAIN BLOCKED BY FORCE FIELDS. THE BOMB UNDER THE GROUND IN THE CENTER OF THE ARENA WILL EXPLODE WITHIN MINUTES AFTER IT HAS BEEN ACTIVATED BY A GREEN LIGHT, WHICH YOU HAVE NO DOUBT ENCOUNTERED. I LEAVE YOU WITH THIS: THE MOMENT YOU ARE DESTROYED I WILL MARRY VICKINA, WHO IS CAPTIVE IN EMAN ON WOLS-EGA.

SILOB

Jerry tore up the note and rushed back to the arena. The area where the green light shone was starting to smoulder. He rushed over to the spot. He saw a black box in the center with

a metal ring. The green light was coming from the box. He looked skyward. The black spot was growing larger and larger. As he reached for the black box his hands were scorched when they entered the beam. The box took on an orange glow. He blew on his hands to cool them.

He stood and started walking toward the stands at the edge of the arena then started running. The wood parted beneath his weight. Picking up the broken boards he quickly ran to the center of the arena. Using them as claws he was able to lift the box a few inches from the ground. Although the box was light it fell to the ground after a few moments, boards burnt to a crisp. He ran to the stands again and retrieved more boards. These he placed in the path of the green ray. The boards began smoldering but the object in the sky started descending. It fell to the ground a few feet from the black box. Dropping the burnt boards he went to examine it.

The green light no longer operated. The object he was looking at was a balloon. Attached to it, a basket. In it was another black box, cooler than the first. He picked it up and carried it to where the other one was resting. The two looked identical. He raised the catch on the one he was holding. A bright light shone through the crack between the upper and lower compartments. He opened the lid an inch and then closed it with a scream of pain. The wrist of the hand holding the box was seared. A scar an inch long showed where the light from the box had touched. He relatched the box and started walking toward one of the exits.

As he neared the exit there was a brilliant flash that blinded him for a second. Putting the box down he continued walking through the exit. On the opposite side he discovered the machine making the force field had blown up. Now it was nothing more than melted metal. He looked behind as he heard a noise. The box in the arena had come back to life and had located the other box. He raced toward the forest.

Inside the forest he continued running even as he heard the thunderous roar from behind. He turned and saw a huge cloud billowing upward above the arena. He was knocked to the ground as a great wind swept over him. His head struck a nearby log and he lost consciousness.

As he awoke he found trees had been knocked down all around him. Behind him he saw what was left of the arena. The walls were blown completely flat and there was a large hole where the sandy portion of the arena had been. Nothing remained of the laboratory Silob had constructed. To the west he detected a small fire. To the east a small river winding through overturned rocks and felled trees. He knew the river emptied into Lake Ekal. He turned toward the river.

He fashioned a small raft from several of the felled trees and vines he collected. Pushing it into the water he climbed aboard and started his journey downstream toward Eman, on the edge of Lake Ekal.

"Your friend should have been blown up by this time. Now you shall marry me!" Silob said as he paced in front of Vickina.

"I wouldn't marry you if you were sole survivor of this god forsaken planet!" she screamed, thrusting her foot onto his as he walked past her.

Silob turned and spoke to the woman seated beside her.

"She should know since Mr. Hawks is dead I am the ONLY man on this planet. What would you do in her place, Namu?"

"Why, I would marry you, of course. But you promised you would marry me," the girl returned.

"But I will. After I have been assured there is nothing left of her friend and my mortal enemy: Jerry Hawks. You, my beauty," Silob stated, taking Vickina by her hand, "will join Namu in her room. Now go. I will pay a visit to you two later. Right now I see a messenger come to inform me of what he saw after the explosion." Walking over to the messenger Silob continued, "Well?"

"We combed the arena for remnants but discovered nothing. The forest was destroyed for miles around the arena. Your laboratory was completely demolished. Do you wish us to search further?" the messenger inquired as he handed Silob a photo of the arena.

Taking the photo Silob replied:

"You need look no further. No one could live through that blast. Of this I am convinced. With the force field covering the exits there was no place to escape. The bomb exploded minutes after we left. Your job is complete. Return to your quarters and rest."

"As you say, oh great one," the messenger replied as he left the room.

Silob took the photo over to a machine resting on a table. He inserted it into a slot in the side of the device, threw a switch and the lights were extinguished. He threw another switch and an image appeared on the wall. It was the arena. He could see the walls had been blown down and how far the line of felled trees extended. Squinting he detected a spec far within the line of devastated trees. He flipped another switch and the image was enlarged. He was able to distinguish the outline of a man on a raft in the river. He flipped the lights back on and went to a place along the wall where a screen was. Looking at the screen he pushed a button. An Oosag appeared in the screen.

"You want us, oh humble one?" the image inquired.

"Yes. Mr. Hawks has not been eliminated! It appears he may be coming after all. Double the guard on all entrances to the city. Start searching the River Myre. I believe that is where he intends to enter. It is the only river which runs into Lake Ekal from here. Now get those guards moving!" Silob commanded as the image disappeared from view.

"What should I do, Vickina? You tell me I must not go around with my body devoid of things you call clothing and yet Silob wishes I remain in that state. What would you suggest?" Namu complained as she seated herself on the soft bed.

"I suggest you wear clothes. Not because it is the right of any self-respecting woman to do so, but if you don't Silob will take advantage of you ... I know that is what you would like, but you are supposed to resist him ... he will expect that. If you don't he will do to you what he has to every woman he has tired of ... he kills them!" Vickina replied as she sat next to the girl.

"Well, I do not want him to tire of me too quickly ... if ever. I think I will do as you have said. You must show me where all these things go though," Namu replied as she held up a variety of clothing.

"Will do, but as we do this you must also help me with a plan of escape," Vickina said, helping her with the panties.

Jerry quickly dove into the water as he saw the Oosags appearing downstream. He let the current carry him downstream until a bush hid him from view. Uprooting the bush he continued floating past the group and onto Lake Ekal itself. Behind he saw the guards had seen the raft and pulled it ashore. After examining it he saw them look up and then downstream. They saw the bush he was clinging to. One guard hesitated and then began running in his direction.

Jerry left the bush floating on the surface while he dove beneath and swam toward the dim light below. He knew the light came from Eman, the underwater city. He saw the guards at the entrance had been doubled but decided he would risk discovery.

He swam toward the entrance, forced the air-lock open and entered. Closing the door he waited as pressure began to equalize. Once the air had stopped entering the chamber he opened the inner door and stepped onto the main street.

As it happened, he managed to enter through the fish-people side ... where there were hardly any guards, only Fishmen. The Oosag and Flat-Racians never came within feet of the Fishmen as they feared them (they were known for eating Oosag and Flat-Racians anytime they were alone with either and the odds were in their favor).

Jerry encountered two guards and was rid of them with a few well placed punches. Using the main waterway, the one used by the Fishmen to travel about the city, he found himself in front of Silob's palace. There were ten guards, five on each side of the door leading to the main chamber. He swam to the rear. Here there were only three guards. Mighty Redmen, known throughout Vulcan II and Neerg for strength and fighting ability. He swam to the front and made his way to one of the clothing stalls in the city. Donned a set of clothing and a knife and started back toward the palace. He crawled on the outside of the waterway, hidden from the eyes of the guards.

Making it to the rear of the palace unseen he poked his

head above the barrier but was detected immediately by one of the Redmen. The guard ran toward him with a knife. Jerry removed the knife from his belt and met the charge at such an angle that he was propelled backward into the secondary waterway. He drank a few mouthfuls of water before rising to the surface, where the guard waited.

The guard swung at him with his knife but he was able to avoid the blow by ducking back into the water. As he resurfaced he leapt from the water and onto the waiting guard. They rolled around on the ground for a few minutes. He found the throat of the guard and started choking him. The other guards, who had been watching, now came to his aid.

One of the guards caught his legs and held them while the other fought to hold his hands. After subduing his first opponent he withdrew his knife and started tangling with the other two ... who, by this time, had gained a sufficient hold on him and were twisting each limb. He struck at the guard holding his left arm. The Redman fell away with a six inch gash along his arm. He looked at the second guard ... he was still twisting his legs. He brought his hand upward and prepared to sink the knife into the guards' back when the knife was removed from his grasp. He looked up and saw the first guard holding the knife.

Jerry threw the guard holding his feet from him and stood, facing the first guard. The guard swung at him with the knife, scraping his arm and creating a three inch gash. Jerry saw red and started swinging madly him. When he stopped swinging and the red had faded he saw both guards were lying on the ground. He picked up the knife and, wiping the blood from it, stuck it into the fold of his trousers near his shirt then went to the rear entrance and peered around the door.

Inside the palace he could see Silob seated on his throne in the center of the room. He opened the door and crept inside. Silently creeping up behind him he listened.

"But I tell you I saw him, your majesty," one guard was saying as he turned to leave.

"I tell you it would be impossible to get into the city unnoticed by the guards on the surface. Have one of the surface guards report to me at once. Now back to your post!" Silob commanded, raising his hand in warning.

As soon as the guard disappeared he crept out from behind the throne and knife in hand advanced on Silob. Catching him unprepared he held Silob at knifepoint.

"Where is she? If you have done anything to her, I'll ..." he said, pressing the knife against his throat.

"Done with who? Who are you talking about. There is no one here but you and me, Mr. Hawks," Silob replied, trying to remain innocent.

"You know exactly who I mean. Vickina ... you know, the woman you took hostage. Remember?" Jerry replied as he pressed the blade deeper into the throat.

"Oh ... er ... her. Well, she is in my personal bedroom

with Namu, the girl from the fifth dimension. I suppose you want to see her?" Silob asked, trying to get an edge.

"Well, that is what I came here for. Now move!" Jerry replied, pushing Silob in the general direction of the corridor.

Still at knifepoint Silob tried several times to thwart his plans for reaching Vickina by leading him to different rooms and saying they were the ones she would be in. After a few mistakes Silob wised up, after he had made a gash in his throat, and took him to where Vickina and Namu were staying. He pushed Silob into the room, fearing a trap. Seeing none he entered and found Vickina exiting from a bath.

"Jerry!" she exclaimed, running toward him.

"No, Vickina, stay back." he warned, trying to retain hold of Silob ... who was trying to escape through a secret tunnel in the wall.

He pulled at Silob's clothing but only succeeded in tearing them. Silob vanished into the wall. He tried to follow but found the tunnel closed. He looked at Vickina and Namu.

"We must hurry if we are to escape. Come," he said, looking at Vickina.

"What about her?" Vickina asked, looking toward Namu.

"I will stay and become the wife of Silob. You must hurry if you wish to escape. The guards have already been alerted," Namu replied, pointing to a light above the door.

"We leave then," Jerry returned as he and Vickina stepped through the door into the corridor.

He looked down the halls. At one end he could see guards gathering. At the other nothing. He turned their steps that way. As they rushed down the corridor he saw the Oosag and Redmen rushing after them. He lengthened his stride, as did Vickina. They reached the end of the corridor and turned the bend. No sooner had they rounded it when they heard the clank of weapons resounding in the corridor behind them.

He was faced with a critical decision as he waited for the guards to catch up. He could continue along the corridor and chance a leap across the canal that ran around the palace or he could wait and destroy the guards and then escape in one of Silob's flying crafts. He chose the latter.

One by one the guards rounded the corner. As they did he knocked them on their head and Vickina removed them from by dragging them farther into the corridor beyond. This worked for the Oosags and Flat-Racians but the Bluemen wised up after the first few moments and there were no sounds of a struggle. As one Blueman rounded the corner another came up behind Vickina and struck her on the head. The Blueman approached Jerry.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
(Freedom and Happiness)

As Jerry hit the Blueman in front he turned to see what was keeping Vickina from dragging that last Oosag down the corridor. He turned in time to see a blade descending on him. Ducking through the blueman's defense he landed a heavy punch to his opponent's abdomen. The Blueman slumped to the floor unconscious. Picking up Vickina's limp form Jerry slung her over his shoulder and ran toward the opposite end of the corridor. Here he headed for the room marked 'Air-Cars'. He stopped, propped her against the outside wall and opened the door a crack to peer into the room. There were many air-cars and only three Oosags guarding the fleet. Withdrawing his knife he crept into the room and hid behind one of the cars. He was about to board when one of the guards spotted him.

The Oosags advanced, knives drawn, dissolvo guns over their shoulders. Quickly climbing down from the air-car Jerry turned to meet them, knife prepared for throwing. At that moment there was a noise behind him. He turned. Vickina staggered into the room, clutching her head.

Looking beyond Jerry she screamed: "Watch out!"

Jerry turned to receive a cut to the side of his face. The knife continued its journey downward, grazing his shoulder before burying itself deep in his stomach. Withdrawing the blade he threw it at one of the Oosags. It fell, knife between the eyes. Another advanced, this one leveled the dissolvo gun at him. Jerry threw his own knife as the creature pressed the trigger. The creature swerved, in order to avoid the knife. In doing so its own ray hit the third guard standing behind Jerry. Jerry's knife buried itself deep within the Oosag and it also fell to the floor in agony. He went over and pulled the knife from the creature.

Vickina ran to Jerry and flung her arms about him. Jerry carried her to the air-car. Inside he lowered the canopy and started the engines. A few seconds before lift-off he glanced at the entrance to the room. Silob was standing there, dissolvo gun in hand. He pulled the trigger as Jerry lifted the air-card from the floor. The ray missed and dissolved part of the protective wall. Silob climbed into another air-car and took to the air a few seconds later.

As his air-car rose Silob detected a small dark object far to the South, he turned his craft toward it. Drawing a bead on it through the gunsight he fired. The object shot high into the air. Silob climbed three miles before he again caught sight of the ship. He could see he had hit and dissolved one of the fins. The ship was still climbing as he fired another round. The ship swerved to avoid the blast, but only succeeded in catching the beam head-on. It began spiraling downward. Silob watched as smoke poured from the tail section. Shortly it crashed into the forest far below. Silob descended to make a closer observation. He could see two figures scrambling

toward the mountains ... and safety.

Silob quickly landed and started after the two on foot. Dissolvo gun in hand he soon caught sight of the fugitives. Taking careful aim at the mountainside he pulled the trigger. The mountain rumbled and then an avalanche began rolling downward. As the two figures were buried beneath the rocks Silob returned to his air-car and headed back to his palace.

"Look, there's Silob!" Vickina shouted, pointing at the figure dismounting the air-car.

"Hurry. Toward the mountains," Jerry replied, starting at a run.

"Look," Vickina said, looking toward Silob. "He's aiming at the side of the mountain ... he fired. Avalanche!"

"Into the cave," Jerry said, pointing to the darkened entrance.

Inside Jerry threw himself over Vickina, to cover her from the small rocks and dirt that drifted into the cave. The landslide lasted but a few moments. As it stopped Jerry rose and looked at the entrance. It was blocked by debris. He looked to the depths of the cave. It was pitch black, but was the only way they had open. Vickina arose and followed him into the darkness.

Once their eyes were accustomed to the darkness they could see where they were going. They saw a patch of yellow at the far end of the cave. It filtered through the earth at the top of the cave. Jerry pushed his hand up through a crack, widening it. He could feel sand to the left and moisture to the right. He continued making the opening larger. Soon he was able to poke his head through then pulled himself up, then Vickina.

Together they set out toward the coast, and freedom. They had emerged on the edge of Lake Ekal. They had but to travel a short distance to reach freedom. This would be a short journey.

Turning toward Vickina Jerry said: "I love you."

Vickina flung her arms around his neck and drawing him closer, kissed him. He picked her up and carried her in his arms as the twin suns began completing their journey and started setting behind the mountains.

DICTIONARY AND WORDS USED IN VULCAN II SERIES****** RACES ******

BIRD MEN: sole inhabitants of the mountains on Vulcan II.
BLUE MEN: a race of creatures inhabiting the inside of Vulcan II.
EPATS: a race of beings on surface of Vulcan II.
FETTS: a race of beings on the isle of Serdnuh.
FISH MEN: sole inhabitants of the rivers and lakes on Vulcan II.
FLAT-RACIANS: a race of creatures inhabiting the inside of Vulcan II.
FRIG-OR-EY-ANS: (Mole Men)
HOLEY MEN: a race of creatures in the Valley of Lubbock.
KIOL'S: enemies of the Yud's who live on Oga.
LUFWA'S: slaves on Neerg.
MIND CREATURES: a race of creatures found on the surface of Vulcan II which thrive on thought vibrations picked up from passing creatures.
MOLE MEN: a race of creatures on the isle of Wols-Ega.
NORSELTS: cannibals which roam surface on Vulcan II.
OOSAGS: a race of creatures which inhabit the inside of Vulcan II.
PILTS: underground creatures on Wols-Ega island.
RED MEN: rulers on Neerg.
SPIDER MEN: scavengers and pirates of Neerg.
SURFACE PEOPLE: a race of people inhabiting surface of Vulcan II.
TETRAEGRA MEN: a race of men on Neerg.
YUD'S: a race of beings on Zurc.

****** PEOPLE ******

ANU: A Blue Man on the jury which convicted Jerry.
CILMA VUL: girl who first found Jerry in the Deserted Valley of Lubbock.
ESH: Shie's brother.
ETNAFELE: A Fish Man on the jury which convicted Jerry.
FUTNAT: operator of force-field machine.
GASLA: high priest of the underground.
JACK: radar operator on the Zutho.
JADTHU: high priest of the Mole Men.
JERRY HOWARD HAWKS: explorer from Jupiter. Main character in the books.
JOHN: man from Earth who crashed on Vulcan II. John P. Warbow, also known as the 'Time Master'.
JOJO: John's son.
KAS ESTAC: Jerry's Lufwa friend on Neerg, travel companion on Vulcan II.
KING LUNA: Anul (King of the Lufwa's). Also on the jury which sentenced Jerry in THE CRIMINAL OF VULCAN II.

KING SSEM: (King of the Spider Men), was one of the jury members which sentenced Jerry in THE CRIMINAL OF VULCAN II.

LAE: King who found Jerry on the Surface of Vulcan II.

LOOGEM: the sea beast.

LUZA: A Lufwa on the jury which convicted Jerry.

MALA: one of the Surface People who found John P. Warbow.

MALALL: John's daughter.

MIKE MCGUNNAHAN: the robot controller of the Zutho II.

MODNAR: a monster created by Nitro.

MODU: leader of the Fish Men.

NAMU: girl from the 5th dimension.

NARU: girl who helped Jerry escape from the underground city of Daor.

NARU: leader of prison Jerry was first held in on Neerg.

NEUB: Mole Man on the jury which convicted Jerry.

NICKINA: doctor from the Zutho.

NITRO: great scientist. Ruler of Eman, a city in Lake Ekal.

SHIE: John's female helper.

SI EKIM: monster Nitro created to kill Surface People.

SILOB EMOS: great underground leader on Vulcan II. Also the greatest criminal of Vulcan II.

SKREX DIPUTS: inventor of the rocket engine run by light beams.

SOMAL: Flat_Racian on the jury which convicted Jerry.

SRAES GOLITAC: King of the Flat-Racians.

TA: girl Jerry fell in love with. Surface woman. Helped Jerry escape.

ULIOP: a Spider Man instructor from the N.E.C.

VAL DEFER: a top scientist on Neerg. A Red Man.

VICKINA: queen on Vulcan II. Jerry fell in love and married her.

VOLANS: general of the O.A.C., a Flat-Racian by birth.

WAZUZU: great chief on Neerg.

W.G.HYDE: criminal and impersonator. Turned Flat-Racians into Oosags. Lives in the Sumaterian Mountains.

ZUTHO: Jerry's pet name. Means: 'Savior from nowhere'.

ZUPUS: King of the Blue Men.

**** LANDMARKS ****

BALCES FOREST: forest on the Wols portion of Wols-Ega island.

CUVES: 'Like the morning suns', island group off the coast of Zurc. Kilo's rule this group of islands.

DESERTED VALLEY OF LUBBOCK: valley on the surface of Vulcan II where Jerry crash landed.

EMAN: city in Lake Ekal under control by Silob Emos on the Wols portion of Wols-Ega island.

FOOR: the prison asteroid. A satellite that circles Vulcan II.

JUY OLP: lake on Vulcan II that all rivers empty into.

LAKE MODO: lake on the Ega portion of Wols-Ega island.

MASSATINA: the Red Cloud of Jupiter.

MELCORE: the large sun of Vulcan II. Travels from North to South.
MELLA: 1st planet in from the double sun Mella/Nipnar.
MELLA: island in the group called the Cuves.
MODNAM MOUNTAINS: mountains on Ega portion of Wols-Ega island.
NASL: a moon of Vulcan II.
NEERG: a satellite that circles Vulcan II. Sole producer of Roly-X-Xem.
NIPNAR: the smaller sun of Vulcan II. Travels from East to west.
OLTISA: town where Mike was born.
ORRAN: a moon of Vulcan II.
OTNI AES: sea to the West of Wols-Ega island.
REBSAR FOREST: forest on the Wols portion of Wols-Ega island.
RETIPUJ: Jupiter.
RONIM SEA: sea to the East of Wols-Ega island.
SOIRIL: country on Vulcan II. Vershay is its capitol.
SOMOC: a moon of Vulcan II.
SUMATERIAN MOUNTAINS: mountains on Vulcan II where Nitro had a scientist (W.G.HYDE) create a race of people: The Holey Men. By mistake Hyde created two races: The Holey Men and the Oosags.
THYRO ISLES: river traveled on by Nickina and Slouch when they found the half-human Jack.
TRESSED DESERT: desert on Wols-Ega island.
VERSHAY: city Jerry received help from when capturing Silob Emos.
VULCAN II: planet where story takes place. In orbit about the suns Mellcore and Nipnar.
WOLS-EGA: island on Vulcan II under control of Silob Emos.
YANDIR RIVER: river in Modnam Mountains on the Ega portion of Wols-Ega.
YUUDIA: island off the coast of Zurc. Where Yud's rule.

**** CONTINENTS ON VULCAN II ****

OSAPER, ROLOC, ZIDAC, ATLUCIGA, RENROC, SINAP, SESOR, OGA, SERDNUH, ZURC, MELLA, YUUDIA

SEAS: REVEF AES, NIFLA AES
ISLANDS: CUVES

**** MINERALS ****

COLUMBIUM: mineral used to break through the force-field.
ROLY-X-XEM: mineral mined on Neerg, very rare.
ROPLE: rarest mineral on Vulcan II.
SLARE: strong, light mineral found on Renroc.

**** ANIMALS ****

LEBER: 5' tall, 300-500 pounds. Roams the surface of Vulcan II

and Neerg. Mortal enemy of the Surface People who kill it on site.

**** MISCELLANEOUS ****

DIIN: Car, 'Thing which floats through the air'.

LUZA: Time, 'Passing from one to another sunrise'.

LUZA DIIN: Time Car, John's vehicle for movement through time and space.

LUZA SOMOC: Time Boat, Time travel on the water was made possible this way.

NGC189: Solar System of Vulcan II.

O.A.C.: Oosag Army Corps

RONO: warrior.

SSION: stove, 'Thing that cooks with warmth'.

WONDER SHIP: native name for spaceship.

ZUTHO: spaceship Jerry arrived on Vulcan II in.

ZUTHO II: spaceship Jerry came to Vulcan II in the second time he visited.

THE INTER-STELLAR SPACE SERIES: the name of the series.

- 1 - Vulcan II
- 2 - The Criminal Of Vulcan II
- 3 - The Time Master Of Vulcan II
- 4 - Lost On Vulcan II